

gen und Stilbegriffe auf. Doch verscherzt er einen Teil dieses Gewinns, wenn er – jetzt weniger akribisch als in der Ornamentanalyse – das Stilproblem nach Assisi und Tarquinia verlegt. Von einem Einfluß durch die dortige Kirche S. Giovanni in Gerosolimitano, deren an Notre-Dame in Dijon erinnernder Chor ja selbst in höchstem Maße erklärungsbedürftig ist, auf Assisi kann keine Rede sein. Nicht nur ist der gotische Gliederapparat verschieden, sondern es gibt in Assisi auch fortgeschrittenere Formen (Maßwerk, Triforium), die nicht als autonom-italienische Weiterentwicklungen, sondern als direkter französisch-hochgotischer Einfluß v.a. der Ste.-Chapelle in Paris gewertet werden müssen. Das gilt auch für den Bereich, den G. am allerwenigsten für französisch erachtete: die Wölbung. Quadratische Joche mit runden Diagonalrippen gibt es in Frankreich dutzendfach – wir dürfen nur nicht die Gotik allein mit den Kathedralen identifizieren.

G. hatte einen Gegenstand gewählt, an dem sich darlegen läßt, vor welcher Vielfalt an (teilweise banalen) Bedingungen und Problemen die Forschung bei einem Sakralbau steht, der nicht zu den Schöpfungsbauten der Kunstgeschichte zählt. S. Fortunato ist ein Fallbeispiel, aber kein Modellfall, und hilft vielleicht, die Bäume, kaum aber den Wald zu sehen. Das ist nicht nur legitim, sondern notwendige Grundlagenarbeit. Das Buch veranschaulicht aber auch, wie schwierig sich die Rekonstruktion des Kontextes gestaltet, soll dieser in der künstlerischen Gestaltung anschaulich wiedererkannt werden. Der Anspruch einer historischen Wissenschaft wird nicht allein durch das Heranziehen der eher zufällig bekannten historischen Ereignisse eingelöst. Wo die Quellen nicht genügen, gerät die Interpretation leicht zur Spekulation. Die Studie hat nicht zufällig dort ihre besten Momente, wo die Bedingungen wie bei der Tropographie noch heute klar sprechen. Meiner bisweilen beckmesserisch klingenden Detailkritik zum Trotz halte ich den von G. eingeschlagenen Weg für zukunftsweisend, der bei noch genauerer Erfassung des Kontextes für die Architektur vielleicht fruchtbarer werden kann als für die Malerei. Es möchte indes nicht vergessen werden, daß Bedingungen allein ein Kunstwerk nicht voll erschließen.

Jürgen Wiener

WILLIAM L. BARCHAM, *The Religious Paintings of Giambattista Tiepolo. Piety and Tradition in Eighteenth-century Venice*. Clarendon Studies in the History of Art. Oxford, Clarendon Press 1989. ISBN 0-19-81 7501 - 9. 246 pp., numerous illustrations, partly in color.

(with two illustrations)

There is a persistent misunderstanding about the religious art of eighteenth-century Venice. According to many, it is impossible to see the frivolous saints, the sensuous Madonna's and the delicate virgins in Settecento paintings as serious expressions of the spirituality of the period. In the eyes of critics, the

dramatic biblical representations of an artist as Giambattista Tiepolo carry even less conviction. It was the purist Ruskin who first voiced these thoughts when comparing Tiepolo's *Road to Calvary* in the Venetian church of Sant'Alvise with the products of mid-nineteenth-century Parisian academy students who had stuffed their heads with George Sand and Dumas. In his widely read manual, *Painting in Eighteenth-Century Venice*, Michael Levey rejects Ruskin's implicit accusation that Tiepolo had been insincere while painting this Tintoretto inspired canvas, but he wholeheartedly approves of the latter's esthetic qualification: „The spectacle is degrading, and the trumpets and horses and Roman eagles make a distasteful carnival of the road to Calvary“. Small wonder that such explicit judgments have hampered our view of the meaning these paintings must have had in their own time. William Barcham's book is the first systematic attempt to correct the current image of Tiepolo's religious work. He does so not only by thoroughly studying the iconography of a number of the artist's key works, but also by analyzing their style and typology in order to determine in which way Tiepolo's art is an expression, both in content and presentation, of specific currents in eighteenth-century religion. The method is traditional, the theme is new and the results are largely positive. At the end of this review I shall marginally comment on Barcham's approach.

The book consists of three main chapters, entitled respectively „The young Tiepolo“, „Marian ceiling-painting and Marian devotions“ and „The saintly altarpiece“. At first sight this division might raise some questions, as the first chapter is based on chronology, whereas the other two follow an iconographical classification. Thus Barcham is forced to treat the early *Madonna del Carmelo* in the Brera (1722-27) twice, in chapter I at pp. 34-39 and again, shortly, in chapter II at p. 146 in connection with his discussion of the ceiling of the Scuola del Carmine in Venice. Yet the way in which the material is presented makes sense, for it largely coincides with the development of Tiepolo's oeuvre. The artist's main religious works till around 1730 are about themes from the Old Testament (*Crossing of the Red Sea*, *Brazen Serpent*, *Rebecca at the Well*, cycle in the Arcivescovado at Udine), the *Crucifixion* (Burano, San Martino) and martyr saints (Bartholomew: Venice, San Stae; Lucy: Vascon, parish church). The great Mariological cycles and the main altarpieces on the other hand all date from the fourth decade of the eighteenth century or later.

Tiepolo's early career still presents us with many problems and even after Barcham's study a number of questions, in particular about chronology, remain unanswered. Remarkably enough, the author pays no attention to two of Tiepolo's best-known early works, i.e. the cycle in the Ospedaletto (including the much reproduced *Sacrifice of Isaac*) and the fresco with the *Apotheosis of St. Theresa* in the church of the Scalzi in Venice. The central place in Barcham's exposé is taken up by the iconographical interpretation of the paintings with scenes from the story of Moses and of the frescoed cycle in Udine. According to Barcham a very early oilsketch showing the *Crossing of*

the Red Sea, generally, and doubtlessly correctly, connected with the (lost) painting with this theme shown in public in 1716, according to Tiepolo's first biographer, Vincenzo Da Canal, would contain an allusion to the Turkish assault on Corfu earlier that same year. An important argument is the recent interpretation of Titian's famous woodcut with the same theme, which would have been prompted by the war of Cambrai. Barcham's suggestion that the early *Crossing of the Red Sea* might have been a rejected project for the Venetian church of Santi Cosma e Damiano, is less convincing. Tiepolo's composition, transmitted in the oils sketch, reveals a clear *sottinsù*, whereas Sebastiano Ricci's *Moses striking Water from the Rock*, which eventually came to hang in the church, is taken from a relatively high viewpoint.

Of particular interest is the analysis of the magnificent frescoed cycle in Udine, for which the author could use Michelangelo Muraro's pioneering study from 1970 as a point of departure. Muraro established that the iconography of the Old Testament scenes in the gallery and in the so-called Sala Rossa, the hall of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal, finds an explanation in the long standing conflict between Austria and Venice over the political control of the Patriarchy of Aquileia, which in the Middle Ages had been transferred to Udine. Barcham elaborates upon the thematic point, but he also pays much attention to the bright color scheme and the theatrical presentation of Tiepolo's raffigurations in the Arcivescovado, which are clearly inspired by the art of Paolo Veronese. Recently it has been put forward from various parts that the renewed interest in Cinquecento styles in early-eighteenth-century Venice is probably connected with an ideological need of the patriciate to reaffirm their own ruling class image in a period of crisis by explicitly referring to the art of the golden age of the Serenissima. In the Udine frescoes, Tiepolo's „neo-veronesian“ style might have been a conscious Venetian response to the political pressure of a foreign nation. Barcham thinks that the frescoes in the gallery and the Sala Rossa were done in 1724-25, but I assume they were conceived a little earlier, perhaps around 1722. This follows not only from the bicentenary, in 1724, of Cardinal Marino Grimani's 1524 proclamation that Udine would be the „new Aquileia“ - a date, more likely to be interpreted as an *ante quem* than as a *post quem* for the painted decoration -, but also from the stylistic parallels with the recently published *Apotheosis of St. Lucy* in Vascon from 1722.

At the beginning of the second chapter, devoted to Tiepolo's Marian representations, Barcham tries to explain why it is that the artist painted so many images of the Virgin. His reasoning is not entirely satisfying: what is the reason that St. Mark all but disappears from Venetian iconography in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries? And had not the veneration of the Nicopeia, which according to Barcham got new impulses in the Settecento, fostered Marian devotions in the city at least since the Quattrocento? However this may be, Barcham's treatment of the individual works of art is again very sound and, as far as I am concerned, particularly revealing when he deals with the frescoes in the church of Santa Maria del Rosario, better known as the

Gesuati (after the order which at one time owned the complex) on the Zattere in Venice. He relates the subject matter of the main ceiling fresco - the *Institution of the Rosary* - to the Jansenist controversy, which stirred many minds in Venice during the first decades of the eighteenth century. In writing, the observant Dominicans of the Zattere reacted sharply upon the publications of their Jansenist-inspired fellow-Dominican Serry, who resided in nearby Padua and who did not only stress the worthlessness of the human will, but also denounced the excessive cult of the Virgin Mary and the veneration of the rosary. In the ceiling piece, it is precisely the miraculous effects of the rosary which are being emphasized. The reason why Tiepolo got his inspiration for this fresco from the great sixteenth-century ceilings in the Palazzo Ducale is not completely clear: the fact that these, too, show a combination of narrative and devotional elements, as Barcham puts it, does not seem a compelling enough reason, certainly not when we consider that the public in the Palazzo Ducale surely must have been different from the „humble Venetian“ to whom Tiepolo's work would have been addressed. Moreover, in the late (1754-55) ceiling fresco in the Pietà - representing an *Incoronation of the Virgin*, or, according to Barcham, more generally, a *Triumph of the Faith* -, which has an intention similar to that of the work in the Gesuati, the artist chose a totally different composition, going back to his own earlier design for the fresco over the staircase in Würzburg.

In the last chapter Tiepolo's altarpieces are discussed. Barcham rightly emphasizes the fundamental new conception of Giambattista's *pale* compared to the altarpieces of his main Venetian contemporaries, Ricci, Pittoni and Piazzetta. Whereas the latter, with their dynamic zigzag compositions, are obviously indebted to the Roman-Bolognese Baroque tradition, Tiepolo draws his inspiration from the great examples of the Venetian Cinquecento - notably Veronese - in his solidly shaped, yet strangely remote figures and in his persistent use of architectural settings. From the 1730s onwards he is successful with this formula in Venice. His first important altarpiece for a major Venetian church was the painting in San Salvador, which, unfortunately, has not been preserved. Its design is transmitted in an oils sketch in the National Gallery, London, and in a drawing of which two versions exist, one in the Staatliche Graphische Sammlung in Munich and the other at Antichità Pietro Scarpa in Venice (black chalk, 496 x 349 mm, from the Bossi-Beyerlen collection) (*Abb. 12a*). In his thorough iconographical analysis, Barcham convincingly identifies the bishop to the right as St. Magno, one of the patron saints of Venice and a legendary founder of San Salvador. Whether the composition of the lost picture corresponded to that of the oils sketch or of the two drawings is a question that cannot be answered with certainty. Barcham decides in favour of the first alternative, with reasonable arguments. Whatever the truth may be, I think it interesting to present a hitherto unknown drawing by Tiepolo, brought to my attention by Christian von Heusinger, which shows a *prima idea* of the altarpiece (South Germany, private collection, pen in

brown, washed, over black chalk, 374 x 245 mm; *Abb. 12b*). The main differences with both previously known representations consist in the relation of the figures to the architectonic setting, in the position of St. Louis on the left, and in the absence of acolytes. Further, the composition of this early sketch seems more compact and crowded than that of the later versions.

Barcham's book is, in conclusion, a perspicuous study of a wrongly neglected field in Settecento art history. The only remark I would like to make is of a methodological nature. By combining sound iconographical research with acute stylistic analysis, the author obtains considerable new insights. Nevertheless, it does not become completely clear, to put it in a very general way, why Tiepolo's commissioners would have preferred him as a religious painter to, say, Ricci or Piazzetta, who, each in their own way, are much more directly connected with traditional seventeenth-century „Counter-Reformatory“ modes. Apparently, Tiepolo represented certain visual categories in a specific way, which was highly appreciated by (part of) the eighteenth-century public. Philip Sohm („Unknown Epithalamia as Sources for G. B. Tiepolo's Iconography and Style“, in *Arte Veneta* XXXVII, 1983, pp. 138-150) has made a first attempt to reconstruct some aspects of a „period eye“ as far as Tiepolo's monumental secular decorations are concerned. Something of a similar approach might have been useful in the present book as well; thus I noticed that the author's analyses of the reasons underlying Tiepolo's „neocinquecentismo“ at times tend to be somewhat noncommittal. As a result, Barcham's last phrase is perhaps all too predictable: „Tiepolo's religious painting was, in conclusion, the end of a tradition“.

But it would be unfair to end this review with a critical note, even when put mildly. Serious iconological research into the religious art of the Settecento, all too often still regarded as „unserious“, is urgently needed. Barcham's book is the best proof of how much such a study can contribute to our understanding of an artist like Giambattista Tiepolo.

Bernard Aikema

Varia

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