

we are now much better informed about the complex personalities and independent contributions of these artists, so much so that the term 'Leonardesque', which is still sometimes improperly used for some of them, is finally losing its derogatory, limited and generic meaning. The turning-point in the reception of Leonardo's followers, friends and colleagues dates from the late 1970s, with Gianni Romano's stimulating essay on the Master of the Pala Sforzesca ('*Quaderni di Brera*', IV, 1978), followed by the outstanding exhibition on Zenale and Leonardo organised by Mauro Natale at the Poldi Pezzoli in 1982 (which included works by Marco d'Oggiono and Cesare da Sesto). As a result of this rekindling of interest, today we can consult detailed monographs on the 'independent' Andrea Solario (by David Alan Brown, Milan, 1987), on Marco d'Oggiono (by Domenico Sedini, Rome, 1989), and on Cesare da Sesto, while a monograph on the most talented of Leonardo's *creati*, Boltraffio, has been announced (by Maria Teresa Fiorio). Books on Luini and Giovanni Agostino da Lodi will probably soon follow. In the meantime Janice Shell, who has published many documents on the life and work of several Milanese artists, has produced a Lombard answer to 'Wackernagel' (no small achievement and no small compliment) which crowns fifteen years of indefatigable research in the Milanese archives.¹

Marco Carminati's lavishly produced monograph on Cesare da Sesto is a major contribution to this Lombard 'renaissance'. If this review deals above all with critical points, this is because the reconstruction of Cesare's early career is extremely controversial: Paola Giusti as well as Giovanni Agosti and Vincenzo Farinella have, for example, made alternative attributions for the early phase of Cesare's career, while Fiorella Sricchia Santoro believes that the painter stayed in southern Italy for a long uninterrupted sojourn and did not travel to Sicily twice with a Milanese break in between, as Carminati and others suggest.²

There are three major problems for anyone trying to reconstruct Cesare's career. First is the lack of documentary evidence. Only two works are documented: the polyptych for Cava dei Tirreni (Salerno) of 1515, which was painted in collaboration with Cesare's colleague Gerolamo Ramarino, and the polyptych for the Milanese Confraternity of St Roch, which was commissioned in 1523, the year of the painter's death, and finished by his assistants. Second, his early years remain in the dark. It should be pointed out that the first five numbers of Carminati's catalogue are all modern attributions: only the *Madonna and Child with St John the Baptist* in Lisbon is in good condition and poses no problem as it is obviously related to the altar-piece for the Oratorio di S. Giorgio dei Genovesi in Messina (today in San Francisco). Moreover, even if we accept Carminati's attribution to Cesare of the fresco cycle in S. Donato at Sesto Calende, the first number of his catalogue, Cesare's known *œuvre* would begin with the year 1503 (a date no longer visible but recorded in earlier publications as well as in an old photograph), when the artist was

Cesare da Sesto 1477–1523. By Marco Carminati. 357 pp. incl. 225 b. & w. and 100 col. pls. (Jandi Sapi Editori, Milan and Rome, 1994). ISBN 88-7142-024-1.

The Lombard artists who began their careers under the aegis of Leonardo, or who had to come to terms with his challenging stylistic innovations, have attracted the attention of a new generation of scholars over the last twenty years. Wilhelm Suida's influential *Leonardo und sein Kreis* (Munich, 1929) remains a fundamental point of reference for those interested in these issues, but

already twenty-six years old: it is as if we had to begin our narrative of Raphael's career with the Stanza della Segnatura. Third, Cesare, who was one of the most talented, complex and receptive painters of his generation, often collaborated with other colleagues: the still anonymous Balduinus, his partner in the apartment of Pope Julius II in 1508;³ Peruzzi, who, according to Vasari, used Cesare's services in Ostia;⁴ the mediocre Gerolamo Ramarino; and Bernardino Marchiselli, better known as Bernazzano, the famous landscape-painter who executed the spectacular landscape in the monumental *Baptism of Christ* for the Milanese mint (today in the Gallarati Scotti collection).

If we bear these points in mind, it is easy to understand why so many aspects of the painter's career remain open to debate. No more than two problems can be discussed here (although many other issues would deserve a thorough treatment): the attribution of the fresco cycle in S. Donato at Sesto Calende and the celebrated sketchbook in the Pierpont Morgan Library.

Carminati's exhaustive catalogue entries are very informative and a model of intellectual fairness: all discordant opinions about attribution and chronology are duly registered, but the opinions of other authors are sometimes inadvertently misrepresented. The attribution to Cesare of the cycle in Sesto Calende is a case in point. The quality of the frescoes is high, above all the group of donors in the fragmentary *Apotheosis of St Catherine of Alexandria*, and after all they are in the church of Cesare's putative birth-place. The attribution is therefore plausible, but the justification given here is rather weak. The hypothesis is based on the observation that the fresco cycle reflects 'all the elements of the ambience and of the cultural situation in which Cesare's early education probably took place' (p. 139): according to the author, the cycle shows elements derived from Leonardo, Zenale and the young Luini. The frescoes in S. Donato are therefore the product of an artist who was attracted by Leonardo, but who at the same time had not yet abandoned the schemes of the 'old guard'. The problem is that these references remain generic and we cannot be sure what models Cesare followed before moving to Rome in 1508 because we know nothing about him before that date. The second point of Carminati's argument is that there is a connexion between these frescoes and Cesare's early Roman works. It should be noted, however, that the relationship between the cycle in Sesto and the Madonna in Lisbon is hard to demonstrate beyond a rather loose Leonardesque flavour, while the attribution of Cesare's early Roman works is itself also hotly debated (both Sricchia Santoro and Annalisa Perissa Torrini have, for example, rejected the *St John the Evangelist* in the church of S. Giovanni Battista at Campagnano Romano).⁵ According to Carminati, it was Mauro Natale who first attributed the cycle in Sesto Calende to Cesare, but this is not what we read in Natale's text. In 1981 Natale published a fresco transferred to canvas, now in the Museo Civico in Como, which represents the *Madonna and Child*

between Sts. Cosmas and Damian: in the exhibition catalogue Natale attributed this fresco to an anonymous Lombard painter around 1515 and recognised the same hand in the fresco cycle in S. Donato at Sesto Calende, noting certain affinities with the early works of Cesare da Sesto. While Carminati's view remains plausible and interesting, it is not in fact shared by Natale (oral communication, June 1996).⁶

As far as the Pierpont Morgan sketchbook is concerned, we still need a modern critical edition of this very important document. Carminati has done an excellent job in cataloguing the paintings he considers autograph, but the drawings pose problems that go beyond the straightforward identification of Cesare's sources, in Leonardo, Raphael, Michelangelo or the antique. The impression is, as Carminati himself seems to imply in the single entries, that several loose sheets by Cesare once belonged to the sketchbook: an analysis of the watermarks should be pursued. Even more important is to understand how the artist collected and used his heterogeneous material: it is clear, for instance, that his copies and variants of Michelangelo's models were made after the latter's public works (especially the Sistine Ceiling), while his sketches after Raphael derived mostly from preparatory drawings. Cesare must have had privileged access to Raphael's workshop because his sketches record inventions for paintings that were not visible in Rome. Cesare's habit of drawing the front of a figure on the recto and the back of the same figure on the verso of the same sheet also deserves scrutiny.

All these observations should not be read as a negative review of the book. On the contrary, Carminati has assembled an impressive amount of material and has succeeded in an extremely difficult task: by adopting a selective attitude towards many unfounded attributions, he has been able to create a coherent and, in the main, convincing catalogue of an extraordinary artist. Cesare always maintained his personal touch (works such as the *Salome* in Vienna and the *Christ Carrying the Cross* in Grenoble are among the most original paintings executed in northern Italy around 1520), even if he never stopped consulting the ready-made models drawn in the Pierpont Morgan sketchbook which he carried with him till the very end of his life.

A few detailed points follow:

- p.32: The Thyssen *Christ* is by Bramantino and should not be attributed to Bramante.
 p.91: Andrea Sabatini's *Nativity* and the anonymous drawing in Dijon with the *Adoration of the Magi* have the same background simply because they are both derived from Dürer's woodcut of the *Adoration of the Magi*. The drawing is particularly intriguing: the right-hand side is a plagiarism of Dürer's woodcut (even the star above on the left is directly quoted), while the left-hand side is inspired by Cesare and some of the figures recur in the panel attributed to Cesare Magni reproduced on p.19.
 p.148: I do not intend to question the dating of the *Madonna* in Lisbon to the year 1508, but it seems to me that the first documented works in which a curtain, in the shape of a modern *dappia*, is drawn to the left are Raphael's *Madonna of the fish* and *Madonna of the curtain*. If this is true, the early chronology of Cesare's works must be rethought.
 p.241, D17: as David Ekserdjian has pointed out to

me, the group on the left-hand side derives from an engraving by Agostino Veneziano: Bartsch XIV, 51-1 (56).

- p.258, D34: The 'great winged angel who plays a trumpet' is a sensual Fame, while the sketch in the top right corner was later used to decorate the bosom of the *Salome* in Vienna.
 p.265, D40: If the executioner at the top of the sheet derives from Raphael's *Massacre of the Innocents* engraved by Marcantonio, the executioner at the bottom is a precise quotation after the fresco cycle on the ceiling of the Cancelleria.
 p.265, D41: The figure at the top left is a Judith, but the figure at the right is a David with the sling in his left hand: his pose (note above all his left-hand arm) is vaguely reminiscent of Donatello's and Michelangelo's bronze Davids.

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J. SHELL: *Pittori in bottega. Milano nel Rinascimento*, Turin [1995], but see also her dissertation, *Painters in Milan, 1490-1530*, New York University, 1987. Shell has profited from the palaeographic expertise of, and collaboration with, Grazioso Sironi.

P. GIUSTI: 'Il rapporto romano tra Cesare da Sesto e Andrea da Salerno e la formazione di Andrea Sabatini', in P. GIUSTI and P.L. DE CASTRIS: *Pittura del Cinquecento a Napoli. 1510-1540, forastieri e regnicoli*, Naples [1988], p.104, note 1, hypothetically attributes to Cesare a *Nativity* in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (reproduced by Carminati on p.47); G. AGOSTI and V. FARINELLA ('Qualche difficoltà nella carriera di Cesare da Sesto', *Prospettiva*, nos.53-56 [April 1988-January 1989], pp.331-32) hypothetically attribute to Cesare a *Madonna and Child between Sts Ambrose and Jerome*, once in the Oratorio di S. Corona and now in a private collection in Milan (reproduced by Carminati on p.11); F. SRICCHIA SANTORO, in: *Andrea da Salerno nel Rinascimento meridionale*, exh. cat., ed. G. PREVITALI, Certosa di Padula [1986], pp. 121-23 and 224-28.

For the source documenting the collaboration between Cesare and Balduinus in the apartment of Julius II, see G.L. FROMMEL: "'Disegno" und Ausführung: Ergänzungen zu Baldassare Peruzzi's figurealem Oeuvre', in *Kunst als Bedeutungsträger. Gedächtnis für Günter Bandmann*, ed. W. BUSCH, R. HACHSERR and E. TRIER, Berlin [1978], p.213. This crucial document is of considerable interest because it is the first and only written evidence of Cesare's Roman sojourn recorded in Vasari's *Vite*. It should be noted, however, that the document mentions only 'Cesar et Balduinus socij pictores'. It neither says that 'Cesar' is Cesare da Sesto nor that the two painters are Lombard. Cesare's sketchbook in the Pierpont Morgan Library gives, however, abundant visual evidence of his sojourn in Rome in these years, and there is no need to doubt that the Cesare of the document is indeed Cesare da Sesto. According to FROMMEL (*op. cit.*, p.245, note 58), Balduinus could be identified with the painter 'Baldino' who painted and gilded the banners of Pope Leo X a few years later. I wonder whether this painter could rather be Battista Balduini da Lecco, who was the brother-in-law of Bernardino Luini (for Balduini, see SHELL, *op. cit.* at note 1 above, pp.52 and 57, note 65). If this is so, Balduini was already back in Milan in 1510-11, but the possible connexion is an interesting one because MARCO ROSSI has suggested that Luini must have travelled to Rome between 1508 and 1511/12, 'perhaps even together with Cesare' da Sesto: see his review of Carminati's book in *Arte Lombarda*, CXXVI, 1 [1996], p.91.

The problem of the fresco cycles in Ostia is too complex to be dealt with in this review. It should be noted however that Vasari was not necessarily ill-informed, as is often assumed, when he wrote that 'Cesare da Milano' was active in the Rocca. The monochrome frescoes which were rediscovered in 1979 in the Episcopio have understandably aroused tremendous interest, but the attribution to Cesare of part of the cycle was premature. The painted architectural framework has been attributed to Peruzzi, while the supervisor of the team who frescoed the stories of Trajan was probably Jacopo Ripanda: the Bolognese artist had painted a

similar but now lost cycle in the Palazzo Santoro in Rome. Carminati rejects the attributions to Cesare, following the best discussion of the problem, v. FARINELLA: *Archeologia e pittura a Roma tra Quattrocento e Cinquecento*, Turin [1992], pp.100-23 and 132-59.

SRICCHIA SANTORO, *op. cit.* at note 2 above, p.225; A. PERISSA TORRINI: 'I disegni di Cesare da Sesto a Venezia', in *Leonardo e Venezia*, exh. cat., Palazzo Grassi, Venice [1992], p.403, note 3.

M. NATALE: 'Pittore Lombardo 1515 circa', in: *Collezioni Civiche di Como: proposte, scoperte, restauri*, exh. cat., Como [1981], p.22.

Another case of an unwitting misrepresentation concerns the beautiful drawing by Correggio in Dresden. According to Carminati (p.118, note 2), the drawing has been attributed to Cesare by AGOSTI and FARINELLA (*op. cit.* at note 2 above, p.332, note 8), but the two authors write only that 'a study by Correggio in Dresden was once attributed to Cesare'.