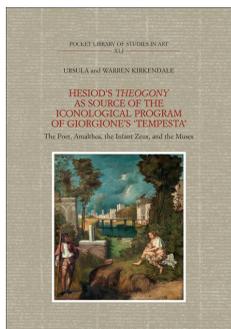


URSULA AND WARREN KIRKENDALE

HESIOD'S *THEOGONY*
AS SOURCE OF THE ICONOLOGICAL PROGRAM
OF GIORGIONE'S «TEMPESTA»

THE POET, AMALTHEA, THE INFANT ZEUS AND THE MUSES

Giorgione's *Tempesta* has been the most discussed enigma in the history of art, with over fifty different interpretations, based largely on ancient literary sources which were compared, unconvincingly, with very few elements of the painting. Hesiod's *Theogony*, well known in Venice when the painting was made, explains all of them, for the artist translated the poet's words literally into visual images, showing the shepherd Hesiod during the vision in which the muses consign



to him a poetic mission; the infant Zeus held by his nurse Almathea one year after being rescued from being devoured by his father Cronus; and the altar of two columns erected by Zeus to commemorate his victory over Cronus, corresponding to his own altar with two columns in his birthplace Lyktos. The lightening is, of course, the attribute of Zeus. The muses are not seen, since Hesiod says they are 'invisible', but he often mentions their nine houses, shown in the painting.

La «Tempesta» di Giorgione ha rappresentato il più discusso enigma nella storia dell'arte, con oltre cinquanta differenti interpretazioni principalmente basate su antiche fonti letterarie che sono state confrontate – in modo poco convincente – con pochissimi elementi del dipinto. La Teogonia di Esiodo, ben conosciuta a Venezia quando fu fatto il dipinto, li spiega più o meno tutti – animati e inanimati – avendo l'artista tradotto alla lettera le parole del poeta in immagini visuali.

URSULA KIRKENDALE received her Ph. D. in historical musicology in Bonn and taught at four important American universities, until, in 1971, after only one semester at Columbia University, a speech impairment (ictus) terminated her teaching, but not her research, highly acclaimed internationally, on Caldara, Handel, and Bach. Her husband, Ph. D. Vienna, is professor emeritus ordinarius of music history, University of Regensburg, Accademico Filarmonico h. c. Bologna, Dr. h. c. and honorary professor of the University of Pavia. He has published books dealing *inter al.*, with sixteenth-century art in Florence and Rome. The interdisciplinary work of both authors, residents of Rome, has centered on the «afterlife of Antiquity».

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