

## Oblivion Deferred: Altichiero in the Fifteenth Century

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### Abstract

Altichiero was the dominant north Italian painter of the later Trecento. In Padua, in the 1370s and early 1380s, he worked for patrons close to Petrarch and his circle and perhaps in direct contact with the poet himself. By the time of the second edition of Vasari's *Vite* (1568) the memory of Altichiero's work had suffered significant occlusion, and Vasari's account of him is little more than an appendix to his life of Carpaccio. Only since the later nineteenth century, and particularly in the last fifty or so years, has Altichiero's reputation been restored. It is the purpose of this paper to examine aspects of that reputation throughout the century or so after the painter's death (by April 1393).

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### Introduction

[1] The complex polarities of fame and infamy, fame and death, contemporary reputation and posthumous glory occupied a central place in early renaissance thought, above all in that of Petrarch (1304-74). Not the least of his contributions to renaissance culture was the extension of these polarities to the lives of artists. The main thrust of his piecemeal eulogy of Giotto (1266/7-1337), pronounced in various contexts, was that the painter's reputation was founded on demonstrable substance, and therefore deserved to survive. Dante (c.1265-1321) famously chose to illustrate the shifting nature of celebrity by means of Giotto's eclipse of Cimabue (c.1240-1302) but without commenting on the justice or injustice of the transference of fame involved.<sup>1</sup> Petrarch's concerns were rather different. No less keen than Dante to underline the ephemerality of renown, he was careful to contrast with it something that emerged as a central theme of his vision of history: a concept of true fame, deserved fame, the *Gloria* which triumphs over Death and averts oblivion, the "second death" to which Time otherwise subjects all things.<sup>2</sup> The eclipse of contemporary repute was generally to be expected; "it happens daily and as a common thing that many who were famous and prominent in their lifetime become unknown and obscure after they have died. Does this surprise you?"<sup>3</sup> Against this,

<sup>1</sup> Dante, *Purgatorio*, xi, 94-96 in: *The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri*, ed. & trans. Robert Durling, 3 vols., Oxford 2003, II, 176.

<sup>2</sup> Petrarch (Francesco Petrarca), *Triumphus Temporis*, in: *Francesco Petrarca: Rime, Trionfi e Poesie Latine*, ed. Ferdinando Neri, Guido Martellotti, Enrico Bianchi and Natalino Sapegno, Milan and Naples 1952, 143.

<sup>3</sup> *Petrarch. Petrarch's Remedies for Fortune Fair and Foul; A Modern English Translation of De remediis utriusque Fortune*, ed. & trans. Conrad H. Rawski, 5 vols., Bloomington, 1991, vol.1, 313. License: The text of this article is provided under the terms of the [Creative Commons License CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/)

Petrarch offsets the prospect of future renown where it is deserved. The process of historical winnowing hinges on defining the criteria for such desert. That this proven fame is to be expected only after death, and perhaps long after, is of a piece with most of the rather chilly consolations offered by the *De remediis utriusque fortunae* (1353-61): "true Glory only exists for those who are no longer present."<sup>4</sup> Petrarch further, and remarkably, allows a concern with fame as a mark of artistic distinction: "If anyone says that craftsmen are not seeking fame but money, I would probably have to agree as far as the common sort is concerned. But I deny it regarding the very best craftsmen."<sup>5</sup>

[2] Fluctuating renown is demonstrated nowhere better than in the case of Altichiero (fl.c.1360-93), an artist with whom Petrarch is likely to have had personal contact, who is associated more than any other with the contemporary translation of Petrarch's literary output into visual form, and in whose work after Petrarch's death the poet's own reputation and likeness were preserved for posterity.<sup>6</sup> And yet, when scholars like Förster and Schubring began to write about Altichiero in the nineteenth century they were to a considerable extent raising him from the dead.<sup>7</sup> There was by their time no consensual tradition that recognised Altichiero's stature, and his name survived in the wider domain as no more than an appendix to Vasari's life of Carpaccio, a kind of holding pen reserved for artists Vasari felt to be somehow out of the main sequence, not least by virtue of not being Tuscan. The ironies of this historiographic sidelining of the very artist who embodied the Petrarchan cult of Giotto in its first flush and in proximity to Petrarch himself are obvious. Altichiero may fairly be seen as the first prominent victim of a humanistic art-historical tradition in which he had every right to expect an honoured place.

[3] This muffling of Altichiero's reputation endured, and it was only in the second half of the last century that his reputation really came into view again, allowing the *rivincità* rather excitably attributed to him by Giuseppe Fiocco and Pietro Toesca's assessment of him as second only to Giotto amongst trecento painters.<sup>8</sup> The unsettled, fragmentary and distracted nature of this renewed critical attention, even when it did appear, may be seen as a consequence of the lost centuries of regard.

[4] It is the chief purpose of this discussion to demonstrate that the loss of a tradition of Altichiero's significance happened not immediately after his death (by April 1393), as is

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<sup>4</sup> Petrarch, *Petrarch's Remedies for Fortune Fair and Foul*, vol. 3, 204-205.

<sup>5</sup> Petrarch, *Petrarch's Remedies for Fortune Fair and Foul*, vol. 3, 204.

<sup>6</sup> John Richards, "Petrarch and Giotto in Padua: Identity and Friendship," in: *Visible Exports/ Imports: New research on Medieval and Renaissance European art and culture*, ed. Emily Jane Anderson, Jill Farquhar and John Richards, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 2012.

<sup>7</sup> Ernst Förster, *Die Wandgemälde der S. Georgenkapelle zu Padua*, Berlin 1841; Paul Schubring, *Altichiero und seine Schule*, Leipzig 1898.

<sup>8</sup> See Giuseppe Fiocco, "La Rivincità di Altichiero," in: *Il Santo* 3 (1963) 283-289, especially 284-285, for some key figures of the Altichiero revival. Pietro Toesca, *Il Trecento*, Turin 1951, 782. For a recent review of the critical tradition, see Fausta Piccoli, *Altichiero e la pittura a Verona nel tarda età scaligera*, Sommacampagna [Verona] 2010, 139-152.

generally the fate of the undeserving in Petrarch's definition, but more gradually, that he remained a living force in the Quattrocento, not at all to be despised as a model. This excludes discussion of Altichiero's presumed pupils and the considerable number of Altichiereschi and semi-Altichiereschi whose work still graces the churches of the Veneto and beyond. Much of this work is of high quality, and painters like Martino and Jacopo da Verona are well worth extended discussion, but their connections with Altichiero tell us little about the extension of his reputation and influence beyond the circles of his pupils and immediate followers.<sup>9</sup>

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### **Marin Sanuto and Flavio Biondo**

[5] It is clear that, locally at least, the frescoes Altichiero painted in the newly built Sala Grande of Cansignorio della Scala's (1340-75) palace in Verona in the 1360s (Fig. 1) were still thought of as something worth seeing throughout the Quattrocento.



1 Verona, former Sala Grande from the Corso S. Anastasia.  
Photo: John Richards

[6] The evidence of two documents of 1427 and 1431, both referring to a "sala magna depicta",<sup>10</sup> is fleshed out in stanza 135 of the *Fioretto* of Francesco Corna (1477), which indicates their exceptional quality: "et e si rica d'oro de pinture con le figure tante naturale, che tutta Italia non ha un'altra tale"; and identifies the subject matter: "le istorie

<sup>9</sup> See Filippa Aliberti Gaudioso, *Pisanello: i luoghi del gotico internazionale nel Veneto*. Milan, 1996, for a well-illustrated survey. The first serious attempt to catalogue Altichiero's Veronese followers and influence was by Evelyn Sandberg Vavalà, *La pittura veronese del trecento e del primo quattrocento*. Verona, 1926, 190-321. Altichiero's local following is discussed by Piccoli, *Altichiero e la pittura a Verona*, 89-138.

<sup>10</sup> Gino Sandri, *I palazzi scaligeri di S. Maria Antica*, Verona 1931,10.

di Tito Vespisiano".<sup>11</sup> Marin Sanuto's *Itinerarium ... cum syndicis terre firme* of 1483 establishes the location of "la salla pynta", that it was "excelente", and by use of the definite article that it stood out amongst the many painted rooms in the sprawling Scaligeri palace complex, seat of the Venetian Podestà in Sanuto's time.<sup>12</sup>

[7] Sanuto (1466-1536) offers no attribution, but in a later paragraph he names Altichiero and Pisanello (c.1395-1455) as the two leading painters of Verona. The significance of these references emerges from their particular context. The *Itinerarium* is a book describing a journey through 60 centres of population on the Venetian mainland, running to some 140 pages of text in the Paduan reprint of 1847. In the course of this, Sanuto mentions only one other artist (Donatello) and only three other examples of painting, all large-scale fresco decorations, one of which is the Sala virorum illustrium in Padua, also in part attributable to Altichiero.<sup>13</sup>

[8] His reference to the Sala Grande suggests a first-hand experience of the hall and its approaches:

A do piazze, una sopra la cui è la fontana bellissima nominata Madonna Verona; et li se fa al mercado de marti, zuoba e venere, e nel giorno di San Zuanne Batista si giostra ivi; l'altra dove è i palazi, dil Podestà, magnifico, con la salla pynta excelente; l'altro dil Capit[ano], et ivi in corte sta il Camerlengo. Apresso è una chiesulla antiqua de S[ta] Maria, unde è le arche de li Signori de la Scalla, tre, alte, marmoree et intagliate.<sup>14</sup>

[9] This is a walk made by countless tourists today, from the Piazza Erbe to the Scaligeri cemetery of S. Maria Antica. Only access to the former Podestà's residence is presently more difficult. The Sala Grande, the main public space of Cangrande della Scala's palace as enlarged by Cansignorio after 1364, and seat of Venetian civic authority in Verona in Sanuto's time, was then more accessible.

[10] The ostensible origins of Sanuto's mention of Altichiero's name are typical of humanist practice. Sanuto, only seventeen when he made his journey, had already given proof of his credentials in the *Memorabilia deorum dearumque*, written at the age of fifteen and heavily dependent on Boccaccio.<sup>15</sup> The convenient habit of imitation served him well throughout his writing life. The *Itinerarium*, though written in the volgare, is no exception, Gaetano Cozzi suggesting that Sanuto wrote his book as a result of his contact

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<sup>11</sup> Francesco Corna da Soncino, *Fioretto de le antiche croniche de Verona e ed tutti i soi confini e de le reliquie che se trovano dentro in ditta citade*, ed. Gian Paolo Marchi and Pier Paolo Brugnoli, Verona, 1973, 50. The narratives were evidently based on the *Jewish Wars* of Josephus.

<sup>12</sup> Marin Sanuto, *Itinerario per la terraferma Veneziana*, 1483. Reprint of the 1847 Paduan edition, Editoriale Insubria, Milan 1981, 97. For the Sala Grande, see Richards, *Altichiero*, 35-75 and Piccoli, *Altichiero e la pittura a Verona*, 60-78.

<sup>13</sup> Theodor E. Mommsen, "Petrarch and the Decoration of the Sala Virorum Illustrium in Padua," in: *The Art Bulletin* 34 (1952), 95-116, and John Richards, *Altichiero: An Artist and his Patrons in the Italian Trecento*, Cambridge 2000, 104-134. Donatello is mentioned as the sculptor of the Gattamelata monument in Padua, Sanuto, *Itinerario per la terraferma Veneziana*, 26.

<sup>14</sup> Sanuto, *Itinerario per la terraferma Veneziana*, 97.

<sup>15</sup> Gaetano Cozzi, "Marin Sanudo il giovane: Dalla cronaca alla storia," in: *La storiografia Veneziane fino al secolo XVI*, ed. Agostino Pertusi, Florence 1970, 333-358, here 335.

with Flavio Biondo's *Italia illustrata*, first published in 1474.<sup>16</sup> If anything, this understates the extent of Sanuto's dependence on Biondo (1392-1460), which is nowhere more evident than in Sanuto's list of Veronese worthies, which ends with: "Giacomo Cavalli ... Captain General of the Venetians ... Nicolo Cavalli and his sons: the learned Guarino ... and, excellent in the art of painting, Altichiero and Pisan[ell]o."<sup>17</sup>

[11] This is clearly derived from Biondo's account of Verona, which similarly goes through the list of distinguished members of the Cavalli clan, pays homage to Guarino (1374-1460) in more extended terms, and concludes with the best painters: Altichiero, "an excellent painter" in the previous period, and the superior Pisanello, the supreme painter "of our age ... of whom Guarino has written".<sup>18</sup>

[12] Sanuto's deviations from his source invite comment. His elimination of Biondo's careful distinction between Altichiero and Pisanello, a distinction of both chronology and esteem, may reflect the rather simpler needs of a book largely concerned with listing things of note in Venetian territory.<sup>19</sup> But it might also reflect something more specific, both here and elsewhere in Sanuto's discussion, an aspect of his journey suggested by his more detailed attention to the role of the Cavalli in Veronese and Venetian history. It is clear from his later chapter on Vicenza that Sanuto had been travelling up to that point in the company of Nicolo Cavalli "doctor jurisconsulto".<sup>20</sup> As a member of this distinguished family of Veronese servants of the former Scaligeri signori, Nicolo was well placed to redirect Sanuto's attention to a figure not mentioned by Biondo but by Sanuto, Giacomo Cavalli (d.1384), greatest of his family and the first to hold high office in Venetian service.

[13] It most of all invites comment that Sanuto mentions Altichiero and Pisanello at all. That their names were already embedded in the list provided by his chosen source is more a question of opportunity than of explanation. It is possible that textual conservatism of this kind is the whole of the answer. But Sanuto's use of Biondo is not so

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<sup>16</sup> Cozzi, "Marin Sanudo il giovane: Dalla cronaca alla storia", 336.

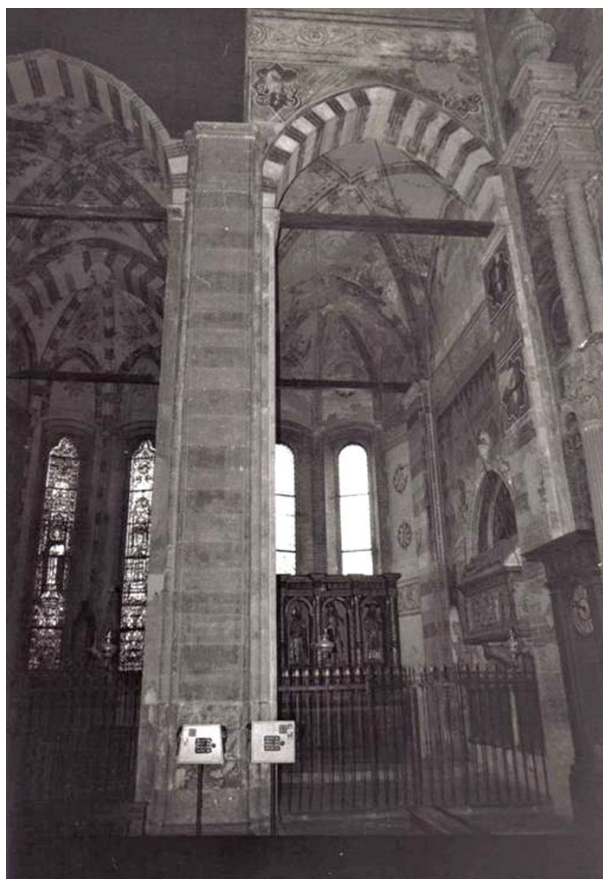
<sup>17</sup> "Jacomo Caballo, milite splendido, di Militia prestantissimo, de' Venetiani Cap[itano] generale meritissimo, et nel numero di patricij azonto, *usque in hodierna* dura; et è Nicolao Caballo con li figlioli soi: Guarino docto, di fama nominato, pochi anni vi è stato, *etiam* veronese, et do in arte pctoria excelenti, Alticherio et Pisano. Sed in questa nostra etate vi riciobi io Leonardi Pelegrin et Andrea suo filio ..." Sanuto, *Itinerario per la terraferma Veneziana*, 98-99.

<sup>18</sup> "Ea quoque expeditione, in qua Luchinus Vermes Cretam Veneto reparavit imperio Georgius Caballus Veronensis eques praestantissimos militares ducens ordines navatae fortiter operae id retulit decus, ut senator a Venetiis fuerit onstitutus... Sed iam claudat Veronensium gloria digniorum aciem Guarinus quem supra in eorum catalogo, quos eloquentiam in nostrum saeculum longo postliminio reduxisse ostendimus, merito laudum praeconio decoravimus. Pictoriae artis peritum Verona superiori saeculo habuit Alticherium. Sed unus superest, qui fama ceteros nostri saeculi facilliter antecellit, Pisanus nomine, de quo Guarini carmen extat qui Gaurini Pisanus inscribitur." Biondo, *Italia Illustrata*, I (1474), 377, cited in Ottavio Clavuot, *Biondos "Italia Illustrata" - Summa oder Neuschöpfung?*, Tübingen 1990, 129.

<sup>19</sup> That Altichiero had a formative influence on Pisanello's development has been a given of much modern scholarship from Hill to Paccagnini, e.g. "both [Altichiero and Avanzi] represent the same tendencies which culminated in Pisanello," George Francis Hill, *Pisanello*, London 1905, 9; and "[it was] "the awareness [Pisanello] developed of the austere and monumental quality of Altichiero's art, which ... became a truly integral part of his artistic expression," Giovanni Paccagnini, *Pisanello*, London 1973, 148.

<sup>20</sup> Sanuto, *Itinerario per la terraferma Veneziana*, 110.

inflexibly slavish that he is unwilling to bend it to his particular needs, or according to his specific local knowledge. Sanuto is likely to have seen dozens of works of art in his travels without finding it worthwhile to mention them. If he was happy to accept the singling out of these two painters with the rest of what he took from Biondo, he must have had his reasons.



2 Verona, S. Anastasia, Pellegrini (l.) and Cavalli Chapels.  
Photo: John Richards

[14] The extra factor may have been, quite simply, Nicolo Cavalli, who could have drawn Sanuto's attention to his family chapel in S. Anastasia, to the great votive fresco by Altichiero on the south wall and perhaps to Giacomo Cavalli's role in its commissioning.<sup>21</sup> Sanuto's restitution of equality between the two 'Veronese' painters may thus have been a sop to Cavalli family pride. The yoking together of the two great names may also have been reinforced by the sight of the adjacent Pellegrini and Cavalli chapels in S. Anastasia, boasting major works by Pisanello and Altichiero respectively (Fig. 2). The layout of Sanuto's text perhaps preserves an echo of this experience in the way his account shortly afterwards slips so easily from the Cavalli to the Pellegrini family.<sup>22</sup> If we can reconstruct from Sanuto's reference to the "salla pynta" the walk from the Piazza Erbe that took him there, we might imagine an extension of this stroll – no great distance – to S. Anastasia,

<sup>21</sup> Richards, *Altichiero*, 92-96; Piccoli, *Altichiero e la pittura a Verona*, 78-84.

<sup>22</sup> Sanuto, *Itinerario per la terraferma Veneziana*, 99. See n. 15 above.

where Biondo's reference, fortified by Cavalli interests, was given additional solidity in Sanuto's young mind.

[15] This is only one of several possible explanations. The juxtaposition of Altichiero's name with the description of the "salla pynta" allows for no firm inference that Sanuto had connected the two things, and it cannot be taken for granted that Nicolo Cavalli either knew or cared who had painted his family's fresco in S. Anastasia more than a hundred years before. No such assumptions can be made with any confidence for a period when the cult of the individual artist, the deliberate preservation of his memory after death, was still in its infancy. Even so, the relative solidity of the local tradition of the Sala Grande's importance is clear, and it is probably on account of it that the first section of Vasari's note on Altichiero in the 1568 version of the *Vite* is apparently so much more coherent than the section on Altichiero's Paduan works which succeeds it.

[16] If Sanuto's references require examination, even more so do those of Biondo, who was not a native of the Veneto. The form of his reference to Altichiero is not itself at all remarkable; it is as much of a humanist commonplace as descriptions of Giotto as a second Apelles. Altichiero is treated as a sort of John the Baptist, precursor to the greater Pisanello, much as the developing tradition for artists' biographies used Cimabue in relation to Giotto. What is significant is that Biondo knew his name at all.

[17] Biondo's knowledge of Verona came, as was usual with him, from a mixture of first-hand investigation and enquiries made via his voluminous correspondence. In the case of Verona the two types of source may have combined to some extent in the person of another of the city's great names, Guarino Guarini, mentioned in both Biondo's and Sanuto's texts. Biondo appeared in Guarino's circle around 1420, remaining in Verona for about two years. Other meetings took place during the 1420s, when Biondo was in the service of the Venetian Republic in various places. In 1427 he returned to his native Forlì. He visited the Veneto again around 1450, when he was assembling the evidence for *Italia Illustrata*, by which time Guarino had been long resident in Ferrara. Contact between the two, predominantly by letter, was constant during the intervening years.

[18] The passage from *Italia Illustrata* given above makes it clear that Biondo's reference to Pisanello is secondary to, and its presence explained by, his familiarity with the ekphrastic poem "Si mihi par voto ingenium fandique facultas ..." addressed by Guarino to Pisanello.<sup>23</sup> The most likely inference must be that Biondo also heard Altichiero's name, which he is unlikely to have encountered outside the Veneto, from Guarino. Whether this happened while Biondo was in Verona, perhaps with Guarino acting as his guide and faced with the frescoes, or by letter, is impossible to determine. What is more to the point is that Guarino, if he was the source, must have impressed on Biondo some idea of Altichiero's importance. Biondo's particular approach to the two painters is expressly calculated to give the palm to his contemporary Pisanello, but the process also

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<sup>23</sup> Hill, *Pisanello*, 113-118; Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist observers of painting in Italy and the discovery of pictorial composition 1350-1450*, Oxford 1971, 87-96.

serves to reflect back on Altichiero a measure of esteem, even if only of the kind doled out to Cimabue in early Tuscan historiography, or even to Giotto himself if looked back on from Vasari's position. There has to be some idea that Altichiero was good for Pisanello's supremacy to be established in this way.

[19] There are no references to Altichiero in Guarino's surviving work, but it is hard to think that he would not have known of him, not least through his extensive and close relationships with the Cavalli. Guarino, it should be remembered, was born (if only just) during the signoria of Altichiero's patron Cansignorio della Scala, and he lived the first decade and more of his life under Scaligeri rule. Altichiero himself was probably still alive and working well into Guarino's early maturity. Guarino's early life brought him into contact with precisely those followers of Petrarch responsible for key aspects of the rapprochement between literary humanism and the visual arts, men like Pierpaolo Vergerio (1370-1444/5) and Giovanni Conversino (1343-1408), under whom Guarino studied in Padua.<sup>24</sup> For all that, Guarino's understanding of painting is still rather naïve. The abundant classical allusions of his poem, "interesting rather than beautiful" as Hill puts it,<sup>25</sup> cannot disguise the essential simplicity of Guarino's judgemental basis: "I put forth my hand to wipe the sweat from the brow of the toiling figures ... The image, though but painted, speaks so vividly, that I scarce dare to utter a sound ...".<sup>26</sup> This could almost have been written in the 1370s; the language is that of Boccaccio (at least before Petrarch got at him) and Villani, Pisanello as *naturae simia*. The undeveloped nature of Guarino's criteria reflects what Baxandall calls "one of the more disconcerting facts of Quattrocento art history that more praise was addressed to Pisanello than to any other artist of the first half of the century...[and that] Pisanello, not Masaccio, is the 'humanist' artist."<sup>27</sup> Pisanello, to put it simply, gives you more to talk about.

[20] Sanuto's reference to the Veneto's other great Trecento fresco cycle on an Antique theme, Francesco da Carrara's (1325-1393) *Sala virorum illustrium* in the Reggia in Padua (c.1370-1380; Fig. 3), suggests almost as strongly as his description of the "salla pynta" that he had seen it for himself:

È sopra la piazza grande il palazzo dil Prefecto, bellissimo, primo, ut multi dicunt, de palazzo de Italia, dove è camere, grande salle, et una con tuti li Imperadori et viri illustri, le opere sue; retrato ancor è Francesco Petrarca et Lombardo Asserico; questa fece riconzar, perchè era antiqua, F.S.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Remigio Sabbadini, *Guariniana*, ed. Mario Sancipriano, Turin 1964, 6-7.

<sup>25</sup> Hill, *Pisanello*, 113.

<sup>26</sup> Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, 93.

<sup>27</sup> Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, 91.

<sup>28</sup> Sanuto, *Itinerario per la terraferma Veneziana*, 25.





3 Padua, Sala dei Giganti (ex-Sala virorum illustrium) and entrance to former central court of Reggia Carrarese. Photo: John Richards

[21] His description of the iconography of the hall is predominantly accurate: it contained some, though not all, "imperadori" and many "viri illustri", together with representations of "le opere sue". The Trecento frescoes were destroyed by fire in the sixteenth century, except for the portrait of Petrarch, twinned on the end wall with the repainted portrait of Lombardo della Seta ("a Serico", d.1390). It is not surprising that Sanuto was shown this great hall, the Paduan equivalent of the Sala Grande and similarly part of a Venetian administrative complex after 1406. Biondo had preceded him here too, listing the Reggia among the "belli pelagi" of his day.<sup>29</sup> Once again, even without any reference to authorship of the paintings, it is still remarkable that Sanuto singled it out among all the painted rooms he must have seen throughout the region, many of more recent vintage. In this instance Sanuto's family piety may have been a factor, for the F.S. of his text was Francesco Sanuto, Capitano in Padua in 1480 and responsible, as Sanuto notes, for the restoration of the frescoes.

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### **Michele Savonarola**

[22] Sanuto's personal encounter with the Sala virorum illustrium may be compared with the description given by the Paduan Michele Savonarola (1385-1468) in his *Libellus*

<sup>29</sup> Biondo, *Roma Trionfante*, IX, 320r-v, cited by Linda Pellecchia, "Architects Read Vitruvius: Renaissance Interpretations of the Atrium of the Ancient House," in: *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 51.4 (1992), 377-416, here 377.

*de magnificis ornamentis regie civitatis Padue* (c.1445-47), written in Ferrara, to which city he had moved in 1440.<sup>30</sup> In the present context Savonarola's work has two features which distinguish it from the accounts by Biondo and Sanuto: he makes explicit attributional connections between works of art and named artists, and he provides some sort of a basis for qualitative assessment. His attributions have been intermittently discussed in recent years; they are central to what was until recently the chief focus of most writing about Altichiero, the issue of his collaboration with the Bolognese painter Jacopo Avanzi (fl.c.1360-84).<sup>31</sup> The present discussion requires no raking over these coals, beyond a reminder that Savonarola's attributions are generally well founded, if incomplete.

[23] Just like Sanuto's, Savonarola's account appears to record the direct experience of the locations he describes.<sup>32</sup>

When one ascends the principal staircase, one finds balconies, all decorated, on the upper floor around the loggia, with marble columns and magnificent windows overlooking both courtyards. On either side are two most spacious halls, of which the first is called [the Sala] Thebarum and the other [the Sala] Imperatorum ... by the hands of the illustrious painters Ottaviano and Altichiero.<sup>33</sup>

[24] Throughout the *Libellus*, Savonarola provides a wealth of local detail quite beyond the scope of Sanuto, or even Biondo (in the Veneto at least). The essential purpose of his book relates it to the genus of patriotic laudatio to which the *Itinerarium* and others belong. What distinguishes Savonarola is not just his depth of knowledge but the level of sophistication at which he operates. The *Libellus*, as well as containing a significant body of information about artistic life in Padua, has a place – if perhaps a minor one – in the process by which painting achieved a status parallel with that of the Liberal Arts, whether or not Savonarola intended this in such explicit terms.<sup>34</sup>

[25] The discussion of painters and painting in the *Libellus* falls into three categories. The first and most conventional type, broadly cognate with Sanuto's references, is topographical and biographical. During the course of his discussion of Padua's most

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<sup>30</sup> For Savonarola's life see Andrea Gloria, *Monumenti dell'Università di Padova 1318-1405*, 2 vols., Padua 1888, 1, 496-7.

<sup>31</sup> For Avanzi, see Daniele Benati, *Jacopo Avanzi nell rinnovamento della pittura padana del secondo '300*, Bologna 1992, and Benati, "Jacopo Avanzi e Altichiero a Padova," in: *Il secolo di Giotto nel Veneto*, ed. Giovanna Valenzano and Federica Toniolo, Venice 2007, 385-415; Robin Simon, "Altichiero versus Avanzo," in: *Papers of the British School at Rome* 45 (1977), 252-271; Richards, *Altichiero*, 167-174 and Piccoli, *Altichiero e la pittura a Verona*, 75-77.

<sup>32</sup> Simon, "Altichiero versus Avanzo", 267.

<sup>33</sup> "Cumque honoratas scalas ascendis, podiola lodiam parte in superiori circuentia, columpnis marmoreis ac magnificis fenestris, que ad utramque curiam aspectum habent, etiam ornate invenis. Stantque due amplissime et pictoris ornatissime sale ad latera horum situate, quarum prima Thebarum nuncapatur, altera Imperatorum nominatur prima maior atque gloriosior, in qua romani imperatores miris cum figuris, cumque triumphis, auro optimoque cum colore depicti sunt. Quos gloriose manus illustrium pictorum Octaviani et Alticherii configurarunt...Et ut uno verbo, pace aliarum civitatum, dicam, nullum in Italia ita magnificum, nullumque ita superbum invenitur." Michele Savonarola, *Libellus de Magnificis Ornamentis Regie Civitatis Padue*, ed. Arnaldo Segarizzi, *RIS*, new ser., XXIV, Città di Castello 1902, 49.

<sup>34</sup> Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators*, 76, compares Savonarola unfavourably with Filippo Villani. License: The text of this article is provided under the terms of the [Creative Commons License CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/)

significant sites and famous men, Savonarola's itinerary takes him into a number of chapels and other ornamented interiors. The accompanying descriptions are accurate but otherwise unexceptional, the emphasis being on the inherent interest of the site or of the person buried there or otherwise associated with it. The discussion of the jurist Prosdocimo Conti, for instance, triggers a reference to the Conti family's chapel in the Santo, decorated by Giusto de'Menabuoi (c.1320-91) in the 1380s, Savonarola emphasising its qualities in general terms.<sup>35</sup> An earlier reference to the same chapel in the section "De divinis et spiritualibus" and to the other most prominent chapels in the Santo, that of St. Anthony in the north transept, and the facing chapel built by Bonifacio Lupi (d.1390) between 1372 and 1379 and dedicated to St. James the Great, are of this type, though the decorations of these last three are attributed to specific painters.<sup>36</sup> The nearby Oratory of S. Giorgio, listed just after these, is described in much the same way, though without an attribution at this stage.<sup>37</sup>

[26] The second category concentrates on the painters themselves, six of whom are singled out in the long third chapter, "De viris illustribus non sacris", after the clerics, natural philosophers (Pietro d'Abano, e.g.), medics (Savonarola's own profession), and other men of intellect, including the twin stars of early Paduan humanism, Albertino Mussato (1261-1329) and Lovato Lovati (c.1240-1309). Savonarola's choice of artists was hardly calculated to pander to any narrow Patavinitas. He begins, all the same, with Paduans or what he defines as Paduans: "In hoc autem ordine duos famosos civitas nostra habuit, Guarientum...et Iustum."<sup>38</sup> Giusto de'Menabuoi was actually a native of Florence, though a citizen of Padua by the time he came to paint the baptistery frescoes which Savonarola describes. The palm goes to Guariento d'Arpo (1310-70), a genuine son of Padua, and specifically to his great fresco of Paradise in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in Venice, arguably the greatest commission of the north Italian Trecento and to Savonarola crowning proof of the dominance of the Paduan school.<sup>39</sup>

[27] Of the remaining four painters of the Paduan Trecento on this list, none was a native. The painter of the St. Anthony chapel in the Santo is for the second time identified as Stefano da Ferrara,<sup>40</sup> and the extra-Paduan origins of the other three, listed in order of merit – an approach used consistently throughout the *Libellus* for all categories of person – are unequivocally spelled out: "... primum in sede locabo Zotum Florentinum ... Secundam sedem Iacopo Avancii bononiensi ... Tertiam vero Altichiero Veronensi ..." The award of supremacy among the outsiders to Giotto, "pictorum princeps", rests in this passage on established humanist arguments of a rather generalised kind.<sup>41</sup> For the more specific basis on which Savonarola made his selection, implicit to an extent in the actual

<sup>35</sup> Savonarola, *Libellus de Magnificis Ornamentis Regie Civitatis Padue*, 34.

<sup>36</sup> Savonarola, *Libellus de Magnificis Ornamentis Regie Civitatis Padue*, 13, 16.

<sup>37</sup> Savonarola, *Libellus de Magnificis Ornamentis Regie Civitatis Padue*, 13.

<sup>38</sup> Savonarola, *Libellus de Magnificis Ornamentis Regie Civitatis Padue*, 44.

<sup>39</sup> Francesca Flores D'Arcais, *Guariento*, Venice 1974, 72-73.

<sup>40</sup> Savonarola, *Libellus de Magnificis Ornamentis Regie Civitatis Padue*, 44.

nature of the list, we must look to the third level of discussion, first encountered in two passages placed before and after the list of painters. Though exact interpretation of Savonarola's meaning is rather impeded by the confused quality of his text, of which, as his modern editor remarked, "multi passi sono oscuri", the gist of his critical choices is clear enough.<sup>42</sup>

[28] In this part of the *Libellus* Savonarola turns to a consideration of the "mechanicos", including the mathematicians, "whose knowledge is not far from philosophy," and the painters, "to whom is given knowledge of the lineaments of figures and the projection of rays" within the ambit of "the science of perspective".<sup>43</sup> In the passage following the list of Paduan painters, Savonarola attributes to them the creation of "a most famous school of painters", whose distinction rests on perspective, "the mother of painting", again placing special emphasis on "the wonderful projection of the rays".<sup>44</sup>

[29] Though Savonarola maintains the established distinction between Liberal and mechanical arts, the substance of his text tends to push painting in a Liberal Arts direction, rather as though his observations outran his categories. He returns to the theme in a long passage near the end of the *Libellus*. Here painting, "in respect of which the splendour of our city is uniquely manifested", and its "mother" perspective – which is "a part of philosophy" are linked with the study of literature and other arts as a peculiarly Paduan mark of civic distinction. The presence of Giotto as the fons et origo of this status is once again specified, and its importance for Padua is underlined by Savonarola's observation that "from all parts of Italy the painters gather" and that without this aspect of Padua culture "the fame of our city would never have crossed the Venetian lagoon".<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> "[Giotto], qui primus ex antiquis et musaicis figuris modernas mirum in modum configuravit." Savonarola, *Libellus de Magnificis Ornamentis Regie Civitatis Padue*, 44.

<sup>42</sup> Savonarola, *Libellus de Magnificis Ornamentis Regie Civitatis Padue*, vii. I am extremely grateful to Elisabetta Toreno for her invaluable help with Savonarola's often baffling Latin.

<sup>43</sup> "Postremo ad mechanicos gloriosos et sua in arte illustres viros me converto, quorum scire a philosophia non est longinquum, et mathematicarum artium practica est. Hi sunt pictores, quibus lineamenta figurarum et radiorum projectiones nosse datum est, ut quibus prospectiva scientia gloriatur per eos practicos demonstretur." Savonarola, *Libellus de Magnificis Ornamentis Regie Civitatis Padue*, 44.

<sup>44</sup> "Hi etenim sua in arte illustres viri ita gloriosam suis pictoris urbem nostram reddiderunt, ut famiosor pictorum schola facta sit. Cumque de pictoribus commemoratio tam gloriosa sic a me facta fuerit et de geometria sic aliquid a nobis actum, cum perspectiva picture mater habeatur, et pars in ea dignior, cum de stupenda radiorum projectione pertractet." Savonarola, *Libellus de Magnificis Ornamentis Regie Civitatis Padue*, 44.

<sup>45</sup> "Neque parve facio pictorie Studium, quod singulare decus urbis nostre existit, cum ad studium litterarum et bonarum artium pre ceteris artibus adhereat, cum pars sit perspective, que de projectionis radiorum loquitur. Hic etenim philosophiae pars est. Suis enim gloriosis atque formosis et plurimis in numero admirandis picturis Zotus pictorum princeps nostra vivit in civitate, sicque ceteri quatuor, de quibus primo loco actum est. Ad quas visendas ex omni Italiae parte pictores confluunt, veniuntque iuvenes hoc studio cupidi, ut, sic ab eis doctiores facti, ad lares deinde proprios redeant. Neque solatiosum hoc tibi tacebo. Nam cum ex Neapoli industrius iuvenis as artem hand adipiscendam Paduam profectus esset, ut eum de stusio suo, in quo delectatus sum, aliqua interrogarem, post multa respondit: Famam civitatis nostre lacunas Venetas nunquam pertransisse, nisi gloriosa studii pictorie fama per illustres nominatos pictores illustrata fuisset." Savonarola, *Libellus de Magnificis Ornamentis Regie Civitatis Padue*, 55.

[30] The overall thrust of this consideration of painting's broader characteristics is quite clear. The emphasis is placed on "perspective", and the nature of Savonarola's list can hardly fail to confirm as a determining criterion for its own construction what his remarks emphasise quite insistently, the projection of pictorial space, an art practiced with unparalleled brilliance in the Padua of Guariento, Giusto and Altichiero two generations before Brunelleschi (1377-1446) stood on the Duomo steps in Florence. Five of Savonarola's six painters, and in this they evidently distinguished themselves from the dozens of recorded painters of Padua whom Savonarola might have mentioned, possessed, as their inclusion in this context implies, qualities of intellectual distinction related to that ingenium with which Petrarch credited Giotto, "cuius pulchritudinem ignorantibus non intelligent", and here identified in perspectival/spatial terms.<sup>46</sup>

[31] In the context of an article about Altichiero's reputation, Savonarola's attributions are obviously worth examining. His view of Altichiero was based on the three major commissions we know the painter carried out in Padua (the Sala virorum illustrium, the Chapel of S. Giacomo 1377-79 and the Oratory of S. Giorgio 1379-84). Savonarola allows him a part share of the SVI and complete authorship of S. Giorgio. S. Giacomo he attributes wholly to Jacopo Avanzi.

[32] The primary visual evidence, such as it is, establishes that Altichiero had a hand in the SVI; the extant and rather battered portrait of Petrarch is clearly his. Secondary evidence, in the form of the illustrations of the Darmstadt codex of the text on which the SVI frescoes were based, Petrarch's *De viris illustribus*, suggests the presence of Jacopo Avanzi too. As both literary and visual evidence suggests his presence with Altichiero in the Sala Grande and as a number of the frescoes in S. Giacomo are identical in style with works reliably associated with Jacopo, Savonarola's attribution is correct as far as Avanzi's presence is concerned. How, then, do we account for Savonarola's omission of Altichiero, who was paid handsomely for his work in S. Giacomo in 1379, and who is the author of the majority of the frescoes?<sup>47</sup>

[33] This could perhaps be explained by the suggestion that Savonarola had access to the book in which the chapel's patron, Bonifacio Lupi, bound together all the documentary material relating to the chapel's construction and decoration.<sup>48</sup> In this book, which is now lost but which probably included the original contracts, Savonarola might have encountered Avanzi's as the first, or only, name: either as senior partner of his and Altichiero's team, or because Altichiero may around 1376 have still been finishing the Petrarchan frescoes of the Sala virorum illustrium, only fully joining the S. Giacomo team

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<sup>46</sup> Theodor E. Mommsen, *Petrarch's Testament*, Ithaca, NY 1957, 80. I exclude Stefano simply because his artistic personality is much less firmly defined than that of the others. His St. Anthony frescoes are lost. Savonarola may have included him as a sop to his new home. For the Paduan painters of the Trecento, see Antonio Sartori, *Documenti per la Storia dell'Arte a Padova*, Vicenza 1976.

<sup>47</sup> Antonio Sartori, "Nota su Altichiero," in: *Il Santo* 3 (1963), 291-326, here 320.

<sup>48</sup> Antonio Sartori, "La Cappella di S. Giacomo al Santo," in: *Il Santo* 6 (1966), 267-359, here 284.  
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a little later. The key point here is that Savonarola thought all the frescoes in S. Giacomo were by Jacopo Avanzi and that his admiration of them may therefore be attached in large measure to Altichiero. It should be emphasised that Altichiero is the author of about 70% of the total frescoed surface, and of everything below the main cornice, the area one would expect to attract most attention, including the great Crucifixion which dominates all views of the chapel from the main body of the church.

[34] The sum total of Savonarola's specific references to Altichiero's work, including those to Jacopo Avanzi, is greater than those of Biondo and Sanuto combined, but it is not much more informative in the sense of immediately identifying those qualities which underpinned the survival of Altichiero's reputation into the Quattrocento. Of S. Giacomo Savonarola says little more than that it was by Jacopo Avanzi, and that the paintings were glorious.<sup>49</sup> Of the SVI he says it was "painted with gold and colour by the illustrious painters Ottaviano and Altichiero"<sup>50</sup> and of S. Giorgio that Altichiero "decorated it with great skill".<sup>51</sup>

[35] These references straddle the boundary between the topographical and biographical elements of Savonarola's discourse, and the absence from them of the kind of reflection embodied in the third category of discussion is a consequence of Savonarola's division between the different strands of his argument. Padua, in his book, deserves fame for these locations, for these men, and for these aspects of its cultural and civic life. It makes perfect sense in context, as the retention of much the same division in guide books written five hundred years after the *Libellus* confirms. It means, though, that the basis for Savonarola's discrimination between the deserving-of-fame and the undeserving must be reconstructed from dispersed remarks rather than arguments specific to named artists.

[36] One feature of Savonarola's *Libellus* that invites comment is the exclusion of any discussion of quattrocento painting in Padua. Savonarola fails to mention either Paolo Uccello (1397-1475) or Filippo Lippi (c.1406-69), both of whom had worked in Padua prior to the writing of the *Libellus*, though in Lippi's case after Savonarola had left for Ferrara. Neither does he mention the most recent major fresco cycle to have been painted in Padua before his departure, Giovanni Storlato's *Life of St. Luke* (1437), which he must have seen, given the frequency of his references to S. Giustina, where the frescoes are located. Nor does he refer to the Paduan Francesco Squarcione (c.1395-1468), whom he

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<sup>49</sup> "Quie manibus Iacobi de Avantio gloriosissimus imaginibus depicta est" and "secundam sedem Iacobi Avanti bononiensi dabimus, qui magnificorum marchionum de Lupis admirandam cappellam veluti viventibus figuris ornavit." Savonarola, *Libellus de Magnificis Ornamentis Regie Civitatis Padue*, 13.

<sup>50</sup> "Auro optimoque cum colore depicti sunt ... manus illustrium pictorum Octaviani et Alticherii configurarunt." Savonarola, 49. For Ottaviano (da Brescia) in this context, see Mommsen, "Petraarch and the Decoration of the Sala Virorum Illustrium in Padua", 101-102.

<sup>51</sup> "Maximo cum artificio decoravit." Savonarola, *Libellus de Magnificis Ornamentis Regie Civitatis Padue*, 44. Savonarola's longest reference to S. Giorgio, 33, concentrates on the tomb of Raimondino Lupi, of which a detailed description is given. The tomb was painted by Altichiero, though Savonarola does not mention this.

surely knew, given the documented association between the painter and Savonarola's son.<sup>52</sup>

[37] Lightbown suggests that Savonarola's exclusion of Squarcione and his contemporaries is to be explained because Squarcione's school "had as yet made no great impression stylistically. It may even have been [Squarcione's pupil] Mantegna's (c.1431-1506) precocious genius that brought to it much of its subsequent fame".<sup>53</sup> Martindale is generally more sceptical with regard to the whole Squarcione issue: "exactly what Squarcione taught and what facilities his household and workshop offered are likely to remain a matter of speculation."<sup>54</sup> Paduan painting of the early Quattrocento has rarely enjoyed much critical acclaim, a situation which is in marked contrast with its longstanding intellectual, scientific and pedagogical distinction. Indeed, Christiansen describes the city in this period as "artistically backward" and Battisti comments on the generally depressed conditions of a pictorial culture lacking exemplary contact with the new developments of Tuscany.<sup>55</sup> Donatello (c.1386-1466) and Mantegna only arrived in Padua after Savonarola had left, and the *Libellus* was written before their work in the Santo and the Eremitani had been completed.

[38] The omission of Uccello and Lippi cannot, in the light of Savonarola's Trecento list, be accounted for on the grounds that neither was a native of Padua. More to the point is the nature of the *Libellus* itself. However superior it may be to other examples of its genre, its principal purpose is still that of establishing the grounds for Padua's fame. Savonarola's reason for including anything or anyone in his book hinges on their contribution to that. The assumption that follows from this is clear: in Savonarola's day Padua was famous for a number of its trecento painters, and for reasons which allowed him to give them something like the same billing as the men of intellect.<sup>56</sup> There was already a precedent for presenting painters of an earlier period as models to be followed in the way writers might model their work on Cicero in the form of Pierpaolo Vergerio's (1370-1444/5) oft-cited observation (c.1396) that the painters (implicitly Paduan) of the late Trecento followed the example of Giotto alone.<sup>57</sup> One of the effects of Savonarola's

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<sup>52</sup> Michelangelo Muraro, "Francesco Squarcione Pittore 'Umanistica'", in: Lucio Grossato, ed., *Da Giotto al Mantegna*, exh.cat., Padua 1974, 68-74, here 69.

<sup>53</sup> Ronald Lightbown, *Mantegna*, Oxford 1986, 21.

<sup>54</sup> Andrew Martindale and Niny Garavaglia, *The Complete Paintings of Mantegna*, London 1971, 7. Kristeller's reading remains valid. Of Squarcione he says: "One certainly does not gain from [his] pictures that impression that Squarcione was the influential artist whom the Paduan tradition, repeated since Vasari by almost all writers, represents him to have been" and that: "[Squarcione] was not so much the artistic, but rather the business head of his workshop." Paul Kristeller, *Andrea Mantegna*, London 1901, 26.

<sup>55</sup> Keith Christiansen, "Early Works: Padua", in: *Andrea Mantegna*, exh. cat., ed. J. Martineau, London and New York 1992, 94-149, here 111, n. 12. Eugenio Battisti, "Mantegna come Prospettico," in: *Arte Lombarda* 16 (1971), 98-107, here 100.

<sup>56</sup> "If the Paduan school of the fifteenth century had been independent and autochthonous, it would certainly have taken its departure from the splendid and important works executed in Padua by artists of the Trecento." Kristeller, *Andrea Mantegna*, 32.

<sup>57</sup> "Faciendum est igitur quod etatis nostre pictores, qui, cum ceterorum claras imagines sedulo spectent, solus tamen loti exemplaria sequuntur." Pier Paolo Vergerio, *Epistolario*, ed. Leonardo License: The text of this article is provided under the terms of the [Creative Commons License CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/)

book may have been to adumbrate for the painters of his day, and their patrons, an extended set of exemplars in the Giottesque tradition. His list could thus be seen as an intellectualised gloss on the Paduan practice, codified in the statutes of the painters' guild, of sending apprentice painters to copy from local frescoes on feast days.<sup>58</sup> Savonarola's emphasis is at least circumstantially supported by the argument it was precisely Filippo Lippi's exposure to the painters of the Paduan Trecento that played a decisive role in the development of his use of pictorial space.<sup>59</sup>

[39] The analogy between humanist imitation of Cicero and Seneca and the use of Giotto and other trecento painters as exemplars was repeated in Savonarola's time by the humanist educator Gasparino Barzizza (c.1360-1431), teaching in Padua between 1407 and 1421. Barzizza noted an analogy between his own pedagogical technique and that of painters: "I myself would have done what good painters practice towards their pupils; for when the apprentices are to be instructed by their master before having acquired a thorough grasp of the theory of painting, the painters follow the practice of giving them a number of fine drawings and pictures as models of the art."<sup>60</sup>

[40] Barzizza gives no indication what type of work Paduan painters used for their pupils' instruction, nor is it entirely clear in what sense the term "model" should be understood. He does state that study of these masters was treated as a preliminary exercise, prior to the direct application of the master's wisdom to his pupils, but implies also that its purpose was to confront young painters with the best of their art – with the equivalent of what would for Barzizza's pupils, have been Cicero, Virgil and Seneca, rather than the less exalted models of the *ars dictaminis*.<sup>61</sup>

[41] The place of Squarcione and his pupils in this context is unclear. Barzizza never mentions him by name and there is no particular reason to think he had him in mind at all. Connections between Squarcione's supposed 'academy' and the firmly documented Gymnasium of Barzizza are purely conjectural, even if we go so far (and it is going some distance) as to allow Squarcione admission to Barzizza's category of good painters. Savonarola's list maintains the supremacy of Giotto's example asserted by Vergerio, adding to it a selected number of later painters most of whom might be defined as Giottesque 'progressives', and who broadly confirmed Vergerio's assertion that "the painters of [his] day" followed the example of Giotto alone. It is always possible that it was Squarcione himself, maybe with an eye to recruitment, who helped Savonarola

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Smith, Rome 1934, 177.

<sup>58</sup> Jennifer Fletcher, "Mantegna and Venice," in: *Mantegna and 15th-Century Court Culture: Lectures delivered in connection with the Andrea Mantegna exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts*, London 1992, ed. Francis Ames-Lewis and Anka Bednarek, London 1993, 17-25, here 22.

<sup>59</sup> Elliott W. Rowlands, "Filippo Lippi and the experience of painting in the Veneto," in: *Artibus et Historiae*, X, no. 19 (1989), 53-83, here 54-67.

<sup>60</sup> Colin Eisler, *The Genius of Jacopo Bellini*, New York 1989, 56.

<sup>61</sup> For Barzizza's school and influence, see R.G.G. Mercer, *The Teaching of Gasparino Barzizza*, London 1979, 118-131.



assemble a list which served to enshrine and transmit a settled Paduan sense of its own pictorial exemplars, Altichiero amongst them.<sup>62</sup>

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## Conclusion

[42] Discussion of the visual evidence of Altichiero's impact in the Quattrocento is beyond the scope of this account. It would have to be extensive and it would have to be argued within a broader analysis of the insufficiently acknowledged role played by trecento painting in a Giottesque tradition in the development of the ars nova of early quattrocento Florence. Even if one were to restrict oneself to the Veneto, the pervasive presence of Altichiero's inventions in the drawings of Jacopo Bellini (c.1400-70/71) and the impact of his spatial adventures on the young Mantegna (c.1431-1506) would support the rather fragmentary evidence of esteem considered here. The apparent interest of these artists in Altichiero's Giottism may be contrasted with the example of other painters working in northern Italy, men such as Michelino da Besozzo (c.1370-c.1455) and Pisanello, neither of whom show any overt sign of an interest in the optical and, one might say, 'Paduan' aspects of Giotto's legacy endorsed by Savonarola, even admitting Pisanello's interest in Altichiero and pace Paccagnini's remarks, cited above.<sup>63</sup>

[43] Altichiero's reputation in the century or so after his death rested chiefly on the Sala Grande and the Sala virorum illustrium. This is understandable. Both fresco cycles were located in public, governmental spaces where they would be seen, and both satisfied at least one established criterion for esteem, based as they were on Antique material. This is possibly reflected in Vasari's observation of the Veronese frescoes that "Mantegna used to praise them as the rarest painting".<sup>64</sup> Apocryphal or not, the point of the remark is that Mantegna was identified as the sort of artist whose praise might be felt to say something significant about them. In this light, and in the light of Savonarola's attempt to establish criteria for good painting along the same sort of Liberal Arts-inflected line developed more thoroughly in Tuscany, what happened to Altichiero thereafter may seem especially unjust. The frescoes of the SVI were largely replaced in the early sixteenth century and those of the Sala Grande were lost to view by 1718 at the latest.<sup>65</sup> This left the artist to be represented by the two Paduan chapels he painted for members of the Lupi family, which were by Vasari's time – and by Vasari – embroiled in the attributional mess which served for so long to obscure Altichiero's role in their creation and deny him his proper measure of renown.

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<sup>62</sup> For the Ferrarese aspects of Savonarola's interests, see John Richards, "Fouquet and the Trecento," in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 70.4 (2007), 449-472, here 469-472.

<sup>63</sup> See n. 19, above. For Michelino in the Veneto, see Gaudioso, *Pisanello*, 151-153 and 357-358.

<sup>64</sup> "Il Mantegna gli lodava come pittura rarissima." Giorgio Vasari, *Le Opere*, ed. Gaetano Milanesi, 9 vols., Florence 1906, 3, 635. It should be pointed out that Vasari attached this praise to the *Trionfi* which he says were part of the scheme and which he attributed to Jacopo Avanzi rather than Altichiero.

<sup>65</sup> Richards, *Altichiero*, 36.

