

THE RHETORIC OF FICTIVE ARCHITECTURE  
*COPIA AND AMPLIFICATIO* IN ALTICHIERO DA ZEVIO'S  
ORATORY OF ST GEORGE, PADUA

10868 with endnotes

7791 without endnotes

The prominent architectural settings realised by fourteenth-century painter Altichiero da Zevio are characterised by a marked interest in structural accretion and decorative abundance that appears at first sight to be gratuitous. His frescoes for the Oratory of St George in Padua (c.1379-1384) are emblematic of this architectural approach, presenting fictive buildings that are almost always articulated by at least two or three registers, and develop through numerous projecting additions, such as the pulpit-like structures attached to the church in the *Baptism of King Sevius* (Figs 1 and 2) or the empty minuscule balcony in the *Dispute with the Philosophers* (Fig.3). The settings develop in width as well as in height, and not always in an orderly manner, as demonstrated by the building on the right in *St Catherine on the Wheel* (Fig.4): a bizarre mass developing sideways with projecting sections at the front and on the side. In addition, Altichiero manipulated fictive structures to display more architectural detail, such as the pink structure in *St George on the Wheel* (Fig.5), or the arms of the throne in the *Coronation* (Figs 6 and 7), and the abundance and intricacy of decorative details such as window tracery and crenellation are nothing short of mesmerising.

Setting itself within a significant rhetorical turn in art and architectural history,<sup>1</sup> this article deploys rhetoric as an interpretative tool for Altichiero's plethora of accreted,

intricately decorated architectural settings for the Oratory of St George. It focuses on the rhetorical tropes of *copia* and *amplificatio*, examining the dissemination and understanding of rhetorical principles and the modalities of their teaching in medieval Italy and, more specifically, in Trecento Padua. This interpretation of Altichiero's fictive structures demonstrates that architecture in painting, often neglected by scholarly literature and treated as a lesser counterpart to built architecture, is a powerful form of visual rhetoric. The pairing of architectural setting and narrative forms an inextricable unit within which fictive structures and narrative reciprocally increase each other's agency.<sup>2</sup> The presence of the narrative 'activates' fictive architecture, enabling us to decode its meanings and messages as a setting; similarly, architecture in painting deploys communicative abilities that reiterate, clarify and, crucially, intensify the narrative's messages, strengthening its persuasiveness. Most importantly, the intertwined relationship between setting and narrative provides an interpretive context highlighting meanings and messages of architectural forms that also apply to built structures. This article therefore underscores the porosity between two and three-dimensional buildings, contributing towards a more integrated consideration of architecture in all its forms and enriching our understanding of its communicative powers.

#### The Rhetoric of Abundance: *Copia* and *Amplificatio*

The structural and decorative abundance of the Oratory's architectural settings evokes the rhetorical precepts of *copia* and *amplificatio*, terms often used by ancient writers to commend stylistic fluency in writing.<sup>3</sup> *Copia* is abundance of expression as a stylistic goal and learning technique, while *amplificatio* is a rhetorical trope expanding a single idea or statement.<sup>4</sup> Although these descriptions refer to texts, it is

not difficult to see parallels with Altichiero's rich and 'expanded' structures, as we shall see.<sup>5</sup>

Amplification had been considered a fundamental trope at least since Aristotle. For him, amplifying the importance of facts was the natural thing to do once these facts have been proven, and amplification (*auxēsis*) and its counterpart, attenuation (*tapeinōsis*), were regarded as common requirements for any speech over the centuries.<sup>6</sup> Cicero defined it as an "admirable" form of ornament that increases the honour of the speech, even describing it as the highest achievement of eloquence.<sup>7</sup> As such, amplification reveals a great deal of the orator himself. For Quintilian it is ornament that distinguishes the orator, for even those without culture can have *inventio*, and it is for this reason that Cicero identifies amplification as the difference between a merely skilled orator and a truly eloquent one.<sup>8</sup>

The interpretation of *amplificatio* as a reflection of the orator's quality defines Altichiero as a particularly proficient artist rather than a "merely skilled" one. If the aim of the artist and his patrons was to give the Oratory distinction, perhaps in particular by proposing it as a counterpart to the Scrovegni Chapel, decorated by Giotto around 1305, Altichiero could not have chosen a better course of action than to design conspicuous and intricate buildings, in opposition to Giotto's linear, mostly mono-structural settings, particularising them with *amplificatio*. Furthermore, amplification is particularly suited to the subject matter depicted in the frescoes, for this rhetorical trope was traditionally reserved for the praise of already ascertained actions and of people whose character had already been determined.<sup>9</sup> The highly ornate, 'accreted' fictive architecture of the Oratory as a type of visual rhetoric would

thus have further corroborated the indubitability and magnificence of the events portrayed, a corroboration the fictive architecture had already provided in its role of place and prime locator of the narrative.

In his *Institutio oratoria*,<sup>10</sup> Quintilian divided *amplificatio* into *incrementum* (growth, increase), *comparatio* (comparison), *rationatio* (reasoning) and *congeries* (accumulation, heap, pile).<sup>11</sup> All these aspects can be observed in the Oratory of St George. *Incrementum*, a most powerful trope that makes even small things seem great,<sup>12</sup> features in almost all the painted scenes, for example in *St Catherine on the Wheel* (Fig.8), where the bizarre structure on the right presents an alternation of projecting and receding, open and closed units, that are more similar to growths rather than carefully planned, symmetrical additions. The same can be said for the white building in the *Presentation to the Virgin* (Fig.9), also characterised by receding and projecting units, balconies jutting out and a lateral expansion that turns into a wall pierced by a gabled round arch. It even applies to the building on the left in *St George Destroys the Temple* (Fig.10), and the structures filling the upper half of the *Dispute with the Philosophers* (Fig.11).

*Comparatio*, which achieves amplification by comparison, is here represented by the use of fictive structures that mirror each other across the walls of the Oratory.<sup>13</sup> Thus, for example, the building in *St George on the Wheel* on the north wall (Fig.5), with its projecting wings, is mirrored by the building in the scene it faces on the south wall, *St Lucy's Trials* (Fig.12), where the pale yellow palace presents two receding wings and a projecting central section. Furthermore, the temple in the *Presentation of Jesus* (Fig.13) reiterates with a few modifications the same structure of the church in *St*

*Lucy's Funerals* (Fig.14). Both structures are in the foreground, the entry demarcated by marble panels, and a wide central round arch gives access to a nave flanked by side aisles. Parallels are also established within the same scene and within the same wall. A bridge supported by a round arch is repeated twice in *St George Slaying the Dragon* (Fig.15), and the bridge in the foreground in this same scene in combination with a projecting wall is also repeated in the following scene, the *Baptism of King Sevius* (Fig.1).<sup>14</sup>

The third subcategory, *ratiocinatio*, indicates a series of arguments or details which when combined together better explain and describe the mental process through which one arrives at a conclusion.<sup>15</sup> Altichiero's settings displays ratiocination in scenes like the *Baptism of King Sevius* or *St Lucy's Funerals*, where the elaborate interior and exterior of the church are represented simultaneously in order to present a more detailed and comprehensive representation of a building as a whole. By displaying interior and exterior at the same time, Altichiero better 'explains' the structure of his buildings, offering us a clearer view of the result as whole. Finally, *congeries*, the multiplication of facts or words,<sup>16</sup> can be seen in the *Presentation of the Lupi Family* (Fig.16), where the baldachin of the throne of the Virgin displays an accumulation of gables, turrets, pinnacles and arches, or in the *Coronation of the Virgin* (Fig.6), where the numerous registers of the throne, marked by different fictive materials, colours, decorative patterns and structures, are piled on top of each other rising towards the *oculus*.

The ideas of *copia* and *amplificatio* as "expanding by means of diversified detail"<sup>17</sup> are exemplified not only in all of the Oratory's narrative scenes, but also in the frame.

The thin bands of fictive marble inlays have patterns on the long walls that differ from those on the short walls, the decoration on the edges of the vault, with its small round cusped arches (Fig.17), is as beautiful and intricate as that at the edges of the *Coronation of the Virgin*, but diverges from it nonetheless, and even the window embrasures present varied fictive inlays of different shape and colour hosting diverse figures.

Lanham described with great clarity the working mechanisms of amplification as a technique that invents, expands and particularises an assertion with a multitude of synonyms. This expansion is aimed at convincing the audience, which is thus encouraged to create a new “expanded sense of reality.”<sup>18</sup> If this new reality is convincing, the amplification is naturalised and becomes truthful for the audience. If one substitutes a plethora of synonyms with a plethora of architectural structures and decorative detail, one can see the extent to which *copia* led Altichiero’s imagination towards the creation of disparate realities, different places at different moments in history. This hypothesis seems ever more probable if one agrees with Moss in considering that the lists of synonyms taken from Cicero that circulated in Italy during the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries were the main means through which students enriched their Latin vocabulary and became familiarised with *copia*.<sup>19</sup>

#### Medieval Rhetoric: Dissemination of the Classics and *Poetria nova*

From the mid-thirteenth century Cicero’s work experienced renewed popularity thanks to various translations into the vernacular, and the consequential redirecting of his principles to a non-learned audience. The first phase of the ‘Ciceronian revival’ began in Italy with Brunetto Latini’s *Rettorica*, a translation into Italian of the *De*

*inventione* (begun in the 1260s and left incomplete) and with Bono Giamboni's *Fiore di rettorica*, an abridged translation of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (also begun in the 1260s), then believed to be Cicero's.<sup>20</sup>

Giles of Rome, instead, focused on Aristotle's work, and wrote a commentary to the Greek philosopher's *Rhetoric* in ca. 1272. Giles was particularly struck by Aristotle's consideration of rhetoric as linked with ethics, and commented that "rhetoric is about those things that are applicable to morals."<sup>21</sup> This meant that rhetoric had a much broader scope than assigned to it by Cicero, who defined it as the art of speaking well on civic affairs. The ethical dimension of rhetoric allowed medieval people to view it as a more encompassing and reliable art in fields other than civic affairs. Brunetto Latini himself, in his Ciceronian translation, had attempted to reconcile the Latin orator's definition of rhetoric with his view that rhetoric could be used for writing and speaking on any topic, and not solely for legal and political matters.

Late-medieval works also existed that did not present themselves as commentaries on the classics and dealt with rhetoric in great detail. The most famous and most widely circulated of these over a long period of time is Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova*, ca. 1208-1213. The *Poetria* covers all five parts of rhetoric, from invention through to delivery, and its popularity is demonstrated by numerous citations taken from it in the work of a disparate array of writers from many parts of Europe: from rhetoricians to scholars, from writers of treatises on *dictamen* (the art of composing official letters and documents) and prose to poets.<sup>22</sup> Particularly important for the present argument is a small group of commentaries to the *Poetria* written in fourteenth-century Italy, as we shall see later. Geoffrey opened his text with a passage that describes the

importance of planning one's work, of 'inventing' one's subject matter, and he interestingly does so with an architectural metaphor:

'If a man has a house to build, his impetuous hand does not rush into action. The measuring line of his mind first lays out the work, and he mentally outlines the successive steps in a definite order. The mind's hand shapes the entire house before the body's hand builds it. Its mode of being is archetypal before it is actual.'<sup>23</sup>

Geoffrey's *archetypus* is comparable to the rhetorical *tópos*, and we may therefore interpret it, in Altichiero's frescoes, as the architectural archetype of the Veneto. Although Altichiero might not have been in direct contact with Geoffrey's work, the writer's use of an architectural metaphor demonstrates that the boundaries between literature, architecture and the figurative arts were permeable at the very least on a theoretical level.<sup>24</sup>

The *Poetria* continues with a detailed treatment of amplification, the text itself amplified to demonstrate the rhetorical mode by way of example, followed by an aptly brief treatment of abbreviation as the other key possibilities for the development of a theme, supporting their explanation with a series of examples.<sup>25</sup> Geoffrey lists eight methods for the achievement of amplification: repetition (*interpretatio*, *expolitio*), periphrasis (*circuitio*, *circumlocutio*), comparison (*collatio*), apostrophe (*exclamatio*), personification (*prosopopoeia*), digression, description and opposition.<sup>26</sup> These divisions recall those offered by Quintilian, although Geoffrey's are more numerous and detailed and are themselves an example of amplification and repetition.



All of Geoffrey's amplifying methods can be identified in Altichiero's fictive architecture, with the exception of apostrophe, which is represented by the figures rather than the architecture, and opposition.<sup>27</sup> Geoffrey's *interpretatio* and *expolitio* signify repetition by variation, and can be likened to Quintilian's *incrementum*. This amplifying method is articulated by the presence of numerous accretions jutting out, such as the portico and small balcony of the building on the right in *St George Destroys the Temple* (Fig.10), the balcony in the upper left and the projecting section of the building on the right in the *Annunciation*; or the cityscape in the *Presentation at the Temple*, where balconies, porticoes, turrets, domes and pinnacles are almost piled on top of each other (Fig.13). Repetition is also evident in the use of decorative patterns like the swallow tail merlons in *St George Destroys the Temple* and in the scene opposite, *St Lucy Dragged by Oxen* (Fig.18); or the three-lancet window with interlaced round arches and twisted colonnettes in the top left of *St George Drinks Poison* (Fig.19) and in the top right of *St Lucy's Trials* (Fig.12); or the grey-blue domes in the city view in the *Flight to Egypt* (Fig.20), those of the temple in *St Catherine before the Pagan Idol* (Fig.21) and those atop the throne of the *Coronation* (Fig.6). Interesting variations are also represented in the motif of small arches acting as decorative framing elements for the vault and the *Coronation*. Each of the three sections of the vault is encased by round trefoiled arches with three small corbels (Fig.17), whereas the arches framing the *Coronation* are of a different colour and only have trefoils but reiterate the three-sphere corbels.

The second method, *circumlocutio*, consists of hinting at a topic without revealing it immediately, for as Geoffrey advises us one should not 'unveil the thing fully but

suggest it by hints [...] take a long and winding path around what you were going to say briefly.’<sup>28</sup> The viewer walks along a winding architectural path whichever scene they may gaze upon in the Oratory, for example in the *Baptism of King Sevius* (Fig.1), where the eye is drawn all around and beyond the central baptismal scene by the pink city gate on the right, the pale yellow portico on the left and the clerestory of the church on top. Geoffrey’s advice not to give everything away at once and merely suggest and hint at the crux of the matter is particularly helpful in relation to Altichiero’s uninhabitable places, as discussed in the previous chapter. The half open doors, numerous dark apertures and diminutive upper storeys and balconies only hint at the interiors of the painted structures, showing an entry point, a place to inhabit, only to frustrate the viewer’s desire for access.

Geoffrey’s *collatio* is similar to Quintilian’s *comparatio*, but the medieval writer points out that one may compare things either explicitly or implicitly, the implicit comparison being ‘more artistic and more distinguished.’<sup>29</sup> An explicit comparison is introduced by one of three key words: ‘more,’ ‘less’ or ‘equally,’ whereas an implicit comparison is introduced ‘with dissembled mien as if there were no comparison at all’ through the adoption of ‘a new form marvellously engrafted, where the new element fits as securely into the context as if it were born of the theme.’<sup>30</sup> It is difficult to say whether the architectural comparisons in the Oratory of St George are explicit or not, for they are not introduced by verbal means, but Geoffrey’s description of implicit comparisons as hidden and as new forms fitting securely within the context is in line with Altichiero’s reiteration with modifications of the structure acting as temple in the *Presentation of Jesus* (Fig.13) and as church in *St Lucy’s Funerals* (Fig.14), and of the yellow building in *St Lucy’s Trials* (Fig.12) complementing the pink structure in

front of it in *St George on the Wheel* (Fig.5). This amplifying means also extends beyond the walls of the Oratory through the numerous references Altichiero makes to the architecture of the Veneto, particularly in *St Catherine before the Pagan Idol* (Figs 22 and 23), where the comparison of the temple with the Santo articulates an evident *collatio* with the Paduan urban fabric.

The connection with the architectural identity of Padua also ties to Geoffrey's *prosopopoeia*, or personification. This trope consists of personifying an object and giving it a voice as if it were a person, as Geoffrey does, by way of example, by presenting a speech of the personified holy cross.<sup>31</sup> Reading *prosopopoeia* into Altichiero's frescoes for the Oratory of St George is more difficult than reading any of the other amplification methods presented by Geoffrey, but if one agrees in recognising numerous aspects of the built architecture of the Veneto in these fictive structures, such as the swallow tail merlons in *St George Destroys the Temple* (Fig.10) and *St Lucy Dragged by Oxen* (Fig.18), recalling the merlons of the Castelvecchio in Verona, or the intricate crenellation in various scenes resembling Venetian examples like the Palazzo Ducale or the Fondaco del Megio,<sup>32</sup> then it could be argued that Altichiero's settings embody the architectural landscape of his region, albeit in a reinvented way. The Oratory's fictive buildings personify the architectural identity of the Veneto, amplifying and concretising regional identity by locating within them the lives of Christ, St George, St Lucy and St Catherine.

The *Poetria nova* also lists digression as a means to achieve amplification, advising us to 'go outside the bounds of the subject and withdraw from it a little.'<sup>33</sup> Forms of digression can be observed in Altichiero's frescoes in *St George Slaying the Dragon*

(Fig.15), where the city walls and the buildings visible within them draw the eye away from the foreground where the saint is slaying the dragon in front of the frightened princess. The background bridge echoing the foreground one, also an example of repetition, leads the eye to the wall towers with machicolation and to a rich cityscape painted with great attention to detail, so much so that one of the towers of the background city gate is much shorter and narrower than the other to allow us to see the gable of a church façade with a rose window.

Another example of fictive architecture digressing from the main narrative event is the setting for *St Catherine on the Wheel* (Fig.8). The structure on the right occupies the majority of the scene, and its numerous accretions projecting sideways (the stairs where Maxentius stands) and forwards (the section on the far right with projecting balcony), its marble panelling and perforations (perforated balustrade and arches) attract the viewer's attention more than the figure of the saint on the wheel. Geoffrey points out that digression is a technique that demands restraint, for one should not digress so much from the main subject that it would then be too difficult to return to it. Altichiero achieves this by splaying the two sets of structures in *St Catherine on the Wheel* and joining them with a wall behind St Catherine. The architectural setting thus creates a V shape leading towards the saint, and the wall acts as a barrier that allows the eye to focus on the figure of Catherine whilst at the same time pointing out the developments of both structures acting as digressions even beyond the wall itself.

The final amplifying method that Geoffrey lists and that can be read in Altichiero's frescoes for the Oratory is description. Description enriches the 'long and winding path' of *circumlocutio*, for one should also let the path 'be wise, let it be both lengthy

and lovely.’<sup>34</sup> Lengthy and lovely description can be read in Altichiero’s intricate decorations reproducing precious materials, as for example in the *Coronation* (Figs 6 and 7). The arms of the throne lead the eye up through a congeries of marble panels, window-like apertures with tracery, shell shapes, gables with a rose window and floral decorations, pinnacles and blue-domed turrets at the back. The delicacy of the decorative patterns and the alternation of white, pale yellow and pink confer onto the throne a jewel-like quality that reveals Altichiero’s fondness for ‘descriptive’ architectural detail.

Altichiero’s architectural ornament is a crucial component of amplification. In Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria* ornament and amplification are discussed in the same book, for they are inextricably intertwined. The Latin author recommended the use of ornament to persuade a wide audience by seeking to give them pleasure, particularly in epideictic rhetoric.<sup>35</sup> This is the kind of rhetoric devoted to the praise and glory of the subject, where there is nothing left to prove for all that is described is certainty. If one were to ascribe a genre to Altichiero’s frescoes, where the admirable deeds of three saints and the holy life of Christ are described, it would be the epideictic. This reflects one of the uses of the verb ‘to amplify’ in the vernacular Italian, where it is often adopted to signify an increase in power, fame and prestige.<sup>36</sup> Architectural ornament in the Oratory’s frescoes is abundant in all depicted scenes, from capitals to console brackets, from pinnacles to painted external wall surfaces (as in *St George Destroys the Temple* (Fig.10), and *St Lucy’s Trials*, (Fig.12)), but it is particularly detailed in the fictive frame patterns, crenellation, tracery and blind or perforated arches of balustrades.

The Oratory's fictive frame presents intricate and varied geometric patterns encasing the scenes, but other, more architectural elements are used in the frame around the vault, where series of cusped round arches with a three-sphere corbel articulate the three sections of the ceiling, the *Coronation* lunette (Fig.6), whose arch is decorated by white, cusped trefoil arches with a three-sphere corbel and a sphere on each cusp, and the *oculi*, whose inner circle is painted with interlacing, cusped round arches with a three-leaf motif and also with a three-sphere corbel (Fig.24). The crenellation is particularly detailed on the background buildings in the *Presentation at the Temple* (Fig.13) and *St Lucy's Trials* (Fig.25), where small piers with a pointed roof with three spheres are alternated to sets of two cusped round arches with a crocketed, slightly concave gable where a lozenge decorated with a quatrefoil is inscribed. This motif is also present in the crenellation on the building in *St George on the Wheel* (Fig.26), although here it is complemented by a second and more elaborate kind of crenellation, where the small piers present a base and two registers, the upper one occupied by a minuscule niche. The round arches now have capitals, and they are surmounted by an ogee arch with crockets and four roundels. This elaborate crenellation is also visible, with modifications, on the building in *St George Drinks Poison* (Fig.27).

Window tracery is especially intricate in *St George Drinks Poison* and *St Lucy's Trials* (Fig.25), where a three-lancet window with twisted colonnettes presents a tracery of cusped, interlacing round arches (like those in the *oculi*) supporting two roundels with quatrefoils, each of the interstitial areas decorated by a trefoil; or in *St Lucy before Paschasius* (Fig.28), where four kinds of tracery are displayed, the one on the top right reiterating the window above the saint in *St George Drinks Poison*

(Fig.19) and recalling the central crenellation in *St George on the Wheel* (Fig.26). Balustrades are particularly ornate in the *Baptism of King Sevius* (Figs 1 and 2) and *St Lucy before Paschasius* (Fig.28), where they are articulated by a series of cusped ogee arches supported by slender piers, the area between each arch embellished by a little flower. This arrangement is also visible in the upper register of the temple in the *Presentation of Jesus* (Figs 13 and 29) and in the blind arches in *St George on the Wheel* (Fig.5), although here the piers are substituted by pairs of slender colonnettes. The balustrade in *St Catherine before the Pagan Idol* (Fig.21) also presents pairs of colonnettes, but they support trefoil arches like the blind ones above the machicolation of the main gate in the *Slaying of the Dragon* (Fig.15).

The decorative details described are but a fraction of the numerous kinds and different combinations of ornament that characterise the frescoes of the Oratory of St George. The more one looks, the more details and pattern variations one finds. They are so many and so beautiful that searching for and finding them in their various declensions becomes for the viewer a delightful architectural quest around the Oratory, from one scene to the next, from one wall to the other. Such *copia* of delicate, intricate ornament might have been greatly disapproved of by Quintilian, for whom ornament must be *virilis, fortis et sanctus* and always used in moderation, but it might have pleased Geoffrey of Vinsauf, whose discussion of ornament follows that on amplification and abbreviation.<sup>37</sup>

Geoffrey treats ornament in great detail, dividing his discussion into five sections and subdividing it into multiple means accompanied by examples to achieve an ornate composition. The numerous tropes indicated by Geoffrey in this extensive treatment

of ornament, amplified even more than the treatment of amplification itself, highlight both the inextricable link between amplification and ornament, and the importance of variation. This is made especially clear by Geoffrey when he treats *expolitio*, the seventh figure of thought discussed as part of his second section on ‘easy ornament (also a trope of *amplificatio*):

‘By turning a subject over repeatedly and varying the figure, I seem to be saying a number of things whereas I am actually dwelling on one thing, in order to give it a finer polish and impart a smooth finish by repeated applications of the file, one might say. This is done in two ways: either by saying the same thing with variations, or by elaborating upon the same thing.’<sup>38</sup>

This passage, emphasising repetition, elaboration and variation could easily have been part of Geoffrey’s treatment of *amplificatio*. As seen above, Altichiero too ‘says the same thing’ with variations, as demonstrated by the series of cusped arches with three-sphere corbels used as framing devices in the vault and the *Coronation* (Figs 17 and 6), but changing their colour (reddish-brown in the vault, white in the *Coronation*) and the shape of the arch (round in the vault, trefoil in the *Coronation*). His interest in ornamental variety is perhaps especially evident in *St Lucy before Paschasius* (Fig.28), where four different kinds of windows and two different types of panelling (coloured marble and carved roundels) adorn the same building.

The late medieval love of *varietas* feeds into what Mary Carruthers termed ‘polyfocal perspective,’ that is the enjoyment of a literary, artistic or architectural work from a variety of points of view.<sup>39</sup> These numerous points of view are given by the diversity



and splendour of the ornament that cannot be taken in at a single glance, as is the case with Altichiero's profusion of beautifully coloured, intricate ornament and architectural *amplificatio*, sending the viewer from one side of the Oratory to the other and back again to compare, for example, the projecting and receding sections of the buildings in *St George on the Wheel* (Fig.5) and *St Lucy's Trials* (Fig.12), or the upper register of the façade with niche and statue of the pagan temple in *St Catherine before the Pagan Idol* (Fig.21) and in *St Lucy's Funerals* (Fig.14). Polyfocal perspective also applies to the perspectival representation of the splayed architectural settings, as visible for example in *St George on the Wheel*, eluding a 'correct', single viewpoint perspective.<sup>40</sup>

Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova* was the basic textbook of rhetorical composition for three centuries after it was written, and it was taught at different levels, both in schools and universities.<sup>41</sup> It engendered numerous commentaries all over Europe, two of which were written in Italy at the beginning of the fourteenth century. The first is the commentary of Guizzardo of Bologna, a *trivium* scholar (*trivium doctor*) who taught at Bologna from 1289 to 1319, and the second is that of Pace da Ferrara, who was a professor of grammar and logic at the University of Padua in the early fourteenth century.<sup>42</sup> Pace's is the longest commentary of the two, dwelling on the *Poetria* phrase by phrase, occasionally word by word, but both Pace's and Guizzardo's texts combine the attention for textual concerns that was typical of school education, with a more sophisticated emphasis on rhetorical theory that was typical of University teaching.<sup>43</sup> This indicates that the *Poetria* circulated at several levels in Italy too, and that rhetoric was a primary educational concern in Padua, both at school and at university.

## Rhetoric in Fourteenth-Century Padua

Rhetorical teaching permeated the Paduan social fabric in four major ways. Firstly through the Biblioteca Antoniana's acquisition of books for the instruction of the friars, secondly through the writing and the performance of sermons (especially after preaching was established as a crucial clerical duty in 1215) and secular public speaking. Thirdly, rhetoric was taught at the University, which provided the highest degree of rhetorical teaching, and finally through private grammar and rhetoric schools, the first stepping stone towards an education that was not necessarily completed at University by all pupils.

### 1. The Biblioteca Antoniana

The first document that describes the existence of a book collection at the Santo dates from 1237.<sup>44</sup> Since its origins in the early thirteenth century, the library of the Franciscan convent was affiliated to the theological school of St Anthony, the first Franciscan who taught theology with the authorisation of St Francis himself.<sup>45</sup> From 1291, when a scriptorium was established for the transcription of texts necessary to the friars, the collection expanded, and an inventory of 1396-97 lists theological, patristic, exegetical and philosophical texts as well as works by Franciscan writers such as Bonaventure.<sup>46</sup> Although the collection was not rich in classical texts, we know that it held copies of various works by Cicero and by Aristotle. Knowledge of the Greek philosopher's thought was considered, as elsewhere, paramount.<sup>47</sup>

### 2. Preaching and Secular Public Orations

The inventory of 1396-97 reveals that at least until the end of the fourteenth century the Antoniana library favoured a kind of teaching that promoted pastoral ability and theological knowledge.<sup>48</sup> This appears to be a direct response to the 1215 Fourth Lateran Council, which stated that all priests were to increase the pastoral care they provided for their parishioners. This included delivering regular sermons, which were compiled using formal classical rhetorical techniques.<sup>49</sup> Thus, priests applied Aristotelian and Ciceronian invention to Biblical material, and adapted it to the vernacular. The art of preaching was codified in the form of *reportationes*, the systematic writing of specific sermons and formulae the preacher could turn to, to compose his sermons, and works designed to help the priest carry out his duty, known as *Pastoralia*, developed.<sup>50</sup>

In Padua, and for Franciscans in general, St Anthony represented a fundamental example as the first preacher who organised and applied rhetorical techniques to sermons within the Franciscan framework.<sup>51</sup> It is during St Anthony's time, at the beginning of the thirteenth century, that the first accurate descriptions of contemporary rhetorical techniques appear, prescribing the division and subdivision of a sermon around a single verse of the Scriptures, a *thema*. However, the arrangement of St Anthony's sermons is not particularly indebted to the symmetrical distribution of topic around a *thema*, rather, it is rich in *clausulae*, detailed titles and subtitles, similes, juxtapositions between Old and New Testaments, etymological explanations, and long evangelical pericopes divided into numerous sections.<sup>52</sup> This ornate treatment of the Scriptures articulates a *dilatatio*, or *amplificatio* of the material, rich in comparisons and concordances between Old and New Testament.<sup>53</sup>

St Anthony's frequent use of *clausulae*, detailed titles and subtitles is mirrored in Altichiero's frescoes by the multitude of architectural structures and architectural detail, repeated exactly or slightly varied, surrounding the figures. One could say that the structures as a whole, such as the building in *St George Drinks Poison* (Fig.19), act as titles, whilst the marble panels, intricate merlons and window tracery function as subtitles particularising the narrative's setting. Besides, the *dilatatio* of St Anthony's sermons brings a further layer of meaning to the splaying of buildings seen in the previous chapter. The splayed throne of the *Coronation* (Fig.6), for example, is a form of dilation both literally (because it is splayed, dilated) and figuratively, in the sense that the dilation of its arms amplifies the narrative by allowing us to see more architectural detail. Comparisons and concordances are also present in Altichiero's frescoes as they are in St Anthony's sermons. An analysis of Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *collatio* has shown how numerous parallels can be drawn across the Oratory, for example between the temple in the *Presentation* (Fig.13) and the church in *St Lucy's Funeral* (Fig.14), both articulating a similar structure; or the buildings in *St George on the Wheel* (Fig.5) and in *St Lucy's Trials* (Fig.12), complementing each other's receding and projecting sections. As already seen, architectural detail also plays an important part in the articulation of correspondences across the Oratory's walls. Yet another example is the use of white rustication on the left in the *Annunciation* and in *St Catherine's Martyrdom* (Fig.30), or the use of the same merlons in the cityscape of the *Presentation at the Temple* (Fig.13), and on the pale yellow building in *St Lucy's Trials* (Figs 12 and 25).

It might seem a stretch to compare Altichiero's frescoes so closely with sermons written well over a hundred years earlier. Perhaps saying that Altichiero's frescoes are

like visual sermons means to grossly conflate the verbal and visual nature of sermons and frescoes, and to disregard their differing audiences.<sup>54</sup> However, as Mary Carruthers pointed out, all arts in the middle ages, from literature to music, from the figurative arts to architecture, were conceived and experienced on the basis of ancient rhetoric.<sup>55</sup> Besides, as observed by Ruth Morse, amplification is one of the most distinctive features of medieval literature as a whole, and, with time, the rhetorical techniques used by St Anthony as well as others breached the clerical boundaries, allowing the more literate laity to eventually appropriate them.<sup>56</sup> Examples of secular public speaking in late medieval Italy are offered by the advice books for the podestà, which furnished rudimentary guidance on public speaking accompanied by model orations, and by treatises on the *ars concionandi* or *arengandi*. These *artes* were less known and less systematically treated than the *ars predicandi*, *dictaminis* or *poetica*, but they evolved over time from practice and from the example of the *ars dictaminis* and *predicandi*.<sup>57</sup>

The *ars concionandi* taught citizens how to respond to and petition officials, and addressed a great variety of speakers and speech situations.<sup>58</sup> The growing power of central and northern Italian city states like Padua encouraged the development of bureaucracy and an increase in the production of administrative documentation, as well as requiring more and more kinds of people to write documents and give speeches, from judicial officials to citizens speaking in their council and from executives of communal chanceries to ambassadors.<sup>59</sup> In his *Parlamenti ed epistole* (c. 1240), Guido Fava has a podestà say that “it is the custom of ambassadors and noble men to speak ornately and say beautiful words so that they may obtain great prestige and reputation.”<sup>60</sup> This sentence shows both how important good public

speaking was to increase one's prestige and how crucial ornament was for this purpose.

In spite of its growing popularity, the *ars concionandi* was held in low esteem by those whose profession was dominated by Latin, such as teachers in ecclesiastical schools and at University. Boncompagno da Signa, teacher of rhetoric at Bologna from the 1190s to perhaps the 1230s, referred to the *ars concionandi* as a *plebeia doctrina*, but in the Trecento the speech structure used in preaching as well as in vernacular *reportationes*, where a theme is identified, split into sections, analysed through *distinctiones* and then amplified, was adopted even by Petrarch when addressing a wider public - although he still used Latin.<sup>61</sup> The poet's oration to Galeazzo Visconti and the Novaresi in 1356 identifies as its *thema* a line from Psalm 72.10, *convertetur populus meus hic* ("here my people are converted"), which the poet divides in two parts: "for the sake of brevity I will divide [this line] in two parts only, of which the first addresses laudable correction [praise-worthy conversion], that is *convertetur*. The second [part] describes the delightful sense of belonging expressed in *populus meus hic*."<sup>62</sup> The second distinction is then itself divided into *populus*, *meus* and *hic*, each treated separately in great detail and amplified through examples. Such a scrupulous word-for-word analysis, in contrast with the *studio brevitatis* professed at the beginning, shows how rhetorical schemes adopted for the *ars predicandi* were also applied to the *ars concionandi*, even when the orator was a humanist of Petrarch's calibre.

### 3. The University

As well as preaching and secular public speaking, a major Paduan institution that contributed to the dissemination of rhetorical principles was the University, or the *Studium*. Although the Paduan University did not receive papal recognition until Urban V's 1363 bull declared the establishment of a faculty of theology in the city, scholarly teaching had taken place there since the early thirteenth century.<sup>63</sup> Especially after the tyrant Ezzelino Romano was defeated in 1256 and the *Studium* was reinstated, the University focused its efforts on the liberal arts, and within these it favoured the *trivium*: grammar, rhetoric and dialectic.<sup>64</sup>

The University was fundamental to the prestige of Padua during the dominion of the Carrara family. In the 1318 document where the Maggior Consiglio transfers its powers to the Carrara, a specific reference to the University is made stating that it should fall under the *paterna providentia* of Giacomo I da Carrara.<sup>65</sup> The signori did not disappoint, and not only continued applying and overseeing all the provisions in favour of the University that it had inherited from the commune, but it also actively participated in the appointment of posts, calling foreign scholars to increase the prestige of the Paduan *Studium*.<sup>66</sup> The Carrara's involvement with the appointment of teaching posts, which Gallo aptly termed "politica delle cattedre," testifies to the signori's will to control the cultural life of their city, as also exemplified by the appointment of Petrarch as canon at the Paduan cathedral at the request of Iacopo II da Carrara.<sup>67</sup> Given the signori's keen interest in the life of the University, it is tempting to identify Altichiero's engagement with rhetoric, and in particular with *amplificatio*, as a reference to the rhetorical teachings of the University and as indirect praise of the Carrara.

It is not unlikely that the Oratory's patron, Raimondino Lupi, and his executor Bonifacio Lupi, both mercenary condottieri originally from Parma, might have wanted to include in the frescoes a nod to their powerful Paduan hosts. Although the coats of arms in the fictive frame of the Oratory are only those of the Lupi, two figures dressed in black stand out in the bottom right corner in *St Lucy before Paschasius* (Fig.28), and have been identified by Mardersteig as Francesco il Vecchio and Francesco Novello da Carrara.<sup>68</sup> One can read another reference to the Carrara reinforcing Mardersteig's hypothesis in the scene immediately following *St Lucy before Paschasius*, where several pairs of oxen fail to drag the saint to a brothel. The Carrara coat of arms was a red cart on a white background, an agricultural tool often dragged by oxen. The ox as symbol of the Carrara and by extension of Padua was also used in the illumination attributed to Altichiero in Petrarch's *Compendium virorum illustrium* (1380), where a fight between an ox and a lion represents the war of Chioggia between Padua and Venice. The two figures and the oxen frescoed next to them testify to the Lupi's will to associate themselves with the Carrara, strengthening already existing family ties.<sup>69</sup> In spite of this, amplification, however important a feature for medieval rhetoric, does not seem to have any specific connection with the Paduan ruling family.

The elucidation of the link between the Carrara and rhetoric is made harder by the difficulty in ascertaining who actually held the *cathedra* of rhetoric at the University in the fourteenth century. Even though the *Studium* was the highest expression of rhetorical teaching in Padua, there were numerous private schools and numerous teachers of rhetoric, and it is not always clear who occupied what post. Some *professores* or *doctores gramaticae* taught at both the University and at private



schools, but not all.<sup>70</sup> However, the figure of Pietro da Moglio might be useful for the present analysis. Pietro was one of the rhetoricians who certainly held the *cathedra* at Padua, where he arrived in 1362 and remained until 1368 under the aegis of Francesco il Vecchio da Carrara.<sup>71</sup> Pietro was the author of a commentary on the *Poetria nova*, today held at the Biblioteca Durazzo in Genoa, and he taught courses on the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Cicero's *De inventione*.<sup>72</sup> His commentary on the *Poetria* and his courses on the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Cicero demonstrate how crucial these texts were for rhetorical teaching in Padua, and Pietro's presence in the city under the invitation and protection of Francesco il Vecchio testifies to the Carrara's more than active involvement, not only with the University in general, but also with the teaching of rhetoric in particular.

#### 4. Private Schools of Grammar and Rhetoric

Many of the private schools where University *professores* also taught may have been monitored by the *Studium* itself. The first goal of these schools was literacy, then the students were taught Latin grammar and were expected to be familiar with several texts.<sup>73</sup> Once a good knowledge of Latin grammar was reached, the education was generally considered complete, but the teachers could hold extra classes where classics such as Cicero were read and where the students were introduced to rhetorical theory.<sup>74</sup> The private grammar and rhetoric school were thus the first milieu where young students would have been introduced to the classics and to works like Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova*.

The most interesting aspect of these private Paduan schools was that they taught grammar and rhetoric to anyone who was willing to learn Latin to make use of it in

his profession. The schools were mainly targeted by those who meant to gain a degree in law, medicine or the liberal arts, but anyone who had enough money to pay the teacher could have access to them.<sup>75</sup> This is not to say that Bonifacio and Raimondino Lupi, or even Altichiero himself, were necessarily instructed at any of these schools, rather to outline the centrality of rhetorical teaching to late medieval culture and its relative accessibility in Padua through three gateways, the private schools, the University and preaching.

In summary, from the thirteenth century onwards, works on rhetoric from Antiquity were translated into the vernacular and glossed, which made them more accessible for a wider public. Moreover, an effort was made to reconcile the ideas of rhetoric and ethics, and to fashion rhetoric into an encompassing art that could be used in any circumstance. This made possible a more conscious application of rhetorical principles in fields other than law or politics. The use of rhetoric in preaching paved the way for its employment in other forms of art pertaining to the religious sphere, such as Altichiero's cycle for the Oratory of St George. Thanks to medieval treatises on rhetoric like the *Poetria Nova*, the status of amplification was raised even higher than it was in the minds of Cicero and Quintilian, by defining it as one of only two key developments of any topic. Finally, the numerous commentaries of Geoffrey of Vinsauf's work testify to the great popularity of the *Poetria*, which was widely circulated and taught in the Paduan schools and *Studium*, where the teaching of rhetoric was considered central to any kind of education.

This exposition of rhetoric as a heuristic tool, clarifying the means and purposes of Altichiero's accreted structures, does not suggest that Altichiero knew rhetorical principles and necessarily set out to apply them to his work; nor does it claim that

rhetoric was the only informing principle of Altichiero's frescoes at the Oratory. Rather, this article emphasised the pervasiveness of rhetoric in medieval culture and the crucial role it played in Trecento Padua in particular, positing that direct knowledge of specific texts was not required to glean at least partial understanding of them. The merits of amplification in particular were widely appreciated. Altichiero's settings lead the viewer along the Oratory, offering several reading pathways: from left to right in a chronological sequence, but also diagonally and across the walls, as suggested by structural and ornamental parallels, and decorations are repeated with exquisite variety. The fictive structures thus address the viewers in a quest to mesmerise and amaze them, impressing upon them not only the truthfulness of the narrative, but also the prestige of the patron and the masterful skill of the artist.

The numerous narrative scenes in the Oratory represent an extensive and cohesive visual unit that enables the art historian to reach more comprehensive conclusions in comparison to a multi-layered, urban architectural environment, and, as an important centre for the study and dissemination of rhetoric, fourteenth-century Padua represents a particularly suitable context. However, the Oratory of St George does not represent an isolated case, rather, it showcases the central role of architecture in painting and the potential of a rhetorical approach, not solely for fictive structures but also for built architecture. This case study highlights the persuasive powers of architectural structures and ornamental patterns, revealing the rhetorical nature of the architectural language, be it two or three-dimensional.

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<sup>1</sup> Caroline van Eck, 'The Retrieval of Classical Architecture in the Quattrocento: The Role of Rhetoric in the Formulation of Alberti's Theory of Architecture,' in *Memory and Oblivion*, ed. Wessel Reining and Jeroen Stumpel (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996), pp. 231–38; 'Architecture, Language and Rhetoric in Alberti's *De re aedificatoria*,' in *Architecture and Language. Constructing Identity in European Architecture c. 1000-c-1650*, ed. Georgia Clarke and Paul Crossley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 72–81; *Classic Rhetoric and the Arts in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); ed., *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Arts of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Paul Binski, 'Reflections on the 'Wonderful Height and Size' of Gothic Great Churches and the Medieval Sublime,'

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in *Magnificence and the Sublime in Medieval Aesthetics*, ed. C. Stephen Jaeger (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 129–56; 'Working by Words Alone: the Architect, Scholasticism and Rhetoric in Thirteenth-Century France,' in *Rhetoric Beyond Words*, ed. Mary Carruthers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 14–51; *Gothic Wonder: Art, Artifice and the Decorated Style, 1290–1350* (London and New Haven: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, Yale University Press, 2014). Jeanne Nuechterlein, *Translating Nature into Art: Holbein, the Reformation and Renaissance Rhetoric* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> On art and agency: Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency. An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) and Robin Osborne and Jeremy Tanner, ed., *Art's Agency and Art History* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Blackwell, 2007). For a study applying Gell's theories to fifteenth-century Italian art: Michelle O'Malley, 'Altarpieces and Agency: the Altarpiece of the Society of the Purification and its 'invisible skein of relations,' *Art History*, 28, no. 4 (2005), pp. 417–41.

<sup>3</sup> Ann Moss, 'Copia,' in *Encyclopaedia of Rhetoric*, ed. Thomas O. Sloane (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 175–177 (p. 175).

<sup>4</sup> Richard Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, 2nd edn. (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), p. 42 and p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Binski has carried out research on amplification and art in medieval northern Europe. He touched on this rhetorical trope in relation to micro-architecture in his evening lecture for a conference held in Paris in 2014. Paul Binski, 'Micro-architecture and Medieval Aesthetics,' evening lecture given for the conference *Microarchitecture et figures du bâti: l'échelle à l'épreuve de la matière*, Musée du Moyen Âge-Termes de Cluny, Paris, 8 December 2014.

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<sup>6</sup> Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1419b20-21. Lucia Calboli Montefusco, 'Stylistic and Argumentative Function of Rhetorical 'Amplificatio,'" *Hermes*, 132, no. 1 (2004), pp. 69–81 (p.69).

<sup>7</sup> Cicero, *Orator*, XXXVI, 125. 'Summa autem laus eloquentiae est amplificare,' Cicero, *De oratore*, II.104.

<sup>8</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, VIII, 3, 1–5. In Cicero, *De oratore*, I, 94, the truly eloquent (*eloquens*) orator is described as someone who, unlike the merely skilled (*disertus*) orator, 'can exalt (*augere*) ever more admirably and more magnificently, and ornament what he wants.'

<sup>9</sup> Cf. note 6.

<sup>10</sup> Although the complete text of Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* was discovered by Poggio Bracciolini in 1416, his work was well-known during the middle ages through partial manuscripts, commentaries and excerpts in other texts, and continued to exert great influence. Between antiquity and the twelfth century, the *Institutio oratoria* was copied, reviewed, excerpted and then incorporated into the important *Ad Herennium* glossing tradition. This article uses primarily Book VIII of the *Institutio*, which features in MS51 in Bern, Bürgerbibliothek, from which medieval manuscripts of the *Institutio* derive for the most part. Furthermore, ninth-century manuscript E153 sup. (s.IX) at the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan contains all the *Institutio* apart from IX, 4, 135– XII, 11, 22. John Ward, 'Quintilian and the Rhetorical Revolution of the Middle Ages,' *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, 13, no. 3 (1995), pp. 231–284 (pp. 249 and 253). Significantly, Ward argued that it was the Renaissance's supposedly more philological approach to Quintilian that 'destroyed the homogeneity and unity characteristic of medieval rhetorical theory and practice.' Ward, *ibid.*, 250. For a history of manuscripts of Quintilian and the reception of the *Institutio* during the

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middle ages: Priscilla Boskoff, 'Quintilian in the late Middle Ages,' *Speculum*, 27 (1952), pp. 71–78; Michael Winterbottom, 'The Textual Tradition of Quintilian 10.1.46 f.,' *The Classical Quarterly* (1962), pp. 169-175 and Ward, *ibid.*, 250–282. Although she pointed out that Quintilian's work was not available in its entirety before 1416, Mary Carruthers did not engage with the details of what exactly may or may not have been known of the *Institutio*, arguing that this continued to be an influential text throughout the middle ages, even if in the form of digests. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 316, note 35.

<sup>11</sup> 'Quattuor tamen maxime generibus video constare amplificationem, incremento, comparatione, ratioconatione, congerie,' Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, VIII, 4, 3.

<sup>12</sup> 'Incrementum est potentissimus, cum magna videntur etiam quae inferiora sunt,' Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, VIII, 4, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, VIII, 4, 9–15. Edwards has analysed the numerous parallels established by Altichiero in the Oratory, but she has not considered these in relation to the rhetoric of *amplificatio*. Mary Edwards, 'Parallelism in the Frescoes in the Oratory of St George in Padua (1379-1384),' *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 71 (2008), pp. 53–72.

<sup>14</sup> This short wall coming forward toward the viewer is a favourite device of Altichiero's. As well as appearing in three scenes of the life of St George in the Oratory, it also features in the *Crucifixion* in the Chapel of St James in the Santo, where Altichiero collaborated with Jacopo Avanzi a few years before his project at the Oratory of St George.

<sup>15</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, VIII, 4, 15–26. Quintilian points out that amplification by *rationatio* can resemble emphasis, but the final effect of emphasis is given by words and that of *rationatio* is given by things. As such, amplification

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via *ratiocinatio* has more value, for things are steadier than words ('res ipsa verbis est firmior'). *Institutio oratoria*, VIII, 4, 26.

<sup>16</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, VIII, 4, 26–29.

<sup>17</sup> Heinrich F. Plett, 'Amplification,' in *Encyclopaedia of Rhetoric*, ed. Thomas O. Sloane (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 25–26 (p. 25).

<sup>18</sup> Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, 9.

<sup>19</sup> Moss, "Copia," 175. Moss cites the example of the humanist Gasparino Barzizza (1360-1431), who probably used lists of synonyms he took from Cicero to illustrate the way of speaking Latin like the ancients to his students. Barzizza arrived in Padua in 1408, and we know he taught Cicero there in 1412, too late, therefore, to have any specific bearing on Altichiero's work. 'Barzizza, Gasperino,' *Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani*, at <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/gasperino-barzizza> (Dizionario-Biografico) (accessed on 3 Dec 2014).

<sup>20</sup> Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter, 'Brunetto Latini, *Rettorica*: Introduction,' in *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric. Language, Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300-1475*, ed. Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 753–757 (p. 753). John O. Ward, 'The Medieval and Early Renaissance Study of Cicero's *De inventione* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*: Commentaries and Contexts,' in *The Rhetoric of Cicero in Its Medieval and Early Renaissance Commentary Tradition*, ed. Virginia Cox and John O. Ward (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), pp. 3–76 (pp. 3–70); and in the same volume Virginia Cox, 'Ciceronian Rhetoric in Late Medieval Italy,' pp. 109–136.

<sup>21</sup> Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter, 'Giles of Rome, Commentary on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*: Introduction,' in *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric*, pp. 792–811 (p.793). Giles of Rome, "Commentary on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*," in *Medieval Grammar and*



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*Rhetoric. Language, Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300-1475*, ed. Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1359a22.

<sup>22</sup> Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter, 'Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria Nova*, ca. 1208–1213: Introduction,' in *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric*, pp. 594–596 (p. 595).  
Marjorie Curry Woods, 'A Medieval Rhetoric Goes to School - and to University: the Commentaries on the *Poetria nova*,' *Rhetorica*, 9, no. 1 (1991), pp. 55–65.

<sup>23</sup> Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, ed. Margaret F. Nims (Wetteren: Universa Press, 1967), lines 43–48.

<sup>24</sup> Paul Binski argued that this was the case in medieval France in his article "Working by Words Alone," 14–51. Mary Carruthers, 'The Poet as Master Builder,' *New Literary History*, 24, no. 4 (1993), pp. 881–904.

<sup>25</sup> One of these, the Lament for Richard I, was famously cited by Chaucer in his *Nun's Priest's Tale*, VII.3347–54.

<sup>26</sup> Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, lines 219–689.

<sup>27</sup> The apostrophe consists of addressing the reader or hearer with an exclamatory tone. If one excludes the damaged areas where the faces of the figures are now lost (especially in St Catherine's cycle), there are three instances of a figure looking out towards the viewer. The first is an elderly man with white and red headgear standing on the left behind the figure identified as Petrarch in the *Baptism of King Sevius*; the second and third are a seraphim and an angel in the *Coronation*. The seraphim looks out and holds his hands joined in prayer, whereas the angel tilts his head and gazes towards us whilst blowing a trumpet.

<sup>28</sup> Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, lines 231–233.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 262–262.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 248–253.

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 469–507.

<sup>32</sup> I discuss this aspect in detail in my doctoral thesis *Rhetoric of Place: Fictive Architecture and Persuasion in Altichiero da Zevio's Oratory of St George and Fra Angelico's Nicholas V Chapel* (PhD Dissertation, University of York, 2016) and in the essay “Fictive Architecture and Pictorial Place,” in *Place and Space in the Medieval World*, ed. Jane Hawkes, Megan Boulton and Heidi Stoner (Routledge/Taylor and Francis, forthcoming 2017).

<sup>33</sup> Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, lines 528–529.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 555–556.

<sup>35</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, VIII, 3, 2–5 and 11–12.

<sup>36</sup> The entry ‘ampliare’ of Salvatore Battaglia’s dictionary lists, among others, Boccaccio (‘I sommi imperadori ed i grandissimi re non hanno quasi con altra arte che d’uccidere [...] e ardere paesi e abbattere città, li loro regni ampliati, e per conseguente la fama loro;’ ‘per ampliare le nostre ricchezze e il mondano onore;’ ‘ampliasi la loro fama’); Matteo Villani (‘[i popoli] per cupidigia d’ampliare signoria’); and Filippo Villani (‘e ampliando le laudi di Teodosio’). Salvatore Battaglia, *Grande dizionario della lingua italiana* (Turin: Unione tipografico-editrice torinese, 1961), I, 432.

<sup>37</sup> Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, VIII, 3, 7.

<sup>38</sup> Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, lines 1244–1251.

<sup>39</sup> Mary Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 151–155.

<sup>40</sup> Polyfocal perspective is also at play in the organisation of the narrative in scenes like *St George on the Wheel*, where two other episodes are illustrated at either side of the central one, requiring the viewers to look more attentively at the scene as a whole

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and then shift their gaze from one episode to the other. Already in 1965 Mellini used the words “prospettiva plurifocale” in connection with Altichiero, but did not expand upon this formulation. Gian Lorenzo Mellini, *Altichiero e Jacopo Avanzi* (Milan: Edizioni di Comunità, 1965), p. 61.

<sup>41</sup> Marjorie Curry Woods, 'A Medieval Rhetoric Goes to School,' pp. 55-56.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 61. Pace’s commentary is addressed to a certain Simon, who has been tentatively identified with Simone della Tela, another scholar in the liberal arts at Padua, who appears in a 1328 document.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

<sup>44</sup> Nicoletta Giovè Marchioli, 'Circolazione libraria e cultura francescana nella Padova del Due e Trecento,' in *Predicazione e società nel Medioevo: riflessione etica, valori e modelli di comportamento*, ed. Laura Gaffuri and Riccardo Quinto (Padua: Centro Studi Antoniani, 2002), pp. 131–41 (p. 138).

<sup>45</sup> Carlo Delcorno, 'La retorica dei *Sermones* di Antonio da Padova,' in *Congresso Internacional Pensamento e Testemunho. 8º Centenário do Nascimento de Santo António. Actas* (Braga: Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Família Franciscana Portuguesa, 1996), pp. 245–62 (p. 246).

<sup>46</sup> Giovè Marchioli, 'Circolazione libraria e cultura francescana,' p. 139.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 141; Antonino Poppi, 'Per una storia della cultura nel convento del Santo dal XIII al XIX secolo,' *Quaderni per la storia dell'università di Padova*, 3 (1970), pp. 1–30 (p. 7). Poppi pointed out that the Paduan emphasis on a vast and detailed knowledge of Aristotle’s thought derived from the influence that Duns Scotus’ work exerted on Paduan scholars. Although critical of the Greek philosopher, Scotus greatly promoted knowledge of his texts. For the circulation of the classics on rhetoric in the middle ages: Michael D. Reeve, 'The Circulation of Classical Works on

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Rhetoric from the 12th to the 14th Century,' in *Retorica e poetica tra i secoli XII e XIV*, ed. Carlo Leonardi and Enrico Menestò (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1988), pp. 109–24.

<sup>48</sup> Giovè Marchioli, 'Circolazione libraria e cultura francescana,' p. 139.

<sup>49</sup> Liz Herbert McAvoy, 'Introduction: Place, Space and the Body within Anchoritic Rhetoric,' in *Rhetoric of the Anchorhold: Space, Place and Body within the Discourses of Enclosure*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), pp. 1–14 (p. 5).

<sup>50</sup> Herbert McAvoy, 'Introduction,' p. 5. Cate Gunn, 'Private Meditations and Public Discourse: Ancrene Wisse and Sermon Rhetoric,' in *Rhetoric of the Anchorhold: Space, Place and Body within the Discourses of Enclosure*, ed. Liz Herbert McAvoy, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), p. 67.

<sup>51</sup> Delcorno, 'La retorica dei *Sermones* di Antonio da Padova,' p. 246.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 246–255.

<sup>53</sup> Folena observed how St Anthony often included rarely used polysyllabic nouns, like *populositas* and *gelicidium cupiditatis*, and ample *clausulae*. Gianfranco Folena, *Culture e lingue nel Veneto medievale* (Padua: Editoriale Programma, 1990), pp. 168–169.

<sup>54</sup> Sermons were aimed at the whole congregation, whilst it is difficult to establish who had access to the Oratory of St George apart from the Lupi family, the priests celebrating mass and perhaps the Carrara.

<sup>55</sup> Carruthers, *The Experience of Beauty*, p. 18.

<sup>56</sup> Ruth Morse, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages. Rhetoric, Representation, and Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 63. Herbert McAvoy, 'Introduction,' p. 5. For a discussion of the interactions between image-making and

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preaching: Lina Bolzoni, *La rete delle immagini. Predicazione in volgare dalle origini a Bernardino da Siena* (Turin: Einaudi Editore, 2002). For a brief but thorough discussion of preaching in Italy: Carlo Delcorno, 'Medieval Preaching in Italy (1200-1500),' in *The Sermon*, ed. Beverly Mayne Kienzle (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), pp. 449–560.

<sup>57</sup> Stephen J. Milner, 'Communication, Consensus and Conflict: Rhetorical Precepts, the *Ars Concionandi*, and Social Ordering in Late Medieval Italy,' in *The Rhetoric of Cicero in Its Medieval and Early Renaissance Commentary Tradition*, ed. Virginia Cox and John O. Ward (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), pp. 365–401 (p. 381).

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 381–383.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 369 and 373.

<sup>60</sup> 'Costume scia de ambaxature et de gentili homini favelare ornata mente, e dire belleçe de parole a zò ch' ey possano atrovare grande presio e nomo pretioso,' Guido Fava quoted in Milner, 'Communication, Consensus and Conflict,' p. 375.

<sup>61</sup> Boncompagno da Signa dedicated a section of his *Rhetorica novissima* to public speaking and ridiculed its practitioners' reliance on custom rather than on Latin learning. Milner, 'Communication, Consensus and Conflict,' pp. 375, 393.

<sup>62</sup> '[...] studio brevitatis in duas tantum partes divido. Quarum prima continet actum correctionis laudabilis, quia 'convertetur'. Secunda continet pactum possessionis amabilis, quia 'populus meus hic'.' Petrarch, *Arenga in civitate Novariae*, ed. Carlo Negrone (Novara: Fratelli Miglio, 1876), p. 18. My translation.

<sup>63</sup> Antonino Poppi, 'Per una storia della cultura nel convento del Santo,' p. 6.

<sup>64</sup> Luciano Gargan, 'Scuole di grammatica e Università a Padova tra medioevo e umanesimo,' *Quaderni per la storia dell'università di Padova*, 33 (2000), pp. 9–26 (p.11). Courses on rhetoric often included moral philosophy in the early stages of the

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notarial or legal syllabus. Robert Black, *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 212. Paola Benussi, 'L'età medievale,' in *I collegi per studenti dell'Università di Padova*, ed. Piero Del Negro (Padua: Signo editrice, 2003), pp. 49–96.

<sup>65</sup> Donato Gallo, *Università e signoria a Padova dal XIV al XV secolo* (Trieste: Edizioni Lint, 1998), p. 23. Silvana Collodo, 'Ordine politico e civiltà cittadina a Padova nel Trecento,' in *Il secolo di Giotto nel Veneto*, ed. Giovanna Valenzano and Federica Toniolo (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2007), pp. 309–33 (p. 312).

<sup>66</sup> Gallo, *Università e Signoria a Padova*, p. 22.

<sup>67</sup> Silvana Collodo, 'Padova al tempo di Francesco Petrarca,' in *Petrarca e il suo tempo*, ed. Gilda P. Mantovani (Milan: Skira editore, 2006), pp. 15–26 (p. 15).

<sup>68</sup> Giovanni Mardersteig, 'I ritratti del Petrarca e dei suoi amici di Padova,' *Italia medioevale e umanistica*, 17 (1974), pp. 251–280 (tav. XVI).

<sup>69</sup> Bonifacio's maternal grandmother was Donella di Pietro da Carrara. 'Bonifacio Lupi,' *Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani*, at [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bonifacio-lupi\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/bonifacio-lupi_(Dizionario-Biografico)) (accessed on 4 Mar 2015).

<sup>70</sup> Gargan, 'Scuole di grammatica,' p. 10.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14. 'Pietro da Moglio,' *Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani*, at [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/pietro-da-moglio\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/pietro-da-moglio_(Dizionario-Biografico)) (accessed 16 Jan 2015).

<sup>72</sup> 'Pietro da Moglio,' *Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani*, at [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/pietro-da-moglio\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/pietro-da-moglio_(Dizionario-Biografico)) (accessed 16 Jan 2015). Although he lived too late to have any bearing on Altichiero's

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work at the Oratory of St George, Guarino da Verona (1374-1460) is another figure demonstrating the interest in Cicero's rhetorical works (and those thought to be Cicero's) in the Veneto in the late fourteenth century. A student at Padua under the guidance of Giovanni Conversini da Ravenna (chancellor for the Carrara between 1379 and 1382, and again between 1393 and 1404), Guarino wrote a commentary to the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and taught Greek in Venice and Verona. 'Guarino Veronese,' *Enciclopedia Italiana Treccani*, at [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/guarino-veronese\\_\(Enciclopedia-Italiana\)](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/guarino-veronese_(Enciclopedia-Italiana)) (accessed 11 Mar 2015).

<sup>73</sup> Gargan, 'Scuole di grammatica,' pp. 1–16. Black, *Humanism and Education*, 86. Elementary school pupils were taught how to read and write, they were introduced to the psalter, and then to *Ianua*, a treatise on *ars grammatica* spuriously attributed to Aelius Donatus ('Legere la tavola, il salterio e il donatello'). Black, *Humanism and Education*, pp. 34–63.

<sup>74</sup> We know some of the names of the rhetoricians who taught at private schools in Padua during the late fourteenth century, for example Carletto Galmarelli, Anastasio Ghezzi da Ravenna, Lazzaro Malrotondi da Conegliano, Egidio da Siena. Gargan, 'Scuole di grammatica,' p. 15. These names demonstrate the extent to which Padua attracted rhetoricians from various parts of Italy. For a general view on the curriculum of rhetorical school teaching: Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter, 'Part 4: Pedagogies of Grammar and Rhetoric, ca. 1150-1280. Introduction,' in *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric*, pp. 544–550.

<sup>75</sup> Gargan, 'Scuole di grammatica,' p. 25.