
Susanne McColeman
them as Realist, and they were recast as Naturalist. The comparison to instantaneous photography also affected Courbet’s legacy since, as Young explains in the conclusion, interpreting his paintings as frozen in time rather than durational deprived them of meaning in the present, and they could thereby be drained of their politics. It is as though the very possibility of an enduring, absorbed state was denied. In the end, then, the book is about the disappearance of Realism as an artistic category as well as the diminishing possibilities for absorption in the modern world.

This last point brings me to what I find most compelling about Young’s argument: the connections to the present day and to current calls for a slower approach to life. In another recent book about time, 24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep (2013), Jonathan Crary describes the intensification of modern time, so that today, in 24/7 time, we feel compelled to fill every instant with productivity, while any remaining moments are dedicated to consumption. He argues that this tendency robs us of any time to be filled by daydreaming or introspection, or what Young calls absorption. Crary writes, “Billions of dollars are spent every year researching how to reduce decision-making time, how to eliminate the useless time of reflection and contemplation. This is the form of contemporary progress—the relentless capture and control of time and experience.” According to Crary, sleeping and waiting are the only instances of empty time in our lives that offer the possibility of resistance. Crary does not say much about art in his book, leaving untouched the question of whether art can serve as a mode of resistance. Young’s book fills that void, showing how the late Realist artists sought out spaces and moments that had not yet been colonized by modern, disciplined time and painted them in a way that called attention to their distinct temporalities. The implication of Young’s argument is that the beholder of these paintings—absorbed in slow looking—is also engaged in a form of resistance. Though this is not the type of book one would assign to undergraduate students, the argument is relevant to their lives and therefore worth introducing to them. Amid the endless stream of images that come our way as part of the twenty-first-century visual economy, Young’s book provides a lesson in the value of slow looking.

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9. Crary, 24/7, 40.
taste. Perhaps most interesting is Minor’s account of the “transition-
al zone” (195) between the two styles, when artists continued to employ forms from baroque visual rhetoric, such as allegorical figures, but did not convey the same meanings or truths. Describing this absence of original meaning, Minor provocatively refers, for example, to Filippo della Valle’s sculptural allegories for the Tomb of Innocent XII as “zombie-like” figures, which remain powerful in their uncanny effect on the viewer (58).

In his introduction, Minor states that his “fascination lies with well-
known works of European art, espe-
cially Italian,” (3) but this does not convey just how narrow his geometrical scope truly is. His case studies are almost exclusively Roman, a fact he eventually discloses near the end of his second chapter. Four of his twelve chapters deal with works in St. Peter’s Basilica, including Gianlo-
renzo Bernini’s Baldacchino, a number of papal tombs, and Bernini’s Cath-
edra Petri. Three chapters focus on the Cathedral of San Giovanni in Laterano, more specifically the Apostles series of sculptures and the Corsini Chap-
el. Additional chapters interpret the architecture of Francesco Borromini’s Sant’Ivo alla Sapienza and paintings in Sant’Andrea della Valle and II Gesù in Rome. Only Chapter Eleven, “Blaise Pascal, Jansenists, Jesuits, and the Lettres Provinciales,” addresses baroque art outside of Rome. This chapter transports the reader to the convent of Port-Royal in Paris, and therefore seems somewhat out of place in this book. This is no more than a minor flaw; the chapter’s inclusion is far from arbitrary. In this chapter, Minor argues that eighteenth-century Italian classical visual rhetoric and the concept of buon gusto had their roots in the rhetoric of the seventeenth-cen-
tury French Jansenists, the Jesuits’ rivals, and his analysis of three of Philippe de Champaigne’s Jansenist paintings serves as a foil to his inter-
pretation of baroque papal and Jesuit art in his other chapters. Still, it is ex-
ceptional within a book that other-
wise could have been called Baroque Visual Rhetoric in Rome.

Overall, Minor focuses more on baroque art and on works that are stylistically “in transit” (197) than on eighteenth-century classical visual rhetoric, since he has already written at length on the subject of buon gusto in his 2006 book The Death of the Baroque and the Rhetoric of Good Taste. In fact, Bar-
oque Visual Rhetoric reads as an exten-
sion of this earlier study. As Minor points out himself, his chapter on Jansenism and the paintings of Philippe de Champaigne fulfills the promise he had made in his earlier book to elab-
orate on the link between Jansenism and buon gusto. More than that, in Bar-
oque Visual Rhetoric Minor elaborates on other key ideas put forth in The Death of the Baroque and the Rhetoric of Good Taste, particularly those from the first chapter, “Cattivo Gusto and Some Aspects of Baroque Rhetoric.” Though Baroque Visual Rhetoric is certainly able to stand alone as a brilliant study of baroque art, readers interested in learning about the other side of the baroque/ classical dichotomy during this period would do well to read his earlier text.

Minor’s work is a significant con-
tribution to the rich body of schol-
arship on rhetoric and the visual arts in early modern Europe that has developed since the 1950s, from the foundational work of John R. Spen-
cer to the studies by Michael Baxandall, David Summers, Patricia Rubin, Marc Fumaroli, Caroline van Eck, and Maarten Delbeke, to name only a few. Much of this scholarship engages in close textual readings of early modern literature on art to reveal the relationship between rhetoric and the production or reception of images, or to analyze the rhetoric of the texts themselves; other studies focus on how particular rhetorical devices, such as enargeia (vividness), serve to persuade or move the viewer in a work of art. Minor engages with these interests as well, but his work stands out for his use of modern critical theory to better understand the rhetorical devices at play in baroque art.

Indeed, Minor dedicates a full chapter to “Critical Perspectives,” and constantly returns to discussions of theory and methodology throughout the book, drawing ideas from a wealth of philosophical and theo-
etical sources in order to elucidate various aspects of his selected works of art. The author does not adhere strictly to one theoretical model when examining his objects of study; however, there are certain theoreti-
cal concepts and assumptions that are central to how he understands the art and culture of the Baroque. Min-
or favours the perspective of Martin Heidegger in particular, especially his idea that baroque art is “truth-disclosing.” The parergon or frame as dis-
cussed in the writings of Immanuel Kant and Jacques Derrida is another concept used prominently in his analysis. In addition to looking at painted or architectural frames that define the layered ontologies in his selection of works, he follows the lead of Gilles Deleuze by devoting considerable attention to the drapery framing sculptural bodies and the baroque fold in general. The concept of the sub-
limine comes up over and over again as well, as Minor discusses the inexpress-
ibility topos Filippo Baldinucci used to describe Bernini’s Baldacchino, the complex architectural geometry of Borromini’s Sant’Ivo alla Sapienza, and the representation of Mary Magdalene’s theophanic moment in one of Philippe de Champaigne’s paint-
ings for the convent of Port-Royal.

These foundational ideas are inter-
laced with philosophy and theory by
Vernon Hyde Minor, Baroque Visual Rhetoric

Itay Sapir

QU’EST-CE QU’UN « OVRAGE DE RÉFÉRENCE » SUR UN PEINTRE? Comment sait-on qu’on a entre les mains ce qu’en anglais on appellerait « the definitive account », nous donnant, pour un temps, le fin mot sur la carrière d’un artiste? La question est épineuse, d’autant plus lorsqu’il s’agit d’un peintre—Caravage—sur lequel tout semble avoir déjà été dit, un artiste qui est l’objet d’un véritable déluge de publications depuis une vingtaine d’années.

Le nouveau Caravage de Giovanni Careri donne plusieurs indices de sa candidature sérieuse à être désormais l’ouvrage de référence—en français à tout le moins—sur le peintre lombard. Le titre tout d’abord: c’est tout simplement le nom de l’artiste qui apparaît sur la couverture, même si un sous-titre, dont je parlerai plus loin, apparaît sur la page de garde et spécifie l’angle d’attaque choisi par Careeri. Le format du livre exprime lui aussi sa prétention à un statut de « ouvrage de référence »: c’est un objet extrêmement beau, difficilement manipulable tellement il est grand et lourd, et il inclut une iconographie d’une qualité sans précédent dans les publications sur Caravage, que ce soit pour le nombre d’œuvres reproduites—pratiquement toutes les peintures du corpus de l’artiste, y compris de nombreuses attributions débattues, en plus de dizaines d’œuvres d’autres artistes servant comme points de comparaison—ou pour la qualité des reproductions et des détails agrandis et magnifiés. C’est donc un répertoire d’images sans égal sur papier, et une référence incontournable pour quiconque voudrait examiner les œuvres de Caravage sans pouvoir se déplacer jusqu’aux originaux. Enfin, le nom même de l’auteur promet un récit « définitif » puisqu’on lui reconnaît des ouvrages majeurs sur des artistes dont les liens avec Caravage sont d’une grande importance historique et conceptuelle, tels que Michel-Ange et le Bernin. D’ailleurs, Careeri reprend ici, à grand profit, quelques idées maîtresses de sa pensée, développées dans ces écrits précédents. Un exemple frappant est l’insistance sur l’utilité du concept de montage, emprunté à l’analyse cinématographique, pour comprendre des œuvres baroques—des ensembles multimédia comme ceux du Bernin d’abord, mais aussi, comme on l’apprend ici, de « simples » peintures.

Cependant, le Caravage de Careeri refuse, par quelques autres aspects, de jouer le jeu de « l’ouvrage de référence ». D’abord, si toutes les œuvres communément attribuées à Caravage sont traitées dans ce livre, certaines sont mentionnées presque en passant, sans trop s’y attarder—elles sont, cependant, toujours magnifiquement reproduites—alors que d’autres ont l’objet d’une analyse détaillée, comme c’est notamment le cas de L’incroyable de saint Thomas, avec laquelle commence le livre et qui a droit à un chapitre à elle seule, hors cadre chronologique. Careeri détermine l’ordre des analyses et leur dosage selon ses intérêts propres et pourrait décevoir les lecteurs qui s’attendent à tout apprendre sur toutes les œuvres. Le même choix est fait pour les références bibliographiques; certes, l’exhaustivité dans le cas d’un peintre sur-évalué comme Caravage est tout simplement impossible, mais même en prenant cela en compte, la liste de références consultées est ici relativement maigre, comme l’est l’appareil de notes. Parmi les centaines, ou plus probablement les milliers de textes de niveau académique qui ont Caravage comme objet principal, sans parler des innombrables études sur les contemporains du peintre, sur son époque, la société romaine qui l’a accueilli, la théologie post-tridentine, etc., Careeri fait un tri hautement sélectif: en tout et pour tout, moins de quatre-vingt-dix références sont nommées.

Deux de ce nombre sont, de l’avis même de l’auteur, particulièrement fondamentales pour son étude: Caravaggio and Pictorial Narrative: Dislocating the Istory in Early Modern Painting de Lorenzo Pericolo, et The Moment of Caravaggio de Michael Fried (qui vient de sortir en traduction française). Deux « guides » assez peu conventionnels: si le livre de Pericolo a été très bien accueilli par les spécialistes de Caravage, malgré des débats sur la validité définitive de sa grille interprétative, Fried reste un personnage hautement...