1.1 Sperone Speroni’s *Dialogo d’amore*

The anonymous *Avertimento sopra il Dialogo d’amore di m. Sperone Speroni* is part of a long and complex censorship case of Speroni’s *Dialoghi*. The *Dialoghi* were prohibited by Constabile’s *Aviso* of 22 May 1574, the *Index* of Parma 1580 and *Indexes* of Rome of 1590 and 1593. The Roman *Indexes* declare that the prohibition would be in force until the work was corrected. In a letter to his friend Matteo Macigni dated 9 October 1574, Speroni informs Macigni of his interrogation at the Roman Inquisition by the master of the sacred palace. His interrogator could well have been Constabile, who was appointed to this position in 1573. According to Speroni, the master of the sacred palace informed him that a certain gentleman and friend of the master of the sacred palace (“gentiluomo”, “quel suo amico”) whose name Speroni never knew had denounced his dialogues and handed them over to the master with his comments. Speroni even refers to the frontispiece of the edition used for the denunciation. Apparently the master of the sacred palace showed him the denounced edition at his interrogation. Speroni says that there was a list of foods written on it and cynically speculates whether the denouncer was a cook.

Speroni was expected to either write an apology or correct and partially rewrite his *Dialoghi* and compose an oration against courtesans. He obeyed and prepared a defence against accusations put forward against him, the *Apologia dei dialogi*, as well as the *Orazione contra le cortigiane*. It is a noteworthy exception that Speroni, an author of literary works, was interrogated in the early 1570s in Rome by Constabile. Poets were rarely interrogated by the Roman censorial authorities in the second half of the sixteenth century, so their accounts are scarce. Montaigne met the master of the sacred palace and his “compaignon,” probably his *socius*. Unlike Speroni, Montaigne does not reveal much of his interrogation.

His *Apologia* shows that the interrogation involved fundamental questions on poetics, rhetoric and the freedom of poetry and language. It elucidates Roman censorship politics and may even have influenced it, as shown above. What is more, Speroni bases his argumentation on poetic authorities, especially Petrarch. It is thus feasible that his statements and defence were one

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1 Cf. *ILI*, ix, 747, 752, 393, cf. 748–51.
3 See Speroni, *Apologia dei Dialogi*, 295, 313, 683; Pozzi, 484s.
reason for the censorial authorities to examine vernacular love poetry more closely in the 1570s.

As we learn from Speroni, this interrogation took place before his Dialogi were prohibited by the May Aviso of 1574, either in early 1574 or in 1573. He was asked to compose an apology or correct his dialogues and provided for both. He found time for this in his later years in Rome. The anonymous and undated judgment Avertimento sopra il Dialogo d’amore di m. Sperone Speroni dates to approximately the early 1570s, and is written by the same hand as the Avertimento sopra le rime dell’Ariosto, del Bembo et del Sannazaro. The relation between the Avertimento, the interrogation and the prohibition is not clear, but analogies between the accusations put forward against the assessed authors become evident. Furthermore, Speroni’s apology shows what the master of the sacred palace criticized in his dialogues, and analogies to the Avertimento are evident. It is likely that the Avertimento preceded and even led to the interrogation, which was followed by the prohibition.

Ten years after the interrogation and Constabile’s May prohibition, on 3 February 1584, the Congregation for the Index decided to include the Dialoghi in the second class of the Index. The Avertimento, however, carries a note which was added afterwards by another hand, probably that of the secretary of the Congregation for the Index: “Decretum quod reponendum in prima classe.” At some point the Congregation for the Index decreed that Speroni was to be listed in the first class and the “reponendum” suggests this happened after he had been assigned to the second class. Now both he and his dialogues were banned. Three more years passed before the Congregation charged a commission of censors with their expurgation, along with that of Francesco Giorgi’s De Harmonia mundi, Agostino Steuco’s Cosmopoeia and Leone Ebreo’s Dialogi d’Amore. On 10 August 1592 a Memoriale pro Dialogos Speroni was read out in the Congregation for the Index, and the Congregation decreed that the master of the sacred palace should provide for the censorship. Fourteen days later this task was delegated to the Jesuit and consolutor of the

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6 Cf. Appendix, doc. 1.1, 1.2. On the dating see Appendix, introduction to doc. 1.3.