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Meyer Schapiro's Early Travels and the United Mediterranean Sea

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In July 1926, at the age of almost twenty-two, while preparing material for his doctoral thesis on the Romanesque sculpture of the abbey of Moissac in France, Meyer Schapiro traveled along the shores of the Mediterranean. Setting Paris as his point of departure for his several itineraries, Schapiro explored in fifteen months the united medieval world. He visited South France, Spain, Italy, Greece, Egypt Palestine, Lebanon and Turkey. Crossing land and sailing across the Mediterranean waters, Schapiro followed the medieval pilgrims' route. But in fact he was crossing borders of art historians' disciplines and regional studies categories. "Everything interest me" he said in one of his letters to his fiancé, and added: "...I feel as if space is different and the whole world more accessible."

In this lecture Schapiro's drawings of the east Mediterranean will be discussed. They illustrate his particular analytic gaze and focus of interest and, more importantly, suggest that a change in mind occurred during these travels, a change that will remain the source of inspirations for the next decays of Schapiro's scholarly investigations.