

# Tiepolo, Henry James, and Edith Wharton

ROSELLA MAMOLI ZORZI

*Ca' Foscari University of Venice*

**T**HIS ESSAY EXAMINES the different reactions of Henry James and Edith Wharton to Giambattista Tiepolo (1696–1770), the only American novelists to write at any length on the painter in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their work reflects the changing and complex story of Tiepolo's fortune in the English-speaking world.

The story of the Venetian painter's reputation in the nineteenth century is actually quite complicated. Although connoisseurs and wealthy collectors never stopped buying Tiepolos,<sup>1</sup> the taste for Neoclassical works had begun to affect the painter's reputation while he was at the Spanish court in Madrid, where Raphael Mengs (1728–1779) had begun to eclipse him.<sup>2</sup> Leading Neoclassical figures such as Antonio Canova and Dominique Vivant Denon, however, owned some Tiepolos,<sup>3</sup> and famous eighteenth-century travelers such as Cochin or Goethe seemed to admire the artist, at least partly.<sup>4</sup> In the English-speaking world, Ruskin's mid-nineteenth-century anathema of what he called the "Grotesque Renaissance," which included the eighteenth century, literally led him to forbid *looking* at Tiepolo. In general, when James was writing in the 1870s, the previous century was still considered a century of decadence,<sup>5</sup> although French painters and critics did praise Tiepolo.<sup>6</sup> These artists and writers included Delacroix,<sup>7</sup> whom James greatly admired.

In 1872 Henry James (1843–1916) went to the opening of an exhibition of paintings, "in a new and handsome gallery, masked by one of the residential brown-stone fronts of Fifth Avenue."<sup>8</sup> This was the new Metropolitan Museum of Art, then in the Dodsworth Building, formerly Mr. Allen Dodsworth's Dancing Academy, at 681 Fifth Avenue, between Fifty-third and Fifty-fourth Streets. James, at the time a young man of twenty-eight, was to become famous for his novels—from *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881) to *The Wings of the Dove* (1902)—stories, critical essays, and prefaces to the New York edition (1907–9) of his works, but not for his plays. At this point, young James was also review-

ing exhibitions, and his articles were published in such journals as the *Atlantic Monthly*, the *North American Review*, *The Nation*, and later *The Galaxy*, the *New York Tribune*, and others.

The "1871 Purchase" exhibited 174 paintings, bought by William T. Blodgett,<sup>9</sup> a member of the executive committee of the new Museum, an abolitionist and the founder of the *Nation*. He had resigned from business because of ill health and had gone to Europe, where he bought three private collections for a particularly good price (\$116,180.27) because of the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War. He offered the works of art to the Museum. After some discussion—because Mr. Blodgett<sup>10</sup> had not consulted the trustees about his purchase—the collections were bought and exhibited to the public.

In writing about the opening, Henry James declared that if the exhibition had "no gem of the first magnitude," it had only a "few specimens" that were "decidedly valueless." He practically ignored the "half-dozen indifferent examples of archaic masters," which he never liked in any case. (Late in life James remembered going to see those "angular saints and seraphs . . . black Madonnas and obscure Bambinos"<sup>11</sup> as a young boy, in the evening, with his parents, at the Bryan Gallery of Christian Art, entrance 25 cents.)

James then described a Rubens with faint enthusiasm and was more inspired by a Jacob Jordaens, a Gaspard de Crayer (whose color he compared with that of Veronese), a few portraits by van Dyck, the "masterpiece of inelegant vigour," *Malle Babbe of Haarlem*<sup>12</sup> by Frans Hals, and several other Flemish paintings.

In the exhibition there were three small Tiepolos, of which he wrote:

An Italian master, whatever his individual worth, possesses this grace as a matter of course. . . . With how little genuine strength it may occasionally be allied, may be seen in the three small specimens of that tardy fruit of the Venetian efflorescence, G. B. Tiepolo. *Sincerity, and even sense, with this florid master of breezy drapery and fastidious pose, is on its last legs; but he retains the instinct of bril-*

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Figure 1. Giambattista Tiepolo (1696–1770). *The Investiture of Bishop Harold as Duke of Franconia*. Oil sketch, 71.8 x 51.4 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, 1871, 71.121

liant and elegant arrangement. He offers a desperately faint but not unmusical echo from the azure-hearted ceilings of Paul Veronese. Elegance for elegance, however, we prefer that of the small Sassoferrato, the usual Sanctissima Virgo . . . [my italics].<sup>13</sup>

The three Tiepolos James saw were the *Investiture of Bishop Harold as Duke of Franconia* (Figure 1),<sup>14</sup> the Metropolitan Museum's oil sketch for one of the great frescoes in Würzburg at the time known as the *Triumph of Ferdinand III*; the *Sacrifice of Abraham*, an oil sketch now attributed to Giandomenico,<sup>15</sup> not to Giambattista; and the *Crowning of Thorns*, later attributed to Jacopo Guarana.<sup>16</sup> The "small Sassoferrato" was a nineteenth-century copy.

James partly admired the elegance of the "three small specimens," but the true meaning of this passage is clear: he stressed Tiepolo's lack of "sincerity" ("Sincerity, and even sense . . . is on its last legs"). Even the metaphors alluding to flowering ("tardy fruit," "efflorescence," "florid") are not purely positive, as "efflorescence" refers not only to the actual flowering but also to its culmination, just before spoiling. If there is an echo of Veronese in Tiepolo, this is certainly "not unmusical" but it is also "desperately faint": what lies behind this comment regarding lack of truth or sincerity in art is clearly Ruskin's judgment, then still strongly influential, which linked the finest art to the religion of the society in which the artist was active.

For many years Ruskin's well-known *Stones of Venice* (1851–53) was regarded as the bible by all English-speaking travelers who went to Venice and contemplated its paintings. It was the leading guidebook for James when he had first visited Venice in 1869. We know from his letters to his brother William<sup>17</sup> that Ruskin's *Venetian Index*, which James followed almost verbatim, led him to discover Tintoretto and to admire Veronese and Titian, but it contained no comment on Tiepolo. James's views on Ruskin's greatness as an art critic are quite explicit over these early years, between 1869 and 1872.<sup>18</sup>

Ruskin's veto on the eighteenth century—as well as the seventeenth—was to prove influential. The only comment that Ruskin made about Tiepolo can be found in a late work, *Saint Mark's Rest* (1884), where he mentions the two paintings in Sant'Alvise.<sup>19</sup> James's lack of appreciation of Tiepolo in 1872 is not at all surprising, for Ruskin's diktat affected him and most other contemporary English and American writers and critics.

In the English-speaking world, moreover, Sir Joshua Reynolds's general strictures on Venetian art were not forgotten. The painter and critic actually loved Venetian painting, but he felt obliged to criticize it in his public

lectures. Referring mainly to Veronese, Reynolds wrote that Venetian art was "a tale told by an ideot [*sic*], full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."<sup>20</sup> Actually, Reynolds was criticizing the Venetian mannerism of the Cinquecento, not Tiepolo; but there was an undercurrent of suspicion that an art that "gave pleasure to the eye or the senses" was too sensual and morally lax for the English.

Therefore, because of Reynolds's influence and that of Ruskin later, and due to the general lack of appreciation for eighteenth-century works, Tiepolo was not well regarded in the nineteenth century. A change in taste would eventually take place also in the English-speaking world, but certainly more slowly than in French culture, as James's and Wharton's different reactions testify.

One blatant, pre-Ruskin example of "blindness" to Tiepolo is Washington Irving, who spent several months in Madrid and described at length his 1842 visit to the queen of Spain. Irving lingered and waited for the queen in the royal palace, and though he mentioned waiting in the royal halls, he did not seem to notice the great Tiepolo ceilings in the palace: the *Apotheosis of the Spanish Monarchy* (Figure 2) in the



Figure 2. Giambattista Tiepolo. *The Apotheosis of the Spanish Monarchy*. Fresco. Madrid, Palacio Real (photo: Palacio Real)

*saleta*, the *Glory of Spain* in the throne room, the *Apotheosis of Aeneas* in the guardroom.<sup>21</sup>

Another traveler, Samuel F. B. Morse, the American painter, now better known as the inventor of the telegraph, went to Venice in 1831. He spent several weeks there, but did not make a single reference to Tiepolo.<sup>22</sup> James De Veaux, another American painter, stayed more than three months in Venice in 1843, copying works by Veronese. He did visit the church of the Scalzi—where at the time Tiepolo's immense fresco ceiling of the *Transport of the Holy House of Loreto* (see Figure 3) could be seen—but he commented only on the “surfeit of marbles” in the interior<sup>23</sup> and did not even mention the ceiling.

After Ruskin's condemnation of anything that belonged to the “Grotesque Renaissance,”<sup>24</sup> Tiepolo was deliberately overlooked as a product of the forbidden eighteenth century, and thus nineteenth-century American travelers to Venice would ignore the gorgeous ceilings of the Scalzi, the Gesuati, the Ca' Rezzonico, or the Antony and Cleopatra cycle in the Palazzo Labia.

English-language guidebooks were of no help when it came to Tiepolo's frescoes: Murray's *Handbook* for 1860 did mention those in the Villa Valmarana ai Nani, in Vicenza, but made no reference to the ones in Palazzo Labia (the building was described as “much dilapidated”), while it listed carefully the paintings in the Manfrin collection.<sup>25</sup>

When Henry James wrote his review of the 1872 exhibition, New Yorkers had already had several opportunities to see Tiepolo, or at least what were described as Tiepolo paintings and etchings. As early as 1830 Richard Abraham, an Englishman whose London address was in Bond Street, had exhibited a “finished sketch” by Tiepolo, at the American Academy of Fine Arts. It was described as follows:

This beautiful cabinet specimen represents the presentation of banners, after a conquest, to one of the Roman emperors, who is seated on his throne under a triumphal arch, the grouping of figures on each side of which, is admirable; the foreshortening of the two musicians in the foreground is inimitable; the drawing is perfect, the casting of the draperies, the grandeur of the colouring, the distribution of the lights and shadows, and the bold, free, and spirited pencilling is not inferior to P. Veronese.<sup>26</sup>

Which painting this may have been (a “finished sketch”)—no size is indicated—is open to conjecture, but the description allows us to identify the subject, the *Investiture of Bishop Harold* (see Figure 1).<sup>27</sup> Whether it was a copy or the oil sketch that the Metropolitan Museum later acquired with the 1871 Purchase does

not seem to be documented. The exhibition that included it ran from March 20 to November 20, 1830, and this success was apparently due also to a scandal: the somewhat shady Mr. Abraham was put in jail in New York because he had passed off copies as originals. After making “some compromise,” he was allowed to exhibit the collection he had brought from London.<sup>28</sup>

In 1874 and 1876 several supposed Tiepolos were shown in the Metropolitan Museum: a *Virgin with Saint Joseph*, belonging to a Mrs. Cooledge [*sic*], and a *Saint Helen Conducting Constantine to Heaven*, belonging to a Mrs. W. Tilden.<sup>29</sup> It is difficult to identify these as paintings, drawings, etchings, or copies.<sup>30</sup> One can only surmise that the name “Tiepolo” was known by some Americans, because a few works were attributed to him. However, Tiepolo's oeuvre did not have much impact on the American imagination, providing no source material for novels or stories, as had the *Beatrice Cenci* by the “divine Guido.” No Tiepolo really impressed Henry James; the writer did not base any story on a Tiepolo painting, although he later wrote about the artist.

In an 1892 story, “Collaboration,” as noted by Adeline Tintner,<sup>31</sup> James used a Tiepolo ceiling to embellish the Paris studio of a painter (the narrator of the story). The studio is described as a center of cosmopolitan sophistication:

The air is international as only Parisian air can be; women, I surmise, think they look well in it; they come also because they fancy they are doing something bohemian. . . . the old heraldic cushions on the divans, embossed with rusty gold, are favourable to expansion and contraction—that of course of contracting parties—and the Italian brocade on the walls appeals to one's highest feelings. Music makes its home there—though I confess I am not quite the master of that house, and when it is going on in a truly receptive hush I enjoy the way my company leans back and gazes through the thin smoke of cigarettes up at the distant Tiepolo in the almost palatial ceiling. I make sure the piano, the tobacco and the tea are all of the best.<sup>32</sup>

As it is seen through a haze of smoke, the Tiepolo ceiling hardly receives its due. It is used by the writer merely to impart the atmosphere of a sophisticated and modish world. The story centers on the suspect “collaboration” of the painter and a musician to write something that lies outside the expected and genteel rules of society, but it is clear that it is their artistic achievement that really counts. However, the title has also a negative nuance, as the protagonists are a French painter and a German musician who cooperate (“collaborate”) while their patriotic friends deplore their association because of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870.<sup>33</sup>



Figure 3. Giambattista Tiepolo. *The Miracle of the Holy House of Loreto*. Oil sketch, 124 x 85 cm. Venice, Gallerie dell'Accademia (photo: Gallerie dell'Accademia)

In a preface, published in 1908, James recalled being in Venice and writing *A London Life*:

I remember being not long before [1888] at work upon it, remember in fact beginning it, in one of the wonderful faded back rooms of an old Venetian palace, *a room with a pompous Tiepolo ceiling* [Figure 4], and walls of pale-green damask, slightly shredded and patched, which, on a warm morning, looked into the shade of a court where a high outer staircase, strikingly bold, yet strikingly relaxed, held together one scarcely knew how; where Gothic windows

broke out, on discolored blanks of wall, at quite arbitrary levels, and where above all the strong Venetian voice, full of history and humanity and waking perpetual echoes, seemed to say more in ten warm words, of whatever tone, than twenty pages of one's cold prose [my italics].<sup>34</sup>

I have quoted this passage at length because I think it reveals vividly James's fascination with Venetian art, architecture, and history. The palace, the Palazzo Barbaro at S. Vidal on the Grand Canal, was the home of Daniel and Ariana Curtis, where the novelist was a



Figure 4. Giambattista Tiepolo. *The Glorification of the Barbaro Family*. Oil on canvas, 243.8 x 466.7 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Anonymous Gift, in memory of Oliver H. Payne, 1923, 23.128

frequent guest from 1887 onward. The palace still stands, with its strikingly bold yet strikingly relaxed open-air stone staircase, Gothic windows, and echoes of the history of the Barbaro family, which gave the palace its name and splendor, with its stuccowork and the eighteenth-century Piazzetta and Ricci in the salon portrayed by Sargent. It was the “germ” from which James derived his imaginary creation of Palazzo Leporelli, where Milly Theale, in *The Wings of the Dove*, decides to live and die.

What concerns us here is the power of Venice on James’s imagination and the reference to the “pompous Tiepolo ceiling” that he remembered. However, this ceiling was no longer in situ when James visited, as it had been sold in 1866,<sup>35</sup> not by the Curtises, who bought the palace in December 1885, but by former owners. The sale of the Barbaro and its contents was a fate shared by many Venetian palaces in the course of the nineteenth century, after the fall of the Venetian Republic. For example, the large-scale Roman-history subjects that are at the Metropolitan Museum and at the Hermitage came from the ballroom of Palazzo Dolfin. They were also sold in 1870.<sup>36</sup>

James does not seem to have realized that the Tiepolo ceiling painting, known as the *Apotheosis of the Barbaro Family* (now called *Fame, Power, Nobility*),<sup>37</sup> was not the real thing, but simply a copy of the one that had been sold. What matters here, however, is the

definition of the painting. In James’s vocabulary “pompous” was hardly a positive adjective, and it is a word to which we will soon return. James’s attitude toward Tiepolo at the beginning of the century does not seem to have changed much from his writings of some thirty years earlier, even if his appreciation of the eighteenth century, and of such painters as Longhi, had undergone a revision.

What is somewhat surprising is not James’s doubt of Tiepolo’s “sincerity” in 1872 but his continued reservations about the ceiling—the pompous Tiepolo ceiling—as late as the early 1900s, when Ruskin’s views were less important and when Tiepolo was admired after the celebrations of the 1896 bicentenary.<sup>38</sup>

Despite James’s fascination with Venetian architecture and painting, Tiepolo never worked on the writer’s imagination as had Titian’s *Sacred and Profane Love* in “Traveling Companions,”<sup>39</sup> Veronese’s *Queen of Shebah Before King Solomon* and Bronzino’s *Lucrezia Panciaticchi* in *The Wings of the Dove*, or the great cycles of his beloved Tintoretto throughout his oeuvre.

Tiepolo, with his breezy beauty, his bare-breasted queens and nymphs and goddesses, seems to have been overly joyous and sensuous for James’s Puritan imagination. If James’s stories and novels concerning art and artists represent an imposing contribution to a genre, Tiepolo is not an influential figure in his work.

As mentioned above, “Collaboration” came out in 1892, a time of a renewed interest in Tiepolo. It is tempting to link James’s story to an important event that took place in Paris—just a little later, 1893<sup>40</sup>—but which is worth mentioning in regard to Tiepolo’s standing. At that time, N lie Jacquemart, a well-known portrait painter, who had married  douard Andr , a wealthy banker, bought several Tiepolo frescoes and moved them to their new mansion on boulevard Haussmann. The Andr s were offered, and bought, the frescoes of Villa Contarini at La Mira.<sup>41</sup> Their subject, and its connection with French history, seemed ideal for these buyers: the fresco cycle represents King Henry III’s arrival at the villa, on his way back from Poland in 1574. The king is shown on the steps of the villa, against a background of boats on the Brenta, as Procuratore Contarini (the owner of the mansion) welcomes the king. In the original arrangement of the frescoes, a balustrade had been painted all around the ceiling, from which the painted guests looked down to admire the royal visitor. Because of the French subject, Henri de Chennevi res, writing in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* in 1896, praised the Andr s as benefactors of France. Of course, de Chennevi res also fully realized the artistic importance of the purchase,<sup>42</sup> since he was one of the first critics to relaunch the cult of Tiepolo.

As noted earlier, the real turning of the tide by English-speaking writers came late, after fin de si cle theories of art for art’s sake had spread, when critics reacted against Ruskin’s theories, and there was a general reevaluation of the eighteenth century. In an 1893 essay John Addington Symonds (1840–1893), the author of *The History of the Renaissance in Italy* (1875–86), was the first English writer to analyze a Tiepolo in detail: the *Last Communion of Saint Lucy* (Figure 5), in the church of SS. Apostoli.<sup>43</sup> Among other things he raised the issue of the response by non-Catholic viewers when confronted with scenes of gory martyrdom, a point that Mrs. Anna Jameson, quite famous as an art critic in the nineteenth century, had also made.<sup>44</sup>

One American writer had proclaimed as early as 1878 “Tiepelo [*sic*] is my artist,”<sup>45</sup> but one cannot say that this declaration led to anything, such as essays or works of fiction based on Tiepolo. This writer, the pretended “innocent abroad,” Mark Twain, was much less “innocent” and ignorant than he wanted to appear, as is quite clear from his journals, in which it is evident that he had read Ruskin.

Edith Wharton (1862–1937) is the first American writer to admire Tiepolo and allow all the beauty and joy of his world to enter her imagination. As regards Tiepolo, Wharton is ahead of James, freer in her

appreciation, freer also than Symonds, whom she had read. Wharton’s admiration for Tiepolo must also be placed within the reevaluation of Tiepolo mentioned above and within the more restricted but highly innovative circle of her friends. Wharton, a friend of Vernon Lee, as was James, had read her book on the eighteenth century and was also influenced by other works by German art historians such as that by Cornelius Gurlitt, who enthusiastically described not only the Villa Valmarana but the church of the Scalzi, the Rezzonico and Labia palaces,<sup>46</sup> and by the 1898 guidebook *Gsell-Fels* (in Dr. Meyer’s *Reiseb cher—Ober Italien*), in which the Scalzi ceiling is discussed in detail.<sup>47</sup> Ruskin’s harsh condemnation does not seem



Figure 5. Giambattista Tiepolo. *The Last Communion of Saint Lucy*. Oil on canvas, 222 x 101 cm. Venice, SS. Apostoli (photo: B hm)

to have penetrated the German world.

Wharton was also a close friend of Mary and Bernard Berenson's. The writer may have read the critic's 1896 essay,<sup>48</sup> and one might imagine his possible influence on her. However, this seems unlikely because when Wharton and the Berensons met in March 1903 in Florence, they initially loathed each other, and they became friends after 1909.<sup>49</sup> Only at a later date did she acknowledge learning from Berenson.

Berenson's admiration of Tiepolo was somewhat qualified, as he noted "the lack of that simplicity and candour which never failed Paolo [Veronese]."<sup>50</sup> He lamented that Tiepolo showed his audience such a "pompous and haughty" word.<sup>51</sup> The word "pompous" is the same word that James had used to describe the Palazzo Barbaro ceiling. Among the many purchases Berenson suggested to Isabella Stewart Gardner, he never mentioned a Tiepolo, although he did write to her about Mme André's *Arrival of Henry III*: "Her finest possession is a really beautiful staircase which she has built to set off the gorgeous Tiepolo frescoes that she got from the Villa Pisani."<sup>52</sup>

If Berenson modified his limited appreciation of Tiepolo in later years, Edith Wharton showed no reservations from the very beginning. In "Picturesque Milan" (first published in 1903) Wharton began her essay with an overt "defense" of the city as worth seeing, defying the "conspiracy of silence" caused by Ruskin and his followers. Wharton had read and loved Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* and *Mornings in Florence*, given to her by her father in 1881<sup>53</sup> but had reacted to the critic's views:

[Milan] is rich in all that makes the indigenous beauty of Italy, as opposed to the pseudo-Gothicisms, the trans-Alpine points and pinnacles, which Ruskin taught a submissive generation of art critics to regard as the typical expression of the Italian spirit. The guidebooks, long accustomed to draw their Liebig's extract of art from the pages of this school of critics, have kept the tradition alive by dwelling only on the monuments which conform to perpendicular ideas, and by apologetic allusions to the "monotony" and "regularity" of Milan—as though endeavouring to placate the traveller for its not looking like Florence or Siena!<sup>54</sup>

In this essay on Milan, Wharton mentioned some of the critics who helped her shake off Ruskin's hatred for the "Grotesque Renaissance" and appreciate the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Among the critics she mentions are J. W. Anderson, Ebe, and Gurlitt again,<sup>55</sup> Franchetti (on Bernini), and "the recent volume on Tiepolo in the Knackfuss series of *Künstler-Monographien*."<sup>56</sup>

When Wharton went to see the wonderful Tiepolo fresco in the Palazzo Clerici, she described it as follows:

Yet Milan is not dependent on the seasons for this mid-summer magic of light and colour. For dark days it keeps its store of warmth and brightness hidden behind palace walls and in the cold dusk of church and cloister. Summer in all its throbbing heat has been imprisoned by Tiepolo in the great ceiling of the Palazzo Clerici: that revel of gods and demigods, and mortals of all lands and races, who advance with linked hands out of the rosy vapours of dawn.<sup>57</sup>

In this short description Wharton seems to capture all the magic of Tiepolo's art, and wholly to appreciate the gods, demigods, and mortals of all lands and races without any concern about Tiepolo's "falsity" or possible immorality.

In Milan, Rome, and Venice, Wharton looked at art with a fresh eye. She even theorized on the traveler's need to renew his perception of art, often over-described in guidebooks, to shed new light on hackneyed subjects. She explored this topic in the final essay of *Italian Backgrounds*, describing the planes of "devotional pictures of the early Renaissance" as follows: "The foreground is conventional. Its personages—saints, angels, and Holy Family—are the direct descendants of a long line of similar figures."<sup>58</sup> She adds that the background, with the landscapes of the Lombard plains, the Tuscan hills, or the "fantastic serrated . . . Friulian Alps" is the "real picture."

She finds that Italy is also divided into planes: "The foreground is the property of the guide-book and of its product, the mechanical sight-seer; the background, that of the dawdler, the dreamer, and the serious student of Italy."<sup>59</sup> Wharton clearly belonged to the group of dawdlers or "passionate pilgrims." To enjoy the foreground, where "paintings, statues and buildings" have "stiffened into symbols," "one must let in the open air of an observation detached from tradition."<sup>60</sup>

Tiepolo, in Venice, is seen as part of the city's background, like all the eighteenth century:

In Venice the foreground is Byzantine-Gothic, with an admixture of early Renaissance. It extends from the church of Torcello to the canvasses of Tintoretto. This foreground has been celebrated in literature with a vehemence and profusion which have projected it still farther into the public consciousness, and more completely obscured the fact that there is another Venice, the Venice of the eighteenth century.

Wharton clearly had in mind Ruskin's forceful prose celebrating Tintoretto and his campaign to preserve Tiepolo's paintings. When Ruskin started writing





Figure 6. Giambattista Tiepolo. *The Meeting of Antony and Cleopatra*. Fresco. Venice, Palazzo Labia (photo: Böhm)



Figure 7. Giambattista Tiepolo. *The Course of the Sun*, detail showing Maenads and Satyrs. Fresco. Milan, Palazzo Clerici (photo: Palazzo Clerici)

about the great Tintoretto of the Scuola di San Rocco in 1846, they were sadly neglected and doomed to destruction because of the rain that seeped in through the roof and onto the canvases themselves.

Wharton was not only able to enjoy Tiepolo's frescoes, but she could also fully appreciate the spirit of eighteenth-century Venice:

It is instructive to note that the Venice of that day [the eighteenth century] had no galleries and no museums. Travellers did not go there to be edified, but to be amused; and one may fancy with what relief a young nobleman on the grand tour, sated with the marbles of Rome and the canvasses of Parma and Bologna, turned aside for a moment to a city where enjoyment was the only art and life the only object of study. But while travellers were flocking to Venice to see its carnival and gaming-rooms, its public festivals and private casini, a generation of artists were at work brushing in the gay background of the scene. . . . Longhena and his pupils were the architects of this bright *mise en scène*, Tiepolo was its great scene-painter. . . .<sup>61</sup>

It is as if Wharton expressed in her appreciation of eighteenth-century Venice<sup>62</sup> a *joie de vivre* that she

herself had rediscovered, finding her true identity as a writer, escaping from the stifling conventions of the New York society she was to portray so bitterly and accurately the following year in *The House of Mirth* (1904) and later in *The Age of Innocence* (1920). It is interesting that Lily Bart, in *The House of Mirth*, chooses not to dress up as Tiepolo's Cleopatra, in the much-discussed scene of the tableaux vivants, but rather as Reynolds's Mrs. Lloyd.<sup>63</sup>

One seems to sense a sort of personal identification with a world where freedom and enjoyment were celebrated, a world that did not exclude sexual and sensual relationships, a world that the dark and oppressive atmosphere of the Victorian nineteenth century could not tolerate or admire.

Wharton was able to appreciate the Gesuati ceiling, the wonderful Palazzo Labia frescoes, and the Scalzi ceiling, the one De Veaux had not bothered to look at:

On the soaring vault of the Scalzi . . . the great painter of atmosphere, the first of plein-airists, was required to depict the transportation of the Holy House from Palestine to Loreto. That Tiepolo, with his love of ethereal distances, and of cloud-like hues melting into thin air, should have accepted the task of representing a stone house borne through the sky by angels, shows a rare sense of mastery; that he achieved the feat without disaster justifies the audacity of the attempt. Tiepolo was above all a lover of open spaces. He liked to suspend his fluttering groups in great pellucid reaches of sky, and the vast ceiling of the Scalzi gave him an exceptional opportunity for the development of this effect. The result is that the angels, whirling along the Virgin's house with a vehemence which makes it seem a mere feather in the rush of their flight, appear to be sweeping through measureless heights of air above an unroofed building. The architectural propriety of such a *trompe l'oeil* is not only open to criticism but perhaps quite indefensible; yet, given the demand for this particular illusion, who but Tiepolo could have produced it [see Figure 3]?<sup>64</sup>

Wharton's description renders the beauty of a ceiling that now exists only in words because it was destroyed by an Austrian bomb in 1915. She recalled it again much later, when, in *The Glimpses of the Moon* (1922), Wharton's male protagonist meets a young woman under the "celestial vortex" of the Scalzi church ceiling.<sup>65</sup>

Wharton noted similar enchanting aerial effects in the ceiling of the Gesuati at the Zattere, where she noticed that guidebooks likened the Virgin Mary to "a noble Venetian lady of the painter's day." "No doubt she does. It is impossible to form an intelligent estimate of Tiepolo's genius without remembering that the Catholicism of his time was a religion of *bon ton*, which aimed to make its noble devotees as much at



Figure 8. Giambattista Tiepolo. *The Course of the Sun*, detail showing the chariot of Apollo. Fresco. Milan, Palazzo Clerici (photo: Palazzo Clerici)

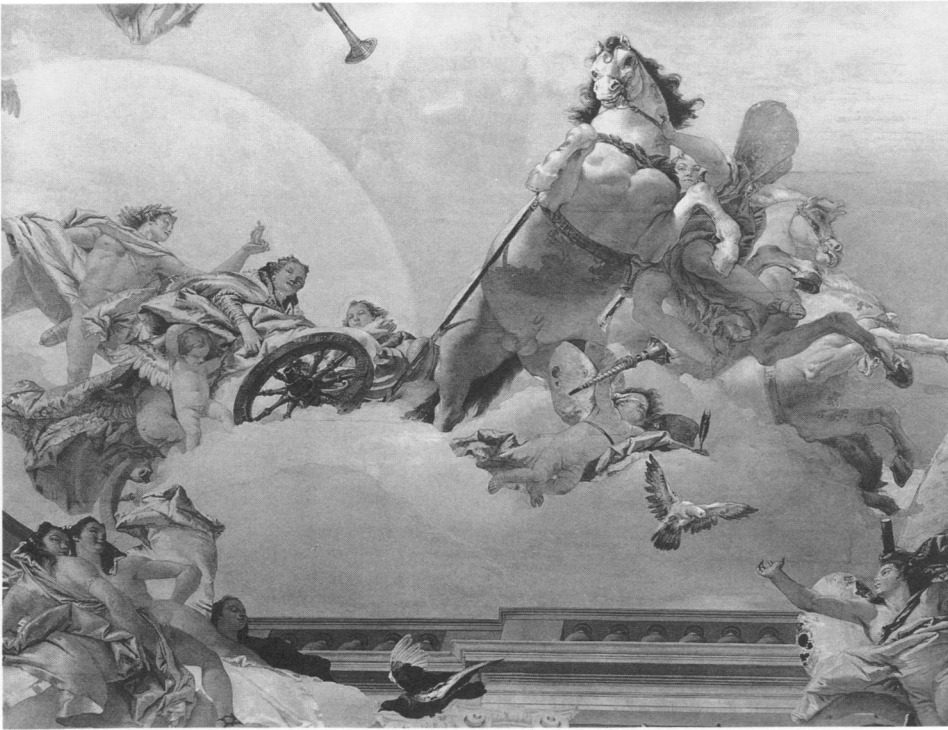


Figure 9. Giambattista Tiepolo. *Wedding Allegory*, detail. Fresco. Venice, Museo del Settecento Veneziano, Ca' Rezzonico (photo: Cacco)

home in church as in the drawing-room.”<sup>66</sup> Yet, “by sheer force of technique,” Wharton continued, Tiepolo “contrived to impart to his great religious pictures a glow of the supernatural splendour” that Dante’s *Paradise* might well have described.

Moving on to discuss Tiepolo’s secular paintings, Wharton emphasized his special gift in depicting “worldly pageants.” In the Palazzo Labia the painter found “an unequalled opportunity for the exercise of this side of his talent.” And:

Here, in the lofty salon of the piano nobile, he painted the loves of Antony and Cleopatra transposed in the key of modern patrician life. He first covered the walls with an architectural improvisation of porticoes, loggias and colonnades, which might have been erected to celebrate the “triumph” of some magnificent Este or Gonzaga. In this splendid setting he placed two great scenes: Cleopatra melting the pearl, and Antony and Cleopatra landing from their barge; while every gallery, balcony and flight of steps is filled with courtiers, pages and soldiers, with dwarfs and blackamoors holding hounds in leash, and waiting-maids and lacqueys leaning down to see the pageant [see Figure 6].<sup>67</sup>

It is interesting that Wharton admired the decorative side of the Labia frescoes, but did not stop there: Cleopatra is immediately referred to as “Royal Egypt,” in Shakespeare’s words, and it is his tragedy that comes to Wharton’s mind when looking at the frescoes. If she describes in splendid prose the richness of Tiepolo’s

figures and gowns, she stresses how “one may recall Shakespeare under these rouged and powdered Venetians”; in other words, the beauty of the paintings does not prevail over the dramatic perception of the story as painted by Tiepolo: “Still more Shakespearean is the scene of the pearl. Cleopatra, enthroned in state at the banqueting table, lifts one hand to drop the jewel into her goblet, and in her gesture and her smile are summed up all the cruel graces of the ‘false soul of Egypt.’”

Whatever “falsity” could be attributed to the artist, it is now a question of how he consciously uses it to tell a tragic and powerful royal story. For Wharton, Tiepolo is “the direct descendant of Titian and Veronese” and of “the radiant majesty of the Venetian cinquecento.” Her admiration of Tiepolo knows no bounds. She wrote on his paintings in *Italian Backgrounds*, documented some of her impressions in *Italian Villas and Their Gardens* and in her first novel. When she went to Venice, she stopped en route at Stra to see the Villa Pisani frescoes, and later wrote about its “most riotously splendid ceiling.”<sup>68</sup>

In *The Valley of Decision* (1902),<sup>69</sup> a book that is a rag-bag of themes and forms—a novel as historical as it is political—the story is set in eighteenth-century Italy. The book was very successful, but Henry James was right when he concluded his appreciation of the novel by telling Wharton, “Do New York!” However, in this long and rather clumsy first novel, she seems to find her true, creative voice when describing an imaginary



Figure 10. Giambattista Tiepolo. *The Course of the Sun*, detail showing the dromedary. Fresco. Milan, Palazzo Clerici (photo: Palazzo Clerici)



Figure 11.  
Giambattista Tiepolo.  
Detail of *The Meeting of  
Cleopatra and Antony* in  
Figure 6 (photo:  
Böhm)

Tiepolo. Although Wharton had prepared herself carefully by reading a number of works, including Vernon Lee's *Studies of the Eighteenth-Century in Italy* and books she had borrowed from Charles Eliot Norton, such as significant eighteenth-century memoirs by Goldoni, Lorenzo da Ponte, and Casanova,<sup>70</sup> her rendering of period Venice is fairly stereotyped.<sup>71</sup> This was not applicable to Wharton's description of an imaginary Tiepolo fresco in the villa where her protagonists meet. The prose suddenly seems to soar, like a flying angel in a Tiepolo ceiling:

When the curtain fell the Procuratoressa led the company to the circular saloon which, as in most villas of the Venetian mainland, formed the central point of the house. . . . His [Odo's] eye . . . was soon drawn . . . to the ceiling which overarched the dancers with what seemed like an Olympian revel reflected in the sunset clouds. Over the gilt balustrade surmounting the cornice lolled the figures of fauns, bacchantes, nereids and tritons, hovered over by a cloud of amorini blown like rose-leaves across a rosy sky, while in the center of the dome Apollo burst in his chariot through the mists of dawn, escorted by a fantastic procession of the human races. These alien subjects of the sun—a fur-clad Laplander, a turbaned figure on a dromedary, a blackamoor and a plumed American Indian—were in turn surrounded by a rout of Maenads and Silenuses, whose flushed advance was checked by the breaking of cool green waves, through



Figure 12. Giambattista Tiepolo. *Wedding Allegory*. Fresco. Venice, Museo del Settecento Veneziano, Ca' Rezzonico (photo: Ca' Rezzonico)



Figure 13. Giambattista Tiepolo. *Apollo and the Four Continents* (modello for fresco, Residenz, Würzburg). Oil on canvas, 185.4 x 139.4 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrightsman, 1977, 1977.1.3

which boys wreathed with coral and seaweed disported themselves among shoals of flashing dolphins. It was as if the genius of Pleasure had poured all the riches of his inexhaustible realm on the heads of the revellers below.<sup>72</sup>

In this description—where one cannot identify a specific Tiepolo fresco—many impressions of different frescoes have acted on the writer's imagination: the plumed Indian, the gilded cornice, the Maenads and Satyrs (Figure 7) of Palazzo Clerici and of Villa Pisani at Stra; the chariot of Apollo bursting through the mist in Palazzo Clerici (Figure 8) and Ca' Rezzonico (Figure 9); the dromedary (Figure 10), the waves, and the coral of Palazzo Clerici; the blackamoor of Palazzo Labia (Figure 11) and Villa Valmarana. But one can also think of other famous frescoes by Tiepolo: the chariot in the monumental Würzburg fresco, *Apollo Leading Beatrix of Burgundy to the Genius of the German Nation*, the plumed Indian and the dromedary in the allegories of the four continents (Olympus and the Continents, see Figure 13), also in Würzburg,<sup>73</sup> not to mention the usual *amorini* (Figure 12) and blackamoors.

In *The Valley of Decision* Wharton seems to paint, in words, her own personal Tiepolo fresco, a pure product of her imagination, a verbal firework inspired by Tiepolo's visual fireworks.<sup>74</sup>

## NOTES

1. See Francis Haskell, "Tiepolo e gli artisti del secolo XIX," in *Sensibilità e razionalità nel settecento*, Vittore Branca, ed. (Florence, 1967) II, pp. 481–497. In the 1850s the Rothschilds bought a large fresco, described first by Henri de Chennevières in *Les Tiepolo* (Paris, 1898), apparently from Palazzo Vecchia in Vicenza and moved it to their Château de Ferrières. See George Knox, *Giambattista and Domenico Tiepolo: A Study and Catalogue Raisonné of the Chalk Drawings* (Oxford, 1980) I, p. 24. I am grateful to George Knox for having called my attention to English and American collectors. For the various albums of the Cheney collection, bought between 1842 and 1852, see George Knox, "Description and Provenance of the Cheney Album," in *Catalogue of the Tiepolo Drawings in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (London, 1975) pp. 3–9. James Jackson Jarves owned the drawings *Five Angels* (now in the MMA) and *Three Allegorical Figures on the Clouds*; see nn.1 and 92 in Bernard Aikema, *Tiepolo and His Circle, Drawings in American Collections* (Cambridge, Mass., 1996).

2. Antonio Morassi, *G. B. Tiepolo* (London, 1955) p. 3. See also Keith Christiansen on Mengs and Neoclassicism, "L' 'infiammata poetica fantasia' di Giambattista Tiepolo," in *1696–1996 Giambattista Tiepolo* (Milan, 1996) p. 275, and Terisio Pignatti, "Giambattista Tiepolo: Life and Art," in Terisio Pignatti and Filippo Pedrocco, *Giambattista Tiepolo: Venetian Itineraries* (Venice, 1996) p. 39.

3. See Haskell, "Tiepolo e gli artisti."

4. Charles-Nicolas Cochin admired the Tiepolos in the Gesuati,

although with some reservation (p. 88/141); he praised the "manière" of Tiepolo at the Scalzi but found "la couleur . . . dure, maniérée et monotone, et les ombres . . . trop égales" (p. 117/148); in the comparison between Tiepolo and Piazzetta he praised the former: "le plus beau génie et la couleur la plus agréable, la plus grande facilité et le pinceau le plus flatteur" (p. 159/159), *Voyage d'Italie; ou, Recueil de notes sur les ouvrages de peinture et de sculpture qu'on voit dans les principales villes d'Italie* (Geneva, 1972 repr. of 1758 ed.). In 1786 Goethe wrote: "Heut sah ich die Villa Valmarana die Tiepolo dekoriert und allen seinen Tugenden und Fehlern freyen Lauf gelassen hat. Der hohe Styl gelang ihm nicht wie die natürliche, und in diesem letzten sind köstliche Sachen da, im Ganzen aber als Dekoration gar fröhlich und brav," in *Sämliche Werke*. II. Abteilung, K. Eibl et al., eds., *Italien im Schatten der Revolution. Briefe, Tagebücher und Gespräche von 3. September 1786 bis 12. Juni 1794* (Frankfurt, 1991) p. 72. Goethe also admired the Gesuati ceiling, although, as Adriano Mariuz points out, he did not distinguish between the two hands of Giambattista and Giandomenico but he did detect two styles: "con acume critico poco comune distingueva due stili: conferendo la palma a quello 'naturale' egli riconosceva implicitamente la maggiore modernità di Giandomenico," in Adriano Mariuz, *Giandomenico Tiepolo* (Venice, 1971) p. 54; see chap. 1 on the relationship with Neoclassicism.

5. In *The Handbook of Painting* based on Franz T. Kugler, rewritten by Gustav F. Waagen, and then Joseph A. Crowe, a popular handbook with English-speaking readers, book 6 of the second volume (in the 1874 edition) is significantly called "The Decline of Art, 1700–1810." But in Venice admiration of Tiepolo never died out; see Antonio Berti, *Elogio di Gio. Batta Tiepolo* (Venice, 1856) and a few years later the work of Urbani de Gheltoff (1879).

6. Hippolyte Taine wrote with mixed feelings on Tiepolo: "le dernier des décorateurs de plafonds, Tiepolo, est un maniériste qui, dans ses tableaux religieux, cherche le mélodrame, et qui, de parti pris, éparpille ses personnages, de manière à donner à ses scènes l'aspect d'un volcan en éruption," *Voyage en Italie* (Paris, 1914) II, p. 301. A few years earlier, Théophile Gautier, who found the style of the Scalzi church horrible, actually praised the interior: "les plafonds à fresque, de Tiepoletto et Lazzarini, d'un ton gai, léger, clair, où dominant le rose et l'azur, conviendraient merveilleusement à une salle de bal ou de théâtre. Cela devait être charmant, plein de petits abbés poudrés et de belles dames, au temps de Casanova et du Cardinal de Bernis, pendant une messe en musique de Porpora, avec les violons et les chœurs de la Fenice," *Voyage en Italie* (Paris, 1876) p. 262. We should also remember the Goncourts' study of the Settecento, *L'Art du dix-huitième siècle* (1873).

7. "Il y a des nouveaux Tiepolo qui sont des merveilles" wrote Delacroix to his friend Pierret (1832–34), *Correspondance générale d'Eugène Delacroix, 1804–1837* (Paris, 1935) I, p. 354.

8. Henry James, "The Metropolitan Museum's 1871 Purchase," in *The Painter's Eye. Notes and Essays on the Pictorial Arts*, John Sweeney, ed. (London, 1956) p. 52 ("Unsigned notes. Originally printed in the *Atlantic Monthly*, June 1872," *ibid.*, p. 5).

9. William T. Blodgett "also collected American and European art. He had made history in 1859 by paying \$10,000 for Frederic Church's *Heart of the Andes*." He offered the 174 pictures he had bought in Europe for \$116,180.27; see Howard Hibbard, *The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1980) p. 9. He was helped in the 1871 purchase by John Taylor Johnston, president of the MMA. Johnston was also a collector and opened his house to the public on Thursday afternoons, see Winifred Howe, *A History of the Metropolitan*



*Museum of Art* (New York, 1913) I, pp. 134–136.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

11. Henry James, *A Small Boy and Others*, F. W. Dupee, ed. (Princeton, 1983) p. 152.

12. In both the *Atlantic Monthly* and the book, the title is *Hille Bobbe of Haarlem*; see James, *Painter's Eye*, p. 55.

13. Henry James, "The 1871 Purchase," p. 58. James goes on to praise Teniers and other Flemish painters, quoting "two examples of that forlorn straggler in the march of Venetian art, Francesco Guardi. A Tiepolo of landscape we may call this gentleman" (p. 65). In contemporary newspaper reviews Tiepolo was never mentioned, but there was general approbation for the Flemish painters. There was also a constant appreciation of the "authenticity" of the collection, guaranteed by Étienne Le Roy, of the Brussels Museum, who had actually helped Mr. Blodgett in the purchase.

14. Filippo Pedrocchi and Massimo Gemin, *Giambattista Tiepolo: I dipinti. Opera completa* (Venice, 1993) cat. no. 414a.

15. Federico Zeri, with Elizabeth Gardner, *Italian Paintings: A Catalogue of the Collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York, 1973) II, p. 66. See also Harry B. Wehle, *A Catalogue of Italian, Spanish, and Byzantine Paintings* (New York, 1940) pp. 282, 288, where the two paintings are specifically identified as part of the 1871 purchase. The *Sacrifice of Abraham* came from the collection of the duchesse de Berry.

16. As for the Sassoferrato and the "third Tiepolo," I owe the identifications to the kindness of Keith Christiansen, curator of European Paintings at the MMA: the Sassoferrato of the 1871 purchase, from the Castelbarco collection, was sold by the Museum at the Parke Bernet Galleries (June 7, 1956). The third Tiepolo, attributed later to Guarana, was sold at Sotheby Parke Bernet on Jan. 8, 1981; again, I am grateful to Keith Christiansen for this information.

17. Henry James, *Letters 1843–1875*, Leon Edel, ed. (Cambridge, Mass. 1974), and Leon Edel, *Henry James. The Untried Years* (Philadelphia/New York, 1953) pp. 301–302; Viola Hopkins Winner, *Henry James and the Visual Arts* (Charlottesville, Va., 1970) pp. 19–21, 28–30; Henry James, *Lettere da Palazzo Barbaro*, Rosella Mamoli Zorzi, ed. (Milan, 1989).

18. See, for example, the beginning of the essay "An English Critic of French Painting, 1868," where James shows he is quite conscious of the influence of Ruskin and the reactions against him, *The Painter's Eye*, pp. 33–34. On the influence of Ruskin in the United States, see Roger B. Stein, *John Ruskin and Aesthetic Thought in America 1840–1900* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967).

19. Ruskin described, and took issue with, the ceiling of the church of S. Alvise, and also with its two Tiepolos (*Ascent to the Calvary* and the *Flagellation*):

[The roof] of S. Alvise is little more than a caricature of the mean passion for perspective, which was the first effect of "science" joining itself with art. And under it, by strange coincidence, there are also two notable pieces of plausible modern sentiment,—celebrated pieces by Tiepolo. He is virtually the beginner of Modernism: these two pictures of his are exactly like what a first-rate Parisian Academy student would do, setting himself to conceive the sentiment of Christ's flagellation, after having read unlimited quantities of George Sand and Dumas. It is well that they chance to be here: look thoroughly at them and their dramatic chiaroscuro for a little time, observing that no face is without some expression of crime or pain, and that everything is always put dark against light, or light against dark. Then return to the entrance

of the church, where under the gallery, frameless and neglected, hang eight old pictures" (John Ruskin, *St. Mark's Rest: The History of Venice* [Sunnyside, Kent, 1887] p. 30).

20. Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, Robert R. Wark, ed. (New Haven/London, 1959) IV, p. 64.

21. Washington Irving, *Letters III, 1839–1845*, Ralph M. Aderman, Herbert L. Kleinfeld, and Jennifer S. Banks, eds. (Boston, 1982) pp. 269–273.

22. Samuel F. B. Morse, *Letters and Journals*, Edward L. Morse, ed. (Boston, 1914; repr., 1972) I, pp. 269–273.

23. James De Veaux, letter in Robert W. Gibbes, *A Memoir of James De Veaux* (Columbia, S.C., 1846) p. 181. De Veaux died of tuberculosis in Rome, in 1844, at the age of 33.

24. See John Ruskin, *The Stones of Venice* (London, 1925) III, chap. 3, which has the same title.

25. Murray's *Handbook for Travellers in Northern Italy* (London, 1860) p. 359. It describes at length the church of the Scalzi, but there is no mention of the Tiepolo ceiling (*ibid.*, p. 371). The 1879 Baedeker (*Italy. Handbook for Travellers. Northern Italy*) does not mention the Tiepolos in Ca' Rezzonico, the Scalzi, or Udine, while it mentions Tiepolo in the Palazzo Labia. The 1899 edition, instead, refers to Tiepolo's ceiling in the Scalzi. Mueller's *Venice: Her Art Treasures and Historical Associations*, published in Venice (1885), in English, mentions the Palazzo Labia frescoes, but makes no reference to the Scalzi ceiling (in spite of the detailed description of the interior marbles and statues on p. 159), and there is no mention of the Tiepolos in the Ca' Rezzonico (p. 144). When Pen Browning bought the whole Palazzo Rezzonico in 1888, his father, Robert, was enthusiastic and included in the list of bargains two Tiepolo ceilings; (*Letters of the Brownings to George Barrett*, Paul Landis and Ronald E. Freeman, eds. [Champaign, Ill., 1958] p. 45).

The Manfrin collection was an 18th-century private collection of over 400 pictures and included Giorgione's *Tempest*; it was open to the public and was listed in every guidebook; it was dispersed in the 19th century; see *Catalogo dei Quadri esistenti nella Galleria Manfrin in Venezia* (n.p., n.d.); Giulio Lecomte, *Venezia* (Venice, 1844) pp. 275–286; and Francis Haskell, *Patrons and Painters* (New Haven, 1980) pp. 379–381.

26. *The National Museum of American Art's Index to American Art Exhibition Catalogues from the Beginning through the 1876 Centennial Year*, James L. Yarnall and William H. Gerdtz, comps. (Boston, 1986) V, cat. no. 89617.

27. As for its owner, the catalogue adds: "This beautiful painting adorned the collection of J. Taylor Esq. of England." No Tiepolo is listed in the Christie's sale catalogue of April 26, 1787, documenting the sale of "a most Capital and Valuable Collection of Pictures, . . . the property of Sir John Taylor, brought from his house in Hill Street, Berkeley Square." I would like to thank Dr. Lotte Hellinga of the British Library and Margaret L. Ford of Christie's, London, for providing me with the documentation.

28. Carrie J. Rebor, *The American Academy of the Fine Arts, New York, 1802–1842* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1990) II, pp. 392–394.

29. *American Art Index*, cat. nos. 89621, 89609.

30. Other paintings attributed to Tiepolo were *Brennus in Rome*, *Cleopatra Drinking the Pearl Dissolved in the Wine*, and *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, the subject of which can be identified with the *Judith Showing the People the Head of Holofernes*, in the Rossello Collection in Milan. See Pedrocchi and Gemin, *Giambattista Tiepolo*,

cat. no. 54, 37 x 48 cm; for other paintings attributed to Tiepolo listed in the *American Art's Index*, see "Tiepolo." A *Jacob and Esau* belonging to C. C. Perkins was exhibited in Boston in 1856; see *The Boston Athenaeum Index 1827-1876*, Robert F. Perkins Jr. and William J. Gavin II, eds. (Boston, 1980) p. 141.

31. Adeline Tintner, *Henry James and the Lust of the Eyes* (Baton Rouge/London, 1993) p. 144. Tintner also correctly suggests that Tiepolo's Palazzo Labia fresco lies behind James's description of alighting from the gondola, compared with Cleopatra's disembarking from her barge, in the 1899 essay "Two Old Houses and Three Young Women" (*ibid.*, p. 145). See chap. 11, "Rococo Venice and Longhi," for James's relation with the 18th century.

32. "Collaboration," in *The Complete Tales of Henry James*, Leon Edel, ed. (London, 1963) VIII, p. 407.

33. Mr. Blodgett's purchase, made during the Franco-Prussian War (Howe, *A History of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, p. 136) may have had something to do with James's choice of chronology.

34. Preface (*The Spoils of Poynton, A London Life, The Chaperon*), in *Prefaces to the New York Edition*, in *Literary Criticism*, Leon Edel, ed., with the assistance of Mark Wilson (New York, 1984) p. 1152. For the other Tiepolo ovals in the "cameron," see Andrea Bayer, "Le decorazioni per Ca' Barbaro," in *1696-1996 Giambattista Tiepolo*, pp. 157-166, and Diane De Grazia in Diane De Grazia and Eric Garbeson, *The Collections of the National Gallery of Art, Systematic Catalogue: Italian Paintings of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century* (Washington, D.C., 1996) pp. 265-272.

35. Pedrocco and Gemin, *Giambattista Tiepolo*, p. 408.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 258.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 408.

38. See the 1896 exh. cat., *Mostra Tiepolesca*, Atilio Centelli, ed. (Venice, 1896), where the list of critics includes Zanetti, Longhi, G. A. Meyer, Ticozzi, De Boni, Siret, Blanc, and Paul Leroy, in addition to Giuseppe Urbani de Gheltoff, the author of *Tiepolo e la sua famiglia* (Venice, 1879), Pompeo Molmenti, who had published *Il Carpaccio e il Tiepolo* (Turin, 1885), and the two then forthcoming works of Henri de Chennevières and Buisson (p. 26).

39. Rosella Mamoli Zorzi, "Titian and XIX-Century American Writers," in *Annali di Ca' Foscari* XXX, 1-2 (1991) pp. 196-197.

40. Adriano Mariuz, "Giambattista Tiepolo: 'il vero mago della pittura,'" in *1696-1996 Giambattista Tiepolo*, p. 3.

41. On the Jacquemart-André purchase of the frescoes, see Henri de Chennevières, "Les Tiepolo de l'Hôtel Édouard André," in *Gazette des Beaux Arts* 15 (Jan. 1, 1896). For other purchases, they bought from the same antique dealers from whom Isabella Stewart Gardner, among others, bought Venetian Gothic windows or 18th-century chairs: the names of the antiques dealers Rietti, Richetti, and Guggenheim recur frequently, along with those of famous Florentine antique dealers. The Jacquemart-Andrés also bought at the Paris auctions and in various European cities. I would like to thank the curator of the Musée Jacquemart-André, M. Nicolas Sainte Fare Garnot, and the curator of the Musée Jacquemart-André of Chaalis, M. Robert-Henri Bautier, for generously giving me access to their archives.

42. "Jamais peut-être dans son oeuvre pourtant surabondante de gaietés d'âme et de brosse, Tiepolo ne donne davantage la sensation de la peinture heureuse de peindre et devenue le besoin d'un esprit et d'un oeil obsédés de la ligne et du ton, comme le musicien l'est de sa libre chanson. La qualité du coloris participe de la joie, plus spéciale encore, de cette composition," *ibid.*, p. 126.

43. John A. Symonds, "On an Altar-Piece by Tiepolo," in *In the Key of Blue and Other Essays* (London, 1893). Symonds's interest in the artist dated back at least ten years, when he had written to Horatio F. Brown inquiring about the Tiepolos at the Villa Contarini, which he had learned about while reading Maxime du Camp's *Souvenirs littéraires*. (See *Letters and Papers of John Addington Symonds*, Horatio F. Brown, ed. [London, 1923] p. 161). The frescoes Symonds inquired about were the very cycle of frescoes the Jacquemart-Andrés bought just a few years later. Maxime du Camp wrote: "Je m'intéressais aux Tiepolo: j'avais contemplé tous ceux que garde la ville, depuis le Portement de la Croix, qui est à Sant' Alvisse, jusqu' à l'Antoine et à la Cléopâtre du palais Labia; j'allais sur la Brenta afin de voir la grande fresque représentant l'entrée de Henri III à Venise, qu'il a peinte . . . la villa Pisani et que l'on a trop retouchée. . . ." *Souvenirs littéraires* (Paris, 1892) II, p. 160. On Symonds's essay, see Haskell, "Tiepolo e gli artisti," pp. 495-497, and John R. Hale, *England and the Italian Renaissance* (London, 1954) chap. 8. Symonds admired Edmund Gosse's studies in the 18th century and also translated Carlo Gozzi's *Useless Memoirs* (1888). On Symonds's background and friendships, see Phyllis Grosskurth, *John Addington Symonds: A Biography* (London, 1964).

44. Anna Jameson, *Sacred and Legendary Art* (London, 1851; 1848) p. 612.

45. Mark Twain wrote, "But Tiepelo [*sic*] is my artist. In that palace near the Bella [*sic*] Arti in that chapel of San Giovanni e Paolo—& in the Jesuit church where the marbles are, these are all beautiful" (Aug.-Oct. 1878). The palace near the Belle Arti could be Ca' Rezzonico. The only Jesuit church in Venice does not have a Tiepolo: Twain might be referring to the Gesuati church. The chapel in SS. Giovanni e Paolo might be a reference to the Ospedaletto, near, not in, SS. Giovanni e Paolo. Twain, however, is usually accurate in his Venetian references. See Mark Twain, *Notebooks and Journals 1877-1883*, II, Frederick Anderson, Lin Salamo, and Bernard L. Stein, eds. (Berkeley, 1975) p. 205. See also Rosella Mamoli Zorzi, "Tintoretto e gli angloamericani nell'Ottocento," in *Annali di Ca' Foscari* XXV, 1-2 (1996) pp. 216-219.

46. See Edith Wharton, *Italian Villas and Their Gardens*, ill. by Maxwell Parrish (London, 1904); the reference on p. 232 is to Cornelius Gurlitt's *Geschichte des Barockstiles in Italien* (Stuttgart, 1887).

47. In *Gsell-Fels* (Leipzig/Vienna, 1898, 6th ed.), the Scalzi Tiepolo is described as follows: "An der Spiegeldecke eines der genialsten und farbenprächtigsten Freskogemälde von Giambattista Tiepolo, die Translation des Hauses der Maria nach Loreto, sein Jubelgesang in sich vollendeter venezianischer Dekorativkunst. (Hier tritt Tiepolos Kunst, der silberklaren Venezianischen Luft die Farbe zu entlocken, besonders glänzend hervor)," p. 282.

48. Berenson wrote on Tiepolo in *The Italian Painters of the Renaissance* (London, 1952) I, p. 35. Although it was initially published in 1896, he added, "N.B. Written in 1894!" at the end of the essay.

49. R. W. B. Lewis, *Edith Wharton: A Biography* (New York, 1985) p. 269.

50. Berenson, *Italian Painters of the Renaissance*, I, p. 35.

51. *Illustrazione italiana* 6 (June 1951) p. 58.

52. Berenson wrote that the frescoes were from Stra, rather than La Mira; letter of June 28, 1898, in *The Letters of Bernard Berenson and Isabella Stewart Gardner 1887-1924*, with correspondence by Mary Berenson, Rollin Van N. Hadley, ed. (Boston, 1987) p. 142. Isabella

Stewart Gardner, however, did buy a Tiepolo, the oil sketch for the Würzburg *Wedding of Barbarossa*, following the suggestion of Ralph Curtis; see *Guide to the Collection* (Boston, 1976) p. 67. On Ralph Curtis's advice to buy the painting in April 1901 through her Paris agent I. Robert, see Philip Hendy, *European and American Paintings in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum* (Boston, 1974) p. 249.

53. Eleanor Dwight, *Edith Wharton. An Extraordinary Life* (New York, 1994) p. 28.

54. Edith Wharton, "Picturesque Milan," in *Italian Backgrounds* (New York, 1927) pp. 155–156. As regards Milan, the visit to Palazzo Clerici may have been suggested by Enrico Boito, Verdi's librettist, whose brother, Camillo, wrote a long, appreciative essay on Tiepolo in 1881, although it was limited to the Villa Valmarana frescoes (*Gite d'artista* [Milan, 1884]). Enrico's "powerful protection" had "opened the doors of some little-known villas of the Brianza and the Naviglio"; see Edith Wharton, *A Backward Glance* (New York, 1964) p. 135.

55. Cornelius Gurlitt described the Scalzi ceiling: "Die Hauptsache aber ist an derselben Tiepolos farbenglänzendes, meisterhaft leichtes und schwungvolles Bild: 'Engel tragen das Haus der Maria nach Loretto,'" *Geschichte des Barock-Styles in Italien* (Stuttgart, 1887) p. 312. Describing Palazzo Rezzonico, he wrote: "Tiepolos glänzende Phantasie erfüllte sie die innere Eintheilung der Treppe mit dem Sonnenscheinen seiner wunderbar heiteren Kunst" (p. 317), and on the Palazzo Labia: "In denselben aber schuf ein phantasiereicherer Künstler eine noch grossartigere Architektur, erweiterte Tiepolo die Wände durch meisterhaft behandelte, perspektivisch gemalte Prachtbauten und erfüllte diese mit einer Schilderung der Kleopatra, im Wahrheit aber mit dem Bilde der lebensfrohen Welt der im letzten Glanze strahlenden Republik" (p. 326).

56. Wharton also read Jacob Burckhardt, whose *Cicerone* admits the talent of some 18th-century artists: "Anche più tardi vi furono pittori di talento che si irrobustirono all'eseempio di Paolo creando qualche opera di notevole importanza. Così il Lazzarini, l'Angeli, il Fiumani ed anche il Tiepolo" (*Il Cicerone*, intro. by Federico Pfister [Florence, 1952] p. 1079). The first edition is dated 1855, but the book was written in 1853–54.

57. Wharton, "Picturesque Milan," in *Italian Backgrounds*, pp. 163–164

58. Wharton, "Italian Backgrounds," in *ibid.*, p. 173.

59. *Ibid.*, p. 177.

60. *Ibid.*, p. 178.

61. *Ibid.*, pp. 190–191.

62. A poem by Wharton, "The Last Giustiniani," was set in 18th-century Venice, *Scribner's* (Oct. 1889) pp. 405–406, and Lewis, *Edith Wharton*, pp. 60–61.

63. On this particular painting see Judith Fryer, "Reading Mrs. Lloyd," in *Edith Wharton: New Critical Essays*, Alfred Bendixen and A. Zilversmit, eds. (New York, 1992), and Elaine Showalter, "The Death of the Lady (Novelist): Wharton's *House of Mirth*," in *ibid.* On the novel, see Cynthia Griffin Wolff, "Lily Bart and Masquerade Inscribed in the Female Mode," in *Wretched Exotic. Essays on Edith Wharton and Europe*, Katherine Jolin and Alan Price, eds. (New York, 1993) pp. 279–280. See also Candace Waid, *Edith Wharton, Letters from the Underworld* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1991).

64. Wharton, "Italian Backgrounds," in *Italian Backgrounds*, pp. 193–194.

65. Edith Wharton, *The Glimpses of the Moon* (New York, 1922) p. 91. In the novel, the old view of people "principled against the effete art of Tiepolo and all his contemporaries" is played out against the admiration now expressed by different characters, *ibid.*, p. 125.

66. Wharton, "Italian Backgrounds," in *Italian Backgrounds*, p. 195.

67. *Ibid.*, pp. 196–197.

68. Wharton, *Italian Villas and Their Gardens*, p. 244. In her description of this ceiling Wharton seems to have captured the essence of Tiepolo's painting as defined by Svetlana Alpers—the idea that the fresco must be seen by a viewer moving in space; see Svetlana Alpers and Michael Bandaxall, *Tiepolo and the Pictorial Intelligence* (New Haven, 1994).

69. On this novel, see William L. Vance, "The Valley of Decision. Edith Wharton's Italian Mask," and Millicent Bell, introduction in *The Cambridge Companion to Edith Wharton*, Millicent Bell, ed. (Cambridge, 1995) pp. 169–198; Gianfranca Balestra, "Italian Foregrounds and Backgrounds in *The Valley of Decision*," in *Edith Wharton Review* 9, 1 (1992) pp. 12–14, 27; Janet Goodwin, *Edith Wharton: Traveler in the Land of Letters* (New York, 1990), and Dwight, *An Extraordinary Life*, p. 285.

70. On Wharton's sources, see her own *Backward Glance*, pp. 67, 70–71, 91, 102, 128, 130; see also Gianfranca Balestra, "Il Settecento italiano di Edith Wharton," in *Il "Passeggiere" italiano: Saggi sulle letterature di lingua inglese in onore di Sergio Rossi*, Renzo Crivelli and Luigi Sampietro, eds. (Rome, 1994) pp. 389–395, and Lewis, *Edith Wharton*, *passim*.

71. On the representation of Venice and the differences among the various descriptions, see Rosella Mamoli Zorzi, "The Representation of Venice vs. the Representation of Places in Central Europe," in *Images of Central Europe in Travelogues and Fiction by North American Writers*, Waldemar Zacharasiewicz, ed. (Tübingen, 1995) pp. 128–137.

72. Wharton, *The Valley of Decision* (New York, 1914) p. 392.

73. Wharton did go to Würzburg, but only later, in Dec. 1909, to see "the longed-for Tiepolos at the Prince Bishop's Palace," as she wrote to Sara Norton on Dec. 2, 1909 (*The Letters of Edith Wharton*, R. W. B. Lewis, ed. [London, 1988] p. 194). She must have written a letter to Henry James on the subject, as he replied that he had followed her, "leaping with you breathless from Schiller to Tiepolo—through all that Gothicy of Augsburg, Würzburg, und so weiter" (*The Letters of Henry James*, Leon Edel, ed. [Cambridge, Mass., 1984] IV, p. 538). This 1909 visit might be linked to her friendship with Berenson.

74. Charles Blanc, in his "Les Tiepolo" in *Histoire des peintres de toutes les Écoles: École vénitienne* (Paris, 1868) had used the metaphor of fireworks but with a very different meaning: "doué, animé au plus haut du feu pittoresque, plein de facilité, d'abondance et de verve; mais, à vrai dire, ce feu n'est qu'un feu d'artifice; cette abondance tient plus au tempérament qu'à l'esprit; cette facilité dégénère en intempérance; cette verve, si fertile en images, est stérile en sentiments et en idées, et parce qu'elle ne vient pas de l'âme du peintre, elle ne dit rien à l'âme du spectateur" (p. 1).