

Thesis Completed

Alfredo Troiano, *Il laudario di S. Maria della Morte di Bologna. Il ms. 1069 della Yale Beinecke Library*. [‘The laud book of S. Maria della Morte in Bologna. The MS 1069 at the Yale Beinecke Library’] Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 2007. 267 pages.

Summary

The bulk of my dissertation is a critical and annotated edition of the lauds (*laudi*) used by the Bolognese confraternity of “Santa Maria della Morte.” Founded in 1336, the confraternity played an important role in the civic community of Bologna, above all through the assistance it provided to persons condemned to death. The critical edition has as a preliminary text the MS 1069 of the Yale Beinecke Library. The codex contains the instructions (“Confortatorio”) addressed to the comforters and a repertory of 49 anonymous *laudi*.

First, the manuscript is described thoroughly. Then, the codex is thoroughly analyzed in the context of other manuals from the same confraternity. This investigation proves that the Beinecke poem collection is rich and remarkable: by itself the codex provides us with the largest number of *laudi* (26) from the “official” (and now lost) repertory of 87 poems. Eight of these poems are to be found only the Beinecke manuscript.

The night before the execution and during the procession to the scaffold, the prayers and sacred images assisted comforters in their mission. In diverting the prisoner’s attention away from worldly matters, the comforters encouraged the condemned to think of death as a means to a better end.

The annotations of the poems privilege the manual as a first source to make thematic connections. It is astonishing to notice the fascination with blood and its symbolic association with the Christian topics of salvation and redemption. The iconographic section helps to understand better this type of relations.

Among the authors present in this collection, two are the most interesting for the topic: Gregorio Roverbella, a Bolognese notary enrolled in the confraternity, whose poem (I) is like a mirror of the comforting manual; and Andrea Viarani, beheaded at Ferrara on 12 August 1469, whose sonnets (VIII and IX) are like a mirror of a condemned comforted. Because ‘gallows literature’ is still unexplored, the Appendix contains also Viarani’s sirvente “Se ’l cieco traditor mondo fallace” followed by an interpretation of the poem in the light of the “Confortatorio.”