

Banella, Laura. *La Vita nuova del Boccaccio. Fortuna e tradizione*. Rome-Padua: Editrice Antenore, 2017. 328pp. ISBN: 9788884557049.

Giovanni Boccaccio, the first and one of the most ardent promoters of Dante's works in history, engaged throughout his life in a massive effort not only to incorporate elements of them actively into his own texts, but also to produce multiple copies of Dante's *Commedia*, *Vita Nova* and lyric poetry. To list all of Boccaccio's efforts here would be impossible, but it is important to point out that Laura Banella's book be understood in the context of a wider and systematic editorial activity of, first, Boccaccio the editor/scribe, and, second — but no less importantly — Boccaccio the author.

Chapter One, "Le trascrizioni del Boccaccio," begins with a thorough analysis and interpretation of the editorial note *Maraviglierannosi molti* that Boccaccio transcribed in the margins of the first *chartae* of his two copies of the *libello*, MSS Toledo 104.6 (To) and Chigi L V 176 (K²). In this note, the Certaldese advises his readers that he altered the text of the *libello* by marginalizing its divisions in order to "satisfy the desire of the author [Dante]" (6–7). Banella stresses the singularity of this note, in which Boccaccio establishes his relationship with the audience; furthermore, she interprets it as criticism of the text's previous and contemporaneous circulation. The discussion in this chapter continues with an analysis of the system of initials and paragraph signs in To and K² in an attempt to contextualize Boccaccio's transcriptions of the *Vita Nova* within the extant tradition (33–64), after which the author concludes that certain elements of Boccaccio's transcription system might be due to the exemplar he used (65–68).

In an effort to demonstrate Boccaccio's hypothesized dependence on the contemporary modes of the *Vita Nova*'s circulation, the following chapter, "La tradizione parallela," examines copies of the text that can be found at the same stemmatic level as Boccaccio's two copies, but that are independent of his editorial interventions. Only three extant copies of the full text of the *Vita Nova* circulated at this time: Martelli 12 (M), Chigi L VIII 305 (K) and Magliabechiano VI 143 (S). In addition to these, several fragments have survived: the Laurentian Library's Acquisti e doni 224 (O), Biblioteca Capitolare di Verona 445 (V) and Trivulziano 1058 (T). Also taken into consideration are two fragments deriving from one codex labeled FtCa (Tordi 339 of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale in Florence and the Trespiano fragment kept at the Carmelo di Santa Maria degli Angeli in the same city). After a detailed analysis of the *mise-en-page*, and especially of the system of initials that denotes the partition of the text, Banella concludes that Boccaccio's system of transcription is indeed at least partially derived from other codices located at the same stemmatic level of the *Vita Nova*.

Chapter Three, “I codici *descripti*,” branches away from To and K², placing focus on the copies of the *Vita Nova* made from these two versions and on the degree to which their scribes stayed within Boccaccio’s *mise-en-page* (and, therefore, his version of the *libello*). A prominent place in this discussion is reserved for the Raccolta Aragonesa and for its place in the *libello*’s circulation, from both the material and sociocultural standpoints. Manuscripts analyzed here tend to adopt different aspects of Boccaccio’s transcription but do not represent a thoroughly coherent corpus. However, they all preserve the exclusive characteristic of Boccaccio’s *Vita Nova*, namely the same treatment of prose and poetry. In other words, poetry and prose belong to the same textual level from the material standpoint, but neither has primacy on the transcribed page.

Chapter Four, “*Editor, auctor, auctoritas*,” is aimed towards establishing Boccaccio’s roles within To and K². After contextualizing the terms *auctor*, *scriptor* and *editor*, Banella investigates the figure of Boccaccio the *editor* in the two copies of the *Vita Nova* and in his other works, including the *Trattatello in laude di Dante* and the *Decameron*. The discussion leads the author to claim that even though the figure of the editor in medieval book-making was still very unstable, Boccaccio significantly contributes to the advancement of this role: “*editor*, when behaving as an *auctor*, becomes, in a certain sense, an *auctoritas*” (245).

Finally, the last chapter, “*La Vita nuova: testi e contesti*,” examines historical and material contexts in which Boccaccio’s *Vita Nova* was realized, focusing first on the ‘prehistory’ of the *libello*’s circulation in the first decades after its composition, the period from which we have no extant copies and therefore must look for indirect evidence. This section of the chapter also discusses two roles Boccaccio assumes in his literary activity, those of author and editor, which constantly complement each other throughout his literary career. This chapter continues with a reconstruction of the readership of Boccaccio’s *Vita Nova* before the Cinquecento and closes with a consideration of anthologies that transmitted the *libello* through centuries of its circulation.

The volume closes with a tripartite appendix that offers a description of codices of the *Vita Nova* from the Boccaccian tradition, a summary of the previous discussion on paragraphs and sub-paragraphs and a stemmatic representation of the relationships among the *libello*’s extant copies. The appendix concludes with a series of figures illustrating the most salient material aspects of the *mise-en-page* of the *Vita Nova*’s text from the Boccaccian tradition.

Useful Indices, as well as an extensive bibliography, are provided at the end of the volume. In sum, *La Vita nuova del Boccaccio* will be a useful tool

for those who wish to understand better an important phase of the *Vita Nova*'s circulation on the one hand and Boccaccio's intense editorial activity and motivation(s) behind it on the other. This study will be of interest to scholars interested in the *Vita Nova*'s circulation in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and to those interested in learning about minutiae and the context of Boccaccio's editorial interventions in Dante's *libello*.

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