

Una lauda dipinta. Gli affreschi di Buffalmacco nel Camposanto di Pisa e la devozione dei disciplinati

Abstract

This contribution offers a new hypothesis for the genesis and function of Buonamico Buffalmacco's famous fresco cycle in the southern gallery of the Camposanto di Pisa. It begins by reconsidering the commission of the sepulchral monument to hermit and *frater penitentie* Giovanni Cini (1270–1335), which can be attributed ab initio to a flagellant confraternity. It then argues that Buffalmacco's frescoes – which are spatially and semantically close to Cini's tomb – should be read in correspondence with the devotional practices and funerary paraliturgy of the Pisan Companies of the Disciplined, who frequented the monumental cemetery from as early as 1343. It seems likely that the cycle would have served as an iconographic reference for the texts that were performed in the ceremonial context of a burial: the so-called *laudes pro defunctis*. The central themes in these texts – the destructive and equalizing power of death, the threat of eternal condemnation for sinners and the consequent call to penance – overlap significantly with the key subjects dealt with in the first two panels of Buffalmacco's 'triptych' mural. Even the *Thebaid* can likewise be inserted coherently into a devotional path of a *disciplinati* sort: spurred on by the pastoral work of the mendicant orders, the lay brothers held the desert fathers as exemplars, and gave them and their experiences of corporal mortification and escape from worldly life cultic centrality.