

Political Contest, and Social Theater, 1600-1700,” in *Ambiente Barocco: Life and the Arts in the Baroque Palaces of Rome* (1999).

Overall, Alice Jarrard provides a focused, well- detailed and interesting study of the patronage of Francesco d’Este that does much to restore his reputation as a serious patron, and highlight the sophisticated diplomatic skills that allowed him to cultivate an international acclaim and secure a lasting place for his family in the world of art history.

Maryvelma Smith O’Neil. *Giovanni Baglione: Artistic Reputation in Baroque Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. xxiii + 404 pp. + 15 color and 108 b&w illus. \$125.00. Review by JEFFREY FONTANA, Austin College.

As O’Neil states in her introduction, her goal is to redress the “standard antagonistic position against Baglione” as an “academic toad” taken by modern scholars, particularly of Caravaggio (1). The two painters were rivals in early seventeenth-century Rome, and while Giovanni Baglione (c. 1566-1643) gained greater success as measured by social status Caravaggio was by far the more innovative, which has made the latter the clear favorite of art historians. Baglione’s situation as an accomplished gentleman-painter was similar to that of Giorgio Vasari in Florence during the third quarter of the sixteenth century, and like Vasari Baglione is valued today more for his collection of artists’ biographies than for his paintings. Baglione brought a lawsuit for libel against Caravaggio and three others, prompting scholars to side with or against him. O’Neil pleads Baglione’s case in the court of scholarly opinion through an examination of his career and writings and an analysis of the libel trial. By gathering together much archival and photographic documentation to demonstrate the high reputation Baglione enjoyed she serves both the painter and the reader well.

O’Neil begins her rehabilitation of Baglione’s image by treating his lawsuit against Caravaggio and three co-defendants in 1603, brought in response to slanderous verses attributed to these men. She examines the verses as an attack on his reputation, and she justifies his reaction in the context of heightened contemporary efforts in Rome to punish defamation. She further argues Baglione’s absence of vindictiveness from the even-handed evaluation

of Caravaggio in his *Le Vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti* (1642). By analyzing the verses and the trial transcript—both helpfully provided in English translation—O'Neil fleshes out the players' motivations and the shadiness of the defendants' characters in this fascinating drama. By dealing with the trial in her first chapter the author has put herself at a disadvantage, however, because her references to Baglione's early works, and the attempt to contextualize his two versions of the Caravaggesque *Divine Love Overcoming Earthly Love* exist somewhat in a vacuum. A reader might do well to read the second chapter first.

The second chapter traces Baglione's career from his training through about 1601. O'Neil publishes numerous drawings in this and the following chapter to characterize the painter's graphic manner, but apparently at present there are few works to document his earliest activity, since she inserts Baglione into a narrative of the typical painter's training in late sixteenth-century Rome. One feels a bit adrift as she lists painters by whom Baglione was influenced, such as Federico Barocci and the Cavaliere d'Arpino, without any explication or comparative illustrations. O'Neil boldly claims that in an early fresco "Baglione established his overriding ambition to forge a new Roman style founded on the legacy of Raphael" (57), but the sole evidence she gives that goes beyond simple assertion is one study of a woman's head after Raphael's *Spasimo di Sicilia*. Rather than explore how the painter sought to build a reputation by creating a style that interwove the styles of certain masters, the author charts Baglione's pursuit of fame in terms of his networking with patrons. Following in the steps of her thesis advisor at Oxford University, the late Francis Haskell, recognized for his pioneering work on Roman Seicento patronage, O'Neil links Baglione to a series of prestigious patrons, including Cardinals Jacopo Sannesio, Pietro Aldobrandini and Paolo Sfondrato. The author illustrates well how Baglione had achieved a prominent place in the Roman art world by 1603, when his success spurred rivals to slanderous action.

In her third chapter O'Neil gives a chronological presentation of Baglione's commissions for the better part of his career, from 1604 until 1632 when his vision degenerated to the point that he virtually gave up painting. By illustrating the succession of major commissions from prestigious patrons she clearly demonstrates the painter's elevated status and insider position within the Roman artistic environment. While the evidence of Baglione's recognition is plain to see, what distinguished his style in the eyes of contemporaries is

harder to appreciate, and it is in the analysis of paintings and drawings that O'Neil leaves the reader somewhat unsatisfied. She characterizes his style as a "rich play of chiaroscuro, a sculpturesque conception of form, and a sensuous surface handling derived from life studies" (100). Echoing the previous chapter she similarly states that in order "to assume the mantle of a seventeenth-century Raphael, Baglione had aimed to ally a central Italian tradition of *disegno* with coloristic naturalism" (107). Exploring the implications of these characterizations would have helped understand Baglione's striving for reputation through the paintings themselves, as well as through his titles and social networking. The desire to synthesize Venetian color handling and central Italian *disegno* can be traced back to Barocci's works in the 1550s, and was a concern of numerous painters during the late 1500s and early 1600s, among them Annibale and Ludovico Carracci and Ludovico Cigoli. Rivalry with Raphael places the meaning of fame in a different light, implying competition in the context of posterity and written history and suggesting a self-consciousness about style set within the long view of artistic "progress." O'Neil's defense of Baglione's work would have been enriched and perhaps strengthened by deepening the discussion of his style as a self-projection, to be viewed in the context of history and the nascent genre of artists' biographies. Particularly pertinent to this would be the passage from Giulio Mancini's *Considerazioni sulla pittura* (c. 1617-21) that O'Neil cites in which Baglione is categorized with artists who "worked in individual styles and did not follow in the footsteps of anyone" (117-18).

Changing gears, in the fourth chapter O'Neil discusses Baglione's long association with the Academy of St. Luke in Rome, beginning with the first record of his membership in 1593. She draws a parallel between his rise and the increasing prestige of the Academy, and credits him with forging important connections to cardinal-protectors and strengthening institutional policies and practices while holding various offices, resulting in a more authoritative role for the organization in Roman artistic production. Drawing upon archival documents, many unpublished, O'Neil describes the operations of the Academy and its changes during the course of Baglione's membership. Baglione drifts in and out of the discussion somewhat, and the chapter focuses more on the Academy than on the painter himself. The clear and concise portrayal of the Academy's operations is useful, but makes no direct contribution to understanding Baglione's paintings, only his biography.

The final chapter treats Baglione's work as a writer, focusing primarily on the *Vite*. O'Neil analyzes the structure and style of his books in order to understand his method, and defends his writing against the predominantly negative criticism of it, which began soon after the painter's death. What critics perceived as lack of focus and inelegant style was intentional, according to O'Neil, who calls attention to his "primary commitment to the 'clarity of truth,'" as set out in the *Vite's* preface, rather than to judgment (185). She argues well that a plain style and the accurate reflection of messy stylistic diversity gave Baglione's writing a desirably "objective tone."

The text is followed by six appendices that provide chronological lists of paintings, drawings, and lost works, a register of documents, and an English translation of the libel trial. Though not a *catalogue raisonné*, the lists bring together basic information about dating, provenance, and references, and will prove valuable to any scholar pursuing research on Baglione. Unfortunately there are no references to O'Neil's text or plates, making the lists difficult to use with this book.

One notes a few missteps or missed opportunities along the way in the interpretation of Baglione's images: In *The Presentation of the Virgin* in Santa Maria dell' Orto the temple out of which the priest emerges to greet Mary is the church itself (pl. 31); we see not a *prie-Dieu* but Neri's knees in *Saint Charles Borromeo and Saint Philip Neri in Meditation* (pl. 63); the Düsseldorf drawing identified as a study for *Saint Sebastian Cured by Saint Irene* (pl. 102) represents instead the Virgin Mary and the dead Christ, and may be connected to the *Anointing of Christ's Body for Burial* (pl. 57); the *Madonna in Glory* fresco on the vault of the family chapel (pl. 103) may include a cratered moon, perhaps a rare reflection of Galileo's discovery seen in Cigoli's *Woman of the Apocalypse* in the dome of the chapel of Pope Paul V, Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome. One must applaud the assembly of a great amount of valuable material, however, in a volume that illuminates the artistic milieu in early Seicento Rome and that will stand as a useful reference for future Baglione scholars.