This volume, comprised of thirteen essays dedicated to aspects of the Baroque, grew out of the St. Michael's College Symposium series. As such, it intends to express the spirit of academic conviviality that characterizes that particular University of Toronto Catholic Liberal Arts College tradition as well as the tradition of serious academic inquiry. It sets high standards for itself as it consciously attempts to link a troubling historical period with the modern and contemporary, while pointing towards the future. This is made boldly evident in the editor's Introduction:

SET BETWEEN THE END OF THE RENAISSANCE and the beginning of the Age of Reason, Baroque has traditionally appeared as a puzzling epoch to the student in arts and science, an age filled with unresolved ambiguities, divisive issues, and unsubstantiated projections of new values to replace established truths. AND YET, IN THIS PERIOD, we find some of the greatest achievements of modern culture in the Western World [...]. (p. 9) [author's emphasis]

By means of these and other typographical variations as well as constant references to Marshall McLuhan, postmodernism, and the Neo-Baroque, the editor intends to intrigue, engage and perhaps even provoke the reader.

The net is cast rather broadly since the volume's goal is to offer the reader an insight into elements of European culture from approximately 1550 to 1650 and still contextualise these developments from a more current perspective. While Italian culture of the period looms large, the essays collected here are not merely confined to phenomena typical of the peninsula. The discussion of the figurative arts, theatre, music, literature, science, philosophy and religion goes beyond the geographical limitations of Italy and the traditional chronology. Despite the vast scope of this volume, it is not intended to be exhaustive but rather to whet the appetite. Hence, a glance at the papers presented here should entice the potential Italianist reader to pursue further study.

This intention is communicated in the editor's brief “Introduction: An Idea of Baroque.” In the first essay, “Point of View: An Intellectual Revolution of the Baroque Age,” Joseph Goering jumps directly into a most absorbing aspect of the period by addressing the contention that the artistic mastery of perspective and point of view in the visual arts was accompanied by philosophical, theological and political opinion, thereby creating a “convergence between art and thought” (p. 15). According to Eric McLuhan's essay, “Francis Bacon's Theory of Communication,” the scientist's aphoristic style of writing in the Essays points to “a scientific technique of keeping knowledge in a state of emergent evolution and thereby of constantly referring it to perception and observation” (p. 25) that becomes of fundamental importance in the analysis of the Book of Life through scriptural exegesis and the Book of Nature through scientific experimentation. Similar concepts run through Domenico Pietropaolo's essay on Galileo and Biblical allegory. Through a careful analysis from the perspective of the representation of immanence and transcendence, Pietropaolo regards Galileo’s letters (par-
particularly the 1615 one to Grand Duchess Christina of Lorraine) as key to his conception of allegory and affirms, “Theology is to the Bible, what physics is to nature, and both are forms of exegesis, that is to say acts of careful reading and interpretation.” (p. 33) Science, revelation and ethics remain linked to this day, and the example of Galileo’s trials and tribulations remain valuable lessons (p. 41). Similarly, history plays a large role in Francesco Guardiani’s essay entitled “Baroque and Neobaroque.” The author claims that we are planted firmly “in the eye of an epochal storm” (p. 43) and in “a period of accelerated cultural transformation” (p. 44). By conjuring Galileo Galilei, Giambattista Marino, Giambattista Vico, Northrop Frye, Marshall McLuhan and Gianni Vattimo, Guardiani presents intriguing arguments for a parallel between the seventeenth century and our current era, or rather, between the Baroque and the Neobaroque. Complementary arguments are detected in John H. Simpson’s essay, “A Scrapbook of Lessons for the Modern from the (New) Baroque: Discontinuity, Gazing, Glancing, Listening,” Here, Walter Benjamin, Paul Klee, Christine Bucil-Glucksmann and Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim Museum of Bilbao are potentially (even “spiritually”) linked by “Baroque Multiplicity” in “the twilight of Modernity” (p. 65).

That spiritual link between artistic and scientific developments is also present in Donald J. Lococo’s “Baroque Science: The Lens of Infinity.” Here, the author argues that the knowledge imparted by such scientific discoveries as the telescope and microscope deepened man’s knowledge of the cosmos and changed human consciousness. With the lens as a metaphor, the author claims that those scientific developments “re-defined material reality beyond the sphere of earth to encompass the near-infinite cosmos which pointed to the infinity of God.” (p. 79) These overtly religious themes are further complemented by the following essay, simply entitled, “Jansenism.” Elmar J. Kremer engages in debates surrounding this important movement in seventeenth-century French Catholicism in order to discuss issues related to divine providence, grace and free will in an era beset by religious wars and scientific discoveries that would continue to reverberate for centuries. In “Paolo Sarpi and Canon Law”, Giulio Silano also engages in questions related to the organized Church and matters related to freedom of expression. The seventeenth-century court theologian battled the Roman Curia on behalf of the Republic of Venice regarding the interpretation of canon law and even the right of Church to make laws by divine right (p. 104). What emerges is an important figure who fights for the rights of the individual to strive for truth unhindered by such bodies as the Inquisition. This figure is so intriguing (and so intriguingly dealt with here) because these argumentations were taking place at a time when the pressures of ‘correct’ interpretation were deeply felt and, indeed, even claimed victims. In order to be successful, the author wonders about the degree to which Sarpi and other such figures really were who and what they claimed to be.

The theme of simulation and dissimulation is carried over in the essay, “The Shepherd’s Baroque Nature,” written by Benoît Bolduc. According to the author, the shepherd embodies “some of the most convincing features of the period that we now agree to call ‘baroque’” (p. 112). It is the exceptional liberty of pastoral drama’s intermediate position between tragedy and comedy that attracted so many writers
to the genre. Consequently, the shepherd too “can be just about any type” (p. 121) and therefore may be considered quintessentially baroque. In “Directing Opera in the Italian Baroque,” Anna Migliarisi turns to opera as a perfect reflection of the “impression of unity of the arts on a grand scale” (p. 123). A recently recovered anonymous treatise dealing with directing musical and spoken drama, Il Corago, is presented as key to understanding baroque theatre for, although there is some degree of indebtedness to other treatises, this one is “a comprehensive summary of directorial, as well as musical-dramatic, practice in the late Renaissance and early Baroque periods in Italy” (p. 134). Laura Willett’s essay, “Montaigne, Caravaggio and the Conversion of St. Paul,” investigates the significance of the Conversion of St. Paul as a theme for Montaigne’s writings and Caravaggio’s paintings. This subject, drawn from Scripture, was treated frequently by major Renaissance and Baroque painters and also by post-Tridentine writers. Between the literary treatment of Montaigne and the painting of Caravaggio, the author compares the rhetorical techniques and discovers, among other things, “the process of dialectical opposition – clearly a characteristic of baroque mentality” (p. 147). Both are seen as texts that can generate multiple interpretations.

For Ann Dooley who, in “More Broke than Baroque: The Irish Perspective” offers insight into the Baroque in Irish literary tradition, any dialectical opposition must be seen to “struggle for some cleared ground […] against the cultural model of the imperialism/colonialism dialectic” (p. 156). The Gaelic poetry of Ó Rathaille of the end of the seventeenth century is compared to Spenser’s Faerie Queen from the perspectives of self-fashioning, the Reformation/Counter-Reformation struggle and nation building in terms of the “mould of the Gaelic mythos of sovereignty” (p. 167). In a similar vein, the last essay by Randall A. Rosenfeld, entitled “Van Eyck’s Der Fluyten Lust-hof” (1644-ca.1655) and the Perception of the Baroque,” makes a strong case for a pan-European Baroque culture. According to the critic, this is due to the eclectic nature of the Netherlandish collection, a reflection of the cultural and religious variations from which inspiration was drawn. If there is a political element to it, the author argues, it is perhaps as “a reflection of the tone of Utrecht society, determined in part by the city’s plurality, with its approximate third of Catholics, spread throughout that society” (pp. 183-84).

There is much to praise in this volume, though there are also some points that detract from its general impact. For example, one notices a basic discrepancy between the methods of referencing the sources among the essays’ authors. Further, one cannot help but be distracted by the occasionally poor editorial practice that leads to such passages as the following:

An [sic] so, perhaps, we can turn somewhere else for help, where there is some faith. Northrop Frye has always fascinated me: often when I am stuck with a problem, missing link [sic] in my train of thought, I get the distinct feeling that he has gone through an identical or similar thinking pattern .. [sic] but of course he always has the answer. (p. 45)

Putting these stylistic infelicities aside, on the whole the book makes a positive impact. The initial impression of the randomness and disconnectedness of the
papers may be seen as resulting from the inherent tension and contrasts typical of
the period itself and, subsequently, one begins to notice a flow of thought that ties
these diverse papers together in order to form a rather thematically tight little vol-
ume. True to the etymology of its central theme, Going for Baroque may indeed be
considered a pearl of irregular beauty.

ROBERT BURANELLO
College of Staten Island
City University of New York

Saints and the Sacred, eds. Joseph Goering, Francesco Guardiani, and

This collection of thirteen essays is derived from the third St. Michael’s College
Symposium, held in February of 2000. “An Idea of Sanctity” is the provocatively
titled introduction to Saints and the Sacred, a volume that introduces the reader to
the complexities of a notion as sublime and intangible as sanctity. The introduc-
tion anticipates the tone of the following essays and directs us “to think of the
effortless dramatic actions of the saints as an expression of a life that is not merely
natural, a life that goes beyond human nature, a life that, therefore, becomes
supernatural, and so most fully human” (10). Once initiated into this philoso-
phical realm, the purpose of the symposium is affirmed by Christopher Potworoski’s
inquiry in his essay: “The Theologian and the ’Little Way’.” He asks: “How can
theologians benefit from the life and experience of the saints?” (136). In light of
this query the essays can be read as an examination of the lives of the saints and
the lessons, to be learned from them. The Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar
suggests in the same article that the saint’s life is a presentation to his own age of
the message that heaven is sending to it and is a way to approach the perennial
truth of Christ (136). Applying this argument to the theological study of saints’
lives allows us to gain a more nuanced understanding of the historical milieu in
which they lived and something of the religious practice of that period.

This volume seeks to initiate the reader into a world of highly focused theo-
logical and research based topics of discussion. Jacalyn Duffin’s exploration of or-
gin and meaning in the cult of saints Cosmas and Damian in Toronto, Canada,
uses an intriguing socio-historical research method involving personal experiences,
surveys, and interviews as well as liturgical and lay literature as sources. Awad
Eddie Halabi examines origins in his essay on the Islamic shrine and annual festi-
val of the Prophet Moses in the Medieval Islamic period. Again, we are presented
with an extensive body of research, though interestingly this time of non-Christian
sources, which examines contemporary chronicles discussing Sultan Baybars’ con-
struction of the shrine and the early performances of the festival. In his conclusion
the author explains how this research advances our understanding of the dynam-
ics existing between popular religious beliefs and state-sponsored religious prac-
tices. The volume then moves to two works focusing on issues of traditional allegorical
interpretation and on the “wilderness motif” respectively. Domenico Pietropaolo’s
essay “The Zodiac Saints” refers to the stellar cartography of Julius Schiller and