THE relationship between Dante's poem and the Florentine chronicles is only one aspect of the complex problem concerning the historical sources of the Divine Comedy: but it is an essential aspect of it. If we could solve the problem of this relationship we should be able to assess more correctly Dante's originality in the framework of contemporary political thought; we should also have a better understanding of his attitude towards the historiographic tradition, and we should be able to define more clearly his own influence on the contemporary chroniclers.

Many a reader of Dante will find it surprising that I should still refer to Dante and the Florentine chroniclers in problematical terms. The fact is that so far the problem itself has been discussed only exceptionally by students of Dante, and it is not even mentioned in most of the current commentaries to the poem. It is true that a great Italian scholar of the past generation suggested a solution of the problem which has since been hardly reflected on by students of Dante. We shall see, however, that should the assumptions on which the theory put forward by Ferdinando Neri in 1912 prove unconvincing, the theory itself would collapse. It is also true that contemporary Italian historians have begun to reappraise nineteenth-century German criticism of the Florentine chronicles, and should the results of such reappraisal prove acceptable, we should no longer be

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1 A lecture delivered in the John Rylands Library on Wednesday the 10th of March 1965.
justified in talking of a real problem in connection with the present topic. But are they acceptable?

It is my intention to deal in this paper with some essential aspects of the question in order to show how far away we still are from a satisfactory solution. It may well be that as a result of my analysis we shall be even further away from it: but I hope that at least we shall no longer be on a wrong path.

The manysided question is: Wherever the historiographic tradition does not offer us a precedent for Dante's historical or legendary references, should we suppose that he drew his information from a written source now lost or unknown to us? To what extent can such references be considered as belonging to an oral tradition extant in Dante's time? Again: wherever there is a specific analogy of treatment between Dante's *Comedy* and the early books of Giovanni Villani's *Chronicle*, which of the following three hypotheses may we assume to be valid: (a) that Villani depends on Dante; (b) that Dante might depend on at least the first book of Villani; (c) that both may depend on a common source? If the last is the case, could the common source of Dante and Villani be identified with the so-called *Storia fiorentina* of Malispini, allegedly written during the thirteenth century?

I think that the best way to deal with the various aspects of the question is to concentrate once again on the relationship between the *Comedy* and the *Chronicle*.

When in 1912 Ferdinando Neri published his article on "Dante e il primo Villani," Italian historians and students of Dante had already adopted the German theory developed by A. Scheffer-Boichorst¹ which stated that Malispini's *Storia fiorentina* was not a thirteenth-century source of Villani, but the work of a

fourteenth-century plagiarist. A plagiarist who, in order to exalt certain Florentine families, reproduced a substantial portion of Villani's *Chronicle*, though with alterations, additions and omissions. The removal of Malispini's *Storia* from the thirteenth-century historiographic scene has created the problem with which I am dealing. Once the various analogies between Dante's *Comedy* and Villani's *Chronicle* could no longer be referred to that supposed thirteenth-century source, how were we to account for their presence in two of the most representative works of fourteenth-century Florentine civilization?

As far as the early history of Florence is concerned it can be safely assumed that both Dante and Villani were familiar with what the latter described as "the most ancient and diverse books, and chroniclers, and authors": of these, however, only a few examples have survived, such as the *Chronica de origine civitatis*, which is a compilation of popular legends, mythological traditions, and historical events derived from classical and medieval authors, written before 1231 and perhaps as early as the end of the twelfth century: a work which was certainly used by the chronicler and known to the poet in one or another of its various Latin versions and Italian translations. Besides this popular story of the origins of Florence, we should remember the *Gesta Florentinorum* of Sanzanome, who made use of the *Chronica de origine* and who continued the narration to the year 1231; Sanzanome too was extensively utilized, and even partly translated almost *verbatim*, by Villani. Full of gaps are the surviving historical records, such as the so-called *Annales Florentini*, I

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1 "più antichi e diversi libri, e croniche e autori" (Cronica, 1, i). Cf. Villani's *Chronicle, being Selections from the first Nine Books of the Croniche Fiorentine of Giovanni Villani*, translated by Rose E. Selfe and edited by Philip H. Wicksteed, London, 1906, p. 2. Unless otherwise stated my quotations in English of G. Villani's *Chronicle* are from these *Selections*; quotations of the Italian text are taken from *Croniche storiche di Giovanni, Matteo e Filippo Villani* (Milan, 1848) reproducing the text of the 1823 Florentine edition, which is to be considered as the *vulgata*.

2 That Villani utilized Sanzanome can be shown beyond doubt by a comparison between the *Gesta* and Villani's Book I, 38 ("Come di primo fu edificata la città di Firenze"), where the Latin text is in parts translated so literally that it is possible to amend the *vulgata* by simply referring to it: cf. Sanzanome's sentence "venerunt ad civitatem quam Cesar edificabat, et invidentes Cesari partiti sunt",
(from 1110 to 1173) and *Annales Florentini*, II (from 1107 to 1247), or a list of consuls and podestà from 1196 to 1267, or the anonymous *Gesta Florentinorum*, from 1080 to 1308, the original version of which has not reached us. All these works—which were collected and published last century by O. Hartwig—are but an example of what Villani might have meant by "ancient books and chroniclers" with reference to the early history of Florence. Obviously it would not be possible to identify any of them, or even all of them taken together, with the common source of Dante and Villani. But then, is it really necessary to pre-suppose the existence of a common source? C. Cipolla and V. Rossi thought that it was, in an article published in 1886.² Having accepted and confirmed Scheffer-Boichorst's negative conclusions on the authenticity of Malaspina's *Storia*, these two scholars maintained (a) that the arguments put forward by Scheffer-Boichorst, O. Hartwig and his school prove the existence of an earlier chronicle from which Villani's narration derives; (b) that a comparison between Dante and the Florentine chroniclers shows that Dante must have utilized a vernacular chronicle similar to, but not to be identified with, Villani's *Chronicle*; (c) that Villani himself followed very closely this unknown source to which, however, he often added further details and his own comments. Cipolla and Rossi's theory is the most important contribution to the discussion of our problem prior to the publication of Neri's article in 1912. It should be noted, however, that these two authors themselves seemed to be aware of the limited applicability of their own thesis, which was in fact based on the results of the analysis of only two chapters of Villani's *Chronicle*: namely, chapter 41 of Book VII (concerning the death of king Enzo, son of the Emperor Frederick II) and etc. and Villani's *vulgata* "vennero da Roma alla citta de che Cesare edificava, e inviandosi [sic for "invidiandosi"] con Cesare si divisono," etc. (both the 1570 and 1587 Giunti editions have *invidiandosi*). It is therefore all the more surprising that A. Del Monte (op. cit.) should have maintained that Villani did not utilize Sanzanome.


² C. Cipolla and V. Rossi, "Intorno a due capi della Cronica malaspiniana" in *Gior. stor. della letteratura italiana*, viii (1886), 231-41.
chapter 9 of the same book (concerning the death of Manfred)—which they compared with the corresponding chapters in Malipini's Storia and with Purgatorio, III. And the conclusion of their article admits that the validity of their findings was limited to the passages taken into consideration. In spite of this admission, Cipolla and Rossi are still regarded as the main supporters of the theory of a source common to Dante and Villani; and yet their admission contained a most valuable methodological implication: namely, that in trying to establish the chronological succession of contemporary historical accounts given by various medieval authors, each episode should be considered on its merits, because of the possibility of successive versions, and later additions and interpolations. But in the course of their analysis of the specific passages from Villani's Chronicle, Cipolla and Rossi did not always closely observe this methodological suggestion implicit in their own conclusions. I would suggest, for instance, that if they were right in noting a break ("spezzatura") between the first and second part of chapter 41, Book VII—in which the chronicler tells how king Enzo died in March 1271 (Florentine style), thus bringing to an end the progeny of the Emperor Frederick\(^1\); but who then adds that according to a rumour, there was a son of Manfred's who outlived him, and who ended his days as a prisoner, old and blind, in the Castel dell'Uovo at Naples\(^2\)—they are methodologically wrong when on the basis of the date of the death of Manfred's son Henry (31 October 1318) they conclude that the whole of Book VII was composed after that date. Not that I would be inclined to suggest an earlier date for the composition of this book, but it seems to me that the specific \textit{terminus a quo} represented by the date of Henry's death should apply only to the

\(^1\) Cf. G. Villani, Cronica, vii. 41 : "L'anno appresso 1271, del mese di Marzo, il re Enzo, figliuolo che fu di Federigo imperadore, morì nella regione de' Bolognesi, nella quale era stato lungo tempo, e fu soppellito da' Bolognesi onorevolmente alla chiesa di san Domenico in Bologna, e in lui finì la progenia dello imperadore Federigo."

\(^2\) Ibid. : "Ben si dice, ch'ancora n'era uno figliuolo che fu del re Manfredi, il quale stette lungamente nella regione del re Carlo nel castello dell'Uovo a Napoli, e in quello per vecchiezza e disagio acciecatò della vista miseramente finì su'a vita."
alleged addition to chapter 41 and not to the whole chapter, even less so to the whole book. How can we be sure that such additions—if this particular one is an addition—were made by Villani at the same time of the compilation of the original text rather than after an interval of months or even years? We might even wonder whether such additions were not made either by copyists, or by their patrons, of a later generation. It is a fact that the earliest manuscripts of the *Chronicle* known to us belong to the last quarter of the fourteenth century. For these reasons our two authors' contention does not hold good: I mean their contention that Dante's non-mention of Manfred's son in Purgatorio, III proves that the *Comedy* is independent of Villani, and goes back to an earlier chronicle making no reference to Manfred's male progeny. Dante's independence of Villani hardly needs to be maintained on the basis of internal evidence with reference to a comparatively late section of the *Chronicle* such as Book VII, which the authors think was composed about the year 1320. In this respect it seems to me that Cipolla and Rossi should have attempted to prove their theory with reference to one of the first books of Villani's *Chronicle*.

The theory of a common source was opposed by Ferdinando Neri in his fundamental article on "Dante e il primo Villani". But here again the most convincing arguments put forward by Neri to prove his own thesis—namely that Villani depends on Dante—are mainly derived from the analysis of chapters of the *Chronicle* included in later sections of the work: it is only after having reached his conclusions on that basis that Neri extends their application to the earlier books. I consider this a methodological error. It should be clear that it is not possible to reach any definite conclusion on the question of the relationship between the *Comedy* and the *Chronicle* without establishing beforehand the chronology of these two works. What Neri did in this respect was to note that "historians" are inclined to believe that Villani's *Chronicle*, in the version which has reached us ("nella sua composizione attuale"), was not written before 1320.1

We have already seen that no manuscript written before the last quarter of the century has reached us, and it would be unthinkable that a popular work of this kind should not have gone through a process of being brought up-to-date, as a result of both the author’s own variations and the copyist’s interventions at least after Villani’s death in 1348. But Neri himself seemed to forget his own qualified acceptance (“nella sua composizione attuale”) of the dating by historians when apparently excluding the assumption that Dante might have known at least part of Villani’s *Chronicle* even if not in quite the same form as it has come down to us.¹ On the other hand, it is again Neri’s contention, on the basis of provisional results of the preparation of a critical edition,² that whatever changes Villani’s *Chronicle* might have undergone since its original composition, such changes would in no case amount to a different version of the work.³ It is, therefore, quite obvious that if the composition of Villani’s *Chronicle* as we know it was not started before 1320, not only is it absurd to suppose that Dante might have utilized it in the course

¹ Cf. Neri, op. cit. p. 2, n. 3.


³ Cf. Neri, op. cit. p. 5.
of the composition of his poem, but it would be equally absurd to suppose that Villani did not utilize Dante's *Comedy*, and all the arguments used by Neri to prove that Villani is dependent on Dante would appear unnecessary. But what do we know for certain about the chronology of both the *Chronicle* and the *Comedy*? I am afraid that, apart from the respective final dates (1321 for the *Comedy* and 1348 for the *Chronicle*), we know very little indeed.

To start with, even if we can accept the historians' theory that in its actual form the *Chronicle* does not indicate a date of composition earlier than 1320, this would prove nothing with reference to the original version which is still unknown to us. But, to remain within the limits of our present knowledge, is the historians' theory absolutely right? The most relevant observation which has led to that theory was based on Book IV, chapter 4 ("Of the progeny of the Kings of France, which descended from Hugh Capet"), where the death of Philip the Fair (1314) is recorded together with the succession to the throne of France of his three sons, the last of whom, Charles IV, was made king in 1322: the contention being that if in such a comparatively early section of the *Chronicle* as Book IV Villani could mention an event of 1322, not only that particular chapter must have been composed after that date, but it is unlikely that the work could have been started much before then. However, the passage mentioning the reign of Philip's sons—beginning "Questo re Filippo il Bello ebbe tre figliuoli" and ending "e morto il padre negli anni di Cristo 1315, furono tutti e tre re di Francia l'uno appresso l'altro in picciolo tempo"—sounds to me very like a corollary to the mention of the reign of Philip the Fair which immediately precedes,¹ and it is most likely that a corollary of this

¹ Cf. G. Villani, *Cronica*, iv. 4: "... Il detto santo re Luis... fu al passaggio di Tunisi, e là morì santamente gli anni di Cristo 1270. Dopo il re santo Luis regnò Filippo suo figliuolo quattro dici anni, e questi fu quelli che fece il passaggio in Araona, e là morì. Questo re Filippo ebbe della figliuola del re d'Araona due figliuoli; il primo fu Filippo il Bello, il quale fu il più bello cristiano che si trovasse al suo tempo: questi regnò re in Francia ventotto anni a' nostri tempi; l'altro fu Carlo di Valois, detto Carlo Senzaterra, che assai mutazioni fece alla nostra città di Firenze, come innanzi al suo tempo farà menzione. Questo re Filippo il Bello ebbe tre figliuoli: il primo fu Luis re di Navarra per retaggio della..."
kind was inserted in the chapter at a later stage of the composition. The more so since there is a striking chronological inconsistency between the explicit mention of Philip’s death mistakenly given in the corollary as 1315 and what Villani says in the previous passage with reference to the reign of Philip the Fair, namely that he reigned “a nostri tempi” for twenty-eight years, without specification of dates, and this after having said that his father Philip III had reigned for fourteen years (but in fact 15 years) as he succeeded Louis IX when the latter died in 1270: a calculation which would give 1312 (or 1313) and not 1315 as the year of Philip IV’s death. In actual fact, Philip the Fair died in November 1314 after having reigned for twenty-nine years (that is, from the death of his father in October 1285) as Villani himself rightly states in Book IX chapter 66 (while the date of the death of Philip III is rightly specified in Book VII, chapter 105). Referring to the chronology given in Book IV, chapter 4 it seems to me absurd that a Florentine chronicler writing about a contemporary king of France should not have known the exact year of his death. The wording and dates in this passage are given according to the vulgata edition of the Chronicle (based mainly on MS. Riccardiano 1532, the so-called “Testo Davanzati” which was allegedly transcribed in the year 1377 for the author’s son Matteo), and if these could be confirmed as genuine in a future

madre; il secondo Filippo conte di Pettieri; il terzo Carlo conte della Marcia; e morto il padre negli anni di Cristo 1315, furono tutti e tre re di Francia l’uno appresso l’altro in piccolo tempo. Avermo raccontato si per ordine li re di Francia e di Puglia discesi del legnaggio d’Ugo Ciapetta, perché contando le nostre storie di Firenze, e dell’altre provincie e terre d’Italia, si possono meglio intendere. . . .”

1 The first printed edition of Villani’s Cronica was published in the sixteenth century: Books I-X were edited by Iacopo Fasolo (Venice, Bartolomeo Zanetti, 1537); Books XI-XII were edited, as seems likely, by Ludovico Domenichi (Florence, Lorenzo Torrentino, 1554). The second edition, by Remigio Nannini, was printed at Venice in 1559 by Niccolò Bevilacqua for Filippo and Iacopo Giunti. A second Giuntine was edited by Baccio Valori (Florence, 1587). On these early editions, see F. P. Luiso, op. cit. The Muratori edition (in Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, XIII, Milan, 1728) depends on the Giuntine of 1559, but also takes into account a manuscript left by G. B. Recanati to the Marciana Library (Venice) and another manuscript of the Ambrosiana Library (Milan). The Muratori text was reproduced in the edition published in Milan by Giusti Ferrario and Co. in 1802-3. What might be considered as the vulgata edition of the Chronicle (Cronica di G. Villani a miglior lezione ridotta coll’aiuto de’ testi a penna,
critical edition of the work, I would rather take the sentence "questi regnò re in Francia ventotto anni a' nostri tempi" to mean that when the chronicler was writing Philip the Fair had been reigning for twenty-eight years. If such interpretation were acceptable, the implication would be that chapter 4 of Book IV was written a year or at least a few months before Philip's death in November 1314 and the composition of the earlier part of the Chronicle would result chronologically parallel to the composition of the Comedy. But, of course, this would be an extreme hypothesis, being always possible to suppose that a copyist might have misread "xxviii" for "xxviii." In any case, pending the preparation of a critical edition of the work, I shall refrain from drawing any conclusions and merely limit myself to suggesting that the passage which follows, containing the wrong date 1315 for the death of Philip and the mention of the reign of his three sons, the last of whom was made king in 1322, must be regarded as a later interpolation based on a similar passage in Book IX, chapter 66.\(^1\) Another observation might strengthen my theory of the interpolation: Villani himself in chapter 4 of Book IV declares that he gives a preliminary account of the kings of France descended from Florence, Magheri, 1823, 8 vols.) was mainly based on the MS. Riccardiano 1532 (the so-called "Testo Davanzati") containing Books I-X and purporting to have been transcribed in 1377 for Giovanni Villani's son Matteo; for this edition, besides the Riccardianos 1532, the following manuscripts were consulted: Riccardiano 1534, Riccardiano 1533 (containing the whole work), Magliabechiano Palch. I cod. 114 for Books I-X (Magliabechiano Clas. XXV, cod. 122 for Books XI-XII), Marucelliano 368, and a fourteenth-century manuscript (containing Books I-VI and part of Books VII-X) which was lent to the editor by Canon Moreni. According to F. Zambrini, Le opere volgari a stampa dei secoli XIII e XIV, 4th edn. (Bologna, 1884), col. 1048, the editor of the vulgata was Gioacchino Antonelli, and not I. Moutier, as was (and still is) generally believed. While the edition by A. Mauri (Milan, N. Bettoni and Co., 1834) still reproduces the Muratori text from the Milanese edition of 1802-3, both the Florentine edition of 1844 (Sansone Coen) and the Milanese of 1848 (Borroni e Scotti) reproduce the text established in the Florentine edition of 1823; the latter is also reproduced from the 1844 edition, by A. Racheli (Trieste, Lloyd austriaco, 1857) and generally by the editors of selected chapters of the Chronicle (e.g. G. Volpi, 1925, I. Del Lungo, 1926, N. Zingarelli, 1934, R. Palmarocchi, 1935, F. Cusin, 1941).\(^1\) Cf. G. Villani, Cronica, ix. 66: "Questi [i.e. "Filippo re di Francia"] lasciò tre figliuoli, Luis re di Navarra, Filippo conte di Pettieri, e Carlo conte della Marcia: tutti questi figliuoli furono in poco tempo l'uno appresso l'altro re di Francia, succedendo l'uno all'altro per morte."
from Hugh Capet in order to enable the reader to understand more fully the Florentine and Italian events which he intended to narrate in the following books. If mention of the reign of Charles IV really belonged to the original version of the chapter, the chronicler could hardly have refrained from noting either that Charles was reigning at the time of writing or that he had died in 1328, without direct heir, thus bringing the Capet succession to an end. This last being a piece of information of great historical and moral significance from the Florentine angle, but which Neri was not able to discover in Villani’s *Chronicle* until chapter 64 of Book VIII, and then only by implication: implied, that is, with reference to the prophecy of the bishop of Ansiona about the fate of Philip and his sons.\(^1\)

In this connection I think that Neri was wrong in assuming that Villani referred to the extinction of the Capet lineage when declaring in Book IX, 66, that the bishop’s prophecy had come true: in fact, Villani explicitly refers in that chapter to the adultery of Philip’s three daughters-in-law (an ignominy which, as the chronicler himself specifies, took place before the king’s death), while the death of Charles IV and the Valois succession are not even mentioned by him either in connection with the bishop’s prophecy or in regard to any other matter.\(^2\) Therefore not even Neri’s assumption that Book VIII was composed after 1328 can be maintained on the basis of the bishop’s prophecy referred to in chapter 64. Nor is it proved that chapter 38 of Book V was written after 1333 on the basis of the imperfect *era* referring to the presence of the so-called statue of Mars near Ponte Vecchio (the statue was washed away by the flood of 1333): it is, in fact, quite natural to suppose that any Florentine copyist of the last quarter of the fourteenth century might have been automatically inclined to substitute an imperfect for a present in a

\(^1\) Cf. G. Villani, *Cronica*, viii. 64: “Il re di Francia farà di questa novella [i.e. “ della presura del papa ”] grande allegrezza, ma i’ ho per ispirazione divina, che per questo peccato n’è condannato da Dio, e grandi e diversi pericoli e avversità con vergogna di lui e di suo lignaggio gli avveranno assai tosto, e egli e’ figliuoli rimarranno diredati del reame.”

\(^2\) Note that the phrase “succeedendo l’uno all’altro per morte” in the passage of Book IX, 66, quoted above (p. 39, n. 1) strictly speaking refers only to the death of Louis and Philip, and not to that of Charles.
sentence referring to a local monument which had disappeared more than forty years before. Finally, the arbitrariness of suggesting a definite *terminus post quern* on the basis of alleged internal evidence offered by a popular text of which no critical edition as yet exists, could not be shown more clearly than by the extraordinary argument used by Neri when confirming the historians' late dating of the Chronicle. He quotes an important article by E. G. Parodi on "I rifacimenti e le traduzioni italiane dell' Eneide di Virgilio" in which the great philologist had suggested that Villani's account of Aeneas in Book I, chapter 23 of the Chronicle was derived from a vernacular version of the poem attributed to Andrea Lancia. Neri jumped to the conclusion that, since, according to Parodi, the date 1316 referring to Lancia's version of the *Aeneid* in a fifteenth-century manuscript might be accepted, this was a further proof that the composition of Villani's Chronicle was started at a later date. He seems, however, to have overlooked the fact that Parodi had accepted as probable that dating suggested by what he considered to be a manuscript of the fifteenth century for no better reason than because it was generally believed that the composition of Villani's Chronicle was started in c. 1320. An extraordinary example

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1 Cf. Studi di Filologia Romanza, ii (1887), 97-368.
2 Cf. Parodi, op. cit. pp. 281-5. Parodi's theory is not altogether convincing. Villani differs from Lancia in having Camilla killed by Aeneas (Cronica, i. 23). I think it is not possible to dismiss such evidence of the independence of the two authors by suggesting, as Parodi did, that Villani made a resumé of Lancia's account after reading it *in fretta*! 3 Cf. F. Neri, op. cit. p. 2, n. 1.
4 Cf. E. G. Parodi, op. cit. pp. 315-16. It is not my intention to discuss here the dating of the Martelli MS. containing Lancia's translation. It should be noted, however, that while Isidoro Del Lungo, followed by Parodi, had decided that it belonged to the early fifteenth century, G. Folena has recently maintained that fos. 1r-23v are written by a "mano del 1316", fos. 24r-38v by a "mano di poco più tarda", and fos. 39v-54v by a hand of the second half of the fourteenth century (cf. La Istoria di Eneas vulgarizzata per Angilu di Capua, ed. G. Folena (Palermo 1956), p. 236). I must confess that it seems to me rather strange that a comparatively short work like Lancia's abridged translation of Vergil should have taken about half a century to be transcribed in the Martelli codex: surely it is not possible that the first part of it was written by a hand of 1316, nor that above the incipit there is an inscription ("anni dni mcccxxvi") containing the very date under discussion. Whatever the real date of the Martelli MS. may be, Folena himself recognizes that, although representing
indeed of what might be described as a vicious circle in historical and philological research.

So far we have seen that the traditional dating of Villani's Chronicle is not justified by the analysis of those very passages which have been put forward by both historians and critics as evidence to support their claims. While it is to be hoped that one day a critical edition of the Chronicle may offer a more reliable basis for the utilization of internal evidence in order to establish a definite chronology of the work, for the moment we have no alternative but to reconsider the question from a different angle. First of all let us recall briefly what we know for certain about the chronology of the composition and circulation of Dante's Comedy. This is an essential point for a historical comparison of the two works. I shall not go through all the arguments which have been put forward by Dante scholars in order to maintain their various theories. I shall simply refer to an important article published by G. Petrocchi in 1957. The author, while maintaining a more or less traditional dating of the composition of the Comedy (i.e. 1304-8, Inferno; c. 1308-12, Purgatorio; 1316-21, Paradiso), rightly points out that Dante must have revised the first two canticas between 1313 and 1315, before publishing them. As for the chronology of the publication, he makes a full re-assessment of the so-called "argumento
Barberiniano according to which, on the basis of a passage in Francesco da Barberino's Latin commentary to his Documenti d'Amore it would be possible to argue that the Inferno and at least in part the Purgatorio were already made public in April 1314. Petrocchi shows that the contention that F. da Barberino's note was written by that date has not been satisfactorily proved. Furthermore he gives a literal interpretation of the passage in question, showing that all we can gather from it is that between 1314 and 1315 a writer contemporary of Dante, with whom he shared literary and political interest, had a vague idea that Dante was writing a work, dealing, among other topics, with infernal matters. All we know for certain, on the basis of dated Bolognese documents, is that in the first half of 1317 the Inferno was known so well that it was quoted by heart; while in the year 1319 we have similar evidence not only for the Inferno, but also for the beginning of the Purgatorio. The latter appears to have been known to Giovanni del Virgilio, who made reference to canto XXI et seq. in the winter 1319-20. The publication of the Paradiso was certainly posthumous. It could be argued from these data that the circulation of the Inferno and Purgatorio was at first limited to what Petrocchi described as the area lombardo-emiliana-romagnola, and only later it must have reached Florence. It is a fact that the only known Florentine reference to the Comedy prior to the death of Dante is the extremely vague mention of it as a work in progress on the part of an associate of Dante (assuming that the relevant note of Francesco da Barberino was written in Florence after his return from exile). As for the date of composition, internal evidence shows that lines 79-87 of Inferno, XIX could not have been written before the death of Clement V on 20 April 1314. This was considered by Francesco D'Ovidio as the only internal evidence really significant for the dating of both Inferno and Purgatorio, apart from the allusion contained in Purgatorio, VII, 96, to either the death of Henry VII (24 August 1313) or the difficulties encountered by the Emperor in his Italian campaign. The obvious implication being that both Inferno and Purgatorio, in their final version, could not have
been completed before 1314.¹ According to Petrocchi, the analysis of internal evidence shows that the *Inferno* could not be published (and by implication ultimately completed) before the second half of 1314, the *Purgatorio* in the autumn of 1315. This chronological indication is quite consistent with what we have already observed about the documented evidence of the circulation of the first two canticas between 1317 and 1319-20.

Having already shown that the traditional opinion that Villani started the composition of his *Chronicle* after 1320 has still to be proved, we have now to consider whether it is possible to maintain that at least the beginning of Villani's *Chronicle* was composed when the *Comedy* had not yet become known.

Villani's belated declaration, in Book VIII, chapter 36, that he started the composition of his *Chronicle* in the year 1300 after having returned to Florence from Rome, where he had been on the occasion of the jubilee, has rightly been dismissed as unacceptable. A consideration of Villani's biography as it results from a number of contemporary documents as well as from his own statements contained in the *Chronicle*, leads us to conclude that he could not have started the compilation of such an organic work at the very beginning of the century. On the other hand the same biographical considerations seem to me to indicate that the *Chronicle* might well have been started some years before 1320, which is, as we have seen, the date generally accepted. I will limit myself here to recalling a few data of Villani's life. Although the exact date of his birth is unknown, c. 1276 seems to be a likely one. He belonged to a typical bourgeois family (his father, Villano Stoldi, was one of the Priors in 1300): from 1 May 1300 to 1 November 1308 Giovanni Villani was a partner in the Peruzzi Company, and in such a capacity he was at the papal Court in Rome in 1301 (after having visited the city in the previous jubilee year), and he went to Bruges in Flanders for about six years from 1302 to 1307, although in that period he was also in Florence several times for business and family reasons. Again as representative of the Peruzzi Company he visited Siena in 1309. When in c. 1310 the Bonaccorsi Company was founded, he was

nominated general director together with his brother-in-law Vanne Bonaccorsi: a post which he held until 1342, when the Company failed. From 1316 he appears to have been very active in Florentine public life: apart from various other commitments, he was a Prior in 1316, 1317, and 1321; in 1322 he was one of the "octo sapientes" to whom the Signoria entrusted the commercial war against Pisa; in the following year he was with the Florentine army at war against Castruccio Castracane master of Lucca. In 1327 he was appointed ufficiale della Zecca (superintendent to the Mint) by Charles, Duke of Calabria (a post which he had already held in 1316). During the famine of 1328 he was a member of the committee responsible for the rationing of food. For our purpose it is not necessary to specify his activities during the last twenty years of his life: suffice it to note that he was very prominent in public life until 1345 when as a result of the bankruptcy of the Bardi and Bonaccorsi Companies he was imprisoned for a while. He died in 1348, a victim of the black plague.1 If one clear indication emerges from these essential biographical data, it is that Villani was not in a position to start a life-long work such as the Chronicle before he took up permanent residence in Florence in 1310 (of course, he was away, mainly on business and diplomatic missions to other Tuscan cities, after that date, but never for a long period). What I find difficult to accept is that he could not have started his work before 1320. We have already seen that the alleged internal evidence on which

1 For the biography of Villani, apart from what can be gathered from his Chronicle, see F. Gherardi Dragomanni, "Cenni biografici di G. Villani" in Cronica di G. Villani (Florence, 1844), I, pp. ix-xx, 556-8; G. Milanesi, "Documenti riguardanti G. Villani e il palazzo degli Alessi in Siena" in Arch. Stor. Ital., n.s. IV, 1 (1856), pp. 3-12; P. Fanfani, "Instrumento dell'accordo e compagna fatta fra G. Villani e Filippo, Francesco e Matteo suoi fratelli il primo di maggio 1322" in Il Borghini, iii (1865), 520-5; N. F. Faraglia, "Alcune notizie intorno a Giovanni e Filippo Villani il vecchio, ed a Persio di ser Brunetto Latini" in Arch. Stor. per le Province Napoletane, xi, iii (1886), 554-61; I. Sanesi, "Di un incarico dato dalla Repubblica Fiorentina a G. Villani", in Arch. Stor. Ital., ser. V, xii (1893), 366-9; G. Arias, "Nuovi documenti su G. Villani", in Giorn. stor. della letter. ital., xxxiv (1899), 383-87; A. Della Torre, "L'amicizia di Dante e G. Villani, con documenti inediti su case di Dante e su G. Villani" (reprinted from Giornale Dantesco, XII, iii-iv), Florence, 1904; F. P. Luiso, Mercatanti lucchesi dell'epoca di Dante, Lucca, 1936; "Indagini biografiche su G. Villani" in Bull. dell'Istit. Stor. Ital. per il Medio Evo e Arch. Muratoriano, li (1936), 1-64.
the traditional dating is based can be easily dismissed as irrelevant. Pending the preparation of a critical text of the Chronicle, we have no alternative but to consider the question from a historical angle: between 1310 and 1320 there was a particular moment in which a Black Florentine, representative of the leading mercantile oligarchy, might have felt that the economic and political power of Florence was at last secure for a long time to come. This particular moment is marked, of course, by the death of the Emperor Henry VII in August 1313 during his Italian campaign—which had been directed against Florence as a first target—and by the consequent disappearance of a nightmare for the Black Government of Florence. Now if we take the year of the Emperor's death as a terminus a quo, and, at the same time note Villani's proud and confident attitude as a Florentine at the beginning of his Chronicle—an attitude which contrasts in part with his repeated apprehensions in the later books—it seems to me that we may suggest, for the starting of the Chronicle, a date not too long after this event, so fortunate for his compatriots. If we can be satisfied that chapter 1 of Book I of the Chronicle (which constitutes the original preface to the work, the few lines which precede it in the vulgata being but a reflection of what will be stated by the chronicler in Book VIII, chapter 36) does not contain any of the typical Dantean echoes which are to be found at a more advanced stage of the compilation, we can safely assume that a date around 1315 might well be considered likely for the beginning of the Chronicle—taking into account the fact that, as we have already seen, the earliest documented evidence of the Inferno being publicly known is dated 1317.

It is by way of comparison between the original preface to the Chronicle, i.e. chapter 1 of Book I, and what might be described as a second preface in chapter 36 of Book VIII, that Villani's change of outlook from a pre-Dantean, or anyhow non-Dantean, phase to the Dantean one can be observed in full. The original preface centres upon the chronicler's purpose "considering the nobility and greatness of our city at our present times ", to give occasion to our successors not to be negligent in preserving records of the notable things which shall happen in the times after us, and to give example to those who shall come after, of changes, and things come to pass, and their reasons and
causes; to the end that they may exercise themselves in practising virtues, and
shunning vices, and enduring adversities with a strong soul, to the good and stabili-
ty of our republic. . . . And because our origin starts from very long ago, it
seems to us necessary to our treatise to recount briefly other ancient stories; and
it will be delightful and useful to our citizens now and to come, and will en-
courage them in virtue and in great actions to consider how they are descended
from noble ancestors and from folk of worth, such as were the ancient and worthy
Trojans, and valiant and noble Romans. 1

A very confident attitude indeed, as is shown by the fact that the
chronicler could then consider both past and present history of
Florence in such a positive light that even the descentance of the
Florentines from both Romans and Fiesolans—a circumstance
which is considered by Dante, and eventually by Villani himself,
as the original cause of civil struggles—is at this stage accepted
by him as a fact to be proud of (if, as it seems to me, the reference
to the "ancient and worthy Trojans" indicates the ancestry of
the Fiesolans). 2

1 Cf. G. Villani, Cronica, i. 1; "... io Giovanni cittadino di Firenze, con-
siderando la nobiltà e grandezza della nostra città a' nostri presenti tempi, mi
pare che si convenga di raccontare e fare memoria dell'origine e cominciamento di
cosi famosa città, e delle mutazioni avverse e felici, e fatti passati di quella; non
perché io mi senta sofficente a tanta opera fare, ma per dare materia a' nostri
successori di non essere negligenzi di fare memorie delle notevoli cose che avve-
ranno per gli tempi appresso noi, e per dare esemplo a quelli che saranno delle
mutazioni e delle cose passate, e le cagioni, e perché; acciocché egli si esercitino
adoperando le virtudi e schifando i vizi, e l'avversitadi sostegnano con forte animo
a bene e stato della nostra repubblica. . . . E perché l'esordio nostro si cominci
molto di lungi, in raccontando in breve altre antiche storie, al nostro trattato ne
pare di necessità; e sia dilettevole e utile e conforto a' nostri cittadini che sono e
che saranno, in essere virtudiosi e di grande operazione, considerando come sono
discesi di nobile progenie e di virtudiose genti, come furono gli antichi buoni
Troiani, e' valenti e nobili Romani." 2

2 According to the Chronica de origine civitatis which, in the part dealing with
the origin of Fiesole, incorporated a cycle of legends relating to Dardanus, founder
of Troy, the Fiesolans were of as noble descent as were the Romans. This was
accepted by Villani in Cronica, i. 29; elsewhere, however, Villani follows, like
Dante, another part of the Chronica de origine which embodies the Florentine
tradition, which distinguishes in the population of Florence the descendants of the
noble Romans and those of the rough, primitive Fiesolans (i. 38). Cf. N.
Rubinstein, "The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence, A Study in
Medieval Historiography" in Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, v
(1942), 198-227, particularly p. 209. It should be noted that on one occasion
Dante himself seems to refer to the noble origin of Fiesole, but only as a nursery
tale: cf. Paradiso, XV, vv. 125-6: "Favoleggiava con la sua famiglia De' Troiani,
di Fiesole e di Roma."
worries regarding the present and future of his city; no reflection whatsoever on the vicissitudes of human events, of the kind which can be observed at later stages of the composition. Finally, no circumstantial or chronological indication of the author's decision to start his work.

All this sharply contrasts with what we note in chapter 36 of Book VIII, dealing with the jubilee in the year 1300. After having duly set out in detail particulars of the indulgences given by Boniface VIII to all Christians who should go to Rome, and having described the condition of the city on that occasion, the chronicler adds what in fact amounts to a second preface to his work. He opens this section of the chapter by saying: “And I, finding myself on that blessed pilgrimage in the holy city of Rome, beholding the great and ancient things therein, and reading the stories and the great doings of the Romans, written by Virgil, and by Sallust, and by Lucan, and Titus Livius, and Valerius, and Paulus Orosius, and other masters of history, which wrote alike of small things as of great, of the deeds and actions of the Romans, and also of universal nations throughout the world, myself to preserve memorials and give examples to those which should come after took up their style and design, although as a disciple I was not worthy of such a work.” So far there is no difficulty in accepting the chronicler's revelation that the inspiration to write his work came to him both from the example of the great Roman historians (the inclusion of Virgil and Lucan among them should not surprise in a medieval writer), and from the sight of the Roman ruins on the occasion of his jubilee visit to the city. But why did he not say so in chapter 1 of Book I, which is the original starting point of the work? One might already suspect, on the basis of this preamble, that when Villani wrote his original preface he was not yet impressed by typical Dantean associations,
Initial “A” and portions of the text from Malispini’s Storia fiorentina in Florence, Laur. Plut. LXI, 29.
such as the parallel between the jubilee pilgrimage and the undertaking of a morally exhortative work, or the relationship between classical masters and the disciple author. A suspicion which might become a certainty when we read the passage which immediately follows:

But considering that our city of Florence, the daughter and creature of Rome, was rising ["era nel suo montare"], and had great things before her, whilst Rome was declining ["nel suo calare"], it seemed to me fitting to collect in this volume and new chronicle all the deeds and beginnings of the city of Florence... and to follow the doings of the Florentines in detail, and the other notable things of the universe in brief, as long as it shall be God’s pleasure; in hope of which... I undertook, by his grace, the said enterprise; and thus in the year 1300, having returned from Rome, I began to compile this book, in reverence of God and the blessed John, and in commendation of our city of Florence. 1

Here the suggestions derived from Dante are very clear indeed. I shall not speculate on the similarity between Villani’s definition of Florence as “daughter and creature of Rome” (“figliuola e fattura di Roma”) and Dante’s reference to “La bellissima e famosissima figlia di Roma, Fiorenza” in Convivio, I, 3; apart from the fact that the Roman ancestry of the Florentines had been a political and ideological principle of Florentine historiography since at least the beginning of the previous century; 2 we must not forget that the Convivio had a comparatively late circulation and even the mention of it by Villani in chapter 136 of Book IX (which constitutes the earliest known biography of the poet) is to be considered as a later interpolation. It is the inverted parallel between the rising of Florence and the decline of Rome which proclaims Villani’s debt to Dante, even, it should be noted, in the choice of the distinctive words “montare” and “calare”, which directly echo Paradiso, XV, 109-11:

1 Cf. G. Villani, loc. cit.: “Ma considerando che la nostra città di Firenze, figliuola e fattura di Roma, era nel suo montare e a seguire grandi cose, siccome Roma nel suo calare, mi parve convenevole di recare in questo volume e nuova cronica tutti i fatti e cominciamenti della città di Firenze... e seguire per innanzi stesamente i fatti de’ Fiorentini, e dell’altrre notabili cose dell’universo in brieve, infino che sia piacere di Dio, ... e così negli anni 1300 tornato da Roma, cominciò a compilare questo libro, a ... commendazione della nostra città di Firenze”.

2 Cf. N. Rubinstein, op. cit.
Non era vinto ancora Montemalo
dal vostro Uccellatoio, che, com'è vinto
nel montar su, così sarà nel calo

Compared with Villani, Dante seems to make a step forward by commenting that in the same way as Florence has surpassed Rome in her rise, so she will surpass her in her fall. But that it is still Villani taking from Dante, can be proved—apart from any other consideration—by the fact that while in Dante's lines “montar su” and “calo” are quite appropriate to the synecdoche “Montemalo” (i.e. Montemario) for Rome and mount “Uccellatoio” for Florence, they no longer appear to be literally appropriate in Villani’s wording. On the other hand, if the latter does not follow Dante all the way and refrains from making an explicit allusion to the future fall of Florence as a consequence of contemporary Florentine politics, we should not forget Villani’s own political standing as a representative of the mercantile leading class. The fact remains, however, that it was precisely the view of the ruins of a powerful city of the past to inspire the chronicler “to follow the doings of the Florentines in detail”; a Dantesque inquietude of which there is no trace in the original preamble to his work. The chronological and circumstantial specification “in the year 1300, having returned from Rome, I began to compile this book”, cannot be taken in the literal meaning: apart from the indications provided by internal evidence, we have already seen that the chronicler’s biography does not allow us to indicate a date prior to the second decade of the century for the beginning of the regular compilation of the Chronicle. The fact that the year 1300 and the pilgrimage to Rome are not mentioned in the original preface to the work seems to confirm, however, that the work was begun before the divulga­tion of Dante’s Comedy: the poet’s pilgrimage to the other world in the jubilee year 1300 must have induced the chronicler to associate retrospectively his own jubilee pilgrimage with his own work undertaken “in commendation of our city of Florence”: the Chronicle being thus converted into a sort of anti-Comedy.

“Montemalo yet
O'er our suburban turret rose; as much
To be surpast in fall, as in its rising” (transl. Cary).
One might wonder why Villani did not re-write the original preface to his *Chronicle* once he had adopted this new Dantean outlook. As I have already mentioned, the partial results of the preparatory work for a critical edition of the *Chronicle* reveal that the theory of a double version can be maintained only in the sense that the chronicler altered his own work by way of variations and interpolations: the original version of the *Chronicle* remained, however, substantially unaltered. My contention is that although the influence of Dante on Villani is evident beyond any doubt in what I have described as the second preface to the *Chronicle* (Book VIII, chapter 36), this does not mean that direct or indirect Dantean influence cannot be noted earlier in the compilation. Here again it would be impossible to decide, on the basis of the *vulgata* and in the absence of a critical edition, whether the analogies contained in the early sections of the *Chronicle* should be referred to later variations and interpolations on the part of the chronicler and his copyists. At the present stage of research, neither the hypothesis of a common tradition nor the possibility that Dante might have known at least the first Book of Villani's *Chronicle* can be altogether dismissed.\(^1\)

I now leave Villani to turn briefly to the other great Florentine chronicler of the early fourteenth century. It has already been noted by Neri that the beginning of Dino Compagni’s *Cronica delle cose occorrenti ne’ tempi suoi* contains a number of analogies with Villani’s Book VIII, chapter 36—such as the mention of the 1300 jubilee, the reference to the ancient historical records, and the definition of Florence as the noble daughter of Rome—which can hardly be explained by taking into account the particular tradition of Compagni’s work. Like Dante in his vision—Neri concluded—the Florentine chroniclers also took inspiration from the jubilee year.\(^2\) Compagni’s *Cronica* was probably written at the time of Henry VII’s Italian campaign, but was not made generally known at the time and became known later through a fifteenth-century copy. The main subject of Compagni’s chronicle are the dramatic events which led to the triumph of the

\(^1\) The possibility of Dante using the first Book of Villani’s *Cronica* was mentioned in 1942 by N. Rubinstein (op. cit. p. 219, n. 5). It is to be hoped that he still intends to deal with this question.

\(^2\) Cf. F. Neri, op. cit. p. 3.
Black party in Florence: since, like Dante, he was a representative of the White party, it should not be surprising if analogies between the two can be discovered particularly as far as their attitude to contemporary political events is concerned. Even so, Compagni’s chronicle is bound to puzzle us both as a literary and a historical document. Of course it would be unthinkable to call in question again the authenticity of Compagni’s text after Isidoro Del Lungo’s studies. The fact remains, however, that as a literary document not only does it reveal peculiarities of the last quarter of the century—such as the asindetic paratactic constructions and the elipsis of the relative nexus—for which the responsibility of the fifteenth-century copyist has still to be established,¹ but in its very polemic tone it does not seem to find any parallel before the political writings of the late fourteenth century. An isolated phenomenon indeed at the very beginning of the century. Not even as an historical document should it be taken for granted and it is time that the interpolations contained in the text were detected and reported upon. This is particularly so in the case of the words “ch’era ambasciatore a Roma” (Book II, 25) referring to Dante at the time of the first sentence against him ²: this is a very likely interpolation of the copyist suggested perhaps by a similar but not otherwise documented statement in Boccaccio’s “Life of Dante”. This does not mean, however, that even through the late transcription known to us we cannot glimpse the genuine personality of the author: a man who, caught up by stirring political events, did not succeed in fully understanding them, and resigned himself to the expression of his own shocked morality. An attitude which—well beyond the political similarity—presents striking analogies with that of Dante: apart, of course from Compagni’s inability, unlike Dante, to overcome his own personal crisis and to project the political and ethical drama of Florence against a universal background.

¹ A systematic study of the syntax of Compagni’s Cronica—which might be relevant to a critical definition of the manuscript tradition of the text—has been undertaken recently by G. Folena (cf. Studi e problemi di critica testuale (Bologna, Commissione per i Testi di lingua, 1961), p. 30, n. 15).

² Cf. R. Davidsohn, Storia di Firenze, Italian translation by G. B. Klein, iii (Florence, 1960), 228.
It might seem strange that in this talk on Dante and the Florentine chroniclers I have hardly mentioned the *Storia fiorentina* supposedly written by Ricordano Malispini in the second half of the thirteenth century (or, to be more precise, allegedly started in c. 1270). This chronicle, known to us through comparatively late manuscripts, contains the narration of some aspects of Florentine history from the origin of Fiesole to the year 1282; an appendix said to have been written by a nephew of Ricordano, Giacotto, continues the narration up to the year 1285. The arguments by which P. Scheffer-Boichorst tried to demonstrate last century that Malispini's *Storia* was a forgery made after Villani's *Chronicle* in order to exalt the nobility of some Florentine families, although not altogether unquestionable, were generally accepted by the historians. Robert Davidsohn, a specialist in Florentine history, fully agreed with Scheffer-Boichorst and did not make use of Malispini's *Storia* in his monumental *Geschichte von Florenz*. The German scholar's conclusions had a critical confirmation in Italy by V. Lami's own contribution to the question in 1890. It was only in 1921—following a suggestion by E. Sicardi in his edition of two chronicles of the Sicilian Vespers—that R. Morghen started his series of articles in which he has tried to reverse the German theory by constantly maintaining the authenticity of the Malispini text. Should Morghen's conclusions prove acceptable, they would substantially solve the question of the relationship between Dante and the Florentine chroniclers by reproposing the *Storia fiorentina* as the common source. So far Morghen's theory has not been openly opposed by Italian scholars, although outside Italy not only has it been ostensibly ignored by such a specialist as N. Rubinstein, but also openly criticized by C. Davis, who

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1 Cf. P. Scheffer-Boichorst, op. cit. chapter I ("Die Geschichte der Malispini. eine Fälschung ").
2 See also Davidsohn's obituary of "Carlo Hegel" and "Paolo Scheffer-Boichorst" in *Arch. Stor. Ital.*, ser. V, xxix (1902), 1.
3 Cf. V. Lami, "Di un compendio inedito della Cronica di G. Villani nelle sue relazioni con la Storia Fiorentina Malispiniana ".
4 Cf. E. Sicardi, op. cit. 5 See above, p. 30, n. 3. 6 Cf. N. Rubinstein, op. cit.
rightly pointed out some logical inconsistencies which would derive from the acceptance of Morghen's theory. Davis's observations could be multiplied *ad libitum* by way of comparison between similar passages in Villani and Malispini which show an irreversible logical succession (it is the case of French expressions in Villani translated into Italian in the Malispini text; of poetic quotations in Villani only partially transcribed in Malispini; of intentional repetitions in Villani eliminated in Malispini.¹) In my view, however, the main argument put forward by Morghen and his followers to maintain the authenticity of Malispini is a palaeographic one. The earliest known manuscript of the *Storia* is the Laur. Plut. LXI, 29; according to Morghen and his school this can be dated c. 1350, and since it is neither the original manuscript of the work nor a direct transcript, from it could be argued the existence of an archetype of fifty years earlier which would prove that Malispini's *Storia* was already in circulation by the end of the thirteenth century. Apart from the absolute lack of evidence in Morghen's regressive reconstruction of the manuscript tradition of the *Storia*, it should be noted at once that an exclusive dating as early as the middle of the fourteenth century applied to the Laurentian manuscript does not appear to be palaeographically unquestionable: in fact, although a date in the second half of the century is possible, both the characters and the initials are of a kind which recur in the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century. Therefore, even if Morghen's argument to prove the existence of an archetype of fifty years earlier were unobjectionable (which it is not, in my view), it might well bring us back to the middle of the fourteenth century: at a time, that is to say, when Villani's life and work had already come to an end.

It is inexplicable that nobody should have as yet discussed the palaeographic premises of Morghen's theory. Malispini's *Storia* has been recently included in a collection of thirteenth-century prose writers edited by two distinguished scholars of our generation²: they have accepted the authenticity of the work with-

¹ Paradoxically, it is by quoting instances like these that Morghen and Del Monte tried to prove Malispini earlier than Villani.
out any hesitation, on the basis of Morghen's conclusions which, however, do not appear to be proved beyond question either by logical or by palaeographic arguments. It might well be that when a truly critical edition of the Malaspini text is available, it will be possible to detect some genuine pre-Villani passages of the *Storia*. Until then, I am afraid, the question is bound to remain sub judice.

My conclusion is that although the so-called *Storia fiorentina* in the version which has reached us cannot be considered as a historical source of Dante's *Comedy* and Villani's *Chronicle*, the hypothesis of a common source should not be dismissed altogether on the basis of Neri's theory of the dependence of Villani on Dante.¹

It is to be hoped that the seventh centenary of Dante's birth will induce some historians and students of Dante to reconsider this problem² and, if possible, to solve it.

¹ As for Neri's theory, it should be remembered that almost at the end of his contribution the Italian scholar maintained what in fact amounts to an acceptable approach to the question: namely that beyond what he considered to be the *rapporto iniziale* between the *Comedy* and the *Chronicle*, many historical facts were common knowledge in the early fourteenth century; and that the study of the language in Dante, Compagni and Villani, reveals expressions of the same stamp which were not necessarily borrowed one from another: they represent a linguistic, and not a stylistic, analogy (cf. F. Neri, op. cit. p. 24).

² Since this paper was read on 10 March 1965, the first volume of the *Atti del Congresso internazionale di studi danteschi* (20-27 aprile 1965) has been published (Florence, Sansoni, 1965). Although neither the ten relazioni included in the volume nor the remaining ones announced in the programme of the Conference deal with the present subject, it should be noted that the inaugural lecture delivered by G. Folena on "La tradizione delle opere di Dante Alighieri" touches on the question of the first diffusion of the *Comedy* (cf. op. cit. pp. 40-43). In spite of Petrocchi's objections to the "argomento barberiniano", Folena is inclined to believe that the *Inferno* was in circulation before 13 April 1314 and the *Purgatorio* "forse qualche tempo dopo". However, apart from the correspondence with Giovanni del Virgilio, Folena too refers to the Bolognese documents (see above p. 43) as a *terminus ante quem* absolutely unquestionable for the publication of the first two canticas. As for Folena's argument based on Lancia's translation of the *Aeneid*, see above, p. 41, n. 4.