



newsletter  
**Boccaccio**

*"studium fuit alma poesis"*



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Vol. 41, No. 2 **American Boccaccio Association** Fall 2014

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**Officers:**

Timothy Kircher, Guilford College, President  
Susanna Barsella, Fordham University, Vice President  
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## Message from the President

Dear fellow boccaccisti,

This past May you elected a new slate of officers for the next triennium: we are grateful for your vote of confidence. We hope to build upon the good work the previous executive committee has done. The ideas we conceive and efforts we undertake can only reach fruition with your support, so we ask for your insights and rely on your enthusiasm. Here's to carrying the momentum forward from Boccaccio's 700<sup>th</sup> birthday, especially since we commemorate in 2014 the fortieth birthday of the Association!

We are happy to announce a few measures of success:

- 1) The ABA is sponsoring five panels at the forthcoming Renaissance Society of America meeting in Berlin next March. A number of other Boccaccio panels have also been sponsored. Many thanks to Michael Papio and Francesco Ciabattoni for arranging these sessions. The annual meeting of the Association will take place at the RSA meeting in Berlin, on Friday, March 27, at 2:45, before a 3 p.m. Boccaccio panel. The room will be in Unter den Linden 6, 2nd floor 3075. We hope as many members can join us for that event.
- 2) We have begun planning the next triennial meeting of the Association for fall 2016. We will keep you informed about details, themes, and deadlines. We aim to emulate the successes of Amherst 2010 and Georgetown 2013.
- 3) The ABA website ([www.abaonline.us](http://www.abaonline.us)) is now being hosted at the University of Oklahoma under Jason's supervision. We have made a number of changes to the website; please suggest others to improve its usefulness.
- 4) We have established a PayPal option for easy payment of dues. Dues are the main source of revenue to meet our conference expenses. In addition, we ask members to consider an additional gift to help with the subventions required for the *Lectura Boccaccii*. Please keep your dues up to date.
- 5) *Heliotropia*, the official journal of the Association, continues under the general editorship of Michael Papio. The executive committee serves on the editorial board. We heartily solicit new contributions to the journal. *Heliotropia* is also a central place for reviews of recent publications in the field. Christopher Kleinhenz and Elsa Filosa continue to collate the North American Boccaccio Bibliography, with a new edition forthcoming soon. Please send them details of any new publications.
- 6) We now have in place editors for every volume of the *Lectura Boccaccii* series with University of Toronto press. We warmly thank these colleagues for undertaking this editorial task, and plan to proceed with this series, initiated in 1984, as expeditiously as possible. As many of you know, the third volume, under the editorship of Francesco Ciabattoni and Pier Massimo Forni, has recently been published: kudos to Francesco, Pier Massimo, and all the contributors!
- 7) We are pleased to announce the first winner of the Velli Prize, which recognizes the achievements of new boccaccisti: the recipient is Johnny Bertolio of the University of Toronto's Department of Italian Studies, for his essay "Il «vin vermiglio» di Filippo Argenti (*Decameron* IX 8)." Congratulations, Johnny!

My fellow officers and I appreciate your creative endeavors on behalf of *il nostro*. At a time when critical pressure is mounting on the humanities in general, and medieval, Renaissance, and Italian studies in particular, Boccaccio's life and work inspire us to

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maintain his legacy, and to express its relevance to a broader audience. We are grateful in particular to the contributions of Gur Zak and Jonathan Combs-Schilling included in this Newsletter, and we welcome similar reflections and essays in future issues.



**Boccaccio at 700**  
**Gur Zak**  
**(originally published in *Haaretz* November 23, 2013)**

This year marks the 700th anniversary of the birth of Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375), one of the founding fathers of Italian literature and undoubtedly among the most influential authors in the history of Western literature. As is customary, this milestone date rekindles the interest in his work and brings about a host of academic conferences, art exhibitions and scholarly articles devoted to his body of work. Not that Boccaccio needed the revival: The Decameron, his masterpiece, is one of a handful of texts written in the later Middle Ages that is still widely read all over the world. The academic interest in his work hasn't diminished over time either, and literary and cultural theorists often use The Decameron as a springboard for their discussions. Therefore, the 700th anniversary of Boccaccio's birth mainly calls for an inquiry as to the continued interest in his work. What is the secret of the relevance to our own day and age of the collection of 100 novellas that Boccaccio wrote in the mid-14th century and which describes ten Florentines that fled the plague-infested city and told each other stories in order to pass the time?

Historians and literary critics have traditionally seen The Decameron as one of the central representatives of the shift in the 14th century from the "dark ages" to the Renaissance. The work's descriptive realism along with the naturalism expressed by its overt sexuality, it was argued, represent a break with the severe moralism of the Middle Ages and the "Renaissance" rediscovery of man and nature – a rediscovery that would reach its peak some 150 years later with the artistic achievements of Michelangelo and Leonardo. This conception was subjected to ongoing criticism in the second half of the 20th century, championed by Vittore Branca, the most prominent Boccaccio scholar of the time. For Branca, while depicting a new class of people that began to emerge - the merchant class, which would subsequently be called the middle class - The Decameron is decidedly rooted in the tradition of the Middle Ages, in terms of both style and content. Like Dante's Divine Comedy, its mastery precursor, the Decameron is comprised of 100 stories, mirroring the 100 Cantos that make up the Divine Comedy. And similarly to the spiritual journey described in Dante's work, which begins with the devil's domain and ends with a mystical vision of God, so in The Decameron, according to Branca, we are witnessing a linear ascent, beginning with the first story, which describes the perfect villain- the notorious Ciappelletto - and ending 99 stories later with the description of the perfect saint, Griselda. Thus, even if Boccaccio substitutes Dante's afterlife with the earthly and no less colorful world of Florence, Naples and the other Italian cities of his day, the structure of the work, Branca

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claims, remains markedly identical. Boccaccio's world, like that of his predecessor Dante, is coherent, ordered, and possesses a clear meaning and purpose.

Yet Branca's account ignores key aspects of Boccaccio's work, which set it apart from *The Divine Comedy*. While the structure of *The Decameron* draws from that of the *Comedy*, it does so, to a large extent, in a parodic manner. This parody is aimed at its core at subverting the orderly picture of the world that is represented in the *Comedy*, challenging Dante's presumption to provide a definitive statement about the meaning of human history and the path to the good and moral life. A brief discussion of two stories from *The Decameron* - the opening story of Ciappelletto and the closing tale of Griselda - will underscore the deep disparity between the two works and highlight *The Decameron's* unique worldview.

The opening story of *The Decameron* is narrated by Panfilo - "lover of all" - and as mentioned above, centers on the abominable attorney, Ciappelletto. Unlike the rest of the stories in the work, we get a lengthy and detailed description of Ciappelletto: he is the quintessential villain, a person who cannot help but perjure himself, stir up conflict, create strife, steal and murder. Ciappelletto was appointed as a debt collector for the Burgundy region, but he falls gravely ill immediately upon arriving at his hosts' house. The pair of his hosts are then faced with a dilemma: according to Christian decree, they must invite the local priest to receive Ciappelletto's last rites. Yet knowing as they do his wicked ways, they fear that no priest will agree to absolve Ciappelletto of his sins and he will not be able to be buried in the church's cemetery, which will make them a target of the townspeople's criticism for sheltering such a man. On the other hand, if they decide to turn him out in his pitiful present state, the locals would be angry at them for treating a guest so poorly. What to do? Realizing his hosts' dilemma, Ciappelletto comes to their aid and orders them to summon the strictest priest they can find. The priest arrives and the scene of Ciappelletto's last confession is a comic masterpiece.

The two hosts - like ourselves, the readers - stand behind a partition, listening to the lies and fabrications that Ciappelletto spews out. When the priest asks when he confessed last, Ciappelletto, who has never confessed a single day of his life, answers that he has always made a point of confessing at least once a week, although ever since he fell ill, eight days ago, he hasn't confessed and is deeply saddened by this. Afterwards, when the priest asks whether he has committed the sin of passion, Ciappelletto declares himself to be a virgin as on the day he was born. When asked about the sin of gluttony, Ciappelletto sadly confesses that he occasionally indulges in drinking more than his fair share of water after undertaking a particularly rigorous pilgrimage. Ciappelletto's list of fabrications grows steadily longer, and the priest, struck with his meekness and piety, decides to fully absolve him of his sins. Later that night Ciappelletto dies, and at his funeral, the priest delivers a lengthy speech in praise of his exemplary life, as revealed in his confession. The sermon affects the listeners so deeply, that upon its completion they gather round Ciappelletto's body, kissing his hands and feet, tearing at his clothes for a bit of cloth they want as a keepsake. Ciappelletto becomes a local saint, and the narrator ends with the proclamation that it is claimed "many are the miracles... that God has performed through him and continues to perform." (trans.

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Waldman). In the final analysis, the narrator adds that we cannot know for sure whether Ciappelletto, the ultimate sinner, was not overcome by such deep remorse on his deathbed that he is now in heaven, but “as there is no way of knowing this,..., and I am concerned only with the evidence, I should say that he’s more likely to be in the devil’s keeping.”

This story about the holy sinner Ciappelletto raises a number of important issues – not least among them Boccaccio’s famous ridicule of church institutions - yet I would like to emphasize two in particular. First, it’s important to note the manner in which the story touches upon the nature and power of literature: in this story, Ciappelletto, via his amusing fabricated confession, is transformed into an author, creating stories of falsities and lies. These fictions, as demonstrated by the story, can have a tremendous influence - one that often exceeds the original intention of their author - and ironically can even potentially lead God into performing miraculous acts. The fact that Ciappelletto’s lies prove so beneficial also allows Boccaccio to present a defense of the morality of the literary act: Plato, as is well-known, demanded that the poets be banned from his ideal city, due in part to their tendency to fabricate lies that deviate from the truth, and these sorts of claims continued to appear time and again throughout the Middle Ages. Through Ciappelletto’s story, Boccaccio argues that the fact that literature is based on lies does not prevent it from being beneficial. The second point relates to the story’s hidden critique of Dante’s *Divine Comedy*: unlike Dante, who had no qualms about sealing the fates of those he encountered on his journey to the afterworld - whether sending them to hell, heaven or purgatory - Boccaccio’s narrator emphasizes our inability to know the hidden truth about a person at the moment of his or her death - even in the case of a sinner such as Ciappelletto - and as follows, his fate in the afterlife. Uncertainty is a necessary component of our worldly existence. Issues of knowledge and interpretation also play an important role in the novella that closes *The Decameron*, 99 stories later - the tale of the unfortunate peasant Griselda. The novella opens with a description of the Marquis Gualtieri, who devotes himself entirely to a life of bachelorhood, staunchly refusing to marry. Gualtieri’s explanation as to why he is so adamant about not marrying is directly linked to issues of interpretation: there is no one who can indicate what woman would be right for him, and moreover, proclaims Gualtieri - “what a crowd of women there are who wouldn’t do at all.” In the end, he succumbs to the repeated entreaties of his subjects and to everyone’s astonishment, selects a beautiful poor peasant named Griselda, whom he encountered on one of his excursions to the countryside. Before marrying her, Gualtieri asks one thing of Griselda: that she swears her fidelity to him and obey his every wish during their marriage. Griselda agrees and the two marry and return to the castle together.

Following a brief period of happiness, during which Griselda proves her talent as a queen and delivers a baby girl, Gualtieri decides to test her fidelity and obedience. He sends a messenger to take away the baby, leading Griselda to believe that he has ordered her killed. The daughter is secretly sent away to live with her father’s relatives and Griselda, who believes her child has been murdered, bravely accepts the terrible twist of fate, and calmly states to her husband that his wish is her own. Gualtieri is satisfied by her faithfulness. However he finds the proof inadequate and to be completely sure, he continues to submit Griselda to a series of monstrous tests: after the birth of her son he summons his messenger

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and once again takes the child from his mother. Griselda bravely withstands this test as well. A short time later, Gualtieri banishes her from the palace, sending her back to her cottage in the village and informs her that he has chosen another woman to replace her. To make things worse, he orders Griselda to prepare the palace for his new wedding. Griselda's equanimity is not shaken this time either, and at this point Gualtieri breaks down and confesses that it was all a test; he reunites Griselda with her children and they live happily ever after.

Griselda's tale of cruelty became one of the most widespread stories in Early Modern Europe. It was translated into Latin by Boccaccio's friend and teacher Petrarch, and subsequently translated into most European languages, including English, as Chaucer added it to his *Canterbury Tales*. It was Petrarch who gave the story a religious interpretation, claiming that Griselda's story is in effect an allegory for God's test of man and the necessity of calmly withstanding these trials - a particularly relevant interpretation at the time, when the Black Plague was just ending. Other translators at the time were much more literal and saw the story as a model for wifely obedience. However, it was Boccaccio himself who refused to give an unequivocal interpretation to the story: when the narrator, Dioneo ("the desirer") sums up the story, he states that there's probably no woman who could withstand such inhuman tests, adding that it would have been only fitting if Gualtieri "had saddled himself with a wife who, the moment he turned her out of the house in her chemise, went off and insinuated herself into a nice new dress provided by a lover who could ride her better."

For Branca, Griselda's tale was supposed to provide a template for the perfect saint. However, Boccaccio's text, and particularly the closing statement made by Dioneo, the narrator, does not allow for such a conclusive reading. Gualtieri is undoubtedly a monster. And yet there's also an inhuman element in Griselda's meek and cowed obedience, as Dioneo claims. Thus, similarly to the way in which the opening tale of Ciappelletto emphasizes the ambiguity that is an inherent part of human existence, Boccaccio closes *The Decameron* with an open-ended tale, one which invites dialogue and refrains from a clear moral stance. As opposed to Dante's *Comedy*, the journey from Ciappelletto to Griselda is not a linear one leading from the profane to the sacred, but rather one which emphasizes the uncertainty, instability, and irony that characterize human existence: while the lies of the perfect sinner lead to miracles and good deeds, Griselda's never-ending sacrifice could turn out to be no more than a monstrous distortion. Awareness of the limits of human knowledge, existential irony, dialogism, healthy skepticism – these are, in the last analysis, the defining characteristics of Boccaccio's masterpiece and those which turn it into a work that has remained as relevant today as it was some 700 years ago.

Dept. of Comparative Literature  
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Translated from the Hebrew by Maya Klein



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## The GIUSEPPE VELLI PRIZE for the best GRADUATE STUDENT essay on BOCCACCIO

Thanks to an anonymous donor, this year (2015) the *American Boccaccio Association* awards an annual prize competition for the best graduate student essay on a subject related to the life or works of Giovanni Boccaccio. The Giuseppe Velli Prize of \$250 will be awarded to the best essay submitted by a graduate student in any American or Canadian University or by anyone not currently enrolled as a graduate student, provided that he or she has received the degree of M.A. or Ph.D. within one year of submission. The winning essay will also be automatically considered for publication in *Heliotropia*.

The winner of the 2014 prize was Johnny Bertolio of the University of Toronto. Mr. Bertolio submitted his essay "Il «vin vermiglio» di Filippo Argenti (*Decameron* IX 8)." We had a number of quality submissions, but his essay was the unanimous choice as the most outstanding. The officers found his essay well-researched, employing a sophisticated use of sources along with a rich understanding of medieval reading and authorship praxis. We also appreciated the strong exposition of the symbolic function of wine as it relates to anger, an exposition that drew upon parallels to sources both ancient and contemporary to Boccaccio."

All submissions must be made by email attachment in Word and sent to the secretary of the American Boccaccio Association. The essays should be no longer than 7500 words, including bibliography and other related material. **The deadline for submission is 30 June.**

The author should provide a cover page (as the first page of the file) containing the author's name, email, mailing and email addresses, the title of the essay and institutional affiliation. The author's name should not appear on the essay title page (to follow the cover page) or on any other page of the essay. Quotations from Boccaccio's works should be cited in the original language, and the format of the essay should conform to MLA Style Sheet guidelines.

Submissions will be judged by an ad hoc committee established by the officers of the American Boccaccio Association. The results will be announced in early autumn and published in the fall issue of the *ABA Newsletter*.

Professor Giuseppe Velli (1928-2013), was a remarkable Boccaccio scholar whose work remains fundamental. He studied at the Scuola Normale di Pisa and elsewhere with the likes of Giorgio Pasquali, Luigi Russo, Alessandro Perosa, Paul Oskar Kristeller, Augusto Campana and Reto Bezzola. Upon the completion of his studies, he spent several years teaching abroad, first holding appointments in Paris and New York before taking an assistant professorship at the University of California Los Angeles and later a post as full professor at Smith College. Afterwards, he returned to Italy where he taught *Letteratura umanistica* at the Università di Macerata, *Letteratura italiana e filologia dantesca* at the Università di Venezia and lastly as professor of Italian literature at the Università degli Studi di Milano. Beginning in the 1980s, he maintained an important presence in the United States as a visiting scholar at UCLA, Johns Hopkins University, the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill and Indiana University. Professor Velli's studies ranged widely, but the ABA is particularly appreciative of his work on Boccaccio. His work, including the edition of the *Carmina* for Mondadori's "Tutte le opere" series and his famous volume entitled *Petrarca e Boccaccio. Tradizione · memoria · scrittura* (1995), helped enhance our understanding of: the patterns of intertextuality between Boccaccio's works and classical literature; the relationship between Boccaccio and Petrarch; and the *modus operandi* of Boccaccio at his *scriptorium*. Essays on these topics are particularly welcome.

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## Report from ABA Treasurer

We are happy to announce that our PayPal button is now functioning. If you wish to renew your regular, student, or sustaining membership, please visit <http://abaonline.us/membership.html> to submit your 2015 dues, as well as to make a donation to the *Lectura Boccaccii* series.

Membership in the American Boccaccio Association costs \$25 per year (\$15 for students). Sustaining memberships of \$40 provide additional resources for the association's activities. Scholars who reside most of the year outside the United States are currently exempt from association dues. Your membership dues enable the Association to support initiatives based upon the ABA's core mission to promote the work of *il nostro* and more generally Trecento studies. To this end, the ABA is a society of collaborative international scholarship through its web presence, scholarly journal, bibliographic efforts, conference panels, and not least its own triennial conference, which will take place again in 2016. These funds enable the Association to maintain and enhance these activities, and contribute to future endeavors to support research and outreach in Boccaccio studies.

Please contact Kristina Olson ([kolson4@gmu.edu](mailto:kolson4@gmu.edu)) with any questions about your membership or to suggest potential members of ABA.



## Thoughts on Teaching Boccaccio Jonathan Combs-Schilling

Last fall I had the singular pleasure of teaching Boccaccio twice in one day, first to a lecture hall of undergraduates and then a small room of graduate students. (I described it on Facebook as “classroom Christmas.”) It will come as no surprise to the readers of these pages that including the *Decameron* in course materials at once enlivens and sharpens classroom discussions, yet to see the distinct but equally enthusiastic responses of undergrads, for many of whom it was their first contact with medieval culture *tout court*, and grads was at once delightful and illustrative.

In both cases, it was a chance to present Boccaccio differently than I had in the past. I have worked a few of his stories into nearly every literature class I have taught—from love and religion in the Middle Ages to literary representations of the sea, there’s usually a *Decameron* tale that fits the bill—but last semester was my first chance to teach a graduate seminar entirely of my own design and, since it was a *Decameron* course taken my senior year of college that spurred me to enter this profession and gave me many of the requisite tools to do so, I leapt at the chance to teach the entire collection. My course design was not particularly novel—approximately one *giornata* per session, with a handful of relevant critical readings—but since the majority of the students were first or second years, I tried to use the *Decameron* not only as a case-study for trecento literary culture but as something of a clinic on literary analysis and



research. To this end, I assigned each student a member of the *brigata* as well as a story number to track over the course of the collection so as to encourage their individuation of multiple intratextual networks of meaning, and presented at least one story per day from multiple interpretive vantage-points to show how a single text resounds differently depending on the critical approach adopted. They also were given pedagogical responsibility for our second meeting, for which each presented on a chapter or aspect of Boccaccio's life and culture, and again for our meeting on Day 6, for which each presented on a major work of Boccaccian criticism, with the two-fold goal of making the classroom more collaborative and tasking them with some of the requisite stages of graduate-level research.

The *Decameron* played a different role in the undergraduate course, which concerned narratives of travel, broadly construed, in medieval and early modern Italy and whose principal texts were Marco Polo's *Travels*, Dante's *Inferno*, and Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*. It was relatively successful when I first taught it, but it was clear that the students would benefit from more preparation before confronting the longer narratives. Instead of adding to the various secondary readings covered in our first meetings, I decided to devote the third week of the semester to the discussion of Day 2. While we interpreted the stories in their own right, their principal function was to serve as a weeklong laboratory to consolidate the ideas presented in the historical and theoretical readings, providing key trends, events and concepts with a narrative and a name. I was very pleased with the results since, whether they linked Angelica to Alatiel or Marco Polo's representation of Eastern hospitality to Rinaldo d'Asti nocturnal adventure, students would consistently refer back to the *Decameron* to organize their thoughts on subsequent readings. What was equally evident from my experiences in both classrooms is that, in addition to being an unfettered joy to teach, the *Decameron* can be an effective heuristic through which to achieve a variety of pedagogical and methodological goals.



## LECTURA BOCCACCII

One of the initiatives that the American Boccaccio Association has promoted during the centenary year and that has matured in 2014 is the revitalization of the *Lectura Boccaccii*. This year has seen the issuing of Volume 3, whereas Volume 2, edited by Victoria Kirkham, and Volume 4, edited by Michael Sherberg, are in their final stages of development.

In order for the publication of the critical readings of the *giornate* to proceed at a similar sustained pace also in the future, a new format for the series has been adopted in consultation with the Acquisition Editor at the University of Toronto Press. Rather than proceeding sequentially, one *Decameron* day at the time, the Press has accepted to develop the remaining volumes in parallel.

We are therefore issuing a general CFP to all members in support of the project: please contact one of the volume editors if you would like to contribute an essay on one of the *novelle*. Please note that authors should contribute only one essay in the series. We would like the series to entertain a diversity of contributors and perspectives, as reflects the composition of the ABA membership. A list of current contributors is being maintained on the ABA site in coordination with the volume editors. Contributors are expected to be members of the ABA. **The deadline for proposals is April 30, 2105.**

The following colleagues have volunteered their work as editors of the *Lectura Boccaccii* volumes, and they are ready to evaluate proposals for the individual lecturae.

Day 5: Jason Houston, University of Oklahoma ([jason.houston@uo.edu](mailto:jason.houston@uo.edu))

Day 6: David Lummus, Stanford University ([dlummus@stanford.edu](mailto:dlummus@stanford.edu))

Day 7: Elsa Filosa, Vanderbilt University ([elsa.filosa@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:elsa.filosa@vanderbilt.edu))

Day 8: William Robins, University of Toronto ([william.robins@utoronto.ca](mailto:william.robins@utoronto.ca))

Day 9: Susanna Barsella, Fordham University ([barsella@Fordham.edu](mailto:barsella@Fordham.edu))

& Simone Marchesi, Princeton University ([simonem@princeton.edu](mailto:simonem@princeton.edu))

Day 10: Michael Papio, University of Massachusetts ([papio@hfa.umass.edu](mailto:papio@hfa.umass.edu))



## ABA WEBSITE UPDATE AND CHANGES

The website of the American Boccaccio Association has been transferred to the servers of the University of Oklahoma's Modern Languages department. The web address for the website ([abaonline.us](http://abaonline.us)) will remain the same. Hopefully, this transfer has gone unnoticed by the membership of the ABA, as our primary goal has been to maintain access to the website for our members. I would also like to acknowledge the effort the past-president of the ABA Michael Papio put into developing, hosting, and maintaining the website for many years.

Our move offers an opportunity to enhance ABA website. The University of Oklahoma Language Learning Center has assigned a staff member to assist with the website. We have already begun to add features, including adding a Paypal button to the membership page, so that members can pay their dues and other contributions through the website. We also intend to create a "blog" on the website, where members, through invitation of the officers, can frequently post short pieces or announcements.

I solicit from our membership suggestions and ideas for how the current website can be improved or enhanced. Current ideas, besides the blog and Paypal option include discussion boards, allowing, not requiring, members to create and maintain "profiles" on the site, and access to membership information via login.

Please send any ideas or suggestions directly to Jason Houston, ABA Secretary ([Jason.houston@ou.edu](mailto:Jason.houston@ou.edu)).



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**SESSIONS SPONSORED BY THE AMERICAN BOCCACCIO ASSOCIATION**

*Boccaccio Veneto*- Organized by ABA member Professor Roberta Morosini with Timothy Kircher and the Fondazione Ugo and Olga Levi.

**Convegno Internazionale**

***Boccaccio veneto. / Boccaccio and the Venetian World***  
***700 anni di incroci mediterranei a Venezia / 700 Years of Cultural Crossing in***  
***Mediterranean Venice***

**Venezia, “Casa Artom”, 20 – 22 giugno 2013 / June 20-22, 2013**

**I Sessione: Venezia: i libri e le immagini / Venetian Books and Images**

Presiede / Chair: **Furio Brugnolo**, Università di Padova

**Marco Veglia**, Università di Bologna

*From Martellino to friar Alberto. Popular Identity, Comic and Political Violence in the ‘Decameron’*

**Agnese Chiari Moretti Wiel**, Wake Forest University “Casa Artom”

*Venice: Art, Religion, Power: Considerations on the Venetian Art of Boccaccio’s Time*

**Steven Grossvogel**, University of Georgia

*‘Decameron IV, 2’: Inner and Outer Body Experiences in Boccaccio’s Venetian Novella*

**II Sessione: Raccontare e viaggiare il Mediterraneo / Narrating and Traveling the Mediterranean**

Presiede / Chair: **Daria Perocco**, Università Ca’ Foscari, Venezia

**Sharon Kinoshita**, University of California, Santa Cruz

*Sailing the Corrupting Sea: ‘Decameron 5:7’ and the Fourteenth-Century Mediterranean*

**Ilaria Tufano**, Università di Foggia

*Narrative and Greek Epic in the ‘Decameron’*

**Timothy Kircher**, Guilford College

*Crossing Seas and Passing Meanings in ‘Decameron 1’*

**III Sessione: Petrarca e Boccaccio a Venezia / Petrarch and Boccaccio in Venice**

Presiede / Chair: **Stefano Zamponi**, Ente Nazionale Giovanni Boccaccio

**Martin Eisner**, Duke University

*Boccaccio’s Visits with Petrarca in the Veneto*

**Susanna Barsella**, Fordham University

*From the ‘Bucolicum’ to the ‘Buccolicum’: Pastoral Spaces between History and Poetry in Petrarch and Boccaccio*

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**Elsa Filosa**, Vanderbilt University

*The Gold of Medusa on the Riva degli Schiavoni: A Possible Inspiration for R.V.F. 197*

#### IV Sessione: Viaggio dei testi / Textual Voyages

Presiede: **Aldo Maria Costantini**, Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia

**Beatrice Barbellini Amidei**, Università di Milano

*Boccaccio, Courtliness, and the 'Venetian tradition' of Stilnovo Poetry*

**Sebastiano Valerio**, Università di Foggia

*The Tradition of the 'Novella' Genre and the Reformation: The Case of the 'Traveling Library' of Giovanni Bernardino Bonifacio from Brindisi, to Venice and Gdansk*

**Leslie Zarker Morgan**, Loyola University Maryland

*'Genealogia gestae': Boccaccio and the Franco-Italian Tradition of the 'Chanson de Geste'*

**Roberta Morosini**, Wake Forest University

*Muhammad and Venus at the Mecca. The journey in the Mediterranean of Peter Alfonsi's 'Dialogi contra Iudaeos', from Paolino Veneto's Gesta Machumeti' to Boccaccio's 'De Mahumeth'*



#### OTHER SESSIONS AND CONFERENCES ON BOCCACCIO HELD IN SPRING 2014:

Les Sept Sages et les Sept Vizirs: Vers une histoire comparée des textes, 6-8 novembre 2014, Uni-Bastions, Aile Jura.

Panel: LES SAGES ET LA TRADITION LITTÉRAIRE:

Olivia Holmes (Binghamton University) The Seven Sages in Italy and Boccaccio's Day Seven

Italian Research Seminar at Notre Dame: "Boccaccio and the Coup in Florence (1360-61)," November 20, 2014

Elsa Filosa (Vanderbilt)



#### FRIENDLY REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Boccaccio at 700: Tales and Afterlives*—a special issue of *Mediaevalia* edited by Olivia Holmes and Dana E. Stewart—contains articles stemming primarily from the plenary addresses at the April 2013 conference “Boccaccio at 700: Medieval Contexts and Global Intertexts,” hosted by the Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies at Binghamton University and co-sponsored by the American Boccaccio Association. The volume contains articles by Teodolinda Barolini, Roberto Bigazzi, Marco Cursi, Anne Hedeman, Victoria Kirkham, Charmaine Lee, Millicent Marcus, Ronald Martinez, F. Regina Psaki, and Janet Smarr. Cursi's and Hedeman's articles both address philological and codicological issues, Cursi's in terms of Boccaccio's texts' earliest diffusion in his own handwritten manuscripts and the author's self-conscious efforts to control reception by managing the texts' visual arrangement, and Hedeman's in terms of the significant role played by the French humanist Laurent de Premierfait in the textual and visual

transmission of Boccaccio's work in France in the early fifteenth century. Lee's essay addresses linguistic issues, rather, in the light of Boccaccio's historical presence in Angevin Naples; she considers issues of code-switching in multilingual communities both in terms of different languages and linguistic registers and the mutual contamination of oral and written communication. Barolini's article forms a diptych with Smarr's, inasmuch as both treat the *Decameron's* final story, that of patient Griselda. Barolini's reading is centered, however, on Griselda's spouse and persecutor, Gualtieri, and interprets the tale as ultimately more about the relationship between the marquis and his vassals than that between husband and wife. Smarr examines early socio-political context and content of the various reworkings of the story. Martinez' essay on Day 6 of the *Decameron* might also be grouped with Barolini's and Smarr's essays in terms of its concern with politics—specifically the governance of the medieval *comune*. Smarr's article on theatrical revisions of Boccaccio might also be seen as forming a group with Bigazzi's, Psaki's, and Marcus's contributions, all of which address Boccaccio's influence on later writers and genres (Bigazzi sees Boccaccio's complex, composite work as providing an early model for the novel, and Marcus, for cinema, whereas Psaki examines specific twentieth-century rewritings of the *Decameron* by women). Finally, Kirkham's essay offers an overview of Boccaccian "apocrypha," the writer's ultimate legacy.

More information about *Boccaccio at 700: Tales and Afterlives (Mediaevalia 34, 2013)*, can be found on the SUNY Press website: for the table of contents, see <http://www.sunypress.edu/p-6013-mediaevalia-volume-34-special-issue.aspx>. To order a copy (the cost is \$38), contact The Sheridan Press at (717) 632-3535 ext. 8188 or e-mail Matt Baile at [matt.baile@sheridan.com](mailto:matt.baile@sheridan.com).



The National Endowment for the Humanities is pleased to announce the recent award of a three-year Scholarly Editions and Translations grant to Professors Michael Papio and Albert Lloret (both of the University of Massachusetts Amherst) for the preparation for publication of the first critical edition and translation from Latin into English of Giovanni Boccaccio's *De montibus*, which will be disseminated in hard copy (upon final approval by the Cambridge University Press) with supplementary materials on an open-access website. For the first time, all of the more than sixty-five extant manuscript witnesses will be examined and their texts collated to produce the most reliable edition possible of this priceless geographical treasure. The grant runs from 2015 to 2018.



Elsa Filosa, ABA member and immediate past Secretary, has been awarded the I Tatti Fellowship by the Harvard Center for Italian Renaissance Studies in Florence. Her research project involves Boccaccio. "On New Year's Eve 1360-61, in Florence, a group of conspirators attempted an unsuccessful coup. The Florentine Republic blamed twelve people, four of whom were close friends and neighbors of Giovanni Boccaccio: Niccolò di Bartolo del Buono, Pino de' Rossi, Andrea di Tello d'Ischia, Luca di Feo Ugolini. Using documents in the State Archive of Florence, I propose to investigate the political dynamics of the attempted coup, the motives behind it, and its consequences. I will examine the relationships between the writer and this group of friends as well, which also deeply affected Boccaccio's life and writing."

Italian Graduate Conference



# The Many Forms of the *Decameron*: Interpretations, Translations and Adaptations

**24-25-26**  
April 2015

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The **ABA newsletter** is an invaluable tool for disseminating important information among our members. Please consider sending items of significance, such as notes on work in progress, announcements of general interest and other similar tidbits to Jason Houston at [jason.houston@ou.edu](mailto:jason.houston@ou.edu)



Christopher Kleinhenz and Elsa Filosa would similarly appreciate your assistance in their yearly compilation of the **North American Boccaccio Bibliography**. Please send them Boccaccio-related citations so that he may integrate them with his own findings. Email: [ckleinhe@wisc.edu](mailto:ckleinhe@wisc.edu); [elsa.filosa@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:elsa.filosa@vanderbilt.edu).

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