Shaping A New Identity For The Trinci Signoria: Ambitions And Image-making In The Early Quattrocento Court Of Foligno.

Thesis

How to cite:

For guidance on citations see FAQs.

© 2022 Sarah Roberts

https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

Version: Version of Record

Link(s) to article on publisher’s website:
http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21954/ou.ro.00014f8b

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online’s data policy on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

oro.open.ac.uk
Sarah Roberts

‘Shaping a new identity for the Trinci signoria: ambitions and image-making in the early quattrocento court of Foligno.’

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Art History

March 2022
The Open University

Volume 1
Abstract
This thesis concerns the decorations of the Palazzo Trinci in Foligno, dating from the early fifteenth century. This early period of court art is relatively neglected, and the frescoes have received little scholarly attention since a 2001 collection of essays in Italian, focusing largely on attribution and the identification of immediate sources.

The thesis extends this earlier research, placing the cycle within the social and political context of the period and showing how it reflects the contemporary process of cultural exchange. Close study of frescoes in the palazzo’s surviving decorated spaces (two large reception rooms, a landing, and a bridge) shows how the Trinci’s dynastic ambitions underlie the scheme. It demonstrates the influence of humanists who were present in Foligno, arguing that humanistic ideas about the nature of leadership, virtue, learning, and time frame the future signoria in new ways. Referencing other works of art in various media and contexts over a wide geographical area, it examines how the artists concerned interpreted these ideas, using chivalric, civic, and religious imagery. Considering the physical nature and likely use of the four spaces, the thesis investigates ways in which contemporary viewers may have perceived the frescoes. It examines the suggestion that one room (the Camera delle Rose) was an early studiolo, proposing, for the first time, that it is unified by the theme of ‘the active and contemplative life’.

Created at a time when other courtly decorations were still often light-hearted and ‘chivalric’, the Palazzo Trinci frescoes are unusually serious in tone. This thesis contends that they occupy an important position in the development of the art and culture of early Italian courts, exemplifying a time when families such as the Trinci were searching for new, more acceptable, identities, and pointing ahead to the more confident ‘magnificence’ of later courts.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the many welcoming and friendly people at the Palazzo Trinci and in the city of Foligno. I am extremely grateful to Arch. Roberto Silvestri, Manager of Museum Services, for his interest, and for his permission to use my images of the Palazzo Trinci in this thesis. Especially helpful during my first visit to Foligno were Marina Rizini at the Palazzo Trinci, Fabrizia Paoletti at the Biblioteca Comunale Dante Alighieri, and Maria Rosaria Benvenuti at the Archivio di Stato. On a later visit, Agnese Brunetti went out of her way to allow access to the loggia in the Palazzo del Podestà, and Fabio Massimo Mattoni to check on the possibility of relevant material in the Biblioteca Ludovico Jacobilli del Seminario Vescovile. Thanks also to Dóra Sallay, Curator of Italian Paintings at the Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest, who provided generous information about the frescoes from the Palazzo Stocchi-Isidori, Perugia.

My gratitude goes, above all, to my three supervisors, Dr Leah Clark, Dr Helen Coffey, and Dr Kathleen Christian, who have given me unstinting support and encouragement. Their wide-ranging knowledge, careful questioning and sound advice have enabled me to develop new skills and explore different approaches, and their continuing interest and enthusiasm for my project has made the whole experience enormously enjoyable and stimulating.

Finally, my husband alone knows how much he has listened over the past three years, and how many useful suggestions and comments he has provided - to say nothing of countless cups of tea.
# Table of Contents

## Volume 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Image list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Chapter 1. The Trinci - setting the scene

- The rise to power | 24
- Influence and networks | 28
- The Palazzo Trinci – an appropriate setting | 30
- The Trinci court – daily life | 34
- The Trinci court – cultural life | 38
- The end of the Trinci *signoria* | 44

### Chapter 2. The Bridge - a transitional space

- Introduction | 47
- Structure and space | 48
- The decorations | 50
- The Nine Worthies | 51
- The Ages of Man | 56
- Conclusion | 65

### Chapter 3. The story of Ilia – foundation myth or investigation of virtue?

- Introduction | 68
- A meeting-point | 68
- Ancient origins | 72
- Shaping a future identity | 78
- Conclusion | 88

### Chapter 4. The Sala dei Giganti – the lessons of history

- Introduction | 92
- Creating an impression | 93
- Sources of inspiration | 97
- Lessons from the past | 102
- Conclusion | 113

### Chapter 5. The Camera delle Rose – *vita activa*

- Introduction | 115
- A different kind of space? | 116
- The active and contemplative lives | 120
Image list

- Images are my own unless another source is stated.
- Abbreviations: WC – Wikimedia Commons; WGA – Web Gallery of Art.

Fig. 0.1: *Grammar*, Camera delle Rose, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig. 0.2: *Arithmetic*, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig. 0.3: *Rhetoric*, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig. 0.4: Pedro Berruguete (attrib.) (c.1480-81) *Federico da Montefeltro and His Son Guidobaldo*, oil on board, Galleria Nazionale delle Marche, Urbino (WGA).

Fig. 1.1: Simplified Trinci family tree, adapted from Nessi, S. (2006) p.212.

Fig. 1.2: Modern Umbria, showing Foligno. (www.italytravelescape.com).

Fig. 1.3: Route of Via Flaminia (WC).

Fig. 1.4: Italy, 1400s (www.britannica.com).

Fig. 1.5: Artist’s impression of Palazzo Trinci, c.1400.

Fig. 1.6: Present-day view from south, Palazzo Trinci.

Figs. 1.7, 1.8: Courtyard, Palazzo Trinci.

Figs. 1.9-1.11: ‘Gothic’ staircase, Palazzo Trinci.


Fig. 1.14: Palazzo Trinci, Mappe Palazzo Trinci (museifoligno.it).

Figs. 2.1-2.3: Views of Bridge, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig. 2.4, 2.5: Interior of Bridge, Palazzo Trinci.

Figs. 2.6: *Petrarch* (?), Bridge, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig. 2.7: Altichiero da Zevio or Jacopo Avanzi, (1374) *Petrarch in his study*, fresco, originally in Sala dei Giganti, Palazzo dei Carraresi; now in Palazzo Liviano, Padua (WC).

Figs. 2.8-2.15: *Ages of Man*, Bridge, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig. 2.16: *Caged Bird*, Bridge, Palazzo Trinci.

Figs. 2.17-2.26: *Nine Worthies*, Bridge, Palazzo Trinci.

Figs. 2.27, 2.28: Parisian workshop of Maître de la Cité des Dames (1403-1404), *Le Chevalier Errant*, Tommaso III, Marquis of Saluzzo, Ms.12559, fols.125r,125v, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (https://gallica.bnf.fr/).

Fig.2.33-2.35: Anonymous (c.1400) *Historical and Mythological Characters*, wall-painting, Castel Roncolo, Bolzano, Italy (WC).

Fig.2.36-2.38: Master of the *Castello della Manta* (1411-16) fresco, Sala Baronale, Castello della Manta, Saluzzo (WGA).

Fig.2.39: Anonymous (2nd c.CE) *Male heads*, sculpture, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig.2.40: Anonymous (1176 -1200) *Psalm 89, Psalterium Cantuariense*, probably copied in Canterbury and illuminated in Catalonia, ink and gilding on parchment, Ms.Lat 8846, fol.161r, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (https://gallica.bnf.fr/)

Fig.2.41: Anonymous (c.1380) *Vulcan finding Venus and Mars together, Roman de la Rose, Egerton Ms.881*, fol.141v, British Library, London (https://www.bl.uk/).

Fig.2.42: Anonymous (c.1405) *Roman de la Rose*, tempera colours, gold leaf and ink on parchment, French, Ms.Ludwig XV 7, fol.91v, J. Paul Getty Museum (Getty Images).

Fig.2.43: Anonymous (c.1400) *Le Jardin de Deduit*, Roman de la Rose, ink on parchment, French, Egerton Ms.1069 fol.1r, British Library, London (https://www.bl.uk/).

Fig.2.44: Master of the Judgement of Paris (early 15th c.) *Aristotle and Phyllis*, tempera on wood panel, Museo Stibbert, Florence (WC).

Fig.2.45: Master of the *Castello della Manta* (1411-16) *The Fountain of Youth*, fresco, Sala Baronale, Castello della Manta, Saluzzo (WGA).

Fig.2.46: Pietro Cavallini (1296 – 1300) *Adoration of the Magi*, mosaic, Basilica di Santa Maria, Trastevere, Rome (WGA).

Fig.2.47: Giotto (c.1320) *Adoration of the Magi*, tempera on wood, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (https://www.metmuseum.org/).

Fig.2.48: Taddeo Gaddi (c.1330) *Adoration of the Magi*, fresco, Cappella Baroncelli, Santa Croce, Florence (WGA).

Fig.2.49: Simone de' Crocefissi (late 14th c.) *Adoration of the Magi*, tempera on board, Musei Civici Palazzo Farnese, Piacenza (https://www.palazzofernese.piacenza.it/).

Fig.2.50: Bartolo di Fredi (c.1390) *Adoration of the Magi*, oil on wood, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (https://www.metmuseum.org/).

Fig.2.51: Gentile da Fabriano (1423) *Adoration of the Magi*, tempera on panel, Galleria dei Uffizi, Florence (https://www.uffizi.it/).

Figs.3.1,3.2: Landing area, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig.3.3: Anonymous (mid-2nd c.CE) *Cupid and Psyche*, marble relief, Palazzo Trinci.

Figs.3.4-3.11: Landing area decorations, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig.3.12: Anonymous (230-240CE) *Sarcophagus of Mars and Rhea Silvia*, marble, Palazzo Mattei, Rome (WC).

Fig.3.14: Giotto (c.1305) *The Birth of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, fresco, Scrovegni Chapel, Padua (WGA).

Fig.3.15: Giovanni da Milano (1365) *The Birth of the Virgin*, fresco, Rinuccini Chapel, Santa Croce, Florence (WGA).

Fig.3.16: Master of the Ashmolean Predella, Andrea di Cione (1365-1370) *The Birth of the Virgin*, tempera and gilding on panel, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (https://www.ashmolean.org/).

Fig.3.17: Master of Charles of Durazzo (c.1410) *A Birth Scene*, desco da parto, Harvard Art Museum (WC).

Fig.3.18: Altichiero da Zevio (1378-1384) *The Martyrdoms of Saint Catherine and Saint Lucy*, fresco, Oratorio di San Giorgio, Padua (WGA).

Fig.3.19: Giovanni di Benedetto and collaborators (c.1385-1390) *Martyrdom of Saint Catherine of Alexandria*, Ms.Latin 757, fol.362v. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (https://gallica.bnf.fr/),

Fig.3.20: Jacobello del Fiore (1410) *Martyrdom of Santa Lucia*, oil on board, Museo Civico, Fermo (WC).

Fig.3.21: Maître des Cleres Femmes (1403) *The Death of Rhea Silvia*, illustration to Boccaccio’s ‘De Claris mulieribus’, Ms.Francais 12148, fol.69v, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (https://gallica.bnf.fr/).

Fig.3.22: Netherlandish artist working in Paris (early 15th c.) *Rhea Silvia and Amulius*, miniature illustration to ‘Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César’, Ms.Stowe 54, fol.266v, British Library, London (https://www.bl.uk/).

Fig.3.23: Talbot Master (c.1440) *Rhea Silvia*, illustration to Boccaccio’s *De claris mulieribus*, Royal Ms.16Gv, fol.55r, British Library, London (https://www.bl.uk/).

Fig.3.24: *Ilia’s execution* (detail) Palazzo Trinci.

Fig.3.25: *Ilia’s execution* (detail), Lodovico Coltellini (1770–1780) ink on paper, private collection, Foligno.

Figs.3.26,3.27: Giusto de’ Menabuoi (1370) *Crucifixion of St Philip*, fresco, Cappella Conti, Padua (Getty Images).

Figs.4.1-4.4: Views, Sala dei Giganti, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig.4.5: Plan, Sala dei Giganti, Palazzo Trinci.

Figs.4.6-4.8: *Fictive Balcony; figures*, Sala dei Giganti, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig.4.9: Anonymous (1st c.CE) *Famous men*, sculpture, Municipal Forum, Merida, Spain.
Figs.4.10,4.11: Altichiero da Zevio (1364) *Roman Emperors* from Palazzo Scaligeri, fresco, Museo degli Affreschi, Verona (https://museodegliaffreschi.comune.verona.it/).

Fig.4.12: Taddeo di Bartolo, (1413-1414) *Allegories and Figures from Roman History*, fresco, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena (WGA).

Figs.4.13-4.26: Details, Sala dei Giganti, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig.4.27: Anonymous (early 1400s) *Bianchi*, Illustration to Giovanni Sercambi’s *Chroniche di Lucca*, Ms.107, fol.321r, Archivio di Stato, Lucca (https://bianchi1399.wordpress.com/2017/06/28/peace-is-the-word-peacemaking-during-the-bianchi-processions-of-1399-in-tuscany/).

Figs.5.1-5.8: Views, Camera delle Rose, Palazzo Trinci

Fig.5.9: Plan, Camera delle Rose.

Figs.5.10,5.11: Details, Camera delle Rose, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig.5.12: Jean de Toulouse (attrib.) (1378-1383) *Prayer Book of Pope Clement VII*, Ms.BM 6733, fols.006, 016 and 155, Bibliothèque Municipale, Avignon (http://initiale.irht.cnrs.fr/).

Fig.5.13: Anonymous (c.1400) *Petrarch in his Study*, Ms.101, fol.1v, Hochschul und Landesbibliothek, Darmstadt (WC).

Fig.5.14: Antonello da Messina (1474-5) *St Jerome in his Study*, oil on wood, National Gallery, London (WGA).

Fig.5.15: Sandro Botticelli (c.1480) *Sant’Agostino nello studio*, fresco, Ecclesia dei Ognissanti, Florence (WGA).

Fig.5.16: Vittore Carpaccio (1502) *St Augustine in his Study*, oil on canvas, Scuola di San Giorgio degli Schiavoni, Venice (WGA).

Figs.5.17,5.18: Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meung (1475) *Le Roman de la Rose*, Ms. Douce 195, fol.1r, Bodleian Library, Oxford (https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/).

Fig.5.19: Henri de Trevou and Raoulet d’Orleans, (1372) *King Charles V in his Library*, manuscript, John of Salisbury, Polricaticus, Ms.Français 24287, fol.1, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris (https://gallica.bnf.fr/).

Fig.5.20: Christine de Pizan (c.1410 – 1414) *The Queen’s Manuscript*, Harley Ms.4431, fol.259v, British Library, London (https://www.bl.uk/).


Fig.5.23: Minucchio da Siena (1330) *Golden Rose*, gold, glass, enamel on silver, Musée de Cluny, Paris (WC).

Fig.5.24: Anonymous (1250-1270) *Psalter*, English(?), Ms.B.11.4, fol.9, Trinity College, Cambridge (https://www.trin.cam.ac.uk/).
Fig.5.25: Anonymous (early 15th c.) *Almanac*, Harley Ms.2332, fol.3v, British Library, London (https://www.bl.uk/).

Fig.5.26: Master of the Brussels initials (1400-1410) *Book of Hours*, Add Ms.29433, fol.2, British Library, London (https://www.bl.uk/).

Fig.5.27: Limbourg Brothers and others (1412-1416) *The Months*, Très Riches Heures of the Duc de Berry, Ms.65, Musée Condé, Chantilly (WGA).

Figs.5.28,5.29: Anonymous (1391-1407) *Cycle of the Months*, fresco, Torre dell’ Aquila, Castello del Buonconsiglio (WGA).

Figs.5.30-5.32: Francesco del Cossa and others (1476-84) *Monthly Activities*, fresco, Sala dei Mesi, Palazzo Sciffanoia, Ferrara (WGA).

Figs.5.33-5.37: Ambroggio Lorenzetti (1338-9) *Allegory of Good and Bad Government*, fresco, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena.

Figs.5.38-5.40: Nicolò Miretto and Stefano da Ferrara (1425-1440) *Astrological Frescoes*, Sala della Ragione, Padua.

Fig.5.41: Novello Dondi dall’Orologio (1423) *Astronomical clock*, Padua.

Fig.5.42: Workshop of Andrea Pisano (1334-1343) *Planetary Gods*, marble, majolica, originally on Campanile, now in Museo dell’Opera del Duomo, Florence.

Fig.5.43: Workshop of Enrico and Pietro Baseggio (1340-1355) *Planets with Signs of the Zodiac*, stone sculpture, Doge’s Palace, Venice (WC).

Figs.5.44-5.46: Nicolò Miretto and Stefano da Ferrara (1425-1440) *Astrological Frescoes*, Sala della Ragione, Padua.

Figs.5.47,5.48: Andrea di Bonaiuto (1366–1367) *Triumph of Thomas Aquinas*, fresco, Santa Maria Novella, Florence.

Fig.5.49: Guariento di Arpo (late 14th c.) *Planets with the Ages of Man*, fresco, Chiesa degli Eremitani, Padua.

Figs.5.50,5.51: Maestro di Angera (c.1300) *Planetary Figures*, fresco, Sala di Giustizia, Rocca Borromeo di Angera, Angera (WC).

Fig.5.52: *Luna*, Camera delle Rose, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig.5.53: Anonymous (1st-2nd CE) *Lamp in the form of Luna*, brass, British Museum, London (https://www.britishmuseum.org).

Fig.5.54: Anonymous (1st-3rd CE) *Selene*, engraved sard gem, British Museum, London (https://www.britishmuseum.org).

Fig.5.55: Anonymous (194-190 BCE) Silver coin, British Museum, London (https://www.britishmuseum.org).

Fig.5.56: *Mars*, Camera delle Rose, Palazzo Trinci.
Fig.5.57: Anonymous (2nd-3rd.CE) Mars Ultor, bronze statuette with silver inlay, private collection. (https://archaicwonder.tumblr.com/).

Fig.5.58: Anonymous (2nd.CE) Mars Ultor, sculpture, Musei Capitolini, Rome (WC).

Fig.5.59: Anonymous (180-192CE) Column of Marcus Aurelius, marble relief, Campus Martius, Rome (WC).

Fig.5.60: Mercury, Camera delle Rose, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig.5.61: Anonymous (Roman copy of early 4th.BCE Greek original) Mercury, marble, Musei Capitolini, Rome (WC).

Fig.5.62: Anonymous (late 1st.C.E) Youthful Mercury resting, bronze, Museo Archaeologico Nazionale, Naples (WC).

Fig.5.63: Jupiter, Camera delle Rose, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig.5.64: Anonymous (1st.C.E) Jove, wall painting, from Pompeii, Museo Archaeologico Nazionale, Naples (WC).

Fig.5.65: Anonymous (Augustinian period, 1stc.BCE) Jove, Museo Archaeologico Nazionale, Florence (ancientrome.ru).

Fig.5.66: Saturn, Camera delle Rose, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig.5.67: Anonymous (2nd.C.E) Saturn, detail of altar, marble, Musei Capitolini, Rome (WC).

Fig.5.68: Anonymous (1st.C.E) Saturn, wall painting, from Pompeii, Museo Nazionale Archaeologico, Naples (WC).

Fig.5.69: Sol, Camera delle Rose, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig.5.70: Anonymous (c.1030-1060) The chariots of the sun and moon, Ms.Cotton Tiberius B V/I, fol.47r, British Library, London (https://www.bl.uk/).

Fig.5.71: Anonymous (11th.c.) Chariot of the sun, Bristol Psalter, Ms.Add 40731, fol.80v, British Library, London (https://www.bl.uk/).

Fig.5.72: Anonymous (mid-3rd.C.E) Sol Invictus, mosaic, Roman villa, Münster-Sarmsheim, Germany (WC).

Fig.5.73: Anonymous (3rd.C.E) Sol Invictus, mosaic, Vatican necropolis, Rome (WC).

Fig.5.74: Anonymous (118-107BCE) Roma and Sol, denarius, Karl Sifferman Collection (WC).

Fig.5.75: Giotto (1304) Elijah, fresco, Cappella Scrovegni, Padua (WGA).

Fig.5.76: Giotto (?) (1297-99) Legend of St Francis, fresco, Basilica di San Francesco, Assisi (WGA).

Fig.5.77: Anonymous (3rd.C.E?) Circus Maximus, relief, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig.5.78: Anonymous (3rd.C.E?) Chariot Race, sarcophagus, Palazzo Trinci.
Figs.5.79-5.85: *The Ages of Man and The Hours of the Day*, Camera delle Rose, Palazzo Trinci.

Figs.5.86,5.87: Anonymous (14th c.) *The Ages of Man and the Hours of the Day*, Francesco di Barberino’s *Documenti d’amore*, Ms.Barb. Lat 4076 fols.76v,77r, Biblioteca Vaticana, Rome (https://digi.vatlib.it/).

Fig.6.1: Anonymous (c.1150) *Incarnation of Christ*, stone-carving, Cathedral de Notre-Dame, Chartres (https://www.library.pitt.edu/).

Fig.6.2: Nicola Pisano (1265-1268) *Pulpit*, marble, Duomo, Siena.

Fig.6.3: Giovanni Pisano (1301-1310) *Pulpit*, stone, marble, Duomo, Pisa.

Fig.6.4: Andrea di Buonaiuto (1366–1367) *The Triumph of St Thomas Aquinas*, fresco, Santa Maria Novella, Florence.

Fig.6.5: Nicola Pisano, Giovanni Pisano, Rosso Padellaio (1277-1278) *Fontana Maggiore*, stone, bronze, Perugia.

Fig.6.6: Giotto di Bondone, Andrea Pisano and Francesco Talenti (1334–1359) *Campanile*, Florence.

Fig.6.7: Workshop of Andrea Pisano (1343–1360) Original *Liberal Arts* from Campanile, marble, majolica, Museo dell’Opera del Duomo, Florence.

Figs.6.8,6.9: Ambrogio Lorenzetti (1338–1339) *Allegory of Good and Bad Government*, fresco, Palazzo Pubblico, Siena.

Figs.6.10,6.11: Details of *Allegory of Good and Bad Government*.

Fig.6.12: Cola Petruccioli (?) (c.1400) *Fortitude, Justice, Vita Activa*, fresco panels originally from roof-spaces of Palazzo Stocchi-Isidori, Perugia, Szépművészeti Múzeum, Budapest (http://www.alaintruong.com/).

Fig.6.13: Anonymous (c.1400) *Liberal Arts*, fresco, Palazzo Stocchi-Isidori, Perugia.

Fig.6.14: Altichiero da Zevio (1377-1384) *Coronation of the Virgin and Annunciation*, fresco, Oratorio di San Giorgio, Basilica di San Antonio, Padua (WGA).

Fig.6.15: Altichiero da Zevio (1377-1384) *Annunciation*, fresco, Oratorio di San Giorgio, Basilica di San Antonio, Padua (WGA).

Fig.6.16: Pietro Cavallini (early 14th c.) *Annunciation*, mosaic, Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome (WGA).

Fig.6.17: Arnau Bassa, Catalan (1340s) *Annunciation*, tempera, gold on panel, Walters Art Museum (WC).

Fig.6.18: Anonymous, French? (14th c.) *Annunciation*, Neville of Hornby Hours, Ms.Egerton 2781, fol.71r, British Library, London (https://www.bl.uk/).
Fig.6.19: Master of Vyšší Brod, Bohemia (c.1350) *Annunciation*. tempera on wood, Narodni Galerie, Prague (WC).

Fig.6.20: Anonymous, Netherlands? (1380s) *Annunciation*, tempera, oil, gold on wood, Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland (https://www.clevelandart.org/).

Fig.6.21: Melchior Broederlam, Netherlands/Burgundy (1393–1399) *Annunciation*, tempera on wood, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon (WGA).

Figs.6.22-6.26: *Liberal Arts*, Camera delle Rose, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig.6.27: Anonymous, Italy (15th c.) *Finger counting*, ink on parchment, Ms.Pal Lat 1449, fol.118v, Biblioteca Vaticana, Rome (https://digi.vatlib.it/).

Fig.6.28: Pacino di Buonaguida (1335-1340) *Carmina Regia*, ink and gold on parchment, Ms.Royal 6 E 1X, fol.29, British Library, London (https://www.bl.uk/).

Figs.6.29-6.31: *Liberal Arts*, Camera delle Rose, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig.6.32: Lodovico Coltellini (1770–1780) *Geometry*, ink on paper, private collection, Foligno.

Figs.6.33-6.35: *Liberal Arts*, Camera delle Rose, Palazzo Trinci.

Fig.6.36: Lodovico Coltellini (1770–1780) *Philosophy*, ink on paper, private collection, Foligno.

Fig.6.37: Anonymous (late 15th c.) *Philosophy holding the Planetary Spheres*, miniature, ink on parchment, Augustine’s ‘De Civitate Dei’, Royal Ms.14 D I, fol.337v, British Library, London (https://www.bl.uk/).

Fig.6.38: Angelo Maccagnino and Cosmé Tura (c.1460) *Calliope* (?) oil/tempera panel, National Gallery, London (WC).

Fig.6.39: Anonymous (c.1460) *Erato*, oil/tempera panel, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Ferrara (WC).

Fig.6.40: Anonymous (c.1460) *Urania*, oil/tempera panel, Pinacoteca Nazionale, Ferrara (WC).

Fig.6.41: Michele Pannonio (c.1460) *Thalia*, oil/tempera panel, Szépmûvészeti Mûzeum, Budapest (WC).

Fig.6.42: Anonymous (c.1460) *Polimnia*, oil/tempera panel, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin (WC).

Fig.6.43: Anonymous (c.1460) *Euterpe*, oil/tempera panel, Szépmûvészeti Mûzeum, Budapest (WC).

Fig.6.44: Giuliano da Maiano (1476) intarsia, Palazzo Ducale, Urbino (WC).

Fig.6.47: Justus van Ghent (1474 – 1480) *Federico da Montefeltro, his son Guidobaldo and others Listening to a Discourse*, oil on panel, Royal Collection Trust, Hampton Court (WC).

Fig.6.48: Pintoricchio and others (c.1450) *Room of the Liberal Arts*, Borgia Apartments, Musei Vaticani, Rome (https://m.museivaticani.va).

Fig.6.49: Pintoricchio (c.1450) *Geometry, Grammar*, fresco, Room of the Liberal Arts, Borgia Apartments, Musei Vaticani, Rome (https://www.wikiwand.com/).

Fig.6.50: Georgio Vasari and others (1570-1575) *Francesco de Medici’s studiolo, Museo del Palazzo Vecchio*, Florence (WC).
Introduction

One of the largest frescoed spaces in the Palazzo Trinci, the Camera delle Rose, is decorated at one end with images of the Liberal Arts and Philosophy, elegantly dressed in the manner of ladies of the court.\(^1\) Three of them, representing Grammar, Arithmetic and Rhetoric, are accompanied by boys wearing the Trinci colours of red and green, increasing in age from child (Fig.01) to adolescent (Fig.0.2), to young man (Fig.0.3). In the cultured environment of this great room, the boys are shown receiving the education recommended by early humanist thinkers to prepare the sons of the élite for future leadership. Visitors to the palace might well have been reminded of Niccolò, Bartolomeo and Corrado, the three oldest sons of Ugolino Trinci, signore of Foligno, who were jointly to inherit his position. Attentive, confident, and refined, these youthful figures promise a future very different from the uncertainty and conflict of their recent past.

By the end of the trecento, the fortunes of the Trinci family had followed a familiar trajectory in their relations with the city of Foligno, in Umbria, as they rose from condottieri – mercenary leaders – to signori – effective rulers, with additional authority conferred by their position as papal vicars.\(^2\) Aware of the frequent characterisation of such men as ‘tyrans’, Ugolino Trinci, the sixth member of his family to hold power, made every effort to present himself and his family differently.\(^3\) In 1397, he purchased a large group of buildings in the centre of the city that had belonged to a wealthy merchant, and had them reconfigured to form the Palazzo Trinci: a place where the business of the signoria could be conducted appropriately and where his family and household could live in a style befitting his status. A few years later, he commissioned a series of inventive and thought-provoking frescoes to decorate the palazzo. This thesis shows how a fertile process of cultural exchange contributed to the design of these frescoes. The concerns and ideals of early humanists who had travelled widely and had contacts with other learned figures can frequently be detected, with the artists involved drawing on their observations and experience in other cities, in both secular and ecclesiastical environments. These factors came together in innovative ways to build Ugolino’s identity as patron of the arts, wise leader, and practitioner of good government, and to promote the Trinci as legitimate rulers for the future.

The Camera delle Rose is one of four extensively frescoed spaces in the Palazzo Trinci that are the subject of this thesis.\(^4\) Although the primary purpose of the frescoes is clearly the promotion of the Trinci, this thesis argues that their self-fashioning in the Palazzo Trinci is

---

\(^1\) Room of the Roses. Also known as the ‘Sala delle Arti Liberali e dei Pianeti’ – Hall of the Liberal Arts and the Planets. See Chapter 6.
\(^2\) See Chapter 1.
\(^4\) From the names by which they became known, other rooms may also have been decorated – e.g., the Sala dei Gigli – Room of the Lilies. There is also a frescoed area in a loggia in the adjoining Palazzo del Podestà, showing a version of Romulus and Remus. Later decorations for the chapel showing the Life of the Virgin were commissioned by Ugolino’s son, Corrado, and painted by Ottaviano Nelli.
less directly aggrandising than that of later Italian princes - and of several earlier and contemporary figures.\textsuperscript{5} As will be shown, the building itself suggests a degree of restraint and does not exhibit the levels of wealth and display adopted by later Italian princes; equally, the frescoes create a moderate impression. There are no identified portraits, for example - although some images could be associated with members of the family - and no inscriptions that refer directly to them. Their presence is implied by observant figures and heraldic devices, and their military success is subtly evoked by generalised association with ancient heroes rather than reference to their own victories. Instead of concentrating on the personal qualities and specific achievements of individuals, the decorations create a cultured and civilized ambience within which the signoria can operate. They support its legitimacy by enabling debate about the nature of leadership and personal virtue, rather than by more explicit messaging, and the many references to passing time imply a recognition of the temporary nature of power. The fact that people from a wide range of backgrounds would have had access to the frescoes would have resulted in a variety of responses and interpretations and encouraged discussion and engagement with their subject matter, something this thesis is particularly concerned with.

The first reaction of the modern visitor to Foligno is to wonder why the palace and its extraordinarily rich and varied cycle of decorations is not more widely recognised. Unlike the better-known schemes in the earlier Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, or the later Palazzo Ducale in Mantua, it rarely features in introductions to the art of the period, and indeed it is often virtually empty of visitors. Yet these striking works offer intriguing insights into the ambitions and philosophy of an early signoria. For the scholar interested in the political, intellectual, and creative activity of the time, they amply repay close attention, constantly suggesting possible interpretations, inspirations, connections, and questions, and constituting an important link in the development of Renaissance secular art that has been largely overlooked. For ordinary visitors, to stand in one of the evocative rooms of the palace is to be surrounded by tantalising clues to the lived experience of a different age: the signore receiving guests from other cities, his sons learning their lessons under their mother’s supervision, sounds from the square below heard through the open windows. Despite damage suffered over time, the frescoes are also, simply, striking and delightful. The depictions of mythical figures, men, women, boys, and animals are brought to life by the artists’ attention to facial expressions (Fig.2.11), the vibrant colour and decoration of fabric (Fig.4.25), the texture of fur (Fig.6.23), the curl of hair (Fig.5.52), the intricate detail of armour (Fig.5.56), books (Fig.6.22), or scholarly instruments (Fig.6.29). In turn delicate, monumental, animated, and sombre, they convey an exuberant delight in the craft of painting. If only for their sheer visual variety and energy, these frescoes deserve to be appreciated and enjoyed more widely.

There are several possible reasons for the relative lack of attention paid to the Palazzo Trinci. Firstly, damage suffered in war and earthquake mean that Foligno itself has never

been established as a popular destination, despite its economic importance. In addition, the long-standing Vasarian focus on Rome, Florence and Venice has contributed to the city being ignored in cultural and historiographical terms. The acquisition by the Vatican of the city’s other most precious artistic possession – Raphael’s *Madonna of Foligno* – only confirmed this situation.\(^6\) The city’s significance as an early centre of printing tends to be overlooked, too, despite the fact that it produced the first printed edition of Dante’s *Commedia*.\(^7\) However, scholars are now challenging the Vasarian notion of select centres as cultural leaders, to show the importance of complex networks of cultural exchange, involving many places and individuals, and it is hoped that this thesis contributes to this process of changing perceptions.\(^8\) Secondly, since the Trinci were in power for such a short time, they did not have the long-term, extensive influence of, say, the Este in Ferrara or the Gonzaga in Mantua, and so have often been relegated to footnote status. Despite exhaustive searches by early scholars, there is little surviving documentary evidence relating to the commissioning of the frescoes, or to the Trinci themselves, hence there is little opportunity for archival research.\(^9\) However, a few local scholars kept interest in the family and the palace alive during the twentieth century.\(^10\) Their painstaking work was

---


\(^9\) Any records made by the Trinci themselves appear to have been lost when they fell from power. A search of Foligno’s archives revealed only material already known. The chief source for the history of the Trinci family is the work by the seventeenth-century antiquarian Durante Dorio, who pieced information together from numerous chronicles and records from other cities that mentioned the Trinci. Dorio, D. (1638) *Istoria della Famiglia Trinci*, Foligno, Agostino Alterij. [Online]. Available at https://www.google.co.uk/books/e/istoria_della_famiglia_trinci/7yXAAAAAcAA?hl=en&gbpv=1 (Accessed 15 November 2021). In 2006, Silvestro Nessi brought together additional documentary evidence, again mainly from other cities, shedding additional light on contemporary attitudes and reactions, and setting events in Foligno in a wider context. Nessi, S. (2006) *I Trinci, Signori di Foligno*, Foligno, Edizione Orfini Numeister.


rewarded by major restorations being carried out in the 1990s. A substantial study made in 2001 records the restoration process, bringing together technical findings, and tracing the history of the palace. It also suggests identifications of the iconography of the frescoes and records their inscriptions, together with some possible sources, and gives biographical information about individuals present in Foligno at the time.\textsuperscript{11} This study was followed in 2009 by a further collection of essays.\textsuperscript{12} It includes a helpful summary of past critiques of the frescoes, further technical information, and ongoing discussion about attribution. Since then, passing reference has been made to the palazzo and its frescoes in a few studies of courtly art, to be discussed further below; the only recent discussion in any depth in English has been by Anne Dunlop, also in 2009.\textsuperscript{13}

Cristina Galassi commented in 2009 that studies of the Palazzo Trinci decorations had until then, ‘considered only, and exclusively, stylistic analysis, underestimating the importance of the study of contexts and of the historical-cultural dynamics related to them’, and expressed the belief that they should ‘give due value again to the messages carried by these cycles.’\textsuperscript{14} Since then, however, the literature on the Palazzo Trinci has not been developed significantly, especially outside Italy. This thesis hopes to address this deficiency in the way Galassi proposed, developing the work done so far on the Palazzo Trinci by exploring further how the frescoes promoted the purposes of the Trinci signoria. It demonstrates the ways in which the ideas of humanists present in Foligno at the time can be detected in the scheme, shaping a new vision of the signoria for the future. It also shows how the artists involved adapted visual themes from civic, religious, and other courtly environments, in support of this agenda. Moving beyond iconographic analysis, the thesis also considers, for the first time, how the spaces in the palazzo may have been experienced by those who visited, worked, and lived there, and the ways in which this could have affected their reception of the messages contained in the frescoes.

The thesis focuses on the frescoes in four very different spaces in the palazzo. It shows that together, they contribute to the impression of the Trinci as firmly rooted in a past associated with military success, but also sensitive to the humanist idea that true legitimacy springs from personal virtue, supported by education and the rule of law. Although never undermining this message, the humanist use of debate as a means of persuasion is constantly in evidence, while the artists’ inventive presentation encourages different ways of looking and prompts further thought and discussion. The serious humanist content of these frescoes is unusual in a courtly environment at this date, where idealised chivalric

\textsuperscript{13} Dunlop, A. (2009) \textit{Painted Palaces: The Rise of Secular Art in Early Renaissance Italy}, University Park (PA), Penn State University Press.
\textsuperscript{14} My translation. All translations are my own unless otherwise stated. Caleca, A. and Toscano, B. (eds.) (2009) pp.219-220.
themes often dominated. In Foligno, the many references to civic imagery associate the signoria with the positive aspects of the communal model of government, distancing it from any characterisation as tyrannical. This suggests that Ugolino and his advisers had an exceptionally well-tuned awareness of the Trinci’s situation, even if any effects were short-lived. As will be seen in Chapter 1, Ugolino’s son, Corrado, quickly reverted to the use of ‘cruelty and terror’, that Ugolino and those around him had made such efforts to be seen to set aside, leading to the early end of the signoria in 1438.

Because it ceased to exist at this date, the character of the signoria is not obscured by later change, and so the palace and its decorations provide exceptionally useful evidence of the early stages in the evolution of Italian courts, and the ways in which this pointed to later developments. Besides contributing to the literature on the Palazzo Trinci, then, this thesis also contributes to the wider scholarship on art produced in courtly environments before 1450. The lack of attention paid to the Palazzo Trinci is symptomatic of a wider neglect of court art of this early period, apart from the early work of Julius von Schlosser, and a very few others. Concentrating on the years between 1350 and 1400 von Schlosser identified similarities between works produced for courts in various media, in terms of style and content. He distinguished two geographical groups: northern Italian courts, concerned with subjects from chivalric poetry, and Tuscany, concerned with grand scholastic compositions. Over fifty years later, Arnold Hauser related artistic developments to changes in social structures. He, too, saw the production of art in geographical terms, but broken down into ‘centres’, describing the art of the courts in the Po valley as creating a ‘dazzling, festive impression’ – as opposed to the ‘essentially ecclesiastical’ art of city republics. At the end of the twentieth century, Andrew Martindale suggested that the relative freedom allowed to artists by early courts provided opportunities for technical experiment, and identified a theme of ‘escape’ from everyday life. Anne Dunlop’s 2009 book on the interior decoration of early wealthy domestic environments focuses on selected works from the trecento onwards, discussing further the innovative stylistic approaches identified by von Schlosser and Martindale, noting especially the illusionary presentation of space and perspective in the Palazzo Trinci.

By contrast, there is a wealth of scholarship on the art of courts after 1450, including large-scale surveys providing copious information, useful for comparison with Foligno, such as those edited by Charles Rosenberg and Marco Folin. In the latter, Andrea de Marchi refers briefly to Foligno, relating it to other small, short-lived Umbrian courts such as at Fabriano

15 For example, in the Castella della Manta, Saluzzo; Castello del Buonconsiglio, Trento; Rocca Albornorziana, Spoleto; Castel Roncolo, Bolzano.
16 Symonds, J.A. (1885) p.82.
which operated in similar political circumstances.\textsuperscript{22} These surveys comment frequently on innovative stylistic naturalism. There is often also an emphasis on the ambitious desire for ‘magnificence’, rather than the light-hearted effects identified by writers on earlier palace decoration. Alison Cole breaks this concept down into ‘nobility’, ‘decorum’ and ‘majesty’, enabling differentiation between courts, and showing that artistic outcomes varied according to individuals’ priorities.\textsuperscript{23} This scholarship again tends to give the impression of geographical areas or centres operating independently of each other and to suggest prevailing themes and motivations for the choice of subject matter without investigating the situations or political motivations of individual patrons, or their possible interactions with artists and others. Other scholars adopt a narrower focus. Patronage studies, for example, consider the role of wealthy individuals in commissioning work, seeing their influence as key to the artistic outcomes.\textsuperscript{24} Monographs of artists follow their careers, often emphasising the emerging concept of individual creative genius.\textsuperscript{25} Others address networks to trace the influence of one artist on another.\textsuperscript{26}

Recent work on the cultural exchange between later courts has challenged this attribution of ideas and inspiration to single patrons or artists, and as mentioned earlier, has also broken down some of the geographical and temporal generalisations of other studies. Instead, it considers holistically the movement of objects, people, and ideas between courts, and between civic and courtly environments, and their reinterpretation over time.\textsuperscript{27}


For example, in a study of Mantegna’s paintings for Isabella d’Este’s later studiolo, Stephen Campbell drills down into the detail of the paintings and relates them to works of classical and contemporary literature, revealing complex interactions between patron, artists, writers, and visitors to the space, all of whom acted not only as initiators of ideas but also as viewers, listeners, interpreters and re-fashioners of imagery and thinking from the antique past. This thesis proposes that a similar process was at work in Foligno, at an earlier date. Here too, the patron was seeking to establish an identity, while at the same time others contributed to the decorations in complex and sophisticated ways, deriving reflected status from the images they helped to fashion. Campbell argues that a ‘creative reader’ was expected in Isabella’s studiolo, ready to seek meanings and participate in the discussion engendered. This thesis detects a similar expectation in Foligno. It is generated partly, as Dunlop suggests, by the illusionary techniques of the artists. However, many other factors also contribute to a cycle of decorations that work separately and together to create layers of intersecting meanings, intended to be read with the senses, the memory and the intellect. The combination of words and images, intertextuality, the use of established iconography in new contexts, visual references to classical and Christian culture, the positioning of images in particular spaces – all these challenge viewers to interpret and respond individually, and in conversation with others.

The thesis distinguishes four themes that run through the Palazzo Trinci decorations: leadership, personal virtue, time, and learning. All these are interwoven, so that the decorations in each room can be viewed separately, but also shed light on each other, creating a scheme whose sum is greater than its parts. Chapters 2-6 show how these themes are manifested in different ways within each space, creating links and contrasts between them. Each chapter considers the nature of the space itself, in terms of its likely use, and by comparison with other similar spaces elsewhere, as well as analysing the viewing experience afforded by the physical qualities of each area. The chapters also explore the literary and artistic references and the inventive execution of the frescoes, showing how they contribute to multiple responses, and inspire debate and reflection.

The first chapter, ‘The Trinci - setting the scene’, briefly establishes the historical background of the Trinci and Foligno, showing how this shaped the aspirations and

Kathleen Christian shows ‘translation’ was at work not only in courts but across other sections of society in the collection of antiquities, which were constantly reinterpreted in light of changing interests and ideologies. Christian, K.W. (2010) Empire without End: Antiquities Collections in Renaissance Rome, c1350-1527, Newhaven (CT), Yale University Press.


concerns of Ugolino Trinci. It outlines the development of the palace building and explores its likely daily use by the family and for administration. It goes on to consider how far it may also have been the base for a ‘court’, and what this may have meant in practice. It concludes that although arrangements may have been quite fluid, two important humanists, Federico Frezzi and Francesco da Fiano, were frequently present and were central to the intellectual life of the palazzo. Frezzi, a Dominican and bishop of Foligno, was a highly regarded poet; da Fiano, a member of the papal curia, was a scholar, antiquarian and also a poet. The size of the palace would have enabled others, including painters, to be accommodated, and the position of Foligno as a crossroads of trade and travel would have encouraged guests from the worlds of religion, soldiering, politics, and commerce.

Moving to the detailed study of individual spaces, Chapter 2, ‘The Bridge – a transitional space’, sees the structure of the bridge itself as a significant symbol of both power and vulnerability, arguing that the unusually confined nature of the viewing space and its likely frequent use invited repeated, close attention to its decorations. The first area of the palace to be frescoed, the liminal position of the bridge reflects the transition from chivalric to humanistic models of leadership, combining two apparently disparate schemes to show pride in the Trinci’s past as well as optimism for the signoria’s changing character in the future.

The third chapter, ‘The story of Ilia – foundation myth or investigation of virtue?’ moves from one transitional space (the bridge) to another, focusing on the decorations of a landing area, showing the story of Romulus and Remus. The chapter argues that the suggestion in existing literature that the use of this story is intended straightforwardly to associate the Trinci with Trojan and Roman history is too simplistic. Although these associations are superficially positive, the contradictions inherent in the story, and the unusual Christianizing presentation, raise questions about the morality of the protagonists’ behaviour and the nature of personal virtue, demonstrating humanist concerns with the interpretation and application of pagan myth within a Christian context.

Turning attention to the largest public space in the palace, Chapter 4, ‘The Sala dei Giganti - the lessons of history’, discusses its monumental series of frescoes showing Roman ‘famous men’. In its reference to earlier examples, the room is clearly intended as a prestigious setting, inspiring awe and admiration, although underlying the scheme is the awareness of passing time and the transitory nature of fame. The room also reflects new attitudes to the study and use of history, and the enjoyment of intellectual dialogue and debate that analysed and compared the actions of great figures from the past, to draw lessons for the present.

Chapter 5, ‘The Camera delle Rose – vita activa’ and Chapter 6, ‘The Camera delle Rose – vita contemplativa’ each discusses one end of the complex scheme in the final room. These chapters propose for the first time that, viewed together, they exemplify the well-known discussion about the relative merits of the two aspects of life. The depiction of the Planets, the Ages of Man, and the Hours of the Day at one end suggest the ‘active life’ and achievements of the Trinci; the Liberal Arts at the other end suggest the ‘contemplative life’ of civilized cultural pursuits to which they also aspired. Within the first, humanist
Concerns with passing time are paramount; in the second, new ideas about learning and education, especially the education of future princes, are in evidence. The whole scheme is underpinned by the artists’ references to civic and religious works whose positive resonances are adapted to the purposes of the signoria. These two chapters also explore the question of whether this room, despite its large size, was indeed an early studiolo, as has been suggested. It concludes that although it is unlikely to have been used, in practice, in the exclusive way of later studioli, the underlying ideology certainly points towards the subsequent development of such spaces.

Conclusion
To summarise, through a detailed discussion of four frescoed spaces of the palazzo, the following chapters seek to answer three main questions.

First, how were the concerns and ambitions of the Trinci manifested in the decorations of the Palazzo Trinci? In addressing this first question, the thesis asks, in more detail: can we, for example, detect a desire to be presented as legitimate rulers, or an ambition to establish a hereditary entitlement to the signoria? Is the obligation to Rome evident? If there are no portraits or inscriptions celebrating individual achievement, are there oblique references that build their reputation? How does their self-presentation compare with that of others in a similar position, and can this comparison shed light on their aspirations? By close examination of the images and comparison with the treatment of similar themes elsewhere, this thesis shows how the presentation in Foligno was tailored to the needs of the Trinci.

Secondly, the thesis asks how the interests of the people with whom Ugolino surrounded himself intersected with the aims of his signoria in the fashioning of a new public image. Are their known political views reflected in the decorations, and if so, are they expressed in ways that remain supportive of the Trinci? Are the views of others whose work they may have read or with whom they had contact discernible? Is the humanist love of debate in evidence? If so, how have the artists brought abstract ideas to life in ways that stimulate discussion? Is there evidence that the experience that artists gained elsewhere enabled them to make a visual contribution that complemented and augmented the underlying themes? By referencing early humanist writings, and by considering civic and religious works of art known at the time, the thesis shows how a wide range of literary and artistic works contribute to the content of the decorations and influence its presentation.

Thirdly, it asks how the frescoes’ physical setting and the character of their audience may have affected their reception. Were particular viewers intended in each space, and how did the space itself, the activity taking place there, and the roles of the individuals involved contribute to the experience? Could one of the rooms indeed have been an early form of studiolo, pointing to the more explicit self-fashioning of later princes such as Federico da Montefeltro or Francesco de’ Medici? Are there other pointers to the practice of later courts? Using spatial, material, and sensory approaches, the following chapters examine each space in which the frescoes are set, considering their possible functions, and how the ways in which they were experienced by family or visitors may have shaped responses.
In addressing these questions, this thesis aims to adopt the role of Campbell’s ‘creative reader’, exploring further the messages carried by the frescoes and placing them in their wider historical and cultural context. In this way, the thesis develops the literature on the Palazzo Trinci as Galassi called for. It also contributes to the wider literature on courtly art before 1450, drawing especially on recent work concerning cultural exchange and translation, showing how this cross-fertilization was already an active force in courtly environments at this early date, and that it was a key factor in creating the rich layers of meaning to be found in the cycle of frescoes in Foligno.

In this, the Trinci court provides important evidence of the process that led to later, more overtly self-promotional image-making, in more lavish and ‘magnificent’ courts. The process is epitomised by a double portrait of 1475, showing Federico da Montefeltro reading to his son Guidobaldo (Fig.0.4). Recently appointed to the hereditary title of Duke of Urbino and readily identifiable from his unusual profile, Federico is dressed in scholarly robes over armour. The child, like the three boys in the Palazzo Trinci, wears courtly costume. The presentation of dynasty and power, legitimised by learning and culture, is a more confident and explicit expression of ideas that were already at work in Foligno over fifty years earlier.

---


31 There were continuing links between the signorie of Foligno and Urbino. For example, in the mid-trecento, Ugolino’s uncle married Anna, sister of Antonio da Montefeltro; Ugolino’s grand-daughter, Blancia, married Guidantonio da Montefeltro’s nephew. Dorio, D. (1638) pp.172, 246. The two families frequently shared political aims, too. For example, shared resentment of Pope Martin V resulted in Ugolino’s son, Corrado, leading a retaliatory expedition to Rome alongside Guidantonio at the time of Martin’s death in 1431. Dorio, D. (1638) p.214.
Chapter 1. The Trinci - setting the scene

Never did such a wise signore govern this fortunate people, nor one so powerful, so agreeable, so perfect - how beloved he was by everyone. Gracious and kindly in all his deeds was this man who we have as our ruler now, he who always chooses righteous government; protect him now, O Virgin Mary. 

Pier Angelo Bucciolini (1430s).

The extract above is from a work written in the 1430s, shortly after Ugolino’s death in 1415, by the local poet Pier Angelo Bucciolini. How far his description of the late signore related to fact, and whether his judgements were universally shared, is open to question, but it certainly seems that the poet was aware of the public persona that Ugolino wished to create. This chapter outlines the way in which the Trinci originally rose to power through their military activity and offers reasons for Ugolino’s desire to fashion a different image for the signoria. It shows how this was achieved partly by establishing social networks through marriage, by judicious connections with the religious and political establishments, and by patronage of local groups and individuals. The purchase and conversion of buildings in central Foligno, facing onto the main square of the city, and standing between the Palazzo del Podestà and the Cathedral of San Feliciano, further confirmed the Trinci’s status in Foligno. The chapter outlines the ways in which the buildings were reconfigured to provide a physical environment that catered for household and administration, and enabled the presence of cultured and creative individuals. It concludes that these arrangements constituted an embryonic ‘court’, albeit a less elaborate one than those of some wealthier and longer-established families. The chapters that follow show how, with the help of humanists and artists present in this court, the elaborate decorations of some areas of the palace were designed further to enhance the Trinci’s reputation, demonstrating their awareness of current intellectual and artistic activity, and giving positive and enlightened messages about the future nature of the signoria.

The rise to power

The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries were times of great political complexity in central and northern Italy, and some knowledge of how the Trinci fitted into this picture helps to understand their motivation and aspirations. At a local level, as Daniel Waley and Trevor Dean have shown, communal forms of government were developed by many cities during the trecento. However, factors such as internal power struggles, relations with other 

---

32 Mai resse questo popol benedicto/un si savio segnor, né si possente/tanto piacevole, né tanto perfecto, che amato fosse da tucta la gente;/gratioso e benigno ogni sui effecto,/questo ch’avemo adesso per regente,/che tucta via piglia più signoria;/or lo difendi, o Vergene Maria. Pier Angelo Bucciolini (1999[1430s]) Leggenda di San Feliciano (ed. P. Tuscano), Perugia, Effe, v.CLXIX. The poem is a hagiography of the city’s patron saint.
Trevor Dean has translated contemporary documents that shed light on communal life. Dean, T. (2000) The Towns of Italy in the Later Middle Ages, Manchester, Manchester University Press.
cities, their geographical and economic situations, and the interests of powerful individuals frequently made it difficult for the civic authorities to maintain security and stability. These problems were exacerbated by natural disasters such as storms, earthquakes and crop failures, and the dramatic social and economic upheaval caused by the Black Death in 1347-48. In the background, too, was the continuing struggle for territorial dominance between the Holy Roman Empire and the Papacy, with French popes based in Avignon, rather than Rome, for much of the trecento, reluctant to return because of the dangers posed by violent factional disputes. As a result, cities within the area of the Papal States, such as Foligno, were often at the mercy of events beyond their control.35

Various theories of government were proposed at the time, based on the idea of the common good, the rule of law and peaceful politics.36 However, in the real world, pragmatic solutions were called for. Shared – or conflicting - needs and ambitions resulted in individual signori coming to power in many cities that had previously adopted communal forms of government. Early historians of the Renaissance in the nineteenth century established an overwhelmingly negative view of individuals who rose to power in this way.37 However, this has been re-examined by Philip Jones and subsequent scholars, with the Victorian idea of the ‘despot’ giving way to a more nuanced picture of the signore, who was accepted by the commune as providing a degree of stability in government.38

The experience of Foligno was in some ways typical of other cities in the area. At the start of the trecento, Foligno had been under the authority of the Ghibelline (pro-imperial) Antignani family. However, in 1305, the city changed allegiance and appointed the Guelf (pro-papacy) Rinaldo Trinci as podestà. From then on, the Trinci’s power grew in Foligno, and apart from one brief period, the city supported the pope in the continuing military and diplomatic struggle for control of the area. In 1349, Rinaldo’s great-grandson, Trincia, was appointed ‘Standard-bearer of Justice’ by the comune of Foligno. In 1367 the pope appointed him as Papal Vicar, an important position that conferred considerable authority, but also demanded allegiance to the papal cause and the payment of an annual ‘census’.39 In 1377, however, during an exceptionally tense period of conflict between papal and pro-imperial cities in the area, Trincia was murdered in a popular uprising, and his body thrown into the main square of Foligno, where it was left for some days. After only a month,
however, communal government in Foligno appears to have failed; Trincia’s brother, Corrado, easily regained control of the city and Trincia’s killers were punished. Corrado briefly signed a treaty with pro-imperial cities, but peace was negotiated with the pope, allowing Corrado, with the help of Trincia’s son, Ugolino, to consolidate Trinci power in the area and return to support of the papacy. Corrado, who was childless, died in 1386, and Ugolino succeeded him as Ugolino III (Fig.1.1).

From this brief summary, several conclusions can be drawn about the challenges and opportunities that faced Ugolino III when he assumed the role of signore in Foligno, in 1387. On the negative side, the rise of the Trinci had been shockingly disrupted by the killing of Ugolino’s father, even though power had swiftly returned to the family. As a result, Ugolino must have been all too aware of the need to maintain popular support. The continuing dependence on the pope for the renewal of the role of Papal Vicar also made for a vulnerability not experienced by individuals with established hereditary titles. On the positive side, Ugolino had proved himself on the battlefield alongside his uncle, Corrado, on numerous occasions, and was well-acquainted with the main players in the local political scene. The role of Papal Vicar gave him authority over the city and the wider area, and except for the one - admittedly major – event of his father’s murder, the Trinci had developed a mutually beneficial relationship with Foligno over many years.

Foligno offered many advantages to a signorial family wishing to create a power base for future generations. Despite the difficulties of the earlier part of the trecento, it had recently survived relatively unscathed, due overwhelmingly to the political and military skills of the Trinci. The city was no backwater, but a crossroads for travel, commerce, and ideas. Unlike many Umbrian towns such as Perugia, Spoleto or Spello, it was built not on a hilltop, but in a plain, defended by city walls and the River Topino (Fig.1.2). Its position on the Via Flaminia, the important ancient communications route from Rimini and Ancona, on the Adriatic, to Rome, also brought trading advantages and enabled access to Padua and Venice (Fig.1.3). Access to Rome and the strategic position in the centre of the Papal States were doubtless factors in the papacy looking to the Trinci for support in maintaining control over the wider area (Fig.1.4). There was also regular communication with larger Tuscan cities, especially Florence and Siena, but also Lucca and Pisa; Foligno was on several pilgrimage routes, for example from Rome to Assisi, or to Ancona for passage to the Holy Land. Foligno manufactured its own goods, adopting papermaking innovations developed in nearby Fabriano, and producing textiles combining local linen yarn with cotton imported from the Mediterranean, through Venice and other ports. Opportunities for trade would

40 Dorio, D. (1638) pp.171-172. Corrado is mentioned as facendo morir piu di cent’huomini: ‘Putting to death over a hundred men.’
have resulted in increasing prosperity, and geographic and economic factors certainly contributed to the rich process of cultural exchange discussed later.\textsuperscript{45} At the time Ugolino came to power, the city needed the military protection and firm government he could provide, to enable it to develop its potential. Its citizens would have welcomed the presence of a nascent court in their midst, for the reflected status and creativity it contributed, and the commercial activity it generated.

To promote his family’s hegemony, it was in Ugolino’s interest to consolidate relationships within Foligno and beyond, and to further enhance his reputation. From the time he took power, in 1387, he was involved in constant military and diplomatic activity in support of the pope in the area, as allegiances changed, and local interests came into frequent conflict with each other. He was rewarded by the granting of further vicarates, and a ceremonially important papal visit by Boniface IX to Foligno.\textsuperscript{46} In 1398, Ugolino and others, on behalf of the Church, succeeded in recapturing substantial lands that had been lost by the papacy, and Ugolino joined papal forces besieging Perugia. In the same year, Boniface awarded Ugolino the exceptional honour of the ‘golden rose’. This was a highly symbolic expression of gratitude and approval, closely associated with the person of the pope: a single rose, crafted from gold and tinted with red, anointed with balsam and musk, blessed in an elaborate annual ritual, and bestowed occasionally on highly favoured individuals, often monarchs.\textsuperscript{47} The image of the rose features in the decorations for the Camera delle Rose, discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, and this precious object could well have been displayed there.

In 1399 Ugolino eventually made peace with Perugia, under the auspices of Florence, and was named in a treaty with Venice, Bologna and Padua.\textsuperscript{48} During this period, the papacy was threatened by the increasing influence of Milan, only halted by the death of its leader, Giangaleazzo Visconti.\textsuperscript{49} In this complex political scene, Ugolino managed to maintain the pope’s favour, and in 1401 the pope rewarded him with a letter exempting him and his subjects from payment of any rewards, collections or other contributions imposed in the past, or to be imposed in the future. It was during this period that the Palazzo Trinci was bought and converted, a process that is discussed in greater depth later in this chapter.

In 1404, Boniface IX, who had been pope in Rome since 1389, died.\textsuperscript{50} For Ugolino this meant the loss of a relationship that he had cultivated for almost the whole of his time as signore
of Foligno. In the uncertainty following his death, Ladislas, King of Naples, marched to Rome hoping to take over the Papal States, a move that caused consternation. There was considerable pressure on Ugolino to continue to side with the papacy, although he did briefly submit to Ladislas. However, in 1413, when Ladislas set out to take possession of Florence, Ugolino went to the aid of the city, putting to flight some of the king’s troops. In retribution, Ladislas and his army advanced into the territory of Foligno, damaging crops and setting fire to villages.\(^{51}\) Help from the papacy, already occupied in dealing with Ladislas elsewhere, was not forthcoming. Fortunately for Foligno, Ladislas died unexpectedly a few months later; Ugolino survived in peace for another year, dying in May 1415.\(^{52}\)

The summary above shows the delicate balance that Ugolino had to find between competing local interests, and the skill needed in dealing with unforeseeable changes in the wider political arena. Throughout his signoria he succeeded in maintaining his loyalty to the pope and - almost to the end - avoiding causing offence to other powerful players. In this, he gained widespread respect from his peers. During his time in power there was no major civic disturbance in Foligno, and he protected the city from attack or involvement in warfare for a surprisingly lengthy period - from 1398 until Ladislas’ dramatic interventions more than ten years later. Even this massive lapse in fortune did not prevent him from passing on the signoria to the next generation.

Influence and networks
From an early date, despite constant preoccupation with immediate political and military threats, the Trinci always understood the value of building bonds of reciprocity and influence at many levels. Following the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Robert Putnam, among others, in the 1980s and 1990s, recent scholarship has explored the many ways in which social capital was acquired in Italy during the *quattrocento*.\(^{53}\) One important method was through marriage alliances, an effective means of cementing relationships and gaining status.\(^{54}\) Like other powerful families, the Trinci frequently reinforced their position in this way. For Ugolino, far and away the most prestigious of these arrangements was agreed in 1397 between his daughter, Agnese, and the pope’s brother, Andrea Tomacelli. This was a real success for the Trinci family in social and political terms, consolidating the connection with Boniface IX on a very personal level.\(^{55}\) Ugolino himself was married to Costanza Orsini. If the recorded date of 1364 is correct, she must have been very young at the time, although

---

\(^{51}\) Dorio, D. (1638) p.190.

\(^{52}\) *E cosi ebbe fini ogni persecuzione d’Ugolino; il quale visse il resto della sua vita quietamente in Foligno; ove more adi undeci di maggio 1415, e fu sepolto con gran pompa nella Chiesa di S Francesco, e nella propria cappella de’Trinci.* ‘So ended all persecution of Ugolino, who lived the rest of his life quietly in Foligno; where he died in May 1415. He was entombed with great ceremony in the church of S Francesco, in the chapel of the Trinci.’ Dorio, D. (1638) p.192.


this date may refer to her betrothal. The Orsini were an extremely influential Guelf family, whose Roman branch had produced two popes and several cardinals; although she was from a minor branch, Costanza had other useful connections through her mother. Not only did she also bring with her a dowry of five thousand florins, but for a young husband with dynastic ambitions, she fulfilled expectations by bearing twelve children, of whom five were boys. She survived until 1437, outliving Ugolino by twenty years, and seems to have been a strong if self-effacing presence. This thesis frequently notes the exploration of the role of women in the frescoes, for instance as maternal figures (Chapter 3), witness (Chapter 5) and inspiration (Chapter 6). Although parallels with Costanza are not explicitly drawn, they must have occurred to many viewers.

Links with religious institutions of all kinds were also extremely important, reinforcing loyalty to the papacy and supporting the Trinci’s secular authority. Family appointments within the church gave direct influence. Ugolino’s uncle, Paolo, was bishop of Foligno from 1326-1363, and acted as emissary for Robert of Anjou to the pope in Avignon, and both Rinaldo and Onofrio Trinci briefly held the post later during Ugolino’s lifetime. Ugolino also orchestrated the election of Troiano Trinci, son of Corrado I, as abbot of the Benedictine Abbey of Sassovivo, near Foligno, which held lands and churches over a wide area. The Trinci also owned a property in Rome, which would have been a useful base in the city, and a further statement of intent in support of the papacy. There are also several records of Ugolino’s support for the charismatic leaders of popular devotional movements, which shows that he understood their appeal to ordinary people. How far these activities also related to personal devotion is impossible to tell, although as this thesis shows, there are many underlying references to religious belief in the decorations, for instance in the story of Ilia in the landing area, and the Camera delle Rose (Chapters 3 and 6).

Ugolino was also successful in building the loyalty of individual citizens of Foligno. Several wills from the time name him (or Costanza) as their beneficiary. In one, for example, the widow of ‘the late Mariano di Puccetto’ left Ugolino a vineyard in recognition of ‘the many favours received and hoped for in the future’. These bequests could, of course, be self-
interested: a way for testators to gain approval and safeguard their families in future. Equally, they could spring from real personal gratitude, or from respect felt for a signore whose power had brought an unusually peaceful period in the early years of the new century.

The Palazzo Trinci – an appropriate setting
Besides this creation of bonds of respect, gratitude and influence, the period of relative peace at the beginning of the trecento enabled Ugolino to consider further ways of enhancing his status in Foligno. A visual and physical presence appropriate to the family’s prestige and role within the city was needed. As mentioned earlier, in 1397 he purchased a large group of buildings in the centre of the city and had them reconfigured to form the Palazzo Trinci: a place where the business of the signoria could be conducted appropriately and where his family and household could live in a style befitting his status. Since the work of Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault in the 1970s, many scholars have adopted a spatial approach to the study of early Italian cities, focusing on the ways in which power and identity were expressed in buildings and the urban environment, how those surroundings developed through use, and the public perceptions they created.63 Drawing on these ideas, Andrea de Marchi describes the Palazzo Trinci as ‘a paradigmatic example of the arrogant ambitions of nobles.’64 However, Marco Folin sees the building differently. He argues that the lack of legitimacy of early ruling families made them reluctant initially to present themselves as monarchs pleno iure, pointing out that the building of magnificent purpose-designed palaces only began in the 1450s, once individuals began to acquire hereditary titles.65 In this context Folin mentions that some early records refer to the Palazzo Trinci as ‘domus’, not ‘palazzo’, an important pointer in assessing the way in which its status was perceived – and intended to be perceived - at the time. This thesis supports Folin’s analysis in terms of the position and appearance of the building, and, as will be seen in later chapters, the decorations display the same desire to be perceived as moderate and restrained in the display of power.

The Trinci’s ‘new dwellings’ not only offered practical advantages, but their position was charged with meaning.66 As mentioned earlier, the property was placed between the

---

See also, for example: Boone, M. and Howell, M. (eds.) (2013) The Power of Space in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, Turnhout, Brepols; Nevola, F. (2020) Street Life in Renaissance Italy, Newhaven (CT), Yale University Press.
Cathedral, on one side, symbolising the power of the church, and the Palazzo del Podestà, symbolising communal authority, on the other (Figs. 1.5, 1.6). It also overlooked the square where Trincia’s body had been abandoned after his murder. In some ways this was a bold statement: the past was not forgotten, but the Trinci were re-established in Foligno and intended to maintain their position there. However, as suggested earlier, care was taken to ensure that the building did not overstep the bounds of appropriateness or suggest excessive ambition. The property was not overtly fortified, and it did not dominate the surrounding buildings in a way that might suggest arrogance. Its presence was restrained, in keeping with the scale and style of others around it and blending with the civic landscape. Some other signori already had substantial residences by this time, but most created a very different external impression from the Palazzo Trinci. Often based on earlier fortifications and occupying positions of military strength, many continued to incorporate defensive elements and appeared determinedly impenetrable. Few survive today in their original form - the Carrara family’s Reggia Carrarese in Padua, for example, is now almost completely eradicated by later buildings. In Ferrara, after a popular uprising in 1385, Niccolo d’Este enlarged an existing fortified building, creating the Castel Vecchio. In Milan, the Visconti inhabited a castle originally constructed between 1358 and 1370, known as the Castello di Porta Giova, later enlarging it to become a square-plan castle with four towers at the corners and walls up to seven metres thick. Even as late as 1437 Sigismondo Malatesta’s Castel Sismondo in Rimini was heavily fortified, with a moat, and in the 1450s, the remodelling of Federico da Montefeltro’s palace in Urbino, in its dominating hilltop position, still retained massive defensive walls.67

However, despite the unthreatening appearance of his new dwelling, Ugolino did not neglect security. The internal arrangements of the Palazzo Trinci belied external impressions, ensuring protection if necessary. There was a deep well (Fig.1.9), supplying fresh water, a crucial resource in case of attack. A large courtyard at ground level allowed space for men-at-arms and horses, and storage of supplies and arms (Figs.1.7,1.8). Over the next few years, Ugolino found other ways to make the palazzo safer (see Chapter 2), at the same time as adapting it to other purposes. He also increased security beyond Foligno by building several fortified rocche.68 However, by contrast with some later palaces, the security precautions of the Trinci were carefully calibrated so as not to appear oppressive to the citizens of Foligno.69

Scholarship concerning the use and internal configuration of palaces in this period also draws on ideas about the social production of space referred to above, showing how layout developed partly by intentional design - to create a specific impression and reflecting what had traditionally been expected of powerful individuals – and partly by gradual use and the

Buildings were adapted to meet the practical necessities of large households and the administration of daily business, with private quarters developing beyond the main reception rooms. Chapters 2–6 of this thesis discuss in detail how the position, layout and likely use of four spaces in the Palazzo Trinci contributed to the image of the Trinci created by the decorations within them, and to their viewing experience. They show, for example, how similar subject matter is used differently in different spaces, and discuss the suggestion that the Camera delle Rose may have functioned as an early studiolo.

A spatial approach is complemented by studies that address the ‘material Renaissance’ and the domestic interior, by exploring the use of furniture, artefacts, household articles, personal possessions – from the mundane to the precious - to shed light on daily life in different contexts, for instance concerning the relationship between ‘public’ and ‘private’, the role of women and family life, and the use of rooms. This literature uses various resources, including plans, inventories, commentaries, contemporary depictions, and the physical evidence of surviving objects. Much of this scholarship concerns later periods or different settings (especially in Florence). Evidence of this kind for the Palazzo Trinci is limited, although comparison with contemporary and later practice elsewhere can provide cautious support for some conclusions on the use of individual spaces in Foligno.

Other writers have taken a sensory approach to explore subjective responses within a particular physical setting, for instance by observing the effects of changing light on perceptions of a work of art. Recently this approach has expanded beyond the visual to explore the impressions of sound, smell, taste and touch in different environments, using contemporary commentaries and a range of technical and physical evidence. Newhauser shows also how changing cultural perceptions of the senses may have shaped these responses. Chapters 2–6 draw on this approach to arrive at as full an understanding as...
possible of the experience of being within the different spaces of the palace, and how this may have affected reception of the images – arguably especially relevant in the case of frescoes, physically tied to their site as they are. A case in point is the narrow, exclusive space of the bridge (Chapter 2), which offers a very different set of sensations from the large airy space of the Camera delle Rose (Chapters 5 and 6).

Information about the internal development of the Palazzo Trinci also comes from technical observations made during the restoration process at the end of the twentieth century.\(^76\) A brief summary of this information follows; each chapter deals with the rooms concerned in greater depth. From the thirteenth century, the area occupied by the Palazzo Trinci had been filled with shops and houses, which were gradually acquired by Giovanni Ciccarelli de’Zitelli, a wealthy merchant. On his death in 1397, his son Giacomo sold the buildings to Ugolino. It seems that, at the time, the Trinci were living in the Palazzo delle Canoniche, behind the cathedral. It is not known at exactly what date work began to adapt the buildings, but in 1411 a document refers to ‘the new palace’ of Ugolino, and in 1413 it is mentioned as the ‘usual habitation of the signore’.\(^77\)

The original layout of the buildings that Ugolino acquired is not known precisely, partly because no records survive, and partly because much material was re-used in the process of reconfiguration, as was customary at the time. However, restoration work has revealed that development was probably undertaken in two stages. A new entrance was constructed at ground level into the main courtyard (Figs. 1.7, 1.8). The existing irregular buildings were merged, and new raised wooden floors were installed to make the levels more even. This unifying work removed some of the old links between levels, replacing them by an ingenious feat of engineering now known as the ‘gothic staircase’ (Figs. 1.9-1.11).\(^78\) This structure twists upwards from the well at ground level, via the first floor, to the second, which at this stage was probably still open to the elements. There are three landings with cross-shaped vaults above them, with different lines of sight from each.

So far, the changes to the buildings provided functioning apartments at first floor level, with easy access via the gothic staircase. This created generous space, probably for the use of members of the household and administration, above the ground floor’s storage and stabling, including two very sizeable spaces, and smaller apartments.\(^79\) Once this was in place the second phase proceeded, with further improvements to these areas the creation of larger, public, spaces at second floor level (Figs. 1.12, 1.13). From the landing area at the top of the gothic staircase (Chapter 3) there was access to a large unroofed space, later covered and known as the Sala di Sisto IV. A small square room at the top of the gothic staircase became a chapel.\(^80\) There was also access to the Sala dei Giganti (Chapter 4) on

---


\(^{79}\) The large spaces are now used for conferences.

\(^{80}\) Ugolino’s son, Corrado, commissioned its cycle of frescoes by Ottaviano Nelli, depicting the Virgin’s life.
the south side, facing out onto the main square. This was the biggest public space, with large windows and a balcony, the small door to which can still be seen; it led into another large room, the Sala dei Gigli. From there a bridge over the street (now lost) gave direct access to the Palazzo del Podestà.81 In the south east corner was a space originally divided into two rooms, but which was combined into one, forming what became known as the Camera delle Rose (Chapters 5 and 6).82 From this room a covered bridge (Fig.2.3) led, via a passage along the façade of the cathedral, to the original family dwelling in the Palazzo delle Canoniche (Chapter 2).

The third and final stage, in 1411-12, was the decoration of some of the second-floor spaces with the frescoes discussed in this thesis (Fig.1.14). A collection of antique sculpture was also displayed, making the palace suitable as a place in which to entertain and impress visitors: diplomats, civic leaders, religious representatives, members of other powerful families. Against this backdrop, Ugolino could perform his role as signore in a different way. His influence could now extend beyond military and political engagement and social networks; he had space to create an efficient administration and an environment in which to build the cultural capital that would enhance his reputation in the longer term. For this, he needed to surround himself with people beyond his family: in fact, to establish a court.

The Trinci court – daily life
To call the environment surrounding Ugolino Trinci a court begs the question, of course, of the exact meaning of the word, although it is often referred to in this way.83 Courts have been defined as ‘the space and personnel around a prince, as he made laws, received ambassadors, dispatched letters, gave commands, decided cases, made appointments, took his meals, entertained, and proceeded through the streets’.84 A wide range of institutions falls under this definition, and it does not give a clear sense of the character of life in the Palazzo Trinci.85 To date, there has been little discussion of the business of government that must have gone on there; the court is more frequently seen in cultural terms. How far, in fact, was the court concerned mainly with the administrative activities described above, and how far can it also be thought of as cultural centre? Did Ugolino

81 The Trinci also built a loggia on the top floor of the original Palazzo del Podestà. It was documented in 1423 and again, in 1429, as the logia nova, originally leading scholars to suggest that it was built about 1420. However, the remains of frescoes were discovered there in 1986; based on their similarity to the frescoes in the Palazzo Trinci, Francesco Mancini argues that they were also commissioned by Ugolino, and hence the loggia must have been built at an earlier date. They probably illustrate the mythical founding of Foligno after the burning of Troy, accompanied by personifications of the Virtues. Mancini, F.F. (2001) ‘La Loggia delle Virtù’ in Benazzi, G. and Mancini, F.F. (eds.) Il Palazzo Trinci di Foligno, Perugia, Quattroemme, pp.303-337.
actively seek out intellectuals and humanists, or did his reputation as an able and influential politician attract those seeking advancement in their own careers? Was their presence in Foligno simply the serendipitous outcome of papal appointments? How did Ugolino’s ‘court’ compare with better-known later courts, and how did it compare with what was happening around other signori at the time?

Occasionally, the efficiently kept records of later courts, such as those of the Este in Ferrara, or the Sforza in Milan, survive - including accounts, letters, diaries, and other documents. Combined with evidence from buildings, artefacts and works of art, these records provide a considerable amount of information. However, the early character of these courts is often obscured by later developments, and little is known about small courts that, like Foligno, left few records and survived for only a brief period – for instance that of the Chiavelli in Fabriano or the Varano in Camerino. It is hoped that a brief exploration of the answers to the questions above helps to arrive at some idea of the size and relative sophistication of the Trinci court, compared with earlier and later developments.

One court that developed from an early date, and about which there is some information, is that of the Carrara, whose signoria in Padua ended before that of the Trinci, when the Venetians took over government of the city in 1405. Although the Trinci court was probably more modest in scale, it seems likely that the Carrara court acted as a model for it, as evidenced, for example, by the similarities between the Sala dei Giganti in Foligno and the Sala degli Uomini Illustri in Padua (see Chapter 4). By the time of their fall, the Carrara had a sophisticated administrative apparatus, and established connections with the worlds of learning and the arts. They benefitted from the presence of the university in the city, fostering the relationship through patronage, while drawing on its expertise, especially from the law school.86 The Carrara family acquired extensive estates, that helped to support them financially and furnished provisions.87 Benjamin Kohl’s detailed study shows that by the 1380s there were departments to deal with legal, economic, financial and diplomatic aspects of government, with the last employing six scribes to deal with the vast volume of correspondence. There was also a mint for the production of coinage.88 Culturally, Petrarch’s long association with the Carrara is well known, but other scholars including Conversini and Pier Paolo Vergerio were employed (the latter, among other roles, as tutor to the younger members of the family). The Carrara were also patrons of artists such as Altichiero and Giusto de’Menabuoi. Besides public rooms, their large palace also had offices, quarters for soldiers and servants, and a segregated area for the women of the court. Francesco’s wife eventually developed her own court, where she entertained in a grand chamber decorated with personifications of the four Virtues.89 The cultured reputation of the Paduan court would certainly have been attractive to the Trinci. The

86 As early as 1318, the university’s students and faculty were to be ‘like sons’ to Giacomo Carrara. Kyle, S.R. (2017) *Medicine and Humanism in Late Medieval Italy*, London, Routledge, p.92.
image of Petrarch on the bridge in the Palazzo Trinci (Fig. 2.6), closely resembling one in the Reggia, and the visual references to works elsewhere in Padua, such as the images of armed men witnessing the death of Ilia (Fig. 3.24) and the depictions of thrones in the Camera delle Rose (Fig. 5.1) suggest that artists and others moved between the two cities and are further evidence that the Carrara court may have been an inspiration.

Most scholarly attention, however, has concentrated on courts after the 1450s, half a century after the period covered in this thesis. By this time some had developed astonishingly swiftly into highly sophisticated institutions. Signori who, like the Trinci, had previously lacked formal legitimacy, began to acquire hereditary titles such as ‘Duke’ and to develop the image of splendour and ‘magnificence’ deemed fitting for a sovereign ruler. These later courts drew on – and contributed to - the lively artistic and intellectual milieu that was developing in Italy. They also looked to models from northern Europe. Sovereign rulers of large areas, such as the English kings and the Dukes of Burgundy, had been established for much longer and had already developed an appropriate style of living. Some northern Italian courts became huge enterprises with enormous incomes from direct and indirect taxes and loans, and they spent lavishly. The greatest employed large numbers of people. By 1452, for example, when Borso d’Este was invested as Duke of Ferrara, the court employed around five hundred salaried servants, and even more people were involved in other establishments beyond the main palace in Ferrara. There was fairly stable employment of secretaries and accountants who provided the administrative apparatus of courts by this time, and of attendants, pages, artisans, chaplains, and men at arms who constituted the ‘household’. By the early 1470s, in Milan, Galeazzo Sforza maintained a hierarchy of administrative officials, retainers and servants, as well as a highly paid choir, a substantial trumpeter corps, tennis players and jesters. Like other wealthy women with their own finances, his wife, Dorotea, and mother, had their own households.

The Trinci court did not have a reputation for the extravagant level of display and ‘magnificence’ later attained in Ferrara or Milan, and Foligno never became a centre of learning equal to Padua. Although, as suggested earlier, it seems likely that the Carrara court was to some extent a model to which the Trinci aspired, the administrative and household arrangements in Foligno were probably not as sophisticated and complex as Padua’s – not least, perhaps, because the Trinci did not own extensive lands, like the Carrara, and so were not as wealthy. Folin discusses several families, including the Trinci,

---

91 In the 1470s, Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza spent over 5,000 ducats a year on maintaining hunting-dogs, an amount equal to the annual budget for Milan’s cathedral building programme. Welch, E. (1997) Art in Renaissance Italy, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p.119.
who for some time had acted as ‘effective rulers’ of smaller cities. He speculates that ‘in the early fifteenth century their court apparatus must have seemed quite modest’\textsuperscript{95} They were rather simple structures on an institutional level, composed of a few dozen people – almost all of them local – and did not have dedicated architectural spaces.\textsuperscript{95} The capacity of the Palazzo Trinci suggests that the total number of people living there was greater than this, but the majority may have been family members and servants.

Composed during the later use of the palazzo by the papal authorities, one of the few surviving documents, an inventory taken in 1458, supports Folin’s comments about the likely numbers employed in administration. In the south west corner of the first floor there were about a dozen rooms that each contain a desk or desks, some with storage, possibly for documents and writing equipment, pointing to a papal staff of up to maybe twenty people, based in this area of the building, directly below the large public rooms of the palace.\textsuperscript{96} It seems likely that this allocation of space followed a pattern set by the Trinci, since the administrative requirements would not have changed a great deal. Most of those employed were probably local people, as Folin suggests, but it seems that during Ugolino’s time, it was not easy to find suitably qualified men to deal with the amount of work generated as his importance grew. An entry in Augustinian records from 1387, not previously quoted in the literature, has the following request: ‘that he (Ugolino) might take two, or three, Friars of his Religion, to send them anywhere, to take part in dealing with his aforementioned business, and to also keep them at his Court to use them in his honest affairs’.\textsuperscript{97} The alacrity with which the request was granted (‘which things were well punctually granted by the aforesaid General’) shows the mutual benefit derived from this kind of arrangement between religious institution and court. Friars were frequently employed as messengers, but it seems that increased numbers of educated men were also needed on a more permanent basis.\textsuperscript{98}

The only person employed in the palazzo during Ugolino’s time who is known by name is Pepo, brother of Francesco da Fiano (discussed below). Pepo is described as ‘a member of the household’, and perhaps rose to be steward or personal secretary.\textsuperscript{99} He was certainly

\textsuperscript{95} Folin, M. (2011) p.11.
\textsuperscript{96} Anonymous (1458) fols.15v-17v.
\textsuperscript{97} che poresse prendere a beneplacito suo, due, ò trè, Frati di sua Religione per mandarli poseia in qual si voglia parte a trattare li sudetti suoi negotii, e di ternerli altresì all sua Corte per impiegari ne’ suoi honesti affari: le quale cose furono ben puntualmente concesse dal sudetto Generale. Torelli, L. (ed.) (1680) Secoli agostiniani ouero historia generale del sacro ordine eremitano, vol.6, Bologna, Giacomo Monti, p.246.
\textsuperscript{98} Another entry from this record shows that Costanza also expected a degree of support, although not perhaps the separate households of the wives of Galeazzo Sforza or Francesco Carrara, described earlier. In 1420, after she had been widowed for some time, she, too, looked to the Augustinians for suitably qualified help - perhaps a pious companion - and received a favourable response: ‘Sister Catterina, a nun of the enclosed order of Foligno, has permission from the General to be able to enter the service of Donna Costanza Trinci, signora of the aforesaid city’. Suor Catterina, Monaca nelle carcerate di Foligno, ottiene licenza del Generale di poter stare al servizio di D. Costanza Trinci, signora di detta Città. Torelli, L. (ed.) (1680) pp.849, 858, 862.
sufficiently important to be the person who, in 1404, presented Federico Frezzi with the papal bull in which he was named as Bishop of Foligno. Two canonries in Foligno were eventually transferred to Pepo’s sons, Mattia and Antonio, from their uncle, Francesco, so there were opportunities for advancement through the Trinci court.100

Besides the daily business of government, routines of feeding mouths, caring for children, tending horses, and so on must have meant that many other people lived and worked in the palazzo. Given Ugolino and Costanza’s many children, with perhaps some other relatives, the family probably numbered up to twenty; personal attendants, nursemoids, cooks, grooms, and other servants would bring that number to many more. As well as ordinary guests, there were also sometimes visitations from important figures with their retinues. For example, in 1392, as mentioned earlier, Pope Boniface IX and seven cardinals stayed in the palazzo, which suggests highly efficient levels of organisation, service and comfort.101 The ability to entertain visitors - not just at this elevated level – was important in terms of prestige and would also have contributed to the constant cross-fertilization of ideas and taste at the court.

The Trinci court - cultural life
Generally, however, the Trinci court is seen in terms of its artistic and intellectual culture, although in fact its character was probably constantly changing as individuals came and went. Unlike some later courts, there is no evidence of the permanent employment of musicians or entertainers at the Trinci court, although perhaps travelling cantastorie performed there, as well as for the wider public in the piazza below.102 Nor is there any record of a ‘court painter’ being employed for a long period in the palazzo; this is not surprising, as painters in this period were usually peripatetic, moving from one commission to another.103 However, the frescoes (or at least their oversight) have been attributed to Gentile da Fabriano, possibly the most prestigious Italian painter of religious subjects in the ‘international gothic’ style. This attribution followed the discovery of an eighteenth-century notebook belonging to local historian, Ludovico Coltellini. The notebook includes reference to two records of payments that Coltellini had found. The payments are from Ugolino Trinci to Magistro Gentile da Fabriano, dated 1411 and 1412, for ‘some paintings’, and other work in a ‘sala imperatorum’ and a ‘camera rosarum’.104 Not only does Galassi see this as strongly reinforcing the suggestion that Gentile was directly involved in the work on the frescoes, but also as placing their commissioning firmly with Ugolino.105 Unfortunately, however, the

100 Messini, A. (1942) p.79.
103 Rinaldi, R. (2003) pp.23-42. There were exceptions in later courts. Andrea Mantegna, for example, was employed from 1459 for almost fifty years by the Gonzaga family in Mantua. Like others, he carried out relatively mundane tasks such as designing costumes and scenery, or creating insignia, besides creating the fresco decorations for which he is famous. Manca, J. (2006) p.54.
104 quasdam picturas.
records referred to by Coltellini do not themselves survive. Not only has it been suggested that further work should be done to establish the authenticity of the Coltellini notebook, but the attribution to Gentile has also been questioned in stylistic terms.\(^\text{106}\)

The question of the precise nature and extent of Gentile’s involvement remains unresolved, although the connection is promoted without reservation in local literature and on websites. Details of Gentile’s life are sparse, but the possibility is supported by the fact that he was born in nearby Fabriano, and maintained connections with its signori, the Chiavelli, who had links with the Trinci. This thesis is not concerned with further research into attribution, and in the absence of further evidence, it accepts Gentile’s involvement, at least in the recommendation or supervision of other artists. He would have had many contacts: he is known to have worked in Venice and Brescia and in 1419 he is recorded as having agreed to work for the new pope, Martin V, in Rome. It is highly likely that, as in similar environments, several other local and peripatetic artists were involved, who between them had experience from a wide geographical area, and indeed, Coltellini’s notebook also names others: Jacobo da Venezia, Francesco di Giambono da Bologna (described as resident in Foligno), Battista di Domenico da Padova (documented again in Foligno in 1417 and 1426) and Paolo Nocchi, who was locally born. As can be seen from their names, and as recent scholarship has highlighted, these artists would have learned their skills in different workshops and worked in many environments, enabling a fertile sharing of skills and ideas, and the adaptation of their style to local purposes.\(^\text{107}\) This is borne out by the fact that echoes of many other works can be detected in the Palazzo Trinci – not only fresco but, for example, civic sculpture (Chapter 6) and manuscript illustration (Chapters 2 and 5). It seems likely then, that, as remained the case in many later courts, several painters were used in Foligno on a temporary basis, some of whom may have been local, and others from further away, possibly under Gentile’s direction. This is not to minimise the contribution of the individuals who worked on the frescoes. They would certainly have been involved in discussions of subject matter and presentation, and the visual references to works of art elsewhere, both in civic and religious settings, as well as the inventive technical innovations, play a central part in creating the layers of meaning in the Foligno frescoes, as later chapters show.

Much of the literature on the Palazzo Trinci emphasises the intellectual and literary activity that took place there. Recent writers have generally accepted that ‘Ugolino loved to surround himself, in fact, with a close-knit group of intellectuals, literati and poets who gave great momentum to court life.’\(^\text{108}\) Anne Dunlop comments: ‘the court of Ugolino Trinci was a small but important centre of the new antique learning.’\(^\text{109}\) This certainly


\(^{107}\) See, for example, Kim, D.Y. (2014) The Traveling Artist in the Italian Renaissance, Newhaven (CT), Yale University Press.


seems to have been the intention, although evidence for the permanent presence of such a group in Foligno is limited. In fact, even in later courts, poets, writers, and men of letters often moved around in search of work that provided financial support for their literary activity and contact with like minds. For example, there is no record of Borso d’Este having employed writers or intellectuals on a permanent basis, and long-term employment remained unusual. More often there was a complex combination of roles: Guarino Guarini, for example, opened his own school in Ferrara, but also held the position of tutor and official orator at the court. Guarino was, however, extremely influential in setting the intellectual and aesthetic style of the court, to the extent of producing instructions for a decorative cycle of the Muses for Leonello d’Este’s *studiolo*.\(^\text{110}\)

Information about some of the men of letters connected with Foligno is sparse. For example, nothing is known of the poet, Bucciolini, whose words are quoted at the beginning of this chapter, or of his actual relationship with the Trinci. It seems likely from his poem that he had at least visited the Palazzo Trinci, and his tone suggests that he saw Ugolino as a patron, at least in general terms. Similarly, a surviving verse by Paolo da Foligno, whose work is unknown beyond this fragment, pays tribute to Ugolino, and it seems that Paolo, too, was aware of how he wished to be perceived:

> This gentle signor is from Foligno; may Ugolino Trinci have health and well-being, that he may continue his way of never promoting War anywhere. Instead, may he care for that great flock that was placed in the centre of his Dominion, and always continues to support him, having great hope in peace.\(^\text{111}\)

However, the description of the court as ‘a close-knit group of intellectuals’ may still be something of an overstatement. Only two figures to whom the description ‘intellectual’ can be confidently applied are known for certain to have been in Foligno in the latter part of Ugolino’s *signoria*: Francesco da Fiano and Federico Frezzi. Even in their case, the exact nature of their relationship with the Trinci is unclear. There are no letters between them and the Trinci and no personal records of their lives in Foligno. Both also had other professional commitments, so it seems more likely that, like other humanists in similar circumstances, they had a continuing, but changeable, association with the life of the Palazzo Trinci. Their wide contacts may well have encouraged other similarly well-educated figures to visit Foligno, but ‘ill-defined’ or ‘fluid’ might be better descriptions of the relationships concerned. However, their contribution to the design and content of the frescoes can be detected in countless ways, as the remaining chapters of this thesis demonstrate.

\(^{111}\) *E da Foligno quel signor gentile; avesse sanita e bono stato/Ugolino de’Trincia, che manten lu stile/di non mover mai Guerra in nessun lato,/Pero, che e pota di quel magno ovile,/che fu posto nel mezzo del Ducato/e sempre sufferendo se mantene,/Avendo nella pace bona speme.* Paolo da Foligno, quoted in Faloci-Pulignani, M. (1888) p.85.
These two men, da Fiano and Frezzi, both held high-status papal appointments at the time the decorations were made: da Fiano as a member of the Curia, and Frezzi as bishop of Foligno. To some extent, this must have created a bond with Ugolino, as Papal Vicar. It would also have meant a slightly uncomfortable sense for all three that their performance and loyalty could easily be reported back to the pope. Both men were highly creative and dynamic individuals and held passionate views, which, this thesis contends, were expressed in the choice and interpretation of the subject matter of the frescoes in the Palazzo Trinci. Chapters 2-6 give numerous examples of the ways in which their thinking can be detected underlying the decorations, for example in the Christianised presentation of pagan myth in the story of Ilia, or the discussion of the active and contemplative life in the Camera delle Rose.

The first, Francesco da Fiano, was born near Rome about 1350, in the small town of Fiano, which was under the control of the Orsini family – an indirect link to the Trinci, through Ugolino’s wife, Costanza Orsini. He was not from a wealthy family, but at an early age he came to the notice of Pandolfo Malatesta, signore of Pesaro, who was married to Paola Orsini. Pandolfo sponsored da Fiano’s education in Bologna, where he attended the school of Pietro da Moglio, acquiring a lifelong love of Latin writers such as Cicero, and of Dante and Petrarch. Pandolfo’s death in 1373 meant not only personal sadness for da Fiano, but also a sudden loss of financial support. After a difficult period, moving frequently in search of work, he found employment with Pope Urban VI, as ‘papal writer and abbreviator’ in the papal curia, recently re-established in Rome. In 1383, da Fiano was in Naples, at the court of Charles III – it is not clear in exactly what capacity.

Also, during this period, da Fiano wrote to a friend, Ludovico de Fabriano, suggesting that he ‘should write in a poetic and suitable style in praise of Costanza Orsini and her husband, and sing the happiness of the new son, brought forth in the delivery of the same Costanza.’ This suggests that da Fiano admired the Trinci at an early stage, perhaps drawing on the experience of his brother, Pepo, mentioned earlier. A group of da Fiano’s letters from this decade (1380-1390) reflect the tensions experienced by a man with no inherited source of income, but highly educated, with a wide-ranging and passionate

---


113 Da Fiano wrote to Petrarch, expressing relief that news of his death had been false. Petrarch replied after a year, congratulating him on his written style. However, Petrarch later refused a request from Pandolfo Malatesta to consider employing da Fiano. Weiss, R. (1949) Il primo secolo dell’umanesimo, Roma, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, pp.93-96.


115 scriptor et abbreviator apostolicus. This was an important post which eventually evolved into the position of the pope’s secretary. It required the ability to write in ‘clear and unambiguous’ Latin and to compose letters and documents. The number of these officials fluctuated but was usually around six. Lee, E. (1978) Sixtus IV and Men of Letters, Rome, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, pp.47-48.

interest in literature, antiquity and intellectual matters. Fortunately, after the chaotic papacy of Urban, the appointment of Boniface IX in 1389 created a more stable environment. Da Fiano was appointed to two ‘canonries’, and other benefices in Foligno.117 These would have been welcome, not only as a recognition of the pope’s favour, but because they carried a stipend. Most importantly, these appointments certainly brought him into closer contact with the Trinci.

During the period between 1399 and 1404 da Fiano wrote his best-known work: *Contra ridiculos oblocutores poetarum*.118 In this, he argued for the importance of poetry as a literary form, and defended the ‘virtue of the pagans’, suggesting that although they had lived before the time of Christ, they could still be morally admirable – a potentially heretical, though topical, idea. Da Fiano’s interest in antiquity was not limited to literature. He was well known for his knowledge of the ancient buildings and works of art that survived in Rome, acting as guide to younger visitors such as the humanist Bartolomeo Bayguera.119 He also seems to have been deeply affected by the popular peace movement known as the Bianchi that swept Italy – including Foligno – in 1399.120 He wrote a sonnet regretting having to abandon the Bianchi’s distinctive white clothing when the pope prohibited the movement for fear it would cause civic disturbance.121 Although da Fiano was of an older generation of humanists – he was a long-term correspondent of Coluccio Salutati, the Florentine chancellor, who died in 1406 – he was employed in the papal curia at the same time as Leonardo Bruni, Poggio Bracciolini, Antonio Loschi and Pier Paolo Vergerio and would have been aware of their ideas about political theory and the interpretation of ancient history, classical literature and education.122

When Boniface died, da Fiano was confirmed by the antipope, Giovanni XXIII, as Chancellor of the Commune of Rome; at which point the two canonries in Foligno were transferred to Pepo’s sons, as mentioned above.123 His association with the Trinci lasted beyond Ugolino’s death. It was da Fiano who registered in Rome the act in which Ugolino’s three eldest sons,

---

117 *canonicati*. These were appointments in the church hierarchy, although da Fiano was not in holy orders. They may have been to some extent sinecures - the phrase *avecre un canonicato* has come to mean ‘to have an easy life.’ Treccani (2021) *Dizionario*, Rome, Treccani [Online]. Available at https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/dizionario/ (Accessed 15 November 2021).

118 ‘Against the absurd critics of poets.’


121 *Per la candida vesta giù diposta/si trista, duole e langue in pianto amaro/lu spirit ch’era a Dio revolto tuesto*. ‘The spirit that was completely turned back to God suffers and languishes in bitter weeping, for the white clothing so sadly laid down.’ Lines 9-11. Transcription in Weiss, R. (ed.) (1959) ‘Poesie religiose di Francesco da Fiano’, *Archivio Itaiano per la Storia della Pieta*, vol.2, pp.201-206.


Niccolò, Bartolomeo and Corrado, joint successors to the papal vicarate of Foligno, swore allegiance to the papacy. He probably died in 1421.

The other notable figure present in Foligno was Federico Frezzi. Born about 1346 in Foligno, Frezzi was a Dominican friar – first mentioned as a novice at the monastery of Orvieto in 1373. In 1375, he was at the monastery in Perugia, then in Florence, and in 1378 he was appointed reader in Sacra Scrittura at the Dominican studium in Pisa. Following this, he was lecturer in theology at the University of Bologna, then prior of a monastery in Lucca, and in 1386 became librarian of the monastery of S. Domenico in Foligno. He was given permission to return to Bologna, and between 1391 and 1392 gained the title of Master of Theology. In 1400, he was appointed Prior of the Roman province of the Dominican order, with responsibility for all the monasteries in central Italy; in 1403, he was appointed Bishop of Foligno by Pope Boniface IX, likely on the recommendation of Ugolino Trinci.

Frezzi’s rise through the Dominican hierarchy is testament to his intellectual and administrative ability. Surviving notarial records in Foligno give some insight into his engagement with the everyday business of the city. He is best known, however, for his one work of poetry, the Libro dei Regni, sometimes called the Quadriregio. Probably written in the period immediately before his appointment as bishop, the work is a lengthy allegorical and didactic narrative poem in Italian, in the style of Dante’s Commedia, in which the narrator journeys through the four kingdoms of Love, Satan, Vice and Virtue. Dedicated to Ugolino, it charts a journey to personal spiritual fulfilment. It may be difficult for the modern reader to understand its continuing appeal over at least a century, but whatever its literary quality, the work gives many insights into Frezzi’s intellectual world, and more specifically into his relationship with the Trinci and Foligno. Like Bucciolini, Frezzi clearly understood how Ugolino wished to be perceived, depicting him as the protagonist’s guide through the four kingdoms, while also dwelling on the dangers of tyranny.

Frezzi’s other surviving work is largely overlooked, but the views expressed in it are important for this thesis. In 1415-1416, he attended the Council of Constance, where the Western Schism was eventually resolved. The council’s business raised questions of rights and authority, and Frezzi presented a paper entitled Iudicium de liceitate tyrannicide –

---


‘Judgement on the Legality of Tyrannicide’. He began by describing the tyrant in terms of a serpent and a spiny, fruitless tree, citing examples from scripture and history, whose actions result in the destruction of justice and public life.\(^\text{128}\) His conclusion was categorical, albeit controversial in its denial of the first commandment:

Of this I say, first, that those who kill this kind of tyrant should be recompensed with honours, and with public and private offices.\(^\text{129}\)

Both Frezzi and da Fiano must have spent a considerable amount of time at the Palazzo Trinci, given their status in the city. Both also had many wider contacts and would have travelled frequently to Rome and elsewhere. It seems likely that they would have drawn others to visit Foligno in return, creating a stimulating intellectual atmosphere within the developing court, further enlivened by the contribution of visiting dignitaries, soldiers and relatives.

This thesis contends that the views of both men, and of other early humanists, can be detected in many ways throughout the fresco cycle. The relationship of each of them with Ugolino was clearly one of mutual advantage, but Frezzi and da Fiano both held strong views that they were prepared to express and defend in public. Instead of being simply propaganda for the Trinci, the decorations challenge the viewer to consider questions of legitimacy, and in so doing hold the Trinci themselves to account. The recent work of James Hankins emphasises the part played by humanists in the shaping of the identity of the princes they served. He coins the word *paideuma*, to mean ‘an intentional form of elite culture that seeks power within a society with the aim of altering the moral attitudes and behaviours of society’s members, especially its leadership class’.\(^\text{130}\) This thesis argues that the individuals present in Foligno, and instrumental in the design of the frescoes, had an agenda of this kind, which subtly attempts to commit the *signoria* to a mode of behaviour in the future that would chime with their theories of good government. The fact that such outspoken and morally principled men as da Fiano and Frezzi both remained loyal to Ugolino suggests that they did not feel compromised but retained their respect for his *signoria*. Perhaps for a time, at least, image and reality were in harmony.

The end of the Trinci *signoria*

Although the focus of this thesis is on Ugolino III and his court, it is worth recording the remaining years of Trinci *signoria*, since they had a bearing on subsequent perceptions of the Trinci and the later use of the palazzo. When Ugolino died, his three oldest sons, Niccolò, Bartolomeo and Corrado, jointly took over the reins of government. Although Nessi quotes several documents where all three are addressed, Niccolò seems to have

---


emerged as the dominant brother.\textsuperscript{131} During this period, the relationship with Perugia was strengthened and allegiance to the pope continued.\textsuperscript{132} Niccolò’s life ended dramatically, when he was murdered during the night at the rocca at Nocera, following a wedding party.\textsuperscript{133} The assassins wrote to Bartolomeo and Corrado calling them, too, to Nocera. Bartolomeo was killed on arrival, but news of events reached their mother, Costanza, enabling her to warn Corrado, who attacked and occupied the rocca, taking savage retribution. The events became a cause célèbre over a wide area, recorded in prose and verse. Not surprisingly, there was speculation that Corrado, wanting power for himself alone, had orchestrated the whole affair.\textsuperscript{134}

The relationship with Perugia continued to flourish under Corrado, and initially, he maintained allegiance to the pope, Martin V. He continued to consolidate his position through marriage ties and connections with the church, and in 1424, he commissioned the painter, Ottaviano Nelli, to decorate the chapel in the Palazzo Trinci. However, relations between Perugia and the papacy deteriorated, resulting in a period of conflict and uncertainty.\textsuperscript{135} In 1433, two years after Martin V’s death, the Emperor Sigismund passed through Foligno after his coronation as emperor, staying in the palazzo for three days.\textsuperscript{136} While he was there, he knighted Corrado and two of his sons – a significant recognition.\textsuperscript{137}

In 1435, though, Corrado declared his submission to the latest pope (Eugene IV), before many witnesses in the Sala dei Giganti in the palazzo.\textsuperscript{138} However, in 1438, he ‘returned to damaging the lands of the Church and to disobeying the Pope’.\textsuperscript{139} After taking Spoleto, he treated the city’s women and children with cruelty seen as shocking, even at a time when ruthless reprisals were common. The pope sent the notorious Cardinal Vitteleschi to subdue him; Foligno was besieged, and its surroundings laid waste. In desperation, a group of citizens allowed the troops into the city. Corrado, his two sons and other members of the family were taken captive and imprisoned and executed; in Dorio’s laconic version, ‘Pope Eugene IV had all three strangled.’\textsuperscript{140}

So ended the signoria of the Trinci. The papacy took direct control of Foligno, with the palazzo being used for administration and even hosting another papal visit (for which the Sala Sisto IV is named), although maintenance remained a problem. In 1578, the civic

\textsuperscript{134} Nessi, S. (2006) p.137.
\textsuperscript{139} ritorno di dannificar I luoghi della Chiesa e a disobbedire al Papa. Dorio, D. (1638) p.228.
\textsuperscript{140} P. Eugenio quarto fece tutti tre strangolare. Dorio, D. (1638) p.238.


authorities requested partial use as a prison, resulting in many physical changes to the building; another part was later used as a theatre. Already in the eighteenth century Coltellini commented on the ‘dark ignorance and the vile importunate malignancy’ of the men responsible for the upkeep of the palace, who were planning alterations that threatened the decorations. Subsequent changes included the demolition of the bridge to the Palazzo Pubblico, and a replacement external stairway from the courtyard to the first floor. In the mid-nineteenth century, a neo-classical façade was constructed facing onto the main square of Foligno. The building remained the property of the state until 1927, when, after prolonged negotiations, ownership was passed to the city of Foligno. Despite ongoing maintenance problems, compounded by earthquake and war damage, it was used as a prison until 1944, and then for administration, and as a library and concert venue. In 1985, it was closed for major repairs and restorations, finally re-opening in 1997 as a historic site and museum. After over five hundred years, the palazzo and its exceptional fresco cycle could be properly appreciated again.

141 *la sciauratura ignoranza e la vile importuna malignita.*
Chapter 2. The Bridge – a transitional space

Introduction

I did not know how to tear myself away from such a sight, until I heard: ‘Turn your attention to the other side: it is not in arms alone that fame is won’.

Petrarch, *Trionfo della fama* (1350s).

This chapter contends that the decorations within the distinctive physical context of the bridge (Fig.2.4) exemplify the discussion of leadership that was important to Petrach and other early humanists, introducing ideas that are explored further elsewhere in the palace. Just as in Petrarch’s poem, the gentler qualities of the ‘Ages of Man’ (Figs.2.8-2.15) are juxtaposed with the military prowess of the ‘Nine Worthies’ (Figs.2.17-2.26). The two series reflect both traditional chivalric values and newer humanistic influences, and interact to create a dialogue between past, present and future. The chapter draws the conclusion that they combine to create an experience intended to reinforce the ability of the Trinci *signoria* to govern wisely and effectively.

The first section of this chapter - ‘Structure and space’ - begins by discussing the positioning of the bridge and the likely reasons for its construction. This section builds on Galassi’s identification of the symbolic significance of the bridge’s position between the Palazzo Trinci and the cathedral, and its visual impact when viewed from the outside. It suggests further reasons for the bridge’s construction and goes on to consider the numerous ways in which it could be experienced from the inside. The next section – ‘The decorations’ - discusses the internal decorations in detail, in this context. Rather than a narrow focus on a small body of iconographic sources, it argues that the images draw on many influences from both chivalric and humanist culture to build a network of meanings, creating a dialogue between the two sides of the bridge. It shows how the ‘Nine Worthies’ sequence references many works of chivalric literature, and that their widespread circulation created a web of popular myth and history that would have associated the Trinci with an ancient chivalric past, focussing on military prowess. In contrast, ‘The Ages of Man’ sequence on the opposite wall embodies the gentler courtly and chivalric values - especially in its depictions of youth and maturity. The two sets of values were not necessarily in conflict.

However, here on the bridge there is a certain tension between them, that would have prompted discussion and raised questions about how the Trinci wished to be seen. Moreover, the depictions of the later stages of life reflect humanist ideas concerning the passing of time and the character of old age. The bridge decorations thus operate as a metaphor for the transitions and tensions of the court itself: one which was, on the one hand, looking towards older, chivalric models, and on the other, looking to the humanist ideals of later courts. The chapter concludes that, far from being two unrelated schemes,

142 Io non sapea da tal vista levarme,/quand’io udi: ‘Pon mente a l’altro lato/ché s’acquista ben pregio altro che d’arme’.


the Nine Worthies and the Ages of Man are intended to work together. Further chapters of this thesis examine the ways in which the themes introduced here are explored in other spaces, informing and enriching each other, and provoking debate and reflection.

Structure and space
 Originally, as described in Chapter 1, there were two bridges from the palazzo, one leading along the wall of the cathedral – symbol of ecclesiastic power - to the Palazzo delle Canoniche – over the street now called Via XX Settembre, the other to the Palazzo del Podestà – symbol of civic authority - over the Via Gramsci (see plan, Figs.1.12,1.13 and Figs.2.1-2.3). These two architectural features, both of which also had several practical uses, created a subtle but unmistakeable visual expression of what has been called ‘the long hand of the signori’, reinforcing the impression of the Trinci’s control over every area of life in Foligno. Besides their visual impact on the ordinary people of Foligno, though, these bridges were significant for their users in several ways.

In practical terms, the surviving bridge was also, in fact, a convenient means of access to the pre-existing accommodation of the Trinci within the Palazzo delle Canoniche, which is attached to the far side of the cathedral. Passing over the bridge from the Palazzo Trinci, a 45° turn led into a passage within the wall of the façade of the cathedral, through to the pre-existing family accommodation in the Palazzo delle Canoniche. The frescoes stretch as far as the meeting of the bridge with the cathedral; there is no record of any in the passageway beyond. Using the bridge would have contributed to the sense of status of those entitled to do so. Since members of the family had no need to cross the square to access the palace from the Palazzo delle Canoniche, it would have been possible to orchestrate public appearances, or to protect female or younger family members from view, if wished.

However, the fact that other similar structures were conceived originally as a means of fleeing attack suggests that this may also have been a purpose for the bridges in Foligno. For example, the Passetto di Borgo, built by Pope Nicolas III in 1277 from the Vatican to Castel Sant’Angelo, was originally designed as an escape route. Similarly, in fourteenth-century Padua, the Carrara family’s traghetto or ‘ferry’ led from the Reggia Carrerese to a fortified tower. In Ferrara, a via coperta – ‘covered way’ - was constructed at the end of

---

146 Subsequent alterations have obscured the original nature of this passageway along the façade. Benazzi, G. (1993) Foligno A.D. 1201: La facciata della Cattedrale di San Feliciano, Foligno, Cassa di Risparmi, p.105.
the fourteenth century, leading from the Castello Estense to the Palazzo Municipale. In 1476, Duchess Eleonora d’Aragona fled along it with her son and heir, young Alfonso d’Este, during an attempted coup: the threat of attack was real.\textsuperscript{149} Ugolino’s experience of the killing of his father, Trincia, would have made him all too aware of this possibility. So besides creating a sense of privilege, the bridges also convey the vulnerability of the Trinci and families like them. The surviving bridge is covered, so that anyone within it cannot easily be seen, and has small windows on either side, from which activity below could be easily observed, enabling constant vigilance and surveillance. It has a passage narrow enough for one man to defend it, and slits in the wall through which warning shots could be fired (Fig.2.5).\textsuperscript{150}

Even at this early date, though, the potential of this bridge to communicate several messages, internally and externally, was plainly not lost on the Trinci, or on the individuals who advised them. The basic purposes of practicality and security are overlaid with more positive meanings, and the bridge becomes, besides, an effective way of expressing the identity of the \textit{signoria}. In this, it is very similar to the original \textit{via coperta} in Ferrara, which was a simple wooden structure, intended in the first instance, like the bridge in Foligno, as a means of escape and surveillance. It too was decorated internally and externally, but with heraldic devices and depictions of Hercules, the chosen archetype of the Este family. In the late fifteenth century, as the style of Este court became more confident, its potential as a space closely associated with the privileged identity of its appropriately named owner, Ercole d’Este, was developed further.\textsuperscript{151} Still occupying the same position, it was re-built as a more grandiose structure and eventually housed private apartments (the \textit{camerini}) with a \textit{galleria} which is likely to have been intended for the display of antique medals and statues, and eventually the famous collections of Alfonso d’Este and his cycle of mythological paintings.\textsuperscript{152} Much later, in the 1560s in Florence, the \textit{Corridoio Vasariano} was designed specifically for Cosimo de’ Medici by Giorgio Vasari. Created from the beginning as an elaborate emblem of power, the elevated covered walkway was almost a kilometre long and provided a private route from his residence in the Palazzo Pitti to his administrative offices in the Uffizi, on the other side of the River Arno. Besides inspiring awe in the Florentine populace who gazed up at it from below, it offered extensive views over the city to the few who were entitled to walk along it – an exaggerated development of earlier versions such as that in Foligno. It was also used as a gallery where portraits of other aristocrats were displayed, again creating a space closely associated with the identity of Cosimo. This has been seen as a ‘reflection of the powerful back to themselves’,


\textsuperscript{150} The other bridge was uncovered, shorter, and wider, and would have provided a similar view in the other direction. Lametti, L. (2001) p.76.


emphasising the intentional sense of distance and separation created by such structures.\textsuperscript{153}

It has also been suggested that for Cosimo de’ Medici, walking along the \textit{corridoio} in Florence was intended as an opportunity for a transformational experience, in which he could move from one role to another – ‘from \textit{pater patria} to \textit{pater familia}, from duke to father, from a heroic image to a natural being, from divine to human, from immortal to mortal’.\textsuperscript{154}

For Ugolino, and others, too, there could well have been something of the same sense of adopting a ‘public presence’ as they moved over the bridge to and from the Palazzo Trinci, past the images on its walls, into and out of the large rooms in the main building, where they would perform the roles expected of them. For younger members of the family, this experience would have constantly instilled a sense of their destiny as part of a developing dynastic project. However, although the bridge in Foligno foreshadows these later developments in Ferrara and Florence, the self-presentation of the Trinci was not as confident and elevated as that of the Este or the Medici would become - the court in Foligno was a court in formation, and the Trinci were walking a fine line between proclaiming their authority and not overstepping the boundaries. Like the other decorative schemes in the palazzo, the programme on the bridge reflects this.

Although it leads into the large, open space of the Camera delle Rose, the bridge itself can only accommodate two people abreast. Without artificial light, the space is quite dark, so candles would often have been needed to view the images; because of the turn in the passage, they cannot be viewed together as a whole scheme, but only at close quarters, and by a few people at a time. However, despite – or perhaps because of - being a restricted, liminal space intended for movement, the bridge was clearly felt to be sufficiently important to warrant a pictorial scheme of some complexity. Another liminal area, the landing at the top of the gothic staircase (Chapter 2), was given equal attention, and in both, the limited space encourages keen inspection of the images in relation to each other, making for heightened personal engagement and prompting comparison and discussion. The scheme here on the bridge introduces ideas that were developed further in the larger public spaces of the palazzo and offers the opportunity to revisit and consider them repeatedly.

The decorations

The decorations in the interior of the bridge explore the questions of leadership discussed in the introduction – intertwining them with references to humanistic concerns about the passing of time, the importance of learning, and the pursuit of individual virtue. Appropriately enough for a space that enables physical movement and transition between one place and another, there is an awareness of the emergence of new values alongside longer-established courtly traditions, and of the possibilities inherent in both. Galassi states convincingly that this bridge was the first part of the Palazzo Trinci to be decorated.\textsuperscript{155}
seems that the members of the court and the artists involved were introducing and exploring ideas here that were to be developed more fully in the larger, more public rooms.

Above the doorway, as one passes onto the bridge from the cathedral end, is an image of a seated man (Fig.2.6). Although it is damaged, this figure bears a strong resemblance to a portrait of Petrarch which was originally in the Sala dei Giganti in the Palazzo dei Carrarei in Padua (Fig.2.7). As mentioned in Chapter 1, Petrarch had close connections with the Carrara court, and although the Carrara fell from power in 1405, their court appears to have been an important model for the Trinci. The reference to this image of Petrarch perhaps implies a desire to become the successors of the Carrara as patrons of the arts and intellectual activity. This would certainly have been supported by Francesco da Fiano, who, as also discussed earlier, is known to have had great admiration for Petrarch. As this and other chapters demonstrate, Petrarch’s influence permeates the decorations of the Palazzo Trinci. The use of his image here subtly positions him as their presiding genius – slightly out of view for much of the time but looking down on those who pass below - a source of inspiration and a reminder of the concerns of early humanism.

At first sight, as described earlier, the images on each wall of the bridge constitute two distinct schemes. This chapter shows that in fact they complement and shed light on each other, as well as participating in the overall themes of the decoration of the palace – in particular, by proposing contrasting (but not mutually exclusive) notions of leadership. On the left-hand wall, as one leaves the cathedral to go towards the Camera delle Rose, is a series of figures depicting the ‘Ages of Man’, a well-known convention at the time (Figs.2.8-2.15). Opposite the Ages of Man, on the right-hand wall, are the equally well-known ‘Nine Worthies’, with Romulus and (possibly) Scipio added (Figs.2.17-2.26). Between the two, over the window, is an intriguing image of a caged bird. Some parts of these latter decorations have been damaged, revealing evidence of an earlier Ages of Man series, by a different hand, but apparently employing very similar iconography to the second version. Of this first scheme, only under-drawing survives. It is suggested that this early work was by a local artist, possibly Giovanni di Corraduccio, between 1407, when the building work on the palazzo was completed, and 1411, the date recorded by Coltellini for the employment of the more prestigious Gentile di Fabriano, as discussed in the Chapter 1. This change of artist implies considerable discussion and re-thinking in the planning of the work. The suggestion is borne out by the way in which these images reflect new humanistic ideas that were beginning to modify older, chivalric traditions at this time, as the section on the Ages of Man, below, demonstrates.

The Nine Worthies

The Nine Worthies (the Neuf Preux in French or Novi Prodi in Italian) were widely known as a group of heroes of chivalry by the time the decorations at the Palazzo Trinci were begun.

---

156 Although the figure faces the opposite direction, the gown and hood are similar in style and colour. Although their positioning is different, the cassoni have very similar patterns of studs, and the circular object resembles the carousel on the desk in the Padua version.

They were first identified as paragons of prowess in a short section of *Les Vœux du Paon* (‘The Vows of the Peacock’), by Jacques de Languyon, a fourteenth-century French poet. *Les Vœux du Paon* is, in fact, an interpolation into some manuscripts of the lengthy *Roman d’Alexandre*, a work celebrating the legendary deeds of Alexander the Great. In describing the exploits of a knight, Porrus, de Languyon comments ‘Since God chose to make Adam[…] no knight was ever born who endured so much fighting in a single day’.158 Porrus’ achievement is then compared to the achievements of nine heroes from history. In de Languyon’s short poem, all nine are described almost exclusively in terms of their conquests and deeds in battle.

The nine individuals chosen by de Languyon form three groups of three: Joshua, David and Judas Maccabaeus from the Old Testament; Hector, Caesar and Alexander from antiquity; and Arthur, Charlemagne and Godfrey de Bouillon from the period after the birth of Christ. This triad of triads seems to have appealed to the scholastic feeling for order and balance, and to a desire to exemplify and make sense of history in terms of great men and momentous events, drawing on didactic and narrative traditions that nourished the imagination of the late Middle Ages. Besides being thought of as a group, each member of the Nine became individually associated with a web of popular fable and myth enjoyed by all levels of society. Their identity became surrounded by a wealth of quasi-historical literature that provided models of heroism, military tactics, and empire-building, as well as exemplars of upper-class social behaviour, courtship, and leisure pursuits.159 The Old Testament figures brought with them associations with the body of preaching and teaching by the church that related Jewish history to the life of Christ. The other six were all celebrated in prose and poetry that circulated in several languages including French, English, and in Italian versions. A large body of contemporary literature was associated with Alexander, for example the *Roman d’Alexandre*, mentioned earlier. The thirteenth-century *Histoire ancienne jusqu’à César* achieved broad popularity throughout Europe, and continued to be copied, especially in Italy. One of the first French vernacular prose histories, this encyclopaedic text compiles mytho-historical stories of classical antiquity until the age of Julius Caesar and simplifies these stories into moral *exempla*. Often bound together with the *Faits des Romains*, a text which provides similar stories of the period after Caesar, the *Histoire* was an important source for ancient history into the fifteenth century.160 Other works in French, based on ancient history, also circulated, for instance the *Roman de Troie*, which existed in deluxe manuscripts illustrated in Italy.161 The crusader, Godfrey de Bouillon, was celebrated in the twelfth-century *Cycle de la

---

159 Some of this literature was not only written—it was also recited or performed. Scuderi, A. (2006) ‘Performance and text in the Italian Carolingian tradition’, *Oral Tradition*, vol.21, no.1, pp.68-89.
Arthurian legend was widely known, with Italian versions including *La Tavola Ritonda*, an anonymous prose romance. Material concerning Charlemagne, and his son, Roland, was also popular in verse and prose, and was compiled by Andrea da Barberino from various legends and *chansons de geste* into a widely read Italian version, *I Reali di Francia*.

Many of these written texts were illustrated, which created an array of iconography that would have been familiar to many people. A network of visual images connected each individual member of the Nine with aspects of chivalry, from techniques of warfare and individual deeds of courage to armour, heraldry, dress, and social pursuits. For example, among the many illustrations to the fourteenth-century manuscript of a romance entitled *Le Chevalier Errant*, the Nine Worthies appear (Figs.2.27,2.28). The text was composed by Tomaso III, Marquis of Saluzzo, and the illustrations made in Paris. The manuscript was in Saluzzo, in north-west Italy, at least until the mid-1400s, and the Nine appear again in frescoes in the Marquis’ castle - just one example of the ways in which the theme was absorbed and then circulated into wider visual culture across northern Europe. Their images appeared together or individually in settings as varied as German civic buildings, churches, North Italian castles and the greatest and most sophisticated courts in France.

As Maurice Keen points out, it was a ‘powerful conception’ that exemplified the ‘chapters’ of world history and lent itself readily to iconographic representation. The Nine Worthies increasingly became associated with the whole spectrum of chivalric values, not simply the battle prowess of de Languyon’s original, which meant that they were readily adaptable to a wide range of environments.

The positive associations of these figures brought with them would have made them an obvious choice for the decoration of the Palazzo Trinci. Most viewers would have been able to recognise and name the characters portrayed. They enjoyed stories about them and

---


163 The process may have been oral, and some stories certainly reached Italy earlier than French romance. Polidori, F.L. (ed.) (1864–65) *La tavola ritonda o l’istoria di Tristano* (2 vols.), Bologna, Presso Gaetano Romagnoli.


166 For example, in sculptural relief in Cologne City Hall and the decoration of Nuremberg’s civic fountain. Otranto Cathedral’s mosaic floor (in Puglia), completed c1165, also shows an image of a mounted crowned man, labelled ‘Rex Arturus’ and another, ‘Alexander Rex’, on a throne carried by griffins.


168 Larner defines the ethos as: ‘the exaltation of pro (impetuous courage), and sen (Intelligence) to produce mezura (a mean). Men show their cortesia by their *joi* (delight in life), solatz (cheerfulness), larguesa (munificence and contempt for wealth as such), saber (knowledge of poetry and music) and demomney (service to ladies).’ Larner, J. (1988).
understood the culture and values they embodied, and for the Trinci, and others like them, their associations with other prestigious environments were doubtless important. However, the use of the theme in Foligno returns to the original conception by de Languyon as primarily military figures. The choice to portray them in this light in Foligno is distinctive and demonstrates that the Trinci still relied on their military reputation as an important element of their image and as a way of supporting their ability to govern.

Other courtly environments placed a different emphasis on these figures. For example, in a tapestry that is almost exactly contemporaneous with the frescoes in Foligno, the Worthies are shown as established, enthroned sovereigns, who no longer need to bear weapons (Figs.2.29-2.32). Woven in the Low Countries, the tapestry is an expensive, transportable, luxury item, which may have been in the possession of Jean, Duc de Berry, since it shows his coat of arms; it would certainly have hung in a successful, wealthy court.\(^\text{169}\) The Trinci could not claim to have achieved this confident hegemony, although they may have hoped to do so eventually, and the presentation of the Worthies in the Palazzo Trinci is still as practitioners of war.

On the other side of the Alps, in Bolzano, the decorations in Castel Roncolo (Figs.2.33-2.35) again exploit the theme differently. Here, they draw on the courtly, aristocratic associations of the Worthies to support the social aspirations of the wealthy Vintler family, who hoped to increase their influence by acquiring the trappings of hereditary nobility. The castle, purchased in the 1380s, had ready-made historical associations and the whole interior was decorated with frescoes of courtly and chivalric subjects.\(^\text{170}\) Here, the Worthies support social advancement based on moral character and innate gentility, rather than reinforcing the right to rule based on military success, as they do in Foligno.

A third example, in the frescoes in the Sala Baronale of the Castello della Manta in Saluzzo, is again very different from the Palazzo Trinci. The Castello belonged to Tomaso, Marquis of Saluzzo, who wrote the *Chevalier Errant*, mentioned earlier, and the subject was clearly close to his heart. In both the manuscript illustrations and the frescoes, the male figures are shown alongside an equivalent group of nine female ‘Worthies’.\(^\text{171}\) The figures take on a more light-hearted mood and their courtly qualities of gracefulness and manners are emphasised (Figs.2.36-2.38). The appearance of the younger figures is fresh and dashing; that of the more elderly is benign and gracious. In the manuscript, the Nine are shown together in a grand hall, as if gathered for a celebration. In the frescoes, they are shown against a background of leafy trees, standing on a carpet of spring flowers, their armour covered by colourful tunics with chivalric emblems. They adopt elegant poses, some with toes pointed as they step into the idealised settings; their shields are no longer needed but


\(^\text{171}\) In the late 1300s, female Worthies were sometimes added, showing ‘sanitised’ masculine valour as feminine virtue, but membership of the group was more fluid. Fraioli, D. (2006) ‘Nine Worthy Women’ in Schaus, M. (ed.) *Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, New York (NY), Routledge, p.608.
hang above them on the trees. David, besides carrying the sling that killed Goliath, also holds a book, reminding the viewer that he also wrote the psalms, and this is reinforced by the harp on his shield. Godfrey de Bouillon, the crusader knight who was made king of Jerusalem, wears a wreath of citrus fruits and foliage, giving him a festive appearance. These individuals have shifted from being the personification of prowess in battle to suggesting much gentler chivalric virtues such as largesse, noblesse, and courtesie. The benefits of victory can now be enjoyed in the leisured, privileged environment of the castle, a fitting setting for Tomaso’s cultured literary pursuits. Again, their mood is very different from the mood of the Nine in Foligno.

To many viewers of the decorations at the Palazzo Trinci, at least some of these literary and visual associations would have been conjured up as they crossed the bridge and turned to look at the Nine. Some would have read romances in Italian, or other languages; a few might have seen manuscripts or visited other settings where the figures appeared together, or as individuals. For some viewers, the Worthies had connotations of imperial rule; for others, they implied inherent nobility or even cultured leisure. However, although they carry many resonances of other elite environments, on closer examination the particular emphasis of the figures in the Palazzo Trinci provokes questions about their significance. This thesis argues, then, that just as others fashioned the Nine for their own purposes, so also their use here on the bridge is carefully adapted in support of the construction of a specific identity for the Trinci.

Observation of the frescoes in Foligno shows that they are presented in a way that goes back to their roots, focusing explicitly on their military qualities and success in warfare. Starting at the exit from the Camera delle Rose, the traditional Nine are preceded by Romulus (Fig.2.17) and Scipio (Fig.2.18), who face each other over a window-shutter where the image of the caged bird, mentioned earlier, appears (Fig.2.16). The Old Testament figures are shown first: Joshua (Fig.2.19), David (Fig.2.20) and Judas Maccabeus (Fig.2.21), They are followed by the figures from antiquity: Hector (Fig.2.22), Caesar (Fig.2.23) and Alexander (Fig.2.24). Last is the trio from the Christian era, of whom Arthur (Fig.2.25) is most intact; virtually all of Charlemagne (Fig.2.26) and all of Godfrey is lost. Appropriately, the three Christian figures are closest to the cathedral. The figures stand facing the viewer, separated by the painted architectural arches that frame each of them, but which also unify the composition. Galassi points to a series of illustrations in a later manuscript as perhaps having a source in common with the Palazzo Trinci frescoes. However, as already argued, the themes were so widespread, and the canon of the Nine so well-defined and easily identifiable, that it seems unlikely that there was one single source.

The surviving figures all wear armour under their cloaks and carry shields and swords or other weapons. David, Alexander and Arthur wear crowns; Joshua and Judas, helmets. On Caesar’s shield, the chivalric device of an eagle can be seen, and on Arthur’s, three crowns.

---

172 Also, a reminder that Godfrey refused to accept a golden crown, since Christ had worn a crown of thorns.
Arthur also has the remnants of chivalric emblems on his tunic. The exceptional youth of Alexander when he conquered his empire is emphasised by his beardless face. In contrast, Arthur’s white beard shows his age. David is shown as a mature man, not as the boy who killed Goliath. This representation of different ages contrasts with that in the Ages of Man opposite, implying here that all generations can take up arms effectively. Their expressions are serious and, in some cases, almost threatening – a reminder, perhaps, that the bridge itself was an escape route and could be fiercely defended. Joshua, David and Arthur all stare fixedly ahead, their mouths set in unsmiling determination. The emphasis is squarely on their military capability and they appear to have been deliberately distanced from the potentially courtly aspects of their personae, unlike the figures in Saluzzo. More surprisingly, unlike the Burgundian tapestry mentioned, they are not shown primarily in the role of sovereign rulers, even though some wear crowns. The addition of Romulus and (possibly) Scipio, is unusual, but perhaps intended to provide a link between the figures of the Worthies and those of the great classical figures in the Sala dei Giganti. Romulus, of course, also features in the story of Ilia and the foundation of Rome decoration the landing area (Chapter 3). Both individuals also had a substantial mythology built around them, and provoked discussion about the merits of their actions. They too appeared frequently in works of art and their iconic status continued into the Renaissance, when they were also shown on furniture and tapestry. Certainly, the overall effect of these figures is to confirm for the viewer the irresistible strength of military might, rather than the established authority shown in the tapestry, the social aspiration of Roncolo, or the light-hearted, cultured milieu at Saluzzo. There is no attempt to include depictions of actual members of the Trinci alongside these paragons of war, as that would have appeared arrogant and pushed the boundaries too far; but there is no escaping the reminder that the Trinci signoria was established on the battlefield and could still be fiercely defended.

The Ages of Man
On the other wall of the bridge is a presentation of another well-established concept: the ‘Ages of Man’ (Figs.2.8-2.15). Again, familiar subject matter is presented in such a way as to connect it closely with the identity and agenda of the Trinci. Set, as it is, opposite the Nine Worthies, it offers an alternative approach to leadership, still rooted in chivalric values, but influenced strongly by humanist thinking. More directed at peacetime than the warlike Nine, there is an awareness of mortality, but also of continuity, through the inheritance of authority from one generation to the next. While crossing the bridge, and looking from one side to the other, the viewer is invited to consider these alternatives and the interactions between them. The theme of leadership is closely connected here with the other themes of time, learning and individual virtue discussed in the Introduction, and in later chapters. Just as Romulus and Scipio form a link with the Sala dei Giganti and with the

---

174 Heraldic emblems were created for them at an early stage. Hector usually has three arrows, Alexander three crowns and David, a harp – although these vary occasionally.
story of Ilia, another – rather different - version of the Ages of Man appears in the Camera delle Rose and is discussed in Chapter 5. There is also a series of heads in the collection of antique sculpture, that can be seen to represent the progression from youth to old age (Fig.2.39). These may originally have been attached to the exterior of the palace, as was the custom at the time, contributing further to the web of inter-connecting ideas.

The origins of the notion of dividing human life into discrete stages are much earlier than the invention of the Nine Worthies by de Languyon. The idea can be found in classical sources and was developed by scholastic writers throughout Northern Europe in their desire to analyse and classify the aging process. In her comprehensive discussion of medieval representations of the Ages of Man, Elizabeth Sears gives many examples from literature and the visual arts.\textsuperscript{176} Often divided into seven phases, as here in the Palazzo Trinci, human life could also be seen in terms of other numeric symbolism and in relation to other systems. For instance, division into three ages was closely associated with the three Magi – a connection which, as is proposed later in this chapter, is referenced by the artist in Foligno.\textsuperscript{177} Four could be matched with the seasons; six with the six Ages of the World; seven with the seven Virtues or the seven Liberal Arts; twelve with the months of the year. These divisions could also be related to other ways of categorizing the human experience, for example, the Wheel of Life and the Tree of Knowledge. Increasingly, the theme was used as a way of making moral points in preaching and appeared in ecclesiastical settings, but its versatility meant that it was also used in domestic wall decoration, in tapestries, and on cassoni.\textsuperscript{178} Sears shows how widespread the theme was, in written and visual versions, and how ‘stock characters’ were created that were easily recognizable in different contexts. This section of the chapter argues that as a result, they too, just like the Nine Worthies, carry with them many and varied associations.\textsuperscript{179}

The frescoes of the Ages of Man on the bridge at the Palazzo Trinci do, however, bear a strong iconographic similarity to one particular representation, in the illustrations in an illuminated manuscript of a psalter in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Fig.2.40).\textsuperscript{180} Sears makes this connection, commenting: ‘the designer has, one thinks, worked out of a library, finding inspiration in a luxury codex’,\textsuperscript{181} and Galassi reiterates the link in her discussion of the frescoes.\textsuperscript{182} The seven figures in the Palazzo Trinci are certainly easily related to the figures in the illustrations in the psalter in the positions they adopt, their clothing and the items they hold such as the child’s toy, the man’s flowering branch, and the old man’s sticks. At the time the Foligno frescoes were painted, the psalter was

\textsuperscript{178} Sears, E. (1986) p.137.
\textsuperscript{179} Sears, E. (1986) p.5.
probably in the library of Jean, Duc de Berry.\textsuperscript{183} There is no record of any members of the Foligno court having visited the Duke’s court, although some are known to have travelled widely, as may some of the painters involved in making the frescoes.\textsuperscript{184} However, the ownership of the psalter by such a powerful figure would have conferred considerable prestige on it. It seems likely, therefore, that its iconography would have been valued for its courtly connections and may have been known through copies, even if it was not used as a direct source.

This chapter argues, however, that although the iconography is very similar to that of the psalter, and may well ultimately be derived from it, the images also evince many other influences, and create a very different mood. In the psalter, the figures accompany Psalm 90.\textsuperscript{185} The focus of this psalm is on the transience and trials of human life, and the punishment of an angry God. Preachers and moral writers frequently elaborated on this theme and the tone of the manuscript’s illustrations is gloomy, with sombre figures set in a deserted landscape and a single angel reminding the reader of divine surveillance. On the bridge, the tone of the images is far more positive. Placed in a new context and in combination with the Nine Worthies opposite, they are adapted to very different purposes from those of the psalter. As argued below, they draw on a combination of French courtly culture and humanist thinking to demonstrate the behaviour suited to peacetime leadership at different stages of life, linking it closely to the Trinci.

On the bridge, the series begins at the entrance from the cathedral, with infancy, and ends with the seventh, old age, as the bridge joins the palazzo (Figs.2.8-2.15). All apart from the youngest face in the same direction, their faces showing increasing age, their hair growing grey and beards lengthening. Each is engaged in an activity appropriate to a well-born, wealthy male. The youngest figure (Fig.2.8) plays with a whip and top; the next (Fig.2.8) shoots an arrow from a bow or perhaps uses a catapult; the third (Fig.2.9) is mounted on a horse and holds a falcon on his gloved hand. The fourth, a mature man (Figs.2.10,2.11), holds what is probably a flowering branch in his left hand. The fifth reads at a desk (Fig.2.12); the sixth walks with crutches (Fig.2.13); the seventh sits in a large chair or throne (Fig.2.14,2.15). These decorations are not simply personifications of abstract ideas, however. The artist has taken care to give each age distinctive facial characteristics and expressions that bring them to life and move them beyond stereotype. All are dressed in contemporary quattrocento clothing - all but one with touches of the red and green of the Trinci. As this thesis contends is frequently the case at the Palazzo Trinci, the images here are closely related to the Trinci themselves, and to the promotion of their signoria.

\textsuperscript{183} The psalter is recorded as having been in the Duke’s possession from 1340-1416. Anselmus Laudunensis (11th c.) Psalterium Cantuariense [Online]. Available at https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10551125c/f1.item (Accessed 15 November 2021).

\textsuperscript{184} Da Fiano, for example, spent time in Avignon in the 1370s. Bachelli, F. (1997).

\textsuperscript{185} The psalm ends: \textit{Dies annorum nostrorum in ipsis septuaginta anni si autem in potentatibus octoginta anni et amplius eorum labor et dolor; quoniam supervenit mansuetudo et cor ripiemur.} ‘For all our days are passed away in thy wrath: we spend our years as a tale that is told. / The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.’ Psalm 90: 9-10, King James Bible.
Behind the figures, green trees flourish, the stages of their growth mirroring the development of the figures. Four angels, spaced evenly above the figures, support flowing banderols bearing brief sections of text, asking each character a question, which he answers. This use of text differentiates these figures from the Nine Worthies, opposite, which has their names only. Written in French, it is also completely different in tone from Psalm 90, mentioned earlier. Translated, the captions are as follows:


XV years
Boy, what do you want to have? A long summer, a short winter.

XX years
Youngster, what do you ask for?

[...] (Fig.2.9)

XL years
What do these flowers mean? Joy of the heart, pleasure in love.

LX years
[...]

[...] years
Gentleman - how have you lived?

[...] I gave alms...

[...]
Old man, why so undone?
Everything comes to an end, except good deeds.

The text has been transcribed by Marilena Caciorgna. In a few places where it has been damaged, words or phrases have been completed using remaining inscriptions visible in the earlier cycle opposite, although some sections are still missing, indicated by [...] Caciorgna, M. (2001) ‘Sanguinis et belli fusor’ in Benazzi, G. and Mancini, F.F. (eds.) Il Palazzo Trinci Di Foligno, Perugia, Quattroemme, pp.420-426.

186 The text has been transcribed by Marilena Caciorgna. In a few places where it has been damaged, words or phrases have been completed using remaining inscriptions visible in the earlier cycle opposite, although some sections are still missing, indicated by [...] Caciorgna, M. (2001) ‘Sanguinis et belli fusor’ in Benazzi, G. and Mancini, F.F. (eds.) Il Palazzo Trinci Di Foligno, Perugia, Quattroemme, pp.420-426.

187 [...] Enfes, que demande tu en t’enfanse? Sante, croissanse.

188 XV ans Valeton, que veus tu avoir? Lonc este, court ivernoir.

189 XX ans Jovensiaus, que demand tu? [...]

190 XL ans Que note sele fleurs? Joie de quer, deduit d’amour.

191 LX ans [...] [...]

192 [...] ans Preudons, coment tu vesqui? [...] aumones ai fait [...]

193 [...] Vielliart, pour coi se si desfais? Tout va a fin, for que bien fait.
The use of French in these inscriptions, or to be more precise, the langue d’oïl of northern France, is exceptional in the Palazzo Trinci, suggesting that it was carefully chosen.\textsuperscript{194} This is the language that Dante praised in his \textit{de Vulgari Eloquentia} for its part in the development of vernacular prose narratives of the deeds of Trojans and Romans and Arthurian romances, which became popular throughout Europe, including Italy, as discussed earlier.\textsuperscript{195} The choice of this language associates these images immediately with the chivalric literature enjoyed in courtly environments.

The stages depicted are not named and so the viewer is left to draw conclusions about each one from numerals showing their ages. Evidence is provided by the artist and by the answer that each character gives to the question he is set, contributing to the interactive quality of viewing these frescoes in the confined space of the bridge. The three younger characters are presented as elegant, well-behaved and confident. The two youngest – usually known at the time as \textit{Infantia} (infancy) (Fig.2.8), whose numerical age has been lost, and \textit{Pueritia} (boyhood) (Fig.2.8), identified as fifteen years old, are shown at play and wear the dress of boys brought up in a wealthy environment – the second has a cloak with scalloped edges and parti-coloured hose. The third from the left, twenty-year-old \textit{Adolescentia} (youth) (Fig.2.9), is dressed in brocade with a high ruffed collar, his left hand elegantly gloved. The training in combat that young boys of this class would have undergone is noticeably absent. Mounted on a lively horse with decorative caparisons and bridle, his falcon perched on his hand, he is the epitome of the young lover - falconry was a noble pursuit, and frequently used as a metaphor for courtship in literature and art.\textsuperscript{196} However, he remains dignified and alone, and there is no suggestion of the erotic, as there is in some other decorations, such as those at Saluzzo. These first characters prefigure the three boys depicted with the personifications of Grammar, Rhetoric and Arithmetic in the Camera delle Rose, as discussed in Chapter 6. Their demeanour is equally serious and restrained and contributes to the impression that the sons of the Trinci family received an upbringing suited to their status – the courtly pastimes they pursue here complementing the academic education shown in the other room.

The fourth, central, character – the stage usually known as \textit{Iuventus}, here aged forty - is also stylishly dressed in the Trinci colours (Fig.2.10,2.11). His green full-length tunic is patterned with spring flowers in white and gold, with a ruffed collar, and he has a crimson cloak thrown casually over his left shoulder. Unlike the other figures, he looks out, seeming to seek a reaction and inviting the viewer to pause. His expression is quizzical, as he replies that the meaning of the flowering branch he carries is ‘Joy of the heart, pleasure in love’. \textit{Iuventus} is the time of life that was seen as the ‘perfect age’, related to Aristotle’s \textit{acme}, Isidore’s \textit{juventus}, and the Middle English \textit{manhood} or \textit{ful age} - the time when a man is in

\textsuperscript{194} All other surviving inscriptions in the palazzo are in Latin or Italian.

\textsuperscript{195} For example, \textit{Histoire Ancienne Jusqu’à César}, the \textit{Roman de Troie}, and \textit{Faits des Romains}. Arthurian romance in French, known in Italy, included the \textit{Prophecies de Merlin}, \textit{Lancelot} and \textit{Tristan}. Cornish, A. (2011) \textit{Vernacular Translation in Dante’s Italy: Illiterate Literature}, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp.76-78.

his prime, suited for marriage and the fathering of children.\textsuperscript{197} According to Dante, this is the period of ‘maturity’ when the ‘noble nature...is strong, self-restrained, loving, courteous, and honest’.\textsuperscript{198} Forty, the age attached to this figure, is in fact quite old as the age for \textit{juventus}, which was more commonly characterised as falling in the late twenties to early thirties, but the description could also apply to older men, especially if they were unmarried or had not yet fathered children.\textsuperscript{199} In any case, this pivotal figure, placed between the promise of the young and the declining powers of the old, anchors the scheme in the present through his direct engagement with the viewer. He calls attention to the continuity of the generations and, subtly, to the dynastic possibilities for the Trinci.

In contrast to the Nine Worthies opposite, it is the gentler aspects of courtly male identity that are celebrated in these first four images of the Ages of Man; they call to mind the light-hearted, highly decorative courtly decorations that were being commissioned in other élite dwellings at exactly this period, as mentioned in the Introduction. As Ruth Karras comments, in this milieu,

\begin{quote}
 military prowess [...] was far from the only important feature of knightly masculinity. In the later Middle Ages, it was in constant tension with another ideal, that of gentility and courtliness. The achievement of manhood depended on mastering the sometimes conflicting, sometimes complementary ideals.\textsuperscript{200}
\end{quote}

The subject matter of these decorations was also popular in courtly environments on tapestries, manuscripts, and precious luxury objects such as ivory caskets, based on the idealised code of behaviour that spread in poetry and prose romances from France throughout Europe. For the Trinci, whose rise to power was based on sometimes brutal warfare and pragmatic politics rather than on inherited title, these associations create a nobler, more genteel image. They suggest the possibility of time for refined leisure pursuits and create a nostalgic picture of an imagined past. They also carry resonances of more established courts of sovereign rulers in northern Europe, especially the Burgundian court, which had already adopted and developed this culture to a highly sophisticated level. The confident style of such courts must have seemed attractive to the Trinci, even as they realized that their hegemony was not yet so well established.

From here, the figures move onwards through the aging process (Figs.2.12-2.15). The presentation of the last three images is tied to the central one and the first three by the composition – the angels above, the trees and foliage behind - and by the continuing questions and answers. Although these figures contrast with the first four, the perception


\textsuperscript{198} Dante divides life into four stages rather than seven, comparing them to the seasons of the year. Adolescence lasts until the age of twenty-five; maturity follows; then old age; finally, senility. Dante (2018[1304-1307]) \textit{Il Convivio} (ed. and trans. A. Frisardi), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, IV, 26.


of old age here is not as negative as might be expected. The trees in the background still flourish; indeed, behind the last figure but one, who identifies his activity as giving alms, the branches are, symbolically, heavy with fruit and green leaves. Despite each figure being clearly older than the last, each has a sense of purpose. Their facial expressions are serene, and although the second to last walks with crutches, in line with iconographic tradition, he does not display sickness or pain.

This presentation in the Palazzo Trinci is unusual in rejecting the frequently negative conventions of courtly art and literature, which often saw old age in terms of failing sexual power, with elderly (wealthy) husbands shown as obstacles to the fulfilment of true love between young wife and knightly suitor, or as ridiculous cuckold (Figs.2.41,2.42). Indeed, in the Roman de la Rose, Old Age was even represented as one of ten vices, decorating the outside of the Jardin de Deduit, excluded from the world of love within (Fig.2.43). Even Aristotle could be presented as an old man humiliated by desire for a younger woman (Fig.2.44). This stereotype of old age is also satirised in Saluzzo: in an incident from the story of Alexander, his elderly followers rush to bathe in the ‘Fountain of Youth’ (Fig.2.45). Shulamith Shahar argues, however, that in the everyday world of the late Middle Ages, as now, perceptions of old age were not confined to one version. Very old people were often characterised by their ‘irascibility, melancholy, miserliness[...]and a rejection of all things new’, and in the absence of medical interventions, the ailments of old age were often a source of dismay, only relieved by the prospect of an afterlife free from suffering. Certainly, in a multi-generational environment such as the Palazzo Trinci there would have been experience of various realities, and as Shahar also shows, the awareness of the degeneration of physical and mental faculties was balanced by the idea that age could bring valuable wisdom and serenity.

The images in the Palazzo Trinci evoke this more nuanced version of old age, depicting a dignified and positive process, worthy of respect, even if tinged with regret. Besides the possible source of the psalter referred to earlier, this chapter suggests that it seems likely that the artists concerned may have drawn on another tradition from ecclesiastical art to help them characterise these figures in a manner appropriate to the aims of the Trinci. As mentioned earlier, there was a long association of a broader grouping of Three Ages of Man with the Three Magi. In this context the ages were Youth (represented by Balthasar); Maturity (Caspar); and Old Age (Melchior). Versions of The Adoration of the Magi, such as Giotto’s and others’ (Figs.2.46-2.50), show figures of youth and maturity with a similarly

---


202 The story behind the image is that the elderly Aristotle advised his pupil, Alexander, against the attractions of Phyllis, only to become captivated by her himself, allowing her to ride him like a horse. The humiliating spectacle was observed by Alexander.


restrained and courtly bearing to the figures in Foligno (Figs.2.9, 2.10). The depiction of the oldest, Melchior, is frequently very similar to that of Decrepitas in Foligno (Fig.2.14). Always closest to Christ, he is often depicted as a venerable, white-haired figure, gazing upwards in contemplation and welcome. This tradition is reflected in the presentation here on the bridge and was doubtless part of the repertoire of the artists involved in Foligno. The subject of the Magi was, of course, most splendidly realised in Gentile da Fabriano’s later Adoration of the Magi which employs the same tropes (Fig.2.51). These religious associations could only be welcome for the Trinci, and they are reinforced by the proximity of the bridge to the cathedral.

The positive conception of old age also owes much to the influence of the early humanist thinking of men such as da Fiano and Frezzi who were present in Foligno - thinking that would have become increasingly relevant to the presentation of Ugolino as he grew older and adopted the role of elder statesman. This attitude drew on classical writers, especially Cicero’s de Senectute, which explored the consolations of old age. Cicero argued that a man’s qualities in this period of life were not determined inevitably by the aging process but were the product of his moral development in his younger years: ‘But as regards all such complaints, the blame rests with character, not with age’. Cicero ended his exposition of the positive aspects of old age by accepting the inevitability of death and finding consolation in a life well-lived:

Now the fruit of old age, as I have often said, is the memory of abundant blessings previously acquired[...]To me, indeed, the thought of this ‘ripeness’ for death is so pleasant, that the nearer I approach death the more I feel like one who is in sight of land at last and is about to anchor in his home port after a long voyage.

Petrarch expressed similar views in the De remediis utriusque fortune, the Secretum and the Seniles (letters written in old age). He did not, however, easily relinquish his involvement in worldly affairs, being loath to leave literary activity behind and still seeing himself as an active advisor and counsellor to younger men. The period of withdrawal from public activity and the adoption of the role of learned, wise counsellor is represented by the fifth figure, Senectus, in the Palazzo Trinci (Fig.2.12). His ‘question and answer’ have been lost, but he is identified here as sixty years old. He is richly dressed, in the Trinci colours, in a red robe with a green chaperon or hood. Seen in profile, his beard streaked with grey, he is less physically energetic, but his posture is upright as he sits at his desk,

---

205 Gentile’s painting dates from 1423, so is at least ten years later than the Palazzo Trinci Ages of Man, and there is no evidence that the Foligno frescoes are directly by his hand. However, his likely involvement in the decoration of the palace is acknowledged (see Introduction).


reading, book in hand. This is the point in life when accumulated learning and the experiences of life come together to produce wisdom. Sears comments: ‘The seven ages and the seven liberal arts are twin modes of approaching this desired state, by nature and through philosophy, by growing old and through study.’ 208 This thesis proposes that the idea of learning as an aspect of leadership is especially important in the Palazzo Trinci and was developed further in the Camera delle Rose (Chapters 5 and 6). In that larger, more public, space it is explored again, and a dialogue is created between the active life of a leader in his prime and the more withdrawn, contemplative life that he might begin to pursue as he passed on the baton of the signoria to his sons.

The next figure, Senilitas, has a greyer beard and a more deeply lined face than Senectus, but his expression is alert, if thoughtful (Fig.2.13). He is slightly stooped and walks with crutches. Exceptionally, he wears a plain, brown robe, almost like a monk’s habit, rather than the fashionable clothing of the other figures. This visual difference claims attention, suggesting a change in his mental state. In the final letter of the Seniles, addressed ‘To Posterity’ Petrarch looks back over his life, recording the achievements that give him cause for pride, his friendships, interests, and creative activity. He concludes, though, that the end of life is the time for repentance and reflection:

But a riper age brought me to my senses and taught me by experience the truth I had long before read in books, that youth and pleasure are vanity—nay, that the Author of all ages and times permits us miserable mortals, puffed up with emptiness, thus to wander about, until finally, coming to a tardy consciousness of our sins, we shall learn to know ourselves. 209

In the Palazzo Trinci, Senilitas personifies this period of reappraisal and penitence. His words ‘I gave alms’ single him out as seeking absolution through penitent action, but this is not only an act designed to ensure personal salvation. Katherine Jansen shows how individual acts of penitence were associated with wider reconciliation and peace-making. 210 This association with peace was especially important for the Trinci, at a time when Ugolino had at last brought a period of calm and stability to Foligno after many years of turbulence.

Dante uses Cicero’s image of a ship returning to port to describe the approach to the end of life. After defining the attributes of a good old age as prudence, justice, generosity and affability, he advises that in the final stages of life the wise man turns to God. He ‘blesses the journey he has made, because it has been straight and good, and without bitterness of

storm’ and recalls the virtuous actions of a life well lived.\textsuperscript{211} In the Palazzo Trinci, the words of the seventh, and final figure, Decrepitas, shows this serene acceptance of death: ‘Everything comes to an end except good deeds.’ His face is even more deeply lined, and the colour of his eyes has faded; but he wears a lively green robe with a red, fur-lined cloak and hat and appears at peace with himself (Figs.2.14,2.15). Seated squarely on a simple throne and gazing upwards with hand outstretched - just as Melchior does in depictions of the nativity, as he finally meets Christ - his lips form words as if in greeting.

In these last three images, then, a gradual shifting of focus from the material to the interior life is clearly depicted, with the physical activity of the younger figures turning to a more reflective mood. Senectus finds solace in the learning that can be used to offer good counsel. Senilitas expiates any errors in his past by penance and giving alms, after which Decrepitas can face death with equanimity, having lived life to the full. This chapter contends that the distinctive vision of old age in this section of the decorations on the bridge is very different from that in Saluzzo and in many illustrations to courtly texts, drawing instead on religious imagery and humanistic ideas. This presentation is clearly intended to present the Trinci in a serious light as thoughtful, reflective leaders, capable of ruling effectively and peacefully.

It is tempting, of course, to make direct links with specific members of the Trinci family, based on their likely ages at the time, and the repeated use of the Trinci colours suggests that the viewer is expected to think of the images as related to them. But even if it may have been possible at the time to identify individuals, more important is the suggestion of a way of life that the men of the family wished to be seen to espouse, connecting them with courtly pursuits in the first four ages, and with humanistic values in their advancing years. For a signoria eager to establish itself as a hereditary power, they also suggest the natural succession of one generation to another, emphasised by the centrality of Iuventus, whose main purpose in life is love, and by implication, procreation. Set alongside each other, they exist in an ‘eternal present’.\textsuperscript{212} Suspended in time, they create an awareness of temporal progress from one age to the next, which will continue as generations of the Trinci pass on the signoria of Foligno. The position of these images on the bridge - whose purpose is to enable physical progress from one space to another, but which also affords a place to pause and reflect - is entirely fitting.

Conclusion

The Seven Ages of Man are carefully fashioned here, then, to reflect the interests of the Trinci and their court. Although, initially, they appear to have little connection with the Nine Worthies opposite, this study makes the case, for the first time, that together they form a coherent whole, complementing and informing each other, and encapsulating notions that are explored further elsewhere in the larger public areas of the palazzo. The three youngest ‘ages’ embody the more light-hearted aspects of chivalric ideals, although

\textsuperscript{211} benedicite lo cammino che ha fatto, però che è stato diritto e buono, e senza amaritudine di tempesta. Dante (2018[1304-1307]) IV, 28.
\textsuperscript{212} Dove, M. (1986) p.98.
they remain completely decorous; the older characters provide an alternative model of maturity, drawn from early humanist thinking, and associated with peace-making rather than warfare. While viewers are invited to admire the familiar figures of the Worthies, and to associate their heroic feats with the military success of the Trinci, they are simultaneously offered an alternative ethos, prompting questions about the transitory nature of fame and worldly success, and combining hope for the future with nostalgia for a past golden time. These are questions that are taken up again in the Sala dei Giganti (Chapter 4).

A process of transition is apparent here on the bridge of the Palazzo Trinci and ideas are introduced that are developed more fully elsewhere in the palazzo. There are echoes of the chivalric tradition of interior decorations, found especially in castles in the north of Italy, showing that, to some extent, the Trinci shared the aspirations of others and the desire to emulate the confidence and sophistication of greater courts further north in Europe. There is also evidence of the more sober concerns of religious art and of early humanism. Elsewhere in the palazzo, as will be seen, the newer concerns of humanists often take precedence over chivalric traditions in the choice and presentation of subject matter. The two strands are not in conflict, however. They complement each other in creating an image of the Trinci that resolves some of the tensions inherent in their position, moving them away from the often-unpleasant realities of their immediate history. Instead, they are associated with an idealised version of the past, paired with an optimistic and serious-minded view of the future.

Many of the regular users of this bridge would have been members of the family and the household, to whom the physical act of crossing over and through it provided repeated reminders of the succession of the generations, and constant reinforcement of the position and aspirations of the Trinci. The potential of the bridge as a means of escape from treachery or insurrection remains; but as in similar, later structures, this purpose is overlaid with reinforcement of the strength and legitimacy of the signoria. Favoured guests in this protected and elevated space would have found it difficult to resist the self-reflection of the Trinci as cultured, thoughtful, and worthy leaders in peacetime – while still capable of expressing their power and protecting their position by force if necessary.

There remains the teasing image of the caged bird, hanging over the window between Scipio and Romulus (Fig.2.16). Does the bird have any significance, too, or is it simply a playful trompe l’oeil version of real pet birds kept in the palace, or even in cages hanging outside on the bridge, their song heard through the open windows? Earlier uses of this

---

213 This yearning for a lost past was frequently explored in Latin and later European poetry through the ‘ubi sunt’ motif. An early example of this theme is from Boethius: ‘Ubi nunc fidelis ossa Fabricii manent? Quid Brutus aut rigidius Cato?’ Where now lie the bones of faithful Fabricius? What of Brutus, or unyielding Cato?’ Boethius (1984[c.524CE]) De Consolatio Philosophae (ed. J.J. O’Donell), Bryn Mawr (PA), Bryn Mawr Latin Commentaries, bk.II, m.7, l.15–6. [Online]. Available at https://faculty.georgetown.edu/jod/boethius/jkok/list_t.htm (Accessed 13 November 2021).
motif were related to the Platonic symbolism of the soul trapped in the body; it also represented the voluntary enclosure of monastic life, and was frequently included in marginalia in psalters and other contemplative objects, symbolising ‘meditation, memory studies and the keeping of wisdom and knowledge’. An inspiration for this image in Foligno could be, as Galassi suggests, the decorations of the Pope’s bedchamber in Avignon, painted in 1337-1338. There, illusionistic cages (many empty, but some with birds) were painted on the walls, and actual birds hung in cages in the window recesses, creating what have been called ‘landscapes for private meditation’. Perhaps, this chapter suggests, here on the bridge the bird may be especially associated with the figure of Decrepitas, almost directly opposite, as he prepares for death and his soul’s escape from the body. But it also acts as a more general invitation to pause and contemplate the messages in the images. It seems appropriate that the bird is placed in the same space as the figure of Petrarch, whose use of the extended metaphor of the bird trapped in a cage, in the following lines from his Trionfo d’amore, uncannily captures the whole intense experience of being within the confines of the bridge:

We were enclosed within this dark and narrow cage, where my worn-out feathers and the former signs of my youth changed over time; and meanwhile, dreaming of liberty, my soul, impatient for escape, took consolation from thinking of things past. I was like snow that melts away in the sun, gazing at such great spirits confined here, like one beholding lengthy painted scenes, in brief time, who, as he moves forward, turns his eyes to look back.

215 Galassi, C (2001) p. 291. As mentioned earlier, da Fiano was employed by the papacy, and visited Avignon, as some of the artists may also have done.
217 In così tenebrosa e stretta gabbia/rinchiusi sommo, ove le penne usate/mutai per tempo e la mia prima lâbbia;/e 'ntanto, pur sognando libertate,/l'alma, che 'l gran desio sea pronta e leve,/consolai col veder le cose andate./Rimirando er'io fatto al sol di neve/tanti spiriti e si chiari in carcer tetro,/quasi lunga pittura in tempo breve,/ché 'l più va inanzi, e l'occhio torna a dietro. Petrarch (1350s) Trionfo d’amore, IV,157-166.
Chapter 3. The story of Ilia — foundation myth or investigation of virtue?

Introduction

If they put anything mythical into their works, they contain physical and natural secrets, which either pertain to moral philosophy or to the highest praises of virtue, to which they lead us through the examples of great men; or through the eloquence worthy of vices, which our understanding learns to detest through the examples of wicked men, and which strikes our minds and eyes in the sweetness of reading.218

Francesco da Fiano, *In difesa della poesia* (early 1400s).

As mentioned in the Introduction, and as the quotation above shows, humanists such as da Fiano were interested not simply in admiring the past, but in drawing lessons from it that could be applied to their own time, and that were compatible with Christian thinking. This chapter concerns decorations whose subject matter is the mythical story of the birth of Romulus and Remus and the foundation of Rome, set on the landing area at the top of the so-called gothic staircase (Figs.3.1,3.2).219 Existing literature argues that the purpose of these frescoes is to link the Trinci with ancient Roman and Trojan history, supporting the legitimacy and prestige of the *signoria*.220 Although this is certainly true, this chapter contends that the decorations also operate on another level, through an unusually inventive presentation that involves the viewer in the narrative and provides constant visual reminders of the Christian message. For example, this study identifies, for the first time, the similarity of the central image of Ilia with conventional representations of Christian martyrdom. Far from simply associating the present with an idealised past, the scheme encourages consideration of the nature of personal virtue, especially for powerful men. The focus of the composition on Ilia, rather than on Romulus and Remus, also raises the meaning of virtue for women. Through this process, the notion of a future *signoria* based on the rule of law and protection of the weak is subtly promoted — a clear example of the humanist *paideuma* at work.

A meeting-point

The frescoes showing the story of Ilia and the foundation of Rome are positioned around an area at the top of the ‘gothic’ staircase. To date, scholars have ignored the likely use of this space or the possible reasons for situating this choice of decorations here; this chapter is the first to draw on primary sources to engage with these questions. The existing literature calls the area *la loggia*, perhaps because the eighteenth-century historian, Ludovico Coltellini, referred to it in this way when he noted that ‘the *loggia* has the most

---


219 Often called the *loggia* in recent literature. A document from 1433 uses this name for the staircase, but describes the space as *sala*, not *loggia*. Nessi, S. (2006) p.161.

beautiful, moving, and lifelike pictures to recreate with the pen. But it is greatly damaged and has suffered a great deal. However, the space does not conform to conventional notions of a loggia as a roofed building - or part of a building - with open, colonnaded sides. It certainly differs from the large civic structures given that name, built at the end of the trecento. Examples such as the Loggia dei Lanzi in Florence, the Loggia dei Mercanti in Bologna or the Palazzo della Ragione in Padua, took the form of external, roofed, open-sided arcaded structures and were used for the administration of justice and civic ceremony. Equally, it has little in common with later loggie incorporated into summer villas such as those belonging to the Medici at Careggi or Fiesole, with open sides giving onto garden views, experienced as a leisured ‘mediating space’ between indoors and outdoors.

In fact, the space is effectively a large landing area (Figs.3.1,3.2). The structure of the building in this part of the Palazzo Trinci is complicated, arising from the adaptation and combination of earlier buildings, as described in Chapter 1. It seems no accident that the largest and most impressive rooms in the Palazzo Trinci, which would have held social gatherings, public audiences, or more private meetings with the signore, were at the top of the building. Visitors to the court faced a substantial climb before they reached this level: entering from the street through the heavy doors of the gateway, they walked through a large courtyard, past the ample provision for horses, men, and supplies. They then had to ascend an outside staircase to the main entrance to the palazzo, at first floor level. This in turn gave access to another ascent, up the architectural tour-de-force of the staircase with its unsettlingly illusionary decoration and its awe-inspiring views down to the well, glimpses sideways of other parts of the building, and upwards to the open sky (Figs.1.9-1.11). Arriving at the top, they would have emerged into the area which is the subject of this chapter (see plan, Figs.1.12,1.13). In the 1400s, it was open to the elements, and affected by weather, changing light, and sounds from outside or within the palazzo. Several doorways lead off the landing, offering glimpses into larger spaces and generating a sense of excitement at reaching the part of the building where the most important activities took place, and where the signore held court.

There was a choice of several spacious rooms around this landing area, including the Sala dei Giganti and the Camera delle Rose, all impressive in size but sufficiently adaptable to allow for large audiences, feasting, smaller meetings, or more private individual use. Since

---


223 The present outdoor staircase is a 1927 reconstruction. Lametti, L. (2001) p.76.

224 Many later palaces had a similar layout with access via a staircase to the largest spaces on the top floor. In the later Palazzo Medici in Florence, there were gardens in the ground level area, with benches where people could wait for access to the palace itself. Preyer, B. (1998) ‘Planning for visitors at Florentine palaces’, Renaissance Studies, vol.12, no.3, pp.357–374.
these rooms are interconnected, the cumulative effect could be exploited, or the order in which they were experienced manipulated. The landing also gives access to the chapel, which is situated on the other side of a door in one corner, up a small flight of steps.

There is space for perhaps a dozen people to gather here, before moving into one of the larger rooms, or entering the chapel. One record exists of a specific occasion when an area identifiable as this landing was used during the time of Corrado, Ugolino’s son. On 22nd July 1433 – about twenty years later than the decorations were executed - a notarial record was made that Corrado gave a solemn pledge to one Gianni di ser Berardo for a thousand florins. It was noted that this transaction took place in a space described as delle udienze – which translates as ‘for hearings’ or ‘audiences’. Its position is described as ‘in front of the Room of the Emperors, at the top of the gothic staircase’, which appears to have been the name used for the stairs at the time.225 The exchange was witnessed by a member of the Orsini family, and other local nobles who were frequent visitors to the Trinci court. By this date, then, the space was used for brief formal events of a legal nature, and perhaps as an area where the signore could listen to clients who had a case to plead or a request to make. This supports this chapter’s interpretation of the images as being concerned, among other issues, with the fair and just application of the law. This is a purpose that is also supported later by Alberti’s advice in De re aedificatoria on the layout of a princely palace:

\[
\text{Then before the innermost rooms should be an atrium or hall, where clients can await the chance to discuss business with their patrons and where the prince may sit on the tribunal and give judgement[...]} \]

Then there should be a meeting room, where the elders may gather to greet the prince and give their opinion when asked.

It seems likely, though, that the area’s transitional nature also made it readily adaptable to other purposes, such as Alberti also recommended. He attributed the idea to classical precedents, but he may well have seen it in operation in more recent buildings. He comments:

I find in Seneca that Graccus, followed by Livius Drusus, was the first not to grant everyone an audience at once, but to divide up the people, and receive some in private, some in company with others, and some en masse, thus distinguishing close friends from secondary acquaintances. If you are wealthy enough, you may prefer to have a number of different doors; these will enable you to dismiss your visitors in a different part from where you had earlier received them, and to exclude any whom you do not wish to receive, without causing offense.226

---

225 antistante la nota Sala degli Imperatori, a capo della scala gotica. The money was received by Gianni on behalf of Giacomo Trinci, Abbot of Sassovivo. It was to be paid to Menico da Narni, for the release of the Abbot, who was being held prisoner in Menico’s castle. A further forty ducats were sent by Corrado to Piergentile Varano, for the liberation of a certain Pellegrino, who was, in turn, being held hostage by the Abbot. Nessi comments that the exchange seems to have resolved an ancient hostility. Nessi, S. (2006) p.161.

This area probably operated, then, as a lobby or atrium to the larger rooms around it. Most visitors to the palazzo – certainly the important ones – would have arrived by the same route, so this landing was ideal for them to be greeted, ushered into another room for an audience, or to await directions. This would have been to some extent fortuitous for the Trinci, as the position and layout results from the adaptation of older buildings. However, the fact that this area was decorated in such detail and with such thought-provoking images suggests awareness of its potential as a place to welcome, control and influence visitors. The decorations take advantage of the chance to create a striking and memorable initial effect, while provoking deeper debate for anyone lingering there for any length of time. Visitors to the Palazzo Trinci would have included ambassadors from other cities, papal representatives, citizens and merchants of Foligno, messengers, clients and dependents of the Trinci, family members, servants – male and female, young and old. There would also have been frequent movement into and out of the chapel by members of the family, including women. Of all the decorative schemes in the palazzo, this one works on several different levels, as if the men who designed and executed it were aware that it would speak to people with a range of backgrounds and interests.

The transitional nature of this space is also exploited to create visual and conceptual links with the larger spaces to which it leads. For example, Romulus, an important participant in the foundation of Rome, shown here on the landing, has already made an appearance on the bridge (Fig.2.17), and was depicted again as one of the historical figures that line the walls of the Sala dei Giganti. The role of women, explored here through Ilia’s experience, is an important element, too, in the scheme in the Camera delle Rose (Figs.5.3,5.4,5.8). The emphasis on bearing witness to events, evident in the treatment of the soldiers in the images on this landing, is also found in the trompe l’oeuil figures on the balcony in the Sala dei Giganti (Figs.4.6-4.8), and in the women in the roundels in the Camera delle Rose (Figs.5.79-5.84). The placing of an antique stela in this space, and the small sculpture set into a niche in the wall, leads to further examination of the rest of the collection of antiquities.²²⁷ Some would have made literary connections, too: Ilia’s biography in Boccaccio’s de Mulieribus Claris would have called to mind Petrarch’s collection of male biographies in de Viris Illustribus, a likely source for the Sala dei Giganti. Those who moved through this area frequently would have discovered further links, gradually coming together from different media – architecture, fresco, text, sculpture – creating a mental network of interlacing impressions as they moved into the space and out again to other rooms.

However, the decorations here function as much more than a linking device. Firstly, they reflect the widespread desire of other powerful institutions to promote their legitimacy by creating a back-story with roots in the distant past. They also evince the early humanists’ fascination with the study of ancient myth and history. More than this, they show the humanists’ desire to draw lessons from pagan culture that were acceptable in Christian

terms – lessons that could contribute to the shaping of the signoria for the future. In this, the space is truly a ‘meeting-point’ not only physically, but ideologically. The next two sections of the chapter examine this proposal further.

Ancient origins
In his notebook, the local historian Coltellini recorded that at the top of the stairs, set into the wall to the right of the fresco scheme (the exact position is unclear) was an antique stela or carved stone memorial (Fig.3.3). The piece is still in the collection of antiquities in the Palazzo Trinci, although it has been removed from the wall. The original inscription on its lower half was erased and replaced with another, saying:

In the year of our Lord 1389, the year that Octavus X came to power, Ugolino Trinci, lord of this land and territory, set this in place. This house was restored by wonderful structural works, in the time starting with Urban VI, and ending with Gregory XII.

On the top half of the stela is a depiction of Cupid and Psyche. She holds a bird, while he feeds a dog with one hand and holds a cup, perhaps full of fruit, in the other. They are shown in a simplified, quasi-domestic scene, with a table set out as if for a feast – presumably their wedding. The text relates well to the themes of the frescoes, making a concrete statement of the connection of the Trinci with the past, in its use of the Latin language and ancient myth, and its recognition of the papacy. The use of the word domus (rather than palatium) meaning house, but also home, homeland and even ‘house’ in terms of ‘dynasty’ also demonstrates their will to establish themselves here in the future, reinforced by the symbolism of the marriage scene. Folin comments that domus was used in preference to palatium by signori at the time, firstly to show themselves as ‘close to the people’ and secondly because extended families often occupied several buildings rather than one unified structure – as was the case in Foligno.

Turning into the frescoed space (Figs.3.1,3.2), the visitor is faced by an arresting image of a beautiful woman, held by guards, and surrounded by soldiers (Fig.3.6). The artist has used a structural archway on the west wall to frame this image so that it holds the attention, and it is clearly intended to be central to the interpretation of the whole scheme. Around the woman are several small vignettes (Figs.3.8,3.9). Turning to the left, the south-facing wall has been used to show cut-away views of indoor scenes in architectural settings (Figs.3.4,3.5). Unfortunately, as mentioned above, some parts of these frescoes have

---

228 Coltellini, L. (1770-1790), p.10.
229 Mille trecentenis domini si iunexeris annis octaginta novem de Trincis extitit ipse. Tunc Ugolinus terre huic dominatus et arci Octavus decimus. Cum deinde relabitur annus miris structuris operum domus hec reparatur Urbanus sextus primo, Grego post duo denus.
This ties the building work on the palazzo to the period 1389-1407.
suffered considerable damage and the decorations on the right hand, north-facing wall, are almost completely lost. This is probably, at least in part, due to their being indirectly exposed to weather, as the area immediately at the top of the staircase was unroofed. However, those areas that are intact show vibrant colour, gilding and ornament, and in other places the under-drawing survives, enabling much of the content to be identified. On a smaller scale than the decorations of the other surviving public spaces, they are painted with great attention to detail, and placed at eye-level, encouraging close inspection on the part of the viewer. The artist’s ingenious use of the fabric of the building creates a sense that the events shown are happening within the same space as the viewer, and in real time.

Beneath the images, inscriptions are spaced in small oblong frames along a border at the top of the dado. Many of these are now missing, but fortunately they were transcribed by the local antiquarian, Ludovico Jacobilli, in the eighteenth century, before they were damaged.\(^{232}\) Caciorgna provides details of the inscriptions and identifies numerous possible written sources in earlier versions of the story.\(^{233}\) The words give at least some idea of the content of the lost areas of fresco, and for the surviving areas they create an additional dynamic, between words and images, for the literate viewer.

From these inscriptions, the scenes show the key foundation myth of Rome, focusing on the story of Ilia, mother of Romulus and Remus.\(^{234}\) This is the only remaining area in the palazzo where the decoration is based on a narrative rather than a set of separate but related images. There were several literary versions of the story, and the details varied considerably, depending on the context, and the writer’s purpose, although the central elements remain recognisable. These literary sources include classical writers such as Livy, Ovid, Plutarch and Dionysus of Halicarnassus.\(^{235}\) Early medieval writers such as Benvenuto da Imola and later writers, including Petrarch and most importantly, Boccaccio, in *de Mulieribus Claris* also wrote versions.\(^{236}\) The piecing together of these references and the drawing of comparisons between them would have afforded an enjoyable activity for some viewers: a way to show their erudition and a starting point for further thought and discussion.\(^{237}\)


\(^{234}\) Romulus, of course, appeared on the bridge, as mentioned in the previous chapter, and is also featured in the Sala dei Giganti (Chapter 4).


\(^{237}\) Classical mythology was the subject of serious study, as well as enjoyment. Boccaccio, for example, wrote an (unfinished) fifteen volume work, the *Genealogie Deorum Gentilium*. Each myth is recounted, then glossed and given natural, historical or moral meanings. Many other writers undertook similar, if more limited, projects. Chance, J. (2019) *Medieval Mythography*, vol.3, Eugene (OR), Wipf and Stock, pp.144-196.
In brief, the main events of the story of Ilia are as follows, although even these are changed or omitted in some versions. Ilia is more commonly known as Rhea Silvia. The use of the alternative name here alludes to the fact that her ancestor, Aeneas, came to Italy from Troy, also known as Ilium. Aeneas’ descendants, the Alban kings, ruled for four hundred years, the last being Numitor. Amulius, Numitor’s younger brother, plotted against him, killing Numitor’s son, Aegestus, and arranging for Ilia (Aegestus’ sister) to become a vestal virgin, rendering Numitor’s line extinct, and leaving himself (Amulius) as heir to the throne. For some reason, Numitor took no revenge, but decided to bide his time. Then, despite – or perhaps as part of – Amulius’ plan, Ilia became pregnant with twins, Romulus and Remus. Because she had broken her vestal vow of chastity, she was put to death. The twins were left by the river Tiber to die, but were suckled by a she-wolf, and survived, to be found by a shepherd and brought up by his wife. As young adults, after a series of adventures, the twins killed Amulius and restored Numitor to the throne of Alba. Having decided to build a city of their own, they disagreed about its position and appealed to an augury for a decision. Further dispute over the meaning of the augury resulted in Remus being killed, either by Romulus or a supporter, and Romulus built and ruled Rome.

In the Palazzo Trinci, the left-hand, south-facing wall shows the conception and birth of the twins (Figs.3.4,3.5). The west-facing wall shows Ilia’s execution within a central arch, surrounded by episodes from the childhood of the two boys (Fig.3.6). Although the inscriptions show that the right-hand, north-facing wall depicted the twins’ subsequent history and the actual foundation of Rome, only one small area at the top of this wall survives, showing the eventual re-crowning of Numitor. Initially, this choice of story seems straightforward, placing the ancient and glorious history of Rome in parallel with Foligno, the city of the Trinci. In support of this interpretation, Galassi points to the use of the name ‘Ilia’ as evidence not only of humanist interest in the etymology of proper names but as a confirmation of the ‘romanising’ culture of the Trinci and the humanists present in their court.

No doubt, this idea would have been understood and welcomed by viewers from Foligno, already familiar with other cities’ adoption of ancient roots as a way of establishing their credentials. This cultural phenomenon had existed for five hundred years by the thirteenth century, when the visual symbolism associated with the mythology was increasingly deployed, as the use of civic propaganda developed. Not only did these traditions increase cities’ prestige in the eyes of outsiders, but they also bolstered the authority of those in power and created focal points for communal rituals that could be regularly celebrated and which, hopefully, cemented social bonds.

Some cities sought to draw direct parallels with ancient Rome, seeing themselves as its latter-day successor: for example, Siena’s fabled founders, Senius and Aschius, were barely

---

distinguishable from Rome’s Romulus and Remus.\textsuperscript{241} According to legend, they were the twin sons of Remus, banished from Rome by their jealous uncle, Romulus, and coincidentally - nourished by a wolf. The image of the suckling animal was ubiquitous in both cities, neatly combining the dual qualities of ferocity and nurture, and maintaining constant reference to a noble past.\textsuperscript{242} Others looked to pre-date their foundation to Rome’s, linking themselves with Troy. Padua, for example, was said to have been founded in the twelfth century BCE by the Trojan prince Antenor, who was believed to have led the Veneti people to Italy. In 1274, a local scholar, Lovato dei Lovati, discovered an ancient coffin, which was declared to contain Antenor’s remains.\textsuperscript{243} The coffin was kept encased in a stone sarcophagus, and Lovato composed a Latin epigram to be inscribed upon it, celebrating the city’s Trojan connections. Placed in a square in the centre of Padua, it became emblematic of the city’s history, a constant reminder of connections with a distant, special, past, that even pre-dated Rome.

Perugia’s mythical founder, Eulistes, was also supposedly of Trojan descent. He was celebrated in a lengthy poem in which the thirteenth-century writer, Bonifacio, drew parallels with the founding of Rome, while differentiating Perugia by deriving its name from \textit{per ursa} – a reference to a story about Eulistes hunting a female bear.\textsuperscript{244} Perugia also referenced the story of Ilia, including a depiction of her on the \textit{Fontana Maggiore}. This differentiation from Rome became increasingly important for some cities, as they asserted their own power. The Florentines, for example, also searched for an identity rooted in history, but traced the city’s origins back to the early Etruscans.\textsuperscript{245} However, although Leonardo Bruni, writing in the early 1400s, valued this heritage, he named the Roman, Sulla, as the founder of Florence.\textsuperscript{246} Although emulation of Rome was often complicated by the desire for distinctiveness, celebration of ties with the past – real or imagined - created a sense of continuity, giving additional legitimacy to communal governments and a unifying sense of pride in a shared heritage to their citizens. It certainly seems likely that the citizens of Foligno would have appreciated their own city being associated with ancient origins.

\textsuperscript{241} This remained important to Siena; several literary versions were produced in the second half of the 15\textsuperscript{th}c. Nevola, F. (2007) \textit{Siena: constructing the Renaissance city}, New Haven (CT), Yale University Press, pp.147-150.
\textsuperscript{242} In Rome, the ‘Capitoline wolf’, especially, was well-known. Thought at the time to be a classical sculpture, recent science dates it as 11\textsuperscript{th}-12\textsuperscript{th}c. The twins were added in the late 15\textsuperscript{th}c.
\textsuperscript{244} This literary invention did not have the hold on the popular consciousness achieved by ancient myth, however. The image of the bear does not appear in Perugian public works, and Eulistes is not readily identifiable when he is shown. Benes, C.E. (2011) p.127.
Indeed, it is surprising that there is no evidence of this having happened earlier, as the practice was not the prerogative of larger cities.247

These ancient connections were not only valued by civic authorities. Individual signori also saw the value of association with the past and adopted approaches that centred more on their own family’s genealogy and exploits. For example, Giovanni Conversini’s *Familie Carrariensis natio*, published in 1404, created a fictionalised history for the Carrara in Padua, valorising the power of the signorial family. Conversini set the Carrara’s origins in a chivalric world of courtly love, children lost and re-united with their parents, and battles fought and won. Unfortunately, the Carrara fell from power too soon for this image to be developed, so it is impossible to know if it would have enhanced their reputation in the long term.

More successful was the Este’s adoption of Hercules as their exemplar. The hero’s clear physical characterisation and his story’s central theme of the choice between good and evil, were easily exploited visually. In the late fourteenth century the Este decorated part of their Palazzo Paradiso in Ferrara with frescoes of Hercules’ exploits in the *Camera d’Ercole*.248 By 1431 the connection was so well established that Niccolò d’Este named his son Ercole; works of art and literature featuring Hercules were frequently commissioned by the family, and the connection promoted in coinage. Eventually, in the mid-sixteenth century, the lavish estate of the Villa d’Este featured, among other classically-themed projects, another *Camera d’Ercole*, and a water garden based around the theme of Hercules and the Garden of the Hesperides.249 In the mid-sixteenth century Cinzio Giraldi expanded his genealogy of the Este family to include Hercules, commenting ‘I can scarcely be persuaded that it (the family) had its origin from the ordinary beginnings of mortals[…]wherefore I come generally to the conclusion that I believe that the Este race[…]is descended from ancient Hercules.’250

Federico Frezzi’s *Quadriregio*, mentioned in the Introduction, briefly linked the Trinci with the city of Troy, within its wider spiritual purpose. Frezzi did not relate specific events but placed Trincia (Ugolino’s late father) in the company of ancient heroes in the afterlife. He also gave a scholarly etymology of the Trinci name, carefully associating the Trinci with aspects of the landscape around Foligno.251 As for the city of Foligno, he made no attempt to create a complete foundation narrative of the kind mentioned above in relation to other cities, but focused, instead, on the unexplained involvement of Mars in its naming, supported again by etymology.

---

247 For example, Todi, also in Umbria, and Asti in the Po valley had similar traditions. Benes, C.E. (2011) p.147.
As is found in ancient papers, one of the grandsons, descended from Tros of Troy (also called Tros) came to that place to live, in that noble country where the Topino and the Timia flow: so great was the love he bore for that beautiful place[...]. He called the beautiful city ‘Flamminea’, just as proud Mars is called ‘the fiery one’[...]. The city’s name and position changed likewise; Flamminea became called Foligno[...]. From this Tros comes the worthy offspring of the Trojan Trinci, and there is the Trinci dwelling, where he still lives and reigns.  

In this way Frezzi created a generalised sense of destiny, centring on the Trojan roots of the Trinci and their relationship with Foligno, rather than on specific events. The decorations in this landing area build on Frezzi’s foundations, while also making links with Rome. One motivation for this was doubtless the desire of the Trinci – as papal vicars - to underline their loyalty to the pope. Allied to this was the delight of humanists such as da Fiano at the return of the papacy to Rome from Avignon, and the renewed possibility of restoring the city to its former glory. As Galassi points out, though, the use of the story of Romulus and Remus is problematic, when analysed in any detail. Indeed, the Romans themselves struggled with the moral questions raised by the latter part of the story, with Cicero wanting ‘to avoid entirely the contentious issue of Remus’ death.’ Galassi deduces from the fact that the inscriptions in the Palazzo Trinci do not mention the killing of Remus by Romulus that the event was omitted from the frescoes, concluding that the intention was to eliminate those episodes in the story that constituted negative models of family unity. She proposes that, instead, the purpose was to identify the Trinci more strongly with the Trojan figure of Ilia.

However, although the final fratricide can certainly be read as a ‘destabilising model’ that was better omitted for the sake of the Trinci’s image as a secure and durable dynasty, this chapter contends that the earlier parts of the myth, which are shown, are in fact equally unsettling: Amulius’ killing of his nephew, Aegestus, and his planned elimination of Ilia by forcing her to become a vestal are actions that equally violate the demands of family loyalty. Indeed, whichever episode is prioritised, in its details, the foundation myth of Rome is frequently at odds with the image of a peaceful and legitimate signoria that the Trinci hoped to promote. As Cristina Mazzoni says, the whole story is ‘a tale made of transgression upon transgression’.

---

252 Come si trova nell’antiche carte,/di Tros di Troia un suo nepote scese,/detto anche Tros e venne in quella parte/ad abitare in quel nobil paese,/ove il Topino e la Timia corre:/tanto l’amor di quel bel loco il prese[...]/Flamminea chiamò la cittá bella,/ché ‘flammeo’ è chiamato Marte fèro;/cosí l’astrologia ancor l’appella[...]/La città il nome e ‘l loco mutò anco;/ e fo Flamminea Foligno nomata[...]/Da questo Tros vien la progenie degna/de’ troian Trinci, ed indi è casa Trincia,/che anco ivi dimora ed ivi regna.

Federico Frezzi (1839[1400]) Libro 1, XVIII, 79-109.


255 Galassi, C. (2001) p.277. However, the inscriptions did not necessarily match the images exactly.

The decision to use this subject matter is complicated, then, by the reservations held for centuries about its moral implications. The presentation in the Palazzo Trinci is interwoven with humanist interests and references to other artistic traditions, laying it open to many interpretations, and moving it beyond being a piece of propaganda about the historical roots of the Trinci family or the city of Foligno. The next section of this chapter demonstrates, for the first time, that through the careful selection of episodes, and through their unusual presentation, these decorations create an unexpected version of the story and raise questions that are highly relevant to the political and moral debates of the quattrocento.

Shaping a future identity
The decorations in this area do indeed associate the Trinci, and Foligno, with the glories of the classical world. However, this association is not straightforward. The focus on Ilia’s death, and the moral questions raised by the actions of the male characters, suggests that the signoria and its advisers were still searching for a clear future identity, to support their legitimacy in the city and in the wider political world. The choice and interpretation of episodes in the story leads to the conclusion that the exercise of power needs to be grounded in virtuous behaviour rather than force; ancestral connections are not enough. Visual references to depictions of female sainthood overlay the original myth with Christian connotations, encouraging examination of the morality of the protagonists’ actions in contemporary terms. The artist has reinforced this response by creating a dramatic narrative that engages viewers emotionally, as well as intellectually.

Despite long-standing anxieties about the content of pagan mythology, there was a growing desire to justify its study, and its use as a means of communicating moral truth. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, in his *Contra ridiculos oblocutores et fellitos detractores poetarum*, Francesco da Fiano argued that ancient writers could offer worthwhile lessons to contemporary readers even though they lived in a time before the revelation of divine truth through Christ.²⁵⁷ Petrarch, Boccaccio and Salutati, among others, also engaged in this discussion. In Boccaccio’s view:

> These ancient poets, despite not being Christians, were gifted with such prudence that no creation of human genius was ever veiled in fiction more cleverly[...]This makes it clear that they were imbued with the great worldly wisdom their peevish detractors very frequently lack. Once the outer layer is peeled back for you, beyond the artifice of the poets who fashioned them and the relationships and affinities of the meaningless gods, you will see aspects of nature, once shrouded in mystery...²⁵⁸

²⁵⁷ Paolo Cherchi comments that for Boccaccio ‘The best proof we can offer is to see myths as poetry, that is, they have coherence as stories at the literary level and a credible meaning in their context’. Cherchi, P. (2018) ‘The Inventors of Things in Boccaccio’s De Genealogia Deorum Gentilium,’ in Candido, I. (ed.) *Petrarch and Boccaccio: The Unity of Knowledge in the Pre-Modern World*, Berlin, De Gruyter, pp.244–269.

Federico Frezzi put these arguments into practice in the *Quadriregio*, setting his lengthy exposition of the protagonist’s moral and spiritual quest in a mythical, pagan, world – with Ugolino himself cast as the guide. Daniele Piccini argues:

*Il Quadriregio* looks to the health of the soul, to the elevation of man to his worth and to the positivity of human experience, which, however, requires sacrifice to be made, requires attention, requires the capacity to avoid evil and to choose good.²⁵⁹

In this cycle of decorations, the artist’s visual Christianising of the pagan myth privileges unusual aspects of the story and makes for unexpected presentation, reflecting the desire of early humanists to interpret ancient stories afresh, in terms of Christian moral and spiritual values. In this way, the decorations raise questions and prompt discussion about issues that were of deep concern to early humanism, and of great importance in the shaping of the *signoria* for the future.

For viewers seeking guidance on identifying or interpreting events, the accompanying inscriptions would be the first place to turn; but the inscriptions are very condensed, sometimes almost to the point of being cryptic. However, the fact that they are in Italian – unlike the use of French on the bridge, or Latin in the Camera delle Rose - makes them more accessible, at least to those who were literate. Rather than being didactic and spelling out specific messages, they appear intended to lead viewers through the narrative by reminding them of the key episodes, which would already have been familiar to many. Instead of appealing to the intellect, the use of emotive words and phrases such as ‘inflamed with desire’, ‘disgrace’, ‘shame’, ‘pity’ and ‘tenderness’ adds to the sense of involvement in an unfolding drama and encourages a moralising response. The first two inscriptions, which relate to the images on the left-hand, south-facing wall, assume an existing knowledge of the backstory and plunge straight into the central action, where despite - or perhaps as part of - Amulius’ plan, Ilia conceived and became pregnant with twins. They state:

> Among the vestal virgins, one, called Ilia, was born from King Numitor. She conceived the founders of Mother Rome, by Mars, who was inflamed with desire.²⁶₀

---


Then, made pregnant with two sons, she fled for shame at this terrible disgrace. With
great pain and grief, she asked for them to be put in a mountainous place, at night-
time.\textsuperscript{261}

The next three inscriptions, on the west-facing wall read:

Out of pity, Romulus and Remus were placed by the river, given up to fate, where for
some days they were nourished by a she-wolf, in the same way as a human.

This is how we read in history: Ilia, after the birth, was buried alive in such a way that
took away her life, so that the strict law would be observed.

They (Romulus and Remus) were carried to the shepherds’ country by Faustolo.
There, the two children were given to Accha Laurenza, his wife, by whom, through
her great tenderness, they were brought up to adulthood.\textsuperscript{262}

The remaining four inscriptions, recorded by Jacobilli, summarise the actions of the twins
in adulthood. These would have been shown on the right-hand, north-facing wall, but are
now almost completely lost:

Romulus and Remus grew up as shepherds, gathering round themselves similar
people, and when each one became strong, each one did foolish things.

Romulus and Remus, with burning desire, each supported by a group of shepherds,
entered Alba and deposed their Uncle Amulio and took his life.

Each one suggested building the city that would be so magnificent and spacious, in
the way that pleased him, and it was decided that the one by Romulus would be
chosen.

Over there you see how the glorious and powerful mother city is surrounded by walls –
she who makes other peoples subject and so strikes fear into all the world.\textsuperscript{263}

The one small area of decoration remaining, at the top of the right-hand wall, shows
Romulus and Remus returning the crown of Alba to their grandfather, King Numitor,

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Gravida fatta poi in doi figlioli/Per infamia fugire del grave incest/Command ache sien posti in loco
\footnote{Per pietà son posti presso al fiume/Romolo e Remo, alla fortuna dati,/Dove più giorni foron
niutriebati/Da una lupa per human costume.
Si chome nella historia se legge,/Ylya dopo el parto è sepellita/Viva in tal modo che priva de vita/Per
observarse la severa legge.
Per Faustolo regio pastore furon portati/Li dui infanti ad Accha Laurenza/Sua donna qual, per sua gran
\footnote{Surgon come pastori Romolo e Remo/Tirando dietro a se simile gente/Et, poi che fatti son ciascun
posente,/Feceono alcuno de soe robbe scemo.
Romolo e Remo colla voglia ardita,/Con turma de pastori ciascuno armato,/Intraro in Alba et levaron de
stato/Avuncho Amulio et tolserli la vita.
Per haver la ciptade edificata,/La quale sia magnifica e capace,/Ciascun consiglia, si come li piace,/Et ch’ella
sta da Romoi nominata.
Quivi vedete si come e mura,/L’alma ciptà gloriosa e possente/Qual fece tributorie l’altre gente/E quasi a
\end{footnotes}
although this is not referred to in the inscriptions – a strange disparity perhaps intended to encourage the viewer to question further.

In the surviving small images, the viewer follows Ilia, rather than Romulus and Remus, and the larger image of her execution is placed centrally, within a framing archway. Clearly, the part that is now lost, which depicted events after her death, would have been predominantly male in its subject matter. However, even if it were still in place, the experience of the female protagonist in the first part of the scheme would dominate our response, partly because of its position, but also because of its powerful emotional appeal. In quattrocento Italy, as now, there was ongoing debate about the nature of women and their role in society, a debate known at the time as la questione della donna – the ‘woman question’. Attitudes to women were sometimes expressed in extreme terms of accusation or defence. Although much of this debate was articulated by men, it also, of course, engaged women, even if their views were rarely expressed publicly. So, it is important to acknowledge that the presentation of Ilia would have elicited responses from both sexes that were in many ways different from those of the modern viewer, coloured as they were by contemporary experiences, customs, anxieties and attitudes that had grown up over centuries.

The narrative begins from the left, with a depiction of Ilia and other vestal virgins at prayer (Fig.3.4). The vestals kneel devoutly in a building that is more like a Christian church than a pagan temple. Seen through the cut-away ‘fourth wall’, the space of the narrative extends into the space of the viewer. It seems no accident that this image is placed next to the door of the chapel, and indeed, the chapel doorway has the same arched form as the arches in the fresco. The architecture within the image is a fusion of different ecclesiastical styles, with Gothic ribbed vaulting above the altar and Romanesque arches with Corinthian columns to each side. Glimpsed above are external domes, closely reminiscent of the domes on the Basilica di Sant’Antonio in Padua, and suggesting, too, the dome of Foligno Cathedral close by. The vestals, all young and attractive, are dressed in the style of Ugolino’s

---

264 Classical writers such as Aristotle - men in a patriarchal society - held views that would now be considered misogynistic, arising from the idea of the male as the ‘norm’ and women as physically, and hence intellectually inferior. Early church fathers such as Tertullian, Cyprian, Jerome and Augustine continued to characterise women as innately inferior to men, supporting this view from the book of Genesis, where Eve was created after Adam by God, and where she was shown as responsible for the Fall, through her weakness and gullibility. The New Testament concept of the Virgin birth contributed to the perception of sexual activity as unclean. Many examples of writing from this period envisage women as incomplete versions of man, weak-minded and licentious. Next to the ideal of virginity, marriage was the most acceptable state, with the wife obedient to, and guided by, her husband, and her sexual nature purposed to procreation. However, even at this time, attitudes were ambivalent, and women could also be idealised and thought of as inspirational, honoured for their virtue and 'exemplars of Christian devotion' (Wood, H. (2017) ‘Feminists and their Perspectives on the Church Fathers’ Beliefs Regarding Women: an Inquiry’, Verbum et Ecclesia, vol.38, no.1 [Online]. Available at https://verbumeteclesiae.org.za/index.php/ve/article/view/1692/3078 (Accessed 15 November 2021).

265 Most of these works were written by men, although a few surviving ‘pro-woman’ examples were commissioned by women. Courtly literature such as the Roman de la Rose reinforced many of these stereotypes. Cerrato, D. (2013) “Filoginia e querelle des femmes tra ducento e quattrocento in Italia”, in Gonzales de Sande E. and Gonzales de Sande M. (eds.) Las relaciones Italo-Espanolas: traduccion, lengua e litteratura, Seville, Arcibel Editores, pp.149-166.
court, and worship around an altar covered in a white cloth. At first sight the object upon the altar could even be a crucifix, although on closer examination it is more likely to be a small column with an image of Vesta – but the more obvious vestal flame is absent. The whole composition associates the young women with an ideal of *quattrocento* female piety rather than attempting to place them in their original historical context, making them relevant for the contemporary viewer. This was also frequently the approach in the depiction of biblical stories, in ecclesiastical settings, where events were made immediate using contemporary dress and settings. This is reinforced by the blending of the actual architecture of the building with the faux architecture in the frescoes, aligning and integrating past and present, an example of meta-painting that simultaneously reminds us of the painters’ invention and draws us into the fictional world of the images.

Moving to the right, Ilia is shown next, meeting with a man, named below as Mars (Fig.3.4). One early literary source, Dionysus, suggests three possible identities for the father of the twins: a secret lover, or Amulius himself, or the god Mars. Livy proposes that by blaming a god, Ilia made her position less shameful. Galassi argues that the choice of the version of the story where Mars is the father of the twins is intended to reinforce the connection made by Frezzi between Mars and the naming of Foligno. She contrasts this with the later inscription that refers to Ilia fleeing *‘for shame of the grave incest’* (*per infamia[...]del grave incèsto*). She interprets this as a reference literally to incest (that is, to the version of the story where Amulius, Ilia’s uncle, fathered the children) but offers no explanation for this apparent inconsistency.

In fact, it is possible to see Mars’ action, too, as *incèsto* – not the specific violation of family ties, but more generally ‘contaminated’ or ‘impure’. As Federico Frezzi’s alter ego in the *Quadriregio* comments, regarding an un-named character encountered in the Kingdom of the Vices:

That one there, is he who rapes, seduces or molests the holy virgins of the sacred institution that was once in Rome in the temple of Vesta. And this crime is called ‘sacrilege’: that something dedicated to God is made ugly or struggles and is treated with contempt.

---

266 Examples include Bartolo di Freddi’s frescoes of Old Testament scenes and Barna di Siena’s New Testament scenes, both in the *Collegiata Santa Maria Assunta*, San Gimignano, painted in the mid-fourteenth century. Benozzo Gozzoli’s *Procession of the Magi* in the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi in Florence (1459-60) includes actual portraits of members of the Medici family.


268 Dionysus of Halicarnassus, (1937[1st c.BCE]) paras.76-79.

269 Livy (1905[1st c.BCE]) bk.1, 4.


271 The Italian word used is *incèsto*, which could mean the more specific ‘incest’, i.e. intercourse with someone proscribed by law, such as a family member. It can also mean, more generally, *contaminato, impuro* – ‘contaminated, impure’. Treccani (2021).

272 *L’altro è chi stupra, losinga o molesta/le vergin sacre del santo collegio/che fu già in Roma nel tempio di Vesta./E questo male è detto ‘sacrilegio’;/ché quella cosa, ch’è dicata a Dio,/s’imbrutta o sforza e trattase in dispregio*. Federico Frezzi (1839[c.1400]) Libro 3, XV, 28-33.
However, the dynamics of this encounter remain hard to interpret. Although the immediate inscription identifies the male figure as Mars, he is dressed in the clothing of a contemporary nobleman – not obviously a god (although he could have disguised himself, as in some written versions). Ilia holds herself slightly away from him and looks up at his face; they have their hands on each other’s arms. Has she made an assignation with a human lover? Or is she the victim of an assault by an unknown man? Or is she truly - as we are led to believe by the inscription - the fateful object of divine desire? In any case, she appears modest and dignified, rather than seductive, with her hair neatly coiled – although she no longer wears a cloak as the vestals in the previous image do.

This episode in the story was frequently represented in classical reliefs and small medallions, and was clearly an important part of the whole myth to the Romans, although the exact nature of the meeting, and the identity of the male figure in these, too, is often doubtful. The image in the Palazzo Trinci is unlike many of these earlier representations, where Ilia was shown as seductive and sexual, sometimes naked (Fig.3.12) or where her rape and loss of virginity were symbolised by the empty water vessel beside her (Fig.3.13). In Boccaccio’s version of her story, Ilia is described as coming, ‘somehow, under the powerful influence of concupiscence’ rather than being the object of any divine intervention. In fact, Boccaccio frames the whole story as a discussion of the inadvisability of shutting young women away as nuns, against their will, when all their natural instincts drive them to seek fulfilment in love and childbearing. Here, the encounter certainly does not fit contemporary ideas of rape: it is not shown as obviously violent, nor does Ilia appear to resist. So perhaps a degree of acceptance on Ilia’s part is implied, if not active participation. If she accepts the situation, though, she does not appear to have invited it, either; there is certainly no suggestion, in the frescoes, of wantonness or desire on her part. This restrained presentation is borne out in the next episode, and, this chapter argues, it is central to the larger purpose of these images.

This chapter proposes that the next image raises further questions over the role of Ilia, especially through the ways in which the artist has drawn on another tradition, and through the interaction of image and words. The scene is set in a contemporary palazzo (Fig.3.5).

---


275 ‘An idle woman serves Venus...as consolation for the sadness in their hearts, their sole recourse is to plan how they can escape from their prison, or at least bring their lovers inside, trying to take secretly the sexual pleasure whose open enjoyment in marriage has been denied them.’ He lays the blame for this not on Ilia, though, but on the fact that she was forced into a life of chastity: ‘Let these fools realise, then[...]that girls must not be consecrated to God while they are ignorant or too young or under coercion.’ Boccaccio (2001[1361-2]) Famous Women (ed. and trans. V. Brown), Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Press, XLV, pp.92-94.

276 Trevor Dean defines rape in contemporary perceptions as follows: ‘The key element is the woman’s consent. In rape cases, she calls out, or tries to run to safety; if she does not, it is because her mouth is covered, or because she is pinned down’. Dean’s conclusions are based on study of court proceedings in Bologna and other cities. Dean, T. (2007) Crime and Justice in Late Medieval Italy, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p.140.
Although architecturally different from the Palazzo Trinci, it creates the impression of a similarly wealthy residence, immediately reminding viewers of the elite environment in which the Trinci themselves moved, and in which viewers find themselves. The lower half of the picture of this building is again cut away to remove the fourth wall, creating an extension of the imagined space into the real. The scene is set in a bedchamber where Ilia sits in a large, canopied bed, having just given birth. A curtain to the top right is folded back, adding to the viewer’s slightly voyeuristic sensation of witnessing a private, intimate event at first hand. Ilia is attended by a maid or midwife; her eyes are downcast, her hands clasped before her as if in prayer. Shockingly, two manservants take away her new-born babies, as she has requested (so the inscription says), to be left in the mountains by night. Again, Ilia’s behaviour here is not easy to read. It is difficult to know if she is intended to appear ashamed, or bereft, or calmly resigned in the knowledge that she has fulfilled her destiny. Is her request to have the children taken away an act of faith and self-sacrifice, or a heartless denial of maternal love and responsibility?

It is hard to escape the striking similarities between the composition of this image and that of numerous other earlier and contemporary birth scenes, both religious and secular. The many depictions of the birth of the Virgin, such as Giotto’s in the Scrovegni Chapel, Padua and images on deschi da parto, the painted wooden plates or trays given as a gift in celebration of elite births in Florence (Figs.3.14-3.17), all draw on the same pictorial conventions. The same use of the cut-away wall of the house allows the viewer to see Saint Anne or a noblewoman sitting up in bed, in the same position as Ilia. A midwife or maidservants are placed beyond the bed, and other attendants in the foreground, again in similar positions to those in the Foligno frescoes. There is normally an entrance to the left, often showing the outside world beyond it, and adding to the impression of the room as a special, secure space. However, the details are very different. In the conventional versions, the baby is being passed to the mother or gently bathed by the women, and the open door to the left allows visitors to offer gifts. By contrast, in the Foligno fresco, one of the babies is held by the standing male figure in the foreground, and the other is being handed out to a man through the doorway. The artist, here, has subverted a pictorial tradition that shows the lying-in period after birth as a ritualised, exclusively female event, with associations of piety and nurture: a time to celebrate the safe delivery of an heir before re-joining the public world. Although Ilia is sending her children away for their protection, the presence of the men tasked with removing them is transgressive and disturbing in this context.277 Again, here, the artist establishes a degree of sympathy for Ilia in the viewer, creating an impression of long-suffering and inviolability through her calm, dignified demeanour and

---

277 Elizabeth l’Estrange shows how depictions of birth scenes were subject to a range of interpretations through what she terms the ‘situational eye’ - for example, by women through actual experience of childbirth; by men through their desire for the birth of male heirs; or by the devout through contemplation of idealised images. l’Estrange, E. (2008) Holy Motherhood: Gender, Dynasty and Visual Culture in the Later Middle Ages, Manchester, Manchester University Press, pp.25-43.
through the familiar connection with Saint Anne, as well as with respectable well-to-do contemporary women.

This scene completes the first part of the story, which runs along the side wall to the left. In front of the viewer is the other surviving section of the decorations (Figs.3.6-3.11). A central arched area (Fig.3.6) is bordered above by scenes from the story of the childhood of Romulus and Remus (Figs.3.8,3.9). Although a substantial amount of paint has worn away from this area, much of the under-drawing can still be seen, giving a good idea of the content, even if the richness of colour and detail is lost. As far as can be discerned, it shows the discovery of the babies by Faustulus, the shepherd. They are shown propped up on a bank, safe and well, still tightly encased in their swaddling clothes (Fig.3.8). The scene where the shepherd brings them home to his wife, Acca Larentia, is also clear. In a visual reversal of the birth scene on the previous wall, she welcomes them in, with open arms, through the doorway of a simple house, seen again through a cut-away wall (Fig.3.9).

Scenes of rural life can also be discerned, with shepherds and sheep and luxuriant trees and plants, but there appears to be no depiction of the she-wolf, despite her being mentioned in the inscription. The focus in these remaining images is on the care given to the twin boys by ordinary people and on the abundance of the pastoral world – perhaps intended to show a natural order that transcends disruptive immediate events. The placing of these scenes around the central one cleverly creates two separate and contrasting time-schemes. In one, the twins progress slowly over many years on their destined path from childhood to manhood – unaware of their mother’s fate. An antique stone relief of Mercury with a goat – perhaps symbolising fertility - is inventively inserted into the wall here (Fig.3.7). The scale is slightly smaller than the figures in the fresco, but it fits comfortably into the rural scene, reminding the viewer of the pagan context. At the same time, it forms a visual link with the other antiquities displayed in the palazzo, creating an unsettling sense for the viewer of alternating between real and imagined space, past and present, myth and reality.

By contrast to this slow-moving rural idyll, the shocking central scene captures a single moment (Fig.3.10). Framed by the archway and at eye level, it draws the viewer into a sensational event that seems to be happening in real time. The immediacy of this scene is emphasised by its large size, relative to those around it, and the contemporary dress of Ilia and the other characters. They are shown not as pagan figures, distanced by time, but as players in up-to-date events, unfolding before our eyes. Ilia, about to suffer the legal penalty of being buried alive for breaking the vestal vow of chastity, leans back exhausted, her expression resigned, her arms held roughly by two men (possibly the same characters who took away her children). A large, deep grave is ready to receive her, the gravedigger standing as if to pull her in, his spade thrown down behind him. She is surrounded by a large troop of foot-soldiers to the right, and armed men on horseback to the left, with Amulius, holding a staff, appearing to direct their actions.

In some versions, Ilia ultimately married a river god and herself became a deity, but most early authors were unconcerned with her fate, focusing only on the twin boys and their

---

278 Sensi, L. (2001) p.223. The fact that this is in its original position also supports the suggestion that the wider collection of sculpture was made at the time of the Trinci.
founding of the city. However, the Palazzo Trinci presentation makes Boccaccio’s brief allusion to her punishment of being buried alive central to the whole scheme. In this image, the artist again departs from earlier representations of Ilia. It has not previously been suggested that here, in fact, she assumes characteristics that owe much to contemporary representations of the deaths of early female Christian saints - an impression reinforced by the earlier images, especially the first, where Ilia is shown in a contemporary religious setting. In depictions of female martyrdom, the fragile, feminine figure, at the mercy of a small group of powerful men, is a familiar trope. So too is the immediate threat of mutilation or execution, and the woman’s acceptance of her fate (Figs.3.18-3.20). We are all too aware that Amulius, who is now punishing her for breaking the vow of chastity, forced her against her will into the role of vestal in the first place, for his own ends. The presentation highlights Amulius’ abuse of power and his misuse of legal sanctions – although the inscription leaves the interpretation open, referring only to sevèra legge – ‘strict law’ - which invites further discussion about the framing of the law itself.

Ilia’s death has been interpreted as an example of an ancient archetype where female suffering results in male achievement: it is only through Ilia’s sacrifice that the destiny of Romulus and Remus - and ultimately of Rome itself - can be realised. But in Christian terms, she herself is also sanctified and elevated through her suffering, an interpretation that appears to have become widespread at this time especially in illustrated editions of Boccaccio’s de Mulieribus (Figs.3.21-3.23) no doubt following his comment there that her execution ‘ensured the reverence of posterity for a mother’s memory, which a tyrant had attempted to destroy on the grounds of sacred law.’

The viewer is also encouraged to examine the actions of Amulius and draw conclusions about his treatment of Ilia. The inscription draws attention to the observation of ‘strict law’. Not only does Amulius hope to usurp his brother’s right to the throne, by killing his immediate heir, he attempted to remove Ilia - and any further heirs - by forcing her into lifelong commitment to chastity against her will. He compounds this crime by using the law to justify cruel punishment when she breaks her vows through no fault of her own. In

---

280 The main definition of sevèro in modern Italian is che esercita la propria autorità o il proprio ufficio con rigore, senza indulgenza e senza debolezza - ‘exercising due authority or duty with rigour, without indulgence or weakness.’ Treccani (2021).
decreasing punishment that is to his personal advantage, his behaviour constitutes an object lesson in the misuse of power.

One aspect of the scene is initially hard to read. The presence of numerous soldiers is not always an element in contemporary images of martyrdom, and there is no obvious reason for them to be there on this occasion: the three men directly involved in restraining Ilia and digging her grave would be perfectly adequate to the task of her execution without any military support. The foot-soldiers on the right appear to be watching impassively from behind their wall of shields. The mounted noblemen on the left, dressed in fashionable headgear and decorative armour, converse with each other, while one points towards Ilia, but their expressions are inscrutable (Fig.3.24). Whatever the responses of the observers of Ilia’s execution may be, it seems that the act of bearing of witness to the scene is crucial. The viewers of the frescoes join in this process and in thinking about the implications of the events unfolding before their eyes. The fact that the participants are in contemporary dress and armour gives Ilia’s punishment extra immediacy and relevance.

Ludovico Coltellini, the eighteenth-century historian mentioned earlier, made a drawing of a detail of this scene. Coltellini’s drawing shows the soldiers on the left, and the pennant (Fig.3.25). On this is clearly written Fides Adiuvat: words that Coltellini identifies as the Trinci motto (‘Faith assists’). These words cannot be distinguished now, although there appear to be the remains of gold marks that could have been letters. If they did exist originally, they associate the Trinci more closely with the role of witness, distancing them from the act of tyranny, and placing them with the ordinary viewer who also observes the scene. Some of the faces of these figures on the left are highly individualised and show different ages; if they were portraits of members of the family, this would have heightened the experience. The use of the Christian motto also points to the conclusion that Ilia’s faith will support her in death and give her honour in posterity. The direct presence of the Trinci in this context connects them, too, with this act of faith, while also reinforcing their links with this ancient quasi-historical world.

It seems that this aspect of the image of Ilia’s death is another example of Paduan influence, which has not previously been noted. In Giusto de’ Menabuoi’s Crucifixion of St Philip, in the Cappella Conti (Figs.3.26,3.27) commissioned by the Carrara family, just as at Ilia’s execution, a group of carefully individualised horsemen, with ordinary men opposite, witness events. The similarities in composition between this scene and the death of Ilia in Foligno are striking. The Paduan inscription names two individuals. Robert Brennan argues that these relate to portraits within the group, although they have not been conclusively identified; a third is likely to be Francesco il Vecchio himself. The inclusion of portraits in narrative subjects in this way appears to have been new at the time. Brennan compares them to votive portraits of donors, suggesting that their presence at the martyrdom signifies ‘the moment when the sacred figure was most sympathetic to grant a request.’

---

284 Brennan, R. (2020) ‘Complicity and Self-awareness’ in Bokody, P. and Nagel, A. (eds.) Renaissance Metapainting, London, Harvey Miller, pp.31-59. Brennan also notes the metapainting in the Cappella Conti, where architectural features are used in a similar way to Foligno.
If the figures in Padua - and in Foligno - are indeed portraits, the desire of the Trinci to follow the model of the Carrara, and embed their identity within the scheme, appears to have allowed them to overlook the paradox posed by Ilia’s pagan origins.

From the inscriptions, the rest of the fresco, on the right-hand wall, showed the actions of Romulus and Remus as adults. It is impossible now to tell how far the tone of the inscriptions was mirrored in the images, but some of the wording is quite negative. The twins are described as doing ‘foolish things’ as they grew older, and their decision to return to Alba and kill Amulio is prompted by ‘burning desire’. However, in the inscriptions, their contest over the planning of Rome is played down and results in a harmonious compromise, while the killing of Remus is not mentioned at all. No doubt, the scenes on the third wall raised questions, too, about the moral character of Romulus and Remus. Again, Frezzi had a view, which may perhaps have been reflected here; in the Quadriregio, having outlined the achievements of Romulus and Remus, he lamented: ‘Oh fierce times! Oh, cruel people! The father of the Romans was killed by the Romans and hidden in the marshes...!’

Finally, although the inscriptions pay tribute to the ‘glorious and powerful mother city [...] surrounded by walls’ they end on a possibly pejorative description of Rome that emphasises the city’s power over others, through the rule of fear: ‘she, who makes other peoples subject, and so strikes fear into all the world’. This is a potentially delicate area, given the connection between the Trinci and the papacy. Whether these words contrasted with the images, or supported them straightforwardly, this part of the cycle would surely have added other layers of meaning to the earlier part of the narrative and led the viewer into further consideration of the personal qualities of the protagonists.

Conclusion
Contemporary viewers were clearly intended to relate these images to the Trinci and their signoria, placed as they are at the heart of the public area of the palazzo. The initial sensation of being enveloped in the world of Trojan and Roman history would have had a powerful immediate effect. Many visitors would have been reminded of the associations made earlier by Frezzi between the Trinci and Troy, and recalled similar symbolism employed by other prestigious cities and signori. The skill of the artist would have been apparent in the wonderfully detailed and richly coloured work, adding an impression of wealth and sophistication, and the learning and erudition of the court was displayed for all to see.

This chapter contends, though, that the treatment of the story here goes beyond these general connections, positive and important though they were. Although the associations with ancient origins reinforce an accepted model of legitimacy based on ancient birth-right, for a signore wishing to establish his family as a hereditary power, there was always a tension between this and the possibility of being perceived as tyrannical. For Ugolino, having achieved his position through military activity, it was doubly important to build the

285 Oh, secolo feroce! oh genti crude! / il padre de’ roman da’ roman poi / fu ucciso ed occultato in palude.... Federico Frezzi (1839[c.1400]) Libro 2, XVII, 82-85.
idea of a more stable society, where conflict could be resolved under the law and peaceful activity could flourish. For the humanists in Foligno, the pagan myth of Ilia offered an opportunity to promote the idea that true authority was based on the ruler’s virtue; that it ‘was legitimate[…]because it was just, moderate, frugal, merciful and respected the liberties and patrimonies of citizens.’\(^{286}\) The decorations demonstrate this underlying humanist agenda, through the questions they raise about the morality of the protagonists. The character of Amulius, as a leader, and as a man, is questioned, especially. In humanist terms, he appears to demonstrate the absence of three virtues essential for a ruler: Prudence, Justice and Temperance. Certainly, Frezzi’s attitude to the behaviour displayed in these images is clear. In the fourth realm of the *Quadriregio*, the poet encounters the first of the Virtues:

> The first lady is called Compassion or Gentleness; she roots out wrath from the heart that is too harsh[…]For this reason, she is called the ‘lady of *signori*,’ for without her, kingdoms and states would not be *signorie*, but would descend into frenzied disorder.\(^{287}\)

Frezzi’s advice is unequivocal: *signori* distance themselves from their subjects at their peril. They need to consider their own personal attitudes if they are to maintain their positions and the stability of the states they control.

The choice of a female protagonist introduces the issue of gender into an already complex set of images and raises questions about expectations of women in society at the time, and in the Trinci court. The ambiguities of the story cannot be ignored, and different views on the ‘woman question’ would have prompted a range of reactions to Ilia’s behaviour. It seems likely that the presentation of Ilia as long-suffering and pious would have appealed strongly to many male viewers, in its support of a *status quo* that was to their advantage. In this way it also enables an association of Costanza with Ilia as virtuous and selfless, and as a dynastic mother-figure. How far female viewers identified with, and wished to emulate, Ilia, is harder to determine, but most had little choice but to accept the wider message of these images and were conditioned by convention to do so: a stable society was in their interests, too. As discussed in the Introduction, Costanza herself could well have been better educated than most women, and she certainly seems to have been an influential figure in the family, and in Foligno; but she also fulfilled expectations. Her reputation rested on her piety and good works, and on her ability to conceive and bring up large numbers of children. It would be some time before a few women in courtly

---


287 *Clemenza e detta, over Mansuetudo/La prima donna[…]Però è detta donna de’signori,/Ché il reami e Stati senza lei/Non sarien signorie, ma eran furori.*

Federico Frezzi (1839[c.1400]) Libro 4, III, 124-135.
environments began to present themselves more assertively, and this potential threat to social order would remain highly unusual and problematic.\textsuperscript{288}

If the decorations offer any answers to the questions that they raise for the Trinci \textit{signoria}, then, it seems that they promote the protection of the vulnerable, and the exercise of justice tempered with mercy. The generous care of the shepherds for the children is contrasted with Amulius' brutal disregard for the welfare of anyone who stands in the way of his ambition, and his use of the law for his own ends, without compassion, seems especially culpable. The virtuous ruler will look beyond his own satisfaction to the welfare of all his subjects, especially the weakest: this is where true legitimacy lies. The many visual references to Christian imagery help to lead the viewer into thinking about the lessons that can be drawn from this archetypal pagan myth – just as da Fiano recommended in the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter. The viewer is also drawn by the composition of the scheme to consider the content of the work attentively and to move beyond the immediate valouring of the Trinci into debating these ideas. Firstly, the artist has created a desire to follow the narrative, from beginning to end. Combined with the inscriptions, the images engage their audience in an unfolding drama that, like a play, has a plot where actions lead to consequences and an inevitable outcome that transcends individual events. The presentation in the early parts of the story, especially, has much in common with the later staging of plays, where the audience sees into the action through the cut-away fourth wall, and is involved emotionally as well as intellectually.\textsuperscript{289} The selective choice of episodes from the well-known myth, and the unusual emphasis within them, would also have engaged the audience and aroused immediate discussion. Secondly, having followed events through to their conclusion, the viewer's eye returns to the central image of Ilia, framed by the arch, and then back to the surrounding episodes. In this, the process is reminiscent of the one encouraged by earlier devotional works, especially triptychs, where a large portrayal of a saint is surrounded by smaller depictions of scenes from their life. These arrangements were intended to aid the process of 'episodic contemplation', in which the worshipper moved slowly from scene to scene, meditating on each one and committing them to memory, giving serious attention to events depicted individually and to relationships within the overall scheme.\textsuperscript{290}

Finally, then, although these decorations raise many questions about roles within society, and do provoke debate, their purpose remains ultimately conservative – to maintain the


\textsuperscript{289} Female martyrs were the subject of \textit{sacre rappresentazioni}, or religious dramas, by the 1490's. Often with graphic performance of physical torments, their episodic structure is very similar to the Palazzo Trinci narrative. Unfortunately, there is no evidence for such plays being staged at this early date. Newbiggin, N. (2006) 'Secular and Religious Drama in the Middle Ages' in Farrell, J. and Puppa, P., \textit{A History of Italian Theatre}, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp.9-27.

continuity and stability implied by the immediate connections between the present and the distant past. Besides asserting the Trinci’s legitimacy in terms of their ancient heritage, these images also reinforce Christian values that, in the view of humanists such as da Fiano and Frezzi, were beneficial for the stability of the signoria and the welfare of its subjects. Fifty years earlier, in a public letter to Francesco da Carrara, lord of Padua, Petrarch had felt able to express the same objectives more directly to his patron. He generously praised Francesco’s past record and commented that all rulers ‘want to reign for a long time, and to lead their lives in security’. Later in the letter, he wrote:

This title really does belong to you[...] but you have to continue to strive to merit that dignity; it endures forever because of your noble efforts. I hope that - urged and encouraged - you will continue to rule as you have already ruled for a long time of your own accord.291

---

291 *Regnare enim diu volunt securique vita agere...Tibi verum hoc cognomen obtigerit...Ut id factis meritum evoque perpetuum sit, eniti debes: et facies spero, facies admonitus oratusque quod iampridem per te ipsum facis.*

Chapter 4. The Sala dei Giganti - the lessons of history

Introduction

Whoever you are who bends your steps to these glittering thresholds, here you will be able to gaze upon the venerable faces of the ancients, men of peace and war, whom glorious Rome once raised high as the heavens, and endowed with illustrious merit. If the high endeavours of such men please you, feed your eyes on the sight and scrutinize every detail.  

Inscription by door to Sala dei Giganti

This chapter is concerned with one of the largest spaces in the Palazzo Trinci, known as the Sala dei Giganti – the Hall of the Giants - because of the monumental stature of the figures from classical history depicted there (Figs 4.1-4.4). From the landing area discussed in Chapter 2, with its narrative showing the birth of Romulus and Remus and the founding of Rome, many visitors would have moved into this large, impressive room, decorated with its figures of famous Roman men. The presentation on the landing can be seen to initiate discussion about virtue and leadership. As visitors entered the Sala dei Giganti, they would have seen the words quoted above, in an inscription on the wall beside the doorway. Besides inviting them to admire and be impressed, it also, explicitly, tells them to interrogate the images carefully, suggesting that they look beyond the surface to divine the meanings they carry.

This chapter proposes that this large room was designed, above all, to create a sense of awe, formality, and occasion (Figs.4.1-4.4). The first section – ‘Creating an impression’ – discusses, for the first time, the possible uses of the space. The second section – ‘Sources of inspiration’ - expands on existing literature regarding precedents for this choice of subject matter in both princely and civic settings, demonstrating how the Trinci were not only placing themselves in the company of ‘venerable’ leaders from Roman history, but were also associating themselves with prestigious courts and civic authorities that had previously used similar iconography. The choice of Roman figures reinforces, again, the links with Rome, at a time when the relationship with the papacy was extremely important to the Trinci. Part three – ‘Lessons from the past’ – examines in detail the choice of


293 Sometimes the Sala degli Imperatori – Hall of the Leaders or Emperors.
individuals at the Palazzo Trinci, showing that they were not simple role models, but often flawed or even deeply reprehensible characters, whose actions were still frequently debated.

The chapter concludes that it would have been possible to respond to these images on two levels: firstly, with straightforward awe and admiration, and secondly as a starting point for debate about the nature of leadership. From Ugolino’s point of view, the room worked to associate him with power and status, reinforcing his authority, while also providing several different models that he could use, as appropriate, to justify his behaviour in different circumstances. At the same time, it demonstrated a proper awareness of the temporary nature of his success and reputation. For those involved in the choice of images and the wording of the inscriptions, the room provoked discussion about the nature of leadership, which – they would have hoped - might influence the future shape of the signoria.

Creating an impression
The Sala Dei Giganti was the largest room in the Palazzo Trinci at the time the decorations were made, and it still creates an overwhelming first impression, despite some later physical alterations, and some damage to the frescoes. Important visitors would enter from the landing (Chapter 2), with its lively, small-scale narrative, featuring Ilia, a female protagonist, and referencing Boccaccio’s series of ‘Illustrious Women’. A few might also have seen the ‘Nine Worthies’ on the bridge, which also make associations with heroes from the past, again on a much more intimate scale, and in the chivalric tradition. In striking contrast, in this room, a monumental gallery of static, larger-than-life male figures lines most of the right-hand wall from eye-level up to the ceiling. A similar array on the opposite wall would have completed the effect of being surrounded, although the scheme is now interrupted by large windows (Figs.4.3,4.4), installed in the early nineteenth century, regularising the external view of the palazzo from the main square (Fig.1.6).\textsuperscript{294} The position of the original windows - smaller and set higher in the wall - can still be seen (Figs.4.1,4.2), and there is also evidence of a small doorway that originally opened onto a balcony overlooking the main square of Foligno (Fig.1.5). The space can accommodate quite large numbers of people – at least a hundred, standing - and so would certainly have been suitable for public occasions, ceremonial events, formal meetings and audiences with Ugolino or his sons. Unfortunately, the inventory taken nearly fifty years later, during the use of the palazzo by the papacy, gives nothing away about its use, recording only two benches, a seat, a closet, and some window-fittings. There are, however, two surviving notarial records of actual events that took place there, dating from the time of Corrado, Ugolino’s son, little more than a decade after the decorations were made. Both ceremonies appear to have been sponsalia, where the exchange of dowries took place in advance of the actual wedding celebrations involving the bride and groom.\textsuperscript{295} This was an extremely

\textsuperscript{294} There is also a large fireplace in this wall, and two small doors that lead in from what is now the Sala del Sestus IV, but was originally a large open area.

\textsuperscript{295} The process began informally with impalmamento (handshake) then the sponsalia – followed by a civil matrimonium and finally nozze, the public celebration. Breach of the sponsalia agreement could lead to
important contractual commitment between families, carried out in public so that it was witnessed by others, and legally recorded. The status of the families in the first ceremony recorded is not clear. However, the second involved a close female relative of Corrado and took place before several notable guests. Corrado assigned a dowry of a thousand gold florins to the bride.

April 5th, 1428, in the Sala degli Imperatori, the magnificent and valorous gentleman Taliano di Antonio Furlano, married by proxy Elena Tomacelli.

Elena Tomacelli was Corrado’s niece, and Taliano was a captain of fortune in the pay of the Republic of Florence, so this match was highly advantageous to both parties: financially and socially for the groom, and politically and militarily for Corrado. The event would have required a high degree of formality, and the imposing atmosphere of this room would have added to the sense that the contract was intended to be serious and binding for the long-term. This was an interaction between the senior male members of each family, involving large amounts of money and carrying political and dynastic implications, and the decorations create a suitably masculine, public, environment.

Alberti’s later advice on the layout of princely palaces may give some clues to further uses of this room. After recommending an area where the prince could meet clients and sit in judgement (such as that discussed in Chapter 2) Alberti goes on to say:

Then there should be a meeting room, where the elders may gather to greet the prince and give their opinion when asked.

The use of the Sala dei Giganti as a council room in this way seems eminently appropriate. It is also likely that when important dignitaries visited, this would have been the room where they were welcomed with due ceremony. For example, when the Emperor Sigismund passed through Foligno in 1433, with a large retinue of soldiers and nobles, he was received ‘with great pomp’ by Corrado. What better room for this reception than the

---

298 Elena was the daughter of Ugolino’s daughter Agnese. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Agnese had married a close relative of the pope, Andrea Tomacelli – a hugely prestigious match, and a real coup for Ugolino. However, Andrea died in 1428, which explains Corrado’s involvement in the provision of Elena’s dowry. Taliano’s military support was extremely useful to Corrado. Romanoni, F. (2019) Taliano, Furlano, Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani, Rome, Treccani, vol.94 [Online]. Available at https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/furlano-taliano_%28Dizionario-Biografico%29/ (Accessed 14 November 2021)
300 Alberti (1988 [1556]) p.121.
room sometimes also known as the Sala degli Imperatori – and where better for the Emperor to honour Corrado and members of his family in return?\textsuperscript{301}

However, it also seems likely that the room was sometimes adapted to other, less serious purposes, such as feasting and celebration, given that it was the largest and most prestigious space in the building. Dining arrangements at the time were flexible, and for banqueting and dancing, moveable trestles and benches would often be set up in the most spacious area available.\textsuperscript{302} This possibility is supported in the Palazzo Trinci by the fact that the kitchen is recorded in the later inventory as being just one floor down, next to the staircase, so it would have been relatively easy to serve food there. In fine weather, it would also have been possible to extend activities out onto the large adjoining balcony overlooking the courtyard.\textsuperscript{303} This means that a wide range of people might have entered the Sala dei Giganti depending on the occasion, including men and women from diverse backgrounds and with varying levels of education, and with many purposes in mind. Regardless of their differences, though, they could not fail to be amazed and, perhaps, intimidated by the grandeur of the figures around the walls.

On an entirely different scale from the decorations on the landing, the ‘giant’ male characters around the room tower over the viewer at double human size, each one filling an arched, faux-stone frame. Beneath them, to head height, is a border of faux marble alternating with black and white ‘tiles’, set in rectangular, classically-inspired borders. Of different ages, the figures wear variations of quattrocento dress, some in richly embroidered robes and cloaks (Fig.4.14), others in quite austere tunics (Fig.4.16); some have laurel wreaths around their heads (Fig.4.20); some carry weapons (Fig.4.16) or wear armour; one holds a scroll (Fig.4.24); another, dressed in white, has his hands clasped as if in prayer (Fig.4.26). Their expressions are serious – some quite fierce – and command respect, but they do not display emotion. Apart from one (Fig.4.13), they do not look directly at the viewer, but sideways, although most do not engage with each other, and there is no sense of narrative or clear chronology. The suggestion of effigies in a gallery is reinforced by the repetitive pattern of the painted architectural frames, separating them from each other, but unifying the whole scheme. The names of some individuals can be determined in lettering by their heads; for several there is also still a surviving inscription below. At one end of the room, two ordinary life-size trompe l’oeil figures, wearing the red and green of the Trinci, stand on small fictive balconies (Figs.4.6-4.8).\textsuperscript{304} The woman looks downwards, as the man gestures towards fictive balconies (Figs.4.6-4.8).\textsuperscript{304} The woman looks downwards, as the man gestures towards her. On a higher balcony, behind the woman, is another female figure.

\textsuperscript{301} Among those awarded honours were Corrado’s sons, several nobles of Foligno, and the son of Taliano. Corrado received the Emperor’s white riband, and a gold cross and chain. Dorio, p.215-216.


\textsuperscript{303} This area was roofed over in 1477 and is now known as Sala di Sisto IV – the Hall of Pope Sixtus IV.

\textsuperscript{304} This device of the fictive balcony was used elsewhere. It appeared in the Camera di Ercole, in Ferrara, and the Palazzo del Capitano, in Mantua, both from the 1370s-80s. Dunlop, A. (2009) pp.53-54.
For most modern viewers, the names that can still be discerned do not immediately convey a great deal of information apart from the fact that these are figures from Roman history, although some – Augustus, Tiberius, Scipio, for example – may be more familiar. Some viewers at the time of Ugolino, well-schooled in classical history, would have found the process easier, although many others would have needed the help of the inscriptions, giving them clues to memorable events from the lives of each figure.\textsuperscript{305} The inscriptions are in the Latin, appropriate to the classical subject matter, so some - including the majority of women - would have struggled to understand them, and may not have been able to access the background information they provided. To this extent, the room is an exclusive space that privileges elite men, and would have created a unifying sense of status for that group, especially when they were involved in formal transactions or giving counsel. This perception is reinforced by the images, which are overwhelmingly male. The only women depicted are shown on a much smaller scale, and as observers, standing on the trompe-l’oeil balcony at one end of the room. They bear witness to events below, but do not participate. That said, once identified, many women would have been familiar with other versions of the stories surrounding some figures, through their depictions on domestic furniture and in illustrated manuscripts, and in literary versions.\textsuperscript{306}

Whatever the viewer’s initial level of understanding, this room arouses a real sense of wonder: at the sheer size of the figures, their august appearance, the fame of their names, the knowledge of classical history involved in their selection, the learning required to read the inscriptions in Latin verse. The viewer’s feeling of inadequacy is reinforced by the fact that figures from the court (perhaps Ugolino, Costanza and a companion?) are also shown (Figs.4.6-4.8). They observe visitors to the room, while themselves being viewed in return. Their elevated position high on the little balcony separates them, acting as a reminder of other public appearances, perhaps from the similar balcony that looked out of this room over the main piazza of Foligno. The association of the Trinci with these ‘giants’ of history gives them reflected status, while their human scale shows that they do not presume to claim equality. Their situation in present time and their connection with the living viewer also acts as a reminder that the massive figures memorialised around them have been consigned to history; their names may live on, but their lives were soon over. In daytime, originally, the room would have been darker than it is now; at night, candles around the room and flames in the large fireplace would have created a somewhat oppressive atmosphere, with these ominous figures louring above on every side. The whole effect is of a repeated shifting between past and present, reality and fiction, larger-than-life and human size, which requires constant adjustment and attention on the part of the viewer.

\textsuperscript{305} Grendler shows that from the start of the trecento communal schools taught reading and writing Latin, which would have been available to the sons of leading citizens. Grendler, P. (1991) \textit{Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300-1600}, Baltimore (MA), John Hopkins University Press, pp.13-22.

\textsuperscript{306} For example, the exploits of Scipio, Caesar and Romulus (including the Rape of the Sabine women) were all thought appropriate for the decoration of marriage chests or cassoni. Baskins, C. (2002) ‘(in)Famous Men: The Continence of Scipio and Formation of Masculinity in Fifteenth-Century Tuscan Domestic Painting’, \textit{Studies in Iconography} 23, pp.109-36.
This effect would have been reinforced when Ugolino entered the room in person, a real individual moving against the backdrop of these recreations of the giants of Roman history.

Sources of inspiration

The idea of using representations of heroic figures from the past as propaganda in the present was not a new one. As far back as the end of the first century BCE, the emperor Augustus had created a new forum in Rome, in which statues of *summi viri*, including Aeneas, Aeneas’ father Anchises and son Aschanius, Romulus and Caesar, accompanied by Augustus himself, were displayed around the temple of Mars. Versions of this forum were found in provincial capitals throughout the western empire, promulgating complex messages about the emperor’s identity and encouraging colonial communities to buy in to his version of Roman history (Fig.4.9). Augustus himself also features in the Palazzo Trinci, as do Romulus and Caesar, echoing this earlier statement – but although in the *quattrocento* da Fiano and others were gradually re-discovering original Roman artefacts, the Augustan forum was not known in its original form, so any visual echoes are filtered through later copies or inspired by other classical sculpture.

The links with the classical period in the Sala dei Giganti can in fact be traced more readily through literary sources. Less than a century later than Augustus’ project, the Roman writer, Plutarch, set the precedent for a genre of historical writing that used anecdotes about key moments in the lives of famous figures from the past, to explore themes such as heroism and stoicism. In forty-six ‘paired’ biographies, Plutarch considered the relationship between the individual and the state and discussed the moral and ethical behaviour of his subjects. During the Middle Ages, the study of history shifted towards an emphasis on setting events and human action within a Christian framework. In his *De Civitate Dei*, written in the early fifth CE, after the sack of Rome by the Visigoths, Augustine gave credit to Roman leaders whose virtue had led to the success of Rome, but placed the city’s past glory within the much wider context of the eternal battle between good and evil, and the ultimate quest for the ‘Eternal City’. For some time after this, examples of the good life were frequently presented by Christian writers in the form of biographies of early martyrs and saints, in which the Roman authorities were cast as oppressors. These saints were often adopted as patrons by emerging communities - San

---


310 Plutarch (1914[1st CE]).


Feliciano of Foligno was a case in point. A collection of these hagiographies by Jacobus da Voragine in the mid-thirteenth century, known as ‘The Golden Legend’, was highly influential in literary and artistic terms, especially in religious settings.\textsuperscript{313} Theoretical discussion of the best methods of government continued, however, in works such as Ptolemy’s \textit{De regimine principum} and Giles of Rome’s book of the same name.\textsuperscript{314} Both looked back to Aristotle, modifying his thinking in the light of Christian principles, and applying it to contemporary political circumstances. Giles promoted sovereign rule as the best form of government, extending his comments to cover the organisation and hierarchy of the household, seeing it as a microcosm of the state. Other works gave more specific advice on ways to behave and govern successfully. Often addressed to young princes new to power, this genre became known as the \textit{specula principum} and flourished well into the sixteenth century, when Baldassare Castiglione wrote \textit{Il Cortegiano}.

In taking figures from Roman history as their subject matter, then, the decorations at the Palazzo Trinci draw on classical tradition, but in a Christian context and with an awareness of more recent political theory and practice. Just as in the story of Ilia, discussed in Chapter 3, there is an underlying tension behind the use of pagan exemplars to spell out Christian values, but as that chapter showed, there was strong support for the process amongst humanist scholars at the time. The most obvious immediate source of inspiration here is the work of Petrarch. From an early stage in his career, Petrarch’s passion for the classical past had led him to plan the huge project of writing the lives of famous men, inspired by Plutarch, to be called \textit{de Viris Illustribus}.\textsuperscript{315} Book I of Petrarch’s work comprises the moral biographies of thirty-six illustrious Romans; Book II relates the histories of twelve Biblical and mythical characters. In his preface, Petrarch explained his method, which was to synthesise and select from earlier writers, including Livy, Valerius Maximus and Cicero, in order to arrive at a ‘true’ version of events. He also hoped to emulate their dignified style. His overriding purpose, however, was didactic:

\begin{quote}
For, unless I am mistaken, this is the profitable goal for the historian: to point up to the readers those things that are to be followed and those to be avoided, with plenty of distinguished examples provided on either side.
\end{quote}

The only worthy examples were from the past:

\begin{quote}
I thank those contemporary princes who free me from this labour, for they contribute material for satire, not history. And though I realise that some of them have recently become famous because of military victories, these occurred through good fortune
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{315} Unfinished at the time of Petrarch’s death, it was completed in 1379 by Lombardo della Seta. Petrarch (1337-1364).
or the inertia of the enemy, so that success was not at all a question of true valour or military glory.  

In a letter to his patron, Francesco da Carrara, lord of Padua, written in the 1360s, Petrarch elaborated on the qualities that he thought desirable in a ruler. To Petrarch, a prince’s chief purpose should be the peace and stability of the state; his greatest disapproval is directed at cruelty and greed. Having expressed his positive views of Francesco’s behaviour thus far, Petrarch suggests that he should read the letter ‘as though gazing in a mirror’. Attributes reflected there should include justice, tempered with mercy; love for his subjects, rather than the desire to inspire fear; the choice of good friends; humility and generosity. In his letter, Petrarch also draws on many of the examples from the *de Viris Illustribus*, applying lessons from history to the issues of the *trecento*.

Petrarch’s work informed a cycle of famous men frescoes painted in the 1370s at the palace of the Carrara family, in Padua, by Altichiero and others. It seems likely that this may have provided a model for the cycle in Foligno, given the many other links with Padua noted in this thesis. In fact, Altichiero had already painted a series of busts of over forty Roman emperors in decorative borders around the arches of the *Sala Grande* of the della Scala Palazzo Scaligeri in Verona; some survive, though not in situ (Fig. 4.10, 4.11). The Paduan cycle was largely destroyed by fire at the end of the fifteenth century but would still have been in existence at the time when the Palazzo Trinci room was decorated, or shortly before. The room in Padua was renovated in the mid-sixteenth century, with the figures repainted, so it is difficult to establish the exact nature of the original. It is much bigger than the Sala dei Giganti in Foligno, and the figures number over forty in total. Some are grouped in twos and threes, with single individuals between, and beneath them were probably illustrations of episodes from their lives, as well as inscriptions. The surviving figures do not all relate to Petrarch’s work, although it cannot be assumed that they follow the original selection exactly, so unfortunately it is impossible to establish now which

---

317 Petrarch (1361) XIV, 1.  
individuals were included in the original version. One original figure survives, though: the portrait of Petrarch, mentioned in Chapter 2.

It has also been suggested that Petrarch was involved in an even earlier version of the ‘Famous Men’ theme, painted by Giotto for Robert of Anjou in the Castel Nuovo in Naples in the 1330s, which does not survive. Not only did Robert honour and host Petrarch when he was in Naples, but Petrarch was known to be an admirer of Giotto. The characters depicted in Naples are identified in a series of anonymous *quattrocento* Florentine sonnets as Alexander, Solomon, Hector, Aeneas, Achilles, Paris, Hercules, Samson and Caesar, so they were not exclusively classical. The male figures were probably accompanied by a female consort. In this, and in the selection of male characters, there seems to have been considerable difference from Petrarch’s later choices – perhaps to fit Robert’s carefully fashioned personal image as ‘The Wise’. It is known that da Fiano also spent time at the court at Naples, so it is very possible that he saw these frescoes, and that they may have been an additional source of inspiration in the Palazzo Trinci.

The two cycles in Padua and Naples mentioned above were in the palaces of powerful, autocratic princes, but the Petrarchan theme was also used in very different settings - for example, at the end of the fourteenth century, in the Palazzo Vecchio, in the republican city of Florence. Although no physical evidence of this cycle survives, it is recorded that in 1385, money was granted for decoration of the Audience Chamber. A manuscript that refers to decorations in this room contains some short verses by Sacchetti, as well as twenty-two Latin epigrams entitled ‘The Famous Men placed in the smaller hall of the Florentine Palace’. Seventeen of these epigrams are also found in an encyclopaedia written by Domenico Bondini, where they are attributed to Salutati, the humanist chancellor of Florence. Over half of the men described by Salutati had also been selected by Petrarch. The five additions are Florentine poets: Claudian, Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio and Zanobi. These men had been included in a work by Filippo Villani on the origins of Florence, which Salutati had edited. It seems likely, then, that the hall was decorated with a combination of Roman heroes and Florentine literary figures, accompanied by Salutati’s verses. Individuals such as Brutus, Cicero and Cato are celebrated for their defence of freedom and civic liberty, and the addition of poets emphasises the city’s sense of its own importance as a centre of culture, even at this early date. The fact that Dante had been


323 This is the portrait of Petrarch that appears to be inspiration for the one on the Bridge in the Palazzo Trinci.


banished for his political views is conveniently ignored and there are further apparent ambiguities in the messages of the verses, in that Alexander, Charlemagne and Augustus, for example, were the founders of empires, and not champions of republican virtues.\textsuperscript{328}

Slightly later – and closely contemporary with those at the Palazzo Trinci – the decorations by Taddeo di Bartolo in the antechapel in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena use similar subject matter. Commissioned by the republican government of Siena, they give a more consistent and clearer message, in support of the city’s determinedly communal aspirations.\textsuperscript{329} Complementing the themes of Lorenzetti’s \textit{Allegory of Good and Bad Government} in the same building’s Sala de Nove, the scheme is introduced by the figure of Aristotle and includes Roman deities and a map of Rome. Personifications of Virtues are shown at the top of the walls (Justice, Prudence, Fortitude, Magnanimity and ‘Religio’). In medallions, and below each Virtue, are depictions of Roman ‘Famous Men’ (Fig.4.12). Inscriptions in Latin and Italian guide the viewer, drawing appropriate lessons from each. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Siena drew on a similar foundation myth to that of Rome, and these figures reinforce the connection. The examples are carefully chosen here, though, to convey a specific message: they are exclusively from Republican Rome, and the emphasis is on their adoption of civic values and resistance to tyranny.\textsuperscript{330} The two last figures - Julius Caesar and Pompey - though still from the period of the Republic, are separated from the others, and from the Virtues. The viewer is left in no doubt that they constitute an important moral example. The Latin inscription states that although, at first, both men brought glory to Rome by their conquests, ‘when blind ambition led them both to arms, Roman liberty perished’.\textsuperscript{331} The Italian verse warns: ‘Take note of this, you who rule: if you wish to govern for thousands and thousands of years, follow the common good and do not be led astray if you have any passion within yourselves’. The reference to ‘common good’ is key in the republican setting of Siena.

These earlier uses of the ‘Famous Men’ theme all share the desire to associate the ruling elite with great heroes of the past. Unlike the Nine Worthies, discussed in Chapter 2, they are not limited to a set number, and do not comprise an established canon of characters, nor, apart from Caesar, do they have associations with imaginative chivalric literature. Although the membership varies, they focus on Roman examples, sometimes with additional features for emphasis.\textsuperscript{332} For Robert of Anjou, the choice of characters seems to

\textsuperscript{332} Later ‘Famous Men’ cycles included a much wider range of characters. In the 1430s, Cardinal Giordano Orsini (of the same family as Costanza) had three hundred figures, from the whole of human history, depicted on the walls of the \textit{sala theatri} in his palace, \textit{Monte Giordano}. Mode, R.L. (1973) ‘The Orsini Sala Theatri at Monte Giordano in Rome’, \textit{Renaissance Quarterly}, vol.26, no.2, pp.167-172.
have been closely associated with his own personal image as ‘The Wise’; for the Carrara, the depictions of battles and other events may have been associated with their own military exploits. In Florence, the connections with the classical past were widened to include contemporary thinkers and literary figures from the city, supporting its aspirations as a cultural centre. The Siena cycle has more coherence than these other versions. In its carefully unified choice of characters, it goes beyond general celebration of achievement, to communicate an unequivocal message to those in authority, as well as to the community at large: a statement of intent and warning about the threat to civic stability from anyone tempted to seek excessive personal power. In this way, the theme was skilfully fashioned to serve the aims and needs of a republican city state. The Trinci did not share these aims. By contrast, they hoped to build on the family’s military and political successes to date, and to consolidate a hereditary signoria in Foligno, with the acquiescence of its citizens. Despite the fundamental difference in ideology, the theme of ‘Famous Men’ was readily adapted to their purposes, too. As the next section of this chapter shows, it was also an ideal vehicle for members of the court to demonstrate their erudition and their interest in the investigation of history as a way of developing good government.

Lessons from the past

For those who had just come from looking at the decorations on the landing, with their complex presentation of the foundation of Rome, the first effect of these figures would have been to reinforce the importance of Foligno’s links with Rome in a more straightforward and emphatic way. There would have been no doubt as to the identity of each figure, as each one was named, and the inscriptions below gave sufficient information to remind viewers of key events associated with them. Their sheer stature and presence pay tribute to the greatness of Rome’s past, and place the Trinci signoria within that context. The focus on Rome also asserts the Trinci’s links with the papacy and implies support for the pope’s recent return to the city and the longed-for renewal of its supremacy as a cultural and religious centre. Galassi comments that cycles of Famous Men were ‘one of the most direct ways available to any culture to declare itself’ through the ‘celebration of its own heroes’.333 She quotes Maria Donato’s view that cycles of Famous Men owed their continuing popularity to the fact that they do not hide their message, ‘like other forms of secular art, within the complexity of erudite allusion or of allegory: they embody it, transparently, in galleries of well-known figures, which, in any case, almost unmissable titles identify, explaining in words the meaning of the figurative tribute.’334 However, this chapter argues that, as elsewhere in the Palazzo Trinci, beneath the more overt messages, there was in fact also an underlying desire to leave interpretations open. Although the

meanings may not be hidden by allegory, they are, in fact, far from ‘transparent’, and besides its overt ‘celebration of heroes’, this cycle also provokes discussion and debate.

The inscription quoted at the beginning of this chapter invites us to look closely. We are to admire and enjoy the spectacle of the Sala dei Giganti, but also to see beyond this to examine its finer points: to ‘feed your eyes on the sight and scrutinize every detail.’ The viewer should expect to be dazzled, first, but should then take the time to glean as much as possible from the experience, perhaps being prompted to read the life of one of the characters, or return to the work of classical, or more recent, historians and commentators. The cycle does not have the clear and direct unity of purpose that can be inferred from the scheme in Siena, but the unique and considered selection of individuals creates a web of possible comparisons and combinations. The literary, historical, and visual references come together to generate discussion about the qualities of individual virtue and the transience of fame, as well as more immediate material questions regarding the political and social outcomes of human action. In this context, Ugolino becomes not simply the imitator of these giants of the past, but the thoughtful interpreter of their legacy. The ambivalence and ambiguity of the presentation means that appropriate – and expedient - lessons can be drawn for any occasion.335

For some viewers, the recognition of Petrarch’s de Viris as a likely source would have guided them to see these images as primarily didactic, offering lessons for their own time in leadership and the exercise of power. For others, this interpretation would have been complemented by their knowledge of Petrach’s Trionfi, with its reflections on the place of human activity within the grand scheme of eternity.336 It has not been noted previously that in fact, of the twenty individuals originally portrayed in the decorations in Foligno, twelve are mentioned in Petrarch’s Trionfo della fama, as well as the de Viris.337 The Trionfi present history in a less didactic way, exploring the experience of Death, the possibility of survival through Fame, and the eventual obliteration of everything - even Fame - by Time. In lines that recall the ubi sunt motif in earlier poetry, mentioned in Chapter 2, Death shows the poet, first, the uncountable numbers of those who, though once successful, are no longer remembered:

Here now are they who were called fortunate, popes, emperors, and others who had ruled; now they are naked, poor, of all bereft. Where now their riches? Where their honours now? Where now their gems and sceptres, and their crowns?338

336 Petrarch (1350s).
337 Petrarch (1350s) Fama, 1.
338 Ivì eran quei che fur detti felici/pontefici, regnanti, imperadori;/or sono ignudi, miseri, e mendici,/U’sono or le ricchezze? U sono gli onori/e le gemme e gli scettri e le corone/e le mitre e i purpurei colori? Petrarch (1350s) Morti, 1.
Fame, however, (‘who saves man from the tomb, and gives him life’) shows Petrarch a vision of some who have lived on through their reputation. The list includes many of the Roman figures in the Palazzo Trinci frescoes, such as Scipio, Caesar, Cato and others, before moving on to Greek and other heroes, and biblical characters. It ends with a reminder that action is not the only means of acquiring fame, by listing philosophers, historians, and thinkers. This glimmer of hope is extinguished in the next Triumph, of Time, in which Petrarch must accept that even Fame is not a road to immortality. Words and memory may preserve the past for a while, but he must look to the different consolations of Eternity, the subject of the final Triumph.

Seen in this light, the room demonstrates the shallowness of human achievement even while celebrating it. We are only too aware that all these larger-than-life characters are consigned to history. Although they are preserved in poetry and now, in painting, their achievements will fade. They are a reminder of the *vanitas* of human life, and of Frezzi’s message in the *Quadriregio* that it is the quest for knowledge, wisdom and virtue, that leads ultimately to God, rather than the desire for earthly fame and power. If this lesson applies to such towering figures from the past, how much more must it apply to Ugolino and the Trinci?

As mentioned above, of the twenty individuals originally portrayed in the decorations in Foligno, twelve are mentioned in Petrarch’s *Trionfo della fama*, as well as the *de Viris*. The addition of four emperors and Pompey bring this number to the seventeen that are also described by Petrarch in the *de Viris*: Romulus, Cincinnatus, Torquatus, Camillus, Decius, Dentatus, Fabius Maximus, Marcellus, Scipio Africanus, Cato, Mario, Pompey, Caesar, Augustus, Trajan and Claudius Nero. Three are not found in Petrarch: Scaeva, Caligula and Tiberius. The earliest, chronologically, is Romulus, followed by a series of republican figures, and ending with three emperors: Augustus, Tiberius and Caligula. They are not, however, shown chronologically. The images of Romulus, Pompey, Caesar, Trajan and Caligula do not survive. The selection is unique to the Palazzo Trinci, which, this chapter contends, suggests careful choice (Figs.4.13-4.26). The unusual inclusion of one overtly negative example, and others who are certainly dubious, points to a desire to promote comparisons between them in a search for new models of behaviour.

This setting of one figure alongside another, highlighting their contrasting qualities, was not a new idea. Plutarch, for example, had also written a ‘Parallel Lives’ where he had deliberately paired Greek and Roman characters, to emphasise their good and bad characteristics. In the first century CE, Lucan, in his *Pharsalia*, used extended metaphors to bring to life the differences between Caesar and Pompey, comparing Caesar to a

---

339 Many people would have been sharply aware of the relevance of this question. For example, as recently as 1405, the Carrara family (who had commissioned the earlier ‘Famous Men’ frescoes in Padua) had been defeated by Venetian forces and removed from power. The head of the family, Francesco Novello, was tried for rebellion and treachery, and brutally executed by strangulation, followed the next day by his two sons. The Carrara never returned to power. Kohl, B. (1998) p.335.
thunderbolt, and Pompey to an ancient oak tree. Many humanists would have read and enjoyed this work, and saw such comparisons not only as a literary device; nor were they a dry academic exercise, or a mere conversational gambit. For humanists, they provided a not only useful starting point for the discussion of political theory, but also a way of increasing their own intellectual capital. At the same time as displaying their erudition, they could use their versions of these characters to educate both their patrons and other scholars in political thinking, with a view to the improvement of society. For example, a lively correspondence between Poggio Bracciolini and Guarino Veronese, in the 1430s, argued the relative merits of Scipio versus Caesar. Poggio’s underlying agenda was in support of Cosimo de’Medici; Guarino’s in support of the Este. The exchange of views was taken up by others in the circle, and was at times expressed in heated terms, although the debate remained civilised. This kind of interaction was fundamental to the spread of ideas, social ties, and honour among early quattrocento humanists.

Conversations like this were underpinned by a dynamic and pragmatic new approach to the writing of history, that saw past events as the consequence of human agency, rather than part of an inevitable divine plan. The publication of Bruni’s Historiarum Florentinarum – ‘History of the Florentine people’ – in 1428 is widely regarded as a landmark in historical writing. Although it was published later than the decorations of the Palazzo Trinci, he was already working on it by this time. Francesco da Fiano was a member of the papal curia at the same time as Bruni and would doubtless have been aware of his ideas. In Bruni’s hands, the study of history became ‘past-focused in the service of the present.’ He challenged earlier chroniclers’ versions of the Florentine past, especially their fatalistic attribution of events to divine intervention, seeing them rather as the result of human action, arguing that for a city to thrive, its ruling classes should be virtuous. The decorations in the Sala dei Giganti offer opportunities for this objective re-evaluation of the past in order to inform present behaviour, and some visitors would have been prompted to respond to the images in those terms. On the other hand, some, especially lovers of Petrarch, would have been moved to meditate on the ultimate futility of involvement in public life.

As elsewhere in the palazzo, the inscriptions are extremely condensed, serving mostly to identify individuals rather than to describe their careers in detail, although the overall tone of all of them, apart from one - Caligula - is positive. Some of the identifying factors are taken up in the images, but there are few clues in terms of facial expression or demeanour, to lead the viewer into judgements about their lives as a whole. Indeed, the faces of

---

Cincinnatus (Fig. 4.20) and Marius (Fig. 4.25) are almost indistinguishable from each other and look to have been taken from the same original. Unlike the scheme in Padua, where events were shown to place them in context, there is no depiction of interaction with others and no background scene-setting to lead the viewer to conclusions. The viewer is not able to examine the figures at close quarters, but is always gazing up at them from below, the eye circling round the room, comparing one with the other, before returning to the reality of events within the room itself. The figures are in fact quite crudely painted, giving broadly stated visual signals that can be discerned from a distance – a viewing experience rather like the more modern one of looking at a stage backdrop or visiting an exhibition of monumental sculpture. This is very different from the experience on the bridge, or the landing, discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, where the viewer can examine the figures at close quarters, and follow a clear sequence from one image to another. This lack of guidance would have prompted many viewers to think further about the reasons for each figure’s inclusion. Is there any unifying factor? What else was known about their lives? What characteristics were being celebrated? Did these men have attributes in common, or differences between them? Are any lessons to be drawn?

In the inscriptions, all apart from Caligula are set in the context of their success in warfare. For a number, this is also the overriding impression visually. Some are associated with particular victories or deeds in battle – for instance, Titus Mallius Torquatus (Fig. 4.19) is noted for killing the Gaul, Gallus, in single combat and taking the golden torc from his neck to wear in triumph (and which he wears in his image).\(^{344}\) Scaeva (Fig. 4.23) is remembered for his exceptional lone defence of an embattled citadel.\(^{345}\) For some viewers, aware of Ugolino’s military successes, and perhaps having fought alongside him, these associations would have been confirmation that his route to power had been legitimate. Representatives of other princes and cities would also have been reminded that the Trinci were capable of similar victories and would prove to be valuable allies – or dangerous enemies. Julius Caesar is also closely associated with military success in his inscription, particularly with the conquest of Gaul.\(^{346}\) Although the image of Caesar here no longer survives, it would doubtless have reminded many viewers of his inclusion in the well-known group of the Nine Worthies, depicted on the bridge in the Palazzo Trinci, and in many other environments. As discussed in Chapter 2, a large body of chivalric literature and visual depictions had developed around Caesar as a member of this group, and this would have contributed to his reception in this very different context.

It is not surprising that the longest inscription is reserved for Scipio (Fig. 4.22) and his defeat of Hannibal and Carthage.\(^{347}\) Placed closest to the male figure on the balcony who could be Ugolino – indeed at his right hand – his position reflects his importance in contemporary thinking. As mentioned earlier, he was seen, alongside Caesar, as one of the most

important military leaders of ancient Rome. The inscription praises his many achievements, but ends by stressing the ingratitude of Rome, his exile, and his death far away from the city he had served – an experience still familiar in quattrocento Italy. However, he is depicted in the fresco as a triumphant hero, wearing a blue and scarlet cloak lined with ermine, and a laurel wreath on his head. Some visitors to this room would have known that besides recording the events of his life in the de Viris, Petrarch had also chosen Scipio as the idealised hero of his epic poem *Africa*. They would also have been aware of other stories associated with Scipio (such as ‘The Continence of Scipio’) that led to him being depicted in very different contexts, such as on cassoni. So, in a similar way to Caesar, Scipio brought with him many associations, several alternative views of his achievements, and a range of opinion as to his suitability as an exemplar. As mentioned earlier, the relative merits of Scipio and Caesar were certainly the object of lively discussion and comparison.

Viewers who had read widely, especially in Petrarch’s *de Viris*, might well have looked beyond this celebration of military success to achievement in time of peace. They would have realised, for example, that Marcus Furius Camillus (Fig.4.16) was elected five times as consul and was known as the ‘second founder of Rome’. For others, despite the recital of their victories, there is a hint of ambivalence in the inscription. For example, the inscription for Gaius Marius (Fig.4.25) states: ‘I fought forbidden civil war’. Gaius Marius was known for repeatedly repelling barbarian attack, which led to his being elected as consul an even more unusual seven times. But under his leadership, especially in his later years, there was terrible internal strife in Rome. Petrarch says of him: ‘If his vices were examined alongside his virtues, it would hardly be easy to say whether he was greater in war, or more pernicious in peace’. The images of these two characters do not give any further clear direction to the viewer. Marcus Furius Camillus is younger, and dressed for battle, and has a determined expression, with his mouth downturned; Gaius Marius is older, and wears an embroidered cloak, but both have the serious and somewhat

---

348 *Africa* was a Virgilian epic which Petrarch regarded as still unfinished at the time of his death, but which was made public by Pier Paolo Vergerio in the 1390s. In *Africa*, Scipio’s physical beauty, personal charm, leadership qualities, piety and patriotism are described in lengthy and glowing terms by his friend, Laelius. Petrarch (1338-74) *Africa*, Rome, Sapienza [Online]. Available at http://www.bibliotecaitaliana.it/testo/bibit000921#bi_f_ (Accessed 14 November 2021).

349 Scipio continued to be depicted frequently throughout the Renaissance. He appeared often on cassoni, (painted chests associated with marriage rituals) sometimes in ‘The Triumph of Scipio’ and sometimes in ‘The Continence of Scipio’. In the latter, after the defeat of Carthage, Scipio was offered a beautiful woman called Lucretia by his soldiers, who had captured her. However, when he was told of her betrothal to a Carthaginian, Scipio honourably sent her back unharmed, and returned the gold sent as ransom by her parents. Cristelle Baskins argues that in the context of cassoni, both presentations were relevant. Scipio embodied two models of masculinity for the bridegroom’s consideration: the sexual restraint of ‘The Continence’, and the conquering hero surrounded by booty of the ‘Triumph’. Baskins, C. (2002) pp.109-36.


inscrutable quality of several of the other figures: the viewer is left to choose what conclusions to draw.

In several more otherwise celebratory inscriptions, incidents are mentioned that raise uncomfortable questions. Even in the heat of battle, it seems excessively cruel to throw the head of the opposing commander’s brother into the enemy camp, as Claudius Nero is said to have done. Indeed, even Romulus, the founder of Rome, is not presented as perfect. Again, sadly, his image is missing, but the viewer would have been reminded, here, of his place alongside the Nine Worthies on the bridge (Fig.2.17), and of the images of the foundation of Rome on the landing (Figs 3.1,3.2), discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Although his achievement in founding the city of Rome is commended, his ‘rape’ of the neighbouring Sabine women, who were taken by force to provide wives for the men of the new settlement, is described in the inscription as ‘deceitful’. Do such actions undermine the reputations of these heroes, or is their ruthlessness admirable when it serves a greater purpose? This was not a purely intellectual question: it had real relevance for men such as Ugolino and his sons, in an environment where violence, including against women, continued to be a political tool.

As mentioned earlier, Titus Mallius Torquatus is celebrated for his prowess in battle, in an inscription that begins by stating that he ‘gave an illustrious name’ to his descendants. His portrait shows him wearing round his neck the golden torc that he took from Gallus after killing him, and he is shown in military regalia, a red cloak thrown over one shoulder and a suit of armour showing beneath his tunic (Fig.4.19). He holds a staff in his left hand, showing his authority, and his right hand clasps the pommel of his short sword: the epitome of a proud military leader. But the inscription concludes by describing him as ‘staining his axe with the killing of his victorious son’. Livy tells the story of the son’s acceptance of a challenge from a soldier of the opposing army, despite Torquatus’ command that no member of the Roman forces was to engage with the enemy. Torquatus condemned his son to death for disobeying orders, although the young man had felt he was defending the honour of his country and had in fact won the duel. The viewer is left to ask whether Torquatus’ steely determination to uphold military discipline was admirable, or whether it should have been tempered with mercy. Should he have displayed paternal pride in his son’s spirited actions, especially as they sprang from the best of motives? Should he, at least, have risked accusations of favouritism by pardoning him? Or was he to be admired

---

355 Ugolino appears always to have behaved moderately, by contemporary standards. However, his son, Corrado, having defeated the people of Spoleto in a siege in 1438, showed no mercy, taking women and children captive and parading them through the streets of Foligno. The following year, after Corrado’s removal from power by Cardinal Vitteleschi, he was imprisoned in Spoleto and abused and attacked by Spoletan women in return. According to Dorio, his behaviour also made him hated by the people of Foligno, who did not come to his aid against Vitteleschi. Dorio, pp 237-239.
358 Livy (1905[1st c.BCE]) bk.8, 7, 13-20.
359 This question is reminiscent of the questions raised about Amulius’ use of the law in Chapter 2.
for taking the more difficult option of overcoming personal feelings for the sake of principle? Torquatus’ impassive expression gives no clues to the answers to these questions, although his military demeanour suggests where his priorities lay.

Others whose military success is recorded - Fabrizius (Fig.4.17), Curius Dentatus (Fig.4.18), Cincinnatus (Fig.4.20), and Fabius Maximus – are all singled out for positive comments on their modest beginnings and continuing disregard for wealth. Trajan, whose military success led to the expansion of the empire to its fullest extent, is celebrated specifically for his attention to one of his most vulnerable subjects – a widow who sought justice for her murdered son. For two, the lack of honour from the city they had served is stressed. Scipio (Fig.4.22) was exiled and ended his days in his villa in Linternum. Claudius Marcellus (Fig.4.21) was denied a full triumph after his victory in Sicily and was only allowed a lesser celebration at Mount Alba, twenty miles outside the city. Marcellus, although depicted as young, and wearing a laurel wreath, also has noticeably drab clothing, perhaps suggesting this failure to celebrate his success. In this way, perhaps, viewers are invited to admire the humility and lack of personal ambition of some successful leaders, but they are also encouraged to censure the lack of due honour offered to others by the city they had served.

Two of those depicted, Cato (Fig.4.24) and Publius Decius (Fig.4.26), deliberately sacrificed their lives in battle. Cato, contemporary of Caesar and Pompey, was highly respected for his probity in carrying out his public duties. He is depicted in the decorations as a learned figure, carrying a scroll in his hand (Fig.4.24). A follower of Stoic philosophy and politically conservative, Cato was increasingly at odds with Caesar and eventually fought for Pompey in the civil war. He killed himself at the battle of Utica rather than live under what he saw as the tyranny of Caesar. The Roman historian Sallust, their contemporary, discussed the relative *virtus* of Cato and Caesar, and his *synkresis* of their contrasting qualities became the object of considerable discussion in the Middle Ages. Again, some viewers would have been reminded of this comparison of two very different models of leadership.

They might also have compared Cato’s suicide with that of Publius Decius, who took his own life during war against the Samnites, when an oracle forecast that one army would win, but the general of the other would die. Decius and his co-consul Titus Mallius ‘Torquatus’ (discussed earlier), pledged that whichever wing of the Roman army faltered first, the one in command of it would sacrifice his life to the gods. When Decius’ wing came under pressure, he underwent the purificatory ritual of *devotio* and then rode into the

---

centre of the battle where he was brought down by enemy darts, inspiring the Roman soldiers to victory.\footnote{Guerrini, R. (2001) p.387.} In the Palazzo Trinci, Decius is readily identifiable, and presented very differently from all the other characters, disrupting the visual unity of the scheme, and attracting the viewer’s attention (Fig.4.26). Dressed in white, embellished with a crimson bar on his chest, his head wrapped in a scarf edged with red, his feet bare, he is ready for the devotio. With his hands clasped in prayer and gazing heavenwards, he is more reminiscent of a Christian saint than a Roman general. He even calls to mind contemporary depictions of members of the Bianchi peace movement (Fig.4.27).\footnote{This is the movement that da Fiano favoured, as mentioned in the Introduction. The Bianchi wore white with a red cross (rather than the red bar, on Decius’ robe). They are also depicted with bare feet, like Decius, and with an unusual head-dress, very similar to the one worn by Decius. Bornstein, D.E. (1993) pp.38, 44, 45.} In Christian terms, however, is his suicide sinful, whatever the circumstances? Is Decius’ death for the sake of his army’s victory, more, or less admirable than Cato’s, for personal honour?\footnote{The teaching of the church on suicide was based on that of Thomas Aquinas, building on Augustine’s earlier condemnation of suicide as an unjust act. Thomas added three further reasons for it to be considered a sin: suicide is unnatural, it damages the community, and giving and taking life is God’s prerogative. Thomas Aquinas (1920[13\textsuperscript{th}c.]) \textit{Summa Theologiae} (trans. Fathers of English Dominican Province) 2,pt.2, q.64. [Online]. Available at https://www.newadvent.org/summa/ (Accessed 14 November 2021). In practice, suicide was often hidden and seen as a disgrace by families. In some European countries, suicides were denied proper burial by law; although this was not the case in Italy, the act was still often shameful and stigmatized. Murray, A. (1998) \textit{Suicide in the Middle Ages}, vol.1, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp.21-31.}

The viewer is, perhaps, led to one conclusion: that ultimately peace-making is more valuable than military success alone. Although the inscription describing Julius Caesar honours his victories, it refers to him personally only as ‘fearsome’; he is also called ‘bloodthirsty’ in the inscription attached to Pompey.\footnote{\textit{Metuendum}; \textit{cruenti}. Guerrini, R. (2001) pp.376,389.}\footnote{\textit{Laceravit in undis}. Guerrini, R. (2001) p.389.} Despite recognition of Pompey’s early prowess, this draws attention to the ignominy of his death: ‘torn to pieces on the waves’.\footnote{\textit{Clauisti reserata diu sua limina Iano}. Guerrini, R. (2001) p.376. The ‘Gates of Janus’ were gates to the shrine of Janus, opened by the senate in wartime and closed in peace - so powerfully symbolic.} Unfortunately, their images have not survived, so it is not possible to know if there were any visual clues to guide the viewer’s interpretation. But although both Caesar and Pompey are described as great soldiers, we are also reminded subtly of the ruinous effects of the conflict between them in the civil war. This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that Augustus’ greatest achievement is seen as bringing peace to Rome after the events instigated by these two men: ‘You closed to Janus the gates that had long been opened wide’.\footnote{Guerrini, R. (2001) p.389.} Although there has been some damage to Augustus’ portrait (Fig.4.13), it can still be seen that his is the only surviving figure shown seated and looking ahead. In a potent combination of words and image, his hand is raised in a gesture of blessing, in a pose reminiscent of an enthroned Christ. It is notable that this idealised figure represents an emperor rather than a republic hero, shifting the focus to an autocratic style of government – an attractive model for the Trinci.
The three individuals not included by Petrarch in the *de Viris Illustribus* do not appear at first sight to have a great deal in common, certainly judging from the inscriptions. However, their addition to such an otherwise well-established group suggests careful selection. Caligula was no doubt included as an unequivocally negative example. The inscription describes him ‘fearful in appearance’ and holding a mirror. ‘Often, to increase the fear in people, you turn that very face towards the mirror and place it within every terrible deed’.372 According to Jacobilli, he was also holding a mirror in the fresco, although that part of the image is now destroyed.373 Jacobilli also noted that he was depicted without shoes: perhaps an ironic contrast to the saintly portrayal of Decius, who is the only other figure shown barefoot. From the description ‘a filthy blight on human life’, the reader is left in no doubt that Caligula has no redeeming characteristics.374 His appearance is also described – he has the pallor associated with death.375 Although Caligula uses the mirror as a way of augmenting the fear that he arouses in others, its image also recalls Petrarch’s words to Francesco da Carrara, advising him that when he looked at his reflection he should hope to see the qualities befitting a good prince.376 Petrarch singled Caligula out elsewhere for special disapprobation, as an enemy of culture: ‘He nearly removed the writings and images of Virgil and Livy from all the libraries, censuring the former as a poet of no talent, and the latter as a verbose and sloppy historian.’377 For Petrarch this destruction of the past and wanton disrespect for two of his most beloved sources of inspiration was further indication of the deepest moral failing.

The image of Tiberius, successor to Augustus as emperor, and standing next to him, shows him as a young man (Fig.4.14). The inscription is apparently positive, focusing on praise for his military campaigns, although perhaps there is a hint of criticism in the first line – ‘This one is celebrated, shining with imperial splendour’ – a reminder of the extravagant display for which Tiberius became known towards the end of his life.378 Some viewers would certainly also have been aware of the sexual depravity for which Tiberius was notorious, and on which Petrarch commented elsewhere: ‘Among the foremost examples is Tiberius, whom I mentioned a short while ago; may his gods and goddesses torment him with evil even in the nether world. My stomach sickens and my bile convulses every time I read


373 ‘He holds a mirror in both hands, towards his feet, and he is without shoes’ - *Tiene con ambo le mani uno specchio, per il suo pede, ed è senza scarpe.* Galassi, C. (2001) p.276.


375 *In vultu cuius Stygii stat palor Avernii.* Guerrini, R. (2001) p.388. ‘In his face rests the pallor of Stygian Avernus’. Avernus was the volcanic crater near Naples that was thought to be the entrance to the underworld.

376 Discussion of mirrors and reflections went back to classical times. The story of Narcissus highlighted the dangers of self-absorption; this was set against Socrates’ advice to ‘know thyself’. In the medieval period, the mirror was also a symbol of pride, and associated with *vanitas* painting exploring the transitory nature of human life; but also, with the Virgin Mary, and the light she reflected. Melchior-Bonnet, S. (2002) *The Mirror: a history*, London, Routledge, pp.101-133.


about the old man’s shameful and shocking practices; among others was one that I am ashamed even to mention whereby he would arouse his failing lusts by attending spectacles of monstrous copulation. So it seems that Tiberius, too, can be taken as a negative example, despite his early successes. Visually, certainly, he is in strong contrast to Augustus. Perhaps it is significant that he turns his back to him, with his left hand pointing in somewhat solipsistic fashion towards himself. His large eyes and full lips seem sensual; he wears richly embroidered clothing, with scalloped cuffs showing under his sleeves, and exaggeratedly pointed shoes showing under his robe, suggesting excessive interest in appearance and luxury (Fig.4.15).

The third, Scaeva (Fig.4.23), seems initially to be simply a model of exceptional physical bravery, differing chiefly from the other figures in the room in that he did not rise beyond the rank of centurion in Caesar’s army. His exploits are described in some detail in Lucan’s epic poem the Aristeia. Left alone to defend a citadel against Pompey’s forces, Scaeva uses a pile of corpses to bury his advancing assailants. An extravagantly bloody hand-to-hand fight ensues, which culminates in Scaeva being shot in the eye with an arrow: plucking the arrow out, along with his eyeball, he fights on. He eventually begs his last opponent, Aulus, for mercy, but when Aulus steps forward to help him, Scaeva stabs him treacherously in the throat. Then, saved by reinforcements from Caesar’s army, he survives. In fact, Lucan’s Aristeia has been seen as questioning models of heroism and virtue by setting Scaeva and Cato (again) alongside each other, presenting Scaeva as a ‘flawed, debased version of Cato, who, in his function as exemplum, exposes just how degenerate Scaeva is.’ In the Palazzo Trinci, the images of the two are also placed alongside each other, so it seems very likely that here, too, the viewer is being encouraged to consider and compare their actions. The visual presentation also points to this. Cato - from what remains – is an elderly, bearded, scholarly figure holding a scroll, in contrast to Scaeva, who carries a sword in his right hand. Scaeva also wears the ‘crown woven from vine leaves’ mentioned in the inscription - and more usually associated with the abandon of Bacchic ritual, although his demeanour is restrained here. This distinguishes him from Augustus, Scipio and others who are crowned with the laurels of victory. However, it would not have been a foregone conclusion that all contemporary viewers would have seen Scaeva as inferior to Cato. Ugolino had established his position through military activity, as had many of his peers, and a commander’s fearlessness and aggression in combat would have been admirable to many who had also experienced the heat of battle.

---


Conclusion
Doubtless many visitors perceived the Sala dei Giganti in a straightforward way, associating Ugolino with one or another of their favourite heroes, or simply impressed with its grandiose scale and the mystique of past glory, without questioning its messages in any detail. They might also have seen similar cycles in other imposing environments such as the Carrara palace, and thought of the Trinci court, accordingly, as equally prestigious. On more formal occasions, especially, the room’s over-riding male atmosphere would have created a gratifying sense, for the men involved, of participating in the revival of a long and powerful tradition. To be surrounded by military and political leaders whose reputation had lived on for centuries would have been an experience that inspired a sense of unity and ambition – hopefully, for the Trinci, centred on their signoria.

For some viewers, though, the many tensions inherent in these decorations would have been apparent, and they would have responded in more sophisticated ways. This would certainly have been the case for anyone versed in classical thinking and in touch with the discussion and writing of contemporary humanists. Francesco da Fiano and Federico Frezzi were such men. Their fascination with the past glory of Rome, and their passion for classical culture, are clearly reflected in the choice of subject matter and in the erudition of its Latin inscriptions. These men were also concerned with how ideals from antiquity could be accommodated within a Christian framework. This meant a re-examination of ancient values and a continuation of the discussions about virtue, fame and leadership that had concerned classical writers, but now in a different context. Hence, we are invited to compare rigid discipline with mercy; dramatic daring in battle with self-sacrifice; the magnificence of imperial display with modest living; heroic feats in war with the achievement of peacekeeping. Perhaps the strongest tension is between the idea of the presentation of figures from the past as part of a dynamic agenda for progress and participation in the here and now, and the consciousness that everything fades and passes, and is forgotten. This contradiction was felt keenly by Petrarch, whose intense involvement in the concerns of the present world, and his desire for public acclaim, were always accompanied by a sense of the transience of human life and fame. In Africa, the celebration of Scipio and his achievements is preceded by a dream, in which the protagonist’s dead father speaks the following words:

In the end, your Rome, though ruined, will live out her allotted span. She will come to the last age and will perish with her world[...]Nothing in mortal affairs is lasting. How can a man and his people hope for what mother Rome cannot? The centuries will slip by easily. Ages will pass. You hasten towards death; you are a shadow, a shadow, weightless ash or a whisp of smoke, which even the wind moves. For what purpose is glory gained by blood? To what purpose are great labours in a fleeting world?[...]Live unconstrained by time, for the time to come will destroy you and the name gained by great deeds. Those things you think enduring will quickly perish.
Virtue alone, which does not know death, can endure. That alone is the way to the heavens.\textsuperscript{383}

It could be thought that these contradictions complicate and undermine the overall purpose of the support and promotion of the Trinci signoria. In fact, this is not the case. These images again give the humanist message that a good leader, while aspiring to the stature of the most memorable figures of the past, is also ready to examine their actions - to imitate their best qualities and reject their worst. The good leader understands the desire for peace after a prolonged period of strife; he can see that personal power needs to be tempered with merciful justice; that he needs to balance the need for appropriate grandeur against the temptations of a decadent lifestyle. Such a man is aware, too, that worldly achievement is transient, and the only true goal is virtue. In short, he knows that he needs to ‘examine himself as though gazing in a mirror’ on a regular basis. Setting the Trinci within this thoughtful context presents them as forward-looking and self-aware rather than blindly emulative. A more cynical view would be that for Ugolino himself - consummate politician as he was - these images also had another appeal. The ambivalence and ambiguity of ancient models gave him the freedom to cast his own persona in whatever mould seemed appropriate: he could select and adapt his style of government to changing circumstances, but always find an ancient and glorious precedent to support his choice.

As will be seen again in the Camera delle Rose, next door, a theme that had been used elsewhere in prestigious princely and civic contexts is here appropriated to the purposes of a rising signore, bringing with it the positive resonances of those other environments. It repositions and interrogates that theme to encourage dialogue and debate. It also generates an awareness of the people who designed and executed the decorations, and hence of a developing court where intellectual and creative activity could flourish. The knowledge of the past and the erudition implied by the images and the Latin inscriptions creates a cultured and learned atmosphere which some visitors would have welcomed. They would have been flattered to be offered the privileged opportunity to enter the debate the room generates, and at the possibility that this might exert some influence over the future of the signoria.

\textsuperscript{383} The words are spoken to Scipio in a dream, by his dead father:
\begin{quote}
Viuet et extremum veniet tua Roma sub æcum/Cum mundo peritura suo./Nec manet in rebus quicquam mortalibus; unde/Vir etenim sperare poest populusque quod alma/Roma nequit? Facili labuntur saecula passu/Tempora diffugiunt; ad mortem curritis; umbra./Umbra estis puluisque leuis uel in aethere fumus/
\end{quote}
Chapter 5. The Camera delle Rose - *vita activa*

Introduction

...among practical pursuits displaying the virtues, politics and war stand out preeminent in nobility and grandeur, and yet they are un-leisured, and directed to some further end, not chosen for their own sakes: whereas the activity of the intellect is felt to excel in serious worth, consisting as it does in contemplation, and to aim at no end beyond itself, and also to contain a pleasure peculiar to itself, and therefore augmenting its activity.\(^{384}\)


This chapter is concerned with one half of the second largest room in the Palazzo Trinci, the Camera delle Rose (Figs. 5.1, 5.2).\(^{385}\) The room is also known as the Sala delle Arti Liberali e dei Pianeti, in reference to the two apparently very different subjects in its decorations.\(^{386}\) This thesis proposes that these separate elements not only operate independently but are also intended to be seen as one. It makes the case, for the first time, that they are brought together by the concept of the ‘active and contemplative life’, developed centuries earlier by Aristotle. Debate about the relative merits of the two aspects of life remained important for early humanists and fed into the self-fashioning of many later princes, as Chapter 6 shows. This chapter discusses the part played by the personifications of the Planets (accompanied by representations of the Ages of Man and the Hours of the Day), shown in one part of the room. Chapter 6 discusses the personifications of the Seven Liberal Arts and Philosophy in the other part and, finally, considers further the combined effect of the two sets of subject matter.

The first section of this chapter – ‘A different kind of space?’ – begins by envisaging what visitors would have seen when the newly decorated room was first displayed at the beginning of the fifteenth century and discusses its possible use. Existing literature has suggested that it was an early form of *studiolo*, although this idea has not been explored in any depth or its meaning defined in this context.\(^{387}\) This thesis follows Dora Thornton’s suggestion that *studioli* can be characterised in terms both of physical use and underlying ideology.\(^{388}\) This chapter considers the room’s likely physical use, while Chapter 6 discusses it further in conceptual terms.

The second section – ‘The Active and Contemplative Lives’ – provides background to the subject matter of the decorations, showing how the notion of the dual nature of the

---


\(^{385}\) Room of the Roses. This name is used in the inventory and the identification is supported by the number of doors and windows itemised there. Coltellini also refers to the room by this name. Anonymous (1458); Coltellini, L. (1770-1780) p.12.

\(^{386}\) Hall of the Liberal Arts and the Planets.


The next section of the chapter – ‘The Planets, the Ages of Man and the Hours of the Day’ – introduces the idea that the presentations of the Planets relate convincingly to the most important elements of the ‘active’ side of the life of a successful signore. It considers the decorations at this end of the room in detail, showing how they appropriate themes from religious, civic and palace contexts, and adapt them in highly innovative ways, often by returning the imagery to its classical roots. It also remarks on the ways in which these decorations evince changing perceptions of time during this period, with the placing of the Ages of Man and the Hours of the Day in the roundels above the Planets calling attention to the temporary nature of power.

This chapter argues that this end of the room avoids simplistic promotion of the Trinci signoria by setting it within the wider context of discussion of the active life, the use of power, and the transitory nature of worldly success – subjects central to humanists at the time. This prompting of debate is familiar from the other spaces in the palazzo, as discussed in earlier chapters, and is itself a reflection of the desire to frame the Trinci signoria as a civilised and cultured institution.

A different kind of space?
The first visitors to be invited into the Camera delle Rose would surely have been captivated by the varied and lively decoration of the room (Figs.5.1–5.8). Although some areas have now suffered damage, every wall was originally completely covered in frescoes. The vivid colours, decorative pattern and heraldic devices, the array of life-size figures (male, female, and animal), the fantastic architectural and natural settings and classical references, all combine to make a dazzling first impression. Skilfully painted trompe l’oeil tapestries, circling the room at eye level, play with the viewer’s perceptions of materials and surfaces, and give an impression of luxury.

The room is slightly smaller than the Sala dei Giganti next door, and the atmosphere is very different. Instead of the static, monumental, almost exclusively male figures of that room, many here are female. Some inhabit the viewer’s space; some are in motion, others relate to each other, displaying interest and involvement in a range of activities. Although the iconography of the main images is classical in origin, the room is unified by motifs that recall the chivalric decorations in the castles of other contemporary princes, such as those in the Castello della Manta or the Castello del Buonconsiglio, mentioned in Chapter 2. In this way, they subtly suggest a sophisticated lifestyle and a degree of leisure, calling to mind the courtly values embodied in the younger figures in the Ages of Man on the bridge.

At the top of the room, above the figures, and following the line of the gable at the ends, is a border of red, green, and blue stripes, with above it a design of red roses and green foliage interwoven with banderols bearing the Trinci motto ‘fα’ (Fig.5.10). This border can be read

---

389 Not only a reminder of the use of the motto on shields and banners in warfare, but also a declaration of piety, since the letters stand for fides adiuvat - ‘faith helps’. 
as a piece of fictive fabric, rolled back to reveal the images below. Under the figures, a few areas remain that also show trompe-l’oeil tapestry with an all-over geometric design of stylised gold roses on a maroon background. This purports to hang from hooks at eye level, the curve between the hooks showing the lighter coloured ‘backing’ of the hanging and suggesting the weight of a real tapestry (Fig. 5.11). The imitation of expensive tapestry in the less costly medium of fresco suggests a desire to emulate more luxurious dwellings; it also demonstrates the skill of the artist in simulating the reality of a range of materials. The reference to a tradition of palace decoration that used heraldic devices and conventional chivalric symbolism, such as the rose, also calls to mind prestigious courtly environments elsewhere and underpins the more innovative and serious content of the main decorations.  

The early naming of this room in the 1458 inventory as the Camera delle Rose suggests that the visual effect of the roses made an impression on contemporary viewers and helped to create a perception of the room as a complete entity. There do not appear to be records of specific events taking place in this room that might point to its original use, as there are for the Sala dei Giganti or the landing area. Although the room is smaller than the Sala dei Giganti, there would still have been space for at least fifty people standing. Such large spaces at this time tended to be multi-purpose, so it seems likely that even if this room was slightly more limited in scale, it was also the setting for a range of public and private events. Its position makes it easily entered from the landing and from the Sala dei Giganti, and it also leads directly onto the bridge, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. This means that it was readily accessible from different parts of the palazzo and from the family accommodation, so it would have been possible to use it for more exclusive or intimate occasions, as well as for formal purposes.

As mentioned earlier, because of the content of the decorations at its other end, showing the Liberal Arts and Philosophy (Fig. 5.1), this room has been characterised in some previous literature as an early form of studiolo or ‘study’. However, this suggestion is made in passing, and exactly what it may have meant at this date in the context of the Palazzo Trinci has not been discussed. Thornton defines studioli in both physical and ideological terms. This section of this chapter considers how far the Camera delle Rose can be seen to possess the physical characteristics she describes: originating as small private areas designed for reading and writing, also used for the storage and display of books, documents and family

---


391 Preyer, B. (1998). Preyer’s evidence relates to slightly later rooms in palazzi in republican Florence. There, large rooms were multi-purpose, hosting ambassadors from other cities, merchants and local officials; visiting dignitaries might use them to host callers. Large rooms were also used for festivities and family events that included women and young people. While based around private celebration, these events were also vehicles for public display and ‘may almost have been open house’.

---
records, and precious objects. Chapter 6 returns to the question, exploring further the ‘ideology’ of the space.

Early depictions of studioli are often associated with the solitary pursuits of scholars such as Petrarch or Saints Jerome and Augustine. They sometimes show a personalised, convenient area within a larger room, with a large purpose-built piece of furniture combining a seat, easily reached storage for books, a lectern or writing slope, and niches for precious or interesting objects (Figs.5.12-5.20). Charles V of France is shown sitting in an elaborate version (Fig.5.19), and Christine de Pizan, who was at Charles’ court, is also shown seated in one – albeit less ornate (Fig.5.20). This construction has been described as an *interno nell’interno* – an ‘indoors enclosure’ - a space that permitted people ‘to withdraw into themselves, to have more intimacy, or engage in a privileged dialogue with others.’

To some extent these depictions may be symbolic rather than representing actual furniture, but it is possible that the Camera delle Rose could have contained a simple version.

The Palazzo Trinci inventory of 1458 (Figs.5.21,5.22) may give some clues as to whether this was the case, although this is nearly fifty years later than Ugolino’s *signoria* and the change of ownership of the palazzo means that it must be treated with caution. Under the heading of the Camera delle Rose it lists:

First, three doors, closed with bolts, and one key and one small bar of iron;
Item, one reading desk and one carrel with chests;
Item, two panelled benches around;
Item, one panelled piece with two doors in it;
Item, one Venetian chair;
Item, one double board, with a pair of new trestles;
Item, two windows with double shutters and cloth coverings;

The ‘reading desk’ and ‘carrel with chests’ could possibly have been an example of the type of furniture described above (the *intorno nell’intorno*), and the ‘panelled piece’ with doors could perhaps have held books, letters or writing implements. The chair is one of only two recorded in the inventory. At the time chairs were a sign of status - it was more usual to sit on benches - and the description of this as Venetian suggests that it may have been distinctive. If these items remained *in situ* from the time of Ugolino, they could provide

---

392 Tuohy also remarks on the positioning of several *studioli* close to a chapel or *oratorio*, although he does not offer any rationale for this. The Camera delle Rose is in fact very near the chapel in the Palazzo Trinci. Tuohy, T. (1996) p.209.


394 *imprima tre usci duppi serrati colli catarcioni et una chiave et una stanghetcha de ferro;/item una lectera et una carigliola colli cassoni;/item banchi duppi actorno et taullati;/item uno taulato con duui usci in ipso;/item una sedia venetiana;/item una taula doppia con uno paro de trespici novi;/item duui fenestre colli usci duppi et inpannate.* Anonymous (1458) fol.16v.
some support for the suggestion of the room as a place for reading, letter-writing and private discussion, at least for some of the time. However, there is no record of books or manuscripts owned by the Trinci, and no mention of further chests or cassoni suitable for their storage in this room, so there is no evidence pointing towards any substantial library or other collection being kept here.

The literature on later studioli does not arrive at a consensus about the ways in which these spaces were used in practice, and doubtless there was variation according to the character of the owner. Writing in 1995, Cecil Clough stressed their private and personal nature:

"The prince's study would have been seen by very few of his subjects[...] The decorative elements of the studiolo reflect this situation and were not intended to impress subjects or visitors with the ruler's 'Magnificence' and its implications for his authority and suitability as a ruler, because they would not have had access."

Even if it was used partly in this way, the Camera delle Rose cannot reasonably be considered small or intrinsically private (given the number of doors leading in from different directions) although doubtless invitation could sometimes have been restricted to a select few. More recently, scholars have also argued for the sociable nature of studioli in practice, especially as a place for the display and appreciation of precious objects and curiosities. Leah Clark shows how many of the valuable items kept there were significant not only for their inherent interest and costliness, but as part of the important symbolic currency of gift-exchange. The studiolo was thus 'social and diplomatic in nature' — a place for display, where conversation, negotiation and the sharing of ideas could take place. The effect could be powerful in later studioli: Andrea Gussoni, Venetian ambassador to Florence at the end of the sixteenth century, described his sense of honour at Francesco de Medici’s flattering invitation to the studiolo usually reserved for his private use, 'where with great familiarity he picks up objects with his own hand from where they are placed, and hands them to me so that I can see them, and so we were occupied for more than an hour'.

Clearly it is not possible to draw direct conclusions about the use of the Camera delle Rose from later examples, but the room would certainly have been an appropriate place to display and appreciate some of the collection of antique sculpture that the Trinci were acquiring, such as the reliefs of the Circus mentioned later in this chapter, whose subject matter complements that of the frescoes (Figs. 5.77, 5.78). In this context, one further possibility has not been previously suggested. What better place than the Camera delle


Rose for Ugolino to keep the papal gift of the Golden Rose in safety, and to show it to selected guests? The golden rose motif on the faux tapestry around the walls would have formed the perfect backdrop for the delicately crafted gold flower (Fig.5.23). The display of this highly prestigious symbolic reward for the Trinci’s long allegiance to Rome would have been an impressive culmination to time spent with the signore in this room. If it was used in this way, the Camera delle Rose would have set an early precedent in Italy for later studioli as spaces for the exhibition and discussion of collections of rare and valuable objects.

It has also been argued that later studioli were places for intellectual debate, and the decorations of the Camera delle Rose would certainly have acted as a prompt for a wide range of conversations. In her discussion of Federico da Montefeltro’s Urbino studio, Jennifer Webb comments that although it may well have been a place of quiet and refreshment for Federico, ‘the attention paid to its sophisticated decorative scheme assumes a larger, and more impressionable, audience.’ She emphasises the importance of playful discussion in exploring serious subjects at Renaissance courts, the wit of conversation mirrored by the visual cleverness of the room. She also suggests that not only were studioli places where courtiers could seek the undivided attention of the prince, they also provided an opportunity for the prince to scrutinise their behaviour in return.398

In practice, the use and purpose of these spaces doubtless varied according to the needs and tastes of their owners. It may be that for Ugolino Trinci, at his stage in life, there was a genuine desire for time for solitary reflection; it seems more likely, though, that given its size, the room was used, in practice, less for individual withdrawal, and more for sociable occasions where the decorations prompted intellectual discussion, and so contributed to perceptions of a civilised signoria. Chapter 6 returns to idea of the room as a studio but focusses on it as an ‘ideological space’ that generated a particular image for its owner. It will argue that in this sense it was certainly a precursor of better known, specially designed later studioli. Thornton defines this as their ‘representative function’ – the creation of a self-image for the owners that involved the idealisation of the ‘retreat of an enlightened individual from public affairs’.399 This function is epitomised by the decorations of the room, which focus on the two aspects of the life of this so-called ‘enlightened individual’: the ‘active life’ of ‘public affairs’, and the ‘contemplative life’ of the ‘ideal retreat’.

The Active and Contemplative Lives

The decorations in the Camera delle Rose have previously been treated as virtually separate entities. The only unifying suggestion has been that Dante creates connections between the Planets and the Liberal Arts in his Convivio, and that this was a source of inspiration.400 Although the members of the court involved in the conception of these frescoes may well have been aware of this work, it seems unlikely that it was a direct source. Dante does not


personify the arts or the planets, but describes their perceived qualities in abstract terms; nor are the pairings he makes followed in the physical positioning of the figures in the decorations.  

It is also true, of course, that there is a connection made between Mercury and the other gods, and the Liberal Arts, in Martianus Cappella’s ‘Marriage of Mercury and Philology’ – the origin of the personification of the Liberal Arts, discussed in Chapter 6 - but this is not made explicit in any way in the decorations either. Personifications of the Planets also sometimes appear together with the Liberal Arts in the earlier encyclopaedic civic and ecclesiastical schemes referred to later in this chapter and in Chapter 6. In these, they are frequently accompanied by other hebdomadal groups such as the Virtues, human crafts and trades, biblical stories, mythical characters, and the sacraments, and specific relationships between the Planets and the Liberal Arts are not established.

However, this chapter makes the case that the Planets and the Liberal Arts in this room not only carry independent meanings but have also been carefully chosen to work together, showing the ways in which the Trinci embody both the vita activa and the vita contemplativa. The relationship between the two aspects of life was of great interest to early humanists, and indeed Francesco da Fiano wrote a book on the subject. Sadly, the work is lost, but he mentioned it by name as De beata ac activa et contemplatativa vita, a title that suggests that he put forward a view in which the two were seen to complement each other. However, on a personal level, da Fiano may not have found it so easy to resolve the tension between them. In his letters, the conflict was expressed in heartfelt terms, as he railed against the pressures of his work in the papal curia, which consumed his time to the exclusion of matters that he felt more important, such as study and letter-writing – a problem exacerbated by his need to earn a living. Although to some extent this is a trope that runs through the writing of others at the time, it is sufficiently noticeable for Monti to describe it as un filo rosso - a scarlet thread - running through da Fiano’s correspondence.

In the extract quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Aristotle favoured the life of the mind over the life of public engagement, but the balance between the two remained the subject of debate. For Cicero, for example, effective involvement in political life was superior:

Virtue is not some kind of knowledge to be possessed without using it: even if the intellectual possession of knowledge can be maintained without use, virtue consists entirely in its employment: moreover, its most important employment is the

---

401 In the Convivio, Dante connects the Moon with Grammar; Mercury-Dialectic; Venus-Rhetoric; the Sun-Arithmetic; Mars-Music; Jupiter-Geometry and Saturn-Astronomy. Philosophy is not mentioned in this context. Dante (2018[1304-1307]) II,13.

402 The singular vita and the use of ac and et translate as ‘life that is both active and contemplative.’ The book is mentioned in a letter sent between 1383 and 1384 to the logotheta or auditor of accounts of the Kingdom of Sicily. Da Fiano complains of lack of payment for this work, and for a History of the Kingdom that he had undertaken to write, presumably when he was at the court in Naples. Sabatini, F. (1974) ‘La cultura a Napoli nell’età angioina’, Storia di Napoli, vol.iv, no.2, pp.7-221, p.153.

governance of states and the accomplishment in deeds rather than words of the things that philosophers talk about in corners.404

In Christian thinking, the contemplative side of life became increasingly associated with monasticism, with the New Testament sisters, Mary and Martha, symbolising the different paths open to Christians.405 Augustine, although he might temperamentally have preferred to follow Mary’s example, also had to accept his priestly duty to be involved in the needs of his congregation, so advocated harmony between the two, or genus compositum – the ordered life.

... the study of wisdom consists in action and contemplation so that one part of it may be called active and the other contemplative – the active part having reference to the conduct of life, that is to the regulation of morals, and the contemplative part to the investigation into the cause of nature and into pure truth.406

Thomas Aquinas explored the subject in detail, ultimately concluding:

Consequently, those who are more adapted to the active life can prepare themselves for the contemplative by the practice of the active life; while none the less, those who are more adapted to the contemplative life can take upon themselves the works of the active life, so as to become yet more apt for contemplation.407

Aquinas’ view would have been especially important – and reassuring - to Federico Frezzi, who as a member of the Dominican order, had accepted the bishopric of Foligno over monastic seclusion, and was closely involved in the life of the city.

In his discussion of the qualities that lead to (Christian) Virtue, Dante refers to Aristotle:

We must know, however, that we may have two kinds of happiness in this life, according to two different paths, one good and the other best, which lead us there. One is the active life, the other the contemplative life; and although by the active, as has been said, we may arrive at a happiness that is good, the other leads us to the best happiness and state of bliss, as the Philosopher proves in the tenth book of the Ethics.408

For early humanist thinkers these were not simply intellectual concepts, but at the root of their sense of themselves as human beings. Petrarch explored the question repeatedly from different angles, both in his writing and in practice. Involved for some time in the court of the Carrara in Padua, he also became a supporter of Cola di Rienzo, the popular leader who seemed for a while to offer hope of political renewal. Petrarch was deeply

408 Dante (20018[1304-1307]) IV,17.
committed to Cola’s cause, agitating on his behalf and writing to him with advice and support, but never took up the actual business of government. For him, the question of the two lives manifested itself also in terms of the tension between public acclaim (which reached its height in his crowning as laureate by Robert of Anjou) and the vita solitaria of reading, writing and thinking that he enjoyed when he spent time in the countryside near his house in Vaucluse. Although it was a life of otium, or leisure, it was not however, idle:

If I also must take thought for it, either because of my moderate talent or my immoderate desire for fame, seeing that I have not yet tamed the latter with the curb of a rational mind, ought it not to be my first aim to have my leisure as remote from idleness as my life is from active affairs?

Those humanists who were directly involved in government, such as Coluccio Salutati and Leonardo Bruni, had somewhat different views. Scholars have found the range of opinions expressed by Salutati on the subject difficult to see as a coherent whole. It seems likely that this reflects the effort to reconcile the tensions inherent in his own life. He too, recognised the value of solitary thought, but as a political realist he put a new emphasis on its expression through the individual’s contribution to society, based on the love of patria, the motherland:

She created us, she ends our lives, from the first of these we came into being: and for that reason, we, collectively, owe her our care.

Bruni, too, recognised the difficulties. Ultimately, though, he arrived at a compromise:

Both kinds of life have their proper esteem and merit. The contemplative life is, to be sure, the more divine and rare, but the active is more excellent with respect to the common good. Thus, both in private and in public life, whatever we do excellently

---

413 *Illa nos creavit, illa nos tuetur, ab illa quod primum est, originem trahimus: qua re pre cunctis nobis esse cure debet.* Salutati (1891[14th c.]) *Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati* (ed. F. Novati), Rome, Tipografi del Senato, p.27.
414 In his lives of Dante and Petrarch, Bruni discusses not only their relative literary merit, but their involvement in public life. He argues that Dante was of greater value in active, civil life because he took up arms for the Republic; but that Petrarch was wiser in choosing a quiet and leisured life instead of involvement in disputes and civil factions. Ianziti, G. (2012) pp.177-178.
and creditably either for the sake of ourselves, our country, or those we hold dearest, it all comes from prudence and the virtues connected with it.\textsuperscript{415}

Most importantly for the Palazzo Trinci, Francesco da Fiano would have been aware of the debate. Besides writing a work on the subject, as mentioned earlier, he was a correspondent of Salutati, and a member of the papal curia at the same time as Bruni. Although he was not as directly involved in politics as either, he would have understood the wider implications of the discussion, as well as having personal experience of the choices and pressures it raised. It seems highly likely, then, that da Fiano’s concern with the subject - and perhaps Frezzi’s too - led to the suggestion that it was an appropriate basis for the decorations in the Camera delle Rose. The \textit{vita activa} of the Planets, exemplifying the responsibilities of the \textit{signore} to the \textit{patria}, and to his family, complements the \textit{vita contemplativa} of the Liberal Arts, discussed in Chapter 6. The ultimate value of the latter is recognised by the centrality of the figure of Philosophy in the frescoes. The two lives are contrasted, but also linked by their concern with future generations, and by an underlying spirituality. Both also contribute successfully to a dual perception of the Trinci as deeply committed to public life and, simultaneously, aware of the life of the mind - and conscious of the tensions inherent in combining the two. The use of this serious and topical subject matter in the palace of a \textit{signore} is exceptional at this early date, and points to its use by later princes, as Chapter 6 shows.

The Planets, the Ages of Man, and the Hours of the Day

The decorations at the south end of the Camera delle Rose comprise personifications of the Roman planetary gods representing the days of the week, accompanied by another series of the Ages of Man, set within roundels showing the Hours of the Day (Figs.5.5-5.8). This combination of subject matter appears, again, to be unprecedented, and the presentation of each separate element is also highly unusual, pointing to deliberate choices being made. These decorations are identified in existing literature simply with the theme of ‘time passing’.\textsuperscript{416} This theme was frequently used elsewhere, in courtly and civic environments, to promote notions of continuity and order, and echoes of this are no doubt present in the Palazzo Trinci. However, the presentation in Foligno is in fact highly innovative, changing the focus to the \textit{vita activa} – the life of public affairs and government that daily occupied the Trinci – accompanied by underlying reminders of its temporal and temporary nature.

Medieval and Early Renaissance conceptions of Time

For a long period leading up to the commissioning of the Palazzo Trinci frescoes at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the measurement of time for ordinary people had been fluid. The length of an hour varied according to seasonal changes in the duration of daylight, and the rhythm of life was closely related to the natural order of rural tasks. If daily time


was measured at all, it was by the church: the ringing of bells marked the times of prayer
for monasteries and churches, and religious festivals punctuated and enlivened the year.
From the twelfth century, this recurring rhythm was represented visually in calendars
within devotional works, especially books of hours.\footnote{125} These became increasingly
decorative, including illustrations with zodiacal signs and ‘labours of the months’, relating
the religious year to the natural world in the context of divine purpose.\footnote{126} Conventionally
the ‘labours’ were shown in terms of seasonal agricultural work performed by peasants
(Figs.5.24-5.26). Although natural events were often depicted with great attention to
realistic detail, they were also idealised, creating a reassuringly familiar and predictable
world - a reminder of the individual’s place within God’s eternal plan.\footnote{127} In some luxurious
books of hours, such as the well-known example belonging to the Duc de Berry, this
conventional imagery was used to support a personal agenda, associating the ruler with
natural order (Fig.5.27). Individual power and a luxurious courtly lifestyle become aspects
of a hierarchical society in which the peasants’ labours of play an idealised part. As Panofsky
comments, ‘The life of the plowman is seen through the eyes of those who do not plow.’\footnote{128}

In the extreme north of Italy, from the same date as the Palazzo Trinci decorations, the
theme was used in frescoes in the Castello del Buonconsiglio in Trento (Figs.5.28,5.29).
Here too it suggests a privileged and entitled courtly existence within a hierarchical
society.\footnote{129} This approach reached its apotheosis in the frescoes in the Salone dei Mesi in
the Palazzo Schifanoia, Ferrara, commissioned by Borso d’Este in the late 1460s (Figs.5.30-
5.32). As Mary Zaho comments, ‘One can imagine Duke Borso d’Este – divus Estensi –
standing triumphantly in the centre of the Salone dei Mesi, watching as the city of Ferrara,
his courtiers, the planets and the stars revolve around him.’\footnote{130} The theme of time has
become a way of demonstrating the dependence of continuity and order on Borso’s
magnanimous rule.

This convention, based on the monthly, rural cycle, survived well into the sixteenth century,
and was also used in civic settings, again to support the status quo and the continuity
of government, albeit communal rather than individual. In the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena,
Lorenzetti’s fresco of Good and Bad Government (Figs.5.33-5.37), dating from 1338-1340,
uses this familiar imagery to support the political purposes of the city’s communal
government. Above the countryside where peasants perform seasonal labours, Securitas
holds a scroll proclaiming the safety of all under the rule of law.\footnote{131} The huge scheme in the

\footnote{125} A large body of literature includes, e.g., Wieck, R.S. (2001) Time Sanctified: The Book of Hours in
\footnote{126} The ‘labours of the months’ also appear in church decoration and in civic works such as the Perugia
fountain.
\footnote{127} Hourihane, C. (ed.) (2007) Time in the Medieval World: Occupations of the Months and Signs of the
Zodiac in the Index of Christian Art, University Park (PA), Penn State University Press, pp.liv-lv.
\footnote{128} Panofsky, E. (1966) Early Netherlandish Painting, 4th edn., Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Press,
p.66.
\footnote{131} Senza paura, ogni uomo frinco camini elavorando semini ciascuno, mentre che tal comuno manterrà questa
dona i sovrania quel alevata arei ogni balia.
Sala della Ragione in Padua (Figs.5.38-5.40) is also structured around the months of the year. Here, the cyclical pattern of time, encircling the whole room, suggests stability and continuity, while the human activity within that pattern is controlled by the law and subject to moral and social judgements. Like the earlier Sienese scheme, this statement of civic values and expectations remains tied to natural rural cycles.

The use of the theme of Time at the Palazzo Trinci is very different. While still suggesting an underlying sense of order by referencing the cyclical movement of the planets, and the recurring stages of human life, the decorations of the Camera delle Rose draw on newer ideas, especially changing concepts of time developing in civic settings. With the invention of clocks, and the coinciding rise of the merchant class, a shift began from the rural, seasonal cycle associated with religious festivals to a more secular and urban framework. Time could now be measured more precisely and became more closely associated with economic value: the length of working hours or the time taken to travel for a trading journey. Public clocks, such as the very early Paduan example (Fig.5.41), besides demonstrating the extraordinary skill and astronomical knowledge of their designers, became an increasingly important symbol of civic order and prosperity.

Alongside this development - and related to it - was a change in philosophical attitudes to time. The Church had always taught that time was teleological: human events were seen in the context of eternity and were only important as part of God’s purpose for creation. Although salvation remained the ultimate spiritual goal, early humanists were gradually arriving at a different emphasis. Increasingly, personal fulfilment during the present life on earth was also perceived as important, with time seen as a resource not to be wasted. Humanists looked back, for example, to the Stoic philosopher, Seneca, who saw time as a precious commodity to be treasured and exploited. In his *de Brevitare Vitae* – ‘On the Shortness of Life’ - he argued that human beings can, and should, choose how they spend their lives:

> It is not that we have a short time to live, but that we waste a lot of it. Life is long enough, and a sufficiently generous amount has been given to us for the highest achievements if it were all well invested. But when it is wasted in heedless luxury and spent on no good activity, we are forced at last by death’s final constraint to realize that it has passed away before we knew it was passing.
Petrarch expressed very similar views in his letters:

The value of time is incalculable. I used not to value time at its price [...] time was the last thing in my thoughts. Now I see, it should have been the first.\(^{427}\)

His *Trionfo del tempo* (Triumph of Time) explores the theme at length, his personal psychological experience adopting ‘mythic form’ through his poetry.\(^{428}\) Following the earlier ‘Triumphs’ of Love, Chastity, Death and Fame, the ‘Triumph of Time’ was written about twenty years after the earlier poems, about four years before Petrarch’s death. The whole poem has a powerful sense of urgency, beginning with the image of the sun speeding across the sky in his chariot: ‘I harness four horses with such zeal, I devour the ocean, and spur and lash, and do not slow down for a mortal man’s reputation.’ Petrarch laments the brevity of life (‘this morning I was a child, now I am old’) and ends: ‘Greedy Time overcomes and takes away everything [...] so Time triumphs over reputations and the world’.\(^{429}\)

Just as da Fiano had a personal sense of lack of time, an awareness of the brevity of human life also underlies Federico Frezzi’s *Quadriregio*, which suggests that he, too, may well have had a direct input into the composition of the Foligno scheme. At numerous points in the poem, the poet is reminded that the time available for his quest is short:

Let us take our leave from here now; time is short and the place distant, from where we make the first step up to heaven...

The sky turned in time; and when I fell, the dawn came, and the sun was already touching the horizon...

I saw that time hastens and does not stay still and can never be retrieved once it is lost...

So, he (man) runs towards death every day, moved onwards by time, which wishes to pass, and because it is gone, never returns.\(^{430}\)

\(^{427}\) *Inaestimabile tempus est...Non aestimabam tempus suo pretio...tempus ultimum erat. Nunc video, primum esse debuerat.* Petrarch (1350s) *Trionfo del tempo*, 11.

Petrarch’s feelings were also doubtless influenced by his experience of surviving a time of natural disasters followed by the devastation of the Black Death in 1348, in which he lost many friends.


\(^{429}\) *Quattro cavai con quanto studio como/ pasco nell’oceano e sprono e sferzo,/e pur la fama d’un mortal non domo!*

*nel quale/stamani era un fanciullo et or son vecchio.’*

*Tutto vince e ritaglie il Tempo avaro[,][…]Così ‘l Tempo triunfo i nomi e ‘l mondo.*

Petrarch (1350s) *Trionfo del tempo*, 59-60,142-143.

\(^{430}\) *Facciamo omai di qui nostra partita:/il tempo è breve, ed è distante il loco,/ov’è d’andar al ciel prima salita.* Federico Frezzi (1839[c.1400]) *Libro 2*, I, 160.

*dì tempo il ciel rivolse; ché, quando io caddi, veniva l’aurora,/e già toccava l’orizzonte il sole.* Federico Frezzi (c.1400) *Libro 2*, III, 12.

*vedi che ‘l tempo corre e non si folce/e non s’acquista mai, quand’è perduto.* Federico Frezzi (c.1400) *Libro 2*, V, 163.
The decorations in the Palazzo Trinci recognise and address these changing perceptions. In the division of each day into hours, and their emphasis on the brevity and urgency of human life, they show the influence of humanist concerns, while also recalling earlier spiritual routines. They shift from a rurally based presentation associated with zodiacal influence and seasonal labours to the highly unusual use of the Planets in the order of the days of the week, associating the Trinci with a different, more dynamic, and more urban set of values.

The Planets
Images of classical gods representing the Planets began appearing during the trecento in a small number of civic and ecclesiastical settings, with sculpted figures on the Florence campanile (Fig.5.42) and the Doge’s Palace in Venice (Fig.5.43). Personifications of the planets also appear in the large encyclopaedic frescoed scheme in the Sala della Ragione in Padua, mentioned earlier (Figs.5.44-5.46). The closest connection of the Planets with the Liberal Arts is in Andrea di Bonaiuto’s fresco of The Triumph of St Thomas Aquinas (1366-7) in the Spanish Chapel, Santa Maria Novella, Florence, where they appear immediately above each Art (Figs.5.47,5.48). Their presentation in these contexts varies, but there are enough similarities for them to be identifiable, at least when all seven are seen together. However, they often depart significantly from the original iconography of Roman gods and goddesses. Jean Seznec argues that these classical roots had been forgotten in Europe as the study of astronomy moved to the east. The iconography was absorbed and modified there, returning to the west when interest in the subject began to revive there. The presentations in Florence and Venice, as well as in contemporary manuscripts, demonstrate this cultural fusion, with the figures further adapted to the purposes of their contexts. Dieter Blume identifies each figure as representing a specific social group, with each corresponding to its own astrological picture. ‘Saturn is the farmer, but as a farmer, also a wartime wanderer; Jupiter seems like a city patrician, the respectable office-holder in the city and Church hierarchy; Mars is a knight or a mercenary soldier; Venus [...] a beautiful noble woman, representing at the same time virtue and love and sexuality. Mercury [...] is a scholar and, like most intellectuals of the time, a cleric.’ This presentation clearly suited civic projects, where each could be seen to represent a group within the comune.

The Planets also appear, unusually, in an ecclesiastical setting, in the Church of the Eremitani in Padua (Fig.5.49). Some of the Eremitani frescoes were destroyed in World War II, but pre-war photographs show the complete series.

_Cosi a morte corre in ogni giorno/mosso dal tempo, che volando passa/e, poichè ito, non fa mai ritorno_

Federico Frezzi (1839[c.1400]) Libro 2, VI, 116.


433 Some of the Eremitani frescoes were destroyed in World War II, but pre-war photographs show the complete series.
– one male, one female - exemplifying the seven ‘Ages’ that they were traditionally supposed to influence. However, in Padua the Planets are in the Ptolemaic order, not the order of the days of the week, as in the Palazzo Trinci.\(^{434}\) Although they could have been one source of inspiration, the Eremitani frescoes serve also to highlight the innovation of the scheme in Foligno.

The only other known example in a private dwelling is in the Rocca d’Angera (Figs.5.50,5.51) where the Planets were shown presiding over sections of a narrative fresco celebrating a victory by Archbishop Ottone Visconti, signore of Milan. Here, the Planets are seen to influence the personal success of Ottone, suggesting the inevitability of his victory. This fresco dates from between 1277 and 1314 – a hundred years before the Palazzo Trinci decorations.\(^{435}\)

In the Palazzo Trinci the presentation of the Planets has distant echoes of the confident association of the prince with the cycle of the natural world seen in books of hours and some palace decoration. It also references the connections with the civic values of order and law. However, underlying these, and substantially altering the emphasis, are changing attitudes to time, especially the humanists’ sense of its transience. In addition, the new interest in classical values has led the artists back to the original classical presentation of the planetary gods, enabling a novel connection between their spheres of influence and the main occupations of the signore, and holding the values they embody up to scrutiny.

As mentioned earlier, in Foligno, the vigorous figures of the Planets are placed, crucially, not in the usual Ptolemaic order, but in the order of the days of the week which are named after them.\(^ {436}\) This departure from convention appears to be unique at the time, and its significance has not been pointed out. In effect, it changes the focus from traditional associations with astrology and natural annual cycles and alerts the viewer to the fact that these decorations have a specific, distinctive message. The emphasis is now on a much shorter weekly, daily – even hourly – timescale, associated with the rhythms of urban life and with responsibilities carried out by the Trinci signore on a regular basis.

These images are placed, appropriately, at the southern end of the room, which overlooks the main square of Foligno (Fig.5.6), where the daily business of the city took place:

\(^{434}\) This is the order identified in Ptolemy’s 2nd CE Greek language *Almagest*. Based on a geocentric model, it begins with the closest to earth - the Moon - then Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and finally Saturn. Jones, A.R. (2020) ‘Ptolemaic System’, in *Encyclopedia Britannica* [Online]. Available at https://www.britannica.com/science/Ptolemaic-system (Accessed 14 November 2021). The youngest ‘Age’ is associated with the Moon, through to the oldest with Saturn.

\(^{435}\) Galassi suggests that the presentation of the Planets in the Rocca d’Angera is more like that in the Palazzo Trinci than later civic versions, because of its reference to antique models. Galassi, C. (2009) p.285. However, four of the figures are lost, and while Sol and Luna are shown in chariots, they are very static. The only other surviving figure, Saturn, is very different from Saturn in the Palazzo Trinci. At the Rocca d’Angera he is shown seated on a throne, holding an *ouroboros*, the alchemical symbol of eternity.

\(^{436}\) Luna, the Moon, is associated with Monday (*dies Lunae* in Latin); Mars-Tuesday (*dies Martis*); Mercury-Wednesday (*dies Mercurii*); Jupiter/Thursday (*dies Iovis*); Venus-Friday (*dies Veneris*). The Italian names are closely derived from the Latin (*lunedì*, *martedì*, *mercoledì*, *giovedì*, *venerdì*). The Italian *sabato* for Saturday more likely derives from Hebrew ‘Sabbath’, but is conveniently close to *dies Saturni*. Sunday becomes *domenica*, the Christian ‘Lord’s day’.
markets, legal procedures, celebrations and processions, and sometimes violence and disturbance. However, instead of being part of it, they preside over it, from the palazzo above. In this way, they move away from civic versions, where they can be seen to represent groups within the comune, and become more closely associated with the signore, looking down from his windows – inspiring, directing and controlling affairs. The figures step out into the immediacy of the present and venture into the same space as the viewer, exemplifying and celebrating the range of signorial activity.

Most visitors to the Camera delle Rose would have entered from one of the doors in the west wall. Their eyes would have alighted first on the female figure opposite, dressed in a silvery robe, and standing in a chariot drawn by two prancing white horses (Fig.5.52). Their gaze would have followed the clockwise motion of her chariot, past five other figures (Fig.5.2), towards a crowned male character opposite (Fig.5.69). Painted in fiery scarlet and crimson, he drives another chariot, again clockwise, this time with four spirited horses straining forwards across the sky. Sadly, there is now considerable damage to some of the five central figures, and one is completely lost, but they still make an impression of strength, energy, and movement. All of them face the same direction as the chariots, but they are positioned slightly forward, standing on the earth, bringing them closer to the viewer’s space. Above them are roundels with smaller, more static individuals, in little rural scenes, set within them (Figs.79-85).

Fortunately, there are inscriptions, in Latin, that help to identify the main figures and provide guidance – somewhat cryptic - as to their significance. They make it clear that gods personify the heavenly bodies known at the time, that is, the Luna (the Moon) (Fig.5.52), Mars (Fig.5.56), Mercury (Fig.5.60), Jupiter (Fig.5.63), Venus (no longer visible), Saturn (Fig.5.66), and Sol (the Sun) (Fig.5.69). The use of Latin in the inscriptions (as opposed to Italian for the Liberal Arts, and the Ages of Man above) alerts the viewer to the emphasis on the classical origin of these figures. Given the general move in depictions of the Planetary Gods away from this, as described earlier, the versions at the Palazzo Trinci are unusual in their determined references to Roman iconography. The representations of the gods in this room clearly attempt a return to the visual characteristics and symbolism favoured by classical Rome – even if they are not classical in style – and eschew the variations that had evolved in the ways described earlier. Seznec notes that a return to classical versions of the planets began in northern Europe later in the fifteenth century, due to the rediscovery and copying of images from early manuscripts, but it seems to be happening earlier in Foligno. The inspiration was, perhaps, literary as much as visual, from works such as Boccaccio’s Genealogia deorum gentilium, an early example of the

437 Caciorgna gives transcriptions of the originals, or, where these are missing, uses notes taken by Jacobilli. Caciorgna, M. (2001) pp.406-420. She also suggests possible early sources, such as Isidore of Seville’s Etymologies, where some words and ideas are recognisable, but the phrasing is not identical. Isidore of Seville (2006[600-625CE]) Etymologies (trans. and ed. S.A. Barney, W.J Lewis, J.A. Beach and O. Berghof), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, BkV,xxx-xxxiii.

reviving interest in classical mythology, referred to previously, in Chapter 3. These classical references suggest the presence, within the court, of individuals with an erudite knowledge of ancient mythology, and an appreciation of antique artefacts that were coming to light at the time in Rome and elsewhere. This would have added to the prestige of the decorations and given them intellectual authority.

In addition, in Foligno, alongside the positive echoes of the use of these images in civic contexts, the return to their original form re-associates the Trinci with an imagined golden era and reinforces their important political links with Rome. The deliberate return to classical iconography opens the way for the identification of the signore with the original essentials of each individual: Mars as the warrior; Mercury, the messenger and god of eloquence, diplomacy and commerce; Jupiter the powerful ruler and judge; Venus, representing love, marriage and procreation; and Saturn, god of seedtime and harvest and wise older counsellor. These spheres of influence were the areas of life in which Ugolino had proved himself and to which his heirs would succeed.

However, in this part of the room – as is so often the case in the Palazzo Trinci - the viewer is not presented with an unequivocal celebration of the signore’s achievements, but with a combination of images and words that prompts questions and discussion. The inscriptions, perhaps surprisingly, while helping to identify the figures, tend to dwell on their negative aspects: the destruction of war, the lustful aspects of love, Saturn’s associations with the profane. This is reminiscent of the presentation in the Sala della Ragione in Padua, where each god or goddess is surrounded by small scenes – some negative - representing the multi-faceted nature of their influence. In Foligno, as elsewhere in the Palazzo Trinci – especially the Sala dei Giganti – oppositions and contrasts provoke close attention to meanings.

As described earlier, the composition begins at the left, on the east wall, with Luna, the Moon, for Monday (Fig.5.52). She is no longer a static figure positioned above a representation of the sea, as in many contemporary versions, although the inscription refers to these, mentioning the moon’s control over the tides:

> Everything cold and wet is subject to me. So, I announce whatever is ordered by the other stars.

In these frescoes, instead, Luna is shown moving gracefully across the night sky, driving a chariot pulled by two horses, as in classical depictions (Figs.5.53-5.55). Boccaccio supports this presentation, referencing early written sources: ‘Above all they said she was given a two-horsed chariot’ and ‘Isidore in his Etymologies says that this chariot was drawn by two

---

439 Boccaccio (2011[1350-1375]).
440 In the Sala della Ragione, Venus, for example (Fig.5.44), appropriately for a space used for hearing legal cases, oversees situations including courtship, married life, lovers’ tiffs, parenthood, and even apparent rape. Human beings, although influenced by the planets, make choices that are subject to moral and social judgement.
horses.’ The eye is led onwards by Luna’s movement, to the planetary gods representing the other days of the week.

The first, Mars (for Tuesday) is an impressive character (Fig.5.56). Although he is highly individualised, the viewer is reminded of some of the figures of the Nine Worthies on the bridge and in the Sala dei Giganti, and their associations with the military prowess of the Trinci. Viewers familiar with Frezzi’s Quadrirregio might also have recalled his connection of Mars with the foundation of Foligno, mentioned in Chapter 3. The inscription emphasises the threatening nature of war, linking with the roundels above in its reminder of the inevitability of death:

For I, contemptuous spreader of blood and war, call all to death; so, I bear the name of Mars.

It is hard to tell Mars’ age, as his face is partially damaged, but from his stance he is a mature man. He stands firmly, ready for battle and armed with a lance and two swords. However, unlike the earlier versions from Florence and Venice and a later one from Padua he is not mounted or dressed in contemporary armour. This contrasts with the armour worn by soldiers in other frescoes in the Palazzo Trinci, even though they show scenes from the ancient past. Instead, an effort has clearly been made to show him as a Roman soldier, albeit an exaggerated, supernatural one, and it seems likely that the artist had sight of classical statues or reliefs (Figs.5.57-5.59). Instead of the fourteenth-century plate armour and ‘bassinet’ helmet most often shown in other images of Mars from this period, in Foligno he wears a typically Roman short tunic with chest protection, shoulder plates, an apron of weighted straps to protect his abdomen, and open-faced helmet. Instead of the sandals of a legionary, the artist has provided him with red hose and soft ankle boots. By association with this classical version of the god of war, the military prowess of the Trinci is elevated to mythical status.

Mercury (Fig.5.60) representing Wednesday, is again very different from the scholar or merchant seated at a desk or counting table, depicted in many civic schemes and identifiable with solid members of communal society. Here, instead of the sedentary, money-counting merchant, he is a dynamic figure, running forward energetically. Most noticeably, he has the winged heels of classical versions (Figs.5.51,5.52) although again, the artist has given him boots rather than the more usual sandals. He differs from classical

---

444 The Nine Worthies on the bridge and the soldiers surrounding Ilia all wear recognizably contemporary armour, including the relatively recent ‘sallet’ helmet.
446 The pommel does not appear to have been taken from a classical model; it is very similar to a ‘scent-stopper’ design - relatively new in the early quattrocento. Oakeshott, E. (1998) The Sword in the Age of Chivalry, Woodbridge, Boydell Press, p.104.
representations in some respects, though, which mostly show Mercury as youthful and naked apart from his sandals, and sometimes also wearing a winged helmet and holding a *caduceus* and perhaps a purse. Here, he is fully dressed as befits his middle-aged appearance. He has a lined face, and his grey hair is tied back; perhaps he represents a particular individual, especially as he is dressed in the red and green of the Trinci. The inscription reads:

I Mercury, able to join with my brothers, favour the work of making deals and the art of fine speech.\(^{447}\)

The words reinforce Mercury’s difference from the clerical civic versions. The reference to fine speech creates a link with the figure of Rhetoric in the Liberal Arts and reminds the viewer of the importance of that subject in the education of young men, in preparation for public life, as discussed in Chapter 6. His outstretched right hand, holding a scroll, makes it clear that he is communicating an important message, and recalls the many acts of diplomacy and negotiation associated with the Trinci.

The image of Jupiter - Thursday - next to him, has been badly damaged, and only his head and part of his upper body can still be seen (Fig.5.63). However, although he is dressed in what appears to be *quattrocento* clothing, he, too, reverts to classical models (Figs.5.64,5.65). Rather than the seated figure of a judge or a bishop more often shown in contemporary versions, he clearly holds in his right arm a sheaf of arrows, representing thunderbolts, suggesting the Trinci’s ability to exert effective authority. However, the inscription supplements the image by referring to the association of Jupiter with religion. As elsewhere in the palace, pagan imagery appears to be accommodated here in support of Christian faith. This aspect of Jupiter is emphasised by the connection with Saturn, who, as will be seen, is associated with the contemplation of old age:

I, Jupiter, take to myself the works of religion, and all the gifts of faith. Saturn, my foster-father, is closest to me.\(^{448}\)

These words, then, associate the Trinci with the defence and promotion of faith, at the same time as the strong government suggested visually. This religious commitment had been demonstrated not only by the Trinci’s continued support for the papacy, but also by their support for local religious institutions and the piety of individual members of the family.\(^{449}\)

Unfortunately, the figure of Venus, for Friday, is completely obliterated so it is not possible to tell if she was represented in a way that also supported a positive image of the Trinci –

---


\(^{449}\) See Chapter 1.
perhaps by enabling a link with Costanza as a wife and mother. The inscription is somewhat ambivalent. It reads:

I, Cyprian, always disperse forbidden worship and the fires of love, shining more brightly than the other stars.\textsuperscript{450}

The verb \textit{fundo} (translated here as ‘disperse’) can mean ‘establish’ but also ‘spread out’ and ‘put to flight’, but the words certainly evoke the ‘sinful’ aspects of love. The unusual use of the name Cyprian has not previously been noted. It refers to Venus’ birth in Cyprus, and may be a reference to Dante, who calls her this at the beginning of \textit{Paradiso}, Book VIII, when he enters the realm of Venus.\textsuperscript{451} The image may perhaps have contrasted with the words, however, to fit with the decorous depictions of women elsewhere in the Palazzo Trinci. It could also have been an exception to the classicising approach of the other figures, which would frequently have shown her naked and often in an erotic light. A more modest, clothed version might have been thought more suitable, for example, such as the one on the Florence campanile, where she holds a pair of smaller figures representing young lovers, suggesting marriage and the continuity of the generations. Certainly, the notion of Venus as presiding over fertility, marriage and the family would have comfortably reflected the role of Costanza and other women of the Trinci, as well as celebrating Ugolino’s successful fatherhood of male heirs.

Saturn - Saturday – (Fig.5.66) is also almost totally lost but can be identified by the sickle that he holds, again a classical representation (Figs.5.67,5.68). Of all the Planetary gods, his significance is perhaps the most complex. He was associated with time, the seasons, and hence also with fertility and agriculture - the sickle, that cuts down living things, combines these attributes, all of which, of course, recalls the wider theme of Time in the decorations. His identity was often conflated with that of the Greek god Chronos, who presided over an ideal ‘golden age’. However, he also devoured his own children, fearing that they would usurp him – a story frequently shown in medieval images - so he was by no means a straightforward model. The inscription points to this conflicted identity:

\begin{quote}
Whatever is unfortunate, whatever is disgraceful, is yours, Saturn: except when you distribute harvest.\textsuperscript{452}
\end{quote}

However, it has been argued that during the fifteenth century Saturn’s ‘rehabilitation' took place, as his association with one of the four ‘humours’ that governed the physical and


\textsuperscript{451} Although this book mentions many kinds of love, much is devoted to discussion of heredity and makes the case for different talents within society, which would be relevant here. Dante (2012[c1308-1320]) \textit{La Divina Commedea} (ed. and trans. R. Kirkpatrick), London, Penguin Books, Paradiso, VIII.

mental makeup of human beings was developed further. ‘Saturnine’ characters ‘tended to be troubled and in pain’ – but this was also thought to lead to contemplation and creativity. As humanists searched for a figure who could represent the melancholic character of the vita speculativa sive studiosa – the questioning or studious life - the figure of Saturn was adapted to fulfil this role. This interpretation would fit convincingly into the Palazzo Trinci scheme. Placed below the figure of Decrepitas, representing the final stage of life, it would suggest the ending of the public life of the signore, represented by the other Planets. After bringing peace and prosperity to Foligno, it is time to reflect. This would also echo the final stage of the Ages of Man on the bridge, discussed in Chapter 2, in evoking a somewhat melancholy but thoughtful old age. It also links with the other end of the Camera delle Rose, suggesting old age as a time to focus more strongly on the vita contemplativa.

A substantial part of the depiction of Sol can still be seen (Fig.5.69). This is also very different from the static fourteenth-century versions. Visually complementary to Luna, he is a vigorous male counterpart to her delicate female charioteer. Wearing a golden crown, his crimson hair streaming behind him, he stands in a chariot driving four energetic horses, which spring forward into the air. The accompanying words point to the regenerative, life-giving power of the sun, balancing the suggestions of mortality elsewhere in the scheme and acting as a reminder that a new generation follows the old:

Nothing increases and grows without my natural light, and everything is warmed in my outpouring of heat.

This image is also clearly based on classical models, but here, too, the artist individualises the figure and brings it to life. There is no single, obvious, visual source, but Sol is shown as a charioteer in early manuscripts, mosaics and wall paintings and the artists could, perhaps, have seen similar images on items such as coins found in Rome or elsewhere (Figs.5.70-5.74). There are also similarities with medieval depictions of Elijah being carried to heaven in a fiery chariot (for example in Padua) (Fig.5.75) and St Francis, envisioned as a latter-day Elijah (for example in Assisi) (Fig.5.76). These images could well also have been in the artists’ minds, but any Old Testament and Christian connections are not explored. It seems likely that inspiration came, too, from earlier literary sources such as Ovid’s Phaëthon, in which Phaëthon, son of the Sun, asked to be allowed to drive his father’s chariot for a day, but, unable to control it, drove too close the earth, nearly setting it on fire – a story on

453 ‘the Italian Renaissance desired a picture of Saturn comprising not only the two aspects of the Saturnine nature, the wicked and the mournful as well as the sublime and profoundly contemplative, but also revealing that ‘ideal’ form which seemed attainable only by reverting to genuinely classical examples.’ Klibansky, R., Panofsky, E. and Saxl, F. (2019) Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Quebec, McGill Queens University Press, p.209.


which Boccaccio based an early work.\textsuperscript{457} Other poets use the image of the sun’s chariot in passing, which implies that educated readers would have been aware of the mythology and visual associations surrounding it. Petrarch, for example, describes nightfall as the time ‘when the sun dips his golden chariot in the sea, darkening the air and my mind’.\textsuperscript{458} Dante, too, uses the metaphor, when he observes the sunrise: ‘The poet saw clearly that I was totally amazed at that chariot of light, rising between us, and the north-east.’\textsuperscript{459} Despite representing Sunday, there is no reference in the inscription to the day as the Christian day of worship – the figure remains classical and pagan, its significance in its dynamic movement, suggesting the speed of passing time.\textsuperscript{460}

The image of the speeding chariot is also referenced in two classical stone reliefs that were probably part of the Trinci’s collection of antiquities, both showing the Roman circus in action (Figs.5.77,5.78). It seems highly likely that the room for these to be displayed would have been the Camera delle Rose, to complement the frescoes and as an additional source of interest and discussion.\textsuperscript{461} The visual connections are clear, but the symbolic connection between time and the design of the circus was also known through written sources. For example, the sixth-century writer, Cassiodorus, explained the construction of Augustus’ Circus Maximus as a micro-cosmos and the chariot race itself as a metaphor for the passing of time. It was:

...a space which contains images of the universe. Hence, they placed twelve gates for the twelve signs of the zodiac[...]the biga was invented as an imitation of the moon, the quadrigna of the sun. The outriders’ horses [...] imitate the speed of the morning star, the sun’s forerunner [...] the whole race is run with seven goals, an image of the week’s recurring seven days. The goals themselves, like the zodiacal divisions, have three peaks around which the swift quadrignae wheel like the sun. They signify the limits of east and west [...] nor is it by chance that the rule of the contest is for a decision in twenty-four heats, as the hours of the day and night are assuredly summed up in this number.\textsuperscript{462}

Cassiodorus was well-known by scholars; those who were familiar with these parallels would have enjoyed explaining the relationships between the carvings and the frescoes to

\textsuperscript{459} Ben s’avvide il poeta ch’io stava / stupido tutto al carro de la luce, / ove tra noi e Aquilone intrava, Dante (2012[c1308-1320]), Purgatorio, IV.
\textsuperscript{460} It has been suggested that Christ was sometimes presented as Sol in early Christian art, but Bardill argues that this was rejected at an early stage by orthodox Christians. In any case, there seems no suggestion of this connection in the Palazzo Trinci. Bardill, J. (2012) Constantine, Divine Emperor of the Christian Golden Age, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp.327-331.
\textsuperscript{461} Perhaps, as on the landing, of the developing idea of the paragone between sculpture and painting.
those who did not understand them or discussing the similarities with other well-read visitors to the room.463

 Appropriately, during his allotted span, Ugolino himself had successfully embraced all the activities symbolised by the five planetary figures. Like Mars, he was adept in the art of war. He was also extremely accomplished diplomatically, communicating, like Mercury, between the different players in the contemporary political scene. Mercury’s placing directly over the main square also acts as a reminder that, under the Trinci, commerce could flourish. Ugolino governed with the decisive firmness suggested by Jupiter and his thunderbolts. Although, sadly, the presentation of Venus is impossible to determine now, the importance of marriage and procreation to the Trinci is indubitable; the positive attributes of the goddess were embodied in Costanza and she and Ugolino had produced a large family. Saturn, next to her, despite the negative aspects of the inscription, is placed below the image of old age as ‘constant’ and can be seen to suggest Ugolino as the wise elder statesman and counsellor, sowing the seeds of future prosperity and peace. In combination, we are presented with the epitome of the lifetime’s activity of an effective signore. As he moves into old age and adopts the role of elder statesman, Sol points towards another generation, studying Grammar and Arithmetic and the other Liberal Arts, ready to take up the reins of power and participate in every aspect of public life. The Ages of Man, in the roundels above, underline this progression while simultaneously reminding us of the finite nature of a single lifetime.

The Ages of Man and the Hours of the Day
The Ages of Man, set in circular frames representing the Hours of the Day (Figs.5.79-5.84) remind the viewer that however successful the signore’s life may be, its length is limited. The aging process cannot be escaped, and the passage of time is marked out on a cyclic, daily basis. In the Camera delle Rose, the Ages are presented very differently from the series on the bridge, described in Chapter 1, and many of its precedents, although their significance is still recognisable. On the bridge, the Ages are single, courtly, male figures drawing on familiar iconography seen frequently in psalters and other manuscripts. The most noticeable innovation in the Camera delle Rose is the unusual predominance of female characters (four, possibly five, of the total seven). All are dressed in elegant, modest, contemporary clothing in subdued colours. In contrast to the vigour and animation of the gods below, these characters have a stillness about them, and female viewers, especially, might have been reminded of Mary, sister of Martha, mentioned earlier, and the version of the contemplative life that she exemplified. The two oldest women (Figs.5.79,5.84) sit sadly on the ground, heads in hands; the youngest (Fig.5.81) gazes wistfully in her mirror; the next (Fig.5.83) kneels and nurtures a child. The two boys (Figs.5.80,5.82) included in the series are both shown as very young and innocent. Even if the elder is embarking on courtship, he is clearly not ready for the world of the mature

man. The association of each figure with a representation of a house, surrounded by flourishing green trees, places them within a refined and protected domestic world. The boys are still part of this environment; the women cherish children, provide support, bear witness to events, and mourn loss. Their presence creates continuity, measured out in regular intervals, but also an underlying sadness, emphasised by their beginning and ending with the two oldest, weeping, figures.

Unlike the Planets, these images appear to have an identifiable visual source, as Galassi notes, in an illustration from Francesco da Barberino’s fourteenth-century Documenti d’amore. (Figs.5.86,5.87). The similarities in composition between this illustration and the Foligno frescoes are striking. In both, the outer circle of each roundel shows the sun and moon in positions that progress from the previous one, the sky shaded to show the time of day. In the manuscript, each is labelled according to the liturgical hours, beginning with Matutina (very early morning, before dawn), then Aurora (dawn), Tertia (terce, or third hour), Sexta (sixth hour), Nona (nones, or ninth hour), Vesper (evening), and Completoni (compline, or end of day). Prima (Prime), which usually came after Aurora, is not included, presumably to arrive at a more convenient seven divisions, fitting the seven Ages. As Barberino explains in his text, he starts his ‘ages’ unusually, in the darkness before dawn. However, the first image in the manuscript is lost and the name is unclear. It is followed by Infantia at dawn, then Pueritia, Adolescenteia, Juventus, Senectus and Decrepitas at compline. Given that this list does not account for the usual seventh ‘age’, Senilites, it seems likely that this was the figure placed in the first roundel. Much of the detail of the manuscript illustration is difficult to discern, but the Palazzo Trinci frescoes certainly appear to follow its overall composition. Indeed, Senilites (Fig.5.79) is placed in the first roundel of the frescoes – a highly unusual decision, which supports the proposed connection between the two works.

Barberino’s book was extremely popular for a long period and is an early example of the conduct literature that developed into advice for princes, such as Castiglione’s sixteenth-century Il Cortegiano. Other literature has not remarked that this source creates a highly appropriate underlying link with the images at the other end of the Camera delle Rose, which are more explicitly concerned with the education of the younger members of the family, as well as reminding the viewer of the aristocratic boys’ pastimes shown on the bridge. The Documenti d’amore comprises verses in Italian, addressed to young people.

---

465 Galassi reads the accompanying word as ‘nox’, (night).
466 Three images are very similar: third from left in both manuscript and fresco shows a young girl looking in a mirror, in profile, dressed in a full-length red dress – representing Pueritia. Adolescenteia, next to her, holds a circular object, perhaps a wreath (although in the fresco the figure is male and in the manuscript female). Next to that, the manuscript figure labelled Juventus shows a kneeling, maternal figure, holding a child. Although in the fresco the child is almost lost, the woman adopts a very similar position.
467 Barberino also wrote a companion book, the Reggimento e costumi di donna. Catherine Harding argues that conduct books were read by both men and women, and ‘worked to construct the identity of a household.’ She also emphasises the interplay between words and images as an aid to memory in the Documenti.
of good family, giving advice on moral and social behaviour and practical matters: ways of inspiring trust and respect, power and gender relationships, and the art of command. This advice is accompanied by Latin paraphrases as well as an encyclopaedic commentary giving scientific and literary information. Overall, it stresses respectful behaviour to all, albeit based on a deeply hierarchical conception of society, appropriate to the sons of an aspirational signorial family such as the Trinci. Barbarino also discusses the virtuous life, with chapter headings including Discretion, Patience, Hope and Prudence, and ending with Eternitas - eternal love. A short section within the chapter on Prudence is entitled *Quale debba essere che va a reggere alcun popolo* - ‘How someone who is going to rule people should behave’. It begins *Vai tu in signoria?* – ‘Are you going to enter the *signoria*?’ and advises:

Maintain the honour of that land, watch over it, keep it safe, as the need arises and whatever happens at the time[...]and to summarise, in conclusion, do not deprive yourself of good and wise counsel.469

The unusual positioning of the figure of old age at the beginning of the fresco cycle (Fig.5.79) emphasises the recurring nature of time: old age and death are part of a continuous process of regeneration. Associated with the time before dawn, and placed close to the figure of Luna, she sits leaning her head on one hand. The inscription is in Italian (not Latin as for the Planets).470 It reads:

Old age, so bitter and strong, until the time when, night and morning, all strength has already declined until cruel death extinguishes it.471

She is followed by a well-dressed young boy (Fig.5.80), who looks back towards her. He is placed just above Mars, and to his right, his arms outstretched, almost as if pleading with the god of war. The words also suggest the suffering of the vulnerable, rather than the optimism and well-being of childhood:

Like the dawn, infancy shows itself absorbed in its first stage, wailing at great disaster and for the misery of our life.472

---


Ma tien di quella terra/l’onor, e guarda, e serra/con il bisogno occorre/o quell tempo, che corre[...]et in somma conchiudo/che se tu non s’e nudo/di sanio e buon consiglio.

Caciorgna makes the point that the combination of the two languages in one scheme is unusual.


The next two inscriptions – youth and adolescence – are lost, but the figures show a young girl, first (Fig.5.81), holding a mirror, facing a young man in the next roundel (Fig.5.82), holding a circular object in his hands, and facing towards her. Placed closest to Mercury and Jupiter respectively, they are capable of numerous interpretations. The mirror can suggest vanity (as in the description of Caligula in the Sala dei Giganti) or thoughtful self-examination; here, the demeanour of the girl supports the latter. Mirrors were also often given as courtship or marriage gifts.\footnote{Anonymous (2016) \textit{Renaissance Wedding Gifts}, London, Victoria and Albert Museum [Online]. Available at http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/r/renaissance-wedding-gifts/ (Accessed 14 November 2021).} The young man appears to be offering her another gift in return, although it is not clear what this could be. It seems most likely that the two figures are intended to suggest this relationship, especially as the next figure is closely connected with marriage and parenthood.

The next image appears to have combined two figures in overlapping frames (Fig.5.83). In the left one there seems to have been a male figure, the midday sun shining above, and in the right is a kneeling woman. They are situated closely above the position where Venus would have been depicted. The inscription refers to the main purpose of marriage:

\begin{quote}
At the sixth hour the adult stage begins; the organ is now perfect for generation, in the same way as before, to preserve the human race with carnal devotion.\footnote{Alla sesta hora fase el tempo adulto;/L’organo è ià perfecto a generare,/Simile a sé ha po già
\end{quote}

It also suggests the negative side of Venus’ influence:

\begin{quote}
At the ninth hour, in youthful strength everything is wholly adapted to wantonness, leaving behind honest and godly things, distant from sense and knowledge.\footnote{All’ora nona in iovinil potenza/Tutta intera apta alle lascive,/Ommettendo le cose honeste e
\end{quote}

Above the figure of Saturn, only the frame of the image can be seen, but the inscription supports the interpretation of the god as representing contemplation and wise counsel:

\begin{quote}
This age seems consistent with the evening, full of sense, settling down in honesty; most firm and steadfast in its actions, it absorbs itself in virtue and study.\footnote{Consistencia a vespero se somiglia/Plena di senso in honesta cessante,/Nell’opere sue firmissima et
\end{quote}

Finally, above Sol, the setting sun, is the figure of a sombre, aged woman, with her head resting on one hand in a similar pose to the first figure in the scheme, again showing the sadness of old age (Fig.5.84). The message is further underlined by the inclusion of what appears to be an eclipse in the border surrounding this figure – the shading over of the sun suggesting the ending of life (Fig.5.85). It seems likely that this refers to an eclipse of the
sun that was visible in Foligno in 1386, the same year in which Ugolino was appointed capitano del popolo.\footnote{This possibility has not been noted before. Espenak, F. (2003) Solar Eclipses Visible from Rome, 1000BCE-3000CE, Greenbelt (MA), NASA [Online]. Available at https://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/SEcirc/SEcircEU/RomeITA0.html (Accessed 14 November 2021).} It would have been a memorable event, and perhaps seen as ominous. The words reinforce the image, although there is a sense of achievement as well as sadness:

In old age, action completed, the green and lively humour is now lacking; life is feeble and full of pain because the time is almost fulfilled.\footnote{In senectute et complectorio fatto/Manca ià el verde et radicale humore,/La vita inferma et piena di dolore/Però ch’el tempo quasi è satisfatto. Caciorgna, M. (2001) p.420.}

The inscriptions’ emphasis on lascivia - wantonness – in relation to the young, is perhaps intended as a warning. Visually, though, the young boys are presented in a similar way to the figures accompanying Grammar, Rhetoric and Arithmetic, and in the other Ages on the bridge, as courtly and respectful in their demeanour. This is reinforced by the link with Barberino’s work, widely used as a handbook for young people of good family. The younger women are graceful and modest; the older women are respectable, if somewhat melancholic, giving an impression of the loss and loneliness of old age, especially, perhaps, associated with widowhood. In their quiet testament to events, they remind us of the women on the ‘balconies’ in the Sala dei Giganti (Figs.4.6-4.8), and the soldiers surrounding Ilia at her death (Fig.2.24), inviting us to share in the act of observation and witness, and to empathise with their feelings. Overall, this series of the Ages of Man evokes the humanists’ sense of the fleeting nature of time, creating a sobering context for the vitality and immediacy of the Planets.

The Hours of the Day

The Hours of the Day, besides acting as a framework for the Ages of Man, are also a reminder of older ways of measuring time, originally especially associated with monastic orders, where the day was structured around prayer, meditation, and liturgical rituals alongside simple work. Foligno did not yet have a civic clock, but the bells from the campanile of the cathedral would have been heard through the windows of this room, still marking this daily pattern. For members of religious orders such as the Dominican, Federico Fretti, the reference to the hours would have acted as a reminder of habitual daily spiritual exercise involving the use of the memory and the close examination of texts for meaning. For many members of the laity, too, the regular recital of prayers and psalms was part of the fabric of life, in the form of the Hours of the Virgin, which had become widespread in Europe over the previous two centuries, as Marian devotion had grown, often promoted by the Dominicans.\footnote{Brown, R.F. (2017) Mary and the Art of Prayer: The Hours of the Virgin in Medieval Christian Life and Thought, New York (NY), Columbia University Press, ch.1.} The Hours of the Virgin also formed the basis of books of hours, mentioned earlier, which, along with images and other material objects, created sacred space within the pious home: devotional practice was not restricted to church...
attendance. In books of hours, biblical passages, psalms, prayers and stories of saints were accompanied by miniatures and bas-de-page images that complemented and supported each other, encouraging a way of looking and responding that is subtly prompted here. As the next chapter shows, there are several further reminders of the Virgin at the other end of the room.

Spiritual routines also underpinned the public rituals of secular power. In France, Charles V carried out a regular round of symbolic behaviours at set times of day, including regular attendance at mass, as well as public audiences, meals and leisure pursuits, that ensured that he was visible to his subjects as well as spending time with his close advisers. Later Italian courts adopted similar practices. Federico da Montefeltro followed a routine that involved mass, the distribution of food to the poor, readings of serious texts at mealtimes, and audiences with his subjects, as well as riding and exercise. Ercole d’Este, too, began the day with charitable giving, followed by mass and later, vespers, as well as listening to sermons. These exemplary rituals were not seen to be in conflict with lavish spending on building, hunting, and other types of entertainment, as well as participation in extravagant public festivals, but they continued to punctuate court life with reminders of spiritual duty and the routines of piety. They also provided predictable, reassuring opportunities for the prince to appear to his subjects with appropriate solemnity. It may be that in Foligno, too, the reminder of the liturgical hours in the decorations was associated with a structure of religious devotion within the daily court routine, ensuring the regular visibility of the signore – reinforcing his status and creating a sense of stability and continuity.

Conclusion
This end of the Camera delle Rose retains the underlying sense of order suggested in earlier visual depictions of the theme of ‘time passing’. However, it departs radically from the courtly versions that showed the prince enjoying a luxurious existence against the background of his subjects’ seasonal labour. It also rejects the civic versions of the planets associating them with the occupations of groups within the comune. Instead, through its use of original classical iconography, it associates the Trinci signoria with dynamic involvement in every aspect of public life, on a recurring daily basis.

The viewer’s response alternates between admiration for the activities symbolised by each Planet, and recognition of the message of transience from the roundels above.

481 Books of hours were often bilingual, combining Latin and vernacular. Latin text (here attached to the Planets) invited attention to the words’ musicality, facilitating ‘sensory attunement and memorization’. Italian text (here attached to the roundels above) focused attention on the meaning and content, ‘offering suggestions for meditation’. Sterponi, L. (2008) ‘Reading and meditation in the Middle Ages: lectio divina and books of hours’, Text & Talk, vol.28, no.5, pp.667–689.
Serendipitously, the progression from Mars to Saturn fits well with the course of the life represented by the Ages of Man, so that admiration for human endeavour is placed in the context of mortality and spiritual routine. The occasional negative comments in the inscriptions challenge viewers (including the signore) to consider the potential pitfalls of allowing themselves to fall under adverse influences. In the background is always the reminder of the swiftness of passing time, putting worldly achievement into perspective.

It seems as if the designers of this part of the room understood that too simplistic a presentation of the achievements of the Trinci would be counterproductive. Unlike the early decorations in the Rocca di Angera, where a specific military conquest was directly attributed to the favourable influence of the planets, here they become part of a meditation on time, achievement, and the nature of power. This more complex presentation places Ugolino at the centre of a sophisticated court where such discussion was allowed, and even encouraged; it certainly reflects the interests of the humanists who were present in Foligno at the time. Ugolino had also reached a point in his life when these questions were considered pertinent on a personal level: having proved himself as a military leader, diplomat, judge and counsellor, as well as fathering a large family, he was entering the period when he was expected to reflect on the past and look towards eternity, passing the reins of government on to the next generation. The next chapter (Chapter 6) shows how the decorations at the other end of the room expand on this, offering a complementary road to personal fulfilment through the vita contemplativa. At the same time, they support the future legitimacy of the heirs to the Trinci signoria, which would be based on an education appropriate to a changing world.
Chapter 6. The Camera delle Rose - *vita contemplativa*

Introduction

I say that it seems to me that princes ought to pay attention to each of the two lives, but more especially to the contemplative life[...] and as it is always the chief duty of princes to command, they should often see with their own eyes and be present when their commands are carried out, and should also sometimes take part themselves, according to the time and need; and all this constitutes action: but the aim of the active life ought to be the contemplative, as peace is the purpose of war, and leisure the purpose of endeavour.

Baldassare Castiglione, *Il Cortegiano* (1528).485

This chapter shows how decorations at the north end of the Camera delle Rose, depicting the Liberal Arts and Philosophy (Fig.5.1), relate to the contemplative life, complementing the representation of the Planets at the other end of the room (discussed in Chapter 5), and positioning the Trinci *signoria* as both dynamic and thoughtful leaders for the future. By the time Castiglione was writing, the dual nature of the persona of the successful ruler had become to some extent codified; the formation of this idea in Foligno is a remarkably early example of a mode of self-presentation adopted by many later princes.486

The chapter’s first section analyses the images of the Liberal Arts in Foligno in detail. It shows how they differ from earlier versions, especially those in religious and civic contexts. In the new environment of the Palazzo Trinci, earlier associations with the scholastic study of theology or law are set to one side. The prestige and value of learning are still vital factors, but here they enhance the reputation of the Trinci *signoria*. This chapter also introduces the ways in which these images explore new ideas about education circulating amongst early humanists. By association with these ideas, the Trinci are shown to be preparing future generations of the family to govern effectively. By close analysis of the images, this chapter argues that while referencing the positive associations of earlier versions, the subject is cleverly appropriated and carefully adapted by the artists, using new techniques of illusion and realism to engage the viewer’s attention.

The next section – ‘An early studiolo?’ – returns to the question of the Camera delle Rose as a *studiolo*, proposing that in its use of the theme of the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*, the room is a forerunner of later such rooms in ideological terms, if not in terms of actual use. In this, the room paves the way for the later self-presentation of powerful individuals through their construction of specially designed, dedicated *studioli* that communicated very similar messages about their owners.

485...*dico che a me pare che I principi debbano attendere all’una e all’altre delle due vite, ma più però alla contemplativa...e l’commandar è sempre il principal officio de’ principi, li quali debbano pero ancor spesso veder con gli occhi ed esser presenti alle esecuzioni, e secondo il tempo e i bisogni ancora talor operar essi stessi; e tutto questo pur participa della azione; ma il fine della vita attiva deve esser la contemplativa, come della guerra la pace, il reposo delle fatiche. Castiglione (1528) Il cortegiano, Rome, Sapienza, IV, 26. [Online]. Available at http://www.bibliotecaitaliana.it/testo/bibit000135 (Accessed 13 November 2021).

The chapter concludes by reiterating the unusual nature of the room’s decorations at this early date. In moving away from the chivalric themes popular with other signori, they demonstrate an awareness on the part of the Trinci of the need to find a new mode of self-presentation. The influence of humanist thinkers is evident in the choice of subject matter, as is the role of the artists in its innovative presentation.

The Liberal Arts and Philosophy

Earlier versions

The decorations centred on the north end of the Camera delle Rose show personifications of Philosophy (Fig.6.34) and the Seven Liberal Arts - the trivium comprising Grammar (Fig.6.22), Rhetoric (Fig.6.23) and Dialectic (Fig.6.24), and the quadrivium of Arithmetic (Fig.6.25), Astronomy (Fig.6.29), Geometry (Fig.6.30), and Music (Fig.6.33). For viewers unable to identify them immediately, there are inscriptions in Italian – the language most accessible to the greatest number - briefly describing the subjects they represent. Many viewers would not have needed these, though, as they would have been aware of the concept of the Liberal Arts from their own education and would have enjoyed recognising the activities the figures perform or the objects they hold. Some would also have seen them portrayed in other contexts and would have been able to make comparisons. Apart from the artists and humanists involved in creating these images, messengers, ambassadors, merchants and members of the mendicant orders, for example, visited other cities, and some would have seen the works of art displayed in them. Foligno’s close relationship with Perugia would have resulted in some individuals seeing the figures of the Liberal Arts on the Fontana Maggiore (Fig.6.5) in the main square there. Others perhaps noticed them on the pulpits in Siena (Fig.6.2) or Pisa (Fig.6.3) cathedrals, or the campanile (Fig.6.6) in Florence. Some might have examined the fresco of Thomas Aquinas in Santa Maria Novella that includes them (Fig.6.4). The Arts also appear in roundels beneath Lorenzetti’s fresco (Fig.6.8) in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena. The subject matter was sufficiently well-known, too, to appear in other elite dwellings at the time. Two examples survive, one at the Palazzo Datini in Prato, and the other in the Palazzo Stochi-Isidori in Perugia (Fig.6.13): both might have been seen by merchants or civic representatives. Those

---

487 Caciorgna gives transcriptions of the inscriptions from the originals, or where these are missing, from Jacobilli’s earlier record. Caciorgna, M. (2001) pp.420-426. She relates the verses to the works of Martianus Capella and Alain de Lille, and to Bartolomeo di Bartoli, but although there are some similarities in phrasing, there are many differences in content, and they are far briefer. Stahl, W.H. and Johnson, R. (ed. and trans.) (1971) Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts, New York (NY), Columbia University Press; Alain de Lille (1973[12th.c.]) Anticleiuadanus (trans. J.J. Sheridan), Toronto, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies; Dorez, L. (ed.) (1904[14th.c.]) La canzone delle virtu e delle scienze di Bartolomeo di Bartoli da Bologna, Bergamo, Istituto Italiano d’Arti Grafiche Editore.


489 For example, Ugolino’s eldest son, Niccolò, attended Biordo Michelotti’s wedding in Perugia in 1397, and would have been accompanied by servants and others. Nessi, S. (2006) pp.87-108.

who had seen representations of the Arts elsewhere would have realised that their depictions in the Palazzo Trinci pay attention to tradition; they might also have appreciated the artists’ many departures from convention.

Personification of the Liberal Arts originates in Martianus Capella’s fifth-century work, *The Marriage of Mercury and Philology*. Its influence was long-lasting, not only as literature, but also as a textbook. Indeed, Francesco da Fiano, the notable humanist discussed in earlier chapters, knew the work. Other literary works, for example Alain de Lille’s *Anticlaudianus*, maintained its imagery, but within a Christian context. Martianus’ device of personification constituted a ready-made basis upon which future artists could build, although his frequently amorphous descriptions of physical appearance would have been difficult to translate into stone or fresco. It seems doubtful, then, that artists, including those at the Palazzo Trinci, ever referred to Martianus as a direct source. Certainly, by the twelfth century, a visual ‘shorthand’ for the personifications, employing easily recognised emblems, gestures, and physical characteristics had developed. In these, Grammar usually holds a book on her knee and has a child (sometimes two) by her side. She also, sometimes, holds a cane for chastisement. Rhetoric holds a rod and is sometimes also with a child; Dialectic (often old) holds two snakes or a scorpion; Arithmetic finger-counts or holds an abacus; Geometry has a set-square or compass; Astronomy has an astrolabe or armillary sphere; Music has a portable organ or bells, occasionally other instruments. There are variations to these, such as Grammar suckling children. However, these are infrequent and the identity of the Liberal Arts as a group is generally instantly recognisable. Occasionally, but by no means always, the female personifications are accompanied by male practitioners of each subject.

From the twelfth century, versions of the Liberal Arts appeared around the portals of French cathedrals, especially in cities associated with educational establishments, such as Chartres (Fig.6.1). Several versions in Italy are also in religious settings, the earliest in the form of sculptures around the base of the central column of a pulpit in Siena Cathedral (1265-1268) (Fig.6.2), followed by a slightly later pulpit in Pisa Cathedral (1301-1310)
(Fig.6.3). In both, the Liberal Arts literally and metaphorically support the preacher in interpreting the Christian message. The Liberal Arts also feature in The Triumph of St Thomas Aquinas, mentioned earlier (Fig.6.4), underlining the importance of learned argument in defeating heresy – a central mission to the Dominicans.

The earliest version in a civic context is the Fontana Maggiore in Perugia (1277-8), also by Nicola Pisano, with his son (Fig.6.5); Galassi identifies this as the most obvious visual source for the Trinci images. Not surprisingly, the iconography of the figures is very similar to that in the Pisano pulpits. The fountain was not only an expression of civic pride but also an enormous engineering achievement, supplying fresh water to the city. The inclusion of the Liberal Arts around its lower tier underlines the importance of intellectual activity to the city’s prosperity and reputation; in 1276 there were already plans for higher education for residents.

The 1330s Florence campanile (Fig.6.6) has images of the Liberal Arts by Andrea Pisano (Fig.6.7), again around the lower level, suggesting a supporting role. They are combined with representations of practical activities, which also contributed to the city’s flourishing economy. Old Testament scenes, Virtues, and Sacraments also feature, and, unusually, contemporary versions of the Roman gods representing the days of the week, although not directly linked with the Liberal Arts. Like Perugia some years earlier, Florence was planning a university, and the Arts, on the east wall, face towards the selected site.

Education was also valued in Siena; the city had a ‘School’ with a Professor of Grammar as early as 1241. However, the Liberal Arts do not appear here in an encyclopaedic civic monument, but in Lorenzetti’s complex fresco of Allegory of Good and Bad Government in the Palazzo Pubblico (1338-1339). The setting here is the Sala delle Nove – the council hall of the nine elected officials of the republic – connecting education intimately with the maintenance and promotion of communal government (Fig.6.8). Set in medallions below the depiction of Good Government, the Liberal Arts (Fig.6.10) were positioned directly opposite a series of medallions showing depictions of tiranni – ‘tyrants’ who ruled absolutely, rather than by election (Fig.6.9). Most of these medallions are lost, but the best preserved is named as Nero; another shows one figure killing another (Fig.6.11). This direct antithesis of the Liberal Arts with historical figures is apparently unique and emphasises the contrast between the unthinking violence of autocratic rulers and the calm rationality of the Liberal Arts, associated with peaceful communal government. The complex messages of Lorenzetti’s scheme have been frequently debated, but these

---

medallions are rarely mentioned, despite being at eye level. However, it has been suggested that they function to alert the eye to further interpretation of the allegory above, with the symbols of the trivium as a reminder that the Sienese political system rested on persuasion – written and spoken.\textsuperscript{502} They are also seen as belonging to ‘the picture of the well-ordered civitas’.\textsuperscript{503} In his wider discussion of the whole scheme, Patrick Boucheron makes points that are also relevant to Foligno, interpreting the grotesque portrayal of the central figure in the fresco of Bad Government as an expression of specific anxieties on the part of the Nine. Boucheron argues that ordinary people elsewhere observed signorie bringing peace and prosperity, and no longer thought of them as threatening or ‘tyrannical’. This was intensely alarming to those who held elected power and who ‘truly loved civic liberty[...]’The discourse of peace was being hijacked by the lords.’\textsuperscript{504} This chapter argues that this is precisely what was happening in Foligno, where Ugolino Trinci had achieved a period of peace that enabled acceptance of his signoria. More than this, in using this familiar imagery, the Trinci signoria was now commandeering the visual language of the comune, turning its symbolism around, to show itself, rather than civic authority, as a reasonable and moderate form of government.

New attitudes to education
As mentioned above, images of the Liberal Arts were especially appropriate to places and institutions that valued education. For the church, control over education gave control over doctrine and belief; civic authorities saw it not only in terms of economic benefits and prestige, but also as underpinning peaceful, just government. The long-standing scholastic approach to pedagogy used the disputation and argument of dialectic to teach the expertise in theology and law that supported these functions. However, new themes emerge in humanist writings about education at the beginning of the quattrocento. There was now a focus on the education of future rulers, with increasing importance being given to the study of Grammar and Rhetoric, in the widest terms, including the study of history and literature. This shift in emphasis did not necessarily replace the established scholastic preparation of students to practice law, medicine, or theology; but for the sons of individuals such as Ugolino there were now different priorities, fitting them for the business of government.\textsuperscript{505}

One of the earliest to express these ideas was Pietro Paolo Vergerio the Elder, a member of the papal curia with Francesco da Fiano. Vergerio’s thinking on the education of princes is encapsulated in a letter addressing Ubertino, son of Francesco Novello da Cararra, ruler of Padua, about 1402-1403. As mentioned in the Introduction, there is reason to think that the Trinci modelled themselves on the Carrara, and as will be seen from discussion of the images later in this chapter, it seems that Vergerio’s ideas had certainly reached Foligno. Vergerio

proposes a balanced approach, including moral education, the Liberal Arts, physical and military training, care for the body and appearance, and leisure activities.

...it is particularly fitting that those of lofty rank, who cannot say or do anything in secret, be instructed in the principal arts in such a way as to be held worthy of the fortune and rank they possess. For it is only fair that those who wish all the greatest things to be due to themselves, be themselves obliged to excel in the greatest things. Nor is there any more firm or solid rationale for ruling than this: that those who rule be judged by all to be worthiest to rule.\footnote{Translation from Kallendorf, C.W. (trans.) (2002) \textit{Humanist Educational Treatises}, Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Press, pp.4-5.}

For those in public life, Vergerio stresses the benefits of studying Rhetoric, in which he includes dialectic argument, despite its difficulty.\footnote{Kallendorf, C.W. (2002) pp.50-51.} However, he pays most attention to the area represented by Grammar, not simply in terms of linguistic skills, but for the benefits derived from reading: especially literature and history, and primarily the works of classical authors. Incidentally, he bemoans the loss of knowledge of Latin and Greek. He proposes that literary study should be combined with the study of Philosophy, recommending

...for the truly noble mind, and to those who are obliged to involve themselves in public affairs and human communities, knowledge of history and the study of moral philosophy are the more suitable subjects. The rest of the arts are called liberal because they benefit free men, but philosophy is liberal because it makes men free[...].Unless I am mistaken, a third study should be added to these in the case of the public man: eloquence, which is a distinct part of civics[...].The outcome of these studies is to enable anyone to speak well and to inspire him to act as well as possible; this is the mark of the greatest men and the absolutely finest characters.\footnote{Kallendorf, C.W. (2002) pp.38-39.}

Vergerio goes beyond seeing education as the path by which the young ruler can acquire skills and attitudes that will help him to govern effectively, although that remains his central point. He also describes the sheer pleasure of learning and suggests that ‘studies which are burdensome to youth will be pleasant relaxations to age. In this sense they are truly great bulwarks, whether we seek a remedy against sloth or solace in the face of worry or care’.\footnote{Kallendorf, C.W. (2002) pp.38-39.}

These ideas were embraced in later courtly environments. In 1429, Niccolò d’Este, for example, employed Guarino Veronese as tutor to his son, Leonello. Guarino recommended, first, the study of Grammar – comprising Latin, Greek, History and Literature. Rhetoric followed, enabling the student to communicate his knowledge effectively.\footnote{Guarino’s thoughts on education were recorded later, by his son, Battista Guarino, in \textit{De ordine docendi et studendi}. As mentioned earlier, Guarino later advised Leonello on the depictions of the Muses for his Ferrara studiolo.} Again, ultimately, Guarino stressed the personal satisfaction to be gained from study:
We shall add one last thing – last in our system, but not last in the benefits it confers[...] is that students should consider nothing sweeter than this literary leisure, which as Cicero says, ‘motivates an adolescent and delights old age; it adds embellishment to good fortune and offers refuge and solace in adversity; it delights at home and does not distract from public affairs’.\(^{511}\)

As well as the content of education, pedagogic practice was being challenged at the beginning of the *quattrocento*. Although much teaching doubtless continued to use traditional methods, Vittorino da Feltre founded a boarding school known as the *La Casa Giocosa* for the sons and daughters of nobles, including the Gonzaga of Mantua (which was also subsidised for the less well-off).\(^{512}\) Vittorino wrote no theoretical texts, but his approach was recorded by appreciative pupils. The school’s pleasant environment embodied his view that pupils should be motivated by encouragement, not fear - contrary to general contemporary assumptions that beating was a normal part of the process of instilling information into children.\(^{513}\) Moral guidance was at the heart of his approach. Vittorino lived alongside his pupils, setting an example of commitment, concern for others and modest living. In the curriculum, the emphasis was on the study of Latin and Greek history and literature, with the aim of absorbing the values of the ancient world. Consequently, Grammar and Rhetoric assumed more importance than Dialectic - analysis of argumentative structure giving way to overall content.\(^{514}\)

Vittorino also educated girls, but their future role was always going to be different from that of their male counterparts, even if their intellectual abilities were not dismissed.\(^{515}\) However, there is no evidence that any of the female members of the Trinci family were highly educated; their role is presented, instead, as one of inspiration and encouragement. Francesco Barbaro, writing in about 1415, describes women’s role in children’s education as ‘surely rewarding, and certainly the most serious’ wifely duty.\(^{516}\) The depictions of the Liberal Arts in the Palazzo Trinci are, of course, personifications, and there is no suggestion that they represent actual practice of the Trinci, but there is an underlying awareness of these ideas. Barbaro emphasises the natural propensity of the mother to care for her children. She ‘should instruct them in their duty toward Immortal God, their country and their parents, so

---


\(^{515}\) Leonardo Bruni, another member of the papal curia with da Fiano, advised Baptista Malatesta, c1405, proposing a challenging programme of reading. Although admitting that, as a woman, Baptista will never practise the art of rhetoric in public, Bruni argues that it still provides models of taste and elegance of expression. Woodward, W. H. (1996) pp.119-33.

that they will be instilled from their earliest years with those qualities that are the foundation of other virtues’. 517 Training in manners was also crucial. ‘Children should meet all people with a civil demeanour, pleasant countenance and friendly words’, as well as avoiding all ‘pleasures that are dishonourable.’ 518 Barbaro recommends kindness and encouragement, with occasional reproof when necessary, reserving the use of the whip for licentious speech and swearing. He expects women to set an example of modesty and truthfulness and urges them to ensure that children keep silent on matters that they do not understand - mothers should teach their children to say ‘little, unless they are ordered to speak’. 519 He concludes that this early training in behaviour by the mother enables further learning and dignity in later life.

The decorations commissioned at the Palazzo Trinci not only paid attention to contemporary humanists’ ideas about education but used them in fundamentally original ways to promote an image of Ugolino and his family that would help to establish the future legitimacy of the signoria. The next part of this chapter discusses the depictions of the Liberal Arts in detail. It shows that besides an appreciation of new educational ideas, especially regarding the appropriate education of future leaders, there is also an underlying appreciation of learning as a path to personal virtue and spiritual fulfilment, that makes an important contribution to the overall messages of the whole room.

The Palazzo Trinci – the Liberal Arts in their own right
The subject matter of the Liberal Arts was sufficiently well-known for it to appear in two other decorative schemes of elite dwellings roughly contemporary with the Palazzo Trinci, although both were more modest in scale and more conventional. Both combined the Arts with the Virtues and showed them as static figures, formally arranged, with little differentiation between them – in contrast to the lifelike and inventive versions in the Palazzo Trinci. One was in the Palazzo Datini in Prato, dating from the 1390s. Datini was a highly successful merchant, but he appears to have had no political ambitions; although he was elected gonfaloniere in 1387, he saw such activity as a distraction. He spent little time in Prato and preferred to acquire status through his wealth and building projects. 520 He had no heirs, and so no dynastic ambitions, eventually leaving his considerable wealth to a charitable foundation. The Liberal Arts here are now all but destroyed, but documentary evidence shows that they surrounded a loggia where clients were probably welcomed. They were ranked alongside each other and paired with the Virtues, probably with the exponents of each discipline at their feet. 521 It seems likely that the choice of subject was intended to


support Datini’s personal and commercial probity, rather than any wider ambitions, but it was clearly felt to be prestigious and was sufficiently well known to be easily recognisable by those with whom he did business.

The other example, in the entrance of the relatively small Palazzo Stocchi-Isidori, in Perugia, dates either from the 1380s or 1416. Here, the Liberal Arts are placed in roundels on the spandrels below a roof-scheme that originally had figures of the Virtues between each rafter. There were possibly over twenty Virtues which, interestingly, included the Active and Contemplative Lives (Fig.6.12). These figures had inscriptions to identify and describe them. For the surviving figures of the Liberal Arts there are no inscriptions; they are static, conventional figures in classical robes, painted in monochrome, shown literally and metaphorically in a supporting role (Fig.6.13). The frescoes were probably commissioned by the owner of the palazzo, Cornolio della Corgna. Cornolio was from an influential family and was involved in Perugian politics but was best known for a scholarly treatise on agriculture and the natural world, La divina villa, written in his later years. It seems, then, that Cornolio was personally committed to intellectual activity, as well as desiring a virtuous public image. It is not known if these frescoes pre-dated those of the Palazzo Trinci or were done shortly afterwards - and in any case, there is no suggestion that one was a direct source of inspiration for the other. However, given the closeness of Perugia to Foligno there was doubtless some wider cross-fertilization of ideas in the background.

The decorations of the Palazzo Trinci participate in the long-established perception of the Liberal Arts as positive subject matter in various contexts. However, they present them in strikingly original ways, both artistically and intellectually. They support the Trinci signoria while exploring new approaches to education and - ultimately – exemplifying humanist thinking about the contemplative life and the behaviour of a successful ruler. These innovations have not been clearly articulated by any of the commentators on the decorations. The most obvious departure from convention in the Palazzo Trinci is that the Liberal Arts are no longer the supporting cast to the leading players within a much larger scheme. Here, they stand alone at their end of the room, with Philosophy the central figure (Fig.5.1), complementing the Planets at the other end. As Galassi comments, the items the figures carry and the activities they perform are very similar to those in the Fontana Maggiore in

---


523 The Virtues were detached in the 19th.c. and are now in the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest. Three of the Liberal Arts survive, in situ: Arithmetic (shown finger-counting), Dialectic (with two snakes) and Astronomy (holding, unusually, a zodiacal disc). The Virtues include Wisdom, Fortitude, Justice, Thrift and Generosity. Vita Activa’s words are: Colto ò di vostre fiore, sorelle miei per esser più giuliva però ch’io so’ la vostra vita activa – I cultivate your flowers, my sisters, to become more joyful, and so I know your active life. Vita Contemplativa says: Disposto ò el mio desire nel contemplare de le superne rote che sono mosse da quell che tucto pote – My desire is set on contemplating the heavenly cycles, which are moved by that which is all-powerful. Pigler, A. (1967) Katalog der Galerie Alter Meister, Budapest, Akadémiai Kladó, pp.714–716.

Perugia (Fig.6.5).\textsuperscript{525} However, the Palazzo Trinci figures are not set in an encyclopaedic context, and decisions have been made in the presentation of each figure that alter details and take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the different medium of fresco, changing the emphasis and fulfilling a different agenda.

Each figure’s importance is underlined by the addition of an inscription in Italian (Fig.5.8), creating an interplay between word and image that does not exist in the depictions of the Liberal Arts mentioned earlier. Some figures also hold books showing Latin text, further drawing attention to the power of the written word, and highlighting the relationship between the two languages (Figs.6.22,6.23,6.29).\textsuperscript{526} As elsewhere in the Palazzo Trinci, the inscriptions do not give direct guidance as to interpretation; instead, they recall and summarise the work of earlier writers, encapsulating contemporary received wisdom about each subject, and inviting viewers to make connections, draw their own conclusions, and consider the significance for themselves.

Visually, there are many innovations. Unlike earlier versions, including the Perugia fountain, the Palazzo Trinci figures are not set in frames or roundels within a repeated decorative pattern, emphasising their abstract quality. Rather than being represented by standardised, static, quasi-classical figures, they are individualised and lifelike, seated on distinctive thrones. Depicted life-size, they are fashionably dressed and behave like ladies of the court, suggesting an authentic, cultured environment in which the viewer can participate. At the same time as inhabiting the idealised space of their thrones, they share the viewer’s world, adopting similar dress and varied poses and attitudes.\textsuperscript{527} There is a marked facial similarity between some of the figures, for example between Music (Fig.6.33), and the woman dressed in green, white and red, looking down from the fictive balcony in the Sala dei Giganti (Fig.4.8). As mentioned in Chapter 4, it has been suggested that she may be Ugolino’s wife, Costanza.\textsuperscript{528} Even if not intended to portray actual individuals, the dress, hair, and deportment of these figures is that of contemporary upper-class women.

The three male pupils are also presented in a way not seen before, connecting them closely with the court. Carefully differentiated in age, they are dressed in the current fashion worn by young members of the elite. The older two (Figs.6.23,6.25) wear the Trinci heraldic colours of red, green, and white – (the youngest (Fig.6.22) can only be seen to wear red, as the lower half of his body is damaged) – an established practice, certainly by later in the quattrocento.\textsuperscript{529} Such images may have performed several functions. Firstly, on a personal level, serving as a starting point for conversation between father and sons; secondly, demonstrating to visitors that the head of the household ‘fulfilled his...dynastic obligations’.

\textsuperscript{527} Frick, C.C. (2002) Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families, Fortunes, and Fine Clothing, London, John Hopkins University Press, pp.149-178. Their clothing resembles that worn at the time by wealthy Florentine women, although standards could have been different in a courtly environment from republican Florence.
by fathering children. This was an important issue for Ugolino in ensuring the continuity of the signoria; he did indeed fulfil his obligations by fathering twelve children, of whom five were sons. Thirdly, such images showed that the father was educating his sons in an appropriate manner – in this case, crucially, for their future role as signori. The three boys also link with the three youngest figures in the Ages of Man series on the bridge, who are shown at leisure, following the courtly pursuits appropriate to members of a signorial family. At the other end of the Camera delle Rose, similar young boys also appear in the roundels above the Planets. It has not been noted in other studies that, as mentioned in the Introduction, the viewer would doubtless have been reminded of Ugolino’s three oldest sons, Niccolò, Corrado and Bartolomeo, who were to be the joint inheritors of his position as signore of Foligno.

The impression of immediacy is aided by the artists’ technical skill. The medium of fresco enables greater decorative detail and naturalism than small-scale stone carving, allowing facial expressions to be clearly articulated and hair, fabric and fur to be shown with great precision. These opportunities are taken to the full, whereas even in the Spanish Chapel, for example, despite the use of fresco, the figures are static and expressionless, and detail limited. The unusual use of perspective, which employs more than one station point, suggests that the viewer is looking upwards at the top of the thrones at the same time as looking down at the base. The dome in the background of Philosophy’s throne gives an added sense of height and distance (Fig.6.34). All this creates a shifting sensation of being on the same level as the figures: the space between viewer and viewed is collapsed, engaging the audience more directly. The thrones of Dialectic (Fig.6.24) and Arithmetic (Fig.6.25) are placed at an angle that suggests from some parts of the room that they jut out into the space of the viewer; those of Grammar (Fig.6.22) and Rhetoric (Fig.6.23) face directly into the room, having the effect of containing the group and confirming the relationship between the figures. Dunlop sees the combination of realism and artifice here in the context of contemporary discussion about the relationship between art and poetry. She comments that the painter’s ability to imitate reality was also a reminder to seek the meaning behind it: ‘an invitation to a mode of reading’ intended to capture the viewer’s attention and encourage thoughtful interpretation.

The illusionary quality of the painting at this end of the room also elicits a pleasurable reaction of admiration and delight, and it has been argued that then, as now, sensual and

530 Stephanie Miller’s comments relate to slightly later Florentine families, but it is reasonable to think this was also the case in Foligno. Miller, S.R. (2013) ‘Parenting in the Palazzo: Images and Artefacts of Children in the Italian Renaissance Home’, in Campbell, E.J., Miller, S.J. and Consavari, E.C. (eds.) The Early Modern Italian Domestic Interior, 1400-1700: Objects, Spaces, Domesticities, Farnham, Ashgate, pp.67-89, p.82.
531 Dorio, D. (1638) p.192.
532 Nessi quotes several contemporary historians who state that Ugolino wished the three oldest sons to rule jointly after his death, and this is indeed what happened. Nessi, S. (2006) p.108. This was not such an unusual idea. Primogeniture was slow to develop in Italy, where ‘partible inheritance’ – division between several offspring - remained common in this period. Kleinhenz, C. (ed.) (2004) p.600.
emotional responses worked alongside the rational interpretation of works of art.\textsuperscript{534} The painter’s skill in mimicking reality could also be enjoyed in the faux ‘tapestry’ (Fig.5.11) and the ‘marble’ insets on the lower part of the walls (which could tested by touch); shadows fall on the thrones in a way that assumes a light source within the room; the use of gold or silver paint would have made the imitation of luxurious metallic fabric actually costly; the replication of hair, skin, furs and velvets exploits their tactile qualities. Besides sight and touch, sound would have played a part: the playing of music (suggested by one of the figures on the wall) or the buzz of conversation; the noise from the piazza outside, or the ringing of bells marking the time of day.\textsuperscript{535} The display of the golden rose – perhaps still emitting traces of the fragrance with which it had been anointed - or of other precious, skilfully crafted objects, would have added the mystique springing from beautiful and unusual possessions. The combined appeal to thought and feeling not only encourages the viewer to consider the messages in rational terms, and to engage in debate and discussion, but also elicits a more subjective, sensorial appreciation.

The figures are placed on either side of the central figure of Philosophy on the north wall, with the first member of the \textit{trivium}, Grammar, furthest from her, on the east (Fig.6.22). Grammar is shown as a young woman teaching a respectful single pupil, as in Perugia. The inscription reminds the viewer of Grammar’s role as the earliest subject taught, leading ultimately to philosophical understanding, and contributing to the rhetorical skills required of a future prince:

\begin{quote}
First tool of the philosophical arts, I am Grammar, who carefully orders congruence and the parts of speech and sweet vocal sound and stress.\textsuperscript{536}
\end{quote}

In Foligno, uniquely, the words on the book that she holds are visible; previous literature has not remarked on their significance. Not only is the alphabet on the right-hand page, as might be expected, but there are also the first words of two texts. The alphabet is clearly connected with the earliest aspects of reading and writing, but its importance should not be underestimated. It was also one of many mnemonic tools which could be used to order information in the mind and so retain and access it appropriately.\textsuperscript{537} The two texts have nothing to do directly with the study of language but seem to carry more complex messages. On the right is the traditional prayer that begins Matins in the Hours of the Virgin.\textsuperscript{538} It was also the basis of the rosary: \textit{Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum. Benedicita} - ‘Hail

\textsuperscript{534} ‘At the core of Renaissance art theory is the assertion that painting, sculpture and architecture are... intellectual disciplines, the practice of which required the exercise of the mind, not the body. It would be a mistake, however, to think that this intellectualisation excluded the realm of the senses.’ Quiviger, F. (2010) p.11.

\textsuperscript{535} Bagnoli argues that ‘Medieval images and objects were made to speak to all the senses – not to sight alone’... people ‘operated in a rich sensory world that was often integral to their apprehension’. Bagnoli, M. (2017) p.13.


\textsuperscript{538} Brown, R.F. (2017) ch.1.
Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women.”

On the left, from Psalm 109, first psalm to be sung at Vespers in the Hours of the Virgin, are the words: *Dixit Dominus Domino meo: Sede a dextris meis, donec ponam inimicos tuos scabellum pedum tuorum.* Virgam [virtutis tuae] emittet. 540 ‘The Lord said unto my Lord: Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The Lord shall send the rod [of thy strength].’ 541 The combination of the two texts from the Hours of the Virgin creates a subtle link with the Hours of the Day at the other end of the room, as discussed in Chapter 5. Their juxtaposition with each other also suggests two very different aspects of the *signoria*. The *Ave Maria* has general connotations of piety and virtue; *Benedicta* is the beginning of the words spoken by the angel at the Annunciation, and so is also a reminder of Mary’s role as a mother. *Dixit Dominus* suggests the God-given ability to rule strongly (and if necessary, to crush enemies underfoot) and the psalm goes on to a description of judgement and punishment. We are reminded that Grammar is the first subject to be learned by the future leader.

On the west wall, opposite Grammar, Rhetoric (Fig.6.23), the next member of the *trivium*, can be identified by the partially surviving inscription below. Rhetoric is visually associated with Grammar by the similarities in their dress, and the two subjects are closely linked by writers such a Vergerio, referred to earlier. She looks at an open book, held in her right hand, and a pupil stands respectfully to one side, in a representation close to the Perugian version. 542 This pupil is clearly the oldest of the three shown, suggesting an awareness of current educational advice on the education of elite boys. The inscription, some of which is lost, characterises Rhetoric as the means through which all other Arts are gracefully expressed:

Highly decorated and for[...I consider my[...]with eloquence and good[...]dress the other arts. 543

The left-hand page of Rhetoric’s book is indistinct. However, the right-hand page shows words that have not been previously identified or commented on, from the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. 544 Attributed by early writers to Cicero, but thought in fact to be a little earlier, this Latin treatise remained popular and was widely used in the teaching of Rhetoric and recommended by Guarino. Among other topics, it discusses the structure of argument, style,

---

539 Luke 1:28, and Luke 1:42. The prayer is a combination of the Angel Gabriel’s address to the Virgin Mary at the Annunciation and the words of her cousin Elizabeth, on hearing of Mary’s pregnancy.

540 This is the beginning of the Vulgate version of Psalm 109.

541 Psalm 109:1-2, King James Bible. It continues: ‘rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.’

542 In terms of age and dress, as well as relationship to the figure of Rhetoric, it seems very unlikely that this figure represents Cicero, as Galassi suggests. Galassi, C. (2001) p.284.

543 Ornato molto et per f[...]/Solo considera la mia f[...]/Con eloquenca et hon[...]/Vesto l’altre scientie et[...].

oral delivery, and mnemonic techniques. The last of these was especially important and formed the basis for later developments of the art of memory.\textsuperscript{545} The work begins:

My private affairs keep me so busy that I can hardly find enough leisure to devote to studies, and the little that is vouchsafed to me I have usually preferred to spend on philosophy. Yet your desire, Gaius Herennius, has spurred me to compose a work on the Theory of Public Speaking, lest you should suppose that in a matter which concerns you I either lacked the will or shirked the labour.\textsuperscript{546}

The words in Rhetoric’s book are the second half of the first sentence. Their context is especially appropriate to this room, and would have resonated with da Fiano, focussing as it does on the tensions between work and leisure, and the lack of time available for the intellectual pursuits of the \textit{vita contemplativa}.

Returning to the east wall, next to Grammar but closer to Philosophy, is the figure of an older woman, viewed in profile (Fig.6.24). Behind her on the dark blue background, to her left, are the letters ‘\textit{Diale…}’, confirming that she represents Dialectic, the third member of the \textit{trivium}. This figure differs considerably from earlier versions. Martianus described her as an aggressive character, who drew people near with attractive propositions, but hid a nasty hook and vicious snakes up her sleeve to attack (and kill) her opponents in a disputation.\textsuperscript{547} The Perugia Fountain and the Siena pulpit both show her as old and scowling, suggesting that the subject was perceived as pointlessly argumentative and confrontational. Like most (except in the Dominican Spanish Chapel) the woman here is also old, but her expression is benign, despite grappling with the two snakes that here seem to have becomes symbols of dialectic method, which she controls, albeit with some effort. This is supported by the inscription which differentiates between ‘sophistry’ and true argument. The inscription is now lost, but was recorded by the antiquarian Jacobilli:

\begin{quote}
I am the enemy of all sophistry; through my art all truth is found and with good arguments and syllogisms I shape all speech in sincerity.\textsuperscript{548}
\end{quote}

It may be that Frezzi, as a Dominican, encouraged a positive view of Dialectic in the inscription. However, the visual presentation suggests that the subject remains the preserve of old age, to be appreciated late in life, and not central to the education of future leaders.

Next, on the west wall, is Arithmetic, the first of the \textit{quadrivium} (Fig.6.25). Her throne, while as decorative as the others, is particularly suggestive of its dual function as a reading seat. It

\textsuperscript{548} Nimica son de tutti rei sophismi;/Per mia scettia trovasi ogni vero/Et con boni argomenti et silagismi/Formo ciascun sermone et fo sincero. (Caciorgna, M. (2001) p.408.
appears to be made of wood, rather than marble, with inlaid panelling and carving, and has the curved canopy above it that was frequently shown in images of studiolo structures (Figs. 5.17,5.18,5.20). The inscription below is straightforward, suggesting the practical nature of Arithmetic:

I am Mathematics, true science in enumerating all additions. My sisters cannot do without my counting and multiplication.549

Her position next to Rhetoric also neatly places her alongside another subject that was taught in the early stages of education. She is accompanied by an adolescent boy, fashionably dressed in red and green, watching his teacher intently and accurately copying her finger-counting. Arithmetic is occasionally shown with a counting board, but Martianus’ description of her fast-moving fingers is more generally translated in visual representations into this practice, which evolved over a lengthy period as an aid to calculation (Figs.6.26,6.27).550 This representation is especially useful as it enables reference to specific numbers, which can often be symbolically significant, as in the manuscript of the Regia Carmina (Fig.6.28), commissioned by the city of Prato as a gift to Robert of Anjou in the 1330s.551 This appears also to be the case at the Palazzo Trinci, although this has not been commented on elsewhere. The number that both teacher and pupil are practising here is one hundred and fifty. The significance of this is not spelled out, but the connection with the Dominican rosary would have been immediate to many contemporary viewers. The rosary involves the recital of a hundred and fifty Ave Marias (representing the number of the psalms of David) and hence links this image with the Ave Maria in the book held by Grammar. The Latin word for rosary, rosarium, also means ‘rose garden’. The symbolism connecting the Virgin Mary with the rose and the rose garden appears widely in literature and art of the period and was clearly associated with the rosary.552 As mentioned earlier, the symbol of the rose is repeated in the fictive tapestry circling the room below the main images, a design motif that may well be reference the Pope’s hugely award of the ‘golden rose’ to Ugolino in 1398. Hence, the secular practice of Arithmetic is subtly underlaid with reminders of spiritual values.

Moving to the north wall, next to Philosophy, and facing inwards towards her, is Astronomy, on a marble throne, clearly identified in the inscription below (Fig.6.29). Unlike the figure of Astronomy on the Perugia fountain, who holds an astrolabe, used as a practical

550 The system of finger counting was outlined by Bede, and illustrations of it appear in manuscripts throughout the medieval period and beyond. Bede (1999[7th c.CE]) The Reckoning of Time (ed. and trans. F. Wallis), Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, pp.9-13.
551 The Liberal Arts appeal to Robert for aid, on Prato’s behalf. Arithmetic demonstrates with her fingers the mathematically ‘perfect’ number six, which she flatteringly relates to Robert: ’it is precisely constituted from its parts, it is clear from its components and finds itself there; it does not transcend its parts, nor do they tend to the lowest. So are you truly, O King Robert’. Convenevole da Prato (1982[1330s]) Regia carmina: dedicati a Roberto d’Angiò, re di Sicilia e di Gerusalemme (intro. and trans. C. Grassi, notes M. Ciatti and A. Petri), Milan, Amilcare Pizzi, fol.29r.
navigational aid, she gestures towards an armillary sphere. One reason for this may simply be that its decorative quality can be exploited in fresco in a way that would be difficult in stone. Perhaps more importantly, the armillary sphere frequently had a different use, as an educational tool - a three-dimensional visual aid to demonstrate descriptions of the structure of the universe. These descriptions were found in texts such as Sacrobosco’s thirteenth century *De sphaera*, widely used in universities and recommended by Guarino. It has so far proved impossible to identify the words in the book held by Astronomy here, but it may be a similar treatise (the word *spera* at the top of the right-hand page could perhaps be for *sphaera*?) Few actual examples of armillary spheres survive from before the sixteenth century, due to their fragility, but their possession as part of the furnishing of the scholarly environment was certainly well known by later in the fifteenth century, as can be seen from Bottigelli’s and Vittore Carpaccio’s versions of *St Augustine in his study* (Figs.5.15,5.16) and in the intarsia in the Urbino *studio* of Federico da Montefeltro (Fig.6.44). It seems likely that even if Ugolino did not own such an object himself, the artist would have been aware of its potential to create an appropriate impression of interest in scientific and astrological matters. Below Astronomy is written:

I know well the purpose and all the movements of all the stars, and I judge and see; future events are well known to me through my judgements of so much around me in the heavens.

In this case, the inscription supplements the image by referencing what would now be called the ‘astrological’ aspects of the subject, in which the movements of the heavenly bodies are thought to relate to human behaviour and events. This creates a further link between this figure and the figures of the Planets at the other end of the room. The reference to future events also relates Astronomy to the younger figures in the images, and hence the future of the *signoria*.

Next, on the north wall and on the other side of Philosophy, facing inwards towards her, is a figure whose lower body is damaged and whose accompanying inscription is now missing, but who can reasonably be identified as Geometry (Fig.6.30). In her right hand she displays a geometer’s quadrant (Fig.6.31), and she probably held a pair of compasses on her knee, as shown in Coltellini’s sketch (Fig.6.32). This differs from the Perugia version, where she is engaged in drawing – there, a reminder, perhaps, of the practical uses of the subject in building and civic construction. The quadrant is the kind used by geometers, rather than

---

553 At Perugia, this figure is labelled *Astrolome* - an odd hybrid of Astronomy/Astrology, which were not distinguished from each other as they are now.


556 *De tucte stelle el uso et tucti moti/Cognoscho bene et iudico et discern;/Futuri eventi ad me sono bene noti/Per me iudicii tanto in ciel me interno.* Caciorgna, M. (2001) p.410.
navigators, and in a similar way to the representation of Astronomy, it draws attention to the study of the subject rather than its practical application. We are also reminded, perhaps, of images of God as the creator holding compasses as he orders the universe (sometimes shown as a Ptolemaic model of concentric circles). Martianus also emphasises the study of Geometry (and Astronomy) as a means of understanding the purpose and ordering of the universe, rather than for practical use, again a subtle link with the other end of the room. This link is further supported here by the inscription:

All the heavenly bodies and both earth and sea I reveal to you, their size and distance.
I show all measurements and make clear, through my kindness, to the end in heaven.557

On the east wall, next to Geometry and opposite Arithmetic, identified by the complete inscription below, is Music (Fig.6.33). This inscription reminds us that she too embodies the more abstract characteristics of the subject.558 Pythagorean philosophy had associated the mathematical relationships within music with the relationships to be observed in the universe through the study of astronomy and geometrical measurement.559 Martianus recognises this in his description of Music and gives a detailed technical analysis of musical harmony. The inscription follows this characterisation:

Tones and voices and highest melody, ditones, diapasons and semitones, I consider celestial harmony, musicians, instruments and all sounds.560

This sense of orderly, hierarchical relationships, embodied by Music and the other members of the quadrivium, can also be seen as a metaphor for a well-regulated, harmonious society, such as Foligno aspired to be.

Music is shown in profile, seated within a throne with a desk incorporated into it. Like Arithmetic’s throne, this is especially suggestive of the studiolo structure: while still highly decorative, it appears to be made of wood and has the curved canopy that frequently featured, as well as a desk. On the desk is a portable organ which she plays with her left hand, while her right hand holds a rod with which she strikes one of a set of bells suspended above her. An open book, its red ribbon fastenings undone, rests alongside the organ keyboard – it has nothing written on the pages. Although the figure of Music is dressed as a member of the court, how far her playing relates to actual practice is open to question. Unlike

559 Several myths surrounded the discovery of music and harmony, relating to Pythagoras, and the biblical half-brothers, the smith Tubalca

The musical intervals mentioned were explained at length, and related to Pythagoras’ harmonic proportions, by Johannes Ciconia, a musician living in Padua. Ciconia, J. (1993[c1400]) Nova musica, (ed. B. Ellsworth), London, University of Nebraska, pp.115-181.
for some later courts, there is very limited evidence regarding music-making in Foligno. Apart from performance by visiting musicians, it seems likely that musical involvement would have been limited to the voice, or to simpler, more easily portable instruments than the arrangement shown here. Musical skill was viewed as an accomplishment for both sexes, and women were encouraged to play or sing, so long as they remained modest. Love songs and overt ‘performance’ that created associations with professional musicians were not acceptable for women, nor were wind instruments thought to be suitable. Care has been taken here to show her as decorous, even if enthusiastic. The type of organ shown was used especially, though not exclusively, in church music, and organs were later shown in representations of St Cecilia, music’s patron saint, another subtle reminder of religious practice.

The central figure of Philosophy is identified by the faint letters ‘...sofia’ painted on the background on her right, as viewed from the ground (Fig.6.34). Sadly, the head and upper body have been lost, as well as the accompanying inscription. However, from the lower part of her figure we can see that her clothing is luxurious, with a gold-coloured design on a green background; her elaborate throne, facing directly into the room, survives almost intact. Fortunately, her appearance was recorded by the eighteenth-century antiquarian Lodovico Coltellini. He comments that ‘Philosophy seems to watch you when you enter the room and has a very sweet face, and the medallion with the motto, all in gold, seems real.’ Coltellini’s drawing confirms this description, and shows that she wore a crown (Fig.6.36). The medallion he mentions bears the letters ‘fa’, which he identifies as short for Fides Adiuvat, the Trinci motto, and which is repeated in the border around the top of the room. Given that Coltellini’s drawings of some of the other (better-preserved) figures are quite accurate, there is no reason to distrust this one.

This figure raises many questions. In Martianus, of course, the central figure is Philology. The meaning of this name was wider than current usage suggests, although the study of spoken and written language was still at its core. It incorporated literature and learning in general, and, through the New Testament, the idea of God as the word, or logos. The conflation of Philology and Philosophy in visual representations seems to have happened at an early stage and was probably associated with the widespread circulation of Boethius’ sixth-century work, The Consolations of Philosophy. The connection was doubtless reinforced by the fact that Boethius also wrote treatises about the subjects of the quadrivium. In the Consolations, Boethius, imprisoned and alone, is comforted by Philosophy, personified as a wise and kindly woman, who persuades him that the desire for physical pleasure, fame or power cannot bring happiness. They discuss questions of fate, predestination and free

---

562 This contrasts with the Muse representing Music, Euterpe, who was often shown playing a flute or flutes, as in the painting that probably hung in the later Belfiore studiolo, discussed later in this chapter.
564 La Filosofia sembra guardarti quando entri nella sala e ha un viso dolcissimo e il medaglione al collo col motto, tutto d’oro, sembra vero. Coltellini, L. (1770-1780) p.12.
565 Boethius (1984[c.524CE]).
will, concluding that in fact ill-fortune can lead the sufferer to virtue. Although Boethius’ work was written in a Christian context, it does not refer to Christian teachings or offer the customary reassurance of salvation and the afterlife. Instead it proposes a reliance on the individual’s inner resources, and faith in a mysterious but ultimately just Providence. Boethius describes Philosophy as wearing a dress that she herself had embroidered with a ladder. However, in the images in Perugia and on the Pisa pulpit, identified in each by a title, she carries a sceptre in her right hand and an orb in her left. On the Siena pulpit she has an object that appears to be a flaming torch in the shape of a cornucopia, which has associations with Boethius’ description of Fortune giving generously with one hand while taking away with the other. At the Palazzo Trinci, she appears to have been presented differently in two specific respects. The crown is conventional, but the addition of the medallion at her neck with the inscription ‘fa’ associates her closely and personally with the Trinci. Coltellini does not mention a further unusual addition: she also appears to hold in her left hand a large disc with concentric circles in green, red and white, the Trinci colours, which Galassi identifies as a representation of the universe (Fig.6.35). Similar presentations of the planetary orbits were well-established, and occasionally appear in later depictions of Philosophy (Fig.6.37). This links her more closely with Geometry and Astronomy, and hence with the study of the physical nature of the universe as well as the understanding of its mystical order. Most importantly, it also links her with the personifications of the planets at the other end of the room.

Philosophy’s throne is especially impressive, incorporating a convincingly three-dimensional blue shell design above her head, decorated with delicate pinnacles, supported by slim pillars, and punctuated with arched windows. The whole structure is decorated in pink and white, accented in green, with pierced marbled insets and a wealth of ornamental detail. The smaller thrones of the Arts are less extravagant in design, complementing Philosophy’s in terms of colour and decoration. Galassi draws attention to the striking stylistic similarity between these thrones and those depicted in two frescoes in Padua by Altichiero da Verona showing the Coronation of the Virgin (Fig.6.14), in support of the likelihood of the involvement of Paduan artists in the decorations. Livia Lupi relates Altichiero’s highly decorative presentation of architectural features to aspects of Rhetoric, especially, copia and amplificatio – ‘generosity’ and ‘ornament’. These specific devices were employed in speech and writing in praise of people whose greatness of character had already been established. The visual version works in a similar way: the artist becomes the equivalent of the eloquent

---

568 The frescoes, by Altichiero, indeed showed thrones of very similar design. One, in the Church of the Emeritani was destroyed; the other, in the Oratorio di San Giorgio, survives. Galassi notes the use of faux marble, pinnacles, pointed arches, towers and shell motifs, all of which appear in Foligno. Galassi, C. (2001) pp.283-284.
orator, presenting his subject in a suitably elaborate manner.\textsuperscript{569} This seems especially appropriate in a context where Rhetoric herself plays an important part.\textsuperscript{570}

It is worth noting that in the same series of frescoes as the surviving\textit{Coronation}, Altichiero also painted an\textit{Annunciation} scene (Fig.6.15). While the throne there is less elaborate than the one in the\textit{Coronation}, the subject matter seems more relevant to the Palazzo Trinci, since it connects the Virgin with the practice of study and reading, while still placing her in a decorative throne-like setting. In this way her role as the Queen of Heaven is merged with her identity as the chaste girl whose devotions were interrupted by the arrival of Gabriel.\textsuperscript{571} Altichiero’s version follows widespread convention throughout Europe in its blurring of the physical boundaries between throne and reading space. In many images of the Annunciation, the high backs of the Virgin’s seats, often with a canopy at the top and sometimes with a desk attached, recall similar features on some of the\textit{studiolo} ‘work-station’ structures described in Chapter 5 (Figs.6.16-6.21). Although the echoes of this convention in the Camera delle Rose are not made explicit, the combination of regal but modest female figures with the practice of learning constitutes a compelling parallel. As this chapter observes, there are several other subtle references to the Virgin in these frescoes (including the reference to the Annunciation in the text shown in Grammar’s book) reminding the viewer that although the subject matter is pagan, it must be viewed in the context of Christian spiritual development. As discussed previously (e.g., in Chapter 3), this was not felt to be inappropriate - Christian ideals could be illuminated by classical writing and imagery, if properly interpreted. Here, these underlying Marian associations help to sanctify and elevate Philosophy and the other Arts and contribute to the seriousness of the overall scheme.

In numerous ways that have not been identified previously, then, the presentation of the Liberal Arts at the Palazzo Trinci is very different from earlier versions. Decisions have been made that distinguish them from previous renditions and raise questions about their significance. These images are no longer under the control of the church or used to promote civic values. However, the positive resonances of those settings persist, creating ready-made associations that might not automatically be made with someone in Ugolino’s position. Sixty years earlier, the city of Siena, wishing to promote the republican model of government, had placed the Liberal Arts in direct contrast to ‘tyrants’.\textsuperscript{572} Ugolino could easily have been characterised in that way, but the audacious adoption of formerly republican imagery associates the Trinci instead with civilised, peaceful pursuits. In the unpredictable political environment of the time, Ugolino, who did not bear an inherited title, needed to establish his legitimacy in as many ways as possible. As shown in Chapter 3, the image of Ilia implies a

\textsuperscript{570} Pintoricchio, in his later decorations of the Borgia apartments in the Vatican, signed his name only once – below the statue of Rhetoric. In so doing, he placed himself, as an artist, on an equal level with figures recognised for their written and spoken eloquence.
\textsuperscript{571} There is also an echo of Mary’s characterisation as the\textit{Sedes Sapientiae} in Romanesque art.
connection with the foundation myths of ancient Rome; the Sala dei Giganti sets his military and political successes alongside the achievements of the great figures of history. In the Camera delle Rose, the Trinci are shown to look to the future, rather than to the past, demonstrating commitment to a new kind of authority. The decorations at this end of the room suggest that under the auspices of the Trinci learning will flourish, and members of the family will be educated to fit them for future leadership.

An early studiolo?

The suggestion that the Camera delle Rose was used as an early form of studiolo was addressed, in part, in Chapter 5. Taking as a starting point Thornton’s view that such spaces fulfilled both a practical and an ideological function, it concluded that the room is unlikely to have been used in practice in quite the same way as later, smaller, purpose-designed studioli. While it could well have an appropriate setting, sometimes, for intellectual discussion and the display of precious objects, and, when necessary, as a space for study, its large size and ease of access make it likely that it also served many other purposes. These could have included meetings, administration, and entertaining, especially given the multifunctional nature of rooms at the time. Chapter 5 concluded, then, that physically, it seems unlikely that this room was seen exclusively as a place for the signore’s personal, leisured withdrawal.

The current chapter proposes, however, that the decorations support the idea that the room did function as a studiolo in ideological terms. As discussed earlier, when seen as a complete entity, the decorations of the Camera delle Rose are concerned with both sides of life: the active and the contemplative. Just as the treatment of the Planets, the Ages of Man and the Hours of the Day, discussed in Chapter 5, enabled a presentation of the Trinci that speaks to the ideals - and temporal limitations - of the vita activa, the treatment of the Liberal Arts associates the Trinci and their court with the vita contemplativa. The separate elements of the decorations are adroitly brought together in support of the agenda of the Trinci, showing the signoria as successful in every aspect of public life, while also valuing learning and intellectual pursuits. In this, the Camera delle Rose has much in common with later studioli, and in fact constitutes a considerably earlier example of the concept than those studied in previous literature.

Later studioli were also based on the notion of cultured intellectual activity as complementary to successful public life, as discussed in Chapter 5. However, some arrived at an interpretation of the vita contemplativa that seemed to move away from the sober self-improvement of the Palazzo Trinci in the direction of the enjoyment of creativity and performance in poetry, music and art. The early example from the 1440s, at Leonello d’Este’s Belfiore, has been lost, although some of the works of art that were shown there survive. On the advice of the humanist, Guarino, a series of depictions of the Nine Muses embodied Leonello’s leisure pursuits of music and poetry (Figs.6.38-6.43). The choice of the Muses, rather than the Liberal Arts, appears to shift the emphasis away from study and

574 It is possible that there were later alterations to these.
education, towards the appreciation of artistic inspiration and accomplishment. The sensuous depiction of the Muses – seated in thrones decorated with sinuous natural forms – is very different from the modest restraint of the Liberal Arts in the Camera delle Rose. However, Campbell also identifies in them concerns with good government, prosperity, and the education of the Christian prince, which he attributes to the influence of Guarino. Certainly, Guarino saw these connections. Much earlier, in 1419, he had written to the Podestà of Bologna:

"You therefore owe no small thanks to the Muses with whom you have been on intimate terms since boyhood, and by whom you were brought up. They taught you how to carry out your tasks in society. Hence you are living proof that the Muses rule not only musical instruments but also public affairs."

Campbell proposes that, for viewers of these works, a ‘dual beholding’ took place, in which this public representation of the prince complemented a private version of him as the ‘individual poet-lover’.

This awareness of the public and the private remained central to the persona of the prince. In the 1460s, the writer on architecture, Antonio Filarete, described how Piero de’ Medici had himself carried into his studiolo every evening. ‘When he arrives there, he looks at his books[…] they are most noble both within and without.’ Besides these symbols of the life of the mind, there were also ‘effigies and portraits of all the emperors and noble men who have ever lived, made in gold and silver, bronze, jewels, marble and other materials.’ For Piero, the depictions of famous men associated his public activity with their past achievements, while his books and the connoisseurship of precious objects were manifestations of his learning and taste.

The well-known studioli created in Urbino and Gubbio for Federico da Montefeltro in the 1470s, which, exceptionally, survive relatively intact, embody the same concepts. While physically smaller and more specialised than the Camera delle Rose, both recognise the complementary nature of the two aspects of life in their decorations and appear to have retained the serious-minded concerns of the Palazzo Trinci. The illusionary intarsia around the walls uses ingenious perspectival techniques to mimic the display of real objects, set on shelves within half-open cupboards. The items on show include armour and insignia symbolising Federico’s public activity, as well as musical and scientific instruments and books attesting to his love of learning and cultured pursuits (Fig.6.44). Campbell comments

---

577 Although studioli were generally regarded as a male space, they were also commissioned by a few women, the best-known example being Isabella d’Este in the early 1500s. In these cases, as Stephen Campbell points out, the owner of the studiolo was already to some extent ‘withdrawn’ from full engagement with wider society, due to her sex. Despite sometimes being actively involved in administration and decision-making, convention required her to be reticent and unassertive in her public behaviour. In Isabella’s case, Campbell sees her studiolo as a ‘vulnerable space’ where ‘sheltered retreat is confronted with that which menaces from outside.’ Campbell, S.J. (2004) p.86.
that as well as being appreciated for their dazzling display of skill, these intarsia decorations should be seen as ‘virtuous intellectual investments’.\(^{579}\) In the Urbino studiolo, portraits of famous men probably hung above the panelling; in Gubbio, there were probably images of the Liberal Arts, some with an identifiable devotee kneeling before them (Figs.6.45,6.46).\(^{580}\)

In one, now lost, Federico himself knelt in homage to Dialectic, as she handed him a book.\(^{581}\) In another painting that was probably part of the same series, Federico and his son are shown listening to a learned lecture (Fig.6.47). The well-known portrait of him with his son (Fig.0.4), mentioned in the introduction, brings together both sides of his life, showing him dressed in his armour, at the same time as reading from a large book – a presentation that combines dynastic intentions with an image of culture and learning in the same way as the Trinci. The theme of the active and contemplative lives was identified here in the early work of Luciano Cheles and has found further support since then.\(^{582}\) More recently Robert Kirkbride has again noted ‘a clear bilateral distinction between action and contemplation’ in the decorations.\(^{583}\) Just as this thesis has suggested in relation to the Camera delle Rose, and to other rooms of the Palazzo Trinci, Kirkbride sees this subject matter in Urbino as offering opportunities for interaction between ‘narrator and audience’ in the interpretation of the decorations of the studiolo. He also sees, for Federico, the option of tailoring the messages to the demands of changing circumstances.

At the end of the quattrocento, Pintoricchio and his workshop painted the decorations for a room that is now assumed to be the study of Pope Alexander VI - one of the so-called ‘secret rooms’ of the Borgia apartments (Figs.6.48,6.49). The rooms have received little scholarly attention so far, so little is known of their actual use. Each Liberal Art is enthroned, within a vaulted frame, surrounded by several other figures. It has been commented that the composition is reminiscent of an altarpiece, and that there is an ‘elevation of the Arts to Marian-type divinities.’\(^{584}\) Although these decorations are dominated by figures of the Liberal Arts, the active life is also celebrated, partly in gilded stucco vignettes above the main images that record episodes from the life of Alexander, but more obviously in the large number of figures accompanying each Art. These include traditional exponents in classical costume, such as Euclid with Geometry, but also others in contemporary dress. Music has Tubal, but also practitioners of the period, some relating to performance in Alexander’s native Spain. Many figures are anonymous, but others have been identified as actual characters, such as the humanist and papal secretary, Paolo Cortesi, shown with

---

Rhetoric, and the architect and painter Bramante.\textsuperscript{585} The presentation of the Arts, here, not only associates the pope with the ideals of learning, but also with the many ways in which each discipline could be put to practical use in everyday life.

Even at the end of the sixteenth century, in the exceptionally secluded \textit{studiolo} of Francesco de’ Medici (Fig.6.50), where Francesco pursued his own genuine scholarly observation and experiment, the combination of the public and the personal was evident in its contents. Francesco’s collection comprised not only antiquities and the objects of scientific interest that were his passion, but armaments and weapons. It was also hung with paintings that related to a ‘narrative of authority and power’: a presentation of himself that combined the two sides of his life in the role of a ‘scholar prince’ that can also be observed in several portraits.\textsuperscript{586}

This thesis proposes, then, that in terms of actual use, the Camera delle Rose may on occasion have offered opportunity for withdrawal from the formal business of the court for a privileged, invited few. For them, the decorations would have provided a starting point for conversation and a chance for connoisseurly appreciation of items from antiquity collected by the Trinci, or the pope’s gift of the golden rose, as well as access to Ugolino. However, it was still large enough to fulfil a range of purposes, and it is unlikely that it was seen exclusively as Ugolino’s private space for study and intellectual pursuits. Ideologically, though, in the way that the decorations present its owner, this space certainly anticipates later, better-known \textit{studioli}, and predates them by a considerable time. Evidence for this proposal lies not simply in the inclusion of the Liberal Arts in the decorations. More importantly, their combination with the Planets provokes discussion of the central question of the \textit{vita activa} and the \textit{vita contemplativa}, a discussion that underpins the development of all later \textit{studioli} and was reflected in their decorations and contents. As discussed in Chapter 5, the known interest of da Fiano in the debate supports this suggestion. It seems that a space was created in the Palazzo Trinci that was indeed, conceptually, an early forerunner of the more specialised rooms of later Italian princes. Although some later \textit{studioli} emphasised their purpose of leisure and retreat from the world more than others, their recognition of an underlying duality in life remained. Their owners - and the humanists who advised them - continued to want to present themselves in a similar way to Ugolino Trinci, as masters of both their public and private identities, each one nourishing and informing the other.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The decorations at this end of the Camera delle Rose reference, but considerably modify, traditional representations of the Liberal Arts, associating them closely with the Trinci


signoria. They present the court as a cultured milieu and show the Trinci and their advisors to be aware of new thinking about education, especially for future rulers, who would need the arts of language and persuasion as much as skill in arms. The subject matter is supported highly effectively by the artists’ presentation. As elsewhere in the palazzo, the artists have drawn on their knowledge of many other conventions to trigger the viewer’s memory and provoke both intellectual and emotional responses. In addition, in this area especially, they have used a repertoire of techniques of illusion and realism that engage the viewer in the experience of looking, so that the images themselves become as eloquent as words.

The sections in this and the previous chapter concerning the use of the room as a studiolo have shown that the decorations at this end of the room combine with those at the other end to form one unified scheme, whose sum is greater than its parts. Concerns about time and aging, fascination with the past, interest in education and spirituality, are all interwoven with the over-arching question of the balance of a virtuous life for a great and powerful man. The many references to humanist thought suggest a nascent court with wide contacts and a lively enthusiasm for new ideas, especially about the character and behaviour of the ruler. Reminders of religious practice and devotion to the Virgin point to the eternal values that underlie these concerns, reinforcing the idea that pagan ideas are not incompatible with Christianity. It seems highly likely that men such as da Fiano and Frezzi helped to formulate the subject matter and, in so doing, hoped to influence the future path of the signoria.

In their seriousness and their references to classical and humanist ideas, the decorations in the Camera delle Rose are exceptional for a palazzo at this early date. Rather than the predominantly chivalric themes in courtly environments elsewhere in northern Italy, they draw on subjects that were also of interest to the supporters of republican regimes and ecclesiastical institutions. Indeed, at some points they appropriate ideas that had hitherto been used to embody the antithesis of the character of the ‘tyrant’, turning them around to feed into the creation of an innovative and flexible image for the Trinci signoria. This image encompassed vigorous public activity, complemented by the appreciation of intellectual pursuits and the thoughtful consideration of personal values. It placed the Trinci where they could be perceived as having the potential to wield authority in Foligno in the long term, passing on their position to future generations, and enabling the city to flourish under their benign influence.

The contemporary poem by Bucciolini, mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis, reflects this conceptualisation of the Trinci signoria, combining the contemplative qualities of the Liberal Arts and the active character of the Planets. The poet envisages an all-powerful, gracious ruler, who compares favourably with the figures from antiquity depicted on the bridge or the Sala dei Giganti:

The powerful signore called Ugolino[...]was clothed in the Seven Liberal Arts; he derived all his power from Jupiter; he wore the mantle of the four Cardinal Virtues and acquired all his eloquence from Mercury. His wings beat over the whole
world; he was accompanied by the greatest wisdom. He exceeded Alexander in state, and surpassed Caesar in generosity.\footnote{El possente segnor decto Ugolino...Vestise delle septe liberale;/A Jove ha tolto tucta sua potentia;/Admantase delle quattro cardenali,/Et a Mercurio ha tolta la eloquentia./Bacton per tucto el mondo le sue ali,/Compagno è della somma sapientia./Passò Alesandro de realetade,/Cesare avanza per magnanimitade. Pier Angelo Buccioni (1999[1430s]) v.CLXIX}
Conclusion

It seems appropriate, in conclusion, to return to the image of Petrarch, presiding over the doorway onto the bridge from the Cathedral (Fig. 2.6). His indistinct figure is easy to miss as one passes beneath it, but this thesis has frequently noted his influence in the underlying themes of the frescoes. His consuming interest in history and the classical world, his idealistic vision of the role of the prince, his sense of the fragility of life, his Christian spiritual values, all reverberate through the cycle, underlying its decorative and sensual appeal. In Petrarch’s dialogue on painting and sculpture, Reason advises Delight that enjoyment of painting is only worthwhile as a path to appreciation of deeper truths:

But if these fictions, tinted with deceptive hues, give you so much pleasure, turn your eyes to Him, who has adorned man’s face with intelligence, his mind with the intellect.588

This thesis has argued that while viewers are certainly expected to delight in the visual appeal of the frescoes in the Palazzo Trinci, and to be impressed by their scale and skill, there is a seriousness of purpose that also encourages response on an intellectual level. Through close attention to four spaces in the Palazzo Trinci – the Bridge, the Landing, the Sala dei Giganti and the Camera delle Rose – the thesis has set out to explore three main questions in this light. It asked, first, how the concerns and ambitions of the Trinci are manifested in the building and decorations of the palazzo; second, how the decorations reflected the interests and experience of the people who contributed to their subject matter, design, and execution; and third, how contemporary viewers might have experienced them and what messages they would have taken away.

In addressing the first of these questions, the thesis has attested to the likely desire of the Trinci to establish themselves in Foligno in the long-term, as entitled hereditary rulers, no longer dependent on communal support or papal favour. Building on existing iconographic studies, and on studies identifying relevant sources, it has given further examples of the ways in which the Trinci adopted strategies similar to those of earlier or contemporary signorial families such as the Carrara, associating themselves with pagan mythology and the classical past of ancient Rome to establish a legitimacy rooted in history. It has also shown that they frequently appropriated civic models, such as the personifications of the Liberal Arts, distancing themselves from the negative connotations of the power acquired through military prowess.

In answer to the second question, the thesis has explored, in greater detail than previous literature, how humanist thinking and artistic invention shaped this image of the Trinci signoria, creating a cultured and civilised environment that enabled – and indeed promoted

588 Tu autem si hec ficta et adumbrata fucis inanibus usque adeo delectant, attolle oculos ad illum, qui os humanum sensibus, animam intellectu[...]pinxit. Petrarch (1366) 40.
- debate. The thesis has shown how the literary and intellectual background of humanists such as da Fiano and Frezzi, present in Foligno at the time, contributed to the presentation of the subject matter in each space in highly innovative ways. Alongside knowledge of chivalric literature, it has found evidence of interest in, for example, classical works, Christian thinking, contemporary political and educational theories, and recent literature in verse and prose. The importance of words is everywhere evident: in inscriptions, in the use of different languages, in pieces of text within the decorations. Words and image are not in competition but constantly interact, with the images understood as tools to express ideas in new ways.\(^5\) This diverse and provocative intellectual context results in a scheme that generates discussion rather than creating a straightforward eulogy of the Trinci. The thinking of Cicero, Augustine, Salutati, Bruni, Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarch, and many others informs consideration of leadership, virtue, learning and time, showing the breadth of reading and the wide contacts of the humanists concerned. They would have relished disputing the issues raised by the creation of these frescoes, justifying their views by reference to learned authority and comparing examples from the past: the role of education in the training of the younger Trinci, the importance of spiritual development, the lessons to be learned from pagan history in a Christian world, the destiny of the signoria. Idealists with strong moral values, these men would have hoped that their input might help to form a future where legitimacy, even if inherited, would be based on virtue, justice, and learning.

The thesis has not explored questions of attribution beyond the existing literature’s identification of Gentile da Fabriano and others. Instead, it has considered the rich intellectual and artistic repertoire of those concerned in the making of the frescoes, some of whom may never be identifiable. Besides the iconographic sources identified in existing literature, it has found many more visual references to other works, in civic and religious settings, and in elite dwellings, from a wide area, showing how the travel and varied commissions of artists contributed to constant cross-fertilisation of ideas and techniques. Especially noticeable are visual links with works from Paduan churches, but the web of inspiration touches French manuscripts, Florentine frescoes, Perugian civic sculpture and much more – sometimes filtered through several incarnations over time or reinvented to suit the different medium of fresco. The thesis has shown how the artists used their skills to underline the humanist message of each part of the scheme, for example by returning to the classical iconography of the planetary gods, or, conversely, presenting the Liberal Arts as courtly figures. It has shown how they frequently played an important part in adapting pagan themes to the promotion of Christian values, by referencing well-known tropes from religious art in their presentation of subject matter from classical mythology. Besides contributing to interpretation in this way, their technical skill helped to create the viewing experience in each room: sometimes offering a level of detail that requires close attention, sometimes creating a monumentality that inspires awe, sometimes playing with the perceptions of the audience to draw them into the physical and pictorial space – as on

\(^5\) The *paragone* between poetry and painting more often saw words and pictures as being in competition with each other. Ames-Lewis, F. (2002) pp.177-187.
the Landing - or enabling a more distanced and reflective response, for instance to the Ages of Man in the Camera delle Rose.

Third, in considering the reception of the frescoes, the thesis has reassessed the small amount of available documentary evidence relating to the use of each of the four spaces discussed. It has shown how the physical experience of each space contributes to the perception of the images within it, for example in the Bridge’s potential as an escape or a surveillance point. While acknowledging that every building developed in different ways, it has also drawn on scholarship concerning the use of similar spaces in earlier and later palaces, to arrive at a fuller understanding of the likely function of these rooms, both in real and symbolic terms. Its discussion of the Camera delle Rose has been the first exploration in any depth of the suggestion that this room was an early studiolo. It has shown how perceptions of the frescoes would have been affected by the occasion, the purpose and frequency of the viewer’s presence in each space, and the changing qualities of light and sound. The thesis has drawn attention to the variety of people who would have visited or lived in the palace, and their different reactions, related to their gender, education, social status, or political allegiance. Many would have been engaged on a subjective and emotional level, while others would have responded intellectually and entered debate as a result.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the approach of this thesis originates in Galassi’s comment that further study of the meanings and context of the frescoes and ‘the historical-cultural dynamics’ that underlie them was desirable, following the early concentration on attribution and immediate sources. The thesis has focussed, as has been shown above, on the connections and links that contributed to the conception – and reception - of the frescoes. It has shown how the interaction between individuals, their many contacts, their knowledge of literature and their combined experience of works of art from a wide geographical area came together to produce this rich and multi-layered work in support of the aspirations of the Trinci family. It has demonstrated that this work cannot be seen solely in terms of the patron-artist relationship, or the stylistic influence of one painter on another, or the input of a single humanist adviser, or the artistic culture of one city. The process was not finite, but porous, with earlier models adopted, adapted, and reinvented by the makers of the frescoes, in light of their own interests and experience, to suit the purposes of the Trinci. The images were set within spaces that each had a distinctive atmosphere and function, and they were beheld by men and women with their own emotional and intellectual hinterland, who doubtless stored them in their memories, to be re-used in new contexts in the future.

This thesis has highlighted the importance of the place occupied by the Palazzo Trinci in the development of the art of early Italian courts, which has not been fully recognised in the existing literature. Marking a point in time where signori such as the Trinci were looking to position themselves as legitimate rulers in the hope of developing dynastic rights, some of the frescoes looked back to earlier models, but they were re-imagined to new purposes. They also sometimes prefigure the decorations of later, more securely established courts.
such as that of Federico da Montefeltro, who eventually came to hold the hereditary title of Duke of Urbino. This is especially true of the early use of the theme of the active and contemplative lives in the Camera delle Rose, a combination that became closely associated with the successful humanist prince, and which, this thesis proposes, was first given visual expression in Foligno. Further research could, perhaps, adopt the approach of this thesis to explore in greater depth the links between Foligno and later courts such as that of Urbino, to show how concepts such as the studiolo developed over time, and to ask whether factors as varied as those in Foligno contributed to the making of later palace decorations. It may also be possible, once pandemic restrictions allow more archival research, that civic records in smaller towns within the Trinci territory, such as Bevagna or Montefalco, could shed further light on the social and economic environment of the period of their signoria. Any surviving records of other signorial families from slightly further afield, such as the Varani of Camerino or the Chiavelli of Fabriano, might provide parallels and points of comparison. Vatican records could possibly provide information about the immediate aftermath of the Trinci’s fall from power, showing what happened to family documents and belongings, especially the golden rose, which seems to have disappeared without trace.

Although much is now lost, and the palazzo is no longer alive with the business of the Trinci signoria, the surviving frescoes give us many insights into their world – a precarious and violent place, changing fast politically, where individuals were questioning long-held values and imagining new futures. Even if their ambitions and ideals were not fully realised, in the process the Trinci and those around them left an exceptionally rich legacy. But perhaps Petrarch should have the last word, reminding us that this legacy, too, is transient:

Your fame is a doubt, a winter, an uncertain peace, and a little mist destroys it; great Time is great poison to great names. Your grandeur and your pageantry pass; your lordships and your kingdoms pass; Time interrupts every mortal activity and treats alike the good or the unworthy; and Time dissolves not just the outward things, but your eloquence and your skill.\textsuperscript{590}

\textsuperscript{590} Un dubbio, iberno, instabile sereno,/è vostra fama, e poca nebbia il rompe;/e ’l gran tempo a’ gran nomi è gran veneno./Passan vostre grandezze e vostre pompe,/passan le signorie, passano i regni;/ogni cosa mortal Tempo interrompe,/e ritolta a’ men buon, non dà a’ più degni;/e non pur quel di fuori il Tempo solve,/ma le vostre eloquienze e’ vostri ingegni.

Petrarch (1350s) Trionfo del tempo, 109-117.
References


Corbari, E. (2013) *Vernacular Theology: Dominican Sermons and Audience in Late Medieval Italy*, Berlin, De Gruyter.


Crampton, J. and Eldon, S. (eds.) *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography*, Basingstoke, Ashgate.


Faloci-Pulignani, D.M (1888) ‘Le arti e le lettere alla corte dei Trinci’, *Archivio Storico per le Marche e per l’Umbria*, vol.4.


King James Bible.


Nevola, F. (2020) *Street Life in Renaissance Italy*, Newhaven (CT), Yale University Press.


Salutati (1891[14th.c.]) *Epistolario di Coluccio Salutati* (ed. F. Novati), Rome, Tipografi del Senato.


Torelli, L. (ed.) (1680) *Secoli agostiniani ouero historia generale del sacro ordine eremitan*, vol.6, Bologna, Giacomo Monti.


