Gallucci, Margaret A. *Benvenuto Cellini. Sexuality, Masculinity, and Artistic Identity in Renaissance Italy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. ISBN 1403961077. xvi, 214 Pp.

Margaret Gallucci's study of Cellini's poetics and the sexual politics of his self-creation through poetry, autobiography, letter-writing and through his art at last permits an English audience to appreciate fully the importance of his role in creating himself as a paradigm of the new masculinity that emerged in the Italian sixteenth century. In part, Gallucci has provided us with a good example of a type of scholarly investigation which I like to call the bibliographic biography. Investigations of men through the books they read and the books they created remind me of Giuseppe Arcimboldo's famous *Librarian* (c. 1566) a painting of a man who is made up entirely of books. The analogy is appropriate in Cellini's case, since he is probably more widely known through his *Autobiography* than through his relatively small repertoire of famous sculptural works, chiefly the *Perseus*. Our perception of Cellini is therefore largely as a book. Gallucci analyses the *Autobiography* to show its origins in Cellini's readings of Dante, Ariosto and Condivi's *Life of Michelangelo*. She also gives us a new way of reading Cellini's life in light of the larger context of sexual politics and the emergence of new readings of masculinity in Cinquecento Florence. To do this, Gallucci situates the *Autobiography* within the wider scope of Cellini's broader literary production, concentrating equally on the poetics of his sonnets (some newly discovered and published here for the first time).

As Gallucci points out, most of Cellini's literary output dates from the period after his second conviction for sodomy (1557). Gallucci offers extremely interesting insights into the politics of prosecution for sodomy in Renaissance Florence and suggests that Cellini's conviction on the second charge, which occurred when he was at the height of his artistic achievement under the aegis of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici, was chiefly a political statement on the part of the Duke. Cellini's conviction proved that Cosimo was willing to regulate this kind of sexual transgression and, by commuting the sentence to house arrest rather than imprisonment, that the Duke was able to use the same occasion as an opportunity to demonstrate his clemency. Gallucci argues that it was partially Cellini's perception of the injustice of this conviction, which robbed him of the Duke's favour and thrust him into relative artistic obscurity, that drove him to poetry. This was the impetus for his *Autobiography*. Cellini also became the author of highly inventive refigurations of Petrarchan canons in the defence of homosexual love. Gallucci argues that the frequent references to sodomy found in the *Autobiography* can also be read as a defence of his transgressive sexual practices, thereby redefining the *Autobiography* as a tract that evolved as a kind of legal defence against the sexual policies of the State. Since the danger of self-invention via autobiography is that it almost always subverts all hope for truth, Gallucci's book is extremely valuable in defining the 'true' circumstances of the identity that Cellini invented for himself, forged from the circumstances of proscriptions for sexual behaviour, particularly male sexual behaviour, in the complex artistic culture of Renaissance Florence.

Cellini's mere indulgence in sonnet writing was also a self-conscious attempt

to equalize his own relationship to the well-documented and highly praised poetic output of his more famous contemporary, Michelangelo. Moreover, other Florentine painters associated with the Medici court at this time were also sonnet writers, most notably Bronzino, who also created complex and witty sexual allegories (most famously the *Venus, Cupid, Time and Folly*, National Gallery, London) for the delectation of precisely the same circle of privileged clients and contemporaries for whom Cellini worked, chiefly Francis I and the circle of Fontainebleau. The tenor of much of Cellini's poetic output compares favourably with such luxurious sexual conundrums and also with the work of the equally sexually voluble Pietro Aretino, whom Cellini seems very much to have admired.

Gallucci's analysis of Cellini's writing as a form of legal argumentation is convincing. In his poetry, Cellini subverts Petrarchan conventions, normally used to express heterosexual love, to defend the practice of sodomy between men, thus articulating his defence of his own practices, and he also used his sonnets to launch attacks against artistic rivals like Vasari and Bandinelli, writing verses accusing them of sodomy. The master of the bon mot and double entendre lost no opportunity to skewer his contemporaries. Certainly much of the *Autobiography* is concerned with artistic rivalry, as Cellini asserts his superior talent as a goldsmith over contemporaries like Caradosso Foppa, Tobbia and Pompeo (curiously enough, all Milanese). It was Pompeo that he stabbed to death, for which he was forgiven by the Pope who proclaimed that "men like Benvenuto, unique in their profession, stand above the law," a clear statement of artistic and legal superiority that goes far to characterize the *Autobiography* as a form of legal defence (Symonds translation of *The Life of Benvenuto Cellini*, London, 1905, p. 144). In terms of artistic rivalry, the fact that Cellini later turned his attention to the creation of treatises on goldsmithing and on architecture could well have been motivated by the high seriousness of Giorgio Vasari's treatise writing. Certainly by the late sixteenth century, treatise writing had become a general mania among the artistic elite—witness Serlio, Bertani, and Palladio just to name three. Moreover, Vasari's success at the Medici court must certainly have prompted Cellini to attempt new avenues to regain his artistic standing.

Gallucci is at her best in Chapter Five, "Honor and Manliness," when she discusses Cellini's self-invention not only in terms of his poetics, but rather in terms of his knowing manipulation of the perception of masculinity in early modern Florentine society. As Gallucci points out, in modern popular culture, Cellini has often been depicted as a waggish, roguish sort, a veneer of feminine charm disguising a capacity for masculine heroics, a popular heroic type in Hollywood cinema of the '30s, the same era that popularized the *Scarlet Pimpernel* (*The Affairs of Cellini* was made in 1934, *The Scarlet Pimpernel* in 1935—Gallucci uses the example of Errol Flynn in *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, 1938). Gallucci makes the important point that this duality emerged as an acceptable and successful vehicle for self-fashioning in courtly society, which required "men like Cellini to be both a feminine courtier and a masculine defender of honor" (141). The sixteenth century was a time of courtesy manuals that regulated every aspect of public behaviour, and the mannered life at court could easily lead to accusations of effemina-

cy. Eventually the duel arose as a socially acceptable expression of controlled male violence. Cellini, and later Caravaggio and Marlowe, who had similar temperaments, probably to some extent countered overt societal control, and the need to court patrons, with spontaneous displays of 'swashbuckling' manly behaviour. Thus, Gallucci effectively shows that, by the sixteenth century, the concept of masculinity was itself continually under revision, and that Cellini was "in the forefront in articulating a new norm of manhood" (113). Gallucci's excellent analysis of the evolving social consciousness about masculinity in Cinquecento Florence, as articulated in her examination of Cellini's literary oeuvre, should undoubtedly influence future readings of his artistic production. Moreover, this book will provide future scholars with greater insights into the 'reading' of artistic representations of sexuality and masculinity in this period.

SALLY HICKSON

Brock University

Art History in the Age of Bellori: Scholarship and Cultural Politics in Seventeenth-Century Rome. Eds. Janis Bell and Thomas Willette. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. xvi, 396 pp.; 106 b/w illustrations. ISBN: 0-5217-8248-1. \$90 US.

Giovanni Pietro Bellori was surely the most significant and influential of all seventeenth-century historians of art in Italy. Most famous for his highly selective biographies of contemporary artists (*Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti moderni*, 1672), Bellori produced (as author, co-author, or editor) some twenty-five additional works on subjects ranging from ancient medals to the Vatican frescoes of Raphael. This interesting collection of essays by an array of international scholars has its origins in a conference held in 1996 at the American Academy in Rome marking the tercentenary of Bellori's death. Together with the grand 2000 exhibition in Rome and its resulting catalogue, *L'idea del bello: viaggio per Roma nel Seicento con Giovan Pietro Bellori* (ed. Evelina Borea and Carlo Gasparri), it is evidence of Bellori's continuing importance in seventeenth-century studies.

Given his importance, it is unfortunate that Bellori is often read only by specialists in seventeenth-century art. The essays in this volume are, frankly, also primarily for the specialist, though Janis Bell has provided an extremely useful introduction that begins with an overview of Bellori's life and scholarship, followed by a lengthy but engrossing summary of his critical reception from the seventeenth century to the present. This helps greatly to situate the eleven essays in the book in historical and critical context, and to illuminate their overarching themes. Together, the participating authors have attempted to consider the relationships between Bellori's differing fields of scholarly activity (antiquarianism and the history and criticism of contemporary art), and to reveal how his personal affiliations and career goals shaped his art criticism. One of the most intriguing aspects of the essays is, in fact, the erosion of the myth of Bellori's much-vaunted objectivity and impartiality, characteristics that led to his being so widely respected as a historian.