

**Charles Hope, *Titian*. New York, Harper and Row; Toronto, Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1980. 170 pp., 86 illus., 32 col. pls., \$39.95**

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I also find of interest the reaching, open approach to Renaissance art theory seen here in two essays. David Summers, who has been working fruitfully in this area for a number of years, explores the Renaissance understanding of physiognomy as one of the outward manifestations of the soul, and finds the reflection in Michelangelo's *David* of what appears to have been almost a stereotype in Renaissance body theory: the leonine type – 'the male type in its perfect form' as a late antique text, known to the Renaissance, put it – signifying courage and daring. George L. Hersey shows how Renaissance thinkers such as Marsilio Ficino could be stimulated by the growing discipline of architectural theory to conceive of a 'cosmic temple': the building as a memory image of the Universe in three-dimensional projection.

The Editors are to be commended for providing an index to the book, a rarity in *Festschrift* productions.

The word *Collaboration* in the title of the Seymour volume stands for a network of meanings. On one obvious level, it means the co-operation between artists, or between artist and patron; on another level, as alluded to by Sheard in her introduction, it refers to the work of the scholar, a creative collaborator with a past moment in history. There is also the collaboration of approaches. Meiss and Seymour taught that a range of methodologies exist in order to make the historical moment come alive. More and more clearly it emerges that the task of their followers is to fuse the methodologies in what may be not so much collaboration as a charting of new territory.

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CHARLES HOPE *Titian*. New York, Harper and Row; Toronto, Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1980. 170 pp., 86 illus., 32 col. pls., \$39.95.

For the past four hundred years Titian has been held in the highest esteem as one of the greatest and most influential of all European painters, so that it is surely paradoxical that art historians of today sometimes still refer to Crowe and Cavalcaselle's 1877 monograph as

the best account of this artist available in English.

During the last twelve years there has been a considerable amount of activity in Titian studies which has produced such significant publications as the multi-volume monographs of Pallucchini and Wethey as well as Panofsky's *Problems in Titian*. Among the most important studies of the documentary sources of the artist have been those of Charles Hope. Consequently, the appearance of a one-volume monograph on the great Venetian painter by this scholar is of considerable importance to the specialist in the art of the Italian Renaissance and of concern to anyone interested in the general development of European painting.

The author states in his Preface that he has chosen not only to concentrate upon the larger works (which is understandable with an artist whose extant paintings number over three hundred), but to 'examine the basic issues on which there is still disagreement among art historians ...' In general he not only examines such issues, but takes a definite position, which, *ipso facto*, must frequently be a controversial one. This makes for lively reading, even though non-specialists will perhaps be distracted by the fact that the art historians with whom the author disagrees are almost never named and the contentious publications seldom cited.

True to his stated aims, the author pays little attention to the social and political background of Titian's artistic development, but despite other remarks to the effect that he has tried to place the artist within the wider context of Venetian painting, there is little consideration of the influence of Giovanni Bellini or Giorgione and none of Titian's relationship to Palma il Vecchio. Nor is his mature work ever really compared with that of his rivals Pordenone and Tintoretto. The most frequently mentioned of Titian's contemporaries is the rather unimpressive Andrea Schiavone. However, Hope is concerned with the influence of the great High Renaissance masters of Florence and Rome and his argument concerning the influence of Fra Bartolommeo upon the *Assunta* in the Frari, which he appears to have made independently of Creighton Gilbert (*Art Bulletin*, LXII,

1980, pp. 56-62) is quite convincing.

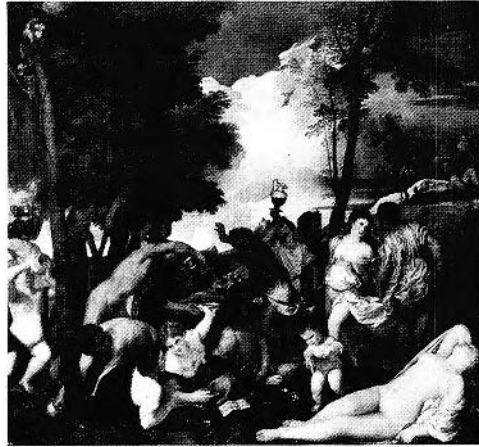
The reader will not find any new attributions to the artist in this monograph which is mercifully free of reattributed Giorgione and Giorgionesque works and of the ascription of early sixteenth-century Venetian furniture panels to the young Titian. Such a severe and welcome pruning of works of doubtful authenticity enables Hope to offer a new chronology of the artist's earliest undisputed paintings. *Jacopo Pesaro Presented to St. Peter* (Antwerp), *The Baptism of Christ* (Rome), *Christ of San Rocco* (Venice), *Noli Me Tangere* (London), and *The Three Ages of Man and Holy Family with St. John the Baptist and a Donor* in Edinburgh are all considered to have been completed before Giorgione's death in 1510. This is done on the apparent assumption (p. 26) that Titian was born about 1485, rather than about 1488-90 as favoured by most modern scholars. In itself this is possibly acceptable, but when one adds the Fondaco frescoes and even one or two other paintings according to one's own reconstruction of this stage of Titian's career, then, even allowing for a high rate of survival of the early works, it constitutes a very busy and productive beginning for an artist who is known throughout the rest of his life to have worked very slowly. Another reason why these works are all dated before 1510 is the belief that Titian painted in a Giorgionesque manner only during that painter's lifetime. This is more difficult to accept, especially when one is later presented with a proposal to move forward by about ten years – (to c. 1516) – the Louvre *Entombment*, because of its supposed Giorgionesque qualities.

Among the works of Titian's maturity there are also some re-datings. The Prado *St. Margaret* is brought forward to c. 1554-58 from an usually accepted date in the mid-1560s (as determined by style), because of the presumption that it was done for Margaret of Hungary who died in 1558. It should be noted that Wethey (*The Paintings of Titian*, 1, London, 1969, p. 142) was aware of this possibility, but did not re-date the work. Another controversial re-dating which is contrary to the usual stylistically determined chronology of

Titian's *oeuvre* is the moving back of the *Mellon Venus with a Mirror* to c. 1567, apparently because of the assumption that it derives from a lost prototype painted for Philip II. But no matter what one may think of these two proposed changes to Titian's chronology, one must agree with Hope in following Suida's lead in insisting on a date of c. 1538 for the Frick Portrait of *Pietro Aretino* because of the fact that a woodcut published in that year obviously derives from it. In this case documentary evidence and stylistic criteria are definitely in agreement.

Pietro Aretino's oft-quoted letter to Titian describing a scene on the Canal Grande appears again in this book, as does Palma il Giovane's familiar report of Titian's late method of working, but there is also a sprinkling of interesting and even delightful bits of information from unfamiliar sources. From the correspondence of the Papal Legate in Venice in the mid-sixteenth century (which was published early this century but neglected in subsequent studies), we learn that the artist, before he set out for Rome in 1545, had given assurances that he would certainly paint a portrait of each and every member of the Pope's family, 'including the cats,' and that the *Danae* which Titian was painting for Cardinal Alessandro Farnese would make the *Venus of Urbino* look like a nun!

Hope's unrivalled knowledge of the documentation concerning Titian does not provide us with any really significant new insights into the mind of the great painter. This is largely explained by the fact that the artist seldom wrote the letters that he sent to his patrons and, as Hope himself says, Titian always presented a public facade. Nevertheless, the author is obviously fascinated by the relationship between the artist and his patrons, especially his most important one, Philip II of Spain, and some of the most perceptive remarks in the book are made in regard to this relationship. The sympathetic attitude to the personalities associated with Titian's art is also an obvious factor in the author's ability to write about the portraits with a certain verve. This can be seen in the informative discussions of the *Mosti Portrait* (Pitti) and *Paul III and his Grandsons* (Naples).



Titian, *The Andrians*. Hope, pl. x.

A group of paintings done in Titian's very last years, after he had stopped sending works to Philip, still have a number of problems associated with them. It is the matter of their broken brushwork and lack of precise definition of form that concerns Hope. He takes issue with those scholars who regard these paintings as constituting the final stage of a great painter's stylistic evolution. Instead he proposes that they are simply unfinished pictures which would have resembled earlier ones had they been completed. The main reason he gives for their incomplete state is physical incapacity on the part of the artist.

It has been always known that some of these paintings were indeed left unfinished in the artist's studio at the time of his death, but Hope is the first to propose that this applies to all those works generally dated c. 1570-76. Differentiating between finished and unfinished works of art is seldom an easy task with artists such as Titian who often begin their works with no clear idea of what they are to look like when finished. Moreover, Hope's thesis is complicated on the one hand by the inclusion of the *Death of Actaeon* (London), which he himself considers to have been begun in the mid-1550s, and on the other hand by the omission of two works of Titian's last years which are neither very different in style from those mentioned, nor ever regarded as unfinished: the *Boy with Dogs* fragment in Rotterdam and the *Flaying of Marsyas* in Kromeriz.

Furthermore, there is sufficient evidence to support the traditional view that a progressive freedom of brushwork and lack of definition of form constitute major elements in a logical stylistic development throughout Titian's maturity and old age. In the 1540s Pietro Aretino complained of what he regarded as lack of finish, as did Philip in 1551. The Escorial *Martyrdom of St. Lawrence* (1564-67) is by the author's criteria a finished work, yet it can be seen (his plates 75-77), as a perfectly logical step in a loosening of the artist's style, a process which reached its final development in such works as the *Flaying of Marsyas*.

Iconographical interpretations of Titian's compositions are also treated with radical simplicity. Early in the book the reader is told that,

Unlike many of his contemporaries ... [Titian] did not feel the need to fill his works with learned allusions to literary and philosophical texts, and as a result he is one of the Renaissance artists whose paintings are least in need of abstruse iconographic interpretations.

Those scholars who have found some recent studies of the artist's iconography to be as unconvincing as they are elaborate will welcome a contrary stand. However, Hope appears to have gone to the opposite extreme. No one would describe Titian as a philosophical or profoundly intellectual artist, but he painted both allegorical and mythological subjects and if we are to understand them we should

carefully examine the relevant iconographical traditions and literary sources. Unfortunately the allegorical tradition in Venetian Renaissance painting is virtually ignored and some of Titian's most important compositions of this genre are either given inadequate interpretations (e.g. the *Sacred and Profane Love* [Rome]), or omitted altogether (*The Allegory of the Marchese del Vasto* [Louvre] and *The Education of Cupid* [Rome]).

Hope again differs from a number of recently published studies in regarding Ovid's *Metamorphoses* as the sole source for the mythological paintings or *poesie* which were sent to Philip II. He points out that the artist could read this source only in Italian, but makes no mention of available translations. Even in the case of that glorious early evocation of pagan antiquity, *The Andrians* where the actual translation is known, it does not appear to have been used by Hope to provide the interpretation given.

The importance of such works as *The Andrians* in the history of Western painting is rightly emphasized in the author's conclusion, but it is not really clear in the reader's mind why the author believes this to be so. This is in marked contrast to his discussion of other aspects of the artist's work, especially the clear and convincing case for Titian's role in the establishment of the conventions of aristocratic portraiture which is made throughout the book and in the conclusion.

Charles Hope is well aware of the fact that he has written a controversial book, particularly in regard to the development of Titian's style and the iconography of his paintings. It is to be welcomed for it should provoke serious rethinking about some of the great masterpieces of European painting.

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WILLIAM VAUGHAN *German Romanticism and English Art*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press (for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art), 1979. 308 + xii pp., 173 illus., \$45.00.

In *German Romanticism and English Art* Dr. William Vaughan endeav-

ours to elucidate the significance for early Victorian British artists and patrons of C.L. Eastlake's celebrated declaration that the Germans possessed the 'mind of art.' The book is a revised version of his 1977 University of London Ph.D. thesis, 'The German Manner in English Art 1815-1855,' and joins his catalogue, *Caspar David Friedrich 1774-1840* (Tate Gallery, London, 1972), and broader histories, *Romantic Art* (New York, 1978) and *German Romantic Painting* (New Haven, 1980). However, it retains much of the dense, sometimes prolix prose and uneven structure of the thesis genus, and is more a series of essays than a cohesive, chronological study. The third chapter, for example, entitled 'The Depiction of German Subjects by British Artists,' contains an essentially statistical analysis of excessive length when compared with the more relevant issues addressed elsewhere. Nevertheless, within the confined boundaries Vaughan establishes in the Introduction, those issues are thoroughly researched and the author presents interesting material on early to mid-nineteenth-century English and German art and aesthetics. Chief among his contributions are the information about a number of secondary and tertiary English painters such as William Cave Thomas or Joseph Severn, British attitudes to History Painting and ecclesiastical art, and a useful review in English of the development of German aesthetic theory. In these respects the book is a welcome addition to the more specialized literature on the German Nazarenes and their influence, notably Keith Andrew's *The Nazarenes* (Oxford, 1964), and the catalogue of the 1977 Frankfurt Exhibition, *Die Nazarener*, and such studies of the English context as T.S.R. Boase's *English Art 1800-1870* (Oxford, 1959).

Some of the limitations of the book are immediately apparent in the Introduction, which, being a distillation of the succeeding chapters, is, incidentally, the most readable section. Having noted the indisputable influence of German art upon early Victorian British painting and decoration, Vaughan justly remarks that it is 'less easy to determine what precisely it implied, and what the English gained from their encounter with it.' But what follows

indicates that he will, essentially, concentrate his investigation upon artistic issues rather than fully considering the existence of deeper cultural or even sociological reasons for the British admiration of German art. Did, for instance, the hierarchical creative values of the major German painters and the authoritarian cast of their predominantly royal patrons appeal to the British dilettanti and artists who promoted the Germanic taste? Certainly, the religious revival sponsored by the Oxford and Cambridge Movements, and proselytized most enthusiastically by A.W.N. Pugin, an admirer of German art, while seeking social reform helped to counteract the radical forces which threatened the status quo in England both before and after the passage of the Reform Bill in 1832. Other phenomena relative to the prestige of German culture in Britain also receive too little attention, such as the pre-eminence of German Classical scholarship or the course of Anglo-German relations through the century. Even accepting the restriction to the artistic perspective, the 'crisis' in British History Painting, which Vaughan isolates as a primary factor, was apparent well before the 1830s and the onset of Germanism; indeed, the problem was considered to be endemic by some, James Fergusson writing to his friend, Sir A.H. Layard, on 24 September 1883 about the proposed decoration of the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral: 'The fact is, I know no artist or architect in this country, who has the smallest conception of what is wanted ...' (British Library, B.M. ADD.MS 39036, no. 320). Similarly, the emergence of other artistic influences which might explain the demise of the German taste from the late 1850s - and its decline is but briefly charted - is not introduced into the preliminary discussion of the subject. One such is Japanese design, which also emphasized formal clarity, actually represented by a decorated lantern in the middle ground of J.E. Millais's 'Garden Scene,' 1849, that is, not altogether appropriately, reproduced on the dust jacket. Lastly, it is perhaps regrettable that reference was not made in the Introduction to the other side of the artistic intercourse between the two nations, as the architect K.F