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Introduction

Four Types of Anti-classicism

“My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun” – by means of this famous *argutia*, William Shakespeare distanced himself from the formulae of the love poetry of his time (sonnet 130, Shakespeare 1986, 141), offering instead a meditation on rhetoric and truth, as well as on the universality versus the individuality of beauty.

While it is possible to read this line as a baroque witticism, it could also be viewed as an act of opposition against the perceived dominance of a discursive scheme, or (in a wider sense) a ‘classicist’ norm, in this case: Petrarchism. In the latter half of the sixteenth century in particular (but not only), such gestures abounded, directed against an assortment of normative tendencies, ranging from Petrarchism to Aristotelianism. Some of these remonstrances have been well-studied, while others are fairly unknown. Yet until today, the phenomena in question have never in their totality been the object of a systematic overview or a typology hoping to incorporate a certain degree of theoretical abstraction.

The present book will attempt this, sketching an outline of such a synthesis for the Italian Cinquecento (and integrating some of the lesser-known parts of this repertoire for the first time), in the full knowledge of its necessary incompleteness or even reductivity. Readers who would like to immerse themselves even deeper into the manifold varieties of non-classicist or anti-classicist writing in Italian sixteenth-century literature, will find ample documentation, analysis and a plethora of new editions in the work of the Italian research group *Cinquecento plurale* (<http://dsu.uniroma3.it/cinquecentoplurale/>).

The present volume, while relying on much of the work done by this group, is the product of an inter-university research project on “Antiklassizismen im Cinquecento” (<https://www.antiklassizismen.italianistik.uni-muenchen.de>) with a different focus. It proposes a model designed to distinguish four types of ‘anti-classicisms’ (hence the plural in our title), differentiated as to their mode and their object of dissent or deviation. The book features four major chapters, each of which studies one particular type of anti-classicism. Every chapter takes the form of an overview, interspersed with more detailed readings of select passages from the literature studied in it.

1 From the late nineteenth century onwards, literary historiography has used concepts of ‘anti-classicism’ in order to articulate the intuition that different phenomena of opposition, parody and criticism of (explicit or implicit) standardisations of literary and artistic practice in the Italian Renaissance could be viewed together in a larger context (Borsellino 1973).

Initially, these observations focused on anti-Petrarchism, a term championed in particular by Arturo Graf in 1886 in his classical study, “Petrarchismo ed antipetrarchismo” (Graf 1886), published in two parts in one of the leading Italian journals of the day, *Nuova Antologia. Rivista di scienze, lettere ed arti*. This essay was then included in Graf’s seminal book, *Attraverso il Cinquecento* (Graf 1888), published by Loescher, Turin, along with Graf’s observations on “Un processo a Pietro Aretino”, “I Pedanti”, “Una cortigiana fra mille: Veronica Franco” and “Un buffone di Leone X”.

Graf re-evaluates Petrarchism in the sense of a “malattia cronica della letteratura italiana” (Graf 1888, 3). The concept of anti-classicism plays no role in this; however, anti-Petrarchism is not restricted to the function of a mere opposite of Petrarchism, it is used in a far broader sense, which embraces many tendencies nowadays more commonly described as anti-classicist: “ma è più spesso semplice avversione alle dottrine, agl’intendimenti e alla pratica letteraria degli imitatori.” (Graf 1888, 37). This is why Graf analyses numerous works which will be classified under the heading of explicit anti-classicism in the present book: *Capitoli* by Berni, Mauro and the Berneschi with their criticism of *pedantismo*, Michelangelo’s *Rime*, the *capitoli* by Castaldi, the *Priapea* and the *Petrarchista* of Franco, Aretino’s dialogues and the maccheronian poets. Graf consequently locates his umbrella term ‘anti-Petrarchism’ within a wide field of *avversioni* and *contrasti*.¹ In this context, he also deals in detail with the “spiritualizzatori di Petrarca” (Graf 1888, 67) and their “operazione dello spiritualizzare” (63).

As early as the late seventeenth century, in the *Istoria della volgar poesia* by Giovanni Mario Crescimbeni (Rome 1698) and the accompanying *Commentarij*, different texts and genres are treated that can be assigned to anti-classicism. Only in the case of the so-called *poesia familiare e burlesca*, exemplified by Berni’s and the Berneschi’s works, however, do we find observations that point to an implicit perception that these texts deviate from a classicist norm.

1 “Del resto, nelle tendenze molteplici e discordi della letteratura contemporanea il petrarchismo incontrava altre avversioni ed altri contrasti. Anzi tutto non potevano essere fautori suoi quegli umanisti intolleranti ed intransigenti che non avevano in pregio se non le opere dei greci e dei latini, e stimavano cosa vile l’usare scrivendo altra lingua che quella di Cicerone e di Virgilio” (Graf 1888, 49).

In literary histories of the period up to 1888, *poesia bernesca* remains the most frequently treated variety of anti-classicist text types. However, this genre is generally insufficiently distinguished from satire or *poesia maccheronica* (Maffei 1858; Cantù 1865). In literary histories written after 1889, anti-classical phenomena (still rarely explicitly described as such until about 1940) are all caught up and swept along together, subsumed under the term ‘anti-Petrarchism’, the phenomenon of which is perceived – probably following Graf – to be a kind of ‘natural’ reaction to pedantic forms of Petrarchism.

During the early phase of research in this field, however, the notion that these heterogeneous phenomena could be compared with or connected to one another, was primarily an effect of an underestimation of the role of diversity and plurality in the Renaissance. This sometimes led to unconsidered or even undue conflation, for example of anti-Petrarchism and other tendencies that ran counter to forms of ‘classicism’ (Graf 1888; Battisti 1962) or to the mixing up of poetological with socio-historical categories (Petronio 1992; critically, Friede 2012/13). In particular, some scholars lost sight not only of the fact that the objectives of such opposing gestures are often hardly comparable (critically, Schulz-Buschhaus 1975), but also that the connections or analogies between the various normative systems that ‘anti-classicists’ seem to attack are by no means self-evident; ‘classicist’ norms can even be partly incompatible with one another (Petrarchism vs. Aristotelianism; Huss et al. 2012).

In a second phase of research – one conducted since roughly the mid-1990s – the coexistence, within the Renaissance, of fundamentally different literary options was either affirmed and studied as a hitherto neglected side of the Renaissance (Corsaro 1999; Procaccioli 1999a; Corsaro et al. 2007), or even declared as the basic epistemic fact of the early modern period as such. Thus, ‘plurality’ (Hempfer 1993b; Hempfer 2010a; Kablitz/Regn 2006) or ‘pluralisation’ (Nelting 2007; Müller et al. 2010) was taken to be the very signature of the epoch: where the multiplicity of (potentially incompatible) authorities does not merely exist or grow, but is reflected or acted upon (be it by discussing it, dramatizing it or seeking to control or to reduce it), a specific difference between the early modern *episteme* and that of the Middle Ages can be discerned. The publications of the DFG Collaborative Research Centre “Pluralisierung & Autorität” (<https://www.sfb-frueheneuzeit.uni-muenchen.de>) at the LMU Munich University illustrate this process in a variety of ways and regarding different social as well as intellectual spheres.

If it is true, following this analysis, that in the early modern period norms such as the rules of poetics are experienced and evaluated precisely as elements of such a plurality, both the unifying singular term ‘classicism’ and its

counterpart ‘anti-classicism’ will appear anachronistic or inappropriate. Both sides of the opposition will have to be ‘pluralized.’

On the other hand, the concept of ‘pluralisation’ itself falls short of the intuition of earlier anti-classicism research in that it tends to level out the antinomies and hierarchies between model and counter model, original and parody, etc., which characterise this field, and their possible interrelationships. It makes them disappear in a homogeneous field of manifold possibilities.

Consequently, this book will describe anti-classicisms and their classicist counterparts in the plural, while maintaining the binary relationships between them.

2 Investigating anti-classicist phenomena presupposes an effort to establish a concept of classicism. It should be noted in advance that in the case of the Italian early modern period, neither of these two terms, classicism and anti-classicism, occurs on the level of the historical objects to be studied. Both are modern day analytic terms designed to map the historical phenomena, although related or contiguous expressions such as *petrarchista*, *ciceronianus* or *aristotelico* are historically verifiable (Quondam 2013, 65–86). The pair of heuristic concepts used here thus stands in a determinable semantic relationship with terms used in the sixteenth century.

Poetics and aesthetics to which we will assign the term ‘classicism’ base their normativity on a systematically affirmative reference to the past, which is taken as a model. The canonization of a ‘classical’ epoch is to be understood as an act of authorisation, which can be explicit or implicit and must be (at least partially) accepted in the literary system in order to be valid.

Classicism is related to, but distinct from, the classical. The latter is a status of canonisation attributed to works, classes of works or epochs within the literary or artistic system. The former results from an effort to attain this status by orienting oneself towards models that are themselves considered classical. Classicist orientation in this sense tends to stabilise the classical model itself (Mazzacurati 1967; Bonora 1988; Voßkamp 1993). Yet a classicist endeavour understood in this way is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the actual attainment of classical status. Moreover, such a status can also be lost over time and thus, paradoxically, classical art or literature has a time index (Föcking/Schindler 2020, 9–13).

The expression used above, “systematically affirmative reference to the past” implies that classicism is not an isolated, unsystematic act of imitation, but aims at a whole. Anti-classicisms can be all forms of counter-tendencies, systematic objections or subversions of such classicisms, and between these (as

will be shown) the question of a potentially systematic whole or at any rate of possible larger contexts, synergies and alliances arises in a special way.

3 As for the specific version of classicism found in the Renaissance, it will be helpful to add a limiting condition to the definition outlined in 2: Renaissance classicism presents itself as the restoration of something that has been lost; it presupposes a break in continuity.

Affirmative reference to an unbroken tradition or the continuation of a form of discourse that has had a steady effect from the past into the present are therefore not to be considered classicism in the sense outlined here. The flowering of the *romanzo* in the Renaissance, for example, will not be understood as an example of classicism in relation to the late Middle Ages in this book, and consequently parodic tendencies within the chivalric romance will not be presented as anti-classicist either (at least not in relation to the genre of the chivalric romance itself).

Rather, it is crucial for the concepts of classicism and anti-classicism used in these pages that the respective contemporary endeavour reacts to an experience of rupture or discontinuity: the ‘classic’ is no longer available to the present; classicist poetics in this sense restores lost ideals after a period of – perceived – decay.

For this restorative gesture, however, the Italian (and later the French) Renaissance resorted to lost classical models of more than one past: it referred on the one hand (as, for example, during the eighteenth century) to classical antiquity, for example in the effort to write tragedies or epics according to the rules found (or taken to be contained) in Aristotle’s *Poetics*. On the other hand, especially in Bemboism, the idea of a revival of ancient perfection is transferred and extended to the relationship between the sixteenth century and the Italian Trecento, especially Petrarch and Boccaccio (Müller 2007; Mehlretter 2007; Regn 2020).

In this way, the models of classical antiquity are joined by a kind of ‘second antiquity’, and this raises two problems: one of them is the possible interference between being a model and following a model. Bembo’s two model authors, Petrarch and Boccaccio, are, at the same time, models (‘classics’) in their own right and yet also – to varying degrees – themselves ‘classicists’ in relation to classical antiquity. In Boccaccio’s case, this mainly concerns the prose style of the otherwise partly medieval, partly ‘modern’ (or innovative) genre of the novella (Branca 1981; Küpper 1993). In Petrarch’s case, we find a much stronger, actively produced reference to antiquity on various levels, for example to Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* and the Latin elegy (e.g. Föcking 2000). In these two model authors, then, the overlapping of the status of an acknowledged classic

and their own activity of methodically pursuing ‘classicism’ creates a certain ambivalence.

The second problem raised by this situation is one of competition: these two vernacular model authors and the discursive traditions and poetics that emanate from them (and which join forces with the rhetorical-Horatian tradition) will, at a certain historical moment, have to compete with yet another set of classical norms; at the moment of the rediscovery of Aristotle’s *Poetics* these implicit traditions will contend with a theoretical edifice understood to be explicitly normative: poetological Aristotelianism.

This kind of classicism, then, is of a plural nature and full of tensions, yet dialogical and constantly dynamic: for example, in the theory of the lyric between Petrarchism, the succession of Horace and Aristotelianism (cf. Regn 2004; Huss et al. 2012), or in the pluralisation of a lyrical practice which oscillates between Petrarchism, the classical ode and the poetry of the psalms (Penzstadler 1993), or even attempts to follow all available models at the same time. Thus, Girolamo Muzio Iustinopolitano’s *Rime diverse* (1551) combine a dominantly Petrarchist style with a macrotextual structure based on the works of Horace; Laura Battiferri’s *Salmi penizenziali* (1564; Battiferri 2005) and Gabriele Fiamma’s Psalm rewritings render the Psalms using a Petrarchan lexicon as a matter of course (Ubal dini 2012).

Therefore, in addition to antiquity, other models (such as the Bible or Petrarch) must be taken into account (Procaccioli 1999a). The structure of such ‘classicisms’ (in the plural), with their hierarchies, their competition or overlap, their different reference options and sectorial limitations, is far more dynamic than the talk of a monolithic ‘Renaissance classicism’ would suggest. It is the manifold ‘positive’ corresponding to the ‘negative’ of sixteenth-century anti-classicisms, which are the subject of this volume.

For their part, these anti-classicisms are just as plural as their correlates, whether they be explicit or implicit counter-movements to the formation of classicist norms. They are as dynamic as the norms themselves, they reconstruct their hierarchies, but they can also team up with initiatives to establish new rules and patterns, new order against the plurality of competing normative systems.

This decidedly plural dynamic was subject to further thrusts in the course of the sixteenth century, when the proliferation of reference texts revealed that even antiquity itself was characterized by an inherently plural corpus of norms, a situation in which arguments could be made, for example, using Horace against Aristotle, Quintilian against Longinus (Huss 2011/12) or Vitruvius against Horace (Friede 2015). Renaissance classicism thus aims at order, but generates plurality by this very process.

Reactions to pluralisation range from attempts at harmonisation to sectoral separation, from indifference to the various claims to absolutizing one of the options (Weinberg 1961; Hathaway 1962; Regn 1987b). Numerous measures designed to cope with plurality aim at the production of uniform sets of norms, for example for the various literary genres, but also in contemporary philosophical thought, in the widespread hope that truth can be established through the harmonisation of opposites (between Plato and Aristotle, for instance).

In this context, a distinction can be made between standardisation efforts on a superordinate level (the transgeneric binding force of the *res-verba* model or attempts at a comprehensive poetics of *mimesis*) and a generic level, on which genre-specific reorientations to ancient genres can be discerned (dialogue, comedy, tragedy, elegy, eclogue, but also the transformation of medieval genres such as the late medieval romance and the novella on the basis of the models provided by antiquity). Here, classicist standardisations can have a pluralising effect by splitting the act of referring to models into sectors for the various genres: what is ‘classicist’ in the subservience to the poetics of the elegy may not be compatible with the development of a love interest in an epic.

In addition, there are genres that remain largely untouched by the formation of classical norms (*Canti carnascialeschi*, *Sacre rappresentazioni*, *Laude*, *Capitoli*), but are nevertheless partly cultivated by authors whose works can otherwise be associated with classical or Petrarchist tendencies (e.g. in the case of Bembo or Poliziano).

In lyric poetry, for example, the range of possibilities for individual authors to relate to models extends from exhibited conformity (Bembo’s Petrarchism) to fundamentally system-conforming, but at the same time exhibiting individual variation (Gaspara Stampa), to skirting the margins or even partly breaking up a given system (Berardino Rota, Michelangelo), or to overstretching the system for the purpose of saving it, the action of which nevertheless endangers said system (Torquato Tasso, Ludovico Paterno, Luigi Groto). The latter two variations, which would then become typical of the second half of the century, have also been called ‘mannerism’ (Regn 1991b; Quondam 2013; Huss/Wehr 2014). In these transformations, the historical dynamics of Cinquecento classicism become tangible: this brand of poetics becomes extinct around 1600 due to the new kind of baroque rule-breaking that took place during that period.

4 Anti-classicist counterpoints to the individual components of this tangle of voices themselves naturally contribute to effects of pluralisation, and indeed multiply them, insofar as there can be multiple reactions to each element of a plural situation.

Negations of the principle of *imitatio*, for example, can be global (as in Giordano Bruno; Mehlretter 2003) or sectorial (as in Niccolò Franco's critique of Petrarchism; Mehlretter 2011) or even merely gradual (as in the tempering of a one-sided reference to Petrarch). A decision in favour of one of the components of a plural situation to the detriment of another can constitute an opposition to the latter: both a kind of anti-Petrarchist Aristotelianism and an anti-Aristotelian Petrarchism (as in Girolamo Muzio Iustinopolitano) can be found in the contemporary repertoire. In the Priapees, moreover, there exists the special case of the counter-discursivity of an entire genre (Oster 2012/13). Giovan Giorgio Trissino's particular position seems to include – theoretically as well as practically – something like an anti-Bembist classicism with a strong reference to antiquity on the level of the individual genres, but without an overarching poetics of *mimesis*.

Many counter-designs are directed at individual aspects (such as Antonio Brocardo's counter-position to Bembo's norms or Vittoria Colonna's and Michelangelo's re-orientation of the poetics of lyric poetry in the direction of prayer and meditation), others – such as the decision for a poetics of Platonic *furor* against an Aristotelian poetics of *mimesis* or against the tradition of *imitatio* (Patrizi; see Hennig 2016; Luca Contile) – imply larger scale decisions.

This field also includes forms of anti-classicism based on religious norms: spiritual poetry and spiritual theatre polemicise against the Petrarchist discourse of secular love as well as against Aristotelianism, from the higher standpoint of their spirituality. Not only are the secular themes, which are associated with genres such as love poetry, condemned in these texts (as in Fiamma's *Rime spirituali*), but the secular poetological norms themselves are problematized as obstacles to a truly spiritual message (as in Giovan Battista di Lega's criticism of "I Greci" in his tragedy on the crucifixion (di Lega 1549).

In some cases, this move is only partially realised, for example in the case of the clerics Girolamo Malipiero and Gabriele Fiamma, who do make an effort to correspond to Petrarch's linguistic and stylistic norm, even though they change the ideological basis of their lyric endeavour completely: their sacred poetry is thus simultaneously classicist and anti-classicist. Similarly, criticisms of Aristotle's *Poetics* by authors of sacred tragedies rarely generate iconoclastic anti- or a-classicist texts, but, rather, strategies to integrate elements of a classicist poetics of tragedy into their system of Christian semantics.

Finally, alternative model authors can come into play and destabilise the system, as in the case of the Cinquecento discussion on Dante. In this context, an author like Dante can be proposed both as an alternative classic (i.e. as bearer of an alternative norm) and as a model for anti-classicist writing (Oberto 2015).

The protagonists of these counter-tendencies can be individuals, but also entire poetological schools, circles of friends such as the circle around Michelangelo, or academies: in its *Rime Marittime di M. Nicolo Franco ed altri diversi spiriti dell'Accademia de gli Argonauti* (1547), the Mantovan *Accademia degli Argonauti* combines Petrarchism as outlined by Bembo with an extensive use of astronomical and nautical themes and their technical lexicon, thus opposing Bembo's verdict against scientific *materie* in poetry. Contacts, correspondences and networks can generally play an important role here.

Furthermore, the question of the relationship between established exponents of a given culture and more marginal groups is always relevant. The book market, too, can – without any explicit theoretical endeavour behind it – either promote or undermine genre poetics, for example when the typical cycle structure of the lyric *canzoniere* with its implication of a narrative substrate is undermined (and possibly replaced by other structures) in the format of the lyric anthology (Quondam 1991a; Tomasi 2012).

Besides such mechanisms of softening poetic norms, there are also phenomena of 'indifference' such as Veronica Franco's a-Petrarchistic epistolary elegies or Bembo's stanzas.

Were one to describe these processes merely in terms of the dynamics of pluralisation, there would be a danger firstly of levelling out the specific hermeneutic relationships and antinomies between each classicist and anti-classicist move, the subversive tendencies, which are after all subversive of something in particular, the hierarchies of original and parody (which are to be assumed at least heuristically), in a historically distorting way.

Secondly, such a perspective tends to lose sight of the connections between the disparate phenomena that make up the field of anti-normative initiatives. For, on the one hand, the classicist tendencies of the sixteenth century are themselves subject to various measures of standardisation, harmonisation and systematisation. These are not only of a poetological, but also of a theological nature in the (Roman) Catholic reform that pervaded the entire Cinquecento from around 1520 onwards. The explosiveness of the early modern experience of pluralisation owes much to the persistence of postulates of unity in relation to truth and authority in this context (Kablitiz 1999).

On the other hand, such connections can arise not just on the classicist side, there can also be alliances between various forms of anti-classicism. These connections and synergies have been investigated in a very rudimentary fashion in this volume and should be the object of future research. Particular attention should be paid to those opposing gestures that are directed against overarching designs and fantasies of unification, such as Bembo's position on the language question or a genre-overarching Aristotelianism. Folengo's demonstration of

linguistic and stylistic multiplicity, for example, might not only be directed against Bembo's plea for Trecento Tuscan, but perhaps against the postulate of stylistic unity as such (Mehltretter 2010). Such large-scale attacks can be taken to constitute a kind of core of anti-classical efforts and are above all of interest with regard to the question of possible larger contexts in this field, to be explored by future researchers.

5 The rich variety of anti-classicist tendencies sketched above will be studied in this companion following the hypothesis that four main types of anti-classicism can be discerned:

5.1 *Explicit anti-classicism*. This is the most obvious, but also the most manifold type. Its explicitness consists either in direct references to an obverse poetics or in antiphrastic, parodic or otherwise distancing forms of intertextuality.

As to the corpus examined, the type labelled 'explicit anti-classicism' roughly corresponds to what is termed and analysed as 'anti-classicist' in literary histories. The two most important features of this type are a clear opposition to the poetry of Petrarch and the Petrarchists, and a distinct devaluation of classical as well as classicist model authors. Canonical texts in this regard include Castaldi's "Udite imitatori del Petrarca", some sonnets and capitoli by Francesco Berni, the *Ragionamento* by Pietro Aretino and Niccolò Franco's *Il Petrarchista*.

However, an extended, genre-based analysis of texts that clearly oppose the classicist *écriture* yields further differentiated criteria for this type, which are partly genre-specific, partly superordinate. In this way, genres such as the *poesia fidenziana*, the priapea, Aretino's *Lettere* and several text types that are assigned to the invective can also be identified as explicitly anti-classicist. An overall look at these texts shows that references to the burlesque poetry of the Trecento and Quattrocento, and to bucolic as well as to 'pedantic' poetry can also be considered characteristic of this type.

Explicitly anti-classicist poetry is characterised by the fact that gestures of opposition to Petrarchist model texts, as well as criticisms of real persons or political parties, very often remain within the realm of the non-serious or the virtual, without even potentially intending to establish alternative models.

Particular attention is paid in this chapter – also in response to the comparatively little scholarly consideration of this aspect – to explicitly anti-classicist references to ancient texts, authors or genres (such as the Roman love elegy). In addition, mutual references between single texts and text types within the corpus of explicit anti-classicism can be observed. These include references of the genre of capitoli poetry to that of satire, references of Priapic poetry to the Bernese capitoli, references in Niccolò Franco's *Rime* to the figure of Pietro

Aretino and his works etc. Such allusions stabilise what could be a ‘system’ of explicitly anti-classicist writing from within.

5.2 Implicit anti-classicism. This term describes texts that do not declare or signal any fundamental opposition to or explicit devaluation of classicist norms and may not even be intended to transgress them; rather, they overstretch the boundaries of poetic norms (as in mannerism, see Quondam 1991b; Huss 2014) or corrode them by the introduction of incompatible elements proclaiming, however, rather than proving their compatibility. In this volume, the phenomena studied in this regard are the spiritual tragedy and the spiritual Petrarchism. Here the ‘old’ classicism of the revival of Greek and Roman tragedy and the discussions about Aristotelian drama poetics from the middle of the Cinquecento and the ‘new’ classicism of Petrarchist love poetry are combined with the new requirements of Christian themes in the age of catholic reform and counter-reformation. In contrast to the ‘submission’ of pagan norms to the Christian doctrine in late antiquity, the *Chresis* (cf. Gnlika 1984), authors of spiritual tragedies and spiritual poetry classify themselves as subordinate to secular poetics and practices of tragedy and Petrarchist poetry. Therefore, they programmatically do not choose the still available, but ‘outmoded’ *sacra rappresentazione* or the *lauda*, but intend the Christian conversion of the pagan-secular, classicist models without abandoning their classicist pretensions. They are not concerned with anti-Aristotelianism or anti-Petrarchianism, but with a ‘better’, ideologically impeccable Aristotle and Petrarch. However, in order to achieve an “Aristotele christiano” (Angelo Grillo) in Christian drama or a “Petrarca teologo e spirituale” (Francesco Malipiero) in poetry, creative theoretical-poetological, as well as textual-practical efforts, are required that do not leave the initial model undamaged. Paradoxically, classicist intentions here lead to anti-classical results of varying degrees.

5.3 Alternative classicism. The choice of an alternative model such as Dante not only ‘pluralises’ the field of norms and standards in poetry, it allows for both opposition and innovation. Deviating from dominant classicist allegiances like Petrarchism, some of the authors studied here contributed to an alternative ‘Dantesque’ tradition, especially of a religious, and in some cases more specifically Savonarolian, type. In the second half of the sixteenth century, two partly new ways of looking upon Dante as different from the mainstream emerged, which opened up a field of possibilities: the debate on Dante as a ‘phantastic’ author on the one hand and, on the other, a new way of appreciating Dante’s poetic ‘harshness’ in literary theory, poetic practice, the fine arts and music.

5.4 Para-classicism. When using this term we are referring to forms of hybridisation or mixture of classicist and non-classicist elements, or between mutually

heterogeneous classicist models. For this mixture, the work of Benvenuto Cellini is analysed as an example, from which excursions are made into similarly situated authors and texts in the Cinquecento. Cellini is paradigmatic for para-classicism because he hybridises different arts and art processes. His *Rime*, his *Vita* and his treatises on art oscillate between factual and fictional narration. On the one hand, they seek to connect with classical models, but on the other hand, they ostentatiously cultivate a conspicuous anti-classicism that builds on shock effects of an ‘aesthetics of the ugly’ or the counter-discursive. Cellini and other authors react to a massively transforming cultural landscape that can only be met to a limited extent with the traditional classical paradigms. Cellini’s emphasis on self-reference is not least the result of an anti-classical texture that contaminates the most diverse genres. Cellini, who feels excluded from the ‘classical classicism’ of his contemporaries, opposes what he sees as unfair treatment with ‘a different classicism’.

Each of the following chapters has been directed by one of the four authors, working with their various teams. The four main authors also wrote the greater part of the texts; the parts written by other members of the respective teams are marked in brackets after their titles. This book would not have been possible without the generous funding of the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* and the Austrian *Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung*. The authors wish to thank both institutions for their support.

Finally, we should like to express our warmest thanks to the members of the four teams, Aina Sandrini, Daniel Fliege, Avi Liberman, Carolina Pini, Sascha Resch, Matteo Cazzato, Giulia Lombardi, Laura Umlauf, Antonio Mariani and the supporting staff at our universities. A special thank you goes to Nicky Beaven for revising and proofreading the English texts in this companion.