

*Abstract*

In the codex miscellany 844 in the San Michele di Murano archive, held today in the Archivio Storico in Camaldoli, there is an incomplete manuscript on paper which contains copies of twelve letters written in Italian by men of letters, including Giovanni Guidiccioni, Giulio Camillo Delminio, Cornelio Frangipane, Giovan Giacomo Leonardo, and Paolo Manuzio, together with two dissertations on rhetoric. The compilation was probably put together between 1554 and 1556, that is, not before the first letter from Giovanni Francesco Peranda to Daniele Padova, dated 25 July 1554 from Treviso, and the publication in 1556, as part of the *Tre libri di lettere volgari* di Paolo Manutio, of the *Discorsi intorno l'officio del Oratore* and the *Discorso sopra le v. parti dela Rhetorica*. The two-year period coincides with the publication of the new edition of three treatises on the vernacular by Francesco Alunno, Francesco Fortunio, and Aldo Manuzio edited by Paolo Manuzio and this, together with the coherence of the topics which are discussed – largely those which were at the centre of sixteenth-century literary debate, such as the use of the vernacular, the rediscovery of the Latin and Greek classics and how these could inspire contemporary writing, the prevalence of historical prose over poetry – would suggest that the compilation was prepared as part of a publishing project devised by Paolo Manuzio which never saw the light, except for the two discourses on the role of the orator and the five parts of rhetoric which were published in 1556.