

Lorenzo Pericolo and David M. Stone, eds. *Caravaggio: Reflections and Refractions*. Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014 + 358 pp. + 118 illus. \$ 123.45. LIVIA STOENESCU, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY.

This major collected volume demystifies an image of the extravagant Caravaggio looming large in art historical literature, and instead presents profound investigations of his historical underpinnings and pictorial idiosyncrasies. Caravaggio studies flourished exponentially in the wake of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death, in 2010, that quickened an output of writings about this most independent and radical painter of the seventeenth century. In this massive outpouring of anthologies, single-authored books, and exhibition catalogues, Lorenzo Pericolo and David M. Stone's *Caravaggio: Reflections and Refractions* is riveting in its insights, breathtaking in its original methodologies, and standing out as an unsurpassably comprehensive foray into Caravaggio's art.

Since the second half of the twentieth century, scholars and critics have situated Caravaggio's pictorial realism at the core of their critical examinations that appear to imply that Caravaggio's painting is a mere reproduction of reality and an expression of the theories of the psyche's development infused with eroticism. By denouncing the tenuous character of Giulio Carlo Argan's and Leo Bersani's conceptual theories, Lorenzo Pericolo redresses the balance in Caravaggio studies by calling attention to characteristics of his art that have been reductively understood, namely, his receptiveness to the history of his time, to fiction as the best instrument in representing the transcendental, and to the spirit of analytic observation that informs Caravaggio's experimentalism in affinity with Galileo Galilei's observation of nature and its laws. Pericolo's quintessential essay "Interpreting Caravaggio in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century: Between Galileo and Heidegger, Giordano Bruno, and Laplanche" embeds Caravaggio studies in a broader context than is usually recognized and simultaneously fosters a novel understanding of Caravaggio's artistic significance in the context of history (302, 303).

*Caravaggio: Reflections and Refractions* emphasizes Caravaggism within a global visual arts discourse by asserting the importance of connoisseurship and the curatorial dynamics of the modern museum. However radical his innovations, Caravaggio remained technically

disciplined, expressing his pictorial ideas with the skill and handling of a great craftsman transcending his time. In the Corsini *Portrait of Maffeo Barberini* his stylistic prowess delicately folds into a descriptive technique, revealing the image of the young, cultured, and ambitious future Pope Urban VIII, which Roberto Longhi had rejected as Caravaggio's work but Keith Christiansen thoroughly examines in his pertinent "Caravaggio's Portrait of Maffeo Barberini in the Palazzo Corsini, Florence." Curatorial modes and recent blockbuster exhibitions constitute, in this anthology, a compelling discussion of an institutionally-generated Caravaggio. H. Perry Chapman's lucid analysis of the 2006 Rijksmuseum challenging exhibition *Rembrandt/Caravaggio* uncovers the curatorial fallacies in pointing out the self-governing and independent creative characters of both Caravaggio and Rembrandt irrespective of Rembrandt's masterful assimilation of Caravaggio's art into his pictorial formation and mature development (274, 277, 285, 289). Also in reference to the imperfections of some curatorial projects devoted to Caravaggio's anniversary, David M. Stone's "Caravaggio Betrayals: The Lost Painter and the Great Swindle" exposes the reality behind a purported display of some seventeen Caravaggio masterpieces at the National Museum of Archaeology of Malta in 2007.

Caravaggio's religious pictures offered a viable alternative to the didactic and rigorous directions of Counter-Reformation art by demonstrating that pictorial energy may reflect current Christian practice, rather than a visual exposition of the Catholic doctrine and dogma. The fact that at the turn of the seventeenth century there were in Rome three churches dedicated to Saint Thomas furnished Erin E. Baney the historical data to ground her investigation of Caravaggio's *Doubting Thomas* in the contemporary devotions to the saint's celebrated relic, namely, the finger St. Thomas inserted into Christ's wound. An entire pictorial tradition of the Doubting Thomas arguably originated from Caravaggio's groundbreaking image, which "capitalized on the powerful message of faith embodied in a story about doubt" (60). Baney convincingly intersperses visual analysis with textual evidence by citing Cardinal Borromeo's 1584 homily on the Passion of Christ as well as Cardinal Paleotti's and Alfonso Paleotti's writings about Christ's wounds, and Saint Thomas's confirmation of the agonies of Christ's

martyrdom. While any previous commentary on Caravaggio's *Doubting Thomas* focused on the power of senses, Baney bears the distinction of having pinpointed the relics and their relevance to the Christian materiality of seventeenth-century art. This is a hitherto-unexplored, outstanding tack still awaiting novel investigations into religious imagery. For Caravaggio, Saint Thomas's tactile inquiry illustrates a source of spiritual truth that may have generated the manifestation of two significant relics: the finger as a contact-relic, and the *Shroud of Turin* as an unmediated imprint of Christ's wounds. The correlation in the *Doubting Thomas* between the contact-relic and the impression of Christ's wounds on the Sacred Shroud raises awareness that early modern artists, Caravaggio in particular, put a premium on the relics' intercessional role in revealing the sacred body and becoming effective instruments of depicting sacred narratives. But as the spiritual relevance and historical legitimacy of relics sustain Baney's analysis eloquently, her visual commentary is mere iconographic and limited to Albrecht Dürer's woodcut of the same subject. While Caravaggio's depiction of Thomas's arm grasped by Christ and finger thrust into the wound depend on Dürer, he simultaneously culled from a variety of past and present Renaissance models. We can safely say that what Baney terms "Christ's spiritual illumination" (61) is a portrait thoroughly prepared by Annibale Carracci in his reiterations of Christ's portrait, in the 1585 Parma *Pietà* in particular, and referred to by Caravaggio in his 1606 *Mocking of Christ* at the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen, and others. Moreover, if the *Doubting Thomas* interprets as the modern expression of "a sculptural group or a theatrical set rather than a two-dimensional painting" (60), then Caravaggio may be said to have acted like Donatello, retranslating pictorial compositions into sculpture while his inventions were translated back into painting by Mantegna and others interested in half-length compositions. Caravaggio continually returned to the half or three-quarter length format, which provoked much of his most radically original work.

Frances Gage's essay on the controversial Louvre *Death of the Virgin* contributes to existing views about Caravaggio's painting in no insignificant ways, helping us grasp the historical reasons for Caravaggio's breaching the Counter-Reformation rules on religious images while proclaiming his own conception of the Virgin's death in a wilful

transgression of acceptable norms. As Gages contends, in his scathing criticism of Caravaggio's *Death of the Virgin* the Sienese physician Giulio Mancini emphasized the stylistic fallacy of depicting the funerals of the Virgin indecorously but evaluated Caravaggio's idiosyncratic and unequivocal artistic approach (90, 92, 95, 96, 99). It must have been rather widely disseminated in the low culture of early modern Italy and Spain to direct blasphemous words at the saints and to still fathom out whores in the guise of the Virgin Mary, as Erasmus and Cardinal Paleotti maintain in their writings (90). Caravaggio would have also thought that seventeenth-century Italian burial practices for the non-nobles looked ordinary enough (96) to lend themselves to his inclusion of a whore in the guise of the Virgin Mary. Gages convincingly enlists the historical reality that Caravaggio imbibed in his original picture of the *Death of the Virgin* to create a more current image that both startles and expands the viewer's knowledge about what a radical modernist understood by subversive Marian imagery in a seventeenth-century burial scene. If ordinarieness equates extravagance, Caravaggio's *Death of the Virgin* is *ipso facto* an excessive image and subsumes all the hallmarks of Caravaggio's style.

The depiction of figures speaking with mouths open and vocalizing a variety of human sounds added an "auditory dimension" to Caravaggio's art, according to Catherine Puglisi's *Talking Pictures: Sound in Caravaggio's Art*. Caravaggio applied this auditory phenomenon to diversify the gamut of human emotions he thus described with an enhanced rhetorical force, which adapted sound to the subject matter in relevance to either religious themes, musicians or players compositions, as well as portraits of the saint and the Pope. This spectacular demonstration of Caravaggio's rhetorical prowess was not recognized by Bellori, but taken up by other Caravaggisti to advance their painting's dramatic apparatus and overtake poetry's advantage in the ancient maxim "painting is mute poetry." It is a well-known fact that the Caravaggisti developed Caravaggio's manner, but it should be worth adducing the impact he had on the fine arts and on sculpture in particular wherein his "auditory dimension" impacted across the field of fine arts. Bernini's Proserpine from the statuary group *Rape of Proserpine* illustrates her mouth open as if she will scream for help, and also the bust of Cardinal Scipione Borghese palpably manifests

the achievement of Bernini's goal to create a speaking likeness. The animated presentation that Caravaggio accomplished by deploying this "auditory dimension" warrants comparison with the sculptors' efforts to treat such a theme, all the more in the context of an essay that seemingly intended to deemphasize the sway that *paragone* and *ut pictura poesis* held in seventeenth-century art.

The angels that populate Caravaggio's paintings conjure in the viewer references to real bodily presences, but their acrobatic poses are the mark of supernatural, celestial beings that defy the idealized and ethereal beings depicted by most of his contemporaries. As Steven F. Ostrow has perceptively pointed out in *Caravaggio's Angels*, the painter flaunted convention to immerse his angels in the radical terms of his commitment to the *vero*, namely, credibility and truthfulness to sacred imagery, "a search for the means to represent the un-representable in such a way as to render it credible both to himself and to his audience" (138). The depiction of angels yielded to the imaginative powers of Caravaggio's art more convincingly than any other subject matter he embraced precisely because Caravaggio invented an angel type that assumed corporeal form only in his art painting, but remained a fantasia in reality; in other words, it was not something that a painter could imitate from any spiritual nature, even though the reform-theologians Ambrogio Catarino and Cardinal Ottavio Paravicino urged artists to depict visions rooted in the veracity of celestial beings (143). Caravaggio's angels have precedents in both Annibale Carracci's painting and in Caravaggio's own card players while demonstrating an adherence to the *figura sforzata* and *figura serpentinata*, the recognized tropes of the Renaissance theory of imitation (141).

Complementing Ostrow's exposition of Caravaggio's unflinching fidelity to the *verosimile* and simultaneous disavowal of canonical models, Jonathan Unglaub's sophisticated paper "Caravaggio and 'The Truth of Painting'" is a further consideration of the full significance of his individual forms. A series of ambivalent gestures of pointing integrate spiritual truth with revelation in *The Calling of Saint Matthew*, *The Raising of Lazarus*, and the *Madonna of Rosary* in ways emblematic to "Caravaggio's subversive realism" (168). Concurrently with Thomas Puttfarcken's ideas of the challenges raised by Caravaggio to the art of painting, Unglaub stresses the compositional conventions

Caravaggio applied to his art to both stimulate and deceive visions of quotidian reality. While Caravaggio punctuated with “the deictic gestural beckoning” (163) the unitary discourse of the sacred narrative or *istoria*, he conceived the treatment of his *Fortune Teller* compositions equally radical to standard representations of the socially marginal. He crafted a “reality effect” (150) by exposing the tensions and stratification of class and gender that erupt the abject and the material while challenging the boundaries of genre scenes. In so doing, Caravaggio accomplished more than a mere subversion of canonical low modes: he negated “any notion of conceptualizing the particular truth of the here and now into the *verosimile*” (150).

Some art historians strive to morph their conventional work into a subversive model as they allot to their name an authoritative place at the center of a topic that they claim they have advocated. The “outliers” (193) movement is rooted in Caravaggio, as Philip Sohm wittingly suggests in his brilliant “Caravaggio the Barbarian.” This aggressive and barbarian strategy to take an authority down often distorts historical realities and replaces impartiality with elusive and imaginative projections. The barbarian strategy is based on alterity and modeled on Caravaggio’s posthumous reputation in art history, wherein he is associated with the discipline’s first formally constituted “other” (179). Sohm compellingly adduces that Federico Borromeo first called Caravaggio the opposite of Raphael in *De delectu ingeniorum* (1625), and Vicente Carducho, soon after Borromeo, described him as the “Anti-Christ” and the “Anti-Michelangelo, with his showy and superficial imitation” in *Diálogos de la pintura* in 1633 (181). Caravaggio’s outliers, in their haste to speculate the fruits of antinomy inherent in stereotyping Caravaggio, simply misinterpreted the quintessence of his art, namely, that “as a champion of naturalism who poisoned Mannerism and destroyed Raphaelesque painting, Caravaggio straddled two antithetical historical roles: savior and foe of art, Christ and Antichrist” (187).

An artist’s reputation is an absolute reflection of the prices of his paintings. Richard Spear draws our attention to the fact that high prices were not an incentive for painters to adopt a Caravaggesque style; rather, the Caravaggisti competed for altarpieces and easel paintings in awareness of their economic disadvantages of being Caravaggio’s

followers (205, 209). Spear emphasizes that the chances of winning commissions were higher for Simon Vouet and Baglione, who were not classified among Caravaggio's and Bartolomeo Manfredi's diehard followers (208). Why then, in spite of Caravaggio's personal success in earning good fees (particularly for his easel pictures), did his followers rarely command comparable prices? Spear argues that Caravaggio's "startling *novità*" was the reason why knowledgeable patrons acquired his art at a time when the market's tendency was to set the highest price for classicizing works (the latter pertaining to Annibale Carracci and his followers, Giovanni Lanfranco and Domenichino, who fared better than the Caravaggisti). An additional reason was, Spear contends, the far greater supply of his followers' work when compared to Caravaggio's (212).

The pronounced materialism of Caravaggio's paintings and his blurring of the boundaries between the appearance of men and angels was not coincidental, but rather intended to respond to new ideas of corruption and change that opposed the abstract ideas of *disegno*. Elizabeth Cropper identifies this direction with Galileo Galilei's astronomical discoveries and the unique effects of applying the telescope to astronomy that challenged the ways in which artists perceived the visible world, revealingly connecting Caravaggio with natural philosophy and the painting of reality. Cropper's essay "Galileo Galilei and Artemisia Gentileschi: Between the History of Ideas and Microhistory" sheds light on "the new emphasis on natural inclination as a vital force in the anti-Aristotelian artistic culture of Rome and Florence in early seventeenth century" (233) and the mutually-profitable intersections between microhistory and the history of ideas in art. Artemisia Gentileschi's *Inclination* painting features the compass to signify her active engagement with documentary, metaphorical, and cultural strains, while the lines of blood spurting from Holofernes's neck in her *Judith Beheading Holofernes* suggest an even more direct reference to Galileo's description of the parabolic trajectory of projectiles. Artemisia's poetic interpretation of Galileo's astronomical references and the personal success she achieved as a Caravaggist painter did not survive the end of the powerful chiaroscuro, which had developed out of Caravaggio's revolution (241) and profoundly influenced a sort of representation that was hugely imitated between 1590 and 1630. Supplementary

permeated by a genuine search for truth and true fame in the face of widespread calumny and jealousy, this period still teaches us that “if we can widen the focus of our investigative telescope beyond the microscope, then it should become possible to see Caravaggio, and also those who he radicalized, including Artemisia Gentileschi, participating in the same cultural enterprise as Galileo and his colleagues—to see art and science occupying the same world, neither one subordinate to the other” (243).

Caravaggio furthermore produced an extraordinary advance in the sphere of unconventional subjects for low genre painting through his new compositions of cardsharps and gypsy fortune-tellers, which—according to Bellori—purport to stand in for reality but can only be a counterfeit. Gail Feigenbaum’s “Perfectly True, Perfectly False: Cardsharps and Fortune Tellers by Caravaggio and La Tours” analyzes how “Caravaggio exploited the obvious appeal of these subjects in order to thematize critical aspects of the role of the painter and his viewer” (253). Caravaggio’s realism misleads the unadvised viewer into believing the cunning nature of the card cheats and gypsy fortune-tellers but transforms the connoisseur and collector into a consciously and eagerly partaker of these pictures’ illusionism. Thus, Caravaggio activated “the metaphor of trickery” as it informed the roles of the painter, the collector, and the viewer of such paintings (254). Like Caravaggio, Georges de La Tour exploited the crucial element of a willing victim derived from the biblical parable of the prodigal son and from Elizabethan tales. Feigenbaum argues that Thomas Dekker’s *The Belman of London: Bringing to Light the Most Notorious Villainies That Are Now Practiced in the Kingdom* reads like descriptions of the paintings of the Caravaggisti (261). The essence of a game depending on chance (*primera*) was laden with allegorical meaning derived from the sixteenth-century poem by Mellin de Saint-Gelais, which represents in the terms of the play of a game the struggle for control of Italy among Francis I, Pope Clement VII, and Charles V. Even though Caravaggio’s and La Tour’s pictures do not operate as political allegories, their moralizing dimensions evoke the elusive senses of Cervantes’s nearly contemporary *Novelas ejemplares*, published in 1613 yet written earlier (263, 264). As indices of false appearances depicted with unprecedented truth, the cheats and fortune-tellers



paintings concomitantly opposed and concurred with the standards for sacred art production that demanded that religious painters create truthful images by means of a perfectly true technique and factual personages (268).

*Caravaggio: Reflections and Refractions* reveals an exemplary effort to recast Caravaggio's identity according to the demands of his imaginative prowess in synch with seventeenth-century history. It is therefore not surprising that the destabilizing Caravaggio comes to dominate Lorenzo Pericolo and David M. Stone's edited volume, providing significant evidence to help us identify the radical nature of his talent and to determine more plausible coordinates for investigating his art. In recent years, there have been several discussions about Caravaggio that originated an orchestrated inquiry into uncovering the historical dimension of his art. The purpose of *Caravaggio: Reflections and Refractions* is to refine and set up an advanced context of dissemination for Lorenzo Pericolo's *Caravaggio and Pictorial Narrative: Dislocating the "Istoria" in Early Modern Painting* (2011), Sybille Ebert-Schifferer's collected volume *Caravaggio e il suo ambiente: Ricerche e interpretazioni* (2007), Genevieve Warwick's anthology *Caravaggio: Realism, Rebellion, Reception* (2006), as well as Horst Bredekamp's *Galilei der Künstler: Der Mond, die Sonne, die Hand* (2007) and Ferdinando Bologna's influential *L'incredulità del Caravaggio e l'esperienza delle "cose naturali"* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn., 2006).

Margaretha Rossholm Lagerlöf. *Fate, Glory, and Love in Early Modern Gallery Decoration: Visualizing Supreme Power*. Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2013. 276 pp. + 30 color plates and 110 b/w illus. £ 70,00. Review by MIRIAM HALL KIRCH, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA.

This richly illustrated book presents four case studies of galleries, three of them well known: the Gallery of Francis I at Fontainebleau; the Farnese Gallery; and the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. Not so well known, but an apt and welcome addition, is the Gallery of Karl XI in Stockholm. Essentially corridors meant to lead from one place to another in a palace, galleries developed into true showpieces that