



## Schraven, Minou. Festive Funerals in Early Modern Italy: The Art and Culture of Conspicuous Consumption

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**Schraven, Minou.**

***Festive Funerals in Early Modern Italy: The Art and Culture of Conspicuous Consumption.***

Farnham, UK: Ashgate 2014. Pp. xviii, 320 + 51 ill. ISBN 978-0-7546-6524-3 (hardcover) \$153.00.

This volume does an important service to the field of early modern ritual and festivities by exploring the development of funerary practices in Italy through the long sixteenth century. Minou Schraven sets out to chart the changing trends in “funeral *apparati*: spectacular ephemeral decorations within church interiors on the occasion of festive requiem masses for the aristocracy” (1). This is a topic that has not been explored sufficiently, and clearly has much to contribute to the larger discussion of social dynamics and ritual life. With 51 black-and-white illustrations, this volume provides ample visual evidence, hopefully inspiring scholars to pursue follow-up investigations.

An excellent introduction provides an important overview of the study’s terms and the field’s academic background. Then chapter 1 moves the reader’s focus on to the papal court in order to chart the movement from a *chappelle ardente* or *castrum doloris*, a baldachin-like structure that was covered in candles, descended from France, and common in the late Middle Ages, to a more elaborate heraldic *apparato*, and eventually larger-than-life catafalques that included statues. Although the title locates the study in Italy, initially the author appears to focus tightly on Rome. Indeed, the study’s over-arching argument is the papal court’s slow adoption of new fashions, either from Spain or elsewhere in Italy. Events memorializing the death of the *Infante* Juan (1498), Queen Isabella of Castile (1505), and Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (1559) stand as spurs to change in Rome. However, there is little evidence supporting Schraven’s assertion that “the obsequies of the Spanish monarchy received the status of ceremonial models for the future” (43). Accounts of Roman funerals from between 1498 and 1559, showing that these examples were adopted at the Curia, are necessary to support this point.

To further explore this trend of memorialization, Schraven moves to Spain, the Low Countries, and other Italian cities to consider Charles V’s funeral *apparati* and the ways that cities memorialized other Imperial family members. Chapters 2 and 3 build up a structure of comparative examples from the early sixteenth century that argue for an international network of funeral events that

visualized transnational political and family networks. These events, and the interest that they prompted, spurred the birth of printed funeral books, which offered inspiration for competing courts. In the mid to late sixteenth century, Florence emerged as an important site for funeral design, seizing opportunities to underline its relationship with the Habsburg family, as well as memorialize famous artists (Michelangelo) and saints (St. Antoninus). Briefly, the volume notes the local Roman efforts to memorialize distant rulers in the 1570s and 1580s, encouraged by communities of expatriates and located within national churches. Much more could be done with this discussion, as the development suggests political and social movements that remain lightly explored.

Chapter 4 spins the desire to memorialize individuals into a larger discussion of Post-Tridentine festival culture and especially the interest in the translation of saints' relics in Milan, Bologna, and Rome. Connections between the fad for urban *translatio* and the development of funeral *apparati* appear weak until chapter 6, which discusses the practice of papal reburials and chapel building using Pope Sixtus V as a case study. While there are certainly links between these discussions, as part of the growth of a larger church-focused life in early modern Europe, further analysis of the events and conscious connections between their meanings and intended goals is necessary.

Chapters 5 through 7 return the reader to Rome, where the author explores how Charles V's memorials had introduced "a radically new iconography, based on the virtues and accomplishments of the deceased," which were amalgamated with the traditional heraldic *apparati* of the *castrum doloris* (159). Through the 1570s and 1580s, wealthy cardinals adopted catafalques and patronized nine-day obsequies (*novenas*) that highlighted their elite social status and their patronage of new Roman churches, like Il Gesù. Schraven does an excellent job of tying the College of Cardinals, pressure for social advancement, and church patronage together in the Post-Tridentine period. The discussion of funeral *apparati* prepared for military commanders in Rome is an underplayed aspect of this study. As well as expanding the analysis of these memorials, Schraven might have highlighted the addition of charity to these late sixteenth-century funerals (e.g., dowry and bread distributions). Finally, following repeated reminders in chapter 7 that the papal ceremonialists were dissatisfied with the fact that papal funeral practices remained unchanged and old fashioned, one wonders who determined ceremonial practices at the papal court, if not the Office of Ceremonies?

Although this study is an excellent example of arguing from a broad base of evidence, it also represents a lost opportunity. While the book mines several important types of evidence, namely funeral books, ceremonialist diaries, and newsletters (*avvisi di Roma*), there is little contextualization of their authors' identities and backgrounds, interests or disinterests, and their impact. This information is less valuable than it could be, as the author has done little to explore these sources to determine their own worth and meaning. A little bit of book history would go a long way, especially since in the past decade an increasing amount of work has been done on all these media. Nor does the author investigate the readership that came in contact with these sources. While initially the diaries were written to advise other ceremonialists—but widely copied by outsiders through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—knowing more about the recipients of funeral books and newsletters would uncover more about how families, religious institutions, and foreign nations competed for soft power with lavish funerals. This is a widely accepted truth of early modern society, but it is rare that we see the mechanics of shared ideas and practices traced from origin to fruition. Schraven's focus on artistic identity and the recycling of *apparati* is helpful and goes part way towards this goal, but the effect of these sources remains underdeveloped.

In sum, this useful study opens the doors for further research, building on Schraven's illuminating foundation.

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**Speziari Daniele.**

*La Plume et le pinceau. Nicolas Denisot, poète et artiste de la Renaissance (1515–1559).*

Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance 563. Geneva: Droz, 2016. 285 p. + 16 ill. ISBN 978-2-600-01918-7 (paperback) US\$66.

*La Plume et le pinceau* fills a major gap in literary scholarship on the French Renaissance by delving into the life and works of Nicolas Denisot, about whom only eighteen critical works have ever been written. Although underappreciated in modern times, Denisot's remarkable versatility (poet, painter, calligrapher,