

Boccaccio Between Dante and Petrarch: Manuscripts, Marginalia, Drawings

Boccaccio, as we know, was a tireless scribe and editor.¹ There are several extant autographs in his hand: twenty-two codices, some complete, some incomplete²; twelve manuscripts,³ of different origin and date, with marginal annotations; and one private letter, addressed to Leonardo del Chiaro in 1366, and today held in the State Archive of Perugia.⁴ His intense activity of studying, commenting and promoting the works of Dante started with the transcription of three of the poet's letters,⁵ which have come down to us through an archive-book⁶ reflecting "quasi tutta la gamma degli interessi culturali del giovane Boccaccio e soprattutto il suo culto per Dante e Petrarca"⁷: this is the so-called "Zibaldone Laurenziano," an anthology held in the BML in Florence (ms. Plut. 29.8), which is the only manuscript witness of these three letters (cc. 62^v–63^r). A

¹ For a synthetic overview of Boccaccio's autograph manuscripts (including those he only annotated), see Cursi and Fiorilla 2013. A broader survey (including manuscripts of Boccaccian interest) can be found in the catalogue of the exhibition *Boccaccio autore e copista* (De Robertis *et al.* 2013) and in the List of Manuscripts in Armstrong, Daniels and Milner 2015, xvii–xxiii. On the production of books by Boccaccio, see Cursi 2013, which pays special attention to the diachronic evolution of his script and to the book formats in which he chose to copy his own works or the works of others.

² Some codices have been dismembered into two or more parts, such as, for example, Riccardianus 627 and Riccardianus 2795, containing Orosius and Paul the Deacon. British Library, ms. Harley 5383 also belongs to the same codex, as recently shown in Pani 2012.

³ In addition to the eleven manuscripts that are already well known, a significant number of glosses by Boccaccio have recently been identified in Marciano Gr. IX 29, a manuscript that contains the text of Homer's *Odyssey* in Greek with an interlinear Latin translation by Leontius. On this, see Cursi 2015.

⁴ See Cursi 2013, 15–82.

⁵ The letters are: *Cardinalibus italicis* (*Ep.* 11), cc. 62^v–63^r; *Exulanti Pistoriensi* (*Ep.* 3), c. 63^r; *A un amico fiorentino* (*Ep.* 12), c. 63^r. See, most recently, Petoletti 2013, 311, with previous bibliography.

⁶ For this definition, see Battaglia Ricci 2010, 137.

⁷ Battaglia Ricci 2010, 118.

little further on among the leaves of this manuscript, Boccaccio transcribed all of the letters exchanged between Dante and Giovanni del Virgilio (cc. 67^v–72^v),⁸ preceded by the *Epistola di Frate Ilaro* to Ugucione della Faggiola (c. 67^r), an enigmatic text containing important information about the life of the poet and, again, known only thanks to this unique attestation. For many years, this letter was considered a forgery, but its potential authenticity has been suggested recently in a number of authoritative scholarly contributions.⁹ The anthology contained in the Zibaldone Laurenziano — originally joined to another miscellany, BML Plut. ms. 33.31 — is complex and stratified, not least because it was built up over a long period (about twenty years). It is therefore difficult to survey the succession of texts it contains, since their arrangement does not correspond to a chronological progression. Hence, we sometimes find in the final leaves of a quire works that were transcribed before those located in the middle.¹⁰

What copying method was chosen by Boccaccio in the creation of this manuscript? At the beginning of his career (between 1327 and 1338), he adopted a conventional technique, transcribing some moral and historical treatises and two works of Andalò del Negro in succession on unbound quires.¹¹ However, at the end of that decade, and towards the end of his youth in Naples, he completely changed his method of compilation, building up a manuscript formed by quires linked by a temporary binding that juxtaposed written leaves with blank ones.¹² Around 1348, he began to transcribe into this codex a complex series of prose and poetic texts, frequently interleaved with blank folios for later integrations.¹³ This is a technique that we can define as “deferred copying,” that is, made over a long period of time with stops and starts. This method of copying was not rare during this period. It is found, for example, in the *zibaldone* of Florence, BML ms. Temp. 2, written in the hand of Antonio Pucci, a prolific Florentine contemporary

⁸ On this, see below.

⁹ On the *vexata quaestio* of the authenticity of the document, see, for example, Padoan 1993; Bellomo 2004; Arduini and Storey 2006; Indizio 2006; and Casadei 2011.

¹⁰ See Zamponi, Pantarotto and Tomiello 1998, 192.

¹¹ These are the *Tractatus sperere* and the *Teoria planetarum* (see, most recently, Petoletti 2013, 306).

¹² See Petoletti 2013, 238. Some of the leaves were palimpsests that Boccaccio bought already erased from a seller in Naples. The original codex was a *graduale* of large dimensions, in Beneventan script (see Brown 1991, 44–56; Zamponi, Pantarotto and Tomiello 1998, 230 n. 154).

¹³ See Petoletti 2013, 254; De Robertis *et al.* 2013, no. 56 (S. Zamponi, ed.), 300–05.

of Boccaccio,¹⁴ and in the Zibaldone Magliabechiano, another Boccaccio autograph¹⁵ characterized by this same occurrence of blank spaces.¹⁶

But let us go back to the Zibaldone Laurenziano. Within this changing and heterogeneous frame, the text block devoted to Dante is quite compact: it is contained in two sections, which are related both in terms of collocation and chronology. In the first section (cc. 60^r–66^v), we find the three *Epistole* within a small collection of fourteenth-century texts, transcribed around 1340–41¹⁷; in the second (cc. 67^r–74^v), we find the letter of Fra Ilaro and the correspondence exchanged between Dante and Giovanni del Virgilio, both copied between 1341 and 1344.¹⁸ What is the layout chosen for these early trials of the transcription of Dante's works? For the letters, Boccaccio builds a page with a high density of writing, in a small and rather careless semi-Gothic script, whereas the textual organization of the eclogues is rather different. Here the page appears more elegant and spacious, the words being arranged in a single column with broad margins for the glosses; the script appears more calligraphic, with marked shading, and with graceful initials painted in yellow at the beginning of the lines (Fig. 1). Such evidence indicates that during this period, although still at the beginning of his long career as a scribe, Boccaccio had already gained full knowledge of the symbolic meanings inherent in specific styles of lettering and layout; in other words, he was perfectly conscious of the close relationship between *sensus* and *instrumentum*, text and book.¹⁹

In this regard, this witness of the poetic correspondence between Dante and Giovanni del Virgilio offers an extremely important example, since — even if considered within an epistolary structure that reproduced the typical rhetorical style of medieval *tenzoni* — it paved the way for the rebirth of the bucolic genre, which had disappeared during the Middle Ages (at least in its purer form) but would flourish during Humanism.²⁰ Boccaccio appears to perceive the exceptional nature of Dante's cultural operation, and therefore

¹⁴ See Varvaro 1957, 51–53. An overview of Pucci and his production can be found in Crimi and Cursi 2013.

¹⁵ Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, ms. Banco Rari 50. On such manuscripts, see, most recently, Petoletti 2013, 295 and 316–26 (with a detailed table of contents); and De Robertis *et al.* 2013, no. 57 (S. Zamponi, ed.), 313.

¹⁶ See Pomaro 1998, 267–72; De Robertis *et al.* 2013, no. 57 (S. Zamponi, ed.), 313–16 (p. 313).

¹⁷ The date is suggested on a paleographical basis: Zamponi, Pantarotto and Tomiello 1998, 216 and 254; De Robertis *et al.* 2013, no. 56 (S. Zamponi, ed.), 304.

¹⁸ Zamponi, Pantarotto and Tomiello 1998, 239–40.

¹⁹ Bologna 1993, 1:344; Battaglia Ricci 2010, 129.

²⁰ Lorenzini 2011, 3 and 6.

chooses a layout that is different from the type used for medieval verse epistles. It is inspired instead by the model of manuscripts containing Virgil's *Eclogues* and other major works of the Latin poet (Fig. 2), which — it is important to remember — did not usually circulate separately, but rather together in complete collections of his works (*Eclogues* + *Georgics* + *Aeneid*). In this context, a survey of forty manuscripts of Virgilian content produced in the fourteenth century and held in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana reveals significant results (see Chart 1 below):

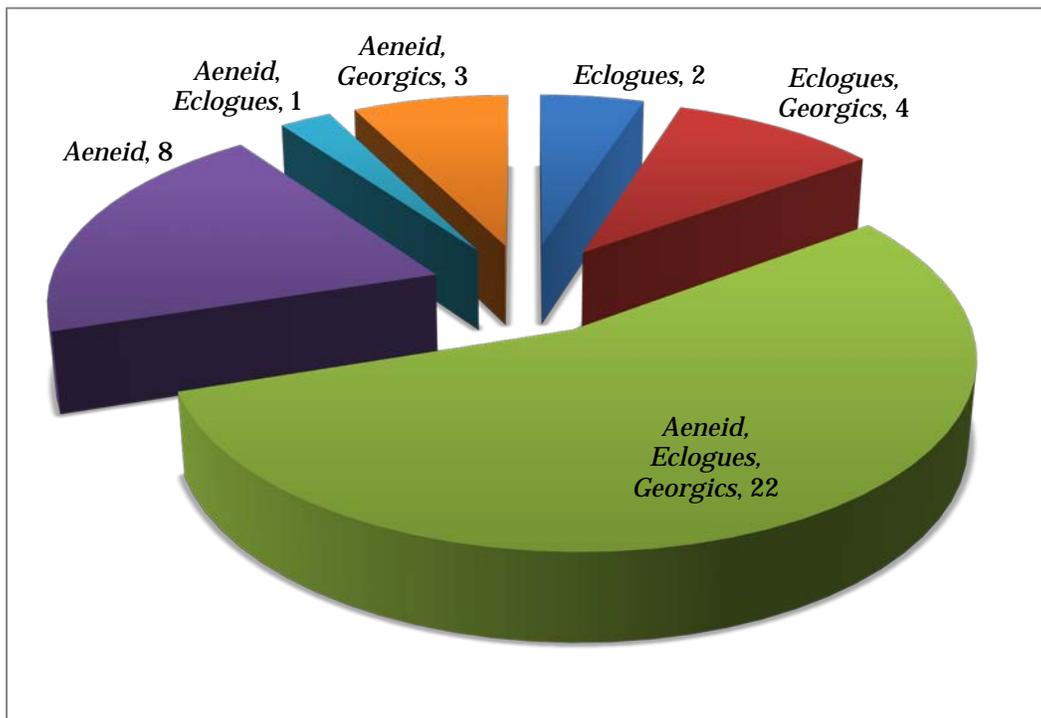


Chart 1. Fourteenth-century manuscripts containing the works of Virgil held in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana

Twenty-two manuscripts (i.e., 55% of the total) are complete collections²¹; eight contain only the *Aeneid* (20%)²² and two only the *Eclogues* (5%),²³ whereas the remaining eight combine the *Aeneid* and *Eclogues* (one [2%]),²⁴ the *Eclogues* and *Georgics* (four [10%])²⁵ and the *Georgics* and *Aeneid* (three [8%]).²⁶

Such collections were very widespread (there are over a thousand extant manuscripts of Virgilian content dating to the medieval period)²⁷ and they followed a specific book model, characterized by medium or medium-small dimensions, a single column layout and broad marginal spaces.²⁸ Although there is no definite evidence that Boccaccio was the owner of manuscripts containing the *Eclogues*,²⁹ it is reasonable to conjecture that he would have handled, read and copied such codices. It is therefore possible to conclude that the layout model employed for the transcription of Dante's *Eclogues* follows the pattern of contemporary Virgilian books and, in assuming this shape, it echoed the opinion of Giovanni del Virgilio on Dante: "Alter es, aut idem..." ("You are another Virgil, or Virgil himself," *Eclogue* 3.34).³⁰

The Zibaldone Laurenziano also embodies the first (literary) meeting between Boccaccio and Petrarch. After the section containing the bucolic correspondence between Dante and Giovanni Virgilio, Boccaccio transcribed a long note of a celebrative nature, the so-called *Notamentum*, before a small anthology of four of Petrarch's metrical letters (1.14, 1.4, 1.13 and 1.12),

²¹ Mss. BAV, Reg. lat. 1669 (IX); Vat. lat. 1570 (IX–X); Reg. lat. 1671 (X); Reg. lat. 1495 (X–XI); Ott. lat. 1313 (XI); Reg. lat. 1670 (XI); Vat. lat. 3251 (XI); Vat. lat. 1573 (XI ex.); Reg. lat. 2090 (XI–XII); Ott. lat. 1412 (XII); Vat. lat. 1574 (XII); Vat. lat. 1575 (XII); Vat. lat. 1580 (XII); Reg. lat. 1563 (XII ex.); Ott. lat. 1373 (XII–XIII); Ott. lat. 1410 (XII–XIII); Vat. lat. 11471 (XII–XIII); Ott. lat. 1203 (XIII); Vat. lat. 1571 (XIV); Vat. lat. 1577 (XIV); Vat. lat. 1578 (XIV); Vat. lat. 2760 (XIV).

²² Mss. BAV, Reg. lat. 2080 (XII); Reg. lat. 1393 (XII–XIII); Reg. lat. 1536 (XII–XIII); Vat. lat. 1581 (XII–XIII); Pal. lat. 1648 (XIII); Pal. lat. 1634 (XIV); Chigi H.V.162 (XIV); Chigi H.V.163 (XIV).

²³ Mss. BAV, Ott. lat. 3025 (XII); Vat. lat. 9991 (XII).

²⁴ Mss. BAV, Pal. lat. 1639 (XIV).

²⁵ Mss. BAV, Vat. lat. 3252 (IX–X); Reg. lat. 1719 (X–XI); Vat. lat. 3254 (XII); Vat. lat. 2759 (XII–XIII).

²⁶ Mss. BAV, Vat. lat. 3253 (XI); Vat. lat. 6828 (XII); Rossi 503 (XII).

²⁷ Alessio 1987.

²⁸ See Cursi 2013, 102–04.

²⁹ Bandini attributes ms. BML, Pluteo 39.14 to Boccaccio's hand, but this suggestion is problematic since the hand in this manuscript uses a rather rigid Gothic script, which is very different from Boccaccio's. On this topic, see Cursi 2010, 179 n. 87.

³⁰ See Malato 1995, 1:916.

which Boccaccio collected some ten years before meeting the elder poet in person. The text commemorates an event considered to be of great importance: the ceremony during which Petrarch was crowned poet laureate in Rome in April 1341.³¹ Whereas the verse epistles are transcribed following the standard, two-column layout (Fig. 3), the celebratory note is set out in an extraordinary and evocative way (Fig. 4): the text is laid out over twenty-four lines, written in a “mixed” distinctive majuscule — the result of the blending of Gothic, capital and chancery models — with marked shading, and with the text tightly organized on the page. In my view, this unusual way of filling the writing space was not inspired by manuscript book models (though a comparison might be made with late antique codices written in capital letters, Boccaccio probably did not know them),³² but was instead an explicit reference to epigraphic writing. Therefore, the *Notamentum* could be compared to the “grande epigrafe di apertura”³³ placed at the beginning of Petrarch’s verse compositions (the *Epystole*),³⁴ which was conceived and imagined as if inserted in an ideal open space,³⁵ “as if sculpted on a plaque.”³⁶

A few years after his first attempts to transcribe Dante’s Latin works, Boccaccio, who by that time had reached his graphical maturity,³⁷ finally approached the vernacular Dante, designing and shaping the huge manuscript anthology now in Toledo (Biblioteca Capitulare, ms. 104.6). It contains the *Trattatello in laude di Dante* (Boccaccio’s biography of the poet; cf. Fig. 5) in an introductory position, the *Vita nuova*, the *Commedia* (with summaries of the contents written in *terza rima*) and the fifteen *canzoni*.³⁸ The date of the manuscript has been the subject of extensive critical discussion during recent years, with suggestions ranging from the beginning of the

³¹ The text represents the first nucleus of *De vita et moribus domini Francisci Petracchi de Florentia*, Boccaccio’s attempt to construct a biographical profile of Petrarch. See Velli 1987 and Feo 1991.

³² For example, the famous Virgil codices, for which see at least Pratesi 1985.

³³ Zamponi, Pantarotto and Tomiello 1998, 203.

³⁴ Feo 1991, 344.

³⁵ Petrucci 1997, 45.

³⁶ Usher 2007, 44; see also Corsi 2013, 73–74.

³⁷ The chronology of Boccaccio’s writing practices can be articulated in the following five phases: 1) Youth (before 1330–mid-1330s); 2) Apprenticeship (mid-1330s–mid-1340s); 3) Maturity (mid-1340s–mid-1350s); 4) Late maturity (late 1350s–mid-1360s); 5) Old age (late 1360s–1375): Corsi 2013, 42–49; Corsi and Fiorilla 2013, 63–66.

³⁸ For a careful description of the manuscript, see, most recently, Bertelli 2014.

1350s to the first half of the 1360s.³⁹ I will attempt to reconsider the problem from a strictly paleographical point of view, using the results of my survey of Boccaccio's manuscript production in its entirety, intended to reconstruct the diachronic evolution of his handwriting.⁴⁰

From this perspective, the transcription of the Toledo manuscript fits into a time period between the end of the 1340s and the first half of the 1350s, in the third phase of the development of Boccaccio's handwriting ("Maturity").⁴¹ This period follows the time when the *Teseida* manuscript (BML, ms. Acquisti e Doni 325)⁴² and the letter *Quam pium* were copied, the latter dated 1348 and probably transcribed in the Zibaldone Laurenziano "in quell'anno o poco dopo."⁴³ This chronological span is also confirmed by another element, represented by a not-so-well-known graphic habit of Boccaccio's: the addition of a pen stroke above the letter *o* when it has a vocative value.⁴⁴ This feature can be seen in his Latin autographs from the end of the 1330s,⁴⁵ and was probably inspired by his observation (possibly in Naples) of the same use of strokes signaling an interjection in manuscripts written in Beneventan, Caroline or Romanesque scripts dating from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries.⁴⁶ Boccaccio pursued this graphic habit more and more frequently over the years, and the increasing frequency of occurrences of accents in his vernacular manuscripts is helpful in dating them.⁴⁷ Chart 2 below confirms the clear chronological separation of the Toledo anthology and the *Teseida* from the other, later anthologies of texts by Dante and Petrarch (Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana ms. 1035; Vatican City, BAV, Chigi L.V.176):

³⁹ A review of the different hypotheses about the date proposed by Michele Barbi, Pier Giorgio Ricci, Giorgio Petrocchi, Albinia de la Mare, Domenico De Robertis, Marisa Boschi Rotiroti and Francesca Malagnini can be found in *Cursi* 2014a, 82–83.

⁴⁰ *Cursi* 2013.

⁴¹ *Cursi* 2013, 45–46.

⁴² Dated shortly before 1348: *Cursi* 2013, 29. For more information, see De Robertis *et al.* 2013, no. 9 (W. Coleman, ed.), 94–95; Bertelli 2014.

⁴³ Zamponi, Pantarotto, and Tomiello 1998, 219; see also De Robertis *et al.* 2013, no. 56 (S. Zamponi, ed.), 305.

⁴⁴ This was noted for the first time by Pier Giorgio Ricci, in the study that identifies the Berlin codex of the *Decameron* as an autograph: Branca and Ricci 1962, 63.

⁴⁵ The oldest known example is in the copy of the letter *Nereus amphytritibus* in BML, MS Plut. 29.8, which can be dated to around 1339: *Cursi* 2013, 78.

⁴⁶ Such as, for example, the thirteenth-century manuscript of Apuleius (BML, MS Plut. 29.2), for which see, most recently, *Cursi* and Fiorilla 2013, 53; De Robertis *et al.* 2013, no. 65 (D. Speranzi and M. Fiorilla, eds), 350–53.

⁴⁷ *Cursi* 2013, 78–82.

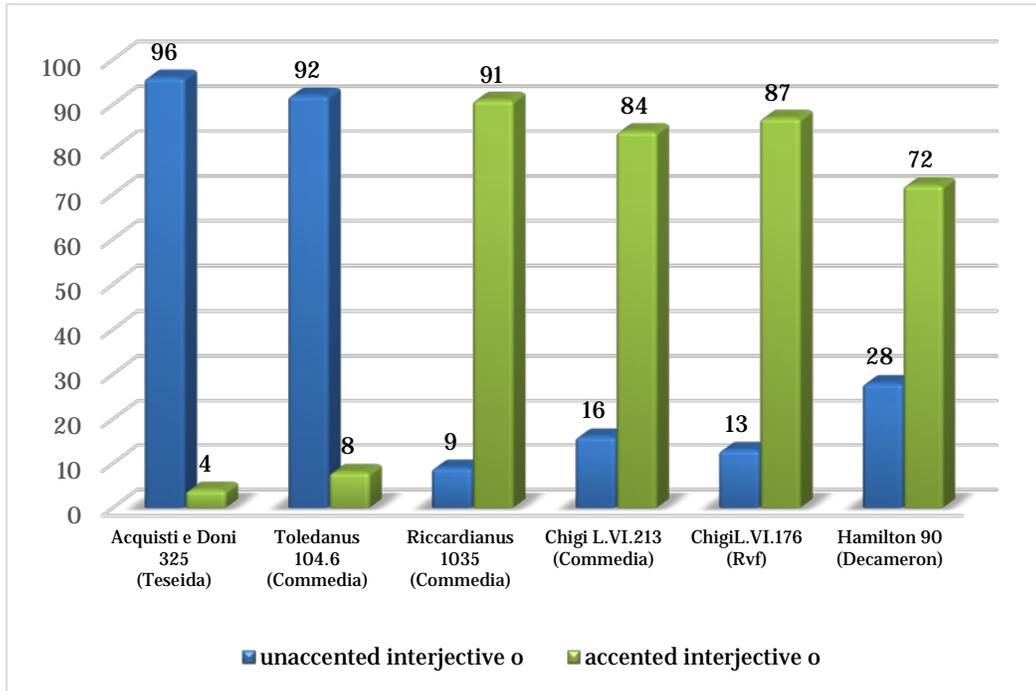


Chart 2. Accents on the vocative *o* in the vernacular autographs

The Toledo codex shows a complex book structure, arranged over a long period, and assembled from originally independent parts; the comparison of the quire structure of the codex and its contents reveals that there are eight discrete units⁴⁸:

Codicological Units	Contents	Quires
I	<i>Trattatello in laude di Dante</i> (cc. 1 ^r –27 ^r ; c. 27 ^v is blank)	1–3 ⁸ , 4 ⁴⁻¹
II	<i>Vita nuova</i> (cc. 29 ^r –46 ^v ; leaf 47 ^{r-v} is blank)	5–6 ⁸ , 7 ⁴
III	<i>Argomenti all'Inferno</i> (cc. 48 ^r –51 ^r ; c. 51 ^v is blank)	8 ⁴
IV	<i>Inferno</i> (cc. 52 ^r –116 ^v)	9–15 ⁸ , 16 ¹⁰
V	<i>Argomenti al Purgatorio</i> (cc. 117 ^r –20 ^r ; c. 120 ^v is blank)	17 ⁴
VI	<i>Purgatorio</i> (cc. 121 ^r –87 ^v)	18–25 ⁸ , 26 ⁴⁻¹

⁴⁸ Cursi 2014.

VII	<i>Argomenti al Paradiso</i> (cc. 188 ^r –90 ^v)	274 ⁻¹
VIII	<i>Paradiso</i> (cc. 191 ^r –256 ^r ; c. 256 ^v is blank); fifteen <i>canzoni</i> (cc. 257 ^r –66 ^v ; leaf 257 ^{r-v} is blank)	28–36 ⁸ , 37 ⁸⁻²

All eight sections identified are closed, since they comprise either a single quire (units III, V, VIII) or a sequence of quaternions closed by a quire of a different formulation, marking a break with what follows (units I, II, IV, VI, VIII). So, from a codicological point of view, these eight textual segments can be considered independent. Should we assume that they were prepared at different times, independently of one another? A paleographical examination of samples of the script employed for the larger codicological units (units I, II, IV, VI, VIII) points in this direction. If we examine, for example, the way the letter *a* is formed, we note that in the sections containing *Inferno* and *Purgatorio* it is usually written in a textualis hand (58%), which indicates that the first two *cantiche* were copied before the *Paradiso* (25%); in turn, the *Paradiso* shows the same forms for this letter as found in the fifteen *canzoni*. The unit that contains the *Trattatello* seems later (21% textualis *a*), whereas the unit containing the *Vita nuova* is in an intermediate position (34%).⁴⁹ Other data dealing with graphic markers (including the percentage of accents) seem coherent with such a picture.⁵⁰ It is therefore possible to suggest that Boccaccio first started by copying the *Commedia* (around 1348–50), then moved on to the *Vita nuova* and the fifteen *canzoni* and, finally (around 1355 or slightly later), he transcribed the *Trattatello*, which, once the different codicological units were joined in a single manuscript, was finally placed at the beginning of the book.

The Toledo anthology is therefore certainly the result of a complex book project, and was clearly made following a procedure very different from that employed for the Zibaldone and the other anthology in the Biblioteca Laurenziana.⁵¹ In that case, the “deferred copying” method was used; while in the Toledo anthology, by contrast, Boccaccio preferred a technique that we can call “split copying,” which had the undeniable advantage of allowing the composition (or, if necessary, the de-composition) of codicological units that were originally independent. In this way, he could demonstrate his consciousness of the dynamics that regulated the relationship between the

⁴⁹ See Cursi 2014, graph 8, 104.

⁵⁰ See Cursi 2014, graphs 9–13, 105–08.

⁵¹ The “Miscellanea Laurenziana,” Florence, BML, ms. 33.31.

“body” (i.e., the material structure of the codex) and the corpus (i.e., the succession of the texts).⁵²

What layout did Boccaccio choose for the transcription of Dante’s poem? He decided on a book structure very different from the traditional one. The predominant model in Florence at that time was what has been defined by Armando Petrucci as the “libro registro di lusso”⁵³: parchment codices, of medium to large size, written in a chancery minuscule, with simple but refined decorations. The most prestigious examples of this widespread book type are the *Commedie* in the hand of Francesco di ser Nardo da Barberino, coordinator of the so-called workshop of the *Danti del Cento* (Fig. 6).⁵⁴ Indeed, we know at least one of the witnesses Boccaccio may have had on his desk, and it follows that exact shape: a manuscript similar to ms. Vat. lat. 3199 (“Vat”), or a twin of it, which he ordered — perhaps during the mid-1340s — from the workshop of the so-called “scribe of Vat” in order to send it as a gift to Petrarch.⁵⁵ A comparison between that manuscript and the Toledo *Commedia* reveals great differences: the latter is a medium-sized manuscript (not medium-large or large), written in a semi-Gothic script (not chancery minuscule), and with a decoration of filigree initials (not ornate initials), and a single column (not two-column) layout (Fig. 7). Boccaccio’s editorial strategy irresistibly recalled his book experiment of ten years earlier, when he made the copy of Dante’s *Eclogues*. Moreover, the book shape of the Toledo *Commedia* recalls the layout chosen for the copy of his own great vernacular poem, the *Teseida*, dated, as previously mentioned, to the second half of the 1340s.⁵⁶ We may suppose, therefore, that also on this occasion Boccaccio was sensitive to suggestions from manuscripts of classical texts, such as the *Aeneid* or the *Thebaid* (to which the *Teseida* is closely linked), especially if we believe that he also owned a codex of Statius’ poem, Florence, BML, ms. Plut. 38.6, which shows exactly this layout structure.⁵⁷

⁵² The distinction is proposed in Petrucci 2004, 4.

⁵³ Petrucci 1983, 510–11.

⁵⁴ On Francesco di ser Nardo, see Bertelli 2004; Bertelli 2011, 59–62; De Robertis 2012.

⁵⁵ There is an extensive bibliography on the Vatican manuscript, but it will suffice to note the two most recent descriptions (both of which include previous bibliography): Bertelli, Fiorentini, Tonelli and Trovato 2013, 72–73; De Robertis *et al.* 2013, no. 78 (G. Breschi, ed.), 379–80.

⁵⁶ Cursi 2010, 173–84; Cursi 2013, 97–106.

⁵⁷ For a description of the *Thebaid* manuscript, see De Robertis *et al.* 2013, no. 59 (M. Cursi, ed.), 337–39.

This interpretation is strengthened by a discovery made during an examination of the codex in Toledo by Sandro Bertelli in 2012. Looking at the *verso* of the final guard sheet using an ultraviolet lamp (which, at first sight lacks anything of interest other than the presence of a pen trial: “POETA SOV”), he detected a large drawing of a man facing to the left, wearing a laurel crown (Fig. 8).⁵⁸ Above him there is a caption, only partially retraced by a later hand, which gives us the name of the figure below: “HOMERO POETA SOVRANO” (with reference to *Inferno* 4.88: “Questi è Omero poeta sovrano”). In my opinion, both the caption and the drawing can be attributed to Boccaccio, inasmuch as this depiction of Homer closely resembles other figures drawn by him, such as the sketch of Claudian in profile in Paris, BNF, ms. lat. 8082, or the profile of the crowned poet in the margin of the Biblioteca Ambrosiana’s Martial.⁵⁹ The attribution of the portrait to Boccaccio lends still greater weight to the idea that his organization of the Toledo anthology was inspired by the model used for classical writers. Confirmation of such a hypothesis may be found in the layout, the anthological nature of the collection (a sort of Dantean “opera omnia” that established a “new canon of the classics”⁶⁰ along the lines of a Virgilian “opera omnia”) and Boccaccio’s decision to open the book “con il ritratto letterario dell’Alighieri [proposto nel *Trattatello*] e di chiuderlo con quello figurato del più sommo fra i poeti (il ritratto di Omero).”⁶¹

The second anthology of Dante’s works compiled by Boccaccio is contained in Florence, Biblioteca Riccardiana, ms. 1035, and includes, in addition to the *Commedia*, only the fifteen *canzoni* (Fig. 9).⁶² Chronologically, it may be placed at the very beginning of the 1360s, as is clear from the handwriting, which dates from the period of Boccaccio’s late maturity. This

⁵⁸ The drawing measures 95 x 55 mm.

⁵⁹ Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, ms. C 67 sup. Some doubts have been expressed recently by Francesca Pasut, who considers it more like that the drawing should be attributed to the hand of a professional artist and suggests, with due caution, that it could be the work of the painter Giovanni da Milano (ca. 1325/30–70): Pasut 2013, 51–59. However, paleographical and codicological details found in a recent examination of the manuscript confirm that the drawing was traced by Boccaccio and suggest that the heading and the image were added to the final sheet of the Toledo codex during a single work session. See Bertelli and Cursi 2014.

⁶⁰ Bologna 1993, 1:177.

⁶¹ Berté 2013, 273.

⁶² For a detailed description of the manuscript see Bertelli 2014.

dating is reinforced by both the overall impression and the graphical markers examined in the survey mentioned above.⁶³ The quire structure of the Riccardiana manuscript is completely different from that of the Toledo:

Codicological Units	Contents	Quires
I	<i>Argomenti all'Inferno</i> (cc. 1 ^r –3 ^v); <i>Inferno</i> (cc. 4 ^r –56 ^v); <i>Argomenti al Purgatorio</i> (cc. 56 ^r –58 ^v); <i>Purgatorio</i> (cc. 59 ^r –121 ^r); <i>Argomenti al Paradiso</i> (cc. 121 ^v –23 ^v); <i>Paradiso</i> (cc. 124 ^r –78 ^r ; c. 178 ^v is blank); fifteen <i>canzoni</i> (cc. 179 ^r –87 ^r ; c. 187 ^v is blank)	1–4 ⁸ , 5 ^{8–2} , 6–9 ⁸ , 10–11 ⁸ , 12–23 ⁸ , 24 ^{6–1}

The manuscript is made up of one single codicological unit; in other words, the end of a work never coincides with the end of a quire. Moreover, the impression of unity is accentuated by the decision to place together the rubrics marking the end of each *cantica* and the rubrics introducing the *Argomenti* that refer to those that follow. These are separated from each other only by a small blank space. The paleographical data confirm the complete coherence among the distinct parts of this manuscript.⁶⁴ The same impression — although with some slight variation — is likewise produced by the percentage of accents on the vocative *o*.⁶⁵ Thus, the transcription technique adopted by Boccaccio for this codex was without doubt different from those seen in the two cases discussed above. He moves from the “deferred copying” of the Zibaldone Laurenziano, to the “split copying” of the Toledo ms. 104.6, to the “continuous copying” of the Riccardiana manuscript.

As is well known, the Riccardiana ms. 1035 is characterized by the presence of seven pen drawings that refer to the first seventeen *canti* of *Inferno* (cf. Fig. 10).⁶⁶ Vandelli was the first to propose a possible attribution to Boccaccio, albeit tentatively:

E mi sono anche domandato parecchie volte, senza riuscire purtroppo a dar sicura risposta alla domanda, se nel cod. Riccard. 1035, una delle tre copie della *Commedia* che ci restano scritte dal Boccaccio, non possano essere di mano sua o eseguiti per suo consiglio e con la sua guida i sette eleganti disegni a chiaroscuro che illustrano altrettante scene dell'*Inferno*.⁶⁷

⁶³ Cursi 2013, 45–46.

⁶⁴ See Cursi 2014, tables 14, 15, 18, 111–3.

⁶⁵ See Chart 2 above and Cursi 2014, table 19, 114.

⁶⁶ Cc. 4^v, 7^r, 10^v, 15^r, 17^r, 20^v, 29^r.

⁶⁷ Vandelli 1929, 29 n. 2.

Many years later, Bernhard Degenhart assigned them to Boccaccio's hand. This more confident attribution was followed by Annegrit Schmitt and then, with broader iconographical arguments, by Maria Grazia Ciardi Dupré Dal Poggetto.⁶⁸ If these drawings could be definitively demonstrated to be autographs, such a book project would be quite different from that of the Toledo codex, for that would mean that Boccaccio had conceived an illustrated *Commedia*, which was then not completed, for reasons unknown to us. Some time ago, however, Lucia Battagli Ricci cast doubt on this theory, highlighting the considerable gap between the morphology of the capital letters that appear on the Gates of Hell (*all'antica*, i.e., following the humanistic model) and the majuscules normally used by Boccaccio (following a gothic model).⁶⁹ This revived Millard Meiss' observation, until then neglected, that "the approximation of the beautiful incised inscription on the Gate of Hell to Roman epigraphs would be remarkable before the second quarter of the fifteenth century."⁷⁰ In fact, if we review the evidence of all the distinctive majuscules written in Boccaccio's hand (some eighty-two examples distributed over a period spanning from the end of the 1330s to the mid-1350s),⁷¹ it is possible to detect a remarkable graphic coherence, as he consistently employs a mixed script that merges Gothic, capital and chancery models. The comparison between this script and that used for the inscription on the gate clearly shows the lack of compatibility between the two hands. Therefore, the only way to support the notion that the drawings are autographs would be to suppose that only the inscription was penned in a different hand. However, the perfect coincidence of the ink color suggests the opposite, and leads us to the conclusion that the small cycle of illustrations linked to the *Commedia* in the Riccardiana manuscript cannot be ascribed to Boccaccio in any way.⁷²

The third and final anthology written in Boccaccio's hand consists of two manuscripts held in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana: mss. Chigi L.VI.213 and L.V.176.⁷³ The circumstances of its genesis and articulation are very problematic, and so it is only possible to outline them here. In 1974 Dome-

⁶⁸ Degenhart and Schmitt 1968–1982, 1:137–38; Ciardi Dupré Dal Poggetto 1994, 205–06; and Ciardi Dupré Dal Poggetto 1999, 2:9–13.

⁶⁹ Battaglia Ricci 2010, 156–57.

⁷⁰ Brieger, Meiss and Singleton 1969, 1:250.

⁷¹ Cursi 2013, 64–75.

⁷² On this, see Cursi 2013, 99 n. 115.

⁷³ For a detailed description of the two manuscripts (with updated bibliography), see Bertelli 2014.

nico De Robertis demonstrated the complementarity of the two manuscripts, following Giuseppe Vandelli's intuitive suggestion made many years before⁷⁴:

è facile innanzitutto rilevare l'identità di costituzione del codice della *Commedia* con quello delle rime: quasi identiche le misure della pergamena [...] identico specchio di scrittura [...] nessuna differenza apprezzabile di scrittura [...] si aggiunga infine l'identità della decorazione dei capilettera, specie per lo stile della calettatura di rosso e blu, usciti, si direbbe, dallo stesso piattello per l'uno e l'altro codice.⁷⁵

The original integration of the two manuscripts was further confirmed by an examination of their quire structure,⁷⁶ as illustrated in the following table.

Codicological Units	Contents	Quires
Chigi L.VI.213		
I	<i>Argomenti all'Inferno</i> (cc. 4 ^r –6 ^v); <i>Inferno</i> (pp. 1–116); <i>Argomenti al Purgatorio</i> (pp. 117–22); <i>Purgatorio</i> (pp. 123–238); <i>Argomenti al Paradiso</i> (pp. 238–42); <i>Paradiso</i> (pp. 243–359)	1 ⁴ , 2–23 ⁸ , 24 ³
Chigi L.V.176		
I	<i>Trattatello in laude di Dante</i> [compendio A] (cc. 1 ^r –13 ^r); <i>Vita nuova</i> (cc. 13 ^r –28 ^v)	1–3 ⁸ , 4 ⁴
II	<i>Donna mi priega</i> (cc. 29 ^r –32 ^v ; leaf 33 ^{r-v} is blank)	5 ⁸⁻³
III	<i>Ytalie iam certus</i> (c. 34 ^r); fifteen <i>canzoni</i> (cc. 34 ^v –43 ^r); <i>Rerum vulgarium fragmenta</i> (cc. 43 ^v –79 ^r ; c. 79 ^v is blank)	6 ⁵ , 7–10 ⁸ , 11 ⁸⁺¹

⁷⁴ Vandelli 1908, 9–10; Vandelli 1923, 63–65.

⁷⁵ De Robertis 1974, 19.

⁷⁶ Both codices have a double pair of mutilated quires, at both the beginning and the end: the first pair is made up of the artificially created binion that closes the first part of Chig. L.V.176 (section I, cc. 25–28), which was originally joined to the four leaves forming the current first quire (also artificially created) of Chig. L.VI.213 (unit I, c. 4–p. 2); the second is made by the three final sheets of the last quire of Chig. L.VI.213 (pp. 354–59), which were joined to the five sheets at the beginning of the third part of Chig. L.V.176 (unit III, cc. 34–38). Moreover, other details, such as the characteristic red and dark-colored ink stains, support this reconstruction of the original order of the sheets.

Since both manuscripts contain two damaged quires that are missing parts of their beginning and end, De Robertis' argued that it was possible to make the following assertions:

1. the binion closing the first part of Chigi L.V.176 (cc. 25–28) is an artificially created quire, made by single folios glued onto paper strips. They originally formed the first half of a quaternion, whose last four folios now form the first (and artificial) quire of Chigi L.VI.213 (c. 1^v–p. 2);
2. the first five folios of the third part of Chigi L.V.176 (cc. 35–38) originally belonged to a quaternion that also included the last three leaves of the last quire of Chigi L.VI.213 (pp. 354–59).

Codex Chigiano L.V.176 would therefore appear to be a composite miscellaneous manuscript made by joining two pieces that were originally not combined, and setting between them the quire containing Cavalcanti's *canzone*.

The original sequence of the works is as follows:

Codicological Units	Contents	Quires
I (Chigi L.V.176)	<i>Trattatello in laude di Dante</i> [compendio A] (cc. 1 ^r –13 ^r); <i>Vita nuova</i> (cc. 13 ^r –28 ^v)	1–3 ⁸ , 4 ⁴ –
II (Chigi L.VI.213)	<i>Argomenti all'Inferno</i> (cc. 4 ^r –6 ^v .); <i>Inferno</i> (pp. 1–116); <i>Argomenti al Purgatorio</i> (pp. 117–22); <i>Purgatorio</i> (pp. 123–238); <i>Argomenti al Paradiso</i> (pp. 238–42); <i>Paradiso</i> (pp. 243–359)	1–4, 2–23 ⁸ , 24 ³ –
III (Chigi L.V.176)	<i>Ytalie iam certus</i> (c. 34 ^r); fifteen <i>canzoni</i> (cc. 34 ^v –43 ^r); <i>Rerum vulgarium fragmenta</i> (cc. 43 ^v –79 ^r [c. 79 ^v is blank])	6–5, 7–10 ⁸ , 11 ⁸⁺¹
IV (Chigi L.V.176)	<i>Donna mi priega</i> (cc. 29 ^r –32 ^v [leaf 33 ^{r-v} is blank])	5 ⁸⁻³

The *Trattatello* was put at the beginning, then the *Vita nuova*, *Commedia* and finally the fifteen *canzoni*, following a sequence already tested by Boccaccio in the Toledo manuscript. However, unlike that model, there are two more texts here: Boccaccio's own composition *Ytalie iam certus* at the end of Dante's poem, and the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* at the end of the

book. De Robertis supposed that the codex was written a little after the Riccardiana manuscript, in the mid-1360s,⁷⁷ while, regarding the dynamics of the copying process, he believed in the substantial unity of the manuscript, speaking of the “unità, se non della continuità nel tempo, della trascrizione della maggior parte del codice,”⁷⁸ but admitting that the Cavalcanti section came afterwards.

The paleographical analysis confirms a date in the 1360s, surely after the Riccardiana, and earlier than or contemporary to the *Genealogie*, BML, ms. Plut. 52.9,⁷⁹ but it also casts doubt on the hypothesis of a continuous transcription of the different textual sections. The relationship of the different parts of the anthology is, indeed, very complex: on the one hand, the letter surveys of each textual section show pauses and interruptions in the material arrangement of the manuscript (even if characterized by a partly contradictory trend)⁸⁰; on the other, the frequency with which accents occur on the vocative *o* is very high, with the striking exception of the *Vita nuova*, where the number of accented letters is equal to that of non-accented letters.⁸¹ So what we have here is perhaps an intermediate scenario between what has been observed for the Toledo and Riccardiana manuscripts. For this anthology Boccaccio could have employed a “split copying” technique, not based on single textual units, but rather on larger macro-sections.

The most important innovation of the Chigi anthology is the insertion of the compact block of Petrarch’s *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*,⁸² but what is the relationship between the layout chosen by Boccaccio for this copy of the *Canzoniere* and the authorial model attested by BAV, ms. Vat. lat. 3195? And what are the characteristics of this layout when compared to the book forms adopted in the manuscripts at the time of their first diffusion?

It is well known that Petrarch “sviluppò, soprattutto nell’età matura e nella vecchiaia, una vera e propria religione dello scrivere.”⁸³ The autograph/idiograph copy of his poetic collection — made partly by himself, and

⁷⁷ Later, in his subsequent edition of Dante’s *Rime* (2002), the scholar assigned the copy of Chigi L.V.176 (and therefore of Chigi L.V.213 as well) to the “pieno settimo decennio” of the century.

⁷⁸ De Robertis 1974, 14.

⁷⁹ Cursi 2013, 46–47.

⁸⁰ Cursi 2014, 118–20, graphs 20–25.

⁸¹ Cursi 2014, 123, graph 27.

⁸² Digital images of the manuscript are at http://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Chig.L.V.176.

⁸³ Petrucci 1983, 517.

partly by a copyist hired by him, traditionally thought to be Giovanni Malpaghini⁸⁴ — reveals the adoption of specific ways of writing and setting out the texts, aimed not at giving the manuscript an exterior “beauty,” but a real “significance.”⁸⁵

The great Italian *Canzonieri* of the thirteenth and early-fourteenth centuries were usually organized according to the literary genres they contained, and different layouts were adopted within them. Compositions characterized by variable length and structure (e.g., *canzoni* and *ballate*) were written as prose (with line breaks only at the end of a stanza), while sonnets were written with verses arranged in two columns (following a horizontal reading perspective, from column A to column B).⁸⁶ By contrast, Petrarch adopted in his *Canzoniere* a free alternation of compositions in different metres (*canzone*, sonnet, *sestina*, *ballata* and madrigal), and decided to extend the sonnet layout (with two verses per line) to *canzoni* and other minor genres that were traditionally transcribed as prose. The only exception to this rule is in the arrangement of the *sestinas*, which the poet preferred to be read in vertical columns, probably to emphasize the specific rhythmic structure of the composition.⁸⁷

This complex page architecture was quite widespread during the first phase of diffusion of the work. In a survey of a group of twenty-nine fourteenth-century manuscripts of the *RVF*, I observed the following page layouts⁸⁸: eleven manuscripts follow the original layout chosen by the author; five have a two-column layout but were arranged for a “vertical” reading; six have a single-column layout; and six show a mixed system (see Chart 3 on the next page).

⁸⁴ On his hand, see: Zamponi 2004, 47–49; Signorini 2005, 109–19. The identification of this copyist as the person who had the task of transcribing ms. Vat. lat. 3195 and other noted manuscripts has recently been reopened in an important essay: Berté 2015.

⁸⁵ Brugnolo 2004, 108. The following pages owe much to this fundamental study.

⁸⁶ Around the middle of the century the horizontal layout prevailed: see Leonardi 2010, 282–83.

⁸⁷ See Brugnolo 2004, 119–20; Pulsoni 1996, 62–65. Leonardi stresses that such a solution, possibly unprecedented for *canzoni* in the previous Italian tradition, is “del tutto normale in ambito mediolatino, dove la disposizione in colonna è applicata ovunque si voglia mettere in risalto la presenza o la combinazione di una o più rime.” Leonardi 2010, 287–88.

⁸⁸ See Corsi 2014b.

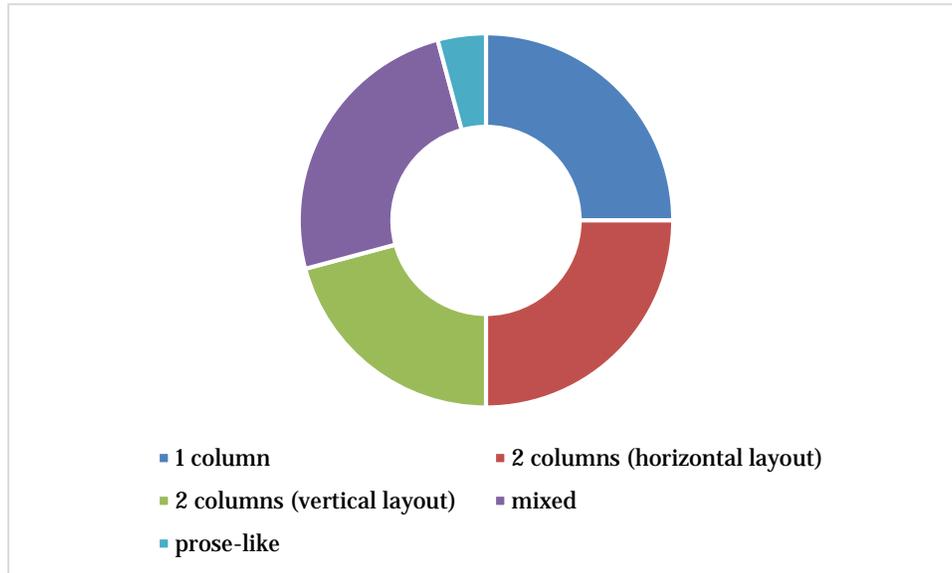


Chart 3. Page layout of the *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* manuscripts dating from the fourteenth century to the beginning of the fifteenth

In this survey, only one manuscript adopts a wholly different model, which we may call prose-like because it applies to all the poetic texts, including the sonnets, “il modulo grafico della canzone [...], presentando dell’intero *corpus* [...] una uguale e costante trascrizione a mo’ di prosa.”⁸⁹ This is ms. Chigi L. V.176, written in Boccaccio’s hand. Why did he choose such a layout (“più unica che rara”)⁹⁰ to transcribe the *Fragmentorum liber*?⁹¹ And which antigraph did he use? Could it have been a copy made by the author? We know for certain that Boccaccio was able to read and annotate some of Petrarch’s manuscripts. Some years ago, Maurizio Fiorilla surveyed these annotations and noted their different forms⁹²:

1. verbal notes, such as the playful phrase “nondum certaldenses erant” (“those from Certaldo were not yet available”) that he wrote in the

⁸⁹ Brugnolo 2004, 113.

⁹⁰ Brugnolo 2004, 113.

⁹¹ This is the title of the work for Boccaccio, as seen in the rubric at the beginning of the Chigi ms.: “Viri illustris atque poete celeberrimi Francisci Petrarce de Florentia Rome nuper laureati Fragmentorum liber incipit feliciter” (c. 43^v). On this title and its relationship with the title chosen by the author for the occurrence of the word *fragmentum* in both cases, see Bettarini Bruni 2013, 261; Eisner 2013, 167 n. 12 (with bibliography).

⁹² Fiorilla 2005, 35–38.

Pliny manuscript now in Paris. It refers to the onions from Certaldo, well known throughout Tuscany⁹³;

2. small drawings, such as the little head of Abraham that can be seen in one of the margins of the same codex⁹⁴;
3. marks and symbols designed to draw attention to parts of the text, such as the unmistakable *manicule*.

Moreover, the circumstances in which Petrarch allowed Boccaccio to transcribe his manuscripts are mentioned briefly in a letter that Boccaccio sent to him. Referring to the beautiful days they spent together in Padua during the summer of 1353, he writes:

Tu sacris vacabas studiis, ego compositionum tuarum avidus ex illis scribens summebam copiam.

You [Petrarch] were engrossed in holy studies, while I [Boccaccio], eager for your writings, was making my own copies of them.⁹⁵

Lastly, we should recall that when Boccaccio offered to sell all his books to Petrarch, the latter wrote that he would prefer to buy them rather than to allow them to be scattered among other buyers. In that way, their libraries would be united into one that Boccaccio could consult whenever he wished and the volumes would follow a single path after the poets' respective deaths.⁹⁶

Nevertheless, I doubt that the Chigi copy of Petrarch's songbook was made in 1363 from one of the author's antigraphs in Petrarch's house in Venice, on the Riva degli Schiavoni, for one specific paleographic reason. In that section of the manuscript we see, for the first time, a letter shape that is typical of Boccaccio's old age, the ç written with wavy cedilla, a sign that this section was the last to be copied in the Vatican anthology.⁹⁷ So this part of the manuscript must have been written around 1365, or a few years later.

And if it is true that Boccaccio could have obtained one of Petrarch's manuscripts around the middle of the decade, it seems difficult to imagine that an autograph by the poet (probably one that followed the layout later attested by ms. Vat. lat. 3195, a format already experimented with as early

⁹³ Paris, BNF, ms. Lat. 6802. The note was either added around 1350, when Petrarch lent Boccaccio the codex, or possibly in 1359 during a meeting in Milan; see Fiorilla 2005, 42. On this Paris manuscript, see Cursi and Fiorilla 2013, 55.

⁹⁴ C. 220^r. Fiorilla 2005, 47–52.

⁹⁵ Boccaccio (Massèra, ed.) 1928, 136.

⁹⁶ Petrarch, *Res seniles* 1.5.134–38. Cf. Cursi and Fiorilla 2013, 44.

⁹⁷ See Cursi 2013, 46–48; Cursi 2014, 93.

as the end of the 1330s in the draft codex ms. Vat. lat. 3196) would not have influenced the design of Boccaccio's own copy.⁹⁸ Indeed, any comparison between the autograph of the *Canzoniere* and the Chigi ms. "non può che misurare le differenze."⁹⁹

On balance, the choice of building a page layout characterized by the search for a "continuità senza soluzioni,"¹⁰⁰ favoring the prose-like layout of the *canzone* and extending it to the corpus in its entirety, was that of Boccaccio himself, and it is difficult to explain. Perhaps in adopting such a layout in the Chigi anthology he wanted to emphasize a "horizontal" view of Petrarch's poetry, as opposed to the "vertical" one chosen for Dante's poetry (referring, obviously, to the *Commedia*). However, this remains an open question, and one to which we will have to return after new, and deeper, reflections.

Finally, although this research is still in progress, I would like to try to draw some conclusions:

1. The earliest experiences of transcription of Dante's and Petrarch's Latin texts, contained in the miscellaneous Zibaldone Laurenziano (BML, ms. Plut. 29.8), show that from the 1330s onwards Boccaccio was perfectly aware of the symbolic meanings that could be transmitted using specific lettering and layout in manuscript books. With regard to the transcriptions of Dante's works, this is clearly attested by the layout chosen for the correspondence between Dante and Giovanni del Virgilio, which was inspired by the model represented by manuscripts containing the *Eclogues* and other major works of the Latin poet. Likewise, where Petrarch is concerned, the extraordinary layout and script chosen for the transcription of the text mentioning his coronation as poet laureate, the so-called *Notamentum*, was conceived as a piece of epigraphic writing inserted into an ideal open space.
2. The book model employed for the copy of Dante's *Commedia*, developed with the beginning of the transcription of the Toledo anthology around the end of the 1340s and then used again without variations in the later Riccardiana and Chigi manuscripts, is significantly at odds with the usual book models employed in Florence at that time. Boccaccio's editorial strategy can be compared to the one he used a

⁹⁸ Recently Anna Bettarini Bruni, on philological grounds, reaffirmed the hypothesis of an intermediate witness (see Bettarini Bruni 2013).

⁹⁹ Bettarini Bruni 2013, 264.

¹⁰⁰ Brugnolo 2004, 126.

few years earlier for the *Teseida*, taking advantage of suggestions from manuscripts of classical texts, such as the *Aeneid* or *Thebaid*, and, in this way, aiming to raise the new vernacular classicism to the level of Latin classical poetry.

3. The page architecture developed during the mid-1360s to copy the *Re-rum vulgarium fragmenta* in ms. Chig. L.V.176 exports the prose-like layout employed for the *canzoni* to the whole corpus of poetic texts. Boccaccio's choice is therefore far from the layout developed by Petrarch himself, as testified by his autograph/idiograph ms. Vat. lat. 3195. It is difficult to explain the reasoning behind such a choice. Perhaps the Certaldese wanted to create an opposition between the "vertical" progression of Dante's *Commedia* and the "horizontal" one of Petrarch's *Canzoniere*.
4. Over the years Boccaccio used different techniques of transcription for his Latin and vernacular anthologies: from "deferred copying" (requiring provisional bindings and blank spaces for later additions), to "split copying" (the making of independent codicological units, later joined together in a unitary book project), and the "continuous copy" (characterized by the making of a single codicological unit, with no interruptions from one section to the other).

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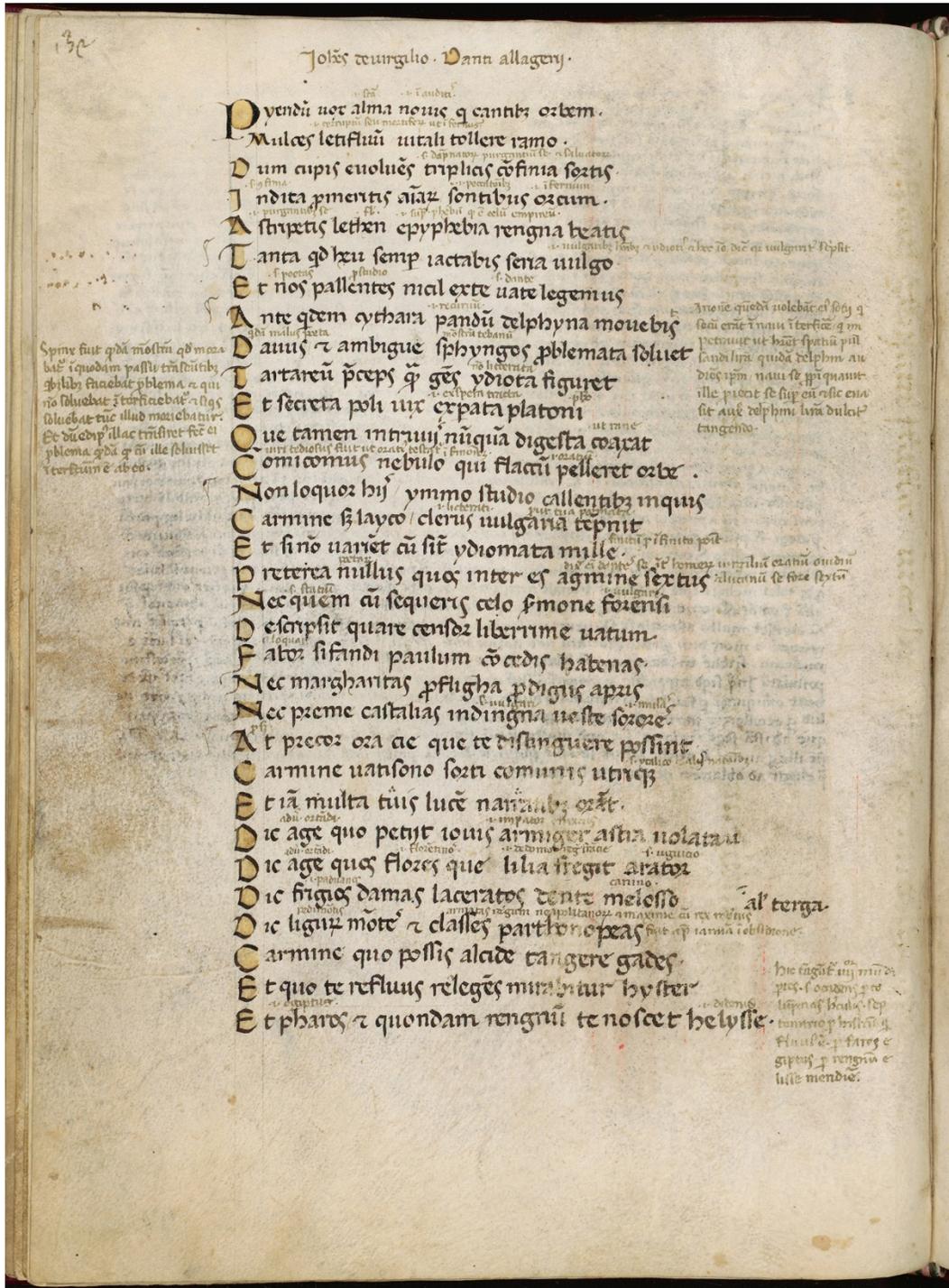


Figure 1. Florence, Plut. 29.8, c. 67v

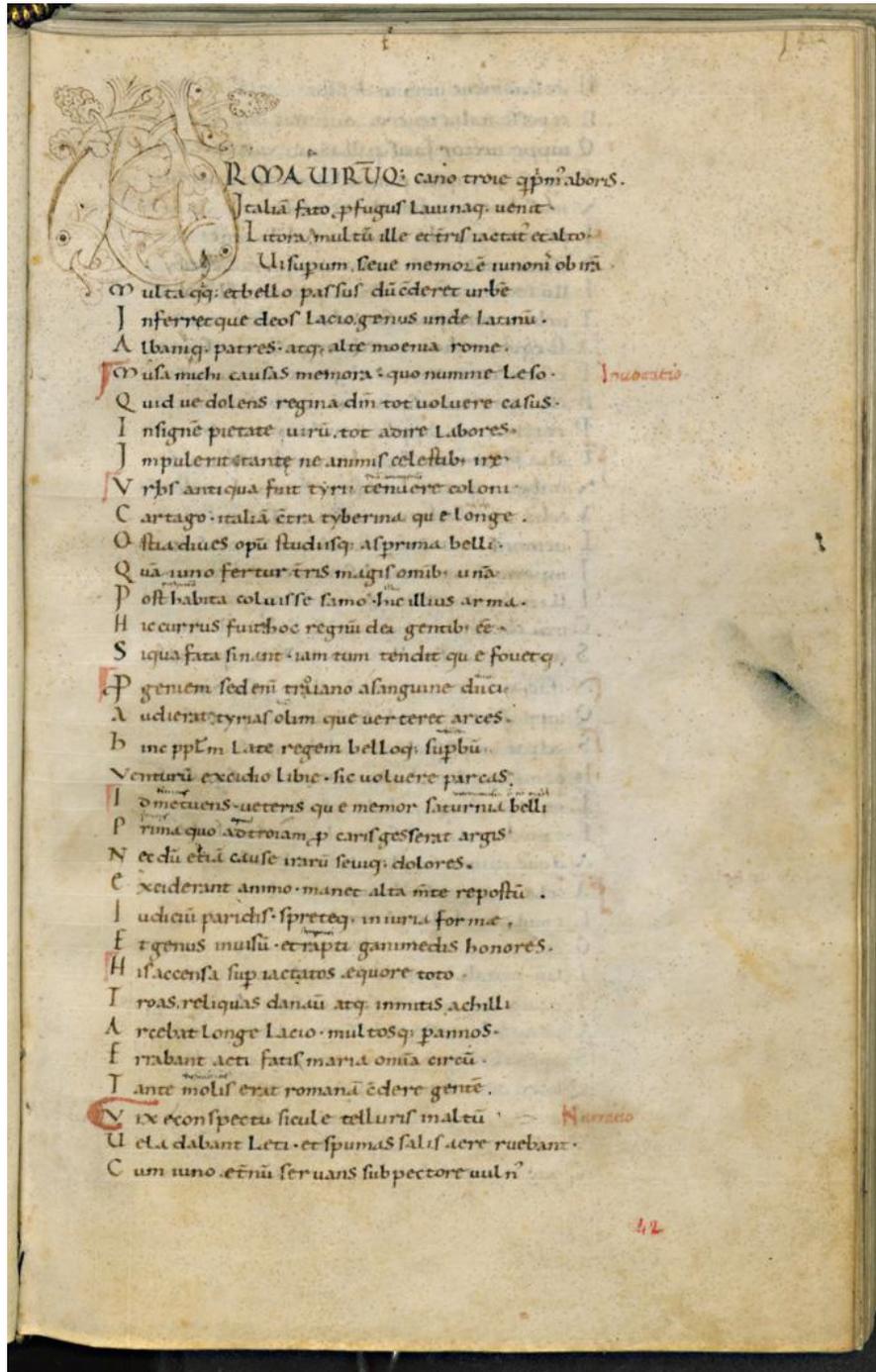


Figure 2. Florence, Plut. 39.3, c. 42r

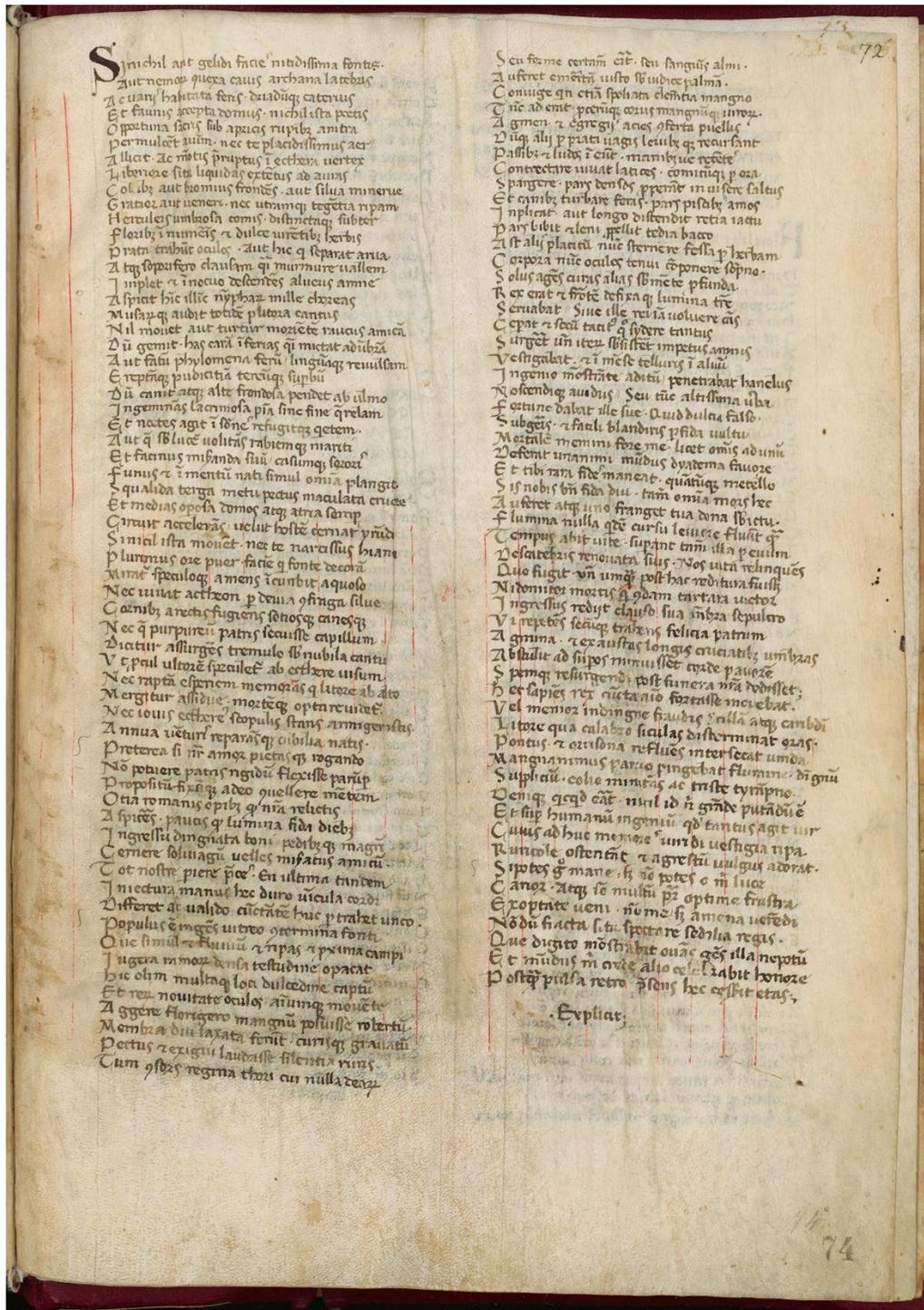


Figure 3. Florence, Plut. 29.8, c. 74r

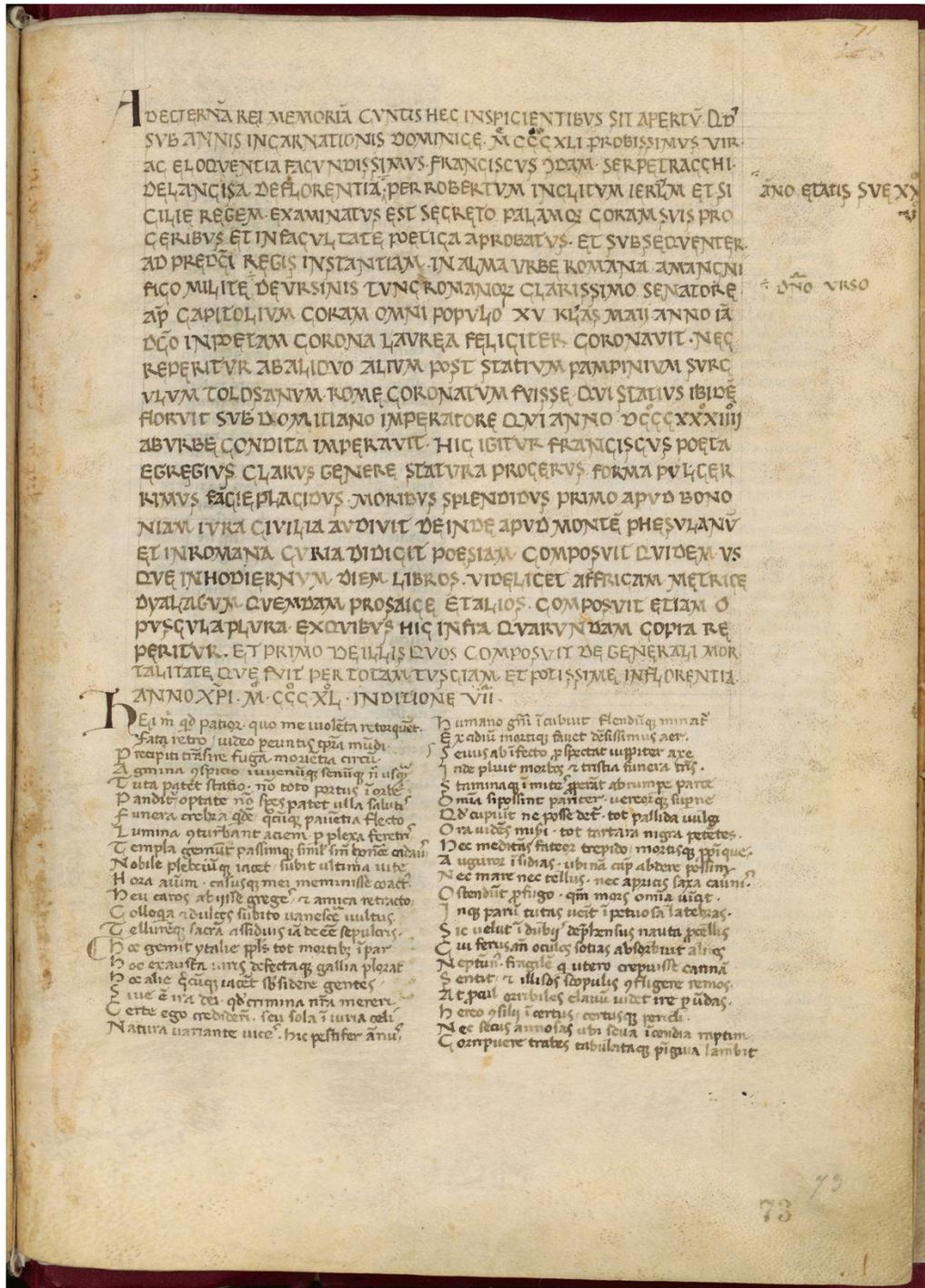


Figure 4. Florence, Plut. 29.8, c. 73r

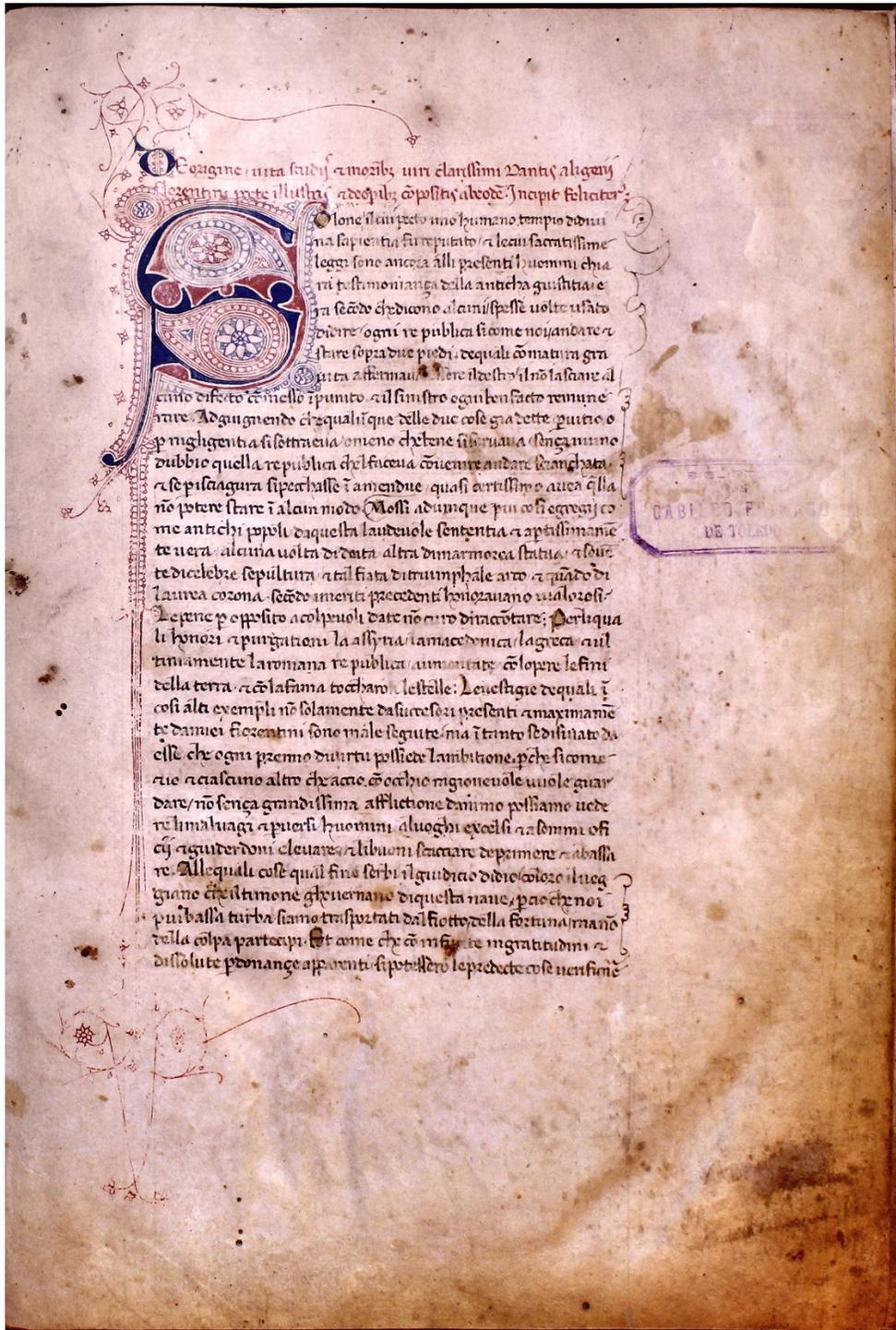


Figure 5. Toledo, Archivo y Biblioteca Capitulares 104.6, c. 2r

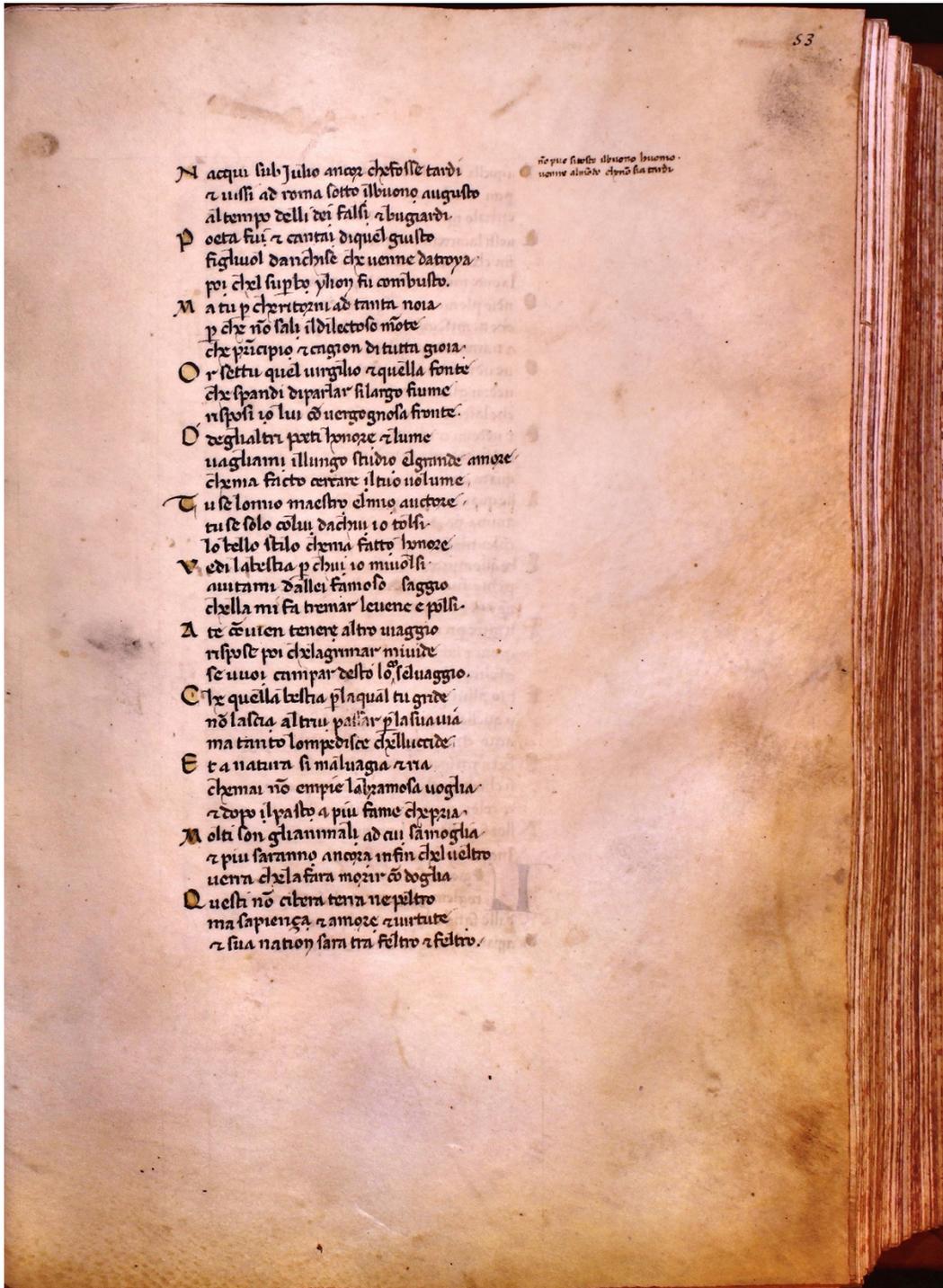


Figure 7. Toledo, Archivo y Biblioteca Capitulares 104.6, c. 53r

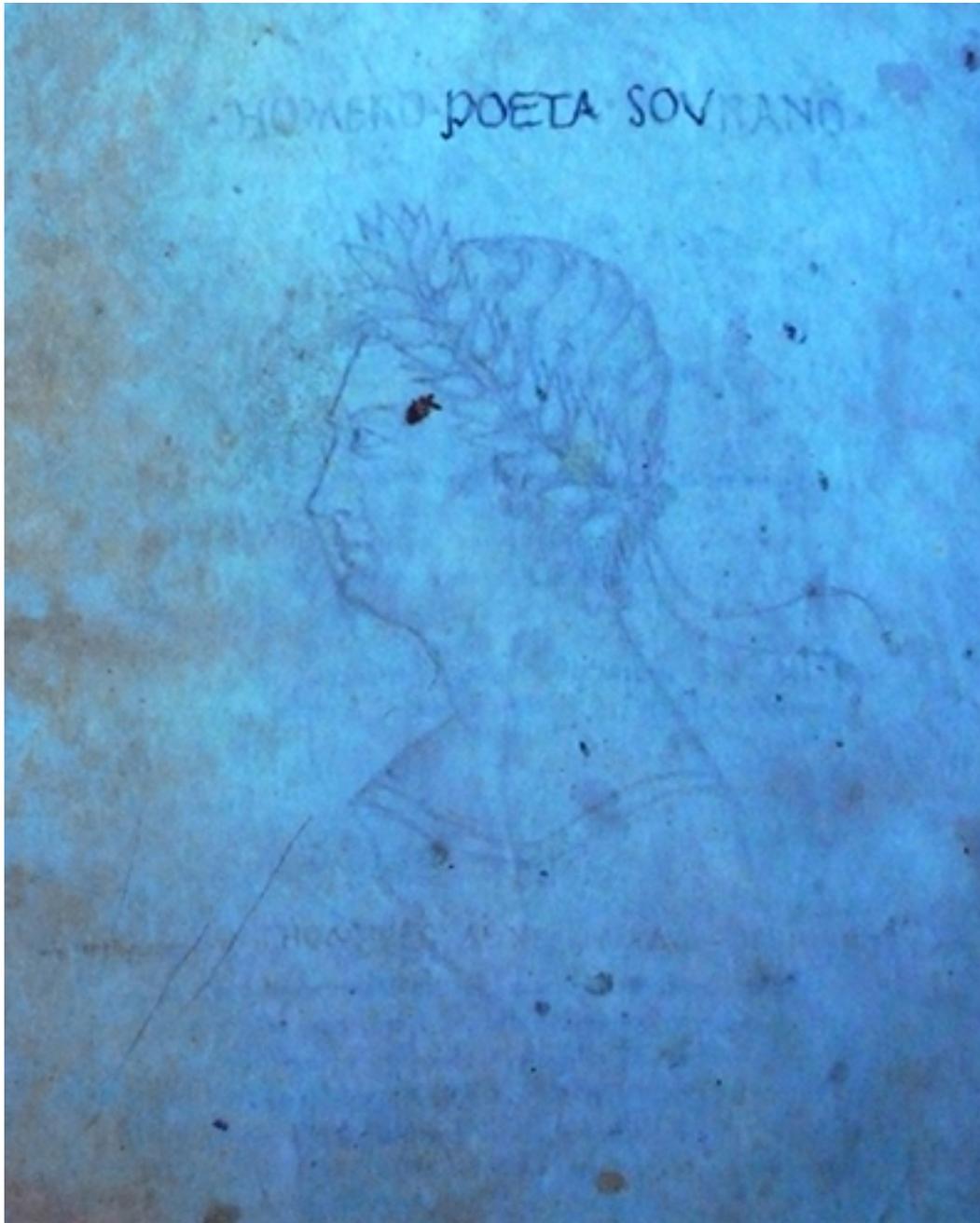


Figure 8. Toledo, Archivo y Biblioteca Capitulares 104.6, c. 267^v

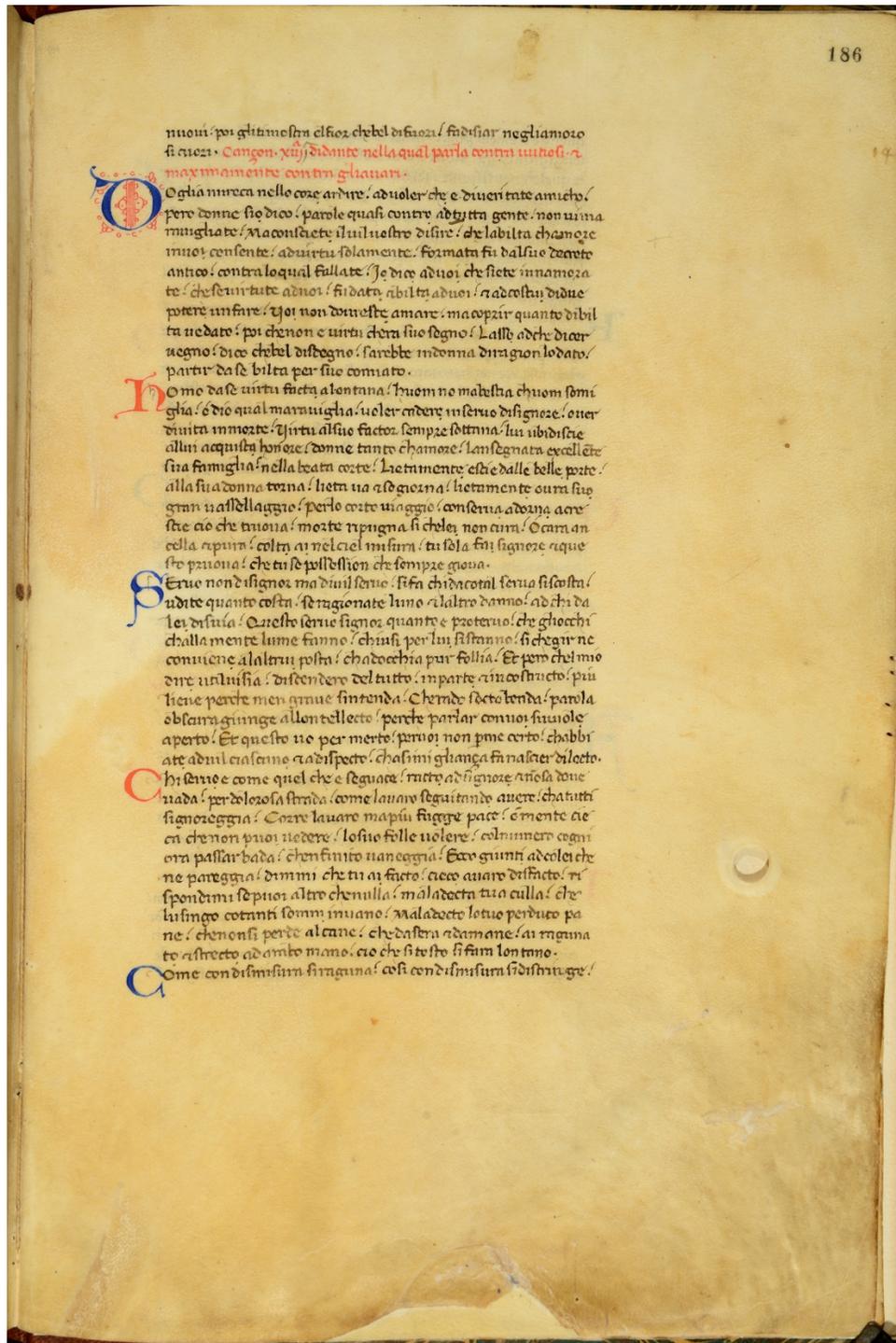


Figure 9. Florence, Riccardiana 1035, c. 186r

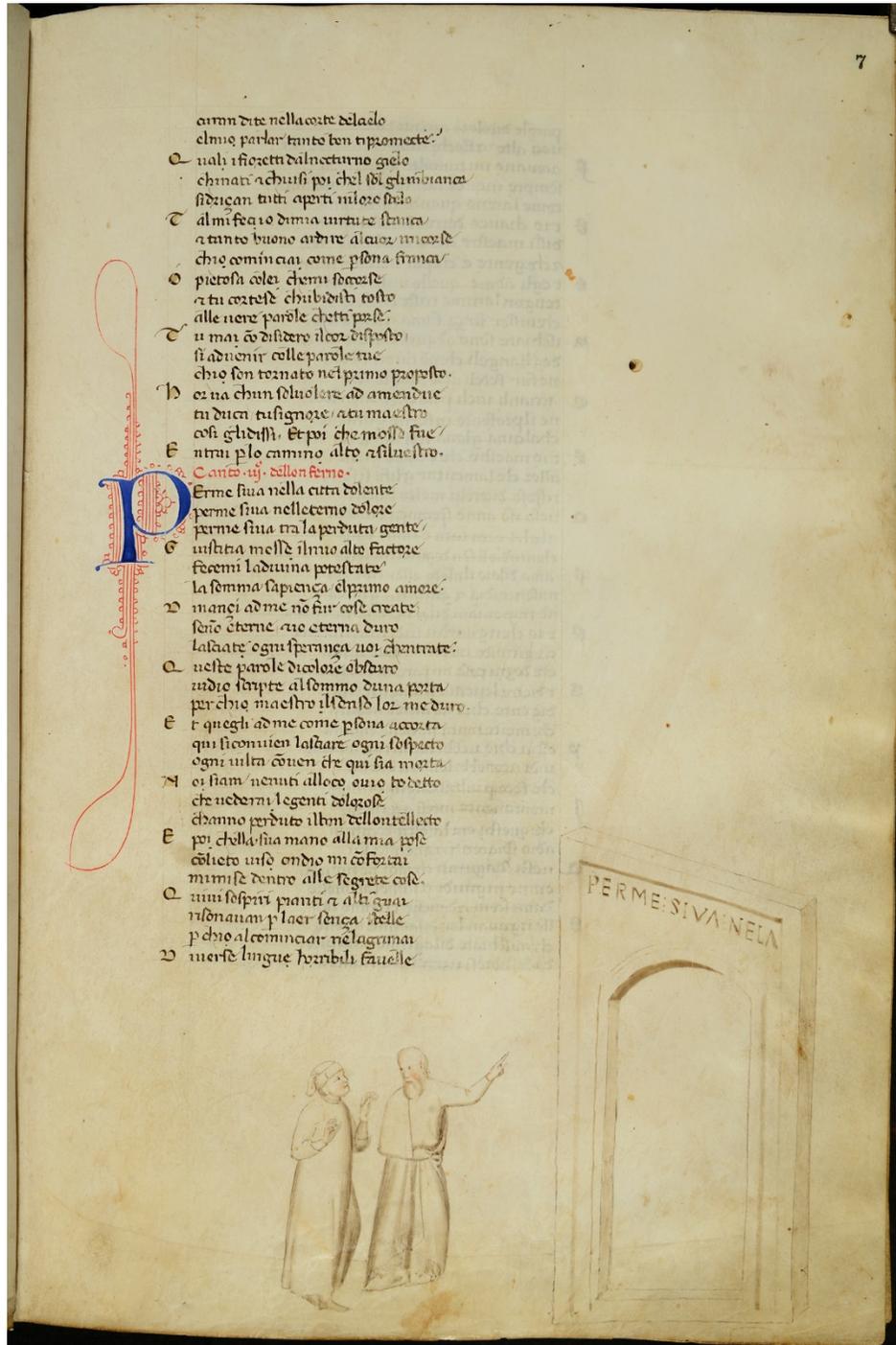


Figure 10. Florence, Riccardiana 1035, c. 7r

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