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” fig-
ures, 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 geograph-
ical 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 con-
cept 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
exceptional 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 chap-
ter, “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 scholar-
ship on rhetoric and the visual
arts in early modern Europe that has
developed since the 1950s, from the
foundational work of John R. Spener-
cer to the studies by Michael Baxan-
dall, 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 inter-
ests 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 theor-
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 theoretical
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-dis-
closing.” 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 consider-
able attention to the drapery framing
sculptural bodies and the baroque
fold in general. The concept of the sub-
line comes up over and over again as
well, as Minor discusses the inexpress-
bility 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 Mag-
dalene’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
Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Paul de Man, Michel Foucault, Walter Benjamin, Sigmund Freud, Gottfried Leibniz, Mieke Bal, Norman Bryson, and others, making for complex and insightful arguments and reflections. In tandem with foregrounding critical theory and reflecting on the philosophy of art, Minor sometimes writes about the history of art historical methodology as well, a fact that will surprise no one who is familiar with his book Art History’s History (1994 and 2000). The way Minor navigates philosophical issues and critical theory not only enriches our understanding of baroque art, but also makes this book relevant for any scholar interested in art historical methodology.

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[Image: Caravaggio: La peinture en ses miroirs
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Itay Sapir

QU’EST-CE QU’UN «OUVRAGE 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—Caravaggio—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 Caravaggio 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 Careri. Le format du livre exprime lui aussi sa prétention à un statut 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, Careri 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 Careri 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 font 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. Careri 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-étudié 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., Careri 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’aveu même de l’auteur, particulièrement fondamentales pour son étude: Caravaggio and Pictorial Narrative: Dislocating the Istoria 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