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The Animal Triad of Capital Sins in Franciscan Iconography

This study examines two exceptional depictions of *St. Francis in Glory* that appeared in Italian painting of towards the mid 15th century, those of the Venetian miniaturist Cristoforo Cortese and the Sienese painter Sassetta. In both versions St. Francis is depicted in a symbolic representation of the stigmatization, with the triad of theological virtues above and three personified sins, accompanied by symbolic animals, below. In the paintings of *St. Francis in Glory* by Cortese and Sassetta a wild boar accompanies the female personification of *Luxuria*, and a wolf characterizes that of *Avaritia*. In each version the saint tramples the fallen knight of *Superbia*, but only Sassetta has included his lion attribute.

Several questions are addressed in regard to the animal symbolism and its adaptation to the image of St. Francis, inevitably relating to some of the broader problems of Franciscan iconography. The issues of literary and visual precedents for the animal/sin triad in Franciscan iconography and the contemporaneous appearance of this scheme in Venice and Siena are examined. It is demonstrated that depictions of saints, in general, and St. Francis, in particular, as the *alter Christus*, were often shown trampling personified vices in Sienese trecento painting, but these did not include animal depictions. Medieval literary sources for the latter include Brunetto Latini's *Tesoretto*, which had introduced the description of the author, lost on the crossroads, who met with beasts, the *Divina Commedia* and preacher's sermons. Beast metaphors from bestiary moralizations and *exempla* literature were still used in fifteenth century preacher's sermons, as illustrated by those of Giovanni Dominici and Bernardino of Siena.

In the late fourteenth century several Sienese artists travelled to northern Italy and executed paintings for the Dominican and Franciscan Orders in Liguria, the Marches and the Veneto. A direct connection between Cristoforo Cortese and Sienese ecclesiastical patrons in Venice leads to the assumption that a Sienese precedent of the animal/vice iconography was transmitted to Venice in the early fifteenth century. Cortese's modification of the scheme demonstrates the metaphoric visualization of concepts and shows that, although models were transmitted from one school to another, there were local variations with scope for renewed interpretation.