

## Looking for the Fifteenth-Century Author: *De ilustres mujeres en romance*

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The fifteenth-century Spanish translator of Boccaccio's *De claris mulieribus* enjoyed the advantage of being able to explain exactly what he understood the meaning of the original to be, a privilege rarely afforded to a twentieth-century translator. Even given this extra edge, the constraints are enormous. George Steiner marvels that there can be serious alterity of meaning and expressive form inside the same language-family and cultural lattice" (393). An examination of glosses and interpolations to the text will lead to a partial portrait of the glossator, whose Romance language placed him in the right language-family, and whose training located him in the right cultural lattice. The reader, aware of the glossator's moral stance and judgments, and of his attitude toward Boccaccio should then be equipped to perceive two chronologically and perhaps spiritually distinct layers in the text.

But first, in order to avoid confusion I have imposed some arbitrary rules: the term translation is replaced by either "version" (Brower 1), or "vernacularization" or "adaptation" (Dembowski 257). Also, Boccaccio is the *auctor* and the anonymous person who composed the Castilian version (*De ilustres mujeres en romance*) is the author or the glossator. Furthermore, without information to the contrary, the author is assumed to have been a man.

The key feature in the relationship between these two men -*auctor* and author- is the author's attitude toward his task, i.e. his connection to the text. Measuring authorial intention on a "literalness" scale, a desire to produce an almost exact word-for-word rendition ("metaphrase") lies at one extreme; an intention to explain or to re-cast the text into new language ("paraphrase") is in the mid-range, and a complete re-working in new terms and concepts ("imitation") is at the other extreme (Brower 2). The perceptive reader will recognize that the medieval author's attitude to the text and its *auctor* determines the form and style of the new version, and that deviations from either a word-for-word or even a sense-for-sense version does not signal a lack of skill on the part of the author. Dembowski explains: "We should, therefore, simply assume that the numerous divergences between the models and the translations resulted not so much from their incapacity as translators, but rather from their unwillingness to follow the text exactly, or, better still, from their desire to recast their models in order to adapt them to their own needs" ("Two Old" 191).

As an adaptation deviates from a literal rendering, the ideological tension inherent in the conflict between fidelity to the original and individuality of opinion becomes evident. This tension is frequently expressed in brief interpolated comments or in extended glosses. Glossed versions are in mid-range between paraphrase and *imitatio* particularly when their authors contradict or correct the original. However, some authors do not differ with the original but merely add explanations that interfere with the "rhetorical focus" of the original. These interventions situate the adaptation somewhere between metaphrase and paraphrase (Lloyd-Jones 362). Heinrich Steinhöwel (1412-1478) produced a German version of *De claris mulieribus* in which he intervened personally with autobiographical annotations or interpretations, and even with apologies when the text seemed to be excessively erotic to him.<sup>1</sup>

At the furthest extreme we find Quintilian imitations where the text is totally reworked or transformed in conformity with classical classroom

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1 In his dedication to Eleanor of Austria, Steinhöwel wrote: "Ob ich och, ettwann grobere wortt schrybe, wann dynen genaden rainikait zu gehoret zereden oder zehoren, beger ich in dem besten ze vernemen, Wann die selben wort, on endrung der rechten mainung, nit mochten mit umbreden gesezset werden" (17). About Flora, he wrote: "Wie och das beschach, ist uns cristen nit stiftlich ze schryben, darumb wil ichs usz lassen" (215).

exercises. A *cuaderna vía* poetization of Pope Innocent's *De miseria condicionis humanae* is a perfect realization of this classical technique. The text is doubly transferred from prose to verse, and from Latin to Castilian and at the same time it is also simplified and made attractive for a readership unable to read Latin. The *cuaderna vía* author of *De miseria* wrote: 'compuso esas razones en buen latín esmerado, / no lo entiende tod omne si non el que es letrado' (3bc). While his audience needed help in order to experience a text whose ornate style excluded all but the most well-educated readers, the poetization reflects his intention to identify himself as a rhetorically trained person (Connolly 4-25).<sup>2</sup>

Unlike the intended readers of *De miseria*, the courtly readers of *De las ilustres mujeres* (some of whom must have been capable of reading Latin) might have enjoyed reading the text in a Castilian version as elegant as the original. However, the author did not simply reproduce the original's elegance; he contributed substantial personal interventions in the form of moral pronouncements, erudite comments and corrections that cause his adaptation to hover above the midrange of paraphrase oscillating between *imitatio* and paraphrase.<sup>3</sup>

Having tentatively placed *De ilustres mujeres* in its mid-range position, we are ready to speculate about the character and intellectual make-up of the author. Unfortunately unlike the Spanish translation of Boccaccio's *De Casibus*, a work that had a surfeit of translators' names, our author's anonymity hampers our efforts to know him.<sup>4</sup>

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2 Two steps in the learning process were transliteration e.g. Latin to Greek and then adaptation of prose to verse (Quintillian xxx-xxxii). Another example of the double process is John Lydgate's poetization of Boccaccio's *Fall of Princes*. He wrote: 'They may of newe finde & fantasye: / Out of old chaffe trye out full fayre come, / Make it more freshe & lusty to the eye, / Their subtile witte their labour apply, / With their colours agreeable of hue, / To make olde things for to seme newe.'" (cited by Amos 7).

3 Because Boccaccio had added chapters to later redactions, it is not clear whether the author's omissions are his or are Boccaccio's. He does not relate the tales of Cammiola, Cornificia, Johanna, Qamiola as an extra Chapter 100, Brumichilde (daughter of Athanagild, king of the Visigoths) as Chapter 101, and the above-mentioned Johanna as Chapter 103. Neither Tullia nor Brunhilda appear in the three existing codices: Vatican Library Vu (Vat. lat. urb. 45), Laurenziana Library in Florence (L - Firenze Biblioteca Laurenziana Cod. Pluteo LII 29) and L1 - Firenze Biblioteca Laurenziana Cod. Pluteo XC sup., 981 [Gadd, 55]) as listed by Zaccaria (1963).

4 Alfonso de Zamora who undertook to complete the translation made by Pero López de Ayala in a Castilian version of *La caída de principes* was said to have asked "Alfons Garcia, deán en las iglesias

First, we wonder if he was an independent scholar or a local cleric selected by a printer to prepare an edition.<sup>5</sup> Surely, it would be wrong to characterize him as a member of a religious community simply because he cites Jerome, Augustine, and Origen since any cultivated scholar of the period might have done so. Still, the vehemence with which sexual misbehavior is treated in a number of glosses might be evidence of a religious vocation or a concern with celibacy.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore he faults Boccaccio fiercely for seeming to criticize conventual life (Rhea 51v), and is very outspoken in his condemnation of priestly abuses: "O sacerdocio aleuoso / & quan presto passas del mucho folgar al crimen del adulterio / no te abasta que viues sobre la sangre / y limosnas delos casados / sin que rompas & penetres los secretos: & tan defendidos encerramientos delas ociosas / & viles mugeres: & finchas las casas reales de zizañas / cruexas & homicidios mortales"(41r). Does his remark that a Christian person's blasphemy is far more serious than a pagan's challenge of a deity mark him as a cleric (Niobe 22r)? How much does his attitude toward Boccaccio's treatment of lingering vestiges of paganism reveal? He takes the *auctor* to task because he had not expressed surprise that the worship of Juno should have persisted, and that it should have taken Christianity three hundred years to prevail: "ho se marauille pues el bocacio / si por luengo tiempo despues de parecido xp<ist>o / la pagana dea Juno fue por los romanos enel capitolio adorada: que assi cumplia para mayor gloria & enalçamiento de christo" (10r). In his role as a spokesperson of Christianity, he denounces past religions telling the reader that the Romans had worshiped Adonis, Baal and even moles, bats and other vile creatures (8v); the Egyptians had venerated dogs, monkeys, rats and other filthy, even the corrupt airs that

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de Santiago y Segovia" (Alonso de Cartagena) to supply the missing parts. Eric Naylor writes that the "prólogo y arenga" in which he is named was probably taken from some other edition (Naylor, "Pero López" 212). Naylor believes that the work was López de Ayala's: "No veo ninguna diferencia entre la primera y última parte de la traducción que indique la presencia de otro traductor" (Naylor, "Sobre"). Another fifteenth-century translator, of *De claris mulieribus*, the humanist Heinrich Steinhöwel, not only identifies himself, he inserts his name in a gloss: "Als mir Hainrico Stainhowell doctori, der dises büchlin von den erluchten frowen nit von zu wort, sunder von sin zu sin getütset hat, beschenhen ist" (3.38).

- 5 At first, the printers were almost all German who "had to call on local talent to help choose and prepare manuscripts and to correct proof, to supply introductions, annotations and commentaries" (Wadsworth 16).
- 6 See Venus (8r), Semiramis (8r), Minerva (12v), Medea (23v), Clitemnestra (41r), Lucretia (54v), Leena (56v), Virginia (65r), wife of Orgiaguntes (77v)

a human body exudes (15r-v). In fact, in the face of ancient depravity, he marvels that Jesus should have come and cleansed this world at all (14r). Viewed as a unified literary sub-corpus, the glossed material reveals the glossator as a cleric who had created a pious underlay that expands the moralizing purpose of the whole text.

The second part of the query about his identity is readily answerable in the light of his tribute to the printer Pablo Hurus of Zaragoza. Responding to Boccaccio's enthusiastic praise of Greek and Italian contribution to learning and to the invention of letters, he lauds the Germans for having introduced printing to Europe thereby making possible the widespread transmission of literature: "y el mismo bocacio / si la emprenta no fuera / dormiera quiça en su ytalia. & agora por medio del magnifico miçer Paulo hurus / se despierta su nombre enla españa: & falla manera de andar por mas bocas que nunca andouiera" (33r).<sup>7</sup>

There is no question that *De claris mulieribus* did circulate widely in Spain. Don Alvaro de Luna (1390-1453) cites it in *De las claras e virtuosas mujeres* (1446): "segun ... iohan vocaçio, varon muy polido en la manera de fablar... en el su notable libro, llamado de las nobles e claras mugeres, el qual fue por el enbiado a la muy novle condesa, llamada de alta villa"(33.147). Mosén Diego de Valera (1412-1488) in his *Defensa de virtuosas mujeres* refers to Boccaccio's work by its Latin title: "Juan Vocaçio escriuió vn libro yntitulado *De claris mulieribus* (165 n. 57); and the Marqués de Santillana (1398-1458) in the *Glosa de los proverbios morales* writes of "Johan Vocaçio, poeta moderno, en el 'Libro de las Dueñas"(224). However, in a later gloss the Marqués gives it a Latin title "De preclaris mulieribus" (245).<sup>8</sup>

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7 While the Spanish author turns the passage in the original into an opportunity to praise German printers and Hurus in particular, Steinhöwel responds to it by omitting Boccaccio's deprecation of German rapacity, Gallic fury, English wiliness, and Spanish ferocity. (Steinhöwel 99; *De illustres mujeres* 32v).

8 Schiff lists a copy of the 1494 Zaragoza edition printed by Paulus Hurus (346-7). The "Inventario de los libros propios de la reina doña Isabel, que estaban en el Alcázar de Segovia a cargo de Rodrigo de Tordesillas, vecino y regidor de dicha ciudad, en el año de 1503" lists four volumes: 148. *Caída de principes*, 149. *Novelas de Juan Bocacio*, 150. *Frometa* (en romance italiano) and one that might be *De illustres mujeres*: "147. Otro libro de pliego entero de mano e en romance en papel que se dice JUAN BOCACIO, con unas tablas de cuero colorado e dos cerraduras de latón en cada tabla con cinco bollones de latón" (Ballesteros 217). See also Joaquín Arce (19). Hain lists four Latin editions of *De claris mulieribus*: Reutlingen: Johanem Czceiner, 1473 (No. 3329), Louvain: Egidio van der Heerstraten, 1484, 1487, 1488 (Nos. 3330, 3331, 3332). He lists four German translations: Rutlingen: Johanne Zainer, 1473 (Nos. 3333, 3334), Augsburg: Anthoni Gorgen, 1479 (No. 3335), Strassburg:

Thus we conclude that the Spanish author was undoubtedly a cleric invited by the printer Pablo Hurus to prepare an adaptation of an already popular work.

With these bits of information in hand, we look next at his stance with regard to the text and its *auctor*. Is the author a faithful servant of a superior writer (the *auctor*), or does he see himself as a scholarly equal? The answer lies in the scope and size of his contribution (twelve per cent of the text). He writes as a peer of the *auctor*, adding substantial commentaries and even corrections in brief interventions and in glosses. An insight into the adaptive act defines "borrowers" as authors who romance texts freely without acknowledging the source, and labels "service translators" as those who name the source even though they may recast it. Dembowski explains: "I suspect that ...the real 'service translations' could take place, paradoxically, only when the translator no longer felt inferior to his Latin *auctor*.... Conversely, the unavowed paraphrasing of the Latin 'greats' by the 'borrower-translator' must have been based ... on an unacknowledged feeling of inferiority" (261). Clearly the glosses show that the Spanish author did not see himself as Boccaccio's inferior.

Dembowski proposes the study of this peripheral material: "A systematic study of glosses is thus as pressing a *desideratum* as the study of linguistic and philological aspects of translations ..." (Dembowski, "Two Old" 268). Having used the glosses to identify the author's clerical orientation, we can go on to respond to this call for action by studying them from four other perspectives: (1) the process by which the author interposes himself between the *auctor* and the new readership; (2) his declaration of intellectual equality with Boccaccio; (3) his open disagreement with portions of the original text, and finally (4) an expression of his personal response (opinions).<sup>9</sup>

First, the glossator establishes his personal cultural literacy that he shares with his readership by adding bits of familiar oral traditional wisdom. He becomes an intermediary between the text and the reader; his

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Johannen Pruss, 1488 (No. 3336), and one French translation: Paris: Anthoine Verard, 1493 (No. 3337).

9 The most heavily glossed chapters deal with: Eve, Semiramis, Juno, Opis, Ceres, Minerva, Venus, Isis, Europa, Libia, Thisbe, Hypermestra, Niobe, Ysiphile, Medea, Aragnes, Orithia, Erithrea, Medusa, Ioles, Deianira, Jocasta, Amalthea, Nicostrata, Prochris, Argia, Manthon, wives of the Minias.

connection with his audience supplants Boccaccio's. Among these items are the already familiar citation of Virgil's Fourth Eclogue that foretold the virgin birth (Amalthea 31r) and the Mantuan poet's warning about sin ("quan bien dize virgilio / quan lezne resuala el que pone los pies en el camino de infierno" (Thisbe 19v). Both assuredly were part of a general sermonic stock of classical allusions. Similarly, he cites truisms attributed to Aristotle that had moved into the popular tradition as folk wisdom.<sup>10</sup>

From Cicero he uses a sentential commonplace in praise of letters: "las letras donde quier vos acompañan, en la prosperidad vos ponen tiento, medida y razon; en la adversidad vos dan esfuerço, paciencia y consuelo; en la posada vos recrean, y dan folgança & fauor" (Cassandra 40v). A proverb attributed to St. Augustine might even have had a place in ordinary discourse: "Mas vale la tristeza del cuerdo que la alegria del loco" (Cassandra 40v).

In his pursuit of public good will, even without citing an authority he passes on *topoi* or "received commonplaces" whose passage through the cultural pipeline was a vital part of *translatio studii* (Kelly 287). For instance, he observes that death comes to all, to popes, to emperors, and to kings (Olimpias 66v). This kind of random insertion of shared wisdom functions as a rhetorical device (*captatio benevolentiae*) that reinforces a bond between author and reader.

Second, the author defines his intellectual equality with the *auctor* by adding information to embellish the original. Julio Plaza writes that this practice even asserts a certain superiority: "Any translator nonetheless harbors a secret desire to surpass the original. This desire appears through the complementing of the original,... the translation widens the meanings of the original and / or touches it a tangential point of its significance..." (52-53). The Spanish author indirectly declares his superiority when, in an extended discursus, he argues that Cain, not Ceres, introduced the cultivation of the earth. He says that classical authors (and by inference Boccaccio) erred because they did not know Hebrew and therefore were unfamiliar with Old Testament lore (11v). He

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10 To question one's progenitors is equal to committing the sin of *superbia* (Hypsipile 23r); virtue is its own reward (Lucretia 54v); however much a man knows, his capacity for evil matches his knowledge (Sempronia 82v). Citing both Aristotle and Jerome, he avers that the sex act "aquel auto difforme" deprives one of the use of reason and judgment, and the capacity for philosophy (Minerva 12v).

goes on to describe the ancient language's difficulty: 'que el hebrayco barbaro: confuso & in perfecto lenguaje es: careçe de tiempos: de modos: de algunas partes dela oracion: de casos en los nombres: & ahun de letras que es peor / & delas mas principales / que las vocales son: ca ni tiene la :o:que: es la mas sonante & de mas noble figura que todas las otras: ni tiene la :e: bien que tengan aspiracion que suple por ella" (11v).<sup>11</sup>

If creativity can be measured by a capacity for associating seemingly disparate topics, then the author creates new connections based on the original's account of a suicide. Arachne's decision to die is the springboard for a discussion of the sin of presumption. This argument is bolstered by the Old Testament account of Ahithophel (the giver of poor advice) who killed himself when Absalom took another's counsel "se vido por otro vencido" (2 Samuel 17:23; 24v).<sup>12</sup>

Third, the fifteenth-century Spanish author in his role as the peer of the auctor differs with the text. He relies on authorities to support his disagreement with the auctor's opinion. For instance when Boccaccio wrote of Italy's superiority: "De muchas otras cosas fue dotada ytalía mas que las otras regiones del mundo ..." (Nicostrata 32r) the Spanish author

11 In a show of scholarly equality with the auctor, he relies on early Church sources to add historical facts not in the original. Hercules did not die in battle but rather committed suicide in a fury. He cites Lactantius's *Las diuinas instituciones* saying that his heir Philotetas threw fuel on the fire in which the great hero had immolated himself (Deianira 29v); Jerome's *Annals of the Hebrews* and Augustine's *City of God* (and the sermon that begins *Uos quam conuenio o judei*) tell of the Erythrean sibyl's acrostic prediction of the coming of Christ, and the chronicler Fenestella in his *Annales* told of Octavianus's order that her verses be put on the Capitol (Eriethrea 26r); Valerius Maximus and Pope Gregory are the source for the greatness of Trajan (33r); Euhemerus (*Sacred History*) and Ennius are cited for the tale of how Uranus named Saturn as his successor with the proviso that his children be killed (Opis 9r); Eusebius tells of the law Semiramis passed allowing marriage between parent and offspring (8r); Augustine is the source of a tale of Roman obscene religious practices (Venus 14r); Justinus is the source of the fate of Saturn exiled by Jupiter, and Astyages' deposed by his grandson, Cyrus (Hypermestra 21r). In the original Jason's arrival in Colchis reads: "Ea igitur regnante, seu vi ventorum in pulsus, seu ex proposito deuctus, cum Argonautis in Colcos tendentibus, Iason..." (82). The author expands: "E assi reynando ella: Jason quier por que los vientos le echassen aculla: quier por su mismo proposito / & por su misma voluntad: yendo con los primeros marineros / & inuentores dela primera naue / que yuan a colcos" (Medea 22v). Only once does the author omit an allusion in the original. The auctor refers to the tale of the contention between Minerva and Neptune for the privilege of naming Athens (ed. Branca 48) but the adaptation does not mention this tale. See Fray Martín de Córdoba for the story of the election and the subsequent disenfranchisement of the women of Athens (*Jardín de nobles doncellas* 243-44).

12 In the original Boccaccio says that Arachne's suicide by hanging was interpreted as a transformation into a spider hanging from its web (without mentioning Ovid). Others had said that she was saved by her servants and spent the rest of her life in misery regretting her presumption.

responded using Valerius Maximus to praise Spain because Trajan, who was a superior emperor had been a Spaniard (33r).<sup>13</sup> Dissatisfied with the *auctor's* treatment of Juno's divinity, he uses Valerius as the source of the opinion that the Christian victory over the Roman gods was more remarkable than the triumph of the Roman gods over the Greek gods, because Christ, the victorious, had been a humble man who had even been condemned in a Roman court ( Juno 10r).

So far we have seen how the author used a shared cultural literacy with his audience to establish himself as a peer of the *auctor*, and how he relied on classical sources to display his erudition while disagreeing with the original. Finally we turn to examples of how the author's personal opinions intrude in the text, a technique that links an original text chronologically with its adaptation. Douglas Kelly wrote: "The artful elaboration of true or credible arguments at suitable points in a given source, ... 'translates', transfers the past to the present" (291).

In a sense the author's disagreement with the original connects the classical period, Boccaccio's fourteenth century, and his own fifteenth century. In the ancient legend Sempronia had refused to accede to the will of others in defense of her family's honor. Boccaccio questioned the value of her constancy because womanly constancy is often obstinacy; the author objects, saying that her behavior is particularly praiseworthy because she had overcome a feminine defect. Unlike most women whose tender natures make them accede to the domination of others, she prevailed by defying both the mob and her judges despite her feminine inclination (79v). The reader has experienced the event on three distinct chronological levels.

It is not surprising that many of his opinions coincide with those of a cleric committed to a life of chastity. Taking issue with the Moslems, who say in the *Koran* that God without woman and without corruption could not have engendered a child, he adds that there is nothing finer than a life free of carnality: "apartada delas hezes delas carnales fantasias" (Minerva 12v). Although the *auctor* expressed strong disapproval of the

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13 Highest praise was given to Trajan "por lo que fizo gregorio de sancto cristiano: porque no solo entre gentiles: mas entre christianos lieue sobre todos el prez delos principes de roma: & a juyzio del mismo romano gregorio / mas del mismo padre sancto & principe dela yglesia sancta catholica / que no pudo ni supo hallar entre todos sus romanos / otro digno de sacar del infierno / & de ganar le la eterna gloria: sino al bienaventurado Trajano / nuestro español" (Nicostrata 33r).

ancient Cypriot custom of ritual prostitution, the Spanish author was even more censorious about pre-Christian religious practices. In one instance, he adds a diatribe from Augustine condemning Roman adoration of the phallus: "adorauan en Italia el mismo vergonçoso instrumento dela generacion / y conel puesto enlas manos dela mas honesta matrona / fazian publica y solemne procession / & despues coronado por mano dela misma señora: le ponian en publico pulpito / o cadahalso & ahi le festejauan obra de vn mes" (Venus 14r).

Continuing to examine the author's expressions of opinion, we come to a series of examples of explicit disagreement with the *auctor* expressed in a concessive formula. He accepts the *auctor's* position, *but* qualifies: he accepts Boccaccio's condemnation of Clitemnestra, *but* he blames Egisto even more (41r); he concedes that Cloelia was valiant, *but* wonders if more credit is not due to King Porsenna who pardoned her and lifted the siege of the city (58v); praise is due to Lacedemonia for having produced the Minyan wives, *but* even more credit is due to the judges who pardoned them after they had tricked their husbands' jailers into freeing them (37r). In discussing Polyxena's death at the hands of Neoptolemus, he acknowledges Boccaccio's praise of the power of her beauty and her nobility of spirit *but* wonders whose guilt is greater, that of Paris for having killed Achilles, or Neptolemus for having killed a woman (39r). In these examples the author benefits from a prestigious association with a respected *auctor*, and at the same time asserts his independence.

In a more forceful kind of disagreement, he responds to Boccaccio's rhetorical queries taking an unexpected tack. For example, Boccaccio asks: "¿uego los que estan corrompidos de aquel zelo / & auaricia tan obstinada / que me digan: que ganan cia sienten dello, o que honra, o que gloria, o alabança?" (34r). Instead of answering he reminds the reader that the tale of Prochris's greed is not really about gold's power as much as it is about the evil of jealousy. Her husband, Cephalus deserved more blame for his jealous trap than did Prochris for her greed (34r). Here he has said, in effect, that Boccaccio had not really understood the meaning of the story.

He says directly that Boccaccio erred when he praised Semiramis for having conquered many lands because Opis is even more praiseworthy for having saved her children Jupiter, Neptune and Pluto from the death planned by Titan and Saturn. A woman who saves her children's lives

deserves more credit than a woman who left many women childless because of wars (8v).

On occasion he disputes the facts given in the text. He believes that Europa did not give her name to the continent but rather that she took her name from the region. He supports the contention with the argument that it was a pagan custom to suit the facts to a purpose, usually to glorify someone or something. He bolsters his argument with the case of Saturn who changed his parents' names to Heaven and Earth to aggrandize himself. Storytellers who wanted to magnify Hercules's victory said that Geryones, king of Spain had three heads. Similarly the tyrant Ixion's reputation was salvaged so that his having been tied to a wheel as an eternal punishment was retold as an account of his having invented mounted processions. (Minerva 16v).

A glossator who is able to display superior knowledge is clearly not a servile translator. In the chapter about Lybia, he states that she is more praiseworthy than Europa: "A lybia yo por mas esclarecida y antigua le tengo que no a europa..." Apparently Boccaccio's lack of knowledge caused him to err: "pues de tiempo / de sangre / & virtud le tiene ventaja, empero el bocacio no cuero dela historia / mas del nombre: que parece mas grande que no aquel de libia" (17r). Although Boccaccio gives Greece as Isis's origin, the author knows that St. Augustine had written in *The City of God* that she came from Ethiopia: "mas dela ethiopia al egypto vino, assi lo reza el mismo augustino dela cibdad de dios enel decimo octauo libro capitulo tercero" (15r-15v).

In a burst of anger, he attacks the Romans (and the Italians) on several counts. They had praised their founders who were, after all, the sons of Rhea Ilia, a woman who had broken her vow of chastity and who had been buried alive for her action:

que nasciessen los fundadores de roma de vna sacrilega / & sepultada viua. & fuesse poblada otrosi de tradidores / homicidas / salteadores / & de criminosos. & de ge[n]tes allegadizas. no se pueden fartar los Jtalianos de loar sus desloadas mujeres. & ende mas a jlia que fuera mejor callar la: que poner la tan adelante bocacio. que alomenos callando / no touiera ni la memoria de que se enturbiar / manzilar: & escurecer ni la pendola que borrar. que mas es borrar que scriuir / ensuziar el papel con los

nombres d<e>las deshonestas prophanadas / &  
viles mujeres (51v).<sup>14</sup>

Furthermore, the Romans had tyrannized the known world under the guise of creating an empire, and treacherous Eneas had brought his bad seed to Italy “vino a plantar en jItalia vna simiente aleuosa / tirana / & cruel. & fuesse poblada otrosi de tradidores / homicidas / salteadores / & de criminosos & de ge[n]tes allegadizas” (51v). Although Boccaccio had attacked the practice of placing young women in convents against their will, the author misreads the attack as a general condemnation of the institution: “dize mal de las monjas: & pone les vn espejo delante para que mirando se enel lo fagan mucho peor: que no dize que lo fazen” (51v).

To sum up, after studying the glosses to the *De ilustres mujeres* I find evidence of the author’s desire to present himself as the *auctor’s* peer -intellectually capable of adding informative material to the original, assured enough to disagree with the *auctor*, and secure in his moral convictions that he can impose his standards on the text. He comes to the task not as a humble clerk in the presence of greatness, but rather as a scholar capable of adding new insights, imparting new information, and even contradicting the *auctor* whose greatness does not overwhelm him. Finally it has been possible to identify an Italian humanist tradition in Boccaccio’s original and a subsequent fifteenth-century Spanish version colored strongly by its author’s pious intentions.

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14 See also the author’s disapproval of honor paid to Venus, the inventor of brothels (14r) and the prostitutes Leena (56v) and Flora (68r).

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