



Discorso dei romanzi by Giovambattista Giraldi Cinzio; Laura Benedetti; Giuseppe Monorchio;
Enrico Musacchio

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nor a separate audience of tavern-loving drunkards and gamblers for these verses. The upside-down world of comic poetry implies a shared “normal” world. Cecco’s poems were copied and circulated together with other types of poetry and include the occasional learned reference. Not only did Cecco engage in poetic exchanges with other poets, such as Simone and Dante, but he may even have influenced particular bits of Dante’s *Vita nuova* and *Commedia*. Boccaccio’s reference to him in the *Decameron* indicates that Cecco continued to be known about in literary circles after his death.

Alfie’s study is generally persuasive but problematic in certain ways. The initial discussion of medieval definitions of comedy is not obviously useful; it leads primarily to the conclusion that Cecco’s comedy does not match these definitions. The debate with previous critics and scholars who read the poems autobiographically is strung out repetitively through many chapters, rather than being dealt with in one introductory locus. Alfie gives ironic or parodic readings even of poems that he agrees could apparently be taken straight as examples of amatory lyric; and even though he emphasizes the variety of Cecco’s experiments, not until nearly the end of the book does he briefly admit that not every poem is necessarily ironic. Similarly, Alfie assumes that Cecco expected one correct reading of his poetry, although given the actually varied critical responses to his work and the always inherent problems of irony and parody, this expectation seems naïve. Finally, I disagree with Alfie’s reading of certain verses: e.g. does “Qualunque ben si fa” “call for the murder and destruction of all those who do not love” (67) or state that such persons can be said to be dead? Are not the “cenni” of “Amor, poi che’n sì greve passo” the gestures of spectators rather than of the lover (70)? Do not the “maitinate” of “Se tutta l’acqua” refer to matins, i.e., prayers, rather than to *albas* (80)? And surely the second quatrain of “In questo mondo chi non ha moneta” says not that money makes one a poet but rather that rich men, unlike poets, do not need to beg for money. Granted the language is often hard to parse, and these particular disagreements do not affect the over-all efficacy of the book’s argument. This is certainly a useful contribution to our understanding both of Cecco’s work and of the broader literary culture around 1300.

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Giovambattista Giraldi Cinzio. *Discorso dei romanzi*. Ed. Laura Benedetti, Giuseppe Monorchio, and Enrico Musacchio. Bologna: Millennium, 1999.

This is a much needed and superbly executed edition of the *Discorso intorno al comporre dei romanzi*, first printed in Venice in 1554. As the editors explain, the Biblioteca Ariostea of Ferrara has a copy of the 1554 edition with Giraldi Cinzio’s hand-written notes in the margin, perhaps in anticipation of a second edition (25). When a subsequent edition was printed (which was not, however, until 1864), it incorporated these marginal comments into the original text, resulting in some illegible passages due to lacunas in the notes. The third edition of the *Discorso* (printed in 1973) included some comments in the body of the text, and others in the footnotes, thus creating a hybrid text (26). Prior to this present edition, the most accurate and academically useful version of Giraldi’s *Discorso* was in English: Henry L. Snuggs’s English translation and notes (U of Kentucky P, 1968).

This new edition follows the 1554 edition as it was printed, with only Giraldi’s “Errata corrige.” The introduction outlines the political, financial, religious, social, and cultural context of the Ferrarese court of Duke Ercole II, and situates Giovambattista Giraldi Cinzio and Giovambattista Pigna within both the court and the university where they taught under Estense patronage. The appendices contain two previously unedited letters as well as an *opuscolo* in which Giraldi defends his intellectual ownership of the ideas expressed in his *Discorso*. The extensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources lists both modern editions as well as the editions that were available to Giraldi.

In their reexamination of the controversy in which Pigna accused his former teacher Giraldo Cinzio of having plagiarized his ideas, the editors find that the available documentation, along with a comparison of Giraldo's *Discorso* and *opuscolo* with Pigna's *I romanzi*, demonstrates the priority of Giraldo's two works. Although Giraldo was innocent of the accusations set forth by Pigna, this controversy nevertheless marked a turning point in his career. He subsequently lost his prominent position and reputation at the Ferrarese court: his university salary was frozen between the 1553–54 academic year and 1561, when he was also deprived of his position as ducal secretary.

The editors go beyond the personal clash of two individuals, however, to interrogate the broader social and intellectual context. At stake for literary history is the fact that “si tratta dei primi scritti in difesa di un genere letterario (ed in particolare dei suoi due massimi autori [i.e., Boiardo & Ariosto]) che aveva cominciato a subire gli attacchi di quei cultori della letteratura che, sulla base della riscoperta Poetica aristotelica, mettevano in forse la sua canonicità” (12). The editors note, moreover, that since the romance epic was the only authentically Ferrarese genre, its defense was not simply a matter of literary taste, but of patriotic pride and courtly encomium.

In trying to understand the underlying causes of the controversy, the editors raise the question of whether the dispute might be indicative of an ideological rift between the open cultural climate that characterized the early 1500s and the Counter-Reformation thinking that will soon dominate the university (19). By uncovering suggestive links among various phenomena of the period (the arrival of the Jesuits to the university, a decrease in religious tolerance, the trial of Ercole's wife Renée de France, the reform of the university), the editors invite further investigation of the interplay of forces at this historical moment.

The 417 footnotes are a remarkable feat of scholarship, not only providing a wealth of information about Giraldo's references and sources, but delving into his motivations, strategies, and objectives. For example, when Giraldo refers obliquely to a text with which he presumes his audience to be familiar, the editors not only seek to identify the reference, but also go on to explain its context and significance for Giraldo. Horace, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian figure prominently, but the editors elucidate as well Giraldo's dialogue with other ancient as well as contemporary writers. The editors are sensitive to the passages in which Giraldo's theoretical statements anticipate or support his own romance epic, *Ercole*, and they likewise note links to other passages in the treatise or to his larger opus. They often draw the reader's attention to aspects of the treatise that are peculiar or unexpected, noting, for instance, that despite the all-encompassing impression of the title, the only authors of romance that find a place in Giraldo's treatise are Boiardo, Ariosto, and Trissino, while “tutti gli altri romanzi sono lasciati nell'ombra dell'anonimato” (77n90).

The first appendix contains Giraldo's dedicatory letter to Duke Ercole II as well as a letter to Bonifaccio Ruggieri, one of the Duke's advisors to whom Giraldo gave a copy of his work. Appendix II contains an *opuscolo* related to the controversy with Pigna that followed the publication of the *Discorso*. The *opuscolo*, edited by Giraldo and currently housed in the Biblioteca Ariostea of Ferrara, is comprised of: 1) Giraldo's letter to Pigna expressing his dismay that the latter had claimed ownership of the ideas expressed in the treatise, 2) an earlier letter in which Pigna had asked Giraldo to write a defense of Ariosto as a shield against his Tuscan calumniators, and 3) Giraldo's initial response to Pigna's request in the form of a letter praising Ariosto.

Beyond the importance of this new edition with its rich critical apparatus, this new edition renders historical justice to one of the most important intellectual figures of sixteenth-century Italy. The volume enacts a sort of “poetic justice” as well. Whereas Giraldo and Pigna (formerly teacher and pupil, subsequently colleagues at the university of Ferrara) engage in a bitter battle over the ownership of ideas, the editors of this volume, Laura Benedetti, Giuseppe Monorchio, and Enrico Musacchio (three generations of teachers and pupils, and currently colleagues at different universities in North America), have combined their talents and energies in an impressive multi-year collaborative effort. The result is not

only a valuable edition of an important literary treatise, but a window into the cultural and political context in which it was written.

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Vittorio Zaccaria. *Boccaccio narratore, storico, moralista e mitografo*. "Biblioteca di Lettere Italiane. Studi e testi," LVII. Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 2001.

Vittorio Zaccaria is the preeminent scholar today of Boccaccio's Latin writings. Editor of the *De mulieribus claris*, the *De casibus virorum illustrium*, and (most massive project of all) the *Genealogie deorum gentilium*, and author of numerous studies on these works, Zaccaria has gathered together in this volume pieces and summaries of his previously published introductions, notes on the text, and other studies, along with corrections, refinements, updates, and some new research. This volume is presented as "una guida alla lettura del Boccaccio latino," with an emphasis on the three major works but with reference also to other Latin writings. Although it is not a "guide" in either an introductory or comprehensive sense, it is nonetheless an important volume for anyone doing work on the Latin Boccaccio. Running through the otherwise separate chapters are threads of interest in what these texts reveal about Boccaccio's readings over time, and the relation of his ideas about literature to the development of humanism.

Chapter I reproduces Zaccaria's introductions and "Note al testo" to each of the three major works in turn, presenting their aims, outline and style, and calling attention to passages that Zaccaria finds especially interesting or lively. The three introductions share a focus on the phases and dates of composition and on the narrative flair that connects these writings closely to Boccaccio's vernacular narratives; Zaccaria thus joins Branca in rejecting the notion of a sharp division in Boccaccio's career between vernacular fiction and Latin scholarship. Each of these introductions also pursues topics specific to the work at hand. The section on *De mulieribus* traces through several of Boccaccio's texts, both Latin and Italian, the descriptions of Helen's beauty and of Cleopatra's death, noting the mingling of classical and vernacular sources. The *De casibus* section takes up the question of when the text was first dedicated to Mainardo Cavalcanti and why some manuscripts oddly omit or include the dedication. The section on the *Genealogia* points out how the different aim of this text results in a different treatment of figures (especially Dido) who appear in the other works as well. Zaccaria indicates Boccaccio's vast reading, emphasizing Boccaccio's direct use of sources rather than encyclopedias or compilations. A number of passages and comments from this first chapter unfortunately reappear in the introduction that was added to the whole volume.

Chapter II analyzes Boccaccio's Latin. Reproducing previous studies of the *De mulieribus* on both changes and synchronic inconsistencies in Boccaccio's spellings, which, Zaccaria remarks, "può valere . . . per le altre opere" (121), it adds (from his published notes on the texts and from more recent archival research) lists of grammatical idiosyncracies and unusual words.

Chapter III attends to the presences of Dante and Petrarch in Boccaccio's Latin writings, including some of the *Epistole*. The briefer section on Dante is basically dismissive. Although Dante appears in person in the *De casibus* to call Boccaccio's attention to the Duke of Athens, Dante seems not to be a source even for those characters noted by both writers. A few minor traces of Dante's phrasing appear in the *De mulieribus* (Thisbe, Manto, Hecuba). He becomes a major source only for the treatment of Geryon in the *Genealogia*. Petrarch is more obviously evident throughout Boccaccio's Latin prose, and Zaccaria sees the last twenty years of Boccaccio's writing as "tutte improntate dalla personalità del Petrarca" (175). Wishing to avoid repeating work already done on this topic