

Caravaggio's 'Crucifixion of St Andrew' and the problem of autograph replicas

Last year the Cleveland Museum of Art exhibited its 'Crucifixion of St Andrew' by Caravaggio side-by-side with the so-called 'Back-Vega' version, raising once more the question of whether the artist painted replicas of his compositions. Any answer must acknowledge the limitations of scientific analysis of the paintings.

by RICHARD E. SPEAR

AMID THE NEVER-ENDING attention paid to Caravaggio in exhibitions and publications, two issues stand out: first, the question of whether there are autograph replicas – meaning faithful second versions, as distinct from variations, such as those of the *Fortune teller* in the Capitoline Museums, Rome, and the Musée du Louvre, Paris – and second, what scientific analysis of Caravaggio's paintings might contribute to this and other problems of attribution. Two recent books, a mini-exhibition and a technical app all devoted to Caravaggio's *Crucifixion of St Andrew* epitomise these issues and resolve one doubt about the autograph status of a replica.

The *Crucifixion of St Andrew* in the Cleveland Museum of Art (Fig.3) is recognised by all Caravaggio scholars as autograph and specifically as 'la Crocifissione di Santo Andrea' by Caravaggio, which, his biographer G.P. Bellori recorded, was taken to Spain by Juan Alonso Pimentel y Herrera, the Conde of Benavente, viceroy in Naples, when he left the city in mid-1610.¹ Whether it was painted during Caravaggio's first (1606–07) or second (1609–10) stay in Naples has been debated, although the earlier date is very convincing and is now generally favoured.²

The highest quality replica of Cleveland's painting, widely known as the Back-Vega *Crucifixion* after its previous owners, Emmerich and Christa Back-Vega, and now in the Spier Collection, London (Fig.4), has been rejected by most scholars, other than Mina Gregori, Didier Bodart and Pierluigi Carofano.³ An attribution to Louis Finson (c.1580–1617) has frequently been proposed, due to evidence that in 1619 a *Crucifixion of St Andrew* in Amsterdam was reported to have belonged to Finson's heirs. At the time, four painters submitted an expertise confirming Caravaggio's authorship.⁴ Two other replicas exist of the Cleveland painting, one formerly in Dijon Cathedral

1. Detail of Fig.3, showing the soldier's armour.

2. Detail of Fig.4, showing the soldier's armour.

and the other in the Museo de Santa Cruz, Toledo, but because of their inferior quality they have never been promoted as originals.

The attribution to Finson of the Back-Vega version was challenged in 2016 when Gianni Papi published a monograph on the painting following its restoration by Bruno Arciprete, who previously restored Caravaggio's *Seven acts of mercy* (Pio Monte della Misericordia, Naples) and *Flagellation* (Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples).⁵ According to Papi, the Back-Vega *Crucifixion* is the painting that was in Amsterdam in 1619 and its attribution to Caravaggio was correct. For him, its stylistic features are 'hard to reconcile with the work of a copyist but reveal the freedom of execution typically found when a painter (Caravaggio in this case) creates a second version of an earlier work'.⁶ Arciprete expressed a similar opinion in his report on the technical analysis of the painting, published in Papi's book: 'instead of the immediacy of execution that might be expected in a first version, we find the sureness characteristic of an artist repeating a composition that he had already worked out'.⁷ Style and quality apart, the Back-Vega painting, Arciprete continues, 'has a series of features – type of canvas, components used to make a ground with a brown tone, the use of an extremely limited palette – characteristic of works from Caravaggio's final period, both in terms of technique and materials used'. He also pointed to some differences between the Back-Vega and Cleveland paintings, the main one being that in the former there are four loops of rope tying the saint's left wrist to the cross whereas there are only three in the Cleveland *Crucifixion*. Typical of further changes of implied significance is that 'the saint's navel is larger' in the Back-Vega painting.

1 G.P. Bellori: *Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti moderni*, Rome 1672, p.214.

2 For the history of the painting, its date and iconography and the three copies, see A.T. Lurie and D. Mahon: 'Caravaggio's Crucifixion of Saint Andrew from Valladolid', *The Bulletin of The Cleveland Museum of Art* 94 (1977),

pp.2–24. The later date is favoured by Mina Gregori and Maurizio Calvesi.

3 Having earlier rejected the painting as a copy, in 2011 Gregori wrote an expertise in its favour; Bodart wrote a similarly positive expertise the next year, which is published in G. Papi: *Caravaggio: 'La Crocifissione di sant'Andrea'*

Back-Vega / The Back-Vega 'Crucifixion of St Andrew', Milan 2016, p.10). For Carofano's opinion, see P. Carofano: 'Ai margini della Sacra Famiglia con san Giovannino del Caravaggio e una riflessione sulla Crocifissione di sant'Andrea ex collezione Back-Vega: la fortuna delle repliche e delle copie', in P. di Loreto,

ed.: *Una vita per la storia dell'arte: Scritti in memoria di Maurizio Marini*, Rome 2015, pp.97–116.

4 D. Bodart: *Louis Finson*, Brussels, 1970, pp.234–36.

5 Papi, *op. cit.* (note 3).

6 *Ibid.*, p.14.

7 *Ibid.*, pp.78–81, esp. p.78.





3. *Crucifixion of St Andrew*, by Caravaggio. 1606–07. Canvas, 202.5 by 152.7 cm. (Cleveland Museum of Art; Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Fund, 1976.2).



4. *Crucifixion of St Andrew*, here identified as a copy after Caravaggio. Canvas, 198 by 148.5 cm. (Spier Collection, London).

As in many other publications of alleged original replicas, extensive technical data are presented as evidence of originality. Papi's book publishes both Arciprete's report and a longer one on the 'examinations and diagnostics carried out on the Back-Vega *Crucifixion of St Andrew*' prior to restoration by Ars Mensurae di Stefano Ridolfi in Rome, which details the findings by way of ultraviolet fluorescence, infra-red reflectography (IR), X-radiography and X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy (XRF) 'to identify pigments and painting techniques'.⁸ Potentially the most significant finding by way of IR analysis is some underdrawing and minor pentimenti. There also are 'areas of shade', which have been painted *en réserve*. Moreover, there appears to be 'an incision on the top edge of the saint's red loincloth'. Twenty XRF points are recorded in a table with comments on the colours and a second table lists 'the chemical elements identified and the pigments that may correspond to them'. A composite X-radiograph of the entire painting is illustrated in Papi's book but there is no IR image to confirm the supposed findings in it. Instead, many details of the Cleveland and Back-Vega paintings are juxtaposed as evidence of the autograph quality of the Back-Vega replica.

For six weeks last autumn, Cleveland's newly restored *Crucifixion* and the Back-Vega replica (which had been restored again since the publication of Papi's book), were exhibited in the Cleveland Museum of Art. The museum's paintings conservator Dean Yoder, who was responsible for the two-year conservation project, prepared a detailed report on his findings that is now available on an interactive app.⁹ Divided into five sections, it provides, in exemplary fashion, an overview and thorough technical data on the examination (canvas, ground, support, paint), conservation, markings (incisions) and scientific analysis. The data available on the app are incredibly detailed. For example, there is an interactive photograph of the *Crucifixion* with fifty XRF location spots that, when opened, report on the elements detected and possible pigments used (XRF does not identify pigments but only indicates what they might be on the basis of the detected elements).

As anticipated, Yoder's examination provides solid additional evidence that the Cleveland painting is an original work (the major pentimento in the artist's repositioning of the old woman's hands had been known). Yet, despite all of the expected 'characteristics' of Caravaggio's working method and materials (for example, double ground layers, areas left *en réserve*, many incisions and *abbozzi*), the extensive laboratory data cannot confirm Caravaggio's authorship but only confirm their compatibility with other data gathered from his authentic works, as will be discussed further below.

The opportunity of comparing the Cleveland and Back-Vega paintings side-by-side left no doubt in this reviewer's mind or eye that the latter is only a good copy. Detail after detail – Andrew's rib cage, the old woman's white cloth (painted by Caravaggio on top of her dress and chest, whereas in the Back-Vega copy it is *en réserve*, as was the soldier's beard, again unlike the Cleveland painting), the white and yellow fabrics at the left, the soldier's ear – reveals a striking qualitative difference that cannot sustain the notion that the execution of the Back-Vega painting is typical of an autograph replica. St Andrew's face and beard in the two versions are strikingly different: in Cleveland, it has the richly



5. Detail of Fig.3, showing St Andrew's head.

modulated, expressive brushwork of Caravaggio's late style (Fig.5), in the Back-Vega copy the strokes are simpler and flatter, resulting in a much less dramatic, less pathetic head (Fig.6). Other details confirm this impression. The highlights on the soldier's armour in the Cleveland painting, for example, are freely executed and shimmer with light (Fig.1), whereas in the Back-Vega painting they are unnaturally regular and dull (Fig.2). Similar observations pertain to the saint's right foot, which in Cleveland is modelled with an extraordinary subtlety of brushwork, creating vibrancy in the flesh tones and lighting (Fig.7), whereas the foot in the Back-Vega painting, most obviously its toes, is relatively inert (Fig.8). These are not differences between the 'immediacy of execution' in the Cleveland painting and any 'sureness' in the Back-Vega replica. Instead, everything in the Back-Vega version is simplified, reduced to surface shapes, as so often occurs in copies.

The same conclusion was reached by Erin Benay in her recent, generously illustrated monograph on Cleveland's *Crucifixion*.¹⁰ She effectively and closely compares the painting with the Back-Vega copy, summarises its conservation and confirms its date as 1606–07, adding that the Back-Vega version was made from a tracing, as indicated when a polyester-film tracing of it was laid over the Cleveland painting, revealing a nearly identical match in the placement of the figures. She discusses in detail the painting's iconography and earlier representations of the story, which reveal the originality of Caravaggio's concept.¹¹ Benay discovered a biography of St Andrew published in 1592–93 by Paolo Regio, a bishop of Vico Equense on the Bay of Naples, that could well have been a textual

8 *Ibid.*, pp.82–94.

9 D. Yoder: 'Conserving Caravaggio's "Crucifixion of Saint Andrew": a technical study', Cleveland Museum of Art 2017, see <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/conserving-caravaggio/id1315714893?ls=1&mt=8> and <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=org.clevelandart.caravaggio>, accessed 14th May 2018.

10 E.E. Benay: *Exporting Caravaggio. The Crucifixion of Saint Andrew (Cleveland Masterwork Series 4)*, Cleveland 2017.

11 Benay's proposal (*ibid.*, pp.55–58) that a painting by Scarsellino was influential on Caravaggio's composition is not convincing. If one of the bystanders has a large goitre, as Benay believes, it is misplaced anatomically.

12 Lurie and Mahon, *op. cit.* (note 2), p.14.

13 Benay, *op. cit.* (note 10), p.58.

14 Benay's suggestion that that the design of the primary figures is purposely 'a synecdoche of the cross itself, a semiotic doubling that evokes both iconographic traditions associated with Andrew's cross' (Latin and X) seems doubtful: *ibid.*, pp.60–61, figs.51–52.

15 *Ibid.*, p.84.

16 *Ibid.*, pp.104 and 139.

17 A concept that Benay acknowledges draws on A. Henning: 'From sacred to profane cult image: on the display of Raphael's "Sistine Madonna" in Dresden', in G. Feigenbaum and S. Ebert-Schifferer, eds.: *Sacred Possessions: Collecting Italian Religious Art, 1500–1900*, Los Angeles 2011, pp.171–88.



6. Detail of Fig.4, showing St Andrew's head.

source for Caravaggio and his patron. As Benay explains, Andrew's relics in Amalfi 'formed an essential part of the saint's cult' in the region, to which Caravaggio's patron, the Conde de Benavente, was devoted (Benavente was involved in renovating the crypt housing Andrew's relics in Amalfi Cathedral, which he had visited). The close links between the iconography of the painting, the patron and its local significance raise the question of the motivation for and function of the three full-size copies of this privately owned altarpiece.

In the footsteps of Anne Lurie ('it is not easy to portray muscles suddenly paralyzed', she observed),¹² Benay acknowledges the difficulty of portraying an immobilised figure (the man at the left on the ladder), whose purpose – to tie or untie? – is ambiguous without knowing the story that Andrew, tied to the cross, wanted to die there, yet his executioners were ordered to untie him. The apostle's wish was granted when the executioners' arms were miraculously struck with paralysis. Benay suggests that 'rather than definitively answer questions inherent in this story of a saint's death, Caravaggio leaves them to the viewer to resolve'. Like the bystanders, we are 'somatically halted, unable to resolve the (pictorial) puzzle before us'.¹³ A more straightforward explanation might be that Caravaggio failed convincingly to convey the thwarted action of an executioner whose arms had become powerless.¹⁴

As the curious title of the book, *Exporting Caravaggio*, suggests, Benay's main interest is the reception of the *Crucifixion of St Andrew* in Spain. The Conde of Benavente may initially have installed his painting in the Palatine Chapel in the royal palace in Naples, but documentation is lacking. His

'affinity for Saint Andrew', and hence Caravaggio's painting, 'was not simply a matter of private devotion or artistic taste but rather an aspect of his public, viceregal image'.¹⁵ Benay argues that once the *Crucifixion* arrived in Spain, it had a significant impact on Spanish collecting and artists. She proposes that it hung in the Conde's family castle, La Fortelaza, before it was documented in 1653 in the Conde's palace in nearby Valladolid. Benay analyses the inventories of the Conde's collection dated 1611, just after his return from Naples, and suggests that he had a 'proclivity for night scenes' and tenebrism. Two lost paintings by Caravaggio, a *S. Gennaro* ('origl. de Carabjo') and *Christ washing the feet of his disciples* ('origl de Carabayo') were inventoried then, together with an unattributed '*San Andrés original*', which Benay speculates could have been the Cleveland painting. There is no indication of its size, however, or of its specific iconography. It would be puzzling if by 1611 Caravaggio's name had been lost for an altarpiece when it was known for two other, presumably less important, paintings.

The concept of *Exporting Caravaggio* encapsulates Benay's analysis of the painting in the context of 'a complex system of circulation' and 'global transcultural exchange'. She concludes that 'Caravaggio's picture may in fact be more Spanish than it is Italian' due to what she calls 'the fluidity of meanings associated with multiple viewing locations [...] In the process of relocation, the object itself transforms, participating in different sets of cultural expectations in different sites'.¹⁶ That surely is so, but it inflates the effect of dislocation to assume that 'each time the [Cleveland] painting was moved' its interpretation was 'reset to zero'.¹⁷

Combined, Yoder's and Benay's work exemplifies the benefits of technical art history, that is, the approach of examining a painting both historically and technically, and by applying skilled connoisseurship.¹⁸ Some art historians and conservators who are wed to laboratory analysis argue that connoisseurship is too subjective, as was claimed in a recent case of litigation, *Thwaytes v. Sotheby's*, in 2014.¹⁹ In 2006 Lancelot William Thwaytes sold a replica of Caravaggio's *Cardsharps* through Sotheby's to Denis Mahon. The painting had been catalogued as a copy, but after it had been restored Mahon announced that it was an original. Thwaytes proceeded to sue the auction house for negligence because it had judged his *Cardsharps* primarily on the basis of quality (although Sotheby's did take X-radiographs into account); because it had relied on the connoisseurship of in-house experts instead of seeking opinions from Caravaggio scholars; and especially because it did not examine the painting with infra-red technology. The claimant submitted massive technical evidence indicating that the painting could not be a copy and that, to the contrary, it was full of Caravaggio 'characteristics', many of them the same as those said to be present in the Back-Vega copy. The sixteen-day trial ended with complete exoneration of Sotheby's practice and with a vindication of connoisseurship in establishing authenticity. As so often occurs when 'new' works by Caravaggio appear, and as the judge astutely recognised, technical data can be sorely abused.

If it is claimed that the Back-Vega copy has been re-examined through technical art history, then only one of its approaches was adequate, the historical study. The technical data were presented with that troublesome word 'characteristic', as if it means idiosyncratic of Caravaggio and not potentially commonplace among his contemporaries and copyists.

¹⁸ The literature on technical art history is too large to cite here. Among recent publications related to Caravaggio, see the ambitious application of technical art history in R. Vodret, G. Leone, M. Cardinali, M.B. De Ruggieri and G.S. Ghia, eds.: *Caravaggio: Opere a Roma. Tecnica e stile / Caravaggio: Works in Rome. Technique and Style*, Milan 2016, and

the present author's review of that publication in *Renaissance Quarterly* 70 (2017), pp.1062–65. The leading scholars of Caravaggio's œuvre from this perspective are Marco Cardinali and Maria Beatrice De Ruggieri; see an interview with them, 'Caravaggio repliche o copie? Parlo due specialisti mentre a Milano inizia "Dentro Caravaggio"',

at <http://www.aboutartonline.com/2017/09/26/caravaggio-repliche-copie-parlano-due-specialisti-milano-inizia-dentro-caravaggio>, accessed 14th May, and their essay cited at note 31 below. Also see M. Cardinali: 'Le copie da Caravaggio tra connoisseurship, critica d'arte e technical art history', in G.S. Ghia and C. Strinati, eds.: exh. cat. *Caravaggio*

nel patrimonio del Fondo Edifici di Culto. Il Doppio e la Copia, Rome (Galleria Nazionale di Arte Antica di Roma, Palazzo Barberini) 2017, pp.37–46.

¹⁹ High Court of Justice, London, case no.HC-2012-000042. The present author served as an expert witness for Sotheby's and is preparing a book on the case.

The minor pentimenti cited are inconsequential because copyists time and again adjusted their copies. Underdrawing and incisions, too, have no significance per se. They have been found in works by Caravaggio's followers as well as by other painters, and therefore must be studied in comparison with Caravaggio's specific practice (the unavailability of IR imagery of the Back-Vega copy precluded any such comparisons). Even so, it is premature to isolate features of Caravaggio's practice and materials because comparative technical data from a substantial corpus of early seventeenth-century Italian paintings are lacking, although progress in this is being made, as described below.

A clear warning of the hazards of relying on technical 'characteristics' emerged from a recent examination of a *St John the Baptist* in Stockholm, a copy of a well-known prototype by Caravaggio in Palazzo Corsini, Rome.²⁰ The technical report reveals that 'the preparatory layers of the painting are very similar to those used by Caravaggio and many of his followers', and furthermore, that examination clearly shows 'the painter's independent choice of working up the position of the eyes', that the composition is 'characterised by subtle, dark underdrawing' and that 'the author of the Stockholm painting slightly changes the movement and the *chiaroscuro* of some of the folds'.²¹ In addition, an uncommon copper-containing pigment was identified that is similar to those found in several of Caravaggio's paintings. The warning could not be clearer: to compare one or even many technical aspects in a painting (let alone to find significance in an extra loop of rope or a larger navel) with those found in a Caravaggio is no sure sign of the same artist at work.

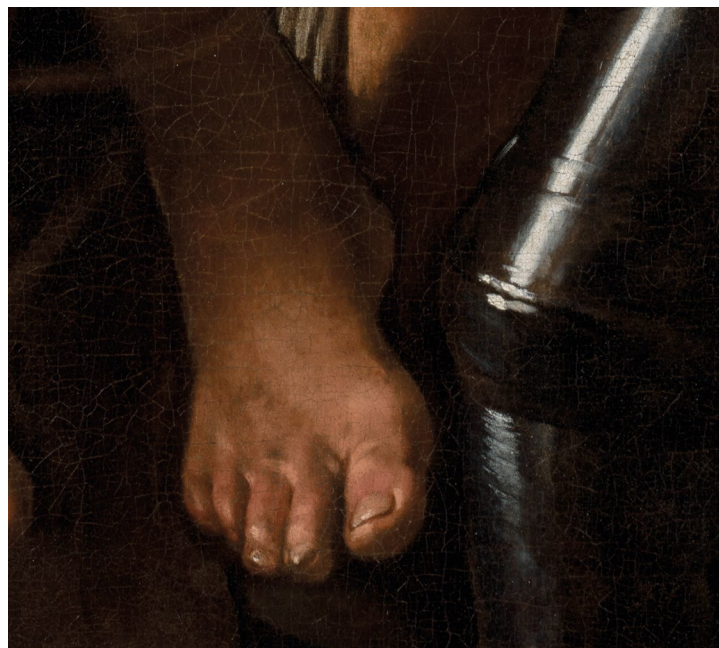
Another trap into which Thwaytes fell was to assert that a tracing cannot have been used to create a replica since the outlines do not all match up. (Evidently there is a stigma attached to mechanical transfer, in spite of the fact that it could have been carried out by the original artist as well as by a copyist.) It was assumed that any slippage that resulted from the difficulty of maintaining registration should be in one direction. An exhibition last year at Palazzo Barberini, Rome, that focused on two pairs or replicas, provides cautionary, contrary evidence. An overlay of the outlines of Caravaggio's *Flagellation* in Naples and those of a copy in S. Domenico Maggiore, Naples, clearly reveals some inconsistent

overlapping in places (Fig.9): notably in the legs of the man on the right, where the outlines of the copy are in some places above and/or to the right of the contours in the original, in others below and/or to the left of them. The *Flagellation* is a large painting, from which the copyist almost certainly made multiple tracings, yet the inconsistencies in the contours indicate that, even when handling partial tracings, slippage can occur.²²

In addition to the *Flagellation*, the pair of paintings of *St Francis in meditation* from S. Pietro, Carpineto Romano, and the Cappuccini Church in Rome, were fully analysed in the catalogue of the same exhibition, where the prevailing opinion that the former is the original version is reiterated. In this instance, technical data, more than connoisseurship, support that opinion ('opinion' because interpretation of most technical data is subjective); some dissent remains, however, on the basis of the quality of the two versions.²³ In any case, there is little support for accepting both versions as original and it is, therefore, unlikely that one of them is an autograph replica.

The lead contributors to the Palazzo Barberini exhibition were Marco Cardinali and Maria Beatrice De Ruggieri of Emmebi Diagnostica Artistica studio in Rome, who also were fundamental contributors to the volumes *Caravaggio: Opere a Roma*.²⁴ Regrettably, they were not involved in the more recent technical undertaking that resulted in last year's exhibition *Dentro Caravaggio* at Palazzo Reale, Milan, the catalogue of which is accompanied by a 365-page CD-ROM e-book that makes use of their work and the structure of presentation of technical data in *Caravaggio: Opere a Roma*.²⁵ The version of *Boy bitten by a lizard* (National Gallery, London) owned by the Roberto Longhi Foundation, Florence, was exhibited with the claim that a pentimento of dubious existence proves its originality. The series of macro-photographs in the catalogue and e-book prompts doubts, as did evidence submitted in *Thwaytes v. Sotheby's*, where the expert witness Dianne Modestini reported that when she superimposed X-radiographs of the two versions of the *Boy bitten by a lizard* on a light box, 'all of the brushstrokes lined up exactly', which would not be expected in an autograph replica.²⁶ The only widely accepted examples of autograph versions apart from the *Fortune teller* are the two versions of the *Luteplayer*, in the State Hermitage Museum,

7. Detail of Fig.3, showing St Andrew's right foot (Photograph author).



8. Detail of Fig.4, showing St Andrew's right foot (Photograph author).

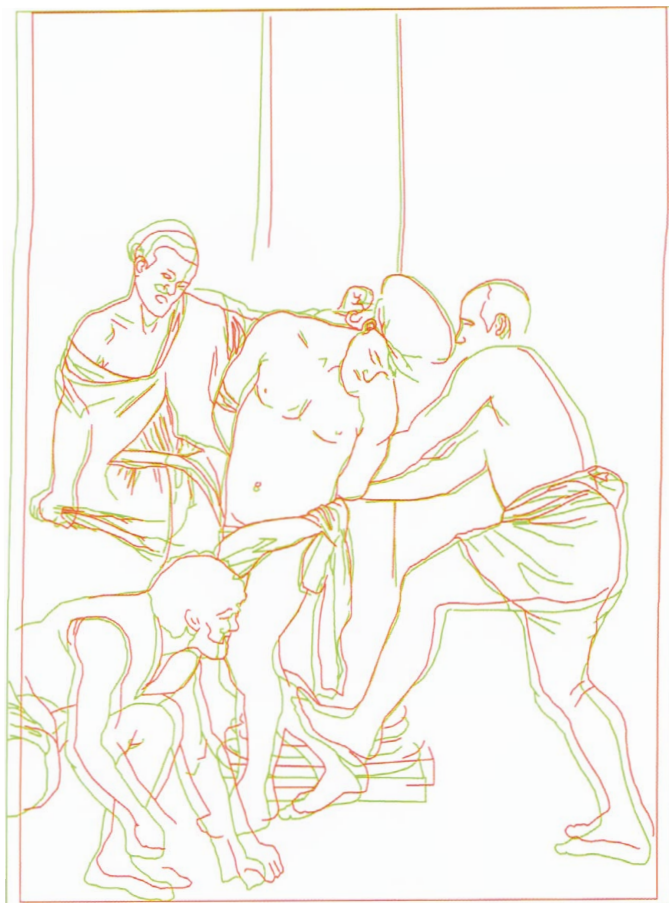


St Petersburg, and the Wildenstein Collection. Neither was exhibited in *Dentro Caravaggio* – but, as Keith Christiansen has stressed, the Wildenstein painting (the attribution of which is still disputed) should be understood ‘not as a replica (which it is not), but as a fresh interpretation of a theme previously treated’.²⁷

Less than half of Caravaggio's accepted *œuvre* has been studied as thoroughly as Cleveland's *Crucifixion of St Andrew* and the paintings included in *Caravaggio: Opere a Roma* and *Dentro Caravaggio*. Although those technical studies enrich the understanding of Caravaggio's practice, notably his use of underdrawing, no laboratory evidence alone – that is, without connoisseurial involvement – can settle problems of attribution, except by exclusion due to materials of a later date.²⁸ Even if Caravaggio's complete work were analysed scientifically, comparative data, as noted, would be essential, especially in order to differentiate between the materials and methods used by the master and what is found in replicas by early copyists.

In 2001 a highly sophisticated database that provides relevant information was conceived by Sybille Ebert-Schifferer, a former Director of the Bibliotheca Hertziana, Rome.²⁹ Called *ArsRoma*, it contains searchable data on more than five thousand works of art, nearly half of which are paintings, with an emphasis on history painting. Of those, about 1,100 were produced by painters active in Rome from 1580 to 1630 (the remaining half are works that influenced those 1,100).³⁰ Among them are about 162 paintings by or attributed to Caravaggio, some 101 copies after Caravaggio, and another 112 or so by the Caravaggisti. Every traditional kind of historical information is included, such as creator, subject, literary source, name of patron and documentation, but many less obvious categories of searchable data are also being entered into the system, such as the ‘gestures’ itemised in John Bulwer's book *Chirologia and Chironomia* (1644). This allows, for example, the appearance of clasped, pleading hands like those of Bulwer's ‘*Ploro*’ to be tracked through the images assembled in *ArsRoma*.

Most promisingly, *ArsRoma* is now linked to a new database, the Archivio Diagnostico Digitale, which contains data from Emmebi Diagnostica Artistica. Currently it has very full technical information and images including X-radiograph, IR, UV, XRF and incisions related to 110 paintings either by Caravaggio (27), attributed to him (9), or copied from him (9), with another 65 by his followers. Among the extraordinary features of the database, aside from the user being able to pull up all of the corresponding information in *ArsRoma*, is that it is possible to manipulate images, for example, by superimposing an X-radiograph or an IR reflectogram mosaic onto a painting and then, through adjustment of intensity, fade in and out for seamless comparison.



9. Overlay of the contours of *Flagellation*, by Caravaggio (Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples) in green, onto a copy of *Flagellation* in S. Domenico Maggiore, Naples, in red. From G.S. Ghia and C. Strinati, eds.: *Caravaggio nel patrimonio del Fondo Edifici di Culto. Il Doppio e la Copia*, Rome 2017.

Both databases are ongoing projects, the *Archivio* in Italian, the *ArsRoma* in German and Italian, and both are available only on terminals in the Hertziana. Sadly, due to copyright restrictions, neither is likely to go online. But if and when many more than nine copies after Caravaggio are entered into the *Archivio*, progress might be made towards identifying any truly idiosyncratic characteristics of the master's materials and methods, and in clarifying whether he ever painted replicas.³¹ For now, there is no persuasive example.

20 It is not relevant in this context that the present author has questioned the attribution of the Palazzo Corsini painting to Caravaggio because it surely is an original painting, just as surely as the version in Stockholm is a copy.

21 M. Cardinali, M.B. De Ruggieri and S. N. Eliasson: ‘Bartolomeo Manfredi, attributed to, 58, “St John the Baptist”, in S.N. Eliasson, D. Prytz, J. Eriksson and S. Ekman: *Italian Paintings: Three Centuries of Collection, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm*, Ostfildern 2015, I, pp.159–63, no.58.

22 Ghia and Strinati, *op. cit.* (note 18), p.93, pl.41 (reproduced here as Fig.9). For discussion of the use of tracings see also M.B. De Ruggieri: ‘Copiare da altre pitture’: Metodi di copiatura nel Seicento secondo la letteratura artistica e qualche verifica sulle opere

di Caravaggio e dei Caravaggeschi’, in *ibid.*, pp.29–36.

23 For a summary of scholarly opinion, see J.T. Spike: *Caravaggio*, 2nd ed. New York 2010, CD-ROM catalogue, nos.9 and 9.1, pp.55–57.

24 Vodret *et al.*, *op. cit.* (note 18).

25 The exhibition was reviewed by John Gash, *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 159 (2017), pp.1015–16. See also an ongoing series of interviews with Caravaggio scholars on Pietro di Loreto's *About Art Online*, prompted by the exhibition: <http://aboutartonline.com>, accessed 14th May 2018. They include Gianni Papi (interviewed 3rd February 2018), who reaffirms his attribution of the Back-Vega *Crucifixion* to Caravaggio.

26 Court transcript of the trial, *op. cit.* (note 19), pp.131–32 (day 10, 10th November 2014).

27 K. Christiansen: ‘Some observations on the relationship between Caravaggio's two treatments of the “Lute-player”’, *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE* 132 (1990), pp.21–26. Three other proposed autograph replicas, all in private collections, the *Luteplayer* formerly at Badminton House, Gloucestershire, the *Medusa* and the *Taking of Christ*, have received much less scholarly support despite the familiar litany of affirmative technical evidence (the *Taking of Christ*, however, has been in judicial custody for years, so it has not received proper study).

28 A tacit exception seems to be the omission from both projects of *Narcissus* (Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome), presumably due to anomalous technical features.

29 I thank Eva Bracchi, Projektmitarbeiterin for *ArsRoma* at

the Hertziana, for explaining and demonstrating the databases to me.

30 For a more complete description of *ArsRoma*, see http://www.biblherz.it/it/attivita-di-ricerca/forschungsprojekte-des-instituts/arsroma/?no_cache=1&sword_list%5B0%5D=arsroma, accessed date 14th May 2018.

31 Another challenge is to identify his early copyists. For an identification on technical grounds of one, Bartolomeo Manfredi, see M. Cardinali and M.B. De Ruggieri: ‘Studying Caravaggio's doubles: from connoisseurship to technical art history’, in Di Loreto, *op. cit.* (note 3), pp.83–96. Another database devoted to Caravaggio's work is being planned by the Caravaggio research institute at the Galleria Borghese, Rome. If, and how, it will duplicate, or merge with, the Hertziana's projects is unknown.