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Boccaccio, the Classics and the Latin Middle Ages

The name of Boccaccio, together with his *praeceptor* Petrarch, appears in the prefaces of many critical editions of Latin classics: in the first century of Italian Humanism the meeting of these two great minds, in person or through their letters, promoted the circulation of texts which were limited until then to the sporadic consultation of a few readers. The manner by which Petrarch and Boccaccio approached Latin literature was quite different, because they had a different education.[1] Petrarch's highly selective judgment contrasts with the curiosity of Boccaccio, attracted by the most obscure works of the classical tradition and generously open to collecting into his own Pantheon the immense literary patrimony of the Middle Ages.[2] Medieval Latin writers were never banished from the canon of *auctoritates*, even after Boccaccio's erudite conversion that developed from his friendship with Petrarch, whom he met in Florence for the first time in 1350 and then visited often in Milan, Padua and Venice. Their methods were different and likewise their results; nevertheless, it is fair to place the names of Boccaccio and Petrarch side by side in the fascinating history of the rediscovery of classical antiquity in the Renaissance. Petrarch is the *sospitator* of Cicero, whose letters to Atticus, to Brutus and to Quintus he discovered in Verona in 1345. We owe to Boccaccio, with the assistance of Zanobi da Strada, the rediscovery of part of Tacitus' *Annales* and *Historiae*. However, Petrarch reserved to Cicero a philological attention that Boccaccio was not able to bestow upon the complicated prose of Tacitus.

There survive a good number of manuscripts, many of them autographs, which belonged to Boccaccio. We have a sort of inventory of his personal library, which was not as rich as that of Petrarch, but nonetheless inhabited by rare texts.[3]

1 Vincenzo Fera: Storia e filologia tra Petrarca e Boccaccio. In: *Quaderni petrarcheschi* 15–16 (2005–2006), p. 369–390.

2 Michele Feo: Petrarca e Boccaccio: Critica e filologia. In: Paolo Orvieto (ed.): *Storia della letteratura italiana. XI. La critica letteraria dal Due al Novecento*. Roma: Salerno Editrice 2003, p. 103–129, in particular p. 123–124.

3 Antonia Mazza: L'inventario della 'parva libraria' di Santo Spirito e la biblioteca del Boccaccio. In: *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 9 (1966), p. 1–74; Teresa De Robertis: L'inventario della 'parva libraria' di Santo Spirito. In: Teresa De Robertis/Carla Maria Monti et al. (eds.): *Boccaccio autore e copista*. Firenze: Mandragora 2013, p. 403–409. On Boccaccio's personal books see Maddalena Signorini: Considerazioni preliminari sulla biblioteca di Giovanni Boccaccio. In: *Studi sul Boccaccio* 29 (2011), p. 367–395; Marco Cursi and Maurizio Fiorilla: Giovanni Boccaccio. In: Giuseppina Brunetti/Maurizio Fiorilla et al. (eds.): *Autografi dei letterati italiani*.

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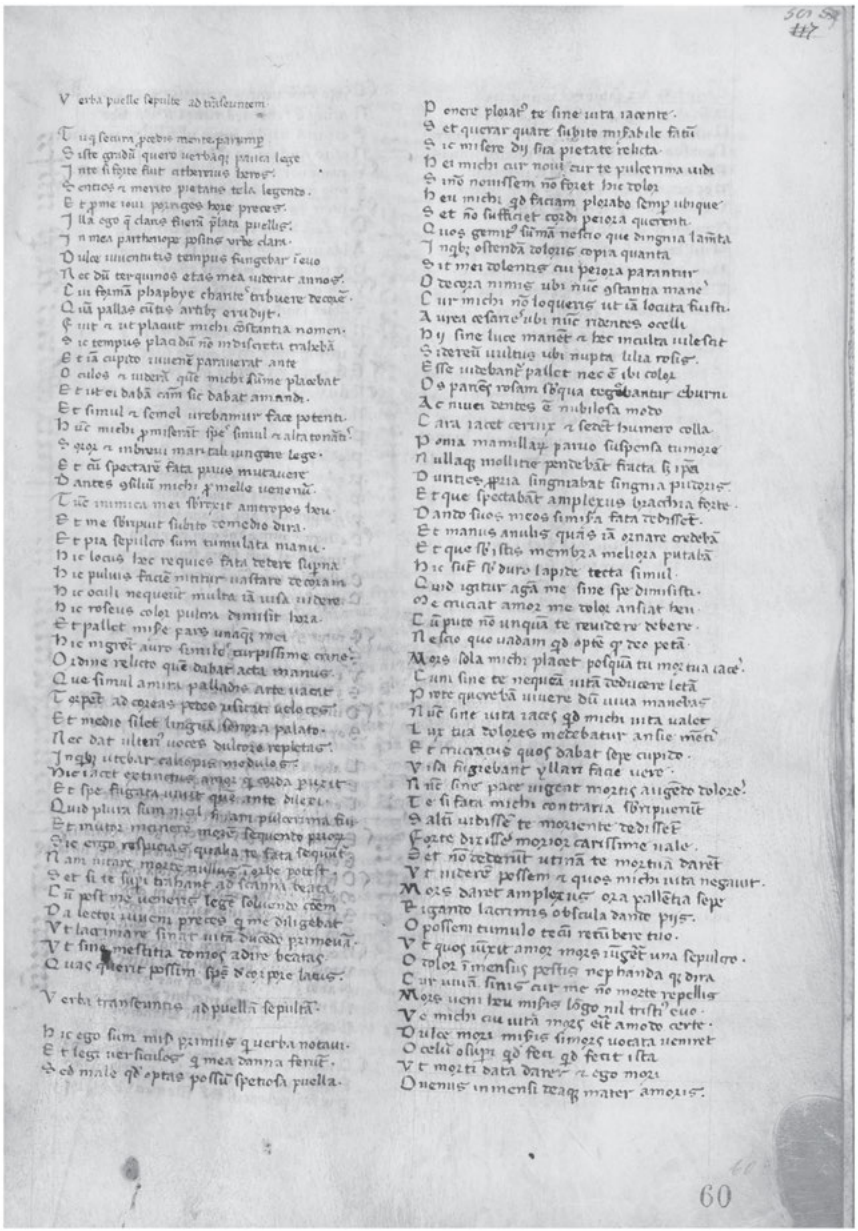

Plate 1: Firenze, Biblioteca Laurenziana, Plut. 29.8, fol. 60r (*Costanza's Elegy*, copied by Boccoccio)

Le Origini e il Trecento. Vol. 1. Roma: Salerno Editrice 2013, p. 43–103; Marco Cursi: *La scrittura e i libri di Giovanni Boccaccio*. Roma: Viella 2013, p. 129–134.

In his will of 28 August 1374 Boccaccio arranged to leave his books to the Augustinian friar Martino da Signa establishing that after the death of Martino the volumes would move to the library of the Florentine convent of Santo Spirito, *ut quilibet de dicto conventu possit legere et studere super dictis libris* ("so that whosoever of this convent might read and study the abovementioned books").[4] In 1451, the volumes of the Augustinian convent were finally inventoried. Thus it became possible, at that time and more recently, to recognize certain books that first belonged to Boccaccio and therefore to the Santo Spirito collection. Others, either missing or yet to be identified, may still reveal their presence on his bookshelf.

It is impossible to trace all the paths of the Latin textual traditions to which Boccaccio had access, but some episodes allow us to establish general guidelines.[5] A starting point could be the Laurentian *zibaldone* and Miscellanea (Plut. 29.8 and 33.31) which, as we now know, originally constituted a single volume, in part assembled by reusing older parchment from a liturgical book in Beneventan script. It would be useful to call these two manuscripts 'Boccaccio's membranaceous *zibaldone*'.[6] With its surprisingly broad collection of ancient, medieval and contemporary texts, which Boccaccio prepared before the meeting with Petrarch in 1350, it is the most significant book of his youth. A whole autograph, it was written since Boccaccio's boyhood until 1348 (a letter to Zanobi da Strada transcribed at fol. 50v belongs to the beginning of this year), in Naples during his formative years, in Florence after his return at the beginning of the 1340s, and later in Romagna. More than 140 texts were entrusted to those pages, from short maxims in prose or verse to more ample works. Ancients and Moderns are welcomed in this membranaceous *zibaldone*, which even included technical treatises by Andalò di Negro, a master of astronomy. Different traditions come together in the apparently disordered tumult of this archive of memory, so different from the other great book of the Trecento, the Ambrosian Virgil of Petrarch.[7] Nevertheless, perhaps it is possible to reconstruct the project or, rather, the distinct projects that explain the genesis of this rhetorical collection. Here Boccaccio wished to include among the modern authors the two stars of his cultural firmament:

4 Laura Regnicoli: *I testamenti di Giovanni Boccaccio*. In: Teresa De Robertis/Carla Maria Monti et al. (eds.): *Boccaccio autore e copista*, p. 387–393, on p. 392.

5 Marco Petoletti: Il Boccaccio e la tradizione dei testi latini. In: Michaelangiola Marchiaro/Stefano Zamponi (eds.): *Boccaccio letterato. Atti del Convegno internazionale (Firenze-Certaldo, 10–12 ottobre 2013)*. Firenze: Accademia della Crusca 2015, p. 105–121.

6 For a complete description see Marco Petoletti and Stefano Zamponi: *Gli zibaldoni*. In: Teresa De Robertis/Carla Maria Monti et al. (eds.): *Boccaccio autore e copista*, p. 289–326, in particular p. 300–313.

7 Antonietta Nebuloni Testa/Marco Baglio et al. (eds.): *Francesco Petrarca. Le postille del Virgilio Ambrosiano*. 2 vols. Padova-Roma: Antenore 2006.

Dante's bucolic *tenzone* with Giovanni del Virgilio, whose transmission Boccaccio promoted, and three Latin epistles, copied as example of the *ars dictandi*;[8] and Petrarch's works which Boccaccio was able to read at that moment (some poetic epistles and the eclogue *Argus*). The section dedicated to Petrarch opens with an evocative page that shows Boccaccio's devotion not yet supported by direct acquaintance: the memory of the coronation ceremony in Rome, when the laurel wreath was placed upon Petrarch's temples, is fixed in epigraphic writing.[9] In his works in Latin prose and verse, Boccaccio tried to imitate both Dante and Petrarch: the four fictitious epistles of 1339, daringly complicated by a sophisticated lexicon, the obscure *Allegoria mitologica*, and the so-called *Elegy to Constance*, in which he hides the imitation, nearly verbatim, of an ancient epitaph still conserved in Rome and made popular by the epigraphic and poetic anthologies of the humanists. Boccaccio is the first to demonstrate knowledge of this inscription, even if the way he knew it remains obscure.[10] Alongside the elaborate Latin experiments constructed in Naples, he places the exchange of eclogues with master Checco di Meletto of Romagna, anchored to the model of Dante's *tenzone* with Giovanni del Virgilio; the *Faunus*, which marked his moving to an imitation of bucolic Petrarch;[11] and a letter, this one real, sent at the beginning of 1348 to his friend Zanobi da Strada, in which he alludes to the question of Varro, *Varronem quidem nondum habui* ("Also, I have not yet received the Varro"). Therefore, Boccaccio was already engaged in negotiations in order to obtain the old manuscript in Beneventan script, today in the Laurentian Library of Florence (Plut. 51.10), containing the *De lingua Latina*, Cicero's *Pro Cluentio* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, from which he extracted a missing copy sent to Petrarch, as the *Fam*. XVIII.4 of 1355 proves.[12] Notwithstanding this, he abraded the name *Iohannes de Certaldo* from the titles of his creations copied in this book: while he did not condemn to flames and destruction those texts of his youth, elaborated during

8 Marco Petoletti: Boccaccio editore delle egloghe e delle epistole di Dante. In: Luca Azzetta/Andrea Mazzucchi (eds.): *Boccaccio editore e interprete di Dante. Atti del Convegno internazionale (Roma, 28–30 ottobre 2013)*. Roma: Salerno Editrice 2014, p. 159–183.

9 Jonathan Usher: Monuments More Enduring than Bronze: Boccaccio and Paper Inscriptions. In: *Heliotropia* 4, 1 (2007), p. 1–30.

10 Boccaccio refers to the epitaph of Claudia Omonea (first century B.C.), now in Rome in the Capitoline Museums (*CIL*, VI/2, nr. 12652). See Roberto Weiss: *La scoperta dell'antichità classica nel Rinascimento*. Padova: Antenore 1989, p. 50; Augusto Campana: *Studi epigrafici ed epigrafia nuova nel Rinascimento umanistico*. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e letteratura 2005, p. 6.

11 Simona Lorenzini: *La corrispondenza bucolica tra Giovanni Boccaccio e Checco di Meletto Rossi. L'egloga di Giovanni del Virgilio ad Albertino Mussato.* Firenze: Leo S. Olschki 2011.

12 Silvia Rizzo: Testi classici scoperti dal Boccaccio e donati al Petrarca. In: Michele Feo (ed.): *Codici latini del Petrarca nelle biblioteche fiorentine*. Firenze: Le Lettere 1991, p. 14–16.

his literary apprenticeship, he did flee almost modestly from laying claim *coram populo* to the authorship of these works.[13] The membranaceous *zibaldone* allows us to recognize even the models Boccaccio used. He copied Persius' text with glosses from an eleventh-century MS., now Laur. Plut. 37.19. So modern scholars have the opportunity to verify directly Boccaccio's talent as a scribe. In this case he can be acquitted of the charge against the congenital distraction attributed to him in copying texts.[14] Other classics copied in this book arouse more interest, for example a collection of *carmina* from the *Anthologia Latina*, preceded by the *Culex* and the pseudo-Virgilian *Dirae* (at fols. 17r–38r of the Laur. Plut. 33.31): all those texts derive from a Carolingian compilation. The juxtaposition in the membranaceous *zibaldone* of Ovid's *Ibis* and *Amores* and the *Cosmographia* of Bernard Silvestre allows us to identify another of Boccaccio's sources: in some twelfth- and thirteenth-century MSS from the Norman area we find the very same succession of texts. Therefore, it is highly probable that in this case the Certaldese transcribed from a previously assembled *corpus*, whose origin is traceable to France. Angevin Naples, which Boccaccio loved and where he dwelt between 1327 and 1341, must have placed at his disposition an unimaginable treasure of books, and not limited to those dispensed by the nearby library of Montecassino, often considered the sole source of literary rarities. Among the works copied in the membranaceous *zibaldone* one must certainly mention the most unusual: the *Priapea*, a collection of 86 epigrams whose protagonist is the jocose and impudent keeper of gardens. Boccaccio's transcription is the first one in the history of the transmission of this text and it is most authoritative for the critical edition.[15]

As for the *Priapea*'s transmission, Laur. Plut. 29.8 and 33.31 offer a substantial contribution even on the side of medieval Latin literature: for example, among the three twelfth-century elegiac comedies that Boccaccio transcribed – Vital de Blois' *Geta*, Guillaume de Blois' *Alda* and the *Lidia* attributed to Arnulf of Orléans (all well-known texts to those who have read the *novelle* of the *Decameron*) – the last one had a so poor circulation that only another surviving witness, possibly of English origin and dating back to XIII century, is known. In a similar way, the membranaceous *zibaldone* is the other only surviving MS of some works as well: Berthold of Hohenburg's *Lamentatio* and a Latin translation of a section of the

13 Victoria Kirkham: Iohannes de Certaldo: la firma dell'autore. In: Michelangelo Picone/Claude Cazalé Bérard (eds.): *Gli Zibaldoni di Boccaccio. Memoria, scrittura, riscrittura. Atti del seminario internazionale (Firenze-Certaldo, 26–28 aprile 1996)*. Firenze: Cesati 1998, p. 455–468.

14 Felice Ramorino: De duobus Persii codicibus qui inter ceteros Laurentianae bibliothecae servantur. In: *Studi italiani di filologia classica* 12 (1904), p. 229–260; Dorothy M. Robathan: Boccaccio's Accuracy as a Scribe. In: *Speculum* 13 (1938), p. 458–460.

15 Marco Petoletti: *Il Boccaccio e la tradizione dei testi latini*, p. 110–112.

Roman d'Alexandre concerning an episode of the siege of Tyre.[16] The satire in goliardic strophes attributed to Pier della Vigna, "Vehementi nimium commotus dolore" ("Moved by a powerful affliction"), had a slightly widespread circulation. Boccaccio's copy shows significant variants and additions in comparison to the other three known manuscripts.[17] Another short poem, which the title assigns to Thomas Aquinas – "Versus beati Thome de Aquino" ("Verses of the blessed Thomas Aquinas") –, but probably composed in the twelfth century in France, as stylistic analysis suggests, is transmitted in Laur. Plut. 29.8 at fols. 52r–v.[18] This medieval Latin relic is saved only by Boccaccio's transcription.[19]

The thirst for knowledge spurred Boccaccio's mind as well as his pen to collect in his book miscellaneous epigraphic texts without any barriers between ancients and moderns. Thus he transcribed two medieval inscriptions, the first an epitaph for Beltramo Aringheri, called Porrina, who was buried in the Church of Santa Maria Assunta at Casole d'Elsa in a tomb sculpted by Marco Romano. If Boccaccio did not copy this funeral eulogy, it would not have survived to our day.[20] Four lines for the Church of San Miniato in Florence also survive only by way of Boccaccio's transcription.[21] At a much later date, in the 1360s, he copied onto a folio that had remained partially blank a Greek epigraph: it is the epitaph for a dog, found near the church of San Felice a Ema in the suburbs of Florence, which is transmitted exclusively by this copy.[22] This text is a visible witness of Boccaccio's interest in Greek culture. Alongside the great collection of ancient, medieval and modern

16 Ibid., p. 113.

17 Antonio Montefusco: Petri de Vinea 'Vehementi nimium commotus dolore': la restituzione del testo tra storia e filologia. In: *La parola del testo* 11, 2 (2007), p. 299–365.

18 Angelo Piacentini: Un carme attribuito a san Tommaso d'Aquino nello Zibaldone membranaceo di Boccaccio. In: *Studi sul Boccaccio* 44 (2016), p. 207–234.

19 Boccaccio's interest in medieval Latin poetry emerges from his autograph transcription of Joseph of Exeter's *Ylias*, a sort of versification of the *Historia destructionis Troiae* by Dares Phrygius, dedicated to Baldwin, archbishop of Canterbury. The MS. Laur. Ashburnham App. 1856, copied around 1355, transmits in its current state the first 387 verses of Joseph of Exeter's poem. See Marco Petoletti: L'*Ylias* di Giuseppe Iscano copiata da Boccaccio. In: Teresa De Robertis/Carla Maria Monti et al. (eds.): *Boccaccio autore e copista*, p. 346–348.

20 Marco Petoletti and Stefano Zamponi: *Gli zibaldoni*, p. 306; Silvia Coazzin: L'epitafio a Porrina trascritto da Giovanni Boccaccio. In: Alessandro Bagnoli (ed.): *Marco Romano e il contesto artistico senese fra la fine del Duecento a gli inizi del Trecento*. Cinisello Balsamo (Milano): Silvana 2010, p. 318–319; Silvia Coazzin: Potere, cultura e committenza artistica. I Porrini di Casole d'Elsa (XIII–XIV secolo). In: *Bullettino Senese di Storia Patria* 117 (2011), p. 34–120, in particular p. 79–94.

21 Marco Petoletti and Stefano Zamponi: *Gli zibaldoni*, p. 309.

22 Ibid., p. 309; Guillermo Galán Vioque: Notes on three Greek epigrams in MS Leiden, Voss. Misc. 13. In: *Aevum* 87 (2013), p. 87–98.

texts copied in his membranaceous miscellany, Boccaccio transcribed on paper another great *zibaldone*, now Florence, Bibl. Nazionale Centrale, Banco rari 50: this is his first autograph to be studied with diligence and passion by Sebastiano Ciampi in the first half of the nineteenth century.[23] In contrast to the membranaceous *zibaldone*, no poetic texts are preserved here, with the exception of a few *versus memoriales* that summarize in hexameters the subject of the first book of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. If one excludes the actual quires 7–9, corresponding to fols. 79r–120v, in the other part of this huge manuscript Boccaccio copied well-structured excerpts of medieval historical encyclopediae. In fact, the fols. 1r–63r include a history of the emperors from Julius Caesar (at least in its current state: the manuscript lacks its first 19 fols.) to Louis IX of France, combining three different texts: the *Historie* of Riccobaldo of Ferrara, a great chronicle built on well-chosen sources, which Boccaccio retrieved during his first sojourn in Romagna, between Ravenna and Forlì (1346–1348);[24] the more widely circulating *Historiae adversus paganos* of Paulus Orosius, which moreover he copied in part in another MS., Firenze, Bibl. Riccardiana, 627;[25] and, finally, the very popular *Chronicon imperatorum* of the Dominican Martinus Polonus, a compendium of

23 Marco Petoletti and Stefano Zamponi: *Gli zibaldoni*, p. 313–326, and bibliography.

24 Teresa Hankey: Riccobaldo of Ferrara, Boccaccio and Domenico di Bandino. In: *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 21 (1958), p. 208–226; Teresa Hankey: *Riccobaldo of Ferrara: his life, works and influence*. Roma: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo 1996 (Fonti per la storia dell'Italia medievale. Subsidia, 2), p. 62–64.

25 The Riccardiano 627, whose first 28 folios belong to the twelfth century, is part of a more complex manuscript that also included the codex London, British Library, Harley 5383, and the Riccardiano 2795, fols. 70–76, identified respectively by Laura Pani and Teresa De Robertis. In its entirety the volume transmits, in addition to Paulus Orosius, the *Additamentum in Eutropii Breviarium* (*Historia Romana* XIII–XVI) and the *Historia Langobardorum* of Paul the Deacon, and the extraordinary letter by Pasquale Romano, *De origine civitatis Aretii* (of which it is the only witness). Boccaccio restored the twelfth-century manuscript in the 1350s, copying the missing part of the *Historiae* of Orosius, the texts of Paul the Deacon and the 'geographical' epistle of Pasquale Romano. See Teresa De Robertis: Restauro di un autografo di Boccaccio (con una nota su Pasquale Romano). In: *Studi sul Boccaccio* 29 (2001), p. 215–227; Laura Pani: "Propriis manibus ipse transcripsit". Il manoscritto London, British Library, Harley 5383. In: *Scrineum* 9 (2012), p. 305–325; Teresa De Robertis: Orosio, Paolo Diacono e Pasquale Romano: un autografo finalmente ricomposto. In: Teresa De Robertis/Carla Maria Monti et al. (eds.): *Boccaccio autore e copista*, p. 343–346; Laura Pani: "Simillima pestis Florentie et quasi per universum orbem": Boccaccio e la 'Historia Langobardorum' di Paolo Diacono. In: Antonio Ferracin/Matteo Venier (eds): *Giovanni Boccaccio: tradizione, interpretazione, fortuna. In ricordo di Vittore Branca*. Udine: Forum 2014, p. 93–131. For the epistle of Pasquale Romano see Pierluigi Licciardello, Una lettera da Bisanzio sulla citta di Arezzo. In: *Notizie di storia. Periodico della Società Storica Aretina* 8 (2006), p. 18–21; Giulio Firpo: Un frammento di itinerario tardoantico in un manoscritto di Boccaccio. In: *Geographia antiqua* 22 (2013), p. 109–124.

political and pontifical history. Polonus' *Chronicon pontificum* is copied at fols. 69v–72v, even if Boccaccio abruptly interrupts the transcription (another hand completes the whole work).[26] Beyond these three authors – one from the patristic age, the others medieval – the first section of the chartaceous *zibaldone* collects various excerpts from English chronicles, which deserve in-depth research for a more precise identification. These excerpts highlight Boccaccio's interests and his lively curiosity. Polonus' description of the ancient monuments of imperial Rome (a sort of summary of the *Mirabilia urbis Romae*) is copied by Boccaccio before the *Chronicon pontificum*.

This rather homogeneous bulk of historical texts is followed by a section which apparently present a more confuse appearance. Here many texts are collected: the *sermo* in praise of poetry dictated by Zanobi da Strada, which must not be confused – as it often happened – with the speech *de fama* Zanobi delivered on the occasion of his poetic coronation in 1355 in Pisa, but rather to be identified with the speech Boccaccio praised to his friend in a letter dated January 1348; two of Boccaccio's letters – the *epistle* IX, datable to April 1353, and the *epistle* VIII, as well as one from Petrarch, *Fam*. XVIII 15, dated December 1355, in a folio now in Krakow;[27] the very rare *Genealogies* of Paolo da Perugia, a master of mythology warmly praised in the *Genealogia deorum gentilium*; and the mythological *compendium* of Franceschino degli Albizzi and Forese Donati.[28]

Latin classics are represented by the first 27 chapters of Sallust's *De coniuratione Catilinae* and by some excerpts from Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis historia*, used by Boccaccio in his erudite Latin works and, contrary to common belief, not copied from the famous Par. lat. 6802, which Petrarch bought in 1350.[29] Boccaccio also entrusted to the pages of this *zibaldone* the valuable report, transmitted only here, of the discovery of the Canary Islands, which took place only a

26 Aldo Maria Costantini: Studi sullo Zibaldone Magliabechiano. IV. La presenza di Martino Polono. In: *Studi sul Boccaccio* 11 (1979), p. 363–370.

27 Vittore Branca: Una carta dispersa dello Zibaldone Magliabechiano. Una Familiare petrarchesca autografa del Boccaccio. In: *Studi sul Boccaccio* 2 (1964), p. 5–14; Giancarlo Savino: Petrarca e Boccaccio deportati in Polonia. In: Michele Feo (ed.): *Codici latini del Petrarca nelle biblioteche fiorentine*. Firenze: Le Lettere 1991, p. 141–145.

28 Attilio Hortis: *Studj sulle opere latine di Giovanni Boccaccio*. Trieste: J. Dase 1879, p. 525–542; Teresa Hankey: Un nuovo codice delle 'Genealogie deorum' di Paolo da Perugia (e tre manualetti contemporanei). In: *Studi sul Boccaccio* 18 (1989), p. 65–121.

29 Marco Petoletti: Boccaccio e Plinio: gli estratti dello Zibaldone Magliabechiano. In: *Studi sul Boccaccio* 41 (2013), p. 257–293; Michael D. Reeve: The text of Boccaccio's excerpts from Pliny's 'Natural History'. In: *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 54 (2013), p. 135–152.

few years earlier.[30] Thus follows a rich miscellany of Senecan maxims, gleaned from the *Epistulae ad Lucilium* and organized by arguments. The enormous orthographic problems prove that Boccaccio copied this section during the first Neapolitan period. Only a part of this Senecan collection survives, because of the losses suffered by the MS.[31] The last part of this book, copied in the second half of the 1350s, as chronological clues disseminated in its pages certify (the date 1356 appears explicitly), is largely indebted to the *Compendium* of the bishop of Pozzuoli Paolino Veneto, a tireless chronicler, and to Hayton's *Flos historiarum terre Orientis*. Boccaccio's thirst for histories and anecdotes led him to Paolino's encyclopedia, based on Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum historiale*, but so poorly organized and so confused, because of repetitions, distractions and errors, that Boccaccio's hostile judgment expressed in his marginal notes can be justified.[32] All the material copied in fols. 121v–221v, with the exception of some small digressions, derived in fact from Paolino's *Compendium* read by Boccaccio in Par. lat. 4939, where he left a violent note against the bishop, accusing him of adulation towards Pope John XXII, biblically branded with infamy as a *vir sanguinum*.[33] At least for the portraits of the tyrant Ezzelino da Romano and of Muhammad, he also used the *Satyrica historia*, which is a less schematic version of the *Compendium*.[34] The complex form of Paolino's work, in which the historical material

30 Manlio Pastore Stocchi: Il 'De Canaria' boccaccesco e un locus deperditus nel 'De insulis' di Domenico Silvestri. In: *Studi sul Boccaccio* 10 (1959), p. 143–156; Giorgio Padoan: Petrarca, Boccaccio e la scoperta delle Canarie. In: *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 7 (1964), p. 263–277; Giovanni Boccaccio: *De Canaria*. Edited by Manlio Pastore Stocchi. In: *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*. Edited by Vittore Branca. Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori 1994, vol. 2, p. 963–986.

31 Aldo Maria Costantini: Studi sullo Zibaldone Magliabechiano. II. Il florilegio senechiano. In: *Studi sul Boccaccio* 8 (1974), p. 79–126.

32 Aldo Maria Costantini: Studi sullo Zibaldone Magliabechiano. III. La polemica con fra Paolino da Venezia. In: *Studi sul Boccaccio* 10 (1977–1978), p. 255–275; Isabelle Heullant-Donat: Boccaccio lecteur de Paolino da Venezia: lectures discursives et critiques. In: Michelangelo Picone/Claude Cazalé Bérard (eds.): *Gli Zibaldoni di Boccaccio: memoria, scrittura, riscrittura: atti del seminario internazionale di Firenze-Certaldo, 26–28 aprile 1996*. Firenze: F. Cesati 1998, p. 37–52. For Paolino see Isabelle Heullant-Donat: Entrer dans l'histoire. Paolino da Venezia et les prologues de ses chroniques universelles. In: *Mélanges de l'École Française de Rome. Moyen Âge* 105 (1993), p. 381–442; Isabelle Heullant-Donat: L'Encyclopedisme sous le pontificat de Jean XXII, entre savoir et propagande. L'exemple de Paolino da Venezia. In: Jacqueline Hamesse (ed.): *La vie culturelle, intellectuelle et scientifique à la cour des papes d'Avignon*. Turnhout: Brepols 2006, p. 255–276; Carla Maria Monti: La Campania nel 'De mappa mundi' di Paolino Veneto. In: *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 54 (2013), p. 285–342.

33 Irene Ceccherini and Carla Maria Monti: Boccaccio lettore del 'Compendium sive Chronologia magna' di Paolino Veneto. In: Teresa De Robertis/Carla Maria Monti et al. (eds.): *Boccaccio autore e copista*, p. 373–376.

34 Roberta Morosini: De Mauhmeth propheta. In: *Studi sul Boccaccio* 40 (2012), p. 273–313.

is organized in chronological order, distinguished by kingdoms and supported by drawings and portraits that help the poor reader to recover the narrative thread, was often reorganized by Boccaccio. He summarizes the topics that the Venetian *laberintator* had distributed throughout his whole encyclopedia into monographic chapters, each devoted to a specific theme. A classic example – but certainly not the only one – is that of the chapter about famous men, in which Boccaccio regrouped according to thematic affinity all of the information that Paolino had distributed in chronological order. Boccaccio explained in a sort of brief *accessus* why he decided to transcribe extracts from a work he discredited: notwithstanding the confusion, the indiscriminate accumulation of news both true and false and the absence of source references, Paolino was in any case the only author who allowed Boccaccio to find otherwise inaccessible information. A writer who, like he himself, was attending to the *De mulieribus claris* and the *De casibus virorum illustrium*, both of which cover a long chronological period from ancient times up to the contemporary era passing through the whole Middle Ages, could not ignore such a great number of histories and anecdotes, despite the effort and inconvenience provoked by Paolino's scholarly unreliability. It is no coincidence that the most uncouth insults, in Latin and in vernacular (the appellative of *bergolo* – 'blabbermouth' – applied to the bishop is all too well known), are addressed to Paolino in connection with those very passages that most interested the curious Boccaccio and which he developed, along with contributions from other sources, in his erudite works. Patience was not his most practiced virtue, and the objective shortcomings of the Venetian dilettante did not favor a quiet discussion in his glosses.[35] With more prudence, but still subtly distancing himself, Boccaccio quotes Paolino in the *Genealogia* (XIV 8, 3) as a *hystoriarum investigator permaximus* – "a great investigator of historical accounts" – (not *historiographus*: after all, as we read in the note on fol. 148r, *imbractator est Venetus et non ystoriografus* – "the Veneto is a hack and not a historian"); thus he does not hide his opinion on the verbosity and lack of authority of this author.

Boccaccio was less severe with regard to Hayton, as he makes clear in the brief introduction to his adaptation of the *Flos historiarum terre Orientis*, a work of the early 14th century which, moreover, was quite popular. However, to remedy the *superfluitas verborum* – "superfluity of words" – and the stylistic improprieties, Boccaccio decided to transcribe Hayton's report of the Eastern lands and nations eliminating the unnecessary elements and improving its form (as he

35 Marco Petoletti and Stefano Zamponi: *Gli zibaldoni*, p. 319–325, with further bibliography.

did regarding Saint Peter Damian's life dictated by Giovanni da Lodi, who was, however, the subject of heavy criticisms in his letter to Petrarch, *epistle* XI).[36]

Boccaccio's *zibaldoni* therefore are concrete proof of the passion that he had for the classics as well as for medieval Latin texts. In a certain sense they reiterate in a very concrete manner the cultural interests that also emerge from other surviving volumes of his personal library and from those, now lost, whose presence on his desk is attested by the fifteenth-century inventory of the *parva libraria* of Santo Spirito. A path yet to be explored is the study of Boccaccio as a reader of "l'antiche storie e le cose moderne" ("ancient histories and modern things"), to have a full comprehension – for example – of his late Latin writings, which are based on extensive reading of many classical and medieval *auctoritates*. The analysis of his library will contribute to understand Boccaccio's approach to the ancient literature.[37]

Two pages of Boccaccio's books are outstanding examples of his cultural breadth and of his love for the Greek world, for the classics and for the moderns, regardless of language. The last folio of the famous Dante today preserved in Toledo (Archivo y Biblioteca Capitulares, Zelada 104 6), in which Boccaccio copied in his own hand the *Trattatello*, the *Vita nuova*, Dante's arguments in

36 Ibid., p. 325. It is worthwhile to read this brief premise, on fol. 223v of the chartaceous *zibaldone*: "*Liber Aythonis domini Curci*. Tempore Clementis V summi pontificis, anno vero ab incarnato verbo MCCCVII°, Ayton ex regulis Armeniorum, vir illustris et Curci dominus, abdicatis rebus transitoriis regique supero obsequium pro viribus prestare dispositus, fratrum beati Augustini habitu sumpto Pictavium venit, ubi iam dicti pontificis iussu gallico sermone de dispositionibus regnorum Asie, Niccolao quodam Falconis scribente, dictavit habunde. Qui tandem Niccolaus ex gallico transtulit in latinum. Verum quoniam et stilus inconptus est et plurima verborum superfluitate lasciviens, superflua resecans, paululum decentius scribere concitus sum, de substantialibus nil obmittens nec illustris viri ordinem mutans in aliquo". ("The book of Hayton, Lord of Corycus. In the time of Pope Clement V, the year 1307 AD, Hayton from the Kingdom of Armenia, illustrious man and ruler of Corycus, abdicated his reign and earthly belongings in order to give himself with all his might in service to a higher power. So, wearing the garb of the friars of the blessed Augustine, he came to Poitiers. Here by order of the Pope he dictated in French language the dispositions of the kingdoms of Asia, which were written down by a certain Nicolaus Falconi. This Nicolaus then translated the work from French to Latin. Because in truth the style is unadorned and tends toward a great amount of superfluous words, I am compelled to rewrite this a bit more gracefully, trimming back the superfluity, neither omitting anything of substance nor changing the order of the illustrious man in any way.") On the life of Saint Peter Damian see Antonietta Bufano: Il rifacimento boccacciano della 'Vita Petri Damiani' di Giovanni di Lodi. In: *Studi sul Boccaccio* 11 (1979), p. 333–362; Susanna Barsella: Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Peter Damian: Two Models of the Humanist Intellectual. In: *Modern Language Notes* 121 (2006), p. 99–113; Agnese Bellieni: Le vite di Petrarca, di san Pier Damiani e di Livio. In: Teresa De Robertis/Carla Maria Monti et al. (eds.): *Boccaccio autore e copista*, p. 215–217, with further bibliography.

37 Marco Petoletti: *Il Boccaccio e la tradizione dei testi latini*, p. 114–117.

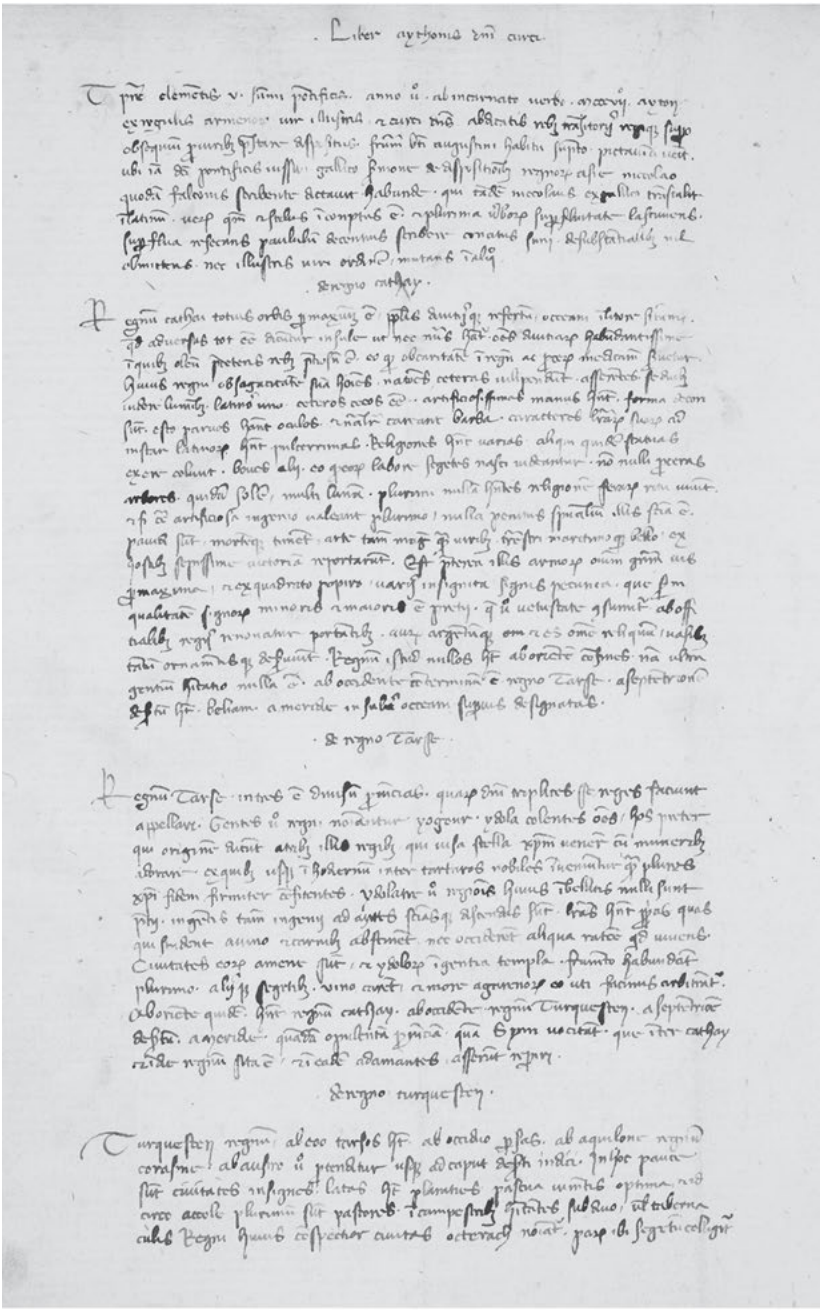

Plate 2: Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Banchi rari 50, fol. 223v (Hayton's *Flos historiarum terre Orientis*, copied by Boccaccio).

terza rima, and the *Commedia* followed by fifteen *canzoni distese*, has recently revealed to Sandro Bertelli and Marco Cursi, thanks to the use of ultraviolet light, a splendid surprise: a beautiful portrait of Homer.[38] The profile bust of the poet crowned in laurel is extraordinary for its remarkable proportions and for the technical mastery with which it is sketched. In the margin above the drawing Boccaccio, in his own hand, identifies the protagonist with a vernacular caption in majuscule script which quotes *Inf*. x, 88: "Homero poeta sovrano" ("Homer sovereign poet"). Boccaccio's drawing of this noble bust, once scrutinized, compels us to withdraw his name from the number of *amateurs* – who delighted in leaving within their manuscripts drawings of greater or lesser effort and even a certain amount of grace – and add it to the official catalog of great fourteenth-century artists. Under the drawing one can discover with difficulty some Greek letters, a sort of *pendant* in respect to the other 'epigraph' derived from Dante. Together with Stefano Martinelli Tempesta, I was able to propose a solution to the problem presented by this additional Greek caption under the portrait of Homer, which is very difficult to read: "Ηοαννες δε Χερθαλδω π/φ[…]ητ" (or "Ioannes de Certaldo p/f[…]it", the likely completion of the final word being 'p[inx]it'or 'f[inx]it' – "drawn by Giovanni of Certaldo").[39] Therefore under the portrait of the ancient poet Boccaccio wrote the Greek transliteration of his Latin name. The last folio of the Toledan Dante not only shows the most expressive drawing yet discovered in the books of Boccaccio's library, but offers a concrete image of the cultural program of the Certaldese, who never abandoned his faithful passion for Dante which marked his artistic experience so deeply, even after meeting Petrarch, master of that generation and true pioneer on the road to Humanism. Enamored of the Latin classics both major and minor, with a special inclination toward the search for rare and precious texts, Boccaccio aspired to bring Homer to the West

38 Sandro Bertelli and Marco Cursi: Novità sull'autografo Toledano di Giovanni Boccaccio. Una data e un disegno sconosciuti. In: *Critica del testo* 15, 1 (2012), p. 287–295; Sandro Bertelli: La prima silloge dantesca: l'autografo Toledano. In: Teresa De Robertis/Carla Maria Monti et al. (eds.): *Boccaccio autore e copista*, p. 266–268; Sandro Bertelli and Marco Cursi: Boccaccio copista di Dante. In: Luca Azzetta/Andrea Mazzucchi (eds.): *Boccaccio editore*, p. 73–111; Sandro Bertelli and Marco Cursi: "Homero poeta sovrano". In: Sandro Bertelli/Davide Cappi (eds.): *Dentro l'officina di Giovanni Boccaccio. Studi sugli autografi in volgare e su Boccaccio dantista*. Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana 2014 (Studi e testi, 486), p. 131–136; Sandro Bertelli: L'immagine di Omero nel Dante Toledano. In: Michaelangiola Marchiaro/Stefano Zamponi (eds.), *Boccaccio letterato*, p. 171–176; and Francesca Pasut: Una recente scoperta e il rebus di Boccaccio disegnatore. In: Michaelangiola Marchiaro/Stefano Zamponi (eds.), *Boccaccio letterato*, p. 177–188.

39 Stefano Martinelli Tempesta/Marco Petoletti: Il ritratto di Omero e la firma greca di Boccaccio. In: *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 54 (2013), p. 399–409.

with the help of Leontius Pilatus, hoping that the Latin translation of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* could be the first step in recovering once again Greek culture. In a very important page of the *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, XV 7, defending himself from the criticism of certain detractors ready to attack his choice of introducing quotations in Greek into his Latin work, Boccaccio proudly claims for himself the merit of bringing Homer to the West and affirms that it will not do to search in a little brook what is possible to obtain directly from the source. And, piling it on even thicker, he declares his pity for the Latin world, which had at that point abandoned the study of Greek to such an extent that it was no longer able to recognize the mere letters of that alphabet.

In this folio one can find Dante, not only transcribed by Boccaccio's own hand in the previous pages but directly quoted in the caption to the drawing; Homer, illustrated with care and exceptional technical ability and transfigured into a portrait that evokes the quintessential image of the laureate poet, and Boccaccio himself, biographer of Alighieri with his *Trattatello* committed to the parchments, and explicitly present in his usual signature "Giovanni da Certaldo," where Latin and Greek coexist in strategic synthesis. If the verb *pinxit*, much more difficult to decipher, follows the name of Boccaccio in Greek letters, we have an open statement that he is really the author of the drawing. It is a thrilling page like the one on fol. 88v of the Ambr. C 67 sup. where, disregarding the confines of time, Boccaccio compares a character from the famous *novella* of his *Decameron* (6, 10) to Filomuso, a swindler from antiquity who, as Martial teaches in his epigram (9, 35), was able to procure dinner for himself with his deceiving rhetoric. The marginal note in the vernacular on fol. 88v reads: "Frate Cepolla".[40]

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40 Marco Petoletti: Il Marziale autografo di Giovanni Boccaccio. In: *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 46 (2005), p. 35–55, in particular. p. 44–45; Marco Petoletti: Le postille di Giovanni Boccaccio a Marziale (Milano, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, C 67 sup.). In: *Studi sul Boccaccio* 39 (2006), p. 103–184, in particular p. 114–115 and 162–163.

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