# Monuments More Enduring than Bronze:
# Boccaccio and Paper Inscriptions

On 20 October 1374, in almost the last year of his life, Boccaccio finally received in Certaldo the sad news from Francescuolo da Brossano, Petrarch's son-in-law, that the great poet had breathed his last in his retreat at Arqua, in mid-July. We do not have Francesco's letter, which presumably touched also upon a tidy bequest of florins to purchase for his old friend a warm garment for nocturnal study and research: insomnia was a shared affliction.[1] Boccaccio's delayed reply of 3 November, offering his condolences to Francescuolo, far from being a spontaneous outpouring of grief, is a carefully composed piece of consolatory rhetoric, a genre famously essayed in a long letter of 1361 to the exiled Pino de' Rossi.[2]

First Boccaccio treats Petrarch's elevation to a better life, rhetorically balancing the deceased's tranquil joy in heaven with the letter-writer's own continued travails in this earthly life, beset as he is by (graphically described) illness. Boccaccio then tells Francescuolo to comfort Petrarch's daughter that her father had passed away after a long, full and productive life, after which he turns to the subject of a monument:

> Superaddis, eum apud Arquatis vicum in agro patavino clausisse diem et in eadem villula iussisse cineres suos perpetue quieti tradi,[3] teque illi erecturum in memoriam sempiternam sepulcrum speciosum atque magnificum (*Epistole* XXIV, 11).

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[1] For the will, dated 9 April 1370, see Francesco Petrarca, *Opere latine*, vol. 4, edited by Antonietta Bufano, Turin, UTET: 1975, pp. 1342–51. The clause relating to the legacy to Boccaccio reads: 'Domino Iohanni de Certaldo seu Boccaccii, verecunde admodum tanto viro tam modicum, lego quinquaginta florenos auri de Florentia pro una veste hiemali ad studium lucubrationesque nocturnas.' [To Giovanni of Certaldo, or Boccaccio, ashamedly, given how small it is for such a man, I bequeath fifty golden florins of Florence to purchase a winter coat for studying and night-time researches.]

[2] The letter, edited by Giuseppe Chiecchi, can be found in volume V, 2 of the Mondadori *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, Milano: Mondadori, 1994, pp. 617–87.

[3] The relevant clause in the will, which lists alternative burial dispositions to cover a wide range of eventualities, states: 'Si autem Arquade, ubi ruralis habitatio mea est, diem clausero et Deus tantum michi concesserit, quod valde cupio, capellam ibi exiguam ad honorem beatissime Marie Virginis extruere, illic sepeliri eligo; alioquin inferius in aliquo loco honesto iuxta ecclesiam plebis.' [If I end my days at Arqua, where my country house is, and God grants me what I greatly desire, namely there to build a small chapel to the most blessed Virgin Mary, then I elect to be buried there, otherwise in whatever suitable place further down, next to the parish church.]

[You furthermore add that he ended his life at Arqua in the Paduan countryside, and that he ordered that his ashes be brought to that same little town for their eternal rest, and that you would be erecting, to his everlasting memory, a beautiful and splendid tomb.]

Such a proposal was directly counter to Petrarch's own will and testament, which specifically stipulated modest, humble burial, and required Francescuolo to respect such wishes, upon pain of divine as well as (posthumous) Petrarchan wrath.[4] Whether Boccaccio was aware of the poet's wishes, either through direct knowledge of the will,[5] or through mention of it in Francescuolo's letter, is, however, unknown.

This pious declaration from Francescuolo prompts Boccaccio to launch into an elaborate discussion of literary pilgrimage, whereby tourists from distant lands (catalogued as an 'oecumene') are drawn to localities not by their civic monuments and physical charms but by the mere fact that great men, and particularly great writers (such as Virgil, Ovid, Homer) are bur-

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[4] See Francesco Petrarca, *Opere latine*, ed. by Antonietta Bufano, cit., pp. 1342–44: 'Corpus autem hoc terrenum ac mortale, nobilium gravem sarcinam animorum, terre unde sibi origo est volo restitui et hoc abscque omni pompa, sed cum summa humilitate et abiectione quanta esse potest. De quo heredem meum et amicos omnes rogo obsecro et obtestor et adiuro per viscera misericordie Dei nostri et per caritatem, si quam ad me unquam habuerunt, neque falsi specie honoris hoc negligant, cum sic omnino me deceat ac sic velim, ita ut, si forte quod absit contrafecerint, teneantur Deo et michi de gravi utriusque offensa in die iudicii respondere' (4). [This earthly and mortal body, a heavy burden for nobler minds, I wish to have returned to the earth from which it came, and for this to be done with no ceremony at all, but rather with complete humility and as much modesty as can be. And I beg, swear, call as witness and enjoin my heir and my friends, in the name of God's mercy and of charity, if they have any towards me, that they do not neglect this on account of a false sense of respect, for it is what suits me and what I want, but should they, perish the thought, go against my wishes, then let them be held to account, before God and myself, on the day of judgment, for this double slight.] Petrarch's view on the transitory reliability of stone monuments can be seen in the second book of the *Africa*, where death is allayed by monuments, but monuments themselves are not as long-lasting as books (which themselves suffer oblivion, thus the third death): 'Quod si falsa vagam delectat gloria mentem, | Aspice quid cupias: transibunt tempora, corpus | Hoc cadet et cedent indigno membra sepulcro; | Mox ruet et bustum titulusque in marmore sectus | Occidet: hinc mortem patieris, nate, secundam.' [For if vainglory delights your eager mind, look upon what you desire: times shall pass, this body shall fall, and your limbs will fall into an unworthy grave; soon both the tomb and the inscription carved in marble will collapse. Thus, my son, you will suffer a second death.]

[5] Boccaccio met Petrarch for the last time in Padua, two years before the making of the will, in 1368. Any knowledge of it, therefore, is likely to have been transmitted by letter, if at all.

ied in them.[6] Ungrateful Florence, however, had not been able to bury its most famous sons, whose tombs were now elsewhere. Boccaccio, as a Florentine, cannot help envying tiny Arqua its privilege of hosting great Petrarch's remains. The sentiments sound rehearsed, and indeed they are, for Boccaccio had already employed them, years before, in the opening sequence of the *Trattatello*, when talking of Dante, buried in Ravenna.

After this pilgrimage-digression, Boccaccio returns to the question of Petrarch's tomb. He initially gives it his qualified approval, moving from a flattering general endorsement to a cultural warning about sepulchral limitations:

> Sepulcrum autem illi erigi laudo: celsitudo enim fulgoris sui et operum suorum magnificentia meruere. Satis tamen credibile est quoniam in conspectu eruditorum parvi momenti erit,[7] cum sepulti virtutes, non ornamenta cadaverum prospectentur a talibus, quibus ipse se sole clariorem hactenus multis in voluminibus fecit; verum ignaris erit monimentum. Horum enim libri sculpture sunt atque picture, et insuper causa percunctandi quisnam tam grandis in eo iaceat homo, que illius merita, qui splendores; et dum responsum talibus dabitur, procul dubio ampliabitur aliqualiter prestantissimi senis gloria. (*Epistole* XXIV, 20–22)

> [However, I praise the fact that a tomb is being built for him: the loftiness of his brilliance and the magnificence of his works fully deserved it. Nevertheless it is quite easy to believe that in the view of learned men it will be of small moment, since it is the virtues of the one buried, and not any honours to the corpses, which are looked upon by such men. In their eyes, with his many volumes, he made himself shine more than the sun. But the tomb will stand as a reminder to the ignorant: their books are constituted by sculptures and paintings, cause, furthermore, to reflect on what great man may lie in it, what his achievements were, what were his reasons for fame. And whilst a response is being given to such people, doubtless the glory of this most exceptional old man will be somewhat increased.]

Boccaccio then cites the case of the famously unburied Roman general Pompey, for whom the whole Egyptian coastline is now metaphorically a tomb, whilst the starry firmament above provides a boundless funeral ornament. No man-made structure would ever have been the measure for

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[6] Petrarch himself refers to such cultural tourism, but in relation to birthplaces, in a *Senilis* of 1370 to Giovanni Fei (XIII, 3), where he relates — with somewhat insincere irony — that the very house in Arezzo where he had been born was now a protected building, under municipal statute, as the birthplace of a great poet.

[7] This phrase might just possibly indicate that Boccaccio was aware of the contents of Petrarch's will, which closes the dispositions on burial with the statement: 'Hec de sepulcro — plura fateor quam virum doctum deceat — ab indocto dicta sint.' [That concludes burial: I have said more than befits a learned man: let it be said as if by one unlearned.]

such a great man. Boccaccio rounds off this classical example with a warning to Francescuolo:

> Quam ob rem, antequam ceperis, prospecta quid facturus sis. (*Epistole* XXIV, 26)

> [And that is why, before you start, reflect on what you are about to do.]

The implied criticism by flattery is that, whatever expense and magnificence Francescuolo employs on behalf of his father-in-law, Petrarch's real worth, as a writer, will outweigh it. What might seem like a mere consolatory topos is, of course, a preparation for another section of the letter. Boccaccio refers briefly, if generically, to the material legacy Petrarch has made to him,[8] and then gets to his real *petitio*. The legacy he really desires is access to Petrarch's books, the proper monument of his greatness, particularly the *Africa* and the *Trionfi*, which Boccaccio continued to fear might be dispersed or even (in a fit of Virgilian emulation) destroyed.[9] Thus, the move from physical monument to metaphorical repository is paralleled by a tacit comparison of the fifty gold florins legacy (for the purchase of a fur-lined study-coat) to the much more valuable gift of access to studying Petrarch's writings.

This exercise privileging the metaphorical over the literal was something Boccaccio had got into the habit of doing. Let us return to the *Trattatello*, in its first Toledan version, written perhaps a quarter of a century earlier than the letter to Brossano. Boccaccio begins by citing Solon (already metaphorised as in the first sentence as a 'temple' of learning)[10] who states that republics should reward those who had served them well and punish those who had harmed them. The great men of antiquity had been honoured in their cities by a range of public practices:

> alcuna volta di deità, altra di marmorea statua, e sovente di celebre sepoltura, e tal fiata di triunfale arco, e quando di laurea corona... (*Trattatello*, 1a red., 2)

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[8] The relevant passage reads: 'me inter heredes suos, ut scribis, numerari voluit, relicta michi satis ampla portione bonorum.' [as you write, he wished to count me amongst his heirs. What is left to me is quite enough of his goods.]

[9] In lines 7–9 of the 'Versus [...] ad Affricam' (*Carmina* IX), written shortly after the letter to Francescuolo, Boccaccio announces: 'crepitentque furentes | in celum flamme damnatis, credo, papiris | supplicium.' [the flames already crackle skyward: punishment, I believe, for your already sentenced papers.]

[10] Boccaccio's reference to Solon at the opening to the *Trattatello*, along with a later metaphorical reference to a limping foot, is a sure sign of his dependence on Petrarch's *Familiaris* 8, 10, 13.

Dante, on the other hand, had not been so honoured by Florence, to Boccaccio's intense shame. It is a criminal neglect. As a Florentine citizen, Boccaccio feels bound to make amends. Interestingly, he uses a legal term, no doubt left over from his law studies in Naples: he is bound 'in solido,' in other words as 'jointly and severally liable,' which means that he is individually obliged to make reparations as part of the collective debt of the whole population.

The natural gesture of reparation in antiquity would have been to erect a monument. Boccaccio does not have the means for this, so declares instead:

> Come che io a tanta cosa non sia sofficiente, nondimeno secondo la mia picciola facultà, quello che essa [Fiorenza] dovea verso lui magnificamente fare, non avendolo fatto, m'ingegnerò di far io; non con statua o con egregia sepoltura, delle quali è oggi appo noi spenta l'usanza, né basterebbono a ciò le mie forze, ma con lettere povere a tanta impresa. (*Trattatello*, 1a red., 8)

Behind this apparently spontaneous gesture is a passage from Horace's *Carmina* (III, 30), where the poet declares that his own writings, not his material commemoration by others, are what will make him immortal:

> Exegi monumentum aere perennius
> Regalique situ pyramidum altius,
> Quod non imber edax, non Aquilo impotens
> Possit diruere aut innumerabilis
> Annorum series et fuga temporum.

> [I have constructed a monument more durable than bronze, loftier than the royal site of the pyramids, which neither consuming rainfall nor the headstrong north wind, nor the countless sequence of years and the flight of aeons can tear down.]

As Boccaccio was perfectly aware, Horace's formula was emulated by Ovid, as a closing formula to the fifteenth book of the *Metamorphoses* (871–79):

> Iamque opus exegi, quod nec Iovis ira nec ignis nec poterit ferrum nec edax abolere vetustas. cum volet, illa dies, quae nil nisi corporis huius ius habet, incerti spatium mihi finiat aevi: parte tamen meliore mei super alta perennis astra ferar, nomenque erit indelebile nostrum, quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris, ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama, siquid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam.

> [And now I have erected a work which neither the wrath of Jupiter nor fire nor iron nor consuming old age shall be able to cancel. When that day comes, which will have no hold over anything but my body, the span of my uncertain age will cease. But I shall be borne, everlasting in the better part of me, above the lofty stars, and my name shall be permanent. Wherever Roman rule is displayed to the world I shall be read on the lips

> of our citizens, and I shall live by my glory through all centuries, if the prophecies of the sages have some truth in them.]

This is exactly the passage Petrarch quotes in the *Collatio laureationis*, when making the connection between poets as singers of themselves and singers of others:

> Item nominis immortalitas; eaque duplex: prima in se ipsis, secunda in his, quos tali honore dignati sunt. De prima fidentissime loquitur Ovidius in fine Metamorphoseos: 'Iamque opus exegi [...]' (*Collatio laureationis* 10, 1–4)

> [The same goes for immortality of reputation: it too is double: the first is for themselves, the second for thos who have been celebrated by such honour. Ovid talks persuasively about the first kind at the end of the *Metamorphoses*: 'And now I have erected a work etc']

Boccaccio, already familiar with this Petrarchan re-use,[11] clearly uses the Horatian-Ovidian conceit here in the *Trattatello*, but has to re-contextualise it, in terms of reparation, to make it work. There are two operations to carry out. One is to make paper not just a rival but a substitute for marble. The current lack of enthusiasm for grandiose monuments may be historically a consequence of the Black Death, which had seen a levelling of funerary practice, as Boccaccio himself gruesomely details in the *Decameron*'s introduction.[12] However, the real purpose of mentioning this lapsed physical tradition is to elevate the modest metaphorical offering that Boccaccio is about to make instead. Writing is so much more precious and long-lasting than stone. The biographer is poor, but he has letters aplenty to offer 'in solido':

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[11] See Giuseppe Billanovich, *Petrarca letterato*, Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1947, p. 77–78. For the presence of the *Collatio* in the *Trattatello*, see Giovanni Boccaccio, *Opere in versi, Corbaccio, Trattatello in laude di Dante: Prose latine, Epistole*, ed. by Pier Giorgio Ricci, Milano: Ricciardi, 1965, p. 620, n. 5. For the combined use of the two laureation documents in the letter of invitation from the Florentine Signoria, see Ginetta Auzzas, "Studi sulle epistole. I. L'invito della signoria fiorentina al Petrarca", *Studi sul Boccaccio* 4 (1967): 203–40 (pp. 209 and 213ff.)

[12] See *Decameron* I, Introduzione dell'autore, 32–35. For a possible echo in the *Genealogie*, see V, 31, 4, where Boccaccio provides a euhemerist explanation of why the sons and daughters of Amphion and Niobe remained unburied for nine years: 'seu aliter potuit contigisse hos, imminente peste, populari ritu sepultos et novem annis neglectos, demum regio more lapideis urnis inmissos.' [Or maybe what happened to them was different, because of the raging plague, they remained neglected, buried merely according to popular rite, and long afterwards placed in stone sarcophagi in the manner of kings.]

> Di queste ho, e di queste darò, acciò che igualmente, e in tutto e in parte, non si possa dire, fra le nazioni strane,verso cotanto poeta la sua patria essere stata ingrata. (*Trattatello* 1a red., 8)

The second operation is to shift the Horatian-Ovidian conceit from self-monumentalization to the monumentalization of others. The writer, in other words, has to show this special power to provide great men with a fitting virtual monument, more splendid than mere funerary ornaments. Boccaccio was aware, from his reading of Petrarch's *Collatio laureationis* (also used, alongside the *Privilegium*, in the compilation of the *De Vita et Moribus*), of the famous anecdote in Cicero's *Pro Archia* (24) about the visit by Alexander to the tomb of Achilles.[13] Petrarch at his crowning reports it thus:

> Et nimirum hinc exclamatio illa est Alexandri Macedonis, qui, cum ad sepulcrum Achillis venisset, dixisse fertur suspirans: 'O fortunate adolescens, qui talem tue virtutis preconem invenisti!' Homerum signans poetarum principem, qu‹e›m Achillis famam constat egregiis nobilitasse carminibus (*Collatio laureationis* 17)

> [Whence that exclamation of Alexander of Macedon is no surprise: when he came to the tomb of Achilles, he was drawn sighing to say 'O lucky youth, you discovered such a mouthpiece for your bravery.' He meant Homer the prince of poets, who he maintained had nobilitated Achilles's fame with verses.]

Petrarch also used the same anecdote in *Familiares* IV, 3, part of the letter sequence leading to laureation, to praise Robert of Anjou for writing to him with a copy of the inscription, penned by the king himself, intended for his niece Clemenza's tomb.[14] It occurs in the *Africa* (IX, 51–54), in a

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[13] *Pro Archia* 24: 'Quam multos scriptores rerum suarum magnus ille Alexander secum habuisse dicitur! Atque is tamen, cum in Sigeo ad Achillis tumulum astitisset: "O fortunate" inquit "adulescens, qui tuae virtutis Homerum praeconem inveneris!" Et vere. Nam nisi Illias illa exstitisset, idem tumulus, qui corpus eius contexerat, nomen etiam obruisset. [How many writers about his deeds is that great Alexander said to have had! But, when he stood at Achilles's tomb, he said: 'O lucky youth, who found Homer as your bard. And truly so. For unless that *Iliad* existed, the same burial mound, which had covered his body, and even his fame, would collapse.]

[14] *Familiares* IV, 3, 12–14: 'Quanta demum gloria est quam tu sibi supremis laudibus peperisti! certe, dum illud tuum sive epygramma sive epythaphium dici mavis, quod eterne mansurum esse confido, nuper defuncte neptis memoriam celebrabit, semper illa tecum et cum clarissimis omnis evi nominibus vivet. Erunt qui mortem immaturam et iacturam modici temporis tali cupiant compensasse pangerico, quique, quod de Achille dixisse fertur Alexander Macedo, suspirantes dicant: 'O fortunatam, que talem preconem tue virtutis invenisti!' Sed iam metuo ne prolixitas in fastidium vergat. [How great is the glory, finally, which you produced for her with your lofty praises! Certainly,

passage which foretells the future poetic triumph of Petrarch on behalf of Scipio. It is also the matter of comparison for sonnet 187 of the *Canzoniere*, 'Giunto Alexandro a la famosa tomba.' Though it was a story that could also be found in Walter of Châtillon's *Alexandreis*,[15] it would have immediately reminded its contemporary readers of Petrarch. Boccaccio treasured the Alexander anecdote assiduously. It would resurface many years later, right at the end of the *Genealogie* (XV, 13, 6), and it would be paraphrased obliquely in a letter of 1372 to Pietro Piccolo da Monteforte (*Epistole* XX, 11).

After this extended sepulchral metaphor, Boccaccio turns to the biography proper, abandoning the tomb analogy completely. But monumental thematics return once again, literally, when it is time to discuss Dante's burial in Ravenna, a city Boccaccio regards as a funeral monument in its

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whilst that epigram of yours or rather epitaph as you prefer to call it, which I am sure will last for ever, shall celebrate the memory of your niece, she will always live alongside you and with the most celebrated reputation through the ages. There shall be some who shall desire that an early death has been compensated for with such a panegyric, and some who shall say, sighingly, what Alexander of Macedon was drawn to say: O fortunate maid, who discovered such a bard for your virtue.' But already I fear lest my wordiness annoys...]

[15] See Galteri de Castellione, *Alexandreis*, ed. by Marvin L. Colker, Padova: Antenore, 1978, bk 1, 478–85: 'Tot bellatorum Macedo dum busta pererrat | Argolicos inter cineres manesque sepultos, | Quos tamen accusant titulis epygrammata certis, | Ecce minora loco quam fama uidit Achillis | Forte sepulchra sui tali distincta sigillo: | "Hectoris Eacides domitor clam incautus inermis | Occubui, Paridis traiectus arundine plantas." | Hec breuitas regem ducis ad spectacula tanti | Compulit, et sterilem mulso saciauit harenam, | Et suffire locum sumpta properauit acerra. | "O fortuna uiri superexcellentior," inquit | "Cuius Meonium redolent preconia uatem, | Qui licet exanimem distraxerit Hectora, robur | Et patrem patriae, summum tamen illud honoris | Arbitror augmentum, quod tantum tantus habere | Post obitum meruit preconem laudis Homerum."' [As Alexander strolled between the graves of so many warriors, amongst the remains and buried shades of the Greeks who were marked by the clear inscriptions on their tombs, behold he saw the grave of Achilles, perhaps smaller than his fame merited, distinguished by this epitaph: 'I son of Aeacus and tamer of Hector, whilst I was unarmed and not on my guard, furtively met my death, when I was pierced on the sole of my feet by Paris's arrow.' This shortness made the king ponder upon such a leader: he soaked the barren sand with a libation of wine, and hastened to purify the spot with incense. 'O how extraordinary the fortune of this man,' he said, 'whose eulogies are redolent of the Maeonian bard.' He who had been permitted to drag lifeless Hector, he who was the strength and father of the fatherland, his greatest achievement, I believe, was to have deserved, after his death, the eulogy of mighty Homer.]

own right.[16] Guido Novello da Polenta, after due ceremony, including the placing of 'ornamenti poetici,' had Dante provisionally buried:

> in una arca lapidea, nella quale ancora giace, il fece porre. (*Trattatello* 1a red., 87)

Guido's intention was to erect a monument so fitting that even if Dante were to be entirely forgotten for his works he would be remembered for his tomb. Boccaccio is implying here that Dante's patron is in danger of turning Horace's 'monumentum exegi' topos on its head. Already we can see the germ of the implicit criticism Boccaccio would later apply to Francescuolo da Brossano. Luckily, fate intervenes, and Guido loses both his rule and his life before putting his intention into practice. However, this project had already attracted the interest of poets, who vied for the privilege of providing a funerary inscription or epitaph:

> Questo laudevole proponimento infra brieve spazio di tempo fu manifesto ad alquanti, li quali in quel tempo erano in poesì solennissimi in Romagna; per che ciascuno sì per mostrare la sua sofficienzia, sì per rendere testimonianza della portata benivolenzia da loro al morto poeta, sì per cattare la grazia e l'amore del signore, il quale ciò sapevano disiderare, ciascuno per sé fece versi, li quali, posti per epitafio alla futura sepultura, con debite lode facessero la posterità certa chi dentro da essa giacesse; e al magnifico signore gli mandarono. (*Trattatello*, 1a red., 89)

Boccaccio then proceeds to justify, via the same literal-metaphorical equation he had used for the 'biographical monument' of the *Trattatello*, his citing of just one of the several compositions:

> Li quali versi stati a me mostrati poi più tempo appresso, e veggendo loro [non] avere avuto luogo per lo caso già dimostrato, pensando le presenti cose per me scritte, come che sepoltura non sieno corporale, ma sieno, sì come quella sarebbe stata, perpetue conservatrici della colui memoria; imaginai non essere sconvenevole quegli aggiugnere a queste cose. Ma, perciò che più che quegli che l'uno di coloro avesse fatti (che furo più) non si sarebbero ne' marmi intagliati, così solamente quegli d'uno qui estimai che fosser da scrivere; per che, tutti meco esaminatigli, per arte e per intendimento più degni estimai che fossero quattordici fattine da maestro Giovanni del Virgilio bolognese, allora famosissimo e gran poeta, e di Dante stato singularissimo amico; (*Trattatello*, 1a red., 90–91)

Just as only one composition could find itself inscribed into the marble of Dante's eventual real tomb, so in the metaphorical monument, which is the *Trattatello*, there can only be room for one epitaph, the one he claims

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[16] In his comparison between Florence and Ravenna, Boccaccio in the *Trattatello* writes: 'Ella è quasi uno generale sepolcro di santissimi corpi, né niuna parte in essa si calca, dove su per reverendissime ceneri non si vada.'

was written by Giovanni del Virgilio. It is a neat figure of thought. The written word substitutes for the missing physical monument, even in its epigraphic limitations. Petrarch uses the same conceit of material constraints for virtual objects in his proposed epitaph for king Robert of Naples.[17] Once Boccaccio has quoted the fourteen lines of Giovanni del Virgilio's proposed inscription, he launches into a diatribe against Florence, complete with glowing references to Homer, Ovid and Virgil's resting places, which perfectly bookends the opening vituperative passage of the *Trattatello*, with its 'oecumene' of invidious cultural tourism, and anticipates the analogous passage in the letter to Francescuolo da Brossano.

It is clear, then, that, bearing in mind the differences of genre and occasion, Boccaccio uses exactly the same arguments and analogies rehearsed in the *Trattatello* when writing his consolatory letter to Francescuolo. Indeed, some of the material used in the *Trattatello* may in turn have been inspired by Boccaccio's early acquaintance with Petrarch's writing, including the *Collatio laureationis*. The original move to paper commemoration, realised by the biography of Dante, is now represented in the letter of condolences by an insistence on saving Petrarch's literary masterpieces, the true and lasting 'paper' monument to the great man. Even Guido Novello's inability, in the *Trattatello*, to make good his promise to provide a fitting sepulchre, finds its equivalent in the warning to Francescuolo to reflect before passing to action.

The displacement of such arguments from a celebratory text into an apparently inappropriate vehicle, a letter of condolences to Petrarch's relatively unlettered son-in-law, is explained by the fact that Boccaccio's biography of Dante was completed when the subject was already dead, whereas the equivalent work for Petrarch, the *De Vita et Moribus*, written when its subject still had more than two decades of life left, had been in

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[17] 'Sed dum celestem mortali carmine famam | prosequor, eloquium medio me liquit in actu. | Si breve, da veniam; quodsi, te iudice, forsan | angustum verbosa prement epigrammata marmor, | deme supervacuum, me permittente, tuoque | temperet arbitrio titulum mensura sepulcri: | denique versiculos, quos mens lacrimosa peregit, | qualescunque putas, placido, precor, aspice vultu, | si tibi carus erat quem mors modo tristis abegit' (*Epystola Metrica* II, 8, 15–23). [But when I pursue heavenly fame with mortal song, speech dissolves as I am engaged in it. If it is brief, forgive me. But if, in your judgement, perhaps over-wordy epigrams weigh down the narrow marble, take away the excess, with my permission, and let the measure of the tomb temper, according to your taste, the inscription: then I pray, if you held dear the man whom sad death has now taken from us, look with calm gaze upon these little verses, whatever you think of them.]

this sense premature. To some extent, therefore, the letter to Francescuolo can be considered as the missing conclusion to the *De Vita et Moribus.*

Boccaccio did compose real epitaphs for individuals. One inscription, for the father and son, Pino and Ciampi della Tosa, is now item nine amongst the *Carmina* edited by Giuseppe Velli for the Mondadori *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio.* It has also been repeatedly claimed, though not by Massèra, and not by Velli, that Boccaccio composed the extant Florentine epitaph for Dante's near contemporary, Francesco da Barberino, in Santa Croce.[18] Like Petrarch, Boccaccio also penned his own epitaph (*Carmina* X), whose awkward penultimate line echoes Petrarch's epitaph for Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro,[19] and whose last line calques a phrase from Petrarch's description of the dual triumph of Scipio and Ennius in book nine of the *Africa.*[20]

He also recorded epitaphs composed by others. On the opening folio of the second part of the *Zibaldone laurenziano* 29, 8 (45v), after three alphabet tables with transliterations of the foreign letters (two tables in Greek and one in Hebrew), there is the garbled transcription of what Boccaccio thought was a Greek epitaph (see fig. 1),[21] discovered in the vicinity of San Felice d'Ema,[22] near the construction site of Niccolò Acciaiuoli's magnificent Carthusian foundation south of Florence.

No doubt, Boccaccio had been made aware of it through his contacts with the Neapolitan grand seneschal, his companion on the school benches of Zanobi da Strada's father Mazzuolo, and for many years his somewhat

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[18] See Vittore Branca, 'L'epitaffio per Francesco e Filippo da Barberino,' in *Tradizione delle opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vol. 1, Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1958, pp. 231–39.

[19] In other words, Petrarch's *Epystola Metrica* I, 13, 67: see Giuseppe Velli's note on the epitaph in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vol. V, 1, p. 490. This metrica will be one of the ones copied by Boccaccio in the Zibaldone laurenziano, immediately after the 'Notamentum.'

[20] Boccaccio's phrase 'Studium fuit alma poesis' [his study was generous poetry] echoes Petrarch's 'Ipse coronatus lauro frondente per urbem | Letus iit totam Tarpeia rupe reversus. | Ennius ad dextram victoris, tempora fronde | Substringens parili, *studiorum almeque Poesis* | Egit honoratum sub tanto auctore triumphum.' [Scipio crowned with leafy laurel passed joyfully through the whole city returning from the Tarpeian rock. Ennius at the victor's right hand, girding his brows with equal frond, performed an honoured triumph of studies and generous poetry beneath such an author.]

[21] A reconstruction, as a four-line stanza, can be found in volume 14 of the *Inscriptiones Graecae*, as item 2128. The editor declares that he is working from later testimonies, all deriving from the *Zibaldone laurenziano*, which he has not been able to consult.

[22] *Zibaldone laurenziano*, XXIX, 8, folio 45v: 'Lictere infra scripte reperte sunt apud Sanctum Felicem ad Emam in quadam marmorea tabula.' [The letters below were found near San Felice d'Ema on a certain marble plaque.]

unreliable patron. Perhaps the presence of a Greek inscription, however
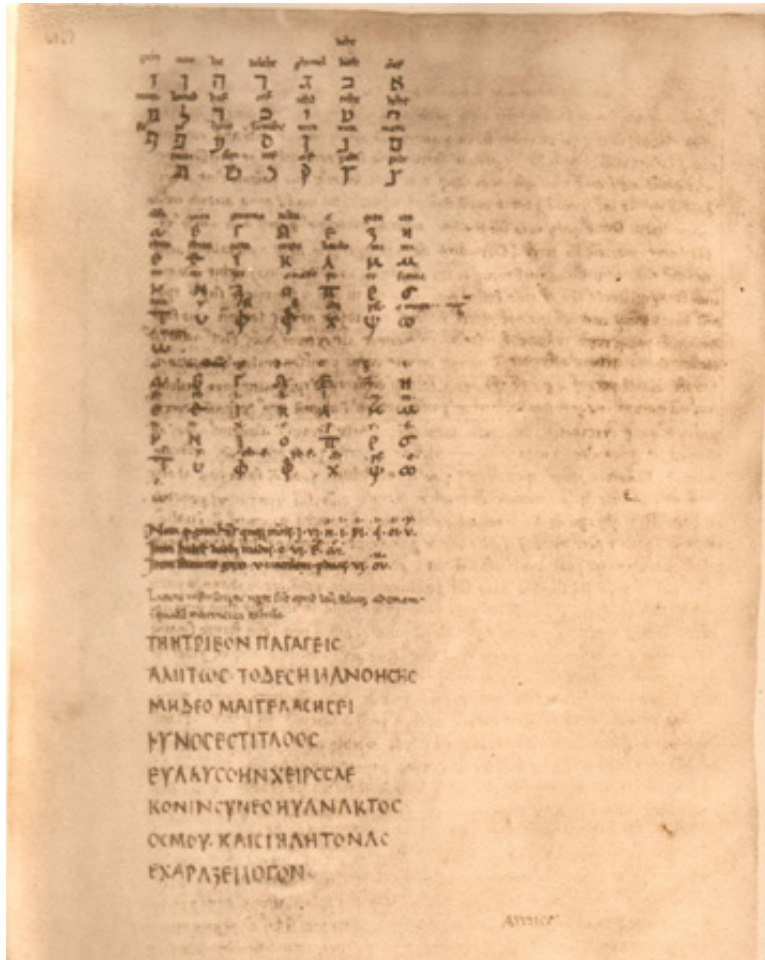


Figure 1

indecipherable (and perhaps luckily indecipherable, given its actual canine content),[23] lent a certain cultural patina and gravitas to what was otherwise a rather 'nouveau riche' building project.

Apart from providing some of the earliest evidence of Boccaccio's interest in Greek, which would eventually lead to his commissioning of a translation of Homer and the championing of a chair in Greek at the Flor-

[23] The end of the second line, in the *IG* transcription (start of fourth in Boccaccio's transcription) reads: 'κυνὸς εστι τάφος' [the grave of a dog].

entine *studium*, the interest of this inscription for us is that it is actually transcribed in epigraphic capitals, unlike the sample Greek alphabets recorded in minuscule immediately above it in the MS. The epigraphy can be found in facsimile as the first folio reproduction in Guido Biagi's 1915 partial edition of the *Zibaldone*.[24]

Long before the pioneering efforts of Ciriaco d'Ancona, Boccaccio either had seen and transcribed the original inscription, or had been presented with some kind of facsimile transliteration, errors and all. This antiquarian interest in epigraphy finds its fictional counterpart in the *Filocolo*: Fileno, the tragic alter-ego to Florio (and arguably to Boccaccio) has had to flee the court of king Felice, having aroused the murderous jealousy of Florio, and is proceeding down the Italian peninsula, engaging in essentially literary tourism of the kind Boccaccio will eventually predict will happen for Dante and Petrarch. In a busy schedule, he will visit Virgil's birthplace, Ovid's birthplace and Virgil's tomb. But first he passes through Padua:

> pervenne alle mura costrutte per adietro dall' antico Antenore, e in quelle vide il luogo ove il vecchio corpo *con giusto epitafio* si riposava. (*Filocolo* 3, 33)

Boccaccio is referring to the discovery, in 1273, of remains thought (on the basis of a remark by Livy)[25] to be those of Aeneas's companion Antenor. It is unclear whether Boccaccio knew that the epitaph recording the remains was recent, having been composed by Lovato Lovati. Here in the *Filocolo* the epitaph is not transcribed, but it is still evidently considered important enough to be mentioned.

More serious epigraphical research takes place in the *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine*, where Boccaccio is describing the primitive establishment of what was to become Naples. Labourers are digging the foundations for the ramparts when they come across a tomb, an inauspicious sign:

> Essi, nel primo fondare, di candido marmo una nobile sepoltura della terra nel ventre trovarono, il titolo della quale, di lettera appena nota, tra loro leggendolo, trovarono che dicea: *Qui Partenopes vergine sicula morta giace*. Onde essi, sterilità e mortalità dubitando, tornarono a' primi luoghi meno utili che' lasciati, e a' lasciati lasciarono per etterno cognome il nome di quella che essi aveano trovata. (*Comedia delle ninfe*, 35, 15)

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[24] Guido Biagi, *Lo Zibaldone Boccaccesco Mediceo Laurenziano Pluteo XXIX, 8*, Firenze: Olschki, 1915. The reproductions start at folio 45v.

[25] Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita,* I, 1, 1–2. The legend was taken up again in the Middle Ages by Dante (*Purg.* V, 75) and Giovanni Villani (*Cronica* I, 17).
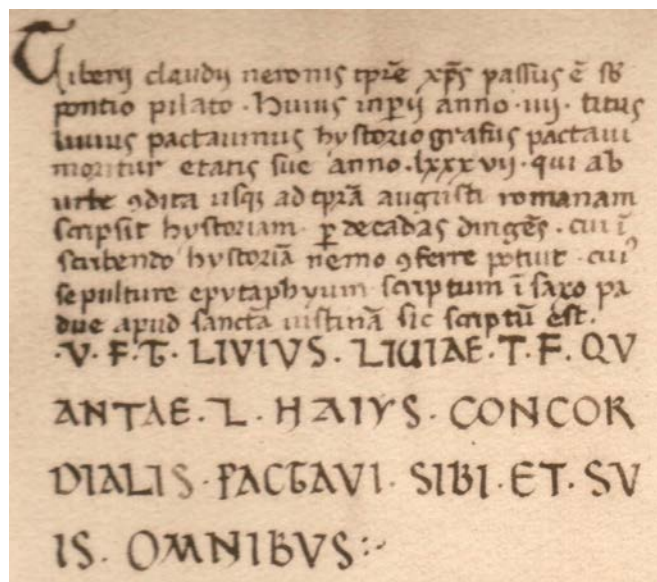
The epitaph is, as far as we can tell, of Boccacccio's own invention. Note that, in order to emphasise antiquity, Boccaccio is fully aware that scripts change over time, and that difficulties can therefore ensue in deciphering them.[26] It was perhaps a lesson he had learnt when reusing Beneventan folios for his early *zibaldoni*.

Padua also sees an example of Boccaccio's interest in real epigraphy. In folio 59v of the *Zibaldone laurenziano*, Boccaccio summarises the career of the 'hystoriografus' Titus Livy, and the goes on to state:

> cuius sepulture epytaphyum scriptum in saxo padue apud sanctam iustinam sic scriptum est.

> [whose grave inscription written on stone in Padua at Saint Justina's is written as follows]

The inscription, with hindsight obviously not that of the actual historian,[27] is reproduced in rustic capitals, with puncta separating words, as in real epigraphy. The prior notice about Livy's life, by contrast, is written in textualis. Here is the image from Guido Biagi's facsimile edition:



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[26] Boccaccio is also aware of the need for restoration, as in the public display of the epitaph, in the *Vita* of Titus Livy, where he announces that the plaque has been: 'vetusta purgatus carie et litteris in primam formositatem redactis.' [cleansed of its accumulated decay and with its inscription restored to its previous elegance.]

[27] The inscription is catalogued in volume 5, 1 of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* as item 2865, and is briefly discussed by Renata Fabbri in her notes to Boccaccio's *Vita* of Livy, in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vol. 5, 1, p. 894.

The same epitaph, again presented epigraphically (if the evidence of the fifteenth century apograph, Laurenziano 63, 8, is reliable), would be used in Boccaccio's brief biography of the historian, 'Pauca de T. Livio a Iohanne Boccaccio Collecta.' Boccaccio was not alone in realising such transcriptions where the actual text is highlighted in capitals. Carla Maria Dondi describes a very similar mix of characters in the late Trecento transcription of a Roman epitaph in the house of a notary called Buzio.[28] Earlier in the century, Albertino Mussato and Rolando da Piazzola had clamorously performed a similar exercise for the funerary inscription of Lucan.[29]

Boccaccio also searched for documentary references to epitaphs. In folio 36r of the companion *Miscellanea laurenziana* XXXIII, 31, he records part of the epitaph by a youthful Virgil for the gladiator-highwayman Ballista, quoted in the well-known Donatus biography of the poet.[30] On the verso of the same folio in the same miscellany, Boccaccio will record ten 'Ephthaphia [sic] exastica Ciceronis,' examples of short commemorative verse about the great orator in epigraphic style.[31]

Virtual epitaphs in Boccaccio are more common. One of the first literary exercises in Latin, the so-called *Elegia di Costanza,* is the erotic hyperamplification of the famous antique epitaph to Homonoeia (*Carmina* I). Boccaccio also includes imaginary epitaphs in his narratives, as with the inscription, in pseudo-antique style, for Arcita in the *Teseida* (XI, 91):

> 'Io servo dentro a me le reverende
> del buono Arcita ceneri, per cui
> debito sacrificio qui si rende;
> e chiunque ama, per esempio lui
> pigli, s'amor di soverchio l'accende;
> perciò che dicer può: "Qual se', io fui;
> e per Emilia usando il mio valore
> morì': dunque ti guarda da amore."

A similarly imaginary inscription can be found in the slightly earlier *Filocolo* (I, 43), when king Felice orders that Biancifiore's mother, Giulia

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[28] Carla Maria Monti, 'Una testimonianza sugli esordi degli studi epigrafici,' in *Vestigia: Studi in onore di Giuseppe Billanovich*, Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1984, vol. II.

[29] See Giuseppe Billanovich, 'Il preumanesimo padovano,' in *Storia della cultura veneta. II. Il Trecento*, Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1976, pp. 19–110, esp. 103–06, fig. 9.

[30] Bianca Maria da Rif, 'La Miscellanea laurenziana XXXIII, 31,' *Studi sul Boccaccio* 7 (1973): 59–124 (p. 113).

[31] See Da Rif, 'Miscellanea,' cit., 113–14.

Topazia, who had died whilst giving birth, be buried with full dignity, including an epitaph:

> Qui d'Antropòs il colpo ricevuto,
> giace di Roma Giulia Topazia,
> dell'alto sangue di Cesare arguto
> discesa, bella e piena d'ogni grazia,
> che, in parto, abandonati in non dovuto
> modo ci ha: onde non fia già mai sazia
> l'anima nostra il suo non conosciuto
> Iddio biasmar, che fé sì gran fallazia.

Whereas the *Teseida* is written in octaves, and therefore the inscription has to conform to the general narrative verse form, it is interesting to note that Boccaccio employs almost the same prosodic structure for the *Filocolo*, whose prose medium in no way obliges him to do so. The *Teseida* in fact displays the characteristic rima baciata couplet in the finalis, whereas the *Filocolo* inscription maintains rima alternata throughout, perhaps a sign that the eventual octave form had not yet been fully regularised. This proto-octave inscription in the *Filocolo* has been briefly studied by Ernest Hatch Wilkins.[32]

An explicitly invented epitaph also figures as a dramatic device in the *Filocolo*. In a bid to wean Florio away from his infatuation with Biancifiore, king Felice dreams up the idea of pretending that the girl has died of an acute illness, and has been buried before Florio can return from his university studies elsewhere. It is a subterfuge to hide the fact that she has been sold to merchants for the sex-trade. A carved marble tomb is prepared, and another girl's corpse is put in it (III, 57, 2).

When Florio returns from university, he is taken by his mother to the grave:

> E dopo alquanto pervennero al tempio dove Giulia sepulta stava, e dove le non vere scritte lettere significavano che quivi Biancifiore morta giacesse.
>
> 　Nel qual tempio entrati, la reina mostrò a Florio la sepoltura nuova, e disse: — Qui giace la tua Biancifiore —. La quale come Florio la vide, e le non vere lettere ebbe lette, incontanente perduto ogni sentimento, quivi tra le braccia della madre cadde, e in quelle semivivo per lungo spazio dimorò. (III, 62, 6–63, 1)

In his grief, Florio, referring explicitly to the Ovidian story of Pyramus and Thisbe, threatens to kill himself, so as to share a tomb with his beloved, with an appropriate inscription:

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[32] Ernest Hatch Wilkins, 'Boccaccio's First Octave,' *Italica* 33 (1956): 19.

> Il misero titolo della tua sepoltura, o Biancifiore, sarà accompagnato di quello del tuo Florio (III, 63, 14).

The gambit of a double inscription must have impressed Boccaccio, for in the *Decameron* there is a brief mention of a narrative-bearing tomb, this time a real one, prepared for the murdered adulterer Guiglielmo Guardastagno and his lover, buried together. In the very last lines of the novella, the tomb is inscribed with the story of their love and death:

> con grandissimo dolore e pianto, furono i due corpi ricolti e nella chiesa del castello medesimo della donna in una medesima sepoltura fur posti, e sopr'essa scritti versi significanti chi fosser quegli che dentro sepolti v'erano, e il modo e la cagione della lor morte. (*Decameron* IV, 9)

Boccaccio's penchant for embedding such epigraphy, whether directly quoted or merely described, in his narratives may be an echo of Ovid's practice. At the end of the Phaethon episode in book II of the *Metamorphoses*, the epitaph to the fallen hero is intercalated into the text:

> Naides Hesperiae trifida fumantia flamma
> corpora dant tumulo, signant quoque carmine saxum:
> Hic situs est Phaethon currus auriga paterni
> quem si non tenuit magnis tamen excidit ausis (235–38)

> [The Italian Naiads give the body, still smoking from the lightning strike, to the grave and mark the stone with verse: 'Here lies Phaethon who, even if he couldn't control the chariot of his father, at least died daring great things']

Boccaccio knew this episode well, refashioning it in one of his earliest compositions, the 'Allegoria mitologica' (also recorded in the *Zibaldone laurenziano*, folios 61r–62r), and referring to it again in the *Teseida* (IX, 31):

> E certo, quando Roma più onore
> di carro triunfale a Scipione
> fece, non fu cotal; né di splendore
> passato fu da quello il qual Fetone
> abbandonò per soverchio tremore,
> quando Libra si cosse e Iscorpione,
> e e' da Giove nel Po fulminato
> cadde, *e lì l'ha l'epitafio mostrato.*

Ovid also includes his own epitaph in a famous *Tristium* (III, 3) to his wife. Boccaccio was well acquainted with the *Tristia*, re-using for Petrarch in the *De Vita et Moribus* the well-known example of paternal displeasure at Ovid's poetic vocation (IV, 10, 21–22). Ovid's self-penned epitaph

plainly couples the idea of paper epigraphy with the conceit of writings, and not monuments, being the true guarantee of lasting fame:

> quosque legat uersus oculo properante uiator,
> grandibus in tituli marmore caede notis:
> "hic ego qui iaceo tenerorum lusor amorum
> ingenio perii Naso poeta meo;
> at tibi qui transis ne sit graue quisquis amasti
> dicere "Nasonis molliter ossa cubent""
> hoc satis in titulo est. Etenim maiora libelli
> et diuturna magis sunt monimenta mihi,
> quos ego confido, quamuis nocuere, daturos
> nomen et auctori tempora longa suo. (71–80)

[So that the passer-by with hurried eye may read, pray sculpt, in large characters on the marble of my tomb-plaque, the following verses: 'I who lie here am the player of tender loves. I, Naso, perished by my own wit. But you, who pass by, if you ever loved, may it not be too much to say: "Let Naso's bones lie gently."' That is enough for the inscription. For my books are greater and more lasting monuments. In them I put my trust, even though they once harmed me, as able to give me reputation and long life to their author.]

Virgil, too, includes Dido's dictation of her epitaph (*Aeneid* IV, 655–58) which then gets reworked by Ovid in *Heroides* VII, 192–96. In modern editions of Ovid, these various epigraphic events are almost universally rendered with capitals, using puncta as word separators, as if genuinely inscribed in stone. Almost certainly, they are obeying Ovid's own injunction to use big letters ('grandibus [...] notis'), which may have been equally compelling to Boccaccio upon reading it. It would be really interesting to see whether such practices were current in the kind of Ovidian MSS to which Boccaccio had access.[33] It would also be worthwhile to examine the relevant folio of Boccaccio's autograph *Teseida* (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS Acquisti e Doni 325), though maintaining the regularity of the ottava rima form may have been a more important consideration for the author than highlighting a particular section of text graphically.

Perhaps the most interesting example of Boccaccio's virtual epigraphy is one that is not often discussed as such, namely the 'Notamentum' [memorandum],[34] which precedes the transcription of a number of Petrarchan compositions in the already mentioned *Zibaldone laurenziano* (73r–74v). The sequence of texts transcribed in this part of the *Zibaldone*

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[33] For a list of which texts Boccaccio possessed later in life, see Antonia Mazza, 'L'inventario della "Parva libraria" di Santo Spirito e la biblioteca del Boccaccio.' *Italia medievale e umanistica* IX (1966): 1–74.

[34] The notice is untitled in the *Zibaldone*.

makes it clear that Boccaccio was interested in poetic laureation. The following extract from the online index of the MS[35] shows how the 'Notamentum' (item 42) is the crucial bridge between Dante's non-crowning, despite an invitation to Bologna, and Petrarch's extraordinary Capitoline triumph:

- Corrispondenza fra Giovanni del Virgilio e Dante Alighieri:
    - 38: Carme di Giovanni del Virgilio: *Pyeridum vox alma...* c.67v–68r
    - 39: *Egloga I* di Dante a Giovanni del Virgilio: *Vidimus in nigris albo...* cc.68r–69r
    - 40: Egloga responsiva di Giovanni del Virgilio a Dante: *Forte sub inriguos colles...* cc.69r–71r
    - 41: *Egloga II* di Dante a Giovanni del Virgilio: *Velleribus colchis...* cc.71r–72v
- Silloge petrarchesca:
    - 42: Boccaccio, Ricordo dell'incoronazione poetica di Petrarca cc.73r
    - 43: Petrarca, *Epistola metrica*, I, 14 (*Ad seipsum*) cc.73r–73v
    - 44: Petrarca, *Epistola metrica*, I, 4 (*Ad Dyonisum de Burgo Sancti Sepulcri*) cc.73v–74r
    - 45: Petrarca, *Epistola metrica*, I, 13 c.74v
    - 46: Petrarca, *Epistola metrica*, I, 12 c.74v

The 'Notamentum' is generally regarded, on the basis of manifest errors seemingly corrected in the later biography, as a kind of trial run for the *De Vita et Moribus*. First transcribed by Hauvette, who authenticated it as being in Boccaccio's hand,[36] subsequently edited by Massèra,[37] then by Carlo Godi,[38] it has been most recently reproduced in the notes (p. 882)

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[35] See the partially completed hypertext project on Laurenziano 29, 8 by Raoul Mordenti: <http://rmcisadu.let.uniroma1.it/boccaccio/A-indice.htm>. A paper version, by Filippo di Benedetto, can be found in Michelangelo Picone and Claude Cazalé Bérard (eds), *Gli Zibaldoni di Boccaccio: Memoria, scrittura, riscrittura*, Firenze: Franco Cesati, 1998, pp. 26–29.
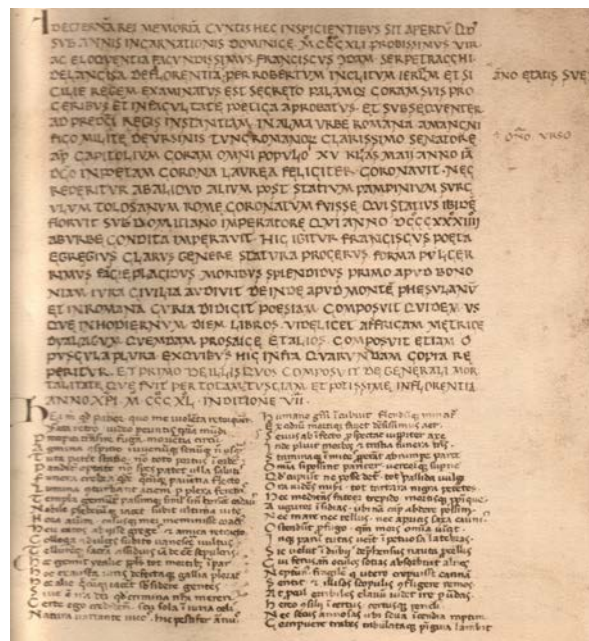
[36] Henri Hauvette, 'Notes sur des manuscrits autographes de Boccace à la Bibliothèque Laurentienne,' in *Mélanges d'Archéologie et d'Histoire de l'Ecole Française de Rome*, 14 (1894): 87–145.

[37] Aldo Francesco Massèra (ed.), *Giovanni Boccaccio: Opere latine minori*, Bari: Laterza, 1928, pp. 364–66.

[38] Carlo Godi, 'La collatio laureationis del Petrarca,' *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 13 (1970), 1–27.

to Renata Fabbri's 1992 edition of the Petrarchan *Vita* for the Mondadori *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio.*

A glance at the facsimile of folio 73r in Biagi's edition reveals how the celebratory and biographical material of the 'Notamentum' runs continuously into the rubric of the first of the Petrarchan compositions (which are arranged in bicolumnar fashion). The *metricae* which follow are transcribed in textualis (except for the first letter of each line), though rubrics to the subsequent Petrarchan items will continue to be written using only rustic capitals.



The above folio (72v) containing the explicit of Dante's eclogue to Giovanni del Virgilio, 'Velleribus colchis' had been narrowly monocolumnar, and was left blank from about a third of the way down the folio. The following folios are clearly part of a different project. It is clear, therefore, that in preparing folio 73r Boccaccio was investing in a 'clean sheet' for the task ahead.

The Latin text of the 'Notamentum' is as follows:

> Ad ecternam rei memoriam cuntis hec inspicientibus sit apertum quod sub annis Incarnationis Dominice MCCCXLI probissimus vir ac eloquentia facundissimus Franciscus, condam ser Petracchi de la 'Ncisa de Florentia, anno etatis sue XX[X]V[II] per Robertum inclitum Ierusalem et Sicilie regem examinatus est secreto palamque coram suis proceribus et

in facultate poetica aprobatus, et subsequenter ad predicti regis instan-
tiam in alma Urbe Romana a magnifico milite domino Urso de Ursinis
tunc romanorum clarissimo senatore apud Capitolium coram omni
populo XV Kalendas Maii anno iam dicto in poetam corona laurea feli-
citer coronavit,[39] nec reperitur ab aliquo alium, post Statium Pampinium
Surculum Tolosanum Rome coronatum fuisse, qui Statius ibidem floruit
sub Domitiano imperatore qui anno DCCCXXXIIII ab urbe condita im-
peravit.[40] Hic igitur Franciscus poeta egregius clarus genere, statura
procerus, forma pulcerrimus, facie placidus, moribus splendidus, primo
apud Bononiam iura civilia audivit, deinde apud Montem Phesulanum et
in Romana curia didicit poesiam. Composuit quidem usque in hodiernum
diem libros, videlicet Affricam metrice, dyalagum quemdam prosaice, et
alios. Composuit etiam opuscula plura, ex quibus hic infra quarundam
copia reperitur. Et primo de illis quos composuit de generali mortalitate
que fuit per totam Tusciam et potissime in Florentia anno Christi
MCCCXL, inditione VII.

[So that this event shall be forever remembered, may it be manifest to all
who behold this that during the year of the Incarnation of our Lord 1341
Franciscus, a man most worthy and fluent in eloquence, son of the late
ser Petracchi de la Incisa of Florence, was, in his thirty-seventh year, ex-
amined by that excellent king Robert of Jerusalem and Sicily, both in pri-
vate and in public before his nobles, and passed in the subject of poetry.
Subsequently, at the insistence of the aforementioned king, he was suc-
cessfully crowned poet with the laurel crown, in the mother city of Rome,
by that splendid knight Orso Orsini, then the celebrated senator of the
Romans, on the Capitol Hill before the entire population, on the fifteenth
calends of May of the same year. Nor has one discovered anybody else,
since Statius Pa[m]pinius Surculus of Toulouse, who was crowned at
Rome. Statius lived in the realm of the emperor Domitian, who ruled
eight hundred and thirty-four years after the founding of the city. This
exceptional poet Franciscus, then, who comes from distinguished stock,
who is tall in stature, handsome in appearance, 'pleasing' in countenance,
brilliant in behaviour, first studied Roman law in Bologna, then in Mont-
pellier, and learnt poetry in the Roman curia. Up to this day he has com-

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[39] Boccaccio seems to be starting the sentence with the intention of creating a passive
construction, with Orso as the agent, but then finishes with an inappropriately active
verb, 'ad sensum.'

[40] See *Collatio Laureationis* VI, 1: 'et iam ultra mille ducentos annos obsolevisse,
siquidem post Statium Pampineum, illustrem poetam, qui Domitiani temporibus flo-
ruit, nullum legimus tali honore decoratum.' [The custom has been in abeyance for over
one thousand two hundred years, so that since Statius Papinius, the illustrious poet,
who lived in the times of Domitian, we read of none decorated with such an honour.]
The equivalent in the *Privilegium Laureationis* passage is: 'usque adeo et in desuetudi-
nem Nobis abiit illa solemnitas, ut iam a mille trecentis annis nullum ibi legimus tali
honore decoratum.' [this ceremony has so far fallen into disuse that we read of nobody,
for one thousand three hundred years, who has been decorated with such an honour.]

posed books, namely the *Africa* in verse, a certain dialogue in prose,[41] and others. He has also composed some small works, a copy of some of which can be found below. And firstly of those which he wrote, is one on the plague which raged throughout Tuscany and particularly in Florence in the year of Christ 1340, the seventh of the indiction.]

Apart from scholars cataloguing the contents or codicology of the *Zibaldone*, such as Di Benedetto, or Zamponi, Pantarotto and Tomiello,[42] none of those who write about the 'Notamentum' comment particularly upon the strategic placing of the material in the *Zibaldone* sequence, concentrating instead on the obvious errors in Boccaccio's account, the misleading clue to the dating of the *metrica* which follows, and the possible chronology of corrections leading to the final biography, the *De Vita et Moribus*. Few scholars, either, have bothered to discuss in any detail the physical presentation of the text. [43] Ernest Hatch Wilkins boldly divided the extremely short text into discrete, if chronologically close moments of composition on the basis of both thematic and palaeographic evidence,[44] tentatively linking this tripartite sequence to the structure of the later and fuller biography. Carlo Godi, whilst briefly reviewing the 'Notamentum' as a significant item in the short catalogue of near contemporary references to Petrarch's laureation, is one of the first who refers suggestively to the actual hand employed by Boccaccio for this notice:

> [Boccaccio] ricordava l'avvenimento con la solenne capitale rustica, che usava per le rubriche. (p. 6)

The second part of Godi's comment is borne out not only by the fact that such capitals do indeed figure in many, though it must be said not all, of the titles of works copied in the MS,[45] but even more significantly

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[41] Most commentators agree that this is probably a reference to the *Secretum*.

[42] Stefano Zamponi, Martina Pantarotto, Antonella Tomiello, 'Stratigrafia dello Zibaldone e della Miscellanea laurenziana,' in Michelangelo Picone and Claude Cazalé Bérard (eds), *Gli Zibaldoni di Boccaccio* (cit.), pp. 181–258.

[43] But see Zamponi, Pantarotto, Tomiello, 'Stratigrafia dello Zibaldone' cit., p. 203: 'Notiamo sui ff. 73–74 [...] una rigatura di tipo epigrafico (un *unicum* nello Zibaldone e nella Miscellanea) per le parti scritte in maiuscola: un binario per la scrittura e uno per l'interlinea, attestazione di un progetto ben preciso di organizzazione della pagina, con quella sorta di grande epigrafe di apertura che è il *Notamentum*, e un indizio di grande cura nella scrittura in capitale, probabile esperimento di recupero di modelli epigrafici. (p. 203).

[44] Ernest Hatch Wilkins, 'Boccaccio's Early Tributes to Petrarch,' *Speculum* 38 (1963): 79–87.

[45] Apart from rubricating the Petrarchan compositions following the 'Notamentum,' mentioned by Godi, rustic capitals are in evidence on folios 46r; 46v; 50r (for the 'explicit'); 52r; 56r; 56v; 59r; 59v; 62r (to highlight the name 'Fredericus' at the beginning of a

Boccaccio's use of majuscules here runs on seamlessly from the 'Notamentum' proper into what is actually the rubric for Petrarch's metrical epistle 'Ad seipsum,' the body of which is itself transcribed in textualis.[46] However, I would like to take up instead the first part of Godi's comment, namely that the 'Notamentum' is written *solemnly* in rustic capitals. Is it possible, given his penchant for the 'virtual monument' metaphor, already used in the clearly Petrarch inspired Dante biography, that Boccaccio was actually thinking of his commemoration of the laureation as a kind of paper plaque or inscription, in other words a halfway house between the literal and the metaphorical?

The employment of capitals throughout the text, as opposed to mere capitalised rubrication followed by littera textualis, certainly indicates that the 'Notamentum' is meant to stand out from the rest of the *Zibaldone*. Furthermore, unlike the Petrarchan compositions which follow in bicolumnar arrangement (one of Boccaccio's two favoured, if not exclusive, layouts in the manuscript),[47] the 'Notamentum' is arranged as a solid occupation of the entire horizontal writing block with clear contours and harmonious proportions. In this sense, it is even more 'epigraphic' than the transcription of the Livian epitaph. The traces of the vertical rulings used to locate and justify the right margin of the 'Notamentum' are still clearly visible, as are the horizontal rulings to establish the generous vertical spacing of the lines. Such is the essentially visual discipline imposed by these ideal dimensions that Boccaccio, when revising the text, finds himself having to clumsily add in the margins a reference to Petrarch's age at

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new item); 64v (for the 'explicit'). It is interesting to note that the exchange between Dante and Giovanni del Virgilio which precedes the 'Notamentum' merely bears rubrics in textualis, confirming Wilkins's hypothesis that there is an interruption between the two periods of writing. The 'Notamentum' is clearly thought of, from the beginning, as something more elaborate.

[46] 'Composuit etiam opuscula plura, ex quibus hic infra quarundam copia reperitur. Et primo de illis quos composuit de generali mortalitate que fuit per totam Tusciam et potissime in Florentia anno Christi MCCCXL, inditione VII.' [He wrote many other works too, from which a copy of some can be found below. And firstly of those which he wrote is one on the plague which raged throughout Tuscany and particularly in Florence in the year of Christ 1340, the seventh year of indiction.]

[47] Of the section of the MS reproduced by Biagi, and bearing in mind that some folios have more than one arrangement, narrow monocolumnar (29 folios) and bicolumnar formats (25 folios) are the most common, whereas horizontal occupation of the entire writing block is much less widespread (only 10 folios). Strangely, Hauvette reproduces the 'Notamentum' in bicolumnar format, cancelling Boccaccio's intention of exceptionality.

laureation, along with a later indication of which specific member of the Orsini family was currently senator.[48]

More importantly, the style of the notice implies public gaze, a situation totally at odds with the private nature of the *Zibaldone*.[49] The language of the 'Notamentum' is declamatory, especially in its incipit, the datings are formal, and indeed consciously varied in formulation.[50] The main evidence, however, lies in the exordium:

> Ad ecternam rei memoriam *cuntis hec inspicientibus* sit apertum quod…

> [So that this event shall be forever remembered, may it be manifest *to all who behold this* that…]

'Ad eternam rei memoriam' is a standard declarative phrase, used to open public documents, and found frequently in chartularies. Petrarch himself uses exactly this formula to open the *Privilegium Laureae*,[51] consciously differentiating, thereby, the legalistic diploma from the rhetorical *Collatio Laureationis*. It is already a clue that Boccaccio's prime source was the diploma, not the speech. However, the following phrase in the 'Notamentum,' 'cuntis hec inspicientibus,' is not normally coupled with the words preceding it here. Petrarch's equivalent phrase in the *Privilegium* is a more standard 'ad quos praesentes pervenerint literae' [to whom the present document may have come]. This departure from the legalistic model shows that Boccaccio was imagining his text as something inscribed in a public place, open to casual scrutiny ('sit apertum'), as if sculpted on a plaque.

At this point, it is worth taking up again Wilkins's remarks on the separate moments of composition. Basing himself partly on variation in the size of the characters, differing ink quality and a change in the cut of the pen, and principally on content, Wilkins had divided the text into three parts, corresponding to what he saw as analogous divisions in the *De Vita*

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[48] Boccaccio adds 'anno etatis sue XXXVII' [in his thirty-seventh year] in the right hand margin, with a small marker in the main text to show where to insert it. Similarly, he indicates further down in the same margin an intercalation 'domino Urso' between 'milite' and 'de Ursinis.'

[49] The essentially private scope of the *Zibaldone* is discussed by Filippo Di Benedetto, 'Lo Zibaldone Laurenziano, libro segreto del Boccaccio,' in *Mostra di manoscritti, documenti e edizioni, (Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, 22 Maggio — 31 Agosto 1975)*, vol. I, *Manoscritti e documenti*, Certaldo: Comitato Promotore, 1975, pp. 117–22.

[50] The first is from the Incarnation, the second from the foundation of Rome, and the third (in the continuing rubric) includes the indiction.

[51] 'Ad perpetuam rei memoriam universi ad quos praesentes pervenerint literae.'

*et Moribus.*[52] Unfortunately, for the 'Notamentum,' the suggested division by Wilkins into sections is relatively arbitrary, and a number of other possible boundaries between sections could equally plausibly be proposed, even, it has to be said, with regard to the last, essentially rubricatory one dealing with the 'Ad seipsum,' whose dimensions are a lot less definite than Wilkins imagines.

If, instead of the 'Notamentum' constituting a planned, traditional tripartition, with corresponding sections in the *De Vita et Moribus*, one imagines an initial project of virtual epigraphy, partially abandoned *en route*, in favour of other agendas, then the dynamics of text prolungation become easier to understand: they represent an organic development, a hyper-miniature case of complexity theory, of the kind outlined for the *Decameron* by Pier Massimo Forni.[53]

Boccaccio starts quite definitely with a monumental schema: he has created his rulings, has decided to fill the entire horizontal dimension of the writing block with rustic capitals of a size he has been using before. He has settled on an opening formula. All he has to do now is to fill the block with a suitable amount of text. This requires a compromise between the rhetorical extent of verbal content and the limits imposed by visual layout. The most obvious place, content-wise, to stop in such an initial project would have been at 'feliciter coronavit.' The very fact that Boccaccio's syntax is faulty here implies that he was beginning to have second thoughts. And yet a grammatically preferable 'feliciter coronatus est,' though less attractive in terms of *cursus*, would have brought Boccaccio neatly to the edge of the right-hand ruling.[54] A further sign of mild crisis

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[52] Ernest Hatch Wilkins, 'Boccaccio's Early Tributes,' cit., p. 81: 'While the 'Notamentum' deals first of all with the coronation, it obviously consists as a whole of three portions, which deal respectively with the coronation, with Petrarch's personality, life and writings, and with a particular poem. The second portion begins with 'Hic igitur Franciscus,' and the third with 'Et primo.'

[53] Pier Massimo Forni, *Forme complesse nel Decameron,* Firenze: Olschki, 1992.

[54] The grammar of the equivalent passage in the *De Vita et Moribus* is more orthodox, though the subject (Ursus) is perilously separated from its verb (coronavit) and object (eum = Petrarch). Presumably, had Boccaccio had space, this is the kind of construction he had been thinking of for the 'Notamentum.' The relevant passage reads: 'Quorum alter, dominus videlicet Ursus de Ursinis miles ac Anguilarie comes clarissimus, VI ydus aprilis, anno vero Incarnationis dominice MCCCXLI, inditione autem VIIII et etatis sue anno XXXVII, in urbe romana celsoque Capitolio coram omni clero et populo, florida ab eodem, ac prolixa in Musarum exaltatione mirifica, ac a predicto domino Urso in laureandi poete laude sermocinatione premissa, eum in poetam laurea corona solenniter coronavit.' [The second of them, lord Orso Orsini, a knight and famous count of Anguillara, on the sixth Ides of April, in the year of the Incarnation of our Lord 1341,

can be seen in the two marginal addenda, giving Petrarch's date of birth, and Count Orso's family ties. Clearly, there was a competing (and corrupting) agenda, requiring more information than a memorial could carry.

The project at this very point ceases to be purely lapidary, and begins increasingly to obey another, competing dynamic. Overlaying the epigraphy is now the germ of an *accessus* or *vita*. Other information, culled from the *Collatio* and the *Privilegium*, but perhaps, given the inaccuracies, from memory or notes and not directly, begins to jostle for space. Driven by Petrarch's own agenda, a section on Statius as the last previous recipient is added, including, digressively and somewhat irrelevantly, brief biographical details. This prompts a summary *descriptio* of the now officially titular poet, Petrarch. Initially extrinsic (his height, his handsomeness, his facial expression), the descriptors then become intrinsic (his moral behaviour). Studies in law are replaced, in a crypto- Ovidian sequence, by studies in poetry. Studies in poetry then lead into a list of poetic and dialogic compositions. Amongst these compositions are also small ones: amongst these small ones is the first Boccaccio is going to transcribe. This narrowing of focus is an exit strategy from a project that is no longer under control.

We know that the biographical project of the 'Notamentum' was carried on into the *De Vita et Moribus*, but what of the epigraphic ambition? There is not the slightest mention of the monument metaphor in the Petrarchan *Vita*. Might it be that the original impulse to provide a 'monument,' albeit a paper one, manifested in the 'Notamentum,' has become, like the *Trattatello*, a biography? And if so, why?

Renata Fabbri, in her introduction to the *Vite*, has justly drawn attention not just to the clear, and by now traditional, linkage between the 'Notamentum' and the *De Vita et Moribus*, but has also briefly pointed out the potential connexions of both these texts with the letter of invitation of 1351, *Epistola* VII, penned on behalf of the Florentine authorities (almost certainly by Boccaccio himself), for Petrarch to come and teach in the Florentine Studium.[55] One could develop this linkage further. The *De Vita*

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the ninth of the Indiction and in his 37th year, in the city of Rome and upon the lofty Capitol, in the presence of the whole clergy and populace, after an eloquent speech from Petrarch himself in wonderful praise of the Muses and an oration from the aforementioned lord Orso in praise of the poet to be laureated, solemnly crowned him as poet with a laurel crown...]

[55] 'Si apre un'altra ipotesi non meno emblematica, e atta a spiegare il rinsaldarsi dei vincoli reciproci: quella che il B. con il *De Vita* abbia voluto avviare un'operazione di pubblica propaganda, in vista della riabilitazione della memoria di ser Petracco e del rientro dell'amico a Firenze. Riabilitazione e proposta di rientro che effettivamente vennero di lì a poco e di cui, come si sa, fu latore il B. stesso' (p. 883). For the letter itself, see

*et Moribus* might actually be a kind of official CV, to be approved by the Signoria before the formal invitation, *Epistola* VII, was sent. Though Auzzas in her notes to this letter does not mention them, there are some interesting parallels. For instance, Both the *De Vita* (8) and *Epistola* VII (10) use the conceit of metempsychosis, linking Petrarch to his illustrious poetic forbears. Boccaccio employed the same device surreptitiously for Dante in the *Trattatello*.[56] Similarly, the reference to Homer's birthplace as a source of civic pride, a situation soon to be reproduced for Petrarch, occurs not only in the *De Vita* (6) but also in *Epistola* VII (4) and in the *Trattatello* exordium (for Dante). It is finally used in the letter of condolences to Francescuolo da Brossano. There is a strong genetic link, therefore, between these texts. Proof that the *Vita* is being written with a conscious eye on the obvious underlying qualifying document, the *Privilegium*, can be seen in the fact that the unacknowledged quotation from the opening of Sallust's *Catilinaria*, which begins the diploma, is now reproduced with explicit reference to its author in the *Vita*. It is almost as if the civic, rather than scholarly, audience that Boccaccio is trying to persuade needs more than anonymous quotations and 'insider' allusions.

But just as the 'Notamentum,' despite its inclusion in a private document, betrays its initially epigraphic programme, so the *Vita*, ostensibly a biography, betrays its functional linkage to the letter of invitation. The text is analogous to the reports used in the present-day justification for bringing a professor working abroad directly, without a *concorso*, to a chair in Italy on the basis of 'chiara fama.' Once the Signoria had approved of Petrarch's qualifications via the systematic report of the *De Vita et Moribus*, Boccaccio was free to draft the invitation, in the form of *Epistola* VII.

One of the points Boccaccio wishes to make in the *De Vita et Moribus* is that Petrarch's fame, which he has again and again underlined, is matched and indeed exceeded by his charisma when met in the flesh, something which does not always happen in real life.[57] It is a way of

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*Epistola* VII in Ginetta Auzzas's edition for the Mondadori *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio* (vol. V, 1, pp. 550–57) and her major study 'Studi sulle Epistole. I. L'invito della Signoria fiorentina al Petrarca,' *Studi sul Boccaccio* 4 (1967): 203–40.

[56] For the metempsychosis motif in Boccaccio's treatment of poets, see Jon Usher, 'metempsychosis and "Renaissance" between Petrarch and Boccaccio,' *Italian Studies* 60 (2005): 121–33.

[57] 'Et ultra, quod est mirabile dictu, in tantum aliis sua prevalet affabilitas inter cunctos, ut que ceteris solet famosis sue fame presentia derogare, huic auget, ut apparet eo quod de eo contrarium evenisse quamplures iam est visum' (*Vita*, 22). [And furthermore, what is extraordinary, his charisma in front of others is so much better than anybody else's that when he is actually present (something which normally lowers the reputation

bolstering up the authority of the report. Boccaccio duly provides evidence for this. It is in the form of reference to sworn statements from reliable authorities: a strange device for a biography, but a natural procedure to be undertaken by the 'sponsor' of a candidate for an official post:

> Nam nonulli probissimi, quod ipsemet propriis auribus audivi, fide interposita iuramenti, firmarunt nichil de hoc homine, respective veritate pensata, famam per orbem gerulonum oribus reportare. (*De Vita et Moribus* 23)

> [Indeed some most trustworthy men, as I myself have personally heard with my own ears, have confirmed, with sworn statements, having weighed up the truth on the matter, that nothing of this man takes away his worldly fame on the lips of its bearers]

The gist is that if the Signoria (the presumed recipient of the *De Vita et Moribus*) is not inclined to believe Boccaccio, then the report writer has back-up from credible third parties. The report-like status of the *De Vita et Moribus* might also explain two remarks in the final section. The first occurs just before announcing Petrarch's major publications:

> Scripsi quidem magis audax quam discretus, et ideo reliqua maiora multo quam posita cum hiis que etiam exotidice demonstravi, viro sufficientiori ac stilo pariter altiori scribenda relinquo.

> [I have written more boldly than wisely, and therefore I leave to a person more capable and equally loftier in style the writing of what is left, far greater than what I have set out clumsily here.]

The second constitutes the final phrase of the document:

> et idcirco ne tedeat prolixitas in legendo, que desunt scrutantibus honestius credidi relinquendum

> [and lest wordiness make the reading boring, I decided it was more appropriate to leave what was left out for others to research]

This kind of unfinished business, and the invitation to others to finish it, seems to be a consistent rhetorical ploy. Already in the early exercises of 1339, one can see a similar pattern. In the letter 'Mavortis milex' (*Epistola* II), a composition included in the *Zibaldone laurenziano* (51v–52r), which deals with the cultural and intellectual impact of Petrarch, unnamed but clearly delineated, we see very similar language in the finalis. Its debt to the opening of Apuleius of Madaura's *Golden Ass* is clear:

> Scio me stilo desultorio nimia inepte ac exotica blacterando narrasse, alterius summens offitium, cum meum dictare non sit.
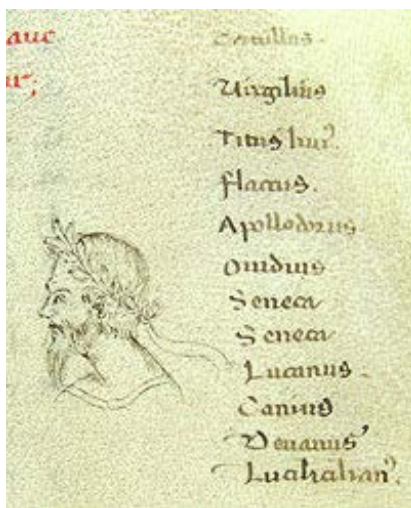
of celebrities), it grows, as has been proved by a number of occasions when the outcome in his case was the opposite of what happened to others.]

> [I know that I have recounted clumsily too many things, in a desultory style, and strange ones garrulously, taking on a task when it shouldn't be mine to write.]

Though Boccaccio appears to be seeking excuses for his barbarous style, he is also suggesting that the material could be more appropriately dictated by somebody else. Similarly, in the *Trattatello*, Boccaccio seems prematurely to abandon his task of explaining the allegory of Dante's mother's dream. He announces in the penultimate paragraph:

> Questa esposizione del sogno della madre del nostro poeta conosco essere assai superficialmente per me fatta; e questo per più cagioni. Primeramente, perché forse la sufficienzia, che a tanta cosa si richiederebbe, non c'era; appresso, posto che stata ci fosse, la principale intenzione nol patia; ultimamente, quando e la sufficienzia ci fosse stata e la materia l'avesse patito, era ben fatto da me non essere più detto che detto sia, acciò che ad altrui più di me sofficiente e più vago alcuno luogo si lasciasse di dire. E perciò quello, che per me detto n'è, quanto a me dee convenevolmente bastare, e quel che manca, rimanga nella sollecitudine di chi segue.

The main rhetorical purpose is to terminate an exercise which otherwise could be prolonged (or for which one wants to give the impression of oversupply of material). The secondary but perhaps more important purpose seems to be to add credibility: if an inferior writer such as Boccaccio can say this much, what indeed could be said by somebody of greater authority and skill? In other words, the reports are to be trusted as authoritative. More than anything, such stratagems reveal a common and consistent writing stance between Petrarch-inspired items over an arc of time of many decades. Boccaccio's biographical exercises all come to a premature end, as if running out of marble, not paper.



Finally, it is worth pondering on some of the CV style material in the letter from the Signoria. Boccaccio recounts what is in effect a conversion from legal studies to poetry. His reading list includes the poets Homer, Terence, Virgil, Horace, Ovid, Lucan, Statius, Juvenal, and rounds off with the moral philosophers Cicero and Seneca. The list resembles in part one found in the recently discovered Boccaccian autograph of Martial at the Ambrosiana in Milan: Catullus, Virgil, Livy, Horace, Apollodorus, Ovid, Seneca

(the moralist separated from the tragedian), Lucan, Canius, Deiianus, Gaius Lucilius.[58]

The list in Boccaccio's biography, which might have embarrassed Petrarch by its cultural choices, is no mere idle parade. It is a preparation for another section in the *De Vita et Moribus*, where Boccaccio compares Petrarch's achievements to those of his masters. Towards the end of the endorsement, Boccaccio writes of the book of as yet unseen *Africa* that: 'a multis visus homericus reputatur' [it is considered by many who have seen it to be Homeric]. The *Secretum*, on the other hand, prompts the declaration: 'nil eum quod Tullius arpinas noverit latuisse' [Petrarch hid nothing which Cicero discovered]. The eclogue 'Argus' reveals that Petrarch 'non solum Virgilium in buccolicis ymitasse, sed potius cum eodem stilum syragusani Theocriti assumpsisse' [not only imitated Virgil in the *Bucolics,* but rather assumed with it the style of Syracusan Theocritus]. Petrarch's comedy *Philostratus* (which has not come down to us) draws a prompt comparison with the playwright Terence, and so on.

Whereas this list in the *De Vita et Moribus* would have cut no ice with Petrarch, it would have been extremely useful – with its well-known authorities – in persuading a culturally conservative Signoria that the poet laureate was indeed pedigree material, clearly worthy of a chair. The overkill may indeed have been necessary if Petrarch were to be allowed to profess at the Studium whatever discipline he wished.

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[58] The names occur *passim* in one of Martial's epigrams (I, 61). The list is important because it substantiates Boccaccio's claim made to Petrarch, partially correct, about the existence of the two Senecas.