

Two Fragments of a Late Fourteenth-Century Vernacular *Laudario* by Sante Cicchi for the Flagellant Confraternity of Santo Stefano in Assisi

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Summary: After a few biographical notes on the notary Sante Cicchi of Assisi and a brief description of fragment AS² from a *laudario* he compiled in 1388 for the flagellant confraternity of Santo Stefano in Assisi, of which he was a member, this article examines some echoes of Dante's *Divine Comedy* to be found in a *lauda* from this fragment and then cites a four-stanzas *lauda* on death from this same *laudario*.

In 1388 the notary Sante Cicchi, a member of the flagellant confraternity of Santo Stefano in Assisi, completed his transcription of a collection of lauds for the sodality's use. Two fragments of this *laudario* have survived to the present day and are known as AS² and AS³, both currently housed in the Chapter Archive of the cathedral of San Rufino in Assisi. The initial rubric in red ink in fragment AS² reads as follows:

In nomine Domini, amen. Anno Domini M° CCC° LXXXVIII°, indictione XI.a, tempore domini Urbani pape sexti, die XVIII° mensis novembris. Iste liber est dissipationum sancti Stephany Ass[...] est manu Sanct(is) Cicchy de dicta fraternitate et hoc fecit dictus Sant(es) per o[bs]equium fraternitatis.¹

(In the name of God, amen. In the year 1388, in the 11th indiction, at the time of Pope Urban VI, on the 18th of November. This book belongs to the flagellants of the sodality of Saint Stephen [...] it is by the hand of Sante Cicchi, [a member] of this confraternity, and the said Sante did this for the confraternity's use.)

This rubric provides us with the oldest documentary reference to Sante Cicchi, a notary in Assisi, who was also a member of this important flagellant confraternity of Santo Stefano. His membership in the confraternity is also attested in a confraternity document from 1393 that recalls how a group of about thirty members (more than two thirds of the total number of members at that time) met in the confraternity's rooms to

¹ Assisi, Archivio Capitolare di San Rufino, ms. 36, fol. 56r.

appoint three of their members as advocates and procurators (*sindicis et procuratores*) in the legal cases the confraternity was about to be involved in, especially against a certain Pietro di Martino.² “Sancte Cichi Iole” appears again among confraternity members on 26 June 1401, when he took part in a meeting held in the confraternity’s oratory³ and then again, on 14 September 1404, this time as *subprior*, to a judgement (*sindicatus*) held by the confraternity in their oratory.⁴ Cicchi must have enjoyed a certain level of social and civic prestige, seeing that in 1416 his name appears in the *Tabula notariorum* of Assisi.⁵

Fragment SA² contains seven lauds for the deceased, five of which form part of “a dialogue between the Living and the Dead” first published in 1925 by Arturo Del Pozzo.⁶ Anna Maria Terruggia has suggested that fragment SA² might originally have been part of codex 36/3 from the Archivio di San Rufino that appears to be in the same hand and also written on parchment.⁷ Now that a complete edition of the *Laudario* 36 has been published, we can confirm, on the basis of linguistic characteristics, that it does come from Assisi.⁸ Ignazio Baldelli had already indicated as much when he noted that “in 1388 Sante Cicchi, [a member] of the confraternity of Santo Stefano (the confraternity of the *Illuminati* [codex]) drew preferentially from the Assisi repertoire (admittedly with a great variety of intrusions, to the point that the first verses of a lauda to the Virgin [...]).”⁹

Echoes of Dante in a Fourteenth-Century Lauda

Michele Catalano was the first to point out the presence of a *terzina* from Dante’s *Divine Comedy* in a fourteenth-century lauda from the flagellant confraternity of Santo Stefano.¹⁰ The lauda, dedicated to the Blessed

² Sini, “Il fondo diplomatico,” 286–287.

³ Monacchia, “Testimonianze confraternali,” 320–321.

⁴ Monacchia, “Testimonianze confraternali,” 324. See also Frank, “Le confraternite di Orvieto,” 610.

⁵ Cenci, *Documentazione di vita assisana*, 1:358.

⁶ Terruggia, “In quale momento,” 453. Del Pozzo, “Contrasti spirituali.”

⁷ “Forse anticamente formava un unico laudario con il 36/3, che appare scritto dalla stessa mano, ed è pure in pergamena.” Terruggia, “In quale momento,” 453.

⁸ Perugi/Scentoni (eds.) *Il Laudario Assisano* 36.

⁹ “Sante Cicchi della fraternita di Santo Stefano (la confraternita dell’*Illuminati*) nel 1388 deriva ancora preferentemente dal repertorio assisano (certo con intrusioni le più varie, fino al punto che i primi versi di una strofe di una laude alla Vergine [...]).” Baldelli, “La lauda e i Disciplinati,” 366. The *Laudario ‘Illuminati’* was the main laudario of the confraternity of Santo Stefano; it has recently been edited and published in Terruggia, et al., *Il laudario ‘Illuminati’*.

¹⁰ Catalano, “Laudari ignoti.”

Virgin Mary, is part of AS³, the third fragment of the *Laudario Assisano* 36. Catalano also pointed out that this lauda had been composed by someone from Assisi who had drawn part of the first stanza from the opening lines of Saint Bernard's prayer to the Virgin in *Paradiso* 33.¹¹ At the IX Convegno di Studi Umbri, held in Gubbio in 1974, Ignazio Baldelli pointed out that Umbria, and Perugia in particular, was "one of the earliest centre of diffusion of Dante's works" and that the *Paradiso* was present in a "strictly local" document from the late fourteenth century, the only work by Sante Cicchi (amanuensis of the third fragment of codex 36) that "did not derive from sources older than a half century, or even a century or more."¹² Baldelli went on to say that there is strong evidence to suggest that in Umbria, aside from the vast dissemination of Dante's work, there are also, on the theoretical-cultural side, some interesting uses of the *Divine Comedy* right alongside the classics.¹³

So, alongside some older laude that Sante Cicchi had copied for his and his brothers' use in the confraternity, there was "a lauda to the Madonna and some saints from Assisi such as Rufinus, Claire, Victorinus, and Francis into which Dante's *terzina* 'Vergine madre figlia del tuo figlio' had been imbedded."¹⁴

In so doing Cicchi had adapted himself to what, for about sixty years already, had been the standard practice of local confraternities, that is, to the use of the local Italian vernacular as the language of choice for their statutes,¹⁵ for the laude they sang or "staged",¹⁶ and for the prayers they recited.¹⁷ The practice was, clearly, a result of the fact that by now knowledge of Latin had become a privilege of the few and certainly not of the members of the confraternity of Santo Stefano, nearly all of whom were from

¹¹ Catalano, "Laudari ignoti," 63.

¹² "[che] non derivi da fonti antiche almeno mezzo secolo, o anche un secolo e più." Baldelli, "L'umanesimo volgare in Umbria," 75–76.

¹³ "D'altra parte, insieme alla vasta penetrazione dell'opera di Dante, cogliamo sul piano teorico-culturale, proprio in Umbria, alcune interessanti assunzioni della Commedia accanto ai classici, già nel Trecento." Baldelli, "L'umanesimo volgare in Umbria," 76.

¹⁴ Baldelli, *Non dica Ascesi ch  direbbe corto*, 109. St Rufinus is the legendary first bishop of Assisi and the city's patron saint, St Claire of Assisi is the founder of the Clarisse, St Victorinus of Assisi was a mid-third century bishop and martyr, St Francis of Assisi is the founder of the Franciscan order.

¹⁵ See, for example, the statutes of the confraternities of Santi Antonio e Giacomo and of Sant'Antonino in Nicolini et al., *Le fraternite medievali di Assisi*, 271–304; 345–372; 373–383.

¹⁶ See the laude in the fourteenth-century laudario 'Illuminati' from the Biblioteca Comunale in Assisi, recently edited and published in Terruggia, et al., *Il laudario 'Illuminati'* and the laudario 'Fron dini' from the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale "Vittorio Emanuele" in Rome, recently edited and published in Mancini, *Il Laudario 'Fron dini'*.

¹⁷ See Santucci, *Preci in volgare trecentesco*.

the lower classes and illiterate, but all of whom could understand Dante's vernacular and, in the case of some, even learn it by heart and pass it on from one generation to the next.

The lauda to the Madonna was edited and published in its entirety by Michele Catalano, partially by Ignazio Baldelli, who limited himself to transcribing the stanza containing Dante's *terzina*, and, more recently and again in its entirety by Gina Scentoni.¹⁸ We transcribe here the four-verse refrain and the first octave of the lauda, with some very slight transcription variants, not worrying about hyper-syllabic verses, and highlighting with bolding the verses drawn from Dante.

O gloriosa pia madre
de Cristo, Vergene biata,
tu si' nostr'avocata
et guardene da onne malatia.¹⁹

I.

**Vergene matre, figlia del tuo figlio,
humele,²⁰ alta più che criatura,
termene fisso dello eterno consiglio,**
non consentire che l'umana natura
perissca: or ne²¹ prinde cura
de noie che t'amamo devotamente;
defende la tua gente,
tu che del paradiso iè' scala et via.

(O glorious pious mother / of Christ, blessed virgin, / you are our
advocate / and you guard us from all illness. // **Virgin mother,
daughter of your son, / humble, loftier than any creature, / keep
me firm in your eternal council** / do not allow human nature / to

¹⁸ Catalano, "Laudari ignoti," 64–65; Baldelli, "L'umanesimo volgare," 75; and Perugi/Scentoni, *Il Laudario Assisano* 36, 75–76.

¹⁹ Catalano, "Laudari ignoti," 64 gives the word as *malatia*, but Baldelli, "L'umanesimo umbro," 75 gives it as *malentia* and Perugi/Scentoni, *Il Laudario Assisano* 36, 75, as *maletia*. I believe Catalano is correct because in the manuscript there is an *a* above the *e* of *maletia*, as if to correct it, even though the deletion sign is not clear. Also, in the first verse of stanza six there is an unequivocal *malatia*.

²⁰ Catalano, "Laudari ignoti," 64 transcribes it as *umele alta* without the comma; Baldelli, "L'umanesimo umbro," 75, gives it as *humele e alta* thereby adding an *e* that is not present in the manuscript; Perugi/Scentoni, *Il Laudario Assisano* 36, 75, gives it as *humel'e alta* even though all the conjunctions in the manuscript are always written out as *et*.

²¹ Catalano, "Laudari ignoti," 64 transcribes it as *onne*; Baldelli, "L'umanesimo umbro," 75 and Perugi/Scentoni, *Il Laudario Assisano* 36, 75 transcribe it as *or ne*.

perish; now take care of us / of us who love you devoutly; / defend
your people, / you who are the ladder and path to heaven.)

Laude about Death

Baldelli's attention was also drawn by a number of laude in the codex that talked about death and which he saw as part of the "Assisi tradition" because they were written in a fine Assisi vernacular,²² such as the following lauda:²³

I

Iterum ad domum:

"O pariente et amicie
del fratiello nostro, ch'è remasto al monnemento,
ciascheduno de noie vo dicie
con pianto e con sospire e co llamento
che senza tardamento
faciate per luye pregare el crociefisso,
a ciò che dal nabisso
esso lo scanpe e minel colgli biate."

II

Vivus:

"Con oratione spese
et co llemosene sì ll'aïtarite,
faciendo chantare messe
per la su'alma, voy che remaste sète,
però che voy vedete
che per le precie se va a salvazione:
questo ène el grande guiderdone
che se pò fare a quiglie che sònno passate.

III

Vivus:

Molto ne semo doliente
noy, che remaste semo, suoy conpagnie:
con descyplina mordente
esso visse con noy gyà fa multi angnie.

²² "Alcune laudi della morte di tradizione assisana [scritte] in un bel volgare assisano"; Baldelli, *L'umanesimo volgare*, 75.

²³ The transcription is by Gina Scentoni from Perugi/Scentoni, *Il Laudario Assisano* 36, 42–43.

Paryente, or ecco glie suo pangnie
 che fo adornato portandolo a ssanto:
 la terra è mo' suo manto,
 et per conpàgnia glie vyerme glie suo' date.

IV

Stephano allapedato,
 che nel sepolcro fecie mezzo luoco
 a lLorenço bÿato,
 el quale arostito fo nel fuoco,
 con grande canto et gyoco
 lui et noy mine a ssalvamnto,
 senza niuno pavento
 en vita eterna siamo collocate."
 Amen Amen.

(I // On the way to the house: // "O relatives and friends / of our brother, who has remained in the tomb, / each of us says to you / with tears and sighs and lamentations / that without delay / you have prayers to the Crucifix said on his behalf, / so that from the abyss / they may spare him and lead him to the blessed."

II // The Living Man: // "With frequent prayers / and with alms you will so help him, / by having masses sung / for his soul, you who are left behind, / so that you see / that through prayer one goes to salvation: / this is the great reward / that one can offer to those who have gone on.

III // The Living Man: // We are very sorry, we who are left here, his companions: / with sharp discipline / he lived with us for many years. / Relatives, here now are the clothes / he was dressed in when he was carried to his burial:²⁴ / the earth is now his mantle / and he has been given worms to keep him company.

IV // Stephen who was stoned [to death], / for whom space was made in the tomb / by blessed Lawrence,²⁵ / who was roasted on

²⁴ Probably a reference to the confraternity gown in which the body was dressed for the funeral, but which was then removed just before burial.

²⁵ In 439 A.D. the remains of St Stephen were interred alongside those of St Lawrence in a tomb in the newly built church of St Stephen in Constantinople. According to Jacopo da Varagine's *Golden Legend*, chap. CXII (107), 464, the remains of St Lawrence moved miraculously aside to make room for those of St Stephen; note, however, that the lauda seems to say the reverse and have St Stephen make room for St Lawrence. In the late sixth century the remains of both saints were transferred to Rome and placed, again together, in a tomb under the main altar of the Basilica of San Lorenzo fuori le mura.

the fire, / with great song and game,²⁶ / led himself and us to salvation, / with no fear at all / we are placed in eternal life.” / Amen Amen.)

As can be seen, this short lauda contains many characteristic traits of the Assisi vernacular of the fourteenth century: the predominant masculine plural ending in –e, such as in *amicie e parente*; the metaphony from –i in *multi e quiglie*; the metaphonetic diphthongization (or vowel breaking) as in *pariente, fratiello, doliente*, and *vyerme*; the palatization of –nn as in *angnie* (for “anni”) and *pangnie* (for “panni”); and so forth.

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Abbreviations

AS² Second fragment of the Laudario ‘Assisano’, ms. 36

AS³ Third fragment of the Laudario ‘Assisano’, ms. 36

Manuscript Sources

Assisi. Archivio Capitolare di San Rufino.

ms. 36 (AS¹ - AS² - AS³ - AS⁴ - AS⁵), Laudario ‘Assisano’

Assisi. Biblioteca Comunale.

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²⁶ Possibly an allusion to St Lawrence’s alleged witticism when, as he was being martyred by being burned alive on a gridiron, he told his executioner “You can turn me over now, I am done on this side.”

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