

Boccaccio, Cavalcanti's Canzone "Donna me prega" and Dino's Glosses

The enigmatic, indeed disturbing figure of Guido Cavalcanti (1259–1300) exercised the imagination of his contemporaries, especially of his fellow poets. Without naming him once, Dante talks about Guido in his youthful work, the *Vita nuova*, telling us that Cavalcanti was the “primo de li miei amici” (VN III), and that he was one of those who replied poetically to Dante’s first sonnet. Dante also refers to Guido’s *senhal*, Giovanna/Primavera (VN XXIV). The whole of Dante’s treatise, as a specifically vernacular composition, is dedicated to this first friend (VN XXX). Amongst Dante’s *Rime*, also, there is a companionship sonnet addressed to Cavalcanti, “Guido, i’ vorrei che tu e Lapo ed io,” to which the older poet responded in verse.

The most memorable mention by Dante occurs in canto X of *Inferno*, where Guido is the “grand absent,” asked after by his damned father, Cavalcante de’ Cavalcanti. The accent in the exchange is on Guido’s implied “altezza d’ingegno,” shared with Dante (X.59), and his disdain for something — unspecified — which Dante by now was pursuing (poetry? theology?). The poet later resurfaces as an allusion in *Purgatorio* XI.97–99, where, in an object lesson in humility, literary primacy is passed through the Guidos, presumably from Guinizelli through Cavalcanti, and on to (perhaps) Dante himself.

Guido Orlandi, who wrote the enquiry sonnet, “Onde si move e donde nasce Amore?” which occasioned Cavalcanti’s famous reply, the doctrinal canzone “Donna me prega,” paints a picture of the poet in “Amico, i’ saccio ben che sa’ limare,” stressing Guido’s verbal prowess, but also his considerable intellectual ambition, verging on vanity. Cino da Pistoia, however, in “Qua’ son le cose vostre ch’io vi tolgo?” reacts angrily to an accusation of plagiarism coming from Guido, and hints that his own humility is more appropriate than Cavalcanti’s self-importance. Amongst the other, almost contemporary poets who mention Cavalcanti is Cecco d’Ascoli (Francesco Stabili), in whose astrological apology the *Acerba* (III.1), dated to 1327, he seemingly takes Guido to task, in detail, for an erroneous analysis of love’s

workings (particularly the function of the irascible appetite, Mars) contained in “Donna me prega.”

Chroniclers, too, were fascinated by him, but as much for his propensity to engage in partisan violence as for his intellectual eminence. His contemporary Dino Compagni refers repeatedly to the powerful Cavalcanti clan’s readiness for street-fighting, and refers specifically to Guido’s exploits, including his failed attempt on the life of Corso Donati, who had reportedly organised an assassination plot against the poet on the pilgrimage route to Compostela. Dino characterises Guido as “cortese e ardito, ma sdegnoso e solitario e intento allo studio.” Giovanni Villani, writing considerably later, draws attention to the prickly nature of Guido’s intelligence: “era, come filosofo, virtudioso uomo in più cose, se non ch’era troppo tenero e stizzoso,” a description of the philosopher-poet which almost exactly parallels Giovanni’s description of Dante himself. Amongst the later novella writers, Sacchetti would include Cavalcanti as the butt (literally) of a practical joke by a small child (Trecentonovelle LXVIII), a jape which in turn is reminiscent of a Boccaccio novella (Decameron VIII.5).

Cavalcanti figures in the early commentary tradition of the Comedy, in particular as a response to the pilgrim’s discussion with Cavalcante de’ Cavalcanti in Inferno X, and the reference to the two Guidos in Purgatorio XI. He also figures to some extent in elucidations of the two lonely, anonymous Florentine “giusti” in Inferno VI.73. Commenting upon Inferno X, Guido da Pisa (1327–28) says of Cavalcanti “Fuit enim iste Guido scientia magnus et moribus insignitus, sed tamen in suo sensu aliquantulum inflatus. Habebat enim scientias poeticas in derisum” [This Guido was great in knowledge and celebrated in character, but nevertheless somewhat puffed up as to his opinion of himself. For he despised the poetic discipline]. Guido da Pisa’s interpretation of Cavalcanti’s “disdegno” (Inferno X.63) as essentially poetical will be influential amongst subsequent commentators. The Ottimo commentary (1334) points to Guido’s common intellectual interests with Dante (“similitudine d’abito scientifico”). Later, when discussing the two Guidos passage in Purgatorio XI, the commentator opines: “E Guido Cavalcanti si può dire, che fossi il primo, che [le] sue canzoni fortificasse con filosofi[che] prove, come si mostra in quella sua canzona, che comincia: ‘Donna mi prega, perch’io deggia dire.’” The Selmiano (1337), commenting upon Inferno X, again points to Cavalcanti’s intellectual impact: “Guido fu tenuto del maggiore ingegno e più alto che allora fosse uomo di Firenze.”

The greatest contribution to the myth of Guido Cavalcanti comes from Boccaccio, who views the poet essentially through the distorting prism of

Dante and the early Dante commentators. In the “Introduzione alla quarta giornata” of the *Decameron*, Boccaccio justifies his own persistence with amorousness, even in his more mature years, by claiming that such a trait was shared with Guido Cavalcanti, Dante and Cino da Pistoia in their old age. He even suggests that he could supply the biographical justifications to prove it (“istorie in mezzo”). The most consistent account of Cavalcanti, however, occurs in *Decameron* VI.9 where Boccaccio applies to Guido a widespread anecdote, with a “lethal” punch-line, which Petrarch, amongst others, had used some ten years previously in the *Rerum Memorandarum* (II, 60) about Dino del Garbo, the famous Florentine physician. The tale, now firmly attached to Cavalcanti, thanks to Boccaccio, will subsequently pass into the Dante commentary tradition when Benvenuto da Imola glosses the two Guidos passage in *Purgatorio* XI.

The *Decameron* tale has been frequently discussed and minutely analysed: what concerns us here is Boccaccio’s preliminary portrait of the poet:

oltre a quello che egli fu un de’ migliori loici che avesse il mondo e ottimo filosofo naturale [...], si fu egli leggiadrissimo e costumato e parlante uom molto e ogni cosa che far volle e a gentile uom pertinente seppe meglio che altro uom fare; e con questo era ricchissimo, e a chiedere a lingua sapeva onorare cui nell’animo gli capeva che il valesse. [...] Guido alcuna volta speculando molto abstratto dagli uomini divenia; e per ciò che egli alquanto tenea della oppinione degli epicuri, si diceva tralla gente volgare che queste sue speculazioni erano solo in cercare se trovar si potesse che Iddio non fosse. (*Decameron* VI.9.8–9)

Creatively interpreting Dante, in order to give the punch-line extra significance, Boccaccio deliberately confuses (or rather suggests that the vulgar throng confuses) Guido with his father, Cavalcante de’ Cavalcanti, for it is effectively the latter who is amongst the “Epicureans” who “l’anima col corpo morta fanno” (*Inferno* X.15). A very similar portrait of the poet is given in the *Esposizioni*, where Guido is described as:

uomo costumatissimo e ricco e d’alto ingegno, e seppe molte leggiadre cose fare meglio che alcun altro nostro cittadino: e oltre a ciò, fu nel suo tempo reputato ottimo loico e buon filosofo, e fu singularissimo amico dell’autore [scil. Dante], sì come esso medesimo mostra nella sua *Vita nuova*, e fu buon dicitore in rima; ma, per ciò che la filosofia gli pareva, sì come ella è, da molto più che la poesia, ebbe a sdegno Virgilio e gli altri poeti. (*Esposizioni* X.62)

The phrase “ebbe a sdegno” clearly shows Boccaccio’s debt to *Inferno* X.63: “Forse cui Guido vostro ebbe a disdegno,” and to the view amongst early commentators, initiated by Guido da Pisa as we have seen, that the

disdain was for poetry, not theology. It is this Boccaccian portrait, with a distinctly Dante colouring, which will inform Filippo Villani's much later biography of Cavalcanti in the *Liber de origine civitatis Florentie* [Book of the Origin of the City of Florence].

As we have seen, the anecdote in *Decameron* VI.9 had been previously used by Petrarch, who places Dino del Garbo as its protagonist. Dino was, in addition to being a notable physician (a pupil of Taddeo Alderotti at Bologna), a lecturer on *materia medica* at various universities. He had a number of commentaries to his credit, including a reading of the third and fourth *fen* of the fourth book of Avicenna's *Canon*, dealing with surgery (a relatively new area for medicine, traditionally hostile to the knife). He also wrote a general handbook, based on book one of Avicenna, the *Dilucidatorium totius pratique medicinalis scientie* [Clarification of the Whole Practice of Medical Knowledge]. According to Giovanni Villani, Dino was very touchy about his academic standing, and took a mortal dislike to Cecco d'Ascoli, at the time a lecturer on the astronomy of Sacrobosco and Alcabitus at Bologna, who publicly accused him of having plagiarised a dead colleague, Torrigiano de' Torrigiani's commentary on Galen. Indeed, Villani suggests that Dino was instrumental in the passing of the death sentence on the astrologer: "molti dissono che 'l fece per invidia" (*Cronica* X.41). Popular opinion had it that Dino's own puzzling death, very shortly after the astrologer's execution, was the result of a posthumous necromantic revenge on Cecco's part.

Cecco wasn't the only one to have an interest in Guido Cavalcanti's canzone "Donna me prega." Dino del Garbo wrote a detailed Latin commentary on the poem, heavily indebted to Avicenna, Haly Abbas and Aristotle, which was partially imitated and adapted in a vernacular version unconvincingly attributed to Egidio Romano. Medical and philosophical interest in Cavalcanti's canzone would continue into the Renaissance, with Ficino, amongst others, clearly in debt to it. Dino's commentary (no later than 1327) was certainly known to Boccaccio. Indeed, it has been convincingly argued by Antonio Enzo Quaglio ("Prima fortuna della glossa garbiana a 'Donna me prega' del Cavalcanti," in *GSLI* 141 (1964): 336–68) that the unique surviving manuscript of the *commentum* (an insert in Vatican Chigiano L. V. 176, ff. 29r–32v) is a Boccaccian autograph. This particular transcription, one of the later documents reinserted into the manuscript, dates from approximately 1366, judging by the evolution of Boccaccio's handwriting studied by Pier Giorgio Ricci (*Studi sulla vita e le opere del Boccaccio*, Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1985, p. 295 [and plate XIII]). The entire MS is reproduced phototypically in colour by Domenico

de Robertis (*Il codice Chigiano L. V. 176 autografo di Giovanni Boccaccio*, Rome-Florence: Alinari, 1974).

However, already in the *Teseida* (1339–41), Boccaccio shows some familiarity with the commentary. Perhaps he had obtained the glosses from Dino's close acquaintance, the poet and jurist Cino da Pistoia, who had known and corresponded poetically with Cavalcanti, and who had been teaching Roman law in Naples whilst Boccaccio was a student canonist there. The commentary, entitled *Scriptum super cantilena Guidonis de Cavalcantibus* [Writing on the Canzone of Guido Cavalcanti] has been edited and published as an appendix by Guido Favati (Guido Cavalcanti, *Rime*, Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1957, pp. 359–78). An earlier, sectionalised English summary translation and secondary commentary can be found in Otto Bird, "The Canzone d'Amore of Cavalcanti According to the Commentary of Dino del Garbo" (*Mediaeval Studies* 2 (1940): 150–203 and 3 (1941): 117–60). In Italian, there is a fine translation and commentary of the glosses by Enrico Fenzi (*La canzone d'amore di Guido Cavalcanti e i suoi antichi commenti*, Genoa: Il Melangolo, 1999, pp. 187–219).

In the *Teseida*, Boccaccio furnishes substantial ecphrases of the abodes of Mars and Venus, the tutelary deities of the two rivals for the hand of Emilia, Arcita and Palemone. The description of the temple of Venus in book VII, octaves 50 ff., prompts an immensely long authorial gloss, part of which is on the nature of love itself. In keeping with Boccaccio's implied fiction that the glosses are by somebody else, he refers to himself in the third person as the "author" and reserves the first person for the fictive commentator. The gloss labours on through the various symbolic, almost personified qualities (à la *Roman de la Rose*) propitious to erotic passion till it reaches the figure of Cupid, or desire:

Alcune ne pone quasi confermative dello appetito eccitato per le sopradette: tra le quali pone Cupido, il quale noi volgarmente chiamiamo Amore. Il quale amore volere mostrare come per le sopradette cose si generi in noi, quantunque alla presente opera forse si converrebbe di dichiarare, non è il mio intendimento di farlo, perciò che troppa sarebbe lunga la storia: chi desidera di vederlo, legga la canzone di Guido Cavalcanti *Donna me priega*, etc., e le chiose che sopra vi fece Maestro Dino del Garbo. (*Teseida*, gloss to VII.50)

What is important here is that, for Boccaccio, the poet's canzone and the physician's glosses were already intimately linked, presumably in a single document (as would be the case in the much later Chigian MS transcribed by Boccaccio himself). The *Teseida* self-commentary then continues, after this parenthesis, with further enumeration of the "author's" selection of symbolic qualities, beginning with an elucidation of Cupid's darts. But the

first sentence of this continuation shows that Boccaccio was still thinking in terms of technical definitions of love borrowed from other sources:

Dice sommariamente che questo amore è una passione *nata* nell'anima per alcuna cosa piaciuta, la quale *ferventissimamente fa desiderare* di piacere alla detta cosa piaciuta e di poterla avere.

The phrasing about fervent desire, in this definition, is reminiscent of a remark in Dino's commentary:

est passio quedam in qua appetitus est cum *vehementi desiderio* circa rem quam amat, ut scilicet coniungatur rei amate. (Favati, 371)

[it is a certain passion in which there is appetite along with fervent desire concerning the thing which it loves, so that it may join with the thing beloved]

But the presence in Boccaccio's gloss of the adjective "nata" (even though it could be construed here as meaning merely "arising") almost certainly betrays an older source, namely the opening definition in Andreas Capellanus' *De arte honeste amandi* (late 12th cent.):

Amor est passio quedam *innata* procedens ex visione et immoderata cogitatione formae alterius sexus, ob quam aliquis super omnia cupit alterius potiri amplexibus et omnia de utriusque voluntate in ipsius amplexu amoris praecepta compleri. (*De amore* I.1)

[Love is a certain inborn passion arising from the beholding of and uncontrolled thinking about the beauty of the other sex, on account of which the person desires above all else to enjoy the embraces of the other person and, by common desire, fulfil all the commandments of love in this embrace]

Andreas uses the term "innata" to describe erotic passion twice more, in quick succession, clearly wanting his readers to understand that its endogenesis is an important part of his theory of love. "Innata" in the *De amore* is clearly adjectival in function, as shown by the following participle "procedens": but "nata" in the *Teseida* may be more in the nature of a past participle. The lexical fragment survives, however, despite its possible change of status, as a tell-tale sign of Boccaccio's prior reading. For Boccaccio, conflating the two sources was tempting, because Dino is clearly indebted, for substantial elements of his treatise, to the chaplain's opening remarks on love, as the characteristic initial combination "passio quedam" already demonstrates.

Boccaccio was not reading Cavalcanti and Dino del Garbo as an innocent, then, but rather as somebody who had already come across authoritative, if somewhat obsolescent definitions. The problem for the compiler of the *Teseida* glosses is that the two definitions do not match. Andreas

believed that love was intrinsic (“innata”), the line which Guinizelli would famously take in his canzone “Al cor gentil,” whereas Dino, following Cavalcanti, declares that this passion was definitely exterior in origin “causans ipsum principaliter est res extrinseca” (Favati, p. 360). Boccaccio at the time of his writing of the Amazon epic seems totally unaware of the inconsistency between these auctoritates. One might doubt that Boccaccio had anything more than circumstantial knowledge of the existence of Dino’s commentary. In other words possibly he hadn’t read it. But certain of the key words (“appetito” and “generare,” markedly Aristotelian terms, though present in the *De amore*, are simply not used as technicisms in Andreas) imply that he has a good idea of the philosophical slant of Dino’s vocabulary.

Unlike Cino da Pistoia, who is quoted unambiguously in the *Filostrato* (V.62–65) and *Rime* (XVI.8 and 13), textual traces of Cavalcanti in Boccaccio’s fictional and creative works are rare and tantalising. The meagre harvest of possible (and hardly provable) intertextuality has been traced by Letterio Cassata, passim in his edition of Cavalcanti (Guido Cavalcanti, *Rime*, Anzio: De Rubeis, 1993, esp. index, p. 353). Vittore Branca furnishes more detailed examples (*Rime* I, IX, XI, XIII, XXIV; *Teseida* X.55–57 etc.) in *Boccaccio medioevale e nuovi studi sul Decameron* (Florence: Sansoni, 1992, pp. 254–57). One could add to this list, tentatively, perhaps. There is possibly a hint that Boccaccio had a “cultural memory” of the opening of “Donna me prega” when writing the *Filocolo*, for Florio’s love is there described by an experienced Ascalion as “sì nobile accidente” (III.5.2). It could be, however, that this particular use of “accidente” (generically a very common term in the early Boccaccio) derives from a reading of Dante’s *Vita nuova*, where the distinction between substance and accident in love theory, probably as an echo of Cavalcanti, is also made (VNXXV.1). Another possible reprise of Cavalcanti occurs in the *Teseida* sequence which generates the gloss which mentions “Donna me prega” and Dino del Garbo’s glosses. In octave 53 of the seventh book, Boccaccio describes the musical and visual environment of Venus’ garden, indicating Palemon’s soul in prayer as it visits the bower:

ripieno il vide quasi in ogni canto
di *spiritei*, che qua e là volando
gieno a lor posta... (VII.53.6–8)

Though “spiritus” was a technical term in medicine, referring to the transmission of vital and animal forces through the body, the diminutive “spiritelli” is a characteristic Cavalcantian usage, denoting the hypostatic emanations of fragmented consciousness characteristic of the “anima

sbigottita.” Guido even parodied this verbal tic in a sonnet, “Pegli occhi fere un spirito sottile.” More persuasive again, in terms of intertextuality with Cavalcanti, is one of Boccaccio’s early *Rime* (XXI):

Biasiman molti spiacevoli Amore
e dicon lui *accidente noioso*,
pien di spavento, cupido e ritroso,
[...]

Though Vittore Branca does not expressly say so in his commented edition of the *Rime* in volume V of *Tutte le opere* (Milan: Mondadori), this sonnet seems to parodically contrast a pessimistically Cavalcantian view of love in the first quatrain with a more Guinizellian, positive stance in the remainder. All in all, though, compared with the massive early presence of Dante, and later of Petrarch, the verse of Cavalcanti seems to have had little practical impact on Boccaccio. He seems to have been much more interested (as the layout of the glosses and the title of the autograph Chigiano LV 176 transcription shows) in “Donna me prega” as a vehicle for Dino del Garbo’s commentary, rather than as a composition in its own right.

The Dino del Garbo commentary became more useful to Boccaccio when he came to write the *Genealogie* (ca. 1360 in its first version) and the *Esposizioni* (1373). By this time, his appreciation of the question of substance and accident, and of intrinsic and extrinsic causality, had markedly improved, though his interest is still anything but scientific. The *Genealogie* passage occurs in the biography of Cupid, begotten from the illicit coupling of Mars and Venus, in IX.4. Cupid had been the figure, as we have seen, who had given rise to the mention of Dino del Garbo’s glosses on “Donna me prega” in the *Teseida*. This time, though used much more extensively, the Garbian source is not explicitly acknowledged.

Est igitur hic, quem Cupidinem dicimus, mentis quedam passio ab exterioribus illata, et per sensus corporeos introducta et intrinsecarum virtutum approbata, prestantibus ad hoc supercelestibus corporibus aptitudinem. Volunt namque astrologi, ut meus asserebat venerabilis Andalo, quod, quando contingat Martem in nativitate alicuius in domo Veneris, in Tauro scilicet vel in Libra reperiri, et significationem nativitatis esse, pretendere hunc, qui tunc nascitur, futurum luxuriosum, fornicatorem, et venereorum omnium abusivum, et scelestum circa talia hominem. Et ob id a philosopho quodam, cui nomen fuit Aly, in *Commento quadripartito*, dictum est quod, quandoque in nativitate alicuius Venus una cum Marte participat, habet nascenti concedere dispositionem phylocapTIONibus, fornicationibus atque luxuriis aptam. Que quidem aptitudo agit ut, quam cito talis videt mulierem aliquam, que a sensibus exterioribus commendatur, confestim ad virtutes sensitivas interiores defertur, quod placuit; et id primo devenit ad fantasiam, ab hac autem ad cogitativam

transmictitur, et inde ad memorativam; ab istis autem sensitivis ad eam virtutis speciem transportatur, que inter virtutes apprehensivas nobilior est, id est ad intellectum possibilem. Hic autem receptaculum est specierum, ut in libro *De anima* testatur Aristoteles. Ibi autem cognita et intellecta, si per voluntatem patientis fit (in qua libertas eiciendi et retinendi est) ut tanquam approbata retineatur, tunc firmata in memoria hec rei approbate passio (que iam amor seu cupido dicitur) in appetitu sensitivo ponit sedem, et ibidem, variis agentibus causis, aliquando adeo grandis et potens efficitur, ut Iovem Olympum relinquere, et tauri formam sumere cogat. Aliquando autem minus probata seu firmata labitur et adnichilatur; et sic ex Marte et Venere non generatur passio, sed, secundum quod supra dictum est, homines apti ad passionem suscipiendam secundum corpoream dispositionem producuntur; quibus non existentibus, passio non generaretur, et sic large sumendo a Marte et Venere tanquam a remotiori paululum causa Cupido generatur. (*Genealogie* IX.4.6–9)

Rather than provide a translation into English here, we can go straight to *Esposizioni* V litt., 162–67, which is an outstanding example of Boccaccio's self-*volgarizzamento*. The passage occurs in Boccaccio's literal commentary on the episode of Paolo and Francesca, and is occasioned by Dante's famous line "Amor ch'al cor gentil ratto s'apprende" (*Inferno* V.100). Whereas in the *Teseida* Boccaccio indulges in a long account of Cupid's iconography and dismisses ("per ciò che troppa sarebbe lunga la storia") the aetiology of love with a curt reference to Cavalcanti and Dino del Garbo, here in the Dante commentary he inverts the process, omitting the lengthy account of details Cupid's portrait ("alle quali voler recitare sarebbe troppo lunga storia") so as to concentrate on the explanation of love's workings. The passage is prefaced with an apparently perfunctory explanation of Aristotle's tripartite distinction of the kinds of love (*Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.3), of which more later. Only the very last periods suffer any change from the content of the earlier *Genealogie* text. The corresponding passage in the *Esposizioni*, the *volgarizzamento* of the *Genealogie* text, reads:

Ma, vegnendo a quello che alla nostra materia appartiene, dico che questo Cupidine, o Amore che noi vogliam dire, è una passion di mente delle cose esteriori e, per li sensi corporei portata in essa, è poi aprovata dalle virtù intrinseche, prestando i corpi superiori attitudine a doverla ricevere. Per ciò che, secondo che gli astrologi vogliono, e così affermava il mio venerabile precettore Andalò, quando avviene che, nella natività d'alcuno, Marte si truovi esser nella casa di Venere in Tauro o in Libra, e truovisi esser significatore della natività di quel cotale che allora nasce, ha a dimostrare questo cotale, che allora nasce, dovere essere in ogni cosa venereo. E di questo dice Ali nel comento del *Quadripartito* che, qualunque ora nella natività d'alcuno Venere insieme con Marte partecipa, avere questa cotale partecipazione a concedere a colui che nasce una

disposizione atta agl'inamoramenti e alle fornicazioni. La quale attitudine ha ad aoperare che, così tosto come questo cotal vede alcuna femina, la quale da' sensi esteriori sia commendata, incontanente quello, che di questa femina piace, è portato alle virtù sensitive interiori e questo primieramente diviene alla fantasia e da questa è mandato alla virtù cogitativa e da quella alla memorativa; e poi da queste virtù sensitive è trasportato a quella spezie di virtù, la quale è più nobile intra le virtù aprensive, cioè allo 'ntelletto possibile, per ciò che questo è il recettaculo delle spezie, sì come Aristotile scrive in libro *De anima*. Quivi, cioè in questo intelletto possibile, conosciuto e inteso quello che, come di sopra è detto, portato v'è se egli avviene che per volontà di colui nel quale è questa passione, con ciò sia cosa che in essa volontà sia libertà di ritenere dentro questa cotal cosa piaciuta e di mandarla fuori, questa cotal cosa piaciuta sia ritenuta dentro, allora è fermata nella memoria la passione di questa cosa piaciuta, la quale noi chiamiamo Amore, o vero Cupido. E pone questa passione la sedia sua e la sua stanza ferma nell'appetito sensitivo e quivi in varie cose adoperanti divien sì grande e fassi sì potente che egli fatica gravemente il paziente e a far cose, che laudevole non sono, spesse volte il costringe; e alcuna volta, essendo meno aprovata questa cotal cosa piaciuta, leggermente si risolve e torna in niente. E così non è da Marte e da Venere generata questa passione, come alcuni stimano, ma, secondo che di sopra è detto, sono alcuni uomini prodotti atti a ricevere questa passione secondo le disposizioni del corpo: la quale attitudine se non fosse, questa passione non si genererebbe.

The translation diverges only at the end. Out goes the Ovidian reference to a love-struck Jupiter preparing to ravish Europa (*Metamorphoses* II.846–75), clearly inappropriate for a commentary to a Christian poem, and in comes a limp and vague reference to shameful behaviour. Similarly, the very last concessionary formula of the *Genealogie* passage, conceding at least the indirect operation of Mars and Venus, is removed in its entirety, leaving the earlier categorical denial of astral influence intact.

But what of the content? The making of such contentious horoscopes, predicting a libidinous disposition, could be dangerous. Villani intimates that one of the reasons for Cecco d'Ascoli's misfortune at the stake was his disconcertingly accurate prognosis for his patron, the duke of Calabria, that his daughter Giovanna, the grand-daughter of Robert the Wise and future queen of Naples, would be subject to scandalous erotic excesses on account of her birth under the sign of Mars in the house of Venus.

Though at first sight, Boccaccio is implying that his source in both passages is the Genoese astronomer Andalò del Negro (almost certainly dressed up as Calmeta in *Filocolo* V.8) and that he is quoting from Ptolemy's commentator Haly Abbas and from Aristotle's *De anima*, a large section of this treatment, including the reference to these *auctoritates*, is in fact lifted from various, almost contiguous places in Dino's glosses. The

opening sentence is an extremely reductive paraphrase of a section of Dino's commentary where the physician indicates the role of the stars in creating the dispositions of the soul. Dino writes:

Alia res concurrat ad causandum aliquam passionem, que est res extrinseca que suam ymaginem vel speciem causat in virtute sensitiva, ad quam cognitionem vel apprehensionem consequitur appetitus talis vel talis, in quo appetitu iste passiones fundantur. Ideo auctor, ut complete ostenderet que est res generans istam passionem, primo ostendit que est dispositio naturalis corporis que reddit hominem aptum ut faciliter istam passionem incurrat; secundo ostendit que est res extrinseca ex cuius apprehensione consequitur in appetitu passio amoris. Secunda ibi: "Vien da veduta forma"; vel posset incipere ibi: "D'alma costume."

In prima parte quod dispositio naturalis, per quam aliquis inclinatur ad incurrendum faciliter in aliquam passionem, ex principiis proprie nativitatibus hominis contrahitur et, inter ista principia nativitatibus alicuius, precipua et principalia sunt corpora celestia: nam, ut dicit Philosophus in *Physicis*, homo hominem generat et sol; et in *De Generatione Animalium* dicit quod in spiritu genitivo est natura existens proportionalis ordinationi astrorum. (Favati 363)

[Something else is involved in causing any passion, and that is an exterior thing causing its image or "species" in the sensitive faculty, upon the cognition or apprehension of which there follows an appetite for this or that, in which appetite these passions are established. So the author, in order completely to show what is the thing which generates this passion, first demonstrates what is the natural disposition of the body which makes man suitable for incurring this passion easily; secondly he demonstrates what is the external thing from whose apprehension the passion of love follows in the appetite. The second starts "Vien da veduta forma"; or can start at "D'alma costume."

In the first part he shows that the natural disposition, by which somebody is inclined to incur some passion, is contracted from the principles of a person's own birth, and, amongst these principles of a person's birth, the foremost and most important are the heavenly bodies: for, as Aristotle says in the *Physics*, man and the sun generate man; and in *The Generation of Animals*, in the generative spirit a nature exists proportionally to the ordering of the stars]

Boccaccio's reference to his astrological mentor, Andalò del Negro, is an opportunistic amplification of a far less specific passage in Dino. The Garbian passage, commenting on line 18 of the canzone, reads:

Hoc autem ostendit in verbo illo quod premisit cum dixit "La quale da Marte viene et fa dimora": nam ista passio dicitur procedere a Marte isto modo, quoniam astrologi ponunt quod, quando in nativitate alicuius Mars fuerit in domo Veneris, ut in Tauro vel in Libra, et fuerit significator nativitatibus eius, significabit natum fore luxuriosum, fornicatorem et omnibus venereis abusivis scieleratum; unde quidam sapiens qui dicitur Aly,

in “Comento Quadripartiti,” dicit quod, quando in nativitate alicuius Venus participat cum Marte, dat inamoramentum, fornicationem, luxuriam et talia similia, que omnia pertinent ad passionem amoris de quo loquitur auctor in hac cantilena. (Favati 363)

[He shows this, however, in that word he placed before when he said “La quale da Marte viene et fa dimora”: for this passion is said to proceed from Mars in this way. Astrologers claim that, whenever, at the birth of somebody, Mars is in the house of Venus, as in Taurus or in Libra, and there is a person to do the child’s horoscope, he will signify that the child will be lustful, a fornicator, and wicked in all venereal excesses. Whence a certain sage called Haly in his commentary to the *Quadripartitum* says that, when at the birth of somebody Venus participates with Mars, it grants enamourment, fornication, lust and such like, which all are concerned with the passion of love which the author talks about in this canzone.]

Boccaccio’s reference to Andalò is rather disingenuous, if the evidence of the Calmeta episode of the *Filocolo* is to be believed. For there the emphasis in that passage is almost entirely astronomical, with no hint of judicial astrology, and the authorities consulted are almost certainly limited to Ptolemy’s *Almagest*, Andalò’s own *Introductorium*, rather than the similarly titled work by Alcabitius, and to the *Alfonsine Tables*. Of Haly’s commentary to the Ptolemaic *Quadripartitum* there is not a trace. Boccaccio’s early astrological culture, under the sway of Andalò, has been examined in an important study by Antonio Enzo Quaglio (*Scienza e mito nel Boccaccio*, Padua: Liviana, 1967) and its narrative consequences (possibly more tending towards judicial astrology) in the *Filocolo* have been investigated by both Janet Levarie Smarr and Stephen Grossvogel. The adventitious references to Haly in the love definition in the *Genealogie* and *Esposizioni* are a sure sign that the late Boccaccio, whilst acknowledging his youthful enthusiasms, was now passively accepting and reproducing Dino’s quotes and mentions, rather than referring to material he knew and remembered intimately and at first hand.

What then follows in Boccaccio’s account, namely the sequence of interiorisation, comes from Dino’s gloss to line 21. Dino’s ordering of the inner processes is, according to Otto Bird, untypical, yet Boccaccio accepts it without demur:

Hic autem est ordo in apprehensione humana, sicut declaratum est in scientia naturali: quod primo species rei pervenit ad sensus exteriores, ut ad visum vel auditum vel tactum vel gustum vel olphatum, deinde ab illis pervenit ad virtutes sensitivas interiores, sicut pervenit ad fantasiam primo, deinde pervenit ad cogitativam et ultimo ad memorialem. Ab istis autem virtutibus procedit postea ista species ad virtutem nobiliorem, que

virtus in homine est altissima inter virtutes adprehensivas, et ista est virtus possibilis. (Favati 364–65)

[For this is the sequence in human apprehension, just as it is declared in natural science. First of all the “species” of the thing reaches the exterior senses, for instance sight or hearing, touch, taste or smell, thence from these it reaches to the inner sensitive faculties, so it comes to fantasy first, then comes to the cogitative and lastly to the memorative faculty. From these faculties this “species” reaches to the nobler faculty, which in mankind is the highest amongst the apprehensive faculties, and this is the possible faculty]

Dino then provides a brief explanation of the difference between the *intellectus agens* [active intellect], the reasoning function of individuation and universals, and the passive or possible intellect, merely concerned with the processing of species resulting from sensibles. The discussion is not otiose, for Dino is aware of Cavalcanti’s dramatic positioning of love right at the crucial borderline between rational and sensitive activity. Boccaccio is not at all interested in such technicalities, and moves on to a matter of much greater concern, namely the question of the relationship between love and will. The relevant passage from Dino glosses Guido’s assertion that love is “di cor voluntate,” but Boccaccio characteristically leaves out Dino’s professionally inspired mention of the difference of opinion between Aristotle and Galen concerning the seat of the sensitive faculties, in the heart or in the head. Dino writes:

Et nota quod istum appetitum vocavit voluntatem, que videtur intellectui attinere, ut ostenderet quod, licet amor fiat in aliquo ex dispositione naturali per quam quis inclinatur ad incurrendum facilliter hanc passionem, tamen fit etiam ex proposito et per electionem, quod pertinet ad voluntatem, que est libera et liberi arbitrii, cum se habeat indifferenter ad opposita; et est simile hic, sicut etiam est in aliis passionibus ut, verbi gratia, de ira. Nam aliquis, licet sit dispositus ex natura ad facilliter incurrendum in iram, tamen per voluntatem potest se retrahere ab ea, et potest etiam in eam incurrere; et simili modo etiam de amore. (Favati 364)

[And note that he calls this appetite the will, because the latter is seen to appertain to the intellect, in order to show that, although love can happen to somebody through a natural disposition whereby that person is inclined easily to incur this passion, that person does so nevertheless on purpose and by choice, and so that is a case of will, which is free and by free choice, when it is faced equally with opposites. And it is the same here, just as it is with the other passions, like anger, for instance. For somebody, even though he may be disposed by nature to get angry easily, nevertheless through his will he can draw himself back from it, and he can even indulge in it; and it is the same with love.]

For Dino, the question is one of classification: given the working of erotic passion specifically in the sensitive *appetite*, it follows that engaging in or disengaging from love is necessarily a voluntary act, and therefore in part subject also to the operations of the rational soul, where choices are made. Boccaccio's rewording changes the emphasis substantially towards moral philosophy: love is no longer an ineluctable force, and the potential lover, being free to choose, is therefore responsible for his own actions in this field as in any other. Love, as a phenomenon of the soul, is consequent on an initial act of the will, by accepting or refusing to be drawn further into passion. Though Boccaccio's direct quotations from the Garbian glosses are all located in a compact area, he may have been encouraged to underline this aspect by his reading further on in the commentary, for Dino refers to the will obliquely later on, drawing on Haly's *Pantechne*, to state more clearly than elsewhere the voluntaristic nature of passion:

amor est sollicitudo melanconica, similis melanconie, *in qua homo iam sibi inducit incitationem cogitationis* super pulcritudinem quarundam formarum et figurarum que insunt ei. (Favati 371)

[love is a melancholic anxiety, similar to melancholy, in which a man actually brings upon himself the rousing of cogitation upon the beauty of certain forms and figures which are within him.]

A fragment of this reading of Dino can be found in the *Decameron*, when Boccaccio describes the *aegritudo amoris* of the pharmacist's daughter Lisa (X.7.8), as she struggles with cumulative "malinconia."

What is more important in the Garbian gloss is the accent on the will. The lover "sibi inducit incitationem." And later again, Dino will return to the topic, to explain why nobles have a greater propensity for erotic passion than those whose existence is marred by the struggle for economic survival:

Secunda causa est quia, licet in amore, quando est multum impressus, appetitus non sit liber, imo est servus et ducitur secundum impetum huius passionis, tamen in principio, quando incipit hec passio in appetitu, adhuc appetitus est quasi liber, ita ut possit amare et possit desistere ab amore. Et ideo initium huius passionis incipit multotiens ex proposito. (Favati 373)

[The second cause is because, though in love for instance the appetite, when it is much pressed, is not free, indeed it is enslaved and is led by the impetus of this passion, nevertheless in the beginning, when this passion starts in the appetite, at that point the appetite is almost free, so that it can love or desist from love. And so the beginning of this passion frequently starts from choice.]

Whereas in the *Genealogie* the highlighting of the question of free will served no particular purpose, and was not set within a moralising context, in the *Esposizioni* the moral discussion is crucial. Boccaccio has a precise task, for he is explaining the sin of those who “la ragion sommettono al talento” (*Inferno* V.39). Boccaccio’s own prior interpretation of this line is rather odd:

Eran dannati i peccator carnali, Che la ragion sommettono al talento,
cioè alla volontà. E come che questo si possa dire d’ogni peccatore intendere, per ciò che alcun peccatore non è che non sottometta, peccando, la ragione alla volontà, vuol nondimeno l’autore che per quel vocabolo “carnali” s’intenda singolarmente per i lussuriosi. (*Esposizioni* V litt. 46)

Boccaccio, never very consistent when adopting others’ philosophical systems or terminology, seems to see no difference here between “will” and “desire.” He seems to have no real understanding of the complexities of appetite. Perhaps he was thinking of the passage in Dante’s *Vita Nuova* XXXIX, where the poet admits to a struggle between appetite (“cuore”) and reason (“anima”). Maybe he is using “volontà” to stand for “voglia,” the term Meo Abbracciavacca uses when he writes “e qual sommette a voglia operazione” (Gianfranco Contini, *Poeti del Duecento*, Milan-Naples: Ricciardi, 1960, vol. I, p. 337). It is no surprise, therefore, to find that Boccaccio now moves straight from his paraphrase of Dino del Garbo on love and will to a discussion of whether Paolo, “atto nato ad amare” (*Esposizioni* V litt., 168) was *obliged* to fall in love with Francesca. Boccaccio freely admits that Paolo was “flessibile,” in other words easily swayed, because of his complexion. It is the same concept Boccaccio applies to Dante’s amorous disposition in the Chigi version of the *Trattatello*: “inchinevole molto a questo accidente” (again a fairly Garbian formula), but when it comes to the famous line: “Amor, ch’a nullo amato amar perdona” (*Inferno* V.103), the moralist suddenly swings into action:

Questo, salva sempre la reverenzia dell’autore, non avviene di questa spezie di amore, ma avvien bene dello amore onesto (*Esposizioni* V litt. 169)

Here Boccaccio is returning to the Aristotelian distinction between the three varieties of love (*Nicomachean Ethics* VIII.3) with which he had prefaced his discussion in the *Esposizioni*. There, he had indicated that the sensual love indulged in by Paolo and Francesca is the morally inferior “amore dilettevole,” where the pleasure principle is foremost. It is a definition totally missing from the *Genealogie* account of Cupid, even though it had been promised much earlier (III.22.8). Now he claims that Francesca’s declaration of the inevitable reciprocity of love is misplaced, for

such reciprocity can only happen with “amore onesto.” He backs this up with the definition to be found in *Purgatorio* XXII.10–12 (where Statius’ love for Virgil causes a corresponding affection in the older poet). But the lovers of *Inferno* V are seekers of pleasure only, not seekers of goodness (the “amore onesto” of Aristotle).

But why did Boccaccio, between the *Genealogie* and the *Esposizioni* accounts, suddenly introduce the Aristotelian distinction? What does it have to do with Dino’s commentary? Once again, Boccaccio has been searching around in the glosses, and has found that the next argument Dino engages in is concerned with the dual nature of love. One is the common definition:

uno modo comuniter et large, secundum quod est quedam passio per quam inclinatur et movetur appetitus in aliquam rem que videtur sibi bona propter complacentiam eius, ratione cuiuscumque actus illius rei: et isto modo non accipitur hic: nam amor est circa multa, de quo amore non est presens intentio. Et de omnibus amicis ad invicem est hoc modo amor: quia amici amant se ad invicem, et tamen non amant se amore de quo est hec presens intentio; et potest etiam esse amore in uno respectu alterius, et tamen non erit amicitia inter eos: omnis enim qui est amicus alicui amatur ab illo, sed non omnis qui amat aliquem amatur ab illo; et ideo, licet omnis amicitia sit cum amore, non tamen omnis amor est cum amicitia. (Favati 371–72)

[one way commonly and widely defined, according to which it is a certain passion by which the appetite is inclined and moved towards something which seems good to it on account of its pleasurability, by reason of whatever agency of that thing: and it is not accepted in this way here: for love concerns many things, about which love it is not Guido’s present intention to speak. Concerning all mutual friends, love is of this kind: for friends love each other reciprocally, and yet they do not love each other with the kind of love which is the topic here; and it can be a question of love in one regarding the other, and yet there will not be friendship between them: for everybody who is a friend to somebody is loved by that other person, but not everybody who loves somebody is loved by that person, and so, even if every friendship is with love, not every love is with friendship.]

In his round-about way Dino is dealing here with the distinction between love “per concupiscentiam” [for desire’s sake] and “per amicitiam” [for friendship’s sake]. The first is properly the subject of Guido’s canzone, whereas the second is Aristotle’s true friendship, what Boccaccio calls “amore onesto.” Dino’s purpose is to go on to define the pathology of the illness that derives from amorous excess, the so-called “ereos,” richly investigated by Massimo Ciavolella (*La “Malattia d’Amore” dall’Antichità al Medioevo*, Rome: Bulzoni, 1976) and before that by John Livingston

Lowes ("The Loveres Maladye of Hereos," *Modern Philology* 11.4 [1914]: 491–546). Boccaccio, uninterested in the minutiae of such medical matters (though he refers to them in his Valerius Maximus inspired episode of Giacchetto Lamien in the novella of the Count of Antwerp (*Decameron* II.8.44–48), retains the distinction but uses it for a moral purpose. Paolo and Francesca were free to retreat from their passions, as theirs was an "amor dilettevole." Their obstinate refusal to avail themselves of the freedom of choice inherent in the birth of such sensual passion led to their damnation. This issue of free will clearly exercised Boccaccio, for he returns to it belatedly in the allegorical exposition to the canto. The commentator has been explaining why carnal sinners, guilty of excess in what is otherwise a natural process, are punished more lightly than the other damned souls, in a circle further from the pit of hell and nearer to God. He then has another go at defining the relative roles of astrological disposition and free use of the rational faculty of choice:

L'origine del quale, secondo che di sopra è mostrato, par che sia nell'attitudine a questa colpa datane da' cieli; la quale parrebbe ne dovesse da questo scusare, se data non ci fosse la ragione, la quale ne dimostra quel che far dobbiamo e quel che fuggire, e, oltre a ciò, il *libero arbitrio*, nel quale è podestà di seguire qual più gli piace. (*Esposizioni* V all. 78)

But this moralistic view of erotic passion, prompted by a public reading of the Paolo and Francesca episode and shaped, selectively, by Dino del Garbo's glosses to Cavalcanti's canzone, represents a very late position, beginning with the first redaction of the *Genealogie*, and perhaps implicitly coeval with some of the thinking behind the *remedia amoris* of the *Corbaccio*. Boccaccio's earlier allusions to the *Inferno* V episode seem to show, instead, that the involuntary nature of love, propounded by Francesca, prevails. In the *Filostrato*, for instance, after much sighing and tearful pillow-soaking, Troilo finally admits to his friend Pandaro the cause of his melancholy: he has fallen in love. Boccaccio's writing at this point is saturated with reminiscences of the Paolo and Francesca passage from *Inferno* V. Troilo is grateful that Pandaro is inclined to hear of his "martiro," rhymed with "sospiro" (Dante: "sospiri" and "martiri") and is responding to Pandaro's "priego" since he is incapable of opposing a "niego" (Dante: "priega" and "niega"). Troilo then indicates how love took over:

Amore, incontro al qual chi si difende
più tosto pere ed adopera in vano,
d'un piacer vago tanto il cor m'accende,
ch'io n'ho per quel da me fatto lontano

ciascheduno altro, e questo sì m'offende, (*Filostrato* II.7.1–5)

This is a clear echo of Francesca speaking of how love “al cor gentil ratto s'apprende [...] e 'l modo ancor m'offende” (*Inferno* V.100–02). Boccaccio in paraphrasing “Amor, ch'a nullo amato amar perdona” here, further emphasises the involuntary nature of such passion. The same emphasis can be seen in the *Filocolo*: in the “court of love” in book four, Clonico has asked the queen for a judgment on whether an unrequited or a jealous lover should be more pitied. The queen passes sentence, saying that the unrequited lover will finally get his reward, for true love induces inevitable reciprocity in the beloved:

ché, ben che ella si mostri verso voi acerba al presente, e' non può essere ch'ella non vi ami, però che amore mai non perdonò l'amare a niuno amato. (*Filocolo* IV.38.11)

The same concept lies behind that other enamourment clearly inspired by Dante's Paolo and Francesca, the Ovid-inspired passion of Florio and Biancifiore in *Filocolo* II: their love, too, is caused by Cupid's agency, they too are apparently coerced by mutual delight. Florio clearly considers that such a situation is universal, and affects not only mortals but gods:

Padre mio, sì come voi sapete, né il sommo Giove né il risplendente Apollo, da voi ora davanti ricordato, né alcuno altro iddio ebbe all'amorevole passione resistenza; né tra' nostri predecessori fu alcuno tanto di virile forza armato, che da simile passione non fosse oppresso. (*Filocolo* II, 15, 1–2)

But perhaps the most memorable examples of such love apologies come in the *Decameron*. In the novella of the count of Antwerp, the queen of France lays bare her passion for the count:

Egli è vero che, per la lontananza di mio marito non potendo io agli stimoli della carne né alla forza d'amor contrastare, le quali sono di tanta potenza, che i fortissimi uomini non che le tenere donne hanno già molte volte vinti e vincono tutto il giorno, essendo io negli agi e negli ozii ne' quali voi mi vedete, a secondare li piaceri d'amore e divenire innamorata mi sono lasciata correre. (*Decameron* II.8.15)

Though the power of love is emphasised, a subtle change has now taken place. We now get at least a fleeting admission that an element of volition was involved (“mi sono lasciata correre”). When we come to look at the famous justification of Ghismonda, caught in flagrante with Guiscardo by her jealous father (*Decameron* IV.1.31–45), we see the same refined concession. Her speech begins with a reminiscence of the Paolo and Francesca episode, audible in the pairing “né a *negare* né a *pregare* sono disposta.”

Ghismonda, at various points, then outlines the sheer power and durability of the passion which has overtaken her:

Egli è il vero che io ho amato e amo Guiscardo, e quanto io viverò, che sarà poco, l'amer e se appresso la morte s'ama, non mi rimarrò d'amarlo.
(*Decameron* IV.1.32)

Though the wording has been altered, the influence of Francesca's per-during love in *Inferno* V is clear: "ancor non m'abbandona" (105) and "che mai da me non fia diviso" (135). But then the speech gets down to detail. It is Ghismonda's youthful appetite, whetted by previous marriage and now enforced celibacy, which causes her to cede to her desires:

Sono adunque, sí come da te generata, di carne, e sí poco vivuta, che ancor son giovane, e per l'una cosa e per l'altra piena di concupiscibile disidero, al quale maravigliosissime forze hanno date l'aver già, per essere stato maritata, conosciuto qual piacer sia a così fatto desidero dar compimento. Alle quali forze non potendo io resistere, a seguir quello che elle mi tiravano, sí come giovane e femina, mi disposi e innamora'mi.
(*Decameron* IV.1.34–35)

Yet, here again, we can see that Boccaccio clearly imagines there to be a moment of decision, an instance of rational choosing, even if the flesh (and the sensitive faculties) are predisposed to "incur such passion."

To sum up then, the evidence for Boccaccio having read Dino del Garbo early on in his career, earlier than the *Teseida*, is quite strong. The gloss on "Donna me prega" is not associated, as one might imagine, with an interest in Cavalcanti's vernacular verse, but rather with its availability as a convenient manual, accessible to a non medical scholar, on the "maladye of hereos." For this reason, perhaps, it became associated with Boccaccio's constant re-reading of the Paolo and Francesca episode from *Inferno* V. What changed over time was the quality of Boccaccio's reading of Dino, starting from an opportunistic level, where the distinction between Capellanus and Del Garbo is hardly felt, and ending with an interpretation which consciously develops the potential in Dino's understanding of the role of the will. The moment of transition, however timid, seems to take place in the years of the *Decameron*.

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