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Bernard Frischer

Rezeptionsgeschichte and Interpretation: The Quarrel of Antonio Riccoboni and Nicolo 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, Nicolo 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
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 blow 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...

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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 Bulgarni (see BCSiena MS C.II.25, fol.18, a letter that I will publish elsewhere). For the story of the rampage of the *bovisi*, 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. Maladornio 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 *Proulio*: *Quas quidem artes [i.e., rhetoric and poetic] ad humanitatem praeclarius quamvis paucis in hoc frequentissimo gymnasio complecti videantur; vel quod damnum studium Humanitatis, prorsus inhumani, earum rerum contemptores, quas ignorant; vel quod depravatos nostri seculi moris sequuntur, vendibilioribus quibusdam studiis plius nimirum addici, ut ea tantum curent, unde quaestum faciant, cetera aspernentur... (= oratio xvii in A. Riccobono, *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 ms. 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 degli Padri Gesuiti*). For assessments of Cremonini’s speech, see A. Favaro, *Galileo Galilei e lo Studio di Padova*, vol.1, 85.

... what do we have [sic., 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?²

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.³ *Cinqucento* 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 *praecptia*, and Kragius just 18.⁴

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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 Gerdier 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. To divide a work into paragraphs requires that you study of paragraphing of Horace, from their earliest attempts to divide the 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." 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. 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. 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 Krugii Ripensis Dant (Basle, Per Sebastiam Henticpetri n.d. [preface dated 1583]).

6 See M.M. Smith, Printed Foliation: Forerunner to Printed Pagenumbers?, 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.


10 De poetica et poetarum dialogus 1, in Historiae poetarum tam graecorum quam latinarum dialogi decem ... L. Greg, Gyraldo Ferrariensi autore (Basle 1545) 6. For Tasso, see Bernardo Tasso, Ragionamento della poesia (Venice, Gabriel Gioiito 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.
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

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11 The first view is associated with scholars active in northern Italy, such as Francisco Robortello, Jason De Nores, 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."

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 sciences; and purely professional rivalries of scholars competing for scholars interested 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 Cologna 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.


II Antonio Riccoboni 16

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 Cologna, 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


17 BCPadova, A. Lollini, In Patavini professorum decemadem praefatio ad virum amplissimum oratoremque praestanissimum Jocubum Baronci, p. v, c.61, cited apud M.R. Canton, Riccoboni, 12n.28.

Rovigo, Riccoboni was enrolled in the College of Notaries. In 1562, he was hired to be a school teacher in the public school founded in the middle of the fourteenth century. 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.

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. 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. 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. Such was the case with the

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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.


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 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; and its members were investigated by the Inquisition on charges of heresy. These investigations stretched on for several years and uncovered evidence against Riccoboni and the others of Anabaptism and Calvinism. This is not surprising: the Veneto had, from the first, been a center of the diffusion of Protestant ideas in Italy. 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. 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-
tion was offered to Riccoboni in May of 1571. 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. At Padua, Riccoboni taught courses on Greek and Roman, rhetoric, poetics, and oratory. 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. 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.

30 For the history of the chairs in litterae humaniores at Padua in the sixteenth century, see Tomasinii, 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 lettero di humanitá per quelli che danno opera a lettere greche et latine, et havendo bosindisima informazione della doctrina 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 Zuane Fasuol” (AS Venice, Registro Senato Terra 48, f.98v; apud A.E. Baldini, Per la biografia di Girolamo Frachetta, Atti e Memorie dell’Accademia Fattavina di Scienze, Lettere, ed Arti, Memorie della Classe di Scienze Morali, Lettere, Ed Arti 92,3 (1979-1980) 34n89). In Cologna’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 eterodasso rodigino, Archivio Veneto 100 (1977) 73n30.

32 Information about annual course offerings contained in the rotuli of the University of Padua in the AAUPadua 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. Grafton, Higher Criticism Ancient and Modern: The Lamentable Deaths of Hermes and the Sibyls, Warburg Institute Surveys and Texts 16 (1988) 155-170.


36 Poetica Aristotelis latina conversa: eiusdem Riccoboni paraphrasias in Poetica Aristotelis: eiusdem Ars Comica ex Aristotelis (Padua, apud Paulum Meietum, 1587); Antonii Riccoboni Poetica, Aristotelis poeticae per paraphrasiam explicans, et nonnuellas Ludovici Castelvettii capitones refellens (Padua, Apud Paulum Meietum, 1587).

37 A. Riccobonius, Orationes, volumen secundum (Padua 1591). The prolusio to 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 parturient to parturiet, supposedly on the basis of an ancient Horace manuscript he owned; cf. G. Bonifacio, Delle lettere familiari, vol.I (Rovigo 1627) 113-116, at p.114-115.

39 De poetica Aristotelis cum Horatio collatae auctore Antonio Riccoboni (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 Niccolò Cologno

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. 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:

Toll 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 reverenced 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 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. 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:

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42 That he may not have earned the laurea may be inferred from the absence of his name from E. Martellozzo Forin (ed.), 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: Avvito 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, 1537 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.

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. 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. The letters are in BCPadova ms. 71, fol. 87v-88v (Nicolaus Coloniius Benedictio Rhamberto, Pano 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.88v). On Paulus Manutius (1511-1574), see Nouvelle Biographie Générale 33 (Paris 1860) 303-310.

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, 1533 to March, 1566. 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". 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 titulatus of the church of S. Stefano, from which he derived a small income. 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.

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

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.

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 (1921) 60-61.

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.\textsuperscript{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;\textsuperscript{55} Christoforo Romanelli, who, like Cologno, published a Latin grammar;\textsuperscript{56} and Ercole Manzoni, who, like Cologno, published a book on Cicero's Prior Articium virum eruditionem. Ihabet quatuor hipodidascatos seu adiutores. Singulis diebus explicatur oratio ciceroniana et poeta unus vel Horatius vel Virgilius. Explanatur etiam liber Aristotelis Priorum. Festis dominicae tantum diebus, chatechismus exporabatur ab eodem domino Nicolao. Studiorum exercitationes fiunt in dictatis conscribendis, explicationes lectionum repetuntur. Quae observatione digna sunt in commentariis reservantur. Latina vulgariter reduntur et contra dictata vulgaria latina Scribuntur aut explicantur. Virgilius aut Horatius memoriae mandantur et singulis sabbatis memoriam providuntur. 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 altre istituzioni di beneficenza amministrate dalla Congregazione di Carità (Bergamo, 1912) 65-66.


\textsuperscript{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."

\textsuperscript{55} Ars oratoria seu in M.T. Cicerois 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.

\textsuperscript{56} Epitomes sotius aris grammaticae (Bergamo, Apud Cominum Venturam 1594). On Romanelli, see Calvi, op.cit. (supra n.55) 102-103.

who shared with Cologno an interest in the plan of Horace's Ars Poética, on which he published a book in 1604.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{58} The Bergamasque 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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{60} Most important for the Paduan appointment was his long-standing relationship with the Cornaro family. Cardinal Federico Comaro 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.\textsuperscript{61} Cologno had dedicated the Methodus to Comaro in

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

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

\textsuperscript{59} A. Roncalli, op.cit. (supra n.53) 66.

\textsuperscript{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."

\textsuperscript{61} On Cardinal Comaro (1531-1590), see Niccolò Antonio Vescovo di Padova, Serie cronologica dei vescovi di Padova (Padua 1780) 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 inaugural lecture, De veritate, is dedicated to the new bishop, whom he calls upon to continue the patronium 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
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 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 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


69 We catch a glimpse of Cologno just after his return from Padua in Achillis Mucii Theatrum sex partibus distinctum (Bergomi, Typis Comeni Venetarum, 1596) fol.68v. We catch a glimpse of Cologno just after his return from Padua in Achillis Mucii Theatrum sex partibus distinctum (Bergomi, Typis Comeni Venetarum, 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.68v).

70 Aristotle, Poetics 1450a38.

71 Vincentii Madii Brixianus in Q. Horatii Flacci de arte poetica librum ad Pisones, Interpretatio (Venice, In officina Erasmiana Vincentii Valgrisi,
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 Roborello 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. 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 episodicness 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

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74 Cf. Discorso di messer Anselmo Castravilla, nel quale si mostra l’imperfezione della comedia di Dante con il dialogo delle lingue dei Varchi, VI, MS 6528, fol. 76v-84 at fol. 7v.

75 Cf. *Giudizio d’Antonio Riccobono sulla tragedia Heraclea di Livio Pagello*, VI, MS 6528, fol. 132r-134v at fol. 132r; on the problem of the authorship of the *Giudizio*, see Weinberg, vol. 2, 939-940.

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.1). 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.1).

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

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 quarreled about the definition of the compository and resolutory 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.

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 Lucianensis interpretatione explicatus (Paris, Ex typographia Matthaei Davidis 1552; originally published in Florence, 1550) 10-11: Cum itaque Horatius de poetica facultate curam scribendi suscepsisset, tametsi de comedie nonnulla, tamen de Tragoediae ratione multa in primis disputavit. Nam quae pertinent ad Epicos, non plura scriptit, quam communia sint utrique generi, vel leviter omnino, et paucia gustavit ... Videns igitur Aristotelis iudicio Tragoediam constare fabula, moribus, sententia, dictione, apparatu, et melodias, primum de constitutione fabulae disserrerit esse statuit, nam et totius imitandi rationem ea credidit: deinde, cum more, et sententia verbis explicentur, orationem statim post fabulum coeperit espolire: in quo non est securitatem 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 Zabarellae De methodis libri quattuor; 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*. 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 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*. 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.

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 philosophical 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.

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

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82 For the passage in Castelvetro, see Dissensio, 4n10.
83 Cf. Madius, op.cit. (supra n.71) 328: *Quonium vero partes illae duae libelli huius, quas praecipuas esse diximus, totae fere ad Poetices Aristotelis imitationem conscriptae sunt: non inutile futurum existimavi, si postquam ea, quae ad Aristotelis Poeticam attingebant, explicavimus; cunus ratione omnis mihi fuerat susceptus labor; quae hic ab Horatio habeantur, in Aristotele, velut in fonte demonstreram, a quo velut rivulum, librum hunc deduxit; J. Grifoli, op.cit. (supra n.79) 7: *illud certe affirmare non dubito, estendisse me locos Horatianos, ac totum fere hoc opus ex Aristotelis Arte poetica decerptum: Nec res in occulto latet: perspiciet, an ita sit, quaecunque leget.
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 but in all. 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. 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. 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.

As this passage demonstrates, Riccoboni was well aware that his predecessor, Robertello, had held both the chair of Humanity and of Moral Philosophy at Padua, as had Marc-Antoine Muret at Rome. 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. 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...

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86 Cf. above, n.13.  
90 Riccoboni, *Conciliatio* [6r].
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 moralì d'Aristotele_.

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 Sienese 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!

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. 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 longstanding 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 Siganio 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. 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.

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

92 BCSiena MS C.11.25, 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 ancora nella posizione della poesia d’Horatio; di cui V.S. mi da aviso, potendole anch’io dar novità, che mi scrivi il S.or Thomasso Correa, novello Humanista nello Studio di Bologna, nel primo luoco, esser normai in Vinegia un suo commento sopra la stessa poesia per stamparsi, di maniera che per mio credere sarà di breve maggior il numero de’ commenti, che d’versi di quella Epistola, non con molto artificio scritta, et non abbi[la] a insegnare compiutamente l’arte, dicano e faccino quello, che si vogliono tanti commentatori ..." The new commentary by Correa is: _Thomae Coreae 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. 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.

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.39).

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. 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, 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.

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).


buying banned Protestant books. His Venetian bookseller, Pietro Longo,
was caught by the Holy Office and drowned in the lagoon in January of
1588. 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. 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. 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
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. 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
tools and refined taste. Of course, Pedemonte was writing in
1546, just before the appearance of what Weinberg aptly called the "great
Cinquecento commentaries" on the Poetics. 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. 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

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104 See P. Grendler, op.cit. (supra n.99), 186-189.
101 Quintus Horatius Flaccus ab omni obscenitate purgatus ad usum
Gymnasio?um Societatis Iesu (Rome, Apud Vic.trium Helianum
1569).
102 Cf. G. Toffanin, La fine dell'umanesimo (Milan, Turin, Rome 1920)
136-140.
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.  

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 ...”. 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. 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 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 νομοθέτου. 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, 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”, Riccoboni breaks up Horace’s text in two ways: figuratively by his disparaging words about its surface disorder (e.g., at *Dissensio*, 7);
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 poe\(\text{ta}\)
\(\text{ica}\)
\(\text{Aristotelis cum Horatii collato}\) (Padua, Apud Laurentium Pasquatum 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—\(\text{the Poetics}\) 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 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 ...
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)

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.

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". 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.


117 See Frischer, 87-100.

118 M. Heath, Unity in Greek Poetics (Oxford 1989) 150.
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. 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. 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 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". 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 *caliginous ordo*, Horace thus makes the speaker resemble the famous inepti doctores of Satires II – Damasippus, Catius, 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*.

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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 Perga Poimiator, fr. 17. 16-24 (Nardelli, pp.24-25): ... ἡ παράδοσις λέγει / μὲν ἡ διάβασμα ἡ / ἱκετεία / ἐκεῖνος ἵνα ἔπαιξητο ποιήσεως ἡ γαμήτων ἡ / μορφής καὶ τῷ τῶν δολῶν ἀνεκάθιστο τοῦτον ἀποκαλεῖ / καὶ τῇ ἡμερολογίῳ καὶ τῇ ἡμερικῇ καὶ τῇ τῆς ἡμέρας ἄμεσης τοῦ τούτου συγκεφάλισμα / γράφεται. The name of the rationalist critic against whom Philodemus writes is not preserved in the fragment.

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

123 I owe many debts of gratitude for help received during the research leading to publication of this article. First, I should like to thank the UCLA Academic Senate Research Committee for generous financial support of this research over the past four years. The UCLA Department of Classics and its chair, Prof. David Blank, have also been extremely helpful by creating an atmosphere supportive of research generally and by permitting me periodic brief leaves of absence to pursue work related to this project – as did my wife, Jane Crawford. For permission to study documents in their collections and for remarkable kindness and helpfulness far beyond the call of duty, I wish to express my gratitude to the following librarians and archivists: Don Camillo Bellinati (Archivio della Curia di Padova), Father Leonard E. Boyle (Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana), Don Pierantonio Gios (Biblioteca del Seminario, Padova), Dr. Lucilla Marino (Library of the American Academy in Rome), Dr. Paolo Pezzolo (Biblioteca dell'Accademia dei Concordi, Rovigo), and Dr. Marino Zorti (Biblioteca Marciana, Venezia). I must also give warmest thanks to Dr. Pezzolo for gaining me access to the Archivio della Curia di Rovigo and to Don Gios for critical palaeographical help in deciphering some all-but-illegible documents in his collection. For their stimulating conversations and for supporting this project in various ways, I wish to thank the following colleagues: Andrew Dyck (UCLA), Giovanna Franci (Bologna), Anthony Grafton (Princeton), James Hankins (Harvard), Daniel Javitch (NYU), Stefania Malavasi (Padua), Antonio Rigon (Padova), and Anne Scott (Bryn Mawr). Versions of this paper, besides that on the occasion of the Tübingen symposium on Horace, were given at the University of
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 aneheac 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 Pasquatum 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 I.C. humanitatem in Patavino gymnasio profiendis defensor seu pro eius opinione de Horatij epistola ad Pisones in Nicolaum Colonium ad Ethi-ca 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 fol. num., 19 cm. [= Epistola]
6 Second half of September, 1591: Conciliato Antonii Riccoboni cum Nicola Colonio ad Illustri ss. et Excellentissimum Principem, Alexandrum Estensem (Padua, Apud Laurentium Pasquatum Typograph. Almae Univ. Iurist., 1591) 5 [i.e. 6] fol. 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, Thebanae conditor urbis, saxa movere sono testudinis et prece blanda ducere quo vellet. fuit haec sapientia quondam, publica privatis secernere, sacra profanis, concubitu prohibere vago, dare iura maritis,
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 Pieris temptata modis ludusque repertus
et longorum operum finis: ne forte pudori
sit tibi Musa Iyrae sollers et cantor Apollo.
natura fieret laudabile carmen an arte,
quasitum est: ego nec studium sine divite vena
410 nec rude quid prosi video ingenium: alterius sic
altera poscit openi res et consueta 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;
ockupet 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 inguis ponere curat,
non barbam, secreta petit loca, balnea vitat.
nanciscetur enim pretium nomenque poetae,
300 si tribus Anticyris caput insanabile numquam
torsori Licino commissarit o ego laevus,
qui purgo bilem sub vermi temporis horam.
non alius faceret meliora poemata; verum
nil tanti est. ergo fungar vice colis, acutum
305 reddere quae ferrum valet exsors ipsa secandi;
munus et officium, nil scribens ipse, docuo,
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,
tc capiat magis, et quaedam, si longius abstes:
haec amat obscurum, volet haec sub luce videri,
judicis argument quae non formidat acumen;
365 haec placuit semel, haec deciens repetita placebit.