

CORREGGIO'S
DRAWINGS



A. E. POPHAM

POPHAM

CORREGGIO'S DRAWINGS

BRITISH
MUSEUM

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The present volume by A. E. Popham, C.B., Fellow of the British Academy and formerly Keeper of the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum, contains the first serious attempt to sift the large number of drawings ascribed to Correggio in the collections of Europe and America. It presents a catalogue of the ninety-two drawings which the author regards as the authentic work of the artist; all of these are reproduced (many of them for the first time), together with the frescoes or paintings for which some of them are preparatory studies. The volume also includes some account of the drawings of Correggio's contemporaries and followers in Parma, with an illustrated catalogue of those of Michelangelo Anselmi, the most important of them. Drawings wrongly attributed to Correggio are discussed and in many cases assigned to their real authors, and there is a catalogue of the more interesting of these apocrypha, a number of which are illustrated in the text. There are 110 plates and 72 text-illustrations.

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FOREWORD

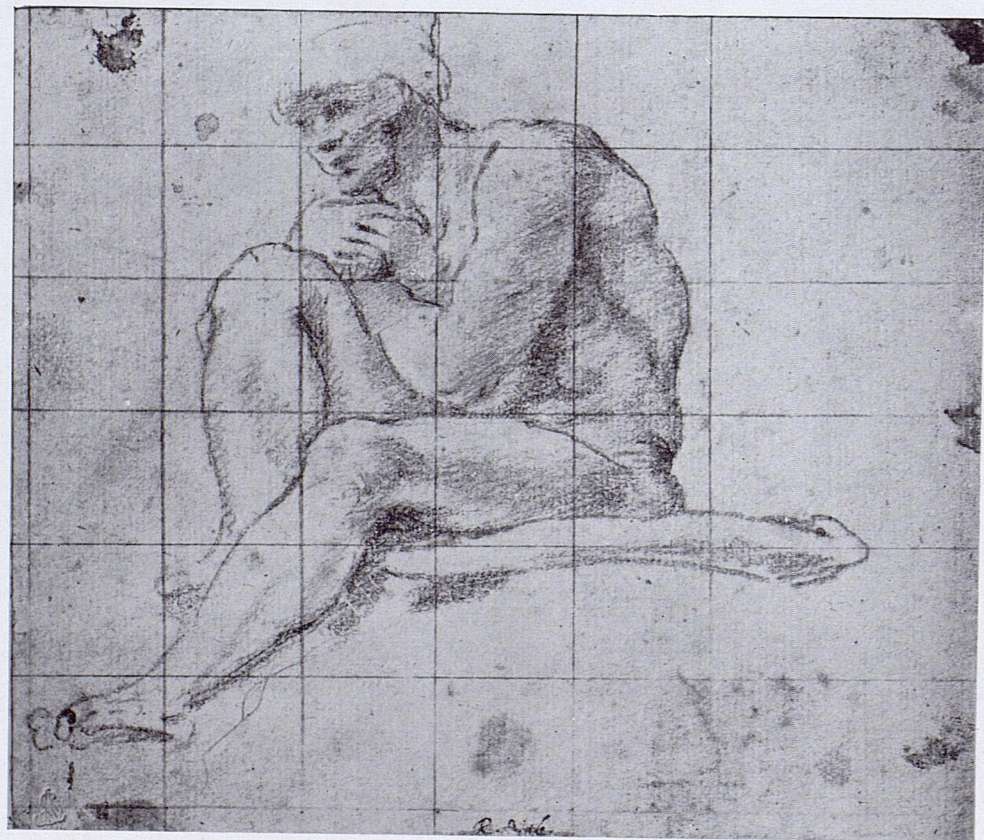
I AM under the impression that the name Correggio, universally familiar as it is, does not today evoke in the mind of the ordinary cultured Englishman any very distinct image, or any great enthusiasm. It is to him a rather vague concept, which he cannot satisfactorily visualize. The names of the other four in the conventional quintette of great Renaissance artists, Leonardo, Michelangelo, Raphael and Titian, call up a much clearer picture; he can place them more or less exactly in their context of place and time. But Correggio's reputation has been passed down from the middle of last century, when it was at its height, and taken on trust, in the absence of any determined effort to explode it. This feeling of uneasiness about Correggio's position in the hierarchy is due to a number of causes and circumstances. The pre-Raphaelite reaction against the High Renaissance naturally shook his pre-eminence, as it did that of Raphael. Ruskin hardly mentions him and that with disapproval. The swing back from the pre-Raphaelite position, even the revived appreciation of the baroque, which might, one would have thought, have rehabilitated his reputation, did not do so. His art seemed to belong neither to the period of the High Renaissance, in which he lived, nor to that of the baroque, which it anticipated in so disturbing a manner. People have, therefore, tended to avert their eyes from this enigmatic phenomenon and interest in Correggio's life and works has not kept pace with that devoted to his great contemporaries.

The present work does not, of course, aim at a revaluation of Correggio's art in general or attempt any appreciation of his greatness as a painter. The admirer of Correggio may even, I fear, be disappointed that the enthusiasm, which he himself feels for the artist, finds little actual expression in the pages which follow. He must be content to believe that the undertaking of this work is evidence of such enthusiasm. To give expression to it with the eloquence of a John Addington Symonds or an Adolfo Venturi is not within my capacity; to pay tribute to Correggio's greatness in conventional and hackneyed phrases would be offensive to his memory.

This book, as its title makes clear, is concerned with the artist's drawings, and his paintings are spoken of and reproduced in explanation of the drawings. It would no doubt have been more satisfactory, from the point of view of the ordinary reader, that the book should have dealt with the whole of Correggio's work, frescoes, oil-paintings and drawings. But to produce such a comprehensive study would be a particularly formidable undertaking. A large part of my life has been spent in the study of drawings and in contact with them; it is necessarily from this angle that I approach Correggio. An exact knowledge and appreciation of the paintings is, I am very much aware, a prerequisite to the study of the drawings. Nevertheless those whose concern has been primarily the study of paintings do not always seem to be equally successful in their judgment of drawings and the approach to Correggio through them should have its value and contribute to the illumination of his art in general.



XIa S. GIOVANNI EVANGELISTA, PARMA



XIb [CAT. 11] Vienna, Albertina



XIIa S. GIOVANNI EVANGELISTA, PARMA



XIIb [CAT. 12] Louvre