

2014

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### Recommended Citation

(2014) "Guido Cavalcanti in Boccaccio's Argomenti," *Heliotropia - An online journal of research to Boccaccio scholars*: Vol. 11 : Iss. 1 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/heliotropia/vol11/iss1/1>

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## Guido Cavalcanti in Boccaccio's *Argomenti*

**B**occaccio's *Argomenti* are, arguably, one of the most remarkable moments in what will become known as Dante criticism. They are short critical presentations of each of the three *cantiche* of the *Commedia* written in the *terza rima* characteristic of Dante's work. Formally, they serve as a proper introduction to each of the *Commedia*'s parts, as a sort of an elaborated rubric. They vary in length, from 226 verses in the cases of *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*, to 186 in the case of *Paradiso*. In them, each canto is summarized in several verses, which contain only those elements of Dante's text to which Boccaccio wanted to direct the reader's attention. The *Argomenti* appear in three manuscripts penned by Boccaccio: Toledano 104.6 (ca. 1352–56), Chigiano L. VI. 213 (ca. 1360–63), and in the MS Riccardiano 1035 (1363–65).<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, in the MS Chigiano L. VI. 213, Boccaccio also includes the so-called *rubriche*, brief, one- or two-sentence-long summaries that accompany each canto and contain its plot and characters.

The rubrics that introduce the *Argomenti* in the Toledo codex are in Latin: on cc. 48r–51r Boccaccio copies the first, introduced with a rubric in red ink:

Argumentum super tota prima parte comedie dantis aligherii florentini  
cui titulus est Infernus. Nel meço del camin di nostra vita | smarrito.

On cc. 117r–20r, we read the *Argomento al Purgatorio*, preceded by the rubric on c. 117r, in red:

Argumentum super tota secunda parte comedie Dantis aligherii florentini  
cui titulus est Purgatorium. Per correr migliore acqua alça le vele |  
qui lautore ecc.

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<sup>1</sup> My material analysis is based on the Toledo codex, and all the citations are taken from it as well. Where necessary, I collate them with Domenico Guerri's 1918 edition of the *Argomenti* in Boccaccio 1918, simply because this edition takes into account all three copies of the *Argomenti*.

The rubric in red on c. 188r that introduces the *Argomento al Paradiso*, copied on cc. 188r–90v, reads:

Argumentum super tota tertia parte comedie Dantis aligherii florentini  
cui titulus est Paradisus. La gloria di colui che tutto move | in questa ecc.

In the Chigi and Riccardiano codices, however, the rubrics introducing the *Argomenti* appear in the vernacular:

Brieve raccoglimento di cio' che in se' superficialmente contiene la lettera  
de la prima parte de la Cantica overo Comedia di Dante Alighieri di Fi-  
renze chiamata Inferno. [Ric. 1035, c. 4r]

Brieve raccoglimento di cio che in se superficialmente contiene la lettera  
della prima parte della canticha overo Comedia di Dante Alighieri di Fi-  
renze chiamata Purgatorio. [Ric. 1035, c. 56r]

Brieve ra coglimento di cio che in se superficialmente contiene la lectera  
della seco terza parte della chantica overo Comedia di Dante Alighieri di  
Firenze chiamata Paradiso. [Ric. 1035, c. 122v]<sup>2</sup>

From the formal point of view, Boccaccio does not only employ the *terza rima* of Dante's *Commedia*, but instead opens each *Argomento* with the first verse of the respective *cantica* ("Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita," "Per correr miglior acque alza le vele," and "La gloria di colui che tutto move"). Similarly, each *Argomento* closes with the very last verse or part thereof of the respective *cantica* ("usciron quindi 'a riveder le stelle," "puro e disposto a salire alle stelle," and "l'Amor che muove il sole e l'altre stelle"). Direct quotations of the commented text allow for a greater proximity of — and continuation between — the two works and also attest to Boccaccio's poetic mastery.

Moreover, each *Argomento* announces the contents of the respective part of the *Commedia*, canto by canto, in an attempt to familiarize the reader with as much of the spirit of Dante's text as possible. However, although the *Argomenti* and the *rubriche* might look like mere summaries, a more attentive reading reveals that they contain selective information and

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<sup>2</sup> My semi-diplomatic transcription of rubrics comes from the MS Riccardiano 1035, where Boccaccio's attention to correctness seems to be fading as he transcribes the *Commedia*: in the rubric introducing *Purgatorio*, while most likely copying the rubric to the *Argomento all'Inferno*, he erroneously refers to it as "la prima parte" instead of qualifying it as the second part of the *Commedia*. Moreover, when he arrives at the rubric that introduces *Paradiso*, he mechanically starts writing "seconda" but notices the mistake after having already copied the first three and a half letters (the transcription of "o" is only partial). He then underlines the letters of the incorrect word (a common procedure for marking parts to be erased) and proceeds with the word "terza."

allusions by which Boccaccio suggests a certain interpretation of Dante's text. As in other cases of his editorial work, Boccaccio leaves his mark on this text as well. Let us not forget that the Certaldese spent a significant amount of time copying and editing Dante's works, from the poems to the *Vita nova* and the *Commedia*. Also striking is his meticulous work on different versions of his *Trattatello in laude di Dante*, which in Boccaccio's manuscripts accompanies, as a sort of a *vida*, both copies of the *Vita nova* and Dante's other works.<sup>3</sup> To this list should be added the literal and allegorical interpretations of the first seventeen or so cantos of the *Commedia* that constitute the text of the *Esposizioni*. With his two copies of the *Vita nova*, Boccaccio the editor he starts a new textual tradition that will last until it is corrected in 1907 in Michele Barbi's edition. Boccaccio's copies of the *Commedia* are identified as corrupt, and they mark the beginning of the so-called "seconda tradizione" of Dante's *magnum opus*.<sup>4</sup> This Boccaccio — the tireless author and, above all, editor and copyist — composed the *Argomenti* and the *rubriche* to accompany the *Commedia*. Boccaccio the compiler/editor of his codices decides not that each *cantica* should be introduced by a simple rubric in red, but that Dante's work deserved a longer and more detailed introduction. Boccaccio the reader of Dante, and above all Boccaccio the *auctor*, composes independent literary texts to function as introductory readings for the three parts of the *Commedia*.

The norms of editing vernacular texts at his time do not support such a decision. The *Argomenti* are very different from any other attempt at introduction of vernacular texts. Latin texts of the *auctores* and of Scripture were normally accompanied by commentaries and glosses. Occitan troubadour poetry, in the Italian diaspora, decades after its composition, gained the *vidas* and the *razos*. But all of these different introductions and interpretations were part either of long-standing traditions aimed at textual interpretation or of the new approaches conditioned by the fact that the original texts are removed from their original context and need to be (re)contextualized. Boccaccio's is a work of an author and editor who took on the challenge of bringing Dante closer to his reader, a task he carries out through the filter of his own eye and pen. He does not claim to interpret Dante's text; on the contrary, in the rubrics that introduce each *Argomento*, both in Latin and in the vernacular, he claims to be merely

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<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed analysis of Boccaccio's different roles in editing and transcription of the MSS. Chigi L V 176 and Toledo 104.6, see Todorović 2011 and Todorović Forthcoming.

<sup>4</sup> Petrocchi 1994, 2:17.

summarizing the plot of the three *cantiche* (“brieve raccoglimento di cio che superficialmente contiene la lettera”). But, his other editorial work on Dante’s texts, coupled with a careful reading of the *Argomenti*, supports the thesis that this reader’s digest of Dante’s work should be marked by Boccaccio’s own personal style and guidelines for interpreting the *Commedia*. A single example will suffice to prove the point: the key moment from the episode of the sullen and the wrathful, at whose center we find Filippo Argenti. Dante’s original goes as follows:

Mentre noi corravam la morta gora,  
dinanzi mi si fece un pien di fango,  
e disse: «Chi se’ tu che vieni anzi ora?».  
E io a lui: «S’i’ vegno, non rimango;  
ma tu chi se’, che si se’ fatto brutto?».  
Rispuose: «Vedi che son un che piango».  
E io a lui: «Con piangere e con lutto,  
spirito maladetto, ti rimani;  
ch’i’ ti conosco, ancor sie lordo tutto».  
Allor distese al legno ambo le mani;  
per che ’l maestro accorto lo sospinse,  
dicendo: «Via costà con li altri cani!».  
Lo collo poi con le braccia mi cinse;  
basciommi ’l volto, e disse: «Alma sdegnosa,  
benedetta colei che ’n te s’incinse!  
Quei fu al mondo persona orgogliosa;  
bontà non è che sua memoria fregi:  
così s’è l’ombra sua qui furiosa.  
Quanti si tegnon or là sù gran regi  
che qui staranno come porci in brago,  
di sé lasciando orribili dispregi!».  
E io: «Maestro, molto sarei vago  
di vederlo attuffare in questa broda  
prima che noi uscissimo del lago».  
Ed elli a me: «Avante che la proda  
ti si lasci veder, tu sarai sazio:  
di tal disio convien che tu goda».  
Dopo ciò poco vid’ io quello strazio  
far di costui a le fangose genti,  
che Dio ancor ne lodo e ne ringrazio.  
Tutti gridavano: «A Filippo Argenti!»;  
e ’l fiorentino spirito bizzarro  
in sé medesimo si volvea co’ denti.  
Quivi il lasciammo, che più non ne narro.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Inf.* VIII.31–64, in Petrocchi 1994, 2:162–66.

This event is contained in just a few verses of Boccaccio's first *Argomento*:

Quivi Flegiás, adirato, il pantano  
oltre gli passa, nel qual vede strazio  
far di Filippo Argenti, e non invano.  
E appena era di tal mirare sazio.<sup>6</sup>

Formally, Boccaccio employs the two crucial rhyme-words from the original text of the *Commedia*: here, too, *strazio* rhymes with *sazio*, an adjective that refers to Dante's satisfaction at seeing Filippo torn apart by the other wrathful. This rhyme not only ensures continuity with Dante's text, but also, as in a *tenzone*, proves the poetic mastery of its author who is undertaking a literary exercise modeled on the text with which it dialogues. Boccaccio even keeps the same *enjambement* present in the *Commedia* ("vede strazio / far di Filippo Argenti"), preserving the original rhetorical style in order to produce the same effect on the reader.

Moreover, Boccaccio summarizes Dante's almost triumphant exclamation regarding Filippo's punishment in a brief hemistich: "e non invano." As Boccaccio will write later in his *Esposizioni*, Filippo was famous for shoeing his horse with silver (hence the nickname Argenti) and for being known as a wrathful person, the sin for which he is destined to spend the rest of eternity in hell. Boccaccio's conclusion of this episode, "e non invano," echoes and justifies Dante's somewhat unusual reaction to the damned soul, which is unlike any other that the reader encounters in the previous *canti*. The reader has by then seen Dante's narration of the unfortunate souls' destinies, but the reaction of the pilgrim was often compassionate or, at the very least, distant and free from personal involvement. Dante admits that he had fainted upon hearing Francesca's sad testimony, but this is something Boccaccio never mentions in his introduction. He just states that Dante hears the cries and screams of the "peccator carnali" where "Francesca e Polo li lor mali / contano."<sup>7</sup> Dante will admit that he is overcome with pity by Pier delle Vigne's story, but Boccaccio only tells us that "gli fe' Pier delle Vigne accorti / delle dolenti lor condizioni / e delle sue"<sup>8</sup> without commenting further. In Filippo's episode, however, we see Dante deeply invested and interested in the unfortunate ending of the damned soul. Consequently, Boccaccio does not miss this chance to emphasize the attitude of the *Commedia*'s author and, in all probability, his own disdain for Filippo, through a simple suggestive and

<sup>6</sup> *Argomento all'Inferno* 61–64, in Boccaccio 1918, 237.

<sup>7</sup> *Argomento all'Inferno* 41, 43–44, in Boccaccio 1918, 236.

<sup>8</sup> *Argomento all'Inferno* 105–07, in Boccaccio 1918, 238.

subjective statement embedded in the phrase: “e non invano.” The reader thus learns that Filippo’s torments serve a purpose, and Boccaccio is most certainly counting on his reader’s knowledge of Filippo’s reputation as a “fiorentino spirito bizzarro,” which was common among many early commentators as well. For example, Guido da Pisa portrays Filippo in his commentary as follows:

Iste fuit quidam miles de Adimaribus de Florentia, totus accidiosus, iracundus, invidus, et superbus.<sup>9</sup>

The Ottimo commento provides this description:

In questa parte l’Autore mostra alcuno famoso in questo vizio d’arroganza, il quale ebbe nome Messer Filippo Argenti degli Adimari di Firenze, cavaliere di grande vita, e di grande burbanza, e di molta spesa, e di poca virtude e valore.<sup>10</sup>

Benvenuto da Imola’s commentary offers the most extensive and the most accusatory portrait of Filippo:

Philippus Argenti de Adimaris, vir quidem superbissimus, iracundissimus, sine virtute vel civilitate, displicentissimus, quia erat de stirpe numerosa valde, et pulcer et fortis corpore et dives valde, quae omnia sibi materiam arrogantiae ministrabant, habebat summe odio populum florentinum, habebat unum equum quem vocabat equum populi Florentiae, quem promittebat omnibus petentibus eum mutuo.<sup>11</sup>

These are just some of the many depictions of Filippo, whose figure led the early commentators, including the Boccaccio of the *Esposizioni*, to unanimous agreement that the sinner was devoid of all positive traits and, presumably, that he deserved Dante’s treatment in *Inferno* VIII. Boccaccio has to do no more in the *Argomento* than simply remind his reader that Filippo is not suffering without cause or reason.

In the episode of the heretics in *Inferno* X, where Dante and Virgil encounter Farinata degli Uberti and Cavalcante de’ Cavalcanti, Guido’s father, we find an example of perhaps the most striking case of Boccaccio’s editorial freedom, which can be defined without hesitation as a true intrusion into Dante’s story. We shall remember that Dante speaks directly to Cavalcante, who is identified not through his own name, but through that of his son Guido. Nonetheless (and despite the fact that in the *Argomenti* Boccaccio rarely fails to name famous sinners, especially those, like “ser

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<sup>9</sup> Guido da Pisa 1974, 170.

<sup>10</sup> *Ottimo Commento* 1995, 1:137.

<sup>11</sup> Benvenuto da Imola 1887, 1:282.



Brunetto," who were involved in Florentine life and politics), Boccaccio's introduction is silent regarding the names of both the father and the son. The text of the *Argomento* pertaining to this canto reads as follows:

Quivi dolente strida et alte udio,  
 che de' sepolcri uscivano affocati,  
 de' quai pieno era tutto il loco rio:  
 in quegli essere intese i trascutati  
 eresiarci, e tutti quelli ancora  
 ch'a Epicuro dietro sono andati.  
 Lì, ragionando, picciola dimora  
 Con Farinata e con un altro face,  
 Ch'alquanto a l'arca pareva di fora.<sup>12</sup>

Let us now read the *rubrica* that precedes the tenth canto of the *Inferno* in MS Chigi L. VI. 213. One of the shortest *rubriche*, it reads as follows:

Comincia il canto decimo dello 'Nferno. Nel quale l'autor parla con Farinata, il quale alcuna cosa gli predice, e solvegli alcun dubbio.

In the shorter form — that of the *rubrica* — Boccaccio thus delivers additional information: he tells the reader that Dante's doubt will be resolved, which alludes to Dante's perplexed reaction at finding out that the damned cannot know the present.

As we see both in the short summary of *Inferno X* in the *Argomento all'Inferno* and in the text of the *rubrica*, Boccaccio mentions the name of only one of the two souls to whom Dante will be speaking in the canto. *L'altro* — the other one — who rises only up to his chin and then faints at the — false — news about his son's death, is Cavalcante. Why does Boccaccio choose not to name this second yet extremely important, and certainly more tragic, protagonist of this canto? Why does he opt not to tell his reader that the second figure is that of a father in pain who only wishes to learn the whereabouts of his son, a son he hopes he might see on his journey through the afterlife with his friend and fellow poet? How does the Boccaccio of the *Argomenti* reflect the Boccaccio of the *Decameron* where he defines Guido as an "excellent natural philosopher" in VI.9 and also includes him in the list of exemplary vernacular love poets in the Introduction to Day Four? How much, if at all, does Boccaccio's approach to Guido change throughout his authorial and editorial work, from the *Decameron* to Guido's poem *Donna me prega* accompanied by Dino del Garbo's Latin commentary and copied by Boccaccio in his codex Chigi L V 176? Are the favorable treatment of Guido and the attempt to save him due to Boccac-

<sup>12</sup> *Argomento all'Inferno* 79–87, in Boccaccio 1918, 237.



cio's own inclinations towards "natural philosophy" and Epicureanism? Or are we witnessing Boccaccio's attempt to save one of his favorite love poets from the tragic destiny of literally burning in hell for the rest of eternity? Perhaps Boccaccio does not reveal who the "other one" is because he wishes to follow Dante's lead in introducing him later and is counting on an effect of delayed recognition that would give this moment greater prominence. Or perhaps Boccaccio wants to conceal the identity of that "other one" for as long as possible, so as to postpone the moment when Guido Cavalcanti is once and for all connected to hell, even if only through his father's presence in the underworld.

The *Argomento* never reveals the identity of the other soul who appears in the tenth canto alongside Farinata. To find that out, the patient reader has to discover that the soul belongs to Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti from the canto itself and must spot the verse in which Dante identifies him as Guido's father. To Cavalcante's question

«Se per questo cieco  
carcere vai per altezza d'ingegno,  
mio figlio ov' è? e perché non è teco?»<sup>13</sup>

the poet replies:

«Da me stesso non vegno:  
colui ch'attende là, per qui mi mena,  
forse cui Guido vostro ebbe a disdegno.»<sup>14</sup>

The reader of the *Commedia* thus learns of the identity of Dante's second interlocutor among the heretics only at the moment when he has been identified as Guido's father. Boccaccio must fail intentionally to mention the other sinner both in the *Argomento* and in the *rubrica* and, in order to understand why he does so, it is useful to look into Guido's presence in his other works.

First, let us look at Boccaccio's interpretation of this same episode in the *Esposizioni*. While we are informed early on in the text that Farinata will be one of Dante's interlocutors, it is not until Boccaccio starts the exegesis of the part in which Cavalcante appears that we are told his name, personal background and history. When Cavalcante shows rises in his fiery tomb, Boccaccio, in harmony with Dante's text, describes his appearance in a kneeling position and finally claims that here we should learn the identity of this soul:

<sup>13</sup> *Inf.* X.58–60, in Petrocchi 1994, 2:165.

<sup>14</sup> *Inf.* X.61–63, in Petrocchi 1994, 2:165–66.

È qui adunque da sapere che costui, il quale qui parla con l'autore, fu un cavalier fiorentino chiamato messer Cavalcante de' Cavalcanti.<sup>15</sup>

Cavalcante is described by Boccaccio as a “leggiadro e ricco cavaliere” who “segui l'opinione d'Epicuro in non credere che l'anima dopo la morte del corpo visse e che il nostro sommo bene fosse ne' dilette carnali.” For this reason, according to Boccaccio, he is punished here with the heretics (“sì come eretico, è dannato”). Dante's conversation with Cavalcante and the mention of Guido's name lead Boccaccio to repeat his description of Guido from *Decameron* VI.9, where Guido is represented as follows:

oltre a quello che egli fu un de' migliori loici che avesse il mondo e ottimo filosofo naturale (delle quali cose poco la brigata curava), si fu egli leggiadrissimo e costumato e parlante uom molto e ogni cosa che far volle e a gentile uom pertinente seppe meglio che altro uom fare; e con questo era ricchissimo, e a chiedere a lingua sapeva onorare cui nell'animo gli capeva che il valesse.<sup>16</sup>

In this *novella*, as we recall, Guido triumphs over a *brigata* of local men who are baffled by his retort and, as the astonished men struggle to decipher it, manages to escape from their trap. Through the mouthpiece of Betto Brunelleschi, the brigata's leader and the only one who understands Guido's words, Boccaccio celebrates Guido's genius:

Gli smemorati siete voi, se voi non l'avete inteso: egli ci ha onestamente in poche parole detta la maggior villania del mondo, per ciò che, se voi riguarderete bene, queste arche sono le case de' morti, per ciò che in esse si pongono e dimorano i morti; le quali egli dice che son nostra casa, a dimostrarci che noi e gli altri uomini idioti e non letterati siamo, a comparazion di lui e degli altri uomini scienziati, peggio che uomini morti, e per ciò, qui essendo, noi siamo a casa nostra.<sup>17</sup>

Betto Brunelleschi's detailed explanation of the meaning of Guido's motto completes the laudatory image of Guido that Boccaccio had started to weave in the *Decameron* as early as the *Introduction* to Day Four, where Guido is listed along with Dante and Cino da Pistoia as one of the greatest love poets.

A similar, albeit brief, picture of Guido is found in the *Esposizioni* where Boccaccio repeats the description of Dante's “first friend:”

[Guido fu] uomo costumatissimo e ricco e d'alto ingegno, e seppe molte leggiadre cose fare meglio che alcun altro nostro cittadino; e, oltre a ciò,

<sup>15</sup> *Esposizioni* X.61, in Boccaccio 1994a, 526.

<sup>16</sup> *Decameron* VI.9.8, in Boccaccio 1992, 755–56.

<sup>17</sup> *Decameron* VI.9.14, in Boccaccio 1992, 757–58.

fu nel suo tempo reputato ottimo loico e buon filosofo, e fu singularissimo amico dell'autore, sì come esso medesimo mostra nella sua *Vita Nuova*, e fu buon dicitore in rima.<sup>18</sup>

Boccaccio does not alter his view of Guido, as is evident from these descriptions that, from the *Introduction* to the Fourth Day of the *Decameron* to the ninth novella of Day Six, to the *Esposizioni*, are separated by several decades. In no instance does the Certaldese change his favorable description of Guido, which is a fact that leads us to conclude that his treatment of Cavalcante in the *Argomento* to the *Inferno* may be explained by the reverence in which he held the great poet and Dante's youthful friend. Preferring to leave it to Dante to reveal the soul's identity within the text of *Inferno* X, Boccaccio limits his identification of the protagonists to Farinata alone.

Boccaccio's admiration for Guido is further confirmed in the codex Chigi L. V. 176 of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, on cc. 29r–32v. In a complex dynamic between Dante and Petrarca, in the midst of this anthology of Boccaccio's teachers and role models, we find Guido's poem *Donna me prega* accompanied by Dino del Garbo's Latin commentary. Boccaccio takes great care not only to include Guido in this canon of Early Italian literature, but also to honor him — quite unusually — with the inclusion of Dino del Garbo's learned text. Material and aesthetic characteristics of the *chartae* on which *Donna me prega* and its commentary are transcribed clearly show that Boccaccio conceived this part of the codex at a different time and with different intentions. The text of the *canzone* is copied in larger letters, with one blank transcription line between the verses, while the commentary is copied in letters of slighter dimensions and occupies every single ruled line. The appearance in this codex of Guido's doctrinal *canzone* thus recalls that of the texts of the classical *auctores*, or of Scripture, which were glossed in the margins as an aid to the reader's understanding. That Boccaccio copied Guido's poem presents no obvious problems; after all, he copied both Dante's and Petrarca's poetry (and his own *carme Ytalie iam certus honos*) and celebrated Guido as a poet of love, alongside Dante and Cino, in the strategically placed Introduction to Day Four in the *Decameron*. But it is quite remarkable that he includes in a poetry anthology a learned commentary in Latin.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> *Esposizioni* X.62, in Boccaccio 1994a, 526.

<sup>19</sup> On the progression of the appearance of the vernacular text (from the margins of manuscripts transmitting Latin works to this rather fascinating moment in which the tables

Domenico De Robertis's codicological analysis of MS Chigi L.V.176 showed that cc. 29–32 are in every respect different from the other *chartae* Boccaccio used for this codex.<sup>20</sup> While the rest of the fascicles feature the same dimensions of the ruled space and of the margins, with 43 lines of transcription, these *chartae* bearing Guido's poem contain 60–63 lines of transcription. The ruled space is much wider because it needed to contain the commentary as well.<sup>21</sup> De Robertis concludes that, even taking out these *chartae*, the original composition of the rest of the codex cannot be retrieved, because of the fragmentary nature of the two surrounding fascicles. The debate about the moment in which Guido's poem was added to the collection has been inconclusive, as has been the debate about the identity of the person who did it. De Robertis bases his conclusion that “indicare l'effettivo momento della separazione (e della sostituzione [of the *Commedia* with *Donna me prega*]) è praticamente impossibile” on different codicological indications, most of which rely on the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century anthologies that contain the same sequence of texts contained on cc. 1–28 and 34r–43 of MS Chigi L.V.176.<sup>22</sup> I argue that it was, after all, Boccaccio himself who changed the material structure of his codex and inserted Guido among Dante's texts, and that, furthermore, this decision was not “frettolos[a] e non calcolat[a].”<sup>23</sup> On the contrary, when considered in the context of Boccaccio's overall reverence for Guido (witnessed by various works written at various points in the Certaldese's life), the insertion of *Donna me prega* appears well-planned and indicative of Boccaccio's editorial techniques, which were strongly connected to his own works and not, as De Robertis suggested, to “megalomania.”<sup>24</sup>

This editorial decision in its own right explains better than any other laudatory passage from his own works that, for Boccaccio, Guido was first and foremost an “ottimo filosofo naturale.” Marco Veglia, arguing very

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have turned and vernacular is at the center and the Latin commentary is ancillary to it), see Storey 1993, 5–69.

<sup>20</sup> De Robertis 1975, 29.

<sup>21</sup> De Robertis 1975, 16–18.

<sup>22</sup> De Robertis 1975, 23.

<sup>23</sup> De Robertis 1975, 21.

<sup>24</sup> De Robertis 1975, 29. Jonathan Usher (2004) deduced that Boccaccio did not have any interest in Guido's poem, but rather in Dino's commentary that served to him “as a convenient manual, accessible to a non medical scholar, on the ‘maladye of hereos.’” While Usher's discussion supports such a claim, a look at a wider relationship between Guido and Boccaccio – also considered in this essay – does not seem to support it completely.

convincingly for a Boccaccio-“epicureo,” has called attention to Boccaccio’s inclination towards Epicureanism in *Phyllostropos*, the fifteenth eclogue in the *Buccolicum Carmen*, in the ninth novella of the Sixth Day of the *Decameron* and in his poetry and letters, including those addressed to friends in his old age. This is a Boccaccio who has managed to reconcile on the one hand the humanism that was on the rise and, on the other, the concept that Veglia has called “avanguardia *naturalis*,” which bordered on heresy. Veglia points out that “all’umanesimo ‘antagonistico’ con la cultura naturale del XII–XIV secolo nel primo [Petrarca], corrisponde nel secondo dei due amici [Boccaccio] un umanesimo inclusivo, conciliante, che adotta e non esclude l’avanguardia *naturalis* nelle punte più alte della recente temperie di rinnovata classicità.”<sup>25</sup> It is in these very notions that we should look for the source of his enduring admiration for Guido, the source of this salvation, no matter how short-lived, that the Certaldese attributes to his predecessor. Boccaccio saves him more than once from the tombs: once in the *Argomento all’Inferno*, where the only inhabitant of the *arche* is Farinata, and once in the *rubrica* from the MS Chigi L. VI. 213. He saves Guido in the *Argomenti* and in the *rubrica* from those same *arche* over which he has Guido leap to safety in *Decameron* VI.9, after being attacked by Betto Brunelleschi’s *brigata*. In relation to Guido, Boccaccio “epicureo” becomes Boccaccio *epicureo* (without quotation marks). This Boccaccio has identified himself as early as the *Buccolicum Carmen* with pastor Epy. Boccaccio, as Typhlus, exclaims:

Memini: cantabat inesse  
pastor Epy, silvis quondam famosus apricis,  
interitum menti pariter cum corpore cunctis.<sup>26</sup>

The last verse depicts the Certaldese as a faithful follower of Epicurus (pastor Epy), whom Dante would have condemned for the same reasons he condemns Farinata and Cavalcante. We can surmise, therefore, that by saving Guido, Boccaccio is saving himself. Indeed, I argue that the key for understanding Boccaccio’s favorable attitude towards Guido in his introductions and rubrics to the *Inferno* must be attributed to nothing but his Epicureanism on the one hand and to the high esteem in which he held love poetry on the other. First, he is saving that young poet of love poetry who followed in the steps of Dante, Cino and Guido. Second, he is saving the Epicurean poet of the *Buccolicum Carmen* and the intellectual who cherished the force of the human genius that was so often on the verge of

<sup>25</sup> See Veglia 2000, 47, and Veglia 1998, 19–42.

<sup>26</sup> *Buccolicum Carmen* XV 131–33, in Boccaccio 1994b, 886.

heresy. Denouncing Guido would be denouncing himself. Insofar as codices Toledo 104.6, Chigi L. VI. 213 and Riccardiano 1035 have all been dated from the early 1350s to the mid-1360s, one might argue that their point of view belonged to the younger and “Epicurean” Boccaccio. But, as Veglia has shown, his Epicurean tendencies never vanish, even from his later writings.

While Boccaccio could not correct Dante's text and the implications of his decision to confine the Cavalcantis — the father and possibly the son as well — to the sixth circle of Hell, Boccaccio does what he can in the copies penned in his own hand. We shall remember that Boccaccio “corrected” the *Vita nova* in his two copies by marginalizing the *divisions* and offering the following justification:

La onde io non potendolo negli altri emendare, in queste che scripto ho n' ho uoluto sodisfare [al]l'appetito de l'auctore.<sup>27</sup>

The desire in both *Inferno X* and the *Vita nova* is clearly not Dante's; it is Boccaccio's, and only his. The mechanism of correction is continued and its aim unchanged: he meant to inscribe upon his interpretations of Dante his own views and values and, above all, to assert himself as a contemporary *auctor* worthy of his great predecessor's legacy.

In the introduction to his magisterial translation of the *Esposizioni*, Michael Papio intelligently grasps the meaning of poetry for the Certaldese: “[p]oetry was far more for Boccaccio than verses strung together according to meter or rhyme; it was, indeed, an art that preserved victories and failures, virtues and vices, for the minds of later generations. It was thanks to poets that past acts of fame — and infamy — were safeguarded, as in amber, for the inspection of posterity.”<sup>28</sup>

On the one hand, Boccaccio's silence on Cavalcante can be interpreted as his attempt at uncoupling Guido's family from Hell. Whereas in his interpretation in the *Esposizioni* he has to tackle this subject for obvious reasons, the poetry of the *Argomenti* leaves him greater freedom, which he does not hesitate to use, to break the association of one of his favorite poets and “natural philosophers” with Hell. Indeed, Boccaccio understood that poetry will live on, as would his writings, and so he took great care to leave to posterity his own viewpoint, be it weaved in his own works or preserved in his tireless editorial enterprise. The poetry of the *Argomenti* will thus perpetuate his fierce and uncompromising message to posterity.

<sup>27</sup> The transcription from MS Toledo, Archivo y Biblioteca Capitulares 104.6 (c. 28r), is mine.

<sup>28</sup> Papio 2009, 4.



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