

The Social World of the *Poligrafi* and the Cultural Politics of Sixteenth-Century Italy



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Abstract

This thesis is about the *poligrafi*, an amorphous group of writers, editors, and translators active in sixteenth-century Italy, and their impact on cultural politics – debates about the nature, purpose and audience for education, art, and literature. Drawing on archival sources and the *poligrafi*'s manuscript and print publications across four generations, it contributes to historiographical debates about the impact of the printing press and humanist culture on patronage networks and writers in sixteenth-century Italy. At the same time, it shows how the *poligrafi*'s attempts to improve their social standing prompted their provocative criticisms of humanist court culture, the nature of language, and the use of obscenity, as well as their shift towards propagandistic work for the Venetian republic in the second half of the sixteenth century.

The first part of this thesis is about the social world of the *poligrafi*, concentrating first on their social world outside Venice (chapter 1) followed by their social world in Venice (chapter 2). The second part, on cultural politics, is split into three chapters. These deal respectively with the role of *poligrafi* in the circulation of libel in manuscript and print outside of Venice (chapter 3), their reinvention in Venice, following the Sack of Rome of 1527, as truth-tellers opposed to courtiers and humanist culture (chapter 4), and the shift of those *poligrafi* who remained in Venice towards propagandistic treatises on art, guidebooks, and popular histories from the mid-1540s onwards (chapter 5). Finally, the conclusion discusses the wider significance of this inquiry in three main areas: first, for our understanding of early modern patronage systems in ecclesiastical and princely courts and republics; second, with respect to the nature and impact of technological innovation – specifically, of the printing press; and third, with respect to humanist debates about language, style, and form in sixteenth-century Italy.

Long Abstract

The *poligrafi* – an amorphous group of writers, editors, and translators active in sixteenth-century Italy – were pioneering adopters of the opportunities afforded by the rapid expansion of publishing enabled by the development of printing. In their published works as well as in private correspondence, they consistently portrayed themselves as fearless truth-tellers, asserting that their independence from any individual princely or ecclesiastical court had freed them to tell the unvarnished truth about subjects that they chose to write about. Indeed, Paul Grendler, the leading Anglophone authority on the *poligrafi*, has argued we should see their work as a conscious rebellion against mainstream culture which paved the way for the likes of Giordano Bruno, Tommaso Campanella, and Galileo Galilei: that is, ‘after they had mocked the idols, it was easier for later and intellectually better equipped men to substitute new ones’.¹

Ultimately, however, the *poligrafi* either fell foul of the Roman Inquisition, ended their careers in obscurity, or shifted to less outrageously distinctive work as the sixteenth century unfolded. After their deaths, many of the *poligrafi* acquired a posthumous reputation as shameless slanderers, flatterers, and rumour-mongers for hire. Even at the height of their notoriety, the radical model of the print satirist that they pioneered was fraught with contradictions: Anton Francesco Doni, who once declared himself the enemy of ‘bastards, *signori*, and prelates’, and Nicolò Franco, who once wrote that ‘the pope, and all his prelates, are buggers’ spent much of their careers working for princes and cardinals.

This thesis began as an attempt to explain this contrast between their attempts to portray themselves as fearless truth-tellers and their posthumous reputation. In doing so, it contributes to wider historiographical debates about the impact of the invention of the

¹ Paul F. Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World, 1530-1560: Anton Francesco Doni, Nicolò Franco and Ortensio Lando* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), p. 210.

printing press and humanist culture on the socio-economic status of writers in early modern Europe, and the corresponding effects of these changes on cultural politics – that is, debates about the nature, purpose and audience for education, art, and literature. In reference to patronage networks, these include the differences between the direct patronage of artists and writers, the varying reception of printing in princely and ecclesiastical courts and republics in Italy, and the ways in which patronage relationships were made, maintained, and broken. With regard to the history of material texts, these include the ways in which printing affected the types of people who wrote books, and the types of books that were being written in print and manuscript; the stigma of writing for profit; and the ways in which the *poligrafi* dealt with that stigma, essentially by reimagining what it meant to be a writer. Finally, with regard to humanist culture, this thesis engages contributes to our understanding of sixteenth-century debates about the function of comedy, jokes and satire in different social contexts; the so-called *questione della lingua*, the debate about the use of Latin and the vernacular; and critiques of the centrality of dialogue, persuasion and the value of consensus.

This thesis suggests that the social history of writers and the study of cultural politics should be in constant dialogue. Material interests do not straightforwardly determine ideological choices. But nor is it the case that ideas can be studied as disembodied, free-floating activity, of ‘men who lived above the world’.² As Antonio Gramsci argued, in order to study the social history of intellectuals broadly conceived, scholars must examine ‘the ensemble of the system of relations in which these activities (and therefore the intellectual groups who personify them) have their place within the general complex of social relations’ rather than the ‘intrinsic nature of intellectual activities’.³ Much of the *poligrafi*’s provocative way of writing and heavy self-promotion to potential patrons was encouraged

² Sanjay Subrahmanyam’s paraphrase of Joseph Schumpeter, in Subrahmanyam, *Empires between Islam and Christianity, 1500-1800* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2018), p. 343.

³ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: ElecBook, 1999), pp. 139-40.

by their precarious socioeconomic circumstances and the stigma attached to writing for the press. At the same time, they offered substantive criticisms of humanist culture in their works.

The first part of this thesis is about the social world of the *poligrafi*, concentrating first on their social world outside Venice (chapter 1) followed by their social world in Venice (chapter 2). The second part, on cultural politics, is split into three chapters that deal respectively with their role in the circulation of libel in manuscript and print outside of Venice (chapter 3), their reinvention of themselves as truth-tellers, opposed to courtiers and humanist culture, in Venice following the Sack of Rome of 1527 (chapter 4), and the shift of those *poligrafi* who remained in Venice to less-controversial guidebooks, art treatises, histories and travel literature from the mid-1550s onwards (chapter 5). Finally, the conclusion discusses the broader implications of this thesis for three main areas: first, our understanding of early modern patronage systems in ecclesiastical and princely courts and republics; second, the nature and impact of technological innovation – specifically, of the printing press – on patronage networks and writers; and third, humanist debates about language, form, and style in sixteenth-century Italy.

Chapter 1 deals with the social world of the *poligrafi* outside Venice, focusing on Rome, Mantua and Florence. The chapter calls particular attention to the socioeconomic circumstances that *poligrafi* inhabited – for example, their usual situation was to be heavily reliant on a single patron, often as part of that patron's household. By contrast, in Venice they were often able to spread their networks much more widely. The chapter also analyses the impact of the introduction of the printing press in the cases of Mantua and Florence. It attempts to assess what lay behind the decisions of individual *poligrafi* to live where they lived, what prompted them to move, and how they established links with new patrons and maintained links with existing ones. The chapter concludes with a case study, exploring the

social network of an individual *poligrafo*, Nicolò Franco, from 1540, the year he left Venice, up to his death 1570, based principally on an analysis of his autograph *epistolario*, or letter-book..

The second chapter looks at the institutions with which *poligrafi* were associated in Venice, including literary salons, academies, and (perhaps most importantly) the printers with which they had a professional relationship: it focuses in particular on the presses of Niccolò Zoppino, Francesco Marcolini and Gabriele Giolito. This chapter builds on the previous chapter's critique of some of the assumptions in recent scholarship about the social world of the *poligrafi* and their relationship with the Venetian publishing industry from the 1520s to the late 1580s. In doing so, it offers a fresh appraisal of the ways in which they navigated the Venetian publishing industry and systems of patronage.

The third chapter explores the *poligrafi*'s role in the circulation of libel in manuscript and print outside Venice. It argues that several Roman court poets who would later become *poligrafi* – Pietro Aretino, most particularly – as well as non-*poligrafi* such as Francesco Berni, played a crucial role in the development of the satirical form of literature known as the pasquinade. These poets were heavily involved in the new, partisan and libellous use of pasquinades to influence public opinion about particular cardinals from the early 1520s onwards, and the development of a new form of pasquinade in which the author was foregrounded, rather than anonymised in favour of the persona of Pasquino, the most famous of the so-called 'talking statues' of Rome. It proceeds to trace the evolution of this form in manuscript and print as the sixteenth century unfolded, including the ways in which it was adapted to attack Aretino himself, one of the form's inventors. Finally, the chapter cumulates with a discussion of Nicolò Franco's return to Rome in 1558 and his libellous dialogue attacking Paul IV and the Carafa family, which brought an end to cardinals' patronage of satirists, and catalysed a change in popes' attitudes and methods of dealing with libellous writers in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The chapter argues that examining the *poligrafi*'s role in the history of pasquinades is useful for revealing the relationships

between *poligrafi*, their patrons, and audiences – a central problem explored in this thesis. The chapter also notes that this particular mode of writing never flourished in Venice, where many *poligrafi* pursued careers after the 1527 Sack of Rome, continuing to develop exclusively in court settings.

Chapter 4 deals with the complex links and tensions in the works of *poligrafi* between court culture, print culture, and truth-telling in Venice from 1527 until the early 1550s. This period saw efforts to reinvent the profession of writing and to justify writing for the press, in the face of considerable stigma. The first section discusses *poligrafi*'s rejections of various models of the courtier and attempts to construct an alternative professional (and literary) persona of the satirist, although they do not use that term explicitly. The second section looks at the positions they adopted in the *questione della lingua*, together with the socio-political and literary implications of each point of view and the links these had with attempts to improve their own social status. The last section looks at *poligrafi*'s satirical takes on mainstream humanist writing and education, and on what they proposed as an alternative.

The fifth and final chapter discusses the shift of those *poligrafi* who remained in Venice to pro-Venetian art treatises, popular histories, and guidebooks from the mid-1550s onwards. In this period, there was a generational shift amongst the *poligrafi* who were active in Venice, in the face of increased state and ecclesiastical censorship, and increasing caution on the part of Venetian printers. In their writings on art, the *poligrafi* who remained in Venice consistently argued for the superiority of Venetian art and architecture above those of Florence, though the priorities and agenda of individual *poligrafi* were themselves articulated through the particular version of Venetian art that they advocated. In their popular histories and guidebooks, they placed particular emphasis on Venice's identity as the Most Serene Republic – a portrayal which reflected an idealised vision of its homogenous, unchanging, and harmonious society and politics, often by popularising the work of Venetian humanists and political thinkers such as Gasparo Contarini. These texts targeted at

an audience of readers interested in history and politics who possessed the money to afford books, but without the Latin or the funds to acquire a vast humanistic library, or the time to read a large number of humanist texts.

Finally, the conclusion summarises the thesis' findings and discusses the wider significance of this inquiry in three main areas: first, for our understanding of early modern patronage systems in ecclesiastical and princely courts and republics; second, on the nature and impact of technological innovation – specifically, of the printing press; and third, on humanist debates about language, style, and form in sixteenth-century Italy.

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I wrote this thesis for the most part in the Upper Reading Room in the Old Bodleian Library, the Rare Books and Manuscripts Room in the Weston Library, New College Library, and the Greek Room in the Taylor Institute. The majority of the research was done in the Weston Library, the Codrington Library, the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, the Biblioteca Marciana, the Biblioteca del Museo Correr, and the state archives of Venice, Florence and Mantua. I would like to thank the staff of each of these libraries and archives for their kindness and patience.

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If you have by any chance in the early stages of a DPhil, and are reading this thesis for some inspiration on how to get started, my advice to you is to join a writing group (or to start one). I joined one in my first year, and it was one of the best decisions I made.

This thesis is dedicated to my grandmother, Marian.

Conventions and Translations

All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. Where a person's name is spelled in various ways, I have tended to prefer the manner in which they usually spelled it themselves (for instance, Nicolò Franco, not Niccolò Franco; Lodovico Dolce, not Ludovico Dolce; Ludovico Ariosto, not Lodovico Ariosto). The exception to this is when referring to figures whose names are usually anglicised in Anglophone historiography (e.g. Charles V, Paul IV). I have followed the same convention for place names (Venice, not Venezia; Trent, not Trento).

In the sixteenth century the Venetian year began on the 1st of March; the Florentine year began on the 25th of March. All dates in the footnotes and the main text have been adjusted to follow the modern calendar, unless otherwise stated.

In the footnotes, all references are given in full when cited for the first time. Thereafter, they are provided in abbreviated form. I have chosen in most cases to abbreviate long early modern book titles silently, unless this would make it difficult to understand which edition of a given text I am referring to. Attributed publication details are given in square brackets. Editorial interventions in quotations are also given in square brackets.

Due to the closure of libraries and archives during the COVID-19 crisis, I have sometimes been unable to provide the original Italian for a quotation, or have had to rely on editions of primary sources that are available online. Where this is the case, I have indicated so in the footnotes.

List of Abbreviations

Archives

ASF Archivio di Stato di Firenze

MdP *Mediceo del Principato*

ASMa Archivio di Stato di Mantova

AG *Archivio Gonzaga*

ASR Archivio di Stato di Roma

TCGR *Tribunale criminale del governatore di Roma*

ASV Archivio Segreto Vaticano

ASVe Archivio di Stato di Venezia

CX *Consiglio dei dieci*

DSR *Dieci savi sopra le decime a Rialto*

ECB *Esecutori contro la bestemmia*

SU *Sant'Uffizio*

Libraries

BAV Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

BMV Biblioteca Marciana Venezia

Online Resources

USTC Universal Short Title Catalogue

Other Abbreviations

b.	<i>busta</i>
c./cc.	<i>carta/cartae</i>
ed.	edited
f./ff.	<i>fascicolo/fascioli</i>
fig.	figure
ibid.	<i>ibidem</i>
ms.	manuscript
n.	number
n. d.	no date
r.	<i>recto</i>
reg.	<i>regnavit</i>
s. l.	<i>sine loco</i>
s. n.	<i>sine nomine</i>
<i>sic</i>	<i>sic erat scriptum</i>
trans.	translated
v.	<i>verso</i>
vol.	volume

Introduction

Tommaso Garzoni's *Piazza universale delle professioni del mondo* – a vast compendium of various sorts of occupation in Renaissance Italy, first published in 1585 – contains a dialogue on 'slanders, detractors and rumour-mongers'. By way of introduction, Garzoni lamented that:

There is a profession of uncivil and badly created men, I should say infernal demons, who from morning to evening, with the most evil tongue, do nothing else but rip apart this man or that, they gather in shops, hold classes in piazzas and public and private conventicles, and show themselves to belong to the Academy of Aretino, of Burchiello, Berni, Franco, not to mention to the school of Pasquino and Marforio, so accustomed are they to unsheathe their tongue equally against everyone, full of venom and the pestilential poison of damned denigration.¹

Evidently, for Garzoni, there was a clear connection between the oral circulation of vile rumours, in public and private spaces around the city, and the manuscript and printed publications of famous writers. Garzoni equated the academy of Aretino and other real authors, and the school of Pasquino and Marforio, the two most famous fictional characters of the satirical 'pasquinade' genre that had become a central feature of the literary culture of Renaissance Rome. And finally – we can infer from the fact that he felt it necessary to dedicate a chapter of his book to the topic – it appears that by 1585, the 'rumour-monger' had become an established profession, despite what Garzoni saw as its debilitating effect on public discourse.

Pietro Aretino and Nicolò Franco were associated by Garzoni with libellous writing. Yet they and other the writers, editors and translators now primarily known for their work for the vernacular printing press in in sixteenth-century Venice – now collectively referred to as the *poligrafi* – consistently portrayed themselves as truth-tellers, both in their published works and in private correspondence. They argued that their independence from any one

¹ Tommaso Garzoni, *La piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1996), p. 1052. Translation from Marco Faini, "'E poi in Roma ognuno è Aretino': Pasquino, Aretino and the Concealed Self", *Renaissance and Reformation* 40 (2017), p. 176.

court, enabled by their work for the printing press and cultivation of multiple patrons simultaneously, had freed them to tell the unvarnished truth about subjects that they chose to write about. Indeed, Paul Grendler, the leading Anglophone authority on the *poligrafi*, goes so far as to regard their writings as a conscious rebellion against mainstream humanist culture – and, moreover, that ‘after they had mocked the idols, it was easier for later and intellectually better equipped men to substitute new ones’. They thus paved the way for the likes of Giordano Bruno, Tommaso Campanella, and Galileo Galilei.² This thesis began as an attempt to explain this contrast between the *poligrafi*’s attempts to portray themselves as fearless truth-tellers, and their posthumous reputation. In doing so, it also contributes to debates about the continued impact of the printing press a century after its invention in Europe, the effect of humanist culture on the social standing of writers and editors, and the changes they wrought in cultural politics – that is, debates about the nature, purpose and audience for education, art, and literature.

Ultimately, however, the *poligrafi* either fell foul of the Roman Inquisition, ended their careers in obscurity, or shifted to less outrageously distinctive work as the sixteenth century unfolded. However, even at the height of their notoriety, the radical model of the print satirist they pioneered was fraught with contradictions: Anton Francesco Doni, who once declared himself the enemy of ‘bastards, *signori*, and prelates’, and Nicolò Franco, who once wrote that ‘the pope, and all his prelates, are buggers’ spent much of their careers working for princes and cardinals. One possible explanation, of course, is that their claims to speak the truth were merely cynical – that none of them meant anything they said: it was all performance to attract patronage and increase book sales. But a better way of understanding this apparent contradiction between ideal and practice may be that it was an attempt to reconcile often-radical ideological views with the socioeconomic realities of being a

² Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World, 1530-1560*, p. 210.

precariously employed writer in sixteenth-century Italy. Consequently, this thesis engages with related historiographical questions about patronage networks, material texts, and humanist culture. In reference to patronage networks, these include the differences between patronising artists and writers, the varying reception of printing in princely and ecclesiastical courts and republics in Italy, and the ways in which patronage relationships were made, maintained, and broken. With regard to the history of material texts, these include the ways in which printing affected the types of people who wrote books, and the types of books that were being written in print and manuscript; the stigma of writing for profit; and the ways in which the *poligrafi* dealt with the stigma, essentially by reimagining what it meant to be a writer. Finally, with regard to humanist culture, this thesis contributes to our understanding of sixteenth-century debates about the function of comedy, jokes and satire in different social contexts; the so-called *questione della lingua*, about the use of Latin and the vernacular; and critiques of the centrality of dialogue, persuasion and the value of consensus. Overall, this thesis demonstrates that the *poligrafi* are a fascinating case study by means of which to assess the impact of printing on the patronage systems and literary culture(s) of sixteenth-century Italy. Their impact on both remains under-studied, despite the ultimate failure of their endeavours to reinvent what it meant to be a professional writer and the demise of their reputations a few decades after their deaths. Indeed, their carefully crafted reputations were replaced by a caricature of Aretino and his followers as representative of the sexual immorality and shameless corruption of the late Renaissance.

This introduction will first situate the thesis within the existing historiography on patronage networks, the history of material texts, and cultural politics in early modern Italy. Next, it will introduce this thesis' case study – the *poligrafi* – critiquing the existing scholarship on these writers specifically, and coming to a working definition of the problematic term *poligrafo* itself, thus defining the geographical and chronological

parameters of this inquiry. Finally, it will comment on sources and methodology, and offer a brief outline of each chapter.

Patronage Networks, Material Texts, and Cultural Politics

The dynamics of patronage networks, in ecclesiastical and princely courts as well as republics, has long been central to scholarship on Renaissance and early modern Italy thanks to their foundational importance for the social and economic history of Renaissance art.³ Indeed, perhaps because court patronage has interested art historians for longer than it has interested historians and literary scholars, most studies of court patronage have concentrated on the patronage of artists, rather than of writers.⁴ This thesis questions the established scholarship on court patronage in this period in four main areas. The first of these is the question of the relative agency of patrons, artists, and writers in cultural production.

Going back as far as Martin Wackernagel, scholars have tended to emphasise the power

³ See, for instance, Robert S. Lopez, 'Hard Times and Investment in Culture', in Anthony Molho (ed.), *Social and Economic Foundations of the Italian Renaissance* (New York: Wiley, 1969), pp. 95-116. Two useful appraisals of the influence of Lopez's thesis are Judith C. Brown, 'Prosperity or Hard Times in Italy?' *Renaissance Quarterly* 42:4 (1989), pp. 761-780; William P. Caferro, 'Warfare and Economy in Renaissance Italy, 1350-1450', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 39:2 (2008), pp. 167-209. Cf. Guy Fitch Lytle (ed.), *Patronage in the Renaissance* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1981); as well as the work of Richard Goldthwaite, Evelyn Welch, and Michelle O'Malley, referenced below.

⁴ Much of the scholarship on the social history of humanists has, since the foundational work of Hans Baron, concentrated on humanists in city-republics rather than at princely courts, with some notable exceptions. See, for example, Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an age of Classicism and Tyranny* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955); Lauro Martines, *The Social World of the Florentine Humanists, 1390-1460* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963); Margaret L. King, *Venetian Humanism in an Age of Patrician Dominance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); James Hankins, 'The "Baron Thesis" after Forty Years and Some Recent Studies of Leonardo Bruni', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56:2 (1995), pp. 309-38; Brian Maxson, *The Humanist World of Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Sarah Gwyneth Ross, *Everyday Renaissance: The Quest for Cultural Legitimacy in Venice* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2016); Erin Maglaque, *Venice's Intimate Empire: Family Life and Scholarship in the Renaissance Mediterranean* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2018). Notable treatments of humanism in other cities include Rudolf George Adam, 'Francesco Filelfo at the Court of Milan (1439-1481)' (D.Phil. Thesis, University of Oxford, 1973); John F. D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome: Humanists and Churchmen on the Eve of the Reformation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983); Gary Ianziti, *Humanistic Historiography Under the Sforzas: Politics and Propaganda in Fifteenth-Century Milan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

of patrons over what they commissioned.⁵ Art historians including Bram Kempers, Mary Hollingsworth and Jill Burke have studied patrons' strategic patronage of artists and architects, often drawing attention to the ways in which they used art to increase their cultural or political capital.⁶ There has been a longstanding assumption that part of the appeal of patronising artists for wealthy patrons was the degree to which they exerted control over the content of what was painted, leaving only the form to the artist. Richard Goldthwaite, Michelle O'Malley, Evelyn Welch, and others who have taken so-called 'consumerist' approaches to Renaissance art and artists have tended to underplay the agency of artists themselves in this period, and to emphasise the social and political value of art for Renaissance patrons.⁷ However, Creighton Gilbert has questioned the evidence for the assumption that patrons largely dictated the content of paintings. He argues that instead, what patrons of art were buying was 'the enhancement of their honor and splendor', and that although they might indicate their preferred theme by, for example, suggesting a title, they 'seem to have thought the professionals could handle the details better', though this presumably varied from patron to patron.⁸

Other art historians have drawn attention to artists' energetic efforts to increase their

⁵ Martin Wackernagel, *The World of the Florentine Renaissance Artist: Projects and Patrons, Workshop and Art Market* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); E. H. Gombrich, 'The Early Medici as Patrons of Art', in E. H. Gombrich, *Norm and Form: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1971), pp. 29-34; Mary Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Renaissance Italy: From 1400 to the Early Sixteenth Century* (London: John Murray, 1994); Hollingsworth, *Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (London: John Murray, 1996); Paul Douglas McLean, *The Art of the Network: Strategic Interaction and Patronage in Renaissance Florence* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007).

⁶ Bram Kempers, *Painting, Power and Patronage: The Rise of the Professional Artist in Renaissance Italy* (London: Penguin, 1992); Jill Burke, *Changing Patrons: Social Identity and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Florence* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).

⁷ Richard Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300-1600* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); Michelle O'Malley and Evelyn Welch (eds.), *The Material Renaissance* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007). For a critique of 'consumerist' approaches to the Italian Renaissance, albeit pre-dating O'Malley and Welch's edited collection, see Lauro Martines, 'The Renaissance and the Birth of Consumer Society', *Renaissance Quarterly* 51:1 (1998), pp. 193-203.

⁸ Creighton E. Gilbert, 'What did the Renaissance Patron Buy?', *Renaissance Quarterly* 51:2 (1998), p. 446.

social standing and autonomy by having their craft recognised as a *fatica di mente*, rather than a *fatica di corpo* (an intellectual activity, rather than a physical one).⁹ Francis Ames-Lewis has, for instance, demonstrated that the trend for highly sophisticated allegories, such as Botticelli's *Calumny of Apelles* and Giorgione's *Tempesta*, were evidence of an increasing engagement by artists with classical mythology. He has also highlighted an increasing trend for what he calls 'demonstration pieces', where the primary intention is to show the artist's technique and skill, and cited famous examples of texts by artists, such as Cellini's autobiography and Vasari's *Lives*, as attempts to make the case for art as an intellectual activity.¹⁰ In Peter Burke's quantitative study of six hundred members of what he calls the 'creative elite', he argues that, despite some 'status dissonance' caused by the continued stigma linked to the manual labour associated with art, the social position of artists had indeed improved markedly by the sixteenth century. In this thesis, I wish to examine how far this was true of the *poligrafi* and their patrons. Why did patrons choose to patronise particular *poligrafi*, why did the *poligrafi* seek out particular patrons, and what effect did this have on their social standing? Can any strategy, on the part of the former or the latter, be discerned from the available evidence? And what were the similarities and differences between the approaches particular patrons, and particular *poligrafi*? The answers to these questions have important implications for our understanding of early modern patronage networks.

Second, this thesis questions unexamined assumptions about the nature of markets, consumption, and technological change that have bedevilled historians and art historians of

⁹ See Erin J. Campbell's review essay, 'Artisans, Artists and Intellectuals', *Art History* 23:4 (2000), pp. 622-41; Peter Burke, *Culture and Society in Renaissance Italy, 1420-1540* (London: Batsford, 1972); Philip Jacks (ed.) *Vasari's Florence: Artists and Literati at the Medicean Court* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Emma Barker, Nick Webb, and Kim Woods (eds.), *The Changing Status of the Artist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Francis Ames-Lewis, *The Intellectual Life of the Early Renaissance Artist* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

¹⁰ Campbell, 'Artisans, Artists and Intellectuals', pp. 622-41.

patronage. In his pioneering 1993 monograph, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy*, Richard Goldthwaite suggested that the Italian Renaissance was consumer-led: the cultural vitality of this period was the outcome of economic prosperity, broad wealth distribution, and shifting attitudes to consumption encouraged by the humanist movement, thus bringing together the birth of consumerism, Renaissance art, and the humanist movement in a way that had previously evaded even Jacob Burckhardt. For instance, Giovanni Pontano's 1498 treatise on social virtues, Goldthwaite argued, emphasised 'the moral quality of possessiveness itself'.¹¹ However, as Michelle O'Malley and Evelyn Welch have shown, drawing on anthropological work on social relationships and networks of exchange, historians need to take into account that in Renaissance Italy, 'networks of exchange that relied not only on money but also on credit, payment in kind and gift giving', and to recognise that 'social relationships, rather than objective price factors, were central to every aspect of Renaissance market activity, for quotidian as well as for luxury goods.'¹² Such assumptions are one way in which historians have misunderstood the nature of court patronage in this period. This thesis therefore tries to take into account O'Malley and Welch's point that socioeconomic relationships in this period were thought about in fundamentally different ways to their equivalents in modern market economies. The fact that the impact (or lack of impact) of printing was different in each of the urban centres under discussion – Rome, Mantua, Casale Monferrato, ducal Florence, and Venice – is also discussed, as is the impact on the socioeconomic position of the *poligrafi* employed in each centre.

Third is the impact of the invention of the printing press on court patronage. The

¹¹ Richard Goldthwaite, *Wealth and the Demand for Art in Italy, 1300-1600* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 249.

¹² Michelle O'Malley and Evelyn Welch, 'Introduction', in O'Malley and Welch (eds.), *The Material Renaissance*, p. 2.

terminology outlined by the sociologist Anthony Giddens in his theory of structuration – specifically, on his distinctions between the terms ‘system’, ‘structure’, and ‘structuration’ – has been useful here. Giddens distinguishes between institutions and practices (systems); the rules and conventions that govern them (structures); and the ways in which both systems, in the world, and the rules that govern them, in people’s minds, are reproduced and reinterpreted (structuration).¹³ In other words, in Giddens’ model, systems and structures interact with each other ‘recursively’ – that is, in a continuous feedback loop, which can produce both continuity and change.¹⁴ This model provides a vocabulary by which historians can discuss circumstances in which institutions, practices, or physical spaces and technologies may have changed – for example, when a printing press is established in a particular court – while, at the same time, mental structures – such as conventions about the social status and positions of writers in a court setting – have not. This can help to explain the actions of both *poligrafi* and their patrons in response to the establishment of presses in particular urban centres: for example, in many cases, rather than breaking down hierarchical patronage systems by providing an alternative source of income for professional writers, printing was instead co-opted by elite patrons who then hired *poligrafi* to produce books for them, or even to operate the presses directly. The fundamental underlying structures, or conventions, about the social role of writers, particularly in court settings had not necessarily changed, even if what the *poligrafi* were writing and printing was explicitly critical of courts

¹³ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984), p. 26. One excellent example of a social history that makes use of a Giddensian approach to social structures is David Gary Shaw, *Necessary Conjunctions: The Social Self in Medieval England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). Cf. Shaw, ‘Happy in Our Chains? Agency and Language in the Postmodern Age’, *History and Theory* 40 (2001), pp. 1-9.

¹⁴ This recursive quality makes Giddens’ concept more flexible than similar sociological concepts that are more familiar to historians, such as Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus*.

and courtiers.¹⁵

Fourthly and finally, scholarship on patronage tends to look at relationships either from the position of patrons, or by means of case studies of individual patron-artist relationships. Conversely, this thesis looks at the *poligrafi* from the perspective of multiple patrons as well as from the perspective of individual *poligrafi*, particularly in chapter 1. This reveals a central feature of the *poligrafi*'s success or failure in this period, which is that being more 'networked' – having multiple patrons at the same time – seems to have been the best possible situation, even if it was rarely achieved in practice. This thesis also shows the effects of the *poligrafi*'s attempts to cultivate relationships with multiple powerful patrons at the same time, as well as their attempts to cultivate multiple relationships with patrons other than – and even, in some cases, a rival of – a primary patron (who tended to be the one who was physically closest). Ultimately, the majority of *poligrafi* depended on a single patron when outside of Venice, and were very vulnerable to this relationship breaking down. Chapter 1 also presents some examples of patronage relationships failing, and patrons and *poligrafi* trying and failing to establish one in the first place, and discusses the reasons why this happened.

The related fields of the history of material texts, communication, and cultural politics – by which I mean debates about the nature, purpose and audience for education, art, and literature – are also crucial to this study. This thesis adds to our comprehension of how the humanist movement and its critics, on the one hand, and the development of the printing press, on the other, contributed to new models of authorship, new genres of literature, and

¹⁵ As was the case, for instance, with two of the works that first made Aretino's name while he was based in Rome, *Le ultime volontà e testamento di Annone, l'elefante*, and *La cortigiana*. These have been published together in a modern edition as Pietro Aretino, *Cortigiana; Opera nova; Pronostico; Il testamento dell'elefante; Farza*, (Milan: Rizzoli, 1989). As Gary Shaw has noted, commenting on Giddens' system, 'The structure teaches agents who help to form the structure. People learn from the system through other people but perform their parts differently and not always with the "same" meaning that the last performer intended. (Indeed, the very idea of identical meaning is probably misleading.)'. Shaw, 'Happy in Our Chains? Agency and Language in the Postmodern Age', p. 6.

new constructions of publics and public opinion in this period. Much of the scholarship in these areas has been framed by the debate regarding whether we can speak of the emergence of a so-called ‘public sphere’ in early modern Europe – by which is usually meant the social spaces and mechanisms that facilitated bourgeois public debate of political issues, and the emergent self-consciousness of civil society as such – and the nature and extent of this phenomenon. This debate was initiated by the philosopher Jürgen Habermas, who saw the emergence of the public sphere (or *Öffentlichkeit*) in the eighteenth century as a key development in the success of the European Enlightenment.¹⁶

Habermas’ account of the development of the early modern public sphere has been much criticised on the grounds that it is too beholden to a simplistic grand narrative of European history and to an idealised notion of bourgeois ‘polite culture’ that never really existed. However, many historians have been reluctant to reject Habermas’ account entirely, arguing instead that we should regard the public sphere as having emerged in the sixteenth or seventeenth century rather than the eighteenth; that printing was a more important driver of its emergence than the physical spaces, such as salons and coffee houses, which Habermas emphasised; that we should speak of a ‘communication triangle’ rather than of a sphere (its points being government, publishers and the public), or even that we can speak of ‘evanescent’ public spheres that emerged in times of crisis, only to dissipate once the crisis

¹⁶ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1989). See also Habermas, *Communication and the Evolution of Society* (London: Heinemann, 1979); Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, 2 vols. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1981). Responses to Habermas’s work are too numerous to cite exhaustively here, even if we confine our interest to the field of history, exclusively. One important collection is Massimo Ropocher (ed.), *Beyond the Public Sphere: Opinions, Publics, Spaces in Early Modern Europe* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2015).

was resolved.¹⁷ Moreover, many of the questions Habermas raised remain absolutely central to the history of political communication, regarding how and when the critical power of public discussion was born, how the ‘public’ and ‘public spaces’ should be defined, and the relationship between public discourse and authority. But the way the debate has been framed has caused other salient features of the history of communication in the early modern period to be obscured. For example, from the 1980s onwards historians have increasingly drawn attention to the fact that the true revolution brought by print was not in scientific and other scholarly work, but in new forms of cheap and middlebrow print (of the kind produced by the *poligrafi*, for example), especially from the early sixteenth century.¹⁸ Moreover, Habermas’ emphasis on rationality and consensus as the grounds for successful communication privileges certain types of communication at the expense of others: learned humanist dialogues, yes; deliberately obscene, offensive satirical literature, such as that produced by the *poligrafi*, no. The nature of communication in the public sphere is considerably more complex than Habermas’ model implies. As one of his early critics, Niklas Luhmann, pointed out, communication need not be goal-orientated nor consensus-orientated (whether it ought to be is of course a normative claim rather than a descriptive one). Rather, as Luhmann noted:

one can also communicate in order to mark dissent, one can desire to argue; and there is no compelling reason to hold the search for consensus to be more rational than the search for dissent

¹⁷ See, for example, Brendan Dooley, ‘News and Doubt in Early Modern Culture: Or, Are We Having a Public Sphere Yet?’, in Brendan Dooley and Sabrina A. Baron (eds.), *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe*, (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 275–90. John Hunt has argued that the discussion of conclaves in sixteenth-century Rome can already be described as a public sphere: see John M. Hunt, *The Vacant See in Early Modern Rome: A Social History of the Papal Interregnum* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), p. 22. On the concepts of an ‘evanescent’ public sphere and a ‘communication triangle’, see the respective articles by Rosa Salzberg, Massimo Rospoche, and Filippo de Vivo in Rospoche (ed.), *Beyond the Public Sphere*.

¹⁸ On cheap and middlebrow print, see Peter Stallybrass, ‘“Little Jobs”: Broadside and the Printing Revolution’, in Sabrina A. Baron, Eric N. Lindquist, Eleanor F. Shevlin (eds.), *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies After Elizabeth L. Eisenstein* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), pp. 315–41; Rosa Salzberg, *Ephemeral City: Cheap Print and Urban Culture in Renaissance Venice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014). On censorship, see Ugo Rozzo, *La letteratura italiana negli ‘Indici’ del Cinquecento* (Udine: Forum, 2005); Gigliola Fragnito, *Proibito capire. La Chiesa e il volgare nella prima età moderna* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2005); Mario Infelise, *I padroni dei libri. Il controllo sulla stampa nella prima età moderna* (Rome: Laterza, 2014).

[...] Communication is obviously impossible without any consensus, but it is also impossible without any dissent. What it necessarily requires is one's being able to leave aside the question of consensus or dissent in relation to themes that are not present at the moment.¹⁹

Secondly, as Luhmann again noted, one need not merely communicate about the subject at hand (what he calls 'first-degree observations'); there are also metatextual 'second-degree observations', which may be about participants, about the audience of a given conversation, or about the framing of a conversation. One might add, moreover, that there is always a dual public at play in public discourse – one's direct interlocutors, and one's audience (whether they are physically observing an oral interaction, readers of a text, or so on). Performativity is, therefore, a key element of all public discourse – one may, for instance, deliberately say something that makes little sense to one's direct interlocutor, but that makes sense to a particular target demographic. As we will see, this point is fundamental to understanding the *poligrafi*'s interventions in humanist debates regarding language and style, including the use of obscene language in manuscript and printed texts.

Finally, historians have paid insufficient attention to early modern debates that are relevant to the emergence of a public sphere in this period. Certainly, in the sixteenth century there was, as of yet, no theory of the public sphere *per se*: the differences between speech, manuscript, and print circulation were also yet to be explicitly theorised. But there was a great deal of writing about language and conversation – or, to put it more precisely, on what should or should not be said in public, and in private, mostly focusing on elite court settings, to which the *poligrafi* made significant contributions. To borrow Terence Cave's term, we can see this as a 'prehistory' of the public sphere.²⁰ These debates were, in effect, about what could be said or published (in manuscript or print), the limits of good taste, the role of dialogue and the nature of persuasion, and about the appropriateness of telling the truth, as well as who got to decide what the truth was, and who was able to utter it, or to write and

¹⁹ Niklas Luhmann, 'What is Communication?' in Niklas Luhmann, *Theories of Distinction: Redescribing the Descriptions of Modernity* (Stanford, 2002), p. 162.

²⁰ See Terence Cave, *Pré-histoires*, 2 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1999-2001); Anna Holland and Richard Scholar (eds.), *Pre-Histories and Afterlives: Studies in Critical Method for Terence Cave* (London: Legenda, 2009).

publish it.

Finally, this thesis suggests that these two spheres – the social history of writers, and the study of cultural politics – must be in constant dialogue. Material interests do not straightforwardly determine ideological choices. But nor is it the case that ideas can be studied as disembodied, free-floating activity, of ‘men who lived above the world’.²¹ As Antonio Gramsci argued, in order to study the social history of intellectuals, broadly conceived, scholars must examine ‘the ensemble of the system of relations in which these activities (and therefore the intellectual groups who personify them) have their place within the general complex of social relations’ rather than the ‘intrinsic nature of intellectual activities’.²² Much of the *poligrafi*’s provocative way of writing and heavy self-promotion to potential patrons was encouraged by their precarious socioeconomic circumstances and the stigma attached to writing for the press; at the same time, they offered substantive criticisms of mainstream humanist culture in their works.

What is a *poligrafo*?

The definition of the term “*poligrafo*” has been strangely under-addressed in the relevant scholarship. In practice, a group of about a dozen loosely-connected writers, editors and translators who worked for at least a portion of their careers for the Venetian vernacular publishing industry has emerged, more or less by consensus, as the *poligrafi*, but the term’s limits are rather vague, and there are significant differences in what individual scholars argue they had in common. Were the *poligrafi* ‘professional adventurers of the pen’, or merchants of the press?²³ Were they radical critics of the Italian world, who worked to fundamentally

²¹ Sanjay Subrahmanyam’s paraphrase of Joseph Schumpeter, in Subrahmanyam, *Empires between Islam and Christianity, 1500-1800* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2018), p. 343.

²² Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: ElecBook, 1999), pp. 139-40.

²³ Douglas Biow, *In Your Face: Professional Improprieties and the Art of Being Conspicuous in Sixteenth-Century Italy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 160.

destabilise key aspects of humanist thought, – as Grendler argued – or ‘editorial collaborators’?²⁴ *Poligrafo* is not an emic term – that is, a term used in the sixteenth century in its modern sense – nor is it clear that all *poligrafi* considered themselves part of the same social group.²⁵ Certainly, it has been of heuristic value for modern-day scholars, who have used it to impose a degree of clarity on the bewilderingly complex careers produced by the largely unregulated world of Venetian publishing. But there is little consensus among scholars about who deserves to be called a *poligrafo*, and who does not, and therefore the criteria used to determine who ought to be ‘in’ and ‘out’ are usually somewhat obscure, as are the temporal limits of the term. This section surveys and evaluates various ways that the term ‘poligrafo’ has been defined, suggests what the group’s common characteristics truly were, and draws attention to two important aspects of the *poligrafi* that have not been sufficiently studied so far.

Work on the *poligrafi* has tended to focus either on their printed ‘original’ work (a problematic term, as we will see) or their editorial work for the press, with studies focusing on the former tending to assume that they had a great deal of agency with regard to what they wrote about, and the latter tending to de-emphasise their agency in favour of that of the printers they wrote for. However, it should be noted that until the twentieth century, scholarship on the *poligrafi* largely consisted of a series of tedious, moralistic condemnations, particularly of Pietro Aretino, the most infamous of the group (though whether or not Aretino himself ought to be considered a *poligrafo* has in fact been the subject of debate, as we will see in the following section). Francesco de Sanctis wrote that ‘he died

²⁴ Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World, 1530-1560*; Claudia di Filippo Bareggi, *Il mestiere di scrivere. Lavoro intellettuale e mercato librario a Venezia nel Cinquecento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1988), p. 5. See also Nicola Bonazzi, *Il carnevale delle idee. L’antipedanteria nell’età della stampa (Venezia, 1538-1553)* ((Bologna: Gedit, 2007), pp. 1-13.

²⁵ For a reflection on the usage of emic and etic terms in historical research, see Carlo Ginzburg, ‘Our Words, and Theirs: A Reflection on the Historian’s Craft, Today’, *Cromohs* 18 (2013), pp. 97-114; on the emic/etic distinction, see Kenneth L. Pike, *Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behavior* (The Hague: Mouton, 1967), pp. 37-9.

at sixty-five, in the year 1557, and his fame died with him. His works were soon forgotten. His memory is infamous: a decent man would never pronounce his name before a woman.²⁶ John Addington Symonds said of Aretino that ‘the man himself incarnated the dissolution of Italian culture.’²⁷ The caricature of Aretino as an evil pornographer largely persisted even in the late twentieth century. Robert Adam described him, in 1989, as ‘a pimp, pornographer, parasite, libeller, sycophant, and blackmailer, with a flashy, scurrilous wit and a major gift of impudence.’²⁸

More recently, scholars have argued that the *poligrafi*’s ‘original’ work is of relevance to historians of humanism and the Italian Reformation. Christopher Cairns, Bette Talvacchia, and Raymond B. Waddington have emphasised that, far from being a wholly unique, amoral iconoclast, Aretino had a deep knowledge of the classical and humanistic works that he satirised, and took Erasmus as something of a career model.²⁹ In English-language scholarship, Paul Grendler’s 1969 intellectual history of the *poligrafi*, *Critics of the Italian World*, remains of fundamental importance, so much so that it is often cited uncritically by Anglophone scholars in adjacent fields as the only key work on the subject.³⁰ In *Critics of the Italian World*, Grendler discusses three of the *poligrafi* that he considers to

²⁶ Francesco de Sanctis, *History of Italian Literature*, vol. 2 (New York: Basic Books, 1959), p. 603.

²⁷ John Addington Symonds, quoted in Paula Findlen, ‘Humanism, Politics, and Pornography in Renaissance Italy’ in Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The Invention of Pornography: Obscenity and the Origins of Modernity, 1500-1800* (New York: The MIT Press, 1993), p. 51.

²⁸ Robert M. Adam, quoted in Raymond B. Waddington, *Aretino’s Satyr: Sexuality, Satire, and Self-Projection in Sixteenth-Century Literature and Art* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. xxiv. A notable exception to the rule is Benedetto Croce, who argued, *contra* De Sanctis, that Aretino was ‘in a certain sense beyond good and evil’. He praised the only tragedy Aretino authored, *L’Orazia*, and his writings on art, and claimed that in some ways he anticipated the Baroque. On the other hand, he dismissed the *Ragionamenti* for its obscenity and criticised Aretino for refraining from attacking the Church. See for example Benedetto Croce, ‘Considerazioni su Pietro Aretino’, *Quaderni della “Critica” diretti da B. Croce* 19-20 (1951), pp. 157-61.

²⁹ See Christopher Cairns, *Pietro Aretino and the Republic of Venice: Researches on Aretino and his Circle in Venice 1527-1556* (Florence: Olschki, 1985); Bette Talvacchia, *Taking Positions: On the Erotic in Renaissance Culture* (Princeton, 1999); Waddington, *Aretino’s Satyr*.

³⁰ Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World*. See, for example, Eric Nelson, ‘Utopia through Italian Eyes: Thomas More and the Critics of Civic Humanism’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 59:4 (2006), pp. 1029-1057; Sheila Hale, *Titian: His Life* (London: HarperPress, 2012).

be the most representative of the *mentalité* of the period, namely Anton Francesco Doni, Ortensio Lando and Nicolò Franco. In justifying his decision to work on these ‘minor figures’, he argues that ‘while major figures sometimes transcend the limitations of their own period, secondary authors, as Lando, Franco and Doni surely were, are often more useful for understanding prevailing attitudes’, due to the fact that ‘because their talent is limited, they are more likely to repeat commonplaces of the day when inspiration fails.’³¹ Much of Grendler’s book is essentially descriptive, as he summarises the ideas expressed by these three authors in a wide range of works to try and demonstrate that they were consistently opposed to mainstream humanist culture. For instance, Grendler cites material critical of the influence of foreign powers in the Italian peninsula, the tyranny of princes, the maldistribution of wealth, and the value of classical education and the notion of the active life, as well of as prevailing religious conventions. This, according to Grendler, amounted to a conscious rebellion against mainstream culture, and moreover that ‘after they had mocked the idols, it was easier for later and intellectually better equipped men to substitute new ones.’ In this way, he argues, they were precursors to the subsequent intellectual innovations of the likes of Giordano Bruno, Tommaso Campanella, and Galileo.³²

Critics of the Italian World made available a great deal of biographical and bibliographical information concerning the *poligrafi* that was not previously accessible, in English or Italian, and remains a useful introduction to these authors. However, there are a number of problems with Grendler’s argument. To begin with, the fundamental idea that major intellectual figures can transcend their particular historical context, whereas so-called secondary figures are the key to understanding the *mentalité* of a given period and place, is liable to obscure the normality of the former and the individuality of the latter. In fairness,

³¹ Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World*, p. 14.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 210.

Grendler is hardly the first intellectual historian to have made such an assertion. But the rationale for choosing to focus on Doni, Lando and Franco, in particular, can also be called into question. Summarising the differences between Lando, Doni, Franco, and the other *poligrafi*, Grendler has argued that the former produced more original works as opposed to editions, translations and compilations – important because ‘despite widespread plagiarisations and the accepted practice of pillaging the ancients for materials, Cinquecento authors had high regard for originality’. However, scholarship since Grendler on the notion of *riscrittura* in this period – defined by Douglas Biow as ‘artfully creating literary patchworks of other people’s writings, both classical and modern’ – has made this distinction between original works and imaginative literature, on the one hand, and editorial and translation work, on the other, difficult to justify.³³

Amedeo Quondam has rightly called for an understanding of *riscrittura*, or *imitazione* as he prefers, that is sensitive to context. As he sees it, while ‘there is no doubt: imitation for us, today, is a practice that is unbecoming, even ugly in a moral sense’, this is something that has become part of western culture only since the early nineteenth century, from a combination of a romantic, idealistic desire for artistic originality and the formation of the right of the author to own his aesthetic property. However, Quondam has argued that in the period from Petrarch to Leopardi, during which time classicism was of central importance to Italian culture, what constituted imitation and what constituted plagiarism were necessarily different. Skilfully creating new works out of a patchwork of references was seen as wholly desirable: plagiarism was instead considered to be ‘the unattributed appropriation, the replacement of the person.’³⁴ As demonstrated by several other contributions in the volume containing Quondam’s essay, however, the *poligrafi* regularly

³³ Biow, *In Your Face*, p. 175.

³⁴ Amedeo Quondam, ‘Note su imitazione e ‘plagio’ nel Classicismo’, in Paolo Cherchi (ed.), *Sondaggi sulla riscrittura del Cinquecento* (Ravenna: Longo, 1998), p. 25.

flirted with this distinction between *risrittura* and full-blown plagiarism. Giorgio Masi has, for instance, called attention to the startling fact that parts of the section of Doni's dialogue on printing in *I marmi* that criticises the potential of the press for facilitating plagiarism were themselves plagiarised, almost word-for-word, from the *Dialogo della stampa* of Doni's nemesis Lodovico Domenichi.³⁵ Westwater has drawn attention to Doni's heavy, unattributed re-usage in *I Marmi* of Antonio de Guevara's *Relox de príncipes*, while other scholars have noted similar practices in the works of Nicolò Franco and others. Evidently, we must treat the idea of 'original' works with caution if we are to avoid being anachronistic.

Another reason cited by Grendler for his decision to focus on Doni, Franco and Lando is their socioeconomic backgrounds. He has drawn attention to important social differences between Doni, Franco, Lando, and some other *poligrafi*, such as Lodovico Dolce (a member of a family of Venetian *cittadini*, albeit a relatively impoverished one) who were born higher in the social scale. Here Grendler is on more solid ground, although other *poligrafi*, such as Pietro Aretino and Eustachio Celebrino, cannot be said to have been from a noble or wealthy background either. Finally, Grendler argues that 'a different way of life also set these two groups of writers apart from each other.'³⁶ Because of their failure to win long-term patronage, Lando, Franco and Doni were forced to adopt peripatetic lifestyles in contrast to Domenichi, Dolce and Sansovino, who lived more 'sedentary existences.' Grendler concludes that it was their 'humble origins, uncertain financial situation, and impermanence [that] made [these men] quick to anger at the flaws in Italian society' and 'eager to publish their critical and pessimistic views.'³⁷ However, a survey of aspects of the life and book

³⁵ Giorgio Masi, 'Postilla sull'affaire Doni-Nesi: La questione del Dialogo della stampa', *Studi italiani* 2 (1990), pp. 41–54; Anton Francesco Doni, *I marmi del Doni, Accademico pellegrino* (Venice: Per Francesco Marcolini, 1552); Lodovico Domenichi, *Dialoghi* (Venice: Gabriele Giolito, 1562), pp. 367–99. Masi argues that Doni plagiarised from a manuscript of Domenichi's book that he had in his possession in the late 1540s. See also Biow, *In Your Face*, pp. 180–1.

³⁶ Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World*, p. 69.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

production of Doni, Franco and Lando, such as their heavy usage of dedicatory letters in printed works and even, in the case of Doni, individualised manuscript production for patrons such as Georg Fugger of the German banking dynasty, suggests that their critique of the maldistribution of wealth and corruption of rulers was less consistent than Grendler has argued. Doni also worked as Cosimo I's official printer for some years and worked in the *Accademia Fiorentina*, while Franco worked for many years at princely courts and in Rome.

Other scholarship on the *poligrafi* from an ideas-led perspective include Silvana Seidel Menchi's *Erasmus in Italia*, a magisterial study of the shifting image of Erasmus and the reception of Erasmian thought in Italy during the sixteenth century, and Eric Nelson's article on the reception of Thomas Moore's *Utopia* in Italy.³⁸ Seidel Menchi and Nelson are primarily interested in what the *poligrafi*'s religious and political beliefs were, rather than in what they were criticising. Seidel Menchi has repeatedly returned throughout her career to the mysterious figure of Ortensio Lando and his fascination with Erasmian thought, arguing that he was perhaps representative of a 'generation of 1514' that were especially hostile to the mainstream religious conventions of their era.³⁹ Nelson in turn argues that that Italian 'neo-Roman' humanists indeed saw *Utopia* as an attack on their values, while Erasmian sympathisers including Anton Francesco Doni and Ortensio Lando saw it as an endorsement of Erasmus and so chose to translate it into Italian. Nelson suggests that 'these early Italian readers recognized in *Utopia* a repudiation of active citizenship, an assault on private property, a rejection of the Roman cult of glory, and a polemic against Ciceronian

³⁸ Silvana Seidel Menchi, *Erasmus in Italia, 1520-1580*, (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1987); Nelson, 'Through Italian Eyes'.

³⁹ Seidel Menchi, *Erasmus in Italia*. Cf. Seidel Menchi, 'Sulla fortuna di Erasmo in Italia: Ortensio Lando e altri eterodossi della prima metà del Cinquecento', *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte* 4 (1974), pp. 537-634; Seidel Menchi, 'Spiritualismo radicale nelle opere di Ortensio Lando attorno al 1550', *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte / Archive for Reformation History* 65 (1974), pp. 212-79; Seidel Menchi, 'Chi Fu Ortensio Lando?', *Rivista Storica Italiana* 106 (1994), pp. 501-64.

humanism.’⁴⁰ While Seidel Menchi and Nelson more or less confine themselves to the writings and translation-work of Lando, as far as the *poligrafi* are concerned there is plenty of evidence to suggest that an interest in religious heterodoxy was a commonly-shared characteristic of these figures.

The most valuable insights into the *poligrafi* have, nevertheless, undoubtedly come from in the last few decades from the perspective of literary studies. The resurgent popularity of the *poligrafi* in this field appears to have prompted above all by Giorgio Masi’s important 1988 article on Anton Francesco Doni.⁴¹ Giovanna Rizzarelli has been amongst the most active *poligrafi* scholars in recent years, producing in the last decade a monograph on Doni’s *I Mondi*, two edited collections (one on *I Marmi* and another devoted to Doni’s work in general) and an online archive of three of Doni’s best known print publications together with one in manuscript: *La zucca*, *La moral philosophia*, *I mondi*, *I marmi* and *L’attavanta*. Her 2012 edited volume sought to analyse the literary genres, techniques, content, narrative directions, and sources of *I Marmi*.⁴² These essays explore, among other things, Doni’s ironic treatment of the politics of Florence and Venice and his use of Florentine dialect, his experimentation with genre, his (often unacknowledged) sources, and the relationship between the text and the woodcuts that accompanied the first (and no subsequent) edition, published by Francesco Marcolini. Scholars such as Amedeo Quondam, Paolo Cherchi, Lynn Lara Westwater and Douglas Biow have, as previously mentioned, argued for an understanding of the *poligrafi*’s creative reworking of texts by others in this period that is

⁴⁰ Nelson, ‘Utopia through Italian Eyes’, p. 1029.

⁴¹ Paul F. Grendler, ‘Review of Giovanna Rizzarelli (ed.), *I Marmi di Anton Francesco Doni. La storia, i generi e le arti* (Florence: Olschki, 2012)’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 66 (2013), p.183; Giorgio Masi, “*Quelle discordanze si’ perfette*”. *Anton Francesco Doni 1551-1553* (Florence: Olschki, 1988); Di Filippo Bareggi, *Il mestiere di scrivere*.

⁴² Giovanna Rizzarelli, *I Marmi di Anton Francesco Doni. La storia, i generi e le arti* (Florence: Olschki, 2012). Cf. Rizzarelli, *Se le parole si potessero scorgere. I Mondi di Doni tra Italia e Francia* (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 2007); Rizzarelli, (ed.), *Dissonanze Concordi. Temi, questioni e personaggi intorno ad Anton Francesco Doni* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2013).

sensitive to context.

One area of the *poligrafi*'s output to which little attention has been paid, until recently, is their manuscript production. This is most striking in the case of Anton Francesco Doni who printed nothing at all in the last twenty or so years of his life, but instead devoted himself entirely to the production of individual, personalised manuscripts in his own hand. Doni's late career saw the appearance of some of his most controversial works, including *Lo Stufaiuolo* ('The Spa-Keeper'), his only play, that now exists in two distinctly different personalised copies written in 1557 and 1559, and *I numeri* and the *Dichiarazione sopra il XIII capitolo dell'Apocolisse* (both 1562), in which he exhibited an interest in numerology and the kabbalah. Work on Doni's manuscripts has been confined so far to Alessandra Del Fante's introductory essay in her edition of *I Numeri* and the *Dichiarazione* (which includes facsimiles of both), and Pierazzo's commentary on her excellent digital version of both surviving versions of *Lo Stufaiuolo*.⁴³ This can, of course, be partially attributed to the difficulty of accessing these works compared to those in print, but then again, Del Fante's critical edition of *I Numeri* was published as long ago as 1981. Perhaps it is simply the case that before the material and visual turns in the mid-90s – and perhaps one can also speak of the 'manuscript turn' prompted by Harold Love in the context of English literary studies, and by Brian Richardson in the context of Italy – the manuscript production of a writer as obscure as Doni was regarded as insignificant.⁴⁴ However, as a case study, Doni's manuscript production has proved a fascinating opportunity to investigate one person's attempts to negotiate the climate of censorship in the later sixteenth century. Rather than

⁴³ Anton Francesco Doni, *I Numeri* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1981); Anton Francesco Doni, 'Lo Stufaiuolo by Anton Francesco Doni: A Scholarly Edition', *The Annual of the Association for Documentary Editing* 36 (2015) <http://www.scholarlyediting.org/2015/editions/intro.stufaiuolo.html>; Anton Francesco Doni [Accessed 2 February 2020]. Cf. Anton Francesco Doni, *Le imprese reali* (Naples: La stanza delle Scritture, 2015).

⁴⁴ Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Brian Richardson, *Printing, Writers and Readers in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Richardson, *Manuscript Culture in Renaissance Italy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

simply producing less controversial works – as, Aretino, for instance, had done over a decade earlier – Doni chose to eschew the industry that he knew so intimately in favour of seeking patronage from influential figures by means of manuscripts created for particular individuals. On the other hand, as Pierazzo has noted, unlike other manuscript texts from the same period, those produced by Doni retain many features of printed books, such as frontispieces, and he did the textual decoration himself rather than seeking the assistance of professional illuminators.⁴⁵ This thesis builds on the work of Del Fante and Pierazzo by giving the *poligrafi*'s manuscript production as much consideration as their printed publications.

In focussing on particular 'original' works, and usually also individual authors, the work of Rizzarelli, Girotto and other scholars has also, like that of Grendler, been in danger of giving a lopsided impression of the careers of the *poligrafi* by neglecting their work as editors and translators. For many *poligrafi*, this occupied a greater proportion of their output than did works published under their own name, and as a consequence, another important strand of scholarship has primarily envisaged the *poligrafi* as editorial collaborators. The most prominent example of this is undoubtedly *Il mestiere di scrivere. Lavoro intellettuale e mercato librario* by Claudia di Filippo Bareggi, published in 1988.⁴⁶ This principally quantitative study of the editorial activities of fourteen *poligrafi* has aged somewhat better than Grendler's pioneering yet problematic study. Rather than concentrating on 'original' works, Di Filippo Bareggi focuses on fourteen figures that she saw as epitomising a new type of profession: the 'collaborative editor', which she uses in preference to the term

⁴⁵ Doni, *Lo Stufaiuolo*. Section One [unpaginated].

⁴⁶ Di Filippo Bareggi, *Il mestiere di scrivere*. Lodovico Dolce, who as the main editor for the largest vernacular press in mid-Cinquecento Venice occupied a crucial role in the Venetian printing industry, has also been the subject of a monograph by Ronnie H. Terpening, which essentially follows Di Filippo Bareggi's line of argument. See Ronnie H. Terpening, *Lodovico Dolce, Renaissance Man of Letters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

poligrafo. She sees this as the first form of ‘intellectual work’ that was tied to neither the courts nor the Church, but rather to the necessarily commercial interests of publishers.⁴⁷ In the first part of her work, Di Filippo Bareggi attempts to ascertain the ‘capacity for cultural independence’ of these fourteen men by studying their economic backgrounds and the details of their careers in Venice, as well as a quantitative analysis of their book production.⁴⁸ The second half explores the impact of this new profession on the literary culture of the later sixteenth century, using these figures to conduct a fascinating exploration of what she saw as the ‘characteristic phenomena’ of the sixteenth century, including the growth of the academy movement, the importance and function of editorial collaboration in the circulation of the works of major literary figures, as well as ‘uncoordinated and discordant heterodox elements in the world of Venetian printing’. These included the tension, alluded to previously, between intellectual work and the ambition of and necessity for printers to make profits. Ultimately, Di Filippo Bareggi concludes, this was ‘a reality full of new ideas [...] but whose true modernity – the ability to make substantial changes in the culture as much as in the concrete life of its processors – seems highly compromised and threatened by the contradictions of the society of the time.’⁴⁹ Why this should make the sixteenth century fundamentally different from other periods is unclear, however. Indeed, it seems remarkably similar to Jean-François Lyotard’s famous analysis on what makes the production of knowledge in the postmodern era – for him, the period after the Second World War – so distinctive.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Di Filippo Bareggi, *Il mestiere di scrivere*, p. 6. The fourteen editors that she concentrates on are Lodovico Dolce, Lodovico Domenichi, Girolamo Ruscelli, Ortensio Lando, Tommaso Porcacchi, Orazio Toscanella, Alfonso de Ulloa, Nicolò Franco, Antonio Brucioli, Francesco Sansovino, Giuseppe Betussi, Anton Francesco Doni, Girolamo Parabosco, and Francesco Baldelli.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 7.

⁵⁰ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 4-5.

Clearly, Di Filippo Bareggi sees the editorial work of these men as their main unifying characteristic. However, her study suggests that they had other characteristics in common as well, which she largely agrees upon with Grendler and Seidel Menchi. The most noteworthy of these is perhaps their shared interest in religious heterodoxy: in the preface, Di Filippo Bareggi notes that her original intention had been to write a monograph on what she perceived to be the heterodox religious affiliations of Lodovico Domenichi, which ultimately evolved into *Il mestiere di scrivere*. Throughout the text, she repeatedly draws attention to the interest of these editors – especially Brucioli, Dolce, Domenichi, Lando, and Doni – in Reformation ideas, though aside from Antonio Brucioli (who was eventually tried by the Inquisition), they rarely strayed into full-blown heresy.⁵¹ Another shared characteristic, though of lesser import to Di Filippo Bareggi given that it applied to the majority of those involved in the Venetian printing industry in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, is the lack of native Venetians among these editors: of the fourteen *poligrafi* she bases her research upon, only one, Dolce, had Venetian origins.⁵² Inevitably, *Il mestiere di scrivere* has dated in some respects, though not to the extent that its thesis is compromised. Obviously, the research was undertaken before the advent of mass digitisation of early printed books, which has transformed book history by bringing to light the more obscure collections of a vast number of hitherto underexploited libraries. The data upon which Di Filippo Bareggi based her predominately quantitative research must, therefore, be treated with appropriate caution.

Finally, the relatively new field of the cultural and social history of translation has sparked a second wave of interest in the last decade or so in the *poligrafi*'s editorial practice. Anton Francesco Doni's 1548 edition of Ortensio Lando's translation of *Utopia* has enjoyed

⁵¹ Di Filippo Bareggi, *Il mestiere di scrivere*, p. 5.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

particular attention, as has Francesco Sansovino's republication in 1561 of Book II of Lando's translation as an appendix to his treatise on republican and monarchical constitutions. Terence Cave's edited collection of essays on six vernacular translations of *Utopia* – in Italian, Dutch, French, English, German, and Spanish – makes it clear that the paratexts and context of publication of each translation made a major difference to its reception in each country. In Italy, Kristin Gierpe argues, the text left the sphere of higher humanist scholarship, becoming appropriated instead by 'lesser known polygraphers – all-purpose editors, literati, minor writers'.⁵³ She draws attention to one fascinating detail in particular: Doni's decision to entitle his and Lando's edition *Eutopia*, 'fortunate place', rather than *Utopia*, 'no place', with any suggestion that this might be a mistake belied by the fact that Doni uses this spelling again in his preface. Meanwhile, Gierpe sees Sansovino's 1561 version as a 'study in comparative politics' – which, to reiterate, used only Book II of Lando's translation and included in a study of genuine systems of government, including that of Venice.⁵⁴ However, the decision to study these works in isolation, disconnected from the *poligrafi*'s social context as well as their texts published in their own name, means that reasons these *poligrafi* chose to edit these particular texts is somewhat obscured. This thesis's detailed qualitative study of individual *poligrafi* and their social context will contribute to a more sophisticated understanding of the reasons behind their editorial decisions, especially after state and ecclesiastical censorship became more sophisticated from the late 1540s onwards.

It is clear from all of the above that *poligrafo* is something of a cluster concept.⁵⁵ Different scholars emphasise different aspects of the group's background and output, and

⁵³ Kristin Gierpe, in Terence Cave (ed.), *Thomas More's Utopia in Early Modern Europe: Paratexts and Contexts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), p. 48.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁵⁵ On cluster concepts, see for instance Kathryn Pyne Parsons, 'Three Concepts of Clusters', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 33: 4 (1973), pp. 514-23.

although there are several key characteristics that scholars agree they all share, other aspects more disputed. Clearly, their association with Venice, and in particular Venice's vernacular printing press is the key characteristic upon which all scholars of the *poligrafi* agree. Certainly, Venice and its publishing industry – the largest in Italy in the mid-sixteenth century, and one of the largest in Europe – played a crucial role in the careers of every *poligrafo*, and, likewise, the *poligrafi* played a crucial role, as writers, editors and translators – and, sometimes, as publishers – in this explosion of print in this period.⁵⁶ Consequently, the relationship between the *poligrafi* and Venice has always occupied a central position in the relevant scholarship and continues to do so. But historians and literary scholars have often gone too far in their claims for the effect of their work for the Venetian publishing industry on their social world. For example, in Raymond Waddington's short biographical entry on Pietro Aretino for the *Renaissance and Reformation* section of *Oxford Bibliographies*, published in 2016, he argues that 'Aretino spearheaded the emancipation of writers from dependence on court patronage', and that, because of his status as a pioneer in this respect, Aretino was 'not the greatest but the most important Italian author of the 16th century.'⁵⁷ However, the idea that their work for the press liberated the *poligrafi* from patronage systems that writers had hitherto been dependant on for both in an economic sense, and with respect to social status, is in fact quite mistaken, as this thesis seeks to demonstrate.

A second feature that scholars agree most *poligrafi* shared was that they came from non-

⁵⁶ Angela Nuovo estimates that, based upon the 64,500 sixteenth-century editions recorded by *Edit16*, the national Italian bibliographic database, slightly fewer than one half were produced in Venice with the high point in terms of the number of editions reached around 1550. See Angela Nuovo, *The Book Trade in the Italian Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 48-9. See also Claudia di Filippo Bareggi, 'L'editoria veneziana fra '500 e '600', in Gino Benzoni and Antonio Menniti Ippolito (eds.), *Storia di Venezia. Dalle origini alla caduta della Serenissima*, vol. 6: Gaetano Cozzi and Paolo Prodi (eds.), *Dal Rinascimento al Barocco* (Rome: Istituto della enciclopedia italiana, 1992-1998), pp. 615-50.

⁵⁷ Raymond B. Waddington, 'Pietro Aretino', *Renaissance and Reformation*, in Margaret L. King (ed.), *Oxford Bibliographies of Renaissance and Reformation*
<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195399301/obo-9780195399301-0308.xml>
 [Accessed 2 February 2020].

elite socioeconomic backgrounds. The extent to which they had radical ideological opinions, outside of an interest in religious heterodoxy, however, is more open to question. It is also clear that their novel role in the world of publication, in of itself, had radical consequences for the circulation of ideas in the vernacular and for the influence of print culture in the peninsula. Nevertheless, in neglecting what was distinctive about their self-authored writings, their work in manuscript, and their relationships with patrons as well as printers, the existing scholarship fails to capture important aspects of the *poligrafi*'s world, in Venice as well as outside of it. A third key characteristic that is normally emphasised in by scholarship on the *poligrafi* is their variety of output, which generally included both editorial and 'original' production, as well as working in wide variety of genres. Indeed, the scale of output of *poligrafi* who specialised in editing, such as Lodovico Dolce, Francesco Sansovino, and Tommaso Porcacchi could be particularly astonishing, in terms of pure productivity. However, other *poligrafi*, such as Pietro Aretino and Nicolò Franco, did very little or no editorial work, so this characteristic did not apply to every member of the group.

There are two related characteristics, however, that virtually all scholarship on the *poligrafi* to date has under-emphasised. One is the fact that the overwhelming majority, except for Lodovico Dolce (who came from a relatively impoverished family of Venetian *cittadini*) and Francesco Sansovino (who grew up in Venice, the son of Jacopo, the Florentine sculptor and architect) not only had non-Venetian origins, but spent significant portions of their careers – often the majority of their careers – largely outside Venice, usually

attached to an ecclesiastical or princely court.⁵⁸ The second is the crucial fact that the *poligrafi* seem largely to have viewed their printed output in Venice as a means of supplementing their patronage connections rather than as an alternative source of income. Why has this blind spot been so long-standing? As Giora Sternberg has pointed out, reflecting on the eagerness in early modern French scholarship to discuss aspects of elite political discourse and social conventions in terms of ‘narratives of state-building, civilizing processes and other modernizing projects’, examining moments of historical change solely in terms of progress can be misleading, if not simply anachronistic.⁵⁹ Pre-moderns were not attempting to become modern, but to deal with current and pressing problems. Sternberg has also rightly called for greater recognition of ‘the enduring vitality of “traditional” modes of thought and behaviour throughout the early modern period’ – rather than dismissing them as ‘reactionary obstacles to progress, to see them instead as ‘indispensable for the explanation of early modern action – including, paradoxically, of the introduction of their modern “successors”’, and, ultimately, to acknowledge that the precursors of our impersonal, bureaucratic machineries were set into gear via the personal, informal mechanisms of kinship and patronage.’⁶⁰ It is certainly the case that the development of the Venetian publishing industry, from the late fifteenth century onwards, did not abruptly end pre-existing attitudes regarding the social standing of writers and editors, even among

⁵⁸ Recognized exceptions are Pietro Aretino’s early years in Rome and Mantua, which have been well-covered by Alessandro Luzio, Paul Larivaille, and Marco Faini; and Nicolò Franco’s period in Rome, on which Franco Pignatti has written a series of articles. See Alessandro Luzio, *Pietro Aretino nei suoi primi anni a Venezia e la corte dei Gonzaga* (Turin: Ermanno Loescher, 1888); Paul Larivaille, *Pietro Aretino fra Rinascimento e manierismo* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1980); Faini, “‘E poi in Roma ognuno è Aretino’”; Franco Pignatti, ‘Niccolò Franco a Roma 1558-70’, *Archivio della Società romana di storia patria* 121 (1998), pp. 119-66; Pignatti, “‘Quel libro è com’un’insalata confusa senz’ordine, che non fu mai trascritto’”. Niccolò Franco pasquinista’, in Chrysa Damianaki, Paolo Procaccioli, and Angelo Romano (eds.), *Ex marmore. Pasquini, pasquinisti, pasquinate nell’Europa moderna* (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 2006), pp. 151-79.

⁵⁹ Giora Sternberg, ‘Epistolary Ceremonial: Corresponding Status at the Time of Louis XIV’, *Past and Present* (2009), p. 78.

⁶⁰ Ibid. As Sheldon Pollock puts it, ‘There is no shame in premodernity’. Pollock, ‘Pretextures of Time’, *History and Theory* 46 (2007), p. 381.

writers and editors who worked for the Venetian publishing industry themselves. Evidently, we have been guilty of assuming that cultural conventions and attitudes change with the introduction of new technology, rather than generationally, when in fact, there was considerable ambivalence at the time, even among the *poligrafi* themselves, about the respectability of writing for the vernacular presses.

Another reason for the continuation of traditional attitudes towards writers and systems of patronage is more prosaic: economic precarity. The printing world was far from a stable source of income, even for successful writers. As Andrew Pettegree and others have shown, printing was a precarious business in the sixteenth century, even in the boom times, and most *poligrafi* did not enjoy stable relationships with printers that lasted more than a handful of years.⁶¹ Moreover, factors such as the increasingly strict enforcement of censorship restrictions in Venice from the 1550s onwards, as well as the influence of the favour of key cultural figures such as Pietro Aretino (who compelled some younger *poligrafi*, such as Nicolò Franco, to leave town following a disagreement) also served to make it a difficult place to live for a sustained period.⁶² Given the context, it is perfectly understandable that the *poligrafi* would try to use print to expand their patronage networks, rather than assuming they could use the new technology to completely replace the established model of making a living as a writer-editor.

Who were the *poligrafi*?

This section sets the chronological and geographic limits of the study, arguing that the *poligrafi* fall into four distinct generations, which are discussed in turn. “Generation” is here

⁶¹ Andrew Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), especially chapter 3, ‘Renaissance Encounters: The Crisis of Print’, pp. 43-62.

⁶² On censorship in Venice, see Paul F. Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press 1540-1605* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977); cf. Gaetano Cozzi, ‘Books and Society’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 51:1 (1979), pp. 86-98; Ugo Rozzo, *La letteratura italiana negli “Indici” del Cinquecento* (Udine: Forum, 2005).

primarily defined as when an individual became active in publishing terms rather than by birthdate – for example, Aretino was born in 1492, whereas Lodovico Dolce was probably born around 1510 – but they both published their first book in Venice in 1532, whereas Anton Francesco Doni and Nicolò Franco, born in 1513 and 1515 respectively, were closer to Dolce than Aretino in age, but did not publish their first books until the late 1530s.⁶³

It is commonplace to refer to Pietro Aretino either as the first *poligrafo*, or as the prototype for those who became known as the *poligrafi*, although denying that he was one himself.⁶⁴ There are some good reasons to call Aretino the first *poligrafo*: aside from his instrumental role in the early years of many *poligrafi* in the generation after him, including Lodovico Dolce, Nicolò Franco, Anton Francesco Doni, and others, Aretino pioneered the vernacular style that many *poligrafi* adopted after him and initiated many of the genres that they worked in afterwards, including pasquinades and *libri di lettere* (published collections of letters). However, this section will suggest that ultimately it makes more sense to begin the *poligrafi*'s timeline a generation earlier with the likes of Niccolò Zoppino and Eustachio Celebrino. Nevertheless, as the focus of this thesis is the social world of the *poligrafi* and their role in cultural politics in sixteenth-century Italy, the limited availability of sources for the social world of the first generation of *poligrafi*, and the fact that Pietro Aretino and his successors had a much greater impact on cultural politics than earlier *poligrafi*, means that little space is devoted to these early figures. It is nevertheless clear that the extent to which Aretino was influenced by earlier writers for the press needs to be re-examined. Relatedly, it is unclear when the time of the *poligrafi* can be said to have ended. This section proposes that the *poligrafi* begin to lose their distinctiveness with the fourth generation of Francesco

⁶³ On studying generational shifts, see Alexandra Walsham, 'Migrations of the Holy: Explaining Religious Change in Medieval and Early Modern Europe', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 44:2 (2014), pp. 241-280, especially pp. 261-63.

⁶⁴ Studies that refer to Aretino as the first *poligrafo* include Waddington, *Aretino's Satyr*, p. xxii; and William Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature: Books of Secrets in Medieval and Early Modern Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 147. On the other hand, Grendler seems to exclude Aretino from the title of *poligrafo* on the basis that he 'never became a complete rebel': see Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World*, p. 10. For Di Filippo Bareggi, Aretino is disqualified from the category of 'editorial collaborator' since he never worked as an editor or translator.

Sansovino, Girolamo Parabosco, and Tommaso Porcacchi.

One of Aretino's most important models – not only for his embrace of the printing press (particularly the Venetian press of Aldus Manutius), but also his style of satirical writing as epitomised in the *Praise of Folly* and *Julius Excluded from Heaven* – was Erasmus of Rotterdam.⁶⁵ Is this enough to call Erasmus the first *poligrafo*? Not quite. Most obviously, because he was writing in Latin rather than the vernacular, which ought to be a necessary characteristic to be described as a *poligrafo*. However, his skilful use of the Aldine press as a means of self-promotion, his publication of his letters, his satirical jabs at hypocrisy, and his paradoxical writings were strongly emulated by the *poligrafi*. For several *poligrafi*, including Ortensio Lando and Nicolò Franco, as Silvana Seidel Menchi has shown – Erasmus' religious views were also formative. Other early 'hack' writers who pre-date Aretino, such as Niccolò di Aristotile de' Rossi (born towards the end of the 1470s, and known as Niccolò Zoppino, presumably because he had a limp) and Eustachio Celebrino – principally active, first in Perugia, and then in Venice, from 1522 until the mid-1530s – ought to be considered first-generation *poligrafi*. Unfortunately, we have little biographical information about these writers. Zoppino and Celebrino were extremely mobile figures who left little trace in the historical record aside from their publications. However, we know that Zoppino worked as a street singer as well as a writer, bookseller and printer, and lived in Ferrara, Faenza, Florence, Foligno, Perugia, Rome, Ancona, Bologna and Pesaro as well as

⁶⁵ On Erasmus's relationship with the Venetian presses – specifically, with the workshop of Aldus Manutius – see in particular Lisa Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters: The Construction of Charisma in Print* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993); Alexandre Vanautgaerden, *Érasme typographe: humanisme et imprimerie au début du XVI^e siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 2012); Mario Infelise (ed.), *Aldo Manuzio. La costruzione del mito / Aldus Manutius: the Making of the Myth* (Venice: Marsilio, 2016); Oren J. Margolis, 'Hercules in Venice: Aldus Manutius and the Making of Erasmian Humanism', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 81 (2019), pp. 97-126. On Aretino's emulation of Erasmus, see Cairns, *Pietro Aretino and the Republic of Venice*; Waddington, *Aretino's Satyr*; Waddington, Raymond B., *Pietro Aretino: Subverting the System in Renaissance Italy* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

Venice, between the last years of the fifteenth century and 1544.⁶⁶

This first generation of *poligrafi* tended to eschew the sort of political (or quasi-political) and religious writing that became a central feature from Aretino onwards, as well as certain genres, such as the books of letters that Aretino pioneered, and that later generations of *poligrafi* continued to produce. On the other hand, writers like Celebrino were from a non-elite socioeconomic background; were not Venetian; produced a wide variety of work, written in a non-Bembian vernacular (that is, in the literary Tuscan of the sixteenth century, rather than imitating the style of Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, the preferred model of Pietro Bembo); worked very closely with the presses, not only writing for them (in Celebrino's case, he had started out producing woodcuts, rather than writing). And they worked in a variety of genres: Celebrino produced books on how to lay a dinner table, how to write love letters, a handwriting manual (*Il modo di imparare di scrivere lettera mercantesca*); a manual on how to cure syphilis in ten days, which he claimed was based on personal experience with the disease (*Questo è lo modo da guarir del mal francioso*) and a book of secrets (*Opera nova piacevole [...] intitulata Venusta*).⁶⁷ Celebrino also produced a poem about the Sack of Rome, *La presa di Roma*, published for the first time just one year after the sack in 1528.

Niccolò Zoppino worked at various points as a writer, bookseller, and as noted, even a street singer: Neil Harris has described him as 'as opposite [to Aldo Manuzio] as possible', on the grounds that he published nothing in Greek, almost nothing in Latin, and his

⁶⁶ On sources for Zoppino's life, see Massimo Rospocher, "'In vituperium status veneti': The Case of Niccolò Zoppino", *The Italianist* 34:3 (2014), pp. 349-61.

⁶⁷ On Eustachio Celebrino, see Rosa Salzberg, 'Eustachio Celebrino' in Mark Knights (ed.), *Brief Lives* (University of Warwick Early Modern Forum 1450-1850, 2012). https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/history/ecc/emforum/projects/brieflives/eustachio_celebrino/ [Accessed 2 February 2020]; Salzberg, *Ephemeral City: Cheap Print and Urban Culture in Renaissance Venice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), p. 36. On books of secrets, see Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature*.

vernacular output ‘experimented with every variety of literary Italian circulating.’⁶⁸ Indeed, Zoppino's role in the development of the Italian vernacular in the years before Pietro Bembo's views on Italian standard has been increasingly studied in the last ten years or so by the likes of Luigi Severi.⁶⁹ Zoppino was also one of the first printers to publish works by Martin Luther in Italian translation in 1525, and one of the last to print the sermons of Bernardino Ochino shortly before his flight to Geneva in 1542.

The second generation is thus that of Pietro Aretino and Lodovico Dolce, both of whom began publishing printed works in the early 1530s. Aretino's first printed work was in fact published by Zoppino in 1512 long before he came to Venice himself: he had also been a prolific writer of pasquinades and had started an epic poem, *La Marfisa*, in the 1520s. However, not until 1532 did Aretino begin to take print publication seriously as an alternative to manuscript circulation, albeit with the intent of creating and maintaining patronage links, rather than as a means of replacing them with the income from book sales alone. After Aretino moved to Venice – and especially after he began publishing his *libri di lettere* in the late-1530s – he attracted a series of young writers to Venice, many of whom worked with him directly, acting as his secretary or editing his papers (often before falling out with him and leaving Venice after a few years). His knowledge of humanist culture, evident when his works are carefully read (even if he frequently denied it), unvarnished style of writing in the vernacular, and (albeit initially reluctant) embrace of the potential of print, proved extremely influential. In the latter regard, the influence of Erasmus is clear. Indeed, after his move to Venice, Aretino's attitude towards Erasmus – while never actively hostile – seems to have shifted towards active emulation. Given that Erasmus wrote exclusively in

⁶⁸ Neil Harris, ‘Review of Lorenzo Baldacchini, *Alle origini dell'editoria volgare: Niccolò Zoppino da Ferrara a Venezia. Annali (1503-1544)* (Rome, 2011)’, *The Library* 14:2 (2013), p. 213.

⁶⁹ Luigi Severi, *Sitibondo nel stampar de libri. Niccolò Zoppino tra libro volgare, letteratura cortigiana e questione della lingua* (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 2009).

Latin, it is interesting to speculate on how Aretino gained a knowledge of his ideas. There is no evidence that Aretino was able to read Latin with any degree of fluency. However, it is probable that the language barrier was mediated by his sometime protégé, Nicolò Franco – and then by Lodovico Dolce, after Franco and Aretino's relationship soured dramatically.⁷⁰ Later *poligrafi*, such as Ortensio Lando, emulated Erasmus' style even more closely – especially his use of the paradox – as well as his religious views.

The third and largest generation of *poligrafi* have been dubbed by Silvana Seidel Menchi the 'generation of 1515'. This consisted of Ortensio Lando, Nicolò Franco, Anton Francesco Doni, Lodovico Domenichi, and Girolamo Ruscelli.⁷¹ Several of them, including Nicolò Franco and Anton Francesco Doni, worked for Aretino as his personal secretary at the beginning of their careers. Like previous generations of *poligrafi*, they tended not to be Venetian, lived peripatetically, and wrote in a non-Bembian vernacular. Unlike previous generations, they were typically better schooled, several having had a Latin education: Nicolò Franco's brother, Vincenzo, was a Latin teacher; Doni had trained as a Servite friar; and Lando had been a member of the Augustinians. Although some, such as Lodovico Domenichi and Girolamo Ruscelli, specialised in one or the other, *poligrafi* of the third generation tended to balance editorial work and social critique. Their period of working for the Venetian presses, from the late 1530s to the mid-1550s, coincided with what Nicola Bonazzi has called the 'carnival of ideas', the period of openness engendered by the developed nature of the Venetian printing industry, the relative lack of enforced print censorship on the part of the Venetian government, and the indecision on the part of the Church over the best way to respond to the influx of Protestant ideas into Italy.⁷² Indeed,

⁷⁰ Cairns, *Pietro Aretino and the Republic of Venice*, p. 130.

⁷¹ Silvana Seidel Menchi, *Erasmus in Italia, 1520-1580* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1987). Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide page numbers for this reference.

⁷² Bonazzi, *Il carnevale delle idee*. See also Margaret L. King, 'The Venetian Intellectual World', in Eric R. Dursteler (ed.), *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400-1797* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 571-614.

Doni, in a letter supposedly written during his first trip to Venice in April, 1544, praises the *signoria* for the freedom it permitted writers so long as they did not criticise the Republic or the Church.⁷³

Most of the *poligrafi* of this generation spent relatively short periods of their careers in Venice, and when they left, left permanently: for Franco and Doni, this was after breaking dramatically with Aretino, and the latter part of their careers were spent outside of Venice until their deaths in 1570 and 1574, respectively. The main exception in this regard was Girolamo Ruscelli, who was able to work consistently as an editor, mostly for Andrea Arrivabene's press, in Venice until his death in 1566. Another contributing factor was the shifting regulatory climate from the late 1550s onwards, on which more will be said in the following section.

The last generation of *poligrafi* discussed in this thesis is the fourth generation, born from 1521 onwards: Francesco Sansovino, Girolamo Parabosco, and Tommaso Porcacchi. These *poligrafi* all, in contrast to earlier generations, spent most of their career in Venice and, especially in the case of Francesco Sansovino, achieved a considerable amount of financial security and worked consistently for the press. However, a precondition of their success lay in adapting to a much harsher regulatory environment than previous generations of *poligrafi* contended with. The first Venetian Index of Prohibited Books was published by Giovanni della Casa in 1549, which was followed by the first, second, and third editions of the Roman Index in 1557, 1559, and 1564. As a result their work became much more based around editorial work, production of informational and how-to books, for example on being a secretary or a lawyer, avoiding controversial topics such as satirical political, social, and

⁷³ Anton Francesco Doni, *Tre libri di Lettere* (Venice: Francesco Marcolini, 1552), p. 226.

religious commentary.⁷⁴

Methodology and Sources

As figures who regularly moved from city to city, living hand to mouth, the *poligrafi* rarely left behind anything as useful to historians as a will or inventory.⁷⁵ The traces they made in the archival record varies a great deal from individual to individual – as with the number and character of printed and manuscript works that they produced. Large parts of the lives of most *poligrafi* remain completely undocumented. However, Rosa Salzberg and Massimo Rospocher's studies of *cantimbanchi* (street singers) – individuals at a much lower end of the social scale than the *poligrafi* who left behind even more partial and fragmentary traces in the historical record – nevertheless demonstrate that there are ways to write a social history of people who lived mobile lives in this period. It is simply necessary to be creative regarding the sources that they did leave behind. In the case of the *poligrafi*, as in the case of *cantimbanchi*, this has meant studying their published works alongside their interactions with authorities (regulators, censors, and the broader legal system). To this end, this thesis makes extensive use of archival material in an attempt to gain an accurate picture of the *poligrafi*'s social world, drawing principally on collections in state archives in Venice, Florence, Mantua, and Rome, as well as manuscript sources in the *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana* and the Marciana Library in Venice, and printed collections in the Bodleian Library, Taylorian Institute, and All Souls College in Oxford, and the Marciana. It also draws on online resources such as BIA (the online portal for the *Mediceo del Principato*, in

⁷⁴ On the indices see Jesús Martínez de Bujanda (ed.), *Index de Venise, 1549; Venise et Milan, 1554* (Geneva: Droz, 1987); De Bujanda (ed.), *Index de Rome: 1557, 1559, 1564: les premiers index romains et l'index du Concile de Trente* (Geneva: Droz, 1990); Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press*. On how-to books, see Rudolph M. Bell, *How To Do It: Guides to Good Living for Renaissance Italians* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

⁷⁵ On the use of *catasti* for studying the social history of intellectuals, see Martines, *The Social World of the Florentine Humanists*.

the *Archivio di Stato di Firenze*), as well as manuscripts digitised by the *Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana*.

One key category of source material for understanding the *poligrafi*'s patronage networks is correspondence. There are letters to, from, and about *poligrafi* in the *Mediceo del Principato*, the vast collection of documents relating to the Medici Duchy and Grand Duchy from Cosimo I onwards, as well as diplomatic correspondence to and from Benedetto Agnello, the Mantuan ambassador to Venice from 1530 to 1556. These resources demonstrate the extent to which the *poligrafi* were embedded in elite patronage networks, despite their work for the Venetian press – indeed, it demonstrates the endurance and adaptability of such networks. However, such collections only capture occasional instances where a *poligrafo* writes to a particular patron, is responded to, or discussed with a third party; often, they preserve only fragments of what must have been an extensive correspondence, carried out not only via official channels between the *poligrafo* and an elite patron or their diplomatic representative, but also via members of his court (such as other writers). Obviously, they do not provide much insight into what was discussed between *poligrafi* and patrons in person. Fortunately, Nicolò Franco's two brushes with the Inquisition in Rome in 1558 and 1568-70 resulted in the preservation of transcripts of his private register of letters sent and received from 1540 to 1559 (MS Vat. Lat. 5642). This provides us with the rare opportunity to see correspondence from the perspective of an individual *poligrafo*, rather than a patron or their representative, which yields particular insight into the strategies *poligrafi* adopted in order to forge and maintain both vertical relationships (with patrons) and horizontal relationships (with friends, family, and colleagues), as well as several instances where a patronage relationship broke down. However, Franco is a single example, and therefore this thesis seeks to put him in context alongside the available material for other figures rather than simply taking him as representative.

A second category of sources this thesis draws upon are those produced from *poligrafi*'s brushes with the authorities, such as *processi* (trial transcripts). There are several instances of the *poligrafi* falling foul of censorship and blasphemy laws in Venice, and consequently the records of the Venetian Inquisition and the state magistracy with the responsibility for prosecuting blasphemers – the *Esecutori contro la bestemmia* – contain documents that yield insights into the relationships between *poligrafi*, printers and state and ecclesiastical authorities in Venice.⁷⁶ Both *processi* pertaining to Franco's trials in Rome, mentioned above are discussed in chapter 1. These sources yield particular insight into the *poligrafi*'s relationships with patrons and publishers, as well as their justifications for writing controversial material. This thesis also makes use of the *poligrafi*'s manuscript publications. These include the pasquinades and dialogues produced by Pietro Aretino and his rival, Francesco Berni in the 1520s, as well as the lengthy dialogue libelling Paul IV and the Carafa for which Franco was arrested in 1568, the *Commento sopra la vita et costumi di Giovanni Pietro Caraffa che fu Paulo Quarto chiamato et sopra la qualità de tutti i suoi et di coloro che con lui governaro il pontificato*, now part of MS Ott. Lat. 2684.⁷⁷ These sources demonstrate that the types of literature varied dramatically between manuscript and print, and between courts (both princely and ecclesiastical) and the Venetian republic: libellous poetry, for instance, appears to be a genre confined to the court setting.

Studying all of these archival and manuscript sources alongside the printed books that the *poligrafi* are primarily known for, principally from the 1530s to the 1580s, yields particular insights into the motivations behind the *poligrafi*'s patronage strategies and authorial personae, as well as their attitudes towards working in print, in of itself. Further

⁷⁶ Unfortunately, the minute book of the Venetian Guild of Printers and Booksellers, though founded in 1549, only survives from 1571 onwards. See Rosa Salzberg, *Ephemeral City: Cheap Print and Urban Culture in Renaissance Venice* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), p. 129, n2.

⁷⁷ 'Comment on the life and conduct of Giovanni Pietro Carafa who was called Paul IV and on the quality of his family and those who with him governed the pontificate'.

insights are derived from the heterodox methodological approach employed, which includes visualisation techniques drawn from Social Network Analysis and a paratext-centred approach to printed books drawn from the history of material texts. This has allowed me to study the *poligrafi* at both a “macro” level by examining their social networks by means of quantitative data and qualitative archival material, and on an individual level by means of close readings of their publications, paratexts, and correspondence.

Thesis Outline

This thesis aims to draw meaningful connections between the social world of the *poligrafi* and the cultural politics of sixteenth-century Italy. To this end, it is split into two main parts. The first part deals with the social world of the *poligrafi*, concentrating first on their social world outside Venice (chapter 1), followed by their world in Venice (chapter 2). The second part, on cultural politics, is split into three chapters that deal respectively with their role in the circulation of libel in manuscript and print outside of Venice (chapter 3); their reinvention of themselves as truth-tellers, opposed to courtiers and humanist culture, in Venice following the Sack of Rome of 1527 (chapter 4); and, finally, the shift of those *poligrafi* who remained in Venice to less-controversial guidebooks, art treatises, histories and travel literature from the mid-1550s onwards (chapter 5). Lastly, the conclusion discusses the broader implications of this thesis for our understanding of early modern patronage systems in ecclesiastical and princely courts and republics; the nature and impact of the printing press on patronage networks and writers; and for humanist debates about language, style, and the public and private spheres in sixteenth-century Italy.

Chapter 1 deals with the social world of the *poligrafi* outside Venice, focusing on Rome, Mantua and Florence. The chapter calls particular attention to the socioeconomic circumstances that *poligrafi* inhabited – for example, their usual situation was to be heavily

reliant on a single patron, and they were often even part of that patron's household. By contrast, in Venice they were often able to spread their networks much more widely. The chapter also analyses the impact of the introduction of the printing press in the cases of Mantua and Florence. It attempts to assess what lay behind the decisions of individual *poligrafi* to live where they lived, what prompted them to move, and how they established links with new patrons and maintained links with existing ones. The chapter concludes with a case study, exploring the social network of an individual *poligrafo*, Nicolò Franco, from 1540, the year he left Venice, up to his death 1570, based principally on an analysis of his autograph *epistolario*.

The second chapter looks at the institutions with which *poligrafi* were associated in Venice, including literary salons, academies, and (perhaps most importantly) the printers with which they had a professional relationship: it focuses in particular on the presses of Niccolò Zoppino, Francesco Marcolini and Gabriele Giolito. This chapter builds on the previous chapter's critique of some of the assumptions in recent scholarship about the social world of the *poligrafi* and their relationship with the Venetian publishing industry, from the 1520s to the late 1580s. In doing so, it offers a fresh appraisal of the ways in which they navigated the Venetian publishing industry and systems of patronage.

The third chapter explores the *poligrafi*'s role in the circulation of libel in manuscript and print outside of Venice. It argues that several Roman court poets who would later become *poligrafi* – Pietro Aretino, most particularly – as well as non-*poligrafi* such as Francesco Berni played a crucial role in the development of the pasquinade genre in the sixteenth century. These poets were heavily involved in the new, partisan and libellous use of pasquinades to influence public opinion about particular cardinals from the early 1520s onwards, and the development of a new form of pasquinade in which the author was foregrounded, rather than anonymised in favour of the persona of Pasquino. It proceeds to trace the evolution of this form in manuscript and print as the sixteenth century unfolded,

including the ways in which it was adapted to attack Aretino himself, one of the form's inventors. Finally, the chapter cumulates with a discussion of Nicolò Franco's return to Rome in 1558 and his libellous dialogue attacking Paul IV and the Carafa family, which brought an end to cardinals' patronage of satirists, and catalysed a change in popes' attitudes and methods of dealing with libellous writers in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The chapter argues that examining the *poligrafi*'s role in the history of pasquinades is useful for revealing the relationships between *poligrafi*, their patrons, and audiences – a central problem explored in this thesis. The chapter also notes that this particular mode of writing never flourished in Venice, where many *poligrafi* pursued careers after the Sack of Rome, continuing to develop exclusively in court settings.

Chapter 4 deals with the complex links and tensions in the works of *poligrafi* between court culture, print culture, and truth-telling in Venice from 1527 until the early 1550s. This period saw efforts to reinvent the profession of writing and to justify writing for the press, in the face of considerable stigma. The first section discusses *poligrafi*'s rejections of various models of the courtier and attempts to construct an alternative professional (and literary) persona of the satirist, although they do not use that term explicitly. The second section looks at the positions they adopted in the *questione della lingua*, together with the socio-political and literary implications of each point of view and the links these had with attempts to improve their own social status. The last section looks at *poligrafi*'s satirical takes on mainstream humanist writing and education, and on what they proposed as an alternative.

The fifth and final chapter discusses the shift of those *poligrafi* who remained in Venice to pro-Venetian art treatises, popular histories, and guidebooks from the mid-1550s onwards. In this period, there was a generational shift amongst the *poligrafi* who were active in Venice, in the face of increased state and ecclesiastical censorship, and increasing caution on the part of Venetian printers. In their writings on art, the *poligrafi* who remained in Venice consistently argued for the superiority of Venetian art and architecture above those of Florence, though the priorities and agenda of individual *poligrafi* were themselves

articulated through the particular version of Venetian art that they advocated. In their popular histories and guidebooks, they placed particular emphasis on Venice's identity as the Most Serene Republic – a view which reflected an idealised vision of its homogenous, unchanging, and harmonious society and politics, often by popularising the work of Venetian humanists and political thinkers such as Gasparo Contarini. These texts targeted at an audience of readers interested in history and politics, and with the money to afford books, but without the Latin or the funds to acquire a vast humanistic library – or, indeed, the time to read a large number of humanist texts.

Finally, the conclusion summarises the thesis' findings and discusses the wider significance of this inquiry in three main areas: first, for our understanding of early modern patronage systems in ecclesiastical and princely courts and republics; second, on the nature and impact of technological innovation – specifically, of the printing press; and third, on humanist debates about language, style, and form in sixteenth-century Italy.

Part I. The Social World of the *Poligrafi*

1. The Social World of the *Poligrafi* in Ecclesiastical and Princely Courts: Seeking, Maintaining, and Losing Patrons, ca. 1517-1570

‘[Pietro Aretino] affected utterly to despise the Papal court because he knew it so well; the true reason was that Rome neither could nor would pay him any longer. Venice, which sheltered him, he was wise enough to leave unassailed. The rest of his relations with the great is mere beggary and vulgar extortion. Aretino affords the first great instance of the abuse of publicity to such ends.’¹

The amount of time the *poligrafi* devoted to ‘beggary and vulgar extortion’, or – to put it another way – to attempting to forge new patronage links while maintaining existing ones, was often derided by Jacob Burckhardt and other Italian Renaissance scholars of the nineteenth century, as was the obscene content of their writings.² While moralistic condemnation of the *poligrafi*’s writing has more or less disappeared in scholarship since the late twentieth century, discussion of their efforts to negotiate their social world has yet to be the subject of serious analysis, especially outside of Venice.³ This omission has significantly impaired our ability to comprehend the consequences of three characteristics shared by most *poligrafi*. First, most *poligrafi* did not spend the majority of their careers in their place of origin, with the exception of Lodovico Dolce, who was Venetian. Second, most *poligrafi* spent the majority of their careers outside of Venice, the centre of the Italian publishing industry, despite the historical importance of their work for Venice’s printing presses. In practice, this usually entailed being in the service of a court or household, working as a secretary, translator, or professional poet attached to a single prince, cardinal, or pope, and, therefore, as the lower-status actor in a vertical, patron-client relationship. The

¹ Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1914), p. 283.

² Three famous examples are John Addington Symonds, *The Renaissance in Italy* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1875-86); Francesco de Sanctis, *History of Italian Literature* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1931), pp. 432-33; Benedetto Croce, *Poeti e scrittori del pieno e del tardo Rinascimento* (Bari: Laterza, 1945-1952), 1, pp. 260-273, 285; 2, p. 126.

³ An exception is Susan Gaylard’s article, “‘Naked’ Truth: Clothing, Patronage, and Genius in Aretino’s Letters”, *The Italianist* 28:2 (2008), pp. 179-202.

alternative to being dependant on a single powerful patron in an urban centre – which, as we will see, was potentially dangerous, if one’s patron grew tired of one’s writing, or if they suddenly needed to dispense with an inconveniently provocative member of their household for political reasons – was to suffer marginalisation from Italian literary culture. Thirdly and finally, *poligrafi* tended to be highly mobile. Generally, they followed a pattern of living in a given city for several years while they enjoyed the protection of a particular patron, before moving on when their most important relationship in that city broke down. To find new work, they tended to rely heavily on horizontal connections throughout their lives (relationships with people of roughly equal social status), with *concittadini* (people from the same town), friends, and family. *Poligrafi* were, therefore, often economically vulnerable and even more dependent on patronage connections for income outside of Venice than they were during the periods that they spent close to Venice’s printing presses.

This chapter reconstructs the social world of the *poligrafi* beyond Venice. In this way, it develops one of this thesis’ central arguments, that the revolutionary effect of the printing press on the Italian literary world has tended to be overplayed in terms of its emancipatory effect on writers in this period. The impact (or lack of impact) of printing was different in each of the locations discussed in this chapter, with consequences with regard to the socioeconomic position of *poligrafi* attached to that court. More broadly, this chapter contributes to our understanding of the dynamics of early modern courts and court patronage systems and structures in four main areas: first, the question of the relative agency of patrons versus that of clients; second, on what the similarities and differences were between the patronage of writers and the patronage of artists; and third, in methodological terms by means of a case study from an individual *poligrafo*’s point of view, rather than looking at patronage from the point of view of patrons or individual patron-client relationships. Fourthly, and finally, this chapter analyses multiple instances of patronage relationships

breaking down or failing to be established in the first place.

Where archival material relating to these issues exists, it tends to be fragmentary and has not been subject to any systematic treatment, except that regarding the most famous of these writers. However, for the study of Nicolò Franco in section 2, I have been able to draw on a particularly rich source: Franco's personal manuscript *epistolario*.⁴ The 847 letters it contains – the first 351 of which have now been published in an edition by Domenica Falardo, and all of which have been digitised and made available on the Vatican Library's website – derive from the lengthy period between 1540, the year after Franco left Venice following a quarrel with his erstwhile friend and collaborator Pietro Aretino, and 1559, the year after he arrived in Rome, where he would be based until his death in 1570.⁵ These unpublished letters – in contrast to printed *libri di lettere* – contain multiple instances of failed attempts by Franco to establish patronage relationships as he sought to rebuild his career after leaving Venice.⁶ This chapter uses Palladio, an open-access data visualisation and mapping tool designed by the Humanities + Design Lab at Stanford University, to display the variety and richness of the social relationships at play in Nicolò Franco's *epistolario*. Palladio has the advantage over social network analysis software that it is specifically designed for historical research rather than for social science research: it is intended for the small and messy data sets that historians necessarily work with. It also allows the visualisation of a specific time-slice of data, a feature which I have used to depict

⁴ BAV MS Vat.lat. 5642 http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.5642 [Accessed 01 February 2018].

⁵ Nicolò Franco, *Epistolario (1540-1548): Ms Vat. Lat. 5642* (Stony Brook: Forum Italicum, 2007).

⁶ On the genre of the *libro di lettere*, see Lodovica Braidà, *Libri di lettere. Le raccolte epistolari del Cinquecento tra inquietudini religiose e "buon volgare"* (Rome: Laterza, 2009); Gianluca Genovese, *La lettera oltre il genere. Il libro di lettere, dall'Aretino al Doni, e le origini dell'autobiografia moderna* (Rome: Antenore, 2009).

Franco's epistolary strategies during particular phases of his career.⁷ Unfortunately – but perhaps unsurprisingly, given the peripatetic lifestyles that they tended to lead – we do not have sources of equivalent richness to Franco's *epistolario* for other *poligrafi*. However in section 2, I have drawn on my original archival research in the state archives of Florence and Mantua, as well as archival sources published by the likes of Armand Baschet, Alessandro Luzio, Franco Pignatti, and Anne Reynolds.⁸

The first section of this chapter discusses the social networks of the *poligrafi* in major urban centres other than Venice, assessing the decisions of individual *poligrafi* to live where they lived, what prompted them to move, and how they established links with new patrons and maintained links with existing ones. In order to keep the discussion manageable, the section focuses on three major centres of patronage associated, at various points, with multiple *poligrafi* – namely, Rome, Mantua, and Florence during the early rule of Cosimo I (reg. 1537-74). These courts have been chosen for the relative abundance of sources in each case, and because multiple *poligrafi* lived in each place for significant periods of time, allowing for comparisons to be made regarding the success, or failure, of individuals. It also analyses the impact of the introduction of the printing press in the case of Florence and Mantua.⁹ While the focus on the three courts in question has entailed the omission of other important urban centres, such as Milan, Naples, Lyon, and Piacenza, from the discussion,

⁷ On Palladio, see <http://hdlab.stanford.edu/palladio/> [Accessed 2 February 2020]; Marten Düring, 'From Hermeneutics to Data to Networks: Data Extraction and Network Visualization of Historical Sources,' *The Programming Historian* 4 (2015), <https://programminghistorian.org/en/lessons/creating-network-diagrams-from-historical-sources>. [Accessed 2 February 2020].

⁸ Armand Baschet, 'Documents concernant la personne de messer Pietro Aretino', *Archivio storico italiano* 3:2 (1866), pp. 107-30; Alessandro Luzio, *Pietro Aretino nei suoi primi anni a Venezia e la corte dei Gonzaga* (Turin: Ermanno Loescher, 1888); Luzio, 'L'Aretino e il Franco', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 29 (1897), pp. 229-83; Pignatti, 'Niccolò Franco a Roma', pp. 119-166; Anne Reynolds (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism at the Court of Clement VII: Francesco Berni's Dialogue Against Poets in Context* (New York: Garland, 1997).

⁹ Although printing existed in Rome at this time, the *poligrafi* and other satirist writing what Reynolds calls 'unofficial' pasquinades (that is, unauthorised, and unprinted) such as Francesco Berni seem to have been largely excluded from using it. See Reynolds (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism at the Court of Clement VII*, p. 9.

Milan forms part of section 2, a case study of Nicolò Franco's social network from 1540, the year he left Venice, up to his death 1570, based principally on an analysis of his personal manuscript *epistolario*. This section also examines Franco's experience of living in smaller, more peripheral cities such as Casale Monferrato and Popoli. Having delineated the social networks of the *poligrafi* outside Venice in the first section, section 2 assesses the effects of the changing landscape of the Italian literary world from the perspective of an individual *poligrafo*.

Patronising the *Poligrafi*: Rome, Mantua, and Florence

This section provides an overview of the history of the relationship between court patrons and *poligrafi* in Rome, Mantua, and Florence, ca. 1517-1570, taking into consideration both the perspectives of patrons and those of *poligrafi* themselves. It examines why patrons chose to patronise particular *poligrafi*, and why the *poligrafi* sought out particular patrons, attempting to discern whether any strategy, on the part of the former or the latter, can be discerned from the available evidence. Rome was, before the sack of 1527, the great centre of patronage in Italy for artists, humanists and poets. Several second and third-generation *poligrafi* spent periods there, either as members of cardinals' households or as members of the pope's own circle. What this actually entailed is worth taking a moment to discuss, since the social environment differed in important ways from the situation in Mantua and Florence. Most cardinals had their own private households (or *familiae*) by the twelfth

century, and hence tended to be important patrons in their own right.¹⁰ By the sixteenth century, a cardinal's *familia* could be extremely large: the *Descriptio Urbis* of 1526 suggests that members of the papal court, including the pope, the cardinals, and their households, accounted for seven per cent of Rome's adult population, of which Alessandro Farnese possessed the largest individual household, with 306 members.¹¹ It did not therefore necessarily follow, therefore, that being part of a given cardinal's household entailed having regular, sustained face-to-face contact with him. Another important consequence of this feature of Roman life was that, as well as the possibility of securing patronage from the pope himself, many cardinals were able to afford to patronise multiple writers.

The social prestige, and, potentially, the financial benefits, of being an artist or intellectual in Rome were great.¹² The papacies of Leo X (1513-1521) and Clement VII (1523-34), until the Sack of Rome in 1527, were particularly rewarding periods to be a court poet in Rome.¹³ However, the city was also, due to the nature of its political system, highly volatile, particularly during periods of *sede vacante*.¹⁴ There was no guarantee, moreover, that the new pope would have the same literary tastes, and tolerance – or intolerance – for

¹⁰ Miles Pattenden, *Electing the Pope in Early Modern Italy, 1450-1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 16; see also Lucinda M. C. Byatt, 'The Concept of Hospitality in a Cardinal's Household in Renaissance Rome', *Renaissance Studies* 2:2 (1988), pp. 312-20; Gigliola Fragnito, "'Parenti" e "familiari" nelle corte cardinalizie del Rinascimento', in Cesare Mozzarelli (ed.), *Familia del principe e famiglia aristocratica* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1988), pp. 565-87; Mary Hollingsworth, *The Cardinal's Hat: Money, Ambition and Housekeeping in a Renaissance Court* (London: Profile, 2004); Hollingsworth and Carol M. Richardson (eds.), *The Possessions of a Cardinal: Politics, Piety, and Art, 1450-1700* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010); Hollingsworth, 'The Cardinal's Household', in Mary Hollingsworth, Miles Pattenden, and Arnold Witte (eds.), *A Companion to the Early Modern Cardinal* (Leiden: Brill, 2020), pp. 260-75.

¹¹ Jean Delumeau, *Vie économique et sociale de Rome dans la seconde moitié du XVI siècle*, vol. 1 (Paris: Boccard, 1957-1959), p. 451-452; Domenico Gnoli, 'Un censimento di Roma sotto Clemente VII', *Archivio della Società romana di storia patria* 17 (1894), p. 471.

¹² On the patronage of humanists in Rome, see D'Amico, *Renaissance Humanism in Papal Rome*.

¹³ On Clement VII's patronage, see the contributions in the second part of Kenneth Gouwens and Sheryl E. Reiss (eds.), *The Pontificate of Clement VII: History, Politics, Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), on 'Patronage, Cultural Production and Reform'.

¹⁴ See Hunt, *The Vacant See in Early Modern Rome*; Pattenden, *Electing the Pope in Early Modern Italy, 1450-1700*; Ottavia Niccoli, *Rinascimento anticlericale. Infamia, propaganda e satira in Italia tra Quattro e Cinquecento* (Rome: Laterza, 2005).

public mockery as his predecessor. Leo X's successor, Adrian VI was, for instance, famously intolerant of satirical writers, though he had little long-term impact on the number of them in Rome since his pontificate was very short, and Clement VII subsequently reversed Adrian's ban on the uniquely Roman genre of satirical writing known as the *pasquinade*.¹⁵ The volatility of curial politics meant that writers necessarily endured a significant amount of instability in their day-to-day lives, especially since they tended to be attached to the household of a single cardinal or pope, and there was no guarantee that their patron would necessarily be able to protect them if their writings were to offend somebody more powerful still. Given this, why did cardinals and popes choose to employ such writers as members of their households, given the likelihood of them offending some other equally powerful, or more powerful, member of the Roman curia? The experiences of Pietro Aretino and his rival Francesco Berni's careers in Rome are illustrative. Since he never wrote for the press, Berni does not fit the definition of a *poligrafo* according to the conceptual framework established in the introduction to this thesis: moreover, he is best-known for his classicised refashioning of Matteo Maria Boiardo's *Orlando innamorato*, and therefore had a somewhat different perspective on the *questione della lingua* to most other *poligrafi*, who tended to favour the contemporary Tuscan vernacular of the time – not the version, based on Petrarch with classical elements, that was favoured by Pietro Bembo and his followers.¹⁶ But in other respects he and Aretino in his Roman period were remarkably similar – part of a world of professional poet-propagandists, a world both would come to satirise: Aretino in *La cortigiana*, Berni in his *Dialogue Against Poets*.¹⁷

Aretino and Berni both arrived in Rome in 1517. At first, Aretino was a member of

¹⁵ Pasquinades during the pontificates of Leo X, Adrian VI and Clement VII are the subject of chapter 3, section 1.

¹⁶ See Neil Harris, *Bibliografia dell' "Orlando Innamorato"*, 2 vols. (Modena: Panini, 1988-1991). The *poligrafi*'s views on language, and their implications, are the subject of chapter 3.

¹⁷ These texts are discussed in chapter 4, section 1.

the household of the Sienese banker Agostino Chigi, the richest man in Rome at the time of his death in 1520.¹⁸ After Chigi's death, and following the success of Aretino's satirical treatment of Leo X's obsession with his pet elephant and the vices of several prominent members of the Roman curia, Aretino became a member of Leo's circle, and, following Leo's death, a member of Cardinal Giulio de' Medici's household (Giulio would later become Clement VII). During the conclave that would ultimately elect Adrian VI in 1521, Aretino was credibly accused of using pasquinades to libel various candidates who were considered *papabili* in order to influence the cardinals to vote instead for his friend and patron, Giulio de' Medici (the future Clement VII). His attempt was unsuccessful, although Adrian's papacy was very short and Giulio de' Medici was elected as Adrian VI's successor in 1523. Eventually, however, Aretino was forced to leave Rome in the wake of the *I modi* scandal, in which he collaborated with the artist Giulio Romano and the engraver Marcantonio Raimondi on a series of explicit depictions of sexual positions, for each of which Aretino provided an accompanying sonnet, now collectively known as the *Sonetti lussuriosi*.¹⁹ This cumulated in an near-fatal altercation between Aretino and an accomplice of the pope's datary, Gian Matteo Giberti, called Achille della Volta (who Aretino accused repeatedly in his writings of having carried out the assault, as well as accusing Giberti of having ordered it, though neither were ever punished).²⁰ In the wake of the scandal, having lost the protection of Clement VII, Aretino was forced to leave Rome for Mantua in 1525, where he stayed for two years before moving to Venice in 1527. From even this brief précis

¹⁸ On Chigi and his patronage of writers, see Ingrid D. Rowland, 'Some Panegyrics to Agostino Chigi', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 47 (1984), pp. 194-99.

¹⁹ The best analysis of *I modi* and the accompanying scandal is Bette Talvacchia, *Taking Positions: On the Erotic in Renaissance Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

²⁰ See Francesco Berni, *Rime* (Turin: Einaudi, 1969); Reynolds (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism at the Court of Clement VII*, pp. 133-38; Paul Larivaille, *Pietro Aretino fra Rinascimento e Manierismo* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1980), pp. 79-80. On Giberti, see Adriano Prosperi, *Tra evangelismo e contrariforma: Gian Matteo Giberti* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1969).

of Aretino's career in Rome we can already get a sense of the volatility and danger of this environment for these writers: Aretino changed patrons very rapidly, and quickly achieved a vast level of influence within the Roman literary world – but he remained vulnerable and, ultimately, dispensable, and was indeed, disposed of by Giulio de' Medici when he became a liability.

Francesco Berni's experience was similar to that of Aretino, although his career also highlights the dangers of being overwhelmingly reliant on a single patron for an extended period. At first, Berni had the advantage that his source of patronage was more consistent than that of Aretino: he very quickly became a member of the *familia* of Giovan Matteo Giberti, who was the papal datary and the bishop of Verona. However, he and Giberti eventually clashed in the early 1530s, prompting Berni's dismissal. Although we cannot be sure whether Berni was dismissed from Giberti's service or left of his own accord, the account of Giberti's secretary, Giovanni Battista Sanga, who attempted to unsuccessfully mediate between Giberti and Berni, suggests that the reason for the tension was Berni's inability, or unwillingness, to adhere to restrictions stipulated by Giberti. In March 1531, Sanga expressed quite frankly his opinion to Berni that:

I wrote my views to Giberti and to you, that is, that His Lordship should not keep you, dissatisfied, in his service, but that he should do you some good and put the bridle on your neck, and let you, with his good grace, take that direction you chose; but you did not agree to this, as though you knew that your temperament could not find a way of fitting in with it; just as I believe (if I have to speak the truth) you will never fit in with it, for in three or four years you have not been able to fit in with it.²¹

After he left Giberti's service, Berni spent some time in the service of Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici, and then joined the *familia* of Cardinal Niccolò Ridolfi, both enemies of Alessandro

²¹ 'Scrissi a Monsignore [Giberti] & a voi l'opinione mia, cioè che né S. Signora vi tenesse appresso di sé mal contento, ma vi facesse qualche bene; & vi mettesse poi la briglia su 'l collo, et vi lasciasse pigliar con sua buona gratia di voi quel partito, che vi piacesse: né voi ci steste, se conoscevate il vostro cervello non potersi accomodare. a starvi contento: così come (se v'ho a dire il vero) credo, non v'accomoderete mai, poiché in tre anni, o quattro, non vi ci sete potuto accomodare.' Giovanni Battista Sanga, Letter to Francesco Berni, 11 March 1531, included in Dionigi Atanagi (ed.), *De le lettere facete, et piacevoli di diversi grandi huomini* (Venice: Bolognino Zaltieri, 1561), pp. 229-30. Quoted in Reynolds (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism at the Court of Clement VII*, pp. 50-1. This is Reynolds's translation.

de' Medici, the duke of Florence from 1531 until his assassination in 1537. Despite Ridolfi and Alessandro's mutual enmity, Berni moved to Florence in 1533, and remained there until his death in 1535. Late in life, Berni reflected, from Florence, on his years in Rome in the service of Giberti:

The court has had from me sixteen years of torment and suffering, and I have had from it the sum of four hundred ducats and three hundred of them or more have been given to me out of kindness by two men whom I consider the only true prelates, both recorded in the book of my heart which is in good order: one is Cardinal Ridolfi, the other the bishop of Verona [Giberti].²²

Clearly, we can see from this comment the potential difficulties of being a writer, or a 'professional poet', as Berni referred to himself, in such a volatile atmosphere. Another important aspect of being a 'professional poet' in Rome in this period can, moreover, be ascertained from the examples of Berni and Aretino: that there was no overarching cultural programme, as was the case in other courts such as Mantua and Florence. This could be an advantage, in that the different factions within the Roman curia were constantly in conflict, and therefore interested in hiring writers to libel one other and promote their interests – there were plenty of opportunities to go round. However, the possibility that one might offend the wrong person, with potentially violent consequences, was ever-present. Even being patronised by the pope himself did not insulate a writer from this factionalism, as Aretino's experience demonstrates. Finally, it is important to note that the level of indulgence regarding pasquinades waxed and waned dramatically with each pope. As previously noted, Adrian VI, for instance, issued a prohibition on pasquinades during his brief pontificate.²³ Ultimately, the general exodus of artists and writers from Rome following the sack of 1527

²² 'La corte avuto ha in presto / sedici anni da me d'affanno e stento, / et io da lei ducati quattrocento: // che ve ne son trecento, / o più, a me per cortesia donati / da duoi che soli son per me prelati // ambeduoi registrati / nel libro del mio cuor ch'è in carta buona: / l'uno è Ridolfi e quell'altro è Verona.' Francesco Berni, 'Sua vita in villa e sua vita in corte', in Francesco Berni, *Rime burlesche* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1991), pp. 259-260.

²³ Reynolds (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism at the Court of Clement VII*, p. 300. Cf. the introduction to Valerio Marucci, Antonio Marzo and Angelo Romano (eds.), *Pasquinate romane del cinquecento*, vol. 1 (Rome: Salerno, 1983). Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide page numbers for this citation.

meant that it declined as a cultural hub during the 1530s and 1540s, recovering only in the latter half of the sixteenth century.

The court of Mantua was a consistently important source of patronage for *poligrafi* in this period. In contrast to the more turbulent environments of Rome and Venice, support from Mantua, once secured, tended to be stable and to continue for many years, though only a handful of *poligrafi* – most notably, Aretino and Nicolò Franco – were able to secure patronage from the ruling Gonzaga family, and only lived in Mantua itself for brief periods. The Gonzaga of Mantua (who, from 1533, also ruled the former Paleologo court of Casale Monferrato) made the patronage of artists, writers, and musicians a central part of their campaign to increase the family's social and cultural capital, which grew steadily throughout the sixteenth century, despite the lack of a pope in the family.²⁴ A particularly important Gonzaga patron of the *poligrafi* in Mantua was Federico (or Federigo) II Gonzaga, who ruled from 1519 until his death in 1540. He was first introduced to Aretino in 1523 by the writer's Roman patron, Giulio de' Medici. Aretino took great care to cultivate a relationship with Federico, despite the fact that the writer remained in Rome with Giulio de' Medici until 1525. We can already see, in this relationship, what would be a hallmark of Aretino's success in Venice from the early 1530s onwards – his ability to maintain multiple sources of patronage simultaneously, through a combination of high productivity, flattery, and threats (both public and private). There are many letters in which Aretino, while still in Rome, demanded financial rewards or, as Francesco Gonzaga, Federico's ambassador in Rome, put

²⁴ Scholarship on the Gonzaga's artistic patronage has historically concentrated on that of Francesco II and, especially, Isabella d'Este: see Molly Bourne, *Francesco II Gonzaga: The Soldier-Prince as Patron* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2008); Sarah Cockram, *Isabella d'Este and Francesco Gonzaga: Power Sharing at the Italian Renaissance Court* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013). See also Francesca Mattei (ed.), *Federico II Gonzaga e le arti* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2016); Ian Fenlon, *Music and Patronage in Sixteenth-Century Mantua*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980-1982). In the last two decades work on Mantuan patronage has broadened the focus from that of Gonzaga themselves to that of other prominent figures in Mantua: see Guido Rebecchini, *Private Collectors in Mantua, 1500–1630* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2002); Barbara Furlotti and Guido Rebecchini, *The Art of Mantua: Power and Patronage in the Renaissance* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2008); Sally Anne Hickson, *Women, Art and Architectural Patronage in Renaissance Mantua: Matrons, Mystics and Monasteries* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2012).

it ‘material recognition for his services’ from Federico.²⁵

On 7 June 1525, Federico II Gonzaga wrote to Aretino requesting copies of his pasquinades from that year. He warned:

Remember that your pasquinades cannot easily remain secret. And when they are made public all over Rome and almost the rest of Italy, they are not so delightful to us, not because they are not exactly the same when they are made public as they were before, but because the novelty commends all things and adds worth to particular things. You can see that we are charging you with not having kept to your promise. If you want to be let off, you had better send us all of your things sent to Pasquino at the time of 25 April [The Festival of Pasquino], as well as all your compositions since. We know moreover that there were a number of subjects worthy of your genius.²⁶

There are several ways in which this missive could be interpreted: it could, for example, be argued that Federico’s displeasure with Aretino for not sending him his latest pasquinades was simply because he took a special delight in reading them before anybody else had a chance to do so. But it may also suggest that, at this early stage, pasquinades and pasquinade-writers were already becoming valued for the political information that they contained – as a rough indication of a given pope’s popularity, and as a source of gossip – as well as for their effect on political discourse, as was certainly the case in the diplomatic correspondence examined by Filippo de Vivo in a considerably later period, during the Venetian Interdict crisis of 1606-7.²⁷ By October of 1525, however, Aretino had been forced to leave Rome for Mantua in the wake of the *I modi* scandal, initially to join his friend Giovanni de’ Medici dalle Bande Nere. Following Giovanni’s death in November 1526, he remained in Mantua with Federico as his principal patron for a relatively short period, during which his

²⁵ Francesco Gonzaga, quoted in Baschet, ‘Documents concernant la personne de messer Pietro Aretino’, p. 118.

²⁶ Francesco Gonzaga, quoted in Baschet, ‘Documents concernant la personne de messer Pietro Aretino’ p. 127; This is Reynolds’ translation, in Reynolds (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism at the Court of Clement VII*, p. 131.

²⁷ De Vivo quotes an English ambassador’s wry comment during the crisis that ‘the Poets have plentiful rayned showers of their witt upon the season’ and that ‘new discourses...doe dayly appeare’, noting that ambassadors took special care to transcribe and comment upon pasquinades that they encountered in their diplomatic correspondence. Filippo de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 203. For a discussion of the content of pasquinades in this period, please see chapter 3, pp. 123-31.

relationship with the marquis became strained to the point that Federico offered in a letter to the pope to have him assassinated (though the offer was declined).²⁸ In March 1527, Aretino moved to Venice.²⁹ Nevertheless, Federico remained in contact with him throughout the 1530s via his ambassador in Venice, Benedetto Agnello, and Aretino's relationship with the marquis recovered, at a distance, in the mid-1530s.³⁰ The same long-distance strategy was followed with Nicolò Franco, who appears to have come into contact with the Gonzaga very early in his career while he was based in Naples. When he moved to Venice in 1536, he living in Agnello's house. Franco's first collection of letters was dedicated to the Agnello family, and in the same work he claimed to have known Benedetto since the early 1530s.³¹ After Franco left Venice in 1540, he moved to the Gonzaga's secondary court of Casale Monferrato and later, in 1547, to Mantua itself a period which will be discussed at greater length in the next section. For now, it is worth noting that in the 1540s, despite Federico's death and replacement by his young son Francesco III in 1540, the Gonzaga continued to demonstrate a willingness to invest time and money in the writers they patronised, arranged for not one but two printing presses to be set up in their territories: Giovanni Antonio Guidone, a Torinese printer who was active in Casale Monferrato in 1541-3, and the

²⁸ Alessandro Luzio, *Pietro Aretino nei primi suoi anni a Venezia e la corte dei Gonzaga* (Turin: Ermando Loescher, 1888), pp. 62-3.

²⁹ Reynolds (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism at the Court of Clement VII*, p. 131; see also Luzio, *Pietro Aretino nei suoi primi anni a Venezia e la corte dei Gonzaga*; Larivaille, *Pietro Aretino fra Rinascimento e manierismo*.

³⁰ Federico II Gonzaga's worries about Aretino lampooning him are discussed in chapter 2, as is the subsequent improvement in their relations. In 1530, Agnello referred to Aretino as 'impudent' and as a 'lunatic'; '[impudente [...] e pazzo]'. ASMa, AG, b. 1461, f. 174. Cf. Luzio, *Pietro Aretino nei suoi primi anni a Venezia e la corte dei Gonzaga*, p. 101. Aretino was also suspected of having arranged an assault on a Mantuan antique-dealer called Mainoldo: Luzio, *Pietro Aretino nei suoi primi anni a Venezia e la corte dei Gonzaga*, Letters by Agnello to duke Federico on 5 February and 23 February 1531, pp. 103-4.

³¹ Nicolò Franco, *Le pistole vulgari* (Venice: Antonio Gardane, 1539). Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide page numbers for this reference.

Rufinelli family of printers in Mantua.³² They also cultivated relationships with other *poligrafi* who were never resident in Mantua itself, such as Lodovico Dolce and Ortensio Lando, who both dedicated works to Agnello or otherwise prominently praised him in various printed works.³³

We last turn to Florence, which became a particularly important source of patronage for *poligrafi* after Cosimo I became duke in 1537.³⁴ Cosimo initiated a vigorous programme of cultural patronage that was in many ways analogous to that of Mantua.³⁵ The relationship between Cosimo and Aretino and the latter's incorporation into the duke's diplomatic network, while Aretino was in Venice, will be discussed in chapter 2. But several *poligrafi* also worked for Cosimo directly in Florence, including, notably, Anton Francesco Doni and Lodovico Domenichi. Doni was commissioned for a brief period to run Cosimo I's official press, benefitting from Cosimo's desire for a 'politically reliable' printer to break the monopoly of the Giunti family, who had republican sympathies and who owned the only press in Florence from 1537 until Doni set up shop, with funding from the Florentine state,

³² On Guidone, see Marina Bersano Begey and Giuseppe Dondi (eds.), *Le cinquecentine piemontesi* (Turin: Tipografia torinese editrice, 1961), p. 365; on the Rufinelli, see the series of articles by Dennis Everard in *La Bibliofilia*: Everard, 'A Bibliography of Mantua', *La Bibliofilia* 58:2 (1956), pp. 161-75; 59:1 (1957), pp. 23-34; 59:2 and 59:3 (published together in 1957), pp. 143-6. Benedetto Agnello personally arranged for the Rufinelli press to be set up in Mantua in 1543, which became the first to operate in Mantua since 1519. See ASMa, AG, Letter from Benedetto Agnello to Sabino Calandra, 20 October 1543, b. 1475; ASMa, AG, Letter from Benedetto Agnello to Sabino Calandra, 15 March 1544, b. 1476; D. S. Chambers, 'Benedetto Agnello, Mantuan Ambassador in Venice, 1530-1556' in J. R. Hale, D. S. Chambers, Cecil H. Clough, and Michael Mallett (eds.), *War, Culture and Society in Renaissance Venice: Essays in Honour of John Hale* (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), p. 133.

³³ In Dolce's case this was a translation of Philostratus, *La vita del gran philosopho Apolloni Tianeos* (Venice: Gabriele Giolito, 1549). Lando refers to Agnello as the 'king of hospitality' in his *Sette libri die cathaloghi* (Venice: Gabriele Giolito & fratelli, 1552), p. 534.

³⁴ Unfortunately, our ability to research Alessandro de' Medici's patronage in the 1530s is compromised by the loss of much of the documentation produced by the Florentine state during his reign. See Alessio Assonitis and Brian Sandberg (eds.), *The Grand Ducal Medici and their Archive, 1537-1743* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2016); Catherine Fletcher, *The Black Prince of Florence: The Life of Alessandro de' Medici* (London: Vintage Books, 2017).

³⁵ On Cosimo I's patronage, see Alessio Assonitis and Brian Sandberg (eds.), *The Grand Ducal Medici and their Archive, 1537-1743* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2016).

in 1546.³⁶ Doni was also elected secretary of Cosimo's *Accademia fiorentina* the same year.³⁷ Initially, Doni was initially extremely prolific – he printed twelve books in 1546, and another eight in 1547, including many by members of the *Accademia Fiorentina*: his 'diligence' in these endeavours was noted approvingly by the historian Paolo Giovio. However, ultimately, he fell out with Domenichi whom Doni had personally invited to come to Florence from Venice in order to collaborate with him in the printing house. Doni went so far as to accuse Domenichi of heresy, which resulted in the latter's imprisonment. Eventually, Doni left Florence for Venice.³⁸ His press and manuscripts in preparation, which included a draft of the first edition of Vasari's *Lives*, were handed over to the Flemish printer Lorenzo Torrentino, who would also go on to print the first edition of Guicciardini's *History of Italy*. Doni nevertheless attempted to repair his relationship with Cosimo. Letters from Doni to Cosimo in the *Mediceo del Principato* include one that accompanied the gift of one of his works printed in Venice, in 1552, at the high point of his career, as well as a desperate affirmation in 1563, during the financially precarious final period of his life that, despite 'the grave blow that [Doni] had received from fortune', he remained Cosimo's 'first and most faithful servant', as he claimed was demonstrated by more than twenty of his works.³⁹ It is unclear whether or not Cosimo ever responded to these missives.

While Doni left Florence shortly after the collapse of his printing enterprise, Domenichi

³⁶ A request from Doni for a very substantial subsidy of 300 scudi is referenced in some notes of Pier Francesco Riccio, Cosimo's *maggiordomo*, from 2 August 1546: ASF, *MdP*, vol. 613, insert 2, f. 13. It is referred to as a 'nuovo subsidio', so presumably it was not the first injection of cash that Doni had received. See also Paul F. Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World, 1530-1560: Anton Francesco Doni, Nicolò Franco, and Ortensio Lando* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), p. 55; Fernanda Ascarelli, *La tipografia cinquecentesca italiana* (Florence: Sansoni antiquariato, 1953), p. 133-7.

³⁷ Giovanni Aquilecchia, 'Pietro Aretino e altri poligrafi a Venezia', in Girolamo Arnaldi and Manlio Pastore Stocchi (eds.), *Storia della cultura veneta. Dal primo quattrocento al Concilio di Trento*, vol. 2 (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1980), pp. 94-95.

³⁸ Paolo Giovio, letter to Pier Francesco Riccio, 30 July 1546, ASF, *MdP*, vol. 1170a., f. 104.

³⁹ Francesco Marcolini, letter to Cosimo I, 17 September 1552, ASF, *MdP*, vol. 411, f. 233; Anton Francesco Doni, letter to Cosimo I, 15 January 1563, ASF, *MdP*, vol. 503, f. 142.

continued to live in Florence on and off until his death in 1564. This was despite Doni having accused him of heresy following his translation of Calvin's *Nicomediana*, which had initially resulted in Domenichi being sentenced to life imprisonment, though the sentence was later overturned.⁴⁰ He seems to have spent his time translating a wide range of religious and philosophical works into the vernacular for Cosimo, as well as, like Aretino, becoming involved in Florence's information network: several *avvisi* from 1555 and 1556 by Giovanni de' Rossi, a merchant in Venice and, most likely, a Florentine informant, are addressed to him.⁴¹ Cosimo seems to have been particularly anxious about the manuscript translations of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* that he asked Domenichi and Benedetto Varchi to produce in 1549, intended as gifts for Charles V. While Varchi delivered his translation promptly, Domenichi seems to have taken quite some time to deliver. A run of letters concerning the episode in the *Mediceo del Principato* attests to the duke's frustration with Domenichi, though it proved to be temporary, since a list of people receiving a stipend from the court from the year of Domenichi's death, in 1564, shows that he was to receive over 16 florins, attesting to his ability to remain in the duke's good graces in the long term.⁴² At the same time, Domenichi worked prolifically on other translations for the Giunti press – which continued operate successfully, despite Torrentino's ducal patronage – and for presses in

⁴⁰ For biographical information on Domenichi, see Angela Piscini, 'Lodovico Domenichi', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 40 (1991). On the accusation of heresy against Domenichi, see Enrico Garavelli, *Lodovico Domenichi e i "Nicodemiana" di Calvino. Storia di un libro perduto e ritrovato* (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 2004); Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World, 1530-1560*, p. 56. This experience did not, however, dissuade Domenichi from translating other Protestant writers including Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa, at roughly the same time as Calvin, and, later, Johannes Sleidanus, in 1557.

⁴¹ ASF, *MdP*, vol. 3079, f. 2; ASF, *MdP*, vol. 3079, f. 13; ASF, *MdP*, vol. 3079, f. 6; ASF, *MdP*, vol. 3079, f. 31; ASF, *MdP*, vol. 3079, f. 40.

⁴² The first mention of the duke's intention to give these translations to Charles V as a gift is in a letter from Lelio Torelli (Cosimo's *primo segretario*) to Lorenzo Pagni (a Florentine envoy then based in Pisa), on 23 May 1549, ASF, *MdP*, vol. 1176b, f. 86; on 20 October of the same year, Pagni wrote to Pier Francesco Riccio from the Medici villa at Poggio a Caiano that the duke found it 'difficult to believe' that Domenichi had not yet finished the translation, and urged Riccio to get him to hurry up ([n]on vuole né può credere il duca nostro signore che il Domenichi non habbi copia della traductione che fece di Boetio'). ASF, *MdP*, vol. 1170a, f. 752. Two days later, Pagni reports to Riccio that Charles V has already received Varchi's translation: ASF, *MdP*, vol. 1175, f. 19. Domenichi's stipend is mentioned in ASF, *MdP*, vol. 616, inserto 19, f. 257.

Venice and Milan throughout the 1550s. While attached to the Florentine court, Domenichi also produced several original works, the most important of which are perhaps *La nobiltà delle donne* (1549), *Historia del detti e fatti notabili di diversi principi et huomini privati moderni* (1556), and *La donna di corte* (1564), as well as his crowning achievement, the *Dialoghi [...] cioè d'amore, de' rimedi d'amore, dell'amor fraterno, della fortuna, della vera nobiltà, dell'imprese, della corte, et della stampa*, printed by the Giolito press in 1562, from which much of our knowledge of his biography is derived. It is clear from the examples of Doni and Domenichi that, like Mantua – and unlike Rome – the Florentine court under Cosimo I had a thought-out cultural programme which involved the *poligrafi* in significant ways. Both *poligrafi* were involved in specific projects designed to increase Florence's cultural prestige, and Domenichi even became a part of a crucial diplomatic enterprise. It is also clear that Cosimo was willing to invest significant amounts of energy and money into *poligrafi*, and even to continue patronising them after they proved to be disruptive in some cases, whereas making a mistake in Rome often tended to have dire consequences for the individual involved.⁴³

We will see in chapter 2 how different that the circumstances of being a member of a court or a cardinal's household were from working in Venice, where most *poligrafi* tried to cultivate links with the press and local and non-local patrons with varying degrees of success. At courts, in contrast, it was much more common to be dependent on a single source of patronage. The courts under consideration in this chapter do however differ significantly from one another with regard to their degree of volatility: Rome was a much more dangerous

⁴³ Cosimo's cultural programme is discussed in Konrad Eisenbichler (ed.), *The Cultural Politics of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001). See particularly the chapters by Margaret A. Gallucci, 'Cellini's Trial for Sodomy: Power and Patronage at the Court of Cosimo I', pp. 37-46; Antonio Ricci, 'Lorenzo Torrentino and the Cultural Programme of Cosimo I de' Medici', pp. 103-120; and Domenico Zanrè, 'Ritual and Parody in Mid-Cinquecento Florence: Cosimo de' Medici and the Accademia del Piano', pp. 189-204. See also Domenico Zanrè, *Cultural Non-Conformity in Early Modern Florence* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

place, but its political system and levels of wealth meant that there were opportunities for a much greater number of writers to be supported there than was the case in Mantua or Florence. But it is also important to remember that the *poligrafi* did not only spend their time as members at major urban centres and princely courts such as Rome, Mantua and Florence when not in Venice. They also spent time in relative backwaters, which were part of the territories of courts or city-republics elsewhere. Rather than going through many examples in detail, individual reasons for living on the periphery, and the advantages and disadvantages of doing so, will be explored more thoroughly in the following section. For now, it is sufficient to say that smaller cities and courts, which tended to lack both printing presses and any particularly wealthy and powerful patrons, do not seem to have been able to support *poligrafi* for long periods, and therefore they tended to base themselves in such places either at the very beginning of their careers or as a last resort.

Negotiating Networks: Nicolò Franco, 1540-1570

In this section, I examine the social world of a single *poligrafo*, Nicolò Franco, drawing primarily on his personal manuscript *copialettere* (or *epistolario*), a rich selection of his correspondence – some 847 letters, sent and received – from 1540 to 1559. The manuscript, now known as MS Vat. Lat. 5642, has long been known to scholars interested in Franco's biography. However, it has never been used to try to understand patronage structures in a systematic way.⁴⁴ Paul Grendler has suggested that it was confiscated from Franco when he was arrested in Rome on the Carafa's orders in 1558, and never returned to him.⁴⁵ Though this is improbable, given that the last letters in the manuscript in fact date from the year after his arrest, it is certainly very unusual for a personal manuscript *epistolario* of a person of

⁴⁴ See, for example, Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World, 1530-1560*, pp. 38-49; Roberto L. Bruni, 'Polemiche cinquecentesche. Franco, Aretino, Domenichi', *Italian Studies* 32:1 (1977), pp. 52-67.

⁴⁵ Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World, 1530-1560*, p. 46.

Franco's social status to survive, and is unique as far as the *poligrafi* are concerned, though they published many of their letters as *libri di lettere*. The crucial difference, however, between printed *libri di lettere* and this private manuscript collection is that the former only documented relationships that the *poligrafi* wanted to publicise: the *epistolario*, conversely, is above all useful as a record of failed attempts at seeking patronage, and of a side of Franco's personality that is very different from the assured persona of his printed works. My method in this section has been to look at different types of relationship across the period covered by the *epistolario*: with Franco's family in Benevento; with literary figures, in the world of print as well as other writers at princely courts; and with patrons themselves, all in order to examine how Franco's social networks evolved over time, paying particular attention to how it changed when he moved from place to place.

A word on the *epistolario*'s material form and structure. It is important to bear in mind that the manuscript is comprised of multiple notebooks bound together, into which Franco usually copied letters in the order that they were sent or received (though he was much more likely to keep copies of the latter). Sometimes letters are out of chronological sequence, or are not dated. There is no categorisation of letters within the manuscript, and indeed, the manuscript also contains drafts of literary works such as a letter to the noblewomen of Mantua, and another to Dante, which was eventually printed.⁴⁶ Sometimes many letters will be copied into the *epistolario* in quick succession; at other times, large time gaps of several months occur, in which Franco did not copy any letters into the *epistolario*. This is therefore only a partial record of what must have been a much greater volume of correspondence, though of course we cannot determine what proportion of his letters Franco decided to copy

⁴⁶ This is recorded as being sent 'dal mondo'. Franco, *Epistolario*, pp. 568-5 (cc. 265r.-271v.). Note that throughout this section, for convenience, I have provided references to both Falardo's edition (which includes the first 351 letters of the *epistolario*, from 1540-1548) as well as to the manuscript in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, BAV MS Vat. Lat. 5642, where possible. The letter to Dante was later published in Mantua in a collection by Venturino Ruffinelli (ed.), *Delle lettere di diversi autori* (Mantua: [Giacomo Ruffinelli], 1547).

into the *epistolario*. Nevertheless, because this material was a private record of correspondence he considered important, rather than for print publication as a *libro di lettere*, it allows us a glimpse at, if not his private self, then at least other versions of Franco's 'social self' than the Franco of his published writings – the version that he presented to a wide range of correspondents, including friends, family, and patrons.⁴⁷ In the latter case, this text affords us a rare glimpse at both successful patronage relationships as well as those that never began, such as those he attempted to forge with Alfonso d'Avalos, the marquis of Vasto and Governor of Milan, and Carlo Carafa, the nephew of the future Paul IV.

Before we come to an analysis of particular relationships within the *copialettere*, a brief word on Franco's biography. Franco moved from Benevento via Naples to Venice in 1536, where he initially stayed in the house of the Mantuan ambassador, Benedetto Agnello. His relationship with the Gonzaga seems to have begun very early in his career while he was in Naples. In Venice he quickly came under Aretino's wing. After publicly falling out with the older man Franco was forced to leave Venice in 1540 for the relative backwater of Casale Monferrato, in modern-day Piedmont – then under Gonzaga control.⁴⁸ In the period covered by the *epistolario*, Franco lived primarily in Casale, Mantua, Popoli, Benevento, and Rome, though he also spent time in Naples and Bologna, and tried to gain patronage from Alfonso d'Avalos at the Milanese court. Eventually, however, Franco was able to move to Mantua itself in 1546, followed by Popoli in 1548, and finally, to Rome in the late 1550s where he lived for just over a decade: first, in the house of his Beneventan compatriot, Bartolomeo Camerario, and then for most of the final ten years of his life as a member of the household of Cardinal Giovanni Morone.

⁴⁷ On the concept of a social self, see Shaw, *Necessary Conjunctions*, pp. 99-100.

⁴⁸ For a brief synopsis of how the Gonzaga came to control Casale Monferrato, see David Parrott, 'The Mantuan Succession, 1627-31: A Sovereignty Dispute in Early Modern Europe', *The English Historical Review* 112:445 (1997), pp. 30-1.

The *copialettere* begins just as Franco was preparing to leave Venice: in a letter to an anonymous recipient, he apologised for being necessarily brief, since he was forced to write with ‘one foot in the boat’.⁴⁹ It seems, interestingly, that the break with Aretino was partly to do with the older *poligrafo*’s dissatisfaction with Franco’s editorial work on the first edition of the first volume of his published letters: in a letter to Aretino, Lodovico Dolce, who ultimately replaced Franco as editor on the second edition and went on to collaborate with Aretino on his later works, complained about what he saw as Franco’s sloppy editorial practice, which he suggested stemmed from an imperfect grasp of Latin and the classics.⁵⁰ It has also been suggested that part of the reason for the break was Aretino’s displeasure at Franco’s efforts to publish his own collection of letters, which the elder man saw as an attempt to supplant him. In any case, the rupture between the two *poligrafi* had life-threatening consequences for Franco, as he was subsequently assaulted by one of Aretino’s *creati*, Giovanni Ambrogio degli Eusebi, who slashed Franco’s face with a razor. In a letter to his friend Francesco Alunno, Franco noted the ironic parallels between this incident and Aretino’s own flight from Rome in 1525, after he was physically attacked by a member of the bishop of Verona’s household.⁵¹ Soon after the attack by Eusebi, Franco left for Casale

⁴⁹ ‘Perche voglio che vi basti questa risposta fattavi in fretta, in disagio, et col piede in barca.’ Franco, *Epistolario*, 48 (c. 3r).

⁵⁰ Federico Della Corte, ‘Nell’officina Di Marcolini. I Collaborati Editoriali’, in Paolo Procaccioli, Paolo Temeroli, and Vanni Tesei (eds.), *Un giardino per le arti. Francesco Marcolino da Forlì: la vita, l’opera, il catalogo* (Bologna: Compositori, 2009), pp. 136–7. Federico Della Corte has, incidentally, argued that Aretino and Dolce’s dissatisfaction with Franco’s editing of the first edition was ‘unjustified and specious’, from the standpoint that typographical errors were no more prevalent than in subsequent editions supervised by Dolce. More interesting, however, than whether or not Franco had the technical skills to be a good editor, is Dolce’s disparagement of Franco’s spelling – which probably reflected the fact that he hailed, unlike Dolce the Venetian and Aretino the Tuscan, from southern Italy – and his disdain for Franco’s learning. This emphasis on knowledge of Latin complicates the arguments of those who, like Paul Grendler, emphasise the hostility of the *poligrafi* towards ‘pedantry’. The *poligrafi*’s views on language, and their consequences, are the subject of chapter 3.

⁵¹ Notably, he comments that ‘as we know, in their ignorance, neither the bishops, nor the archbishops, know how to respond to him in rhyme, but they know how to stab very well’. ‘[...] nell’ignoranza sapendo che né i vescovi, né gli arcivescovi né i prencipi sapiano rispondergli con le rime, ma con le pugnolate sì bene.’ Franco, *Epistolario*, pp. 65–9 (c. 10r–12r). Francesco Alunno was the pen name of Francesco del Bailo, on which see Angela Piscini, ‘Francesco del Bailo’, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 36 (1988).

Monferrato. There is evidence that the Mantuan ambassador to Venice, Benedetto Agnello, assisted Franco in his move to Casale, and that the Gonzaga arranged for a printer to set up shop there, who went on to print several of Franco's works, including attacks on Aretino in the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino* and *la Priapea*, which were published together.⁵² Franco would be based there until 1546.

Franco's first years in Casale were characterised by attempts to maintain his existing links with printers in Venice, and to leverage relationships with his friends and family in other cities to try to create new patronage links. In another letter to Alunno, from shortly before he moved to Casale, Franco commented that 'I will not be able to boast of having friends close by, but at least I will be able to boast of having ones far away'.⁵³ It is clear from letters to multiple correspondents that Franco, aware of the need to seize the narrative following his flight from Venice, was anxious to justify the tone of his public attacks on Aretino in the *Rime* and the *Priapea*, in which he accused the older man of sodomy, blasphemy, and a host of other sins. Many early letters suggest that Franco was worried, or perhaps paranoid, about the extent of Aretino's power and influence in the world of Venetian publishing. At one point, in another letter to Alunno, Franco even alleges that Aretino had spies working for him in the workshop of Giovanni Giolito – one of Venice's most prominent and prolific printers in the sixteenth-century – in the period in which Giolito was printing his second edition of Franco's *Dialogi piacevoli*.⁵⁴ If this was genuinely the case, however, it seems to have been ineffective as a means of suppressing the continued publication of

⁵² Nicolò Franco, *Rime di M. Nicolo Franco contra Pietro Aretino; & nel fine la Priapea del medemo autore* (Turin [actually Casale Monferrato]: Appresso di Gioan Antonio Guidone, 1541). These texts will be discussed in detail in chapters 3 and 5. Guidone also printed Franco's *Dialogo di m. Nicolo Franco. Dove si ragiona delle bellezze* (Casale Monferrato: ne le stampe di Giovanni Antonio Guidone, 1542).

⁵³ '[...] non potrò vantarmi d'haver amici vicini, me ne vanti almeno d'havergli lontani'. Franco, *Epistolario*, p. 43 (c. 1r). In the same period, Franco also wrote letters to his brother Vincenzo, in Benevento, and to Marcantonio Passero, a bookseller based in Naples, informing them of his troubles in Venice and asking for them to, respectively, spread the word of his predicament, and to ask him to help sell his books in his shop. See *Ibid.*, p. 49 (c. 3v); pp. 50-3 (cc. 3v-5r).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 65-69 (cc. 10r-12r).

Franco's books, since Giolito went on to print Franco's *Il Petarchista* in 1541 and 1543, and his *Dialogi piacevoli* four more times in 1542, 1544, 1554 and 1559.

In his early years in Casale, Franco also corresponded with Lodovico Domenichi, who was then working as an editor and translator for Giolito. The correspondence between Franco and Domenichi centres on practical matters for the most part, including the likelihood of Domenichi helping Franco getting published in Venice. In the first of these letters to be copied into the *epistolario*, from Domenichi to Franco on 18 April 1541, Domenichi offered to read any compositions that Franco might send him, while at the same time stressing his limited ability to get them published.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the Giolito press continued to print works by Franco regularly throughout the 1540s and intermittently in the 1550s. Franco's motivation for preserving this letter in the *epistolario* may, therefore, have been a desire to keep a record of Domenichi's tentative offer. On the other hand, in another exchange of letters between Franco and Domenichi the following year, Franco seemed to take offence at Domenichi's lack of respect for his work, despite his letters and two sonnets that Domenichi had written in tribute to Franco.⁵⁶ In his reply, Domenichi defended himself from Franco's accusations that his flattery had been in any way insincere or that he was in any way 'ungrateful'.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, Franco published his letter to Domenichi as an addendum to his *Dialogo dove si ragiona delle bellezze*, making his dispute with Domenichi public. It appears, from this correspondence, that despite Aretino's opinion of him and prominence in Venice, Franco was still highly regarded, at least by some Venetian publishers: evidently, he

⁵⁵ 'Come si sia io con questa mia povera di cerimonie, ma colma d'affetione, v'offerisco da hora innanzi il mio piccolo potere, havendovi per l'a dietro donato senza vostra saputa il mio cor grandissimo. Et quando degnarete d'usare nei vostri comandi i miei servigi allhora sarò sicuro che l'amicitia mia non vi sia discara benché di basso et oscuro nome...Non vi spiaccia ancho caso che mi giudichiate degno ch'io vegga et veggendola osservi alcuna de le dotte et chiare compositioni vostre perché, ciò facendo, mi farete singular favore.' Lodovico Domenichi, in Franco, *Epistolario*, pp. 54-5 (cc. 5r.-5v.).

⁵⁶ Franco, *Epistolario*, pp. 146-7 (cc. 49v.- 50v.).

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 148 (cc. 50v.-51r.).

was not as isolated from the world of Venetian publishing as has generally been assumed to have been the case. Nevertheless, Franco chose to have new works, such as his *Dialogo dove si ragiona delle bellezze*, printed in Casale Monferrato instead by Guidone.⁵⁸

Franco's stock gradually rose during his time in Casale. At some point – the precise date is unclear – he was elected head of a literary academy, the *Argonauti*.⁵⁹ Other prominent members included Giovan Francesco Arrivabene and Pietro Catalano, who are both correspondents in the *epistolario*. Many of his letters, as shown in figs. 2 and 3, were to academy members in the vicinity of Casale. However, he also frequently wrote to people in Mantua and Milan, as well as corresponding frequently with his family and friends in Benevento (initial correspondences with acquaintances in Lyon, Paris, and Naples, though they stand out on the map, do not seem to have borne fruit). The *Argonauti* eventually produced a collaborative work printed by Giacomo Ruffinelli, another printer based in Mantua who was patronised by the Gonzaga. This was a collection of poems by multiple members including Franco, whose contribution was devoted to Ferrante Gonzaga and Isabella of Capua, prince and princess of Molfetta.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, his time in Casale was also characterised by multiple failures to solicit new patrons. One of the most ambitious of these, and the attempt that he spent the largest amount of energy and time on, was his attempt to build a relationship with the then-governor of Milan, Alfonso d'Avalos, the marquis of

⁵⁸ There is, however, only one letter to Guidone in the *epistolario*, which does not provide any information on their relationship, and none to Ruffinelli, or to Giolito for that matter. Franco, *Epistolario*, p. 57 (c. 6v.).

⁵⁹ Lorenza Gianfrancesco and Simone Testa, Italian Academies Database <https://http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/ItalianAcademies/> (funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, UK, Resource Enhancement Grant, 2006-9, ref. AH/D00117X/1, and Major Research Grant, 2010-14 ref. AH/H023631/1). [Accessed 2 May 2019]. See also Simone Testa, *Italian Academies and their Networks, 1525 - 1700: From Local to Global* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Jane E. Everson (ed.), *The Italian Academies 1525-1700: Networks of Culture, Innovation and Dissent* (London: Routledge, 2016).

⁶⁰ Gioan Iacopo Bottazzo, *Dialogi Maritimi di M. Gioan Iacopo Bottazzo. Et alcune rime maritime di M. Nicolo Franco, et d'altri diversi spiriti, dell'Accademia degli Argonauti. All'Eccellenza del Machese di Soncino, Il S. Conte Massimiano Stampa* (Mantua: Giacomo Ruffinelli, 1547).

Vasto and Vittoria Colonna's nephew.⁶¹

Aside from writing to Avalos himself, Franco also communicated with others based in Milan, including Captain Lodovico Borghi;⁶² someone referred to only as 'Franceschino C.'; Tommaso de' Giuliani; and three members of the Moccia family, Bernardino (Avalos' secretary), Giovanni Battista, and Pietro.⁶³ Franco's campaign to secure Avalos's patronage began with a letter to Borghi on 3rd October, 1541, and lasted until his final letter to Avalos's son Antonio in November 1543; it was at its most intense from October 1541 until March 1542, during which the majority of the correspondence in the *epistolario* is either with Avalos himself or with members of his household. He also dedicated his *Dialogo dove si ragiona delle Bellezze* to Maria d'Aragona, the marquis's wife. In one letter to Avalos, requesting a pension to 'feed the muses' – the longest letter, incidentally, to anyone in the whole *epistolario* – Franco drew explicit attention to his capacity for libel: if the muses, he wrote, 'were able to 'kill' Aretino in three days while poor, 'rich, they could kill him in three hours'.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Franco's attempt to cultivate a link with Avalos was unsuccessful. The reason for this seems primarily to have been Franco's unwillingness to be tied down to any one court by having to reside there physically. As he explained in a letter to Avalos' son in November 1543, Antonio Castriota, the duke of Ferrandina, who had invited him to come to court at Vigevano in exchange for a stipend:

Here I am, so sought after and harassed by many princes. And while every one of them has tried to imprison me in his court, I still have the disgusting bread of each, clearly showing that if I am saddened to hear ugly things with my ears, I am even more saddened to see them

⁶¹ Incidentally, Pietro Aretino had courted Avalos more successfully from 1539-1543, during which time the marquis had commissioned his hagiographies of the Virgin Mary, Catherine of Alexandria and Thomas Aquinas. Paolo Marini has argued that these were part of Aretino's attempt to pressure Charles V into paying him a pension. Later, after the death of Avalos in 1546, the hagiographies were republished in 1552 with a new dedication to pope Julius III, as part of Aretino's ultimately unsuccessful campaign to be made a cardinal. See Paolo Marini, 'Le agiografie di Pietro Aretino e la riscrittura del sacro nell'età del Concilio di Trento', in Michela Catto and Adriano Prosperi (eds.), *Trent and Beyond: The Council, Other Powers, Other Cultures* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), pp. 101-119.

⁶² Franco, *Epistolario (1540-1548)*, p. 94 (c. 24r.); p. 98 (cc. 25v.-26r.).

⁶³ BAV MS Vat. Lat. 5642 (c. 26v; cc. 26v.-27r.; cc. 27r.-v.; cc. 27v-28r).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, (cc. 65v.-66r.).

with my eyes.⁶⁵

He went, in the same letter, to confess that another reason was his fear of being ‘discovered’ by ‘an Aretine’ – that is a follower of his nemesis.

Eventually, Franco was able to move to Mantua itself, where he enjoyed the protection of Leonardo Arrivabene (the father of Giovan Francesco, a member of the *Accademia degli Argonauti*) and cardinal Ercole Gonzaga.⁶⁶ However, he did not stay for long, for reasons that are unclear. It is possible that he found being in close proximity to his patrons too stifling, as he had suggested he might in his letter to Castriota. The network visualisation in fig. 4 shows that his social circle was far more restricted in Mantua than it had been in Casale, with correspondents in Trent (Pietro Catalano, his friend, who was a fellow Beneventan and member of the *Argonauti*), Venice, and Rome (as well as Casale) replacing his contacts in Milan. At the same time, however, Franco was courting Giuseppe Cantelmo, the count of Popoli in modern-day Abruzzo, and the son of Gian Pietro Carafa’s sister-in-law (Franco’s correspondence with Cantelmo appears in fig. 4 as the fourth-most northern of the four southern nodes on the map, during which time the count was based in the small town of Pescosansonesco). Cantelmo is one of the most frequent correspondents in the *epistolario*. Franco first wrote to him in 1544, and dedicated his 935-page prose epic *La Philena* to the count, which was printed by Rufinelli in Mantua.⁶⁷ Eventually, his efforts paid off: he seems to have become part of the count’s household at some point in 1547, and his earliest letters from Popoli in the *epistolario* date from the year after, though rather than staying in a fixed location, he moved around with Cantelmo, who travelled frequently.

⁶⁵ ‘Eccomi da molti principi con somma molestia insino a qui ricercato. Et mentre ciascuno ha cerco imprigionarmi ne la sua corte, ho tuttavia il pane di ciascuno schifato mostrando apertamente che se m’incresece d’udire con gli orecchi le por bruttare, più m’incresceria di vederle con gli occhi.’ Franco, *Epistolario*, pp. 241-3 (c. 104v.).

⁶⁶ Luzio, ‘L’Aretino e il Franco’, p. 277.

⁶⁷ Nicolò Franco, *La Philena. Historia amorosa* (Mantua: Giacomo Rufinelli, 1547).

Domenica Falardo has noted the irony of the fact that, in some respects, he seems to have settled for an arrangement similar to the one that he had rejected some years earlier from Alfonso d'Avalos and Antonio Castriota.⁶⁸ Franco was much less productive in terms of literary output in this period, though he maintained a steady stream of correspondence with a wide range of people, including family and friends in Benevento. His travels with Cantelmo notably took him to Basel, where he arranged for a new edition of his *Rime contra l'Aretino* to be printed; to Calabria, of which Cantelmo was elected viceroy in 1551; and to Sicily.

In 1550, Franco and Cantelmo visited Florence together, where they were the guests of Benedetto Varchi. While in Florence, Franco attended a meeting of the *Accademia Fiorentina* in disguise, though he was recognised by Lodovico Domenichi, who spread the news of Franco's presence. This resulted in Franco being beaten outside the venue, probably by friends of Aretino, demonstrating that the fear of reprisal that he had expressed in his letter to Antonio Castriota had been justified. Despite Domenichi's attempt to apologise, Franco threatened to note in a history that he was writing (which was never completed) that Domenichi had wronged him.⁶⁹

Cantelmo and Franco's relationship ended in 1552, seemingly because the count was running short of money. Between 1552 and 1556, Franco lived in Naples, as he had before he moved to Venice. In 1556, his elder brother, Vincenzo, died (as did his mentor-turned nemesis, Aretino). Vincenzo had been a teacher of Latin who lived in their hometown of Benevento for all of his life. Franco and his brother were close, and Nicolò wrote to Vincenzo frequently, updating him on his varying fortunes. The death of Vincenzo prompted Franco to move back to Benevento for a period, followed by a short stint in Bologna, before

⁶⁸ Domenica Falardo, 'in Nicolò Franco, *Epistolario (1540-1548): Ms Vat. Lat. 5642*, (Stony Brook: Forum Italicum, 2007), p. 25.

⁶⁹ Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World, 1530-1560*, pp. 44-5.

he moved to Rome in 1558.

Another failed attempt at seeking patronage proved to be extremely consequential in Franco's eventual decision to move to Rome and the course his life would ultimately take. This was with Carlo Carafa, the nephew of Gian Pietro Carafa, the future pope Paul IV. Although in light of Franco's eventual execution in 1570 for having slandered Paul IV and the Carafa, it may seem very odd that he would correspond with a Carafa – especially given the contrast between Gian Pietro's well-known moral severity, on the one hand, and Franco's particular specialism in obscenity and slander, on the other – the *poligrafo* did in fact have several reasons to feel hopeful. Firstly, as Falardo has pointed out, in his youth Paul IV had spent time in Benevento, Franco's city of origin, and knew several of Franco's compatriots. Secondly, Giuseppe Cantelmo was a cousin of the Carafa.⁷⁰ Here we can see, again, the value of leveraging family networks and *campanilismo* for the *poligrafi*, albeit this time it was a family link between patrons that Franco was attempting to exploit, rather than his own.

The brief correspondence with Carlo Carafa copied into the letter-book, evidently a small part of a much greater amount of correspondence now lost, demonstrates that Franco for many years sought to gain his patronage. The first letter in the series, from Franco, dates from 1544, during Franco's Casale period. The *poligrafo* made sure to mention the Benevento connection (indeed, noting that he had specially selected a Beneventan courier for the letter), and his (still developing) relationship with Cantelmo.⁷¹ He frankly discussed

⁷⁰ Falardo, 'Introduzione', p. 30.

⁷¹ '[...] venendo hora a quella il portatore di questa [lettera], io deporrò quel rancore che potrei et devrei havere tra me circa il visitarla et noiarla ad un tempo et, persuadendomi che le fie caro, verrò a la parte de la noia ch'io cerco dargli, la quale è che la sua cortesia habbia per bene ch'io gli raccomandi chi gli porta questa mia lettra perché, oltre a l'essere del Val di Vitulano et però quesì beneventano, gli è nobile et puossi stimare compiuto soldato se per hora non gli manca altro che un poco di buona fortuna. Et di questa pur son certo ch'egli havrà buona parte solo che Vostra Signoria, a cui chieggo cotanta gratia, voglia per tale stimarlo degnandosi, hor che viene costì in Aste, d'entrometterlo nelle sue compagnie et entrattenerlo secondo i meriti che si vedranno di lui.' Franco, *Epistolario*, pp. 293-4 (c. 130v.-c.131r.).

his desire for payment and writing commissions – and freely complained about tensions in his relationship with Cantelmo, referring to the count's impatience 'with the first thing I wrote for him', and stating that he had not yet had the chance to 'show [the count] some sign of my service'. He offered his services to Carlo, noting that 'there is always within me the desire to honour you'.⁷² Unfortunately, Carlo did not have much opportunity to take Franco up on his offer. The following year, Carlo would be exiled from Naples for his involvement in a murder, and moved to Benevento, where he unrepentantly got himself involved in *another* murder, this time of a certain Tomaso Panachione.⁷³ The next letter in the Franco-Carlo Carafa correspondence comes four years after the previous one, dated 1548, from Carlo in Rome. By this time, Franco's primary patron was Cantelmo: it was still seven years before Paul IV would make Carlo a cardinal, but the younger Carafa had already been made prior of Naples. The letter began relatively calmly, if coldly, but then turned increasingly hostile. Evidently, Franco had written to express his disappointment that Carlo was unable to meet him and Cantelmo in Mantua, on his way back from Trent (this letter is not included in the *epistolario*). Carlo began by explaining that he had been unable to do so, since the murder of Pier Luigi Farnese, the duke of Parma, had necessitated his leaving Trent by another route. However, Carlo seems to have been very irritated to have discovered that Franco, rather than going to Mantua, had gone to Abruzzo instead with the count of Popoli, going on to write that 'I don't know what you mean to infer [...] when you were a thousand miles away.' Then again, he declared, do 'as you like, since you want to do injury, and to make me your enemy.' Carlo ended the letter by seemingly washing his hands of Franco, declaring that he should 'stay there and poetise about the mountains of Abruzzo, in this lovely cool weather, while I, standing in Rome, since I am at the service of my friends, will

⁷² '[Q]uesto si dice che, essendo in me sempre viva la volontà di farvi honore', Ibid., pp. 293-4 (cc. 130v.-131r.).

⁷³ Georges Duruy, *Le cardinal Carlo Carafa, 1519-1561* (Paris: Hachette, 1882), p. 8.

not bother with you. *A Dio*.⁷⁴

Franco's response to Carlo exhibits a curious mixture of passive-aggressiveness and a desire to smooth over any misunderstanding. He began by sardonically assuring Carlo that there was no need to apologise for not coming to see him in Mantua since his 'troubles', Franco hinted, must be considerable, perhaps gesturing towards Carafa's misadventures since 1544, as well as the delay caused by the death of Pier Luigi Farnese. 'But', he wrote, 'the excuse that you have already made to me, is of a piece with the ways in which you have acted on previous occasions.' He chastises Carafa for 'it having pleased you to call me an enemy, when you had already been made a friar by the grace of God [...] just because I was in Abruzzo'.⁷⁵ He went on to explain why, in his opinion, Carafa's displeasure was unwarranted. 'All this', Franco wrote, finally, 'I tell you in the end because not only do I like to praise a friar without a hood, but we also hope that even if you have promised me that you would love me forever, you needs to demonstrate this love with a sign.'⁷⁶ Not only was Carafa in the wrong, but he ought to send Franco a token of his appreciation to show that his affection for Franco was real. Franco also, moreover, expresses a desire to go to Rome, but hints that *il debito* – the debit – that he had incurred when he was younger – that is, presumably, the interdict against his works that had been issued by Paul III – prevented

⁷⁴ 'Sperava, signor caro, partendo di Trento venire a fare il mio debito con V. S. a Montoa, ma per la more del duca Pier Luigi [Farnese] et per comandamento del Cardinale mi bisognò da Trento far altra via, onde non potei adempire il mio desiderio che era di rivedervi et di servirvi in quanto mi fusse stato possibile. Hora, havendo inteso che vi troviate in Abbruzzo co 'l Conte nostro [the Conte di Popoli, Carlo's cousin], donde havete pur voi inteso ch' io mi trovo a Roma, non so che vogliate inferire occoltandomi l'essermi così dapresso; il che solevate voi fare quando m'eravate da mille miglia lontano. Sia come si voglia, poiché così mi volete male et mi sete nimico. Statevi a poetare per le montagne d'Abbruzzo per questo bel fresco, ch' io, standomi a Roma, sì come sto al servizio degli amici, non m'impaccierò con voi altri. A Dio.' Carlo Carafa, in Franco, *Epistolario*, p. 610 ([c. 293v.- c.XXXIV]).

⁷⁵ 'Dico vi piace, per esservi piaciuto di chiamarmi nimico, perché a pena gionto in Abbruzzo non v'habbi fatto intendere l'esser mio, né mi sia rallegrato del vostro, de l'essere, dico, già fatto frate per la Dio gratia.', Carafa, in *ibid.*, pp. 611-12 (c. 294r/c.XXXIIr.-c. 294 v/c. XXXIIv).

⁷⁶ '[T]utto questo io vi dico a la fine perché non solo mi piace lodare un frate senza cappuccio, ma sperarci anchora che sì come m'ha promesso d'amarmi sempre, così debba di tanto amore mostrarmi a la giornata buon segni.' *Ibid.*

him from doing so.⁷⁷ This interdict may well have been issued in response to Franco's *Rime contra l'Aretino* and *La Priapea*, in which had attacked Paul III, Gian Pietro Carafa, and praised the murder of Pier Luigi Farnese.⁷⁸

It is evident, from this correspondence, that tensions between Franco and the Carafa family began long before Franco came to produce his volume of Anti-Carafa pasquinades – before even his arrest, on their orders, by the Inquisition soon after his arrival in Rome in 1558, which multiple Franco scholars have pointed to as the source of Franco's antagonism against the family. It is also clear from other letters that Franco had been thinking about going to Rome some years before he eventually went there in 1558. In 1555, in a letter to his friend Dolce Gacciola following the election of pope Paul IV in June of that year, Franco expresses a desire to move to Rome to seek the patronage of the Carafa family, and the revocation of Paul III's interdict.⁷⁹ He complained that 'four nephews and a brother of the pope do not want, for the grace of God, something for me', and that he did not see why he had to go there to 'ingratiate himself with the apostolic see', and complained that, for having consistently 'lacerated the vices, like a good man' he was suspected to be a rogue (*ribaldo*).⁸⁰ Ultimately, Carlo and his brother Giovanni, the duke of Paliano, did promise Franco that he would have some sort of position in Rome, which prompted him to finally go.⁸¹ However,

⁷⁷ 'Perché son costretto far fine sì per questa cagione, sì anche perché bravate con Rome vostra, dove poco mostrate di curarvi del resto et dove il debito sarebbe voluto che fusa andato più giovane. Avenga che Roma sia una schola dove il far latini per gli attivi riesce non meno a buona fortuna che ad infiniti riesca il fargli per li passivi.' Ibid.

⁷⁸ Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World, 1530-1560*, pp. 45-6.

⁷⁹ On Dolce Gacciola, see Pignatti, 'Niccolò Franco pasquinista', pp. 152-4.

⁸⁰ 'quattro nipoti et un fratello del Papa non vagliono, per la Dio gratia, qualche cosa per me, ma solamente per molti che ci hanno sperato assai manco di me [...] Dirò ben questo: che io non so perché debba venirci ad accomodar, sì come dite, le cose mie con la sede apostolica. Questo è a punto un significare che per haver io lacerati i vitii, come huomo da bene, ci debbo essere in sospetto come ribaldo [...] Io sono, et fui da che nacqui, quello che sarò ancho insino a la morte, dico libero ne la penna, come si sa et se di vita non tanto santa che faccia miracoli, almeno de la manco infame che sia possibile in un composto di carne et di ossa.' Nicolò Franco, *Epistolario*: BAV, MS Vat. Lat. 5642 (c. 496r.)

⁸¹ See the letters between the Carafa nephews and Franco published in Giuseppe de Michele, 'La "Filena" di N. Franco', *Rassegna critica della letteratura italiana* 30 (1925), pp. 8-28.

these promises were overruled by Paul IV.⁸² Franco decided to go to Rome anyway, relying on his Beneventan connections (the fact that Aretino had died in 1556 may have also meant he was less worried about attacks from his followers). However, any hope that this would be sufficient to protect him proved to be ill-founded. Soon after he arrived, on the evening of 15 July, 1558, Franco was arrested in the house of his Beneventan compatriot Bartolomeo Camerario, ostensibly on the grounds that *La Priapea* contained heretical content. He would remain imprisoned for about eight months. From the resulting *processo* – the transcript of which has been published by Franco Pignatti – we can learn a great deal about Franco’s social position and plans at the time.⁸³ It is certainly clear, from his description of his possessions, that at this point he was far from a wealthy man. At the beginning of the trial, asked what he had brought with him to Rome, Franco replied that he had brought just two trunks: the first filled with bread, a raincoat (*cappa da acqua*), some socks, a pair of boots and two pairs of shoes; the second with shirts, handkerchiefs, *cuffie*, and books mostly of his own composition, these being a volume of letters from 1538 to 1558 (probably the *copialettere* discussed at length in this chapter); his *Petrarchista*, a satire of the cult of Petrarch; and his *Rime contro Pietro Aretino e la Priapea*. All of his possessions, Franco claimed, were seen by the Lord Governor and other clerics ‘in the house where I was taken.’⁸⁴ They had been inspected, he said, by the inquisitors Daniele Bianchi da Crema (who in 1558 was the Master of the Sacred Palace) and Michele Ghislieri (the future Pius

⁸² Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World, 1530-1560*, p. 46.

⁸³ Pignatti, ‘Niccolò Franco a Roma’, pp. 157-160.

⁸⁴ ‘Int.s Benevento recedens que et qualia bona secum Romam attulerit. R.dit...portai con me dui baligie una de panno l’altra de coiro nella baligie de coiro ce erano alcune mie compositione quale ha viste il Signore Governatore ad una ad uno, in casa de Benevento quando fui preso, et le viddero anchor quelli altri clerici de camera, camisie fazoletti cuffie, et l’altra baligie de panno ce era un’altra cappa da acqua, un par de calze un par de borzachini et dui para de scarpe altre robbe non ho portate con me.’ ASR, *TCGR*, sec. 16, *Processi*, vol. 44. *Liber criminalum contra Bartholomeum beneventanum et illius ministros*, ff. 27r-28v. Now published as an appendix to Pignatti, ‘Niccolò Franco a Roma’, *Archivio della Società romana di storia patria* 121 (1988), pp. 157-60.

V) who had assured him that they were written ‘a bit liberally, but not heretically’.⁸⁵ Ultimately, he was released, but most of his books were never returned to him, which he complained about profusely.

As he did not continue to keep his *epistolario*, our next glimpse of Franco’s life in Rome is from the transcript of his second and final trial ten years later, from 1568-70, which concluded in his execution after he was found guilty of having libelled Paul IV and the Carafa family in his *Commento sopra la vita et costumi di Giovanni Pietro Caraffa che fu Paulo Quarto*. On the first day of his 1568-70 trial, Franco stated that he has been in Rome for the past ten years. During the *sede vacante* after Paul IV’s death in 1559, he had shared quarters in the Parione neighbourhood with Antonio Soriceo, a childhood friend from Benevento, and opposite his friend Dolce Gacciola and a certain Aurelio Grimaldi. From 1560, he spent eight years as part of the household of Cardinal Giovanni Morone – first in his palace in Borgo, and then following him to Trastevere. Morone was at that time the most prominent surviving member of the pro-reform, *spirituali* faction of the Curia and enemy of Paul IV; Pius V had attempted to revive charges of heresy against Morone before it fizzled out due to the cardinal’s abundance of powerful supporters, forcing Pius to content himself with less prestigious targets (it is however important to state that Franco only moved into Morone’s household after writing the *Commento*, at the end of 1560). Franco went on to state that he had left Morone’s household ‘this past January’ (that is, January 1568), because, somewhat mysteriously, ‘I departed from his servants because I could not contain myself there [*non me possevo trattenere lì*] and I asked him for permission [to leave].’⁸⁶ Subsequently, he had stayed for two months at Monte Giordano, in a ‘room in the house of

⁸⁵ Pignatti, ‘Niccolò Franco a Roma’, p. 158.

⁸⁶ ‘Io me partì da suoi servitij perché non me possevo trattenere lì et gli domandai bona licentia.’ Niccolò Franco, in Angelo Mercati (ed.), *I costumi di Niccolò Franco (1568-1570). Dinanzi l’inquisizione di Roma, esistenti nell’Archivio Segreto Vaticano* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1955), p. 96.

a Madam Giovana' before being invited by '*cavaliero* Sorentino to reside [*tratternerme*] with him and so I was with him until now'.⁸⁷ We can only really speculate about why his relationship with Morone came to an end, but it is not difficult to imagine a scenario similar to that which had unfolded between Giovan Matteo Giberti and Francesco Berni some years earlier.

This section has provided a perspective on early modern patronage systems from an individual *poligrafo*'s point of view, in contrast to the patrons' perspectives that were explored in the previous section. In doing so, it has outlined the strategies in which Nicolò Franco attempted to solicit patronage from various elite patrons, maintain his links with the Venetian printing industry, and leverage his Beneventan connections and family relationships, as well as family relationships between his patrons. While he did have a degree of success in these endeavours, it also seems clear that almost always being dependant on one patron at a time made him extremely vulnerable. This vulnerability, together with his specialism in obscene satirical writing, was what ultimately led to his downfall – he was never able, like Aretino, to become sufficiently 'networked' to make himself difficult to dispose of, nor able, like Domenichi, to enjoy the steady tolerance of a patient benefactor after his patronage from the Gonzaga ended. Nevertheless, despite the fact that throughout his life he was often in precarious circumstances, we can also see Franco exhibiting his agency, for example in his reluctance to commit himself to becoming closely attached to a court in 1543, even if he later resorted to working as a secretary for Cantelmo.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the *poligrafi* were not, contrary to the assumptions of previous

⁸⁷ '[...] cavaliero Sorentino a trattenerme con lui et così son stato con lui fino adesso, che esso me ha fatto le spese.' Ibid.

scholars, emancipated from court patronage systems by the printing press. Notwithstanding the fact that this was not the case even in Venice – as I will show in chapter 2 – it has been demonstrated that for the majority of their careers, the *poligrafi* remained dependant on elite patrons at princely or ecclesiastical courts. The systems of patronage that existed outside of Venice, and the conventions associated with them, necessarily structured the range of options available to the *poligrafi* in negotiating this social world, which was characterised by mobility and precariousness. When a printing press was established in a princely court, it tended to be under the direct control of the ruler in question and therefore did not enhance a *poligrafo*'s range of options in the same way that the Venetian presses did. In most cases, rather than breaking down hierarchical patronage systems by providing an alternative source of income for professional writers, printing was instead co-opted by elite patrons who then hired *poligrafi* to produce books for them, or even to operate the presses directly. The fundamental underlying structures, or conventions, about the social role of writers in a court setting had not necessarily changed, even if what the *poligrafi* were writing and printing was explicitly critical of courts and courtiers.⁸⁸

There were important differences between the environment at individual courts with regard to what patrons they hired *poligrafi* to do and their attitudes towards printing. In Rome before 1527 and from the late 1550s onwards, the dispersed nature of power and wealth, and the volatile, factional environment meant that opportunities for writers were plentiful, but the potential dangers of offending the wrong person were severe. Securing patronage in Mantua and Florence was more difficult, but the regimes there were much more

⁸⁸ As was the case, for instance, with two of the works that first made Aretino's name while he was based in Rome, *Le ultime volontà e testamento di Annone, l'elefante*, and *La cortigiana*. Both have been published in a modern edition as Pietro Aretino, *Cortigiana; Opera nova; Pronostico; Il testamento dell'elefante; Farza* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1989). As Gary Shaw has argued, 'The structure teaches agents who help to form the structure. People learn from the system through other people but perform their parts differently and not always with the "same" meaning that the last performer intended. (Indeed, the very idea of identical meaning is probably misleading.)'. Shaw, 'Happy in Our Chains? Agency and Language in the Postmodern Age', p. 6.

stable – at least, in Florence’s case, after Cosimo I became duke in 1537.

In negotiating their social world, the *poligrafi* all tended to leverage a range of horizontal social networks, with friends, family, and colleagues, in order to forge new patronal connections, though there are significant differences with regard to the choices – and degrees of success – of individual *poligrafi*. A central feature of the *poligrafi*’s success or failure in this period, which is that writers being more ‘networked’ – having as multiple patrons, at the same time – was seen as desirable. In some cases this temporarily gave *poligrafi* a greater degree of freedom and flexibility, in the case of Pietro Aretino before 1527, or of Nicolò Franco during his late Casale period. However, this was rarely achieved in practice, and ultimately the majority of *poligrafi* were dependant on a single patron when outside of Venice and were very vulnerable to this relationship breaking down. Moreover, the networked state of Aretino in Rome and Franco in Casale was only maintained briefly, in contrast to the situation of Aretino after he moved to Venice, during which time he maintained relationships with multiple patrons relatively harmoniously. Finally, this chapter has shown that in important respects the social status of *poligrafi*, and the patronage systems and structures that they existed in, did not change significantly over the course of the period concerned (even if the relative status of different centres of power shifted significantly). Differences in the degree of success seems to have depended above all on an individual *poligrafo*’s particular relationships and set of skills.

The following chapter moves from the ecclesiastical and princely courts of Italy to the centre of the printing industry in Italy, the city of Venice, ca. 1527-1585. In doing so, it provides a fresh perspective on the relationship between the *poligrafi* and Venice, focusing respectively on their links with the world of print and then on their attempts to gain and maintain patronage links with Venetians and foreign state agents in Venice.

2. The *Poligrafi*, Print, and Patrons in Venice, ca. 1527-1585

Venice and its publishing industry – the largest in Italy in the mid-sixteenth century, and one of the largest in Europe – played a crucial role in the careers of every *poligrafo*. Many *poligrafi* were central to the explosion of print in this period, as writers, editors, translators, and sometimes as publishers. The scale of involvement of some *poligrafi* could be astonishing, in terms of output, especially for those who specialised in editing: it is estimated, for example, that Lodovico Dolce was involved in some capacity in the production of some 358 books in his career.¹ Consequently, the relationship between the *poligrafi* and Venice has always occupied a central position in the relevant scholarship. However, most scholars have gone so far as to argue that the *poligrafi*'s association with the printing press liberated them from entirely from patronage networks, both with regard to social status and in economic terms.

This chapter challenges these assumptions about the social world of the *poligrafi* by analysing their social world in Venice, from the 1520s to the 1580s.² It does so cross-generationally, following the approach outlined in the introduction, from the first generation of Niccolò Zoppino and Eustachio Celebrino, to the fourth generation of Francesco Sansovino and Tommaso Porcacchi. In this way, we can see how the *poligrafi*'s relationship with the Venetian publishing industry changed across this period, in response to changing press regulation and state and ecclesiastical censorship. But this chapter also adds context to the traditional scholarly focus on the *poligrafi* and the Venetian press by examining their relationship with other important Venetian institutions, such as literary salons and

¹ Di Filippo Bareggi, *Il mestiere di scrivere*, p. 58. Cf. Ronnie H. Terpening, *Lodovico Dolce, Renaissance Man of Letters* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

² For a discussion of the content of the *poligrafi*'s Venetian publications, see chapters 4 and 5.

academies, as well as their attempts to cultivate patronage links with Venetian patricians and foreign state agents based in the city, drawing on archival sources in the Venetian, Mantuan, and Florentine state archives. It is clear, from this material, that the *poligrafi* were just as focused on cultivating patronage links in Venice as they were in princely and ecclesiastical courts, and they tended to regard the opportunities afforded by the Venetian printing presses as supplementary to rather than a substitute for traditional patronage connections. All this being said, the unique social structure of the Venetian republic meant that patronage worked differently than in princely and ecclesiastical courts, as this chapter delineates.

The first section of this chapter focuses on the institutions with which the *poligrafi* were associated in Venice, including literary salons, academies, and, most importantly, the presses that they had a professional relationship with, focusing especially on those of Niccolò Zoppino, Francesco Marcolini and Gabriele Giolito. The second section moves on to an examination of their attempts to gain and maintain patronage links with Venetians and foreign state agents in Venice. In doing so, it re-evaluates the ways in which they navigated the Venetian publishing industry and systems of patronage.

The *Poligrafi* and the Venetian Printing Press

It was their relationship with print that made the *poligrafi* distinct from previous generations of writers. However, the extent to which their careers were tied up with print, and the extent to which they spent their time writing as opposed to editing, translating, or running their own print houses in some cases, varied dramatically. In *Il mestiere di scrivere*, Claudia di Filippo Bareggi examined a corpus of 1,330 editions printed in Venice. Of these, of the 14 *poligrafi* she considered, Lodovico Dolce wrote, edited or translated 358 editions; Francesco Sansovino, 176; Lodovico Domenichi, 172; Girolamo Ruscelli, 125; Tommaso Porcacchi, 111, Alfonso de Ulloa, 81; Antonio Brucioli, 78; Girolamo Parabosco, 77; Orazio

Toscanella, 53; Anton Francesco Doni, 48; Giuseppe Betussi, 32; Ortensio Lando, 28; Francesco Badelli, 26; and Nicolò Franco, 18. Some important points are immediately apparent – first, that Lodovico Dolce's influence in the Venetian printing industry in the mid-sixteenth century is difficult to overstate – he is responsible for writing or editing 26.9 per cent of the works examined by di Filippo Bareggi.³ On the other hand, *poligrafi* who are generally considered major figures, such as Nicolò Franco and Ortensio Lando, were involved in relatively few publications in Venice over the course of their careers (partially because neither was in Venice for a particularly long period).

Scholarship on the sixteenth-century Venetian printing industry in general is characterised by a focus on a few famous printers, including Aldo Manuzio and his son Paolo, the Giunti, Gabriele Giolito de' Ferrari, and, to a lesser extent, Francesco Marcolini. This can give the impression that the landscape of Venetian publishing was overwhelmingly dominated by a handful of successful printers, and that the *poligrafi* worked for them exclusively.⁴ This was not the case, even though the scale of printers' outputs did vary quite dramatically. Recent efforts in quantitative digital bibliography, despite the method's limitations, have provided an invaluable corrective to the tunnel vision that is produced by lopsided historiographical trajectories. For example, it is immediately evident from the 281 editions recorded by the Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC) as being printed in Venice in 1540 that no individual printer dominated the market – nobody produced more than twenty-six editions in that year, and sixteen of the twenty-four printers listed by the USTC as having printed something that year produced fewer than ten editions. Twenty-two of the

³ Pietro Aretino is not included in di Filippo Bareggi's analysis, but in any case, a key difference between him and subsequent generations of *poligrafi* is that he only wrote for the press – he did not edit or translate texts by others. See Claudia di Filippo Bareggi, *Il mestiere di scrivere*, p. 58. Cf. Terpening, *Lodovico Dolce*, pp. 10-13.

⁴ In the last few years historians have begun to look at more minor figures, see, for example, Rospocher, "In vituperium status veneti", pp. 349–61; Natalie Lussey Searle, 'Staying Afloat: The Vavassore Workshop and the Role of the Minor Publisher in Sixteenth Century Venice', in Angela Dressen, Susanne Gramatzki, and Berenike Knoblich (eds.), *Minor Publishers in the Renaissance* kunst- texte.de 2 (2017).

editions printed in Venice in 1540 have no printer or publisher listed at all. Of course, we need to take such quantitative approaches with a pinch of salt – although the USTC contains records approximately 780,000 editions, and 4 million surviving copies, of editions from the first two centuries of printing in Europe, this is only a small part of the total number of texts that were printed – a problem compounded by the fact that not all categories of printed texts survive equally well.⁵ Expensive, luxuriously-produced Bibles and editions of classical texts survive much better than cheap broadsheets and pamphlets. However, even if the categories of printed texts that survive from the early modern period were more representative of the proportions originally produced, there is no reason to doubt the essential point that no single printer was dominant.

Another aspect of the Venetian printing industry in this period that it is important to understand, when studying the *poligrafi*'s relationships with printers, is the very different state, compared to today, of legal concepts such as patents, copyright, authorship, and contracts. As Christopher May has argued, in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, Venice was the site of extraordinary legal innovation in these areas.⁶ Nevertheless, printing was a very lightly regulated industry – much to the chagrin of observers such as Erasmus, who complained that '[n]ot everyone may have leave to be a baker, but printing is a trade open to any mortal man.'⁷ In the late fifteenth century, following the death of John of Speyer, who briefly held the exclusive right to print in Venice, in 1470, the government began to grant *privilegi*, essentially a patent on a text or typographical innovation, to publishers (but not authors). This system ultimately proved so unworkable that all existing *privilegi* were

⁵ Andrew Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 354.

⁶ Christopher May, 'The Venetian Moment: New Technologies, Legal Innovation and the Institutional Origins of Intellectual Property', *Prometheus* 20: 2 (2002), pp. 159-79. See also Christopher L. C. E. Witcombe, *Copyright in the Renaissance: Prints and the Privilegio in Sixteenth-Century Venice and Rome* (Leiden: Brill, 2004).

⁷ Desiderius Erasmus, 'Festina lente', in *Erasmus on His Times: A Shortened Version of the 'Adages' of Erasmus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 11.

cancelled in 1517. From the 1520s onwards, the Venetian government experimented with various forms of copyright and press censorship, initially without much success. An attempt to establish a new copyright law in 1545 proved extremely difficult to enforce. The consequence of this regulatory environment was that it was quite common for authors and editors to work with multiple printers at the same time, and for authors, editors and printers to plagiarise or otherwise attempt to piggyback off the successful of bestsellers by other printers, even within the Venetian territories (given that copyright only applied within the territory in which it was granted, there was no barrier to printing exactly the same text in Lyon). In the 1540s, for example, after the printer Gabriele Giolito collaborated with the *poligrafo* Lodovico Domenichi on either one or two highly successful anthologies of contemporary poetry, his rival, Andrea Arrivabene, quickly came out with his own volume of contemporary poetry, in collaboration with another *poligrafo*, Girolamo Ruscelli, entitled *Il terzo libro*. This pre-empted a third volume that Giolito was in the process of producing with Lodovico Dolce, which ended up coming out as the ‘fifth’ volume in the series in 1552, since another collaboration between a printer and an editor, Anselmo Giaccarello and Ercol Botrigaro had produced a ‘fourth’ volume the preceding year in Bologna.⁸

Consequently, the printing industry of Venice was highly fragmented and fast-moving – there was no oligopoly of major publishers dominating the market, as is the case today, and print houses were formed and went bust very frequently. This makes certain aspects of the career trajectories of the *poligrafi* in Venice comprehensible: they tended to spend a very long time working for multiple small printers, before established a relationship with a major print house like Gabriele Giolito. Pietro Aretino himself was published by a number of printers before his lucrative collaboration with Francesco Marcolini to print his series of

⁸ Louise George Clubb and William G. Clubb, ‘Gabriel Giolito and the Rival Anthologists, 1545-1590’, *Italica* 68:3 (1991), pp. 336-7.

letter collections from 1538 onwards. Aretino's first publication in Venice was a collection of conventional, Petrarchan poems, printed by Niccolò Zoppino in 1512. This was long before Aretino had ever set foot in Venice himself. His first collaboration with a printer after he moved to Venice in 1527 was with Bernardino Vitali in 1532, who also published Lodovico Dolce around the same time.⁹ Later in his career, Aretino's hagiographies were printed by Giovanni Farri while his *libri di lettere* were printed by Marcolini. In the last years of his life, Aretino was included in the phenomenally successful anthologies of contemporary poetry by Gabriele Giolito. This pattern is repeated with other *poligrafi*. For example, Lodovico Dolce's first publication was in 1532, also with Bernardino Vitali, but his first collaboration with Gabriele Giolito was not until 1542, a decade later.¹⁰ Even then, Dolce's partnership with Giolito was not an exclusive one – two books produced by him, out of six, were published by Giolito in 1542; four out of five in 1543; five out of eight in 1545. Only from 1547 onwards, when nine out of ten of his books were printed by Giolito, did he consistently work for a single publisher. Dolce's partnership with Giolito continued until 1563, when his output again began to be split amongst different printers.¹¹ In 1566, for example, only three out of sixteen of Dolce's books were published by Giolito – all reprints.¹²

This pattern repeats with other printers who played unarguably pivotal roles in the careers of the *poligrafi* in Venice. One printer who was particularly important from the late 1530s until his death, shortly after Pietro Aretino, in 1559, was the aforementioned

⁹ Cairns, *Pietro Aretino and the Republic of Venice*, pp. 232-3.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Di Filippo Bareggi, *Il mestiere di scrivere*, p. 286.

¹² Ibid., p. 287.

Francesco Marcolini.¹³ It was with Marcolini, in collaboration with Giovanni Antonio Nicolini da Sabbio, that Aretino published *La passione di Giesu*, his first foray into religious writing, in 1534: in the same year Marcolini also produced two editions of the first part of Aretino's *Ragionamenti*, a satire of humanistic dialogue conventions featuring three prostitutes advocating the superiority of their profession over that of being wives or nuns (that is, the 'three states of women' of the title), which were falsely advertised as being printed in Paris.¹⁴ This was followed by numerous other religious writings, as well as the first printed edition of his famous play, *La Cortigiana*, in 1535, three editions of another play, *Il Marescalco*, as well as editions in the 1540s of two other plays, *La Talanta* and *Lo ipocrito*. Most importantly, it was Marcolini with whom Aretino collaborated on his first two volumes of letters, the first in the vernacular by a living author (with Nicolò Franco serving as editor for the first volume, and Lodovico Dolce for the second).¹⁵ These were an enormous success, especially the first volume. However, the first volume was also subsequently published in editions by other printers including Curzio Troiano Navò, Bartolomeo Zanetti, Niccolò Zoppino, Giovanni Padovano, Luigi Torti, and others (whether or not this was with Aretino's approval is unclear) in cheaper quarto and octavo editions rather than in folio, the

¹³ On Marcolini, see in particular Amedeo Quondam, 'Mercanzia d'onore/Mercanzia d'utile. Produzione libraria e lavoro intellettuale a Venezia nel Cinquecento', in Armando Petrucci (ed.), *Libri, editori e pubblico nell'Europa moderna* (Rome: Laterza, 1977), pp. 51–104; Quondam., 'Nel giardino del Marcolini. Un editore veneziano tra Aretino e Doni', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 157 (1980), pp. 75–116; Paolo Procaccioli, Paolo Temeroli, and Vanni Tesei (eds.), *Un giardino per le arti. Francesco Marcolino da Forlì: la vita, l'opera, il catalogo* (Bologna: Compositori, 2009).

¹⁴ Pietro Aretino, *La passione di Giesu con due canzoni, una alla Vergine, et l'altra al Christianissimo* (Venice: Francesco Marcolini ha fatto imprimere da Giovanni Antonio Nicolini da Sabbio, 1534); *Ragionamento della Nanna, et della Antonia, fatto in Roma sotto una ficaia, composto dal divino Aretino per suo capriccio, a correzione de i tre stati delle donne* (Paris, [Actually Venice] Ubertinus Mazzola [actually Francesco Marcolini], 1534). On Aretino's foray into religious writing, see Élise Boillet, *L'Arétin et la Bible* (Geneva: Droz, 2007).

¹⁵ Pietro Aretino, *De le lettere di m. Pietro Aretino. Libro primo* (Venice: per Francesco Marcolini, 1538); Aretino, *Del primo libro de le lettere. Editione seconda con giunta de lettere XXXXIII scritte da i primi spirti del mondo* (Venice: per Francesco Marcolini, 1542).

format of the first edition.¹⁶ Marcolini's relationship with Aretino ended in 1544, and Gabriele Giolito, who had established himself as the most prominent publisher of non-religious vernacular texts in Venice by the late 1540s, printed the next four volumes of letters instead.¹⁷

Another publisher with significant ties to the *poligrafi* was Andrea Arrivabene, now best known as the publisher of the first Italian translation of the Koran in 1547. Arrivabene seems to have been active from 1534 until 1570, inheriting his business from his predecessors Giorgio and Cesare Arrivabene. He specialised in vernacular religious texts, and most often worked in collaboration with other printers rather than by himself: Bernardo Bindoni, Francesco Giovanni and Domenico Farri, Giovanni Griffio and Pietro and Giovanni Maria di Niccoli da Sabio, and Comin da Trino were frequent collaborators. Most notable for our purposes, however, was Arrivabene's involvement in the publishing of the fourth and fifth volumes of Aretino's letters in 1550, and his support of the career of Ortensio Lando, the most explicitly pro-Erasmus of all *poligrafi* – Lando is, in fact the third-most published author by Arrivabene according to surviving editions recorded by the USTC, with seven editions. Among texts by Lando published by Arrivabene were, in addition to various edited collections of aphorisms and witty sayings by classical authors, his *Commentario de le piu notabili, & mostruose cose d'Italia, & altri luoghi*, a travel guide to Italy supposedly originally written in Aramaic by a visitor from Utopia, and translated by Lando; a religious dialogue, the *Dialogo di m. Hortensio Lando, nel quale si ragiona della consolatione, et utilità, che si gusta leggendo la sacra scrittura*; and his most famous work, the *Paradossi*,

¹⁶ Pietro Aretino, *De le lettere di messer Pietro Aretino. Libro primo* (S. l. [Venice]: per Curzio Troiano Navò & fratres, 1538); Aretino, *Le lettere* (Venice, per Bartolomeo Zanetti, 1538); Aretino, *Le lettere di m. Pietro Aretino. Di nuovo impresse et corrette* (Venice, per Niccolò Zoppino, 1538); Aretino, *Le lettere di nuovo impresse et corrette* (Venice: per Giovanni Padovano, 1538); Aretino, *Le lettere di m. Pietro Aretino, di nuovo con la giunta ristampate, e con somma diligenza ricorrette* (Venice: per Luigi Torti, 1539).

¹⁷ Salvatore Bongi, *Annali di Gabriel Giolito de' Ferrari da Trino di Monferrato stampatore in Venezia, descritti e illustrati da Salvatore Bongi* (Rome: Presso i principali librai, 1890-1895); Angela Nuovo and Christian Coppens, *I Giolito e la stampa nell'Italia del XVI secolo* (Geneva: Droz, 2005).

a defence of thirty counter-intuitive propositions such as that it was better to be poor than to be rich, and better to be ignorant than learned.¹⁸ However, it is noteworthy that even, for example, at the apex of Lando's career in Venice, in 1550, he did not work exclusively for one publisher: in total he produced six books that year, of which four were for Andrea Arrivabene and two were for Gabriele Giolito.¹⁹

There were two *poligrafi* who worked as publishers and printers themselves in Venice.²⁰ The first of these was Niccolò Zoppino. The USTC records 359 editions printed by Zoppino, of which the overwhelming majority, 347, were printed in Venice. This is almost certainly a conservative estimate: on the other hand, Lorenzo Baldacchini lists 438 surviving editions in his *Annali* of Zoppino, which is almost certainly too high: there is reliable evidence of about 385 extant editions.²¹ What is unarguable, however, is that Niccolò Zoppino, in addition to writing, bookselling and street singing, somehow found the time to become of the more prolific printers in Venice the first half of the sixteenth century.

The other main example of a *poligrafo* who also published is Francesco Sansovino, who started publishing decades later. His first piece of writing was published in Venice in 1537, though the printer is unknown.²² Between 1560 and 1577 (and again from 1578-1581), however, Sansovino acted as a publisher as well as a writer and editor, frequently publishing his works he had written or edited himself (21 editions out of 75 recorded by the USTC),

¹⁸ Incidentally, Arrivabene was accused in 1544 of publishing the *Paradossi* without having obtained a licence, as a consequence of which the printer, Bernardo Bindoni, was fined 10 ducats and the book burned, although he was able to publish it without trouble in 1563. See Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World*, p. 5.

¹⁹ Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World*, p. 34.

²⁰ Anton Francesco Doni briefly worked as a printer for Cosimo I in Florence, as discussed in section 1, chapter 1.

²¹ Lorenzo Baldacchini, *Alle origini dell'editoria volgare. Niccolò Zoppino da Ferrara a Venezia. Annali, 1503–1544* (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 2011); Neil Harris, 'Review of Lorenzo Baldacchini, *Alle origini dell'editoria volgare. Niccolò Zoppino da Ferrara a Venezia. Annali, 1503–1544*', *The Library* 14:2 (2013), pp. 213-7.

²² Francesco Sansovino, *Stanze di messer Francesco Sansouino gentilhuomo fiorentino* (Venice: s. n., 1537).

though he printed many other works besides, specialising in Latin and vernacular edited collections, literature, poetry and non-fiction, such as guidebooks, advice books, collections of speeches, and travel writing.²³ Even in this period, however, he continued to collaborate with others, including Domenico Farri, Comin da Trino, Giovanni Andrea Valvassori, and his relative Giacomo Sansovino – like Arrivabene, he rarely seems to have acted as a printer.

State and ecclesiastical censorship, targeting what the authorities regarded as heretical and obscene texts, seems to have had a much greater effect on the shape of the Venetian publishing industry – and the *poligrafi*'s output specifically – than the Venetian government's occasional attempts to establish copyright restrictions. Until the 1540s, censorship was sporadic and lightly enforced. With regard to content, authors and publishers were only likely to get into trouble if they openly criticised Venice, especially in times of crisis such as the War of the League of Cambrai, during which the Council of Ten periodically banned anti-Venetian works and encouraged the dissemination of pro-Venetian ones. In 1527, an anti-clerical work provoked complaints from the Franciscans of San Francesco della Vigna, which prompted the Council of Ten to introduce a system of imprimaturs or *licenze* to prevent the publication of 'immoral works, and [works] of an ill nature', although they did not make it mandatory to apply for one.²⁴ Although the new *privilegio* system established in 1527 required books to be checked by two censors in advance of being printed, this proved to be essentially impossible to enforce.

From the early 1540s onwards, under pressure from the Church, censorship gradually became more effective, as was the case elsewhere in Italy. This was particularly the case after the papal *nuncio*, Fabio Mignanelli, complained to the *Signoria* in 1543 that 'things

²³ On Francesco Sansovino's career as a publisher, see Elena Bonora, *Richerche su Francesco Sansovino: Imprenditore librario e letterato* (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 1994).

²⁴ ASVe, CX, Parti Comuni, f. 4, f. 162 (29 January 1527). Quoted in Rosa Salzberg, *Ephemeral City*, p. 131.

most unworthy of a well-governed Republic such as this one' – that is, heretical printed books – were circulating freely.²⁵ On 12 February that year, the Council of Ten announced that henceforth all printed books would require pre-publication approval, citing the rampant selling of books 'which are very improperly against the honour of the Lord God and of the Christian faith, setting a very bad example and [causing] universal scandal'.²⁶ The Venetian authorities' own office in charge of policing blasphemous speech, the *Esecutori contro la bestemmia*, though founded in 1537, became much more effective after it was given the power to enforce this decree through the extension of its policing powers.²⁷ It is possible that Nicolò Franco's *Priapea* was a casualty of this legislation: in 1545, the street-singer Francesco Faentino was punished by the *Esecutori* for selling a 'dishonest' work on 'the god Priapus', and the text was ordered to be confiscated and burned.²⁸ Further measures included the prohibition on the importation of heterodox books in 1547, and the holding of public bonfires of heretical works, from 1548.²⁹ The first Venetian Index of Prohibited Books was published by Giovanni della Casa, the papal *nuncio*, in 1549 – though it was never enforced, due to disagreements amongst the Venetian authorities regarding its scope, that year proved to be something of a watershed, since all books were henceforth required by law to indicate the author, printer, and where they were printed.³⁰ This prohibited printers and authors from using anonymity as a dissimulating strategy: the rule also applied retroactively, to works

²⁵ Benedetto Nicolini, *Aspetti della vita religiosa, politica e letteraria del Cinquecento* (Bologna: Tamari, 1963), p. 68.

²⁶ ASVe, CX, Parte comuni, f. 32, f. 234; quoted in Salzberg, *Ephemeral City*, p. 133.

²⁷ On the *Esecutori contro la Bestemmia*, see Elizabeth Horodowitch, *Language and Statecraft in Early Modern Venice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

²⁸ ASVe, ECB, b. 56. It is suggested by Rosa Salzberg that this may have been Franco's text of almost the same name, though nothing is said of the work confiscated apart from what I have quoted here, and indeed it is unclear whether Franco text ever circulated in Venice. See Salzberg, *Ephemeral City*, p. 1.

²⁹ Salzberg, *Ephemeral City*, p. 133.

³⁰ For the 1549 Index, see De Bujanda (ed.), *Index de Venise, 1549; Venise et Milan, 1554*, p. 392. On the disagreements in the Senate that led to it not being enforced, see Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press*, pp. 88-89.

printed up to twenty-four years beforehand. 1549 also saw the establishment of the Guild of Venetian Printers and Booksellers.³¹

Cumulatively, these changes ensured that by the late 1550s the *poligrafi* were operating in a very different regulatory environment.³² Both lay and religious authorities' attempts to regulate the press gradually became more effective. The first, second, and third editions of the Roman Index came out in 1557, 1559, and 1564, and were all printed in Venice³³ – unlike the local index of 1549, these were enforced, albeit imperfectly. The indices were initially met with considerable resistance by the printing industry, with the Guild of Printers and Booksellers acting as a vehicle for organised protest: for example, in January 1559, several publishers met in the *bottega* of one of the guild priors, Tomaso Giunta, and agreed to disobey the orders of the authorities to booksellers to submit lists of their prohibited stock. One of the other guild priors, Melchior Sessa, even pronounced the bookseller Zacharia Zenaro a 'traitor' for advising obedience to the Holy Office's instructions that the other booksellers had vowed to resist.³⁴

However, the printers' inclination to resist gradually declined. Notably, there were two high-profile prosecutions which directly involved the *poligrafo* Lodovico Dolce. In 1558, Dolce was prosecuted for heresy alongside the Spanish translator, Alonso de' Ulloa, both accused by the Holy Office of collaborating on the banned *Secreti* of Pompeo dalla Barba di Pescia. Asked whether he had published the suspect work at the request of his main employer, Gabriele Giolito, Dolce answered in the affirmative, though he argued that

³¹ ASVe, CX, Parti comuni, f. 47, f. 66, 18 January 1549). Salzberg, *Ephemeral City*, p. 129.

³² On the printing industry in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Mario Infelise, *Prima dei giornali. Alle origini della pubblica informazione, secoli XVI e XVII* (Rome: Laterza, 2002); Angela Nuovo, *The Book Trade in the Italian Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

³³ For the indices see De Bujanda (ed.), *Index de Venise, 1549; Venise et Milan, 1554*, De Bujanda, *Index de Rome: 1557, 1559, 1564: les premiers index romains et l'index du Concile de Trente*; Greder, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press*).

³⁴ ASVe, SU, b. 14, f. labelled 'Constituto contra Vincentium Valgrismum librarium 1559 9 Agosto'.

Alfonso had first sought the approval of a ‘Fra Michele’, a Carmelite, and, ‘seeing the approval of a master of theology I was convinced that the book was Catholic’.³⁵ In the end, Dolce got off comparatively lightly: the Holy Office burned all copies of the offending work, and banned the unfortunate Fra Michele from preaching during Lent in 1559. However, it would not be the last time Dolce and Giolito were questioned by the Inquisition. In 1563, Giolito was denounced to the Neapolitan Inquisition by the disgruntled director of his branch office in Naples, Pietro Ludrini, who had been fired for negligence. Ludrini accused Giolito of selling prohibited books, and subsequently an associate of the printer was caught in Naples with a wealth of prohibited books in his possession, including Aretino’s letters and dialogues, several of Erasmus’ works, and a vernacular Bible.³⁶ This revelation prompted an extensive investigation of Giolito’s business, and in 1565 the printer was questioned by the Holy Office in Venice about his personal beliefs and contacts. Giolito admitted that he had procured prohibited books, including a history and commentary of Johannes Sleidanus, which had been listed on the index since 1554, but stated that he had only done so at the request of Dolce, who had needed the work for his life of Ferdinand I.³⁷ Although Giolito and Dolce escaped punishment, it is possible that this experience (coupled with the death of Dolce in 1568) may have prompted Giolito’s noted pivot from publishing vernacular literature in favour of spiritual works, in his final decade before he himself died in 1578.³⁸ Giolito, for example, last published Aretino in 1557, the same year that the *poligrafo*’s complete works were included on the Roman Index: by the 1570s, two thirds of Giolito’s

³⁵ ‘et vendendo io la fede di un maestro di theologia mi persuasi ch’ el libro fosse catholico’. ASVe, SU, b 14, f. 1. Section labelled ‘-Fra’ Michele / Carmelitano, e Ludovico Dolce, per libri sospetti’.

³⁶ ASVe, SU, b. 20., f. 18.

³⁷ This was published the following year. See Lodovico Dolce, *Vita di Ferdinando, primo imperadore di questo nome, descritta da M. Lodovico Dolce* (Venice: Apresso Gabriel Giolito, 1566).

³⁸ See Quondam, ‘Mercanzia d’onore/Mercanzia d’utile’, pp. 51–104.

output was comprised of religious texts.³⁹ Giolito was far from unusual in this regard: Anne Jacobsen Schutte has calculated that religious texts made up only about 15 per cent of publications in Venice in the mid-sixteenth century, but climbed to about 25 per cent in the 1560s and 1570s, and to about 33 per cent in the 1580s and 1590s.⁴⁰ The Guild gradually changed from a locus for organised protest to a mechanism for preventing new entrants into the industry: from 1572, no one could work in Venice as a printer or bookseller if they were not matriculated in the guild. In order to do so, one had to serve at least five years as a registered apprentice and three years as a worker in a print or bookshop in the city, and then had to apply to join, for a fee of five ducats for a Venetian or ten ducats for a foreigner, though children of established printers and booksellers were exempted.⁴¹ From the 1570s onwards, pre-publication expurgation of controversial passages by censors also became commonplace, as, we can assume, was self-censoring on the part of authors and printers, though obviously by its very nature this is difficult to prove.⁴² All of these developments severely restricted the number and quality of work available to the *poligrafi* in the Venetian publishing industry.

Despite their involvement in the world of printing, moreover, it is clear that the *poligrafi* had a much more ambivalent relationship with the industry than one might assume.⁴³ In a letter in Aretino's first volume of letters, addressed to his publisher, Marcolini, he argued that 'those who sell their own writings become wheelers and dealers in their own

³⁹ Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press*, p. 133.

⁴⁰ Anne Jacobsen Schutte, 'Printing, Piety and the People in Italy: the First Thirty Years', *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* 71 (1980), pp. 5-19; cf. Edoardo Barbieri, 'Tradition and Change in the Spiritual Literature of the Cinquecento', in Gigliola Fragnito (ed.), *Church, Censorship and Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 113-5.

⁴¹ Salzberg, *Ephemeral City*, p. 145.

⁴² On self-censorship, see Rozzo, *La letteratura italiana negli 'Indici' del Cinquecento*.

⁴³ On overall attitudes towards publishing in print in this period, see Brian Richardson, 'The Debates on Printing in Renaissance Italy', *La bibliofilia* 100 (1998), pp. 135-55.

infamy', also swearing that he 'would suffer any discomfort rather than commercialize the liberal arts.' Aretino claimed to want no recompense from Marcolini, arguing that 'the favours of our princes and not the poverty of those who buy them will pay me for my trouble in writing these letters.'⁴⁴ This particular letter removed by the third edition of 1542: it seems that Aretino's apparently strong belief in the purity of his literary endeavours were soon swayed once he realized how much money there was to be made. However, the shift was more a case of stumbling onto a lucrative source of income than a strategic move.

In Nicolò Franco's *Dialogo del venditore di libri*, first published as part of his *Dialoghi piacevoli* in 1539, one of the characters complained about the decline of learning and writers, while 'manual labourers, and artisans ... triumph in this world'.⁴⁵ He suggested that, however, there is nothing to be done: booksellers ought to adapt to the new reality by stocking plenty of vernacular translations, 'because the manual labourers, who are not lettered, in order to learn *De agibilibus mundi*, will want Pliny. The soldiers, who do not understand Latin, will want the wars of Appian with the Commentaries of Caesar.'⁴⁶ It is far from clear as to whether Franco approves of the new reality, or if he merely sought to make the best of it.

Over a decade later, in 1553, Anton Francesco Doni included a dialogue on printing in *I Marmi*, his compilation of dialogues on various subjects (all ostensibly overheard on the marble steps of the *Duomo* of Florence, Doni's home town). In this dialogue, speakers debate on whether the introduction of printing has, overall, been positive or negative. The character of Coccio argues for the latter position, positing that printing was 'a sordid, mechanical

⁴⁴ Pietro Aretino, *Selected Letters*, trans. George Bull (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 98. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this quote.

⁴⁵ Nicolò Franco, *Dialogi piacevoli di m. Nicolo Franco* (Venice: apud Giovanni I Giolito De Ferrari, 1539). This has been published as a modern scholarly edition: see Nicolò Franco, *Dialogo del venditore di libri (1539–93)* (Venice: Marsilio, 2005), p. 30.

⁴⁶ Franco, *Dialogo del venditore di libri*, p. 39.

activity’ and a ‘job for commoners’ in contrast to the nobility of the scribe.⁴⁷ While Coccio concedes that one of his interlocutors, Crivello is right to say that if printing had existed ‘when the Latin tongue was flourishing and the sciences and the arts were at their apogee, we would not now hanker after and vainly regret the loss of so many beautiful objects, buried in the countless pillages of Rome and Italy’ he ultimately succeeds in persuading his compatriots that printing had, overall, had a negative effect on society, again citing the printers’ capacity for errors and their responsibility for flooding the market with salacious books, arguing that ‘many printers lay honesty aside for lucre, so indifferent and error-ridden is their printing, so poor their choice of paper and the type that is chipped, rammed in and forced to fit’.⁴⁸ This is all the more fascinating given that Doni, the author of the dialogue, had worked in the vernacular print industry in Venice for most of his career by this point, though he would subsequently withdraw from working for the press entirely and concentrate instead on producing personalised autograph manuscripts for individual patrons, which suggests at first glance that Doni indeed sympathised with Coccio. However, there is a further complication. Most of the dialogue was filched almost word-for-word from the *Dialogo della stampa* written by Doni’s rival and fellow *poligrafo*, Lodovico Domenichi, not printed until considerably later than that of Doni, but circulating in manuscript from about 1548.⁴⁹ Ironically, in one section, Domenichi (and therefore also Doni) warned of the way in which the press facilitated plagiarism and the rise of hack writers who produced nothing of literary value. A one speaker remarks that ‘Every last pedant seems bent on printing a tale that has been shat out, patched together, filched, and torn from thousands of clumsy tales;

⁴⁷ This is now available in translation as Anton Francesco Doni, *A Discussion About Printing which Took Place at ‘I Marmi’ in Florence*, trans. D. Brancalone (Turin: Tallone, 2003), p. 17. Originally printed as Anton Francesco Doni, *I marmi del Doni, academico peregrino* (Venice: per Francesco Marcolini, 1552).

⁴⁸ Doni, *A Discussion about Printing which Took Place at ‘I Marmi’ in Florence*, pp. 45–6. See also Salzberg, *Ephemeral City*, p. 32.

⁴⁹ Lodovico Domenichi, ‘Dialogo della stampa’, in *Dialoghi* (Venice: Gabriel Giolito, 1562).

he then gads about all puffed up... The minute he sees one of his fables in the marketplace, he sticks up his tail and calls out: “Out of my way! I yield not to Bembo! Ariosto is but a dream, Sannazaro and Molza are unworthy to drag Petrarch behind me!”⁵⁰ It is of course possible that Doni was, in taking this dialogue from Domenichi, merely meant it as a joke: but given that he eventually withdrew from the world of print entirely, it is likely that it reflected a genuine internal conflict about the impact of the press on literary culture.

We can see from this section that the *poligrafi*’s relationships with printers were more fluid than we might assume: the Venetian printing industry was fragmented and largely unregulated (in practice, if not in theory), and *poligrafi* often worked with multiple presses at the same time. Moreover, the ease with which works could be plagiarised by other *poligrafi*, and other printers, made income from book sales unpredictable. It has also been demonstrated that there was considerable resistance to the idea of making money from writing for the press among some *poligrafi*, and that they were undecided on the question of whether the invention of printing was wholly positive: In light of this, it is less surprising that they did not rely solely on book sales for their support, but instead used print as a means of making and strengthening patronage connections with influential Venetians and foreigners. Traditional attitudes towards patronage therefore continued.

Relationships with Venetians and *Stranieri*

Successive generations of *poligrafi* attempted to improve their relationships with influential Venetian patrons and foreign patrons, especially foreign ambassadors and state agents, in order to improve their standing in Venetian society. The primary focus of most of the *poligrafi*, however, in terms of patronage connections, seems to have been cultivating

⁵⁰ Biow, *In Your Face*, pp. 180-1. On Doni’s plagiarism of Domenichi, see Giorgio Masi, ‘Postilla sull’affaire Doni-Nesi. La questione del Dialogo della stampa’, *Studi italiani* 2 (1990), pp. 41–54.

relationships with members of the Venetian patriciate or *cittadini*. Few had substantive success in this endeavour, although those that did were the most likely to stay in Venice long term. This section discusses successive generations of *poligrafi*'s links with Venetian patrons through institutions such as the *Compagnie della Calza*, literary salons and academies (especially the Venier Salon and the *Accademia Veneziana*). Next it discusses their relationships with foreign state agents, above all diplomats of Mantua and Florence in Venice. The section concludes with a comparison of the *poligrafi*'s housing situations, and what this can tell us about their patronage connections.

Our information about the social life of *poligrafi* before Aretino is rather patchy. We have essentially no information on Eustachio Celebrino in this regard, even from his publications. However, Niccolò Zoppino does appear to have managed to cultivate some useful connections in his time in Venice which he used on at least one occasion to get himself out of trouble. On 13 March 1510, he was arrested for having publicly sung a derogatory *frottola* against Venice (at that time Venice was at war with Ferrara, Zoppino's home town), and selling copies of the composition to the audience. He and his business partner Vincenzo de Venetiis were initially found guilty and sentenced to jail, followed by three years of exile. However, after three months, the two appealed to the *Quarantia Criminal*, the court with the highest authority in criminal cases, where they were acquitted. Afterwards Zoppino seems to have left Venice for a period before returning in 1512, after which he seems to have spent most of his time in Venice from 1512 to 1543, when he moved to Ravenna to start a bookshop with his son, Sebastiano.⁵¹ Marino Morosini, one of the *Avogadori di Comun*, the state attorneys who were responsible for the operation of other magistracies, appealed on behalf of Zoppino and Vincenzo de Venetiis. Unfortunately, we do not know on what basis Morosini appealed, although the fact that he did so at all is perhaps significant in-and-of-

⁵¹ Rospocher, “In vituperium status veneti”, pp. 349-53.

itself, since it suggests that Zoppino and de Venetiis had managed to prove their usefulness to at least part of the Venetian patriciate, even if there is no evidence of them having successfully cultivated long-term patronage relationships with particular patricians.⁵²

Poligrafi of the second generation, such as Pietro Aretino and Lodovico Dolce, pioneered the use of printed sources to ingratiate themselves with potential patrons, and therefore we have a great deal more information about their patronage networks. One trope that several *poligrafi* used to ingratiate themselves with patrons, actual or potential, in the 1530s in particular was to include them in discussions of the trope of the “Dream of Parnassus”, in which the author describes his vision of the coronation of poets, ancient and contemporary by Apollo and the Muses. Dolce appears to have been the first *poligrafo* to use the theme, initially as a standalone text printed by Bernardino Vitali in 1532, which appears to have been his very first publication.⁵³ Later, he also inserted a riff on the theme into his Ovid translation, first published in 1553. The names in the list change throughout the six editions of his *Transformazioni*, published by the Giolito press, and expanded from 21 poets in 1553 to 40 by 1561.⁵⁴ Christopher Cairns was the first to show that Dolce, Aretino, Nicolò Franco and Anton Francesco Doni all used the Dream of Parnassus to mention as many patrons, actual or aspirational, as possible, changing them from edition to edition. They mentioned contemporary poets in addition to ancient ones, and even, in Doni’s

⁵² Ibid., pp. 349-350. On Marino Morosini and the *Avogatori di Comun*, see Alfredo Viggiano, ‘Interpretazione della legge e mediazione politica: note sull’Avogaria di Comun nel secolo XV’, in Gaetano Cozzi and Gino Benzoni (eds.) *Studi veneti offerti a Gaetano Cozzi* (Vicenza: Il Cardo, 1992), pp. 121–31; Robert Finlay, *Venice Besieged: Politics and Diplomacy in the Italian Wars, 1494–1534* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), pp. 37–72.

⁵³ Lodovico Dolce, *Il sogno di Parnaso con alcune altre rime d'amore* (Venice: per Bernardino Vitali, 1532).

⁵⁴ Initially published as Lodovico Dolce, *Le trasformazioni di M. Lodovico Dolce* (Venice: appresso Gabriele Giolito de Ferrara, 1553). This went through six editions, all published by Giolito, from 1553 until 1561; see also Cairns, *Pietro Aretino and the Republic of Venice*, p. 240.

case, including a list of cardinals in a 1543 letter.⁵⁵ It is clear that *poligrafi*, far from shifting away from patronage systems towards a reliance on book sales, were instead using print even more determinedly as a means of expanding patronage networks: in Doni's case, we can perhaps also infer that the shifting religious climate meant he deemed it necessary to begin cultivating relationships with ecclesiastical patrons by the 1550s.

From 1538 onwards we have substantial amounts of autobiographical information about second and third-generation *poligrafi* thanks to their regular habit of publishing letter collections, after the runaway success of Aretino's first volume of letters, which went through ten editions in one year, began a new literary trend.⁵⁶ Some of these letters appear to have been actually sent, while others were clearly written for publication: therefore, they have to be used with caution as sources of biographical information. Many of Aretino's published letters are either thinly veiled requests for patronage or public thanks for patronage already received.⁵⁷ Peter Burke has suggested, probably correctly, that Aretino's initial strategy was to try to gain a degree of financial stability by cultivating as many patrons as possible: this, however, increased the risk of loss of favour, so his strategy gradually shifted towards a greater reliance on book sales.⁵⁸ The apparently gradual phasing out of his letters to patrons about gifts clothing, for example, across the six volumes of his letters supports this argument, with a greater focus on cultivating his public image as the 'scourge of princes' and the 'fifth evangelist', during a period in which he had in fact ceased to write anything

⁵⁵ Cairns, *Pietro Aretino and the Republic of Venice*, chapter X, 'The Dream of Parnassus, Aretino's Heritage and the *Poligrafi*', pp. 231-249; Anton Francesco Doni, Letter to Agostino Landi, 20 July 1543, in Doni, *Tre libri di lettere del Doni* (Venice: Francesco Marcolini, 1552), pp. 80-6.

⁵⁶ On Aretino's influence on the evolution of the *libro di lettere* genre, see Genovese, *La lettera oltre il genere*.

⁵⁷ For an extended discussion of these letters see Gaylard, '""Naked"" Truth: Clothing, Patronage, and Genius in Aretino's Letters'; Gaylard., *Hollow Men: Writing, Objects, and Public Image in Renaissance Italy* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), especially chapter 3, 'Banishing the Hollow Man: Print, Clothing, and Aretino's Emblems of Truth', pp. 123-59.

⁵⁸ Peter Burke, *The Italian Renaissance: Culture and Society in Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 118-9.

satirical.⁵⁹ Burke has also suggested that the practice of dedicating books to a wealthy patron in the hope of a financial reward was an example of the ‘commercialization of patronage’ and is thus an example of the interaction between patronage and the market: the old system and the new.⁶⁰ However, Aretino’s shift towards the market was in fact much more accidental than deliberate, and certainly never ended his dependence on patrons.

One fundamental means of ingratiating oneself, as a non-Venetian, with the Venetian patriciate was to attend a literary salon or, later in the period, an academy (which was essentially a more formalised version of the same, with a member list, emblem, constitution, and so on). The *poligrafi* were intimately involved in the rise of literary salons and, later, the more formal academies of late sixteenth-century Venice. Here we can see, again, their struggle to increase their social status. It is also one of the only ways in which we can see the *poligrafi* interacting directly with members of the Venetian elite. An exception to this is Aretino’s involvement with the *Sempiterni* (Eternal Ones), one of Venice’s *Compagnie della calza*, essentially drinking societies for young male patricians, named for the emblems members wore on their stockings – one way in which, again, Aretino seems to have been uniquely successful. The formation and membership of such associations was tightly regulated: each had to be approved by the Council of Ten, and usually only Venetian patricians were allowed to join. Aretino was commissioned by the *Seminterni* to write a play for the carnival festivities in 1542, *La Talanta*, which was based on Terrance’s *The Eunuch* and was performed with sets designed by Giorgio Vasari.⁶¹

Although *poligrafi* were involved in other salons and academies in Venice and elsewhere (some examples of the latter were discussed in chapter 1), by far the most important was the

⁵⁹ As Susan Gaylard has observed: see Gaylard, *Hollow Men*, pp. 127-8.

⁶⁰ Burke, *The Italian Renaissance*, p. 119.

⁶¹ Courtney Quaintance, *Textual Masculinity and the Exchange of Women in Renaissance Venice* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), pp. 65-7.

salon of Lorenzo and Domenico Venier, which existed from 1530 until Domenico's death in 1558, in their family palazzo in Campo Santa Maria Formosa. As early as 1530, three years after he moved to Venice, Aretino wrote to Federico II Gonzaga, the new duke of Mantua, to send him *La puttana errante*, a new composition by Lorenzo, who he referred to as his 'creation'.⁶² The Venier salon counted as members, at various times, figures such as Pietro Aretino, Domenico and Lorenzo Venier, Girolamo Ruscelli, Lodovico Dolce, Girolamo Parabosco, Girolamo Molino, Federico Badoer, Benedetto Corner, and Bernardo Tasso (the father of Torquato). One distinctive feature of the salon's literary activities was the exchange of obscene manuscript poems written in Venetian dialect, often involving what Courtney Quaintance calls the 'textual exchange' of women, which she has persuasively argued was used as a means of homosocial bonding by its members.⁶³

By 1537, Aretino had managed to ingratiate himself into young patrician society, primarily through his association with the Venier salon. He continued to develop his relationship with the Venier brothers, Lorenzo and Domenico, throughout the remainder of his career: there are letters to Domenico Venier in all six volumes of his *libri di lettere*, a distinction only shared with Federico Badoer, another Venetian patrician and poet.⁶⁴ Other *poligrafi*, including Lodovico Dolce, Girolamo Parabosco, and Girolamo Ruscelli, played important roles in the group: Parabosco immortalised its leading figures through his dialogue, *I Diporti*, a collection of tales with a frame narrative in the style of the Decameron, with the framing device in this case being a male-only fishing expedition on the Venetian lagoon taken by members of the salon.⁶⁵ After he died in 1556, Aretino was buried in the

⁶² Ibid., p 3.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 27-9. See also Giuseppe Marcocci, *Indios, cinesi, falsari. Le storie del mondo nel Rinascimento* (Rome: Laterza, 2016), especially Chapter V, 'Storie di successo: poligrafi veneziani al servizio del grande pubblico', pp. 128-58.

⁶⁴ Quaintance, *Textual Masculinity and the Exchange of Women in Renaissance*, p 7.

⁶⁵ On Dolce's plays, see Anne Neuschäfer, *Lodovico Dolce als dramatischer Autor im Venedig des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 2004).

church of San Luca along with Girolamo Ruscelli and Lodovico Dolce: Domenico Venier is supposed to have written his epitaph, although the tomb no longer survives, and the earliest description that we have of it is Francesco Sansovino's edition of Dolce's Ovid translation from 1568.⁶⁶

There has been very little research to date on the role of the *poligrafi*, as well as other writers and artists, in state diplomatic and information networks. This is in part due to the very different sources traditionally used by historians of diplomacy, on the one hand, and cultural historians, literary scholars and art historians, on the other, despite the recent rise of the more holistic approach to 'New Diplomatic History'.⁶⁷ However, even a cursory examination of the epistolary records of states such as Florence and Mantua reveals that state actors were very interested in cultivating relationships with major and minor literary figures living in Venice. In the interests of brevity, I have concentrated on the relationships between *poligrafi* and Mantuan and Florentine state agents. However, it is worth noting that Aretino, in particular, cultivated relationships with every state that had a significant presence in Venice, and may even have seriously considered moving to France and Constantinople in the 1530s before he fully established himself there.⁶⁸

We can see from Florentine diplomatic correspondence after Cosimo I's rise to power that many *poligrafi* were intimately involved in the exiled Florentine community – indeed, such texts are often very concerned with what was happening in the exiled Florentine

⁶⁶ Quaintance, *Textual Masculinity and the Exchange of Women in Renaissance*, p. 7: see also *ibid.*, n27, p. 171. For the description of Aretino's tomb, see Lodovico Dolce, *Le trasformazioni tratte da Ovidio* (Venice: appresso Francesco Sansovino, 1568), f. 4r. On Domenico Venier's epitaph, see Monica Bianco, 'Domenico Venier e l'epitaffio di Pietro Aretino', *Quaderni veneti* 41 (2005), p. 273.

⁶⁷ For an overview of this trend in the history of diplomacy, see Giacomo Giudici, 'From "New Diplomatic History" to New Political History: The Rise of the Holistic Approach', *European History Quarterly* 48:2 (2018), pp. 314–24.

⁶⁸ Ian Frederick Moulton, *Before Pornography: Erotic Writing in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 128.

community in Venice.⁶⁹ Many members of the Florentine community in Venice were political exiles, expelled for being enemies of the Medici regime (Lorenzino de' Medici, for example, was the assassin and cousin of duke Alessandro, and was ultimately assassinated himself in Venice on the orders of Charles V).⁷⁰ Understandably, a central preoccupation of Cosimo I's information network in Venice was the activities and whereabouts of these exiles: none more so than Piero Strozzi, the famous *condottiere*. The Florentine ambassadors to Venice changed relatively frequently under Cosimo I's rule, and the extent to which they were part of Venice's artistic and literary community varied greatly. Furthermore, the level of detail of ambassadors' regular reports on their activities, and specifically the level of detail regarding their social relationships in Venice, is also very variable. However, it is possible to ascertain from the available that Aretino and Cosimo I had a relationship that blended literary patronage and diplomatic activities.

The first surviving letter from Aretino to Cosimo I in the Florentine archives dates from shortly Cosimo's appointment as duke. In this letter, Aretino stresses his close relationship with Cosimo's father, Giovanni dalle Bande Nere.⁷¹ He also reported that he had carried out the diplomatic mission given to him, which was to talk the Duke of Urbino into allowing Lucantonio Cuppano to enter Florentine service as the castellan of the Fortezza da Basso. However, Aretino seems subsequently to have been kept at arm's length by Florence for the majority of the time between the beginning of Cosimo I's rule, in 1537, until 1552, only four years before the writer's death. Following the removal of Pier Francesco Riccio, Cosimo I's *maggiordomo*, from his position in 1553, Aretino appears to

⁶⁹ On sources for Florentine state agents, particularly as relating to the *Mediceo del Principato* series, see Assonitis and Sandberg (eds.), *The Grand Ducal Medici and their archive*; on Alessandro de' Medici and Florentine exiles in Venice, see Stefano dall'Aglia, *The Duke's Assassin: Exile and Death of Lorenzino de' Medici* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

⁷⁰ On Lorenzino de' Medici and his assassination in Venice, see Dall'Aglia, *The Duke's Assassin*.

⁷¹ Pietro Aretino, Letter to Cosimo I, 7 November 1537, ASF, *MdP*, vol. 653, inserto 13, f. 9.

have enjoyed much more in the way of direct communication with the duke, suggesting that Riccio had perhaps had something to do with the regime's previous ambivalence. A circulating cast of Florentine informants in Venice regularly corresponded with the duchy about Aretino's activities (including his debts), and reported on conversations they had had with the writer (in which Aretino almost always brought up his relationship with the duke's father). These figures included Giovanbattista Pitti, Donato de' Bardi and Pier Filippo Pandolfini, the Florentine ambassador to Venice from 1545 to 1549 and again from 1557 to 1561.⁷² Aretino regularly sent the duke occasional comedies, gifts (often bearing the likeness of Giovanni dalle Bande Nere) and, in one instance, a medicinal remedy, and was sometimes in return rewarded with gifts of money, or a letter of thanks signed by Cosimo.⁷³ In 1550, Aretino thanked Cosimo for his assistance in getting appointed a *cavaliere di San Pietro* by Julius III, which came with an income of 800 scudi.⁷⁴ It was not only Aretino who performed diplomatic favours in the relationship, however: On 4 June 1546, Aretino requested that he release his friend Francesco Leoni from prison – accompanying it with a portrait medal of Cosimo's father – and shortly afterwards wrote to the duke again to thank him for doing so.⁷⁵

⁷² Examples include Donato de' Bardi's report of a conversation with Aretino, Letter to Cosimo I, 24 January 1541, ASF, *MdP*, Vol. 653, inserto 8, f. 245; a reference to Aretino owing an unspecified man a 'black satin' is in a summary of letters to Cosimo on 15 December 1543, ASF, *MdP*, vol. 617, f. 550. Unfortunately, I have not been able to find any further information about this debt.

⁷³ On 4 February 1545, Cosimo I thanks Aretino for sending him a remedy, ASF *MdP*, vol. 185, f. 172. Cosimo I writes to Pandolfini on 2 December 1545 instructing him to give Aretino a gift of 100 scudi: see ASF, *MdP*, vol. 6, f. 382. In 1546 he sends another gift of money via Pandolfini, ASF *MdP*, vol. 7, f. 87. On at least six occasions of which we have evidence in letters relating to Aretino in the Mediceo del Principato, Aretino is reported to have sent the duke poems and comedies, often to commemorate particular occasions such as carnival: see Letter to Cosimo I, 8 March 1542, ASF, *MdP*, vol. 617, f. 150; Letter to Cosimo I, 23 February 1543, ASF, *MdP*, vol. 617, f. 266; Letter from Pier Filippo Pandolfini to Giovanni Francesco Lottini, 28 April 1548, ASF, *MdP*, vol. 2967, f. 857; Letter from Pietro Camaiani to Cristiano Pagni, 15 January 1549, ASF, *MdP*, vol. 2968, f. 168; Letter from Pietro Camaiani d'Arezzo to Cristiano Pagni, 13 November 1549, ASF, *MdP*, vol. 2968, f. 112; Letter from Medoro Nucci d'Arezzo to Cristiano Pagni, 19 April 1550, ASF, *MdP*, vol. 397, f. 336.

⁷⁴ On 30 April 1550 Cosimo I was sent an anonymous *avviso* from Rome that reported Aretino had been made a *cavaliere di San Pietro*: ASF, *MdP*, vol. 397, f. 442: shortly afterwards, on 27 May, Aretino himself wrote to Cosimo thanking him for his help: see ASF, *MdP*, vol. 397a, f. 701.

⁷⁵ ASF, *MdP*, vol. 7, f. 137; Pietro Aretino, Letter to Cosimo I, 12 June 1546, ASF, *MdP*, vol. 380, f. 51.

In 1552, Aretino's persistence and occasional service was rewarded with a letter from Cosimo which pledged that henceforth he would pay Aretino an annual stipend, the small size of which he apologised for.⁷⁶ This was however more than sufficient to pay Aretino's rent for a vast apartment owned by a branch of the Dandolo family which was worth 65 ducats a month, according to another one of his published letters.⁷⁷ It is clear that, in the same period in which Aretino became famous for his printed books of letters, he was also masterfully cultivating more traditional relationships with powerful patrons. However, he did not confine himself to cultivating a relationship with the Florentine court.

Mantua was somewhat different to Florence, in that the state's cultural interests in Venice appear to have been funnelled to a much greater extent through a single actor: namely, Benedetto Agnello, the Mantuan ambassador to Venice from 1530 to 1556.⁷⁸ Agnello was friends with many of the most prominent members of the artistic and literary community of Venice, including Pietro Aretino, Jacopo Sansovino, Titian, and Nicolò Franco. Aretino continued to be patronised by the Gonzaga, and monitored closely, for years after he moved to Venice from Mantua in 1527. Aretino seems to have occupied a great deal of Agnello's time in the early years of his service in Venice, after he arrived in June 1530. On 11 July of that year, Agnello reported to the Mantuan chancellor, Gian Giacomo Calandra, that he had given Aretino 50 scudi, as instructed.⁷⁹ A month later, he reported that 'Aretino is ill' and 'has a great fear of dying',⁸⁰ though he soon recovered. On 11 September, Agnello reassured Calandra that, having spoken to Aretino, contrary to rumours that were apparently

⁷⁶ Cosimo I, Letter to Pietro Aretino, 11 June 1552, ASF, *MdP*, vol. 195, f. 160.

⁷⁷ Pietro Aretino, *Il sesto libro delle lettere*, (Paris, appresso Mathieu La Maistre, 1609) v. 104f.

⁷⁸ On Benedetto Agnello, see D. S. Chambers, 'Benedetto Agnello, Mantuan Ambassador in Venice, 1530-1556' in J. R. Hale, D. S. Chambers, Cecil H. Clough, and Michael Mallett (eds.), *War, Culture and Society in Renaissance Venice: Essays in Honour of John Hale* (London: Hambledon Press, 1993), pp. 129-145.

⁷⁹ Benedetto Agnello, Letter to Gian Giacomo Calandra, 11 July 1530, ASMa, *AG*, b. 1464, f. 48.

⁸⁰ Benedetto Agnello, Letter to Gian Giacomo Calandra, 6 August 1530, ASMa, *AG*, b. 1464, f. 79.

circulating, he had not spoken ill of the duke of Mantua, but of only some of the duke's servants.⁸¹ A few years later, in 1533, Agnello communicated that Aretino had written to him asking to be rehabilitated by the duke.⁸² Another difference between Florentine and Mantuan relationships with *poligrafi* in Venice is that Mantua cultivated relationships with them – especially Aretino and Nicolò Franco – much more actively than Florence did. Franco reportedly stayed in Agnello's house for several years when he first came to Venice, before moving in with Aretino, and then following his acrimonious split with the older *poligrafo* he moved to Casale Monferrato, the second seat of the Gonzaga family, which – according to a letter by Agnello to Calandra – may have been at the ambassador's suggestion.

One clear way in which Aretino's success in building relationships with Venetian patricians, as well as with foreign patrons, can clearly be seen is in his living arrangements. A couple of years after he arrived in Venice, in 1529 or 1530, Aretino moved into one floor of a small palazzo on the Grand Canal in the district of Santi Apostoli, where he would remain until 1551. This building had previously been owned by the Dolfin family, and had been inherited by the Bollani family shortly before Aretino moved in: it was then, and is now, called the Palazzo Bollani. Juergen Schulz has described the property as 'a patrician palace on a miniature scale'.⁸³ In tax declarations, the Bollani referred to it a *casa di stazio*, a term that historically signified principal residence of a patrician family. By the sixteenth century such properties were however often rented out, as in this case. Aretino occupied the *soler de mezzà*, the lower residential floor, which Schulz suggests had started out as a mezzanine and had later been converted into a residential flat, explaining the low height of its ceilings. It consisted of a long entrance hall (or *portego*), and three other rooms, reached

⁸¹ '...in effetto il parlar suo fu solamente contra li servitori et non contra il signore'. Benedetto Agnello, Letter to Gian Giacomo Calandra, 11 September 1530, ASMa, AG, b. 1464, f. 137.

⁸² Benedetto Agnello, Letter to Gian Giacomo Calandra, 1533. ASMa, AG, b. 1467, f. 8.

⁸³ Juergen Schulz, 'The Houses of Titian, Aretino, and Sansovino', in David Rosand (ed.), *Titian, his World and his Legacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 83.

by what Aretino referred to as a ‘bestial staircase’.⁸⁴ The palace had been rebuilt in the late fifteenth century, but by Aretino's time was in poor condition. In one of the Bollani's tax declarations from 1534, it was said to be in need of constant repair and partially held up by shoring: when Aretino moved out, in 1551, he called it a wreck and declared that rain came in from all sides.⁸⁵

The most remarkable nature of Aretino's living arrangement was, however, that he seems to have paid no rent whatsoever for the 22 years that he lived there. Why this was the case is unclear: Christopher Cairns has suggested that Benedetta Bollani, the mother of Aretino's landlords, the Bollani brothers, believed Aretino might be able to help with their future advancement and therefore remained content with the arrangement.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, he was eventually evicted in 1551, by which time he had had commissioned a new fireplace, new floors, and a new ceiling for his bedroom painted in 1545 by Tintoretto, which he praised in one of his published letters the following year.⁸⁷ He subsequently moved into a much larger and more lavish apartment on the Riva del Carbon, owned by a branch of the Dandolo family, which was worth 65 ducats a month, although he apparently did not pay this either: as we have seen, and according to another one of his published letters, it was covered by a pension from Cosimo de' Medici.⁸⁸ His flat, which occupied the entire second floor (*soler di sopra*) contained approximately twice as many rooms as his old flat, a much bigger *portego* running the entire depth of the floor with large windows, and had an outdoor terrace at the rear.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Pietro Aretino, *Il primo libro delle lettere* (Paris, appresso Mathieu La Maistre, 1609), v. 170.

⁸⁵ Schulz, ‘The Houses of Titian, Aretino, and Sansovino’, p. 84.

⁸⁶ Christopher Cairns, ‘Ancora sulla casa dell'Aretino sul Canal Grande’, *Studi veneziani* 14:2 (1972), p. 216.

⁸⁷ Schulz, ‘The Houses of Titian, Aretino, and Sansovino’, p. 86.

⁸⁸ Pietro Aretino, *Il sesto libro delle lettere*, (Paris, appresso Mathieu La Maistre, 1609), 97v. 104f.

⁸⁹ Schulz, ‘The Houses of Titian, Aretino, and Sansovino’, pp. 86-7.

Aretino's situation was in marked contrast to the modest arrangements of Anton Francesco Doni, which he described in a published letter of 1550 to his friend, Girolamo Fava:

Let us now talk about my home comforts...There are four people lodging here: i.e. Prestor John, who is in the back room, a superabundant man, of many skills...apart from him, we consist – from head to tail – of myself, my uncle in the middle, and my pseudo-wife. Then I have other rabble, such as footmen, household servants, stepmothers and others whom I hold in small account. We have one bed between the lot of us, and each has his own (O beautiful secret) chamber pot, because the privies are common to all...To express in a word my state of ease, at one and the same time I can be writing, at a table, in bed, or sitting in front of the fire, not to mention in the shit-house...Whoever reads this letter would think I was the most well-off man in the world, and that such a place costs me some tens of florins a month....I came to Venice in those days to practice printing, and to be quit of various lodgings I had which are unworthy to expose beside this place where I am now. I have the most wretched room (if you can call it that) in the whole town, and the worst company, and I suffer the worst discomfort in the world. For the consolation of sleep, I have a solid mattress, a good, soundly made hard bed, an empty pillow, coarse sheets and a blue counterpane of the type used in hospitals; at night, in the manner of a cruel doctor, an army of huge bedbugs, as large as Mocenigos [a type of large silver coin], and a mob of fat fleas, test my pulse and bleed me; above my head, in an old loft, I think there is a college of mice and a consistory of cobwebs; below, there is a street where all night long wretches who waste the daytime pass up and down singing *strambotti* [lewd songs] noisily and certain erotic little madrigals; not to mention Prestor John I told you about, who is next door to me, separated by a board partition. Afflicted by a canker, he energetically struggles, hour after hour, with pills, plasters, embrocations, cupping-glasses, sticky plasters, cauteries, adhesives, wads and enemas; he shouts at the top of his voice and shits with great difficulty. His tabernacle being locked up all day, I swear to God that no corrupted grave gives off such a stench when it is opened. On the other side of me I have an old woman and a tailor who, what with the noise of the scissors and the coughing of the toothless crone, pass away two thirds of the night for me with pleasures of the most wretched sort to be found in all the world.⁹⁰

This letter must be taken with a considerable pinch of salt: it is a rhetorical exercise as much as anything else, especially since it was published, and was presumably intended to function as a device to attract patronage. Indeed, Doni's own Venetian academy, the *Accademia pellegrina*, was dependent on financial backing from powerful patrician families including the Morosini, Martinengo, Contarini and Cornaro.⁹¹ Nevertheless, in the absence of evidence

⁹⁰ Anton Francesco Doni, Letter to Girolamo Fava, New Year's Day (1 March) 1550, *Tre libri di Lettere* (Venice: Francesco Marcolini, 1552), pp. 86-8. Translation from D. S. Chambers and Brian Pullan (eds.), *Venice: A Documentary History, 1450-1630* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 181-2. It is worth also noting that Girolamo Fava was also the dedicatee of Doni's edition of Ortensio Lando's *Utopia* translation. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this reference.

⁹¹ Aquilecchia, 'Pietro Aretino e altri poligrafi a Venezia', pp. 94-5.

to the contrary, we have no reason to doubt its basic details. Doni, in marked contrast to Aretino, seems to have lived in one room in extremely cramped conditions in a single room: perhaps, given his mention of a loft above his head and neighbours on either side, he was living in a *soffitta*, a suite of rooms at the top of a Venetian building, where servants often lived.⁹²

Finally, Francesco Sansovino's accommodation and financial arrangements show that he made the most of the advantages he enjoyed as a result of the money and personal connections of his father, Jacopo, as well as the benefits that came with being one most prominent loyalist writers of the Venetian Republic after 1560. In 1570, after a legal struggle, he managed to get the Venetian government to pay him an annual stipend of some sixty ducats a year, in lieu of unpaid fees owed to his father, who had died earlier that year. In 1573, was made a cavalier of the Order of Constantine. By 1582, a year before Francesco himself died, he was reporting a considerable annual income of 119 ducats from the rental of four houses and over forty fields, not including of course any further income he received from publishing or the stipend. Grendler has described him at this point as being as 'well-off but far from wealthy, at the level of moderately successful merchants and professionals', but it is worth comparing him with Titian, Pietro Aretino and Jacopo Sansovino, in the 1530s – none of whom, in that decade, was in a position to earn supplementary income by renting out multiple properties (Titian, who lived in a flat on the uppermost floor of a *casa da sazentì*, the most common type of residential housing in Venice, rented the two floors below him as well in 1537-39, because he found the previous tenants irritating).⁹³ We can infer, therefore, that Sansovino was at least as comfortable as the most famous artistic and literary personalities of Venice in the first half of the sixteenth century by the end of his life.

⁹² Schulz, 'The Houses of Titian, Aretino, and Sansovino', p. 87.

⁹³ Paul F. Grendler, 'Francesco Sansovino and Italian Popular History 1560-1600', *Studies in the Renaissance* 16 (1969), p. 142; Schulz, 'The Houses of Titian, Aretino, and Sansovino', p. 79. For Francesco Sansovino's income, see ASVe, *DSR*, Condizioni di decima, 1581, San Marco, b. 157, no. 340, quoted in Grendler, *ibid.*

This section has argued that relationships with Venetian and foreign patrons were key to the success of *poligrafi* in Venice, arguably more so than their relationship with individual print houses. It has also shown that they used both print and manuscript to create and maintain links with patrons. Finally, it highlighted that Pietro Aretino's case – and in particular, his housing situation from 1530 until his death – demonstrates a greater dependence on cultivating patronage relationships than on income from book sales.

Conclusion

In concentrating on the *poligrafi*'s printed publications, almost entirely produced during their careers in Venice, scholars have failed to account the effect their precarity and mobility had on their literary output and their dependence on patronage. In this chapter we have seen that the *poligrafi* were not liberated from patronage systems by the rise of the printing press, but rather, saw it largely as a novel means of soliciting patronage, while in many cases remaining somewhat ambivalent about the social stigma associated with publishing in print. Certainly, print did fundamentally change the literary culture of sixteenth-century Venice. But social systems, structures, and attitudes are far more resilient than *poligrafi* scholars have tended to assume. While, with the notable exception of Pietro Aretino, their social positions were usually precarious, the *poligrafi* did have a degree of success in improving their position in the mid-sixteenth century, in the period preceding the Counter-Reformation. Some of them enjoyed long and productive relationships with Venice's leading print houses, especially that of Gabriele Giolito. Some became fixtures of the Venier Salon, or the *Accademia Veneziana*. But equally, such success tended to be short-lived, except where a *poligrafo* managed to cultivate a long-term relationship with an individual printer or the Venetian patriciate.

The consequence of the *poligrafi*'s generally precarious living conditions was that they tended to be heavily dependent on their patronage links. It is unsurprising therefore that their

writings would align so closely with their patrons' interests. One thing that we need therefore always to bear in mind regarding the *poligrafi*'s output is the extent to which it was their choice to write, edit and translate what they produced, versus the publisher's choice – and the extent to which they had control over the material form of the books: or, in other words, to what extent the decision to produce a given text was a product of ideological or personal commitment, rather than a business decision.

The following three chapters move from a consideration of the ways in which the *poligrafi*'s social world was structured to an assessment of their impact on the development the cultural politics of sixteenth-century Italy. It begins with a chapter exploring the role of the *poligrafi* in the circulation of libel in manuscript and print outside of Venice, arguing that several Roman court poets who would later become *poligrafi* – Pietro Aretino, most particularly – as well as non-*poligrafi* such as Francesco Berni, played a crucial role in the development of the pasquinade genre in the sixteenth century. It traces the evolution of this form in manuscript and print as the sixteenth century unfolded, including the ways in which it was adapted to attack Aretino himself, one of the form's inventors. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Nicolò Franco's return to Rome in 1558 and his libellous dialogue attacking Paul IV and the Carafa family, which marked the end of cardinals' patronage of satirists, and shaped future popes' attitudes and methods of dealing with libellous writers in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Part II. The Cultural Politics of Sixteenth-Century Italy

3. Slanderers, Detractors and Rumour-Mongers: The *Poligrafi* and Libel in Ecclesiastical and Princely Courts, ca. 1521-1570

In 1501, a battered old statue – thought to be a depiction of Menelaus – was fished out of the Tiber and installed by Cardinal Oliviero Carafa in front of the Palazzo Orsini (now Palazzo Braschi), a stone's throw from Piazza Navona.¹ So badly damaged that it was devoid of any readily-identifiable features, lacking even a face, the statue quickly acquired the name and persona of 'Pasquino'. It soon became popular to post anonymous satirical poems – of protean form, but usually written in the persona of Pasquino himself and hence known as pasquinades – on the statue's base, as well as on those of several other statues throughout the city. These statues became collectively known as the talking statues of Rome. After the death of Leo X in 1521, Roman court poets such as Pietro Aretino and Francesco Berni played a crucial role in adapting the form of the pasquinade and the persona of Pasquino to partisan libels on behalf of their ecclesiastical patrons. Later, Aretino and other *poligrafi* would take aspects of this style of libellous writing and adapt it, in print and manuscript, to their purposes, though it never became an established form in Venice, remaining confined to ecclesiastical and princely courts.

Traditionally scholars have tended to take pasquinades, especially in the early years, to be a sort of barometer – if not exactly a voice – of the Roman people. The first serious scholars of pasquinades, writing in the nineteenth century, argued that they represented the anticlericalism of the bourgeoisie in the face of the nepotism and corruption of the papacy. Others have cast Pasquino in more of a popular light, arguing that he represented the voice

¹ Angelo Romano, 'La satira di Pasquino: Formazione di un genere letterario' in Chrysa Damianaki, Paolo Procaccioli, and Angelo Romano (eds.), *Ex marmore. Pasquini, pasquinisti, pasquinate nell'Europa moderna: atti del colloquio internazionale*, (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 2006), pp. 11–34.

of the ‘opposition of the piazza’ more broadly.² Claudio Rendina, for example, has described Pasquino as ‘a counter-voice, a troublemaker, albeit without revolutionary ends’.³ More recently, Ottavia Niccoli has argued that pasquinades are indicative of a broad tradition of anticlericalism in Rome that crossed class boundaries, while John M. Hunt has argued that most Romans accepted the legitimacy of papal rule and the system of nepotism that characterised it, even if they criticised its excesses.⁴ Still another school of thought has suggested that pasquinades fulfilled a sort of carnivalesque function in early modern Rome, as a sort of institutionalised means of ensuring that the Roman *popolo* could express discontent without their anger boiling over into violence.⁵

Pasquino is often portrayed as a public censor of moral virtue in texts dating from the period in question. In the preface to his *Pasquillorum tomi*, published in Basel in 1544, Celio Secondo Curione lamented what he saw as the recent decline of public satire in Rome. Curione traced a direct thread from ancient comedy and satire to the public posting of pasquinades in his own time, arguing that the motivator for all these genres was the principle that ‘within a free society, not only bodies, but also tongues should be free.’⁶ He went on to

² See the classic studies by Alessandro Luzio, *Pietro Aretino e Pasquino* (Rome: Tipografia della Camera dei Deputati, 1890); and Vittorio Rossi, *Pasquinate di Pietro Aretino ed anonime per il conclave e l'elezione di Adriano VI* (Palermo and Turin: Carlo Clausen, 1891); Renato Silenzi and Fernando Silenzi, *Pasquino* (Milan: Bompiani, 1932). For more recent scholarship on Pasquino, see the edited collections by Marucci, Marzo and Romano (eds.), *Pasquinate romane del cinquecento*; and Antonio Marzo (ed.), *Pasquino e ditorni* (Rome: Salerno, 1990); as well as Niccoli, *Rinascimento anticlericale*; Damianaki, Procaccioli, and Romano (eds.) *Ex marmore*; Renaud Villard, ‘Incarnare una voce. Il caso della sede vacante (Roma, XVI secolo), *Quaderni storici* 121 (2006), pp. 39-68.

³ Claudio Rendina, *Pasquino statua parlante. Quattro secoli di pasquinate* (Rome: Newton Compton, 1991), Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide page numbers for this reference. Similarly, John M. Hunt argues that ‘Pasquinades...were one of the best barometers of Rome’s anger towards deceased pontiffs.’ John M. Hunt, *The Vacant See in Early Modern Rome: A Social History of the Papal Interregnum* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), p. 193.

⁴ Hunt, *The Vacant See in Early Modern Rome*, p. 194.

⁵ See for instance Laurie Nussdorfer, ‘The Vacant See: Ritual and Protest in Early Modern Rome’, *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 18:2 (1987), pp. 173-189. On the concept of the carnivalesque, see Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 10-6.

⁶ ‘In civitate libera uti corpora hominum, sic etiam linguas liberas esse oportere’. Celio Secondo Curione, *Pasquillorum tomi duo*, vol. 1 (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 2013), pp. 52-3. See also Faini, “E poi in Roma ognuno è Aretino”, p. 162.

claim that, in the first half of the century:

The most wise [pope] considered that [...] if someone could not say certain things freely and overtly, Pasquino ought to take on himself their complaints, making them known in his own name, becoming a public censor of the habits and a life mentor and, at the same time, a messenger of everything, of serious and funny matters.⁷

Similarly, the 1550 edition of the *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae* – a catalogue of engravings of Rome's most famous sights – features an engraving of Pasquino based on a drawing by Nicolas Beatrizet, one of Michelangelo's students, with the following pasquinade inscribed on the statue's base:

...I am that most famous Pasquino, / and I make the most prominent men shiver. / And I astonish the out of towners and my fellow citizens / When I compose in vernacular, or in Latin. / My persona was shaped in this way / By the blows I take from here and from there / For happily revealing their sins, / But as long as I have my voice I do not care, / Even if the rest of my body perishes, / I will continue to speak the truth, / And the people who are offended must deal with it. / Because if stupid people do not want to keep their sins to themselves, / Who is going to stop me from telling them.⁸

For Beatrizet, like Curione, Pasquino is the voice of the people who holds powerful sinners to account. It is certainly true that the vices – and especially the corruption – of the Roman Curia were among Pasquino's favourite subjects, and, equally, that the anonymity afforded by the genre provided pasquinade writers with the ability to express things that would have been dangerous to say under one's own name. But when we shift our focus from the image of Pasquino in pasquinades to contextual evidence about the *writers* of pasquinades, how they came to be written, and the ways in which the genre developed throughout the sixteenth century, this image of Pasquino as a voice of the people and moral censor of the powerful

⁷ 'Existimavit summus ac prudentissimus ille [Pontifex] [...] si quae coram atque aperte alii dicere non sustinent, eorum indicationem Pasquillus iste in se susciperet, suoque nomine in vulgus efferret, essetque idem quasi quidam publicus morum censor, ac vitae magister omniumque seriorum pariter ac ridiculorum interpres.', Curione, *Pasquillorum tomi duo*, pp. 52–3.

⁸ '...son quel famosissimo Pasquino / che tremar faccio i Signor piu Soprani, / stupir Forastieri et Paesani / Quando compango in volgare, o in latino / La mia persona è fatta in tal maniera / Per i colpi, e, hor questo hor quel in accocca / Per ch'io dico i lor falli a buona cera. / Ma infin ch'io ha l'usata lingua in bocca / Non ne fo stima, anchor che'l resto pera / e sempre cantaro, Zara a chi tocca / Che se la gente sciocca / Non si vuol rimaner de i falli suoi / Chi terra me' che no' ridica poi.' In Antonio Lafreri (ed.), *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae* (Rome: Antonio Lafreri, 1550). The University of Chicago Library has digitised several editions of the *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae*, accessible at <http://speculum.lib.uchicago.edu/index.html> [Accessed 8 June 2018].

breaks down. It is clear, in fact, the persona of Pasquino was adapted to a wide variety of ends and genres of writing across the sixteenth century – not only the large numbers of short, anonymous poems, but also longer, dialogue forms that used Pasquino as a character, and that were produced by well-known writers. Some were tolerated or even – if they avoided libelling prominent members of the curia – promoted by the authorities in the form of printed collections, although different popes took different approaches to the circulation of pasquinades. Of the pontiffs discussed in this chapter, Leo X and Pius IV took a more liberal approach, whereas Paul IV and Pius V were much less tolerant.

This chapter deals with the crucial role of several court poets – most of whom also spent periods working for the Venetian presses – in the development of the partisan use of libellous manuscript pasquinades to influence curial politics from the early 1520s onwards – especially Pietro Aretino, Francesco Berni, and Nicolò Franco. It then moves on to a discussion of the ways in which two *poligrafi*, Franco and Anton Francesco Doni, adapted this libellous style to printed works attacking Aretino in the 1540s and 1550s. As in the following chapters on the work of *poligrafi* as satirists and propagandists in Venice, it is clear that there is a strong relationship between these writers' socioeconomic circumstances and the genres in which they wrote. It seems clear that libel was a court genre, that rarely crossed over into the world of Venetian print. There is certainly no evidence that the *poligrafi* ever wrote verses attacking particular individuals by name on behalf of Venetian patrons. On the other hand, the short-form pasquinade – that is, the publicly posted, anonymous satirical poem – was first noted in Venice in 1532 by the diarist Marin Sanudo, and continued as a form of political communication in Venice throughout the early modern period, although it was only in the 1540s that it acquired a distinctly Venetian persona in the form of the

Gobbo, or hunchback, of Rialto.⁹

The chapter begins with a discussion of court poets in the 1520s, and their key role as libellers of their patrons' rivals. It focuses on Pietro Aretino and Francesco Berni as case studies. The second section of the current chapter skips ahead chronologically to a discussion of printed libel in the 1530s and 1540s, and how the *poligrafi* and the Milanese poet Giovanni Alberto Albicante adapted to a new medium and a new context.¹⁰ Finally, the chapter concludes with a discussion of arguably the most detailed source base we have for the motivations behind a particular libellous text – Nicolò Franco's dialogue libelling Paul IV and the Carafa family, the *Commento sopra la vita et costumi di Giovanni Pietro Caraffa che fu Paulo Quarto chiamato et sopra la qualità de tutti i suoi et di coloro che con lui governaro il pontificato* – written in 1560, the year after that pope's death. I argue that Franco's execution, a decade later, for writing this text, while not putting a complete end to this style of libellous writing, did mark the end of cardinals' patronage of satirists, and formed the template for future popes' attitudes and methods of dealing with libellous writers in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Court Satirists in 1520s Rome: Pietro Aretino and Francesco Berni

In the 1520s, court poets such as Pietro Aretino and Francesco Berni adapted the pre-existing literary persona of Pasquino – the truth-telling statue of Rome – and the pasquinade, the style of short, anonymous poem written in his voice, to their own purposes: promoting themselves and attacking their patrons' rivals. This section briefly summarises the origins of

⁹ On the circulation of pasquinades in Venice and the Gobbo di Rialto, see Antonio Marzo, 'Pasquino e il Gobbo di Rialto', in Damianaki, Procaccioli, and Romano (eds.) *Ex marmore*, pp. 121-34; and Maartje van Gelder, 'The People's Prince: Popular Politics in Early Modern Venice', *The Journal of Modern History* 90 (2018), pp. 249-91, which focuses on the popular politics leading up to and following the 1595 election of Marino Grimani as doge.

¹⁰ The impact of the 1527 Sack of Rome and the influence it has on the *poligrafi*'s writing in Venice is the subject of chapter 4.

Pasquino and the pasquinade form in early sixteenth-century Rome, and discusses the differences between the short, anonymous poems affixed to the statue from the longer manuscript poems often explicitly in the name of the author, that were produced by the likes of Aretino and Berni. It goes on to discuss Berni's 1526 *Dialogue Against Poets*, a vivid portrayal of the saturation of poets and libellous poetry in the 1520s Roman court, and some of Aretino's famous pasquinades from this period.

At first Pasquino does not seem to have had any direct political function, but merely served to call out alleged hypocrisies within the curia. The statue became the basis of an annual ritual on the 25th of April each year between 1509 and 1518, and then on an intermittent basis until 1539. As well as pasquinades, this involved dressing the statue in different costumes, often referencing recent events. For example, in 1512 it was dressed as Mars, presumably as a reference to the war of the Holy League against France that year.¹¹ From the very beginning of the festival, an enterprising printer, Giacomo Mazzocchi, published an annual selection of pasquinades.¹² The majority of the poems in the collections were in Latin: none of those that openly criticised the papacy were included.¹³ However, the pope and the Governor of Rome (the papal official with jurisdiction over libel) had no control over manuscript circulation – the primary means by which pasquinades circulated, thanks to an amorphous group of copyists. It was a potentially lucrative exercise: Brendan Dooley has found evidence of some wealthy clients paying two hundred scudi to have pasquinades copied, an enormous sum given that most copyists made eleven baiocchi per

¹¹ Anne Reynolds, 'Classical Iconography in the Early Celebrations of the Festival of Pasquino', *Paregon* 5 (1987), pp. 117-26.

¹² See, for example, Anon., *Carmina quae ad pasquillum fuerunt posita in anno. M.CCCCC.IX* (Rome: Giacomo Mazzocchi, 1509).

¹³ Reynolds, 'Classical Iconography in the Early Celebrations of the Festival of Pasquino', pp. 117-26.

day.¹⁴ The authorities sometimes attempted crackdowns on copyists, especially from the late sixteenth century onwards, but were often only able to ‘repress [...] excess licence somewhat’.¹⁵ In contrast, Leo X seems to have enjoyed people making fun of him and his cardinals (at least up to a point), as illustrated by his positive response to Pietro Aretino’s breakthrough work, the satirical *Last Will and Testament of Hanno the Elephant*, which had mocked the pontiff’s obsession with his beloved pet and the vices of various prominent members of the curia.¹⁶ Rather than being punished for writing such an outrageous work, Aretino was welcomed into the pope’s inner circle. Leo even helped to finance the aforementioned Festival of Pasquino, and on the subject of libellous writings, is supposed to have said ‘they will talk, and we will act.’¹⁷ The implication seemed to be that slander and libel were of no consequence as long as they were being spoken, written and for an audience outside the corridors of power.

Aretino would take the character of Pasquino and the aggressive satirical style of the anonymous pasquinades and turn them into a potent political tool. The catalyst for this was the conclave following the death of Leo X in 1521, which would ultimately elect Adrian VI. During the conclave, Aretino vigorously campaigned for his new patron, Leo’s cousin, cardinal Giulio di Giuliano de’ Medici, who would eventually be elected as Clement VII in 1523. Unfortunately, the majority of the pasquinades Aretino wrote in this election have been lost, but one that has survived exhibits characteristic features of his style. It began ‘[e]veryone says: “I am flabbergasted that the College [of Cardinals] / is unable to shut up

¹⁴ Brendan Dooley, *The Social History of Skepticism: Experience and Doubt in Early Modern Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 38; *Ibid.*, p. 43. On Roman copyists of pasquinades, see also Hunt, *The Vacant See in Early Modern Rome*, pp. 205-6. One Roman *scudo* was worth 100 *baiocchi*.

¹⁵ Teodoro Ameyden, quoted in Hunt, *The Vacant See in Early Modern Rome*, p. 206.

¹⁶ Aretino, *Cortigiana; Opera nova; Pronostico; Il testamento dell'elefante; Farza*. On Hanno, Leo X’s pet elephant, see Silvio A. Bedini, *The Pope’s Elephant* (Manchester: Carcanet, 1997).

¹⁷ ‘Loro dirranno, e noi faremo.’ ASV Misc. Arm. IX.69, f. 17, quoted in Mercati, (ed.), *I costituti di Niccolò Franco*, p. 73.

Pietro Aretino / and I am revived by hearing Aretino / preach all the vices of the College.””
 He went on to argue that ‘if the reverent College / had not been ungrateful towards Aretino’
 – that is, if the college had patronised him to a greater extent – ‘the College would now be
 in the heavens.’ There was still time to ‘make Aretino its servant’, he claimed, if it appointed
 him a chamberlain, but ‘[I]f not, Pietro Aretino / will then say six words to the College / and
 this will break Pietro and the College apart.’¹⁸

This sonnet exhibits characteristic aspects of Aretino’s style. As Marco Faini has noted, these include ‘the obsessive repetition of his name, which works both as a sort of signature and a kind of advertisement; a combination of arrogance and victimhood; the request for rewards and the threat of revenge should they not be bestowed on him. Finally, Aretino admits his faults and ambiguously declares some mitigating circumstances.’¹⁹ One should point out that the repetition of his own name, generally every other line, broke dramatically with the anonymous authorship that had characterised pasquinades up to this point. Indeed, if what makes a poem a pasquinade is that it is written in the voice of Pasquino, optionally also including other talking statues (usually Marforio) as interlocutors – rather than the adopting of a particular poetic form – then this is not a pasquinade at all. Instead, Aretino instead sets himself up as the great exposé of the College of Cardinals’ vices, while at the same time openly demanding favours in return for keeping quiet. This is in marked contrast to what the statue of Pasquino declares in the 1550 engraving, quoted in the introduction to this chapter: ‘Even if the rest of my body perishes, / I will continue to speak the truth.’ Other famous verses by Aretino from the period repeat these exact features. One

¹⁸ ‘Dice ognuno: “Io stupisco che ’l Collegio / non possa far tacer Pietro Aretino / e sí rinasco a sentir l’Aretino / predicar tutti i vizi del Collegio.” [...] Ma se la reverenzia del Collegio / non fusse stata ingrata all’Aretino / in ciel sarebbe a quest’ora el Collegio. // Pur a tempo è il Collegio/ e se vol farsi schiavo l’Aretino / faccia or cubiculario l’Aretino. // Se non, Pietro Aretino / dirrà poi sei parole del Collegio / et ecco in rotta Pietro col Collegio.’ Pietro Aretino, *Operette politiche e satiriche*, vol. 2 (Rome: Salerno, 2012), pp. 70–1.

¹⁹ Faini, “E poi in Roma ognuno è Aretino”, p. 167.

began: ‘Wise college, have mercy on me! / I sinned, I do confess it: I spoke badly. / But who will be such an indiscreet cardinal / that he will not absolve my sweet verses?’ The same poem concluded with another vague threat of libel, seeming almost to imply that Pasquino was merely an alter-ego of Aretino: ‘So, handsome College, / forgive Aretino with all your heart / so that God may spare you and keep you from Pasquino.’²⁰

Even after the rise of Aretino, the Roman authorities attempted to control the circulation of pasquinades by means of their control over the Roman printing press. Katherine de Rycker has noted that Gian Matteo Giberti, the papal datary, refused to allow any of Aretino’s work to be included in the collection of pasquinades produced by Antonio Blado from the 1525 festival, despite the volume being specifically dedicated to Aretino.²¹ Ultimately, however, Pasquino and Aretino became so closely associated with one another that pasquinades were very commonly attributed to him whether there was any plausible evidence that he wrote them or not.²² As we have seen Aretino was eventually forced to leave Rome in the wake of the *I modi* scandal, after a violent altercation between Aretino and an accomplice of Giberti.²³ Consequently Aretino left Rome for Mantua in 1525, and, after the death of his friend Giovanni de’ Medici dalle Bande Nere, moved on to Venice in 1527. Although he wrote a satirical *prognostico* predicting that the fall of Rome was imminent – which won him considerable fame when Charles V’s troops sacked the city shortly after publication – Aretino does not appear to have written any pasquinades after he left Rome, moving on to different forms of satire that did not take aim at specific individuals

²⁰ ‘Savio collegio, *miserere mei!* / *Peccavi*, io lo confesso: ho detto male. / Ma qual fia sí indiscreto cardinale / che non assolva i dolci versi miei [...] Sí che, collegio bello, / perdonati di core all’Aretino / se Dio vi scampi e guardi da Pasquino.’ BAV, Ott. Lat. 2817; published in Aretino, *Operette politiche e satiriche*, pp. 71-72.

²¹ Katherine De Rycker, ‘Recycling Pietro Aretino: The Posthumous Reputation of Europe’s First Professional Writer’ (PhD Thesis: University of Kent / University of Porto, 2014), pp. 241-2.

²² Faini, “E poi in Roma ognuno è Aretino”, pp. 172-174.

²³ On the *I modi* scandal, see p. 51.

but instead satirised courts (in *La Cortigiana*) and humanist dialogues and attitudes to sexuality (in the *Ragionamenti*). Instead, he seems to have lived to a great extent off his reputation as the scourge of princes, regularly receiving gifts from the ambassador of one state or another, in the – usually successful – hope that it would discourage him from writing about them.

Just as Aretino had worked for Leo X and later for his cousin Giulio de' Medici (later Clement VII), his chief antagonist, Giberti had his own libellous poet-for-hire: Francesco Berni. Berni's *Dialogo contro i poeti*, printed anonymously in 1526, is a vivid satirical portrayal of cultural life in the Roman court in the time of Clement VII. It opens with Berni and Giovanni Battista Sanga, both poets and members of Giberti's household, complaining about the saturation of the city with poets and poetry – indeed, the agitated Sanga claims to have been relaxing in his own room when he was accosted by a poet who began reading him verses against his own will. Later, two other figures that cannot be identified with real people, Marco and Giovanni, join the conversation, although they serve only to put up a half-hearted defence of poets, and to be insulted by Sanga and Berni, though by the end they are convinced of the truth of their opponents' perspective.

As Anne Reynolds, the modern editor of Berni's dialogue, has pointed out, on one level the dialogue is a witty, albeit relatively unoriginal, contribution to the literature for and against poetry – a classical trope, and a favourite subject of humanists since the time of Petrarch.²⁴ Reasons to condemn poetry and poets that are cited in the dialogue include the idea that poetry is of no practical use; that poets are guilty of all of the mortal sins, and prefer the pagan gods to the Christian God; that they lie, and in fact *prefer* fiction to the truth; that they claim divinity, but are in fact heretical; that they are rude, arrogant, and crazy; that they

²⁴ See Anne Reynolds, 'Dialogo contra i poeti: A Guide to Interpretation', in Reynolds (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism at the Court of Clement VII: Francesco Berni's Dialogue Against Poets in Context* (New York: Garland, 1997), p. 154.

are intellectually ignorant; that they plagiarise; and that they are slanderers and libellers.²⁵ But the text also functions as a source of insight into and critique of the role of court poets in the papal court. Significantly, Sanga and Berni make it clear that they are only critiquing professional poets, who write nothing else – that is, ‘those who write only verse’, those ‘who are poets by profession’, by which they exclude humanists such as Pietro Bembo, and the noblewoman Vittoria Colonna.²⁶ At multiple points, both Sanga and the character Berni comment vividly on professional poets’ shameless and aggressive attempts to gain patronage by means of flattery and intimidation:

What greater roguery and flattery can there be than when they come up to you in person with a tetrasich, and recite first a preamble, either full of weak excuses, or they want to declaim it to you most insolently, saying that it’s in praise of you? And at that point, if you manage to get a word in edgeways, fine; if not, with the same insolence they will tackle you even with a pair of old hose, promising on receipt of payment to make you immortal. And sometimes they are so evil that, if you don’t give in, they will threaten to write against you and satirise you to death, and other such trifling things.²⁷

We see here that a version of Jacob Burckhardt’s caricature of Aretino – that he obsessively pursued patronage by any means, including blackmail – was familiar to his contemporaries. However, it is also true that Berni did exactly what he accuses other poets of doing. He attacked Adrian VI in 1522, in a long poem denouncing him as an ignorant foreigner; of being in league with *marranos* and Muslims (an allusion to Adrian’s Spanish sympathies); and, perhaps worst of all from Berni’s point of view, of patronising German and Dutch courtiers and cardinals (four of whom he names), at the expense of Italians. He went on to deride the cardinals, some by name, who had elected Adrian, as well as Adrian’s predecessor, Leo X, for having carelessly created so many cardinals in the first place – ‘is there anyone

²⁵ For a discussion of the ways in which the *Dialogo* is influenced by and differs from the previous classical and humanist literature for and against poetry, see *Ibid.*

²⁶ Francesco Berni, ‘Dialogue Against Poets’, in Anne Reynolds (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism at the Court of Clement VII: Francesco Berni’s Dialogue Against Poets in Context* (New York: Garland, 1997), p. 212.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

he failed to make a cardinal?’, he asks, rhetorically.²⁸ Finally, he mockingly alludes to Adrian VI’s stated desire to throw the statue of Pasquino in the Tiber, if the writers of Rome continued to ridicule him.

Later, Berni wrote a poem deriding Aretino’s patron, the newly elected Clement VII, possibly at Giberti’s behest.²⁹ His criticisms of Clement’s character, made early in his papacy, are consistent with the judgements of the historian Francesco Guicciardini, who had known Clement personally and who had famously criticised the pope’s indecisiveness in book XVI of his *History of Italy*, written some years after Clement’s death.³⁰ Berni summarised his pontificate as one ‘composed of congratulations, / of ceremonies and speeches, / of althoughs, of laters, of buts, of ifs, of maybes, / of many words without effects’. He accused Clement of miserliness – that he enjoyed entertainment, but only if he could pay ‘with audiences, responses and sweet nothings’ rather than money. Although it seems Berni was willing to concede that Clement demonstrated ‘great prudence [*pie’ di piombo*] and neutrality, / [...] patience, [...] the demonstration / of faith, hope and charity’, it is clear that he also believed him innocent, naïve, and well-intentioned – and, ultimately, foolish, so much so that Berni predicted he would eventually canonise his unpopular predecessor, Adrian VI.³¹ Ultimately, it appears that Giberti began to see Berni as a liability – though is no direct evidence of a disagreement or a dismissal, letters from other members

²⁸ ‘Onde diavol cavò questo animale / quella bestiacca di papa Leone? / Che li mancò da far un cardinale?’. Berni, *Rime burlesche*, p. 78.

²⁹ Vittorio Cian, *Baldassar Castiglione illustre nunzio pontificio del rinascimento* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1951), p. 113 and n. 1. See also Talvacchia, *Taking Positions*, p.15.

³⁰ Francesco Guicciardini, *Storia d’Italia*, vol. 4 (Turin: UTET, 1874), p. 243. T. C. Price Zimmermann, ‘Guicciardini, Giovio, and the Character of Clement VII’, in Gouwens and Reiss (eds.), *The Pontificate of Clement VII*. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, here I have had to rely on a nineteenth-century edition of the *Storia d’Italia*, and am unable to provide page numbers for my reference Price Zimmermann’s chapter.

³¹ ‘Un papato composto di rispetti, / di considerazioni e di discorsi, / di pur, di poi, di ma, di se, di forsi, / de pur assai parole senza effetti; // di pensier, di consigli, di concetti, / di conietture magre per apporsi; / d’intrattenerti, pur che non si sborsi, / con audienze, risposte e bei detti; // di pie’ di piombo e di neutralità, / di pazienza, di dimostrazione / di fede, di speranza e carità; // d’innocenza, di buona intenzione, / ch’è quasi come dir semplicità, / per non li dar altra interpretazione. // Sia con sopportazione, / lo dirò pur, vedrete che pian piano / farà canonizzar papa Adriano.’ Berni, *Rime burlesche*, p. 98.

of the datary's *familia* allude to tensions in the relationship between Berni and Giberti in 1531 –and that year he left Rome and Giberti's service, settling instead in Florence, where he died in 1535.

Following the Sack of Rome in 1527, in any case, there was a general exodus of artists and writers from the city. In the 1530s Rome was no longer the lucrative artistic hub that it had been in the early sixteenth century, especially during the pontificate of Leo X. Although short, anonymous pasquinades continued under Paul III, professional writers like Aretino and Berni were forced to reinvent themselves elsewhere, in Venice and Florence – though Berni's attempts to do so were thwarted, ultimately, by his premature death. Paul III's successors, Julius III and Paul IV, introduced extremely repressive measures against libels and pasquinades, which largely stamped out the publication of even the ephemeral, anonymous texts.³² In the meantime, outside of Venice, writers such as Giovanni Alberto Albicante and Nicolò Franco adapted the self-aggrandisement, obscenity, and libellous style of Aretino and Berni's 1520s writings to the printing medium in princely courts, often to attack Aretino, who had become arguably the most famous satirist in Europe by the late 1530s, as well as the Church. These printed libels are the subject of the following section.

Contra Aretinum: The Poligrafi, Publicity, and Printed Libel in the 1530s and 1540s

In the 1530, 1540s and 1550s, the Roman court was a considerably less attractive centre for writers than it had been prior to the Sack of 1527. In the early 1530s, a period in which Aretino was attempting to establish himself in Venice and to develop a new style of writing, the libellous style popular in the 1520s among the Roman court poets declined. However, from the late 1530s onwards, court poets and *poligrafi* who had fallen out with Aretino – notably, Nicolò Franco and Anton Francesco Doni – adapted the style in order to attack him

³² Hunt, *The Vacant See in Early Modern Rome*, p. 200.

in print. This section examines two of these texts – the *Vita di Pietro Aretino*, published under Francesco Berni’s name (but variously attributed to Nicolò Franco, Fortunio Spina, and, most recently, Giovanni Alberto Albicante); Franco’s *Rime contro Pietro Aretino e la Priapea*.³³

The first of the aforementioned texts to be published was the *Vita di Pietro Aretino*, which came out in 1538 in Perugia under Francesco Berni’s name, though it refers to events that took place after Berni’s death.³⁴ It takes the form of a short dialogue between Berni and Mauro on Aretino’s life, attacking him as a sodomite who had sex with young men in his household and participated in orgies with men and women.³⁵ Moreover, the dialogue claims that the mother of one of the young men Aretino had seduced had brought sodomy charges against him, and that these, followed by other accusations of blasphemy, were what had forced Aretino to flee from Venice in early 1538, shortly after the publication of his first volume of letters (though he soon returned, allegedly after the duke of Urbino, Francesco Maria della Rovere, intervened to protect him against the charges).³⁶ It is understandable that historians have tended to assume that the dialogue was written by Nicolò Franco, since the character of Berni in the dialogue claims to have learned of the accusations against Aretino from ‘that madman Nicolò Franco’ and ‘partially from Francesco Marcolini’, the printer of works by both Franco and Aretino.³⁷ It is also claimed that Franco will soon

³³ On the various attributions that have been given to the *Vita*, see Paolo Procaccioli’s biographical entry for Fortunio Spina, *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 93 (2018). For the attribution to Albicante, see Giovanni Alberto Albicante, *Occasioni aretiniane. Vita di Pietro Aretino del Berna* (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 1999).

³⁴ Francesco Berni, *Vita di Pietro Aretino del Berna* (Perugia, per Cosimo Bianchini, 1538). The most up-to-date edition of this text is cited in the previous footnote. Note, however, that due to the COVID-19 crisis, I have been unable to provide footnotes to this text and so have referred instead to a nineteenth-century edition of the *Vita* which is available online: this is Anon., *Vita di Pietro Aretino del Berni* (London: Edward Danuntly, 1839).

³⁵ Anon., *Vita di Pietro Aretino del Berni* (London: Edward Danuntly, 1839), pp. 24-9; p. 37.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 39-40. On the duke of Urbino’s intervention see Alessandro Luzio, ‘L’Aretino e il Franco’, *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana* 29 (1897) pp. 243-5.

³⁷ Anon., *Vita di Pietro Aretino del Berni*, p. 3; p. 35.

publish his own volume of letters, which will rival Aretino's widely successful collection. However, as Ian Moulton has noted, 'the *Vita* is both highly polemical and riddled with inaccuracies, and none of its claims can be taken as more than rumour'.³⁸ Moreover, as Paolo Procaccioli has noted, there is evidence that it was not written by Franco, nor by another of Franco and Aretino's mutual acquaintance, Fortunio Spina (the suggestion of prominent nineteenth-century *poligrafi* scholars, Alessandro Luzio and Enrico Sicardi), but Giovanni Alberto Albicante, another poet who had very public falling-out with Aretino in the late 1530s, as well as with another *poligrafo*, Anton Francesco Doni, in 1545.³⁹ The conflict between Aretino and Albicante, a poet employed at the time of the *Vita*'s publication at the court of Alfonso d'Avalos, the marquis of Vasto and governor of Milan, seems to have begun because of Aretino's disparagement of Albicante's *Historia della Guerra del Piamonte*, a poem *in ottava rima* on the recent war between France and Spain. It is possible, as Alberto Asor Rosa points out, that Aretino had mistaken Albicante for another of the same surname who had forged two letters, purporting to be from Aretino, that attacked Charles V and the *condottiere* Cesare Fregoso. In response, Albicante published an *Apologia del Bestiale Albicante contro il divino Aretino* as well as, most probably, the *Vita*. Bizarrely, however, Aretino (uncharacteristically) seems to have called off the feud in order to ask Albicante to use his influence in Milan to purge the real Francesco Berni's *magnum opus*, a rewrite of Boiardo's *Orlando innamorato*, of all anti-Aretine content before it was published by the Calvo press.⁴⁰ More important for our purposes than the authorship, however, is the style

³⁸ Moulton, *Before Pornography*, p. 140.

³⁹ On Spina, see Procaccioli, 'Fortunio Spina'; Alessandros Luzio, 'La famiglia di Pietro Aretino', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 2 (1884), p. 363, n3; Enrico Sicardi, 'L'autore dell'antica "Vita di Pietro Aretino"', *Miscellanea nuziale Rossi-Teiss* (Bergamo 1897), pp. 295-314. On Albicante, see Alberto Asor Rosa, Giovanni Alberto Albicante', *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani* 2 (1960); Albicante, *Occasioni aretiniane*.

⁴⁰ For Berni's edition of Matteo Maria Boiardo's *Orlando innamorato* and its suppression, see Neil Harris, *Bibliographia dell' "Orlando innamorato"*, 2 vols. (Modena: Panini, 1988-1991), especially vol. 1, pp. 133-51; vol. 2, pp. 99-138.

and content of the dialogue. Significantly, the dialogue marked the first time that Aretino was publicly accused of sodomy, something that he would be repeatedly accused of in later polemics by Nicolò Franco and Anton Francesco Doni.⁴¹ This was an accusation that Aretino himself seems to have refrained from using while writing pasquinades against various figures in the 1520s; the sexually explicit nature of the *Sonetti lussuriosi*, written to accompany Marcantonio Raimondi's infamous *I modi* engravings, was absent from his libellous poetry. On the other hand, Franco continued to use sodomy as an accusation when he returned to Rome and libelled the Carafa family in 1560 – the subject of the next section of this chapter. Polemical accusations of sexual deviance – quite the opposite to Aretino's positive portrayal of sex in both his *Sonetti lussuriosi* and the *Ragionamenti* – also characterise the second text to be discussed in this section, Franco's *Priapea*.

The *Rime contro Pietro Aretino and the Priapea* were published together in Casale Monferrato in 1541, possibly having previously circulated in manuscript. The volume consists of 495 poems – 297 in the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino* and 198 in the *Priapea* – all of but one of which are sonnets. Literary scholars have generally derided both the *Rime* and the *Priapea* as puerile and facetious. Even Moulton, the author of an important work on obscene satire in early modern Italy and England, has been dismissive of the *Priapea*: his principal comment on its content being that ‘in one of the first sonnets of *La Priapea* – addressed to “the arch-divine Pietro Aretino, Scourge of Cocks” – Franco apologizes for presenting Aretino with a book filled with “so many cocks”, but concludes that Aretino's “huge arse might be satisfied / to find its usual food here.”’ Moulton observes that, in his view, ‘these lines set the tone for the rest of the volume.’⁴² The *Rime* have received more of

⁴¹ On Anton Francesco Doni's polemics against Aretino, see Doni, *Contra aretinum. Teremoto, Vita, Oratione funerale. Con un'appendice di lettere* (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 1998); Paolo Procaccioli, ‘Per il Doni antiaretiniano: L'orazione funerale’, *Studi e problemi di critica testuale* 47 (1993), pp. 119-34.

⁴² Moulton, *Before Pornography*, p. 141.

the scant scholarly attention than the *Priapea*, partially because they underwent significant textual changes across the three sixteenth-century editions: they are also a much more focused attack on Pietro Aretino, Franco's erstwhile mentor.⁴³ The *Priapea* remained much more textually stable across the three sixteenth-century editions, and attacks a much greater range of targets than the *Rime*, though Aretino is also very often mentioned. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I will focus on the *Priapea*, which I believe is more revealing about Franco's attempt to construct a public image of himself as an iconoclastic figure, independent of any authority be it religious, political, or literary.

The *Priapea*'s paratextual apparatus is significant in these respects. It begins with dedicatory letters to number of individuals including the printer of the volume, Giovanni Antonio Guidone, the humanist Francesco Alunno, and Girolamo Moro, Franco's patron in Casale Monferrato. However, the most interesting by far is the prominently placed 'letter to princes' that concludes the volume. Here, Franco denounces the corruption and lasciviousness of the princes that he claims have allowed such morally decadent figures as Pietro Aretino to flourish, implicitly contrasting Aretino's good fortune with Franco's exile in Casale Monferrato.⁴⁴ When one also considers the frequent and negative references to princes in the sonnets themselves – including a sequence that repeatedly address 'the princes' in the first line – it seems clear that the *Priapea* constitutes in large part a sustained attack on conventional notions of artistic patronage. However, the picture becomes still more complicated when we remind ourselves that, by his own account on the first day of his Inquisition trial in 1568, Franco lived from around 1555 until his arrest in a series of

⁴³ On the *Rime*, see Bruni, 'Polemiche cinquecentesche', pp. 52-67.

⁴⁴ Note that for the reader's convenience my page references refer to an eighteenth-century edition of the *Priapea* attributed to Luigi Tansillo, and published alongside his *Il vendemmiatore*, accessible via the Bodleian library website: I have also consulted a copy of the original 1541 edition held by All Souls College, Oxford. Luigi Tansillo, *Il vendemmiatore. Poemetto in ottava rima* (Peking [Actually Paris]: s.n [J. C. Molini], 1790), pp. 167-71. Originally published as Nicolò Franco, *Rime di M. Nicolo Franco contra Pietro Aretino, & nel fine la Priapea del medemo autore* (Turin [actually Casale Monferrato], Appresso di Gioan Antonio Guidone, 1541).

cardinals' households.⁴⁵ Rather than taking his attacks on conventions of patronage at face value, therefore, it makes more sense to read this as an attempt by Franco to construct a public image in his published writings as a radical, fearless denouncer of moral corruption, while, at the same time, privately seeking conventional means of support.

In the longest of the poems in the volume – the only one, in fact, to break the sonnet form – Franco attacks virtually all authorities, ecclesiastical, legal, medical, political and literary:

The pope's a bugger, and all his prelates,
Along with every other religious person;
So now buggery is not a thing
That one can count among sins.
Bugger all the notable Princes...⁴⁶

Franco goes on to advocate the same for lawyers, philosophers, soldiers, doctors, poets, and, naturally, Pietro Aretino: his contention that one should 'Bugger the Philosophers that have cured themselves / of investigating natural things / So that nothing is against nature' is particularly notable for its accusation that learning and sodomy go hand in hand.⁴⁷ These attacks are deliberately extreme. We can see the influence of the obscene satire developed by the previous generation of *poligrafi* on Franco, and most notably by Aretino's *Sonetti lussuriosi*. Indeed, the eighteenth-century edition of the *Priapea* – to which I refer – makes the association with Aretino's cycle explicit by using 'sonetti lussuriosi' as the subtitle. In the sixteenth-century additions this association was not made explicit. However, as with the *Vita di Pietro Aretino*, where Franco's style differs from that of Aretino's in the *Sonetti lussuriosi* is in the overt seriousness of the allegations, as well as the apparent recklessness

⁴⁵ Mercati (ed.), *I costituti di Niccolò Franco*, p. 96.

⁴⁶ 'Buggera il Papa, e tutti i suoi Prelati, / Con ogni altra persona religiosa; / Or dunque il buggerare non è cosa / Che annoverar si possa tra' peccati. / Buggerano tutti i Principi notati [...]' Tansillo, *Il vendemmiatore*, p. 108.

⁴⁷ 'Buggerano i Filosofi che han cura / D'investigar le cose naturali: / Dunque cosa non è contro natura.' Ibid.

with which Franco targets others such as ‘the pope and all his prelates’, and ‘the princes’ (making its style more comparable to what is said of Aretino’s pasquinades, in the *sede vacante* following the death of Leo X, even if the pasquinades that have survived proceed by means of veiled threats rather than open allegations of sexual misconduct by particular cardinals). However, unlike other obscene works of the period such as the *Vita* and Antonio Vignali’s *Cazzaria*, the *Priapea* was printed with Franco’s name rather than circulating in manuscript under a pseudonym.⁴⁸ On the other hand, unlike the *Vita*, neither the *Rime* nor the *Priapea* appear to have had even a temporary impact on Aretino’s career.⁴⁹ Perhaps by the 1540s Aretino was considered too useful by the Venetian authorities for such charges to have any weight; or, perhaps, confined as Franco was to the backwater of Casale and unable – he claimed – to get printed in Venice, thanks to Aretino’s influence – he did not achieve the circulation necessary to cause the elder *poligrafo* significant problems.⁵⁰

Franco’s treatment of the Church is deserving of further consideration. It is difficult not to read the extensive anticlerical content, in the *Priapea*, without being reminded of his ultimate fate, execution for libelling Paul IV and the Carafa. His sarcastic treatment of the Council of Trent demonstrates the stridently anticlerical side to his nature:

Oh what a happy day it will be,
When the council has finished,
And in order to see such a noble union,
I will run, panting, without my coat.
And because I was always a good little Christian,
Inside I will hunt with my sword
Behind Luther and behind Melanchthon,
And I will say, make way for the beautiful Pope,
As a result of which because he is the father of heroes
To render me favour, he will want me
To take care of his business.
He will lead me by the hand like a God
With tears in his eyes, and then will say,

⁴⁸ Antonio Vignali, *La Cazzaria: the Book of the Prick* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003).

⁴⁹ Moulton, *Before Pornography*, p. 140.

⁵⁰ Franco claimed that Aretino had spies working for him in the workshop of Giovanni Giolito, preventing his work being printed. Franco, *Epistolario*, pp. 65-9 (cc. 10r-12r).

Oh bless you, my cock.⁵¹

Unsurprisingly the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino* and *La Priapea* both went on to be included in the 1559 Pauline Index of Prohibited Books, and again in the more lenient Index of 1564.⁵² Although, as we will see in chapter 4 of this thesis, *poligrafi* based in Venice were also capable of attacking the Church, they tended to do so much more indirectly: poems libelling the pope directly and accusing him of buggery were not publishable in Venice in this period, at least under an author's own name.

One unusual aspect of Franco's self-presentation in this text is his effort to portray himself as learned, rather than inspired by nature as most other *poligrafi* did from Aretino onwards. This may well have been due to the disparagement of his Latin by his fellow *poligrafo* and replacement as editor of Aretino's letters, Lodovico Dolce, an episode discussed in chapter 2.⁵³ On the first day of his 1558 arrest in Rome, asked whether he had ever previously been imprisoned, Franco admitted that 'I was imprisoned one other time during Paul IV's time in the Court of Savella on account of my *Latin Commentaries on the Priapeia of Virgil*'.⁵⁴ The *Priapea* is filled with references to other works both classical and modern. Indeed, an unknown reader of the 1541 edition of the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino e la Priapea* undertook painstakingly to underline every reference to Petrarch and Boccaccio in in a copy now owned by All Souls College, Oxford, sometimes even including a precise reference: such annotations occur every few pages. At the time of his second arrest in 1568, incidentally

⁵¹ 'Oh che felice giorno sarà quello, / Quando il Concilio avrà conclusione, / E per veder si nobile unione / Ansando correò senza mantello. / E perché sempre fui bion cristianello / Dentro mi cacerò col mio falcione / Dietro al Lutero, e dietro al Melantone, / E dirò, fate largo al Papa bello, / Ond'egli perche è padre degli eroi / Per rendermi favore, vorrà ch'io / Allora allora faccia i fatti suoi. / Per man mi menerà com'un Iddio / Con le lagrime agl'occhi, e dirà poi, / Oh sia tu benedetto cazzo mio.' Tansillo, *Il vendemmiatore*, pp. 83-4.

⁵² Franco Pignatti, 'I Dialogi piacevoli di Niccolò Franco', in Paolo Procaccioli and Angelo Romano (eds.), *Cinquecento capriccioso e irregolare. Eresie letterarie nell'Italia del classicismo* (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 1999), p. 100.

⁵³ See chapter 2, p. 173.

⁵⁴ 'io fui pregione una altra volta a tempo de Paulo Quarto in Corte Savella per conto che me furno trovati li Comentarij mei latini sopra la Priapeia di Virgilio'. Nicolò Franco, quoted Mercati (ed.), *I costituti di Niccolò Franco*, p. 95.

Franco also claimed to have been working on a translation, this time of Homer, which he said he was in the process of arranging to be printed in Venice. There is no evidence that Franco knew Greek, so this was presumably a vernacular translation of a Latin edition. Humanist work, and a learned public image, were clearly important to him. Taken together, it is clear that Franco's attacks on forms of authority and intertextual references can be seen, not as indiscriminate and reckless, but as a deliberate attempt to fashion a public image as an iconoclastic figure, free from the hypocrisy and moral corruption that he claims characterises his contemporaries such as Aretino – and yet, at the same time, distancing himself from the claims of Aretino and other *poligrafi* to write purely from their own inspiration without the need to imitate Petrarch or Boccaccio, by demonstrating his classical knowledge.

The texts examined in this section demonstrate libellous satire, attacking an individual or individuals by name, continued to flourish outside of Venice after the Sack of Rome in princely courts, adapted without a great deal of modification to the medium of print. Several features of the style developed by the likes of Aretino and Berni in the 1520s remain – self-promotion, and the replacement of Pasquino with the author as the speaker of truth; obscenity; the targeting of alleged moral failings of the object of criticism; and dire predictions for the future. To these were added the repeated open accusation of sodomy, which writers in 1520s Rome seem to have refrained from using. Moreover, many of the works examined in this section target Aretino himself, as well as being written by his disciples who had fallen out of favour, thus in a sense turning his own style and tactics against him. The following and final section of this chapter examines the return of the professional court satirist to Rome in the form of Nicolò Franco, shortly before the death of Paul IV. Using Franco's 1559 pasquinades and career in Rome as a case study, it seeks to understand the differences between Rome in the 1520s and in the late 1550s and 1560s, the

intended and actual impact of Franco's pasquinades, and the ways in which his subsequent trial and execution served as a template for the treatment of satirists by the Church in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century.

Manuscript Libel in Counter-Reformation Rome: Nicolò Franco, 1558-1570

The final section of this chapter uses one manuscript pasquinade as a case study: Nicolò Franco's dialogue against Paul IV and the Carafa family, written in 1560, the year after the death of Paul IV.⁵⁵ By this point, there was a marked contrast between the official public pronouncements of the Church regarding pasquinades, and what popes and senior church officials said in private. During his trial, on 2 November 1569, the prosecutor of the Carafa nephews, Alessandro Pallantieri, claimed that in 1564, Carlo Borromeo (Pius IV's nephew) and Gabrio Serbelloni told him to show Pius IV 'many vernacular verses against him'. When Pallantieri did so, with some trepidation, Pius is supposed to have responded with laughter and to have quoted Leo X's dismissal of outside criticism, on the grounds that 'they will talk, and we will act.'⁵⁶ However, when he came to describe the same episode again later in the trial, on 7 March 1570, Pallantieri provided much more detail about the pope's reaction and his response, which appears, on the face of things, to be counter-intuitive:

...a pasquinade against the person of pope Pius IV and the Cerbelloni *signori* [or Serbelloni, relatives of Pius IV on his mother's side] was found, which spoke very badly of the pope and accused him of various vices. This pasquinade got into the hands of cardinal Borromeo or *signo* Gabrio [Girolamo Federici, the governor who oversaw the Carafa trial in 1560], who wanted me to bring it to the pope and begged me to do so. I showed said pasquinade to His Holiness, even if I thought it wasn't a good idea I obeyed them and showed it to him. If I remember correctly he did not like it, but nonetheless he responded, laughing: "for us it is enough to be good men: they will talk and we will act". And I

⁵⁵ BAV, MS Ott. Lat. 2684, ff. 346r-570v.

⁵⁶ 'Loro dirranno, e noi faremo.' ASV Misc. Arm. IX.69, f. 17, Leo X, quoted in Mercati, (ed.), *I costituti di Niccolò Franco*, p. 73.

believe that I then restated or issued a ban against these pasquinades.⁵⁷

In private Pallantieri is also supposed to have said, along similar lines to the pope, that ‘one does not see in this court (as far as I know) the pontiffs caring about people who say or write negative things about them...in Rome we have never paid much attention to such things.’⁵⁸ But his self-described actions following the meeting with Pius in 1564 – issuing a ban against pasquinades – seems to be much more of a response to Pius’s emotional reaction to the pasquinade under discussion (‘he did not like it’) than a response to his words, which appear, on the face of things, to amount to Pius telling Pallantieri that one ought not to take such things very seriously. The ban subsequently issued by Pallantieri was, in fact, extremely harsh, pronouncing that anybody daring to ‘compose, do, write, say, or publish any sort of infamous libel...does so under penalty of death and the confiscation of all goods.’⁵⁹ Officially, then, the penalties for writers of pasquinades and other texts deemed to be libellous were extremely severe: in private, attitudes seem to have been much more ambiguous, with Pius IV claiming that they did not matter, but his subordinates seeming to believe that in fact the pope cared about public opinion much more than he would care to admit. Moreover, the issue becomes still more complex once we consider the considerable evidence that either Pius IV, himself or Pallantieri appear to have commissioned Franco to write his *Anti-Carafa Commento*, suggesting that the authorities were perfectly willing to take advantage of the services of professional writers like Franco in order to denigrate their

⁵⁷ ‘...fu trovato un pasquillo contro la persona di Papa Pio quarto et di questi signori Cerbelloni dove si diceva molto male et s’imputava il Papa d’alcuni vitii, il quale pasquillo andò in mano del cardinale Borromeo o del signo Gabrio et volendo io entrare dal Papa fui pregato da loro, ch’io volesse mostrare a S. Santità detto pasquino et se bene io dissi che non era bene per obedirli gli lo mostrai, et se bene io conobbi che non gli piacque, non di meno rispose ridendo: a noi ci basta essere homo da bene: loro dicano et noi faremo, et credo ch’allhora io rinovasse o facessero fare un bando contra questi pasquinanti.’ Pallantieri, *ibid*, ff. 170-183, quoted in Mercati, (ed.), *I costituti di Niccolò Franco*, p. 89.

⁵⁸ ‘non si è visto in questa corte (che io sappia) che i pontifici habbino curato in queste genti che dicono o scrivono male di loro [...]. A Roma non se n’è mai fatto troppo gran conto.’ Pallantieri, quoted in Niccoli, *Rinascimento anticlericale*, p. 165.

⁵⁹ ‘nessuno ardischi comporre, né fare, né scrivere, né dire, né leggere, né pubblicare alcuna sorta di libelli famosi [...] sotto pena della vita et della confiscatione de tutti i suoi beni.’ *Ibid*.

rivals, although the official reason for Franco's arrest in 1568, eight years after the *Commento* was written, was that text had libelled Paul IV and the Carafa family, and that it contained heretical content. However, as Miles Pattenden has argued in his work on the process and aftermath of the prosecution of the Carafa nephews during the pontificate of Pius IV, a principal motivation for Franco's trial was in fact to pressure the *poligrafo* to provide information about his patrons, and in particular about Alessandro Pallantieri, the prosecutor of the Carafa and therefore an identified target of Pius IV's successor, Pius V, who had made it his mission to punish all those who had been involved in the Carafa's trial.⁶⁰ There is evidence to support this view from the content of the *Commento* itself.

On the first day of the trial, Franco stated that he had been in Rome for the past ten years, of which he had spent eight years in the household of Cardinal Giovanni Morone – first in his palace in Borgo, and then following him to Trastevere. Morone was at that time the most prominent surviving member of the pro-reform, *spirituali* faction of the Curia and enemy of Paul IV; Pius V had attempted to revive charges of heresy against Morone before it fizzled out due to the cardinal's abundance of powerful supporters, forcing Pius to content himself with less prestigious targets (it is however important to state that Franco only moved into Morone's household after writing the *Commento*, at the end of 1560).⁶¹ Prior to this, during the *sede vacante* after Paul IV's death in 1559, Franco had shared quarters in the Parione neighbourhood with Antonio Soriceo, a childhood friend from Benevento, opposite Aurelio

⁶⁰ As well as the principal charges of knowingly introducing libellous material as evidence into the Carafa trial, fraud and extortion, previous charges of rape and incest against Pallantieri were revived. See Miles Pattenden, *Pius IV and the Fall of the Carafa: Nepotism and Papal Authority in Counter-Reformation Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 122-4; Thomas V. Cohen, *Love and Death in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), ch. 4, pp. 125-70. On Pallantieri's trial itself, see Paolo Grandi, 'Il processo Pallantieri (1569-1571) sotto il pontificato di S. Pio V' (Tesi di Laurea: University of Bologna, 1981).

⁶¹ On Pius V's attempt to revive the charges against Morone, see Massimo Firpo, *Inquisizione romana e Controriforma. Studi sul cardinal Giovanni Morone e il suo processo d'eresia* (Bologna: Mulino, 1992), pp. 471-536; Massimo Firpo and Dario Marcatto (eds.), *Il processo inquisitoriale del cardinal Giovanni Morone. Edizione critica*, vol. 6 (Rome: Istituto storico italiano per l'età moderna e contemporanea, 1981-1995), p. 23.

Grimaldi and Dolce Gacciola. The latter appears to have been a figure of significance in the production of the *Commento*, to whom we will return later.⁶² Franco stated that he left Morone's household 'this past January' (that is, January 1568): somewhat mysteriously, he said 'I departed from his service because I could not contain myself there and I asked him for permission [to leave].'⁶³ It is possible that, as with Aretino and Clement VII and Francesco Berni and Giberti before him, tensions arose between the austere Morone and the mercurial satirist, but there is no direct evidence of any such tension: only this vague insinuation from Franco. Subsequently, he had stayed for two months at Monte Giordano, in a 'room in the house of a Madam Giovana' before being invited by '*cavaliero* Sorentino to reside with him and so I was with him until now'.⁶⁴ Eventually, under repeated torture by the *Strappado* or *Tratto di corda* (a technique by which the person being interrogated was hung from a beam by a rope tying their wrists together, causing their bodyweight to slowly dislocate their shoulders) Franco alleged that Pallantieri had collaborated with him on the pasquinades with a view to using them as evidence in the Carafa trial.⁶⁵ Subsequently, on 25 February 1570, Pallantieri was brought in to confront Franco on this claim (a standard legal practice in this period when testimonies conflicted). Pallantieri hotly denied that he had worked with Franco, exclaiming to the inquisitor that '*Signor*, I have told the truth: as to what Nicolò Franco has said, as I have said and hope to prove in a clear manner, as far as things are known to me I have told the truth.'⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the inquisitors chose to believe

⁶² Pignatti, 'Niccolò Franco pasquinista', p. 152.

⁶³ 'Io me partì da suoi servitij perché non me possevo trattenere lì et gli domandai bona licentia.' Nicolò Franco, in Mercati (ed.), *I costituti di Niccolò Franco*, p. 96.

⁶⁴ '...cavaliero Sorentino a trattenerme con lui et così son stato con lui fino adesso, che esso me ha fatto le spese.' Ibid, p. 96.

⁶⁵ Pattenden, *Pius IV and the Fall of the Carafa*, pp. 123-4.

⁶⁶ 'Signor io l'ho detta la verità: l'havesse così detta Nicolò Franco, come'io l'ho detta et spero di provare di maniera così chiaramente le cose mie che si conoscerà ch'io ho detto la verità.' Pallantieri, quoted in Mercati, (ed.), *I costituti di Niccolò Franco*, p. 225.

Franco, not Pallantieri, and both the poet and the prosecutor were subsequently executed. It seems possible – though there is no direct evidence to support this – that Franco was given a place in Morone’s household as a reward for his service to Pallantieri during the trial of the Carafa nephews.

The *Commento* itself largely takes the form of a long-form, 288-page dialogue between Pasquino and Marforio (written, we can say with confidence thanks once again to the transcript of Franco’s 1568-70 trial, between August and September 1560). The title makes Franco’s targets fairly clear: the ‘Comment on the life and conduct of...Paul IV, his family, and those who with him governed the pontificate.’ Pasquino, as in most other works involving the talking statues, takes the central role in the dialogue and the majority of the speaking time, with Marforio mostly playing the role of the audience, occasionally contributing questions and interjections. The *Commento* is entirely by Franco except for the incipit, written by a certain Angelo Gabriele, who had been a canon of St Peter’s from 1554 to his death in 1566 and for whom, Franco initially claimed during his 1568-70 trial, the *Commento* was composed for. The manuscript seized as evidence had been copied out by Franco himself from another manuscript in the hand of Dolce Gacciola, who appears to have played an important role in the commissioning and composition of the work, working perhaps as an *amanuensis* or even as a collaborator with Franco.⁶⁷

The *Commento* immediately introduces its main themes – the infamous career of Don Carlo Carafa, the pope’s cardinal-nephew; to a lesser extent, that of his brother Giovanni, the duke of Paliano; and the young cardinal Alfonso, Paul IV’s great-nephew, as well as their relationship with the late pope. Carlo, often referred to with the sarcastic epithet ‘the good Don Carlo’, is introduced as ‘[Paul IV’s] carnal nephew’ (*suo nipote carnale*, a play on ‘cardinal-nephew’), and the ‘greatest and most dismal assassin that was ever born.’

⁶⁷ On Gacciola, see Pignatti, ‘Niccolò Franco pasquinista’, pp. 152-4.

Certainly, his murderous reputation was well deserved. There are frequent references to Carlo's sojourn in Benevento, Franco's hometown, to which Carlo had been exiled following his involvement in a homicide in the Carafa hometown of Naples, where – as mentioned previously – Carlo had become involved in yet another murder. This episode is repeatedly returned to in the dialogue.⁶⁸

Another event that is referred to frequently is the murder of Violante, Giovanni's wife, for which both Carlo and Giovanni are portrayed as culpable. Violante was, according to Giovanni, caught having an affair with his captain of the guard, Marcello Capece. Having killed Capece – supposedly, after a brief trial at Giovanni's palace, the duke bit off his nose, stabbed him twenty-seven times and dumped the body in the palace sewer – there was a brief debate about what to do about Violante. After receiving word from Carlo and Alfonso that Violante too should die, she was strangled with a silk cord, despite the fact that she was heavily pregnant. The reaction to the murders in Rome, where Violante was one of the few members of the family to enjoy some degree of popularity, was of widespread disbelief regarding her infidelity and outrage at her fate, to the extent that there was a popular vote to remove the family's Roman citizenship and to remove their insignia from all locations within the city and a delegation of three hundred citizens petitioned the cardinals, then gathered in Rome for the conclave that would elect Pius IV, to ratify it.⁶⁹

The Carafa's calamitous foreign policy decisions also feature regularly, including their disastrous war with Spain, as well as Carlo's attempts to foster links with the Turks and Lutherans.⁷⁰ As with the references to Carlo's involvement in the Panachione murder in

⁶⁸ BAV, MS Ott. Lat. 2684, ff. 348r.-350v.; On Carlo Carafa's time in Benevento and the murder of Panachione, see Georges Duruy, *Le cardinal Carlo Carafa, 1519-1561* (Paris: Hachette, 1882), p. 8. See also chapter 1 of this thesis, p. 72.

⁶⁹ The details of the murders only emerged during the Carafa trial: see Pattenden, *Pius IV and the Fall of the Carafa*, p. 31.

⁷⁰ BAV MS Ott. Lat. 2684, ff. 352r.-353v.

Benevento, the extent to which the *Commento* tallies with the charges that would subsequently be brought against the Carafa is quite remarkable, as is the extensive coverage of Carlo Carafa's time in Venice, including a possible reference to the vague 'incident with a dancing girl' that would be referenced by Pallantieri in the trial.⁷¹ Franco also accuses Carlo of associating there with the Florentine exile and *condottiere* Piero Strozzi (although interestingly this particular association does not appear to have been made against Carlo in his trial), and of colluding with him in an attempt to persuade the Venetians to form a league against Philip II by offering them some of the territories resulting from any successful taking of the Kingdom of Naples from Habsburg control:

Pasquino: Now it came to be in the end was that by a BULL Don Carlo was made Angel of Peace. You know how he came back from France with Piero Strozzi with a positive response and a great resolution and having [...] with the Duke of Alva for forty days he was sent to the Venetians and the main goal was to see them enter the league against King Philip by offering them something of the conquest of the Kingdom of Naples...⁷²

This accusation is significant in that, in the course of the Carafa trial, both Pius IV and Carlo Carafa repeatedly attempted to persuade Philip II, as arguably the dominant force in Italian politics, to support their side.⁷³ In the end, Carlo was only successful in obtaining the support of Philip's ambassador in Rome, Francisco Vargas, which proved to be of limited value, with Philip's sole intervention being a tepid request for Pius to show leniency that arrived the day before the cardinals met to decide whether Carlo was guilty, in March 1561.⁷⁴ This accusation that he had sought to forge a allegiance between Florentine anti-Medicean rebels

⁷¹ BAV MS Ott. Lat. 2684, f. 569r. On the "incident", presumably of sexual misconduct of some kind, see Pattenden, *Pius IV and the Fall of the Carafa*, p. 70 and ch. 3, n58.

⁷² 'Pasquino: Hor' come si sia per venir' al fine perché fu fatta così grande BULLA era fu Don Carlo fatto Angelo della Pace saprai come tornato che fu egli di Francia insieme con Piero Strozzi con buona riposta et con bonissima risolutione et havendo poi [...] col Duca de Alva per quaranta giorni fu mandato legato a Venetiani et l'intendimento principale fu per vede le potea farli entrare nella lega contro Re Filippo offerendo loro che della conquista del Regno de Napoli...' BAV, MS Ott.Lat. 2684, ff. 568r.-569v. On the attempt by the Carafa to broker an alliance with Venice and Strozzi, see Marcello Simonetta's forthcoming entries on Piero Strozzi and his father Filippo Strozzi for the *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*.

⁷³ Pattenden, *Pius IV and the Fall of the Carafa*, pp. 81-4.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 67, 82, 100.

and Venice is, therefore, significant, and perhaps intended to remind Philip II and the Spanish faction of Paul IV's attempt to retake Naples, and thereby discourage any attempt by them to intervene in the trial.

The *Commento* frequently insinuates that the Carafa nephews had heretical leanings. Franco insinuates that Carlo's religious views were behind his attempt to solicit the support of 'Lutherans' against the Habsburgs.⁷⁵ He also implies that Alfonso Carafa had read of one of the most famous Italian Reformation texts, the *Alfabeto Cristiano* of the Spanish reformist writer Juan de Valdés, as well as 'prohibited books other than that'.⁷⁶ Paradoxically, Valdés had been one of the most important influences on the reformist-minded circle of elites often referred to as the *spirituali*, which included figures such as Pietro Carnesecchi, Marcantonio Flaminio, Giulia Gonzaga (one of the two interlocutors in the *Alfabeto*, which takes the form of a dialogue, along with Valdés himself), Vittoria Colonna, and Morone. However, here the *Commento* exactly corresponds once again with the charges made against the Carafa in their trial, since the charge of heresy was added to Alfonso's charge sheet on 18 July 1560 on the grounds that several works on the Index of Prohibited Books had been discovered among his possessions – probably as an unfortunate consequence of having inherited Paul IV's library rather than any genuine interest on his part.⁷⁷

Franco alleged, under torture, that Alessandro Pallantieri had collaborated with him on the *Commento* in order to introduce them in the Carafa trial as evidence of their various misdeeds.⁷⁸ On the other hand, Franco Pignatti has argued that 'the origin of the *Commento*

⁷⁵ 'Pasquino: Non si puo' iscrivere, dunque scusa, che basti a difondere quest' indegno Pontifice, cosi' dall'Infamia del Mondo, come dal Luogo oticno fiori che sapendo la maluagia unita del nipote in nocibosa puo assasi pripublico heretico... Marfiorio: Io so che Don Carlo è buon Cristiano...' BAV, MS Ott.Lat. 2684, ff. 365r.-366r.

⁷⁶ 'l'Alfabeto, et piu' di quello dei libri prohibiti...' BAV, MS Ott.Lat. 2684, ff. 351v.-351r. Italics mine. On Juan de Valdés and the *Alfabeto Cristiano*, see Massimo Firpo, *Juan de Valdés and the Italian Reformation* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2015).

⁷⁷ Pattenden, *Pius IV and the Fall of the Carafa*, pp. 75-6.

⁷⁸ Ibid, pp. 123-4.

was a slim volume that circulated among friends, destroyed, I would say, because of a moment of anger rather than as a result of a premeditated decision, just as it started to become embarrassing.’⁷⁹ The subjects covered in the *Commento*, however, appear to support the idea that its content was premeditated, since it corresponds with the content of the prosecution case against the Carafa so accurately. The murder of Violante scandalised Rome, and made the Carafa family – never particularly popular – more hated than ever. It makes sense, therefore, that Franco would repeatedly make reference to it. This was public knowledge, along with the Carafa’s disastrous foreign policy exploits, although the references to Carafa’s attempt to form an anti-Habsburg league with Piero Strozzi and Venice may have been included specifically for the purposes of dissuading Philip II from intervening in the trial. Insinuations of religious deviance, along with sexual deviance, were common tropes of libellous literature, although the charge of heresy was made against Alfonso in the course of the trial. On the other hand, Carlo Carafa’s murder of Tommaso Panachione in Benevento was presumably much less well-known, especially in the level of detail that Franco describes them, including using the victim’s name. Here, he may be drawing on his personal knowledge of Carlo’s history. Overall, however, the accusations in the *Commento* seem to correlate with the accusations made in the trial to such an extent that it seems likely Franco received instructions on what to include from Pallantieri.

Some insight into the intended and actual effects of the *Commento* can be gleaned from Pallantieri’s own trial. In his defence against charges of having introduced the pasquinades at the Carafa’s trial, he argued that they had in fact hindered the case for the prosecution by giving Giovanni Carafa written evidence of Violante’s adultery, while they provided Carlo with the opportunity to claim that it was Paul IV who was responsible for

⁷⁹ ‘...all’origine del *Commento* sta uno smilzo fasciolo che circolava tra amici, distrutto, dieri per un moto di stizza piuttosto che per una decisione mediata, allorquando la pubblicità cominciava a farsi imbarazzante.’ Pignatti, ‘Niccolò Franco pasquinista’, p. 153.

the mistakes of the papacy during his reign.⁸⁰ On the other hand, during the course of the Carafa trial, the argument had been put forward that the pasquinades were libellous and that they had caused great damage to the family's honour.⁸¹ The issue seems to rest primarily on a question of audience. We have seen in section 1 that elites were greatly interested in the content of pasquinades and were willing to pay copyists handsomely to provide them. There is, admittedly, no evidence that Franco's *Commento* was intended to be read beyond the restricted audience that could afford to participate in manuscript circulation. However, elements of the *Commento* echo the charges being made, near-contemporaneously, against the Carafa in their trial so precisely that it seems it was intended to publicise the case against them, and therefore to turn elite opinion against them. Moreover, the specific allegation that Carlo had attempted to form a secret alliance with the Venetians and Piero Strozzi may have been intended to dissuade Philip II and the Spanish faction in Rome from using their considerable influence to intercede on the Carafa's behalf. There is also a more general point to be made. What is striking about the various charges against the Carafa in Franco's *Commento* is the fact that, for all of the Carafa's complaints about libel and Franco's typically exaggerated, overblown style, the vast majority of the allegations are believable, since they were echoed in wider accusations made against the Carafa more broadly, whether or not they were actually true.

Franco's execution for having written these pasquinades may not have led to the end of this style of libellous writing, but it did mark the end of cardinals' patronage of satirists – and shaped future popes' attitudes and methods of dealing with libellous writers in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The treatment of the satirist Ferrante Pallavicino is a case in point. In various works, Pallavicino attacked the Church, especially the Inquisition

⁸⁰ See Pattenden, *Pius IV and the Fall of The Carafa*, pp. 123-4.

⁸¹ ASV, Fondo Borghese I.130, f. 387v.; quoted in Pattenden, *Pius IV and the Fall of The Carafa*, n.76, p. 124.

and the methods of Jesuit education, and the alliance between Urban VIII and Spain. Particularly notorious was his final work *Il Divortio celeste*, in which Christ requests a divorce from his bride, the Church, on the grounds of her adultery and depravity, which is granted after Saint Paul is sent to investigate the truth of these allegations.⁸² An important difference between Pallavicino and Franco was that the former was based in Venice for most of his writing career, where he enjoyed a degree of protection – but this text proved to be so outrageous that Pallavicino was forced to leave the city for Bergamo, from which he was persuaded by a papal agent, Charles de Breche, to seek out the patronage of Cardinal Richelieu in Paris. On the way there, he was handed over to the papal authorities in Avignon, where he was imprisoned and ultimately executed just a year after the publication of *Il Divortio celeste*.⁸³ We can perhaps see Franco's execution in 1570 as marking the beginning of the Church's taking a much more aggressive approach to the pursual of libellous writers.

Conclusion

The chapter began with a discussion of court poets in Rome in the 1520s, before the 1527 Sack of Rome, and their role as libellers of their patrons' rivals, usually via the medium of the manuscript pasquinade. Focusing on two of the most prominent individuals, Pietro Aretino and Francesco Berni, I argued that this polemical, libellous form of poetry borrowed the style of the anonymous manuscript pasquinade, while adapting it to the *poligrafi*'s purposes: by replacing the persona of Pasquino as a fearless truth-teller with that of the poet, they both promoted themselves and served their particular patrons' interests. The second section of the current chapter discussed printed libel in the 1530s and 1540s following the

⁸² Ferrante Pallavicino, *Il divortio celeste* (Villafranca [actually Geneva], s.n., 1643).

⁸³ Giorgio Spini, *Ricerca dei libertini. La teoria dell'impostura delle religioni nel Seicento italiano* (Rome: Editrice universale de Roma, 1950), pp. 177–99; Edward Muir, *The Culture Wars of the Late Renaissance: Skeptics, Libertines, and Opera* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 61–107. For Pallavicino's trial, see BAV, MS Barb. lat. 6157.

Sack of Rome. I argued that writers at princely courts adapted the style perfected by Aretino and Berni to the print medium, adding obscene content that had been used by Aretino in a positive spirit in other works such as the *Sonetti lussuriosi* and the *Ragionamenti* in order to attack the infamous *flagello de' principi* himself. Finally, the chapter concluded with a discussion of the most detailed source base we have for a writer of pasquinades – Nicolò Franco's dialogue libelling Paul IV and the Carafa family, written the year after Paul's death – and argues that Franco's execution, a decade later, for these pasquinades, while not representing a complete end of this style of libellous writing, did mark the end of cardinals' patronage of satirists, and formed the template for future popes' attitudes and methods of dealing with libellous writers in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

It is clear, from the material examined in this chapter, that there was a strong relationship between these writers' socioeconomic circumstances, location in which they were writing, and the genres that they worked in. Libellous poetry remained a court genre throughout the period with which this thesis is concerned – though the *poligrafi* played a key role in its spread to princely courts from its origins in Rome, it never crossed over into the world of Venetian print. The extent to which they were able to adapt the style pioneered by Aretino and Berni in the early 1520s speaks to their adaptability. However, after Nicolò Franco's execution in 1570, the genre quickly declined, as did the range of opportunities for libellous poets at courts throughout Italy, highlighting the extent to which such writers relied on the tolerance and willingness of their patrons to protect them.

The next chapter moves on to an examination of the literary output of those writers who moved to Venice in the wake of the changes wrought by the Sack of Rome, and their attempts to redefine themselves as free speakers of truth, independent of any single patron, in order to counter the stigma of writing for profit for the Venetian printing industry.

4. Pedants, Courtiers and Satirists: The *Poligrafi* as Demonstrators of Vice and Virtue in Venice, ca. 1527-1556

After the Sack of Rome, in 1527, many young writers were drawn to Venice. There, because of the stigma against writing for profit, and the lack of a court patronage system in Venice, they were compelled to develop a new model of authorship and a new method of writing that could appeal to their existing patrons, potential future patrons in Venice and a wider reading public – though not a mass audience – at the same time. Consequently, from the early 1530s to the early 1550s, Venice became the site of a novel experiment in literary authorship. While building on the combination of relentless self-promotion and a witty, obscene literary style already pioneered by the likes of Pietro Aretino and Francesco Berni in Roman pasquinades, the *poligrafi* began explicitly to define themselves against not only the courtier-poet model but also the court patronage system in general. More precisely, they claimed to reject both the compromised relationship to the truth engendered by the power balance in the court-patron relationship, and the careful way in which a courtier-poet needed to speak and write, taking full advantage of the opportunities afforded to them by lax censorship and the burgeoning printing press in Venice. They saw the press not primarily as a means of making a living from book sales, but instead as a way of promoting themselves to multiple patrons, inside and outside of the city, at the same time. At the same time, the *poligrafi* tended to present themselves in opposition to efforts by the likes of Pietro Bembo and Baldassare Castiglione to purify the vernacular by introducing classical elements: instead, they tended to argue that their direct language reflected the unvarnished truth of what they wrote. However, it is clear nevertheless that they chose the subjects they wrote about and the genre and style in which they wrote about them very carefully, avoiding not only criticism of Venice, but also any writing targeted at particular individuals at all, in

contrast to the *ad hominem* style of pasquinades and the other libellous texts examined in the previous chapter.

In constructing their literary personae as satirists and responding to contemporary debates about the correct use of spoken and written language, the *poligrafi* also made significant contributions to what we might call a ‘prehistory’ of the public sphere.¹ In the sixteenth century there was, as yet, no conception of the public sphere, nor any concept of “free speech” *per se*. It was not until the seventeenth century that civil society began to be incorporated into theoretical models of political participation. The different communicative registers entailed by speech, manuscript, and print circulation were also yet to be theorised explicitly. But there was a great deal of writing about language (the *questione della lingua*) and conversation – or, to put it more precisely, on what should or should not be said in public, and in private, mostly focusing on elite court settings. In these areas the *poligrafi* made significant contributions. Moreover, the very fact of publishing certain forms of political information – whether in manuscript form to circulate among a restricted audience, as with pasquinades, or in print form to a much wider (albeit still relatively restricted) audience, as with the publications under consideration in this chapter, was itself an innovation.²

From Petrarch onwards, humanists often argued that it was more important to do good than to know the truth, and that people are more effectively moved to right action by poetry and history than by philosophy.³ Victoria Kahn has shown how, as a consequence, the favoured humanist genre of the dialogue became central to humanist practice in Renaissance

¹ I am using the term ‘prehistory’ in Terence Cave’s sense: see Cave, *Pré-histoires*; Holland and Scholar (eds.), *Pre-Histories and Afterlives*.

² On the publicity/secretcy axis of politics, see Elizabeth Frazer, ‘Political Theory and the Boundaries of Politics’, in Marc Stears and David Leopold (eds.), *Political Theory: Methods and Approaches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 194.

³ Victoria Kahn, *Rhetoric, Prudence, and Skepticism in the Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 10.

Italy.⁴ The dialogue, building primarily on the model of Cicero and (to a lesser extent) Plato, served a key rhetorical and pedagogical function – first, it served as an example of the writers’ ability to argue *in utramque partem*, on both sides of any topic – and, second, the reading of a dialogue and the consideration of every point of view therein was considered to be the best way of learning rhetoric and developing the Aristotelian virtue of prudence – a key area of congruence, as Kahn has shown, between Aristotelian practical philosophy and humanist thought. However, by the sixteenth century, there was increasing scepticism about the capacity of humanist education to develop prudence, most famously from the likes of Erasmus of Rotterdam and Niccolò Machiavelli.

The *poligrafi* shared this scepticism, often using non-elite figures including prostitutes, poultry farmers and fishermen in their dialogues to satirise humanists’ continued commitment to the educational potential of rhetoric. But scholars have sometimes mistaken this tendency for a championing of and sympathy for the perspective of the common people. In fact, the *poligrafi*’s use of such figures in their dialogues bears a marked resemblance to what Emily Butterworth has found in her examination of French satire in the same period – the rhetorical deployment of a ‘public voice’, rather than the ‘voice of the people’.⁵ This framing helps make sense of other aspects of their output as well. For example, the *poligrafi* were frequently just as happy to criticise non-elites, as when Anton Francesco Doni wrote a satirical preface ‘to those who cannot read’. This is not so surprising when we consider the audience for their printed works – not the masses, but those who were sufficiently educated, and who could afford to buy books; and those elite patrons, or prospective patrons, to whom the books were dedicated. In some instances, such as Aretino’s first book of letters, their books were even printed in two editions – a cheap octavo, and a more luxurious quarto

⁴ Ibid. p. 20.

⁵ Emily Butterworth, *The Unbridled Tongue: Babble and Gossip in Renaissance France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Cave, *Pré-histoires*.

version, with a large engraving of the author. It is worth remembering, moreover, that such writers spent most of the 1530s and 1540s attempting to establish patronage networks in Venice, as we have seen in Part I of this thesis.

In many ways we can see the story of the *poligrafi* in Venice as a project to adapt the genre of the pasquinade to the medium of print. While they abandoned the publication of personal attacks characteristic of pasquinades during their time in Venice, they continued to deploy their obscene, witty style and the obsessive promotion of their own personae, as Pietro Aretino had pioneered. This stylistic choice bears comparison with Pierre Bourdieu's analysis of the relationship between institutional power and knowledge production in twentieth-century French academia, *Homo Academicus*, in which Bourdieu argues 'it is not [...] as is usually thought, political stances which determine people's stances on things academic, but their positions in the academic field which inform the stances that they adopt on political issues in general.'⁶ In a similar way, we can see the *poligrafi* in Venice seeking to create a distinctive style as in part a consequence of being outside conventional patronage structures.

It is worth noting before we proceed to a detailed analysis that, in the period in which the *poligrafi* were establishing themselves in Venice, the cultural context of the city was unusual in two respects. The first is the unusual degree of openness exhibited by Italian culture in this period before the conclusion of the Council of Trent, especially with regard to heterodox religious thought and erotic fiction and art, which has been described by Nicola Bonazzi (focusing on the literary world of Venice) as a 'carnival of ideas' and by James Grantham Turner as an 'erotic revolution' by (focusing on painting and sculpture, particularly in Rome, Mantua and Venice).⁷ Despite their rather different foci, both Bonazzi

⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), pp. xvii-xviii.

⁷ Bonazzi, *Il carnevale delle idee*; James Grantham Turner, *Eros Visible: Art, Sexuality and Antiquity in Renaissance Italy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

and Turner are correct to note the degree to which many *poligrafi* were, in the first half of the sixteenth century, able to publish a range of heterodox religious works and satirical social commentary that would not have been publishable later in the sixteenth century. This was the case despite the existence of official censorship laws that banned erotic content and the fact that occasional controversies did occur (such as the *I modi* scandal that led to Marcantonio Raimondi's imprisonment and ultimately to Aretino leaving Rome permanently). The second is the significant stigma that was attached to writing for the press until at least the late 1530s, which meant that the *poligrafi* often felt compelled to justify at length why they wrote for print publication.

The first section of this chapter discusses the *poligrafi*'s rejections of court patronage models and attempts to construct an alternative professional (and literary) persona, that of the satirist. The second section looks at the positions they adopted in the *questione della lingua* – the debate over whether Latin or the vernacular was most appropriate for written expression, and if the latter, which vernacular to choose – together with the socio-political and literary implications of each point of view and the links these had with attempts to improve their own social status. The last section looks at their satirical takes on mainstream humanist writing and education, and at what they proposed as an alternative.

Courtiers and Truth-Tellers: The *Poligrafo* as *Parrhesiastes*

The *poligrafi*, starting with Aretino, tended to reject court culture after relocating to Venice. This can be particularly demonstrated via their engagement with Baldassare Castiglione's *Cortigiano*, which they satirised directly. But it is also apparent where they diverged from court literature more broadly, including the model of the court poet epitomised by Ludovico Ariosto, who in *Orlando Furioso* had St. John the Evangelist explain that poets are liars, openly putting forward the possibility that 'princely avarice may be to blame / Which

beggars makes of those whom at their birth / The Muses have endowed with sacred flame', even going so far as to admit, albeit playfully, that Ariosto himself was so compromised.⁸

The *Cortigiano* is comprised of various speakers offering plausible, contradictory opinions without coming to any clear conclusions, in contrast to dialogues which are essentially monologues by one character, broken up by others interrupting with questions or requests for clarification. For this reason, Virginia Cox has suggested categorising the *Cortigiano* as an 'open' dialogue, as opposed to 'closed' dialogue.⁹ Indeed, at one point, one of Castiglione's main characters, the Genoese patrician and diplomat, Federico Fregoso, suggests that 'our courtier' would benefit from 'some universal rules', but is immediately challenged by another speaker who argues that rules are unhelpful because circumstances determine the right thing to do, and the courtier ought to use his judgement. Nevertheless, the participants do famously agree that the courtier should be accomplished at a wide range of activities and always willing to please his prince, and should affect a certain studied nonchalance – *sprezzatura* – so as to appear to do everything without effort. A further important idea consistently put forward in Castiglione's text is that the courtier can almost never say what he truly thinks. Fregoso, the main speaker of book 2, explicitly argues that the courtier should say very little, refrain from praising himself, and ought to practice 'a good type of dissimulation'.¹⁰ A particularly important moment, for our purposes, is the passage in book II in which Castiglione has cardinal Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena, who was known for his wit and love of *beffe* (practical jokes), lead a discussion centred around the

⁸ Stefano Jossa, 'The Lies of Poets: Literature as Fiction in the Italian Renaissance', in Machtelt Israëls and Louis A. Waldman (eds.), *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Joseph Connors* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 567.

⁹ Virginia Cox, *The Renaissance Dialogue: Literary Dialogue in its Social and Political Contexts, Castiglione to Galileo* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

¹⁰ 'Però il parlar poco, il far assai e'l non laudar se stesso delle opera laudevole, dissimulandole di bon modo'. Baldassare Castiglione, *Il libro del Cortigiano* (Turin: Einaudi, 1965), p. 101. Cf. Elizabeth Horodowich, *Language and Statecraft in Early Modern Venice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 39.

types of humour which are appropriate at court.¹¹ Dovizi argues – to the general agreement of his audience – that while a wide range of jokes were acceptable, courtiers ought to refrain from obscenity, blasphemy, jibes that too cruelly attacked the attributes of an individual person, and jokes that demeaned women.¹² As Barbara Brown has highlighted, here Castiglione was certainly drawing on arguments drawn from Cicero’s *De Oratore* on humour – even using some of the same examples that Cicero uses – and may also have been drawing on Aristotelian arguments for the need for *comitas* – the mean between buffoonishness and humourlessness.¹³ In essence, Castiglione was drawing on a tradition that took humour to be a form of elite sociability rather than as a mechanism for exposing uncomfortable truths or hypocrisies.

Several *poligrafi* – above all, Lodovico Dolce – were involved in the editing history of the *Cortigiano*, and as a consequence they played a key role in encouraging a highly prescriptive reading of the text as a how-to guide to success as a courtier that was contrary to Castiglione’s probable intentions. The editions of the *Cortigiano* that the *poligrafi* produced for the Venetian presses included extensive paratexts, such as tables of aphorisms on particular subjects, which, separated from their original context, considerably diminished the dialogic, ambiguous nature of the text. Dolce’s 1552 edition of the *Cortigiano*, produced for the Giolito press is indicatively exemplary (all in all, the Giolito press published sixteen editions of the text, far more than any other sixteenth-century publisher). The index of this edition directs the reader to some fifty-one pieces of advice, twenty witty repartees, eleven

¹¹ On Dovizi, see Angelica Pediconi, ‘Cardinal Bernardo Dovizi da Bibbiena (1470-1520): A Palatine Cardinal’, in Hollingsworth and Richardson (eds.), *The Possessions of a Cardinal*, pp. 92-112.

¹² Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (London: Penguin, 1967), pp. 153-203. On Renaissance court humour, see Barbara C. Bowen, ‘Paolo Cortesi’s Laughing Cardinal’, in Andrew Morrogh, Fiorella Superbi Gioffredi, Piero Morselli, and Eve Borsook (eds.), *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Craig Hugh Smyth*, vol. 1 (Florence: Giunti Barbera, 1985), pp. 251-9.

¹³ Barbara C. Bowen, ‘A Neglected Renaissance Art of Joking’, *Rhetorica* 21 (2003), pp. 137-48. Cf. Jill Burke, ‘The One about Michelangelo and the Onions: Jokes and Cultural Anxiety in the Early Sixteenth Century’, in Cecilia Hewlett and Peter Howard (eds.), *Studies on Florence and the Italian Renaissance in Honour of F. W. Kent* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), pp. 495-516.

‘remarks’ and seven jokes.¹⁴ This, to be clear, does not reflect any lack of understanding of the text on Dolce’s part, since in the same year he applied Castiglione’s key concept of *sprezzatura* to art criticism in his dialogue on painting, discussed in chapter 5, in a highly sophisticated manner.

Peter Burke has argued that ‘we should not place too heavy a load of responsibility on Dolce and his editorial colleagues’ for significantly reducing the subtlety of Castiglione’s dialogue, since they were merely ‘responding to as well as reinforcing wider movements’.¹⁵ Burke’s contention is certainly in line with Virginia Cox’s thesis that the Renaissance dialogue became increasingly ‘closed’ and more prescriptive as the sixteenth century unfolded, thanks to the impact of print and the Counter-Reformation’s effect. But such a view ignores the fact that they first began to do so at a point at which the Counter-Reformation had not yet had a serious impact on Venice, and secondly, that, as we will see, in the 1530s, 1540s, and early 1550s, there was in fact considerable pushback against Castiglione’s ideas. In this period, the *poligrafi* attempted to create a counter-model with regard to both their literary style and the profession of writing, by taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by the Venetian printing industry. This image was based on an assertion that, unlike writers attached to princely or ecclesiastical courts, they could be trusted to speak the truth, in natural, unadorned language. Often this claim was explicitly made in connection with their independence from courts; sometimes the freedom that the city of Venice afforded to writers – so long as they refrained from criticising the Venetian state – is explicitly mentioned. In some ways this self-fashioning has important features in common with the concept of *parrhesia* / *parrhesiastes* (or “fearless speech” / “fearless speaker”) as outlined by Michel Foucault, in his late lecture series at the University of

¹⁴ Peter Burke, *The Fortunes of the Courtier: The European Reception of Castiglione’s Cortigiano* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p. 44.

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 45.

California, Berkeley.¹⁶ Based on an examination of uses of these terms across a wide range of philosophical texts and works of Ancient Greek drama, Foucault argued that the ability to claim the role of *parrhesiastes* was only open to those who fulfilled specific conditions tied to social status and gender, since they tended to be men of lower social status than that of their audience. Moreover, such claims were only appropriate in specific contexts that permitted this right to speak frankly and critically to power without fear of retribution, either at a court or in a democratic assembly. As Robert Buranello has summarised, '[parrhesia] is a choice to speak frankly rather than persuade'.¹⁷ Moreover, in contrast to the protagonists of the *Cortigiano* who argued that courtiers should be modest, pick their moments to speak, and take care to do so carefully and tactfully, refraining from coarse humour and even dissimulating if necessary to avoid causing offence, the *poligrafi* published prolifically, praised themselves constantly, and claimed to speak the truth always, even if it cost them severely. Even the nicknames they gave themselves – 'scourge of princes', 'fierce presenter of the vices and virtues', 'the truth-teller [*il veritiero*] – as well as Aretino's famous motto, *veritas odium parit*, 'truth begets hatred' calls attention to this feature of their self-fashioning.¹⁸

Aretino led the way in this effort to devise an alternative to the model of the court-poet began while he was still in Rome (indeed, his pasquinades, discussed in the previous chapter, were the first to reference their author constantly by name rather than being completely anonymous). His play, *La Cortigiana*, initially written in 1525 and then published in a

¹⁶ Michel Foucault, *Discourse and Truth: The Problematization of Parrhesia* (six lectures given at the University of California at Berkeley, 1983) foucault.info/downloads/discourseandtruth.doc [Accessed 3 November 2019]. This was subsequently published as Foucault, *Fearless Speech* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001).

¹⁷ Robert Buranello, 'The Paradox of Parrhesia: Sperone Speroni Meets the Master of the Sacred Palace', in Anthony Mollica (ed.), *Studies in Honour of Guido Pugliese* (Welland: Soleil, 2015) p. 101.

¹⁸ 'Acerrimus vitium ac virtutum demonstrator.' Quoted in Marco Faini, "E poi in Roma ognuno è Aretino": Pasquino, Aretino and the Concealed Self", *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 40:1 (2017), p. 168.

heavily revised form in 1534, is in large part a satire on works like the *Cortigiano* (which circulating Rome in the 1520s in manuscript) and similar courtly advice literature such as Paolo Cortesi's *De Cardinalatu*, which also drew heavily on *De Oratore*. The title of Aretino's play is itself likely to be an allusion to Castiglione's book, and may be translated as either something like 'Courtly Affairs', 'Courtliness', or 'The Courtesan', though as no courtesan appears as a character in the work, the former is more plausible. It is, moreover, dominated by Aretino's evident scorn for the idea that one could become a successful courtier by studying a book. One of the two main plots concerns Messer Maco, a naive, aspiring cardinal from Siena, who employs a cunning Roman native, Master Andrea, to teach him how to become a courtier. The satirical intent is clear from the start: in their first lesson, Master Andrea declares that 'the first, most important lessons a good courtier learns are how to blaspheme and how to commit heresy.'¹⁹ Eventually, he persuades Maco to jump into what the elder man cheerfully refers to as a 'mould' – actually a cauldron of hot water – to be recast as a courtier, before being shaved, dressed in new clothes, and given pills that make him vomit. Finally, Andrea shows Maco his reflection in a convex mirror, much to the younger man's horror – though, at the end of the process, he is unharmed, and after further practical jokes at his expense, is at the end of the play taken under the wing of an established courtier, Parabolano.²⁰

At the same time Aretino acknowledged the importance of the Venetian environment to his newfound sense of freedom. In his first book of letters, Aretino included one ostensibly written to the doge, Andrea Gritti, in 1530, in which he lauded the freedom of expression that Venice provided in explicit contrast to the court of Rome:

[...] I who in the liberty of such a State have succeeded in learning to be free, renounce the

¹⁹ Pietro Aretino, *Cortigiana* (Ottawa: Dovehouse 2003), p. 74. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this quote.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 105. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this quote.

court forever, and here I build an everlasting tabernacle for the years that are left over; because here treason does not take place, [...] here the cruelty of the prostitutes does not reign, here the insolence of the effeminate does not rule, here one does not steal, here one does not struggle and here one does not murder [...]. O universal homeland! O common freedom! O inn of diverse peoples! How much greater Italy's troubles would be, if your goodness were lesser! [...]. Rome, be silent, for here no one can tyrannise others or seeks to do so, while there, freedom has been enslaved by its prelates.²¹

Crucially, however, Aretino does not endorse writing for profit instead. This is consistent with the fact that, in the 1530s, as we have seen in Part I, Aretino was engaged in a project to try to win over Venetian (and non-Venetian) patrons – not the pursuit of commercial success. The massive sales of his first book of letters after 1538 seem to have come as a surprise to even him.

Having been safely ensconced in Venice for a decade, and with his first book of letters having already been a runaway success, Aretino broadened his critique of courts in the *Ragionamento delle corti*, also published in 1538. In this dialogue, Aretino contrasts the rampant mendacity and constant battle for social superiority of the Roman court with the garden in which the dialogue is set – which belonged to Francesco Marcolini, the publisher of the dialogue, though Marcolini himself is absent. Here, in private, the protagonists can enjoy the safety and tranquillity required to speak truthfully to one another. They are the native Venetian *poligrafo*, Lodovico Dolce (who would later return the favour by writing a dialogue on art that included Aretino as the key character); the young university student, *letterato*, and protégé of Aretino, Francesco Coccio; the prelate, Pietro Piccardo (on the first day only), who has much experience of life at the Roman court; and the poet and translator of Cicero, Giovanni Giustiniani (on the second day only), who has a comparable amount of

²¹ '[...] io che ne la libertà di cotanto Stato ho fornito d'imparare a esser libero, refuto la corte in eterno, e qui faccio perpetuo tabernacolo a gli anni che mi avanzano; perché qui non ha luogo il tradimento, [...] qui non regna la crudeltà de le meretrici, qui non comanda l'insolenza de gli effeminati, qui non si ruba, qui non si sforza e qui non si amazza [...]. O patria universale! o libertà comune! O albergo de le gente disperse! quanti sarebbero i guai d'Italia maggiori se la tua bontà fusse minore! [...]. Taccia Roma, perché qui non son menti che possino né che voglino tiranneggiare la libertà fatta serva da gli animi de i suoi.' Pietro Aretino, Letter to Andrea Gritti, 1530, in Aretino, *Il primo libro delle lettere* (Paris, appresso Mathieu La Maistre, 1609), v. 2.

experience of princely courts. The discussion is centred around Coccio's desire, expressed at the beginning of the dialogue, to abandon his studies and pursue a career at the Roman court.

On the first day, Piccardo is unsparing in his descriptions of Rome, referring to it variously as the 'school of fraud', the 'market of mendacity', the 'paradise of vice', and other similar epithets.²² Eventually, Coccio is persuaded by Piccardo's arguments, drawn from extensive experience, about the irredeemable character of the Roman court, summarising what he has learned from as: '[h]e who knows how to lie, knows how to rule; whoever does not lie, does not rule.'²³ On the second day, Giustiniani urges Coccio to devote himself to his studies, arguing that, even he is forced into poverty as a result, he ought to 'take comfort in fortitude, the source of every virtue'. The student, Giustiniani argues, ought to be 'like the soldier who [...] allows himself to be totally consumed by the effort and, that not being enough, spills his own blood and risks his own life in order to achieve fame'.²⁴ Drawing on his experience of working as a poet at many different princely courts, Giustiniani acknowledges that it is true that 'the courts are all different' but argues that nevertheless they are 'the same in terms of the recognition of merit and the compensation of merit.'²⁵ The dialogue concludes with a rhapsodising speech by Giustiniani on the ideal celestial court, in which courtiers would be free to tell the truth – possibly, as Robert Buranello has suggested, intended to be parody of Pietro Bembo's impassioned speech on Platonic love in the *Cortigiano* – but it is strongly implied that such a court is not realisable

²² Pietro Aretino, *Ragionamento delle Corti* (Milan: Mursia, 1995), pp. 49-50.

²³ 'Chi sa mentire sa regnare, e chi nol fa non ha.' Ibid., p. 55.

²⁴ '[...] usate per commodità la fortezza, alimento de ogni virtù. Lo studente dee essere come il soldato, il quale [...] struggesi ne la fatica e, non bastando ciò, sparge il sangue et arrischia la vita solo per venire ne la cognizione de la fama.' Ibid., pp. 114-5.

²⁵ 'Le Corti, perché sappiate, sono diverse, ma d'una medesima qualità nel ricompensare dei meriti e de le fatiche'. Ibid.

on earth.²⁶

The place of the printing press in the dialogue, as an alternative to the courts, is ambiguous. It must be said that the only character who has direct knowledge of the Roman court, Piccardo, only agrees to speak candidly about his experiences because Francesco Marcolini, the publisher and owner of the garden in which the conversation is taking place, is absent and therefore unable to ‘make a copy of my idle words and publish them’.²⁷ However, this is likely to have been intended as a joke about the antiquated attitude of Piccardo, as an elderly prelate, given that the following day the *poligrafo* Dolce, in a clever metatextual aside, bemoans Marcolini’s absence, pronouncing it a shame that as a result nobody is transcribing their inspired discussions, which are surely worth preserving.²⁸ However, writing for the presses is never explicitly endorsed as an option for Coccio instead, perhaps because at this point, in 1538, Aretino himself was yet to fully embrace the commercial potential of the press.

Although Aretino’s dialogues were far less successful in commercial terms than his books of letters would later be, it did not go unnoticed by contemporaries that his satires of the Roman court were being produced at the same time as his religious works. In his first book of letters, he included a candid response to Vittoria Colonna, after she had praised his religious works and criticised him for wasting a great deal of his time writing on frivolous subjects:

Listen: my great friend Brucioli dedicated his Bible to the King [Francis I], who is surely most Christian, and in five years he has had no reply. Perhaps the book wasn’t well translated and well bound? But my *Cortigiana*, which drew the famous chain of gold from him, doesn’t on this account laugh at Brucioli’s *Old Testament*, as this isn’t proper. So I deserve to be

²⁶ Robert Buranello, ‘Pietro Aretino between the “Locus Mendacii” and the “Locus Veritatis”’, in Thomas J. Schoenberg and Lawrence J. Trudeau (eds.), *Literary Criticism from 1400 to 1800* (Detroit: Gale, 2004), p. 114.

²⁷ ‘Così farò, se mi assicurate che il Marcolino non pigli la copia de le mie chiacchiere stampandole’. Aretino, *Ragionamento delle Corti*, p. 49.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 85.

forgiven for my nonsense, which I write to make a living and not from evil intent.²⁹

His justification here appears to be that his satirical works are effective at drawing rewards from patrons, and that he does not criticise religion or well-intended religious scholarship, only (we can infer) the court itself.

Other *poligrafi* also expressed disdain for courtly life. In his unpublished letters, Nicolò Franco regularly alluded to his '*ignoranza cortigianesca*'. As Domenica Falardo has argued, such moments indicate that Franco, 'professing himself alienated' from 'courtly practices [*le cortigianerie*]', shows that he was 'not disposed to sacrifice his own ideas and intellectual freedom', and so was constantly seeking an 'accommodation' between the princes he depended upon for support, and the 'more equal distribution of goods' that he sometimes advocated in his writing.³⁰ We have also seen, in an earlier chapter, that Franco expressed a reluctance to join the court at Vigevano on the grounds that he did not want to be 'imprisoned', also exclaiming that 'if I am saddened to hear ugly things with my ears the more so I am to see them with my eyes.'³¹ In an all-encompassing spirit, in a letter to Aretino dated 28 March, 1543, Anton Francesco Doni declared himself the enemy of 'priests, friars, pedants, *signori*, and bastards', though he would subsequently work as a printer for Cosimo I in Florence and later would reject writing for the press entirely in favour of manuscript production. On the other hand, in several of his books published in 1551 and 1552, Doni made use of an image that seems to make fun of the incessant claims of his contemporaries to telling the truth (see fig. 6).

²⁹ Pietro Aretino, Letter to Vittoria Colonna, 9 January 1538, *Selected Letters* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1976), p. 166. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this quote. Cf. Waddington, *Aretino's Satyr*, p. 7.

³⁰ Domenica Falardo, 'Introduzione', p. 22.

³¹ 'Eccomi da molti principi con somma molestia insino a qui ricercato. Et mentre ciascuno ha cerco imprigionarmi ne la sua corte, ho tuttavia il pane di ciascuno schifato mostrando apertamente che se m'increbbe d'udire con gli orecchi le por bruttare, più m'incresceria di vederle con gli occhi.' Franco, *Epistolario*, pp. 241-243 (c. 104v.).

The identity of ‘truth-teller’ was not, it must be stressed, merely a literary persona that the *poligrafi* expressed through their publications, but an ideological justification of their style and objects of writing that they also expressed privately. In an unpublished letter to his friend Francesco Alunno, dated 1541, during a low point of his career in Casale, Nicolò Franco, in emulation of Aretino, uses the phrase of ‘scourging the vices’, [*flaggellare i vitii*], though he is referring to those of Aretino himself. However, he also alludes to the inherent dangers of doing so when targeting those more powerful than oneself, remarking that ‘in their ignorance, know that neither bishops, nor archbishops, nor princes will know how to respond with rhymes, but they know very well how to respond with stabs.’³² Indeed, he must have been well aware that Aretino had been stabbed in revenge for his pasquinades against rivals of the future Clement VII in Rome.

Franco even invoked his role as a truth-teller as a defence against claims of libel and blasphemy. At his first Inquisition trial in Rome, shortly after he moved to the city in 1558, Franco was asked to justify the language of his *Rime contro Pietro Aretino e la Priapea*, discussed elsewhere in this thesis, as well as his other works, including a commentary on the classical collection of obscene poetry known as the *Priapea*, thought at that time to have been written by Virgil (not Franco’s own collection of obscene poetry with the same title). Franco was asked whether he has also submitted his *Priapea* commentary to the Inquisition for review, to which he cautiously replied that ‘I would soon have shown them if it had been ready to send to the press and if there had been something there [that was] against the faith.’³³ Franco went on to justify the obscenity of his verses in the *Rime contro Pietro Aretino e la Priapea* on the grounds that it denounced ‘all the vices of the world, and the excess of the

³² [...] nell’ignoranza sapendo che né i vescovi, né gli arcivescovi né i prencipi sapiano rispondergli con le rime, ma con le pugnalate sì bene.’ Franco, *Epistolario*, p. 65 (cc. 10r-12).

³³ ‘io ero per monstrarli sì se havessero possuto dare alla stampa et si ce fusse stata cosa contra la fede.’ Nicolò Franco, in Pignatti, ‘Niccolò Franco a Roma’, pp. 157-60.

world, and the excesses of sodomy. I have always been an enemy of these vices'.³⁴ The argument he was making, therefore, would appear to be that the frequent sodomitical content in his work was justified in that he was accusing others of sodomy, rather than endorsing it himself (and omitting to mention the fact that among those accused of sodomy in the *Rime e la Priapea* were 'the pope and all of his prelates'). However, this defence seems to have unpersuasive, since Franco remained in prison for about eight months.³⁵

Some of the most important letters in Franco's personal *copialettere* provide us with further insight into how he perceived his role as a writer and the ideological basis of his writings. In a letter to the marquis of Vasto in 1542, he declared that 'my sword is the pen with which I defend myself and slay my enemies, and I know well that I would be foolish if I exchanged it for a sword'. Franco here, of course, was using the familiar trope of the pen as a sword, while acknowledging at the same time that literary battles were somewhat safer than actual battles.³⁶ In 1544, in a letter to an anonymous recipient, Franco discussed his motivations for writing pasquinades, exclaiming that 'I believe the air of this country makes me vomit pasquinades by the thousand', alluding presumably to some sort of moral revulsion to the contemporary moral climate.³⁷ Most interestingly of all, writing to his friend Pietro Catalano from Casale in 1545, Franco discussed the role of satire and its relationship with truth. Here Franco compared satire to a *cicalona* and a *pinzochera schifa*, 'that does

³⁴ 'tutti li vitii del mondo et massime del mondo et massime la sodomia delli quali vitii sonno stato sempre inimico'. Ibid.

³⁵ Tansillo, *Il vendemmiatore*, p. 108.

³⁶ 'la mia spada si sa ch'è la penna con la qual io difendo me et ammazzo i nimici et bene sarei sciocco se cangiassi una spada tale per quante ne vengono di Valenza', Ibid, f. 62r.

³⁷ '[I]o credo che l'aria di questo paese mi faccia vomitare i pasquini a migliaia', BAV MS Vat.lat. 5642, f. 120r.

not walk any road other than the one most frequently used.’³⁸ The gender dynamics of the imagery used here are worth commenting upon: a ‘cicalona’ is a ‘windbag’ or a ‘prater’, someone who speaks foolishly or at tedious length; a ‘pinzochera’, or *pinzochiera*, an insult for someone who displayed a purely external religiosity.³⁹ Emily Butterworth has shown the ways in which types of information such as gossip and rumour were gendered in this period, arguing that ‘the association of women with gossip and other forms of trivial, frivolous speech was a means of denying both a place in the public sphere.’⁴⁰ The mixture, however, of this gendered language and frank acknowledgement of satire’s tendency to exaggerate, that it ‘makes the devil far more ugly than he really is’, with the conviction that it nevertheless ‘sings the gospel’ suggests that for Franco, satire is fundamentally concerned with truth-telling, albeit in a vulgar style, while perhaps also indicating a degree of ambivalence about his chosen profession, given that his allusion to satire only using the road most frequently used may suggest that he did not think of it as a particularly creative means of expression, at least as generally employed by his contemporaries.

We can see, in their engagement with courts in their published works as well as their private correspondence, that many of the *poligrafi* were seeking to define themselves against the court model immortalised by Baldassare Castiglione and Ludovico Ariosto, arguing that freedom from an individual patron both freed one from dependence on the whims of a single

³⁸ ‘[...] la satira perlopiù è una cicalona che, benché canti il Vangelo, non dice però tutto il vero nel frenetico d’imbestialire in amore et lasciamo che alle volte fa il diavolo assai più brutto di quello ch’è. Ella è poi una pinzochera schifa che non cammina per altra strada che per quella più frequentata, biasmando sempre in voce ciò che considera che sia biasmevole in fatti.’ Ibid, f. 211v. Incidentally, Aretino also uses the word *prater*, though in reference to pedantic scholars, in the middle of a diatribe that is also directed against ‘idler priests’, ‘babbler historians’, ‘poets and charlatans’, and ‘ignorant chroniclers’. The passage is from a poem by Aretino, *Orlandino*, written in 1540: see Aretino, *Poemi cavallareschi* (Rome: Salerno, 1995), pp. 217-8. See also Stefano Jossa, ‘The Lies of Poets: Literature as Fiction in the Italian Renaissance’, in M. Israël, M. & L. A. Waldman (eds), *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Joseph Connors* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 572.

³⁹ In the *Terremoto*, his invective against Aretino, Anton Francesco Doni refers to the former’s mother as a ‘pizzocchera’: see Doni, *Contra aretinum. Terremoto, Vita, Oratione funerale. Con un'appendice di lettere*, p. 26.

⁴⁰ Butterworth, *The Unbridled Tongue*, p. 172.

patron, and allowed one to speak the truth and denounce the world's vices freely and frankly. However, such a style of writing also had implications for their relationship with the dominant position in the *questione della lingua* advocated by Pietro Bembo, as well as their engagement with humanist culture more broadly.

The *Poligrafi* and the *Questione della lingua*: Bembo, Language, and Obscene Satire

Throughout their works, the *poligrafi* demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the socio-political implications of the *questione della lingua* – the debate over whether Latin or the vernacular was most appropriate for written expression: and, if the latter, which vernacular to choose. Their responses to the debate shifted over time in response to the social, political and religious climate. Before discussing their involvement in the debate, however, we need to establish what they were defining themselves against. By the sixteenth century, humanism, which had begun as an insurgent cultural movement outside of the universities and the socio-political elite, had been absorbed into the (pre-university) education and governmental institutions of many Italian cities, including Florence and Venice. The increasing prevalence of humanist education, focused around the teaching of rhetoric and grammar, gave a fresh impetus to issues of appropriate written (and sometimes verbal) expression.

Although the humanist movement has sometimes been seen as fairly homogenous by the sixteenth century – most famously by Carlo Dionisotti, who argued that sixteenth-century Italian literature was marked by a ‘fundamental bipolarity’ between those who embraced humanism and those who rejected it completely – it in fact consisted of several inter-related discursive currents. With regard to the *question della lingua*, specifically, there were at least six main positions, each of which had its own aesthetic, literary, social, and

political implications, particularly with regard to education, gender, and regional identity.⁴¹ Undoubtedly the most dominant position was that of Pietro Bembo, who in *Gli asolani* (1505) and *Le prose della volgar lingua* (1525) argued eloquently that the ideal written language was based on the Trecento Tuscan used by Petrarch (for poetry) and Boccaccio (for prose), together with elements of Ciceronian Latin.⁴² Bembo also enjoyed the support of Ludovico Ariosto, perhaps the best-selling author in Italy at the time, who even revised his epic poem, the *Orlando furioso*, in order that it might better fit Bembo's prescriptions.⁴³ Bembo, incidentally, had little to say about spoken language.

Although Bembo's view ultimately won out, there was initially strong pushback against his position from others, who nevertheless agreed that some form of vernacular was appropriate for literature. Another well-supported position was that the ideal vernacular ought to be a synthesis of the languages of various princely courts. This was the position advocated by, among others, Baldassare Castiglione and the Vicenzan humanist, Gian Giorgio Trissino (the latter also, uniquely, argued that this new language required the addition of Greek letters to represent particular sounds).⁴⁴ While Castiglione expressed admiration for Bembo, he argued distinctively in the *Cortigiano* that there ought to be a symmetry between spoken and written language, and that just as it would be bizarre to use antiquated words when speaking, so they should not be employed in writing either. Another position,

⁴¹ See Brian Richardson's summary of the main positions in Richardson, 'Prose' in Peter Brand and Lino Pertile (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Italian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 181-5.

⁴² Ibid., p. 183.

⁴³ On the *questione di lingua* in Cinquecento Italy, see Cecil Grayson, *A Renaissance Controversy: Latin or Italian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960); Oliver Logan, *Culture and Society in Renaissance Venice, 1470-1790* (London: Batsford, 1972), pp. 93-104; Richardson, 'Prose', pp. 181-5. On Bembo, see Carlo Dionisotti, *Scritte sul Bembo* (Turin: Einaudi, 2002); Marco Faini, *Pietro Bembo: A Life in Laurels and Scarlet* (Cambridge: Legenda, 2017).

⁴⁴ Giovanni Giorgio Trissino, *Epistola del Trissino de le lettere nuovamente aggiunte ne la lingua Italiana* (Rome: Ludovico degli Arrighi & Lautizio Perugino, 1524); Trissino, *Dialogo del Trissino intitolato Il castellano, nel quale si tratta de la lingua italiana* (Vicenza: Gianicolo Tolomeo, 1529); Baldassare Castiglione, *Il libro del cortegiano* (Venice: in aedibus haer. Aldo I Manuzio & Andrea I Torresano, 1528).

arguably the most liberal in the debate, was that of Sperone Speroni, the Paduan humanist, who argued that the use of any vernacular was acceptable since all could be used to convey beauty.⁴⁵ Many Florentine authors, including Niccolò Machiavelli – who responded to Bembo in a dialogue pointedly titled the *Discorso o dialogo intorno alla nostra lingua* – were incensed by the Venetian’s assertion that the quality of the Tuscan language had declined since the fourteenth century, and argued instead that the contemporary Florentine vernacular, as spoken in the sixteenth century, was the most appropriate for literary use.⁴⁶ Others continued to question the idea that any vernacular was appropriate to use for literary writing, arguing that Latin was superior. However, although this had been the consensus among fifteenth-century humanists, it was a minority position by the time of Bembo’s interventions in the *questione della lingua* in the 1510s, though many humanists (especially in Venice) in practice continued to write in Latin almost exclusively.⁴⁷

The *poligrafi* adopted a range of positions in the *questione della lingua*, ranging from straightforward endorsements of Bembo’s views to positions much closer to those advocated by Machiavelli and Speroni. Their views often tell us a great deal about their social position as well as the level of influence enjoyed by Bembo, especially after his views had become so widely accepted that it was difficult to challenge him openly. Aretino, for instance, very carefully refrained from direct criticism of Bembo, especially after he moved to Venice – even after he had become a powerful literary figure in his own right.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, it is clear that his views on language differed from those of Bembo, as well as Castiglione.

⁴⁵ This view was put across in Speroni’s *Dialogo delle lingue*, first published in 1542 in a collection of dialogues edited by Daniele Barbarato: see Speroni, *Dialoghi* (Venice: Figliuoli di Aldo, 1542) cc. 105v-131r.

⁴⁶ Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discorso o Dialogo intorno alla nostra lingua* (Turin: Einaudi, 1976). The dialogue was not printed until 1730, but circulated widely in manuscript.

⁴⁷ See the discussion of the Bolognese humanist Romolo Amaseo, who advocated for the superiority of Latin, in Grayson, *A Renaissance Controversy*, pp. 6-9.

⁴⁸ This has been noted by Paolo Procaccioli, ‘Due re in Parnaso: Aretino e Bembo nella Venezia del doge Gritti’, in Giorgio Gritti (ed.), *Sylva. Studi in onore di Nino Borsellino* (Rome: Bulzoni, 2002), pp. 207-31.

Aretino's satire of Parnassus – the home of Apollo and the muses – in his first volume of letters, published in 1538, provided an opportunity for a rich variety of jibes against various literary enemies and extremely flattering portraits of his friends. Aretino's highlighting of Pietro Bembo as one of the poets honoured by Apollo in the poem may, on first glance, appear to contradict the idea that he opposed the theory of language and literature that Bembo epitomised. As a consequence, Tom Nichols has argued that Aretino and his circle of followers ought to be seen as advocating an elitist view of language and literature, as opposed to a younger generation of *poligrafi* such as Annibal Caro and Anton Francesco Doni, who according to his reading had much more populist sympathies.⁴⁹ Crucially, however, as Christopher Cairns previously noted, Bembo is not being honoured in Aretino's dream for his most famous works, *Gli asolani* and *Le prose della volgar lingua*, nor for his poetry – but, instead, for his far less admired *History of Venice*.⁵⁰ Aretino concludes the letter by dramatically refusing the poetic crowns that Apollo offers him, asking him to 'grant me a privilege for printing instead, so that I can use its facilities to see or pawn the talents heaven has showered upon me; then I'll have a few ducats and won't have to worry about work, and I won't be beaten by the sophistries of the pedants.'⁵¹ In another letter, published in 1542, in a letter addressed to Pietro Bembo himself, he acknowledged his stylistic divergence from the Venetian cardinal, noting that:

With the stylus of my practical nature, I make up stories about everything and force myself to lift up the pride of princes with my great praises, keeping them forever in the skies upon the wings of hyperbole [...] I have not learned your technique of using measured words to express conceits, of selecting good-sounding words, and of adorning the subject better.⁵²

⁴⁹ Tom Nichols, 'Tintoretto, Prestezza and the Poligrafi: A Study in the Literary and Visual Culture of Cinquecento Venice', *Renaissance Studies* 10:1 (1996), p. 72-100.

⁵⁰ Aretino, *Selected Letters*, p. 142. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this quote.

⁵¹ Ibid, pp. 144-5. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this quote.

⁵² Luba Freedman, *Titian's Portraits Through Aretino's Lens* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), p. 20. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this quote.

The volume was a great success, and, as a consequence, published collections of letters became what Aretino was best known for, and his main output for the rest of his life. In time he became a fixture of the cultural elite in Venice, and Bembo's ideas increasingly became the orthodoxy. On the other hand, it is interesting to note that the rupture with Aretino that led to Nicolò Franco leaving Venice, discussed in chapter 1, may have partially been because of linguistic disagreements, with Aretino moving towards a more orthodox Bembian linguistic position that Franco did not share. It has been suggested by Paolo Procaccioli and Federico Della Corte that Aretino's dissatisfaction with Franco's editorial work on the first edition of the first volume of his published letters was the tipping point in their relationship. In a letter to Aretino written before the final rupture, Dolce, who replaced Franco as editor for the second edition and went on to collaborate with Aretino on many other works, complained about what he saw as Franco's sloppy editorial practice, which Dolce argued stemmed from an imperfect grasp of Latin and the classics:

in ten lines he has sown twenty errors: in three places he has written "giudicio" with "t", when every simple child knows that here one writes "c" and not "t", as it derives from the Latin verb *iudicio*, which one writes with a "c". And this sheep Poet should also remember how it is written in that verse in the first part of Virgil's *Aeneid*, in which you read at every School:

Judicium Paridis, spreteque ingiuria forme.

He has also written "arei", "mosterà", "saria" with a double "r", when every clumsy pedant knows that these words are written with a single "r". But because he begged me in the beginning of his letter to forgive the errors in his writing, I am glad that he has returned to your favour.⁵³

Shortly after this letter, however, the rift between Aretino and Franco became permanent. It is important to note that Della Corte and Procaccioli have argued that, in actual fact, Dolce's

⁵³ 'in dieci righe ha seminato venti errori, che in tre lughò egli ha scritto "giudicio" per "t", dove ogni semplice fanciullo sa che questa voce se scrive per "c" e no per "t", derivandosi da iudico verbo latino, che per "c" si scrive. E devrebbe pure questo Poeta pecora ricordarsi, come è ciò scritto in quel verso che è nella prima fronte dell'Eneida di Virgilio, che si legge in ogni Scola: *Judicium Paridis, spreteque ingiuria forme*. Scrive ancora "arei", "mosterà", "saria", per duplice "r r", dove ogni goffo pedante sa che questi tali voci si scrivono per solo "r". Ma perché egli mi pregò nel principio della lettera, che io gli perdonassi de gli errori dello scrivere, io sono contento che ciò torni in sua laude.' Lodovico Dolce, quoted in Della Corte, "Nell'officina Di Marcolini. I Collaborati Editoriali. p. 136.

dissatisfaction with Franco's editing of the first edition was 'unjustified and specious', from the standpoint that typographical errors were no more prevalent than in subsequent editions supervised by Dolce.⁵⁴ However, this seems to me to miss the point: more important than whether or not Franco had the technical understanding to be a good editor is Dolce's disparagement of Franco's spelling and his disdain for Franco's learning. In truth, his orthographic choices may have reflected the fact that Franco hailed, unlike Dolce the Venetian and Aretino the Tuscan, from Benevento in southern Italy, while it is clear that Franco had a good command of Latin from his translation work, perhaps unsurprisingly given that his older brother was a Latin teacher. Dolce, on the other hand, was an uncritical enthusiast for Bembo's position, and edited the *Prose* for the Giolito Press.⁵⁵ Given that Aretino continued to disagree with Bembo, albeit politely, in 1542, it is difficult to see that Aretino's displeasure with Franco in 1538 was primarily linguistic, rather than because Franco had copied Aretino in publishing his own volume of letters in the same year – this seems more likely to have been Dolce's main motivation.

Dolce was not the only *poligrafo* who essentially accepted Bembo's position wholesale. Lodovico Domenichi also faithfully followed Bembo's rules in his edition of the *Orlando Furioso* as well as his edition of Francesco Berni's reworking, on Bembian lines, of Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*.⁵⁶ But most other *poligrafi* did not follow Bembo, even after his ideas had become dominant. Anton Francesco Doni, for example – a native Florentine – advocated the use of modern Tuscan, a position more analogous to that of Machiavelli and early Aretino. While Doni did not leave behind any linguistic treatise, his works demonstrate his creative and lively approach to language, and his scepticism of

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 137.

⁵⁵ Pietro Bembo, *Le prose di m. Pietro Bembo, nelle quali si ragiona della volgar lingua [...] reuiste da L. Dolce* (Venice: Gabriele Giolito, 1556).

⁵⁶ Marco Faini, 'Building the Chivalric Canon: Teofilo Folengo, Lodovico Domenichi, and Aretino's Silence', *Italian Studies* 74 (2019), p. 154.

Ciceronian humanism. For this reason, his works were much used by the scholars behind the first *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* a century later, as a guide to the state of Tuscan as spoken in the mid-sixteenth century.⁵⁷ While Annibal Caro's stance on Bembo was ambiguous – in his introduction to the 1548 edition of Bembo's *Rime*, he is effusive in his praise for Bembo – in his own work he took a markedly different stance.⁵⁸ In some works, such as the plays *La Potione* and *La Fiorina* (both 1552) and the *Rime piscatorre* (1543), he used as many as seven different dialects from the Veneto region, though he himself hailed from Civitanova in Le Marche. In his *Apologia de gli academici di Banchi di Roma* (printed in 1558, but circulated in manuscript beforehand), written as part of his bitter dispute with the critic Lodovico Castelvetro, Caro put forward a radically different view of language to that of Bembo, whose ideas had by this point become the orthodoxy.

The title of this work alludes to its argument – the academy to which it refers did not actually exist, but was a metaphorical academy of the *Banchi*, a street containing market stalls near Castel Sant' Angelo in Rome. The protagonists are Pasquino, Predella, Buratto, and Fedocco, who each embody a different aspect of the people (Predella is a cleaner; Buratto, a cook; Fedocco simply means gloomy or muddling). This contrasts markedly with the social position of Castelvetro, a renowned humanist scholar and commentator (particularly of Aristotle's *Poetics*) and a member of the Accademia Modenese. Through various speakers as well as sections written in his own voice, Caro makes an argument strikingly similar to that of Aretino in his letter on style, in favour of the use of 'natural' language based on speech, and the imitation of the creativity of Petrarch, rather than of his language: as Caro summarised his position, '[i]mitating [Petrarch] means having the same

⁵⁷ See Elena Pierazzo's introduction to Doni, 'Lo Stufaiuolo'.

⁵⁸ See Stefano Jossa, 'Nature Versus Grammar: Annibal Caro's *Apologia* as a Manifesto for Orality', in Luca Degl'innocenti, Brian Richardson, and Chiara Sbordoni (eds.), *Interactions Between Orality and Writing in Early Modern Italian Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016), p. 174.

posture as he did rather than putting our foot in his footsteps.’⁵⁹ Like Aretino, Caro is not against quotation *per se*, but against what he sees as unthinking imitation of ancient authors. Indeed, in using the imagery of not following in an authority’s footsteps, Caro was himself re-using an expression used by Erasmus in his *Ciceroniamus* of 1528, itself a reworking of an image first used by Quintilian.⁶⁰ Moreover, Caro even goes so far as to say that if Bembo still lived, he would agree with him rather than with Castelvetro, since he was only arguing, as the Venetian cardinal had done, that writers ought to ‘pick with discretion’, like Petrarch, rather than ‘use the sickle’, like Dante – in other words, to use the best of the linguistic choices available to them, rather than an undiscerning hodgepodge of whichever words were to hand. This point of view in fact differs so markedly from that of Bembo, who was arguing for the imitation of the Florentine vernacular from over a century prior rather than the contemporary dialect, that Caro’s assertion that Bembo would have supported him is untenable. But the fact that he claims the cardinal for his side is very significant in-of-itself, since it shows how influential Bembo’s views on language had become by the late 1550s.

A distinctive feature of the *poligrafi*’s position in the *questione della lingua* is their use of obscenity, which is connected to their view that literary language ought to emulate natural language. It is true that there had been a long tradition within humanist circles of circulating erotic writings, often with copious classical references, in manuscript form, a tradition which continued into the sixteenth century. Perhaps the most famous of these is *La Cazzaria* (The Book of the Prick), completed by Antonio Vignali in 1525, which satirises the political infighting in Siena in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, referring to the main factions

⁵⁹ ‘Imitar [Petrarca] vuol dire, che si deve portar la persona, & le gambe, come egli fece; & non porre i piedi ne le sue stesse pedate.’ Annibal Caro, *Apologia de gli academici di Banchi di Roma contra M. Lodovico Castelvetro da Modena* (Parma: In casa di Seth Viotto, 1558), pp. 112-3.

⁶⁰ This is pointed out by Jossa, ‘Nature Versus Grammar’, p. 177; cf. Desiderius Erasmus, *The Ciceronian: A Dialogue on the Ideal Latin Style* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. 445–6.

as ‘Balls’, ‘Cunts’, ‘Pricks’ and Arses’.⁶¹ But these were circulated in manuscript form for reading among an extremely selective private network, often in Latin; not for the more indiscriminate circulation of a pasquinade affixed to the statue of Pasquino in Rome, and certainly not the much larger audience of a printed text. Moreover, many of the *poligrafi*’s obscene texts – despite Aretino’s posthumous reputation as a pornographer – were intended to make a critical, satirical point about the artificiality of humanist dialogues.⁶² This is epitomised by the following moment, in Aretino’s *Ragionamenti*, in which Antonia complains to Nanna about the latter’s overuse of allusive, indirect language:

Speak plainly and say “fuck”, “prick”, “cunt” and “arse” if you want anyone except the scholars at the University of Rome to understand you. You with your “rope in the ring”, your “obelisk in the Coliseum”, your “leek in the garden” your “key in the lock”, your “bolt in the door”, your “pestle in the mortar”, your “nightingale in the nest”, your “tree in the ditch”, your “syringe in the flap-valve”, your “sword in the scabbard”, not to mention your “stake”, your “crozier”, your “parsnip”, your “little monkey”, your “this”, your “that”, your “him” and your “her”, your “apples”, “leaves of the missal”, “deed”, “verbigratia”, “job”, “affair”, “big news”, “handle”, “arrow”, “carrot”, “root”, and all the shit there is – why don’t you say it straight out and stop going about on tiptoes? Why don’t you say yes when you mean yes and no when you mean no – or else keep it to yourself? ⁶³

As Ian Frederick Moulton has pointed out, this passage must of course be read as a celebration of the creative use of metaphor as well as a criticism of ornate, indirect language (especially since Nanna refuses to change her way of speaking).⁶⁴ But it is also a criticism of the way in which humanists delighted in arguing *in utramque partem*, on both sides of a question, a mode which, as Victoria Kahn has shown, was supposed to encourage the reader

⁶¹ Vignali, *La Cazzaria*.

⁶² Research by Paula Findlen, Ian Frederick Moulton, Raymond B. Waddington and Paolo Procaccioli, among others, has nevertheless demonstrated the satirical, critical intent of much of this writing, its close links with humanism, and hence its utility for understanding the place of sex and satire in sixteenth-century Italian literary culture. See Findlen, ‘Humanism, Politics, and Pornography in Renaissance Italy’ in Hunt (ed.), *The Invention of Pornography*, pp. 49-108; Moulton, *Before Pornography*; Waddington, *Aretino’s Satyr*; Waddington, *Subverting the System in Renaissance Italy*; Procaccioli and Romano (eds.), *Cinquecento capriccioso e irregolare*.

⁶³ Pietro Aretino, *Dialogues* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2005), pp. 43-4. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this quote.

⁶⁴ Moulton, *Before Pornography*, p. 127-8.

to learn rhetorical skills and to develop the Aristotelian virtue of prudence.⁶⁵ For the *poligrafi*, such a mode of writing merely encouraged hypocrisy. Aretino openly advocated the use of direct, vernacular Tuscan and obscene language in literature in his published letters. In one famous letter – originally written to accompany his *sonnetti lussuriosi* in 1524, before Bembo’s ideas were fully established, but republished in his first volume of letters in 1538 – Aretino asserted that ‘the tool Nature gave us to preserve the race should be worn as a pendant round one’s neck or a medal in one’s hat’.⁶⁶ Aretino went on to suggest that, conversely, one’s hands should be hidden since they sign false testimony, commit usury, wound and kill; ‘and what do you think of the mouth, which blasphemes, spits in your face, gorges, boozes, and vomits?’⁶⁷ It is on the face of it a deliberately shocking defence of the idea that artists and writers should be free to create obscene work, though the argument is actually more subtle than it first appears: indeed, the defence draws on Pliny’s *Natural History*, and the argument’s structure is modelled on the common humanist genre of the paradox.⁶⁸

It is tempting here to point to a similarity to Martin Luther’s views on obscene language. Luther argued that ‘scandalizing the scandalous’ was a crucial element of spiritual and social reformation. According to him, it was necessary, when speaking to false Christians, to ‘offend them boldly lest by their impious views they drag many with them into error’. This is in striking contrast to the view of Erasmus a key influence on the *poligrafi* in other ways, who argued in his treatise on the *Tongue* that such an approach to debate was potentially

⁶⁵ Kahn, *Rhetoric, Prudence, and Skepticism in the Renaissance*, p. 20.

⁶⁶ Aretino, *Selected Letters*, p. 156. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this quote.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 157. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this quote.

⁶⁸ Talvacchia, *Taking Positions*, pp. 86-7.

disastrous.⁶⁹ There are sometimes parallels between the ways in which *poligrafi* such as Aretino and Luther talk about Rome, with the former referring to it as *coda mundi*, the ‘arsehole of the world’, while the latter called it the latrine ‘where all the Devils shit’, and that under the papacy, ‘[w]e too were formerly stuck in the behind of this hellish whore, this new church of the pope.’⁷⁰ But the comparison should not be pushed too far. For example, it is worth noting that the *type* of obscene language used by Aretino and other *poligrafi* was rather different: unlike Luther, they make much more use of sexual imagery, including homophobic imagery, than they do of anality. Moreover, Aretino, in particular, rejected Luther as the ultimate pedant when it came to language, citing his rejection of all sources of authority other than scripture, and other *poligrafi* who adopted heterodox positions were much more disposed to Erasmian ideas than those of Luther.

The *Poligrafi* and Humanist Culture: Against Pedantry

The distinctive features of the *poligrafi*’s subversions of humanism were their literary personae and their rejection of traditional court structures for writers, rather than a radical embrace of printing or rejection of the humanist movement’s fundamental assumption that the study of ancient writers was of fundamental importance. The latter was a subject about which they instead tended to express ambivalence. As James Hankins has observed: ‘all humanists [...] delighted in their ability to argue both sides of a question. If reproached with levity on this score, they might admit (following Cicero) the ultimate duty of the orator to uphold moral virtue, but political consistency and ideological loyalty did not come into their

⁶⁹ Martin Luther, ‘The Freedom of a Christian’, in Luther, *Three Treatises* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1970), pp. 311–312; cf. Teresa M. Bejan, *Mere Civility: Disagreement and the Limits of Toleration* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2016), pp. 23–36.

⁷⁰ Martin Luther, quoted in Lyndal Roper, ‘Martin Luther’s Body: The “Stout Doctor” and His Biographers’, *American Historical Review* 115:2 (2010), p. 375. Roper also notes that in his polemic *Against the Roman Papacy an Institution of the Devil*, Luther repeatedly refers to ‘the ass-fart pope.’

definition of morality'.⁷¹ This flexibility perhaps accounts for the humanist movement's success as well as its heterogeneity. The usefulness to political elites both of employing professional rhetoricians in government and of employing them as educators is obvious: it is no surprise, therefore, that humanists tended to be socially conservative and politically flexible.⁷² The *poligrafi* regularly subjected such tendencies to subversion and satire. However, teasing out which aspects of humanist thought and practice they approved of and which they rejected – ironically, given that they sometimes explicitly advocated a direct, truthful style of writing – is far from straightforward.

Perhaps the most sophisticated subversions of the humanist dialogue written by any *poligrafo* are Aretino's *Ragionamenti*, also known as the *Sei giornate*, which are comprised of the 1534 *Ragionamento della Nanna e della Antonia* and its sequel, the *Dialogo nel quale la Nanna insegna a la Pippa* of 1536. These are multifaceted satires of the conventions of the humanist dialogue, of Neoplatonist conceptions of love, and of the idealised portraits of women that humanists regularly eulogised. Aretino subverts humanist conventions from the very beginning of the *Ragionamenti*, by dedicating the first book to his pet monkey and refusing to cite any classical precedent.⁷³ The setting beneath, first, a fig tree in Rome, and then a peach tree in the garden of one of the interlocutors – both sexual symbols – perhaps parodies the *Phaedrus*, the Platonic dialogue on love translated by Marsilio Ficino several decades beforehand, set beside 'a tall plane tree and a lovely stream.'⁷⁴ The first part of Aretino's dialogue, which takes place over three days, is a conversation between Nanna, an

⁷¹ James Hankins, 'Humanism and the Origins of Modern Political Thought', in Jill Kraye (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 121.

⁷² See the discussion of Gramscian categories of intellectuals in James Hankins, 'Renaissance Philosophy between God and the Devil', in Robert Black (ed.), *The Renaissance: Critical Concepts in Historical Studies*, vol. 4 (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 65-6.

⁷³ Aretino, *Dialogues*, (Toronto, 2005) p. 3. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this quote.

⁷⁴ Waddington, 'Aretino's Prostitutes: The *Ragionamenti*' in Waddington, *Subverting the System in Renaissance Italy*, p. 8.

experienced prostitute who had previously been first a nun and then a wife, as she explains as the dialogue progresses; and Antonia, a younger but still relatively experienced prostitute. The subject of the discussion is how best to bring up Nanna's daughter, Pippa. After extensive discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of each profession, they conclude that Pippa will be best off as a prostitute, partially since it is the most 'honest' choice available – in that, according to Nanna, nuns pretend to be chaste, and wives pretend to be loyal, but whores are honest about what they are – and partially because it provides the greatest degree of freedom for women. These assertions are both justified by reference to Nanna's own life experiences.

The second part of the dialogue, taking place over the next three days, is mainly a conversation between Nanna and her daughter Pippa. First, Nanna instructs Pippa in the ways of her new profession; the next day is series of warnings about the viciousness of men, again drawing on Nanna's own experiences. Finally, on the last day, Nanna and Pippa listen to a midwife explain to a wet nurse how to be a procuress, which requires a training in the means of oral seduction which, she asserts, make it the twin sister of the techniques of sexual seduction used by prostitutes. It should be noted that by including courtesans in his dialogues Aretino was drawing on an established trope in sixteenth-century satire.⁷⁵ More innovative, however, is the fact that the *Ragionamento della Nanna e della Antonia* (1534) cleverly reverses the conventional structure of a *trattato d'amore*, which consisted of a progression from bestial love, to human love, and on to divine love: this is the structure, not at all coincidentally, that Pietro Bembo used in *Gli asolani*, published in 1505.⁷⁶ In his discussion on the three roles of women, Aretino by contrast moves from the lives of nuns, to the lives of wives and finally to the lives of whores. He, moreover, equates the life of nuns with bestial

⁷⁵ See Paola Ugolini, 'The Satirist's Purgatory: Il purgatorio delle cortegiane and the Writer's Discontent', *Italian Studies* 64:1 (2009), pp. 1-19.

⁷⁶ Waddington, *Aretino's Satyr*, p. 22.

love and the life of whores with divine love.

A well-known letter published in the first volume of Aretino's letters, originally addressed to Nicolò Franco (though re-addressed to Lodovico Dolce from the third edition onwards), might be regarded as something of a stylistic manifesto.⁷⁷ Here Aretino made his disdain for 'pedantry', by which he meant the sterile, unimaginative imitation of classical writers: he argued that a writer should 'strive to be a sculptor of the true meaning of things and not a miniaturist of mere words.'⁷⁸ He declared that a writer should instead follow his example, and seek inspiration in nature and in life: 'Nature herself (to whose simplicity I act but as secretary) tells me what to compose, and my native land unties the knots in my tongue whenever it gets entangled by some high-flown foreign lingo.'⁷⁹ However, Aretino made it clear that he does not condemn the study or the imitation of classical or canonical figures completely: he began the letter by declaring that: 'there is a world of difference between imitators and plagiarists, whom I always condemn.'⁸⁰ As Raymond Waddington has put it, 'so compelling is Aretino's rhetoric in nature's cause [...] that we tend to forget that the larger part of the letter argues for creative imitation.'⁸¹ This, moreover, was in actual fact a commonly expressed opinion in antiquity and humanist treatises on art. Indeed, in Castiglione's *Cortigiano*, during a conversation about the concept of *sprezzatura*, Ludovico da Canossa recalls reading of ancient orators who delighted in pretending that they had no knowledge of letters, and making their orations appear to be composed 'according to the

⁷⁷ Aretino, *Selected Letters*, pp. 100-3. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the Italian original for this reference. This letter was addressed to Nicolò Franco, who helped edit the volume, in the first two editions of Aretino's letters; after their acrimonious split in 1538 it was re-dedicated to Lodovico Dolce.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 103. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this quote.

⁷⁹ Ibid. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this quote.

⁸⁰ Aretino, *Selected Letters*, p. 100. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this quote.

⁸¹ Waddington, *Aretino's Satyr*, pp. 54-5.

dictates of nature and truth rather than of effort and art'.⁸² Later in the letter, Aretino declared his admiration for Sperone Speroni, arguing that listening to one of his dialogues 'it seemed that in one or two places Plato had imitated Sperone [...] because the latter had made his very own the passages that he borrowed'.⁸³ Aretino's position can therefore be regarded as somewhat nuanced: he condemned pedants who unimaginatively fetishize the likes of Cicero and Petrarch, while acknowledging the value of studying the ancients: but he argued that writers should primarily draw their inspiration from nature.

Elsewhere in the same volume, Aretino explicitly acknowledged a change in stylistic direction from his earlier work. Writing to Luigi Gonzaga, he commented on the effect of Charles V's patronage on his writing:

[It is a] great thing that his shadow has recently touched me, causing my fortune and my style to change! As my fortune has changed, what I did not have shows what I do have. And as for the change to my style, a book of Letters that will soon be out of print bears witness to it.⁸⁴

Aretino encouraged the idea that he was wholly ignorant of classical and humanist learning, once boasting that 'I who do not even know the beginnings of A, B C, am teaching persons who know it to X, Y Z'.⁸⁵ In another published letter, he lamented 'how much better it would be for a Grand Master to have a household of faithful and free men of good will, and not be taken in by the crafty modesty of those asinine pedants who plunder other people's books, rob the dead by learning from them how to croak and never rest until they also crucified the living.'⁸⁶ He even went as far to say that 'it was pedantry...[that] stirred up heresy against

⁸² Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (New York, 1959) pp. 43-4.

⁸³ Aretino, *Selected Letters*, p. 101. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this quote.

⁸⁴ 'Gran cosa che la sua ombra che a pena mi tocca, mi abbia fatto mutare fortuna e stile! Come ho mutato fortuna, a quel che io non aveva lo dimostra ciò che io ho. E de la mutazione del mio stile, ne rende testimonianza un libro di Lettere che tosto saran fuor de le stampe.' Pietro Aretino, *Lettere sull'arte* (Milan: Edizioni del Milione, 1957-1960).

⁸⁵ Pietro Aretino, quoted in de Sanctis, *History of Italian Literature*, vol. 2, p. 601.

⁸⁶ Pietro Aretino, *Selected Letters*, p. 107. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this quote.

our faith through the voice of Luther, the greatest pedant of all.’⁸⁷ Other *poligrafi* made similarly colourful declarations. Anton Francesco Doni wrote ‘my books are written before they are composed, and read before they are printed.’⁸⁸ On the other hand, many *poligrafi* expressed their sympathies for Erasmian ideas.⁸⁹ In Aretino’s case, after moved to Venice in 1527 and shifted from being a courtier to the first *poligrafo*, Erasmus become arguably his most dominant single influence. This is not merely with regard to his use of the published letter and his manipulation of the printing press, but also with regard to his beliefs.

Before his move to Venice, however, Aretino’s opinion of Erasmus was less positive. It appears that in his early play, *Il Marescalco*, originally written while he was a courtier in Mantua in 1526, the character of the Pedant – later to become an extremely popular figure in Renaissance comedy and to evolve into the *Dottore* character in *Commedia dell’arte* – may have been based on Erasmus. The key aspects of the Pedant character, generally speaking, were as follows: he was usually a schoolmaster or a tutor; he spoke in a bizarre mixture of Latin and Italian, frequently using Latin words or well-known proverbs inappropriately; and he rarely played a significant part in advancing the plot, existing mostly for comic effect.⁹⁰ However, Aretino seems to have given his Pedant some Erasmian characteristics. Generally, pedants in Cinquecento comedies were against marriage: Aretino’s Pedant, on the other hand constantly makes unprompted arguments in favour of Christian marriage, supported by myriad quotations from the Bible and longwinded orations.⁹¹ Erasmus was well-known at the time as a proponent of traditional Christian marriage at the time, in works such as *Encomium matrimonii* and *De conscribendis epistolis*,

⁸⁷ Ibid. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this quote.

⁸⁸ Anton Francesco Doni, quoted in de Sanctis, *History of Italian Literature*, vol. 2, p. 616.

⁸⁹ Carlo Dionisotti, paraphrased in Cairns, *Pietro Aretino and the Republic of Venice*, p. 31.

⁹⁰ Cairns, *Pietro Aretino and the Republic of Venice*, p. 50.

⁹¹ See for example Scene X in Aretino, *The Marescalco*, p. 105. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this quote.

both published in Venice in 1526.⁹²

Aretino's attitude towards Erasmus, while never hostile *per se*, had shifted towards admiration by the 1530s. It seems that the Dutch scholar served as an inspirational example to Aretino of how to use printing in order to create a public persona. As Raymond Waddington has observed, 'what Aretino might have needed to learn from Erasmus that he would not have gotten from the letters of, say Petrarch, Ficino or Bembo, was the technique of orchestrating the resources of the printing press to maximal effect [...] toward a concerted self-presentation.'⁹³ The most obvious way in which Aretino emulated Erasmus is with regard to his published letter collections – several key letters from the first volume, as we have seen, were commentaries on style and parodies of classical themes. In the second volume, Aretino includes a letter explicitly praising Erasmus, memorably referring to him as 'he who has enlarged the confines of the human mind and who with no model other than himself is for all mankind the only exemplar of himself.'⁹⁴ In this letter, addressed to Giambattista Salis Grisone, an Italian disciple of Erasmus, Aretino pointedly emphasises his admiration for what he sees as Erasmus's originality, rather than the imitation of others epitomised by Bembo and other Italian humanists. Aretino's 1542 comedy *La Talanta* also provides compelling evidence for his ever-increasing interest in Erasmian thought. Christopher Cairns has described *La Talanta* as 'a translation into comedy with a moral or didactic purpose of the same comic mixture of satirical targets in the *Praise of Folly*'.⁹⁵ Several of the key characters in *La Talanta* are clearly drawn from Erasmus's famous satirical work.

⁹² Cairns, *Pietro Aretino and the Republic of Venice*, pp. 57-60.

⁹³ Waddington, *Aretino's Satyr*, p. 48.

⁹⁴ Aretino, *Selected Letters*, p. 175. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this quote.

⁹⁵ Christopher Cairns, 'Introduction to Talanta', in Cairns (ed.), *Three Italian Renaissance Comedies*, pp. 204-5.

Relatedly, Eric Nelson has suggested that Thomas More's *Utopia* – long regarded, he says, as 'the great Northern European expression of Italian civic humanist ideals' – was championed in Italy not by the Ciceronian humanists whom Nelson designates by the term 'civic humanist', but by their fiercest critics, including the *poligrafi* Ortensio Lando and Anton Francesco Doni, who were responsible for the first translation of More's *Utopia* into Italian.⁹⁶ Nelson's principal concern is to show that *Utopia*, and Erasmian political thought more generally, was neither an endorsement of mainstream Italian 'neo-Roman' humanism, nor satirical warning of its dangers, but rather an attack on these 'neo-Roman' values from a perspective that was much more sympathetic towards Greek political theory. Why he thinks it is possible to support this thesis by an analysis of More's reception in Italy is unclear. However, Nelson is certainly correct that Ciceronian humanists in Italy saw *Utopia* as an attack on their values, while the two *poligrafi* in question were sympathetic – and, indeed, were responsible for the first translation of *Utopia* into Italian. After completing this translation, Ortensio Lando repeatedly drew on *Utopia* in his polemical attacks on the Ciceronian mainstream: he wrote a series of anonymous works in the late 1530s and 1540s, only signing them 'Philaethes' – 'lover of truth', in Greek – and 'ex Utopia civis' – 'a citizen of Utopia'.⁹⁷ The most famous of these was the *Paradossi* of 1543, structured around a set of counter-intuitive statements that ran counter to the grain of popular opinion in the style of Erasmus's *Praise of Folly*.⁹⁸ Doni, on the other hand, published a Utopian work, *I Mondi*, which outlined a perfect, circular city, with exactly one hundred streets, uniform houses, and clothes whose colour reflected one's age: marriage was abolished and promiscuity was permitted.⁹⁹ A character in Doni's dialogue exclaims 'Oh, happy country, which abolishes

⁹⁶ Nelson, 'Utopia through Italian Eyes: Thomas More and the Critics of Civic Humanism', p. 1029.

⁹⁷ Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World, 1530-1560*, p. 136.

⁹⁸ Nelson, 'Utopia through Italian Eyes: Thomas More and the Critics of Civic Humanism', p. 1045.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, pp. 417-418.

the sadness of the death of a wife, of fathers, mothers, children and relations, where there is never a cause for weeping.’¹⁰⁰ J. R. Hale argued that Anton Francesco Doni's Utopian work *I Mondi* was not meant to be sincere, but was instead meant to ridicule the ‘ruthless planning zeal of Utopianists’, arguing that the conformity of Doni’s ideal commonwealth was taken to such extreme lengths that it can only have been meant as a satire. However, Hale’s argument appears to be based solely on the degree of severity that Doni advocates the government should use in his perfect world (it is worth noting, incidentally, that Hale also asserted that More’s portrayal of ‘an ideally devout, rationally organised and stable society’ was itself ‘not intended as a goal but a warning’).¹⁰¹ However, there is evidence that demonstrates Doni did in fact have a serious, non-satirical interest in Utopian thinking: when Lando made the first translation of *Utopia* into Italian in 1548, it included a completely serious preface by Doni.¹⁰² As Nelson has argued, Doni and Lando saw in *Utopia* ‘a repudiation of active citizenship, an assault on private property, a rejection of the Roman cult of glory, and a polemic against Ciceronian humanism.’¹⁰³

The *poligrafi* above all criticised the tendency of humanists and Italian writers of the period in general to imitate Cicero and Petrarch slavishly, in a manner consistent with Aretino’s letter of 1538. In one of the most fascinating letters in Nicolò Franco’s private *copialettere*, addressed to Dante Alighieri ‘from the world of 1547’, Franco – who had already achieved some fame for his satire of the cult of Petrarch in his *Il Petrarchista* – gave the poet humorous updates on the sixteenth-century literary scene and the contemporary

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in J. R. Hale, *The Civilization of Europe in the Renaissance* (London: HarperCollins, 2005), p. 418.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 414.

¹⁰² See Nelson, ‘Utopia through Italian Eyes: Thomas More and the Critics of Civic Humanism’, p. 1049.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 1029.

reception of Dante's writings.¹⁰⁴ Franco began by referencing Pietro Bembo's then-recent death, writing that 'the Most Reverend Monsignor Bembo having finally left this company, it seemed to me the time to write and send this to you on his behalf'.¹⁰⁵ Franco went on to comment sarcastically on the recent doings of his erstwhile mentor, Aretino, casting doubt on the sincerity of the scourge of princes' recent spiritual awakening, having published hagiographies of Thomas Aquinas and Catherine of Siena, 'works', as Franco noted, 'which have truly confirmed and convinced Christian people to adore God's saints, against the principles of the heretics.'¹⁰⁶ In contrast to Vittoria Colonna's admonishment of Aretino for continuing to write satire alongside religious works, here we have Franco questioning Aretino's religious sincerity (contrary to the tendency of some recent scholars, such as Christopher Cairns and Élise Boillet, to take Aretino's religious writings seriously).¹⁰⁷

The *poligrafi* tended to be critical not only of many "professional" humanists, that is, those who were actively involved in publishing philological research – whom they sometimes dismissed as pedants – but also "social humanism" – the value of humanist education for everyday people.¹⁰⁸ Their fundamental criticism was that humanist education was not relevant to reality, citing the weakness of Italy as evidence. They conceded that, in an ideal world, a liberal arts education would indeed provide adequate preparation for an active civic life, but doubted it would ever be possible, arguing that individual genius – *ingegno* – was more often the source of greatness than one's education. Several *poligrafi*

¹⁰⁴ This was published later the same year in a collection of letters by various authors, in Ruffinelli (ed.) *Delle lettere di diversi autori*.

¹⁰⁵ '[H]ora, partendosi finalmente da queste bande il Reverendissimo Monsignor Bembo, m'è parso di nuovo scrivervi et mandarvi questa per lui': Franco, *Epistolario*, p. 569.

¹⁰⁶ 'veramente che hanno convinto et confermato il popolo christiano ad adorare li santi et le sante di Dio contro la legge de' [...] heretici.' Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Cairns, *Pietro Aretino and the Republic of Venice*; Élise Boillet, *L'Arétin et la Bible* (Geneva: Droz, 2007).

¹⁰⁸ The distinction between "professional" and "social" humanism is derived from Maxson, *The Humanist World of Renaissance Florence*.

advocated complete withdrawal from the world, arguing that it was beyond saving and men would be better served seeking some individual peace than in trying to improve it.¹⁰⁹ Doni, for example, claimed to be recounting the deathbed confession of a simple weaver in a published letter of 1547, which rejected both Protestants and their critics, instead endorsing a simple form of religion.¹¹⁰ In *I Marmi*, a collection of dialogues supposedly overheard on the marble steps of the Duomo in Florence, Doni recounts a conversation between a merchant, a poultry seller, and an unidentified third person on the question of whether the liberal arts could teach men to be virtuous or wise – their answer was negative.¹¹¹ However, it is important there was a generational divide among the *poligrafi* when it came to humanist education. Pietro Aretino, though he often portrayed humanistic schoolmasters as pedantic and ineffectual in his comedies, did not spend a great deal of time writing about education. However, younger *poligrafi* such as Ortensio Lando, Anton Francesco Doni, and Nicolò Franco, were much more hostile, repeatedly condemning humanist education in what Paul Grendler has called a ‘rejection of learning for the *vita civile*.’¹¹²

In his *Discorso in materia della satira*, a short text attached to an anthology of satirical writing by Ariosto, Luigi Alamanni, Pietro Nelli and others (though not, it should be pointed out, Aretino, Doni or Franco) in 1560, Sansovino offered a brief history and theory of satire that drew heavily from humanist work on the genre’s ancient origins. He argued that the origins of satire were, like tragedy and comedy, in religious rituals, as a means by which ‘men of intellect’ could guide against the danger of ‘great and mighty men’ usurping the

¹⁰⁹ Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World, 1530-1560*, p. 142.

¹¹⁰ This has been published as an appendix in *Ibid*, pp. 250-2.

¹¹¹ Nichols, ‘Tintoretto, Prestezza and the Poligrafi’, p. 82. Doni, *I marmi del Doni*. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide page numbers for this reference.

¹¹² Grendler, *Critics of the Italian World, 1530-1560*, p. 136.

gods by encouraging people to praise them in place of the divine.¹¹³ Tragedy, Sansovino argued, consisted in its original form of verses showing ‘how feeble and weak the fragility of men was in comparison with the happiness of gods’.¹¹⁴ Comedy, on the other hand, ‘contained nothing but verses which principally reproduced the vices of others.’¹¹⁵ In ancient comedy, writers ‘with great freedom noted the vices, not only of the living but many times of those who were in their presence, which freedom to resume benefited for a long time from virtue and good habits; so that, having many fear of not being infamous and reviled for bad operations, they refrained from living dishonestly and were careful not to sin, in public at least.’¹¹⁶ Satire, he asserted, was very similar to comedy. The difference was merely ‘so that the writers could more freely tax the dishonest and shameful vices [...] they introduced some satyrs, who are gods of salvation and who cheer up the lascivious and who are shameless [...] just as in our times it is permissible to introduce fools, madmen and drunkards by means of which one can speak freely [*ragionar liberamente*]’.¹¹⁷ The difference between comedy and satire, therefore, for Sansovino, lay principally in the use of the character of the satyr, which allowed one to say, by means of prosopopoeia, what one could not as oneself. However, after the Greeks ‘had written in this way for a long time, they started being much more licentious in writing, such that, motivated by the requests or corruption of their

¹¹³ Francesco Sansovino, ‘Discorso in materia della satira’, in Sansovino. (ed.), *Sette libri di satira* (Venice: apresso Francesco Sansovino & C., 1560), unpaginated section.

¹¹⁴ ‘quanto fosse debile e fiacca la fragilità degli uomini a comparazion della felicità degli iddii’. Ibid, unpaginated section.

¹¹⁵ ‘non conteneva altro che versi i quali riprendevano principalmente gli altrui vizii...’ Ibid, unpaginated section.

¹¹⁶ ‘[gli scrittori dell’antica comedia] con grandissima libertà notavano i vizii, non solamente degli uomini vivi ma molte volte anco di coloro che si trovavano quivi alla presenza loro, la qual libertà di riprendere giovò lungamente alla virtù et a’ buoni costumi; perciò che, avendo molti paura di non essere infamiati e vituperati per le cattive operazioni, s’astenevano di viver disonestamente e si guardavano di non peccar almeno in publico.’ Ibid, unpaginated section.

¹¹⁷ Ma acciò che gli scrittori potessero più liberamente tassare i vizii disonestissimi e vergognosi a parlarne, introducevano alcuni satiri, i quali son dèi salvatici e che s’allegrano delle lascivie e che sono sfacciati. Laonde, sì come a nostri tempi è lecito introdurre buffoni, pazzi e gli ebbriachi da coloro che temono di ragionare liberamente.’ Ibid, unpaginated section.

contemporaries, they began to speak ill of good people. Thus a law was made that no one could compose books or publish verses attacking any person living by name.’¹¹⁸ These legal restrictions were what led Menander and Gaius Lucilius to invent the ‘New Comedy’ and the ‘New Satire’, respectively, in Rome, which continued to attack vices in the manner of the Greek satyrs, but in a way that accommodated the new laws – though Sansovino does not specify precisely how this was achieved.¹¹⁹

Sansovino argued that it is this history that accounts for satire’s distinctive style, which was ‘not ornamented, nor graceful [...] nor does it consist of the sweetness of heroic and high matter, but of a frank simplicity with a severe bitterness, sometimes mixed with salt, and some pleasant and acute parts’.¹²⁰ He cited Horace, among the ancients, and Ariosto, among the moderns, as examples of this style. Finally, he offered a recipe for satirical writing which draws together several of the themes with which this chapter has been concerned. He argued that:

satire wants to be humble and low-keyed and to imitate nature [...] the satirists do not begin with invocations or a marvel, but either with disdain or something similar such that, as if provoked by the sheer multitude of the vices of men, they move indignantly and angrily to take them down [*riprenderle*], not being able to keep quiet, in a manner of speaking. In addition to this, in satire, they insert stories of [*s’introducono a favellar*] humble people, such as servants, sinners, and other such people, because heroes and great men are the subjects of serious verses: the poet sings of their labours, adorning them with many poetic

¹¹⁸ ‘Ma poi che i Greci ebbero per gran tempo usato questo modo di scrivere, cominciarono a divenir nello scrivere assai più licenziosi, perciò che, mossi da preghiere o corrotti da presenti, si diedero a dir male delle persone da bene. Laonde fu fatta una legge che niuno potesse compor libri o publicar versi contra qualunque persona che vivesse, sotto il suo proprio nome. Per che Menandro per questo ritrovò la comedia nuova et in ultimo Lucilio fu inventor della nuova satira, il qual conservò l’antica usanza del riprendere i vizii, ma mutò il modo de’ versi, affrenando però alquanto la libertà per rispetto della legge. Ma perciò che essi secondo il costume de’ satiri andavano d’un vizio in un altro, rimase il nome di satira a così fatto modo di scrivere.’ Ibid, unpaginated section.

¹¹⁹ It should be noted that this account of ancient satire was inaccurate – at this time, ‘satyr’ and ‘satire’ were thought to derive from the same root, something disproved by Issac Casaubon in the seventeenth century, when he showed that while satyr was a Greek word, the word satire was of Latin origin. See Isaac Casaubon, *De Satyrica Graecorum poesi et Romanorum satira* (Paris: apud Ambrosium et Hieronymum Drovard, 1605). However, this was a common belief at the time: on Aretino’s use of the satyr/satire image, see Waddington, *Aretino’s Satyr*, pp. 11-9.

¹²⁰ ‘Laonde si vede manifestamente ch’alla materia satirica non si convien l’ornamento né la grazia, né i fuchi, né la soavità del dire che vuol la materia eroica et alta, ma una schietta semplicità con una acerbità severa, mescolata talora con qualche sale e con qualche tratto gustevole et acuto.’ Sansovino, ‘Discorso in materia della satira’.

fictions and with select, illustrious words. But satire requires the bare and open truth[.]¹²¹

These elements that Sansovino saw as part of ancient and modern satire – the emphasis on ‘the bare and open truth’, on the use of stories of ordinary people, on the condemnation of vices, and on the need for a low style that imitated natural, spoken language, together with the use of satiric (or satyric) personae – are all elements that we have seen reflected in the works under consideration in this chapter.

This brings us to a final distinction that must be made between a ‘public voice’ and the ‘voice of people’. Paula Findlen has argued that ‘by using pornography as a vehicle to attack everything from the humanist educational program to clerical piety to the vicissitudes of court life, Aretino exposed the vices of the upper classes to an indiscriminate audience.’¹²² However, what I want to argue is that Aretino and other *poligrafi* were exposing the vices – not only of the ‘upper classes’, but of the masses as well – to a discriminating audience, rather than a popular one. As Emily Butterworth has argued, drawing from her investigations of satirical texts by Joachim Du Bellay and Rabelais, the inclusion of ‘humble’ people in satirical texts – such as Aretino’s prostitutes or Doni’s poultry-seller – must be distinguished from an uncritical endorsement of the voice of the people, of speaking from below. A pasquinade by Du Bellay from 1558 endorses such a distinction, in which Pasquino claims his ‘true calling’ is to ‘spare no-one, but to sing out vices with a public voice.’¹²³ Doni’s preface to those that cannot read – *a coloro che non leggono* – in the introduction to the

¹²¹ ‘la satira vuol esser di stil umile e basso et imitante la natura....Laonde i satirici non cominciano con invocazion o con maraviglia, ma o con sdegno o con qualch’altra maniera così fatta, quasi che, essendo come provocati dalla moltitudine de’ vizii degli uomini, si muovino sdegnosamente e con ira a riprenderle, non potendo a un certo modo più tacere. Oltre a ciò nella satira s’introducono a favellar persone umili, come servi, peccatori e tali altre persone, ché ne’ versi gravi entrano eroi e uomini grandi; de’ quali il poeta cantando adorna l’opera di molte fizioni poetiche e di elette parole et illustri. Ma la satira richiede la verità nuda et aperta’. Ibid.

¹²² Findlen, ‘Humanism, Politics and Pornography in Renaissance Italy’, p. 101.

¹²³ Aussi mon vrai métier, c’est de n’épargner homme, / Mais les vices chanter d’une publique voix.’ Joachim Du Bellay, *Les regrets et autres oeuvres poetiques* (Paris, Frédéric Morel, 1558), (II. 5-6), cited in Butterworth, *The Unbridled Tongue*, pp. 61-2.

second book of *La seconda libreria*, a sort of satirical bibliographic compendium of works that did not exist, makes it clear that, despite his inclusion of a poultry-seller in his dialogue on education and of a weaver in a dialogue on religion to attack the vices of humanists and religion respectively, he was happy to mock the illiterate as well:

How much happier you are than other men, you who do not know the ABC; and how much more obliged you are to fate, and to your fathers, who did not make you go through the difficulty of learning to read. What a beautiful place Turkey must be, since they are not rotting in this plague of books. It's possible that a time will never come when a shock of water would be able to destroy them all, or that an Emperor would be able to make a Mount Athena out of them. And we other readers lose days going after all these developments. What do you think it means to make a book [*fare un libro*]? What do you think is the significance of one of these pages? And what do you think we are doing with them?¹²⁴

Evidently, although Doni reveals in this passage something of the distaste for the 'plague of books' wrought by printing that would eventually compel him to abandon the press in the last part of his career, this does not mean that he sympathises with the unlearned, except in an obviously ironic fashion.

The *poligrafi*'s intended audiences were their patrons (prospective and actual) and those who could afford their books. Their claims to be truth-tellers were intimately linked to their efforts to improve their social status, which is linked to their intended audience. The satirical works examined in this chapter, on courts and humanist writing and education were not particularly commercially successful. For example, despite their subsequent notoriety – and later influence on the development of pornography – the *Ragionamenti* were printed only five times in Aretino's lifetime, out of approximately 160 editions of his works.¹²⁵ This was typical. Moreover, unlike many canonical ancient and modern writers, there is little evidence

¹²⁴ 'De quanto siate voi felici piu degli altri huomini, voi che non sapete l'A B C; e quanto piu obbligo havete voi alla sorte, e a i padri vostri, che non vi fecero stentare a imparare a leggere. O che bella stanza debbe essere in Turchiera poi che non si infarinano [infarinano?] in questa maladitione di libri. È possibile che non possi venire una volta una scossa d'acqua che gl'immolli tutti, o uno Imperadore che ne facci un monte d'Ethena. E noi altri lettori perdi giornate andiamo dietro tutto di a questi viluppi; che credete voi che sia il fare un libro? Che cosa credete voi che importi un di questi scartabelli? E come credete voi che noi facciamo a fargli?'. Anton Francesco Doni, *La seconda libreria*, (Venice: [Gualtiero Scoto] per Francesco Marcolini, 1551).

¹²⁵ Waddington, 'Aretino's Prostitutes: the *Ragionamenti*', p. 7.

of these texts turning up in the book collections of artisans.¹²⁶ Certainly, they were far less commercially successful than either the books of letters produced by Aretino, Franco, Doni and others in the 1540s and 1550s, or the vernacular translations, histories, guidebooks, and anthologies produced by a subsequent generation of *poligrafi* in the late 1550s, 1560s and 1570s. But they were not intended to be particularly commercially successful. Rather, these satirical texts were a means of targeting multiple patrons at once, and of criticising the relationship with truth and literary style produced by the court system, in the face of considerable stigma.

Barbara Johnson once asserted that a true critique of any theoretical system is not an examination of its flaws and imperfections, or a set of criticisms designed to make the system better, but ‘an analysis that focuses on the grounds of the system's possibility’.¹²⁷ According to this definition, the *poligrafi* and other critiques of ‘mainstream’ Bembian humanism should be seen as reformers rather than radicals, given that the solutions they proposed often boiled down to studying the classics more closely – as Eric Cochrane pointed out, ‘in typically Petrarchan and traditionally fifteenth-century fashion’ – rather than entirely rejecting the fundamental premises of humanism.¹²⁸ However, it is clear that, in their efforts to carve out a social role for themselves as distinct from courtiers and humanists, they did produce significant literary innovations.

Conclusion

Until the late twentieth century, the *poligrafi* tended to be seen as radical outsiders, who rejected learning completely as mere pedantry, and who argued instead that one should be

¹²⁶ See Ross, *Everyday Renaissance*.

¹²⁷ Barbara Johnson, translator's introduction to Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. xv.

¹²⁸ Eric Cochrane, *Italy 1530-1630* (London: Longman, 1988), p. 86.

inspired by Nature alone. It is not difficult to see why scholars have usually believed this: the *poligrafi* encouraged this image themselves. Moreover, it is an accurate portrayal of their attitude towards some aspects of the humanist movement, especially the aims and methods of humanist education. However, it severely underestimates the extent of the *poligrafi*'s understanding and usage of classical sources, which becomes evident when their works are examined closely.

At the same time, the printing press has conventionally been seen as precipitating a dramatic shift in the types of people who wrote books and the genres in which they were writing. As Brian Richardson has argued, 'the frontiers of the world of letters were now being pushed back to include parts of the population to whom literati had previously been able to feel superior: access to the ideas of others and the ability to diffuse one's own ideas were, in other words, no longer reserved for an elite.'¹²⁹ This is obviously true in part. But it is not the whole story. The *poligrafi*'s satirical takes on courts and humanism were not particularly successful commercially, and were not intended to be. As we have seen in chapter 2 of this thesis, however, such attempts to improve their social status were only partially successful; few other than Aretino successfully ingratiated themselves into the Venetian literary establishment in the first half of the sixteenth century, though the stigma attached to commercial success does seem to have faded. Moreover, in the context of increasing state and religious censorship, publishing controversial material became increasingly difficult. Consequently, after the mid-1550s, most *poligrafi* either left Venice or shifted to producing much-less controversial work that contributed to the so-called 'Myth of Venice', which proved to be far more commercially successful than their earlier satirical work. These writings are the subject of the next chapter.

¹²⁹ Brian Richardson, 'The Debates on Printing in Renaissance Italy' *La Bibliofilia*, 100 (1998), p. 154.

5. Loyalists and Propagandists: The *Poligrafi* and the Myth of Venice, ca. 1549-1581

In the 1550s, the most prominent *poligrafi* of the second and third generations, with the important exception of Lodovico Dolce, either died or left Venice. Those who remained into the 1560s, 70s and 80s, including Dolce, Francesco Sansovino (who had spent a brief period away from Venice at the papal court of Julius III in 1550, but soon returned), and Tommaso Porcacchi were writing books of a very different sort to the obscene satire that had been popular in the 1530s and 1540s. In this period the *poligrafi*, in response to increasing censorious pressure from state and ecclesiastical authorities, and increasing reluctance on the part of publishers to take chances on controversial texts – though rarely at the behest of the Venetian state or individual patricians – wrote many books that reflected the way the Venetian elites sought to portray their state.¹ Consequently, this chapter argues the *poligrafi* who stayed in Venice from the 1550s onwards – shifted from being satirists to loyal propagandists for the Venetian regime: their works, in this period, contributed to the political narrative about the origins and nature of the Venetian Republic that has become generally known as the ‘myth of Venice’. While elements of the fearless, truth-telling persona of the 1530s and 1540s remained, their output became much more based around informational books, how-to guides, and popular histories, avoiding controversial topics.

It is worth briefly outlining the main features of Venice’s myth before we proceed. They were relatively consistent, though particular elements received different emphases over time. These features were that Venice was a city founded in liberty, and that had never been conquered by a foreign power; that its power came from the sea, and privileged merchant activity; that its patriciate was unified and devoted to the civic good; that Venetians were

¹ On press regulation and censorship, see chapter 2, pp. 95-7.

pious, but independent from both Rome and Byzantium; that Venice's populace was loyal, and content, with no cause or inclination to protest or rebel; and that its perfect, mixed constitution, which combined the best features of democracy, monarchy and oligarchy, had ensured Venice's endurance and consistency since its founding.² It should be noted that, to borrow Gina Fascioli's term, that the myth of Venice had always been 'bifrontal': Venice's enemies contended that, contrary to the republic's self-image, it was in fact tyrannical, oligarchic, treacherous, self-interested, impious, and culturally stagnant.³ This chapter however focuses only on the *poligrafi*'s contributions to the Venetian version of the myth.

Until the 1980s, historians often tried to discern how closely the myth of Venice corresponded to historical reality, focusing in particular on the period from the late fifteenth century to the early seventeenth century. Such an approach has been invaluable in exposing the ways in which, for example, Venetian histories and political treatises have obscured the extent of disagreement amongst patricians and discontent amongst the populace, as well as the dramatic changes in the composition of Venetian society in this period.⁴ But focusing on finding the truth behind the myth has sometimes obscured our understanding of its utility, both for the Venetian state as a whole, and for individuals in Venice and its empire. As the philosopher of myth, Hans Blumenberg, has highlighted, myths can provide life with meaning and significance. But in order to do so, they must be continuously adapted, by the

² The main features of Venice's myth are admirably summarised by James Grubb, 'When Myths Lose Power: Four Decades of Venetian Historiography', *Journal of Modern History* 58 (1986), pp. 43-94.

³ Gina Fasoli, 'Nascità di un mito', in *Studi Storici in onore di Gioacchino Volpe*, Vol. 1 (Florence: Sansoni, 1958), p. 449.

⁴ Some particularly important early works were Fasoli, 'Nascità di un mito'; Gaetano Cozzi, *Il doge Nicolo Contarini. Ricerche sul patriziato veneziano agli inizi del Seicento* (Venice: Istituto per la Collaborazione Culturale, 1958); Franco Gaeta, 'Alcune considerazioni sul mito di Venezia', *Bibliothèque d'Humanisme et de Renaissance* 23 (1961), pp. 58-75. See also Donald E. Queller and Francis R. Swietek, 'The Myth of the Venetian Patriciate: Electoral Corruption in Medieval Venice', in Queller and Swietek, *Two Studies on Venetian Government* (Geneva: Droz, 1977), pp. 99-166; Robert Finlay, *Politics in Renaissance Venice* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1980); Guido Ruggiero, *Violence in Early Renaissance Venice* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1980). Donald E. Queller, *The Venetian Patriciate: Reality versus Myth* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

constant reworking of a narrative core (or what Blumenberg calls a *mythologem*), as alluded to in the title of his key text on the subject, *Arbeit am Mythos*.⁵ That is to say, “living” myths are constantly being re-worked and adapted, rather than presenting a static, unchanging story.

Since the 1980s, specific aspects of Venetian myth-making, including the contributions of humanist scholarship, governmental record-keeping, public rituals, and music, art and architecture have all been the subject of multiple studies exposing the ways in which they were designed to present an image of Venice as unchanging and harmonious.⁶ On the other hand, with the notable exception of Bronwen Wilson’s important work on printed visual representations of the city, the significance of Venice’s publishing industry in shaping the myth has been more regularly asserted than demonstrated.⁷ Moreover, the publications of the *poligrafi* based in Venice in the second half of the sixteenth century – especially those of Francesco Sansovino – are regularly drawn upon by scholars such as Edward Muir, Iain Fenlon, Filippo de Vivo, and Natalie Rothman in their discussions of the Venetian

⁵ Hans Blumenberg, *Work on Myth* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1985); originally published as Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1979). Cf. Chiara Bottici, *A Philosophy of Political Myth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 7-8.

⁶ On Venetian humanism, see Margaret L. King, *Venetian Humanism in an Age of Patrician Dominance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Craig Kallendorf, *Virgil and the Myth of Venice: Books and Readers in the Italian Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999); Filippo de Vivo, ‘Historical Justifications of Venetian Power in the Adriatic’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64:2 (2003), pp. 159-76. On Venetian bureaucracy, legislation, and record-keeping, see Horodowich, Elizabeth, *Language and Statecraft in Early Modern Venice*; Filippo de Vivo, ‘Heart of the State, Site of Tension: The Archival Turn viewed from Venice, c. 1400-1700’, *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 68 (2013), pp. 699-728. On government ritual, see Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); Ian Fenlon, *The Ceremonial City: History, Memory and Myth in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); van Gelder, ‘The People’s Prince’. On public art and architecture, see Deborah Howard, *Jacopo Sansovino: Architecture and Patronage in Renaissance Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975); Patricia Fortini Brown, *Venetian Narrative Painting in the Age of Carpaccio* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988) and Brown, *Venice and Antiquity: The Venetian Sense of the Past* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996); David Rosand, *Myths of Venice: The Figuration of a State* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). For a summary of work since Grubb’s overview, see Filippo de Vivo, ‘The Diversity of Venice and her Myths’, *The Historical Journal* 47:1 (2004), pp. 169–77.

⁷ Bronwen Wilson, *The World in Venice: Print, the City, and Early Modern Identity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); Wilson, ‘Venice, Print, and the Early Modern Icon’, *Urban History* 33:1 (2006), pp. 39-64; Wilson, ‘“Foggie diverse di vestire de’ Turchi”: Turkish Costume Illustration and Cultural Translation’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern History* 37:1 (2007), pp. 95-138; Wilson (ed.), *Making Publics in Early Modern Europe: People, Things, Forms of Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

conception of the *vita civile*, as well as the ways in which Venetian print influenced European perceptions of the Ottoman Empire, thanks to the strength of the city's printing industry.⁸

However, these texts have more often been mined for information than treated as subjects of research in themselves, as if they simply reflected the vision of the myth of Venice invented by Venetian elites, without any particular attention being directed to the *poligrafi*'s own motivations for producing them. For example, throughout his well-known *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*, Edward Muir relies on Francesco Sansovino as a principal source on the official Venetian version of the republic's history, including key events such as Saint Mark's alleged visit to the lagoon on his way back to Rome, after preaching in Aquileia, in c. 50 CE; the Venetian Republic's mythical foundation on 25 March, 421; and the famous story of doge Sebastiano Ziani's brokering of the Peace of Venice between Pope Alexander III and Frederick I in 1177. Muir also relies on texts by Sansovino, and their revised editions, as sources detailing the revision of the commemorations of the 1177 Peace of Venice in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁹ But Sansovino's books did not just straightforwardly reflect an official Venetian myth.¹⁰ Rather, they were constructed by an author who was acutely aware that he was himself not a native Venetian, with his own agenda and motivations such as achieving commercial success, pleasing his patrons, and improving his own social standing. Other *poligrafi*, such as Lodovico Dolce and Tommaso Porcacchi, also made substantial contributions to Venetian mythmaking. Dolce – the only native Venetian *poligrafo*, and a survivor of the second

⁸ E. Natalie Rothman, *Brokering Empire: Trans-Imperial Subjects between Venice and Istanbul* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 21.

⁹ See Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice*, p. 79; pp. 71-2; pp. 112-8, 124. Notably, he relies on the 1604 edition of the *Venetia*, which was considerably revised and expanded by Giovanni Stringa after Sansovino's death. See Bonora, *Ricerche su Francesco Sansovino*, p. 163.

¹⁰ Muir has more recently criticised his own early work for treating Venetian civic culture as monolithic: see Edward Muir, 'The Anthropology of Venice', in Dursteler (ed.), *A Companion to Venetian History*, pp. 487-512.

generation who became active in the early 1530s – remained prolific in his later career, and his 1557 treatise on art, the *Dialogo della pittura [...] intitolato l'Aretino* (henceforth referred to as *L'Aretino*), has received particular attention. But its reception has varied widely, treated as either a rather unoriginal work, of merit solely as a representation of Venetian art theory in general, or as a strikingly original application of Aristotle's *Poetics* to aesthetics.¹¹ In both cases, Dolce's particular social context and personal motivations have not been paid sufficient attention. Similarly, the series of historical texts Sansovino, Dolce and Tommaso Porcacchi produced for the Giolito press are the subject of an important article by Paul Grendler on the genre of popular history, but are treated as straightforwardly representative examples of how the genre worked, without much consideration of the authors' own particular reasons for producing them. (They are, for example, praised by Grendler for having seen 'history as a secular science guided by considerations of evidence and objectivity').¹² In particular, the difficulties that the *poligrafi* and their publishers faced as a result of increasing regulation and censorship on the part of state and ecclesiastical authorities of the Venetian printing industry from the 1540s onwards, as detailed in chapter 2, require more scholarly attention as factors in the choices *poligrafi* made both with regard to which texts to produce, and with regard to how particular texts were presented. One of the aims of this chapter is, consequently, to take the *poligrafi* who continued to live in Venice in the late sixteenth century 'out of the footnotes' – rather as Tom Hamilton has recently done with the endlessly-cited observer of the French Wars of Religion, Pierre de l'Estoile – in order to problematise their use as objective sources of information on the Venetian myth.¹³

¹¹ The former opinion is that of Mark Roskill, *Dolce's Aretino and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento* (New York: New York University Press, 1968); the latter is that of Marco Sgarbi, 'Ludovico Dolce e la nascita della critica d'arte. Un momento della ricezione della poetica aristotelica nel Rinascimento', *Rivista di estetica* 59 (2015), pp. 163-82.

¹² Grendler, 'Francesco Sansovino and Italian Popular History 1560-1600', pp. 139-80.

¹³ Tom Hamilton, *Pierre de L'Estoile and his World in the Wars of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 5, p. 16.

This chapter begins by examining of how the *poligrafi* used writing on art and architecture to articulate a pro-Venetian message and enhance their own social standing. This was an element of their output from as early as the 1530s, when Pietro Aretino praised the work of Titian, and criticised Michelangelo, in his *libri di lettere* – but that became still more pronounced from the late 1540s onwards, as the fearless truth-teller persona that they had collectively emphasised in the 1530s and early 1540s was gradually replaced by the identity (or ring changes here with ‘identity’?) of a Venetian loyalist. In this new role, they sought to refine the myth of Venice in its artistic manifestations by responding to shifting circumstances, most particularly, the publication of the first edition of Giorgio Vasari’s *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* in 1550. The second section of the chapter explores the ways in which the *poligrafi* increasingly applied this approach to popular histories and guidebooks of Venice, as well as editions of historical texts by figures like Francesco Guicciardini, from the 1550s onwards. Finally, the chapter seeks to provide some answers to the questions of who the audience were for these types of books, and how successful they were. These answers can only be tentative since the history of reading for non-elite readers is in its very early stages: we will need to wait for more systematic examinations of household inventories to reach firmer conclusions. Still, this chapter argues that, on the basis of available evidence, while the *poligrafi*’s writings on art, like the satirical material of an earlier generation, circulated among a relatively restricted group of readers, their transition to pro-Venetian popular histories and guidebooks resulted in them being read by a much larger number of people – albeit still not a mass audience.

The Poligrafi and Venetian Art

The *poligrafi*’s writing on art is a distinctive feature of their output in Venice that we do not see from *poligrafi* living elsewhere, even when in other great centres of artistic production

in Italy such as Florence and Rome. It is with regard to art – not writing that touched on politics directly, such as history or satire – that we can first see the *poligrafi* articulating an element of the myth of Venice that was attractive to Venetian elites. Moreover, we can gain insight into the priorities and agendas of individual *poligrafi* because they are articulated through the particular version of Venetian art that they advocated. This section begins with an examination of Venetian art theory before the partisan debate engendered by the publication in 1550 of the first edition of Vasari's *Lives*, including the first treatise on art published in Venice, by Paolo Pino, and the role of Aretino in championing the art of Titian and Jacopo Sansovino in his writings from Aretino's arrival in Venice in 1527 up to 1550. This provides the context for an extensive discussion of the most significant text on art theory produced in sixteenth-century Venice, *L'Aretino* by the *poligrafo* Lodovico Dolce. I discuss how Dolce's text builds upon and deviates from earlier texts on the nature of Venetian art, and also how it relates to his professional ambitions. Finally, the section concludes with a discussion of alternative approaches to Venetian art taken by other *poligrafi*, such as Francesco Sansovino and Andrea Calmo, and how their opinions on Venetian art relate to their social standing.

Paolo Pino's 1548 *Dialogo di pittura* has the distinction of being the first treatise on art in Venice, as well as the first treatise on art produced by a Venetian painter.¹⁴ In this text, the Venetian Lauro and the Florentine Fabio, both painters, enter a dialogue on the art of painting, prompted by the beauty of a woman at a banquet to which they have both been invited. Although the dialogue draws on the main theoretical sources for art theory up to this point – such as Leon Battista Alberti, Albrecht Dürer, and Pliny the Younger – its objective is to synthesise this material with Pino's practical experience. For example, the dialogue

¹⁴ Paolo Pino, *Dialogo della pittura* (Venice: per Paulo Gherardo, 1548). I have given page references to the modern edition edited by Paola Barocchi: see Paolo Pino, 'Dialogo di pittura', in Paola Barocchi (ed.), *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma* (Bari: Laterza, 1960), pp. 92-139.

comments on effects supposedly achieved by painters in antiquity, such as Apelles' ability to depict the sun's rays and lighting realistically, which Fabio describes as impossible.¹⁵ The most salient aspect of this text for our purposes, however, is that Pino does not argue that Venetian painting is superior to that of Florence. This distinguishes his treatise from later works by Vasari (to which he refers, having seen a manuscript copy, possibly by means of his friendship with the *poligrafo* Doni who had originally been given the contract to print the *Lives*) and Lodovico Dolce.¹⁶ Pino praises masters from various regions of the Italian peninsula: he even goes as far, in one famous passage, as to claim that he envisions the ideal artist – the hypothetical 'god of painting' – as a fusion of Titian and Michelangelo, 'the perfect union of Venetian *colore* and Florentine *disegno*'.¹⁷ Moreover, Pino does not explicitly put forward any clear conception of what made Venetian art distinctive: as a painter, he is more concerned with discussing practical aspects of the Venetian art world. For example, Lauro comes to the defence of the 'smearing' of Andrea Schiavone – a painter accused of excessive speed – not on aesthetic grounds, but by blaming the labour market for painters in Venice, who were not being paid enough and had to accept large numbers of commissions as a result.¹⁸ We can see here that, at the time Pino was writing, art criticism had not yet become the site of ideological conflict between Florence and Venice that it would become with the extraordinary impact of the first edition of Vasari's *Lives*, published in 1550. The roots of the Venetian perspective in the ideologically charged debate between Florence and Venice initiated by Vasari were, on the other hand, not in Pino's treatise, but in the published letters of Aretino.

¹⁵ Pino, 'Dialogo della pittura', p. 110.

¹⁶ On Pino's relationship with Doni, see Ben Thomas, 'The Paragone Debate and Sixteenth-Century Italian Art' (DPhil Thesis: University of Oxford, 1997), p. 96.

¹⁷ Pino, 'Dialogo della pittura', p. 127.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 113-5.

Aretino never wrote any dialogue or treatise specifically devoted to art or aesthetics. However, across the six volumes of his 3,000 letters that were ultimately published on a wide range of subjects, 683 were on artistic subjects. Many of these letters – especially those promoting the work of Titian and Jacopo Sansovino – have become justly famous. It is clear that, from the beginning, Aretino saw his friendship with the elder Sansovino and, especially, Titian, as mutually beneficial. Aretino initially leveraged his relationships with the two artists – who were both more successful than him when he first arrived in Venice – to increase his own social and cultural capital and to rebrand himself as, on the one hand, a free and independent satirist not beholden to any court, and, on the other, a loyal servant of the Venetian republic. To the former end, a portrait of Aretino painted by Titian in the year of the writer's arrival in Venice, in 1527, is a case in point. Sent to Federico II Gonzaga, Aretino's former patron, the painting (which unfortunately does not survive) is said to have depicted him wearing a cap with a gold medal he had received from the duke, inscribed FIDES, and holding a laurel wreath in his right hand, the symbol of a poet. On the other hand, the sonnet that Aretino wrote to accompany the portrait declared that he was 'neither poet nor prince' but 'censor of the proud world / and nuncio and prophet of truth.'¹⁹ Aretino would later also send portraits of himself by Titian to Francesco Marcolini and Cosimo I, and used an engraving based on one of Titian's portraits as the frontispiece to his first collection of letters.²⁰ In return, Aretino became a tireless champion of Titian's work, helping the artist, who had already achieved a pre-eminent position in the Venetian art world by the

¹⁹ Freedman, *Titian's Portraits Through Aretino's Lens*, p. 37.

²⁰ Raymond B. Waddington, 'A Satirist's Impresa: The Medals of Pietro Aretino', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 42:4 (1989), pp. 655-81.

time Aretino arrived in 1527, to become one of the most famous artists in Europe.²¹ By the late 1530s, thanks to his friend's influence, Titian's attention was coveted by emperors and princes, while, at the same time, he was able to remain economically independent of all of them, and therefore without the responsibilities suffered by artists who were permanently employed at a princely or ecclesiastical court.²² Moreover, Aretino cultivated his relationship with the Venetian elite by regularly using his platform to smooth over the difficult relationship between Jacopo Sansovino and the Senate, by publicly reminding the artist – who at one point, in the 1530s, became so fed up with the Venetian authorities that he briefly contemplated returning to Rome – of the immense privilege granted to him by the Venetian state.

It is clear that Aretino saw his relationships with Titian and Jacopo Sansovino as opportunities to improve his social standing. But his art criticism was also influential in intellectual terms. Aretino contended that artists and writers ought to be inspired by nature, that what determined a work's quality was how close it got to nature. He argued, moreover, that the appreciation of art ought to focus on the subjective experience of the viewer rather than on the technical skill of the artist, something that particularly comes across in his ekphrastic letters on individual works by Titian. While Mark Roskill has argued that this argument has democratic implications, since it opens up the judgement of art to non-artists, it is more plausible that, as Svetlana Alpers has observed, the very nature of ekphrasis means that it 'concerns the viewer's education, not the artist's' – that is, it implied that to truly appreciate a painting, one had to understand the references – and that therefore it privileged

²¹ The effectiveness of his advocacy for Titian's painting was noted on by contemporaries, including Vasari, who commented that 'Pietro Aretino, the most celebrated poet of our day, having gone to Venice before the sack of Rome, became very friendly with Titian and [Jacopo] Sansovino. This proved of great advantage to Titian, spreading his name as far as Pietro's pen reached, especially to notable princes'. Giorgio Vasari, quoted in Freedman, *Titian's Portraits Through Aretino's Lens*, p. 1.

²² See Charles Hope, 'Titian as a Court Painter', *The Oxford Art Journal* 2 (1979), pp. 7-10; Rudolf Wittkower and Margot Wittkower, 'Titian's Opulence and Financial Astuteness', in Wittkower and Wittkower, *Born under Saturn* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1969), pp. 265-70.

the judgement of an educated elite.²³ This interpretation is borne out by Aretino's insistence that his own capacity to exercise *guidizio* – judgement – of art, despite the fact that he was not a practicing artist, was a result of his extensive experience of viewing paintings (interestingly he gives no weight to his own early artistic training in Perugia). This differs from Vasari's emphasis on the importance of *giudizio* – present in his earliest writings on art, in the 1540s, but especially emphasised in the second edition of his *Lives*, published in 1568 – which is not the judgement of the viewer but of the artist.²⁴ Aretino even went so far as to invite young painters and sculptors to bring their works to him for advice when visiting Venice.²⁵ His writings about art are also full of uncited references to classical authorities such as Pliny. In this way, Aretino put forward a conception of art that foregrounded the viewer's subjective experience over the technical skill of the artist, but without implying that everybody was equipped to judge whether art was good or bad. He also, moreover, justified his own authority to do so, despite his lack of artistic credentials or a humanist education, as well as validating the judgement of elite patrons.

However, Aretino did not uncritically approve of all Venetian art, or even of all of Titian's work. He preferred those artworks that he felt most closely imitated nature, and he was willing to criticise artists, including Titian, when he felt they deviated from that standard, deliberately or otherwise. For instance, along with many contemporaries, Aretino disliked Titian's late 'painterly' (*pittresco*) style, in which he deliberately left his brushwork

²³ Svetlana Alpers, 'Ekphrasis and Aesthetic Attitudes in Vasari's *Lives*', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1960), pp. 190-215; Roskill, *Dolce's Aretino and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento*, pp. 17-18.

²⁴ On the differences between the two editions of the *Lives*, see Zygmunt Wazbinski, 'L'idée de l'histoire dans la première et la seconde éditions des vies de Vasari', in Wazbinski, *Il Vasari storiografo e artista* (Florence: Istituto nazionale di studi sul Rinascimento, 1974) pp. 1-20.

²⁵ On Aretino's view of judgement and mentorship of young artists, see Lora Anne Palladino, 'Pietro Aretino: Orator and Art Theorist' (PhD Thesis: Yale University, 1981), pp. 96-9.

exposed.²⁶ In the letter to Cosimo I accompanying the 1545 portrait of Aretino by Titian, now kept in the Palazzo Pitti (fig. 7), Aretino complained that Titian had left his portrait ‘more sketched than finished’.²⁷ In a letter to Cosimo I, the portrait’s recipient, he said:

Here is a similar portrayal of my own appearance, likewise the work of his paintbrush. Truly it breathes, its pulses beat, and it is animated with the same spirit with which I am in actual life, and if I had only counted out more crowns to him, the clothes I wore would likewise have been as shining and soft, yet firm to the touch as are actual satin, velvet and brocade.²⁸

Aretino preferred Titian’s earlier, more naturalistic style: when discussing specific paintings by Titian, he mainly focuses on early works, such as the *St Peter Martyr* dating from 1528-29 (now lost, though see fig. 8 for a seventeenth-century copy). When he wrote about artists other than Titian, Aretino was happy to attribute ‘painterly’ approaches to sloppiness and hastiness, rather than unhappiness with low pay. For example, although he commented approvingly on Tintoretto’s *Miracle of the Slave* in 1548 (fig. 11), Aretino also argued that artist’s ‘name will be blessed’ if he were willing to reduce the ‘haste to be done’ (*prestezza del fatto*) with which he painted.²⁹ It is notable that Aretino does not appear for a moment to consider the possibility that Titian or Tintoretto had deliberately employed a ‘painterly’ style on artistic grounds. Many of the key elements of Aretino’s opinions on art reoccur in later writings on art by the *poligrafi*, such as the championing of ‘natural style’ and the veneration of early Titian as the exemplar of Venetian painting. However, also see fresh questions arise, over whether *prestezza* could in fact be seen as positive rather than, as for Aretino, negative; and we see the debate over whether Venetian or Florentine art was superior explicitly

²⁶ On critical responses to Titian’s late style, see Philip Sohm, *Pittoresco: Marco Boschini, His Critics, and Their Critiques of Painterly Brushwork in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

²⁷ Aretino, *Lettere, sull’arte*, vol. 2, pp. 106-7. Cf. Sohm, *Pittoresco*, p. 11. This is Philip Sohm’s translation: unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this reference.

²⁸ Aretino, *Lettere*, II, pp. 107-8. Cf. Sohm, *Pittoresco*, p. 11. This is Philip Sohm’s translation: unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide the original Italian for this reference.

²⁹ ‘E beato il nome vostro, se reduceste la prestezza del fatto in la pazienza del fare.’ Aretino, *Lettere sull’arte*, vol. 2, pp. 204-5.

invoked, as a response to the impact of the first edition of Vasari's *Lives*.

The publication of Vasari's *Lives* in 1550, his championing of the superiority of Florentine art and of Michelangelo as its chief exponent, and his negative view of the Venetian tradition prompted Lodovico Dolce to develop Aretino's fragmented commentary into a systemic theory. In his 1557 dialogue, *L'Aretino*, a fictionalised Aretino features as a mouthpiece for Venetian art.³⁰ It consists of a conversation between the "scourge of princes" and Giovanni Francesco Fabrini, a Florentine humanist. The character of Aretino consistently argues for the superiority of Titian, while Fabrini takes the side of Michelangelo, though by the end of the dialogue he has been won to Aretino's side. The dialogue is broken into three parts: a discussion of the nobility of painting and the elements of which it consists of; examples of painters who have achieved perfection, both ancient and modern; and a final section concentrating on Titian's brilliance, with descriptions of some of his most important works. Whether or not the dialogue was theoretically innovative has been central to much of the relevant scholarship. The verdict of Dolce's modern editor, Mark Roskill, on the dialogue has been very influential. Roskill sees the text as a partisan response to Vasari's advocacy of the superiority of Florentine *disegno* over Venetian *colore*, wholly lacking in originality, by a hack writer with little interest in art for art's sake.³¹ Roskill describes Dolce as having 'little capacity for originality of thought' and describes his 'intellectual personality' as possessing 'no great attractiveness or strength.' 'In terms of industry and intellectual pedantry', Roskill concludes, 'he was more or less on a plane with

³⁰ Lodovico Dolce, *Dialogo della pittura di m. Lodovico Dolce, intitolato l'Aretino. Nel quale si ragiona della dignità di essa pittura, e di tutte le parti necessarie, che a perfetto pittore si acconvengono, con esempi di pittori antichi, & moderni, e nel fine si fa mentione delle virtu e delle opere del divin Titiano* (Venice: Gabriele Giolito De Ferrari, 1557). I have provided page numbers from Roskill's modern translation for the reader's convenience.

³¹ Moreover, Roskill has speculated that Dolce's *L'Aretino* must have been commissioned by a patrician, as such is his disdain for Dolce that he feels 'it is rather hard to believe that Dolce could have thought up the whole idea entirely on his own initiative.' Roskill, *Dolce's Aretino and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento*, p. 38.

the ancient Alexandrian scholiasts.’³² On the other hand, in a revisionist 2015 article, Marco Sgarbi argued that in fact Dolce deserves to be seen as one of the most original interpreters of Aristotle’s *Poetics* as applied to art theory, which, in Venetian art theory, came to displace Horace as the great classical authority on the subject.³³ Where Horace had said poetry was like painting – *ut pictura poesis* – Aristotle said, conversely, that painting was a model for poetry. Sgarbi’s contention is that the consequences of Dolce’s use of this inversion – or, more precisely, the Renaissance interpretation of this inversion – were profound, going so far as to say that, thanks to Dolce’s innovative use of the *Poetics*, the ‘foundations were laid for the birth of art criticism as an autonomous discipline, disconnected from the technical act of production of the work of art.’ This goes too far in the opposite direction to Roskill: Dolce was not the first critic, as we have seen, to be more interested in the subjective interpretation of art than its technical foundations, nor was he the first to write a treatise dedicated to art.

More pertinent here, however, is identifying where Dolce agreed or disagreed with Pino, Aretino, and Vasari, and how these related to his professional ambitions. It is clear that Dolce agreed with Aretino that generation of artists after Titian, including Tintoretto, were a disappointment since they did not put enough effort into their work (albeit Dolce seems to have been reluctant to criticise Tintoretto by name).³⁴ Titian, on the other hand, was the greatest practitioner of the Venetian style, as the leading exponent of natural painting. As the Aretino of Dolce’s dialogue comments, ‘Titian [...] moves in step with nature, so that every one of his figures has life, movement and flesh which palpitates. He has shown in his works no empty gracefulness, but a palate which is properly appropriate; no artificiality of

³² Ibid., pp. 6-7.

³³ Sgarbi, ‘Ludovico Dolce e la nascita della critica d’arte’, pp. 163-82.

³⁴ The only Venetian painter of the generation after Titian that Dolce praises by name is Battista Franco. See Dolce, in Roskill, *Dolce’s Aretino and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento*, p. 194.

ornamentation, but a masterly concreteness; no crudity, but the mellowness and softness of nature.³⁵ Unlike the real Aretino, Dolce refrains from explicitly criticising Titian's late style. However, when he refers to a specific painting by Titian, Dolce almost always cites an early painting, such as the Frari *Assumption* (fig. 9), his lost *St Peter Martyr* for San Giovanni e Paolo (fig. 8), and his *Venus and Adonis* (fig. 10), of which many versions exist, which possibly date back as far as the 1520s, though it must be said that all surviving versions are dated to the 1550s at the earliest.

Dolce's highlighting of Titian's *Venus and Adonis* in particular may have had a further motive. The theme is derived a story from the *Metamorphoses* – which Dolce had translated into Italian in its entirety in the 1530s – but *departs* from the story of Venus and Adonis, in that Venus is never described as restraining Adonis before his hunt in this way. However, Dolce had produced standalone versions of the tale of Adonis, in 1545, and Dido and Aeneas, in 1547, for the Giolito press, which do contain scenes reminiscent of Titian's composition, as Kiyo Hosono has pointed out.³⁶ Therefore it is possible that either the composition pre-dates Dolce's interest in Ovid, in which case Titian probably influenced Dolce's translation; or it post-dates it, in which case Dolce probably influenced Titian. Either way, the potential for Dolce to associate himself with the eminent painter is obvious. Moreover, the most famous version of the composition is the one Titian painted for Philip II in 1554, now housed in the Prado, and Dolce may well have wanted to highlight Titian's achievement in receiving Philip's patronage. Titian, incidentally, explicitly refers to the painting of *Venus and Adonis*, in his correspondence with Philip II, as a 'poesie', perhaps suggesting an awareness of the

³⁵ Dolce, in Mark Roskill, *Dolce's Aretino and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento*, p. 185. Cf. David Rosand, 'Titian and the Critical Tradition', in Rosand (ed.), *Titian: His World and His Legacy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 16.

³⁶ Lodovico Dolce, *Favola d'Adone* (Venice: appresso Gabriele Giolito De Ferrari, 1545), in which Adonis rises from Venus with arrows in his hand; Dolce, *Didone* (Venice: appresso Gabriele Giolito De Ferrari, 1547), in which Dido seeks to restrain Aeneas as Venus does Adonis. See Kiyo Hosono, 'Venere e Adone di Tiziano. La scelta del soggetto e le sue fonti', *Venezia Cinquecento* 13:26 (2003), pp. 128–47.

new arguments for the relationship between poetry and painting sparked by the influence of Aristotle's *Poetics* in art criticism in this period that Sgarbi has highlighted. However, it may also simply reflect Dolce's desire to draw attention to his influence on Titian, or vice versa, depending on the date of the composition.

Dolce's *L'Aretino* had limited commercial success, printed in only a single edition by his regular publisher, Gabriele Giolito. However, it has been suggested that the *L'Aretino*'s challenge to Vasari's narrative was one of the prompts for the painter's visit to Venice in preparation for the second edition of his *Lives*, eventually published in 1568 in a vastly expanded form which included biographies of several Venetian artists, including Titian.³⁷ But writing humanistic dialogues was rarely the path to commercial success. It is more likely that Dolce's aim was to ingratiate himself with the Venetian nobility, as evidenced by his dedication to the patrician Hieronimo Loredan, which pointedly praises his ancestor, the doge Lorenzo Loredan, not least for having given Dolce's father a minor governmental post as *castaldo delle procuratorie*.³⁸ Dolce's desire to avoid even the possibility of offending anyone may lay behind his reluctance to criticise Titian, or indeed any Venetian artist, by name. However, if one of his aims in publishing the dialogue was indeed to ingratiate himself with the patriciate so they would protect him from the authorities, it did not work. As we have seen in chapter 2, Dolce – and his publisher, Giolito – repeatedly fell foul of the Venetian Inquisition in the 1560s, and there is no evidence that any patricians intervened on his behalf, unlike when Aretino was accused of sodomy by the author of the *Vita di Pietro Aretino* in 1538.³⁹ It is possible that this muted response to *L'Aretino* from Venetian elites was the reason that Dolce did not return to the subject of art in the decade before his death

³⁷ See for example, Sharon Gregory, 'Vasari on Imitation', in David J. Cast (ed.) *The Ashgate Research Companion to Vasari* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 234-5; Mark Roskill, *Dolce's Aretino and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento*, pp. 63-4.

³⁸ Dolce, in Mark Roskill, *Dolce's Aretino and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento*, pp. 196-8.

³⁹ See chapter 3, pp. 132-4.

in 1568.

In contrast, Francesco Sansovino's publications on art were rarely insightful, but much more commercially successful than those of Dolce. However, Sansovino's subtle shifts of opinion across different texts reflect his professional ambitions even more clearly than in Dolce's case. In his early work from the 1540s, Sansovino had been critical of what he saw as the excessive decoration of Venetian churches and the *scuole grandi*.⁴⁰ At the time, he was close to Titian's wayward first son, Pomponio, and had a tense relationship with the painter as a result, as well as with his own father, Jacopo, who had wanted Francesco to become a lawyer: one of his first published writings is a letter to Aretino in which he refers to 'Titian, and those [others] who hate me'.⁴¹ However, in his *Delle cose notabili che sono in Venetia*, first published in 1556 and then in an expanded edition in 1561, he extravagantly praised the painter, while joining Aretino and Dolce in criticising Tintoretto's speed as excessive.⁴² He also took care to compliment the younger artist Battista Franco, who had been praised by Dolce, but also Veronese, Schiavone and Licinio, who had been publicly praised by Titian after the writing of Dolce's dialogue.⁴³ He also tirelessly promoted Venetian architecture, especially that of his father, Jacopo. Francesco, moreover, seems to have been responsible for large sections of the *Life of Jacopo Sansovino, Sculptor and Architect of the Republic of Venice* – ostensibly merely a new, standalone edition of Vasari's life of Jacopo, published as part of the *Lives*, issued after the elder Sansovino's death. As

⁴⁰ Bonora, *Ricerche su Francesco Sansovino*, pp. 94-5.

⁴¹ 'Tiziano, e quei m'odiano'. Gonaria Floris and Luisa Milas (eds.), *Lettere a Pietro Aretino*, vol. 2 (Rome: Bulzoni, 1997), p. 334.

⁴² Anselmo Guisconi [actually Francesco Sansovino], *Tutte le cose notabili e belle che sono in Venezia* (Venice: Presso Altobello Salicato, 1556); Francesco Sansovino, *Delle cose notabili che sono in Venetia* (Venice: per Comin da Trino, 1561). Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I have been unable to provide page numbers for this reference. *Delle cose notabili* is extensively discussed in Filippo de Vivo, 'Walking in Sixteenth-Century Venice: Mobilizing the Early Modern City', *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 19:1 (2016), pp. 115-41.

⁴³ Sansovino, *Delle cose notabili che sono in Venetia*, p. 341. Cf. Roskill, *Dolce's Aretino and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento*, p. 341.

Lisa Pon has persuasively argued, this edition contained new, intimate details of Jacopo's home life and his relationship with and hopes for his son that Francesco is more likely to have known about than Vasari, and strongly emphasised (as the title suggests) his work in Venice, whereas Vasari had placed greater emphasis on his Florentine origins and his work there and in Rome.⁴⁴ However, it is his determination to recast Jacopo as a sculptor and architect of *Venice* rather than Florence and Rome that is most crucial. As Pon has shown, there are significant additions to the *Life* which foreground his work for the Venetian government over and above the first half of his career. *Delle cose notabili* had far more immediate and long-lasting commercial success than Dolce's dialogue, despite the banality of Sansovino's artistic views, and therefore may have played a role in popularising the basic ideas that Titian was the leading figure of Venetian painting, and Jacopo Sansovino ought to be seen as a leading architect of Venice, rather than Rome or Florence.

Other *poligrafi*, who were personally closer to the Tintoretto than to Titian, dissented somewhat from the idea that the younger painter's speed ought to be regarded as a defect. As with Francesco Sansovino's writing on art, their texts often scarcely rose above banalities, though in defending Tintoretto it is true that they were some of the first critics to argue that verisimilitude was not the sole means by which art ought to be judged. Andrea Calmo, although he did not write a formal treatise on painting, published two letters which praised Tintoretto from 1548 and 1552, the latter of which described him as 'modern prophet'. He regarded Tintoretto's speed, moreover, as the aspect of his style that made him a true genius, since it was this that elevated the mechanistic act of painting into a moment

⁴⁴ Lisa Pon, 'Rewriting Vasari', in David J. Cast (ed.) *The Ashgate Research Companion to Vasari* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 261-75. Cf. Pon, 'La vita di Jacopo Sansovino tra Firenze e Venezia', in Lisa Pon and Craig Kallendorf (eds.) *The Books of Venice / Il Libro Veneziano*, a special issue of *Miscellanea Marciana* 20 (Venice: Talia Editrice, 2009), pp. 327-44. On Jacopo Sansovino's work in Venice, see Howard, *Jacopo Sansovino*.

of inspired creativity.⁴⁵ Doni, meanwhile, praised Tintoretto in the *Libraria* and the 1553 edition of *I Marmi*, in which he described him as a ‘great intellect’, as well as appointing the painter to his *Accademia Pellegrina*.⁴⁶ However, he refrained from commenting on Tintoretto’s style directly, with regard to either its technical details or his subjective experience of viewing it. A plausible reason for Calmo and Doni’s motivation for defending Tintoretto has been put forward by Tom Nichols, who suggests that they saw his speed as the artistic equivalent of their approach to writing, citing as an example Doni’s preface to *I Mondi*, in which he boasts of having written said text in just twenty days without planning or editing.⁴⁷ More dubiously, Nichols has suggested that Tintoretto’s penchant for including common people in his paintings reflects a democratic impulse that we can also see in, for example, in Calmo’s plays written in multiple Veneto dialects, or Doni’s dialogue on humanist education in *I Marmi*, in which a poultry seller argues that education is of no value.⁴⁸ However, as I have argued in chapter 4, the *poligrafi*’s inclusion of common people in their writings was not because they felt any particular affinity for them, but as a means of attacking their rivals; they were happy to criticise the masses at other times. Moreover, from the 1560s, Tintoretto was increasingly receiving commissions from the very highest levels of Venetian society, including the *Scuola di San Rocco*, from 1564, as well as commissions from the Doge’s Palace itself from the 1570s onwards. In 1574, it was agreed that he would be awarded the *sansaria*, an annual payment of about 117 ducats, paid by the Venetian

⁴⁵ See Andrea Calmo, *Lettere* (Turin: Ermanno Loescher, 1888), pp. 132-3. Cf. Anna Laura Lepschy (ed.), *Tintoretto Observed: A Documentary Survey of Critical Reactions from the 16th to the 20th Century* (Ravenna: Longo, 1983), pp. 17-8.

⁴⁶ Tom Nichols, *Tintoretto: Tradition and Identity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2015), p. 97.

⁴⁷ Nichols, ‘Tintoretto, Prestezza and the Poligrafi’, pp. 81-2. Anton Francesco Doni, *I mondi del Doni. Libro primo* (Venice: per Francesco Marcolini, 1552). Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide a page number for this reference. Cf. Tom Nichols, ‘Tintoretto and Venetian Literary Culture’, in Nichols, *Tintoretto*, pp. 87-126.

⁴⁸ Nichols, ‘Tintoretto, Prestezza and the Poligrafi’, pp. 84-5. Anton Francesco Doni, *I marmi del Doni, academico peregrino* (Venice: per Francesco Marcolini, 1552). Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide page numbers for this reference.

government's Salt Office to the state's most favoured painter, once Titian died, though curiously it never appears to have been paid after the elder painter's death two years later in 1576.⁴⁹ Although it does appear that Tintoretto suffered rejection by the Venetian cultural and social establishment earlier on in his career, this does not seem to have been because he was sympathetic to the masses and hostile to the elites – nor does the criticism of Aretino, Dolce, and Sansovino of his speed seem to have hindered his ability to gain commissions from Venetian elites in the long run.

In this section, we have seen how the priorities and agenda of individual *poligrafi* themselves articulated through the particular version of Venetian art that they advocated. Less successful *poligrafi*, such as Andrea Calmo and Anton Francesco Doni, promoted Tintoretto, perhaps in part because they saw a similarity between his speed and their approach to writing, though unlike them Tintoretto was wholly accepted into the Venetian cultural establishment in the last part of his career. Aretino, conversely, denied any similarity between himself and Tintoretto's speed. Instead, he emphasised his friend Titian's natural genius and ability to draw from nature, qualities which he also, not coincidentally, saw in himself. The publication of the first edition of Vasari's *Lives* prompted Dolce and Francesco Sansovino to write much more overtly pro-Venetian texts than was the case for either Paolo Pino or Pietro Aretino. Dolce and Francesco Sansovino promoted a narrow view of centred around the artists who received overwhelming support from the Venetian patriciate: Titian and Jacopo Sansovino. Conversely, they criticised Tintoretto for his *prestezza*, and Vasari for not having understood Venetian art. The association between the *poligrafi*'s writings and their socio-political interests became, nevertheless, more direct in their popular histories and guidebooks to Venice.

⁴⁹ Tom Nichols, *Tintoretto: Tradition and Identity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2015), p. 130. On the non-payment of Tintoretto's *sansaria*, see Pier Luigi Rambaldi, 'Un oppunto intorno al Tintoretto e ad Andrea Vicentino', *Rivista d'arte* 7 (1910), p. 15.

The *Poligrafi* and Venetian Popular History

In his early career, Francesco Sansovino had been critical of what he saw as the excessive decoration of Venetian churches and the *scuole grandi*. Bronwen Wilson has argued that Sansovino's 'early guidebooks betray the misinterpretations that accompanied his own subjective reflections', attributing this to the fact that he 'was himself a foreigner who came to Venice from Rome'.⁵⁰ However, these should not be seen as misinterpretations but critiques. Elena Bonora has even suggested that there is evidence Sansovino was influenced by the satirist Alessandro Caravia, who himself wrote scathingly of the frivolous spending of Venice's confraternities.⁵¹ By the 1560s, however, following a brief period away from Venice at the papal court of Julius III, Sansovino had fully embraced the role of a propagandist for the city of Venice. The increasing regulation and censorship of the Venetian printing industry on the part of lay and religious authorities led to a much greater focus on the part of Venetian publishers on publishing religious texts, popular histories, and guidebooks.⁵² Sansovino and other *poligrafi* embraced this trend, though they seem to have largely eschewed writing on religious subjects after 1550, for reasons that are unclear. In Sansovino's *Delle cose notabili che sono in Venetia*, written in the form of a dialogue between a Venetian guide and a visitor to the city, the guide remarks that 'without any doubt, [Venice] can be called the theatre of the world, and the eye of Italy.'⁵³ In Sansovino's most

⁵⁰ Wilson, *The World in Venice*, p. 5. Sansovino was born in Rome in 1521 while his father, Jacopo, was working there, and then came to Venice with him in 1527, when Francesco was six years old.

⁵¹ Bonora, *Ricerche su Francesco Sansovino*, pp. 94-5.

⁵² Anne Jacobsen Schutte has estimated that religious texts made up only about 15 per cent of publications in Venice in the mid-sixteenth century, but climbed to about 25 per cent in the 1560s and 1570s, and 33 per cent in the 1580s and 1590s. See Schutte, 'Printing, Piety and the People in Italy', pp. 5-19. See also Barbieri, 'Tradition and Change in the Spiritual Literature of the Cinquecento', pp. 113-5. Press censorship and regulation in Venice is discussed at length in chapter 2, pp. 95-7.

⁵³ Sansovino, *Delle cose notabili che sono in Venetia*. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 crisis, I am unable to provide page numbers for this reference. On the popular trope of city as theatre as applied to Venice, see Wilson, 'Venice, Print, and the Early Modern Icon', pp. 39-64.

commercially successful publication, *Venetia: città nobilissima et singolare*, he argues, similarly, that it is the presence of foreign communities that make Venice a ‘singular city’, ‘because being useful for those nearby nations, as from afar, all people from the most distant parts of the earth come together here (where they see people of different and discordant faces, costumes, and languages, but all agree, however, to praise the city while admiring it) to deal and to trade.’⁵⁴

This section explores how the *poligrafi* represented Venetian government, society, and history in their works across a diverse range of genres, including popular histories, biographies of important Venetians, a guide to the Venetian constitution, and guidebooks to the city, as well as editions of historical texts by the likes of Francesco Guicciardini. In these texts, we can see how the *poligrafi* of the second, third and fourth generations shaped the ways in which Venice was perceived. They placed particular emphasis in these texts on Venice’s identity as the Most Serene Republic – a view which reflected an idealised vision of its homogenous, unchanging, and harmonious society and politics, often by popularising the work of Venetian humanists and political thinkers such as Gasparo Contarini. However, writing and editing popular histories and guidebooks was also a means by which the *poligrafi* could win the favour of the Venetian elite and thus achieve commercial success.

The collective term “popular histories and guidebooks” signifies a broad range of texts that are largely, and openly, consist of vernacular translations and compilations of scholarly texts, rather than “original” texts. They often transcended conventional notions of genre. For example, Sansovino’s *Venetia* begins with a travel guide to the city of Venice, organised by *sestiere* from east to west.⁵⁵ It then goes on to discuss Venetian dress, habits, weddings,

⁵⁴ Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia: città nobilissima et singolare* (Venice: Francesco Sansovino, 1581), 3v; see also Wilson, *The World in Venice*, pp. 4-5; n. 6.

⁵⁵ For a discussion of the travel guide section of the *Venetia*, see de Vivo, ‘Walking in Sixteenth-Century Venice’, pp. 115-41.

funerals, festivities, and the visits of popes, emperors and kings to the city. The second part of Sansovino's *Venetia* is a history of the Venetian republic, concentrating on doges and famous personages – especially writers – associated with Venice, and Venice's wars. Specific chapters follow on the 'grandness and dignity of the princes of Venice', and on the triumph of the doges, an annual celebration of Venice's dominion of the Adriatic. It is thus a travel guide, guidebook, and popular history all rolled into one. However, one common feature of this type of text is that they popularised key aspects of the myth of Venice. For example, the *Venetia* gives pride of place to the events of 1177, when – in the conventional Venetian telling – Pope Alexander III gave dominion of the Adriatic to the doge of Venice in perpetuity.⁵⁶ Sansovino's account of the events of 1177 remained influential within Venice for a long time: De Vivo reports that Giovanni Nicolò Doglioni plagiarised Sansovino's description of the story of Alexander III and the story of the pope granting Venice dominion in perpetuity over the Adriatic, in his *Delle cose notabili della Città di Venetia*.⁵⁷

Many of the *poligrafi*'s "original" texts were in fact plagiarisations, or largely plagiarisations, of other texts, as Giorgio Masi among others have demonstrated.⁵⁸ However, the popular histories and guidebooks discussed in this section were openly syntheses or compilations of other works. For instance, the beginning of the *Venetia* also includes a list of the authors Sansovino relies on, essentially a who's who of the most famous medieval chroniclers, and contemporary writers and historians from Florence and Venice. Classical sources are, however, scant, at least by name – Sansovino does cite 'authentic antique writings' – with the notable exception of Livy, who also has the distinction of being the first author to be mentioned in the main text. He also cites his own *Orationi a Principi Veneti*, as

⁵⁶ For a brief summary of this story, see De Vivo, 'Historical Justifications of Venetian Power in the Adriatic', pp. 160-1.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 172; Giovanni Nicolò Doglioni, *Delle cose notabili della Città di Venetia, Libri II* (Venice: Appresso Nicolo Misserini, 1606).

⁵⁸ Masi, 'Postilla sull'affaire Doni-Nesi', pp. 41–54.

well as ‘Venetian Statute’ as sources. Giovanni Battista Ramusio is cited by name, and his most famous work, the *Volumi delle Navigationi et Viaggi*, is also cited specifically. Another example is Sansovino’s *Del governo de i regni et delle repubbliche*, first published 1561. This was a compilation of short descriptions of the constitutions of contemporary Venice, France, Germany, England, Spain, Rome, Lucca, Genoa, ‘Switzerland’, the Ottoman Empire, Tunisia, Persia and Fez, and papal Rome; Sparta, Athens, and republican Rome. It concludes with a description of the government of More’s Utopia.⁵⁹ Several of its chapters, such as those on the constitutions of Genoa, Lucca, and Ragusa, were written by Sansovino himself: others were acknowledged to be taken from other sources, often translated by Sansovino into the vernacular. These include the chapters on Persia (adapted from Paolo Giovio), Venice (the first vernacular translation of Gasparo Contarini’s *De magistratibus et republica venetorum*), and Spain (by Alfonso de Ulloa). A chapter on the Kingdom of Fez that was included in later, expanded editions was taken from Leo Africanus’s *Description of Africa*, which had been previously published by Giovanni Battista Ramusio in his series *Delle navigationi e viaggi*, in 1550.⁶⁰ Finally, the chapter on the government of Utopia is taken from the second book of the vernacular translation of More’s text by the *poligrafi* Ortensio Lando and Anton Francesco Doni: only the former is acknowledged by Sansovino by name, though this is simply to criticise the quality of Lando’s translation. Sansovino acknowledges in his preface that, unlike the polities included in the volume, Utopia ‘is fiction’, but contends that it is ‘beautiful in effect’ (*è finta, ma bella in effetto*), and could show readers how to live ‘well and happily’. Notably, Sansovino also meaningfully

⁵⁹ Francesco Sansovino, *Del governo de i regni et delle repubbliche così antiche come moderne* (Venice: appresso Francesco Sansovino, 1561).

⁶⁰ On Leo Africanus / al-Hasan al-Wazzan, see Natalie Zemon Davis, *Trickster Travels: The Search for Leo Africanus* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007); On the reception of the *Description of Africa* and Sansovino’s use of it, see Oumelbanine Zhiri, *L’Afrique dans le miroir de l’Europe: fortunes de Jean Léon l’Africain à la Renaissance* (Geneva: Droz, 1989), p. 124.

commented that More was ‘full of true justice and divine religion.’⁶¹ Therefore, he says, he decided to include it as the final chapter.

In the preface to *Del governo de i regni et delle repubbliche*, Sansovino stated that his intention was ‘that of Aristotle, and many other writers’, in that he wished to ‘form a new politics’ (*politica nuova*) by studying the ways in which principalities and republics are ‘different from one another’.⁶² The overall conclusion he wished readers to draw, however, was that Venice’s constitution approached perfection. He explicitly drew a comparison between Utopia as described by More and the Venetian ‘perfect state’, as described by Gasparo Contarini, despite the lack of some of the characteristic features of More’s Utopia such as the elimination of property. Rather, what Sansovino saw as similar is the harmonious *vita civile* that both Utopia and Venice successfully fostered in their respective inhabitants.

This emphasis on need to defer to sources is not found in texts produced by the *poligrafi* before around 1550. Why this is the case is not clear. However, it may be that in the newly censorious climate of the Venetian publishing industry in this period, it was thought prudent to be transparent about one’s sources in order to avoid suspicion. The tendency by no means exclusive to texts mainly or in large part devoted to Venetian subjects: in the preface to Lodovico Dolce’s *Life of Emperor Charles V*, first published in 1561, he stressed the unreliability of his sources, complaining that Charles ‘was not spoken or written

⁶¹ Francesco Sansovino, quoted in Cave (ed.), *Thomas More’s Utopia in Early Modern Europe*, p. 177-9.

⁶² Sansovino, *Del governo de i regni et delle repubbliche*, unpaginated section.

of by very sincere men'.⁶³ Elsewhere in the same preface, Dolce demonstrated his anxiety about how the work would be received, arguing that if he had erred, 'either by negligence, or because I have reported something by someone else who has erred', he deserved forgiveness, especially since he neither intended 'to hurt anyone, or [...] to deny credit to anyone who deserves it, but [...] to tell the truth'. This fear was not without foundation: Dolce and his publisher, Giolito, would get into trouble with the Venetian Inquisition in 1565 for procuring the banned books of Johannes Sleidanus, listed on the index since 1554, to use as sources for Dolce's life of Ferdinand I of Aragon, though they ultimately escaped punishment.⁶⁴ However, it is sometimes clear that *poligrafi* could get away with citing banned materials by taking fairly basic precautions. For instance, Tommaso Porcacchi's quarto edition of Francesco Guicciardini's *Storia d'Italia*, published in 1574, lists under 'S' in his list of 'authors cited', a certain 'Florentine secretary, of the Discourses and elsewhere' (*Secretario fiorentino ne' discorsi & altrove*) – transparently, none other than Niccolò Machiavelli.⁶⁵ In fact, Porcacchi's commentary incorporates material from Machiavelli's three most important works of history and political philosophy: *The Prince*, the *Discourses on Livy*, and the *Florentine Histories*. Machiavelli's complete works had been banned by the Roman Index of Prohibited Books since 1557. Consequently, Porcacchi claims not to have

⁶³ 'La onde io nella discriptione della vita di Carlo Quinto, Imperadore di gloriosissima memoria, temeri d'incorrer nel medesimo pericolo, et odio, ch'io non ho scritto di lui cosa, che prima non sia stata detta o scritta da huomini intendentissimi e sincerissimi [...] Ma, se pure in qualche cosa; o per negligenza, o per essermi rapportato a chi cosi ha scritto, havesi errato, in questo io merito perdono: tanto piu che io non ho cio fatto per pungere alcuno, o per non dar le debite laudi a chi merita, ma con intentione e stima di dire il vero.' Lodovico Dolce, *Vita dell'invittiss. e gloriosiss. imperador Carlo quinto, descritta da m. Lodovico Dolce. Con la tavola nel fine* (Venice: Apresso Gabriel Giolito, 1561), unpaginated section. Republished with Pedro Mexia's biographies of Ferdinand and Maximillian as *Le vite di tutti gl'imperadori. Aggiuntevi in questa terza impressione le vite di Carlo quinto, & di Ferdinando secondo & di Massimiliano imperadori de tempi nostri* (Venice, appresso Giacomo Sansovino, 1569), compiled and translated by Francesco Sansovino; this compilation was then published in a new edition in 1574 by Francesco Sansovino in partnership with Michele Bonelli.

⁶⁴ Lodovico Dolce, *Vita di Ferdinando, primo imperadore di questo nome, descritta da M. Lodovico Dolce* (Venice: Apresso Gabriel Giolito, 1566).

⁶⁵ Francesco Guicciardini, *La historia d'Italia di m. Francesco Guicciardini gentil'huomo fiorentino nuovamente riscontrata con tutti gli altri historici & auttori & ornata in margine con l'annotazioni de' riscontri fatti da Thomaso Porcacchi* (Venice: appresso Giorgio Angelieri, 1574), unpaginated section.

read these works for over twenty years, and frequently qualifies his citations with the phrases ‘if memory doesn’t deceive me’ (*se non m’inganna la memoria*).⁶⁶ However he quotes him with such frequency and accuracy that it is probable he had these volumes close to hand while writing his commentary. Porcacchi is, however, careful never to endorse an opinion of Machiavelli directly, or his political philosophy in general – he is simply cited as an authoritative source on military and political matters, as with the many other historians and writers that Porcacchi mentions in his commentary. Since Porcacchi does not appear to have got into any trouble for publishing this edition, it appears that this subterfuge was sufficient to either deceive or at least mollify the censors.

It is clear that these texts were intended as syntheses, compilations, or editions purged of problematic material, of authoritative texts by other authors. This is a marked shift from the texts studied in previous chapters, which were original works by the *poligrafi* themselves, even if they partially plagiarised others. The intent behind this shift is never clearly stated, but it may well have been partially an attempt to protect these authors, and their publishers, from censorship. However, Dolce and Porcacchi both used, or attempted to use, sources which were on the Index of Prohibited Books, and only the former was caught, despite Porcacchi’s deception being a simplistic one. The measures put in place by state and ecclesiastical authorities were, evidently, only partially effective: it was perhaps easier to catch people trying to buy banned texts, than to spot disguised references to banned texts in books awaiting the censors’ approval for publication. Another reason may well have been to attract readers interested in history and politics, and with the money to afford books, but without the Latin or the funds to acquire a vast humanistic library – or, indeed, the time to read a large number of humanist texts.

The question of the intended audience for the *poligrafi*’s popular histories and

⁶⁶ For example, *ibid.*, p. 107; p. 148.

guidebooks is crucial. Elena Bonora has argued that Francesco Sansovino and other *poligrafi* wrote with ‘one eye on the men of government, and one on the market’.⁶⁷ However, as with their satirical printed texts of the 1530s and 1540s, it is clear that the *poligrafi* did not write for a mass audience. Rather, they wrote with one eye on ambitious readers interested in history and politics, and with the money to afford books, but no Latin; and the other elite, Latinate patricians, who might be willing to offer them patronage.

Much of the *poligrafi*’s output from the late 1550s onwards can be seen as a series of guides to navigating Venetian politics and society for ambitious readers who could not read Latin. One key work in this regard was Sansovino’s aforementioned *Del governo de i regni et delle repubbliche*. This work was successful, and was frequently republished: later editions added discussions of more governments, such as those of Nuremberg and Portugal in the 1578 edition, and Naples in the 1583 edition.⁶⁸ *Poligrafi* also wrote guides aimed at teaching how to succeed in professions that were being transformed by the expansion of humanist culture. Again, Sansovino is the standout example, publishing his works on how to be a lawyer (a profession in which he had trained) and how to be a secretary.⁶⁹ At the same time, Baldassare Castiglione’s *Cortigiano* was transformed by the *poligrafi* from a complex and ambiguous work possibly written to undermine the idea that becoming perfect courtier was an achievable goal, to a straightforward manual on how to do so, thanks to the *poligrafi*’s editing.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Bonora, *Ricerche su Francesco Sansovino*, p. 163.

⁶⁸ Sansovino, *Del governo de i regni et delle repubbliche cosi antiche come moderne* (Venice: per ordine di Iacomo Sansouino, 1578); Sansovino, *Del governo de i regni et delle repubbliche cosi antiche come moderne* (Venice: presso Altobello Salicato, 1583).

⁶⁹ Bonora, *Ricerche su Francesco Sansovino*, especially chapter 1, ‘Dagli anni della formazione culturale al mestiere di letterato’, pp. 11-62. Another example is Girolamo Ruscelli’s published letters to princes. See Lodovica Braidà, ‘Ruscelli e le “Lettere di principi”’: da libro di lettere a libro di storia’, in Paolo Marini and Paolo Procaccioli (eds.), *Girolamo Ruscelli. Dall’accademia alla corte alla tipografia* (Rome: Vecchiarelli, 2012), vol. 2, pp. 605-34.

⁷⁰ On the *poligrafi* and the *Cortigiano*, see chapter 4, pp. 157-9.

Much of the pro-Venetian writing that the *poligrafi* produced in the second half of the sixteenth century, as with the period from 1530 to 1550, was targeted at Venetian patrons. One early example is Girolamo Parabosco's *Diporti*, first published in 1550. Modelled on the *Decameron*, with a frame narrative (various members of the Venier salon going on a fishing exhibition on the lagoon) and several self-contained stories told by individual characters, the *Diporti* immortalised many of the leading patricians and literary and artistic figures of the day. The work was a great success, despite the short-lived existence of the Venier salon, and was printed in nine more editions, the last of which were published in 1607.⁷¹ Francesco Sansovino's biographies of doges in the *Venetia*, and of noble families in other publications, also seem to have been written to please elite patrons. His history of the Orsini family is notable for being, according to Grendler, the only commissioned work of history that he ever published, though it is unclear why this was the unique example.⁷² This was dedicated to Paolo Giordano I Orsini, who five years earlier, in 1560, had become the first duke of Bracciano: the commission was transparently an attempt by Paolo Giordano to burnish his branch of the family's reputation and noble lineage in the light of his recent elevation. Other books in this vein include Girolamo Ruscelli's *Indice degl'uomini illustri* in 1572, and Ruscelli comprehensive collection of *Lettere di principi, lequali o si scrivono da principi, o a principi, o ragionan di principi* in 1573. Sansovino's *Venetia* also appears to have been written with at least the tacit support of Venetian patricians: in a letter he sent to the *podestà* of Treviso, Alvise Michiel, in 1573, he claimed to have been encouraged by several friends who were members of the Council of Ten, and that the Senate more generally

⁷¹ Girolamo Parabosco, *I diporti ritocchi, migliorati, & aggiunti secondo l'originale dell'auttore. Et dedicati all'onorato signore Gieronimo Lanza* (Venice: appresso Antonio Rizzardi, 1607); Parabosco, *Quattro libri delle lettere amorose. Di nuovo ordinamente accomodate, ampliate, & ricorrette per Thomaso Porcacchi* (Venice: appresso Girolamo Polo, 1607).

⁷² Francesco Sansovino, *L'historia di Casa Orsina Di Francesco Sansovino. Nella quale oltre all'origine sua, si contengollo molte nobili imprese fatte da loro in diverse Provincie fino a tempi nostri...* (Venice: Appresso Bernardino, & Filippo Stagnini, fratelli, 1565). Cf. Grendler, 'Francesco Sansovino and Italian Popular History 1560-1600', p. 142.

‘knows that I hold affection for this State’.⁷³

Their most successful texts appealed to both audiences. One example of this is a collection of vernacular addresses to the Venetian senate by Francesco Sansovino.⁷⁴ This is a collection of twenty-nine speeches, nineteen in the vernacular and ten in Latin, by foreign ambassadors of different cities and regions (all within the Venetian Empire) to the doge (in the majority of cases) or to the senate (in one case), interspersed with short biographies of the doges in question, almost all of whom were within living memory. These are Andrea Gritti, Francesco Donato, Marcantonio Trivisan, Francesco Venier, Lorenzo Priuli and Girolamo Priuli (who was, in fact, doge at the time the book was published). There are also speeches to two fifteenth-century doges, Nicolò Tron and Nicolò Marcello, and one to Leonardo Loredan, doge from 1501 to 1521. The work is dedicated to Giacomo Contarini, a member of a wealthy and influential patrician family who later became a highly influential figure in Venetian politics, but who was at that time only in his mid-twenties. However, as Sansovino noted in the dedicatory letter, the young patrician had already demonstrated his skill in public speaking, which had seen him elected to the position of *savio delle mercanzia*, one of the senior magistrates responsible for the regulation of manufacturing and trade. Sansovino’s choice of dedicatee may well be the result of him following a similar strategy to that of Aretino in the 1530s and 1540s – i.e. of ingratiating himself with young patrician men – although it is unclear whether Contarini ever acknowledged the dedication.

In the preface to the collection, Sansovino argues that young readers of the volume could

⁷³ ‘Son in animo et in procinto di tentar l’impresa de scriver l’historia volgare et chieder il carico al consiglio di Dieci agiutato in questo dall’affettione che il Senato sa ch’io porto a’ questo Stato, da diversi amici del consiglio di Dieci che a ciò m’invitano, dal nome anco ch’io ho et da qualch’altra qualità che a me non è lecito cusi di dire, oltra che io non domando al dominio cosa nissuna se non pura licenza di dover farla per haver comodità di vedere i veri particolari.’ Francesco Sansovino, Letter to Alvise Michiel, 22 June 1573, BMV, *Codici Latini classe XIV*, cod. 243. Published in Emmanuele Antonio Cicogna (ed.), *Delle iscrizioni veneziane. Raccolte ed illustrate*, vol. 4 (Venice: Presso Giuseppe Picotti, 1834), pp. 89-90. Quoted in Bonora, *Ricerche su Francesco Sansovino*, p. 164.

⁷⁴ Francesco Sansovino (ed.), *Delle orationi recitate a principi di Veneti nella loro creatione da gli ambasciatori di diverse città* (Venice: Apud Franciscum Sansovinum, 1562).

learn something from it of the art of rhetoric, the foundation of the order and harmony of the Venetian republic. The bulk of the preface, however, is concerned with explaining why Sansovino had not translated the Latin orations that were included into the vernacular: this, he claimed, was so they did not lose any of the force of their rhetoric in translation. In reality, however, it seems they were originally intended to have been published as a separate volume. Sansovino also regretfully explained that he was unable to include a vernacular speech earlier than that of Gian Giorgio Trissino, speaking during the reign of Andrea Gritti, ‘because before him they used Latin, and I believe he was the first that would speak in the vernacular, because the language was at that time, thanks to the work of [Pietro] Bembo, emerging from darkness.’⁷⁵ It is clear that by this point, Bembo’s views on language had achieved the status of orthodoxy, such that a speech by a humanist with different linguistic views could not be included, precisely because they deviated from Bembo’s rules. Interestingly, Sansovino does not specifically note or comment upon the fact that each speech is by a representative (or ambassador, *ambasciadore*) on behalf of a different part of the *stato da tera*, Venetian territories on the Italian mainland. But the idea expressed by Cornelio Frangipane, in his speech on behalf of Udine, that Venice had never been anyone’s subjects since they ‘were by nature rulers over others’ surely has particular force coming from a native of Friuli, rather than Venice.⁷⁶

As with the satirical publications of an earlier generation of *poligrafi*, the popular

⁷⁵ ‘percioche innanzi a lui si usavano Latine, & io crederò ch’egli fosse il primo che le recitasse in Volgare, percioche la lingua era all’hora per opera del Bembo uscita dalle tenebre.’ Sansovino (ed.), *Delle orationi recitate a principi di Veneti nella loro creatione da gli ambasciatori di diverse città*, unpaginated section. This is curious insofar as Trissino actually disagreed with Bembo’s advocacy of a literary language based on the fourteenth-century Tuscan vernacular of Petrarch and Boccaccio with some classical elements, favouring, like Castiglione, a synthesis of contemporary ‘courtly’ languages. See Claudio Giovanardi, *La teoria cortigiana e il dibattito linguistico nel primo Cinquecento* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1998).

⁷⁶ ‘persoche soli per natura signoreggiano’. Cornelio Frangipane, in Sansovino (ed.), *Delle orationi recitate a principi di Veneti nella loro creatione da gli ambasciatori di diverse città*, f. 5v. This speech is quoted in Muir, *Civil Ritual in Renaissance Venice*, p. 17, though he does not note that Frangipane is speaking on behalf of Udine.

histories and guidebooks under consideration do not appear to have reached a mass audience. There is some evidence, from the corpus of 1,227 sixteenth-century household inventories compiled by Sarah Gwyneth Ross from the records of the Venetian *Cancellaria Inferiore*, the *Giudici di Petizion*, and the *Archivio delle Istituzioni di Ricovero e di Educazione*, that the *poligrafi*'s publications were not being read by artisan households (which comprise 28 per cent of Ross's corpus), despite the fact that they evidently read a great deal more than histories of reading have tended to believe.⁷⁷ Ross's analysis suggests that retail merchants and artisans in Venice owned 11–12 books on average – specific examples include a goldsmith's wife who owned works by Lucan, Josephus, Ariosto, and Marcus Antonius Sabellicus, and a pharmacist's widow who owned copies of Augustine's *Confessions*, Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*, and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.⁷⁸

Inventories made after death often only refer to books sufficiently valuable to be thought worth mentioning, such as when such items were intended to be sold at public auction, and give no indication of books that were more commonly borrowed rather than owned, or that people may have heard someone else read. But the evidence, flawed though it may be, suggests that artisans appear to have been less interested in books on modern history and art, than they were in classical texts and chivalric literature.⁷⁹ Members of professions, such as medicine and the law, owned many more books than artisans, and even more than patricians.⁸⁰ It was these professionals – like the *poligrafi*, anxious to improve their social

⁷⁷ Ross, *Everyday Renaissances*, pp. 29–32. Ross's analysis builds on the pioneering work of Marino Zorzi on inventories in the *Cancellaria Inferiore* and *Guidici di Petizion*. See Marino Zorzi, 'La circolazione del libro a Venezia nel Cinquecento. Biblioteche private e pubbliche', *Ateneo Veneto*, 177 (1990), pp. 117–89.

⁷⁸ Ross, *Everyday Renaissances*, pp 38–9.

⁷⁹ On the difficulties of using household inventories as sources for book history, see Roger Chartier, 'Reading matter and 'popular' reading: from the Renaissance to the seventeenth century', in Guglielmo Cavallo, Roger Chartier, and Lydia G. Cochrane (eds.), *A History of Reading in the West*, (Oxford: Polity Press, 1999), p. 270.

⁸⁰ Ross finds that physicians had the largest collections on average with a median of 140 books, while the average size of lawyers' libraries was 120 books. Patricians, on the other hand, owned a median of only 32 books. Ross, *Everyday Renaissances*, p. 36.

status by immersing themselves in literary culture – who continued to be the target audience for the *poligrafi*'s output in this period.

Another continuity from the period before 1550 and after it is that the *poligrafi* continued to emphasise their reliability when it came to telling the truth. However, this was recast from being the fearless teller of inconvenient facts in satirical texts, to the figure of a neutral, impartial observer. Often, foreign-born *poligrafi* tried to turn their foreign-born statuses to their advantage: by stressing they were not blinded by an innate, patriotic love for Venice, freeing them to tell the truth about Venice's greatness. In Sansovino's successful request for a printing privilege for his *Venetia*, submitted to the Council of Ten, he admitted that it could be that 'it is not right' for him to ask for the opportunity to write a history of Venice, because he was 'not a secretary', and so 'not allowed to see state secrets', an allusion to the fact that state bureaucrats for Venice were required to be native Venetians. However, he suggested he could get around this by instead asking for 'a summary of them'. He further countered, to his hypothetical objector, that 'if the noble Venetian writes its history in Latin, the noble foreigner (*nobile forestiero*) will write the vernacular one, which might be believed more than the Latin.'⁸¹ This is an allusion to the position of official state historiographer to the Republic, a position coveted by Marin Sanudo and once held by Pietro Bembo, which primarily involved writing an official history of the Venetian Republic in Latin. The dedicatory letter of the published *Venetia* acknowledges Sansovino's twin loyalties to Tuscany, by way of his father, and to Venice, 'the most famous, and celebrated city that there is under heaven'. His choice of dedicatee was, appropriately, Bianca Cappello de' Medici, the daughter of Bartolomeo Cappello and Pellegrina Morosini and therefore a member of

⁸¹ 'perché me si potrebbe opporre, che non m'è lecito di chiederla non essendo io segretario, perchè non sta bene, ch'io che sono ab extra veda i secreti, ho pensato di chieder un sommario di quelle cose, ch'a loro parerà, nè per questo dò noia ad alcuno, perchè s'il nobile vinetiano scrive l'historia latina, il nobile forestiero scriverà la volgare, la qual forse sarà più creduta che la latina.' Sansovino, Letter to Michiel, BMV, *Codici Latini* classe XIV, c. 243.

two of the most prominent patrician families of Venice, who had become the second wife of Grand Duke Francesco I of Tuscany just two years beforehand. Sansovino's argument seems to have been highly successful: his petition to the Council of Ten was successful, as previously mentioned, and the *Venetia* went on to be reprinted and expanded in 1604 and 1663.⁸²

A similar example can be found in the preface to Dolce's life of Charles V. Here, the *poligrafo* complained about the difficulty of not offending anyone, noting that '[I]t is not a secret, kind Readers, how difficult and perilous it is to write about the events of one's own time'.⁸³ Dolce argued that writers can be misinformed, and even if they are not, they often end up offending not only their sources of information, but their readers as well, citing the dangerous temptations of 'affection', which 'naturally leads to the writer favouring his own people' and 'hatred', which 'one often has for foreigners', as well as 'the fact that most historians, in order to show their ingenuity and eloquence, amplify virtuous and sad things alike'.⁸⁴ However, he suggested that he had probably managed to avoid these pitfalls. This was due to the fact that he was Italian, and therefore able to write about the emperor without suspicion of bias, since '[t]he Italians, in their glory, have neither cause to envy, nor to hate any nation, since they have already been Tamers and Triumphant over the world: and without their help, it seems even today that no enterprise, no feat of arms, can be successfully

⁸² Francesco Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare; descritta già in 14. libri da M. Francesco Sansouino: et hora con molta diligenza corretta, emendata, e più d'un terzo di cose nuove ampliata dal M.R.D. Giovanni Stringa* (Venice: presso Altobello Salicato, 1604); Sansovino, *Venetia, città nobilissima, et singolare; con aggiunta di tutte le Cose Notabili della stessa Città, fatte, e occorse dall'anno 1580 fino al presente 1663* (Venice: Appresso Steffano Curti, 1663).

⁸³ 'Non m'e nascosto, benignissimi Lettori, quanto sia difficile e perigliosa impresa il por sia scrivere i fatti de' suoi tempi. Percioche aviene, che lo scrittore, puo sovente essere male informato delle icose, delle quali prende a trattare. E, se pure ne ha buona informatione, volendo, come è suo ufficio, scrivere il vero, offende le piu volte non solo quelli, che le hanno operate, e da i quali si prende la materia delle historie, ma etiandio milti di coloro, che leggono.' Dolce, *Vita di Carlo Quinto*, unpaginated section.

⁸⁴ 'Due cose oltre a cio possono far traviar lo scrittore dalla verità: l'una è affettione, che si porta naturalmente a suoi; l'altra l'odio, che si suole havere a gli stranieri: senza, che il piu de gl'historici, per dimostrar lume d'ingegno, e grandezza di eloquenza, vanno amplificando l'opere cosi virtuose, come triste.' Ibid.

accomplished.’⁸⁵ In this text, we see a *poligrafo* emphasising his trustworthiness based on his Italian-ness rather than his non-Venetian status, but the rhetorical move was similar to that of Francesco Sansovino.

In these popular histories and guidebooks, we can see the *poligrafi* responding to the shifting commercial, religious, and geopolitical climate of Venice, balancing the need to serve the market and the socio-political elite of Venice, and thereby to further their own interests. The shift of the *poligrafi* who remained in Venice far into the sixteenth century towards the authorship of popular histories and guidebooks based on authoritative sources, and away from more controversial libellous and satirical original works, was a means of protecting themselves from trouble with the authorities. Only Sansovino and Porcacchi, however, seem to have been entirely successful in this regard. At the same time, as with their writing on art, these works served to further elaborate the myth of Venice during periods of cultural crisis, in which Venetian identity was threatened. That said, though, more work is needed on the reception of these texts before we can discuss their effectiveness in any detail. However, the fact that many were frequently reprinted is itself an indication of a degree of success for the authors, and some measure of these works’ influence.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown the ways in which the *poligrafi* articulated various versions of the ‘myth of Venice’ in the second half of the sixteenth century, up to about 1581. In this period, there was a generational shift amongst the *poligrafi* who were active in Venice, in the face of increased state and ecclesiastical censorship, and increasing caution on the part of

⁸⁵ ‘Oltre, che essendo io nato e cresciuto in Italia, vengo a esser libero dal sospetto della affettione. Ne gli’Italiani nella gloria hanno cagione d’invidiar, ne meno d’odiar veruna natione, essendo stati gia Domatori e trionfatori del mondo: e senza l’aita loro pare ancora hoggidi, che non si possa fare impresa, ne fatto d’arme, che a buon fine si conduca.’ Ibid. The idea that Italians were uniquely equipped to write the histories of other nations, it must be said, was not unique to Dolce. See Eric Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 315–42.

Venetian printers. Those who remained, and the new *poligrafi* of the fourth generation, ceased writing libellous and satirical texts. Instead, they shifted their emphasis decisively towards material that avoided controversial topics, and which – although not directly commissioned by the Venetian state or individual patricians – more clearly reflected the way Venetian elites sought to portray their state. This is clear both in texts with a relatively small, elite audience, such as Lodovico Dolce's treatise on art, and in texts with a wider, mixed audience, such as Francesco Sansovino's guidebooks to Venice and Tommaso Porcacchi's series of popular histories. However, this was no simple, uncritical reflection of the agenda of the Venetian state, as has sometimes been assumed by historians. Rather the priorities and agenda of individual *poligrafi* themselves articulated through the particular slant on the myth that they advocated. In section one, we saw that, in art theory, with the divide between *poligrafi* about who among the generation of artists after Titian ought to be considered the best, and whether since Titian the art of Venice had begun to decline. In section two, we saw the foreign-born Francesco Sansovino emphasising the advantage of employing foreigners to write histories of the Venetian state – and the native Venetian, Dolce, arguing he was qualified to write about Charles V for the same reason: they could be relied upon to tell the truth. This emphasis on their 'truth-telling' persona is an echo of the satirical identity employed by a previous generation.

This shift in emphasis from exhibiting the 'bare and open truth' and exposing vices, to writing treatises, histories and guidebooks loyally extolling the virtues of the Venetian Republic had mixed results, as regards the *poligrafi*'s social status and ability to work. Certainly Lodovico Dolce's status as a Venetian native, long and uncontroversial service working in Gabriele Giolito's workshop, and writing the definitive theoretical defence of Venetian art in 1557, did not prevent him from being put on trial by the Venetian Inquisition twice in the last few years of his life, before his death in 1568. On the other hand, the varied

audience for other *poligrafi*'s popular histories and guidebooks, composed not only of erudite readers but also a relatively wide range of officials, lawyers, doctors, pharmacists, and merchants, meant that their interpretations – generally based on a compilation of secondary sources – had the potential to be extremely influential. One piece of evidence that they were indeed influential is the frequency with which works such as Sansovino's *Delle cose notabili* and the *Venetia* were reprinted, as well as his financial success.⁸⁶ However, more research is undoubtedly needed on the reception of the *poligrafi*'s texts before this conclusion can be more than tentative.

The abandonment of the distinctive persona of the fearless, direct, truth-telling satirist, to the loyalist popular historian – including the abandonment of satire in Sansovino's case – resulted in the loss of the *poligrafi*'s distinctiveness as a group. This loyalist output is a not a feature that we see in the writings of those who chose to leave Venice, such as Nicolò Franco and Anton Francesco Doni, who continued to write libellous poetry and satirical work (even about Venice, in the latter case).⁸⁷ The Venetian vernacular printing industry continued to be prolific after the deaths of Sansovino and Tommaso Porcacchi, but the label *poligrafo* is no longer a particularly useful one, since the satirical, anti-court work of a previous generation could no longer be printed there. Aretino and Franco's successors, such as Ferrante Pallavicino, were comparatively marginal figures, and never able to publish freely in Venice. Coupled with the end of the libellous court style originally developed by Aretino and Francesco Berni in Rome, after Nicolò Franco's execution in 1570, there was no way for a new generation of *poligrafi* to develop via by writing satirical texts.

⁸⁶ For a discussion of Francesco Sansovino's financial arrangements see chapter 2, p. 115.

⁸⁷ Doni, 'Lo Stufaiolo'.

Conclusion

This thesis contributes to our understanding of the social history of the *poligrafi* in sixteenth-century Italy and their impact on the cultural politics of sixteenth-century Italy. It has argued that the *poligrafi* were neither a radical intellectual movement that mocked the idols of sixteenth-century Italians, nor insincere sophists who would say or do anything for material gain. Rather, we should see the *poligrafi*'s ideological views and their material circumstances as being in a dynamic relationship, each influencing the other. Moreover, the thesis argues that the *poligrafi* are not merely creatures of the vernacular Venetian printing press, and we ought not to consider their printed books as their only scholarly productions to merit our attention. In fact, their careers as a whole, which were mostly spent away from Venice and its publishing industry, show that the printing press did not significantly reduce the importance of elite patronage for writers. Instead, those careers demonstrate the strength and adaptability of existing patronage structures, at ecclesiastical and princely courts as well as in Venice; the significant stigma that came with writing for profit, decades after the first press was founded in Italy; and the ways in which the *poligrafi* attempted to use printing, from the 1530s onwards, in order to create new patronage opportunities and to create new professional identities for themselves. At first, this was as free and independent truth-tellers, in opposition, either implicitly or explicitly, to conventional court poets; but later it was as loyal print propagandists for the Venetian Republic.

Part one of this thesis examined the social world of the *poligrafi* in the Venetian Republic and three ecclesiastical and princely courts: namely Rome, Mantua, and Florence under Cosimo I's rule. Chapter 1 focused on the social world of the *poligrafi* outside of Venice, from around 1520 to around 1570. It argued that the *poligrafi*'s work for the publishing industry in Venice, and particularly their approach to seeking and maintaining patronage connections for their printed works, cannot be understood without considering

how they spent their careers outside Venice, which was the greater proportion of their working lives for the vast majority of these figures. This chapter therefore laid the foundations for a critique of the historiography of patronage in early modern Italy in general, and of scholarship on the *poligrafi* in particular, both central to the overall argument of the thesis. First, it highlighted the differences between the receptiveness of particular courts to the *poligrafi* as well as to the printing press in general, from the perspective of the courts. As we have, in the cases of Rome, Mantua and ducal Florence, when a printing press was established in a princely or ecclesiastical court, it tended to be under the direct control of the ruler in question and therefore did not to enhance a *poligrafo*'s range of options in the same way that it did in the Venetian Republic. Second, the chapter used Nicolò Franco as a case study to examine an individual *poligrafo*'s interactions with multiple courts from his point of view. Finally, the chapter established that the *poligrafi*'s careers outside of Venice were characterised by socio-economic precariousness, mobility, and, usually, dependence on a single patron. However, we occasionally find Franco stating explicitly that it was better to keep patrons at a distance, and that the ability to please multiple patrons at once was advantageous. Finally, it is clear from the material examined in this chapter that in negotiating their social world, *poligrafi* all tended to rely on a range of horizontal social networks with friends, family, and colleagues, in order to forge new patronage connections, though there are significant differences with regard to the choices – and degree of success – of individuals.

Chapter 2 examined the social world of the *poligrafi* in the city of Venice across a similar period: from around 1520 to around 1580. It concentrated first on *poligrafi*'s relationships with Venetian printing presses, and then moved on to a discussion of their attempts to gain and maintain patronage links with both Venetian patricians and foreign state agents in Venice. What this chapter demonstrated is that while the growth of the Venetian

printing industry certainly enhanced a *poligrafo*'s range of options, they generally saw working for the Venetian presses as an alternative means of soliciting patronage rather than as a replacement for it, and in many cases remained somewhat ambivalent about the social stigma associated with publishing in print. One reason for this is very straightforward: the printing world was far from a stable source of income, even for successful writers. Andrew Pettegree and others have shown that printing was a precarious business, even in the boom times, and most *poligrafi* did not enjoy stable relationships with printers that lasted more than a handful of years.¹ Moreover, factors such as the increasingly strict enforcement of censorship restrictions in Venice from the 1550s onwards, as well as the influence of the favour of key cultural figures such as Pietro Aretino (who compelled some younger *poligrafi*, such as Nicolò Franco, to leave town following a disagreement) also served to make the city a difficult place to live for a sustained period.² Given the context, it is logical that the *poligrafi* tried to use print to strengthen and expand their patronage networks rather than assuming they could use the new technology to completely replace the established model of making a living as a writer-editor. How far they could sustain themselves in Venice therefore depended more on the success of their attempts to cultivate patronage links *via* their printed books than on their book sales in and of themselves. Consequently, this chapter argued that their constant self-promotion and habit of dedicating their works to multiple patrons is indicative of the continuation of pre-print systems of patronage and the unreliability and stigma attached to the printing industry, rather than evidence of a new, ruthlessly commercial approach to writing.

The second part of this thesis went on to examine the *poligrafi*'s impact on cultural

¹ Pettegree, *The Book in the Renaissance*, especially chapter 3, 'Renaissance Encounters: The Crisis of Print', pp. 43-62.

² On censorship in Venice, see Grendler, *The Roman Inquisition and the Venetian Press*; cf. Gaetano Cozzi, 'Books and Society', *The Journal of Modern History*, 51:1 (1979), pp. 86-98; Rozzo, *La letteratura italiana negli "Indici" del Cinquecento*.

politics, in light of their struggles to improve their social standing. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 respectively examined their libellous, satirical and propagandistic output, in princely and ecclesiastical courts in the case of libel, and in the Venetian Republic in the case of satire and propaganda. Each chapter also explored the ways in which the *poligrafi* fashioned their literary personae and their audiences through each type of writing. Chapter 3 argued that the *poligrafi* produced libellous literature as a form of court writing, both in manuscript and print: these included pasquinades in 1520s Rome, printed libel in the 1540s, and pasquinades again in the very different context of Rome in the decade following the death of Paul IV. This represented something of a dead end for this mode of writing, since this particular style never really developed in Venice – while after the execution of Franco in 1570, Roman pasquinades reverted to being anonymously authored.

Chapter 4 discussed the ways in which the *poligrafi*'s efforts to reinvent themselves as free satirists after the Sack of Rome resulted in a distinctive critique of court culture and of the humanist movement in general. In the 1530s, 1540s, and early 1550s, we see an attempt to reinvent the profession of writing and to justify writing for the press in the face of considerable stigma. The first section of this chapter discussed their rejections of various models of the courtier and their attempts to construct an alternative professional and literary persona, that of the unrestrained, unvarnished truth-teller; the second looked at the positions they adopted in the *questione della lingua*, together with the socio-political and literary implications of each point of view and the links these had with their attempts to improve their own social status. The last section looked at their critical stances on the conventions of mainstream humanist writing and the goals and methods of humanistic education, as well as their views on the merits of adopting a 'natural' style and on the role of innate genius. I argued that this should not, however, be mistaken for evidence of a populist mindset – rather, the *poligrafi* were trying to appeal to elites and the educated classes who could afford their

books, and often disparaged those who they thought of as beneath them.

Finally, chapter 5 discussed the shift of a new generation of *poligrafi* who remained in Venice from the mid-1550s onwards to propagandistic work in praise of the Venetian regime, such as treatises on the superiority of Venetian art, guidebooks, and popular histories. In this period, there was a generational shift amongst the *poligrafi* who were active in Venice, in the face of increased state and ecclesiastical censorship, and increasing caution on the part of Venetian printers. Those who remained, and the new *poligrafi* of the fourth generation, ceased writing libellous and satirical texts, and produced texts more clearly reflected the way Venetian elites sought to portray their state. This is clear both in texts with a relatively small, elite audience, such as Lodovico Dolce's treatise on art, and in texts with a wider, mixed audience, such as Francesco Sansovino's guidebooks to Venice and Tommaso Porcacchi's series of popular histories. However, these works did not simply reflect the agenda of the Venetian state uncritically, as historians have sometimes assumed. Rather the priorities and agenda of individual *poligrafi* themselves articulated through the particular slant on the myth that they advocated. In section one, we saw that, in art theory, with the divide between *poligrafi* about who among the generation of artists after Titian ought to be considered the best, and whether since Titian the art of Venice had begun to decline. In section two, we saw the foreign-born Francesco Sansovino emphasising the advantage of employing foreigners to write histories of the Venetian state – and the native Venetian, Dolce, arguing he was qualified to write about Charles V for the same reason: they could be relied upon to tell the truth. This emphasis on their 'truth-telling' persona is an echo of the satirical identity employed by a previous generation. However, the abandonment of the distinctive persona of the fearless, direct, truth-telling satirist, to the loyalist popular historian – including a historian of satire in Sansovino's case – resulted in the loss of the *poligrafi*'s distinctiveness as a group.

Overall, this thesis has argued against overly teleological interpretations of the *poligrafi* which have asserted that they constitute a radical intellectual break thanks to their contributions to political and social thought, or that they represent a radical break in Italian literary culture, thanks to their use of the printing press. Cross-generationally, some common characteristics of the *poligrafi* can be ascertained: they worked with the Venetian presses for a portion of their careers, though the number of years varied dramatically: they wrote most of their works in a direct, non-Bembian vernacular Italian; they usually both produced works under their own name, as well as edited and translated works by others, though many specialised in one or the other; and they tended not to be from Venice. Finally, they were all men (which is noteworthy given that the sixteenth century saw a major rise in the number of women writing for the vernacular Venetian press: however, those women produced exclusively original work, rather than editing and translating). However, it is clear that for the most part, the *poligrafi* saw the printing press as a means of increasing their number of patronage connections rather than as a replacement for them. There are significant differences in the level of education of the first and second generations of *poligrafi* relative to later generations; and there is a significant shift, in the fourth generation of *poligrafi* who stayed in Venice, away from works of social critique, towards explicitly pro-Venetian material. This can be ascribed both to the shifting regulatory environment of Venice discussed above, especially from the late 1540s onwards, and the extent to which these *poligrafi* were assimilated into elite patronage networks, in contrast to those who left the city and tried to maintain their “truth-teller” personae, whose careers tended to either peter out or come to a tragic end.

More broadly, this thesis has contributed to the decentring of Venice in the literary history of sixteenth-century Italy. By drawing on material from archives and libraries in Rome, Mantua and Florence, as well as paratextual analysis of their printed books, it has

demonstrated the significance of traditional patronage networks to these writers' careers and that a full understanding of their motivations and objectives cannot be achieved without an understanding of their careers outside Venice. Even while resident in Venice, it is clear that the *poligrafi* saw print as a means of forging new patronage connections, both in the 1530s and 1540s, in their satirical work, and from the late 1540s onwards, as a new generation of *poligrafi* turned towards pro-Venetian art treatises, popular histories and guidebooks. Consequently, it serves to illustrate the adaptiveness of early modern Italian patronage networks in this period, as well as the ways in which these writers, coming from unusually impoverished backgrounds, writing new types of literature, adapted themselves in turn to a relatively rigid and hierarchical social world. In doing so, they nevertheless produced substantive criticisms of humanist culture and style in their works, ranging from scathing criticisms of humanist court culture, the Bembian language orthodoxy, the use of obscenity in written texts, and even the role of dialogue and the nature and limits of persuasion. It must be said, however, that the solutions they proposed often boiled down to studying the classics more closely, rather than entirely rejecting the fundamental premises of humanism, and that therefore in the end they were reformers, rather than radicals.

This thesis has also contributed to the current trend among early modernists in general to push back against the overwhelming objective of an earlier generation of scholars to look for the beginnings of modernity in this period – whether it concerned the rise of the centralising state, the invention of individualism, or technological and scientific advancement. This objective led to a tendency to overlook elements of the past that appear “backward” to modern eyes such as patronage networks; to ignore failed social and intellectual movements, such as that of the *poligrafi*; and to produce teleological narratives that downplay the extent to which people in the past were simply seeking to address contemporary problems, with all the failures, chance occurrences, and unintended

consequences that take place in the present day. For the *poligrafi*, for example, it is clear that the printing press represented an opportunity to increase their ability to play off one patron against another, or to increase the number of patrons that they had – not an opportunity to free themselves from the shackles of an oppressive patronage system in favour of making a living from the book market. Ultimately, it proved necessary to reinvent the profession of writer in order to take advantage of the choices presented by printing’s invention– but this happened gradually, in stages, rather than all at once.

Further research on the *poligrafi* will, I hope, broaden the parameters of this thesis to examine the patronage of writers at courts other than Rome, Florence, and Mantua across a longer time period, as well as their involvement in diplomatic networks.³ This will be facilitated by the continued development of online sources, allowing scholars to cover much greater ground, as well as editorial work that continues on the *poligrafi*’s own publications and the literary history of pasquinades more generally, going beyond sixteenth-century Rome and Venice. It will be particularly interesting to see works dealing with the legacy of the *poligrafi* in seventeenth-century Italy – beyond the relatively well-known examples of the Accademia degli Incogniti and Ferrante Pallavicino – and projects that compare the *poligrafi* with similar figures in other regions of Europe and the wider world, in the years after the spread of printing.⁴ There have been tentative comparisons of the *poligrafi* with English satirists, but there are no rigorous comparative studies in the manner of John Robertson’s history of Enlightenment figures in Scotland and Naples.⁵ On the *poligrafi*’s

³ For an example of the role of texts in diplomatic networks, see Oren J. Margolis, *The Politics of Culture in Quattrocento Europe: René of Anjou in Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁴ Such as, for example, the writers studied by Peter Lake, *Bad Queen Bess? Libels, Secret Histories, and the Politics of Publicity in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Cf. Nina Geerdink, ‘Economic Advancement and Reputation Strategies: Seventeenth-Century Dutch Women Writing for Profit’, *Renaissance Studies* (2019), pp. 350-74.

⁵ John Robertson, *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

relationship to the history of patronage – and, indeed, the patronage of writers in Italy in general – much empirical work remains to be done, included a systematic examination of all their prefaces and dedicatory letters, and the categorisation and digitisation of relevant manuscript letters to patrons, especially outside of Venice and Florence. Scholars of patronage may benefit from greater engagement with the techniques of Social Network Analysis, though there are obvious potential dangers in reducing relationships to categories such as “friend”, “patron” or “family relation” in order to study them quantitatively.⁶ I have already suggested, in the introduction to this thesis, some ways in which the history of political communication can fully move beyond the debate began by Jürgen Habermas: here, I merely reiterate that there is much work to be done both with regard to expanding our theoretical conception of the public sphere – for example, drawing on theoretical frameworks developed by Niklas Luhmann, Michael Warner, and others on communication and the effects of creating “publics” and “counterpublics” by explicitly invoking them in writing – as well as empirical work on, especially, the prices of books and the reception of printed texts, which will enable a much better understanding of who the audience were for the *poligrafi*’s publications across different genres and periods.⁷

In a sense, this thesis is a study in failure, an evocation of a route that the history of Italy did not take. The majority of the *poligrafi* died in obscurity, and they either suffered a steep decline in their reputations, or else were forgotten entirely. As Katherine De Rycker has shown, by the seventeenth century, outside of Italy, the meaning of Pietro Aretino’s

⁶ For one attempt at making such techniques more sophisticated, see Ingeborg van Vugt, ‘Using Multi-Layered Networks to Disclose Books in the Republic of Letters’, *Journal of Historical Network Research* 1 (2017) pp. 25-51.

⁷ See for example the research project led by Cristina Dondi on the fifteenth-century Italian book market in 2014=2019, <http://15cbooktrade.ox.ac.uk/> [Accessed 24 February 2020]; cf. Cristina Dondi, *Printing Revolution 1450-1500: Fifty Years that Changed Europe* (Venice: Marsilio, 2018); as well as the ongoing research project led by Angela Nuovo on the economics and juridical frameworks of the book trade in the sixteenth century., <http://emobooktrade.unimi.it/content/early-modern-book-trade> [Accessed 24 February 2020]; Ross, *Everyday Renaissances*.

nickname, the ‘scourge of princes’, had shifted to almost an opposite meaning than the original: from one who scourges princes, to a scourge who acted *on behalf of* princes.⁸ Those who, like Francesco Sansovino and Tommaso Porcacchi, were able to achieve success in the second half of the sixteenth-century did so by abandoning the satirist persona and obscene style of the second and third generations of *poligrafi* entirely. Those who emulated the style of Aretino, Nicolò Franco and Anton Francesco Doni in a later period – most notably, Thomas Nashe in England and Ferrante Pallavicino in Venice – were relatively marginal figures, and, in the case of Pallavicino, ended up being arrested and executed by the Roman Inquisition at the age of twenty-seven. Their scepticism towards the humanist movement’s faith in the power of education to produce learned, moral, active citizens, while shared to an extent by more influential literary figures such as Michel de Montaigne, did not prevent humanistic models of education from remaining the dominant form of schooling for the European elite into the seventeenth century and beyond. On the other hand, a problem which the *poligrafi* were the first to struggle with – the relationship between print and patronage, with the conflicting obligations of patronage, commercial print, and the writer’s commitment to truth – continued to be salient a century later. In his *Art poétique*, the French poet Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux argued that a writer should:

Work for the sake of glory: sordid gain
Should never be an illustrious writer’s goal
True, without shame or crime, a noble mind
May accept a lawful tribute for its work.
But I cannot endure these famous authors
Who, scorning glory, hungry but for gold,
Hire out Apollo to a bookseller,
And turn their art divine into a trade.⁹

Boileau’s view of writers who work for the press was remarkably similar to Tommaso

⁸ De Rycker, ‘Recycling Pietro Aretino’, pp. 228-42.

⁹ Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, quoted in Alain Viaila, ‘The Theory of the Literary Field and the Situation of the First Modernity’, *Paragraph* 29:1 (2006), pp. 84-5; cf. Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, *L’Art poétique*, in *Œuvres complètes* (Paris, Gallimard, 1966), pp. 183-4.

Garzoni's discussion of the *poligrafi* and other libellous writers with which this thesis began. Boileau went on to argue in the same poem that 'Parnassus lost its first nobility' when 'poverty came': that is, when the poor began to write books for publication, 'Vile thirst for gain infected writers' minds / And soiled their writings with the grossest lies'.¹⁰ While Garzoni made no suggestions of what might be done to address this problem, however, for Boileau the remedy for this problem was simple: writers should be of independent means.

Similarly, the adaptiveness of the witty, 'natural' style developed by the *poligrafi*, and its effectiveness as a political tool, in manuscript and print, had been proven. In 1621, the historian, canon lawyer and state counsellor to the Venetian Republic, Paolo Sarpi, wrote a short advisory text to the Venetian Senate on what he saw as the most effective ways of dealing with libellous texts. He argued that given the volume of texts produced by the Venetian press and the ever-increasing role of public opinion in early modern politics, the appearance of such writings should be regarded as an inevitability, and the government ought to respond with censorship, silence, or its own propaganda, depending on the type of text involved:

In literary battles, even more than in private quarrels and armed actions, staying on the defensive is the most miserable strategy of all and condemns the user to certain defeat; for the enemy will proceed to new and more impudent insults in the assurance of never being struck and always being respected [...] Here is another worthwhile counsel: never attempt to respond to writings that speak evil with brevity and wit, even if falsely, when the defence requires a long narrative or discourse, since brief and witty expressions impress themselves on and take over the mind, whereas a long discourse tires it to such an extent that it will never open up to the truth.¹¹

In this advice – which draws not only on Sarpi's extensive personal experience dealing with the pamphlet wars during and after the Venetian Interdict Crisis of 1606-7, but also references the French Wars of Religion in a similar vein – we can see a member of the

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Paolo Sarpi, 'On Slandorous Books', in Brendan Dooley (ed.), *Italy in the Baroque: Selected Readings* (New York: Garland, 1995), pp. 334-5.

political elite grappling with the profound impact of printing technology on political communication, professional writers, and the role of public opinion in early modern politics, which, as Sarpi recognised, had irrevocably changed the nature of political practice.

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https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.lat.5642

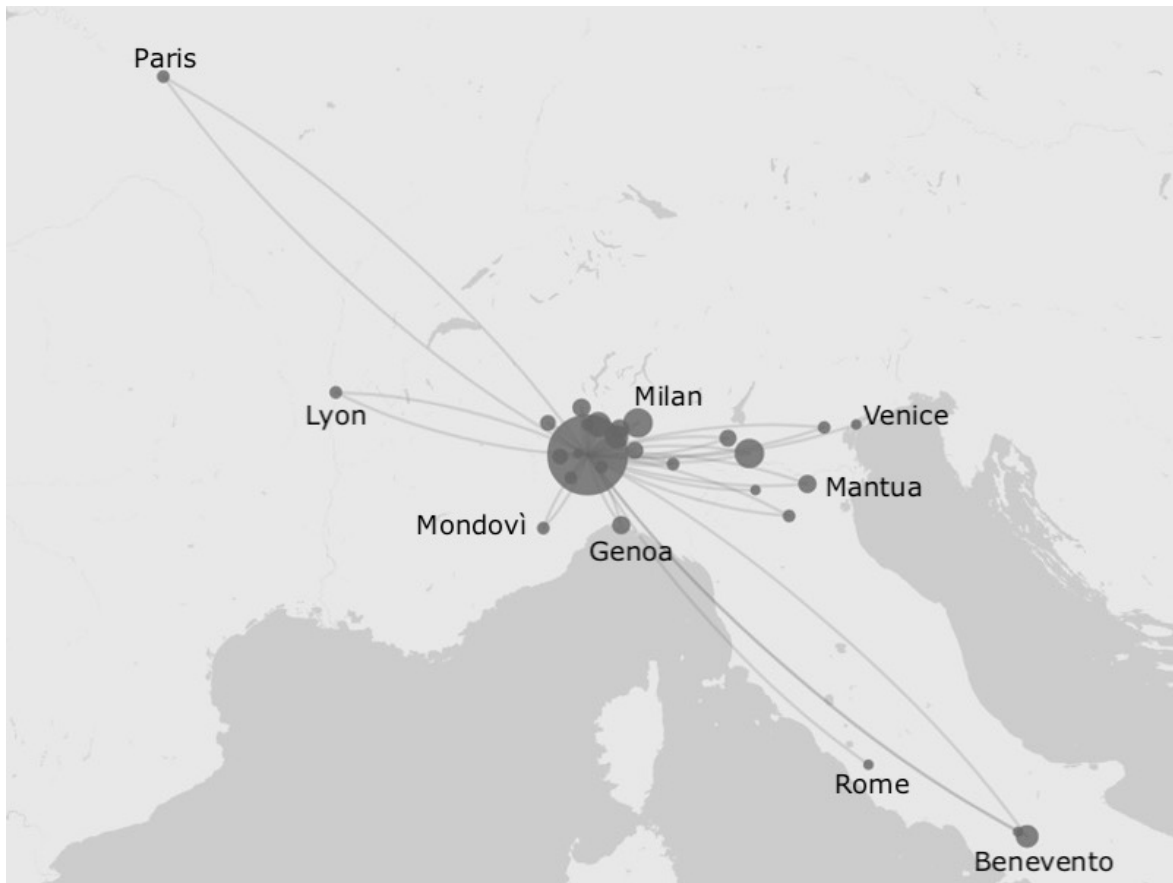


Figure 2. Franco's correspondence network in Casale Monferrato (1540-1546), weighted by the number of letters sent and received from each location.

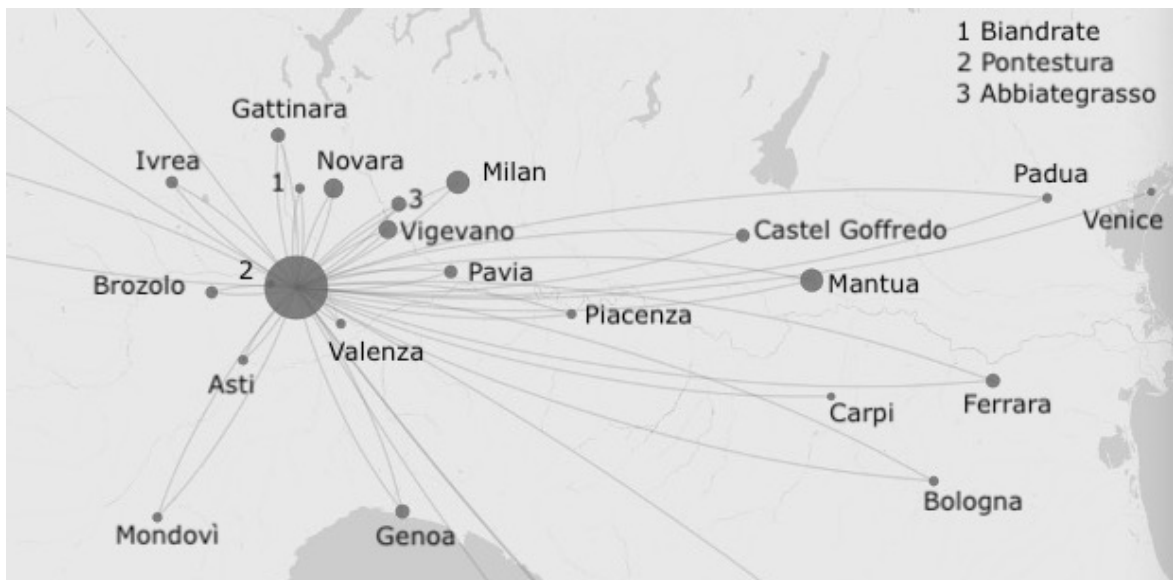


Figure 3. A closer visualisation of Franco's correspondence network in Casale Monferrato, excluding connections with Paris, Lyon, Rome, Benevento, and Vitulano (near Benevento) (1540-1546). This visualisation is weighted by number of letters sent and received from each location.

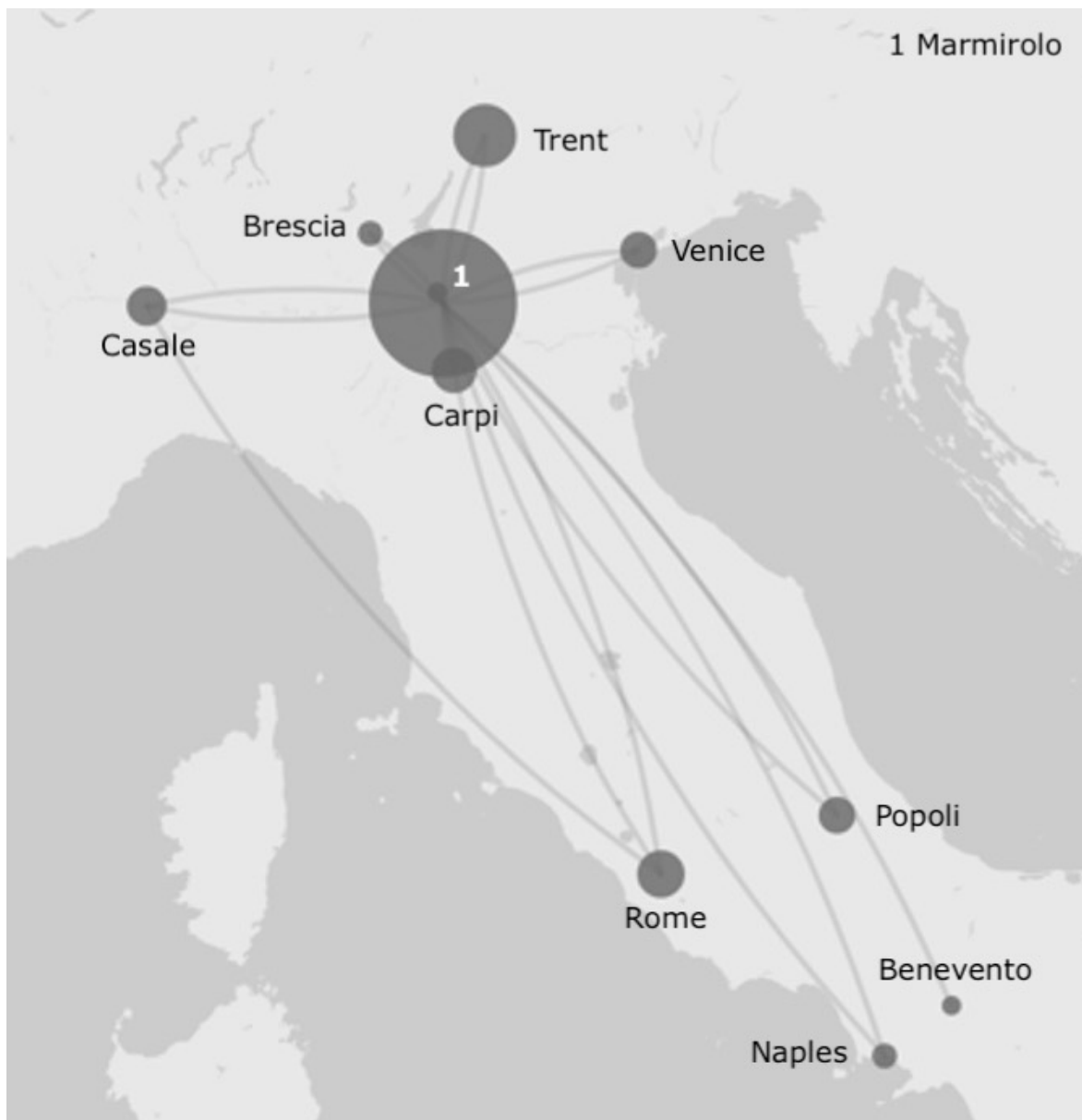


Figure 4. Franco's correspondence network in Mantua (1546-1548), weighted by number of letters sent and received from each location.

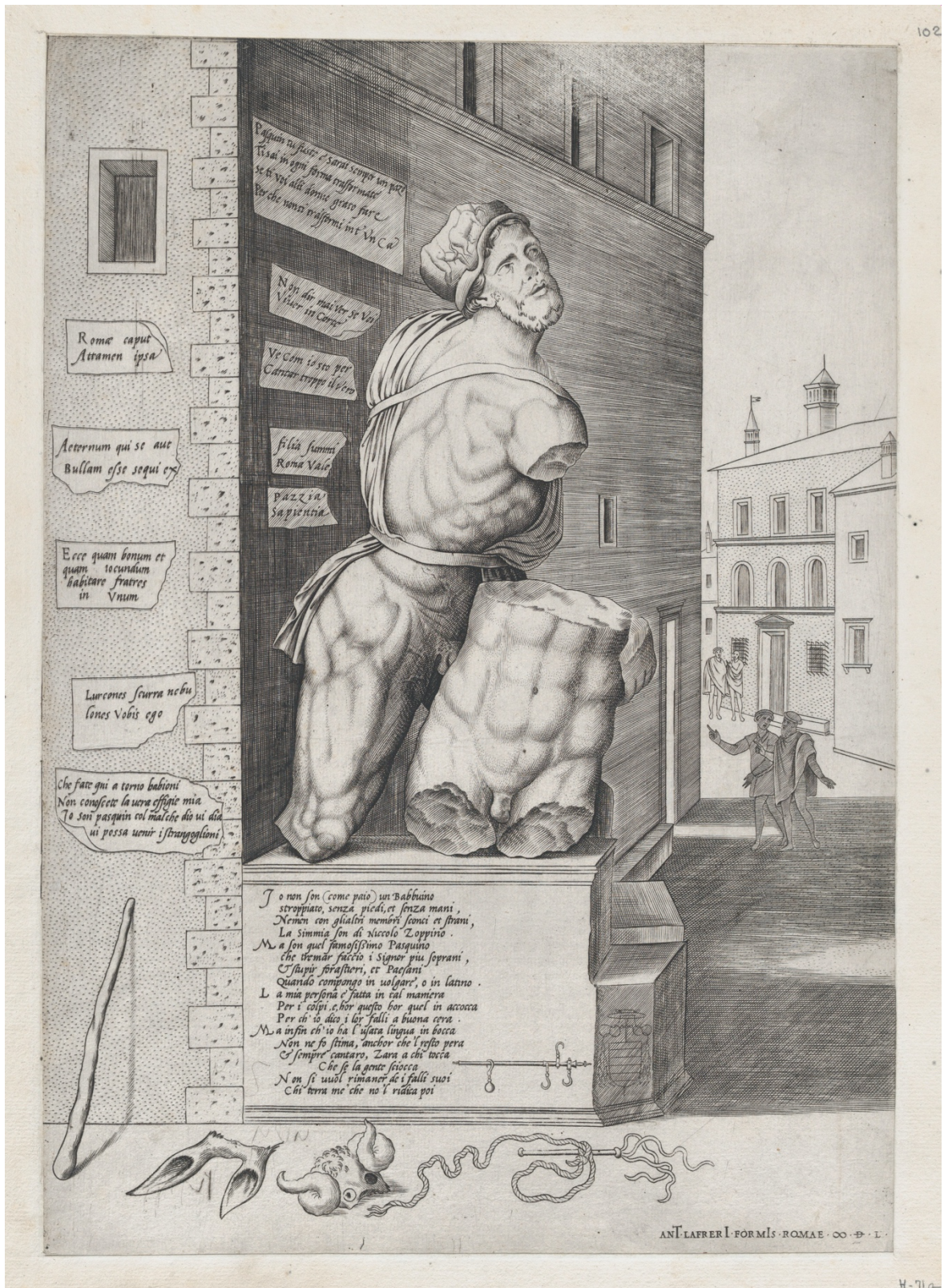


Figure 5. After Nicolas Beatrizet, 'Statue of Pasquin in the House of Cardinal Ursino'. Engraving and etching, 40 x 28 cm, in Antonio Lafreri (ed.), *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae* (Rome: Antonio Lafreri, 1550). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Accessed 7 April 2020. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/402737>.



Figure 6. Masked woman with motto, 'The thing that bothers me most, I hide and keep silent'. Woodcut on paper, 10.5 cm x 6.5 cm: used as the frontispiece to Book 2 of Anton Francesco Doni, *La Moral Filosofia* (Venice: apud Francesco Marcolini, 1552), p. 65. Image from Cambridge University Library, Cambridge.



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Figure 9. Titian, *Assumption of the Virgin*, oil on panel, 668 x 344 cm, 1516-18), Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice. Image from Wikimedia Commons. Accessed 8 May 2020. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tizian_041.jpg.



Fig. 10. Titian, *Venus and Adonis*, oil on canvas, 186 cm x 207 cm, (1554). Museo del Prado, Madrid. Image from the Museo del Prado. Accessed 8 May 2020. <https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/venus-and-adonis/bc9c1e08-2dd7-44d5-b926-71cd3e5c3adb>.



Figure 11. Tintoretto's *Miracle of the Slave*, oil on canvas, 416 x 544 cm (1547-1548). Gallerie dell'Accademia, Venice. Image from Wikimedia Commons. Accessed 15 July 2020. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Accademia -
_Miracle_of_the_Slave_by_Tintoretto.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Accademia_-_Miracle_of_the_Slave_by_Tintoretto.jpg).

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Condizioni di decima

Consiglio dei dieci

Dieci savi sopra le decime a Rialto

Esecutori contro la bestemmia

Sant'Uffizio

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