

MARIALAURA PANCINI, **The Envoi (“*congedo*”): a poetical send off in the Political and Civil minor Tuscan poetry of the 14th Century**

Introduction

Keen writes «The *congedo* to an Italian canzone is the closing stanza that in English is designated the envoy. The two terms give perhaps a slightly different emphasis to the function of this end-portion of the lyric: the Italian term highlights the idea of closure or departure, as the words take leave of their author [...] the English emphasizes their journey towards and reception by a wider public»¹. If we examine the genre of the Political and Civil minor Tuscan Poetry of the 14th Century, we find a wide array of captivating examples which illustrate the journeys the authors want their songs to take. In my paper I have collected a representative and heterogeneous selection of these examples, which allowed me to compare different texts and analyze their *congedo* the section where the authors plan the journey for their songs to take. If we imagined the song as a letter, a message from the author, the *congedo* would be the address and the name of the recipient. It tells us the direction and the destination chosen by the authors for their songs. In order to strike a balance between being concise and being able to include targeted analyses for a specific purpose, I opted to concentrate my efforts on comparing and analyzing the works of two poets. This approach allows for a more focused examination, enabling the development of a coherent argument within the confines of the paper. I have focused on Franco Sacchetti, as he is widely recognized as one of the most prolific authors of 14th century Tuscany excluding incomplete songs, we have access to 26 songs by Sacchetti. The second author I present is Brusciaccio da Rovezzano, whose case exemplifies how the *congedi* and an author's body of work can be important not only for literature purposes but also for

¹ Keen (2009), p. 183.

biographical and historical reasons. While we have a rich anthology of Bruscaccio's writings we do not know much about his life, except what we can infer from his texts. Bruscaccio's texts are the only link between his poetry and his personal life. In my presentation I will focus on the *congèdo* of the analyzed songs, examining the structure and the thematic aspects of this specific section of the text. Consequently, I have provided only brief information about the entire text and about the biography of the authors. A detailed analysis of the texts is available in my PhD Thesis and additional information about the authors can be found in the critical editions of the texts, referenced in the footnotes. To support my arguments, I have used the original verses of the texts; for these I have provided my translation or my paraphrase within the article's body. I have referred to the songs with the feminine pronoun *her*: the authors themselves consider their songs a person and refer to them as a human being, talking to them and advising them. Therefore, I would like to maintain this practice and think about the songs like individuals who travel from the heart and the pen of the poet to reach other places and people. Examples of the songs are ordered by author. Although Keen has studied the *congèdo* in Medieval Exile lyrics, focusing on the second half of the 13th Century, there have been no studies specifically addressing the *congèdo* in the 14th Century political and civil minor Tuscan songs².

Franco Sacchetti

The first text I present is a song that Franco Sacchetti addresses to the rulers of his city, Florence. Even though Sacchetti (1332-1400) collected his lyrics in his *Libro delle rime*, he was a merchant, a politician, and held many roles for the Florence city council³. In the song *Cari signori, collegi e consolari*⁴ the author writes after the fall of the Ciompi revolt (a rebellion among unrepresented labourers which occurred in Florence between 1378 and 1382). In particular he disagrees with the street riots, and he praises the rulers that governed the city in that difficult period, reminding them the bitter passed days: «giorni preteriti

² *Ibidem*.

³ Zaccarello (2017).

⁴ Critical editions: Ageno (1989), pp. 328-331; Puccini (2007), pp. 392-394.

amari» (4) that undermined the peace. In the following verses the author lists all the cardinal virtues: prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance. Sacchetti underlines the comparison between the past, when these virtues were mistreated, and the present, where these virtues flourish thanks to the rulers of the city. In Sacchetti's texts Florence rulers embody the four virtues, and the virtues live through the rulers. After praising the rulers, Sacchetti advises them using the imperative form. The entire text emphasises the heroism of the rulers that save and protect the four virtues that are represented with the metaphor of a mistreated woman. Another important aspect is that Sacchetti highlights the disadvantages for the entire community when the four cardinal virtues are not present. Sacchetti then quotes some well-known historical and mythological characters in order to prove with real-life examples that his words are true⁵. Sacchetti also refers directly to the experience of his readers: «s'io dico il vero, il sa chi vide il gioco» (52)⁶. In the *congedo* Sacchetti sends off his song to the rulers, and he invites his song to be happy with them because the bad days are gone: «che drieto a ria fortuna han dolce tempo» (63). After that, the author asks his song to remind the rulers and the people to maintain their brotherhood and unity.

A similar example by the same author is the song *Non mi posso tener più ch'io non dica*⁷, written around 1365 or 1368. The rubric specifies the occasion of the composition: the alliance between Charles IV and Urban V and their war against Florence. As it is conveyed in the incipit, the author writes with the intention to convey current events Sacchetti directly addresses pope Urban V and king Charles IV. The subsequent verses refer to the alliance, «*assembranza*» (5), between the spiritual and the temporal power (Urban and Charles). Following this Sacchetti addresses only the pope, criticizing his behavior and his belligerent attitude by comparing him with his predecessors. Sacchetti goes on to directly address Charles IV, accusing the emperor to betray his role⁸. The short *congedo*, only three verses, sends off the song to Rome, the place where both Urban and Charles were at the time, and

⁵ He quotes Roboam, Sardanapalo, these characters are also quoted by other Tuscan authors like Antonio Loschi in *O Cleopatra madre*.

⁶ [if I tell the truth, he who saw the play knows].

⁷ Critical editions: Ageno (1989), pp. 169-175; Puccini (2007), pp. 226-231.

⁸ There are lots of similarities between these critiques and Sacchetti's to pope Gregory XI in texts like *Gregorio primo* or *L'ultimo giorno*.

the author instructs his poem to tell everyone the truth, just as he did: «a ciascun il vero, com'io ti parlo» (153).

Franco Sacchetti writes also *L'ultimo giorno veggio che s'appressa*⁹; the historical context is the war between Florence and Pope Gregory XI. The song was written in 1376 after Florence decided to ally with the Visconti. In his song Sacchetti foresees the end of the world due to the situation of extreme sin and moral vileness embodied by the pope, who wants to impose himself on divine judgments while also holding the temporal power, a position rejected even by Jesus. As previously done in *Non mi posso tener* he draws upon virtuous Christian examples of the past like Jesus and Saint Peter. He compares these enlightened people with Gregory XI, criticizing the pope and highlighting his errors. Sacchetti also equates Gregory XI's behavior with the pharaohs of ancient Egypt, deeming the pope's errors far worse. In conclusion Sacchetti accuses the pope of paganism, of believing in the god Mars and of waging war against Christians instead of focusing on the Saracens. In the last stanzas before the *congèdo*, Sacchetti addresses the pope directly asking him to follow Christian teachings, and to think about his successors so that they are not left in the dark by his conduct. In the *congèdo* the poet affirms the truthfulness of his words and sends the song off towards the Pope. According to Ageno the location is Genoa, where Gregorio XI makes a stop in 1376 during his journey from Avignon to Rome due to sea storms¹⁰. According to Puccini this reference is too weak, and he dates these verses during Gregory's entire four-month journey.

By Sacchetti I examined also *Fece già Roma triunfando festa*¹¹, a song written after the 15th of May 1358, the day when the Guelph captains (supporters of the papacy) issue a law against the Ghibellines (supporters of the Holy Roman Empire). The Ghibellines are banished from the city of Florence, and they are excluded from public roles. The law and the repressions are extended also to the people suspected of being Ghibelline. At the beginning of the song events from the history of ancient Rome, where the city was victorious, are recounted. After three stanzas dedicated to the celebration of Rome, Sacchetti

⁹ Critical editions: Ageno (1989), pp. 270-275; Puccini (2007), pp. 333-336.

¹⁰ See Ageno (1989), p. 275; Puccini (2007), p. 337.

¹¹ Critical editions: Ageno (1989), pp. 62-66; Puccini (2007), pp. 116-120.

abandons the topic because of its vastity. In the entire song the author refers to Rome as a woman, describing her with human sentiments and emotions¹². Sacchetti then addresses his city, Florence «E tu Fiorenza» (49); in this case the author accuses Florence of being ungrateful to his loyal citizens and their good fate. In particular Sacchetti asks his city why, being so powerful, she perseveres in fighting her own citizens. After that there are some examples taken from ancient history and from his time to demonstrate how internal divisions in a city are only a ruin for the city itself. At the end the author reminds his city that he has already forewarned her «se ben senti, assai t'ho manifesto» (96). In the *congèdo* the author tells his song to choose between leaving or staying. In any case the song will find Florentine people. Sacchetti also asks the song to stop where she finds love and virtue, and where she finds people with these characteristics, she must tell them to leave any kind of «setta o parte» (104)¹³. In line 75 «fuggi, per Dio, adunque, cotal ugge» the author uses the imperative form to tell the city and its citizens to reject political factionalism. The main topic emerging from the entire song is the negative opinion of the author regarding the political division between parties in his city.

I Upon examining Sacchetti's texts it is evident his *congèdi* serve practical purposes, he does not write just to be a poet, but he really wants to reach real, existing people with his words (the pope, the rulers of Florence, the emperor). The recipients of his texts are not random or shaped by stylistic considerations, his *congèdi* are precise and they are linked with the historical context and the life of the poet (the Ciompi revolt, the war between Gregory XI and Florence, the coming of Charles). Although Sacchetti's lyrics are influenced by models like Dante and Petrarch, his *congèdi* demonstrate that the primary motivation of the writing is deeply connected with and motivated by the personal individuality of the author and the events he witnesses. Furthermore, his *congèdi* demonstrate the freedom of expression at that time: Sacchetti is not afraid to strongly criticize a Pope or an Emperor, with the hope that his critiques will reach them.

Bruscaccio da Rovezzano

¹² See Pancini (2023), pp. 423-27.

¹³ [Sect or political party].

The next author I considered is Bruscaccio da Rovezzano, a Florentine who lived between the end of the XIV Century and the beginning of the XV Century. Although what we know about his life is limited to what we can infer from his texts, we have a substantial anthology of his texts available today¹⁴. Sensing the looming threat to Florence of an authoritarian takeover led by Maso degli Albizzi, Bruscaccio da Rovezzano writes the song *Per liber mantenere il popol mio*¹⁵. What distinguishes this song is that the author expresses his opinions through the voice of a woman, in this case not clearly identifiable, in such a way that she could represent either Florence or Freedom itself. Within the genre of the political and civil 14th Century minor Tuscan poetry it is common to find texts where a woman talks in the first person¹⁶. This woman declares at first the intention to defend the freedom of her citizens, that she is armed, and extremely tired but «ferma» (4), settled. The woman's confidence comes from her certainty of having God by her side, and she also wants to vindicate all past injustices. In the subsequent verses there is a glorification of freedom which is, according to the author, a divine gift. For this reason, people should not give up their freedom by subjugating themselves to a single person like Maso degli Albizzi. Similar to the texts by Sacchetti I previously presented, the author adds some examples from Roman ancient history to prove the veracity of his words. The *congèdo* implies that the song knows already where to go, and thus that the readers have also already guessed to whom she is addressed; the journey is very short because the recipient is the head of the Florentine oligarchy, and it is not necessary to go far to reach him¹⁷. Furthermore, the author clarifies that his song is addressed to everyone, without political distinction.

The song *Io parlerò perch'altri non si taccia*¹⁸, by the same Bruscaccio, is linked with the song previously mentioned; in this case the author talks in the first person and not through a woman, but the themes expressed are the same as in *Per liber mantener*. Like Franco

¹⁴ See also Pieri (1971).

¹⁵ Critical edition: Ruggiero (2015), pp. 104-112.

¹⁶ See Pancini (2023), pp. 423-427.

¹⁷ See Ruggiero (2015), p. 111.

¹⁸ Critical edition: Ivi, pp. 113-119.

Sacchetti in *Non mi posso tener più ch'io dica Bruscaccio* also states his necessity to express his opinion to his peers and to advise his public. He suggests to follow God's teachings, to be moderate and to think about the superiority of Death and God's judgment. The author goes on focusing on the people who in the past fought without being afraid to die as martyrs¹⁹. Another interesting aspect is that the author refers to his city, Florence, as a mother and a guide like a new Rome, ready to protect but also to dominate other populations. If we look at the *congèdo*, the author addresses his song to Florence, but the recipient is not Maso degli Albizzi: it should be the head of the exiled Guelphs, who is impossible to identify²⁰. The author hopes that his song won't spread around inside Florence walls, because the song is not elegant «vestita di grossa regola» (83)²¹. At the same time, the author proves that this declaration is only false modesty, that is more rhetorical than sincere. A proof of that is that Bruscaccio asks his song to be affable with the people who want to copy her. The verses «e ssia cortese a cchi ti vuole scrivere» (86)²² are a demonstration of the medieval custom to copy texts to allow their circulation.

Another song by Bruscaccio da Rovezzano is *Agri sospiri, che dal doglioso core*²³; the main topic of the song is the war between Florence and Gian Galeazzo Visconti (the first duke of Milan). The song refers to the defeat of Gian Galeazzo Visconti in Mantua in 1397, as attested in the rubric²⁴. The song is a call to the cities not already politically aligned to unite with Florence against the Visconti's family. The author, at the beginning, addresses his own sighs telling them not to bother him while he is communicating with his readers. In this way the author explains that he does not want his emotions to take over this song, as his purpose is to express concrete arguments. These verses highlight the peculiarity but also the complexity of the political and civil lyrical genre, where the lyrical expression of the author's ego is intertwined with the historical and objective descriptions of the events. After

¹⁹ Even if it is not the topic of this paper, we can well see in Sacchetti and in Bruscaccio's texts that adding examples from the past is a recurring topos in this genre. In my Phd thesis I found a lot of other examples and I focused on also on this aspect.

²⁰ See Ivi, p. 119.

²¹ [dressed in a rude way].

²² [be kind to whom wants to write to you].

²³ Ivi, pp. 126-131.

²⁴ See Ruggiero (2015), p. 126.

that Bruscaccio addresses the cities not already political aligned to unite against the Visconti. In spite of everything the author has faith in the future: Gian Galeazzo Visconti will be defeated with the help of God. Even when writing about his faith Bruscaccio underlines the importance of the alliance between cities. In the *congèdo* Bruscaccio invites the song to find «Franchezza» (57)²⁵, here both personified. The author tells his song to be accompanied with Frankness «che t'accompagni con fidata scorta» (58)²⁶. Bruscaccio invites his song to comfort the anti-Visconti league «E tutti i (co)llegati riconforta» (59)²⁷. He tells the song also to comfort his homeland Florence «la tal mia Fiorenza» (60)²⁸, he praises his city and places his hopes in her «ché nella sua potenza / ò mia speranza come 'n salda torre» (61-62)²⁹.

In all of these three texts the author, Bruscaccio, addresses his songs to Florence. A peculiarity of this author is that he always shows his affection to Florence and his patriotism, «la nostra patria»³⁰ v. 77 of *Io parlerò*; «la tal mia Fiorenza»³¹ v. 60 of *Agri sospiri*. Comparing Sacchetti's texts with those by Bruscaccio we could also understand something about the personality of the authors. In his personal life Sacchetti was a practical man, a merchant, and a politician; his texts express concrete and practical motivation, he is less emotional than Bruscaccio, and he suggests practical actions to his readers «a ciacun di' che fugga setta o parte»³² v. 103 of *Fece già Roma*. Bruscaccio's *congèdi* always show his affection for Florence and his heartfelt concern for his city. Another peculiarity of Bruscaccio is that he shows real affection also for his song, unlike Sacchetti who appears to address his song in a formal manner without genuine affection. Bruscaccio speaks to his song like a person he is in love with and for whom he deeply cares «guardi non entri dentro nella terra, / perché sè mal

²⁵ [Frankness].

²⁶ [that accompanies you with a trustful escort].

²⁷ [All the united people comforts].

²⁸ [my very own Florence].

²⁹ [because in her power / I have my hope like into a solid tower].

³⁰ [our homeland].

³¹ [my very own Florence].

³² [tell everyone to escape from the sept or party].

vestita in grossa regola. / Ma, sse lì entri, tua regola / mostra a cchi ssi diletta di ben vivere / e ssia cortese a cchi tti vuole scrivere»³³ vv. 82-86 of *Io parlerò*.

Conclusion

Although the *congèdo* is typically a small part of a song, these texts demonstrate that the *congèdo* is important when geographically locating the written work in a real, tangible place. Moreover, the *congèdo* allows the authors to convey important historical and biographical information. For instance, through the *congèdo* of *Fece già Roma triunfando festa* by Sacchetti we know that he is in Florence, or in a place where many Florentines are.

In this last stanza the authors' tone shifts, and even though authors address their entire song to someone else, in the *congèdo* they speak intimately to their songs, revealing the relationship with their creations that they are about to send off. The authors' recommendations to their song show they care for them. For instance, Sacchetti, in *L'ultimo giorno*, grants his song the chance to stay or leave.

Through the *congèdo* we also gain insight into cultural practices: in *Io parlerò perch'altri non si taccia*, the author writes about the custom of copying lyrics to spread them around.

Furthermore, the *congèdo* is the place where authors express their considerations about their songs and their intentions when writing them: in *Aprite gli occhi Brusaccio* clarifies the link between religion and the content of his song.

Often in the *congèdo* authors ask their songs to convey their message to someone, like *In Agri sospiri, che dal doglioso core*. Furthermore, upon examining these examples, it becomes apparent that in political texts the *congèdo* has more value than in other genres, like love songs or moral songs, where the focus is not on contemporary or historical events.

In conclusion, the *congèdo* connects the song with the tangible and historical reality in which the song is composed, it is the link between the abstraction of the poetry and the concrete socio-cultural needs that motivate the composition. When considering these

³³ [look, do not go inside my homeland, because you are not well-dressed. But if you go there, show your rule to people who want to live well, and be polite to whom that wants to write you].

examples, it becomes evident that the *congèdo* is conceived as a special part of the song, a separate part, in addition to the overall structure. For instance, from the narrator point of view, even if the author uses the first plural person in the entire song, like in *Su per la costa*, or he writes assuming the voice of another person, like in *Per liber mantener*, or he uses the third person like in *Fece già Roma*, the first person is consistently used to directly address the song. The author speaks with his voice in the *congèdo*, like in the greetings of theatre performances where actors abandon their characters and show themselves for who they are. When examining the rhetorical, lexical, thematical and structural construction of the *congèdo* we can well see that this part of the song is more straightforward and less complex than the rest of the song: the *congèdi* I analyzed are often shorter than the stanzas of the song, the syntax is easy to understand, and there are no rhetorical figures or other constructions which make the meaning of the text obscure. The significance of the text lies in what is explicitly written, hidden meanings are not frequently used. The author has already demonstrated his talent, and at the end he just wants to send his song off. As a result, compared to the entire song, the *congèdo* responds to a practical purpose, making it the most pragmatic part of the song. In an era where travel was quite complex and communication between distant people was difficult, each text assumes a higher importance, each author knows that his text has to embark on a long and difficult journey to reach its destination. Consequently, each word is motivated and accurately chosen, nothing is left to chance. We must consider that Political and Civil texts are important not only for literature, but also to study historical matters in detail: analyzing the *congèdo* of these songs allows us to connect these texts to a physical location and recipient, to understand the connection between people of that time. The *congèdo* is the link between the poetry of the author and the intended destination, thereby allowing a better understanding of the purpose of the composition and the author's intentions.

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The Political and Civil 14th Century Tuscan minor poetry presents many songs (Canzoni) where authors directly address their songs in the closing stanza - in the congèdo. Here poets ask their words to go towards someone or somewhere. A very heterogeneous group of recipients can be found. Sometimes authors ask their songs to reach a specific category of people, such as Franco Sacchetti, who writes a poem to the rulers of his city. While Catherine Keen has extensively analysed cases of congèdo in Medieval poetries, no studies have explored the 14th Century Political and Civil minor Tuscan songs. My paper aims to carefully select and analyze representative examples of these songs, where authors imagine their songs voyages and instruct them to go to a specific place. I have focused on the biographical and historical contextualization of texts by Franco Sacchetti and Bruscaccio da Rovezzano. Additionally, I have found similarities and differences between texts and authors.

Parole-chiave: *Poesia politica e civile, Trecento, Toscana, Canzone, Viaggio*