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**Filippo Andrei. 'Boccaccio the Philosopher. An Epistemology of the Decameron.' Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.**

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*visio* had been combined into numerous other religious genres. Among these, the homely featured, as a form which gathers the prophetic and eschatological ferments which characterized the *visio* of previous centuries. Obviously, such ferments are regathered in the genre of the *visio* in Dante's *Commedia*, a poem which reunites eschatology and prophetism under the banner of the afterlife journey.

The second chapter, *Predicazione e predicatori nella 'Commedia'*, analyzes the passages of Dante's poem which somehow deal with preaching. If on the one hand the false preachers identifiable with modern ecclesiastic hierarchy are condemned because Dante feels they have betrayed the evangelical message of poverty and humility, on the other hand, the Dantean lines tend to praise the preachers who have conveyed that same evangelical message, i.e. the Apostles, especially Paul, and modern saints such as Francis and Dominic.

The third chapter, *Figure della predicazione*, focuses on the rhetorical and stylistic aspects of the so-called *sermo modernus*, the particular homiletic genre which came to life during the twelfth century. Maldina argues that Dante's divine mission is highlighted not only by the substantial function of prophet and preacher accorded to him, but also by the peculiar literary styles through which Dante shapes the eschatological message he carries, as he expresses his prophecies according the style of the *rhetorica divina*.

The final chapter, entitled *Stili omiletici*, analyzes three different passages of the *Commedia* which relate to the genre of medieval preaching. In particular, the instance of *Inferno* 19 can be related to the specific subgenre of homely which is moral rebuke; the purgatorial episode of the *giron* of pride (cantos 10-12) helps not only demonstrating how the homiletic style helps repressing sins, but it also exhorts to the opposite virtue (in this case, humility); cantos 4 and 5 of *Paradiso* offer an example of how the homiletic genre can function as an intertext for what concerns the more marked aspect of the *Commedia*.

Giovanni Vedovotto, *University of Notre Dame*

Filippo Andrei.

*Boccaccio the Philosopher. An Epistemology of the Decameron.*

Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. XI + 259 pp. \$99.

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In Italian literary tradition, there are many authors whose contribution to philosophical thought has not been fully appreciated. Giovanni Boccaccio is certainly one of these. Although writing across an impressive variety of different genres and topics, including history, mythology, and moral psychology, Boccaccio's legacy as an author seems to be especially tied to his purely literary works. For most scholars, as well as for a more general public, Boccaccio is, first and foremost, the witty and colorful author of the *Decameron*.

While the *Decameron's* role in the development of Italian literature cannot be underestimated, this view runs the risk of overshadowing a large and significant

part of his production. By rejecting the idea that Boccaccio was purely and simply a narrator (indeed, an exceptionally gifted one), Filippo Andrei's book provides a refreshing insight into Boccaccio's interests in philosophy. *Boccaccio the Philosopher* does a good service to scholars not only because it offers a clear and convincing account of what is not immediately graspable in Boccaccio's works, but also because its analysis focuses primarily on Boccaccio's literary masterpiece *par excellence*: the *Decameron*.

Boccaccio, Andrei argues, was not a philosopher in the same sense Plato or Aristotle were; i.e., he did not build a comprehensive system encompassing all branches of philosophical inquiry. This does not mean, however, that he did not contribute at all to the investigation of topics that have some relevance for philosophy.

Andrei convincingly shows that the *Decameron* presents an "undercurrent philosophical discourse" (p. 3), a discourse that runs through all the tales of the collection and outlines a coherent theoretical parabola. The main components of this discourse are epistemology (namely, the analysis of the processes and dynamics of knowledge) and practical wisdom. Along with the many stories it presents, Andrei claims, the *Decameron* carries out an investigation into human knowledge and theory of action.

Composed of five chapters, Andrei's book may be divided into three main sections. The first one, corresponding to chapter 1, explores Boccaccio's training in ancient and medieval thought as well as his philosophical terminology presented in the *Decameron*. The second section, unfolded in chapters 2 through 4, examines Boccaccio's theory of knowledge emerging from three main issues within the *Decameron*: these are the epistemic nature of the *fabula*, the notion of the journey as a process of knowledge acquisition, and Boccaccio's recourse to the enigmatic device of the *motto* as a means to illustrate the functioning of the human mind. Boccaccio's rhetorical use of *mottos* serves as transition towards the last section of the book, presented in chapter 5 and devoted to practical philosophy and theory of action. In this chapter, Andrei presents an analysis of "the moral discourse of the *Decameron*" (p. 184), a discourse making its way from the very prologue of the work which, by identifying its *raison d'être* in the "clear recollection of the kindnesses received" ("la memoria de' benefici già ricevuti"), provides the composition of the whole *Decameron* with a clear moral basis – i.e. the return of a *beneficium*, following a tradition that can be traced back most notably to Seneca.

Seneca is, unsurprisingly, one of the philosophical sources Boccaccio was certainly familiar with. One of the aspects making Andrei's book most convincing is that it grounds all its arguments on historical and material evidence. In chapter 1, for instance, Andrei provides a detailed account of Boccaccio's "philosophical library." From the perspective of a modern reader, it is interesting to observe how conspicuous the philosophical readings were of a person who never styled himself as a philosopher. In fact, Andrei's list features a wide variety of thinkers, from Greco-Roman antiquity to the Islamic world, to the Latin Middle Ages: Plato, Aristotle, al-Ghazālī, Seneca, Horace, Cicero, Macrobius, Augustine of Hippo, Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, Hermes Trismegistus, William of Auxerre, Thomas Aquinas, to mention only a few (p. 7). While still young, Boccaccio transcribed entire sections from some of these authors' writings in his famous *Zibaldoni*,

now preserved in the Biblioteca Laurenziana and Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale of Florence.

The *Zibaldoni* thus testify for Boccaccio's early interests in philosophy, and they offer a very concrete example inviting us to reconsider some of the trajectories undertaken by Boccaccio's intellectual activity. Among the many philosophical items copied by Boccaccio in his *Zibaldoni*, Andrei might have mentioned a few more as significant for the shaping of Boccaccio's philosophical views. One of these is the famous *Carmen* on fortune, which Boccaccio transcribes in ms. BLaur., Plut. 33.31, f. 33v. The *Carmen* is a well-known Latin composition that describes fortune by appealing to all the *topoi* traditionally associated with this notion (fortune's inconsistency and unpredictability, its being fickle and capable of overturning people's destiny). All these motives will be drawn upon by Boccaccio in the many passages of his works dealing with fortune—a concept which, by combining epistemological and practical aspects (one needs *to know* how natural causality actually works in order *to foresee and address* unexpected events), presents important philosophical implications.

*Boccaccio the Philosopher* is a beneficial contribution to the scholarship on this essential author. It provides a sensitive and unprecedented reading of Boccaccio's philosophical preoccupations and sources. In doing so, Andrei reminds us that many different layers coexist in Boccaccio's writings and that it is not possible to separate, as Charles Osgood famously put it, “Boccaccio the poet” from “Boccaccio the scholar.”

Tommaso De Robertis, *University of Pennsylvania*

*La filologia in Italia nel Rinascimento.*

Carlo Caruso and Emilio Russo, eds.

Biblioteca dell'Arcadia. Studi e testi 4. Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2018. XXIV + 424 pp. €58.

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The volume is comprised of twenty-one chapters dealing with the textual and editorial trajectories of both Renaissance and pre-Renaissance literature in the Italian vernacular over a period of almost two centuries, approximately from the late Quattrocento to the mid-seventeenth century. As suggested by the editors in their introductory remarks (Carlo Caruso and Emilio Russo, 'Introduzione,' p. vii), the historical transition from “l'età del manoscritto” to “l'età della stampa” provides the main vantage point from which this variegated collection of essays may be regarded as a whole, although the introduction of typographical innovations (including new punctuation and formats, cursive and roman types) as well as paratextual devices (such as final indexes and appendices) hardly accounts for all the questions addressed throughout the volume.

To begin with, a crucial question arises about the literary canon and its making. This is not just a recurring topic but one across the board, which intersects the