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"Ché non finire so cominciare."
Orality's Role in Shaping the Circular Poetics of Guittone's *ballate-laude*[1]

Isabella Livorni

In Tuscany in the second half of the thirteenth century, a new form of poetry emerges in our written records of the lyric tradition, one that is not present in the earliest flourishing of the written Italian lyric tradition in Sicily. This form is that of the *ballata*, a refrain form that generally begins with a *ripresa* and then proceeds in multiple stanzas. The stanzas are made up of a *fronte* with two identical *piedi* or *modulazioni*, which lead into a *volta* that is often structurally similar to the *ripresa* and always ends with a verse that rhymes with the last verse of the *ripresa*. After each stanza, the *ripresa* is repeated. The form began as a popular one, often related to dance, as its name suggests; in fact, an alternate name for it was, in its early years, *danza*.[2] The origins of this form have long perplexed critics; slightly different refrain forms were all over the Romance-language-speaking Mediterranean in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, and we cannot say with certainty from which the *ballata* derived. Formal precedents are: the *zajal* form of Al-Andalus; Latin sequences and *versus* with refrains; the troubadour *balada* or *dansa*; and the trouvère *virelai* and *rondeau*, among others.[3]

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[2] Nino Pirrotta, "Ballata," in *Enciclopedia della musica*, Vol. 1 (Milan: Rizzoli Ricordi,1972–1974), 220–221, 220.

[3] Aurelio Roncaglia notes the connection of the *ballata-lauda* to the *zajal* form in his groundbreaking article entitled "Nella preistoria della lauda. Ballata e strofa ziagialesca," in *Il movimento dei disciplinati nel settimo centenario dal suo inizio (Perugia, 1260)*, ed. Lodovico Scaramucci (Perugia: Deputazione di storia patria per l'Umbria, Centro di documentazione sul Movimento dei Disciplinati, Quaderno n. 1: 1960), 460–475. Roncaglia also sheds light on Latin sequences' refrain forms in "Sequenza adamiana & forma zagialesca," in *La sequenza medievale: Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Milano 7–8 aprile 1984*, ed. Agostino Ziino (Lucca: Libreria musicale italiana editrice, 1992), 141–154. Related to this topic is the Latin *versus* and its refrain form, as analyzed by Margaret Switten in "Versus and troubadours around 1100: A comparative study of refrain technique in the 'New Song,'" in *Plainsong and Medieval Music*, Vol. 16, Issue 02 (October 2007), 91–143. Guido Capovilla sums all this information up succinctly in "Note sulla tecnica della ballata trecentesca," in *L'Ars nova italiana del Trecento IV* (Certaldo: Centro di studi sull'Ars nova italiana del Trecento, 1978), 107–147, 107: "I precedenti formali di questa struttura ritornellata sono stati intravisti nella lirica mozaraba, nella poesia ritmica tardo-latina, nella tradizione liturgica, nella pratica di cantilene popolari la cui esecuzione, alternata fra solista e coro, si snodava segnando le fasi di un'azione danzata circolare. Sono state così postulate affinità o divergenze tra esemplari ballatistici e forme strofiche diffuse nella Romània occidentale o in area periferica, quali lo *zadjal* arabo-andaluso, le portoghesi *Cantigas de S. Marìa*, la *dansa* o *balada* provenzale, il *rondeau* e il *virelai* francesi, e il più tardo *villancico* castigliano del sec. XV; per quanto invece poteva concernere possibili filiazioni dall'ambito medio-latino, ci si è appellati ai *versus*, alle sequenze, ai tropi" [The formal precedents of this refrain form have been glimpsed in Mozarabic lyric, in late Latin rhythmic poetry, in the liturgical tradition, in the practice of popular melodies (*cantilene*) whose execution, alternating between soloist and chorus, unwound according to the phases of circular, danced action. Similarities and divergences have been proposed, between *ballata*-like exemplars and strophic forms widespread in the Romance-language-speaking west or on its peripheries, like the Arabic-Andalusian *zadjal*, the Portuguese [*sic*] *Cantigas de S. María*, the Provençal *dansa* or *balada*, the French *rondeau* and *virelai*, and the later fifteenth-century Castilian *villancico*; as far as potential origins in the Middle-Latin context, we have turned to *versus*, sequences, and tropes].

Although scholars will probably never be able to determine what was, in fact, the specific history of the *ballata*'s emergence as a form, it is important to note that no poems in *ballata* form have been found in the output of the *Scuola siciliana*.[4] It seems to be a particularly Tuscan form:[5] the first extant poem that uses *ballata* form and self-consciously refers to itself as a *ballata* is Bonagiunta Orbicciani's "Molto se fa brasmar" (date unknown; sometime between 1242 and 1290),[6] and a number of anonymous *ballate* appear (copied between 1265 and 1300) in the *Memoriali bolognesi*, a notarial register in which Bolognese notaries transcribed a number of poems in blank spaces.[7] There is also a *danza* (utilizing the same form as the *ballata*) from Mantua, of uncertain date, but certainly transcribed no earlier than the second half of the thirteenth century.[8] The real proliferation of this form, however, began during the flourishing of Tuscan and Umbrian poetry around 1260, with Raniero Fasani's movement of the *disciplinati*, in the *laude*, of which Guittone d'Arezzo's are, perhaps, the first written manifestation in *ballata* form.[9]

The *lauda* existed before 1260; however, as Aurelio Roncaglia and Ignazio Baldelli have taken pains to point out, prior to 1260 religious poems of praise had a number of different forms, among them what has been termed the *lauda salmistica*, of which the most famous is St. Francis' "Cantico delle creature."[10] However, between 1260 and 1300, the *lauda*'s form became more and more solidified into the *ballata*'s form: we see this fact in the examination of the *Laudario di Cortona* and the *Laudario Magliabechiano*, two of the largest extant *laudarii* from this period.[11] Roncaglia posits that the movement of the *disciplinati* adopted the form of the *ballata* and made it the primary form of the *lauda* to assist in the transmission and popularity of these religious songs:

> Che i Disciplinati abbiano adottato per le loro laude spirituali lo schema strofico delle ballate profane è arcinoto [...] Ed è anche ben noto che l'uso di cantar laude era già diffuso, quando—nel 1260—si scatenò per tutta l'Umbria e per tutta

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[4] Based on an examination of Roberto Antonelli, *Repertorio metrico della scuola poetica siciliana* (Palermo: Centro di studi filologici e linguistici siciliani, 1984) and of Linda Pagnotta, *Repertorio metrico della ballata italiana: secoli XIII e XIV* (Milan: R. Ricciardi, 1995); stated also in Claudio Giunta, *La poesia italiana nell'età di Dante: la linea Bonagiunta-Guinizzelli* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1997), 290.

[5] Giunta, *La linea Bonagiunta-Guinizzelli*, 290–1.

[6] Gianfranco Contini, *Poeti del Duecento* (Milan: R. Ricciardi, 1995), 257.

[7] Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, 766: "in generale la prevalenza statistica [nei *Memoriali bolognesi*] è per la ballata" ["in general the *ballate* are statistically predominant in the *Memoriali bolognesi*"].

[8] Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, 785–788.

[9] On the development of the *lauda* within the context of the movement of the *disciplinati*, see Adelmo Damerini, "Lauda," in *Enciclopedia della musica*, Vol. III (Milan: Rizzoli Ricordi, 1972–1974), 456–457, 456: "La primitiva lauda nata in Umbria fu l'espressione più tipica del grande movimento dei flagellanti [...] iniziato da R. Fasani a Perugia nel 1260 ca., su cui esempio sorsero in tutta Italia altre compagnie" ["The primitive *lauda* born in Umbria was the most typical expression of the great movement of the flagellants [...] started in 1260 by R. Fasani in Perugia, who set an example for other groups all over Italy"]. Cyrilla Barr also has an extensive article on "Lauda singing and the tradition of the *disciplinati*. *Mandato*: a reconstruction of two texts of the Office Tenebrae," in *L'Ars nova italiana del Trecento IV* (Certaldo: Centro di Studi sull'Ars nova Italiana del Trecento, 1978), 21–44. On the possibility of Guittone's being the first written *ballate-laude*, see Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, 227; Ignazio Baldelli, "La lauda e i disciplinati," in *Il movimento dei Disciplinati nel Settimo Centenario dal suo inizio (Perugia, 1260)*, ed. Lodovico Scaramucci (Perugia: Deputazione di storia patria per l'Umbria, Centro di documentazione sul Movimento dei Disciplinati, Quaderno n. 1: 1960), 337–367, 341.

[10] Baldelli, "La lauda e i disciplinati," 342; Roncaglia, "Nella preistoria della lauda," 461.

[11] Roncaglia, "Nella preistoria della lauda," 469.

l'Italia il movimento di Raniero Fasani; e che le più antiche laude volgari, succedute alle latine, avevano forme affatto diverse da quelle della ballata. (461–63)

[It is well-known that the *Disciplinati* adopted the strophic pattern of secular *ballate* for their spiritual *laude*. And it is also well-known that the custom of singing *laude* was already widespread when—in 1260—Raniero Fasani's movement erupted throughout Umbria and throughout Italy; and that the most ancient vernacular *laude*, which succeeded Latin *laude*, made use of form that were very different from the *ballata*'s.]

And, even more explicitly:

L'intenzione di far concorrenza al canto profano, accettandone le forme più diffuse e gradite e surrogandone il contenuto, sembra [...] innegabile [...] Non si potevano, invece, consacrare le ballate, volgendole a laude? Utilizzare, insomma, i modi esteriori della ballata come mezzo efficace per riconquistare più prontamente alla devozione religiosa di chi viveva tra i piaceri mondani?[12]

[The intent to compete with secular song, accepting its best-known and most pleasing forms and replacing its content, seems undeniable. Wasn't it possible to render the *ballate* holy by turning them into *laude*? To sum it all up, wasn't it possible to use the exterior trappings of the *ballata* as an efficient means to bring those who lived among worldly pleasures back to religious devotion more efficiently?]

With these statements, Roncaglia corrects an earlier thesis expounded by Ferdinando Liuzzi (one of the first historians of the *lauda*) that completely denied the *lauda*'s relationship with *ballata* form and insisted on its original, inspired emergence through the religious fervor of the *disciplinati*.[13] However, as Roncaglia notes, the correspondences between the form of the post-1260 *lauda* and that of the *ballata* are too great to be ignored, and at this point it is a widely accepted theory that the *lauda* adopted *ballata* form as a way to encourage popular involvement in the religious movements of the second half of the thirteenth century.[14]

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[12] Roncaglia, "Nella preistoria della lauda," 461–463.

[13] Ferdinando Liuzzi, *La lauda e i primordi della musica italiana* (Rome: Libreria dello Stato, 1935), 18–19. Liuzzi's argument (notably formulated in the 1930s, during the Fascist *Ventennio*) is colored by his desire to discover respectable origins of Italy's "national" musical life. He viewed the form of the *laude* as an organic union of poetry and music made possible through "il decorso poetico [che] accett[a] e segu[e] il decorso musicale in questo ch'è per eccellenza il disegno della melodia nostra" ["the poetic unfolding that accepts and follows musical unfolding in what is, par excellence, the outline of our melody"]. He insists on the special qualities of this "melodia nostra," and finds the idea of the *lauda* using the form of the *ballata* as a way to increase its popularity insulting to the religious fervor of the Duecento: it is impossible, for him, "che per superficialità o cedevolezza del sentimento religioso la lauda abbia rubato alla ballata, con frivola ed equivoca furberia, movenze e melodie, in un secolo d'intensa fede quale fu il Duecento" ["that, out of superficiality or instability of religious sentiment, the *lauda* would have stolen motives and melodies from the *ballata* with frivolous and dubious slyness, in an intensely religious century like the *Duecento*"].

[14] We see this in multiple encyclopedia definitions of the *lauda* and the *ballata*: Nanie Bridgman, "Lauda," in *La Musica. Enciclopedia storica*, Vol. III (Turin: Unione tipografico-editrice torinese, 1966–1971), 93–97; Adelmo

The performance practice associated with the *ballata* form most likely led to its adoption for the *lauda*: the *ballata* required participation in a collective performance, and this participation seems to have carried over to the performance of the *lauda*. The performance of the *ballata* was dictated by its precise form: the leader of the dance began the song by singing the *ripresa*, which was then immediately repeated by the chorus of other dancers. Then the soloist would go on to sing the stanzas of the *ballata*, and the chorus would sing the *ripresa* all together between the stanzas.[15] The performance practice of the *lauda* mirrored this structure: *laude* were monophonic songs intended for collective performance,[16] either antiphonally (in which two groups alternate singing different parts of the song) or responsorially (in which the group alternates with a soloist).[17] It should be noted that performance practice for the *laude* not only has a precedent in performance practice for *ballate*, but also in performance practice for the Latin *versus*, a type of sacred strophic song that also employed congregational refrains. According to Margaret Switten, the refrain in the *versus* became the locus for group participation in these sacred songs: a participation that often involved both singing and dancing.[18] Thus, the *lauda*'s performance practice and use of the *ballata* form also calls into question the role that dance played in the conceptualization of the *lauda*; I will return to this point more extensively in my later discussion of Guittone d'Arezzo's *ballate-laude*.

I use the term *ballata-lauda* advisedly: indeed, when considering the formal overlap between the *ballata* and the *lauda*, it is difficult to determine the difference between these two types of poetry. Roncaglia and Baldelli articulated a difference between the *lauda drammatica* and the *ballata-lauda* (or *lauda-ballata*):[19] the *laude drammatiche* (of which Jacopone da Todi wrote many) were a vehicle for telling biblical stories. Although at first they maintained the form of the *ballata*, they eventually became the root of the later *sacre rappresentazioni*.[20] The *lauda drammatica*, then, can perhaps be differentiated from the *ballata* in its new performance methods. The term *ballata-lauda*, on the other hand, demonstrates how nebulous the relationship between these two forms really is. One could posit, perhaps, that the main difference between a *ballata* and a *ballata-lauda* is ultimately determined by its content: the *ballata* is secular in

Damerini, "Lauda," 456–457; Fabio Fano, "Ballata," in *La Musica. Enciclopedia storica*, Vol. I (Turin: Unione tipografico-editrice torinese, 1966–1971), 316–318; and Nino Pirrotta, "Ballata," 220–221.

[15] Pirrotta, "Ballata," 220: "L'elemento più caratteristico della [...] struttura [della ballata] fu la *ripresa*, il ritornello col quale chi dirigeva la danza iniziava il canto, e che era immediatamente ripetuto dal coro dei danzatori. Venivano poi le strofe, dette *stanze*, pure cantate dal solista e seguite ciascuna da una ripetizione corale della ripresa" ["The most characteristic element of the structure of the *ballata* was the *ripresa*, the refrain with which whoever led the dance would begin the song, and which was immediately repeated by the chorus of dancers. The strophes, called *stanzas*, followed, also sung by the soloist, each of them followed by a choral repetition of the *ripresa*"].

[16] Damerini, "Lauda," 456: "Musicalmente le laude sono monodiche, per voce sola, ma destinate ad essere cantate all'unisono collettivamente" [Musically, the *laude* are monophonic, for one voice, but meant to be sung in unison, collectively].

[17] Barr, "Lauda singing and the tradition of the *disciplinati*," 37: the *laude* were "frequently antiphonal, and occasionally responsorial." Giunta, too, connects the *ballate* to responsorial practices, in *La linea Bonagiunta-Guinizzelli*, 290.

[18] Switten, "A comparative study of refrain technique in the New Song," 99: "these early usages [of the refrain] [...] point to origins [...] that have been adduced: responsorial chant and dances [...] [T]he notions of response and of physical movement, doubtless also of participation by a group of not necessarily trained singers, certainly play into the refrain." Switten also notes the question of religious or liturgical dancing: according to her, "[r]itual or processional dancing [...] is more prominent than one might at first anticipate" in the *versus* (119).

[19] Baldelli makes this distinction in his article on "La lauda e i disciplinati," as does Roncaglia in "Nella preistoria della lauda."

[20] Vincenzo de Bartholomaeis, *Laude drammatiche e rappresentazioni sacre* (Florence: F. Le Monnier, 1943).

nature, whereas the *ballata-lauda* is sacred. However, even such a thematic division is somewhat complicated by the manuscript tradition. Although no study of the position of the *ballate* within the thirteenth-century *canzoniere* can claim to be definitive, due to the *ballata*'s not-yet-completely-standardized position as a written poetic form at the time these collections surfaced, it is significant to note that an examination of the *ballata* section of Banco Rari 217 (P)—the only thirteenth-century *canzoniere* to include such a section—contains only secular and specifically courtly or erotic *ballate*, leaving the one *ballata-lauda* it contains (Guittone's "Ora vegna a la danza") in its *canzone* section (along with two of Bonagiunta's *ballate*—one of which, "Molto se fa brasmar," is secular but moralizing—and a secular, courtly *ballata* by Pucciandone).[21]

Although, as Roncaglia and Baldelli stated in their now widely accepted theories, the early, popular *ballata* most likely gave the *lauda* its more standardized form around 1260, the *ballata* as a *literary* form—one used by self-styled lyric poets—did not gain prominence until after its usage in the *ballata-lauda*. Claudio Giunta notes the extraordinary number of anonymous *ballate* in the thirteenth-century *canzonieri*, conjecturing that a number of these poems belong to "non-institutional" and "pre-artistic" spheres.[22] In tandem with the growth and diffusion of the *ballata-lauda*, the *ballata* began to grow into a form that was no longer "non-institutional" or "pre-artistic," becoming accessible and even desirable as a mode of lyric expression (as catalogued by Dante in the *De vulgari eloquentia*, when he places the *ballata* just below the *canzone* and above the *sonetto* in his hierarchy of metrical forms; and as is made manifest in a thirteenth-century *canzoniere* like P, in its dedication of a whole fascicle to the *ballata*). Some critics have even gone so far as to conjecture that the *lauda* allowed the *ballata* to gain credibility and legitimacy as a literary form. Fabio Fano, for instance, states in his definition of the *ballata*, "fu con [il] tramite della lauda che la ballata poté ambire a dignità artistica più elevata, per lo più intesa come mezzo di espressione lirica (e perciò sempre solistica)" ["it was through the *lauda* that the *ballata* could aspire to higher artistic dignity, and be understood as a means of lyric expression (and therefore always soloistic)"].[23] Nino Pirrotta comes to a similar conclusion, echoing Fano:

> Delle ballate più antiche non ci è pervenuta nulla, finché la loro struttura, col tipico alternarsi di solista e coro, non fu adottata per il canto di laude religiose delle confraternite dei Disciplinati e dei Battuti, che si diffusero in Umbria verso il 1260. Attraverso la lauda la ballata pervenne a una sfera artistica più elevata, nella quale fu adoperata prevalentemente come mezzo di espressione lirica, dunque in forma esclusivamente solistica.[24]

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[21] Lino Leonardi, "I canzonieri della lirica italiana delle origini," in *Il canzoniere Palatino Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze, Banco Rari 217, ex-Palatino 418: riproduzione fotografica*, Vol. 3 (Florence: SISMEL: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2001), x. See also Giunta, *La linea Bonagiunta-Guinizzelli*, 292.

[22] Giunta, *La linea Bonagiunta-Guinizzelli*, 291: "l'indebolimento della *authorship* che caratterizza buon numero di rappresentanti del genere [della ballata] sarà da interpretare [...] come prova statistica di una produzione e di un consumo mantenutisi per ampio tratto a livello non istituzionale, e, per dir così, pre-artistico: l'adespotia si rivela come 'uno dei modi di essere più caratteristici della ballata'" ["the weakening of authorship that characterizes a large number of the *ballata*'s representatives must be interpreted as statistical proof of a production and a consumption that, for a long period of time, was kept at a non-institutional and, to put it bluntly, pre-artistic level: lack of authorial attribution is revealed to be 'one of the *ballata*'s most characteristic modes of existence'"].

[23] Fano, "Ballata," 317.

[24] Pirrotta, "Ballata," 220.

[No older *ballate* have reached us, until their structure, with the typical alternation of soloist and chorus, was adopted for the singing of religious *laude* in the confraternities of the Disciplinati and the Battuti, which spread throughout Umbria around 1260. Through the *lauda*, the *ballata* reached a higher artistic sphere, in which it was primarily used as a means of lyric expression, and thus in an exclusively soloistic form.]

The *ballata-lauda*, according to these critics, became the vehicle through which the *ballata* emerged as a written, literary form—through which it shifted from being a popular, anonymous, and collectively performed dance song to a self-aware poetic and, as both Fano and Pirrotta term it, soloistic ("solistica") composition. These assertions cannot, of course, be categorically proven: chronology for the textual lives of *ballate* and *ballate-laude* are too uncertain to state whether the *ballata* or the *ballata-lauda* gained textual legitimacy first. And yet, as Giunta notes, the contact between the *ballata* and *ballata-lauda* throughout the thirteenth century requires us to examine what he calls the "primordiale doppio registro erotico e religioso" ["primordial erotic and religious double register"] of the written *ballata*. Essentially, any examination we undertake of the *ballata*'s emergence as a major poetic form in the Italian lyric in the second half of the thirteenth century must include a discussion of its cross-pollination with the *ballata-lauda*.

In search of literary legitimacy: the emergence of the written *ballata*

The only examples of extant *ballate* that may precede the birth of the *ballata-lauda* are Bonagiunta Orbicciani's five *ballate*, of uncertain date, but surely written between 1242 and 1290. Bonagiunta's *ballate* contain similar themes to the *ballate* found in the *Memoriali bolognesi* (c. 1265–1300),[25] and focus on courtly praise of the lady with the inclusion, in true Bonagiuntian fashion, of liberal sprinklings of Sicilianisms. The last stanza of Bonagiunta's *ballata* "Donna, vostre belleze" is a perfect example of these citations, even including a reference to Tristan and Isolde and a rhyme (between "Isolda" and "non solda") that was previously used in Giacomo da Lentini's *discordo*:[26]

> Maritate e pulzelle
> di voi so 'nnamorate
> pur guardandovi mente.
> Gigli e rose novelle
> vostro viso aportate
> sì smirato e lucente.
> Ed eo similemente
> 'nnamorato son di voi
> più ke non fue Tristano d'Isolda:
> meo cor non solda—se non vostr'altura.[27]

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[25] Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, v. I t. II, 765–766.

[26] Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, v. I t. II, 257.

[27] Bonagiunta Orbicciani, "Donna, vostre bellezze," lines 25–34, ed. Amos Parducci, *I rimatori lucchesi del secolo XIII: Bonagiunta Orbicciani, Gonnella Antelminelli, Bonodico, Bartolomeo, Fredi, Dotto Reali* (Bergamo: Istituto italiano d'arti grafiche, 1905), 36.

[Married women and maidens are in love with you as they look at you purely. Your face, so shining and pure, has brought fresh roses and lilies. And I am similarly in love with you, more than Tristan was with Isolde: nothing can heal my heart, other than your highness.]

It is impossible to tell if the courtly language used here was a trope of the *ballata* before Bonagiunta, since we have no extant *ballate* written before his; however, it is quite possible that courtly language was widespread in the *ballata*, considering the amount of it present even in the oldest collection of *ballate-laude*, the *Laudario di Cortona* (c. 1270).

Bonagiunta was almost certainly the first of the *siculo-toscani* to use the *ballata* form; his primacy, however, is contested by Guittone d'Arezzo.[28] If Guittone wrote any *ballate* in his life as a secular, courtly poet, none are extant; however, as Frate Guittone, he wrote a number of *ballate-laude*. The two poets' almost-overlapping use of this new poetic form has proved to be fertile ideological terrain in examining different developments in the Italian lyric at the end of the thirteenth century. Gianfranco Contini, for instance, frames the poetic output of Bonagiunta and that of Guittone as a battle between the old (Bonagiunta) and the new (Guittone); he notes that although Guittone was probably born in 1235 and thus several years younger than Bonagiunta, "la […] robusta novità [di Guittone] fu innovativa specialmente rispetto al bonagiuntismo" ["the robust novelty of Guittone was innovative, especially when compared to Bonagiunta"].[29] Claudio Giunta, more recently, complicates this picture: in his view, Bonagiunta and Guittone both represent two different potential paths for Italian lyric poetry on the threshold of the *Trecento*. Bonagiunta, along with his secular *ballate*, represents the line that, according to Giunta, leads from the Sicilians to Guinizzelli to the *stilnovisti*; Guittone and his complex *ballate-laude*, however, represent another path, whose potential, in Giunta's mind, remained largely untapped by the following generation of poets.[30]

Giunta is, of course, correct in stating that most *ballate*, into the fourteenth century and beyond, follow the characteristics set by Bonagiunta in his *ballate*: fewer stanzas, courtly themes, standardized metrical forms, and (for the most part) little theoretical or philosophical

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[28] Giunta, *La linea Bonagiunta-Guinizzelli*, 291, n. 69: "Il primato cronologico nella sperimentazione della ballata profana è conteso notoriamente tra Bonagiunta e Guittone per la sola testimonianza del Trissino, che nella *Poetica* cita alcuni frammenti di ballate amorose guittoniane inattestate nei codici e databili agli anni pre-conversione" ["The chronological primacy in experimenting with the secular *ballata* is notoriously contested between Bonagiunta and Guittone, due merely to the testimony of Trissino, who cites in his *Poetica* a few fragments of erotic Guittonian *ballate* unattested to in the codices and datable to before his conversion"].

[29] Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, vol. I, t. I, 258. With regards to Guittone's birth date, see Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, 189: "il Ferretti ne situa la nascita circa il 1240. Ma bisognerà arretrarla di qualche anno perché egli sia in grado di deplorare, esule volontario fuor di Toscana, fatti aretini probabilmente del 1256 [...] L'insieme dei fatti sembra parlare dunque per nascita verso il 1235 ed entrata nell'ordine [dei frati gaudenti] verso il 1265" ["Ferretti situates the date of his birth around 1240. But we must move it back a few years so that he is able to deplore, as a voluntary exile from Tuscany, events that most probably occurred in Arezzo in 1256. Taken all together, the data seems to refer to his birth as around 1235 and his entry into the Order of the Jovial Friars around 1265"].

[30] Giunta puts it rather bluntly, in *La linea Bonagiunta-Guinizzelli*, 288: "La linea 'vincente' che porta a Petrarca è insomma quella che restaura, dopo la diversione guittoniana, il sublime disimpegno della poesia amorosa [...] Lo stilnuovo non è affatto un 'ritorno,' involontario o deliberato, ai siciliani; è invece la scelta, storicamente spiegabile *benché non storicamente necessaria*, di una delle due linee poetiche che si affrontavano in Toscana nell'ultimo trentennio del secolo" ["The 'winning' path that leads to Petrarch is ultimately the one that, after the Guittonian diversion, restores love poetry's sublime disengagement. The *stilnuovo* is not an involuntary or deliberate 'return' to the Sicilians; instead, it is the historically explicable *but not historically necessary* choice of one of the two poetic paths facing off in Tuscany in the last three decades of the century"].

content.[31] Still, as I have observed above, the *ballata* and the *ballata-lauda* are deeply imbricated one with the other throughout their early textual history; ultimately, it seems impossible to consider the fate of the *ballata* in the *Trecento* without considering its roots not only in the Bonagiuntian secular, courtly *ballata*, but also in the Guittonian *ballata-lauda*. In fact, Guittone's *ballate-laude* represent a pivotal moment in the history of the refrain form in Italian lyric poetry: they demonstrate the way that Guittone managed to take a primarily orally performed poem and use it to his advantage in the creation of a hyper-literarily conscious one, moving the *ballata* and *ballata-lauda* away from the sphere of collective performance and into (to quote Pirrotta) "espressione solistica."[32] Guittone applies his *trobar clus*—a poetics deeply connected to the written text, as noted by Wayne Storey[33]—to a form that was originally performed orally; and in fact, in these poems Guittone uses the form's echoes of oral performance in support of certain innovations in his poetics. Such a process was seminal in pushing the refrain form beyond its popular or choral components, allowing it to become a space where poetic prowess could be performed and claimed. In addition, the circular poetics that Guittone obtains through his revolutionary use of the refrain form has implications for Italian lyric production beyond the *ballata*.

"Davanti alla regina fanno danza": performative links between the *ballata* and the *ballata-lauda*

Guittone's *ballate-laude* acknowledge an oral, performed, perhaps even participatory and danced context—and they thematize this acknowledgement, finding new ways to make an impressive union of form and content in the written word through the self-awareness of their oral past. This union of form and content is not unique to Guittone's *ballate-laude*, as Claudio Giunta has pointed out in an analysis of Guittone's *trobar clus* and its relation to the concepts that Guittone attempts to express.[34] Giunta mainly focuses on Guittone's love lyric (in comparison to Bonagiunta's), but I believe that an examination of Guittone's religious poetry reveals a similar preoccupation with matching form and content. In the case of the *ballate-laude*, Guittone uses *trobar clus* to convey the difficulty of the concepts he is trying to express: namely, how to depict and praise the divine. Indeed, many of his *ballate-laude* discuss his concern that his words are insufficient to communicate the saint's praise (an element of these poems that I will analyze fully later on). At the same time, Guittone instrumentalizes a knowledge of the performed form of the *ballata-lauda* to allow for a sense of ecstatic mysticism to enter the poem: a "giocundare" [rejoicing] (as he puts it in his *ballata-lauda* "Vegna, vegna—chi vole giucundare" ["Come, come, whoever wants to rejoice"])[35] represented by worship through singing and dancing, an enactment of praise whose performance makes up for words' potential failures.

That Guittone conceived of the *ballata-lauda* as being related to communal worship comes through in two of his *ballate-laude*: "Vegna, vegna—chi vole giocundare," and "Ora vegna a la danza." Both poems include references to a "danza," another word for the *ballata* form, as we

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[31] Giunta, *La linea Bonagiunta-Guinizzelli*, 213; 288; 293.

[32] Pirrotta, "Ballata," 760.

[33] Wayne Storey, *Transcription and Visual Poetics in the Early Italian Lyric* (New York: Garland Pub., 1993), 30: "Writing becomes the only vehicle for this poetics, requiring study like a university text [...] many of Guittone's and Guinizzelli's experiments which depended on stylistically difficult systems of troping and imagery were deeply entrenched in the written forms of poetic discourse."

[34] Giunta, *La linea Bonagiunta-Guinizzelli*, 211.

[35] Egidi, *Le rime di Guittone d'Arezzo,* 107–8.

see in various early *ballate*. For instance, "Seguramente," from the *Memoriali bolognesi*, includes an invitation to dance in its *ripresa*:[36]

> Seguramente
> vegna a la nostra danza
> chi è fedel d'Amore
> e hagli cor e speranza.[37]

> [Surely, may he who is one of Love's faithful and has heart and hope come to our dance.]

An anonymous *danza* from Mantua, "Venite, polcel' amorosa," contains a similar invitation:

> Venite, polcel' amorosa,
> madona, vinit a la dansa,
> mostrati la vostr' alegrança,
> sì como vu siti çoyosa.[38]

> [Come, loving maiden, my lady, come to the dance. Show your happiness, how joyous you are.]

"L'anghososa partença"—another of the *ballate* from the *Memoriali bolognesi*—even contains a *congedo* in which the poetic composition is termed a "novella dansa amorosa" and ordered to go to the lady and speak to her, according to the typical personification of poetic form that often occurs in the *congedo*.[39]

A number of the *ballate-laude* from the early *laudarii* contain these references to dance, potentially pointing toward a tradition of liturgical dance. In the *Laudario Magliabechiano*, "Ave Maria, stella diana" commands its participants to raise their hands, perhaps in a dance meant to honor the Virgin Mary.[40] The *ballata-lauda* "Regina pretiosa" mentions the heavenly dance of

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[36] Justin Steinberg notes the similarities between Guittone's "Vegna, vegna" and "Seguramente" in the *Memoriali bolognesi* in *Accounting for Dante: Urban Readers and Writers in Late Medieval Italy* (Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 2007), 34. He asserts that "Guittone almost certainly encountered the popular ballad ["Seguramente"] during one of his extended stays in Bologna." Although this certainly could be possible, I am hesitant to draw a direct connection between Guittone and this *ballata* from the *Memoriali*; this kind of language (the invitation to dance directed at "chi vole giocundare" ["whomever would like to rejoice"] or "chi è fedel d'Amore" ["whomever is faithful to Love"]) is fairly common in the *ballate* and *ballate-laude* in this period and not unique to "Seguramente" (see, for instance, almost any of the *laude* in the *Laudario di Cortona* (c. 1270)).

[37] Anonymous, "Seguramente," lines 1–4, ed. Adriana Caboni, *Antiche rime italiane tratte dai memoriali bolognesi* (Modena: Stem Mucchi Editore, 1941), 68.

[38] Anonymous, "Venite, polcel' amorosa," lines 1–4, ed. Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, vol. I, t. II, 787.

[39] Anonymous, "L'anghososa partença," lines 22–30, ed. Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, vol. I, t. II, 776: "Novella dansa amorosa, / move cun [grande] pietança, / non far seçorno né posa, / van' a la mia dolçe amança, / ver' la plu rengratïosa: / contagli la mia pesança, / dili ch'aça membrança / de mi, che vivo 'n pene / et altro non ten – lo meo cor en dogl[i]a" ["New amorous dance, move with great pity, do not stop or rest; go to my sweet love, the most graceful one: tell her the weight I carry, tell her to remember me, since I live in pain, and nothing (other than her) keeps my heart in pain"].

[40] Anonymous, "Ave Maria, stella diana," lines 27–30, ed. Liuzzi, *La lauda e i primordi della melodia italiana Vol. 2*, 106: "Su, le mani alte in palese, / prechiamo la vergine cortese / per color che le laude fece, / che sempre sia lor

the saints in the heavens around the Virgin Mary,[41] as if she were the leader of the celestial dance (the "sovrana de le belle," in the words of one *ballata* from the *Memoriali bolognesi*),[42] and later invites all penitent participants in the *lauda* to whip themselves in time with this *danza*—"se egli avrà il cuor pentuto / vadasi scoriando a questa dança"[43]—in a reminder of the *lauda*'s connections to the movements of the *disciplinati* and the *battuti*.

Thus, the *ballata-lauda*'s implied connection to liturgical dance is not a feature unique to Guittone. However, Guittone's "Vegna, vegna—chi vole giocundare" and "Ora vegna a la danza" both demonstrate Guittone's awareness of the popular, communal roots of the *ballata-lauda* and its status as a participatory lyric form. In addition, a suggestive miniature accompanies "Ora vegna a la danza" in the richly-decorated Banco Rari 217 (P): it depicts four women holding hands in a circle on a flat blue background, all contained within the "O" of "Ora vegna a la danza."[44] This circular dance is a hallmark of the secular *ballata*, as Capovilla has noted, in addition to having been historically linked to liturgical dance, as John Freccero has laid out in his analysis of *Paradiso* X.[45] Guittone's poem describes one such religious (indeed, heavenly) dance, mixing the courtly, popular, and religious registers, as was typical of many *laude* at the time:

> Ora vegna a la danza
> e con baldanza—danzi a tutte l'ore
> chi spera in voi, Amore,
> e di cui lo cor meo disia amanza.[46]

> [Now let him come to the dance and let him dance at every hour with joy, whosoever places his hope in you, Love, and from whom my heart desires love.][47]

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guardiana" ["Come, raise your hands, let us pray to the courtly virgin for those who made the *laude*, that she always be their guardian"].

[41] Anonymous, "Regina pretiosa," lines 4–10, ed. Liuzzi, *La lauda e i primordi della melodia italiana Vol. 2*, 145: "No' vi facciam preghiera / [e] all'alto re del cielo, che nne chonduca / a questa luce chiera, / là 've sonno li vangelista e Marco e Luca / et sonnvi tutt'i sancti / che fanno i dolçi canti: / davanti alla regina fanno dança" ["We pray to you and to the high king of heaven, that he lead us to this bright light, where the Evangelists Mark and Luke and all the saints who sing sweet songs can be found: they dance in front of the queen"].

[42] Anonymous, "Ella mia donna çogliosa," lines 1–10, ed. Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, vol. I, t. II, 777: "Ella mia dona çogliosa / vidi cun le altre dançare. / Vidila cum alegrança, / la sovrana de le belle, / ke de çoi menava dança / de maritate e polcelle, / là 'nde presi gran baldança, / tutor dançando chon elle: / ben resenbla plui che stelle / lo so vixo a reguardare" ["I saw my joyous lady dance with the others. I saw her with happiness, the queen of the beautiful, who with joy led the dance of married women and maidens; and there I found great happiness, still dancing with her: her face looks like stars"].

[43] Anonymous, "Regina pretiosa," lines 16–17, ed. Liuzzi, *La lauda e i primordi della melodia italiana*, Vol. 2, 145.

[44] Florence, Biblioteca nazionale centrale di Firenze, Banco Rari 217, fol. 58v.

[45] Guido Capovilla discusses the circular nature of the dance accompanying a *ballata* in "Note sulla tecnica della ballata trecentesca," 107: "[l']esecuzione [della ballata], alternata fra solista e coro, si snodava segnando le fasi di un'azione danzata circolare" ["the *ballata*'s execution, alternating between soloist and chorus, unwound according to the phases of a circular, danced action"]. The circularity of liturgical dance is discussed in John Freccero, *Dante: The Poetics of Conversion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 221–244.

[46] Guittone d'Arezzo, "Ora vegna a la danza," lines 1–4, ed. Francesco Egidi, *Le rime di Guittone d'Arezzo* (Bari: Gius. Laterza & Figli, 1940), 136.

[47] This translation (like all of the translations in this article) are my own; I have attempted to keep them as syntactically close to the original as possible. However, for a more sophisticated translation of "Vegna, vegna" and one other Guittonian *lauda*, "Graziosa e pia," see Guittone d'Arezzo, *Selected Poems and Prose*, selected, translated, and with an introduction by Antonello Borra (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 76–85.

Such a *ripresa* would make it seem as if the *ballata-lauda* were being sung by a servant of Love in praise of his lady; the marker of its status as *lauda*, in addition to its status as *ballata*, comes in the first stanza, when the poet states "Oh, quanto è dilettoso esto danzare / in voi laudare, — beata Maria!" ["Oh, how pleasurable is this dancing and praising of you, blessed Mary!"].[48] The illumination seems to serve a similar function, as it mixes different references to the courtly, the popular, and the religious: the women dance in a style similar to that recalled in the *Memoriali bolognesi*, but they do so on a flat blue background, making it look as if they were dancing ethereally suspended in the heavens. Of course, as Wayne Storey has noted, one must be cautious not to over-interpret illumination; as Storey puts it, "this register of illumination [present in *canzonieri* like P] was never intended to function as an INTEGRAL ILLUSTRATION [*sic*] of its accompanying text nor on an interpretive par with the poetic message."[49] While bearing this caveat in mind, it is still significant to note that the illuminator of P was made aware (either through a copyist's instructions, by copying from another manuscript, or by reading the poem) of the content of Guittone's *ballata-lauda* and was reminded of its connections with dance practices in religious and extra-religious contexts.

"Ora vegna a la danza" is one of Guittone's more traditional *ballate-laude*: it follows forms and registers that link it to popular *ballate* (like the ones of the *Memoriali bolognesi*), newly courtly *ballate* (like Bonagiunta's), and religious coopting of those forms (like the *laude* from the *Laudario di Cortona* or the *Laudario Magliabechiano*). However, the other *ballata-lauda* in which Guittone explicitly references dance, "Vegna, vegna," does not merely follow these codes; in fact, it contains, within its form, certain hallmarks of Guittone's *ornatus* style,[50] with *rime equivoche* (the "faccia-faccia" rhyme of vv. 3 and 5, for instance) and dense repetition as in the fourth stanza:

> O vita vital per cui ẽo vivo,
> for cui vivendo moro e vivo a morte,
> e gaudio per cui gaudo e son gioivo,
> for cui gaudendo onni dolor mi sorte,
> degna—degna—la mia alma sponsare
> e farlaTe tutta degna.[51]

> [O lively life for whom I live; outside of whom I, living, die, and live death-like; and delight for whom I delight and am joyous; outside of whom I, rejoicing, am filled with pain; in marrying my worthy, worthy soul, make it wholly worthy of You.]

Such a dense use of polyptoton is reminiscent of Guittone's prior secular lyric poetry (a prime example would be his sonnet "Tuttor ch'eo dirò gioi, gioiva cosa"). In "Vegna, vegna," then, Guittone brings his signature methods of *trobar clus* into the *ballata-lauda*. This move is an essential one in Guittone's transformation of an oral, participatory form into a soloistic one revealing the prowess of the lyric poet. Guittone breaks with the typical formulaic poetic

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[48] Guittone d'Arezzo, "Ora vegna a la danza," lines 5–6, ed. Egidi, *Le rime di Guittone d'Arezzo*, 136.
[49] Storey, *Transcription and Visual Poetics*, 182.
[50] Teodolinda Barolini, "Dante and the Lyric Past," in *Dante and the Origins of Italian Literary Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 23–46, 26.
[51] Guittone d'Arezzo, "Vegna, vegna—chi vole giocundare," lines 21–26, in Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, vol. I, t. I, 231.

material of the *ballata-lauda* here: although he explicitly thematizes the idea of participatory performance and worship, his poetry still contains the weight of what Contini termed "[il] capitale ma ingombrante *trobar clus* di Guittone" ["Guittone's fundamental but burdensome *trobar clus*"].[52]

We see this same use of Guittonian style—specifically, the use of *rime equivoche* and closely packed repetitions, mainly polyptota—in Guittone's four other *ballate-laude*: "O bon Gesù, ov'è core"; "Graziosa e pia" (to the Virgin Mary); "Meraviglioso beato" (to St. Dominic); and "Beato Francesco in te laudare." In all of these *ballate-laude*, Guittone's poetics reveal a hyper-awareness of the relationship between the content of his poems and the form they would take if they were to be performed in the manner dictated by the oral tradition. He uses the idea of oral performance that this form evokes to assert his poetic prowess, even in a context that includes popular, participatory, and collective features, like the refrain or *ripresa*. Guittone's instrumentalization of the echoes of an oral form, used in service to the text, provide a new perspective on his hyper-literary *trobar clus*. As Wayne Storey has noted, textuality is central to Guittone's *trobar clus*: writing is essential to its development and reading is essential to its comprehension.[53] However, in his *ballate-laude* Guittone does not *only* rely on textual techniques: he takes advantage of oral implications in order to seek new methods of unifying word and deed, *signum* and *res*, in the poetics of praise, displaying his poetic prowess as he does so. In my exploration of how Guittone transforms the participatory *ballata-lauda* into a soloistic and hyper-literary expression of his own skill as a lyric poet, I will primarily examine the *ballate-laude* to St. Dominic ("Meraviglioso beato") and to Saint Francis ("Beato Francesco, in te laudare").

From "segno" to "fatto": the enactment of the word in Guittone's *ballate-laude*

Of the two poems, "Meraviglioso beato"—the poem to St. Dominic—is the stylistically and formally simpler one, and yet it presents kernels of elements that emerge in more elaborate form in the *ballata-lauda* to St. Francis. The poem's rhyme scheme is fairly straightforward: it is made up entirely of *ottonarii* and *novenarii* (with some *quinarii* and *senarii* for the internal rhymes) with a two-verse *ripresa*. The stanzas are made up of two *piedi* that follow the same structure as the *ripresa*, linked to the *volta* (which also shares a rhyme scheme with the *ripresa*) through a kind of transitional verse that does not typically appear in the *ballata-lauda*, although Guittone does use a similar technique in "O bon Gesù."

One significant element of "Meraviglioso beato" is Guittone's brief meditation on Dominic's name in the second stanza:

> O nome ben seguitato
> e onorato—dal fatto,

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[52] Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, 258.

[53] Storey, *Transcription and Visual Poetics*, xxiii: "This more complex poetics [of these early experimenters with the appearance of the text] was inexorably linked to the written word and even the ACTIVITY OF WRITING itself. As early as the 1250s, a written poetics informs Guittone d'Arezzo's lyric production." Storey also comments on the reader's experience of Guittone's poetics, 26: "The thirteenth-century 'philosophization' of the Italian lyric was quickly translated into an elevated sense of the lyric poem's written form as the primary vehicle for transmission. And though there was no early consensus on the scribal formats for these lyrics, the fact was that their themes of sententious philosophical and/or political import required, both in their composition and their reception, the attentive reading of the written text."

Domenico degno nomato,
a Domino dato[54]

[O name well-followed and well-honored by deed, Dominic worthily named,
given to God]

Although meditations on Dominic's name are common in the Middle Ages, having started
through biographies of the saint,[55] the way that Guittone thematizes the name followed and
confirmed by the fact or the doing ("nome ben seguitato / e onorato—dal fatto") introduces the
question of *res* versus *signum* that he expands upon in his much longer *ballata-lauda* to St.
Francis. In the case of Dominic, he is rightly named ("degno nomato") because his name (the
signum) aligns with its enactment (the "fatto" or *res*): his consecration to God.

The discourse of the word and the action (the "fatto") that represents it reemerges in the last
stanza of "Meraviglioso beato," in which Guittone declares:

Forse ch'io perdo tacere,
poi non so compiere—aonore:
ché vertù di tanto savere
sommo chere—laudatore.
Und'eo sarò tacitore:
ma tuttavia ciò ch'è ditto
ascondo ni gitto—non fiore.[56]

[Maybe I should have been silent, since I do not know how to honor you; because
such knowledgeable virtue requires an excellent praise-singer. Therefore I will be
silent: and yet I do not hide or recant any part of what has been said.]

Guittone states that he will now be silent ("sarò tacitore") because he cannot adequately honor
Dominic in his praise ("non so compiere—aonore"). Dominic's knowledgeable virtue ("vertù di
tanto savere") requires skillful praise ("sommo chere—laudatore"), which Guittone claims not to
have. And yet, in the last two lines of the stanza, he undermines all his claims of unworthiness by
declaring that, despite everything he has just declared, he will not hide or recant a word of it
("ma tuttavia ciò ch'è ditto / ascondo ni gitto—non fiore").[57] Guittone's undercutting of his
previous self-deprecating statements at the beginning of the final stanza, and his reassertion of
ownership of his verses, is enacted by the repetition of the *ripresa* that, in the performed tradition
of the *ballata-lauda* form, would occur after every stanza, including the last one. Therefore, his

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[54] Guittone d'Arezzo, "Meraviglioso beato," lines 10–14, in Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, 258.
[55] As Anna Maria Chiavacci Leonardi states in her notes on *Paradiso* XII (Milan: Mondadori, 1997), 327–355, 341:
"terzo segno di predestinazione, anch'esso, come i due sogni, presente nelle biografie del santo: e perché fosse
anche nel nome [...] quale era di fatto, [...] dal cielo venne (ai suoi genitori) una divina ispirazione perché lo
chiamassero col possessivo di colui (il Signore) del quale egli *era tutto*, cioè a cui totalmente apparteneva" ["this,
like the two dreams, is a third sign of predestination present in biographies of the saint: and so that he could be, in
his name, what he was in reality [...] a divine inspiration came from the sky (to his parents) so that they would name
him the possessive of the Lord, whose he *was entirely*, that is, to whom he belonged completely"].
[56] Guittone d'Arezzo, "Meraviglioso beato," lines 59–65, in Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, 229.
[57] Or, in Contini's helpful paraphrase: "[di ciò che è stato detto] non nascondo né sconfesso punto" ["I do not hide or
recant anything of what was said"]. Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, 229.

assertion that he would not take back even a word of his *lauda*—no matter how unfit he may be for the task of praising Dominic—moves from words (the *signum*) to performative enactment (the *res*) in the final repetition of the *ripresa*.

This move has a number of implications: one, it expands on the idea of signification and representation that Guittone had already briefly touched upon in his meditation on Dominic's name in the second stanza of "Meraviglioso beato"; two, it enacts the reclaiming of poetic ability in praise that the end of the last stanza implies; and three, it represents a significant step in the conceptualization of the refrain as no longer a simple, codified element that allowed for popular participation in the *ballata* or *ballata-lauda*, but rather a formal tool that could be used in the demonstration of poetic prowess. All three of these elements play significant roles in Guittone's *lauda* "Beato Francesco."

"Beato Francesco" is a much denser poem than "Meraviglioso beato," despite its lack of Guittone's characteristic internal rhymes. Instead, this *ballata-lauda* contains a high number of hendecasyllables and a four-verse *ripresa*. The stanzas are also lengthy: each is ten verses long (as compared to the seven verses in each of the stanzas of "Meraviglioso beato") with two three-verse *piedi* and a four-verse *volta*. "Beato Francesco" begins with the poetic statement found in the last stanza of "Meraviglioso beato." In fact, in the *ripresa* itself, the poet asks St. Francis whether he is worthy of praising him:

> Beato Francesco, in te laudare
> ragione aggi' e volere:
> ma prendo unde savere,
> degnità tanta in suo degno retrare?[58]

> [Blessed Francis, I have reason and desire to praise you; but where can I find
> enough knowledge and ability to worthily depict you?]

The poet has reason and desire ("ragione" and "volere") to praise St. Francis; however, he wonders, does he have the knowledge ("savere") to properly *depict* ("retrare") the saint's high worth in his *lauda*? The use of the word "retrare"—to depict—is significant, especially in its appearance in the *ripresa*, where, according to the responsorial form of the *ballata*'s performance, it will be repeated after each stanza. In addition, this poem is extraordinarily long, with thirteen stanzas and a *congedo* (also followed by the *ripresa*), meaning that, were this *ballata-lauda* performed, the *ripresa* would be heard fifteen times. The idea of "retrare" is essential to the questions of signification that I have already examined in "Meraviglioso beato" and will only continue to emerge—with even more intensity and insistence—in an analysis of "Beato Francesco."

The poem's first three stanzas focus on the *ripresa*'s question: where will I find the knowledge, the "savere," to be able to sing your praises and depict your noble worth? In the fourth stanza, a shift occurs:

> E perché parva era umana scienza,
> e non degno om omo angel laudando,
> prese Dio la tua laude in sua potenza,
> tuo caro merto degno orrato orrando;

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[58] Guittone d'Arezzo, "Beato Francesco," lines 1–4, in Egidi, *Le rime di Guittone d'Arezzo*, 103.

e no in dire, u' non ben par valenza,
ma in mirabili fatti essa provando;
ché più fiate augelli te fece onrare
ubidendo e seguendo,
e a morti, surgendo,
la tua cara vertù fece parlare. (35–54)

[And since human knowledge was scant, and no man was worthy to praise an
angel, God took your praise into his power, honoring your precious, worthy,
honorable merit. He did not do so in words, since they do not easily show value,
but he proved it in marvelous deeds; multiple times he had birds honor you by
obeying and following you, and upon making the dead rise, he made your
precious virtue speak.]

The poet explains that, since human knowledge lacked the ability to properly praise St. Francis,
God himself took matters into his own hands ("prese Dio la tua laude in sua potenza"). God,
however, did not praise Francis in words ("in dire") where worth is difficult to portray ("u' non
ben par valenza")—but rather in marvelous acts ("mirabili fatti") like birds following and
obeying him, and the dead rising because of him. Here, once again, as in "Meraviglioso beato,"
Guittone pursues a metapoetic meditation on *res* and *signum*: here, he states that the only worthy
lauda of St. Francis comes from the miraculous actions he has performed—his "mirabili fatti"
(*res*)—rather than "dire" (*signum*). And yet, Guittone then contradicts his claim that "mirabili
fatti" are worth more than "dire" in the praise of St. Francis when he states, at the end of the
stanza, that through these actions, Francis' virtue was made to speak: "la tua cara vertù fece
parlare." Thus, here we see a vindication of the word ("parlare") and spoken praise, even in
God's method of praising Francis through his miraculous acts.

   In fact, Guittone mixes together the categories of *res* and *signum* throughout the poem, and
as the *ballata-lauda* progresses he continues to assert the merging of actions and words (or
signs), especially when discussing the miracles (deeds) that God executed to praise Francis.
According to Guittone, these miraculous acts take the form of embodied, corporeal *signs*:
specifically, Francis' stigmata. The stigmata are first described in the seventh stanza:

Magne de tua vertù, magne d'amore
da Dio a te son prove este, e son nente
inver che c'è sorgrande e sormaggiore
e sola tua, ch'è maggio e maggiormente,
ché, ciò che fu en sé maggio e megliore,
le suoi piaghe, mise in te apertamente;
e ciò per magne due cose asegnare:
una provando como
la via sì è 'l tuo dentro, omo;
altra teco una cosa esser mostrare. (65–74)

[These are great signs of your great virtue and great love from God to you, and
they are nothing compared to what is so great and only yours, which is even
greater, because what was in Him greatest and best—his wounds—he put openly

in you; and so he marked two things as great: one, proving how the path is within you; the other showing his oneness with you.]

God makes the stigmata appear on Francis' body: he *signs* them ("asegnare") onto him. The verb "asegnare" exemplifies the mixing of *res* and *signum* toward which the poem now moves: God actively places *signs* on Francis that are physically and corporeally manifest.

The stigmata represent, within the poem, the union of "dire" and "fare," as Guittone explicitly specifies in the eleventh stanza:

> Segnano anche altro esti segni in teie.
> Dice Cristo: chi vol poi me venire
> tolla la croce sua e segue meie;
> cioè piaghe suoie degga in cor sculpire
> e nel suo dire e far portarle in seie;
> e chi non ciò, non pol ver cristian dire.
> Unde tu, che dovei ricoverare
> in vita vera e voce
> di penitenza croce,
> mertasti gonfalon esso portare. (105–14)

> [These signs in you mark other things as well. Christ says: whoever desires to come with me, let him take up his cross and follow me; that is, this man needs to sculpt Christ's wounds in his heart and carry them with him in his words and deeds; and whoever does not do this cannot say that he is a true Christian. Therefore, you, who recovered the cross of penitence in your true life and voice, deserved to carry the standard.]

The stigmata, physical and corporeal *signa* that incorporate the *res* into their very manifestation, become abstracted: "[s]egnano anche altro esti segni in teie." In fact, they signify ("segnano") the symbolic internal wounds carved into Francis' heart as a true follower of Christ. The stigmata are, in this sense, the reification of the *signum*, which would be these symbolic internal wounds. Francis himself becomes the vessel for the union of the *res* and the *signum*: he bears the wounds in his saying and his doing, "nel suo dire e far." He physically carries, in his person, the symbolic standard—the "gonfalon"—of Christ.

These meditations on the role of the language (*signum*) and its concrete execution (*res*) that are found in "Meraviglioso beato" and, to an even greater extent, "Beato Francesco," penetrate to the center of the meta-literary discussion of representation that is a signature feature of the Italian lyric since its origins in the *Scuola siciliana*, where, in Giacomo da Lentini's work, we can already observe anxiety about the relationship between *res* and *signum* in the poetic act.[59]

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[59] I am thinking, in particular, of poems like the *canzonetta* "Meravigliosamente," or the *canzone* "Madonna, dir vo' voglio," in which the question of how to express the love the poet is feeling—and the explicit references to not only writing, but also different acts of representation like painting—demonstrate the poet's anxiety surrounding the relationship between signs and things and, also, the relationship between form and content. Teodolinda Barolini discusses the relationship between form and content in Giacomo da Lentini's sonnet "Io m'aggio posto in core a Dio servire" in her article "Dante and the Lyric Past," in *Dante and the Origins of Italian Literary Culture*, 23–26. Wayne Storey also briefly discusses Giacomo da Lentini's "Meravigliosamente" in terms of poetic representation and pictorial representation, in *Transcription and Visual Poetics*, 185–186.

Throughout "Meraviglioso beato" and especially "Beato Francesco," Guittone strives, in his songs of praise, toward a unification of poetic language (*signum*) and the execution of this language (*res*). This attempt appears, as stated above, at the end of "Meraviglioso beato," where Guittone declares his unworthiness to sing Dominic's praises only to retract this statement and reaffirm the praises he has already sung ("ciò ch'è ditto / ascondo ni gitto—non fiore"), an assertion that is then concretely *performed* and *enacted* through what would have been the traditional oral performance of this poem: the repetition of the *ripresa* that opens the poem.

Thus, Guittone uses the reference point of the *ballata* form's traditional oral performance to transform the *ripresa* from an element of popular song, meant to encourage collectivity and group participation, into a solo expression ("espressione solistica," to once again quote Pirrotta), that enacts the union of "dire" and "fare" upon which Guittone meditates in these poems. This enactment takes place in the conclusion of "Beato Francesco," as well. In the last, truncated stanza (made up of just a *volta*), Guittone restates his unworthiness to sing St. Francis' praises (an anxiety articulated in the *ripresa* of this poem and in its first three stanzas):

> Mercé donque, Messer; me perdonare
> a te piaccia e ai toi,
> se non laudat'ho voi
> degno, ché non finire so cominciare.[60]

> [Pardon me, then, Messer; let it please you and yours to forgive me, if I have not praised you worthily enough, since I know how to begin but not how to finish.]

At the closing of this poem, Guittone admits that although he began this poem, he does not know how to finish it: "non finire so cominciare." This admission is then *enacted* by the rules of the poem's oral performance, which would involve a return to the *ripresa*—which opens the poem—after the last stanza. Therefore, Guittone, as at the end of "Meraviglioso beato," is making his "dire" into "fare": he declares that although he does not know how to end, he knows how to begin, and then, through a repetition of the *ripresa*, he returns to the beginning of the poem. He makes his linguistic *signum* into *res* by using the popular performance of this form in service of his complex, hyper-literary poetics. Guittone's statement that he knows how to begin, but not how to finish, is confirmed by the form of the *ballata-lauda* itself, which doubles back and repeats itself, in a circular manner, through the *ripresa*.

In the case of "Beato Francesco," this circularity is marked in the manuscript itself: it appears in the Guittone-centric Laurenziano Rediano 9 (L), along with four more of Guittone's *ballate-laude*. L is divided into two sections, a *canzone* section and a *sonetto* section; a block of Guittone's poetry opens both sections (in addition to a section dedicated entirely to Guittone's prose letters, which opens the codex).[61] L contains no *ballata* section, and the five *ballate-laude* within it—all Guittone's—are found one after the other (between fols. 49r–51v, in fascicle VII) in the section of the manuscript that belongs to Guittone's *canzoni*. Three out of the five *ballate-laude* ("O bon Gesù," "Beato Francesco," and "Vegna, vegna") contain a responsorial marking—like the ones that appear in breviaries—on the left margin, next to the last stanza,

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[60] Guittone d'Arezzo, "Beato Francesco," lines 135–138, in Egidi, *Le rime di Guittone d'Arezzo*, 107.
[61] Lino Leonardi, "I canzonieri della lirica italiana delle origini," in *Il canzoniere Laurenziano, Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Redi 9: riproduzione fotografica,* Vol. 2 (Florence: SISMEL: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2001), ix.

indicating, perhaps, that the response (the refrain or *ripresa*) should be sung after it. Of course, the lack of standardization in the writing of the *ballata* or *ballata-lauda* form at this point makes it difficult to come to any kind of definitive conclusion regarding the responsorial marking: it is not used consistently in L (two out of the five *ballate-laude* do not have it—including "Meraviglioso beato"—and it appears next to the last stanzas of a few of the *canzoni* in addition to the *ballate-laude*), and it does not appear in P.[62]

We cannot know whether Guittone had any direct supervision over the textual layout of his *ballate-laude* in L, despite what some philologists have conjectured (or hoped for) in the past.[63] However, whether or not Guittone himself mandated the responsorial marking or it was added by a scribe, the written poem itself seems to necessitate it, as a way of linking it back to its beginning when the poet states that he cannot end the poem, but he can begin it. One wonders to what extent the inclusion of the responsorial marking could be considered a minor manifestation of Guittone's "authorial strategy of linguistic and visual networking," as Storey puts it in his analysis of Guittone's *Trattato d'amore* in the MS Escorial e. III. 23.[64] As stated above, many uncertainties and conjectures must accompany any analysis of the responsorial marking next to the last verses of certain *ballate-laude* in L. However, despite the inconsistent use of this marking, I would hazard to state that it is, perhaps, significant that it accompanies a poem like Guittone's "Beato Francesco": it directs the reader, who has been following the text linearly and most likely in silence, back to the *ripresa*, enacting the return to the beginning of the poem suggested by the poet in the last line (an effect that would have occurred aurally if the *ballata-lauda* were to have been performed orally). Perhaps this marking encourages the reader to engage in a silent, circular meditation, a loop of endless praise that does not know how to end but knows how to begin.

Circularity in the poetics of praise: implications for later Italian lyric

The way that the ending of the *ballata-lauda* links the *res* and the *signum* in its praise of St. Francis mirrors the way that, as Guittone described in the previous stanzas, God links the *res* and the *signum* in His praise of St. Francis through the union of the miraculous deeds ("mirabili fatti") and signs ("segni") that he assigns, or marks ("asegna"), onto Francis. Guittone, then, draws a parallel between his own praise of St. Francis and the praise of St. Francis that God in his glory undertook (the "laude […] [che] prese Dio […] in sua potenza"). Such a statement asserts Guittone's awareness of his own poetic prowess and ability in his *ballata-lauda*. Notably, Guittone instrumentalizes the echoes of an oral/performative tradition within a written/textual medium as a way to demonstrate his skill. By bringing together the oral and the written, we can sense how preoccupied he is, in his poetics, with questions of representation—a preoccupation that, as mentioned above, runs throughout the Italian lyric tradition, linking him with the earlier *Scuola siciliana* and the later *stilnovisti*, and, in particular, Dante. Remarkably, Guittone chooses the *ballata* as the form through which he could execute his praise poems: a form that, before him, had been almost exclusively oral and popular. It seems improbable and reductive to attribute Guittone's use of the *ballata* form as merely a way to compete with secular forms, as

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[62] In fact, the stanzas of the *ballate* in P are marked by a V, the companion to the responsorial marking, indicating their similarity to a *verse* followed by a *responsory* in a breviary.
[63] See Leonardi, *I canzonieri della lirica italiana delle origini*.
[64] Storey, *Transcription and Visual Poetics*, 172.

Roncaglia posits with regards to the *lauda*'s adoption of *ballata* form.[65] Rather, in Guittone's case it appears that the choice to use *ballata* form has less to do with an attempt to make his *ballate-laude* more popular or accessible, but instead regards his repurposing of the refrain form as a method of constructing a circular poetics of praise that loops back on itself in a potentially never-ending meditation on the divine.

We can see this circularity—this disruption of the poem's sequential nature—through Guittone's use of repetition on various levels. On the micro level, as mentioned above, Guittone often employs polyptoton, like "dogliosa doglia" in "O bon Gesù,"[66] "coronato d'onore / onor sé onora" in "Meraviglioso beato,"[67] or "debber segni essi a segno in te segnare" in "Beato Francesco"[68]—all this, paired with his frequent usage of *rime equivoche*. These two elements are, as stated previously, typical elements of Guittone's poetry that are intensified through formal repetition in the *ballata-lauda*.

"O bon Gesù" is a prime example of such repetition: each stanza begins with the apostrophe "O bon Gesù," a repetition that extends beyond what appears on the printed page when we remember that, according to traditional *ballata* structure, the *ripresa*—which also begins with "O bon Gesù"—would be repeated between each of the stanzas. This anaphora disorients the reader, making typical signposts of the poem difficult to locate and disrupting the poem's sequentiality. This disruption also surfaces, of course, at the end of "Beato Francesco," when the last stanza of the poem points us back to the beginning ("ché non finire so cominciare"), enacting a circularity that does not allow for the fixed beginnings and endings of most poems ("O bon Gesù" is, incidentally, another poem that includes a responsorial marking next to its last stanza in L).

Such poetic self-consciousness certainly propels the *ballata-lauda* into the terrain of a potentially virtuosic, poetically skilled composition, and contributes to the shift from the perception of the *ballata* as a popular, oral form to a literarily viable one (although it should be noted that the *ballata* never shed its association with popular performance).[69] Although scholars, like Giunta, have noted that ultimately Guittone's model of the *ballata-lauda* was subsumed by the secular, courtly, Bonagiuntian-style *ballata* (as we see in the production of the *stilnovisti*), it is undeniable (as I discussed above) that the secular and/or popular manifestations of this refrain form were deeply connected to its religious manifestations during its establishment as a lyric

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[65] Roncaglia, "Nella preistoria della lauda," 462.

[66] Guittone d'Arezzo, "O bon Gesù," line 7, in Egidi, in *Le rime di Guittone d'Arezzo,* 96.

[67] Guittone d'Arezzo, "Meraviglioso beato," lines 2–3, in Egidi, in *Le rime di Guittone d'Arezzo*, 101.

[68] Guittone d'Arezzo, "Beato Francesco," line 91, in Egidi, in *Le rime di Guittone d'Arezzo*, 103.

[69] Dante's classification of the *ballata* as inferior to the *canzone* in the *De vulgari eloquentia* (which seems due, in large part, to the *ballata*'s use of a *ripresa*) may have contributed to this perception. As it is, in the *Trecento* Petrarch will consider it to be a popular or "popolareggiante" form, according to Emilio Bigi in "Le ballate del Petrarca," *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana* 152 (1974): 481–493, 482: "Si può ragionevolmente pensare che il [...] gusto aristocratico e fortemente selettivo [del Petrarca] lo portasse a giudicare la ballata come un genere 'plebeo' secondo la definizione che ne dà egli stesso in una postilla del Vat. Lat. 3196, a proposito di *Amor, quando fioria*: 'hoc est principium unius plebeie cantionis'" ["We could reasonably think that Petrarch's aristocratic and highly selective taste brought him to judge the *ballata* as a 'plebeian' genre, according to the definition he himself gives to it in an annotation to Vat. Lat. 3196, regarding *Amor, quando fioria*: 'here is the beginning of a plebeian song'"]. Bigi goes on to posit that this is due to "[l]'origine popolare o popolareggiante (a differenza di quella del sonetto) della ballata, e soprattutto l'impiego di essa, anche e proprio ai suoi tempi, come strumento di comune intrattenimento" ["the popular or popularizing origin of the *ballata* (unlike the sonnet), and above all the use of the *ballata* as a means of common entertainment, even in his own time"]. Giunta echoes this sentiment, in *La linea Bonagiunta-Guinizzelli*, 293: he states that in the *ballate* of the *stilnovisti*, the popular or popularizing tradition associated with this poetic form does not allow for great innovation in the hands of a poet like Dante.

genre.[70] Therefore, although the structure of Guittone's *ballata-lauda* was not necessarily taken up by the following generation of poets, I believe it fair to assert that the hyper-literary, formal, and representational experiments that Guittone undertook in his use of the *ballata* helped dispel the perception of the refrain form as an exclusively orally performed genre (which would render its written form a mere transcription of an oral performance). Instead, in his *ballate-laude* Guittone propelled this form to a new poetic legitimacy.

Guittone's innovative literary use of the presumably widespread orally performed *ballata* to create a poetic meditation on representation, sequentiality, and circularity in narrative time during the act of praising the divine merits further consideration, even outside the context of the *ballata*, and its contribution to the Italian lyric tradition that follows it requires, perhaps, some reevaluation. Although the themes of Guittone's *ballate-laude* are not directly continued in the *ballate* that succeed his poetic production, it could prove useful to consider the implications of the circular poetics of praise developed in Guittone's *ballate-laude* outside of the *ballata* form. In fact, the influence of Guittone's circular, never-ending poetics that disrupts mere sequential reading, employed within the context of divine praise, could be linked to Dante's attempts to avoid the constraints of narrative time in the poetics of his *Paradiso*;[71] indeed, as Teodolinda Barolini has written, Guittone is "the only one of Dante's lyric precursors who could actively imagine, if not the Comedy itself, at least the space that the Comedy would later fill."[72] This statement is especially pertinent when considering the close links between *Paradiso* XI and XII and Guittone's *laude* to St. Francis and St. Dominic, in addition to potential ways that Guittone's poetic techniques in these poems are echoed in events like the circular heavenly dance of *Paradiso* X and the archangel Gabriel's "circulata melodia" of *Paradiso* XXIII.

Even more broadly, using Guittone as a case study in our examination of how the *ballata* as literary form was established alongside (or perhaps even thanks to) the *ballata-lauda* demonstrates the necessity of considering the role of oral performance in the development of early Italian poetics. If, in our reading of Guittone's *ballate-laude*, we ignore the form such compositions would have had in oral performance, we lose much of their poetic complexity: the way that they harness echoes of orality to assist in meditations on poetic time (or sequentiality), circularity, and representational considerations (the union of *res* and *signum*; as Dante would say, in *Inferno* XXXII, the desire that "dal fatto il dir non sia diverso" ["that the word may not differ from the deed"]). Moving beyond the oft-embraced paradigm of the so-called "divorce" between music and poetry in the Italian *Duecento* laid out by Roncaglia nearly fifty years ago and considering interactions between textuality and orality in the early Italian lyric allows for reinterpretations of previously inaccessible, impenetrable, or simply neglected poems from this time period. In a similar vein, abandoning dichotomous perceptions of popular (often associated with oral performance) and literary (often associated with written texts) poetry in favor of a more

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[70] Giunta, *La linea Bonagiunta-Guinizzelli*, 213. Giunta considers the abandonment of Guittone's *ballata-lauda* form by later poets to be a "rifiuto [...] categorico" ["categorical rejection"] in favor of a *ballata* form "dove non si varcano le quattro stanze e non hanno spazio temi extracortesi" ["where the four stanzas are not exceeded and there is no space for themes outside of the courtly"].

[71] I am citing the interpretation expounded in the three chapters on the *Paradiso* in Teodolinda Barolini, *The Undivine Comedy: Detheologizing Dante* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992): "Problems in Paradise: The Mimesis of Time and the Paradox of Più e Meno," "The Heaven of the Sun as a Meditation on Narrative," and "The Sacred Poem is Forced to Jump: Closure and the Poetics of Enjambment."

[72] Teodolinda Barolini, *Dante's Poets: Textuality and Truth in the Comedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 123.

holistic approach to *Duecento* lyric may lead to a reevaluation of the relationship between what have historically been considered separate spheres.