

the author's standpoint, they are a felt need) the most notable, as Cesare Brandi pointed out at once, is Giuseppe Mariani, from Pistoia, an impetuous and extremely delicate interpreter of Borromini in the church of Santi Cosma e Damiano at Alcamo, where he restates Sant' Ivo alla Sapienza and its "astronomical" spiral, like a fanciful musical "Ricercare" that could only have been suggested to him by the island. No one will demand an impossible completeness in a monograph like Blunt's, arranged under large heads. Niccolò Pisani brought to light a notarial document indicating that Vincenzo Sinatra was working on the Casa Giuratoria of Noto in 1746, not 1764 as appears in the caption of figure 64. Even one who has read all the publications, some fifteen hundred, largely by Sicilian authors, chronologically arranged in an annex to my essay on the Baroque in western Sicily, could make many slips. This book of mine was available in April, 1968. It may be that both Blunt (whose monograph appeared, I believe, in the following November) and I were visiting or reviewing the same buildings in the same city, at the same time and I was consulting a certain number of archives in old families of the nobility, convents, monasteries and confraternities. Regrettably we did not meet. If we had, Blunt's monograph, valuable within its limits, would have been distinctly more up-to-date and vital, and he would surely have avoided saying, if only for publishing reasons, that no Sicilian had taken it on himself to write a book on the theme that he had boldly attacked. I regret to have had to refer here to my publications more than once, but books, once issued, no longer belong to us. I hope therefore that the reader may be indulgent in the thought that my wish was to pin down, both as historian and writer, the direction of discussion on this question to which both Blunt and I are so devoted.

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TERISIO PIGNATTI, *Longhi*, London and New York, Phaidon Press, 1969. Pp. 419; 550 ills. + 24 color pls. 35s/

This book conducts a cool, sustained and highly competent investigation into the activities of Pietro Falca, called Longhi. Few people are better qualified to have carried it out than Professor Pignatti. Any Venetian scholar starts with some natural advantages in dealing with such a local—indeed localised—talent; but the very advantages could prove handicaps without some compensatory breadth of experience of art, and life, in the world beyond Venice. Until one has seen work by Watteau and Hogarth, it might seem reasonable to compare Longhi as an equal with them. Professor Pignatti has not only travelled widely and looked intelligently, but he has also written on painting in eighteenth-century Europe. In the present book he quotes himself, rightly, amid his anthology of Longhi criticism, selecting a passage which begins: "... it would be absurd to place him, on the plane of quality, on a level with universal geniuses like Watteau or Chardin."

These refreshingly restrained words do not mean that the author has no admiration for his subject. He says all that can properly be said in Longhi's praise and at the same time he provides the fullest

possible evidence—through the drawings as well as the paintings—for each of us to reach our own conclusions. So hard indeed has he worked that one might wish his subject had approached art with equal application. Some people respected by the present reviewer think well of Longhi, and for criticizing him severely one is nowadays likely to be in turn severely criticized. It is probably best to hasten on from the difficult problem of whether Longhi deserves a monument of scholarship to the actual monument itself. However, rashness is all—as Shakespeare probably says somewhere—and to me it still seems absurd to place Longhi, on the plane of quality, on a level with the vivacious and competent talents of Lancret, Saint-Aubin or Troost, leaving aside universal geniuses.

Although by no means the first word on the subject, Professor Pignatti's book is likely to prove effectively the last—at least in volume form. The pioneer work of Ravà (1909) and the handsomely-illustrated, scholarly monograph by Vittorio Moschini have provided a useful basis for it. Some individual studies, notably by Valcanover, have in recent years revealed new works such as the frescoes in San Pantalon. In the book under review Professor Pignatti himself adds several previously unpublished pictures. Nevertheless, the established artistic personality of Longhi does not substantially alter. The biographical references remain rather meagre, and the few surviving documents (like Longhi's letters to the printer Remondini, printed here) are largely banal. Problems of attribution are not great, though the degree of collaboration at times between Longhi and his son Alessandro is still not very clear.

Professor Pignatti's introduction traces Longhi's career and reputation, his ambient and the possible links with Goldoni; he makes some interesting comparisons with Venetian popular verse of the period, sensibly suggesting that this, rather than Goldoni's theatre, offers the best analogy with the tone of Longhi's pictures. He also discusses foreign influences on Longhi, a difficult theme worth returning to below. On the question of the subject-matter of the paintings he has not a great deal to say. Indeed, he seems as baffled as most commentators have been as to what exactly is happening in some scenes, what the exact status is of the people involved and whether irony is intended in such depictions.

The introduction is followed by an extensive catalogue raisonné of all the known paintings and drawings by Longhi (with valuable juxtaposition in the plates of paintings and relevant drawings), plus a section on attributed work and on that of Longhi's followers or imitators (also usefully illustrated). Consulting it, however, is not made easy by cataloging under location only and without any numeration; and the alphabetical order under Venice is literal to an eccentric degree (Ca', church, collection, gallery, museum, pinacoteca, etc.). Professor Pignatti seems rather generous in his interpretation of autograph work, admitting some dim-looking objects—as far as one can tell from the photographs—which, if right, certainly justify all one's reserves about Longhi's quality. It is hard to accept the portrait in the Trucchi collection, Genoa; even if it be by Pietro, it seems inconceivable that it should be of the same date as the Ca' Rezzonico *Francesco Guardi* (inscribed, by the way, FRANC.<sup>o</sup> DE GUARDI/Pietro Longhi P<sup>t</sup>/1764), as suggested by the author. The chronology of Longhi is certainly difficult. Few pictures are dated or datable, and the oeuvre gives a confusingly homogeneous impression. What is proposed in this book is broadly

convincing; it is scarcely worth taking further space here to quibble over the precise dating of this or that picture.

More absorbing is the shape of Longhi's career which emerges very well. We find it opening only slowly, and then in the wrong direction of the large-scale *istoria* (e.g., the San Pellegrino Altarpiece, finished by 1732 when Longhi was at least thirty). At that point he is patently more under the influence of his first master, Balestra, than aware of the innovatory genius of Crespi, under whom he must by then also have studied; the chronology is only presumptive but it seems hard to believe that Longhi went away to study under Crespi post-1732, the year in which he married in Venice. The Palazzo Sagredo fresco of the *Fall of the Giants*, executed two years later, probably made it finally clear that Longhi was unsuited to this category of painting; what he produced is, above all, markedly old-fashioned, and Pallucchini has aptly spoken of Dorigny in connection with it. Further, Alessandro Longhi's *Compendio* (1762) must be authoritative for the life of his father and he implies a critical experience at Venice: "comprendendo la difficoltà di distinguersi nello Storico, mutò pensiero." The change was not at first to fashionable interiors but to rustic and low-life genre which certainly recalls Crespi, but which was perhaps sparked into existence by Piazzetta's work; some of his enchanting if irrelevant genre vignettes, engraved by Cattini and others for the edition of Bossuet published in Venice in 1736, could easily have pointed new possibilities to a painter hesitating over what subject matter would succeed.

It now seems obvious that there was a place for a specifically Venetian genre painter and that—in a city at a moment when Rosalba was portraitist, Canaletto was *vedutista*, and Tiepolo, Piazzetta and Pittoni were history painters—there would indeed be a difficulty in artistically distinguishing oneself otherwise. And so to the scenes by which Longhi will always be best known, of which the earliest dated one (the *Accademia Concert* of 1741) remarkably establishes the style and compositional elements which would scarcely evolve over forty years' activity. There's never a window in Longhi's rooms and even out-of-doors he avoids painting the sky as far as possible. It is hard to see much influence of Watteau or Lancret in that, and though one may be glad to find reproduced Cars' engraving of Watteau's *Fêtes Vénitienes*, it is even harder to see its particular relevance to Longhi; the title is a mere engraver's caprice and there is nothing Venetian, I believe, about the original painting or its real subject. It is unfortunate, incidentally, that in both the Italian and English editions of Professor Pignatti's book Watteau is consistently credited with the initial F; before any French edition appears this might be emended.

The possible influences on Longhi receive intelligent discussion from Professor Pignatti, but those outside Italy must remain a rather uncertain subject. It is of course quite true that an excellent channel between Paris and Venice existed in Flipart, to take a single example, but most of the analogies between Longhi's pictures and the genre engravings of, or after, De Troy, Cochin, Boucher, Gravelot, etc., are based on general subject-matter rather than on anything direct. Is it really more than a common taste shared throughout middle and upper-class Europe for seeing their private life and diversions closely mirrored in art? In some ways a comparison of,

say, Cochin's *Le Tailleur pour Femme* (1737) and Longhi's *Il Sarto* (*Accademia*; ca. 1741) reveals greater differences than similarities. It should be remembered that most French genre engravings were for wide dissemination among a basically bourgeois society. Longhi is more like the pet of a small patrician class, working often to its positive commission. His pictures travelled little outside Venice during his lifetime, as far as I am aware, and were unlikely to be easily visible to most visitors there. The only apparently direct compositional borrowing by Longhi from a French source seems to be in *La Seduzione* (Crespi Coll., Milan) where the pose of the old man and resisting girl apparently derives from a similar couple in Lancret's *La Vieillesse* (National Gallery, London), engraved by Lar-messin in 1735; even this could be mere chance, because a preparatory drawing by Longhi for his couple seems quite underivative. As for close analogies between Hogarth and Longhi, it is doubtful if anything fruitful would come of chasing these. For the concept of series of pictures, it is not essential to postulate Longhi's awareness of Hogarth at all. Nor, whatever Longhi exactly depicted, were his pictures of "modern moral subjects."

His subject-matter, however, requires closer scrutiny than it has so far received. Since he seems to have been willing, once established, to drift in and out of painting specific portraits (though never with the combined boldness and shrewdness of his gifted son), it may be assumed that many of the figures who look out of his small genre pictures were once recognizable people. Not much can probably be done about this aspect of his work, but Professor Pignatti is likely to be right in suggesting that there is ancestral relevance in the painted portraits which hang in the background of several scenes. Thus Doge Carlo Ruzzini (appearing in the *Parrucchiere* at Ca' Rezzonico), hardly a great Venetian hero, is presumably present because he was related to the central woman, herself possibly the commissioner of the scene. Once or twice Professor Pignatti might have pursued clues a little further; an identifiable coat of arms on a curtain, what appear to be virtually the opening words of a Metastasio text (set once by Mozart) on a sheet of music—even such minor details elucidated might aid comprehension. Some comments on costume would at times have been particularly welcome, and might clarify chronology, for there is a good deal of variety of style. Perhaps a Venetian of the period would in such ways have detected nuances that gave their point to what now often appear listless little depictions.

Finally, as a minute new fact relating to the London version of the *Rhinoceros* (of which that at Venice is inscribed within the picture area as executed for Giovanni Grimani, patron of both Longhi and Goldoni), I can add that this too is now established as specifically commissioned. When it was quite recently relined, the original canvas was found to be inscribed on the reverse very similarly "per commissione del Nobile Uomo Sier / Girolamo Mocenigo. . . ." The patron is likely to be Girolamo, son of Alvise IV Mocenigo, who held several official posts at Venice and died in 1771. His is a new name to add to the long list of Venetian patricians who encouraged the activities of Longhi.

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