Chapter 1

Sforza Pallavicino: A Jesuit Life in Baroque Rome

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1 Gianlorenzo Bernini and Sforza Pallavicino*

The catalogue of the exhibition Bernini at the Villa Borghese (1 November 2017–8 February 2018) concludes with a list of capsule biographies of the historical actors connected to the artists Pietro and Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598–1680). Between the many clergymen, artists, and men of letters figure two Jesuits; Sforza Pallavicino (1607–1667) is one of them. Long only a marginal presence in the historiography of art, hidden in the shadow of the Jesuit superior Gianpaolo Oliva (the other Jesuit in the catalogue), since the studies of Tomaso Montanari, especially, Pallavicino has entered the art historical canon, right next to popes and other actors who shaped Baroque Rome.

This presence is due to several factors. Amongst the works shown in the exhibition was a large bronze crucifix attributed to Gianlorenzo Bernini, now at the National Gallery of Ontario, that has been identified with a 'crocefisso' listed in Pallavicino’s last will and testament [Fig. 1.1]. The identification is a matter of art historical dispute, but it attests to an otherwise well-documented and multifaceted relationship between Pallavicino, Bernini and the latter’s family. The most lasting sign of this relationship is Pallavicino’s involvement in the two book-length biographies of Bernini that appeared shortly after his death: the vitas written by Filippo Baldinucci and published in 1682, and by Gianlorenzo’s youngest son, Domenico, published in 1713. In Bernini studies the close resemblance between the two texts has long attracted scholarly attention to their genesis, especially since 1966, when the art historian Cesare

* The references in the introduction are limited to a bibliography that bears immediately on the points discussed here. For a more extensive bibliography on the various topics addressed here, the reader is referred to the essays in this volume.


D’Onofrio postulated the ‘priority’ of Domenico’s biography over Baldinucci’s. According to D’Onofrio, Domenico adapted and published a manuscript prepared in the 1670s that Baldinucci had used for his own publication. Following

this lead, Tomaso Montanari established that in the 1670s Sforza Pallavicino had been drafted to aid Bernini’s sons with compiling biographical material about their father. This material served first as the basis of Baldinucci’s work, but dissatisfaction with this version, as well as the need to address taints on Bernini’s legacy emerging after 1682, led Domenico to return to the original material and write Bernini’s Vita anew.

Tellingly, Sforza Pallavicino is far more prominent in Domenico’s version than in Baldinucci’s. The second Vita thus offers a striking early eighteenth-century testimony of Pallavicino’s enduring reputation. Domenico calls Pallavicino ‘Cardinal’, thereby establishing the pontificate of Alexander VII Chigi (r. 1655–1667) as a chronological point of reference, since Sforza was elevated to the purple by Chigi in 1659. The Vita casts Pallavicino as an important presence at the papal court and a staunch advocate of Bernini’s greatness. Pallavicino and Bernini’s proximity during the Chigi pontificate is also attested by other sources. The published excerpts of the pontiff’s diary describe their joint presence at Alexander’s side. One such occasion is evoked, with notable differences, in Domenico’s Vita and Sforza Pallavicino’s own Arte della perfezion cristiana (1665): a witty conversation around a marble bust of Alexander VII presented to the pope by Bernini in the presence of Pallavicino [Fig. 1.2].

Pallavicino also assisted Bernini’s eldest son, Pier Filippo, in drafting a memorandum to justify the design and construction of the largest architectural undertaking of Alexander, the colonnade framing piazza di San Pietro, correcting Pier Filippo’s grammar and admonishing the author to temper his praise of the pope. Pallavicino intended to commission the frontispiece of the Latin translation of his history of the Council of Trent from Bernini, but had to settle for the painter Pietro da Cortona when Bernini refused the

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task [Fig. 1.3].

Their closest mutual involvement in art and architecture was probably the planning process of the Jesuit novitiate church of Sant’Andrea al Quirinale, designed by Gianlorenzo Bernini from 1658.10


Figure 1.3  Pietro da Cortona, frontispiece of Sforza Pallavicino, *Storia del Concilio di Trento* (Rome, 1656–57)
If Domenico’s text shows the two men side by side in the 1650s and 1660s, they probably first connected in the 1620s, since both belonged to the close circles of Urban VIII Barberini (r. 1623–1644). In the absence of documents proving their acquaintance, Domenico in fact suggests as much when, in an anecdote of the Vita, he transfers to Bernini the epithet ‘la fenice degl’ingegni’ (‘phoenix of the ingenious ones’) that the Roman beau monde had bestowed onto Pallavicino in the 1620s. This transfer casts Bernini and Pallavicino as mirror images, two men whose exceptional gifts in their chosen profession enabled them to transcend its limits and become the emblematic mind of their day and age. If Bernini earned this reputation as the new Michelangelo, the artist whose sheer power of genius lifted the visual arts to new heights, in Pallavicino’s case the epithet—inherited in his case from Virginio Cesarini—signalled how he managed to reconcile philosophy, theology and the new science, and paired his abilities as a consummate courtier to the requirements of modesty and friendship. What the image of the phoenix reveals of both men, then, is that they are essentially composites of different virtues, abilities and forms of knowledge. One ambition of this book is to outline the composite that is Sforza Pallavicino and probe for its underlying unity.

2 Sforza Pallavicino and Baroque Rome

This ambition is in essence a historiographical endeavour. It is perhaps testament to the vicissitudes of history writing that the field where Sforza Pallavicino comes closest to being a household name is one where his involvement was only indirect. With the possible exception of the crucifix, the works of Bernini that Pallavicino owned were minor, and mainly tokens of friendship; Bernini did not sculpt his bust but eternalised his features in a quick sketch [Fig. 1.4]. Bernini’s biographies are not proper parts of Pallavicino’s extensive written oeuvre, nor does that oeuvre contain writings on art. Still, assigning Pallavicino his rightful place in the historiography of Bernini highlights those
Figure 1.4 Gianlorenzo Bernini, Portrait of Sforza Pallavicino, pencil and red wash on paper
Yale University Art Gallery
aspects of his life and work which are important for our contemporary preoccupations with Baroque Rome, centred as they are on its art and architecture. These preoccupations reflect a historical reality. As Paul Kottman has argued and Jon Snyder reminds us in his contribution here, the seventeenth century was characterised by the insistence of art, the permeation of art and artistic concerns in nearly all aspects of Roman culture. To some degree, the contact and exchange between Bernini and Pallavicino exemplify this aspect of what is now commonly called the Roman Baroque.

The reciprocity between artist and Jesuit raises the question of what this baroque looks like when viewed from Pallavicino’s perspective. The artist is present in Pallavicino’s writings, too: as a highly esteemed artist, certainly, but also as a prop to illustrate the learned Jesuit’s functional ideas about art and artistic expression. In Pallavicino’s version of the conversation about Alexander’s bust, Bernini’s sculpture serves to demonstrate the inferiority of all human art to the work of the divine artificer, not (as in Domenico) the superiority of Bernini’s wit over the studious learning of the Cardinal. This anecdote is one example of Bernini’s significant yet marginal presence in Pallavicino’s writings. As the contributions to this volume demonstrate, in Pallavicino the insistence of art reflects in writings on such diverse fields as poetry, historiography, devotion and philosophy. Already under Urban VIII, Pallavicino had occupied himself with questions that touched on the visual arts when he aligned himself with that pope’s effort to usher in a poesia sacra, a new form of poetry that would combine Christian content with the forms of the classical tradition, a topic discussed here in particular by Pietro Giulio Riga and Silvia Apollonio. Out of this effort grew reflections on the aesthetic and emotional appeal of poetry and—by extension—the visual arts that are sprinkled across Pallavicino’s oeuvre. Indeed, as earlier literature and several contributions to this volume demonstrate, Pallavicino’s poetic experiments of the 1620s and early 1630s would continue to inform his reflection on the relationship of art to philosophy and religion.

Similarly, the patronage of Alexander VII, so important for Bernini’s art, emerges in a different light when viewed through the lens of the close friendship between Pallavicino and Fabio Chigi, outlined here by Irene Fosi, which persisted from their acquaintance in the 1620s until their death, when Chigi

16 Delbeke, “The Pope, the Bust, the Sculptor and the Fly”.
had become Alexander VII. It is during Alexander’s pontificate that—without mentioning Bernini’s name once—Pallavicino pronounces himself on issues that pertain directly to artistic patronage, such as the question of the pope’s legitimate residency (the Vatican or the Quirinal), the relevance of major public works like the colonnade at St. Peter’s, and the appropriateness of Alexander’s refusal of a statue in his honour on the Roman Capitol. The episode where matters of art and patronage became most closely intertwined with the sociability Fosi outlines in her essay concerns Bernini’s trip to Paris in 1665. Pallavicino was key in convincing Bernini to undertake the journey meant to culminate in the completion of the Louvre, and remained in close contact with the artist and his entourage during his French sojourn. The ensuing correspondence reveals the mostly subtle play whereby the capital of friendship is leveraged to achieve the political goal of the trip and ensure its success.

In general, the Rome that emerges from Pallavicino’s writings is marked by other personalities than Bernini, such as Giovanni Ciampoli, Virginio Cesarini and other members of the Barberini-milieu, or else the interlocutors that are staged or mentioned in Pallavicino’s dialogues, such as Antonio Querenghi, Gherardo Saraceni, Alessandro Orsini, Andrea Eudimono, Antonio Perez, Virgilio Malvezzi, Matteo Pellegrini, Giulio Rospigliosi or, finally, Fabio Chigi. It is in this milieu that Pallavicino left his mark on Baroque Rome. Already in the seventeenth century Pallavicino was regarded as one of the main letterati of his day and age. His involvement in the Galileo affair and his subsequent philosophical and theological work have recently been given their rightful historical importance. His Istoria del Concilio di Trento (1656–1657) is foundational to the historiography of the Counter-Reformation. Finally, as someone deeply immersed in the same social and political networks as Bernini, his life and correspondence offer a penetrating view of the vicissitudes of life amongst the social elite in the Eternal City. This volume unites contributors who are specialists in each of these fields, and have been key in identifying the value of Pallavicino’s work and evaluating its importance. It is the aim of this volume to map and analyse these endeavours and offer a broad perspective on the writings and activities that Pallavicino unfolded over the course of his life, in order to outline an intellectual biography of our protagonist against his own

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historical background. At the same time, Pallavicino’s multifaceted persona and his presence in some defining moments of the seventeenth-century history of the Urbs affords an insight, through the lens of a privileged participant, in the anatomy of the capital of Catholicism at a time of political, cultural and scientific change.

3 Sforza Pallavicino, 1607–1667. A Jesuit Life

Francesco Maria Sforza Pallavicino was born in Rome on 28 November 1607 as the son of Alessandro Pallavicino, marchese of Zibello, and Francesca Sforza di Santa Fiora, his second wife. He was named after Alessandro’s adoptive father, the famous condottiere Sforza Pallavicino. Through his father, Sforza was the sole heir of three branches of the Pallavicino name. In 1587 Ranuccio Farnese had expropriated Alessandro’s feuds, however, and after a stay at Busseto the Pallavicino family moved to Rome, probably to follow up on the court proceedings Alessandro had initiated to regain his property. But it was also through the Farnese that Alessandro was brought into contact with the new ideas about science that would occupy Sforza in the 1620s, as Favino writes here.

Sforza studied at the Collegio Romano, where he obtained his doctorate in philosophy (1625) and theology (1628). Both occasions were celebrated with exceptional pomp, and marked both the advent of a ‘new Aristotelianism’ at the Collegio, and the recognition of Sforza as a new intellectual star, a ‘fenice

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21 See the correspondence discussed by Irene Fosi in this volume. See also Soliani C. – Allegri G. – Cappelli P., Nelle Terre dei Pallavicino. I—parte seconda: Il feudo di Zibello e i suoi signori tra XV e XVIII secolo (Busseto: 1989) 75–97 and docs 165–178.
Through his friendship with, amongst others, Virginio Cesarini and Giovanni Ciampoli, he entered the circles of the Barberini court as well as the literary academies of Rome, as Pietro Giulio Riga details in his contribution; in 1625 Pallavicino became principe of the Accademia degli Umoreisti, the main Roman circle of letterati. Under circumstances analysed in Favino’s essay, on 27 January 1629 he was elected as one of the four last members of the Accademia dei Lincei, the scientific gremium founded by Federico Cesi that fostered the new science and championed Galileo Galilei; as Favino argues, his election may well have been masterminded by Ciampoli in order to make him principe of the Academy and pursue its support of Galilei. This plan was probably thwarted because in 1631 Pallavicino had entered the prelature, a condition incompatible with the role of principe of the Lincei. In 1632 Ciampoli fell from grace with Urban VIII, and Pallavicino’s loyalty towards his friend cost him a prolonged removal from Rome, as the governor of Iesi, Orvieto (1633) and Camerino (1636). In these years, Pallavicino worked on his Fasti Sacri, a Christian calendar poem modelled on Ovid’s Fastorum. After the author abandoned the project, it was published only partially in the Scelta di poesie italiane (1686) until the critical edition of 2015 by Silvia Apollonio, who discusses the work in her contribution here. The year after returning to Rome, in 1637, he entered the Jesuit order, to the surprise of many and against the opposition of his father. After completing his noviciate, he taught logic (1639–1640), natural philosophy (1640–1641), and metaphysics (1641–1642) at the Collegio Romano. In 1644 he took up the chair in theology vacated when Juan de Lugo was made Cardinal. As Sven Knebel and Anselm Ramelow demonstrate here, these assignments cast Pallavicino in the centre of the internal debates of Jesuit scholasticism, and led to original contributions regarding the matters of inductive reasoning and probability. In 1649 Pallavicino published the Vindicaciones Societatis Iesu, a controversial apology of the Society of Jesus, interpreted as a ‘true and proper manifesto’ of the progressive current within the Collegio.

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23 See also Riga’s essay in this volume.


25 Villoslada, Storia 323, 327, 330, 332, 334. See also the essays of Knebel and Ramelow in this volume.
In fact, the theological treatises that Pallavicino prepared for his students (De incarnatione, De gratia, De fide), were censured because of their adherence to ‘new doctrines’. Nonetheless, these works were published as the Assertionum Theologicarum (1650–1652), the first five volumes of which are dedicated to Pallavicino’s former teacher, Juan de Lugo, whose Responsa moralia he would edit in 1651.

As Eraldo Bellini has suggested, it is probably no coincidence that Pallavicino’s writerly output surged after the death of Urban VIII in 1644—Pallavicino’s return to Rome in 1636 may have been tied to a prohibition to publish so as to avoid controversy. The new Jesuit’s first learned books since the publication of his dissertations, some poetry and a description of the festivities for the centennial of the Jesuits in 1640 (Relazione scritto ad’un amico delle feste celebrate nel Collegio Romano), were the treatise on morals Del bene quattro libri (1644) and the Considerazioni dello stile (1646), a guide to the appropriate writing style for ‘scientific’ or non-literary prose. The year 1644 saw the first staging of Pallavicino’s tragedy, Ermenegildo martire. As Pallavicino’s afterword to the printed edition suggests, the tragedy marks a return to ‘Aristotelian rationalism’ in the genre of the martyrological drama, a move away from spectacular scenography in favour of measured meraviglia and verisimilitude.

In 1648–1649, Pallavicino edited and published the literary heritage of his

27 De Backer – Sommervogel, Bibliothèque de la compagnie de Jésus notes 9–19.
friend Giovanni Ciampoli, as the *Rime* and the *Prose*, in an attempt to restore his reputation and make his ideas more palpable to his contemporaries.31

In 1641 Pallavicino was a potential candidate for the Secretariate of Briefs, a position that went to Giulio Rospigliosi.32 Under Innocent X Pamphili (r. 1644–1655), Urban's successor, Pallavicino remained close to the papal court, as his correspondence with Fabio Chigi attests. In this period, the Jesuit's advice was sought for the papal response to the writings of Cornelius Jansenius, which would be formulated in the bull *Cum Occasione*, promulgated in 1653 and analysed here by Chiara Catalano. But it was with the election of his friend Fabio Chigi to the papal throne that Pallavicino became part of the closest circles around the pope. The issue of nepotism was one of the many topics where Alexander sought advice from his friend.33 Soon Alexander desired to make him a cardinal, a rare honour for a Jesuit. Pallavicino received the purple on 10 November 1659, with his titular church San Salvatore in Lauro, after a nomination *in petto* of 30 April 1657.34 The nomination was at least in part to reward the publication of Pallavicino's *Istoria del Concilio di Trento*. Stefan Bauer discusses the monumental task of recording the history of the Council, initiated by Terenzio Alciati (who died in 1651) and Agostino Oreggi under the auspices of Francesco Barberini, and directed against Paolo Sarpi's earlier *Historia del Concilio Tridentino* (1619). In close collaboration with Alexander himself, Pallavicino also started work on a biography of the pope.35 The manuscript, first published in 1839–1840 as *Della vita di Alessandro VII*, only covers the years up to 1659; the project was probably abandoned because of Pallavicino's elevation to the purple. Pallavicino's final publication during his

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32 According to Pezzana, *Vita del Cardinale Sforza Pallavicino* 47, note.


34 See the honorific publication *Effigies insignia nomina cognomina patriae et dies promotionis ac obitus summorum pontificium et S.R.E. cardinalium defunctorum. Ab anno MDC(L)VIII* (Rome, de Rubeis: 1690). Pallavicino had initially received Santa Susanna as his titular church: see Favino, “Pallavicino, Francesco Maria Sforza” 512–518.

lifetime is the Arte della perfezion cristiana (1665), a devotional guide that is the topic of Alessandro Metlica’s contribution. Less than two weeks after the demise of Alexander VII, Pallavicino himself died on 4 June 1667. He was buried in Sant'Andrea al'Quirinale, entombed under a magnificent slab designed by Mattia de' Rossi, right at the entrance to Bernini’s finest church [Fig. 1.5].

4 Pallavicino: Apologist, Philosopher and Man of Letters

When Wilhelm Leibniz visited Rome in 1689, he regretted that Pallavicino had died as he would have loved to have met the Jesuit and conversed with him. As Knebel observes in his contribution, Pallavicino was ‘the very kind of schoolman of which Leibniz was so fond’, and this sympathy was reflected in the

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36 Montanari, “Bernini e Sforza Pallavicino” 55 and 57.
influence that Pallavicino's ideas had exerted on the German philosopher.\(^{37}\) Despite such high praise, and Giambattista Vico's comparable appreciation for the Jesuit, Pallavicino has been obscured in the historiography of philosophy, an injustice that Knebel attributes to its Protestant slant. From a Protestant perspective, but also amongst Catholics, Pallavicino remained first and foremost the author of the *Istoria del Concilio di Trento*. The *Istoria* would continue to define Pallavicino's reputation up to the twentieth century, and not always for the better.\(^{38}\) As Mario Scotti put it in 1962, the Jesuit and his apologetic history of the Council would always remain paired to Paolo Sarpi, a coupling that casts Pallavicino as a staunch and not always objective defender of the Counter-Reformation papacy.\(^{39}\) Already in the seventeenth century the *Istoria* would provoke vitriolic reactions such as Jean Le Noir's scathing *Les nouvelles lumières politiques pour le gouvernement de l'Église, ou l'Évangile nouveau du cardinal Palavicin* (1676), a parody of the *Istoria* which emphasised Pallavicino's apology for the worldly and secular aspects of the papacy. The *Nouvelles lumières* enjoyed considerable editorial success and would be translated into English, but the *Istoria* also continued to attract praise as a dignified answer to Sarpi's portrayal of the Council.\(^{40}\)

No doubt the Jesuit's fame as a philosopher and theologian was also affected by his involvement in controversy, first with the Galileo affair and then at the Collegio Romano. Still, in the seventeenth century Pallavicino was praised as an at once ingenious and rigorous thinker, whose ascetic life was put entirely into the service of his work rather than the court, an image consecrated in his first posthumous biography, published by Agostino Oldoino as part of the 1677 edition of Alphonso Chacon's *Vitae et res gestae Pontificum Romanorum*.\(^{41}\) The contributions of Irene Fosi, Federica Favino, and Maria Pia Donato paint a more subtle picture of an actor who throughout his life remained deeply involved in the social and political spheres of Rome—a matter of sheer

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\(^{37}\) See Knebel's essay in this volume.


necessity, but also of self-esteem. Still, the man who had been dubbed a ‘fenice degl’ingegni’ would be celebrated during and after his lifetime as someone of exceptional intellectual capacities. In Carlo Bovio’s *Rhetorica Suburbanum* (1676), for instance, Pallavicino figures amongst the popes and luminaries of seventeenth-century Rome whose virtues and achievements are praised in sets of emblems. Bovio singles out for praise Pallavicino’s abhorrence of the pomp of the cardinalate and his intellectual prowess, but also both his rebuttal of Sarpi and his capacity for observation, illustrated with the image of the microscope, emblem of the new science [Fig. 1.6].

If Pallavicino’s *persona* as controversial historian undoubtedly overshadowed the sharp thinker so valued by Leibniz, it did not affect a third aspect of Pallavicino’s reputation that would only gain in importance from the late seventeenth century onwards: as a man of letters. Pallavicino’s poetic output was limited, except for some youthful verse produced in the ambit of the Barberini court and the interrupted *Fasti Sacri*. The inclusion of Pallavicino’s poetry into some late seventeenth-century compilations is probably due to his position in the literary firmament of Rome, enshrined in the 1630–edition of Alessandro Tassoni’s *Secchia rapita*, in such compendia as Leone Allacci’s *Apes Barberinae* (1633), Lorenzo Crasso’s *Elogi d’uomini letterati* (1666), or Prospero Mandosio’s *Bibliotheca romana* (1682), in dedications such as of Giambattista Manzini’s chapter on imitation in his *Metteore retoriche* (1652), and his presence in the so-called *pleias alessandrina*, the international network of neo-Latin poets gathered around Fabio Chigi/Alexander VII.

But over the course of the seventeenth century, Pallavicino’s fame as a poet was enhanced by another aspect of his literary *persona*: that of a theoretician of style. Pallavicino’s *Vindicaciones* contained an explicit condemnation of the poetics of Giambattista Marino, much in the vein of the precepts of the *poesia sacra* theorised and practiced at the court of Urban VIII. The surviving parts and the introductory “Discorso” of his *Fasti Sacri* bear witness to

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Figure 1.6  Carlo Bovio, *Rhetoricae Suburbanum. Pars prima, cuius libri tres exhibent [...]* (Rome, Franciscus Tizzoni: 1676) 110
his own attempt to achieve this poetic genre. The same ideas would be voiced again in Pallavicino’s editions of Giovanni Ciampoli’s work, especially in the long *Poetica sacra* published in Ciampoli’s *Rime* of 1649 and originally written between 1625 and 1629.44 The continuing relevance of the *poesia sacra* for Pallavicino is illustrated by the *Arte della perfezion cristiana*. As Riga and Metlica detail here, in its pages Pallavicino explicitly recalls that period of more than 30 years earlier when a new alliance between poetry and religion was forged, a project revived to some degree during the Chigi pontificate and persisting with the papacy of Clemens IX Rospigliosi (r. 1667–1669), who had been part of that same milieu. More fundamentally, as Metlica notes, the entire *Arte* is premised on Pallavicino’s ideas about the human sensibility for powerful images and literary beauty. Its stylistic refinement was noted in the *Journal des sçavans*, which praised the *Arte* as a work where one learns ‘at the same time how to speak well, and how to live well’.45 The *Istoria del Concilio*, too, was simultaneously celebrated and attacked for its style.

5 ‘Un petit livre qui meriteroit bien d’être traduit en notre langue’

But it was the *Trattato dello stile*, the third and final edition of the *Considerazioni dello stile*, that cemented Pallavicino’s authority in matters of style. As Eraldo Bellini’s meticulous analysis of the *Trattato* shows, here Pallavicino develops a sophisticated theory of prose writing. Pallavicino’s own reliance on poetic examples and his persistent comparison of prose with poetry however guaranteed that the *Trattato* was soon read as a general treatise pertaining to all literary genres. The *Trattato* would be republished several times in the seventeenth century and was received favourably abroad as well.46 The *Melanges d’histoire et de litterature*, first published in 1699, qualified it as a ‘little book that would well merit to be translated into our language [i.e., French]’.47

This view of Pallavicino as an authority in literary matters became enshrined in the *querelle* between the French Jesuit Dominique Bouhours and Giovan Gioseffe Orsi, where the *Trattato dello stile e del dialogo* emerged as an

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45 *Journal des sçavans*, February 27 1668 (Chez Jean Cusson) 328. See also Moreri Louis (ed.), *Le grand dictionnaire historique ou le mélange curieux de l’histoire sacrée et profane* (Paris, les libraires associés: 1759), s.v.
46 Pezzana, *Vita del Cardinale Sforza Pallavicino* 120–125, note.
important point of reference. In his *Manière de bien penser dans les Ouvrages de l'esprit* (1687), Bouhours praised Pallavicino as ‘one of the most famous writers from beyond the mountains’, but attacked his treatment of comparisons as typical of an Italian penchant for metaphors with no discernible relation to truth or sense of proportion.\(^{48}\) Giovan Gioseffe Orsi’s *Considerazioni sopra un famoso libro francese intitolato ‘La Manière de bien penser dans les Ouvrages de l’esprit’* (1703), intended as the united answer of the major Italian critics and cultural institutions against Bouhours, rebutted Bouhours’s specific attacks on Pallavicino and put forward the Italian Jesuit as the ‘most accurate, and most exact master we have [on the matter of defining metaphor]’, and the ‘authority’ concerning the appropriate use of the literary figure of exaggeration.\(^{49}\) Statements such as these allowed Pallavicino to emerge progressively as an author who helped to define and maintain an at once proper and Italian idea of style during a century otherwise marked by excesses condemned both in Italy and abroad. As a critic internal to the literary debates of Seicento Rome, Pallavicino came to exemplify a position that Franco Croce would call in 1955–1956 ‘barocco moderato’: open to the literary inventions of the poets after Torquato Tasso, Marino chief amongst them, but also held to an intellectual and religious rigour that kept poetry rooted in truth.\(^{50}\)

Central to this position was Pallavicino’s view of verisimilitude: the question of whether and how poetry should be probable and credible rather than truthful. Pallavicino treated this problem most explicitly in *Del bene* and the *Trattato dello stile*, but it permeates other works as well. In *Del bene* he advanced a thesis rooted in scholasticism and discussed in detail here by Jon Snyder: that poetry, like the other arts of imitation, addresses the cognitive faculty of the *prima apprensione*, the moment when an image is apprehended by the mind yet not judged for its truth value. This image causes other images stored in the viewer’s memory to become activated and to nourish the cognitive process. The

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\(^{48}\) Bouhours Dominique, *La Manière de bien penser dans les Ouvrages d’esprit* (Paris, Veuve de S. Mabre-Cramoisy: 1687), with the quote—an implicit reference to, and criticism of, the *Trattato dello stile*, 34—on 392 and the attack on 71–74.


office of poetry and the arts of imitation, then, is to stimulate this process. In order to do so, its imagery should be lively and powerful. This proposal is radical, as it casts poetry and the arts of imitation as essentially untrue—devoid of truth value per se, yet rooted in and addressed to the imagination, and as such instrumental in triggering the process of cognition. Pallavicino himself seems to have withdrawn from this position in the Trattato dello stile, where he advances a more didactic view of poetry.

The prima apprensione was fundamentally misunderstood by Pallavicino’s fellow Jesuit Gian Domenico Ottonelli, who used it in his Della Christiana moderatione del theatro (1646–1652) to justify the censorship exercised by wise men when devising fitting subject matter for theatre, since it so easily bewitches its audience. More to the point, the querelle between Bouhours and Orsi did not pick up Pallavicino’s prima apprensione despite the querelle’s concerns with the relationship between metaphorical language and truth. The apprensione did attract Ludovico Muratori’s attention in his Della perfetta poesia italiana (1706), but in a way that helps to explain its limited success. Muratori examines the apprensione in his discussion of the role of verisimilitude in poetry to conclude that improbable images will never provoke the ‘sweet movement’ of the human affetti and that, as a consequence, verisimilitude is a necessary precondition for the arts of imitation. If this reading of the prima apprensione to some extent misses Pallavicino’s point, it does highlight how ill the apprensione fitted with the more classicist or rationalist views of art and its function that emerged in Italy and France in the early eighteenth century. Only in the early twentieth century would Benedetto Croce recognise the prima apprensione as a token of a specifically baroque artistic sensibility, and Pallavicino’s proposal garnered renewed attention.

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51 The passage from Ottonelli is given in Taviani F., La Commedia dell’Arte e la società barocca. La fascinazione del teatro (Rome: 1969) 41: ‘E tali favole, come ingegnosamente prova il P. Pallavicino, tutti ch’è da’ savi siano conosciute per cose false, recano tanto gusto che ogni età, ogni sesso, ogni condizione di mortali, si lascia con diletto incantar dalla favola’ (‘And such stories, as was ingeniously proven by Father Pallavicino, even though they are recognised as false by wise [men], give so much pleasure that each age, each sex, each mortal condition, allows itself with delight to be bewitched by the story’). Italics mine. For a discussion of this misunderstanding, see Delbeke, The Art of Religion 46–47.


Sforza Pallavicino, 1667–2022

It was undoubtedly the *Istoria del Concilio di Trento* that carried Pallavicino's fame into the eighteenth century; as a work of controversy undoubtedly, but also as an example of good style. Pallavicino himself had devoted considerable effort to polishing the monumental text for the second edition of 1664, which carries a ‘To the reader’ explaining and justifying the care the author had invested in the wording of his work of history. His writings in *volgare* had met with considerable editorial success over the course of the seventeenth century. *Del bene* and the *Trattato dello Stile* went through several editions, and the *Avvertimenti grammaticali per chi scrive in lingua italiana*, a practical guide to writing, was published in 1661, 1675 and 1684 and would continue to appear in the eighteenth century. A selection of Pallavicino’s letters published immediately after his death would appear four times until the beginning of the eighteenth century (1668, 1669, 1678 and 1701). Still, Pallavicino’s role and position in the fulcrum of the intellectual and political life of seventeenth-century Rome seems to have disappeared from view, probably as a consequence of the increasingly negative perception of the entire period and the culture it represented. In fact, the first extensive biography of Pallavicino since the capsule vita in Chacon’s *Vitae et res gestae Pontificum Romanorum* already argued that our protagonist stood out for his ‘good taste’ [*buon gusto*] in literature and the ‘faultlessness’ [*castigatezza*] of his Christian morals’ in a century otherwise...
largely deprived of such qualities. The biography in question was drawn up by Ireneo Affò, a Franciscan friar and scholar from Parma, who included a life of Pallavicino in his 1780-collection of ‘classical Italian authors’. Drawing on published and unpublished material, Affò’s Memorie della Vita e degli Studj di Sforza Cardinale Pallavicino paints a rich picture of Pallavicino and his milieu, including Sforza’s involvement with Ciampoli and the novatores and his subsequent attempt to reconcile Aristotle with the new science at the Collegio Romano. Affò’s Memorie was picked up by the Jesuit Francesco Antonio Zaccaria (1714–1795), who included an expanded version of the biography in his edition of the Istoria del Concilio di Trento (1792–1797). The biography would be published as a separate and slightly expanded volume in 1794, and again as part of Affò’s Memorie degli scrittori e letterati parmigiani (1797). Affò’s biography served as an inspiration for an expansive eulogy for Pallavicino written by Antonio Cerati, a count and law professor from Parma, published in 1782 by Andrea Rubbi. The text proposes to praise the two distinct aspects of Pallavicino’s persona that Affò had already identified, the ‘great man of letters’ and the ‘virtuous cleric’. Interestingly, the literary Pallavicino encompasses the philosopher and the theologian as well. Cerati elides the Galileo affair, but in the introduction to his panegyric he praises— with Affò’s words— Pallavicino’s ‘judicious eclecticism’ in philosophical matters, before celebrating Galileo and his followers as ‘lovers of truth’ who have been unjustly vilified. The part on Pallavicino’s virtues emphasises how Pallavicino remained faithful to Ciampoli even when the latter fell from grace. These snippets suggest that at least some late eighteenth-century authors sought to position Pallavicino as a Catholic figure who was open to the scientific values dear to the Enlightenment; in the

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56 Affò, Memorie della Vita e degli Studj 44, referring to Chacon – Agostino, Vitae et res gestae Pontificum Romanorum et S.R.E. Cardinalium 738–741.
57 Affò, Memorie della Vita e degli Studj.
59 Apart from multiple annotations, the additions concern the account of Pallavicino’s death and burial and the defence against the accusations referred to below. Affò Ireneo, Memorie della vita e degli studi del Cardinale Sforza Pallavicino. Raccolte e in questa terza impressione di nuovo ritocate ed ampliate dal Padre Ireneo Affò (Parma, Stamperia reale: 1794), with an ‘A Chi Legge’ explaining the edition history of the biography and pointing to the forthcoming edition of the Memorie degli scrittori e letterati Parmigiani. Pallavicino’s biography, now titled ‘Sforza Pallavicino Cardinale’, would be part of vol. 5, published in 1797 by the Stamperia reale in Parma, as nr. 236, 89–160.
Zaccaria edition of his biography Affò defends himself against an otherwise unidentified author who had accused him of turning Pallavicino into a rabid Aristotelian.\(^{63}\)

In the eighteenth century Pallavicino was also celebrated as an exemplary Jesuit,\(^{64}\) while the only addition to his bibliography was the *Scritture contrarie* [...] *se al Romano pontefice più convenga di abitare S. Pietro, che in qual-sivoglia altro luogo della Città*, published in 1776 by the same Zaccaria who produced a new edition of Pallavicino’s *Istoria*.\(^{65}\) The *Scritture* opposed the opinions of Pallavicino and his fellow Lincean Lukas Holste about where the pope should reside in Rome, with Pallavicino favouring the Quirinal palace, and Holste the Vatican.\(^{66}\) The authors had been solicited by Alexander VII to voice their views on the issue, probably in a similar way as when Chigi sought advice on whether he should call his family to Rome, despite his initial refusal to do so, a question on which Pallavicino also pronounced himself.\(^{67}\) When Pope Pius VI Braschi (r. 1775–1799) intended to privilege the Vatican, Zaccaria published the seventeenth-century debate. A little under a century later the arguments of Holste were unshelved to prove that the pope could lay claim on the Quirinal only as the temporal ruler of the Papal State. Because the newborn Italian nation had relieved him of this particular burden, the palace consequently belonged to the new head of state.\(^{68}\) In this dispute Pallavicino again emerges as the advocate of a worldly papacy relying on pomp and representation to buttress its authority, prerequisites that, in Pallavicino’s view, are better met by the Quirinal than the Vatican.\(^{69}\)

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\(^{64}\) In an *oratio* from 1734, Pallavicino is praised as one of the only two Jesuit Cardinals of the seventeenth century. See Jozef Ijsewijn, “Rome en de humanistische literatuur”, *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie* [...] *van België. Klasse der Letteren* 47.1 (1985) 25–73, at 60.

\(^{65}\) *Scritture contrarie del card. Sforza Pallavicino e del chiarissimo monsignor Luca Holstenio sulla questione nata a tempi di Alessandro VII se al Romano pontefice più convenga di abitare S. Pietro, che in qualsivoglia altro luogo della Città. Ora per la prima volta date in luce con qualche annotazione e conseocate All’Eminentissimo, e Reverendissimo Principe Il Signor Cardinale Gio.battista Rezzonico Pro-Segretario de’Memoriali Da Francesco Zaccaria* (Rome, Benedetto Seltari: 1776).

\(^{66}\) Delbeke, *The Art of Religion* 115–20, with earlier literature.

\(^{67}\) See also note 33 above.


\(^{69}\) Delbeke, *The Art of Religion* 115–120.
By the time of the Risorgimento, Pallavicino’s Italian works had been made newly available in series such as the *Biblioteca scelta di opere italiane antiche e moderne*, published in Milan by Giovanni Silvestri, the *Biblioteca di opere classiche antiche e moderne* published in Venice by Girolamo Tasso, and the *Biblioteca classica sacra* published in Rome by Ottavio Gigli. Silvestri’s collection, an Everyman’s Library avant la lettre driven by popular demand, included Pallavicino’s *Arte della Perfezion Cristiana* (1820 and 1839), *Del bene* (1831), the shortened version of the *Istoria* first published in 1666 (1831), and a second edition of the unfinished *Vita di Alessandro VII* (1843), while Tasso limited himself to the *Arte* (1840). Gigli’s far more ambitious editorial project was meant to educate the Italian youth of the Risorgimento. It made available, besides Pallavicino’s Italian works, previously unpublished materials such as Pallavicino’s *Trattato sulla Provvidenza*, as well as letters that had not been included in the seventeenth-century *Lettere.* Gigli’s *Biblioteca*, which appeared in parallel in a quarto and ottavo-edition, also included a much expanded version of Affò’s biography by Angelo Pezzana, whose notes to Affò’s text had first been published in his additions to the *Memorie degli scrittori e letterati parmigiani.*

These and other editions made Pallavicino’s Italian work quite widely available, while enshrining him as an important author of a seventeenth century still viewed with suspicion, and a man whose intellect, morality and piety could serve as a didactic example for nineteenth-century Italy. This was also the image of Pallavicino that emerged from a short biography penned by the author Pietro Giordani, who collaborated with Silvestri as a consultant and developed his ideas on style and language in capsule biographies added to Silvestri’s editions of Italian authors. First included in Silvestri’s edition of the *Arte della Perfezion Cristiana* (1820), the biography served as a preface to many of the nineteenth-century Pallavicino editions. It celebrated Pallavicino as ‘a great philosopher, a great Italian writer, and an example of the most loveable

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70 On Gigli’s ambitions as publisher, see Carpentieri C.M., “La Biblioteca classica sacra di Ottavio Gigli e la ‘Vita del b. Giovanni Colombini’ di Feo Belcari”, *Prassi Ecotiche della Modernità Letteraria* 5.1 (2020) 119–139, with a description at 121 of the ottavo-edition of Pallavicino’s works. Pallavicino represents the seventeenth century in Gigli’s series, which aimed to include the best sacred authors from the fourteenth up to the nineteenth century.

Giordani adopted Affò, Zaccaria and Pezzana’s careful characterisation of Pallavicino’s involvement with the new science. He also declared himself incapable of judging whether the accusations of partisanship against the *Istoria* were valid, diffusing the suspicion by arguing that Pallavicino, famously untouched by political ambitions, would have had no motive to falsify his account of the event. At the same time, Giordani emphasised the literary qualities of Pallavicino’s work, positioning and comparing him to contemporaries such as Malvezzi, Daniele Bartoli, Paolo Segneri, Giambattista Doni and Galileo, now primarily considered as a not particularly gifted author of scientific prose. In so doing, Giordani firmly situated the merit of Pallavicino’s work in the context of Italian literature, even going so far as to deny the relevance of Latin works such as the *Vindicationes* and the theological treatises of the 1640s: ‘that what he wrote on these matters in Latin, no one still wants to read it; since this subject matter is dead, and not even enlivened by its style’. In Giordani, Pallavicino’s philosophical activity is celebrated not for what it yielded in terms of insights and ideas, but as an emblem of Pallavicino’s ingenuity and intelligence, and as a testimony of his moral and political position in Seicento Rome.

The edition history of Pallavicino’s work and the critical judgment reflected in Giordani’s biography helped to define *Del bene*, the *Trattato dello stile*, the *Istoria del Concilio di Trento* and the *Arte della Perfezion Cristiana* as the kernel of Pallavicino’s written oeuvre, an arrangement that is sustained in twentieth-century compilations as well, such as Ezio Raimondi’s essential *Trattatisti e narratori del Seicento* (1960). This selection is supported by an internal coherence. *Del bene* and the *Trattato* are explicitly cast as related reflections on style, in practice and theory, and the *Arte* contains a brief reflection on the style of the *Istoria*. More fundamentally, all four works engage with the relationship between language, expression and thought based on the human susceptibility for images.

It is largely this Pallavicino who made it into the twentieth century. In his history of aesthetics, Benedetto Croce argued that Pallavicino’s writings contained...
a core of aesthetic considerations that proposed a mimetic art concerned with its expressive qualities rather than verisimilitude.\textsuperscript{76} Croce’s suggestions were further developed in the first decades of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{77} When after World War II baroque literature and its taste for metaphor and concetti became the object of sustained scholarly attention, Pallavicino’s oeuvre emerged as a point of reference for the so-called barocchi moderati, authors who attempted to ground the formal innovations of poets like Marino in a more reasoned and religiously inspired approach to literary invention.\textsuperscript{78} Authors such as Ezio Raimondi and Marc Fumaroli recognised the relevance of these literary questions for an understanding of the visual arts of the seventeenth century, the latter going so far as to identify a particular aesthetic in the sacred rhetoric and poetics developed in early seventeenth-century Rome; Fumaroli cast \textit{Del bene} as a treatise on aesthetics.\textsuperscript{79} Also because of Ottonelli’s reference to Pallavicino

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item See note 53 above. Croce, \textit{Storia dell’età barocca in Italia} 101 writes: ‘[…] il pregevole libro \textit{Del bene} del Pallavicino, che abbraccia sotto questo titolo la trattazione della logica, dell’etica, della politica e della poetica, e come ha principale intento letterario-divulgativo, così anche offre il suo meglio in quel che dice della poesia e non già nell’investigazione dei problemi della coscienza morale.’ (‘the praiseworthy book \textit{Del bene} by Pallavicino, which embraces under that title the treatment of logic, ethics, politics and poetry, and since it has as its main intent literary-popularising, thus offers its best also in what it says of poetry, and not in the treatment of problems of moral conscience.’)
\item Volpe, \textit{Le idee estetiche}; Marrocco, \textit{Un precursore dell’estetica}.
\item Fumaroli M., \textit{L’âge de l’éloquence: rhétorique et res literaria de la Renaissance au seuil de l’époque classique} (Geneva: 1980) 792, nr. 928; see the literature in Apollonio, “Per una lettura dei Fasti sacri di Sforza Pallavicino”. See also Raimondi, \textit{Trattatisti} xv: ‘E certo, il nome del Bernini è il solo a cui ci possa richiamare per definire analogicamente una prosa quale è quella dell’Istoria [della Compagnia di Gesù by Daniello Bartoli], che conferisce movimento alla compostezza classica, che sa trascorrere dalla sinfonia descrittiva al racconto severo, dove alla pagina di eloquenza può fare seguito una partitura di grande, indimenticabile romanzo.’ (‘And truly, the name of Bernini is the only one that could be called to mind to define analogically a prose which is that of the History, which confers movement to classical composure, goes from descriptive symphony to strict narration, [and] where a page of eloquence can be followed by a score of great, unforgettable romance.’) See also idem, \textit{Il colore eloquente. Letteratura e arte barocca} (Bologna: 1995).
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in his *Trattato della pittura e scoltura*, from the 1970s Pallavicino’s name began to surface in writings on art.\(^8^0\) Marco Collareta suggested that Pallavicino’s work probably provides the best theoretical justification of the baroque fascination with marvel and illusionism.\(^8^1\) The art historian Anthony Blunt made similar suggestions in one of his last articles, ‘Gianlorenzo Bernini: Illusionism and Mysticism’, published in 1978.\(^8^2\) In his *L’estetica del Barocco* Jon Snyder gives Pallavicino pride of place.\(^8^3\) Most recently, expanding the exploration of the art theoretical implications of Pallavicino’s writings, Caroline van Eck has identified his ideas on memory, representation and liveliness as a precocious attempt to theorise the response to art works as if they were living beings.\(^8^4\)

7 **Sforza Pallavicino, 1607–2022**

Important victims of the progressive canonisation of Pallavicino as a baroque *letterato* and proto-aesthetic thinker are his contributions to theology and philosophy. As suggested earlier, this suppression is due in large part to the historiography of these fields, which long minimised the Jesuit and neo-scholastic contribution. In Pallavicino’s case specifically it has led to a separation between his corpus of Italian writings and his philosophical and theological works in Latin. Pallavicino’s historical writings sit somewhere in between, as an integral part of his literary endeavours but disputed as pieces of history writing. As the first Catholic history of the Council of Trent, the *Istoria* owns its place in the complex historiography of the Counter Reformation, but Pallavicino’s *Vita* of Pope Alexander VII has received comparably little attention, with the exception of the parts dedicated to the Roman arrival of Christina of Sweden and to the containment of the plague of 1656, published separately in the early nineteenth century, probably as historical testimonies of the good governance


\(^8^3\) See Snyder J.R., *L’estetica del Barocco* (Bologna: 2005) and his contribution to this volume.

and authority of the papacy. Perhaps it is fair to consider Pallavicino in this case, too, less as a historian than as a writer who employs his skills to bring forth the particular level of detail that distinguishes biography from general historiography. As Stefan Bauer argues here, the literary component of the Istoria is not limited to its style, but to its very method: the book is a rhetorical refutation of Sarpi rather than an independent historical enquiry.

By redressing the balance of Pallavicino’s work, this volume raises the question of whether a new coherence emerges, both in the work, through principles and ideas permeating Pallavicino’s various endeavours, and in the man, in an intellectual or moral posture that would characterise his many activities. Establishing such coherence remains a delicate task. Our perspective on the multiple facets of Pallavicino’s life and work is still fragmented. We are bound to view Pallavicino through the lens of different historical disciplines, and each of these fields requires specialist knowledge and terminology to arrive at a critical understanding of aspects of Pallavicino’s life and work; literary history and the history of philosophy, or church and social history as they are practiced today, share little conceptual common ground. If each of Pallavicino’s biographies wonders how a single man could achieve so much—a standard trope in early modern biography—we are condemned to picking up pieces that remain difficult to fit together.

What the constellation of present contributions does make clear, however, is that our protagonist’s intellectual work can never be separated from the challenging social and political circumstances of his life. Maria Pia Donato shows how the different career paths available in Baroque Rome depended on the competences and capital one acquired through learning and participation in various social and political bodies, with the cardinal’s hat as the ultimate prize. If Pallavicino succeeded in obtaining this goal—however reluctantly, as his biographers have us believe—a permanent concern with alliances and friendships permeates all his written work, from his letters to his theological tracts. This concern bears witness to the permanent need to secure a position within a multi-layered and ever-shifting social landscape, as Federica Favino reminds us, which called for mediation and compromises in whatever one wrote or said. The case of the condemnation of Jansenius’s five propositions is,

86 See Delbeke, The Art of Religion 119–120.
in all its complexity, perhaps the most telling if implicit example of this condition, as a heavily politicised theological debate. Yet in the face of the vagaries and fortune, some hierarchies and bonds remained stable: those of nobility and kinship. As Irene Fosi shows, the friendship between Pallavicino and Chigi was coloured by their different and changing social status, and this hierarchy shaped their interaction and mutual dependency until their death.

Against this background, Pallavicino is perhaps best defined by his ongoing preoccupation with language—not just as a matter of style, but in the close connection Pallavicino saw between acting, speaking and thinking well. As Eraldo Bellini argues, Pallavicino’s theory of language is, in fact, a theory of culture, characterised by moderation and rationality. Bellini demonstrates how Pallavicino carefully calibrated the rules of language on the requirements of convention, putting a firm limit on any form of absolute authority. If Petrarch, Torquato Tasso and Gabriele Chiabrera are key points of reference in Pallavicino’s work, it is less as fixed linguistic models than as examples of how sound ideas can be articulated through language, and how such language transmits virtues such as friendship and faith. In Pallavicino’s view, language exists deeply embedded in the social conditions of its use. This notion, Bellini reminds us, aligns Pallavicino quite closely with ‘moderns’ like Alessandro Tassoni; it also seems to prefigure arguments deployed in France by such voices in the *Querelle des anciens et modernes* as Pierre Nicole and the brothers Perrault.  

It also assigns to Latin a particular place in culture: as a dead and therefore pristine form of expression. If the mutability of the *volgare* guarantees its vitality at the risk of a progressive loss of meaning, the utility of Latin depends on its immutability.

This understanding of language transforms it into a most powerful instrument; it is with language that we think and act. Jon Snyder demonstrates how this conviction gives way to an aesthetic of marvel firmly rooted in rationality, while Alessandro Metllica shows how it defines Pallavicino’s ideas about devotion and conversion: even ‘Christian perfection’, ultimately a matter of faith, is rooted in the cognitive faculties of the human mind, which are able to gently bend the will thanks to the powerful images that language is able to convey. Pallavicino recast the Christian tragedy in exactly those Aristotelian terms, relying on ‘ornate argument’ to touch the viewer. Similarly, Stefan Bauer describes Pallavicino’s *Istoria* as a piece of psychological warfare, in which

Pallavicino launches myriad attacks on Sarpi’s text to cast doubt on the morality and motivations of its author.

Parallels seem to emerge between this ‘theory of culture’ encoded in language and Pallavicino’s philosophical preoccupations: perhaps less in terms of how our Jesuit positions himself with regard to the old authorities of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas and the new science, than in his approach to theological and philosophical problems. As Sven Knebel points out, reality can only be understood by how it presents itself to us, which calls for inductive reasoning. In such an approach, nothing lies beyond the grasp of rationality, while rationality operates on the appearances it needs to process. Perception as much as reasoning are operations that involve mediation, and this mediation opens up a space for philosophical ingenuity as well as intuitions about uncertainty and probability. As Anselm Ramelow points out, with this attitude Pallavicino participates in the controversial attempts to rationalise belief that are typical of theology at the Collegio Romano. This attitude, he argues, is possible because it is rooted in ‘baroque optimism’: the belief that, ultimately, we live in a coherent and unified universe willed by an omnibenevolent God.

As several authors point out, if these ideas sound modern, it is because they are. Taking Pallavicino’s work seriously implies reconsidering historical and disciplinary periodisations and continuities. The break between baroque poetics and the eighteenth century is more subtle and multifaceted than long taken for granted, not in the least because of the complexity of the seventeenth-century landscape itself, as Riga reminds us. Snyder sees parallels between Pallavicino’s aesthetics and Leibniz’s monads, an intuition made all the more probable given the latter’s debt to Sforza’s philosophical works, which he helped to carry into the eighteenth century. Bellini points to the history of a reflection on prose style that runs uninterrupted from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, a suggestion supported by Pallavicino’s edition history and biographies. In sum, Pallavicino’s work invites us to think about continuities in the history of ideas and the question of how periodisation operates in different historical disciplines.

At the same time, Pallavicino’s life bears witness to real moments of historical rupture. The shift in the cultural policy of Urban VIII in the early 1630s, the transition from the Barberini to the Pamphilii to the Chigi pontificates, and the subsequent reconfiguration of the papacy in view of its increasing loss of power and the sustained criticism of its pomp, fundamentally reconfigured the social, cultural and political fabric of Rome. If Pallavicino’s life was marked by two of these moments, he must have been deeply aware of the dynamics that would change the outlook of Rome: as an agent, a controversial historian, and a close friend of Fabio Chigi, who set out to reform the papacy at the
moment of his election, but came to epitomise the Roman Baroque. Perhaps most fundamentally, thanks to his own experiences and despite his optimism Pallavicino may have intuited that the self-evident position of Catholic faith as the cornerstone and ultimate legitimisation of any intellectual endeavour was eroding. It is this foundation, long viewed as essentially un-modern, that separated Pallavicino progressively ever more from the thinkers and writers who followed in his footsteps.