

**DREAM-VISIONS IN  
BOCCACCIO AND PETRARCH**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## ABSTRACT

Dream-visions formed an integral part of literature since the Ancient Greek period, with discussions about their prophetic and revelatory value appearing alongside poetry, prose, and autobiographical accounts of visions. By the Middle Ages the popularity of the oneiric form reached a new height. This thesis examines the presence of dream-visions in three works from the fourteenth century: Boccaccio's *Amorosa visione* and *Corbaccio*, and Petrarch's *Triumphs*. It looks specifically at the ways in which the two authors drew upon existing oneiric sources in the composition of their own texts.

Chapter 1 contextualises the thesis. It examines the different models of dream-vision texts which would have been available to Boccaccio and Petrarch when composing their oneiric narratives, and looks at the specific terminology used to describe dreams and their varying functions within biblical, fictional, and philosophical writings. This in turn helps to establish a set of conventions for dream-vision literature, which Boccaccio and Petrarch would have been able consciously to employ (or not) within their own texts.

Chapter 2 examines the ways in which Boccaccio and Petrarch discuss and use dreams and visions within their non-dream-vision texts. It looks not only at their fictional dream-visions, but also at autobiographical and philosophical works written by the authors on the subject of dreaming, the presence of visions within their respective poems and prose, and discussions within their texts regarding the specific terminology one should use to discuss different types of dream experience.

Chapter 3 considers the ways in which Boccaccio experiments with form and structure within the *Amorosa visione*, and the impact this has upon the resulting dream-vision text. It looks specifically at the use of the spirit-guide motif and Boccaccio's unusual employment of the framing dream. Similarly, Chapter 4 looks at the various ways Petrarch deviates from the established norms of the dream-vision traditions within his *Triumphs* by employing multiple and simultaneous visions within a single text. In Chapter 5 Boccaccio's *Corbaccio* is examined in the context of various literary traditions. The chapter considers how Boccaccio engages with his predecessors in the creation of his dream-vision text, and the ways in which he combines various literary elements in order to create a

work which is both innovative and reliant on the encyclopaedic knowledge of oneiric works he possesses.

In the conclusion the findings from each chapter are drawn together to present a view of the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumphs*, and *Corbaccio* as works which are simultaneously rooted in established traditions while at the same time testing the boundaries of the very genres to which they belong.

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## A NOTE ON DATING AND SOURCES

Both Boccaccio's and Petrarch's works are notoriously difficult to date with any degree of accuracy, since the two men were constantly editing and rewriting their texts until their deaths in 1375 and 1374 respectively. I have provided discussions within the individual chapters regarding the dates of composition of the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumphs*, and *Corbaccio*, and have arranged the chapters in a rough chronological order to reflect these discussions.

Since the aim of this thesis is to establish the different ways in which the two authors interact with the dream-vision tradition, and how the various conventions are made manifest within the oneiric narratives of Boccaccio and Petrarch, I have provided quotations from earlier works in the original language only when that language is one which either Petrarch or Boccaccio would have been able to read. Greek and Arabic sources are cited in English translation only, since neither author could fluently read Greek, and would have almost certainly relied upon Latin translations of texts.

It is not possible to ascertain accurately which texts were available as models for either Boccaccio or Petrarch in the composition of his own narratives, and not all of the texts discussed within this thesis were definitely read by either writer. Their inclusion within this study, however, reflects the fact that they would have almost certainly been known in certain forms by educated contemporary readers of the two authors and, as such, would have influenced the reception of the three narratives.

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the use of dream-visions in works by two fourteenth-century Italian writers: Giovanni Boccaccio and Francesco Petrararch. The works are those in which dream-visions have a particularly important role to play: Boccaccio's *Amorosa visione* and *Corbaccio* and Petrarch's *Triumphs*. Although dreams and visions occur in many other works of these two authors, these three are their only texts that can accurately be described as dream-visions, since they are entirely framed by the external structure of a dream.

While there have been several studies into the role of dream-visions in near-contemporary texts such as Dante's *Commedia* and Guillaume de Lorris's and Jean de Meun's *Roman de la rose*,<sup>1</sup> and while certain studies explore Boccaccio's and Petrarch's use of specific dream-vision tropes, a comprehensive and comparative investigation into the types of dream-visions being used by the two authors, the specific tropes made manifest within such dreams, and how these visions are reported within the narratives, is missing from the critical literature surrounding the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumphs*, and *Corbaccio*. Studies of these three texts, as this introductory chapter demonstrates, have tended to focus on the intertextual relationships between these dream narratives and the works of Dante, or else have only offered analyses of Boccaccio's or Petrarch's use of individual oneiric tropes. This thesis begins to address some of the heretofore unanswered questions regarding how the two authors built and managed reader expectations of their vision texts. All three of the texts studied within this thesis are, in their own

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<sup>1</sup> For Dante's use of dream-visions, see: Charles Speroni, 'Dante's Prophetic Morning-Dreams', *Studies in Philology*, 45 (1948), 50-59; Dino S. Cervigni, *Dante's Poetry of Dreams* (Florence: Olschki, 1986); Tibor Wlassics, 'Dante's Surrealism: The Oneiric Overture to the *Comedy*', in *The Flight of Ulysses: Studies in Memory of Emmanuel Hatzantonis*, ed. by Augustus A. Mastro (Chapel Hill, NC: Annali d'Italianistica, 1997), pp. 34-40; V. Stanley Benfell, 'Prophetic Madness: The Bible in *Inferno* XIX', *MLN*, 110 (1995), 145-63; Rebecca S. Beal, 'Beatrice in the Sun: A Vision from Apocalypse', *Dante Studies*, 103 (1985), 57-78; Warren Ginsberg, 'Dante's Dream of the Eagle and Jacob's Ladder', *Dante Studies*, 100 (1982), 41-60. For the employment of dreams within the *Roman de la rose*, a good study to consult is Emmanuèle Baumgartner, 'The Play of Temporalities; or The Reported Dream of Guillaume de Lorris', in *Rethinking the 'Romance of the Rose': Text, Image, Reception*, ed. by Kevin Brownlee and Sylvia Huot (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), pp. 21-38.

way, both representative of the dream-vision genre and original in their inventiveness; as such, they provide us with an excellent and fruitful starting-ground for the examination of the ways in which Boccaccio and Petrarch engaged with the traditions of dream-vision literature in order to create innovative works which challenged the ideas and expectations of their contemporary readers.

This study looks, too, at the interrelationships between the works of Boccaccio and Petrarch, and examines the ways in which each author not only drew upon the previous models of dream-vision literature in the composition of his own oneiric texts, but also how they influenced one another's texts through their various correspondence, meetings, and criticisms. Boccaccio held Petrarch in great esteem from the very beginning of his career, and the importance of their literary relationship has long been established. However, this respect was not always mutual, and in a recent study on the relationship between the two authors, Francisco Rico explains how Petrarch, 'privo di *sense of humour*', saw Boccaccio:

a volte come un servitore e volte come un fratello. Un fratello minore e meno dotato, al quale senza dubbio si vuole un bene dell'anima, ma della cui docilità si beneficia e si abusa perfino.<sup>2</sup>

While Boccaccio may have idolised Petrarch, Petrarch — it would seem — often saw his younger colleague as an irritation; although brotherly in his encouragement, he was sometimes condescending towards his friend.

The pair first met in October 1350, in a brief encounter as Petrarch was passing through Florence. However, Boccaccio's interest in Petrarch's works, began much earlier, and around 1348 Boccaccio began composing his *De vita et moribus Francisci Petracchi*, a provisional biography of his senior colleague. In this laudatory work, Boccaccio praises both Petrarch's poetic skills and personal characteristic, in the belief, explains Giuseppe Mazzotta, that the two aspects are correlated, and 'involve and complement each other'.<sup>3</sup> Following their initial

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<sup>2</sup> Francisco Rico, *Ritratti allo Specchio (Boccaccio, Petrarca)* (Rome and Padua: Antenore, 2012), pp. 9-10. For a further study on the literary relationship between the two men, see also Ernest H. Wilkins, 'Boccaccio's Early Tributes to Petrarch', *Speculum*, 38 (1963), 79-87.

<sup>3</sup> Giuseppe Mazzotta, 'A Life in Progress (*De vita et moribus Francisci Petracchi di Florentia*)', in *Boccaccio: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, ed. by

meeting, the pair began frequently exchanging letters, the first of which — sent by Petrarch in 1351 — included a copy of Cicero's *Pro Archia Poeta*. Over the subsequent twenty years, Boccaccio and Petrarch became good friends, and Boccaccio would visit his esteemed colleague several times: in March 1351 in Padua; for one month in 1359 in Milan, where the pair would plant laurel trees in Petrarch's garden; and in 1363, 1367, and 1368 at Petrarch's family home in Venice.<sup>4</sup>

Over the course of their long friendship, Boccaccio and Petrarch corresponded regularly with one another. Eighteen letters of Petrarch's *Seniles*, explains Wallace, are addressed to Boccaccio (1.5, 2.1, 3.1, 3.2, 3.5, 3.6, 5.1, 5.3, 6.1, 6.2, 8.1, 8.8, 15.8, 17.1, 17.2, 17.3, and 17.4), with the two authors responding to each other's epistles and literary works.<sup>5</sup> Included in Book 17 of Petrarch's *Seniles* are his responses to Boccaccio's own literary efforts, including his famous Latin rewriting of the Griselda story from *Decameron* X. 10. The inclusion of such material clearly documents Boccaccio's and Petrarch's literary engagement with one another; each commented on, rewrote sections of, and suggested improvements to be made within the other's texts. In terms of their dream-vision output and influence upon the oneiric genre, this has led to much confusion, with many critics doubtful about the exact origins of tropes such as the triumphal motif (Vittore Branca, for example, stresses that 'it is often difficult to ascertain whether the pattern of a particular triumph is to be traced to Boccaccio or to Petrarch'),<sup>6</sup> since the two men were frequently rewriting their texts as a direct response to the advice, suggestions, and criticisms of the other.

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Victoria Kirkham, Michael Sherberg, and Janet Levarie Smarr (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2014), pp. 207-12 (p. 208).

<sup>4</sup> For a chronology of Boccaccio and Petrarch's relationship, their correspondence, and their various encounters, see Victoria Kirkham, 'Chronology of Boccaccio's Life and Works', in *Boccaccio: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, pp. xiii-xix, and 'Chronology of Petrarch's Life and Works', in *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, ed. by Victoria Kirkham and Armando Maggi (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2009) pp. xv-xxii.

<sup>5</sup> David Wallace, 'Letters of Old Age: Love between Men, Griselda, and Farewell to Letters (*Rerum senilium libri*)', in *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, pp. 321-32 (pp. 322-23).

<sup>6</sup> Vittore Branca, 'Introduction', in Giovanni Boccaccio, *Amorosa visione*, trans. by Robert Hollander (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1986), pp. ix-xxviii (p. xxv).

It was not only through their correspondence, however, that Boccaccio and Petrarch influenced the composition of the other's texts, and Rico suggests that they discussed some of the key themes and ideas present within their narratives, which in turn influenced the other's thinking on matters. Rico argues, for example, that the *Corbaccio* was in some way influenced by Petrarch's *Secretum*, and although Petrarch never permitted his friend to read his *libello* (it is unlikely that Boccaccio even knew of its existence), 'lo ricostruì nei loro rapporti personali, lo inscenò con la condotta, con gli ammonimenti a parole e per iscritto, dando a Boccaccio il ruolo di *Franciscus* nel *Secretum*.<sup>7</sup> To study the two authors side by side, to consider their texts together in one study, therefore, not only gives us space to inspect how the two friends tackled the expectations of the dream-vision genre, but it also provides us with the opportunity to note any overlap in their approach to the subject of dreaming; we are able to examine how their close personal relationship impacted upon their often disparate literary approaches to the various traditions of oneiric literature.

The present thesis differs from prior studies into the dream-vision works of Boccaccio and Petrarch (and studies on dream-visions more generally) in several ways. Previous literature regarding the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumphs*, and *Corbaccio* has tended to focus on only one or two key oneiric tropes, such as the authors' use of spirit-guides,<sup>8</sup> the inclusion of the triumphal motif,<sup>9</sup> or the protagonist's conversionary experience (or lack thereof);<sup>10</sup> or else has focused on

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<sup>7</sup> Rico, *Ritratti allo Specchio*, p. 101.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Stefano Carrai, 'Il problema della "guida": un consuntivo e una nuova proposta', in Claudia Berra (ed.), *I "Triumphs" di Francesco Petrarca*, pp. 67-78, which deals specifically with the trope of the spirit-guide in Petrarch's text; Guyda Armstrong, 'Boccaccio and the Infernal Body: the Widow as Wilderness', in *Boccaccio and Feminist Criticism*, ed. by Thomas C. Stillinger and F. Regina Psaki, (Chapel Hill, NC: Annali d'Italianistica, 2006), 83-104, in which Armstrong explores the misogyny of the *Corbaccio*'s spirit-guide.

<sup>9</sup> For example, Aldo S. Bernardo, 'Triumphal Poetry: Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio', in Eisenbichler and Iannuci (eds), *Petrarch's Triumphs: Allegory and Spectacle*, pp. 33-45; see also Fabio Finotti, 'The Poem of Memory: "Triumphs"', in Kirkham and Maggi (eds.) *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, pp. 63-83.

<sup>10</sup> See Janet Levarie Smarr, 'Boccaccio and the Choice of Hercules', *MLN*, 91 (1977), 146-152; and Theodor E. Mommsen, 'Petrarch and the Story of the Choice of Hercules', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 16 (1953), 178-92.

the interrelationships between Petrarch, Boccaccio and Dante and their respective works.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, literature on medieval dream-visions has, almost exclusively, failed to take into account any Italian text aside from Dante's *Commedia*. This thesis bridges some of these knowledge gaps by considering the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumphs*, and *Corbaccio* in their entirety, looking at both the specific oneiric tropes used by both Petrarch and Boccaccio in their texts, and the social, historical, philosophical and scientific factors which influenced their work. This study considers several different approaches to dream-visions simultaneously; it not only looks at the ways in which dreams and visions were received and interpreted within the Middle Ages,<sup>12</sup> and the scientific theories which influenced these interpretations;<sup>13</sup> nor does it simply look at one or two

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<sup>11</sup> On Petrarch's and Boccaccio's relationship with Dante and his texts, see Guyda Armstrong, 'Dantean Framing Devices in Boccaccio's *Corbaccio*', *Reading Medieval Studies*, 27 (2001), 139-61; Barański, Zygmunt G, and Theodore J. Cachey Jr., *Petrarch and Dante: Anti-Dantism, Metaphysics, Tradition* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009); Bernardo, 'Petrarch's Attitude toward Dante', *PMLA*, 70 (1955), 488-517; Bernardo, 'Triumphal Poetry'; Aldo S. Bernardo and Anthony L. Pellegrini, (eds.), *Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio: Studies in the Italian Trecento in honor of Charles S. Singleton* (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 1983); Rocco Montano, 'Italian Humanism: Dante and Petrarch', *Italica*, 50 (1973), 205-221; Kristina Olson, 'The Language of Women as Written by Men: Boccaccio, Dante and Gendered Histories of the Vernacular', *Heliotropia*, 8-9 (2011-12), 51-78; Giuseppe Billanovich, 'Dalla "Commedia" e dall'"Amorosa Visione" ai "Trionfi"', *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana*, 123 (1946), 1-52.

<sup>12</sup> On the medieval reception of dream-visions see Hans-Jürgen Bachorski, 'Dreams that Have Never Been Dreamt at all: Interpreting Dreams in Medieval Literature', trans. by Pamela E. Selwyn, *History Workshop Journal*, 49 (2000), 95-125; see also Alain Corbellari and Jean-Yves Tilliette (eds), *Le rêve médiéval* (Geneva: Droz, 2007). On the reception of religious visions within the Middle Ages, see especially Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (eds.), *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); McGinn, Bernard, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Jean-Marie Husser, *Dreams and Dream-Narratives in the Biblical World*, trans. by Jill M. Munro (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); the original version of the text first appeared in *Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible*, XII (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> On the scientific explanations of dreams and visions within the medieval and pre-medieval periods, see especially Andrew M. Holowchak, *Ancient Science and Dreams: Oneirology in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (New York and Oxford: University Press of America, 2002); and Edward Grant (ed.), *A Source Book in Medieval Science* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974).

aspects of Boccaccio's and Petrarch's dream-vision texts. Rather, it combines the various philosophical, scientific, religious, and medical theories surrounding dreams, and applies these to Boccaccio's *Amorosa visione*, Petrarch's *Triumphs*, and Boccaccio's *Corbaccio* in order. Furthermore, the thesis not only considers each author's use of the dream-vision form, such as their employment of several different genre-specific tropes, but also how these three texts interact with one another and exemplify the conversations in which their respective authors were engaging. These two primary considerations – the historical background of the dream-vision and the ways in which Boccaccio and Petrarch utilise the oneiric form in their own works – are viewed simultaneously within this study, in a way which has never before been attempted. The purpose of this approach is to present a holistic view of the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumphs*, and *Corbaccio*, in order to appreciate fully the multiple nuances of the three texts and to better understand Boccaccio's and Petrarch's intentions when composing their oneiric narratives.

The *Amorosa visione*, *Triumphs*, and *Corbaccio* share many inherent similarities, not only in terms of their literary content and employment of genre-specific motifs, but also in terms of the specific social and cultural context from which they emerge. Both Boccaccio and Petrarch were educated Italians, enormously successful in many ways but inevitably working under the overwhelming shadow of Dante Alighieri, whose *Commedia* had revolutionised many aspects of vernacular literary composition and had not only given prestige to the Italian vernacular language in the dissemination and creation of poetry, but also resulted in the establishment of a new poetic form: the *terza rima*. Boccaccio and Petrarch would both adopt this new Dantean rhyme scheme in the *Amorosa visione* and *Triumphs*, respectively. However, the two poets were not merely subject to the influences of Dante in terms of their dream-vision output, but were themselves innovative and influential to the development of the oneiric tradition. Indeed, one of the core objectives of this thesis is to demonstrate the extent to which both Boccaccio and Petrarch were able to manipulate the established conventions of dream-vision literature. However, in order to fully appreciate the various ways in which dream-visions are made manifest within the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumphs*, and *Corbaccio*, it is first necessary to outline what is meant by a 'dream-vision' since, as Kathryn Lynch argues, 'If we are to understand the

game a poet plays, then first we must describe its rules'.<sup>14</sup>

Dream-visions have served as an important literary form for centuries, and are closely associated with the ability to impart truth, due to their resonances with religious prophecies from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Properly speaking, oneiric narratives are texts which are framed by the presence of a dream or vision, either within or without sleep, which provides the internal formal structure of the narrative. The terms 'dream' and 'vision' are often used interchangeably within oneiric literature, and definitions of the different types of vision frequently overlap. However, in terms of the use of terminology, this thesis draws primarily on the work of the fifth-century commentator, Macrobius, and his typology of dreams from his commentary on the *Dream of Scipio* (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 1 of this study). I use the term 'dream' (*sogno/somnium*) to refer to dream episodes framed within sleep; these dreams are often enigmatic and require interpretation. 'Vision' (*visione/visio*) is used to refer to prophetic or revelatory dreams, which are not always framed by sleep, but within which previously unknown truths are revealed to the dreamer. Dream-visions, therefore, are episodes which are at once enigmatic and framed by sleep, but which, upon interpretation, impart some form of higher knowledge to the protagonist.

Within the dream-vision genre, there are a number of conventional motifs which emerge and evolve over time, but which are not necessarily present within all oneiric texts; these include, but are not limited to, the presence of a guide figure — an authoritative figure who appears within the dream framework to offer guidance and advice to the dreamer, or to attempt to lead him to a different way of life —; a conversionary experience — this is usually undergone by the narrator as a result of the spirit-guide's intervention, but can also occur without the presence of a guide figure —; a spring-time setting — in the Christian tradition, spring came to be associated with Easter, so dreams set around this time are afforded a higher prophetic value —; the forewarning or foretelling of future events, and the revelation of truths. Since not all medieval dream-vision narratives contain the entire set of conventional tropes associated with oneiric literature, authorial choices regarding the terminology and particular motifs to employ within a text

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<sup>14</sup> Kathryn L. Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy, and Literary Form* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988), p. 5.

invariably affect the outcome and impact of a given dream-vision sequence.

Owing to the large numbers in which they are found within medieval literature, dream-visions have attracted a good deal of critical attention from scholars, who have sought to define the genre and its tropes, and to provide an analysis of the different ways in which dream-visions are made manifest within both poetry and prose. Pre-medieval texts, such as biblical visions and classical dreams, have been the focus of several studies integral to the development of the critical framework used to analyse the employment and content of dream-visions. Richard Emmerson and Bernard McGinn's edited volume *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* is particularly notable for its studies regarding the influences of the Book of Revelation on medieval society, and includes David Burr's examination of Dominican and Franciscan Apocalypse commentaries, in which he stresses that mendicant orders within the Middle Ages were particularly reliant upon apocalyptic discourse in their self-justification;<sup>15</sup> and Michael Camille's discussion of the different terminology used to report biblical dreams, in which he argues that, '[o]f all the biblical books, the Apocalypse is the one predicated on the sense of sight [since John uses phrases such as 'I saw'], highest of the senses according to the new Aristotelian learning'.<sup>16</sup> In the same volume, E. Ann Matter's study on the impact of the Apocalypse upon medieval exegesis discusses the influence of Bible commentaries in the understanding and dissemination of the book of Revelation.<sup>17</sup> Matter presents a detailed history of medieval Apocalypse commentaries, and stresses the importance of the commentaries of Victorinus of Pettau and St Jerome, which, she argues, were significant since they 'opened up some important themes of interpretation and emphasis'.<sup>18</sup> Ronald Herzman's study on the influence of the Apocalypse upon Dante's composition of the *Commedia* is also particularly interesting, since it demonstrates the ways in which

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<sup>15</sup> David Burr, 'Mendicant Readings of the Apocalypse', in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), pp. 89-102.

<sup>16</sup> Michael Camille, 'Visionary Perception and Images of the Apocalypse in the Later Middle Ages', in Emmerson and McGinn (eds.), *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, pp. 276-89 (p. 277).

<sup>17</sup> E. Ann Matter, 'The Apocalypse in Early Biblical Exegesis', in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, pp. 38-50.

<sup>18</sup> Matter, 'The Apocalypse in Early Medieval Exegesis', p. 40.

medieval authors drew upon the available vision sources in the authoring of their own oneiric texts. Herzman argues that sections of Dante's text — and particularly the final cantos of the *Purgatorio* — draw so heavily on the imagery of Revelation that they would be rendered 'unintelligible without some knowledge of the Apocalypse'.<sup>19</sup> Such theories as these are imperative to our understanding of the dream-visions of Petrarch and Boccaccio, since both authors were writing from a context similar to that of Dante, and — as will be shown in Chapter 1 of this thesis — included many of the same images, ideas, and phrases as Dante had employed within his *Commedia*.

Jean-Marie Husser's study *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World* builds upon the essays within Emerson's and McGinn's volume to provide an excellent discussion regarding the different types of dreams used within Scripture, the terminology used to report these visions, and their various functions within narratives.<sup>20</sup> Husser not only discusses the function of the interpretative arts — oneiromancy, incubation, interpretation, and so on — and aetiology (the interpretative discourse concerning the recognised causes and origins of dreams), but she also applies these discussions to real-life dreams of individuals in order to establish the relationship between the literary form of reported visions and actual dream experiences. Building upon the earlier works of A. Leo Oppenheim,<sup>21</sup> Husser suggests a formula for the vision narrative, which consists of 'dream + interpretation', whereby the allegorical or prophetic vision is accompanied by a thorough critical assessment of the dream-account.<sup>22</sup> Husser's study not only opened up discussions regarding the practical implementation of interpretative processes in real-life dream accounts, but also foregrounded the importance of including such explanatory interpretations in fictional and literary dream-vision narratives.

Aside from religious and prophetic dreams, classical and pre-medieval

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<sup>19</sup> Ronald B. Herzman, 'Dante and the Apocalypse', in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, pp. 398-423 (p. 398).

<sup>20</sup> Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives in the Biblical World*.

<sup>21</sup> A. Leo Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East: With a Translation of the Assyrian Dream Book* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1956).

<sup>22</sup> Husser, *Dreams and Dream Narratives*, pp. 145-46.

dreams have also received a great deal of attention in terms of their literary function. One of the most commented-upon texts to have emerged from the oneiric genre is Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, a fictional dream-vision found within the sixth book of his *De re publica*. While the text is interesting in itself — it displays many of the key tropes of the genre, such as the imparting of prophecies and the presence of a spirit-guide — its impact upon the subsequent understandings and manifestations of dream-vision literature is most pronounced thanks to the work of Macrobius. Many critics have focused exclusively on the dissemination and material form of the *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*,<sup>23</sup> while others have explored the content of the commentary without applying its significance to the subsequent composition of later dream-visions.<sup>24</sup> However, in his study on dream-visions within medieval poetry, A. C. Spearing includes discussions on the influence of not only Macrobius's commentary, but also Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae* and scriptural and biblical visions.<sup>25</sup> Spearing begins by providing a discussion of what is meant by a 'dream-poem' — a discussion which has greatly influenced the definitions of dream-visions within this current thesis:

Many medieval poems include, as incidents in the stories they tell, dreams dreamt either by the narrator of the poem (as in Dante's *Divine Comedy* or Froissart's *Espinette Amoureuse*) or by one of his characters [...]. But by dream-poems I mean not works of this kind, but poems whose main substance is a dream or vision, dreamt invariably by the 'I' of the poem.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Irène Caiazzo, for example, presents an excellent study on the textual and material history of Macrobius's commentary, but does not discuss the influences of the text upon the wider dream-vision genre. Irène Caiazzo, *Lectures médiévales de Macrobe: les 'Glosae Colonienses super Macrobius'* (Paris: Vrin, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> A good discussion of the content of the *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* is A. H. M. Kessels, 'Ancient Systems of Dream-Classification', *Mnemosyne*, 22 (1969), 389-424; Kessels discusses Macrobius's classification of dreams, alongside the dream-theories of ancient philosophers such as Plato, Heraclitus, and Hippocrates.

<sup>25</sup> A. C. Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

<sup>26</sup> Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry*, p. 1.

Dream-vision narratives, therefore, are not simply those in which dreams occur as incidental asides within a given text, but are texts whose *main substance* is the dream itself, dreamt by the narrator. Spearing also begins to define the conventions of dream-vision literature by discussing some of the commonly occurring tropes and conventions of the genre; he speaks, for example, of the ‘spiritual adventure’ of dream-poems, which dreamers undertake (usually accompanied by a guide figure) and of the use of specific places, or *loci*, in the reporting of dreams. Spearing provides an excellent résumé of the medieval and pre-medieval traditions from which dream-vision texts emerged and to which later medieval authors turned when composing their own narratives. Although his textual analysis of specific texts focuses primarily on oneiric literature composed in Old English, his general comments on the development of the genre have greatly influenced my thinking regarding the conventions and expectations of dream-vision literature.

An early, but nevertheless useful study into the manifestations and conventions of dream-poetry is Constance Hieatt’s *The Realism of Dream Visions* which, although primarily focused on Middle English visions, gives an excellent general introduction to the genre.<sup>27</sup> Hieatt explores the popularity of literary dream-visions, stating that one of the reasons for their continued use throughout the Middle Ages was their appropriateness as a vehicle for the type of allegory used in the medieval period, but also owing to the fact that they provided an ideal framework for the dissemination of didactic material, which tied together disparate subjects:

the dream may be an excuse for the inclusion of didactic material, or for cutting short an episode. But it also seems frequently to be used as a unifying device, tying together seemingly unrelated material by means of the sort of association and transformation typical of dreams,

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<sup>27</sup> Constance B. Hieatt, *The Realism of Dream Visions: The Poetic Exploitation of the Dream-Experience in Chaucer and his Contemporaries* (Paris: Mouton, 1967).

and, insofar as this is true, the poets must have been making use of what we know as dream psychology.<sup>28</sup>

Dreams, then, were not only used by poets as a way of distancing themselves from the content of the visions, nor were they simply used to host allegorical debates; they had multiple purposes, including the ability to bring together issues which would not commonly be discussed side by side.

Hieatt further explains that literary dream-visions cannot simply be understood as one would understand one's own dreams, since

Human beings do not commonly dream in allegorical form – or, at least, in this kind of allegorical form. The [literary] dream setting is, rather, used as a setting where the unreal and the imaginative, because they are possible, cannot be judged by the standards of waking reality.<sup>29</sup>

Hieatt's examination of the genre is thorough, and serves to establish some of the key tropes of dream-vision literature, including the discussion of love ('This form [dream-visions] was primarily, if not exclusively, a vehicle for love poetry'),<sup>30</sup> the spring-time setting ('it is not surprising that Spring was considered the proper time of year to be associated with youth and love'),<sup>31</sup> and the allegorical teaching of religious doctrine, since 'dream convention lends a certain sort of authority, and authority was dear to the medieval public'.<sup>32</sup> Like Spearing's, Hieatt's study focuses primarily on the use of dreams within English literature, although many of her arguments are illustrated with examples from the *Roman de la rose* and can be equally applied to Italian texts.

Kathryn Lynch's study mirrors both Hieatt's and Spearing's in many ways: like her two predecessors, she begins by providing a set of rules for the genre, a 'Grammar of Dream and Vision', before systematically analysing several different dream-vision texts, including the *Roman de la rose*, Dante's *Purgatorio*,

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<sup>28</sup> Hieatt, *The Realism of Dream Visions*, p. 11.

<sup>29</sup> Hieatt, *The Realism of Dream Visions*, p. 18.

<sup>30</sup> Hieatt, *The Realism of Dream Visions*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>31</sup> Hieatt, *The Realism of Dream Visions*, p. 15.

<sup>32</sup> Hieatt, *The Realism of Dream Visions*, p. 20.

and John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*.<sup>33</sup> Lynch argues that prophetic and revelatory dreams were often shrouded in ambiguity — 'veiled in enigmatic shapes, images, and fictions'<sup>34</sup> — since this ensured that only eminent men of superior intelligence were able to interpret the content of such dreams and become privy to the truths revealed within them. Lynch provides a discussion regarding the physical state of the dreamer during the vision experience, and explains that:

the medievals were quite interested in the marginal relationship between body and soul during vision; it was this aspect of the dream or vision's liminality that seems to have occupied their thought and commentary more than any other, thus making the fictional vision the perfect literary form for poets seeking to explore the philosophical issues that were so urgent to this age.<sup>35</sup>

Unlike standard dream typologies, such as that of Macrobius in his *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, which tend to focus on the products of the vision experience, Lynch's study is primarily concentrated on the mechanics of the vision, that is to say the psychological implications of dream literature, which, she argues, 'indicate the most fundamental assumptions held by twelfth- and thirteenth-century poets about vision as these poets created the literary works and thereby gained a special power to address the age's philosophical and poetic concerns'.<sup>36</sup>

After providing a summary of the conventions of dream-vision literature, Lynch goes on to discuss four individual dream-narratives in more detail: Alain de Lille's *De planctu Naturae*, Jean de Meun's section of the *Roman de la rose*, Dante's *Purgatorio*, and John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. Although Lynch is keen to stress that neither the *Purgatorio* nor the *Commedia* as a whole can be accurately described as a dream or vision as such, she argues that Dante draws so heavily upon the motifs and traditions of the genre that there was often confusion — even on the part of his own son, Pietro Alighieri — as to whether the pilgrim's

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<sup>33</sup> Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision*.

<sup>34</sup> Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision*, p. 49.

<sup>35</sup> Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision*, p. 49.

<sup>36</sup> Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision*, p. 51.

journey occurred within sleep, since ‘the poet incorporates in a most thorough way many of the conventions of the philosophical vision, often couched as a dream, including an abstractive psychology of vision and dreams used explicitly to mark stages of spiritual progress’.<sup>37</sup> While she does not explicitly discuss the dream-visions of Boccaccio and Petrarch within her study, Lynch’s arguments regarding the psychological and philosophical implications of dream-visions are particularly noteworthy, and give a clear indication as to the specific cultural and literary context from which the *Amorosa visione*, *Corbaccio*, and *Triumphs* emerged.

Steven Kruger’s *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* is, in many respects, similar to Lynch’s study: both provide thorough summaries of medieval theories and attitudes towards dreams, including those set forth by philosophers, theologians, and those involved in the interpretative arts. However, while Lynch incorporates such discussions into her analyses of medieval vision texts, Kruger does not explore the practical application of these attitudes or theories within literature. His focus remains solely on the types of dreams common in the Middle Ages, and he presents chapters on topics including dream-books (manuals used to aid the interpretation of specific dream-imagery), patristic dreams, Aristotelian theories regarding the nature of visions, and the different understandings of dreams within daily life in the Middle Ages. In his final chapter, ‘Dreams and Life’, Kruger explains how, in the Middle Ages, dreams were often seen as anomalous, ‘a kind of consciousness only present during unconsciousness’,<sup>38</sup> and were often exploited within works of literature precisely for this reason:

literary works often forcefully exploit the dream’s anomalies, presenting dream fictions that fit neatly into no single category, and that therefore articulate important questions about the connections between (or breachings of) the categories themselves [...] Thus, alongside the desire to understand and control the dream, is found a

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<sup>37</sup> Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision*, pp. 147-48.

<sup>38</sup> Steven F. Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 50.

refusal to oversimplify dream experience, a refusal to make it either merely vain or wholly significant.<sup>39</sup>

While he does not explicitly discuss individual oneiric narratives, Kruger's study exemplifies the extent to which medieval authors were reliant upon the general mistrust and incomprehension of the dream experience in their authoring of ambiguous texts. Kruger's study is, therefore, crucial to our understanding of both medieval attitudes towards dreaming, and the compositional processes of authors of dream-visions within the Middle Ages, since it clearly sets forth the various approaches to oneiric experiences.

Despite the wealth of secondary literature surrounding dream-visions within medieval literature, no single study has yet succeeded in presenting a holistic view of the dream-vision texts of the authors considered in the present thesis; one which takes into account the individual dream-motifs within the text alongside the specific cultural, historical, and literary context from which they emerged, in order to demonstrate how Boccaccio and Petrarch were interacting with the narratives of their predecessors and of each other. This thesis takes this premise as its principal objective: it seeks to establish the specific literary traditions which were available as models for both Boccaccio and Petrarch, not only in terms of previous examples of dream-vision literature, but also the scientific, religious, and philosophical understandings of this phenomenon. Yet, unlike previous dream-vision studies, this thesis then demonstrates the different ways in which Boccaccio and Petrarch engaged with these precedents; how their oneiric texts reflected and adapted the conventions of the genre; and the effects of their authorial choices on the resulting narratives.

This study examines just three texts, yet there are numerous isolated instances within the works of both authors in which dreams and visions play significant roles. Despite their frequent use, dream-visions found within the narratives of Boccaccio and Petrarch have received scant attention from critics; indeed, there are only a few critical studies which focus on the oneiric aspects of their texts. In terms of Petrarch's use of dream-visions, one of the most pertinent sources is Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle's *Petrarch's Genius*, in which a great deal of

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<sup>39</sup> Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, p. 151.

space is dedicated to the discussion of Petrarch's engagement with the dream-vision tradition.<sup>40</sup> Although Boyle does not explicitly examine Petrarch's employment of dream motifs within the *Triumphs*, she provides a good summary of the poet's understanding and interest in the tradition; Petrarch spent a lot of time carefully copying out and commenting on examples of dreams, prophecies, and omens in his *Rerum memorandarum liber*, and showed a great interest in the interpretative arts of haruspicy (divination through the examination of the entrails of sacrificed animals) and augury.<sup>41</sup> Boyle also explains that Petrarch himself confessed to being plagued by horrific night-terrors, which disturbed his sleep and troubled him greatly, and wrote about his own understanding of dream-visions in his epistle to Giovanni Andrea, professor of canon law at Bologna University, where he recalled a revelatory dream he had experienced.<sup>42</sup>

Other studies into Petrarch's use of dream-vision motifs — particularly in relation to the *Triumphs* — tend to focus on very specific aspects of the vision sequences. Claudia Berra's edited volume *I 'Triumphs' di Francesco Petrarca*, for example, contains critical studies on individual aspects of the text such as the spirit-guide, the triumphal motif, and the representation of visions, which are all thorough in their examinations of specific tropes, and crucial to our understanding of Petrarch's engagement with the traditions of dream-vision literature. One of the most illuminating studies within Berra's volume is Stefano Carrai's 'Il problema della "guida"', which offers several different readings of the *Triumphs*'s spirit-guide figure. Carrai suggests that Petrarch drew upon various models when crafting his anonymous male guide, including Virgil's protagonist in the *Aeneid* ('la visione dei trionfi può ricordare genericamente l'episodio dell'incontro di Enea con Deifobo e con Anchise nel sesto libro del poema virgiliano'),<sup>43</sup> and the figure of Brunetto Latini in Dante's *Inferno* XV, although, states Carrai, the guide is definitely 'più Brunetto che Virgilio insomma, ciò che anche spiega l'incidenza

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<sup>40</sup> Marjorie O'Rourke Boyle, *Petrarch's Genius: Penitence and Prophecy* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991).

<sup>41</sup> O'Rourke Boyle, *Petrarch's Genius*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>42</sup> Petrarch, *Epistolae familiares: Le familiari*, ed. by Vittorio Rossi, 4 vols. (Florence: Sansoni, 1934), vol. II. V. 7.

<sup>43</sup> Carrai, 'Il problema della "guida"'.

dell'episodio del XV dell'*Inferno*'.<sup>44</sup> The poets Sennuccio del Bene, Guittone d'Arezzo, Cino da Pistoia, Franceschino degli Albizi, and even Dante, Carrai explains, have all been suggested as possible identities for Petrarch's guide figure, while other critics have posited that the guide was intended to represent Giovanni Aghinolfi, chancellor of the prestigious Gonzaga family.<sup>45</sup> However, Carrai states that arguments for this latter candidate are less convincing, since Aghinolfi 'difficilmente avrà conosciuto Petrarca negli anni giovanili'.<sup>46</sup> Although Carrai's study is primarily focused on the process of identifying the unnamed guide from the *Triumphus Cupidinis*, it does provide us with an excellent starting point for a full analysis of Petrarch's use of this motif: Carrai discusses the guide's (albeit minimal) role within the narrative, and sets out many of the sources upon which Petrarch may have relied when creating this character.

In the same volume, Carlo Vecce discusses the different types of vision used by Petrarch in the *Triumphs*, the specific terminology used to report such dreams, and the narrative function of these episodes. In his chapter 'La "lunga pictura"', Vecce argues that Petrarch-*personaggio*'s secondary dream from *Triumphus Mortis* II, in which he is visited by the soul of his beloved Laura, differs from the framing dream in several ways. Firstly, within his dream of Laura, facts are revealed to Petrarch-*personaggio*, which were previously unknown to him, regarding events which had just occurred: the dreamer learns in the vision that his beloved has died, before discovering this to be true in his waking life. As such, Vecce sees this dream 'non come profezia o premonizione, ma come rivelazione di un fatto vero, già accaduto'.<sup>47</sup> However, this is not the only key difference to emerge between the primary and secondary dream-visions: as Vecce remarks, Petrarch uses different dream-terminology to report the dream of Laura in *TM* II: 'Petrarca non si serve di verbi come "apparve" o "sembrò venire", né utilizza in prima persona il passato remoto di "vedere" (*vidi*),

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<sup>44</sup> Carrai, 'Il problema della "guida"', p. 69.

<sup>45</sup> Carrai, 'Il problema della "guida"', pp. 70-71; see especially notes 2-4, in which Carrai cites numerous important, but often dated, studies regarding the identity of the *Triumphs*'s guide.

<sup>46</sup> Carrai, 'Il problema della "guida"', p. 72.

<sup>47</sup> Carlo Vecce, 'La "lunga pictura": visione e rappresentazione nei *Trionfi*', in *I 'Triumphs' di Francesco Petrarca*, pp. 299-316 (p. 300).

caratteristico della *visio*'.<sup>48</sup> Vecce's discussion about dream-types and dream-terminology includes a short summary of Petrarch's own beliefs regarding the function and prophetic value of dreams — Vecce refers to both Petrarch's letter to Giovanni Andrea (*Ep. fam.* V. 7), and the discussions of dreams presented in the *Rerum memorandarum libri* — and is important to our understanding of Petrarch's engagement with oneiric traditions and conventions. We see how Petrarch, despite his personal beliefs, is able to experiment with and employ different types of dreams within the *Triumph*i with varying degrees of success.

Studies of Boccaccio's use of dream-visions are similarly fragmented, and tend to focus on specific aspects of his texts, rather than providing a detailed overall analysis of Boccaccio's engagement with the genre and the importance of his use of motifs and terminology in the development of his narratives. For the *Amorosa visione*, Victoria Kirkham's study 'Amorous Vision, Scholastic Vistas' gives us a good starting point.<sup>49</sup> Kirkham discusses several key features of the text, including Boccaccio's use of allegory and the acrostic poems, and his use of Dantean texts as models for his own. Kirkham argues, primarily, that the dream-vision form is used by Boccaccio in the *Amorosa visione* as a way of exploring the allegorical content of the narrative: the dream framework serves to enhance the latent ambiguities of allegory, and as readers we are tasked with interpreting the text by translating the various symbols. Once that has been achieved, she argues, we will be able to understand the moral of the story. Yet, according to Kirkham, Boccaccio's pairing of the dream-vision framework and allegory is problematic:

According to the rules of good and proper allegory, the lost soul who is hero of this all ought to be ascending gradually, by degrees. But Boccaccio's visionary is more like a comic anti-hero. He seems to vacillate and meander without really getting anywhere. We watch him in a perpetual back-and-forth, caught between what he wants to do

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<sup>48</sup> Vecce, 'La "lunga pictura"', p. 303.

<sup>49</sup> Victoria Kirkham, 'Amorous Vision, Scholastic Vistas', in *The Sign of Reason in Boccaccio's Fiction* (Florence: Olschki, 1993), pp. 55-116.

[...], and the sounder but more boring itinerary the Guide has in mind.<sup>50</sup>

Kirkham argues that the dreamer's reluctance to follow his guide's advice and convert to a more pious way of life disrupts not only the conventions of dream-vision literature — he does not follow in the steps of his visionary predecessors, such as Dante and Boethius, who are much more pliable characters and heed the words of their respective guide-figures — but also the conventions of allegory. Boccaccio's dreamer is all kinds of unconventional, and Kirkham is clear that Boccaccio has played unfair by providing insufficient evidence for us to decode the text.<sup>51</sup>

Having examined both the structural framework of the *Amorosa visione*, and Boccaccio's use of allegory in the text, Kirkham examines the guide figure and her role within the vision. She argues that the guide is the allegorical representation of Reason, lacking the necessary authority needed to effectively fulfil her role within the narrative ('To all appearances a regal lady with super credentials for her mission, she does not last long after dropping in from heaven before we see how problematic are her leadership qualities').<sup>52</sup> Kirkham's examination of not only the guide figure, but also the unwillingness shown by the text's narrator to undergo any form of conversion have greatly influenced my own thinking on these topics, and I return to many of her arguments in Chapter 3.

A further important study for this thesis is Janet Smarr's *Boccaccio and Fiammetta*, in which the role of the *Amorosa visione*'s guide is discussed in detail, alongside an analysis of her role in terms of Boccaccio's engagement with previous spirit-guides of the convention.<sup>53</sup> Unlike Kirkham's study, Smarr's foregrounds Boccaccio's use of intertextuality within the *Amorosa visione* to present a clear idea of the ways in which Boccaccio was interacting with the genre to which his text would belong. The works of both Smarr and Kirkham are invaluable to this thesis in terms of setting out the established expectations of the

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<sup>50</sup> Kirkham, *The Sign of Reason in Boccaccio's Fiction*, p. 64.

<sup>51</sup> Kirkham, *The Sign of Reason in Boccaccio's Fiction*, p. 63.

<sup>52</sup> Kirkham, *The Sign of Reason in Boccaccio's Fiction*, p. 62.

<sup>53</sup> Janet Levarie Smarr, *Boccaccio and Fiammetta: The Narrator as Lover* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

guide figure and her specific function within the *Amorosa visione*. I build upon these studies not only to demonstrate the extent to which the spirit-guide differs from her literary predecessors, but also to situate the text and its oneiric conventions within a wider context of dream-vision traditions to show how Boccaccio's use of tropes and motifs impacts upon our reception of the *Amorosa visione*.

Studies on Boccaccio's *Corbaccio* have proved pivotal to the examination of the text in terms of its textual predecessors, with scholars such as Claude Cazalé Bérard and Gian Piero Barricelli providing excellent analyses of Boccaccio's use of intertextuality in the development of his dream-vision. Bérard offers an important insight into Boccaccio's literary processes, using the contents of his various notebooks as evidence of his engagement with different texts.<sup>54</sup> The *Zibaldone Laurenziano*, *Miscellanea Laurenziana*, and *Zibaldone Magliabechiano*, she explains, contain a carefully controlled and pointedly selected collection of materials, which Boccaccio diligently copied out for use within his own narratives. While Bérard's study does not specifically discuss the *Corbaccio*, or dream-vision texts in general, it is nevertheless important to consider alongside Barricelli's study of Boccaccio's engagement with satirical and invective texts within the *Corbaccio*. Barricelli argues that one of Boccaccio's main influences when composing his dream-vision was Juvenal's sixth satire, a text which Bérard explains featured heavily in the *Zibaldone Laurenziano*.<sup>55</sup> Letizia Panizza has recently developed Barricelli's arguments regarding Boccaccio's employment of intertextual allusions, arguing that he not only engaged with Juvenal's misogynistic text in the composition of his dream-vision, but also drew heavily upon the invective tradition; Boccaccio drew, for instance, upon an epistle against marriage — *Dissuasio Valerii ad Rufinum philosophum ne uxorem ducat* — attributed to Valerius Maximus; alongside the works of Jerome and Cicero, and examples from ancient philosophers, such as Plato and

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<sup>54</sup> Claude Cazalé Bérard, 'Boccaccio's Working Notebooks: *Zibaldone Laurenziano*, *Miscellanea Laurenziana*, *Zibaldone Magliabechiano*', in *Boccaccio: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, pp. 307-20.

<sup>55</sup> Gian Piero Barricelli, 'Satire of Satire: Boccaccio's *Corbaccio*', *Italian Quarterly*, 18 (1975), 96-111.

Socrates).<sup>56</sup>

The works of Barricelli, Bérard, and Panizza have reopened and reignited important discussions about Boccaccio's intertextuality and engagement with texts from varying different traditions — not only satires, but also invective texts, misogynistic treatises, and religious sermons — and are integral to our understanding of Boccaccio's intentions when composing the *Corbaccio*. I build upon this previous literature within this thesis in my examination of Boccaccio's use of secondary sources. However, no author has yet provided an analysis of the ways in which Boccaccio subverts reader expectations of the genre, nor has anyone commented on the various types of dream-vision Boccaccio employs throughout his literary *corpus*, and the different narrative functions these oneiric manifestations undertake. I provide an extensive analysis of Boccaccio's engagement with the dream-vision tradition; I look specifically at his use of genre-specific tropes and terminology, and how his use of the aforementioned literary traditions impacts upon our understanding of the *Corbaccio* as an extended dream-vision.

## METHODOLOGY

The critical theorist Hans Robert Jauss discusses the building of reader expectations in his study *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik*, wherein he posits that no reader approaches any given text from a social or literary vacuum, but that they are instead armed with knowledge and expectations gained from cultural experiences and earlier texts.<sup>57</sup> Jauss argues that literary genres invoke specific tropes or allusions, and it is precisely because of these repeated motifs that authors were able to build reader expectations of a work:

A literary work, even when it appears to be new, does not present itself as something absolutely new in an informational vacuum, but predisposes its audience to a very specific kind of reception by

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<sup>56</sup> Letizia Panizza, 'Rhetoric and Invective in Love's Labyrinth: *Il Corbaccio*', in *Boccaccio: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, pp. 183-93.

<sup>57</sup> Hans Robert Jauss, *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981); trans. taken from *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. by Timothy Bahti, intro. by Paul de Man (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

announcements, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics, or implicit allusions. It awakens memories of that which was already read, brings the reader to a specific emotional attitude, and with its beginning arouses expectations for the ‘middle and end’, which can then be maintained intact or altered, reoriented, or even fulfilled ironically in the course of the reading according to specific rules of the genre or type of text.<sup>58</sup>

Jauss’s theory states that every literary work belongs to a specific genre, which itself summons up a ‘preconstituted horizon of expectations’, or the ‘rules of the game’;<sup>59</sup> and it is precisely because of these established expectations that authors are able to create works which are at once located within a specific genre, whilst simultaneously breaking the conventions and expectations associated with that same genre. Jauss further comments that the most capable texts in terms of their historical and literary frames of reference are those which ‘evoke the reader’s horizon of expectations, formed by a convention of genre, style, or form, only in order to destroy it step by step — which by no means serves a critical purpose only, but can itself once again produce poetic effects’.<sup>60</sup> This theory is pivotal to this thesis, and forms the very basis for my study into the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumpho*, and *Corbaccio*. I examine how each author builds reader expectations within his dream-vision text — be that through the employment of specific terminology, the use of a particular physical setting for the narrative, or by calling upon some of the many motifs common within oneiric literature — only to manipulate these expectations by systematically failing to meet them, either by design or by disregard.

In order to establish the exact conventions and resulting expectations of the genre and the different ways in which these expectations are managed within the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumpho*, and *Corbaccio*, I take an approach which is, at its root, intertextual. I begin by examining the models of dream-vision literature that were available to both authors and their contemporary readers — especially the

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<sup>58</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, p. 23.

<sup>59</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, p. 79; cf. also Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision*, p. 8.

<sup>60</sup> Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, pp. 23-24.

specific tropes and allusions within the texts, and the language and specialised terminology used to report the dreams — in order to ascertain Jauss’s ‘rules of the game’, that is to say, the expectations of the genre. Through such an examination of the dream-vision traditions, I am able to signal some of the individual tropes and allusions which educated contemporary readers of Boccaccio and Petrarch may have expected of the dream-vision genre, and I compare the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumphs*, and *Corbaccio* to this list; I examine which of these established conventions are used within my three narratives, and how each is employed within the texts. I then look at the ways in which both authors use, adapt, and go beyond these literary models within their own texts, and to what effect.

Chapter 1 constitutes an examination of the wider dream-vision tradition, dating from Greek mythology to the commencement of Petrarch and Boccaccio’s literary careers. I look specifically at the various tropes and motifs that recur within dream-vision literature; the language and terminology used to narrate the dreams; and the narrative function of these visions. The chapter is not intended to be a full and exhaustive chronological list of every dream-vision predating the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumphs*, and *Corbaccio*, but instead sets out the Jaussian ‘horizon of expectations’ by investigating the different types of literary models used by the two men. In Chapter 2, I discuss Boccaccio’s and Petrarch’s uses of and opinions towards dreams and visions, as made manifest within their the non-dream-vision texts — that is to say, narratives which, although containing isolated dream episodes, discussions about the value of dreams, or aspects deriving from vision literature, are not entirely encased within an external dream-vision framework. I look especially at how Boccaccio and Petrarch shared ideas regarding dreams, with both each other and their contemporaries, and how this impacted upon their narratives.

Chapter 3 examines the dream-vision aspects of the *Amorosa visione*. I begin by exploring the complex history of the text, which exists in two different versions — the A and B redactions — and how the different supposed dates of these two versions affect our understanding of the various influences exerted upon Boccaccio in terms of the dream-vision aspects of his text. I look at the intricate structure of the text, which includes the use of extended acrostic poems and the Dantean *terza rima*, and how these serve to amplify the theme of dreams and

visions. I then look more specifically at Boccaccio's engagement with the dream-vision genre; I examine the key oneiric tropes employed within the text — the spirit-guide, conversionary experience, the type of terminology used, for example — and discuss the possible models for these sources. However, I also focus on what Boccaccio is doing differently from his predecessors in the employment of these tropes, and examine the effect of this, not only on the resultant text, but also on our understanding of the dream-vision traditions.

My fourth chapter looks at the dream-vision aspects of Petrarch's *Triumphs*. I examine the relationship between this text and Boccaccio's *Amorosa visione* and look particularly at the dream-vision motifs common to both narratives, and discuss Petrarch's employment of some of Boccaccio's less conventional tropes. I then provide a detailed analysis of Petrarch's text, focusing specifically on the internal narrative structure, and the different ways in which oneiric tropes are made manifest within the triumphal processions which make up the work. I examine the textual models used by Petrarch in the composition of the *Triumphs*, and the ways in which he deviates from these models. Here I focus specifically on the inclusion of secondary dreams — the dream-within-a-dream from *Triumphus Mortis* II, and the eschatological vision of Eternity in *Triumphus Eternitatis* — and Petrarch's unorthodox use of the spirit-guide trope.

In Chapter 5 I look at how Boccaccio's engagement with the dream-vision tradition affects our understanding of the *Corbaccio*. I examine the way in which Boccaccio combines several key elements from multiple literary genres within the *Corbaccio*, and how this impacts on our understanding of the text as an oneiric narrative. I look specifically at Boccaccio's choice of dream-terminology and major tropes associated with oneiric literature – especially the spirit-guide and conversionary experience undergone by the narrator – in order to ascertain how Boccaccio builds reader expectations of his text, before systematically deconstructing these expectations.

My conclusion shows the extent to which both authors relied upon and employed a wealth of literary sources within their respective texts, and the ways in which these sources aided the construction of reader expectations associated with the dream-vision genre. I consider how Boccaccio and Petrarch influenced the compositional processes of the other's oneiric texts through various epistles,

conversations, and criticisms. While further studies are needed to address the interrelationships between Boccaccio and Petrarch's other works, this thesis sheds light on the complex literary relationship of the two authors' oneiric texts, and how their shared eagerness to set themselves apart from the traditions and conventions of a genre resulted in three very distinctive and unorthodox dream-visions.

**CHAPTER 1: DREAM-VISIONS BEFORE PETRARCH AND  
BOCCACCIO: MODELS, TROPES, AND  
TERMINOLOGY**

Dreams and visions have received a great deal of attention from the Greek period onward; from the prophetic and revelatory visions of the Old Testament, to the scientific and philosophical theories of dreams disseminated through the treatises of such thinkers as Aristotle and Macrobius. This chapter explores the rich history of dream-visions, dating from the early manifestations within literature and scientific theory, up to the composition of the first redaction of the *Amorosa visione* (c. 1342-43). I in no way intend for this chapter to constitute a comprehensive survey of all oneiric manifestations in this time; instead, it will present a framework through which my chosen texts may be read. I explore the various models and understandings of dreams that were available to both Boccaccio and Petrarch, whether directly or — as in the case of authors such as Homer and Plato — through later rewritings and adaptations. I argue in my later chapters that such literary, scientific, and philosophical antecedents helped to build a set of reader expectations, so that certain tropes, terminology, and imagery could be used as ‘triggers’ within dream-texts, prompting well-read audiences to anticipate certain narrative events. It is precisely because of the many centuries of dream-texts, that both Boccaccio and Petrarch were able to draw upon and manipulate reader expectations within their own, often unconventional, uses of dream-visions.

One of the key issues to arise, almost without exception, within oneiric narratives and dream-theories alike is the question of the value of dreams and visions. Opinions of early philosophers and scientists were divided regarding the causes of dreams and whether they were able to possess any revelatory or truth-telling properties. Some suggested that dreams were wholly natural, arising from physiological processes; while others argued that they were a product of divine visitation. Even within fictional dream-visions, the question of dream-veracity is one which is continually posed. As such, the value of dreams is one of the key features I explore within this chapter; I look specifically at the different narrative methods used to portray both prophetic and non-prophetic fictional dreams, and

the various theories proposed by early philosophers and scientists regarding the physical and psychological causes of visions. The terminology used to narrate dreams is one of the key ways in which authors differentiate between the various types of dreams being relayed; be these wholly prophetic *visii*, or the more enigmatic *somnia*. Beginning with Macrobius's typology of the different kinds of oneiric experiences, I explore the terminology used within dream texts and treatises, and discuss the effects of lexical choices upon the resulting narratives. I also look closely at the presence of certain recurring tropes within accounts of visions, such as the presence of a spirit-guide — a wise character, usually sent by a higher being, whose role is to aid the dreamer in his oneiric journey — a spring-time setting, and a conversionary experience, usually undergone by the protagonist. I look also at the different ways in which truth or higher knowledge is imparted to the dreamer (for example, through direct speech, the witnessing of triumphal processions, or the viewing of frescoes or paintings).

Wherever possible, I have maintained a chronological ordering to the material I present; I have, however, chosen to group both Old Testament and New Testament biblical visions together, since, for the purposes of this study, I read the Old Testament through the lens of early Christian interpreters. The material is presented in the following order: classical and pagan writers; the biblical tradition; the writings of theologians; late-medieval texts. Through such a wide-ranging study of diverse texts, authors, and understandings of dreams and visions, this chapter will better equip us to read the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumpho*, and *Corbaccio* as works which both stem from, and form an integral part of dream-vision literature.

### **DREAMS AND VISIONS IN THE CLASSICAL PERIOD**

Although rising to new levels of popularity during the Middle Ages, dream-visions were not an invention of medieval authors. From the eighth century BC onwards, dreams played a significant role in narratives and provided an important framework for eschatological discussions.

The Greek mythological daemon Morpheus, leader of the *Oneiroi* (dream-spirits), had the ability to appear in dreams and constitutes one of the earliest examples of a 'spirit-guide' — characters which take human forms and speak

directly with dreamers whilst they are sleeping. Accounts of Morpheus' lineage vary: Cicero presents him as the son of Nyx (Night), and Erebus (Darkness), and brother to Hypnos (Sleep);<sup>1</sup> whereas in the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid suggests that he was not the brother of Hypnos, but one of his thousand sons.<sup>2</sup> From the medieval period onward, Morpheus was generally accepted as the god of sleep and dreams, with the ability to adopt any human form within dreams.

In Homer's *Odyssey* (eighth century BC), we see, perhaps for the first time, the use of an oneiric landscape as a literary framing device, with the text drawing heavily on the idea of dreaming as a version of the afterlife. In this dramatic epic, Penelope — the faithful wife of Odysseus — recounts a dream she has recently experienced, in which an eagle, having savagely killed her pet geese, reveals himself to be her husband and explains that he has just killed all of her suitors. Although Odysseus attempts to explain the meaning of the dream to Penelope, she quietens him by explaining the precarious nature of dream-interpretation:

dreams are beyond our unravelling — who can be sure what tale they tell? Not all that men look for comes to pass. Two gates there are that give passage to fleeting dreams; one is made of horn, one of ivory. The dreams that pass through sawn ivory are deceitful, bearing a message that will not be fulfilled; those that come out through polished horn have truth behind them, to be accomplished for men who see them.<sup>3</sup>

Although it is unlikely that either Boccaccio or Petrarch would have had direct access to Homer's *Odyssey* (the first Latin translation of Homer's works, by the Italian scholar Leontius Pilatus, was not completed until 1362), this imagery of dreams passing through the gates of horn and ivory would reappear several times

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<sup>1</sup> Cicero, *De natura deorum*, bilingual edition, trans. by H. Rackham, in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), III. 17.

<sup>2</sup> 'At pater e populo natorum mille suorum excitat artificem simulatoremque figurae Morpheae'; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, bilingual edition, trans. by Frank Justus Miller, in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: 1916), 2 vols, II. XI. 633-49.

<sup>3</sup> Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. by Walter Shewring, intro. by G. S. Kir (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), XIX. 560-69.

within later literature, with authors such as Plato (424-328 BC) and the late epic poet Nonnus (late fourth or early fifth century AD) both reusing the Odyssean motif.<sup>4</sup> It is most likely that Boccaccio and Petrarch would have been familiar with the imagery of the gates of horn and ivory from Virgil's reworking of this episode within Book 6 of his *Aeneid*, which popularized the Homeric imagery of the two gates:

Sunt geminae Somni portae; quarum alter fertur  
cornea, qua veris facilis datur exitus umbris,  
altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto,  
sed falsa ad caelum mittunt insomnia Manes.

(Two gates of Sleep there are, whereof the one is said to be of horn, and thereby an easy outlet is given to true shades; the other gleaming with the sheen of polished ivory, but false are the dreams sent by the spirits to the world above).<sup>5</sup>

Here, and possibly for the first time, Virgil makes the distinction between 'veris [...] umbris' (true shadows) and 'falsa insomnia' (false dreams). It would be centuries before Macrobius would present his classification of different dream-types in his *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis*, yet already we see a clear understanding that not all dreams are equal; some, such as the 'veris [...] umbris', should be afforded more importance than others. From the very earliest incarnations of dream-vision literature, the question of the value of dreams was

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<sup>4</sup> Plato refers to the gates of horn and ivory in his dialogic *Charmides*: "Ἀκουε δὴ, ἔφην, τὸ ἐμὸν ὄναρ, εἴτε διὰ κεράτων εἴτε δι' ἐλέφαντος ἐλήλυθεν" ('Hear then, I said, to my dream, whether it has come through horn or through ivory'); Plato, 'Charmides', in *Charmides; Alcibade I & II; Hipparchus; The Lovers; Theages; Minos; Epinomes*, bilingual edition, trans. by W. R. M Lamb (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), pp. 8-91 (pp. 78-79); Nonnos (c. AD 400) also uses the imagery in his *Dionysiaca*: 'Μορρέα δ' ὑπνώοντα παρήφανεν ὄψις ὄνειρου, | κλεψινόων ἐλέφαντος ἀναΐξασα πυλάων' ('While Morpheus slumbered, the vision of a dream came flying from the deluding gates of ivory to cajole him'); Nonnos, *Dionysiaca*, bilingual edition, intro. by H. J. Rose, and trans. by W. H. D. Rouse, in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1940), 3 vols.; vol. II. XXXIV. 89-90.

<sup>5</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, bilingual edition, trans by H. Rushton Fairclough, in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), VI. 893-96.

being raised by authors such as Homer and Virgil; a topic to which later authors of the tradition would dedicate much time and space in their own vision narratives.

One of the most important influences exerted upon Virgil was the poetry of his contemporary and friend Sextus Propertius (c. 50-15 BC).<sup>6</sup> Propertius includes several accounts of visions within his poetry; in the second book of his *Elegiae*, for example, he narrates a dream in which his narrator witnesses his love-object Cynthia, shipwrecked and drowning (2. 26).<sup>7</sup> This disturbing vision, fraught with turbulent maritime imagery, is broken just as the narrator tries to save his love: ‘iamque ego conabar summo me mittere saxo, | cum mihi discussit talia uisa metus’ (‘I was already working up the nerve to jump from a high rock, | when my fear dispersed these visions’). Yet, it is within his final book of *Elegiae* where we see one of the most striking dream-visions, which would later influence Petrarch in his *Triumphs*, in which Propertius recounts the vision experienced by his narrator of the deceased Cynthia. Propertius-*personaggio*, alone in his bed and mourning the recent death of Cynthia, is visited by her ghost, who reproaches the dreamer, before giving him instructions to take care of her former nurse and to preserve her memory by writing on a column ‘HIC TIBVRTINA IACET AVREA CYNTHIA TERRA :| ACCESSIT RIPAE LAVS, ANIENE, TVAE’ (‘HERE IN TIBUR’S SOIL LIES GOLDEN CYNTHIA: | GLORY HAS COME TO YOUR BANK, ANIENUS’, IV. 7. 85-86). Yet Propertius’s engagement with dreams extends further than merely including them as narrative devices within his poems, and shortly before departing the narrator’s consciousness within *Elegiae* 4. 7, Cynthia raises the question of the value of dreams: ‘nec tu sperne piis uenientia somnia portis: | cum pia uenerunt somnia, pondus habent’ (‘Don’t spurn the dreams that come through the portals of truth: | when true dreams come, they have weight’, IV. 7. 87-88). Similar to Homer, Ovid, and Plato before him, Propertius

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<sup>6</sup> See Peter E. Knox, ‘Cynthia’s Ghost in Propertius 4.7’, *Ordia Prima*, 3 (2004), 153-69; Knox suggests that Propertius’s partitioning of the Underworld in *Elegiae* 4.7 is reused by Virgil in *Aeneid* 6, which suggests a ‘common background in Hellenistic poetry for these accounts’ (p. 158).

<sup>7</sup> All references to Propertius’s *Elegiae* are taken from: Sexti Properti, *Elegiarum Libri IV*, ed. by P. Fedeli (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1984); trans. Sextus Propertius, *The Complete Elegies of Sextus Propertius*, trans. by Vincent Katz (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

teams the inclusion of dream-visions with a discussion about their relevance and worth.

While certainly playing a significant role in the debate, discussions regarding the cause and meaning of dreams were by no means limited to works of fiction, and many philosophers and scientists also wrote extensively on the value of visions. The Pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus (535-475 BC) declared that dreams were a universal human trait, and did not possess any supernatural significance. He commented that life and death, waking and sleeping, and youth and old age are the same; for the latter change and are the former, and the former change back to the latter; sleep and death, for Heraclitus, were one and the same thing.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, any knowledge achieved during sleep, through dreams or visions, was necessarily inferior to knowledge gained during the waking state, since dreamers are cut off from communication with the outside world during sleep, and cannot perceive things in a coherent manner. There is no evidence to suggest that the works of Heraclitus would have been translated from the original Greek prior to Boccaccio and Petrarch writing their own dream-visions, but his works certainly would have been known to later philosophers writing on the same subject. Perhaps the most influential and outspoken of these philosophers was Aristotle (384-322 BC), who built upon Heraclitus' work and strongly disagreed with any suggestion that visions could be afforded prophetic value. Aristotle saw dreams as images produced by physiological and psychic processes brought about by the digestion of food in the stomach and the changes in body temperature during this digestive process:

This affectation [sleep] arises from the evaporation due to food; for that which is vaporized must be driven forward for a space, and then turn and change its course, like the tide in a narrow strait. Now in

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<sup>8</sup> ‘ταυτό τ’ ἔνι ζῶν καὶ τεθνηκὸς καὶ τὸ ἐγρηγορὸς καὶ τὸ καθεῦδου καὶ νέου καὶ γηραιον· τάδε γάρ μεταπεσόντα ἐκεῖρά ἐστι κακεῖφα πάλιν μεταπεσόντα εαῦτα’ (‘And, (?) and [one and] the same thing, there is present [in us?] living and dead and the waking and the sleeping and the young and old. For the latter, having changed around, are the former and the former, having changed around, are [back] again [to being] the latter’); Heraclitus, *Fragments*, trans. and commentary by T. M. Robinson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), Fragment 88, pp. 52-53.

every animal the hot tends to rise; when it reaches the upper parts, it turns back and descends in a dense mass. So sleepiness mostly occurs after food for then both liquid and solid matter are carried up in considerable bulk.<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, Aristotle defined dreams ‘properly speaking’ as ‘the mental picture which arises from the movement of sense-impressions when one is asleep’.<sup>10</sup>

Within Aristotle’s three essays on sleep and dreams — *De somno et vigilia*, *De insomniis*, and *De divinatione per somnum* — which belong to the *Parva Naturalia* (short treatises on nature), the philosopher discusses exactly what is meant by dreaming. He argues that an internal apparition or *phantasma* (a phantom which appears before the sleeper) is the part of sleep which should be considered the dream proper.<sup>11</sup> However, he also holds that dream-images are not perceived through the regular sensory channels, since

if everything that has its eyes shut and is asleep is incapable of seeing, and similarly with the other senses, so that clearly we have no perception in sleep at all: then it follows that it is not by sense-perception that we see our dreams.<sup>12</sup>

In the *De divinatione*, Aristotle emphatically denies a divine provenance for dreams. He claims that, dreams are not sent by a god, but are ‘daemonic’, with ‘daemonic’ used to describe something which is neither human nor divine.<sup>13</sup> Speaking specifically about people who claim to receive prophecies from deity, Aristotle argues that these dreamers experience many different kinds of visions, and so, as with games of chance, they can be expected to strike lucky now and again if the events in their visions should come true.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Aristotle, ‘On Sleep and Waking’, in *Parva Naturalia*, bilingual edition, trans. by W. S. Hett, in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), §456b. 18-25.

<sup>10</sup> Aristotle, ‘On Dreams’, in *Parva Naturalia*, §462a. 80-82.

<sup>11</sup> David Gallop, ‘Introduction’, in Aristotle, *On Sleep and Dreams: A Text and Translation with Introduction, Notes, and Glossary*, trans. and intro. by David Gallop (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1991), pp. 1-58 (p. 9).

<sup>12</sup> Aristotle, ‘On Dreams’, in *Parva Naturalia*, §§458b. 8-10.

<sup>13</sup> Aristotle, ‘On Prophecy in Sleep’, in *Parva Naturalia*, §§463b12-22.

<sup>14</sup> Aristotle, ‘On Prophecy in Sleep’, §§463b12-22.

The *De insomniis* especially is replete with discussions on the provenance and significance of dreams. Aristotle sets out his opinions as to the meaning of dream-visions from the start, arguing that:

the experience which we call dreaming does not belong to the opinionative or to the intellectual faculty; nor to the sensitive faculty, in the normal sense; for in that case it would be possible [in a dream] to see and hear normally.<sup>15</sup>

Aristotle's view was that dreaming must be considered separate to any rational faculty of the mind, since dreams are neither works of perception nor judgment; an idea upon which Augustine and Thomas Aquinas would base their own discussions in later centuries.<sup>16</sup>

Aristotle focused much of his dream-theory on the relationship between physiological changes in the body and the psychological processes of sense-memories, yet the rationalising of dreaming through medical concepts was not new. Graeco-Roman doctors, for example, would offer various remedies to prevent erotic dreams, such as sleeping with a lead plate against one's testicles or sleeping on one's side.<sup>17</sup> The relationship between waking thoughts and imagined visions during sleep was also well-founded in antiquity, since medical practitioners recommended having intercourse in the dark so as to prevent the possibility of the lovers mentally registering images which might provoke lust during sleep.<sup>18</sup> However, what Aristotle did was collate these theories — theories of the soul, the interaction between waking images and dream images, the relationship between physical or corporeal states (hunger, thirst, arousal) and oneiric experiences — into a holistic approach to dreaming, which not only discussed how dream-visions could take on significance, but which also dealt with the validity of dream-images for the dreamer.<sup>19</sup> He did not perceive dreams to be

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<sup>15</sup> Aristotle, 'On Dreams', §§459a. 8-12.

<sup>16</sup> Aristotle, 'On Dreams', §§458b25-29.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Stewart, 'Erotic Dreams and Nightmares from Antiquity to the Present', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 8 (2002), 279-309 (p. 281).

<sup>18</sup> Stewart, 'Erotic Dreams and Nightmares', p. 281.

<sup>19</sup> Stewart, 'Erotic Dreams and Nightmares', p. 284.

merely a faculty of the soul, but rather a psychophysical condition, which combined the physical processes of the heating and cooling of the body during digestion with the temporary suspension of the ability to make rational judgments.<sup>20</sup>

Aristotle's treatises were fundamental in terms of the influence they exerted upon dream-theories and the subsequent impact these theories had upon oneiric literature; his beliefs regarding the physiological and psychological causes of dreams would prove especially significant within the writings of later philosophers and theologians. Time and again within his *Parva Naturalia*, Aristotle engages with the ongoing debates regarding the value of dreams, offering new and compelling viewpoints which contradicted earlier beliefs that visions were divinely inspired. These treatises, therefore, were pivotal in the development of dream-vision literature, since they paved the way for different uses of dreams within narratives: visions were no longer thought of as purely prophetic, but rather the result of bodily processes.

Cicero was the most outspoken supporter of Aristotle's theories of dreams during the Graeco-Roman era, and composed his own treatise on the art of divination, similar to that of Aristotle. In his *De divinatione*, Cicero divides divination into two separate fields: those 'allied with art', which require the implementation of interpretative skills, for example oracles (priests or priestesses acting as mediums through which prophecies or advice could be sought from gods), augury (omens of future events), haruspicy (the inspection of the entrails of sacrificial animals for signs or omens), and astrology; and those 'which do without art' and which go unaided by reason or deduction, such as divine visitations, dreams, and visions.<sup>21</sup> Cicero used Aristotelian arguments to support his theories of dreams as a naturalistic phenomenon, arguing that they are not only subject to psychological influences, but that they are also influenced by physiological processes: 'when we are burdened with food and drink our dreams

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<sup>20</sup> Gallop, 'Introduction', in Aristotle, *On Sleep and Dreams*, p. 19.

<sup>21</sup> 'Eis igitur assentior, qui duo genera divinationum esse dixerunt, unum, quod particeps esset artis, alterum, quod arte careret'; Cicero, *De divinatione*, bilingual edition, trans. by W. A. Falconer, in Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1923), vol. XX. xviii. 34.

are troubled and confused'.<sup>22</sup> Cicero quotes passages from Book IX of Plato's *Republic* as the source of his intelligence regarding such physiological effects on dreams; here the character of Socrates advises that men who sleep when either overfed or starved are liable to experience confused visions of incest, murder, or blasphemy.<sup>23</sup> Building on these views, Cicero argues for the inclusion of dreams in medical evaluations of a person's health, thus viewing dreams as indicators given by one's soul or spirit which reflect the physical state of the body.

Cicero's own views on dreams and divination, however, are never established within his dialogues, which are narrated from the perspectives of his two interlocutors: Marcus and Quintus. Indeed, within his expositions on the nature of gods, Cicero is sure to make clear that his own opinions do not explicitly enter into his treatises: 'Qui autem requirunt quid quaerant di re ipsi sentiamus curiosius id faciunt quam necesse est' ('Those, however, who seek to learn my personal opinion on various questions show an unreasonable degree of curiosity').<sup>24</sup> Instead he presents both sides of the same argument regarding the nature of dreams and prophecies; the first book of the *De divinatione* — wherein he presents arguments against the veracity and reliability of divinatory arts — effectively balances the second book, in which he argues against the Roman traditions of divination. No firm conclusions are ever drawn, but Cicero manages to lay out both positions and leave any definitive decisions up to the reader.<sup>25</sup>

The most influential of Cicero's writings on dreams comes in the form of

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<sup>22</sup> 'Nunc onusti cibo et vino perturbata e confusa cernimus'; Cicero, *De divinatione*, XX. xxix. 60.

<sup>23</sup> "'Those", said I, "that are awakened in sleep when the rest of the soul, the rational, gentle and dominant part, slumbers, but the beastly and savage part, replete with food and wine, gambols and, repelling sleep, endeavours to sally forth and satisfy its own instincts. You are aware that in such case there is nothing it will not venture to undertake as being released from all sense of shame and all reason. It does not shrink from attempting to lie with a mother in fancy or with anyone else, man, god, or brute"; Plato, *The Republic*, bilingual edition, trans. by Paul Shorey, in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), IX. i. §571C.

<sup>24</sup> Cicero, *De natura deorum*, I. 10.

<sup>25</sup> For an overview of the various discussions concerning Cicero's opinions on divinatory arts in the *De divinatione*, *De Legibus*, and *De natura deorum*, see Mary Beard, 'Cicero and Divination: The Formation of a Latin Discourse', *Journal of Roman Studies*, 76 (1986), 33-46.

the fictional dream vision, the *Somnium Scipionis* (written 54-52 BC; set in 144 BC) wherein the first-person narrator, the Roman general, Scipio Aemilianus is visited by the spirit of his deceased adoptive grandfather, Scipio Africanus. Upon presenting himself to his somewhat afraid grandson, Scipio Africanus proceeds to offer guidance to the dreamer and prophecies concerning his future. Originally located within the sixth book of Cicero's political dialogue, *De republica* — NB: 'political', here, refers not to practical politics, but rather to a branch of philosophy concerning the theory of the *polis* or city-state<sup>26</sup> — the *Somnium* constitutes an influential precursor for subsequent dream-vision narratives and displays some of the key tropes common within later oneiric texts, such as prophetic revelations and the inclusion of a knowledgeable spirit-guide.

The dream-sequence of the *Somnium Scipionis* is entirely framed by sleep. The narrator initially describes Scipio's descent into a deep sleep ('ut cubitum dicessimus'),<sup>27</sup> and proceeds to recount the contents of the dream, explaining how the figure of Scipio Africanus appeared to the dreamer, although Scipio Aemilianus confesses to having recognised him from his portraits rather than from real life ('Africanus se ostendit ea forma, quae mihi ex imagine eius quam ex ipso erat notior', *Republic*, VI. 10). The apparition of Scipio Africanus serves as a spirit-guide within the *Somnium Scipionis*; he imparts information unto the dreamer through conversation, and speaks at length about many topics, including the Universe and destiny. He prophesies that Scipio Aemilianus will overthrow Carthage in less than two years to become the consul:

hanc hoc biennio consul evertes, eritque cognomen id tibi per te partum, quod habes adhuc a nobis hereditarium. cum autem Karthaginem deleveris, triumphum egeris censorque fueris et obieris legatus Aegyptum, Syriam, Asiam, Graeciam, deligere iterum consul absens bellumque maximum conficies, Numantiam excindes. sed

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<sup>26</sup> Jonathan Powell and Niall Rudd, 'Introduction', in Cicero, *The Republic; The Laws*, trans. by Niall Rudd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. ix-xxxi (p. xi).

<sup>27</sup> Cicero, *The Republic*, bilingual edition, trans. by Clinton Walker Keyes, in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), vol. XVI, pp. 12-283; VI. 10.

cum eris curru in Capitolium invectus, offendes rem publicam consiliis perturbatam nepotis mei.

(Within two years, you as consul shall overthrow it [Carthage], thus winning by your own efforts the surname which till now you have as an inheritance from me. But after destroying Carthage and celebrating your triumph, you shall hold the censorship; you shall go on missions to Egypt, Syria, Asia and Greece; you shall be chosen consul a second time in your absence; you shall bring a great war to a successful close; and you shall destroy Numantia. But, after driving in state to the Capitol, you shall find the commonwealth disturbed by the designs of my grandson).<sup>28</sup>

The prophecies are narrated in the future indicative tense, betraying little to no doubt as to the veracity of Scipio Africanus's predictions.

Mid-way through the vision, Cicero reminds us that his character's dream is framed within sleep when his protagonist undergoes a partial awakening, having been disturbed by the shouts of Laelius:

Hic cum exclamasset Laelius ingemuissentque vehementius ceteri, leniter arridens Scipio: St! quaeso, inquit, ne me e somno excitetis, et parumper audite cetera.

(Laelius cried aloud at this, and the rest groaned deeply, but Scipio said with a gentle smile: Quiet, please; do not wake me from my sleep; listen for a few moments and hear what followed).<sup>29</sup>

The protagonist comprehends that he is dreaming, and is able to control his awakening. Following a lengthy conversation with his deceased grandfather regarding the Universe and his destiny, Scipio Aemilianus eventually awakes from the dream as the narrative ends: 'Ille discessit; ego somno solutus sum' ('He departed, and I awoke from my sleep').<sup>30</sup>

Cicero's dream-works — not only his fictional *Somnium Scipionis*, but

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<sup>28</sup> Cicero, *The Republic*, VI. 11.

<sup>29</sup> Cicero, *The Republic*, VI. 12.

<sup>30</sup> Cicero, *The Republic*, VI. 29.

also his philosophical treatises on the nature and truthfulness of dreams — had a huge impact on the resulting dream-vision tradition, since they accentuated the ambiguous nature of dreams and dreaming. Yet, as I show later in this chapter, the true extent to which Cicero influenced the oneiric tradition would not be fully comprehended until over four centuries later, following the composition of the *Commentarium in Somnium Scipionis* by the Christian interpreter, Macrobius.

### **THE BIBLICAL TRADITION**

The influence of the biblical tradition upon vision literature is great, though hardly surprising considering the wealth of oneiric sequences found within the Bible. From the first book, Genesis, to the final prophetic visions of St John in Revelation, Scripture provides us with a variety of templates upon which medieval authors were able to project their own dream-visions. This section seeks to establish the particular influences of three dream sequences, each of which has generated much discussion amongst both biblical commentators and literary critics investigating the phenomenon of dream-visions: Genesis 28 (Jacob's Ladder), Daniel 7 (the Vision of the Four Beasts), and the Book of Revelation. Chosen for their particular resonances with the *Triumpho*, *Amorosa visione*, and the *Corbaccio*, these biblical dreams will permit us to gain a better understanding of the extent to which Petrarch and Boccaccio drew upon the biblical tradition when composing their own texts.

Within the Book of Genesis, there are several dream-visions and instances of dream-interpretation.<sup>31</sup> Abram's prophetic vision in Genesis 15 reveals the identity of his heirs; Joseph's accounts of his dreams occupy the entirety of Genesis 37, while his interpretations of the dreams of others make up Genesis 40 and 41; Genesis 46 recalls the vision sent by God to Israel, which instructs him to go to Egypt with his family. Yet perhaps the most remarkable dream-vision within Genesis is the tale of Jacob's Ladder (Genesis 28) in which Jacob, having been sent to find a wife by his father, falls asleep with his head upon a stone and dreams of a ladder reaching from earth to heaven: 'viditque in somnis scalam stantem super terram et cacumen illius tangens caelum angelos quoque Dei

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<sup>31</sup> All biblical quotations are taken from Jerome's Latin Vulgate, with English translations taken from the Douay-Rheims.

ascendentes et descendentes per eam' ('And he saw in his sleep a ladder standing upon the earth, and the top thereof touching heaven: the angels also of God ascending and descending by it', 28. 12).

The structure of this chapter is characteristic of dream-vision literature within Scripture: the dreamer falls asleep and experiences a heavenly or angelic visitation, and awakes having undergone a conversionary or enlightening experience. The language used to relate the vision is also characteristic of biblical dreams and prophecies: the dream is introduced using the construction 'viditque in somnis' ('and he saw in his sleep'), with Jacob's return to waking consciousness described using a similar construction: 'evigilasset Iacob de somno' ('Jacob awaked out of sleep', 28. 16). Jacob's vision is divinely inspired, and prophesies that Jacob will have many offspring; yet it also brings insight, with Jacob awakening with the belief that God was occupying the space where he, himself, was sleeping.

Biblical commentators have offered various interpretations of Scripture since the early days of Christianity, and Genesis 28 was widely commented upon, with several different interpretations of Jacob's dream suggested. Unfortunately, very few early commentaries on this episode remain, but of those that do, the most pertinent is that of Philo Judaeus, or Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BC – 50 AD), whose works are roughly contemporaneous to the biblical apocrypha. Philo was one of the first scholars to provide interpretations of the New Testament, and his works proved pivotal in the later writings of the Church Fathers.<sup>32</sup> Philo wrote three books on the subject of dreaming, each concerning a different type of dream. The first of these books has been lost, but within the remaining two books Philo discusses dreams sent by deity, and dreams which are able to prophesy future events.<sup>33</sup> A great deal of Philo's *De somniis* is taken up by an extensive commentary on Genesis 28, and Philo offers possible interpretations for numerous scenes found within the episode of Jacob's dream. He makes suggestions regarding the meaning of the ladder and its ability to stand on earth and touch

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<sup>32</sup> James Kugel, *The Ladder of Jacob: Ancient Interpretations of the Biblical Story of Jacob and His Children* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> A useful study of the first book of Philo's *De somniis* is J. H. A. Hart, 'Philo of Alexandria: *De somniis*, I', *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 18 (1906), 330-46.

heaven, and also regarding the ascending and descending of angels upon the ladder, commenting that:

the affairs of mankind are naturally compared to a ladder, on account of their irregular motion and progress: for as some one or other has said: ‘One day has cast a man down from on high and destroyed him, and another it has raised up [...] Do not men become rulers from having been private individuals, and private individuals from having been rulers, poor from having been rich, and very rich from having been very poor; glorious from being despised, and most illustrious from having been infamous?’<sup>34</sup>

Here Philo argues that we should view Jacob’s dream as a comment upon the human state: like the medieval Wheel of Fortune, the ladder symbolises the ups and downs of life. Philo’s interpretation of the dream is interesting, not least because he appears to suggest that Jacob’s vision was enigmatic and representative of the human condition, rather than constituting a divine prophecy. Yet, in the same treatise, and only a few verses after this initial interpretation, Philo offers a more divine explanation of events:

But the dream also represented an archangel, namely the Lord himself, firmly planted on the ladder; for we must imagine that the living God stands above all things, like the charioteer of a chariot, or the pilot of a ship.<sup>35</sup>

Although Philo’s views on biblical dreams are made explicit (‘the divine word speaks of dreams as sent from God’),<sup>36</sup> his commentary appears to allow for multiple interpretations of Jacob’s dream at Bethel. Genesis 28 offers an interesting model for dream-vision literature, since the episode can be read in several different ways, both literally and allegorically. Philo’s commentary on Jacob’s vision reinforces this ambiguity, and presents several different interpretations of the dream, without definitively explaining its meaning. This

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<sup>34</sup> Philo Judaeus, *De somniis*, I, in *The Works of Philo Judaeus*, trans. by C. D. Yonge (London: Bohn, 1854-90), vol. 2, pp. 292-344, vv. 1.153-55.

<sup>35</sup> Philo Judaeus, *De somniis*, I, 1.157.

<sup>36</sup> Philo Judaeus, *De somniis*, I, 1. 190..

issue of dream-interpretation arises again in the book of Daniel and forms a focal point for many of the chapters.

It is revealed in Daniel 1 that, along with human knowledge, God gave the prophet Daniel the gift of understanding all visions and dreams: '[dedit Deus] Daniheli autem intelligentiam omnium visionum et somniorum' (Daniel 1. 17). As such, the book contains several dreams and visions, five in total; three of the dreams are experienced by Daniel, and two are experienced by the king, Nebuchadnezzar, and interpreted by Daniel. These dreams are important in our understanding of the influence of biblical visions upon later dream-vision literature, since they are often formulaic, and place great emphasis on the need to analyse dream-content.

Within the book of Daniel, a huge sense of importance is placed on the process of interpreting visions: in Daniel 2, Nebuchadnezzar threatens to put to death all Chaldeans unless one of them can provide him with an account and interpretation of his dream; in Daniel 8, the Angel Gabriel is sent to the prophet to provide an interpretation of his vision of the ram and goat; while a similar angel is sent to help Daniel understand his terrifying vision in Daniel 10-12. Daniel's ability to understand dreams and visions proves invaluable, since many of the visions presented are allegorical in nature; Nebuchadnezzar's vision from Daniel 2, for example, is prophetic, but the prophecies are veiled in symbolism. Daniel elucidates parts of the dream for the king, explaining, for example, that the feet of the statue of which Nebuchadnezzar dreamed were made of both iron and clay to symbolise the coming kingdom: 'et digitos pedum ex parte ferreos et ex parte fictiles ex parte regnum erit solidum ex parte contritum' ('And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay: the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken', 2. 42). Likewise, the prophet's own vision from chapter 8 requires interpretation, and the Angel Gabriel explains that the ram of which Daniel dreamed is symbolic of the king of the Medes and Persians ('aries quem vidisti habere cornua rex Medorum est atque Persarum', 8. 20); while the goat is the king of the Greeks ('porro hic caprarum rex Graecorum est', 8. 21).

Of the visions in Daniel, perhaps the most striking is that described in Daniel 7. In a bizarre and apocalyptic dream sequence, the prophet sees four beasts, each thought to represent one of the four empires of the Mesopotamian

era. The beasts — a lioness with the wings of an eagle, a bear-like creature, a winged leopard with four heads ('quasi pardus et alas habebat avis quattuor super se et quattuor capita erant in bestia et potestas data est ei', 7. 6), and a beast with ten horns — appear to Daniel one at a time before being slain to make way for 'one like the Son of man' ('quasi filius hominis', Daniel 7. 13). This final figure proceeds to explain the meaning of the vision to Daniel, stating that the four beasts are four kingdoms, which shall arise out of the earth ('hae quattuor bestiae magnae quattuor regna consurgent de terra', 7. 17). The apocalyptic nature of the explanation concerning the fourth beast is particularly arresting: 'et sic ait: bestia quarta regnum quartum erit in terra quod maius erit omnibus regnis et devorabit universam terram et conculcabit et comminuet eam' ('And he said thus: the fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon the earth, which shall be greater than all the kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it into pieces', 7. 23), and the Christ-like figure ends by prophesying a final judgment: 'iudicium sedebit ut auferatur potentia et conteratur et dispereat usque in finem' ('a judgment shall sit, that his power may be taken away, and be broken into pieces, and perish even to the end', 7. 26).

Much has been said about this apocalyptic vision, and Jerome's *Commentary on Daniel* (c. 407 AD) gives a thorough explanation of the episode. Jerome begins his interpretation of Daniel 7 by stating that, since only Daniel himself was aware of the visions he was experiencing, they 'therefore lacked any importance as signs or revelations so far as the barbarian nations were concerned. But they were written down only that a record of the things beheld might be preserved for posterity'.<sup>37</sup> Yet despite this apparent lack of importance for the barbarians, Jerome continues to refer to Daniel as 'the prophet'.

Jerome's commentary offers interpretations for the symbols in Daniel's vision; he states, for example, that the 'quattuor venti caeli' ('four winds of heaven', 7: 2) are representative of the 'angelic powers to whom the principalities have been committed',<sup>38</sup> and that the 'mari magno' ('great sea', 7: 2) 'signifies this world and the present age, overwhelmed with salty and bitter waves, in

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<sup>37</sup> St. Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, trans. by Gleason L. Archer (Mississippi: Baker Book House, 1958), pp. 15-157 (7: 1).

<sup>38</sup> Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, 7: 2.

accordance with the Lord's own interpretation of the dragnet cast into the sea (Matt. 13).<sup>39</sup> This method of suggesting alternative meanings of Daniel 7 is important when considered alongside the terminology used for this biblical scene. There are six explicit references to dreams within Daniel 7; four of these use forms of 'visio', while the two remaining references are made using 'somnia'. Macrobius would later explain in his fifth century commentary on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* that 'visio' should be used to denote prophetic dreams, and indeed, in the case of Daniel, this would appear correct; yet we must also heed the warning by Daniel that even visions need careful consideration if we are to understand them properly: 'intelligentia est enim opus in visione' ('there is need of understanding in a vision', 10. 1). If the various explanations of dream symbolism within the book leave us with little doubt as to the enigmatic nature of some dreams, this warning should provide any clarification required.

In his commentary, Jerome makes several references to the nature of prophetic dreams. Using the example of Nebuchadnezzar, Jerome explains that, although some unworthy men receive visions, only holy or righteous servants of God are able to understand and interpret them:

The impious king beheld a dream concerning things to come, in order that he might give glory to God after the holy man had interpreted what he had seen [...] We read this same thing in the case of Pharaoh, not because Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar deserved to behold visions, but in order that Joseph and Daniel might appear as deserving of preference over all men because of their gift of interpretation.

Jerome's view was that it was not only pious men who could receive prophetic, revelatory, or divinely inspired visions: even sinners and non-Christians were able to undergo such experiences, although they would not necessarily be able to fully understand what their dreams and visions mean.

Alongside the need for interpretation, the various visions within the Book of Daniel are all reported using set phrases, such as 'videbam in visione capitis' ('I saw in the vision of my head', Daniel 4. 10); 'videbam in visione mea nocte'

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<sup>39</sup> Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, 7: 2.

(‘I saw in my vision by night’, Daniel 7. 2); ‘vidi autem in visione’ (‘I saw in the vision’, Daniel 8. 2). These lexical repetitions provide a way for readers to understand how each passage should be understood; through the use of set phrases such as ‘levavi oculus meos et vidi et ecce...’ (‘I lifted up my eyes, and saw: and behold...’, Daniel 8. 3), we quickly come to recognise that a dream-vision will follow. The fact that the visions within the book of Daniel occur in the head of the dreamer is often emphasised: ‘Danihel somnium vidit visio autem capitis eius in cubili suo’ (‘Daniel saw a dream and the vision in his head was upon his bed’, Daniel 7. 1); ‘visiones capitis mei conturbaverunt me’ (‘the visions of my head frightened me’, Daniel 4. 2). Jerome, in his commentary on Daniel, explains that this is significant, since it shows that divine visions are not seen with the eyes, but rather inside the head:

He does not say, ‘The visions of thine eyes’, lest we should think it was something physical, but rather: ‘of thy head’. ‘For the eyes of a wise man are in his head’ (Eccl. 2:14), that is to say in the princely organ of the heart, just as we read in the Gospel: ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they are ones who shall see God’.<sup>40</sup>

Visions in the head, therefore, are sent by God, whereas those of the eyes are purely physical; a product of physiological or psychological processes.

The visions and dream-interpretations within Daniel are perhaps one of the most important sources in terms of the function and formulae of dream-vision narratives. The use of specific terminology and set phrases, such as ‘I saw in my vision’, or ‘I saw a vision in my head, and behold...’ became established conventions within the reporting of dream-visions; well-read men of the Middle Ages, therefore, would have developed a keen understanding and set of expectations as to the type of narrative that would follow such a phrase. Furthermore, the commentaries on the visions from both Genesis and Daniel highlight the inherent multifaceted nature of scriptural visions: since they are veiled in allegory, the prophecies within biblical dreams can only be understood properly when interpreted by intermediaries or prophets.

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<sup>40</sup> Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*, 2. 29.

In a similar fashion to both Jacob's dream at Bethel and Daniel's apocalyptic vision of the four beasts, the visions within the Book of Revelation contain striking imagery and are open to different interpretations. This final book of the Bible sees St John receive a series of prophecies while on the island of Patmos, which reveal how the world will end. Upon hearing a great voice, which instructs him to commit to paper and distribute to the seven churches that which he saw, John experiences several visions. After being invited into heaven by a trumpet-like voice ('ascende huc et ostendam tibi quae oportet fieri post haec', Revelation 4. 1), John witnesses the Lamb of God open a book which is sealed with seven seals. The opening of each seal is accompanied by the unleashing of several horses (a white horse, 6. 2; a red horse, 6. 4; a black horse, 6. 5; and a pale horse called death, 'nomen illi Mors', 6. 8) and disasters, and this eventually results in the knowledge that all souls must wait to be judged by God: 'For the great day of their wrath is come And who shall be able to stand?' ('quoniam venit magnus dies irae ipsorum et quis poterit stare?', 6. 17). Seven angels holding trumpets are then shown to John and, upon the sounding of each of the seven trumpets, the earth is plagued by various terrors. The saint is then instructed to orally consume the book of prophecies held by the seventh and final angel, before witnessing the pouring of God's wrath upon the earth in order to punish those who have sinned. The Apocalyptic vision ends in the promise of a new earth, a new heaven, and a new Jerusalem, and the knowledge that we shall all be judged at the end of time, according to the Book of Life.

Since the Apocalypse is a vision not framed by sleep, it is hardly surprising that the term 'somnia' is not used at all; yet the term 'visio' is used only once: 'et ita vidi equos in visione' ('and thus I saw horses in the vision', 9: 17). Instead, John refers to his divine revelation as his 'prophetia' ('prophecy', 1: 3); he speaks of God's 'prophetas' ('prophets', 10:7); and God's direct order that he, John, must 'prophetare' ('prophesy', 10: 11). These lexical choices ensure that the nature, if not the content, of John's vision is unambiguous: it clearly announces that which is to come. Despite the terminology and the prophetic qualities of the vision, many of the early commentaries on Revelation suggested a more enigmatic interpretation of the Apocalypse.

There were several different schools of biblical commentators, which each

offered individual interpretations of Scripture, ranging from the literal (such as St Lucian, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and St Ephraem) to the allegorical or metaphorical (St Ambrose, Cyril of Alexandria, Dionysius of Alexandria, Clement of Alexandria).<sup>41</sup> Jerome's patristic commentaries on both Revelation and Daniel epitomise the Intermediate School of commentaries, and combine aspects of various previous commentaries. Jerome presents a reading of the Apocalypse which suggests that, rather than constituting true prophecy, Revelation provided a history of the Church on earth, dating from the time of the patriarchs to the second coming of Christ.<sup>42</sup> Like Jerome, Nicholas of Lyra (1270-1349) rejected anachronistic readings of the Apocalypse which appeared to offer premature insight into later occurrences.<sup>43</sup> Nicholas belonged to the Latin Catenist School of commentators — catenists combined chains (*catenæ*) of passages left by earlier commentators — and argued that St John does not make the meaning of his vision explicit, even though he professed to fully comprehend the meaning of the Apocalypse:

Saint John wrote these imaginary visions; however he did not express their understanding, even though he understood them fully.

Sometimes he inserted the method through which to understand the rest. For example, in Chapter 1 he says that the seven golden candles are the seven churches and the seven stars are the seven angels, that is, their bishops [...] The literal understanding is not what is signified by the words immediately, but it is what the images signify.<sup>44</sup>

Despite the terminology used within the biblical verses, Nicholas clearly sets out his feelings that Revelation should be taken as an enigma; a vision in need of careful interpretation in order to comprehend its true, rather than literal, meaning.

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<sup>41</sup> For a history of biblical commentators, see C. Aherne, 'Commentaries on the Bible', *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 16 vols (New York: Robert Appleton, 1913), IV, 157-63.

<sup>42</sup> Matter, 'The Apocalypse in Early Medieval Exegesis', p. 39.

<sup>43</sup> Philip Krey, 'Many Readers but Few Followers: The Fate of Nicholas of Lyra's "Apocalypse Commentary" in the Hands of His Late-Medieval Admirers', *Church History*, 64 (1995), 185-201 (pp. 188-90).

<sup>44</sup> *Nicholas of Lyra's Apocalypse Commentary*, trans. and intro. by Philip D. W. Krey (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), p. 66.

His readings of the Apocalypse are often metaphorical, for example he explains that within the prophecy of Revelation 11. 7 — ‘et cum finierint testimonium suum bestia quae ascendit de abyso faciet adversus illos bellum et vincet eos et occidet illos’ (‘And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the abyss shall make war against them and shall overcome them and kill them’) — the reference to the ‘killing’ of men should not be taken literally, since its true meaning is to kill ‘[b]y civil death by sending them into exile’.<sup>45</sup> He also argues that the recurrent number seven should be ‘understood as “all” [...] because all time is comprehended by replication in seven days’.<sup>46</sup>

In his commentary on the Apocalypse, Victorinus of Pettau (d. AD 303) also offered metaphorical readings of verses of Revelation. He explains that the opening of a new door in heaven (‘vidi et ecce ostium apertum in caelo’, Revelation 4. 1) is symbolic of the New Testament of the Bible, while the four living creatures (‘quattuor animalia’, Revelation 4. 6) which surround the throne are representative of the four Gospels.<sup>47</sup> However, what is most striking about Victorinus’s commentary is his evident ability to read Scripture critically, as one would perhaps read a work of fiction: speaking of 8. 1, for example, wherein John expresses how ‘cum aperuisset sigillum septimum factum est silentium in caelo quasi media hora’ (‘with the opening of the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for almost half an hour’), Victorinus rightly notes that ‘if the silence had continued, here would be an end to his [John’s] narrative’.<sup>48</sup>

Biblical visions constitute one of the most important influences for later literary dream-visions; the terminology used to describe prophecies and revelations would be employed in a similar manner in oneiric fiction, whilst the commentary tradition provided a glossary of symbolism which could be, and indeed was, reused within enigmatic and allegorical accounts of dreams. The need for dream-interpretation had already been stressed within the books of Genesis

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<sup>45</sup> *Nicholas of Lyra’s Apocalypse Commentary*, p. 129.

<sup>46</sup> *Nicholas of Lyra’s Apocalypse Commentary*, p. 140.

<sup>47</sup> Victorinus of Pettau, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, trans. by Robert Earnest Wallis, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. by Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886). Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. Last accessed online at [www.newadvent.org](http://www.newadvent.org) [02/06/14].

<sup>48</sup> Victorinus of Pettau, *Commentary on the Apocalypse*, 8: 1.

and Daniel, and a set of expectations for vision literature was firmly established by the formulaic reporting of prophecies, including the specific terminology used to introduce dreams. The Bible also gives us models for different types of dreams, such as allegorical prophecies and clear or unambiguous prophecies, and also highlights the need to apply reason and interpretative faculties to dreams in order to fully understand their meanings.

### **DREAMS, VISIONS, AND THEOLOGIANS**

From the Early Church Fathers, such as St Jerome and St Augustine, to the early medieval commentator, Macrobius, and the philosopher, Boethius, thinkers and theologians have played an important role in the propagation and exploration of dream-visions. The Church Fathers, especially, were influential in the development of a common understanding of dreams; some, such as St Jerome, compiled extensive commentaries on the nature and significance of biblical visions; while others — for example, St Augustine — composed treatises on the scientific and philosophical causes of dreams.

Jerome's works were particularly important; even today, his translation of the Bible into the Latin vulgate remains the authoritative source of Scripture for the Catholic Church, and his commentaries on the prophetic visions of Daniel were extremely influential in highlighting and establishing a set of conventions for the reporting of dreams. Jerome was, himself, subject to disturbing visions. During his sojourn in the desert at Chalcis, to the south-west of Antioch, he was plagued by his memories and fantasies of dancing girls and other temptations; although these visions were not prophetic — they instead reflected Jerome's constant struggle to shun his sexual desires in favour of an ascetic lifestyle — elsewhere within his works, Jerome describes a vision which he insists was not 'vana somnia' (idle dreams), but was divinely inspired.<sup>49</sup>

In his letter to the nun Eustochium, Jerome describes a frightening dream he experienced during Lent. After dedicating many hours to the study of Cicero,

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<sup>49</sup> Jerome, 'XXII: Ad Eustochium', in *Select Letters*, bilingual edition, trans. by F. A. Wright, in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), pp. 52-157; the account of the dream vision is reported at XXII. 30 (pp. 124-29).

Jerome, suffering from a terrible fever which very nearly killed him, was ‘caught up in the spirit and dragged before the Judge’s judgment seat’ (‘cum subito raptus in spiritu, ad tribunal iudicis pertrahor’, XXII. 30). During this vision, the saint is accused of being a follower of Cicero, rather than of God, and is tortured both physically by strokes of the lash (‘verbera’) and mentally by the fire of conscience (‘conscientiae [...] igne’). Although Jerome does not describe falling asleep, he does state that the physical injuries he sustained within his visions remained with him after he had awoken from sleep (‘liventes habuisse me scapulas, plagas sensisse post somnum’), suggesting that he was unconscious during his dream.

Although Macrobius would later argue that dreams which occur while the dreamer is suffering from a fever or other illness should be considered philosophically irrelevant, Jerome is keen to stress the prophetic qualities of his vision. He claims that his dream was neither idle nor a by-product of sleep, but was instead both divinely inspired and revelatory: ‘Nec vero sopor ille fuerat, aut vana somnia, quibus saepe deludimur’ (‘And [...] this was no sleep nor idle dream, such as those by which we are often mocked’). That his dream-injuries pervade his waking life serves as further proof of the truthfulness of his vision. Following his return to consciousness, Jerome reaffirms his commitment to God and vows to discontinue his fervent study of Cicero. This conversionary experience — one of the most common tropes of dream-vision literature — comes as a direct result of the saint’s dream, and again serves as evidence of the divine nature of the vision.

Despite Jerome’s professed belief in the divine provenance of certain dreams, his contemporary, St Augustine, explains that dreams and visions arise as a result of physical and mental processes rather than being sent by God. Augustine writes about dreams, visions, and the relationship between sleep and death in several of his treatises, including the *De natura et origine animae*, his commentary on the Book of Genesis, and his *Confessions*. Yet, unlike Aristotle, who believed that dreams were the product of physiological processes in the sleeping body, and Cicero who argued for the inclusion of dream accounts in medical examinations, since he felt they offered insight into a person’s health, Augustine argued that dreams were purely a product of the imagination. He explains that, during sleep, a person’s soul is neither entirely passive, as Aristotle

had previously argued, nor does it leave the dreamer's body, as suggested by Augustine's contemporary, Vincentius Victor of Mauretania Caesariensis.<sup>50</sup> Rather, the soul is subject to the faculty of memory.

Augustine posited that everything we see in dreams is a product of our experiences. As we pass through our lives, we witness mountains, rivers, animals and other human beings, and the likeness (*similitudine*) of such images is stored in our memory. In dreams, these memories are somehow recalled and we witness their likenesses as if we were actually seeing them through our eyes:

namque huiusmodi species uelet corporum, non tamen corpora et uigilantium cogitatione formantur et profunditate memorie continentur et ex eius abditissimis sinibus nescio quo mirabili et ineffabili modo cum recordamur prodeunt et quasi ante oculos prolata versantur [...] quid ergo mirum, si et ipsa sibi in sui corporis similitudine apparet et quando sine corpore apparet? neque enim cum suo corpore sibi apparet in somnis et tamen in ea ipsa similitudine corporis sui quasi per loca ignota et nota discurrit et laeta sentit multa uel tristia.

(Now things of this kind, which look like bodies, but are not really corporeal, are formed in the thoughts of persons when they are awake, and are held in the depths of their memories, and then out of these secret recesses, by some wonderful and ineffable process, they come out to view in the operation of our memory, and present themselves as if palpably before our eyes [...] What wonder is it, then, if it actually itself appears to itself in the likeness of its own body, even when it appears without a body? For it never appears to itself in dreams with its own body; and yet in the very similitude of its own body it runs

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<sup>50</sup> For an analysis of Augustine's relationship with the works of Vincentius Victor, see Mary Sirridge, 'Dream Bodies and Dream Pains in Augustine's *De natura et origine animae*', *Vivarium*, 43 (2005), 213-49. None of Victor's works survive, and we rely solely upon Augustine's reconstruction of his treatise. Augustine purportedly cites sections of Victor's work in a letter directed to Victor himself, which Sirridge explains, are 'presumably accurate [...] since they match those in Book I and II, which were originally addressed to recipients who were familiar with Vincentius Victor's treatise' (p. 214, n. 2).

here and there through known and unknown places, and beholds many sad and joyous sights).<sup>51</sup>

Not only is the imagination able to reproduce visions of experiences and people, but the mind is also able to recall memories of physical sensations and emotional responses experienced during the waking state. Augustine also argued that this faculty could serve a creative purpose, meaning that the imagination would be capable of combining small elements of often disparate memories to produce something entirely new to the dreamer.

Augustine devotes an entire chapter of his *De Genesi ad Litteram* to the discussion of the different kinds of visions. Like Jerome in his commentary on Daniel, Augustine argues that visions seen within dreams are not seen by the eyes, but by the soul: ‘Anima mea, inquit, videbat eum, non oculi mei. Non tamen sciebam, utrum corpus esset, an imago corporis’ (“My soul”, he said, “was seeing him, not my eyes; still I did not know whether he was a body or the image of a body”);<sup>52</sup> and proposes a tripartite division of the dreams, consisting of bodily, spiritual, and intellectual visions. Bodily visions, he explains, cannot occur unless a spiritual vision accompanies them, since at the precise moment when bodily contact is made by a physical sense, an impression is also produced in the soul or spirit; whereas spiritual visions can occur without the bodily kind, but are in need of the intellectual kind in order to be able to understand them. Since intellectual visions require neither bodily nor spiritual visions, they are the superior kind. Prophets, such as Daniel, who both experience premonitory dreams and are also able to fully interpret them, receive this final type of vision.

In his treatise *De civitate Dei*, Augustine argued that, although dreams are intensely personal in nature, and reflect an individual’s experiences or anxieties,

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<sup>51</sup> St Augustine, *De natura et origine animae*, ed. C.F. Urba & J. Zycha, *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*, IV. xvii. 404-05; trans. by Peter Holmes and Robert Ernest Wallis, and revised by Benjamin B. Warfield, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 5, ed. by Philip Schaff (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887).

<sup>52</sup> St Augustine, *De Genesi ad Litteram*, accessed online via Patrologia Latina (pld.chadwyck.com), 30/09/2014; trans. from Augustine, *On Genesis*, trans. and intro. by Edmund Hill, vol. 13 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (New York: New York City Press, 2002); XII. 2. 4.

they are also able to transport an individual dreamer into a communal conversation or experience:

sed phantasticum hominis, quod etiam cogitando sive somniando per rerum innumerabilia genera variatur et, cum corpus non sit, corporum tamen similes mira celeritate formas capit, sopitis aut oppressis corporeis hominis sensibus ad aliorum sensum nescio quo ineffabili modo figura corporea posse perducī.

(I hold instead that a man's phantom — which also in his thoughts and dreams is changed by the countless variety of objects it receives, and though it is not a body, still with astonishing swiftness receives shapes that are like material bodies — this phantom, I hold, can in some inexplicable way present itself to the senses of others in bodily form, when their physical senses are dulled or blocked out).<sup>53</sup>

Dream-bodies, therefore, are not divine apparitions, but rather individual phantoms which are able to transmute into various forms; so, like when the likeness of a person appears in another's dream, forms within visions do not appear in physical bodies, but rather in imaginary ones.

Aside from discussions about the nature of dreams, their origins, and how they are formed, Augustine also discusses the issue of dream-reality, that is to say whether one should be held responsible for sins committed during sleep. In his *Confessions*, the saint explores this issue using the example of food consumed within dreams: 'cibus in somnis simillimus est cibus vigilantium, quo tamen dormientes non aluntur; dormiunt enim' ('That food we dream of shows very like the food which we eat awake; yet are not those asleep nourished by it, for they are asleep').<sup>54</sup> He explains that, since our bodies are not nourished by food we perceive to have eaten during sleep, we cannot be held accountable for sins we

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<sup>53</sup> Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, bilingual edition, trans. by William McAllen Green, in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 7 vols; Vol. V. XVIII. 18.

<sup>54</sup> Augustine, *Confessions*, bilingual edition, trans. by William Watts, in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1912), III. 6.

have committed within dreams. Dream-bodies are entirely separate from our actual bodies, and dream-pleasures are only pleasurable for our dream-bodies, so upon waking, the sins we dreamed we were committing, or the food we thought we were consuming, disappear in the same way as sleep. He further explores this issue in his *De natura et origine animae*, stating, ‘tantum valet imaginis inlusio in anima mea in carne mea, ut dormienti falsa visa persuadeant quod vigilantia vera non possunt’ (‘In my soul and in my flesh there is the illusion of an image and whilst sleeping false visions suggest things that cannot be true whilst awake’).<sup>55</sup> Dream-reality within ‘false visions’, as Augustine explains, is far-removed from waking reality, and the two should not be confused:

nam et in somnis quando aliqua dura et molesta perpetimur, nos utique sumus et, nisi euigilantibus nobis illa praetereant, poenas grauissimas pendimus; sed corpora esse credere, quibus hac atque illac quasi ferimur et uolitamur in somnis, hominis est, qui parum uigilanter de rebus talibus cogitauit. de his quippe uisorum imaginibus maxime anima probatur non esse corporea, nisi uelis et illa corpora dicere, quae praeter nos ipsos tam multa uidemus in somnis: caelum, terram, mare, solem, lunam, stellas, fluuios, montes, arbores, animalia. haec qui corpora esse credit incredibiliter desipit.

(For even in dreams when we endure anything hard and bothersome, we are still ourselves and unless these things pass away at our waking, we are weighed down by the heaviest suffering. But to believe that these are ‘bodies’ in the dreams in which we are slain or we flutter about belongs to people who have pondered on such matters too inattentively. Obviously it is through these appearances of visions that it is proven that the soul is not corporeal, unless you want to call ‘bodies’ those things, other than ourselves, which we see so much in dreams: the sky, the ground, the sea, the sun, the moon, the stars,

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<sup>55</sup> Augustine, *De natura et origine animae*, X. 30. 41; trans. Holmes and Wallis.

rivers, mountains, trees and beasts. Anyone who believes that these are ‘bodies’ is incredibly foolish.)<sup>56</sup>

Since Augustine believed that dreams were produced solely by the faculty of imagination, and that dream-reality and waking reality are two very separate states, his views on prophetic visions may seem obvious. However, in a letter dated 415 AD and addressed to a friend, Evodius, Augustine explains that some phenomena, including visions and religious prophecies occur, but that these marvels are wholly inexplicable by man:

Visiones autem illae, futurorumque praedictiones quomodo fiant, ille iam explicare conetur, qui novit qua vi efficiantur in unoquoque animo tanta, cum cogitat.

(As to the question how these visions and predictions of future events are produced, let him attempt to explain them who understands by what power we are to account for the great wonders which are wrought in the mind of every man when his thoughts are busy.)<sup>57</sup>

While memory and imagination may be responsible for the vast majority of dreams, prophetic visions — particularly those experienced by pious and holy people — are beyond the range of human comprehension. Augustine and Jerome proposed very different explanations regarding the meaning and value of dreams. Jerome’s belief that dreams could be sent from God and held prophetic qualities directly contrasted with Augustine’s explanations of dreams as the result of a combination of psychological and physiological processes, such as digestion, illness, memories, and imagination.

In his *Commentarium in Somnium Scipionis*, the fifth century Roman, Macrobius, discusses the value of dreams at great length. The work takes the form

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<sup>56</sup> Augustine, *De natura et origine animae*, IV. 27; trans. Holmes and Wallis.

<sup>57</sup> Augustine, ‘Epistola 159’, accessed online at [augustinus.it/latino/lettere/index2.htm](http://augustinus.it/latino/lettere/index2.htm) [02/01/2015]; trans. from Augustine, ‘Letter 159’, in *Letters 156-210*, vol. 3 of *The Works of Saint Augustine*, ed. by Boniface Ramsey and trans. by Roland Teske, pp. 47-49.

of an explanatory commentary, which not only deals with the textual, contextual and historical issues to have emerged from Cicero's narrative, but also constitutes one of the most important dream treatises ever written, offering insightful thoughts on the process of dreaming and how dreams may be categorised and interpreted according to type. He successfully merges different dream-theories – ranging from Aristotle's theory of the physiological causes of dreams, to those provided by biblical commentators which suggest divine knowledge or revelation. Yet, unlike both Jerome and Augustine, Macrobius does not emphatically claim that dreams are either entirely divine or resolutely human; rather he argues that there are several different types of dreams, which are not all equal and which do not possess the same worth. He argues that all dreams must fall into one of five categories:

omnium quae videre sibi dormientes videntur quinque sunt principales et diversitates et nomina, aut enim est ὄνειρος secundum Graecos quod Latini somnium vocant, aut est ὄραμα quod visio recte appellatur, aut est χρηματισμός quod oraculum nuncupatur, aut est ἐνύπνιον quod insomnium dicitur, aut est φάντασμα quod Cicero, quotiens opus hoc nomine fuit, visum vocavit.

(All dreams may be classified under five main types: there is the enigmatic dream, in Greek *oneiros*, in Latin *somnium*; second there is the prophetic dream, in Greek *horama*, in Latin *visio*; third there is the oracular dream, in Greek *chrematismos*, in Latin *oraculum*; fourth there is the nightmare, in Greek *enyption*, in Latin *insomnium*; and last, the apparition, in Greek *phantasma*, which Cicero, when he has occasion to use the word, calls *visum*).<sup>58</sup>

Of these five different types of dreams, nightmares and apparitions hold no greater significance; they are not divinely inspired, but rather the result of corporeal and psychological factors such as anxiety, illness, hunger, or sexual

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<sup>58</sup> Macrobius, *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, ed. by Jacob Willis (Leipzig: Teubner, 1970); translations taken from Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. and intro. by William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), I, 3. 2.

arousal. This type of dream, explains Macrobius, is philosophically irrelevant, whereas enigmatic dreams, prophetic visions and oracular dreams are valuable, since they are imparted by deities or higher powers. Macrobius's *Commentarium*, and specifically this categorisation of dream-types, would become the standard oneiric reference work during the Middle Ages; the definitions provided within the treatise for the different sorts of dreams and visions would directly affect the terminology authors chose to employ within their own oneiric narratives, according to the type of dream they wished to portray.

Macrobius begins his *Commentarium* by explaining that dream visions, although often fictional, served as excellent authoritative vehicles for the dissemination of philosophical discourse,<sup>59</sup> before moving on to deal specifically with Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*. He argues that Cicero's dream-vision has to do with all five varieties of the enigmatic dream, but that the presence of the spirit-guide highlights the oracular qualities of the vision, since

et est oraculum quidem cum in somnis parens vel alia sancta gravisve persona seu sacerdos vel etiam deus aperte eventurum quid aut non eventurum, faciendum vitandumve denuntiat.

(We call a dream oracular in which a parent, or a pious or revered man, or a priest, or even a god clearly reveals what will or will not transpire, and what action to take or to avoid, I. 3. 8).

An oracular guide cannot merely be an ordinary man, but requires an elevated status or authoritative position in relation to the dreamer; in the case of Scipio's dream, explains Macrobius, the two men who appeared before the dreamer were 'uterque parens, sancti gravesque ambo nec alieni a sacerdotio' ('both his father, both were pious and revered men, and both were affiliated with the priesthood', I. 3. 12). Macrobius's description of oracular guides and the qualities they ought to possess would act as guidelines for the inclusion of this trope in numerous

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<sup>59</sup> John Taylor Bickley explains that, for Macrobius, dream-visions were an excellent construction for the propagation of philosophical ideas, since they offered the 'ability to construct an appropriate support structure and to convey its truths through the tastefully and appropriately indirect rhetorical mode'; John Taylor Bickley, 'Dreams, Visions, and the Rhetoric of Authority' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Florida State University, 2012), p. 78.

medieval dream-vision texts, with the various levels of authority associated with such guides influencing their reception within literature. Macrobius differentiates between the two types of revelatory visions, *oraculum* and *visio*, stating that, although both types of dreams impart truth, oracular dreams rely upon the presence of a guide to relay prophecies, whilst in prophetic dreams proper (*visiones*), the dreamer actually witnesses future events exactly as they will happen.

Macrobius was greatly indebted to the second century professional diviner, Artemidorus, in the composition of his *Commentarium*, and draws especially upon his *Oneirocritica*, a dream-interpretation manual. Like Macrobius, Artemidorus also used methods of categorization to distinguish between dream-types: those which were true visions, and those which were false. He calls false visions — those which are the product of physiological states, such as hunger, sexual arousal or fever — *Enypnia*; whereas true visions, which are produced by the soul and are either prophetic in nature or sent by gods, are called *Oneiroi*. The *Oneirocritica* was an extremely influential work during the classical era, yet during the Middle Ages its importance stemmed primarily from the impact it had wrought upon Macrobius's *Commentarium*.

Boethius (c. 480-525 AD) played a hugely significant role in the development of the dream-vision tradition. Like Macrobius's *Commentarium*, Boethius's *De consolazione Philosophiae* combined many key tropes of philosophical and oneiric works. Written during the author's imprisonment for treason, a crime for which he would eventually be executed, the *De consolazione* takes the form of a dialogue between an incarcerated protagonist and the personification of Lady Philosophy who visits him in his prison cell and converses with him about several philosophical issues, such as the nature of good and evil, the true nature of happiness, and the role of God in humanity. While not a dream-vision itself — Boethius's narrator is never shown to fall asleep or awake from his vision — many of the central literary devices of the text would be reused within numerous examples of dream-vision literature throughout the Middle Ages, and perhaps the most influential of these devices comes in the form of Boethius's eponymous character, Lady Philosophy.

Philosophy first appears to the protagonist in Book 1 of the work, and

immediately engages the narrator in conversation about the unsuitability of associating with the Muses of poetry, before moving on to deal with questions of predestination and justice. She is described as both awe-inspiring and aged, wearing a dusty robe and carrying books in her right hand and a sceptre in her left. The character is a personification of an abstract concept; she embodies traditional philosophical thinking, and serves as an external voice with which Boethius is able to establish a useful dialogue in order to explore his own philosophies. Her questions and insights aid the protagonist in his search for enlightenment, and lead him to conclude that he has become too attached to material and earthly riches; she is the facilitator of a conversionary experience, with the narrator vowing to renounce pleasures of the flesh in favour of contemplation of spiritual matters.

As signalled by the text's title, Boethius's treatise belonged to the genre known as *consolatio*, which became famous thanks to a text written by Cicero by which he meant to console himself following the death of his daughter Tullia. Texts of the *consolatio* tradition were primarily concerned with allaying distress caused by ill-fortune through the use of language. In the case of Boethius's text, comfort is eventually found by the narrator thanks to his conversations with an external projection of his own thought. P. G. Walsh suggests that Boethius's naming of the work was a direct move to signal the close connection between his treatise and the philosophical writings of Cicero; he, too, claims to have composed his own *consolatio* as an anodyne to compensate for his lack of meaningful role in society, or in affairs of the state.<sup>60</sup> The trope of conversing with an external projection, or personification of allegorical or rhetorical figures, is prominent within later dream-vision literature: Dante in his *Vita nuova* and Boccaccio in the *Corbaccio* both use similar constructions as a means of self-consolation; while in the *Roman de la rose*, the character of Reason — a poorly veiled reincarnation of Lady Philosophy — discourses with the dreamer about the role of Fortune and the true nature of happiness.

The *De consolacione* was widely disseminated throughout the Middle

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<sup>60</sup> P. G. Walsh, 'Introduction', in Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. by P. G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. ix – 1 (p. xxxi).

Ages, and was translated into numerous vernacular languages.<sup>61</sup> Perhaps due to their similar experiences of exile, Boethius exerted a particularly notable influence on Dante, with references and allusions to the philosopher found in almost all of the Florentine's compositions.<sup>62</sup> In the *Convivio*, Dante's 'donna gentile' serves as an allegorical representation of philosophy, while Boethius himself is directly referenced in the *Commedia*: Dante places Boethius in the Heaven of the Sun, and describes him as 'l'anima santa che 'l mondo fallace | fa manifesto a chi di lei ben ode' (*Pd.* X. 125-26). Several commentators have noted the similarities between Dante's Beatrice and Boethius's Lady Philosophy, with most agreeing that Dante drew inspiration for his character from the allegorical representation in the *De consolatione*, since their roles as guides require them to advise their respective narrators on similar issues.<sup>63</sup>

Boethius played a hugely significant role in the history of medieval philosophy, and was one of the most important translators of early medieval treatises, especially those written by pagan philosophers. His influence throughout the Middle Ages was extensive, rivalled only by that of Aristotle and St Augustine; indeed, anyone wishing to access the philosophical works of Aristotle during the Latin medieval period would have been almost entirely dependent on the translations produced by Boethius. As one of the last philosophers of the Roman Empire to have a comprehensive knowledge of Greek, his commentaries and translations of both Plato and Aristotle remained the only lens through which

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<sup>61</sup> For a discussion of the translation and dissemination of the *De consolatione*, see Luca Lombardo, *Boezio in Dante: La «Consolatio philosophiae» nello scrittoio del poeta* (Venice: Ca' Foscari, 2013), where Lombardo discusses the 'numeroso traduzioni nelle diverse lingue volgari' (p. 63) and the circulation of the text throughout Europe (p. 80).

<sup>62</sup> Angelo Gualtieri comments that 'Not less than ten specific references are made to Boethius in the *Convivio*, while copious allusions to the philosopher's work can be found in all of Dante's compositions with the exception of the poetry section of the *Vita nova*'; Angelo Gualtieri, 'Lady Philosophy in Boethius and Dante', *Comparative Literature*, 23 (1971), 141-50 (p. 141); see also Lombardo, *Boezio in Dante*.

<sup>63</sup> In the *Dante Encyclopedia*, Marguerite Chiarenza explains that 'there is a distinct kinship between Lady Philosophy and Beatrice herself, especially in the *Commedia*, where so much of Beatrice's role is to guide the pilgrim through the intricacies of philosophical and theological matters'. Marguerite Chiarenza, 'Boethius', in *Dante Encyclopedia*, ed. by Robert Lansing (New York and London: Garland, 2000), pp. 118-19 (p. 118).

later philosophers were able to access such knowledge. As such, much of Boethius' earlier works were concerned with the translation, interpretation and dissemination of Aristotelian texts, and the author produced detailed commentaries on both Aristotle's *Organon* and Porphyry's *Eisagōgē* — an introduction to Aristotle's treatment of categories which sought to explain both Platonic and Aristotelian thought on many aspects of philosophy. One of the most famous proponents of Boethius's works was Thomas Aquinas, whose commentaries on the works of Aristotle relied heavily upon Boethius's translations. Within Aquinas' commentaries on both Boethius' *De trinitate* and *De hebdomadibus*, the saint would often take exception to the previous expositions provided by Boethius, or else he would expand and develop Boethius' earlier interpretations of Aristotelian doctrine.<sup>64</sup> Although he would sometimes take issue with Boethius' treatises, Aquinas' commentaries were inspired by the philosopher, not only in terms of their subject matter, but also with regard to their literary form, as Ralph McInerny explains: 'To write a commentary in the thirteenth century was to adopt a literary gene, not to invent one, and among the chief influences on the genre is none other than Boethius himself'.<sup>65</sup>

Aquinas was not only a commentator, but also composed his own treatises. His *Summa theologiae* was written to explain Christianity to students of theology; it constitutes one of the best-known and respected works of Christian theology and was hugely influential in the construction of later dream-vision texts. In Book 1 of the treatise, Thomas expresses his beliefs regarding prophetic dreams, arguing that 'intellectual vision does not see intelligible things by any likeness but by their essences' ('Sed visio intellectulis est de rebus intelligentibus, non per aliquas similtudines, sed per suas essentias').<sup>66</sup> Essences, the saint goes on to explain, are things which exist within one's soul and which can be seen through intellectual visions. Even within these intellectual or imaginary visions, if a

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<sup>64</sup> See: Ralph McInerny, *Boethius and Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1990); McInerny explains that Thomas would often 'take issue with Boethius' interpretation [within his Aristotelian commentaries] by appealing to the commonly understood task of the commentator' (p. 34).

<sup>65</sup> McInerny, *Boethius and Aquinas*, p. 33.

<sup>66</sup> All references to the *Summa theologiae* are from Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, bilingual edition, ed. and trans. by Herbert McCabe (Manchester: Blackfriars, 1964), 10 vols; vol. III. 1. 12. 11.

person should speak on behalf of God to a dreamer, it ought to be considered with a certain high degree of prophecy. In his theorizing of prophetic dreams, Aquinas draws heavily upon Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram*, using as an example St Paul's account of his vision of a rapture from 2 Corinthians 1. 4. Aquinas explains that, even after the essence of God had disappeared from his vision, St Paul could still remember certain aspects of the rapture by using his intellect; as such, Paul was seeing both God's essence and also the likeness of things which he saw in that essence. He further explains this complex reasoning in the following manner:

Præterea, intellectus in actu est intelligibile in actu; sicut sensus in actu est sensibile in actu. Hoc autem non est, nisi in quantum informatur sensus similitudine rei sensibilis, et intellectus similitudine rei intellectæ. Ergo si Deus ab intellectu creato videtur in actu, oportet quod per aliquam similitudinem videatur [...] Sed videre Deum per essentiam non est visio ænigmatica, vel specularis, sed contra eam divitur. Ergo divina essentia non videtur per similitudines.

(Actual thought is the realized intelligibility of what is known, just as actual sensation in the realized sensibleness of what is known. But this only occurs when the sense is formed by a likeness of the sensible thing or the mind by a likeness of the intelligible thing. Hence if God is actually seen by the created mind he must be seen through some likeness [...] But to see God in his essence is not to see him 'in a dull mirror' but is contrasted with this; hence the divine essence is not seen through any likeness.)<sup>67</sup>

It is not God's likeness that is made known to man during visions, but his actual essence; whereas other objects within the visions are mere likenesses. This issue of corporeality, or whether that which we see in visions is physically present, is summed up by Aquinas in 1. 43. 7 of the *Summa theologiae*. Citing Augustine's *De Trinitate* 2, Aquinas explains that prophetic visions are not visible to corporeal eyes, nor are they made up of corporeal shapes; rather they are 'shown by the

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<sup>67</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1. 12. 2.

spiritual images of bodies'.<sup>68</sup> Aquinas refuted the belief that prophecy proper could be attained from the process of dreaming, but conceded that 'the more our soul is abstracted from corporeal things, the more it is capable of receiving abstract intelligible things. Hence in dreams and alienations of the bodily senses divine revelations and foresight of future events are perceived the more clearly';<sup>69</sup> and although humans are unable to witness the divine essence of God while on Earth, during sleep our imaginations are more adept in generating visions of higher beings.

The works of theologians and early-Christian authors were important in the development of a dream-vision tradition. Not only were they influential in establishing an understanding — or, indeed, several different understandings — of the phenomenon of dreaming, such as how dreams and visions are formed, where they come from, and their significance, but dream-treatises also aided the formation of a specific dream-vocabulary. Macrobius was especially influential in this process, with his five-fold classification of dreams explaining the significance and value of different types of visions, and serving as an important reference-point for later authors of oneiric texts. Furthermore, early dream-vision narratives — Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* and Boethius's *De consolazione Philosophiae*, for example — were pivotal in instituting a specific set of tropes and conventions for oneiric literature, such as the spirit-guide, a conversionary experience, and the use of personifications. These conventions would become standardised dream-vision motifs within later medieval literature.

#### **LATE-MEDIEVAL DREAM-VISIONS**

During the Middle Ages, as a result of flourishing philosophical and religious views, there was a huge resurgence in the number of dream-vision narratives being produced and disseminated. Dreams were not only being used to frame philosophical debates, as they had traditionally been employed for, but they were also used to develop a variety of debates, ranging from the satirical and religious, to the didactic.

Alain de Lille, or Alanus ab Insulis (c. 1116-1203), used the dream-

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<sup>68</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1. 43. 7.

<sup>69</sup> Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1. 12. 11.

framework in his prosimetric treatise *De planctu Naturae*, a satirical text which explores the various sexual proclivities and perversions of man. The importance of this text lies both in its use of previous dream-vision texts as models — particularly Boethius' *De consolatione Philosophiae* — and in the influence it exerted on the literature which followed it: it was firmly rooted in the oneiric tradition, and also prompted a resurgence of dream texts.

*De planctu Naturae* opens with the narrator-protagonist, Alanus, alone and in sorrowful lament ('lamentabili modulatione'; Prose I), cogitating on human sexuality.<sup>70</sup> While Alanus is never explicitly described as falling asleep, what follows is certainly a kind of reverie, in which the personified figure, Natura, appears to him in a vision and engages him in conversation about various topics, including, predominantly, the 'correct' and 'incorrect' ways to engage in sexual relationships and the dichotomous relationship between lust and reason. Within these conversations — narrated not by human speech, but by the image of a real voice ('in mentali intellectu materialis vocis mihi depinxit imaginem'; Prose III) — Natura explicitly denounces sexual perversions (homosexuality, adultery, cohabitation, concubinal arrangements), claiming that they are against both nature and God.

Natura appears to the passive Alanus in much the same way as Boethius's Lady Philosophy: she glides down from a superior position and approaches the visionary ('mulier ab impassibilis mundi penitiori dilapsa palatio, ad me maturare videbatur accessum'; Prose I). Her various attributes are then depicted in inordinate detail; her hair, eyebrows, skin, forehead, nose, lips, teeth, chin, and waist are all afforded lengthy descriptions; she is represented as both virtuous and sexually attractive, wearing a tunic covered in fish, birds, and other wild beasts. This clothing is symbolic of the entire natural world; Natura is both a personification and a metonym of nature. Barbara Newman suggests that the

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<sup>70</sup> References to the *De planctu Naturae* are taken from the following edition: *Alani ab Insulis Liber de Planctu Naturae*, accessed online on 30/09/14 via Patrologia Latina (pld.chadwyck.co.uk); translations from Alain of Lille, *The Complaint of Nature*, trans. by Douglas M. Moffat, *Yale Studies in English*, 36 (1908), republished in 1972 (Connecticut: Shoe String Press, 1972).

imagery of Natura's robes is also borrowed from Boethius' Lady Philosophy.<sup>71</sup> Just as Natura's garment is torn away from her and defiled by sexual deviants, so Lady Philosophy's robe is pulled apart by various philosophical sects, each struggling to obtain a part of her clothing. It is widely accepted by critics that Alain de Lille was greatly influenced by the works of Boethius, not only the *De consolatione*, but also the *De hebdomadibus*. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that in the creation of his own oneiric text, and specifically in the development of his guide-personification, Alain should look to Boethius for inspiration. The characters of Philosophy and Natura are described in similar terms, yet it is not only their outward appearance to their respective protagonists which links the two personifications; they also fulfil similar roles within the narratives. The two personified figures both act as spirit-guide figures for the narrators of their texts: they appear within visions and engage the protagonists in existential debates, each focusing on the weaknesses of humanity — in the case of Boethius, the predilection for earthly goods; for Natura, the various sexual sins of men — and the role of God in society. Yet Natura is not the only personified figure to appear within the *De planctu Naturae*; several other personifications play significant roles, such as Humility (*Humilitas*), Generosity (*Largitas*), and Chastity (*Castitatis*). Many of these figures would reappear in Jean de Meun's section of the *Roman de la rose*, thus cementing personifications as a key trope of dream-vision literature.

While the *De planctu Naturae* shares many similarities with the *De consolatione*, the endings of the narratives are markedly different: Boethius' text concludes with the narrator and Philosophy still in conversation; while in Alain's text, the ending is much more typical of dream-vision literature. Natura and her lover/son Genius — another personified figure who would also reappear in the *Roman de la rose* several decades later — depart the scene, leaving the protagonist alone and asleep:

Postquam Genius hujus anathematis exterminio finem orationi  
concessit, huic imprecationi applaudens Virginum assistentia festino

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<sup>71</sup> Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), p. 67.

confirmationis verbo Genii roboravit edictum, lampadesque cereorum in manibus virginum suis meridiantes luminibus in terram cum quadam aspernacione et demissione, extinctionis videbantur sopore dejectae.

(After Genius, in the utterance of his anathema, had made an end to his speech, the assembly of the woman approved of the curse with quick word of ratification, and confirmed his edict. Then the lights of the tapers in their hands became drowsy, sank to the earth with a scorn of extinction, and seemed to be fallen asleep; Prose IX).

The departure of the various personified figures from the narrator's vision is described in soporific terms: the lights of the tapers 'become drowsy' and are extinguished. This is particularly striking considering the text's lack of sleep-framework; the narrator is never shown to fall asleep at any time prior to his vision. Furthermore, within the *Conclusio operis*, Alain describes the end of his vision as thus:

Hujus imaginariae visionis subtracto speculo, me ab exstasi excitatum in somno, prior mysticae apparitionis dereliquit aspectus.

(With the mirror of this visionary sight taken away, the previous view of the mystic apparition left me, who had been fired by ecstasy, in sleep)

Unlike with traditional models of oneiric literature, the end of the dream-vision is not punctuated by a return to consciousness, but rather a descent into sleep. While this ending is entirely unconventional for the genre, it serves to reinforce that Alanus's vision was not one located within the unconscious realm of sleep, but rather a waking vision.

Brunetto Latini's *Tesoretto* is an allegorical-didactic poem, written within the framework of a dream-vision; it has an encyclopaedic structure and contains many autobiographical details, and narrates the allegorical vision experienced by an unnamed narrator, who is visited by several personifications of virtues. Latini closely modelled his text on Alain de Lille's *De planctu Naturae*, as well as

Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae*, Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, and Guillaume de Lorris's section of the *Roman de la rose*, as Karl Vossler argues:

Sometimes he [Latini] draws the decorations for his personifications from Boethius' *Consolatio*, sometimes from the *Planctus Naturae ad Deum*, sometimes from the *Anticlaudianus* of Alain de Lille, or again from the *Roumant of the Rose* of Guillaume de Lorris, and into the midst of these he thrusts, without an introduction or imaginable reason, his own experiences, and preferably his political convictions.<sup>72</sup>

The *Tesoretto* is inextricably bound up with oneiric antecedents, and Latini uses the previously established dream-vision frameworks of these earlier texts as a vehicle to impart his own knowledge unto the reader. Vossler somewhat disparagingly describes the text as both a 'potato sack' and 'a ready-made wooden scaffolding', from which Latini would simply pour down his stored knowledge, ridding himself of information in any way possible. Yet, the *Tesoretto* is much more complex than this: certainly, it draws upon ready-made models as a way of imparting knowledge, but it is also a nuanced text, which is bound up with the political events of Latini's — and later, Dante's — life (Latini became Dante's legal guardian following the death of his father Alighiero di Bellincione in 1283).

The text is set during the exile of the Guelphs from Florence:

Mi disse immantenente  
 Che guelfi di fiorença,  
 Per mala providença  
 E per força di guerra,  
 Eran fuori de la terra<sup>73</sup>

The narrator, Brunetto Latini himself ('Io, burnetto latino, | Che Vostro in ongni guisa'; lines 70-71), a member of the White Guelph political faction, experiences

<sup>72</sup> Karl Vossler, *Medieval Culture: An Introduction to Dante and his Times*, trans. by William C. Lawton, 2 vols. (New York: Ungar, 1958), II, 76-77.

<sup>73</sup> Brunetto Latini, *Il Tesoretto*, bilingual edition, trans., ed., and intro. by Julia Bolton Holloway (New York: Garland, 1982), lines 156-60; unless otherwise stated, all references to the *Tesoretto* are taken from this edition of the text and will be referred to by line number only.

a vision wherein he is visited by several personified figures. Yet, as in the *De planctu Naturae*, this vision is not framed by sleep as in traditional dream-visions, but is instead induced by feelings of anguish and confusion:

E io in tal corrocto,  
 Pensando a capo chino,  
 Perdei il gran cammino,  
 E tenni a la traversa  
 Di una selva diversa (lines 186-90).

This passage would later be echoed in *Inferno* I, where Dante-*personaggio* describes having found himself in ‘una selva oscura’, having also lost his way.

Brunetto encounters the personifications of several abstract figures during his vision, beginning with Natura (line 215), who is described in an inordinate amount of detail. Latini uses much of the same imagery as found within Boethius’ descriptions of Lady Philosophy and Alain de Lille’s own Natura in his depictions of this first personified figure, thus firmly rooting his character in the conventions of the trope. Consider, for example, the following description of Latini’s Natura:

Mi sembrava  
 Come fosse incarnata:  
 Talora isfigurata;  
 Talor toccava il cielo  
 Si che pareva suo velo,  
 E talor lo mutava,  
 E talor lo turbava (lines 216-22)

This characterisation of Natura’s uncertain height is but a mere rewording of Boethius’ earlier depiction of Philosophy:

statura discretionis ambiguae. Nam nunc quidem ad communem sese  
 hominum mensuram cohibebat, nunc uero pulsare caelum summi  
 uerticis cacumine uidebatur; quae cum altius caput extulisset ipsum  
 etiam caelum penetrebat respicientiumque hominum frustrabatur  
 intuitum

(her stature uncertain and doubtful, for sometime she exceeded not the common height of men, and sometime she seemed to touch the heavens with her head, and if she lifted it up to the highest, she pierced the very heavens, so that she could not be seen by the beholders.)<sup>74</sup>

And like Boethius' Philosophy, too, Latini's Natura engages the narrator-protagonist in discussions regarding the roles of God and Nature in the world, the differing tasks of the Soul, Heart, and Memory, and the symbiotic relationship between Reason and Sense. Indeed, Philosophy herself is present as a character within the *Tesoretto* ('E poi, dall'altra via | Vedrai filosofia | E tutte sue sorelle', lines 1143-45), although her role is marginal.

Latini also draws upon Alain de Lille's descriptions of Natura, not only in terms of the characters' names, but also in their appearance: Alain presents Natura as pale, almost milky-white in colour ('candore lilii dealbata', 0435C), with rounded lips, and ivory teeth ('Dentes quadam sui coloris consonantia eboris faciem exemplabant', 0432C). Latini similarly stresses the pallor ('biancicante', line 261) of Natura's skin, the redness of her lips ('le labbra vermiglia', line 258), and the whiteness of her teeth ('lo dente argentato', line 260). Yet, as in the *De planctu Naturae*, Natura is not the only personification to appear within Latini's work; the figures of Virtue ('Vertute', line 1239), Prudence ('Prudenza', line 1272), Temperance ('Temperanza', line 1284), Fortitude ('Fortezza', line 1296), and Justice ('Justitia', line 1315) all feature within the text, each demonstrating a particular desirable characteristic. Not all of the personified figures are afforded the same significance within the narrative, with only a few given the ability to converse with the narrator: some are mentioned merely in passing, whilst others remain within the narrative for extended periods of time, with their appearances punctuated by a definite entry and departure.

The text ends with the narrator approaching Ovid for advice on love. Here, in a scene whose influences upon Dante's *Commedia* cannot be overlooked, the protagonist is counselled by the poet and vows to commit to writing that which he

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<sup>74</sup> Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. by "I. T.", revised by H. F. Stewart, in Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1918); I. 1. 8-13.

has learnt from his vision.

Brunetto's contemporary and fellow-Guelph Dino Compagni (c. 1255-1324) was also important in the formation of the dream-vision tradition; indeed much of Boccaccio's *Amorosa visione* is modelled upon Compagni's oneiric text, the *Intelligenza*. The *Intelligenza* is an allegorical poem, written in *nona rima*, which recounts the vision experienced by a narrator, who is visited by the figure of Madonna Intelligenza. The vision takes place during spring-time ('Ne li bei mesi d'aprile e di maio'),<sup>75</sup> while the narrator is enjoying the sounds and smells of the season. Within his vision, the dreamer travels through the twelve rooms of Madonna Intelligenza's palace, witnessing triumphs and frescoes, and meeting several personifications of virtues.

While Boccaccio certainly used the *Intelligenza* as a source for his *Amorosa visione* — his narrator, too, passes through the various rooms of a castle, witnessing triumphal processions, frescoes, and encountering personifications — there are several key differences between the two texts. First and foremost, the *Intelligenza* is not framed by sleep; the narrator's vision spans almost the entire narrative — with the sole exception of the introductory remarks preceding the vision — but he is neither shown to fall asleep nor to wake at the end of the text; instead, the vision takes place while the narrator is fully conscious. The protagonist is greeted by a majestic figure, clothed in red silk robe and wearing a jewelled crown, whose role is to lead the narrator through the twelve rooms of her palace until they reach the figure of Amor, who resides 'Nel mezzo de la volta' (71. 1). Amor is surrounded by a vast number of famous lovers from every age and nation: characters from Greek and Roman mythology, such as Dido and Aeneas, Penelope and Ulysses, and Helen and Paris; lovers from biblical or historical texts, and characters from romance literature, such as Floris and Blancheflor. The lovers pass by the narrator in a triumphal procession, in a direct prefiguration of the processions within both the *Amorosa visione* and *Triumphs*.

Madonna Intelligenza acts as the oneiric spirit-guide within the text: she leads the dreamer through the various parts of the castle, pointing out the various portraits and frescoes upon the walls of the rooms. The palace is the figurative

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<sup>75</sup> Dino Compagni, *L'Intelligenza*, ed. by Vittorio Mistruzzi (Bologna: Carducci, 1928), 2. 3.

representation of the human body; the different rooms of the castle serving as allegorical representations of the different body parts. The ‘volta’ in which the characters meet Amor is representative of the human mind; the paintings upon the walls are memories which may be recalled at any moment. The use of a castle as a memory-device, whereby paintings on the walls may be used to impart truth or higher knowledge, is a topic to which I will return when discussing Boccaccio’s *Amorosa visione* in more detail; yet what is important to note here is that, for the first time in the oneiric tradition, Compagni had provided a model of vision literature in which both triumphal processions and the use of paintings and frescoes were being employed alongside an authoritative guide. With the *Intelligenza*, Compagni successfully merges established tropes of the oneiric tradition (the personifications of virtues and the use of a spirit-guide, for example) with new, innovative features; his text was influential in the composition of both the *Amorosa visione* and *Triumpho* and provides us with a helpful lens through which we are able to read and better understand these two texts.

While the *Tesoretto* and *Intelligenza* were certainly important models for the composition of Petrarch’s and Boccaccio’s dream-vision texts, neither was as widely read, debated or disseminated as the French allegorical courtly love poem, *Le Roman de la rose*. The *Rose* takes the form of a dream-vision experienced by the text’s protagonist, Amant, who finds himself alone in a walled garden (the *hortus conclusus*, a traditional trope of courtly love literature, an enclosed space in which lovers could meet illicitly and engage in sexual acts without fear of being caught) and becomes so fixated on a beautiful flower that he cannot rest until he has possessed it. Guillaume de Lorris completed the first 4058 lines of the poem around 1230, with Jean de Meun adding a further 17,724 lines some forty years later. There are more than 300 extant manuscripts of the poem, evidence of the text’s tremendous success and popularity throughout the Middle Ages.

Throughout Amant’s dream-vision, he is confronted with various personifications of abstract concepts and virtues, such as Fortune, Reason, Old Age and Jealousy. These personifications serve as allegorical figures, conversing with the dreamer about the nature of love. The authors of the *Rose* were heavily influenced by previous texts from varying traditions, including Cicero’s *Somnium Scipionis*, Ovid’s *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris*, Latini’s *Tesoretto*,

Compagni's *Intelligenza*, and Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae*, a text which Jean de Meun himself translated into French during the thirteenth century. In his study on dream-vision literature, Russell describes the *Rose* as the 'first work in a millennium which brings together the disparate rhetorical motifs of Cicero, Macrobius, and Augustine in a framework that captures the ambivalence of the *Somnium Scipionis*';<sup>76</sup> the poem is a veritable panoply of literary tropes, which originate in numerous genres and traditions.

The *Rose* is set in May, 'el tens enmoreuse, plain de joie, | el tens ou toute rien s'esgaie' ('the season of love and joy, when everything rejoices'),<sup>77</sup> and is narrated in retrospect. The spring-time setting, which would become one of the most commonly deployed motifs in subsequent dream-vision narratives, is used here for the first time in conjunction with an oneiric experience (while Dino Compagni sets his *Intelligenza* during spring, his text cannot be truly classified as a dream, since it is not framed by sleep). Although lacking the conventional spirit guide of dream-vision texts, many of the allegorical figures fulfil the advisory role of this trope: Vieille (Old Age), counsels Amant about the fleeting nature of beauty; Raison (Reason) vainly attempts to convince Amant to forget the rose; while Fortune and her wheel serve to illustrate the inconsistency of love. Boethius, too, had discussed the role of Fortune in the attainment of happiness, but in the *Rose* we see Fortune given a voice; she has agency and is able to converse with the protagonist on issues such as unrequited love and the attainment of happiness.

Before introducing his protagonist's dream, Guillaume de Lorris firmly locates his text within the established vision tradition through his mentioning of both Macrobius and Scipio. He explains that some dreams are deceitful, while others may seem so but later prove to have been true:

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<sup>76</sup> J. Stephen Russell, *The English Dream Vision: Anatomy of a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1988), p. 103.

<sup>77</sup> All references to the *Roman de la rose* are taken from the following edition: Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le roman de la rose*, 3 vols. (Paris: Lecoy, 1968), vol. I, lines 47-49; all translations are from Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. and intro. by Frances Horgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

Aucunes genz dient qu'en songes  
 n'a se fables non et mençonges;  
 mes l'en puet tex songes songier  
 qui ne sont mie mençongier,  
 ainz sont après bien aparant,  
 si en puis bien traire a garant  
 un auctor qui ot non Macrobes,  
 qui ne tint pas songes a lobes,  
 ançois escrit l'avision  
 qui avint au roi Scypion (*Rose*, I, lines 1-10)

(Some say that there is nothing in dreams but lies and fables;  
 however, one may have dreams which are not in the least deceitful,  
 but which later become clear. In support of this fact, I can cite an  
 author named Macrobius, who did not consider that dreams deceived,  
 but wrote of the vision that came to King Scipio)

After this introduction to the different classifications of dream-visions, Guillaume de Lorris then introduces his narrator's vision in the following manner:

Couchier m'aloie  
 une nuit, si con je souloie,  
 et me dormoie mout forment,  
 et vi un songe en mon dormant  
 qui mout fu bius et mout me plot;  
 mes en ce songe onques riens n'ot  
 qui tretot avenu ne soit  
 si con li songes recensoit. (*Rose*, I, lines 23-30).

(I lay down one night, as usual, and fell fast asleep. As I slept, I had a  
 most beautiful and pleasing dream, but there was nothing in the dream  
 that has not come true, exactly as the dream told it.)

From the outset, Guillaume de Lorris demonstrates his knowledge of the dream-  
 vision tradition, citing Macrobius's commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis*,

immediately followed by an assertion that his own dream-vision should be treated as prophetic.

The dream entirely frames the narrative, with the protagonist waking right at the very end of the section authored by Jean de Meun, immediately following his conquest of the rose:

par grant joliveté cueilli  
 la fleur du biau rosier fueilli.  
 Ainsint oi la rose vermeille.  
 Atant fu jorz, et je m'esveille (*Rose*, III. 21747-50)

(I plucked with joy the flower from the fair and leafy rose-bush. And so I won my bright red rose. Then it was day and I awoke.)

The narrative ends as the dreamer awakes, and the authors offer no interpretation of the dream-vision.

The influence of the *Rose* extends much farther than its native France. Two Italian rewritings emerged during the late thirteenth century: the *Fiore* and *Detto d'Amore*, both of which have been attributed to Dante by scholars such as Castets,<sup>78</sup> Rajna,<sup>79</sup> and Mazzoni,<sup>80</sup> the principal basis for this argument is the author's stated name, 'Durante', which appears in the *Fiore*'s sonnets 82 ('Ch'e' pur convien ch'i' soccorra Durante') and 202 ('Cosi avvenne al buon di ser Durante').<sup>81</sup> Although the *Fiore* and *Detto d'Amore* exemplify the extensive influence wrought upon Italian literature by the *Rose*, their author, in his heavy editing of the original French poem, completely subsumes the dream-vision aspects of the text. No longer is the narrative framed in sleep; nor does it contain a

<sup>78</sup> *Il Fiore, poème italien du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, en CCXXXII sonnets, imité du Roman de la rose par Durante*, ed by Ferdinand Castets (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1881).

<sup>79</sup> Pio Rajna, 'La questione del *Fiore*', *Il Marzocco*, 26 (1921).

<sup>80</sup> Guido Mazzoni, 'Se possa *Il Fiore* essere di Dante Alighieri', in *Raccolta di studii critici dedicata ad Alessandro D'Ancona festeggiandosi il XL anniversario del suo insegnamento* (Florence: G. Barbèra, 1901).

<sup>81</sup> Dante's authorship of the *Fiore* and *Detto d'Amore* has been the source of much controversy. For an excellent summary of the debate, including the latest bibliography, see Patrick Boyde, 'Summus Minimusve Poeta? Arguments for and against Attributing the *Fiore* to Dante', in *The Fiore in Context: Dante, France, Tuscany*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański and Patrick Boyde (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), pp. 13-45.

spring-time setting ('Del mese di genaio, e non di maggio | fu').<sup>82</sup>

Only one manuscript copy of the *Fiore* exists (Codex H. 438, Bibliothèque Universitaire of Montpellier) and until 1849, this copy was bound in one volume with the *Detto d'Amore*, which was written in the same hand.<sup>83</sup> The two Italian poems are syntheses of the 21,750 verses of the *Rose*: the *Fiore* is made up of 3245 verses, with the *Detto d'Amore* constituting only 480 verses. Many of the same themes and characters from the French poem reappear in the Italian reworkings, such as the allegorical personifications — Vecchia (Vielle), Falsembiante (Faux semblant) and Ragione (Raison), for example — and the erotic description of the flower being plucked. Yet, the forms of the two texts are markedly different from one another: while the *Detto* is written in rhyming couplets, reflecting the original text of the *Rose*, the author of the *Fiore* rejects this tradition and adopts the sonnet form for his poem. Casciani and Kleinhenz suggest that this was a calculated move, designed to dissociate the *Fiore* from the *Rose*, while also grounding the text within the style of the anti-courtly *giocosi* poets, who famously parodied and inverted classical poetry.<sup>84</sup>

The question of the *Fiore*'s complexity, not only in terms of historical and literary content, but also with regard to self-awareness, is one which continues to divide critics.<sup>85</sup> Lino Pertile, for example, presents a reading of the text which emphasizes the work's simple, comic purpose;<sup>86</sup> while Barański argues for a much more intricate interpretation of the work, with the various allegorical personifications representing something greater; Barański illustrates his argument

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<sup>82</sup> *Il Fiore*, in *The 'Fiore' and the 'Detto d'Amore': A late 13<sup>th</sup>-century Italian translation of the 'Roman de la rose', Attributable to Dante*, trans. and intro. by Santa Casciani and Christopher Kleinhenz (Notre Dame, IN.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 3. 1.

<sup>83</sup> See 'The *Fiore*: Manuscript and Composition', in *The 'Fiore' and the 'Detto d'Amore'*, pp. 6-7; see also 'The *Detto d'Amore*: Manuscript and Composition', p. 503 in the same volume.

<sup>84</sup> Casciani and Kleinhenz, 'Introduction to the *Fiore*', in *The 'Fiore' and the 'Detto d'Amore'*, p. 5.

<sup>85</sup> Casciani and Kleinhenz provide a good summary of the opposing arguments in their 'Introduction to the *Fiore*', in *The 'Fiore' and the 'Detto d'Amore'*; see especially pp. 11-18.

<sup>86</sup> Lino Pertile, 'Lettura dei sonnetti CLXXXI-CCX', *Lecture classensi 22: Lettura del 'Fiore'*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański, Patrick Boyde, and Lino Pertile (Ravenna: Longo, 1993), pp. 131-53.

using the example of *Falsembiante*, and suggests that this character's anti-clerical speech in sonnet 103 is indicative of the author's views on the translation and rewriting of the *Rose*.<sup>87</sup>

Whether or not Dante was responsible for the Italian reworkings of the *Roman de la rose*, the dream-visions found within his other works firmly cement his status as a pivotal figure in the nascent dream-vision tradition in Italy. Dreams take on significant roles in several Dantean texts, ranging from his youthful *Vita nuova*, to the three prophetic dreams in *Purgatorio*. In his *Convivio*, too, Dante touches upon the nature of dreams, and shows his belief in their prophetic qualities:

Ancora: vedemo continua esperienza della nostra immortalitate nelle divinazioni de' nostri sogni, le quali essere non potrebbero se in noi alcuna parte immortale non fosse; con ciò sia cosa immortale convenga essere lo revelante, [o corporeo] o incorporeo che sia, se bene si pensa sottilmente.<sup>88</sup>

Dante believes in the role of an immortal 'revealer' within dreams and discusses their divinatory nature; his views on the truthfulness of prophetic dreams are thus made clear.

Dante's proclivity for experimentation with the dream-vision form first emerges within his youthful *Vita nuova*, in which the narrator experiences several visions, dreams, and imaginings. In his study on Dante's use of dreams, Dino S. Cervigni proposes that there are six key visionary episodes within the *Vita nuova*, which may be characterised as follows:

- III. 10-12 (dream);
- IX. 9-12 (imagining);
- XXIII. 21-28 (fantastic and delirious dream);
- XXIV. 7 (imagining);

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<sup>87</sup> Zygmunt G. Barański, 'The Ethics of Literature: The *Fiore* and Medieval Traditions of Rewriting', in *The Fiore in Context*, pp. 207-32 (p. 224).

<sup>88</sup> Dante, *Convivio*, ed. by Franca Brambilla Ageno, 3 vols. (Florence: Casa Editrice Le Lettere, 1995), vol. 3. II. 8. 63-67.

XXIV. 809 (imagining and *apparimento*);

XLI. 10-13 (higher vision).<sup>89</sup>

While I am greatly indebted to Cervigni's work on dream-visions, I would argue for a markedly different structuring of the *Vita nuova*'s vision aspects, which includes Dante-*personaggio*'s dream-vision of Amore in XII, and which disregards the protagonist's various 'imaginings', since these are not dreams proper.

Strictly speaking, there are only two dream-visions recorded in the *Vita nuova*; both dreams are entirely framed by sleep, and in both instances the dreamer is greeted by a godlike figure. The first such episode occurs within chapter III of his *libello*, where the protagonist experiences a vision in which he is visited by a terrifying, lordly figure ('una figura d'uno signore di pauroso aspetto'), who proceeds to feed Dante-*personaggio*'s burning heart to his beloved Beatrice.<sup>90</sup> The vision begins with the narrator explaining how he had fallen into a 'soave sonno' (III. 3) immediately before the apparition, and concludes with a description of his return to consciousness: 'lo mio deboletto sonno non poteo sostenere, anzi si ruppe e fui disvegliato' (III. 7). Dante refers to this first dream exclusively using the term 'visione' ('m'apparve una maravigliosa visione', III. 3; 'm'era questa visione apparita', III. 8; 'pregandoli che giudicassero la mia visione', III. 9), which is combined with 'sonno' to make it clear that this is a vision framed within sleep.

The second of the *Vita nuova*'s two dreams opens in much the same way as the first: the narrator, alone in his room, falls into a deep sleep (m'addormentai come un pargoletto battuto lagrimando', XII. 2) and is visited by a divine being, in this case, Amore. Amore describes himself in an enigmatic fashion ('Ego tanquam centrum circuli, cui simili modo se habent circumferentiae partes; tu autem non sic', XII. 20), which elicits an appeal on the part of the narrator for further elucidation, to which Amore responds, 'Non dimandare più che utile ti sia' (XII. 6). That such a request should appear within the confines of a dream-vision

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<sup>89</sup> Cervigni, *Dante's Poetry of Dreams*, p. 55.

<sup>90</sup> Dante, *Vita nuova*, ed. by Jennifer Petrie and June Salmons (Dublin: Belfield, 1994), III. 3; unless otherwise stated, all references to the *Vita nuova* are taken from this edition.

is striking: Dante clearly understands that enigmatic dreams are subject to interpretation, and Amore — his spirit-guide for this episode — serves to exemplify the confusion common within oneiric narratives. That his guide then refuses to provide further help with this interpretative process highlights Dante's belief that one's own logic and reason should be applied to dreams in order to better understand their content; but like Augustine, he believed that we cannot begin to comprehend everything about our souls, or everything that we see in dreams, so we should focus only on those aspects which may prove useful ('utile') for us.

As with Dante's first dream in the *Vita nuova* (III), this second dream is framed by sleep; the narrator describes having been approached by Amore 'ne li miei sonni' (XII. 4), and the dream concludes with Dante-*personaggio* returning to a state of consciousness: 'E dette queste parole, sì disparve, e lo mio sonno fue rotto' (XII. 9). Dante refers to his dream on two further occasions, both times employing the term 'visione' to describe the sequence ('trovai che questa visione m'era apparita', XII. 9; 'questa soprascritta visione', XIII. 1). Should we compare this use of vocabulary with that used to describe Dante-*personaggio*'s delirious dream from XXIII, the impact is clear: the latter is not framed by sleep, but induced by a fever ('in alcune parte de la mia persona mi giunse una dolorosa infermitade', XXIII. 1), and as such, is a very different type of vision. While the dream of Amore is described using only 'visione', the confused and feverish hallucinations from XXIII are described as both 'fantasia' and 'imaginazione'. The accepted theory of the provenance and significance of dreams within the Middle Ages stemmed from the works of authors such as St Augustine, Aristotle, and Macrobius, and combined concepts of both physiological and psychological dream-origins.<sup>91</sup> That Dante should both frame this dream within the narrator's illness, and also employ the terms 'fantasia' and 'imaginazione', therefore, is of

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<sup>91</sup> Patrick Boyde, *Perception and Passion in Dante's 'Comedy'*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 124-25; Boyde explains that dream-theories in Dante's time were drawn from four main sources: 1) traditional Christian teaching, such as that found within the works of St Augustine; 2) Aristotle's appendices *On Dreams* and *On Prophecy in Sleep*; 3) medical writings by Arab philosophers and physicians; 4) Macrobius' *Commentarium in somnium Scipionis*.

significance, especially considering Macrobius's explanation of dream-types: both serve to negate any prophetic qualities found within the dream. The 'fantasia' is the result of physiological or corporeal problems (e.g. fever) and, as such, is philosophically irrelevant; it is a *somnium naturale*, or *corporale*, which has its origins in the body, rather than in the mind or soul, whereas the previous dream-visions from chapters III and XII are of a higher value, and are not merely products of physiological processes.

The final vision within the *Vita nuova* is not a dream proper, since it does not occur within sleep. Dante explains that he had received a 'mirabile visione', in which he saw things which made him decide not to write of Beatrice again until such a time as he felt more worthy to do so ('io vidi cose che mi fecero proporre di non dire più di questa benedetta infino a tanto che io potesse più degnamente trattare di lei', *VN*. XLII. 1). He does not, however, elaborate on the nature of these deciding factors, nor does he relate the details of how, where, or when this vision occurred. It is simply mentioned post-factum, and the *libello* concludes with a small prayer.

Dante's fluency in the language of dream-vision literature extends beyond the *Vita nuova*, and it should cause no surprise that the other-worldly setting of his *Commedia* should play host to striking dream sequences. The *Commedia* has long been considered one of the most influential narratives in terms of its impact upon the later dream-vision tradition, and it contains many of the key tropes common within oneiric texts: the pilgrim's journey takes place during the spring equinox; Dante-*personaggio* is greeted by a spirit-guide, whose role is to lead the narrator through the various levels of the afterlife and, ultimately, to a more virtuous state of being; the pilgrim undergoes a conversion. Yet, importantly, the *Commedia* is not a dream: Dante-*personaggio* may be 'pien di sonno' as he enters the dark forest (*If*. I. 11),<sup>92</sup> but he is not actually asleep. Nor is he ever shown to awake from his vision. Dante sets his text up in such a way as to imply that his protagonist physically journeyed through the stages of Inferno, Purgatory, and

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<sup>92</sup>All references to Dante's *Commedia* are taken from the following edition: Dante, *La Commedia, secondo l'antica vulgata*, ed. by Giorgio Petrocchi, 4 vols. (Milan: Mondadori, 1966-67); and will henceforth be abbreviated to *If*. (*Inferno*), *Pg*. (*Purgatorio*), and *Pd*. (*Paradiso*).

Paradise as a *corpus mobile*.<sup>93</sup> The *Commedia* may be a vision of the afterlife, but it is not a *dream*-vision of the afterlife, although some critics have argued for this categorisation of the *Commedia*. Robert Durling for example, argues that St Bernard's words from *Paradiso* 32. 139-42 ('Ma perché 'l tempo fugge che t'assonna, | qui farem punto, come buon sartore | che com'elli ha del panno fa la gonna; | e drizzeremo li occhi al primo amore') serve as proof that Dante intended his text as a dream-vision. He argues that the pilgrim's awakening, after having been 'pien di sonno' (*If.* 1. 11) should reinforce the dream-vision aspects of the *Commedia*, since, 'from the *Romance of the Rose* onward, the genre of dream-vision regularly begins the dream with an awakening'.<sup>94</sup> Durling further comments that early manuscript illustrations accompanying *Inferno* I often depict Dante-*personaggio* asleep, and this should be taken as further proof of the author's intention that his text should be read as a vision within sleep.<sup>95</sup>

While I do not agree entirely with readings of the *Commedia* as a dream framed by sleep, there are several contained episodes within the *Commedia* which do qualify as dream-visions, and these play pivotal roles in the development of the narrative. Dante's pilgrim experiences three dreams while journeying through *Purgatorio*: one for each of the three nights he spends there. All three dreams occur during the early hours of the morning, which, according to ancient tradition, is the time most associated with prophetic visions, since the mind is no longer preoccupied with anxieties or human memories.<sup>96</sup> Dante himself comments that dawn is the time at which

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<sup>93</sup> Patrick Boyde writes particularly convincingly about the 'true' nature of Dante's account, stating that Dante took 'extraordinary pains' to remind us that he did not imagine the journey he takes as one would experience a dream, but that rather he is recalling images which have been preserved in memory; Boyde, *Perception and Passion in Dante's 'Comedy'*, p. 119.

<sup>94</sup> Robert M. Durling, 'Introduction', in Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, trans. and ed. by Robert M. Durling (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 3-20 (p. 17).

<sup>95</sup> Durling comments: 'a number of the earliest illuminations of *Inferno* I represent — often in the same frame — both the poet asleep and his dream-imago confronting the beasts in the dark wood, a style that recalls the iconography of the Apocalypse', p. 18.

<sup>96</sup> For a detailed discussion of the prophetic nature of morning-dreams and why they were historically associated with truth and revelation, see Speroni, 'Dante's Prophetic Morning-Dreams', 50-59. Speroni gives examples of dream-treatises

la mente nostra, peregrina  
 più da la carne e men da' pensier presa,  
 a le sue vision quasi è divina. (Pg. IX. 16-18)

Combined with the time of year when his allegorical vision takes place (spring, over the Easter weekend), the early morning setting of his three purgatorial dreams highlights the reliability and prophetic qualities of his forthcoming visions.

The locations of the three dreams are also significant: each occurs before the pilgrim's entrance into a new level of the afterlife: the dream within canto IX comes before his entrance into Purgatory proper; that within canto XIX precedes his entrance into the *gironi* of avarice, gluttony, and lust; while the dream within canto XXVII is located prior to Dante-*personaggio*'s entrance into the Earthly Paradise.<sup>97</sup> The dreams, therefore, serve as a prefiguration of truths which are revealed in the later cantos.

The first of Dante's three dreams in the *Commedia* is located within canto IX of *Purgatorio*, directly preceding the pilgrim's entrance into the first terrace. Dante-*personaggio*, having passed through Ante-Purgatory, is overcome by sleep ('vinto dal sonno', Pg. IX. 11). He then recalls the myth of Ganymede as he dreams of a golden eagle, which circles above him and rapidly descends, captures the pilgrim, and carries him upward into a fire:

Poi mi pareo che, poi rotata un poco,  
 terribil come folgor discendesse,  
 e me rapisse suso infino al foco. (Pg. IX. 28-30)

The dream is immediately concluded and the dreamer awakens, pale and frightened ('mi fuggì 'l sonno, e diventa' ismorto, | come fa l'uom che, spaventato,

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which verify the prophetic nature of morning-dreams, ranging from Ovid and Horace to Philostratus the Elder and the ancient Greek poet, Moschus (p. 53).<sup>97</sup> Glyn P. Norton comments that 'the situation of the nights and their dreams within the hierarchy of the "gironi" is by no means fortuitous [...] It may, therefore, be deduced that the nights and the dreams of *Purgatorio* serve as introductory scenes, preparing Dante emotionally and spiritually for all which is to follow'; Glyn P. Norton, 'Retrospection and Prefiguration in the Dreams of *Purgatorio*', *Italica*, 47 (1970), 351-65 (p. 351).

agghiaccia', *Pg.* IX. 41-42). As in his youthful experimentations with the visionary form, the dream of the eagle ends as he awakens, and Dante ensures that the entire content of his vision is fully contained within sleep.

Many suggestions have been made as to the meaning of Dante's first dream, with authors such as Glyn P. Norton and Sebastiano Agliano proposing a purely psychological reading of the episode.<sup>98</sup> Yet Warren Ginsberg poses an interpretation of the dream which is not simply personal to Dante as dreamer, but is a complex reworking of the dream of Jacob's Ladder from Genesis 28: both men are afraid when they wake from their respective visions, and, as Ginsberg argues, the ascending and descending motion of the eagle is reflective of the angels in Jacob's dream.<sup>99</sup> A further reworking of Jacob's Ladder would appear in canto XXIII of *Paradiso*, where Dante-*personaggio* ascends the ladder with Beatrice to enter the heaven of the fixed stars.

While all efforts had been made on the part of Dante to ensure that his readers would appreciate the prophetic quality of this first dream — the use of a spring-time setting; the fact that the vision took place at dawn, the time for divine revelations — he stresses that his descent into the flames was 'imaginato' ('Ivi pareo che ella e io ardesse; | e sì lo 'ncendio imaginato cosse', *Pg.* IX. 31-32). This, paired with his repeated use of the verb 'parere' ('mi pareo', 'Ivi pareo'), is used to highlight the enigmatic nature of the dream: certainly the vision is prophetic, but it is also metaphorical, and representative of something greater.

The second of Dante's dreams from *Purgatorio* takes place within canto XIX, again during the early morning: 'innanzi a l'alba, | surger per via che poco le sta bruna' (*Pg.* XIX. 5-6). Dante-*personaggio*, having fallen asleep at the end of the preceding canto ('li occhi per vaghezza ricopersi, | e 'l pensamento in sogno trasmutai', *Pg.*, XVIII. 144-45), is met in his dream by a siren, who prepares him for the subsequent three circles of excessive love: avarice, gluttony, and lust. Like

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<sup>98</sup> Norton argues that 'the soul continues its act of purgation even at night when the body sleeps. Dante's dreams are precisely such activity, prefiguring that final state of dreamless slumber, free from all anxiety'; Norton, 'Retrospection and Prefiguration in the Dreams of *Purgatorio*', p. 352; see also Sebastiano Agliano, 'Il Canto IX del *Purgatorio*', in *Lecture dantesche*, ed. by G. Getto (Florence: Sansoni, 1964), pp. 181-200.

<sup>99</sup> Ginsberg, 'Dante's Dream of the Golden Eagle and Jacob's Ladder', p. 42.

his earlier dream, the vision of the siren is entirely framed by sleep, with the pilgrim only returning to consciousness thanks to the stench caused by Virgil's act of exposing the woman's stomach ('mi svegliò col puzzo che n'uscita', Pg. XIX. 33). Here, physiological factors (i.e. the dreamer's senses) invade the psychological world of his dream. Dante refers to this vision using only the term 'sogno', and this itself occurs only once ('mi venne in sogno una femmina balba', Pg. XIX. 7).

The dream of the abhorrent siren is situated near to the mid-point of the narrator's journey through the afterlife, and evokes much of the same imagery as found in the opening cantos of *Inferno*. This episode marks a critical moment in Dante-*personaggio*'s pilgrimage, since the siren, like the leopard, lion, and she-wolf of *Inferno* 1, strives to divert the dreamer away from virtue. The siren attempts to lead the dreamer away from the right path with her sweet singing and newly beautiful face, just as she had previously tried to lure Ulysses ('Io volsi Ulisse del cammin vago | al canto mio', Pg. XIX. 22-23). Yet, while she may serve as an anti-spirit guide, the 'donna [...] santa' who appears at the end of this dream-sequence effectively counteracts this model of female vice. Just as divine intervention enabled the narrator to begin his journey, this appearance of a holy woman allows him to continue his climb of Mount Purgatory; she saves him from the siren's song and steers him back onto the 'correct' path.

Within the *Commedia*'s final dream, located within canto XXVII of *Purgatorio* in which Dante-*personaggio* takes his leave of Virgil, the protagonist is visited by the biblical figures of Leah and her sister Rachel. The sequence is introduced in a similar manner to the preceding two purgatorial visions: the narrator, overcome by tiredness, lies down to sleep and begins to dream:

mi prese il sonno; il sonno che sovente,  
anzi che 'l fatto sia, sa le novelle [...]  
giovane e bella in sogno mi pareva  
donna vedere. (Pg. XXVII. 92-98)

Dante's description of sleep as something which often knows events before they happen ('anzi che 'l fatto sia, sa le novelle') reinforces the forthcoming vision's sense of prophecy.

The entire dream sequence occupies only twenty-two lines, and ends as the pilgrim arises from his sleep in order to converse with Virgil:

le tenebre fuggian da tutti lati,  
e 'l sonno mio con esse; ond' io leva'mi,  
veggendo i gran maestri già levati. (Pg. XXVII. 112-14)

Although short, this final dream functions on a complex allegorical level: Leah makes garlands with her hands, while her sister gazes at herself in the mirror, and the women are representative of the active and contemplative life, respectively ('lei lo vedere, e me l'ovrare appaga', Pg. XXVII. 108). However, Norton argues that Leah's active life fulfils a 'retrospective role which recalls the entire context of Dante's ascent of the mountain [Mount Purgatory].'<sup>100</sup> Not only are the women models of piety to which we are encouraged to adhere, but Leah is further representative of the pilgrim's physical journey. Furthermore, both she and Rachel act as prophetic announcements of Dante-*personaggio*'s forthcoming encounter with Beatrice and Matelda, who are themselves representative of the active and contemplative life.

A sense of prophecy is common to all three dreams of *Purgatorio*. Dante not only sets his three dreams during the early morning, at a time historically associated with divine revelation, but he avoids any misunderstanding regarding his intentions for the dream-visions by explicitly explaining that dawn is the time at which visions are most like divinations.

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<sup>100</sup> Norton, 'Retrospection and Prefiguration in the Dreams of *Purgatorio*', p. 361.

## CONCLUSIONS

Dream-visions are an important literary form, which have been used in many different ways throughout the centuries. They have imparted previously unknown truths about events which have already taken place; they have served as prophetic end-of-time visions; they have helped to stage important philosophical and eschatological debates about the human condition; and they have functioned as vehicles for allegories. While this chapter has aimed to provide a résumé of the most influential examples of dream-vision literature, it is important to remember that the timeline of texts was not simply linear; Homer and Plato may have written their texts centuries before Boccaccio and Petrarch, for example, but it is unlikely that the two medieval authors would have had direct access to either the *Odyssey* or the *Republic*. Their texts were most likely known through rewritings and retellings – through Cicero’s *Republic* or Virgil’s *Aeneid*.

There are several key types of dream-vision text that would have been available to Boccaccio and Petrarch and which would have each influenced the writings of the two men. Religious dreams and prophecies were used widely throughout the period preceding the Middle Ages as narrative devices to impart truths or predict future events. These visions were not always straightforward, as this chapter has shown, but instead summoned up an entire tradition of commentaries, which sought to elucidate various points raised within these episodes, with many commentators suggesting enigmatic, metaphorical, or allegorical interpretations for these dream-visions. Earlier dream-visions had already prompted us to question the nature and worth of dreams — Homer, Virgil, and Plato had all used the imagery of the gates of horn and ivory to explore the varying levels of significance dreams hold — yet these religious dreams and their accompanying commentaries opened up the debate as to the value of dreams by raising questions pertaining to the ways in which we should read these passages; in other words, should they be taken at face-value, or should we apply interpretative skills to them in order to fully comprehend that which is being related?

Yet it was not only biblical and fictional dream-visions which impacted upon the compositional processes of Boccaccio and Petrarch; they had several types of dream-vision models available to them, all of which could have

influenced the composition of their own texts. Scientific and philosophical treatises on the causes of dreams, such as those written by Aristotle, Cicero, and St Augustine, clearly infiltrated the thoughts of authors and impacted upon fictional dream-visions. This is especially pertinent considering the literature concerning the different types of dreams and their respective values, since medieval authors would have almost certainly been familiar with Macrobius's classification of dream-types, and so specific aspects of their narratives would have certainly been fraught with meaning. As this chapter has shown, particular phrasing was used when reporting different types of dreams, and so both Boccaccio's and Petrarch's choice of words within their own dream-vision texts should not be considered trifling, since both men understood the impact of their lexical choices upon their resulting narratives.

Whether directly or indirectly, the examples of dream-vision texts discussed in this chapter served as potential models for Boccaccio and Petrarch in the composition of their own texts. Whether either author adhered to the rules of the genre in their own texts is another question entirely, and one which I begin to answer in my next chapter, where I look specifically at Boccaccio's and Petrarch's attitudes towards dreaming.

## CHAPTER 2: BOCCACCIO'S AND PETRARCH'S VIEWS ON DREAMS AND VISIONS

This chapter discusses the ways in which Boccaccio and Petrarch engage with vision traditions in texts which are not entirely framed by a dream. It looks specifically at the isolated dreams and visions within the works of the two authors, the language used to report these dreams, and the specific oneiric tropes included in these episodes. However, it also considers the attitudes towards dreams propagated by the formal epistles, informal personal correspondence, and unpublished texts of Boccaccio and Petrarch. This will not only enable us to examine the opinions of the two men concerning the function of dreams, but will also allow us to see how each author understood the conventions of the dream-vision genre. It will be possible to examine precisely how far they each experimented with the different tropes and motifs, which will in turn colour our comprehension of the extent to which the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumphs*, and *Corbaccio* were indicative of the two authors' engagement with the traditions and expectations of dream-vision literature.

The conclusions drawn in this chapter are influenced by my own working hypotheses regarding the dating of Boccaccio's and Petrarch's texts. Although the questions around compositional dates of each text are discussed in detail in the chapters specifically relating to the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumphs*, and *Corbaccio*, it is necessary to outline my own beliefs regarding the dating of these texts, as this inevitably impacts upon my readings of the works. The analysis of the *Amorosa visione* is based on the assumption that Boccaccio wrote the text in either 1342 or at the very beginning of 1343, and certainly before the death of Robert of Anjou (19 January 1343). This places the text in direct succession to the *Commedia delle Ninfe fiorentine*, and facilitates the argument that the *Amorosa visione* was, conceptually and thematically, the inspiration for Petrarch's *Triumphs*. Although convincing arguments have been made as to the legitimacy of the *Amorosa visione*'s B text, I do not believe it is possible to know with any degree of certainty the extent to which this version of the dream-vision text has been edited by third parties. As such, I do not treat the B text of the *Amorosa visione* as genuinely boccaccian in nature, and base this present study on the A text of the

work.

The study on Petrarch's *Triumphs* is based on the supposition that Petrarch began composing the *Triumphus Cupidinis* and *Triumphus Pudicitie* around 1352, after Petrarch hosted Boccaccio at his home in Padua. After Boccaccio returned to Florence following this trip, he sent Petrarch copies of Dante's *Commedia* and his own *Amorosa visione*. This dating therefore supports my hypothesis that Boccaccio's *Amorosa visione* influenced Petrarch's compositional process when composing the *Triumphs*. Furthermore, I believe that Petrarch never intended the six poems which make up the *Triumphs* to be assembled into a finished whole, and that he was still working on the texts right up until his death in 1374.

Scholars remain divided on the question of the dating of Boccaccio's *Corbaccio*, with issues regarding authorial intention inextricably linked with the proposed dates. I base my analysis of the *Corbaccio* on the theory that Boccaccio wrote this satirical piece in his old age, after his retreat to Certaldo in 1363. This supposes that the *Corbaccio* was written after the *Decameron* (completed in 1353), but that Boccaccio did not intend the *Corbaccio* to serve as a mere continuation of the themes and issues raised in the *Decameron*.

Within the respective literary works of Boccaccio and Petrarch, there are only three examples of dream-visions proper: the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumphs*, and *Corbaccio*. Although this thesis focuses specifically on these three texts, and offers analyses of the extent to which each author engages with — and, indeed, transcends the established conventions of — dream-vision literature, there are several isolated and contained dream or vision episodes within the texts of both authors, which play a significant role in the development of specific narratives. For Petrarch, these fictional manifestations occur exclusively in the *Africa*, while discussions regarding the meaning and value of dreams occur in his *Rerum memorandarum libri*, *Epistolae familiares*, *Canzoniere*, and *Secretum*. Boccaccio is much more liberal in his use of the trope, with dreams occurring within several of his *opere minori* — the *Filostrato*, *Filocolo*, and *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* — and also within his masterpiece, the *Decameron*. Furthermore, in his *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, Boccaccio includes a discussion of the different types of dreams; whilst in his biography of Dante, he recounts a premonitory

vision experienced by Dante's mother shortly before his birth, and offers a full explanation for the content of her dream.

### **PETRARCH'S ENGAGEMENT WITH DREAMS AND VISIONS**

Petrarch makes his views on dreams clear within many of his texts, and in his *Epistolae familiares*, he includes a letter to Giovanni Andrea, one of his former professors at the University of Bologna, in which he discusses how much value one should place on the content of one's dreams. In this letter, Petrarch mentions several authoritative sources on the value of dreams, thus demonstrating his extensive knowledge of the subject, before moving on to recount two revelatory dreams he had himself experienced:

Habes et Calcidii in *Thimeum* et Macrobiani commentum in *Reipublice* librum sextum, ubi de somniis clara et brevi distinctione disseruit; habes de his et horum adiacentiis aristotelicum volumen; habes demum ciceroniane *Divinationis* libros; ibi quid aliis, quid sibi videatur invenies. Quid me iubet replicare notissima? (*Ep. fam.*, V. 7. 3)

(You know the commentary of Chalcidius on the *Timaeus* and the commentary of Macrobius on the sixth book of the *Republic* where he presents a clear and brief distinction between types of dreams. You have Aristotle's book on these and related matters. Finally you have Cicero's book on prophecy, in which you will find how he himself, as well as others, viewed the matter. Why do you want me to repeat what is very well known?)<sup>1</sup>

Having thus made his wide knowledge of the literature surrounding dream-visions clear to his recipient, Petrarch proceeds to narrate his own visions. The first such dream, Petrarch explains, concerned a dear friend of his who was struck down with a fatal illness and had been given up as a lost cause by his doctors ('hic repente gravi pressus egritudine, nec medicis sue nec michi mee vite spem reliquerat', *Ep. fam.*, V. 7. 6). In his dream, the sick man appeared to Petrarch and informed him that his doctor would be able to restore him to good health:

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<sup>1</sup> Petrarch, *Epistolae Familiares: Le Familiari*, ed. Rossi; trans. Bernardo.

Tace; quicquid dicturus es scio; sed en adest qui colloquium hoc nostrum dirimat: illi, oro te, salutis mee spem restitue, et sic habeto me nequaquam ex hoc morbo peritulum esse, nisi deseror. (*Ep. fam.*, V. 7. 7)

(Be silent; whatever you are about to say I know; but here is someone approaching who will put an end to our conversation; I beg you to renew your hope for my health through him, and rest assured that I shall not perish at all from this disease unless I am forsaken.)

Petrarch reports that he relayed the dream to the man's physician, and his friend was returned to good health.

The second dream Petrarch relates in this epistle has similarly revelatory qualities, and concerns another of the poet's close friends, Giacomo Colonna the younger. Having heard nothing more than gossip regarding the ill-health of his friend, Petrarch fell asleep in his garden and was visited by an apparition of Colonna. Petrarch reports that the pair briefly conversed before he realised that his friend was dead: 'Figo oculos, atque exanguis pallore mortuum agnosco' ('I fixed my eyes upon him and I recognized from his paleness that he was dead', *Ep. fam.*, V. 7. 14). Petrarch noted the date of the dream upon awaking, and found out some weeks later that his friend had died on the exact night of his apparition: 'post vigesimum quintum diem nuntius ad me mortis allatus est; collatis temporibus, eo ipso die quo vita decesserat, sed michi illum apparuisse comperio' ('After twenty-five days the news of his death was brought to me. When I checked the dates, I note that he had come to me on the very day on which he had passed away', *Ep. fam.*, V. 7. 15). Despite these two reported incidences of Petrarch's dreams revealing previously unknown truths, his attitudes towards dreams in the final section of the letter is rather disparaging: he states that, like Cicero, he believes that the accidental truth of some dreams should not make up for the ambiguities and falsity of others: 'cum visis meis fortuna coincidit, idcirco somniis fidem habeo; non magis quam Cicero ipse, propter unius sui somnii fortuitam veritatem, multorum ambagibus implicatur' ('My faith in dreams is no more than Cicero's who considered that the accidental truth of one of his dreams did not undo the ambiguities of many others', *Ep. fam.*, V. 7. 16).

In this letter to Giovanni Andrea, Petrarch refers his friend to another of his works for further information regarding his opinions on the value of dreams: ‘Siquid de hac re verbosius agentem audire volueris, est in manibus *Liber memorandarum rerum*; qui si unquam in publicum exierit, prima operis pars de his latius tecumaget’ (‘If you should wish to hear me dealing with this matter in a more elaborate fashion, I have in hand a book entitled *Liber memorandarum rerum* which if it is ever published will deal in a first part more fully with these matters’, V. 7. 5). Indeed, the *Liber memorandarum rerum* was never published during the poet’s lifetime, and Paolo Cherchi explains that Petrarch never revised it, circulated any portion of it, or made mention to it within any of his published texts, as he did with his other works.<sup>2</sup> Petrarch began the work — a collection of anecdotes, each dealing with the topic of ‘sapientia’ — in 1343, but never completed it, finally abandoning his efforts in 1345.<sup>3</sup> Yet, should we examine the fourth and final book of the extant text, we would see a poet deeply interested in, if not a little suspicious of, dreams, prophecies, omens, and the arts of interpretation.

The fourth book of the *Rerum memorandarum libri* contains the following sections: ‘De providentia et coniecturis’; ‘De oraculis’; ‘De sibillis’; ‘De vaticiniis furentum’; ‘De presagiis morientum’; ‘De sompniis’; ‘De aruspicum et augurum disciplina’; and ‘De ominibus et portentis’. A final section, ‘De Caldeis mathematicis et magis’, is present within the autograph manuscript, although this is incomplete and consists of the title only. Cherchi suggests that Petrarch’s main source of inspiration when composing the *Rerum memorandarum libri* was Valerius Maximus’s *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri IX*, which not only deals with many of the same topics as Petrarch’s encyclopaedic work, but is also structured in the same way as the *Rerum memorandarum libri*.<sup>4</sup> Petrarch had built

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<sup>2</sup> Paolo Cherchi, ‘The Unforgettable *Books of Things to be Remembered: Rerum memorandarum libri*’, in *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, pp. 151-62.

<sup>3</sup> Cherchi explains that the autograph manuscript of the *Rerum memorandarum libri* was found in 1378 by Tedaldo della Casa, and proves that Petrarch worked on the text between 1343 and 1345; ‘The Unforgettable *Books of Things to be Remembered*’, p. 152.

<sup>4</sup> Cherchi, ‘The Unforgettable *Books of Things to be Remembered*’, p. 154; for a discussion of the dissemination and transmission of Valerius Maximus’s works

upon Valerius Maximus's pattern of arranging particular anecdotes pertinent to the various subjects discussed, and had even dealt with many of the same topics. Valerius Maximus had also provided a discussion concerning the value of dreams in his *Dictorum Factorumque Memorabilium Libri IX*, in which he included numerous anecdotes of different types of dreams experienced by people.<sup>5</sup> Some of the anecdotes included in Valerius Maximus's text would reappear in Petrarch's discussion of dreams, such the premonitory dreams of Cassius of Parma, which foresaw his execution at the hands of the Emperor Augustus.<sup>6</sup>

In his chapter on dreams in the *Rerum memorandarum libri* — 'De Sompniis' — Petrarch states that dreams are often detached from reality, since people experience large numbers of dreams throughout their lifetimes and so, even if one should experience a dream which exhibits an element of truth, one must also have experienced numerous others which are entirely devoid of truth:

Quanto satius fuerat docere ut de mille unum non accidit cui vel tenuis sit cum veritate cognatio! Totis autem noctibus dormientes ac sepe meridiantes, quid mirum si nonnunquam vero quedam proxima videmus? Horum aliqua iam hinc scribere aggrediar — falsa enim quis caperet liber? —; et hec quoque sic legi volo, ut agnoscatur potius fortune vis quam fides sompniis habeatur.

(How much better it would be to teach that of the thousands [of dreams], not one occurs which actually has a small degree of truth! Since we all sleep every night and sometimes in the afternoon, why would it be remarkable if we see things that are close to the truth? I have already begun to write about these issues – indeed, which book

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throughout the Middle Ages, see *Valeri Maximi facta et dicta memorabilia*, ed by John Briscoe (Stuttgart and Leipzig: Teubner, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> Valerius Maximus, *Dictorum Factorumque Memorabilium Libri IX: Memorable Doings and Sayings*, bilingual edition, trans. and ed. by D. R. Shackleton Bailey, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 81-101; Valerius Maximus dedicates an entire chapter (Book I. 7) to the discussion of dreams and premonitions.

<sup>6</sup> References to the *Rerum memorandarum libri* are taken from: Petrarch, *Rerum memorandarum libri*, ed. by Giuseppe Billanovich (Florence: Sansoni, 1943), IV. 56; Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings*, 1. 7. 88-89

would concern false arguments? -; and I want these things to be read in such a way as to acknowledge the power of fortune rather than having faith in dreams).<sup>7</sup>

This attitude is representative of Petrarch's engagement with dream-visions: despite his obvious fascination with the faculty of imagination and the production of dreams, he frequently rejects the notion that they should hold any kind of divinatory quality.

Petrarch's suspicions regarding the meaning and value of dreams is further seen in his *Secretum*, a series of three imagined dialogues between Petrarch and St Augustine, composed sometime between 1347 and 1353, in which the poet explores various aspects of his Christian faith. Many aspects of the text are reminiscent of earlier oneiric texts, and perhaps the most obvious similarity between the *Secretum* and the wider dream-vision genre is Petrarch's inclusion of authoritative guide figures. The *Secretum*'s narrator, Franciscus, engages in a lengthy dialogue with St Augustine (Augustinus) regarding his potential conversion to a more spiritually fulfilling existence, and their conversation is overseen by a second guide, Veritas. Veritas is the personification of Truth, and the way in which Petrarch describes his first encounter with her is noteworthy: 'mulier quedam inenarrabilis etatis et luminis, formaque non satis ab hominibus intellect, incertum quibus viis adisse videretur' ('Then I seemed to see a woman; she was from a time and of a splendour impossible to describe, and of a beauty which no mortal comprehends').<sup>8</sup> Petrarch's use of the subjunctive 'videretur' suggests doubt on the part of the narrator — 'I seemed to see' — and is conventional of dream-vision literature, thus reinforcing the oneiric qualities of the text. Both Veritas and Augustinus share similarities with guide figures from dream-vision texts: like Lady Philosophy in Boethius's *De consolazione Philosophiae* and Amore in the second dream of Dante's *Vita nuova* (XII), they

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<sup>7</sup> Petrarch, *Rerum memorandarum libri*, ed. by Giuseppe Billanovich (Florence: Sansoni, 1943), IV. 40. 13-14; trans. mine.

<sup>8</sup> All references to the *Secretum* are taken from Petrarca, *Opere Latine di Francesco Petrarca*, ed. by Antonietta Bufano (Turin: UTET, 1975), pp. 44-259; translations from Petrarch, *My Secret Book*, trans. by J. G. Nichols (London: Hesperus, 2002); Proem.

each appear to Franciscus when he is alone and contemplating issues of life and death. Furthermore, in employing Augustinus to do her bidding and attempt to lead Franciscus to a more pious life, Veritas's role echoes that of the Virgin Mary in Dante's *Commedia*, who also calls upon mortal figures (Virgil, St Bernard, Beatrice) to help her to guide the visionary to religious enlightenment.

Yet, despite the similarities between the *Secretum*'s guides and their precedents in the convention, there is one crucial difference: the *Secretum* is not a dream-vision. Petrarch stresses this fact within his Proem, wherein he describes how the dialogues of the text occurred when he was 'not overcome with sleep, as sick people are, but wide awake with anxiety' ('contigit nuper ut non, sicut egros nimis solet, somnus opprimeret, sed anxium atque pervigilem').<sup>9</sup> The first words uttered by Augustinus within the dialogues are also intended to stress that the context for the work was not sleep, but waking consciousness: 'Quid agis, homuncio? quid somnias? quid expectas? miseriarum ne tuarum sic prorsus oblitus es? An non te mortalem esse meministi?' ('What are you doing? Dreaming? What are you waiting for? Have you completely forgotten your unhappy state? Have you forgotten you are mortal?').<sup>10</sup> Augustinus is reproachful about dreaming; he questions whether Franciscus is in a dreaming state as a way of criticising him, and he infers that dreaming is simply a form of time-wasting, and his distaste for the dreaminess of Franciscus is clearly illustrated by his use of the diminutive 'homuncio', ('little man'). Although the *Secretum* reflects some of the key motifs of dream-vision literature, Petrarch's mistrust of dreams and their revelatory value is evident in his repeated denial that his text is set within an oneiric framework; by choosing to dismiss such a framework, he feels he is able to furnish his dialogues with a good deal more authority and *gravitas*.

By the time Petrarch composed his *Secretum* — a text which remained a secret throughout the poet's lifetime — he had already begun writing his *Africa*, the epic poem written in Latin hexameters, concerning the Second Punic War. Petrarch continued to edit and rewrite the *Africa* until his death in 1374 and, although it was neither completed, nor published before Petrarch's death — except, explains Simone Marchesi, for 'one, or most likely two, individual

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<sup>9</sup> *Secretum*, Proem; trans. Nichols.

<sup>10</sup> *Secretum*, Dialogue I.

sections' —<sup>11</sup> the text is pivotal to our understanding of Petrarch's understanding of the dream-vision genre, since it contains two dreams which both demonstrate Petrarch's ability to employ this narrative device in very different ways from his previous texts.

The first of the *Africa*'s two dreams occurs within Book 5, where Petrarch builds upon Cicero's Dream of Scipio, before Massinissa reports a troubling dream he experienced:

Somnia nunc, tacite quondam michi tempore noctis  
 visa, recognosco turbate horrenda quietis  
 non satis intellecta prius. Tu ne illa fuisti  
 candida prostrato per vim subducta marito  
 cerva, sed imperio tandem pastoris iniqui  
 custodi precepta novo? tunc nempe placebas,  
 vel sic visa, michi. Sed quid coniuncta ferebat  
 mors tua? (*Africa*, V. 604-11)

(Riconosco ora i sogni apparsi un tempo nella tacita notte a turbare  
 orribili il mio riposo, i sogni che prima non avevo ben compreso. Non  
 eri tu la candida cerva, sottratto a forza al marito atterato, ma poi  
 rapita al nuovo custode per il comando di un iniquo pastore? Certo mi  
 piacevi allora, anche in quell'aspetto! ma che cosa annunciava la  
 visione che subito seguiva della tua morte?)<sup>12</sup>

Massinissa's dream of the captured doe serves as an enigmatic prefiguration of Sophonisba's death; having understood the dream to directly relate to his own situation and that of his wife, Massinissa arranges for Sophonisba to be poisoned, rather than allow her to become Scipio's property. Petrarch's previous writings on the value of dreams seem far removed from his use of the trope in the *Africa*; this

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<sup>11</sup> Simone Marchesi, 'Petrarch's Philological Epic: *Africa*', in *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, pp. 113-30 (p. 113).

<sup>12</sup> References to the *Africa* are taken from Francesco Petrarca, 'Africa', ed. and trans. by Guido Martellotti, in *Rime, Trionfi e Poesie Latine*, ed. by Enrico Bianchi, Ferdinando Neri, Guido Martellotti, and Natalino Sapegno (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2005), pp. 626-705.

first dream, especially, demonstrates his understanding of the different types of narrative visions and their literary functions, as he is able to produce an enigmatic dream-vision, which his character then interprets and acts upon.

The second of Petrarch's two dreams in the *Africa* occurs shortly before the end of the final book, where Ennius recalls a dream he had experienced of Homer, in which the poet had appeared to him as an old, bedraggled figure, dressed in rags, and with unkempt hair:

Hi nocte sub alta

aspicio adventare senem, quem rara tegebant  
frusta toge et canis immixta et squallida barba.  
Sedibus exierant oculi. Cava frontis imago  
horrorem inculta cum maiestate ferebat. (*Africa*, IX. 166-70)

(Ed ecco a notte fonda vedo avvicinarsi un vecchio coperto da radi lembi di toga, con la barba squallida, mista di peli bianchi; nelle orbite non erano gli occhi; l'aspetto della fronte vuota spirava orrore e insieme negletta maestà).

In Ennius's dream, Homer takes on the role of spirit-guide, encouraging the dreamer to walk alongside him and engage in conversation:

'Surge' ait 'et mecum ex equo, nam dignus es, ultro  
congrederere et, dum tempus habes, tam sepe negato  
colloquio satiare meo'. (*Africa*, IX. 180-82)

('Sorgi,' mi disse 'e conversa liberamente con me alla pari, poiché ne sei degno, e mentre ne hai tempo, saziati del colloquio con me che tanto spesso ti fu negato')

Homer then proceeds to offer prophecies to Ennius, including a prefiguration of Petrarch's works and his coronation as poet laureate. This second dream quite clearly draws heavily upon the dream of Scipio Africanus in the *Somnium Scipionis*: both narrators are visited by the shades ('umbra fuit'; 'he was a shade', *Africa*, IX. 179) of men they held in high esteem; both of these spectral figures reveal prophecies to their respective dreamers before departing their narratives; indeed, Scipio Africanus himself serves as a pivotal character in both accounts

(Cicero uses him as a spirit-guide in the *Somnium Scipionis*, while in the *Africa*, he is the person to whom Ennius recounts his vision of Homer).

Petrarch's use of dreams within the *Africa* is important to note: both vision sequences are prophetic, but these prophecies are revealed in very different ways. Massinissa's dream is veiled in ambiguity and he relies upon his intellect to correctly interpret its content before acting upon the warning he receives, while Ennius's vision is more straightforward: he is visited by a spirit, who acts as his guide and directly reveals prophecies relating not only to his own political situation — 'Nec cura futuri | sollicitet casus. Quoniam lux crastina campos | sanguine Penorum Latio victore rigabit' ('Né ti tenga in ansia il pensiero del futuro evento: poiché il giorno di domani, per la vittoria del Lazio, righerà i campi di sangue cartaginese')<sup>13</sup> — but also to the future of Petrarch's career. With these dreams, Petrarch demonstrates his knowledge and understanding of oneiric literature, since he successfully employs different types of vision sequences, and includes key dream-vision tropes, such as the various ways in which prophecies may be revealed, the veiling of dream-content in ambiguity, and a spirit-guide figure.

While the *Africa* is the only other Petrarchan work to include dream-visions proper, Petrarch does include references to dreams and visions within ten poems of his *Canzoniere* (I. 14; XLIX. 8; CLVI. 4; CCXLIX. 13; CCXII. 1; CCXXV. 12; CCLI. 1; CCLVII. 10; CCLXIV. 88; CCCXXIII. 74).<sup>14</sup> Although these instances of vision imagery are used in various ways within the individual poems, they each serve to highlight Petrarch's negative attitude towards dreams. Consider, for example, sonnet XLIX ('Perch'io t'abbia guardato di menzogna'), in which Petrarch directly addresses the individual parts of himself — 'ingrata lingua', 'Lagrima triste', 'sospiri' —, and uses the figure of the dreamer to illustrate the imperfection and insincerity of his words ('et se parole fai | son imperfecte, et quasi d'uom che sogna', XLIX. 7-8). This simile is particularly notable, for it demonstrates Petrarch's suspicions regarding dreams; he equates

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<sup>13</sup> *Africa*, IX. 212-14.

<sup>14</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all references to the *Canzoniere* are taken from: Francesco Petrarca, *Canzoniere*, ed. by Marco Santagata (Milan: Mondadori, 2004).

dreaming with a lack of eloquence and empathy ('ché quando più 'l tuo aiuto mi bisogna | per dimandar mercede, allor ti stai | sempre più fredda', XLIX. 5-7). Likewise, in sonnet CLVI, Petrarch's choice of simile underlines his wariness of dreams: he likens his memories to 'sogni, ombre e fumi' (CLVI. 4), thus suggesting that dreams are nothing more than illusions; mere smoke and mirrors. Dreams are simply shadows of thoughts and should not be afforded any prophetic or revelatory value. In sonnet CCXLIX, too, Petrarch speaks of the vanity of omens, dreams, and dark thoughts ('or tristi auguri, et sogni e penser' negri | mi dànno assalto, et piaccia a Dio che 'nvano', CCXLIX. 13-14). While in the first sonnet of the collection, Petrarch uses dreams as a metaphor to describe the transient nature of earthly pleasures:

et del mio vaneggiar vergogna è 'l frutto,  
e 'l pentérsi, e 'l conoscer chiaramente  
che quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno. (I. 12-14)

Petrarch's employment of dream imagery to discuss the vanity and insubstantial nature of worldly goods and pleasures further reinforces the idea that he viewed visions as irrelevant and lacking any great importance; they may be pleasant to experience, but they are fleeting and ultimately have no impact upon our overall existence.

As in his letter to Giovanni Andrea, and in his *Rerum memorandarum libri*, Petrarch's use of dreams in the *Canzoniere* betrays a deep unease; he is consistent in his refusal to allow them any divinatory qualities within his lyric poetry, and regularly reinforces his beliefs that they are little more than vain imaginings. He uses dreams as comparative devices to illustrate various negative character traits, and negates any greater value they may hold. Indeed, throughout Petrarch's works — with, perhaps, the sole exception of the *Africa*, where he experiments with the use of more conventional literary dream-visions — we see a poet deeply mistrustful of dreams and visions. His prose works demonstrate the attitudes of a pragmatic humanist, concerned not with the divine or prophetic qualities of dreams, but with their role in relation to the waking consciousness, such as their relationship with thought and memory.

### BOCCACCIO'S ENGAGEMENT WITH DREAMS AND VISIONS

Estimated compositional dates for many of Boccaccio's *opere minori* vary greatly, but it is thought that the earliest manifestations of the dream-vision motif within any of his texts appear within the *Filostrato*, thought to have been written around 1335.<sup>15</sup> Within the *Filostrato*, the text's protagonist, Troiolo, dreams that his love-object, Criseida, is taken away from him and, as a result of this dream, becomes suicidal; it is only after a long discussion with his friend Pandora regarding the nature of dreams — and, specifically, the content of his own vision — that Troiolo decides to live. Within this discussion, it is specifically Pandora's speech to Troiolo which gives us a real indication of Boccaccio's early interactions with the ideas and philosophies surrounding the value of dreams:

‘Io ti dissi altra volta che follia  
era ne' sogni troppo riguardare;  
nessun ne fu, né è, né giammai fia  
che possa certo ben significare,  
ciò che dormendo altrui la fantasia  
con varie forme puote dimostrare;  
e molti già credettero una cosa,  
ch'altra n'avvenne opposita e ritrosa.’<sup>16</sup>

Boccaccio immediately raises the question of the value of dreams, and uses Pandora as an external voice for this debate. Yet Pandora's argument — that one should not pay too much attention to the content of dreams, since nobody can ever be certain what they signify — appears to be contradicted elsewhere in Boccaccio's works. Within the *Filocolo*, for example, several different types of dreams are used by Boccaccio; these are used variously to warn characters of forthcoming dangers, to reveal previously unknown truths, and to serve as

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<sup>15</sup> Vittore Branca argues that ‘Il *Filostrato* dunque dovette esser composto, come la *Caccia*, dal Boccaccio poco più che ventenne, e certo prima del *Filocolo*: attorno cioè al 1335’; Vittore Branca, ‘Introduzione’, in Giovanni Boccaccio, *Caccia di Diana, Filostrato*, ed. by Vittore Branca (Milan: Mondadori, 1990), pp. 47-57 (p. 49).

<sup>16</sup> *Filostrato*, ed. Branca, 7. 40.

enigmatic prefigurations of future events.

The *Filocolo*, which Boccaccio composed while residing in Naples (1336-38), is based on the Old French romance tale of Floire and Blancheflor, and was greatly influenced by religious allegory, hagiographical texts, French and Provençal courtly literature, the works of Boccaccio's contemporaries (especially Cino da Pistoia and Andalò del Negro), and the works of Ovid, Lucan, Dante, Virgil, and Statius.<sup>17</sup> There are numerous oneiric episodes within the *Filocolo*, which each play significant roles in the development of the narrative. Both Florio and Biancifiore experience revelatory and prophetic dream-visions; while several other minor characters, including Florio's friend and advisor Ascalion and Biancifiore's potential suitor Fileno, also undergo vision experiences.

The first dream-vision occurs within Book 2 of the *Filocolo*. Florio's father, King Felice, is visited by the goddess Venus in a dream and is shown an enigmatic and marvellous vision which prophesies the strong romantic love between Florio and Biancifiore and the many trials they would face in pursuit of their love. The king's vision is entirely framed by sleep; the episode begins with Venus taking the dreamer to 'una camera sopra un ricco letto, dove d'un soave sonno l'occupò';<sup>18</sup> and it ends with a return to consciousness: 'era tanta la letizia la quale egli con loro facea, che il cuore, da troppa passion occupato, ruppe il soave sonno' (2. 3. 11). Although Venus is responsible for showing the dream to the king, her role within the narrative extends no further than this; she neither communicates with the dreamer, nor offers him any form of counsel. Instead, Venus imparts her knowledge and higher wisdom by showing the king that which will transpire through the enigmatic form of an allegory. The king dreams that a young white deer becomes the focus of a lion cub's attention; several attempts are made to separate the two young animals, but these are ultimately unsuccessful and the young animals — however unsuited they may seem — eventually transform

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<sup>17</sup> For an analysis of Boccaccio's use of sources in the *Filocolo*, see Elissa Weaver, 'A Lover's Tale and Auspicious Beginnings', in *Boccaccio: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, ed. by Victoria Kirkham, Michael Sherberg, and Janet Levarie Smarr (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), pp. 87-93.

<sup>18</sup> All references to the *Filocolo* are taken from the following edition: Giovanni Boccaccio, *Filocolo*, ed. by Antonio Enzo Quaglio (Milan: Mondadori, 1967), pp. 61-675, vol. I of *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. by Vittore Branca (2. 3. 1).

into a handsome and noble human couple and are able to love freely.

Following his return to consciousness, the king does not pay attention to the meaning of his vision and returns to his palace: ‘poi non curandosene, venne alla reale sede del suo palagio in quell’ora che Amore s’era da’ suoi nuovi soggetti partito’ (2. 3. 12). The dream-vision serves as a warning to the king against intervening in Florio and Biancifiore’s relationship; however, since he neglects to properly interpret the enigmatic vision, this warning goes unheeded.

Boccaccio’s employment of allegorical dreams is important, particularly considering the king’s inability to understand the events depicted. Boccaccio draws upon a whole body of oneiric literature, which places great emphasis on dream-interpretation, such as the dreams both experienced and interpreted by Daniel in the Bible, the enigmatic vision of Amore experienced by Dante in the *Vita nuova*, and Artemidorus’s *Oneirocritica*, which would prove integral to the composition of Macrobius’s *Commentarium in Somnium Scipionis*. These texts serve as models for the *Filocolo*’s dreams: they emphasise the need to interpret the meaning of enigmatic dream-visions, and highlight the king’s failings in not doing so.

By far the most striking dream-visions in the *Filocolo* are the two revelatory dreams shown to Florio and Biancifiore by the goddess Venus, which inform the two characters of the king’s deceit in framing Biancifiore for his attempted murder. The king, in an effort to secure Biancifiore’s execution and, thus, release Florio from his love for her, arranges for Biancifiore to unwittingly serve him a poisoned peacock during a state banquet. Florio, having been separated from Biancifiore for some years, receives a vision in which Venus reveals to him ‘[il] crudele rinchiudimento, e la malvagia sentenza della morta ordinata di dare contro a Biancifiore’ (2. 42. 7). The vision occurs during sleep; Florio, alone and lamenting his separation from his beloved, becomes drowsy and falls into a deep sleep:

E mentre che Florio queste parole e molte altre sospirando dicea,  
continuamente al caro anello porgea amorosi baci, sempre  
riguardandolo per amor di quella che donato glielo avea. E in tal  
maniera dimorando pensoso, soave sonno gli gravò la testa, e, chiusi

gli occhi, s'addormentò; e dormendo, nuova e mirabile visione gli apparve. (2. 41. 9-10)

Following the departure of Venus from his vision, Florio awakens: 'piangendo elli forte, e veggendo partire la santa dea, rompendosi il debile sonno, e subitamente si dirizzò in piè, trovandosi il petto e 'l viso tutto d'amare lagrime bagnato, e nella destra mano la celestiale spada' (2. 43. 1). Venus acts as Florio's spirit-guide in this dream-sequence: she appears to the dreamer and reveals what has happened to Biancifiore in his absence. Venus shows Florio images and allows him to witness the scene of the poisoned peacock for himself ('preso Florio, involtolo seco in una oscura nuvola, sopra Marmorina il portò, e quivi gli fece vedere l'avvelenato paone posto in mano a Biancifiore dal siniscalco', 2. 42. 7), and she also engages him in conversation and directly informs him of what has happened and indeed, what will happen if they do not intervene; it is she who proposes the plan to rescue Biancifiore from her executors.

The way in which Boccaccio allows Venus to communicate with Florio is not unusual: in previous examples of dream-vision texts, information and knowledge had been conveyed using both dialogue and through witnessing various scenarios. In biblical visions it was usual for dreamers to be shown prophetic scenes; St John's Revelations, for example, were intended to demonstrate precisely how the world will end; likewise, Daniel's dreams from the Old Testament took the form of the visionary witnessing allegorical and enigmatic visions. Dialogue, too, had been used in numerous dream-visions as a way of imparting knowledge: the visions within Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae*, and Dante's *Vita nuova* had all used this form of interaction. Although these two methods of communication had previously existed in the same text — Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun allow their dreamer to enter into an oneiric landscape and witness several different scenes, while also conversing with various personifications which each impart knowledge and wisdom — the *Filocolo* is unique in that Boccaccio not only combines these two methods of communication within individual dreams, but also experiments with the two ways of instruction within different dream-visions. Consider, for example, Biancifiore's vision of Venus which she receives while imprisoned for attempted murder, a dream which shares many similarities with that just received by Florio.

Like Florio, Biancifiore is alone when she receives the vision of Venus; furthermore, the role of Venus within the two oneiric episodes is to both reassure the young lovers ('Ahi, bella giovane, non ti sconfortare. Non già mai non ti abbandoneremo', 2. 48. 17) and to inform them of the king's deceit. Yet there are several key differences between the visions: notably, Florio is able to witness the moment when Biancifiore is framed for trying to poison the king, while also being capable of conversing with Venus; whereas within Biancifiore's vision, she does not see exactly how she has been deceived. The knowledge she receives during her vision of Venus stems solely from conversing with the goddess.

In terms of dream-types, the most notable difference between these two revelatory dreams is that, unlike Florio's vision, Biancifiore's is not induced by sleep; her apparition occurs during a period of consciousness, as a response to her invocations of Venus to help her find a way to reunite with Florio:

Non avea Biancifiore ancora compiuta di dire queste parole, che nella prigione subitamente apparve una gran luce e meravigliosa, dentro alla quale Venere ignuda, fur solamente involta in uno porporino velo, coronata d'alloro, con un ramo delle frondi di Pallade in mano, dimorava. (2. 48. 16)<sup>19</sup>

Although, as is clear, Biancifiore's vision of Venus does not appear within a dream proper, it does contain definite oneiric qualities, and draws heavily on Boethius's *De consolatione Philosophiae*. Just as Lady Philosophy appeared to Boethius as he was imprisoned and awaiting execution, so too does Venus to Biancifiore. In his study on the *Filocolo*, Steven Grossvogel writes at length about the influence of Boethius on Boccaccio, stating that many of the details within the *Filocolo* were intended as allusions to the *De consolatione Philosophiae*, such as the fact that Biancifiore's parents, Giulia and Lelio, were married the same year

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<sup>19</sup> See also *Filocolo* 4. 134. 1-2: 'Venere, intenta a' suoi soggetti, commosse il cielo, e per loro porse pietosi prieghi a Giove, col consentimento del quale e di ciascuno altro iddio, il necessario aiuto si dispose a porgere. E involta in una bianchissima nuvola, coronata delle frondi di Pennea, con un ramo di quelle di Pallade in mano, lasciò i cieli e discese sopra costoro, e con l'una mano, cessando i fummi dintorno a' due amanti, a' circostanti da poter vedere dove Florio e Biancifiore fosse, dando a loro chiaro e puro aere, nel quale tutta si mostrò loro'.

Boethius wrote the *De consolazione*; and that the spatial and temporal settings of Boccaccio's narrative echo those of Boethius's text.<sup>20</sup> Grossvogel even argues that many of the sentences in the *Filocolo* are directly sourced from the *De consolazione*, and that the character of Lelio, especially, shares clear attributes with Boethius's protagonist.<sup>21</sup> Yet Grossvogel overlooks Biancifiore's vision of Venus in his intertextual analysis; a vision which, I believe, constitutes the most obvious borrowing from Boethius in the entire narrative.

The visions of Venus experienced by both Florio and Biancifiore demonstrate the extent to which the young Boccaccio was experimenting with the dream-vision tradition in the *Filocolo*. On the most basic level, the two dreams fulfil the same role: Venus appears to both dreamers to offer comfort and reassurance. Yet when one considers how these two visions are framed within the narrative, and indeed what role they each play, key differences emerge: Florio's is framed by sleep, Biancifiore's is not; Florio's acts as an epiphanic turning-point, whereas Biancifiore remains entirely without agency. Even the terminology Boccaccio uses to narrate the two visions differs. Within Florio's dream, Boccaccio refers twice to sleep ('soave sonno gli gravò', 2. 41. 10; 'rompendosi il debile sonno', 2. 43. 1), twice to the act of sleeping ('s'addormentò', 2. 41. 10; 'e dormendo', 2. 41. 10), and twice uses the term 'visione' ('mirabile visione', 2. 41. 10; 'nella preterita visione', 2. 43. 1). He also uses the traditional way of reporting dreams by employing verbs such as *apparire* and *parere* to narrate events ('A Florio parve subitamente vedere', 2. 42. 1; 'tutti gli altari di Marmorina gli pareano ripieni d'innocente sangue umano', 2. 42. 3). In Biancifiore's dream, however, there is no reference to sleep or the act of sleeping, nor does Boccaccio ever use the term *visione* to describe the apparition of Venus. Gone, too, is the doubt caused by verbs such as *parere*; *apparire* is used only once ('apparve una gran luce', 2. 48. 16) and this is not used in a way to signal doubt, but rather to convey facts. Biancifiore's vision is, therefore, a very different type to that of Florio, and Boccaccio reminds us of this fact at every stage of narration.

Boccaccio further demonstrates his ability to employ different types of

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<sup>20</sup> Steven M. Grossvogel, *Ambiguity and Allusion in Boccaccio's 'Filocolo'* (Florence: Olschki, 1992), pp. 33-34.

<sup>21</sup> Grossvogel, *Ambiguity and Allusion*, p. 43.

dreams elsewhere within the *Filocolo*. Florio's enigmatic dream of the regal lord and the sinking ship from 3. 19 exemplifies the trope of the prophetic vision, since Biancifiore's offering of an olive branch serves as a 'segno di futura pace' – it prophesies the eventual resolution of the lovers' situation. Florio's dream occurs as he is alone and lamenting the possible romance between Fileno and Biancifiore. The vision is sent to him by Venus, and is introduced in the following manner:

Mentre che Florio piangendo dolorosamente queste parole diceva,  
disteso sopra 'l suo letto, Venere, che il suo pianto avea udito, avendo  
di lui pietà, discese del suo cielo nella trista camera, e in Florio mise  
un soavissimo sonno, nel quale una mirabile visione gli fu manifesta.  
(3. 18. 32)

The dream is bizarre; Florio sees a regal and winged lord seated beside a broken ship in a storm. The dreamer is initially blindfolded, but after removing the blindfold, he finds himself trapped within the sinking ship and almost drowned. Biancifiore then appears to him and gives him both an olive branch and a sword, with which Florio is able to save himself. The dream is broken as Florio attempts to repair the damaged ship: 'volendo intendere a racconciare i guasti arnesi della sua nave, il lieve sonno subitamente si ruppe' (3. 19. 15). Despite the dream's evidently enigmatic form, Boccaccio only ever uses the term *visione* to describe the sequence, which according to the Macrobian typology of dream-types, is indicative of prophecy. Indeed, after waking, Florio immediately appreciates the revelatory nature of the vision, commenting that 'la voce di lei [Biancifiore] mi riconfortò nella affannosa tempesta ove io mi vidi, e diemmi argomento da campare da quella, e in segno di futura pace mi donò questo ramo delle frondi di Pallade' (3. 19. 17); the olive branch serves as a 'segno di futura pace', prophesying the eventual resolution of their unfortunate situation.

Fileno's dream from 3. 30 also acts as a prophecy. As Fileno dreams, one of the sleep-spirits summoned by Venus appears to him in the guise of a close friend ('uno di quelli ufficiali in forma d'un caro suo amico gli parve che gli apparisse', 3. 30. 3) and warns him of Florio's plan to kill him. Fileno awakes due

to his distress at being so badly wounded by dream-Florio and confides his vision to a friend:

Ma poi ch'egli si vide essere stato ingannato dal sonno, partita la paura, pieno di meraviglia rimase, non sappiendo che ciò si volesse dire, e dubitando forte si mise a cercare del caro amico che nel sonno avea veduto. Il quale trovato, a lui brevemente ciò che dormendo avea veduto, gli narrò. (3. 30. 9)

Here, Boccaccio not only employs a prophetic dream-vision, but he also highlights the need for dream-interpretation; Fileno had the intelligence to consult his friend regarding the meaning of the dream and, as such, he is spared death since his friend is able to confirm Florio's intentions, leaving Fileno free to hastily flee to safety. The issue of dream-interpretation, which had proved so integral to Daniel's biblical prophecies, is once again cast alongside portents of the future, thus lending the dream-vision an authoritative edge; Boccaccio firmly roots this vision within the realms of the oneiric conventions.

The way in which Boccaccio employs several different types of dream within the *Filocolo* allows us to appreciate the extent of his early experimentations with the genre. He uses visions as a way of imparting knowledge — allowing his characters to witness scenes which either prefigure events or report those which have already happened — but also plays around with the conventions of the tradition and the specific terminology he uses to report the dreams. While some of the dream-visions may contain spirit-guides (for example, Biancifiore's and Florio's dreams of the poisoned peacock, and Fileno's dream of Florio's revenge), others, such as King Felice's dream of the lion cub and deer, do not. Even within dreams of the same type, information is imparted in differing manners, for example, through conversation, or by bearing witness to a scene. All of these issues would re-emerge in Boccaccio's later dream-vision texts, but the *Filocolo* demonstrates the extent of Boccaccio's early interest in the oneiric tradition.

Around 1341, roughly five years after completing the *Filocolo*, and shortly before finishing his first redaction of the *Amorosa visione*, Boccaccio wrote his prosimetric *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine*, a pastoral-allegorical romance in

which the uncouth shepherd Ameto becomes attracted to seven young nymphs, each of whom narrates tales in a bid to transform him into a more talented and refined person. The seven nymphs are all personifications of virtues: Emilia is the personification of Justice; Acrimonia is Fortitude; Adiona is Temperance; Mopsa is Wisdom; Agapes is Chastity; Lia is Faith; and Fiammetta, is the personification of Hope.<sup>22</sup> Many of these figures would reappear as similar personifications in the *Amorosa visione*.

Personifications had already been associated with dream-vision literature by the time Boccaccio composed his *Comedia delle ninfe*; they had played significant roles in the *Roman de la rose* and its Italian rewritings, *Il Fiore* and the *Detto d'Amore*. Yet within the *Comedia*, Boccaccio uses them as storytellers outside of a dream framework; they interact with the protagonist through the narration of tales, but they do so within reality; they are not a product of Ameto's imagination, but actually communicate with him on a conscious level.

Boccaccio not only uses specific oneiric tropes within his *Comedia*, but also includes a short dream-sequence, in which Ameto is greeted by the vision of a woman. The woman acts as a spirit-guide character, and converses with the protagonist at great length, before departing the narrative completely ('Ebbero detto; e a un'ora esse e 'l sonno si dipartirono').<sup>23</sup> Although Boccaccio's narrator does not explicitly state at the beginning of his vision that he is asleep, when recalling the dream *post factum* he clearly locates his experiences within sleep:

Questa donna è colei che nella mia puerizia, e non ha gran tempo ancora, m'aparve ne' sonni miei, questa è quella che, con lieto aspetto, graziosa mi promise l'entrata di questa città, questa è quella che dee signoreggiare la mia mente e che per donna mi fu promessa ne' sonni.  
(*Com. ninf.*, XXXV. 108).

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<sup>22</sup> For a full discussion regarding the importance and various incarnations of Fiammetta throughout Boccaccio's literary *corpus*, see Smarr, *Boccaccio and Fiammetta*.

<sup>23</sup> All references to the *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* are from Giovanni Boccaccio, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine*, ed. by Antonio Enzo Quaglio, vol. II of *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. by Vittore Branca, pp. 679-835.

Although the dream-vision within the *Comedia* does not frame the entire narrative, it does play an important role within the text; it allows the dreamer to undergo a conversionary experience and gain a better understanding of the benefits of specific virtues. Furthermore, many of the key dream-vision aspects of the *Comedia* — including the personifications, conversionary experience, and female guide figure — would reappear within an extended dream-framework in his *Amorosa visione*.

Although composed more than a decade after the *Amorosa visione*, many of the *Decameron*'s tales exemplify Boccaccio's keen interest in dreams and visions, and affect our understanding of the author's attitudes towards literary dreams in the period directly preceding the composition of his *Corbaccio*.<sup>24</sup> Dreams play a central role in three of the *Decameron*'s *novelle*, yet these dreams are not all of the same type, and Boccaccio does not employ the same terminology in them. In the first of these three tales — IV. 5 — Lisabetta's murdered lover appears to her in a dream and shows her where his body is buried. She digs up his head and plants it in a pot of basil, weeps upon it daily, and dies when her brothers take the pot away from her. In the rubric preceding this tale, Boccaccio describes the dream using the term 'sogno' ('I fratelli d'Ellisabetta uccidon l'amante di lei; egli l'apparisce in sogno e mostrale dove sia sotterato', *Dec.* IV. 5. 1); however, this is the only time within the *novella* that the dream is referred to in this way. In narrating the tale, Filomena only ever uses the term 'visione' ('dando fede alla visione', IV. 5. 14; 'per che manifestamente conobbe essere stata vera la sua visione', IV. 5. 15), or else speaks of the sleep which frames the dream ('Lorenzo l'appare nel sonno', IV. 5. 12; 'nel sonno l'era paruto', IV. 5. 14). In the subsequent *novella*, however, the use of terminology changes, reflecting the difference in the type of dream being reported. In IV. 6, Panfilo begins by explaining the different types of dreams we may experience, and the differing levels of significance we should assign them:

Per la qual cosa molti a ciascun sogno tanta fede prestano quanta  
presterieno a quelle cose le quali vegghiando vedessero, e per li lor

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<sup>24</sup> For a study of Boccaccio's use of dreams in the *Decameron*, see Fabio Bonetti, 'Somnium and visio in the *Decameron*', *Med. Secoli*, 21 (2009), 611-29.

sogni stessi s'attristano e s'allegnano secondo che per quegli o temono o sperano; e in contrario son di quegli che niuno ne credono se non poi che nel premostrato pericolo caduti si veggono; de' quali né sempre son veri né ogni volta falsi. (IV. 6. 5)

Panfilo's classification of dream-types is illuminating, since it demonstrates an acute awareness of the different roles of dream-visions within tales. He immediately sets his own *novella* apart from other types of dreams in his assertion that his character's tale, like Filomena's story of Lisabetta in IV. 5, is not entirely false: 'tutti non sien falsi, già di sopra nella novella di Filomena s'è dimostrato e nella mia, come davanti dissi, intendo di dimostrarlo' (IV. 6. 6). Panfilo proceeds to narrate the tale of Andreuola and Gabriotto, who recount their dreams to one another; shortly after Gabriotto has finished telling Andreuola of his dream, he dies in her arms and she is accused of his murder, but she is eventually freed and becomes a nun. While both Andreuola and Gabriotto experience premonitory dreams of his death, these dreams are full of symbolism and require interpretation; indeed, Gabriotto questions the meaning of his own dream, but erroneously concludes that it bears no importance: 'Ma che vuol questo per ciò dire? De' così fatti e de' più spaventoli assai n'ho già veduti, né per ciò cosa del mondo più né meno n'è intervenuto' (IV. 6. 17).

While Panfilo had already drawn comparisons between his own tale and that of Filomena in his proclamation that both would show themselves to be true, the terminology used to narrate the two *novelle* highlights the inherent differences between the two stories. Filomena's use of 'visione' reflects the true, revelatory quality of Lisabetta's dream; the protagonist was visited by her dead lover and told in no uncertain terms where she could find his corpse. The dreams of Gabriotto and Andreuola, on the other hand, are veiled in ambiguity: they may act as warnings against future events, but they are enigmatic and use symbolism instead of direct communication. This shift in dream-type — from the clear revelation of Lisabetta's dream to the obscured and ambiguous message of those in Panfilo's tale — is reflected in his use of 'sogno' in his telling of the dream. While the dreams of Lisabetta, Gabriotto, and Andreuola are all true, they reveal their truths in very different ways, and this is clear from the lexical choices of the

two narrators.

The relationship between dream-type and vocabulary is reaffirmed in the final oneiric tale of the *Decameron*: IX 7. Here, Pampinea narrates the tale of Talano d'Imola, who experiences a premonitory dream that his wife is savaged by a wolf. Giving no credence to her husband's dream, the wife disregards his concerns, stating: 'Chi mal ti vuol, mal ti sogna: tu ti fai molto di me pietoso ma tu sogni di me quello che tu vorresti vedere' (IX. 7. 8). Yet, when the husband's dream comes true, and the wife is mauled by a large and terrifying wolf, she laments not having taken heed of Talano's 'vero sogno' (IX. 7. 14). What is particularly striking about this final dream-sequence is Pampinea's choice of terminology: although the dream is revelatory and prophetic and its content not veiled in symbolism — Talano sees the incident exactly as it transpires — Pampinea narrates the tale using only *sogno* to describe the dream, which is suggestive of ambiguity and enigma. The other members of the *brigata*, however, are quick to correct Pampinea: 'Universalmente, ciascuno della lieta compagnia disse quel che Talano veduto aveva dormendo non essere stato sogno ma visione, sì a punto, senza alcuna cosa mancarne, era avvenuto' (IX. 8. 2). The way in which the *brigata* differentiate between dreams and visions is a sure indication of Boccaccio's deliberate use of specific dream-terminology within his oneiric texts; that he allows his *brigata* to question the incorrect use of *sogno* demonstrates Boccaccio's acute awareness of the appropriate terminology to use in the authoring of his later dream-vision narratives.

Boccaccio used dreams quite liberally within his fictional works, yet within his *Trattatello in laude di Dante*, we see Boccaccio extend his mastery of the dream-form in a new setting. In his biography of his literary master, Boccaccio narrates a predictive dream allegedly experienced by Dante's pregnant mother, shortly before giving birth to him:

Vide la gentil donna nella sua gravidezza sé a piè d'uno altissimo alloro, allato a una chiara fontana partorire un figliuolo, il quale di sopra altra volta narra, in breve tempo, pascendosi delle bache di quello alloro cadenti e dell'onde della fontana, divenire un gran pastore e vago molto delle frondi di quello alloro sotto il quale era;

alle quali avere mentre ch'egli si sforzava, le pareva ch'egli cadesse; e subito non lui, ma di lui un bellissimo paone le pareva vedere. Dalla qual meraviglia la gentil donna commossa, ruppe, senza vedere di lui piú avanti, il dolce sonno.<sup>25</sup>

Boccaccio then proceeds to discuss the imagery within this dream. Although he states in his concluding remarks that his presentation of the dream is 'superficialmente per me fatta', Boccaccio diligently and thoroughly examines every part of the dream, from the significance of the laurel tree and fountain, to the sound of the peacock. By including this premonitory dream and providing suggestions as to the meanings of the different dream-images, Boccaccio exercises his ability to use dreams as narrative devices which have prophetic qualities, and also draws upon the traditions of dream-books and oneiromancy by offering various alternatives for the meanings of such visions.

It was not only in his vernacular works that Boccaccio discussed the value of dreams and experimented with their use within his texts: in his *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, composed around 1360, Boccaccio includes a chapter on the nature of sleep and dreams, entitled 'De Somno Herebi filio XVII<sup>o</sup>'. He cites various authorities on sleep, including Ovid, Seneca, and Cicero, before explaining the different types of dreams and their value, underpinning his text with Macrobius's five-fold typology: 'Nunc autem de assistentibus videamus, que somnia sunt multiplicium specierum, ex quibus quinque tantum super *Somnio Scipionis* ostendit Macrobius.' ('So now let us examine his [Sleep's] assistants, that is, the dreams of many types; Macrobius discusses only five of them in his *Dream of Scipio*').<sup>26</sup> Boccaccio then thoroughly examines these five categories in order — 'phantasma', 'insomnium', 'somnia', 'visio', 'oraculum' — and cites literary examples of each to illustrate the dreams' precise narrative uses. His *Genealogia* certainly demonstrated that he read and understood important dream

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<sup>25</sup> Boccaccio, *Trattatello in laude di Dante*, first redaction, ed. by Pier Giorgio Ricci, vol. III of *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, pp. 437-96; para. 208.

<sup>26</sup> Boccaccio, *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, ed. by V. Zaccharia, in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vols. VII-VIII; trans. from Boccaccio, *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods*, ed. and trans. by Jon Solomon (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), vol. I. I. 31.

works, but it also shows that he was able to correctly draw upon oneiric texts belonging to the different dream-types, and provide thoughtful and illuminating commentaries regarding the specific function of these visions and their differing values.

## CONCLUSIONS

Petrarch's and Boccaccio's engagement with dream-vision literature are markedly different. Although Petrarch draws upon established classical models for his rewriting of Scipio's dream in the *Africa*, he remains tentative in his experimentations with the tropes and conventions elsewhere in his works. Not only does his Latin and vernacular poetry betray a certain degree of caution towards the use of dreams as revelatory or prophetic narrative devices, but his personal correspondence in the *Epistolae familiares* clearly sets out his own views on the value of dreams: he did not believe in their divinatory qualities, and only very hesitantly used them as narrative devices outside of the *Triumphs*. Indeed, within his *Secretum* — a text which contains several motifs common to oneiric literature, such as the authoritative guide figure and personifications of abstract virtues — his characters repeatedly refer to the fact that the dialogue is most definitely not set within the confines of a dream, as if such a setting would negate the value of the text.

Boccaccio, on the other hand employs dream-visions within several of his texts, and also includes in both his *Decameron* and *Genealogia* clear discussions about the types of dreams and visions available to narrators. He experimented widely with different forms of dreams, even — as in the case of the *Filocolo* and the *Decameron* — using several different dream-types within a single text. The presence of visions within several texts demonstrates that his engagement with dream-vision traditions and conventions was long-standing: he not only used dreams as narrative devices within both his early and later works, but he also staged and restaged debates on the function of dreams within literature, and how different dream-terminology may impact upon our understanding of the content and meaning of visions. The following three chapters offer detailed studies into the different ways in which these disparate opinions of Boccaccio and Petrarch

regarding the value and meaning of dreams are made manifest within their respective dream-vision texts.

### CHAPTER 3: THE *AMOROSA VISIONE* AS A DREAM-VISION

This chapter will discuss the key issues which affect our understanding of Boccaccio's *Amorosa visione* as a dream-vision text. I will begin by exploring how the dream-vision form is made manifest within the *Amorosa visione*, and the conventions and terminology employed within the narrative, before going on to discuss the various ways in which Boccaccio draws upon the dream-vision tradition in general, not only in terms of fictional narratives, but also with regard to his philosophical treatises on the function and causes of dreams. I will look specifically at the oneiric texts which Boccaccio uses as models for the *Amorosa visione*, and how each of these previous narratives serves to enhance — or, conversely, call into question — Boccaccio's message. I will conclude by exploring the most innovative aspects of the text, by looking at the features of the *Amorosa visione* which had not appeared in earlier dream-vision texts.

The *Amorosa visione* is a narrative dream-vision, introduced by three lyric poems, whose role is to set out contextual information regarding the text's production, such as for whom Boccaccio was writing; the identity of the woman to whom he dedicates his *Visione*; and the key themes present within the work. Within the narrative vision, an unnamed protagonist falls asleep and is greeted by a female spirit-guide and led through the rooms of a castle on his dream-journey. During his vision, the dreamer is confronted by talking frescoes and is faced with a choice: he may enter through a narrow door, a 'piccola porta [che] mena a via di vita' (II. 65), or a wide gate, which leads to earthly pleasures, or 'gloria mondana' (III. 17).<sup>1</sup> Choosing the wider door, the dreamer is visited by the spirit of a lady who attempts to enlighten him as to the error of his ways by guiding him through various triumphs in the hope of leading him to a more pious existence, with the eventual hope of entering heaven. Yet the protagonist is stubborn and his constant refusal to undergo any real form of conversion acts as a source of amusement to the reader and lends the text a certain satirical tone.

The text adheres to many of the traditional conventions of dream-vision

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<sup>1</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *Amorosa visione*, ed. by Vittore Branca (Milan: Mondadori, 1974), vol. III of *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. by Vittore Branca; unless otherwise stated, all references to the *Amorosa visione* will be taken from this edition of the text and will be abbreviated to *AV*.

literature: it is framed by sleep; there is a spirit-guide present within the dream; the dreamer witnesses several triumphal processions and has the opportunity to undergo a conversionary experience. Yet, as this chapter documents, Boccaccio's employment of oneiric motifs within the *Amorosa visione* is decidedly unconventional, not only in terms of the narrative content, but also as a result of the text's unusual structure.

### THE HISTORY OF THE TEXT

The *Amorosa visione* presents many problems. Not only are we unable to provide a precise date of composition for the text, but it is also impossible to determine with any degree of certainty the extent to which the original text — as Boccaccio wished it to be read — has been adapted by an early editor. Two versions exist, the A text and the B text published by Girolamo Claricio in 1521, yet scholars remain unclear as to the authenticity of the B version.<sup>2</sup> Vittore Branca was the first to argue in support of its legitimacy as genuinely Boccaccian. He first set forth his convictions in 1938 whilst working on the critical edition of the text (Florence: Sansoni, 1944), stating that what he considered to be the second redaction of the *Amorosa visione* — ‘l'unica che circolò a stampa fino ai primi dell'Ottocento’ — is a clear improvement on the moralistic and classicising content of the original.<sup>3</sup> Although Branca had previously discussed the presence of a B text in his article on the *editio princeps* of the *Amorosa visione*, his discussions were mainly focused on the year of the first print edition of Boccaccio's text, rather than the input of Claricio in the editing of this second redaction;<sup>4</sup> yet within his introduction to the critical edition of the text, Branca argued that Boccaccio was compelled to continually correct and rework his earlier texts, and that, having received comments on his work from his friend Petrarch, he had attempted to correct his youthful errors with the more mature ideas he developed as a result of their friendship. However, in 1946 Vincenzo Pernicone

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<sup>2</sup> For a full discussion of the various theories regarding the B version of the *Amorosa visione*, see Francesco Colussi, ‘Sulla seconda redazione dell’*Amorosa visione*’, *Studi sul Boccaccio*, 26 (1998), 187-263.

<sup>3</sup> Branca, ‘Introduzione’, pp. 3-21 (p. 19).

<sup>4</sup> Vittore Branca, ‘L’editio princeps dell’“Amorosa Visione” del Boccaccio’, *La Bibliofilia*, 40 (1938), 460-68.

argued that the second redaction was little more than a ‘pasticcio linguistico del ’500’.<sup>5</sup> Pernicone felt that the B text arose as a result of the heavy revisions made by Claricio, some of which displayed, claimed Pernicone, a scant knowledge of Boccaccio’s language and a clear misunderstanding of several of his verses.

In that same year, Giuseppe Billanovich came out in support of Branca’s hypothesis and argued that the second redaction was probably authentic in nature, but that clear revisions had been made by the editor.<sup>6</sup> Francesco Colussi explains how both Billanovich and Gianfranco Contini — whose own review of Branca’s edition<sup>7</sup> was published in the same issue as Billanovich’s article — believed that certain aspects of the B text were authentic, yet neither could accept the ‘numerosa particolarità linguistiche settentrionali assolutamente non attribuibili al Boccaccio’.<sup>8</sup> Billanovich and Contini acted as mediators between the opposing arguments of Branca and Pernicone, with both scholars agreeing that the B text is probably Boccaccian in nature, but that Pernicone’s reservations as to the extent of revisions made by Claricio were also well founded.

In more recent years, Marco Santagata has set forth his reservations regarding the B text, and states that studies investigating editions of the *Amorosa visione* have proved that

la presunta seconda redazione non è opera di Boccaccio, ma è un rifacimento di uno spregiudicato editore cinquecentesco, Gerolamo Claricio, che nel dare alle stampe il poema, nel 1521, aveva messo mano al testo saccheggiando abbondantemente i *Triumph* di Petrarca.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Vincenzo Pernicone, ‘Gerolamo Claricio collaboratore del Boccaccio’, *Belfagor*, 1 (1946), 474-86 (p. 474).

<sup>6</sup> Billanovich, ‘Dalla “Commedia” e dall’“Amorosa Visione” ai “Trionfi”’.

<sup>7</sup> Gianfranco Contini, ‘Rassegna bibliografica: G. Boccaccio, *Amorosa visione*, edizione critica per cura di Vittore Branca’, *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 123 (1946), 69-99.

<sup>8</sup> Colussi, ‘Sulla seconda redazione’, p. 196.

<sup>9</sup> Marco Santagata, ‘Introduzione’, in Petrarch, *Trionfi, Rime estravaganti, Codice degli abbozzi*, ed. by Vinicio Pacca and Laura Paolino (Milan: Mondadori, 1996), pp. xiii-lii (pp. xxix-xxx).

Martin Eisner has also revisited the hypothesis set out by Branca and Billanovich, stating that their argument, ‘whereby Boccaccio’s *Amorosa visione* influenced Petrarch’s *Triumphs*, which in their turn prompted Boccaccio to revise his poem’, remains persuasive to modern scholars.<sup>10</sup> In terms of the text as a dream-vision and the impact of this presumed second redaction upon our understanding of Boccaccio’s use of the oneiric genre, two important factors must be considered. First, if the B text is genuinely Boccaccian, then it is possible that Petrarch’s own dream-vision text influenced Boccaccio’s editing of the *Amorosa visione*, since we know from Petrarch’s letter collections that the two men maintained frequent contact regarding their respective literary outputs. Secondly, the B text of the *Amorosa visione* not only contains several amendments in terms of individual verses and phrasing, but also, importantly, includes one extra personification missing from the A text, which I discuss in more detail later in this chapter. Whether the work of Boccaccio himself, or the result of heavy editing at the hands of its sixteenth-century editor, the second redaction of the *Amorosa visione* clearly demonstrates a desire to amplify the dream-vision aspects of this complex text.

Whilst I am convinced by their arguments regarding the probable authenticity of the B text, both Branca and Billanovich have also expressed uncertainties regarding the extent to which Claricio, as the text’s editor, revised Boccaccio’s original work.<sup>11</sup> As a result of this, and having also considered the lack of manuscript evidence to verify the authenticity of the B text, I will be basing my own study of the *Amorosa visione* on the A text as edited by Vittore Branca in 1974. Although no exact compositional dates are known for either the A or B texts of the *Amorosa visione*, I am basing my study upon the convincing argument put forward by Branca, who claimed that the parallels between the

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<sup>10</sup> Martin Eisner, ‘Petrarch Reading Boccaccio: Revisiting the Genesis of the *Triumphs*’, in *Petrarch and the Textual Origins of Interpretation*, ed. by Teodolinda Barolini and H. Wayne Storey (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007), pp. 131-46 (p. 132).

<sup>11</sup> See especially Billanovich, ‘Dalla “Commedia” e dall’“Amorosa Visione” ai “Trionfi”’, in which Billanovich questions how one is to distinguish the original text from Claricio’s copious revisions: ‘Nelle varianti con cui in ogni canto, se non in ogni terzina, il testo della stampa del 1521 contrasta contro il blocco della tradizione manoscritta come distingueremo la revisione del Boccaccio dai rinnovamenti dell’intraprendente Claricio?’, p. 47.

*Amorosa visione* and Boccaccio's other *opere minori* prove that the *Amorosa visione* was 'posteriore alla *Commedia della Ninfe*' (1341-42);<sup>12</sup> whereas Boccaccio's depiction of King Robert of Anjou as a living character in canto XIV suggests that the text was composed before his death on 19 January 1343. Branca states that, considering these two facts, along with 'altri minori argomenti', the date of the first redaction must be fixed between 1342 and the very beginning of 1343.<sup>13</sup> This dating facilitates the implementation of Eisner's view of the *Amorosa visione* as 'the decisive mediating text in Petrarch's conceptualization of the *Triumph*', and also gives weight to his argument that no work of literature has contributed more to the inspiration of the triumph motif than Boccaccio's *Visione*.<sup>14</sup>

### THE ACROSTIC SONNETS

The *Amorosa visione* has one of the most unusual structures of any text of the Middle Ages, and the three introductory sonnets serve to provide not only the contextual information pertinent to the text's composition, but also the acrostic beginnings of each *terzina* which make up the fifty cantos of the entire narrative section of the dream-vision. The acrostics are an intrinsic part of the text; they are inextricable from the narrative vision, due to the way in which the two sections of the text interlock. Kirkham describes the introductory poems as a '*tour-de-force*', which are not meant to be 'pruned away' from the narrative vision, but which are meant to be admired.<sup>15</sup> They unravel to span the full 4403 verses of the vision, and fulfil several simultaneous roles within the composite text. In this section I discuss the varying functions and structures of the lyric and narrative components of the *Amorosa visione*; how these features enhance our understanding of the composite text; and the impact of this upon the dream-vision aspects of Boccaccio's writing, before moving on to explore the more formal aspects of Boccaccio's dream-vision.

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<sup>12</sup> Branca, 'Introduzione', p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Branca states that 'La composizione dell'*Amorosa Visione*, nella sua prima redazione, può essere dunque fissata [...] tra il 1342 e i primissimi del 1343': 'Introduzione' p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Eisner, 'Petrarch Reading Boccaccio', p. 132.

<sup>15</sup> Kirkham, *The Sign of Reason in Boccaccio's Fiction*, p. 59.

The three poems which introduce the *Amorosa visione* are of varying lengths (seventeen, sixteen, and twenty-five lines, respectively) and have differing metre and rhyme schemes. Kirkham stresses that these poems are not merely ‘ordinary [sonnets] of fourteen verses, but more imposing *sonetti caudati* with elaborate trains’.<sup>16</sup> Aside from the variations in verse length, the poems also differ in their dedications since the first two are addressed to a ‘*donna gentile*’ (sonnet 1. 2) and a ‘*donna pietosa*’ (sonnet 2. 2), respectively; whilst Boccaccio uses his third acrostic poem to directly address his imagined readership, the ‘*gratosi | animi virtuosi*’ (sonnet 3. 1-2), whom he implores: ‘*prestiate lo ’ntellecto agli amorosi | versi*’ (sonnet 3. 6-7). This final dedication makes explicit that Boccaccio intended his text to be received by an informed readership; by addressing their ‘*ntellecto*’, Boccaccio immediately clarifies the level of knowledge he presumes of his readers. The *Amorosa visione* has been written with a specific audience in mind; one which already has a good working knowledge of dream-vision literature and, therefore, possesses an established set of expectations for the text.

Within the first of his introductory poems, Boccaccio gives a great deal of information regarding the purpose of his dream-vision text. Not only does he directly address ‘*madama Maria*’ (sonnet 1. 11) — whom he names elsewhere as ‘*Cara Fiamma*’ (sonnet 1. 15) — but, thanks to his lexical choices, he also clearly sets out many of the *Amorosa visione*’s key themes, with his repetition of ‘*vision*’ (‘*la presente | vision*’, sonnet 1. 1-2; ‘*questa Visione*’, sonnet 1. 16) firmly locating the text within the oneiric tradition. Boccaccio draws further attention to his final use of ‘*Visione*’ (sonnet 1. 16) by ensuring that it stands alone within the final tercet, sandwiched as a rhyme word between the ‘*caldo : Certaldo*’ rhyme, prominent to both the eye and the ear, thus highlighting the particular importance with which we should view the visionary characteristics of his text.

Like the first acrostic poem, Boccaccio’s second sonnet is dedicated to a ‘*donna pietosa*’ (sonnet 2. 2), whom he describes in highly elevated terms (‘*una soavità sì dilectosa*’, sonnet 2. 3; ‘*vostra biltate*’, sonnet 2. 10), and it also contains terminology relating to the composition of poetry. Boccaccio’s initial employment

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<sup>16</sup> Kirkham, *The Sign of Reason in Boccaccio’s Fiction*, p. 59.

of terms such as ‘lo nuovo stile’ (sonnet 1. 3) and ‘sottile | rima’ (sonnet 1. 7-8) is amplified within his second sonnet, where he explains how he wished to pay homage to his beloved through his ‘rime nuove’ (sonnet 2. 11) and ‘parole rimate’ (sonnet 2. 13). The lexical field of poetic composition used here by Boccaccio is a sure intertextual allusion to the works of his literary master, Dante, and is a topic to which I will return later in this chapter.

Boccaccio’s third and final acrostic poem is markedly different from its two predecessors in both its intended audience and its content. Gone are the elevated descriptions of his beloved ‘Maria’ and the explicit references to the vision aspects of the narrative text: these have been replaced by modest suggestions as to the readers’ possible responses to the *Amorosa visione*:

Se in sé fructo o forse alcun dilecto  
porgesse a vo’ lector, ringratiate  
colei la cui biltate  
questo mi mosse a ffar come subgiecto.            (Sonnet 3. 13-16)

Boccaccio uses the *passato remoto* – ‘mi mosse’ – to address his reader, which confirms that the vision is narrated in retrospect. Since the acrostics form the basis for the narrative vision, these must also necessarily be narrated in retrospect. Yet the question of timings — which part of the text came first, the tenses used to narrate the individual sections of the text — must remain secondary to issues surrounding how the two sections of the *Amorosa visione* interact with one another, and how their individual influences combine to produce a composite text.

In her study of the *Amorosa visione*, Sylvia Huot proposes a reading of the text which accentuates the mutual dependence of the acrostic poems and the narrative vision. She argues that each acts as a commentary device for the other: the cantos provide an amplification of the introductory poems, which in turn constitute both an introduction to and commentary on the narrative vision.<sup>17</sup> Huot advocates reading the narrative vision and lyric poems in tandem to better understand the inherent ambiguities and ironies which emerge from the composite

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<sup>17</sup> Sylvia Huot, ‘Poetic Ambiguity and Reader Response in Boccaccio’s *Amorosa Visione*’, *Modern Philology*, 83 (1985), 109-22 (p. 119).

text, and she maps out the more pertinent sections of narrative alongside the lyrical sequences to which they correspond. She notes, for example, that the

Triumphs of Glory and Avarice [within the vision sequence] are marked in the acrostic by the names ‘Madama Maria’ (acrostic 1, line 11, corresponding to canto 10, lines 34-64) and ‘Cara Fiamma’ (acrostic 1, line 11, corresponding to canto 13, lines 61-88), respectively, while the description of the lady in the Triumph of Love is marked by Boccaccio’s own name.<sup>18</sup>

If then, as Huot suggests, the correlation between the narrative sequence and the acrostic lyrics is contrived, it should come as little surprise that the sections of the narrative in which Boccaccio first introduces his dream-vision should be punctuated by oneiric references in their corresponding acrostics.

Boccaccio begins to introduce his narrator’s vision within the first canto of the *Amorosa visione*, where he describes falling asleep (‘Lì mi posai, a ciascun occhio grave | al sonno diedi’, I. 19-20) and being greeted by his guide, a ‘donna gentil, piacente e bella’ (canto I, 26). The first exchange the narrator then shares with his guide is marked in the acrostic by the word ‘vision’ (sonnet 1. 2, corresponding to cantos I. 79 – II. 6). The two ‘giovinetti’, who first appear within canto IV, serve the narrative function of creating conflict by attempting to lure the dreamer away from the ‘piccola porta’ towards a life of pleasure and sin. Their role in the vision is pivotal, since they both initiate and personify the protagonist’s temptation; in essence, they create the subject matter of the dream, since the text is primarily concerned with Boccaccio-*personaggio*’s struggle to convert to a more heavenly and virtuous way of life. That the introduction of the ‘giovinetti’ within the narrative vision is marked in the acrostics by a phrase which highlights the oneiric nature of the text, then, should come as little surprise. In fact, the phrase Boccaccio uses to underpin this section of the narrative — ‘la fantasia ch’è nella mente’ (sonnet 1. 4) — ensures that we are reminded that these two young tempters are not real, but a product of the fictional narrator’s imagination; the functions they serve within the narrative are amplified by their positioning within

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<sup>18</sup> Huot, ‘Poetic Ambiguity and Reader Response’, p. 110.

the text in relation to the acrostic sonnets.

The section of text in which the two ‘giovinetti’ are introduced also plays host to a discussion between the dreamer and his spirit-guide regarding ‘falso immaginar’:

Fermata allor mi disse: ‘Tu t’abbagli  
nel falso immaginar, e credi a questi  
ch’a dritta via son pessimi serragli’. (III. 76-78)

This discussion corresponds to the same section of the first acrostic sonnet as the entrance of the two young men – ‘la fantasia ch’è nella mente’ – which seems apt considering the subject matter of the conversation. Discussions pertaining to the truth and value of fantasies simultaneously occupy both the narrative vision and the exact sections of the acrostics to which this conversation belong.

Within the *Amorosa visione*, the narrator witnesses several triumphal processions created within the frescoes painted on the walls of the castle. In the Triumph of Love he sees the god Amor, ‘un gran signor di mirabile aspetto’ (XV. 14), and also encounters his love-object. Canto XV contains lengthy descriptions of both Amor and the ‘donna gentile’ (XV. 47), and culminates in the narrator exclaiming that

A rimirar contento questa onesta  
donna mi stava, che in atti dicesse  
parea parole assai piene di festa,  
come lo ’mmaginar par che intendesse. (XV. 85-88)

This section of the narrative is marked in the acrostic poems not only by the author’s name and birthplace, as Huot notes (‘Giovanni è di Boccaccio da Certaldo’, sonnet 1. 17),<sup>19</sup> but also by the word ‘Visione’ (sonnet 1. 16,

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<sup>19</sup> Huot, ‘Poetic Ambiguity and Reader Response’, p. 117; Huot compares Boccaccio’s self-naming with *Purgatorio* 30, in which Dante, too, names himself: ‘Surely this, the only instance in all of his works where Boccaccio names himself, deserves attention, and one cannot help but think of the passage in *Purgatorio* 30, the only instance in the works of Dante where he names himself. This occurs at a highly-charged moment — Dante has just met Beatrice and lost Virgil — and is the opening word of Beatrice’s rebuke. As Boccaccio’s name emerges from the description and imagined discourse of the *donna*, we may well imagine a similar

corresponding to XV. 19-39). As with the introduction of the ‘giovinetti’ in canto III, the description of Boccaccio-*personaggio*’s love-object also ends with an oneiric reference: ‘come lo ‘mmaginar par che intendesse’ (XV. 88). The ‘donna gentile’, too, fulfils a pivotal role within the narrative, since she also — albeit inadvertently — ignites contradictory feelings within the protagonist; while the spirit-guide attempts to lead the dreamer away from a life of carnal pleasure, the beautiful woman reminds him of the delights on which he is missing out. It is quite clear that Boccaccio’s positioning of these sections of narrative is deliberate, and his dual approach of simultaneously using both the lyric verses and the narrative sequence ensures that sufficient attention is drawn to the vision aspects of his composite text.

Boccaccio’s use of the acrostic format itself highlights the importance with which he wished the dream-vision aspects of his text to be considered. Kirkham discusses the history of acrostic poetry in her study *The Sign of Reason*, and explains that the form originated on a Greek island where it was practised by the Erythraean Sibyl, a prophetess of the late antique period. The Erythraean Sibyl prophesied, in the form of an acrostic, ‘ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΧΡΕΙΣΤΟΣ ΘΕΟΥ ΥΙΟΣ ΣΩΤΗΡΣ ΤΑΥΡΟΣ’ (‘JESUS CHRIST GOD SON SAVIOUR CROSS’); as such the form has been intrinsically linked to visionary experiences since its inception.<sup>20</sup> Boccaccio was familiar with the life and works of the prophetess, and would dedicate a section of his *De mulieribus claris* to her in his later years, wherein he would describe her virtuous nature and ability to prophesy accurately:

Sunt qui asserant insuper eam virginitate perpetua floruisse, quod ego facile credam: non enim in contagioso pectore tanta futurorum lux effulsisse potuisset.

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rebuke, for he is even now committing the errors from which Dante was recovering’.

<sup>20</sup> Kirkham, *The Sign of Reason in Boccaccio’s Fiction*, p. 60.

(Some accounts further claim that she preserved her virginity. I can easily believe this, for I do not think that so clear a vision of the future could have shone forth in an unclean breast).<sup>21</sup>

Boccaccio's use of acrostics, then, should not be overlooked, since we know that he was familiar with the Sibyl's history with the form; in employing acrostics in his own poetry, he ensures that his own oneiric text be afforded the same gravitas as religious prophecy since, as Kirkham explains, 'visions become all the more authoritative when cast in the arcane acrostic medium'.<sup>22</sup>

### TERMINOLOGY

Boccaccio stresses the importance of the *Amorosa visione*'s dream sequence within both his extended narrative and the introductory acrostic poems through his use of acrostics and oneiric references, yet the precise vision references within his text require careful consideration if we are to fully understand the reasoning behind — and effects of — his use of the dream-vision trope. This section explores the specific dream terminology Boccaccio uses in the narration of the *Amorosa visione* and how this influences our understanding of the text as a dream-vision.

The *Amorosa visione* is almost entirely framed by sleep, with the narrator succumbing to slumber after only eighteen lines of verse ('Lì mi posai, e ciascun occhio grave | al sonno diedi', I. 19) and waking at the beginning of the final canto ('Dico che poi che 'l sonno fu partito | tutto di me, che stava lagrimando | ancora in me di tal bene smarrito', L. 1-3). Perhaps unsurprisingly, there are numerous oneiric references within the text, almost thirty in total. Six references appear within the introductory sonnets, and serve to announce the main theme of the text ('la presente | vision', 1. 1-2; 'la fantasia ch'è nella mente', 1. 4; 'vi manda questa Visione', 1. 16; 'Il dole immaginar', 2. 1; 'nello 'nmaginar vostra biltate', 2. 10; 'la Visione in parole rimate', 2. 13), with the remaining references

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<sup>21</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *De mulieribus claris*, ed. by Vittorio Zaccharia, in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vol. X; trans. taken from Giovanni Boccaccio, *Famous Women*, bilingual edition, trans. and ed. by Virginia Brown (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), XXI. 9.

<sup>22</sup> Kirkham, *The Sign of Reason in Boccaccio's Fiction*, p. 60.

found within the narrative vision. With only one exception — located within the Guide's speech from canto XXXII. 46-48 ('Il povero uom di tal cosa non geme, | né perde sonno, né lascia sentiero, | sol di sua vita trar pensiero il preme') — all of the references located within the narrative vision refer specifically to the narrator's dream, and the highest concentration of oneiric terms occur during the sections of text where the protagonist is either falling asleep or waking from his dream-vision.

Within the vision proper, the first reference to dream-visions occurs within the first canto, where Boccaccio-*personaggio* introduces the text by explaining his intent to narrate that which had been shown to him by Cupid:

[...] volvervi narrare  
 quel che Cupido graziosamente  
 in *vision* li piacque di mostrare  
 all'alma mia (I. 2-5, emphases mine)

The dream-sequence begins just a few lines afterwards, with the narrator describing his descent into sleep:

[...] ciascun occhio grave  
 al *sonno* diei, per lo qual gli agguati  
 conobbi chiusi sotto dolce chiave.  
 Così *dormendo*, in su liti salati  
 mi vidi correr [...]. (I. 19-23, emphases mine)

Having located his narrator's vision within the realm of sleep, Boccaccio makes no further reference to dreaming until the closing cantos of the *Amorosa visione*, despite the narrative being entirely framed by a dream-vision. However, as the protagonist becomes aroused from sleep, and in a space occupying just three cantos —XLVI, XLIX and L — there are twenty-one separate references to sleep, dreams, fantasies, and imaginings. Such a high concentration of references ensures that, as the text comes to an end, the reader cannot fail to remember that the preceding narrative was framed by sleep, its action having taken place within a dream. The first group of references marking the end of the vision is located within canto XLVI, where the narrator departs the care of his spirit-guide and tries

to constantly reassure himself that he is not dreaming but actually experiencing the events of his vision in real life:

Dond'io fra me spesse volte dicea:  
 'Sogni tu? o se' qui come ti pare?'  
 'Anzi ci son' poi fra me rispondea [...]  
     fra me dicendo ch'io pur non *sognava*,  
 posto che mi pareva grande tanto  
 la cosa, ch'io pur di *sognar* dubbiava. (XLVI. 34-42, emphases mine)

During this section of narrative, Boccaccio-*personaggio* descends into what appears to be a dream-within-a-dream; having departed the company of his guide, the narrator enters a secluded garden and encounters a beautiful woman whom he attempts to seduce. Despite her protestations (““Che fai?” | cominciò isvegliata, “deh, non fare! | se quella donna vien, come farai?””, XLIX. 28-30), the narrator begins to rape her, stopping only as his sleep is interrupted. Boccaccio’s dreamer is woken at the very point at which he is about to commit rape, rendering his narrative what Hollander describes as ‘the greatest anti-climax in the medieval literature of love’.<sup>23</sup> Unlike Jean de Meun’s dreamer in the *Roman de la Rose*, who achieves satisfaction from the eponymous Rose before waking, Boccaccio-*personaggio* remains in a perpetual state of frustration. He is the ultimate tragic character, having neither learned from his guide, nor achieved any form of sexual gratification.

During canto XLIX, in which the attempted assault and subsequent awakening occur, there are a total of eleven oneiric references, the highest concentration of any canto. One reference is made to the beautiful woman whom the narrator desires (‘presa lei che ’n sull’erbeta | sonniferrava già, XLIX. 23-24), and one is made to the interruption of the narrator’s sleep at the moment of penetration (‘ma ’l sonno offese | là dov’io dolce allor facea dimora | per che si ruppe e più non si difese’, XLIX. 43-45); seven references are present within lines 51-61:

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<sup>23</sup> Robert Hollander, *Boccaccio’s Two Venuses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), pp. 89-90.

mi fu il *dormir* mentre 'n braccio v'avea!

Ahi come ritornò in duolo amaro  
 quel diletto che 'l *sonno* m'avea porto,  
 ch'a ogni affanno avea posto riparo!

Lasso angoscioso e senza alcun conforto,  
 levato, pur dintorno mi mirava,  
*immaginando* ancora star nell'orto.

La *fantasia* non so come m'errava,  
 e mentre avea *sognato*, mi credeva  
 non *sogno* avesse e così estimava.

Or stordito *sognar* mi pareva (XLIX. 51-61, emphases mine).

The remaining two references occur during lines XLIX. 71 ('ancor mi fora leggiero il dormire') and XLIX. 82 ('nella quale ora dormendo').

The final six references to sleep, dreams, and fantasies all appear within the final canto. They mark the narrator's complete arousal from sleep ('l sonno fu partito', L. 1) and subsequent discussion of his dream with the guide — who, it may be noted, has the ability to appear to the dreamer outside the oneiric framework. Three references to sleep are made by the guide in direct speech ('che nel tuo sonno mi ti diè ancoi', L. 9; 'il tuo dormire alla tua fantasia', L. 14), while the final two references ('tanta gioia nel mio dormire', L. 48; and 'la passata visione', L. 53) offer a conclusion to and reflection on the dream-vision.

In his *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, Boccaccio dedicates an entire chapter — *De Somno* — to discussions of sleep. He discusses the approaches taken by Ovid, Seneca, and Cicero in terms of their thoughts on reveries, before moving on to explore the different theories proposed by Macrobius in his commentary on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*. Boccaccio paraphrases Macrobius's five-fold classification of dreams, and explains the suspected causes and significance of each type. While I do not suggest reading the *Amorosa visione* through the lens of a text whose first draft was not completed until some twenty years later, the *De Somno* clearly illustrates Boccaccio's interest in and familiarity with treatises regarding the nature of sleep and dreams; he understood the function of different dream-types and how these could be deployed within literature. Yet in the *Amorosa visione*, there are numerous different references to sleep and dreams and

Boccaccio's use of terminology makes it unclear how, if at all, we are to interpret the vision. He not only uses *dormire* and *sonno* seemingly interchangeably, but he also employs a variety of terms to describe the narrator's oneiric experiences — *sogno*, *visione*, *fantasia*, for example. Boccaccio combines the different types of dreams proposed by Macrobius in his typology, to create an enigma of a text, which Kirkham describes as a '*visio-somnium-oraculum*';<sup>24</sup> it belongs to several categories at the same time; it defies the rules of Macrobius's classification. As such, it is a riddle; a dream which cannot be easily comprehended or interpreted. And since Boccaccio has elsewhere demonstrated his understanding of the function of different dream-types, we are left to conclude that the sense of elusiveness surrounding his text is deliberate.

### THE SPIRIT-GUIDE

Boccaccio's lexical choices in terms of reporting his narrator's dream-vision are both conventional — they stem from a catalogue of already established terms, which had been deployed within oneiric literature for centuries — and unconventional — he combines terminology specific to several different types of vision in one text. Unconventional uses of conventional tropes are a key feature of the *Amorosa visione*, and this is especially evident in his deployment of the spirit-guide motif.

Boccaccio's guide is a complex figure and, according to Branca, constitutes 'l'aspirazione alla virtù che è in ogni anima'.<sup>25</sup> She is described in regal terms: she is wearing violet robes, has a pleasant disposition, and is carrying a sceptre and a 'bel pomo d'oro' (I. 41). Smarr suggests that, since the guide holds a sceptre and orb, or golden apple, rather than a sceptre and book, she is representative of a heavenly (rather than earthly) queen;<sup>26</sup> like Dante's spirit-guides in the *Commedia*, she is sent from an otherworldly realm to aid the dreamer in his journey to conversion. The heavenly guide makes her debut within the first canto of the narrative vision, appearing to the dreamer as he sleeps:

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<sup>24</sup> Kirkham, *The Sign of Reason in Boccaccio's Fiction*, p. 74.

<sup>25</sup> Vittore Branca, 'Note', in *Amorosa visione*, p. 560.

<sup>26</sup> Smarr, *Boccaccio and Fiammetta*, pp. 102-03.

Così dormendo, in su liti salati  
 mi vidi correr, non so che temendo,  
 pavido e solo in quelli abbandonati,  
 or qua or là, null'ordine tenendo;  
 quando donna gentil, piacente e bella,  
 m'apparve. (I. 22-27)

She then remains within the narrative until the final canto — only briefly parting company with the protagonist in cantos XL-XLIX, as he goes off in search of sexual pleasure — where she exits through the ‘portella stretta’ (L. 50), followed by Boccaccio-*personaggio*.

That Boccaccio’s guide is female is not unusual – Dante used a female guide to accompany his pilgrim through *Paradiso*, and Boethius’s Lady Philosophy also constitutes one of the most influential spirit-guide models of the tradition. Furthermore, the way in which the guide enters the narrative is modelled upon several oneiric texts, including Cicero’s *Somnium Scipionis* and Boethius’s *De consolatione Philosophiae*: the dreamer is passive in the process, with the guide entering his consciousness and appearing within his vision, as denoted by Boccaccio’s use of ‘m’apparve’. In his *Somnium Scipionis*, Cicero’s protagonist explains how his adoptive grandfather, Scipio Africanus, ‘se ostendit’ (‘revealed himself’) as he was sleeping, before proceeding to offer prophecies regarding the dreamer’s future political career;<sup>27</sup> whilst the sleeping Boethius was similarly greeted by the figure of a woman who ‘astitisse mihi supra verticem’ (‘seemed to position herself above my head’).<sup>28</sup> The roles of the characters overlap, too; like Boethius’s Lady Philosophy, who facilitates the discussion of the concepts of Good and Evil, Boccaccio’s guide engages her protagonist in debates regarding the rejection of earthly pleasure and carnal delight.

The primary function of the *Amorosa visione*’s guide is to eventually lead the dreamer away from his current life of sin, in favour of following a more virtuous existence. She attempts to achieve this goal in several ways, both by conversing with the protagonist about the pursuit of heavenly — rather than

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<sup>27</sup> Cicero, ‘Somnium Scipionis’, in *The Republic*, VI,

<sup>28</sup> Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy*, I. 1. 1. 2-3.

earthly — delights, and also by communicating with him through the use of frescoes depicting triumphal processions, and offering explanations for the scenes witnessed by the dreamer within the paintings. The guide essentially provides a gloss on the narrative and serves to bridge the gap between the allegory and reality by elucidating the significance of the frescoes and triumphs.<sup>29</sup> However, despite her manifold approach to educating the dreamer, the guide essentially fails in her task and the narrative ends with the dreamer leading a life no more virtuous than before his dream. The guide's and the narrator's roles within the text are clear: as a character who has proven himself consistently unable to apply reason to his own situation, the dreamer clearly represents the ignorance of allegory; whereas, the guide, relentless in her exhortation, is the misunderstood representation of allegory. Both characters act as commentaries on the use and misunderstanding of allegory, but are themselves allegorical representations of that same misunderstanding.

Sylvia Huot has explored the relationship between Dante's *Purgatorio* 19 and the final cantos of the *Amorosa visione*, where Boccaccio's guide departs the text, having failed to convert her dreamer. She describes how Dante's pilgrim undergoes a dream-vision in which he becomes sexually aroused by an attractive woman, but how these fantasies are quickly extinguished by the pilgrim's mentor, Virgil, who urges the dreamer to continue his journey to discover his true lady in heaven.<sup>30</sup> In the *Amorosa visione*, Boccaccio recreates this scene when the dreamer departs the company of his guide in order to pursue his sexual desires. However, unlike Dante-*personaggio*, Boccaccio's narrator does not take heed of his guide's advice against these fantasies. As such, Huot describes Boccaccio's refiguration of the Dantean dream as a complete inversion of the original episode:

In Dante's dream, sexual fantasies elevate an infernal being to an object of desire: in Boccaccio's, these fantasies debase a celestial being [...]. [W]e see the protagonist of the *Amorosa Visione*

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<sup>29</sup> Smarr also argues for such a reading of the *Amorosa visione*'s guide in *Boccaccio and Fiammetta*, p. 104: 'the guide provides a running commentary or explication for the scenes which the lover describes but does not understand [...] we have once again a sort of text and gloss both within the narrative'.

<sup>30</sup> Huot, 'Poetic Ambiguity and Reader Response', p. 119.



outside the text's dream-framework. The narrator's return to consciousness is made explicit:

ma 'l sonno offese  
 là dov'io dolce allor facea dimora,  
 per che si ruppe e più non si difese. (XLIX. 43-45)

'l sonno fu partito  
 tutto di me' (L. 1-2)

Yet despite this, their conversation continues. The narrator has the ability to engage with the guide despite the dream having ended, and she has the ability to respond to his questions.

The guide's ability to appear beyond the confines of the dream-vision is problematic, and raises many questions. Are we to assume, for example, that the narrator has, in fact, undergone a false awakening and is still trapped within his dream? Or is this final scene a necessary narrative device for the protagonist to be able to confront his carnal desires in a state of conscious awareness? We may hazard guesses as to the responses to these queries, but ultimately we will never truly know Boccaccio's intentions regarding the guide's ability to transcend the different planes within the *Amorosa visione*. It seems likely, though, that Boccaccio was simply playing around with the traditions and conventions of dream-vision texts, particularly considering the stolid and often humorous resistance displayed by his protagonist in his refusal to take heed of his guide's advice.<sup>33</sup> No previous spirit-guide within the tradition had displayed the ability to permeate the dreamer's waking life, but likewise, no other guide had failed so spectacularly in converting their charge to a different way of life. Her presence within the final canto constitutes one last-ditch attempt to fulfil her task: 'Andiamo omai, | ché 'l tempo è breve a quel che voi fornire' (L. 43-44).

The role of the *Amorosa visione*'s guide is multifold: she leads the

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<sup>33</sup> Hollander, in *Boccaccio's Two Venuses*, also argues that the insertion of the guide outside the framing dream, coupled with the awakening of the narrator at the very moment of intercourse with his love-object, was simply a way in which the author was able to play around 'rather coquettishly' with the conventions of oneiric literature, p. 90.

dreamer through his oneiric journey and also through the physical castle; she draws his attention towards the various frescoes and triumphs, and then provides explanations and commentaries on the scenes he witnesses therein; yet she also serves to enhance our understanding of the allegorical text as presented by Boccaccio. She provides glosses for the dreamer regarding the literal, metaphorical, and allegorical meanings of the frescoes, and in so doing, draws our attention to the different ways in which the *Amorosa visione* may be read and understood. She is also the mediator of Boccaccio's message; she is an external voice through which discussions regarding difficult issues may be facilitated. However, because she is both a product of fiction and a figure within an imagined dream, the ambiguity and distance created by Boccaccio-author is able to be fully preserved.

#### THE TRIUMPHAL MOTIF

Within the *Amorosa visione*, Boccaccio's guide leads the dreamer through a 'nobile castello' (I. 59), upon the walls of which he sees frescoes depicting the four triumphs of Wisdom, Glory, Wealth and Love. The first triumph, that of Wisdom, occurs during cantos IV and V of the narrative vision; here Boccaccio-*personaggio* is presented with a painting, which includes the figures of famous philosophers, such as Aristotle 'tacito riguardando, in sé unito' (IV. 43), Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras, and Boethius, '[v]estito d'umiltà, pudico e casto' (IV. 82); classical authors, such as Ovid, Virgil, Homer, and Horace; and even Dante.

This first triumph has attracted a great deal of attention from commentators precisely because of Boccaccio's inclusion of Dante within this scene, and the parallels between this episode and canto IV of Dante's *Inferno*. In *Inferno* IV, Dante depicts his own 'nobile castello' of Limbo (*If.* IV. 106), where the unbaptised souls of pagans reside. Here, Dante places many of the same characters as found within Boccaccio's own castle — Plato, Socrates, Diogenes, Zeno, as well as the poets Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan:

quelli è Omero poeta sovrano;  
l'altro è Orazio satiro che vene;  
Ovidio è 'l terzo, e l'ultimo Lucano. (*If.* IV. 88-90)

Boccaccio recreates this scene within the *Amorosa visione* with one crucial difference: he places Dante alongside these pagan poets, essentially numbering him amongst those trapped in Limbo.<sup>34</sup>

The Triumph of Wisdom is immediately followed by the Triumph of Glory, which occupies cantos VI-XII of the text. Within this second painting, Boccaccio-*personaggio* encounters many mythological and biblical characters, such as Nimrod ('Il superbo Nembròt', VII. 7), Ulysses, Minos, Samson, and Absalom. He also witnesses several historical figures, such as the Roman generals Lucius Sulla, Catiline, and Caesar, alongside the legendary characters of King Arthur and 'tutti cavalieri | chiamati della Tavola ritonda' (XI. 2-3). This second triumphal procession gives way to the third, that of Wealth (cantos XII-XIV), in which the narrator recalls meeting the Byzantine general, Narses, and the mythological character of Midas, amongst others including Nero, Dionysius, and Pygmalion.

The fourth triumph spans fifteen cantos (XV-XXIX) and is concerned with famous lovers. It opens with Cupid, surrounded by great a great horde of people who 'mirasse pure a sua [Cupid's] benignitate' (XV. 39), including the mythological figure of Jove, who rapes Europa ('riguardando essa, né giammai da lei | partir senza il disiato giugnimento', XVI. 85-86), and also pursues sexual contact with Juno, Diana, Semele, and Antiope, amongst others. The dreamer also sees many of the ill-fated characters from the Ovidian *Heroides*, such as Jason and Medea, Phaedra and Hippolytus, Phyllis and Demophon, Dido and Aeneas, and Hero and Leander.

The fifth triumph of the *Amorosa visione* is that of Fortune. Occupying cantos XXXI-XXXVII, this final triumph includes the personified figure of Fortune herself, alongside both famously successful and unfortunate people from history and mythology, such as Alexander the Great ('Alessandro, ch'assalio | in mondo tutto, per velen morire', XXXV. 2-3), Hector, who 'non li valse niente | contra costei il suo esser famoso' (XXXIV. 68-69), and Jocasta, 'ch'al figlio moglie misera divenne, | ben ch'avenisse senza suo sapere' (XXXIV. 23-24).

In her study on triumphs, Mary Beard explains that the motif had been

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<sup>34</sup> For further argumentation on Boccaccio's placing of Dante in Limbo, see Huot, 'Poetic Ambiguity and Reader Response', p. 113.

used for centuries within literature since it offered a particularly suitable climax to poems celebrating Roman achievement.<sup>35</sup> Writers such as Ennius, Statius and Silius Italicus all made use of triumphal imagery within their own texts, and in his *Paradiso*, Dante also makes use of the trope when describing the Church Triumphant:

Ecco le schiere  
del trïunfo di Cristo e tutto 'l frutto  
ricolto del girar di queste spere!      (*Pd.*, XXIII, 19-21)

Perhaps the most influential triumphal text in terms of its impact upon the composition of the *Amorosa visione* was Dino Compagni's *Intelligenza*, composed in the early fourteenth century. Within Compagni's text, the narrator, having been greeted by the rhetorical figure, Madonna Intelligenza, is led through the rooms of a castle in much the same way as Boccaccio's narrator in the *Amorosa visione*. Like Boccaccio's guide, Madonna Intelligenza communicates with Compagni's protagonist through the use of painted frescoes upon the castle walls, which depict various scenes and triumphal processions. The first of these triumphs occurs during canto 71 of the text, as the narrator, having journeyed through all twelve rooms of Intelligenza's palace, reaches the central vault, where Amor resides:

Nel mezzo de la volta è 'l Deo d'Amore  
Che tiene ne la destra mano un dardo,  
Ed avvisa qualunque ha gentil core,  
E fierelo, che mai non ha riguardo.<sup>36</sup>

Here, the narrator witnesses many famous mythological, historical, and literary lovers, including Helen of Troy and Paris, Dido and Aeneas, and even Florio and Biancifiore, who would re-emerge as characters in Boccaccio's *Filocolo* only a few years later.

Although the Triumph of Love is the only triumph proper within the

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<sup>35</sup> Mary Beard, *The Roman Triumph* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 41.

<sup>36</sup> Compagni, *Intelligenza*, 71. 1-4.

*Intelligenza*, the narrator witnesses four further frescoes which depict various scenes from history and mythology — the stories of Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Troy, and the Knights of the Round Table, respectively. These four episodes differ from the first triumph; the long lists of exempla have given way to more detailed narratives. Yet, in terms of their structure and narrative function, the episodes share many similarities with Compagni's Triumph of Love and, indeed, the frescoes Boccaccio's narrator sees in the *Amorosa visione*: the tales of Caesar, Alexander, Troy, and the Round Table are all depicted in the mural frescoes; they all celebrate glory and honour; and, importantly, the characters found within the images are able to communicate with the protagonist both verbally and through the appended inscriptions. In the *Amorosa visione*, Boccaccio not only re-employs many of the same characters as found within the frescoes of the *Intelligenza* (Alexander the Great, Caesar, Dido and Aeneas, Ulysses and Penelope, for example), but he also affords them the capacity to communicate with Boccaccio-*personaggio* through speech and inscriptions within the paintings.

Within the triumphs of the *Amorosa visione*, Boccaccio's narrator encounters several personifications of virtues or abstract traits. The first of these, Wisdom, appears within cantos IV-V, during the Triumph of Wisdom:

Là vid'io pinta con sottil diviso  
 una donna piacente nell'aspetto,  
 soave sguardo avea e dolce riso.  
 La man sinistra teneva un libretto,  
 verga real la destra, e' vestimenti  
 porpora gli estimai nell'intelletto.      (*AV.*, IV. 25-30)

Surrounding Wisdom are the aforementioned characters of the triumph, alongside seven ladies, 'dissimiglianti | l'una dall'altra in atto ed in parato' (IV. 35-36).

Aside from introducing Dante to the narrator ('Costui è Dante Alighier fiorentino, | il qual con eccelente stil vi scrisse | il sommo ben, le pene e la gran morte', V. 84-86), Wisdom's role within this triumph is minimal; she does not offer any guidance or advice to the dreamer, but simply serves as a figuration of the character trait for which those within her triumph are revered.

Boccaccio-*personaggio*'s second encounter with a personified virtue

comes during canto VI, when he is greeted by the character of Earthly Glory ('la Gloria del popol mondano', *AV*. VI. 75). This character, whom the dreamer describes as 'leggiadra e pura' (VI. 48), is crowned with gold and precious stones, seated upon a triumphal carriage (VI. 50-53) and is holding 'nella man sinistra | un pomo d'oro' (VI. 59-60). Like Wisdom before her, Earthly Glory plays a very small role within the narrative; she does not interact with the dreamer, and is identified simply by an inscription above her head, which reads 'Io son la Gloria del popol mondano' (VI. 75).

During the Triumph of Love (cantos XV-XXIX), Boccaccio introduces the character Amore, the personification of erotic love. Described as a 'gran signore di mirabile aspetto' (XV. 14), seated atop two eagles, Amore also wears a crown of gold and has 'due grandi ali d'oro' protruding from his shoulder-blades (XV. 26). Like Earthly Glory, Amore does not play a significant part within the Triumph; his role is merely to oversee the procession of famous lovers. He does not communicate with either the dreamer or any other character within the text, and certainly offers no advice or counsel of any kind.

Not all of Boccaccio's personifications are of the same ilk, and his characterisation of Fortune is particularly striking since she is depicted as simultaneously happy and sad; a woman who 'muta ogni mondano stato' (XXXI. 17). Fortune is shown alongside her wheel, upon which are depicted many humans: 's'andavan con le man con tutto ingegno, | fino alla sommità d'essa montando' (XXXI. 41-42). Yet what sets her aside from the personifications of Wisdom and Earthly Glory is the fact that she takes an active role in the narrative. Whilst Wisdom speaks only to introduce Dante, and Earthly Glory remains entirely silent, Fortune interacts with other characters within the text. Her speech comes in the form of a stark warning to those men willing to climb upon her rotating wheel in search of good fortune: 'Ogni uom che vuol montarci su sia oso | di farlo, ma quand'io 'l gitto a basso | inverso me non torni allor cruccioso' (XXXI. 31-33). Fortune is also pivotal in the dreamer's becoming aware of his need to convert to a more spiritual life, whereby a loss of material wealth would cause little trouble.

Lady Fortune and her Wheel (Rota Fortunae) were recurrently used to depict the precarious nature of fate within ancient and medieval philosophical

treatises. Although the trope was common within the writings of Roman philosophers, astrologers, and historians, it was primarily through the works of Boethius that the concept was known within the Middle Ages. Boethius refers to Fortune and her Wheel in his *De consolazione Philosophiae*:

Fortunae te regendum dedisti; dominae moribus oportet obtemperes.  
Tu uero uoluentis rotae impetum retinere conaris? At, omnium  
mortalium stolidissime, si manere incipit, fors esse desistit.

(Having entrusted yourself to Fortune's dominion, you must conform to your mistress's ways. What, are you trying to halt the motion of her whirling wheel? Dimmest of fools that you are, you must realize that if the wheel stops turning, it ceases to be the course of chance).<sup>37</sup>

As I demonstrated in my first chapter, the *De consolazione Philosophiae* was a key oneiric text which greatly influenced the development of the medieval dream-vision narrative, and one with which both Boccaccio and his educated readers would have almost certainly been familiar. Boethius foregrounded the issue of Fortune within his *De consolazione*, therefore Boccaccio's inclusion of Fortune as a fundamental character within the *Amorosa visione* is indicative of the extent to which he interacted with the conventions of dream-vision texts within his own narrative. He calls upon a classical figure of authority to aid his guide in the conversion of the narrator; Fortune's role within the narrative is conventional — she is accompanied by her Wheel and seeks to enlighten the protagonist about the precarious nature of happiness and wealth — and she even enjoys a certain amount of success as a result of her task, with the dreamer (albeit reluctantly) agreeing to listen to his guide's advice:

Io son contento,  
donna, d'udire, acciò che 'l mio errore  
io riconosca, però che io sento  
non aver nulla esser grave dolor.      (*AV.*, XXXI. 85-88)

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<sup>37</sup> Boethius, *De consolazione Philosophiae*; trans. Walsh, II. 1. 18-19.

Yet this resolve to follow his guide's teachings is short-lived, and Boccaccio-*personaggio* soon reverts to his former self, tempted by earthly pleasures. The role of Fortune within the text is conventional of the trope; she is surrounded by figures who serve as examples of how her fickle fate can alter lives. Her caution to the dreamer is also conventional; she reinforces the teachings of the guide and warns against the pursuit of carnal pleasures and worldly goods.

Boccaccio underpins his Triumph of Fortune with an important figure from vision literature and, as such, builds reader expectations of his text. He places the personified Fortune in a position of authority and allows her to directly address the dreamer, before allowing his narrator to ignore her warnings and do precisely as he wishes. It is not she who deviates from the conventions of the trope, but the dreamer himself.

One of the most interesting developments within the (albeit problematic) second redaction of the *Amorosa visione* is the inclusion of a further personification within canto XII of the narrative vision. In this version of the text, the author has used the character of Ricchezza within the Triumph of Wealth to warn of the dangers of material possessions. Ricchezza is surrounded by gold and is seated on a golden throne:

Con aurea gonna e aurea corona in testa  
 donna vi vidi in aureo tron locata,  
 cinta d'aurei trofei, in gioiosa festa.<sup>38</sup>

Hordes of people surround her, hammering and picking away at a mountain of gold and silver; many of these people are depicted as abhorrent or deplorable in their greed for excessive wealth:

Givano alcuni per cupiditate  
 cacciando or questo or quel con duol a morte,  
 per prenderne essi maggior quantitate;  
 iniqua tirannia rubesta e forte  
 usavan altri con fatti e con detti,

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<sup>38</sup> References to the 'B' text of the *Amorosa visione* are taken from the following edition: *Amorosa visione*, ed. by Vittore Branca, Vol. III of *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. by Vittore Branca.

pigliandon più che la dovuta sorte.

Alcuni v'eran che i lor mantelletti  
 se n'avean pieni, e per volerne ancora  
 abbandonavan tutti altri dilette. (*AV.*, B Text, XII. 73-81)

Ricchezza does not communicate with the protagonist, either through speech or through inscriptions within her fresco; she simply acts as a personification of the wealth to which those present within her Triumph aspire. Whilst problems regarding the authenticity of this redaction remain, it must not go unnoticed that the author or editor of this later version of the *Amorosa visione* had specifically chosen to exaggerate the features of the text most associated with the dream-vision tradition by including further examples of this rhetorical device.

By employing personifications of virtues and abstract ideas within his dream-vision text, Boccaccio successfully draws upon a longstanding tradition of using this trope within oneiric works. Famous precedents for this convention may be found in the works of Dante, Brunetto Latini, and Dino Compagni. However it is within the *Roman de la Rose* where we see the most famous deployment of personifications. In Guillaume de Lorris's and Jean de Meun's courtly love poem, the protagonist, 'Amant', falls asleep and finds himself in a walled garden. As he journeys through the garden, he is greeted by numerous personified virtues and vices, including 'Haine' (Hatred), 'Convoitise' (Lust), 'Avarice' (Avarice), and 'Vieillesse' (Old Age). Boccaccio appears to have drawn heavily upon de Lorris's and de Meun's characters in the creation of his own personifications since they, too, play minimal roles within the narrative. These virtues and vices do not have the ability to interact with the protagonist of the *Rose*; they do not add any real value to the narrative; they simply serve to demonstrate the various elements involved in a love affair.

Dante's use of personifications, although employed in a vastly different manner to those within the *Roman de la Rose*, are certainly of great importance when considering Boccaccio's use of previous dream-vision texts as models for his own narrative, and the *Vita nuova*, especially, contains clear examples of this trope at work. Dante explains how, upon falling asleep, he was greeted by the personification of love — Amore — who appeared to him surrounded by 'una nebula di colore di fuoco' (III. 3). Within this sequence, Amore vocally engages

with the dreamer ('Ego dominus tuus', III. 3), before going on to feed Dante's burning heart to Beatrice ('le faccia mangiare questa cosa che in mano li ardea', III. 6). Within the *Amorosa visione*, Boccaccio clearly employs aspects of Dante's text. While the Amore of the *Amorosa visione* is a far cry from the Dantean model – Boccaccio's character neither engages with any of the characters nor forms any integral part of the narrative sequence – Dantean influences may be felt through Boccaccio's character of Fortuna, who both interacts with other characters and whose presence within the narrative directly influences the dreamer. Yet, while Amore carries only 'una persona [...] nuda' in his arms (*VN*, III. 4), Fortuna is responsible for the fates of all men: although she is a clear descendent of Amore, she is also an amplification of the Dantean model.

In his employment of personifications within the *Amorosa visione*, Boccaccio combines aspects from different examples of this trope in previous literature: his characters are an amalgamation of the passive, marginal personifications of the *Rose*, and the engaging, pivotal representation of Love as a character in the *Vita nuova*. Boccaccio demonstrates his knowledge and understanding of the several ways in which this trope has been deployed within earlier dream texts, and by using examples of both passive and active characters, he ensures that the *Amorosa visione* occupies a central position in the oneiric tradition.

### **BOCCACCIO'S USE OF *LOCI***

When Boccaccio-*personaggio* takes his leave of his guide, following her latest unsuccessful attempts in canto XXXI — aided by Lady Fortune — to convert him to a more virtuous way of life, he is drawn towards a beautiful orchard, intrigued by the 'festa e gran canto' (XXXVII. 70) he hears within. Despite the guide's protestations, the narrator enters the garden — which he describes as 'fiorito e bello com di primavera' (XXXVII. 66) — and is greeted by several sculptures 'di diversi color, com'io compresi, | qua' belle e qua' lucenti e quali oscure' (XXXVIII. 32-33). The spirit-guide makes several attempts to coax the dreamer out of the garden, before he finally takes his leave of her and goes in pursuit of the beautiful women he sees on the bank of the river. It is whilst he is alone in the beautiful garden that he encounters the woman whom he attempts to rape, in a

move prevented only by his arousal from sleep.

The trope of the *locus amoenus* has its origins in the lush and verdant Garden of Eden, the archetypal landscape of sin and temptation; it has been used within literature throughout the centuries as a place of pleasure, which foregrounds the exploration and development of human sexuality. The *locus amoenus* had been the setting for many romance narratives, and was particularly associated with courtly love literature, since its secluded space provided the ideal location for illicit love affairs. The walled garden had even appeared within previous dream-vision narratives, such as the *Roman de la rose* and its Italian incarnation, *Il Fiore*; in both texts, a sleeping narrator finds himself inside a walled garden and, upon seeing a beautiful flower, becomes sexually aroused by it and attempts to begin a romantic relationship. Within the walled spaces of these two narratives, the respective narrators are able to fully commit to the pursuit of sexual gratification without the fear of recrimination, since their actions are concealed from the outside world thanks to both the walls of the garden in which they find themselves, and also to the fact that they are trapped within their own imaginations and their dreams are not perceivable to any outside sources.

Boccaccio's situating of this part of the *Amorosa visione* within a tranquil and beautiful garden, then, is not unconventional for an oneiric narrative; he, too, is concealing his narrator's pursuit of sexual gratification by both the walls of the garden and the dream in which he finds himself. Yet the sexual assault of the woman marks a real shift in the literary tradition to which the physical space of the garden belongs. Like the protagonists in these two earlier texts, Boccaccio's narrator is overcome by desire when he meets his 'bella donna', and attempts to seduce her; but unlike his textual predecessors, he is unable to control his passion and proceeds to rape the object of his lust when she protests against his actions ('deh, non fare!', XLIX. 29) and refuses to succumb to his wishes. The employment of the garden motif within this section of the *Amorosa visione* is an exact inversion of the courtly-love tradition. Rather than providing the location for an illicit love affair, the secluded space in which Boccaccio's narrator finds himself serves as the veil under which he is able to commit a violent sexual act.

The fact that the rape is disturbed by the narrator himself is of little consequence to the deployment of the *locus amoenus*, and Boccaccio's

unconventional use of the trope ensures that the oneiric qualities of his text are amplified. In dreams, situations are apt to change very rapidly, often causing confusion for the dreamer, and the use of the *locus amoenus* — which rapidly transforms into a *locus terribilis* — amplifies the oneiric aspects of the text. His narrator is unable to control his urges on several levels: not only is he consumed by his desire for the woman — a factor which is exemplified by the traditional courtly-love motif of the garden — but he is also simultaneously trapped within both a dream and a work of fiction. He has no control over his own actions or the direction of the narrative to which he belongs, and this is clearly and unambiguously illustrated in his behaviour within the garden.

In his *De Insomnis*, St Augustine writes that human are unable to rationally control the content of their dreams, since they are neither works of perception nor judgment, but rather a psychophysical condition. Dreams arise as a result of physiological processes in the body, such as digestion, hunger, thirst, the need to urinate; but they are also psychological in nature, and result from memories of sensory perception. Augustine's approach to dreams was holistic, and took into account several different theories regarding the nature of sleep and dreams. Boccaccio's presentation of his sleeping narrator within the *Amorosa visione* evidently draws upon Augustine's works: Boccaccio's dreamer is continually tempted by carnal pleasure within the text, because he has no other option: he has no way to counteract these temptations because he is unable to exercise rational thought whilst trapped within his sleeping state. He is almost tragic in his helplessness. The walled garden is the perfect setting for this helplessness: it is a *locus* where illicit affairs may be privately conducted away from the gaze of external parties. Dreams offer this same protection, since dreaming is a phenomenon which is completely encased within the subconscious of an individual's mind. Sleep acts as the walls of the *locus amoenus*, ensuring that any onlookers are blocked out. Boccaccio's dreamer is already trapped within the metaphorical walls of his imagination; his entrance into both the walled garden and the castle further isolates him from rational thought.

Boccaccio builds reader expectations of his text into his employment of the walled garden; the motif was widely used within medieval courtly love literature and, as demonstrated above, even within the more specific area of

medieval dream-vision narratives. However, through his inverted use of the trope — the walled garden in the *Amorosa visione*'s dream landscape is a space of sexual violence, rather than sexual pleasure — he is able to play around with the conventions of the tradition. While Boccaccio was not the first author to use a *locus amoenus* as a narrative device within a dream-vision text, the way in which this trope is made manifest within the *Amorosa visione* is unconventional, and it further amplifies the oneiric aspects of the text by creating a sense of confusion often found within dreams.

The role of the castle within the narrative is complex. Certainly it is another *locus*; a walled space which traps the narrator, but it is also a canvas for the paintings and triumphs the dreamer witnesses along his journey. As the dreamer of the *Amorosa visione* is accompanied through the various rooms of the palace by his guide, he is presented with frescoes painted upon the walls detailing the lives of famous people displaying individual virtues or character traits. These frescoes — ‘chatty paintings’, as Juan Pablo Gil-Osle calls them — speak to the dreamer and, in doing so, act as *imagines agentes* within the narrative.<sup>39</sup> Osle explains how such talking pictures help to revive debates about the uses of paintings within the fourteenth century, particularly in relation to the *ars memorativa*, since ‘images stimulate memories more vividly than words’.<sup>40</sup>

In her study on the medieval Art of Memory, Mary Carruthers describes the different memory-models taught within the Middle Ages.<sup>41</sup> She explains how the *thesaurus sapientiae* (store-room, treasury) model relied upon students imagining a physical space — *topica memoria* — which should have several separate sections, in much the same way as a pigeon coop or beehive. The student would then mentally project images connected to memories upon each of the *cellae* of their chosen memory spaces. Carruthers explains how every memory ‘occupies a *topos* or place, by the very nature of what it is, and this *topica*, like bins in a storehouse, have both contents and structure. Every topic is in this sense

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<sup>39</sup> Juan Pablo Gil-Osle, ‘Chatty Paintings, twisted memories and other oddities in Boccaccio’s *Amorosa visione*’, *Studi sul Boccaccio*, 38 (2010), 89-104.

<sup>40</sup> Gil-Osle, ‘Chatty Paintings’, pp. 92-93.

<sup>41</sup> Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

a mnemonic, a structure of memory for recollection'.<sup>42</sup> What is Boccaccio's castle, then, if not a memory storehouse, a *topica memoria*? Within each of the paintings within the *Amorosa visione* are examples of one specific virtue or character trait; their positioning upon the wall of an individual room, *cella*, of an architectural space allows them to serve as mnemonics; as the dreamer mentally journeys around the castle — mentally, since he is dreaming and is, therefore, trapped within his imagination — his memory is prompted by the images he sees.

During the Middle Ages, frescoes and images within manuscripts would traditionally be accompanied by *tituli* – inscriptions which rendered the meanings of specific images unambiguous.<sup>43</sup> Carruthers explains that images used to prompt memories 'should not be "mute", "silent". They must speak'.<sup>44</sup> That Boccaccio should make the images within his own memory-palace communicate with his dreamer confirms that he intended his castle to act as a mnemonic storehouse, with the speech and inscriptions of the frescoes determining the ways in which each individual painting must be interpreted. Furthermore, as Gil-Osle explains, the utterances of Boccaccio's paintings share two important characteristics: firstly, they are all related to romantic love, and secondly, they are all extremely brief, which is not surprising, 'since the principle of brevity is another rule in the game of memorization'.<sup>45</sup> The utterances of the frescoes are kept short deliberately so that the narrator may commit them to memory.

The role of the castle, then, is far-removed from Dante's 'nobile castello'. Located within canto 4 of *Inferno*, Dante's castle is incidental; it plays no significant role in the narrative and is referred to only once. We readers are never permitted beyond its 'alte mura' (*If.* 4. 107). Conversely, Boccaccio's castle is the central *locus* of the narrative, and its function is pivotal to our understanding of the text as a whole. It is a physical representation of the earthly riches away from which the guide continually tries to turn the dreamer; but its function is also, primarily, didactic. It is a tool for the recollection of memories, itself located

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<sup>42</sup> Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, p. 40.

<sup>43</sup> Gil-Osle, 'Chatty Paintings', p. 93: 'Through *tituli*, inscriptions, the interpretation of a given image was narrowed in order to make the reading of images "univocal"'.  
<sup>44</sup> Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, pp. 229-30.

<sup>45</sup> Gil-Osle, 'Chatty Paintings', pp. 93-94.

within the imagination of the dreamer.

That Boccaccio encases this memory palace within the realm of sleep gives us clues as to its role within the narrative, and his text serves to highlight the varying capacities of the mind as an entity which can produce dream narratives and images of its own, while at the same time recalling stored memories using learnt techniques.

### **BOCCACCIO AND INTERTEXTUALITY**

As has been demonstrated thus far in this chapter, the *Amorosa visione* is a multifaceted text. Not only does it draw upon the previously established conventions of dream-vision literature as a way of building and deconstructing reader expectations of oneiric narratives, but it also simultaneously functions as an aid for the recollection of stored memories. Throughout the text, Boccaccio underpins his narrative with a variety of different literary and mythological sources as a way of grounding his narrative within an established tradition, whilst at the same time playing around with the conventions of the genre. We need only look at the models of spirit-guide which Boccaccio simultaneously emulates and contradicts in the formation of his own guide figure; the texts of Boethius, Cicero, Alain de Lille, and even Dante are used as sources for Boccaccio, who manipulates reader expectations of the role his guide will fulfil by consciously and continuously undermining the integrity of these models by refusing his own guide the ability to successfully convert the dreamer.

Yet Boccaccio used texts in different ways throughout the *Amorosa visione*, not merely to provide working models for the development of a particular trope (the guide, spring-time setting, triumphal motif, for example). The entire plot of the text has been the subject of much discussion, with Janet Smarr claiming that the narrator's decision from canto II, in which he is faced with the choice of two doors through which he may enter — a narrow door which 'mena a via di vita' (*AV*. II. 65) and a wide door through which the narrator can hear the sounds of festivities — is a direct figuration of the tale of Hercules at the crossroads. In his youth, Hercules found himself alone and confronted with a fork in the road, where he sat to contemplate his future life. As he sat there, he was greeted by two goddesses; one was very beautiful and attempted to lead him down

her path, which she claimed was much easier and pleasanter than the other; the second goddess, more humble in appearance, told Hercules quite clearly that her path would be long and difficult and that a great deal of hard work would be required if he were to follow her. Hercules eventually chose to follow the more difficult path, and was tested throughout his life by many hardships and labours.

The similarities between Boccaccio's narrator and Hercules are obvious: both characters are presented with a choice between a life of pleasure and ease, and a life of virtue and labours. Both are initially tempted to follow the path of carnal delights and festivities, before finally following the path of goodness, undergoing various challenges as a result of this. However, there is one vital difference between Hercules and Boccaccio's narrator: while Hercules freely chooses the path of virtue, *Boccaccio-personaggio* does not; he requires constant coercion, support and guidance to stay on the correct path. He is met at several points throughout his journey by two 'giovinetti', who relentlessly try to tempt the dreamer towards a life of carnal pleasures, while the spirit-guide has the task of steering her student away from his tempters towards the narrow path of life. Unlike Hercules, *Boccaccio-personaggio* is unable to fully commit to one way of life or another, since he actually has no choice: he is both a product of fiction with no free-will and is trapped within his own dream. Because of this, he has no real agency in the text; he cannot truly convert to a more virtuous life, because he cannot overcome his own subconscious. The guide's task of converting the dreamer, then, is doomed to fail from the very start.

The iconography of choosing between a narrow path of pleasure and a wide path of virtue is also present within Matthew 7. 13-14:

intrate per angustam portam quia lata porta et spatiosa via quae ducit ad perditionem et multi sunt qui intrant per eam quam angusta porta et arta via quae ducit ad vitam et pauci sunt qui inveniunt eam.

(Enter ye in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate, and strait is the way that leadeth to life: and few there are that find it!)

Boccaccio conjoins biblical and pagan sources within the *Amorosa visione*; he uses the imagery of a wide gate and a narrow gate from Matthew's gospel and combines it with the way in which Hercules must actually decide between the two ways of life. The result of this is a text which functions on several levels: certainly it is allegorical – as almost all commentators of the text have argued – but it is not merely a Christian allegory; it is concerned, also, with morality and love. Branca describes the depiction of the lover's journey as an allegory as 'the most constant, and most typical characteristic' of dream-vision literature.<sup>46</sup>

Boccaccio preserves the very essence of the dream-vision journey by ensuring that his text functions on an allegorical level — or, indeed, several simultaneous allegorical levels — and within his *Visione* he constantly demonstrates his awareness of the tropes and precedents of dream-vision literature. It is this very awareness which allows Boccaccio to locate his text within the firm tradition of dream-vision literature, whilst simultaneously going beyond the genre's boundaries, and nowhere is Boccaccio's rejection of dream-vision boundaries more evident than in the character of his protagonist, whose constant refusal to undergo any form of conversionary experience acts as a humorous pastiche of Dante's pilgrim in the *Commedia*.

Boccaccio's dreamer is stubborn in his resistance to change. While his Dantean counterpart displays what Huot describes as 'ready obedience and remorse', the protagonist of the *Visione* continually yields to the temptations laid out before him.<sup>47</sup> Boccaccio's dreamer is a slow learner; indeed Hollander describes him as 'one of the slowest and most perverse learners since the dreamer-protagonist of the *Roman de la Rose*'.<sup>48</sup> Yet it is not a lack of understanding which sets him apart from the *Commedia*'s pilgrim, but a lack of willingness to accept his guide's advice. He consciously rejects her efforts on several occasions, reasoning that he ought to be able to experience worldly goods in order to be able to fully reject them in favour of heavenly riches ('Ogni cosa del mondo a sapere | non è peccato, ma la iniquitate | si dee lasciare e quel ch'è ben tenere', *AV*, III. 31-33), and he further questions the guide on her reluctance to allow him to enter the

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<sup>46</sup> Branca, 'Introduction', p. xvii.

<sup>47</sup> Huot, 'Poetic Ambiguity and Reader Response', p. 115.

<sup>48</sup> Hollander, *Boccaccio's Two Venuses*, p. 80.

walled garden ('A te che face | l'entrar là entro e un poco vedere?', *AV*. XXXVIII. 1-2).

The very fact that Boccaccio's dreamer is able to disobey his guide is, in and of itself, significant. She lacks the same authority as Lady Philosophy, whose appearance within Boethius's text is all-consuming, occupying the entire central narrative and successfully instructing the dreamer of her text in important matters; she is secondary, too, to Virgil in the *Commedia*, since her attempts to lead her own pilgrim to a more divine existence are ultimately futile. Engaged in a Sisyphean task, the guide of the *Amorosa visione* is unable to reach the ranks of her literary predecessors and fails to fully engage her distracted student. Both her role and that of the dreamer are reversals of the models upon which they were based. Huot describes Boccaccio's protagonist as an 'anti-Dante',<sup>49</sup> yet this is, in my mind, an overstatement. The *Amorosa visione* interacts with the *Commedia* in multiple, subtle ways. Certainly, Boccaccio's dreamer displays characteristics which directly contrast with Dante's pilgrim: he does not willingly undergo reformation, nor does he listen to or take heed of his guide's advice. Indeed, on many levels the text appears to be a direct inversion of the *Commedia*: it is a dream entirely framed by sleep, rather than a waking vision, it concerns human rather than divine love, and lacks the central moment of a spiritual conversion. Yet to describe the *Amorosa visione* as an anti-*Commedia* would be to suggest that Boccaccio intended the text as a kind of parody of his literary master's greatest work, which I believe to be wholly untrue. What we see throughout the *Amorosa visione* is Boccaccio constantly engaging with the *Commedia*, not only in the characterisation of his pilgrim and the plot of the narrative, but also in the structure of the text (Boccaccio both adopts the Dantean *terza rima* and uses exactly half the number of cantos found in the *Commedia*), which results in a dream-vision which is at once Dantean in nature (as almost all of Boccaccio's texts are) while at the same time managing to achieve something distinctly different from both the *Commedia* and the traditions of oneiric literature. Boccaccio's text is at once located within, and distinct from, the traditions of oneiric literature, and in terms of the text as a dream-vision, this is a significant

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<sup>49</sup> Huot, 'Poetic Ambiguity and Reader Response', p. 121.

observation, since Boccaccio is able to draw parallels with the *Commedia* in both narrative content and structural form, which has the effect of building reader expectations of his text. He constantly engages with Dante's narrative, and employs many of the same tropes, such as the castle motif, the use of a female spirit-guide, and triumphal processions; yet these conventions are often deployed in entirely unorthodox ways. Boccaccio is therefore able to firmly locate his text within the genre of oneiric literature, whilst simultaneously manipulating reader expectations of his *Visione* by playing around with the conventions of dream-vision texts.

### CONCLUSIONS

Boccaccio's texts are notoriously ambiguous, and their ability to facilitate multiple interpretations has been widely acknowledged by the extensive scholarship surrounding his works. In the epilogue to his later *Decameron*, Boccaccio would explain that a multiplicity of meanings may be attached to any given word. He argues that language itself is ambiguous and that the responsibility for interpretation lies not with the author but with the reader, since:

Niuna corrotta mente intese mai sanamente parola: e così come le oneste a quella non giovano, così quelle che tanto oneste non sono la ben disposta non posson contaminare se non come il loto i solari raggi o le terrene brutture le bellezze del cielo.<sup>50</sup>

Yet his *Amorosa visione* is certainly one of the most ambiguous texts, not only within Boccaccio's literary *corpus*, but within any given genre of literature. As a starting point, we are given three acrostic sonnets, which serve to both introduce and comment upon the narrative vision which follows. These sonnets are heavily imbued with terminology specific to the world of the mind — from the 'fantasia ch'è nella mente' (acrostic 1. 4) to the 'dolce immaginar' (acrostic 2. 1) — and act as the first of several building blocks which firmly cement the text's status as multifaceted. We are then presented with a sleeping character who dreams of an allegorical journey through a mnemonic *locus*; he is accompanied by a female

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<sup>50</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, ed. by Vittore Branca, in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, vol. IV, 'Conclusione dell'Autore', 11.

guide who attempts to instruct him about the dangers of earthly goods, whilst at the same time allowing him to seek out carnal gratification. The dreamer is incapable of taking control of his situation, unable to suppress his sexual appetite, since he is not only asleep and trapped within an imagined world, but because he is also a product of fiction, a figment of someone else's imagination. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that he should be so unable to convert to the life of virtue his guide wills upon him.

Boccaccio's literary knowledge, it would seem, is endless, and his text is a product of diligent reading and reframing. The acrostic format of his work enables parallels to be drawn between the *Amorosa visione* and the Erythraean Sibyl's prophecy of the coming Christ, cementing Boccaccio's text as traditionally visionary from the outset. Yet his use of the genre's traditions and tropes extends far beyond his employment of the acrostic form; he draws also upon the oneiric works of Cicero, Boethius, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, and Dante in a bid to ensure that his own text is firmly situated within the conventions of dream-vision literature. That he uses such texts as models for his own narrative is not uncommon, but the way in which these texts are deployed and manipulated throughout the *Amorosa visione* is entirely unconventional: indeed, many of the intertextual allusions apparent within the *Amorosa visione* are reversals of the original episodes from which they are taken. They are not models, rather anti-models. Boccaccio selects references from dream-vision texts and positions them within his own, in order to demonstrate his knowledge of oneiric literature, but also his understanding of how different genres of literature may be combined to create different effects. He was intimately familiar with dream-vision literature, and his shrewd employment of traditional tropes and terminology from previous texts clearly shows that he was unafraid to reject the genre's boundaries and reader expectations, for example by allowing his guide to appear outside of the dream framework, and permitting his dreamer to reject his guide's advice.

The *Amorosa visione* has been described variously as mediocre and pedantic (Muscetta), incoherent (Wilkins), and the 'most imposing piece of scrimshaw in the history of literature' (Hollander).<sup>51</sup> Yet it is also a pivotal text in

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<sup>51</sup> Kirkham succinctly summarizes the disparaging reviews of the *Amorosa visione* in *The Sign of Reason in Boccaccio's Fiction* (p. 55); see especially Carlo

the development of the dream-vision tradition; it demonstrates the unwritten boundaries of oneiric texts and the extent to which these boundaries may be challenged, the conventions of the genre played around with, in order to create something entirely original and innovative. Throughout the *Amorosa visione* we see the work of an author, acutely aware of the traditions to which his work belongs, who excels in drawing upon models in order to build reader expectations, only to reverse the rules of dream-vision literature.

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Muscetta, 'Giovanni Boccaccio e i novellieri', in *Storia della letteratura italiana*, II, ed. by E. Cecchi and N. Sapegno (Milan: Garzanti, 1965), pp. 350-51; E. H. Wilkins, *A History of Italian Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 105; Hollander, *Boccaccio's Two Venuses*, p. 78.

#### CHAPTER 4: DREAMS AND VISIONS IN PETRARCH'S *TRIUMPHI*

This chapter deals with the issues surrounding our understanding of Petrarch's *Triumphs* as a dream-vision text. It looks specifically at the relationship between the *Triumphs* and Boccaccio's *Amorosa visione* in order to establish how the relationship between the two authors impacted upon its composition, before going on to discuss the extent to which Petrarch employed the tropes and traditions of previous dream-vision texts within his poems. By drawing on the complex intertextual relationships between the *Triumphs*, *Amorosa visione*, and other oneiric narratives, I show that Petrarch was conscious of writing within a set of conventions and used his text as a way of responding to the traditions of oneiric texts, but that he often betrayed a certain difficulty in his handling of the dream-vision genre.

The poems which make up Petrarch's *Triumphs* chronicle the experiences of an unnamed narrator who, upon falling asleep, is greeted by a guide (who is also nameless) and witnesses several triumphal processions. Within these processions — 'triumphs' — the narrator sees famous people from history, politics, literature, and mythology, all of whom serve to provide examples of the triumph to which they belong. Comprising six books — the *Triumphus Cupidinis*, *Triumphus Pudicitie*, *Triumphus Mortis*, *Triumphus Fame*, *Triumphus Temporis*, and *Triumphus Eternitatis* — and written over a period spanning two decades, the poems which make up the *Triumphs* are replete with literary borrowings from several examples of dream-vision literature, combined in a way which had never been seen before.<sup>1</sup>

It is not known exactly when Petrarch began writing the *Triumphs*, and opinions vary greatly. Ernest H. Wilkins estimates that the *Triumphus Cupidinis* and *Triumphus Pudicitie* were probably written between 1340 and 1344 (and almost certainly before the death of Laura in 1348), and that there is no evidence

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all references to Petrarch's *Triumphs* are taken from the following critical edition: Francesco Petrarca, 'Trionfi', in *Trionfi, Rime Estravaganti, Codice degli Abbozzi*, ed. by Vinicio Pacca and Laura Paolino, intro. by Marco Santagata (Milan: Mondadori, 1996), pp. 39-626. References to individual Triumphs will be henceforth abbreviated to *TC* (*Triumphus Cupidinis*), *TP* (*Triumphus Pudicitie*), *TM* (*Triumphus Mortis*), *TF* (*Triumphus Fame*), *TT* (*Triumphus Temporis*) and *TE* (*Triumphus Eternitatis*).

to suggest that Petrarch had any idea of writing any further *Triumphs* at that time.<sup>2</sup> However, Marco Santagata, Francesco Colussi, and Victoria Kirkham have each argued for a much later compositional date of around 1352, shortly after Petrarch hosted Boccaccio in Padua.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Colussi even suggests that it was actually this meeting with Boccaccio which acted as a trigger for Petrarch's commencement of the *Triumphs*, since 'il Boccaccio avrebbe parlato al Petrarca anche dell'*A.V.* [*Amorosa visione*], l'opera che più doveva sembrargli vicina ai gusti e agli interessi del maestro'.<sup>4</sup> After returning to Florence, Boccaccio sent Petrarch a copy of Dante's *Commedia*, which Petrarch claimed never to have read; but included in his parcel a copy of the *Amorosa visione* as a gift to his friend.<sup>5</sup> Giuseppe Billanovich has even expressed his convictions that the manuscript upon which the fifteenth-century editor, Girolamo Claricio, based his 1521 edition of the *Amorosa visione* was, in fact, the very copy which Boccaccio had gifted to Petrarch, the editor making full use of Petrarch's extensive marginal annotations when compiling the 'revised' edition of the text.<sup>6</sup> Although there is no material evidence to support these speculations — indeed, W. H. Herendeen has argued for the much earlier date of 1338 for the *Triumphs*, thus negating any Boccaccian influence at all<sup>7</sup> — I am convinced by the arguments set forth by Branca and Billanovich that Petrarch read Boccaccio's text during the compositional process of his *Triumphs*, and that he took inspiration from both the *Amorosa visione* and the *Commedia* when creating his *Triumphus Cupidinis* and *Triumphus Pudicitie*.

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<sup>2</sup> Ernest H. Wilkins, 'The First Two *Triumphs* of Petrarch', *Italica*, 40 (1963), 7-17 (p. 7).

<sup>3</sup> In his 'Cronologia', Marco Santagata states that, in 1352 Petrarch '[f]orse inizia, a Valchiusa, la composizione dei *Triumphs*'; 'Cronologia', in Petrarca, *Trionfi, Rime estravaganti, Codice degli abbozzi*, pp. LIV–LXVI (p. LXI); Colussi, 'Sulla seconda redazione dell'*Amorosa visione*', p. 192; Kirkham, 'Chronology of Boccaccio's Life and Works', p. xv.

<sup>4</sup> Colussi, 'Sulla seconda redazione dell'*Amorosa visione*', p. 192.

<sup>5</sup> See Colussi, 'Sulla seconda redazione dell'*Amorosa visione*', p. 192.

<sup>6</sup> Giuseppe Billanovich, 'Dalla "Commedia" e dall'"Amorosa Visione" ai "Trionfi"', p. 39.

<sup>7</sup> W. H. Herendeen, 'Petrarch's *Triumphs* and the Rhetoric of Triumph', in *Petrarch's Triumphs: Allegory and Spectacle*, ed. by Konrad Eisenbichler and Amilcare A. Iannucci (Toronto: Dovehouse, 1990), pp. 87-96 (p. 87).

## NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

The *Triumphs* have a complex textual structure, and discussions still exist between critics as to the correct ordering of the individual parts of the poem. Most modern editions of the text are made up of twelve *capitoli*, spread over six books; however, these chapters are not evenly distributed, and even through close examination of their content, no visible symmetry or discernible pattern emerges. The *capitoli* are distributed as follows: *TC* (4), *TP* (1), *TM* (2), *TF* (3), *TT* (1), *TE* (1), and as the text develops we not only see an evolving writing style, but also a significant shift in subject matter. Within the *TT* and *TE*, especially, Petrarch's poetic style becomes much denser and more economical: he replaces the long lists of literary, historical and mythological characters found within the earlier triumphs with explorations of philosophy regarding the human condition and the afterlife, and the reconstruction of his vision of 'un mondo | novo' (*TE*, 20-21). Aside from the list of the names of famous lovers, little discussion can be found in the 697 lines which make up the *TC*, whilst the *TT* and *TE* — both 145 lines long — offer unambiguous commentaries on the state of man. In the *TT* we see a definite shift from Petrarch's earlier writing style and the earlier subject matter of the first four poems: in place of lists, Petrarch employs metaphors and similes to illustrate his argument that time eventually triumphs over life and fame. His character speaks of his 'breve viver mio' (*TT*, 59), and asks 'Che più d'un giorno è la vita mortale[?]' (*TT*, 61), before going on to compare human glory to snow beneath warm sunlight ('vidi ogni nostra gloria al sol di neve', *TT*, 129) or a sunny day during winter, which can be obscured by clouds at any moment ('Un dubbio hiberno, instabile sereno, | è vostra fama, e poca nebbia il rompe', *TT*, 109-10). The *TE* retains this depth of message, as Petrarch's protagonist warns that 'tarde non fur mai gratie divine' (*TE*, 13) before going on to prophesy that time will no longer be divided into seasons or the 'fu', 'sarà', or 'era', but will be one Eternity 'raccolta e 'ntera' (*TE*, 67-69). Perhaps owing to the inevitable literary maturation process Petrarch had undergone by the time he completed the *TE*, or perhaps owing to the sense of urgency to complete his text which occupied his elderly mind, a veritable shift in style occurred at some point between the start of the *TC* and the final triumph which, he states, 'Dio permettente', will occur in heaven (*TE*, 123). This change in style — alongside the fact that his dreamer is

never seen to wake from his sleep — is certainly problematic when treating the *Triumphs* as a single text framed within an extended vision.

During the years which span the commencement of the *TC* and the eventual composition of the *TE*, Petrarch's writing style had certainly evolved. However, the reasons behind the undeniable chasm which exists between the first and final triumphs cannot be simply accredited to a change in authorial style. Whether resulting from a conscious decision, or from Petrarch's evident difficulties in adhering to the conventions of dream-vision literature, the final two triumphs are of entirely different styles from the earlier poems. This change, alongside Wilkins' assertion that the *Triumphs* 'do not constitute a single poem',<sup>8</sup> causes difficulties when attempting to analyse Petrarch's poems in terms of their relationships with the wider dream-vision genre, particularly because they possess one of the most interwoven structures of any Petrarchan text. The six triumphs are all written in the Dantean *terza rima* — also used by Boccaccio in the narrative vision of his *Amorosa visione* — and are combined into an interlocking formation, with each book "triumphing" over its predecessor. The *TC* is the starting point, representative of something which has triumphed over the individual and which is, itself, triumphed over by Chastity in the *TP*. Death triumphs over Chastity, and is in turn triumphed over by Fame. Time triumphs over Fame and the *Triumphs* conclude with Petrarch's eschatological and apocalyptic vision of Eternity, which triumphs over Time. Yet while Petrarch's poems dovetail perfectly into one another, they are not all of the same style; such a great gulf exists between the first and final triumphs because they are of very different characters. Certainly, Petrarch had tightened up his writing style during the compositional process of the *Triumphs*, but this can only account for an element of the change in tone and structure. What really ensures that the individual poems remain distinctive is that they are entirely different from one another in content and form. They share the common feature of a triumphal procession, but have little else binding them together.

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<sup>8</sup> Wilkins, 'The First Two Triumphs of Petrarch', p. 7.

## TERMINOLOGY

From the outset, we may clearly observe the oneiric features of Petrarch's text, and in the first chapter of the *Triumphus Cupidinis* the narrator firmly locates his experiences within the world of the subconscious. Petrarch-*personaggio* describes how, finding himself alone and 'fra l'erbe' (*TC*, I. 10), he was overcome by sleep ('vinto dal sonno', *TC*, I. 11), before going on to discuss the contents of a dream-vision in which he is visited by a spirit-guide and witnesses triumphal processions of famous people pass by. There are only seven explicit references to sleep and dreaming within the entire *Triumph* and, of these, six occur within this first book. These are important to note since they not only help Petrarch to situate his poems within a specific framework, but they also aid our understanding of his engagement with oneiric traditions.

The first mention of sleep occurs within the opening lines of the framing dream, and describes how Petrarch-*personaggio* found himself in a verdant setting before being initiated into the dream-landscape:

Ivi, fra l'erbe, già del pianger fioco,  
vinto dal sonno, vidi una gran luce. (*TC*, I. 10-11; emphasis mine).

What is particularly striking about this first instance of dream vocabulary is its resonances with previous oneiric literature: these verses are mere paraphrases of Dante's introduction of his pilgrim's dream from canto IX of *Purgatorio*:

quand' io, che meco avea di quel d'Adamo,  
vinto dal sonno, in su l'erba inchinai  
là 've già tutti e cinque sedavamo. (*Pg.* IX. 10-12; emphasis mine).

Petrarch not only reuses the exact phrase 'vinto dal sonno', but the repetition of erba/erbe leaves us in little doubt as to his intentions: these allusions were not accidental, but a contrived effort on Petrarch's part to echo previous examples of dream-vision literature.

Two further references to sleep and dreaming are found within the third *capitolo* of *TC*, the first of which is another allusion to a previous text:

Vedi qui ben fra quante spade e lance  
 amor, e 'l sonno, ed una vedovetta  
 con bel parlar, con sue polite guance  
 vince Oloferne (*TC*, III. 52-55; emphasis mine).

The 'vedovetta' to whom Petrarch refers is the biblical figure Judith, who seduced Nebuchadnezzar's general Holofernes, before decapitating him while he slept.<sup>9</sup> In terms of the *Triumphus Cupidinis* as an account of famous lovers, this reference is perhaps unsurprising since the tale of Judith and Holofernes clearly illustrates the dangers of love affairs; however, in relation to the *Triumphus* as a dream-vision, it is an unorthodox and unexpected example to employ. While the biblical tale is not framed within a dream or vision, and contains no other motifs associated with oneiric literature, Petrarch's inclusion of the Judith/Holofernes tale betrays a certain amount of difficulty in putting aside his own convictions regarding dreams (as documented in chapter 2 of this thesis), since sleep is used by Judith as a facilitator in her murder of Holofernes. Petrarch is clearly demonstrating the damage that can be caused by sleep and this certainly impacts upon the text as a dream-vision; despite his obvious attempts to overcome his mistrust of dreams and visions, this reference clearly shows that his anxieties have not been completely or convincingly put aside.

The second oneiric reference within *TC* III is found only a few lines after the first, in a phrase which is also linked to a previous dream-vision text. The narrator, having witnessed the procession of the Greek goddesses Procris, Artemis, Deidamia, Semiramis, Byblis, and Myrrha, exclaims 'Ecco quei che le

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<sup>9</sup> See Petrarch, *Trionfi*, ed. by Marco Ariani (Milan: Mursia, 1988), p. 143, footnote 53; and Judith, 13. 4-10 ('porro Holofernis iacebat in lecto nimia ebrietate sopitus; dixitque Iudith puellae suae ut staret foras ante cubiculum et observaret; stetitque Iudith ante lectum orans cum lacrimis et labiorum motu in silentio dicens confirma me Domine Deus Israhel et respice in hac hora ad opera manuum mearum ut sicut pomisisti Hierusalem civitatem tuam erigas et hoc quod credens per te posse fieri cogitavi perficiam et haec cum dixisset accessit ad columnam quae erat ad caput lectuli eius et pugionem eius qui in ea ligatus pendebat exsolvit cumque evaginasset illud adprehendit comam capitis eius et ait confirma me Domine Deus Israhel in hac hora et percussit bis in cervicem eius et abscidit caput eius et abstulit conopeum eius a columnis et evolvit corpus eius truncum').

carte empion di sogni!’ (*TC*, III. 79), a phrase which, Ariani explains, Petrarch also employed to describe the *Roman de la Rose* when he sent a copy of the French poem to Guido Garzana, the Lord of Mantua.<sup>10</sup>

Petrarch mentions sleep and dreaming within *TC* IV three times; the first such reference appears at a point in the narrative where the protagonist is questioning the meaning of life:

Ben è 'l viver mortal, che sì n'agrada,  
sogno d'infermi e fola di romanzi! (*TC*, IV. 65-66; emphasis mine).

Petrarch uses similar lexis within his *Canzoniere* to describe the temporary nature of earthly delights, where he comments, ‘quanto piace al mondo è breve sogno’ (*Canzoniere*, I. 14). His comments regarding the pleasures of mortal life within the *TC* IV serve as little more than a reiteration of this comment: they demonstrate his attitudes towards dreams and visions as things which lack substance and importance; they are nothing more than fleeting vanities.

Ariani notes that the word ‘romanzi’ used here by Petrarch to negate the importance of mortal life and, as a result, the value of dreams, is a *hapax* in Dante’s *Commedia*, since the word appears only once in *Purgatorio* XXVI. 118 (‘Versi d’amore e prose di romanzi’). The relationship between the *Triumphs* and the *Commedia* is a topic which continues to garner academic attention, and is a subject to which I will return later in this chapter; however, Petrarch’s blatant use of Dantean terminology to my mind reinforces the view set forth by Aldo S. Bernardo that the *Triumphs*’s resemblances to the *Commedia* are so deep-rooted and multi-levelled that it is impossible to think them accidental.<sup>11</sup> Petrarch’s employment of the term ‘romanzi’ in conjunction with ‘sogno’, therefore, is important in our understanding of his authorial intentions. Petrarch builds reader expectations of his text through his contrived use of Dantean phrasing and imagery, which has the desired effect of locating the *Triumphs* within a specific vision tradition; however, he subtly but repeatedly reveals a deep unease for the dream-vision genre through his employment of terminology and intertextual references.

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<sup>10</sup> Petrarch, *Trionfi*, ed. Ariani, p. 146, footnote 79.

<sup>11</sup> Bernardo, ‘Petrarch’s Attitude Toward Dante’, p. 506.

Two further dream references are found within *TC IV*, the first of which further emphasizes Petrarch's suspicions regarding the value of dreams, since he places them alongside false opinions and vain imaginings:

errori e *sogni* et imagini smorte  
 eran d'intorno a l'arco triumfale  
 e false opinioni in su le porte (*TC*, IV. 139-41; emphasis mine)

The final dream reference within *TC IV* expresses desire, rather than offering any useful insight into Petrarch's use of the oneiric genre:

e 'n tanto, pur *sognando* libertate,  
 l'alma, che 'l grand disio fea pronta e lève,  
 consolai col veder le cose andate. (*TC*, IV. 160-62; emphasis mine)

We see, then, that throughout the *Triumphus Cupidinis*, where Petrarch seemingly seeks to ground his text within the established traditions of dream-vision literature, he repeatedly creates a jarring effect within his narrative. Certainly it is a dream-vision, as is clear from his narrator's descent into sleep, the introduction of the traditional spirit-guide motif, and the use of specific dream terminology, but it is by no means a comfortable dream-vision. There are several instances whereby Petrarch appears to deliberately undercut the authority and, indeed, verity, of his protagonist's dream by casting doubt on its value as a narrative device.

The final mention of dreams within the entire text, however, is markedly different from these previous examples; indeed, the very vision to which it refers casts doubt upon Petrarch's troubled relationship with the genre. Although the initial dream-vision of the *Triumphus* spans the entire six books which make up the narrative, and although this dream is never obviously interrupted, a second, different dream takes place within the *Triumphus Mortis* II. Here, Petrarch's narrator is visited by the soul of his beloved Laura on the evening of her death, and she engages the narrator in conversation about life, death, and love. This second oneiric sequence (a dream-within-a-dream, since the protagonist is never shown to awake from his initial vision) begins in a similar manner to the first, with the narrator alone and full of 'sogni confusi' (*TM*, II. 6). This final use of dream terminology is the only such reference within the entirety of Petrarch's

*Triumph* to refer to the protagonist's dream (although Petrarch uses sleep to encase his framing vision, he never actually refers to it as a dream) and, as such, warrants a good deal of attention.

The dream of Laura differs from the initial dream in several ways: firstly, unlike the framing dream, which is never shown to end, this secondary sequence has a definite beginning and conclusion in the form of Laura's arrival and departure from the episode. Furthermore, the content of this second dream is much more conventional of traditional dream-vision narratives; like Boethius's *De consolazione Philosophiae* and Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, the narrator and his guide engage in conversation about topics such as love, life, and death. However, one of the most pertinent differences between the *Triumph*'s two dreams is the terminology used by Petrarch to narrate them. In the *TM II*, Petrarch radically alters his rules of oneiric reporting, and not only sets this vision apart from the frame-dream of the *Triumph*, but also from previous examples of vision literature, as Carlo Vecce comments:

Petrarca non si serve di verbi come 'apparve' o 'sembrò venire', né utilizza in prima persona il passato remote di 'vedere' (vidi), caratteristico della *visio* [...] Più che 'vedere' Laura, sfuggente e indistinguibile nella stessa luce dell'aurora [...] in *TM II* Petrarca, ad occhi socchiusi, la ascolta parlare, le sfiora la mano, la sente accanto a sé sulla riva della Sorgue.<sup>12</sup>

Conventionally, literary dream-visions were reported using only certain sensory verbs, such as 'vedere' and 'parere' (Dante, for example, uses both of these verbs to describe his narrator's vision in the *Vita nuova*: 'me pareva vedere ne la mia camera', *VN*, III. 3; 'Avvenne quasi nel mezzo de lo mio dormire che me parve vedere', *VN*, XII. 3). However, Petrarch differs from previous dream-vision authors since his dreamer has his eyes firmly closed 'come uom cieco' (*TM*, II. 3) and is unable to partake in the traditional act of seeing his spirit-guide. His protagonist relies upon the conversations in which he and Laura engage, placing great emphasis on Laura's speech. Petrarch's refusal to make use of such an

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<sup>12</sup> Vecce, 'La "lunga pictura"', p. 303.

important dream-vision trope as the witnessing of his guide is symptomatic of the greater picture: throughout the *Triumph*, we see an author who is both acutely aware of, but also resistant to employing, the key tropes of dream-vision literature. When he does employ the conventions consistent with the traditions of oneiric texts, his use of these tropes is unorthodox, showing a clear rejection of the genre's boundaries.

It is certainly worth noting that no references to dreams, visions, or sleep are found at all within the *TE*, a Triumph which is entirely concerned with relating Petrarch-*personaggio*'s final apocalyptic vision. This should not be considered trifling, but rather of great importance. The previous sleepy, confused visions, which may or may not have been the product of the narrator's subconscious, have been replaced by a single, authoritative end-of-time vision, which draws heavily on biblical models and eschews any sense of ambiguity. Unlike the opening verses to the previous two visions, no mention is made of Petrarch-*personaggio*'s spirit-guide; gone, too, is the consistency of tenses in which the vision is described. While the visions from *TC* I and *TM* II have been located entirely in the past historic tense, the introduction to this final triumph (*TE*, 19-33) — and to Petrarch's final vision of the heavenly Laura — relies not only upon the *passato remoto* ('mi parve un mondo | novo', *TE*, 20-21; 'vidi in un punto quel che mai non stette', *TE*, 26), but also falls into the present tense ('ch'umana vita fanno varia e 'nferma!', *TE*, 33). Such a shift in tenses is hardly surprising given Petrarch-*personaggio*'s assertion that, in his vision of Eternity, there will be neither "'fia', né 'fu', né 'mai', né 'inanzi' o 'ndietro'" (*TE*, 32), a line which is reiterated only a few verses later:

Non avrà loco 'fu', 'sarà' ned 'era',  
 ma 'è' solo, 'in presente', ed 'ora', ed 'oggi',  
 e sola 'eternità' raccolta e 'ntera (*TE*, 67-69).

This phrasing clearly reflects Revelation 11.17, where St John addresses God: 'qui es et qui eras quia accepisti virtutem tuam magnam'. Likewise, Petrarch's vision of a 'mondo | novo' is but a reworking of the 'caelum novum et terram novam' revealed to St John in Revelation 21. 1. Further comparisons can also be made between the two texts' eschatological subject matter, and the similar ways

in which the respective visions are reported, since both narrators use the verb ‘vidi’ to describe their experiences. Just as St John uses other sensory verbs, such as ‘audio’ — ‘audivi post me vocem magnam’ (I heard a great voice behind me, Rev. 1. 10); ‘audivi vocem magnam in caelo’ (I heard a great voice in heaven, Rev. 12. 10) — and ‘pareo’ — ‘et signum magnum paruit in caelo’ (and a great sign appeared in heaven, Rev. 12. 1) — so too does Petrarch. Unlike within his dream of the deceased Laura in *TM II*, Petrarch-*personaggio* actively participates in his vision of Eternity, and perceives his new world using verbs in the first-person singular (‘sento quel ch’i’ sono e quel ch’i’ fui’, *TE*, 7; ‘spero che ’n me anchor faranno’, *TE*, 14). While an element of passivity prevails in his recounting how ‘veder mi parve un mondo | novo’ (*TE*, 20-21), this final vision is almost unrecognisable from those within *TC I* and *TM II*. Whether this shift in styles reflects a maturing authorial approach, a conscious effort to synthesise his poetry into a more concise form, or simply an element of carelessness in the continuity of his text, it is clear that this final Triumph is of a different character entirely to the rest of the *Triumphs*.

### **THE SPIRIT-GUIDE(S)**

To speak of only one spirit-guide within the *Triumphs* would be to overlook one of the most original features of Petrarch’s text, since there are two separate and very different guides, who appear at various points throughout the narrative and who fulfil very different literary roles. The first of these two guides appears for the first time within the first quarter of *TC I*, wherein Petrarch’s narrator describes how he was greeted by ‘[u]n’ombra alquanto men che l’altra trista’, who ‘mi chiamò per nome’ (*TC*, I. 40-41). This guide serves to introduce the dreamer to the triumphal processions present within the *TC*, before almost disappearing from the text completely. He is not described in any physical terms, and no clue is given as to whence he came, aside from his disclosure that, ‘teco nacqui in terra toska’ (*TC*, I, 48). While there have been many suggestions regarding the identity of Petrarch’s first spirit-guide, many of these have proved untenable; yet Wilkins asserts that the most probable candidate is Giovanni Aghinolfi, a fellow Aretine

and chancellor of the powerful Gonzaga family.<sup>13</sup>

Carrai offers various models for this first guide figure, such as Brunetto Latini, Virgil's Aeneas, and even Virgil himself, whom Dante also uses 'ombra' to describe ('qual che tu sii, od ombra od omo certo!', *If.* I. 66). However, no matter what Petrarch's inspirations when creating this spirit-guide, he is certainly a complex character. Not only is this 'ombra' temporarily replaced in the *TM* II by an apparition of the deceased Laura, but he also plays a much less significant role than any other guide figure from previous dream-visions, and Petrarch neglects to include him at all in several of the later *capitoli*: indeed, after *TC* III, Petrarch's guide — 'amico mio' (*TC*, III: 4) — is not mentioned again. The dream which frames the *Triumph*i is not interrupted at any point during the narrative, nor is the dreamer ever shown to wake. Therefore we must understand that, if the *Triumph*i are set within one extended vision, and the character of the spirit-guide is not at any point described as departing the protagonist's dream, then the guide must accompany the dreamer throughout his entire oneiric journey. His notable absence within the narrative, then, leads us to conclude that his presence within Petrarch-*personaggio*'s vision cannot be vastly important. Petrarch's 'ombra' disappears into the background of the narrative after his initial introduction and does not fulfil any of the traditional spirit-guide responsibilities: he does not prophesy future events like Cicero's Scipio Africanus, nor does he facilitate his dreamer's journey through the afterlife like Dante's Virgil and Beatrice. He is little more than a fair-weather spirit-guide and, after revealing himself to the dreamer of the *Triumph*i, he takes a back-seat role, neglecting to fulfil his duties of answering Petrarch-*personaggio*'s queries, or leading him to any form of spiritual enlightenment.

Petrarch's second guide is of a different ilk entirely from his first, not least because she actively engages the dreamer in conversation. Her role is much more traditional than her male counterpart, since her physical appearance is described, and her presence within the narrative is punctuated by a clear moment of arrival:

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<sup>13</sup> Wilkins, 'The First Two Triumphs', p. 9; for a summary of the various proposed identities of Petrarch's guide, see Carrai, 'Il problema della "guida"', pp. 70-71.

donna semiante a la stagione,  
 di gemme orientali incoronata,  
 mosse ver' me da mille altre corone (*TM*, II. 5-7)

and, importantly, a definite point of departure:

Ella già mosse, disse: "Al creder mio,  
 tu starai in terra senza me gran tempo." (*TM*, II 189-90).

Spirit-Laura's role within the dream-vision is clear, and she quickly establishes a dialogue with the dreamer, asking him 'Riconosci colei che 'n prima torse | i passi tuoi dal publico viaggio?' (*TM*, II. 13-14), before engaging him in conversation regarding his unreciprocated love for her, the nature of death, and the time remaining until the dreamer may be released from the 'pregione oscura' (*TM*, II. 34) that is earthly life.

Petrarch drew heavily on several previous guide figures when composing spirit-Laura, and she is a neat incarnation of many aspects of her literary predecessors. Like Dante's Beatrice, she is the poet's love-object, ostensibly dead, yet able to communicate with the narrator; she demonstrates characteristics similar to Scipio Africanus in the *Somnium Scipionis*, since she, too, appears after death to both reassure her dreamer and offer prophecies regarding his future; but she is also closely modelled upon Boethius's Lady Philosophy, as her character provides a neutral external voice to facilitate the discussion of difficult amorous and eschatological issues, which occupies the entire central narrative of her *capitolo*. Yet of the various models Petrarch used when composing this second spirit-guide, perhaps the most resounding example is one which, for the most part, has been overlooked: Elegy 4. 7 of Propertius's *Elegiae*.<sup>14</sup> Here, Propertius's love-object and muse, Cynthia, appears to the poem's narrator from beyond the grave to admonish him for not properly grieving her death: 'hoc etiam graue erat, nulla mercede hyacinthos | inicere et fracto busta piare cado' ('Was that so hard, to toss hyacinths, which cost | nothing, and to purify my ashes with the broken jug?', IV.

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<sup>14</sup> Vecce briefly mentions Propertius's poem in 'La "lunga pictura"', but does not discuss how these influences are made manifest within the *Triumphs*, nor the impact of these allusions upon Petrarch's texts; p. 302.

7. 33-34).<sup>15</sup> Having given Propertius several orders, including one to burn his verses and write no more of their love ('et quoscumque meo fecisti nomine uersus, | ure mihi: laudes desine habere meas!'; 'And whatever verses you have made in my name, | burn them: don't praise me anymore in your poetry', IV. 7. 77-78), Cynthia prophesies that Propertius-*personaggio* will die soon ('mox sola tenebo: | mecum eris et mixtis ossibus ossa teram'; 'I alone will hold you soon: | you'll be with me, and I'll rub my bones against yours, enmeshed', IV. 7. 93-94) and departs the narrative: haec postquam querula mecum sub lite peregit, | inter complexus excidit umbra meos ('After she'd finished her bitter complaint against me, | her shade slipped away through my embrace', IV. 7. 95-96). However, before disappearing from the narrator's consciousness, Cynthia raises the question about the value of dreams and the difference between prophetic visions and trivial reveries: 'nec tu sperne piis uenientia somnia portis: | cum ia uenerunt somnia, pondus habent' ('Don't spurn the dreams that come through the portals of truth: | when true dreams come, they have weight', IV. 7. 87-88). Like Propertius, Petrarch uses his deceased love-object as a spirit-guide figure; she appears to the dreamer while he is alone and confused; she converses with him about his love for her and the various ways in which he has behaved towards her; she reveals prophecies about the length of the narrator's life, before departing the narrative completely and leaving the dreamer alone once again.

Laura is vastly more traditional of her convention than her male counterpart, both in the role she plays within the narrative, and the impact she has upon the dreamer. Furthermore, the timing of her appearance is also deeply significant, as Bernardo rightly comments:

It is here [in the *TM* II] that the poet identifies the most critical moment of his life, the first hour of April 6 when he had first met his beloved and when she expired, and of course, now the moment of his present dream.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Propertius, *Elegiae*; trans. Katz.

<sup>16</sup> Aldo S. Bernardo, *Petrarch, Laura, and the 'Triumphs'* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974), p. 122.

The dream of Laura is set during the prophetic hours of early morning, thus lending her speech the necessary *gravitas* and literary vigour for her to rank among the most famous examples of her trope.

That Petrarch was familiar with previous dream-vision narratives is clear from the characters he presents within his poetry — Boethius, Scipio, and Dante all appear within the various triumphal processions — and so his failure to make full use of the spirit-guide trope in the initial chapters is striking, especially when faced with the second guide, whose role is much more conventional of the genre. We may ask ourselves why Petrarch chooses to employ such vastly different spirit-guides, but this is a question to which there are no clear answers. At various points within the narrative, we see moments of difficulty, hints that Petrarch was struggling to contend with some of the key tropes of the genre: the fact that the narrator is never shown to wake from his dream, the drastic contrast in tone between the earlier and final Triumphs, the lack of communication between the dreamer and his initial guide, and the same guide's unacknowledged disappearance from the narrative.

The only assertion we may presume to make with any degree of certainty is that Petrarch's positioning of these two guides — whether intentional or a result of his authorial carelessness — ensures that his text is simultaneously conventional and unconventional. He does not display a great deal of control over his handling of the genre's conventions, and his employment of key tropes is inconsistent: his female spirit-guide adheres to the traditions of the genre to which she belongs, while the role of the unnamed male guide is far from usual. Yet through this combination of two very different guides, who fulfil very different roles within the narrative, Petrarch both demonstrates his ability to 'correctly' draw upon previous examples of dream-vision literature, while concurrently rejecting the genre's boundaries. Were it not for his numerous other inconsistencies, Petrarch's combination of orthodox and unorthodox spirit-guides could almost be contrived; a way of demonstrating his understanding of the genre; a tool to show off his ability to contort reader expectations. However, we cannot help but notice, as we reach the end of the final triumph, that the neglect in the initial guide's duties and his unnoticed abandonment of the dreamer may not have

been deliberate on the part of Petrarch, and that perhaps the poet has simply forgotten that he ever introduced the spirit-guide.

### TRIUMPHAL IMAGERY

As has been clearly demonstrated by Petrarch's employment of the spirit-guide motif, his use of oneiric tropes within the *Triumphs* was rather inconsistent and unconventional. Yet Petrarch's employment of triumphs or triumphal processions within his text is much more traditional, and proves essential to our understanding of his work. His narrative is made up of triumphs and is filled with characters from the classical and early medieval eras, however his use of triumphal imagery was by no means innovative, even within dream-vision literature. As my previous chapter discusses, Boccaccio employed this trope within his *Amorosa visione*, a work which shares many similarities with the *Triumphs*. Yet even in the *Amorosa visione*, the trope takes a minor role within the work, framing only sections of the narrative; furthermore, these triumphs are encased within paintings, rather than constituting actual processions.

Petrarch is canny in his deployment of the triumphal trope, and references permeate every layer of his text, from the title, to the structure, and even the characters he chooses to employ. Scipio Africanus, the spirit-guide in Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, for example, is also the subject of Silius Italicus's great triumph in his epic poem, *Punica*; yet in the *Triumphs*, he also appears as a character in *TC*, II and *TF*, I:

Fecimi al primo: "O Massinissa antico,  
per lo tuo Scipione, e per costei" (*TC*, I. 13-14)

Da man destra, ove gli occhi in prima porsi,  
la bella donna avea Cesare a Scipio,  
ma qual più presso a gran pena m'accorsi (*TF*, I. 22-24)

Scipio Africanus is not, however, the only reference to classical triumphal texts to appear within the *Triumphs*; Petrarch also borrows some of his most striking scenes from earlier narratives. Speaking of Statius's *Thebaid*, Mary Beard comments that the Athenian King, Theseus, is shown riding through the streets of

Athens ‘in a chariot decked with laurel and pulled by four white horses’;<sup>17</sup> a scene which Petrarch would replicate in *TC* II, wherein he places his ‘quattro destrier, vie più che neve bianchi, | sovr’un carro di foco’ (*TC*, I. 22-23). Historically, triumphal processions were civil ceremonies held in ancient Rome, usually to celebrate military victories. The inclusion of triumphal imagery within literature was not uncommon since, as Beard points out, ‘[t]riumphs offered a suitable climax to poems celebrating Roman achievement’.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, writers such as Ennius, Statius, and Silius Italicus all employed the imagery of triumphs in their own texts, and within Canto XXIII of *Paradiso* Dante also uses this same imagery when describing the Church Triumphant, as Beatrice comments ‘Ecco le schiere | del triunfo di Cristo e tutto 'l frutto | ricolto del girar di queste spere!’ (*Pd.*, XXIII, 19-21).

That Petrarch should base his entire text around the imagery of triumphal processions is not surprising. Ceremonial processions, such as triumphs, were used to commemorate achievement, and Petrarch dedicates his own *Triumph* to the celebration of heroes from literature, philosophy, science, mythology and religion. With so many classical figures to honour, a classical trope such as a Roman triumph seems extremely fitting. However, Petrarch not only uses the triumphal motif within his six poems on a literal level, but also on a transtextual level as a way of demonstrating his mastery of literature. He uses the structure of the triumph to encase his text, but also employs characters previously used within triumphal narratives. His placing of Scipio Africanus within his triumphal procession, for example, is particularly noteworthy and illustrative of Petrarch’s authorial excellence: the character is included in a procession, thus building upon his appearance as a character within a triumphal text, but he is also used as a model for Petrarch’s two spirit-guides, owing to his previous incarnation as a spirit-guide within Cicero’s *Somnium Scipionis*. As such, Scipio Africanus is a character who brings with him many connotations, and multiple levels of expectation. He is certainly an intertextual allusion in terms of his role as a spirit guide, but he also functions on levels beyond simply drawing attention to his narrative role; he is an influential character whom Petrarch has carefully selected

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<sup>17</sup> Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, p. 43.

<sup>18</sup> Beard, *The Roman Triumph*, p. 41.

to demonstrate his excellent knowledge and management of different literary genres.

In the opening lines to his study on the role of Laura in Petrarch's text Aldo Bernardo comments:

throughout Petrarch's life the two most consistent sources of inspiration for his poetry were Scipio and Laura. In these two personages Petrarch apparently saw the kind of foundations on which he felt that true poetry should rest.<sup>19</sup>

Petrarch's use of Scipio Africanus as both a character and a model for his spirit-guide are not, then, very surprising, although their impact upon the narrative effects of the *Triumphs* are unquestionably important, since they provide a way for Petrarch to demonstrate his mastery of literature. His skills as a craftsman are evident: within his six poems, he is able to simultaneously demonstrate not only his understanding of how different genres function, but also his vast knowledge of the literature which had preceded him. The *Triumphs* were certainly a celebration of achievement, but this achievement was in no way limited to that of the characters Petrarch employed within his text.

#### **SPRING-TIME SETTING**

Petrarch's use of traditional dream-vision motifs extends far beyond his use of the spirit-guides. Not only does he draw upon biblical and classical models of oneiric narratives in his selection of terminology, but he also uses these texts as models for his own visions. One of the most commonly occurring features of dream-vision literature is that of a spring-time setting, which is associated with religious prophecy and truth due to the significance of Easter as a time when earlier prophecies of Christ's resurrection were fulfilled. Dante famously set his *Commedia* over a vernal weekend — his pilgrim's journey through the various stages of the afterlife spanning from Good Friday to the Wednesday after Easter in the year 1300 —, while Guillaume de Lorris's opening lines of the *Roman de la Rose* locate his dreamer's experiences during the month of May:

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<sup>19</sup> Bernardo, *Petrarch, Laura, and the 'Triumphs'*, p. 1.

Avis m'iere qu'il estoit mais,  
 il a ja bien .v. anz ou mais,  
 qu'en may estoie, ce sonjoie,  
 el tens enmoreus, plain de joie,  
 el tens ou toute rien s'esgaie,  
 que l'en ne voit buisson ne haie  
 qui en may parer ne se veille  
 et covrir d novele fuelle. (*Rose*, I. 45-52)

(‘It seemed to me that it was May, five years ago or more; I dreamed that it was May, the season of love and joy, when everything rejoices, for one sees neither bush nor hedge that would not deck itself for May in a covering of new leaves’)

We know from surviving correspondence that Petrarch was familiar with both the *Commedia* and the *Rose*: Boccaccio gifted him a copy of the former, and his correspondence with the Lord of Mantua confirms that he was rather critical of the latter. His use, then, of this spring-time trope, with its strong associations with oneiric literature, cannot be considered trivial.

Petrarch’s *Triumph* open on an unspecified anniversary of ‘quel giorno | che fu principio a sì lunghi martiri’ (*TC*, I. 2-3), that is to say the day he first met Laura. Furthermore, the narrator’s second dream-vision, that of the deceased Laura in *TM II*, is also set on 6 April, on the evening of her death (‘La notte che seguì l’orribil caso | che spense il sole’, *TM*, II. 1). That the two dreams open on the same date, although during different years — indeed, Berra suggests that Petrarch-*personaggio*’s dream of Laura in *TM II* may even precede the original frame dream: ‘[*TM II*] si apre con un secondo esordio (nell’ordine, ma forse primo nella cronologia) del poema’<sup>20</sup> — leaves minimal doubt as to the significance of his spring-time setting. Petrarch, acutely familiar with the dream-vision genre and its associated tropes, imbues his text with the authority of previous oneiric texts by employing multiple examples of the spring motif, thus ensuring that his readers cannot overlook its significance. He not only draws upon fictional narratives such

<sup>20</sup> Claudia Berra, ‘La varietà stilistica dei *Trionfi*’, in *I ‘Triumph’ di Francesco Petrarca*, ed. by Claudia Berra (Milan: Cisalpino, 1999), pp. 175-218.

as Dante's *Commedia* and the *Roman de la Rose*, but also, importantly, instils his narrative with the gravitas of biblical prophecy. During his later poems — and particularly the *TE* — Petrarch draws heavily on St John's account of the Apocalypse to explore his own vision of Eternity; however, he does not wait until this point to introduce the idea of Christian foresight, as his use of the spring-time setting demonstrates: the *TC* is pivotal in establishing the *Triumph* within the traditions of the genre, since it is so bound up with religious iconography that we cannot fail to grasp its importance in terms of Christ's death and subsequent resurrection.

Certainly 6 April was a significant date for Petrarch; not only do his narrator's two dreams in the *Triumph* open on this day, but his *Canzoniere*, which he rewrote and reorganised numerous times, eventually came to be organised in a bipartite formation: those poems which deal with Laura 'in vita', and those following her death on 6 April 1348. Although Petrarch did not specify that his collection should be divided in this way, Barolini explains that a dissection was often created within manuscripts, with an illuminated initial at the beginning of poem 264 signalling the start of the second section of poems.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, Petrarch also affords the beginnings of both parts of his collection a spring-time setting, although this does not become apparent until sonnet III, when we come to understand that the 'giovenile error' of which the poet speaks in his first poem (*Canzoniere*, I. 3) refers to his first meeting with Laura on 6 April 1327. The second part of the *Canzoniere* begins shortly after Laura's premature death in April 1348. That Petrarch chooses 6 April for the setting of both dreams of his *Triumph*, therefore, is unsurprising, but this should not render his use of the spring-time setting any less important to our understanding of Petrarch's engagement with the dream-vision tradition. Like many of his predecessors, Petrarch employed a spring-time setting within the *Triumph* as a way of ensuring that his narrator's dreams were afforded value and revelatory qualities; by repeating this vernal setting within his secondary dream, Petrarch leaves us with no doubt that his deployment of this trope was deliberate and calculated.

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<sup>21</sup> Teodolinda Barolini, 'The Making of a Lyric Sequence: Time and Narrative in Petrarch's *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*', *MLN*, 104 (1989), 1-38 (especially pp. 7-11).

### THE *TRIUMPHI* AND INTERTEXTUALITY

The *Triumphs* owe a great deal to Petrarch's literary predecessors, in terms of both style and content, and many studies have sought to establish links between Petrarch's poems and earlier dream-vision texts. In his study on the representation of visions in the *Triumphs*, Carlo Vecce provides a succinct summary of Petrarch's various models when composing his dream-vision poetry:

Petrarca entra in gara d'emulazione: il *Somnium Scipionis* di Cicerone, con il commento di Macrobio, e il *De consolatione Philosophiae* di Boezio; e ancora, per la visione di TM II, l'elegia di Properzio con l'apparizione di Cinzia Morta.<sup>22</sup>

According to Vecce, Petrarch was not only influenced by previous examples of dream-texts, but actively sought to emulate them within the *Triumphs*. His influences were wide-ranging, and by no means limited to the models Vecce suggests; they include biblical, classical and medieval texts, which each colour our reception of the *Triumphs*.

Although now rather dated, Goffis's 1951 study on the *Triumphs* was pivotal in the development of modern interpretations of Petrarch's use of literary models, and specifically his use of the *Roman de la Rose*. Goffis states that, although Petrarch knew the *Roman de la Rose*, and may have even desired to improve upon it in his *Triumphs*, the French text cannot be considered an actual source for Petrarch, since his text — and specifically the dream-vision which frames the narrative — has very different implications from the dream in the *Rose*:

C'è, dunque, un rapporto [tra il *Roman de la Rose* ed i *Triumphs*], ma non più preciso di quello che poteva esservi con uno dei principali testi amorosi del medioevo; non tanto preciso da consentirci di trovare qui la fonte della concezione petrarchesca, e di scendere a precise illusioni cronologiche.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Vecce, 'La "Lunga Pictura"', p. 302.

<sup>23</sup> Cesare Federico Goffis, *Originalità dei "Trionfi"* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1951), p. 6.

While I would agree with Goffis that many aspects of the *Triumphs*'s dream-vision differ greatly from that of the *Rose*, there are certain moments within Petrarch's text where there are clear echoes of Guillaume de Lorris's and Jean de Meun's text. Perhaps one of the most important intertextual allusions Petrarch employs within his *Triumphs* occurs within the opening lines of the *Triumphus Cupidinis* I, where Petrarch describes his narrator's descent into sleep:

Amor, gli sdegni e 'l pianto, e la stagione  
ricondotto m'aveano al chiuso loco  
ov'ogni fascio il cor lasso ripone.  
Ivi, fra l'erbe, già del pianger fioco,  
vinto dal sonno, vidi una gran luce (*TC*, I. 7-11)

Petrarch's use of a confined space ('chiuso loco') as the location for his narrative is steeped in tradition, and it is here that the dreamer experiences his vision of the triumphal processions. Within medieval love literature, the *locus amoenus* — an enclosed but beautiful space — was used widely as a location for illicit love affairs, since they offered a peaceful, idyllic atmosphere, whilst guaranteeing that affairs could be conducted away from prying eyes. In the *Roman de la Rose*, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun use the space of a beautiful garden as a setting for their protagonist's conquering of the Rose:

Quant j'oi un poi avant alé,  
si vi un vergier grant et lé,  
tot clos de haut mur bataillié,  
portret dehors et entaillié  
a maintes riches escritures. (*Rose*, 129-33)

(When I had gone a little further, I saw a large and extensive garden, entirely surrounded by a high, crenellated wall, which was decorated on the outside with paintings and carved with many rich inscriptions.)

The location of the narrative of the *Rose* thus serves to both enhance and facilitate the carnal pleasures involved in love affairs, since its high walls ensured privacy for the indulgence of sexual pleasures, while its beautiful and verdant enclosed space augmented the enjoyment experienced by the illicit lovers. Petrarch, too,

employs this same *locus amoenus* within the *Triumph*, as a space in which his narrator is able to fall in love with Laura, whom he sees for the first time in the *TC*:

Una giovenetta ebbi dallato,  
 pura assai più che candida colomba.  
 Ella mi prese; ed io, ch'avrei giurato  
 difendermi d'un uom coverto d'arme,  
 con parole e con cenni fui legato. (*TC*, III. 88-93)

However, the way in which he combines this traditional motif with an unusual employment of the trope serves to demonstrate Petrarch's deep understanding of the ways in which established conventions may be manipulated. Petrarch-*personaggio* does not only fall in love within this space, but he is witnessing others who have done the same. Despite still functioning as a setting for illicit love affairs, his *locus* is no longer a private space, but rather it is a space filled with people. Its role as a secluded idyll is, therefore, redundant.

The combination of the 'chiuso loco' and the dream-vision genre had already been accomplished by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun in the *Roman de la Rose*. Yet Petrarch's reworking of this combination in the *Triumph* is vastly different from the *Rose*: not only is his use of the *locus amoenus* unconventional, since there is no real requirement for a private space to facilitate the illegitimate love affairs of the *TC*, but the relationships Petrarch-*personaggio* witnesses are pre-existing, dating from ancient mythology, history and literature.

While Petrarch continually engaged with the *Roman de la Rose* throughout his text, drawing inspiration from the various uses of oneiric conventions within the French poem and adapting these within his own, the influence of this dream-vision within the *Triumph* pales in significance when compared to Petrarch's use of Dantean texts throughout his poems. For many decades critics have written extensively on Petrarch's engagement with Dante's works; Bernardo considers the *Triumph* Petrarch's response to Dante's great theological poem, his 'answer to what Dante should have done with the *Divine Comedy*';<sup>24</sup> while Mazzotta

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<sup>24</sup> Bernardo, 'Petrarch's Attitude Toward Dante', p. 493.

explains that Dantean echoes are so common within the texts of Petrarch precisely because ‘Dante, more than anybody else, has become Petrarch’s inner voice. He echoes it, and in the process, he transforms it’.<sup>25</sup>

Mazzotta investigates the literary influence exerted on Petrarch by Dante, and argues that the relationship between the two poets has historically attracted attention — and, indeed, will continue to do so — precisely because it gives weight to the question of how we are to interpret and understand shifts and ruptures in literature.<sup>26</sup> He goes on to state that it would be foolhardy to attempt to identify every single Dantean echo within Petrarch’s works, since they are numerous and, in so doing, we would risk missing the meaning of their literary relationship, since ‘from the very start of his career, Petrarch had entered into a dialogue with his predecessor and had kept it going until the very end’.<sup>27</sup> The idea that Petrarch produced his *Triumphs* as a response, or indeed alternative to the *Commedia* has been supported by both Christian Moevs and Fabio Finotti, who both argue that, while Petrarch drew heavily on the *Commedia* in the composition of his *Triumphs*, Dante’s text serves not as a model, but as an anti-model.<sup>28</sup> Firstly Petrarch’s text is much more subjective than Dante’s: while Dante uses plural pronouns to describe the opening of his journey through the afterlife, thus universalising his experiences (‘nostra vita’, *If.* I. 1), Petrarch’s account remains firmly in the singular (‘i miei sospiri’, *TC*, I. 1). His dreamer’s experiences are personal, rather than symbolic of a collective journey; they concern the condition of man and, even in his eschatological discussions within the *TM* II and *TE*, Petrarch maintains a humanistic approach. Bernardo comments that even Petrarch’s God within the *Triumphs* takes on a humanistic element, whereby He is

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<sup>25</sup> Giuseppe Mazzotta, ‘Petrarch’s Dialogue with Dante’, in *Petrarch and Dante: Anti-Dantism, Metaphysics, Tradition*, ed. by Zygmunt G. Barański and Theodore J. Cachey, Jr. (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2009), pp. 177-94 (p. 193).

<sup>26</sup> Mazzotta, ‘Petrarch’s Dialogue with Dante’, p. 178.

<sup>27</sup> Mazzotta, ‘Petrarch’s Dialogue with Dante’, p. 180.

<sup>28</sup> Christian Moevs, ‘Subjectivity and Conversion in Dante and Petrarch’, in *Petrarch and Dante*, pp. 226-59 (see especially pp. 226-27); Fabio Finotti, ‘The Poem of Memory: *Triumphs*’, in *Petrarch: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, pp. 63-83 (see especially p. 64: ‘Petrarch’s vision is not a product of divine will as in Dante. From the eschatological horizon of the *Divina Commedia*, the *Triumphs* turns to a psychological horizon’).

important only in terms of His relevance to man's fears and desires; He 'is defined not directly, as in the case of the *Comedy*, but in terms of the state in which man will find himself in the absolute timelessness of the afterlife'.<sup>29</sup> Secondly, while the journey undergone by Dante's dreamer leads him to a more spiritual way of life, Petrarch-*personaggio* never truly converts in quite the same way. Although he is led through various triumphal processions, and, like Dante-*personaggio*, engages in dialogue with many of the characters he encounters, his conversion is never truly completed, precisely because it is never fully desired.

Conversionary experiences are one of the staple elements of traditional dream-vision texts. Dante's pilgrim exemplifies perhaps the most conventional use of this trope, but other instances of its employment are found within some of the most important oneiric texts: Lady Philosophy helps Boethius to understand issues regarding life, death, and God, and to ultimately convert to a more virtuous existence, while St Jerome, in his letter 'Ad Eustochium' reports how he experienced a dream which led him to renounce his studies of Cicero in favour of dedicating himself to God. While these narratives provide Petrarch with models for his own text, his friend and contemporary Boccaccio had recently demonstrated an entirely different use of the conversion model in the *Amorosa visione*, in which he documented his narrator's constant refusal to fully adhere to his guide's wishes and abandon his life of carnal delights in order to pursue a more pious life. Yet in the *Triumphs*, Petrarch-*personaggio*'s failure to convert differs even from Boccaccio's already unorthodox use of this motif: while Boccaccio's narrator oscillates between a ready willingness and a stubborn refusal to change, Petrarch seems almost resolute in his view that his narrator should *not* change. Moevs describes this lack of conversion as 'an unobtainable goal, a quest only partially fulfilled', since 'the literary form of the conversion narrative attempts to create a paradigmatic individual life, to construct and stabilize an identity, to generate the voice of a collected soul that says "I"'.<sup>30</sup> The lack of conversion and the reduction of Dante's universalising to a personal and subjective experience, therefore, go hand-in-hand: Petrarch removes the communal aspect from his text as he eradicates the need for his narrator to

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<sup>29</sup> Bernardo, 'Petrarch's Attitude Toward Dante', p. 508.

<sup>30</sup> Moevs, 'Subjectivity and Conversion', p. 226.

conform to the expectations placed on him as the protagonist of a dream-vision. His inability to fully convert to a different way of life is less an authorial failing, but rather a conscious decision on the part of Petrarch to allow his *personaggio* to explore the various human states, feelings, desires, and fears. He may be a dreamer in an oneiric narrative, but Petrarch-*personaggio* is not subject to the authorial expectations that were placed on his dream-character predecessors.

Petrarch's engagement with previous oneiric texts extends much further than his allusions to Dante's *Commedia*. His setting of his dream of Laura in *TM* II, for example, reflects Dante's dream from chapter III of his *Vita nuova*, in which the narrator is alone and asleep on the ninth anniversary of his first encounter with Beatrice and is visited by Amor, who proceeds to feed his burning heart to his beloved. Propertius's *Elegia* IV. 7 is also a clear model for this secondary dream, not only in terms of the influence of Cynthia upon Petrarch's spirit-Laura, as discussed earlier in this chapter, but also on the sequence as a whole: the narrator is visited by the ghost of his love-object, with whom he converses, and who offers prophecies before departing the narrative.

In terms of Petrarch's interaction with oneiric texts and traditions, we need look no further than the near-contemporary works of his friend, Boccaccio, whose *Amorosa visione* is described by Robert Coogan as 'the probable source for the *Trionfi*',<sup>31</sup> and by Branca as 'the most important instance of literary influence exerted on Petrarch by Boccaccio'.<sup>32</sup> Convincing proof of their intertextual links, states Martin Eisner, can be found within the margins of Vat. Lat. 3196: the Abbozzi codex, which contains a collection of some of Petrarch's worksheets.<sup>33</sup> This document was immediately recognised as important by those interested in the works of Petrarch, and since the Cinquecento it has been used as a tool to better understand Petrarch's compositional process and style. Both intertextually and paratextually, there is ample evidence of Boccaccio's influence upon Petrarch, yet Vecce, goes one step further in his comparison of the *Amorosa visione* and *Triumphs* by suggesting that Petrarch's intention when composing his

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<sup>31</sup> Robert Coogan, 'Petrarch's "Trionfi" and the English Renaissance', *Studies in Philology*, 67 (1970), 306-27 (pp. 307-08).

<sup>32</sup> Branca, 'Introduction', in *Amorosa Visione*, trans. Hollander, p. xxiii.

<sup>33</sup> Eisner, 'Petrarch reading Boccaccio', p. 135.

triumphal poem was to improve upon Boccaccio's earlier work, stating that 'Petrarca ha [...] cancellato l'invenzione boccacciana della descrizione della lunga pittura dell'*Amorosa visione*, preferendo la descrizione immediata della propria visione'.<sup>34</sup>

Whether Petrarch intended his *Triumphs* as an improvement on Boccaccio's *Amorosa visione*, or whether he was merely influenced by their conversations on topics which arise in both texts, there are definite parallels between the two dream-visions. Both authors employ unorthodox spirit-guides, for example, and Boccaccio's innovation in introducing triumphal processions into his dream-vision framework is replicated by Petrarch in the *Triumphs*. However, Petrarch not only uses elements of the *Amorosa visione*, but actively builds upon them; he combines the imagery of the triumph with the tropes of dream-vision literature, as Boccaccio had recently done, but effectively encases his text within an intertwined amalgamation of both frameworks, wherein the triumphal features of the text are as important as the dream-vision features. While the *Amorosa visione*'s protagonist is constantly criticised for his stubborn refusal to fully adhere to his guide's wishes and convert to a more virtuous way of life, Petrarch-*personaggio* is both self-assured and reassured by spirit-Laura that his previous actions have caused no embarrassment to his love-object:

S'al mondo tu piacesti agli occhi mei,  
questo mi taccio; pur quel dolce nodo  
mi piacque assai che 'ntorno al cor avei;  
e piacemi il bel nome, se vero odo,  
che lunge e presso col tuo dir m'acquisti;  
né mai in tuo amor richiesi altro che 'l modo. (*TM*, II. 127-32)

He not only substitutes the guide's admonishments for statements of support and reassurance, but he also takes the long lists and lengthy descriptions of the *Amorosa visione* and replaces them with a gradual economisation of words and a definite emphasis on the oneiric aspects of his own text. The *Triumphs*, while clearly influenced by Boccaccio's text, constitute a veritable shift away from

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<sup>34</sup> Vecce, 'La "Lunga Pittura"', p. 313.

many of the *Amorosa visione*'s most innovative features.

Although Petrarch evidently draws upon several key examples of oneiric narrative within his *Triumphs*, perhaps the most important and influential source in the development of the text's secondary dreams is his own account of the revelatory visions he experienced and communicated to Giovanni Andrea in his *Epistolae Familiares* V. 7. In his letter, he recalls having experienced a vision of his friend, Giacomo Colonna, in which he learnt of his death. Upon waking, Petrarch claims that he wrote down the details of the dream and, when he received confirmation of Colonna's passing some weeks later, he realised that Colonna had actually died on the very day Petrarch dreamed of him. The similarities between Petrarch's own vision and that of his narrator within *TM II* are obvious: both dreamers were visited by apparitions of recently deceased acquaintances, the deaths of whom are revealed only during the course of the vision. What, then, are we to make of the *TM II* in light of these similarities, in light of Petrarch's inclusion of disparaging remarks regarding the value of dreams in his letter to Giovanni Andrea? Considering the unorthodox inclusion of many oneiric tropes within the *Triumphs* — the unsuccessful first guide figure, the lack of a conversionary experience, for instance — it would be foolhardy to dismiss such attitudes as irrelevant within the *TM II*; I believe, rather, that Petrarch's intentions for this dream sequence are somewhat more complex. This secondary dream episode demonstrates Petrarch's ability to 'correctly' employ certain generic conventions of oneiric literature, particularly the spirit-guide motif and the imparting of prophecies; however, in drawing on his own personal experiences of dreaming, and having previously made his own thoughts on the value of visions clear, Petrarch shows a clear difficulty in balancing his desire to adhere to the conventions of the genre whilst simultaneously managing his own feelings towards the subject.

## CONCLUSIONS

The *Triumphs* occupied Petrarch for a great deal of his career, with the poet revising and redrafting sections of the work right up until his death in 1374, at the age of 69. Although certain similarities are shared by the six poems which make up the *Triumphs* — triumphal processions, the presence of dream-vision tropes, for example — these poems were probably written in pairs, were never assembled by him into a finished whole, nor are they all of the same character;<sup>35</sup> as such, they are vastly different from one another, in style, content, and length. While the first two *Triumphs* demonstrate a propensity for encyclopaedic listing and the inclusion of classical and contemporary models, the later *Triumphs* illustrate the extent to which Petrarch's authorial style and intentions for his text had changed over the course of his career. The catalyst for these authorial changes appears to have been the premature death of his beloved Laura around 1348, with the *TM* clearly indicating a definite shift in Petrarch's approach to the *Triumphs*. As Berra has recently argued, the two chapters which make up the *TM* are vastly different from the rest of the text:

Rispetto al bilancio sulla poesia aspra e dolorosa che traspare dal montaggio dei primi due trionfi, i due capitoli di *TM*, di centro del poema, contraggono i debiti più consistenti con lo stile 'dolce'.<sup>36</sup>

Petrarch, who had so fervently favoured the classical and roman models of literature in his earlier *capitoli* clearly demonstrates a change in tone and style within these central *Triumphs*, which reflects his continually evolving intentions for his text.

The *Triumphs* emerged from a variety of different literary traditions, dating from ancient Greek and Roman mythology, through to the works of his contemporaries, and influences from these various traditions can be traced throughout the six *Triumphs*. Petrarch employed ideas, phrasing, and even

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<sup>35</sup> See Wilkins, 'The First Two Triumphs of Petrarch', who states: 'The first two *Triumphs* were written probably within the years 1340-1344, and certainly while Laura was still living. The next two were written not long after her death, which occurred in 1348. The last two were written toward the end of Petrarch's life', p. 7.

<sup>36</sup> Berra, 'La varietà stilistica dei *Trionfi*', p. 204.

characters from works such as Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*, Guillaume de Lorris's and Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*, and Dante's *Commedia* and *Vita nuova*, combining aspects of each of these texts in a way which ensured that his own be considered innovative and exciting. His use of the Triumph was borrowed from Roman texts, such as those by Statius, Ennius, Silius Italicus; even Dante and Boccaccio had both used the triumphal motif prior to Petrarch's composition of his *Triumphs*. Yet the combination of this trope with the traditions of fantastical dream-vision literature, biblical prophecies, and philosophical commentaries on the meaning of life certainly sets Petrarch's text apart from other triumphal narratives. Likewise, his use of triumphal imagery and existentialism ensured that his poems were clearly differentiated from other dream-vision narratives: they are an intricate combination of the key conventions of several different genres of literature.

Yet, while we see Petrarch continually using the tropes of these literary traditions in new and unusual ways, we are often left with the impression that his unconventional employment of such features may not have been intentional; that perhaps Petrarch failed to fully comprehend how to correctly and effectively employ key conventions within his text. His placing of characters such as Boethius and Scipio Africanus within his *Triumphs* demonstrates Petrarch's familiarity with pre-existing dream-vision narratives, whilst material evidence documenting his reliance upon Boccaccio's dream-vision, the *Amorosa visione*, can be found within the margins of his worksheets in Vat. Lat. 3196. However, although he knew of and employed aspects of numerous oneiric texts within the *Triumphs*, his deployment of dream-vision motifs was often fraught with difficulty. The ineffectuality of his initial spirit-guide, the inexplicable secondary dream of the *TM II*, the inclusion of a second guide-figure, and the fact that the framing dream is never shown to conclude, all cast doubt upon Petrarch's ability to confidently and convincingly invoke the traditions of dream-vision literature. Perhaps, however, we should not see these elements as authorial shortcomings, but rather an evolution of the way in which Petrarch envisaged his text developing.

Petrarch was an extremely indecisive poet, to which his numerous attempts to restructure his *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta* testify. Within the

*Triumphs*, too, we find multiple redactions of several chapters. Petrarch died before completing the *TE*, thus proving that he had not finished arranging his text into the structure he imagined. As a work-in-progress the *Triumphs* shows firm promise to become one of the greatest, most original dream-vision narratives of the Middle Ages, but as a work which will never be completed, it lacks finesse. That the *Triumphs* fail to display the same level of skill and polish as other dream-vision narratives is unfortunate, but his dream-vision poems allow us to see — perhaps more clearly than anywhere else in his works — the extent of Petrarch's engagement with the traditions, conventions, and previous texts of the dream-vision genre.

**CHAPTER 5: BOCCACCIO'S *CORBACCIO*:  
TRADITIONS, INTENTIONS, AND THE DREAM-  
VISION**

This chapter examines the ways in which Boccaccio's engagement with the dream-vision tradition affects our understanding of the *Corbaccio*. I begin by examining the key issues to have arisen from the critical literature surrounding this work, exploring how these problems impact upon our understanding of the text as a dream-vision, before going on to discuss the ways in which Boccaccio enters into a dialogue with his textual predecessors in the composition of the *Corbaccio*. I look specifically at the ways in which Boccaccio combines elements from multiple literary genres in order to create a text which is at once innovative and steeped in tradition, and how this impacts upon our understanding of the *Corbaccio* as a dream-vision narrative; I then examine Boccaccio's employment of the major tropes associated with oneiric literature, particularly the use of specific dream-terminology, the presence of a spirit-guide and the conversionary experience undergone by the *Corbaccio*'s dreamer, in order to ascertain how Boccaccio uses and manipulates the key features of dream-vision narratives in his text.

The *Corbaccio* was Boccaccio's final work of fiction, composed sometime after his *Decameron*, yet the question of the compositional date of the work is one which continues to draw critical attention, and to which there is no definite answer. The proposed dates vary greatly, from around 1353-55 (for which scholars such as Domenico Maria Manni and Francisco Rico have argued), to 1365 (the dating given by Giorgio Padoan and Vittore Branca).<sup>1</sup> Padoan concedes that this date may be slightly earlier, but certainly 'dopo il ritiro a Certaldo: luglio 1363'.<sup>2</sup> Robert Hollander devotes a great deal of his 1988 study to discussions

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<sup>1</sup> For an excellent summary of the proposed compositional dates of the *Corbaccio* see Stefano Carrai, 'Corbaccio o Laberinto d'Amore', in *Boccaccio: autore e copista*, ed. by Teresa de Robertis, Carla Maria Monti, Marco Petoletti, Giuliano Tanturli, and Stefano Zamponi (Florence: Mandragora, 2013), pp. 147-49 (esp. p. 147).

<sup>2</sup> Giorgio Padoan, 'Introduzione', *Corbaccio*, ed. by Giorgio Padoan, in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, 12 vols, ed. by Vittore Branca (Milan: Mondadori, 1964-), V (ii) (1994), 413-614 (pp. 415-40); unless otherwise stated, all quotations

regarding the dating of the *Corbaccio*, arguing that the compositional date is key to our understanding of the text. Hollander states his position in favour of the ‘traditional’ compositional date of 1354-55, thus situating the text in direct succession to the *Decameron*, completed in 1353. Hollander’s placing of the *Decameron* and the *Corbaccio* as chronological neighbours allows for his argument that the latter displays a continuation of many of the themes, subjects, and techniques found within Boccaccio’s one hundred tales. He suggests that readings of the *Corbaccio* as either anti- or proto-feminist are influenced by the presentation of women within the *Decameron*, wherein Boccaccio presents numerous different female models, including those who are strong, virtuous, intelligent, and resourceful. Such a chronological placing of these two texts is directly bound up with issues of authorial intention, and Hollander suggests that a compositional date of 1354-55 indicates that Boccaccio did not intend the *Corbaccio* to be taken as a serious treatise against women.

Hollander argues that Padoan’s earlier scholarship regarding the dating of the *Corbaccio* was incorrect, since his study was based on a passage which sought to establish Boccaccio’s age at the time of writing the text,<sup>3</sup> stating that Padoan’s addition of a preposition to a passage concerning Boccaccio’s age discredits rather than proves the latter’s hypothesis:

Padoan (1963: 6), abetted by confirmation contained in a letter from Nurmela, adds the preposition ‘per’ before ‘la quale’, adjusts the punctuation of the passage [§179 of the *Corbaccio*], and has it refer not to the age of the narrator, but to that of the century, which is forty *plus* twenty-five, or sixty-five years old, thus making the date of the work 1365 or 1366.<sup>4</sup>

However, explains Hollander, it was later proven by Mario Marti that the information given to Padoan by Nurmela was incorrect, since it was based on an

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from the *Corbaccio* are taken from this edition of the text, and will be referred to by paragraph number only.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Hollander, *Boccaccio’s Last Fiction: ‘Il Corbaccio’* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), pp. 27-28.

<sup>4</sup> Hollander, *Boccaccio’s Last Fiction*, p. 28; Giorgio Padoan, ‘Sulla datazione del *Corbaccio*’, *Lettere italiane*, 15 (1963), 1-27.

incomplete survey of manuscripts.<sup>5</sup> Marti's 1363 dating of the *Corbaccio* is slightly earlier than those of both Branca and Padoan, but still markedly different from the estimates of Hollander, Rico, and Manni. Despite the extensive scholarship which surrounds this issue, no definitive compositional date for the *Corbaccio* has ever been established. I am, however, convinced by the arguments set forth by Padoan that the *Corbaccio* was composed after Boccaccio's retreat to Certaldo in 1363, and so use as the basis for my study Padoan's 1994 critical edition of the *Corbaccio*. This edition is based on Bibliotheca Medicea Laurenziana, MS. 42.1, which contains both the *Decameron* and *Corbaccio*, copied by Francesco Mannelli, alongside numerous and extensive marginal glosses by Mannelli, a large number of which are reproduced in Padoan's accompanying notes.<sup>6</sup> Aside from the ongoing debate regarding the date of its composition, the *Corbaccio* presents many other critical problems. These include, but are by no means limited to, the meaning of the text's title and Boccaccio's authorial intentions, both of which are intrinsically linked to each other and to the issue of dating.

Many tenable suggestions have been made as to the meaning of the word 'corbaccio', which Anthony Cassell summarizes in his article of 1970.<sup>7</sup> Hauvette suggested that the word derived either from the Latin *corbis* ('crow'), or from the Turkish *qyrbâç* ('whip' or 'scourge');<sup>8</sup> while Violet M. Jeffery, in 1933, made the interesting but improbable hypothesis that the title was formed by two Greek words — *χώρα* or *χώρος* ('region') and *βάκχειος* ('frenzied') — which combined to give the meaning 'region of those frenzied by passion'.<sup>9</sup> Padoan's 1963 article gives the most probable suggestion for the meaning of 'corbaccio', wherein the

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<sup>5</sup> Mario Marti, 'Per una metalettura del *Corbaccio*: il ripudio di Fiammetta', *Giornale storico della letteratura italiana*, 153 (1976), 60-86.

<sup>6</sup> On the marginalia accompanying the Mannelli manuscript, see K. P. Clarke, 'Taking the Proverbial: Reading (at) the Margins of Boccaccio's *Corbaccio*', *Studi sul Boccaccio*, 38 (2010), 105-44.

<sup>7</sup> Anthony K. Cassell, 'The Crow of the Fable and the *Corbaccio*: A Suggestion for the Title', *MLN*, 85 (1970), 83-91.

<sup>8</sup> Henri Hauvette, *Boccace: Étude Biographique et Littéraire* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1914), p. 322.

<sup>9</sup> V. M. Jeffery, 'Boccaccio's Titles and the Meaning of the *Corbaccio*', *Modern Language Review*, 28 (1933), 194-204.

author argues that the title is a pejorative term, used to refer to the character of the widow:

Se dunque ‘corbo’ era usato in senso dispregiativo, sia ad indicare persone vestite abitualmente in nero, sia per colpire ipocrisie e falsità, e poiché ‘corbaccio’ è il normale e comune peggiorativo di ‘corbo’, mi pare abbastanza semplice che con questo epiteto il Boccaccio abbia voluto vendicarsi delle dicerie sparse sul suo conto dalla vedova nerovestita.<sup>10</sup>

Cassell suggests that the term ‘corbaccio’ derives from a Greek fable, in which a crow – referred to in later Latin and Romance versions as *cornacchia* – adorns itself with the feathers of other birds to win favour in court, before being recognised, stripped and put to shame.<sup>11</sup> The similarities between this tale and Boccaccio’s text are obvious — the widow is the metaphorical crow, consumed by vanity and tricking others into finding her attractive — and Cassell’s arguments are certainly persuasive, if not conclusive. In terms of the nature of the text as a dream-vision narrative, this suggestion is significant, since fables were commonly used as didactic tools to instruct and warn against immodest behaviours. Metaphors and dreams function in similar ways within literature, since both afford authors the ability to veil meanings. Therefore, in framing the tale within the confines of a dream-vision narrative, Boccaccio adds a further dimension to the metaphorical reading of this fable, effectively double-veiling the intended function of the *Corbaccio*.

Until relatively recently, most studies into the *Corbaccio* had argued for a serious, even autobiographical, reading of the text. Frank McManus, for example, argues that the work was written as a knee-jerk reaction to Boccaccio himself having been mocked by a potential lover, and states that the author ‘was hurt into a loathing of women, into a loathing of love’.<sup>12</sup> Francesco Bruni refused to

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<sup>10</sup> Giorgio Padoan, ‘Ancora sulla datazione e sul titolo del *Corbaccio*’, *Lettere italiane*, 15 (1963), 199-201 (p. 201).

<sup>11</sup> Cassell, ‘The Crow of the Fable and the *Corbaccio*’, p. 86.

<sup>12</sup> Frank McManus, *Boccaccio* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1947), p. 177; see also Henri Hauvette, ‘Une confession de Boccacce: Il Corbaccio’, *Bulletin Italien*, 1 (1901), 3-21; and Michael Leone, ‘Autobiografismo reale e ideale in *Decameron*

entertain the possibility that Boccaccio's writing could be anything other than entirely serious, commenting that even if he was not entirely misogynistic in his thinking, 'il Boccaccio maturo è però antierotico, estraneo e anzi avverso (come mostra il *Corbaccio*) alla mitologia della corte d'Amore'.<sup>13</sup> Bruni's comment about 'il Boccaccio maturo' should be noted here: his assumption regarding Boccaccio's age at the time of the composition of the *Corbaccio* suggests a dating of the work much later than that proposed by Hollander.

The approaches of Bruni and McManus are symptomatic of the wider tradition, with many studies focusing on Boccaccio's use of misogynistic invective texts as models for his own narrative;<sup>14</sup> yet during the 1970s and 80s, a wave of alternative readings emerged. In 1975, both Cassell and Gian Piero Barricelli published articles which sought to expose the *Corbaccio* as satirical, with both authors favouring allegorical or comical interpretations of the text. In his 1988 study, Hollander also argues for an ironic interpretation of the text, based upon his thesis that the *Corbaccio* was written in direct succession to the *Decameron*. Hollander posits that the strong female characters inherent within many of the *Decameron*'s tales, alongside the essential roles played by the female members of the *brigata*, serve as proof of Boccaccio's proto-feminist attitudes: surely Boccaccio could not display misogynistic tendencies so soon after composing tales which celebrate the intelligence and strength of women in the *Decameron*? Indeed, the furiously crude and bizarrely exaggerated diatribe provided by the text's spirit-guide certainly facilitates such a reading of the text, but Hollander's argument is founded on an unsteady premise of a substantially earlier compositional date than that proposed by other critics. Furthermore, to describe the *Corbaccio* as anything other than serious would be to overlook the very nature of such a complex and problematic text. In this chapter I argue that the *Corbaccio* derives from a multitude of diverse literary sources, and has its roots in two very different traditions: the invective tradition and the dream-vision

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VIII, 7', *Italica*, 50 (1973), 242-65, both of whom argue for an autobiographical reading of the *Corbaccio*.

<sup>13</sup> Francesco Bruni, *Boccaccio: l'invenzione della letteratura mezzana* (Bologna: Mulino, 1990), p. 45.

<sup>14</sup> A thorough and compelling recent study into Boccaccio's use of invective texts within the *Corbaccio* is Panizza, 'Rhetoric and Invective in Love's Labyrinth.'

tradition. As a direct result of this varying heritage, Boccaccio is able to create a text which is at once conventional as both invective and dream-vision, while at the same time fulfilling its role as a didactic treatise which does not target women so much as warn against the abundant snares of erotic love, and the self-righteousness of intellectuals.

#### **THE *CORBACCIO* AS A DREAM-VISION**

The *Corbaccio*, arguably the most problematic text of Boccaccio's literary *corpus*, is a first-person account of a dream-vision experienced by an unnamed narrator, who is enamoured of a widow. Rather than returning his affections, the widow mocks him publicly, causing a great deal of distress to the narrator. The protagonist, full of self-loathing and shame, wishes death upon himself before engaging in a dialogue with an external projection of his inner voice – *Pensiero* – which he believes to have been sent by a heavenly being ('credo da celeste lume mandato, sopravenne un pensiero', §8). His conversation with this external musing leads the narrator to conclude that, by committing suicide, he would achieve nothing. Having discussed his conclusions with a group of friends, who confirm his hypothesis regarding the futility of harbouring enmity, the narrator falls asleep and is greeted by the deceased husband of his love-object. This spirit acts as the narrator's guide, and proceeds to instruct the dreamer about the shortcomings of women in general, and the widow specifically, and his speech culminates in a highly localized description of her genitalia. The dreamer then wakes from his dream-vision vowing to hate women, his hostility having been successfully reignited by the guide. He then returns to his group of friends, who once again confirm his interpretation of the vision.

The dream-vision sequence within the *Corbaccio* spans §§27-407, and occupies over nine-tenths of the narrative. Yet, even before the narrator's descent into sleep, Boccaccio establishes his text within the confines of the dream-vision tradition, having allowed his protagonist to engage in a conversation with a projection of his inner voice, evoking the Boethian model of wisdom commonly employed within medieval narratives. Boethius uses such an external projection as the central plot device in the *De consolatione Philosophiae*, with his unnamed protagonist engaging in conversation with the eponymous Lady Philosophy;

Dante, too, uses the same rhetorical tool in the *Vita nuova*, as a means of self-consolation. However, the use of this device within the *Corbaccio* is markedly different from that found within the texts of Boccaccio's literary predecessors: rather than offering support or comfort to the protagonist, his 'pensiero' suggests a cure which includes exacting revenge on the widow for inspiring the narrator's feelings of lust, by making her life a misery through his very existence: 'Vivi addunque; e come costei, contr'a te malvagiamente operando, s'ingegna di darti dolente vita e cagione di desiderare la morte, così tu, vivendo, trista la fa' della tua vita' (§20).

From the very outset of the text we see Boccaccio intent on staging a very different debate on the roles of women than that of his predecessors: rather than using his external thought to console his love-sickness — as in the case of Dante — he hints at the necessity of punishment for women who attempt to subvert male dominance. However, despite the guide's orders that the narrator should avenge himself on the woman ('voglio che della offesa fattati da lei tu prenda vendetta: la quale ad una ora a te e a lei sarà salutifera', §383), the dreamer eschews any suggestion of violent rebuke, instead promising to exact his revenge through his writing. Proving that the pen really is mightier than the sword, Boccaccio's protagonist vows to leave violent punishments to the will of God ('La vendetta da dovero, la quale i più degli uomini giudicherebbono che fosse da far con ferri, questa lascerò io a fare al mio signore Dio, il quale mai niuna mal fatta cosa lasciò impunita', §389), instead promising to provide a lasting 'testimonianza delle sue malvagie e disoneste opere' (§391).

The dream-vision of the *Corbaccio* may draw upon several established sources, but the narrative is far from conventional. In order to appreciate why Boccaccio uses the dream-vision framework amongst many other literary models, and how these different traditions influence our understanding of the text, this chapter will look specifically at two aspects of the *Corbaccio*: the terminology used by Boccaccio in the narrating of his protagonist's dream; and how the character of the spirit-guide exemplifies Boccaccio's unconventional employment of key oneiric tropes. However, first we need to examine the literary models available to Boccaccio and how he uses these within his dream-vision narrative.

## TEXTS AND TRADITIONS

Boccaccio was acutely familiar with many seminal works of the invective tradition, and copied sections of them into his notebooks for use within his own texts. Three notebooks are known to exist: the *Miscellanea Laurenziana*, an anthology of classical texts; the *Zibaldone Magliabechiano*, a collection of historical sources and literary texts which revolve around specific areas of interest for Boccaccio; and the *Zibaldone Laurenziano*, an anthology of fourteenth-century texts.<sup>15</sup> In his *Zibaldone Laurenziano*, Boccaccio copied out passages from authors such as Juvenal, Ovid, St Jerome, and Andreas Capellanus, which he would adapt and employ in many of his own narratives, a process which drew heavily on the medieval pairing of *imitatio* and *aemulatio*. In the *Corbaccio*, we see this process effectively put into place, with several intertextual allusions to these sources emerging throughout the narrative. It is within the guide's speech where Boccaccio's use of sources becomes most apparent, and Boccaccio underpins the character's discourse with numerous references to other texts. In the footnotes to her 1992 edition of the *Corbaccio*, Giulia Natali notes intertextual references used by Boccaccio.<sup>16</sup> A significant number of these references are to important texts of the invective tradition: notably Juvenal's *Satires*, Ovid's *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris*, and Andreas Capellanus's *De amore*. Yet it is St Jerome's *Adversus Iovinianum* which offers us the most important model for the *Corbaccio*. Boccaccio copied select passages from Jerome's treatise into his *Zibaldone Laurenziano*, including sections on the importance of holding one's studies in a higher esteem than women:

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<sup>15</sup> For an excellent discussion about the critical questions surrounding Boccaccio's notebooks, and what they tell us about Boccaccio's literary habits, see Cazalé Bérard, 'Boccaccio's Working Notebooks'; for details of the contents of the *Zibaldone Laurenziano*, and the transcripts of two of the texts copied within it (the *Elegia di Costanza* and St Jerome's letter advising against marriage – 'Ieronimus, contra Iovinianum'), see 'Edizione Critica Ipertestuale dello *Zibaldone Laurenziano*', at [www.rmcsadu.let.uniroma1.it/boccaccio](http://www.rmcsadu.let.uniroma1.it/boccaccio).

<sup>16</sup> Boccaccio, *Il Corbaccio*, ed. by Giulia Natali (Milan: Mursia, 1992); Natali's edition is based on Nurmela's 1968 edition of the *Corbaccio*, with notes and annotations drawn from Ricci's 1985 edition of the text.

no(n) ig(itur) uxor  
 duce(n)da sapienti, primu(m) e(n)i(m) i(m)pedit studio(m)  
 phy(losophi)ae[;]  
 nec poss(it) q(ui)sq(uam) libris (et) uxori pariter i(n)s(er)uire.

(L'uomo saggio, pertanto, non deve prendere moglie; infatti innanzitutto impedisce lo studio della filosofia; nessuno è in grado di dedicarsi contemporaneamente ai libri e alla moglie);<sup>17</sup>

the abhorrent materialism of women:

Multa e(n)i(m) co(n)sta(n)t matronar(um) usib(us) necessaria  
 e(ss)e, p(re)tiose (scilicet) uestes, au(rum), su(m)pt(us), ge(mm)e,  
 ancille, supellex uaria

(Molte, infatti, sono le regolari necessità delle donne sposate: vesti preziose, oro, spese, gioielli, serve, corredi vari);<sup>18</sup>

and the difficulties associated with both rich and poor women:

pauper(m) alere diffici=  
 le e(st), diuite(m) ferre tormentu(m)

(Mantenere una donna povera è difficile, sopportarne una ricca è un tormento)<sup>19</sup>

Jerome's *Adversus Iovinianum* was by no means the first anti-feminist treatise, but what sets this work apart from previous misogynistic texts is the extent to which it was read, repeated, disseminated, and cited. It was a hugely influential text, which Alcuin Blamires describes as the 'core precedent' for misogyny in the Middle Ages.<sup>20</sup> Boccaccio's interest in Jerome's treatise is hardly surprising, considering

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<sup>17</sup> Boccaccio, *Zibaldone Laurenziano*, ed. by Ombretta Feliziani, c.52 [v]; accessed online at [rmcisadu.let.uniroma1.it/boccaccio](http://rmcisadu.let.uniroma1.it/boccaccio) [12/05/14].

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, c.52 [v].

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, c.52 [v]

<sup>20</sup> Alcuin Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 50; a thorough study into the influence of Jerome's *Adversus Iovinianum* on writers of the Middle Ages is P. G. Walsh, 'Antifeminism in the High Middle Ages', in *Satiric Advice on Women and*

its influence upon the wider invective tradition; yet in the *Corbaccio* we see the extent to which this text infiltrated Boccaccio's thinking and writing. Passages from the *Adversus Iovinianum*, which Boccaccio had noted in his *Zibaldone Laurenziano*, appear in various forms within the guide's speech: he warns the *Corbaccio*'s dreamer to favour his philosophical studies over women ('Dovevanti, oltre a questo, li tuoi studii mostrare (e mostrarono, se tu l'avessi voluto vedere) che cosa le femine sono', §132), and instructs the protagonist that both rich and poor wives are impossible to please ('Niuna cosa è più grave a comportare che una femina ricca; niuna più spiacevole che a vedere irritosire una povera', §167).

Boccaccio's interest in invective texts extends much further than Jerome's *Adversus Iovinianum*, and references to works such as Juvenal's *Satires* and Andreas Capellanus's misogynous *De amore* permeate the guide's speech within the *Corbaccio*. After Dante, Juvenal is the author to whom Boccaccio most often alludes within the *Corbaccio*, and within the guide's speech there are a total of thirty separate references to the poet's *Satires*, all but one of which are in relation to *Satire 6*.<sup>21</sup> *Satire 6* — written in the late 1<sup>st</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> century, and the most famous of Juvenal's known sixteen *Satires* — is a vehemently misogynistic text, which takes the form of a dialogue between two figures — Posthumus and Poet — who converse at length about the value of women and the dangers of marriage. Like the *Corbaccio*, the central section of *Satire 6* is taken up by a lengthy speech by the text's supposedly wise character, Poet, regarding the horrors perpetuated by married women, including their proclivity for material wealth, and their inability to resist temptation. Yet despite the similarities between *Satire 6* and the *Corbaccio*, there are several obvious and fundamental differences. Firstly, Juvenal's text is a treatise against marriage, rather than an unrestricted outpouring against women in general. Although forming an integral part of the invective tradition, *Satire 6* scarcely touches upon many of the topics prominent within other invective texts, such as the laziness, filthiness, stupidity, or stubbornness of

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*Marriage: From Plautus to Chaucer*, ed. by Warren S. Smith (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), pp. 222-42.

<sup>21</sup> All references to the *Satires* are from Juvenal, *D. Iuni Iuvenalis Saturae XIV*, ed. by J. D. Duff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909); trans. from Juvenal, *The Sixteen Satires*, trans. and intro. by Peter Green (London: Penguin, 1967).

women, upon which Boccaccio places such great emphasis in his text. Juvenal deals predominantly with the institution of marriage, with his text serving as a vehicle for the dissemination of misogynous attitudes. Secondly, the narrative roles within the two texts are reversed: in the *Corbaccio* it is the narrator who is initially ignorant to the wiles of women, and he requires an extensive lesson from the guide to fully understand female vice; whereas in Juvenal's text it is the narrator, Poet, who offers instruction against marriage. Poet advises Posthumus that he should consider both suicide and taking a male lover rather than committing to marrying a woman, before moving on to list the evil things wives have been known to do to their husbands — poisoning, aborting their unborn children, enlisting the help of their mothers to murder step-children, for example.

*Satire 6* belongs to both the invective and satire traditions, and although these two terms would become almost interchangeable in later years, in the Middle Ages — and certainly in the early Christian era — the term 'satire' summoned a different set of expectations. Claire Honess explains that, as one of the three main types of text — along with tragedy and comedy — satire was constantly being discussed in medieval works on the art of writing, and that the term suggested a type of literature which was not merely concerned with attributing blame, but was also focused on reprehension and moral regeneration.<sup>22</sup> In his *Ars poetica*, a treatise on the art of writing poetry and drama, Horace describes satire as both goat-like ('caprina') — due to its use of fetid and dirty words — and naked ('nuda'), since it does not employ allegorical constructions, but rather speaks directly.<sup>23</sup> Boccaccio's use of such a construction in the

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<sup>22</sup> Claire Honess, 'The Language(s) of Civic Invective in Dante: Rhetoric, Satire, and Politics', *Italian Studies*, 68 (2013), 157-74 (pp. 160-61); see also C. A. Van Rooy, *Studies in Classical Satire and Related Literary Theory* (Leiden: Brill, 1966).

<sup>23</sup> Honess, 'The Language(s) of Civic Invective', p. 162; see also Suzanne Reynolds, 'Dante and the Medieval Theory of Satire: A Collection of Texts', in *'Libri poetarum in quattuor species dividuntur': Essays on Dante and 'genre'*, ed. by Zymunt G. Barański, supplement 2 to *The Italianist* 15 (1995), 145-57, in which Reynolds cites several useful texts relating to the reception of Horace in the Middle Ages, including the following passage from the *Ars poetica*: 'Satire is goat-like, because goats are fetid, in the same way that satire uses foul and fetid words. It is naked because it does not speak in circumlocutions', p. 147; passage 5.

*Corbaccio*, then, is all the more complex. His text certainly contains crude language, but his narrative is encased within the notoriously ambiguous framework of a dream-vision; he employs metaphors and euphemisms throughout the guide's speech, veiling meaning behind several layers of allegory and rhetoric. Metaphors and euphemisms, like allegory, function in much the same way as literary dream-visions, since their role is to effectively prevent straightforward and literal interpretations. In didactic texts, such as moralising fables, the use of such constructions is common. Yet in the *Corbaccio*, Boccaccio essentially double-locks his text from simplified readings by employing both rhetorical devices (such as euphemisms, hyperbole and metaphors) alongside the ambiguous dream-vision framework.

Juvenal's *Satire 6* is by no means the only invective text used as a model for the *Corbaccio*: Boccaccio also makes reference to several other, similarly misogynistic texts. A total of sixteen allusions are made to the twelfth-century text by Andreas Capellanus, *De amore*, ten references are made to Ovid's *Remedia amoris*, whilst a further twelve are made to his *Ars amatoria*. All three of these texts offer advice and instruction about how to love, or to avoid the pains of love.

Ovid's texts were used extensively by Boccaccio, and Claude Cazalé Bérard comments that one of the most exciting discoveries within the author's notebooks was Boccaccio's transcription of Ovid's *Ibis* — a catalogue of abuse, written in elegiac couplets and directed at Ibis — which served to confirm Boccaccio's taste for satirical texts.<sup>24</sup> Boccaccio's use of the *Ibis* is certainly of great interest considering its inclusion in the *Zibaldone Laurenziano*, since it demonstrates the author's familiarity with a text described by Oliver Taplin as 'a stream of violent but extremely learned abuse':<sup>25</sup> a statement which could be equally applied to the *Corbaccio*. However, in terms of the antifeminist influence exerted on the *Corbaccio*, it is not to the *Ibis* that we should turn, but to the *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris*, both of which explicitly deal with issues of female value.

The *Ars amatoria* was composed sometime between 2 BC and AD 4, and

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<sup>24</sup> Cazalé Bérard, 'Boccaccio's Working Notebooks', p. 317.

<sup>25</sup> Oliver Taplin, *Literature in the Greek and Roman Worlds: A New Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 437.

serves as a pseudo-didactic treatise on the art of seduction and erotic love. The text eschews any serious or moralising tone by utilising the rhetorical tools of reversal and disproportion (both *hyperbole* and *litotes*), and also by the poet's use of elegiac couplets rather than hexameter.<sup>26</sup> The *Ars amatoria* is made up of three books. Books 1 and 2 are aimed at men and provide instruction regarding the best ways to keep a woman happy, such as not asking about her age, and brushing dust from her lap:

Utque fit, in gremium pulvis si forte puellae  
Deciderit, digitis excutiendus erit:  
Etsi nullus erit pulvis, tamen excute nullum (*Ars.* I. 149-51)

(And if perchance, as will happen, a speck of dust falls on your lady's lap, flick it off with your fingers; even if none fall, then flick off — none)

However, with only one exception, all references to the *Ars amatoria* found within the narrative of the *Corbaccio* are taken from the third book, in which Ovid directs his attention towards women and offers them advice regarding love affairs. In this final book, Ovid's narrator advocates the use of make-up, and the taking of several lovers of differing ages, and he examines the hairstyles which best suit different face shapes:

Longa probat facies capitis discrimina puri:  
Sic erat ornatis Laodamia comis.  
Ut pateant aures, ora rotunda volunt.  
Alterius crines umero iacentur utroque. (*Ars.* III. 137-40)

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<sup>26</sup> David Malouf explains that any suggestion of solemnity would have been subverted for ancient readers by the poet's choice of meter, since the treatise was written not in hexameter, as was usual for didactic texts, but in elegiac couplets comprising both hexameter and pentameter; a structure Ovid had previously used in his 'playfully erotic' *Amores*. David Malouf, 'Introduction', Ovid, *The Art of Love*, trans. by James Michie (New York: Modern Library, 2002), pp. xi-xvi (p. xiv); unless otherwise stated, all quotations from *The Art of Love* are taken from the following edition: Ovid, *The Art of Love, and Other Poems*, bilingual edition, trans. by J. H. Mozley (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 11-176.

(An oval face prefers a parting upon the head left unadorned: the tresses of Laodamia were so arranged. Round faces would fain have a small knot left on top of the head, so that the ears show. Let one girl's locks hang down on either shoulder).

Boccaccio not only recreates the humorous tone of the *Ars amatoria* by employing the same techniques of disproportion — particularly in the case of the guide's exaggerated speech — but he also reverses many of these Ovidian models of female behaviour in the criticism of the widow's behaviour. Boccaccio's widow follows the advice of Ovid's narrator in her careful application of make-up and in the taking of lovers, yet this behaviour is used against her in the guide's tirade. Her numerous extramarital affairs cause her morality to be called into question:

Essa, con questa sua vanità e con questa esquisita leggiadra [...] e con l'essere degli occhi cortese e più parlante che alla gravità donnesca non si richiedea, molti amanti s'avea acquistati; de' quali non avvenne come di chi corre al palio, il quale ha l'uno di molti; anzi de' molti pervengono molti al termine disiato, sì come essa procacciava. (§249)

Similarly, her use of cosmetics is used as further proof of her immodesty: 'Or, s'io dicessi di quante maniere ranni il suo auricome capo si lavava, e di quante ceneri fatto, e alcuno più fresco e alcuno meno, tu ti maraviglieresti', (§228). Again, Boccaccio uses the technique of reversal in his text: he employs references to the *Ars amatoria*, using much of the same imagery and subject-matter, but, while in Ovid's text, such behaviours are praised and encouraged, Boccaccio's widow is vilified for following this advice. She is caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place: that which she is encouraged to do by her literary predecessors is precisely what causes her to become the target of the guide's derision.

It makes sense for such a scene to be cast within a dream-vision framework, since it highlights the personal nature of the guide's testimony. The guide — being the deceased husband of the female love-object — has a personal interest in the character of the widow, and it is therefore impossible for his account of her behaviours to be entirely objective. The nature of the dream-vision — inspired, as it is, by nothing more than the narrator's own private anguish —

further underlines this sense of subjectivity; through both its form and content, we are constantly reminded that the *Corbaccio*'s dream is personal and not indicative of any higher agenda.

Like the *Ars amatoria*, sections of the *Corbaccio* are also punctuated with references to Ovid's *Remedia amoris*, which offers advice as to how to avoid love, or to fall out of love. Considering the subject matter of the *Corbaccio*, it is hardly surprising that Boccaccio should choose to use references to this work within his narrative, since Ovid's text functions primarily as an antidote to, or retraction of, the *Ars amatoria*: it is concerned not so much with how to get and keep a lover, as with how to heal oneself from the snares of amatory desire. The *Corbaccio*'s guide essentially offers the narrator his own remedy against love, reusing a great deal of Ovid's text in his speech. He encourages the dreamer to focus specifically on the unattractive parts of the widow's body and to find comfort in the company of friends: 'auxilio turba futura tibi est. | Tristis eris si solus eris' ('a crowd will give you succour. If alone, you will be sad'; *Rem.* 582-83).<sup>27</sup>

The role of the narrator's friends within the *Corbaccio* has received scant attention within critical literature surrounding the text; yet it is of great import when considering the influence wrought upon Boccaccio by texts such as the *Remedia amoris*. The narrator's group of friends appears twice within the narrative: once following his external musings with Pensiero; and a second time following his arousal from the text's dream-vision. On both occasions, the friends serve to confirm the narrator's own interpretations of events — his revelatory thought and the guide's lesson within the dream. The narrator's reliance upon his friends in the interpretation of these events not only demonstrates the effective deployment of Ovid's advice for curing love, but also serves to highlight the ambiguity associated with dreams. The narrator is fully aware that his way of 'reading' the content of his dream may not necessarily be the correct way, and he requires the external opinions of his friends to confirm his analysis. This model had previously been employed within the *Vita nuova*, where Dante explains that he sent, in sonnet form, an account of his vision of the Eaten Heart to many

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<sup>27</sup> All references to the *Remedia amoris* are taken *The Art of Love, and Other Poems*, trans. by J. H. Mozley, pp. 177-234.

famous poets in order that they might provide him with interpretations: ‘Pensando io a ciò che m’era apparuto, propuosi di farlo sentire a molti li quali erano famosi trovatori in quello tempo’ (*VN*, III. 9). However, for Dante, this is a purely literary exercise; he rewrites his vision in the form of a sonnet and asks others to provide answers to its meaning. In the *Corbaccio*, however, we see a character who, at the end of a text which underlines the need to read intelligently, is able to provide his own interpretations of events. By calling upon his group of trusted friends, the narrator is not only adhering to the Ovidian model for curing his love-pains, but also demonstrating his ability to apply logic and reason to that with which he has been presented. Through his use of the *Remedia amoris*, Boccaccio effectively demonstrates his ability to use invective texts in a conventional manner: he selects appropriate sections of Ovid’s treatise with which to underwrite the guide’s lesson against love. Furthermore, he allows his narrator to follow the advice given by Ovid’s narrator regarding the most effective ways to rid oneself of unwanted desire.

Andreas Capellanus’s *De amore* was deeply influenced by Ovid’s works: the tripartite structure reflects the three books of the *Ars amatoria*, and the final book of the *De amore* corresponds to the *Remedia amoris*. *De amore* is a treatise on the art of courtly love, in which the author explains that marriages are not necessarily ideal facilitators of affection or true love. Intertextual allusions within the *Corbaccio* are drawn especially from Book 1 of the treatise, in which the author sets out imaginary dialogues between men and women of different social backgrounds. Aside from one reference each to 1.1 and 1.2, all references taken from the *De amore* are found within 1.3 of the work, a dialogue between a noblewoman and a man of the middle classes. This exchange is introduced by the author, who explains that, wherever possible, women should take lovers only from their own social class, or higher; if this is not possible, and she finds a worthy man of a lower social standing than her, then she must test his resolve by setting him trials. Many of these same ideas would re-emerge in Boccaccio’s tale of the scholar and the widow on Day VIII of the *Decameron* (VIII. 7), which has long been considered the companion-piece to the *Corbaccio*, and which will be discussed at length later in this chapter. Yet in terms of its relevance to the *Corbaccio* itself, this dialogue provides some extremely interesting comparisons;

the noblewoman of the *De amore*, defending herself against accusations of dishonesty, argues:

dico enim quod ex eo solo, quod me fraudis dicis et medacii habere  
calliditatem, ostendis te eiusdem erroris contagio maculari et aliud in  
corde retinere conceptum aliudque fallaci lingua proferre.

(The mere fact of you ascribing to me the cunning of deceit and lying shows that you are pitted with the infection of the same vice, and that the thoughts enclosed in your heart are different from those you speak with deceitful tongue.)<sup>28</sup>

The accuser rapidly transforms into the real target of such accusations, with the woman revealing the lover's true nature. Unlike her counterpart in the above example, the *Corbaccio*'s widow is denied a voice and is, therefore, devoid of any agency within the text; she is unable to draw attention to the guide's deceitful nature. In fact, it is the guide himself who is responsible for the reversal of accuser to accused thanks to the nature of his speech, which is not only exaggerated and personal, but essentially highlights his lack of authority within the narrative. Unlike his spirit-guide predecessors, the husband does not possess any knowledge or wisdom greater than his own individual experiences of the widow. His attack on the defenceless woman is both hyperbolic and subjective, and prompts us to question the veracity of his comments. In short, he is as enigmatic as the dream in which he finds himself.

Ovid's amatory works, alongside Capellanus's *De amore*, greatly influenced the composition of the *Roman de la Rose*; indeed Ovid's *Ars amatoria* was one of Jean de Meun's most important sources when composing the second part of the French poem. The tropes of embittered husband and demanding wife are common within the earlier invective tradition, but are further exemplified within the *Rose*, where the characters of Jaloux — a resentful husband, exasperated by the idiocies of his wife — and La Vieille — an old woman, whose teachings advocate that women should take multiple lovers — each explain the

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<sup>28</sup> Andreas Capellanus, *On Love*, (bilingual edition) ed. and trans. by P. G. Walsh (London: Duckworth, 1982), 1. 3. 130.

conduct of their own sex as a reaction to the behaviour of the other.<sup>29</sup> These same characters and ideas are reincarnated within the *Corbaccio*, where the spirit-guide and narrator each fulfil the role of Jealous Husband, although the silenced widow is unable to defend herself or her sex in the same way as La Vieille.

The *Rose's* Jaloux serves as a model for both the guide of the *Corbaccio* — who similarly attacks his wife for, amongst other things, vanity and her excessive sexual appetite — and the narrator, who in turn, projects onto the woman his own insecurities regarding the sexual inadequacy of men. Yet Boccaccio also uses the character of La Vieille as a source of inspiration for his text: in a similar way to the narrator of Book 3 of Ovid's *Ars amatoria*, the old woman advocates many of the same behaviours with which the guide and narrator charge the widow, such as leaving home as often as possible so that her beauty may be known, taking several young lovers to satisfy her sexual appetite, and replying to written expressions of love without promising anything in return. But unlike the male characters of the *Corbaccio*, when the widow adheres to this behavioural model, she is denigrated and derided. Perhaps the most obvious explanation for this is the way in which Boccaccio uses these sources: certainly the characters of the garrulous guide and shamed narrator draw upon the character of Jaloux, but the lengths to which Boccaccio takes these earlier teachings is almost laughable. Consider, for example, the Jealous Husband's attack on his wife's unnecessary vanity:

Que me revalent ces gallandes,  
ces coifes a dorees bandes,  
et ces diorez treçoërs,  
et ces yvorins miroërs,  
ces cercles d'or bien entailliez,  
precieusement esmailliez,  
et ces corones de fin or,  
tant sunt beles et bien polies,  
ou tant a beles perreries,

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<sup>29</sup> F. Regina Psaki, 'Women Make All Things Lose Their Power: Women's Knowledge, Men's Fear in the *Decameron* and the *Corbaccio*', *Heliotropia*, 1.1 (2003).

safirs, rubiz et esmeraudes,  
 qui si vos font les chieres baudes,  
 ces fermauz d'or a pierres fines  
 a voz cous et a voz poitrines,  
 et ces tessuz, et ces ceintures,  
 don tant coutent les ferreüres,  
 que l'or que les pelles menues ?  
 Que me valent tex fanfelues ? (*Rose*, II. 9241-58)

(What use to me are these headbands, these caps striped with gold, these decorated braids and ivory mirrors, these carefully crafted golden circles with their precious enamelling, these coronets of purest gold which never cease to enrage me, being so fair and finely polished, studded with such beautiful stones, with sapphires, rubies, and emeralds, and which make you look so joous. These clasps of gold and precious stones at your throat and on your bosom, these fabrics and these girdles whose fittings are worth as much as gold or seed-pearls, what are such baubles worth to me?)

Boccaccio's guide reuses the same ideas and imagery found within the *Rose* in his depiction of the widow's vanity in the *Corbaccio*, with one fundamental difference: his attack is ridiculously drawn-out (§§217-48) and includes an inordinate amount of detail, often humorous in nature. He describes, for example, how if, after applying her make-up, a fly were to land on her face, such an uproar would ensue that 'a rispetto, fu a' cristiani perdere Acri un diletto' (§233); or how he frequently became glued to her face while kissing her, due to the excessive amounts of lotions and ointments she used: 'spesse volte avvenne che, non guardandomene io e basciandola, tutte le labra m'invischiai' (§227). Although the guide's speech reflects much of Jaloux's attack, it is so extreme and lengthy, and goes into so much detail, that it is almost impossible to believe that Boccaccio wished it to be viewed with any degree of sincerity. He has taken the traditional trope of the cuckolded and helpless husband, rendered powerless by his wife's self-obsession, and skewed its conventional use by his employment of hyperbole. With such extreme deployment of the norms of the invective tradition, we are no

longer expected to sympathise with the husband, but rather we are prompted to question the seriousness of such a ridiculously extended attack. Although Boccaccio uses satirical and invective texts as models for his own narrative, the conventions of each tradition sometimes cause a jarring effect, rendering the narrative absurd.

Boccaccio's framing of his narrator's plight within a vision was not revolutionary: the *Rose* is also a dream-vision, highly influenced by the invective tradition, and the authors use many of the same ideas and imagery found within Ovid's didactic treatises as models for their own protagonist. Yet the type of dream used by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun is very different from that found within the *Corbaccio*: in the *Rose* we find an allegorical vision, which deals with the topic of courtly love. Aside from the presence of several personifications of virtues and abstract ideas, the *Rose* also boasts a spring-time setting and a sense of prophecy ('en ce songe onques rien n'oi | qui tretot avenu ne soit | si con li songes recensoit'; 'there was nothing in the dream that has not come true, exactly as the dream told it', *Rose*, I. 28-30). The *Rose* does not, however, contain any character able to fulfil the role of a spirit-guide, nor does the narrator provide any further information regarding the interpretation of his dream after awakening, rather he simply plucks the eponymous Rose and immediately arises from his sleep. The dream within the *Corbaccio* is of an entirely different ilk: not only does it not allow for the glorification of the female love-object, but it is also entirely devoid of any prophetic qualities; it is a vision rooted firmly in the earthly realm of sexual love. While the combination of dream-vision and invective traditions had been used prior to the *Corbaccio*, the types of dreams used in the *Corbaccio* and *Rose* respectively are so markedly different that Boccaccio was able to create a wholly original narrative by reframing arguments and issues found within several other, earlier texts.

In many of his earlier works Boccaccio had already demonstrated his ability to combine elements from different literary traditions, with some texts even incorporating the dream-vision motif. In the *Filocolo*, for example — composed when Boccaccio was living in Naples during his late-twenties (1336-38) — he combines the Old French romance tale of Floire and Blancheflor with religious allegory, using a vast number of literary sources, including works by Ovid, Lucan,

Dante, Virgil, and Statius; the Bible; hagiographical texts; works of his contemporaries (including Cino da Pistoia and Andalò del Negro); alongside French and Provençal courtly literature.<sup>30</sup> Many aspects of the *Filocolo*, for example, the dedication to women and the framing narrative, anticipate parts of the *Decameron*, yet it is Boccaccio's use of the dream-vision motif within the text that is particularly notable. Dreams and visions play a significant role in the *Filocolo*: the protagonist, Florio, undergoes two separate dream-visions, which act as portents for the character. The dreams take on eschatological and prophetic qualities — dimensions lacking in the *Corbaccio*'s dream — yet the allegorical nature of the visions ensure that they still require interpretation. Weaver comments that, with the *Filocolo*, Boccaccio demonstrates his 'finely honed rhetorical skills, elegant Ciceronian syntax, and a large dose of his own personality';<sup>31</sup> the text constitutes an innovative blend of various literary traditions, in much the same way as within his later *Corbaccio*.

#### TERMINOLOGY

Although many critics have commented upon Boccaccio's use of the dream-vision framework in the *Corbaccio* and its function within the narrative, nobody to my knowledge has commented on the *type* of dream Boccaccio uses. This section explores the specific terminology used to describe the protagonist's dream within the *Corbaccio*, and how this affects our understanding of the text as a dream-vision.

Although Boccaccio's text is almost entirely framed by a dream-vision, there are only six references within the *Corbaccio* to dreams or the process of dreaming, and a further ten references to sleep. Of these, three references appear within the guide's lengthy diatribe against women and are not related to the protagonist's dream. As such, these references are marginal in terms of the present study, serving only as asides within the guide's invective. The remaining thirteen references to sleep and dreams within the *Corbaccio* directly relate to the narrator's own dream-vision, with the highest concentration of allusions appearing

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<sup>30</sup> For an analysis of Boccaccio's use of sources in the *Filocolo*, see Weaver, 'A Lover's Tale and Auspicious Beginning'.

<sup>31</sup> Weaver, 'A Lover's Tale and Auspicious Beginning', p. 93.

within the sections of the narrative in which the protagonist falls asleep and wakes up.

There are a total of five references within §§26-27, wherein Boccaccio's narrator describes his gradual descent into sleep:

dopo lungo andare, vincendo la naturale opportunità il mio piacere, soavemente m'*adormentai*; e con tanza più forza si mise ne' miei sentimenti il *sonno*, quanto più che gli avea il dolce pensiero, trapassato il tempo tolto (§26, emphases mine).

Per che essendo io in altissimo *sonno* legato, non parendo alla mia nimica fortuna che le bastassero le ingiurie fattemi nel mio veggiare, ancora *dormendo* s'ingegnò di noiar mi; e davanti alla virtù fantastica, la quale il *sonno* non lega, diverse forme paratemi (§27, emphases mine).

A further three references are found within §§48-49, in which the protagonist expresses his distress at being paralysed within his dream, rendering him unable to flee the spirit-guide, despite being consumed by fear:

Ma, sì come sovente avviene a chi *sogna*, che li pare ne' maggiori bisogni per niuna condizione del mondo potersi muovere, così a me *sognante* parve avvenisse; e parvemi che le gambe mi fossero del tutto tolte e divenire immobile. E di tanto potere fu questa nuova paura, ch'io non so pensare qual cosa fosse quella che sì forte facesse il mio *sonno* ch'egli allora non si rompesse (§§48-49, emphases mine).

The remaining three allusions to sleep and dreams occur within the final section of the vision, at the point of the narrator's return to consciousness. He describes how both the spirit-guide and sleep seemed to leave him at the same time ('esso e 'l mio sonno ad una ora si partiro', §407) and he awoke bathed in sweat like a man who had just climbed a mountain 'che nel sogno mi parve salire' (§408). He then proceeds to relate 'ogni particella del sogno' (§409) to his friends, who agree with the protagonist's interpretation of his vision.

Boccaccio's choice of terminology within the *Corbaccio* gives us a real indication as to the type of dream he wished to emulate: he only ever refers to the

narrator's vision using 'sogno', forms of the verb 'sognare', or else he omits dream-references entirely and speaks only of sleep. Clearly the *Corbaccio* is a very different type of dream to the *Amorosa visione*, both in terms of the language Boccaccio uses, but also in the message he purports to portray. That he only refers to his narrator's dream using the term 'sogno' — the vernacularized form of *somnium* — is significant. 'Sogno' is the obvious lexical choice to describe a dream; in the *Decameron* alone, a substantial work, certainly, but one which is not entirely framed by a dream-vision, there are over thirty instances of the use of 'sogno', 'sognare', and its derivatives. Were we coming at the *Corbaccio* from nothing, having never read any of his other works, we might be tempted to overlook his use of 'sogno'; yet it is in this choice of terminology where we see the clearest sign as to how Boccaccio was using the dream-vision motif.

Boccaccio is consciously setting the *Corbaccio* up as a very different type of dream-vision to that found within the *Amorosa visione*: not only does he employ different words to describe the two dreams, but this is reflective of the very different roles the visions play within their respective narratives. Looking back at Boccaccio's definitions of 'sogno' and 'visione' from the *Decameron*, it is clear that he did not wish the *Corbaccio* to be seen as a clear, revelatory vision. Like the dreams of Gabriotto and Andreuola from *Decameron* IV. 6, whose visions were also narrated using 'sogno', the narrator of the *Corbaccio* experiences a dream which is veiled in ambiguity; although the narrator may think that the message of his dream is obvious, Boccaccio's use of terminology suggests that it requires a great deal of interpretation.

In many ways, the *Corbaccio* may be seen as a continuation of the ideas Boccaccio began exploring in the *Amorosa visione*. In both texts, he explores the deployment of dreams within literature, experimenting with the use and conventions of the trope, and he constantly seeks to push the boundaries of the tradition. Yet the subject matter of the two dream-visions is vastly different: in the *Amorosa visione* we see a protagonist struggling against general temptation; he is shown several alternative, virtuous ways of life, but repeatedly defaults to his previous life of pleasure; while in the *Corbaccio*, the dreamer does not need to fight temptation, since he is narrating a completed conversion. By the time he recounts his vision, he has already been convinced by the misogynistic arguments

set forth by the guide.

In terms of narrative content, the *Amorosa visione* and the *Corbaccio* are distinctly disparate, but their shared status as dream-vision text renders comparisons inevitable, with neither text fully adhering the conventions of the tradition. Yet we are still able to find a model for the *Corbaccio*'s tale within Boccaccio's literary *corpus*. *Decameron* VIII. 7 has long been considered the companion-piece to the *Corbaccio*: both tales centre on a scholar who has been wronged by a widow, and both are underpinned by inherently misogynistic messages. Although not a dream vision itself, the tale of the scholar and the widow is an unmistakable early incarnation of the *Corbaccio*, and is also studded with references to texts of the invective tradition. Boccaccio puts into place the advice given by Capellanus in *De amore* 1.3 that women should set trials for potential suitors — the widow, Elena, tasks the scholar, Rinieri, with enduring freezing temperatures in order to meet with her — and that provided by Juvenal in *Satire* 6, which focused on the moral regeneration of errant women. Many of these same ideas would re-emerge in the *Corbaccio*, where Boccaccio combines aspects of VIII. 7 with the dream-vision aspects of the *Amorosa visione*: he uses the same invective sources, but recasts them within a new framework in order to develop these earlier literary experimentations.

Comparisons between the *Corbaccio* and *Decameron* are particularly pertinent when considering Hollander's suggested compositional date for the text. By arguing for a compositional date of the *Corbaccio* of 1354-55, Hollander places the text in direct succession to the *Decameron*; the content a mere continuation of the themes and resulting discussions found within the hundred tales. Certainly Boccaccio's use of literary sources — particularly misogynistic invective treatises — and the similarities between the characters clearly demonstrates his wish to reopen the same debates on female value often prompted by the *Decameron* tales. But why should he feel the need to employ a dream-vision framework in the recasting of this *novella*? Boccaccio was not, I believe, interested in creating a wholly new subject-matter, but rather he was a true literary inventor with a penchant for rearranging pre-existing literary material into new and exciting forms. He takes his influences from a variety of different sources, ranging from religion and mythology to the works of his contemporaries, and

arranges these sources in such a way as to constantly test genre boundaries. Smarr suggests that this practice was primarily driven by Boccaccio's wish to impress (or, perhaps, convert) his friend Petrarch, who famously scorned the use of the vernacular within literature, and who had recently been named poet laureate:

Seeking Petrarch's approval but unconvinced by his example,  
Boccaccio wrote in endlessly new ways, none of which was obviously  
the right way to be a great poet and none of which won him a laurel.<sup>32</sup>

The comparing of the *Corbaccio* with the *Amorosa visione* and *Decameron* VIII. 7 is but one very clear example of this experimentation at work: Boccaccio poses many of the same questions, and raises many of the same issues in the *Corbaccio* as he had already raised in his two previous narratives, but his combination of the key elements of each within the *Corbaccio* – the dream-vision and the debate on female value – demonstrates his constant aspiration to literary greatness. That he is able to show originality even within the dream-vision itself further reveals his sense of invention, and nowhere is this deviation from the orthodox employment of dream-vision literature more evident than in the character of the spirit-guide.

### **THE SPIRIT-GUIDE**

The *Corbaccio*'s guide first appears within §34, when Boccaccio's narrator, alone 'nella misera valle', and 'quasi da ogni speranza abbandonato' (§34), is greeted by the solitary figure of a man walking slowly towards him. The dreamer describes the figure as

di statura grande e di pelle e di pelo bruno, benché in parte bianco  
divenuto fosse per gli anni, de' quali forse sessanta o più dimostrava  
d'avere; e il suo vestimento era lunghissimo e largo e di colore  
vermiglio, come che assai più vivo mi paresse – non ostante che  
tenebroso fosse il luogo dov'io era – che quello che qua tingono i  
nostri maestri (§35).

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<sup>32</sup> Janet Levarie Smarr, 'Introduction', in *Boccaccio: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, pp. 1-20 (p. 4).

The description of the guide, with his rich vermilion robes and dark features, is undoubtedly an allusion to the *Commedia*, wherein Dante chooses Virgil as his *personaggio*'s guide — a poet for whom he held a great deal of respect and admiration. Boccaccio viewed Dante with much the same esteem as Dante viewed Virgil, devoting a great deal of his career to celebrating the achievements of his predecessor, with Dantean allusions permeating almost all of Boccaccio's texts. The traditional, recognisable crimson robes of the *Corbaccio*'s guide stand as a playful nod towards Dante — whose own red robes symbolise his consuming love for Beatrice<sup>33</sup> — without Boccaccio ever having to name him as such. Guyda Armstrong suggests that Boccaccio's use of 'maestro' when confronting Dante's portrait in the *Amorosa visione* ('il maestro dal qual io | tengo ogni ben', *AV*, VI, 2-3) is little more than a reflection of Dante-*personaggio*'s speech from *Inferno* I, where he describes Virgil as 'lo mio maestro e 'l mio autore' (*Inf.* I, 85).<sup>34</sup> The fact that Boccaccio has previously invoked Virgil in his depiction of Dante should, then, facilitate parallels to be drawn between the two characters once again in the *Corbaccio*. Yet there is one crucial difference between the guides of the *Commedia* and the *Corbaccio*: unlike Virgil, representative of earthly wisdom and reason, the unnamed guide of the *Corbaccio* has no real authority. He is little more than the bitter and deceived former husband of the widow, garnering information by spying on her as she engages in affairs with other men. Furthermore, unlike those of his predecessors, the guide's lessons are not grounded in otherworldly visions of an afterlife. He does not lead the dreamer to any heightened sense of realisation regarding the ascent into heaven; rather, his speech focuses on the terrestrial topic of sordid, carnal desire, and his lessons inspire nothing but hatred and bitterness.

The *Corbaccio*'s guide has endured many years of comparison with other

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<sup>33</sup> In his study on colour symbolism in clothes, John Harvey explains that in the Middle Ages 'a lover wears vermilion, like blood'. John Harvey, *Men in Black* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 51.

<sup>34</sup> Armstrong, 'Dantean Framing Devices', p. 154; Armstrong further comments that Boccaccio, in the first redaction of his *Trattatello in laude di Dante*, describes the Florentine as dark-skinned and dark-haired, in much the same way as the guide of the *Corbaccio*, and that although this cannot be taken as conclusive proof of an identification with Dante, it is obvious that Boccaccio was aware of the effects of such a description upon his informed readership.

literary spirit-guides — not only Dante’s Virgil, but also Boethius’s Lady Philosophy and even Petrarch’s Augustinus.<sup>35</sup> However, in spite of the attention received by the *Corbaccio*’s guide, the relationship between this character and the guide of the *Amorosa visione* has been wholly neglected within the critical literature.

Boccaccio’s two dream-vision texts — the *Corbaccio* and *Amorosa visione* — are markedly different from one another, and nowhere is this more evident than in the roles of the two spirit-guides. The guide of the *Amorosa visione* is relentless in her (albeit vain) efforts to instruct the text’s dreamer, even appearing outside the dream framework in one final, desperate attempt to lead the protagonist to a more divine existence. She continually tries — with very little success — to lead the dreamer away from the path of carnal delights, to which he is so strongly attracted. The *Corbaccio*’s guide, meanwhile, encourages his dreamer to harbour enmity, to nurture a heightened awareness of the deceits of others, and hostility towards such deceivers. Furthermore, while the guide of the *Amorosa visione* illustrates her arguments with classical and historical *exempla*, in the form of triumphal paintings, the *Corbaccio*’s guide offers nothing but his own anecdotes as proof of the veracity of his testimony. In short, the *Corbaccio*’s guide is a direct inversion of the traditional spirit-guide model; he lacks the wisdom and divine knowledge of his predecessors, and seeks to steer his charge to an ultimately harmful way of life. Rather than facilitating, or indeed encouraging a conversion to a higher state of being, the narrator’s exchange with the *Corbaccio*’s guide acts as the catalyst for his relapse into the sickness from which he had temporarily managed to escape, thanks to his conversation with compassionate friends (‘trovai compagnia assai utile alle mie passioni’, §23). He is once again forced to relive the humiliation and suffering caused by his unrequited love for the woman, only for this shame to be exacerbated by the guide’s lengthy diatribe on the narrator’s shortcomings.

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<sup>35</sup> Regina Psaki explores the relationship between Boccaccio’s dream-vision text and Petrarch’s *Secretum* in her 2010 article. She argues that, although it is unlikely that Boccaccio would have been at all familiar with Petrarch’s text, both authors were in dialogue with one another and concurrently exploring similar themes and ideas within their respective texts; F. Regina Psaki, ‘Boccaccio’s *Corbaccio* as a *Secret Admirer*’, *Heliotropia*, 7 (2010), 105-32.

The spirit-guide of the *Amorosa visione* is by no means traditional, as Chapter 3 demonstrates; she appears outside of the dream framework and is almost entirely unsuccessful in her mission to convert the dreamer. Yet her presence within the dream proper is conventional: she acts as a voice of reason for the wayward dreamer, consistently attempting to show him a more virtuous way of life. Considering Boccaccio's ability to create such a character, the *Corbaccio*'s spirit-guide is all the more striking. It is no accident that the guide of the *Corbaccio* does not adhere to the expectations of his convention; and it is certainly not the result of any authorial failings. Rather, it is a calculated move on the part of Boccaccio, who crafts his guide to be so far removed from the traditional trope, his speech so extremely venomous and misogynistic, that he borders on the ridiculous. The spirit demonstrates echoes of too many different models — Dante's Virgil, Boethius's Lady Philosophy, even Boccaccio's own female guide from the *Amorosa visione* — for Boccaccio to have simply failed to achieve the same sense of authority as his predecessors.

The guide is embittered, and frequently preaches about the widow's shortcomings in excessive detail, not content with simply attacking her for, amongst other vices, vanity and excessive sexual appetite. However, as the narrative progresses, his descriptions of her actions and appearance become increasingly bizarre, his language becomes increasingly euphemistic. He describes intercourse, for example, in the following manner: 'le donne sono ottime sensali a fare che messer Maza rientri in Vallebruna' (§230),<sup>36</sup> before going on to provide a lengthy and intricate description of the woman's body. No part of her anatomy is spared; the guide describes her breasts in the following manner:

tanto oltre misura dal loro natural sito spiccate e dilungate sono, se  
cascare le lasciasse, che forse, anzi senza forse, infino al bellico  
l'agiugnerebbono, non altrimenti vote o vize che sia una viscica  
sgonfiata; e certo, se di quelle, come de' cappucci s'usa a Parigi, a

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<sup>36</sup> In Nurmela's edition of the text, the exact euphemism used is 'le donne, sono ottime sensali e maestre di far che messer Mazza rientrar possa in Valleoscura' (§321).

Firenze s'usasse, ella per leggiadra sopra le spalle se le potrebbe gittare alla francesca (§289);

he describes her stomach as 'un sacco voto, non d'altra guisa pendenti che al bue faccia quella buccia vota che li pende dal petto al mento' (§290); and her genitals as the Gulf of Setalia, buried in the Valley of Acheron, 'sotto gli oscuri boschi di quella, spesse volte rugginosi e d'una gromma spiacevoli e spumosi, e d'animali di nuova qualità ripieni' (§291), and 'una voragine infernale' (§293). The depictions of the widow's private parts are so drawn out, so extreme and lengthy, that they become a source of amusement for both the reader and the dreamer, offering an air of light relief from the invective tradition upon which the character of the guide draws so heavily.

The guide's appearance and attempts to convert the dreamer to a different way of life ensure that his character is firmly grounded in the convention; that his teachings advocate harbouring grudges and exacting revenge upon women is a different matter. In constructing the spirit, Boccaccio has taken aspects of texts from varying traditions and from varying sources within those traditions, thus ensuring that his text is steeped in expectations.

## CONCLUSIONS

The *Corbaccio* is a difficult text to fathom, with ambiguity and confusion found in abundance on every level of the text. Even leaving aside issues of authorial intention, compositional dates, and the meaning of the title, we are still left with a complex tangle of intertextual allusions and conflicting messages, especially regarding the seriousness of the text. While arguments may continue to be put forth in support of both satirical and serious readings of the *Corbaccio*, an examination of Boccaccio's use of dream-visions within the text has shown a deliberate use of literary models and sources, and the extent of Boccaccio's literary awareness when composing the text.

Boccaccio was intensely familiar with invective works, as exemplified in his *Zibaldone laurenziano*, and his use of such texts, combined with those of the dream-vision tradition, serves as a clear indication of his intentions when composing the *Corbaccio*. In a successful invective dialogue, an author would be able to demonstrate his ability to argue convincingly on both sides of an argument

by adopting the narrative voice of each speaker and using the rhetorical pairings of *laus* and *vituperatio* (praise and blame) — directed towards a particular person, group of people, city, or abstract idea — and *hyperbole* and *litotes* (exaggeration and understatement).<sup>37</sup> Examples of both pairings may be found in abundance within the guide's speech in the *Corbaccio*, and demonstrate the extent to which Boccaccio relied upon invective texts as models for his dream-vision narrative. Indeed, he constructs his text in such a way, with so many allusions to invective treatises that we are left confused as to whether the *Corbaccio* can be described as a dream-vision at all, or whether it should be more accurately classified as an invective text. The truth is that Boccaccio has set his narrative up in such a way that it invokes aspects of both literary traditions, without fully adhering to either. The *Corbaccio* is both a dream-vision and an invective narrative, with the influences of both genres fully permeating the text. The effect of this is that the reader is left in a state of confusion, while Boccaccio is able to successfully build reader expectations before repeatedly catching us unaware. In this way, not only is he able to produce a wholly original text without introducing any new ideas, but he is also able to re-stage the debate on female value in a new, innovative way. Within his *Decameron*, Boccaccio had already raised similar questions regarding gender roles, since many of the *novelle* served as celebrations of the intelligence, patience, and virtues of women. Yet with the *Corbaccio* we see the same issues revisited, but within a framework which invites interpretation, serving to highlight the multifaceted nature of both dreams and texts.

Boccaccio's use of dreams within his earlier texts — particularly in *Decameron* IX. 7, and the resulting comments in IX. 8 regarding the differences between the terms 'sogno' and 'visione' — highlight the importance of the lexical choices made within the *Corbaccio*. Boccaccio only ever refers to his narrator's dream using the term 'sogno', or else he omits dream terminology entirely and makes reference only to sleep. At no point does he refer to the narrator's dream as 'visione', a term which his own *brigata* define as prophetic or revelatory, in

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<sup>37</sup> See Panizza, 'Rhetoric and Invective in Love's Labyrinth'; she describes the *Corbaccio* as itself a 'highly wrought' example of the invective tradition, which 'engages with contemporary polemics about love poetry [and...] offers a therapy for dealing with immoderate sexual passion', p. 183.

which everything that occurs within the dream also occurs in waking life. In this way, Boccaccio deliberately sets the *Corbaccio* apart from his *Amorosa visione*, and the two texts present very different types of dreams. In the latter Boccaccio presents an allegorical vision filled with long, encyclopaedic lists of *exempla*, including numerous female models of aspirational behaviour; whilst in the *Corbaccio*, he recounts a completed conversion from lover to hater. It is a dream inspired not by divine forces, but by sexual urges, which merits very careful interpretation.

The need for readers to apply reason and logic to that with which they are presented is something which Boccaccio makes thoroughly evident in the character of the spirit-guide. Not only does he lack the necessary *gravitas* to be authoritative, but his character is something of a pastiche; his vehement attacks on women, which culminate in a highly descriptive depiction of his former wife's genitalia, are so extreme and lengthy that they border on the ridiculous. Furthermore, the guide's speech is punctuated by frequent references to other satirical texts: Juvenal's *Satires*, Ovid's *Remedia Amoris*, Andreas Capellanus's *De Amore*, amongst others. Although these textual models are classical examples of invective texts, they too invite alternative — even humorous, tongue-in-cheek — readings. Yet, unlike the characters in these misogynistic texts, Boccaccio's guide has the added responsibility of being an oneiric spirit-guide, a role which he consistently fails to fill with any degree of conviction.

Throughout the *Corbaccio*, we are presented with shadows of the guide's literary predecessors — from the narrator's Boethian conversation with his personified thought, to Boccaccio's reworking of Dante's *Inferno* I within the description of his narrator's entrance into his dream-world and first meeting with the widow's husband. Yet the sole purpose of these echoes, it would seem, is to remind the reader of precisely what the *Corbaccio*'s guide is not. He is a far cry from Virgil or Lady Philosophy, Cicero's Scipio Africanus, or Petrarch's Augustinus, and he is not to be trusted. The fact that Boccaccio affords the character the status of spirit-guide, yet ensures that he repeatedly fails to adhere to the strict conventions of the trope, reminds us that we should not pay much attention to what he is saying; his nonconformity ought to serve as a warning against believing him without applying logic and reason to his speech.

Furthermore, he is not a guide of a 'visione', but of a 'sogno', and his speech is moderated by the type of dream in which he is found: he does not reveal divine truths, nor is he concerned with ensuring a conversion to a more divine existence. Rather, his sole purpose in the narrative is ensuring the conversion of the dreamer from being consumed by unrequited love to a life of misogyny.

Boccaccio has given us a text which raises questions about the necessity of interpretation and the impact of genre expectations. He invites us to question the veracity of a testimony relayed by an untrustworthy guide, whose only insight is necessarily biased, since it stems from his own personal experiences of his wife during his lifetime, and playing voyeur following his death. Moreover, by setting his text apart from his *Amorosa visione* in terms of both dream terminology and the employment of various oneiric conventions — the role of spirit guides, the success of the respective conversionary experiences, for example — he raises questions about the functions of different types of dream-vision narrative. The *Corbaccio* is certainly problematic in terms of issues such as authorial attitudes towards women, and how these attitudes relate to Boccaccio's other texts, yet in terms of its dream-vision qualities, it gives a clear indication of Boccaccio's abilities to draw on several different literary traditions in order to raise debates not only on female value, but also on the nature of literature, the process of reading, and the importance of interpretation.

## CONCLUSION

One of my principal aims for this study was to demonstrate the extent to which Boccaccio and Petrarch used the vast body of dream literature available to them to situate their own narratives within specific traditions, whilst simultaneously rejecting or surpassing the boundaries of the conventions and the expectations of the oneiric genre. In doing so, the relationship between Boccaccio and Petrarch, and the effects of this relationship upon their respective literary outputs, has emerged as an important sub-theme of my research. In these closing pages, I consider how these issues have been addressed throughout this thesis, and suggest what these findings tell us about the complex interrelationships between the two men and their texts.

The *Amorosa visione*, *Triumph*, and *Corbaccio* are the key texts of Boccaccio's and Petrarch's engagement with the dream-vision traditions, and are all excellent indicators of the extent to which each author understood and interacted with the genre. During their long and illustrious history, dream-vision texts had accumulated a specific set of motifs which, when deployed within narratives, prompted certain expectations from readers. Specific terminology, for example, was commonly used to narrate religious prophetic visions, such as 'vidi in visione et ecce...'; 'vidit in somnis'; while enigmatic dreams were very different in style and content to these prophetic visions, with authors often using metaphors and extended allegories to communicate different issues. As this thesis has demonstrated, dream-visions were used in a variety of different ways. They give an external voice to an author's inner dialogue; they raise questions about the human state and the afterlife, and, importantly, they create a sense of distance between an author and the content of his text. However, my literature review showed that while many scholars have focused attention on specific types of dream-vision (religious prophecies and enigmatic dreams, for example), no study has yet looked at the different aspects of dreams, such as the specific terminology used to narrative oneiric texts, the employment of key features, and the reliability of accounts situated in the realm of the imagination.

Chapters 1 and 2 of the thesis constituted important parts of my argument, since they helped to establish which literary, historical, and biblical sources were

available to Boccaccio and Petrarch in the composition of their dream-vision narratives. These chapters examined the different forms and types of dreams that had been used previously in oneiric texts, drawing upon the typologies set out by commentators and philosophers, such as Cicero, Macrobius, and St Augustine. They looked, also, at the different ways in which the two authors' opinions and beliefs regarding dreams and visions were established elsewhere within their respective bodies of work. This allowed us not only to establish a set of expectations for the genre, against which it was possible to compare and contrast the works of Boccaccio and Petrarch, but also, significantly, to foreground the different ways in which each author approached his own dream-vision narratives. Although it is impossible to accurately pinpoint the precise dream-vision narratives which would have been read by both Boccaccio and Petrarch, we know that both men were writing from similar social backgrounds, and so it is likely that they would have known and accessed many of the same texts. Yet, despite the similarities in their shared literary heritage, an examination of their respective uses of dreams within their own texts has shown two very different viewpoints emerging. On the one hand we have Petrarch, deeply suspicious of dreams, and mistrustful of their interpretative, divinatory, and revelatory value; while on the other hand we have Boccaccio, who experiments widely with the different narrative forms of dreams and visions, uses them freely and liberally within his texts, and engages fully with debates regarding their worth within both his Latin and vernacular works. Petrarch clearly sets out his views on dreams and visions within both his *Rerum memorandarum libri* and *Epistolae familiares*, noting that, should events witnessed by the unconscious during sleep transpire to be true, one should not forget the thousands of other dreams we experience which do not; while Boccaccio continues to adapt the dream form and use it in new ways from the beginning of his career right up until his last work of fiction. In spite of the close personal relationship shared by Boccaccio and Petrarch, and the comparable contexts from which their texts emerged, their individual attitudes towards the interpretative arts and the ways in which they engaged with the traditions of oneiric literature were vastly different.

We saw from chapters 3, 4 and 5 of the thesis that aspects of the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumpho*, and *Corbaccio* both adhered to, and subverted the boundaries

of the dream-vision genre. The texts were analysed in rough chronological order, although some uncertainty still remains as to the precise dating of the works, since both Boccaccio and Petrarch continually edited and rewrote their own texts in response to the others' criticisms. The men entered into a sort of conversation through their texts; they used their narratives as a way of critiquing and commenting upon the various techniques and opinions of the other. Petrarch's rewriting of Boccaccio's Griselda tale from *Decameron* X. 10 is but one example of this and demonstrates the extent to which their respective narratives influenced the thinking of the other. Their dream-vision texts are no exception to this dialogue, and the studies on the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumphs*, and *Corbaccio* have shed light upon how Boccaccio and Petrarch not only interacted with preceding oneiric narratives, but also — especially with regard to the *Amorosa visione* and *Triumphs* — how the two men engaged with one another's dream-vision texts. This is evident in the use of specific tropes, such as the triumph motif, first used by Boccaccio in the *Amorosa visione*, but then built upon by Petrarch in the *Triumphs*, who makes it the central image of his entire text. The listing of classical figures, too, is present within both the *Amorosa visione* and *Triumphs*; this gives each text a degree of literary *gravitas*, certainly, but also allows for parallels to be drawn between the two dream-visions to the extent that it is often difficult to ascertain whether either author is making any new or valuable contribution to the genre, or is simply trying to out-do his colleague in his demonstration of encyclopaedic knowledge.

This thesis has shown the *Amorosa visione* to be an inherently ambiguous text, which is able to fulfil simultaneous functions: it is both a dream-vision and a mnemonic store-house, through which Boccaccio is able to recall and show off his vast encyclopaedic knowledge of literature. The multiple intertextual references, particularly those relating to dream-vision accounts, ensures that the *Amorosa visione* is firmly situated within an established body of literature. His references to some of the most influential writers of dream-vision texts, such as Boethius, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, and Dante, ensure that the *Amorosa visione* belongs to, and invokes many of the key themes of the dream-vision genre. However, Boccaccio often reverses the original intentions of texts to create 'anti-models' for his own dream-vision; he experiments with form, imagery and

content of literature as a way of rejecting the boundaries imposed by previous texts. I showed that Boccaccio's choice of oneiric terminology ('immaginar', 'visione', 'fantasia', 'sonno', 'sogno', for example) render his dream confusing: he does not adhere to simply one type of dream-vision, but instead creates a text which simultaneously belongs to several categories of dream. This further enhances the ambiguity of the text, as we are never certain of Boccaccio's intention for the *Amorosa visione*; it is at once an elusive 'sogno' and a prophetic 'visione'.

Petrarch's *Triumphs* have also emerged as poems which make use of the established conventions of dream-vision literature as a kind of yardstick by which to measure the author's own originality. Petrarch's use of oneiric terminology is but one element of this, and we see him experiment with different language to narrate the *Triumphs*'s three dream-sequences. Perhaps the most interesting incident of dream-terminology within the entire *Triumphs* is Petrarch's description of the way his narrator sees his spirit-guide, Laura. The protagonist describes himself as 'come uom cieco' (*TM* II. 3) at the moment of encountering his guide; he is unable to actually see Laura, and instead presents his experiences as an intellectual vision, rather than a physical apparition.

Although Petrarch consciously sets his text within the realms of a dream — and he employs characters, references, and even phrases from previous oneiric texts to emphasise this — he also introduces new elements from different literary genres to test the limits of dream-vision texts. By combining the dream form with a triumphal procession and, specifically, by foregrounding the procession as one of the most important aspects of his text along with discussions regarding the meaning of life, Petrarch opens up the dream-vision genre more widely than it ever had been. Within the *Triumphs*, Petrarch builds upon Boccaccio's efforts in the *Amorosa visione* to showcase his mastery of literature, but Petrarch does not simply use examples of dream-vision texts to do this. He amalgamates aspects from various sources, combines genres and approaches, and develops his own evolving style, in order to create texts which are both original and push the boundaries of the oneiric genre to its limits.

As Chapter 5 demonstrated, Boccaccio's *Corbaccio* builds upon Petrarch's work in the *Triumphs* by combining key features of several different literary

genres. Boccaccio deliberately uses specific texts as sources for his *Corbaccio*, referencing works by some of the most prominent authors of both invective and satire texts. He reuses many of the same ideas raised in works by authors such as Juvenal, Ovid, St Jerome, and Horace, on the topics of marriage and women; however, by framing these discussions within the notoriously ambiguous world of dreams, and by employing an unreliable and unauthoritative guide, Boccaccio casts doubt on the seriousness of these texts. He emphasises the need for readers to apply logic and reason to that which they are faced with, and to question the intention and trustworthiness of characters. The insincerity of the guide's speech is underpinned by Boccaccio's choice of terminology; Boccaccio eschews the traditional terms used to narrate revelatory or prophetic dreams (*visio/visione*) and instead exclusively uses the term 'sogno' within his text. Owing to our familiarity with Boccaccio's other works (his *brigata*'s discussion about the correct dream-terms to use in the *Decameron*; his chapter on dreams and visions in the *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, for instance), it is clear that this invocation of 'sogno' was a contrived move on Boccaccio's part: he was consciously setting up his *Corbaccio* as one which required interpretation and could not simply be taken at face-value. This aspect of Boccaccio's text has remained hitherto ignored in the arguments for and against reading the *Corbaccio* as satirical or serious, and one which is evidently extremely important when considering Boccaccio's engagement with the dream-vision genre.

As my chapters on the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumphs*, and *Corbaccio* have showed, Boccaccio and Petrarch regularly deviated from the conventions of oneiric literature. Many of the motifs and tropes, which set their respective texts apart from their predecessors, are deployed in unusual ways within all three texts. The most obvious example of this are the figures of the spirit-guides, which appear within each of the narratives and which frequently prompt us to re-evaluate our anticipations of the texts. Yet, despite the fact that the two authors use unconventional guides, their respective characters vary from the norms in different ways. The *Amorosa visione*'s guide is ultimately unsuccessful in her mission; she is relentless in her attempts to convert her dreamer to a more pious way of life, but his pursuit of carnal gratification, and unwillingness to follow a more virtuous path, render these attempts futile. However, Boccaccio's other

guide, the deceased husband of the widow who was his love-object in the *Corbaccio*, lacks the ability to fulfil his role successfully within the narrative. The use of invective texts in the guide's diatribe against the woman serves as little more than a rhetorical exercise for Boccaccio, and the character's authority is based merely on his own personal, biased experiences of the widow. In these two very different but similarly unorthodox guides, Boccaccio demonstrates his expertise in managing and manipulating reader expectations. He introduces both figures in a conventional manner, and describes them in grand and imposing terms, but he follows these traditional depictions with unusual accounts of their activities: the guide of the *Amorosa visione* appears outside of the dream-framework in a last-ditch attempt to persuade her dreamer to undergo a full conversion, while the *Corbaccio*'s guide attempts to steer his dreamer towards a life of hatred and misogyny. Neither of Boccaccio's guides ever quite meets up to their literary predecessors, and as such, Boccaccio is able to manipulate reader responses to his texts: he knows well that the inclusion of such characters ought to signify a shift in the development of the dream-vision narrative, but ultimately does not fulfil his duties in supplying this shift.

Petrarch's deployment of the guide motif within the *Triumph* is similarly unconventional, although it also deviates from Boccaccio's already unusual use of the trope in the *Amorosa visione*. Petrarch uses two guides within one text, and they each take on differing levels of importance: his first spirit-figure, male and unnamed, is marginal to the development of the plot. He is little more than a nod towards the conventions of dream-vision literature, since he offers no real narrative value and, after his initial, rather orthodox explanation of the triumphal processions, he does not help his dreamer in any way. One could almost believe that Petrarch has forgotten about him, so unsuccessful is his employment of the figure within the text. Yet this insignificant shade of a man is soon replaced within the *Triumphus Mortis* II by a second guide, the deceased figure of Laura, who takes on an altogether different role. In his portrayal of his spirit-guide Laura, Petrarch draws upon the wealth of oneiric models and presents an altogether more traditional, conventional figure; like the guides of Cicero and Boethius, and, to some extent Dante in the *Vita nuova*, Laura appears to her dreamer and reassures him, before prophesying his long life and eventually departing his consciousness.

So what do these guides tell us about the ways in which Boccaccio and Petrarch interacted with the dream-vision tradition and with each other? In short, a great deal. They are a great indicator of the two authors' approaches to literature, and embody their individual attitudes to dreams. Boccaccio is keen to experiment with the spirit-guide form, just as he proves himself willing and able to employ the dream framework within a variety of his texts; while Petrarch is tentative in his approach to the guide trope. He begins his text with the intention to use his guide-figure throughout his text — just as Boccaccio had done in his *Amorosa visione* only a few years earlier — but soon reverts to a more conservative use of the trope, introducing a contained dream-vision and a conventional guide.

The guide-figures Petrarch and Boccaccio employ within their dream-vision texts are all very different to one another: the *Amorosa visione*'s guide is dedicated to the purpose of transforming her dream and is relentless in this mission; the *Triumphs*'s two guides are different from both their predecessors and from each other: the first, male guide is absent for the majority of the narrative and fulfils no obvious purpose other than to introduce the dreamer to the oneiric landscape in which he finds himself; while the second guide, Spirit-Laura, is much more traditional of her trope but appears in a dream-within-a-dream; the *Corbaccio*'s guide is different again: he is misogynistic, bitter, and attempts to lead the dreamer to a state of anger and hatred. The *Amorosa visione*, *Triumphs*, and *Corbaccio* each include unorthodox guide figures, however the ways in which these differences are made manifest vary greatly from one another. This exemplifies the main argument of this present thesis: while Boccaccio and Petrarch manipulated reader expectations of their dream-vision texts by introducing new elements to the genre, by recasting existing tropes, and by testing the boundaries of the established oneiric convention, the ways in which the two authors showcase their innovations within these three texts are markedly different.

In many respects, the inclusion of the *Corbaccio* within this thesis presents difficulties. The *Amorosa visione* and *Triumphs* have often been paired with one another, as an example of the strong literary influences exerted upon Petrarch by Boccaccio, and vice-versa. It has even been suggested, albeit speculatively, that Petrarch's marginal notes in his manuscript of the *Amorosa visione* influenced the editing of the text by Girolamo Claricio in 1521, although there is no solid

manuscript evidence to support these claims. To include the *Corbaccio* in this discussion, therefore, is to introduce a third party to the *Amorosa visione-Triumph* relationship, and allows us to further examine the use of dream-visions in medieval literature. The *Corbaccio* is, after all, an extremely illuminating example of how Boccaccio subverts form and genre as a way of managing reader responses to his texts, and what sets it apart from both the *Amorosa visione* and the *Triumph* is the way in which it straddles two separate genres. It is not merely a dream-vision narrative, and it is not merely an invective narrative, but successfully merges key features of each genre without fully adhering to the expectations and conventions of either. It is precisely because of the hybrid nature of the *Corbaccio* that Boccaccio is able to demonstrate his ability to build reader expectations of both oneiric and invective literature, only to repeatedly, systematically, and intentionally fail to meet these expectations. With the *Corbaccio*, Boccaccio proved that dream-vision literature should not be exclusive; it should not come at the expense of other literary traditions, but can be, as the text shows, combined with other genres, which affect and alter our perceptions of the narratives, since true innovation occurs precisely when boundaries are blurred.

In my introduction, I discussed the fact that no work to date has provided a thorough and holistic analysis of the dream-vision texts of either Boccaccio or Petrarch, which takes into account the deployment of multiple key tropes and the cultural and sociological background from which the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumph*, and *Corbaccio* emerged. This thesis has gone some way to addressing some of these obvious gaps in scholarship by considering how both Boccaccio and Petrarch interacted with the dream-vision texts that preceded their own, by reusing and reframing key imagery and themes; but also how the relationship of the two men impacted upon their markedly different approaches to the genre. More generally, I have shown how the choice of dream-vision terminology affects the meaning and tone of oneiric texts, and have also explored some of the myriad ways in which key tropes and imagery were commonly deployed within dream narratives.

There are common traits within the *Amorosa visione*, *Triumph* and *Corbaccio* which set all three texts apart from previous oneiric works. Each author introduces new literary genres and influences into his texts, and both

Boccaccio and Petrarch experiment with form in their works (the acrostic sonnets of the *Amorosa visione*, the dream-within-a-dream of the *Triumphs*, the Boethian conversation between dreamer and guide in the *Corbaccio*, for example). However, the two authors also include imagery and ideas that had not previously been framed within the dream-vision form. Excellent examples of these include the triumphal processions of the *Amorosa visione* and *Triumphs*, the invocation of the *Ars memoria* in the physical framework of the *Amorosa visione*'s castle, and the use of satire and invective in the *Corbaccio*. By analysing the *Corbaccio* alongside the *Amorosa visione* and *Triumphs*, this thesis has gone beyond traditional explorations of the dream-visions of Petrarch and Boccaccio, since it has shown that the two men were not afraid to introduce aspects of other genres or literary forms into their oneiric texts. Petrarch and Boccaccio are, in many respects, polar opposites of one another: Petrarch is cautious in his use of the dream-vision form, while Boccaccio freely experiments with both content and form. Yet, this thesis has shown a great deal of overlap in their respective approaches to the dream-vision genre, with both men challenging preconceived expectations of dream-vision texts by regularly using traditional oneiric tropes in ways which deviate from their normal functions.

The *Amorosa visione*, *Triumphs*, and *Corbaccio* all draw upon a wealth of dream-vision literature; they all adopt various combinations of conventions and terminology, with Boccaccio and Petrarch both achieving very different results from their respective narratives. Yet the three texts are much more than a sum of their parts. Each of the oneiric narratives adds something new to the dream-vision genre, while reflecting the personal attitudes of their authors. Petrarch's fervent mistrust of dreams, as documented in his *Epistolae familiares* and *Rerum memorandarum libri*, is temporarily put aside within the *Triumphs* as he trials different uses of dreams, both allegorical and revelatory. These experiments are often tentative, and initially not always convincing in their results, but as the *Triumphs* progress, they achieve bold and astonishing results; he combines visions which are both personal — as in his dream of Laura in *TM II* — and relevant to all humankind. Petrarch demonstrates his ready willingness to put aside his personal views on dreams for the sake of his poetic output and he creates visions which are at once traditional and innovative. Boccaccio, too, is extremely forthcoming in his

readiness to create, and we see a real shift in the way in which he engages with the conventions of dream-vision literature over the course of his career. Unorthodox from the very beginning, Boccaccio continues to develop new ways of experimenting with genres and motifs. The *Amorosa visione*, *Triumphs*, and *Corbaccio* should therefore rank alongside Boccaccio's and Petrarch's most inventive works, rising, as they do from long-established traditions, yet helping to reinvent the expectations associated with dream-vision literature.

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