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**Rezeptionsgeschichte and Interpretation:
The Quarrel of Antonio Riccoboni and Nicolò
Cologno about the Structure of Horace's
*Ars Poetica****

I

For Antonio Riccoboni, the fifty-year-old senior humanist at the University of Padua, the summer of 1591 should have been a time of relaxation at the end of a hard academic year that ended with a major disappointment. He had been passed over for the vacant and more prestigious professorship of Moral Philosophy in favor of an obscure Bergamasc priest and schoolmaster, Nicolò Cologno. From mid-July to the end of August Padua is usually muggy and mosquito-ridden – not a place to be doing serious work, if you can avoid it. But Riccoboni had to stay in the city, attending to important business and shoring up his world against the forces that suddenly seemed bent on destroying it.

The Jesuits were causing trouble in Padua, threatening to open their “Counter-University” with offerings in direct competition with Riccoboni's

own poorly-attended classes. Tempers were short, and the students were divided between supporters and opponents of the Jesuits' scheme, which was motivated by their desire to remedy the University's alleged tolerance of heresy.

In early July, some noble university students had run naked through the town, covered only by sheets, and had entered the Jesuit College, where, dropping their sheets, they insulted all present. Riccoboni had to start organizing a defense of his discipline against the Jesuits, which was to bear fruit the next November when the University formally agreed to ask the Venetian Senate to prohibit the Jesuits from offering courses in Padua. What was at stake for a professor like Riccoboni was nothing less than his position and livelihood. University appointments usually were for four years, with a two-year extension at the convenience of the University. Renewal of contracts depended upon a teacher's satisfactory performance of his duties and sufficient student demand for his classes. The Jesuits planned to offer courses in grammar and rhetoric – Riccoboni's field. If successful (and they almost always were, in no small measure because they did not charge fees) the Jesuits could provoke the Venetian Senate into not renewing Riccoboni's contract, or at least into reducing his salary, which at 650 florins was quite handsome for a humanist.

Most on Riccoboni's mind that July, however, was a more pressing and gnawing problem affecting his professional standing at Padua: how best to respond to the brutally sarcastic attack against his views on Horace's *Ars Poetica* published in the late spring by his new nemesis, Cologno.

That Riccoboni and Cologno would project their many-faceted rivalry onto the seemingly unlikely text of Horace's *Ars Poetica* is not as strange as it might seem: the work was a mainstay of the curricula of both religious and lay schools. This fact made the Riccoboni-Cologno debate much more important than we might suspect today and caused the disputants to invest a great deal of emotion in their fight. Just listen to this typical passage, dripping with vitriol, in which Cologno attacks Riccoboni:

You, on the other hand, who think that Horace has written nothing that is coherent and connected, but like a madman babbled things that are

* The following abbreviations are used in the notes below:

ACBergamo = Archivio della Curia di Bergamo, Archivio Capitolare

AAUPadova = Archivio Antico dell'Università di Padova

ASVenezia = Archivio di Stato, Venezia

Atti Borromeo = *Gli atti della visita apostolica di S. Carlo Borromeo a Bergamo* (1575), a cura di Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli (= Pope John XXIII), Fontes Ambrosiani 13-17 (Florence 1936-1957)

BAVaticana = Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

BCBergamo = Biblioteca Civica Angelo Mai (Bergamo)

BCPadova = Biblioteca Civica, Padova

BCSiena = Biblioteca Comunale di Siena

BSPadova = Biblioteca del Seminario, Padua

Frischer = B. Frischer, *Shifting Paradigms. New Approaches to Horace's Ars Poetica*, American Philological Association, American Classical Studies 27 (1991)

Weinberg = B. Weinberg, *History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance*, 2 vols. (Chicago 1961)

10 disconnected, disjointed, and incoherent, ... You, you, Riccoboni, are mad, not Horace.¹

No wonder Riccoboni was spending July in Padua trying to frame an effective response so that he did not become a laughing-stock.

The *Ars Poetica* is Horace's longest and – at least until the nineteenth century – his most influential poem. The purpose of this talk is to investigate the quarrel of Riccoboni and Cologno, a forgotten, but colorful, event in the modern history of the poem's reception. The Cologno-Riccoboni debate was the first occasion on which scholars came to blows about the internal problem that has most exercised editors and critics over the past four centuries: does the *Ars Poetica* have a clear plan or structure? As such, the quarrel is a landmark in Horatian scholarship that deserves to be better known.

The quarrel arose as a result of Cologno's publication of a book in 1587 in which he claimed to have uncovered the secret of the plan, or *methodus*, of Horace's poem (cf. nr.1 in Appendix I). Although Cologno did not

¹ Cologno, *Responsio*, 27. That Riccoboni was in Padua in mid-July of 1591 is known from a letter addressed to him then by his friend, Belisario Bulgarini (see BCSiena MS C.II.25, fol.18, a letter that I will publish elsewhere). For the story of the rampage of the *bovisti*, see A. Favaro, *Lo studio di Padova e la compagnia di Gesù sul finire del sec. XVI*, *Atti dell'Istituto Veneto di scienze, lettere ed arti*. Ser.5, vol.4 (1877-78) 428ff. For professorial contracts in the sixteenth century see L. Rossetti, *The University of Padua. An Outline of Its History*, trans. A.W. Maladorno Hargraves (Trieste 1982) 27-28. On Jesuit education, see P. Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy. Literacy and Learning, 1300-1600* (Baltimore and London 1989) 363-399. That Riccoboni's course in rhetoric and poetics in 1590-91 was poorly attended is clear from his published *prolusio*: *Quas quidem artes [i.e., rhetoric and poetics] ad humanitatem praecipue pertinentes quamvis pauci in hoc frequentissimo gymnasio complecti videantur; vel quod damnent studium Humanitatis, prorsus inhumani, earum rerum contemptores, quas ignorant; vel quod depravatos nostri seculi mores sequantur, vendibilioribus quibusdam studiis plus nimio addicti, ut ea tantum curent, unde quaestum faciant, cetera aspernentur ... (= oratio xvii in A. Riccoboni, *Orationes*, vol.2 [Padua 1591] fol.88.). That professors like Riccoboni feared competition from the Jesuits is clear from the speech given by Cesare Cremonini before the Venetian Senate later in 1591, several mss. of which are preserved (cf. BAVaticana Urb. lat. 1028, p.II, ff.415-430: "Oratione ... detta in nome dell'Università del studio di Padova, in Venezia nell'eccellentissimo collegio per levar le scuole delli Padri Gesuiti"). For assessments of Cremonini's speech, see A. Favaro, *Galileo Galilei e lo Studio di Padova*, vol.1, 85.*

71 explain why he chose to write specifically about the *Ars Poetica*, his motivation is not far to seek. The *Ars Poetica* starts *in medias res* with the description of the painting of a monster representing a poorly made poem and continues with very little explicit attention paid to its own structure – in fact, most sections follow the previous section without transition or obvious logical connection.² As Riccoboni was to put it:

... what do we have [scil., in Horace's *Ars Poetica*]? First there is discussion of plot ... Then the topic is poetic diction. Then we return to plot. Next there is arrangement. Then we are back to diction. After this comes the genres of poetry and the three kinds of diction. Then come comic characters and tragic roles. Then we return to the epic plot. Next, we are back to characters ... What does it mean [for a poem] to be muddled, if not this?³

It is obvious even from this brief quotation that for Riccoboni the *Ars Poetica* was far from the "methodical" work that Cologno took it for. The Riccoboni-Cologno quarrel began in April or May of 1591 when Riccoboni, in his *Dissensio*, made his objections to Cologno's reading known, and it continued throughout the spring and summer of that year with a rapid-fire exchange of five tracts (cf. Appendix I, nrs.2 to 6).

How did a quarrel arise on such a seemingly modern question as the structure of the *Ars Poetica*? The distant background of the Cologno-Riccoboni debate is the division of the poem into precepts by the ancient scholiasts, Ps.-Acro and Porphyrio.⁴ *Cinquecento* commentators such as Badius Ascensius (1500), Pigna (1561), and Kragius (1583) imitated this way of analyzing the poem's structure, though they felt no compunction about departing from the scholiasts in detail. For example, whereas Ps.-Acro divides the poem into twelve or thirteen precepts, Badius has 25 *regulae*, Pigna 80 *praecepta*, and Kragius just 18.⁵

² See P. Cauer, *Zur Abgrenzung und Verbindung der Theile in Horazens Ars Poetica*, *RhM* 61 (1906) 232-243.

³ A. Riccoboni, *Dissensio*, 7. The passage quoted relates to just the first 250 lines of the 476-line poem; Riccoboni's disparaging list of jumbled topics continues, touching on the subjects dealt with in the next 226 lines, but the extract given above is sufficient to allow us to see how perplexing a learned reader could find the poem's structure.

⁴ On which see Weinberg, vol.1, 73, 78-79.

⁵ *De arte poetica, cum commento Iodoci Badii Ascensii* (Paris, Durand Gerlier 1500); *Ioan. Baptistae Pignae poetica Horatiana* (Venice, Apud

A second and more recent motivation for concern with the structure of the poem was the introduction of the convention of paragraphing printed texts. Paragraphing originated in the fifteenth century, gaining popularity as the century proceeded.⁶ To divide a work into paragraphs requires that you have at least an elementary idea of its structure. As is clear from Watkins' study of paragraphing of Horace,⁷ from their earliest attempts to divide the *Ars Poetica* into sections, editors encountered great difficulties in arriving at a consensus.

Finally, the third motive involved the rediscovery of Aristotle's *Poetics* by sixteenth-century Italian scholars. This is an old story that can be summarized quickly here. Before the Latin translation of Pazzi in 1536, Aristotle's work was little known in the West. Pazzi's Aldine set off a flurry of studies in the 1540s, culminating in what Bernard Weinberg has aptly called the "great commentaries" of Robortello (1548), Maggi-Lombardi (1550), Vettori (1560) and Castelvetro (1570).

Until the mid-sixteenth century, the *Ars Poetica* had dominated Western thinking about poetics. It – not Aristotle's *Poetics* – was, as Stephen Halliwell has recently written, "the central classical source of literary principles, and one which could be much more comfortably combined with the pagan texts at the core of the Renaissance – Vergil, Seneca, Roman Comedy, Ovid – than Aristotle's treatise could ever have been."⁸

All of this changed very quickly once Aristotle's *Poetics* moved to center stage in the 1540s and 50s. To contrast the trajectories of the *Poetics* and the *Ars Poetica* consider that, in his 1318 *Letter to Can Grande della Scala*, Dante cites Horace's *Ars Poetica* but not Aristotle's *Poetics*. In the mid-fourteenth century, Boccaccio cites the *Metaphysics*, not the *Poetics*, for Aristotle's ideas about poetry. A century later, the curriculum of Guarino

Guarini's famous school in Verona included Aristotle's *Ethics*, but for poetic theory, Horace's *Ars Poetica*.⁹

Yet by 1545, less than a decade after Pazzi's translation, Lilio Gregorio Giraldi ranked Aristotle as the best writer on poetics, a view that is also found in Bernardo Tasso's 1562 *Ragionamento della poesia*, and again and again in the *secondo Cinquecento*. Indeed, in Tasso's *Ragionamento*, the *Ars Poetica* is mentioned as a treatment of merely secondary interest along with works by Plato, Plutarch, Strabo, Cicero, and Maximus of Tyre.¹⁰ Clearly in the sixteenth century, Horace's popularity fell in proportion to the rise of Aristotle's.

In the four decades preceding the Cologno-Riccoboni debate in 1591, scholars had first explicitly addressed the problem of the structure of the *Ars Poetica*, and almost all agreed that it suffered by comparison with *Poetics*, which was written by the authority of authorities whom humanists called "the master of method".

By 1561, two explanations for the disjointedness of the *Ars Poetica* had been proposed, neither demonstrated in any detail and neither very satisfactory: the first was that the *Ars Poetica* was loosely written because it was not a technical treatise at all but (allegedly) a letter, and letters are very informal in tone, contents, and structure, or plan. So persuaded were some of the adherents of this view that they even suggested changing the transmitted title of the poem from *Ars Poetica* to *Epistula ad Pisones* and including the poem in Book II of Horace's *Epistles*. These suggestions have been taken very seriously indeed over the past four centuries and have, I have argued elsewhere, seriously distorted our perception of the work. Opposed to what we might call the "letter-thesis" was the alternative

Vincentium Valgrisium 1561); *Q. Horatii Flacci ars poetica, ad P. Rami dialecticam & rhetoricam, resoluta: studio Andreae Kragii Ripensis Dani* (Basle, Per Sebastianum Henricpetri n.d. [preface dated 1583]).

⁶ See M.M. Smith, *Printed Foliation: Forerunner to Printed Page-numbers?*, *Gutenberg-Jahrbuch* 63 (1988) 54-70, especially Figure 1 (p.58), with a graph showing the dramatic growth of paragraphing between the years 1465/69 and 1495/1500.

⁷ R.E. Watkins, *A History of Paragraph Divisions in Horace's Epistles*, *Iowa Studies in Classical Philology* 10 (1940).

⁸ S. Halliwell, *Aristotle's Poetics* (Chapel Hill 1986) 295.

⁹ On Dante, see E.R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W.R. Trask (New York 1953) 354. For the curriculum in Guarini's school, see J.E. Sandys, *Harvard Lectures on the Revival of Learning* (Cambridge 1905) 79.

¹⁰ *De poetica et poetarum dialogus I*, in *Historiae poetarum tam graecorum quam latinorum dialogi decem ... L. Greg. Gyraldo Ferrariensi autore* (Basle 1545) 6. For Tasso, see Bernardo Tasso, *Ragionamento della poesia* (Venice, Gabriel Giolito de' Ferrari, 1562), quoted in E. Williamson, *Bernardo Tasso* (Rome 1951) 28. According to Williamson, Tasso's *Ragionamento* is chiefly interesting because it reflects the views of the Venetian Academy, of which Tasso was a member.

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position that the *Ars Poetica* was so confusedly written that it deserved neither its title nor much respect from modern students of poetics. Rather, it resembled the very monster that Horace condemns at the beginning of the poem.¹¹

Cologno's *Methodus* of 1587 must be read against this background. Explicitly responding to earlier *Cinquecento* attacks disputing the claim of the *Ars Poetica* to be considered a technical treatise, Cologno thought that he had found a way to save the reputation of the poem and of the poet. The key was none other than Aristotle's *Poetics*. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle considers plot to be the "soul" of poetry and thing that distinguishes poetics from the other arts.¹² According to Cologno, there are four kinds of plot – epic, tragedy, comedy, satyr drama. Since these are all treated in a separate section in the *Ars Poetica*, the poem has a plan in the sense that it exhaustively treats its topic.

In 1591, four years after publishing the *Methodus*, Cologno accepted the post of professor of Moral Philosophy at Padua as successor of Jason De Nones, who died the previous December.¹³ Before the 1591-92 academic year began in November, Antonio Riccoboni published the *Dissensio*, his first attack on the theory of his new colleague, Cologno. For Riccoboni, the main problems were, in brief, that Cologno did not define what he meant by "plan" or "method"; that the number of genres in the poem and in ancient literature exceeded four; that Horace does not, in any case, treat the epic genre in a separate section, as he does tragedy, comedy, and satyr drama; and that the *Ars Poetica* is not a technical treatise on the model of Aristotle's *Poetics* but simply a friendly letter that Horace sent to the Pisones. To clinch this last point, Riccoboni showed how the poem would have to be rewritten, if it were to have a "plan", in the technical sense of the word.

¹¹ The first view is associated with scholars active in northern Italy, such as Francisco Robortello, Jason Denores, and Denys Lambin. The second position was held by Julius-Caesar Scaliger in his influential *Poetices libri septem*. For details, see Frischer, 4-7, with Appendix I for the key texts.

¹² Poet. 1450a39-50b1: "So plot is the origin and as it were the soul of tragedy, and the characters are secondary."

¹³ On De Nones see F.E. Budd, A Minor Italian Critic of the Sixteenth Century: Jason Denores, *Modern Language Review* 22 (1927) 421-434.

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The quarrel is worth studying for several reasons, of which undoubtedly the most important is that this was the first serious debate on the problem (still very much on the scholarly agenda, today) of whether or not Horace's longest work has a structure. Scholarly quarrels – if not always pretty sights – do at least have the virtue of raising to consciousness issues that have been lying dormant and of thereby giving impetus to new research.

As we will see, the Riccoboni-Cologno debate resembles most scholarly quarrels in yielding at least as much smoke and heat as light. The light – however weak – is precious: Riccoboni and Cologno grasped that their problem had three theoretical answers, and these three solutions have become perennial in *Ars Poetica* scholarship. The first – Riccoboni's position – is that the poem has no clear structure, but need not have one because it is not a formal treatise but merely an informal letter. The second – Cologno's misunderstanding of Riccoboni's position – is that the poem can be given a structure through massive transpositions of lines to restore an original order supposedly lost through scribal error; and the third – Cologno's position – is that the *Ars Poetica*, for all its superficial confusion, has an implicit structural principle which, once revealed, lends the poem more coherence and unity than are apparent on a first reading.

There are other reasons, as well, for studying the Cologno-Riccoboni debate. Of least importance, perhaps, is the fact that the very few references to the quarrel in the scholarly literature are quite understandably inaccurate. A complete dossier of five tracts has not been available to the handful of scholars over the past three centuries who have shown any awareness whatsoever of the matter. Without all the texts – which I found in the Marciana in Venice several years ago – it is impossible to follow the twists and turns of the debate. This is especially the case because in the most widely circulated polemic, Riccoboni's *Dissensio* (nr.2 in Appendix I), Cologno is not referred to by name but only as "a certain learned man". Of greater importance is the fact that the topic under discussion – poetic theory – has a special importance in sixteenth-century Italy, for, as Bernard Weinberg showed in his monumental study and as has been

reconfirmed in two recent surveys.¹⁴ Italian scholars in this period were unusually preoccupied with what might at first glance seem to be surprisingly post-modern subject of critical theory. Our study will suggest some of the reasons for this obsession, which, then as now, have to do with such things as contemporary educational curricula and ideologies; the precarious position of humanities in the universities; the relationship of poetics to logic, rhetoric, and political science in the classification of the sciences; and purely professional rivalries of scholars competing for private and university patronage. So the subject of poetic theory gave scholars interested in many different disciplines a common field on which to joust for public and professional rewards and prestige.

Finally, this study can contribute to the contemporary discussion of the canonization of literary works. Daniel Javitch has recently written an important book tracing how a new work, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, was canonized during the second half of the sixteenth century.¹⁵ Horace's *Ars Poetica* was, as we have seen, long since part of the Western literary canon when Cologno and Riccoboni had their debate in 1591. As we have also seen, the poem's status was threatened by the reemergence of Aristotle's *Poetics* in the middle of the century. In his book, Javitch's focus was on the process whereby a new work becomes part of the literary canon. In this paper I will be studying something complementary: not the original process of textual inclusion but the ongoing and no less important processes of textual retention and exclusion. Let us look briefly at the disputants themselves.

¹⁴ Weinberg; D. Aguzzi-Barbagli, Humanism and Poetics, in *Renaissance Humanism. Foundations, Form, Legacy*, ed. by A. Rabil, Jr. (Philadelphia 1988) 85-169; B. Vickers, Rhetoric and Poetics, in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge 1988) 715-745.

¹⁵ See D. Javitch, *Proclaiming a Classic. The Canonization of Orlando Furioso* (Princeton 1991).

II Antonio Riccoboni¹⁶

Antonio Riccoboni was the leading humanist at Padua in the last three decades of the sixteenth century, a glorious period in the history of the University of Padua, in which it was one of the best in Europe. Compared to Cologno, we know a great deal about Riccoboni's character and intellectual formation, both of which are quite relevant to understanding his work on Horace's *Ars Poetica*.

Born in the small town of Rovigo in 1541 to parents "of moderate means, but respectable",¹⁷ he studied Greek and Latin with the leading Veneto humanists of his youth, including, at Venice, Paolo Manuzio and Marc-Antoine Muret and, at Padua, Carlo Sigonio.¹⁸ Returning by 1558 to

¹⁶ A full-length study of Riccoboni's life has never been written. Most informative are the following works: *De Gymnasio Patavino Antonii Riccoboni Commentariorum Libri Sex* (Padua, Apud Franciscum Bolzetam, 1598; reprinted by Athenaeum, *Biblioteca di Storia della Scuola e delle Università*, vol.32, ed. E. Cortese and D. Maffei, 1980) ff.53r-57v; Iacobus Philippus Tomasini, *Patavini Elogia virorum literis et sapientia illustrium* (Padua 1644) 109-112; N.C. Papadopoli, *Historia Gymnasii Patavini*, vol.1 (Venice 1726) 337; G. Mazzacurati, *La crisi della retorica umanistica (Antonio Riccoboni)* (Naples 1961); M. Schiavone s.v. Antonio Riccoboni in *Enciclopedia filosofica*, vol.4 (Florence 1967) col.750; M. Pecoraro, s.v. Antonio Riccoboni in *Dizionario critico della letteratura italiana*, vol.3 (Turin 1973) 187-189; M.R. Canton, *Intorno alla figura di Antonio Riccoboni lettore dello Studio di Padova (1541-1599)*, Tesi di Laurea, Università degli Studi di Padova (Padua 1973); P. Griguolo, *Antonio Riccoboni (1541-1599), interprete della Poetica di Aristotele*, Tesi di Laurea, Università degli Studi di Padova, Facoltà di Magistero [1984].

¹⁷ BCPadova, A. Lollini, In *Patavinorum professorum decadem praefatio ad virum amplissimum oratoremque praestantissimum Iocubum Baroncium*, p. v., c.61r, cited apud M.R. Canton, *Riccoboni*, 12n28.

¹⁸ *Iacobi Philippi Tomasini Patavini Elogia virorum literis et sapientia illustrium* (Padua 1644) 109-112; N.C. Papadopoli, *Historia Gymnasii Patavini*, vol.1 (Venice 1726) 337. On Muret, see C. Dejob, *Marc-Antoine Muret, un professeur français en Italie dans la seconde moitié du XVIe siècle* (Paris 1881); on Sigonio, see W. McCuaig, *Carlo Sigonio. The Changing World of the Late Renaissance* (Princeton 1989); on Manutius, see the bibliography cited by McCuaig, op.cit., at p.9n16. On the Studio of Venice in the sixteenth century, see R. Palmer, *The Studio of Venice and Its Graduates in the Sixteenth Century*, Contributi alla Storia dell'Università di Padova 12 (1983), especially pp.48-49, for the philologically-oriented Scuola di San Marco, where Robortello and Sigonio taught.

78 Rovigo, Riccoboni was enrolled in the College of Notaries.¹⁹ In 1562, he was hired to be a school teacher in the public school founded in the middle of the fourteenth century.²⁰ By 1570, his prestige was so high that he was elected to the local council and given the task of revising the town's statutes.²¹

Riccoboni never married. He had several siblings, including a learned younger brother, Barnaba. Barnaba lived in Rovigo his whole life, rising to the position of abbot of the Olivetan monastery of S. Bartolomeo and head of the Accademia degli Uniti.²² The brothers had a close relationship all through their lives, sharing intellectual, as well as personal, interests.

Antonio's rise to local prominence did suffer one major setback. During the early 1560s, he was a member of the Accademia degli Addormentati ("Academy of Sleepers") in Rovigo.²³ Far from being the antiquarian debating societies they were later to become, the *accademie* of mid-sixteenth century Italy were instrumental in promoting religious reform and in some cases even Protestantism.²⁴ Such was the case with the

¹⁹ Archivio di Stato di Rovigo, Matricola dei notai, 1286-1568, cc. 80 (cited by P. Griguolo, *Antonio Riccoboni (1541-1599), interprete della Poetica di Aristotele*, Tesi di Laurea, Università degli Studi di Padova, Facoltà di Magistero [1984] 10n8).

²⁰ Accademia dei Concordi di Rovigo, Archivio Storico del Comune di Rovigo, Registri del Consiglio, D.c. 151 (cited by L. Contegiacomo, *Rovigo: Personaggi e famiglie*, in *Le 'iscrizioni' di Rovigo* [Trieste 1985] 485). For a history of the school, see C. Cessi, *La scuola pubblica in Rovigo a tutto il secolo XVI* (Rovigo 1896).

²¹ For Riccoboni's enrollment in the *consiglio*, see Accademia dei Concordi di Rovigo, Archivio Storico del Comune di Rovigo, Registri del Consiglio, DE, c. 62 (cited by L. Contegiacomo, *Rovigo: Personaggi e famiglie*, in *Le 'iscrizioni' di Rovigo* [Trieste 1985] 485); for Riccoboni's revision of the town statutes, see A. Nicolio, *Historia dell'origine et antichità di Rovigo* (Brescia 1578) 139.

²² See S. Malavasi, *Cultura religiosa e cultura laica nel Polesine del Cinquecento: Le accademie degli Addormentati e dei Pastori Frattegiani*, Archivio Veneto 120 (1989) 61-70 at pp.68-69. For information about the Riccoboni family, see L. Contegiacomo, *Rovigo: Personaggi e famiglie*, in *Le 'iscrizioni' di Rovigo* (Trieste 1985) 484-485.

²³ See S. Malavasi, *Giovanni Domenico Roncalli e l'Accademia degli Addormentati di Rovigo*, Archivio Veneto 95 (1972) 47-58, at p.47.

²⁴ On the *accademie* in general, cf. M. Maylender, *Storia delle accademie d'Italia*, 5 vols. (Bologna 1926); F.A. Yates, *The Italian Academies, in Renaissance and Reform: The Italian Contribution, Collected Essays*, vol.2 (London 1983) 6-29; D.A. LaRusso, *Rhetoric in the Italian*

79 Accademia degli Addormentati. In 1561, anonymous posters plastered around the city accused the Accademia of being a Protestant sect. The next year, the Venetian governor of the city ordered its closure;²⁵ and its members were investigated by the Inquisition on charges of heresy.²⁶ These investigations stretched on for several years and uncovered evidence against Riccoboni and the others of Anabaptism and Calvinism.²⁷ This is not surprising: the Veneto had, from the first, been a center of the diffusion of Protestant ideas in Italy.²⁸ This episode – which climaxed with the execution of one member of the academy – is, however, a side issue for the 1591 quarrel, and I leave it behind just noting that it left a bitter, anti-clerical taste in Riccoboni's mouth. As we will see, Riccoboni's anti-clericalism played a role in his quarrel with Cologno, an enthusiastic post-Tridentine priest.

Once the trials had ended, Riccoboni left Rovigo for the freer, more tolerant air of Padua, where he began what was to be a brilliant university career in 1571. Upon his arrival in Padua, Riccoboni quickly earned his *laurea* in canon and civil law, which he received in February of 1571.²⁹ When the distinguished Classicist Marc-Antoine Muret turned down Padua's offer of a professorship in Greek and Roman Humanity, replacing the deceased Francesco Robortello (†March 18, 1567), the posi-

Renaissance, in *Renaissance Eloquence*, ed. J.J. Murphy (Berkeley, Los Angeles 1983) 37-55 at p.44. For the *accademie* in Venice and the Veneto, see the literature cited by Malavasi, op.cit. (supra n.23) 48n6; G. Benzoni, *Aspetti della cultura urbana nella società veneta del '5-'600*. *Le Accademie*, Archivio Veneto 108 (1977) 87-159 (cf. pp.113-115 on heterodox academies, including the Accademia degli Addormentati at Rovigo).

²⁵ See M.R. Canton, op.cit. (supra n.17) 18-19.

²⁶ S. Malavasi, op.cit. (supra n.23) 55.

²⁷ S. Malavasi, op.cit. (supra n.23) 50-53; *Intorno al testamento di Giovanni Domenico Roncalli eterodosso rodigino del Cinquecento*, Archivio Veneto 95 (1972) 5-9, at p.7. Veneto Anabaptism generally was the subject of a study by A. Stella, *Dall'anabattismo al socinanesimo nel Cinquecento veneto* (Padova 1967). For Rovigo, in particular, see S. Ferlin Malavasi, *Sulla diffusione delle teorie ereticali nel Veneto durante il '500: Anabattisti rodigini e polesani*, Archivio Veneto 95 (1972) 5-24.

²⁸ See E. Cochrane, *Italy, 1530-1630* (London and New York 1988) 134-141; A. Stella, *Dall'anabattismo al socinanesimo nel Cinquecento veneto* (Padua 1967).

²⁹ See M.R. Canton, op.cit. (supra n.17) 35.

tion was offered to Riccoboni in May of 1571.³⁰ This rather surprising turn of events was due, as he tells us himself, to the intervention of a well-placed friend, the Venetian Lorenzo Massa, who worked in Venice for the *Riformatori*, or the public officials in charge of the university. Riccoboni had presumably met Massa during his student days in Venice or Padua.³¹ At Padua, Riccoboni taught courses on Greek and Roman, rhetoric, poetics, and oratory.³² Although he published no scholarly *magnum opus* that would justify our calling him a figure of monumental importance to the field of Classical philology, Riccoboni was quite prolific as a writer and has many books, tracts, and orations to his credit.³³ He is undoubtedly best remembered for offering the first reconstruction of the lost second book of Aristotle's *Poetics* and for his successful attack on the authenticity of the pseudepigraphal *Consolatio Ciceronis* of 1583, which had been vigorously defended by his old teacher, Sigonio – the man who probably forged it.³⁴

³⁰ For the history of the chairs in *litterae humaniores* at Padua in the sixteenth century, see Tomasini, *op.cit.* (supra n.18) 340-343. The decision of the Venetian Senate to hire Riccoboni is dated May 14, 1571: "ha molto bisogno il studio nostro di Padova di uno eccellente lettor di humanità per quelli che danno opera a lettere greche et latine, et però havendosi bonissima informazione della dottrina et peritia di legger dell'ecc.te domino Antonio Riccoboni ... il sudetto ... sia condotto a legger la lettura di lettere greche et latine in concorrenza dell'ecc.te mess Zuanne Fasuo!" (ASVenezia, Registro Senato Terra 48, f.98r, apud A.E. Baldini, *Per la biografia di Girolamo Frachetta, Atti e Memorie dell'Accademia Patavina di Scienze, Lettere, ed Arti*, Memorie della Classe di Scienze Morali, Lettere, Ed Arti 92,3 [1979-1980] 34n89). In Cologno's case, we find quite similar language; I will publish the *condotta* elsewhere.

³¹ For Riccoboni's friendship with Massa, see M. R. Canton, *op.cit.* (supra n.17) 35-38, and on Massa see S. Ferlin Malavasi, *Domenico Mazzarelli eterodosso rodigino*, *Archivio Veneto* 100 (1977) 73n30.

³² Information about annual course offerings contained in the *rotuli* of the University of Padua in the AAUPadova permit one to reconstruct Riccoboni's activities as a teacher for much of his career. This I will do elsewhere.

³³ An accurate and full bibliography is lacking; for a partial list of titles, see M.R. Canton, *op.cit.* (supra n.17) 50n128.

³⁴ See W. McCuaig, *op.cit.* (supra n.18) 291-344, for a good account of the Riccoboni-Sigonio quarrel over the *Consolatio*. Riccoboni gives his own version of the quarrel in *op.cit.* (supra n.16) ff.82v-94r. On the forging of Classical texts and their exposure in the Renaissance (without reference to the *Consolatio* affair) see the excellent general article on A.

After the *Consolatio* affair had ended, Riccoboni shifted his attention to rhetoric and poetic theory. The turning-point came during Carnevale of 1585, when Palladio's Teatro Olimpico was inaugurated in nearby Vicenza with a performance of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*. Riccoboni attended the performance and soon wrote a critical letter about its lack of historical fidelity to the governor of the city. In the letter, Riccoboni already shows himself to be a staunch Aristotelian.³⁵ In 1587, Riccoboni published his translation and commentary on the *Poetics*, whose primary goal was to distinguish his views from those of Lodovico Castelvetro.³⁶ Riccoboni's *Compendium* on the *Poetics* – an abridgement with brief commentary – came out in 1591. In the same year, he included in a book of his speeches two *prolusiones* on Aristotle's rhetoric and poetics that were delivered during the 1590-91 academic year.³⁷

This was also a period when – despite a lack of evidence that he was teaching Horace's *Ars Poetica* – he was known to have a keen interest in that text.³⁸ He taught the poem during the 1596-97 academic year. Finally, after publishing various other works on rhetoric and poetics in the 1590s, in 1599 he published a book comparing the poetics of Aristotle and Horace.³⁹

Grafton, *Higher Criticism Ancient and Modern: The Lamentable Deaths of Hermes and the Sibyles*, *Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts* 16 (1988) 155-170.

³⁵ See Weinberg, vol.2, 942-945; the text of the letter is published by A. Gallo, *La prima rappresentazione al Teatro Olimpico* (Milan 1973) 39-52.

³⁶ *Poetica Aristotelis latine conversa: eiusdem Riccoboni paraphrasis in Poeticam Aristotelis: eiusdem Ars Comica ex Aristotele* (Padua, apud Paulum Meietum, 1587); *Antonii Riccoboni Poetica, Aristotelis poeticam per paraphrasim explicans, et nonnullas Ludovici Castelvetrii captiones refellens* (Padua, Apud Paulum Meietum, 1587).

³⁷ A. Riccobonus, *Orationes*, volumen secundum (Padua 1591). The *prolusio* on rhetoric is *oratio* nr. xvii (ff.88r-93v); that on poetics is *oratio* nr. xviii (ff.94r-99v).

³⁸ As evidenced by the fact that his former student Giovanni Bonifacio sent him a letter on 7 September 1590 discussing, among other things, his proposal for emending the text of the *Ars Poetica* 139 from *parturiet* to *parturiet*, supposedly on the basis of an ancient Horace manuscript he owned; cf. G. Bonifaccio, *Delle lettere familiari*, vol.I (Rovigo 1627) 113-116, at p.114-115.

³⁹ *De poetica Aristotelis cum Horatio collatus auctore Antonio Riccobono* (Padua, Apud Laurentium Pasquatum, 1599).

Riccoboni died after a brief illness in the summer of 1599, nearly sixty years old. He was buried in the family tomb he erected three years earlier in S. Francesco in Rovigo, which housed the city's oldest school.

III Nicolò Cologno⁴⁰

Relatively little is known about Cologno and very little has been written about him in the past three centuries. As will be seen, his obscurity is well-deserved.

Cologno was born in Bergamo sometime in the period, 1510-1520. Since few, if any, baptismal records are extant in Bergamo prior to 1564, it is difficult to document Cologno's exact birth date. For our purposes, the most important point is that he was at least twenty years older than Riccoboni. From unpublished sources we learn that Cologno's father's name was Girardo, son of Moyses, and he had at least one sibling, a brother named Antonio.⁴¹

In published sources we have very little information about Cologno's family. A source dating to the mid-1530s described Cologno's social status as "middle-class" (*mediocre*). In an autobiographical poem dedicated to Federico Cornaro on the occasion of Cornaro's appointment as Bishop of Bergamo in 1561, Cologno tells us that his father died when he was young, leaving him impoverished. Perhaps because of the economic blow of the premature death of his father, Cologno seems never to have earned the *laurea*, but he did go to Padua as a young man.⁴² Since he had

⁴⁰ See *Index Bio-bibliographicus Notorum Hominum*, vol.39 (Osnabrück 1986) 336, citing C.G. Jöcher, *Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexicon*, 1. Theil (Leipzig 1750) 2020.

⁴¹ See BC Bergamo MS AB 155, Giuseppe Mozzo, *Antichità bergamasche*, tom.IIc (ca. 1750-1770), Index book 22 (Gab. 0.1.16 bis) fol.113r: "1577 ... Nicolaus fig[lio] d[i]. Girardi de Colonio"; fol.113v: "1588 ... Antonius f[ig]lio d[i] Girardi de Colonio."

⁴² That he may not have earned the *laurea* may be inferred from the absence of his name from E. Martellozzo Forin (ed.), *Acta graduum academicorum ab anno 1526 ad annum 1537* (Padua 1970) and from the index volume to the *Acta graduum* for the years, 1501-1550 (Padua 1982). There is a chance he may have earned his degree elsewhere since

a good knowledge of Latin and Greek, he was able while there in 1536 to find employment as the household tutor of Cosimo Gheri, the 23-year-old Bishop of Fano.⁴³ From a series of letters, published and unpublished, we can reconstruct this most happy period in Cologno's life, which ended with the tragedy of Gheri's death at age 24 on September 24, 1537 from a Tertian fever. It was in this period that Cologno's deep interest in religion was awakened – in no small measure because of the execution of the Catholic martyrs, Thomas More and John Fisher, by Henry VIII and the flight of inspirational English churchmen like Reginald Pole to the Veneto. Pole and Gheri were members of the Pietro Bembo circle. Though a mere satellite in that circle, Cologno was able to rub elbows with some of the intellectual elite of his day. That he viewed this as one of his life's peak moments is clear from an autobiographical poem he wrote twenty-five years after Gheri's death, in which at one point he exclaims:

How happy and pleasing to me were those days, o Gheri, when I chanced to live with you – indeed that, that was truly deserving to be called life:

Toil or Death, ... you beware lest you think anyone could be better or more brilliant than was that godlike youth, the late Bishop of Fano!

Both Priuli and Pole revered him as a friend;

he was honored by most learned Bembo, whom no age surpasses and no age may ever match: at that time the famous city had such great heroes. I rejoice to have lived then. If perchance I have anything of value, I seized it then from his golden gatherings ...

Every man mentioned in these lines was a bishop or cardinal. Religion, then, played just as fundamental a role in the life of the young Cologno as it did for Riccoboni, but the circumstances of their times were quite different. For Cologno, it was Protestant cruelty and the exemplary piety and learning of Catholic churchmen like Gheri and Bembo that was

S. Carlo Borromeo calls him "doctorem ... Nicolaum Colonium, virum eruditum" in *Atti Borromeo*, vol.1 (Florence 1936) 372.

⁴³ On Gheri, see Vita di Monsignor Cosimo Gheri, in *Monumenti di varia letteratura tratti dai manoscritti di Monsignor Lodovico Beccadelli, arcivescovo di Ragusa*, Tom.I, Parte I (Bologna, Nell'Istituto delle Scienze, 1797) 171-196; P. Paschini, *Un amico del Card. Polo: Alvise Priuli, Lateranum 2* (Rome 1921) 35-41. There is much useful information and more recent bibliography about Gheri in G. Fragnito, *Aspetti della censura ecclesiastica nell'Europa della Controriforma*, *Rivista di Storia e Letteratura Religiosa* 21 (1985) 3-48.

decisive. Born a generation later, Riccoboni associated the Church's role in Italy with the equal-but-opposite repression of the Counter-Reformation.

Cologno seems to have been present in Fano a few weeks after Bishop Gheri's death, but after October, 1537⁴⁴ we lose track of him for over eighteen months. The reason for this is that, with the death of Gheri, his brothers were sent to the courts of Cardinals Pole and Contarini in Rome, so there was no more need of the services of Cologno.⁴⁵

We next encounter Cologno in Bergamo, giving a public lecture on the poetry of Horace. The lecture went so well that a few days later, on June 3, 1539, the *Magnifico Consiglio* of Bergamo hired him for three years to serve as grammar teacher in the town's revived public school.⁴⁶ The contract survives in the records of the town council. Not preserved is any notice of the renewal or termination of Cologno's contract.

From two unpublished letters, we also learn that during the period, 1536-1543, Cologno was friendly with the publisher and scholar, Paolo Manuzio, with whom he occasionally corresponded.⁴⁷ In the second letter, dated January 29, 1543, Cologno sounds somewhat bored with life in Bergamo and eagerly asks Manuzio for the news from Venice. We also learn that he is once again friendly with a bishop. The unnamed bishop is Cesare Trivulzio, who served as bishop of Como from 1519 to 1548, and

⁴⁴ Elsewhere I will publish a letter of Benedetto Ramberti to Filippo Gheri and his brothers, dated Venice, October 7, 1537. Ramberti asks Filippo to greet Cologno, if he is still in Fano two weeks after Cosimo Gheri's death.

⁴⁵ For the breakup of Gheri's household in Fano after an abortive attempt to gain the appointment of Beccadelli as Gheri's successor, see P. Paschini, *Un amico del card. Polo: Alvise Priuli, Lateranum 2* (Rome 1921) 60-61.

⁴⁶ See BC Bergamo, MS s.4.20, Azioni dei Consigli, fol.131v-132r, dated 3 May 1539. The identification of this Nicolò Cologno as our man is also accepted by G. Locatelli, *L'istruzione a Bergamo e la Misericordia Maggiore* (Storia e documenti), Bollettino della Civica Biblioteca di Bergamo 4.4 (1910) 57-169, at p.93.

⁴⁷ The letters are in BSPadova ms. 71, foll.87r-88r (Nicolaus Colon[i]us Benedicto Rhamberto, Fano Fortunae, 26 November 1536); foll.93r-94v (Nicolaus Colonius Paulo Manutio, Bergomi, 4 Kal. Feb. 1543). Mention of study of Aristotle is made in the 1536 letter (fol.88r). On Paulus Manutius (1511-1574), see *Nouvelle Biographie Générale* 33 (Paris 1860) 303-310.

who, according to Cologno, had come to Bergamo to find peace and quiet for his literary studies.⁴⁸

No trace of Cologno is found in published or unpublished documents for ten years. In the acts of the canons of the cathedral of Bergamo, Cologno's name appears as a canon from December, 1553 to March, 1566.⁴⁹ In 1575, on the occasion of the apostolic visit to Bergamo of S. Carlo Borromeo, whose reports give us many glimpses of life in the town at that period, we find that Cologno is a priest living in the suburban parish of S. Caterina, a modest quarter of the city. His neighbors included a dyer named Stefano, a tailor and his brother, and "the place where the poor of S. Tomaso dwell".⁵⁰ We know from one of his tracts of 1591 that he also possessed a *villula* near the Brembo River. The reports of S. Carlo's visit also list Cologno as the *clericus titulus* of the church of S. Stefano, from which he derived a small income.⁵¹

Cologno is mentioned as the head of the Accademia dei Chierici di S. Maria Maggiore, a school founded in 1566 and devoted to providing sound, orthodox religious education of clerics aged twelve and older.⁵²

⁴⁸ I will elsewhere publish Cologno's letter to Manuzio, dated Bergamo, January 29, 1543. On Cesare Trivulzio, see Van Gulik/Eubel/Schmitz-Kallenberg, *Hierarchia Catholica Medii et Recentioris Aevi, sive Summorum Pontificum, S.R.E. Cardinalium, Ecclesiarum Antistitum Series*, vol.3, editio altera (Monasterii 1923) 182.

⁴⁹ See AC Bergamo, ms. 158, foll.41v-88v (passim). That Cologno was not a *canonicus* later in his life is also confirmed by the fact that in the marginal notes to Achilles Mutius' poem in praise of Bergamo entitled 'Theatrum, sex partibus distinctum' (Bergamo, Typis Comini Venturae, 1596), Cologno is called a *philosophus* but not a *canonicus*, a title that appears in other notes (e.g., for "Christoforus Tassus Canonicus et Philosophus"; fol.69v).

⁵⁰ See Supplica del parroco di S. Caterina per ottenere che la sua parrocchia facesse parte non del suburbio ma della città, in *Atti Borromeo* at vol.II, p.70, where in n.1 Cologno is mentioned in the catalogue of residences in the parish.

⁵¹ On Cologno in the reports of S. Carlo's apostolic visit, see *Atti Borromeo* at vol.IV, pp.369, 373. On Cologno's *villula* near the Brembo River, see Cologno, *Epistola*, 1.

⁵² For the meaning of "cleric" in the context of such schools, cf. P. Grendler, op.cit. (supra n.1) 6: "a general term that could mean boys intending to become priests, youths in minor orders, or adult clergymen". In the case of Cologno's school, the students belonged to the first two groups.

86 Here Cologno taught orations of Cicero, Virgil, Horace, Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*, and catechism.⁵³

This picture of a cleric, living on his own in modest quarters and earning his living in part from prebends and in part from his own efforts as a teacher conforms to a well-known pattern that has been recently studied by Grendler.⁵⁴ In Bergamo itself, Cologno's position was by no means unique, for the town was no provincial backwater but had a modest cultural life, mainly centered on its clerical humanists. Other clerical teachers of humanity in Bergamo in the period include Giovanni Peliccioli, who published a book on Cicero's *Pro Milone*;⁵⁵ Christoforo Romanelli, who, like Cologno, published a Latin grammar;⁵⁶ and Ercole Manzoni,

⁵³ *Atti Borromeo* at vol.I, 372; cf. G. Locatelli, op.cit. (supra n.46) vol.4 (1910) 77: *Accademia distincta est in tres classes. Doctorem habet dominum Nicolaum Colonium virum eruditum. Habet quatuor hipodidascalos seu adiutores. Singulis diebus explicatur oratio ciceroniana et poeta unus vel Horatius vel Virgilius. Explicatur etiam liber Aristotelis Priorum. Festis dominicis tantum diebus, chatechismus exponitur ab eodem domino Nicolao. Studiorum exercitationes fiunt in dictatis conscribendis, explicationes lectionum repetuntur. Quae observatione digna sunt in commentariis reservantur. Latina vulgariter redduntur et contra dictata vulgaria latine scribuntur aut explicantur. Virgilius aut Horatius memoriae mandantur et singulis sabbatis memoriter pronuntiantur.* Locatelli gives a narrative account of the history of the school at vol.4 (1910) 128-139; see also A. Roncalli (= Pope John XXIII), *La 'Misericordia Maggiore' di Bergamo e le altre istituzioni di beneficenza amministrate dalla Congregazione di Carità* (Bergamo 1912) 65-66.

⁵⁴ Cf. P. Grendler, op.cit. (supra n.1) 11: "... clerical masters neither lived nor taught under ecclesiastical roofs, but lived and taught anywhere in the town. Indeed, after Trent, bishops sometimes obliged seminarians to take employment as household tutors after several years of study but before ordination, if they had not secured postings through their own efforts. One suspects that some of these clerics simply continued to teach after ordination. Residence requirements were not always enforced on the Renaissance clergy. Hence, some clerics became independent masters and, like laymen, moved from quarter to quarter and town to town searching for more pupils and better positions."

⁵⁵ *Ars oratoria seu in M.T. Ciceronis Orationem pro Milone* (Bergamo, Apud Cominum Venturam 1599). On Peliccioli see D. Calvi, *Scena letteraria de gli scrittori bergamaschi* (Bergamo 1664) 209-210. Like Cologno, Peliccioli seems to have been part of the circle around Bishop Federico Comaro, to whom he dedicated the *Ars oratoria*.

⁵⁶ *Epitomes totius artis grammaticae* (Bergamo, Apud Cominum Venturam 1594). On Romanelli, see Calvi, op.cit. (supra n.55) 102-103.

87 who shared with Cologno an interest in the plan of Horace's *Ars Poetica*, on which he published a book in 1604.⁵⁷

Whether or not Cologno was associated with the Accademia dei Chierici di S. Maria Maggiore since its founding is not clear from our sources but is suggested by the coincidence that the school was founded in the same year (1566) that Cologno ceased to be a canon. At any rate, when S. Carlo Borromeo visited the school and interviewed the students, he did not find them a group high in either intelligence or achievement.⁵⁸ The Bergamasco Pope John XXIII (Angelo Roncalli) characterized conditions in the school at this period as "not particularly flourishing", and attributed the school's closure in 1590 to the shortcomings already apparent in 1575.⁵⁹

Be that as it may, when Cologno's school closed in 1590, the schoolmaster, now in his seventies, was available for other employment. The position of professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Padua came Cologno's way rather unexpectedly. He did not apply for the post (or so he claimed) but was given it through the good offices of Giovanni Michiel, one of the *riformatori* and a man Cologno called his patron in 1591.⁶⁰ Most important for the Paduan appointment was his long-standing relationship with the Cornaro family. Cardinal Federico Cornaro was Cologno's old friend and the bishop of Bergamo from 1561 until 1577 and then the bishop of Padua until his death in 1590. Sixtus V made him a cardinal in 1585.⁶¹ Cologno had dedicated the *Methodus* to Cornaro in

⁵⁷ *In Q. Horatii Flacci de Arte Poetica Librum, Hercules Manzonius, Civis ab origine Bergomas. Qui aperte demonstrat, expressum ab Aristotelis Poetice Horatii poetices ordinem. Quos vero interscribit particularum numeros, Aristotelicam in eos poetice prudentia Madii dispositam fecit* (Bergamo, Apud Cominum Venturam 1604). On Manzoni, see D. Calvi, op.cit. (supra n.55) 334.

⁵⁸ For the documentation, see Locatelli, op.cit. (supra n.46) vol.5 (1911) 77-78.

⁵⁹ A. Roncalli, op.cit. (supra n.53) 66.

⁶⁰ Cf. Cologno, *Responsio*, p.17: "What has moved you [scil., Riccoboni] to be so ill-willed toward me I cannot for my part imagine – unless it is the fact that you are vexed because, even though you sought the position of professor of Moral Philosophy, I who did not apply was chosen, even though I resisted the appointment, as my patron, the most illustrious Giovanni Michiel can attest."

⁶¹ On Cardinal Cornaro (1531-1590), see Niccolò Antonio Vescovo di Padova, *Serie cronologica dei vescovi di Padova* (Padua 1786) 138-140; G. Moroni, *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica*, vol.17

1587, and at the end of the volume he published a laudatory poem about his friend.⁶² Since the Cardinal predeceased De Nores, any help he may have given Cologno's cause could only have been quite general, aimed at paving the way for an eventual appointment, should a vacancy arise. That he may have done so is suggested not only by his friendship for Cologno but also by the fact that the Cardinal was strongly committed to the Tridentine reforms, particularly those regarding religious education.⁶³ Moreover, as Magnus Cancellarius of the University, Cornaro naturally interested himself in university affairs, expressing concern at the number of Protestants in the student body and befriending such professors as the famous physician, Gerolamo Mercuriale.⁶⁴ Cornaro's successor, his nephew Alvise Cornaro, continued his educational policies. Cologno's

(Venice 1842) 144; P. Frasson in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani* 29 (Rome 1983) 183-185.

⁶² This is the first poem, entitled *Ad Federicum Cornelium, cum esset Episcopus Bergomi*, in the collection *Eiusdem Nicolai Colonii Carmina*, pp.57-59.

⁶³ See C. Bellinati, *Un aspetto della riforma tridentina a Padova: le scuole e le compagnie di dottrina cristiana (1541-1664)*, Tesi di laurea, Università di Pavia, anno accademico 1953-54, 75-85. On the Church's keen interest in the universities generally in the period after Trent, see L. Willaert, S.I., *La restaurazione cattolica dopo il Concilio di Trento (1563-1648), Storia della Chiesa*, vol.XVIII/1 (Turin 1966) 226-228. Of special interest is the section on 'I religiosi nelle Università' (227), where the general trend to encourage religious to assume professorships is discussed.

⁶⁴ Cf. Mercuriale's letter in [anon.], *Lettere d'uomini illustri che fiorirono nel principio del secolo decimosettimo* (Venice, Nella Stamperia Baglioni, 1744) 468-471, at p.468, where we find Mercuriale's nostalgic recollections of the hospitality given him by the Cardinal during his Padua days before his transfer to Bologna in 1588: "credo ... che se fosse piaciuto, che io ritornassi a Padova, siccome ne vive in me desiderio, fra le altre mie consolazioni, questa sarebbe la maggiore d'aver a servire sua Sign. Illustrissima, e spererei siccome il Sign. Cardinale Federico [Cornaro] mi aveva fatta grazia de darmi goder in vita il Palazzo di Torre, con quel Brolo e Giardino ..." On Mercuriale's later attempt to return to his position in Padua and on his unhappiness in Bologna, see F. Seneca, *Un fallito tentativo di Girolamo Mercuriale di tornare nell'ateneo patavino, Rapporti tra le Università di Padova e Bologna, Centro Per la Storia dell'Università di Padova* 20 (1988) 161-172. On Cornaro and the University, cf. P. Frasson, op.cit. (supra n.61) 185; C. Bellinati, *ibid.*, 31; on the position of Magnus Cancellarius of the University of Padua, on whose authority as papal deputy the laurea was conferred, see *Nicolai Comneni Papadopoli Historia Gymnasii Patavini* (Venice, Apud Sebastianum Coleti, 1726) vol.1, 104-117.

inaugural lecture, *De veritate*, is dedicated to the new bishop, whom he calls upon to continue the *patrocinium* of his uncle.⁶⁵

The Venetian Senate's decision to hire Cologno for four years is preserved and is dated May 6, 1591.⁶⁶ The document justifies the appointment by noting that Cologno had written much on the subject of moral philosophy. In fact, the only publication on record from his pre-Padua days was the *Methodus*, published in 1587, which is a work on poetics. The fact that Cologno was so old and so relatively obscure when he was hired by the Venetian Senate suggests that personal connections were indeed an important factor in his selection.

We are fortunate in having not only the polemics exchanged with Riccoboni but also his inaugural lecture *De veritate* as evidence of Cologno's one-year tenure at the University of Padua. This evidence suggests that the year was probably not his happiest. Having had to confront the intellectual challenge of Riccoboni in the very days in which his appointment became official (Riccoboni's *Dissensio* can be dated to April, 1591 on the basis of the date of the dedicatory letter of the accompanying *Compendium*), Cologno next found that he was unable to get through the ceremony of his inaugural lecture because of serious disturbances from his students. In the preface of the *De veritate*, he writes: "Because of the bad behavior of the shouting students, I was unable to finish all the things that I had planned to say in my first lecture about Political Science ... [so] many people have asked me to publish it ..."⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Cf. *Nicolai Colonii Disputatio de veritate quam pronuntiavit in praefatione De Politica Scientia* (Padua, apud Paulum Meietum, 1591) p.[1]: "... Haec ego volui in nomine tuo apparere: ut intelligeres me vehementer optare, quo sum usus antea patrocinio FEDERICI CARDINALIS Illustrissimi Patru tui, idem ut amplitudo sua suscipere ne recuset clientis tibi addictissimi fidem optimam et observantiam defero singularem. On Alvise Cornaro (1558-1594) see G. Gullino, *Biografia degli Italiani*, vol.29 (Rome 1983) 149-50.

⁶⁶ As noted above, I will publish the *condotta* elsewhere.

⁶⁷ Pp.i-ii of the unpaginated dedicatory letter to Aloysius Cornelius, Bishop of Padua: *Quoniam quae praefari cogitaveram de Politica scientia, quae Doctrinam traditam in Libris Ethicis et Politicis complectitur, corrupta obstrepentium adolescentum consuetudine peragere omnia non potui, rogatus sum a multis ut ea publice legenda proponerem. On p.ii of the dedication Cologno writes to the new bishop, Haec ego volui in nomine tuo apparere: ut intelligeres me vehementer optare, quo sum usus antea patrocinio FEDERICI CARDINALIS Illustrissimi Patru tui,*

Little wonder, then, that, as Facciolati wrote in his 18th-century history of the University of Padua, the 70- to 80-year old Cologno resigned his four-year position at the end of the first year, "exhausted by his age and his unusual labors".⁶⁸

Cologno returned to Bergamo in 1592, where he spent the remaining years of his life writing, publishing and teaching.⁶⁹ He died on April 7, 1602 and was buried in his family chapel in S. Agostino.

IV The Substantive Dispute

The Riccoboni-Cologno debate was comprised of some forty-nine separate issues. Of these, only nineteen directly concerned the *Ars Poetica*; almost as many – 17 – involved Aristotle's *Poetics*; and the rest include such personal or general matters as the definition of method and whether Riccoboni coveted Cologno's appointment as Professor of Ethics. As the debate proceeded, the emphasis shifted away from the *Ars Poetica* and toward personal issues and the elucidation of the *Poetics*. By the time we

idem ut amplitudo sua suscipere ne recuset Clientis tibi addictissimi fidem optimam et observantiam defero singularem.

⁶⁸ J. Facciolati, *Fasti Gymnasii Patavini* (Padua 1757) 316: *Vix autem defuncto Jasone, scholarium Universitas summopere commendavit Magistratui Michaelem Bradiolum Medici Collegii Praesidem. Sed locus vacavit usque ad diem pridie non. febr. MDXCII. [sic] quo die Nicolaus Colonius Bergomas conductus est florensis ducensis. Anno post aetate atque insolito labore fractus in patriam rediit. Riccoboni in op.cit. (supra n.16), fol.79r, wrote more succinctly: Eius locus [i.e., De Nores'] datus est an. 1591 Nicolao Colonio Bergomati, qui per annum eam cathedram tenuit, posteaque in patriam suam rediit. An. autem 1594 ad talem explicationem habendam electus est Ioannes Bellonius Venetus et Canonicus Patavinus, vir ingeniosissimus et doctissimus, ac non solum iuris utriusque peritus, cuius insignia est consecutus, sed etiam in studio Philosopohiae fructuose versatus et potissimum in doctrina Platonica exercitatus.*

⁶⁹ We catch a glimpse of Cologno just after his return from Padua in *Achillis Mucii Theatrum sex partibus distinctum* (Bergomi, Typis Comeni Venturae, 1596) fol.68v. This work is a poem celebrating Bergamo, its history, topography, and famous citizens. "Nicolaus Colonius philosophus praestantissimus", as he is called in the marginal note, is mentioned in the *Pars Quarta* as inhabiting the vicus S. Antonii (cf. fol.68r).

arrive at Riccoboni's *Conciliatio* – Appendix I, nr.6 – the *Ars Poetica* is almost wholly absent from the discussion.

Here it will be possible to present just a sampler of the debate by looking at how the two disputants interpreted the first 45 lines of the *Ars Poetica*.

Cologno's discussion in the *Methodus* begins by praising Horace's learning, especially his mastery of all the branches of philosophy. His only fault he shared with Aristotle: a penchant for brevity, which could sometimes make his writings appear to be obscure (p.1). The *Ars Poetica* is a case in point.

Scholars have been misled by Horatian brevity into thinking that the poem is not a methodical technical treatise – by which Cologno means a comprehensive treatment of the subject of poetics, with the topic covered in an orderly way (p.3). These scholars believed that the *Ars Poetica* treated some (but not all) of the problems connected with tragedy and comedy, but very little of those otherwise handled in a formal treatise such as Aristotle's *Poetics*. According to these commentators, then, Horace's emphasis is on the dramatic genres, and he gives short shrift to epic. Cologno's aim is to correct this misinterpretation by showing that the work is an *ars*, i.e., a formal treatise, and that it treats epic as thoroughly as it does the other genres and hence is comprehensive.

Cologno accepts Aristotle's doctrine that plot is the "soul of poetry" (p.3).⁷⁰ As such, it is the principle around which a poetic treatise ought to be arranged. Cologno speculates that Horace (whom he assumes agreed with Aristotle about the importance of plot) might have proceeded in two ways in structuring the *Ars Poetica*: by dealing with the properties peculiar to the four kinds of plots (epic, tragic, comic, and satyric); or by discussing the properties of plot common to all four genres (p.3).

According to Cologno, much of the first section of the poem (verses 1-37) represents a fusion of the two options. Cologno agrees with such earlier commentators as Maggi and Pigna that the first section concerns all the literary genres, but he thinks it has a special relevance to the epic plot (p.4).⁷¹ This is because of the fact that an epic poem is typically the

⁷⁰ Aristotle, *Poetics* 1450a38.

⁷¹ *Vincentii Madii Brixiani in Q. Horatii Flacci de arte poetica librum ad Pisonem, Interpretatio* (Venice, In officina Erasmiana Vincentii Valgrisi, 1574).

longest of the four kinds of poems, making the epic poet more likely to err in composing his plot (p.4). Epic has this quality because it is filled with episodes, whereas poems in the other genres either have no episodes or just a few, short ones. By *episode*, Cologno means "an extraneous matter added for the sake of pleasure" (p.4). Now, the danger run by the epic poet is to compromise the unity⁷² of his work by adding too many episodes, by giving his episodes too much variety, and so on (p.4).

Cologno thinks that Horace's emphasis on epic can be confirmed by a host of details in the poem's first forty-five lines. The image of the monster in lines 1-4 he interprets as representing an epic poem that is bad because it is episodic. He bases this reading both in the general argument about the length of epics but also in the word *librum* in line 7, for he thinks that the word implies a long poem, and epics are long poems (p.5). The words, *inceptis gravibus plerumque et magna professis* (*Ars Poetica* 14: "a serious work of large pretensions") he likewise takes as proof that Horace is thinking specifically of the epic poet, because only the epic poet announces his theme at the beginning of the poem (p.6). In verses 21-22, he takes the *amphora* to represent an epic, because it is a big vase; and he interprets the *urceus*, a small vase, to be episodes (p.8). In verse 27, the vice of turgidity applies specifically to epic, because epic is written in the high style (p.11). In the next lines (28-29), Horace criticizes epic writers who desire to give too much variety to their episodes, with the result that their poem loses its unity and resembles the monster with which the *Ars Poetica* begins (pp.11-12). The simile about the craftsman whose shop is near the Ludus Aemilius (lines 32-37) indicates the difficulties faced by the composer of epic: he must not only pay attention to unity; he must also have more training than other poets because the epic is the most difficult genre of all (pp.12-13). Finally, in lines 42-45 on proper arrangement, Horace deals with a topic of concern to all poets, but by using the words *promissi carminis auctor* (45: "the writer pledged to produce a poem") he shows that he once again puts special emphasis on the epic poet, the length

1550) 329-330; *Ioan. Baptistae Pignae poetica Horatiana* (Venice, Apud Vincentium Valgrisium, 1561) 1-5.

⁷² Aristotle assumes that unity is a poetic virtue in passages like *Poetics* 1451a1, 1451a16-17, 1462b4.

of whose poem and the variety of whose episodes make proper arrangement an urgent necessity (pp.13-14).

In the *Methodus*, Cologno's desire to defend the *Ars Poetica* as a technical treatise against earlier *Cinquecento* attacks by scholars like Robortello and De Nores is readily comprehensible. Perhaps less immediately clear to us is why Cologno bases his defense on a reading of the first section of the poem as relating to epic and to the problem of the episodic plot. To the twentieth-century reader, such an interpretation seems far-fetched.

Cologno's motives were undoubtedly two-fold. On the one hand, his definition of *method* led him to seek in the text an apparently missing section on epic corresponding to the sections on the other genres. Secondly, in *Cinquecento* literary controversies, the issue of the episodic plot bulked large, particularly in the quarrel over the *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto. Right from the beginning in the *Spositione* of Simone Fornari, debate over this work was centered on the question of whether Ariosto's epic was too episodic.⁷³ Cologno's awareness of this controversy is demonstrated at p.7 of the *Methodus*, where he writes, "Horace rejects digressions from ... epic as if they were unbecoming and unsuitable. Horace ... had observed [this fault] in the poets of his own age ... so, too, in our times there are men, otherwise noble and learned, who have written about *Orlando* and *Rinaldo*." Concern for episodiness was not, however, limited to this debate but is a recurrent theme in practical criticism in the sixteenth century, appearing, e.g., in discussions of works as different as the *Divina Commedia*,⁷⁴ Pagello's tragedy, *Heraclea*,⁷⁵ and Guarini's controversial pastoral tragicomedy, the *Pastor Fido*.⁷⁶

Thus, by his revisionist reading of the beginning of the *Ars Poetica*, Cologno's strategy was defensive and offensive at the same time. He both

⁷³ *La Spositione di M. Simon Fornari da Rheggio sopra l'Orlando Furioso di M. Ludovico Ariosto* (Florence, Appresso Lorenzo Torrentino 1549) 34-35. For a history of the quarrel, see Weinberg, vol.2, 954-1073.

⁷⁴ Cf. *Discorso di messer Anselmo Castravilla, nel quale si mostra l'imperfezione della comedia di Dante con il dialogo delle lingue del Varchi*, VL MS 6528, foll.76-84, at fol.79.

⁷⁵ Cf. *Giuditio d'Ant.o Riccobono sulla tragedia Heraclea di Liv.o Pagella*, VL MS 6528, foll.132-134^v at fol.132; on the problem of the authorship of the *Giuditio*, see Weinberg, vol.2, 939-940.

⁷⁶ Cf. *Discorsi poetici dell'eccell. sig. Faustino Summo Padouano* (Padua, Appresso Francesco Bolzetta, 1600) fol.90.

staved off attacks on the poem's weakness as a technical treatise by showing that it was more methodical than had been recognized; and he also reestablished its positive claim to authority in the matter of a central cultural issue by suggesting its relevance to the debate about the episodic plot.

Riccoboni published the *Dissensio*, his critical reply to Cologno's *Methodus* in April of 1591, perhaps just after he had learned that Cologno was a serious candidate for the post of professor of Ethics at the University of Padua. Cologno's appointment was formally approved by the Venetian Senate on May 6, 1591. Throughout the *Dissensio*, Riccoboni refers to his opponent only as "a certain learned man". That Cologno was meant cannot have been difficult for Riccoboni's erudite readership to infer: Riccoboni repeatedly quotes or paraphrases passages from the *Methodus*.⁷⁷

From the beginning, Riccoboni makes it clear that he disagrees with Cologno in viewing the *Ars Poetica* as a technical treatise. Instead, he reads the work as an informal letter on some, but not all, of the topics that a methodical treatise would handle (p.i). The *Dissensio* is devoted to defending this view and also to showing that, despite its epistolary informality, the poem is derived from a methodical source, namely, Aristotle's *Poetics* (p.i).

In holding this position, Riccoboni is far from original. Since the revival of interest in Aristotle's *Poetics* earlier in the *Cinquecento*, scholars had labored to show the parallels between that work and Horace's poem – sometimes misinterpreting both texts in the process.⁷⁸ In particular, Riccoboni follows Grifoli in seeing that the *Poetics* was Horace's source but that Horace changed the order of topics in his source and, indeed, omitted many of the topics treated by Aristotle.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Cf. *Dissensio*, 1, 6, 7, 12, 13, 15.

⁷⁸ See Weinberg, vol.1, 111-155.

⁷⁹ Cf. *Q. Horatii Flacci liber de arte poetica Iacobi Grifoli Lucinianensis interpretatione explicatus* (Paris, Ex typographia Matthaei Davidi 1552; originally published in Florence, 1550) 10-11: *Cum itaque Horatius de poetica facultate curam scribendi suscepisset, tametsi de comoedia nonnulla, tamen de Tragoediae ratione multa in primis disputavit. Nam quae pertinent ad Epicos, non plura scripsit, quam communia sint utriusque generi, vel leviter omnino, et pauca gustavit ... Videns igitur*

Riccoboni scrutinizes what Cologno means by the word, *method* (p.2). According to Riccoboni, there are two kinds of method: the resolving method, proceeding from whole to its parts; and, its opposite, the composing method (p.2).⁸⁰ Cologno's tacit position is that Horace used the first method, since Cologno believes that the poem begins by defining plot as the element common to all poems, and continues with a demonstration of the nature of the plot of the different varieties of poetry (epic, tragic, comic, and satyric). Riccoboni grants that if this is the case, then Horace's poem would, indeed, be methodical (p.2).

At this point, we will do well to tarry a moment to note that Riccoboni's definition of method represents the latest thinking of late-Paduan Aristotelianism. In the decade before the *Dissensio*, two Padua philosophers – Giacomo Zabarella and Francesco Piccolomini, both friends of Riccoboni – had quarrelled about the definition of the compository and resolatory methods and about their application to the various branches of knowledge.⁸¹ There is no question but that Riccoboni was familiar with their debate since he summarizes it in his history of the University of Padua. Here, then, at the beginning of the Riccoboni-Cologno dispute we see something that is quite typical of the whole debate: Riccoboni, the insider, with twenty years of active participation in the intellectual life of the University of Padua, is able to run circles around the obscure priest from Bergamo, whose only authorities are Aristotle, Horace, and Lambinus' commentary on Horace.

Aristotelis iudicio Tragoediam constare fabula, moribus, sententia, dictione, apparatu, et melodia, primum de constitutione fabulae disserendum esse statuit, nam rei totius imitandae rationem ea continet: deinde, cum more, et sententiae verbis explicentur, orationem statim post fabulam coepit expolire: in quo non est secutus nec ordinem, nec rationem Aristotelis ..."

⁸⁰ For more on these methods, see N.W. Gilbert, *Renaissance Concepts of Method* (New York and London 1960).

⁸¹ There is no extensive account of this quarrel, and my account of it here will focus on those aspects that are most important for understanding the Riccoboni-Cologno dispute. For earlier literature, see N.W. Gilbert, *ibid.*, 173-176 (pp.164-176 provide useful background); *Jacobi Zabarella De methodis libri quatuor; liber de regressu, Instrumenta Rationis. Sources for the History of Logic in the Modern Age*, vol.1, edited by C. Vasoli (Bologna 1985) xxvii-xxviii.

Riccoboni agrees with Cologno in seeing plot as the category of things treated by poetics (p.2). He disagrees with Cologno, however, in interpreting the first section of the *Ars Poetica* as emphasizing epic plot as against plot in general. In Riccoboni's Aristotelian terminology, such a view attributes to members of a single species characteristics that are common to the whole genus of poetry (p.2). In defending this view, Cologno violates the key principle of Aristotle's analytical method, viz., of proving the unknown from the known (p.3).

Cologno is right to say that the epic plot is both the longest and most difficult of all (p.3), but Riccoboni criticizes Cologno for proving this with a false argument about episodes. The main error that Cologno makes is in defining the word episode in too general a way as "an extraneous matter added for the sake of pleasure". In fact, Aristotle uses the word in four senses. In his *Defensor*, Riccoboni will give his source for this observation as Castelvetro's 1570 commentary on the *Poetics*.⁸² Riccoboni's receptivity to Castelvetro's insight shows again that Riccoboni was *au courant* with the work of contemporary scholars.

Next, Riccoboni attacks Cologno's claim that there are four kinds of plot and hence four genres of literature. He notes that Horace mentions six kinds of poetry, adding the elegiac, iambic, and lyric genres to those mentioned by Cologno and subsuming satyr drama under tragedy (p.6).

Riccoboni's next task is to show that the arrangement of the *Ars Poetica* is far from methodical. Had Horace done what Cologno thinks he has done that would indeed have resulted in a poem methodically arranged (p.6). Instead, the *Ars Poetica* lurches from topic to topic with no particular rationale (p.7). By Cologno's own admission, the large section running from 251 to 476 contains material that is at best "not unrelated" to the alleged plan of the poem (*Dissensio*, p.7, quoting *Methodus*, p.40). So, for Riccoboni, the topics are treated in a "jumbled up" order, quite differently from the tight organization found in Aristotle (p.8).

Not content to refute Cologno on the central issue of the poem's structure, Riccoboni goes on to rearrange sections of the poem to show how Horace's informal letter can be "reduced" to an orderly plan. It is important to stress that Riccoboni's intention is not *textual criticism* – he is not

⁸² For the passage in Castelvetro, see *Dissensio*, 4n10.

proposing to transpose lines of the poem which supposedly have been displaced from their original location. Rather, his purpose involves *source-criticism*: he thinks that Horace wrote the *Ars Poetica* inspired by a methodical technical treatise, which Riccoboni, following earlier commentators like Maggi and Grifoli, believed to be Aristotle's *Poetics*.⁸³ Riccoboni's aim is thus to rearrange the lines of the *Ars Poetica* in order to show both that Horace treats the same topics as did Aristotle and that these topics can be arranged in a more coherent fashion than we find in Horace, who was trying to give his poem the chatty, informal air of a letter to friends. This notion of reduction to a system is Aristotelian: in the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle says that the chief characteristic of a science is its reduction to a system of the random experiences of mankind in a certain field of endeavor.⁸⁴

Presenting all the details of Riccoboni's reduction would far exceed the space at my disposition; instead, in Appendix II, I give an example of his approach. I should note that in his subsequent tract, the *Responsio* (Appendix I, nr.3) Cologno misconstrues Riccoboni's purpose as philological transposition, in the manner of Riccoboni's enemy, Joseph Scaliger, and as not a mere *Quellenkritik*. But that involves a part of the quarrel that we have no time for here. Instead, let us pass on to Riccoboni's criticisms of specific points of Cologno's case.⁸⁵

Riccoboni rejects Cologno's interpretation of the first thirteen lines of the poem, which supposedly relate more to epic than to the other genres. For Riccoboni, the point of the opening verses is to warn poets against disunified plots of any kind (p.13). Thus, he also contests Cologno's

⁸³ Cf. Madius, op.cit. (supra n.71) 328: *Quoniam vero partes illae duae libelli huius, quas praecipuas esse diximus, totae fere ad Poeticas Aristotelis imitationem conscriptae sunt: non inutile futurum existimavi, si postquam ea, quae ad Aristotelis Poeticam attinebant, explicavimus; cuius ratione omnis mihi fuerat susceptus labor; quae hic ab Horatio habentur, in Aristotele, velut in fonte demonstrarem, a quo velut rivulum, librum hunc deduxit; J. Grifoli, op.cit. (supra n.79) 7: illud certe affirmare non dubito, ostendisse me locos Horatianos, ac totum fere hoc opus ex Aristotelis Arte poetica decerptum: Nec res in occulto latet: perspiciet, an ita sit, quicumque leget.*

⁸⁴ Cf. Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1354a1ff.

⁸⁵ Omitting his criticisms of specific passages in Cologno's commentary that have no bearing on the main issues of the quarrel.

attempts to link specific details here with epic. The word *librum* (7) could refer to any genre and need not be restricted to epic (p.14). Poems with "serious beginnings that make grand promises" (14) could just as easily refer to dithyrambs as epics (p.14). In verses 21-22, the *amphora* does not stand for epic and the *urceus* for an episode. The point here is not that the bad poet loses sight of the whole epic by focussing too narrowly on the episodes, as Cologno seems to think, but that he is unable to execute whatever kind of poem he chooses to undertake (p.14). Lines 24-31 pertain to diction, not to epic plot (p.15). Riccoboni interprets the simile about the craftsman in lines 32-37 as referring, not specifically to epic, but to any genre of poetry, in which the poet should excell not simply in one part of the work but in the whole (p.10). As for arrangement, he disagrees with Cologno that verses 42-45 concern epic alone because the problem of where to begin telling a story is common to many of the literary genres (p.13).

V Significance of the Quarrel

So much for the sampler of the debate, which should suffice to show why I believe that Riccoboni emerged the clear victor. More important, however, than determining the winner and loser in what was essentially a local dispute with few repercussions outside Padua, is to pose the question about the overall significance of the debate for our understanding of late Renaissance culture and of the *Ars Poetica*. I would like briefly to suggest two very different kinds of answers to this question: the first, from the perspective of the sixteenth century; the second, from our own viewpoint today.

First, from the point of view of the disputants the quarrel can be seen to reflect not just literary disputes about Horace and Aristotle but also a conflict of fundamental professional, economic and ideological interests.

The element of professional rivalry between Riccoboni and Cologno is not something about which we must speculate; it was clear to the disputants themselves. At stake was the succession to Jason De Nores' chair in the Moral Philosophy of Aristotle at the University of Padua. As noted, De

Nores died in 1590.⁸⁶ Cologno was not shy about acknowledging the fact that he was backed for the position by one of the *Riformatori* of the University, Giovanni Michiel.⁸⁷ Cologno claimed that he did not seek the post but that Riccoboni did; according to Cologno, this rejection is what motivated Riccoboni's attack on his work.

Riccoboni admits that he did apply for the post, but denies that his rejection has prejudiced him against Cologno:

For my part, I am not biased [against you] because I have sought the post of professor of Ethics and Morality ... since other most famous men of my order have held this position. I also had put so much study into this subject that I thought myself worthy to offer my labor, however modest, to my Most Serene Prince. However, I at once and utterly acquiesced in the decision of the most illustrious *Riformatori* of the University.⁸⁸

As this passage demonstrates, Riccoboni was well aware that his predecessor, Robortello, had held both the chair of Humanity and of Moral Philosophy at Padua, as had Marc-Antoine Muret at Rome.⁸⁹ There was more at stake, however, than the mere accumulation of academic titles (and very possibly a rise in salary): Riccoboni says at the end of the *Conciliatio* that he is inferior to Cologno in three ways: as a man younger in age; as a lay person as opposed to a priest; and as a professor of Humanity as compared to a professor of Moral Philosophy.⁹⁰ This is not only a facetious gibe. Academic disciplines in the *Cinquecento* did enjoy different statuses, and the status of Moral Philosophy was higher than that of Humanity. The documentation of this comes from the case of Lionardo Salviati's appointment to the Studio of Ferrara in 1586. At first, he was

⁸⁶ Cf. above, n.13.

⁸⁷ Cf. Cologno, *Responsio* 17.

⁸⁸ Riccoboni, *Defensor*, 8.

⁸⁹ Riccoboni speaks of Robortelli's dual appointment at: op.cit. (supra n.16) fol.25^v (misnumbered as 27^v): *Aristotelis Ethicorum ad Nicomachum libri decem, ab Antonio Riccobono latine conversi: capitum partitionibus, ac periochis distincti* (Hanoviae, Typis Wechelianis, apud haeredes Claudii Marnii, 1610) 10-11: *Quae nimirum caussa fuit, cur saepe non fuerint distincti Humanitatis, et moralis, ac civilis Philosophiae doctores, sed iidem in publicis Gymnasiis utramque facultatem professi sint; ut inter caeteros Romae Marcus Antonius Muretus, in hoc Gymnasio Patavino Franc. Robortellus, alibi alii ...*

⁹⁰ Riccoboni, *Conciliatio* [6^r].

offered the title of *lettore d'umanità* but, in the words of his biographer, Salviati considered this "an affront to his dignity", and demanded instead, and received, the title of *lettore delle morali d'Aristotele*.⁹¹

How Riccoboni viewed Horace's poem before 1591 is of great interest for our study of his quarrel with Cologno. We are in the fortunate position of being able to document his views from several years before the quarrel with Cologno broke out – an important fact if we wish to gauge the extent to which Riccoboni's fight against Cologno was motivated by genuine intellectual disagreement (as Riccoboni claimed) or merely by Riccoboni's dog-in-the-manger jealousy of Cologno's selection for the post of Professor of Moral Philosophy (as Cologno claimed).

The document in question is an unpublished letter written by Riccoboni to Belisario Bulgarini, the Sieneese humanist, dated Padua, March 24, 1587. Riccoboni writes in answer to a previous letter from Bulgarini informing him of the news that an oration of Girolamo Zoppio on Horace's poetics had just appeared. It is not clear to what text of Zoppio's Bulgarini is referring, but this is a side issue and need not concern us here. In his reply, Riccoboni writes to Bulgarini:

... the speech of Zoppio has not yet arrived in Padua, and thus I don't know what else to say except that I have always esteemed Zoppio and believe that this will also be true of his exposition of the poetics of Horace, of which you have advised me. I can also give you some news. Thomas Correa, the new humanist in the University of Bologna, writes me that his commentary on the *Ars Poetica* is now in Venice being printed. So, I think that before too long there will be more commentaries than there are verses of that letter, which was written without much craft and which does not completely teach the art [of poetry] – let all those commentators say and do what they will!⁹²

⁹¹ Salviati was the founder of the famous Accademia della Crusca in Florence. The quotation is from P.M. Brown, *Lionardo Salviati. A Critical Biography* (Oxford 1974) 205, where more details about the affair can be found.

⁹² BCSiena MS C.II.25, fol.24: "... l'orazione del Zoppio non è arrivata a Padova, et perciò non li vi so dir altro, si non che lo stimo sempre Zoppio, et tali credo, che sarà anchora nella spositione della poetica d'Horatio; di cui V.S. mi da aviso, potendole anch'io dar novita, che mi scrivi il S.or Thomasso Correa, novello Humanista nello Studio di Bologna, nel primo luoco, esser hormai in Vinegia un suo commento

Riccoboni's position, as expressed in this early document, shows that he has embraced what I have called the "letter-thesis" of the *Ars Poetica*, as expressed by Jason De Nores, Gabriel Trifone, and Francesco Robortello. According to these mid-sixteenth century critics, the poem is a letter, not a technical treatise; and, although its ideas are compatible with the doctrines found in Aristotle's *Poetics*, it is not to be held to the same high standards of philosophical rigor.⁹³ Thus, Cologno was certainly wrong to accuse Riccoboni of attacking his theory about the *Ars Poetica* simply out of spite. Riccoboni had good scholarly grounds for taking the position he did.

On the other hand, notwithstanding Riccoboni's disclaimer and his long-standing belief in the letter-thesis, one of his motivations in attacking Cologno was certainly his desire to succeed De Nores. The proof of this is clear: timing. The *Methodus* was published in 1587. Why, then, did Riccoboni wait until April of 1591 – one month before the Venetian Senate was to vote on Cologno's appointment – before publishing his *Dissensio*? This is reminiscent of the polemics exchanged by the professors of Humanity, Carlo Sigonio and Francesco Robortello in Padua in 1562. The polemics were largely responsible for Sigonio's decision to depart Padua for a chair in Bologna in 1563.⁹⁴ That Riccoboni pursued the quarrel after Cologno's appointment went through may be a sign that he had not completely given up on the chair: by making life miserable for Cologno, he could perhaps succeed in driving him away, as Robortello had done. It may be pertinent to recall that Riccoboni studied with both Sigonio and Robortello.

sopra la stessa poetica per stamparsi; di maniera che per mio credere sarà di breve maggior il numero de' commenti, che di' versi di quella Epistola, non con molto artificio scritta, et non abb[i]a a insegnare compiutamente l'arte, dicano e faccino quello, che si vogliono tanti commentatori ..." The new commentary by Correa is: *Thomae Corraeae in librum de arte poetica Q. Horatii Flacci explanationes* (Venice, Apud Franciscum de Franciscis Senensem, 1587). On Correa and his tenure in Bologna (from 1586 until his death in 1596) see L. Simeoni, *Storia della Università di Bologna*, vol.2 (Bologna 1947) 45.

⁹³ See Frischer, 8-10.

⁹⁴ On which, see W. McCuaig, op.cit. (supra n.18) 43-54.

In the event, Riccoboni may well have succeeded in driving Cologno back to Bergamo after one year in Padua, but he did not succeed in obtaining the professorship of Ethics. This remained vacant for two years until it was filled in 1594 by Giovanni Belloni, a canon of the Padua cathedral.

This brings up the matter of religious, or, more generally, ideological conflict that permeates the Riccoboni-Cologno debate. We earlier noted the contrasting religious formations of the two disputants and their different statuses as priest and layman. Religion plays a determining role in the debate in at least three ways.

First, insofar as the quarrel was sparked by competition for the professorship of Ethics at Padua, Riccoboni probably lost because he was not a religious. I began this paper by alluding to the greatest controversy of 1591: the attempt by the Jesuits to open their Anti-Studio in Padua to stamp out heresy at the public university. The *Riformatori* seem to have responded to the Jesuit challenge in part by trying to pre-empt them in the prestigious and sensitive field of Ethics by changing their appointment policy at the death of De Nores. Before Cologno, every holder of the chair had been a layperson. After De Nores, until at least the middle of the next century, every professor of Ethics at Padua, starting with Cologno in 1591 and Belloni in 1594, was a religious.⁹⁵ Such a change of policy would also explain the otherwise puzzling fact that Riccoboni could have lost the appointment to Cologno, for, besides his clerical status, what else could the aged priest put forward in support of his candidacy?

The role of religion is also explicitly present in the polemics themselves. Near the end of the *Defensor*, Riccoboni writes that Cologno has violated the etiquette of quarrelling as set forth by Cicero in the *Pro Sestio* by resorting to personal attacks. (p.38):

I follow the advice that Cicero used, advice that is truly saintly and, I should say, nearly Christian:

If any are secretly hostile to my welfare, let them not show themselves; if any have at any time done anything, but now keep quiet and say nothing, we also, I hope, have forgotten; if any place themselves in my way or insolently follow on my heels, I will tolerate them as far as possible, and my speech will hurt no one, unless he puts himself right before me – and then it will be clear

⁹⁵ Cf. Tomasinus, *op.cit.* (supra n.18) 322-324.

that I did not deliberately assail him, but just stumbled upon him.⁹⁶

Cologno responds in kind in his next polemic, the *Epistola*, by admitting that in mocking and abusing Riccoboni he has behaved in an unchristian way and by rather facetiously asking Riccoboni's forgiveness (fol.3). Finally, in the *Conciliatio*, the last of the five polemics, Riccoboni agrees – also facetiously – to pardon Cologno, calling him the "greatest of priests" (fol.3r).

This explicit presence of religion in the polemics is but the superficial expression of the third and most fundamental way in which religion plays a role in the quarrel. Just over a century ago, Dejob wrote a famous book about the influence of the Council of Trent on the fine arts in Catholic countries.⁹⁷ Just as Trent sponsored a return to the canonical authorities of the Church, rejecting all recent theological innovations as heterodox; so, too, in the arts the post-Trent mentality favored the development of Classicism in the arts based on rules derived from an ancient authority. In literature, the authorities were Aristotle and Horace. The application of their rules led to such repressive measures as the Index, first published on Italian soil in Milan in 1538,⁹⁸ and expurgated editions of the ancient and modern classics, including Boccaccio and Horace. Seen in this light, the passion of Cologno's defense of the *Ars Poetica* as a technical treatise is more easily comprehended. The man who spent many years teaching young clerics in Bergamo felt the need for an authoritative rulebook for literature, and Horace's poem had certain advantages over even Aristotle's *Poetics* – not least of which was that it defined the end of literature as giving pleasure as well as instruction (333), whereas Aristotle speaks only of pleasure.⁹⁹

Riccoboni, on the other hand, was always a critical thinker, if not necessarily a free-thinker, and a man known to thumb his nose at the Index by

⁹⁶ Cicero, *Pro Sestio* 14. Note that Riccoboni added the word "insolently".

⁹⁷ C. Dejob, *De l'influence du concile de Trente sur la littérature et les beaux-arts chez les peuples catholiques* (Paris 1884).

⁹⁸ See P. Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press, 1540-1605* (Princeton 1977) 73.

⁹⁹ See M.T. Herrick, *The Fusion of Horatian and Aristotelian Literary Criticism, 1531-1555* (Urbana 1946) 39-47.

buying banned Protestant books. His Venetian bookseller, Pietro Longo, was caught by the Holy Office and drowned in the lagoon in January of 1588.¹⁰⁰ Riccoboni undoubtedly was horrified by that and by such things as the expurgated edition of Horace prepared for the Jesuit schools in 1569 and frequently reprinted.¹⁰¹ In his own poetic theory, he came down firmly on the side of those who, like Aristotle, defined the purpose of poetry as providing pleasure *without* instruction.¹⁰² As for the *Ars Poetica*, he treated it with no less respect than he did the *Poetics* of Aristotle. Both works – and, incidentally, Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, too – he subjected to his procedure of methodical reduction. In the end, what that procedure really means is a recognition that in the authoritarian culture of his day, any original contribution to knowledge had to be packaged as more Aristotelian than Aristotle. To be openly anti-Aristotelian and to scoff at rules for the arts, as Giordano Bruno did, meant to run the risk of ending up as Bruno did, arrested for heresy in Venice in 1592 and burned at the stake in Rome in 1600.

And what are we, today, to make of the Riccoboni-Cologno quarrel? Both disputants were driven by a conscious need to defend the *Ars Poetica* against disparaging attacks. Implicit in those attacks is a sense that the poem will not stand comparison with Aristotle's *Poetics* as a technical treatise. In Cologno's hands, the poem was made more Aristotelian, i.e., more methodical and therefore more technical, by *reinterpretation*: If only Riccoboni and other learned readers will grant that the first section pertains to epic, then Cologno is certain that the work will be comprehensive and complete, with one section devoted to each of the genres. Riccoboni's approach was to shift the terms of appraisal by granting the poem's lack of technicality but then insisting that, judged on its own terms as an informal letter, it is quite successful in conveying helpful advice to Horace's friends, the Pisones. Moreover, for Riccoboni the quality of that advice

¹⁰⁰ See P. Grendler, op.cit. (supra n.99), 186-189.

¹⁰¹ *Quintus Horatius Flaccus ab omni obscenitate purgatus ad usum Gymnasiorum Societatis Iesu* (Rome, Apud Vicotrium Helianum 1569).

¹⁰² Cf. G. Toffanin, *La fine dell'umanesimo* (Milan, Turin, Rome 1920) 136-140.

was guaranteed by the fact that through *Quellenkritik* its source can be shown to be that indisputable authority, the *Poetics* of Aristotle.

Of all possible defenses of Horace's claim to our attention and respect, the late sixteenth-century strategy of showing that the *Ars Poetica* is as Aristotelian as the *Poetics* might appear to be one of the weakest. Like most sixteenth-century commentators, both Cologno and Riccoboni ignored Porphyrio's scholium attributing to Neoptolemus, not Aristotle, the main ideas in the *Ars Poetica*.¹⁰³ Moreover, why read Horace at all if he simply purveys Aristotle's insights into the poetic art? Does that not make the poem *recentior et deterior*? This issue neither Cologno nor Riccoboni confronts. That they were capable of doing so is clear from Pedemonte's interesting argument that Aristotle is actually inferior to Horace because, coming later, Horace had the advantage of more advanced ideas and refined taste.¹⁰⁴ Of course, Pedemonte was writing in 1546, just before the appearance of what Weinberg aptly called the "great [Cinquecento] commentaries" on the *Poetics*.¹⁰⁵ Those publications helped Italian scholars to appreciate just how seriously the *Poetics* was to be taken.

Most sixteenth century scholars were wholly pre-Romantic in their lack of interest in originality, in their almost automatic deference to the authority of Aristotle in field after field.¹⁰⁶ They suffered more from an anxiety of heterodoxy than from the anxiety of influence that, according to Harold Bloom, plagues post-Enlightenment civilization. Even if the typical

¹⁰³ Cf. Porphyrio on line 1 of the *Ars Poetica*: *hunc librum, qui inscribitur de Arte Poetica ad Lucium Pisonem, qui postea urbis custos fuit eiusque filios misit. Nam et ipse Piso poeta fuit et studiorum liberalium antistes; in quem librum congegit praecepta Neoptolemi τῷ Παριάνῳ de Arte Poetica, non quidem omnia sed eminentissima*. Exceptional commentators who do cite Neoptolemus, along with Aristotle, as Horace's chief authorities include: A. Iani Parrhasii Cosentini in *Q. Horatii Flacci artem poeticam commentaria luculentissima* (Naples, Opera et diligentia Ioannis Sultzenbachii Hagenovensis Germani 1531) 4v; T. Correa, op.cit. (supra n.92) 1.

¹⁰⁴ *Francisci Philippi Pedimontii ephrasis in Horatii Flacci artem poeticam* (Venice, Apud Aldi Filios 1546) fol.31v.

¹⁰⁵ Cf. Weinberg, vol.1, 388.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. P.F. Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World [1530-1560]*. Anton Francesco Doni, Nicolò Franco, & Ortensio Lando (Madison, Milwaukee, and London 1969) 140-142.

Cinquecento intellectual's bias is the opposite of what we labor under, a Bloomian analysis of the positions of Cologno and Riccoboni is no less informative, for the famous map of misreading can be applied to chart abysses as well as mountain ranges. In applying Bloom, we must of course take into account a second key difference in what we will be doing as compared to what Bloom has done in books like *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York 1973) and *A Map of Misreading* (New York 1975). Instead of looking at how later *poets* react to the work of earlier poets, as Bloom does, we will be looking at how later *critics* react to the work of earlier critics. These adaptations of Bloom ought not to cause major difficulties: after all, Bloom's map was itself (appropriately enough) inspired by the sixteenth-century Kabbalistic Bible commentaries of Isaac Luria and Moses Cordovero.¹⁰⁷

To begin with Cologno: his reading of the *Ars Poetica* exemplifies a *tessera*, the second of Bloom's six kinds of misprision. Adapting Bloom's definition to the present case, we can define *tessera* as a new reading produced when "a later critic provides what his imagination tells him would complete the otherwise 'truncated' precursor text ...".¹⁰⁸ For Cologno, such completion requires reading the first section of the *Ars Poetica* as pertaining to epic, so that each genre has its own treatment in the poem. Bloom speaks of the urgency felt by the later writer in saving the text of his predecessor, an urgency that reflects a passion to bring redemption to what might otherwise appear to be a flawed and fragmentary text.¹⁰⁹ Such passion can be detected in the highly emotional state of mind that Cologno reveals throughout the quarrel, as evidenced in the passage I quoted in my introduction in which he calls Riccoboni mad, but also in the following pitiful plea he makes to Riccoboni in the *Responsio*: "if only

¹⁰⁷ On this inspiration, see H. Bloom, *Kabbalah and Criticism* (New York 1975) 86-88. On the map of misreading and its background, see D. Fite, *Harold Bloom. The Rhetoric of Romantic Vision* (Amherst, 1985) 55-90; P. De Bolla, *Harold Bloom. Towards Historical Rhetorics* (London and New York 1988) 36-60.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. H. Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (New York 1973) 66.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Bloom, *ibid.*, 67: "In this sense of a completing link, the *tessera* represents any later poet's attempt to persuade himself (and us) that the precursor's Word would be worn out if not redeemed as a newly fulfilled and enlarged Word of the ephebe."

you would grant that ... verses [1-3] ... concern the epic plot ..., [then you would see that] in that treatise nothing necessary is lacking and everything is presented through a most proper and splendid method" (p.19).

As for Riccoboni, even if he succeeded in winning the debate against Cologno by scoring the most debating points, he was no less guilty of misprision. Although to the disputants it seemed obvious that one must be right and the other wrong, from our perspective they can both be wrong. The fact that Riccoboni demolished most of Cologno's arguments does not mean that his are more true or probable. The flaws in Riccoboni's position are fundamental: he adduces no evidence in support of classifying the *Ars Poetica* as a letter; even if the poem is a letter, that does not mean it will necessarily have the lack of structure that Riccoboni claims to perceive; and deriving the poem from Aristotle's *Poetics* flies in the face of the testimony of Porphyrio, now supported (as, admittedly, Riccoboni could not know) by the witness of Philodemus on Neoptolemus in Book V of the *Περὶ ποιημάτων*.¹¹⁰ Worst of all, there is a piece missing in Riccoboni's argument: how would the mere fact of derivation from the *Poetics* ensure the quality of the *Ars Poetica*? This question is especially urgent when we consider Riccoboni's critique of the arrangement of topics in the poem and his failure to explain, as Grifoli had before him,¹¹¹ what principle had motivated Horace to include or exclude topics covered by Aristotle.

In Bloom's terms, Riccoboni's reading can be categorized as a *kenosis*. To quote Bloom, "whereas the synecdoche of *tessera* makes a totality, however illusive, the metonymy of *kenosis* breaks this up into discontinuous fragments ... Psychologically, a *kenosis* is not a return to origins, but is a sense that the separation from origins is doomed to keep repeating itself".¹¹² Riccoboni breaks up Horace's text in two ways: figuratively by his disparaging words about its surface disorder (e.g., at *Dissensio*, 7);

¹¹⁰ The text was only published in this century; see C. Jensen, *Philodemus über die Gedichte, Fünftes Buch* (Berlin 1923). On Neoptolemus' influence on the *Ars Poetica* see, especially, C.O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry*, vol.1 (Cambridge 1963).

¹¹¹ Cf. J. Grifoli, *op.cit.* (supra n.79) 10-11.

¹¹² Cf. H. Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (New York 1975) 99.

and literally, by his "reduction" to method with its transposition of hundreds of verses. In a defensive move typical of a *kenosis*, Riccoboni undoes the rich texture of Horace's poem, reweaving its strands so that a colorful and vital tapestry comes to resemble a pure white shroud. In the next stage of Riccoboni's work on poetics – the *De poetica Aristotelis cum Horatio collatus* (Padua, Apud Laurentium Pasquatium 1599) – he will subject the *Poetics* itself to such reduction and transposition. Here the original critical work lending authority to the whole of Riccoboni's critical enterprise – the *Poetics* – is itself seen to be the flawed, not true, expression of Aristotelianism, and it is the late-comer *Cinquecento* critic, Riccoboni, who must restore the true lost version through a reductive *kenosis* that represents, in effect, the repetition of its own origin.

Bloom tells us that he undertook to chart his map of misreading in order to gain insight into the ambivalences of canon-formation.¹¹³ As I mentioned earlier, my interest is in something closely related: canon-maintenance. Through quarrels like that between Cologno and Riccoboni the *Ars Poetica* was able to retain its position in late Renaissance schools and culture. What kept it in the canon was much the same thing that permitted new works like Ariosto's *Orlando* or Aristotle's *Poetics* to enter the canon: in the words of Javitch, it became a "site of contestation ... where the culture debate[d] artistic or other issues that may be central to the culture but that bear less and less on the poem as such ..." ¹¹⁴ This siting of the poem in a semantic field ever farther removed from that of Horace's own is exactly what we find in the Riccoboni-Cologno debate: as we have seen, Cologno's point of departure was Aristotle's idea that plot is the distinguishing characteristic of poetry and, as the quarrel continued, the issues shifted from the *Ars Poetica* to Aristotle's *Poetics* so that in the last two tracts, Horace is hardly mentioned at all.

Driving this re-siting of the *Ars Poetica* were processes of creative reading so perceptively described by Bloom. But, as Bloom suggests, and as Javitch implies, the result was and remains ambivalent. The poem that was able to stay in the canon throughout the sixteenth century, in the face of competition from Aristotle's *Poetics*, could do so by 1591 only by hosting

¹¹³ H. Bloom, *ibid.*, 4.

¹¹⁴ D. Javitch, *op.cit.* (supra n.15) 8.

a debate about issues that are much more relevant to the *Poetics* than to Horace's text. Worse still, the *Ars Poetica* emerged in the early seventeenth century as, literally, a completely rewritten work, when Scaliger's student, Daniel Heinsius, in his famous edition of 1610 seriously undertook to do what Cologno mistakenly thought Riccoboni had done – transpose hundreds of lines of the *Ars Poetica*.¹¹⁵

Lest this be dismissed as a mere aberration, I hasten to add that I have found fourteen editions of Horace published between 1591 and 1950 in which the *Ars Poetica* is subjected to wholesale transposition, no two examples of which agree on how the poem should be rearranged.

Riccoboni's solution to the problem of the poem's structure – simply to evade it by calling the poem a loosely-written letter – also lives on. Niall Rudd, in his 1989 text and commentary published by Cambridge, calls the poem *Epistula ad Pisones* and then adds in parentheses and with quotation marks, "*Ars Poetica*", as if the better title were the one deriving from Renaissance conjecture, not from manuscript evidence. He goes on to characterize the poem in a way that Riccoboni would have found congenial, writing: "the [work], then, is not a systematic handbook of literary theory; nor ... was it ever meant to be. It is a lively, entertaining, verse-epistle, written by a well-read man for his friends, who shared his love of poetry and whose company we are invited to join" (p.34). Little wonder, then, that Rudd is not dismayed by having to admit that, by his analysis, the structure of the poem is marked (or marred) by a fault-line dividing lines 1 to 152 from verses 153 to 476 (cf. Rudd, p.22).

Cologno's approach of trying to find a principle of unity lurking below the surface confusion of the poem has had the biggest run of all. The only problem is that, as was the case with the transposers, no two critics agree, throwing the whole project of uncovering the poem's hidden unity into doubt. What Rudd has recently written about one such plan – Jensen's – could well be applied to them all: "[my] failure to discern a threefold division ... corresponding to that which Jensen attributed to Neoptolemus need not cause undue dismay. For even if [I am] wrong, and Horace did

¹¹⁵ Q. Horatii Flacci opera omnia cum notis Dan. Heinsii accedit Horatii ad Pisones epistola, et Aristotelis de poetica libellus, ordine suo nunc demum ab eodem Heinsio restitutus (Leiden, Ex Offic. Plant. Raphel. 1610).

adopt a ... scheme from Neoptolemus, he cannot have regarded it as of major importance. If he had, he would have taken more trouble to make it clear" (p.25).

VI From *Rezeptionsgeschichte* to Interpretation: A Reader-Response Approach

Among the various Topics I have fallen into in these Observations, there is nothing, I have so much endeavoured to interest your Grace in the Truth of, as what I have said concerning the Uselessness, in general, of Rules in Poetry, and the like: I might produce many Authorities on this Head, if Authorities were, or ought to be, of any weight with Men of Sense ... Horace has, even in his *Ars Poetica*, thrown out several things, which plainly shew, he thought, an *Art of Poetry* was of no sort of Use, even while he was writing one.

– Leonard Welsted (1724)¹¹⁶

What we, today, can learn the Cologno-Riccoboni debate is first and foremost the sobering lesson that after 401 years of looking for a solution to the enigma of the structure of the *Ars Poetica*, we are still very much where we began. Four centuries of reactions of learned readers to the *Ars Poetica* bring a solid phenomenological proof of the thesis that the poem has neither a clearcut structure nor any generic excuse not to have one. For, if Cologno and his followers have found no persuasive hidden structural principle, that does not yet mean that Riccoboni's letter-thesis is correct. The Northern Italian apologetic attempt to explain the problem has at least two errors: all the evidence speaks against classifying the poem as a letter; and, at any rate, letters are not formless but are themselves subject to certain conventions of structure and content.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ *Epistles, Odes, &c. Written on Several Subjects with a Translation of Longinus' Treatise on the Sublime. By Mr. Welsted. To which is prefix'd a Dissertation concerning the Perfection of the English Language, the State of Poetry, &c.* (London, Printed for J. Walthoe, 1724) lii-liii, in the Preface to the Duke of Newcastle. On Leonard Welsted (1688-1747) see G.A. Aitken in *DNB* 60 (London 1899) 240-242.

¹¹⁷ See Frischer, 87-100.

To stop spinning our wheels, we need to reconsider our concepts of unity and structure, for, as Malcolm Heath has recently (and with some justification) argued, "where[as] the characteristic tendency of ... criticism [since the Renaissance] is to seek coherence in thematic unity, the characteristic tendency of ancient criticism was to seek coherence in thematic plurality ordered primarily at a *formal level*".¹¹⁸ What interests me about the *Ars Poetica* is how Horace achieves this formal unity not despite thematic disunity but by means of it. Space limitations prevent my giving more than a brief example of how Horace achieves such formal unity – but the example I choose to present here is the one that gets closest to the heart of the matter and thereby helps to move us closer to a resolution of this four hundred year-old dispute.

In shifting our focus, we can also profit from a return to the intersecting point where Riccoboni and Cologno met and collided in interpreting the poem. It is curious that they agreed on one fundamental point: if their explanations of the structure of the *Ars Poetica* were not accepted, then there would be no alternative to the conclusion that Horace was mad. In this they followed the ancient – and Horatian – idea that "le style est l'homme même". Cologno and Riccoboni, of course, denied that Horace was mad. Thus, like all their successors, vainly pursued endless variations of the same three basic solutions to the problem of structure that were already clear by 1591.

Horace was mad – I find the idea fascinating but unprovable as well as an evasion of critical responsibility. The working hypothesis of the literary critic must be to assume that everything in a text is motivated. To do otherwise necessitates going off onto the tangent of textual criticism (if you think you must change the text to improve it) or of literary biography (if you think that you must excuse the author's artistic lapse). Is there, then, a literary-critical way of motivating the "insane" structurelessness of the *Ars Poetica*? There is indeed: *persona*-theory.

Persona-theory (assuming that the main speaker of a text is not necessarily to be equated to its author) finds explicit attestation in Augustan literature in poems like Ovid's *Tristia* II; and it has been applied with fruitful results

¹¹⁸ M. Heath, *Unity in Greek Poetics* (Oxford 1989) 150.

to all the main Augustan poets, including Horace, as Doblhofer's excellent new survey of Horatian research since 1957 shows.¹¹⁹

If we consider the awkwardly constructed speech of the speaker of the *Ars Poetica* from the perspective of characterization and not, as before, from that of rhetoric and logic, then we can say that, not Horace, but his speaker is the madman and that the speaker's theory of poetry is thereby implicitly undermined by Horace. Such an interpretation would accord with many other features of the poem, including perhaps the strangest one of all: if this is really Horace's sincere poetic manifesto, then why is it of so little use in the interpretation of his own poetry?

Let us consider the most fundamental sense in which the speaker's madness is expressed both in terms of style and content. This concerns his belief that there is such a thing as an *ars poetica* in the first place. Like the Peripatetics and the Stoics, the *Ars-Poetica* speaker believes that poetry and the other arts have a rational quality and that its creation and appraisal can be based on objective norms independent of such accidental factors as individual talent. However, for the Epicureans and Skeptics such a belief was misguided.¹²⁰ In their eyes, poetry had a strong element of the unpredictable and the uncertain. Thus, according to Philodemus, an Epicurean contemporary and acquaintance of Horace, a rational theory of poetry is in itself a futile and insane enterprise.¹²¹ The proof for Epicureans like Philodemus was simple: the poeticians cannot practice what they preach.

In the passage quoted by Leonard Welsted at the beginning of this section, Welsted teases us with a brilliant idea, thrown out all too casually: Horace wrote the *Ars Poetica* to show the futility of writing an *ars poetica*! Unfortunately, Welsted never enlarged on what he meant, but perhaps he

119 E. Doblhofer, *Horaz in der Forschung nach 1957* (Darmstadt 1992) 9, 20, 92f., 96, 109.

120 I will elsewhere treat the Skeptic and Epicurean critique of the arts, the main source for which is Sextus Emp. *Adv. Math.* I and II.

121 I will explore this in greater detail elsewhere; here it will be enough to cite one example: Philodemus, "Trattato D" of Περὶ Ποιημάτων, fr.17. 16-24 (Nardelli, pp.24-25): ... ἡ παράκουσμα λέγο- / μεν ἡμεῖς ἡ παραπλήξ / ἐκεῖνος ἐμαινέτο πο- / ἡματα φάσκων τὰ [Δη- / μοσθένους καὶ τάντιφώντος μάλλον [δὲ καὶ / τὰ Ἡροδότου καίπερ κατὰ / τὴν συνθήκην [τούτου συγ- / γράφου]τος. The name of the rationalist critic against whom Philodemus writes is not preserved in the fragment.

was alert to the way in which the *Ars Poetica* speaker often does not practice what he preaches. A striking, and for our purposes, highly relevant example occurs in lines 40-41. There the speaker preaches in favor of *lucidus ordo*, asserting blithely that "clear order and eloquence will not be lacking in the poet who chooses his subject in accordance with his resources".¹²² If the *Ars Poetica* is disorderly, this can only mean by the speaker's own theory that he has waded above his head into the deep waters of poetic theory. Yet, who better than our speaker should be able to apply the rational art of poetics to the creation of a well-formed poem – if, that is to say, this "rational" art is worth anything at all? By presenting the speaker's sermon in favor of *lucidus ordo* with *caliginosus ordo*, Horace thus makes the speaker resemble the famous *inepti doctores* of *Satires* II – Damasippus, Cadius, Tiresias, and Davus – and he also makes the speaker himself present the strongest possible evidence for the futility and, indeed, madness of his project of composing an *ars poetica*.¹²³

122 *Cui lecta potenter erit res, / nec facundia deseret hunc nec lucidus ordo.*

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Appendix I

In this Appendix full bibliographical information is given about Cologno's *Methodus* of 1587 and about the five polemical tracts exchanged by Riccoboni and Cologno from April to September of 1591. As far as I know, the only library with a complete set is the Marciana in Venice. I am currently preparing an edition with translation.

- 1 *Q. Horatii Flacci Methodus De Arte Poetica: Per Nicolaum Colonium Exposita Quomodo antehac ab alio nemine* (Bergamo, Comino Ventura 1587) 56pp. [= *Methodus*]
- 2 April-May, 1591: *Antonii Riccoboni a quodam viro docto dissensio de epistola Horatii ad Pisones: quae nullam quidem methodum habere: sed ad methodum redigi posse ostenditur*, printed at the end of *Compendium Artis Poeticae Aristotelis ad usum conficiendorum poematum ab Antonio Riccobono ordinatum et quibusdam scholiis explanatum* (Padua, Apud Laurentium Pasquatam Typograph. Almae Univ. Iurist., 1591) 16pp. [= *Dissensio*]
- 3 May-June, 1591: *Nicolai Colonii responsio adversus absurdissimam sententiam Antonii Riccoboni de Horatij libello ad Pisones de poetica* (Bergamo, Typis Comini Venturae, 1591) 34pp., 19 cm. [= *Responsio*]
- 4 After July 7, 1591: *Antonii Riccoboni l.C. humanitatem in Patavino gymnasio profitendis defensor seu pro eius opinione de Horatii epistola ad Pisones in Nicolaum Colonium ad Ethica Aristotelis in eodem gymnasio interpretanda designatum* (Ferrara, Apud Benedictum Mammarellum, 1591) 38pp., 20 cm. [= *Defensor*]
- 5 September 13, 1591: *Epistola Nicolai Colonii Ad Antonium Riccobonum* (n.p., 1591) [5 foll.], 19 cm. [= *Epistola*]
- 6 Second half of September, 1591: *Conciliatio Antonii Riccoboni cum Nicolao Colonio ad Illustriss. et Excellentissimum Principem, Alexandrum Estensem* (Padua, Apud Laurentium Pasquatam Typograph. Almae Univ. Iurist., 1591) 5 [i.e. 6] foll. num., 19.5 cm. [= *Conciliatio*]

Appendix II

In this Appendix, I print Riccoboni's reconstruction of the beginning of the source of the *Ars poetica*. The original line numbers are in the left margin.

- | | |
|-----|--|
| 391 | Silvestris homines sacer interpresque deorum
caedibus et victu foedo deterruit Orpheus,
dictus ob hoc lenire tigres rabidosque leones;
dictus et Amphion, Thebanæ conditor urbis, |
| 395 | saxa movere sono testudinis et prece blanda
ducere quo vellet. fuit hæc sapientia quondam,
publica privatis secernere, sacra profanis,
concubitu prohibere vago, dare iura maritis. |

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- oppida moliri, leges incidere ligno.
 400 sic honor et nomen dininis vatibus atque
 carminibus venit. post hos insignis Homerus
 Tyrtaeusque mares animos in Martia bella
 versibus exacuit; dictae per carmina sortes
 et vitae monstrata via est et gratia regum
 405 Pieriis temptata modis ludusque repertus
 et longorum operum finis: ne forte pudori
 sit tibi Musa lyrae sollers et cantor Apollo.
 natura fieret laudabile carmen an arte,
 quaesitum est: ego nec studium sine divite vena
 410 nec rude quid prosit video ingenium: alterius sic
 altera pascit opem res et coniurat amice
 qui studet optatam cursu contingere metam
 multa tulit fecitque puer, sudavit et alsit,
 abstinuit venere et vino; qui Pythia cantat
 415 tibicen, didicit prius extimuitque magistrum.
 nunc satis est dixisse 'ego mira poema pango;
 occupet extremum scabies; mihi turpe relinqui est
 418 et quod non didici sane nescire fateri.'
 295 ingenium misera quia fortunatius arte
 credit et excludit sanos Helicone poetas
 Democritus, bona pars non unguis ponere curat,
 non barbam, secreta petit loca, balnea vitat.
 nanciscetur enim pretium nomenque poetae,
 300 si tribus Anticyris caput insanabile numquam
 tonsori Licino commiserit. o ego laevus,
 qui purgo bilem sub verni temporis horam.
 non alius faceret meliora poemata; verum
 nil tanti est. ergo fungar vice cotis, acutum
 305 reddere quae ferrum valet exsors ipsa secandi;
 munus et officium, nil scribens ipse, docebo.
 unde parentur opes, quid alat formetque poetam.
 308 quid deceat, quid non, quo virtus, quo ferat error.
 361 ut pictura poesis; erit quae, si propius stes,
 te capiat magis, et quaedam, si longius abstes;
 haec amat obscurum, volet haec sub luce videri,
 iudicis argutum quae non formidat acumen;
 365 haec placuit semel, haec deciens repetita placebit.