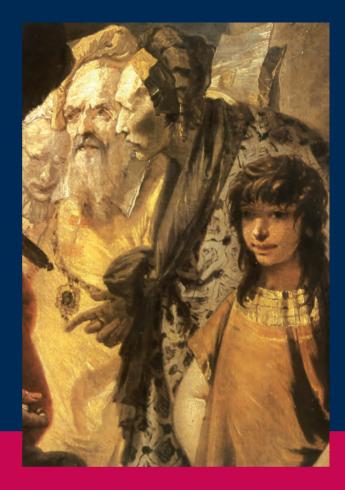
Studies in Early Modern European Culture Studi sulla cultura europea della prima età moderna



Johanna Fassl Sacred Eloquence Giambattista Tiepolo and the Rhetoric of the Altarpiece

Peter Lang

This book offers an innovative approach to the altarpieces of Giambattista Tiepolo (1696–1770) by discussing them within the intellectual context of the first half of the eighteenth century. Tiepolo occupies a particular position in the history of art: firmly embedded in the eighteenth century, he is one of the last great painters of the classical tradition, and, at the same time, one of the precursors of modernity.

Why has Tiepolo's religious art often been misunderstood? How can the abbreviation and absence of key symbols in the images be explained and why is this rhetoric of absence so utterly modern? Deliberately concentrating on what is not painted, rather than what is in the picture, the book deals with Tiepolo's lacunism as an eighteenth-century phenomenon anticipating modernity. It discusses four different forms of rhetoric: iconic, narrative, silent, and visionary. Each discourse calibrates the images within their contemporary religious and philosophical context, which promote this type of rhetoric as highly innovative.

Johanna Fassl was born in Munich, Germany, and holds a PhD with distinction in Art History from Columbia University. She received Mellon and Getty fellowships for her research on Tiepolo. Currently she is an assistant professor of art history at Franklin College Switzerland, in addition to being the director of Casa Muraro: Columbia University Study Center in Venice. She is now working on her second book project, dealing with the concept of vision in Enlightenment art, science, and philosophy.

Sacred Eloquence

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Johanna Fassl

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Printed in Switzerland

to David, Liesbeth, and my students

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Preface

Giambattista Tiepolo was Venice's greatest painter of the so-called Silver Age of Venetian Painting. Second president of the Venetian Academy of Painters and Sculptors, member of the same institution in Parma, friend and professional confidante of Francesco Algarotti, sought after by Europe's courts and clientele, Tiepolo enjoyed not only immense popularity but also high esteem in the artistic world of the Settecento. This favorable response lasted until about 1946, when the influential Italian art critic Roberto Longhi accused Tiepolo of an "anachronistic rhetoric" in its most derogatory sense. Subsequently the Venetian painter's appreciation has been varied and his critical fortune has not been entirely congruent with the appreciation of his contemporaries. It is easy to like Tiepolo: the chromatic brilliance of his palette, the fire of his brush, and magnificence of his spectacle. But Tiepolo's paintings frequently come with built-in enigmas, confronting the viewer with more questions than answers. Fragmented body parts, closed eyes, masked faces, ruptures in the perspective framework, and a touch of darkness disturb the beholder in his search for meaning. Tiepolo's pictures are indeed often puzzling, ambiguous, and sometimes utterly indeterminate. Key symbols are absent and resolution lies outside the world of the picture, to be constructed only in the viewer's mind. Concentrating on his decorative side seemed an adequate way to escape (what I call) Tiepolo's rhetoric of absence and to avoid acknowledging the deeper issues behind it.

This book grew out of the tercentenary celebrations of Tiepolo's birth. The great exhibitions at Ca' Rezzonico, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Petit Palais afforded an excellent opportunity to study Tiepolo's art. They also brought out the critics' astonishment and wonder; and despite William Barcham's seminal study on Tiepolo's religious works, once again, the sacred paintings were under attack. Yet, while often being perplexed, the viewers nonetheless could not escape Tiepolo's expressive power. From the responses it became clear that critics and historians have hardly ever allowed themselves to react to Tiepolo's expressiveness and to approach his pictures with an interpretive framework that leaves room for the consideration of paradox and indeterminacy. But rarely does not mean never and it is from the authors who have addressed Tiepolo's departure from convention that my study started out: Barry Hannegan, Ulrike Andersson, Svetlana Alpers and Michael Baxandall, Frank Büttner, David Rosand, and Nigel Llewellyn. Rather than discarding or neglecting Tiepolo's "oddities," they have located meaning in the unusual and implicitly recognized Tiepolo's liminal position: one of the last masters of the Renaissance and first protagonists of the Romantics - even a precursor of the Surrealists.

The questions that I asked myself at the outset of this study is what kind of interpretive framework is necessary to make sense of Tiepolo's rhetoric of absence, especially within the religious context; and if this rhetoric finds an explanation within the historical moment. The focus on rhetoric was an obvious choice, for it gets right to the heart of the matter. It calls for rigorous attention to the surface, to the painted signs and the pictorial structure telling the story. But it also allows going behind the scenes and to consult the images' immediate context for – to say it literally – enlightenment. Rhetoric was widely discussed during the Age of Enlightenment and concerns all disciplines that are key to the understanding of Tiepolo's pictures: painting, devotion, and epistemology.

The decision to concentrate on the altarpieces was motivated by the specificity of their viewing situation. Although not an essential instrument to the liturgy performed on the altar, the altarpiece is a particular instrument of communication. Viewed *in situ*, it is a stimulus for an existential experience that comprises both body and mind. The painter mobilizes such an experience not only by the "what" but also by the "how." The articulation of symbols, facial expressions, gestures, pictorial structure, and choice of colors bear meaning in themselves and contribute to the reading of the image and the viewing experience.

The pictorial rhetoric of the altarpiece can also be considered by taking it off the altar; the pictures then become historical documents. This means to release the altarpiece from its official function and to contemplate the picture as an aesthetic object, which not only participates in the spiritual life of the sacred environment, but also partakes in a specific moment. In this manner the altarpiece returns to the painter's studio and becomes the historic voice of his hand and mind. Attesting to the rhetorical power of the painter's language means to search for meaning beyond subject matter and to locate it in the picture's immediate structure.

The painter's studio is not a hermetically sealed environment or fragmented reality, but a place where tradition, thought, technique, and skill intersect. In other words, the artist and his practice are firmly embedded within their context. For this study, context is explained as a clearly demarcated moment in the past: the first half of the eighteenth century. This moment is defined and separated from its own past and future through a specific structure that underlies its expressions. Language, literature, art, religion, law, and philosophy all have a common base, or sensus communis, and are codeterminative factors in shaping their individual appearances. These expressions also enter into relationships with each other, not as direct influence but as mutual resonance and exchange. In this book, I examined if the particularities in Tiepolo's pictorial language are also present in other forms of expressions. In this endeavor I specifically investigated the philosophical texts and devotional practices of the first half of the Settecento.

One of Italy's most important thinkers of the eighteenth century, the Neapolitan philosopher Giambattista Vico, proved to be the most important "companion" for Tiepolo in this enterprise. Vico sparked my curiosity because he too is a transitional figure, standing at the crossroads of two powerful intellectual traditions: Renaissance humanism and the Enlightenment. This partly explains his ambiguous status not only amidst eighteenth-century thinkers, but also within the entire philosophical tradition, where the situation is even more complex. He can be read either as a protagonist of the Enlightenment, attempting to develop an epistemological response to Descartes that validates a science of history and philology; or he can be interpreted as attempting to subvert the Enlightenment's preoccupation with a certain model of rational thinking, thus emerging as an implicitly postmodern thinker.

Vico's theory of *verum et factum convertuntur*, the convertibility of the true and the made, provides a key explanation for Tiepolo's rhetoric of absence. The idea is anti-Cartesian in the sense that knowledge cannot be deduced but must be produced in order to be fully understood. Just as divine truth is what God creates in the act of knowing it, so human truth is what man comes to know in the act of making. In this manner, man can never really know what is God's work, such as nature or the elements. But he can know his own products, such as history, art, and philosophy. In the Vichian context, the lacunism in Tiepolo's rhetoric may be explained as a creative stimulus for the beholder to construct meaning in his pictures, and thus to truly know them – seeing is understood as a form of *poesis* with an epistemological import.

What I hope to demonstrate in the following chapters is that Vico and Tiepolo stand side-by-side as equal partners in the enterprise of the Italian Enlightenment. Jonathan Israel suggests that Vico's philosophy partakes in the radical Enlightenment, that he is part of a group of thinkers whose revolutionary ideas helped lay the foundations of the modern world. This book is an attempt to give Tiepolo a leading role in the visual culture that had its foundation in the same ground. My objective is not to answer all the questions that Tiepolo's images put in front of our eyes; rather, I aim to construct a framework so that they no longer seem accidental and incongruous. I hope to offer an alternative reading that makes indeterminacy a significant voice of the Enlightenment and calls for a poetic/creative mode of beholding pictures.

Applying Vico's subject-centered hermeneutics – seeing as *poesis* – to Tiepolo's images leads to a set of readings of the altarpieces that go beyond text-image relationships and contextual issues. Vico offers an imaginary, or inner approach, which is triggered by those elements in the image that the beholder does not understand. Seeing means to enter into a partnership with the picture, by which the beholder transforms himself in the (inner and imaginary) making of the work. For a deeper explanation of this type of reception, one naturally turns to names that are not immediately associated with Tiepolo: Freud, Lacan, Kristeva, Barthes, Iser, and Gadamer. I claim that these readings come directly out of the pictures and the Vichian framework, which essentially is contemporary to them.

For the analysis of Tiepolo's altarpieces I singled out four modes of expression: iconic, narrative, visionary, and silent rhetoric. Each chapter is rooted in a work that most characteristically represents these types. The Introduction takes up the importance of language in the eighteenth century through Tiepolo's allegorical representation of rhetoric at Ca' Sandi in Venice. Chapter 1 focuses on the Rest on the Flight into Egypt and explores the concept of iconicity. Iconic altarpieces directly confront the beholder but iconicity also involves the engagement of memory and the work of the imagination. It demonstrates how Tiepolo, by abbreviating the key symbols and painting the scene with a nocturnal background, relies on the beholder's memory to complete the missing information. Chapter 2 discusses martyrdom images, addressing Tiepolo in the role of the storyteller. It demonstrates how Tiepolo conforms with, but also transcends conventional pictorial narration; and how the graphic display of the martyred body, by questioning the beholder's subjectivity, induces a process of introspection. Chapter 3 deals with the expressionless faces in Tiepolo's chorus figures. They often have been labeled as pictorial exoticism, as bystanders

dressed in Oriental garb. Rather than being geographic indicators, I see them as instances of a silent rhetoric, expressions of a *muta poesis*. The final chapter engages with Tiepolo's altarpieces of painted visions, explaining the dissociation of the visionary and his vision as an instance of creative seeing. It specifically refers to the writings of an eighteenth-century Venetian mystic who describes the collaboration of intellect and imagination in her visionary encounters and to Vico's theory of the eye of *ingenium*. In the Conclusion, I attempt to place the notion of viewing as a poetic activity within the wider context of eighteenth-century Europe.

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Abbreviations

ASV Archivio di Stato di Venezia

- BMC Biblioteca del Museo Correr, Venice
- BNM Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice
- BSPV Biblioteca del Seminario Patriarcale di Venezia
- B. Busta

It is said that he [Raphael] took pictures, which frquently are considered the books of the illiterate, and also asked the lettered to read them, making them speak to both their intellect and emotion. It is said that, in a certain way, he wanted to explain Quintilian, where he says that greater than the force of the artifices of rhetoric is that of painting.

(Francesco Algarotti, Saggio sopra la pittura)

INTRODUCTION

Poetic Rhetoric: The "Discovery of the True Homer"

Painted Rhetoric: Mercury at Ca' Sandi

Francesco Algarotti's statement on the power of pictorial rhetoric finds its full expression in Tiepolo's first Venetian commission in fresco of profane subject matter;¹ the ceiling of the great hall in Ca' Sandi at Sant'Angelo.² The Sandi were one of Venice's most important families of lawyers, and the *soffitto*, painted between 1724

- 1 "Si direbbe che i quadri, i quali, secondo il detto comune, sono i libri degl'ignoranti, egli prendesse a fargli leggere anche ai dotti, facendogli parlare allo intelletto e allo spirito. Si direbbe ch'egli abbia inteso di giustificare in certa maniera Quintiliano, là dove afferma maggiore della forza che hanno sopra di noi gli artifizi della retorica, esser la forza della pittura" (ALGAROTTI 1969d, 399).
- On the Sandi ceiling, see DA CANAL 1809, pp. xxxii–xxxiii; MOSCHINI 1815, vol.1, p. 603; SELVATICO and LAZARI (no date), p. 434; MOLMENTI 1909, p. 54; SACK 1910, p. 153; ARSLAN 1935–36, p. 250; MORASSI 1942, pp. 259–267; MORASSI 1943, pp. 15–16; IVANOFF 1951, pp. 70–72; MORASSI 1955a, pp. 15–16; MORASSI 1955b, pp. 4–7; MORASSI 1962, pp. 60–61, 69; PALLUCCHINI 1968, no. 32; PRECERITTI GARBERI 1971, pp. 16–18; BRAHAM 1981, p. 72; AIKEMA 1986, pp. 167–171; LEVEY 1986, pp. 23–28; BARCHAM 1989, p. 56; BARCHAM 1992, no. 2; KNOX 1993, pp. 135–145; GEMIN and PEDROCCO 1993, no. 65; DEININGER 1995, Chapter 8: "Das Deckenfresko 'Macht der Beredsamkeit' im Palazzo Sandi in Venedig," pp. 70–78; PIAI 1996, pp. 102–104; ALPERS and BAXANDALL 1994, p. 171; CHRISTIANSEN 1996a, pp. 15, 44, 47, 63, 68, 76, 118; PEDROCCO 2002, no. 52/1; FASSL 2004, "Introduction: Poetic Rhetoric"; ARMSTRONG 2005.

and 1725, is a tribute to their occupation. It alludes to the fame and virtue of the legal profession glorifying the foundation of jurisprudence, namely rhetoric.³ The subject of the ceiling is generally identified as the *Power of Eloquence*, articulated in four scenes: *Bellerophon Overcoming the Chimera*; *Amphion Building the Walls of Thebes*; *Hercules Holding His Listeners Enthralled*; and *Orpheus with Eurydice Overcoming Cerberus* (plate 1). Tiepolo had studied the subjects in an oil sketch, a *modello*, that he may have presented to his patrons prior to execution (fig. 1).⁴ The ceiling affords an excellent opportunity to study the concept and articulation of rhetoric within the context of the eighteenth century in general and within Tiepolo's work in particular.

Carlo Goldoni describes how lawyers enjoyed a status similar to that of nobility.⁵ Practicing law was considered a very lucrative profession and an applied art that represented an *exemplum virtutis*. Vettor Sandi, an acclaimed Venetian lawyer, had bought the property just off the Canal Grande at Sant'Angelo in 1665 from the Barbarigo family. In 1685, the year of Vettor's death, the Sandi family was able to gain entry into the Venetian nobility. Vettor was succeeded by his son Tomaso, who would also become a successful lawyer.

- 3 "But since the object of rhetoric is judgment for judgments are pronounced in deliberative rhetoric and judicial proceedings are a judgment – it is not only necessary to consider how to make the speech itself demonstrative and convincing, but also that the speaker should show himself to be of a certain character and should know how to put the judge into a certain frame of mind" (ARISTOTLE 1959, Bk. 2, p. 1).
- 4 Вканам 1981, р. 72.
- 5 "Les Avocats à Venise doivent avoir leurs logements, ou du moins leurs Etudes, dans le quartier de la Robe. Je louai un appartement à Saint Paternien, et ma mère et ma tante ne me quittaient pas. J'endossai la robe de mon état, qui est la même que la *Patricienne*. J'enveloppai ma tête dans une immense parruque, et j'attendois avec impatience le jour de ma présentation au Palais" (GOLDONI [1787] 1992, I, p. XXIII).



Plate 1: Giambattista Tiepolo, *The Power of Eloquence*, 1724-25, Ca' Sandi, Venice. Photo: Cameraphoto.



Figure 1: Giambattista Tiepolo, *The Power of Eloquence*, ca. 1724, Courtauld Galleries, Princess Gate Collection, London. Photo: The Courtauld Institute of Art.

Tomaso Sandi began the reconstruction of the old building in 1721. The architect Domenico Rossi undertook the remodeling, and Tiepolo and Nicolò Bambini subsequently were invited to embellish the *salone*. Tiepolo frescoed the main ceiling and Bambini the surrounding frieze underneath it. ⁶ Both also supplied works for the walls: Tiepolo painted *Ulysses Discovering Achilles* and Bambini *Volumnia Exhorting Coriolanus*, two large canvases of horizontal format for the short ends of the hall. For the long wall opposite the *salone* windows, Tiepolo executed two smaller, vertical pictures depicting *Apollo and Marsyas* and *Hercules and Antaeus*; and Bambini the *Three Graces* in the same format.

The Sandi commission is first mentioned in Vincenzo da Canal's text on the early life of Tiepolo, included in his biography on Tiepolo's master, Gregorio Lazzarini:

In Palazzo Sandi in Venice, he painted four stories on the ceiling of the main hall, showing Eloquence beneath other hieroglyphs. He also made a painting in oil with Odysseus, discovering Achilles among the virgin daughters of Diomedes: a work that is very beautiful for the lovely ideas of these girls and the arrangement of the stories.⁷

Da Canal does not mention Tiepolo's small canvases, nor does he speak about Bambini. From his words, however, it is clear that the

⁷ "Dipinse a Venezia nel palazzo Sandi il soffitto della sala in quattro storie indicanti la Eloquenza sotto altri jeroglifici. Vi fece pure un quadro ad oglio con Ulisse, che discopre Achille fra le vergini figliuol' de Diomede: opera assai bella per le graziose idee di quelle femmine, e per la disposizione delle storie" (DA CANAL 1809, pp. xxxii–xxxiii). Da Canal's biography of 1732 is the *terminus ante quem* for the ceiling. However, for stylistic reasons the fresco is generally dated to 1724–1725. Aikema supports this thesis by referring to an important event in the Sandi family history, the wedding between Vettor Sandi – son of Tomaso – and Elisabetta Donato. The union is significant; it confirms the newly acquired status of nobility as the young Vettor is the first Sandi to marry a woman from the old aristocracy (AIKEMA 1986).

⁶ IVANOFF 1851, pp. 70–72.

subject of the ceiling is the power of eloquence described in multiple stories.

Upon entering the *salone*, one is immediately confronted with Mercury and Minerva, in the center of the ceiling. Mercury is suspended in space, whereas Minerva sits on a cloud and both orchestrate the scenes below. Tiepolo divided the space into four separate stories unfolding along the edges. They are read clockwise from the left, starting at the short end with *Bellerophon Overcoming the Chimera* followed by *Amphion Building the Walls of Thebes* (fig. 2); then *Hercules Holding his Listeners Enthralled* followed by *Orpheus with Eurydice Overcoming Cerberus* (fig. 3).

Just how do these particular and unusual subjects visualize the power of rhetoric? A key to this curious choice of subject matter is found in the texts of the ancient poets and in the emblem books of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, including Vincenzo Cartari's *Imagini delli Dei de gl'antichi*, Andrea Alciati's *Emblemata*, and Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*. In Cartari's *Imagini delli Dei*, a work that went through several editions (Venice 1556, 1571, 1615, 1647, and 1674), the chapter on Mercury offers an explanation for the presence of the two gods on the Sandi ceiling.⁸ In a woodcut they are represented, arm in arm, and accompanied by a short description (fig. 4):

Images of Mercury and of Minerva, the former god of Eloquence and the latter of Prudence, and [she is also the] inventor of the fine arts, expressing the necessity that Eloquence and Prudence should be conjoined if words are to be useful for human actions.⁹

- 8 See CARTARI and PIGNORIA 1674. Cartari was first proposed as a source by KNOX 1993. My study of the ceiling is based on his interpretations and tries to further refine Tiepolo's employment of the ancient sources.
- 9 "Immagini di Mercurio & di Minerva, quello dio della Eloquenza, questa della Prudenza, & delle arti buone inventrice, dinotante esser necessario la Eloquenza, & la Prudenza esser congionte insieme, se devono giovare le parole alle operazioni humane" (CARTARI and PIGNORIA 1674, p. 175).



Figure 2: Giambattista Tiepolo, *The Power of Eloquence*, 1724-25, Ca' Sandi, Venice, detail of *Bellerophon Overcoming the Chimera* and *Amphion Building the Walls of Thebes.* Photo: Böhm.



Figure 3: Giambattista Tiepolo, *The Power of Eloquence*, 1724-25, Ca' Sandi, Venice, detail of *Hercules Holding His Listeners Enthralled* and *Orpheus with Eurydice Overcoming Cerberus*. Photo: Böhm.

Introduction

In Cartari's image, the two gods walk arm in arm, looking at each other in agreement on their joint mission. In Tiepolo's oil sketch, the gods are also attached to each other, whereas on the ceiling he chose to represent them separately. While the cloud at her feet virtually connects Minerva to Amphion's wall of Thebes, Mercury is singled out in a luminous vortex in the ceiling center, rendering him the presiding god over all the scenes.

Mercury's position on the ceiling is in direct connection to the scene of the *Gallic Hercules Holding his Listeners Enthralled* on the short side. It is explained in the same chapter of Cartari, where Hercules is lauded as a god of eloquence, even more powerful than Mercury.¹⁰ The scene shows golden chains coming from his mouth to literally capture his audience and its accompanying text testifies to the authority of his words (fig. 5):

Image of Hercules of the Galls, who is considered the god of eloquence and exercise, which, others maintained to be true also for Mercury, and this image shows the force, and military discipline, which is at its maximum in old captains and aged orators.¹¹

On the previous page, Cartari had introduced the image as follows:

It is easy to see, how this image indicates the power of eloquence, which these people gave to Hercules. They did so because of Lucian, who said that Hercules was much stronger and braver than Mercury. And they made him old, because in the aged, eloquence is indeed more perfect than

- 10 Also Andrea Alciati, in Emblem no. 18, features the scene of the Gallic Hercules for the illustration of "Eloquentia fortitudine praestantior" (AL-CIATI and PIGNORIA 1661, p. 751).
- 11 "Imagine di Hercole appo Francesi da loro tenuto Dio dell'eloquenza, & dell'essercitio, qual fu da alcuni tenuto anco per Mercurio, & questa imagine dinota la forza, & disciplina militare, massime in vecchi Capitani, & consumati oratori" (CARTARI and PIGNORIA 1674, p. 169). On the Gallic Hercules, see also BULST 2003.

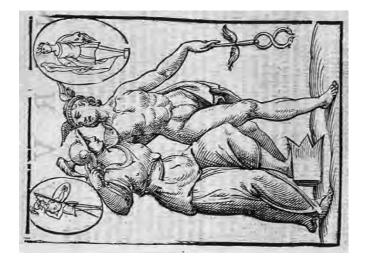


Figure 4: Merury and Minerva, woodcut from V. Cartari and L. Pignoria, Imagini delli dei de gl'antichi [...], Venice, 1674. Photo: Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana.

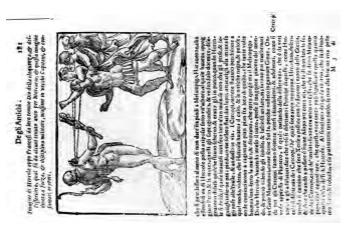


Figure 5: Image of Herates of the Galls, woodcut from V. Cartari and L. Pignoria, Imagini delli dei de gl'antichi [...], Venice, 1674. Photo: Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana.

Introduction

in the young, like Homer showed us for Nestor, from whose mouth sweet honey seemed to drip while he spoke.¹²

Cartari referred to Lucian, and it is indeed in the ancient poet's ekphratic introduction to Hercules that we find a full description of the scene:

The Celts call Heracles Ogmios in their native tongue, and they portray the god in a very peculiar way. To their notion, he is extremely old, baldheaded, except for a few lingering hairs that are quite gray, his skin wrinkled, and he is burned as black as can be, like an old sea-dog. [...] But I have not yet mentioned the most surprising thing in the picture. That old Heracles of theirs drags after him a great crowd of men who are all tethered by the ears! His leashes are delicate chains fashioned of gold and amber, resembling the prettiest of necklaces. Yet, though led by bonds so weak, the men do not think of escaping, as they easily could, and they do not pull back at all or brace their feet and lean in the opposite direction to that in which he is leading them. In fact, they follow cheerfully and joyously, applauding their leader and all pressing him close and keeping the leashes slack in their desire to overtake him; apparently they would be offended if they were let loose!¹³

In the depiction of the Gallic Hercules, a significant change occurs from oil sketch to the actual fresco. In the *modello*, the scene takes over one of the long sides, whereas on the ceiling it is depicted on a short side. Although the story occupies less space, Hercules is placed in a particular position. Tiepolo aligned him with Mercury on the longitudinal axis that dissects the long side of

- 12 "Facile da vedere, che questa immagine significa la forza dell'eloquenza, laquale davano quelle enti ad Hercole, perché, come dice il medesimo Luciano. Fù Hercole creduto più forte assai, & più gagliardo di Mercurio, & lo facevano vecchio, perché ne vecchi la eloquenza è più perfetta assai, che ne' giovani, come Homero ci mostra per Nestore, dalla cui bocca, quando parlava, pareva che stillasse dolcissimo mele" (CARTARI and PIGNORIA 1674, p. 168).
- 13 LUCIAN 1961, pp. 64–65.

the fresco. On this axis, the god hovers directly above Hercules, and if he were to descend, he would touch ground immediately behind Hercules.

Although not mentioned by Cartari, Amphion is also directly linked with Mercury. The latter presented him with his lyre, with which he built the walls of Thebes: playing the instrument, he caused the great stones to fly into place. The source is Philostratus' *Imagines*:

The clever device of the lyre, it is said, was invented by Hermes, who constructed it of two horns and a crossbar and a tortoise shell; and he presented it first to Apollo and the Muses, then to Amphion of Thebes. And Amphion, inasmuch as the Thebes of his day was not yet a walled city, has directed his music to the stones, and the stones run together when they hear him.¹⁴

In Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* Amphion's musical miracle is cited as the personification of rhetoric. The author states:

language is the art to speak with exactness, which resembles the [tone of the] lyre, moving our emotions through its sound that is now high, then low, and through voice and pronunciation.¹⁵

Subsequently he prescribes the depiction of Amphion, and his sweet and persuasive harmonies, for the representation of eloquence:

- 14 PHILOSTRATUS 1931, Chapter 10: "Amphion," p. 41. Tiepolo's Amphion also closely resembles the description of the ancient painting by Philostratus: "His hair is lovely and truthfully depicted, falling as it does in disorder on his forehead and mingling the downy beard beside the ear, and showing a ling of gold; but it is lovelier still where it is held by the headband – the headband wrought by the Graces, a most lovely ornament" (PHI-LOSTRATUS 1931, pp. 44–45). See also SZILÁGYI 1985.
- 15 "La lingua è l'arte del favellare propriamente laquale ha somiglianza della Lira, che va movendo gl'affetti col suono hor acuto, hor grave della voce, & della pronuntia" (RIPA and CARATINO CASTELLINI 1630, p. 214). For Tiepolo's knowledge of Ripa, see MARIUZ 1999, p. 253.

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