

*Boccaccio e le letterature romanze tra Medioevo e Rinascimento. Atti del Convegno Internazionale "Boccaccio e la Francia."* Ed. Simonetta Mazzoni Peruzzi. Firenze: Alinea Editrice, 2006 (Carrefours/Medioevo – Testi e ricerca/Textes et Recherche 2). Pp. 287.

The eleven articles published in this volume, second in a new series directed by Lucia Lazzerini and Simonetta Mazzoni Peruzzi, are the result of two meetings held in Florence and Certaldo in May 2003 and May 2004 on *Boccaccio e la Francia*. The volume's title, however, reflects the fact that one article, by Piero Ceccucci, is about Boccaccio in Portugal. Moreover, the contributions, in Italian and French, are not limited, as might have been expected, to sources and analogues of Boccaccio's works; they also deal with their influence. Indeed, it might have been preferable to structure the volume so as to highlight these two aspects by first presenting the articles on Boccaccio's use of French culture and then those on his influence on that culture, as I will in the following discussion, instead of opting for a simple alphabetical order.

The chapters on sources and analogues mostly deal with the *Decameron* with the exception of Roberta Morosini's contribution, "Ancora Boccaccio e i «franceschi romanzi»: «Ki verté trespasse et laisse» ovvero gli 'ignoranti,' i maghi e i loro «fabulosi parlari»" (135–57), which suggests some possible models for *Filocolo*. Morosini investigates Boccaccio's attitude towards the "fabulous" in the "franceschi romanzi," especially magic and necromancy, as part of a more general consideration of his views on literature. In particular, she discusses *Amadas et Ydoine* and Adenet le Roi's *Cléomades*, which mentions the Neapolitan legend of Virgil the magician building the Castel dell'Ovo on an egg. Morosini argues that Boccaccio never mentions this legend though he must have been familiar with it, but for him it was "fabulous" and to be ignored or ridiculed; for the same reason the *negromante* in *Filocolo* is presented as a parodical figure. Thus, the comparison with French models helps define Boccaccio's literary theory, which was to build his works on reason and truthfulness rather than on fantasy and imagination. A point corroborated by Laurence Harf-Lancner's study "La parodie du mythe de l'amant surnaturel: l'histoire de frère Albert (*Décameron*, IV.2)" (43–55), in which she shows how, with the tale of Frate Alberto, Boccaccio turns to the comic version of the folklore motif of the supernatural lover.

As an expert on the motif of the fairy lover, Harf-Lancner points out how this motif, K1301 in Stith-Thompson's index, also incorporates a parody, K1315.1 "Seduction by posing as a god," which is obviously the form exploited by Boccaccio, but also by the romances of Alexander the Great,

implying that his father was not Philip but Nectanebo, last of the pharaohs and a magician. Though this contribution is more about Alexander than Frate Alberto, it does prove once more that Boccaccio prefers to ridicule magical elements, often through parody, whether he had the Alexander story in mind or not.

Simonetta Mazzoni Peruzzi, “Cultura francese ed intertestualità nella novella della sposa nel pozzo (*Dec.* VII.4)” (83–111), turns to the *exemplum* collection as a source for the *Decameron*, arguing for a combination of sources for *Decameron* VII.4, not only *De Puteo* from the *Disciplina Clericalis*, but also the *Seven Sages* tradition, the *Dolopathos* in particular, and the *Lamentations* of Matheolus. Only the French translation of the *Dolopathos* specifically links the tales *Inclusa* and *De Puteo* as Boccaccio implicitly does. However, as so often happens in Boccaccio’s reworking of his sources, the female protagonist must use her wits to avoid a difficult situation, a fact that Mazzoni attributes to the realism of Florence’s merchant classes, though I wouldn’t say this represents a “crollo dei miti cortesi” (111), since the sources are essentially clerical. Boccaccio prefers to “problematize” (to quote Neuschäfer) his sources, often laying the blame on both parties and avoiding, as he does here, the violence of the husband’s punishment.

This is also the conclusion to *Decameron* IX.6 compared to its sources and analogues, the group of tales known collectively as *Le Berceau* after the cradle that is shifted from bed to bed leading to the protagonists’ nighttime adventures. These tales, three fabliaux, two German *Schwanke* and Chaucer’s *Reve’s Tale*, are the subject of Philippe Ménard’s contribution, “Les sources françaises d’un conte de Boccace (*Décameron*, IX.6)” (113–33). Nevertheless Ménard’s method of analysis ignores about 50 years of research into the intertextual relationships between the *Decameron* and the medieval tradition. It is now a well-established fact that there is no point in seeking a single source for each tale, as Ménard claims, following Bédier’s study of 1893, but rather the concept of a source should be broadened to include themes, motifs, a corpus of texts or a whole genre, several of which tend to be combined by Boccaccio as he transforms the more exemplary, monologic discourse of his sources into the polyphonic *novella*.

The narrator’s art is the theme of Michelangelo Picone’s very stimulating contribution, “La maschera di Bergamino (*Dec.* I.7)” (183–200). Picone believes that *Decameron* I.7 is the most important tale in the First Day, since it contains a tale within the tale, thus enabling Boccaccio to comment on the production and reception of tales, while also anticipating the themes of I.8, the relationship between political power and artistic

creation and the need for the former (Cangrande here) to recognise the latter and reward it adequately. Moreover, the embedded tale involves Paris and Cluny, where the *exemplum* and *legenda* were developed, a first source of inspiration for Boccaccio, while the main narrative involves Verona in the Trevisan Marches, where the *vidas* and *razos*, further sources for the *Decameron*, were composed and assembled. Picone, then, suggests that this is a tale about *translatio studii*, from Hugh Primas to Bergamino, to Filostrato (the narrator), to Boccaccio himself. Of the four main characters, only Bergamino is fictional and Picone argues that the historical figure behind him could be Dante, who dedicated *Paradiso* to Cangrande. This hypothesis harks back to a topic Picone has often investigated, which is the role of Dante and the *Comedia* as models for the *Decameron*, particularly convincing here given the importance of literary creation in the tale.

The role of the author is also an aspect discussed in Luciano Rossi's chapter "Il *Decameron* e il *Roman de la Rose*" (201–19), which suggests that the whole of Boccaccio's works are influenced by the *Roman de la Rose*. Furthermore, Rossi puts forward the argument that the *Rose* has only one author, Jean de Meun, and one, moreover, with connections to the Angevins in Naples, with whom of course Boccaccio later had contacts. He goes on to sum up those features of the *Decameron* which are inspired by the *Rose*: replacing love poetry by a more mature type of composition; parody of "high" genres to the advantage of more playful ones; authorial interventions to counter unjustified criticism; discussion of the arbitrariness of linguistic signs; choice of "polyphony", which implies that all narrators express different points of view, none of which is privileged by the "Auctor." Rossi then examines one of these features: the author's interventions in defence of his work. Like Jean de Meun, Boccaccio still sees himself as a poet, despite his tendency to have recourse to more comic literature and his dedicating his work to women. Like Jean, and taking his cue from the dialogue between Reason and the Lover in the *Rose*, Boccaccio justifies his use of obscenities where necessary, since it is the context which elicits the use of appropriate terminology. Rossi's is a stimulating theory, which certainly elicits discussion. He is quite right to say that little attention is paid to the influence of the *Rose* in Italy, though its influence on Dante is a well-established fact and it is not easy to judge how far some of the features he highlights have influenced Boccaccio directly, or how far they have come down to him from Dante. Indeed, the high esteem of his role as *Auctor* is typical of Dante, as Picone's contribution here shows. Dante, too, was concerned with polyphony and with the use of appropriate terminology even from a lower register in the *Comedia*, a term which indi-

cates a mixture of genres of different registers and is a move away from the register of his lyric poetry, or of the *Vita Nuova* which, however, is in Italian, as Dante points out, so as to be accessible to women, those same *oziose donne* to whom Boccaccio dedicates the *Decameron*.

The encyclopedic nature of Jean de Meun's culture leads us to Ernesto Stagni's contribution, "Testi latini e biblioteche tra Parigi e la Valle della Loira (secoli XII–XIII): i manoscritti di Guido de Grana" (221–87), a fascinating account of the career of the little-known thirteenth-century French bibliophile, Guido de Grana, which helps to paint a picture of the kind of classical or Latin material that circulated in France and to which Boccaccio might have had access. An example is the copy of William of Blois' elegiac comedy *Alda*, a product of the Loire Valley, in Boccaccio's *Zibaldone*. Stagni follows all available clues from marginal notes by Guido in manuscripts to archives to recreate the Parisian milieus in which Guido moved and his (possibly virtual) library, which seemed to include some quite rare texts. This very detailed, well-documented contribution seeks in the end to revalue Paris, alongside the Loire Valley, as a centre of learning in the years preceding Boccaccio's literary career through the figure of Guido. A tenuous link between the two is the myth of Androgeus, Minos of Crete's son, who went to study in Athens and was killed through envy. Guido seems to make two brief references to this tale, which was then used by Marbod of Rennes and especially by Geoffrey de Vinsauf in the *Poetria Nova*, later to be echoed by, among others, Petrarch and Boccaccio.

Stagni, however, hints at a possible connection between this and another medieval myth, that of *translatio studii* which is almost a *leitmotif* of this volume, as is clear too from the two contributions on Boccaccio in sixteenth-century France, Mireille Huchon, "*Caméron et Décaméron: de l'influence de Boccace travesti à la française*" (57–82) and Catherine M. Müller, "Jeanne de la Font e Anne de Graville: riscrittrici cinquecentesche del *Teseida* di Boccaccio" (159–81). Huchon's very wide-ranging contribution covers such topics as the history of French, the reception of Boccaccio and the imitation of Italian models in Renaissance France, problems of translation, Marguerite de Navarre. She starts out with Anthoine Le Maçon's translation of the *Decameron* (1545) for Marguerite and thus an important work in the genesis of the *Heptaméron*. Huchon goes on to compare this translation to the preceding one by Laurent de Premierfait (1411–14), or rather to its printed versions, especially Anthoine Vérard's *Caméron* (1485), which substantially rewrites Laurent's translation, restructuring the tales and giving them a more moral emphasis. Reworking, it should be said though, begins with the manuscript tradition, where all but three of the fifteen extant manuscripts tend to move away from the

letter of the text, altering, summarizing it and generally replacing Boccaccio's version of the Griselda story with Petrarch's. Le Maçon's translation, on the other hand, was praised at the time as an example of "langue courtoisane," as theorized by Castiglione, so the passage from one version of the *Decameron* to the other in sixteenth-century France also leads to the heart of France's own *questione della lingua*. Marguerite de Navarre, in fact, by promoting the translation of the *Decameron* proves to be as involved in the "défense et illustration de la langue française" as was her brother Francis I.

This is also the case of the translations of the *Teseida* discussed by Catherine Müller, both by women and in verse, though Jeanne de la Font's is now lost and known only from contemporary comments, while Anne de Graville's is still available and provides a feminine rewriting, eliminating all traces of the misogyny present in the earlier prose translation and in the original. The work is dedicated to Claude de France, Francis I's queen, a further example of the importance of *translatio* for the *illustration* of French, so dear to the king but also to court circles generally as they attempted to make of French a rival to Italian and Latin, thereby bringing about that *translatio studii*, which would lead French language and culture to dominate Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

An earlier feminine/feminist rewriting of Boccaccio is the subject of Patrizia Caraffi's contribution, "Boccaccio, Christine de Pizan e il mito di Didone" (7–21), which considers how Christine rereads Boccaccio's Dido in the *Cité des Dames*. She follows both versions of Dido offered by Boccaccio: Virgil's mythical and basically misogynistic version and the historical one, which has Dido committing suicide to save her husband's name. However, Christine always modifies her sources (mainly *De mulieribus claris*) to show Dido in a positive light, to use her as an example, but without casting moral judgement. Dido appears as a widow, a founding queen, whose downfall was brought about by Fortune, who caused her to choose an unfaithful man.

Moving from France to Portugal, Piero Ceccucci's article, "Boccaccio in Portogallo. 'La Griselda' nei *Contos e Histórias de Proveito e Exemplo* di Gonçalo Fernandes Trancoso" (23–41), argues that the Portuguese attitude to the *Decameron* has to this day been one of moral censure, a fact he attributes to the Catholic Church and, more recently, to the fascist dictatorship. Trancoso's *Contos e Histórias*, the first collection of tales in Portuguese, have, as their title suggests, moral intentions; they rely heavily on Juan Timoneda's *Patrañuelo*, as illustrated by the tale of Griselda, which closely follows Timoneda rather than Boccaccio. Though centred on Portugal and on the fortunes of the *Decameron* in that country, Ceccucci's

general conclusion points to a development that is not only limited to Catholic Portugal, that is, that the Griselda story tends to become an exemplary tale in many rewritings. This is frequently due to Boccaccio's "problematic" version of the tale being replaced by Petrarch's moralizing Latin version, an innovation that also serves to shed light on Boccaccio's ideas on literature, as do most of the contributions in this very stimulating little volume in one way or another.

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