In the autumn of 2010, the elegant Dutch black stallion, Moorlands Totilas and his rider, Edward Gal, created headlines at the World Equestrian Games at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, Kentucky, as they gave nearly flawless performances in the dressage ring. The unified and seemingly effortless collaboration of rider and horse embodied an ideal first expressed almost half a millennium ago by the Neapolitan riding master, Federico Grisone. The modern equestrian sport of dressage (from the French dresser, which means ‘to train’) evolved from another form of horsemanship known as the manège, the classical riding practised at the courts of early modern Europe. The French term manège derives from the Italian verb maneggiare (to manage or train) employed by Grisone in his treatise, Gli ordini di cavalcare (The Rules of Riding), first published in Naples in 1550. Although Grisone was not the inventor of manège riding, he was the first author to publish a treatise and present horsemanship as a noble art form.

Grisone was also the first author to record the names of manège movements and the first to construct a diagram illustrating how to ride the two principle foundations of the discipline – the volta and the repolone. Sixteenth and seventeenth century masters, from John Astley to William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle, made reference to Grisone and his methods in their own treatises. Some of these masters, as well as modern-day historians, have singled out passages in the Ordini describing cruel punishments of the horse and have rejected Grisone’s methods as brutal. However, they may have read these passages out of context without acknowledging Grisone’s more humane and perceptive training philosophies. Lastly, Grisone demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the contact between the horse’s mouth and the rider’s hand that is surprisingly up to date and recognizable to modern riders and trainers.

Currently, I am preparing an edited modern English translation of the Ordini for publication with the Arizona Center for Medieval
and Renaissance Studies. As the source, I used the 1550 first edition of the *Ordini*, deposited in the Ludwig von Hünersdorf Collection at the National Sporting Library & Museum in Middleburg VA, which I translated in collaboration with the Italian literature scholar, Federica Deigan.¹ The Library’s F. Ambrose Clark Rare Book Room is an important repository of sixteenth and seventeenth century treatises on horsemanship and holds no fewer than nine copies of eight Italian editions of the *Ordini*, published between 1550 and 1620.² Despite its importance to the history of riding, there exists only one modern edition of the *Ordini* in Italian, and it has not been translated into English since Thomas Blundeville published an abridged version in England in 1560 under the title *A newe booke containing the arte of rydynge, and breaking greate horses*.³ I embarked on this translation project out of a desire to make Grisone’s text more accessible to equestrians and scholars who cannot read the original Italian.

¹ The translation project would not have been possible without the support of the National Sporting Library & Museum and the John H. Daniels Fellowship. I transcribed the 1550 edition of the *Ordini* and completed the first draft of the translation with the assistance of Dr. Deigan during the twelve months in 2007 when I held a Daniels Fellowship at the Library. I am especially indebted to John H. and Martha Daniels and their daughter, Martha Daniels, whose financial support and vision led to the creation of the fellowship at the Library. David Guy, a dressage rider and instructor from Flemington NJ, assisted me greatly in reviewing the translation and answering my questions regarding dressage. I would also like to thank Nancy H. Parsons, the former President & CEO of the Library as well as Richard Stoutamyer, the present Executive Director and Lisa Campbell, the Librarian.

² The National Sporting Library & Museum has a greater number of Italian editions of the *Ordini* than any other library in the United States and is second only to the University of Bologna, which owns ten editions, in holdings worldwide. The National Sporting Library & Museum also owns nine copies of eight translated editions of the *Ordini* in French, English, and German.