

Galerie Canesso

Tableaux anciens

BARTOLOMEO CAVAROZZI

(VITERBO, 1587 - ROME, 1625)

Aminta's Lament

Oil on canvas, 30¾ x 40⅜ in (78 x 102.5 cm)



PROVENANCE

Possibly, in 1615, in the collection of Don Juan de Tassis y Peralta, Count of Villamediana (according to Papi 2023, p. 195 and Sanguineti 2017, p. 34); it may correspond to a listing in the 1617-1621 inventory of the collection of Giovan Carlo Doria, in Genoa (Papi 2023, p. 195). Genoa, private collection; by inheritance, Turin, private collection.

Opera notificata: artwork protected by Italian law

LITERATURE

- B. Nicolson, *Caravaggism in Europe*, 2nd ed. revised by L. Vertova, Turin 1990, I, p. 89 (listed as “Caravaggesque unknown, Roman-based”);
- G. Papi, “Il primo ‘Lamento di Aminta’ e altri approfondimenti su Bartolomeo Cavarozzi”, *Paragone*, 77 (695), 2008, pp. 39-51;
- G. Papi, “Il primo ‘Lamento di Aminta’ e altri approfondimenti su Bartolomeo Cavarozzi”, *Paragone*, 77 (695), 2008, pp. 39-51;
- G. Papi, *Bartolomeo Cavarozzi*, Soncino 2015, pp. 20-24, 28, 65, 197, n. 13, tavv XIV-XV;
- D. Sanguineti, “Genova 1617: incontro con Bartolomeo Cavarozzi”, in *Bartolomeo Cavarozzi a*

Genova, exhibition catalogue ed. by G. Zanelli (Genoa, Galleria Nazionale di Palazzo Spinola, 6 December 2017 – 8 April 2018), Genoa 2017, pp. 31-61, fig. 2;

- G. Papi in *Cecco del Caravaggio. L'allievo modello*, exhibition catalogue ed. by G. Papi (Bergamo, Accademia Carrara, 28 January – 4 June 2023), Milan 2023, pp. 192-195, no. 33

EXHIBITIONS

Cecco del Caravaggio. L'allievo modello, curated by G. Papi, Bergamo, Accademia Carrara, 28 January – 4 June 2023, no. 33.

Comparative works:

- *Aminta's Lament*, oil on canvas, 88 x 113 cm, location unknown, formerly Bergamo, Perolari collection. Published with illustration in G. Papi, *Bartolomeo Cavarozzi*, Soncino 2015, p. 198, no. 14, pp. 112-113, pls. XVI-XVII.

- *Aminta's Lament*, oil on canvas, 100 x 120 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre (inv. RF 1937 6), donated in 1937 by Paul Jamot (1863-1939). Considered autograph, with some hesitation, by Papi (in *Cecco del Caravaggio. L'allievo modello*, exhibition catalogue ed. by G. Papi (Bergamo, Accademia Carrara, 28 January – 4 June 2023), Milan 2023, p. 195); earlier published with illustration in G. Papi, *Bartolomeo Cavarozzi*, Soncino 2015, p. 198, no. 15, p. 213, fig. 5.

- *Aminta's Lament*, oil on canvas, 82.5 x 106.5, location unknown, formerly London, with Matthiesen (1989); Spoleto, with Galleria Paolo Saporì; Naples, Piedimonte collection; New York, with Weitzner (1955). Published with illustrations in G. Papi, *Bartolomeo Cavarozzi*, Soncino 2015, p. 198, no. 16, pp. 145-147, pls. XLIX-LI.

- *Aminta's Lament*, oil on canvas, 99.6 x 75.6 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Arts (inv. 2010-228-1), to which it was donated in 2010 by Mr. and Mrs. Herman Lefco, heirs of Seymour and Dorothy Wanderman. Published with illustration by G. Papi, *Bartolomeo Cavarozzi*, Soncino 2015, p. 223, fig. 15 (as copy after Bartolomeo Cavarozzi).

Bartolomeo Cavarozzi's *Aminta's Lament* of 1613/1614 is an important example of early Roman Caravaggesque painting. The immediate adherence to the new artistic movement is expressed not only through the dramatic luminosity of high-contrast chiaroscuro but also in the search for naturalism in "painting from life", and the choice of subject is in itself fully in keeping with Caravaggio's repertoire. The title by which the painting is now known derives from the open musical score in the centre of the table, between the bunches of grapes and the foreshortened violin: this is the madrigal *Dolor che sì mi crucii*, drawn from Torquato Tasso's pastoral fable *Aminta*, set to music by Erasmo Marotta and published in Venice in 1600¹.

The *Aminta*, first performed in Ferrara in 1573 and immediately very successful, is a theatrical text in five acts inspired by Ovid's mythological tale of Pyramus and Thisbe. The young shepherd Aminta, perhaps personified by one of the two boys portrayed by Cavarozzi, is in love with the nymph Silvia, although she does not reciprocate his feelings. Not even when the shepherd saves his beloved from the violent intentions of a satyr does she show kindness to her suitor. The young man's love is so great that he decides to kill himself upon hearing the news of Silvia's presumed death. This is precisely the episode expressed in *Dolor che sì mi crucii*, depicted in Cavarozzi's painting, with characters seemingly moved by intense feelings of nostalgia. Unlike the ancient Roman myth, Tasso's has a happy ending. When Silvia learns that Aminta, who believed her to be dead, has thrown himself from a cliff, she is finally moved and rushes to seek the shepherd's body. The last act describes the young lover as revived by a passionate kiss from Silvia.

Among the known versions of this subject (see *comparative works*, above), ours is judged by Gianni Papi to be the most “intimately Caravaggesque” for its adherence to a “more evocative and clearly-expressed naturalism”². Considering its high quality and applying a stylistic comparison to works painted by Cavarozzi at the beginning of the 1610s, Papi hypothesizes that this canvas is the prototype of the successful iconographic iteration of *Aminta’s Lament*, placing it among the first fruits yielded by the painter’s growth into Caravaggism³. Both Papi and Daniele Sanguineti hypothesize that this is the version of the painting referred to in a document of 1615 in which Don Juan de Tassis y Peralta, Count of Villamediana, writing from Genoa, asks the secretary of Grand Duke Cosimo II de’ Medici for an export licence to Spain for certain works purchased from Siena⁴. The list, drawn up in Genoa, includes a canvas of “two boys, one playing the flute and the other who has put down a violin”, stated to be by Caravaggio, although all scholars agree on connecting this with the picture by Cavarozzi. In 1613 Villamediana had come into contact with the painter’s patron, Giovan Battista Crescenzi, who may have been responsible for attributing the work to the more famous of the two artists.

Another interesting point of documentation is the listing of a canvas with “two shepherds by the hand of Bartolomeo of Viterbo” in the 1617-1621 inventory of the collection of the Genoese nobleman Giovan Carlo Doria. Gianni Papi suggested that this could be the picture Villamediana wanted to take to Spain and that, having reached Genoa, it remained there for some reason. For this motive, too, given the Genoese provenance recorded by the owners of our version of *Aminta’s Lament*, Papi and Sanguineti favour identifying it as the Villamediana (later Doria) painting now in a private collection in Turin.

Bartolomeo Cavarozzi was born on 15 February 1587 in Viterbo. Having arrived in Rome aged about thirteen, he entered the workshop of the Viterbese painter Tarquinio Ligustri and then that of Cristoforo Roncalli, known as Pomarancio. It was through the latter that Cavarozzi came into contact with the Crescenzi family, for whom Pomarancio was working. The importance of the Roman family for the career of the young painter is reflected in the name “Bartolomeo de’ Crescenzi” given to him by his biographer Giovanni Baglione, who had occasion to meet Cavarozzi in Rome and who published his *Life* in 1642⁵. It was Baglione who recorded Bartolomeo’s decisive change in style: the young artist abandoned the Mannerist idiom of his teacher Pomarancio and “began to paint from life with great diligence, and with lovingly applied finishing touches” – that is, using the language of the earliest Roman Caravaggism. This shift in style must have taken place before 1617, when Cavarozzi moved to Spain – sojourning for a few months in Genoa – in the entourage of his patron, Giovanni Battista Crescenzi, whom Philip III had appointed superintendent of Royal architectural projects. Early sources assert that Cavarozzi painted many works in Spain, the most famous of which is undoubtedly the *Holy Family with Saint Catherine* in the Museo del Prado, Madrid. The date of the painter’s return to Rome remains unknown, but he had certainly returned to the city in the early 1620s, living with his mother, and no longer in the house of Marchese Crescenzi, who instead remained in Spain for almost two decades. Bartolomeo Cavarozzi died in Rome on 21 September 1625 “not having succeeded, as his talent had promised, to create marvellous works in this City”⁶.

Note:

[1] What we see in the painting are pages 16-17 of *L’Aminta musicale: Il primo libro di madrigali a cinque voci, con un dialogo in otto* (Venice, 1600), the musical adaptation of the pastoral fable *Aminta* by Torquato Tasso (1544-1595) composed by the Sicilian musician Erasmo Marotta (1578-1641).

[2] G. Papi, *Bartolomeo Cavarozzi*, Soncino 2015, pp. 22-23.

[3] As regards the turning point, Eric Schleier has prudently indicated two chronological limits: 1610, the date of Cavarozzi’s last still un-Caravaggesque, and 1617, when the painter left for Spain (E. Schleier,

“Bartolomeo Cavarozzi”, in *Caravaggio e il suo tempo*, exhibition catalogue (Naples, Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, 14 May – 30 June 1985) ed. by M. Gregori, R. E. Spear and L. Salerno, Naples, 1985, p. 126). Luigi Spezzaferro proposed narrowing this parameter to the mid-1510s (L. Spezzaferro, “Un imprenditore del primo Seicento: Giovanni Battista Crescenzi”, *Ricerche di storia dell’arte*, 26, 1985, p. 55).

[4]The document was published by E. Fumagalli, “Precoci citazioni di opere del Caravaggio in alcuni documenti inediti”, *Paragone*, XLV, 535-537 (2nd series, 47-48), 1994, pp. 114-116. For the connection with this canvas, see G. Papi, “Il primo ‘Lamento di Aminta’ e altri approfondimenti su Bartolomeo Cavarozzi”, *Paragone*, 77 (695), 2008, p. 42; and D. Sanguineti, “Genova 1617: incontro con Bartolomeo Cavarozzi”, in *Bartolomeo Cavarozzi a Genova*, exhibition catalogue (Genoa, Galleria Nazionale di Palazzo Spinola, 6 December 2017 – 8 April 2018) ed. By G. Zanelli, Genoa 2017, p. 34.

[5] G. Baglione, *Le Vite de' Pittori, Scultori et Architetti. Dal Pontificato di Gregorio XIII del 1572 in fino a' tempi di Papa Urbano VIII nel 1642*, Rome 1642, p. 287.

[6] *Ibid.*