

stil“ bezeichnet hat und mit dem er die Gattung der Landschaftsmalerei offenbar in die obersten Ränge akademischer Klassifizierung zu erheben hoffte.

Kurz nach 1780 begann Gainsborough Bilder eines bei ihm bis dahin unbekannt Typs zu malen, sogenannte Fancy-Pictures oder Fantasiestücke, die den Auftakt für eine das ganze 19. Jahrhundert über in vielen Abwandlungen gepflegte Bildgattung abgeben. Möglicherweise von Bildern Murillos, den er sehr verehrte, inspiriert, nahm er sozusagen die Staffagefiguren seiner früheren Landschaften in den Vordergrund und gab ihnen eine bildnishaft Individualität (Kat. Nrn. 138, 139). Zugleich mit einer dem ländlichen Alltag vertrauten Verrichtung beschäftigt, eignet diesen armen Häuslerkindern ein melancholischer Grundzug, der sie zu den thematischen Hauptakteuren macht, während die Landschaft diese gefühlsbetonte Stimmung nur mehr hinterfängt. Der von Gainsborough sehr wohl ernst gemeinte soziale Tenor dieser Bilder wird noch deutlicher in dem Bild „Peasant Smoking at a Cottage Door“ von 1788 (Kat. Nr. 152), das thematisch auf Bilderfindungen J. F. Millets vorausweist.

Die Ausstellung wird — in erweiterter Form — gegenwärtig in Paris gezeigt.

Christoph Heilmann

## REZENSIONEN

DAVID ROBERTSON, *Sir Charles Eastlake and the Victorian Art World*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1978, 468 pp. 200 ills.

This outstanding book on Sir Charles Eastlake presents the reader with a puzzling paradox: its hero — if Eastlake can be called anybody's hero — was a mediocrity, even if a highly successful mediocrity. He was for a quarter of a century secretary of the Fine Arts Commission which instigated and supervised the decoration of the new Palace of Westminster. Yet even admirers of 19th century „official“ art will have to admit that both competitions and frescoes were an abysmal failure, reflecting little credit on the judgement of Eastlake and his colleagues. His long Presidency of the Royal Academy did not add lustre to this dormant institution, partly because he himself was never more than a pleasant but shallow painter, who supplied a willing market with pretty souvenirs of Italy and a few good portraits. His narrative pictures are almost invariably sentimental, catering for philistine tastes. He was Keeper, Trustee, and finally Director of the National Gallery, and rightly he is best remembered for the significant part he played in building up this new collection.

Mr. Robertson has no illusions about Eastlake, and as we read his cautious and balanced summing up (pp. 243 ff.) we are aware that he does not try to make him greater than he was. We must ask therefore how this man of moderate intelligence and limited artistic gifts could rise to a position of such eminence in Victorian England? Perusing this fully documented book we discover an interesting social pheno-

menon: Eastlake owed his rise in society and the world of art, his rank in the „establishment“, not to innate gifts, but to (what is vulgarly called) the „old boy“ network. He came from the right family background, as his forebears had been judge-advocates to the Admiralty in Plymouth for generations, he went, if only for a very short time, to the right Public School (Charterhouse), he belonged to the right clubs, dining and wining with the right people, and last, but probably not least, he married a woman who had not only the right family connections but was also in intelligence, imagination, and energy his superior. Lady Eastlake, in the *Memoir* of her husband published in 1870, has a revealing passage; “It was in the hospitable house of the late Earl of Essex in Belgrave Square ... that Mr. Eastlake met distinguished members of both Houses and of the Government of the day. It was there that he attracted the notice of Sir Robert Peel, whose estimate of his character and attainments brought him subsequently into public employment.”

Professor Robertson's full title is apt: *Sir Charles Eastlake and the Victorian Art World*. Throughout Eastlake is seen in the context of the set-up in which he played so conspicuous a role. The biography makes constant reference to it, and five substantial Appendices — almost 200 pages — provide the invaluable background to Eastlake's manifold activities.

The book opens with an account of Eastlake's training under Benjamin Robert Haydon, and the examples of early work, well reproduced here, show that he was no better or worse than other history painters in early 19th century England, and just as dull. There is, however, one unusual picture which deserves to be singled out. *Napoleon on Board the Bellerophon* (Greenwich, National Maritime Museum) was painted in 1815 while the Emperor was waiting deportation to St. Helena. It is not a great picture, and hardly does justice to the significance of the tragic event, but it is a rare example of a history painting showing a contemporary event, based on observation. Eastlake painted it from sketches he made by going out in a boat and he claimed that Napoleon posed when he noticed him.

While a young man in Italy, where he lived for almost 10 years, Eastlake not only painted landscapes and the ever fashionable “banditi“, which made him so popular with collectors, he also studied Italian art thoroughly and thus laid the groundwork for that connoisseurship which in later years enabled him to take on the direction of the growing National Gallery.

The list of friends and acquaintances with whom Eastlake dined after his return to London reads like the social register. To name but a few: he met Macaulay, Carlyle, Mill, Tennyson, artists like Copley Fielding, together with members of the aristocracy. The manner of his appointment to the Fine Arts Commission is characteristic. The Prince Consort and Sir Robert Peel, the Prime Minister, handpicked the Secretary “for his professional talent, knowledge of the subject and character.“ Since the Houses of Parliament were to be adorned with frescoes, Eastlake was probably the only man in England who had at least some acquaintance with the technique, for he had seen what was done in Munich, and he had talked with Cornelius during the latter's stay in England in 1841. Still, he could hardly be called an

expert on large scale mural decorations. But by the early 1840s he was fast becoming a key figure in the Victorian art world.

Professor Robertson tells the depressing story of the competitions organised by the Commission and illustrates many of the deplorable designs submitted by competitors such as E. Armitage, C. W. Cope, E. M. Ward, and others. Fortunately he gives us as an antidote several of the amusing caricatures published in *Punch* by such witty draughtsmen as John Leech. The level of the designs and executed frescoes is so low that even today's revival of Victorian art has so far failed to redeem these works. Yet the historian must be interested in this invasion of German influence into this citadel of Englishness at a period when the country was not notably pro-German. The Prince Consort believed that the same enthusiasm which had given rise to a new school of fresco painting in Germany might also be kindled in England, and he remarked that he had full confidence in the ability of the English: "I have not the slightest doubt they would produce works fully equal to the present school of the Germans." The question why the English artists failed to live up to these expectations still awaits investigation, but it might be suggested that all art in order to develop successfully needs to be rooted in a tradition, and that England lacked both a tradition in painting monumental murals and in developing a school of history painters.

Eastlake did really memorable work at the National Gallery — founded in 1824 — with which he was closely connected from 1843 until his death in 1865. Here too there were some calamitous failures — objectively recorded in this book — such as the acquisition of a portrait attributed to Holbein (NG nr. 195) which turned out to be by a minor master. Eastlake had to admit that he failed to ascertain the picture's provenance, using the feeble excuse that he was suffering from disappointment, because the Trustees had refused to buy a Ghirlandajo he had recommended. He was unable to stop Gladstone, at the time Chancellor of the Exchequer, from the high-handed action of acquiring against the wishes of the Gallery staff and Trustees, the largely worthless Krüger Collection, nor did he resign over this slight. But his real failure was not over missed opportunities or wrong attributions, mistakes which are bound to happen to every museum director. He failed through inertia to give the administration of the National Gallery its proper status. In his day there was no fixed budget and every purchase had to be approved by the Trustees who were often enough unwilling to follow guidance from their director, and funds had to be asked from the Treasury. Chancellors often had ideas of their own. There was one particular bone of contention between the various parties: Should the gallery acquire only "masterpieces", or was it to be a repository for paintings from the past telling through their presence the history of art. It was Eastlake's outstanding achievement that he tried to strike a balance between the two opposing views, and Professor Robertson has amply documented this fact.

The greatest cross Eastlake had to bear was the relentless nastiness of Mr. Morris Moore, the self-appointed watchdog over all affairs of the National Gallery, who spent his time writing aggressive letters to the *Times* and other Papers. He attacked

the Director over purchases and their attributions, over cleaning, and even over personnel, always supported by his ally in Parliament Lord Elcho. Eastlake was not Morris Moore's only victim, who also waged a venomous campaign against Dr. Waagen, whom he called "that sycophantic, empirical Prussian". He specially went to Berlin in 1856 with the intention of destroying Waagen's standing. Waagen first ignored him, and later ended a brief reply with the dignified remark: "That I cannot enter into a personal discussion with a man of this sort will be found quite natural by every man of honour." Morris clearly was a paranoid who went round maligning the competence of Eastlake or Waagen (and incidentally others as well), pointing out his own alleged superior knowledge. He was a type not unknown in academic circles even today. The *Art Journal* rightly commented that his activities were a "pitiable display of personal vindictiveness and prejudicial only to the writer". Not everybody will agree with Professor Robertson that Morris was at least "competent". But in spite of failures or attacks by Moore and his friends The National Gallery remains a magnificent achievement by its first director. As the author rightly observes: "Eastlake's finest monument, in fact, is rather to be seen all around upon the walls of the National Gallery." It is, nevertheless, an achievement which reflects the idiosyncratic taste of the director. The acquisitions concentrated on Italian painting, particularly of the 16th and 17th centuries. True, a number of important Netherlandish pictures were bought, but everything else was almost totally neglected. Professor Robertson's praise of Eastlake's scholarship seems a little overdone, because connoisseurship was limited to certain phases of Italian painting. When he claims, that Eastlake's outlook was not insular but European, he seems to overlook that by and large Eastlake's taste was but an extension of the taste of the English connoisseur-collector of the 18th century. He was lucky in building up this unrivalled collection because he happened to be around at the moment when so much of the "right" art appeared on the market.

As an account of a life fully lived right in the centre of Victorian England this book is excellent. The lengthy Appendices give it additional value, for they provide raw material needed in understanding the role of art in Victorian England.

The first is a carefully compiled and well illustrated catalogue raisonné of Eastlake's paintings. Robertson, as a true historian, has given identifications of patrons or collectors. Since usually Eastlake's pictures are hardly interesting as works of art, this extension in the direction of social history is particularly welcome, because Eastlake's clients reflect an important change in the social background of English collectors. Among those who bought his pictures were still aristocrats and traditional patrons of art, but he was also patronised by a new class of art lover, best represented by men like Vernon or Sheepshanks. As Lady Eastlake wrote in her *Memoir*: "The patronage which had been almost exclusively the privilege of the nobility and higher gentry, was now shared by a wealthy and intelligent class, chiefly enriched by commerce and trade." A detailed analysis of Eastlake's patrons in conjunction with the pictures he painted for them would yield a fascinating chapter in the

history of English taste. The material for such an investigation can be found in the pages of this book.

The second Appendix is a catalogue of Eastlake's own collection. He always was a collector on a modest scale, and in weighing his own desires against his duties as Director of the National Gallery he acted with scrupulous honesty and care. Furthermore he stipulated in his will that any picture bought during his tenure should be offered to the Gallery at purchase price. The Trustees bought nine out of fifteen, further pictures came through Lady Eastlake, and yet more, not taken by the Trustees, found their way into the Ludwig Mond Collection and came to the National Gallery with his bequest. It should be noted as typical that of the paintings which found their way eventually into the Gallery twenty out of twenty-five are by Italian masters.

The third Appendix gives us in the space of about 35 pages a documentary history of the National Gallery, listing officials, trustees, and acquisitions. Much of all this is based on hitherto unpublished material from the archives of the Gallery. There is not the space here to discuss this fascinating chapter in detail, but read in conjunction with the exemplary catalogues of the collection it tells not only the story of the growth of a museum founded only in the 19th century, it also speaks most eloquently of Eastlake's connoisseurship and taste. Apart from this, the chapter also makes a notable contribution to the history of the art market, as the purchase prices of pictures are given. It must come as a shock that Eastlake bought Jan van Eyck's portrait of a man, inscribed *Leal Souvenir*, for £ 189.11s in 1857, or that Piero della Francesca's *Baptism* cost only £ 241.10s.

The fourth Appendix tells the story of the Fine Arts Commission. Professor Robertson has carefully sifted the many documents and contemporary accounts. He has also provided a room by room discussion of the decorations. Taken together with T.S.R. Boase's paper in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* (1954) there is now the material available needed for a consideration of these designs and frescoes in their historical and European context.

The last Appendix deals with the history of the Royal Academy during the years of Eastlake's Presidency (1850—1865). As already noted Eastlake did not change the course of this august institution, and the pictures he himself exhibited were anything but remarkable. Mr. Robertson, in listing exhibitions year by year, has extensively quoted from reviews given in the leading papers of the day. Here again he has provided future historians with invaluable information for an account of academic taste in England.

In the course of this book Professor Robertson gives a number of tantalising glimpses of Lady Eastlake, „a handsome and confident bluestocking of thirty-four years of age“ when she first met Eastlake in 1843. Quotations from her letters and writings show her to have been highly intelligent and witty, gifted with a sharp tongue. In particular her wholly negative attitude to Ruskin is of interest to the stu-

dent of the Victorian age. As Robertson puts it: „Ruskin, by Lady Eastlake's account, had undependable vision and a messy mind.“ She deserves a fuller treatment in a companion volume to this one.

It may sound ungrateful to criticize one omission from a book which has so much to offer. It is a pity that the author has paid comparatively little attention to Eastlake as an author. He translated Goethe's *Farbenlehre* into English, making it available, for example, to Turner. The choice of this anti-Newtonian treatise is in itself of interest and should be questioned in conjunction with the rest of Eastlake's writings. He was not one of the outstanding contributors to art history or aesthetics in the 19th century, but his writings merit attention, particularly since he also went outside his own field, writing, for example, a long paper on Kaspar Hauser.

It must be mentioned that this book is handsomely produced, that the illustrations are plentiful and of very good quality. There is a good index, and Professor Robertson's bibliography is a model of its kind. All in all: the most notable contribution to Victorian studies in years.

Leopold D. Ettlinger

Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Kupferstichkabinett: Die Deutschen Zeichnungen des 19. Jahrhunderts. 2 Bände (Text und Abbildungen). Text bearbeitet von RUDOLF THEILMANN und EDITH AMMANN. Karlsruhe 1978. C.F. Müller Großdruckerei und Verlag GmbH, Karlsruhe. Text: 751 S., Abbildungen: 519 S.

Mit dem Band über die „Deutschen Zeichnungen des 19. Jahrhunderts“ aus eigenem Besitz knüpft die Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe an ihre Tradition ausgezeichneter Kataloge an. 1966 erschien das zweibändige Werk über die Alten Meister, bearbeitet von Jan Lauts, 1971/72 zwei weitere Bände über die Neueren Meister, bearbeitet von Jan Lauts und Werner Zimmermann. Außerdem gab das Museum eine Reihe von Heften zu seinen Bild- und Zeichnungsbeständen heraus. Hier manifestiert sich eine auf die eigenen Belange gerichtete Auffassung der Museumsarbeit. Dem Laien wie dem Wissenschaftler werden nicht nur die ausgestellten, sondern jetzt auch die in Schachteln verpackten Kunstwerke zugänglich gemacht und, so weit möglich, erklärt. Hiermit wurde ein Arbeitsinstrument geschaffen, das auf dem Gebiet der Zeichnung innerhalb Deutschlands seinesgleichen sucht.

Vorwiegend dank der Unterstützung durch die Fritz Thyssen Stiftung haben — jedenfalls bis 1975 — zahlreiche westdeutsche Museen ihre bedeutenden Bestände an Gemälden des 19. Jahrhunderts wissenschaftlich bearbeiten und in Form gedruckter Kataloge erschließen können. Entsprechende Verzeichnisse der Zeichnungen des 19. Jahrhunderts fehlen jedoch fast völlig. Vor Karlsruhe hatte nur die Staatsgalerie Stuttgart 1976 ihren relativ überschaubaren Bestand in Buchform ediert. Der große Umfang an Blättern und das starke qualitative Gefälle zwischen guten, klein- und kleinstmeisterlichen Arbeiten dürften Gründe dafür gewesen