INTRODUCTION

As one ascends Rome's Janiculum Hill by the Via Garibaldi, mounting the steep incline toward Bramante's Tempietto, the Bosco Parrasio appears to one side among the trees and tall grass, laurels, myrtle, and ilexes. In this spot of tranquillity and peace, the Parrhasian Grove provided a charming setting in the eighteenth century for "great writers, philosophers, or artists, all the noble lords, all the rich bankers, all the astute lawyers, all the well-known doctors, all the sainted priests, all the beautiful ladies" of Rome.[1] Here, in a place named after a sacred grove of Apollo in Greece, these literati gathered for pastoral ceremonies. The Accademia degli Arcadi set the tone for good taste in Rome. The Arcadians dressed as shepherds and shepherdesses, adopted bucolic names, played harps and spinets, flirted, and made quiet conversation. This was, so they believed, a return to nature – a highly cultivated nature, to be sure.

In this book I write a series of essays generally organized around such topics as the climate of taste, especially as it was under the sway of the Academy of Arcadians, their promotion of *buon gusto*, and the collision of rhetorical values in late-seventeenth-, early-eighteenth-century Rome. I follow a cultural and artistic tradition through the environs of Rome's academies and the haunts of her intellectuals, art patrons, ecclesiastics, poets, painters, architects, and sculptors. The story is about pastoral poetics, good and bad taste, the emerging public sphere in the guise of an Arcadian academy, the Franco–Italian debate on language and style, the republic of letters, and the academicians. I try to account for both a waning baroque sensibility (although I do this more in rhetorical than political and religious terms) and a burgeoning insistence on *buon gusto* in culture, literature, and art.

What I call "climate" can also be seen as a discourse of power, in Michel Foucault's terms. The power Foucault means when articulating the actions and behavior of discourses is not one of domination or repression; it is, rather, a "making possible." As Arcadianism and its companion *buon gusto* circulated through Rome and its institutions in the eighteenth century, it abetted and allowed certain things to happen. It could regulate, adjust, arrange, manage, and order events in such a way that certain notions and abstractions – such as *buon*

gusto – became fairly standard beliefs. Systems of power, like the Arcadian movement, can subjugate individuals in a positive sense, make men and women into subjects, give them identity and individuation. And give them ideas.

By looking closely at circumstances in the arts and letters in Rome from the later seventeenth into the early eighteenth century, I try to engage with matters that are part of the practice of art but that also reach into broader areas of culture, politics, and religion. As I have intimated, this text is also about the weakening of the baroque style as it confronted the elusive matter of taste, specifically "good" taste. Although the Arcadians are central to the story that I try to tell, they are not its essence; the Accademia degli Arcadi was probably as symptomatic of complex cultural workings as any other group, institution, or powerful individual of the time. As we hardly need reminding, every effect arises from multiple causes; there rarely, if ever, is a prime mover in art or physics. That is why this text is as much a cultural and literary history as it is an art history; in other words, the "inflowings" that we call influences existed throughout the religious, artistic, and literate culture of the settecento and are not simple phenomena that move only between and among artists.[2] Although I try to trace some of the larger and more general contours of the period and its history, I am also interested in specific readings of works of art and analyzing various rhetorical strategies, such as the way narratives unfold in various paintings and statues.

I do not follow Liliana Barroero and Stefano Susinno, who, in their important article for the catalogue of the exhibition *Art in Rome in the Eighteenth Century*, held in 2000 in Philadelphia and Houston, characterized the new style promoted by the Arcadians as "classical."[3] This is, in my estimation, a rather anemic categorization and portrayal of something more deserving of close rhetorical examination. I argue that pastoral poetics have more to tell us about how things looked in early-eighteenth-century Rome than do old warhorses of classical and romantic or linear and painterly.

A more pressing question at the moment might be this: Why did the baroque (I am thinking of what has traditionally been called the "high" or "dramatic" baroque), as a set of stylistic strategies – or, better, as a rhetorical stance – decline? What has driven so many critics and art historians from different cultural backgrounds over such a long period of time to dismiss this extraordinary rhetorical mode as "tinged by the bizarre," as the "excess of the ridiculous," and the "superlative of the bizarre," as that which is "irregular, bizarre, uneven?"[4] The recurrence of the word bizarre in these quotations suggests more than the usual loathing that accompanies the end of a particular style or cultural expression; these connotations of the whimsical and eccentric, of deviance and decadence, seem to have been uttered with distaste by baroque's enemies. The divergence from accepted taste (although the taste from which the baroque deviated had not yet occurred) soon enough came to be called "bad" taste, as in Giovanmario Crescimbeni's cry, "Esterminare il cattivo gusto!" Stamp out bad taste!

Who controls taste, controls culture; who controls culture, controls Italy. Against taste, baroque sins; against culture, baroque sins; against Italy, baroque sins.

This polemic (in the form of a *gradatio*) is not mine but belongs to the eighteenth century. We realize that there are any number of reasons why styles and modes of individual and cultural expression change, and this text cannot provide a full accounting for such a complex historical occurrence. My intention is to demonstrate how Franco–Italian literary debates, the phenomenon and discourse of Arcadianism and pastoralism, and the Italian version of *buon gusto* – which anticipates much of the Anglo–German debates on taste – provide the fertile soil out of which change could grow and cultural conflicts flourish.

I must advise the reader that what follows is not a history of art in early-eighteenth-century Rome. Rather than attempt something comprehensive, I have opted for essays that approach taste, art, and culture from various points of view. In the first chapter, I try to isolate certain aspects of "bad taste" – the despised *cattivo gusto* so often excoriated by the Arcadians and like-minded intellectuals. I hope it is clear that what they despised I admire; and yet, despite my approbation, I do not attempt to take full measure of baroque visual rhetoric. I try to sketch the contours of *secentismo* as contemporaries understood it, without offering an extensive historical accounting. That deserves a fuller treatment in another venue. Chapters 2 and 3 are more sustained essays on *buon gusto* and the attendant issues of Arcadianism and pastoralism. Chapter 4 addresses the question of whether we can, with any legitimacy, talk about Arcadian architecture. In Chapter 5, I provide a brief history of the Accademia degli Arcadi. Although the Arcadians have in no way been ignored by Italian historians and critics of literature, art historians have come rather late to the game. As I have mentioned, only in 2000, as part of the superb exhibition *Art in Rome in the Eighteenth Century*, has the Academy of the Arcadians been taken seriously, especially in the English-speaking world, as an institution of real art historical significance. Finally, in Chapter 6, I explore the now largely forgotten Bosco Parrasio, a tangible if rudimentary artifact of Giovanmario Crescimbeni, the long-lived chief herdsman of the Arcadians, and his academy of Arcadian shepherds. I treat the old garden as an embodiment of early-eighteenth-century Roman pastoralism, almost as if it were a free-standing idyll. I take seriously what Crescimbeni and his accademicians took seriously: Arcadia is a landscape of art.

ONE:

CATTIVO GUSTO AND SOME ASPECTS OF BAROQUE RHETORIC

How does one account for the contempt held by the Arcadians (and other theorists of the early settecento) for the poets, writers, and artists of the seicento?

Indeed, even in the twentieth century, one finds critics expressing such opinions as "it was the very formlessness of the 'seicento' that was responsible for Italy's literary undoing." This same writer also opines that "[t]he taste for fantastic thinking, for the 'concetti' of Marini [the poet Giambattista Marino, 1569–1625] and his followers, became universal, and paralyzed all serious literary effort."[1] James Mirollo portrays the attitude of the Arcadi and others: "As they saw it, the Marino period had been a bad dream, a time of a national literary disease soon to be called *seicentismo* – literally, seventeenth centuryism. And Marino, it was universally agreed, had been the leading germ carrier."[2]

In the world of literature, the seventeenth century in Europe seemed to be awash with "ismo": *marinismo* and *secentismo* in Italy; *culteranismo* and *gongorismo* in Spain.[3] Somewhat comparable movements appeared in Germany (*Schwulst*) and in England (Euphuism). Also, the Metaphysical poets in England were famous for their "far-fetched" conceits.[4] In France, the Pléiade continued the styles of the sixteenth century into the seventeenth, and, as a reaction against the apparent licentiousness of the court of Henri IV, a group of poets known as the *Précieuses* grew up around the salon of the Marquise de Rombouillet. All of these more or less self-conscious literary movements formed the congeries of the baroque and, eventually, raised aesthetic hackles throughout Europe. Molière's *Les Précieuses ridicules* (1659) was merely the first in a series of attacks on the French version of the literary baroque.

I mentioned earlier some of the assaults on *marinismo*. Francesco Algarotti (1712–1764) made specific connections between the baroque style of Marino and the visual arts, especially the architecture of Francesco Borromini.[5] The Arcadian and more general antibaroque camps never lost sight of the old notion of *ut pictura poesis* – as is poetry so is painting (and sculpture, and architecture) – and they condemned with a broad brush, as it were.[6] No artist who was highly dependent

on the marvelous, the element of surprise, and the use of elaborate visual conceits was free of their enmity.

In this chapter, I discuss the *visual* rhetoric of baroque spectacle; but first, I would like to examine a few other aspects of that stylistic phenomenon of the baroque to which its critics so vigorously objected. As Giambattista Marino himself acknowledged, his grand and magniloquent poems consisted more of "digressions and luxuriances," embellishment, intricate tableaux, and extended metaphor than of actual narrative. His love of the marvelous and of astonishment won him a few adherents in the seventeenth century (actually quite a few in Italy) but brought scorn down on him from abroad and, later on, from within Italy itself.

The *antimarinisti* of the early eighteenth century attacked baroque conceits as well. *Concettismo* is one of those "ismos" despised by the cognoscenti of the eighteenth century. Samuel Johnson in his *Life of Cowley* complained of the conceits of the metaphysical poets that they imitate "neither . . . nature nor life."[7] As we will see in the next section, *concettismo* has to do with hyperbole and the pushing of odd and sometimes highly intellectual comparisons as far as possible.

The French writer Jean Chapelain's view of Marino's poetry as a "bottomless and edgeless sea" is a complaint against extreme *concettismo* as that which is formless, boundless, nebulous, or inchoate. Marino's days as the poet laureate of the baroque were numbered. The next volleys against him and Italian literature of the preceding centuries (at least since Dante and Petrarch) came from, as we shall see (Chapter 2); a Frenchman, Père Bouhours, whose *Entretiens d'ariste e d'Eugène* of 1671 was followed quickly by Nicolas Boileau's *Art poétique* of 1674. The texts denigrated not only *marinismo* but also the Italian language itself. Not content with his first sally against baroque literature and the Italian language, Bouhours became ever more venomous in the *Manière de bien penser dans les ouvrages de l'esprit* of 1687. The battle lines now were clearly drawn, and the Italians came out swinging for their language and culture, if not in defense of Marino himself.

From its very beginnings, the baroque style was under attack.[8] The extreme inventiveness, performativeness, and magniloquence of baroque spectacle and *concettismo* were caught up in complex ways with debates on free will and religious experience. Although there was little mention of the religious overtones to the baroque style on the part of those who assailed it, it seems clear in retrospect that the Arcadians and others who hated the baroque were also taking close aim at Jesuit poetics.[9] Boileau in France as well as Lodovico Antonio Muratori and Gianvincenzo Gravina in Italy found fault in an intensely Catholic mode of expression. If not openly stating it, they were at least insinuating that the traditional Jesuit promotion of emotive images was in fact *cattivo gusto*. Although there is not space here to trace anti-Jesuit and specifically pro-Janesenist rhetoric from the mid–seventeenth century to the early eighteenth century, suffice it to say that in the intellectual circles of Paris and Rome there was a discernible shift in worldview. When Blaise Pascal attacked the Jesuits in *Les provinciales* (1656), he

launched a campaign that finally was to bring the society to its knees by the middle years of the eighteenth century.[10] He ridiculed Jesuit probabalism, its doctrine on grace, belief in free will, and "laxity" of morals. In succinct and vivid prose, Pascal made an argument on the side of the Jansenists, one that was in favor of a rigorous search for truth, belief in predestination, and the assertion that salvation emanates from divine grace rather than good works. Boileau was later to see that Pascal's cogent use of language marked the beginning of a new French literary tradition as well.

Despite the Church's repeated attacks on Jansenism (witness Clement XI's bull *Unigenitus*, signed in 1712), Roman Jansenists continued to meet more or less openly. Clement XII's *nipote*, Cardinal Neri Corsini, invited the Jansenists (many of whom belonged to the Accademia degli Arcadi) to gather in his home. One of the important patrons of eighteenth-century art and a leading Jansenist, Giovanni Gaetano Bottari (whose Arcadian name was Agesia Beleminio) was a great and close friend of Neri.[11] There certainly was a connection between Jansenism and *buon gusto*, but untying the intricate knot that fastens taste to religious ideology awaits another opportunity. Hanns Gross has presented the case for the importance of seeing Jansenism as a nexus for cultural studies in the Roman settecento: "A great deal of what happened in Rome during the ancien régime can only be explained in terms of the Jansenist controversy. Even areas beyond the strict confines of theology were shaped by events and thought patterns that on the surface had little to do with the confrontation of Jansenists and Jesuits, but which were still couched in those terms."[12] He may have overstated the case, in fact; but I believe that there is no denying the preoccupation of so many in France and Italy with the Jansenist controversy, the power of the papacy, the religious sovereignty of the French Church, and the cultural antagonism between the French and Italians. Indeed, there was a Franco–Italian war in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, one that raged in the salons; among the *eruditi* and savants; in the republic of letters; in the writing of sacred history; in the attack and defense of language, literature, and the visual arts; and in the very souls of these two languages, cultures, and traditions. The battles went on and on into the middle of the eighteenth century, when things calmed down for a while, with many in France turning their thoughts to revolution.

Before continuing with the Italians' own campaign against the baroque, I want to analyze those things that constitute the baroque vision and style. I am mindful of and quite in agreement with Mieke Bal's assertion that "style . . . refers to cultural attitudes and states of consciousness which encompass intellectual and aesthetic, political and scientific, assumptions and thoughts."[13] The cultural skin worn by style cannot be cut away without exposing its sinews to destructive elements; yet for the purposes of this study and for the sake of brevity, I am going to do just that. Then I attempt to redress baroque rhetoric in time for its meeting with Arcadian rhetoric.

The Rhetorical Turn

In his essay "Semiology and Rhetoric," published in 1979, Paul de Man put forward what he characterized as a modest effort at going beyond the form–content debate that had dominated literary (and, I would add, art historical) criticism since the 1930s. Form had been seen as the "inside" of an artifact, content its "outside." On close examination, de Man found this to be a false dichotomy, not because form *is* content – he had no interest in a McLuhanesque "medium as message (and massage)" – but because the languages of art, literature, and criticism inevitably mix up the two. De Man's close reading both of the traditions of metaphor and grammar and of particular texts led him to the observation that "the deconstruction of metaphor and of all rhetorical patterns such as mimesis, paronomasia, or personification that use resemblance as a way to disguise differences, takes us back to the impersonal precision of grammar and of a semiology derived from grammatical patterns."[14] There are consequences to collapsing metaphors into grammatical structures and asking rhetorical questions about the rhetorical element in any text. De Man refers not to so-called rhetorical effects such as ornament, eloquence, or persuasion but to "the study of tropes and of figures," which are things that arise out of the grammatical structure of language.[15] Although I have no intention of avoiding reader and viewer responses, I do agree that riveting one's attention only on persuasion will tell us little about what the Arcadians so despised. On the other hand, were we to accept the Arcadians disdain for ornament, we might miss the deeper issues of the controversy between good and bad taste.

By reattaching figural language to grammar, to the bare bones of syntax and the logic of sentences, de Man was able to jettison a misguided but time-honored notion that conceits and metaphors, tropes and figures, are "add-ons" used by rhetorical artists as nothing more than flourishes or so much icing on the cake.[16] At the same time, he was able to question the apparent rationality and logic of grammatical structures – the cake beneath the icing, so to speak. One can conclude from de Man's intricately worked-out studies and deconstructions of texts that he would have understood the complexities of *cattivo gusto* while remaining deeply suspicious of the claims of *buon gusto*.

Art historians studying the early modern period also have taken into account the importance of visual rhetoric. In the early 1950s, a conference was held in Venice on the topic of rhetoric and the baroque.[17] In his contribution to the proceedings, Giulio Carlo Argan drew a parallel between baroque art and the enthymeme, a rhetorical rather than a demonstrative argument.[18] Aristotle (*Prior Analytics*, ii, 27) contrasts the enthymeme with the syllogism because it induces probabilities or propositions that would strike one as being *generally* valid. In modern logic, enthymeme is a less explicit form of the classical syllogism because it is based on unexpressed premises – things that are tacit, that "go without

saying." It is, in effect, a rhetorical form of the syllogism.[19] In terms of baroque art, an enthymeme can be seen, among other things, as the religious attitude of the viewer. As Argan contends, Caravaggio's religious paintings do not necessarily express the artist's spiritual values nor attempt to prove the general validity of religious propositions; rather, they take into account the assumptions of the faithful and, in so doing, deliver a discourse that is sharp-edged, concise, violent, and (this is the rhetorical part) persuasive (although in an indefinite sense).

Baroque art does not attempt to persuade its audience of the truth of Christianity nor (necessarily) the legitimacy of the Catholic Church (although some art can be outright propaganda). But the baroque artist's many techniques, as Argan argues, move the viewer, touch his or her desires, uncover and reveal fundamental human reactions, and, in assuming the religious and moral base of existence, go beyond them to reveal in larger terms the whole scope of public and private life, its grief and joy, its mysteries and pleasures. Agostino Tassi uses *quadratura*, for instance, not to advance the study of Euclidean geometry but to draw on our knowledge of geometry and thence to plumb the depths of how we think about and experience space so that we allow ourselves the pleasure and emotional thrill of a virtual, visionary journey and experience. In this sense, the rhetoric of the baroque constitutes a repertory of tropes and schemes marshaled by the artist to engage (not just persuade in the narrow sense) the viewer in some profound way. This engagement or encountering can become aggressive, contestatory, and combative or, on the contrary, soothing, gentle, calming, and reassuring. Whether baroque rhetoric riles the viewer or puts her in a meditative, contemplative state, it inevitably incites in her mind what Charles Sanders Peirce calls interpretants – mental images that are parts of the process of signification. No sooner does one interpretant appear than another takes its place, signs leading to signs like a string of firecrackers firing rapidly and consecutively. Rather than following the semiotic trail of transforming interpretants, however, I want to ponder those tropes, figures, and techniques that constitute baroque rhetoric.

Conceit, Ekphrasis, and Metaphor

I have already intimated that *concettismo* (associated with *secentismo*) brought derision down on a century's worth of language, imagery, and culture. As used in Renaissance treatises and discourses on art, the *concetto* is the idea lying behind a specific execution, whether that idea exists in the mind of the artist or is somehow hidden in the inchoate material out of which the art object springs (the familiar idea that the marble contains the image *in potentia*).[20] Michelangelo's *concetto* is, in a sense, the nucleus of art, the prior idea of which the final form (the painting, the statue) derives.

But to restrict the *concetto* to an idea or concept gives short shrift to the metaphorical and sometimes occult implications of the term. Conceit as *discors concordia* involves the comparison of unlike things, the finding of similarity in dissimilarity. The *concetto*, however, is not immediately associated with metaphorical language in late Renaissance Italian treatises. An early comment in Italian critical literature on the *concetto* appears in Giulio Cortese's *Avertimenti nel poetare* (1591), where he describes the *concetto* as "that meditation which the spirit makes on some object offered to it, of what it means to write about."[21] In other words, the *concetto* is the treatment given by an author to a particular subject, how the author casts his or her theme, what words are chosen, what tone and point of view are adopted, what rhetorical strategies are brought to bear on it. Bernard Weinberg observes that "[t]he poet must take particular care to see that the words are adapted to the style in which he is writing and that the sounds are at once fitting to the thought and harmonious among themselves."[22] In this demonstration of the *concetto* in Italian literature, it does not appear to be much more than an attempt to match form and content, to give an appropriate style to a particular subject. An eighteenth-century critic such as Crescimbeni would have thoroughly approved and have seen this as an example of *convenevolezza*, a suitable and seemly decorousness.

Camillo Pellegrino's *Del concetto poetico*, 1598, in the form of a dialogue, has its star discussant Giambattista Marino say that the *concetto* "is the thought formed by the intellect as an image or resemblance of a real thing, signified by these latter [which are *senso, sentimento, sentenza*]."[23] Pellegrino in his assertion that the concetto is "a thought of the intellect, an image or resemblance of true things and of things which resemble the truth, formed in the fantasy" summons forth the importance of verisimilitude (*verosimile*). The poet can traffic in similitudes rather than the truth. That is to say, verisimilitude is here taken not as realism but as something different from (although related to) the truth; it is a product of the imagination – it is true, but similar rather than identical to something else. Whereas the orator persuades and sticks to that which is true, the poet gives pleasure and depends on his or her *fantasia*. Pellegrino continues in this vein by explaining that "[p]rose in expressing conceits uses pure forms of expression, proper words, and when it uses metaphors and figurative language it uses them rarely and with moderation; whereas verse, with greater liberty and sometimes with excessive boldness expresses its conceits with figures and metaphors distant from literal meanings."[24]

We are now in the country of Metaphysical and Marinesque conceit, where complex, extended metaphors compare objects, experiences, and sensations so distant from one another – and yet always connected by a slender if tenacious thread – that they create a sense of surprise and intellectual excitement. In the following sonnet, Marino makes the not unreasonable comparison of his beloved's hair to the sea. But when the ivory comb becomes a precious ship, milady's ivory

hand, the stern captain, and the lover's rebellious spirit, a heart shipwrecked on her diamond clips and drowned in her golden waves, we see how remarkable a conceit can be.

Through waves of gold, the waves which were her hair,
A little ship of ivory sailed one day,
A hand of ivory steered it on its way
Through precious undulations here and there.
And while along the tremulous surge of beauty
She drove a straight and never-ending furrow,
From the rows of tumbled gold Love sought to borrow
Chains to reduce a rebel to his duty.
My shipwrecked heart veers down to death so fast
In this stormy, blond and gilded sea that I
Am caught forever in its waves at last.
In golden gulfs, at last, I come to my
Tempestuous end, on rocks of diamond pressed,
– O, rich disaster in which submerged I die.

Poesie varie, 78; trans. Frank J. Warnke

Frank J. Warnke, one of our best commentators in the 1960s and 1970s on baroque literature and rhetoric, adopts art historical nomenclature in his texts *European Metaphysical Poetry* and *Versions of Baroque* by identifying a particular kind of seventeenth-century poetry as "High Baroque."[25] He makes a distinction between what he considers to be the mannerist style of John Donne and the high baroque of Richard Crashaw (and, on the Continent, Marino and Góngora), which he characterizes as "expansive, hyperbolic, sensuous."[26] As is true of many of the critics of his generation, Warnke shows a particular interest in drawing strong distinctions between Renaissance and baroque discourses and in the making of qualitative judgments on writers (Marino was "very good"; Góngora "great"). Although he shies away from tying literature to specific political and social circumstances, he does seem to follow Ernst Cassirer and Suzanne Langer in sensing that poetic language conforms not just to the intrinsic patterns of literary history but also to deep and broad intellectual currents and forms of apprehension. For Warnke, baroque rhetoric symbolizes underlying forms and realities. He reifies the baroque as a kind of mind or sensibility that has lost its (Renaissance) faith in appearances, in sensuous reality. He writes that there is an "irritable doubt as to the precise relationship between seen and unseen worlds." Although I find Warnke to be a strong writer on baroque rhetoric, I sense that his emphasis on "deceptive appearances" might lead one to see baroque spectacle as hostile to the sensuous and the material. Of course, Warnke does not say exactly that; he stresses, instead, the sensuousness of the baroque and asserts that things