

substantive notes. The reader is directed to each of the pertinent letters that support the narrative, but the editor's commentary is duplicated in notes appended to the correspondence, as well. The result is that the reader may find the same explanation in several places, instead of further depth of information. Overall, however, O'Day's work is an excellent record, which will add to the history of women of the late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth centuries.

Vernon Hyde Minor. *The Death of the Baroque and the Rhetoric of Good Taste*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. x + 196 pp. + 33 illus. \$80.00. Review by KATHERINE M. BENTZ, SAINT ANSELME COLLEGE.

The question of style—what it is, what it does, and why it changes over time—is perhaps one of the most central questions of the discipline of art history, and it is precisely the question that Vernon Hyde Minor examines in *The Death of the Baroque and the Rhetoric of Good Taste*. Minor's focus is eighteenth-century Italy, and in particular the Accademia degli Arcadi, a powerful group of elites who functioned as the tastemakers of *settecento* Rome. Employing the tools of post-modern critical theory, Minor investigates the waning popularity of the baroque style and the emergence of a new aesthetic influenced by Arcadian concepts of *buon gusto* (good taste) and pastoral poetics. In six discrete but related essays, each concerning different aspects of politics, literature, art and culture during the period, his book provides a densely rich discussion of artistic and literary style as a powerful discourse that directed and influenced the ideas of Italian society in the early years of the Enlightenment.

The book opens with a discussion of baroque visual rhetoric, the style so reviled by the eighteenth-century Arcadians. In his analysis of works such as Caravaggio's *Crucifixion of Saint Peter* and *Saint John the Baptist*, as well as Bernini's *Sant'Andrea al Quirinale*, Minor shows how the baroque utilizes visual effects such as spectacle, metaphor, conceit and fantasy to engender a variety of interpretative reactions and transcendent meanings in the mind of the viewer. Such effects are akin to the experiential and sensory visions taught by Ignatius of

Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, a text that exercised great influence on the art of *seicento* Italy. However, during a period in which Cartesian rationality and Jansenism were growing in popularity, eighteenth-century critics rejected the rhetoric and analogies of the baroque style as too saturated with Jesuit theology, and as too emotional, complex and numinous to constitute *buon gusto*.

In chapter two, Minor studies the concept of *buon gusto* and how it developed into a larger discourse during the early modern period. Good taste, he argues, was never a stable idea, but a "marker in the game of discourse, a term used for persuasion and control," and one that varied with its use in every context (27). By the seventeenth century, an earlier notion of taste referring to qualities of beauty and harmony had developed a social dimension, defined as an innate quality of discernment possessed by members of the nobility. In the eighteenth-century, concepts of *buon gusto* formed the heart of debates between French and Italian theorists on the use of language in defining national identity; became the springboard for advocating a reform movement of enlightened intellectualism in an Italian "Republic of Letters"; and was steering theorists to link ideas of beauty to the imagination and the genre of the pastoral. Perhaps the most important contribution of this chapter concerns the writings of Lodovico Antonio Muratori (d.1750). Though probably unknown to many readers of his book, Minor shows that Muratori was a significant Enlightenment thinker whose discussions of taste, judgment and the beautiful in many ways anticipated those of Kant and later eighteenth-century philosophers.

Chapter three turns to the pastoral as topos, subject, style and mood. Minor's aim here is to show the ways in which the pastoral and *buon gusto* informed and inflected each other within Arcadian discourse, and by extension, the discourse of eighteenth-century Italian art and culture. Through an analysis of paintings by Trevisani, van Bloemen and Maratti, as well as the art criticism of Diderot and Giovanni Mario Crescimbeni, Minor demonstrates how the pastoral mode in art draws the viewer into a fictional reality, one that revels in discontinuity, narrative rupture, fantasy, lyricism, and a sense of loss and nostalgia for an irretrievable Golden Age. That this aesthetic is starkly opposed to the baroque becomes obvious through Minor's brilliant analysis of the

tombs of baroque artist Bernini and eighteenth-century sculptor (and Arcadian Academy member) Filippo delle Valle. Where the baroque utilizes spectacle, celebrates allegorical and multivalent meanings, and speaks to the transcendent, Arcadianism, drawing on the pastoral, instead focuses on the pleasurable and charming, self-absorption, rationality and clarity. Notions of *buon gusto* were both “proscriptive and prescriptive,” and came to represent the sensibilities of the aristocracy and intelligentsia in promoting a new Italian culture over the excess and bad taste of the baroque style and Jesuit ideology (80-81). If *buon gusto* was the “text” of *settecento* aesthetics, posits Minor, then Arcadianism, which promulgated the mode of the pastoral in all aspects of cultural production, was its “subtext” (84).

*Buon gusto* and pastoralism did not always work together in harmony, however, as Minor explains in chapter four. Using the Trevi Fountain as his example, he asks whether we can characterize architecture as Arcadian. While the Trevi Fountain contains many elements of the pastoral, he points to elements of the grotesque appearing in the monument—elements that depart from the strictures of *buon gusto*. The important point Minor makes here is that like any stylistic mode, pastoralism did not fit neatly into a single category and instead often complicated and challenged the “text” (*buon gusto*) from within.

In chapter five we learn the history of the Accademia degli Arcadi and its leading founder, Giovanni Mario Crescimbeni (d.1728). This institution, with its members hailing from the upper echelons of society (aristocrats, prelates, scholars, artists, and poets), took up the cause of *buon gusto* as part of the broader movement of *settecento* cultural reform. Under Crescimbeni’s guidance (despite a short-lived leadership schism in 1711), the academy expanded to thirty-six “colonies” all over Italy. The influence of Arcadianism was thus widespread in learned culture, and thus, argues Minor, understanding the Arcadian ideology helps us to understand eighteenth-century taste.

The final chapter centers on the Bosco Parrasio, the garden on the Janiculum Hill in Rome in which the Arcadians held their gatherings. Here Minor analyzes the layout, sculptural program and iconography of the garden, but moves beyond creating a catalog of symbolic motifs to discuss the performative aspects of the space and how these generated particular “pastoral-Arcadian hermeneutics” (157).

Indeed, the plan of the garden, its sculpture and its inscriptions were not simply a backdrop for the poetry readings and play-acting of Arcadians dressed in shepherd costumes. It was rather a space that enacted the pastoral in its pathetic reminiscence of the distant past, in its production of mood and relaxation in the service of *otium*, and in its lack of resolution or logical narrative conclusion as an experiential space. The Bosco Parrasio was the very quintessence of pastoralism in the service of *buon gusto*, operating at the heart of Arcadian poetics.

Minor's book is not a comprehensive historical account of the period, nor does it claim to answer in absolute or definitive terms why the baroque style was eclipsed by a new aesthetic in the eighteenth century. This is one of the great strengths of Minor's study, for the question of style is multifaceted, and cannot be answered in simple terms. He offers instead sharp historical analysis and insight into the political and social climate that contributed to and helped to create a critical shift in aesthetic taste. Another strength of Minor's study is his illuminating reading of works of art, architecture and literature, which draw upon a dazzling array of theoretical approaches. His use of semiotics and reception theory, to highlight just two examples, provide the reader with model approaches for future art-historical interpretation. But perhaps the greatest contribution of Minor's book is his ability to explicate the cultural discourse and institutional powers that produced works of art and facilitated their appreciation in a period so critical to the development of the Enlightenment, and yet so often neglected by scholars.

Alexander Cowan. *Marriage, Manners and Mobility in Early Modern Venice*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007. xvi + 209 pp. + 8 illus. \$99.95. Review by R. BURR LITCHFIELD, BROWN UNIVERSITY.

This book will be of interest to historians of Venice and to those interested in the definition of nobility in Early Modern Europe generally. It focuses on proofs of nobility for the 600 non-patrician brides of Venetian nobles in the period 1589-1699. The book is well researched and well written.