

Genevieve Warwick. *Bernini: Art as Theatre*.

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Genevieve Warwick's assertion that "the relationship between Bernini's art and his theatre has been relatively neglected" is surprising, since her extensive bibliography cites many classic studies of "Baroque theatricality" in his multimedia oeuvre and across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, from Hibbard to Lavin to Weil. (I would add B. Wisch and S. Munshower's *All the World's A Stage* [1990], with contributions by the latter two authors and many others.) Theatricality has been a staple of Bernini criticism since his own time (e.g., in Baldinucci's biography), as he was himself directly involved in performance as a playwright, scenographer, and stage engineer, and his French host Chantelou recorded that

Bernini had an actor's "particular talent for expressing things through word, expression, and gesture."

What Warwick's fascinating (if occasionally tendentious) study contributes to this long-standing trope of Baroque historiography is not so much new works or documents (though she makes discerning use of some formerly underutilized biographical sources) as the first synthesis of the considerable existing work on previously isolated aspects of Bernini's theatricality. Arranged typologically rather than chronologically or by medium, her wide-ranging interdisciplinary panorama is also the first study to bring to bear on this consummately dramatic (and self-dramatizing) artist and his milieu modern theories of performance and performativity, in their broadest sense. Her hermeneutic framework derives from theorists such as Victor Turner and Clifford Geertz, who move beyond the simple observation that visual and theater arts use parallel forms and techniques, to the deeper premise that culture is constituted by performance: rituals of power and belief that necessarily enlist theatrical methods in the formation of fundamental social relations, communal identity, and individuality.

The value of this book lies in its totalizing exposition of the multiple and interlocking aspects of this protean metaphor. Warwick groups her discussion under five main headings; each chapter has something fresh and insightful to say about familiar monuments. The first four chapters focus on categories of subject matter and purpose: scenographies (the realm of actual plays and stages), churches and religious ephemera (the spiritual), pastorals (mythological subjects), and fountains and festivals (urban design and social engineering). This is not a monograph, however: each chapter spotlights a few representative examples of its type, omitting other important works in the same vein or giving them only passing notice. "Theatres of Piety" concentrates on the Cornaro Chapel for St. Teresa and the Cathedra Petri in St. Peter's; among his other sacred spaces, she does not mention the important church of San Andrea al Quirinale, among the most deliberately stagey of his religious interiors. The festival chapter deals almost exclusively with the Four Rivers Fountain and the laying out of its setting, the Piazza Navona, as a site of civic ritual.

Elsewhere, there is almost no discussion of Bernini's successive projects for the Louvre in Paris; the omission is disappointing, since it was precisely the excessive theatrical plasticity of his early proposals that the French rejected — a classroom staple for comparing the Italian Baroque with its classicizing Gallic equivalent. Also missing or mentioned briefly are papal tombs, the Scala Regia (its exaggerated perspective often linked to scenographic techniques), and the monument to Blessed Ludovica Albertoni, so strikingly similar to St. Teresa. At one point, Warwick's urge to simplify gets the better of her: the claim that "purpose-built permanent theatre buildings only emerged in the second half of the seventeenth century" (7) erases significant forebears in a long developmental tradition, from Vicenza to Florence to Parma, back to the 1580s.

The final chapter, "The Performance of Practice," exploring how Bernini's studio functioned as a personal stage for self-fashioning and self-promoting, is

particularly novel and compelling. Analyzing the artist at work, it goes into extensive detail to flesh out and theorize the parallel view of Bernini's courtier skills and theatrical salesmanship evoked by Franco Mormando's recent biography of the artist (2011). Her approach to the artist's career itself as a "show," which builds on what Svetlana Alpers has done for Rembrandt, suggests a productive avenue of further research for other artists of this period and beyond: Rubens, for example, and Velázquez, whose atelier as a site of complex social interplay is famously embodied in his *Las Meninas*.

Warwick has assembled an overarching and convincing argument about the inextricability of art, theater, illusion, and society. Her well-illustrated and clearly written study will enlarge, complicate, and enrich our understanding of Bernini and his world, and of cultural production in general.

JAMES M. SASLOW

CUNY, Queens College and the Graduate Center