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Reopening a Question of Attribution: Programmatic Notes on Boccaccio and the Translation of Livy¹

In the second half of the fourteenth century, an anonymous vernacular translation (or *volgarizzamento*) of the third and fourth decades of Livy began to circulate in Tuscany. It is very interesting that, for historical and stylistic reasons, the name of Giovanni Boccaccio was soon proposed as its author. At the same time, however, certainty has yet to be reached on the attribution in spite of numerous and authoritative contributions dating from the 1300s. All questions are still open. Are both decades attributable to Boccaccio? What is the evidence in favor of that attribution? Is supplemental research called for, and further confirmation required? What kind of evidence might we consider convincing?

In order to address these questions, my paper will proceed through three stages. First, I will summarize the status of the question related to the attribution of the two decades, making reference to the early attributions by Sicco Polenton, Pietro Bembo and Lionardo Salviati, and to the most recent contributions by Maria Teresa Casella, Emilio Lippi and Giuliano Tanturli. Second, basing my remarks on an updated *recensio* of the manuscript tradition, I propose to adopt a guideline for future linguistic study of the *volgarizzamento* by comparing its lexical choices with Livy's text and, after that, with those of Boccaccio. Today it is possible to set up a truly systematic analysis thanks (also) to the corpus known as "DiVo" ("Dizionario dei Volgarizzamenti") and its software "Gattoweb," both of which were elaborated by the Institute "Opera del Vocabolario Italiano" (at the Accademia della Crusca in Florence). Finally, I will offer some evidence for concluding that Boccaccio was the author of the fourth

¹ This paper was presented, with some modifications, to the conference "Boccaccio: the Humanist" held on January 4, 2013 and organized by the American Boccaccio Association (Boston, MLA Convention). I point out that I am continuing my research on Livy's translation; therefore this is a "work in progress." I thank Cesare Segre and Simone Marchesi for their suggestions and Michael Papio for having accepted this article for *Heliotropia*.

decade *alone*. Beyond the possible philological ramifications of such a claim, my paper is intended as an exploration of a further facet of Boccaccio's humanism: his early relationship with the text of Livy.

1. The issue of the attribution of the decades of Livy to Boccaccio is an old one indeed.² The first question one must address is: which Latin text of Livy was available to the translator (or *volgarizzatore*)? As Giuseppe Billanovich demonstrated quite some time ago, the *volgarizzamento* was based on a text that Petrarca had reconstructed.³ On this basis, scholars who support the attribution to Boccaccio have proposed as *terminus ante quem* 1346, the year of the death of Ostagio da Polenta, a liege from Ravenna, to whom the Proemio at the beginning of the fourth decade was dedicated and whom the translator addresses with reverence and gratitude. In the second half of the fourteenth century, they maintain, the decades started to circulate anonymously.

This is not a new take on the issue. The first clue in this regard may be found in Sicco Polenton who in 1436 states that Boccaccio:

scripsit etiam de Montibus, de Silvis, de Fontibus, de Lacubus, de Fluminibus, de Paludibus, de Maribus Famosis libros septem. Haec Latine ac perite. Sermone autem patrio atque suavi complura volumina edidit fabulis pulcherrimis ac multis plena. Decades preterea tres T. Livii patrium in sermonem vertit.⁴

Thus Boccaccio, according to Polenton, translated all the three known decades.⁵

² Casella, "Nuovi appunti" 77-78, then Casella, *Tra Boccaccio e Petrarca*. Casella traced a history of the attribution, but see already Arri, whose work dates from 1832. A couple of pages accompanied by exhaustive bibliography but not a great deal of depth. The history of the question that we want to reconstruct stems from her contribution: it develops it in detail, deepens and, as far as possible, completes it.

³ Billanovich, "Petrarch and the Textual Tradition" and Billanovich "Il Boccaccio, il Petrarca."

⁴ See: Sicco Polenton; Massera; Viti.

⁵ A second judgment, noted by Quaglio, is to be found in the Venetian edition of the *Ameto-Lettera consolatoria a Pino de' Rossi (Comedie)*, dated 1503 (Venezia, Rusconi). In the foreword, *De hiis quae Johannes Boccadius edidit*, which opens the volume, an unidentified Zilius, referring to the Livy translation, writes: "non lassando le deche tramutate nello patrio parlare del padoano historico mirabile ne' concioni, quale restarano in monimenti de' gaudii et refrigerii a li amatori et cupiosi di virtù." The quotation was reported — and accepted — by Casella in *Tra Boccaccio e Petrarca*. But the following year, Lippi (Rev. of Casella, *Tra Boccaccio e Petrarca*, 366n) said that connections between the text of the preface's author and Sicco's text would surface. The

In the first half of the sixteenth century, Pietro Bembo similarly supports the attribution to Boccaccio in two of his letters:

(i) Lettera a Giovan Matteo Bembo, da Padova:

“Questa vi fo acciò diciate al Mag. M. Giovan Giorgio da Dressano che io lo prego che sia contento far che io abbia per quattro giorni quella *Deca* di Livio tradotta in volgar dal Boccaccio – la quale sua Sig. ha ora in Venezia – se in questo io non li fo sinistro: che subito gliela renderò”;

(ii) Lettera a M. Zuan Batta Rannusio, da Padova:

“Io vi fo a saperla che se M. Tomaso Giunta non aveva altro testo da stampar la *Deca* del Boccaccio, che questo del Mag.co M. Zuan Zorzi, la sua stampa non sarà né corretta né buona. Né gioverà che le siano preposti correttori de quelli che si potranno aver a Venezia. Però lo conforterei che 'l vedesse di aver alcun altro testo. Io ne ho veduto qui uno, che era molto corretto senza comparazione alcuna, di non buona lettera. Ma non mi può tornare a memoria di chi esso fosse, né chi mel desse: vennemi ben da Venezia. Più tosto non lo stampi che vederlo stampare incorretto, come necessariamente si stamperia non avendo miglior testo. E voler poi stampar le altre *Deche* tradotte come che sia, a me per niente non piace. Stampi per sua fe' questa sola, che ognuno la comperà; ché accompagnata non fia così vendibile [...]. Rarissima e desideratissima opera sarà questa sola, che accompagnata non fia né desiderata né rara. De grazia, de grazia, non le mescoli. Forse li venirà un giorno alcuna occasion de qualche gentile spirito, che con la via fatta dal Boccaccio si porrà a tradur le altre *Deche* toscanamente, e bene.”⁶

What Bembo writes in the second letter is especially interesting. He says he does not remember who owned the manuscript that was “molto corretto” and that contained the translation he had the opportunity to consult. The manuscript text, he states, would be preferable to the very wrong text that Tomaso Giunta would rather publish. In Bembo’s view, we could suppose, at least one decade of Livy was translated by Boccaccio. However, if Polenton attributes to Boccaccio the translation of all three decades, Bembo excludes the attribution to Boccaccio of the first and sees Boccaccio’s possible traces in just one decade: either the third or the fourth.

In 1584 Lionardo Salviati highlights the stylistic similarities between the translation of the third decade and both the *Fiammetta* and *Filocolo*, yet without mentioning Boccaccio. He feels he can trace back the style of the first decade to the old style that was used at the time of Villani, while in the third he recognizes the style from the time of Boccaccio’s youth. He

testimony of Zilius, Lippi concludes, would then depend *recta via* on Sicco’s text and not add anything new to the history of the question.

⁶ Bembo, vol. 3: 20 febbraio 1533 e 8 marzo 1533.

concludes that the translator of the third decade must have been a contemporary of Boccaccio but he makes no attempt to give him a name. What Salviati has to say about the style of the text is also interesting. He notes that the translation is often literal, very close to the Latin text, so much so that it lacks a proper expressiveness. This could have been caused either by the laziness of the translator or by the majesty of the Latin language:

Oltr'a questi della primiera, il volgarizzamento c'è della terza deca, ma per nostra credenza fu tratto dal Latino, e da persona, secondo il temporale, che mezzamente intendesse, e per questo, e per altro da porre avanti alla prima. La favella ci sembra del tempo del Boccaccio, lo stile simile alla Fiammetta, e in magnificenza forse l'ha superata: perocchè le clausole di questa sono ancora più sonore, e tutte piene di parole ditirambiche rimbombanti. Ma nel fatto dell'esser pura, benchè non poche v'abbiano delle bellezze del parlar di quel secolo, e talora anche dell'età precedente, si vede tuttavolta, che molto spesso si lascia sforzar dal Latino, o per infingardaggine, o per maestà che 'l facesse: e brevemente è tutto in questa parte su l'andar del Filocolo.⁷

As a consequence, the scope of attribution narrows.

After Salviati's contribution to the debate, more than two centuries pass before just about anyone cares to contest or to reassert Boccaccio's authorship of the translation of Livy.⁸ Indeed, even nineteenth-century scholars limit themselves to printing editions based on the vulgate of the text without advancing in any way the discussion of the controversial issue.⁹ It is only in the 1960s that a few Italian scholars begin to perform deeper textual analyses.¹⁰ In the wake of the contributions on Livy by Billanovich, Maria Teresa Casella advanced the notion that both decades

⁷ Salviati 2: 208.

⁸ Relevant opinions include those of: Abbot Laurentius Mehus who, in his *Specimen historiae litterariae florentinae* (1747), reported Sicco's judgment declared Boccaccio's authorship of the Fourth Decade based on the fact that this Ostagio from Polenta was mentioned in the preface; and Jacopo Paitoni, who skeptically writes: "è fondamento poco sodo l'aver molti, appoggiati su tale autorità, attribuito al Boccaccio un volgarizzamento di qualche Deca di Livio, se non di tutte" (1767). See Arri 12 and 48. Despite Casella's claim, Attilio Hortis was not the first to note that the *Proemio* contained the dedicatee's name.

⁹ See: Arri; Pizzorno; Dalmazzo, *Ricerche*; Dalmazzo, *La prima Deca*; Baudi Di Vesme, *I primi quattro libri*; Hortis, *Cenni*, then in *Studj*; Zambrini.

¹⁰ In the early twentieth century: Parodi, "*La cultura e lo stile del Boccaccio*," which first appeared in 1914 and then again in *Poeti antichi e moderni*; Maggini, "Le prime traduzioni" and "Il Boccaccio traduttore." Both the essays are contained also in Maggini, *I primi volgarizzamenti*; Schiaffini 151, n. 52.

were translated by Boccaccio: “If there are regular correspondences between some Latin and translated linguistic forms, and if in both decades some peculiar habits of the translator recur, there must have been only one translator.”¹¹ Her argument relies on the consistent translation of certain words in both decades, and some characteristics peculiar to Boccaccio’s style do appear in the translated text. Casella’s work is taken with a measure of skepticism by Emilio Lippi¹² and, subsequently, by Giuliano Tanturli who believes it is more probable that Boccaccio translated the fourth decade alone.¹³ According to Tanturli the one who translated the fourth decade had not yet translated the third one, a fact that could be proven not only by the omission of a great number of events mentioned in the third decade and important for the fourth, but also by mix-ups in the Roman calendar. From the content, Tanturli moves on to perform a linguistic analysis: the inconsistent translation of certain words demonstrates different attitudes towards the Latin text, each attributable to a distinct personality. Thus the diversity of the two translators presupposes «a different degree of knowledge and historical sensibility».¹⁴ This, in a nutshell, is how the issue stood in 1986. Today, these arguments notwithstanding, we still do not know whether the translation was carried out by Boccaccio or not. Simply put, it is impossible to reach a conclusion based solely on these criteria.

2. Let’s move to the second point of my paper: the review of the whole and updated manuscript situation. In 1961 Casella integrated a list of manuscripts provided by Francesco Maggini with a new list of the manuscripts of the first, third and fourth decades.¹⁵ In the following years Vittore Branca enhanced it by bringing to our attention a few more, and between 1977 and 1979 Lippi drew up a content description of the manuscripts recommended by Casella.¹⁶ In 1978 Lippi himself pointed out a second draft of the vernacular translation preserved in five manuscripts of the third decade (XXI, 1 – XXV, 7). At that point the question was raised about which of the two redactions had come first: Lippi proposed the anteriority of the minority tradition (i.e., the translation passed on by the five manu-

¹¹ Casella, “Nuovi appunti” 81. The translation is mine. I have translated into English only Italian texts published in the twentieth century.

¹² Lippi, rev. of Casella, *Tra Boccaccio e Petrarca*. See also Lippi, “Per l’edizione critica.”

¹³ See Tanturli.

¹⁴ Tanturli 829.

¹⁵ Casella, “Nuovi appunti” 124-29.

¹⁶ See Lippi, “Una redazione particolare” and Lippi, *Per l’edizione critica*.

scripts) with respect to the “diffused” tradition (i.e., the “vulgata”).¹⁷ In her monograph of 1982, Casella, who neither quotes Lippi’s article nor demonstrates an acquaintance with it, provides a list in her addendum that she deems final. Actually, three codices that were mentioned and described by Lippi three years earlier are missing from her list, which therefore renders it incomplete.

But there is more. In the years immediately following the list changed again. Already in 1963 Gianfranco Folena had discovered in the inventory of Piero da Lion’s library another translated third decade¹⁸; in 1982 Biagiarelli announced that among the manuscripts owned by Father Stradino (Giovanni Mazzuoli) there was one that included the fourth decade; Gregori pieced together Pietro del Nero’s library and found one more manuscript preserving the translation of the third decade.¹⁹ The list of acquisitions continues until Tanturli’s study, which provides some details concerning the dating of some manuscripts. Finally, in 1990, Branca mentions a manuscript from the Visconti-Sforza library of Pavia, which he says is, however, “unobtainable” together with the those of the libraries of Mazzuoli, Del Nero and Piero da Lion.²⁰ So, the document summary of the manuscripts concerning both the third and fourth decade’s translations has changed over the years and broadened quite significantly.

Here below is an overview of the *recensio* of manuscripts as it stands at the current time.

1) Third Decade manuscripts²¹:

MANUSCRIPT	ABBR.	AGE	CONTENT
LUCCA, Biblioteca Governativa, 340	LU	Sec. XIV	1. Summary of the third decade. 2. Brief work on Roman institutions. 3. Praise of Scipio and Hannibal.
TORINO, Biblioteca Nazionale, 1707	Tn	Sec. XIV	Entire third decade.

¹⁷ Lippi, “Una redazione particolare.”

¹⁸ Folena 153. The manuscript was reported by Branca, *Tradizione delle opere 2*: 46.

¹⁹ Cf. Maracchi Biagiarelli; Gregori, *Per la storia*, and “Pietro del Nero.”

²⁰ Branca, *Tradizione delle opere 2*: 9. Branca, however, points out that of these manuscripts “the identification with manuscripts of the two versions attributed to Boccaccio is often by necessity only probable and hypothetical” (49n.).

²¹ We use the abbreviations adopted by Lippi, *Per l’edizione critica*.

VENEZIA, Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, <i>italiano Z 16</i>	Vz	Sec. XIV	Entire third decade.
FIRENZE, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, <i>Ashburnhamiano 1057</i>	L 1	Sec. XIV ex.	Entire third decade.
FIRENZE, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, <i>Panciatichiano 62</i>	F 5	Sec. XIV ex.	Entire third decade.
FIRENZE, Biblioteca Riccardiana, 1518	FR	Sec. XV	Entire third decade.
PARIS, Bibliothèque Nationale, <i>italiano 5</i>	P	Sec. XV	Libri XXI–XXV (c. 1–76 ^r): third decade in the vernacular. Libri XXV–XXX (cc. 80 ^r –182 ^v): Livy’s third decade in Latin.
FIRENZE, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, II. II. 155	F 6	Sec. XV	Entire third decade.
FIRENZE, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, <i>Ashburnhamiano 487</i>	L	Sec. XV	Entire third decade.
PARIS, Bibliothèque Nationale, <i>italiano 118</i>	P 1	1432	[anepigraphic] Entire third decade.
CATANIA, Biblioteca Universitaria, <i>Ventimiliano 82</i>	Ct	1442	In addition to the <i>Corbaccio</i> and the <i>Consolatoria a Pino de’ Rossi</i> : 1) Florilegium of phrases from the third decade (cc. 34 ^r –48 ^v); 2) “Volgarizzamento del <i>Boccaccio</i> .” Transcribed: XXI, 10; XXII, 39; XXII, 59–60; XXIII, 12–13.
WIEN, Oest. Nationalbibliothek, 91	W	1448	1) Brief work on Roman institutions (cc. 1 ^r –2 ^r); 2) Entire third decade.
LONDON, British Museum, <i>Additional 15286</i>	LO	1464	Entire third decade.
FIRENZE, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, <i>Magliabechiano II, 1, 374</i>	F 1	1470	Entire third decade.

FIRENZE, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, <i>Magliabechiano II</i> , 1, 71	F	Ultimo quarto XV sec.	Misc. codex; various passages from the <i>volgarizzamento</i> of the third decade (cc. 244v–254v): chap. 9, 10, 13, 54, 56 of book XXI and 25, 41–46, 60–72 (up to p. 177 r.15) of book XXII. (Baudi Di Vesme)
VALENCIA, Biblioteca de la Universidad, 756	VA	1476	Entire third decade.
STRASBOURG, Bibliothèque Universitaire, 1817	St	Sec. XVI	Part of the third decade: books XXIV, 43,1 – XXVII, 13,1.
PARMA, Biblioteca Palatina, <i>Vitali, Lett.it.</i> , vol. 11, op. 2	Pm	Sec. XVIII	Fragments of book XXI, chap. 31–34 and 47–50. Baudi Di Vesme, ed.

2) Fourth Decade manuscripts:

MANUSCRIPT	ABBR.	AGE	CONTENT
CREMONA, Archivio di Stato, <i>Notarile</i> , fragmenta codicum, 77–86	Cr	Sec. XIV	In numbering of Pizzorno's ed.: IV, p.149 r.19 – p.151 r. 27; IV, p.168 r.1 – p.168 r.36; IV, p.233 r.1 – p.234 r.23; V, p.43 r.23; – p.55 r.12; V, p.58 r.4 – p.60 r.27; V, p.193 r.23 – p.202 r.10; V, p.214 r.10 – p.217 r.6.
TORINO, Biblioteca Nazionale, N. I. 8	Tn 1	Sec. XIV	Entire fourth decade.
CATANIA, Biblioteca Civica, B 6	Ctc	Sec. XV	1) Frag. of chap. XXXIX; 2) c. 17r: "Finite le rubliche del X libro et ultimo libro della quarta deca di tito livio pattavio padovano. Non bene per toto libertas venditur auro. deo gratias. Amen"; 3) c. 17v: Proem of the <i>volgarizzatore</i> ; 4) Remainder of fourth decade.
FIRENZE, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, 61, 5	L 2	1390–92	Frag. c.171 r-v (= V, p.354 r.17 – 355 r.15 of the Pizzorno ed.).
FIRENZE, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, già <i>Magliabechiano II I 377</i>	F 2	Sec. XV	Entire fourth decade.

FIRENZE, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, <i>Palatino 456</i>	F 3	Sec. XV	Entire fourth decade.
FIRENZE, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, <i>Palatino 485</i>	F 4	Sec. XV	Entire fourth decade.
FIRENZE, Biblioteca Riccardiana, 1558	FR 2	Sec. XV	Entire fourth decade.
HOLKHAM HALL, Library of the Earl of Leicester at Holkham Hall, 543	H	Sec. XV	1) Entire fourth decade; 2) Notes on Roman institutions.
PARIS, Bibliothèque Nationale, <i>italiano 119</i>	P 2	Sec. XV	Entire fourth decade.
VALENCIA, Biblioteca de la Universidad, 757	VA 1	Sec. XV	1) Brief work on Roman institutions; 2) Entire fourth decade.
CITTÀ DEL VATICANO, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vaticano lat. 4808	V 1	Sec. XV	[anepigraphic] Entire fourth decade.
FIRENZE, Biblioteca Riccardiana, 1556	FR 1	1451–52	1) Brief work on Roman institutions; 2) Entire fourth decade.

Manuscripts Assumed Missing

Third Decade:

CODICE	DATA INVENTARIO
PADOVA, Esemplare della <i>Libreria di Piero da Lion</i>	1445
FIRENZE, Esemplare della <i>Libreria di Pietro del Nero</i>	1478

Third Decade:

CODICE	DATA INVENTARIO
PAVIA, Esemplare della <i>Libreria Visconteo Sforzesca</i> n. 430–731	1488
FIRENZE, Esemplare della <i>Libreria di Giovanni Mazzuoli da Strada</i>	22 novembre 1553

Among the fragmentary manuscripts of the third decade, we notice that the only passage to be shared in common by two of the manuscripts (*Ventimiliano 82* of Catania e *Magliabechiano II*, 1, 71 of Florence) is chapter 10 of book XXI. The rest of the fragments are spread throughout various sections of the decade, though most prevalently from its first half (books XXI–XXV). Regarding the manuscripts of the fourth decade, even those that are fragmentary, things are different. We see, in fact, that there is no overlap, no single passage preserved by at least two manuscripts.

Now that we have looked into the list of manuscripts, I shall review those that could, in my opinion, offer a roadmap for future work. First of all, it would be necessary to proceed with the *recensio* and only then to carry out all the proper textual analyses. However, beyond the critical edition (my hope for the future), some short-term steps could be taken soon, such as the continuation of the *recensio* not only of books XV–XXX of the third decade, but also and especially of the ones of the fourth decade drawn up by Lippi; but, above all, it would be fundamental to analyze *systematically*, for the first time, the lexical choices of the decades, comparing them to one another on the basis of the level of comprehension of the Latin text that the translators seem to possess. In other words, we need to understand *how well* the translators knew Latin. Only after having established this yardstick could we compare the translators' language with Boccaccio's. Casella, in fact, was misled in her attribution. Just by comparing the first book of the third decade and the first book of the fourth²² with Livy's text, it is actually possible to notice cases of matching translation:

Latin terms (from Livy's text)	Third and Fourth Decades
<i>Equites</i>	Cavalieri
<i>Gens</i>	Gente
<i>Metus</i>	Paura
<i>Pedites</i>	Pedoni

But it is also possible to identify *inconsistent* translations (formally and substantially) of several keywords in Livy's text:

Latin terms (from Livy's text)	Third Decade	Fourth Decade
<i>Consilium</i>	Consiglio	Cagione/Consiglio

²² For the text of the *volgarizzamento* of the third decade (books 1, 2, 3, 4), see Baudi Di Vesme and for that of the third and fourth decades, see: Pizzorno.

<i>Dux</i>	Duca	Duce/Pastore/Guida/ Consolo
<i>Imperator</i>	Imperadore	Consolo romano /Romano imperadore
<i>Imperium</i>	Imperio/ Comandamento	Imperio
<i>Legati</i>	Legati/Ambasciatori	Legati
<i>Miles</i>	Milite/Uomo d'arme	Cavaliere
<i>Praesidium</i>	Presidio	Presidio/Aiuto
<i>Signum</i>	Segno	Segno/Bandiera
<i>Suffragium</i>	Favore/Suffragio	Aiuto/Aiutorio/ Suffragio

As we can see, in addition to words like *Equites*, *Gens* etc., other fundamental terms of Livy's text, such as *Miles*, *Legati*, *Signum*, *Praesidium* are rendered differently in each book. Today, thanks to the corpora OVI ("Opera del Vocabolario Italiano"), it is possible to conduct a broader analysis.²³ For the DiVo ("Dizionario dei Volgarizzamenti"),²⁴ in fact, OVI scholars have begun to examine in particular the entries reported by Casella occurring in Livy, Valerius Maximus and sometimes in some of Boccaccio's works. Often, thanks to the broad documentation available today, it is possible to observe that lemmas that Casella considered "marked" and characteristic of Boccaccio and Livy's translation are well attested in ancient Italian and also present in other texts (as in the case of the word "stificanza"²⁵). The rarity, instead, is confirmed for other lemmas.

Consequently, it is necessary to set up a systematic analysis that compares the translations of the (hypothetical) translators with Livy's text. In this way, we may be able to gauge not only their level of knowledge of Latin, but also their artistic sensibility. This is a type of work that has never been done before and that is, in my opinion, the main shortcoming of the philologists who have worked on the *volgarizzamento* of Livy.

3. The working plan I have proposed thus far is not an end in itself, but is functional to the stylistic and linguistic study of the text, that is, to comparisons between the language of the translator and that of Boccaccio, for

²³ <http://www.ovi.cnr.it/>.

²⁴ [http://divoweb.ovi.cnr.it/\(S\(pi3pd2y3mffcsbb3bjepmn45\)\)/CatForm01.aspx](http://divoweb.ovi.cnr.it/(S(pi3pd2y3mffcsbb3bjepmn45))/CatForm01.aspx).

²⁵ See Burgassi and Guadagnini.

it will significantly contribute to the determination of Boccaccio's authorship. I would propose, as Gianfranco Contini would have put it, a working hypothesis that is economically more gratifying: to me it seems more likely that Boccaccio translated only the fourth decade. I will support my conviction by drawing attention to some facts that, though not necessarily to be considered as "proof," may turn out to be decisive:

1) The fourth decade is the only one, amongst the three, to be given a *Proemio* in which the author outlines the purpose of his work. More importantly – as Arri, and then Casella, had noted regarding the content of the *Proemio* – “lo stile, la lingua, ed il colore del *Proemio* convengono affatto al Boccaccio.”²⁶ There is more. The *Proemio*, as I noted above, mentions Ostagio da Polenta, the dedicatee and the liege at whose house Boccaccio was certainly a guest in 1346. Similarities in content with the *Ameto* and *Amorosa visione* are present as well: I am only thinking of the antithesis of human beings-brute animals, the association “fiere-uccelli,” etc. (such as in the *Esposizioni sopra la Comedia di Dante*, 4.lit.300: “fiere salvatiche [...] uccelli” or in the *Fiammetta* 97: “selvatiche fiere [...] semplici uccelli,” as Casella has also shown²⁷). In the *Proemio*, therefore, we may sense Boccaccio's presence. However, it is important to underline that the attribution has often tended to be based largely, if not exclusively, on this *Proemio*. In this case we also should ask whether it is possible to attribute a work as extensive as Livy's decades to a single translator when the only undeniable proximity to Boccaccio appears in the first few pages.

2) Outstanding authors closer to Boccaccio's time, like Bembo and Salviati, already believed that Boccaccio had translated just one decade. (With regard to Salviati's opinion, it is plausible, as Arri proposes, that the humanist meant to refer to the fourth decade rather than to the third.) Bembo's opinion is not lightly dismissed, given the “unequaled competence in both the language and style of the author of the *Prose della volgar lingua*.”²⁸ Thus, granted that both authors were aware of Polenton's judgment and that they both distanced themselves from it, the historical importance of this opinion, together with their relative chronological proximity, represents an interesting clue that Boccaccio actually translated only one decade.

²⁶ Arri 68. This is the title of a paragraph that goes from p. 68 to p. 83.

²⁷ Casella, “Nuovi appunti” 101.

²⁸ Tanturli 833.

3) Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the printed editions may give a wrong impression. In the manuscript tradition there is no single witness that contains both decades. As is clear from our documentary summary of manuscripts, each manuscript contains either the third or the fourth decade. This is a fact that significantly weakens the one-translator hypothesis. Unless a relevant chronological hiatus were to exist, would it not be statistically probable that at least one manuscript should include both the translated texts? Or, given the size of the texts at stake, a couple of manuscripts so homogeneous as to be certainly related? The issue is still open and a more exhaustive inquiry into the tradition would provide useful data in that respect.

I would like to conclude by asking some operative questions. In deciding on the attribution to Boccaccio, should we focus on the extremely eloquent and rhetorical style of the fourth decade, on that continuous urge to cut in order to explain, underline, make clear what in the original text was implied? Or should we base our decision on the diverse levels of knowledge, not only of the Latin language but also of its culture, that we can perceive in this translation? In reading the fourth decade, we find an artistically mature personality, one that Boccaccio, already thirty-three and the author of the *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta*, *l'Amorosa visione* and *Ninfale Fiesolano* could perfectly incarnate. The translation of Livy would then be a practice either of translation or of stylistic refinement; in either case, it would be an exercise at some artistic level, one that surely helped him to develop the language and style of his mature works, especially the *Decameron*. We may assume that Boccaccio, during his second stay in Florence (from 1340 to 1347), could have chosen to carry on the work of an unknown – probably previous – translator and draw up the translation of the missing decade.

Therefore, the question of the translation of Livy is *not* closed. Instead, as I have tried to show, it should be *reopened*. If it were possible to prove the paternity of Boccaccio, we could deepen his status as a humanist and, indeed, use this identification as a building block toward even greater discoveries. In this sense, we have to remember that, right from the beginning, many of Boccaccio's contemporary readers were used to seeing Petrarca as the out-and-out founder of Humanism, the absolute model of inspiration, while in Boccaccio they saw something of a "minor disciple," more distant from classical culture and at the same time less exacting than his master-colleague philologist. Should we succeed in demonstrating that Boccaccio was responsible for Petrarca's Livy, not only would the relationship between Boccaccio and classical culture appear in a better light, but

we could also far better redefine the outlines of his contribution to the great cultural season that goes by the name of Humanism.

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