

*De facti e detti memorabili della citta di Roma ad Tiberio Cesare* [translation of VALERIUS MAXIMUS, *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium urbis Romae historia* (History of the memorable deeds and sayings of the city of Rome)], possibly attributable to GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO?

In Italian, illuminated manuscript on parchment  
Northern Italy, c. 1400-1450

i (paper) + 105 + i (paper) folios on parchment (very fine and smooth), modern foliation in pencil, upper outer rectos, 1-105, lacking five leaves, else complete (collation i<sup>10</sup> [-2, with loss of text in Book 1] ii-viii<sup>10</sup> ix<sup>10</sup> [-1, with loss of text in Book 7] x<sup>10</sup> [-8 to 10, with loss of text at the end of Book 9]), horizontal catchwords, lower center, ruled in hard point with full-length vertical and horizontal bounding lines, prickings visible in outer margins (justification 193-197 x 160-162 mm.), written below top line in dark brown ink in a fine Gothico-Antiqua script in two columns of forty lines, guide letters for initials, extensive gloss added between lines and in the margins of Books 1 to 6 in smaller glossing script on up to eighty-nine lines, some capitals touched in yellow, red rubrics, one-line red paraphs, two- to three-line spaces left for initials within each chapter, four- to sixteen-line spaces left for initials at the beginnings of chapters, corrections by scribe, some contemporary annotation, including many pointing hands in the second half of the book, some discoloration of parchment on ff. 74v-75 and 105v with no loss of legibility, an occasional leaf with a small tear at the edge (eg. f. 4), some worming in the first and final few leaves, otherwise in excellent condition with wide and clean margins. Bound in nineteenth-century parchment over pasteboards, spine with five raised bands, some spots and small stains. Dimensions 295-298 x 221-229 mm.

Did the great humanist Giovanni Boccaccio have a hand in this Italian translation of an important Roman work? This question drives a lively scholarly debate, and this unstudied manuscript represents an important opportunity to revisit the question. Out of the thirty-two manuscripts preserving this text, it is the only copy to appear on the market in at least a century. A striking, high-end humanist manuscript, it is written in a handsome script with neat and ample glosses and wide, clean margins.

## PROVENANCE

1. Evidence of script points to this book's origin in Italy, most likely Northern Italy, in the first half of the fifteenth century, c. 1400-1450. According to Albert Derolez, "in Northern Italy, where Gothic traditions were particularly strong and Humanistic models few, ... Gothico-Antiqua is a common phenomenon" (2006, p. 179).
2. This book remained in Italian hands in the eighteenth-century, judging from the identifying inscription at the top of f. 1: "Storia Romana di Valerio Massimo, e Tiberio Cesare ed altri."
3. Nineteenth- or early twentieth-century pencil marks, "NS/H" and "Q.3538" inside front board.
4. Private European collection.

## TEXT

f. 1rv, [Table of Contents] *Rubriche del libro primo di ualerio Maximo*, incipit, "Della religione, Capitulo primo ... De miracoli, Capitulo 6<sup>o</sup>";

Following its list of the chapters in Books 1-9, the table of contents lists the chapters of Book 1 again. All subsequent books are preceded by their respective chapter lists, so this was almost certainly a deliberate choice.

ff. 1v-105v, *Comincia Il primo libro di ualerio Maximo de fatti e detti memorabili della citta di roma Ad Tiberio Cesare*, incipit, "[L]i facti e li dicti li quali sono digni de memoria della citta di roma e delle strane gente ... arrotino li ferri temperino li stocchi pil//"

*De fatti e detti memorabili della citta di Roma ad Tiberio Cesare* is an Italian translation of Valerius Maximus's Latin *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium urbis Romae historia* (History of the memorable deeds and sayings of the city of Rome). This translation was produced in the first half of the fourteenth century, as early as 1326 (or shortly before), or, perhaps, in the late 1330s or early 1340s. Some scholars have attributed it to Giovanni Boccaccio, although recent scholarship has questioned this attribution because of evidence that points to the earlier date of composition (see below). Extensive glosses accompany six of the nine books in this work.

*De fatti e detti* is known in only thirty-two complete, or nearly complete, witnesses, including this one; four additional manuscripts preserve fragments of the text (see Casella, 1982 for this list, with the provision that the Yale University copy listed there, Marston 43, in fact only contains extracts from this text rather than the text itself and has therefore not been included in our list). The text survives in three principle versions, designated A, B, and C (Zampieri, 1975-76 and 1977-78). The most popular version, B, appears in the majority of the manuscript witnesses, as well as in four sixteenth-century print editions. This version was also edited in the nineteenth century, based on the consultation of fourteen manuscripts (Visiani, 1867). The present manuscript contains a copy of the B version, and collation with Visiani (1867) reveals some textual variation, but no major differences of structure or content. It is important to note, however, that the substantial glosses present in this manuscript and others do not appear in Visiani and are unedited. Nearly all of the manuscripts preserving *De fatti e detti* are housed in Italian repositories; only five of the other thirty-five witnesses are to be found outside of Italy and, of these, only one copy (a fragment) is held in North America. The present manuscript is the only copy of *De fatti e detti* to go on the market in this century.

If not for medieval interventions, *Deeds and Sayings* would not have survived in any language. Valerius Maximus (c. 20 BCE – c. CE 50) was a Roman writer known for this text, which collects historical anecdotes relating how the earliest Romans had lived. It presents many of these accounts as instructive or edifying examples of virtues cultivated under the Roman Republic. Early on, the work furnished a popular source for rhetoricians seeking to embellish their speeches with exemplary narratives. Only a single copy of the Latin text survived into the Middle Ages, but renewed interest in the Carolingian period assured its survival. A Benedictine monk of Fleury, Rodolfus Tortarius (c. 1063-c. 1122), produced a versified version of the text, *De memorabilis*, and by the thirteenth century complete copies of *Factorum et dictorum* could be found in Italian libraries.

The Italian translation of *Factorum et dictorum* emerged during another period of humanist renewal, the fourteenth-century Italian Renaissance, and was perhaps the work of one of the period's greatest writers. Maria Teresa Casella (1982) has proposed that this translation was produced by the great humanist Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375), noting that textual similarities between *De fatti e detti* and Boccaccio's known works point to his involvement in – and, indeed, his authorship of – the translation. If this were the case, *De fatti e detti* would have been one of his very first works, written during his time in Naples as a young man (c. 1327-1340).

Much of the fascination of this translation centers on the fascinating glosses that accompany the text here and elsewhere. Early versions of these glosses were designed to make this translation more accessible to its intended readers, who lacked training or practice in reading Latin; later glosses introduced by humanists instead aimed to restore the work's Latinity and to emphasize its alterity.

The evidence of the glosses has also played a role in discussions of the possible author of this translation. While in Naples, Boccaccio studied under Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro (c. 1300-1342), a friend of Petrarch and the author of what would become the standard commentary on *Factorum et dictorum*. This commentary was a major source for the glosses, a point which fits in well with the possibility of Boccaccio's authorship of the translation.

More recently, however, other scholars, notably Alison Cornish (2013), have disputed Casella's case for Boccaccio as author of *De fatti e detti*, and their argument, ironically, is also drawn from the glosses – in particular, the wording of a gloss in an early manuscript witness. This gloss's language (which refers to events taking place in 1326 as "today") suggests that the manuscript was copied in 1326, when Boccaccio was thirteen years old, and that the translation must therefore be dated to 1326 or earlier. This evidence for the date of the translation, though it certainly calls the possibility of Boccaccio's authorship into question, is based on a single gloss. The matter warrants further investigation and corroboration, as dates from glosses typically do (scribes often copied earlier material, even with topical references, verbatim), and scholarly inquiry into Boccaccio's role in this work continues. This as yet unstudied copy of *De fatti et detti* will play a crucial role in furthering this conversation and expanding our knowledge of an early vernacular translation of this text – a translation which is undeniably important, whether it was written by Boccaccio or, even more intriguingly, perhaps, by an unknown author from the same circle.

## LITERATURE

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## ONLINE RESOURCES

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