

Angela Oster

4 Benvenuto Cellini as a Paradigm of Para-classicism in the Cinquecento

4.1 Introductory remarks

Benvenuto Cellini is a paradigmatic figure of what will be termed Renaissance para-classicism in these pages, as he represents the simultaneously classicist and anti-classicist tendencies of that epoch. Cellini's para-classicism represents a hybrid mixture of classicist and non-classicist elements. The latter can be the result of either the effect of decidedly anti-classicist gestures or of a certain disregard for classical norms, or even of the interference of competing classicist allegiances. Even though Cellini was talented in a number of fields – as a musician, as a writer of sonnets, as a fortress engineer, sculptor and goldsmith – he was not a universal artist of the calibre of a Leonardo or Michelangelo. Cellini did not produce comprehensive works comparable to frescoes or panel paintings. Rather, his achievements in the visual arts were analogous to what he practised in his famous *Vita* as an author: he was a virtuoso of the solitary performance, of the brilliant individual piece (without, however, being an individualist in the modern sense).

4.1.1 Reception and state of research

With regard to Cellini's diverse oeuvre, critics have mostly concentrated primarily on the following: 1. Exceptional works of visual art, such as the *Saliera* (Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna) and the *Perseus* (in the front part of the left one of the three arcades of the Loggia dei Lanzi); 2. Cellini's *Vita*. Literary studies have so far analysed the latter mainly as an early form of the genre of the modern autobiography, although more recently, new approaches to more far-reaching considerations have begun to be presented (above all Pany 2014, as well as Dickhaut 2015).

The 'voids' in Cellini reception and scholarship are striking. Hardly any of Cellini's extensive sculptural works have survived the centuries. This does not mean, however, that they have not survived in other forms. Cellini himself describes some of his works of art that have been lost in his texts, and contemporary sources also confirm that at least some of these works of art existed. In the case of other works mentioned by Cellini, the question remains open as to

whether Cellini could have invented them for self-fashioning purposes in his *Vita* (more on this below). This in no way diminishes their significance for philologists, on the contrary. In contrast to the field of art history, it is precisely the conglomerate of factual and fictional narration in the *Vita* that challenges literary studies and especially narratology. Because of the numerous descriptions of things and materials in his texts, Cellini is a rich subject for *Philological Material Studies* (Oster in course of print b). Cellini's technical treatises are texts that have received little attention in literary studies, including the one on the goldsmith's art and on sculpture (*I trattati dell'oreficeria e della scultura*). They have largely been left to other disciplines, which have avoided the eminently literary procedures of these texts (Nova/Schreurs 2003).

4.1.2 Problems and questions

Benvenuto Cellini's texts are anything but easy to categorise, not least because on the one hand they seek a connection to classical models, but, on the other hand, they ostentatiously display a conspicuous anti-classicism. The latter builds on the counter-discursive shock effect of an "Ugly Renaissance" aesthetic (Lee 2013), unsuited to the expectations of the contemporary public, which prevented a text like the *Vita* from appearing in print during the author's lifetime. Cellini cultivates the role of the 'enfant terrible' by rejecting sectorial restrictions in his art and texts. This is demonstrated, among other things, in his hybrid handling of classical genre systems. With an anti-classicist gesture, he combines autobiography, conversion literature, the structure of a book of *Rime*, commentaries on his own poems or art theories, thus following a 'pluralising' approach.

The *Rime*, which have recently appeared in a new edition (Cellini 2014), seem at first glance to be a disparate conglomeration of Petrarchist tradition and contemporary models (Aretino, Michelangelo) and thus modelled on a "theory of the lyric in the plural" (Huss/Mehltretter/Regn 2012). In fact, however, Cellini's lyric production ambitiously aims at a 'different classicism' (Proccaccioli 1999a) and has therefore been rather inappropriately characterised with attributes such as "versi brutti sì ma ardenti" (Carrara 1926) or even diletantism (Maier 1952). For as far as his reference options are concerned, Cellini stages himself as the heir to antique models, which are then counteracted by autoreferential gestures. Thus, he realizes a kind of hyper-classicism, based on anti-classicist tergiversations. Cellini bends the various models of the lyric, the classical canon and conventional patterns into a matrix of para-classicist *scrittura*. He blends religious madrigal forms with heretical provocations and even

stylises the poetic voice of his texts into that of a ‘new Christ.’ The use of theological discourse and confessional modes of writing, themselves a kind of classicism with respect to their models, enables Cellini to contour an individual exceptionality, which, however, has been incorrectly interpreted as that of a modern, religiously agnostic genius (Goethe 1803).

In addition to the *Rime*, Cellini’s *Vita* is similarly important for his lyric production, since this text also contains poems and commentaries on them. Cellini’s ostentatious self-referencing in the field of lyric poetry is not least the result of an anti-classicist style of writing, which also contaminates the most diverse genres in the field of lyric poetry. The self-congratulatory rhetoric of the lyrical passages of the *Vita* is more than risky when weighted against the contemporary background and especially its intertextual horizon, as it exaggerates and transcends Petrarch’s poetics of *gloria* with an anti-classicist verve. Cellini’s provocative violations of appropriate speech, his straining of *decorum* and decency have often been excused by his inexperience as an author who was actually a craftsman and goldsmith by trade. This explanation is clearly inadequate and disregards Cellini’s poetic talent, the amount of work involved in his writing and the prudent planning undertaken for the printing of the books. That Cellini was merely negligent in his authorial activity has been impressively refuted by the archival research of Dario Trento, who has examined the ‘cassette Cellini’ (containing meticulously-kept notes, invoices and lists) in the Biblioteca Riccardiana of Florence (Trento 1984).

Over the course of the following pages, the para-classicist categories and patterns in individual texts by Cellini (*Vita*, *Rime*, treatises) will first be outlined and the problem areas they have then dealt with in further detail. Finally, the *Cicalamenti del Grappa*, a text by a different author, will be analysed in order to demonstrate the connectivity of the concept of para-classicism in the Cinquecento beyond Cellini.

4.2 Para-classicisms in Benvenuto Cellini’s texts

4.2.1 Cellini’s *Vita*

When referring to an artist’s *Vita* in Renaissance Italy, Giorgio Vasari and his famous *Le Vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori e architetti* is, inevitably, evoked. The first edition of this work was published in 1550. Vasari’s text is not only regarded as the founding text of the field of art history, but also as the literary masterpiece of a practising visual artist. Vasari, the architect of the Uffizi in Florence,

presents in the *Vite* what he considers to be a definitive line-up of the most important artists in Italy. These are, especially in the first edition from 1550, mainly artists who were already dead at the time. To these he adds Michelangelo, and from the second edition published in 1568 onwards, among others, Leonardo and Raphael. At the end of the volume Vasari pays tribute to himself over 42 pages. Vasari can be merited with having historicised art through the creation and introduction of different epochs, thus relativising standards of judgement previously believed to be timeless. In the meantime, specialists on the subject have revealed that Vasari did indeed pass on valuable knowledge in this fashion, but that, at the same time, his opinions were not neutral or unbiased in nature by any means (opinions are, however, controversial, cf. for example Nova 2014 and Belting 1987). In general, scholars believed, even during the Cinquecento itself, that Vasari, in keeping with being a true patriot, preferred Florence (although he also dedicated some of his attention to Rome) over other regions of Italy or, indeed, Europe.

Moreover, not every contemporary artist felt that their work had been adequately acknowledged or represented by Vasari. For example, Vasari wrote almost nothing about the sculptor and goldsmith Benvenuto Cellini, who was quite famous at the time, and when he did, it was in less than flattering terms. He called Cellini “animoso, fiero, vivace, prontissimo e terribilissimo” (Vasari 1857, 185), which in turn led Cellini to insult Vasari, whom he held in low esteem, as a “Giorgetto Vasellaio” (‘vase dealer’) (Güntert 1986b, 54). The relationship between Vasari and the sculptor Baccio Bandinelli, who was also famous at that time, was just as hostile as that between Cellini and Vasari. Bandinelli and Cellini hated each other even more. The dispute between these artists took place mainly at the court of the Tuscan prince Cosimo I de’ Medici.

Cellini’s *Vita* is considered one of the first autobiographies of the Renaissance. Although this genre designation will not be dispensed with in the following pages, other models will be brought into play with regard to genre affiliation. It should be noted that it is disputed in research to what extent an author of the Cinquecento could have been able to conform to the pragmatics of a genre that only became truly established in the eighteenth century (Wagner-Egelhaaf 2005). Cellini’s ‘autobiography’ is not unique within the anti-classicist text panorama of the Cinquecento, but it is exceptional. To give a representative example: Girolamo Cardano’s *De propria vita liber* already reveals, through its preference for Latin, that it is not motivated by para-classicist ambition. His (thoroughly interesting) enumerations lack Cellini’s narrative verve and the anti-classicist will to openly confront authority or name inconvenient truths. On the contrary, Cardano advises taking the path of least resistance (‘choose the part more comfortable by nature’): “In ancipitibus, partem elige natura commodiorem, ut boli exhibitionem,

nam si potionem, non licet redire et in ancipiti confunderis nec adeo gravitatem retines.” (Cardano 2020, 339).

Cellini’s *Vita*, on the other hand, is relevant for the context of anti-classicism for several reasons. Not least, Cellini’s text is a defiant reaction to Vasari’s notorious refusal to pay biographical tribute to Cellini. Nevertheless, the *Vita* is not unique in this function either. His competitor Bandinelli was outraged that his work was not acknowledged in Vasari’s first edition of the *Vite* and therefore immediately started writing his *Memoriale* in 1552. For other reasons, Michelangelo – who is particularly celebrated in Vasari’s *Vite* – also authorised a biography of his life and work, which was written by (Condivi 1553). Michelangelo apparently saw the need to make additions or even corrections to Vasari’s portrayal of his life as an artist. While Bandinelli is at least acknowledged to some degree in Vasari’s 1568 edition of the *Vite*, Cellini counters Vasari’s renewed notorious omission of his artistic persona by recounting his life himself, even before the appearance of the second edition of Vasari’s work, in a text that was to cause a sensation – albeit long after the author had written it.

Large parts of Cellini’s *Vita di Benvenuto di Maestro Giovanni Cellini fiorentino, scritta, per lui medesimo* were written roughly between 1556 and 1562. The *Vita*, however, was not printed until 1728, in the edition by Antonio Cocchi (Cellini/Cocchi 1728) in Naples (the indication “Colonia”, which is often cited, is incorrect). This edition is defective, which is due to the fact that it was based on an already insufficient, subsequently lost copy of the original manuscript. Translations in other European countries followed in the same century (including the translation into English by Thomas Nugent in 1771 and into German by Goethe in 1795). The original manuscript was considered lost, but resurfaced in 1805 and was then moved to a more secure location in 1825 (the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence) (Codice Mediceo Palatino 2342). On this basis, the first serious edition of the text was printed in 1829 and edited by Francesco Tassi (Cellini/Tassi 1829). Bacci’s later edition (Cellini/Bacci 1901) is more philologically accurate. Goethe’s version helped the text to gain wider resonance beyond Italy (and within it). We should explicitly speak of a ‘version’, as although Goethe was very dedicated to his translation, it is very idiosyncratic (cf. chap. 4.3.3). Why Cellini’s text was only published posthumously becomes clear relatively quickly when reading the *Vita*. It was explosive in several respects, a fact which was also clear to the author, who therefore asked Benedetto Varchi for advice on his manuscript (the letter to Varchi of 22 May 1559 gives an explanation; Cellini 1971c, 985–986). The notes on Cellini’s life that make up the last parts of the text end in 1562. The ending is abrupt and the manuscript thus most likely remained unfinished. The text was originally conceived by Cellini as a petition to Cosimo I, with whom the artist had fallen out of favour.

Cellini had just completed the *Perseus*, and this bronze statue catapulted him instantaneously to a position alongside the great Donatello. This is to be taken quite literally, for his *Perseus* was placed between Michelangelo's *David* and Donatello's *Judith*, at the front of the left of the three arcades of the Loggia dei Lanzi, which is still one of the most visited squares in the world (cf. chap. 4.3.1.2). Subsequently, Cellini and Cosimo I could not agree on the fee (on this and other disputes see Trento 1984, 43–51). Cellini once again showed little skill in dealing with his superiors and with the usual power strategies at play at court (Cellini had also previously massively overtaxed the tolerance of François I in France). What can be noted is that in the course of his *Vita*, Cellini succeeded at first only with difficulty and then hardly at all in expressing his disappointment and latent anger about Cosimo I in a polite fashion. In the end, Cellini states that Cosimo I acted more in the “modo di mercatante che di duca” (Cellini 1971a, 476). This is a side blow to the Medici's descent from the banking and mercantile business. This sentence was then removed from the manuscript of the *Vita* that is housed in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana. Two things can be concluded from this: first, that Cellini was well aware that he could not have published his book in its original form, but that (further) self-censorship was necessary. Secondly: the very deletion is likely to be an indication that doubting the honesty of Cellini's accounts, as frequently happens, is perhaps a case of exaggerated scepticism. In fact, Cellini seems to have written things down literally as they came into his head, or, rather, dictated them to his assistant Michele de Goro, as he himself notes in his own hand on the first pages of the manuscript. According to Cellini, speaking at the same time as working in the workshop made it easier for him to work.

Vita di Benvenuto di Maestro Giovanni Cellini fiorentino, scritta, per lui medesimo, in Firenze – is the final title, whereby the “scritta, per lui medesimo” is ambiguous: it can mean ‘through himself’, but also ‘for himself’ (cf. Meier 2004, 36–37). Cellini, who was born exactly in the middle of the second millennium, in 1500, was 56 when he began writing. And the wealth of events he describes is exorbitant. Cellini appears in his own narratives as a kind of prodigy of the arts, as well as a great hero and survivor. In the famous Sacco di Roma, for example, Cellini, according to his claim, succeeded in holding off the enemy troops and helping to save the Pope. In these passages, Cellini's text follows in the footsteps of the picaresque novel. In addition, elements of Boccaccio's classic novella – repartee, punchlines, obstacles along the way as well as boldness and determination – characterise the account.

Cellini's sensational escape from Castel Sant'Angelo is particularly famous, where he – from Cellini's point of view: unjustly imprisoned for defamation and slander by Pope Paul III – suffers martyrdom under the worst conditions (with

little food, in almost constant darkness, cold and damp). This is especially important in terms of genre history, because Cellini borrows from hagiographies and accounts of the passion of Christ: an act of para-classicist appropriation. However, there are also witty scenes. Cellini is placed in Castel Sant'Angelo under the care of a castellan, Giorgio Ugolini, who is initially benevolent towards Benvenuto. But things change over the course of his imprisonment and the fatal thing, according to Cellini, is that once a year the castellan is seized by a strange form of madness (cf. generally on madness in the Renaissance Oster in course of print a). Among other things, the castellan has a strong need to talk, and Benvenuto makes the mistake of intoning his usual exorbitant laudations about himself in response to the castellan's question as to whether he thinks he can fly. He describes himself as a kind of new Daedalus, ultimately referring to his skills as an *artifex*. The castellan, however, takes a very different view. He insinuates that Cellini wants to flee, that is, to fly away. This leads to Cellini actually planning and daringly carrying out his spectacular escape.

Cellini describes himself as a genius artist, almost like the hero in a mythical epic who (the parallel to Dante is evident) has to flee his home in Florence. Cellini does not always take the criterion of authenticity and truth in his reports very seriously. He creates a free space of self-constitution, as it were, in which fiction and truth cannot always be clearly separated. The genre of autobiography as such was not well-established in the early modern period. The tradition of Augustine's *Confessiones* and Boethius' *De consolatione philosophiae* was only continued in the eighteenth century, for example, with Rousseau's *Confessions*. Therefore, the many private matters that Cellini presents in his autobiographical first-person narrative are completely unusual for the Cinquecento. It is true that Petrarch was one of the first in Italy to establish a kind of cult of his own person in his writing and was considered a role model for classicists, however his approach is quite different from Cellini's. From Petrarch's numerous texts, it is sufficient to mention his famous letter to posterity, *Epistola Posteritati*, in which Petrarch prudently reinterprets Boccaccio's eulogistic *Vita* about his person in order to cautiously dismiss the prophecies, oracles and other portents of his excellency contained in it. Petrarch's model for this was Augustine and his explanations on appropriate speech in the *Doctrina christiana* (Book IV, 6 and 7). The fact that the effect of this superficial humility was an all the more forced self-elevation – and that we are therefore dealing with tactical behaviour here – is another matter.

Cellini, on the other hand, was an 'enfant terrible.' For his contemporaries, what Cellini subjected them to was a violation of classical decorum. The rhetorical rules of a Cicero or a Quintilian (*Institutio oratoria*) on the appropriateness of speech and especially of speaking about oneself were still binding in the

Cinquecento, even if the manuals of rhetoric left a lot of leeway. This is not changed by pseudo first-person narratives such as those written by, say, Pietro Aretino or a Francesco Berni (Schulz-Buschhaus 1975). In contrast, ‘authentically’ personal matters were regarded as something that was none of the public’s business, let alone fit to be published. So, if Cellini so ostentatiously transgresses the classical boundaries of shame, why does he do so? After all, Cellini’s writing about things such as his regular or irregular sexual intercourse, about financial transactions and the like was of little avail to the function the tradition of the *Vita* as a genre was primarily intended to contribute to: namely, to highlight the exemplary nature of what is described. An assumption of exemplarity would surely pose a problem for Cellini’s book in view of the fact that he even reports his acts of murder.

He himself is aware of his sinfulness in the Christian sense and repeatedly makes contrite apologies. However, he can always be sure of protection from the highest authorities. For he plans his murders prudently. For example, he deliberately murders in times of papal vacancy, as he can expect the subsequent new Vicar of Christ on earth (Pope Paul III as successor to Clement VII) to perform the usual first official acts: to bestow his amnesty on criminals and sinners. Cellini at one point even goes one step further in his self-defence. He boasts of complete immunity because an exceptional artistic talent like him cannot be measured by normal earthly standards. He quotes Pope Paul III: “Sappiate che gli uomini come Benvenuto, unici nella lor professione, non ànno da essere ubbrigati alla legge” (Cellini 1971a, 232).

The fact that artists like Cellini or Michelangelo were perceived as idiosyncratic at the time, is an indication that there was as yet no conception of the ‘free artist’ in the Renaissance, in the sense of the term coined in the nineteenth century. Not even the term of *artista* in the modern sense was in use. Cellini’s ‘individuality’ is a specifically *early* modern one, that is: it has its place decidedly in spatial and social relationships, which the artist by no means abandons; he cannot cultivate a modern ‘solitude of genius.’ However, artists did slowly break away from the corporately organised workshops of the guilds and moved into courtly patronage, which opened up opportunities, but also restrictions due to patronage structures. Cellini had an unstable relationship with his patrons, be it the popes or François I of France and Cosimo I de’ Medici.

In terms of functional history, Cellini’s *Vita* in its Renaissance context can be interpreted as an attempt to remedy and to structure the perceived disparities and inconsistencies of his career as an artist. Cellini sees his belonging to social spaces and the respect and appreciation due to his person defamed and wants to counter this with a written testimony, in which he himself stylises his person as belonging to a group, but which actually turns out to be a clear breach of

classicist norms from the point of view of his contemporaries. Cellini's calamities may have opened up paths of a premodern type of individualisation, which would later be reinterpreted as moments of individuality in a more modern sense. As such, they are impressive in retrospect and should not be questioned. However, with regard to anti-classicism, the very patterns of autobiographical writing in the *Vita* demonstrate very clearly that there can hardly be any question of subjective autonomy in the modern sense. Such an interpretation would simply be contradicted by the intertextual genre patterns and their rules, as well as social context. Cellini uses these patterns with freedom and self-confidence, but he is still bound by social conventions. This applies to the tradition of *Vitae* in general, such as Plutarch's depictions of Greek and Roman statesmen and Sueton's *De vita Caesarum*. In addition to the *vitae* tradition, Cellini draws on other classical models, the *Libri di famiglia*, the *Ricordi* and the *Memoriali*. Their classical systems of rules dictate, for example, that the author's ancestry and origins be described first, then the country from which he originates, and then the region, the city and finally the author's parental home.

A topos of the aforementioned traditions is the precociousness of the author, his commitment and his talent, which was evident from a young age onwards. The beginning of Cellini's *Vita* fulfils all these requirements almost flawlessly. His hometown of Florence is compared to ancient Rome and linked to his family's genealogy. Julius Caesar, Benvenuto claims, had a brave captain named Fiorino da Cellino in his service, after whose first name Florence was named. After this legendary foundation, the family tree hypothesis of which is historically completely unproven, Benvenuto unfolds the patrimony of the Cellini family further, to his capable father and his grandfather Antonio, who was supposedly a hundred years old when Benvenuto reached infancy (Cellini 1971a, 66–67). As far as can be reconstructed, his grandfather Andrea was in reality at most 82 years old, but the grandson's fictional design is not really about the documentation of his family tree, but about the design of a legendary patronym, for which the role of the grandfather as biblical patriarch is necessary.

The following generations of Cellinis are virtuous people, but live in modest circumstances – and thus Benvenuto imperceptibly transfers the scheme of the *Libri di famiglia* into the *Vita* register. As far as family genealogy is concerned, Benvenuto bases his family chronicle on Christian edification and sermon literature, with numerous biblical borrowings. Benvenuto's parents are not blessed with children until late in life, and Benvenuto styles himself in the manner of John the Baptist, given to Elizabeth and the aged Zachariah (Isaac, who remains childless for a long time, is also alluded to).

What Cellini stages here is quite audacious. His origin and birth are portrayed as an analogy of the role of the *praecursor*, John the Baptist, and thus as

a reference to things to come. The structure of the reference, however, has an anti-classicist twist. It explodes the classical genealogy (and the typological structure of *figura* and *implementum*) by revolving around the singular figure of Benvenuto as a precursor of his own later excellence. It announces his exceptional position as an artist who will surpass everything and everyone in the future. Remarkably, we are dealing with an autobiography that does not so much focus on the past or the present. Memory serves to pave the way for the exceptional Benvenuto beyond present time and space. This is all the more striking in that the latter, who omits practically no date in his vita that could be stylised, conspicuously marginalises the date of his final release after his second imprisonment in Castel Sant'Angelo. It is, in fact, 24 December, but Benvenuto then seems to shy away from contrasting the birth of Christ with a rival model. In the Christmas story, the events leading up to John's and Jesus' births are largely portrayed in parallel, although the incidents of the story of Christ surpass the passages relating to John the Baptist in each case. And while Cellini otherwise does not shy away from any rivalry, indeed is almost manically obsessed with outdoing everything and everyone in the sense of an exaggerated aesthetic of *aemulatio*, he remains restrained here and seems to want to demonstrate a submissive piety contrary to his anti-normative attitudes. At any rate, he does change his date of birth without exhibiting such scruples, moving it forward a day so that he appears to be born on the night after All Saints' Day. This is important to him because all the saints are commemorated on this feast – even those who have not been canonised – as well as the many saints whose holiness is known to no one but God. And to the latter category, at least as Benvenuto sees it, he himself also belongs.

With Benvenuto, a 're-naissance', a rebirth of the entire Cellini family clan is initiated, as it were. The individual, Benvenuto, is always part of the family whole and is loyal to his native Florence. The autobiographical I is thus the bearer of a family constellation that must be perpetuated and in whose service the individual stands. Cellini's supposedly individual poetics is thus, in fact, anchored in a supra-individual context, and his autobiography is a para-classicist textual combination that interweaves various forms of writing about the self. These are artificial forms of discourse, which in Cellini's case are forcefully oriented towards persuasion. Cellini wants to convince his readers. And to this end, he uses a register that derives from the classical legal *narratio* and offers the reception options corresponding to that genre. One can refuse this offer and continue researching what may have been true or false about the facts Cellini refers to. But this would probably miss his actual intention, which aims not at classical 'truths', but at the para-classicist narratives of someone who is his own advocate: Cellini, who wants to portray Benvenuto's bravura according to the established criteria of probability

and credibility. In this respect, he remains committed to communicative consensus. For as far as classical rhetoric is concerned, this is not primarily committed to truth, but to *veri similis*, to plausible speech. It is about narrative probability, about a semblance of proof that occurs primarily as a rhetorical effect.

As an author, Cellini is also concerned with his main aim as a visual artist, namely an artful presentation of the natural. If we return from there into the literary field, we could even say that Cellini's *Vita* is interesting primarily *because* it operates in the fictional mode. This does not mean that it is *fictive*: it is *fictional*, that is, fictionalised in relation to some reality of whatever kind, and therefore not a completely invented fantasy. Rather, it builds up a fictional tension with reality, the hybrid, para-classicist design of which is what is actually exciting. Cellini carves out a space for himself in relation to a present situation, which, at least in his perception, is deemed unjustifiably oppressive, and in which he is exposed to numerous calamities. Cellini relies on authentication effects not authorised by any classical tradition. At the same time, he is not the kind of author who would explicitly and intellectually reflect on the *poiesis*, the 'making' of his text. But he knows the power of the word and he is a naturally-gifted linguistic virtuoso. He trusts in 'fare con le mani', both in the realm of sculpture as well as in writing. In terms of the hypothesis of para-classicism, it is his intermedial twists and interlacings between word and artefact that render Cellini a true virtuoso, palpable in expressions like: "molte cose son belle da dire, che faccendole poi non s'accompagnano bene in opera" (Cellini 1971a, 373); "con le parole disegnato" (Cellini 1971a, 373).

What Cellini does not come up with, from a modern expectation of features typical to autobiographies, are attempts at introspection. Although Cellini certainly explores his conscience or even his motivations, he does not want to see these as limited in a mundane way; rather, his para-classicism aims at incomparably higher consecrations. His *vita* exhibits the aforementioned structures of hagiography and dwells on similarities with the life of Jesus. Cellini, who at the beginning of his text describes himself extensively in his role as a son, becomes over the course of his text a father's son in the Christian sense: the suffering Christ on the cross. The vision of Christ is transformed into the vision of a holy Benvenuto. When Cellini ascribes a kind of messianic election to himself, he is following in the footsteps of tradition, not least that of Dante, who, like Benvenuto, was chosen to behold divine glory even as a mortal. Cellini subsequently remains an illuminated man who, after his transcendent vision, claims to be accompanied by a halo above his head, but which is not visible at all times, in all spaces, and not equally visible to everyone.

Cellini repeatedly emphasises his supernatural talent, which is expressed particularly succinctly in childhood episodes narrated as legends and making

use of allegorical dimensions. Benvenuto is about three when he discovers a scorpion. The scorpion is a symbol of water and also the astrological sign under which Cellini was born. The adults are frightened when they see the poisonous animal in the hands of the boy, who does not want to give up his catch. Somehow the father manages to cut off the scorpion's tail and pincers with scissors. The castration implication of the event is evident, all the more so because Benvenuto remains unharmed in comparison, which fact the artist later attributes primarily to his divinatory kinship with the (ultimately inferior) animal. Additionally, the childlike fearlessness of demigods is invoked (for example, the myth of Heracles, who as a child boldly strangled snakes with his own hands). Moreover, biblical references are echoed once again: the domestication of snakes and scorpions is found in the Gospel according to St. Luke 10:19.

The second episode from Cellini's childhood concerns the appearance of a salamander in the domestic fireplace. Now the salamander is a royal attribute of François I, with whom Cellini was repeatedly in service. Moreover, it is an animal that has alchemical and magical connotations, and it stands ambivalently between heat and cold. The fact that this episode is one of the first to be recounted in Cellini's *Vita* again closes the circle of the autobiographical remembering of the ageing artist, who, in retrospect, stylises his childhood under the sign of exceptionality. Like the salamander, Cellini later withstands fire both in terms of concrete craftsmanship and in a figurative sense, for he defies the hell created by his diabolic enemies, omnipresent in the *Vita*.

Cellini's character also has an affinity with fire. He describes himself as partly sanguine (i.e., according to the humoral pathology of the Renaissance, with an affinity for scorpions as a zodiac sign) and partly choleric. Hot-tempered as he is in some situations, in others Cellini is able to react with admirable cold-bloodedness, be it during the Sack of Rome and not least again and again in his work, in which the fragility of the materials requires the greatest calm, skill and circumspection. Cellini demonstrates this particularly vividly in the example of his most famous work, the monumental *Perseus*. As an artist, Cellini presents himself implicitly as the antithesis of the saturnine, melancholic, meditative Michelangelo. Cellini is red-haired, gruff, repeatedly unkempt, and in his depiction of himself he deliberately recalls the god of the underworld, who, like the artist, masters the art of forging with hot moulds in his role as the god of fire. And in this field, too, the smelting furnaces become ambivalent vehicles, since they could produce both cannons and works of art (Alessandro Lastricati, who was responsible for the casting of *Perseus*, was significantly a cannon founder by profession).

An exemplary episode for the para-classicist attitude of the *Vita* is to be found in Cellini's description of his encounter with Pietro Bembo, the classicist *par excellence* in the Cinquecento. Benvenuto describes above all "le più

sterminate carezze”, which the then already-prominent poet bestowed on him and that Bembo dubbed him a “virtuosissimo signore” (Cellini 1971a, 285). But when it comes to the fine arts, it turns out that the famous man does not know the first thing about them: “e come quello era grandissimo innelle sue lettere e innella poesia in superlativo grado, ma di questa mia professione Sua Signoria non intendeva nulla al mondo” (Cellini 1971a, 285).

4.2.2 Cellini’s *Trattati dell’oreficeria e della scultura*

Cellini’s work as a visual artist had a striking influence on his writing. Poetry, craft and artefact are in constant synaesthetic exchange in Cellini’s work and mutually shape each other. At a time when the *artes mechanicae* still have to assert themselves intellectually against the *artes liberales*, Cellini strives to expand the classical professional canon of artists to include the goldsmith’s art. The latter is mounted in Cellini’s poetic and aesthetic texts as a competitive paradigm set against the fine arts, a feat accomplished by exploring disparities within the theory framework of a flexible tradition of discussing the arts. The segments and structures of Cellini’s contrarian classicism are alternative drafts to the acts of self-proclamation and self-canonisation of his time and above all to Vasari’s system of classical models. Cellini’s treatise is also to be seen as a rival offering to Vasari’s second edition of his *Vite*, which also appeared in 1568 and of whose contents Cellini may already have learned beforehand. Vasari – unlike in the first edition (1560) – devalued the goldsmith’s art in the revision of 1568. The *oreficeria* was eliminated from the realm of the *disegno* (Collareta 2003, 163). On the one hand, this infuriated Cellini, but on the other hand, in this way the composition of the most important practical art treatise of the Cinquecento was triggered, and with it the possibility of revaluing the goldsmith’s art in a para-classicist manner. Cellini wrote the first part of the *Trattati dell’oreficeria e della scultura* in 1565, as a wedding gift to Francesco de’ Medici and Joan of Austria. The part on sculpture was written in 1567 and the complete text was printed in 1568. Like the *Vita*, the manuscript was subject to many changes as to its whereabouts, and was finally secured by the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana (cod. 5134). It was republished by Milanese in 1857 (Cellini/Milanese 1857). Cellini’s treatise, however, is not only a sui generis work that provides insight into the tangible practices of the artist’s workshop. The text is also, as far as its autobiographical digressions are concerned, similar to the *Vita*. Trento has demonstrated the mutual proximity of the two works in terms of content on the basis of source material (Trento 1984, 43–88).

With few exceptions, Cellini worked with gold, silver and bronze. Questions about sculpture are therefore not separable in Cellini's case from the art of the goldsmith. First of all, artistic and commodity value are very interchangeable in the craft in which Cellini was active. Metal artists always had to be aware that their works of art could be melted down to be made into coins or cannons at any moment. This fact alone stands in the way of a tangible, long-term classicism from the outset. Incidentally, Cellini himself often melted down works of art without scruple, as he recounts in the *Vita*, on behalf of the Pope during the Sacco di Roma. And Cellini knew what Petrarch had always urged: without (materially-transmitted) texts or works of art, there is no afterlife of the artist and thus of his glory. The permanent danger of works being melted down and other forms of loss were thus a constant affliction, against the horizon of which Cellini generally wrote his texts; it is in these that he saw an alternative option for longevity.

For all the appreciation of it, art was by no means seen as 'auratic' in the same way in the Renaissance as it was in later centuries. Beyond its ceremonial uses, art had a strictly more material status than later on. This materiality, however, led precisely to a greater appreciation of the artist proving his value in the difficult process of producing such material objects than in the myth of the effortlessly accomplished work of art since Romanticism. Sculptors such as Michelangelo or Cellini worked in a field in which the *artes mechanicae* and the *artes liberales* were still partly merged and in which the artist was assigned the role of mastering matter. It was from pragmatic uses of material objects that perfectly decorated luxury objects emerged, removed from everyday use, as was particularly evident in Cellini's famous salt cellar (*Saliera*) for François I. According to Cellini's special version of the *paragone*, the sculptor's texts echo this relationship between usability and pure form in that they, too, distance themselves from everyday speech, which can be measured by criteria of truth: they become an artistic type of discourse, which merely 'quotes' its own practical use. They are artefacts whose production is part of their message. What Pico della Mirandola called "plastes et factor" (Mirandola 1990, 6) in *De hominis dignitate* manifests itself in them: every human being creates sculptures and poetry that mirror their own inner selves.

Cellini contributed to the *paragone* between the arts of his time, with provocative but unsystematic comments. In fact, the discourse may ultimately have been too theoretical for him. Cellini sought the direct agon of practice, a competition between workshops. However, in the *Trattati dell'oreficeria e della scultura* he strictly distinguishes between "un valente praticone" and the "praticonacci": only the former "son degni di lode" (Cellini 1971b, 597). It was important to Cellini to pass on his practical knowledge in treatises, which was a wise decision insofar as he could hardly have contributed anything unique within the framework of the academic *paragone* discussion – unlike, on the other hand, in the *Trattati*

dell'oreficeria e della scultura, in which he does make an important contribution. His workshop book 'is absolutely unique, because between the writing of Theophilus' *De diversis artibus*, written at the beginning of the twelfth century, and the literature on the art of goldsmithing that only first began to emerge in the eighteenth century, there are only these Trattati, completed around 1566' (Brepohl 2005, 7: "ist ein absolutes Unikat, denn zwischen der Anfang des 12. Jahrhunderts entstandenen Schrift des Theophilus *De diversis artibus* und der im 18. Jahrhundert beginnenden Goldschmiedeliteratur gibt es nur diese um 1566 fertiggestellten Trattati").¹

The notes are particularly productive for *Philological Material Studies* in general (Oster in course of print b), but also provide information on Cellini's para-classicist corpus of works, not least in the form of a theoretical authentication of remarks in the *Vita*. On the basis of modern metallurgy (Brepohl 2005, 7), it can be shown that the facts reported with regard to the production processes 'correspond exactly to the works of art handed down to us' (Brepohl 2005, 9: "[stimmt] exakt mit den überlieferten Kunstwerken überein"). One of the questions about the *Vita*, which has occupied purely text-immanent literary studies, can be answered unequivocally by thus expanding the text corpus to the treatise: 'If the information about the verifiable objects is so reliable, we can also rely just as surely on the very vivid descriptions of the jewellery and works of art that have since been lost' (Brepohl 2005, 9: "Wenn die Angaben über die nachprüfbaren Objekte so zuverlässig sind, können wir uns auch auf die sehr anschaulichen Beschreibungen der inzwischen verlorengegangenen Schmuckstücke und Kunstwerke genauso sicher verlassen."). This conclusion is confirmed by Acidini Luchinat (Acidini Luchinat 2003).

In the *Trattati dell'oreficeria e della scultura*, Cellini presents himself as the contemporary master of the eight main techniques of the goldsmith: working with gold, silver, engraving, gem-setting, enamelling, chasing, gilding and metal casting. Contrary to what Brepohl summarily presents from a point of view of cultural studies, Cellini the writer of treatises cannot be 'assigned to 'Mannerism'' (Brepohl 2005, 9: "dem 'Manierismus' zuzuordnen"). The *Trattati dell'oreficeria e della scultura* can be read as a decidedly para-classicist act of textual certification that Cellini was already a purveyor of the fine arts during his lifetime, a function which would not have been conceptually compatible with an emancipation from pragmatic and social contexts usually associated with Mannerism. The dedication "Allo illustrissimo ed eccellentissimo signor principe governante di Firenze e di Siena" is a telling demonstration of Cellini's para-classicist attempt to confirm his status.

1 All translations are mine (given in single quotation marks).

This dedicatory epistle begins with protestations of indisposition (Benvenuto excuses himself for not being able to attend the wedding in person: “indisposizione”; “non potere operare”; “mal contento;” Cellini 1971b, 591), for which “fortuna”, omnipresent in the Cinquecento, is to blame (Cellini 1971b, 591). But it is the artist who is able to give this chain of unfortunate circumstances a creative turn. The signal word for this is “capriccio” additionally underlined by “nuovo.” The innovation of the *capriccio* is to be classified as decidedly para-classicist (and not as mannerist), for subsequently another signal word is invoked that links Cellini’s project to classical poetics: “piacevolissima” (Cellini 1971b, 591). The superlative, however, is prudently hedged. Cellini does not attribute it directly to himself, but reclaims for himself the ‘classical’ status of an exception by making everything depend on the recipient. And indeed, the “principi” for whom Cellini has worked so far are “grandissimi” (Cellini 1971b, 592). For their sake, the “piacevolissima” is complemented by the term “utile”, echoing Horace’s *delectare et prodesse*. Cellini is the one artist who playfully manages the para-classicist balancing act between classicism and innovation, between entertainment and instruction, because he masters “molte arte diverse” in a practical *paragone*: “cambio di operare [. . .], presi la penna, e di mano in mano [. . .] scrivevo tutte le mie estreme fatiche” (Cellini 1971b, 592–593). The superlative extreme pervades this dedication from the first to the last line (“grandissimi”, “illustrissima”, “felicissima”), which can be read symbolically with reference to Cellini’s para-classicism: the classical references are (not only grammatically) unassailable. But the superlative is overstretched to such an extent that the words use their contours in a general ‘elative’, in excess and independently of their semantics, only to be tamed by the virtuosity of Cellini’s “mia mano” (Cellini 1971b, 592). Cellini then goes on to list the “bellissimi segreti e mirabili modi” of his art. He never ignores the classical tradition, but it is in such bad shape in the present (“cotal male [. . .] tal male”) that it takes a *Benvenuto* to compensate for the *malvenuto*: “mi fussi addivenuto, io” (Cellini 1971b, 592).

4.2.3 Cellini’s *Rime*

Cellini’s lyrical production² began in the mid-twenties of the Cinquecento and continued until the end of his life. With the *endecasillabo* “Questa mia vita travagliata io scrivo”, Cellini begins a sonnet in his *Vita* whose autobiographical

² The reflections on the *Rime* grew out of joint work with Laura Umlauf in the research project “Anti-classicisms in the Cinquecento” at the LMU Munich.

tendency is not a singular occurrence, but nevertheless exceptional in the Cinquecento. Among other things, Cellini describes his sensational life, which was marked by a talent for creating jewellery and sculptures. A closer look at the events, most of which are highly embellished narratively, reveals a highly artificial construct under the signum of self-fashioning, interspersed with quotations; a construct which – like Cellini's other texts and works of art characterised by *aemulatio* and *superatio* – can be located in the broader context of anti-classicism. The fact that lyric poetry was also of great importance to Benvenuto is evident not only in the prominent placement of the quoted sonnet within a narrative text, but also in the multitude and the motifs of the *Rime*, which, however, remained unpublished during Cellini's lifetime. Initially, from 1811 onwards, only individual poems were published in anthologies or as paratexts to other works such as the *Vita* or the *Trattati* (Cellini 1857, e.g. XLII or XLIXf).

The unwieldiness, apparent remoteness from rules and inaccessibility of the *Rime* can be read through the lens of a presupposed para-classicism as contrapuntal commentaries on the programmatic classicism of the Cinquecento – and not as elaborations of a supposed mannerism *avant la lettre* (as sustained by Carrara 1926 and Mirollo 1984, 72–98). Even in purely chronological terms, Cellini seems incompatible with the schools of exaggerated and exaggeratedly formulaic procedures commonly associated with Mannerism. But something else is even more important: Cellini's form of crisis management, unlike Mannerism, remains connected to the codified reference system of the classical (*imitatio veterum*), even if he repeatedly transcends an *imitatio auctorum*, especially with regard to the rules of decorum. However, Bembo's classicism, oriented towards the ideal of *elegantia* and a unified middle style based on the tempering of *gravità* and *piacevolezza*, is only of limited use for Cellini's penchant for *violenza* and *terribilità* (see chap. 4.3.1.1 and 4.3.1.2). Cellini's excess of artistry leads to an erosion of dogmatic classicist norms, whereupon transgressions take place selectively, but without a complete break. Rather, the gestures of transgression tie in with contemporary contexts of an emergence of new 'types of images and extravagant visual languages' (Thimann 2008, 27: "Bildertypen und extravaganter Bildsprachen"). In the autobiography, as seen, this provides insights into the rise and self-image of an artist of the Cinquecento. As a poet, Cellini also positions himself as an 'uomo universale' and 'uomo virtuoso', for whom Leonardo da Vinci (also active at the court of François I, as Cellini was for a time) was exemplary in the view of his contemporaries (Tauber 2009, 166). Like da Vinci, Cellini boasts of being a goldsmith, sculptor, musician, writer and poet, and of writing treatises (such as the aforementioned *Trattati dell'Oreficeria e della Scultura*). In this context, the contemporary

theoretical revaluation of the arts, including poetry, should be pointed out once again. The *Accademia del Disegno*, founded by Giorgio Vasari in 1563, deserves special mention here.

The first largely complete, albeit flawed, publication of the poetry can be traced back to the 1857 edition by Carlo Milanese. As in the case of the *Vita*, it is not clear why the *Rime* were not printed during Cellini's lifetime. Annibale Caro points out Cellini's problematic tone towards his patrons (Gamberini 2014, 49), for example in the letters to Luca Martini of 22 November 1539 and to Benedetto Varchi of 5 December 1539. Gamberini points out that the *Rime* were certainly intended for publication, since dedications to specific individuals can be found in the titles of the poems or epistolary references (Gamberini 2014, LXVIII–LXIV). From the purely literary perspective dominant from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, Cellini's *Rime*, described as "subletteratura" (Gamberini 2014, IX), were classified as amateurish because of their apparent coarseness, unwieldiness and formal deviation. Similarly to Mannerism and in line with a 'traditional, dichotomously structured literary-historical ordering convention' (Pany 2012/13, 23: "tradierten, dichotomisch strukturierten literaturhistorischen Ordnungskonvention") prevalent throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Cellini is classified as a – negatively evaluated – anti-classicist (cf. Gamberini 2014, IX–XXXIV). In this context, for example, his poetry is spoken of as "non del tutto disprezzabile, per la novità dei grandiosi e bizzarri concetti" (Francesco Tassi, 1829, cited in Gamberini 2014, XI) or of his "concetti capricciosi, nebulosi" (Carlo Milanese, 1857, cited in Gamberini 2014, XVI), which are not geared towards readability and are due to Cellini's lack of a humanist education. In this respect, parallels are drawn to Michelangelo's poetry, referring to an "assenza di 'disciplina', [. . .] improprietà, zeppe, oscurità, contorsioni, durezza, che non si possono accettare, perché realmente sgradevoli" (Benedetto Croce cited in Gamberini 2014, XIX) – with an analogous emphasis on an always glaring distance from the classical canon.

It was only in the course of the twentieth century that a more adequate discussion of Cellini the poet emerged, a less judgmental and more descriptive criticism, which acknowledged his achievement. Cellini's poetry is now seen as a "poesia [. . .] appassionata, [che] canta le cose che possiedono l'anima sua" (Enrico Carrara, 1926, cited in Gamberini 2014, XX), or as poetry of "grande intensità e [. . .] multiforme testimonianze di una personalità d'eccezione" (Giuseppe Guido Ferrero, 1971, cited in Gamberini 2014, XXIII). Cellini's complex and contradictory personality is thereby appreciated from a psychological point of view, a personality which manifests itself by means of "[rime] frammentari[e] [di] dissonanze effusività" (Giuseppe Guido Ferrero, 1971, cited in Gamberini 2014, XXIV). Due to the complexity and heterogeneity of the texts, editions of the *Rime* are

confronted with problems that also concern the form, since no further information has been handed down by Cellini himself (for example, on macrotextual arrangement). Gamberini argues against a chronological structure, which anyway could at best only partly be reconstructed based on correspondence. Cellini generally took up events anachronistically in his poems (Gamberini 2014, XLIV–XLVI). There are weighty arguments against a “forma-canzoniere [. . .] di marca petrarchesca” (Gamberini 2014, LVIII), despite the constant references to his biography and his other works, both literary and artistic.

A look at the thematic complexes reveals a wide range. There are religious-spiritual, philosophical, burlesque-comic and encomiastic poems, but also poems of repentance, poems about Cellini’s stays in prison, about the *paragone* discussion, about his art or matters of art theory. There are sonnets, octaves, canzonas, madrigals and fragments. In the current edition of the *Rime* by Gamberini, they are divided into the following sections: “Poesie ordinate e trascritte dall’autore”, “Poesie non ordinate dall’autore”, “Rime dubbie” and “Rime apocrife”. Many of Cellini’s poems are situated in the context of the *paragone* discussion or an *aemulatio* that has been described as an epochal signature of an artist who ‘made surpassing his life as well as his art programme’ (Tauber 2009, 170). Self-heroisation and gestures of surpassing are manifested at both formal and textual levels, as in the sonnet ‘senza titolo’, in which Cellini seeks to demonstrate the superiority of sculpture. The first quartet states:

Lustrante, eterna et gloriosa et bella:
 felicie se’ più d’ogni altra immortale,
 non ci è arte o scienza a te rivale,
 se’ come ‘l sol è ‘n ciel più d’ogni stella.
 (vv. 1–4) (Cellini 2014, 53)

In praising an art that appears personified, with hyperbolic comparisons and descriptive attributes, sculpture in an “orgogliosa affermazione del primato della scultura” (Cellini/Gamberini 2014, 52), is declared superior to medicine, philosophy and the art of war. In the context of the *paragone* discussion and influenced by Benedetto Varchi’s *Lezioni* (cf. Varchi 2013), Cellini takes on unfamiliar intellectual challenges. He draws on Petrarch and Vittoria Colonna and on Vasari’s vocabulary to cover his writing through various *auctoritates*. Mingling the proper with the foreign, the sonnet also aims at an effect of *admiratio*, which, however, is not to be confused with the Mannerist or Baroque marvelous (Oster 2019). Cellini’s sculptural qualities, which he developed alongside his work as a goldsmith, are emphasised in the first tercet, as he refers to Socrates, who is his equal and no less active as a ‘scultore’: „Socrate ti lasciò quand’io ti presi, / cagion che me’ d’ogni altro al mondo disse: / da-tterra asciese alla maggior altura, [...]” (vv. 8–11)

(Cellini 2014, 53). Cellini thus deploys a kind of syllogism to refer once again to sculpture as the highest art form, as “chiunque sia riuscito in essa non avrà difficoltà a primeggiare in un diverso ambito” (Cellini/Gamberini 2014, 55). The poem ends by again praising sculpture in the second tercet: “lieve senti l’parlar, non quei gran pesi / dove la mente, l’anima, il corpo fisse; / più-vval nostra immortal, sacra scultura.” (vv. 12–14).

Cellini’s argumentative poem on the superiority of sculpture can be interpreted epigrammatically, as it is characterised by appropriate brevity and elegant wordplay. The classical genre of the epigram, however, is transformed by Cellini into para-classicist punchlines. This finding is also supported by the text accompanying the poem and contributing to a better understanding. Possibly in imitation of a scholar’s commentary, or perhaps as a prosimetric form less typical at the time, which disregards genre divisions, this comment could have served, in Cellini’s understanding, to lend his poetry additional nobility (Tasso’s commentaries on his own poems will subsequently provide a similar example). The sonnet *Di carcere al Duca* (Cellini 2014, 13), which, as the title already reveals, is written at the time of Cellini’s imprisonment in 1557, presents itself quite differently. The lyrical I in the first quartet addresses Cosimo I de’ Medici, from whom he hopes for mercy and an end to his imprisonment:

Glorioso Signore, poi che a Dio
piaque ducarvi, pien d’oro e d’ingegno,
discreto e santo e d’ogni laulde degno,
dê muova in voi pietà quest’esser mio:

(vv. 1–4)

In this encomiastic speech, a polysyndetic turn in verse three emphasises the noble qualities of the Duca. Among other things, Latinisms are evident, exemplified in “laulde” (v. 3), which are possibly intended to raise the style level. Quantitatively, the description of Cellini’s own sorrowful condition predominates in the following lines. This passage lacks neither hyperbole nor the display of virtuosio rhetorical devices, which is due to the poet’s imaginative *inventio*:

ò cinquantasei anni hora e se io
muoio in questo carcer, che vil pegnio
vi resti poi un sol cadavro indegno!
Perso arte, speme, fede e ‘l sudor mio:

(vv. 5–8)

The lyrical I points to his advanced age, in view of which the Duke should show mercy, since all that will soon remain of ‘Cellini’ is a corpse. All his art, his faith, his hope will be lost, and “‘l sudor mio” (v. 8) quotes the *Orlando furioso* (VII, 56, 8: “lungamente atteso ho del sudor mio?”; Ariosto 1960, 183) and

stands metonymically for Cellini's great effort as a sculptor. The poem can also be read paradigmatically for Cellini's discriminatory treatment. Neither had the artist been adequately rewarded for his *Perseus*, nor had he received the desired *gloria* through its creation. In the concluding *terzina*, which begins with a chiasmic-antithetical verse "Addaccio in mezzo al fuoco e nel diaccio ardo:" (v. 12) which line refers to Petrarch's *Canzoniere*, references to Ariosto ("grevi affanni", v. 14) or the *Liber psalmodum* ("n galdio [. . .] affanni", v. 14) are again included (Cellini 2014, 13).

The sonnet *A M. Benedetto Varchi* is less marked by efforts at distinction and individualisation than the poems just discussed. However, it is also written within the sphere of influence of Varchi's *Lezzione* (which also includes Laura Battiferri; cf. Cellini/Gamberini 2014, 179). In the first quartet, a Petrarchist element can be observed, which is followed by a quotation of the Bembist distinction between the flowers of rhetoric and the fruit of philosophy (according to Cellini/Gamberini 2014, 179–180):

La ricca pianta, bench'alquanto acerba,
che da Voi surgie a questo nuovo aprile,
laür che s'alza al ciel fresco e sottile,
frutti, hombra e fior già stende amplie all'erba.

(vv. 1–4)

In the course of the second quartet, too, in which the immortal, holy laurel is recommended, Cellini uses Petrarchist stylistic figures. But Michelangelo, Bronzino and Varchi himself also seem to be reference models in terms of word choice or concepts. Gamberini (2014, 180–181) refers to the "accumulazione di cinque aggettivi [che] è petrarchesco" (v. 6) or the motif of noble materials (v. 11), then to some adjectives typical of Michelangelo (v. 7), to an alliteration (v. 10) that can be traced back to Varchi and the Dantesque verb *infiora* (v. 10). In the last tercet, Cellini recalls the estate of Laura Battiferri and her husband, here in the context of an "immaginario pastorale del Ninfale fiesolano" reminding us of Boccaccio's eponymous work (Cellini/Gamberini 2014, 182). The last verse seems to allude to the renowned edition of the *Primo libro delle Opere Toscane* by Laura Battiferri, published in 1560 in order to gain rehabilitation in the Medici circle, a goal also pursued by Cellini himself: "Se oggi a Maian, fra tante ninfe e maghe, / lei col canto i pastor vincie e gli eroi, / questo 'l mondo di speme e d'opre honora." (vv. 12–14).

Cellini demonstrates with this and similarly crafted poems that he is familiar with classical norms. The conspicuous intellectualisation of poetry, however, is not necessarily to its advantage, which is true for the Petrarchism of the time in general and not for Cellini alone. On the other hand, Cellini's *Vita*

presents life in a seemingly casual and uninhibited style, but the level of literary idealisation it introduces ultimately proves to be excessive, artificially elaborate and transgressive. In this autobiographical narrative, Cellini is free to realise a transgressive para-classicism, less burdened by the limits of genre and tradition than in poetry. The Petrarchist or epigrammatic, *argutia*-ridden lyric forms, on the other hand, use a certain mechanism, which in itself can be interpreted as a second-degree para-classicist technique on a metapoetical level.

In addition to sonnets written in prison, religious poetry and poems based on various themes from the life of Cellini's persona of 'artista-scrittore', there is a not inconsiderable number of poems dedicated to the dispute over precedence between the two arts of painting and sculpture. The corpus of these *paragone* poems comprises about 14 sonnets and caudate sonnets, although this theme is also manifest to a lesser extent in other poems of the *Rime*. In addition to his art, his autobiography and his treatises, Cellini's poetry thus also deals with the question of points in common, differences, possibilities and limits of visual media and language, which had ignited a discussion around the middle of the sixteenth century in which not only contemporary artists, but also literary figures and philosophers participated. Always against the backdrop of *ut pictura poesis* and in need of demarcation and evaluation of one's own discipline, which, especially in the case of artists, went hand in hand with efforts to enhance their social status and also very practical financial interests, the discussion took on increasingly sharp contours in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. After Petrarch had, in *De remediis*, claimed that sculpture was superior to painting because of its greater closeness to nature through its three-dimensionality and thus apparent liveliness, Leon Battista Alberti, Leonardo da Vinci and Baldassare Castiglione's *Cortegiano* are fundamental in relation to Cellini's poetry in this respect. It is true that the artists and, at the same time, art theorists Alberti and Da Vinci had attempted to elevate painting (which they both regarded as the higher art) to the status of a science by providing it with a comprehensive catalogue of rules. Thus, with regard to the dispute about superiority in the Quattrocento, one can speak of a transitory, identity-forming phase, which then culminated in the Cinquecento, gaining in magnitude, in downright feuds under the sign of Classicism.

If we now concentrate on the superiority topos in Cellini's poetry, the chronological order of his *Rime* manifests an accumulation of *paragone* poems in the months leading up to the funeral celebrations (July 1564) that had to be organised on the occasion of Michelangelo's death in February 1564. In a first phase, Cellini had dealt with the theme on a practical basis in the forties of the Cinquecento, for example in the *Narcissus* or the *Saliera*. A second phase can be identified as a kind of reflex to the verbal and written attacks on Cellini's

positions in the *paragone* by Vincenzo Borghini. As ‘luogotenente’ of the *Accademia del Disegno*, Borghini participated in decisions on individual components of a catafalque that was to enhance the status of Michelangelo’s work with the aid of an allegorical programme. Here, painting was given priority (an allegory of *pittura* was to adorn the heraldically more highly valued front of the catafalque). Cellini, who was also a member of the organising committee, saw this as a devaluation of sculpture in Michelangelo’s work. After unsuccessful efforts to implement an alternative programme that would give sculpture its proper importance, Cellini left the project in the aftermath of a dispute (cf. on this and the following Gamberini 2014, XLIV–LVII). Moreover, in his *Selva di notizie* (ms. K 783 [16], Kunsthistorisches Institut, Florence), Borghini ridiculed Cellini’s demands in the latter’s epistle to Benedetto Varchi, amongst other things by showing amusement with Cellini’s postulate that the sculptor had to be, among other things, a good warrior, musician or poet if he wanted to create a sculpture of the aforementioned figures. Borghini draws on the example of the ancient sculptor Praxiteles, who according to this line of argument would have had to be a good horse himself to create a statue of one. The polemical criticism, apart from invalidating Cellini’s *paragone* arguments, also aimed at the latter’s para-classicist demand for an artist who would correspond to the image of a ‘uomo universale’ in post-classical times.

Within the contexts described above, Cellini’s poems on these subjects can be localised with regard to the *paragone* theme. To defend sculpture, for example, the topos of ‘God as artist’ manifests itself mostly polemically and pointedly when Cellini writes in the poem *Quel immortale Iddio della natura* (Cellini 2014, 240):

Quel immortale Iddio della natura,
che fecie i cieli e ’l mondo e noi fé degni
delle sue mani, senza far disegni,
come Quel che ogni arte aveva sicura,
di terra fecie la prima scultura,
et la mostrò agli angel de’ suoi regni,
(vv. 1–5)

Here, the core of all legendary accounts of the artist as ‘alter deus’ or representative of the Creator (as for example Daedalus and Prometheus) is called up, a motif already manifested in antiquity, which in this case refers above all to the poet. In the Cinquecento, this configuration is part of a fixed set of classical topoi, for example in Vasari’s work, too, who in such contexts and alongside Aretino often refers to the ‘divino artista’ Michelangelo. Cellini also refers here to the prototype of man, Adam, created by God without any preliminary drawing and from earth, an indication of the superiority of sculpture. In addition to

Cellini, Varchi had interviewed seven other artists in his survey (see Nova 2003 for an overview). As well as comparing man to the divine creative process, as its most worthy and oldest model, ingenuity, imagination and inspiration are also attributed to divine inspiration. *Mimesis* is relativised and the ‘furor dell’arte’ (cf. Oster in course of print a) is given precedence, enabling the artist to feel and invent the new and unheard-of. Cellini underpins the moment of *elevatio* in the further course of the sonnet. From Satan’s original sin of rebelling against a higher entity, Cellini deduces the topos of painting as the devil’s work, which was widespread in the Cinquecento. He uses this as an opportunity to attribute an inadmissible rebelliousness against the primacy of sculpture to the painters. Painting is nothing more than an *inganno* and nothing more than a shadow of the *rilievo*.

The topos of *inganno* manifests itself in other *paragone* poems by Cellini as well, such as the sonnet *Gli à dato la sentenza giusta et pura* (Cellini 2014, 328). The poem is to be seen in the context of the virulent question of which *ars* represents reality most truly and faithfully and can function as a sign system that is as universal and universally understandable as possible. In the course of this sonnet, the lyrical I also directly addresses “frate” Vincenzo Borghini and “Giorgio” Vasari (v. 5), whose offence, on the one hand, would lie in their turn to painting and a concomitant ignorance of the sculptor’s activity. On the other hand, Cellini, referring to the ‘gran maestro’ Michelangelo, who only completed one work a year, wants to justify his own modest speed in the realisation of works of art, which others perceive as ineffective and too slow. In connection with the longer duration of work, which to a certain extent lies in the nature of the realisation of a sculpture, reference should be made to another motive that could justify its superiority: since in the Cinquecento statues were increasingly often placed as freestanding objects in an effort to return to how they were displayed in antiquity – in contrast to medieval times during which they were mostly integrated into the architecture of a building or a tomb – it was now the artist’s task to make them aesthetically pleasing from all sides. This in turn entailed a greater amount of work and a higher standard. In the caudate sonnet *O voi, ch’havete non sapendo sparte parole al vento* (Cellini 2014, 251), this is stated explicitly: “Ha solo una veduta la pittura, / l’altra è suggetta a più di cento parte” (vv. 7–8). Furthermore, the permanence of the work of art is brought up: “quell’opre che si fanno agevolmente / son poco degne perché presto han fine, / l’altre han gran lode più meritamente” (vv. 9–11). For Cellini, the advantage lies – in the sense of Horace’s question as to which of the arts guaranteed greater and longer-lasting fame for patron and artist due to their longevity – with the sculptor, foundryman or goldsmith. Unlike paintings, which are (too) easy to execute, their works have the advantage of a more durable type of art and material.

This is also confirmed in the sonnet *Il Boschereccio* (Cellini 2014, 258): “ma quel più gran sculpir eterno e ‘ntero / (in oro, argento, bronzo, marmi) è degno / di tener sopra ogni arte il primo impero” (vv. 12–14). The function of the semantic field of *boschereccio* for the reception of the pastoral background of this poem must be mentioned at this point. When the speaker’s voice in the *Rime* repeatedly presents itself as that of a shaggy and not very socially compatible ‘forest man’ (similar to how Cellini describes himself as a brittle, resistant artist in comparison to Michelangelo in the *Vita*), the para-classicist implications are evident. Even in *Allo Ill.mo S. Duca di Firenze fecie Benvenuto dichiearando la Filosofia Boschereccia* (Cellini 2014, 6), the classical status of the bucolic genre remains unquestioned. Against this, however, there is the problem of a decided shortage of relevant theoretical opinions on it, which endangers this status (Krauss 2015, 235). This ambivalence opens up a field of possible experimentation for the *Rime*, in which Dante’s situation of being lost in both a geographical and a moral sense in the *selva oscura* at the beginning of the *Divina Commedia* represents another intertextual connection. This para-classicist ambivalence is additionally strengthened by the fact that even after Sanazaro’s *Arcadia*, the genre affiliation of the bucolic was by no means certain, but mixed forms were permissible (Krauss 2015, 241).

In Cellini’s hybrid form of lyrical poetry, the aim of fomenting and even forcing renewed poetological discussion and the poetic struggle for recognition of his arguments on the theory of art are both supported by a constant practice of taking up old, classical forms and combining them with heterogeneous and even anti-classicist elements, in order to help something new and para-classicist to emerge. In the *Rime*, autobiography, conversion literature and art theory, among others, are mixed together in a pluralising design. Cellini’s poems are not categorically anti-classicist, but they emphasise the individual, which shows itself in para-classicist contrapositions and turnabouts. Cellini’s *Rime* are complementary to classicism and rarely openly oppose it. He often tries to outdo classical models, but then overshoots these classicist gestures by textual elements that, at least in retrospect, seem to belong to a kind of modernity *avant la lettre*. Cellini’s incoherences in all his public and non-public utterances were bound to meet with little positive contemporary response, given his dubious reputation. However, it was precisely the fact that he was rejected in certain more prestigious social and cultural contexts that, along with his exorbitant self-confidence, triggered his remarkable experiments. This led to some very individual solutions, to which in hindsight we can assign the quality of para-classicism and which most of his contemporaries failed to recognise, bound as they were to a form of dogmatic classicism.

4.3 Systematic and overarching aspects of Cellini's para-classicism

4.3.1 Examples of para-classicist manipulation in Cellini's work

4.3.1.1 Power and violence in Cellini's texts

Virtus and *fama* are closely related in the Renaissance and are in turn connected to the analogy between the creator god (*deus artifex*) and the artist and his *virtus creativa*. It makes sense to analyse Cellini's anti-classicism on the basis of categories that were negatively attributed to him by contemporaries: *violenza*, *terribilità* as well as *fierezza*, and, in a certain way, also *gloria*. That these categories have anti-classicist potential is evident and would be banal as the only finding. In the following paragraphs, the focus will rather be on determining the extent to which Cellini uses a kind of verbal violence that goes beyond both the pathologic actions of a 'criminal mind' (Bredenkamp 2008) and a philosophical 'figure of thought' (Plackinger 2016). Finally, the fact of murder itself is not the real scandal contained within Cellini's *Vita*. Murder was not only common in the Cinquecento, but was also committed by prominent figures, including Cosimo I de' Medici (Bredenkamp 2003, 345–346). What is more sensational is that Cellini, in a para-classicist mixture of penitent confessional literature and glorious self-stylisation, does not cover up his murders, but boasts about them by means of the written word and thus documents them for posterity. Again, the basic structure is a contradictory complementarity of abiding by the rules and transgressing them, but this transgression does not necessarily pose a threat to classical values. As an extreme form of artistic sovereignty, violence can also be interpreted as perfect *aemulatio*. Cellini measures himself against classical antiquity with enthusiasm and virtuosity:

Standomi in Pisa andai a vedere il Campo Santo, e quivi trovai molte belle anticaglie; [. . .] viddi molte altre cose antiche, intorno alle quali tutti e' giorni che mi avanzavano del mio lavoro della bottega assiduamente mi affaticavo; [. . .] spendevo tutte l'ore mie virtuosamente [. . .]. (Cellini 1971a, 80)

Cellini's actual para-classicism, however, is not directed at the past but at the present, and he reacts angrily and with a full sense of his (supposed or actual) superiority when colleagues shy away from the contest by seeking cover behind antiquity: “[. . .] perché tutto quello che gli aveva veduto di noi moderni era molto discosto dal ben fare di quelli antichi. [. . .] cercando di scilire l'opere

mie facendosi formatore di antichi.” (Cellini 1971a, 445). Challenged by Giorgio Vasari and intellectually inspired by Benedetto Varchi, Cellini looks towards Michelangelo’s works and theoretical concepts and ideas, which reflect a pronounced preoccupation with the figure of thought of *violenza*. In Michelangelo’s work, too, *violenza* is manifest both as an object of representation and as an artistic subtext (Plackinger 2018), whereas Cellini, in contrast, even extends his violence to the real world.

The personally-held power of Renaissance princes and the legal practice connected with it result in a broad spectrum of punishments, even very lenient ones, imposed on Cellini’s violent acts by the prince or pope. The reason for this is not just arbitrariness, but can be connected with the universality of the struggle for power, whether in the political or the cultural sphere, and consequently a certain omnipresence of acts of violence. *Violenza* and *terribilità* could therefore in some contexts be socially acceptable. The Latin *potestas* in the sense of a ‘rightful power’ serves to distinguish acceptable violence from its primitive, brutish counterpart (Müller-Salo 2018, 39). And on closer examination, *violentia* can even be traced back etymologically to the not necessarily negative *vis* – ‘force’ or ‘strength.’ *Vis*, in turn, can be related to *vir* (‘man’) or to *virtus* (‘virtue’, ‘efficiency’), terms that can already be traced back to works by Seneca and Cicero; a decidedly positive connotation emerges with Machiavelli in the sense of an ideal of masculinity, a ‘virtuoso’ (Plackinger 2016, 53–54). A look at the concrete application of the term is helpful here: in addition to the use of the term *violenza* by influential literary figures (above all the *tre corone*), whose works were widely received in the Cinquecento (Plackinger 2016, 54), reference should be made above all to Cesare Ripa’s *Iconologia* (1593), but also to the dictionary of the *Accademia della Crusca* (1612). Under *violenza* we find there, on the one hand, a certain semantic entanglement of ‘force’ and ‘power’, on the other hand, an opposition between those two and *natura* (on this and the following aspects Plackinger 2016, 53–64). Nature in its turn is opposed to art and can thus be seen as something to be overcome, and for this purpose classical measure may be exceeded. Thus, the concept of *violenza* can be positive in the sense of ‘superior force’, or negative, as ‘transgression’. Furthermore, the artist’s *fierezza* can also be seen as a counterpart to Castiglione’s *sprezzatura*, as a less casual but more aggressive form of pride. Power imbalances, however, exist equally in both areas.

The same applies to *terribilità*. It can be interpreted as a category antithetical to classical art and can also be brought into semantic proximity with *difficoltà* (cf. on this and the following Plackinger 2016, 63–67). Vasari uses the term to characterise Michelangelo (see part 3 of this Companion, chap. 3.3.2.4). *Terribilità* serves to describe his art and suggests an unsurpassed mastery. The art theorist

Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo's line of argument is similar in nature, taking up Michelangelo's *terribilità* in reference to his painting of the Sistine Chapel. *Terribilità* proves to be a polyvalent concept, perhaps close to Hermogenes' concept of δεινός ('terrible', or 'frightening', see part 3 of this Companion, 3.3.2.2) and to the rhetorical *genus grande* (Plackinger 2016, 75). Furthermore, the term is also to be understood as the ability to create an impression of cleverness through 'terrible' judgements on aesthetic value. With regard to Michelangelo's, but also Cellini's art, which resorts to both *deinótes* and *commovere*, reference should also be made to Pseudo-Longinus' *De sublimitate*, another ancient source received in the Cinquecento, for here a classical position emerges that interprets the sublime as a disposition towards the extraordinary and situates it within the speaker. In the case of Pseudo-Longinus, a final point of interest in relation to Cellini's transgressions is his plea for the violation of rules and the establishment of new norms. Cellini takes up all of these options, making the most of the 'pluralising' reception of antiquity typical of the Cinquecento, and mixes different rhetorical models and elements from different contexts.

In sum, Cellini starts from a figure of thought of violence, which originates from Michelangelo's artistic environment in the Cinquecento, and which was by no means always perceived as amoral, but served as a means of demonstrating power and sovereignty (the same applies to the handling of the 'furor' in the Renaissance, cf. Oster in course of print a). Primarily reserved for rulers, it is an option for action in the eyes of Cellini, who sometimes sees himself on a similar hierarchical level, a tried and tested means of achieving unrestricted, individual autonomy and admiration, but also of overcoming the strong competition among court artists. Seen against the intellectual backdrop of the Cinquecento, the theoretical as well as practical preoccupation with the concept of violence is influenced by several eclectically received, ancient rhetorical concepts; in dictionaries of the time, the terms *violenza* and *terribilità* show a semantic proximity to concepts such as 'active, superior force', or 'masculinity' with certain inherent destructive and transgressive moments. The para-classicist hybridisation of these concepts is the basis of Cellini's production of art and literature.

4.3.1.2 Violence of form in Cellini's works of art: *Perseus*

The *Perseus*, created between 1545 and 1554, was commissioned by Cosimo I. Cellini's bronze statue of the hero with the head of Medusa is 3.2 metres high. The blood from both the severed head and the stump of the neck drips conspicuously towards the viewer – in whom it evokes fear, perhaps in the sense of Hermogenes' *deinótes* – and even gushes towards the Piazza della Signoria.

The representation of an episode from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* shows the moment when Perseus proudly holds the severed head of Medusa aloft on his outstretched arm. Contrary to the original intention, instead of a more boyish figure, a rather strong young man with detailed muscles is shown, carrying the instrument of murder – the sickle sword of Hermes – in his lowered hand. The posture of the naked body manifests the calm dignity of a victorious pose, the gaze is slightly lowered and the hero wears a dragon helmet that seems to have the face of a monstrous alter ego on the back (Bredekamp 2008, 74). The hero's face bears a peculiar resemblance to the Gorgon's head – one is wreathed in curls, the other in fearsome serpents. Lowering his eyelids, Perseus seems to be gazing at the powerful Gorgon body lying at his feet, which – unnaturally curved from the previous death throes – winds itself around the shield on which the hero stands with his supporting leg, while with the other foot he almost touches the body of the beheaded woman.

For a more differentiated interpretation, the location must also be included, because when the bronze sculpture was unveiled in the middle of the Cinquecento, the Piazza della Signoria was still the site of executions (especially beheadings). There is also a strong political dimension to the statue with regard to the patron who commissioned it: Cosimo I erected this statue as a monument to himself and his political rise under the guise of classical mythology, at the same time issuing a veiled warning. It refers to Cosimo's victory in the Battle of Montemurlo (1537) and the subsequent beheading of the vanquished republicans. Cellini's *Perseus* is henceforth a witness and representative of Cosimo I, who will direct the fate of the city in an absolutist manner. At this point, reference should be made to the potential equality of rulers and artists (in the eyes of some), who do not have to submit to any laws, and who both see violence as permissible when it comes to achieving their goals. Thus, Cosimo I may have seen his own creative power reflected in the art that he commissioned Cellini to produce (Bredekamp 2008). If there is something akin to a 'classical' idea of power, this joint action of patron and artist could be something similar to a 'para-classicist gesture' towards it.

In view of the spatial situation of *Perseus*, it is necessary to refer to another point that has already been taken up: the direct connection between competition and violence. Thus, in the Piazza della Signoria, several of the most important artists of the period are represented with their sculptures, which stand in an agonal relationship to Cellini's statue of the ancient hero. On the one hand, there is Donatello's *Judith* (1504), erected by the citizens on the occasion of the expulsion of the Medici from the city – in a way, an opponent over which *Perseus* was to triumph, and not only from an aesthetic point of view. In Donatello's sculpture, the moment before the slitting of Holofernes' throat by a woman's hand can be

seen. Similarly to *Perseus*, here ‘those paradoxical structures of violence [are manifest] that are capable of transforming the victim into the victor and the heroic deed into a tragedy’ (Bredenkamp 2003, 347: “[sind] jene widersinnigen Strukturen der Gewalt [manifest], die das Opfer zum Sieger und die Heldentat in eine Tragödie zu verwandeln vermögen”). The second statue in the piazza that is significant for Cellini is Michelangelo’s *David* (1501–1504), a marble sculpture over 5 metres high, which was placed at the entrance gate of Palazzo Vecchio in its function as a symbolic guard. Vasari states that *David* was regarded as a symbol of freedom, in the sense of an ideology of the newly formed republic and of freedom for the inhabitants of the palace, i.e. the rulers who were to protect and govern Florence justly (Maggio 2018, 24). Cellini’s *Perseus* had a similar function, although the latter had to serve a different ideology: that of the absolutist ruling Medici. Michelangelo’s *David*, for all his nonchalance, is not free of attributes of violence, such as the slingshot on his shoulder, which he brings to the battle against Goliath. His hand grasps the projectile, which will be used at any moment. The prominent veins, the wrinkled forehead and the concentrated gaze of the hero also testify to the tension of an imminent battle. *Terribilità* is also evident here, as in Cellini’s *Perseus*, in the overwhelming, colossal size of the two statues. Cellini’s work is virtually a para-classicist variant situated between Michelangelo and Donatello:

Adunque quest’opera andrà in mezzo in fra una di Michelagnolo e una di Donato, i quali uomini hanno di virtù superato gli antichi? Adunque, che maggiore tesoro poss’io desiderare che essere messo in fra questi dua sì grand’uomini? – E perché io mi sentivo d’essermi affaticato molto grandemente innegli studi di queste arte, certo mi pormessi che l’opera mia anch’ella si farebbe vedere in fra costoro [. . .]. (Cellini 1971b, 678–679)

The fiercest adversary and rival of Cellini’s is Baccio Bandinelli and his statue of *Hercules and Cacus* (1534), the third point of reference in the Piazza della Signoria. According to Vasari, who initially used *violenza* in a morally neutral way when describing Bandinelli’s sculpture, in order to characterise the active power of the demigod in contrast to the passive suffering of the victim, Bandinelli’s marble statue was judged by contemporaries as a failed attempt to triumph over Michelangelo’s *David* (Goffen 2007, 171–172). The fact that Bandinelli presents two colossi instead of a single statue does not change this. As opposed to Cellini’s para-classicist imitation of Michelangelo, the rivalry with Bandinelli proves to be a dogged obsession beyond all boundaries. Cellini was concerned with nothing less than being the best in the production of monumental sculptures. For François I, Cellini wanted to produce an Olympic candelabra representing the gods of antiquity in bronze. Jupiter, Juno, Vulcan and Apollo were planned as sculptures destined for the royal dining room in Fontainebleau – which, after the success of the *Saliera* (which is housed in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna today),

also produced by Cellini for François I, was to be understood as a continuation of activities and distinction. The scheming to which Cellini believed he had been yet again exposed to (this time by the king's mistress, Madame d'Estampes or "Madama di Tampes") are described by Cellini in the *Vita*. What is important is the staging by which the artist presents his work of art to the ruler. He undermines the classical norm of immobility, which is considered noble, by skilfully placing the light, despite the approaching dusk, in such a way that the statue appears as though it were alive on a rolling mechanism. And so, Madame d'Estampes' pejorative rhetoric is not successful: "queste baiate moderne". On the contrary, the king objects: "che non tanto che l'opere sue restino al paragone dell'antiche, ancora quelle superano" (Cellini 1971a, 454).

In the historical *paragone* of *superatio* of the ancients, Cellini is tied to classical antiquity, although d'Estampes' observations cannot be entirely dismissed. More astute than the king, she recognises – albeit pejoratively – the innovative aspect of Cellini's art that marks him out as a para-classicist. Cellini's triumph, however, does not last. The king subsequently gives the commission to Cellini's rival and d'Estampes' favourite, Francesco Primaticcio. This fact puts Cellini's subsequent account in a different light, which appears to be written as a compensation for his defeat at the French court. Cellini ultimately appears – even if he himself did not put it explicitly in words – as an anti-classicist who did not fit into Fontainebleau's intended classicism. Cellini's position with regard to the plurality of models and authorities of his time is not reflective or focussed on problematics, but predominantly actualising – and always adapted to his own work, his changing priorities and the needs of the day.

4.3.2 Goethe's role in Cellini's popularity

Goethe is known for having paved the way for some Italian authors to become famous in Europe. Alongside Manzoni (Oster 2017), this is especially the case with Cellini. Goethe wrote a partial translation of Cellini's *Vita* for Schiller's *Horen* between 1796 and 1797, but he was only able to consult the flawed edition by Cocchi (Cellini/Cocchi 1728). Goethe therefore was never able to read the original manuscript, which only became accessible again in Florence in 1825. Printed as a serial publication in the *Horen*, the *Vita* was adapted by Goethe to an 'adventure' format, which contributed to Cellini's great popularity and later motivated above all Jacob Burckhardt's problematic stylisation of the artist. Burckhardt attributes to the Renaissance, and with it to Cellini, an individuality that has since been criticised as a modern historical invention of the nineteenth century. Jacob Burckhardt asserted in 1860:

Auch die Selbstbiographie des Benvenuto Cellini geht nicht gerade auf Beobachtungen über das eigene Innere aus. Gleichwohl schildert sie den ganzen Menschen, zum Teil wider Willen, mit einer hinreißenden Wahrheit und Fülle. Es ist wahrscheinlich kein kleines, dass Benvenuto, dessen bedeutendste Arbeiten bloßer Entwurf geblieben oder untergegangen sind, und der uns als Künstler nur im kleinen dekorativen Fach vollendet erscheint, sonst aber, wenn man bloß nach seinen erhaltenen Werken urteilt, neben so vielen größeren Zeitgenossen zurückstehen muss, – dass Benvenuto als Mensch die Menschen beschäftigen wird bis ans Ende der Tage. Es schadet ihm nicht, dass der Leser häufig ahnt, er möchte gelogen oder geprahlt haben, denn der Eindruck der gewaltig energischen, völlig durchgebildeten Natur überwiegt. Neben ihm erscheinen z.B. unsere nordischen Selbstbiographien, so viel höher ihre Tendenz und ihr sittliches Wesen bisweilen zu achten sein mag, doch als ungleich weniger vollständig in der Darstellung. Er ist ein Mensch, der Alles kann, Alles wagt und sein Maß in sich selber trägt. Ob wir es gerne hören oder nicht, es lebt in dieser Gestalt ein ganz kenntliches Urbild des modernen Menschen. (Burckhardt 1860, 365–366).

Benvenuto Cellini's auto-biography does not exactly strive for observation of his own inner self. Nevertheless, it depicts the whole man, partly against his will, with riveting truth and fulness. It is probably no small thing that Benvenuto, whose most important works have remained mere sketches or have perished, and who appears to us as an artist accomplished only in the small decorative field, but who otherwise, if one judges only by his surviving works, must take a back seat to so many greater contemporaries, – that Benvenuto as a man will occupy people until the end of time. It does him no harm that the reader often suspects that he may have lied or bragged, for the impression of a powerfully energetic, fully formed nature predominates. Next to him, for example, our Nordic auto-biographies, however much higher their tendency and moral nature may sometimes have to be respected, appear incomparably less complete in their portrayal. He is a man who can do everything, dares everything and carries his measure within himself. Whether we like to hear it or not, in this figure lives a completely recognisable archetype of modern man.

The fact that Burckhardt's modern individuality, as far as Cellini is concerned, should be viewed with the greatest scepticism does not mean that – especially in view of the fact that Cellini was writing an autobiographical text – the Renaissance did not itself have its own concept of individuality. On the basis of what has been discussed in chap. 4.2.1, however, Goethe's and Burckhardt's readings are problematic, regardless of their other merits.

Goethe's knowledge of Cellini was obtained through mediated channels and he also paid no attention at all to the *Perseus* when visiting Italy; indeed, his travel report makes no mention of the famous bronze sculpture. Goethe also fails to view Cellini's para-classicist processes within their historical context, but instead integrates what he sees and reads into an ahistorical system of classicism, modified by the cult of genius of his time, when he writes that Cellini 'knew how to approach the highest in art' ("sich dem Höchsten der Kunst zu nähern", Goethe 1963, 189) 'with a lively sense of freedom' ("mit lebhaftem

Freiheitssinn", Goethe 1963, 191). What Goethe writes in his appendix to his Cellini translation seems to conceptually anticipate the quotation from Burckhardt above:

In einer so regsamen Stadt zu einer so bedeutenden Zeit erschien ein Mann, der als Repräsentant seines Jahrhunderts und vielleicht als Repräsentant sämtlicher Menschheit gelten dürfte. Solche Naturen können als geistige Flügelmänner angesehen werden, die uns mit heftigen Äußerungen dasjenige andeuten, was durchaus, obgleich oft nur mit schwachen unkenntlichen Zügen, in jedem menschlichen Busen eingeschrieben ist. (Goethe 1963, 189)

In such a lively city at such an important time, a man appeared who could be regarded as the representative of his century and perhaps as the representative of all humanity. Such natures can be regarded as spiritual wingmen, who indicate to us with fierce expressions that which is definitely inscribed, although often only with faint unrecognisable traits, in every human bosom.

In Goethe's military jargon, the wingman is the great foreman who must push forward with exaggerated energy in order to set an example for all the others. Apparently, it was not least his training as a goldsmith that, in Goethe's eyes, guaranteed that Cellini would become the forerunner of excellence in Italy. In a letter to Meyer dated 8.2.1796, Goethe writes:

Italien lag in dem 15. Jahrhundert mit der übrigen Welt noch in der Barberey. Der Barbar weiß die Kunst nicht zu schätzen, als in so fern sie ihm unmittelbar zur Zierde dient, daher war die Goldschmiedearbeit in jenen Zeiten schon so weit getrieben, als man mit den übrigen noch so sehr zurück war und aus den Werkstätten der Goldschmiede gingen durch äussere Anlässe und Aufmunterung die ersten trefflichen Meister anderer Künste hervor. (Goethe 1892, 22)

In the fifteenth century, Italy was still barbarian with the rest of the world. The barbarian does not appreciate art except in so far as it serves him directly as an adornment, therefore the goldsmith's work was already so far advanced in those times, when one was still so much behind with the others, and from the workshops of the goldsmiths the first excellent masters of other arts emerged through external causes and encouragement.

In this context, it must be emphasised that in Goethe's time there was no concept of a *longue durée* of the Renaissance era such as the one we are familiar with today. Goethe was not particularly clear on what he classified as belonging to the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In addition, Goethe did not visit Florence and the great works of art there – including Cellini's *Perseus* – on his visit to Italy, which was something he later regretted. This is all connected to the fact that Goethe was fixated on Rome as the bearer of classical antiquity. This explains his closeness to Petrarch (and his scepticism towards Dante) and the inadequate evaluation of the Middle Ages and humanism in the fifteenth

century. Goethe's Cellini project arose in connection with a second major journey through Italy that the author planned but never carried out. Along with the aforementioned Johann Heinrich Meyer, Goethe planned to write an encyclopaedic cultural history of Italy – a plan that never came to fruition. For this reason, Goethe spent a lot of time analysing the Florentine Renaissance and the history of Florence in the sixteenth century.

Thus, Goethe could not judge Cellini's art from personal experience; instead, he occupied himself with the textual evidence available within the *Vita*. In 1795, he produced a first, incomplete version of the *Vita*, which appeared in Schiller's aforementioned *Horen* in 1796–1797. In the *Tag- und Jahresseften* for the year 1797, Goethe writes:

Als ich mich in die Kunstgeschichte von Florenz einarbeitete, ward mir Cellini wichtig, und ich faßte, um mich dort recht einzubürgern, gern den Entschluß seine Selbstbiographie zu übersetzen; besonders weil sie Schillern zu den *Horen* brauchbar schien. (Goethe 1895, 41).

When I became acquainted with the history of art in Florence, Cellini became important to me, and I gladly decided to translate his autobiography, especially because it seemed useful to Schiller for the *Horen*.

The following year the text was revised and in 1803 the final version was published by Cotta, with an additional appendix of material. However, the Cellini translation is not only exceptional in terms of time, but also in terms of page count. It comprises almost twice as many pages as all of Goethe's other translations combined. Goethe's next largest translation, Diderot's *Neveu de Rameau*, only took him from November 1804 to February 1805 to write. Goethe owned a reprint of the aforementioned 1728 edition of Cellini's *Vita* by Cocchi, which he had acquired in 1795. Unlike Cocchi, Goethe divided the text into four books. He divided these into 10 to 13 chapters each and prefaced each with a summary. In addition, he omitted some of the poems, such as the opening sonnet or the *terzina* poem on Cellini's incarceration. In this way, Goethe followed the outline of Thomas Nugent's English translation dating from 1771. Goethe has been accused of corrupting the Italian two-part division with his four parts, but this criticism deliberately overlooked the fact that the usual Italian division into two parts does not in any way derive from Cellini's autograph, which is relatively undifferentiated as to its internal structure.

For Goethe, his activities as a poet and translator are closely related in a poetological sequence of thought whose priorities may not render criticisms of his translations obsolete, but also resulted in his viewing them as non-urgent in nature; Karl Vossler has been prominent amongst those who have enumerated the various misunderstandings and mistakes that exist in Goethe's translation

(Vossler 1899). Of more importance for questions relating to anti-classicism or para-classicism are the functional connections between identity and alterity, as they are also expressed in the study scene in *Faust*. However, Goethe was chiefly concerned with an aesthetic faithfulness to meaning, which in turn means that fidelity to literal meaning cannot always be expected. The linguistic pitfalls of the *Vita* are immense, ranging from convoluted syntax to unclear, hermetic-seeming utterances by Cellini to difficult Florentine dialect and vulgarisms in expression. It was Karl Vossler who again compiled and analysed these linguistic phenomena (Vossler 1899). It could be stated that Goethe's undoubtedly commendable efforts on behalf of Cellini immensely enhanced the latter's fame, but at the price of ascribing an ahistorical, diffuse anti-classicism to him – an image that has prevailed to this day. Based on Goethe's 'ideal image of the artist' (Herdling 2003), works such as Hector Berlioz's Cellini opera have subsequently emerged, in which Cellini's para-classicism continues to be ignored in favour of an aesthetic of individual genius, and nineteenth-century historicism painted as a one-sided image of an anthropocentric Renaissance in the wake of Burckhardt.

4.3.3 Para-classicism in works by other authors: *Cicalamenti del Grappa*

The anonymously published *Cicalamenti del Grappa intorno al sonetto "Poi che mia speme è lunga a venir troppo."* Dove si ciarla allungo delle lodi delle donne et del mal francioso was published in Mantua in 1545 (cf. on the following Oster 2012/13). The date is significant because 1545 is the year of the beginning of the Council of Trent, in the wake of which, in a reaction to the Reformation, fundamental reforms took place within the Catholic church up until 1563, and, at the same time, an increased classicism as a reaction to perceived anti-classicist and anti-normative tendencies was set in motion.

The authorship of the *Cicalamenti del Grappa* is disputed. Possible authors for the pseudonym "Grappa" (for the sake of simplicity, the author of the text will be referred to as such in the following) include Grazzini, Gamba, Aretino, Beccuti and Firenzuola. The authorship of Grazzini is favoured by Vincenzo Lancetti (Lancetti 1836, 133–134). Giovan Mario Crescimbeni, on the other hand, argues that "Angiolo Firenzuola" is the author of the text (Crescimbeni 1698, 327). The history of the word *grappa* is also shrouded in uncertainty. The name could be a variation of the Italian *graffa*, 'parenthesis', derived from the Greek *parentithemi* ('frappongo' in Italian). Against this background, the *Cicalamenti del Grappa* could be understood as an (ironic) 'parenthetical remark' added to the tradition of scholarly commentary within early modern academic circles. But a

reference to the alcoholic distillate of *grappa* is also conceivable, and so the commentary and the provocative statements contained within it, could be regarded as being based in an alternate reality created by the effect of strong drink, and thus not particularly intellectually punishing (Oster 2012/13, 151).

This curious text is meant to be an erudite commentary on sonnet 88 of Petrarch's *Canzoniere*. It advances the following provocative thesis: Petrarch caught syphilis, the "mal francioso" of the title, from his beloved Laura. After an unflattering dedication to a Signora Antea Arcifanfana, who is a veritable 'cemetery of French disease' ("cimitero di mal francioso"; *Cicalamenti del Grappa* 1545, 1v.), an extended introduction follows in which Petrarch's great love is drastically interpreted as gratitude for the beautiful gift of venereal disease, as a kind of catalyst of all the virtues and arts. To this end, a select catalogue of supposed virtues of syphilis is compiled. Petrarch's sonnet is reproduced with typographical care on sheet 16r./17v. of the first edition and is analysed in terms of style and content on the following pages.

To classify the *Cicalamenti del Grappa* solely as a form of desultory anti-Petrarchism because of its ostentatiously displayed sexual innuendo would be wrong. On closer examination, the text maintains a relationship with the object of its travesty – the *Canzoniere* – that can aptly be described as anti-classicist, or more precisely, para-classicist. It is not a case of what in this volume is termed explicit anti-classicism (as in the genre of paradoxical praise), nor is it a case of alternative classicism. The humorous register of the *Cicalamenti del Grappa* can only fully unfold if an evasion into alternative is models avoided. Instead, there is a clear reference to Petrarch, but this is not limited to parody: rather, the explosive power of comic writing is held in a para-classicist balance. Petrarch is by no means dismissed as the founder of a cultural concept of love, even though the author of the *Cicalamenti del Grappa* openly mocks the systematic and insistent imitation practised by the Petrarchists. In (pseudo)encomiastic passages, the text takes up the doxographic discourse networks (politics, moral philosophy, medicine) of Petrarchism and attempts to expose them as a freaky quirk of their authors by means of cunning reversals of texture.

The *Cicalamenti del Grappa* were highly praised for their refined idioms: "Osceno libricciuolo scritto da uomo nella lingua peritissimo" (Gamba 1839, 437). Although its form of writing is rather special, the text maintains obvious relationships with other narrative or colloquial genres of discourse. There are echoes of the ancient *priapea*, thus named for the god of gardens and fertility, Priapos, which celebrated the imposing (or supposedly imposing) dimensions of male genitalia (Buchheit 1962). These genera were by no means sanctioned as classical even in antiquity itself, and in the Renaissance, an accumulated scepticism towards the genre can be detected. Anti-classicist authors countered this

scepticism with offensively erotic poems, singing the praises of the garden god Priapus and virtuously staging the double coding of the fruits mentioned within them (representing female and male genitalia, among other things). A prominent Renaissance example is Nicolò Franco's *Priapeia* (Oster 2012/13, 147). Read in this context, the title of the "Cicalamenti" is also more than ambiguous. It represents the 'crazy crickets' contained within the text itself, something which openly announces its humorous nature from the first word of the title. But the *cicala* also connotes the staged 'chatty' style of the writing of this 'loquacious' text and, moreover, colloquially, the non-verbal 'communication' of the male genitalia (in regional language, the lively chirping of the grasshopper stands for the acrobatic *movimento* of the virile sex). In this respect, the cricket is not only able to sing praise, but also to lament, which is expressed in the (ironic) interconnection of the semantics of *cicala* ('cricket') and *lamenti* ('laments'): *Cicalamenti*.

The anti-classicist tendency of the traditional, vernacular *Canto carnascialesco* contributes to this kind of writing, as this form preferred erotic ambivalence, for example in the area of 'craftsmanship', where the work and activity of the hands was doubly coded. A prominent example is Benedetto Varchi's *Canto degli arcolai* ('The Song of the Wool Winders'). Crudity and obscenity can also be found in Francesco Maria Molza's *Capitolo in lode dei fichi*, which was subsequently taken up by Annibal Caro under the title *La ficheide* and published with a learned commentary using the pseudonym of Ser Agresto da Ficaruolo. Also famous is the dialogue *La cazzaria* by Antonio Vignali (who was known as "Arsiccio Intronato"), which imitates the style of the academies. Almost all of these texts, in whose tradition the *Cicalamenti del Grappa* are to be located, are fictional apologies of the *puttanesco sesso*. 'Grappa' attempts a transformation of *imitatio veterum*, the imitation of the *optimi*, in a para-classicist counter-commentary. With this, he apparently wants to catapult himself to the top of the list of anti-classicist writers, but with ostensibly serious intentions and in a mock serious style of writing. This is another reason why the learned academies play an important role in the *Cicalamenti del Grappa*. The humanistic commentary transforms itself into a para-classicist commentary, not least by treating its subject matter with an inverse *aptum*. The scholarly commentary of the *Cicalamenti del Grappa* combines its elitist origins with a praise of the profane and the base. With this, 'Grappa' harpoons another tradition, this time decidedly poetic. With the exaltation of venal love under the sign of syphilis, the author turns against the naïve and 'sincere' forms of love associated with the bucolic genres and praises prostitution, the "maggior mostro", as Tasso will later call it (Tasso 1824, 48). The artifice of bucolic love turns dissonant in the work of 'Grappa' because the pastoral is no longer able to convince with its stereotypical conventions. The authorities of 'Grappa', on the other hand, are those who have sung about syphilis in an

exemplary manner: Girolamo Fracastoro with his didactic poem *Sifilide ossia del mal francese* or Giovan Francesco Bini with a *Capitolo in lode del malfrancese*, as well as Agnolo Firenzuola in his *Capitolo in lode del legno santo* (*Cicalamenti del Grappa* 1545, 20v.).

What the *Cicalamenti del Grappa* stage is a pointed contrast to both academic Petrarchism (in the wake of Pietro Bembo) and anti-Petrarchism (associated with Berni). The author names or alludes to ancient and vernacular cultures (he writes explicitly – and this too is in parallel with Cellini – of artists, not merely writers), not only of jocular character, but also representatives of ‘serious’ literature.

The very first pages of the *Cicalamenti del Grappa* in the original edition of 1545 give an impression of the constitution of the work. The language demands a certain amount of literary competence from the (modern) reader, because – similar to Rabelais in *Gargantua et Pantagruel* – it juggles with word cascades and fantasy expressions. The *Cicalamenti del Grappa* begin with the following words:

Chi volevate voi (magnifichissima & lustrissima signora) che fesse fede di quanto ciarlo intorno a questo sonetto, se non produceva voi per testimone, la quale sete apunto un cimitero di mal francioso? Il quale s'è con voi domesticato & infratellito di modo, che n'avete messo il legno d'India in estrema desperatione; per la cui mercè (parlo del mal francioso) voi sete fregiata & riccamata di tante virtù, che andate per bocca delle brigate con maggior riputazione di quello che non va per la bocca de' preti il Tedeum. Eccovi la perfettissima nel suono della cornamusa: eccovi in quel di pedale arcidivina: intorno al grat-tar la vivola, che vi si può opporre? Del vostro pizzicar l'arpa, che vi si può dire? Quanto spetta poi al toccar il ciembalo non è dubbio che fate andar le persone coeli coelorum. Ma chi non fanno stringere le labra & increspar le ciglia le vostre divine opere, come i sonetti, li strenfiotti, le fistole e i capogiroli? (*Cicalamenti del Grappa* 1545, 2v./3r.)

With the “legno d'India”, the very ‘wood’ is mentioned (see Oster 2012/13, 152), something which Cellini also repeatedly invokes in his *Vita* as a remedy against venereal diseases. Similar to the aforementioned *Canto degli arcolai* by Varchi and Cellini's *Vita*, the erotic double coding of the supposed craft (in this case: the virtuoso handling of various instruments or erotic techniques) is evident. Equally evident at the level of genre references is the allusion to the paradoxical encomium, which in antiquity was located in the doctrine of *epideixis*, and praises unusual or lowly phenomena (‘paradoxa’: Lukian's *Praise of the fly*, for example) or serious evils (‘adoxa’: such as Favorinus' *The praise of quarto fever*) – an accomplishment which, incidentally, was already considered proof of poetic ingenuity in a Renaissance classic which was not at all regarded as having anti-classicist leanings, namely Castiglione's *Cortegiano* (II, XVII). At the beginning of the *Cicalamenti del Grappa* (“Filostroccola. In Vece di Proemio”), ‘Grappa’ critically counters the complacent assessment of his own age as a classical one with crude vocabulary:

A me pare, & credo che paja così ancho a voi (ingeniosissimi Balordi), che questa nostra felicissima età sia molto brava & molto sfoggiata; dico tanto che tutte le passate non sarebbono buone per cavarle (come si dice) gli stivali. Se quell'età di Saturno si chiamò aurea & felice perchè gli uomini andavano sbracati & mangiavano quelle porcherie, aurea & felice si può hora chiamare la vita de'furfanti che vivono in cotal guisa, & dormono senza paura di esser rubati, & fanno quell'altra cosa anchora dove si truovano. Ma le son baje a credere che la natura non si risenta dell'ingiurie che fa il freddo e 'l caldo alle carni ignude, de' torti che fanno alla gola i cattivi bocconi, lasciando i ghiotti; degl'incomodi che si fa patire agli appetiti lussuriosi, potendoli satiar con comodo & agiatamente. Io per me non saprei che si potesse dir altro d'uno se non che anfanasse a sanità, & che avesse date le cervella a rimpedulare, il quale quando il freddo più crudelmente ci tormenta, volesse andare più tosto ignudo che bene impellicionato; [. . .]. (*Cicalamenti del Grappa* 1545, 4r./5v.)

After numerous – and ostentatiously staged – adjournments and procrastinations, the actual subject of the treatise announced in the title arises, Petrarch's sonnet 88 from the *Rerum Vulgarium Fragmenta* (RVF). The poem is first printed in full length:

Poi che mia speme è lunga à venir troppo
Et de la uita il trappassar si corto;
Vorrei mi à miglior tempo esser accorto,
Per fuggir dietro più, che di galoppo;
Et fuggo anchor così debile & zoppo
Da l'un de lati, oue 'l desio m' hà storto,
Sicuro homai: mà pur nel uiso porto
Segni ch'io presi à l'amoroso intoppo.
Ond'io consiglio uoi, che siete in uia,
Volgete i passi: & uoi, ch' amor auampa,
Mon (sic) u'indugiate sù l'estremo ardore:
Che perch' io uiua; di mille vn non scampa,
Era ben forte la nemica mia;
Et lei uid' io ferita in mezzo 'l cuore.

(*Cicalamenti del Grappa* 1545, 16v./17r.)

In this poem, we find characteristics typical of Petrarch, such as an enumerative structure ending in a conclusion; the suffering of the lover; the origin of his moral suffering, rendered by a physical image (the lover's 'lame side', which, however, in this case is treated literally by the author of the *Cicalamenti del Grappa* who ascribes a double meaning to it). Thus, for the commentator, the *dolori* are not only mental but first and foremost somatic, and they are so intense that they tend to override the 'gioia' of the pain of love, and also make the lady's unattainability appear to be a secondary problem. The author of the *Cicalamenti del Grappa* must have had Francesco Berni's famous anti-Petrarchist "Sonetto delle puttane" in mind, which stages the lover in the "inferno" (v. 6), where "non

è maggior pena" (v. 6), and where "un sospetto crudel del mal Franzese" (v. 9) plays a leading role, the "eterno onor del puttanesco sesso" (v. 14) being drastically transformed into something obscene in the final verses (cf. Schulz-Buschhaus 1975). In the *Cicalamenti*, Berni's satirical thrust is replaced by a para-classicist reversal of ideal norms. Thus, Petrarch's theme of tired hope is turned into its burlesque opposite: the (love) disease is not one of the heart, but a venereal disease, for which the poet should be grateful, however, since it has inspired his immense productivity. Hopelessness is thus negated, yet not in a forced anti-classicist gesture, but as a remembrance of a norm which is thereby affirmed. The multiplicity of the amorous encounters of a syphilitic "divinisimo Petrarca" (*Cicalamenti del Grappa* 1545, 15v.) and hence of an inconstant lover sensualises the concept of love found in Petrarch and Bembo, a para-classicist development which the *Cicalamenti del Grappa* humorously pass off as an artful extension of the poetics of *imitatio*. The comic contrasts resulting from this obviously depend on the continued existence of an idealising version of love.

These effects could be viewed as an ultimately irrelevant variant of the general interdependence of normativity and deviation. However, this does not apply to the *Cicalamenti del Grappa*, if only because they break loose from the structural restrictions of the genre of commentary. Traditionally, the commentary genre is characterised by the fact that the text commented upon is in a way 'continued' in the commentary. As opposed to this, the *Cicalamenti del Grappa* multiply and expand the technical procedures of the commentary genre and overstretch its boundaries, at the same time breaking away from the ideology of Petrarch's poem. For only at first glance does 'Grappa' follow the rules of the commentary – by examining Petrarch's sonnet line by line and word by word and commenting on it in a (pseudo-) affirmatory manner. However, he exaggerates the need for explanation so excessively that the reader forms an impression of opaqueness, of a para-classicist suspension of the possibility of true understanding or knowledge. The *Cicalamenti del Grappa* take up Petrarch's pseudo-autobiographical stylisation and blend this with anti-classical formulas so as to blow the lid off the poet's self-fashioning, revealing it as nothing but a form of sophisticated camouflage. In the process, 'Grappa' the commentator appears as an anachronistic interlocutor across the times, for he not only lectures the readers in the Cinquecento, but also retrospectively addresses Petrarch himself in a patronising manner, enlightening him about his ingratitude towards syphilis by means of a didactic digression. 'Grappa' thereby eradicates the chronological structure of exemplary past and imitative present which serves as the cornerstone to Petrarchism.

The serious system of reference to classical Petrarchism is thus inverted, but – and this is crucial for what we understand by para-classicism – not completely

abandoned: it is questioned, suspended. In the *Cicalamenti del Grappa*, in fact, it becomes questionable as to what the actual model function of Petrarch and the ancients he favours should be or remain. The *Canzoniere* is no longer imitated by the author in the sign of *aemulatio*, but demands a competent commentary on relevant questions, a gloss which in turn receives its own para-classicist dignity. The normative moral claims of the *Canzoniere* thus become a pseudo-discourse, and Petrarch's poetry can only be freed from its aporetic situation by the argumentative aids of a para-classicist commentary. For 'Grappa' is erudite. He ostentatiously displays his academic knowledge; and he achieves this above all by bringing up the classics page by page. The reader is confronted with a multitude of luminaries: from "Batracomiomachia", "Homero", "Mastro Vergilio" to "Oratio", with an "Lucanum quaeras" thrown in, and up to "Ariosto" and "Dolce" (*Cicalamenti del Grappa* 1545, 5r./v.–6r.). The radical amplification of the physical dimension turns not only against an idealisation of Petrarch, but also against the idea of Plato as an authority within the field, who is constantly invoked in the text as the guardian of an ephemeral world of ideas. The author of the *Cicalamenti del Grappa*, however, does not question tradition *in toto* in this respect either. Unambiguous positions are nowhere to be found in this very elegantly-argued text, which openly exhibits its references and merely denies the absolute authorisation of a single model. It is about a redefinition of what can be 'classical' in the Cinquecento.

The *Cicalamenti del Grappa*, which at first sight comes across as a harmless, mundane farce, thus turns out to be a composition with serious tendencies that set themselves apart from both Petrarchist and anti-Petrarchist discourses, maintaining a para-classicist distance. 'Grappa' relies on the plurality of theory options, playing up one of them against the other and ultimately including even himself in his constant ironising of reference sources.

The *Cicalamenti* are more than just a parody or a mere variation of a basic model. 'Grappa' breaks with an entire tradition of Petrarch commentaries, from Filelfo's allegorising to Vellutello's idealising biography. In doing so, he proves that he is a true follower of Petrarch, who after all rethought classical antiquity as a lost 'other', believing it needed to be interpreted, analysed and defined on its own terms. A para-classicist relativity of interpretations is brought to bear against the familiar, the 'classical.'

In this commentary, the learned scholar and the syphilitic both ultimately operate under the sign of an 'other' classicism, which elaborates basic anthropological constants of human amorous behaviour. These are anchored in human nature itself, and no longer in a metaphysical principle. With regard to this, there is a clear difference from Petrarch, for Petrarch thought of the things he deemed remarkable – that is: classical, immaculate beauty rather than venereal

disease – in ethical categories. Only in this way could the *humanitas* of the classical world be opened up and shine in new splendour in the seemingly effortless elegance of Petrarch's own classicism. The *Cicalamenti del Grappa* opt for the contrary, for a drastic language reminiscent of passages from Dante's *Inferno*. It is true that Dante – unlike Petrarch and Boccaccio – is not, or hardly ever, explicitly addressed in 'Grappa' but the *Cicalamenti*'s ostentation of physical love and its contagious consequences implicitly rejects both Dante's lofty ideals of love and Petrarch's moral criticism of it. Earthly love is no longer a merely tolerated stopover on the way to *caritas*, but sexual realism is the goal and pivot of a form of poetry directed towards earthly values and thus reminiscent of Boccaccio: "Et è il vero, & la ragione è fisica" (*Cicalamenti del Grappa* 1545, 26v.). The many other references to Boccaccio are hardly coincidental in this context, for Petrarch's literary friend becomes the necessary complement of a comprehensive 'human condition' in the *Cicalamenti del Grappa*, which includes the physical world (see also Oster 2012/13, 164).

The *Cicalamenti del Grappa* radically question the supposedly natural appropriateness of speech in Renaissance classicism as well as the monolithic structure of its system of models and authorities; they champion plurality. The fact that the *Cicalamenti del Grappa* appeared anonymously could well be interpreted as evidence of this objective: anonymity absorbs the notoriously overpowering concept of authorship, of an authorial figure, even of the commentator himself. The commentary of the *Cicalamenti del Grappa* is a critical gloss on authorship and its permanent strain of poetic *aemulatio*, but also on the tradition of commentary itself.

The staged anonymity of the *Cicalamenti del Grappa* is part of its poetic programme. Whether Beccuti or another advocate and editor of Berni (for example, Antonfrancesco Grazzini) was the author of the text: ultimately, it is the texture itself that gives clear indications that Francesco Berni – despite all the criticism that is voiced against him – is to be installed besides Petrarch as one of several parallel model authors. But as opposed to the Petrarchist practice of openly canonising a single model author, Berni's role is only proclaimed between the lines – and never in all seriousness, merely as a possible alternative reference – alongside others (Ruzante, Folengo, Aretino).

Even though we cannot speak of a closed system of anti-classicist writing, such texts should not be regarded merely as sporadic voices in the textual panorama of the Cinquecento. The fact that there is no thematic or structural continuity in para-classicist texts is part of their agenda and, in the case of the *Cicalamenti del Grappa*, as well as in Cellini's case, this mode of writing was probably directed against the academic humanism prevalent at that time, which, under the sign of an erudite cult of antiquity, claimed superiority within the

contemporary system of knowledge. The *Cicalamenti del Grappa* satirise a whole series of ancient authors as well as the uncritical and detached admiration they were subjected to in the Cinquecento. In this way, texts such as the *Cicalamenti* not only negate Petrarchism, they also distance themselves from what Schulz-Buschhaus (1986) has characterised as “a-petrarkistisch”, a serious, non parodic style indifferent to the claims of Petrarchism and often following a hedonistic, sensual conception of love inherited from antiquity (*Anthologia graeca*, Ovid, Horace, Catullus).

The burlesque style, on the other hand, whose concept of an apparent ‘artlessness’ characterises the *Cicalamenti del Grappa*, originates from the Middle Ages and thus from a culture that Petrarch and the humanists are known to have despised. As far as the semantics and the affiliation of the *Cicalamenti del Grappa* to the *genera dicendi* are concerned, the text is ambivalent, for the signals of affiliation to the *genus humilis* are contaminated with artificial lexemes and elaborate hyperboles on the one hand and obscene innuendo on the other. While declining to follow the classicist poetics of *aemulatio*, they situate themselves as poetry on a par with the Petrarchists’ and, for their part, cultivate such ambitious stylistics and complex concepts that one could refer to an independent and balanced para-classicism. This para-classicism mediates between the extremes of classicism and anticlassicism, it is never openly exhibited, but instead follows an elegant *sprezzatura* – and it is, in spite of its comic character, ‘seriously’ constructive poetry beyond mere ridicule: “Et viva la Balordia in secula seculorum” (*Cicalamenti del Grappa* 1545, 27r.).

4.4 Conclusion

Cellini’s para-classicist writing and art, like his metallurgy, often appears as elusive, extremely iridescent material, which deliberately eludes the univocal in order to remain flexibly manageable. Despite its frequent contradictions, its ambiguity and opacity, even to the point of obscurity in places, Cellini’s para-classicism seeks a connection to a classical canon. Yet he eschews fixed hierarchies in favour of flexibility. This form of para-classicism belongs to the field of Cinquecento anti-classicism, whose expressivity is to be clearly distinguished from the styles and forms of later epochs (Mannerism, Baroque). Unlike in ‘alternative classicism’ (see part 3 of this Companion), para-classicism cannot dispense with gestures of opposition to classical models, which, however, are at the same time objects of aggressive *aemulatio*. Cellini’s is an offensive *paragone* in the sense of a confrontational juxtaposition that can, however, instantaneously

turn into gestures of appeasement when Cellini realises he has gone too far in his transgressions. When Cellini realises that his attempt at *aemulatio* is not successful, he opts for a good-natured compromise: *Perseus* then stands ‘next to’ (*para*) Michelangelo’s and Donatello’s sculptures in a neighbourly fashion – in an urban space of equal canonicity. In doing so, Cellini relies on the action of time: time will tell whose work will be considered classical in the future.

However, para-classicist procedures are just as highly stylised as their ‘sublime’ counterparts or neighbours, and on this level correspondence already plays an important role. The chief difference lies in how this relationship is interpreted. Unlike in Petrarchism, it is never viewed as imitative dependence. This also applies to the author’s own para-classicist writing, should it threaten to develop into a fixed agenda. Para-classicism resists any attempt to establish norms, even for para-classicism itself. It is thus less of a direct opposition to a certain, concrete authority or a given classicism, even if the ostensible polemics of the para-classicist texts pretend this in order to initially attract the reader. Rather, para-classicism (which itself is composed of heterogeneous text types) opposes absolutist mono-literary systems of classicism in general.

With regard to Benvenuto Cellini, three descriptive dimensions can be used to describe his brand of para-classicism:

a) Spatial: throughout his life, Cellini worried about not receiving enough attention from actual or potential patrons. It should not be forgotten that Cellini, as a sculptor and goldsmith, was much more dependent on monetary support for his material expenditure than, say, a poet. The motto “*Pecunia nervus rerum est*” therefore applies here in particular (Stolleis 1983, 63–65). It is true that Cellini considers himself an important writer, however, his view that this branch of his profession is really only a side-line to his fame is not wrong. With regard to his patrons, spatial presence is important when dealing with rivals, for example in Florence (Medici), Rome (popes), and France (François I). In his travels between Italy and France, Cellini presents himself as an equal to his more established competitors, who lay claim to classicist status. With regard to these demarcation lines (and transgressions), he seldom penetrates the centre of classicist esteem, but walks along ‘beside’ it (*para*) in search of synergies and alliances. The fact that Cellini opportunistically complied with different powers, indiscriminately changing his affiliations and locations and always searching for fame, was criticised frequently both by contemporaries and later observers.

b) Temporal: ‘Conversely, without classics there can be no classicists. What is different here is the time index: one ‘is’ a classicist, one ‘becomes’ a classic, or one ceases to be one in the course of history.’ (Föcking/Schindler 2020, 11: “Umgekehrt kann es ohne Klassiker keine Klassizisten geben. Unterschiedlich ist

dabei der Zeitindex: Klassizist ‘ist’ man, Klassiker ‘wird’ man, oder man hört im Verlauf der Geschichte auf, es zu sein.”). Cellini proves to be an artist who consistently followed Machiavelli’s recommendation to seize the opportunity (*occasione*) courageously (Schröder 2004, 161). He even resolutely ‘recodes’ moments that could be to his disadvantage. An example of this is the described fight with the French king’s mistress, Madame d’Estampes. Cellini even murders according to a timetable. Here, Cellini acts in an uncompromisingly anti-normative manner both ethically and with respect to *decorum*, but stylises his actions in a para-classicist perspective in the written retrospective of the *Vita*. Cellini’s manipulation of the historically available literary genres creates the impression that the typically Renaissance sensation of a break in continuity (between antiquity and its revival in the present, see Oster 2008) does not affect him. As far as genres are concerned, the *Vita* and the *Rime* in part continue traditional patterns. The discontinuity is found more in the rhetorical register, in the use of *decorum* or *aptum*.

c) Transgression beyond the spatial-temporal axes. Cellini’s anti-classicism always blossoms in its purest form where he has to assert himself against something or someone. Resistances to be overcome are those of the papal curia, the court, but also the resistance of materials (marble, bronze, gold). And in Cellini’s view, these resistances are only there to be overcome: “tempo da militare, non da statuare” (Cellini 1971a, 465). The bellicose vocabulary is not due to chance, as has become clear from his remarks on power and violence. The subversive transgressions refer to almost all axiological areas of discourse: Cellini transgresses aesthetic, geographical, economic, sexual or social, moral and legal demarcations. In doing so, he leaves open whether what his contemporaries perceive as anti-classicist violations are meant to be such, or whether he uses the ambiguity of para-classicism as a springboard from which to rise to the level of ‘real classics’. With Homi Bhabha, Cellini’s approach can be seen in a “third space” with hybrid structures (Bhabha 2004, 55). Here, classicism and anti-classicism do not confront each other as substantially different, but rather interpenetrate each other without, however, achieving something like dialectical mediation or a fusion of differences. Rather, interactions and processes of hybridisation counteract rigid identities. In this sense, problematic interferences between different models are no cause for irritation for Cellini. His incommensurable texts are at odds with the tendencies both of authorisation and of pluralisation (as described by the collaborative research centre SFB 573 “Pluralisation and Authority in the Early Modern Period”; <http://www.sfb-frueheneuzeit.uni-muenchen.de/>). He forces the superimposition of various classicisms – from antiquity to the Bible – to a point that not only shatters the respective texts, but also Cellini’s credibility in the contemporary discourse panorama.

That Cellini's brand of para-classicism operates mostly on the level of *decorum* may have something to do with the fact that as a 'persona non grata' he strives for social rehabilitation. The search for *aptum* is supposed to compensate for disproportions and generate agreement or at least correspondences. Appropriateness is a universal, harmonising principle, which, however, often collides with Cellini's use of allegory: while *aptum* aims at probability, the object of allegory is truth. In Cellini, however, these demarcations become skewed: his allegories are merely probable or even improbable (like the childhood experiences described in the *Vita*), and Cellini's *aptum* often turns out to be an embittered claim to be right. This results in further confrontations between Cellini and his environment and even in his texts, which sometimes fail to communicate and resort to para-classicist discourses of eccentric self-empowerment. It is fitting that Cellini repeatedly claims new roles for himself within the power structures of his various patrons, but also in his texts. Be it the courageous knight in the *Vita*, the personal union of craftsman and scholar in the treatises, or the poet in the *Rime*: Cellini undermines any accusation of inappropriate evaluation of himself as a 'consensus omnium' by leaving no doubt that he has no intention of changing himself or his *Vita*. As someone who has experienced what might be called the greatest of all para-classicist events – a direct encounter with the divine in the dungeon – Cellini, like Dante, has escaped the *selva oscura* and, by means of his works of art, elevates himself to the *divina foresta*.

It is remarkable that Cellini, with his numerous borrowings from the Middle Ages (not least as far as the genres in the *Vita* are concerned), which already seemed outdated during his lifetime, was subsequently declared a modernist. This statement does not deny that Cellini participated equally in the reception of antiquity during his lifetime. He achieved this historical balancing act by conceiving normativity as anachronism and instead conceiving classicism as universalisation *and* singularisation. By placing the unfamiliar or shocking on an equal footing with the familiar, he sidestepped the binary opposition of the classical and the non-classical. He cultivated the alterity of para-classicism, whose elastic design may seem opportunistic, but ultimately constituted one that allowed Cellini to highlight the autonomy of the aesthetic sphere and the ability of disregarding dogmatic canonisations contained within it, with a gesture that was indeed modern.