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Boccaccio. Fragilità di un genio.

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In a literary criticism sphere as dense as the Giovanni Boccaccio's studies, the embodied volume by Marco Santagata distinguishes itself for being transversal, for presenting a reviewed prospect of the field, and for the material expansion it triggers. The advanced place that, in the history of literature belongs into the work of the *tre corone*, Dante, Petrarca, and Boccaccio, is correlated to the power of its contexture, conferring by itself an extraordinary complexity to the analysed theme. To that, it is added, just like in any classic, the width of a critical speech, generated among the centuries, which has been developed through an exponential growth. Even in any of the three cases — Dante, Petrarca, and Boccaccio —, the critical speech's origins go back to the times when writers were actually taking part into that dialogue themselves.

This remand to the work of the *tre corone* is essential to the comprehension of *Boccaccio. Fragilità di un genio*, as well as the context in which it has been written. In the heart of several themes to which Santagata has been dedicating his work, there has been defined a line that, in a continuous and articulated manner, has crossed the work of Dante, Petrarca, and Boccaccio. In the case of the first two writers, it contemplates both critical analysis and text edition. From 1988 on, the professor from the Pisa University has been publishing a series of volumes dedicated to Francesco Petrarca, inaugurated in that very year with *Petrarca e i Colonna* (1988), and sealed by *I frammenti dell'anima. Storia e racconto nel Canzoniere di Petrarca* (1992), which had a new edition in 2011. In parallel, Santagata has prepared the comment of the *Canzoniere* (1996) and coordinated the edition of *Trionfi. Rime estravaganti. Codice degli abbozzi* (1996) to the Meridiani from Arnaldo Mondadori. Regarding Dante Alighieri, between *Dante. Il romanzo della sua vita* (2012) and *Il racconto della Commedia* (2017), there were several other essays, as well as the coordination of the commented edition from the poet to the

Meridiani (2014). A Dante themed novel is to be added, *Come donna innamorata* (2015), Strega finalist award.

This said, *Boccaccio. Fragilità di un genio*, actually preceded by *Boccaccio indiscreto. Il mito di Fiammetta*, from the same year, comes as the ulterior piece of work, framing the *tre corone*. It should be outlined, for an audience who is less familiarised with Italian literature, that the interrelation in the work of *tre corone* is an acquired critic premise.

The central body of the volume is divided into three parts which, according to a chronological order, follow Giovanni Boccaccio's intellectual path: youth (1313-1340), maturity (1341-1360) and elderness (1361-1375). Each of them is internally organised into chapters and subchapters. The monographical profile of this essay reviews and articulates family relationships, intellectual and merchant education, places and journeys, social positioning, relationing manners, intellectual networks, contact and correspondence linkages, coeval testimonials, possessions, acquisitions and tributations. Placed in the core of this contexture, the writer's literary production shall be enlightened by a range of perceptions, which, besides enlarging and enriching its interpretation, corroborate its actual deepening.

One of the traits which immediately stands out to the reader is how, in its almost 300 pages, the treatment and exploration of intricate critic contents, sometimes saturated by the positions' debate, flow through a language showing plenty of clarity and simplicity. Not even the communicational plan — how it will be mentioned — is affected by the interposition of a detailed network of remands and quotations, opinions and counter-opinions about the matter. Furthermore, neither the critic's plan loses deepness or meaningfulness. In fact, the book is structured at several levels. After the referred central body from this volume, there is a section with numbered notes indicating the passages of Boccaccio, as well as other literary authors which keep being cited, by remission or transcription, and include the translation of each step in latin. However, it is after the bibliography that the master structure of *Boccaccio. Fragilità di un genio* is set up. This is the "Annotazioni" section, in which, through nearly a hundred pages the main ties of the Boccaccian criticism are discussed in a specific and supported way. In it lays the erudition body, whose illations are presented in the main body of the book.

In fact, the previous essay from Marco Santagata, *Boccaccio indiscreto. Il mito di Fiammetta*, structured around the figure of Fiammetta and which boasts a more academic profile, presents itself as the laboratory from where *Boccaccio. Fragilità di un genio* has come out. Thus, each reader is offered the possibility to build its preferential path across the volume, crossing contents from several sections or managing absolute choices.

By proceeding to an in-depth review of the Boccaccio's critique, Marco Santagata takes as reference points both great scholars that, between the late 19th and the early 20th century, have been dedicated to the writer (Arnaldo Della Torre, Attilio Hortis, Domenico Guerri, Francesco Torraca, Vincenzo Crescini), and the new generation that emerges after the post-war times (Giorgio Padoan, Giuseppe Billanovich or Vittore Branca, names that are worth so many others), as well as the numerous line-up of investigators who, throughout the more recent decades, have been exploring the work of Boccaccio and applying the methods of ecdotic. From this, it often results the identification, amongst the 19th century critique, of the origins of the view points and the information that, misplaced in its times, came to gain a new life through indirect causality. Following that circuit, results of more recent research are subject to a validation that confronts and regards solutions, either through developing logical paths leading to irrefutable conclusions, or recognising that the complexity of the matter or the kind of its sources justifies some previous careful consideration.

At the very first pages, there is an approach to the *vexata quaestio* of Boccaccio's birthplace. Despite having several indications pointing to the location of Certaldo, supported by a precision that even lists the existing fossils in the area, Marco Santagata does not exclude the hypothesis that the birthplace was Florence, considering an epistle written by Boccaccio at an advanced age and the work *De montibus*. Nevertheless, Santagata does not take into account the Paris hypothesis, showing how eventual self or autobiographical mentions from Boccaccio to Paris are either framed into a context of parody or dependent on a fictional coherence. There is a different position assumed by the author of *Boccaccio. Fragilità di un genio*, regarding the first works' chronology. The line-up chain *Caccia di Diana*, *Filocolo* and *Filostrato* is confirmed by a chronological analysis which brings to

the collation a broad and even tortuous sequel, among projections which, coming from the 19th century, still have echoes nowadays.

Besides that, one of the fields in which the shrewdness of this essay outcomes is the literary relation of Boccaccio with Dante as well as with Petrarca. In the case of Petrarca, it was also experiential. Santagata shows how, at *Decameron*, Boccaccio follows the trays of *Commedia*, not only in the poetics plan — in a book that starts poorly and ends up well, according to the epistle, of dantian attribution, to Cangrande della Scala — but also in terms of discursive field and historical integration. Following the same track, Boccaccio is elected as one of the writers of the 14th century who understood best the dialogue that Dante instituted between vulgate and Latin. Besides, the meeting with Petrarca is interpreted not only as the nodule which directed the humanism of Boccaccio in a ethic sense, but also as the spring — *la molla*, Santagata writes — which has launched the *Decameron*. Both the *Decameron* and the *Canzoniere* represent macrotxts composed by several microtexts, the first in prose, the second in verse. Nevertheless, Santagata notes the precedence is held by Boccaccio. Therein is the line uniting between two other crowns — Dante and Petrarca — drawn by Boccaccio, and therein lays the fragility of a genius.

Geniality and fragility open the reception trajectories for this writer, right from the beginning with *Griselda*. In the sequence of other critiques, Marco Santagata admits that the translation to latin, elaborated by Petrarca, of the last novel of *Decameron*, could have never been known by Boccaccio. The fact is that the reception of *Griselda*, both in vulgate as in Latin, was portentous, and Portugal is not an exception. Exceptional is the critique empty space observed in field of Boccaccio reception studies in Portugal, which is so deep and where it is possible to distinguish, just like residual points of light, the interventions of Piero Ceccucci.

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