

Brandano

Bartolomeo Garosi (or Carosi), also known as Brandano, is a preacher like many others: he travels through Italy, France, and Spain, urging those he meets to repentance and prophesying disasters. He becomes famous for his rhyming invectives, such as those related to his homeland: "Siena, Siena, put the Lordship in your mind, or you will end up in a brothel." Or: "Woe to you, Siena, when your wolves will carry the bell and the mountains will come down to the plain."

In Rome, he distributes bones to the cardinals and to Clement VII, towards whom he harbors deep resentment because, being a member of the Medici family, he is an enemy of Siena. His invectives provoke reactions, including violent ones, but he seems to have nine lives, and at this point, the chronicle becomes legend: according to popular tales, despite being bound with chains and thrown into the Tiber in a sack by the Pontifical guards, unbelievably, he survived. Upon emerging, still covered in mud, he would go around the city saying, "Oh Romans, your consciences are dirtier than this sack that covers me, and I pity you because when the Head is bad, the limbs become putrid. And you, Rome, should have been the head of Christianity, but instead, you have become the capital of heresy. Because of your sins, you will have to be tamed." To the pope, he said, "Bastard sodomite, for your sins, Rome will be destroyed. Confess and convert because in fourteen days, God's wrath will fall upon you and the city." Charles V's Landsknechts would promptly bring death, destruction, and plague, as well as imprisoning Clement VII. Paradoxically, at the same time, Brandano was instead liberated by the invaders. Amidst ironic situations, prophecies, and challenges to power, his fame could only grow, so much so that his memory is still alive in the original areas.

The preacher returned to Siena after the Spaniards had been forcibly expelled (previously he had challenged the Imperial forces, which had led to his exile), and here he died in 1554, a year before the city's fall at the hands of the Spaniards and the Medici. His body was displayed for three days in the church of San Martino, but nothing more is known of his remains. Some relics are located in the headquarters of the Archconfraternity of Mercy in Siena, where there is also a portrait of him with the Cross of the two Maries from the 16th century. A very similar one from the next century is found in the collegiate church of Provenzano, featuring Bernardino Mei's painting depicting a Prophecy of Brandano. Representations with a sackcloth and cilice abound, while he holds a cross and a skull. In his native Petroio, a small terracotta statue has been dedicated to him, fittingly for the land of "concai."

In the Val di Chiana, there is another trace of his passage, linked to yet another prophecy. He used the crucifix, which he always carried with him, to engrave a cross on the facade of the church of San Giovanni and said, "O afflicted Fratta, when this cross is covered by the earth, you will suffer the scourges of divine wrath." About a century and a half later (in 1699), the owner of the Augusto Gori Pannilini farm had the cross and a commemorative plaque walled up, perhaps superstitiously, in a certain spot.

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