

Howard Hibbard

Source: Hibbard, H., 1983. *Caravaggio*, London: Thames and Hudson, pp.343–87. Grateful acknowledgement is made to this source for permission to reproduce material.

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Giulio Mancini, *Considerazioni sulla pittura*. Manuscript of c.1617–1621 with additions and corrections, published with critical apparatus by A. Marucchi (I, Rome, 1956) and with art-historical commentary by L. Salerno (II, 1957). The passages concerning Caravaggio are reordered here to give first his biography and a few bits of incidental information, then two versions of Mancini's attempt to characterize the schools of Roman painting.

On Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio

Our times owe much to Michelangelo da Caravaggio for the method of painting he introduced, which is now quite widely followed.

He was born in Caravaggio of honorable citizens since his father was majordomo and architect to the Marchese of Caravaggio. At a young age he studied diligently for four or six years in Milan, though now and again he would do some outrageous thing because of his hot nature and high spirits.

At the age of about twenty he moved to Rome where, since he had no money, he lived with Pandolfo Pucci from Recanati, a beneficiary of St. Peter's, because he was able to work for his room by doing unpleasant work. Worse, he was given nothing but salad to eat in the evening, which served as appetizer, entrée, and dessert – as the corporal says, as accompaniment and toothpick. After a few months he left with little recompense, calling his benefactor and master 'Monsignor Salad.'

During his stay he painted some copies of devotional images that are now in Recanati. He painted for sale a boy who cries out because he has been bitten by a lizard that he holds in his hand, and then he painted another boy who is peeling a pear with a knife, and a portrait of an innkeeper who had given him lodgings, and the portrait of [missing].

In the meantime he was struck by sickness and, being without money, was obliged to enter the hospital of the Consolazione, where during his convalescence he made many pictures for the prior, who brought them to Seville, his home.

Afterward, I have been told, he stayed with Cavalier Giuseppe [Cesari d'Arpino] and Monsignor Fantin Petriagnani, who gave him the comfort of a room in which to live. During that period he painted many pictures, and in particular a Gypsy who tells a young man his fortune, the Flight into Egypt, the Penitent Magdalen, a St. John the Evangelist.

These were followed by the Deposition of Christ in the Chiesa Nuova, the pictures in San Luigi, the Death of the Virgin for Santa Maria della Scala, which the Duke of Mantua now has since the fathers of that church had it removed because Caravaggio portrayed a courtesan as the Virgin; the Madonna of Loreto in Sant'Agostino, and the Madonna for the altar of the Palafrenieri in St. Peter's. He also did many paintings now owned by the most illustrious [Cardinal Scipione] Borghese, the Cerasi Chapel in Santa Maria del Popolo, and many paintings privately owned by the Mattei, the Giustiniani, and the Sannesio.

Finally, as a result of certain events he almost lost his life, and in defending himself Caravaggio killed his foe with the help of his friend Onorio Longhi and was forced to leave Rome. He first reached Zagarolo where he was secretly housed by the Prince. There he painted a Magdalen and a Christ going to Emmaus, which was bought by Costa in Rome.

With these earnings he moved on to Naples, where he painted various works.

From there he went to Malta where he did some paintings that pleased the Grand Master, who as a token of his appreciation (it is said) gave him the Cloak of his Order. Caravaggio left Malta with the hope of being pardoned, but at Port Ércole he was stricken by a malignant fever and there, between thirty-five and forty years of age, at the height of his success, he died of privation without any help, and was buried nearby.

It cannot be denied that for single figures, heads, and coloration he attained a high point, and that the artists of our century are much indebted to him. But his great knowledge of art went together with extravagance of behavior. Caravaggio had an only brother, a priest, a man of letters and of high morals who, when he heard of his brother's fame, wanted to see him and, filled with brotherly love, arrived in Rome. He knew that his brother was staying with Cardinal Del Monte, and being aware of his brother's eccentricities, he thought it best to speak first to the Cardinal, and explain everything to him, which he did. He was well received by the Cardinal, who asked him to return in three days. He did so. In the meantime, the Cardinal called Michelangelo and asked him if he had any relatives; he answered that he did not. Unwilling to believe that the priest would tell him a lie about a matter that could be checked, and that would do him no good, he asked among Caravaggio's compatriots whether he had brothers, and who they were, and so discovered that it was Caravaggio who had lied. After three days the priest returned and was received by the Cardinal, who sent for Michelangelo. At the sight of his brother he declared that he did not know him and that he was not his brother. So, in the presence of the Cardinal, the poor priest said tenderly: 'Brother, I have come from far away to see you, and thus I have fulfilled my desire; as you know, in my situation, thank God, I do not need you for myself or for my children, but rather for your own children if God will give you the blessing of marriage and see to your succession. I hope God will do you good as I will pray to His Divine Majesty during my services, as will be done by your sister in her virginal and chaste prayers.' But Michelangelo was not moved by his brother's ardent and stimulating words of love, and so the good priest left without even a goodbye. Thus one cannot deny that Caravaggio was a very odd person, and that his eccentricities served to shorten his life by at least ten years and somewhat diminished the fame he had acquired through his profession. Had he lived longer he would have grown, to the great benefit of students of art.

... when a poor painter needs to sell a picture at a lower price than he had done in previous times, he loses his reputation as indeed Caravaggio did when he sold the *Boy Bitten by a Lizard* for fifteen *giuli*, and the *Gypsy* for eight *scudi*

Before going further, we must consider the aspects of figures in order that they look appropriate, with expression and movement such as will portray a person in a particular activity. As a result we can comprehend how poorly some modern artists paint. For example, when they wish to portray the Virgin Our Lady they depict some dirty prostitute from Ortaccio, as Michelangelo da Caravaggio did when he portrayed the Death of the Virgin in the picture of the Madonna della Scala, which the good Fathers rejected for that reason and perhaps consequently Caravaggio suffered so much trouble during his lifetime. ...

... now that we have reached the century of living artists, I should like to propose the following ideas in order to examine them, namely:

That these living painters be divided into four categories or classes, or better, schools, one of which is that of Caravaggio, which had a wide following and was taken up with vigor and knowledge by Bartolomeo Manfredi, Spagnoletto [Giuseppe Ribera], Francesco called also Cecco del Caravaggio, Spadarino [Giacomo Galli], and partially by Carlo [Saraceni] Veneziano. A characteristic of this school is lighting from one source only, which beams down without reflections, as would occur in a very dark room with one window and the walls painted black, and thus with the light very strong and the shadows very deep, they give powerful relief to the painting, but in an unnatural way, something that was never thought of or done before by any other painter like Raphael, Titian, Correggio, or others. This school, working in this way, is closely tied to nature, which is

always before their eyes as they work. It succeeds well with one figure alone, but in narrative compositions and in the interpretation of feelings, which are based on imagination and not direct observation of things, mere copying does not seem to me to be satisfactory, since it is impossible to put in one room a multitude of people acting out the story, with that light coming in from a single window, having to laugh or cry or pretending to walk while having to stay still in order to be copied. As a result the figures, though they look forceful, lack movement, expression, and grace, as is the case with this style, as we shall see. Of this school I do not think that I have seen a more graceful and expressive figure than the Gypsy who foretells good fortune to a young man, by Caravaggio, a picture owned by Signor Alessandro Vittrici, a gentleman of Rome. Here too, while using the same method, nonetheless he shows the Gypsy's slyness with a false smile as she takes the ring of the young man, who shows his naiveté and the effects of his amorous response to the beauty of the little Gypsy who tells his fortune and steals his ring.

(The four schools of living painters)

In the present century there followed the most modern painters, who it seems to me achieved perfection through intelligence, style, and force of coloring, in landscapes and in perspectives. Our century can be divided into four schools that represent four different styles of painting.

The first should be that of the Carracci.

...

The second school is that of Michelangelo da Caravaggio, which is forceful and excellently colored. There are many works by him: the Deposition from the Cross in the Chiesa Nuova, the Madonna dell'Horto [*sic*] in Sant'Agostino, the chapel of St. Matthew in the church of San Luigi dei Francesi, and many privately owned pictures, and in particular those in the house of Marchese Giustiniani and of Signor Alessandro Vittrici; on the right side in the church of the Madonna della Scala, and in Monte Cavallo there are many things in the room before the chapel [here he seems to be talking of paintings by Caravaggio's followers], and many other pictures in private houses. In this century it has been taken up and followed by many, and its characteristic is a certain naturalness.

The third school is that of Cavalier Giuseppe Cesari. ...