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John Richards, Review of Minou Schraven, *Festive Funerals in Early Modern Italy: The Art and Culture of Conspicuous Commemoration* (Farnham and Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2014), xviii + 320 pp., 13 tables, 51 b/w illustrations. ISBN: 978-0-7546-6524-3. Price £70 (hardback).

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Minou Schraven begins her book with the unarguable observation that '[...] one thing is certain: the moment we are born, we are destined to die' (p. 1). It is almost as certain that we cannot get ourselves into the grave unassisted and unobserved, for interment is but one stage of a process necessarily involving the living. Any funerary monument is a rhetorical object in its own right but, especially in the case of a high status defuncto or defunta (the objects of the obsequies treated here are all high-status and almost exclusively male), its rhetoric cannot be fully understood if the actions and procedures by which it was filled are excluded from scrutiny. If the monument itself is designed to outlast time it is also the culmination of an impermanent dramatic sequence, often elaborately staged and sometimes recorded. It is to that sequence and to the transitory objects which articulate it that Schraven's book is devoted. Readers of this journal will find little here that is about funerary monuments as such, but they will find a great deal that places them in their exemplary and commemorative contexts. Schraven's introduction sets out the principal aims of the book with a series of subsections on Rome, on the broad parameters of Christian funeral culture, the heraldic funeral, and on the *chappelle ardente*, the late-medieval ancestor of the most spectacular feature of Renaissance obsequies: the great catafalques of the sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century funeral rites to which the book is chiefly devoted. She closes her introduction with an examination of terms used – usefully so, given the 'confused terminology of contemporary authors' on whose testimony any modern account must rest (p. 15). Schraven thus distinguishes between the *chappelle ardente* (variously *castrum doloris*, *hearse*, *gebirs*, depending where one died) and the later and more complex *catafalco*. The difference was not liturgical, for both were used in the rite of absolution, but in terms of the *catafalques*' 'far more sophisticated vocabulary as far as their design and iconography is concerned', especially in that they referred explicitly to the 'virtues and achievements of the deceased' (p. 15). There follow seven chapters, beginning with a discussion of Roman funerals of the early sixteenth century and moving on to accounts of the *apparati* of the Emperor Charles V and those in various Italian cities which followed in their wake. Schraven then turns to the post-Tridentine culture of funerals in Rome and Milan, the funeral *apparati* of cardinals in Rome, various papal reburials and the *apparato* of Pope Sixtus V, and closes with a survey of Roman practice at the end of the sixteenth century and a general conclusion. For the modern reader, especially one interested in the architectural language of tombs, it is probably the *catafalque* that will appear the most striking element of the range of temporary decorations which comprised the funeral *apparato*. The sixteenth century saw these things increase in scale to a startling extent, especially once the Roman Church embarked upon a process of trying to catch up with the kind of *apparati* used in the Italian courts or for the Spanish monarchy. The *castrum doloris* of Pope Alexander VI (d. 1503) was imposing enough at 8.8 m in height, but it was dwarfed by the *catafalque* of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese displayed in the church of *il Gesù* in March 1589. This was 30 m tall, more than twice the size of its architectural ancestor, Bramante's *Tempietto* (1502). In a later chapter Schraven usefully reproduces an engraving of 1623 showing the *catafalque* of Pope Paul V in situ in the nave of *S. Maria Maggiore* in Rome, its *cupola* all but scraping against the roof. The effect

is extraordinary, and the disruption of the normal liturgical functions of the church must have been considerable. These temporary constructions clearly allowed designers to indulge themselves in a manner rather harder to sanction in the case of permanent stone structures. At times this led to excesses of invention which were perhaps too much even for their exalted patrons. Schraven's Fig. 7.6 reproduces an unrealised design for the catafalque of Pope Gregory XV (d. 1624) in Bologna, a multi-tiered confection crowned by a cupola in the form of a (very large) papal tiara. Its author, Giacomo Lippi, having lost the competition to Gian Luigi Valesio, promptly published his entry for the perusal of "those who delight in good design" (p. 244). Throughout the book Schraven investigates these structures in their liturgical contexts and fully engages with the various sources which record them, most notably the funeral books often published 'as quick and effective means to broadcast the particularities of the ceremonies, the apparato and its iconographical programme' (p. 2). She correctly places her account in relation to the modern literature of the two related areas of 'festival culture and [...] issues of death and commemoration' enshrined in her title (p.5). As one might expect, her research uncovers strands of considerable tension, not least between the personal austerity of reforming popes and the lavish commemorations which were increasingly expected, even in Rome, where budgets mattered. These tensions reveal themselves in the contrasting views of a Master of Ceremonies such as Giovanni Paolo Mucanzio, who lamented the fact that 'nowadays [1591] the funerals of the pope [...] lack more and more the splendour and majesty of the past' (p. 239), and the author of the twice-weekly *Avviso di Roma*'s observation of 1602 concerning the ceremonies for Gianfrancesco Aldobrandini, that '[...] since the entire church [S. Maria in Aracoeli, Rome] was covered in black, yet they had put up so many skeletons, arms, trophies and emblems, that it looked rather like a triumph than a funeral, and more befitting for some villa than for Rome' (p. 231). This gives us a sense of the extraordinary theatricality of these commemorations, something well supported by Schraven's excellent range of contemporary illustrations. In some respects, too, the triumphal aspect was fully intended. Schraven reminds us that the apparato's roots lay to an extent in a culture of *imitatio imperii*, something explicitly supported with reference to the catafalque by Paris de Grassis, the 'renowned expert on all aspects of funeral ceremonies at the Roman Curia' under Julius II, in his treatise on the funerals of cardinals (pp. 35–36). Indeed, the interplay between imperial and papal practices, lay and ecclesiastical iconography, and between the prescriptions of the Council of Trent and a humanist culture of exemplarity, is one of the most fascinating aspects of this topic and one which Schraven delineates very well. In her first chapter Schraven sets out the ritual requirements and procedures of papal commemoration. One of the chief areas of differentiation between curial and lay ceremonies of commemoration was that the curial ones were not and could not be dynastic in character, for all that family names played a prominent role in the funerals of cardinals and popes, as one would expect. The pope has no successor in the usual sense, and no aspect of the papal journey to the tomb is more touching than the ceremony by which the deceased pontiff was tapped with a little hammer and addressed by his Christian name to reinforce the point that 'the pope [had] returned to his former status of mere mortal human being' (p. 28). Nature often intervened at this point to add a further reminder of the pope's ordinary humanity. With the exception of the occasionally uncorrupted papal corpse, taken as a sign of exceptional sanctity, the prolonged lying in state presented obvious and sometimes grisly challenges which had to be 'taken for granted [...] especially if the pope had died in summer' (p. 28). One of the most picturesque features of the lying in state was the presence of two or more fly swatters, whose usual characterisation as purely ceremonial may rather understate their value. The book is rich in interesting material and Schraven's observations are rooted in meticulous research. She writes engagingly and with great vitality throughout, but presentation is sometimes undermined by moments of unidiomatic English which surely could have been dealt with at a copy-editing stage. Columns do not 'top over' (p. 231),

corteges are not 'opened' (p. 59), and bullfights cannot be 'oppressed' (p. 116). A more thorough scrutiny of the text would have allowed for the correction of mishandled narratives such as: 'to the great dismay of the family, Roberto [Altemps] was executed in 1586, presumably for having raped a young girl' (p. 233). Of course we know what is meant, but the charge was obviously less random than the words suggest. This is no factual error, but elsewhere there are areas of muddle which should have been tidied up. Bramante's Tempietto is at S. Pietro in Montorio, not S. Pietro in Vincoli, and it is misleading to refer to it as 'the archetype of the centralized mausoleum' (p. 168). Of course, it could serve as an architectural model for later mausolea but it is a martyrrium and cannot be their archetype. These niggles notwithstanding, no-one interested in this material could fail to learn a great deal from Schraven's book or enjoy reading it, and its arguments will resonate across a field of funerary scholarship much broader than the chronological limits of her discourse might suggest. The polarities of grief and pride, extravagance and austerity (not much in evidence here except on a purely theoretical level, it must be admitted), personal and universal, transitory and lasting, are ably and entertainingly displayed, and they offer food for thought for anyone concerned with the iconography of death and the rhetoric of commemoration. In the end, the ephemeral has an enduring aspect for, as Carlo Borromeo declared at the funeral of Anne of Austria (d. 1580), "once these candles will be extinguished, the dark cloth will have disappeared [...] once this funeral apparato will be demolished, and the service will be over, its fruition will persist" (p. 140).

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