

Chapter 14

The Private and Public Sessions of the Accademia dei Ricovrati:

Orality, Writing, and Print in Seventeenth-Century Padua*

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The history of the early modern Italian academies raises many questions about oral culture in relation to manuscript and print, and about the role of interactions between these media in private and public life. Many of the activities were oral/aural in nature. They consisted of reciting and listening to discourses, poems, or music in closed or open sessions. But they were often informed and mediated by the written or printed word, whether in the context of the censoring of drafts of discourses in advance of delivery, the printing of copies for distribution after the event, or the keeping of archives for future reference. Different academies of course made different uses of oral, written, and printed media, as of performative and visual media, according to the cultural projects and policies they pursued.

Although there is now a very large literature on the Italian academies, and on their uses of particular media from *conversazione* to music to print, there are few studies that focus on interactions between media.¹ One very important contribution is Judith Bryce's article on the oral world of the Accademia Fiorentina, which met in both private and public sessions. She described its larger context as a highly literate, text-based humanistic culture reinforced and modified by printing, within a matrix of persisting orality, both cultured and popular. It had affiliations with other sectors of the oral world of Florence that encouraged popular participation: the religious confraternities, the theatres, and the tradition of public lectures on Dante. But politics intervened in the shape of the reforms of 1547, which introduced legislation enabling authorities to impose silence where required (by the consul), to censor written texts, to ensure the fitness of those who mounted the lecturer's rostrum. The text-based world

* My thanks to Brian Richardson, Lisa Sampson, Simone Testa, and Chiara Sbordoni.

¹ As a gateway to materials and bibliography see the website of the project 'The Italian Academies, 1525–1700', <<http://italianacademies.org/>> [accessed 17 November 2014], and the 'Database of Italian Academies', <<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/ItalianAcademies/>> [accessed 17 November 2014], hosted by the British Library.

of live debate, performance, improvisation, even festivity, which originated in the prior and short-lived Accademia degli Umidi, was brought to order. At the same time, during the internal struggles surrounding the transformation of the free-spirited Umidi of the early 1540s into the state-controlled and academic Fiorentina of the late 1540s, the nature of the record kept of the activities changed.²

This essay will take another example of an academy whose oral world was far more significant than its printed output: the academy of the Ricovrati ('inmates', 'those in recovery') founded in Padua in November 1599. After a general introduction concerning the circumstances of the foundation, I will discuss the relationship between the written and oral forms of the *attioni* of the Accademia; the way in which the record of the *attioni* was put together and archived by its secretaries (at different stages of its existence); and the main activities of the Accademia, with particular reference to the aesthetics (which privilege orality and performance) behind its choice of *impresa*.³ The essay will conclude with the case of one Ricovrato – the moral philosopher and *canonico* Flavio Querenghi – whose use of oral and written forms of discourse is highly germane to our theme.⁴

The relationship between recited sounds and contemplative silence, and between verbal, performative, and visual media, was at the heart of the philosophical aesthetics of the Accademia dei Ricovrati. Like the Accademia Fiorentina, it met in both private and public sessions. The former often

² Judith Bryce, 'The Oral World of the Early Accademia Fiorentina', *Renaissance Studies*, 9 (1995), 77–103 (pp. 80, 101–2). For some of the other points here see Inge Werner, 'The Heritage of the Umidi: Performative Poetry in the Early Accademia Fiorentina', in *The Reach of the Republic of Letters: Literary and Learned Societies in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Arjan Van Dixhoorn and Susie Speakman Sutch, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 2008), II, 257–84; Michel Plaisance, *L'Accademia e il suo principe: cultura e politica a Firenze al tempo di Cosimo I e di Francesco de' Medici* (Manziana: Vecchiarelli, 2004).

³ This usage of 'attione' perhaps combines senses 2 ('singolo atto, [...] impresa') and 6 ('l'atto del recitare', 'il gestire, la mimica di un attore teatrale (o di un oratore)') of 'azione' in the *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana*.

⁴ On this academy see *Dall'Accademia dei Ricovrati all'Accademia Galileiana: atti del Convegno storico per il IV centenario della fondazione (1599–1999): Padova, 11–12 aprile 2000*, ed. by Ezio Riondato (Padua: Accademia Galileiana di scienze, lettere ed arti, 2001); Paolo Maggiolo and Leda Viganò, *L'accademia in biblioteca: scienze, lettere, arti dai Ricovrati alla Galileiana: aspetti e vicende dell'Accademia di Padova dalle raccolte delle Biblioteche cittadine* (Padua: Biblioteca universitaria, 2004).

concerned the regulation, in writing, of spoken discourse under the authority of the ‘prince’ of the academy and the governing body of officers, including censors. The latter were given over to multimedia public events, in which oral performances and aural experiences were predominant. Though it sponsored some print publications, it did not, like the short-lived Accademia Venetiana, have a publishing programme and a relationship with a publisher (Paolo Manuzio) at the very heart of its activities.⁵ Like the post-1547 Accademia Fiorentina its activities were addressed to and controlled by a civic elite of dominant *letterati*, led in the Paduan case by a very powerful family of cardinal-patricians, the Cornaro.

The academy first met in the Paduan house of its founder, the young abbot and Monsignore Federico Cornaro on 25 November 1599. Amongst its twenty-six founding members were the philosophers Cremonini and Galileo. At that time, Cornaro was a young abbot, and the academy he founded, and which met in his own house, was an offshoot of the episcopal curia of the diocese of Padua. The diocese became in these decades a quasi-feudal possession of the San Polo Cornaro family (Federico’s and his brother Marcantonio’s branch), as they out-maneuvered their dynastic rivals, the San Maurizio Cornaro family, and consolidated their connections in Rome.⁶

It may be that Roman society provided a model for the involvement of powerful cardinal families in the foundation of academies designed to sustain shared discourse and cultural values with the Catholic nobility. The Accademia degli Umoristi was founded for such purposes around the same time (c. 1600) in the papal city, with the involvement of Maffeo Barberini, the future Pope Urban VIII.

⁵ Shanti Graheli, ‘Reading the History of the Accademia Venetiana through Its Book Lists’, in *Documenting the Early Modern Book World: Inventories and Catalogues in Manuscript and Print*, ed. by Malcolm Walsby and Natasha Constantinidou (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 283–319.

⁶ Laura Megna, ‘Federico Cornaro e l’Accademia padovana dei Ricovrati’, *Studi veneziani*, 43 (2002), 331–48; Achille Olivieri, ‘I Ricovrati e le trasformazioni dell’idea di prudenza: “l’antro e le parole”’, in *Dall’Accademia dei Ricovrati*, ed. by Riondato, pp. 361–74; Giuseppe Gullino, ‘I Corner e l’Accademia’, in *Dall’Accademia dei Ricovrati*, ed. by Riondato, pp. 59–73.

While he was still at Padua, in the early years of the Accademia, Cornaro treated it as a personal platform for his own delivery of orations, sonnets, and lectures.⁷

Amongst other functions, the Paduan academy's role would be both to see off and to welcome powerful Venetian patricians. Along with the Venetian governors (*podestà, capitano*, etc.) of the city, and scholars and students of the university, many noble priests and Venetian aristocrats would be present at the public events, which were a particularly noteworthy feature of the academy's activities. This was to be a union of the nobility of the ruled (Padua) and ruling (Venice) cities, under the aegis of a dynasty of worldly Venetian clerics. Still in 1645 the secretary considered it to be the academy of the most noble city of Padua *and* of the most serene Republic of Venice, as well as more particularly of the most glorious 'famiglia Cornara'.⁸

The governance set up for the academy was hierarchical, like that of a court, centred on a prince who had the power, within certain limits, to control the discussions and the topics of the discussions. He was advised by a 'banca' or governing body of elected officials, and ballots were regularly taken on various issues. The private sessions were given over to the verbal *discorsi, opposizioni*, and *difese* of the academicians, to the reading out of letters, to the composition and reform of the written laws of the academy, to the swearing-in of new members, who had to listen to those laws read out loud, and to the verbal discussion of *dubii*, as we shall hear in a moment.⁹ The noble and virtuous 'attioni' produced in public by the academy were multisensory, multimedia events, though speech, music, and poetry were central.

Let us first consider in an introductory way exactly what role writing had in this oral world. There are two main aspects to bring out: the submission in writing of what was about to be said for the

⁷ Andrew Dell'Antonio, *Listening as Spiritual Practice in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), pp. 44–5; Megna, p. 339.

⁸ *Giornale della gloriosissima accademia ricovrata A: Verbalì delle adunanze accademiche dal 1599 al 1694*, ed. by Antonio Gamba and Lucia Rossetti (Padua: Accademia galileiana di scienze lettere ed arti in Padova, 1999), p. 173 (henceforth abbreviated as 'Giornale A').

⁹ *Giornale A*, p. 10.

purposes of censorial review; the keeping of written registers and archives of what was said and done for the purposes of memorialisation. On 16 March 1600 a law was proposed and passed whereby any academician, bar certain exemptions (for the ‘esenti’ or the ‘molto essercitati’), who was given the charge of reasoning publically in the academy, had to submit his composition in advance. The secretary shall ensure that the written discourse

is seen and reviewed, and every part of it well considered by each of the said censors, such that, when judged good and worthy of being publically recited, they are all obliged to vouch for it viva voce with the lord Prince [... without this] the said academician, whose discourse it is, shall not in any circumstance be permitted to take the chair and recite it, in either a private or public session of the academy. In this way we think we can with great dignity avoid any occasion for inconvenience that might otherwise arise. (Poi farsì che da ognuno delli 3 signori censori sia visto et revisto et in ogni parte di modo ben considerato che giudicandolo buono et degno di potersi publicamente recitare, sii obligato ognuno delli detti signori censori farne di ciò al signor Principe fede et con la loro viva voce [...] che non possi detto academico, de chi sarà il discorso, in modo alcuno ascender la cathedra et quello, in privata, or in publica Academia, recitare. Così pensiamo potersi con molta dignità dell’Academia nostra levar ogni occasione d’inconveniente che potesse nascere.)

(*Giornale A*, pp. 22–3)

In 1634, another law was brought in to specify that this applied to any composition in prose or verse read or recited in the academy, as the public sessions initially featured only one *attione in cathedra*, and not other types of oral interventions. At the same time the *accademici* were obliged to give another copy after the event, within twenty days, for the purposes of registration in the academy’s books (e.g. ‘libro B’, not extant, for academic compositions in prose).¹⁰

The main record we have of the sequence of private and public meetings is in writing, the *Giornale A*. This register was not only mediated by a series of secretaries who had the task successively of keeping the record, but edited in retrospect by two, related, mid- to late seventeenth-century

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 15–17 (mentions of ‘libro B’, also called the ‘libro dell’attioni’ or ‘de li componimenti academici in prosa’), 111 (the relevant entries in Zabarella’s index), 165 (the minutes of the private sessions of 10 February 1634).

secretaries, Giacomo Zabarella (elected 7 March 1645) and, more extensively, Scipione Zabarella (secretary, 1676–77, 1681–82, 1684–85). They took it upon themselves to review the earlier written records, to supplement, index, and annotate them. This was partly because of lacunae: they felt not enough care had been taken to keep a continuous record. Though all that survives is the main register, there is mention of an archive in which not only the compositions, but letters, other manuscripts, printed books, and every record pertaining to the academy was kept.¹¹

At the point of exit from his final secretaryship, in 1685, Scipione Zabarella mentions the various loose, ephemeral forms of paper record generated by the activities of the academy, from *policini d'invito* to *sonetti*. Even the minutes of the meetings were written on loose sheets, before transcription in the main register. The secretary's thankless task was to attempt to assemble all this paper, supplement it with oral recollections, and bring it together as a faithful record in the *Libro* – all in a context, it seems, in which none of the other academicians were much concerned with the written memory of the activities staged by their academy.¹²

What were these activities? From mid-December 1601 the recreational aspect of the private sessions centred on a verbal 'exercise of proposing several questions, whether moral, political, poetical or of some other literary kind, upon which any academician who wishes to may discourse, briefly and in a familiar style' ('questo essercitio di proporsi alcuni dubbii, o morali, o politici, o poetici o d'altra materia di lettere, intorno a' quali da chiunque volesse de gli academici, brevemente e con stile familiare si ragionasse').¹³ In the verbal discussion of the form to be taken by this exercise there were various opinions on how much time should be assigned, and in the end the *Principe* cut it short by proposing two *dubii* for the following session. Two weeks later it was decided that *dubbi* or *questioni* would in

¹¹ Ibid., p. xix (Scipione), pp. 76 (minute of the private session of 8 April 1601, in which the 'archivio' is mentioned), 111 (the entry in Scipione's index), 173 (election of Giacomo as secretary).

¹² Ibid., pp. 512–13. 'Policini' is probably a diminutive plural of 'póliza', defined in John Florio's *Queen Anna's New World of Words* (London: Bradwood, 1611) as 'a schedule, a bill, a note, a writing, an obligation or ticket'. My thanks to Brian Richardson.

¹³ *Giornale A*, p. 87.

future be printed in advance on ‘cartuccie’ or little cards, together with the summons (‘citatione’) to the private session.¹⁴

Much time in the early private sessions, before the academy opened in public, was given over to a less ‘academic’ question: the question of the *impresa* that the academy should adopt in public. Thirty-one written proposals and designs were deposited in an urn and then all read out by the secretary. Debate was cut short by the *Principe*, who decided that the three elected *censori* in the *Banca*, would, for the next meeting, preselect just three for consideration, giving the academicians a chance to see them in writing beforehand. The discussion of these *imprese* the following week is in itself interesting. It centred on the distinction between the visual ‘corpo’ of each *impresa*, and the verbal ‘motto’ and ‘nome’ – the name proposed for the academy itself.¹⁵

Once again, however, the oral *discorsi* in private session for and against the three proposals go on too long for the *Principe*’s liking. He puts it back in the hands of the *censori* and orders that any further oppositions to or defences of the proposed *imprese* should be submitted in writing to the secretary, for future reading aloud. But this also produces no resolution, at which point the *Principe* has entered in the ‘Giornale’ a written ‘Legge per l’Impresa’, approved by a ballot, which puts the matter completely in the hands of the *censori* and three others, including two university philosophers, Cremonini and Giovanni Belloni.¹⁶

They choose for the ‘corpo’ the cavern at the head of the harbour at Ithaca, in Homer’s *Odyssey* (XIII.96–158), next to a large olive tree. The cavern is sacred to the Naiads, with bowls, stone jars, beehives, and stone looms for weaving. It has two entrances, one facing north, by which mortals can enter, and one from the south for gods only. Water runs through it. The motto is adapted from a phrase in Boethius’s *Consolation of Philosophy* (‘Hoc patens unum miseris asyllum’; III.10.6) in a passage

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 89.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 8–10.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 11 (minute of private session on 12 December, 1599), 11–13 (‘Legge per l’Impresa’).

about the way everyone is ensnared by the senses: ‘bipatens animis asylum’ (‘an asylum for souls with two entries’). The name is of course ‘Ricovrati’.¹⁷

But what exactly did this mean and how was the choice of *impresa* and its meaning to be publicized, to be disseminated? At, of course, a public meeting of the academy, on 11 June 1600, when Monsignor Giovanni Belloni, *canonico* and *dottore*, would give a discourse. In anticipation of this discourse, however, the members decided the academy would need a printer (Francesco Bolzetta) who was her own (‘che sia [...] proprio di lei’). Academicians would be prohibited from using any other printer, unless by permission.¹⁸

So the demand for a printer arose in specific connection with the anticipated need to provide a printed version of the official verbal discourse, given in public session, on the choice and meaning of the *impresa*. Six months later they would build on this by creating print censors, ‘censori sopra la stampa’ (including Belloni), who would review printed books sent to the academy, or books to be issued in association with it. In due course Belloni’s discourse was printed, much elaborated from its spoken version, though still bearing the markers of oral delivery. The text addresses not the reader but the ‘most noble listeners’ (‘nobilissimi ascoltatori’).¹⁹

In this printed discourse Belloni makes it clear that the cavern is intended to be a representation of the two, complementary paths of the philosophical life: the active and the contemplative. The study of these should inform every action – *attione* – of the academicians. In the course of the discussion he provides an interesting account of the philosophical aesthetics behind it. He categorizes the nine verbal and visual signs by means of which humans can express their internal passions and concepts: ‘the voice, gestures, letters, the ancient cipher, the device, the heraldic crest, the hieroglyph, the emblem, the motto’

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 36.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 73; Giovanni Belloni, *Discorso intorno all’Antro delle Ninfe Naiadi di Homero. Impresa de gli Academici Ricovrati di Padova* (Padua: Francesco Bolzetta, 1601), fol. 2^o.

(‘la Favella, i Gesti, le Lettere, la Cifra antica, la Divisa, il Cimiero, il Hieroglifico, l’Emblema, & l’Impresa’).²⁰

Speech comes first and foremost; Belloni describes how the voice we are given by nature becomes, with art’s rule and measure, song and harmony, capable of manifesting our passions. The gestures and movements of the body follow hard on. Theatre and dance can miraculously, in silence and without voice (‘in silentio, & senza voce’), represent literary fictions and philosophical precepts. He gives the classical example of the dancer Memphis who managed to express Pythagoras’s precepts in dance, in silence. Oratory also uses the body. Letters were needed because men, distanced from one another, could neither hear one another, nor see one another’s gestures. They are commonly used to supply this lack but they are also used by the wise to hide their meanings from the vulgar crowd – which leads him on to ciphers invented for analogous purposes. He then moves on to the various types of personal image or heraldry that can be used as means of expression. He concludes with a description of the way in which, in the *impresa*, the ‘motto’ restricts the meaning of the ‘corpo’, the physical concept, so that it applies to the souls and thoughts in particular of the Accademici Ricovrati.²¹

Just as a coda, it is worth noting one consequence for the academy of the fact that they decided to go into print with an official version of the orally delivered discourse about the meaning of the *impresa*. One Rodolfo Moieschino replied to Belloni’s publication with his own printed *libretto* attacking both it and the *impresa* itself. Four Ricovrati were immediately delegated to read this attack and to judge whether to reply in turn, or whether to treat it lightly, with ‘disprezzo’ i.e. not to reply at all, disdainfully. The decision was not to reply, but to allow Belloni to reply in his own person, in other words, not as an official Ricovrato, if he wished.²²

²⁰ Belloni, fol. C2^v. The distinctions between these various Italian terms are very difficult to convey in a modern English translation.

²¹ Ibid., fols C2^v–D4^v.

²² *Giornale A*, pp. 81, 84; Pio Rodolfo Moiaschini, *Dubbi proposti [...] alli signori Accademici Ricovrati di Padoa, per occasione dell’impresa loro che è l’Antro delle Ninfe Naiadi di Homero* (Vicenza: Giorgio Greco, 1601).

But this was not the end of it: on 14 June 1601 Signor Abate Gradenigo discoursed from the *cattedra* on the cavern described by Socrates in the seventh book of *The Republic*. He excited in the soul of each person present not only *meraviglia* but *stupore*, and as a result ‘was constrained to offer the said discourse in print to satisfy the infinite number of people who, incited by the pleasure they had taken in hearing it, earnestly desired to read it’ (‘fu costretto a dare detto discorso alle stampe per sodisfare ad infiniti che, invitati dal diletto che haveveno preso udendolo lo bramavano ardentissimamente di leggerlo’).²³ It does therefore seem that the academy were particularly keen to have an official account of the meanings of their *impresa* on the printed record.

The public *attioni*, then, were very much oral events, to be experienced aurally, then followed up in writing or print. One description of the academy’s purpose in meeting publicly is ‘to recite or to hear a public or private action’ (‘o del recitare o del sentire qualche publica o privata attione’). The people assembled are described as the ‘auditori’, in one case the ‘numerosissimo et nobilissimo auditorio’, and the occasion is always judged a success when they listen in complete silence and applaud loudly at the end. The voices and verbal styles of the speakers, their elocution and pronunciation, are described. So the *Principe* (Cornaro himself) recites an oration ‘with a very fine voice’ (‘con bonissima voce’), causing ‘voices of happiness’ (‘voci d’allegrezza’) amongst the *auditori*, whereas one Scottish orator who chose Latin is criticized for his pronunciation (‘pronontia’), which was ‘not very fluent and comprehensible’ (‘non era molto ispedita, et intelligibile’); indeed his discourse was ‘confused’ (‘conturbato’) by it.²⁴

The first public academy on 9 January 1600 set the pattern for many of the events that would follow. The main recitation – in the form of a discourse from the *cattedra* by an *accademico* – is set off by musical recitations which mix voices and musical instruments. The combination of voices, both in discourse and song, and instrumental music, was a feature of other academies’ activities. The audience is in the first instance drawn in by the *fama* of the music, which, in the singing of the Mass in the chosen Chiesa del Santo (Sant’Antonio), promised to be most solemn (‘solenissima’). The academy’s *Principe*

²³ *Giornale A*, p. 82.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 15, 16, 24–5.

and the *soprastanti alla musica* had called in singers and musicians from Venice for this purpose; the main singer is an *accademico*. Everyone is then invited to the after-dinner *attione* at the academy itself. It again begins with a ‘concertino di varii instrumenti et voci’ which has the function not only of bringing solemnity and delight, but of quietening the great murmur of voices. The main discourse is then delivered, after which the concert continues, once again received with pleasure in total silence.²⁵

Just over a couple of months later there are details of a slightly different style of event: a funeral oration. On this occasion print, writing, and other forms of material culture provide the setting for the aural experience. A man of letters, Signor Francesco Contarini, is brought in from Venice. He is known for ‘canzoni, sonetti, et madrigali’ that are already in print, and as someone who everyone wants to hear give an oration (‘orare’). We are told that the room of the academy was decked all in brown, and that on the mourning cloths or tapestries were attached the ‘componimenti poetici’, the written poetic compositions supplied by the *accademici* in praise of the departed, one Mattheaccio. The crowd stops to read these compositions, then views in silence as Contarini takes to the *cattedra*, which was itself decked in black velvet.²⁶

²⁵ Ibid., p. 15 (minute for the public session of 9 January 1600): ‘si diede principio ad un concertino di varii instrumenti et voci, il quale non solo servì per solennità et per diletto de gli auditori, ma insieme per acquetare il sussorio de voci, che fra tanta gente era grandissimo. [...] Sforza Oddo academico [...] fece nella nostra lingua volgare un’attione, che per esser state da lui messa insieme, in pochissimo tempo et quasi, et secondo l’opinione de molti, all’improvviso, fu giudicata bellissima et al tempo, al luogo et a gli auditori accomodatissima come chiaramente si potrà vedere nel nostro libro segnato B de li componimenti academici in prosa, dove sarà posto. Finito il discorso s’incominciò di novo il concerto, il quale per esser come il primo meschiato di voci et instrumenti di musici eccellentissimi fu con sommo silentio et diletto sentito’.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 24 (minute for public session of 21 March 1600): ‘accese detto signor, mentre era il tutto pieno di silentio et d’una certa mestitia che da quelle nere vesti dell’Academia nasceva, la cattedra che di veluto nero era similmente adobata, et con attione et maniera tale recitò una bellissima et ordinatissima oratione, che ci diede facilmente a conoscere quanto per mover gli affetti de gli animi possi la forza dell’eloquenza in persona che di essa a miglior uso se ne sappia particolarmente servire [...] et molte altre sue prerogative ne raccontò, le quali, dall’esemplare che di essa nel nostro libro B si conserva, si potranno piu chiaramente vedere. Fu questa attione accettissima non dirò all’academia solo, ma a tutti quelli ch’ebbero gratia di poterla sentire et però con universali voci de lodi da tutti commendata et per bellissima giudicata’.

Contarini was brought in for the occasion, but then, later the same year, became an academician and was elected *segretario*. He was praised again in the record in mid-1601; his *nobilissime attioni* both ‘in this, and other academies’, and in his printed Latin and vernacular works, were very well known to everyone.²⁷ Let us conclude with the contrasting example of a less well known academician, Flavio Querenghi, whose oeuvre of *attioni* did not combine orality and print in the same way. He was the nephew of the much more substantial figure of Monsignore Antonio Querenghi, and became a member of the Ricovrati on 7 November 1601.²⁸ He was to be the direct successor to the role occupied by the author of the discourse on the academy’s *impresa*, Belloni. He became, that is, both a *canonico* (coadjutor for his uncle) of the cathedral and a professor of moral philosophy in the university. It was Federico Cornaro himself who recommended Flavio to the future doge, his father Giovanni, for the chair, which he obtained in 1624.²⁹

By the early seventeenth century there were of course many philosophers who communicated primarily by means of exegetical and theoretical discourse in printed books. But philosophy – especially practical philosophy – should not be equated exclusively with printed texts, as it is in most of the scholarship.³⁰ Querenghi did not publish a substantial printed book until late in life, when he was collecting his works for posterity, though he did edit a volume of poetry by his patron and uncle Antonio Querenghi.³¹ In the main part of his career, manuscript writings acted as a surrogate for and

²⁷ Ibid., p. 39.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 85.

²⁹ Megna, pp. 344–5.

³⁰ For example, throughout *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. by Charles B. Schmitt and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

³¹ Flavio Querenghi, *Institutionum moralium epitome; alter, de genere dicendi philosophorum, seu, de sapientiae et eloquentiae divortio* (Leiden: Maire, 1639); Flavio Querenghi, *Institutionum moralium epitome. De sapientiae & eloquentiae divortio. De consiliario. De honore. De numero virtutum moralium. Introductio in philosophiam moralem Aristotelis* (Paris: Widow of Mathurin Dupuis, 1643); Flavio Querenghi, *Discorsi morali politici et naturali* (Padua: Giulio Crivellari, 1644); Antonio Querenghi, *Hexametri carminis libri sex. Rhapsodiae variorum carminum libri V* (Rome: Bartolomeo Zannetti, 1618). He had two very slender *discorsi* printed in the early 1620s, probably as an alternative to having scribal copies made:

memorialization of his live oral and social performance as a philosopher. His predecessor Belloni published even less in print. Besides his discourse on the *impresa*, I have located only a slender (eight folios) Latin pamphlet of theses, issued in 1583.³²

Of primary importance, as I have already indicated, was Querenghi's social performance of the contemplative Christian philosopher's role in society. This was described in a dedication of 1629 by the prior of the Jesuate monastery at Padua. The prior, called Girolamo Canini, dedicated the third book of the French churchman Arnaud D'Ossat's *Lettere a principi* to 'Monsig. Flavio Querenghi Canonico, e Publico Lettore delle morali in Padova'.³³

Canini portrays the secular canon Querenghi as an exemplar of the balance between the contemplative and the active philosophical lives – a sort of secular hermit who teaches practical philosophy. We have already heard that this balance had been placed by Querenghi's predecessor Belloni at the heart of the Accademia dei Ricovrati's enterprise. On the one hand Canini observes – or imagines? – Querenghi living a serene and tranquil life of 'conferenza' with the Muses, enjoying a state of meditative pleasure, beyond idleness and beyond the mutual confusion that can arise in 'civil conversation'. So Canini sees him now seated in contemplation, now walking in the field, where even in midwinter the grasses and herbs flower as he passes:³⁴

Now I follow you towards the Sacro Tempio Maggiore, to see you be amongst the first to attend divine services: and now towards the public university of this celebrated Italian Athens, to hear you with pliant mind, a new Aesculapius of spirits, with no less

Flavio Querenghi, *Alchimia delle passioni dell'animo* ([Padua and Vicenza: n.p., 1620]); Flavio Querenghi, *Ragionamento dello Studio di Padova nella partenza dell'illustrissimo sig. podestà Ottaviano Bon* (Padua: G. B. Martini, [c. 1622–23]).

³² Giovanni Belloni, *Thaeses has, ad diversa spectantes publice examinandas proponit, veritatis acquirendae causa, Ioannes Bellonus Venetus academicus resolutus indefessus, sub foelicissimis praesidiis excel. D. Alexandri Marantae atrium, et sacrae theologiae doctoris, eiusdem academiae pro eximiis meritis assistentis et moderatoris* (Venice: Grazioso Percacino, 1583).

³³ Arnaud D'Ossat, *Lettere a principi di negotii politici, e di complimento, del sig. cardinal d'Ossat. Divise in tre libri. Tradotte dal francese, messe insieme, & arricchite di alcuni discorsi*, trans. by Girolamo Canini (Venice: Giacomo Sarzina, 1629), fol. 3a2^r.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, fols 3a2^v–3^r.

learning than eloquence, intent only on remedies, and focused on the wellbeing of the audience; [...] and in this way to put before others the true example, from which one can learn by a quicker route, more efficiently, and learn not only through school but rather principally through life, the most profitable philosophy.

(Hora il [V.S. Reverendissima] seguo verso il Sacro Tempio Maggiore, per vedervelo assistere fra i primi a' Divini Offitii: & hora verso la publica Academia di questa celebre Italica Atene, per sentirvi con seguace ingegno da lui novello Esculapio de gli animi, con non minor dottrina, che eloquenza, al sol rimedio intenta, & al ben de gli Vditori tutta rivolta; [...] & in tal guisa metter davanti a gli altri il vero esemplare, donde si apprenda per strada più breve, e più spedita, e vi s'impari non solamente per la scuola, ma ancora principalmente per la vita la più profittevole Filosofia.)

(D'Ossat, *Lettere a principi*, fol. 3a3^{r-v})

The balance between contemplative silence and active speech is important here, as it is in the setting of the Accademia dei Ricovrati. Canini first observes the silent, meditative Querenghi, in the fields and at worship, then hears him at the university lectern: the religious-philosophical life is a performance with an audience. Canini attributes the philosophical *persona* of a physician of souls to Querenghi, a new Aesculapius, intent on the practical healing, through learning and eloquence, of his auditors in the university. He celebrates him as someone who teaches philosophy by displaying himself in life, to the life, as a true example to others.³⁵

From this living philosophical exemplar, whose decrees on the art of living are reduced to practice in the candour and innocence of his own *costumi* ('già ridotti egregiamente da esso a' Precetti, e [...] alla pratica nel candore, e nell'innocenza esquisita de' suoi costumi'), they can learn the most profitable philosophy by a shorter and quicker route. The offices from which Querenghi's philosophical *persona* fundamentally derives are those of a priest (a coadjutor-canon responsible for the sacrament of penance in the cathedral) and a reader of moral philosophy, while it is his speech and conduct in person which is paramount, not his manuscript writings, and certainly not his printed books.

³⁵ On the *persona* of the philosopher as physician of body-and-soul see Sorana Corneanu, *Regimens of the Mind: Boyle, Locke, and the Early Modern 'cultura animi' Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011).

Canini's celebration of the dual offices of Querenghi as priest and professor of ethics in this context is of some historical significance. One consequence of the perceived need for reforming measures in sixteenth-century Venice and Padua was the increasing role played by the Venetian state in the administration of the University of Padua and, thereby, in the formation of the ruling and bureaucratic elite which the former needed.³⁶ In 1560 the task of nominating teaching staff at the university was taken from the joint body of masters and scholars and passed to the *Riformatori dello Studio* and the *Senato* itself.³⁷

One response of the body of conservative patricians who perceived a particularly acute moral crisis in the late sixteenth century was to encourage the role of Jesuits as educators of the young nobility in the traditional values of private and public morality – even if, in 1591, they were expelled and their college at Padua closed.³⁸ Another, via the *Riformatori*, was to elect to the chair of Aristotelian ethics at Padua in 1594, for the first time since its inauguration in 1407, a priest, Giovanni Belloni. From then until the eighteenth century the chair was held by ecclesiastics of various kinds. The second to be elected was Flavio Querenghi in 1624.³⁹ We have already heard that neither of these professors put any emphasis during the main part of their careers on communicating their philosophical teachings and scholarship via print.

Canini tells us what lies behind this: a moral turn towards teaching in life, in person, in church and university, orally and behaviourally. Besides church and university, however, there was a third setting in which Querenghi taught his audience by presenting himself as a living philosophical exemplar of the contemplative life: the *Accademia dei Ricovrati*. In his academic persona he ostentatiously followed the contemplative path into the *Ricovrati*'s philosophical cavern. But he did so as a secular

³⁶ Sandro de Bernadin, 'I riformatori dello studio', in *Storia della cultura veneta*, ed. by Gianfranco Folena, 5 vols (Vicenza: Pozza, 1976–86), IV, pp. 61–91, 61.

³⁷ Antonio Poppi, 'Il problema della filosofia morale nella scuola padovana del rinascimento: Platonismo e Aristotelismo nella definizione del metodo dell'etica', in *Platon et Aristote à la Renaissance: XVIe Colloque international de Tours, De Pétrarque à Descartes*, 32 (Paris: Vrin, 1976), pp. 104–46 (p. 107).

³⁸ Bernadin, pp. 73–4.

³⁹ Poppi, pp. 106–7, 137–8.

canon who was an active public teacher and speaker – thereby complementing the contemplative with the active, in the manner praised by Canini and associated by Belloni with the Ricovrati.

Another way of putting this is to say that he spoke up publicly for the virtues of silence and solitude. Indeed, he gave two public speeches on two separate occasions reopening the Ricovrati, one in praise of not speaking, the other in praise of solitude and silence, both of which were printed in the aforementioned edition of his vernacular *Discorsi*. The speech in praise of not speaking was given early on, in 1606, before he achieved honours in later life. He begins by saying that his intention had been never to speak at all, but that he had been ordered to do so by the *Principe*. The rest of the speech in praise of not speaking justifies his original intention. He describes this as taking the arms of the enemy. He quotes Diogenes saying that nothing was more proper to the philosopher than silence, and he takes on those who claim the opposite by arguing, for example, that animals speak. He touches – from one, partisan point of view – on many of the *topoi* that point to an ambivalent relationship with silence on the part of both the Christian and classical traditions of philosophy. The history of silence and its *topoi* in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy includes other contributions associated with other academies such as the Occulti in Brescia, and is bound up with the consequences of religious division and dissimulation, and the shift towards an understanding of contemplation as a social performance.⁴⁰

The *Giornale* reports that, in praising silence, Querenghi gave occasion to all never to be silent in always praising him with ingenious discourse.⁴¹ There are other such pointers to the importance of the discourses of praise and critical assessment that followed the various events. One of the roles of the secretary, indeed, is summarily to record the consensus that emerges from such discourse and assessment. Andrew Dell’Antonio has argued, in relation to the Accademia degli Umoristi in Rome, for the centrality of the ‘sonic experience and discursive interaction of the members of the Accademia’.

⁴⁰ Querenghi, *Discorsi morali*, fols T3^r–V3^v; Linda Bisello, *Sotto il ‘manto’ del silenzio: storia e forme del tacere (secoli XVI–XVII)* (Florence: Olschki, 2003).

⁴¹ *Giornale A*, p. 139.

The academy is a ‘site for *discourse-about*, its focus the interaction between the *virtuosi* concerning the performance or presentation rather than the performance or presentation itself’.⁴²

The second speech was delivered on 21 May 1633, after Querenghi became a *conte* and a professor of moral philosophy at Padua, on the occasion of the academy’s coming out of silence again and reopening. In a private session on 16 April, the secretary had described it as having – during the absence of the founder’s brother Marcantonio Cornaro – remained like a barren widow in solitude and withdrawal (‘rimasta vedova nella solitudine e ritiratezza incolta’).⁴³ The topic of Querenghi’s public discourse – solitude – was, in this context, highly appropriate. The only version extant is the one printed eleven years later in Querenghi’s collected *Discorsi*. The text we have opens by telling the Signori Eminentissimi and Celebratissimi Academici ‘of the ecclesiastical, secular and literary Republic’ that, having hung up his arms in the temple and retired to a hidden life in the country, he never believed he would have to show himself on the public scene again.⁴⁴

In this speech, he more directly justifies the fact that he, a philosopher who would contemplate in silent solitude, is speaking as a secular priest to a large audience of civic dignitaries. Even ancient contemplatives occasionally came together in symposia to converse on the fruits of their contemplation. He ends by saying that preaching solitude might better close than open the academy. The printed version retains the features of an orally delivered *discorso*. At one point for example, it incorporates a poetry recitation: ‘Listen to one of mine from home’ (‘Udite un mio di casa’), says Querenghi, before reading aloud Latin verses of his uncle’s on the preference of prelapsarian natural man for solitude and silence. But it also has touches for the reader of the printed book – as when he refers to ‘these discourses of mine’ (‘questi miei discorsi’).⁴⁵

Perhaps more interesting for us than the speech itself, is the way in which Querenghi’s noble *attione* was described in the academy’s official register:

⁴² Dell’Antonio, p. 45.

⁴³ *Giornale A*, p. 156.

⁴⁴ Querenghi, *Discorsi morali*, fol. V3^v.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, fols X2^{r-v}, Y3^r, Y4^v.

In which [discourse], while learnedly discussing the solitary and remote life, he [Querenghi] represented in his speech almost as if in a noble portrait his way of life, lonely and free from public affairs, dedicated only to his studies and friends, that was applauded by the most illustrious and excellent governors, along with the most illustrious and reverend monsignor bishop, and all the flower of the city there gathered to hear him. The academy ended with most beautiful music and the reading of some sonnets.

(Nel qual mentre dottamente ragionò della vita solitaria e repostata, rappresentò nella sua dicitura quasi in un gentilissimo quadro il viver suo solingo, e da pubblici affari disciolto, solo agli studii ed agli amici sacro, al quale applauderono con l'illustrissimo e reverendissimo monsignor vescovo gli illustrissimi ed eccellentissimi rettori, et tutto il fior della città quivi concorso ad udirlo. Si terminò l'Academia con bellissima musica et lettura d'alcuni sonetti.)

(*Giornale A*, p. 158)

In his entry, the secretary summarizes the discourse about Querenghi's speech on the part of the *virtuosi* assembled to hear it. It is an orally painted portrait, greeted by loud applause and praise on the part of the elite of Padua and their Venetian governors. It was naturally complemented and honoured by other forms of sound: music and poetry, including the poetry recited as part of the *discorso*. Though submitted in writing for approval before the event, and printed in revised form eleven years later, the audience for which it was primarily intended received it as a living philosophical portrait of solitude and silence, delivered orally in a public forum.

The printed version, then, is an afterthought, intended for Querenghi's afterlife in posterity. It removes the discourse from its natural environment. This was one in which orality, regulated and supplemented by manuscript writing, was the norm, and in which the affective response of the listening dignitaries, also registered in writing, was paramount. In such an environment, philosophy was understood to be an oral and social performance on the part of people who adopted philosophical personae – in this case, one or other kind of *ricovrato* – in their speech and conduct.⁴⁶ Writing was used

⁴⁶ *The Philosopher in Early Modern Europe: The Nature of a Contested Identity*, ed. by Conal Condren, Stephen Gaukroger, and Ian Hunter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

in advance of oral delivery to ensure that the performance would be decorous, and in retrospect to record the aesthetic reaction of the audience to the persona portrayed in sound and gesture.