

Forty Years of Drunkenness: A Note about Cecco Angiolieri's Sonnet about Wine*

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For most of the twentieth century readers knew Cecco Angiolieri's poem, «Tutto quest'anno ch'è mi son frustato», from only one manuscript source. In 1906, Aldo Francesco Massèra published the first modern edition of Angiolieri's poetry, and as the basis for his reading of the sonnet he used only one of the two versions found in the Ottelio manuscript, codex 10 of the Biblioteca Comunale "Vincenzo Joppi" in Udine (ff. 148v-149r)¹. Massèra considered the second variant located in the Udine 10 manuscript to be imperfect (ff. 209r-v), and thus he disregarded it as a source. Over the decades, subsequent editors of Angiolieri's sonnets updated Massèra's *lectio* but none revisited his decision to base the sonnet on only one of the two versions found in Udine 10. In 2001, I published an article entitled *One Year – or Two Decades – of Drunkenness? Cecco Angiolieri and the Udine 10 Codex*, in which I discussed the codicology of Angiolieri's sonnet «Tutto quest'anno ch'è mi son frustato»². In my study, I discussed the second version of the sonnet also found in the Udine 10 manuscript (ca. 1461-70)³. The situation

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¹ A. F. Massèra, *Introduzione*, in *I sonetti di Cecco Angiolieri*, a cura di A. F. Massèra, Zanichelli, Bologna 1906, pp. III-LX: XLI.

² F. Alfie, *One Year – or Two Decades – of Drunkenness? Cecco Angiolieri and the Udine 10 Codex*, in "Italice", LXXVIII, 2001, pp. 18-35.

³ For a full description of the Udine 10 manuscript, see G. Fabris, *Il codice udinese Ottelio di antiche rime volgari*, in "Memorie storiche forogiuliesi", IV, 1908, pp. 89-112; the article continues in the following year, "Memorie storiche forogiuliesi", V, 1909, pp. 33-74, pp. 145-60, and pp. 210-35. See also G. Mazzatinti, *Inventari dei manoscritti delle biblioteche d'Italia*, vol. XLVI, Olschki, Firenze 1930, pp. 12-49.

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presented a conundrum at the time, as the codicological information from the manuscript was applicable to both variants.

In my study, I urged fellow literary critics to consider the two versions as the products of a scribal culture that never hesitated to edit, revise, or even rewrite texts. Given the state of information at the time, it was impossible to determine which version was more authoritative; instead I wrote, «both [versions] are the end-products of a continual process of circulation, transcription, perhaps revision, and maybe even redaction [of texts] in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries»⁴. The situation has changed since 2001, however, as two other texts have come to light that flesh out the codicological history of Angiolieri's poem: one is another version of the sonnet, heretofore unpublished, from a codex compiled several decades before Udine 10; the second is another sonnet altogether, the verses of which were copied into one of the transcriptions in Udine 10. The new information provides further evidence for the idea, asserted in the previous article, that during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, some texts were fluid, shifting from one form to another as different people saw fit. The current study, therefore, is an analysis of the three versions of the sonnet, along with the related poem, which when taken together provide a broader perspective on the reception of Angiolieri's sonnet in the fifteenth century. Through repeated transcriptions, Angiolieri's poem was adapted and merged with other related texts.

To begin, the two versions from Udine 10 are reproduced below, and for the sake of simplicity, I label them as Udine 10, versions A and B; the latter is the version discarded by Massèra and thus not considered in any of the printed editions of Angiolieri's works. All the texts in this study are transcribed diplomatically, with the scribal contractions expanded and rendered in italics, and “v” distinguished from “u”. Otherwise, all punctuation and spellings reflect those found in the respective manuscripts. The printed version, based exclusively on Udine 10 A, is reproduced in the notes as assistance to interpret the poem⁵. Both versions from Udine 10 read as follows:

⁴ Alfie, *One Year – Or Two Decades – of Drunkenness?*, cit., p. 30.

⁵ In the interest of clarity, I am citing an edited version of the sonnet: «Tutto quest'anno ch'è, mi son frustato / di tutti i vizi che solia avere; / non m'è rimasto se non quel di bere, / del qual me n'abbi Iddio per escusato. / Ché la mattina, quando son levato, / el corpo pien di sal mi par avere; / adunque, di': chi se poria tenere / di non bagnarsi la lingua e 'l palato? / E non vorria se non greco e vernaccia, / ché mi fa maggior noia il vin latino, / che la mia donna, quand'ella mi caccia. / Deh, ben abbi chi prima pose 'l vino, / che tutto 'l dì mi fa star in bonaccia; / i' non ne fo però un mal latino». Cited from C. Angiolieri, *Le rime*, a cura di A. Lanza, Archivio Guido Izzi, Roma 1990.

Udine 10: version A

(ff. 148v-149r)

Rubric: ciecho da siena

Tutto quest *anno che* mi son frustato
de tutti vicij *che* solia havere:
non me rimasto *senon* quel di bere
del qual mi nabbi idio *per* eschusato

che la matina *quando* son levato
el corpo pien di sal mi par havere
adonque di chi se poria tenere
de non bagnarli la lingua e l pallato

E non voria se *non* greco e vernacia
che mi fa la magior noia il vin latino
che la mia dona quandela mi cacia

de chi ben habbi chi prima possel vino
che tutol di mi fa star in bonacia
i non ne fo pero un mal latino

Marginal note to left of sonnet: Aliter in cartis 209

Udine 10: version B

(ff. 209r-v)

No rubric

Da vinti anni inqua son castigato
de tutti i vicij *che* soleva havere:
non me rimasto *senon* quel dil bere
pero me habbi dio *per* eschusato.

Che la matina *quandio* son levato
el corpo plen di sal mi par havere:
chi si potria tener de *non* bere
per rinfreschar el polmon el fegato.

El ber di laqua tutto mi travaglia,
ma quel dil vin mi fa far molti acti
quandio lo capo pieno di vinaglia.

Ligier io son da fare di gran facti:
ma laqua ne la golla mi gargaglia
e fa parer mie sentimenti mati:

Siche sio fo degli ati
non ui mirevigliati, *che* glie il vino
che mi fa star lizadro, e pelegrino

The Udine 10 manuscript is a compendium of poetry from the Trecento and Quattrocento, favoring the latter century. The two versions of the sonnet therein, as has been mentioned, are quite different from one another, yet both versions are based on traditional *topoi* about the tavern, wine, and drunkenness prevalent in the Middle Ages and Renaissance; they both employ the contrast between wine and water as a means to portray the wisdom of the Church's teachings and the folly of the drunkard⁶. In version A, Cecco explains that, for over a year, he has purged himself of all vices except for drunkenness. Instead, he proclaims his love of wine, and he praises its inventor. In version B, conversely, the author says that for over twenty years he has avoided all vices except drunkenness, and the next seven verses are identical to those in version A. However, it is in the tercets that version B takes a new direction. In the second half of version B, the poet claims that wine makes him feel powerful while water just gurgles in his throat. It then closes with a three-verse *coda*, resulting in a seventeen-line sonnet. He concludes that wine inspires him to do great deeds, and to feel joyful. Aside from the textual differences between Udine 10 A and B, however, it should be noted that Udine 10 B also demonstrates characteristics of Northern Italian dialects, suggesting a linguistic calque of the place of its transcription⁷. Both versions present plausible readings for the sonnet, despite the differences between them.

The third version of the sonnet, heretofore unexamined, is essential in negotiating the differences between Udine 10 A and B. It reinforces Massèra's conclusion that Udine 10 A was probably more authentic. The third version of Angiolieri's sonnet appears in manuscript C 155 of the Marucelliana Library of Florence, a codex dated to 1417, roughly half a century before the compilation of Udine 10. The Marucelliano codex includes numerous anonymous texts, but also Boccaccio's *Filostrato*⁸. The version of the sonnet under discussion appears among the anonymous poetry. It reads as follows:

Marucelliano C 155

(f. 57v)

No rubric

Ne quarantannj miso ritrovato
de tutti i vizi chi solia avere

⁶ Alfie, *One Year – Or Two Decades – of Drunkenness?*, cit., p. 20.

⁷ Ivi, p. 25.

⁸ For a complete description of the codex, see S. Ferrari, *Le poesie popolari del Codice Marucelliano C. 155*, in "Biblioteca di letteratura popolare italiana", I, 1882, pp. 313-29. See also B. Visconti, *Le rime*, a cura di D. Piccini, Accademia della Crusca, Firenze 2007, p. 36.

senon che me rimaso quel del bere
diome ha gente mal, per eschusato

E la mattina quandio so levato
el chorpo pien di sale mi pare avere
de chi si potrebe astenere del bere
chi non bagnassi il pulmone e pelato

Io no vory senon grecho e vernacia
che mi fa noia questo vin latino
per chome fa la mia donna quando mi dischacia

De che ben aggia bacco signor fino
che senpre maj me fa stare in bonacia
e maj per luj non feci uno latino

The version of Marucelliano C 155 shows strong similarities to Udine 10 A. The last six verses are nearly identical between the two variants, although Marucelliano C 155 adds a reference to Bacchus instead of merely discussing the unknown inventor of wine (v. 12). It also lacks the *coda* attached to the end of Udine 10 B. This is not to say that Marucelliano C 155 has no similarities to Udine 10 B, however, because it too raises the question of who could refrain from drinking («bere», v. 7) and of bathing one's lungs, not tongue («polmone», v. 8). It should be recalled that Udine 10 was compiled decades later, and therefore version A itself may have also been altered before transcription. Nevertheless, in most respects, the differences between Marucelliano C 155 and Udine 10 A are negligible, indicating their affinity to each other.

That said, Marucelliano C 155 shares one important similarity with Udine 10 B: the timeframe of its *incipit* verse covers several decades. Both Marucelliano C 155 and Udine 10 B vastly extend the period of abstinence from the single year of Udine 10 A, but they also differ from one another, forty years instead of twenty. Moreover, the *incipit* of Marucelliano C 155 is unique in that it omits any notion of purgation («frustato», Udine 10 A; «castigato», Udine 10 B). In short, all three versions differ in their *incipit* verses.

The discovery of Marucelliano C 155, with its resemblances to Udine 10 A, suggests the preferability of Udine 10 A over Udine 10 B, but to see how much so requires examination of a fourth text. The *Conventi Soppressi* 122 manuscript of the Mediceo-Laurenziana Library of Florence contains an anonymous sonnet that clarifies the tercets in Udine 10 B; those six lines, it will be recalled, differ widely from those of both Udine 10 A and Marucelliano C 155. *Conventi Soppressi* 122 contains the poetry of numerous poets of the Tre- and early Quattrocento, with authors as diverse as Cino da Pistoia, Francesco Petrarca, Dante, and Stefano Finiguerra, nicknamed “il

Za”⁹. As can be best determined, *Conventi Soppressi* 122 was composed in the first half of the fifteenth century, perhaps decades before the Udine 10 codex. The sonnet is not another version of Angiolieri’s poem but rather, an entirely different composition altogether. Since I believe this sonnet to be unedited, I am reproducing it in full below, in the same manner as the three sonnets above:

Biblioteca Mediceo-Laurenziana Conventi Soppressi 122

(f. 127r)

No rubric

Il ber dell acqua tutto mi travagla
 ma quel del vino mi fa far gran fatti
 e sentomi leggier a far molti acti
 quando o ben pieno il chapo di vinagla
 Il vin giu *per* la gholà mi gharghagla
 e par che sia versato nelli usatti
 allor i sentimenti stanno extratti
per che virtù divina lingua vagla
 Somma dolceza sento nel chonchare
 tal che bevendo *non* vorrei compagno
 in vita eterna sol mi pare andare
 nel bere veggio star tutto il ghadagno
 che mi rallegra e *fammi* ben chantare
 il chuor mi cresce *quando* bene il bagno
 ma *non* te ne dar lagno
 chio ti prometto di far senza fallo
 chel budellame senpre stara a ghallo

The poet of the sonnet in *Conventi Soppressi* 122 explains how wine inspires him to great acts (vv. 1-5), but conversely he gags on water and it would be better if it had poured into his riding boots («usatti», v. 6). Alcohol makes him feel ecstatic, because it has the same merits as divine speech, and when he is drunk he feels transported to heaven (vv. 7-11). Drinking brings only advantages, and his heart swells with wine (vv. 12-15). As before, the sonnet taps into many of the widespread *topoi* about drinking from the Middle Ages, but what is of interest here is how it relates specifically to Angiolieri’s poem. The first five lines of the sonnet from *Conventi Soppressi* 122 were introduced into Udine 10 B as five of the six verses in its tercets; in some instances the verses have been reordered (e.g., v. 5 in the sonnet

⁹ For a complete description of Mediceo-Laurenziana *Conventi Soppressi* 122, see D. de Robertis, *Censimento dei manoscritti di rime di Dante (III)*, in “Studi Danteschi”, XXXIX, 1962, pp. 119-207: 173-4. See also D. Alighieri, *Rime*, vol. I, a cura di D. de Robertis, Le Lettere, Firenze 2002, pp. 161-5.

above became v. 11), or elements have been switched around (e.g., «fatti», v. 2; «acti», v. 3). Nonetheless, the verses in Udine 10 B are recognizable as derived directly from this sonnet. As we have it, in other words, Udine 10 B is actually an amalgam of two different sonnets, Angiolieri's and the anonymous poem found in *Conventi Soppressi* 122.

From all this information, it is clear that Udine 10 B is an extravagant form of the sonnet, as Massèra concluded. Over time, someone replaced verses from Angiolieri's poem with those from the anonymous composition in *Conventi Soppressi* 122, and attached the *coda*. Conversely, Udine 10 A and Marucelliano C 155, taken together, along with those portions of Udine 10 B that resemble them, provide a glimpse into a more authentic form of the poem. For thirteen of the fourteen lines, the differences between Udine 10 A and Marucelliano C 155 are minor, as mentioned above; perhaps the most notable variation is the reference to Bacchus in Marucelliano C 155 (v. 12), which may have been introduced to reflect the fifteenth-century interest in the classical world. The greatest difficulty remains the *incipit* verse, however, for which no consensus among the manuscript witnesses has emerged: the poet may have restrained himself from all his vices for one, twenty, or forty years. To explain the changing timeframes of the *incipit*, I offer the provisional hypothesis that a certain amount of free-variation existed among the fifteenth-century transcriptions for the opening line of the poem, with some individuals changing the duration of self-restraint in their versions for artistic effect. Given the similarity in meaning between Udine 10 A and B, the rhyme word of the *incipit* probably indicated some form of purgation («frustato», «castigato») and not merely the presence of vice, as in Marucelliano C 155 («ritrovato»).

In conclusion, a dictum among philologists explains that more recent sources are not necessarily less reliable (*recentiores sed non deteriores*). The codicology of Angiolieri's poem exemplifies – and challenges – that received wisdom. From the current information, Udine 10 A, transcribed after 1461, appears the most reliable of the three versions. While Marucelliano C 155 (ca. 1417) provides valuable information, and corroborates much of the reading of Udine 10 A, it has a less reliable *incipit* verse. Thus, as regards Udine 10 A, the most recent manuscript is also superior. Yet, Udine 10 B, the version from the very same manuscript as Udine 10 A, is also the least reliable of the three versions, with eight of its seventeen verses derived from another source altogether. Thus, to judge from both the versions found therein, the Udine 10 codex is *recentior*, while both *deterior* and *melior* at the same time.

