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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.

1.1 Berni's sonnets

1.1.1 Origins

While the burlesque sonnet was still a central form of comic poetry in the Trecento and the Quattrocento, it was marginalised in the Cinquecento by the Bernesque capitolo. Francesco Berni did not only help the latter form to spread, but he also emerged as a writer of burlesque sonnets. In this genre, Berni took themes and motifs from the comic sonnet production of previous centuries and partially related them to Cinquecento lyric genres such as Petrarchism.

Both the formal and the thematic differences between Berni's capitoli and his sonnets are reflected in the genesis of the texts, for the two forms initially appeared separately. While Berni had emerged as an author of capitoli between 1518 and 1523, he devoted himself almost exclusively to writing sonnets in the 1520s. In his last creative phase before his death in 1535, he was finally active in both genres concurrently (Longhi 1976). The partial return to the form of the capitolo was likely also influenced by his contact with the *Accademia della Vigna* active in Rome (cf. chap. 1.2) whose members had made Berni's capitoli the model for their own *terzina* poetry. Berni's formative effect on other writers, however, remained limited to the form of the capitolo, and therefore the sonnet was increasingly marginalised in the production of other *poeti berneschi* (Romei 1984, 66–67).

1.1.2 Text and edition history

Francesco Berni's sonnets were initially published simultaneously with collections of his capitoli, but in separate editions containing only poems of this form. This suggests an editorial practice that took into account the formal, but also thematic differences between Berni's sonnets and his capitoli. The first collection of Berni's sonnets was published in 1537 – two years after his death – in Ferrara by Scipione et fratelli. Three years later, Curzio Troiano Navò in Venice also published a sonnet anthology with additional poems.

This formal differentiation was abandoned only in the two-volume *Opere burlesche*, published by Giunti in Florence in 1548 and 1555. The first of these two volumes, edited by Antonfrancesco Grazzini, opens with a section devoted to Francesco Berni, containing first the capitoli and then the sonnets, as well as other poetic forms. This arrangement reflects changes in the perception of Berni's poems since the publication of the first editions. The fundamental differences between Berni's sonnets and his capitoli were clearly now of less importance than

the intention of providing a comprehensive overview of his burlesque oeuvre. Moreover, the capitoli have a more prominent position in the arrangement of the texts than the sonnets. The codification of the genre of Bernesque lyric poetry promoted by Berni's successors had marginalised the form of the sonnet so that the burlesque capitolo asserted itself as the paradigmatic form of this genre.

The underlying objective of the Giunti edition is further evident in the dedicatory letter and two of the introductory sonnets that Antonfrancesco Grazzini placed at the beginning of the first volume he edited. These texts emphasise Berni's Florentine background, elevating him to the status of "maestro e padre del burlesco stile" (Berni et al. 1548, n.p., v. 8). The *Accademia degli Umidi*, which was active in Florence and to which Lasca also belonged, appears here as the continuator of the "stil burlesco" established by Berni (iir). The latter is polemically contrasted with the "Petrarcherie" and "Bemberie" and thus presented from an anti-Petrarchist perspective (iiv). Lasca's perspective is geared towards an attempt to reclaim Francesco Berni and his character for Florence after Bernesque poetry had been received and disseminated mainly in Rome (Romei 2012, 275–276). The anti-Petrarchism attested to Bernesque poetry in this edition earned Francesco Berni a "Ruf des Anti-Petrarca und Anti-Bembo" (Schulz-Buschhaus 1993, 287), which shaped the reception of his texts from the late Cinquecento onwards. Berni's texts themselves, however, only partially support this reputation; moreover, anti-Petrarchist elements appear precisely in the form of the sonnet, which is accorded less importance in the *Opere burlesche* than the capitolo.

Modern editions of Francesco Berni's poetry such as the editions by Ezio Chiòrboli (Berni 1934), Danilo Romei (Berni 1985), Giorgio Bàrberi Squarotti and Moreno Savoretti (Berni et al. 2014), arrange the poems chronologically. Only the anthology edited by Guglielmo Gorni, Massimo Danzi and Silvia Longhi (Berni 2001) separates Berni's sonnets from the capitoli, following the model of the first Cinquecento editions.

1.1.3 Research

In recent scholarship, Berni's sonnets have generally been studied separately from his capitoli, indicating that the two forms are perceived as distinct genres. While some studies examine the distinction itself (Longhi 1983, 4–23; Schulz-Buschhaus 1993), in most cases it is implicitly assumed. In addition to the chronological and textual position of the sonnets within Berni's oeuvre (Longhi 1976; Bernardi 1988, 199–200), the relation of these poems to other textual traditions has been analysed, most notably the burlesque sonnets of the Trecento and

Quattrocento.¹ The interpretation of Berni's sonnets as satires is terminologically inaccurate (Schulz-Buschhaus 1975), but still holds up in isolated cases (for example, in Bettella 1998). A frequently studied aspect of Berni's sonnets is their parody of Petrarchist poetry, especially in the sonnet *Chiome d'argento fino, irte e attorte*.²

1.1.4 Analysis

Francesco Berni's burlesque sonnets cannot be traced back to a uniform type but are heterogeneous in terms of style and themes. Even though a complete classification cannot be provided here, some basic types must be mentioned. Some sonnets are based on themes and motifs taken from the burlesque poetry of the Trecento and Quattrocento, such as descriptions of decaying houses and buildings, polemics against incompetent doctors, as well as petitionary and companion sonnets for gifts and various objects. Others exhibit thematic proximity to Berni's capitoli, such as the poem *Può far la Nostra Donna ch'ogni sera*, which is a palinode of the eulogy on the game of cards formulated in the *Capitolo della primiera*. Others use features of the political invective or *tenzone* among poets (cf. chap. 1.6) or take the form of burlesque funeral poems.

Of particular interest in this context are the parodies of Petrarchist poetry to be found among Berni's sonnets.³ The sonnet is more suitable than any other metrical form for this kind of parody because the lack of genre distance from Petrarchism makes the parodic conciseness of the poems more prominent (Schulz-Buschhaus 1993, 283). Characteristic of Berni's parody of Petrarchan style is the so-called *Sonetto alla sua donna*, written around 1530 (Longhi 1976, 290):

Chiome d'argento fino, irte e attorte
senz'arte intorno ad un bel viso d'oro;
fronte crespa, u' mirando io mi scoloro,
dove spunta i suoi strali Amor e Morte;
occhi di perle vaghi, luci torte
Da ogni oggetto diseguale a loro;
ciglie di neve, e quelle, ond'io m'accoro,

¹ Longhi 1983, 19–22; Bernardi 1988; Schulz-Buschhaus 1993, 315–331; Orvieto/Brestolini 2000, 219–238.

² Schulz-Buschhaus 1975; Giampieri 1978; Toscan 1983; Schulz-Buschhaus 1993; Montanile 1996; Bettella 1998; Gigliucci 2010; Tonozzi 2015.

³ Occasionally, Berni's work also contains parodies of Petrarchist lyric poetry that make use of other meters, such as the ballad *Amore, io te ne incaco*, which parodies Petrarch's *Amor quando fioria*.

dita e man dolcemente grosse e corte;
 labra di latte, bocca ampia celeste;
 denti d'ebeno rari e pellegrini;
 inaudita ineffabile armonia;
 costumi alteri e gravi: a voi, divini
 servi d'Amor, palese fo che queste
 son le bellezze della donna mia.
 (Berni et al. 2014, 139–140)

The sonnet varies an old burlesque motif, the portrait of an ugly old woman. This already appears in the *dolce stil novo* or, for example, in Cecco Angiolieri as a comic replica of the images of unearthly beauty that are attributed to the beloved in love poetry.⁴ Berni aligns this motif to the common topoi of description of the beloved in Petrarchist poetry. His poem specifically parodies Pietro Bembo's sonnet *Crin d'oro crespo e d'ambra tersa e pura* (V) by combining the original components of the description in 'perverted' or wrong correlations. The resulting pastiche is, as Ulrich Schulz-Buschhaus notes (1993, 330), a parody of imitation itself, through which not only the language and world view of high poetry is attacked, but also imitation as its essential literary procedure.

Berni's parodies of Petrarchism occur not only in sonnets of standard length, but also to some extent in his *sonetti caudati*, such as the so-called *Sonetto delle puttane* from around 1518 (Longhi 1976, 278–279):

Un dirmi ch'io gli presti e ch'io gli dia
 or la veste, or l'anello, or la catena,
 e, per averla conosciuta a pena,
 volermi tutta tôr la robba mia;
 un voler ch'io gli facci compagnia,
 che nell'inferno non è maggior pena,
 un dargli desinar, albergo e cena,
 come se l'uom facesse l'osteria;
 un sospetto crudel del mal francese,
 un tôr danari o drappi ad interesse,
 per darli, verbigratia, un tanto il mese;
 un dirmi ch'io vi torno troppo spesso;
 un'eccellenza del signor marchese,
 eterno onor del puttanesco sesso;
 un morbo, un puzzo, un cesso,
 un toglier a pigion ogni palazzo
 son le cagioni ch'io mi meni il cazzo.
 (Berni et al. 2014, 75–76)

4 See on this burlesque motif Hausmann 1975; Orvieto/Brestolini 2000, 214–238.

The triviality of the subject matter and the misogynistic impetus of the sonnet form a stark contrast “zur ideal-heroischen Welt petrarkistischer Liebeserklärung” (Schulz-Buschhaus 1993, 217). The sonnet enumerates the inconveniences of intercourse with women. The model for this enumeration scheme is adopted from high love poetry, namely from Bembo’s sonnet *Moderati desiri, immenso ardore* (VI), in which the sufferings of the devoted lover are enumerated according to this pattern. Bembo’s sonnet formed this schema into a particularly concise type of Petrarchist poetry, which was often imitated (Schulz-Buschhaus 1993, 317–321). In addition to its formal adaptation to this schema, Berni’s sonnet also parodies the model in thematic terms. In Bembo’s poem, the sufferings of the lover are due to the absence of the beloved, but have an ennobling effect on the former. In Berni’s sonnet, the lover suffers precisely because of the beloved’s overly physical proximity. Because of that, he gratifies himself “in trivial handgreiflicher Weise selber, indem er misogyn Liebe wie Geliebte überhaupt im Stich läßt” (Schulz-Buschhaus 1993, 322). Berni’s sonnet thus continues an anti-heroic conception of love that appeared earlier in the *sonetti caudati* of the burlesque tradition of the Quattrocento. While in this tradition, for example in Burchiello’s work, the authors of classical antiquity appeared as the counterpart, to whom the ‘false’, mythical image of Cupid was attributed, in Berni’s work this role is assigned to Bembist lyric poetry (322–323).

1.1.5 Conclusions

Francesco Berni’s sonnets draw heavily on the burlesque lyricism of the Trecento and Quattrocento. In some sonnets, themes and motifs from this tradition are combined with a parody of Petrarchist-Bembist poetry. The sonnet proves to be a particularly suitable form for this kind of parody because its formal proximity to Petrarchism makes the comic distortion especially salient. Linguistic and thematic obscenity serve as a central means of parody. The object of parody is not only the language, themes, and motifs of Petrarchist poetry, but also imitation itself as a constitutive procedure of this genre.

1.2 Bernesque capitoli

1.2.1 Origins

The burlesque capitolo was the most widely received form of Bernesque poetry, even after Francesco Berni’s death. While Francesco Berni wrote capitoli primarily

in the 1520s, a circle of lyric poets (the so-called *vignaiuoli*) active in Rome in the 1530s, who received the forms established by Berni, codified them into a genre and in some cases developed them further, was decisive for their dissemination. Among the lyricists who belonged to this group were Giovanni Mauro d'Arcano, Francesco Maria Molza, Agnolo Firenzuola and Mattio Franzesi.

Both basic types of the Bernesque capitolo, the paradoxical encomium and the epistolary capitolo, appear in Francesco Berni's work. The so-called *capitoli di lode* are poems in praise of fruit, everyday objects or other inanimate things (e.g. peaches, eels, chamber pots), as well as of diseases and other calamities (such as Berni's famous chapters on the plague). Their counterpart is the *capitoli contro*, invective poems on specific objects or courtly manners (such as Mattio Franzesi's capitolo *Contra il parlare per Vostra Signoria*). In both cases, the capitoli are characterised by the use of sexual metaphors and codified language, which add an obscene level of meaning to the praise or vituperation.

The *Lettere in capitoli*⁵ are addressed to direct recipients, mostly named in the text, and imitate the style of epistolary correspondence in the opening and closing formulas. Many of these capitoli are narrative, as illustrated, for example, by the numerous descriptions of hardscrabble journeys.⁶

Francesco Berni played a formative role in the development and dissemination of burlesque capitoli in the Cinquecento. With a series of paradoxical encomiums produced around 1521–1522 (*Capitolo dell'anguille*, *Capitolo delle pesche*, *Capitolo dell'orinale*), Berni established the form of the paradoxical encomium as it was taken up a decade later by other Bernesque authors. Around 1527–1528, the form of the epistolary capitolo also appeared in Berni's *terzina* poetry, which also found favour with his successors (Longhi 1983, 251–267).

Although Berni left Rome towards the end of the 1520s to follow his employer Giovanni Matteo Giberti to the Veneto, the development of the Bernesque capitolo⁷ remained strongly tied to Rome in the following decades. Presumably at the beginning of the 1530s, a group of burlesque lyricists emerged here in the circle of the Mantovan Uberto Strozzi, for whom the historically unconfirmed designation *Accademia della Vigna* or *Accademia dei Vignaiuoli* has become widespread in research.⁸

⁵ The designation comes from Berni's letter to Blosio Palladio dated December 31, 1534 (cf. Berni et al. 2014, 508).

⁶ This common motif is also prevalent in the French burlesque and satirical tradition (Schulz-Buschhaus 1993, 289).

⁷ Bärberi Squarotti/Savoretti in Berni et al. 2014, 53–54.

⁸ This designation is based on an academy under this name mentioned in Anton Francesco Doni's *Libreria* and *Mondi*. It now seems questionable whether this was the group of *poeti berneschi* active in Rome (Romei 1984, 53–57).

There is evidence that the group existed between the years 1532 and 1535, probably until at least 1537 (Romei 1984, 55). It was likely a loosely programmed group that met regularly rather than an institutionalised academy. The association consisted of authors, most of whom were in the service of ecclesiastical dignitaries or were clerics themselves, such as Giovanni Mauro d'Arcano, Giovanni Della Casa, Giovanni Francesco Bini, Francesco Maria Molza, Agnolo Firenzuola and Mattio Franzesi (Romei 1984, 52–58). Most of the members did not only use the comic genre, but at the same time emerged also as writers of serious poetry (75). In the realm of Bernesque capitoli, these authors used the central characteristics of Francesco Berni's *terzina* poems and codified them into a genre based on replicable textual features. The preference given to the capitolo greatly marginalised the burlesque sonnet, which occupied a position equal to the capitolo in Berni's own texts. This choice also excluded political satire from the thematic repertoire of Bernesque lyricists, which in Italian lyric poetry of the Cinquecento appeared primarily in sonnet form – consider, for example, the pasquinades but also some of Berni's sonnets (Romei 1984, 67–68).

Francesco Berni's contact with this group was limited to correspondence with individual members and short stays in Rome in 1533 and 1534 (Romei 1984, 55). Nevertheless, the capitolo produced in the group's environment also influenced Berni's writing. Thus, in 1532, after a period of exclusive sonnet production, Berni returned to writing capitoli, thematically referring to the *terzina* poetry of his successors. One example of this are his *Capitoli della peste*, the contents of which are linked to Francesco Bini's *Capitolo del mal francese* (67).

However, in other centres of Italy, especially in Venice, the form of the Bernesque capitolo only spread after anthologies of poems in this genre were first printed between 1537 and 1539 (Romei 1984, 65–66). Bernesque capitoli by Pietro Aretino, Lodovico Dolce, and Francesco Sansovino, who were active in Venice at the time, appeared in a collection in 1540 (Longhi 1983, 54–56).

In the final decades of the sixteenth century, the production of Bernesque lyric poetry was concentrated in Northern Italy, especially in the Venetian area of influence, Lombardy and Emilia. Bernesque lyricists of the late Cinquecento include Giulio Padovano, the Accademico Confuso, the Accademico Sviluppato, and Tommaso Garzoni.⁹ Of some of these authors, only their pseudonym adopted within literary academies survives, indicating the importance of such associations for the development of the Bernesque capitolo in the late Cinquecento. The forms and themes used in this phase are limited to the schematic repetition of patterns that had already become constitutive of the genre around the middle of

⁹ Romei 1998 (12–13) contains a comprehensive list of Bernesque authors of this period.

the sixteenth century. Compared with earlier capitoli, obscene allusions clearly lost their relevance due to Counter-Reformation repression (Romei 1998, 8–17).

As early as the first half of the Cinquecento, burlesque commentaries were produced, which parodied humanist textual exegesis, especially interpretations of Petrarch. Francesco Berni himself provided a model for this with the *Comento al capitolo della Primiera*, published in 1526, in which the fictitious author Messer Pietropaulo da San Chirico comments on Berni's capitolo featured in the title. Burlesque commentaries gained wider circulation in connection with the *Accademia della Virtù*, which existed in Rome¹⁰ in the 1530s and 1540s and included Bernesque authors such as Caro, Bini, and Franzesi (Longhi 1983, 46–47). It was in this environment, for example, that Annibal Caro's *Commento di ser Agresto da Ficaruolo sopra la prima ficata del padre Siceo* (1538) on Francesco Maria Molza's *Capitolo in lode de' fichi* was produced. Other burlesque commentaries mainly originated from Florence, where Antonfrancesco Grazzini¹¹ and an author only known as Grappa,¹² among others, excelled in this genre (Procaccioli 2002, 11).

1.2.2 Text and edition history

Over the course of the Cinquecento, numerous editions of Bernesque capitoli appeared, predominantly in the form of anthologies with texts by various authors. The present account concentrates on the first editions of the individual editions, without considering the – in some cases numerous – reissues.¹³

The first collections of burlesque capitoli by multiple authors appeared between 1537 and 1539, when the poems of Francesco Berni and some *berneschi*, likely to have initially circulated in manuscript form, were printed. The four anthologies published by Curzio Troiano Navò during this period represent the canonisation and hierarchisation of individual authors that took place at this time. The first of these anthologies (Mauro d'Arcano/Berni 1537) names only Giovanni Mauro d'Arcano and Francesco Berni in its title, with the former preceding Berni in both the title and arrangement of capitoli. In the same year, however, Navò published a second edition of the anthology (Berni/Mauro

¹⁰ Cf. Cosentino 2002, 180–182.

¹¹ Cf. for instance *Lezione di maestro Niccodemo dalla Pietra al Migliaio sopra il capitolo della salsiccia*.

¹² Cf. e.g. *Il Commento del Grappa sopra la canzone in lode della salsiccia* and *Cicalamenti del Grappa intorno al sonetto „Poi che mia speme è lunga a venir troppo“*.

¹³ Information on the reissues of individual editions of Bernesque capitoli is given in the section “Appendice I” in Longhi 1983 (247–250).

d'Arcano 1537) in which this order was reversed. Navò's 1538 edition reflects an expansion of the canon of anthologised texts, which was probably made possible by access to additional sources. In separate sections, the collection includes capitoli by Berni and Mauro d'Arcano, as well as burlesque *terzina* poems by Giovanni Della Casa, Giovanni Francesco Bini, and Angelo Bronzino. In the third Navò edition of 1539, additional texts by Giovanni Maria Molza and Benedetto Varchi, as well as lesser-known names such as Alessandro Sansedoni, Bartolomeo Carli, and Mario Confuso, are added. In 1540, a collection of capitoli by Pietro Aretino, Lodovico Dolce, and Francesco Sansovino was produced, testifying to an increased interest in the Bernesque capitolo in Venice, which probably emerged as a result of the publication of the Navò editions.

A strong influence on the later reception of Bernesque poetry was *Il primo* and *Il secondo libro Dell'Opere burlesche*, published by Giunti in Florence in 1548 and 1555 (cf. chap. 1.1). While the titles of earlier anthologies focus primarily on the names of the authors or the capitolo form, the designation *opere burlesche* of the collected texts, which appears in the Giunti editions, suggests their perception as an individual genre (Longhi 1983, 25).

In addition to the anthologies of Bernesque poetry mentioned thus far, editions of capitoli by individual authors also appeared in the Cinquecento, which were, however, less visible than the anthologies because of their more marginal distribution. Francesco Berni's *Capitolo del Gioco della Primiera* is the only poem published by Calvo in Rome during his lifetime, in 1526. In this edition, the text is accompanied by a burlesque prose commentary by Berni on the capitolo, which also served as a model for later texts of this kind. As early as 1537, Agostino Bindoni published Quinto Gherardo's *Terze rime piacevoli*, the first collection of capitoli by an author who belonged to neither Florentine nor Roman circles (Romei 2012, 273). Agnolo Firenzuola's *Rime*, published in Florence in 1549, contains some Bernesque capitoli in addition to poems of other genres. The *Capitolo delle lodi del fuso* by Girolamo Ruscelli was published in Venice in 1554 as a single-text edition. On the whole, editions of capitoli by individual authors in this period were a rather isolated phenomenon and often of only small textual volume.

Around the middle of the Cinquecento, publications with poems by individual authors also appeared, containing both satirical poetry and burlesque capitoli. Ercole Bentivoglio's *Satire et altre rime piacevoli* (1546), Pietro Nelli's *Satire alla carlona* (1546–1548), Gabriele Simeoni's *Satire alla berniesca* (1549), Giovanni Agostino Caccia's *Satire et capitoli piacevoli* (1549) and Cesare Caporali's *Piacevoli rime* (1585), all of which appeared in numerous editions, fall into this category.

In the second half of the sixteenth century, a decrease in the number of editions of Bernesque poetry can be observed. The reason for this was most likely

the censorship to which this type of poetry was subjected in an increasingly repressive climate marked by the Counter-Reformation.¹⁴ Collections from this period include Giovanni Francesco Ferrari's *Rime burlesche* (1570), the anthology *Raccolto d'alcune piacevoli rime* (1582) and the *Rime piacevoli di Cesare Caporali, del Mauro, et d'altri auttori* (1586). The frequent designation of these collections as *piacevoli* already points to the emerging deviation at this time from the constitutive features of the genre that had characterised the Bernesque capitoli until the middle of the century (Romei 1998, 8).

In the field of modern critical editions, there are, on the one hand, anthologies of Bernesque texts by various authors and, on the other, editions of texts by individual authors that contain – at least in part – Bernesque poems. *Poeti del Cinquecento*, edited in 2001 by Guglielmo Gorni, Massimo Danzi and Silvia Longhi, is an example of an anthology containing Bernesque texts. A more recent collection of Bernesque poems by various authors is offered by *Opere di Francesco Berni e dei berneschi*, edited in 2014 by Giorgio Barberi Squarotti and Moreno Savoretti.

Of the editions dedicated to individual authors, only Francesco Berni's texts have an extensive editorial history. In addition to the much-cited edition by Ezio Chiòrboli (1934), more recent editions by Danilo Romei (1985) and Giorgio Bärberi Squarotti (1991) should also be mentioned. For other Bernesque authors of the Cinquecento, the number of editions is minimal. Examples of modern editions of Bernesque texts include Giovanni Francesco Bini (2017), Francesco Coppetta dei Beccuti (Guidiccioni/Beccuti 1912, 279–311), Agnolo Bronzino (1998), Agnolo Firenzuola (1977), Antonfrancesco Grazzini, called *Il Lasca* (1974), Giovanni Mauro d'Arcano (2016), and Francesco Maria Molza (1999).¹⁵

1.2.3 Research

Bernesque lyric poetry is one of the comic genres of the Cinquecento that has been most thoroughly studied in recent scholarship. While for a long period of time interest was limited primarily to Francesco Berni's poems, from the 1980s onwards, indeed perhaps earlier, efforts began to emerge, alongside studies of

¹⁴ The index of 1559 forbade, among other things, the publication of the works of Berni, Della Casa, and Aretino. The index of 1564 lifted the ban on Berni and Della Casa, but introduced a general prohibition against texts with obscene content. The indices of 1590 and 1593 again explicitly referred to Berni's works (Romei 1998, 7; Romei 2012, 280).

¹⁵ The edition of the Molza poems, however, contains only three capitoli (*de' fichi, dell'insalata, della scomunica*) and does not use the methodology of textual criticism.

individual Bernesque authors or texts, to explore Bernesque lyric poetry as a genre.

In the field of Francesco Berni's capitoli, besides the chronology of his work (Longhi 1976) and its linguistic-stylistic aspects (Bàrberi Squarotti 1978), its relationship to the genre of satire (Toscan 1982), as well as explicitly anti-Petrarchist or anti-classicist aspects have also been analysed (Muecke 1984, 75–81; Schulz-Buschhaus 1993). Berni's *Capitolo del Gioco della Primiera* and *Capitolo del prete da Povigliano* are, moreover, the subjects of research devoted solely to these texts.¹⁶

In studies that deal with the burlesque poems of individual authors, general overviews and observations prevail without discussion of individual aspects. There has been increased research interest in the burlesque capitoli by the painter Agnolo Bronzino.¹⁷ Other authors whose burlesque capitoli have been examined sporadically in recent studies are Francesco Coppetta dei Beccuti,¹⁸ Giovanni Della Casa,¹⁹ Agnolo Firenzuola,²⁰ Antonfrancesco Grazzini,²¹ Giovanni Mauro d'Arcano,²² and Francesco Maria Molza.²³

Studies that consider Bernesque texts from a genre-related perspective seem particularly informative. In addition to the history of editions (Romei 2012; 2015) and the chronological development of the genre (Romei 1984, 49–84; 1998; 2007a), the constitutive features of *poesia bernesca* as a genre of Cinquecento lyric poetry have also been described in relation to other genres.²⁴ Further analyses have focused on the relationship between Bernesque poetry and the genre of satire (Floriani 1988, 125–217; Romei 2010) as well as on the treatment of ancient myths in burlesque capitoli (Corsaro 2005). The language of the burlesque capitolo has mainly been addressed in research with regard to sexual metaphors.²⁵ Studies on the form of the *capitolo di lode* focus primarily on its relation to ancient

¹⁶ Reynolds 1996; Romei 2001; Schulz-Buschhaus 1983.

¹⁷ Parker 1997; Parker 2001; Chiummo 2009; Rossi 2014; Chiummo 2017.

¹⁸ Ossola 1983.

¹⁹ Corsaro 1999; Zaccarello 2007.

²⁰ Romei 1983; Romei 2002.

²¹ Fachard 2001.

²² Savona 2003; Romei 2006a.

²³ Larocca 2019; Pignatti 2013.

²⁴ Longhi 1983 (critically, Floriani 1987, 165–173); Romei 1984, 49–84; Orvieto/Brestolini 2000, 199–218; Jossa 2016.

²⁵ Toscan 1981, critically; Romei 1984, 85–107, 127–135. Similarly critical of Toscan is Floriani 1987, 163–165. In contrast, Marzo (1997) takes a similar approach to Toscan. An examination of the language of the Bernesque capitoli as a representation of orality can be found in D'Angelo (2013).

examples of paradoxical encomiums (Cherchi 1975; Kromann 1975). Themes and motifs of Bernesque capitoli that have been analysed thus far include the burlesque self-portrait (Corsaro 2007), the theme of play (Romei 1993), and the judgments on fine art contained in Bernesque capitoli (Sandrini 2022). Studies of Bernesque capitoli concerning the phenomenon of anti-classicism only occur sporadically (Borsellino 1975, 41–59; Busjan 2012–2013).

1.2.4 Analysis

The Bernesque panegyric poems and epistolary capitoli draw on different models derived from Italian as well as Latin and Ancient Greek literature. The form of the *capitoli di lode* and its counterpart, the *capitoli contro*, refer to the model of ancient paradoxical encomiums.²⁶ This genre first emerged in the realm of Greek sophism from the fifth century B.C. onwards, later appeared in Roman literature,²⁷ and was taken up again at the beginning of the sixteenth century in Erasmus of Rotterdam's *Moriae Encomium*. However, these models are not explicitly mentioned in the Bernesque capitoli themselves, whether by concrete intertextual references or by metapoetic commentary. Moreover, as Danilo Romei has noted, the *capitoli di lode* appear as parodies of paradoxical encomiums because of their multi-layered structure of meaning (1984, 97–98). Among the constitutive features of the *capitoli di lode* is the use of sexual metaphors that selectively distorts the eulogy formulated on the surface of the text into the obscene and ridiculous.

The epistles in capitolo form, on the other hand, refer to the model of Ariosto's satires. This is also supported by the temporal proximity of the emergence and dissemination of both genres: Ariosto's satires were written between 1517 and 1524–1525 and were published posthumously in 1534, while the epistolary capitoli spread from 1528 onwards, when Francesco Berni wrote the first *terzina* poems of this kind.²⁸ Moreover, the *Dialogo contra i poeti* (cf. chap. 1.9) indicates that Berni was familiar with Ariosto's satires (Romei 1984, 20–22). They seem to have had an exemplary effect on the epistolary capitoli because in

²⁶ Romei 1984, 72; Longhi 1983, 142.

²⁷ Ancient Greek examples include the eulogies on pebbles and mice attributed to Polycrates, and later on Lucian of Samosata's eulogy on the fly; in the realm of Roman literature, mention may be made of Marcus Cornelius Fronto's *Laudes fumi et pulveris*. See Pease 1926, 29; Russell 2016; Cherchi 1975.

²⁸ These are the capitoli *A M. Francesco da Milano* ("Messer Francesco, se voi sete vivo") and *A M. Marco Veneziano* ("Quant'io vo più pensando alla pazzia") (Longhi 1976, 268–269).

these satires – following the model of Horace’s *Epistulae* – the stanzaic form of the *terzina* was applied to the structure of the epistle for the first time (Gasparini 2015, 122). The Bernesque epistles share obvious similarities with Ariosto’s satires: like the latter, the *lettere in capitoli* are addressed to a named author, who is directly approached at the beginning of the poem. On the linguistic level, both genres share the imitation of epistolary communication, which occurs together with the use of a low, almost colloquial style, with the burlesque poems displaying their low style more clearly than Ariosto’s satires do. On the structural level, this corresponds to an associative mode of argumentation and, on the content level, to the dominance of trivial themes.²⁹

The reference to the model of satire in the epistles of the *poeti berneschi* is also made clear by references to Ariosto and Horace in individual capitoli. Giovanni Mauro d’Arcano’s capitolo *Al Signor di Malphi* (“*Uscito dalle gran mura di Roma*”), for example, contains a travel description modelled on Horace’s *iter brundisinum* in his satires (I, V) (Mauro d’Arcano 2016, 369). The formulaic requests for news (*saper vorrei*)³⁰ that often occur in Bernesque capitoli, where the speaking subject inquires for news from the recipient about certain figures or events, uses a formulation from Ariosto’s first satire, which in turn is modelled on Horace’s *Epistulae*.³¹

Besides these similarities, however, there are significant differences between the Bernesque epistles and Ariosto’s satires. One significant difference seems to lie in an aspect that Ulrich Schulz-Buschhaus (1993) has observed with regard to Francesco Berni’s sonnets. Schulz-Buschhaus notes the fundamental absence of a satirical attitude in these texts. In Berni’s sonnets, there is no direct or indirect reference to a moral value against whose ideal background the “*Realität des Gegenwärtigen*” (432) can be rejected as false. If we apply this observation to the comparison between Ariosto’s satires and the Bernesque epistles, we have to bear in mind that in Ariosto’s case, the epistolary communication situation, which is imitated in his satires, as well as the thematic connection to the realm of the everyday merely serve as a starting point to create a depreciatory perspective on present reality in the name of a moral value understood as a comprehensive ideal. This latter aspect is alien to the Bernesque epistles. The simulation of epistolary communication and the thematic connection to the immediacy of the everyday remain the primary theme of the Bernesque *capitoli epistolari*, but there

²⁹ Cf. on the characteristics of Ariosto’s satires Gasparini 2015, 123.

³⁰ E.g. in Giovanni Mauro d’Arcano’s capitolo *A Messer Pietro Carnesecchi* (Mauro 2016, 339–342).

³¹ Cf. Ariosto 1987, 3–12 and 71–77. Cf. furthermore Longhi 1983, 192–194; Mauro d’Arcano 2016, 342–343, not. 7.

is no positing of a moral concept against which the present reality would be condemned, let alone a hint at an alternative dimension (434).

The mixed editions of Bernesque poetry and satires that started to appear from the middle of the Cinquecento need to be considered separately from the relationship between Bernesque epistles and Ariosto's satires just outlined (cf. chap. 1.2.2). The hybridisation of these two genres takes on different forms in the individual collections: Ercole Bentivoglio transfers features of the satire to the Bernesque capitoli contained in his *Satire et altre rime piacevoli*, while Pietro Nelli instead infuses satirical capitoli with Bernesque elements. Gabriele Simeoni's *Satire alla berniesca* already alludes to the style of Bernesque poetry in its title. However, the implementation of this objective in the individual poems has little in common with the Bernesque genre. Even features of the genre of satire only appear sporadically, giving the overall impression that the collection is the expression of a polemic that, contrary to what its title suggests, has little in common with the genre features of Bernesque capitoli and satire (Floriani 1988, 128–182).

Both the *capitoli epistolari* and the *capitoli di lode*, in addition to the models presented so far, use elements of Tuscan burlesque literature dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. An example of this is found in the sexual metaphors used in the *capitoli di lode*, for which the Florentine *canti carnascialeschi* served as a point of reference. These are carnival songs, which were widespread in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, originally tied to an oral tradition that then took on more codified forms, especially through the works of Lorenzo de' Medici. The masks that feature in these songs describe craft activities and various objects, often turned into sexual metaphors (Ferroni 1978, 234–236). While the sexual metaphors in the *canti carnascialeschi* are characterised by a repetitive schematism, they reach a higher level of complexity in Bernesque capitoli. The sexual level of meaning in the *capitoli di lode* – in contrast to the *canti carnascialeschi* – does not run through the entire text but occurs selectively and interacts with the main theme of paradoxical praise (Romei 1984, 97–98).

However, references to Tuscan burlesque poetry are not limited to the sexual metaphors used in the *capitoli di lode*. At the thematic and motivic level, the Bernesque capitoli also borrow from this textual tradition. The *ghiozzi*, *anguille*, *cardi*, *pescche* and *orinali* praised by Berni are elements drawn in part from the thematic and motivic inventory of the *canti carnascialeschi*, but also from the sonnets of Burchiello and of Meo de' Tolomei.³² Other borrowings

32 Cf. Silvia Longhi's comments in Berni 2001, 681–696.

concern epic models: the caricature-like self-portrait of the authorial figure, as drawn by Berni in the epistolary capitoli *Al Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici* and *Capitolo a Messer Baccio Cavalcanti sopra la gita di Nizza*, for example, is modelled on the self-characterisation of the half-giant Margutte in Luigi Pulci's comic epic *Morgante* (Longhi 1983, 115–119).

On a structural level, too, there are borrowings from forms of Tuscan comic poetry in individual capitoli. Berni's poem in praise of peaches or his capitoli on the plague partially take the structure of paradoxical recipes, which also play a role in Burchiello's and Meo de' Tolomei's sonnets.³³

The fact that the examples cited are exclusively from Berni's capitoli already indicates that the connection to fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Tuscan burlesque poetry is far more pronounced in Berni's poems than in later *poeti berneschi*. Although the use of sexual metaphors remains important in their texts, other thematic and motivic references to Tuscan burlesque poetry occur only sporadically. The tendency to distance themselves from Tuscan models is also reflected in the *poeti berneschi* at the linguistic level, where the Tuscan idiom was abandoned in favour of a largely non-regional, repetitive repertoire of phrases. This makes Florentine attempts to reclaim the Bernesque genre, such as those made by Grazzini in combination with the publication of Giunti's edition of the *Opere burlesche* in 1548, seem all the more obsolete. The detachment from Tuscan models illustrates Berni's school-forming function on the *poeti berneschi*, who succeeded him. Berni's example was clearly valued more highly than the Tuscan sources to which the *padre del burlesco stile* himself had referred, so that reference to this textual tradition became obsolete (Romei 1984, 69).

The Giunti edition of 1548 by Grazzini is characterised not only by an attempt to reclaim Bernesque poetry for Florence, but also by an anti-Petrarchist reading of Bernesque poems. In Berni's capitoli, however, no programmatic orientation against Petrarchism or Bembism can be discerned, as Ulrich Schulz-Buschhaus (1993) in particular has made clear. Berni's capitoli did not develop from a counter-position to Petrarchism, but from textual traditions that preceded Bembo's modelling or existed independently of it (287). Moreover, Berni's *capitolo in terza rima* took a form that did not belong to the specific formal repertoire of Petrarchist-Bembist poetry. As a result, Berni's capitoli hardly refer in a direct inversion or parody to the typical genera of Petrarchan-Bembist poetry (288). Consequently, the majority of parodic references to Petrarch in Berni's capitoli are not taken from the

³³ Lusius 1983, 78–79; on the type of paradoxical prescriptions in earlier comic poetry cf. Zaccarello 2009.

Rerum vulgarium fragmenta but from the *Trionfi*, which are also written in capitolo form. The gesture of protest in these cases does not concern Petrarchist poetry of a Bembist persuasion, but the poetics of Petrarchism in general, extending this objection to “alle geschlossenen Formen hohen Stils” (292). Berni’s capitolo *A Ippolito de’ Medici (Non crediate però, Signor, ch’io taccia)* illustrates the fact that Petrarch represents only one among several antagonists in this regard. The poem takes as its starting point a supposed request by Ippolito de’ Medici to write poetry in the *stil più alto*. The rejection formulated in response contains a demarcation of the *stile bernesco* from a ‘higher’ kind of poetry:

Provai un tratto a scrivere elegante
 In prosa e in versi e fecine parecchi
 et ebbi voglia anch’io d’esser gigante,
 ma messer Cinzio mi tirò gli orecchi,
 E disse: “Bernia, fa’ pur dell’anguille,
 ché questo è il proprio umor dove tu pecchi;
 arte non è da te cantar d’Achille:
 ad un pastor poveretto tuo pari
 convien far versi da boschi e da ville”.
 Ma lasciate ch’io abbia anch’io denari,
 non fia più pecoraio ma cittadino,
 e metterò gli *unquanto* a mano e’ *guari*;
 (Berni et al. 2014, 214–215; vv. 37–48)

The attempts at *scrivere elegante* outlined in the first tercet are probably to be understood as allusions to epic writing, more specifically to Berni’s *rifacimento* of Boiardo’s *Orlando innamorato* (Schulz-Buschhaus 1993, 295). The reference to the epic genre is clarified by a quotation from Pulci’s *Morgante* (XVIII, 113, v. 6) in the final verse of the first *terzina* (“ebbi voglia anch’io d’esser gigante”). The rebuke put into Apollo’s mouth (“messer Cinzio”), however, subsequently evokes the realm of Bernesque lyricism, namely the more prosaic “far versi da boschi e da ville”. The comparison between the Bernesque poet and the shepherd (“ad un pastor poveretto tuo pari”) quotes Virgil’s *Bucolica* (VI 3–5) but is not to be understood literally as positing an equivalence between Bernesque lyric poetry and bucolic poetry in the poetological sense. The allusion to the inventory of figures and settings of pastoral poetry here stands rather for the sphere of the thematic and stylistic plainness to which Bernesque lyric poetry is supposed to belong (Longhi 1983, 214). The quoted passage ends with an ironic twist in which the *I* pretends to conform to the demand for stylistically higher poems because of a prospective financial remuneration. The *scrivere elegante* is indicated by adverbs (“unquanto”, “guari”), which, as allegedly typical expressions of Petrarchist-Bembist poetry, can be interpreted as acts of ridicule of this

genre.³⁴ The stylistic self-determination of the text thus opposes, on the one hand, Petrarchist lyric poetry, and, on the other – as the first verses of the passage make clear – epic poetry. The antithesis is therefore not directed against the model of Bembism but against a more general idea of high poetry that encompasses both lyric and epic (Schulz-Buschhaus 1993, 295–296).

In contrast, the capitoli of Berni's successors express a decided opposition to Petrarchist-Bembist poetry. This is probably related to the fact that in the active phase of the so-called *Accademia dei Vignaiuoli* in the 1530s, an increasing "Kanonisierung und Systematisierung des Petrarkismus als des heroischen Stils der Liebeslyrik" (Schulz-Buschhaus 1993, 308) was already prevalent. Explicit distancing from Petrarchist poetry can be found, for example, in Giovanni Mauro d'Arcano's capitolo *A Messer Pietro Camasecchi* (Mauro d'Arcano 2016, 341, vv. 76–81) and in Agnolo Firenzuola's *In lode delle campane* (Berni et al. 1548, 287, vv. 247–255), in which the wantonly displayed unpolished style of Bernesque lyricism is defended against the affectation of Bembist lyricism. Unorthodox references to Petrarchism are also evident at motivic and thematic levels. The fruits and growths praised in Berneschi's paradoxical encomiums are used for "blasphemische Überbietungsvergleich[e] mit Apollos und Petrarca's 'lauro'" (Schulz-Buschhaus 1993, 308). In the *Capitolo de' Fichi*, for example, Francesco Maria Molza declares that figs are superior to laurels (Berni et al. 1548, 16r., vv. 22–24), and in Giovanni Mauro d'Arcano's *Capitolo delle fave*, the question is raised as to why the poets preferred mere laurels to beans.³⁵

Here and there, however, even Berni's successors combine their dissociation from Petrarchism with general opposition to any form of high poetry. Thus, in Lodovico Dolce's *Capitolo dello Sputo*, Ariosto's and Boiardo's *Romanzi*, Virgil's *Georgica* and Cicero are rejected, as is a form of Petrarchism which follows Pietro Bembo's model.³⁶ Although the anti-Petrarchist turn is more pronounced among Berni's successors than in Berni's own capitoli, Bembism is not the only antagonist consistently parodically or polemically rejected in the capitoli.

In Berni's capitoli as well as those of his successors, however, strategies opposing high poetry only rarely emerge with such clarity as in the examples

³⁴ The passage recalls Berni's much-quoted *Capitolo a Fra Bastian del Piombo*, in which Michelangelo's poetry is highlighted as a positive counter-example to Petrarchists. Petrarchist lyricism is evoked here – like the capitolo *A Ippolito de' Medici* – through a series of Petrarchic punctuations ("tacete unquanco, pallide viole, / e liquidi cristalli e fiere snelle", Berni et al. 2014, 236, vv. 29–30).

³⁵ "Ma donde vien, ch'ogni Poeta canta / Più tosto i lauri, i pampani, e le spiche, / Che questa gloriosa, e nobil pianta?"; Mauro d'Arcano 2016, 201, lines 31–33.

³⁶ Berni et al. 1548, 254; cf. Schulz-Buschhaus 1993, 314.

described above. Overall, the desultory character of a capriccio-aesthetic remains predominant (Schulz-Buschhaus 1993, 282). In Berni's *Capitolo in laude d'Aristotele*, for example, the *I* refers to the verses of the poem as "capricci / ch'a mio dispetto mi voglion venire" (Berni et al. 2014, 200, vv. 104–105), and Mauro d'Arcano's *terzina* poems deliberately emphasise the digressive structure of the poems, whose length and stringency constantly escape self-control.³⁷ By emphasising this lack of moderation and this volatility, the capitoli resist any definition and do not develop a comprehensive objective that could be understood as a significant counter-proposal to high poetry.

Another phenomenon that can be observed in Berni's capitoli, as well as in those of the *poeti berneschi*, is a retelling of ancient myths often aimed at comically and obscenely degrading them. The myth of the Golden Age is often invoked in this context.³⁸ An example of this is Berni's *Capitolo primo della peste* (Berni et al. 2014, 184–190): the poem elevates the time of the plague to an epoch of freedom, in which humanity is freed from the shackles of social conventions and can thus realise the original state of nature once more. As Antonio Corsaro (2005, 394) points out, an ambiguous line of argument is employed here: suffering and disease are praised as signs of an age that, according to the original myth, is characterised precisely by an absence of hardship and distress.

Among Berni's successors, the degradation of the myth of the Golden Age occurs primarily through a sexual interpretation of it, as in Giovanni Della Casa's *Capitolo del Martello* (Castiglione/Della Casa 1937, 706–709). This capitolo is directed as *vituperatio* against the notion of the infatuating *martel d'amore*, which was a widespread motif in the Cinquecento. In Della Casa's capitolo, infatuation appears as a state of suffering resulting from the process of civilisation. In the Golden Age, freedom from any social and sexual regulatory standards had also kept humanity away from the evil of *martel d'amore*. Through the sexual reinterpretation of the myth, which emphasises the physical and instinctual, it loses any philosophical implications (see for example Fontecedro 2012), as they were consistently discussed in Renaissance culture. At the same time, detachment from the sentimental appropriation of myth, as in the realm of love poetry, becomes apparent.³⁹ This occurs not only through the sexual interpretation of the myth but also through the *vituperium* of the *martel d'amore* expressed in the

37 Cf. on this feature of the Bernesque capitoli Longhi 1983, 210–212, further Bàrberi Squarotti 1978.

38 Ancient sources of this myth include Hesiod, *Works and Days*, vv. 109–173; Virgil, *Eclogues* IV; Horace, *Epodes* XVI, vv. 35–36 and 49; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, vv. 89–112.

39 Corsaro 2005, 397. Della Casa himself also draws on the myth in his love poetry, for example in the sextine *Di là dove per ostro e pompa ed oro* (Della Casa 2003, 201–205).

capitolo. The poem, in fact, opens up a vituperative and trivial perspective on the pain of love, which forms one of the constitutive themes of Petrarchist poetry.

Another genre of ancient (mainly Latin) literature that the capitoli of Berni's successors draw on, is the poetry of Priapus. This will be dealt with in a separate section (chap. 1.4).

1.2.5 Conclusions

Bernesque capitoli constitute a genre that uses features of preceding Tuscan burlesque poetry, the paradoxical encomium and satire. At points, a general opposition to the forms and values of high poetry is expressed in the capitoli using the anti-classicist writing strategies outlined above. The unpolished style and desultory character of the capitoli are pitted against the artificiality of Petrarchist and epic poetry. Moreover, especially among Berni's successors, thematic-motivic obscenity is used in the comic-parodic distortion of these counter-models as well as a degrading reinterpretation of ancient myths. The opposition to Petrarchist lyricism and epic poetry, however, remains within the realm of the unserious, without making any real claim to the establishment of an alternative model.

1.3 Poesia fidenziana

1.3.1 Origins

The term *poesia fidenziana* refers to a lyrical genre that developed from Camillo Scrofa's *Cantici di Fidenzio*. This is a collection of poems, likely written around the middle of the Cinquecento, which contains fifteen sonnets, a sestina, two capitoli, and an epitaph in the edition of 1562, which is regarded as the *vulgata*. The protagonist of the collection is the grammar teacher Fidenzio, who in the poems sings as the lyrical *I* of his (largely unrequited) love for his pupil Camillo. The *Cantici* are written in an artificial language known as *fidenziano*, which in morphology and syntax corresponds to Italian, but on the lexical level takes up Latin terms and latinising neologisms.

Cantici di Fidenzio had an educational effect in the environment of the *Accademia Olimpica* in Vicenza, to which Scroffa himself also belonged, so that other members in this circle also wrote poems based on the *Cantici* in the second half of the Cinquecento. In addition to the *fidenziano*, the epigones also used the figure of the pedant as protagonist and first-person speaker. However, the theme of

love, still central in the *Cantici*, was increasingly marginalised in their poems and in some cases turned heterosexual. The proliferation of encomiums and correspondence poems among Scroffa's successors also illustrates the development of the genre as a group phenomenon linked to the structures of the *Accademia Olimpica*.

The question as to which author the *Cantici di Fidenzio* should be attributed to remained open for a long time, since in the Cinquecento editions, no names other than that of the protagonist (and intra-fictional author) Fidenzio are mentioned. The earliest edition to include a portrait of Camillo Scroffa in the frontispiece did not appear until 1743. Investigations into the author's identity, which began as early as the eighteenth century and continued until the end of the nineteenth century, have confirmed this attribution.⁴⁰ Little information survives about Scroffa himself; it is at least certain that he lived between 1526–1527 and 1565 and was a member of the *Accademia Olimpica* in Vicenza (Hartmann 2013, 43–51). Moreover, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, attempts were made to identify the figures of Fidenzio and Camillo with extratextual individuals, namely with the grammar teacher Pietro Fidenzio Giunteo da Montagnana, active in Padua during the Cinquecento, and a certain Camillo Strozzi from Mantova. Although the existence of these two individuals in the sixteenth century can be proven, no definite indication can be given as to whether the literary figures of Fidenzio and Camillo refer to them.⁴¹

The *Cantici di Fidenzio* are assumed to have been produced in the middle of the sixteenth century. The collection of poems likely originated after the publication of the widely received second edition of the novel *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* in 1545, which especially influenced the linguistic form of the *Cantici di Fidenzio* (Trifone in Scroffa 1981, IX–X). Similarly, the Cinquecento comedies, whose inventory of characters includes pedantic grammar teachers, influenced the *Cantici di Fidenzio*. Francesco Belo's comedy *Il pedante* (1529) and Pietro Aretino's *Il Marescalco* (1533), in particular, which were in any case published before the *Cantici di Fidenzio* were written, should be mentioned here.

At the same time as Camillo Scroffa, at least two authors emerged who imitated his *maniera*. The poems of an author described by Trifone as 'Pseudo-Scroffa', who could, however, be more than one person, were integrated with Scroffa's poems in the undated edition of the *Cantici et Elegie del Pedante appassionato* (Trifone in Scroffa 1981, 50). Among Scroffa's earliest epigones,

⁴⁰ Zorzi 1722; Zeno 1724; Ferrari 1802; Da Schio in Scroffa 1832; Crovato 1891.

⁴¹ Hartmann 2013, 51–54; Trifone (2019, 69–70) endorses the plausibility of the above thesis but cannot cite any evidence for it.

moreover, were Iano Argirolotto, about whom nothing more is known than the pseudonym (50), and Giambattista Dal Gorgo, a contemporary of Scroffa and a probable member of the *Accademia Olimpica* (61). This academy was the central point of reference for the development and dissemination of the so-called *poesia fidenziana* in the following decades. Giambattista Girolodi (known within the academy as ‘Pudentio Spinedo’), who worked in Vicenza as a member of the *Accademia Olimpica* from around 1570, provided significant impetus. The sonnets dedicated to him by other academicians testify to his pre-eminence within the Vicentine circle of *poeti fidenziani*, joined by Michelangelo Angelico (alias Cintio Pierio), Aristarco (Palemone), Giovan Battista Liviera (Lattantio Calliopeo), Angelo Nigro (Albificato), Fabio Pace (Gallenico Irenio), and Tropotipo.⁴² Outside Vicenza, only isolated publications of Fidenzian poems were printed, for example by Scipione Metelli from Castelnuovo in Lunigiana and Anton Maria Garofani from Parma (Romei 1998, 20).

The affiliation of Scroffa’s poems and those of his epigones under the heading of a common genre is based primarily on the use of the *lingua fidenziana*, whose constitutive features are essentially preserved despite tendencies towards simplification and banalisation among individual authors (Romei 1998, 21–22). Another genre constant is the sonnet, which is the predominant poetic form both in the *Cantici* themselves and among its imitators. The figure of the pedant also remains the protagonist and first-person speaker in the *fidenziani* poems, though it loses some of the characteristics that its typification in the *Cantici di Fidenzio* is based on. The topos of pederasty appears only in the poems of Iano Argirolotto. The love poems of other *fidenziani* (for example, by Dal Gorgo, Girolodi, Liviera and Pierio), on the other hand, are addressed to female characters, which limits the comic aspect of these texts primarily to their linguistic form. In addition to the frequent abandonment of this topos, it can be observed on a general level that love poems appear only marginally in the textual corpus of some epigones and are pushed back in favour of encomiums and correspondence poems (Romei 1998, 20–23). The poems of these last two types are, in most cases, addressed to other *fidenziani* and illustrate the character of this genre as a phenomenon of *community-fashioning* tied to the *Accademia Olimpica* group.

In addition to the poetry of the *fidenziani*, the *Cantici di Fidenzio* also partially influenced comedy production in the second half of the Cinquecento. This can be seen most clearly in Girolamo Razzi’s comedy *Gostanza*, which features a pedant called ‘Fidenzio’ who claims to be the author of the *Cantici di Fidenzio*

42 Cf. the respective sections in Scroffa 1981, 77–106.

(Stäuble 1985, 627). Allusions to the *Cantici di Fidenzio* can also be found in the comedies *Prigione d'amore* (1592) by Sforza Oddi, *La Idropica* (1584) by Battista Guarini and Belisario Bulgarini's *Gli Scambi* (1611) (Stäuble 1991, 75).

1.3.2 Text and edition history

The first dated edition of the *Cantici di Fidenzio* appeared in Reggio Emilia in 1562, but it was likely preceded by the *Cantici et elegie Del Pedante appassionato*, published without any references to date or location, and two editions that are now lost (Trifone in Scroffa 1981, 117–128). The 1562 edition seems to have been born out of an effort to bring to market an edition without texts by other authors. Indeed, whereas in the *Cantici ed elegie*, Scroffa's texts are interwoven, without any other specification, with those of an author referred to in modern editions as Pseudo-Scroffa, the 1562 edition contains only Scroffa's texts. Moreover, the poems follow a more logical arrangement than the earlier edition, which was also adopted in later editions of Scroffa's poems. Fidenzio's name in the title of the collection also suggests an increased focus on this figure. Since Scroffa was still alive in 1562, it is at least conceivable that he influenced the design of this edition (Trifone 1979, 3–13).

Later editions again included the poems of Scroffa's epigones, but these were presented in a separate section. Here, Iano Argirolotto was given precedence: from 1564 onwards editions of the *Cantici* contain a section reserved for him; in the 1568 edition, his name is even mentioned in the title of the collection. However, the texts of other *fidenziani* were not included in the printings of the *Cantici* until approximately 1600 (Trifone in Scroffa 1981, 121–123).

In addition to the aforementioned prints, numerous collected manuscripts with sections dedicated to Fidenzio's poems also survived the sixteenth century. Of these, at least four are likely older than the earliest prints of the *Cantici di Fidenzio* that are still accessible today.⁴³ The Fidenzian sections of these manuscripts exclusively contain Scroffa's poems, although the number and arrangement of the texts vary.

The only modern critical edition of the *Cantici di Fidenzio*, which also offers an appendix of poems by other *poeti fidenziani*, was edited by Pietro Trifone in 1981. Scroffa's poems are also included in the volume *Poeti del Cinquecento* edited in 2001 by Guglielmo Gorni, Massimo Danzi and Silvia Longhi.

⁴³ Trifone offers a description of the manuscripts in Scroffa 1981, 109–118.

1.3.3 Research

Although the first literary approaches to the *poesia fidenziana* were established at the end of the nineteenth century (Ferrari 1892), few studies of this genre have featured in more recent research, which, moreover, focus almost exclusively on the *Cantici di Fidenzio*. Regarding Camillo Scroffa's collection of poems, in addition to the context of composition (Trifone in Scroffa 1981, 47–49; Hartmann 2013, 43–76) and history of editions, the *fidenziano* as an artificial language has also been studied, with attempts to determine criteria of demarcation vis-à-vis the language of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* on the one hand, and Macaronic⁴⁴ on the other (Trifone in Scroffa 1981, 109–147; X–XXIX). Much of the research emphasises the parodic character of the *Cantici di Fidenzio*, although the respective direction of impact is assessed differently: on the one hand, Scroffa's collection of poems is understood as a parody of Petrarchist poetry, which often cannot be separated from the parody of the figure of the pedant,⁴⁵ and, on the other hand, as a parody of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (Paccagnella 1982). Other aspects of the *Cantici di Fidenzio* addressed by individual works include the potential erotic meaning of the text (Hartmann 2013, 213–235; critically, Trifone 2019) and intertextual references to ancient texts, especially to the genre of Roman love elegy (Hartmann 2013, 111–112; Friede 2020). The texts of other *poeti fidenziani* (Trifone 1979; Stäuble 1985, 630–633), as well as the development of the genre after the publication of the *Cantici di Fidenzio* (Romei 1998) have only rarely been studied.

1.3.4 Analysis

As mentioned above, the *Cantici di Fidenzio* employ features of the allegorical novel attributed to Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, which was published by Aldo Manuzio in Venice in 1499, with a second edition published in 1545. Both Colonna's novel and Scroffa's *Cantici* use an artificial language

⁴⁴ This artificial mixed language is characteristic of the works of Teofilo Folengo (*Maccheronee*). These texts are not considered here in the context of anti-classicism, because the characteristics identified in relation to other anti-classicist texts do not fully apply there.

⁴⁵ Trifone in Scroffa 1981, 9–46; Stäuble 1985; Orvieto/Brestolini 2000, 257–268. While the studies cited link the parody of Petrarchism to that of pedantism, Capata (2005, 153–169) exclusively sees a parody of the figure of the pedant in Scroffa's collection of texts; merely an alternative, but not a parodistic reference is established to Petrarchist lyric.

that corresponds to the vernacular in morphology and syntax but is characterised by Latinisms and Graecisms in its lexis. The two texts also noticeably correspond on a structural level. The second sonnet of the *Cantici di Fidenzio*, entitled *Ne i preteriti giorni ho compilato* (Scroffa 1981, 4), is presented as a dedication of the poetry collection to Fidenzio and echoes the dedication *Poliphilus Poliae S.P.D.* at the beginning of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, where the first-person narrator Polifilo dedicates the novel to his beloved Polia (Paccagnella 1982, 168). This parallel is also supported with further details: in both Polifilo and Fidenzio, the introductory text is referred to as a *munusculo* (gift), and its offering is combined in both cases with the openly formulated hope that the recipient will reward the literary efforts with expressions of love (Hartmann 2013, 124).

In the poem that follows the dedicatory sonnet, *Le tumidule genule, i nigerrimi* (Scroffa 1981, 5), the link to the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, already implicitly established, is explicitly marked by a comparison between Fidenzio's desire and Polifilo's (vv. 12–14). Another structural similarity between the two texts is the epitaph placed at the end, for the beloved in Polifilo and for the lover himself in Fidenzio (Paccagnella 1982, 169–170). This difference seems relevant regarding the references to Petrarchist canzonieri that also appear in the *Cantici* (see below).

In addition to the parallels described above, however, fundamental differences between the *Cantici* and the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* are noteworthy, which can be traced back to the emergence of the two works in the context of different discourses. The linguistic experiment of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* took place in the second half of the Quattrocento and thus in a phase in which the *questione della lingua* and disputes on both the status of Latin on the one hand and the vernacular on the other had not yet produced a dominant model. The language of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* can thus be seen as taking up position in the context of a debate that still allowed for different solutions, in which the vernacular language experienced an upward revaluation through elements taken from classical languages (Dionisotti 1968, 9; Trifone 1981b, IX–XII). By the time the *Cantici* were written in the mid-sixteenth century, Bembo's model had already established a widely received solution to the issues indicated above. Experiments that deviated from it, such as *polifilesco*, would have seemed obsolete by this time (Trifone in Scroffa 1981, IX–XII). The artificial character of this language, but also its similarity to the mixture of Latin and Italian used by the figure of the pedant in comedies of the Cinquecento, probably led to the use of an artificial language strongly based on *polifilesco* in a parodic function to caricature the figure of Fidenzio in the *Cantici*.

The figure of the pedantic *grammaticus*, who makes excessive use of Latinisms and learned allusions, first appeared in Italian comedy with Francesco Belo's *Il Pedante* (1529) and remained present in the genre throughout the

century.⁴⁶ In addition to the mixed Latin-Italian (and to a lesser extent Greek) language, this comic character is characterised by an ostentatiously displayed erudition, which often turns out to be superficial and unworldly (Stäuble 1991, 25). The character of Fidenzio also corresponds to this characterisation. Although Fidenzio's language seems more homogeneous and less capricious than that of the pedants in the comedies (Trifone in Scroffa 1981, XX), the impression of a caricature-like mode of expression persists even in the *Cantici*. The frequent hyperboles and pleonasms contribute to this, as does the use of Latin neologisms for expressions for which Italian equivalents in fact exist (Trifone in Scroffa 1981, XXI–XXVII). Another element that the parody of the pedant in the *Cantici* is based on is the pederasty attributed to him. This is a topos for which earlier examples can also be identified. In Dante's *Divina Commedia*, for example, the grammarian Priscian dwells in hell among the sodomites (*Inferno* XV, 109), and Ariosto's sixth satire contains a warning against teachers indulging in this vice.

However, Fidenzio's characterisation as a grammar teacher who is showing off his erudition is based not only on the language he uses, but also on an abundance of references to various Latin texts. Predominant among these are allusions to Virgil (especially to the *Aeneid*, but partly also to the *Bucolica*), Horace (*Sermones*, *Epistolae*), Ovid (*Metamorphoses*) and Catullus (*Carmina*). The pedant Fidenzio makes some of these references incorrectly, either in content or by their use in an inappropriate context, thereby creating a comic contrast to his ostensible literary education. This is evident, for example, in sonnet XIII, *Venite, hendecasyllabi, venite* (Scroffa 1981, 15), which concludes a group of sonnets (XI–XIII) whose theme is a brief, happy period of experiencing love. In this final sonnet, Fidenzio invokes “hendecasyllabi”, “lepidi versi” and “soavi accenti” (vv. 1–2) to sing of a gift received from Camillo – a dried plum seed.⁴⁷ In the opening verse, Fidenzio alludes to the beginning of one of Catullus's poems (*Carmen* 42), which, as an invective against a prostitute, is little suited in content to the celebratory tone of Fidenzio's sonnet. With the ‘soavi accenti’, the pedant invokes a Petrarch sonnet about Laura's death (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* CCLXXXIII), which equally contrasts with the phase of happy love celebrated by Fidenzio (Hartmann 2013, 155–157).

In other cases, intertextual references support the topos of pederasty. This occurs, for example, in sonnet II, already cited, with which Fidenzio dedicates the collection of poems to Camillo. The first tercet of the sonnet (“Hei, hei Fidentio, hei Fidentio misello, / che dementia t'inganna? ancora ignori / ch'il tuo

⁴⁶ Cf. the overview in Stäuble 1991, 11–13.

⁴⁷ Cf. on the possible sexual significance of this element Hartmann 2013, 155 and 233.

Camil munusculi non cura?”, Scroffa 1981, 4, vv. 9–11) contains allusions to Virgil’s *Bucolica* (II, 69). Thus, the character of Fidenzio is paralleled with that of the shepherd Corydon, who in the verses cited gives expression to his homosexual courtship of the young Alexis (Trifone in Scroffa 1981, XXXV). In other parts of the text, a connection is made between Fidenzio and the character of Dido from Virgil’s *Aeneid*. This is particularly evident in capitolo XVII, *O d’un alpestre scopulo più rigido* (Scroffa 1981, 20–28), in which Fidenzio is tormented by fears of love during the night like Dido (Hartmann 2013, 171). It also seems significant in the context of the *Cantici* that the references to the *Aeneid* equate Fidenzio with a female figure, implicitly giving him a sexually passive role.⁴⁸ Thus, in this case too, intertextual references serve to expose Fidenzio as a pederast and reinforce the parodic effect.

The *Cantici* thus use topoi and linguistic aspects of comedies written during the Cinquecento that include pedants, but place them in the context of a new genre by applying them to a collection of poems. Although the theme of anti-pedantism appears in several places in Cinquecento poetry prior to the *Cantici di Fidenzio*, the pedant nevertheless is innovative as the protagonist and first-person speaker of a canzoniere-like collection of poems. In this context, the pedant parody also connects to the parody of Petrarchist poetry, which is evident at several levels of the *Cantici*.

On a macrostructural level, similarities with the structure of the *Hypneratomachia Poliphili* have already been highlighted. However, the arrangement of the poems in the *Cantici* can also be seen in relation to the structure of Petrarchist canzonieri, with which the collection shares some features. These include, for example, the rudimentary narrative structure of the *Cantici*, in which phases of amorous sorrow alternate with those of amorous happiness, and which, as in Petrarchist poetry collections, is supported by allusions to external events.⁴⁹ Another feature that the *Cantici* share with Petrarchist canzonieri is the opening sonnet, modelled on the proemial sonnet of Petrarch’s *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (Erspamer 1987, 110–111; Schneider 2007, 54–57):

Voi ch’auribus arrectis auscultate
 in lingua etrusca il fremito e il rumore
 de’ miei sospiri pieni di stupore
 forse d’intemperantia m’accusate.

 Se vedeste l’eximia alta beltate
 de l’acerbo lanista del mio core

⁴⁸ Cf. on the aspect of sexual passivity also Hartmann 2013, 58–76.

⁴⁹ Cf. on the narrative structure of Petrarchist canzonieri Regn 1987c, 32–35; Schneider 2007, 57.

non sol darestes venia al nostro errore,
ma di me havreste, ut aequum est, pietate.

Hei mihi, io veggio bene apertamente
ch'a la mia dignità non si conviene
perditamente amare, et n'erubesco;

ma la beltà antedicta mi ritiene
con tal violentia che continuamente
opto uscir di prigion, et mai non esco.

(Scroffa 1981, 3, son. I)

As with Petrarch, in the first sonnet of the *Cantici* the *I* directly addresses the audience and presents the poems as testimony to his experience of love. Reference to the model is reinforced by the borrowing of individual words and stylemes, whereby the elements taken from Petrarch are often transferred from a figurative, spiritual sphere of meaning to the physical-trivial. Thus, to Petrarch's "ascoltate" is attached a physical detail ("ch'auribus arrectis auscultate"), the sound ("suono") of the sighs of love is degraded to "il fremito e il rumore" and "mi vergogno", referring to an emotional and moral dimension, is likewise transformed into the physically perceptible "n'erubesco" (Trifone in Scroffa 1981, XXXVIII). The differences from the Petrarchist model already indicated at the linguistic level emerge even more strongly in relation to the perspective from which the *I* presents the love experience underlying the poems. Whereas in Petrarchist canzonieri the *I* conveys it as a past experience from which he has since ruefully distanced himself, no *pentimento* is evident in Fidenzio's introductory sonnet.⁵⁰ Consequently, the *Cantici* also lack a division of distinct temporal levels (the time of the love experience and the purification from it) as well as different instances of the lyrical *I* (the loving *I* and the distanced, matured *I*). Fidenzio remains attached to the effect of love until the end, to which he is exposed in defenceless passivity. This reversal of the Petrarchist model also seems to extend to the end of the collection, when it is not the beloved who dies, as is often the case in Petrarchist canzonieri, but the lover himself.

References to Petrarchist poetry are not limited to the introductory sonnet, but also appear in other poems of the *Cantici*. Some of these incorporate individual Petrarchist stylemes, while in others extended Petrarchan paraphrases are realised. In sonnet VII, *Mandami in Syria, mandami in Cilicia* (Scroffa 1981, 9), for instance, whose connection to Petrarch's sonnet *Ponmi ove 'l sole occide i fiori et l'erba* is evident both in the sonnet's content structure and individual verses or expressions, the transposition of Petrarchist verses into Fidenzian alone creates a

⁵⁰ Orvieto/Brestolini 2000, 295; Hartmann 2013, 118.

comic effect. In part, however, the parody is also based on the application of the Petrarchist inventory of themes and motifs to the imaginary world of the pedant Fidenzio. In place of the symbolic locations only hinted at in Petrarch's text, to which the *I* could hypothetically be transported without interrupting his *sospir*, Fidenzio gives concrete geographical references ("Syria", "Cilicia", "Gallia ulteriore", "mar Rubeo", "Paphlagonia", "Bitinia", "Fenicia", vv. 1–4). This exaggerated concreteness allows the emphatically displayed erudition that characterises the figure of the pedant to emerge here as well, yet the passage also recalls the motif of enumerating geographical locations as metaphors for various sexual practices, a common motif in Bernesque capitoli. Examining the Fidenzian sonnet from this perspective, "Syria", "Cilicia", and "Bitinia" can be understood as countries where homosexual practices are common, "Gallia ulteriore" as the place of origin of syphilis, "mar Rubeo" as a metaphor for menstruation and "Fenicia" (as the birthplace of Dido) for sodomising women.⁵¹

In addition to the references to Petrarchist lyricism through linguistic, motivic, and thematic elements, the meter of the Fidenzian sonnets is another aspect through which the parodic function of the Petrarchan allusions in the *Cantici* becomes apparent. Contrary to the *rime piane* (with stress on the penultimate syllable of the verse) typically used in sonnets, *rime sdrucciole* predominate in the *Cantici*, in which the verse ending is stressed on the antepenultimate syllable. In this way, the sonnets exhibit an awkward metrical structure that contrasts comically with the rhythmic harmony of Petrarchist poetry. Consequently, the term "rumori" used in the first sonnet of the *Cantici* to describe Fidenzio's sighs of love seems even more appropriate. The comic effect of this approach is reinforced in many of these verses ending on *-culo*, which highlights the sexual overtones of Fidenzio's lyrical outpourings.⁵²

The procedures thus presented, which contribute to the establishment of references to Petrarchist poetry in the *Cantici*, seem to correspond to a twofold parodic orientation: on the one hand, the parody thus realised is aimed towards the invoked genre of Petrarchist poetry; on the other hand, the references to

51 Cf. Hartmann 2013, 228–229 and Toscan 1981, 664–687. Whether a second, obscene level of meaning can be reconstructed throughout the *Cantici di Fidenzio*, as assumed by Hartmann, seems questionable. The analysis carried out by Hartmann based on poems II–IV and VII–VIII, which seems mechanistic in places, only partially leads to results (213–235). It is conceivable that the obscene level of meaning – as in the Bernesque capitoli – only occurs selectively and does not form a continuous level of reference. Cf. also Trifone 2019, 73–74.

52 The use of expressions ending in *-culo* also occurs in pedant comedies (Stäuble 1991, 51). Silvia Longhi's hypothesis, according to which *rime sdrucciole* are used in lamenting poems, *rime piane* in poems of joyful content, does not stand up to closer scrutiny (Longhi 2001, 1141–1142; Hartmann 2013, 125–126).

Petrarch serve to parody the pedant Fidenzio himself. The latter appears ridiculous in that he uses techniques of Petrarchist lyricism to sing of a homosexual love affect that is not envisaged in the genuinely Petrarchist lyric model.⁵³ The invoked Petrarchist elements are, moreover, transposed into a language that is in and of itself a component of pedant parody. Another aspect pointing in this direction is the partly inappropriate transposition of Petrarchan references in terms of content, as well as their modification according to the pedant's perspective, thus alienating them from their original context of meaning. These procedures expose Fidenzio's ostensible erudition as superficial and thus contribute equally to the parodistic profile of the protagonist.

In addition to Petrarchist lyric poetry, the Roman love elegy, as Friede (2020) highlights, is another genre from which several features of the *Cantici* stem. This is already suggested by paratextual elements in individual prints and manuscripts: for example, the edition likely published in Padua before 1562 bears the title *Cantici et elegie Del Pedante appassionato*, and in several manuscripts the capitolo *O d'un alpestre scopulo più rigido* is referred to as *Elegia Fidentii Camillifili* (Trifone in Scroffa 1981, 109–118; Friede 2020, 297). The resumption of the *sospiri* from Petrarch's proemial sonnet in the opening sonnet of the *Cantici* is also significant in this context because the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* itself uses elements of the elegiac code, which, with the description of the agonies of love and the warning to the reader, are already evident in the first sonnet (Friede 2020, 296). The involvement of the *I* in love's sorrows described above, which, unlike in Petrarchist poetry, is not purified by any *pentimento*, corresponds "eins zu eins der in der römischen Liebeselegie dargestellten Grundsituation" (296). Other features of the *Cantici di Fidenzio* that resemble the Roman love elegy are the mention of a homosexual love relationship, which – for instance in the Priapees of the *Corpus Tibullianum* – can also be found throughout Latin elegies, as well as the "konturierte Ineinssetzung des Lebens des Sprecher-Ich als Dichtenden und zugleich als Liebenden" (297). The characterisation of the *Cantici di Fidenzio* as wooing poetry, courting not only the favour of the beloved but also that of the audience, also points to the model of the Roman elegy. Here, Fidenzio's wooing often takes on a plaintive tone, making it a *lamentatio* in the sense of the *codice elegiaco* (297). The aforementioned sonnet *Venite hendecasyllabi, venite* occupies a special position in this context, assuming a meta-discursive function (297) with its rejection of the "elegie querule et dolenti" (v. 3).

53 'Homosexual love' is, of course, a simplification. The field of phenomena that, from a modern perspective, appear to belong to this category is manifold, and there are varieties like the chaste and 'sincere' neoplatonic love for a man, as sung in Benedetto Varchi's *Sonetti*, which are highly serious and, as it were, above suspicion; see Huss 2001.

While Scroffa's poems contain numerous and often conspicuous references to other genres and models, these occur less frequently in the poems of other *poeti fidenziani*. Pietro Trifone's edition of the poems of Scroffa's successors cites no evidence of intertextual allusions in these texts, though Antonio Stäuble has reconstructed references to other texts in two of Iano Argirolotto's sonnets: in the sonnet *Il crispo di fin auro erroneo crine* (in Scroffa 1981, 58), there are clear references to Pietro Bembo's sonnet *Crin d'oro crespo e d'ambra tersa e pura* (Stäuble 1985, 631). In addition to the general theme of the *descriptio* of the beloved, lexical correspondences between the two poems stand out, making Argirolotto appear as a free translation of Bembo's sonnet into Fidenzian. Unlike other parodies of Bembo's sonnet (cf. chap. 1.1), Argirolotto does not employ a deformative description of the beloved. The comic effect of the sonnet lies solely in its linguistic design and the use of Petrarchist motifs to describe the pedant's pederastic love affairs.

Iano Argirolotto's sonnet *Viviam, suaviolo mio, et con syncero* (included in Scroffa 1981, 56), on the other hand, echoes Catullus's *Carmen V* (*Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus*), with which it shares the basic theme of love defying moral expectations as well as correspondences or similarities in wording. The term "suaviolo" (v. 1) is used in Argirolotto's sonnet as a nickname for the beloved. At the same time, as a diminutive of the Latin noun *suavium* ('kiss'), it draws on another poem written by Catullus (XCIX) in which the word also holds this meaning. The aforementioned *Carmen* is a text from the Juvenius cycle, which has a homosexual theme. In addition to the clear reference to *Carmen V*, Argirolotto's poem also contains a subtler allusion to another of Catullus's poems that provides literary legitimation for the homosexual theme of the sonnet (Stäuble 1985, 632).

Due to the paucity of research on Scroffa's epigones, no claims can be made as to whether similar references and intertextual procedures can be found in other texts of the *fidenziani*. However, Argirolotto's special position, already observed in relation to the history of editions and the use of the topos of homosexuality, makes it conceivable that his texts also differ from other *fidenziani* regarding textual references.

1.3.5 Conclusions

The references in the *Cantici di Fidenzio* to classical texts and genres as well as Petrarchist poetry, constitute a set of devices that serve to parody the pedant Fidenzio. The polemic against pedantic poetry is so prevalent that it makes the *Cantici* the anti-pedanticist text *par excellence*. References to classical texts and Petrarchism

are comically distorted or incorrect in content so that the pretentious erudition of the first-person speaker Fidenzio seems superficial and ridiculous. This is reinforced, for example, by the relegation of Petrarchist elements to the sphere of the trivial and the physical, but also the structure of the collection as a *canzoniere* without *pentimento*, which is moreover applied to a pederastic relationship. Allusions to Latin texts are invoked incorrectly or in an inappropriate context, or else these references parallel Fidenzio with female or pederastic figures. The genre is constituted, alongside *antipedantismo*, by the dominantly placed position accorded to ‘another sexuality’. In poems by Scroffa’s successors, these strategies only appear selectively, whereby the genre loses its parodic conciseness.

1.4 Priapea

1.4.1 Origins

The lyric poetry of Priapus is a genre that originated in Ancient Greece but spread primarily in Roman literature. Latin priapea first appeared in the form of wall inscriptions in sanctuaries and on statues dedicated to Priapus, the god of gardens and fertility. This custom was later adopted by poets who imitated these inscriptions with literary pretensions as book epigrams (Goldberg 1992, 25). Examples of such priapea include some of Martial’s epigrams,⁵⁴ the priapea contained in the *Appendix Vergiliana* and the anonymous collection of *Carmina Priapea* from the first century A.D. Thematic reference to the god Priapus are characteristic to this type of poetry, realised within a limited, repetitive repertoire of themes. These include the oversized phallus as Priapus’ central attribute, worship of the god and the sacrifices offered to him, the punishment of thieves who invade the garden of Priapus, and degenerate sexual practices, in which the god indulges (Goldberg 1992, 25–27).

Priapic lyricism was later received in the neo-Latin poetry of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (cf. Calì 1894), but seems to have experienced a broader revival, especially in the first half of the Cinquecento. Towards the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century, numerous editions of Latin Priapus poetry appeared, among which the edition of *Diversorum veterum poetarum in Priapum lusus*, published by Manuzio in 1517 and corrected by Pietro Bembo, is noteworthy. Several neo-Latin Priapic poems were produced, especially in the 1530s and 1540s, including, for example, Pietro Bembo’s poem

54 Cf. for instance VI.16, VI.49, VI.72, VI.73, VIII.40, XIV.70.

Priapus that appeared posthumously in 1552 (Bembo 1990, 16–19). This style also found favour in vernacular Italian poetry of the Cinquecento period but did not achieve the same breadth as in the neo-Latin production.

1.4.2 Nicolò Franco: *La Priapea*

The only collection of vernacular poems that systematically includes elements of Priapic lyricism is Nicolò Franco's *La Priapea* (1541). In other vernacular poems, such as the Bernesque capitoli, Priapic lyricism is only a selectively invoked point of reference, which is not fundamentally constitutive of the genre.

Nicolò Franco's *Priapea* are a collection of 198 sonnets, first published in 1541 together with the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino* by the same author. The *Priapea* employs the model of ancient Priapic poetry, especially at the thematic and motivic levels. In Franco's *Priapea*, references to the ancient genre are embedded in the cultural context of the Cinquecento through references to literary and political themes as well as extra-literary figures.

The collection opens with a dedicatory sonnet to Pietro Aretino, which is not, however, the encomium of the addressee that may be expected at this point. Aretino is called a pederast in this poem, and the *priapea* continues the invective against the *flagello dei principi* initiated in the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino*. The counterpart to this dedicatory poem is the final sonnet of the collection, in which Priapus asks for mercy because Aretino has infected him with syphilis. A structure that is rudimentarily narrative but predominantly one of thematic variation develops between these two poles. Dominant themes, which are addressed in the form of sonnet series on similar subjects, are the characteristics and sexual preferences of Priapus, the garden of the god, the parody of Petrarchist poetry, polemics against Aretino, the *principi* and the clergy, as well as political satire.

The writing of the *Priapea* can be linked, on the one hand, to Nicolò Franco's engagement with Latin Priapic poetry, as evidenced by a letter written in June 1541 and addressed to Giovanni Antonio Guidone, the publisher of the first edition of the *Priapea*. In this letter, Franco announced the publication of his "Priapea Vulgare" together with *Rime contro Pietro Aretino*. On the other hand, for his Latin commentary on "la Priapea di Virgilio" (Franco 1916a, 3), by which title the anthology *Diversorum veterum poetarum in Priapum lus*, published by Manuzio in 1517, was probably meant, he envisaged publication together with other Latin texts: "perché i Comentari latini fatti sopra quella di Virgilio, s'imprimeranno colle cose latine" (Franco 1916a, 3). This Latin commentary circulated in manuscript form in Venice and was repeatedly edited by Franco over the period of twenty years until it finally fell victim to destruction

by the Inquisition in 1558 (Bruni 1977, 90). In addition to his preoccupation with ancient Priapic poetry, the invective against Pietro Aretino also influenced the creation of Franco's *Priapea* (cf. chap. 1.6), which is evident from the individual swipes at Aretino in the collection of poems.

1.4.3 Text and edition history

Information about the source of the jointly published *Rime contro Pietro Aretino* and *La Priapea* is tenuous, due at least in part to the fact that Nicolò Franco's works were already placed on the Index in 1557 and presumably destroyed (Bruni 1977, 127–128). The 1541 *editio princeps*, published by Giovanni Antonio Guidone, was long considered lost until a copy of it was located in the All Souls College Library in Oxford in 2006 (Falardo 2008, 319). Of the second edition, likely published in 1546, neither copies nor information about the place of publication and publisher are known. Only one copy of the third edition, published in Basel in 1548, is preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze. The only modern edition of the *Priapea* was published in 1916 by Enrico Sicardi.

1.4.4 Research

Only a limited number of studies have been published on Nicolò Franco's *Priapea*. Carmelo Cali's study of priapea in Neo-Latin and Italian literature from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century, published as early as 1894, analyses the *Priapea*'s references to the ancient lyric genre of Priapic poetry, listing connections between individual sonnets by Franco and the pseudo-Virgilian *Carmina Priapea* (Cali 1894, 104–107). More recently, Roberto L. Bruni (1997) has dealt with the problem of the history of editions of the *Priapea* and attempted to reconstruct the structure of the no longer existing *editio princeps* from surviving prints and manuscripts. Domenica Falardo (2004) filters out thematic nuclei in Nicolò Franco's poems, emphasising that the *Priapea*, in comparison with other texts by the Beneventan author, are characterised by an intensified polemic against the clergy and rulers, as well as against pedants, mannerist poets and Petrarchists. Falardo's account is limited to highlighting these themes by way of example, based on a selection of the *Priapea*'s sonnets, without, however, subjecting them to more in-depth analysis. Patrizia Bettella (2011, 302) cites Franco's *Priapea* as an example of the so-called *poesia puttanesca*, whose subject matter is satire against prostitutes, but refers only to the sonnet *Priapo, l'alma Tullia Rangona*, in which Tullia d'Aragona, as a Petrarchist lyricist, is the target of satirical verses.

1.4.5 Analysis

Reference to the ancient genre of Priapic poetry, already evident in the work's title, runs through all the sonnets in that, on the one hand, genre-specific themes are incorporated and, on the other, stylistic features taken from the *Carmina Priapea* are of programmatic relevance. Themes typical of Latin Priapic poetry that also appear in Franco's *Priapea* include the god's attributes, most notably the oversized phallus, and comparison with other gods, the garden of Priapus and the crops growing there, the veneration Priapus receives from garden visitors, and the thieves that haunt the garden. The changing identity of the *I* that is speaking in the sonnets, which is partly assigned to Priapus himself, partly to visitors to the garden, also corresponds to the model of the *Carmina Priapea*.

Stylistic reference to the ancient genre comes to the fore above all in sonnets 1–8,⁵⁵ which, with the stylistic self-determination formulated therein, assume the function of a proem. Franco's characterisation of *Priapea* as “Opra [. . .] vile” (Franco 1916a, 7; son. 3, v. 1), which is accompanied by a programmatically established preference for direct, obscene language (11; son. 8), echoes the definition of the *Carmina Priapea* as “horto carmina digna, non libello” (*Priapées* 2, v. 2) and the dichotomy between “obscure” and “Simplicus [. . .] Latine dicere” (3, v. 1 and vv. 9–10) established in the third poem of the Latin collection. Franco's *Priapea* thus stylise themselves as a collection of sonnets, clearly following the model of ancient Priapic lyricism on both a thematic and stylistic level.

In the *Priapea*, a clear demarcation from other literary genres can be observed, which cannot always be reduced to a single counter-model. In sonnet 2, the “versi senza vergogna” of the *Priapea* (Franco 1916a, 7; v. 2) are controversially contrasted with epic poetry, and in sonnet 3 with the lyric poetry of the “Ser Petrarchisti dal bel stile” (8; vv. 5–6). The demarcation from the high poetry thus outlined is closely related to an anti-court polemic that runs thematically throughout the collection. The stylistic artificiality of these genres is associated with the sphere of influence of the court, whose ostensible sophistication is dismissed as hypocritical. The crude directness of the sonnets of the *Priapea* is thus presented as an undisguised opposition to vituperations emanating from the courtly world.

The initially formulated general opposition to high poetry is most often specified more concretely as one to Petrarchist poetry, which the collection of poems parodically or satirically rejects by means of various strategies. Some sonnets directly address Petrarchist poets, whose poetry is sometimes dismissed as

55 The numbering of the sonnets draws on the 1916 edition of the *Priapea*.

The “fatti gloriosi e magni”, that Petrarch’s *Trionfo della Fama* subsequently deals with, refer to sexual act in Franco’s sonnet. The parody of Petrarch is thus based on the use of Petrarchan linguistic material in an obscene context, whereby the former undergoes a fundamental reinterpretation.

The proportion of Petrarchan elements varies between the individual sonnets. In some poems, a verse by Petrarch serves as a starting point at the beginning of the text as, for example, in sonnet 190 (Franco 1916a, 133), in which the famous verse “O bella man, che mi dstringi il core” serves as a prelude to a poem about masturbation. This is contrasted with sonnets that unexpectedly lead into a Petrarchan verse: in sonnet 193, for example, a discourse upon ejaculation addressed to the “donne” is surprisingly followed by the verse “tal frutto nasce di cotal radice” (Franco 1916a, son. 35; v. 14), which concludes Petrarch’s sonnet *Mirando ‘l sol de’ begli occhi sereno* (*Canzoniere* CLXXIII). Other sonnets, in turn, consist of a set of Petrarchan verses of different provenance, assembled into a sonnet as in a Centone poem (e.g. Franco 1916a, 71, son. 97). The procedures of reference to Petrarchan poems outlined here are common in Petrarchist poetry of the Cinquecento, including, for example, Bembo’s sonnet *Moderati desiri, immenso ardore*, in which the model reference is marked by a Petrarch quotation in the last verse, or the Centone poems of Iacopo Sannazaro. Franco’s *Priapea* thus imitates procedures that underlie Petrarchist poetry but applies them under different auspices to construct explicitly anti-classicist, obscene sonnets, which run counter to the Petrarchist concept of love. The imitative procedure that underlies Petrarchan lyricism is thereby subverted by degrading the source text to mere linguistic and motivic material, which can be adapted to quite heterogeneous content matter.

In addition to the cases presented thus far, in which the original context of meaning of quotations from Petrarch is subjected to a fundamental reinterpretation, in order to establish a distance from the Petrarchist model, there is an affirmative use of Petrarchan elements in sonnets 73 and 96 (Franco 1916a, 54; 136). The aforementioned sonnets refer to the three ‘Babylonian’ sonnets of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (nos. CXXXVI–CXXXVIII), which are based on a political theme with their criticism of the corruption of the Church. In sonnets 73 and 195, Franco quotes these Petrarchan sonnets to satirise the pope and the clergy in general, and thus also thematically follows the template of the Babylon tryptic. Their satirical undertone does not collide with that of the original, but rather follows its equally satirical, rather comical and realistic tone. The affirmative reference to Petrarch throughout makes it clear that the distancing from Petrarchist poetry otherwise observable in the *Priapea* is not related to the model of Petrarch himself but the poetic practice of Petrarchism in the succession of Bembo. This is characterised as pretentious, artificial, and mechanically imitative, and therefore rejected.

1.4.6 Priapean elements in other examples of anti-classicist poetry

Besides Nicolò Franco's *Priapea*, Priapean elements can be found above all in Bernesque capitoli (cf. chap. 1.2), although these appear only in poems by Berni's successors and not in Berni's own capitoli. Giovanni Mauro d'Arcano composed a trilogy of capitoli around 1533 (*Della fava*, *Della fava il secondo*, *Priapo*), for which the ancient *Carmina Priapea* are a central point of reference. In the two encomiums dedicated to the *fave*, the eulogy on the field beans is interwoven with themes and motifs from the poetry of Priapus. This combination was favoured because the beans mentioned in the two capitoli serve as metaphors for the male genitalia and thus create associations with the oversized phallus of Priapus, the god of fertility. In the second bean capitolo, both a certain ambiguity surrounding the subject matter of the praises sung in the poem and more specifically Priapean elements are used for a degrading re-reading of the myth of the Silver Age. According to the myth, the invention of agriculture falls into this era following the Golden Age. The capitolo thus presents a series of gods as the inventors of various crops, with Priapus credited with the invention of the beans praised in the poem. Among the figures who appear in the capitolo as visitors to the garden of Priapus and worshippers of *fave* are deities of the Greco-Roman pantheon. The sexual level of meaning, which is evident at this point, makes the obscene degradation of ancient myths especially clear:

Corser le donne di quei tempi in fretta
 A coglier tutte de' frutti novelli,
 Ove molte di lor hebber gran stretta;
 E i dei d'allhor, come eran vaghi, et belli,
 Se ne venian in calze a campanelle,
 Con le donne a mangiar fave, et baccielli;
 Et le figlie di Giove, et le sorelle
 Tanta se ne mettean, dove si mette,
 Quanto potean caper drento a la pelle.
 Quante volte Giunone ignuda stette
 Tra le fave in disparte a l'ombra fresca,
 Cogliendo le più grosse, et le più elette!
 (Mauro d'Arcano 2016, 217; vv. 34–45)

This kind of reinterpretation is subsequently extended to other myths and legends of Roman history. For example, the success of the robbery of the Sabine women is attributed to the miraculous effect of the *fave*, as is the rise of the *gens fabia*. The obscene level of meaning underlying the chapter further enhances the comic effect of these retellings.

In the capitoli of the *poeti berneschi*, the adoption of Priapean elements is also interwoven with the use of certain legitimization strategies for the, at least apparent, revaluation of burlesque lyric poetry. The Priapean capitoli insist that Virgil also made use of the genre of Priapic lyric genre, thus appointing Virgil as the model for this type of capitolo. An example of this can be found in Giovanni Mauro d’Arcano’s first bean capitolo:

Et Vergilio, che fu di tanto ingegno,
 Se lo spese in cantar lo dio de gli orti,
 Et volse i suoi pensier’ tutti a quel segno;
 Il qual però non ebbe tutti i torti
 Di cantar quel famoso, et chiaro dio,
 Senza il qual noi saremmo tutti morti;
 Del quale intendo di cantare anch’io,
 Quando che sia: a voi drizzarlo tutto,
 Se darete audientia al parlar mio.
 (Mauro d’Arcano 2016, 201–202; vv. 64–72)

The decisive factor for the invocation of Virgil in this context is the circumstance that the *Carmina Priapea* in the Cinquecento were often assigned to the *Appendix vergiliana* and thus regarded as Virgil’s work. The legitimization strategy outlined above is reinforced in Mauro d’Arcano’s capitoli by the inclusion of other texts by Virgil. Thus, the second *Capitolo della fava* contains passages that can be understood as a burlesque transposition of parts of the *Georgica*, while the beginning of the *Capitolo di Priapo* alludes to the *Aeneid*. Through the legitimization strategies described above, the burlesque capitoli – despite the obvious stylistic differences – seemingly place themselves on the same level as the Virgilian texts they allude to. The legitimization strategies employed thus correspond to a re-evaluation of classical authorities, whose model function is despoiled of its mythical character by being invoked in an inappropriate, burlesque context.

1.4.7 Conclusions

In Nicolò Franco’s *Priapea*, individual textual and genre references to Latin Priapic poetry serve as point of departure for an anti-court polemic that runs thematically through the entire collection. This is linked to the opposition to genres of high poetry such as Petrarchist love poetry and epic poetry evident in the sonnets of the *Priapea*. These genres are associated with the sphere of the court, whose affectation and mendacity are presented as a negative antithesis to the obscene genuineness of the *Priapea*.

In Bernesque capitoli on the other hand, the Priapus theme and metaphor serve as a starting point for an obscene reinterpretation of ancient myths and legends. More strongly than in Franco's *Priapea*, the capitoli emphasise the ancient origins of the Priapic lyric, from which the model gains legitimacy. At the same time, the capitoli insist that Virgil also worked in this genre. The literary authority of Virgil, however, does not appear inviolable in the capitoli, as his works are parodied in individual poems. All in all, both literary authorities and classical myths are despoiled of their mythical character.

1.5 Invective I – Pasquinades

Unlike an expression like *poesia burlesca*, the term 'invective' was not widely used in the Cinquecento. However, several examples of anti-classicist poetry can be assigned to a discursive type that can be aptly described by this concept. Genres like the pasquinade and the *tenzone* share the moment of *vituperium ad personam* that is constitutive of invectives. This feature especially characterises those pasquinades, in which the invective is directed primarily against political figures and the clergy. In addition to pasquinades, a second type of invective, that takes up features of the medieval *tenzone*, appears in the Cinquecento. Nicolò Franco's *Rime contro Pietro Aretino* belong to this group. Both these invective poems and the pasquinades adopt a comic-burlesque, low style and use satirical devices. Such features are absent from Cornelio Castaldi's capitolo *Udite, imitatori del Petrarca*. However, since this poem equally takes the form of a polemical attack against a particular group of authors, it will also be discussed in the present section.

In addition to the invectives mentioned above, other examples of this genre can be found in the poetry of the Cinquecento, including, for example Maffio Venier's invective poems against Veronica Franco and her response capitoli (Venier 1956), or Francesco Berni's polemical sonnets against political and ecclesiastical rulers.⁵⁷ The present account is limited to the study of invectives from the repertoire of lyric poetry that can be associated with explicit anti-classicism because of their (antithetical) reference to classicist models.

⁵⁷ Examples of political invective are the sonnets *Un papato composto di rispetti* and *Può far il ciel però, papa Chimenti*, written as a pasquinade. Attacks *ad personam* can be found, for example, in the sonetto *Contro a Pietro Aretino* (*Tu ne dirai e farai tante e tante*) and in the sonnet *Contro a M. Pietro Alcionio* (*Una mula sbiadata, dommaschina*).

Pasquinades are anonymous poems that used to be attached to the so-called statue of Pasquino. This Roman torso, which had received the popular name of Pasquino for reasons unknown, had been placed in 1501 at a corner of the Orsini Palace (now Palazzo Braschi) in Rome.⁵⁸ In addition to Pasquino, other ‘talking statues’ (*statue parlanti*) such as Marforio, who enters into dialogue with Pasquino in some texts, appeared in Rome during the Cinquecento. Texts created in connection with other statues are also commonly referred to as pasquinades.

While Latin pasquinades, written in epigram form, were predominant at the beginning, vernacular (and partly dialectal) pasquinades became increasingly important in the first decades of the Cinquecento, mainly in form of sonnets of standard length or with *cauda*. This kind of genre development resulted in an alteration of the content of the poems. Pasquinades increasingly took the form of politically motivated propaganda in which individual rulers, groups, or fractions were played off against each other (Firpo 1984, 603).

In addition to pasquinades in the narrow sense, which were meant to be posted on the statue of Pasquino, a second tradition of Pasquino poetry began to emerge, which was independent of reception in a specific pragmatic context and spread primarily in print. These texts, which belong to different genres, share themes and motifs with pasquinades in the narrow sense. However, they appear in forms such as dialogues, *lamenti*, *frottole* and correspondences in verse, which are longer than the sonnet predominant in pasquinades in the narrow sense. This change is also accompanied by a greater range of subject matter (Marzo in *Pasquino e dintorni* 1990, 12–17).

The present account deals exclusively with vernacular pasquinades. Central aspects of Latin pasquinades are only touched upon where they seem relevant to the contexts discussed here.

1.5.1 Origins

Soon after its erection in 1501, the statue of Pasquino became a central figure of the celebrations during the Feast of Saint Mark (25 April). An annually established framework theme determined the act of dressing up Pasquino as a mythological figure as well as the subject of the poems, which was mostly chosen and made known by students and professors of Sapienza University in the earlier years. Members of the Curia were responsible – at least in the period from

⁵⁸ Over time, the origin of the name was traced back to a tailor, a teacher, a barber and an innkeeper. No valid evidence has been found for any of these hypotheses (Romei 1995, 1–2).

1509 to 1520 – for the organisation of the festival. They also determined the selection of poems that would later be published in the form of official prints. Accordingly, political satire is rare in pasquinades of this period. Invectives in this phase rather refer to pedants than to rulers or the clergy.⁵⁹

Today's perception of pasquinades is primarily shaped by vernacular pasquinades that became widespread between 1514 and 1515. During this period, the form of pasquinades as political invectives took an increasingly distinct shape. The target of the polemics expressed in them was primarily not social grievances, but the respective opposition party. Due to the lack of a morally motivated *indignatio*, the perception of pasquinades as satirical poetry remains questionable (Aquilecchia in *Pasquinate romane* 1983, XII). Even though these texts remained fundamentally anonymous, pasquinade writers achieved notoriety especially because of their activity in this genre. Antonio Lelio who integrated elements of Tuscan comic poetry (e.g. by Burchiello and Bellincioni) into his pasquinades, played a pioneering role in this regard. Pietro Aretino was especially active as a pasquinade writer after the papal conclave of 1521–1522, which elected Adrian VI as the new pope. His production had such an impact on the perception of the genre that Aretino as a figure became increasingly identified with that of Pasquino.⁶⁰ The form of the more politically oriented pasquinades was not entirely new but could be traced back to Latin satires directed against the Curia, which were widespread in Rome as early as the thirteenth century (Romei 1995, 1).

Since 1526, pasquinade production began to decline both quantitatively and qualitatively. There were probably three reasons for this: Aretino's flight from Rome in the same year, the Sacco di Roma (1527) and Lelio's death before 1530 (Marucci 1995, 81). As early as in the 1530s, pasquinade-like poetry spread in Venice where the poems were mainly posted on the statue of the so-called Gobbo di Rialto, and in Florence, where they were attached to the statue of Porcellino. This production continued up until the seventeenth century. There is also evidence of pasquinade production in Milan and Genoa towards the end of the sixteenth century (Niccoli 2005, 43–44). In Northern Europe, pasquinades appealed to Celio Secondo Curione (Caelius Secundus Curio) and Ulrich von Hutten, who wrote Latin poems in this form against the Curia (Marucci in *Pasquinate del Cinque e Seicento* 1988, 13–21).

⁵⁹ Marucci in *Pasquinate romane* 1983, XVII–XVIII; Marucci in *Pasquinate del Cinque e Seicento* 1988, 7–8; Romei 1995, 1–4; Marucci 1995, 71; Marzo 2007, 170–171.

⁶⁰ Marucci 1995, 70–76; Romei 1995, 8–9; Aquilecchia in *Pasquinate romane* 1983, X.

1.5.2 Text and edition history

Official printings commissioned by the organisers of the Feast of Saint Mark, handwritten edited anthologies, as well as isolated letters, collected manuscripts, and heterogeneous collections of lyric poems, served as sources for the Cinquecento pasquinade tradition (Marucci in *Pasquinate romane* 1983, 969). It is safe to assume that the official editions did not represent the full range of pasquinade production of the period, but corresponded to the selection criteria set by festival organisers and revealed in editorial prefaces (Aquilecchia in *Pasquinate romane* 1983, IX). The publication period of the annually published editions covers the period between 1509 and Pope Leo X's pontificate (1513–1521). During this pontificate, increasingly strident invective against the papacy led to 'official' pasquinade editions becoming rare and eventually ceasing to exist (Marucci in *Pasquinate romane* 1983, 995). While the official pasquinade prints appeared 'harmless' in terms of content and style, handwritten pasquinades, which are known to have been handed down, are characterised by satirically pointed stylistic features, themes, and motifs that are more strongly influenced by the Tuscan burlesque poetry of the Quattrocento (Aquilecchia in *Pasquinate romane* 1983, IX–X).

Numerous, predominantly anonymous texts in various genres circulated mainly in printed form, which referred thematically to pasquinades but were not meant to be posted on the statue of Pasquino: the capitolo *Triompho della lussuria, di maestro Pasquino* (Venice 1537), the *Utilissimi Consigli de lo Eccellente Dottor plusquamperfetto Pasquino da Roma* (Venice 1550), written in octaves, and the Latin distichs and vernacular sonnets by Luca Grillo.

In the field of modern text-critical editions, the two-volume edition of the *Pasquinate romane* by Valerio Marucci, Antonio Marzo, and Angelo Romano (1983), which is based on both the official Cinquecento prints and manuscript sources, deserves particular mention. This edition is complemented by Valerio Marucci's *Pasquinate del Cinque e Seicento* (1988), which incorporates additional sources both geographically (Rome, Florence, Venice) and chronologically. The editions *Pasquino e dintorni* (ed. Antonio Marzo, 1990) and *Pasquinate, grillate, pelate e altro Cinquecento librario minore* (ed. Chiara Lastraioli, 2012) are dedicated to the second tradition of *pasquinismo* that is, however, no longer directly associated with the statue of Pasquino.

1.5.3 Research

Research has addressed both the Latin and Italian pasquinade tradition of the Cinquecento. In the field of Italian pasquinades, a broad area of research, which

began to emerge as early on as in the nineteenth century and has continued into more recent scholarship, concerns the authorship of individual pasquinades.⁶¹ With the effort to produce modern critical editions of pasquinades in the 1980s, reconstructions of the chronological development of the genre also emerged, focusing primarily on the role of Aretino.⁶² Following the indexing of the Cinquecento pasquinades by modern textual scholarship, an examination of texts that were no longer tied to the statue of Pasquino but nevertheless shared features, themes, and motifs with pasquinades began to emerge.⁶³ In addition, the distribution of pasquinade-like texts in other Italian cities has been studied sporadically.⁶⁴ Other aspects to be found in research on pasquinades concern motif and thematic areas such as play in Pasquinade poetry (Romei 1993, 408–422), the Pasquino festival as a publication and reception space for Cinquecento pasquinades (Reynolds 1985, 1987, 1988), Pasquino iconography in edition and art history (Damianaki 2006; La Monica 2006), the relationship between Pasquino and Pietro Aretino's author-figure⁶⁵ and the appearance of a Pasquino character in other genres such as comedy (Borsellino 1986, 442–446; Cairns 2006). The relationship between pasquinades and other genres such as satire and Macaronic poetry has also been analysed (Corsaro 2006; Faini 2006). In addition, the genre of pasquinades has been studied from a historical and anthropological perspective in relation to forms of anticlerical criticism in the sixteenth century (Niccoli 2005, 29–48; 111–119; 158–173). An outlook on chronological and geographical contexts, which are not dealt with in detail here, is provided by research contributions on Pasquinade poetry in the Seicento (Romei 2006b; Warwick 2006) as well as in modern languages other than Italian.⁶⁶

1.5.4 Analysis

Pasquinades, whose production and reception was directly linked to the Roman statue of Pasquino, are a form of poetry that thematises political and social

⁶¹ Rossi in Aretino 1891; Percopo 1896; Romei 1986; Pignatti 2001; Larivaille 2005, 13–29.

⁶² Aquilecchia in *Pasquinate romane* 1983, IX–XVI; Marucci in *Pasquinate romane* 1983, XVII–XXII; Marucci in *Pasquinate del Cinque e Seicento* 1988, 7–22; Romei 1995; Marucci 1995; Larivaille 1997, 57–79; Orvieto/Brestolini 2000, 239–247; Marzo 2007.

⁶³ Marzo in *Pasquino e dintorni* 1990, 7–18; Lastraioli in *Pasquinate, grillate* 2012, passim; Larivaille 2006; Dalmas 2006; Mevoli 2006.

⁶⁴ Marzo 2006; Garavelli 2006; Masi 2006; Spagnolo 2006.

⁶⁵ Larivaille 1980, 45–53; Procaccioli 2006; Faini 2017; Lastraioli 2021.

⁶⁶ Parkin 2006; Panizza 2006; Provvidera 2006; Lastraioli 2006; Dingemanse/Drees 2006.

events. Explicit references to specific literary models or metaliterary reflections are not to be found in these poems. Whereas pasquinades adopt elements from earlier textual traditions and genres, such as fifteenth-century Tuscan comic poetry, they are not discussed on a metaliterary-theoretical level.

The same applies to references to classical mythology, which are frequently found in pasquinades. They concern the statue of Pasquino, who is dressed up as a mythological figure (e.g. Hercules, Janus, Apollo) and provides the thematic framework for the Pasquino festival each year. Descriptions of and references to Pasquino's mythical attire are often linked to allusions to the political situation of Rome and Italy. Mythological figures and motifs are thus torn from the sacrosanct sphere of myth and placed in an extratextual context. However, this characteristic of the pasquinades is not linked to an opposition to dominant literary models but to the genre's origin and reception.

Individual pasquinades refer to elements from Petrarch's poems but do not parody them. Pasquinades that thematise the act of mourning the death of Cardinal Oliviero Carafa, for example, comprise reminiscences from the poems of the *Canzoniere* that touch upon the theme of mourning (cf. pasquinades 30, 31 in *Pasquinate romane* 1983, 26–27). Another example is the dialogue-sonnet *Dove vai, vecchierel, così turbato* (*Pasquinate romane* 1983, 191–192): the reference to one of Petrarch's Babylonian sonnets (*Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* CXXXVIII) in the last tercet does not contrast with the content of the pasquinade but seems appropriate to the lamentation about the wretched state of the Church expressed in it. The references to Petrarch in the pasquinades thus lack the contrast between the invoked model and the target context that creates a parodic effect in other Cinquecento lyric genres.

Scholars have considered Aretino's pasquinades as an example of his anti-classicist and phenomenological reflections. The 'realism' of the pasquinades would thus be a form of implementation of the naturalness of writing, which Aretino opposed to classicist poetics of imitation in his manifesto-like letter to Nicolò Franco, dated June 25, 1537.⁶⁷ However, the naturalness that Aretino defended in his letter cannot be compared with what today would be called realism, but is rather connected to an original, independent treatment of literary models (cf. chap. 1.11). The strong reference of these pasquinades to the extra-literary realm is related to the function of the genre as a means of political invective. Questions associated with the status of classicist models remain, however, excluded from the poems themselves.

⁶⁷ Marzo 2007, 187–189; similarly argued by Marucci 1995, 85–86. Cf. on Aretino's letter to Franco chap. 1.11.

A wide range of parodic strategies can be found in texts of various genres that were thematically and stylistically related to pasquinades in their narrow sense but were not written in direct connection with the statue of Pasquino. Among the variety of texts, lyric examples will be discussed here in particular. The form and content of *Trionfo della lussuria di Maestro Pasquino* (1537)⁶⁸ is inspired by Petrarch's *Trionfi*. The *I*, identifiable with Pasquino, describes the victory chariot of *lussuria*, which carries figures such as courtiers, *ruffiani* and prostitutes, who are punished for their sacrilegious actions. The characters of the poem correspond to a repertoire that also appears in other comic texts of the Cinquecento. Pasquino is accompanied in this kind of vision of the afterlife by the character of Zoppino, who also appears in Aretino's comedies and dialogues (cf. chap. 1.9). On the linguistic and stylistic level, the *Trionfo della lussuria* is characterised by a *stile grave*, which closely resembles that of the parodied text. The parodic effect thus arises from the contrast between Petrarchist form and style on the one hand and burlesque cast of characters on the other.

The parodic use of elements of Petrarchan poetry is also evident in the poem in octaves, *Pasquino cerca il suo naso* (1550?).⁶⁹ The text uses the metaphor of the nose as a phallus, which was widespread in comic poetry of the Cinquecento.⁷⁰ The noseless Pasquino sends his servant to various places in Rome to search for the missing body part, thereby praising the virtues of a broad nose. The reference to Petrarchan poetry is most pronounced in the first octave of the poem, in which the praise of the nose is introduced by an allusion to a sonnet by Petrarch. Moreover, throughout the poem, other classical elements, such as authorial figures and works of ancient Latin and Greek literature (Homer, Ovid, the *Iliad*), are associated with the obscene content of the text. Unlike the *Trionfo della lussuria*, the parodic use of elements from classicist-Petrarchist literature is more evident here. Whereas in *Trionfo della lussuria*, the parody arises from the contrast between form and language on the one hand and the cast of characters and themes on the other, in *Pasquino cerca il suo naso*, classicist elements are placed in a thematic and linguistic context that is at first glance recognisable as comic. Not only does the motif of the nose as a phallic metaphor point in this direction, but the simple, unpretentious linguistic style does as well, which – in contrast to the elevated language of the *Trionfo della lussuria* – clearly marks the text as low-burlesque.

⁶⁸ Included in *Pasquino e dintorni* (1990, 10–11).

⁶⁹ Included in *Pasquino e dintorni* (1990, 11).

⁷⁰ Cf. for example the *Nasea* by Annibal Caro, or the *Capitolo del Naso* by Lodovico Dolce.

1.5.5 Conclusions

The constituent features of pasquinades are strongly tied to their immediate context of origin and reception, which is characterised by opposition to individuals or political parties. The pronounced reference to extratextual events and figures is also conditioned by the function of pasquinades as a means of political polemics. Consequently, there are no metaliterary reflections or determinations of position vis-à-vis other literary models. Significantly, the figure of Pasquino is placed in the service of the parody of Petrarch only in those texts that were not written in direct connection with the statue of Pasquino. In this second, heterogeneous tradition of Pasquino poetry, parody of literary models takes the place of political invective, at least in the examples presented thus far. By detaching these texts from a strongly extra-literary context of origin, the figure of Pasquino clearly became more linked to the parody of literary models.

1.6 Invective II – Nicolò Franco: *Rime contro Pietro Aretino*

1.6.1 Origins

Nicolò Franco's *Rime contro Pietro Aretino* is a collection of poems first published in 1541 together with his *Priapea*. The general theme of the collection, already evident in the title, is the invective against the author-figure Pietro Aretino. The quarrel between Franco and Aretino that preceded the publication of the book served as an extratextual occasion for it. However, the *Rime* does not extensively discuss the possible causes of the quarrel. The 278 poems of the *editio princeps* were expanded to 298 in the third edition, which appeared in 1548 under Franco's supervision.⁷¹ The last version of the collection comprises 295 sonnets, a caudate sonnet, the *Testamento del Delicato* (consisting of *stanze brevi*), and the accompanying *epitaphio*, written in octaves.

The collection is divided into two parts, which vary in style and themes. Whereas the first part uses features of the medieval *tenzone*, the second part is

⁷¹ Bruni 1997, 128; Bruni's reconstruction is the only clue for determining the number of poems contained in the first edition. In the only existing copy of the 1541 edition, pages are missing, making it impossible to determine the total number of poems (Falardo 2008, 298).

characterised by parodic borrowings from pastoral poetry, which are embedded in the framing theme of the invective against Aretino. In both parts, the poems are arranged in small, thematically organised cycles (for example according to the recipient of the poem or the theme it addresses).

The reasons for the conflict between Nicolò Franco and Pietro Aretino, which the invective in the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino* refers to, remain partly misunderstood. Franco worked for Aretino in Venice between 1536 and 1538. He contributed to the publication of Aretino's *Lettere* and probably also translated for him, since Aretino knew no Latin. Following the publication of Aretino's *Lettere* in 1538, Franco also published a collection of letters in 1539 titled *Pistole vulgari* (cf. chap. 1.11). It seems thus plausible that the competitive relationship, which developed between Aretino and Franco, caused the conflict. In addition to the collection of poems discussed here, Aretino's letters also bear witness to the dispute between the two authors.⁷² However, sonnets directed against Franco, as mentioned in the poem *Aretin mio, non vaglia a scorucciare* (Franco 1916b, 11; 17) at the beginning of the first part of the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino*, have not been handed down (Sicardi in Franco 1916b, XIV). In 1539, Franco also became the victim of a knife attack provoked by Aretino's protégé Ambrogio degli Eusebi, whom Aretino supported in the ensuing court case (Bruni 1997, 126). Following the incident, Franco left Venice and, after stops in Milan and Padua, reached Casale Monferrato in 1540, where he encountered poets of the local *Accademia degli Argonauti*.⁷³ It was also in Casale that both the first edition of the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino* and the *Priapea* were published in 1541 by Giovanni Antonio Guidone.⁷⁴ The publication of the text further sharpened the conflict between Franco and Aretino. On March 11, 1542, Aretino wrote a letter (contained in Aretino 1998, 347–348), in which he accuses Sigismondo Fanzino, the governor of Casale Monferrato, of giving Franco protection and allowing the publication of the text (Bruni 1997, 130).

1.6.2 Text and edition history

According to some typographical sources, the edition of the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino*, published in 1541 by Giovanni Antonio Guidone, was printed in Turin,

⁷² Cf. for example the letter from Pietro Aretino to Lodovico Dolce, dated October 7, 1539, in Aretino 1998, 147.

⁷³ Cf. on the *Accademia degli Argonauti* Oberto 2016, chap. 1.3 “Die *Rime Marittime di M. Nicolo Franco et d'altri diversi spiriti, dell'Accademia de gli Argonauti* (Mantova 1547)”.

⁷⁴ Sicardi in Franco 1916b, VI–XVIII; Bruni 1997, 124–127; Martelli 2003, 860.

but likely originated from Guidone's workshop in Casale Monferrato. The first edition was long considered lost until a copy of it was found in the All Souls College Library in Oxford in 2006 (Falardo 2008, 319). Of the second edition, probably published in 1546, neither copies nor accurate information about the date and place of publication are known (Bruni 1997, 131–133). One copy of the third edition, published in Basel in 1548 and authorised by Franco, is preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale di Firenze. The paucity of sources is at least partly because Franco's work was already placed on the Index in 1557 (Bruni 1997, 128). Following the manuscripts, Roberto L. Bruni managed to reconstruct the arrangement of the poems in the first two editions (1997, 134–143). The 1548 edition was expanded by 20 additional pieces in relation to the previous two editions. In addition, whereas the earlier division of the collection into five parts was replaced by an organisation that divided the collection into two parts, no relevant changes were made in the sequence of individual texts. Further differences between the first two and the third edition concern the individuals to whom individual sonnets were dedicated. Names associated with Casale Monferrato, which predominated in the first two versions of the *Rime*, were left out from the 1548 edition or replaced by those with whom Franco was in contact at the time (he had left Casale in 1546) (Bruni 1997, 134–141).

The only modern edition of the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino* was published by Enrico Sicardi in 1916 and is based on a handwritten copy of the 1548 edition. Concerning the structure of the collection and enumeration of individual poems, the present discussion draws on this edition, which is also the last, most comprehensive version of the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino* authorised by Franco.

1.6.3 Research

Although the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino* are among the texts written by Nicolò Franco that have been paid relatively little attention, there has been an increased interest in this text among researchers, especially since 2000. In addition to the edition history (Bruni 1997; Falardo 2008), the relationship between Nicolò Franco and Pietro Aretino, which forms the textual background for the creation of the collection, has also been studied (Martelli 2003; Procaccioli 2021, 508–516). Further, the *Rime* have also been analysed in relation to other texts or lyric genres such as invectives or the *tenzone* (Crimi 2016; Orvieto/Brestolini 2000, 253), the genre of pastoral poetry, including the variant known as *poesia pescatoria* (Pignatti 2007; Falardo 2004) and sonnets by Antonio Brocardo (Caterino 2012).

1.6.4 Analysis

The *Rime contro Pietro Aretino* is divided into two parts that basically refer to two different genres in terms of content and style. The first part is characterised by borrowings from the genre of *tenzone*, which spread in Italy since the thirteenth century under the influence of Provençal poetry. Examples include sonnets by Rustico di Filippo, who serves as a model in this field (Celotto 2015, 71–72) and the *tenzone* between Dante Alighieri and Forese Donati or Matteo Franco and Luigi Pulci. On a formal level, the genre is characterised by use of the sonnet form, and, on a stylistic and thematic level, by irony, obscene allusions, trivial language, and the degradation of elements of high culture. The defamation of the addressee is sometimes combined with elements of political polemic (Celotto 2015, 72).

The exemplary function of the *tenzone* regarding the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino* becomes particularly apparent on the thematic level. Just like in Rustico di Filippo's poems, the attack against Aretino becomes apparent through a polemical form of address in the opening verse of the sonnet:

Aretin mio, se tu mi sfidi e chiami,
 e io vengo e rispondo, a le frontiere
 sta su da valente uomo, e non temere,
 poiché hai trovato quel che cerchi e brami.
 Se l'onor de le chiacchiere tant'ami
 quanto prosumi, fammelo vedere,
 ch'io, dal mio canto, ti farò sapere
 s'io son la salsa per i tuoi salami.
 E s'egli è ver, che sai trovar le vene
 de le foggie galanti in dir ridendo,
 e le tue baie son più de l'arene,
 non ti bisognerà d'andar fuggendo;
 che se pensassi di voltar le rene,
 hai da saper ch'io non me ne intendo.

(Franco 1916b, 11; 18)

The metaphor of war, with which the invective is staged as a battle, can also be traced back to the model of the *tenzone*.⁷⁵ The same applies to sexual insults.⁷⁶ The *tenzone* can also serve as an example that establishes a link between personal invective and political or social polemics, as it is sometimes found in the *Rime*. For example, these two themes are intertwined in sonnets 54–67 (Franco

⁷⁵ Crimi 2016; cf. on the characteristics of medieval *tenzone* Celotto 2015, 70–74.

⁷⁶ As, for example, in sonnet 23 (Franco 1916b, 13–14; 23).

1916b, 27–33), which critically address the *prencipi*. In the first sonnets of this group, the justification for the attack on the princes is still closely related to the framing theme of the invective against Aretino. They are accused of having given Aretino protection. From sonnet 60 onwards, the polemic shifts to a more general level, accusing the rulers of acting unjustly towards authors in need of their material support. In sonnets 66–67, this criticism culminates in political partisanship for the French king and against the Emperor Charles V, who was supported by Aretino.

In the second part of the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino*, the framing theme of the invective against Aretino is linked to the parody of pastoral rhetoric.⁷⁷ The invective is staged here as rivalry between two shepherds, surrounded by a bucolically stylised landscape and a repertoire of mythological figures characteristic of the genre. In some sonnets, the reference to pastoral rhetoric is made in a seemingly unbroken manner (e.g. in sonnet 207) so that the parody remains recognisable only through its being embedded in the thematic context of the invective. In other poems, bucolic elements are distorted into the ridiculous and obscene, as in sonnet 237:

Era comparsa Monna Aurora, e in quello
le rosseggiava il viso di belletto,
e ser Titon, che l'aspettava in letto,
tutto si scompisciava il vecchiarello,
quando, disteso a piè d'un fiumicello,
l'asinaro Aretin, tanto diletto
ebbe nel rimirlarla, che, costretto,
prese a menarsi il cazzo per martello.

E le dicea: O mio visotto adorno,
o buona robba piú che la Pierina,
o s'io t'avessi a potta in dietro un giorno!

Sparve l'Aurora, ond'egli, che vicina
avea la stalla, corse per lo scorno
a fare il resto con la Caterina.

(Franco 1916b, 118–119; 237)

The degradation affects both the mythological cast of characters (the morning goddess Aurora uses reddish make-up, her husband Tithonos suffers from

77 The parody partly draws on the so-called *poesia pescatoria*, a subgenre of pastoral poetry in which characters, themes and motifs refer not to the world of shepherds but that of fishermen. Following the publication of Iacopo Sannazaro's *Eclogae piscariae* (1526), this variant of pastoral poetry spread in the sixteenth century and was also taken up by Nicolò Franco in some of the pastoral sonnets of his *Pistole vulgari* (Pignatti 2007, 153).

bladder weakness) and Aretino, who is defamed here as a donkey-herder. The obscene content of the sonnet, which adds to the distortion of bucolic elements, is couched in sexually explicit language. Not all the sonnets in the second part of the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino* feature the technique of obscene reinterpretation as strongly as the example given above. Whereas in some poems the obscene content is only implied, in others the degradation is restricted to Aretino's character. In the second part of the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino*, manifold references to pastoral rhetoric can thus be found, ranging from its seemingly unbroken realisation to a parodic distancing through emphasised obscenity.

In addition to the references to the genre of *tenzone* and pastoral poetry discussed above, the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino* also contains isolated references to Petrarchist poetry. These take the form of a parody of Petrarch only in sonnets 5 and 48 (Franco 1916b, 5; 24), realised through the invocation of elements of *canzoniere* in a thematically banal or obscene and stylistically low context. However, affirmative references to Petrarchist poetry, as presented in sonnets 13–15 and 202 (Franco 1916b, 9–10; 101), are more common. These poems draw upon the framing theme of invective against Aretino and are addressed as correspondence sonnets or encomiums to various recipients named in the text. The alternately parodic or affirmative recourse to Petrarchist elements thus corresponds to an *aptum* relation between the poem's theme and the style chosen in each case. While poems in which the invective against Aretino takes a central position can parody Petrarch corresponding to the comic character of these texts, the correspondence sonnets are characterised by the *stile grave* whose inventory also includes the affirmative use of Petrarchist elements.

The *aptum* relation is particularly evident in sonnets 200–204, addressed to the poet Giovanni Francesco Bellentani at the end of the first part of the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino* (Franco 1916b, 100–102). In these sonnets, written in the *stile grave*, the lyrical *I* seeks to discard the “scrivere d'ira” and “ragionar di sdegno” (son. 200, v. 14) as well as the related “aspro stile” (son. 201, v. 13) to surrender to a “moderno stile” (son. 200, v. 11) and to “beltade” (son. 202, v. 6). The use of low style is thus not programmatically absolute in the *Rime*, for instance in the sense of a consistent anti-Petrarchist polemic. Both the *stile grave* and the low style rather appear side by side, and the choice made in each case depends on the subject treated.

1.6.5 Conclusions

Parody of Petrarchist poetry plays a subordinate role in the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino*. Correspondence sonnets and encomiums that deviate from the framework theme of the invective are characterised by affirmative references to Petrarchist

poetry. The alternately parodic or affirmative recourse to Petrarchist elements and the respective preference for the *stile grave* or low style are exclusively conditioned by the respective subject treated.

Related to the choice of the Provençal genre of *tenzone*, a degradation of elements of high culture occurs in the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino*. Quotation of these elements is characterised by a parody of pastoral rhetoric culminating in its obscene distortion. Depending on the type of reference, personal invective or a genuine social polemic can play a role.

1.7 Invective III – Cornelio Castaldi: *Udite, imitatori del Petrarca*

1.7.1 Origins

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, literary-historical accounts and thematic studies have cited Cornelio Castaldi's capitolo *Udite, imitatori del Petrarca* as an example of poetry that programmatically demonstrates the anti-Petrarchism of the Cinquecento. The *terzina* poem, which circulated only in manuscript form in the Cinquecento and did not appear in print until 1757, addresses Petrarch's imitators directly in a polemical manner, accusing them of artlessness and a lack of imagination. According to it, although Petrarch can serve as a model, an imitation of Petrarch alone is insufficient. Rather, an independent approach to ancient and modern models should be sought, without limiting oneself to a single one of them. Ancient poetry is cited as proof of this, where no monotonous imitation of a single model author can be found.

The capitolo is a direct attack on Petrarch's imitators. However, apart from the clearly polemical opening formula, there are hardly any elements in the capitolo that transfer the invective in terms of content to the stylistic form of the text. Obscene allusions or means of verbal aggression that are characteristic of invectives are absent from Castaldi's poem. Furthermore, the images in the text to which the poetic practice of Petrarch's imitators is compared (such as "garrule Piche" in verse 9, or a child's first attempts at writing in vv. 73–81), do not attain the severity and the contempt of the opponent that is characteristic of a text like the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino*.

The exact date of the capitolo's composition cannot be determined. Argumentative and stylistic similarities between Castaldi's poem and Angelo Poliziano's epistle concerning the imitation of Cicero make it possible to situate the *Capitolo contro i petrarchisti* within the debate on the imitation of ancient models that

developed in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (Baldacci 1974, 39–43). The controversy over *imitatio* had developed primarily among the humanists of the fifteenth century and revolved mostly around the question of whether the Ciceronian model or an eclectic orientation toward multiple models was to be preferred in prose. This polemic reached a climax in the exchange of letters between Angelo Poliziano and Paolo Cortese, in which the former advocated the eclectic model and the latter opted for Ciceronianism. The debate intensified when Gianfrancesco Pico, in a letter dated 1512 and addressed to Pietro Bembo, questioned not only the imitation of a single model but imitation itself. At the same time, in a partly contradictory argument, Pico ranked *aemulatio* above *imitatio*. Bembo responded in early 1513 by rejecting the eclectic form of imitation of various models, only accepting Virgil and Cicero as models to be imitated. At the same time, he abolished the juxtaposition of *imitatio* and *aemulatio* sketched by Pico, declaring the latter a necessary component of poetic imitation (Alfano et al. 2018, 47–54). Castaldi's *capitolo* thus presumably represents an attempt to apply the debate around Ciceronianism to the terrain of vernacular poetry (Baldacci 1974, 43).

Castaldi's poem seems to have received hardly any attention in the Cinquecento, especially since it circulated exclusively in manuscript form and probably only in the Venetian environment (Balduino 2008, 6). The only textual evidence that alludes to Castaldi's position vis-à-vis Petrarchism is a Latin poem by Giovanni Aurelio Augurelli published in 1505. The text praises Castaldi's Latin poetry but condemns his vernacular verse for distancing itself from the imitation of Petrarch and Dante.⁷⁸ It remains uncertain whether Augurelli's poem refers directly to the *Capitolo contro i petrarchisti*; either way, it testifies that Castaldi's early critical examination of the technique of imitating Petrarch in vernacular poetry preceded the publication of Augurelli's Latin verses. In the practice of poetry, including that of its author himself, however, the *capitolo* does not seem to have had any consequences, since Castaldi's own poems are generally marked by clear Petrarchan borrowings (Balduino 2008, 13–17).

1.7.2 Text and edition history

In the sixteenth century, the *Capitolo contro i petrarchisti* circulated exclusively in handwritten form and probably only in the Venetian area.⁷⁹ Only a few of

⁷⁸ Cf. Ioannis Aurelii Augurelli *Carmina*, Venetiis, In aedibus Aldi, 1505, *Iambicus liber*, I 23, c. c3; qtd. in Balduino 2008, 12, not. 14.

⁷⁹ An overview of the existing Cinquecento manuscripts is given in Castaldi 1899 (II, XL–LIII).

Castaldi's poems appeared in printed anthologies in the Cinquecento.⁸⁰ The *Capitolo contro i petrarchisti* was first published in 1757 in the edition of Castaldi's Italian and Latin poems edited by Tommaso Giuseppe Farsetti. This was followed in 1899 by an expanded edition by Giambattista Ferracina. The capitolo discussed here also appeared in 1829 as the only text by Castaldi in the appendix of an edition of Pierio Valeriano's *La infelicità dei letterati* (*De litterorum infelicitate*, written around 1529). More recently, the capitolo was published in the anthology *Texte zum Antipetrarkismus*, edited in 1970 by Johannes Hösle.

1.7.3 Research

Since Arturo Graf's (1888, 60–61) remarks on anti-Petrarchism, Cornelio Castaldi's capitolo *Udite, imitatori del Petrarca* has been declared the prime example of anti-Petrarchist poetry of the Cinquecento. This appraisal of the text has long held; for example, Johannes Hösle's 1970 anthology *Texte zum Antipetrarkismus* places Castaldi's capitolo first (1–5). Recent research – even though scant – has produced more nuanced results. On the one hand, Castaldi's polemic has been anchored in the debate on *imitatio* of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries; on the other, the poem's limited programmatic impact, both in Castaldi's own work and in early Cinquecento poetry more generally, has been emphasised (Baldacci 1974, 39–43; Balduino 2008).

1.7.4 Analysis

Unlike other texts discussed here, Castaldi's *Capitolo contro i petrarchisti* does not display any techniques of parodying literary models. The author's opposition to an exclusive imitation of Petrarch is expressed through a directly formulated polemical attack, which uses a middle style without obscene elements:

Udite, imitatori del Petrarca,
Udite servi di vane parole
Che più stimate i remi che la barca:
 Per starvi accanto di quel vivo sole
E per inopia seminando urtiche,
Non vi sperate di coglier viole.
 I vostri studi e le vostre fatiche,
A chi ben mira, vi fan parer quali

⁸⁰ Cf. Castaldi 1899 (II, XXXIV–XXXV).

Alla voce d'altrui garrule piche.
 Che vi vale esser all'Aquile uguali
 Di forma altera e d'onorate piume,
 E fuor del nido non spiegar mai l'ali?
 Leggo talor tutt'un vostro volume
 Da capo a piedi, ch'io non vi discerno,
 D'arte o d'ingegno un semivivo lume.
 (Castaldi 1899, 102, vv. 1–15)

Both in the choice of individual motifs and the structure of argumentation, Castaldi's capitolo shows connections to Angelo Poliziano's epistle to Paolo Cortese, in which the former defends the eclectic imitation of several models against a one-sided orientation towards Cicero (Baldacci 1974, 41–42). On this basis, Luigi Baldacci reads the capitolo as a manifestation of anti-Petrarchism in the early Cinquecento, related to the more general polemic surrounding the status of *imitatio*, as it developed especially in Neo-Latin literature in relation to Ciceronianism. Castaldi's capitolo thus represents an isolated attempt to transfer the positions of anti-Ciceronianism to anti-Petrarchism (Baldacci 1974, 40–43).

1.7.5 Conclusions

Cornelio Castaldi's capitol is the only example of poetry discussed here that expresses a polemic against Petrarchism in a serious style whilst at the same time pointing to an alternative, better model: one-sided orientation to Petrarch is opposed to the eclectic imitation of several models. Castaldi's poem, however, had no direct consequences. It was received with little or no attention in the Cinquecento and none of the positions formulated in the capitol can be found in other poems by the author. Thus, it cannot be assumed that opposing stances against Petrarchism in Cinquecento poetry were inspired by Castaldi.

1.8 Pietro Aretino: *Sonetti lussuriosi* (Sonetti sopra i 'XVI modi')

1.8.1 Origins

Pietro Aretino's *Sonetti lussuriosi* are a collection of 16 caudate sonnets originally published together with erotic wood engravings by Marcantonio Raimondi. The latter were based on drawings made in 1524 by the painter Giulio

Romano. The date of the creation and first publication of the *Sonetti lussuriosi* is disputed, especially since Aretino's complete works were placed on the index in 1557/1559 and no copy of the first edition of the collection is known to exist (Romei in Aretino 2019, 30). Possible dates for the *editio princeps* range from 1524 to 1537 and there is also no consensus on the original title. It can only be said that later editions refer to the collection as *Sonetti lussuriosi*.

The sonnets, primarily dialogical, take the form of dialogues between sexually active couples about their preferred practices. With Vasari's description of the *Vita di Marcantonio Bolognese*, narratives about the origins of the *Sonetti lussuriosi* began to emerge as early as the sixteenth century, although they provide few solid facts. What we know for certain is that the painter Giulio Romano produced a series of erotic drawings in 1524, based on which Marcantonio Raimondi made copper engravings. The rapid dissemination of the latter led the papal Datario Giovan Matteo Giberti to arrest Raimondi and have the engravings destroyed. Pietro Aretino, who was at the height of his Roman career at the time, intervened on behalf of the engraver and secured his release (Romei in Aretino 2019, 5–15). It is impossible to determine when the *Sonetti lussuriosi* were exactly created and published together with the wood engravings based on Raimondi's copper engravings.⁸¹ Accounts that have long prevailed, according to which the publication of the work was linked to an assassination attempt on Aretino ordered by Giberti and to the author's flight from Rome, have proved unsound (Larivaille 1997, 108–112; Romei in Aretino 2019, 16–21).

1.8.2 Text and edition history

Only one copy has been handed down of the *Sonetti lussuriosi* that was published in the sixteenth century. This is a privately owned edition in Geneva without a title page and colophon, which contains no information about the date of publication, place or publisher.⁸² The copy does probably not correspond to the first edition but constitutes a subsequent, partially defective contrafaction of the text

⁸¹ The printing technology of the time did not permit to combine copper engravings and text so that wood engravings had to be made for printing (Romei 2020, 78).

⁸² This circumstance has also triggered a discussion about the title of the collection of poems. While the designation *Sonetti lussuriosi* has become established in the textual tradition, Giovanni Aquilecchia and Angelo Romano (in Aretino 1992, 295–296) propose the title *Sonetti sopra i 'XVI modi'* based on Aretino's dedicatory letter to Battista Zatti. For reasons of conciseness – and also because Aquilecchia's and Romano's proposal is not uncontroversial (Romei in Aretino 2019, 153–154) – the title *Sonetti lussuriosi* is used in the present account.

(Aquilecchia and Romano in Aretino 1992, 292; Romei in Aretino 2019, 5–6). Despite the shortcomings described above, it represents the only testimony in which the original form of the book as a picture-text combination is preserved. Both later manuscript and printed versions from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries combine the poems included in the Cinquecento edition with other sonnets that either belong to Aretino himself or an apocryphal tradition (Romei in Aretino 2019, 109–129; Romei 2019).

Due to the ambivalent source situation, even the modern text-critical editions of the *Sonetti lussuriosi* propose various reconstructions of the original text structure. The edition of the *Sonetti lussuriosi* published in 1992 as part of the *Edizione Nazionale delle Opere di Pietro Aretino* and edited by Giovanni Aquilecchia and Angelo Romano adopts the structure of the Genevese copy, which is considered the only reliable textual source. The edition also includes a reproduction of this Cinquecento print, which allows the reception of the sonnets in connection with the accompanying images. In 1996, Alcide Bonneau and Paul Larivaille published an edition with a French translation of the poems. Danilo Romei's edition, published in 2019, draws not only on the sixteenth-century print but also on later textual sources to compensate for deficiencies in the Genevese copy and to fill in missing parts.

1.8.3 Research

The incomplete sources have led to intensive research on this topic.⁸³ There are also various hypotheses about the publication date of the *Sonetti lussuriosi*. For a while, Italian and French scholarship considered the years 1524 and 1525, respectively, as the publication date of Aretino's *Sonetti*.⁸⁴ None of the proposals, however, has been entirely verified thus far (Aquilecchia/Romano in Aretino 1992, 294). In 2018, Danilo Romei proposed 1537 as the new publication date, which would correspond more coherently to Aretino's chronology of works (Romei 2018b, Romei 2020). Furthermore, the relationship between image and text in the *Sonetti lussuriosi* has been analysed.⁸⁵ Besides a tendency to ascribe a realistic, anti-literary character to the *Sonetti lussuriosi* (Larivaille 1980, 72) and to view

⁸³ Aquilecchia 1982; Bernasconi 1983; Aquilecchia/Romano in Aretino 1992, 290–298; Romei 2013; Romei in Aretino 2019, 103–172; Romei 2019.

⁸⁴ Cf. on the possible publication date by Italian scholarship Romano 1991, 20; and by the French scholarship Larivaille 1995; Larivaille 1997, 89–94 and 108–111.

⁸⁵ Only marginally in Larivaille 1997, 113–114; Procaccioli 2009; more detailed in Lawner 1984, 37–47; Talvacchia 1999; Cairns 2005, 169–174; Larivaille 2010; Romei 2020.

Sannazaro). The sonnet therefore represents a general distancing from seriously stylised (love) poetry rather than a decidedly anti-Petrarchist positioning.

At the same time, the sonnet echoes the opening distichs of the *Carmina Priapea*, which sketch a similar antinomy between the obscene character of the poems and an opposed, rejected option (Romei in Aretino 2019, 80–81). The dissociation from Petrarchist and bucolic poetry in the *Sonetti lussuriosi* corresponds in the Latin model to a rejection of virgin goddesses as protective powers watching over the verses of the collection (*Priapées* 1, vv. 3–4). In this way, the proemial sonnet establishes, on the one hand, a distancing from Petrarchism and bucolic poetry and, on the other, a reference to the *Carmina Priapea* as an ancient example of obscene lyricism.

In previous studies, the *Sonetti lussuriosi* have primarily been examined regarding opposing references to Bembist-Petrarchist poetry. Bernhard Huss (2013) lists several procedures through which a burlesque inversion of Petrarchist poetry becomes apparent on several levels of the text. The shape of the poems as dialogue sonnets, in which female characters demand sexual gratification, presents a clear contrast to the speech situation of Petrarchist praise of women, in which the beloved remains silent and physically unattainable (228). Furthermore, nonconformist references to Petrarchist poetry are evident on a motivic and thematic level. The sonnet *Fottiamci, anima mia, fottiamci presto*, for example, uses the Petrarchist motif of death to invert it “in eine diesseitige Todesnegierung im Liebesakt” (229). In *Marte, malatestissimo poltrone*, a mythological reference compatible with Petrarchism is established, but immediately reinterpreted in an obscene manner (230). Huss also describes unorthodox references to features of Petrarchist poetry on a structural level. He considers the fact that the only existing Cinquecento edition of the text contains no proemial but two epilogue sonnets, as an inversion of the structure of Petrarchist canzonieri. The epilogues would then take the functions normally assigned to proems in Petrarchist canzonieri (226). However, as discussed above, the existing edition of the Cinquecento is not a reliable textual source. Moreover, a proemium that seems plausible can be reconstructed on the basis of later editions of the text (Romei in Aretino 2019, 152–159). Huss identifies another reference to Petrarchism in the “forcierete[n] Paradigmatik” (2013, 227) of the *Sonetti lussuriosi*. The juxtaposition of coital situations corresponds to a “forcierten Serialisierung des immer Gleichen” (227). This radicalises one of the “zentralen Kompositionsprinzipien petrarkischer Zyklen”, namely the “paradigmatischen Blöcke”, which are typically embedded “in die lineare Syntagmatik der ohnehin fragmentierten Liebeserzählung” (227) in Petrarchist canzonieri. However, against Huss’s interpretation one could adduce the fact that this structural feature of the *Sonetti lussuriosi* is already predetermined by the series of images to which the sonnets refer. The “Serialisierung des

immer Gleichen” is already inherent in the theme of the woodcuts, namely the depiction of different variants of sexual consummation. Even if the sonnets, as Huss (227) points out, are only loosely oriented to the pictorial motifs of the woodcuts in detail, there is nevertheless a connection between text and image in terms of content, which also determines the thematic structure of the collection.

Considering the proemial sonnet cited above as an integral part of the text, the features described by Huss can also be placed in the context of an opposition not only specifically to Petrarchism, but more generally to ‘high’ love poetry. Thus, for example, the reference to mythology in the sonnet *Marte, malatestissimo poltrone* is compatible not only with Petrarchism but also with bucolic and, more generally, all forms of ‘higher’ poetry.

The objective announced in the proemial sonnet, however, is realised not only through the procedures described above, but more fundamentally through the pronounced obscenity that thematically and linguistically characterises the *Sonetti lussuriosi*. This constitutive feature forms an opposition to the idealising perspective of love poetry, in which sexuality cannot be thematised at all or only in a metaphorically veiled way. The implications of this mode of representation also become clear in the letter dating from December 19, 1537, in which Pietro Aretino dedicated the *Sonetti lussuriosi* to Battista Zatti.⁸⁹ The letter concludes with the remark that the recipient should make sure whether the verses of the collection ‘naturally’ depict the poses of those involved in lovemaking (“Intanto considerate se io ho ritratto al naturale coi versi l’attitudine dei gios-tranti [. . .].” Aretino 2019, 42). In this passage, ‘naturalness’ seems to mean primarily a realistic representation of the subject, defined by a contrast with the idealising perspective of love poetry. The stylistic artificiality of the high genres is contrasted with the coarseness of the *Sonetti lussuriosi*, which allows for an unvarnished depiction of physical pleasure.

The letter to Battista Zatti is also revealing because it legitimises the obscenity of the poems on several levels of argumentation. On the one hand, the aspect of naturalness is brought into the field here as well: Sexual reproduction and the male genitalia, he argues, are inherent in the nature of procreation, which means that there is no reason to hide them.⁹⁰ Moreover, a pre-existing artistic and literary practice legitimised the obscenity of the poems: both ancient

89 The letter is included in the first book of Aretino’s *Lettere* (1538); Romei (in Aretino 2019, 156) considers the letter part of the structure of the collection in his edition of the *Sonetti lussuriosi*.

90 “Che male è il veder montare un uomo adosso a una donna? Adunque le bestie debbon essere più libere di noi? A me parebbe che il cotale, datoci da la natura per conservazion di se stessa, si dovesse portare al collo come pendente e ne la beretta per medaglia, però che egli è

and contemporary poets and sculptors had sometimes indulged in the treatment of the lascivious for the purpose of mental distraction.⁹¹ The obscenity of the sonnets is thus legitimised by the *auctoritas veterum* and the poems are assigned an unserious dimension that argumentatively diminishes their scandalous potential (Talvacchia 1999, 86–87).

1.8.5 Conclusions

In the *Sonetti lussuriosi*, a gesture of opposition against Petrarchist lyricism and bucolic poetry is evident. The obscenity of content and language contrasts with the idealising perspective of these forms of literature. Moreover, an unorthodox reinterpretation of individual features of serious love poetry contributes to this relationship of opposition. The lasciviousness of the *Sonetti lussuriosi* is associated with the aspect of naturalness on several levels. Thus, the obscenity of the sonnets appears as a mode of representation close to reality, which at the same time receives its legitimacy from the naturalness surrounding the subject. It is striking that the semantic field of nature is functionalised in two ways: on the one hand, to designate a specific mode of representation, and, on the other, to justify the subject treated. In both cases, ‘naturalness’ forms an implicit antithesis to the loftier forms of love poetry. The idealising mode of representation and the stylistic artificiality prevailing there are contrasted with an unveiled, linguistically coarse, and stylistically low mode of representation, which penetrates towards the realm of the bodily-instinctive and thus to a zone that cannot be mentioned in most poetry influenced by classicism. At the same time, the *Sonetti lussuriosi* are placed in a literary and artistic tradition dedicated to the treatment of lascivious themes for the purpose of intellectual diversion.

la vena che scaturisce i fiumi de le genti e l'ambrosia che beve il mondo nei dì solenni.” (Aretino 2019, 41) Cf. on this passage also Fischer 1993, 90.

⁹¹ “E perché i poeti e gli scultori antichi e moderni sogliono scrivere e scolpire alcuna volta per trastullo de l'ingegno cose lascive, come nel Palazzo Chisio fa fede il satiro di marmo che tentava di violare un fanciullo, ci sciorinai sopra i sonetti che ci si veggono ai piedi, la cui lussuriosa memoria vi intitolo con pace degli ipocriti [. . .].” (Aretino 2019, 41) As Talvacchia (1999, 86) notes, this passage possibly echoes Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis historia* (XXXV, 72).

1.9 Dialogues

Traditionally, a range of different research questions have been directed at the Renaissance dialogue and especially to Italian dialogues of the sixteenth century. Since the 1990s, scholars write about the pluralisation of concepts and ideas characteristic of the Renaissance, about processes of heterogenisation accompanying them, and about the self-dissolution of principles of order and the resulting heterogeneous value systems.⁹²

In this context, the literary dialogue of the Renaissance can be considered as one of the central text types in which to observe these processes, insofar as it is a staged conversation between opposite opinions in or as a mode of argumentation, and has become the predominant text type “der Erörterung von Sachfragen überindividueller Reichweite” (Hausmann/Liebermann 2014, 8) alongside the treatise.⁹³ The dialogue has – whether rudimentary or highly differentiated – a narrated or dramatised plot, in which argumentation structures are embedded in different ways. It is therefore characterised both by its fictional-poetic structure and by the fact that factual issues are discussed in it. These issues concern the reading audience – generally speaking Eco’s Model Reader – and pertain to possible, impossible or (to a certain extent: between possible and impossible) hazardous practices of individual and collective action, which are negotiated in the social or, more precisely, in the communal space of action of certain groups. Several scholarly studies of the dialogue, which have themselves attained the status of classics, therefore deal with structural features of the dialogue and their function within the framework of a *community fashioning*.⁹⁴

A central approach attempts to define the dialogue of the Cinquecento as a hybrid genre, thereby focusing on its combination of text-type-specific forms of representation. It also includes intermedial elements, referring to a specific rhetorical-stylistic hybridity or a primarily playful contamination of genres.⁹⁵ Furthermore, the embedding of dialogues in a framing narrative and in other

⁹² Cf. on pluralisation Hempfer 1993b, 17–24; Hempfer 2010a, 11–12; the studies of the SFB “Pluralisation and Authority”, cf. SFB 573: Publications (uni-muenchen.de); on (heterogeneous) systems of meaning cf. Küpper 1993; Regn 1993.

⁹³ The fictional “as if” character of the Renaissance dialogue remains dominant even when historical figures appear, cf. Häsner 2004, 23–27.

⁹⁴ Cf. Häsner 2004, 48–59; Häsner 2006, 180–189, also on ‘resonance spaces’ of the respective dialogue.

⁹⁵ On dialogue as a hybrid genre cf. Hempfer 2004, 69–72; Corno 1922, 21–27. On the question of playful contamination Häsner/Lozar 2006, 53. See generally the ‘bibliographie raisonnée’ in Honnacker 2002, 190–251.

paratextual elements and their relatedness to courtly (self-)staging cultures, as well as the social staging of gender roles have particularly been examined.⁹⁶

While from the point of view of research into anti-classicisms, all of these general approaches are significant, their relevance for the research on individual dialogues and dialogue corpora of individual authors has been tested to varying and sometimes lesser degrees and only rarely with regard to those Cinquecento dialogues that can be linked to explicit anti-classicism.

1.9.1 Francesco Berni, *Dialogo contra i poeti*

1.9.1.1 Origins

Francesco Berni's *Dialogo contra i poeti* was written in context of the tense political situation in Rome between 1524 and 1525, most probably from the second half of the year 1525 onwards (Corsaro 1989, 60). It appeared in the discursive environment of eminent functionaries who were active in the municipal and ecclesiastical, as well as literary, circles of the city. In general, we are dealing with the aggressiveness of a strongly ideological dispute within the Roman micro- and macrocosm here, even before the Sacco di Roma (Alfano 2011, 120).

Not only aesthetic considerations shape the form and content of the Renaissance dialogue, but it has both a literary and a socially corrective function.⁹⁷ Francesco Berni's political and social influence within the Roman community outlined above is expressed in the setting and the argumentation structures of his dialogue; from a poetological point of view, the dialogue is characterised by the use of explicitly formulated anti-classicist positions. A central feature of the dialogue is a redefinition of authorial agency, which underlies not only this text but also Berni's other works such as the *Capitoli* that appeared around the same time as the *Dialogo* (Alfano 2011, 127; Bárberi Squarotti in Berni 2014, 45–46).

1.9.1.2 Text and edition history

The *Dialogo contra i poeti* first appeared in 1526, anonymously. It remains unclear to what extent the *imprese*, i.e. Berni's personal emblems, that were attached to

⁹⁶ Wagner 2009 on Bembos Asolani; Wagner 2012 on Cortegiano; Segler-Meißner 2002; Cox 2000.

⁹⁷ On the relationship between fictional and documentary form in Renaissance dialogue cf. Cox 1992, 17; on the association of narrative and historical contexts cf. Honnacker 2002, 24.

the first editions, might have given the primary audience clear indications of Berni's authorship (cf. Reynolds in Berni 1997, 1–2). The *Pasquinate* written by Girolamo Casio de' Medici for Pasquino celebrations which took place on 25 April 1526, are sometimes considered to be the first response to the *Dialogo* apparently in circulation (Reynolds in Berni 1997, 4–5; Corsaro 1998). Whereas for the 1540s, there is evidence of the distribution of Berni's writings in Florence, as well as of the first attempts at their suppression in Venice, the first editions of the *Dialogo* fell victim to censorship in the form of the Roman Index of 1559, which prohibited all works by Berni that had appeared since 1525 (Reynolds in Berni 1997, 26–28). The first modern edition was published by Carlo Gargioli in 1863, both as a separate work and as part of the complete edition of Berni's works (Berni 1863). It marked the beginning of the modern study of Berni's oeuvre and that of a clear recognition of Berni's authorship, which would no longer be questioned (cf. Reynolds in Berni 1997, 31–33).

The more recent editions, published in 1997 (Berni 1997) and 2014 (Berni 2014), testify to the fact that Berni's work is given the attention it deserves due to the research on the Primo Cinquecento.⁹⁸

1.9.1.3 Research

The editions mentioned above (Berni 1997 and Berni 2014) comprise extensive contextualising reflections and in-depth interpretations of individual passages. In general, criticism has not only focused on the socio-cultural context or, for example, the pragmatic context of “academic gatherings” (Reynolds in Berni 1997, 143), but from the very beginning located the text directly within the religious discourse of the period (Corsaro 1989). This is necessary also because the *Dialogo* functions as a mixed form that comprises elements from documentary and fictional dialogue, which, as mentioned above, primarily has the function of criticising the practices and individuals of Roman life in the years 1524–1525. In fact, the dialogue shows distinct traces of a Gibertine ethic that are connected to Berni's activity as secretary to Giovan Matteo Giberti (Reynolds in Berni 1997, 46–49, 59–85; Giampieri 1997, 86–88, 106–107). Fundamental for the understanding of individual passages is the restitution of cultural knowledge underlying the concrete political allusions, or, more specifically, the allusions to certain social groups in the text (Alfano 2011, 127–131).

⁹⁸ On the genesis and first printing cf. Reynolds in Berni 1997, 1–5, 31–33, 143–146; Romei 2007b, 163–164. Berni 1997: the text of the dialogue is found on pp. 177–345. Berni 2014: the text of the dialogue and extensive notes are found with commentary in the third part, edited by M. Savoretti, on pp. 318–349.

1.9.1.4 Analysis

A characteristic feature of the *Dialogo contra i poeti* is that the critique of classicist and contemporary poetry is developed from critical reflections on ancient poetry. A significant example is the passage in which Sanga, the main interlocutor of Berni's own dialogue character, gives a satirically coloured enumeration of various ancient poets and their causes of death:

Lucrezio, per le sue bone opere che fece contro alla religione, prima impazzò, poi si ammazzò da sé stesso. Lucano, sapete che Nerone gli dette la stretta, che non fece mai altra bona opera alli di suoi. E beati noi, se come segò le vene a Seneca vecchio, così avesse segata la gola anche al nipote, a Silio Italico, a Marziale, et a quell'altra canaglia che empié poi il mondo di veleno. Di Ovidio dicemmo di sopra che morì di freddo in quel paese. Quell'altra pecora, favorita di pedanti, di Iuvenale, anche egli ebbe bando del capo e fece una morte simile. (Berni 1997, 210)

Interestingly, the criticism expressed in the passage is directed against an entire group and not against individual poets. The dramatic course of their lives, which finds its vivid expression in their deaths, is directly linked to the content of their poetry. On previous pages, the behaviour of ancient as well as modern poets is criticised for its non-compliance with religious norms and various gradations of heresy (Berni 1997, 182). Heresy and infamy of the poets are thereby attributed to the “degenerazioni scaturite dell'inopinata professionalizzazione della letteratura” (Girardi 1989, 112).

The polemic against *pedantismo* and *bembismo* as well as their stylistics – as the Model Reader must know from Berni's and other writers' satirical works of the 1520s – plays an important role in the *Dialogo*, regarding, in a figurative sense, ancient poets, and, in a direct sense, contemporary poets. The negative view of the *imitatio* of ancient poetry and of its allegedly exemplary role has a direct effect on the judgment of contemporary poetry. ‘Modern’ poetry is understood as theft (*rubare*), its contents are “mendicati dagli antichi” (Berni 1997, 190), and the poets are *ladri* (Berni 1997, 198). Poets including Homer, Lucretius and Catullus are mentioned in this context. Virgil and Cicero are decisively devalued, their status as author figures that can be imitated in a classical manner is deconstructed, in the case of the latter with the strong expression “questa canaglia” (Berni 1997, 202).⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Cf. for a detailed analysis of these observations in the context of literary judgement Friede 2022b.

1.9.1.5 Conclusions

It can be said that in Berni's *Dialogo contra i poeti*, poetry is generally understood as mendacious and the craft of writing poetry as of little value. A determined and systematic decanonisation of classicist models follows, with particular criticism of the pedantesque *maniera* of *imitatio*. Interestingly, this does imply a reference to classical models of imitation, and in fact not only to those of antiquity, but also to those of the Trecento or Cinquecento. At the same time, poetry itself becomes, in a certain fashion, disenchanted by an anti-classicist 'realism'. Explicitly anti-classicist themes are introduced, such as the *mal francese* of the dialogue partner, Stanga (Friede 2022a). Various *ad personam* attacks are styled on the models of satire, Pasquinade poetry, and occasionally comedy (Corsaro 1998); in addition, comic-burlesque elements are being integrated. In spite of this extensive use of elements oriented towards the contemporary realm, no positive draft of a 'new' or 'alternative' literature or canon is being developed: the dialogue ends by emphasising the existing 'void' and the absence of potential positive judgements. The *Dialogo contra i poeti* can be read as an explicitly anti-classicist swan song for the literary system of the Primo Cinquecento.

1.9.2 Pietro Aretino, *Sei giornate (Ragionamento, Dialogo)*

1.9.2.1 Origins

Interestingly, the *mal francese* mentioned above, which served as a leitmotiv in anti-classicist literature, is also significant to the *Ragionamento* by Pietro Aretino (1492–1556), published in Venice in 1534 and dedicated to Francis I.¹⁰⁰

The *Ragionamento* and the *Dialogo* (1536), each of which cover the doings of three days, count, together with the *Lettere* published from 1537 onwards, amongst Aretino's principal works. Of all the dialogues published in the Cinquecento, scholars consider these texts unanimously as anti-classicist polemics (Malato 1995, 1137). They are understood as the expression of an explicitly anti-classicist poetics, which is "per certi aspetti, la più radicale espressione dell'anti-classicismo cinquecentesco" (Borsellino in Aretino 1984, xvii–xviii). Like their classicist pretexts, i.e. Pietro Bembo's *Asolani* (1505) and Baldassare Castiglione's

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Aretino 1984, 9: "*Antonia* 'Il mondo, sì. Lascia star pensierosa a me che, dal mal francioso in fuori, non trovo cane che mi abbaï [. . .]'" (this is the third speech of the *Giornata prima*).

Cortegiano (1528), they belong to the category of *dialoghi diegetici* (Ordine 1995, 678) and essentially follow the Ciceronian model.

Although the narrated and, at the same time, dramatically presented events take place in a city that is never explicitly named, it can be assumed that the dialogue and, to a large extent, the action, too, occurs in Rome (Ferroni 1995, 32). Characteristic of the *Sei giornate* is their strong ‘reference to reality’; they inextricably interweave the portrayal of Roman circumstances and everyday experiences – that a broad audience could relate to – with sharp criticism of a depraved, basically courtly, world.

1.9.2.2 Text and edition history

There is no doubt that as early as 1530, Aretino was working on the first day of the *Ragionamento* (Larivaille 2010, 204–207), and that his relatively endangered position in Venetian society and among his patrons certainly played a role in this context. Also, an edited text of the first book already existed in 1530/1531; an “abbozzo della pagina iniziale” can be found among the manuscripts of the Biblioteca Marciana (Larivaille 1980, 140–141).

There are different indications as to the year in which the *Sei giornate* were placed on the Index.¹⁰¹ What is important, however, is that the dialogues – despite or because of the indexing – continued to circulate under Aretino’s name or pseudonym.¹⁰² We can therefore speak of both works also in terms of ‘clandestine’ texts. During the period of clandestine distribution, other texts attached themselves to the *Sei Giornate*, notably the so-called *Ragionamento del Zoppino* (e.g. in the edition Paris/London 1584).

Only one copy of the first edition of the *Ragionamento* has been preserved, which had been found in the *Enfer* of the *Bibliothèque nationale de France* in Paris (Malato 1995, 1148). The *Ragionamento* and *Dialogo* were first referred to as the *Sei giornate* by Giorgio Aquilecchia in his 1969 edition which was based on this manuscript.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Ciavolella 1995, 4: 1557; Malato 1995, 1129: 1558; Larivaille 1995, 7: 1559.

¹⁰² Cf. for the 1584 (Paris/London) and 1586 (Turin and Venice respectively) editions Larivaille 1995, 7.

¹⁰³ For the modern editions from the twentieth century onwards cf. Malato 1995, 1138–1142.

1.9.2.3 Research

Until recently, research focused on the figure of Aretino himself as represented in his works, especially his dialogues, his self-staging, but also the story of his demonisation (see Morano 1995, 573–574). Before the publication of the *Companion to Aretino* (2021), the figure of Aretino was seen as embodied in the character of Nanna (Moulton 2021, 117–118). An important milestone of Aretino criticism can be seen in Giovanni Maria Mazzucchelli's *Vita di Pietro Aretino*, published in 1741. Moralising prejudices and a moral condemnation of the *Sei giornate* was not only prevalent directly after Aretino's death. Notwithstanding recurrent attempts at rehabilitation (prominent among others by Arturo Graf in 1888), they remained effective in biographical accounts and literary analysis well into the twentieth century (Larivaille 1995, 7–9). For Enrico Malato, who provides an overview of the relevant research from 1945 to 1995 (Malato 1995, 1131–1150), a critical, non-moralising engagement with Aretino's works only began in 1948 with the works of Giorgio Petrocchi (Malato 1995, 1138).

Different aspects have been taken up in readings of the *Sei giornate*: a focus on the representation of the city of Rome as the *regnum* of fornication (Ferroni 1995, 33); the establishment of a relationship between the mode of life of a *puttana* and the general portrayal of the world (Moulton 2021, 114); the relationship of the *Sei giornati* to the *Ragionamento de le corti* (1538), which can be regarded as its opposite or counterpart.

Most of the non-moralising current research relates to the intertextual relationship of the *Sei giornate* to other texts and models (cf. chap. 1.9.2.4). What is of fundamental significance here, is the study of the genre. Cottino-Jones (1995, 934) argues that similarly to other ancient and early modern dialogues, the *Ragionamento* is based on oral narrative and depicts personal experiences. Other recent studies focus primarily on the role of gender and sexuality, as well as the change in social roles (Moulton 2021). These studies implicitly or explicitly rest on the assumption that the *Sei giornate* have their 'Sitz im Leben' (i.e. setting in life) in a rejection of courtly life (Ferroni 1995, 35). The hypothesis that the *Sei giornate* may also represent a *manuale* for the behaviour of prostitutes (Ordine 1995, 688) also corresponds to the idea of this 'Sitz im Leben'.

1.9.2.4 Analysis

The narrative frame of the *Ragionamento* clearly emphasises the fact that the *Sei giornate* try to surpass Boccaccio's *Decameron*: in her comment "Perdonimi il Centonovelle [. . .]" (Aretino 1984, 60) Antonia apologises only superficially,

offering, above all, Nanna an opportunity to invoke the hierarchy of thing and mere image, which Berni had already (cf. chap. 1.2.4) claimed to be a reasonable criterion of evaluation for Michelangelo's poetry: "Questo non dico io: – replica con prudenza la narratrice – ma voglio che egli confessi almeno che le mie son cose vive, e le sue dipinte." (Aretino 1984, 60) The composition of the dialogues is thus characterised at the same time by intertextual and intermedial components, which constitute the central characteristics of the combination of genres typical for anti-classicist texts (Borsellino in Aretino 1984, xxi).

Indeed, Boccaccio's *Decameron* is the object of intertextual reference in the *Sei giornate* to an even greater extent than the *Asolani* and the *Cortegiano*. This is particularly striking if one looks at the contrast achieved by the simplicity of the setting in the *Ragionamento* (Cottino-Jones 1995, 939; Ciavolella 1995, 66): the *Sei giornate* reverse the *locus amoenus* motif found not only in the frame of the *Decameron* but also of Pietro Bembo's dialogue *Gli Asolani* (Procaccioli 1987, 55; Ordine 1995, 674–683). In this way, the *Ragionamento* strives for a polemical form of reverse *imitatio* and an *aemulatio* regarding both works (cf. Larivaille 1980, 152–155). At the same time, Boccaccio's obscene literary language, but also that of younger poets such as Angelo Firenzuola, is developed further (Ciavolella 1995, 64).

Other important reference texts of the *Sei giornate* include *volgarizzamenti* of Erasmian texts, which became available as an alternative to Ciceronian classicism from the 1530s onwards (Procaccioli 1999b, 162–163). In general, however, the Ciceronian dialogue model is replaced in the *Sei giornate* by a reference to Lucian's dialogues.¹⁰⁴ Comedy and its courtly dimension also play a certain role as a model (Ferroni 1995, 25; Borsellino in Aretino 1984, 25).

Concerning classical Roman literature, concrete intertextual references to Virgil, especially to the *Aeneid* and the depiction of the relationship between Dido and Aeneas, can be demonstrated (Malato 1995, 1143–1144; Cottino-Jones 1995, 954). At the same time, the *Sei giornate* continue to rewrite Ovid's texts, especially the *Ars amatoria* (Procaccioli 1987, 55–56; Ciavolella 1995, 64). Regarding the question of the obscene, a veritable accumulation of intertexts manifests itself in the *Sei giornate*, within which especially Spanish erotic literature of the Cinquecento, and in particular Francisco Delicado's *Lozana andalusa* (Venice 1528), plays an important role (Procaccioli 1987, 57–58; Cottino-Jones 1995, 940–941).

¹⁰⁴ Cf. Ordine 1995, 685–686 (with bibliography) and Fantappiè 2017; Fantappiè 2019; Fantappiè in course of print.

1.9.2.5 Conclusions

The *Sei giornate* develop an anti-Bembist and anti-Petrarchist counter-language that is characterised on the one hand by an attempt at linguistic ‘realism’ and authenticity, and, on the other, by metaphorical and euphemistic excess.¹⁰⁵ The techniques of linguistic obscurity or opaqueness employed in the text are, on the one hand, endowed with an aesthetic anti-classicist autonomy, similar to that of the *Sonetti lussuriosi* (Whall 2005, 13); on the other hand, they have a concrete function, as they are directed against the ideal of perspicuity championed in Ciceronian rhetoric (Procaccioli 1987, 47–48); at the same time, this type of language obfuscates the sexual act and therefore works as a kind of self-censorship, a means of defense against the threat of outside censorship (Larivaille 1996, 15–16; Larivaille 2010, 207).

Because of its abundantly clear anti-Bembism, the *Sei giornate* became a model text for Venetian poets who wrote anti-Bembist poetry in the wake of Aretino from their publication in 1534 onward (Procaccioli 1987, 61; Procaccioli 1999b, 157). However, the *Sei giornate* are not mere parody; rather, they are characterised by a constant interaction of ‘high’ models and their negation or ‘twisting’. This observation applies to all levels of the text – thematic, rhetoric, stylisation, representation of characters and paratext. This can be observed, for example, in the entanglement of anti-Petrarchism, obscenity, moralism and a positive humanism in these dialogues, which form an experimental field in which traditional narrative patterns and modes of expression are demythologised (cf. Ferroni 1995, 35; Cottino-Jones 1995, 939). In the dedication of the *Dialogo* to Messer Bernardo Valdaura, what has been narrated in the preceding part of the *Ragionamento* is termed “tre giorni di *Capricci*” (Aretino 1984, 210). The term *capriccio* coincides with what is today known as the Capriccio-discourse in art history. The fact that it is used here also clarifies the proximity of what is addressed in the *Sei giornate* on the one hand and the characteristics of the grotesque on the other (Friede 2015).

The explicit anti-classicism of the *Sei giornate* is based on all the features mentioned above and also on the fact that diverse references to other explicitly anti-classicist texts and genres – such as to the satirical poetry of Ariosto, for example, and to Berni’s and Folengo’s poetry – are interwoven with them.

On the pragmatic level, the strongly socio-critical element of the dialogues has an explicitly anti-classicist effect. Using the means of polemics and parody, it takes a critical look at the position of women in particular (Cottino-Jones 1995, 948–957; Moulton 2021, 116) and the behaviour of the clergy.

105 Cf. Ordine 1995; Moulton 2021, 115–116; Cottino-Jones 1995, 944.

1.9.3 Pietro Aretino, *Le carte parlanti*

1.9.3.1 Origins

In Aretino's dialogue *Le carte parlanti* (1543), courtly themes and court life make a return appearance as one of its numerous subjects. The dialogue takes place between the historical figure of Federico Padovano on the one hand and a set of cards endowed with speech on the other. The very use of the collective personification of the cards reverses the logic of the classicist dialogue, in that, rather than speaking *about* objects of the outer world (such as the paintings and sculptures in Lodovico Dolce's *Dialogo della pittura* of 1557), *speaking objects* become characters in the dialogue. The Model Reader thus has to deal with a paradoxical, carnivalesque text that depicts the world as reversed (Girardi 1986, 103). *Le carte parlanti* consists primarily of dramatised stories with some scenic elements, which seem very close to everyday life and which presuppose a certain *savoir culturel* of the Model Reader.

The text apparently refers to the practice of gambling as it was prevalent at the home of Cardinal Niccolò de' Gaddi (Ferroni 1995, 46–47). Already in the *Ragionamento*, gambling had been personified as a kind of adversary of prostitutes. Aretino's text repeatedly points to the fact that both a prostitute and the game are in a direct struggle for a man's money (cf. Giaccone 1989, 226).

1.9.3.2 Text and edition history

The text of the *Carte parlanti* appeared in 1543 in Venice as *Dialogo di Pietro Aretino, nel quale si parla de giuco con moralità piacevole*, printed by Giovann de' Farri e fratelli (Giaccone 1989, 225, not. 1). A second edition appeared in 1545, also in Venice (printed by Bartolomeo detto l'Imperador [. . .]), and another in 1589 with an altered title, from the press of Gio. Andrea del Melograno (Casalegno in Aretino 1992, 29). Two editions printed in 1650 and in 1651, which used for the first time the current title *Le carte parlanti*, both demonstrate censorship-related modifications. The edition published by F. Campi in 1914 is based on this modified text. It was not until 1992 that Giovanni Casalegno and Gabriella Giaccone edited the earlier, uncensored text (and recorded some minor changes made in 1589 in the notes).

1.9.3.3 Research

In general, the text is considered to have been neglected by scholars, and this is indeed the case.¹⁰⁶ In the existing research on the *Carte parlanti*, similarly to the *Ragionamento*, references to historical real circumstances and conditions are examined, and intertextual systems of reference identified. As far as the analysis of references to extra-literary reality is concerned, it is emphasised above all that the dialogue depicts the kaleidoscopically changing constitution of the world (Girardi 1986, 106). The historical context and Aretino's 'autobiographical' background are usually in focus, including a detailed characterisation of historical individuals who indulged in playing cards (Girardi 1988, 108–118). Furthermore, the combination of genres that determines the shape of the dialogue is emphasised, such as, for example, the integration of *beffe* from dramatic literature and from the *novelle* (Bolzoni 1995, 643). As a third aspect, several articles argue that despite all ridicule, the dialogue has a moral subtext: it contains moral aphorisms, and the merits of the game are underlined. The card game combines, for example, *otium* and *negotium* (Girardi 1986, 119–120), and the speaking cards are depicted not only as objects embodying a carnivalesque culture, but also as 'wise things'; the dialogue pursues a thoroughly instructive-didactic goal (Giaccone 1989, 238).

1.9.3.4 Analysis

An analysis of the dialogue must take a variety of intertextual references into account. The appearance of the figure Pasquino refers to the *Pasquinate* (Girardi 1986, 103); Berni's *Capitolo del gioco della primiera* also counts as an important intertext. Moreover, in a parodical manner, the layout of the *Cortegiano* (Bolzoni 1995, 647) is played with, and reference is made to Erasmus' *Laus Moriae* (Bolzoni 1995, 643).

What is decisive, however, is above all the fact that the dialogue more than adequately complies with classicist practices of dialogue (Giaccone 1989, 225–226). A casuistry of the game is presented; the formation of a judgement about the status of the game is encouraged in Padovano as well as in the Model Reader. A similar practice occurs for example in the *Asolani*, albeit with reference to a different object. The anti-classicist 'twist' lies in the fact that the vices of the game are neither

¹⁰⁶ Cf. especially Bolzoni 1995, 642, for all the research literature up to 1995; Malato 1995, 1146, with not. 27.

subject for a dialogue nor one that could be made acceptable in a classicist manner of presentation. Nevertheless, elements of a possible ‘classical’ discourse on the game of cards are referred to, namely the invention of the game by Palamedes during the siege of Troy, which is treated in various sources such as the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (cf. Girardi 1986, 105; Giaccone 1989, 230).

A typical feature of explicitly anti-classicist writing is the opposition to pedantic and Petrarchan or Petrarchist poetry (cf. Bolzoni 1995, 658). This becomes particularly evident when the cards, in a pedantic manner, paraphrase mundane remarks in deliberately exclusive diction and are criticised by Padovano for it:

PADOVANO: E a ciò che da me non si è più compreso ne i vostri andari.

CARTE: Il cuore di colui che disputa di materie importanti, essulta ne la efficacia de la mente, la qual procrea i pensieri che formano le cose che poi distingue la lingua, caso che chi lo ascolta accenni con la intelligenza di capire i sensi de i concetti che esso prepara di esprimere.

PADOVANO: Cotesto parlare isquisito avete voi rubato da qualche giocatore dotto?

CARTE: Indovinasti. (Aretino 1992, 48)

Besides, in this context, the motif of reprimanding a poet for stealing from erudite model authors is used. This device is known from Berni’s *Dialogo* and here, too, it is accentuated in an anti-classicist way.

1.9.3.5 Conclusions

All in all, *Le carte parlanti* display four essential features that can be regarded as characteristics of explicit anti-classicism: a) They make a travesty of motivic, thematic, and discursive elements that are characteristic of the canonical spectrum of classicist texts (Procaccioli 1987, 46–52). In contrast to classicist dialogues, for example, the dialogue establishes a ‘poetics of ignorance and naturalness’ with the help of narrative components that establish a “natura centonesca del testo” (Procaccioli 1987, 52). b) The dialogue is generally characterised by a strong moment of ambivalence of high and low language and stylisation, and by a discursive structure characterised by chaotic enumerations, hyperbolic sequences, and a constant, *capriccio*-like change of subjects (Girardi 1985, 107–111). The game creates an infinity of cases and situations, which on the one hand – and this too is ambivalent – have unfavourable effects on the player, but, on the other hand, also turn out to be emblems of human life. c) Despite its opposition to pedantism

and Petrarchism, the dialogue refuses to be linguistically standardised;¹⁰⁷ rather, it implicitly refers to the chameleonic nature of writing and play (Bolzoni 1995, 659). d) Moreover, transitions from explicit classicism to para-classicism become apparent in it: the mosaic of ‘reality patterns’ and their serial juxtaposition are supported by an intertextual *frame* that exhibits, primarily in a performative manner, the diverse classical and classicist literary patrimony in spite of all the anti-classical gestures exhibited in the text.

1.9.4 Nicolò Franco, *Il Petrarchista*

1.9.4.1 Origins

Nicolò Franco’s¹⁰⁸ dialogue *Il Petrarchista* represents a threefold satirical confrontation: first, with Petrarch’s poetry; second, with the poetry of the Petrarchists; and third, with the commentary on Petrarch’s *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* (cf. Rinaldi 2006, passim; Bruni 1980, 82). All three levels of satire are always inextricably intertwined in the dialogue. Given this context, it is no coincidence that the title of the dialogue is one of the first main evidences of a negative use of the term ‘Petrarchist’ (Béhar 2017, 190). Mimicking the practice of *imitatio* favoured by the Petrarchists and of a certain form of Petrarch scholarship, the dialogue exposes the problems of a complex phenomenon (Mehltretter 2006, 149–153) that shaped Cinquecento literature like no other. In addition, practices of the cult of Petrarch (Bruni 1980, 62) are presented as a kind of superordinate object of the satire. *Il Petrarchista* describes how the character Sannio, one of the two speaker figures, undertakes a ‘pilgrimage’ (Sabbatino 2003) to Laura’s tomb.

A direct reference of the dialogue to the biographically-oriented Petrarch commentary by Alessandro Vellutello (1525) can be assumed, in which the latter states that he, too, made a journey to Laura’s tomb in Vaucluse (cf. Mehltretter 2009, 197–200; Mehltretter 2006, 152). The *Petrarchista* is already connected to the *Dialogi piacevoli* via the paratext, insofar as its introductory letter is addressed to Leone Orsini’s secretary Bonifazio Pignoli, to whom one of the *Dialogi piacevoli* is also dedicated.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ It is questionable whether, as claimed by Girardi 1986, 119, *dignitas* is given point to the so-called ‘mercantile style’ despite its low style.

¹⁰⁸ The first edition of 1539 and further editions show the spelling of the first name with one ‘c’, cf. Franco 2003. In research and handbooks, alternating spellings with one or two ‘c’s are used. Here, the spelling ‘Nicolò’ is used throughout.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. on the paratext Kers 1912, 12; Bortot 2006, 184; Mehltretter 2006, 151–153.

1.9.4.2 Text and edition history

The first edition of the *Petrarchista* was published in Venice by Giovanni Gioliti in 1539. Its complete title, according to Bruni (in Franco 1979, 111), already announces the revelation of secrets about Petrarch's person and doings – a claim that constitutes an essential aspect of the role of a *Petrarchista*: “Il Petrarchista, dialogo di M. Nicolò Franco, nel quale si scuoprono nuovi secreti sopra il Petrarca. E si dano a leggere molte lettere che il medemo Petrarca in lingua thoscana scrisse a diverse persone. Cose rare, ne mai piu date a luce.” Between 1539 and 1623, many other editions of the dialogue appeared.¹¹⁰

1.9.4.3 Research

It is noteworthy that similarly to Pietro Aretino's *Sei giornate*, there were no positive judgements on the *Petrarchista* in research until 1945 (Bruni 1977; Bruni 1980, 61). In recent studies, two aspects in particular have been pursued: on the one hand, the question of the target object of the criticism formulated in the *Petrarchista* and, on the other, the procedures of parody employed in the dialogue.

Concerning the first question, Florian Mehlretter has argued that the figure of the *petrarchista* in the narrative could only be the character of Roberto from Avignon who appears in the embedded story (Mehlretter 2006, 153). On this level, the *petrarchista* is a fictitious imitation of a kind of Petrarch scholar (161), whereas on the thematic level of the speeches, the term also refers to the poetic imitators of Petrarch. Commentators and biographers of Petrarch as well as Petrarchists in the modern sense would thus be the target of criticism. Robert Béhar (2017, 195–196) argues that not only these, but also Petrarch's method of self-staging himself in the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* is the object of the dialogue's critique. Moreover, elements of a regional Neapolitan Bembism (Béhar 2017, 199–210) and regional pedantic poets such as Girolamo Borgia are also satirically parodied (196–197). Béhar considers that both the social and courtly approach to Petrarch's poetry, i.e. the ‘Petrarch of the courtesans’, and the literary and linguistic approach, i.e. the ‘Petrarch of the pedants’, are parodied in the text (Béhar 2017, 194).

¹¹⁰ Cf. for the first editions Bruni's list in Franco 1979, 111–113, and the list of 40 editions in Iermano 1997, 142; De' Angelis 1977, 59–60, also contains a list of editions from 1539–1623.

Regarding the second issue of the concrete methods of parody, Francesca De' Angelis (1977) has determined the relationship between Petrarch's poetry and the *Petrarchista* in linguistic terms. She demonstrates in detail the techniques of anti-thesis, direct insertion from the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, accumulation and the establishment of a modular structure à la Petrarch. In addition to these linguistic-rhetorical phenomena, irony, fictionalisation, and the deconstruction of biographical causality serve as superordinate strategies of undermining Petrarch's authority (Mehltretter 2006, 158–162; cf. also Kers 1912, 27–29). In general, a disenchantment with everything Petrarchan can be noted in *Il Petrarchista* (Bortot 2006, 169).

1.9.4.4 Analysis

A detailed look at *Il Petrarchista* shows that and how an intertextual inlay technique shapes the text (Bortot 2006, 170). However, this does not imply a clear break with classicist writing, but rather a dialectical attitude that explicitly combines anti-classicist strategies with the adoption of classicist elements from what would have been 'primary' and 'secondary' texts at the time. In addition to Vellutello's commentary on Petrarch, *Il Petrarca* by Fausto da Longiano (1552) (Béhar 2017, 190) and the commentary of Giovanni Andrea Gesualdo (Mehltretter 2009, 152) are relevant in the 'secondary' field. Adoptions, intertextual and system-related allusions in *Il Petrarchista* point to texts by Dante, Ariosto, Machiavelli and Aretino (Béhar 2017, 200–202), as well as Erasmus (191–192) and Boccaccio (Mehltretter 2009, 165–166). In 1980, Roberto L. Bruni demonstrated that one-fifth of the text of *Il Petrarchista* consists of transcripts from commentaries on Petrarch (Bruni 1980, 63–78). In this way, the dialogue itself is determined by the logic of appropriation it criticises.

1.9.4.5 Conclusions

The complex layout of the *Petrarchista* and the role of anti-classicist writing in this dialogue can be characterised in different ways. The dialogue's position between the polemically anti-Petrarchist pamphlet and pastiche can unquestionably be understood as "antipetrarchismo petrarchesco" (Bortot 2006, 165). In addition, the text deals with a "maniera di dire", a *goffezza* and thus the ironic-parodistic stylisation on the rhetorical level (Béhar 2017, 193). The techniques of poetic description used by Petrarch and his followers are explicitly devalued, attacked, and questioned (Bruni 1980, 78). In these contexts – and this is perfectly comparable to Aretino's *Sei giornate* – sudden changes of register play an important role.

On the other hand, we can also argue that the dichotomy between classicism and anti-classicism does not quite fit this dialogue, since it is characterised above all by anti-religious and anti-formalist polemics (Pignatti 1999, 99–100). In fact, in many places the dialogue features concrete criticism of the church and the pope (Pignatti 1999, 186; Mehlretter 2006, 167) as well as criticism of concrete social problems (Bortot 2006, 181).

However, when the character Sannio decides at the end of the dialogue, for economic motives, to join the group of authors of a Petrarch commentary,¹¹¹ what we are left with is the inextricable anti-classicist ambivalence of valid criticism of church, court and society and a playful deconstruction of Petrarchist poetics.

1.9.5 Nicolò Franco, *Dialogi piacevoli*

1.9.5.1 Origins

In the same year as the publication of the first edition of the *Petrarchista* – and that of the *Pistole vulgari* – Nicolò Franco's *Dialogi piacevoli*¹¹² were published, whereas there is little to no information about the actual period in which they were written (Pignatti in Franco 2003, 59–60). It is a collection of ten dialogues and their dedicatory letters, which Franco used to explore new horizons, as he states in the dedicatory letter of the eighth dialogue to Giovan Tomaso Bruno: “seguire altra strada che la mia solita” (Franco 2003, 291).¹¹³ These dialogues touch upon problems of everyday life, intellectual positionings and philosophical and literary divulgations of all kinds. In their experimental character, they distance themselves from both Aristotelian and Ciceronian models (Pignatti in Franco 2003, 9–13; Pignatti 1999, 111).

1.9.5.2 Text and edition history

Like the *Petrarchista*, the first edition of the *Dialogi piacevoli* was published in Venice by Giovanni Gioliti. Other Venetian editions from the years 1541, 1542 and 1545 exist, published by Gabriele Giolito, as well as from the 1550s and 1590s

¹¹¹ Franco 1979, 106: “[Sannio] Onde facilmente correranno i compratori per vedere tante testé, et tanti guari ne l'opra mia, perché le belle figurine a le volte fanno spacciare i libri.”

¹¹² Here and in the following, the spelling ‘Dialogi’ is used, which is found in the first prints. In research, both this and the modernised spelling ‘Dialoghi’ are adopted.

¹¹³ Cf. for an interpretation of this statement Pignatti in Franco 2003, 13–15.

(Pignatti in Franco 2003, 60–65; Pignatti 1999, 100–101). The dedicatee of the seventh letter is Bonifazio Pignatti, to whom the *Petrarchista* and numerous letters are also dedicated. The dedicatee of the first letter is Bishop Leone Orsini. Thus, also by means of the structure of the paratexts, Franco's works published in 1539 are closely linked. In 1590, an edited and later often reprinted edition appeared under the title *Dialoghi piacevolissimi*, also in Venice, by Altobello Saliceto. French and Spanish translations of this edition also exist (Pignatti in Franco 2003, 62–63, 65–66).¹¹⁴

1.9.5.3 Research

In general, it can be said that the *Dialogi piacevoli* have not been convincingly researched (cf. Pignatti 1999, 100; Bortot 2006, 175–176). De' Angelis (1977, 43) demonstrates a “scelta precisa di scrittura” and discusses this style of writing of the *Dialogi* with reference to the dialogic-inductive method of other dialogues of the Cinquecento.¹¹⁵ Like in the *Petrarchista*, a programmatic-critical reflection on Petrarch's poetry can also be demonstrated in the *Dialogi*; there are also direct references to the *Petrarchista* in Dialogue III (Bortot 2006, 166, 180). All in all, the dialogues show an eclectic position regarding *imitatio* that can be anti-Ciceronian (as in Dialogue III, cf. Pignatti 1999, 108); likewise, there are anti-humanist, anti-ecclesiastical and anti-clerical allusions, some of which are similar to those found in Erasmus (Pignatti 1999, 119).

1.9.5.4 Analysis

Important characteristics of the *Dialogi* are their heterogeneity and the unpredictability of the frame of reference chosen in each case, which are due to Franco's typical method of multiple usage of intertextually valuable material (Pignatti 1999, 115). Nevertheless, the most important texts of reference can clearly be named: in addition to Pontano's dialogues (Iermano 1997, 136), Lucian's dialogues in particular function as a pre-text (Pignatti in Franco 2003, 14–27; Pignatti 1999, 118; Fantappiè in course of print). The *Dialogi* can be described as “dialoghi a guisa di Luciano” (Iermano 1997, 123), a remark that was made about them as

¹¹⁴ Pignatti in Franco 2003, 102–107, compares the original and the expurgated version.

¹¹⁵ This dialogic-inductive mode of writing is characterised by (De' Angelis 1977, 43): “l'accogliamento di una pluralità di rapporti e quindi l'analisi particolareggiata del ragionamento.”

early as in the seventeenth century. The question of the extent to which Franco's *Dialogi* adopt stylistic and textual elements from the writings of Erasmus has been critically reflected upon by scholars (Pignatti 1999, 117–119); in this context, it is significant that the quarrel between Nicolò Franco and Pietro Aretino also concerned questions of Erasmian style (Iermano 1997, 125–126).

Little or not very detailed attention has been given to the question of the recourse to ancient authors and ancient myths as well as the explicitly anti-classicist, parodic reference of the *Dialogi* to *pedantismo*. Both perspectives can be illustrated by a look at Dialogue III, as shown by the title: *Dialogo di M. Nicolò Franco, nel quale induce Borgio pedante impetrare da Caronte tempo da pensare l'Oratione che dee fare ne l'inferno dinanzi a Plutone* (Franco 2003, 169). The anti-classicist engagement with the Ciceronian model (Iermano 1997, 129–131) is achieved through a clearly polemical and at the same time anti-pedantic thrust in the discussion of rhetorical discourse:

BOR[gio]: [. . .] Hora io ho letto in Tullio che son cinque le parti dell'officio de l'oratore: inventione, dispositione, elucotione, memoria e pronunciatione. Tutte queste cose, poi che non si possono conseguire se non con arte, con imitatione e con essercitio, è forza ch'io lasci star. Io so che buono pronunciare non puote essere ne la mia bocca, per essere senza denti. So che né memoria né inventione è in me, per trovami smemorato da la vecchiezza. Ma non ho detto che mi bisogna ne l'Oratione fuggire i viti del parlare e massime il solecismo et il barbarismo per essere barbari tutti i pedanti? Che più? Hora che mi ricordo: fa di mistiero d'adornare il parlare con i colori rhetorici, tra i quali è la repetitione, la quale è quando continuamente si pigliano i principii da uno et il medesimo verbo in cose simili e diverse [. . .].” (Franco 2003, 173)

The anti-classicist ambivalence that at times characterises the *Petrarchista* is also found here: Borgio shows erudition when he lists the five *officia* of the orator for the preparation of a speech according to Cicero. Then again, elements of anti-Petrarchist poetry are invoked, when Borgio declares that he lacks the teeth for *pronuntiatio* and that his *vecchiezza* stands in the way of *memoria*. This is linked – somewhat forcedly – to a clearly anti-Petrarchist argument that basically characterises the technique of “adornare il parlare con i colori rhetorici” as a *barbarismo*.

1.9.5.5 Conclusions

In summary, four explicitly anti-classicist features of the *Dialogi piacevoli* can be identified: (a) a clearly anti-Ciceronian polemic, as it appears above all in Dialogue III; (b) the explicitly occurring *antipedantismo*, embedded in a fundamentally satirical and polemical intellectual aggressiveness; (c) a “scrittura poliedrica e asistemica” (Pignatti 1999, 116) which creates an ambivalence between

learned montage in the *cento* style and intertwined oppositional gestures. However, d) these must be accompanied by a more fundamental observation: when, at the end of Dialogue VIII, the decline of poetry and the excessive number of poets are lamented (which reminds us of the central argument in Berni's *Dialogo contra i poeti*), then this is a complaint that belongs to the explicitly anti-classicist position within the literary establishment of the Cinquecento. This complaint is in turn answered in the anti-classicist texts themselves – and not only in the *Dialogi* – by acts of distorting and reversing appropriation, which make us aware of a dramatically changing literary system.

1.10 Lorenzo Venier: *La puttana errante* (Avi Liberman)

1.10.1 Origins

Comical elements were already present in chivalric romances at the end of the fifteenth century. One of the best examples is Luigi Pulci's *Morgante* (1478/1483), a parody of the genre. The eponymous giant, like the other giants in the poem, eats and drinks fervently. The knights are also quirky and surrender to their passions and whims easily. Due to the popularity of this poem in Florence and outside of it, one can notice other poets imitating some of the parodical aspects in what Stefano Nicosia calls the “funzione Morgante” (Nicosia 2015).

Aretino pursues Pulci's parodical line, although failing to produce a full-scale and innovative chivalric poem (Nicosia 2015, 94–106; Villosi 2020, 42–51; Cabani 2021). Lorenzo Venier belonged to his circle of poets and admirers in Venice, as some of the first octaves in the *Puttana errante*, as well as Aretino's letters, testify (Catelli in Venier 2005, 21–27). Venier draws inspiration from Aretino's ferocious poetic style, especially the vituperation, and from his language (Erasm 1995, 876–878; Catelli in Venier 2005). Venier chooses narrative material from outside the Charlemagne universe: *La Puttana errante* is inspired by chivalric romances, but the protagonist is a prostitute, not a knight; she is Venetian and contemporary to the author, unlike the chivalric poems which take place in an imaginary past.

1.10.2 Text and edition history

A short poem of four cantos in *ottava rima*, the *Puttana errante* tells the journey of an unnamed Venetian courtesan from her hometown to Rome. The Errante

embarks on adventures of an obscene character in different cities and regions of the peninsula. Her arrival in the Eternal City coincides with the Sack of Rome (1527). But while the Romans react with horror to this catastrophe, the protagonist of this short poem laughs as she enjoys the destruction of the city, and sleeps with all the foreign soldiers. At the end of the last canto, she is pictured as a winner, and to honour her a procession is held.

The first editions of Venier's *Puttana errante* do not include any dates, but their publication can be retraced thanks to letters written by Aretino in which he mentions the poem. It was probably written in 1530, and Aretino's biographer Giammaria Mazzuchelli refers to a first edition, in three cantos, published the following year, which is now lost. An integral edition was published in 1531 or in 1536. Mazzuchelli speaks of another edition, presumably a reprint, that goes back to 1538, but no copy of it has survived (Mazzuchelli 1763, 237; Catelli in Venier 2005, 94–95). Later editions in the sixteenth century attribute the poem to Lorenzo's son, Maffio Venier. A French translation of the poem along with an introduction, edited by Alcide Bonneau, appeared in Paris in 1883. It attributes the poem to Lorenzo and argues that the *Errante*, whose name remains a secret in the text “per non vituperar il mondo” (Venier 2005, 34), is based on the Venetian courtesan Elena Ballerina with whom Lorenzo had an affair that ended badly, as she was trying to steal his money ([Bonneau] 1883, v–xxiii). An annotated, critical edition by Nicola Catelli was published in 2005.

1.10.3 Research

Because most poem-parodies in the sixteenth century were not particularly successful, literary scholars handle them sporadically, apart from Aretino's incomplete chivalric poems. Venier's poems are no exception. Erasmi (1995) lists Venier's models for the *Puttana errante* and offers a possible interpretation of the poem as a political allegory of Italy. At the same time, he underlines that a coherent interpretation is impossible because Venier seems to enjoy parody just for the sake of it. Catelli (Venier 2005) offers a well-commented edition of the poem as well as a survey of Venier's biography and the genesis of the poem. His introduction focuses on the motif of the Sack of Rome. This researcher also provides a few examples of the *Puttana errante* in his monography about parodies in the sixteenth century (Catelli 2011). In addition, the gender aspects of the poem, as well as the social meaning of the courtesan, were discussed by Quaintance (2015).

1.10.4 Analysis

The poem is a comic parody of the chivalric romance, as is alluded to by the poem's title. The Errance is a common topos in this genre: in his quests, the errant-knight faces challenges that ultimately lead to his personal development and to the growth of his virtues (Auerbach ⁷1982, 120–138; Köhler ²1970, 66–88). Reading about the adventures of famous chivalric heroines like Ancroia, Marfisa, and Bradamante and wanting to imitate them is what makes Errante go on her journey to Rome. As is often the case with parodies, every diegetic element is inverted (Catelli 2011, 55–122). The knight-errant becomes a prostitute-errant. In accordance with her low social status, her adventures are degraded and revolve mostly around sexual encounters, including some with animals, like the monstrous dog in Bologna who is attracted to her malodour (I, 39–45). Also, Errante's journey in no way entails a moral development. One might expect a conversion or repentance to occur when she arrives in Rome. Instead, it seems she is more depraved than she was before. On the one hand, her lewdness seems to be exceptional. That is her virtue and she is thus the “eroica puttana” (II, 26, 3), as referred to by the narrator. On the other hand, this ‘virtue’ does not increase. Others might marvel at her, but she does not really acquire new virtues in her journeys, if not the recognition as the most excellent prostitute. The poem reflects this sort of stagnation with its circular structure, insofar that the last octave suggests that Errante returns to Venice, the point of departure for her quest. Apart from this, concrete references to known works of chivalric literature are also part of the parodic strategy. The best example is the beginning of the second canto. After falling into the Reno river, the Errante vows to offer her services, if she would be saved. Her rescuer is a peasant. This is a parody of the old hermit, who rescues Angelica from drowning in canto VIII of *Orlando furioso* by Ariosto (Erasmi 1995, 887–888).

Parody is also carried out on a formal level. The obvious choice for the metric form of an epic is the octave. The narrator is much like a narrator of a chivalric romance, for instance, when he uses metalepsis. The narrator talks directly to his readers, as if they were his listeners, and informs them that the canto is coming to an end or that he returns to the subject (“Ma torniamo a colei del chiasso gemma”, III, 6, 1). More interesting are the proems with which each canto is introduced. The first one is structured like a classical proem. It contains the argument of the poem (I, 1) as a comic inversion of the sublime mission and heroic protagonist (“D’una frustabordel, ladra impudica, / Vengo a cantar gli orrendi potamenti”, I, 1–2) as well as the invocation to the gods, in this case, to Aretino (I, 2–5). Aretino has a double function in the proem. He should lend the poet his language (“Presti tanto di lingua, che palese / Faccia da l’Arsenal fin a

la Tana / L'opre poltrone d'una gran puttana", I, 3, 5–8) and especially his vituperative style (Erasmi 1995, 876–878) and at the same time accord him a favor so he can commence his poem ("Ora col favor tuo vo cominciando", I, 5, 1), in what seems like a dedication to his patron. By mentioning Aretino in that way, Venier associates himself with a specific literary ambience.

In the other proems, Venier aims to justify the choice of his coarse and rough language. He repeats themes that can be traced back to Berni's poems as well as other burlesque poets. One of Venier's explanations for his language is the classicist idea of the congruence between *res* and *verba*. As Erasmi notices, his models are Aretino and Dante, as both are well known for their invective and harsh language (Erasmi 1995, 877–880):

Lingua d'acciarro e voce di bombarda,
 Stil arrabbiato e ingegno furiobondo,
 Una penna che tagli, un foglio ch'arda,
 Tromba, che s'odi fin ne l'altro mondo,
 Bisogna a me per dir a la gagliarda
 Di un cul, che non ha né fin né fondo,
 E d'una potta, u' 'l morbo si raguna,
 La più larga, che sia sotto la luna.

(II, 1)

Furthermore, the clarity of the text is important, because metaphorical language might leave the reader confused and in need of further explanations:

S'io dico "chiave ne la serratura",
 Chi 'ntenderebbe mai "cazz'in la potta"?
 S'io dico "il membro va contra natura",
 Bisogna Isopo che 'l comenti allotta.

(III, 3, 1–4)

But Venier also mentions the amusement that one experiences in pronouncing vulgar terms:

Io non vi pasco in monti, in selve, in valli
 Di soventi, lascivie e vaghe erbette,
 D'unquanchi isnelli e liquidi cristalli,
 D'ombre soavi e dolci parolette,
 Come fan quei, ch'i pegasei cavalli
 Scorticano ogni dì con le staffette.
 Et ha la nostra lingua un gran solazzo
 Dicendo a bocca piena e "potta" e "cazzo".

(III, 5)

As Catelli mentions in his commentary, these verses are a parody of Petrarchan commonplaces (Venier 2005, 51). Another Petrarch parody (of the *Trionfi*) is the triumphal march of Errante at the end of the fourth canto, as well as, more generally, the depiction of the protagonist as an anti-Laura (Erasmì 1995, 881). In addition to that, Venier expresses his dislike of Petrarch in his note to the readers:

Fratelli beati coloro, che approno le orecchie del core alla gran tromba del quinto evangelista san Giovanni Boccaccio, e guai a quelli, che a gli incazziti fernetichi di messer Petrarca daran fede, perché l'uno è accesa candela de' buon socii, l'altro è tenebre di chi coglionescamente crede, che la sua monna Laura pisciasse acqua d'angioli, e caccasse ambracane; però vigilate, carissimi mei, quod amen amen dico vobis, che 'l sacrosanto Corbaccio è quel, che cava l'anime del limbo, e 'l corpo dell'inferno, e le borse del purgatorio. (Venier 2005, 34)

Venier uses a language with strong religious connotations to oppose Petrarch to Boccaccio. While the first misleads his devotees with his “incazziti fernetichi” to believe that women are angelic, the “fifth evangelist”, according to Venier, announces the truth: in the *Corbaccio*, Boccaccio is thought to show the dangers and evilness of women, in accordance with the prevalent misogynistic perception of the book in the early modern period (Richardson 2017, 51–52). It is not so much Petrarch's style that is being attacked, but rather his deification of Laura, and the lack of ‘truth’ in his *Canzoniere*.

1.10.5 Conclusions

Venier's short poem is misogynistic and purports to reveal the ‘truth’ about the dangerous nature of women, as opposed to the ideas of Petrarch and his followers. Venier is inspired by Aretino, he imitates his language and vituperative style. At the same time, Dante's invectives seem to be another significant model for Venier's style. But Venier does not attempt to create a new model for a chivalric poem, substituting Petrarch by Dante or by Aretino. Instead, he enjoys parodying the popular chivalric romance by inverting the heroic gestures of the protagonist, who is now a Venetian prostitute seeking sexual encounters all over Italy.

1.11 Letters

1.11.1 Origins: Pietro Aretino's *Lettere*

As the approximately 540 volumes of letters, published between 1538 and 1627, testify, the genre of the *libro di lettere* was widespread in the Cinquecento (Quondam 1981, 30).¹¹⁶ The epistolary collection that announced the triumph of the genre in 1538, was Pietro Aretino's *Primo libro delle lettere*, a collection of letters addressed to influential persons, artists, writers, and other contemporary personalities. Drawing on the immediate public success of the work, numerous reprints followed within a few months, as well as the publication of five more volumes of letters by the same author between 1542 and 1557. However, Aretino's work appears significant not only for its popularity, but above all as a model for the success of the genre of the book of letters, as well as for the relevance of some individual letters of Aretino's within the anti-classicist literature of the Cinquecento.

1.11.2 Text and edition history

The first book of Aretino's *Lettere* was published in January 1538. For the publication of this volume, Aretino avails himself of the opportunity to collaborate with his secretary Nicolò Franco, and his publisher Francesco Marcolini, who published the text in large folio format. The first volume of the *Lettere* presented itself thus as a “libro-dono destinato in primo luogo a nobili interlocutori, dalla cui protezione e munificenza Aretino si riprometteva le necessarie prebende e [. . .] per i quali non si poteva adottare il consueto piccolo formato dei testi in volgare.” (Bertolo in Aretino 1997, 536). The text sparked great interest among ordinary readers as well, achieving a success that reached beyond the reception circle it seemed to be originally intended for. Several Venetian publishers responded to the strong market demand by producing, within a few months, four exemplary editions, which were based on the first edition by Marcolini but were printed in a practical octavo size.¹¹⁷ It was probably because of the intense competition that in September of the same year, Marcolini had another edition of the first edition printed, which, enriched with unpublished letters, was supposed to

¹¹⁶ We thank Angela Scapati for her valuable collaboration in the preparation of this chapter.

¹¹⁷ For a detailed description of these and other later reissues, see Bertolo in Aretino 1997, 533–616.

quicken the public interest. As the three re-editions, issued on behalf of various Venetian publishers between December 1538 and February 1539, demonstrate, this publication also enjoyed wide renown (Bertolo in Aretino 1997, 533–542).

In 1542, a second edition of the first book of the *Lettere* was published, again by Marcolini, which was presented as an “intenzionale superamento della prima edizione” (Bertolo in Aretino 1997, 545). The changes made to the text, edited by Lodovico Dolce, echo the changes Aretino apparently thought necessary after his break with Franco (cf. chap. 1.6). The names of the former collaborator and his brother were literally removed from the new edition. Nevertheless, the re-edition seemed to be intended not only to erase Franco’s memory but also to meet new linguistic and literary requirements. According to Paolo Procaccioli (1996, 264–280), the version edited by Franco is linguistically less regular and more expressive than the edition by Ludovico Dolce. As a result, it appears more anti-Bembesque and more in line with Aretino’s earlier theories. The layout of the re-edition by Dolce, on the other hand, contributes to an overall regularisation of the text.

Coinciding with the appearance of the new edition, Marcolini published the second volume of the *Lettere* (Aretino 1547b). This was followed by a third (1546), fourth (1550a) and fifth volume (1550b), which were printed by various Venetian publishers. Following the publication of his own letters to others, Aretino had two volumes of *Lettere scritte a Pietro Aretino* (1551, 1552) published by Marcolini. The sixth volume of the *Lettere* was published posthumously in 1557; however, this collection strongly differs from Aretino’s conception of a *libro di lettere*, which difference can be understood as a sign of an editorial intervention staged in the author’s absence (Bertolo in Aretino 2001, 421).

The innovation introduced by Aretino served in turn as a model for the numerous collections of letters that were published during the Cinquecento. First of all, Aretino’s collaborators Nicolò Franco and Anton Francesco Doni were influenced by it: the former published the *Pistole vulgari* in 1539, the latter a collection of *Lettere* subdivided into two books; the first edition of the two volumes was published in 1544 and 1547 respectively. Even though the model soon circulated beyond Aretino’s circle of collaborators, as shown for example by Vittoria Colonna’s *Litere* (1544), the author remained the main protagonist of the genre until 1546 (Quondam 1981, 40). Between the publication of the third and fourth volume of the Aretinian *Lettere*, the genre gradually became associated with new names like Niccolò Martelli, Orazio Brunetti and Antonio Minturno,¹¹⁸ and finally with the main actors of a novel phase of the books of

118 Martelli 1546, Brunetto 1543, Minturno 1549.

letters: Pietro Bembo (1548, 1551, 1552), Bernardo Tasso (1549) and Claudio Tolomei (1547) (Quondam 1981, 39–40). This period also witnessed the emergence of collections that specialised in a certain type of letters like ‘*facete*’, ‘*spirituali*’ and ‘*amorse*’.¹¹⁹ In addition to books of letters by a single author, collections of letters by different authors became widespread from 1542 onwards, following the publication of two books in Venice by Navò and Manuzio.¹²⁰ These were again followed by collections of letters that were arranged according to more specific parameters, such as the *Lettere di molte valorose donne* and the *Consolatorie di diversi autori*, both compiled by Ortensio Lando (Lando 1548, 1550).¹²¹

As far as modern critical editions are concerned, the main reference is the *Edizione Nazionale delle Opere di Pietro Aretino*, which includes six volumes of the *Lettere* (Aretino 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002) and two volumes of the *Lettere scritte a Pietro Aretino* (2003, 2004). Further editions dedicated exclusively to Aretino’s letters on art have also been published, including the edition prepared by Ettore Camesasca (Aretino 1957–1960) and the more recent edition by Paolo Procaccioli (Aretino 2003).

1.11.3 Research

Because of its nature and the biographical evidence it provides, the book of letters has for a long time received only little scholarly attention, and it has been treated as a kind of unspecific paratext (Genovese 2002, 206). One of the aspects that research on Aretino’s *Lettere* has shown considerable interest in, is the author’s function regarding the work itself. The *Lettere* have been seen as an instrument of self-portrayal that Aretino, who must have sensed the great potential of the invention of printing, made use of.¹²² Moreover, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century, Aretino’s work on the *Lettere* has been

¹¹⁹ For an analysis of these types of letters from the perspective of the letterbook genre, see Quondam 1981, 89–119. On the books of letters published in the wake of Aretino see also de Nichilo 1981.

¹²⁰ It deals respectively with the *Lettere de diversi eccellentissimi signori a diversi huomini scritte* and *Delle lettere volgari di diversi nobilissimi huomini, et eccellentissimi ingegni in diverse materie*.

¹²¹ For an exhaustive list of letter books that appeared between 1538 and 1627, see the chronology in Quondam (ed.) 1981, 319–326. On the *Sulle Lettere di molte valorose donne* see Bellucci 1981.

¹²² Larivaille 1980, 313–315 and 351–357; Genovese 2002, 225–226; Martelli 2003, 863; Genovese 2008, 201–211; Fantappiè 2018, 209; Cupperi 2019, 219–220.

compared to that of a journalist working in an ‘editorial office’ before the term was coined.¹²³ More recent criticism has strongly relativised this theory (Fantappiè 2018, 211).

In contrast to interpretations of the *Lettere* that focus on Aretino as a historical figure, there are studies which analyse the work in the context of the book of letters as a literary genre, emphasising the role of Aretinian *Lettere* in the emergence and diffusion of the genre.¹²⁴ In addition, critics have focused on the influence of Erasmus of Rotterdam, and especially on the importance of his *Opus de conscribendis epistolis*, on Aretino’s books of letters.¹²⁵

Many letters in Aretino’s epistolary corpus are either addressed to artists of the era¹²⁶ or deal with questions concerning the figurative arts. Some contributions analyse the letters addressed to contemporary artists and those that deal with works of art.¹²⁷ More generally, the theoretical and poetological implications of Aretino’s letters have also been examined.¹²⁸ Some of the letters touch upon the subject of the relationship between nature and art, which has been discussed in studies that examine Aretino’s letters in relation to the concept of anti-classicism (Borsellino 1975, 9–16; Sandrini 2022). In addition, literary scholarship has dealt with the description of the so-called *Sogno di Parnasso* in the letter written on December 6, 1537 (Cairns 1985, 231–249, Perrone 1995).

1.11.4 Analysis

The Aretinian concept of the book of letters differs strongly from the epistolary writings that were previously printed in the vernacular, including, for example, the letters of St. Catherine of Siena or those of Francesco Filelfo. As opposed to other collections of letters, which were commonly printed after the death of their author, Aretino himself compiled his collection for printing. This approach is clearly visible both in the modifications that were applied to the letters before their publication, as well as in the strict selection of the letters – not so much in the selection of those letters that were written before the collection was created, as in the choice of letters to be written specifically for publication and perhaps

¹²³ Nicolini 1913, 406; Brognoligo 1914, 141; Pompeati-Lucchini 1946, 497.

¹²⁴ Innamorati 1957, 230–236; Larivaille 1980, 220–263; Quondam 1981; Longo 1981; Basso 1990; Baldassarri 1995; Genovese 2002, 206–207; Genovese 2009; Larivaille 2021.

¹²⁵ Cairns 1985, 125–161; Procaccioli 1997, 30–33; Procaccioli 1999b; Martelli 2003, 870.

¹²⁶ On Aretino’s relationship to various artists of his time, see Larivaille 1997, 258–289.

¹²⁷ Favaro 2019; Cupperi 2019; Carrara 2020; Grosso 2020; Procaccioli 2020; Cottrell 2021.

¹²⁸ Larivaille 1980, 256–263; Larivaille 2003; Nicolini 2019, D’Onghia 2020; Panzera 2022.

never sent at all. In this way, Aretino inverted the relationship between the letter and the book, adjusting the former to the latter and not the other way around (Baldassarri 1995, 158–164).

This particularity distinguishes the Aretinian book of letters from literary models that had previously become established in the field of epistolography. The influence of Erasmus' *Opus de conscribendis epistolis*, which was significant for the definition and distribution of the letter as a literary genre, is visible in individual letters but does not concern the book as a whole (Baldassarri 1995, 164), and, of course, there are Petrarch's *Familiares* and *Seniles*; but these are Latin models. Aretino's vernacular letters also differ from the 'familiar' letter (and at least indirectly from the Ciceronian corpus), because they only occasionally contain information that one would expect to find in this type of letters. Thus, a conception of a letter appears "che è per intero [. . .] pubblica, pensata e costruita *ab initio* per l'occhio dei lettori" (Baldassarri 1995, 169).

The *Lettere* not only function as a model, but also provide guidance for the definition of poetological and theoretical positions. A letter, dated June 25, 1537, that is presented as a compendium of advice addressed to the young fellow writer Nicolò Franco, is particularly significant in this regard.¹²⁹ As this passage demonstrates, it underlines the essential difference between *imitators* and *stealers*:

E per dirvelo, il Petrarca e il Boccaccio sono imitati da chi esprime i concetti suoi con la dolcezza e con la leggiadria con cui dolcemente e leggiadramente essi andarono esprimendo i loro, e non da chi gli saccheggia non pur de i "quinci", de i "quindi", e de i "soventi", e de gli "snelli", ma de i versi interi. E quando sia che il Diavolo ci aciechi a trafugarne qualc'uno, sforziamoci di somigliarci a Vergilio, che svaligiò Omero, e al Sanazaro, che l'accocò a Vergilio, onde hanno avanzato de l'usura, e saracci perdonato. Ma il caccar sangue de i pedanti che vogliano poetare, rimoreggia de l'imitazione, e mentre ne schiamazzano ne gli scartabelli, la trasfigurano in locuzione, ricamandola con parole tistiche e in regola. (Aretino 1997, 231)

A potential point of reference for this differentiation could be Petrarch's letters to Boccaccio, in which the theft of a whole set of expressions and verses is distinguished from an original appropriation of literary models.¹³⁰ In addition to this distinction, the letter stresses the dichotomy between 'nature' and 'art', identifying the former as the principle that should guide the writer:

¹²⁹ In the editions following the break between Aretino and Franco, the name of the latter was replaced by that of Lodovico Dolce.

¹³⁰ Sandrini 2022, 264; the reference is to *Familiares* XXII 2 and XXIII 19. The distinction between imitation and theft is also a subject of Francesco Berni's *Dialogo contra i poeti* (Friede 2022a).

O turba errante, io ti dico e ridico che la poesia è un ghiribizzo de la natura ne le sue allegrezze, il qual si sta nel furor proprio, e, mancandone il cantar Poetico diventa un cimbalo senza sonagli, e un campanil senza campane. Per la qual cosa chi vuol comporre, e non trae cotal grazia da le fasce, è un zugo infreddato. [. . .] E' certo ch'io imito me stesso perché la natura è una compagnona badiale che ci si sbracca, e l'arte una piattola che bisogna che si appicchi. Sì che attendete a esser scultor di sensi, e non miniator di vocaboli. (Aretino 1997, 231–232)

According to Borsellino (1975), this letter represents “la *summa* delle argomentazioni antiregolistiche dei ‘discepoli della natura’” (12), in that it summarizes the key points of an anti-classicist poetics characteristic to the works of Pietro Aretino, Francesco Berni, Ruzante, Benvenuto Cellini and other authors of the Cinquecento. This poetics is revealed “nel concorde rifiuto dei modelli letterari” (10), to which anti-classicists oppose nature as the only model. Nature is thought to be superior to art because it is spontaneous and unpredictable rather than the result of imitation and study. However, in the letter above, imitation is not entirely rejected, but only if it leads to servile dependency on models. Further, Borsellino’s definition of nature as spontaneity and unpredictability does not correspond to the associations to which the term is linked in other letters of Aretino. There, *natura* is often associated with the terms *ingegno* and *giudizio*, which, as Cristina Panzera (2022) shows, Aretino uses mainly to emphasise the originality and autonomy of literary expression rather than its total spontaneity.

Aretino’s perception of the concept of *natura* should therefore be understood as a defence of a literary and artistic practice that is based on the autonomous appropriation of models (Procaccioli 1999a, 20–24). Moreover, the opposition between nature and art, as construed in Aretino’s letter, hardly represents an anti-classicist poetics that can be extended to texts by other authors. Even though the term *natura* is evoked also in other anti-classicist texts, for example in Bernesque capitoli, its implications vary greatly according to the genre that the work belongs to. It therefore cannot be considered as the fundamental element of a common anti-classicist theoretical basis (Sandrini 2022).

1.11.5 Conclusions

Pietro Aretino’s *Lettere* are significant primarily for their poetological statements which, as shown in the examples above, refer to the status and role of literary models. In this way, a distinction emerges between pedantic imitation of models and their independent, original treatment. This differentiation is associated in Aretino’s letters with the juxtaposition of *arte* and *natura*, whereby

arte refers to a rigidly standardised way of writing, *natura* to an autonomous appropriation of literary models. However, no comprehensive anti-classicist poetics can be derived from these positions that could be directly transferred to texts by other authors. Even though the concept of *natura* in particular is taken up in other genres discussed, it remains definitionally vague and thus cannot be traced back to a common theoretical basis.