



97. *Coronation of the Virgin with Sts Francis, John the Baptist, Ivo and Dominic with Christ in Limbo between the Annunciation*, by Giovanni dal Ponte, c.1430. Tempera on panel, 194 by 215.7 cm. (Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence).

and *Child with angels* (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge), once the central panel of this polyptych, which is perhaps the work that is most keenly missed in the exhibition. Moreover, as Tartuferi underlines, there is a strong Renaissance imprint in the donor portraits in some of his altarpieces (nos.21 and 33). As Sbaraglio suggests, Giovanni showed signs of moving slowly but surely towards Masaccio's style, first in a superficial manner, in works dating probably from c.1425, like the predella of the triptych of St John the Evangelist in the National Gallery, London (no.24), then, in a more considered manner (nos.26, 31 and 33), then as if almost forgetting Masaccio, returning to a more traditional style. Nevertheless, the strength of this artist would seem to lie also in Gothic fantasies, such as the *Saviour* who appears to be almost dancing in the painting in the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (no.19) or the angel in flight in the *Annunciation* from the Philadelphia Museum of Art (no.28), on which Andrea Staderini writes eloquently.

The catalogue provides solid documentary evidence, enlivened by new discoveries by Alberto Lenza, while more interdisciplinary contributions, strongly encouraged by the new director Cecilie Hollberg, include Arianna Soldani's, which identifies the ancient form of guitar being played by the angels in the *Coronation of the Virgin* (no.37; Fig.97) previously known only from documents.

¹ Catalogue: *Giovanni dal Ponte, protagonista dell'umanesimo tardogotico fiorentino*. Edited by Lorenzo Sbaraglio and Angelo Tartuferi. 255 pp. incl. 246 col. + 53 b. & w. ill. (Giunti, Florence, 2016), €42. ISBN 978-88-09-83585-6.

² That the Würzburg triptych was painted for Lucca has been suspected for many years; the present writer noticed a quotation from it in a polyptych in the Pinacoteca Vaticana painted by a local artist, the Master of Barga, perhaps for the church in the village of Nozzano dedicated to that rare saint Acconcio, who appears in the polyptych; the church was rebuilt in 1412; see L. Pisani quoted in A. De Marchi: 'Pittori gotici a Lucca: indizi di un'identità complessa', in M.T. Filieri, ed.: exh. cat. *Sumptuosa Tabula Picta. Pittori a Lucca tra Gotico e Rinascimento*, Lucca (Museo nazionale di Villa Guinigi) 1998, p.417.

³ T. Bini: 'Della Basilica di San Frediano', *Atti dell'Accademia lucchese di scienze, lettere ed arti* 12 (1843), p.518.

⁴ Archivio di Stato di Lucca, Notai, Simone del fu Jacopo Alberti, 7th January 1404; B. Baroni: *Notizie genealogiche di famiglie lucchesi*, Biblioteca Governativa di Lucca, MS 1113, fol.593.

⁵ The chapel may not have been under the patronage of the Della Luna family in the early quattrocento; at the end of the fifteenth century it was rebuilt and probably provided with an altarpiece taken from another chapel (maybe that of S. Trinita) by Pandolfo Della Luna, perhaps because he had become prior of the church.

Caravaggism

Madrid, London, Dublin and Edinburgh

by JOHN GASH

THE SECOND HALF of 2016 witnessed two major exhibitions devoted to Caravaggio and, especially, to his 'followers': *Caravaggio and the Painters of the North* at the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid (closed 18th September 2016), and *Beyond Caravaggio* at the National Gallery, London (closed 15th January), where this reviewer saw it, transferring, with some modifications, to the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin (11th February–14th May), and to the Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh (17th June–24th September).¹ Both contained several rarely exhibited works, and both set out to demonstrate Caravaggio's impact, in the first exhibition, on painters from Northern Europe (almost entirely the Northern and Southern Netherlands and France), in the second, on painters who could be subsumed under the Caravaggesque umbrella whose pictures are in British and Irish collections. The Madrid display was concerned with the first thirty to forty years of the seventeenth century, but the title of the second exhibition also allowed for the inclusion of a few pictures from a later period by the likes of Mattia Preti, Nicolas Régnier in his Venetian phase, Georges de La Tour, and even a conundrum of a painting of *Tobias and the angel* from Corsham Court, Wiltshire (cat. no.34), which may be Dutch, but has an air of eighteenth-century England about it, and could be as late as the 1650s.²

Both exhibitions included pictures either by, or attributed to Caravaggio, but whereas in Madrid there was a substantial block of ten, running right up until the end of his Roman period, followed, at an interval, by two late works, *The martyrdom of St Ursula* (cat. no.46) and the controversial *Toothpuller* (no.47),



98. *The chicken vendor*, by the Pensionante del Saraceni. c.1615–22. Canvas, 79.5 by 72 cm. (Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid; exh. Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid).

which came across strongly as an original, the London show included six Caravaggios scattered throughout the exhibition. Two of them, the Gallery's own *Supper at Emmaus* (1601; no.7) and the National Gallery of Ireland's *Taking of Christ* (no.8; Fig.99), were tellingly juxtaposed between works by Serodine and Gramatica, all of which were commissioned by members of the Mattei family and hung in their Roman palace. Not to be outdone, the Thyssen show grouped together certain works that hung in that other major Caravaggesque repository, the palace of Vincenzo Giustiniani in Rome, including two giant canvases by Régnier (no.20) and Giusto Fiammingo (no.22) that made one wonder why this late Caravaggesque taste for gigantism had occurred – surely not simply owing to the scale of Vincenzo's Galleria, but rather perhaps out of a wish to push the boundaries of realism to their limit. Clearly this gigantism backfired, for Régnier's solitary, over-life-sized young *St John the Baptist* (no.20), a good-looking young Italian footballer-type, appears absurd on that scale. But perhaps that is all that Régnier could do, apart from applying his masterly Flemish sheen, to supersede its smaller prototype, Caravaggio's intensely brooding *St John the Baptist in the wilderness*, which appeared in both shows (Nelson-Atkins Museum, Kansas City; nos.7 and 33).

The Thyssen display was visually stimulating, separating but also intertwining works by Dutch, Flemish and French practitioners. It was conscious of the ethnic dynamics and political complexity of the era, bearing in mind that French-speaking artists such as Régnier (from Maubeuge) were, until Louis XIV's conquests of the 1660s and 1670s, citizens of the Spanish Netherlands: 'francese-fiammingo' as he dubbed himself to the Roman census-takers. Its highlights included, innovatively, two of Caravaggio's key Northern contemporaries in Rome, Elsheimer and Rubens, who could hardly be called Caravaggeschi, but who were in their own way almost as important as he was in the spawning of naturalism and chiaroscuro in Rome in the first decade of the seventeenth century. But most telling of all were certain comparisons of Netherlandish artists with each other rather than directly with Caravaggio, especially in a room devoted to ter Brugghen, Honthorst and Baburen. Their 'coloured Caravaggism', as Leonard Slatkes called it, was most effectively displayed in ter Brugghen's beautiful *Calling of St Matthew*, dating from 1617–19 as Sman convincingly argues (no.28; Fig.102). Indeed its juxtaposition at right-angles to the sometimes doubted *Supper at Emmaus* from Toledo, Ohio (no.28) – whose allegedly inscribed date of 1616 is still not visible, enabled one to confirm its attribution to the Utrecht painter due to some striking similarities of colour, technique and detail (including the vermilions, apple greens and oranges). A less conceptually and compositionally sophisticated work than the *Calling*, it must nonetheless



99. *The taking of Christ*, by Caravaggio. 1602–03. Canvas, 133.5 by 169.5 cm. (On permanent loan to the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin).

rank as ter Brugghen's second earliest known work, after *The denial of St Peter* (Spier collection, London; not in either exhibition), a giant work that may have been made for Vincenzo Giustiniani in Rome before 1614.

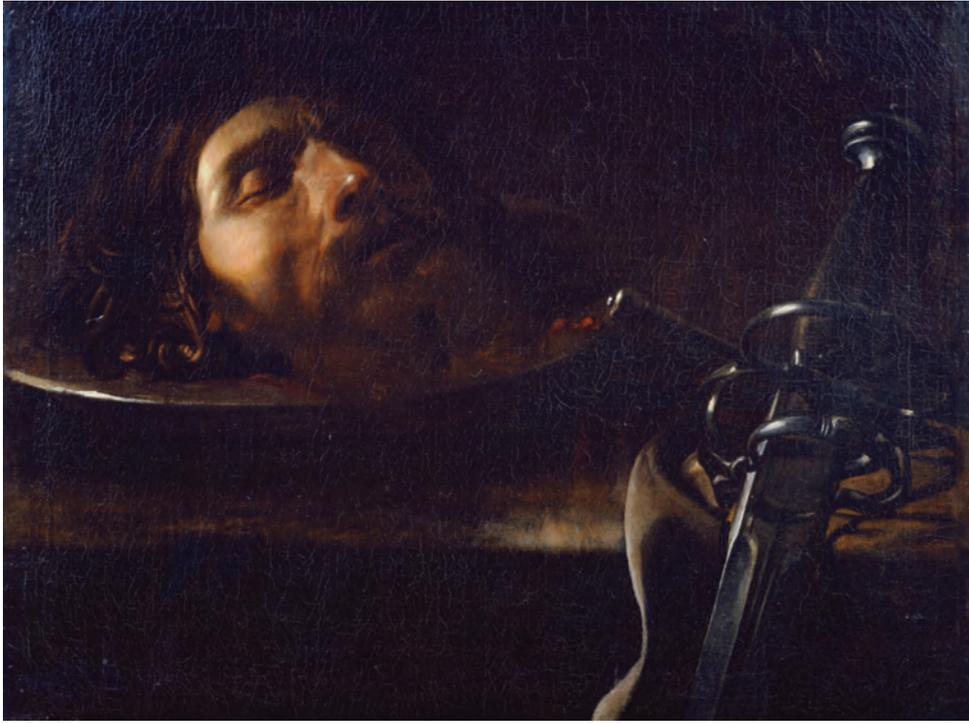
A room at the Thyssen contained one of Claude Vignon's finest, and rarely exhibited, Italian-period pictures, *St Paul writing his Epistles* (Sabauda Galley, Turin; no.37) alongside Vouet's *David with the head of Goliath* (1621; Palazzo Bianco, Genoa; no.41) and two striking works by the elusive Pensionante del Saraceni: the *Denial of St Peter* (Musée de la Chartreuse, Douai; no.38), whose uncanonical grey doublet could imply that he is not Peter but Job mocked by his wife, and the dazzling *Chicken vendor* from the Prado (no.39; Fig.98), a work flooded with light that makes the chicken-seller's straw hat glow and dots his eyes with highlights. Whether, however, the Pensionante was French, as Roberto Longhi thought and as the location of the works in this room seeks to corroborate, is open to question. The iconography of the *Chicken vendor*, as well as its technique and sensibility, could make it North Italian, in the wake of works like Vincenzo Campi's *Chicken seller* (Berra, Milan) but now shifted from Mannerist complication to Caravaggesque concision.

The sure-footed approach of Sman, reflected in the well-informed and probing catalogue entries, many, but not all of which, are by him, mean that one generally had few disquiets about the attributions. In discussing the Caravaggio paintings he makes the pertinent observation that Caravaggio's Roman and post-Roman chronology is still very uncertain. For this reviewer, that led to some tantalising thoughts: the *Christ crowned*

with thorns from Vicenza (no.9) might not be late Roman, as this reviewer has suggested, nor indeed non-autograph, as some have claimed, but a work done in Malta or Sicily. Its handling and morphology could not exclude it being one of the lost Passion pictures made for Niccolò di Giacomo in Messina in 1609. Similarly, the clever juxtaposition, at right-angles on a corner (is this an ideal formula for comparing pictures?) of the Prado *David with the head of Goliath* (no.5) with the Uffizi *Sacrifice of Isaac* (no.8) made it pretty clear that they were painted almost contemporaneously, and probably using the same boy model, whether that be in 1600–01 or 1603.

But it is in the area of the large Netherlandish colony of painters in early seicento Naples that one encounters one of the exhibition's most unexpected revelations: the lyrically populist *Adoration of the shepherds* from the Cobbe Collection, Hatchlands Park (no.51), plausibly given to Hendrick De Somer (rather than Van Somer), as he is now identified thanks to the documentary researches of Giuseppe Porzio.³ Almost of the quality of Honthorst, but in sketchier mode, it is closer to the style of another of Caravaggio's followers than to the master himself. We are definitely here 'beyond' Caravaggio, although in a way that is unlikely to have developed quite as it did without his catalytic example.

In *Beyond Caravaggio* Letizia Treves has made a very good fist of gathering together a remarkable and stylistically wide-ranging group of often little-known, high-quality canvases from public and private collections together with one or two that were, or might have been, once in the British Isles. The



100. *The head of St John the Baptist*, attributed to Bartolomeo Manfredi. c.1618. Canvas, 50 by 70 cm. (Robilant & Voena, London).

beautifully illustrated catalogue is especially strong in the additions that it makes to the provenances of several of the pictures.

The juxtaposition of Caravaggio's *Taking of Christ* and *Supper at Emmaus* (no.7) enabled one to observe two of Caravaggio's favoured registers: artificial and night lighting for Christ's arrest, and a less clearly manifested 'spiritual light' for the scene at Emmaus, which also includes natural, late afternoon or early evening light. It results in a much sharper set of contrasts and more sculptural modelling for the spotlight *Taking of Christ*, reminding us that Caravaggio's chiaroscuro was subject to constant adjustments in response to iconography more than to any chronological evolution of style, for the use of the same bearded model for St James (or St Peter) at the right of the *Emmaus*, and the helmeted soldier in the right middle-distance of the *Taking*, confirm the two pictures' proximity in date already indicated by the documents.

The exhibition also had interesting works by all the artists whom the connoisseur and papal physician Giulio Mancini linked, c.1620, with the 'Schola del Caravaggio': Ribera, Manfredi, Cecco del Caravaggio (Francesco Buoneri/Boneri) and Spadarino, and Saraceni 'in parte'. The Burleigh House Saraceni *St Gregory the Great* (no.18) is an enticing picture, full of detail, as are the two Ceccos: the Wellington Museum's iconographically elusive 'Musician' (no.3) and the Ashmolean's deteriorated *Recorder player with still life* (no.4), but Cecco, unlike Saraceni allows studio detail to dominate the ensemble, thereby losing out on Caravaggio's habitual unity of effect. Today there are no certain Manfredis permanently in Britain, which was compensated for by two beautiful and characteristic works,

the *Fortune teller* from Detroit (no.6) and the *Musicians and drinkers* from an Italian private collection (no.12), although it is unlikely that either of these were in distinguished English collections, such as that of Charles I's favourite, the Duke of Buckingham, who is known to have owned pictures by the artist. Yet paradoxically two pictures attributed to Manfredi, both expertly restored, were concurrently on show at a sizeable dealer's exhibition in London, *In Pursuit of Caravaggio* at

Robilant & Voena (closed 22nd January): a nearly full-length, youthful *St John the Baptist in the wilderness* and a powerful *Head of St John the Baptist* (Fig.100). Both attributions seem plausible for works at opposite ends of the second decade of the seventeenth century, but it is the late *Head of the Baptist* that is the more powerful, so much so that it was understandably once attributed to Valentin de Boulogne and is also close to Caravaggio's late style.

Whereas Manfredi's role in the dissemination and transformation of the Caravaggesque style is well established, that of Giovanni Antonio Galli, known as Spadarino, is still to be determined in a way that would confirm Mancini's inclusion of this elusive figure. Yet it is with Spadarino that one encounters one of the highlights of the National Gallery's exhibition, with two rarely seen works that have been linked to him: *Christ displaying his wounds* in the Perth Museum and Art Gallery (no.16), and the *Incredulity of St Thomas* from Wrotham Park (no.15).⁴ Each is in direct dialogue with Caravaggio's *Incredulity of St Thomas* (c.1602–03; Sanssouci, Potsdam), the Wrotham picture more obviously so, though in a more aristocratic vein; the Perth canvas boldly casts the viewer in the role of doubting Thomas, even though its iconography is more strictly tied to the tradition of Christ as the Man of Sorrows. Treves is not afraid to put question marks against authorship, as when she not unreasonably queries the ascription to Antiveduto Gramatica of the Wellington Museum's *Card players* (no.5; Fig.101). But when it comes to the Spadarinos, one would be inclined to reverse her designations. The attribution of the Wrotham picture to Spadarino, which she accompanies with a question



101. *The card players*, attributed to Antiveduto Gramatica. 1615–18. Canvas, 87 by 116 cm. (The Wellington Museum, Apsley House; exh. National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin).

mark, is increasingly espoused by specialists, whereas opinions on the Perth picture are more divided, or at least hesitant. Treves may be right in giving it to Spadarino, for the colours and powerful mood are not inconsistent with some of his best and most Caravaggesque concoctions, such as the Rieti *Guardian angel* and the Palazzo Barberini *Narcissus*. But one would have liked more argument rather than mere assertion, for the morphology is not totally characteristic of his known work. The two pictures reveal inconsistencies of technique that either indicate different artists or distinct stages in one artist's career. If that artist were Spadarino, the Perth picture would be the earlier of the two.

It was a great scoop to have an early work (c.1615) by Manfredi's putative friend, Valentin, the tightly foregrounded, lusciously painted and almost audible *Three musicians and drinkers* from Chatsworth House (no.37), evocative of Caravaggio's own early close-up focus, but more tactile in its paint textures.

Other particularly interesting works included Giovanni Francesco Guerrieri's *Lot and his daughters* (no.21) which, in juxtaposition with Artemisia Gentileschi's somewhat post-Caravaggesque, Guercinesque, *Susannah and the elders* from Burghley House (1622; no.22), showed how in both colour and aesthetic Guerrieri was clearly influenced by the elegant Tuscan style of the Gentileschi family, father and daughter, both represented in the exhibition. Treves's evocative catalogue entry blending iconographical information with comments on Guerrieri's interpretation, as well as the influence on him of other artists such as Gramatica and Honthorst, is typical of the engaging commentaries that make the catalogue both readable and perceptive. Gabriele Finaldi's discussion of Ribera's masterly *Martyrdom of St Bartholomew* (1634; no.29), which was until 1983 in the possession of the Cranstoun family in Scotland, helps to pinpoint just how far Ribera developed the power and eloquence of Caravaggio's tragic vision through his transition from a more literal realism consonant with Caravaggio's to a more nuanced and painterly naturalism, while maintaining Caravaggio's intense and unblinking focus on facial expression and bodily posture to convey suffering. In the case of Mattia Preti, also working in Naples, one wonders whether the composition of his *Crucifixion of St Peter* (c.1656–59; no.32) may not owe something to Caravaggio's lost first version of the same subject for the Cerasi Chapel, S. Maria del Popolo, Rome, hinted at in certain early copies or variants.

The final rooms were devoted to pictures by a range of Northern artists, many of them night scenes, including Georges de La Tour's *Dice players* (no.49). However, it seems unnecessary to add 'and studio' to the designation, for La Tour employed assistants for many of his later works without compromising their nature.

It is one of the fascinating features of our evolving insight into the styles of Caravaggio's followers that many of the works exhib-

ited in both venues were, until the twentieth century, claimed for Caravaggio himself. However, despite this ongoing, 'scientific' clarification, there remain one or two borderline paintings that could conceivably be by Caravaggio himself. One such candidate that could have usefully been exhibited in the London show is *The calling of Sts Peter and Andrew* (Royal Collection, London), which has a more than an even chance of being by the master. It would be fascinating to see it beside the National Gallery's *Supper at Emmaus*, but pending such an alliance, these two exhibitions have provided ample food for thought as well as aesthetic pleasure.

Comments on individual works follow:

Thyssen exhibition:

no.19. *Self-portrait with an easel*, (also called *Double portrait of Nicolas Régnier and Vincenzo Giustiniani*), attributed to Nicolas Régnier. (Fogg Museum, Harvard). The portrait on the easel is surely not of Vincenzo Giustiniani. It may be Régnier's master in Antwerp, Abraham Janssens, as suggested by John Spike.

Travelling exhibition:

no.5. *Card players*, by Antiveduto Gramatica(?) (The Wellington Museum, Apsley House) (Fig.101). Although the catalogue's doubts about the categorical attribution of this work to Gramatica are not unreasonable, given some differences of facture from the *Christ disputing with the doctors*, also in the exhibition (no.9), the two pictures need not be of the same date. As Gianni Papi has argued in his book on Gramatica, it is in several respects close to Gramatica's *Judith* in Stockholm. Its quality is altogether higher than the so-called 'Maestro dei Giocatori' with whom it is here tentatively con-

nected. It could have been done by a Northern painter close to Gramatica, though one operating in Italy given the Italian *tarocchi* cards. There is a compositionally very similar engraving, allegedly after a lost painting of *Card players*, said to be by Valentin. The mystery remains.

no.23. *Victorious earthly Love*, by Rutilio Manetti. (National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin). The attribution of this playful take on Caravaggio's Berlin *Amor vincit omnia* does not sit comfortably with Manetti. Gianni Papi's proposal at the National Gallery colloquium of Angelo Caroselli seems better.

no.36. *St Sebastian tended by the holy women*, by Nicolas Régnier. (Ferens Art Gallery, Hull). The proposed date of c.1626–30 seems too early for this distinctly classifying take on Caravaggio's naturalism. Late 1630s–early 1640s?

¹ Catalogues: *Caravaggio and the Painters of the North*. By Gert Jan van der Sman, with contributions by Francesca Cappelletti, Giovanna Capitelli, Annick Lemoine, Marije Osnabrugge and Dolores Delgado. 224 pp. incl. 115 col. and 22 b. & w. ills. (Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid, 2016), €42. ISBN 978-84-15113-83-6; *Beyond Caravaggio*. By Letizia Treves, with contributions from Aidan Weston-Lewis, Gabriele Finaldi, Christian Tico Seifert, Adriaan E. Waiboer, Francesca Whitlum-Cooper and Marjorie E. Wieseman. 208 pp. incl. 112 col. and 3 b. & w. ills. (National Gallery Company, London, 2016), £25. ISBN 978-1-85709-602-6.

² At the colloquium at the Gallery devoted to the exhibition held in October 2016, the name of Karel du Jardin (c.1622–78) was raised – to some initial approval.

³ G. Porzio: *La Scuola di Ribera: Giuseppe Dò, Bartolomeo Passante, Enrico Fiammingo*, Naples 2014.

⁴ J. Gash: 'A Caravaggesque "Christ" in Scotland', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 151 (2009), pp.682–90; J. Gash: 'Spadarino's "Doubting Thomas" rediscovered', *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 157 (2015), pp.678–81.



102. *The calling of St Matthew*, by Hendrick ter Brugghen. c.1617–19. Canvas, 153.5 by 195 cm. (Musée d'art moderne André Malraux, Le Havre; exh. Thyssen-Bornemisza Museum, Madrid).