THE NEW MIDDLE AGES

BOCCACCIO'S *DECAMERON* *and the* CICERONIAN RENAISSANCE

Michaela Paasche Grudin
and Robert Grudin

THE NEW MIDDLE AGES

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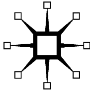

BOCCACCIO'S *DECAMERON* AND THE CICERONIAN RENAISSANCE
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Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 2012 978-0-230-34112-8

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First published in 2012 by
PALGRAVE MACMILLAN®
in the United States—a division of St. Martin's Press LLC,
175 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10010.

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ISBN 978-1-349-34394-2 ISBN 978-1-137-05684-9 (eBook)
DOI 10.1057/9781137056849

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Grudin, Michaela Paasche, 1941–
Boccaccio's Decameron and the Ciceronian Renaissance / Michaela Paasche Grudin and Robert Grudin.
p. cm.—(New Middle Ages)

1. Boccaccio, Giovanni, 1313–1375. Decamerone—Criticism and interpretation. I. Grudin, Robert. II. Title.

PQ4294.G78 2012
853′.1—dc23 2011047902

A catalogue record of the book is available from the British Library.

This book is printed on paper suitable for recycling and made from fully managed and sustained forest sources. Logging, pulping and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

Design by Newgen Imaging Systems (P) Ltd., Chennai, India.

First edition: June 2012

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Novi ingenium tuum; et quid merear novi.

—Boccaccio, *De casibus,* IX.xxiii.8

To Anthony, Nicholas, and Theodore
Charles Muscatine, In Memoriam

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For guidance in completing this project, we are deeply indebted to two scholars of medieval literature. Charles Muscatine over many years contributed invaluable insights to our publications, especially this one. The peer reviewer for Palgrave Macmillan not only pointed out several missteps but also suggested important redirections. For expert and generously rendered counsel, we are grateful to William S. Anderson, Julia Bolton Holloway, Carlo Pincin, Gene Brucker, Michael Calabrese, Warren Ginsburg, Gina Psaki, Louise Clubb, Eckhard Kessler, Lisa Kaborycha, and Cristiana Franco. Our sincere thanks go also to Bonnie Wheeler, editor of the New Middle Ages series, and Michele Rubin, our agent at Writers House. Fulvia Bracci, Lavinia Bracci, Antonio Giorgi, and Ora Cipolla graciously provided homes away from home in Siena and Florence.

INTRODUCTION: CICERO AND THE *DECAMERON*

In the pages that follow we will present a new interpretation of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*. By "new" we mean that we have availed ourselves of previously unexamined Ciceronian sources, and that these sources have led us to new conclusions about the unity and direction of Boccaccio's work. As we conceive it, the *Decameron* not only establishes a clear line of evolution between late classical thought and modern humanism, but also stands as the first coherent expression of moral principles that scholarship has come to associate with the Renaissance.

How the coherence of this work of genius and its readily discernible sources remained unrecognized until now is a good question. The answer, in as few words as possible, is that understanding the coherence of the *Decameron* depends in large measure on the identification and interpretation of these sources; and that, given the character of literary interpretation since the late fourteenth century, there seemed little reason to see them as sources at all. Some of Cicero's works were fragmentary, so fragmentary that at least one of them was despised by Petrarch himself. And none of them was literary in subject matter. *De legibus*, which of them all is perhaps the most crucial to this study, has not up to now been considered a major Boccaccian source. Centuries after Boccaccio's time, *De legibus* would become uncommonly important to the Enlightenment, but since then it has retired into the province of political scientists.

Thus what might otherwise have been regarded as the obvious line of descent from the classical godfather of humanism (Cicero invented and developed the idea of *humanitas*) to its most formidable fourteenth-century protagonist has been so obscured that it will now require substantial effort to show that such descent existed at all. But evidence in favor of our thesis is not lacking. Boccaccio had access to most of Cicero's then-extant writings. He showed this by reproducing Ciceronian terminology, Ciceronian lines of argument, and, in sum, the entire framework of the Ciceronian humanistic project. He declared that he modeled his

own style on Cicero's. Granted, he modernized Cicero, converting him from an ancient authority to an early modern resource. But this fact in no way reduces the Roman's contribution, or the Italian's debt.

Examining this largely unexplored interaction will bring a few academic assumptions into question. Cicero was not, as many believe, a derivative philosopher, trafficking merely in traditional academic, Epicurean, and Stoic points of view. Instead it was Cicero who used these and other sources, including his own political experience, to construct the modern ideas of the state, of private property, of community, of liberty, of natural law, of government by consent, and of political theory as deriving from an understanding of real-life events. Neither was Cicero, as is generally assumed, a second-rate thinker and a recalcitrant conservative, thrown onto the scrap-heap of political history by the premodern executive politics of Julius and Augustus Caesar. He is more accurately seen as a liberal visionary in his own time, paving the way for Locke, Jefferson, and modern democracy. Renaissance humanism did not, as literary scholars often assume, evolve initially from the Arab Aristotelians alone. It also found its origins in civic humanism, as promoted in Florence in the mid-thirteenth century by Dante's teacher, the Ciceronian Brunetto Latini. Dante, who grew to hate his own Guelphic republic, could not in the end accept Brunetto's republican teachings. But two generations later, Boccaccio could and did. Finally, Boccaccio was not, as Vittore Branca declared, an organic outgrowth of medievalism. On the contrary, he was the most radical convert to Ciceronian humanism of his time. To Boccaccio, Cicero was no mere mortal, but rather a quasi-divine figure, sent by the heavens for the betterment of humanity. Cicero's heroic and tragic mission, as Boccaccio describes it, is comparable to Christ's, and Boccaccio's account of it in *De casibus* may be seen as the modern alternative to the prevailing evangelical narrative.[1]

But for all this, Boccaccio's aim was not, as it was for Cola di Rienzi and so many since, a restoration of the classic. Like Cicero, Boccaccio looked to the future, and he assembled his many powers and resources, including the Ciceronian legacy, to this end. Without an excess of nostalgia, he accepted his location in history. He concentrated so intensely on the now, the Italian, and particularly the Florentine for his fictive raw material that his operative principles became submerged in an ocean of original configurations. The extent to which he realized Cicero's promise, and transformed it with his own brilliant inventiveness, will be of major interest here.

Boccaccio's debts to Cicero in the *Decameron* are many and various. He regularly employs Ciceronian prose style and is adept at imitating

the form and/or substance of Ciceronian oratory. He is clearly attentive to Cicero's emphasis on the practical application of human intelligence (*De inventione*, I. i). He shares Cicero's ability to view a given topic (*De natura deorum*) from separate and opposed positions—a strategy employed to great effect in his treatments of religion and of the status of women in the *Decameron*. He follows Cicero's advice to cultivate a studied neglect, thus creating an informal-yet-articulate style of expression (*Orator*).[2] Similarly, he is attentive to Cicero's counsel (*De inventione*, I. xv.21) on the use of indirection and suggestion (*insinuatio*) rather than direct statement, when dealing with difficult issues. He profits from the Ciceronian strategy of moving from the serious to the comic and back again, and he accepts and transmits the Ciceronian theory of humor (*De oratore*, II. liv. 216–lxxi. 289). He excels, finally, in the use of *copia*, the discursive variety, abundance, and pure bounty that gave Cicero his almost hypnotic allure.[3] Yet Boccaccio turns all these inherited felicities into a literary experience so completely his own that his debt to the Roman is superficially invisible. So great is the Italian's alchemy that many have long read his masterpiece as sui generis: a source of modern perspectives rather than a revival of ancient devices. This oversight is itself a gauge of Boccaccio's achievement. As T. S. Eliot remarked, good writers borrow; great writers steal.

But these are only the more easily apparent Ciceronian influences on the *Decameron*. Beyond them lies a corpus of moral and political ideas that derive from Cicero's late works: the *Laws* (*De legibus*, 52 BC) the *Republic* (*De re publica*, 52 BC), and the *Duties* (*De officiis*, 44 BC). These ideas may be summarized as follows: Nature is the only palpable manifestation of the divine; thus Nature and natural Justice must be our guides in all human matters.[4] We cannot comprehend Nature without using Reason, which unites us with the gods, and which, by virtue of this, endows us with the spark of divinity. The rule of Reason implies the use not only of logic, but also of history and direct experience. As Nature embodies Justice, and Reason perceives Justice, so we are obliged to use Reason as a means of replicating Justice in our laws and our behavior. Reason teaches that all human beings are fundamentally similar to each other, and that all of us crave liberty. To achieve and preserve a rational degree of liberty, we must cultivate moral and political virtue. The same Nature that made us individuals also bonds us through love or mutual attraction into political groups, thus giving each person a dual identity: as an independent being and as a social team member. To accommodate this double nature, we choose to form republics: independent societies founded by common consent. From Nature and Reason we learn to

live independently, yet also harmoniously and decorously. In Cicero's words,

> And it is no mean manifestation of Nature and Reason that man is the only animal that has a feeling for order, for propriety, for moderation in word and deed. And so no other animal has a sense of beauty, loveliness, harmony in the visible world; and Nature and Reason, extending the analogy of this from the world of sense to the world of spirit, find that beauty, consistency, order are far more to be maintained in thought and deed, and the same Nature and Reason are careful to do nothing in an improper or unmanly fashion, and in every thought and deed to do or think nothing capriciously.[5]

What faculty gives us access to reason and the understanding of nature? In his *De legibus* (I. xxii.59) Cicero answers with one of his most powerful concepts: *ingenium* (genius, imagination, inventiveness), a blessed, even holy gift, inborn in every human being, at once drawing human beings together and distinguishing them from every other species. *Ingenium* is at the root of all human achievement—especially the arts of speech, which build and guard the health of the *res publica*. Boccaccio appropriates the idea as *ingegno* and makes it the key to the morality and esthetics of the *Decameron*. Various forms of the word *ingegno*, referring to human ingenuity and inventiveness of all sorts, throng the text of the *Decameron*, as do related verbs like *conoscere*, nouns like *industria*, *ragione*, and *intelletto*, and adjectives like *savio* and *avveduto*. When Boccaccio introduces Titus, his Ciceronian avatar, in the *Decameron* tale of Titus and Gisippus (X.8), he links him specifically to *ingenium*: "Titus Quintius Fulvus, possessed of marvelous genius" (*Tito Quinzio Fulvo nominato, di maraviglioso ingegno*). And by contrast, words denoting the lack of *ingegno* abound. At or near the front of the pack are forms of *sciocco* (fool), and the profusion ranges to metaphoric terms like *meccanico* and *lavaceci* (bean-washer). One uncommonly feeble mind is characterized as *più che una canna vana* (hollower than a cane). Calandrino, the captain of Boccaccio's ship of fools, is *di grossa pasta* (pasta-brained).

It must be added that Cicero was as alert to *ingenium* as a source of social ills as he was to its blessings. In his political and rhetorical writings, as well as in his public speeches, the bête noire is tyranny. In *De inventione*, he inveighs against the sort of inventiveness that worms its way into public power by imitating virtue—"a depraved imitation of virtue . . . low cunning supported by talent" ("*prava virtutis imitatrix . . . ingenio freta malitia*") (I. ii).[6] For him the only rhetoric that can build and protect a republic is eloquence (*copia dicendi*) supported by reason (*ratio*) and wisdom (*sapientia*).

This crucial distinction between base and noble rhetoric would not be ignored by Boccaccio, who reprises it in *De casibus* (I. xi and VI. xiii) and enlarges on it comprehensively in the *novelle* of the *Decameron*.

Boccaccio was by no means the first writer in the late Middle Ages to integrate concepts like genius, reason, and nature into philosophical fiction. Alain de Lille (1128–1202) and Jean de Meun (1240–*ca.* 1305), both admirers of Cicero, had embodied one or more of these concepts allegorically in major works.[7] Nor was he the first writer in that era to proclaim the virtues of Eros, either allegorical or physical. Here also Jean de Meun and others, including the thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century authors of the fabliaux, preceded him.[8] But perhaps the most important of Boccaccio's predecessors was the Florentine, Brunetto Latini (*ca.* 1220–1294). Brunetto, regarded by many as a medieval encyclopedist in the style of Isidore, is more accurately seen as the effective founder of civic humanism and humanist vernacular literacy in thirteenth-century Florence:

> He commented the Rhetoric of Tully, and made the good and useful book called the *Tesoro*, and the *Tesoretto*, and the *Keys of the Tesoro*, and many other books of philosophy, and of vices and of virtues, and he was Secretary of our Commune. He was a worldly man, but we have made mention of him because he was the first master in refining the Florentines, and in teaching them how to speak correctly, and how to guide and govern our Republic on political principles.[9]

First chancellor of the Florentine commune (*primo popolo*), Brunetto provided the first example of republican government in what would become a uniquely productive, if fractious, city-state. He achieved this feat by emulating his idol Cicero in word and deed. He was an expert in law, a celebrated civic leader, and a writer whose influential work, including the widely circulated *Tesoro*, laid the foundations for independent thinking and political liberty. In effect, he harnessed classical discourse and drove it into the forum.[10] As Stephen J. Milner attests, Brunetto was thus instrumental in transforming classicism from a learned pursuit into a political imperative.[11]

Brunetto was also responsible for an innovation in discourse that would have a pervasively energizing effect on Italian letters. In his influential *Rettorica*, he developed a new kind of writing: a lively oppositional style based on the rhetoric of Cicero's orations. Brunetto took the adversarial element implicit in Ciceronian rhetoric and expounded on it as a tension (*tencione*) that could be used to energize discourse in general. This latter style, with its dialectical implications, would be an obvious advantage

to the emerging Florentine commune, which was experiencing conflict both within and without. The new style, moreover, may well have enabled writers and artists of succeeding generations, including Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, to express and convey the multifarious political, philosophical, personal, and psychological contradictions implicit in the human condition.[12] Brunetto reconstructed Ciceronian discourse in such fashion as to enlighten and invigorate Florentine culture. In so doing, he nurtured a civic intelligence that could appreciate the rise of Humanism and the Renaissance.

Boccaccio thus sprang from a late medieval tradition that was alive with the resurrected spirit of Cicero. But Boccaccio was the first to weave these and other Ciceronian ideas into a comprehensive fabric of social meaning, based on realistic characterizations that sprang from, and spoke to, the day-to-day issues of the world around him.

In integrating Cicero so profoundly into his discourse, Boccaccio became a revolutionary in his own times. Ciceronian belief anticipated Christian doctrine as a communitarian and moderating influence, and Ciceronian discourse influenced Christian thinking from its earliest interpreters on through Dante. But unlike Christianity, Ciceronian thought did not rest its authority on complicated narrations and exotic symbols, or encourage ignorance of civic affairs in both believers and priests, or lay counterintuitive strictures on personal and social behavior, or seek to impose itself on the world as a dominating political power. Quite the contrary. The Ciceronian plan encouraged individual initiative, social engagement, reverence for nature, and intellectual inquiry. Though Ciceronian theory supported religion, it nonetheless emphasized the centrality of a state based on secular knowledge and virtue.[13] For Cicero, knowledge and social commitment constituted the best forms of piety. In his eyes, reasoning was sacramental, indeed revelatory:

> True law is right reason in agreement with nature; it is of universal application, unchanging and everlasting; it summons to duty by its commands, and averts from wrongdoing by its prohibitions . . . We cannot be freed from its obligations by senate or people, and we need not look outside ourselves for an expounder or interpreter of it . . . one eternal and unchangeable law will be valid for all nations and all times . . . Whoever is disobedient is fleeing from himself and denying his human nature . . .[14]

Cicero's late works presented something not to be found in other classical writers: a moral and practicable schema for a politics that could prosper independently of Christian authority. With the rise of republicanism in Florence in the thirteenth century, Cicero would reemerge as a fulcrum

for civic independence and a threat to vested interests. But this is not all. Four centuries later, the Cicero of *De legibus*, *De re publica*, and De *officiis* would take his place as the godfather of Enlightenment politics and the democratic state. This monumental legacy, combined with his contributions in other areas, prompted Michael Grant to declare that Cicero's "influence upon the history of European literature and ideas greatly exceeds that of any other prose writer in any language," and to add that "the Renaissance became, above all else, a revival of Cicero."[15]

But how could Boccaccio broadcast Cicero's essentially un-Christian message in a rigidly Christian publishing context? In virtually every way possible, we will see, short of shouted declaration—through repetition, insinuation, irony, metaphor, fictional event, stylistic orientation, structural emphasis, and seemingly demure suggestions, which, when read in context, are little short of revolutionary. He reinforces this strategy theoretically, making many urgent and sometimes angry assertions that fiction has allegorical meaning. In the *Trattatello in Laude di Dante*, he declares that the works of the great poets are not mere pleasantries, "as the foolish multitude thinks, but that within them are concealed the sweet fruits of historical and philosophical truth."[16] Similarly, in the *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium*, Boccaccio reminds his readers that he has "time and time again proved that the meaning of fiction is far from superficial... Fiction is a form of discourse, which, under guise of invention, illustrates or proves an idea; and, as its superficial aspect is removed, the meaning of the author is clear." He is notably impatient with readers who settle for "the guise of fiction," and ignore the author's concealed meaning:

> Is any reader so muddled as not to see clearly that Vergil was a philosopher; or mad enough to think that he, with all his deep learning, would, merely for the sake of displaying his eloquence... have led the shepherd Aristeus into his mother Climene's presence in the depths of the earth, or brought Aeneas to see his father in Hades? Or can anyone believe he wrote such lines without some meaning or intention hidden beneath the superficial veil of myth?

He mentions readers' responses to the works of Virgil, Dante, and Petrarch as instances of the universal and regrettable tendency to read literally. Boccaccio specifically refers to his own *Eclogues* ("of whose meaning I am, of course, fully aware") as works that have been read too literally.[17] We should add that in the *Eclogues* as well as elsewhere, Boccaccio uses the veil of allegory to protect his ideas from the political vested interests at which they are satirically directed.

The pervasiveness of the allegorical mode is noted by Victoria Kirkham, who observes that from

> his first fiction, *Caccia di Diana*, he busied himself "hiding" moral truths for readers to uncover, just as he would "expose" and expound them in his last encyclopedia, *Genealogia deorum gentilium*. Even at mid-career, when he was supposedly keeping well distant from a mode so medieval, and while he had on his drawing boards the very "realistic" *Decameron*, beneath surface appearances of history and documentary he drew a network of submerged allegory.[18]

The *Decameron* is not a polished and openly advertised allegory like the *Commedia*; it presents itself as a loosely organized miscellany, and as such it has delighted readers for centuries. But closer study reveals that both its frame and its stories build a coherent moral meaning, deriving in the main from Cicero, as well as from Boccaccio's own experience of contemporary life.[19] Moreover, the sense of a unified teaching increases as the reader nears the central days of the book and intensifies right up to the conclusion. Even the *canzoni* that punctuate the conclusion of every day advance the development of this teaching. And the countertales of Dioneo, which seem to mock the significance of each day's announced theme, are nothing if not faithful to the author's implicit ideas.[20]

Dioneo, the subversive, satirical wit who flouts moral standards and demolishes fixed positions, is the ultimate insider of the *Decameron*. He may be seen as the conduit for an ironic energy that suffuses the whole work with a fierce dynamism. Brash and insolent, he is the first hero in the rise of modern satire. Not only does he build and maintain a character of stubborn unorthodoxy in his own tales, but he also haunts the frame narration with misrule and serves as a tuning fork for aggressively iconoclastic assertions and actions in tales told by others. When Guido the atheist leaps over the graveyard wall and mocks the true believers (VI. 9), he is embodying Dioneo. When Filippa of Prato defends her sexual infidelity so ably as to break a solemn courtroom into vaudevillian hilarity (VI. 7), she speaks with Dioneo's voice. And Dioneo's voice is nothing if not adversarial, giving substance to Brunetto's teaching about the "*tencione*" implicit in Ciceronian discourse. Dioneo, in short, is about as close as we will get to Boccaccio's living speech—closer by far than the deferential if sometimes ironic tone that Boccaccio puts on in his author's comments. Boccaccio's reverent name for his irreverent hero—which (we submit) is from the ancient Greek for "New God"—implies that the esoteric meaning he carries is of an iconoclastic and revolutionary nature.[21] In both name and character, Dioneo thus suggests Boccaccio's

goal in appropriating Ciceronian *ingenium*: the replacement of other-worldly authority with autonomous human genius.

Granted, the fact that Dioneo's teachings, and more broadly Boccaccio's, are couched in irreverent and often sexual discourse would seem to distance the *Decameron* from the Stoic and dignified Cicero. But this distinction derives in large part from Boccaccio's redefinition of Ciceronian "nature" in terms of the fourteenth century. Cicero lived in a permissive culture, where various forms of erotic activity were openly practiced, and where even the gods were thought to express themselves sexually. Boccaccio, for his part, lived in a Christian society that had, at least in terms of public policy, banished Eros from its midst. Had Cicero been transplanted to the Florence of 1350, he might well have sympathized with Boccaccio's use of sexuality as a symbol of resurgent nature in the face of authoritarian rule. This bold literary practice would ultimately inspire De Sanctis's insightful comment that Boccaccio "writes like Cicero, yet so alive and so true is his imagination that it turns Cicero into an enticing siren who bends and moves her body alluringly."[22] All of this notwithstanding, however, Boccaccio will devote much energy, in Day X, to regaining touch with Cicero's idea of community and self-control.

Ciceronian Insinuations in the *Proemio* and Introduction to Day I. Boccaccio's style in the opening sections of the *Decameron* accords suggestively with Cicero's rhetorical theory. In *De inventione* (I. xv.20), Cicero gives studious attention to the *exordium* or opening of an oration—a passage enthusiastically discussed by Brunetto. According to Cicero, pleading a case that has powerful, convincing evidence needs little or no *exordium* at all; but pleading a difficult case—one against which the auditors may be prejudiced—requires an artful opening that uses a technique he calls *insinuatio,* "*oratio quadam dissimulatione et circumitione obscure subiens auditoris animum*" ("an address which by dissimulation and indirection unobtrusively steals into the mind of the auditor").

Accordingly, while purporting to introduce a work that diverts and consoles lonely female readers, Boccaccio's *Proemio* serves as a subtly crafted entryway into a complex of revolutionary ideas. After drawing attention to the central theme of love, he carefully introduces one of the key topics that will characterize the work to come: social injustice, as evidenced by the subjection and alienation of women,

> ristrette da' voleri, da' piaceri, da' comandamenti de' padri, delle madri, de' fratelli e de' mariti, il piú del tempo nel piccolo circuito delle loro camere racchiuse dimorano e quasi oziose sedendosi, volendo e non volendo in una medesima ora, seco rivolgendo diversi pensieri, li quali non è possibile che sempre sieno allegri. (*Proemio*.10)

> [restricted by the wishes, whims, and commands of fathers, mothers, brothers, and husbands, they remain most of the time limited to the narrow confines of their bedrooms, where they sit in apparent idleness, now wishing one thing and now wishing another, turning over in their minds a number of thoughts which cannot always be pleasant ones.] (2)[23]

The issue of society's unjust treatment of women will reach crescendo in a number of tales near the work's center, inspiring a rallying cry for the rule of reason, the imitation of nature, and government by consent, all (as we will see) reminiscent of Cicero's late works. After these remarks, Boccaccio proceeds to describe the contents of his book as "*novelle, o favole o parabole o istorie che dire le vogliamo*" (*Proemio*.13). Here, as Simone Marchesi has shown, Boccaccio breaks with the traditional formula of *fabula*, *historia*, and *argumentum*, thus suggesting forcefully the literary uniqueness and moral purport of his achievement.[24] Boccaccio caps this passage with a discretely assertive prediction, that

> le già dette donne, che queste leggeranno, parimente diletto delle sollazzevoli cose in quelle mostrate e utile consiglio potranno pigliare, in quanto potranno cognoscere quello che sia da fuggire e che sia similmente da seguitare. (*Proemio*.14)
>
> [the ladies just mentioned will, perhaps, derive from the delightful things that happen in these tales both pleasure and useful counsel, inasmuch as they will recognize what should be avoided and what should be sought after.] (3).

Boccaccio thus reminds us at this auspicious juncture that apt *poesis* can and often does convey urgent human meaning. But his boldest sally of all occurs in the very first phrase of the *Proemio*, and hence of the whole *Decameron*: "*Umana cosa è*." For the careful reader, this phrase is doubly meaningful. It gracefully demarcates Boccaccio's discursive territory from that of his esteemed predecessor, Dante. Yes, Boccaccio seems to say, Dante's *Commedia* is a noble and transcendent exploration of things divine, but I am building from it into the equally essential world of the here and now. Boccaccio is also ushering us into the brilliant world of Cicero, who invented and developed the idea of "*humanitas*" (*De oratore*), as well as the neuter plural "*umana*," thus spawning the concepts that would become the ideological core of Renaissance culture, and of the modern term "humanism." With his resounding "*Umana*," Boccaccio briefly suggests to us the literary and moral foundation of the enterprise to come.

If Boccaccio has indeed, in his *Proemio*, laid claim to the province of things *umana*, he reasserts that claim by stretching the concept to its

very limits in the pages immediately following (Day I, *Introduzione*). His extended description of the plague in Florence—epoch-making as a moment in literary history—is a stylistic tour de force, drawing equally from poetics, rhetoric, classical material, and an emergent vein of quasi-journalistic techniques. His mis-en-scène realizes, in a copious medley of human ways, a world so desperate and chaotic that comparisons with the *Inferno* are irresistible. Boccaccio is nodding again to Dante here, though implying that one need not go as far as an imaginary Underworld to encounter the basic elements of torment, panic, and abandoned hope:

> E lasciamo stare che l'uno cittadino l'altro schifasse e quasi niuno vicino avesse dell'altro cura e i parenti insieme rade volte o non mai si visitassero e di lontano: era con sí fatto spavento questa tribulazione entrata ne' petti degli uomini e delle donne, che l'un fratello l'altro abbandonava e il zio il nepote e la sorella il fratello e spesse volte la donna il suo marito; e, che maggior cosa è e quasi non credibile, li padri e le madri i figliuoli, quasi loro non fossero, di visitare e di servire schifavano. (I. *Intro.*27)
>
> [The fact was that one citizen avoided another, that almost no one cared for his neighbor, and that relatives rarely or hardly ever visited each other—they stayed far apart. This disaster had struck such fear into the hearts of men and women that brother abandoned brother, uncle abandoned nephew, sister left brother, and very often wife abandoned husband, and—even worse, almost unbelievable—fathers and mothers neglected to tend and care for their children as if they were not their own.] (9)

Boccaccio's description of the plague sets up a thematic background, perverse and troubling, against which to project his ten days of stories. While the geographic progress of the *brigata* will represent a process of healing and enlightenment, their *novelle* and *canzoni* will often remind us of the mean streets, ugliness, and brutality that, as symbolized by the plague, are the targets of the author's satire. From this perspective, as Victoria Kirkham has noted, the plague is not merely a physical epidemic; it is more extensively a metaphor for unreason, ignorance, and injustice in general.[25] The author makes this dialectical interaction rather difficult to ignore: Florence is a diseased and disordered culture, a broken community. In the words of Dioneo, "*Or non sapete voi che, per la perversità di questa stagione, li giudici hanno lasciati i tribunali? le leggi, cosí le divine come le umane, tacciono?*" (VI. *Concl.*9) (Now, are you not aware that because of the corruption of these times, judges have abandoned their tribunals, the laws, both of God and man, have fallen silent...?) (411). To the same extent that the city is pestilent and disordered, the *brigata*'s rejection of it is sane and rational. Pampinea's initial statement of purpose (made during

the original meeting of the *brigata* in Santa Maria Novella) begins with an endorsement of reason and nature that draws on Cicero's *De officiis*:

> Donne mie care, voi potete, cosí come io, molte volte avere udito che a niuna persona fa ingiuria chi onestamente usa la sua ragione. Natural ragione è, di ciascuno che ci nasce, la sua vita quanto può aiutare e conservare e difendere. (I. *Intro*.53)
>
> [My dear ladies, you have often heard, as I have, how proper use of reason can do harm to no one. It is only natural ["Natural reason is"] for everyone born on this earth to sustain, preserve, and defend his own life to the best of his ability.] (13)[26]

Natural reason, moreover, dictates a withdrawal from urban life and a return to a more natural setting. Boccaccio gratifies this expectation by depicting the blend of art and nature in his description of the *palagio* (mansion) that is the *brigata*'s initial destination:

> Era il detto luogo sopra una piccola montagnetta, da ogni parte lontano alquanto alle nostre strade, di varii albuscelli e piante tutte di verdi fronde ripiene piacevoli a riguardare; in sul colmo della quale era un palagio con bello e gran cortile nel mezzo, e con logge e con sale e con camere, tutte ciascuna verso di sé bellissima e di liete dipinture raguardevole e ornata, con pratelli da torno e con giardini maravigliosi e con pozzi d'acque freschissime e con volte di preziosi vini. (I. *Intro*.90)
>
> [The place was somewhere on a little mountain [hill], at some distance from the road [our roads], full of different kinds of shrubs and plants with rich, green foliage—most pleasant to look at; at the top of this hill there was a country mansion with a beautiful large inner courtyard containing loggias, halls, and bedrooms, all of them beautifully proportioned and decorated with gay and interesting paintings; it was surrounded by meadows and marvelous gardens, with wells of cool water and cellars full of the most precious wines.] (17)

Arrived at the mansion, the ten characters agree on a mode of self-organization that roughly resembles a Ciceronian republic: independent, libertarian, self-governed, and creative, with individuals drawn together by common profit, and authority rotating among equals (later, Boccaccio will call the *brigata* a "*piccol popolo*").[27] Their commerce, moreover, is discourse itself; and comments or disputes about the "meaning" of this or that story or poem remind us of Boccaccio's enjoinder in the *Proemio* that his discourse will be morally edifying. Thus the *brigata* dedicate themselves to—indeed found their *polis* on—the rational and literate discovery of human nature.

Our working hypothesis that the *Decameron* is stylistically and conceptually Ciceronian, moreover, throws emphasis on the plague. The plague is Cicero's favorite polemical metaphor. He uses it repeatedly over the years against one enemy after another. Catiline he calls "tam adulta rei publicae pestis"; Clodius, "ipsa illa taeterrima peste." Antony is stigmatized as a plague in twelve of the fourteen Philippics.[28] In Book I of *De officiis* Cicero characterizes civil war as a plague, and he returns to the metaphor at an important moment in Book II:

> Atque ut magnas utilitates adipiscimur conspiratione hominum atque consensu, sic nulla tam detestabilis pestis est, quae non homini ab homine nascatur.
>
> [And yet as, on the one hand, we secure great advantages through the sympathetic cooperation of our fellow men; so, on the other hand, there is no curse [plague] so terrible but it is brought down by man upon man.][29]

It was through *De officiis* that, many centuries later, the plague metaphor came to serve as ammunition in one of the most explosive conflicts in the history of Christianity. In 1302 Pope Boniface VIII issued a bull called *Unam Sanctam* in which he asserted papal authority over the entire secular world.[30] This aggressive claim was based largely on the premise that as human beings, we are low (*infima*) earthly things and can reach heaven only through the intermediary (*media*) power of the church: "*Nam secundum B. Dionysium lex divinitatis est, infima per media in suprema reduci*" (For, according to the Blessed Dionysius, it is a law of the divinity that the lowest things reach the highest place by intermediaries). The bull, concise enough in itself, became in part the target for two much lengthier Ghibelline responses: Dante's *De monarchia* (*ca.* 1312) and Marsilius of Padua's *Defensor Pacis* (1324). The latter work, whose sensational reputation lasted through and beyond Boccaccio's lifetime, is a spirited and erudite defense of the separation of church and state.[31] Marsilius uses Cicero's *De officiis* as one of his primary authorities in asserting the autonomy of secular power. Characterizing the Christian argument as sophistry, Marsilius not only refutes the pope's claim to secular authority, but characterizes the church itself as non-Christian—indeed, as a plague: a metaphor that he avails himself of repeatedly. In the space of one paragraph Marsilius acknowledges his Ciceronian roots and applies to the church the poisonous Ciceronian metaphor:

> Since this pernicious pestilence, which is completely opposed to all the peace and happiness of man, could well infect with a disease of the same corrupt root the other states of faithful Christians throughout the world,

> I consider it supremely necessary to repel it, as I said in my introductory remarks. To these tasks all men are obligated who have the knowledge and ability to thwart this evil; and those who neglect or omit them on whatever grounds are unjust, as Tully attested in the treatise *De officiis* (I.v), when he said: "There are two kinds of injustice: one, of those men who inflict it; *the other, of those who do not drive away the injury from those upon whom it is inflicted, if* [even though] *they can*."[32] (Italics ours)

This bold assertion appears in the conclusion of Part One of a book whose central thesis, as Quentin Skinner has summarized it, is "that anyone who aspires to be a defender of the peace in Northern Italy must above all be a sworn enemy of the alleged jurisdictional powers of the church."[33]

Marsilius (1275–1342) did not burn at the stake for making these bold accusations. Because he managed to keep on the safe side of the shifting power-bases of his times, he went on to help crown a pope in Rome, and to be installed himself as archbishop of Milan. His *Defensor* was similarly fortunate. Translated into Florentine Italian in 1363, it became ammunition for the prolonged polemic that the civic leaders of Boccaccio's city carried on against the Avignon papacy, culminating in the War of the Eight Saints and the confiscation of church property in Florence (1375–1378).[34] The *Defensor* also exerted broad influence on early reformers like Wyclif and on early modern political theorists like Machiavelli.

In presenting the plague allegorically, Boccaccio was thus not only mining a rich vein of ancient civic eloquence (like Cicero, he elsewhere refers to civil war as a plague),[35] but also availing himself of the energies that were propelling the principal controversy of his time. Boccaccio's sympathy with the Marsilian censure of the church is documented by the fact that he voices a similar view personally, in a vigorous diatribe to be found in a dedicatory letter for *De casibus* (1373 or 1374), where he characterizes modern popes as violent and tyrannical, and accuses them of un-Christian actions and high crimes:

> Making helmets of priestly mitres, lances of pastoral staffs, and breastplates of sacred vestments, of perturbing the tranquility and liberty of innocent people, of hanging out in military camps, of rejoicing in fires, in violence, and in the shedding of Christian blood, of contradicting the Word of truth, which says, "my reign is not of this world," and of occupying the earthly empire.[36]

The abundant anticlerical satire in the *Decameron* cannot be divorced from these bitter sentiments, which are similar to the sentiments that would drive Florence to war against the papacy in 1375. But the *Decameron* is

far more than a political battering ram. In his great work, Boccaccio not only impugns the church, and other similarly repressive institutions, but also aims to alert attentive though passive readers: those who, in Marsilius's Ciceronian quotation above, "have the knowledge and ability to thwart this evil," but "do not drive away the injury from those upon whom it is inflicted, even though they can." His goal, moreover, is not simply to destroy an old order but, more ambitiously, to replace it with a new order based on reason and nature. In meeting this double challenge, he will employ, as both sword and ploughshare, the idea of *ingegno*, the creative agency that can unmask injustices and reconceive society along rational lines.

CHAPTER 1

INGEGNO—THE INDIVIDUAL AND AUTHORITY: *DECAMERON*, DAY I

Io son sí vaga della mia bellezza,
che d'altro amor già mai
non curerò né credo aver vaghezza.
[So struck I am by my own beauty
That never could I heed
Another love or find delight therein.]

One of the primary challenges in uncovering the moral development of the *Decameron* is disentangling the basic character of the individual days from the relatively bland and harmless subjects assigned to them by the *brigata*. While the avowed subjects of the ten days suggest an entertaining but incohesive assortment of narrative topics, the individual days develop specific topics that are at once coherent and subversive; and the full sequence of days is united by a challenging development of its own.[1] An excellent example of this disproportion between label and intention is presented in Day I. This day, which modestly purports to deal with topics "*che piú gli sarà a grado*" (I. *Intro.*114) (treating any subject which most pleases you) (20), reveals itself, as Valerio C. Ferme has remarked,[2] to be a nonstop series of anecdotes concerning the subversion of authority. No fewer than five of these ten focus on the church, while the other five concern, as targets of satire, two kings, a prince, a wealthy Genoese lord, and a female snob. In each of the ten tales, the subversive weapon—the Goliath-slayer as it were—is *ingegno*: pure creativity and wit, expressed by an inventive individual in common speech. Viewed in this light, Day I suggests a kind of revolution: a shift in emphasis from institutionalized authority to individual inventiveness. And the day is capped, as we will see, by a *canzone* that universalizes the value of this

inventiveness in terms that evoke Cicero's treatment of *ingenium* in *De legibus*.

A glance at the vested interests under scrutiny reveals much about Boccaccio's intentions. The authority structure he details is the moral equivalent of the plague: unhealthy, chaotic, and counterproductive. The female snob (I. 10)—empowered by her ability to accept or reject the attentions of her male admirers—is prejudiced and cannot see her own best interests. The kings and lords (I. 5, 7, 8, and 9) are variously guilty of lechery, avarice, and timidity, all of which suggest the improper use of power. These misuses of power are aptly put in their place by *ingegno*, but not before each has received a detailed airing. Thus revealed, each of them suggests a social order in decline. Lauretta sums up the matter bitterly in I. 8, describing courtly society as composed of men who

> vogliono essere gentili uomini e signor chiamati e reputati, son piú tosto da dire asini nella bruttura di tutta la cattività de' vilissimi uomini allevati . . . (I. 8.7)
>
> [wish to be called and reputed gentlemen and lords . . . when they should, instead, be called asses, bred as they are on the dungheap of the wickedness of the most vile of men . . .] (52)[3]

But even these attacks on secular corruption, robust and eloquent as they are, seem puny when compared to Boccaccio's onslaught against the church. This barrage of satire, developed piecemeal in I. 1–4 and continued in I. 6 and at the beginning of I. 7, leaves little doubt that he considers the clerical establishment to be the primary infesting agent of the moral disease that has crippled society. Sometimes Boccaccio phrases his criticism openly, as in I. 2, when Abraham the Jew gives his considered opinion of Rome to his Christian friend Giannotto:

> quivi niuna santità, niuna divozione, niuna buona opera o essemplo di vita o d'altro in alcuno che cherico fosse veder mi parve, ma lussuria, avarizia e golosità, fraude, invidia e superbia e simili cose e piggiori, se piggiori esser possono in alcuno, mi vi parve in tanta grazia di tutti vedere, che io ho piú tosto quella per una fucina di diaboliche operazioni che di divine. (I. 2.24)
>
> [I saw there no holiness, no devotion, no good work or exemplary life, or anything else among the clergy; instead, lust, avarice, gluttony, fraud, envy, pride, and the like and even worse (if worse than this is possible) were so completely in charge there that I believe that city is more a forge for the Devil's work than for God's.] (35)

Sometimes (as in the continuation of Abraham's speech) Boccaccio can shift modality to the ironic:

> E per ciò che io veggio non quello avvenire che essi procacciano, ma continuamente la vostra religione aumentarsi e piú lucida e piú chiara divenire, meritamente mi par discerner lo Spirito Santo esser d'essa, sí come di vera e di santa piú che alcuna altra, fondamento e sostegno . . . (I. 2.26)
>
> [And since I have observed that in spite of all this, they do not succeed but, on the contrary, that your religion grows and becomes brighter and more illustrious, I am justly of the opinion that it has the Holy Spirit as its foundation and support, and that it is truer and holier than any other religion . . .] (35–36)

Is Abraham's reasoning a testament to the power of faith, or does it point instead to the gullibility of the masses? Boccaccio leaves the question to the reader's judgment; but the ironic implications of Abraham's words are almost impossible to ignore.

Boccaccio is not content to scourge the manners and morals of the clergy; he is ready to challenge doctrine itself. In I. 3 he recounts an already-famous story—the so-called Parable of the Wise Jew—in which Melchisedech, compelled by Saladin to choose among the three great religions in terms of truth and falsehood, compares them to three rings, identical in every respect, left to three sons by their father and each representing the full power of the patrimony. This would suggest, by extension, that the three religious doctrines are equally true. Saladin is duly impressed and satisfied. But the reader, who finds this tale literally embedded in a hornet's nest of anticlerical satire, may be excused for thinking otherwise. It does not take an Ockham to reason that if the three religious narratives, each of which relies on specific details and implicitly refutes the others, are equally true, then they must be, as Pamela D. Stewart has argued,[4] equally arbitrary and fallible.

The three other anticlerical tales of Day I concern various types of fraud, which Boccaccio refers to directly as "*la malvagia ipocresia de' religiosi*" and, invoking the plague metaphor, the "*pistilenziose avarizie de' cherici*" (I. 6). In I. 4 the abbot of a monastery, who is in the process of imprisoning a monk for the same sort of sexual offense that he himself had committed, is silenced by a witty riposte from the young man. In I. 6—a tale that, like I. 3, was proscribed by the Inquisition—a Florentine inquisitor, cynically extorting money from well-heeled Florentines by means of thinly veiled harassment, is embarrassed by a biblical gloss wryly presented by one of his victims. But by far the most methodical and ruthless examination of religious fraud occurs in the celebrated

tale of Ciappelletto, I. 1.[5] Here Boccaccio expounds on the evils of his times with stylistic bravura and arch irony. To begin with, he sets the tale in 1301,[6] during the tenure of Pope Boniface VIII (1294–1303), whose *Unam Sanctam* (1302) marked the deepest intrusion by the church into secular affairs. And, notably, Panfilo prefaces his narration with observations that paraphrase Boniface's bull:

> La quale a noi e in noi non è da credere che per alcun nostro merito discenda, ma dalla sua propria benignità mossa e da' prieghi di coloro impetrata che, sí come noi siamo, furon mortali, e bene i suoi piaceri mentre furono in vita seguendo ora con Lui eterni son divenuti e beati; alli quali noi medesimi, sí come a procuratori informati per esperienza della nostra fragilità, forse non audaci di porgere i prieghi nostri nel cospetto di tanto giudice, delle cose le quali a noi reputiamo oportune gli porgiamo. (I. 1.4)
>
> [Nor should we believe that such special grace descends upon us and within us through any merit of our own, but rather it is sent by His own kindness and by the prayers of those who, like ourselves, were mortal and who have now become eternal and blessed with Him, for they followed His will while they were alive. To these saints, as to advocates who from experience are aware of our weakness, we ourselves offer our prayers concerning those matters we deem desirable, because we are not brave enough to offer them to so great a judge directly.] (21)

Here, as in the *Unam Sanctam*, the human relationship to God cannot be direct, and hence is anchored by intermediaries—in this case the saints. But while the papal bull rests its claim on the authority of the ancient churchman Dionysius, Panfilo's argument feeds into a rather suspect aside: "Because we are not brave enough to offer them [our prayers] to so great a judge directly," thus implying that the church is running a religion for cowards. As though this were not bad enough, Panfilo then adds that, because of human error, a damned soul can be elected to sainthood. What if the saint we pray to, though sanctified by the church, was in real life a very bad man? In unctuous and casuistic language, Panfilo concludes that God, in His wisdom, compensates for such human error:

> E ancor piú in Lui, verso noi di pietosa liberalità pieno, discerniamo, che, non potendo l'acume dell'occhio mortale nel segreto della divina mente trapassare in alcun modo, avvien forse tal volta che, da oppinione ingannati, tale dinanzi alla sua maestà facciamo procuratore che da quella con eterno essilio è iscacciato: e nondimeno Esso, al quale niuna cosa è occulta, piú alla purità del pregator riguardando che alla sua ignoranza o allo essilio del pregato, cosí come se quegli fosse nel suo cospetto beato, essaudisce coloro che 'l priegano. (I. 1.5)

> [And yet in Him we discern His generous mercy toward us, and since the human eye cannot penetrate the secrets of the divine mind in any way, it sometimes happens that, deceived by popular opinion, we choose as an advocate before His majesty one who is sentenced by Him to eternal exile; nevertheless He, to whom nothing is hidden, pays more attention to the purity of the one who prays than to his ignorance or the damnation of his intercessor and answers those who pray to Him just as if these advocates were blessed in His presence.] (22–23)

This strange preface is the first of the three parodic passages that comprise the fabric of the story. The butt of this first parody is the dishonesty and arrogance that characterized the *Unam Sanctam* in particular, and the rhetorical strategies of the church in general. Marsilius of Padua had proclaimed this discourse to be sophistry and had fought it with his own version of Ciceronian reason. Boccaccio is instead aping it mischievously, before introducing us to the even more egregious moral outrages to come. He draws our attention to his real-life targets by mentioning Boniface himself in the sentence that comes immediately after Panfilo's introduction.[7]

Boccaccio's second parody, which follows hard upon Panfilo's pronouncements, introduces the notorious notary Ciappelletto, the antihero who will be presented as the iconic protagonist of pious language as a weapon of evil. Here the author adopts the panegyric mode, long a staple of political and religious discourse. Boccaccio, however, subverts this discourse by making its subject matter not the virtues of a king or a saint, but rather the vices of a criminal:

> Era questo Ciappelletto di questa vita: egli, essendo notaio, avea grandissima vergogna quando uno de' suoi strumenti, come che pochi ne facesse, fosse altro che falso trovato; de' quali tanti avrebbe fatti di quanti fosse stato richesto, e quegli piú volentieri in dono che alcuno altro grandemente salariato... Aveva oltre modo piacere, e forte vi studiava, in commettere tra amici e parenti e qualunque altra persona mali e inimicizie e scandali, de' quali quanto maggiori mali vedeva seguire tanto piú d'allegrezza prendea... Bestemmiatore di Dio e de' Santi era grandissimo, e per ogni piccola cosa, sí come colui che piú che alcuno altro era iracundo. A chiesa non usava giammai, e i sacramenti di quella tutti come vil cosa con abominevoli parole scherniva; e cosí in contrario le taverne e gli altri disonesti luoghi visitava volentieri e usavagli. Delle femine era cosí vago come sono i cani de' bastoni; del contrario piú che alcuno altro tristo uomo si dilettava. Imbolato avrebbe e rubato con quella coscienza che un santo uomo offerrebbe. Gulosissimo e bevitor grande, tanto che alcuna volta sconciamente gli facea noia. Giucatore e mettitore di malvagi dadi era solenne. (I. 1.10–14)

> [Ciappelletto was by profession a notary; he was very much ashamed when any of his legal documents (of which he drew up many) was discovered to be anything but fraudulent. He would have drawn up, free of charge, as many false ones as were requested of him, and more willingly than another man might have done for a large sum of money... He took special pleasure and went to a great deal of trouble to stir up scandal, mischief and enmities between friends, relatives and anyone else, and the more evil that resulted from it, the happier he was... He was a great blasphemer of God and the saints, losing his temper at the slightest pretext, as if he were the most irascible man alive. He never went to church, and he made fun of all the church's sacraments, using abominable language to revile them; on the other hand, he frequented taverns and other dens of iniquity with great pleasure. He was as fond of women as dogs are of a beating with a stick; he was, in fact, more fond of men, more so than any other degenerate. He could rob and steal with a conscience as clean as a holy man making an offering. He was such a great glutton and big drinker that he often suffered the filthy price of his overindulgence; he was a gambler who frequently used loaded dice.] (23)

Having piled up this verbal cumulus of abuse, the narrator briefly concludes, "*era il piggiore uomo forse che mai nascesse*" (I. 1.15) (He was probably the worst man that ever lived) (23). Satirically, this passage does double duty. It introduces the unlikely hero of what will be literary history's most thoroughly debauched saint's life, and it establishes, as a point of reference for the entire work to come, a veritable anti-saint: an image of the diseased humanity that, in Boccaccio's view, underlies the discourse of religious power. Ciappelletto can thus be seen as a kind of moral *bubo*, a defining symptom of the social plague that his author aims to memorialize.

Boccaccio fixes Ciappelletto's character in the political tradition of *mal governo* with two damning Ciceronian references. Ciappelletto is sent to Burgundy because Musciatto Franzesi, his client, needs an agent who can deal with the Burgundians on their own dishonest terms ("*la malvagita de' borgognoni*") (I. 1.16); he succeeds at this task because of his "cunning" (*malizia*, a direct derivative of Cicero's *malitia* as presented in Book I of *De inventione*).[8] And when Ciappelletto is described as taking special pleasure in his own misdeeds—"*de' quali tanti avrebbe fatti di quanti fosse stato richesto, e quegli piú volentieri in dono che alcuno altro grandemente salariato...*" (I. 1.10) ([he drew up]... as many false ones [documents] as were requested of him, and more willingly than another man would have done for a large sum of money) (22f.)—he is reminiscent of Cicero's condemnation of Julius Caesar in *De officiis*: "So great was his passion for wrong-doing that the very doing of wrong was a joy to him for its own sake, even when there was no motive for it."[9]

Ciappelletto's evildoing, moreover, is set in an appropriately degenerate context. The notary is housed with two brothers who practice usury. Pope Boniface VIII was infamous not only for his *Unam Sanctam*, but also for other abuses of power, including the machinations that robbed Dante of his patrimony and citizenship in Florence (also in 1301, when the story is set). Boniface and the French king Philip the Fair developed bad blood that would culminate in the pope being kidnapped in 1303—an ordeal from which the pope never recovered. These events led to the ill-starred removal of the papacy from Rome to Avignon in 1309. Ruthless in his money-dealings, Philip the Fair went on to disband the illustrious and powerful order of Knights Templars (many of whom he later murdered on trumped-up religious charges) and to expel the Jews. As he executed Jacques de Molay, grand master of the Templars, in 1314, "according to legend, de Molay cursed both Philip and Clement V [Philip's puppet pope] from the flames, saying that he would summon them before God's Tribunal within a year; as it turned out, both King and Pope died within the next year."[10] Boccaccio's father apparently witnessed the execution, and Boccaccio became one of de Molay's biographers.[11] Boccaccio, in other words, was setting *Decameron* I. 1 in a time with which he was well acquainted: perhaps the most disordered and dishonorable period in European history as he knew it, and in the same year that Dante, his most revered near-contemporary, was exiled by a coalition of Boniface and his Florentine allies.

These details suggest that Ciappelletto is typical of his times, and add color to the last and longest parody of I. 1, Ciappelletto's dying confession: an assertion of Christian virtue that is in fact a fabric of lies. This mockery of spiritual dialogue boils down to a long series of brief shaggy-dog stories, in which the reader, again and again expecting to be regaled with some monstrous sin, is instead offered a trivial misdemeanor:

> E appresso questo il domandò se nel peccato della gola aveva a Dio dispiaciuto. Al quale, sospirando forte, ser Ciappelletto rispose di sí e molte volte; per ciò che, con ciò fosse cosa che egli, oltre alli digiuni delle quaresime che nell'anno si fanno dalle divote persone, ogni settimana almeno tre dí fosse uso di digiunare in pane e in acqua, con quello diletto e con quello appetito l'acqua bevuta aveva... che fanno i gran bevitori il vino. (I. 1.41)
>
> [Then, he asked if he had displeased God through the sin of gluttony. To this, breathing a heavy sigh, Ser Ciappelletto replied that he had, and many times; for in addition to the periods of fasting which are observed during the year by the devout, he fasted every week for at least three days on bread and water, but he had drunk the water with the same delight and appetite as any great drinker of wine would...] (26)

> "Mai messer sí," rispose ser Ciappelletto "che io ho detto male d'altrui; per ciò che io ebbi già un mio vicino che, al maggior torto del mondo, non faceva altro che batter la moglie, sí che io dissi una volta male di lui alli parenti della moglie, sí gran pietà mi venne di quella cattivella, la quale egli, ogni volta che bevuto avea troppo, conciava come Dio vel dica." (I. 1.53)
>
> ["Yes, indeed," answered Ser Ciappelleto, "I have spoken ill of others, for once I had a neighbor who did nothing but beat his wife unjustly, and one time I spoke badly about him to his wife's relatives, such was the pity I had for that poor creature; only God can tell you how he beat her every time he drank too much."] (27–28)

Boccaccio achieves high comedy here through the hyperbolic virtue that Ciappelletto lays claim to, and in the self-depreciating tone that, instead of obscuring his pretended virtue, throws it into higher relief. The comedy is increased by the fact that it is the speech-act of a confirmed villain who is diabolically angling for sainthood. Yet much more is at stake here than Ciappelletto's honesty. Through the notary's unctuous rhetoric, Boccaccio sets Christian society itself under scrutiny: not only its emphasis on innocence and passivity, but also its characteristic credulity toward the kind of language wielded by clerics. In this instance, the friar, deeply moved by Ciappelletto's confession, convinces his pious colleagues of Ciappelletto's sanctity, and the next morning, after a solemn night vigil, delivers a sermon in his praise to the whole community, in words that "*alle quali era dalla gente della contrada data intera fede*"(I. 1.86) (were taken by the people of the countryside as absolute truth) (31). The confession and sanctification of Ciappelletto, engineered by "*frati creduli*" (I. 1.84) (gullible) friars and an inanely ignorant flock of parishioners, fills out the picture of a society gone to the dogs, where high rollers like Musciatto, Boniface VIII, and Philip the Fair exploit the offices of usurers and evildoers like Ciappelletto to violate the humanity of a population that the clergy has reduced to a nation of morons.

Boccaccio, Cicero, and the Humanistic Image of Intellect. In Day I maladies untreatable by any other agent yield to the subtle pressures of human wit, which in each case temporarily transforms a degenerate social climate into a theater of creativity and invention. In all the tales of the day but one, Boccaccio credits wit (*ingegno*) with the restoration of healthy order; while in the tale of Ciappelletto, he makes mischievous wit a factor in a general—and abundantly witty—satire on vice and ignorance.[12] But this is not all. A poetic image of the primacy of *ingegno* is the subject of Emilia's *canzone* at the Conclusion of Day I. This song, which, like the nine others, has long resisted interpretation,[13] reveals itself

as a metaphorical presentation of the creative principle that has operated throughout Day I:

Io son sí vaga della mia bellezza,
che d'altro amor già mai
non curerò né credo aver vaghezza.
Io veggio in quella, ognora ch'io mi specchio,
quel ben che fa contento lo 'ntelletto:
né accidente nuovo o pensier vecchio
mi può privar di sí caro diletto.
Quale altro dunque piacevole obgetto
potrei veder già mai
che mi mettesse in cuor nuova vaghezza?
Non fugge questo ben qualor disio
di rimirarlo in mia consolazione:
anzi si fa incontro al piacer mio
tanto soave a sentir, che sermone
dir nol poria, né prendere intenzione
d'alcun mortal già mai,
che non ardesse di cotal vaghezza.
E io, che ciascuna ora piú m'accendo
quanto piú fisi tengo gli occhi in esso,
tutta mi dono a lui, tutta mi rendo,
gustando già di ciò ch'el m'ha promesso:
e maggior gioia spero piú dappresso
sí fatta, che già mai
simil non si sentí qui da vaghezza (I. *Concl.*18–21)

[So struck am I by my own beauty
that never could I heed
Another love nor find delight therein.
I see within that beauty in the mirror,
that good which satisfies the intellect;
and no new circumstance or ancient thought
can ever cheat me of such dear delight.
What other charming thing, then, could I hope
to ever gaze upon
that would stir new delight within my heart?
This good of mine never fades away, for I
can always gaze upon it in my solace;
this beauty, to my pleasure, is so fine
that no words can be found
to celebrate its meaning,
and there is no man who can understand
unless he, too, burns with the same delight.
The more I keep my eyes fixed in this joy,

the brighter burns my flame,
I give my whole self to it, I surrender
totally, enjoying now what it has promised me,
and even greater joy I hope to have,
the kind of happiness
no one has ever felt before this time.] (60–61)

Emilia's passion (*vaghezza*) refers us to strong positions taken by Dante and Cicero. In the *Convivio* Dante declares that the lovely ladies and physical beauties he so poetically extols are to be interpreted as symbols of the philosophical quest:

> E così, in fine di questo secondo trattato, dico e affermo che la donna di cu' io innamorai appresso lo primo amore fu la bellissima e onestissima figlia de lo Imperadore de lo universo, a la quale Pittagora pose nome Filosofia.
>
> [So at the end of this second book I assert and affirm that the lady of whom I was enamored after my first love was the most beautiful and honorable daughter of the Emperor of the universe, to whom Pythagoras gave the name of Philosophy.][14]

In the *Paradiso*, the character Beatrice fulfils this role dramatically, leading the narrator on a pilgrimage that ends with the overwhelming vision of "*l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle*" (the love which moves the sun and the other stars).[15] Boccaccio, who communicates with Dante throughout the *Decameron*, would seem to be following him here as well: the singer of the *canzone* represents the delight of the mind ("*quel ben che fa contento lo 'ntelletto*") or, perhaps more specifically, the human capacity for self-knowledge and creativity. Emilia's words convey her dazzling realization of her own intellectual excellence: a virtue that she possesses independently and that can be appreciated by no one else, unless it be someone perceiving the same beauty and sharing the same passion ("*d'alcun mortal già mai, / che non ardesse di cotal vaghezza*").

But what kind of beauty is Boccaccio referring to? The context here points directly to Cicero, whose boldest assertion of the power of intellect (*ingenium*) occurs near the end of Book I of *De legibus*:

> nam qui se ipse norit, primum aliquid sentiet se habere sentiet divinum ingeniumque in se suum sicut simulacrum aliquod, dicatum putabit tantoque munere deorum semper dignum aliquid et faciet et sentiet et, cum se ipse perspexerit: totumque temptarit, intelliget, quem ad modum a natura subornatus in vitam venerit...
>
> [For he who knows himself will realize, in the first place, that he has a divine element [*divinum ingenium*] within him, and will think of his own

> inner nature as a kind of consecrated image of God; and so he will always act and think in a way worthy of so great a gift of the gods, and when he has examined and thoroughly tested himself, he will understand how nobly equipped by Nature he entered life . . .][16]

Cicero was passionately attached to the concept of *ingenium*, invoking it lavishly in *De oratore* and giving it key positions in *De inventione* and the late political works. He held *ingenium* to be the decisive element in the making of a great orator, but also described it glowingly as a genius uniting, and ennobling, all of humanity.[17] In unison with his other principal topics—*ratio, natura, jus, lex, humanitas, amor, communitas, eloquentia, libertas, res publica*—*ingenium* became part of the overreaching natural and moral matrix that framed the Ciceronian polity.

But the same thinker who created *ingenium* as a concept also problematized it. Cicero's *De inventione* sounds a warning that "low cunning supported by talent" (*ingenio freta malitia*) has created a "depraved imitation of virtue" (*prava virtutis imitatrix*) that warps popular judgment and subverts society:

> postquam vero commoditas quaedam, prava virtutis imitatrix, sine ratione officii dicendi copiam consecuta est, tum ingenio freta malitia pervertere urbes et vitas hominum labefactare assuevit.
>
> [But when a certain agreeableness of manner—a depraved imitation of virtue—acquired the power of eloquence unaccompanied by any consideration of moral duty, then low cunning supported by talent grew accustomed to corrupt cities and undermine the lives of men.][18]

This danger, he asserts, makes it all the more necessary for Rome to educate statesmen whose eloquence is based on true knowledge: a combination of virtues that will keep them alert to nefarious misuses of speech.[19]

Cicero's torch of *ingenium* was picked up by Boccaccio's forbears, Brunetto and Dante, as *ingegno.* Brunetto conveyed Cicero's idea as "*altissimo ingegno*," and Dante famously invoked his Muse as "*alto ingegno*" ("O Muses, O high genius") claiming to have been taught by Brunetto about how "*l'uomo s'eterna*" ("how man makes himself eternal").[20] Brunetto and Dante, moreover, both pass along Cicero's warning about *ingenio freta malitia*. Brunetto expounds on the issue at length in Part I of his *Rettorica*. And Dante refers disparagingly to the "*ingegno di sofista*" in *Paradiso*, XXIV.[21]

Boccaccio appropriates the idea of *ingegno* from his eloquent forebears, celebrating it in Day I of the *Decameron* and praising it allegorically in Emilia's *canzone*. He is well aware, however, of *ingegno*'s less glorious uses,

and he presents these with equal zeal. His portrait of Ciappelletto in I. 1 is the classic example of *ingenio freta malitia* establishing a *prava virtutis imitatrix*. Whether for good or for ill, the use of intellect is the implicit theme of the *Decameron* at large. As his great work progresses, Boccaccio will appeal to *ingegno* again and again, sometimes as a weapon of exploitation (as in Dioneo's tales of Rustico, III. 10; Cipolla, VI. 10; and Gianni, IX. 10), but more often as the instrument by which individuals can fulfil their potential and survive the oppression of a disordered society. Emilia's *canzone* refers to this dramatic moment in the history of ideas. Her assertion that she is alone in her discovery of her own genius points to the low estimation of intellect, which, as Boccaccio suggests, prevails in his culture.

Days I–III as Introduction to Ingegno. Earlier we called *ingegno* the "humanistic image of intellect." It is not only humanistic, but one of the key ideas that gives humanism, and the Renaissance at large, its character. As a creative faculty that is inborn and that dignifies the individual, *ingenium* was essential to Cicero's plan for a strong republic. In the *Decameron*, *ingegno* becomes the chief means of breaking free from subjection and conformity into an epoch of promise. Boccaccio spends the first three days of the *Decameron* introducing this idea and the next seven in developing its implications.

This interpretation may rattle some china. As part of his reading of the *Decameron* as a "mercantile epic," Vittore Branca described Days VI–VIII as a "triptych of '*Ingegno,*'" without considering the possibility that it is *ingegno* itself that holds all the other main elements of the great work—love, satire, mercantilism, social realism—together.[22] He apparently had no idea that the concept had been a staple of Ciceronian thought. This is not surprising. Branca (1913–2004) studied the classics in an age that was under the long shadow of Theodor Mommsen (1817–1903), a professor of history and liberal politician whose *Römische Geschichte* (1854–1856) dismissed Cicero on the grounds that he was a conservative and a thinker of minor consequence.[23] It is ironic that the liberal Mommsen seems to have been ignorant of Cicero's formative influence in creating the modern liberal state.

Apparently this lack of awareness was passed on, not only to generations of literary scholars, but to researchers in other fields. Both Karl Popper (*The Open Society and its Enemies,* 1945) and Leo Strauss (*Natural Right and History*, 1953) wrote highly visible books on the rise of liberal politics without mentioning Cicero's *De legibus.* The provenance of Ciceronian humanism through Brunetto and Marsilius was ignored quite as thoroughly. The influential Renaissance historian Hans Baron (1900–1988) located the rise of civic humanism with Leonardo Bruni in

the early fifteenth century, about 150 years after Brunetto Latini had used Ciceronian thought to awaken and unify his city.[24] Baron's sin of omission is the more serious since, as Stephen Milner has recently pointed out, Bruni's civic humanism developed in part as the result of a "renaissance" of Brunetto's Ciceronian interpretations; as Milner puts it, Bruni was "following in the footsteps of Latini."[25]

Misapprehensions like Baron's have contributed to the current state of *Decameron* studies, which are hampered by a lack of interest in Boccaccio's ties to Ciceronian social and political thought. Even Aldo Scaglione, who most recently came close to a breakthrough interpretation of the work, would have benefitted from recognizing Boccaccio's insight into the Ciceronian vision that tied reason, nature, and genius into a cultural paradigm that was perfected by eloquence. Scaglione, who stoutly held that the *Decameron* was a coherent critique of contemporary values, and that it was the first masterpiece of the Renaissance, stopped short of the realization that would have justified all his claims: that Boccaccio used Cicero's classical vision in an effort to revolutionize letters and culture.[26]

CHAPTER 2

INGEGNO—WIT AS THE SOUL OF ACTION: DAY II

> *e se io ora sto in peccato mortaio, io starò quando che sia in imbeccato pestello . . .*
> *[And if I am at present living in mortar sin, I would also be so with a cold pestle . . .]*

The announced topic of Day II concerns characters who achieve happiness after being *da diverse cose infestato* (afflicted with various woes). More seriously, however, Boccaccio persists in developing the social metaphor of the plague, and the role of human ingenuity as cure. In accord with the word *infestato*, the ten tales present a fictional demographic heavily sprinkled with pimps, prostitutes, pirates, robbers, hypocritical friars, larcenous priests, murderous thugs, bloodthirsty crowds, traitors, and usurers, as well as a variety of egregious chumps. Against this unhealthy background, Boccaccio plots diverse courses for *ingegno*, balancing his tales fairly evenly between the virtuous and perverse uses of intellect.

If we define *ingegno* as the intellectual basis for a creative act of any sort, from a brilliant speech down to an outright lie, we find that the first half of the day (excepting part of II. 3) is concerned with the baser forms of *malizia* and folly, while the second half is dignified by displays of *alto ingegno*—enlightened imagination—in every tale. This division gives the entire day the sense of a progression of developing awareness, which is rounded off by Dioneo's rollicking endorsement of female sexual liberation in II. 10. Moreover, the creative intelligence that wins the day in II. 3, and 6–10, is generally expressed in Boccaccio's version of Ciceronian eloquence.

Both II. 1 and 2 take up anticlerical themes, with the following novel twist: that in each case not only the credulous victims of trickery, but also the mocking tricksters themselves are blind to social realities and hence vulnerable. Here Boccaccio is exploring the lowest form of *malizia*: a streetwise cunning, sensible to the weakness of its victims but insensible to the consequences of action. In showing the interaction between this

low cunning and provincial society in II. 1, Boccaccio portrays a dark moral world, redeemed by little except his own deadpan irony toward both the credulous and the cunning. In II. 2, as we will see, the irony deepens and is complicated by a fascinating glimpse at Boccaccio's moral goals in the *Decameron*.

Wise Fools in Treviso (II. 1). Nowhere is Boccaccio's irony more apparent than in the opening description of the northern town of Treviso in II. 1. Here, without using a single pejorative term, Boccaccio creates the image of a town—*tutto il popolo della città*—driven crazy, just like Ciappelletto's town at the end of I. 1, by an access of blind faith. In this case, the newfound saint is a German laborer named Arrigo, at whose death

> le campane della maggior chiesa di Trivigi tutte, senza essere da alcun tirate, cominciarono a sonare. Il che in luogo di miracolo avendo, questo Arrigo esser santo dicevano tutti; e concorso tutto il popolo della città alla casa nella quale il suo corpo giacea, quello a guisa d'un corpo santo nella chiesa maggior ne portarono, menando quivi zoppi, attratti e ciechi e altri di qualunque infermità o difetto impediti, quasi tutti dovessero dal toccamento di questo corpo divenir sani. (II. 1.4–5)
>
> [all the bells of the largest church in Treviso began to ring without anyone pulling them. Taking this to be a miracle, everyone proclaimed Arrigo to be a saint; and the whole town ran to his house where his body lay and carried it off to their cathedral as if it were the body of a saint, and they brought along with them the lame, the crippled, the blind, and anyone with any kind of infirmity or deformity with the belief that all of them would be cured by touching this body.] (133)

Boccaccio's narrative context here is historically on target. As Franco Fido (speaking of I. 1) notes, "the Christian world of the Duecento and Trecento [was] teeming with popular saints, people who died with the odor of sanctity and were directly canonized by the faithful on the basis of their miracles."[1] But Boccaccio's narrative creates *tencione* by exposing these simple—or let us say silly—faithful to a *malizia* that is even sillier. Enter three city slickers: Florentine court entertainers Stecchi, Martellino, and Marchese, who are arrogant enough to believe that they can trick the townspeople and find a way through the crowds to the body of the sainted laborer. Martellino pretends to be a cripple and gains access to Arrigo's body, but when the hoax is exposed he is subjected by the angered Trevisans to a fate near death.

This apparently slight narrative is nonetheless effective programmatically. Since Boccaccio is going to devote Days II and III to a life-size portrait *of ingegno*, agonies, and ecstasies alike, why not begin with the

agonies? As Martellino discovers, there are times when irreverent wit is distinctly counterproductive. He is imprudent enough to jest with the judge who must decide his fate:

> Ma Martellino rispondea motteggiando, quasi per niente avesse quella presura: di che il giudice turbato, fattolo legare alla colla, parecchie tratte delle buone gli fece dare con animo di fargli confessare ciò che color dicevano, per farlo poi appiccar per la gola. (II. 1.24)
>
> [But Martinellino started answering him with smart remarks, as if he gave little importance to the fact that he had been arrested, and this angered the judge, who had him tied to the rack and given several good turns to make him confess to whatever the others accused him of before he was hanged by the neck.] (66)

Ultimately the offender is freed, and the trio of tricksters leaves town. The *brigata* applauds this tale of Florentine *malizia* gone awry. Similar examples of misapplied *malizia* will occur, not only in II. 2, but also in II. 3, where usury begets folly among the sons of Tebaldo, and in II. 4, in which Landolfo Rufolo resorts to piracy, with disastrous consequences.

St. Julian and Galeotto (II. 2). II. 2, the much more complex and interesting *novella* of the merchant Rinaldo and his beloved Saint Julian, offers a second example of *ingegno* gone awry. Rinaldo is a credulous Christian merchant who uses prayer as a kind of travel insurance to mitigate the hardships and dangers of his trading excursions. Once, however, on the way from Ferrara to Verona, reasoning incautiously ("*ragionando incautamente*") he falls in with three brigands, themselves posing as merchants, who resolve to rob him.

This rather ordinary narrative material is mere window-dressing for the satiric substance of Boccaccio's story, which has to do with the supposed power of prayer. As they ride along together, one of the robbers asks the unsuspecting Rinaldo, as though out of curiosity, what prayers he uses for safety on the road; Rinaldo responds, with total candor, that it is his usual custom in the morning when leaving an inn to say

> un paternostro e una avemaria per l'anima del padre e della madre di san Giuliano, dopo il quale io priego Idio e lui che la seguente notte mi deano buono albergo. E assai volte già de' miei dí sono stato, camminando, in gran pericoli, de' quali tutti scampato pur sono la notte poi stato in buon luogo e bene albergato: per che io porto ferma credenza che san Giuliano, a cui onore io il dico, m'abbia questa grazia impetrata da Dio . . . (II. 2.7–8)
>
> [one Our Father and one Hail Mary for the souls of St. Julian's mother and father, after which I pray to God and to St. Julian[2] to grant me a suitable

> lodging for the coming night. And in my journeys I have often found myself in grave danger, from which I have nonetheless managed to escape and find myself in a safe place with good lodgings that same evening; so I firmly believe that St. Julian, in whose honor I say my prayers, has obtained this favor for me through his intercession with God...] (68–69)

Like Arrigo's sainthood in II. 1, Rinaldo's comment reminds us pointedly of I. 1, where Panfilo asserts the power of saints as intermediaries between human beings and God. Rinaldo's faith does not, however, distract his companions from their dark purpose. Toward evening of the same day, at a ford, they assault Rinaldo, strip him, and leave him in his shirt to perish from cold. In a parting sally of wit, their leader mocks him and St. Julian: "*Va e sappi se il tuo san Giuliano questa notte ti darà buono albergo, ché il nostro il darà bene a noi*" (II. 2.13) (Now go and see if your St. Julian gives you as good a lodging as our saint will provide for us) (69).

But the coarse jest backfires. Incautious themselves, the robbers have left Rinaldo within walking distance of the town of Castel Guglielmo, toward which at nightfall he painfully wends his way. As he sits outside the town walls, shivering and complaining to St. Julian, a widow who lives nearby hears his words of torment and takes him in. Happily then his fortunes change. Fresh from the unbearable chill, Rinaldo finds himself in the warm and well-appointed residence of the widow, who turns out to be the favorite mistress of regional ruler Marquis Azzo, and in addition a very charming lady. She regales him with a warm bath, a suit of her deceased husband's clothes, and the sumptuous dinner that the Marquis, who has been called away, is unable to share. When all else is said and done, she confides her intimate feelings to Rinaldo and makes him an attractive proposition:

> Anzi vi voglio dir piú avanti: che, veggendovi cotesti panni indosso, li quali del mio morto marito furono, parendomi voi pur desso, m'è venuta stasera forse cento volte voglia d'abracciarvi e di basciarvi: e, s'io non avessi temuto che dispiaciuto vi fosse, per certo io l'avrei fatto. (II. 2.37)
>
> [In fact, there is something else I have been meaning to tell you: seeing you there wearing those clothes which belonged to my late husband, you remind me so much of him that all evening I have had the impulse to kiss and embrace you more than a hundred times, and had I not been afraid that this might have displeased you, I certainly would have done so.] (72)

Rinaldo is overjoyed to accept, and Boccaccio adds the wry and thought-provoking comment, "*Oltre a queste non bisognar piú parole*" (II. 2.39) (After this no more words were necessary) (72). Hereafter things go swimmingly

for the merchant. The next day the robbers are apprehended and his possessions restored.

At the tale's close the *brigata*, with ill-concealed irony, praises the success of Rinaldo's prayers. This irony, which is imposed by the fiction, lies in two implied alternative theories as to the power of prayer. Either prayer to St. Julian is ineffectual, and Rinaldo's happy fortune is mere dumb luck. Or prayer is effectual, and we can all pray to St. Julian for good sex. But our author has more serious issues than this on his mind. The words "*Oltre a queste non bisognar piú parole*" are thought-provoking for two reasons. First, they impact the theme of the story, which is the power of prayer. Do the words that we speak to St. Julian in prayer actually have power? If so, what can there be in the world that is *beyond* the power of words, making them, as they are for Rinaldo and the widow, no longer necessary? Second, the remark, "*Oltre a queste non bisognar piú parole*," is a reference to another literary seduction, as described by Dante in this dramatic passage:

> la bocca mi basciò tutto tremante.
> Galeotto fu 'l libro e chi lo scrisse:
> quel giorno più non vi leggemmo avante.
> [kissed my mouth all trembling. Gallehaut was the book, and he who wrote it. That day we read no farther in it…] (25) (*Inferno* V.136–3)[3]

Lighthearted as it may seem, Boccaccio's reference to Dante is also critical: the same erotic passion that damns Francesca in the *Inferno* blesses Rinaldo in the *Decameron*.[4] Boccaccio could not have thought of a more courteous way to measure the moral distance between his favorite poet and himself. This artful self-distancing briefly reveals the inner program of the *Decameron*, which locates both Heaven and Hell not (as with Dante) in some imagined courtroom of divine justice, but rather in the motive substance of humanity, the here and now. If, as Joan Ferrante argues, Dante's chief purpose in the *Commedia* is a reformation of the church based on an idea of its original spiritual purity,[5] Boccaccio's chief purpose, here and throughout the *Decameron*, is a reformation of society based on reason and nature.

Boccaccio's thematic revelation is signaled as well by the very Dantean passage that he references: "*Galeotto fu 'l libro e chi lo scrisse*" (Gallehaut was the book, and he who wrote it.)—a passage that is the well-known source of Boccaccio's mysterious subtitle for the *Decameron* ("*Comincia il libro chiamato Decameron, cognominato prencipe Galeotto*"). Boccaccio's reference to this passage may serve as a metaphorical marker suggesting that if the original Galeotto, in Arthurian and Dantean terms,

played the role of archetypal pander, diverting the human will from its politically and religiously proper course, then the Galeotto/*Decameron* may be imaged as a revolutionary pander: an iconoclastic agent that subtly recalibrates perception and relocates the axes of good and evil. Seduction in this context becomes, rhetorically, a countercultural strategy. In terms of this philosophical conceit, we may also infer that if Julian is the apparent saint, whose good offices are a clerically inspired illusion, Galeotto is the subversive saint, who passes judgment on such things as piety and credulity, and whose fee of admission is not prayer but realistic observation.

Andreuccio and *Ingegno* (II. 5). The sense of upward mobility conveyed by the overall development of Day II is highlighted by the central placement of its most celebrated story, the tale of Andreuccio. Here Boccaccio the satirist offers perhaps his most convincing take on social disorder, but implies that even the worst disorder can be relieved by awareness.

There is little need to retell this famous story except to catalogue its images of depravity. Andreuccio, the Perugian bumpkin who has come to Naples to buy horses, is treated, in short order, to the good graces of a ruthless con-woman, a murderous pimp, two grave robbers, and a larcenous priest. During this time he visits four symbolic locations: a whorehouse, a pile of human excrement, a well of drinking water (in which he conveniently washes off the excrement), and the coffin of the newly deceased but richly attired archbishop. Thus, in a few short pages and through a variety of expressive strategies, Boccaccio is able to drive home the essence of a society that is rotten at the core and dishonest throughout. Andreuccio, the victim of all these disorders, manages, however, to prevail. Timid and gullible through the early events of the tale, he gradually develops a realistic awareness of his plight, and finally experiences a brief but liberating flash of insight and invention. As the grave robbers force him into the archbishop's marble casket, he realizes (the word here is *pensò*) their insidious intent: "*Costoro mi ci fanno entrare per ingannarmi*" (II. 5.77) (These guys are making me go into the tomb to cheat me) (95); consequently he cheats them by secretly reserving for himself the cleric's precious ruby ring. The disgruntled thieves, as *maliziosi* (tricky) as Andreuccio has now become, then seal him in with the casket's heavy lid. As he lies trapped in the coffin with the dead archbishop, another grave-robber, this time a priest, raises the lid and starts to climb in. Andreuccio grabs the man's leg, as though trying to drag him into the casket. When the terrified priest vacates the premises, our hero is able to escape and to return to Perugia with the dead prelate's ring. His hard-earned awareness has won the day.

***Ingegno* as Persuasive Eloquence (II. 3, 6–10).** After Andreuccio's suggestive coming-of-age parable, Boccaccio launches into a series of five substantial *novelle*, all depending for their happy outcomes on the use of *ingegno* ("*ingegno*" or cognate words occur eleven times in these five tales: twice the average for the text as a whole). In most of these tales, as well as in the conclusion of II. 3, the vehicle for *ingegno* is eloquence. In II. 3 an English princess uses the language of "Providence" to the pope himself in order to justify her illicit love affair:

> "E cosí disposta venendo, Idio, il quale solo ottimamente conosce ciò che fa mestiere a ciascuno, credo per la sua misericordia colui che a Lui piacea che mio marito fosse mi pose avanti agli occhi: e quel fu questo giovane" e mostrò Alessandro "il quale voi qui appresso di me vedete, li cui costumi e il cui valore son degni di qualunque gran donna, quantunque forse la nobiltà del suo sangue non sia cosí chiara come è la reale." (II. 3.39)
>
> ["In this frame of mind I was on my way here when God, Who alone knows what is best for all of us, moved, as I believe, by His compassion, set before my eyes the man whom He chose to be my husband, and that person is the very man," she said as she pointed to Alessandro, "whom you see standing by my side, whose manners and valor are worthy of any great lady, even if his blood is perhaps not as obviously noble as that of a person of royal birth."] (79)

In II. 6 Gianotto, a young man imprisoned for having an affair with Currado's daughter, invokes the forces of nature in his own defense:

> "Currado, né cupidità di signoria né disiderio di denari né altra cagione alcuna mi fece mai alla tua vita né alle tue cose insidie come traditor porre. Amai tua figliuola e amo e amerò sempre, per ciò che degna la reputo del mio amore; e se io seco fui meno che onestamente, secondo la oppinion de' meccanici, quel peccato commisi il qual sempre seco tiene la giovanezza congiunto e che, se via si volesse torre, converrebbe che via si togliesse la giovanezza..." (II. 6.53–54)
>
> ["Currado, neither lust for power nor desire for wealth nor any other motive has ever made me a traitor to you or to your possessions. I loved your daughter, and I shall always love her, for I consider her worthy of my love; and if I acted with her in a manner which the ignorant consider to be dishonorable, I committed that sin which is always inseparable from youth, and should one wish to abolish that act, he must abolish youth as well..."] (104)

Eloquent and cogent speech abounds in this cluster of fictions, suggesting the public role of *ingegno* and hearkening back to the civic activism of Brunetto. In the same spirit as II. 3 and II. 6, the wise Antigono (II. 7)

coaches the oft-bedded Alatiel to invent a lengthy fiction that saves her virginal reputation. Eloquence also expresses itself in a character's ability to "stage" a meeting where, in a socially significant setting, long-hidden truths are revealed. In II. 8 the Count of Antwerp, who has been falsely accused, and has consequently lived in disguise for years, arranges a dramatic reunion with the king who now repents having accused him. Similarly Zinevra, the mistreated heroine of II. 9, brings her husband, her betrayer, and the Sultan together, and expresses her outrage in an eloquent and biting Latinate period:

> "Signor mio, assai chiaramente potete conoscere quanto quella buona donna gloriar si possa d'amante e di marito: ché l'amante a un'ora lei priva d'onor con bugie guastando la fama sua e diserta il marito di lei; e il marito, piú credulo alle altrui falsità che alla verità da lui per lunga esperienza potuta conoscere, la fa uccidere e mangiare a' lupi..." (II. 9.64)
>
> ["My lord, you can now see quite clearly what manner of lover and husband this good woman could boast of: for the lover deprives her of her honor with lies, thus ruining her reputation and destroying her husband, while her husband, believing more in the falsehoods told by others than in her truth, which he should have known himself through long experience, has her killed and eaten by wolves..."] (150)

Zinevra's rise from powerless fugitive to forensic superstar shows how knowledge, inventiveness, and eloquence, in and of themselves, can assume moral authority and renew social order.

Ricciardo and Paganino (II. 10). The day is brought to an appropriate, if rowdy, conclusion by Dioneo's tale of the judge's wife and the pirate. Here the implicit motives of Boccaccio's overall satire rise closest to the surface, as do the positive values that justify his challenge to the status quo. Old Judge Ricciardo of Pisa has taken a young wife, whom he is unable to satisfy in bed. To excuse his shortcomings, he cites an endless list of saints' days that demand sexual forebearance. Soon, as luck will have it, the wife is kidnapped by Paganino the pirate. When the judge finally locates her, she refuses to leave her captor, with whom she has fallen in love. She justifies her position in a speech that diametrically reverses the conventional understanding of right and wrong:

> "Del mio onore non intendo io che persona, ora che non si può, sia piú di me tenera: fosserne stati i parenti miei quando mi diedero a voi! Li quali se non furono allora del mio, io non intendo d'essere al presente del loro; e se io ora sto in peccato mortaio, io starò quando che sia in imbeccato pestello: non ne siate piú tenero di me. E dicovi cosí, che qui mi pare esser moglie di Paganino e a Pisa mi pareva esser vostra bagascia, pensando che

> per punti di luna e per isquadri di geometria si convenieno tra voi e me congiugnere i pianeti, dove qui Paganino tutta la notte mi tiene in braccio e strignemi e mordemi, e come egli mi conci Dio vel dica per me. Anche dite voi che vi sforzerete: e di che? di farla in tre pace e rizzare a mazzata? Io so che voi siete divenuto un pro' cavaliere poscia che io non vi vidi! Andate, e sforzatevi di vivere, ché mi pare anzi che no che voi ci stiate a pigione, sí tisicuzzo e tristanzuol mi parete. E ancor vi dico piú: che quando costui mi lascerà, che non mi pare a ciò disposto dove io voglia stare, io non intendo per ciò di mai tornare a voi, di cui, tutto premendovi, non si farebbe uno scodellino di salsa, per ciò che con mio grandissimo danno e interesse vi stetti una volta: per che in altra parte cercherei mia civanza. Di che da capo vi dico che qui non ha festa né vigilia, laonde io intendo di starmi..." (II. 10.37–41)
>
> ["As for my honor, now that it is too late, I do not intend for anyone to be more jealous of it than I am. Would that my parents had been more concerned over it when they gave me to you! But since they were unconcerned about my honor then, I do not intend to be concerned about theirs now, and if I am at present living in mortar sin, I would also be so with a cold pestle, so do not be any more tender with my honor than I am. And let me tell you this, that here I feel like Paganino's wife, whereas in Pisa I felt like your whore, remembering all the phases of the moon and the geometrical calculations that were necessary between you and me to bring the planets into conjunction, while here Paganino holds me in his arms all night, squeezes, and bites me, and just what he does for me only God can explain. And you claim that you will try harder! But how? By doing it in three shots and then getting it up again stiff like a rod? I didn't realize you had become so bold a knight since I last saw you! Go away and just try to stay alive, for you look so run-down and wretched that you're barely able to hang on to life. And furthermore, let me tell you this: even if Paganino abandoned me (which he does not seem to wish to do as long as I wish to remain), I do not intend ever to return to you, because I know that if I squeezed you all over, you couldn't come up with even a thimble full of juice—I stayed with you once, suffering the greatest loss and paying too high an interest rate, and now I shall seek my profits somewhere else. So, once more, let me tell you that here there are no holidays or vigils, and here I intend to remain..."] (158)

Here Boccaccio dispenses with traditional morality, which is based on religion, law, and the mechanics of power, and replaces it with a pragmatic morality based on character, reason, and nature. Judged by this new morality, the lady's parents—by observing what were then typical middle-class Tuscan marital customs[6]—dishonored her by offering her in marriage to a man who could give her no joy. As the victim of what was essentially a mercantile transaction, she is thus his *bagascia* (baggage, whore). By the same token, Ricciardo has dishonored himself, not only

in his failure to observe the natural laws of marriage, but in his exploitation of religion to conceal his inabilities. In light of this stunning reversal of values (which anticipates modern feminist polemics), Paganino the pirate becomes the more "honorable" husband, if only by virtue of his unflagging performance in bed. Boccaccio reinforces this offense against holy matrimony with an offense against language—a pun: "*e se io ora sto in peccato mortaio, io starò quando che sia in imbeccato pestello*" (and if I am at present living in mortar sin, I would also be so with a cold pestle). This coarse and defiant witticism drives Boccaccian *ingegno* into a new and deeper level of cultural psychology. The author will employ this and similar devices throughout Day III and later in the *Decameron*, using forms of verbal novelty to disorganize and reorganize the reader's awareness, and anticipating Francis Bacon's insight that to reform knowledge, we must first change language.[7]

The story of Ricciardo's rebellious wife is the crowning example of the *ingegno* that has occupied Boccaccio's attention since Day I. Here for the first time, in the abducted wife's brilliantly reasoned attack on cultural taboos, *ingegno* is allied with *ragione* (reason), a normative concept that figures importantly in the *Decameron*. Judge Ricciardo, whose sum of human knowledge is reckoned in exculpatory saints' days, is being held up for contrast with "Paganino," the pagan[8] pirate: a worn-out Christian soul, spouting meaningless words, against a new man, dashing, naughty, and insatiable. Ricciardo's lame hypocrisy resonates with other satiric passages in Day II: II. 1 with its satire on relics, II. 2 with its satire on prayer, II. 5 with its satire on clerics, II. 7 with its implicit satire on virginity, all suggesting, as incremental reminders, that the church and its teachings rank foremost among the causes of political and personal plague.

Pampinea's concluding song, addressed to Amor (whom she also calls her lord "*signor*"), expresses a lady's joy at finding a young man of shining virtue:

> Tu mi ponesti innanzi agli occhi, Amore,
> il primo dí ch'io nel tuo foco entrai,
> un giovinetto tale,
> che di biltà, d'ardir né di valore
> non se ne troverebbe un maggior mai,
> né pure a lui equale:
> di lui m'accesi tanto, che aguale
> lieta ne canto teco, signor mio. (II. *Concl.*14)
> [You, Love, set before my eyes
> the first day that I fell into your fire,
> a young man of such talent,
> accomplishment [spirit] and valor [worth]

the likes of which no one could surpass
or could even be compared to;
so much have you inflamed me with him, Love,
that now in joy I sing with you of him.] (161)

Pampinea seems to answer Emilia's preceding *canzone*, which has characterized love as an experience whose uniqueness can be shared only by an intellectual equal. Like Emilia, Pampinea asserts a meritocratic standard of love, judging men—as a leader or a philosopher might judge them—according to their comparative virtue rather than according to the ethos of courtly love. Her poem thus reinforces the new ethos of *ingegno* and initiative that has been developed in Days I and II.

A Marsilian Holiday. Just before Pampinea's song, Queen Filomena bestows the governing of the *brigata* ("*questo piccol popolo*" (II. *Concl.*2); (this tiny nation) (159) on Neifile, who commands that the next two days, Friday and Saturday, be set aside in observance of the Passion of him who died for us ("*che per la nostra vita morí*") and that the storytelling recommence on Sunday. As this is the only religious observance described at any length in the whole frame narrative (there is a more briefly mentioned break of the same sort after Day VII), we should carefully consider its nature. The queen's words are modest and simple, devoid of the parodic religious sophistry of Panfilo's opening to I. 1. Moreover, the ceremonies run true to the spirit of the Marsilian separation of church and state: the modest religious celebration is kept completely separate from the storytelling of the surrounding days and is not described as part of the narrative. Finally, though the *brigata* observe the queen's injunction without dissent, their hearts are elsewhere. As the day concludes, they "*con disiderio aspettarono la domenica*" (eagerly looked forward to Sunday) when they could return to the delightful business of hearing and telling stories. Though Boccaccio honors religion decorously, he leaves no doubt about the principal occupation of his "*piccol popolo*." And his positioning of the Christian celebration—between the two sexual powder kegs, II. 10 and III. 1—provides a suitably ironic context.

CHAPTER 3

INGEGNO—WIT AS MISDIRECTION AND ICONOCLASM: DAY III

E cosí stando, essendo Rustico piú che mai nel suo disidero acceso per lo vederla cosí bella, venne la resurrezion della carne . . .
[Being in this position, and more than ever burning with desire from the sight of her kneeling there so beautiful, the flesh was resurrected.]

Boccaccio's setting for Day III is auspicious. Following his *brigata* from their delightful villa to an even more sumptuous estate, he regales us with a modernized *locus amoenus* whose various beauties and pleasures have decidedly philosophical overtones. In the language of a prose poem, he describes a palace stocked with practical amenities and boasting indoor-outdoor accessibility, a huge courtyard overhung with loggias, gardens graced with flowers, fruit, delightful animals (more on these later), living cupolas, a thick dark lawn, and waterworks that—in a fashion that would become a late Renaissance hallmark—at once recall ancient Rome and anticipate modern technology.[1] The effect of this pagan/futurist scheme is especially striking here, because Boccaccio seems to be dialoguing with Dante's star-studded and transcendental version of paradise:

> Il veder questo giardino, il suo bello ordine, le piante e la fontana co' ruscelletti procedenti da quella tanto piacque a ciascuna donna e a' tre giovani, che tutti cominciarono a affermare che, se Paradiso si potesse in terra fare, non sapevano conoscere che altra forma che quella di quel giardino gli si potesse dare, né pensare, oltre a questo, qual bellezza gli si potesse agiugnere. (III. *Intro*.11)
>
> [The sight of this garden, its exquisite plan, the plants, and the fountain with its little streams flowing from it pleased each of the ladies and the three young men so much that all of them decided that if Paradise were to be created on earth, they could conceive of it as having no other form than

> that of this garden, nor could they imagine what beauty might be added to the garden other than what it already possessed.] (164)

If Boccaccio is speaking with Dante here, he is again (as in the Introduction and II. 2) questioning Dante's parameters. For while Dante's *Paradiso* bears classic elements of Christian redemption, Boccaccio's *Paradiso* ("*se Paradiso si potesse in terra fare*") suggests a kind of secular redemption: a Renaissance vision of humanity reconciled with nature, in a context based on observed reality and developed with native genius. When the word "*Paradiso*" appears again, three times in III. 4, it serves as a metaphor for sexual intercourse.

The stories of Day III support this worldly revelation. Here Boccaccio refines and concentrates the three thematic energies introduced in the preceding days: *ingegno*, sexuality, and satire of the clergy. Six of the ten stories contain sallies against religious figures, while every one of the ten shows *ingegno* operating as the Prince Galeotto or go-between for illicit sexuality. Boccaccio establishes sexuality as one extreme of a moral spectrum whose opposite extreme is piety, and he regularly privileges the former over the latter. But even sexuality gives place, in his creative hierarchy, to the *ingegno* that animates all ten stories. Day III, moreover, complicates the function of *ingegno* itself. While earlier Boccaccio's model of human ingenuity took on a variety of forms, Day III shows *ingegno* specifically as a kind of deep displacer: a device that misdirects meaning and alters the shape of cognition.

Why should Boccaccio contrive this sort of mental disarrangement at such a critical juncture in the development of his work? As he would have known from Augustine (*Confessions*, VIII), confusion and disorientation play an important role in the process of conversion from one belief system to another. Moments of confusion, in which paradigms are shaken, and premises that made perfect sense now make no sense at all, are common in all serious learning processes ancient or modern. Arthur Rimbaud, the young precursor of modernity, imposed such misrule on himself when he embarked on "*un long, immense et raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens*."[2] What better place than here, in the paradise of freedom from the plague, for Boccaccio to undertake his own sort of heuristic confusion? To achieve this displacement, Boccaccio creates a series of narrative complications that deform some familiar cultural premises: common social assumptions about speech, marital intimacy, and religious semiotics. In so doing he at once corrupts narrative predictability and opens up a world of new alternatives made possible by *ingegno.* Thus these deformations, grotesque as they may at first appear, take on the character of creativity.

Permutations of Speech (III. 1, 3, 5, 10). Boccaccio's concept of speech as the moral and political backbone of society derives from the Ciceronian positions taken in *De inventione*, *De legibus*, and *De officiis*.[3] Accordingly, in *De casibus*, Boccaccio characterizes language as a resource that unites and civilizes both the individual and society.[4] Language, however, can be as deadening as it is beneficial. Because words organize our reality for us, we are heavily dependent on them, and tend to lean on them as arbitrary props. By the same token, misdirections of language can affect us profoundly. It is through deliberate misdirections of speech that Boccaccian *ingegno* succeeds most brilliantly in Day III. In each of the following four *novelle*, Boccaccio reverses, or eliminates altogether, one of the essential vectors of language.

III. 1: Masetto, young and lusty, shows up at a convent pretending to be a deaf-mute, and applies for a job as gardener. His ostensible disability, together with his demonstrated agricultural skills, wins him a position, and he becomes part of the small religious community. It is not long, however, before the nuns realize that his verbal impotence gives them unhindered access to his erotic potency. One thing leads to another, and before long Masetto is hard put to gratify the desires of eight eager nuns. When the abbess herself joins in, the exhausted womanizer pleads for mercy and cunningly attributes his newfound faculty of speech to an act of God. Both his initial stratagem and his means of escaping its consequences are displays of *ingegno.*

III. 3: The bored wife of a Florentine wool merchant loves a young stranger from afar. Unable to approach him in any other way, she locates a silly friar who knows the man. Affecting a tone of wronged virtue, she complains to the friar that the young man has been making unwelcome advances. Completely fooled by the gambit, the friar passes along the complaint to his friend, who, after some thought, correctly interprets its real meaning. He finds a way to let the lady know that he is in the picture, and the three-way dialogue continues until their love is consummated. Happily united in bed together, the lovers add bells and whistles to this triumph of *ingegno* by jesting with each other about the friar's credulity and the deceived husband's trade: "*E appresso, prendendo l'un dell'altro piacere, ragionando e ridendo molto della simplicità di frate bestia, biasimando i lucignoli e' pettini e gli scardassi . . .*" (III. 3.54) (And then, while enjoying each other, they talked and laughed hilariously over the stupidity of Brother Ignoramus, and made many a jibe about wool-wicks, wool-combs, and wool-carders . . .) (184).

III. 5: Zima, a young man of Pistoia, is crazy in love for the wife of a knight named Francesco who, in turn, wants to own Zima's horse. Zima offers Francesco the horse in exchange for a brief conversation with the

lady, and Francesco, to limit his own risk, responds that this can happen only if his wife is not allowed to speak. When Zima is at last alone with the lady, he expresses his passion for her and then, without missing a beat, invents and intones a credible reply from her. The lady is impressed by this virtuoso performance and, after further consideration, gives him her love. Here a clever rogue capitalizes on two well-known Tuscan male vices—greed and tyranny toward wives—and then employs dialogic *poesis* to complete the seduction.

III. 10: Dioneo's wry tale of Alibech, the guileless virgin who visits a Christian hermit named Rustico and is taught to put "the Devil into Hell" (III. x), was singled out by one nineteenth-century editor before being so carnally offensive that it could not be published in English (for mature readers, he supplied a French translation). The dialogue between the two characters as they perform this sacramental act (which has Dioneo's audience in stitches of laughter) is a merciless satire of Christian values and liturgical language, as well as a rousing defense of natural pleasure:

> E cosí stando, essendo Rustico piú che mai nel suo disidero acceso per lo vederla cosí bella, venne la resurrezion della carne; la quale riguardando Alibech e maravigliatasi, disse: "Rustico, quella che cosa è che io ti veggio che cosí si pigne in fuori, e non l'ho io?"
>
> "O figliuola mia," disse Rustico "questo è il diavolo di che io t'ho parlato; e vedi tu ora egli mi dà grandissima molestia, tanta che io appena la posso sofferire."
>
> Allora disse la giovane: "Oh lodato sia Iddio, ché io veggio che io sto meglio che non stai tu, ché io non ho cotesto diavolo io."
>
> Disse Rustico: "Tu di' vero, ma tu hai un'altra cosa che non l'ho io, e haila in iscambio di questo."
>
> Disse Alibech: "O che?"
>
> A cui Rustico disse: "Hai il ninferno..." (III. 10.13–18)
>
> [Being in this position, and more than ever burning with desire from the sight of her kneeling there so beautiful, the flesh was resurrected. Alibech looked at it in amazement and said:
>
> "Rustico, what is that thing I see sticking out in front of you and which I do not have?"
>
> "Oh, my child," replied Rustico, "that is the Devil about whom I told you. Now you can see him for yourself. He is inflicting such pain on me that I can hardly bear it."
>
> "Praise be to God!" said the girl. "I am better off than you are, for I do not have such a Devil."
>
> "That is very true," Rustico replied, "but you do have something else, which I do not have, and you have it in place of this."
>
> "Oh?" answered Alibech. "What is it?"
>
> "You have a Hell..."] (237)

Dioneo's story of Alibech and Rustico concludes in the ironically moralistic manner of III. I: the wily seducer has so effectively aroused the female libido that he is ultimately unable to satisfy it.[5] Nonetheless, the tale of Rustico epitomizes the direction and impact of the *novella* in Day III. Through all of them, Boccaccio is developing a rule of Misrule, an assault on common assumptions intended to initiate his readers into the realm of revelations yet to come. In these stories, misrule takes on the role of liberator, freeing natural energies that are typically suppressed by society. At times, moreover, Boccaccio compounds the insult by embodying misrule in the very language of suppression, that is, the language of Christian sanctity. He thus reverses established polarities of good and evil, instilling in his readers a confusion that is, in turn, amenable to new ideas.

The Bed-Trick (III. 2, 6, 9). One of the bylaws of human sexuality is that while the two sexes are generally drawn to each other, individuals usually depend on having a specific and familiar partner. Substituting the unfamiliar, unbeknownst to the other partner, can, if discovered, be profoundly disorienting. But reversals of familiarity are as mother's milk to Boccaccio, whose *poesis*, here and throughout, thrives on anomalies, failings, extremes, and subversions. In III. 2, King Agilulf discovers that an enterprising groom has crept into his royal bed and made love to his sleepy queen. By measuring the heartbeats of all the grooms lying in their own beds, he identifies the culprit, and cuts off a lock of his hair to mark him. But the culprit cleverly manages to confuse the evidence by similarly marking his fellow grooms. The monarch, though offended, is wise enough to realize that he cannot press justice any further without becoming the butt of a scandal. Rethinking his options, he cleverly finds a way to defuse the situation without the queen being any the wiser.

In III. 6, the Neapolitan matron Catella seems to be totally unseducible. A chaste and loving wife, she is, moreover, insanely jealous of her husband's possible infidelities. But the ingenious Ricciardo, who loves her, finds a way. Alleging to Catella that her husband is unfaithful, he lures her to a dark bedroom in the city baths. There she expects to impersonate the reputed mistress (allegedly Ricciardo's wife) of her reputedly errant spouse and then expose his culpability. Of course it is not her spouse, but rather Ricciardo, who joins her in the darkened bedroom. Boccaccio exploits a double irony when, after some mutually gratifying sex, Catella arraigns her bedmate for his infidelity:

> "Ahi quanto è misera la fortuna delle donne e come è male impiegato l'amor di molte ne' mariti! Io, misera me, già sono otto anni, t'ho piú che la mia vita amato, e tu, come io sentito ho, tutto ardi e consumiti nell'

> amore d'una donna strana, reo e malvagio uom che tu se'! Or con cui ti credi tu essere stato? Tu se' stato con colei la quale con false lusinghe tu hai, già è assai, ingannata mostrandole amore e essendo altrove innamorato. Io son Catella, non son la moglie di Ricciardo, traditor disleal che tu se': ascolta se tu riconosci la voce mia, io son ben dessa; e parmi mille anni che noi siamo al lume, ché io ti possa svergognare come tu se' degno, sozzo cane vituperato che tu se'." (III. 6.33–34)
>
> ["Ah, how wretched is the fate of women and how misplaced is the love that so many of them bear for their husbands! Oh, poor wretch that I am, for eight years now I have loved you more than my life itself, and you, I'm told, are burning with passion for another woman, evil and wicked man that you are! Now whom do you think you have just been with? You have been with the same woman you have been deceiving for many a year with your false compliments, pretending to love her while all the time you were in love with someone else. I am Catella, you faithless traitor, I am not Ricciardo's wife. Don't you recognize my voice? Yes, it is really she. I can't wait to be in the light again, so that I can shame you the way you deserve, you lousy, filthy dog."] (199)

When Catella learns the truth and flies into an even greater rage, Ricciardo placates her with words and kisses.

In III. 9, Giletta de Nerbona, rejected wife of the Count of Rossiglione, learns that he has gone off to Florence and declared that he will not accept her love until she has given him a child and gained possession of his favorite ring. Giletta successfully meets his challenge by traveling to Florence in disguise, discovering that the count is courting a local beauty, meeting the girl's mother, and offering her a large dowry for her daughter in return for her cooperation. Substituting herself for the girl in bed, she emerges with the ring in hand and a pair of fine twins in her belly. Her brilliant tactics win the count's love.

In three various but mutually complementary ways, Boccaccio has deformed marital sex from an event of familiar, if not monotonous, gratification into a theater of unpredictable possibilities. So great is the power of *ingegno* to awaken culture with surprise.

Misdirecting Ritual and Vesture (III. 4, 7, 8). The vesture and ritual of Christianity carry arbitrary meanings that convey sacred power and (in theory) suppress the native urges of the flesh. The creatively wrought misdirection or reversal of these meanings imperils order and opens new avenues of opportunity. This subversion of institutional power at once satirizes that power and celebrates the natural instincts that have been suppressed. In III. 4, a monk appropriately named Don Felice—a man "*d'aguto ingegno e di profonda scienza*") (III.4.7) (of sharp wit and profound knowledge) (185)—convinces the gullible friar Puccio to do

a lengthy penance. While Puccio lies on a board with his arms spread out, as it were, in crucifixion, Don Felice pays frequent visits to *Paradiso* with Puccio's wife. When Puccio calls into the bedroom to ask why the house is shaking, his wife, who is astride, responds with colloquial brevity: "*Non ve ne caglia, no; io so ben ciò ch'io mi fo: fate pur ben voi, ché io farò ben io se io potrò*" (III. 4.29) (Don't worry about it; I know very well what I'm doing. You just keep up your good work, and I will do the best I can with mine) (188). Here Boccaccio's reversal of scriptural meaning reaches full pitch. Not only does he align the concept of paradise with its nearest physical approximation on earth, but he conversely demotes the idea of crucifixion from its lofty scriptural perch to an earthier level, where it suggests the duped husband's hopeless credulity and cuckoldry. Puccio's wife sums up this reversal neatly when, in flagrante, she remarks to her lover, "*Tu fai fare la penitenzia a frate Puccio, per la quale noi abbiamo guadagnato il Paradiso*" (III. 4.31) (You make Friar Puccio do the penance but we are the ones who go to Paradise) (189).

In III. 7, the Florentine Tedaldo, rejected by his mistress Ermellina, revisits her some years later, disguised in pilgrim's vesture. Her husband has been arrested for murder, and Tedaldo alone has the means of exonerating him. But before performing this favor, he asks her why she originally rejected him as her lover. She replies that a friar told her to. Tedaldo then uses his "invested" authority to give her a lengthy lecture on erotic morality—and the general wickedness of friars, whom he describes as fundamentally irreligious, lazy, and self-interested hypocrites, who frighten the laity with potential damnation, only to bleed them of material wealth. Having overwhelmed Ermellina with this anti-sermon, Tedaldo reveals his true identity, wins her love anew, and rescues her husband from the law. His eloquence has restored order: not the disingenuous order imposed by friars and husbands, but a dynamic new order of individual enterprise and *ingegno.*

III. 8 reprises the anticlerical satire of II. 7, but this time from a clerical perspective. A wily abbot, having seduced the wife of his gullible friend Ferondo, convinces him to suffer the ordeal of Purgatory. Using a drug, a dungeon, an assistant, and several months of time, the abbot makes it appear both to Ferondo and his neighbors that Ferondo has died. When Ferondo wakes up in the dungeon, the abbot has him secretly scourged on a regular basis by the assistant. This lengthy period of purification facilitates the abbot's illicit affair; but when the lady becomes pregnant, the abbot must think quickly. He approaches Ferondo as a harbinger of Divine grace:

> "Ferondo, confortati, ché a Dio piace che tu torni al mondo; dove tornato, tu avrai un figliuolo della tua donna, il quale farai che tu nomini

Benedetto, per ciò che per gli prieghi del tuo santo abate e della tua donna e per amor di san Benedetto ti fa questa grazia."

Ferondo, udendo questo, fu forte lieto e disse: "Ben mi piace: Dio gli dea il buono anno a messer Domenedio e allo abate e a san Benedetto e alla moglie mia casciata, melata, dolciata." (III. 8.65–66)

["Ferondo, be of good cheer, for God wishes you to return to the world; and when you return, a son will be born to you from your lady, and you shall name him Benedetto, for through the prayers of your holy Abbot and your wife and through the love of St. Benedict, this grace is given you by God."

Hearing this, Ferondo was very happy, and he said, "Am I glad! God bless God Almighty, the Abbot, St. Benedict and my cheesy-weesy honeybunny of a wife."] (224)

Here the clergy, who were the object of a lively sally in the preceding tale, appear to emerge triumphant in their hypocrisy, but only because Boccaccio has another satiric goal in mind. As with Ciappelletto in I. 1 (and as it will be with Cipolla in VI. 10, and Gianni in IX. 10), the witty priest is used as the agency for an indictment of credulity and a satire on conventional sanctity. Boccaccio spares no pain to attack social inequities, using any means that come to hand. In Day III, the last in his three-day introduction to *ingegno*, he has created what amounts to a subversive finishing school, whose purpose is to liberate readers from repressive and interest-driven cultural norms, and to take them into a world whose hierarchy is determined by wit and invention.

Lauretta's Song. Lauretta's song expresses the anguish of a woman whose beloved husband, who appreciated her real beauty, has died:

Niuna sconsolata
da dolersi ha quant'io,
ch'invan sospiro, lassa innamorata.
Colui che muove il cielo e ogni stella
mi fece a suo diletto
vaga, leggiadra, graziosa e bella,
per dar qua giú a ogni alto intelletto
alcun segno di quella
biltà che sempre a Lui sta nel cospetto;
e il mortal difetto,
come mal conosciuta,
non mi gradisce, anzi m'ha dispregiata.
Già fu chi m'ebbe cara e volentieri
giovinetta mi prese
nelle sue braccia e dentro a' suoi pensieri,
e de' miei occhi tututto s'accese,

e 'l tempo, che leggieri
sen vola, tutto in vagheggiarmi spese;
e io, come cortese,
di me il feci degno;
ma or ne son, dolente a me!, privata (III. *Concl*.12–14)
[There is no helpless lady
who has more cause to weep than I,
who sigh in vain, wretchedly in love.
Heaven's mover and that of every star
made me for His delight
so light and lovely, gracious to behold
that I might show to every noble mind
on earth some trace of that
beauty which dwells forever in His presence;
but mortal imperfection,
which cannot comprehend,
finds me undelightful and I am spurned.
There was one man who held me dearly,
and I was young when he
embraced me with his arms and all this thoughts—
my eyes had set him all aflame,
and time, which flies away
so lightly, he spent it all in courting me;
and I, in courtesy,
made him worthy of me;
but now, alas, I am deprived of him.] (241–42)

The widowed singer, we learn from the lines that follow, is now married to a new lover, a pretender who, deceived by "false belief," has become a jealous husband ("*e con falso pensiero / divenuto è geloso*" III. *Concl*.15). She prays for an end to her misery.

Lauretta's song, like Emilia's in Day I, recalls Dante, who repeatedly turned the imagery of courtly love into philosophical allegory. As though to make this connection clearer, Boccaccio imitates the final line of the *Paradiso*: Dante's "*l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle*" is here "*Colui che muove il cielo e ogni stella*." But while Dante's "*amor*" is a divine intellect energizing all creation, Boccaccio's allegorical entity ("*Colui che muove il cielo e ogni stella*") is located in the human intellect, and represents a form of *ingegno* (as in Emilia's song at the conclusion of Day I) whose beauty is available only to those who value the life of the mind. Lauretta's old lover, now dead, was intellectually equipped to prize her beauty. Her new lover, clearly of dull wit ("*falso pensiero*"), despises and suspects her. Who are these male lovers? To unpack this part of the allegory, we may turn from Lauretta's Dantesque imagery to the characterization of Lauretta herself.

Lauretta's name has been connected with that of Petrarch's famous Laura. Petrarch was crowned with laurel on the Capitoline Hill in Rome in 1341; and Boccaccio has the king or queen crowned with laurel at the start of each day (I. *Intro.*97). One of Petrarch's special missions, moreover, was to restore, insofar as possible, the eloquence and virtue of pagan antiquity (a mission that he balanced precariously with his desire to be known as a good Christian). With these connections in mind, we may identify the old lover in Lauretta's song as pagan antiquity, which generally celebrated Nature and prized the intellect, and the new lover as Christian authority, which sternly regulated both nature and mind. Reminiscent of Petrarch's outrage at the then-current societal neglect of ancient genius, the singer expresses an alienated awareness, separated tragically from its past sources of nourishment and vitality. Day III, and the *Decameron* as a whole, are dedicated to the reintegration of that awareness into literate culture.

Day III and Boccaccio's Developing View of Nature. Wandering through the various misdirections of Day III, and looking ahead to the seven following days, we may make some tentative observations. If we look at the first three days of the *Decameron* as a lengthy introduction to the concept of *ingegno,* then the misdirections of Day III may be seen as revealing *ingegno* in its highest form—a kind of genius conversant with inner cognitive paradigms and capable of disrupting them. This form of *alto ingegno*, so effective at seducing readers away from old paradigms and into new situations, sets the stage for the moral revolution implicit in the *Decameron* as a whole. *Ingegno* propels the awareness and initiative that are privileged in every day of the work. Taken together, the ideas of misdirection and relocation in Day III operate analogously to the geographical metaphor of relocation and renewal played out by the *brigata*: from city to nature, from plague to paradise, from mere escape to a dynamic revolution in awareness. The motive force of this revolution is *ingegno*, which liberates the individual and asserts real-world human autonomy.

But *ingegno*, for all its revolutionary appeal, cannot be justified as an original and isolated force. It must, as in Cicero's *De legibus*, be supported by reason and take its pedigree from nature. Accordingly, as the *brigata* moves from one delightful location to another, telling stories and responding to them, Boccaccio limns out an image of nature that is quietly revolutionary. For Boccaccio nature is a universal, comprising all the inborn functions of life, including reason. It is natural, Boccaccio implies, for human beings to act rationally; but (as we will see in Day IV) the rational faculty must recognize and accept the validity of equally natural phenomena like passion.

Boccaccian nature has notable antecedents, but is not limited by their purview. From the Epicurean tradition he takes the sense of nature as a universal and self-affirming creative principle; from Cicero the idea that nature is the sole valid source of wisdom and model for development. But unlike Cicero, Boccaccio does not directly moralize from these positions. Instead he enacts them, patiently depicting a social universe in which a general knowledge of human nature, together with an awareness of its specific manifestations, drives the engines of enlightenment and renewal. Boccaccio, without fanfare of any sort, breaks with the past, at times including his beloved Cicero, as radically as the boldest heretic. In so doing, he accommodates a vivid future. The nature celebrated in the *Decameron* is basically the same nature that will be conceived by Shakespeare and Bacon. It will empower the Scientific Revolution and, in turn, animate modern awareness. How to engage and accommodate this dynamic force will be the subject of the following days of the *Decameron*.

CHAPTER 4

REASON'S DEBT TO PASSION: DAY IV

> *alle cui leggi, cioè della natura, voler contastare troppo gran forze bisognano, e spesse volte non solamente in vano ma con grandissimo danno del faticante s'adoperano.*
> *[whose laws (that is, Nature's) cannot be resisted without exceptional strength, and they are often resisted not only in vain but with very great damage to the strength of the one who attempts to do so.]*

Day IV opens with a surprise. Temporarily dissolving the narrative frame, the author addresses his readers directly. He amiably defends his own *Decameron* against a host of literary maligners and detractors—shades of Lauretta's second lover—and argues that his effort to court and amuse female readers makes him a true child of nature—the great engine that drew men to women in the first place. To illustrate the power exerted by nature, the author takes the unusual step of telling a story himself. He recounts the tale of Filippo Balducci, who travels to Florence with his adolescent son. Since age two, the boy has been sequestered in a hermit's cell and deprived of worldly knowledge. After some reflection, Filippo decides to take the boy into the city, whose noble buildings thrill the lad's untutored eyes. Then father and son run into a group of young women. Filippo's son asks what they are, and Filippo replies,

> "Figliuol mio, bassa gli occhi in terra, non le guatare, ch'elle son mala cosa."
>
> Disse allora il figliuolo: "O come si chiamano?"
>
> Il padre, per non destare nel concupiscibile appetito del giovane alcuno inchinevole disiderio men che utile, non le volle nominare per lo proprio nome, cioè femine, ma disse: "Elle si chiamano papere."
>
> Maravigliosa cosa a udire! Colui che mai piú alcuna veduta non avea, non curatosi de' palagi, non del bue, non del cavallo, non dell'asino, non de' danari né d'altra cosa che veduta avesse, subitamente disse: "Padre mio, io vi priego che voi facciate che io abbia una di quelle papere."

> "Oimè, figliuol mio," disse il padre "taci: elle son mala cosa."
> A cui il giovane domandando disse: "O son cosí fatte le male cose?" (IV. *Intro.*21–26)
> ["My son, lower your eyes and do not look, for they are evil."
> Then the son asked: "What are they called?"
> In order not to awaken some potential or anything-but-useful desire in the young man's carnal appetite, his father did not want to tell his son their proper name, that is to say "women," so he answered:
> "Those are called goslings."
> What an amazing thing to behold! The young man, who had never before seen a single gosling, no longer paid any attention to the palaces, oxen, horses, mules, money, or anything else he had seen, and he quickly said:
> "Father, I beg you to help me get one of those goslings."
> "Alas, my son," said the father, "be quiet; they are evil."
> To this the young man replied:
> "Are evil things made like that?"] (246–47)

The father immediately recognizes "*più aver di forza la natura che il suo ingegno*" (that Nature had more power than his intelligence) and abandons his specious position.

Boccaccio's humble but hilarious story strikes one as a sharp contrast to Dioneo's Devil in Hell barnburner (III. 10). But there is lurking continuity. Both stories establish a foil of extreme innocence, connected in some way with hermetic isolation of a cell (*cella, celletta*). Both focus on the way in which the charged issue of sexuality warps the linguistic space between one human being and another. Amidst this linguistic distortion, familiar words (III. 10: *diavolo, inferno*; IV. 1: *papere, beccare*) take on new meaning as icons of pure mischief. The implication of both tales is that the long suppressed forces of nature will triumph—if necessary, at the expense of some familiar cognitive paradigms. At the end of the tale Boccaccio makes his own alignment with nature clear:

> E se mai con tutta la mia forza a dovervi in cosa alcuna compiacere mi disposi, ora piú che mai mi vi disporrò; per ciò che io conosco che altra cosa dir non potrà alcuno con ragione, se non che gli altri e io, che v'amiamo, naturalmente operiamo; alle cui leggi, cioè della natura, voler contastare troppo gran forze bisognano, e spesse volte non solamente invano ma con grandissimo danno del faticante s'adoperano. (IV. *Intro.*41)
> [And if I have in the past striven with all my might to please you in some way, now I shall do so even more, for I realize that no reasonable person could say that I and the others who love you act in any way but according to Nature, whose laws (that is, Nature's) cannot be resisted without exceptional strength, and they are often resisted not only in vain but with very great damage to the strength of the one who attempts to do so.] (249–50)

Here Boccaccio takes on the role of exegete, the task of interpreting one of his own fables, to achieve a rational justification for his poetic endorsement of human passion.

IV. 1: Ghismunda as Cicero. It may be surmised by now that Boccaccio is framing the transition from Day III to Day IV as an emphatic and climactic series of passages, devoted to developing the ideas implied in the earlier tales and songs. His series of pointed allegories (Rustico in III. 10, Lauretta's *canzone*, Introduction to Day IV) reaches its climax in IV.1, the famous story of Ghismunda and Tancredi. This simple tale of illicit and fatal love is not exploited for its eroticism or its melodrama. What it dwells on at length is the character of Ghismunda, the royal widow whose lover, the court page Guiscardo, is about to be murdered by her oppressive father, and the unprecedented eloquence with which she defends her love and her values. Ghismunda is cut from the same cloth as the heroine of Lauretta's song: a rational being isolated in a world of unreason. Thus she represents an heroic personality, a feminist pioneer, and more generally the existential alienation of progressive thought in a repressive age.

In terms of its elevation of tone, vocabulary, development, and sentence structure, Ghismunda's words in her own defense take the form of a brief classical oration. Stylistically her speech recalls two Ciceronian invectives, 1 *Catiline* and 1 *Philippics*,[1] while the moral content of her argument is based on Cicero's *De legibus* and *De officiis*. She begins with a resounding latinate period:

> Tancredi, né a negare né a pregare son disposta, per ciò che né l'un mi varrebbe né l'altro voglio che mi vaglia; e oltre a ciò in niuno atto intendo di rendermi benivola la tua mansuetudine e 'l tuo amore: ma, il vero confessando, prima con vere ragioni difender la fama mia e poi con fatti fortissimamente seguire la grandezza dell'animo mio. (IV. 1.31)
>
> [Tancredi, I am disposed neither to deny nor to beg, since the former would not avail me, and I do not wish to avail myself of the latter; moreover, in no way do I intend to appeal to your kindness and your love but, rather, I shall confess the truth to you, first defending my reputation with sound arguments, and then, with deeds, I shall follow the boldness of my heart [actually, "greatness of my spirit"].] (254)

With the rhetorical devices *paromoiosis, divisio*, and *negatio*,[2] Ghismunda presents herself as a figure of dignity, while simultaneously measuring out a moral distance between herself and her father. After this exordium, she proceeds immediately with the main argument (*narratio*). She justifies her actions in terms of Ciceronian natural law (*De legibus*, I.viii–ix), which she strikingly refers to as "*le legge della giovanezza*" (the laws of youth).

Following Cicero, she dismisses her father's position as being based on "*la volgare opinione*" (Cicero uses the same phrase in a closely related context, *De officiis*, III.xxi.84)[3] rather than on the truth. She invokes the Ciceronian idiom "sound reason" (*vere ragioni*) and vaunts "*la grandezza dell'animo mio*" (the greatness of my spirit).[4] And she bases her assertions, in Ciceronian fashion, on experience: on knowledge gained in her prior marriage, her years at court, and her relationship with Guiscardo, avowing that she chose the young page above all others with "*diliberato consiglio*" (deliberate consideration) rather than by pure chance. Regarding her lover Guiscardo, who was not of noble birth, she invokes the idea of human equality via the Platonic/Aristotelian concept, advanced forcibly by Cicero, of "the principles of things" (*principii delle cose*)[5]:

> Ma lasciamo or questo, e riguarda alquanto a' principii delle cose: tu vedrai noi d'una massa di carne tutti la carne avere e da uno medesimo Creatore tutte l'anime con iguali forze, con iguali potenze, con iguali vertú create. La vertú primieramente noi, che tutti nascemmo e nasciamo iguali, ne distinse; e quegli che di lei maggior parte avevano e adoperavano nobili furon detti, e il rimanente rimase non nobile. E benché contraria usanza poi abbia questa legge nascosa, ella non è ancor tolta via né guasta dalla natura né da' buon costumi; e per ciò colui che virtuosamente adopera, apertamente sé mostra gentile . . . (IV. 1.39–40)
>
> [But let us leave all that aside and look rather to the principles of things: you will observe that we are all made of the same flesh and that we are all created by one and the same Creator with equal powers and equal force and virtue. Virtue it was that first distinguished differences among us, even though we were all born and are still being born equal; those who possessed a greater portion of virtue and were devoted to it were called nobles, and the rest remained commoners. And although a custom contrary to this practice [*contraria usanza*] has made us forget this natural law, yet it is not discarded or broken by nature and good habits; and a person who lives virtuously shows himself openly to be noble.] (255)

Ghismunda's defense locates itself in history and submits the same sort of historical narrative suggested by Lauretta's song at the end of Day III. For Ghismunda, "*contraria usanza*" has obscured natural law, just as, in Lauretta's song, the speaker's natural beauties are not apparent to her second husband. Lauretta's nameless consort, with his jealousy and oppression based on "*falso pensiero*," is reflected in the autocratic character of Tancredi. Both male figures signify the cultural imprisonment of awareness that Boccaccio sees as characteristic of his times, and from which his *Decameron* functions as a medium of liberation.

But if Ghismunda is locating her calamity in an historical moment, she is not about to leave history as she found it. Her emphatic statement that "*tutti nascemmo e nasciamo iguali*" (we have been born and are born equal)—even though expressed as part of a fiction—is a landmark in modern social theory, anticipated by other writers including Cicero, Aquinas, Brunetto, and Dante, but never proclaimed outright until now.[6] Ghismunda, moreover, supports this fiery manifesto with a state-of-nature paradigm that rejects feudal inequalities, and allows for individuals to gain distinction and nobility through active virtue. She omits only one major component of the liberal political formula that would later animate Hobbes and Locke: government by consent. Boccaccio leaves that bridge for Filippa of Prato to cross in VI. 7.

Ghismunda's speech is to no avail, and fittingly so: anything but a fatal consequence would dull her message. Thus ennobled by tragedy, her defense of her rights, and of human rights in general, stands as a monument in the history of literature and culture. Her words are patently heretical. To justify sexual freedom, to address her princely father as an equal, to claim that indeed all human beings are created equal, to suggest merit as the only justification for rank, and to assert the authority of reason and nature over the dictates of church and state is to posit a startling and comprehensive new model for human affairs. To do this as a disenfranchised woman compounds the offense. Ghismunda's words would have looked fairly cheeky if spoken in the context of a Thomas Hardy novel of the 1880s. Spoken in the age of the Inquisition, they are quite outrageous.[7]

Of course, Boccaccio (if challenged by some inquisitor) might well have claimed that Guiscardo's death and Ghismunda's subsequent suicide relieve the text of any semblance of impropriety. But equivocation of this sort in no way dilutes the forceful reasoning of her self-defense. Through Ghismunda, Boccaccio is able to summarize explicitly what he has been implying throughout the first three days of the *Decameron*: that the social order is diseased, and that the best cure available is a new order based on human nature and the appropriation of Ciceronian natural right. Boccaccio expresses this view, moreover, by using and repeating Italian versions of the appropriate Ciceronian words: *ratio, natura, virtus, ingenium, ius, lex*, among others.[8] Thus presented, the *Decameron* is an early salvo in the resurgence of Ciceronian political theory that ultimately inspired Machiavelli, Locke, Jefferson, and the modern republics.[9]

Ghismunda as Lucretia. Boccaccio's Ghismunda, who aptly places herself in history and makes history as a women's advocate, is also repeating history. Her role as self-martyred defender of her own sexual identity significantly resembles that of Lucretia, the Roman matron whose

violation by Sextus Tarquinius became the rallying point for the overthrow of the Kings of Rome. Cicero, who brought up Lucretia's story in *De finibus*, V, was followed at much greater length by Livy (I. 57–60), whose version Boccaccio emulated twice, in *De casibus* (III.iii) and in *De mulieribus claris* (XLVIII). The fact that Lucretia died defending her marital chastity, while Ghismunda dies defending her sexual liberty, may have concealed the qualities they have in common. Both Lucretia's chastity and Ghismunda's liberty are forms of female personal integrity, which are first unjustly compromised by men and then reasserted by heroic action. Lucretia's virtue lies in the defense of her personal integrity from the tyranny of rape; Ghismunda's virtue bespeaks a more modern purpose: the defense of the integrity of the heart's affections. In other words, Boccaccio is coopting the dramatological weapon of martyrdom as part of a new poetic arsenal for women's rights. While Lucretia's martyrdom liberates the state from a violent pagan tyranny, Ghismunda's is a step in liberating women from an autocratic patriarchy.

That Boccaccio takes up this issue in unmistakably Ciceronian language should cause us to stop and think. What is the crowning purpose of a four-part sequence that has, in a few pages, confronted us with the outrageous Rustico, the yearning Lauretta, the enlightened Filippa, and the radiant Ghismunda? Is Boccaccio's cause the liberation of women? The restoration of classical eloquence? The defeat of feudalism and church oppression? The resurrection of the idea of nature? The rule of reason? Of realism? The establishment of political equality? The emancipation of the individual? Given the profound interrelationship of these causes in the tales up to now, we may only guess that it is all of these, and that they represent to the author a supreme and unified project. Boccaccio had no single word for this project, and it would be 200 years before Vasari developed a viable historical tag, "*rinascita*."[10] Thanks to him, we know it now as "Renaissance."

IV. 2: The Angel as Wild Man. Boccaccio follows up the Ghismunda story with a contrast so glaring as to remind us of the anecdotal mischief of Dioneo himself. But seen in context, the ridiculous figure of Alberto—first disguised as an angel and then feathered as a wild man—is a thoroughly appropriate segue, both with regard to the Ciceronian princess and with regard to the development of the *Decameron* as a whole. Ghismunda and Alberto unite to help us locate ourselves along the way in Boccaccio's poetic journey. Each of these *novelle* converses with one of the two great tales that begin and conclude the *Decameron*. Ghismunda, as the figure of misused virtue and dignity, looks ahead to the celebrated Griselda of X. 10: each heroine is unjustly disempowered by an autocratic male. Alberto, as the preposterous Christian mountebank, looks

back to the notorious Ciappelletto of I. 1: each of them outrageously manipulates and exploits religious discourse. Thus the two stories serve as timely reminders of the disastrous reversal of values that characterizes Boccaccio's satiric world.

Alberto's story, as told by Pampinea, opens with a muscular invective[11] against the clergy:

> la ipocresia de' religiosi, li quali co' panni larghi e lunghi e co' visi artificialmente palidi e con le voci umili e mansuete nel dimandar l'altrui, e altissime e rubeste in mordere negli altri li loro medesimi vizii e nel mostrar sé per torre e altri per lor donare venire a salvazione. (IV. 2.5)
>
> [the hypocrisy of the [clergy],[12] who go about with their long, flowing robes, their artificially pale faces, their voices humble and sweet when they are begging alms, but shrill and bitter when they are attacking their own vices in others or when they declare how others gain salvation by giving alms while they do so by taking them.] (259–60)

The tale is originally ancient Roman (Hegesippus, *Historia*), and Boccaccio retells it elsewhere (*De mulieribus claris*, XCI),[13] but here he sets it in his own times and in Venice, which he characterizes as "*d'ogni bruttura ricevitrice*" (IV. 2.8) (that receptacle of all sorts of wickedness) (260). Alberto, a notable malfeasant who has come to the city and become a friar, conceives a longing for the idle, vain, and air-headed local matron Lisetta. In order to seduce her, he exploits her vanity and gullibility with a bogus promise of love from the archangel Gabriel, reminding the reader of Pampinea's opening invective against the "*religiosi*," who solicit donations by offering the love of Christ. There are various ironic veins to mine here, including the story of Gabriel and the Virgin Mary; and Boccaccio rises to the occasion. His stroke of genius, however, is to turn the amusing image of Alberto as Gabriel into a bitter Dantean *contrapasso*. Alberto's great advantage, Lisetta's vanity, becomes his fatal disadvantage when Lisetta starts to brag about her sexual encounters with an angel. Fleeing from Lisetta's enraged in-laws, Alberto takes refuge with a Venetian who deceives him by promising to help him escape Venice in disguise. Instead Alberto, masked and covered with honey and feathers, is chained up as the Wild Man at the Fair in the piazza and then unmasked as the phony Gabriel by his wily Venetian host:

> a frate Alberto trasse la maschera dicendo: "Signori, poi che il porco non viene alla caccia, e non si fa, acciò che voi non siate venuti invano, io voglio che voi veggiate l'agnolo Gabriello, il quale di cielo in terra discende la notte a consolare le donne viniziane." (IV. 2.55)
>
> [tore the mask off his face and announced: "Ladies and gentlemen, since the pig did not show up for the hunt, there is not going to be a hunt,

> but I would not want you to feel that you have come for nothing, so may I present to you the Angel Gabriel, who descends by night from Heaven to earth to comfort our Venetian ladies."] (267)

Bitten by insects, trashed by the crowd, and at last seized by his fellow friars, Alberto is led off to a miserable fate.

The contrast between two emblematic images, Alberto as Gabriel and Alberto as Wild Man, serves as a figurative unveiling of institutional fraud. The angelic vision that turns into an inhuman monster aptly conveys the burden of Pampinea's opening diatribe against clerical hypocrisy. Moreover, Boccaccio's use of the trope of unmasking as applied to the exposure of clerical rhetoric is the same figure of speech—"*involucrum reserando*" (tearing away the mask)—with which Marsilius of Padua concluded his diatribe against the sophistry of the church in the *Defensor Pacis*. The term *involucrum*, used with regard to the exposure of specious rhetoric, was Ciceronian.[14]

Alberto's double identity of angel and monster is perhaps the most hideous image in Boccaccio's large gallery of anticlerical emblems. And Boccaccio underlines the universality of his satire with Pampinea's concluding exclamation: "*Cosí piaccia a Dio che a tutti gli altri possa intervenire*" (IV. 2.58) (May it please God that the same thing happen to all others like him!) (267).

IV. 10: Ghismunda in Reverse. Day IV is unusual in that it is framed at beginning and end by two stories that have substantial material in common. Both IV. 1 and IV. 10 are set in the relatively provincial, but not uncivilized, southern town of Salerno. Both stories revolve around a young woman's relationship with a much older man (IV. 1: Ghismunda and her father, Prince Tancredi; IV. 10: a nameless *donna* and her doctor husband, Mazzeo). In both cases the young woman is victimized by a social order that unfairly restricts her freedom. In both tales, finally, the young woman takes a lover (Guiscardo in IV. 1; Ruggieri in IV. 10), with whom she meets secretly. Here, however, the resemblances end. The dramatic difference between the two stories is that the male lovers occupy opposite positions on the moral spectrum. The page Guiscardo (IV. 1), while humbly born and bred, is an accomplished and wholly admirable young man. The local stud Ruggieri (IV. 10), while high-born, is a complete rogue and villain: "*e per tutto Salerno di ladronecci e d'altre vilissime cattività era infamato*" (IV. 10.7) (and throughout Salerno he was infamous for his thievery and most other disgraceful crimes) (302). This difference is reflected in the women's erotic feelings. Ghismunda's love is characterized as a full personal commitment; while the doctor's wife has nothing but sex in mind, "*piacendogli esso per altro*" (IV. 10.7) (he pleased her for

quite another reason) (302). The distinction plays itself out in the sequel, where Ghismunda stages her own tragedy as a lesson in revealed morality, while Mazzeo's wife and her paramour survive discovery of their affair and the onslaught of the law through a series of missteps and petty lies, topped off by some quicky sex in the magistrate's office.

With all this in mind, we may consider viewing IV. 10 as a corrective or balance to IV. 1. While he has every reason to memorialize Ghismunda as his own philosophical spokesperson and a champion of women's rights, Boccaccio must also sustain the real-world satiric attitude that he has established in Days I–III. Ghismunda may be great but, as he reminds us, the world is much fuller of nameless *donne* who get things done any which way they can. A case in point is a brief erotic incident in IV. 10 that Boccaccio will later refer to as the salient *jeu d'esprit* of the whole *novella*.[15] The doctor's maid, who agrees to save her mistress and Ruggieri by telling a self-incriminating lie, arrives at last before the chief magistrate (*lo stradicò*)[16] and tells him her trumped-up story. While listening to her, *lo stradicò* has been smitten by her charms, and he sets himself a course that Boccaccio expresses in some of his spiciest language: "*attaccar l'uncino alla cristianella di Dio*" (IV.1 0.48) (to get his hook into such a delightful one of God's creatures) (308). After this procedure has been duly proposed, considered, accepted, and then consummated on the office floor, the criminal case against Ruggieri is dismissed, and things go back more or less to normal in Salerno. So indeed does Boccaccio, as he abandons tragic melodrama and returns to more familiar salacious and satiric haunts.

IV. 3–9 and the Theme of the Irrational. The remaining *novelle* of Day IV, which recount little more than a miscellany of impulsive, indiscreet, self-destructive, or otherwise uninformed erotic initiatives, build on a theme that is shared by the first two stories of the Day: the problematic relationship between love and rationality. This conflicted relationship, Boccaccio implies, can only be resolved if reason recognizes passion as a human constant. As Neifile puts it in introducing IV. 8:

> tra l'altre naturali cose quella che meno riceve consiglio o operazione in contrario è amore, la cui natura è tale che piú tosto per se medesimo consumar si può che per avvedimento alcun torre via . . . (IV. 8.4)
>
> [there is nothing in all of nature that is less amenable to advice or to interference than Love, whose nature is such that it is more likely to consume itself rather than be diverted by someone else's foresight . . .] (292–93)

Boccaccio drives this idea home with determination and variety in the central stories of Day IV. 3–9. In Marseilles, three couples elope together

and come to grief after one of the males forms a new attachment (IV. 3). A Sicilian prince tries to hijack his beloved at sea, with gory results for both (IV. 4). Three spiteful brothers murder their sister's lover, and she goes crazy preserving his severed head (IV. 5). A nightmare proves prophetic to lovers in Brescia (IV. 6). An herbal remedy spells doom for lovers in Florence (IV. 7). Another Florentine crawls into bed with his already-married beloved and promptly dies, causing her a major logistic problem; she later dies of grief (IV. 8). A knight in Provence makes his wife eat her lover's heart (IV. 9). What these unhappy tales supply in variety, they frequently lack in intensity. It would seem that, by concentrating on tragic love, Boccaccio has robbed himself of his most effective literary assets: his provocative realism, his devilishly satiric insinuations, and his ability to relate the erotic with creativity and laughter. And while all seven of these tales concern love affairs, only one describes what it is like to fall in love: IV. 7, a workplace romance in which Pasquino, a delivery man, develops a mutual affection with Simona, a weaver whom he supplies with wool:

> Per che, l'un sollecitando e all'altra giovando d'esser sollecitata, avvenne che l'un piú d'ardir prendendo che aver non solea, e l'altra molta della paura e della vergogna cacciando che d'avere era usata, insieme a' piacer comuni si congiunsono; li quali tanto all'una parte e all'altra aggradirono, che, non che l'uno dall'altro aspettasse d'essere invitato a ciò, anzi a dovervi essere si faceva incontro l'uno all'altro invitando. (IV. 7.9)
>
> [And so it happened that while one was being attentive and the other was enjoying the attention, one of them grew bolder than was his custom, while the other one set aside her usual timidity and modesty, and together they were united in mutual pleasure, which was so enjoyable to both parties that rather than one waiting to be invited by the other, it was, whenever they would meet, a case of who could be the first to make the invitation.] (289)

Here Boccaccio is at his best, conveying both emotional immediacy and thematic consistency. It is this moment, and a few others, that come closest to illustrating Neifile's argument that reason cannot contain or deconstruct love. And because Neifile's position on love is very close to that of Ghismunda, it can be taken as carrying a degree of authorial blessing. Ghismunda, who is nothing if not reasonable, yet acknowledges "*le legge di giovanezza*" as indispensable functions of human nature. She is thus introducing a "modern" theory of reason as accommodating the irrational: a theory that would not be considered alien or old-fashioned by William James or Sigmund Freud. This viewpoint will come to our aid as we address the days to come.

Appropriately, the lovelorn Filostrato sings the concluding song, in which a lover passionately bewails his beloved's betrayal. His torment revolves around the moment of realization, his awakening to knowledge of the deceit (*conosco, conoscente, conobbi* all occur in the full text of the song). Yet this knowledge does not bring with it the wisdom that can heal his affliction.

> Lagrimando dimostro
> quanto si dolga con ragione il core
> d'esser tradito sotto fede, Amore.
> . . .
> Fatto m'ha conoscente dello 'nganno
> vedermi abbandonato da colei
> in cui sola sperava;
> ch'allora ch'io piú esser mi pensava
> nella sua grazia e servidore a lei,
> senza mirare al danno
> del mio futuro affanno,
> m'accorsi lei aver l'altrui valore
> dentro raccolto e me cacciato fore. (IV. *Concl.*11, 13)
> [With my own tears I show
> how rightly grieves the heart
> [when, O Love, faith is deceived.][17]
> . . .
> [I learned of the deceit
> when she in whom alone I placed
> my hope abandoned me,
> for when I thought myself to be
> most in her grace and in her service
> and could not see the coming
> of all my future pain,
> I found that she had welcomed to her heart
> another and had driven me away.] 310f.

Filostrato's song reflects the lingering paradox of Day IV. Our reasonable acceptance of passion as a function of nature does not make passion itself reasonable. On the other hand, is there a kind of passion that can awaken and gratify the mind? More specifically, is there a moment of realization that can enrich rather than impoverish the spirit? Boccaccio leaves that question hanging until Day V, where he will submit figurative evidence that passion can be not only rationally acceptable, but also ennobling.

CHAPTER 5

THE SHOCK OF RECOGNITION: DAY V

> *Genius, all over the world, stands hand in hand, and one shock of recognition runs the whole circle round.*
>
> —Herman Melville, "Hawthorne and his Mosses"

The laurel crown for Day V is bestowed on Fiammetta, whose physical presence is described in the Conclusion to Day IV in words so sensuous and detailed as to inspire a Botticelli:

> La Fiammetta, li cui capelli eran crespi, lunghi e d'oro e sopra li candidi e dilicati omeri ricadenti e il viso ritondetto con un color vero di bianchi gigli e di vermiglie rose mescolati tutto splendido, con due occhi in testa che parean d'un falcon pellegrino e con una boccuccia piccolina\li cui labbri parevan due rubinetti . . . (IV. *Concl.* 4)
>
> [Fiammetta, with her long and curly golden hair falling about her delicate white shoulders, her nicely rounded face glowing all over with a mixture of the true color of white lilies and red roses, her eyes black as falcons, and a sweet little mouth with lips that looked like twin rubies . . .] (309)

The author endears Fiammetta to us by giving her a *boccuccia* (little mouth) that punningly kisses his own *boccaccio* (big mouth). Hers is a name that, like Lauretta's, carries thematic authority. She plays various important roles in a number of Boccaccio's works and is understood to represent a muse-like figure reminiscent of Dante's Beatrice and Petrarch's Laura.[1] Why does Boccaccio describe her so copiously and evocatively at this moment? Perhaps to prepare us for a similarly ravishing experience in V. 1, where the sight of a beautiful girl will have revolutionary effects. Perhaps, as well, to remind us of Emilia's song in Day I, "*Io son sí vaga della mia bellezza*," and its Ciceronian implications about the genius (*ingegno*) implicit in the individual and characterized poetically as a form of beauty.

One more detail of Fiammetta's physiognomy should be noted here: the likeness of her eyes to those of a "*falcon pellegrino*." These words introduce us to a substratum of allusions that will stretch through the entire day: allusions to the magnificent and notorious Frederick II, nonpareil of medieval freethinkers, and to some of the subjects he held dearest—falconry and other Arabic importations. These arabesque subthematics will add garnish and subtlety to the topic at hand.

The Shock of Recognition. Boccaccio's main concern in Day V is hidden in plain view. The day's five central stories all hinge on the shock of recognition—in each case, the recognition of a familiar person in an unfamiliar setting. In V. 3, a member of the Orsini clan recognizes the lost and hunted Agnolella. In V. 4, Lizio finds his daughter sleeping with a man and identifies him as a family friend named Ricciardo. In V. 5, Bernabuccio recognizes his long-lost daughter. Gianni, hero of V. 6, escapes death when he is recognized by the king's admiral, Ruggier da Loria. And in V. 7, Fineo, an Armenian ambassador in Sicily, recognizes and rescues his long-lost son, Teodoro/Pietro. These recognitions set the thematic tone of the day as a whole. Admittedly, recognition is a romance commonplace, timeworn even in Boccaccio's day. But readers who have followed this study up to now will guess that Boccaccio has something more serious than romance in mind.

To understand exactly what, we need only remember that recognition is a mental event connected not merely with social relationships, but with learning and discovery of all sorts. Is Boccaccio, perhaps, overdosing us with recognitions in order to suggest more dramatic aspects of the learning process? A reexamination of the entire day suggests that this may be the case. In the first place, two of the tales portray erotic embarrassments, recognized by the victims as being potentially gainful opportunities. Lizio, whose daughter has been dishonored by Ricciardo (V. 4), recognizes in Ricciardo a promising son-in-law. Pietro di Vinciolo (V. 10) realizes that his discovery of his wife's lover offers him a means of satisfying his own homoerotic desires. In both cases unconventional thinking leads to a new synthesis that turns misfortune into opportunity.

Five other tales in Day V expand the idea of recognition into different psychological areas. In V. 5 Bernabuccio's unnamed daughter is moved by an "*occulta vertú*" (hidden force) as she recognizes her father. In V. 2 Martuccio Comito, imprisoned in Tunisia, earns freedom and honor by lecturing on archery to the king, who in turn recognizes his value as a strategist. In these tales, the idea of recognition is expanded beyond mere personal identification into the realms of insight and creativity. More serious yet are three stories that center on transfiguring realizations. There is the famous story of the impoverished Federigo

degli Alberighi (V. 9), who slays, plucks, and cooks his prized falcon in order to please Monna Giovanna, whom he loves madly but unrequitedly. All too late, she informs him that she had come to his house to ask for his beloved falcon as a present for her dangerously ill son. Though she reproaches Federigo for having killed the falcon to feed his guest, to herself she acknowledges his magnanimity: *e poi la grandezza dell'animo suo, la quale la povertà non avea potuto né potea rintuzzare, molto seco medesima commendò* (V. 9.37) (But then to herself she commended the greatness of his spirit, which no poverty was able, or would be able, to diminish) (368). Sometime later, after mourning the child's death, and being pressured by her brothers to marry, she remembers Federigo's virtue and responds that she wishes to marry him. When her brothers complain about his poverty, she answers: "*Fratelli miei, io so bene che cosí è come voi dite, ma io voglio avanti uomo che abbia bisogno di ricchezza che ricchezza che abbia bisogno d'uomo*" (V.9.42) (My brothers, I am well aware of what you are saying, but I would much rather have a man who lacks money than money that lacks a man) (368). Similar in purport, though radically different in tone, is V. 8, in which Nastagio degli Onesti—similarly unrequited—treats his lady to a supernatural horror show in which a woman is mangled by dogs and then murdered by an armed knight. It evolves that the victim is being punished for having refused the man's love:

> Ma tra gli altri che piú di spavento ebbero, fu la crudel giovane da Nastagio amata, la quale ogni cosa distintamente veduta avea e udita e conosciuto che a sé piú che a altra persona che vi fosse queste cose toccavano, ricordandosi della crudeltà sempre da lei usata verso Nastagio; per che già le parea fuggire dinanzi da lui adirato e avere i mastini a' fianchi.
>
> E tanta fu la paura che di questo le nacque, che, acciò che questo a lei non avvenisse . . . ella, avendo l'odio in amor tramutato . . . (V. 8.40–41)
>
> [But among those who were most terrified was the cruel girl Nastagio loved, for she had clearly seen and heard every detail and realized that these things concerned her far more than anyone else who was present, inasmuch as she recalled the cruelty that she had always inflicted on Nastagio; as a result, she already felt herself fleeing from his rage and the mastiffs lunging at her sides. So great was the terror aroused in the lady by this spectacle that in order to avoid a similar fate herself, she changed her hatred into love . . .] (362–63)

In both these stories (V. 9 and V. 8) a degree of interpretation is required of the lady in question before the major moment of recognition. Like a scholar interpreting a poetic text, each lady reviews the event in question and determines its relevance to her own situation. Both stories suggest that life may yield us more wisdom if we read its experiences symbolically.

Recognition, realization, the whole process of internalizing new knowledge, is, Boccaccio would seem to suggest, a moral victory of no mean proportions.

These thematic vectors shed new light on what is perhaps the most powerful moment of Day V: Cimone's discovery of Ifigenia in the woods of Cyprus (V. 1). Cimone, a handsome but blockheaded young man whose doltishness has disgraced his noble family, wanders through nature one spring day and comes upon a sleeping maiden:

> La quale come Cimon vide, non altramenti che se mai piú forma di femina veduta non avesse, fermatosi sopra il suo bastone, senza dire alcuna cosa, con ammirazion grandissima la incominciò intentissimo a riguardare; e nel rozzo petto, nel quale per mille ammaestramenti non era alcuna impressione di cittadinesco piacere potuta entrare, sentí destarsi un pensiero il quale nella materiale e grossa mente gli ragionava costei essere la piú bella cosa che già mai per alcun vivente veduta fosse. (V. 1.8)
>
> [When Cimone saw her, as if it were the first time he had ever seen the feminine form, he leaned upon his stick and without saying a word, he began to gaze upon her with the greatest of admiration; and within his rustic bosom, in which a thousand lessons had failed to leave any impression at all of refined delight, he felt a thought awaken which within his material and uncouth mind told him that this lady was the most beautiful thing that had ever been seen by any living man.] (315)

This experience, much like the visitation of a muse or goddess, miraculously transforms the clownish Cypriot into a scholar and a gentleman:

> Essendo adunque a Cimone nel cuore, nel quale niuna dottrina era potuta entrare, entrata la saetta d'Amore per la bellezza d'Efigenia, in brevissimo tempo, d'uno in altro pensiero pervenendo, fece maravigliare il padre e tutti i suoi e ciascuno altro che il conoscea. (V. 1.16)
>
> [And now that Cimone's heart, into which no teaching had ever been able to enter, was pierced by Love's arrow through Iphigenia's beauty, in the briefest of time he passed from one way of thinking to another, to the amazement of his father, his relatives and anyone else who knew him.] (316)

Cimone dons handsome garments, forms edifying relationships, becomes a musician, turns to the study of philosophy, cultivates the martial arts, and refines his manner of speaking. In short, he undergoes an epochal transfiguration.

Special aspects of this metamorphosis merit attention. First, Cimone's experience is described in the manner of a spiritual revelation. Cimone does not "learn" the arts of civilization, but rather is swept into them by

a single all-encompassing vision. Second, in describing Cimone's conversion, Boccaccio makes what was probably the first presentation of the qualities making up a humanist education and framing a Renaissance Man: a man multifariously excellent, finely tuned to the music of experience.[2] The placement of these heavy-duty ideas at the head of a day full of recognitions and sudden insights suggests that Boccaccio sees real-world realizations—our coming to terms with exactly who and what we are—as revelations to rival if not supplant the transfiguring experiences that have been used to support religious discourse. Cimone's conversion is the image of religious revelation, except that it operates in reverse. Just as Augustine, in his garden, is suddenly and utterly conveyed away *from* the world (*Confessions,* VIII), so Cimone, in the woods, is drawn with equal rapture *into* the world. Boccaccio's mini-myth of Cimone is thus in line with all the other realistic implications of the *Decameron*. With Cimone's story, Boccaccio would seem to be asking, "Why worry about heaven when truth is here on earth?"

We may also connect Cimone's recognition of Ifigenia's beauty with Emilia's recognition of her own beauty in the *canzone* of Day I:

> Io son sí vaga della mia bellezza,
> che d'altro amor già mai
> non curerò né credo aver vaghezza.
> [So struck am I by my own beauty
> that never could I heed
> Another love nor find delight therein.]

In both instances, physical beauty is connected with Ciceronian *ingenium*, the precious spirit that dignifies humanity, and that Boccaccio presents as *ingegno*. In the story of Cimone, Boccaccio mythologizes the emergence of *ingegno*, showing (in the manner of Plato's *Symposium*) how it is awakened by the beauty and bounty of nature, and how it resultantly seeks to improve itself and engage itself with the world. Boccaccio explicitly calls love "an awakener of sleeping genius" (317) ("*eccitatore degli adormentati ingegni*" V.1.22). Thus, on the emotive side, *ingegno* is related to the pleasurable perception of beauty, including outright eroticism; while on the educative side, it lends itself to humanistic programs and social action.

Arabesque and Anarchy. As a set of related undertones, Boccaccio adds three topics: falconry, Arab fiction, and the looming influence of Emperor Frederick II. These topics were historically interrelated: falconry was an Arab importation, and its center in the mid-thirteenth century was Frederick's court. All of the day's ten tales, moreover, resemble Arabian romances in their dependence on coincidence, their thematic

interrelationships, and their narrative appeals to the animal kingdom. V. 9, the story of the poor knight and his falcon, derives in part from the Arabian tale of Hatim Tayyi.[3] Emperor Frederick is referenced directly in V. 5, and appears as a character in V. 6; he is evoked again in V. 9, whose hero, the falconer Federigo, bears his name. These resemblances reflect on the theme of recognition in a number of ways. Frederick was a literary and scientific pioneer. His lengthy *Art of Falconry* (based on the Arabic of Moamyn), with its elaborate detail and loving concentration on zoological subtleties, is a classic of early modernity. Frederick was a practicing scientist in the modern sense (he conducted experiments); he numbered Arabic among his linguistic skills; and he topped off his New Age credentials by entertaining such Averroist doctrines as that of the eternity of matter.[4] Simply put, Frederick and his Arab connections symbolize the spirit of discovery—both in its delight and in its danger—that permeates Boccaccio's Day V.

But one more factor deserves attention here. Recognitions, realizations, revelations of all sorts usually follow the perception of strangeness. To put it rather obtusely, we are startled by the sight of a familiar face among strangers because the familiar itself is strange among strangeness. In Day V Boccaccio supplies this element with a literary circus of the strange and the wild. A girl boards a small boat and abandons herself to the winds (V. 2). Another girl cringes in a haystack as a sword probes it (V. 3). A third is mauled by mastiffs and butchered by a knight (V. 8). A man spends the night up a tree (also in V. 3). A woman eats the flesh of a falcon, which, had it been allowed to live, might have cured her ailing son (V. 9). And of course unlikely reunions abound.

Boccaccio saves the strangest for last. Dioneo's closing tale about the Perugian sodomite Pietro di Vinciolo is a rogue's gallery of enormities, confrontations, surprises, reversals, recognitions, and ironies. Pietro's new wife is shocked to discover that her husband is attracted to other males and has no erotic interest in her at all. Outraged, she appeals to a local wise woman who, in turn, reveals to her an iconoclastic morality of opportunism and rough justice by which the wife can excuse her own illicit satisfactions:

> E per ciò che a questo siam nate, da capo ti dico che tu fai molto bene a rendere al marito tuo pan per focaccia, sí che l'anima tua non abbia in vecchiezza che rimproverare alle carni. Di questo mondo ha ciascun tanto quanto egli se ne toglie, e spezialmente le femine, alle quali si convien troppo piú d'adoperare il tempo quando l'hanno che agli uomini . . . (V. 10.19–20)
>
> [And since we're born to do it, let me tell you once more that you are right to give your husband tit for tat, for at least in your old age your heart

> will have no reason to reproach your flesh. In this world you've got to grab what you can get, and especially a woman, who needs, even more than men, to take advantage of every opportunity that presents itself.] (371)[5]

The wise woman turns procuress, and the wife eagerly seizes opportunities. One such opportunity turns sour when the wife and a lusty lad of her choosing are interrupted at dinner by Pietro's unexpected return. Lad hides under chicken coop, as Pietro (in an Arabian Nights style tale-within-a-tale) enters and explains his sudden return. His tale is, unbeknownst to him, a precise fractal of his own immediate situation. Pietro tells how his dinner host, Ercolano, has flown into a rage on discovering his own wife's hidden lover. Pietro's wife seizes on this narrative as an opportunity to deceive him further by sermonizing on fidelity; but this irony is itself ironized when an accident with a donkey gives her own lover away. It's now Pietro's turn to fulminate hypocritically; but he changes his mind when he recognizes Lusty Lad as one of his own secret flames. He hits on a plan to intimidate his wife and have the lad to himself; but this is trumped when she rakes him over the coals for being a deadbeat husband. Reconciled by all these self-deconstructing initiatives and posturings, the three dine joyously ("*lietamente*") and spend the night enthusiastically *à trois*.

Dioneo's tale complicates the heuristic dynamics of Day V. For the humane implications of realization and recognition that fill the preceding tales—especially 1, 4, 8, and 9—Dioneo substitutes a loveless theater of base interest and blatant opportunism. Granted, Pietro and his wife experience a number of important realizations, but none of these conveys moral insight: each is merely the impetus for a new tactic in a competition for erotic power. Pietro's sexual orientation, which Dioneo labels as unnatural,[6] sets a persistent undertone of gross venality, and the wise woman's advice to the wife, "*tu farai molto bene a rendere al marito tuo pan per focaccia*" (V. 10.19) (you'll do very well to give him tit for tat) (371) does little to elevate the discourse. What redeems the tale, however, is abundant laughter, humor aimed and focused in such a way that we cannot dismiss either husband or wife as alien to our own human state. These factors suggest that V. 10 may be read as a kind of coda, thematically related to the nine preceding tales, but corrective in nature. If Boccaccio is counseling his readers to recognize and realize a new set of human parameters, V. 10 is warning us that these parameters can be as dangerous as they are promising. The wise woman's riveting maxims, "*non senza grandissime e amare punture d'animo conosco, e senza pro, il tempo che andar lasciai*" (V. 10.16) (There is no pain equal to that of knowing that you have wasted time) (371) and "*Di questo mondo ha ciascun tanto quanto egli*

se ne toglie" (V. 10.20) (In this world one takes as much as one can get) (371) may be seen as canny reminders of the competition and dissension that underlie polite society: factors that will still be in effect when our enlightened *brigata* returns to Florence.

Here, even in his most extreme insult to narrative propriety, Boccaccio does not lose touch with his Ciceronian psychological framework. In his introduction to the tale, "*il rider piú tosto delle cattive cose che delle buone opere, e spezialmente quando quelle cotali a noi non pertengono*" (V. 10.3) (We are more likely to laugh over bad things than over virtuous deeds, especially when we ourselves are not directly involved) (369), Dioneo has drawn the connection between vice and laughter, in words that evoke a famous dictum of Cicero's:

> Then the field or province, so to speak, of the laughable . . . is restricted to that which may be described as unseemly or ugly; for the chief, if not the only, objects of laughter are those sayings which remark upon and point out something unseemly in no unseemly manner.[7]

In both cases, as with tales of the *Decameron* itself, the witty description of misdeeds amuses and instructs the audience without directly offending them. But with Boccaccio, as with Cicero, a jest can also be a warning.

Recognition and Discovery as Elements of Humanism. Boccaccio's exoticism and melodrama in Day V provide insight into the nature of discovery and recognition. Both processes temporarily favor the strange, and question the familiar. Unlike conventional learning experiences—study, memorization, tutoring—which tend to reinforce established paradigms, discovery and recognition endanger them, and instead suggest new syntheses. This distinction played out strikingly during the Renaissance, often called the Age of Discovery. Material discoveries, like the Americas, the moons of Jupiter, and the circulation of blood, went hand in hand with more abstract revelations like algebra, the ancient classics, and the idea of infinity. Some of these epochal events occurred before Boccaccio's very eyes, and he became part of them, joining his friend Petrarch in the quest to recover ancient writing. Petrarch shared with him the excitement of discovering Cicero's letters in Verona, and the more intimate revelation of the "human" Cicero revealed by those letters.[8] But the theme of humanistic discovery is far older than this. As Mary Jaeger reminds us, Cicero himself boasts of his discovery, as a young Roman quaestor, of Archimedes's then-forgotten grave in Syracuse. In the process he compares himself, as a civic-minded intellectual, to Archimedes the ur-discoverer, who had leapt out of his tub with the immortal exclamation, "Eureka!"[9] Boccaccio was not a precocious Roman quaestor like Cicero,

who could mythologize his own life, or a dashing philological superstar like Petrarch, who traveled with his 200-codex library packed on a train of horses. Boccaccio instead contrived to create living fictions that would make recognition and discovery available to readers.

A Note on Arab Numerology. With Arab influence and literature in mind, it will not be amiss here to add a note about numerology in the *Decameron*. Numerologically, the number 1001, as used in the celebrated *Arabian Nights*, is a semiotic conceit. If the number 1000, as a perfect power of 10, suggests perfection and finality, then 1001, which ruins that perfection, suggests process and continuity. Thus Shaharazad, the teller of tales in the *Arabian Nights*, chooses the number 1001 for the simple reason that the king has said that she must die when she completes her cycle. From this perspective it is interesting that Boccaccio tells 101 stories instead of 100 in the *Decameron* (we include the story of Filippo Balducci, told by the author himself in the Introduction to Day IV). Boccaccio may be suggesting, with this mathematical asymmetry, that the *Decameron* is not perfect, like the divine order and Dante's epic, but rather, as life forms always are, in process and evolution. Thus he would simultaneously be placing the *Decameron* beneath the *Commedia* in the moral order, and implying its precedence over the *Commedia* as a commentary on real-world dynamics.

Conclusion and Transition. The anarchic spirit of Dioneo's tale of Perugia spills over into the subsequent Conclusion of Day V and creates a turbulence that continues into the Introduction to Day VI. Dioneo, apparently driven into a heightened state by his own tale, uncorks a *copia* of verbal and musical mischief. When the new Queen asks him for a song, he begins to sing "*Monna Aldruda, levate la coda, Ché buone novelle vi reco*" (V. *Concl.*7) (Monna Aldruda, lift up your tail, for I bring you good tidings) (377). The ladies interrupt this melodic outrage, and the following interchange ensues:

> Disse Dioneo: —Madonna, se io avessi cembalo, io direi: *Alzatevi i panni, monna Lapa o Sotto l'ulivello è l'erba*; o voleste voi che io dicessi: *L'onda del mare mi fa sí gran male?* Ma io non ho cembalo, e per ciò vedete voi qual voi volete di queste altre. Piacerebbevi: *Esci fuor che sie tagliato, Com'un mio in su la campagna?*—Disse la reina: —No, dinne un'altra.—
>
> —Dunque, —disse Dioneo —dirò io *Monna Simona imbotta imbotta, E' non è del mese d'ottobre--.*
>
> La reina ridendo disse: —Deh in malora! dinne una bella, se tu vuogli, ché noi non voglian cotesta.—
>
> Disse Dioneo: —No, madonna, non ve ne fate male: pur qual piú vi piace? Io ne so piú di mille. O volete *Questo mio nicchio, s'io nol picchio o Deh fa pian, marito mio o Io mi comperai un gallo delle lire cento?*— (V. 10.9–13)

[Dioneo replied,

"My lady, if I had a tambourine, I'd sing, 'Raise your skirts, Monna Lapa,' or 'The grass grows under the olive tree,' or would you like me to sing 'I'm sick from the waves of the ocean's motion'? But I don't have a tambourine, and so you'll have to tell me which of these others you prefer. Would you like 'Come out and be cut down, like a maypole in the country'?"

"No," said the Queen, "sing us another one."

"Well, then," replied Dioneo, "shall I sing you 'Monna Simona, fill up your cask, it isn't the month of October'?'"

Laughing, the Queen said:

"Oh no! Please sing us a nice song, we don't want to hear that one."

Dioneo replied:

"No, my lady, do not take offense. Now, which do you prefer? I know more than a thousand of them. Would you like 'This treat of mine cannot be beat,' or 'Not so fast, husband dear,' or 'I bought a cock for one hundred lire'?"

Though all the others were laughing, the Queen now became a bit angry with him and she said,

"Dioneo, stop being funny and sing us a pretty song; if you don't, you'll find out how angry I can get."] (377–78)

Dioneo's salvo of japes is striking, not only because it prolongs the sense of misrule evoked by V. 10, but also because, for the first and only time, it tests the otherwise Horatian aplomb of the *brigata*. The Queen shows anger, and the culprit sues for grace with the ebullient love song, "*Amor, la vaga luce*."

Amor, la vaga luce
che move da' begli occhi di costei
servo m'ha fatto di te e di lei.
Mosse da' suoi begli occhi lo splendore
che pria la fiamma tua nel cor m'accese,
per li miei trapassando;
e quanto fosse grande il tuo valore,
il bel viso di lei mi fé palese;
il quale imaginando,
mi senti' gir legando
ogni vertú e sottoporla a lei,
fatta nuova cagion de' sospir miei.
Cosí de' tuoi, adunque, divenuto
son, signor caro, e ubidente aspetto
dal tuo poter merzede;
ma non so ben se 'ntero è conosciuto

l'alto disio che messo m'hai nel petto
né la mia intera fede
da costei, che possiede
sí la mia mente, che io non torrei
pace fuor che da essa, né vorrei.
Per ch'io ti priego, dolce signor mio,
che gliel dimostri e faccile sentire
alquanto del tuo foco
in servigio di me, ché vedi ch'io
già mi consumo amando e nel martire
mi sfaccio a poco a poco;
e poi, quando fia loco,
me raccomanda a lei, come tu dei,
che teco a farlo volentier verrei. (V. *Concl.*16–19)

[Love, the lovely light
which shines from out my lady's lovely eyes
has made me both your slave and hers.
The splendor of her lovely eyes
first kindled your flame in my heart,
as it transfixed my own;
And all the greatness of your power
was shown to me through her sweet face,
which when I have it in my mind,
I feel myself bringing together
every virtue, yielding them to her,
which is new reason for my sighs.
Thus, one among your followers
I have become, dear lord, and in obedience
I await the mercy of your power;
but yet I do not know if my high hope,
which you have set within my breast,
or my unbroken faith,
is fully known to her,
who so possesses all my mind, that I would not have,
nor would I want, any other happiness.
And so I pray you, gentle lord of mind,
to show her this, and make her feel
something of your fire
in grace to me, for you can see that I
already waste away in love, and in its torments
bit by bit wither;
then, when the time is ripe,
commend me to her as you should—
how gladly would I come to do it with you!] (378–79)

Dioneo's words reprise the erotic origins of Cimone's revelation in V. 1: like Cimone, he is taken captive by love, which "*gir legando*" (binds up) his every virtue. But his is a happy captivity, thanks to his novel conception of love as "*vaga luce*" (impassioned and/or captivating light), a phrase suggesting the heuristic love that simultaneously enthralls and enlightens. The song thus joyously completes a day in which love has been connected repeatedly with recognition and renewal.

This respite from discord, however, is brief. Chaos will suggest itself from another source at the outset of Day VI, with a dispute among the kitchen staff. Granted, these outbursts are minor and soon controlled. But tellingly they occur at the mathematical center of the development of the *Decameron*. This architectonic positioning gives added emphasis, not only to them, but also to adjacent tales and passages. By testing the temper of his discursive participants, Boccaccio signals the dangerous and subversive nature of his literary intention. In Day V he has presented his new version of evangelism—revised, shall we say, for mature audiences—and he is about to let loose, especially in VI. 7, 9, 10, and VII. 1, a withering barrage against a complacent patriarchy. The unrest at the juncture of Days V and VI serves as a drumroll for what will follow.

CHAPTER 6

MISRULE AND INSPIRATION: DAY VI

> *A' quali Guido, da lor veggendosi chiuso, prestamente disse: "Signori, voi mi potete dire a casa vostra ciò che vi piace"; e posta la mano sopra una di quelle arche, che grandi erano, sí come colui che leggerissimo era, prese un salto e fussi gittato dall'altra parte, e sviluppatosi da loro se n'andò.*
>
> *[Guido, finding himself surrounded by them, quickly replied: "Gentlemen, in your own house you may say to me whatever you wish"; then placing a hand on one of those tombstones, which were very high, nimble as he was, he leaped over the top onto the other side, and having escaped them, he went on his way.]*

How should a writer present an alarming truth? How does one convince readers that they must rethink their own social context, their internalized values, their very identities? Literary history offers three alternative answers: directly, indirectly, or not at all. Day VI, which reprises the subject matter of Day I—the power of *ingegno* as expressed in language—illustrates all three alternatives.[1] Madonna Filippa of Prato, who publicly endorses her own adultery and impugns the laws of her city (VI. 7), epitomizes the direct approach; while VI. 9, where Boccaccio privileges the freethinking Guido Cavalcanti, shows nearly the same bluntness. In the famous Cipolla story (VI. 10), the truth is wrapped in allegory and garlanded with laughter. The story of Chichibio in VI. 4, an understated gem, elevates laughter—or rather the role of laughter in upending logic and dissolving class barriers—to the level of truth itself; while the fair Cesca in VI. 8 represents a human intelligence so numb to meaning that neither direct nor indirect communication is of any use at all. Boccaccio fittingly sets these dramatics of wit, together with five other related narratives, in a context of misrule. Having concluded Day V with an outbreak of erotic insolence by Dioneo, he begins Day VI with another interpersonal eruption. We may see the author as using these chaotic interludes in Day VI to highlight the subversive power of *ingegno*, and alert us to the radical implications of the next three days.

As Day VI begins, Dioneo himself, shortly after having displayed his authorial credentials by singing a song about Troilus and Cressida (Boccaccio was at that time the best-known purveyor of that legend) is called on to settle a quarrel among the kitchen servants. This quarrel is rather one-sided, for only one of the two servants summoned gets a chance to speak. It is a woman named Licisca, whose brief but memorable presentation concerns the prevalence of premarital sex:

> Madonna, costui mi vuol far conoscere la moglie di Sicofante e, né piú né meno come se io con lei usata non fossi, mi vuol dare a vedere che la notte prima che Sicofante giacque con lei messer Mazza entrasse in Monte Nero per forza e con ispargimento di sangue; e io dico che non è vero, anzi v'entrò paceficamente e con gran piacer di quei d'entro. (VI. *Intro.*8)
>
> [My lady, this fellow thinks he knows Sicofante's wife better than me, as if I had no idea of who she was, and he has the nerve to try to make me believe that the first night Sicofante slept with her, Messer Hammerhead took the Black Mountain by force and with some loss of blood; but that's not true, and on the contrary, I say he entered with ease and to the general delight of all the troops stationed there.] (381)

Drawing from her broad acquaintance with the female population (that is, her immediate neighbors), Licisca goes on to say that in general women neither do, nor should, remain virgins until marriage. Without hesitation Dioneo awards her the victory.

The fairness of Dioneo's judgment is hardly at issue here. He speaks with his author's blessings. His opinion, moreover, is not so much judicial as it is thematic. As he has done in the erotic unorthodoxy of V. 10, and in Dioneo's salacious uprising in the ensuing Conclusion to Day V, Boccaccio is warning the reader that the heightened awareness so richly encouraged by Days I–V must of necessity open up to some disorderly realities. The sense of the advent of a dangerous newness has a structural basis as well. Among the most convincing comments on the structure of the *Decameron* is Pamela Stewart's observation (cautiously supported by Robert Hollander) that I. 1 and VI. 1, which geometrically balance each other and which both concern the power of discourse, locate two separate "beginnings" in the development of the work as a whole.[2] What does this twin structure suggest? Given our perception that the sequence of the *Decameron* as a whole is one of developing awareness, we may conjecture that the first half of the tales (I–V), though exhilarating in itself, is largely preparatory in function, much like the infiltration and barrage preceding a major invasion. In the second half (VI–X), the army of new ideas will attack in force. This chapter on Day VI, and the four following, will test this theory.

Day VI, Tales 1–5. Tales 1–5 of Day VI are brief and anecdotal, hinging on single sentences or phrases, witty and appropriate enough to reverse or defuse uncomfortable situations. As with the stories of Day I, the verbal offensive is usually aimed socially upward, as defense against the misuse of civic or masculine power. Madonna Oretta playfully rebukes a knight who is bad at telling stories (VI. 1). Geri Spina (Oretta's rich husband) gets a lesson in repartee from the baker Cisti, whom he has unintentionally wronged (VI. 2). Nonna de' Pulci delivers a stinging reply to an offensive comment made by the Bishop of Florence (VI. 3). Chichibio the cook saves his own neck with an outrageous witticism that placates his employer, Currado (VI. 4). Giotto the painter responds in kind to an insult from Forese da Rabatta, the jurist (VI. 5). Since these verbal heroics come from the gamut of the social scale—humble cook up to society maven—they suggest the same systemic reinterpretation of the relationship between social class and human worth, reminding us of Ghismunda's great speech (IV. 1) and of the tale of Federigo and his falcon (V. 9). This overall subversion of privilege sustains the dynamic and oppositional tone that was established near the end of Day V and that will prevail for the *novelle* of Day VI to come.

Then, after reaching the midpoint of the day, Boccaccio turns up the heat, switching to a more authoritative and forceful style. VI. 6, ostensibly a tribute to the ugliness of the Baronci family, is more seriously an arraignment of the aristocracy, while VI. 7–10 constitute an all but frontal assault on the moral status of his society.

Madonna Filippa, the matron from Prato who admits and then successfully defends her own adultery in court (VI. 7), is at once a throwback to Ghismunda and a harbinger of the emancipation of the female that will occupy Day VII. Boccaccio describes her as "*di gran cuore era, sí come generalmente esser soglion quelle che innamorate son da dovero*" (VI. 7.9) (very courageous, as women truly in love usually are) (397) and she is less a realistically drawn female character than a spirit of impudent common sense. Her brief in court is an unembarrassed indictment of self-interested legalism and the double standard.

Filippa, who had been expected to deny her transgression, instead sails into court like a frigate with guns blazing. Shifting the court's attention away from herself and toward the law that condemned her, she asserts that this law is unfair and invalid. As she puts it, "*le leggi deono esser comuni e fatte con consentimento di coloro a cui toccano*" (VI. 7.13) (the laws should be equal for all and should be passed with the consent of the people they affect) (397). She concludes her case with a wry assertion of her own sexual prowess that sends the courtroom into gales of laughter. Supported

by her husband's own testimony, she asserts that she never denied him sex, and continues:

> domando io voi, messer podestà, se egli ha sempre di me preso quello che gli è bisognato e piaciuto, io che doveva fare o debbo di quel che gli avanza? debbolo io gittare a' cani? (VI. 7.17)
>
> [I ask you, Messer Podestà, if he has always taken of me whatever he needed and however much pleased him, what was I supposed to do then, and what am I to do now, with what is left over? Should I throw it to the dogs?] (398)

Filippa wins her case resoundingly,[3] and Boccaccio's narrative follows her home in language that is spiritually as well as heroically charged: "*e la donna lieta e libera, quasi dal fuoco risuscitata, alla sua casa se ne tornò gloriosa*" (VI. 7.19) (and the lady, now free and happy, as resurrected from the flames, so to speak, returned to her home in triumph) (398).

This appeal to equal justice for all was previously sounded by Cicero (though Boccaccio had no direct access to the specific text involved, he might easily have run into the idea more than once in Livy).[4] Filippa's use of the term "consent of the people they affect" (*consentimento di coloro a cui toccano*) would seem to be the first literary reference to Cicero's now-famous *consensus*: the idea that, many years later, became the basis for the theory of the Social Contract (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, etc.).[5] It is certainly the first reference anywhere to "consent of the governed" theory as basis for the support of women's rights. Filippa is also referring to Cicero's opinion, expressed in the *De legibus*, that statutes, which disregard reason and nature, are bad and should not be honored:

> Iam vero illud stultissimum, existimare omnia iusta esse quae sita sint in populorum institutis aut legibus ... Atqui nos legem bonam a mala nulla alia nisi naturae norma dividere possumus ...
>
> [But the most foolish notion of all is the belief that everything is just that is found in the customs or laws of nations ... But in fact we can perceive the difference between good laws and bad by referring them to no other standard than nature ...][6]

Boccaccio's setting for this egregious display of freethinking is historically apt. The bustling mercantile town of Prato was known as a center for heresy, perhaps through having been, between 1240 and 1250, the northernmost outpost of Europe's highest-ranking freethinker, Emperor Frederick II. Frederick's learned chancellor, Pier delle Vigne, was a literary influence on Brunetto Latini, the groundbreaking humanist, and Brunetto in turn took both Dante and Guido Cavalcanti under his

wing.[7] This line of influence perhaps accounts for Boccaccio's placement, just two tales away from Filippa (VI. 7), of an anecdote about Guido and his notorious freethinking.[8] In VI. 9 Boccaccio introduces Guido glowingly as

> un de' miglior loici che avesse il mondo e ottimo filosofo naturale (delle quali cose poco la brigata curava), si fu egli leggiadrissimo e costumato e parlante uom molto e ogni cosa che far volle e a gentile uom pertenente seppe meglio che altro uom fare; e con questo era ricchissimo, e a chiedere a lingua sapeva onorare cui nell'animo gli capeva che il valesse. (VI. 9.8)
>
> [one of the best logicians in the world and a superb natural philosopher (things for which the group cared very little), Guido was a most charming and courteous man, and a gifted conversationalist who could do everything he set his mind to and who, better than any other man, knew how to undertake those things which were befitting a gentleman; and besides all this, he was extremely wealthy, and thus capable of entertaining as lavishly as you can imagine anyone whom he felt was worthy of such treatment.] (401)

He adds that Guido was thought to be an atheist:

> e per ciò che egli alquanto tenea della oppinione degli epicuri, si diceva tralla gente volgare che queste sue speculazioni erano solo in cercare se trovar si potesse che Iddio non fosse. (VI. 9.9)
>
> [and because he leaned somewhat toward the opinions of the Epicureans, it was said among the common folk that these philosophical speculations of his were solely directed toward the possibility of discovering that God did not exist.] (401)

As Guido strolls through a cemetery near the Florence baptistry, he is approached by a number of horsemen led by a friend of his, Betto Brunelleschi.[9] The young men, who have been seeking Guido's company at their dinner club, mockingly upbraid him for his heretical pursuits, and the riposte he delivers is punctuated by an act of daunting athleticism:

> "Guido, tu rifiuti d'esser di nostra brigata; ma ecco, quando tu avrai trovato che Idio non sia, che avrai fatto?"
>
> A' quali Guido, da lor veggendosi chiuso, prestamente disse: "Signori, voi mi potete dire a casa vostra ciò che vi piace"; e posta la mano sopra una di quelle arche, che grandi erano, sí come colui che leggerissimo era, prese un salto e fusi gittato dall'altra parte, e sviluppatosi da loro se n'andò.
>
> Costoro rimaser tutti guatando l'un l'altro . . . (VI. 9.11–13)

> ["Guido, you refuse to join our company; but listen here, what good will it do you when you finally manage to discover that God doesn't exist?"
>
> Guido, finding himself surrounded by them, quickly replied: "Gentlemen, in your own house you may say to me whatever you wish"; then, placing a hand on one of those tombstones, which were very high, nimble as he was, he leaped over the top onto the other side, and having escaped them, he went on his way.
>
> The men were all left looking at each other.] (401–402)

Guido's triumphant leap over the tomb reinforces the meaning of his bold response: the learned, inquiring mind is lively and nimble, while the minds of the "*gente volgare*" are as those of the dead.[10]

Was Guido an atheist?[11] Was Boccaccio an atheist? Or is the *Catholic Encyclopedia* correct in telling us that Boccaccio's "jibes and anecdotes at the expense of clerics did not impair his belief in the teachings of the church" (the same article confidently informs us that the tales of the *Decameron* were told "near Naples"). Let's leave such issues to the seances of the *gente volgare.* The point for us is that, in Boccaccio, we have a truly lively and (like Guido) nimble writer, who is choosing key sequences in his text to introduce a new program of free inquiry, reliance on direct experience, individual initiative, and distrust of authority. He is, however, pursuing this mission in challenging weather conditions that include limited freedom of speech, religious investigations and punishments, suppression of women, and an assortment of other primitive and authoritarian attitudes. He is offering new ethical and esthetic products to a marketplace that is, for the present, numb to change.

Boccaccio speaks to this heuristic predicament in two stories that straddle the Filippa and Guido episodes: VI. 8 and VI. 10. In the first of these the wise Fresco da Celatico reproves the snobbery of his air-headed niece Cesca with the mordant suggestion, "*Figliuola, se cosí ti dispiaccion gli spiacevoli, come tu di', se tu vuoi viver lieta non ti specchiar giammai*" (VI. 8.9) (My girl, if you find people as disagreeable as you say you do, I suggest for your own happiness that you never look at yourself in the mirror again) (400). But his wisdom falls on deaf ears:

> Ma ella, piú che una canna vana e a cui di senno pareva pareggiar Salamone, non altramenti che un montone avrebbe fatto intese il vero motto di Fresco, anzi disse che ella si voleva specchiar come l'altre. E cosí nella sua grossezza si rimase e ancor vi si sta. (VI. 8.10)
>
> [But Cesca, whose head was more hollow than a reed, though she thought she was as wise as Solomon, understood the true meaning of Fresco's witty remark as well as some dumb animal might, and said that she intended to look at herself in the mirror just as other women would.

> And so she remained as stupid as she ever was, and continues to remain so to this day.] (400)

The second story, VI. 10, is a comic masterpiece that has exerted massive influence on the rise of modern literary humor. Brother Cipolla ("Onion"), of the then-infamous Order of St. Anthony,[12] visits the town of Certaldo every summer to preach to the locals. There he extorts goods and money from the people in return for guaranteeing their safety. One morning he promises to show them a priceless relic: the very feather that dropped from the archangel Gabriel's wing at the Annunciation. After making this promise, which reminds the reader of Alberto's equally outrageous promise of IV. 2 (that the angel Gabriel would take on his shape), Cipolla strolls downtown for a lengthy lunch, leaving his gear under the watchful eye of his assistant, *Guccio Imbratta* (Guccio the Mess).[13] But the greasy and slovenly Guccio has other ideas. He follows his nose down to the kitchen and begins chatting up Nuta, a misshapen scullery maid. This amorous initiative is detailed in a way that suggests the dark underside of ecclesiastical diplomacy:

> E senza riguardare a un suo cappuccio sopra il quale era tanto untume, che avrebbe condito il calderon d'Altopascio, e a un suo farsetto rotto e ripezzato e intorno al collo e sotto le ditella smaltato di sucidume, con piú macchie e di piú colori che mai drappi fossero tartereschi o indiani, e alle sue scarpette tutte rotte e alle calze sdrucite, le disse, quasi stato fosse il siri di Ciastiglione, che rivestir la voleva e rimetterla in arnese e trarla di quella cattività di star con altrui e senza gran possession d'avere ridurla in isperanza di miglior fortuna e altre cose assai: le quali quantunque molto affettuosamente le dicesse, tutte in vento convertite, come le piú delle sue imprese facevano, tornarono in niente. (VI. 10.23–24)
>
> [And with absolutely no concern for his cowl, which was covered with so much grease it would have seasoned all the soup kettles in Altopascio, or his torn and patched-up doublet, covered with sweat stains all around his collar and under his arms and in more spots and colors than a piece of cloth from India or China ever had, or his shoes, which were all worn out, or his hose, which were full of holes, he spoke to her as if he were Milord of Chatillons, talking about how he wanted to buy her new clothes and take her away from all this drudgery and into the service of someone else, and how he would give her the hope for a better life, even if he did not have much to offer, and he told her many other things in this very amorous way, but, like most of his undertakings, this one, too, amounted to nothing but hot air.] (405)

Both Cipolla and Guccio are masters of fiction. Cipolla lies to his audiences as a means of gaining power and loot, while Guccio's verbal art

derives from the promptings of Cupid. Together they comprise a brief inventory of the misuses of clerical power.[14]

While Guccio is thus employed, two mischievous friends of Cipolla's steal the feather from its box, replacing it with a few bits of charcoal from the hearth. Their reason for conceiving this *beffa* is the desire to see what egregious conceit the friar will produce in response to the disappearance of his holy relic. Cipolla, who is unaware of the ruse until he is in the middle of his holy service, thinks quickly. He delivers a lengthy oration, woven of fantasy and doubletalk, and concludes with the announcement that instead of showing them Gabriel's feather, he will show them coals from the burning of St. Lorenzo. Thus he saves his reputation for probity and piety, simultaneously impressing his two friends with his ability to create impromptu lies.

Cipolla's narrative—of a pilgrimage, no less—simultaneously stretches the boundaries of credence and suggests a profound disdain for the intelligence of his audience (several of the strange places he mentions are actually Florentine in-jokes)[15]: his confidence in the mindless credulity of his flock is so great that he has the cheek to aim a satiric arrow at his own fraternal order:

> messom'io in cammino, di Vinegia partendomi e andandomene per lo Borgo de'Greci e di quindi per lo reame del Garbo cavalcando e per Baldacca, pervenni in Parione, donde, non senza sete, dopo alquanto pervenni in Sardigna. Ma perché vi vo io tutti i paesi cerchi da me divisando? Io capitai, passato il Braccio di San Giorgio, in Truffia e in Buffia, paesi molto abitati e con gran popoli; e di quindi pervenni in terra di Menzogna, dove molti de' nostri frati e d'altre religioni trovai assai, li quali tutti il disagio andavan per l'amor di Dio schifando, poco dell'altrui fatiche curandosi dove la loro utilità vedessero seguitare, nulla altra moneta spendendo che senza conio per quei paesi: e quindi passai in terra d'Abruzzi, dove gli uomini e le femine vanno in zoccoli su pe' monti, rivestendo i porci delle lor busecchie medesime; e poco piú là trovai gente che portano il pan nelle mazze e 'l vin nelle sacca . . . (VI. 10.38–41)
>
> [I set out on my way, leaving from Venice and passing through Greekburg, then riding through the kingdom of Garbo and on through Baldacca, and I came to Parione, whereupon, not without some thirst, I reached, after some time, Sardinia. But why do I go on listing all the countries that I visited? After passing the straits of St. George, I came to Truffia and Buffia, lands heavily populated with a great many people, and from there I came to Liarland, where I discovered many of our friars and those of other orders who scorned a life of hardship for the love of God, who cared little about the troubles of others, following their own interests, and who spent no money other than that which had not yet been coined in those countries; and afterward I came to the land of Abruzzi where men

> and women walk around on mountaintops in wooden shoes and dress their pigs in their own guts. And farther on I discovered people who carry bread twisted around sticks and wine in goatskins . . .] (407)

Boccaccio's copious extravagance here, like many of his other devices, serves more than one distinct purpose. As a sally of coterie humor, it delights his Florentine audience. As a free play of verbal invention, it radically extends the frontier of literary exploration. And as a satiric take on institutional language, it suggests the way in which religious power can subvert discourse, spreading confusion for profit, and turning monstrous absurdities into articles of conviction.

It is the last of these three functions that is especially interesting here. To appreciate the relevance of the Cipolla story to its context, we need only remember Boccaccio's fondness for allegorical presentation. While the surface value of the story causes wonder and amusement, the inner message casts revealing light on issues of religious narrative and iconology. Cipolla may be a most amusing chap—that is, if we view him as a mere anomaly: a flimflammer who has broken ranks with the otherwise honorable institutions of the church. But what if we look at him allegorically? Suppose that his nonsense narrative represents liturgical discourse itself, that his phony relics are meant to stand for holy icons, and that his ceremonial display of them stands for the sacraments. Suppose that the tale as a whole depicts a religious institution whose hallmarks are ambition, idolatry, venality, and hypocrisy—a hulking superstructure that depends primarily on the fear and ignorance of the common people? Unlikely? Not if we remember Ciappelletto (I. 1) and Alberto (IV. 2), Cipolla's partners in crime. Not if we consider that Marsilius of Padua had famously made an even bolder attack on the church in the 1320s, and that critiques of this sort would be mounted by reformers from Wyclif to Luther. With Brother Cipolla and Guccio the Mess, Boccaccio adds yet another vignette to his series depicting credulous masses and their unscrupulous exploiters.

The tale of Cipolla and Guccio gains even more ironic significance when we consider that its opposite bookend in Day VI, Filomena's tale of Madonna Oretta (VI. 1), is also closely tied to the issue of fiction and culture. The *novella*, in which Oretta wittily frees herself from subjection to a tedious narrative by a knight, contributes as well to Boccaccio's ongoing critique of contemporary Italian letters and culture. Filomena begins by introducing Oretta as a rare exception among an Italian female population who are generally at a loss for words, whether it be "*la malvagità del nostro ingegno o inimicizia singulare che a' nostri secoli sia portata da' cieli*" (VI. 1.3) (our lack of intelligence or a singular enmity of the heavens

to our times) (382). She then presents a knight who, seeking to show his courtliness by aptly narrating a good tale, fails at every stylistic juncture:

> ma egli or tre e quatro e sei volte replicando una medesima parola e ora indietro tornando e talvolta dicendo: "Io non dissi bene" e spesso ne' nomi errando, un per un altro ponendone, fieramente la guastava: senza che egli pessimamente, secondo le qualità delle persone e gli atti che accadevano, profereva. (VI. 1.9)
>
> [repeating the same word three, four, or even six times, and then going back to the beginning to start the story all over again, and remarking from time to time, "I'm not telling this very well, am I?" and frequently getting the names of the characters wrong and even mixing them up with one another, the knight managed to make a dreadful mess of it all—not to mention how badly out of keeping his delivery was with the characters and incidents he was describing.] (383)

Oretta manages to silence the knight by gently and wittily comparing his story to an unruly horse.

The comparison between the knight's comprehensive failure as storyteller and Cipolla's outrageous success at the same art is invidious to both parties. It suggests a culture that is starved of literate sophistication by a theocracy that exploits a naughtily literate sophistication of its own. If we expand Boccaccio's standard for appropriate narrative to include attention to the quality of one's audience, Cipolla's place-names and images are appropriate to the qualities of the various people he addresses: he totally befuddles his provincial audience, he delights the Florentine *brigata*, and, finally, he makes serious readers reflect about the uses of language as a political tool. As a whole, Day VI has much to say about issues like transmission, tone, and audience: the conditions under which knowledge is successfully or unsuccessfully conveyed. Oretta's reproof of poor storytelling might have been insulting to its hearer, a knight familiar with horses, if it had not been expressed as an equine metaphor. When in VI. 6 the great storyteller Michele Scalza snipes at the ugliness of the noble Baronci family, he softens the criticism by making ugliness a proof of nobility. Filippa's courtroom speech (VI. 7) might have fallen flat if she had made it in Perugia or Treviso; but the setting in avant-garde Prato is more appropriate to her perspective. Fresco's reproof of Cesca (VI. 8) is *too witty* for the girl (whose brain is *canna vana*, hollow reed); thus she derives no wisdom from it. Guido's sharp riposte to Betto Brunelleschi and his friends (VI. 9) sounds harmless but carries hidden meaning, available to Betto alone. Cipolla's jargon is just right for his audience, but soon will be balanced in VII. 1, the brilliant tale of Monna Tessa and her *fantasima*, by jargon used to opposite effect. Here and in many other tales,

Boccaccio exploits and illuminates the social genius of language, as well as its pitfalls.

Boccaccian Poetics and the Incident of the One-Legged Crane. Especially pertinent to the topic of language in Day VI is a little tale (VI. 4) that one tends to gloss over and speedily forget: the story of a cook (named after a finch) who mangles a roast crane and then saves his life with a single word. Chichibio, a Venetian clown working in the kitchen of the high-spirited Florentine magnate Currado, is roasting a crane that his master has brought home from the hunt, when girlfriend Brunetta flounces in, smells the bird, and demands a leg. The bird-brained cook complies. When the roasted bird is set out on the dinner table, his employer asks what has become of the missing leg; and Chichibio, as honest as he is intelligent, answers that all cranes are born with only one leg. The enraged Currado demands that he and the chef put this taxonomical theorem to the test in the wilds the next morning. Duly arrived at the riverbank, the two men find a number of cranes asleep, each with one leg tucked up to the breast. As Chichibio claims victory and exonoration, Currado shouts "Ho! Ho!" and the cranes, lowering their hidden legs, take off and fly away. Chichibio, now well past his wit's end, is saved when Currado sarcastically asks, "What do you think of that, you rogue? Do they, or do they not, have two legs now?" In desperation, the chef resorts to the absurd, replying that if Currado had shouted "Ho! Ho!" to the cooked bird at dinner, it would have thrust out its second leg, just like the others. Currado is so delighted by this atrocious lie that he forgives his servant.[16]

Amusing enough in itself, the tale of Chichibio takes on special meaning as part of a day whose mission is the issue of language and truth. Here we have a single semi-verbal exclamation—"Ho! Ho!"—that in context displaces the weight of a lengthy legal defense. And more significantly, we have an outright lie that, again in context, conveys human truth and inspires forgiveness. This anecdote looks forward to Day IX, whose primary subject is lies, as well as reflecting that aspect of *ingegno* that thrives on creative permutations of language. As Boccaccio states in his views on allegory in the *Genealogy* (Books 14–15), and as the whole of the *Decameron* implies, language is often at its truest when it keeps a prudent distance from the facts.

Elissa's Song. At the end of Day VI, it is Elissa's turn to sing. Like the earlier songs of Emilia and Lauretta (Days I and III), her words convey a sense of mysterious alienation, again in the language of lovers. Appealing to the god of love, the singer complains of bondage to a cruel master:

> Poi, circundata delle tue catene,
> a quel che nacque per la morte mia,

piena d'amare lagrime e di pene
presa mi desti, e hammi in sua balia;
e è sí cruda la sua signoria,
che giammai non l'ha mosso
sospir né pianto alcun che m'asottigli. (VI. *Concl.*44)
[And then, you had me bound up with your chains,
to that man who was born to make me die,
and I in bitter tears and suffering
was given to him as a prisoner;
his lordship is so cruel
that not a sigh or cry from me,
who waste away, can make him change.] (414)

Like the songs of Emilia and Lauretta, Elissa's song leaves her listeners in some doubt as to its meaning: a sure sign that Boccaccio wants us to be aggressive in our own interpretations. And again, given its context in the *Decameron*, we are tempted to conclude that the song conveys the sense of an awakened awareness, trapped on a dangerous island in time, and granted no recourse other than the power of expressing alienation poetically. Here the alienation is figuratively suggested by the familiar narrative of a lover (this time female) whose beloved refuses to hear her sighs and accept her affection. Her feelings, figured philosophically, reflect those of a lover of truth whose goal is not yet won and whose desire grows more painful with each new disappointment. In terms of the overall development of the *Decameron*, this expression of as yet unsatisfied desire is an appropriate lead-in to the boisterous fulfillment of Day 7.

A Florentine Extravaganza. One additional note about Day VI as a cultural document. If Day V is Boccaccio's arabesque, Day VI is Florence Day. All the stories occur in or near the city, even the farthest venue, Boccaccio's hometown of Certaldo (VI. 10), falling within Florentine territory. VI. 10 includes a humorous celebration of Florentine place-names; while other tales draw attention to Florentine arts, crafts, and agriculture. But by far the most loving characterizations of the day are devoted to Florentine wit and imagination—virtues that, even in the worst of times, hold promise for the culture. Boccaccio may be his city's sharpest critic, but he remains aware of the virtues that can redeem it.

The Valley of the Ladies. By the end of Day VI, the reader has already learned that something exciting is in store. Elissa has led the other ladies down a path to a natural amphitheater known as the Valley of the Ladies:

Dentro dalla quale per una via assai stretta, dall'una delle parti della qual è un chiarissimo fiumicello, entrarono, e viderla tanto bella e tanto

> dilettevole, e spezialmente in quel tempo che era il caldo grande, quanto piú si potesse divisare. E secondo che alcuna di loro poi mi ridisse, il piano, che nella valle era, cosí era ritondo come se a sesta fosse stato fatto, quantunque artificio della natura e non manual paresse: e era di giro poco piú che un mezzo miglio, intorniato di sei montagnette di non troppa altezza, e in su la sommità di ciascuna si vedeva un palagio quasi in forma fatto d'un bel castelletto.
>
> Le piagge delle quali montagnette cosí digradando giuso verso il pian discendevano, come ne' teatri veggiamo dalla lor sommità i gradi infino all'infimo venire successivamente ordinati, sempre ristrignendo il cerchio loro. (VI. *Concl.*19–21)
>
> [They entered this valley through a very narrow path, along one side of which flowed a crystal-clear little stream, and they found it to be as beautiful and delightful, especially during that time when the weather was so hot, as one might possibly imagine. And according to what some [one] of them told me afterward, the plain in the hollow of the valley was as round as if it had been drawn with a compass, in spite of the fact that it was the work of nature and not the hand of man: it was a little more than half a mile in circumference, surrounded by six little hills, none of which was very high, and on the summit of each could be seen a palace built like a charming little castle. The sides of these little hills sloped downward toward the plain like tiers in an amphitheater, arranged so that they gradually descended from the summit to the lowest row, continuously diminishing their circles.] (412)

A tiny lake lies in the middle of this valley, pellucid and so beckoning in the heat of the day that the seven ladies strip to the buff, step into the water, and start playfully chasing fish. Thoroughly delighted, they dress and return to the men, who are desirous of seeing the same natural marvels, and proceed to visit the lake themselves. After the men return, it is decided that the entire *brigata*, complete with servants, tents, and other amenities, will move their court to the delightful valley. There, where Nature has established its own idealized theater ("*come ne' teatri veggiamo*") (VI. *Concl.*21) they will assemble, under the aegis of the impious Dioneo, to celebrate that bugbear of social and religious orthodoxy, female marital infidelity.

CHAPTER 7

VALLEY OF *INGEGNO*: DAY VII

Fantasima, fantasima che di notte vai, a coda ritta ci venisti, a coda ritta te n'andrai . . .
[Ghost, ghost, who walks by night, who came here with your tail up tight, keep it up and go . . .]

As Day VII begins in the *Valle delle Donne*, we enter a new theater of discourse. The *brigata* has moved as far away as possible from Florence, leaving the polluted city behind and ascending, in three successive stages, toward a landscape of liberty.[1] Boccaccio has populated this terrain with metaphors and allusions. The iconography of an idealized landscape is capped with the image of the naked women in the crystalline lake: a rebaptism into moral freedom. But Boccaccio is playing with another spatial metaphor as well: the Valle and its central *piano* (plain). The perfectly round plain, surrounded by its little hills, dissolves the distinction between art and nature:

> E secondo che alcuna di loro poi mi ridisse, il piano, che nella valle era, cosí era ritondo come se a sesta fosse stato fatto, quantunque artificio della natura e non manual paresse . . . (VI. *Concl.*20)
>
> [And according to what one[2] of them told me afterward, the plain in the hollow of the valley was as round as if it had been drawn with a compass, in spite of the fact that it was the work of nature and not the hand of man . . .] (412)

This convergence of art and nature creates a spatial metaphor for one of Cicero's crowning observations in *De legibus*: that "moral excellence is nothing other than the completion and perfection of nature."[3] The metaphor suggests that the moral progression of the *Decameron* is about to close the loop between humanity and nature—about to gain (along Boccaccian lines) the balance and harmony that Dante celebrates in the

final stanza of the *Paradiso*: "*ma già volgeva il mio disio e 'l velle,/sì come rota ch'igualmente è mossa*" (but already my desire and my will were revolved, like a wheel that is evenly moved by the Love that moves the sun and the other stars).[4] As though to emphasize this dramatic juncture, Boccaccio insinuates himself into the *Decameron* text: "*E secondo che alcuna di loro poi mi ridisse.*" At this precious moment in the course of his literary journey, Boccaccio comes closest to joining his *brigata*.

The lake and its hills, moreover, are an unavoidable image of the female erotic and generative anatomy. Licisca's comic reference to the female parts as "*Monte Nera*" in Day VI may be read as a preliminary summons to this metaphor, as can the double-entendre "*Valle delle Donne*."[5] Though Boccaccio is appealing here to Dante and Petrarch, and the intellectual culture of Lady Philosophy beyond them, he is also drawing the clearest possible line of distinction between himself and his forbears. His version of *philosophia* will not have divine lineage and connections. Instead it will spring from the earth and ally itself, if only at first, with the carnal side of nature.

Dioneo, Boccaccio's effective vicar on earth, is the appointed master of ceremonies, and the subject of the day's stories will be a hypercharged topic: women who cheat on their husbands. Dioneo has absolved the assemblage of any scruples regarding subject matter, saying that such scruples are the province of "*cattivi animi*" (wicked minds) (VI. *Concl.* 15). And Filostrato, in introducing VII. 2, goes further in asserting that the discourse of female infidelity can actually have positive moral effects. He announces to the ladies that such discourse

> altro che utile esser non vi può, per ciò che, quando alcun sa che altri sappia, egli non si mette troppo leggiermente a volerlo ingannare. Chi dubita dunque che ciò che oggi intorno a questa materia diremo, essendo risaputo dagli uomini, non fosse lor grandissima cagione di raffrenamento al beffarvi, conoscendo che voi similemente, volendo, ne sapreste beffare? (VII. 2.4–5)
>
> [cannot be anything but useful to you, for when someone knows that others know about such matters, he will not easily wish to deceive you. Who can doubt, therefore, that when men learn what we have to say about this subject today, this will serve as a very good reason for them to refrain from such deceits, since they will discover that you, too, know how to deceive them.] (422)

This insight about the essential moral and political power of knowledge ("*sa che altri sappia*") imparts a kind of allegorical gravity to the hijinks of Day VII. The idea that only consciousness, vigilance, and eloquence can protect society from the evil misuses of discourse was, of course, urgently

expressed in Cicero's *De inventione* and is taken up by Boccaccio in *De casibus*, where the prudent individual is described as a kind of "mental watchtower."[6] Here, Filostrato's comments introduce us to a theme that will transcend exclusively erotic deceptions and will develop powerfully over the remaining days. Boccaccio's treatment of the acquisition of knowledge, and of its proper uses, will perfect and conclude his elaboration of *ingegno*.

Primed by these auspicious notices, we wait for a dramatic gesture. Boccaccio does not disappoint. Though he supplies more than enough wicked humor to pass the story off as pure entertainment, what he offers in VII. 1 is a recapitulation and evolution of the issues voiced in the latter tales of Day VI: ignorance, credulity and authority versus realism, independent thought, and moral choice. He manages this in VII. 1 with a relatively compact narrative that is nonetheless rich in cultural detail and elaborately patterned in figures of deceit. Our hero/victim is one Gianni Lotteringhi, a prosperous Florentine weaver, who is egregiously gulled, in separate but metaphorically connected ways, by the Dominican friars and by his raving beauty of a wife, Monna Tessa. Gianni is a familiar figure in urban culture: a deep-pocketed donor who is flattered and duped by the institution that he supports.[7] In this case the friars of Santa Maria Novella have made Gianni the head of their school of laud-singers.[8] The friars' motive in bestowing this patently frivolous honor, and Gianni's reasons for prizing it excessively, are succinctly detailed:

> gli avveniva per ciò che egli molto spesso, sí come agiato uomo, dava di buone pietanze a' frati. Li quali, per ciò che qual calze e qual cappa e quale scapolare ne traevano spesso, gl'insegnavano di buone orazioni e davangli il paternostro in volgare e la canzone di santo Alesso e il lamento di san Bernardo e la lauda di donna Matelda e cotali altri ciancioni, li quali egli avea molto cari, e tutti per la salute dell'anima sua se gli serbava molto diligentemente. (VII. 1.4–5)
>
> [and yet the only reason these duties were given to him so often was that, being a man of means, he could provide the friars with some good meals. And since they often managed to get a pair of hose or a cloak or a scapular out of him, they taught him some good prayers and gave him copies of the Paternoster in the vernacular, as well as the song of Saint Alexis, the lament of Saint Bernard, the laud of Lady Matelda, and other such nonsense, all of which he valued very highly and used most diligently for the salvation of his soul.] (418)

During the warm months, while Gianni is busy weaving, donating, and caroling in town, Monna Tessa resides at their handsome country place near Fiesole, where she receives secret visits from a charming young

Florentine named Federigo. Their mutual longings are consummated in her bedroom, during a night when, as Boccaccio delicately puts it, she "*gl'insegnò da sei delle laude del suo marito*" (VII. 1.8) (taught him at least half a dozen of her husband's lauds) (418). To continue their meetings in safety, they arrange that an ass's skull, set on a post in her vineyard as a kind of scarecrow, should by its positioning serve as a signal as to whether Gianni is at home or the coast is clear.

But one night Gianni returns unexpectedly. Tucked into bed with Tessa, he is alarmed when he hears a knocking at the door. Forced to think quickly, Tessa (like Cipolla in the last tale of Day VI) compounds one deceit with another. Brazenly she informs Gianni that the creature at the door is a local monster (*la fantasima*),[9] that the only way to get rid of it is through a formal exorcism, and that, thanks to sensible preparation, she knows precisely which holy words to use. Bringing Gianni with her to the door, she incants,

> Fantasima, fantasima che di notte vai, a coda ritta ci venisti, a coda ritta te n'andrai: va nell'orto, a piè del pesco grosso troverai unto bisunto e cento cacherelli della gallina mia: pon bocca al fiasco e vatti via, e non far mal né a me né a Gianni mio. (VII. 1.27)
>
> [Ghost, ghost, who walks by night, who came here with your tail up tight, keep it up and go; go to the garden, and at the foot of a large peach you'll find some oily greasy mess and lots of chicken droppings there [lots of eggs from my hen]; then take a swig of wine and go, and harm me not nor Gianni mine.] (420)

Gianni is then commanded to spit, as a kind of ritual valedictory. Needless to say, the ruse works, and the lovers are able to continue their clandestine relationship indefinitely.

Via the adroit use of disparity of awareness, Tessa has satisfied both husband and lover, thus providing an apt introduction to a series of stories meant to liberate oppressed femininity from the tyrannies of loveless marriage. But behind the hilarity of Tessa's artful dodging, Boccaccio develops another narrative, or rather a kind of dialogue between religious discourse and temporal power. The friendly friars, at no cost or threat to themselves, give Gianni administrative power over the lauds and verbal power over the Lord's Prayer; as he exults in his enlarged dominion, he is unwittingly drawn further into their thrall. This enthrallment is profound enough to extend into his marital intimacy. Before bedding down with Tessa, the devout moron (*lavaceci*)[10] recites a number of sacred texts, followed by four separate Signs of the Cross, to banish evil spirits: a pathetically unsexy performance, which, under the circumstances, is also spectacularly ineffectual. Tessa, on the other hand, represents a new

discourse: one that is, like most of Boccaccio's *beffe*, at once creative and subversive. The "*laude*" that she teaches Federigo represent successive mutual come-cries that happily punctuate their summer's night together. Nonverbal exultations, they express more existential grace than the nonsense Gianni has learned in church.

With Tessa's *fantasima* incantation, Boccaccio pursues the same discursive dialectic into subtler and deeper interconnections between art and culture. Like Brother Cipolla's sermon in the preceding tale, VI. 10, Tessa's words are meant to confuse and thus to control. But while Cipolla represents a manipulative power structure, Tessa stands for the opposite: an abused and disenfranchised class. Moreover, her incantation, though it deceives her husband, carries a message of truth to the man she loves. In effect, it expresses Boccaccio's view that the poet conceals truth under a veil.[11]

The story of Monna Tessa is a brilliant medley of literary tonalities—realism, social commentary, imagination, sensuality, verbal dynamics, focused spite, and redeeming *poesis*—that shows Boccaccio at the top of his game, simultaneously giving delight and compelling reflection. It is also the junction of the major themes that he has developed separately over the last six days: reason, nature, anticlerical satire, women's rights, illusion versus reality, and, above all, the pivotal role of *ingegno* in the renewal of culture. Thus merged and recapitulated, this development reaches critical mass with Monna Tessa, poetically justifying the climax of the allegorical frame narrative: the *brigata*'s entry into the Valle or heart of meaning.

Boccaccio continues to ride this thematic crest in the eight *novelle* (VII. 2–9) that immediately follow Monna Tessa's. Though the subject matter of all these tales is consistently illicit and erotic—wives who cheat—Boccaccio skimps on the sex to emphasize the *ingegno* that facilitates each successful liaison. In all eight tales, moreover, he illustrates the wives' *ingegno* in action on two levels: the saucy contrivance or ploy itself, and the even more mischievous rhetorical expertise displayed in some speech, which, in order to conceal the ploy, plays havoc with the truth. Boccaccio takes care to give each wife a measure of justification for her infidelity: the eight husbands are too old and/or too jealous and/or too distracted and/or too stupid. But neither male limitations, nor for that matter female desires, are really the point. Under this splendid display of pyrotechnics, Boccaccio is pushing the envelope of propriety to show that individual creativity is the only available resource in a morally atrophied society. In so doing, he completes a set of three concentric circles. Just as his crafty wives have created a poetics that expresses their humanity, so has his *brigata* conceived a new republic of letters for their mutual edification.

And so has his epic, whose hero is none other than the individual creative spirit, opened a new window on personal liberty.

Boccaccio twice refers directly to this connection between *amor* and creativity in Day VII, in both cases accessing the thought of Dante. In her introduction to VII.4, the ever-sensible Lauretta echoes Dante's thesis connecting philosophy with eroticism:

> —O Amore, chenti e quali sono le tue forze, chenti i consigli e chenti gli avvedimenti! Qual filosofo, quale artista mai avrebbe potuto o potrebbe mostrare quegli accorgimenti, quegli avvedimenti, quegli dimostramenti che fai tu subitamente a chi seguita le tue orme? Certo la dottrina di qualunque altro è tarda a rispetto della tua . . . (VII. 4.3–4)
>
> [Oh Love, how numerous and great are your powers, what resource of counsel, what insight you have! What philosopher, what artist ever could display such intelligence, such insight or such explanations as you spontaneously bestow on those who follow in your footsteps? Every other doctrine is most certainly behind the times with respect to your own . . .] (431)

Similarly, Boccaccio recalls Dante's invocation to *alto ingegno* and his emphatic placement of *amor* at the close of the *Commedia* in Panfilo's tale of the valiant adultress Lidia (VII. 9):

> Della terza cosa entrò la donna in piú pensiero; ma pur, sí come quella che era d'alto ingegno e amor la faceva vie piú, s'ebbe pensato che modo tener dovesse a darle compimento. (VII. 9.41)
>
> [The third task gave the lady a bit more to think about; nevertheless, being a woman of sharp wit, which Love had made even sharper, she succeeded in thinking of a way to achieve it.] (462)

Thus Boccaccio, who has already referenced the final line of the *Commedia*, "*l'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle*," in Lauretta's song (Day III, Conclusion), now links it to Dante's preliminary invocation of his muse, "*alto ingegno*" (*Inferno* II), as though to encapsulate Dante's entire thought metonymically. Of course, Dante would not for a moment have condoned Lidia's gross infidelity. But that is precisely Boccaccio's point. A worldly contingency demands a worldly poetic. This insight is anticipated in VII. 6, when Madonna Isabella corrals three wild men (one her husband) with a colossally dishonest mis-en-scène. Even in such exaggerated fictive situations as these, Boccaccio remains thoroughly on target. His position, quite contrary to Dante's, is that only earthly *amor*—expanded, in later tales, to unequivocal love and knowledge of life itself—can provide the creative energy for renewing society.

Boccaccio backs up this argument with vigorous social satire. The deceived husbands in VII. 1–9 resemble a police lineup of deadbeats, and the day's two framing stories, VII. 1 and VII. 10, amount to lively anticlerical forays. Filostrato inveighs at some length against the male double standard in VII. 2, and Elissa, with an earnestness anticipating the Reformation, takes the cudgel to Friars in VII. 3. Stories 4 and 5 bring up the case of male jealousy, while 7 and 9 compound the issue by focusing on male credulity. In VII. 8 Boccaccio scourges his own echelon in the ruling classes, the merchants, as shabby parvenus—especially those who (like Boccaccio's own father)[12] marry into noble families. In this tale Monna Sismonda, an aristocrat who has been given in marriage to Arriguccio, a boring merchant, finds a way of concealing her love affair and incriminating her jealous husband in the bargain. This clever process involves an appeal to her mother who, as Arriguccio dumbly stands by, responds as follows:

> si vorebbe uccidere questo can fastidioso e sconoscente, ché egli non ne fu degno d'avere una figliuola fatta come se' tu. Frate, bene sta! basterebbe se egli t'avesse ricolta del fango! Col malanno possa egli essere oggimai, se tu dei stare al fracidume delle parole d'un mercatantuzzo di feccia d'asino, che venutici di contado e usciti delle troiate vestiti di romagnuolo, con le calze a campanile e colla penna in culo, come egli hanno tre soldi, vogliono le figliuole de' gentili uomini e delle buone donne per moglie, e fanno arme e dicono: "I' son de' cotali" e "Quei di casa mia fecer cosí." (VII. 8.45–46)
>
> [we ought to murder this pesty dog of a nobody who is not worthy of having a girl such as you! Just look here! This would have been too much to take even if you had picked her up out of the gutter! He can go to Hell before you'll put up with the rotten slander of an insignificant little trader in donkey dung, one of those yokels from the country, right out of some pigsty, who dress in shabby clothes, with their short baggy stockings and their quill pens sticking out of their asses. As soon as they've gotten a few cents in their pockets, they want the daughters of noblemen and worthy ladies for their wives, and they make up a coat of arms, and then they claim, "I'm one of the so-and-so family" or "The people in my family do such-and-such."] (457)

Duly scourged, Arriguccio never again interferes with his wife's liberties. An even ruder cut to vested interests is dealt in VII. 5, where Boccaccio's rhetorical mischief brings the church to life and puts its dishonesties on display. After a diatribe against male jealousy, Fiammetta recounts the tangled tale of a lady in Rimini who is trapped in a loveless marriage with an obsessively jealous man. Lonely and frustrated, she strikes up a hungry

friendship with Filippo, her charming neighbor, to whom she whispers sweet nothings through a crack in the wall. As marital tensions mount, her husband devises a cunning scheme: to disguise himself as a priest, take confession from his own wife, and thus uncover her most intimate thoughts and actions. But as she sits at his feet in church, she sees through his disguise and immediately hits on a plan of revenge. In a dialogue that conjures up Ciappelletto's infamous confession in I. 1, the wife tells her husband a strategic lie: she says that she is having an affair with a priest. Not just an average priest, mind you, but an inspired cleric who can open locked doors by touch and cast sleeping spells on jealous husbands. Ecstatic with jealousy, her husband vows to keep said priest away from his wife's bedroom. Night after freezing night, he sits near the front door, fully armed. And night after winter night Filippo outflanks his line of defense by visiting his wife's bedroom from the roof.

The tale ends with a memorable confrontation. The husband, who has guarded his wife's bedroom fruitlessly for many nights, confronts her angrily with what she had told him in confession. She responds with an even bigger lie than her first. She regales him with a quasi-clerical exegesis of her own initial lie. She cleverly avers that it is he, the husband, with whom she has been enjoying sex:

> "Io ti dissi che io amava un prete: e non eri tu, il quale io a gran torto amo, fatto prete? Dissiti che niuno uscio della mia casa gli si potea tener serrato quando meco giacer volea: e quale uscio ti fu mai in casa tua tenuto, quando tu colà dove io fossi se' voluto venire?" (VII. 5.55)
>
> ["I told you that I was in love with a priest, and weren't you, whom I love so unwisely, a priest? I told you that none of the doors in my house could remain locked when he wanted to sleep with me, and what door in your house was ever closed to you when you wished to come to me?"] (441)

Just as the wife equivocates about "priest," "lover," and "lock," the church (according to Marsilius's celebrated *Defensor*) was using the same sort of equivocation with terms like "law," "spiritual," "judgment," and "church" itself.[13] This sort of equivocation was one of the main reasons why Marsilius denounced clerical spokesmen as sophists and pretenders. Here, as in the better-known tales (I. 1, III. 10, IV. 2, and VI. 10), Boccaccio uses ecclesiastical rhetoric as satiric ammunition.

VII. 9, the last in Boccaccio's adultery cadenza, is an absurdist fable that darkly mimics a famous earlier *Decameron novella*. In III. 9, Giletta proves her worth as a wife by successfully meeting two virtually impossible demands imposed by her husband. In VII. 9, Lidia, an otherwise-inclined

but equally ingenious wife, pulls off four unlikely stunts to convince Pirro, her potential lover, that she is worth his risk. She kills her husband Nicostrato's prized hawk, tears out a tuft of his beard, extracts one of his teeth and, for her finale, manages to make love with Pirro before his very eyes—all with complete impunity. Boccaccio's message here, as before, is free of entangling nuance. Marriage, as an elemental social institution, is so hopelessly broken that only infidelity and *ingegno* can humanize it.

The Preeminence of Knowledge. Day VII. 1–9, in their variety of treatments but unwavering concentration on theme, comprise Boccaccio's *pièce de résistance* on the topic of *ingegno.* But each tale in its own way anticipates the transition to a separate but closely related topic: knowledge. This component derives from the psychology of the *beffa* or trick itself. Simply put, the trickster exploits a disparity of awareness between herself and her spousal victim. In terms of the subject matter of the trick involved, her awareness of the facts at hand is necessarily greater than his. This disparity of awareness, especially since it is repeated variously through several tales, takes on a provocative moral significance. As Day VII progresses, the wives, who compound libido with ingenuity, begin to look strangely heroic, like pioneers in some evolving modern science. This is not only because Boccaccio is advancing a cause of social justice, but also because he is more generally substituting a new morality for an old one.

With his nine ingenious wives, Boccaccio takes an early initiative in what will become the Renaissance revision of morality, setting knowledge above such medieval virtues as rectitude, innocence, and piety. Writing over 100 years later, both Baldassare Castiglione and Niccolò Machiavelli will codify knowledge-centered value systems that will in turn inaugurate the modern world. When Christopher Marlowe's Machiavel asserts, "I count religion but a childish toy, / And hold there is no sin but ignorance,"[14] he references a moral innovation that has its genesis in Boccaccio's fiction.

The primacy of knowledge and the converse culpability of ignorance are shown off to great effect in the final story of Day VII, which looks forward to the manifold examples of ignorance in Day VIII. The story concerns two close friends, Tingoccio Mini and Meuccio di Tura, who have formed a pact that the first of them to die will return in some form, in order to report to the other about the afterlife. Tingoccio is promptly involved in a series of unlikely events. He gets into a torrid erotic affair with Monna Mita, the mother of his godchild, and literally copulates himself to death. Three days later his ghost returns and reports

to Meuccio about it as promised. He recounts an interview with a fellow sufferer in Purgatory:

> "O," diss'io "amico mio, io ho gran paura del giudicio che io aspetto d'un gran peccato che io feci già." Quegli allora mi domandò che peccato quel fosse. A cui io dissi: "Il peccato fu cotale, che io mi giaceva con una mia comare, e giacquivi tanto, che io me ne scorticai." E egli allora, faccendosi beffe di ciò, mi disse: "Va, sciocco, non dubitare, ché di qua non si tiene ragione alcuna delle comari!" (VII. 10.26–28)
>
> ["Oh, my friend," I answered, "I am terrified of the judgment which I expect to be passed on me for a great sin that I have committed."
>
> Then that soul asked me what sin it was, and I replied:
>
> "The sin was this: I slept with the mother of my godchild, and I made love to her so much that I wore it to the bone."
>
> Then, laughing at me, he said :"Go on, you idiot, don't worry, for down here they don't count the mother of a godchild for very much!"] (470)

Superficially read, Dioneo's story seems something of a letdown, especially coming after the brilliance of Lidia's tomfoolery in VII. 9. But reading it in detail and in context produces a different impression. As we see early on, the story of Tingoccio is at heart a study of ignorance. Dioneo introduces it as concerning "*la bessaggine de' sanesi*" (VII. 10.7) (the stupidity of the Sienese) (468) and his deadpan narrative style slyly reveals the simple-minded Tingoccio's preposterous manner of departing this earth (the operative verb here is *scorticare*, to skin, or to flay). Connected with this elemental denseness is credulity: the two young men attend church regularly like everybody else and believe everything they hear in sermons "*della gloria e della miseria*" (VII. 10.9) (about the glories and the miseries) dealt out, respectively, to the virtuous and the sinful in the afterlife. Boccaccio then proceeds to test his readers' credulity, first by announcing that Tingoccio indeed comes back from the dead, and then with the ridiculous punch line, "*Va, sciocco, non dubitare, ché di qua non si tiene ragione alcuna delle comari*!" (VII. 10.28). There are only two ways to interpret Dioneo's story. It is either a fatuously complacent reinterpretation of church doctrine, or it is an outrageous anticlerical sally in the vein of Marsilius,[15] a delayed-action bomb planted squarely under institutional pretense and public brainlessness.

Filomena's *canzone* harmonizes with the licentious tone of the preceding tales by being the only one of the *Decameron*'s ten songs to refer directly to the act of love:

> Deh lassa la mia vita!
> Sarà giammai ch'io possa ritornare
> donde mi tolse noiosa partita?...
> Se egli avvien che io mai piú ti tenga,

non so s'io sarò sciocca,
com'io or fui a lasciarti partire.
Io ti terrò, e che può sí n'avenga;
e della dolce bocca
convien ch'io sodisfaccia al mio disire.
D'altro non voglio or dire
dunque vien tosto, vienmi a abracciare,
ché 'l pur pensarlo di cantar m'invita. (VII. *Concl.*10, 14)
[Alas, ah luckless life of mine!
And can it be I shall return
To where a bitter parting took me from?...
If I should ever hold you once again,
I shall not be so foolish
as once I was ever to let you go.
I'll hold you tight, and then let come what may;
and on your lovely mouth
I'll let desire take its satisfaction
and say no more about the rest;
come quickly, then, come and embrace me—
I sing with just the thought that you may come.] (472–73)

The singer declares herself ready to indulge her passion, but a "*noiosa partita*" (bitter parting) has delayed this longed-for consummation. What brought about this separation is not specified, but it is clear that some bridge to mutual satisfaction has yet to be crossed. If here, as before, we look at the beloved as knowledge, then Filomena's song suggests that the fulfillment of knowledge, though closer than ever, is not yet at hand.

Filomena's *canzone* is a road mark in the figurative development of the *Decameron*. With Day VII Boccaccio has completed the most iconoclastic section of his great secular project. He has fully presented *ingegno* as the subverter of top-heavy institutions and hypocritical social prohibitions. In the days that follow he will meditate further on topics that are contingent on this revolution: the role of knowledge, the rhetoric of truth, and the reestablishment of community. These concluding days will not only supply some necessary positive balances for his lively challenge to the social order in Days I–VII; they will also realign him with his dearest allies: Cicero and Dante. To Dante, whom he has crossed with his unequivocal endorsement of nature and real-world interactions, he will show that nature itself imposes limits on the liberty of passion and the autonomy of the individual. For Cicero, whose Stoic morality and view of nature he has questioned, Boccaccio will measure out the boundaries that rational society imposes on the individual. However, he will do this in both cases without abandoning the premise that his own times, circumstances, and purposes prevent him from completely endorsing the values that he has inherited from the past.

CHAPTER 8

BOCCACCIO'S SHIP OF FOOLS: DAY VIII

A striking example of Boccaccio's modernism occurs in the seventh tale of Day VIII, when the young scholar Rinieri, who has been sorely jilted by the Florentine seductress Elena, upbraids her as follows: "io mi conosco, né tanto di me stesso apparai mentre dimorai a Parigi, quanto tu in una sola notte delle tue mi facesti conoscere" (VIII. 7.85) (I know myself, for you made me learn more about myself in a single night than I learned during the entire time I lived in Paris) (516). Rinieri's ironic praise holds both specific and general meaning. Specifically, he is telling Elena that her cruelty to him has educated him about the world's wicked ways and his own innocent vulnerability to them. Generally, Boccaccio suggests that theoretical knowledge (which Rinieri acquired as a student in Paris) cannot avail us unless seasoned by worldly experience; and that we cannot achieve self-knowledge without considering ourselves within our social context.

The emphasis on experience, which would become a modernist staple by 1600 in the hands of Machiavelli, Montaigne, and other empirical thinkers, was anything but a given in Boccaccio's intellectual milieu. The three main epistemological systems of Boccaccio's day—Christian, Aristotelian, and Stoic—had little use for the idea. It figures prominently, however, in the teachings of Cicero, who declares boldly that he is the first philosopher capable of combining a grasp of theory with a solid experience of practice:

> Since I have had the good fortune to achieve something of note in government, and also possess a certain ability in expounding political principles not only as a result of experience but also through my enthusiasm for learning and teaching (I am not unqualified for this task. This is not true of most) authorities; for some of my predecessors have been highly accomplished in theoretical discussion, without any discernible

> achievement in practice; others, with a creditable practical record, have lacked analytical skill.[1]

Although Boccaccio had no direct access to this passage, he could have found the same teaching in other writings of Cicero, as well as in the influential work of Jean de Meun, himself a serious Ciceronian. Nonetheless, Boccaccio is the first to embody this teaching in a realistic narrative context.

Day VIII of the *Decameron* revolves around the topic of empirical or worldly knowledge, concentrating as thoroughly on its absence (that is, on ignorance) as on its presence. Its ten stories situate us in a courtroom of empirical awareness, where those who gain knowledge are rewarded and those who lack it are punished. Boccaccio limits the hearings of his moral court to three sorts of malfeasant: women who misuse their sexual power without any sense of the human consequences (VIII. 1, 2, 7, 8, 10), men so blockheaded that they lose touch with the real world (VIII. 4, 5, 9), and Boccaccio's own allegorical figure of credulity, the pasta-brained painter Calandrino (VIII. 3, 6). Beyond these issues, Day VIII compensates demurely for the sexual license of Day VII, and it introduces, in the flagship tale of Rinieri and Elena, a new and daring narrative technique that involves the reader viscerally in the problem of self-knowledge.

The six leading ladies of Day VIII all play sexual games, as in Day VII, but this time with less euphoric results. Although the wise widow of Fiesole scores a modest victory by using the bed-trick on a wolfish rector (VIII. 4), things do not turn out as well for the five other ladies. Elena (VIII. 7), who tortures her admirer Rinieri out of pure spite, is spitefully rewarded. Zeppa's wife, who is having a generic urban affair with his best friend, is requited by her husband with a dose of her own medicine (VIII. 8). The women of VIII. 1, 2, and 10, who all have sex for material gain, are systematically disappointed or embarrassed. Exemplary in this regard is Jancofiore, the beautiful con artist of Palermo, who seduces the Tuscan merchant Salabaetto, and fleeces him to the tune of 500 florins (VIII. 10). Salabaetto's payback is a textbook *contrapasso*: betting on Jancofiore's proven greed, he takes her for 1500. The implication here, as for the other two stories in the group, is that *malizia*, or short-term, bottom-line cunning, generally cannot stand up against resurgent *ingegno* and awareness. Similarly, five ostensibly empowered male figures—a merchant, a scholar, a doctor, a judge, and a rector—suffer because they lack the know-how to succeed in real-world interactions. Their embarrassments suggest that no amount of professional training can protect individuals against misfortune unless they turn their attention to their immediate human circumstances. Professional standing,

Boccaccio implies, is of little use unless it is supported by the insight of shared humanity and the art of social discourse.

Calandrino & Co. Boccaccio throws these strengths into the sharpest contrast by visiting their polar opposite. The heliotrope story of VIII. 3 ushers in a new type of satiric narrative. Boccaccio draws on two near-contemporary Florentine artists, Bruno and Buffalmacco,[2] and recreates them as provocateurs, whose mission it is to plumb the depths of local ignorance in the most amusing manner possible. Their victim is usually their fellow-painter Calandrino, an oaf confected from the worst ingredients of Florentine maleness: greed, credulity, violent chauvinism, and unteachable ignorance. Buffalmacco and Bruno victimize Calandrino in four separate tales. Once they make him believe that he is invisible (VIII. 3); once they convince him that he is pregnant (IX. 3); once they give him a nonsensical love-formula (IX. 5); and once they defame and half poison him, in addition to stealing his pig (VIII. 6). With these narratives reinforced by dozens of relevant details, Boccaccio builds Calandrino up as a veritable emblem of ignorance: the abysmal baseline from which to chart the establishment of a culture that values awareness. On this level, Buffalmacco and Bruno take on the identity of satirical reformers, who entrap the foolish to expose the sin of folly.

In VIII. 3, a crony of the two tricksters named Maso del Saggio suggests to Calandrino that he would do well to amass a number of heliotropes—in fact as many as possible. By "heliotrope" Maso implausibly means a magic rock available from a river bed near Florence. These stones, he continues, can make their bearer invisible. Quick to imagine himself invisibly raking in the florins at a local bank, Calandrino enlists Bruno and Buffalmacco as his accomplices on an expedition into the countryside. There he loads himself with heliotropes. On the way back, Bruno and Buffalmacco convince Calandrino that they cannot see him, and avail themselves of the attractive opportunity to pelt him with stones. No one disabuses him of his illusion until he arrives home, where his wife, unaware of the prank, greets him with the simple truth. In return he beats her mercilessly for breaking the spell.

The unredeemed crudeness of this tale, especially in the context of a satiric work of social commentary, sounds the alarm for some sort of allegory. If Calandrino stands for a dumbed-down population, Bruno and Buffalmacco would appear to be playing out the institutional abuse of public trust as practiced by the church. All the offensive practices are present in their actions: the false promise of personal empowerment, the deceit, the illusion, the manipulation, the wasted effort, the torture, and, in the end, the displacement of frustration and anger onto a minority scapegoat. This antifeminist scapegoating approaches the humor of

the absurd in IX. 3, when Calandrino, convinced that he is pregnant, blames his imagined condition on his wife's choice of sexual positions. His damaged wife gets her revenge in IX. 5, but that will not be the end of Boccaccio's anti-church allegories. Dioneo's outrageous tale of Father Gianni in IX. 10 will reprise the allegory in a new image at once appropriate and obscene.

Rinieri and the Widow. More serious issues relating to self-knowledge are taken up in the most famous story of Day VIII, the tale of the Florentine scholar Rinieri and the wily widow Elena (VIII. 7). It is the longest uninterrupted text in the *Decameron*, and along with the Ciappelletto story (I. 1) and the Griselda story (X. 10) one of the most difficult to interpret. The tale is notable for the complex characterization of Rinieri and for the ways in which Boccaccio involves the reader in his lengthy narrative. Rinieri, first of all, is an authorial avatar both in profession and in character. A young man of privilege who has studied abroad, a scholar who has eschewed the lucrative career-paths of law and medicine for a life of pure inquiry, Rinieri is an easy target for the dart of love ("*piú tosto da amore essere incapestrati*") (VIII. 7.6). Rinieri falls for the beautiful widow Elena, who encourages his advances without the slightest intention of rewarding them. Things come to a head when he spends a freezing night in her courtyard while she puts him off with lies, laughing, with her hidden lover, at the scholar's agonies. Rinieri barely survives the night. Although he is as embarrassed by his own foolishness as he is angry at Elena's duplicity, he vows revenge.

When it comes, Rinieri's revenge takes a form that is darkly reminiscent of the savage imagery of the Nastagio degli Onesti tale (V. 8); but here, instead of being pursued by mastiffs after death, the offending female is left to roast alive and naked on a rooftop for the whole of a hot summer day. Boccaccio details at length the extent of her injuries, her desperate entreaties for mercy, her agony and despair. At one point during the ordeal, Rinieri responds to her pleas with the assertion that "*io mi conosco, né tanto di me stesso apparai mentre dimorai a Parigi, quanto tu in una sola notte delle tue mi facesti conoscere*" (VIII. 7.85) (I know myself, for you made me learn more about myself in a single night than I learned during the entire time I lived in Paris) (516). This insight, so painfully achieved and so bitterly expressed, reflects profoundly on the morality of self-awareness that is Boccaccio's topic in Day VIII of the *Decameron*.

But are we to believe Rinieri's claim that he has achieved self-knowledge? His "enlightenment" is suspiciously simplistic and hard-hearted. He leaves Elena to sizzle for the rest of the day, and all that we learn about her after her final liberation concerns the colossal lie she invents to hide her shame from her relatives. After the tale has concluded, the

brigata passes judgment on the scholar. Was his punishment of Elena too cruel? Of course it was! they agree. But let us momentarily leave Rinieri's all-too-obvious cruelty to discuss the unusual way in which Boccaccio brings the tale to life. The author's identification with his protagonist is quite startling. Boccaccio seems to throw himself into this story, body and soul. Through his narrator, Pampinea, he speaks sharply to his female readers, warning them to think twice before they play erotic pranks, especially on scholars: "*E per ciò guardatevi, donne, dal beffare, e gli scolari spezialmente*" (VIII. 7.149) (And so, ladies, beware of playing such tricks, especially on scholars) (524). He even has Rinieri warn the hapless widow of his abilities as a writer and how he might have used them to scourge her. These personalizing, almost confessional effects are augmented by an insinuating and thoroughly mischievous appeal to the psychology of his male readers. What if, he asks, they have been injured and humiliated by a beautiful woman, and now find themselves in a position of total control over her? What if she is naked, isolated, and trapped—in short, completely vulnerable? Would they be tempted to . . . ? Boccaccio dilates on this theme in a startling passage:

> Lo scolare, il quale in sul fare della notte col suo fante tra salci e altri alberi presso della torricella nascoso s'era e aveva tutte queste cose veduto, e passandogli ella quasi allato cosí ignuda e egli veggendo lei con la bianchezza del suo corpo vincere le tenebre della notte e appresso riguardandole il petto e l'altre parti del corpo e vedendole belle e seco pensando quali infra piccol termine dovean divenire, sentí di lei alcuna compassione; e d'altra parte lo stimolo della carne l'assalí subitamente e fece tale in piè levare che si giaceva e confortavalo che egli da guato uscisse e lei andasse a prendere e il suo piacer ne facesse; e vicin fu a essere tra dall'uno e dall'altro vinto. (VIII. 7.66–67)
>
> [The scholar, who at nightfall had hidden with his servant among the willows and the other trees near the tower, observed all these things, and when she walked right past, so close to him, naked as she was, he gazed at the whiteness of her body penetrating the shadows of the night, and at that moment, as he stared at her breasts and the other parts of her body, thinking about how beautiful they were and realizing to himself what was about to happen to them, he felt a twinge of pity for her. Moreover, suddenly attacked by the desires of the flesh which caused a certain part of him which had been resting to stand up straight, he was tempted to leave his hiding place, seize her, and fulfil his desires—and caught between pity and lust, he was almost overcome.] (513)

This is brilliant psychological writing, not only because it eloquently expresses a disturbed mental state, but also because Boccaccio implicates his male readers themselves in a classic male confusion of anger, sympathy,

and lust. The questions males ask about Rinieri are thus subordinate to the questions that Rinieri makes them ask about themselves. Here is self-knowledge with a vengeance, and it carries the theme of discovery, which Boccaccio first introduced with the story of Cimone and Ifigenia in V. 1, to a new level of intimacy.

In the two final *novelle* of Day VIII, Boccaccio returns to two issues that he has dwelt on in VIII. 7: the questionable usefulness of academic knowledge in real-world situations, and the difficulty of maintaining self-awareness under the most ordinary of real-world stresses.

The Visit to Countess Latrine. VIII. 9 is a scatological extravaganza in which the Florentine tricksters Bruno and Buffalmacco convince Simone, a credulous Bolognese doctor, to join a phony confraternity that Boccaccio bases loosely on the sorcery of the thirteenth-century scientist/ magus Michael Scot. The enticement they offer is the promise of free sex with an absurd miscellany of trumped-up international *prime donne*, while the goal of their own *malizia* is an abundance of feasts at the doctor's expense. After many exotic formalities and much satiric wordplay, the brief action plays out at Santa Maria Novella, where the terrified Simone climbs onto the back of a demon (Buffalmacco in costume), who carries him out of town and dumps him into a manure trench.

Plot-wise this story carries only moderate interest; it is a typical boondoggle *à la toscana*, topped off with requisite dashes of nastiness and obscenity. But then as now the devil was in the details. Boccaccio's story focuses satirically on several knowledge-related topics, including the University of Bologna, the medical professions, the mystique of sorcery, and Florentine argot. The University of Bologna is treated as a particularly sore point, because it reflected poorly on Florentine culture:

> Sí come noi veggiamo tutto il dí, i nostri cittadini da Bologna ci tornano qual giudice e qual medico e qual notaio, co' panni lunghi e larghi, e con gli scarlatti e co' vai e con altre assai apparenze grandissime, alle quali come gli effetti succedano anche veggiamo tutto giorno. (VIII. 9.4)
>
> [We have occasion to see every day how our fellow citizens return to us from Bologna, some as judges, some as doctors, and others as notaries, all decked out in long, flowing robes of scarlet and vair and a good deal of other pompous paraphernalia, and every day we see the results of all this.] (529)

Whatever the fourteenth-century prominence of Florence as a mercantile and financial center, it had no academic cachet to speak of; almost all of its professionals were educated in Bologna and elsewhere. Moreover, as Boccaccio continues, Bologna is not educating its professionals—whether they are judges or doctors or notaries—very well. In spite of all their furs

and pomp, their inferior "*effetti*" (results) crop up every day. Thus Simone and his ilk are typical elements in Boccaccio's encompassing image of culture: factors in a society devoted to appearances and starved of quality.

Bad enough. But even this falls short of Boccaccio's satiric thrust. The main force of satire in VIII. 9 is to be found in the insulting wordplay that Bruno and Buffalmacco deploy against Simone. They call him "*dolciato*" (dull-sit) and "*zucca mia da sale*" (wise-less drear one); they ask him to swear by his "*grande e calterita fede*" (sacred and tainted word). They fill his ears with trumped-up nomenclature, "*la donna de' barbanicchi, la reina de' baschi, la moglie del soldano, la 'mperadrice d' Osbech, la ciancianfera di Norrueca, la semistante di Berlinzone e la scalpedra di Narsia*" (VIII. 9.23) (the Lady of the Barbarnicals, the Queen of the Basks, the wife of the Sultan, the Empress Orabitch, the Cangeacrap of Noway, the Samaway Asa Before, and the Scalpuka of Nausea) (532).[3] These verbal sallies mean nothing to Simone who, born and bred in Bologna, cannot understand them, even when his two mischievous friends lead him to the *contessa da Civillari*—that is, the local latrine—and proceed to dump him into it. Thematically, however, the doctor's vulnerability to Florentine wordplay implies an alienation from the immediacy of social discourse not entirely different from Rinieri's plight in the preceding tale. Just as Rinieri's learned books have taught him nothing about common human relationships, Simone's Bolognese diploma has left him a total dunce in terms of the urban discourse that could have sustained him. You might say that Boccaccio is mounting an Inquisition of his own here, but that his Inquisitors Bruno and Buffalmacco are testing society not on the basis of its religious orthodoxy, but on the basis of its alertness and creativity, particularly as these concern language. As he puts it in a *De casibus* passage that references Cicero's *De legibus*, it is through language alone that "we reveal whatever the mind experiences through reason, and we comprehend the significance of what we learn" ("*quicquid rationalis anima sentiat [propslamus] et sentita percipimus*").[4] Seen in this light, Boccaccio's satiric portrayals in the *Decameron* of linguistic lapses, flimflams, and other improprieties are diagnostic of a culture that is out of touch with its own humanity.

The Baths of Palermo. Fallacious language of a completely different sort is evident in VIII. 10, which like VIII. 7 implicates the reader through pornographic rhetoric. Dioneo's spicy narrative of Salabaetto, the Florentine merchant who is fleeced in Palermo by a Sicilian seductress named Jancofiore, is highlighted by a descriptive passage of torrid sensuality. As our gullible hero awaits Jancofiore's arrival in a private bathing chamber, he is greeted by the appearance of two slave girls, one carrying a basket of bedroom linen, the other balancing a choice mattress on her head. Having made the bed richly and spread it with "*una*

coltre di bucherame cipriana bianchissima con due origlieri lavorati a maraviglie" (VIII. 10.14) (a bedcover of the whitest Cyprian buckram and two marvelously embroidered pillows) (546), the two girls take off all their clothes and scrub the bathtub. Jancofiore now arrives with two more slave girls and, rushing to embrace him, exclaims, "*Non so chi mi si avesse a questo potuto conducere altri che tu; tu m'hai miso lo foco all'arma, toscano acanino*" (VIII. 10.15) (There is no one who could have led me to do this; you have set my heart on fire, my darling Tuscan) (546). Boccaccio follows this exchange with a narrative passage that is not only frankly provocative but also precocious in its use of detail:

> Appresso questo, come a lei piacque, ignudi ammenduni se ne entraron nel bagno e con loro due delle schiave. Quivi, senza lasciargli por mano addosso a altrui, ella medesima con sapone moscoleato e con garofanato maravigliosamente e bene tutto lavò Salabaetto, e appresso sé fece e lavare e stropicciare alle schiave. E fatto questo, recaron le schiave due lenzuoli bianchissimi e sottili, de' quali veniva sí grande odor di rose, che ciò che v'era pareva rose; e l'una inviluppò nell'uno Salabaetto e l'altra nell'altro la donna e in collo levatigli ammenduni nel letto fatto ne gli portarono. E quivi, poi che di sudare furon restati, dalle schiave fuori di que' lenzuoli tratti, rimasono ignudi negli altri. E tratti del paniere oricanni d'ariento bellissimi e pieni qual d'acqua rosa, qual d'acqua di fior d'aranci, qual d'acqua di fiori di gelsomino e qual d'acqua nanfa, tutti costoro di queste acque spruzzarono; e appresso tirate fuori scatole di confetti e preziosissimi vini alquanto si confortarono. (VIII. 10.16–18)
>
> [After this, at her request, they both entered the bath naked, attended by two of the slave girls. There, without allowing anyone else to lay a hand upon him, the lady herself, taking marvelous care, washed Salabaetto all over using soaps scented with musk and cloves, and then she had herself washed and rubbed down by the slave girls. And when this was done, the slave girls brought two of the whitest and thinnest sheets, from which there arose so strong an odor of roses that everything in the room seemed made of roses; having wrapped Salabaetto in one and draped the lady in the other, they lifted both of them up and carried them to the bed made ready for them. And there, when they stopped perspiring, the sheets were removed by the slave girls, and they were left naked between the other sheets. The most beautiful silver perfume bottles appeared from the basket, some full of rose water, some with water from orange blossoms, others from jasmine blossoms and still others with various kinds of citron extract, and the slave girls sprinkled all these lotions over them; and later came boxes of confections and bottle of the most precious wines with which they refreshed themselves.] (546–47)

Here, as in the passage concerning Rinieri in VIII. 7, Boccaccio would seem to be using a poetics of arousal to involve the reader in Salabaetto's

situation, but the appeal to male psychology is, in this instance, completely different. Unlike the naked and helpless Elena, Jancofiore here is consciously working out an erotic rhetoric of her own: an appeal so insidious as to fascinate the reader as well as the poor merchant. Like Cleopatra at Cydnus in Plutarch's famous anecdote (*Life of Antony*), she is using live semiotics to fascinate and arouse her chosen prey. The delicate sheets, the cottonwool mattress, the heavy rose perfume, and above all the slave girls who arrange them and strip naked to wash first the bathtub and then their equally naked mistress, are all elements in a material incantation of desire. Her strategy aims at total control by augmenting her sexual advance with an irresistible barrage of symbol and ornament.

Garnished with sighs of passion and oaths of commitment, her sexual favors are rhetorical flourishes in a pattern of entrapment. Her initiative reaches its apogee when, pretending to have received a letter from a brother in desperate straits, she sobbingly touches Salabaetto for a loan of 500 florins. Even though the florins actually belong to his Pisan employers, Salabaetto agrees. As Jancofiore accepts the money, "*ridendo col cuore e piagnendo con gli occhi*" (VIII. 10.37) (with a heart full of laughter and eyes full of tears) (549), her performance as a trafficker in the *prava imitatrix virtutis*[5] is complete.

Her monetary goal achieved, Jancofiore proceeds to dismiss Salabaetto from her affections. At last the young Florentine gets the picture. Deceived, cheated, near-destitute, and now on the verge of becoming a fugitive from his own employers, he thinks of the shame he has merited, bewailing "*le beffe le quali meritamente della sua bestialità n'aspettava, dolente oltre modo seco medesimo la sua sciocchezza piagnea*" (VIII. 10.40) (the well-earned ridicule awaiting him for his stupidity, sorrowful beyond all measure, he wept in silence over his folly) (550). In terms of the interplay between ignorance and awareness that Boccaccio has set up in Day VIII, Salabaetto has reached the middle of his journey, the nadir of his moral arc.

Here again, the contrast between Salabaetto and Rinieri, the cheated scholar of VIII. 7, is impossible to ignore. Rinieri reached a similar nadir because of a woman and found equal cause to blame himself "*maladiceva la qualità del tempo, la malvagità della notte insieme con la sua semplicità*" (VIII. 7.39) (he cursed the bad weather, the treachery of the lady, and the length of the night along with his own stupidity) (509). Armed with new awareness of the ways of the world, and of their own complicity as victims, both protagonists survive and seek justice. But while Rinieri's cruel revenge seems to compound his own initial folly, Salabaetto finds a means of letting the cunning Jancofiore outwit and punish herself. Fleeing to Naples, he is counseled by a wise family friend named Pietro dello Canigiano.[6]

> "Male hai fatto, mal ti se' portato, male hai i tuoi maestri ubiditi, troppi denari a un tratto hai spesi in dolcitudine: ma che? Fatto è, vuolsi vedere altro"; e, sí come avveduto uomo, prestamente ebbe pensato quello che era da fare e a Salabaetto il disse; al quale piacendo il fatto, si mise in avventura di volerlo seguire. (VIII. 10.43)
>
> ["You have acted badly, behaved badly, obeyed your employers badly, and spent too much money too quickly in easy living; but what's done is done and now we must find a remedy." And clever man as he was, he quickly saw what had to be done, and he explained it to Salabaetto, who was delighted with the plan and set out to follow it.] (550)

With Canigiano's advice in mind, the young man returns to Palermo and surprises the temptress by reassuring her of his undying love. Moreover, he claims to have a new trading deal afoot. Jancofiore, who is condemned by her own *malizia* to think only in terms of material advantage, buys into the deceit, and the Boccaccian *contrapasso* is complete.

Thus Salabaetto's story plays out happily, without inner stress or guilt. As Boccaccio adds rather obliquely, our enlightened hero decides to head for Ferrara and give up the merchant's calling. Here as elsewhere in the *Decameron,* Boccaccio lets his characters go their merry ways, without any undue soul-searching or moralistic declamation. But his positioning of the two parallel stories close to each other in Day VIII tempts a comparison between the two, suggesting that Salabaetto's ultimate response to *malizia* is more appropriate and less destructive than Rinieri's insistence on brutal revenge. It is worth noting, too, that Salabaetto's success is achieved by dint of Canigiano's wise counsel. While *ingegno* bespeaks the individual, shared knowledge bespeaks a healthy community.

Panfilo's *Canzone*, "Tanto è, Amore, il bene / ch'io per te sento." If Filomena's preceding *canzone* has memorialized passion without fulfillment, Panfilo's celebrates fulfillment tempered with caution. He rejoices in requited love, but concludes that he must conceal it:

> Non mi sarien credute
> le mie fortune; ond'io tutto m'infoco,
> quel nascondendo ond'io m'allegro e gioco. (VIII. *Concl.*12)
> [None would believe
> my good fortune; and so I burn, concealing
> the thing which gives me happiness and joy.] (556)

With this implication of consummated love—or, figuratively, of knowledge achieved—Boccaccio marks another step upward in the *brigata*'s pilgrimage of awareness: the importance of self-knowledge as an anchor of morality. But this realization itself introduces a new theme that will carry

into the *canzoni* of Days IX and X: the need for protecting the precious knowledge of *umane cose* with discretion. Such discretion, as Boccaccio teaches here and elsewhere, is effected through eloquent and figurative *poesis*, which conveys the truth while protecting it from punishment or vulgarization.

Moral Ambiguities in Days VII and VIII. Readers seeking moral and psychological integrity in the teachings of Days VII and VIII face more than one major challenge. Female sexual infidelity is first indulged (VII. 1–9) and then decried (VIII. 8). Eros is praised as a head-clearing inspiration (VII. 1–9) and then punished as the polar opposite (VIII. 1, 2, 4, 7, 9, 10). Irritating as these ambiguities may be, they point to a deeper consistency in Boccaccio's message. Honor and love may be variable quantities in the world of the *Decameron*. Knowledge, however, seems to reign absolute.

Thus Day VIII may be seen as a corrective, or balancing adjustment, to the Bacchic endorsement of female sexuality in Day VII. Boccaccio's campaign for women's liberation in the *Decameron* needed an element of shock value, and he provides it in Day VII with a resounding and unequivocal endorsement of femininity armed with *ingegno*. On the other hand, both common sense and Ciceronian *ragione* counsel moderation. With this in mind, the author recalibrates his poetic justice, embarrassing an unfaithful wife in VIII. 8 and punishing four other women who use their sexual power exploitatively (VIII. 1, 2, 7, and 10). This strategy tempers the moral import of the work as a whole, without diluting, in the slightest, the naughty license of Day VII.

With this reorganization—or shall we say disorganization—of moral judgments, Boccaccio concludes the lengthy exploration of women and sexuality that he began at the start of Day VII. Even though the *Decameron* is far from over, we may well ask, at this juncture, what all this commotion suggests about Boccaccio's view of women. The most sensible answer would seem to be that he has no "view" at all. In the *Decameron*, the women, like the men, are as various as the birds in the sky in character, and equally various in circumstance and situation. Boccaccio does, however, have something important to say about society's treatment of women, which he uniformly proclaims to be oppressive and exploitative. His case here, moreover, is no mere premodern roar of disapproval: instead (as we have seen in IV. 1 and VI. 7) it is firmly based on Ciceronian legal theory. No other writer of the Renaissance—not even Baldassare Castiglione in the sixteenth century—can be said to have treated women with a greater sense of social justice. Making this point is important to Boccaccio: he alludes to the condition of women in the *Proemio*, and dramatizes it in the *novelle* with conviction and bravura. But

this is not his final purpose, because not only women, but the community in general is the victim of a social order based on interest and ignorance. Boccaccio's study of women, though artfully pursued, serves primarily as a means of developing his central themes of mind, nature, and justice. In Day IX he will advance this grand project by giving full attention to the most intimate component of culture: language, with its unique capacity to convey or conceal human truth.

CHAPTER 9

TRUTH, LIE, AND ELOQUENCE: DAY IX

What is truth?' said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer.

—Francis Bacon, "Of Truth"

In Day IX Boccaccio narrows his perspective from general issues of knowledge and ignorance to issues of truth and falsehood, concentrating on the ways in which information is expressed and received. Here he treats topics that were developed by Cicero, not this time in the late philosophical works, but rather in the well-known *De inventione* (see the introduction to this volume). According to Cicero, rhetoric, which can be of the greatest good to society if it is based on wisdom (*sapienta*), can be equally harmful to society if it is allied with low cunning. Wisdom, moreover, is useless to society unless it is conveyed effectively. In Day IX Boccaccio produces ten cases in point, and he supports his thematics in the Day's Introduction and Conclusion. As a whole, the day suggests that in the ambiguous and hazardous interactions of real-world society, truth is relative rather than absolute, and can be useless, indeed irrelevant, unless it is augmented by caution, imagination, and art.

Boccaccio approaches this topic poetically, by setting up a figurative standard of idealized communication. As the *brigata* wanders happily through the woods before their daily meeting, they come upon a number of wild beasts and proceed to play with them:

> e per quello entrati, videro gli animali, sí come cavriuoli, cervi e altri, quasi sicuri da' cacciatori per la soprastante pistolenzia, non altramenti aspettargli che se senza tema o dimestichi fossero divenuti. E ora a questo e ora a quell'altro appressandosi, quasi giugnere gli dovessero, faccendogli correre e saltare . . . (IX. *Intro*.2–3)
>
> [and entering the wood, they saw animals such as roebucks, deer and other species, which, almost sensing that they were safe from hunters

> because of the existing plague, let them come close to them, much the way a tame and friendly animal might do. And drawing near now to one of them and now to another, as if about to touch them, they made them run and leap about...] (557)

The episode of the tame beasts extends the allegorical journey of the *brigata*. We have observed that as the ten young people geographically remove themselves from the plague, they are intellectually divesting themselves—and the reader—of institutionally promoted illusions, and moving toward an awareness that is fully engaged with reason and nature. But that is not all. This image of reconciled nature also looks forward to the figure who will dominate the most challenging tale of Day IX: the great King Solomon, whose wisdom was so potent that he could tame wild animals and speak with them (IX. 9).[1] As we will see, the king's concept of truth is both far from comforting and thoroughly modern. But first a brief overview.

Each of the ten stories in Day IX concerns an individual who adopts an obtuse or otherwise unorthodox approach to the truth. In eight of the tales (IX. 1–6, 8, and 10), a character behaves dishonestly in order to achieve some personal goal. In one (IX. 7) the truth is ignored until it is revealed by disaster. And in one more (IX. 9), the truth is simultaneously revealed and concealed by oracular rhetoric. As a group, the tales suggest a distanced and ironic attitude toward what we call truth.

Three of the *novelle*—all among Boccaccio's best-known—may serve as indicators of the day's satiric direction. In IX. 2, an abbess is in the act of hypocritically condemning a nun's secret love affair when, because of a clever riposte by the nun, she realizes that she herself is wearing her secret lover's pants on her head, instead of her wimple. In IX. 6, after a game of musical beds, an errant wife prevaricates her way back to respectability. In IX. 10, a priest named Gianni promises to transform a fool's wife into a mare, and is in the act of pinning on the tail (that is, of entering her from behind) when he is interrupted by the husband. Granted, these are very funny stories. They are examples, nonetheless, of a day-long culture of lies: a little world in which truth is available, if at all, via oblique and difficult byways of experience.

Cecco #1 and Cecco #2. From this satirical perspective, two of the stories are particularly mordant. IX.4, the first of these, stars the (appropriately Sienese) Cecco #1 and his dark *Doppelgänger* Cecco #2, and bears witness to Cicero's warnings about the depraved imitation of virtue. Cicero's concept of *ingenio freta malitia* (low cunning supported by talent), introduced in the opening of the *De inventione,* became a topic of moral condemnation in Brunetto (*Rettorica*) and Dante (*Paradiso*). What makes

malitia (Ital. *malizia)* so dangerous is that, as "*prava virtutis imitatrix*," it can masquerade as virtue, winning over hearts and minds, just as Jancofiore won over Salabaetto in VIII. 10. This perverse but predictable phenomenon has been multifariously thematic in the *Decameron* since the beginning, spotlighted in famous tales like those of Ciappelletto, Alberto, and Cipolla. In IX. 4 Boccaccio demonstrates it with particular vividness and near-pedantic emphasis, repeating the word *malizia* three times in a short tale, and referring repeatedly to the ineffectual speech of the victimized Cecco #1 ("*le sue parole non erano ascoltate*") (IX. 4.23) [his words were ignored] (573). The story plays out as follows

When Cecco #1 (Cecco Angiulieri) decides to make a career move from Siena to Ravenna, Cecco #2 (Cecco Fortariggo) hires on as his servant. At an inn along the way, he robs Cecco #1, convinces everyone around that he himself is the injured party, and totally discredits his employer. Cecco #2's modus operandi is completely rhetorical. Imitating Cecco #1's language of indignation, he successfully creates a false ethos of offended virtue:

> "Io non so come io non t'uccido, ladro disleale che ti fuggivi col mio!"; e a' villani rivolto disse: "Vedete, signori, come egli m'aveva lasciato nell' albergo in arnese, avendo prima ogni sua cosa giucata! Ben posso dire che per Dio e per voi io abbia questo cotanto racquistato, di che io sempre vi sarò tenuto" (IX. 4.22)
>
> ["I don't know what's stopping me from killing you treacherous thief, running off with my belongings the way you did!" Then, turning to the peasants, he announced: "Gentlemen, you can see for yourselves the sorry state he left me in at the inn, after gambling away everything he owned! But I can say that thanks to God and to yourselves, I have at least salvaged this much, for which I shall always be grateful to you."] (573)

Because of Cecco #2's ability to manipulate his uncritical audience, his tactics succeed.

The underlying message of this tale is sinister and provocative. In a culture dominated by mere appearances, the best performance wins the day. The author drives his point home by giving his characters the same first name, Cecco.[2] Though the two young men are completely different character types, Cecco #2's *malizia* and *ingegno* (in this case, rhetorical skill) enable him to duplicate and steal Cecco #1's moral authority.

The narrative informs us that infamous Cecco #2 is finally brought to justice through some sort of revenge: "*E cosí la malizia del Fortarrigo turbò il buono avviso dell'Angiulieri, quantunque da lui non fosse a luogo e a tempo lasciata impunito*" (IX. 4.25) (And while Fortarrigo's cunning did upset Anguilier's good intentions, he did not go unpunished when the

proper place and time presented themselves) (574). The message of the tale, however, reads loud and clear. *Malizia* is most effective and dangerous when it boldly appropriates the trappings of virtue. In the context of the *Decameron*, moreover, the tale of the two Ceccos reflects not only on personal relationships, but also on politics and religion, where institutional rhetoric and ceremony can sanctify the basest of motives, and where ignorance and credulity are the norm.

Donno Gianni's Horse. A related form of *malizia* is evident in Dioneo's last and dirtiest of dirty tricks, IX. 10. Dioneo's story concerns—who would guess it?—gullibility and exploitation, with the power in this case wielded by a priest. Dioneo's hyperbolically courtly and self-effacing lead-in, "*Leggiadre donne, infra molte bianche colombe agiugne più di bellezza un nero corvo che non farebbe un candido cigno*" (IX. 10.3) (Charming ladies, the beauty of a flock of white doves is enhanced more by a black crow than by a pure white swan) (596), is an ironic means of setting his audience up for an episode of utter grossness. The bawdy fable that follows is set in the remote reaches of the Italian hinterland (Puglia) and concerns three characters (the pedlar-priest Donno Gianni, fellow-pedlar Pietro, and Pietro's wife Gemmata) who coexist in unforgiving poverty and rustic ignorance. From these characters and conditions Boccaccio builds a compact allegory that reflects the same kind of exploitation as has been noted in IV. 2 (Alberto as archangel). But here the allegory takes on a shape that is monstrously frank and unforgivably funny.

One day Donno Gianni convinces Pietro and Gemmata that their business life will improve substantially if they allow him, via incantation, to turn Gemmata into a mare. Man and wife accept this offer enthusiastically, without asking for any details about the process. As the two simple folk await the unlikely event, the reader is left to balance against each other two apparent impossibilities: that Gianni can pull off such a metamorphosis, or that Pietro and Gemmata can be stupid enough to believe him.

The sequel plays itself out shortly before dawn the next morning. Gianni hands Pietro a lamp to hold, and orders Gemmata to strip naked and get down on all fours on the floor. He then methodically caresses each part of her body, while intoning the incantation impressively in ceremonial subjunctives:

> "Questa sia bella testa di cavalla"; e toccandole i capelli, disse: "Questi sieno belli crini di cavalla"; e poi toccandole le braccia, disse: "E queste sieno belle gambe e belli piedi di cavalla"; poi toccandole il petto e trovandolo sodo e tondo, risvegliandosi tale che non era chiamato e sú levandosi, disse: "E questo sia bel petto di cavalla"; e cosí fece alla schiena e al ventre e alle groppe e alle cosce e alle gambe . . . (IX. 10.17–18)

> ["Let this be the beautiful head of a mare."
> Then, stroking her hair, he said:
> "Let this be the beautiful mane of a mare."
> And then, fondling her arms, he said: "And let these be the beautiful front legs and hooves of a mare."
> Then, as he fondled her breasts, finding them to be round and firm, a certain something-or-other was aroused, and it stood straight up, and he said: "And let this be the beautiful chest of a mare."
> And he did the same thing to her back, her stomach, her buttocks, her thighs, and her legs . . .] (598)

As Gianni completes the ceremony by adding the mare's tail (i.e., penetrating Gemmata sexually), Pietro gets cold feet. Without realizing that he and his wife are variously being had, he finds himself unwilling to deal with this sort of personal humiliation, even in return for a good horse. He interrupts the ceremony, "*io non vi voglio coda, io non vi voglio coda*" (IX. 10.19) (no tail! I really don't want a tail there!) (598). He reproves Gianni, "*Bene sta, io non vi voleva quella coda io: perché non diciavate voi a me `Falla tu'? e anche l'appiccavate troppo bassa*" (IX. 10.21) (That's fine with me—I didn't want that kind of tail anyway! Why didn't you ask me to do it? Besides, you stuck it on too low) (599). Pietro consequently earns contempt and repudiation from Gemmata.

Considering the outright resemblances between Gianni's ceremonies and other such nonsense ("*cotali altri ciancioni*" (VII. 1.5) that Boccaccio has already targeted in I. 1, IV. 2, VI. 10, VII. 1, IX. 3, the reader cannot but remember Abraham's claim (I. 2) that the real miracle of Christianity is that people believe in its teachings at all. Much of the *Decameron* may be seen as a series of variations on this heavily ironized statement: an incrementally developing characterization of religious institutions as a colossal agglomeration of frauds. But comprehensive as this web of satire may seem, it is only part of Boccaccio's grander vision: the restoration of reason and knowledge as first principles of a literate culture.

Talano's Dream. Another troubling aspect of the thematic truth/falsehood issue is revealed in IX. 7, a story that purports to recount the grisly outcome of a prophetic dream, but more subtly concerns the reception of discourse. Talano d'Imolese, a good man who is married to a shrew named Margherita, dreams that his wife is set upon by a wolf in the neighboring woods. When he warns her not to go into the woods the next day, she distrusts his motives, saying to herself:

> Hai veduto come costui maliziosamente si crede avermi messa paura d'andare oggi al bosco nostro? là dove egli per certo dee aver data posta a qualche cattiva e non vuole che io il vi truovi. Oh! egli avrebbe buon manicar co' ciechi, e io sarei bene sciocca se io nol conoscessi e se io il

> credessi! Ma per certo e' non gli verrà fatto: e' convien pur che io vegga, se io vi dovessi star tutto dí, che mercatantia debba esser questa che egli oggi far vuole. (IX. 7.10)
>
> [You see what a crafty fellow he is, thinking he could scare me away from going into our woods today? I'm sure he's made an appointment with some wretch of a woman, and he doesn't want me to find him there. Ah! He'd certainly eat well at a dinner for the blind, and I'd be a real fool to believe him and not see through his plan! He's certainly not going to get away with this; even if I have to stay there the whole day, I'm going to see what business it is he's up to now.] (587)

That the dream turns out to be truly prophetic (Margherita is indeed attacked by a wolf) is of less interpretative interest than her suspicious reading of it. Her conclusion that Talano intended his warning "*maliziosamente*" suggests in context that Margherita and others of her ilk are distrustful of the truth, indeed readier to believe in lies. And when this story is compared with others like the Calandrino stories or IX. 4, where Cecco #2's rhetoric of distrust wins the day over Cecco #1's real innocence, we find ourselves in a culture of fear and ignorance, a society so starved of mental oxygen that it has reversed the moral polarities of discourse.

This ugly situation was anticipated by Cicero, who bestowed rhetoric on Western politics with a sharp warning about *malitia* attached. He averred that there was only one viable solution: virtue must arm and defend itself with *eloquentia*.[3] Many years later, Brunetto revived the tradition by founding a new politics in Florence on the basis of Ciceronian rhetoric. Boccaccio champions the same cause in *De casibus* where, just after recounting Cicero's rise and fall, he praises eloquence as the sine qua non of rational politics (VI. xiii) and urges its study. Earlier on, he enlarges on Cicero's warning about the political dangers of credulity:

> Do you think all opinions make equal sense? Certainly nothing is more foolish than a credulous mind. The prudent man refuses no one's ideas, weighs each according to its worth, then deliberates carefully so that he does not make a mistake by a too precipitous conclusion concerning something he does not know anything about. He is like a mental watchtower observing with discrimination who is speaking, and judging what the speaker has to gain; he wants to know what actually took place, where and when. He takes anger or calm into account, and whether the speaker is friend or enemy, honorable or infamous.[4]

For Cicero and Boccaccio, eloquence—the ability to move minds with truthful words—has as its corollary eloquent listening—the skill of judging

the words of others. Day IX of the *Decameron* provides us with lessons, both positive and negative, concerning both of these skills.

Day IX includes four examples of eloquent speech, two at its beginning and two near its end. In IX.1 Francesca of Pistoia tells two clever lies to rid herself of two pesky lovers. In IX. 2, cited above, a nun uses an ostensibly polite request, "*Madonna, io vi priego che voi v'annodiate la cuffia; poi dite a me ciò che vi piace*" (IX. 2.17) (Mother, I pray you to tie up your wimple; then say anything you please to me) (566) to fend off a hypocritical rebuke by her abbess. In IX. 8 Ciacco, who has been tricked by Biondello, takes revenge on him by duping him into approaching a well-known ruffian with the insolent request, "*che vi piaccia d'arubinargli questo fiasco del vostro buon vin vermiglio*" (IX. 8.14) (that you be so kind as to rubify this flask with your good red wine) (589). Having said the wrong words at the wrong time, Biondello gets soundly beaten.

The Wisdom of Solomon. But the most prominent demonstration of language in the service of virtue is the King Solomon *novella* of IX. 9, a challenging tale that purportedly concerns the proper treatment of women. After an introduction asserting that women should subject themselves to male authority, Emilia tells of Giosefo and Melisso, both young and both unhappy, who travel from Antioch to Jerusalem and visit King Solomon for advice. To Melisso, who complains that no women love him—even though he entertains lavishly—the king responds with the one-word command, "*Ama*" (IX. 9.14) (Love) (593). To Giosefo, whose wife is unusually hostile and unmannerly, the king replies, "*Va al Ponte all'Oca*" (IX. 9.15) (Go to the Goose Bridge) (593). Though neither young man initially understands Solomon's laconic counsel, each of them ultimately gets the point. On the way back from Jerusalem, they see a man beat his mule in an effort to make it cross a bridge. When they suggest that he try gentler treatment, he shoots back, "*Voi conoscete i vostri cavalli, e io conosco il mio mulo; lasciate far me con lui*" (IX. 9.20) (You know your horses and I know my mule! Let me handle it) (594). He continues thrashing away, and in the end, the mule cooperates. Giosefo then asks a bystander about the name of the bridge, receives a predictable response, and immediately understands the meaning of Solomon's command; returning to Antioch, he confirms the counsel by beating his wife into civility. Melisso, who has had no such object lesson in the meaning of "*Ama*," must seek a second opinion. He finds a wise man who parses Solomon's advice in a way that would satisfy a good clinical psychologist today:

> Niuno piú vero consiglio né migliore ti potea dare. Tu sai che tu non ami persona, e gli onori e' servigi li quali tu fai, gli fai non per amore che tu

> a alcun porti ma per pompa. Ama adunque, come Salamon ti disse, e sarai amato. (IX. 9.34)
>
> [He could not have given you sounder or better advice. You know you really do not love anyone and that the banquets you give and the favors you perform do not stem from any love you bear for someone else but rather from your own vainglory. Love, therefore, as Solomon has told you, and you will be loved.] (595–96)

Emilia concludes the *novella* resoundingly: "*Cosí adunque fu gastigata la ritrosa, e il giovane amando fu amato*" (IX. 9.35) (And so in such a fashion was the shrew punished, and the young man by loving was loved in return) (596). What can we make of this story, or, more accurately, of this story in the context of Emilia's introduction? Regarding Emilia's male chauvinistic comments, which seem to contradict the general treatment of women throughout the *Decameron*, we should remember that Boccaccio often sends mutually contradictory messages—as counterbalances, corrections, or pure dodges. Moreover, the fact that Solomon's message is patently self-contradictory adds provocative new implications to the tale and its context. These are both moral and rhetorical.

Morally, Solomon's advice that Giosefo resort to brutality contradicts his advice that Melisso simply love. Why should two radically opposed methods produce the same effect? Boccaccio's meaning here would seem to be that moral teaching has to conform to the contingencies of praxis. While religion says simply this, and philosophy says simply that, wise ethical teaching must tune each counsel to time and place. Thus Emilia's introduction to the story may be seen as part of the assortment of diverse modalities that comprise Boccaccio's rich enterprise. Solomon's radical counsel, so puzzling when read as concerning spousal relations, will look much less so when Machiavelli takes it up 150 years later and calls it the Lion and the Fox. Nonetheless, the implied contradiction is a sign that the paths of wisdom are not for the timid.[5]

Solomon's counsel has rhetorical significance as well. Speaking of his own Ciceronian prose style in Book VI of De *casibus*, Boccaccio asserts that circumstances sometimes demand that eloquence could be crude:

> Negasse tulliana incude fabricatum eloquium longe magis quam rude possit, stultissimum est; sed nec rude caruit effectu quandoque; eo namque in patrum gratiam e Sacro monte plebs romana in urbem reducta est, fide potius quam eloquentia suadentis inspecta.
>
> [It is the height of stupidity to deny that a style based on Cicero's careful eloquence is much more polished than crude. But sometimes his eloquence did not lack the effect of being crude, because it was the means by which the common people of Rome were led from the sacred mount back

> to the city and into the favor of the senators. But people better understood Cicero's faith than his eloquence.][6]

He goes on to assert the power of his own language in terms that reflect but modify Solomon's injunction about Goose Bridge: "*si nimium pultros calcaribus urgeamus, non promptos ad iter sed persepe retrogrados facimus; ubi, si si molli cedantur virga, insidentis sequuntur abitrium*" [but if we spur a horse too much, we do not speed it on its way but very often make it go back. If we strike it with a supple stick [*verga*, switch], however, the horse obeys us].[7] Here, instead of a mule, we have a horse, and instead of a stick (*stecca*) we have a switch, thus implying that Boccaccio's subtle creativity mediates between the rough and the gentle, between coarseness and elegance. Later in Book VI of *De casibus*, he returns to this alternation of modalities, reciting a list of divergent styles that includes "*nunc aspera atque mordentia verba, nunc placida atque clementia*" (now rough and sharp, now calm and placid) as a means of showing what kind of rhetoric can affect the priorities of kings.[8]

As Boccaccio read Cicero's theory of eloquence, so he patterned his own in the *Decameron*. For Cicero, rhetoric was not merely the fashioning of words but also the sensitive response to what would move specific audiences at specific times. The orator consequently must respond to changing contingencies with an "irregularity of style" (*dispar . . . ratio orationis*")[9] that strikes the right note to the right ears at the right time. Solomon's counsel profoundly elaborates the rhetoric of the *Decameron*, and Boccaccio, that Solomon of rhetoricians, thus justifies the irregularities of his own style. Such irregularities, which run the gamut of expressive modalities in Boccaccio's *novelle*, do much to give the *Decameron* its encompassing variety and its breadth of human understanding.

Neifile and Poetic Truth. Neifile's song "*Io mi son giovinetta*" reprises the charged imagery of the opening frame narrative of Day IX: the miraculously tamed animals suggesting the ideal of open and honest communication with the world at large. The speaker narrates a scene in which she discovers a flower that is a poetic reminder of her beloved and—as though she has thus evoked his spirit—opens her soul to him in words:

> De' quali quand'io ne truovo alcun che sia,
> al mio parer, ben simile di lui,
> il colgo e bascio e parlomi con lui:
> e com'io so, cosí l'anima mia
> tututta gli apro e ciò che 'l cor disia:
> quindi con altri il metto in ghirlandella

legato co' miei crin biondi e leggieri. (IX. *Concl.*10)
[When I find one among these blooms,
a flower, I feel, most like him,
I pluck it, kiss it, speak to it,
and so, in my own way, I open up
my soul to it and to my heart's desire;
then with the rest, I weave it in a crown
of flowers for my fine and golden hair.] (601)

Neifile's expression of fulfilled but still secret love renews our attention to the thematics of Day IX. Between her lover's all-too-infrequent visits she cannot speak to him directly and must console her own longing with a symbolic flower and a figured poem. Like her fellow women in the distrustful and repressive climate of fourteenth-century Florentine culture, Neifile is isolated and vulnerable, dependent for her sustenance on a lifeline of indirect communication via poetic eloquence. Like Panfilo (*canzone*, Day VIII), she cannot proclaim the truth openly; instead, following Solomon, she must artfully and poetically ration it out.

Day IX and its Role in the Development of the *Decameron*. With Solomon's wisdom in mind, the implications of Day IX may be summed up as follows: human truth does not exist as an abstract form. Instead it is contingent on circumstance. Rather than being an autonomous entity, it resides in our specific actions and their consequences. The power of truth, indeed its human essence, depends on its delivery and its reception. Thus the clever lie can win the day over artless honesty. Similarly, the ethos of a given person or culture often determines both delivery and reception. A Solomon will be believed, no matter how strange his speech. But a corrupt society often ignores blunt honesty and instead privileges the cunning and emphatic lie. With these factors in mind, eloquence—which comprehends both truth and falsehood, both delivery and reception—is the only defense of truth against lie and the only practical arbiter between knowledge and ignorance. And eloquence, whose end goal is social health and enlightenment, may sometimes, for the common good, default to creative prevarication.

Viewed as a subgroup in the larger structure of the *Decameron*, Days VII–IX may be seen as developing the idea of knowledge crowned by eloquence as a moral principle and social force. The liberated females of Day VII triumph, in the main, because they control the information on which their stratagems depend. And key stories in Days VIII and IX suggest that social wisdom and self-awareness must be part of the mix, as must the ability to interact with diverse elements in society. Moreover, practical understanding is not adequate without the means of expressing

itself in different ways, under different circumstances, and to different sorts of people—in short, without eloquence. As Cicero proclaims at the outset of *De inventione*, wisdom without eloquence is of no good at all to society.

Understanding Boccaccio's implicit construct of knowledge and eloquence in these terms, we are reminded forcefully of the Renaissance humanism that would develop academically in Europe over the generations after his death and that would ultimately usher in the Enlightenment. Granted, the Renaissance did not spring armed from Boccaccio's brow; his ample debts to Cicero, Marsilius, Dante, and Petrarch, among others, are proof enough of that. Nonetheless, as Aldo Scaglione suggests, the *Decameron* is a full-blown Renaissance work in every important sense.[10] As we reach the end of Day IX, only one element of characteristic Renaissance humanism remains unaddressed: its political engagement, as evidenced in the lives and work of Cicero, Brunetto, and the great civic humanists that followed them. Boccaccio turns to that subject in Day X.

CHAPTER 10

THE CICERONIAN SYNTHESIS: DAY X AND AUTHOR'S CONCLUSION

Le tre disposizion che 'l ciel non vole,
incontenenza, malizia e la matta
bestialitade? e come incontenenza
men Dio offende e men biasimo accatta?
[Three dispositions which Heaven wills not: incontinence, malice, and mad bestiality? and how incontinence less offends God and incurs less blame?]

—*Inferno*, Canto XI, 81–84[1]

Day X, and the brief valedictory section that follows it, are not conclusions in the everyday sense of the word. Instead of tying up loose ends, Day X presents vitally new material, new issues, and new avenues for dialoguing with Boccaccio's literary backgrounds. Its message, so clearly divergent from that of Days I–IX, comes as a surprise. It suggests that, in its light, we should reevaluate the moral import of the *Decameron* as a whole.

Day X: Overview. Day X is designated—this time with some accuracy—as a celebration of generosity. As the *brigata* variously narrate stories of love, friendship, magnanimity, and self-sacrifice, the text begins to exhale an atmosphere of institutional benevolence that contrasts sharply with the satirical and rebellious spirit of the earlier days. However, although one of its heroes is a cleric, nowhere in Day X is generosity strongly related to Christian values; its most eminent heroes are Nathan (a Jew), Titus (a Roman), and Saladin (a Moslem). Boccaccio, it would seem, while not renouncing his characteristic unorthodoxy, is radically reforming his moral perspective. How, then, do we unpack this revolution in tone?

Perhaps the best way to begin is to place Boccaccio in a tradition of which he has already repeatedly availed himself. Cicero, Brunetto, and Dante all conclude major works with a similar sense of uplift. Cicero concludes his *De re publica* with Scipio's dream of a heavenly realm in which good deeds are rewarded, and when Brunetto breaks off his *Penitenza* at the end of the *Tesoretto*, his narrator has purified himself, and the spirit of Ptolemy is about to give a lecture on the heavens. Dante, writing under the influence of both Cicero and Brunetto, describes a similar form of geographic and spiritual ascent in the *Paradiso*, which itself shows Ciceronian influences. With Day X Boccaccio takes his place in this illustrious tradition. The understanding of human nature expressed in Days I–IX is now applied to a vision of an enlightened individual and a resurrected commonwealth. As Giuseppe Mazzotta remarks, the image of successful marriage conveyed by many of the tales is an "exemplary metaphor of order and reconciliation."[2] How all this works specifically is well illustrated by one of the two flagship tales of the day: X. 8, the famous story of Titus and Gisippus.

Titus, Gisippus, and the Ciceronian Commonwealth. Here is Boccaccio's own description of X. 8:

> Sofronia, credendosi esser moglie di Gisippo, è moglie di Tito Quinzio Fulvo e con lui se ne va a Roma, dove Gisippo in povero stato arriva; e credendo da Tito esser disprezzato sé avere uno uomo ucciso, per morire, afferma; Tito, riconosciutolo, per iscamparlo dice sé averlo morto; il che colui che fatto l'avea vedendo se stesso manifesta; per la qual cosa da Ottaviano tutti sono liberati, e Tito dà a Gisippo la sorella per moglie e con lui comunica ogni suo bene. (X. 8.1)
>
> [Sophronia, believing that she is the wife of Gisippus, is actually married to Titus Quintus Fulvius [Quintius Fulvus],[3] with whom she goes to Rome, where Gisippus arrives in an impoverished state. Believing that he has been scorned by Titus, he claims, in order to be put to death, that he has murdered a man; when Titus recognizes him, in order to save Gisippus he declares that he himself committed the murder. When the actual murderer perceives this, he confesses; as a result, they are all freed by Octavianus, and then Titus gives Gisippus his sister in marriage and shares all his possessions with him.] (640)

Thorny and detailed as it is, this synopsis does little to suggest the complexity of the lengthy tale, which abounds in conflict, suspense, and soul-searching, not to mention long passages of deep reasoning or daunting eloquence. The narrative follows a love triangle literally from the groves of Academe in Athens to the Roman senate, and it concludes with three acts of conspicuous self-sacrifice, all reconciled by the mercy of Caesar himself.

Beneath all this, X. 8, as Victoria Kirkham has shown,[4] is a virtual seed bag of unadvertised classical sentiments and positions, almost all of them Ciceronian. The tale is a discursive memorial to the Roman sage, from its language up to the sequence of its drama. Titus Quintius Fulvus, the hero, is himself a young Cicero, bred in Rome and educated in the Athenian school founded by Plato.[5] His very name is a Ciceronian conglomeration.[6] He is, moreover, "*di maraviglioso ingegno*." His lengthy speech in Athens is based, in part, on Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations*, I.i.1–3. Like Cicero, Titus returns from Athens to Rome, and becomes hugely prominent. Like Cicero, he is a patriot and shows himself willing to give up his life for an idea. Like Cicero's, his life is forfeit to Octavius Caesar; but Caesar, who was (albeit unwillingly) complicit in Cicero's death, shows mercy in this fictional case. Here, more than anywhere else in this opus, Boccaccio is evoking and celebrating his hero's times and character.

This historically tuned and discursively nuanced tribute, however, is not Boccaccio's final goal in X. 8. Rather, he uses it to set off his fullest statement of the moral position that is the platform of the first nine *novelle* of Day X, and the final balancing element of the *Decameron* as a whole. This moral position is based on the idea of friendship—not just the friendship of the two young men, but the famously Ciceronian concept (*De officiis*, I.xvii.55–56; *De amicitia,* passim; *De legibus*, I.xviii.49) of friendship as an embracing social and ethical structure:

> Disiderino adunque gli uomini la moltitudine de' consorti, le turbe de' fratelli, e la gran quantità de' figliuoli e con gli lor denari il numero de' servidori s'acrescano; e non guardino, qualunque s'è l'un di questi, ogni menomo suo pericolo piú temere che sollecitudine aver di tor via i grandi del padre o del fratello o del signore, dove tutto il contrario far si vede all'amico. (X. 8.119)
>
> [So let men go on wishing for a multitude of relatives, hosts of brothers and of children, and to increase the number of their servants with their wealth. But what they do not realize is that every one of them, no matter who he may be, is more concerned over the smallest danger to himself than he is eager to protect his father, or his brother, or his master from great peril—whereas between friends exactly the opposite happens.] (655)

Boccaccio's paean to friendship is highlighted by four paradoxical Stoic maxims, three of them Ciceronian,[7] all translated directly from the Latin: seeing with *oculis mentis*, the eyes of the mind; *te ricognosci*, know yourself; *se vincere*, to conquer oneself; and regarding a friend as an *alter me*, another me:

> Apri gli occhi dello 'ntelletto e te medesimo, o misero, riconosci; dà luogo alla ragione, raffrena il concupiscibile appetito, tempera i disideri non sani

> e a altro dirizza i tuoi pensieri; contrasta in questo cominciamento alla tua libidine e vinci te medesimo mentre che tu hai tempo. (X. 8.14)
>
> non vo' dir perder lei, ché non la perderò dandola a te, ma a un altro me la trasmuterò di bene in meglio . . . (X. 8.38)
>
> [Open the eyes of your mind, you miserable creature, and know yourself for what you are. Give way to reason, restrain your lustful appetite, temper your unhealthy desires, and direct your thoughts to something else; oppose your lust from the outset and conquer yourself while you still have time.] (641–42)
>
> [I do not say lose her, for I would not be losing her in giving her to you but rather I would be transferring her to another me, that is, from good to better.] (645)

These concepts are all interbreeding: any two of them can be derived from the other two. Seeing with the eyes of the mind, we know ourselves, we gain control over our own passions; our selfish instincts diminish; we treat other people as we wish to be treated ourselves. This complex of attitudes, couched by Titus in a characteristically Stoic self-dialogue,[8] fulfills the social implications of the fraternal love that powers the tale of Titus and Gisippus. Moreover, these principles look outward toward a potentially enlightened society that resembles Boccaccio's *brigata* itself , as described by Panfilo at the day's conclusion:

> continua onestà, continua concordia, continua fraternal dimestichezza mi ci è paruta vedere e sentire; il che senza dubbio in onore e servigio di voi e di me m'è carissimo. (X.*Concl*.5)
>
> [Constant decorum, constant harmony and constant fraternal friendship are, in fact, what I have seen and felt here—something which, of course, pleases me, for it redounds to both your honor and merit and mine.] (682)

Note Boccaccio's use of "*fraternal*": here and throughout the first nine stories of Day X, he elevates the concept of brotherly love at the expense of its hot-blooded male/female alternative. Note also the word "*dimestichezza*." As used here, it functions as a modern equivalent for the Latin *civilitas*. The *brigata* has achieved this virtue because of its self-selected character and its utopian and temporary situation. In X. 8, Boccaccio meditates on what it would take to bring about *dimestichezza*—a kind of social-self-knowledge—in real life.

The Ciceronian Synthesis. Understanding the pervasively Ciceronian focus of X. 8, we may now locate Day X as a whole in Boccaccio's master plan for the *Decameron*. Day X. 1–9 dramatically balance the more libertarian aspects of the entire work and, to a degree, complete Boccaccio's general endorsement of Cicero's social thought. Boccaccio achieves this

by focusing on every citizen's obligation to the commonwealth, and thus by endorsing Cicero's idea of *communitas*.

Under the terms of the commonwealth outlined in Cicero's late political works, there is a tacit agreement between the state and the citizen. The currency of this contract is no more nor less than liberty. The state guarantees the liberty of the citizen, and in return the citizen defends the liberty of the state. If this means renouncing his own peace and pleasure, it must be done nonetheless. If this means risking his life in battle, so be it. The grandeur that is Rome, complete with its unequaled degree of security and liberty is, in Cicero's commonwealth, bought and paid for by the civic virtue of its citizens. The freedom of the state is guaranteed by individuals who are themselves free from selfish passion. As Cicero declares (though in a work not directly available to Boccaccio), "when it comes to preserving the people's freedom, no one is just a private citizen."[9] These values are summed up in Cicero's concept of *communitas*: a word he used to refer to the naturally shared interests that bound people together in society.[10] This concept would have a particularly strong influence on Brunetto Latini, who fed it into the Florentine bloodstream.[11]

Earlier we remarked at how aggressive and creative Boccaccio was at co-opting Ciceronian thought and adapting it for the purposes of his own times. In so doing, however, he seemed to ignore the elements that complete the Ciceronian paradigm: social responsibility and civic virtue. The subversive frolics and hilarity of Days V–VII are well and good as attacks on the status quo, but by themselves do not suggest the reinstatement of reason, justice, and nature that Boccaccio has encouraged us to expect. Clearly Boccaccio has noted this imbalance as well, though through Days VII–IX he keeps his cards pretty close to the vest. Finally, in Day X, he undertakes to correct the imbalance, completing his commonwealth of reason and fulfilling his compact with Cicero. Nine of the heroes of Day X do justice to Cicero's doctrine of citizenship by sacrificing private goals for the sake of others; and the last of them, Gualtieri, is notable for his failure to do so.

The Social and Narrative Mechanics of Day X. Civic culture of all sorts so pervades Day X that it is hard to say whether Boccaccio wrote the ten tales or convened them. From the fabled thirty-two gates of Nathan's palace in Cattaio (Cathay), graciously inviting to all travelers and beggars (the same beggar tried all of them and was kindly granted alms at each), to the sumptuous banquets of King Alfonso, King Charles, and King Peter (X. 3, 1, 6, 7), the day teems with society, as folks in substantial number watch, listen to, judge, wonder at, and appreciate the actions of central figures. And whether these actions involve lavish munificence (X. 1, 2, 9), the sacrifice of a love object (X. 4, 5, 6, 7), or

the imperilment of one's own life (X. 3, 8, 10), they set off the heroes as standard-bearers of social justice, knights in a new rationally based chivalry of generosity, self-denial, and moderation.

Boccaccio is at pains to remind us how difficult civic self-denial can be. In X. 6 he tells the story of King Charles (of Anjou)[12] who, newly victorious at Benevento, holds power over Florence and its environs. In Castel del Mare he visits the home of a displaced Florentine knight, who entertains him in impressive style with an outdoor feast. Charles becomes erotically interested in the knight's two daughters, who attend him at a picnic. Like the Renaissance painters who would someday depict his tales, and along the lines of his earlier VIII. 7 and 10, Boccaccio conveys the ignition of male desire so vigorously as to implicate his male readership in the web of temptation:

> E mangiando egli lietamente e del luogo solitario giovandogli, e nel giardino entrarono due giovinette d'età forse di quindici anni l'una, bionde come fila d'oro e co' capelli tutti inanellati e sopr'essi sciolti una leggier ghirlandetta di provinca, e nelli lor visi piú tosto agnoli parevan che altra cosa, tanto gli avevan dilicati e belli; e eran vestite d'un vestimento di lino sottilissimo e bianco come neve in su le carni, il quale dalla cintura in sú era strettissimo e da indi 'n giú largo a guisa d'un padiglione e lungo infino a' piedi. (X. 6.11)
>
> [And while he was happily eating his meal and enjoying the solitude of the place, there entered the garden two young girls, each about fifteen years of age, their hair as blond as strands of gold, all in curls surmounted by a delicate garland of periwinkle blossoms, and they looked more like angels than anything else, so lovely and delicate were their faces. They were dressed in garments of the thinnest linen, as white as snow upon their skin, fitting tightly at the waist and extending from there in bell-shaped fashion, all the way down to their feet.] (628–29)

After feasting his eyes on the winsome pair, the king watches them in action as they net the silver fishes, and throw, rather than carry, their catch, fish by fish, to a servant onshore who is cooking them over a fire. As the fishing, throwing, catching, frying, and serving proceed, the guests, royalty included, are lured into the bizarre festivities. In what could be a scene from the Dada stage, fish fly in every direction, the king reclaims his boyhood, and decorum somersaults into misrule. Flushed with pleasure after this interlude, the king turns his undivided attention to the two girls as they leave the pond:

> Le fanciulle, veggendo il pesce cotto e avendo assai pescato, essendosi tutto il bianco vestimento e sottile loro appiccato alle carni né quasi cosa

> alcuna del dilicato lor corpo celando, usciron del vivaio; e ciascuna le cose recate avendo riprese, davanti al re vergognosamente passando, in casa se ne tornarono. (X. 6.17)
>
> [When they saw that the fish had been cooked and they had now caught enough of them, the young maidens—their white, thin garments clinging to their skin concealing hardly any part of their delicate bodies—emerged from the fishpond; and after picking up all the things they had brought with them, they shyly passed before the King and returned to the house. (629)

Here, as in VIII. 7 and 10, Boccaccio unites lively imagination with precise detail to convey, if not inspire, the onset of sexual desire. This is the discourse of arousal, but in each case Boccaccio locates it within a narrative climate that complicates its meaning. In this tale King Charles, who is sexually aroused by the girls, has virtually tyrannical power over the Florentine population. He decides to use this power to satisfy his erotic desires, and he shares this plan with his counselor, Count Guido. The count responds decisively with a barrage of warnings and strictures that suggest the moral of the story. King Charles, who has conquered a large part of Italy, must now "*se medesimo vincere*" (X. 6.32), conquer himself.

Other strokes of narrative genius—Lisa's *canzonetta* in X. 7, Caesar's judgment in X. 8, a joyous recognition scene in X. 9, and a remarkable resurrection by love in X. 4—seize our attention throughout the final day of the *Decameron*. In general these vivid passages serve to show that unselfish love and self-sacrifice can be as exciting and fulfilling as worldly pleasures. The first nine stories of Day X are thus a testimony not only to civic responsibility but also to individual freedom of choice. Taken together, the tales form a block of meaning that offsets the extravagances of earlier days and does justice to Cicero's view of the citizen's responsibility to society.

Dioneo's Rebuttal: the Story of Griselda. This hearty paean to social generosity, prolonged as it is over nine consecutive *novelle*, cannot, however, silence Dioneo. Like some avenging angel, Boccaccio's New Zeus returns to silence the philanthropic harmonies and to assert again the *tencione* that has been his message throughout. He does this with the tale of Griselda, a story so baldly unsettling that for centuries interpretation has spun its gears arguing over the painful topics raised. But what X. 10 presents is not so much an accessible problem as it is a hermeneutic trap.[13] The trap is baited with a handsome array of poetic artifices: pathos, disparity of awareness, a loveable (and temporarily naked) heroine, two helpless children, a conniving hero, and, above all, a moral issue: the question of Gualtieri's behavior toward his wife. The effect of the trap, and has it ever been effective, is to entangle readers in this ethical

dilemma, while covertly opening up a new perspective on human nature. More precisely, Boccaccio is using Gualtieri's behavior as a means of staging a vastly more critical issue: the tension between moral discourse itself and perceived reality. While the narration describes Gualtieri's testing of Griselda, and while Dioneo and the *brigata* in turn test Gualtieri's motives and methods, it is in fact we readers who are being tested—tested as to the extent to which we are willing to forego our humanity in favor of a traditional moral construct. Thus Boccaccio is not asking us whether his characters are good or evil. Rather he is implying that values like good and evil, if conceived and applied in a disordered society, can devolve into confusion, and must consequently be reassessed.

To see how Boccaccio does this, we should first appreciate the various contexts in which X. 10 operates. In what has to be one of the most daringly intertextual performances ever attempted, Boccaccio reaches out to his readers (above and beyond the narrative) on six different levels: the context of Day X, the context of the *Decameron* as a whole, the realm of connected works, the humanistic tradition, the religious background, and the question of style.

The Context of Day X. In the context of day, X. 10 functions as a strong corrective. Dioneo, who recounts Gualtieri's subjection of his long-suffering Griselda to years of torture, and who intimates to us that Gualtieri is a monster and suggests additionally that Griselda is a fool, thus serves up a potent antidote for any dangerous optimism that may have built up in the reader during Day X. He reminds us that while King Charles and Titus may set excellent examples, and while Nathan and Saladin may be wonderful people, they do not characterize the state of society in Italy or the world at large. Sad to say, the world at large may actually more resemble the society figured in the first nine days of the *Decameron*, where characters like Gualtieri, while seeming to radiate virtue and sanctity, use their power to exploit others. Dioneo may thus be seen as preparing the *brigata* for their return to Florence, while simultaneously preparing readers for their post-*Decameron* reentry into the everyday world.

The Context of the *Decameron* as a Whole. Dioneo is thus a messenger, not just from the real world, but also from the satirical paradigm established in the first nine days of the *Decameron*. He enters laughing and immediately references the flagship tale from his own Day VII: the rollicking, licentious, and archly satiric story of Monna Tessa and her *fantasima*:

> Il buono uomo, che aspettava la seguente notte di fare abbassare la coda ritta della fantasima, avrebbe dati men di due denari di tutte le lode che voi date a messer Torello. (X. 10.2)

> [The good fellow who was looking forward to lowering the ghost's stiff tail the following night wouldn't have given you two cents for all the praises you are lavishing upon Messer Torello.] (672)

The second reference here is to X. 9, the tale that has just concluded. Its hero, Messer Torello, has left his charming wife to go off on a crusade, putting public duty above marital bliss. Dioneo mocks this demonstration of political responsibility, drawing attention instead to the "*Il buono uomo*" Federigo, Tessa's lover in VII. 1, with special mention of his erect "tail."[14] In the same vein, he turns to the hero of the story he is about to tell, shocking us with a moral appraisal that is, even for Boccaccio, unusually damning: "*vo' ragionar d'un marchese, non cosa magnifica ma una matta bestialità . . .* " (X. 10.3) (I should like to tell you about a marquis and not about a generous act of his but, rather, about his insane cruelty . . .) (672). "*Matta bestialità*" (insane cruelty) being, in Dioneo's opinion, the salient feature of Gualtieri's character. As has often been noted, the two chief book ends of the *Decameron*, I. 1 and X. 10, take on a moral symmetry, compounded of darkly satiric paradox. In I. 1 we see the world's worst man ("*il piggiore uomo forse che mai nascesse*") assume, in public opinion, the lineaments of a saint. In X. 10, we see a veritable female saint subjected to punishments befitting a criminal. Both tales, too, hinge on extended deceptions: outsized *beffe*, which, in both cases, achieve their questionable purpose. As though the implication of this symmetry were not clear enough, Dioneo later spells them out for us:

> Che si potrà dir qui? se non che anche nelle povere case piovono dal cielo de' divini spiriti, come nelle reali di quegli che sarien piú degni di guardar porci che d'avere sopra uomini signoria. (X. 10.68)
>
> [What more can be said here, except that godlike spirits do sometimes rain down from heaven into poor homes, just as those more suited to governing pigs than to ruling over men make their appearances in royal palaces.] (681)

What could cause this egregious reversal of justice? Only a world where interest and ignorance have combined to confound the basic parameters of moral value. With patient but unforgiving art, Boccaccio is intimating that, thanks to greed and ignorance, his culture has been stood on its head.

The Realm of Connected Works. The thematic resonances set up by the phrase "*matta bestialità*" and the character of Gualtieri extend beyond the *Decameron* to two other moralizing epics, Dante's *Commedia* and Boccaccio's own *De casibus*. In Canto XI.81–4 of the *Inferno*, Dante

uses the phrase "*matta bestialitade*" to describe one of the three worst vices:

> le tre disposizion che 'l ciel non vole,
> incontenenza, malizia e la matta
> bestialitade? e come incontenenza
> men Dio offende e men biasimo accatta?
> [three dispositions
> that strike at Heaven's will: incontinence
> and malice and mad bestiality?
> And how the fault that is the least condemned
> and least offends God is incontinence?]

Boccaccio appropriates this poetics of damnation and carries it down two separate but intercommunicating avenues, each involving chiefs of state named Walter. Both of these narrative avenues carry explicit references to Dante. The *Decameron* story about the *matta bestialità* of Gualtieri, marquis of Sanluzzo, we know already. The other story, told in the *De casibus*, concerns an historical Walter (Gualterius), duke of Athens and for some months (1342/43) despotic ruler of Florence. Like that of Gualtieri, the story of Gualterius is located at a climactic and nearly final point in the larger work (the next-to-last biography in *De casibus*, IX.xxiv). Boccaccio introduces the Gualterius story portentously, by fictionalizing Dante himself, *Inferno*-style, as an eloquent departed spirit. Referring to Boccaccio (the narrator) as "my son,"[15] Dante warns him of Gualterius, calling the Duke a "*labes inextricabilis*" (utter ruination) and (imitating Cicero and Marsilius) a "*pestis domestica*" (civic plague).[16] In the *De casibus*' ensuing story of Gualterius's rise and fall, Boccaccio moves even further into the discourse of inhumanity, calling Gualterius's brutal henchman, Guglielmo, "*omni belva immaniorem*" (more monstrous than any beast). Gualterius, invited to the city by greedy burghers, ascends to dictatorial power over Florence, and proceeds to rule with brutal tyranny, including unacceptable treatment of the local women, until he is ousted by the citizens.

Why connect the two Walters, not only by name but also by the darkest of epithets? The Gualtieri story has no specific source, so Sanluzzan history is not a factor in the similarity. But another *Decameron* tale offers a clue. As an additional subject for comparison and contrast with X. 10, we have already referenced the story of Tancredi, prince of Salerno, and his daughter Ghismunda in IV. 1. Although the three tales (*De Casibus*, IX.xxiv, *Decameron*, IV. 1, and the current *novella*) differ in terms of specifics, they all concern the connection, both metaphorical and factual, between autocratic rule and the mistreatment of women. Like Gualterius,

Gualtieri and Tancredi both treat women as little more than property: the sort of treatment that marks, throughout the *Decameron*, a key symptom of systemic cultural corruption. The Gualterius incident in *De casibus* projects this cultural disorder into politics. As David Wallace and Warren Ginsburg separately remind us, the *Decameron*, the Griselda story included, is energetically charged with the political issues of its day.[17] And Wallace's view that the character of Gualtieri references fourteenth-century Lombard despots might be extended to the authoritarian stances of the church and the patriarchic prejudice of culture in general.

The Humanistic Tradition. As we have noted above, Day X communicates with a humanistic tradition of political vision founded by Cicero (*De re publica*) and passed on by Brunetto and Dante. In this context, Dioneo's message in X. 10 is that the celestial politics of Cicero and Dante are idealized formulations at best, while the real world, as it has evolved in time, requires the recognition of, and resistance to, *matta bestialità* in all its forms. In making this early insinuation of realpolitik, Boccaccio could look back at the actual lives of Cicero, Brunetto and Dante, all of whom were either damaged or destroyed by political malice. In another sense, Dioneo's tale stakes out the territory for the world of later humanism, where thinkers like Machiavelli and Castiglione rejected idealized politics and championed a clear-headed acknowledgment of the evil and disorder implicit in human nature. Thus Dioneo's story and indeed the *Decameron* place themselves in a humanistic tradition while implying that this tradition itself must respond to changing times.

The Religious Background and the Commonwealth. In a religious sense, Gualtieri's test of Griselda's virtue would seem to hearken back to the *Book of Job* and also to *Genesis*, where God tests Abraham's faith and the angel wrestles with Jacob. This resemblance has prompted Christian interpreters from Petrarch[18] onward to view Gualtieri's torture of Griselda as a legitimate and downright heroic test of character. But to view Gualtieri as a quasi-divine agency is to ignore Dioneo's provocative comments, to miss the textual and situational ties that link Gualtieri to other evildoers in Boccaccio, and to misread the text, which plainly relates that Gualtieri is animated by a selfish motive (his own uneasiness about marrying). Even Francesco di Amaretto Mannelli, a staunch Franciscan, and Boccaccio's earliest annotator, characterized Gualtieri's actions as madness.[19] Dioneo's Gualtieri is not a providential agent. Given the evidence at hand, he may more accurately be described as a tyrant whose very deficiencies provoke him to beat and scourge humanity until it is without dignity, without identity. What he does to Griselda is figuratively what the church had done to humanity ever since it gained power over the Roman world. This acidic and subversive exegesis suits

the details and context of the story better than Petrarch's does, and it conforms more precisely to Boccaccio's image of the church as expressed throughout the *Decameron*.

Gualtieri, like the church, is fundamentally inimical to the idea of the relationship of individual and community advanced by Cicero, and illustrated by Boccaccio in the first nine stories of Day X. The heroes of those tales, down to a man, are generous, outgoing, and expressive. When they make sacrifices or control their desires, it is out of their sense of reason and love of human nature: not, as with Gualtieri, out of ingrained distrust. Gualtieri's character bespeaks almost none of the virtues that Cicero extolled or that bring worth and favor in the world of the *Decameron*. Rather, he is, under his ultra-respectable surface, a small-minded tyrant who shirks his social responsibilities in order to indulge his own weaknesses.

Conversely, we may see traditional virtues—grace, obedience, humility, endurance—in the character of Griselda, but they are the recessive virtues of a class that has been oppressed both materially and spiritually, rather than the socially redeeming strengths that Boccaccio has emphasized throughout the *Decameron*. Compare Griselda, for example, with Ghismunda (IV. 1), Filippa of Prato (VI.7), or Monna Tessa (VII.1). Would any of them have assented, as Griselda does in deference to Gualtieri, to the murder of her own children? Griselda does not speak to us—as they do—of reason, humanity, self-reliance, or creativity; rather she presents to us, in a conventionally attractive form, a morality of impoverishment, submission, and alienation.

Boccaccio himself remarks on this diametrical opposition of types when, in the Preface to *De mulieribus claris*, he distinguishes between Judeo-Christian and pagan female heroics. The former, he asserts, sought eternal glory by displaying an "*aduersam persepe humanitati tolerantiam*" (an endurance often at odds with human nature). The latter, on the other hand, founded their heroism on "*nature munere uel instinctu*" (some natural gift or instinct).[20] Boccaccio goes on to announce diplomatically that he will leave the former women to God and write exclusively about the latter.

A similar distinction can be made between Griselda and the majority of the other female protagonists in the *Decameron*. Griselda is lodged in Boccaccio's final story precisely because she contradicts the code of reason and nature that he has so carefully constructed. Instead she conforms to the culture of the plague: her dysfunctional relationship with Gualtieri parallels the codependency between a dominating power structure and a tyrannized and benighted population. Boccaccio could exaggerate this relationship grotesquely without losing touch with his central theme.

The "pasta-brained" Calandrino, who castigates womanhood and beats his wife brutally because he fears her power, has all the essential moral features of Griselda's esteemed marquis.[21]

Thus Petrarch's heroic figure takes on satiric overtones. Gualtieri's "godlike" testing of his wife reminds us that fourteenth-century Italy saw notable instances in which the discourse of divinity was politicized by church and state. In the papal bull *Unam Sanctam* (1302), Boniface VIII virtually declared himself God on earth by asserting dominion over all secular as well as all religious affairs. Similarly, as Wallace notes, the Lombard despots of Boccaccio's day used a court rhetoric that elevated them toward the divine. Historically, Boccaccio and his circle had no truck with either pope or despots. Under the leadership of his friend and fellow-humanist Coluccio Salutati, Florence went to war against the pope in 1375, and stood up against Lombard despotism some years later. It seems safe to say that Boccaccio (who died in December 1375), Salutati, and a number of other leading Florentines—who descended from a Guelphic tradition that, in the end, distrusted both the emperor and the pope—saw no real difference between religious tyranny and secular tyranny, and that they considered any attempt to merge the two forms of autocracy to be particularly offensive.[22]

The Narrative Style. The narrative tone of X. 10, especially considering its position and its teller, seems uncommonly thin. Dioneo, who gave us the outrageous III. 10 (Rustico), VI. 10 (Cipolla), and IX. 10 (Gianni), as well as the scarcely less rambunctious II. 10, IV. 10, V. 10, and VIII. 10, here ebbs into a businesslike monotone. Even compared to the three other most "serious" tales in the *Decameron*—Ghismunda's (with her Ciceronian oration), Rinieri's (with its narrative sparkle), and Titus's (with its soul-searching and suspense)—the tale is stylistically flat. Thus devoid of ornament, the narrative, which compresses thirteen years into a few pages, with its drab description of mounting humiliation regularly interrupted by catechistic dialogues between oppressive man and oppressed woman, would seem as spare as a courtroom.

But with two exceptions. First, Gualtieri has Griselda stripped naked at their wedding ("*la fece spogliare ignuda*") in the presence of all the guests; here, the annotator Amaretto Mannelli exclaims "*a' pazzi*." Second, Gualtieri's private discourse to Griselda over the years is depicted in the imagery, not of moral examination, but rather of brutal physical torture:

e' primieramente la punse con parole. (X. 10.27)
[and first he stabbed her with words.]
con maggior puntura trafisse la donna. (X. 10.34)
[with a greater thrust [he] transfixed the lady.]

> Come che queste parole fossero tutte coltella al cuor. (X. 10.51)
> [As all these words were a knife to the heart.]
> in quanti modi tu sai ti punsi e trafissi. (X. 10.61)
> [in such ways you know I stabbed and transfixed you.]
> con somma dolcezza le punture ristorare. (X. 10.63)
> [with greatest sweetness to heal the wounds.] (Translations ours)

The brutality of these offenses, and their destructive effect on the victim, are apparent in Griselda's final words to her husband, a plea for him to show mercy to his new wife, in which she designates herself not as Griselda, nor as a marquesa, nor even as Gualtieri's wife, but simply as "*l'altra*": "*ma quanto posso vi priego che quelle punture, le quali all'altra, che vostra fu, già deste, non diate a questa,...*" X.x.59 ("allow me to pray of you that such wounds as you have already given to the other, you do not give to this one"). Deprived of her authority, her human dignity, and her personal identity, Griselda has assented to the apparent murder of her children, rejection by her husband (Mannelli writes in the margin, "*a' pazzi, a' pazzi*"), and the humiliation of serving as maid to the new bride. Testing her virtue? Gualtieri's acts are less like testing than like rape: the loveless and self-indulgent destruction of human dignity. His barbed discourse, moreover, stands in sharp opposition to Boccaccio's own definition of language, voiced prominently in *De casibus* VI, as a vehicle of fellowship and reason: "We join with other men in intelligent understanding. We praise virtues; we deprecate vices; we receive and transmit the results of teaching. In short, we reveal whatever the mind experiences through reason..."[23] Herein lies the hermeneutic trap referred to earlier. To take the harsh Gualtieri as the moral issue is to be caught in the trap; for Gualtieri is shown to be a character whose prejudices get the better of his humanity. On the other hand, to take the virtuous Griselda as the moral issue is to escape the trap and avail oneself of the tale's subversive pith. The real issue, in other words, is less whether Gualtieri is unjust than whether Griselda is to be commended for enduring his injustice. More generally put, the question is whether Christian moral tradition, with its protocol of patriarchal autocracy answered by meek submission, has any relevance to a developing world of active political agency: the perilous and open-ended environment that Boccaccio has realized in the *Decameron*. What Boccaccio provides in the character of Griselda is a symbolic image of the kind of moral stance that the *Decameron* has persistently questioned.

With all these factors in mind, Dioneo's final tale may be reassessed as a kind of literary double agent: a subtly exaggerated Pauline exemplum, doctrinaire enough to protect the *Decameron* from the inquisitors, but masking a bitter indictment of vested interests and the misuses of

authority.[24] After remarking that men like Gualtieri are "more suited to governing pigs" than to leading other human beings, and speculating that Griselda's virtue is so exceptional that it should not be held as an example, Dioneo avers that to Gualtieri:

> non sarebbe forse stato male investito d'essersi abbattuto a una che quando, fuor di casa, l'avesse fuori in camiscia cacciata, s'avesse sí a un altro fatto scuotere il pilliccione che riuscito ne fosse una bella roba. (X. 10.69)
>
> [It might have served Gualtieri right if he had run into the kind of woman who, once driven out of her home in nothing but a shift, would have allowed another man to warm her wool in order to get herself a nice-looking dress out of the affair!] (681)

This coarse obscenity should come as no surprise. After all, adulterous sexuality has been, virtually since the outset of the *Decameron*, Boccaccio's symbolic response to social injustice toward women. But Dioneo's obscenity is also, in the context of the preceding stories of Day X, a sharp reminder that social responsibility and concern for the good of others, no matter how praiseworthy, are not to be sought at the expense of reason and nature.

Conclusion to Day X and Author's Conclusion. After Dioneo's story has come to an end, the king (Panfilo) discourses on prudence, a virtue that, he suggests, counsels that the *brigata* disband its mini-state and forsake their splendid lodgings. He bases this admonition on three unwelcome possibilities: that continued storytelling might become boring, that the *brigata* might be criticized for having gone on storytelling and partying too long, and that a longer stay would be likely to draw unwelcome hangers-on. Accordingly, after a song by Fiammetta and a last bit of revelry, the group retires. The next day they go back to Florence and the now-notorious Santa Maria Novella, where they part company: as Boccaccio ironically puts it, the ladies to their homes, the men to their amusements. Their adventure is over.

But not, apparently, our adventure as readers. The conclusion of the frame narrative raises a question that seems to be left unanswered. Why would Boccaccio, that lion of chronological and geographic detail, have sent his dear friends back to Florence, when the plague, as his narration shows, was still raging in the city?[25] How could their "prudent" (*discreto*) king lead them back into the inferno that would ultimately take three out of every five lives? There simply is no commonsense answer to this question. If, as Pampinea originally put it, there was every reason for the *brigata* to flee Florence in the first place, there is no reason at all for them to return after only fifteen days.[26]

Frustrated then by common sense, we must resort to uncommon sense: the dynamics of allegory. For if, commonsensically, there is no reason for Boccaccio to send his little band back to Florence, allegorically there is every reason to do so. Allegorically, Florentine ignorance and church oppression are the plague, and the *brigata*'s sojourn in the airy hills, with all its humanistic intimations, is the potential cure. The *brigata* must return to Florence because, as Cicero and the early humanists put it, knowledge is useless unless applied in society. Thus Boccaccio's apparent gaffe may be taken instead as the key unlocking one level of meaning—the essential moral imperative—from the narrative details. Thus the fact that the women of the *brigata* must "return . . . to their homes"—that is, to face social injustice—has everything to do with their otherwise unwarranted return to the plague-ridden city.

With the *brigata*'s imminent return to the corrupt city in mind, we should look with some care at Fiammetta's *canzone*, which concludes not only Day X, but the whole sequence of *canzoni*. Its subject matter is a continuation of the poetic love-narrative that—notwithstanding the brief outburst of joy at the end of Day II—has been suggestively developed over the nine preceding *canzoni*: the story of alienation (Days I and III) and loss (Day IV), interrupted by a new love, prayed for (Day V), anticipated (Days VI and VII), consummated (Day VIII), and then guarded as a precious secret (Day IX). Fiammetta sings of the anxiety of a woman who has given her love to an attractive man but is wary of possible competition:

> S'amor venisse senza gelosia,
> io non so donna nata
> lieta com'io sarei e qual vuol sia. (X. *Concl.*10)
> [If there could be love without jealousy,
> then I know that no woman born
> no matter who, could have more joy than I.] (683)

Boccaccio's assignment of the final song to Fiammetta is appropriate allegorically. If we take Fiammetta as the author's muse, if not as truth itself, we may read her anxiety as relating to the reception of the *Decameron* by religious authorities and the literate world at large. Will the great book, so full of dangerous innovation, be misread or damned or destroyed? Will the poet himself, under the strain of negative criticism, remain true to his iconoclastic designs? While such questions go unanswered, the tenuous relationship between knowledge and the city—between consciousness and culture—is tellingly limned out. In Fiammetta's words, as in Neifile's preceding *canzone* (Day IX), the gift of knowledge is portrayed

as something precious and fragile, to be treasured and protected, rather than paraded with pride, and the social healing conveyed by this knowledge must (shared by only a few) wait for a more receptive generation.[27] If we are to remember the Renaissance as a revolution, we must not forget that it began as a conspiracy.

Accordingly, in the *Author's Conclusion*, which follows immediately, we are transported abruptly from allegory to public rhetoric. Here Boccaccio the Humanist descends from his poetic throne to present himself as Boccaccio the Humorist. In rhetorical manners borrowed from Ovid,[28] he defends his narratives, not as revolutionary assertions of consciousness, but rather as spicy erotic inventions:

> Niuna corrotta mente intese mai sanamente parola: e cosí come le oneste a quella non giovano, cosí quelle che tanto oneste non sono la ben disposta non posson contaminare, se non come il loto i solari raggi o le terrene brutture le bellezze del cielo. (*Concl. dell' Autore*.11)
>
> [A corrupt mind never understands a word in a healthy way! And just as fitting words are of no use to a corrupt mind, so a healthy mind cannot be contaminated by words which are not so proper, any more than mud can dirty the rays of the sun or earthly filth can mar the beauties of the skies.] (686)

Such sophistical apologies, which are clever evasions of his real literary intent, now multiply into a copious variety: Even Holy Scripture can be misinterpreted. The world's most precious items, like wine, fire, and weapons, are liable to gross misuse. Indeed nothing is perfect. Friars, in particular, should stop being holier-than-thou about these matters. They all talk utter nonsense, and besides, they smell like goats. These deft feints and flippant postures devolve into a short series of outrageous sexual blandishments, which are all the more ridiculous because they are addressed to no one woman in particular: Yes, dear ladies, your faithful, wholesome, and well-endowed author is at your service, in the flesh, should you be so inclined.

The fact that readers have been more or less satisfied by the *Author's Conclusion*—or have merely been puzzled by it—is a tribute to Boccaccio's misdirection. Like Panfilo, his "*re discreto*," and true to the allegorical implications of Fiammetta's *canzone*, he senses the dangers accruing to those who speak the truth too freely, or too long. Instead of remaining on stage to sum up his poetic strategies, he departs via the stage door of humor, content perhaps that future readers will catch his more serious drift. Especially during the late 1360s and early 1370s, when he was still at work on his manuscript,[29] Boccaccio had good reason for such circumspection. Though the fourteenth century was not the great age of the

Inquisition in Florence, neither was it (or would be for centuries to come) an open forum for free thought. Suppressive doctrines continued to be advocated and advertised in the heart of the city. In or around 1368, in the chapterhouse of the monastery of Santa Maria Novella (since renamed the Spanish Chapel), a painter named Andrea da Firenze unveiled his own masterpiece, known as the Allegory of the Active and Triumphant Church and of the Dominican Order. In it, Dominican Inquisitors are portrayed as robust dalmatian dogs, victorious over a number of wolves, who stand for heretics and freethinkers; and offending books are being destroyed. For the author of the *Decameron*—who has depicted these same Santa Maria Novella Dominicans as conniving scoundrels (VII. 1)—a well-timed touch of frivolity would not be amiss in keeping the dogs off his scent.

EPILOGUE: THE *DECAMERON* AND ITALIAN CULTURE

Looking back at the *Decameron* from the perspective of all ten days, we see uncovered, under the 101 brilliant fictive rubrics, a coherent philosophical vision, with Days I–III concerning the introduction to the idea of *ingegno*, which will dominate the work; Day IV, the role of passion; Day V, the act of discovery; Days VI and VII, the primacy of liberty and knowledge; Day VIII, knowledge versus ignorance; Day IX, truth versus lie; and Day X, the compact with society. This thematic development is full of interconnections, corrections, and balances; but there is compelling evidence of progress from a zero sum (Florence under the plague) up to a complement of humane knowledge sufficient for the *brigata* to return to their city and to reengage society. With all this in mind, we may safely ask what Boccaccio intended to achieve with his *Decameron*.

To answer this question, we should avoid making the effort to relate long-passed events to our own times. We should not, for example, call Boccaccio "the father of literary realism," or even "the father of modernity," for such labels are of no use at all in addressing the on-the-ground reality of a fourteenth-century author's attitude toward his book. Instead we must attempt to resolve Boccaccio's image of his own culture, determine the nature of his literary effort, and triangulate from there to a credible authorial purpose. This seems doable enough, given the content of the tales. In the *Decameron*, Boccaccio images a sick culture, where an informal conspiracy of greed and power dominates and exploits an ignorant populace. In this disordered society, the primary victims are women, who as marriageable chattel or cooped-up wives are literally denied the exercise of their own humanity. Against this social background Boccaccio creates the *Decameron* as an agent of reform and liberation.

Why, then, did he fill the *Decameron* with ribald and humorous tales? To project his message as widely as he could, Boccaccio set out to write the world's most entertaining book. A book that would be read wherever Italian was spoken—indeed, wherever literacy was prized. A book that

would settle squarely in the lap of culture, commending itself to every reader who had a sense of humor and a capacity for love. A book that would steer grandly down the channel of history—making history, he hoped, with its indwelling message. This message would be revolutionary. It would amount to the rejection of arbitrary and repressive social codes, and the emergence of new values derived from open-minded inquiry and direct experience. Thus piety, innocence, and obedience would be displaced by reason, knowledge, and, above all, *ingegno*, a quasi-divine creative faculty residing in the individual.

The primary source of these new values was an ancient thinker, Marcus Tullius Cicero. But Boccaccio would render these ideas into such strikingly realistic human situations, and clothe them in such luxuriant imagery, that they disappeared into the very texture of his fictions. All this made for a stiff cocktail. Boccaccio's use of explicit sexuality, wicked humor, gritty realism, and irrepressible charm, woven into a thematics of nature, genius, and knowledge, equipped his enterprise for a sensational future. The goal of this impressive project is a neo-Ciceronian culture that prizes nature, recognizes human equality, provides humanistic education, and encourages independent initiatives.

But was this, or anything like it, possible for a writer? Consider the conditions for widespread publication available to Boccaccio in his time. Granted, manuscript technology made mass publication impossible. But recent Florentine history offered Boccaccio an example of what could happen when the town fathers smiled on a local author. Brunetto's then-famous *Tesoro*, which for generations functioned as a beacon of Florentine civic self-advertisement, was widely read in numerous copies all over Europe and routinely recopied to be sent out as a ceremonial gift with Florentine embassies. Brunetto's well-won fame lingered long after his death in 1294—long enough for Coluccio Salutati, in the 1360s, to use him as the standard by which to measure his own literary hero, Petrarch. The impressive success of the *Tesoro* was thus a dramatic example of how public esteem could push the envelope of publishing technology.

Boccaccio had another type of publication to reckon with as well. Late in life, he was commissioned by the city to give a series of lectures on Dante's *Commedia*. Though he did not live to complete these *Esposizioni*, the very commission was evidence of the degree to which creative literature could be privileged by a literate commune. Together with the example of Brunetto, this suggested the extent to which Florentine eloquence could become, like the Bargello and the then-abuilding Duomo, part of a civic architecture accessible to the community.

This sense of vernacular literature as a kind of public architecture is reinforced by the magisterial, almost regal rhetoric of both Brunetto and

Dante. Brunetto begins his great work by asserting that its comprehensive knowledge is as precious as gold:

> This book is called the *Treasure,* for just as the lord who wishes to amass things of great value, not only for his own pleasure but to increase his power and elevate his social status in war and in peace puts into his treasure the most precious jewels he can gather together according to his intention, in a similar manner the body of this book is compiled out of wisdom, like the one which is extracted from all branches of philosophy in a brief summary. The first part of this treasure is like cash money, to spend readily on necessary things; that is, it describes the beginning of the world, and the ancient times of the old histories, and the establishment of the world, and the nature of all things.[1]

Brunetto's money-metaphor took shape in a receptive civic context. In 1252, only a decade before his *Tesoro*, Florence had minted the first gold florin, a currency that would enrich the city and change world economic history. Brunetto, we may infer, is connecting the practical value of his intellectual currency with the golden currency that had become the commercial symbol of Florence.

Dante shoulders his way into the civic center by a different route. Almost certainly emulating his teacher Brunetto in terms of conceptual scope, he constructs in the *Commedia* a complete plan of Divine Justice. He even includes a scene, in Canto XV of the *Inferno*, in which Brunetto himself passes on to him, as a father to a son, the aegis of discourse. Thus both works resemble forms of legislation: articles of knowledge presented as being so indispensable to the reader that they take on civic significance.

As both Brunetto and Dante had reason to know, their claims were politically justifiable. Brunetto's *Tesoro*, as much as any literary work we know of, was also an aggressive political act. Like all his other professional initiatives—whether as chancellor, ambassador, prior, notary, or teacher—it was part of an overarching effort to unite and strengthen the commune of Florence. The *Tesoro* may not be a civic constitution, but with its strong emphases on real-world leadership and discourse-based government, it may fairly be called a civic blueprint. Dante's *Commedia*, though a very different kind of work, is equally foundational in substance. It solidly establishes the Italian vernacular as a medium for literary discourse. As such it gives voice to the Italian community and takes an important early step in Italian unification. Dante, a forceful advocate for linguistic integrity, is putting his language on the map, and pioneering for an Italian nation.

Boccaccio takes up Dante's standard where the great campaigner laid it down. Generally following the 100-part structure of the *Commedia* and

adopting a quasi-utopian narrative frame, he provides both a realistic documentation of life as lived and an aggressive manifesto for change. Appropriately he composes, in a separate but communicating work, a scene where, in his own character, he meets Dante, just as Dante has met Brunetto in the *Inferno*, and receives the same sort of mandate from his elder: "*Siste, fili mi, tam effluenter in laudes meas effundere verba, et te tam parcum tuarum ostendere. Novi ingenium tuum; et quid merear novi*" (Stop, my son, and do not squander your words so volubly in my praise. I know your genius and know what I deserve).[2] "I know your genius." With these self-congratulatory words, Boccaccio enrolls himself with Brunetto and Dante as a maker of culture.

NOTES

Introduction: Cicero and the *Decameron*

1. For Boccaccio's eulogy of Cicero, see *De casibus*, VI.xii. For another Boccaccian biography of Cicero and a listing of his major works, see *Esposizioni sopra la Commedia*, ed. Giorgio Padoan (Milan: Mondadori, 1965), Canto 4: litt. 327-31, pp. 251f.; English trans., Michael Papio, *Boccaccio's Expositions on Dante's Comedy* (Toronto: U Toronto P, 2009), pp. 230-31. The sequence of chapters in Book VI of *De casibus* roughly follows the scheme of references in the opening of Cicero's *De legibus*, with a chapter on Marius (VI. ii) followed by a chapter on Pompey (VI. ix) and one on Cicero (VI. xii). Both books link Marius and Cicero to the town of Arpinum.
2. *Orator* 78 was not available to Boccaccio in the original, but this sentiment had been restated accurately by Augustine, *De doctrina*, IV. 10.
3. On *copia*, see Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); and Robert Grudin, *On Dialogue* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996), chapter 3.
4. "*in hoc sumus sapientes, quod naturam optimam ducem tamquam deum sequimur eique paremus*" (I am wise because I follow Nature as the best of guides and obey her as a god), *De Senectute*, II.5, in *De Senectute, De Amicitia, De Divinatione*, trans. W. A. Falconer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1923), pp. 12f. Also see *De officiis*, I.xxix.100.
5. Cicero, *De officiis* [*On Duties*]; English trans. Walter Miller (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1913), I.iv.14, pp. 14–17: "Nec vero illa parva vis naturae est rationisque, quod unum hoc animal sentit, quid sit ordo, quid sit quod deceat, in factis dictisque qui modus. Itaque eorum ipsorum, quae aspectu sentiuntur, nullum aliud animal pulchritudinem, venustatem, convenientiam partium sentit; quam similitudinem natura ratioque ab oculis ad animum transferens multo etiam magis pulchritudinem, constantiam, ordinem in consiliis factisque conservandam putat cavetque ne quid indecore effeminateve faciat, tum in omnibus et opinionibus et factis ne quid libidinose aut faciat aut cogitet." Subsequent citations of *De officiis* are from this edition.
6. Cicero, *De Inventione, De Optimo Genere Oratorum, Topica,* English trans. H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949), *De*

inventione, I.ii.3, pp. 8f. See also *De officiis,* III.xvii.72. All subsequent citations from *De Inventione* are from this edition.

7. Respectively, in *De planctu naturae* and *Le Roman de la Rose.* See, e.g., *De planctu, Prosa* VIII, where *Natura* addresses Genius as "*sibi alteri similem*" (her other self) and Jean's section of the *Roman*, where Reason, Nature, and Genius all appear as significant figures.
8. For an introduction to some of these Boccaccian sources, particularly in France, see Aldo Scaglione, *Nature and Love in the Late Middle Ages: An Essay on the Cultural Context of the Decameron* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1963), chapters 1 and 2. On the fabliaux in particular, see Charles Muscatine, *Medieval Literature, Style and Culture* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), pp. 164–70. Especially pertinent is Muscatine's comment that "the final preoccupation of the fabliaux is with *engin* (wit, cleverness) . . . Like other comic genres, the fabliaux are thus a mildly subversive literature . . . They favor the dispossessed, reward ingenuity at the expense of law and privilege, and suggest throughout that the conventional rules of morality and justice simply do not hold" (pp. 166f). Muscatine offers a more detailed survey of the fabliaux in *The Old French Fabliaux* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).
9. Giovanni Villani (1280–1348), *Cronica*, VIII. 10. *Villani's Chronicle*, trans. Rose E. Selfe (London: Archibald Constable, 1906), pp. 312–13. *Keys of the Tesoro* is apparently a lost work.
10. Dante pays homage to Brunetto in *Inferno* XV, and Boccaccio acknowledges Brunetto's achievements in his gloss on the same passage in *Esposizioni sulla Commedia*, as well as imitating the passage in *De casibus*, IX. On Brunetto's accomplishments, see Lauro Martines, *Power and Imagination: City-States in Renaissance Italy* (New York, 1979; rpt Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1988), pp. 115–23; Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 56; John M. Najemy, *A History of Florence* 1200–1575 (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 48f; Cary J. Nederman, *Lineages of European Political Thought* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), esp. chapter 9: "Brunetto Latini's Commercial Republicanism," pp. 141–59; and Julia Bolton Holloway, *Twice-Told Tales: Brunetto Latino and Dante Alighieri* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993). Finally, the reader is forewarned that there are *two* works by Brunetto commonly referred to as *Rettorica*: a stand-alone version and the discourse comprising Book III of his *Tesoro.* Here we are referring to the stand-alone version.
11. Stephen J. Milner observes, "The reason why Latini's reading of Cicero was so close and so attentive to the latter's moralizing tone lay precisely in the parallels between their respective political positions in relation to political conflict and the social ordering of their respective polities. At a time of extreme political turbulence and at the very origins of the popular guild-based Florentine commune, the adversarial dimension of the Ciceronian rhetorical paradigm, with its clear association between the rhetorical commentator and the *vir bonus*, was ideally suited

to Latini's own political vision." See chapter 13, "Communication, Consensus and Conflict: Rhetorical Precepts, the *Ars Concionandi*, and Social Ordering in Late Medieval Italy," in *The Rhetoric of Cicero*, p. 384. See also Milner's essay, "'*Le sottili cose non si possono bene aprire in volgare*': Vernacular Oratory and the Transmission of Classical Rhetorical Theory in the Late Medieval Communes," *Italian Studies* 64.2 (Autumn 2009): 221–44.

12. On *tencione*, see Virginia Cox, "Ciceronian Rhetoric in Italy, 1260–1350," *Rhetorica: A History of Rhetoric* 17.2 (Summer 1999): 239–88; and Paola Sgrilli, "*Retorica e Società: Tensioni Anticlassichi nella 'Rettorica' di Brunetto Latini,*" *Medievo Romanzo* III (1976): 380–93.
13. Cicero treats religion directly in two late works, *De natura deorum* (45 BC) and *De divinatione* (44 BC). Both works display strong currents of skepticism. On the other hand, as *De legibus* II attests, Cicero was an energetic proponent of public religion. Throughout *De legibus* I he uses the idea of divinity theopoetically to support his theses about genius, language, reason, and nature.
14. Cicero, *De re publica*, in *De re publica, De legibus,* English trans. Clinton Walker Keyes (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1928), III.xii.33, pp. 210–11. This is one of the few fragments of Book III to have survived, in this case via Lactantius, and to have been available to Boccaccio. The full text reads: "Est quidem vera lex recta ratio naturae congruens, diffusa in omnes, constans, sempiterna, quae vocet ad officium iubendo, vetando a fraude deterreat; quae tamen neque probos frustra iubet aut vetat nec improbos iubendo aut vetando movet. huic legi nec obrogari fas est neque derogari ex hac aliquid licet neque tota abrogari potest, nec vero aut per senatum aut per populum solvi hac lege possumus, neque est quaerendus explanator aut interpres eius alius, nec erit alia lex Romae, alia Athenis, alia nunc, alia posthac, sed et omnes gentes et omni tempore una lex et sempiterna et immutabilis continebit, unusque erit communis quasi magister et imperator omnium deus, ille legis huius inventor, disceptator, lator; cui qui non parebit, ipse se fugiet ac naturam hominis aspernatus hoc ipso luet maximas poenas, etiamsi cetera supplicia, quae putantur, effugerit..." (*Lactantius Insi. Div.* VI, 8.6–9). For similar ideas, see *De legibus*, I.vii.22–23 to viii.24–25. Subsequent citations from *De re publica* and *De legibus*, unless otherwise noted, are from the Keyes edition.
15. Michael Grant, *Cicero: Selected Works* (London and New York: Penguin, 1971), pp. 24, 27. On the manuscript history of *De legibus* in fourteenth-century Italy, see Andrew Dyck, *A Commentary on Cicero, De legibus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), pp. 40–42. On its renewed influence in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Dyck, *A Commentary on Cicero*, pp. 34–37.
16. "E, avvedendosi le poetiche opere non essere vane o semplici favole o maraviglie, come molti stolti estimano, ma sotto sé dolcissimi frutti di verità istoriografe o filosofiche avere nascosti." Boccaccio, *Trattatello in laude di Dante*, ed. Luigi Sasso (Milan, 1995), p. 14; "And seeing that the

works of the poets are not vain and simple fables or marvels, as the foolish multitude thinks, but that within them are concealed the sweet fruits of historical and philosophical truth . . . " *Life of Dante*, trans. J. G. Nichols (London: Hesperus, 2002), p. 12.

17. Giovanni Boccaccio, *Genealogie Deorum Gentilium*, ed. V. Zaccaria, vols. 7–8, *Tutte le Opere di Giovanni Boccaccio* (Milan: Mondadori, 1983); trans. Charles G. Osgood, *Boccaccio on Poetry: Being the Preface and Fourteenth and Fifteenth Books of Boccaccio's Genealogiae Deorum Gentilium* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, Library of the Liberal Arts, 1956), pp. 48, 52–54.
18. *The Sign of Reason in Boccaccio's Fiction* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1993), pp. 57f.
19. Although Kirkham's working definition of allegory may seem rather general, it is borne out by Quintilian's definition of the term (*Inst.* VIII 6, 44). Discussing Quintilian, as well as medieval theories of allegory, James C. Kriesel writes that "'allegory,' as understood in the Middle Ages, is that which can communicate beyond its literal sense or be interpreted beyond its literal sense." "The *Genealogy* of Boccaccio's Theory of Allegory," *Studi sul Boccaccio* 37 (2009): 197–226.
20. The unity of the *Decameron* remains a topic of lively debate. For a summary of recent views, see Robert Hollander, "The *Decameron* Proem," in *The Decameron: First Day in Perspective* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 14–15; and Marilyn Migiel, *The Rhetoric of the* Decameron (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), pp. 29–30.
21. *Διο[ς] νέο[ς]*, "new Zeus," or "new god." As a Greek compound, this complements *δέκα ἡμέρα*, the Greek etymology for *Decameron*. For earlier conjectures as to the meaning of the name Dioneo, see Ronald Martinez, "The Monk and His Abbot," in *The Decameron: First Day in Perspective*, ed. Elissa B. Weaver (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 127f.
22. Francesco De Sanctis, *The History of Italian Literature* (1870), trans. Joan Redfern (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), vol. I, p. 358. The Italian reads: "e scrive come Cicerone. Pure il suo concepire è così vivo e vero, che Cicerone si trasforma nella sua immaginazione in una sirena vezzosa che tutta in sè si spezza e si dimena."
23. *Decameron* citations are from *Decameron* (2 vols), ed. Vittore Branca (Turin: Einaudi, 1980); translations are from *The Decameron*, trans. Mark Musa and Peter Bondanella (New York: Penguin, 1982).
24. Simone Marchesi, "Intertextuality and Interdiscoursivity in the *Decameron*," *Heliotropia* 7.1–2 (2010): 31–50: "The problem is, of course, the second term of the triad, which sources coherently render with the Latin *argumentum* [found in William of Moerbecke's translation of Aristotle's *Rhetorica*] but that Boccaccio, surprisingly, chooses to render with *parabola*" (see esp. pp. 32–35).
25. Victoria Kirkham, "*Morale*," in *Lessico Critico Decameroniano*, ed. Renazo Bragantini and Pier Massimo Forni (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1995), pp. 260f. Kirkham allegorizes the plague from an Aristotelian and

Christian perspective, while we view it in a Ciceronian and Marsilian context.

26. See Cicero, *De officiis*, I. iv. 11: "homo autem, quod rationis est particeps, per quam consequentia cernit, causas rerum videt earumque praegressus et quasi antecessiones non ignorat, similitudines comparat rebusque praesentibus adiungit atque adnectit futuras, facile totius vitae cursum videt ad eamque degendam praeparat res necessarias," where reason is specified as the human means of providing self-preservation. Part of this passage is quoted verbatim in Marsilius, *Defensor Pacis*, I.iv.2.
27. *"Omai, cara compagna, di questo piccol popolo il governo sia tuo"* (II. *Concl*.2); "Now, dearest companion, the rule of this tiny nation is yours" (159).
28. See *In Catilinam*, I.xii.30; Clodius, see *Pro Milone*, xxv.67; Antony, see esp. *Philippics*. III 3, V 16, XIV 20, and XIII 19.
29. Cicero, *De officiis*, trans. Miller, I. xxiv, 86 (p. 86): "*pestifera bella civilia*." See also *De officiis*, II. v.16 (p.182).
30. "Porro subesse Romano Pontifici omni humanae creaturae declaramus dicimus, definimus et pronunciamus omnino esse de necessitate salutis" (Furthermore, we declare, we proclaim, we define that it is absolutely necessary for salvation that every human creature be subject to the Roman Pontiff).
31. On the *Defensor Pacis* as a response to Boniface, see C. W. Previté-Orton, ed., *The Defensor Pacis of Marsilius of Padua* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), intro, xiii.
32. Marsilius of Padua, *Defensor Pacis*, I. xix.13. English citations are from *Defensor Pacis*, ed. Alan Gewirth (Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1980). The correct documentation for the Cicero quotation is *De officiis,* I. vii.*23: "Sed iniustitiae genera duo sunt, unum eorum, qui inferunt, alterum eorum, qui ab iis, quibus infertur, si possunt, non propulsant iniuriam."*
33. Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), vol. I, p. 22.
34. On the tensions between Florence and the papacy during the middle and late fourteenth century, see especially Marvin Becker, "Church and State in Florence on the Eve of the Renaissance, 1343–82," *Speculum* XXXVII (October 1962): 509–27. On the War of the Eight Saints, see David Peterson, "The War of the Eight Saints in Florentine Memory and Oblivion," in *Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence*, ed. William J. Connell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 173–214. For a reading of the *Corbaccio* as reflecting the tensions between Florence and the papacy during this period, see Michaela Paasche Grudin, "Making War on the Widow: Boccaccio's *Il Corbaccio* and Florentine Liberty," *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 38.2 (2007): 127-57. For 1363 Italian translation of the *Defensor,* see Carlo Pincin, *Defensor Pacis nella traduzione in volgare fiorentino del 1363* (Turin: Einaldi, 1966); and Pincin's book-length study, *Marsilio* (Turin: Edizioni Giappichelli, 1967).
35. See Giovanni Boccaccio, *Esposizioni sopra la Commedia*, ed. Giorgio Padoan (Milan: Mondadori, 1965), X. 50, p. 524.

36. This dedication is to Boccaccio's friend Mainardo de' Cavalcanti; see "*Dedica*," *in De casibus*, vol. 9, pp. 1–6, ed. Pier Giorgio Ricci and Vittorio Zaccaria in *Tutte le Opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. V. Branca (Milan, 1983); translation ours.

1 *Ingegno*—The Individual and Authority: *Decameron*, Day I

1. The first day's "purported" subject is announced in the introduction to Day I by Pampinea, the elected queen for the day (I. *Intro*.114; *The Decameron*, trans. Mark Musa and Peter Bondanella (New York: Penguin, 1982), p. 20). At the end of Day I (and at the end of each of the subsequent days of storytelling), the newly elected king or queen announces the subject for the next day's stories. These subjects are also found in the head-link to each day.
2. "The stories of the first day, although in name without a fixed theme of narration, introduce characters who, through *beffe* or *motti*, subvert the traditional stratification and mores of society... Because most of the *beffatori* are inferior in rank to their victims, these stories implicitly affirm the importance of intelligence over rank in determining a person's position in the hierarchical order." See Valerio C. Ferme, "*Ingegno* and Morality in the New Social Order: The Role of the *Beffa* in Boccaccio's *Decameron,*" *Romance Languages Annual 1993*, ed. Jeanette Beer, Charles Ganelin, and Anthony Julian Tamburri, 4 (1993): 248–55. Luigi Russo, in his *Letture Critiche del Decameron* (Bari: Laterza, 1956), pp. 115–18, points out that a number of tales in Day I establish an anti-hierarchical and humanistic tone that will be characteristic of the *Decameron* as a whole, concluding that Boccaccio seeks to replace established religion with a "*nouva religione di natura*" (new religion of nature). His overall view of the *Decameron* as a foundational expression of early modern thought is a more detailed extension of Francesco de Sanctis's position, and one that would influence Scaglione; though none of them observes the link to Cicero.
3. Lauretta returns to the theme of cultural decay in her *canzone* at the end of Day III.
4. Pamela D. Stewart, "The Tale of the Three Rings, I. 3," in *The Decameron: First Day in Perspective*, ed. E. Weaver (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 89–112. See also Viktor Sklovskij, who declares that "*Le prime tre novelle [of Day I of the Decameron], diciamo religiosi, sono state collocate volutatmente in testa a tutta l'opera, negando cosí la religione come norma che fornisca agli uomini certi fondamenti morali e certe regole di comportamento . . . 'La . . . vecchia fede viene bruciata, come durante la peste si bruciavano gli stracci per la disinfezione*." *Lettura del Decameron*, trans. Alessandro Ivanov (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1961), p. 209. [The first three *novelle* [of the *Decameron*] which we may call "religious," have been placed intentionally at the head of the whole work, thus negating religion as a standard that provides humanity with a firm moral ground and code of behavior... The old faith is burned,

just as during the plague one burned rags and old clothes to destroy the sources of contagion.] English translation ours.

5. An informative survey of modern critical views on the story of Ser Ciappelletto has been offered by Franco Fido in "The Tale of *Ser Ciappelletto* (I.1)," in *The Decameron: First Day in Perspective*, ed. E. Weaver (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 59–76.
6. This time frame is established by Panfilo in his introductory comments on Musciatto's departure from France.
7. "Ragionasi adunque che essendo Musciatto Franzesi di ricchissimo e gran mercatante in Francia cavalier divenuto e dovendone in Toscana venire con messer Carlo Senzaterra, fratello del re di Francia, da papa Bonifazio addomandato e al venir promosso . . . " (I. 1.7).
8. "*Prava virtutis imitatrix . . . ingenio freta malitia*" (a depraved imitation of virtue . . . low cunning supported by talent). *De inventione*, I.ii.3–I.iii.4.
9. "*Tanta in eo peccandi libido fuit, ut hoc ipsum eum delectaret peccare, etiam si causa non esset." De officiis*, II. 84. Citing the similarities between these passages, Giuseppe Velli recently remarked that here "Boccaccio completes Cicero": "*Giovanni Boccaccio centonatore/ricreatore o del uso libero della parola scritta*," presented to the International Boccaccio Conference, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, May 1, 2010.
10. Widely quoted, often verbatim. The original anecdote comes from the fourteenth-century chronicler Geoffrey of Paris. Also see Henry Charles Lea, *History of the Inquisition* (New York, 1888), vol. 3, pp. 326f.
11. For Boccaccio's life of Jacques de Molay, see *De casibus*, IX.21.
12. Ferme, in "*Ingegno* and Morality in the New Social Order," observes that Ciappelletto's *ingegno* wins the sympathy of the audience in a book that universalizes *ingegno* as a virtue, thus modifying "the moral implications of the story" (p. 249). We have tried to show, on the other hand, that Ciappelletto's performance enhances, rather than contradicts, Boccaccio's negative exemplum regarding *malizia*.
13. Robert Hollander, in a rousing catalogue of *Decameron* perplexes, remarks, "The *ballate* . . . remain a closed book to the vast majority of critics who concern themselves with the *Decameron*. Can we not see that they are obviously of importance, that they all cry out for interpretation?" "The *Decameron* Proem," in *The Decameron: First Day in Perspective*, ed. E. Weaver (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 13.
14. Dante's *Il Convivio*, II.15, trans. Richard H. Lansing (NY & London: Garland Publishing, 1990), p. 79.
15. This and all further quotations from Dante's *Commedia* are from *The Divine Comedy*, 6 vols, trans. Charles S. Singleton (Princeton University Press, 1991); this citation is from *Paradiso*, vol. 3, part 1, pp. 380f.
16. Cicero, *De legibus*, I. xxii.59, pp. 364f. Boccaccio acknowledges Cicero's idea by calling Cicero's genius divine in *De casibus*, VI. 12: "*Si celesti polleret ingenio*."
17. See also *De oratore,* I.xxv and II.ix.
18. De *inventione,* I.ii.3.

19. We will return to this topic in our discussion of *Decameron*, IX.4.
20. Singleton*, Inferno*, Canto II , pp. 12f. and Canto XV, pp. 158f.
21. For parallel diatribes by Boccaccio against the dangers of verbal fraud (*fraus*), see *De casibus*, I. 11 and VI. 13.
22. Vittore Branca, *Boccaccio: The Man and His Works,* trans. Richard Monges and Dennis J. McAuliffe (New York: New York University Press, 1976), p. 287. Branca suggests, as well, that Boccaccio's prose style derives from Livy, "the idol of the great Italian '*rhètoriqueurs*' of the thirteenth century," rather than from Cicero, not realizing that Livy's prose style was itself Ciceronian, and that Boccaccio in the *De casibus* (VI.i.12) declared that his own style was Ciceronian. "In summary," Branca concludes, "Boccaccio's whole development is influenced strictly by medieval writing" (p. 223).
23. Theodor Mommsen, *Römische Geschichte* (Berlin: Wiedmannsche Buchhandlung, 1904), vol. III, book V, chapter 8, pp. 312–14 and chapter 12, pp. 622–24.
24. Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: University Press, 1955). On this error, see Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), vol. I, pp. 54f.; and James Hankins, "The 'Baron Thesis' after Forty Years and Some Recent Studies of Leonardo Bruni," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 52.2 (April 1995), 309–338, esp. pp. 315f.
25. Stephen J. Milner, "Communication, Consensus and Conflict: Rhetorical Precepts, the *ars concionandi*, and Social Ordering in Late Medieval Italy," in *The Rhetoric of Cicero in its Medieval and Early Renaissance Commentary Tradition*, ed. Virginia Cox and John O. Ward (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006), p. 396.
26. Aldo Scaglione, *Nature and Love in the Late Middle Ages: An Essay on the Cultural Context of the "Decameron"* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), chapter 3. Scaglione's predecessors in the so-called naturalistic interpretation of the *Decameron* include Francesco de Sanctis*, Storia della letteratura italiana* (Naples: Morano, 1870); Guido di Pino, *La Polemica del Boccaccio* (Florence: Vallecchi Editore, 1953); and Russo, *Letture Critiche del Decameron*. More recent efforts in this area include Robert Hastings, *Nature and Reason in the Decameron* (Manchester, UK: University of Manchester Press, 1975); Victoria Kirkham, "*Morale*," in *Lessico Critico Decameroniano*, ed. Renazo Bragantini and Pier Massimo Forni (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1995); and Gregory B. Stone, *The Ethics of Nature in the Middle Ages: On Boccaccio's Poetaphysics* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998). Stone's account of Boccaccio's theory of nature references Cicero's oration, *Pro Archia Poeta.*

2 *Ingegno*—Wit as the Soul of Action: Day II

1. Franco Fido, "Ser Ciappelletto," in *The Decameron: First Day in Perspective*, ed. E. Weaver (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 65. Fido's

essay is helpful in providing us with a panorama of Ciappelletto interpretations since Croce.

2. St. Julien the Hospitaller, patron saint of travelers.
3. *Inferno,* V.136–38. *The Divine Comedy,* trans. Charles S. Singleton, 6 vols, *Inferno*, vol. 1, Part 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 55.
4. Boccaccio did not, in fact, accept Dante's judgment on Francesca's adultery: his *Esposizioni* gloss on *Inferno* V asserts that Francesca was tricked into her marriage by Paolo himself, and was thus not to be blamed for the sequel.
5. "He knew that by striving for more, well beyond its proper sphere, it [the church] had reduced itself to a virtual prisoner and tool of one ruler, thereby disrupting a delicate balance in the secular sphere and destroying its own ability to influence to good. The only way to return the church to the role God ordained for it was to remove it entirely from temporal affairs." Joan M. Ferrante, *The Political Vision of the Divine Comedy* (Princteon: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 130.
6. Tuscan middle-class marriage preferences in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries favored females just entering their childbearing years and males who had already demonstrated moneymaking skills; thus husbands tended to be older than wives by at least a decade. See, e.g., Lauro Martines, *An Italian Renaissance Sextet* (New York: Marsilio Publishers, 1994), p. 161, where he cites Florentine figures from 1427 showing that the average age gap between husband and wife was twelve years; also Gene Brucker, *Giovanni and Lusanna*: *Love and Marriage in Renaissance Florence* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1986).
7. Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum*, Book One, lix–lx.
8. The use of the adjective *pagano* to refer to the ancient Greeks and Romans was new to Boccaccio's time. Its first extant appearance in this context is in the anonymous (attributed to the public servant and historian, Dino Campagni) early Trecento poem *L'intelligenza.*

3 *Ingegno*—Wit as Misdirection and Iconoclasm: Day III

1. Robert Pogue Harrison locates the gardens of the *Decameron* in the heart of the Epicurean tradition. *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 83. Simone Marchesi finds significant links between Boccaccio's description of the villa in Day III and Pliny the Younger's descriptions of gardens at two of his villas in "Boccaccio's Vernacular Classicism: Intertextuality and Interdiscoursivity in the *Decameron*," *Heliotropia* 7 (2010): 47–50. Thomas C. Stillinger's "The Language of Gardens: Boccaccio's '*Valle delle Donne*' "(*Traditio* 39, 1983, 301–22) locates Boccaccio's *Valle* in its medieval literary context, and argues that Boccaccio's descriptive and narrative strategy points to a reevaluation of social norms, especially as these relate to women. On the humanistic

spirit alive in all of the *Decameron* gardens, Edith G. Kern remarks, "If we compare the gardens of the *Decameron* with those of French, classical Provencal, or Celtic origin or even with those used by Boccaccio in previous works, one general fact appears quite clear: Boccaccio stripped the *Decameron* gardens of all supernatural elements." "The Gardens in the *Decameron* Cornice," *PMLA* 66.4 (June 1951): 505–23, 514.

2. Letter to Paul Demeny (May 15, 1871).
3. Cicero*, De inventione* , I.i.–ii; *De legibus*, I.xxiv.62; *De officiis*, I.iv.12.
4. Boccaccio, *De casibus*, VI.xiii.4–5.
5. The Rustico story has two intriguing similarities to the Hermetic Latin *Aesclepius*, which was included during Boccaccio's time in codices with the philosophical works of Apuleius. The *Aesclepius* (21) presents sexual intercourse as sacramental and adds that it transfers energy from the male to the female.

4 Reason's Debt to Passion: Day IV

1. Both Cicero and Ghismunda make rhetorical use of second-person address, both exploit gender distinctions, and both refer to their own approaching death. The premonition of death voiced in the *Philippics* was in fact justified.
2. *Paromoiosis* (balanced clauses), *divisio* (division of topic), and *negatio* (rhetorical use of negation): all common devices in Cicero.
3. "*Non habeo ad volgi opinionem quae maior utilitas quam regnandi esse possit, nihil contra inutilius ei, qui id iniuste consecutus sit, invenio, cum ad veritatem coepi revocare rationem*" [What greater advantage one could have, according to the standard of popular opinion, than to be a king, I do not know; when, however, I begin to bring the question back to the standard of truth, then I find nothing more disadvantageous for one who has risen to that height by injustice] *De officiis*, XXX.xxi.84.
4. Cicero revisits the Aristotelian concept of *megalopsychia*, using the terms *magnitudo animi* and *magnanimitas* (his coinage); but, breaking with Aristotle, holds that this virtue can exist only when combined with philosophical understanding (*De officiis*, I.19, 62–66). See also James Fetter and Walter Nicgorski, "Magnanimity and Statemanship: The Ciceronian Difference," in *Magnanimity and Statesmanship*, ed. Carson Holloway (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2008), pp. 29–48.
5. See, e.g, *Tusculan Disputations*, I.xxii.54: "*principii autem nulla est origo; nam e principio oriuntur omnia*" [principles have no origin, for all things have origin in a principle] (translation ours).
6. On Cicero and human equality, see Nicgorski, "Cicero: a Social Contract Thinker?" Paper delivered at the 2005 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington D.C., September 1–4, 2005 (available on JSTOR). Also *Aquinas: Moral, Political, and Legal Theory*, by John Finnis (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 136f. Brunetto and Dante take up the theme via the related idea that

true nobility lies in virtuous behavior rather than noble descent. Brunetto see *Tresor* II. 54 and 114; Dante see *Convivio* IV. 29. For background on Brunetto and Dante, see John M. Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200–1575* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), p. 57.

7. The *Decameron* was placed on the Papal Index, but not until 1557.
8. Words based on *ratio* appear over 200 times in the *Decameron*, *ius* or *lex* over 100, *natura* over 50, *ingenium* over 90, and *virtus* over 25.
9. Cicero's contribution to modern liberal democracy is now universally acknowledged by historians. On his originality and influence, see Robert T. Radford, *Cicero: A Study in the Origins of Republican Philosophy* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 73f.; and Neal Wood, *Cicero's Social and Political Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 68, 90, and 120; Michael Grant, ed., *Selected Writings of Cicero* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), Introduction; and Marcia Colish, "Cicero, Ambrose and Stoic Ethics: Transmission or Transformation?" in *The Classics in the Middles Ages,* ed. Aldo S. Bernardo and Saul Levin Binghamton, New York: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1990, vol. 69), pp. 95–112. For Cicero's influence on the French Revolution, see Camille Desmoulins, *Histoire Des Brissotins Ou Fragment De L'histoire Secréte De La Revolution,* in *Oeuvres De Camille Desmoulins,* vol. 1 (Paris: Charpentier, 1874), p. 309.
10. "Però, lasciando questa parte indietro, troppo per l'antichità sua incerta, vegniamo alle cose più chiare, della loro perfezzione e rovina e restaurazione e per dir meglio rinascita; delle quali con molti miglior fondamenti potremo ragionare." *Le Vite de' Più Eccellente Pittori, Scultori ed Architetti* (Torino: Einaudi, 1986), p. 125.
11. Reminiscent of John of Salisbury's invective, *De hypocritis (Policratus*, VII. 21); see Branca, p. 489, n. 1, 2, and 6.
12. We have substituted "clergy" here for Musa/Bondanella's "monks." Actually "*religiosi*" can refer to all members of the clergy, as the Payne/Singleton translation attests. Boccaccio, *Decameron* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), vol. I, p. 305.
13. "*De Paulina Romana femina*." Here the vain Paulina is seduced by a gallant named Mundus, who takes on the identity of the god Anubis and has bribed priests to aid him in his devices. When the hoax is discovered, Tiberius executes the priests and exiles Mundus.
14. "*Primum quidem opinionis iam dictae, tamquam radicis iam factorum et futurorum malorum, involucrum reserando . . .* " [This is to be done first by tearing away the mask of the afore-mentioned false opinion, as the root of the past and future evils] *Defensor Pacis*, I. xix. ed. C. W. Previté-Orton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928), p. 109. Marsilius drives home this metaphor again in I.xix, as he has in I.i and I.viii. On the *Defensor*, its popularity in Florence, and its sources in Cicero, see Introduction above. Cicero uses the term *involucra* for describing Crassus's rhetoric in *De oratore*, I. xxxv.161.
15. "*e spezialmente quando disse lo stradicò aver l'uncino attaccato*" [especially the part where he told how the judge got his hook in] (IV. *Concl*.).

16. *stradicò*: old regional term for magistrate. Perhaps an affectionate dig at Boccaccio's good friend Mainardo Cavalcanti, who served as *stradicò* of Salerno. See Branca, p. 579, n. 6.
17. We have emended Musa and Bondanella's translation here to express more closely the Italian syntax.

5 The Shock of Recognition: Day V

1. For a comprehensive study of Fiammetta, see Janet Levarie Smarr's *Boccaccio and Fiammetta: The Narrator as Lover* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1986).
2. Leonardo Bruni's (1369–1444) description of Dante's education under Brunetto's guidance may be taken as an early example of the goals of a humanist education: "*non solamente a litteratura, ma a degli studi liberali si diede, niente lasciando indietro che appertenga a far l'uomo excellente*" (1436). *Vite di Dante e del Petrarca*. Reprinted in *Leonardo Bruni Aretino: Histoire, Eloquence e Poesie à Florence au Début du Quattrocento*, ed. Laurence Bernard-Pradelle (Paris: Champion, 2008), p. 870.
3. See Robert Irwin, *The Arabian Nights: A Companion* (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 97.
4. Some of what we know of Frederick's character and pursuits is taken from the historical writings of Salimbene (degli Adami, 1221–*ca.* 1290), a Franciscan friar who as a young man knew the emperor personally. G. G. Coulton translated some of Salimbene's writings under the title *From St. Francis to Dante* (1907; 2nd ed., Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972).
5. The querulous and cynical "*vecchia*" presented here is glossed by Branca (696) as a female literary type evident in Apuleius and evoked as well in the later Middle Ages, most notably by Jean de Meun. Charles Muscatine in *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1957) comments on Jean de Meun's characterization of the Duenna ("*la vieille*"), and relates it to a rising cultural tide of materialism, realism, and unorthodoxy. "In adopting a literary form for the best possible representation of the Wife's [Wife of Bath's] attitudes, Chaucer had the precedent of Jean de Meun to go by. The main strength of Jean's Duenna . . . is that this representative of philosophic naturalism is herself presented naturalistically"; see pp. 73–77, 204–13.
6. For late medieval attitudes toward homosexuality, see John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 269–302; and Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 3–42.
7. "*Locus autem et regio quasi ridiculi—nam id proxime quaeritur turpitudine et deformitate—quadam continetur: haec enim ridentur vel sola, vel maxime, quae notant et designant turpitudinem aliquam non turpiter.*" *De oratore*, II.lviii. 236,

trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham, in *Cicero: De oratore*, Books I and II (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press), pp. 372f.

8. On this, see Petrarch's letters to Cicero, *Fam*. XXIV. 3 and XXIV. 4.
9. See Mary Jaeger, *Archimedes and the Roman Imagination* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), chapter 2. The Cicero anecdote is in the *Tusculan Disputations*, Book V.

6 Misrule and Inspiration: Day VI

1. Victoria Kirkham, among others, alerts us to the fact that both the tales of Day I and those of Day VI occur on Wednesdays: the day sacred to Mercury, a god whose offices include oratory and lying. She asserts that "Mercury's role at the threshold of each narrative week raises the medium of language itself to high-ranking status in the system of values that informs the author's message." "The Word, the Flesh and the *Decameron*," *Romance Philology* XLI.2 (1987), 127–49, 128. This essay, which became chapter 5 of Kirkham's *The Sign of Reason in Boccaccio's Fiction*, will be of value to anyone interested in the role of language in the *Decameron* and its context in the Western literary tradition.
2. Pamela D. Stewart, "*La novella di madonna Oretta e le due parti del Decameron*," in *Yearbook of Italian Studies* (1973–75), 27–40; reprinted in *Retorica e mimica nel 'Decameron' e nella commedia del Cinquecento* (Florence: Olschki, 1986), pp. 19–38; Robert Hollander, *Boccaccio's Dante and the Shaping Force of Satire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 41, n.50.
3. The court's decision, in this patently fictive case, has been of some interest to scholars debating Boccaccio's treatment of women in the *Decameron*. On this topic, see Regina Psaki, "Women Make All Things Lose Their Power: Women's Knowledge, Men's Fear in the *Decameron* and the *Corbaccio*," *Heliotropia*, I. 1, 2003.
4. *itaque nulla alia in civitate, nisi in qua populi potestas summa est, ullum domicilium libertas habet; qua quidem certe nihil potest esse dulcius, et quae si aequa non est, ne libertas quidem est.* (Hence liberty has no dwelling-place in any state except that in which the people's power is the greatest, and surely nothing can be sweeter than liberty; but if it is not the same for all, it does not deserve the name of liberty.) *De re publica*, I.xxxi. 47. For the Livy references in context, see Chaim Wirszubski, *Libertas as a Political Idea at Rome during the Late Republic and Early Principate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), pp. 9–11.
5. *De re publica*, I. xxv.39. This passage was available to fourteenth-century readers in a quotation by Lactantius. The idea, perhaps derived from that quotation, was circulating during Boccaccio's time (see Branca, p. 748, n. 1 in Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 2 vols, ed. Vittore Branca (Turin: Einaudi, 1992); the identical sentiment had been written into the Florentine Ordinances of Justice in 1293 (Najemy, p. 83). On Cicero and the Social Contract, the most recent survey is in Walter

Nicgorski, "Cicero: a Social Contract Thinker?" prepared for Delivery at the 2005 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association Washington D.C., September 1–4, 2005.

6. *De legibus*, I.xv.42, 44
7. Holloway notes a number of instances in which delle Vigne produces both stylistic tone and epistolary examples that were followed by Brunetto. See Julia Bolton Holloway, *Twice-Told Tales: Brunetto Latino and Dante Alighieri* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), pp. 3, 5, 8, 23, 35,61, 80, and 84.
8. Branca (p. 753, n. 1) sees Frederick as a possible source of the Guido Cavalcanti episode. Pier delle Vigne is memorialized by Dante in the *Inferno* XIII.
9. A Black Guelf, and for many years a leading figure in Florentine public affairs, as chronicled by Giovanni Villani and Dino Compagni. Responsible for the death of Corso Donati, he was fatally wounded by two of Donati's relatives while playing chess. Compagni, *Chronicle*, trans. Daniel E. Bornstein (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), III. 39. It is appropriate here that Boccaccio makes Betto the only man who understands Guido's quip, for in later life Betto was a notorious freethinker.
10. Here Boccaccio may be reprising Seneca "*Otium sine litteris mors est et hominis vivi sepultura"*—Seneca, *Letters to Lucius*, LXXXII (tenth book).
11. On this issue, see Jonathan Usher, "Boccaccio, Cavalcanti's *Canzone* '*Donna me prega*' and Dino's Glosses," *Heliotropia* II. 1 (2004). Literary circumstance also connects this *novella* with *Inferno* X, where the Epicureans dwell. Here Dante is accosted by Guido's father-in-law, the famous Ghibelline leader and freethinker, Farinata degli Uberti, who stands next to Guido's father Cavalcante di Cavalcanti, another freethinker. The scene is set among tombs.
12. Infamous for their avarice (*Paradiso*, XXIX.124–26).
13. Guccio has already made a brief appearance in IV. 7. Among his other nicknames in VI. 10 is Porco, the same pejorative that Dante uses to describe the Order of St. Anthony in the *Paradiso.*
14. As an ingenious storyteller, Cipolla has attracted a following of contemporary readers, including Guido Almansi, Giuseppe Mazzotta, and Millicent Marcus, who parse his performance as a metafictional image of poetic creation itself. In response to these, Victoria Kirkham ("The Word, the Flesh, and the *Decameron*," *Romance Philology* 41.2 (November 1987) 127–49) has more soberly assessed Cipolla as an example of the self-serving misuse of rhetoric described by Cicero and Brunetto. Kirkham's remarks are especially apposite when considered in light of the following *novella*, VII. 1, where Boccaccio assigns a moral order to *poesis* itself.
15. See Branca, p. 768, n.8.
16. Currado vedendole disse: "Aspettati, che io ti mostrerò che elle n'hanno due" e fattosi alquanto piú a quelle vicino, gridò: 'Ho, ho!,' per lo qual grido le gru, mandato l'altro piè giú, tutte dopo alquanti passi cominciarono a fuggire"; laonde Currado rivolto a Chichibio disse: "Che ti par, ghiottone? parti che elle n'abbian due?" Chichibio quasi sbigottito, non

sappiendo egli stesso donde si venisse, rispose: "Messer sí, ma voi non gridaste 'ho, ho!' a quella d'iersera; ché se cosí gridato aveste ella avrebbe cosí l'altra coscia e l'altro piè fuor mandata, come hanno fatto queste."

A Currado piacque tanto questa risposta, che tutta la sua ira si convertí in festa e riso, e disse: "Chichibio, tu hai ragione, ben lo doveva fare."

Cosí adunque con la sua pronta e sollazzevol risposta Chichibio cessò la mala ventura e paceficossi col suo signore (VI.4.17–20).

7 Valley of *Ingegno*: Day VII

1. Guido di Pino speaks to this topic as follows: "*La narrazione della peste non può considerarsi semplicemente una pagina–sia pur grande–d'occasione e d'attacco. La sua presenza resta come un continuo termine di riferimento dialettico per la materia del racconto: un confronto, che, richiamato nel testo, rammenta quell'insorgere di volontà e di passioni contro lo scenario di una città morta.*" *La Polemica del Boccaccio* (Florence: Vallecchi Editore, 1953), 245–46.
2. Corrected from "some" in *The Decameron.* Trans. Mark Musa and Peter Bondanella (New York: New American Library, Penguin, 1982). "*Alcuna*" here refers to an otherwise unnamed female.
3. "*est autem virtus nihil aliud nisi perfecta et ad summum perducta natura*..." *De legibus*, I. 25.
4. *The Divine Comedy,* trans Charles S. Singleton, 6 vols, *Paradiso*, vol. 3, Part 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 381.
5. In Day VI, Conclusion, Dioneo credits Licisca with inspiring the subject matter of Day VII.
6. See particularly *De casibus*, I.xi.3–5, and chapter nine in this volume.
7. John M. Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200–1575* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), sees Boccaccio's portrayal of Gianni as representing a class of upwardly mobile Florentines who joined confraternities like the laud-singers during this period. "In Boccaccio's character," Najemy writes, "we see the combination of social and spiritual motives that led Florentines to join confraternities in large numbers, especially those elements of the *popolo* in search of communities that could give them a sense of self-esteem and a social prominence they otherwise lacked" (p. 53).
8. The laud, or hymn of praise, was a musical art form of Franciscan origin, introduced in Florence in the thirteenth century and especially popular during the plague year.
9. Variously translated as a werewolf, a bogey, and a ghost, the *fantasima* is more accurately described as a large composite creature with a prominent tail, which, catlike, it can raise or lower at will.
10. Literally, "bean-washer," i.e., dumb clod.
11. This view is expressed at length in the *Genealogia* (xiv–xv), in *De casibus*, as well as in the *Trattatello in Laude di Dante* and the *Esposizioni*. See chapter one in this volume.
12. Boccaccio's father married Margherita del Mardoli some time in the 1320s.

13. On ecclesiastical equivocation, see *Defensor Pacis*, II.i., xxv and xxx.
14. Prologue to *The Jew of Malta*, *ca.* 1590.
15. Marsilius of Padua inveighs against this doctrine of rewards and punishments in the *Defensor*, I.v.11.

8 Boccaccio's Ship of Fools: Day VIII

1. Cicero, *The Republic, The Laws*, trans. Niall Rudd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 8. We have used Rudd's translation here for the sake of clarity; the Latin is from the Loeb Classical Library: *Quibus de rebus, quoniam nobis contigit, ut idem et in gerenda re publica aliquid essemus memoria dignum consecuti et in explicandis rationibus rerum civilium quandam facultatem non modo usu, sed etiam studio discendi et docendi essemus . . . auctores, cum superiores ali fuissent in disputationibus perpoliti, quorum res gestae nullae invenirentur, ali in gerendo probabiles, in disserendo rudes. De re publica*, I. viii.13; see also II.xi.22 and II.xxx.52.
2. All of these characters were based on real Florentine personalities. Calandrino (Nozzo di Perino, fl. 1301–1318) was known as an unexciting painter and an utter fool. Buffalmacco (*ca.* 1262–1340) was an able painter, whose elegant "Triumph of Death" still survives. His biographer, Giorgio Vasari, makes much of Buffalmacco's pranks. When his early master Andrea made him rise to work before dawn, "This being displeasing to Buonamico (Buffalmacco), who was made to rise out of his soundest sleep, he began to think of finding a way whereby Andrea might give up rising so much before daylight to work, and he succeeded; for having found thirty large cockroaches, or rather blackbeetles, in a badly swept cellar, with certain fine and short needles he fixed a little taper on the back of each of the said cockroaches, and, the hour coming when Andrea was wont to rise, he lit the tapers and put the animals one by one into the room of Andrea, through a chink in the door. He, awaking at the very hour when he was wont to call Buffalmacco, and seeing those little lights, all full of fear began to tremble and in great terror to recommend himself under his breath to God, like the old gaffer that he was, and to say his prayers or psalms; and finally, putting his head below the bedclothes, he made no attempt for that night to call Buffalmacco, but stayed as he was, ever trembling with fear, up to daylight. In the morning, then, having risen, he asked Buonamico if he had seen, as he had himself, more than a thousand demons; whereupon Buonamico said he had not, because he had kept his eyes closed . . . " Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* trans. Gaston de Vere (New York: Knopf, 1996), vol. I, pp. 142f.
3. For notes on the original word-play, see Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 2 vols, ed. Vittore Branca (Turin: Einaudi, 1992), pp. 987–93.
4. *De casibus*, VI.xiii.5. For background on this passage, see *De legibus*, I. ix.27, and *De officiis*, I.xvi.50.

5. Cicero uses this term, meaning "a depraved imitation of virtue," as part of his condemnation of false rhetoric. See earlier, p. 4 and chapter nine in this volume.
6. Boccaccio nods to a personal friend of that name; see Branca, pp. 1018–19, n. 4.

9 Truth, Lie, and Eloquence: Day IX

1. Solomon's power is memorialized in Rabbinical literature (e.g., the *Targum Sheni*) as well as in the *Qur'an*, which quotes him as saying, "O ye people! We have been taught the speech of birds, and on us has been bestowed (a little) of all things: this is indeed Grace manifest (from Allah)" (*Qur'an* 27:16). He is referred to repeatedly as a figure of supernatural powers in the *Arabian Nights*.
2. Cecco is a nickname for Francesco. Boccaccio's use of names here is in fact doubly ironic: Cecco Angiulieri (#1), who is made to play the guileless victim of dishonest words, was in fact a sharp-witted poet so celebrated that his work is still read today. His poetic bag of tricks importantly included wordplay and parody. A vindictive poem that he addressed to Dante suggests that he had a bitter falling-out with the Florentine, who was at first his friend. Boccaccio's representation of him as a helpless foil is probably some form of fraternal revenge. This Cecco, finally, is not to be confused with the equally notable poet and scientist, Cecco d'Ascoli, who was burned at the stake in Florence in 1327, partly (the story goes) because he defamed the work of Dante and Cavalcanti.
3. See a more detailed account of this issue in Michaela Paasche Grudin, *Chaucer and the Politics of Discourse* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 6–12.
4. *Boccaccio: The Fates of Illustrious Men*. Translated and abridged by Louis Brewer Hall (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1965), p. 24; *De casibus*, I.xi.3–5: *Et cum ita sit, omnesne putabis uno eodemque animo verba proferre? Nil profecto hac existimatione stolidius. Circumspecti quidem viri atque constantis est negligere neminem, sed unumquenque pro meritis pendere, et, ne possit de incognitis precipiti sententia falli, se in se ipsum colligere, et, quasi e specula mentis librato iudicio, intueri quis verba faciens, quod ob meritum, quis in quem facta, quo in loco, quo in tempore, iratus an quietus animo, hostis an amicus, infamis aut honestus homo sit.* See also *De casibus*, I.xi.10–12.
5. Machiavelli, *The Prince*, Chapters 18 and 19. The sense of "contingency" that we allege in Solomon's judgment, Emilia's comments, and the political philosophy of Machiavelli raise a number of questions, both theoretical and tactical, for readers of the *Decameron*. Perhaps the liveliest issue, at least at present, is the relationship of a literary work to the social emergencies of its own times. Deconstructionist or textualist approaches to literature tend to read contingency as a disorganization of experience that fundamentally undercuts moral, and even esthetic, evaluations of

fiction. Machiavelli, on the other hand, contended that contingency actually *organized* experience, explaining contradictions that would otherwise be impenetrable. This latter point of view is especially tenable for those who look beyond a literary work and into the social contingencies that it addresses. Marilyn Migiel speaks to this issue as follows: "The view of *Decameron* storytelling as marginal had its heyday in the 1970s, when readers, particularly in Anglo-American contexts, sought to emphasize textualist approaches to the *Decameron*; unfortunately these readings had the drawback that they often divorced the rhetoric of the *Decameron* from any sustained reading of social reality." *A Rhetoric of the "Decameron"* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), p. 201.

6. *De casibus,* VI.i.12, Hall, p. 139.
7. *De casibus*, VI.i.14; Hall, p. 140.
8. *De casibus*, VI.xiii.9; Hall. p. 166. We have corrected two errors in Hall's text.
9. *De oratore*, II. xliv, a chapter that was one of those available to Boccaccio in Petrarch's incomplete copy. The deliberate use of self-contradiction, opposed polarities, and stylistic irregularities would become a common practice in the Renaissance, and a target of criticism from the generations that followed. It developed in accord with the doctrine of copious variety, which was also Ciceronian. See Terence Cave, *The Cornucopian Text* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 171–334.
10. "And I should not hesitate to maintain that this 'organic composition' [the *Decameron*] is as typical of Italy's Renaissance literature as it is of its Renaissance art..." Aldo Scaglione, *Nature and Love in the Late Middle Age: An Essay on the Cultural Context of the "Decameron"* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), p. 56.

10 The Ciceronian Synthesis: Day X and Author's Conclusion

1. *The Divine Comedy,* trans. Charles S. Singleton, 6 vols, *Inferno*, vol. 1, Part 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 114f,
2. Giuseppe Mazzotta, *The World at Play in Boccaccio's Decameron* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 122.
3. Musa and Bondanella misplace an "i," thus producing the improbable Latin name, Titus Quintus Fulvius, instead of the original Titus Quintius Fulvus.
4. Victoria Kirkham, "The Classic Bond of Friendship." In *The Classics in the Middle Ages*, ed. Bernardo and Levin, pp. 223–36.
5. Cicero studied in Athens with his friend Titus Pomponius Atticus and his brother Quintus in 79 BC. See Andrew Dyck, *A Commentary on Cicero, De Legibus* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), p. 27.
6. "Titus Quintius Fulvus" is a series of Ciceronian tags. Titus is for Titus Pomponius Atticus. The Quintii were a family whom Cicero

represented legally early in his career. Fulvia was a woman mentioned by Boccaccio in his retelling of the Catiline plot (*De casibus*, Book 6; *"Sed tam diris ceptis obstante Deo, actum est ut a Quintio* [*sic*] *Curio Fulvie sibi dilectissime et illecebri mulieri omne panderetur opus et ab ea pluribus et inter alios Ciceroni*."). Her husband was named Quintus, as was Cicero's brother.

7. The sources, respectively, are (eyes of intellect) Cicero, *De senectute,* 12; (know yourself) traditional, quoted by Cicero, *De Leg,* I.58 and *Tusc*, I. 22; (conquer yourself) Plato, *Laws*, and widely quoted thereafter; (another me) Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, IV. 1.
8. On self-dialogue, see Seneca, *De ira,* 3.36.1–3.
9. "*in conservanda civium libertate esse privatum neminem*." Cicero, *De re publica*, II. xxv.46.
10. On the use of this word in late medieval Florence, see the *Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c.350–c.1450*, ed. J. H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), chapter 17, "Community, Counsel and Representation," by Jeannine Quillet, pp. 521f.
11. See Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 54–57.
12. "This Charles was wise, prudent in counsel and valiant in arms, and harsh, and much feared and redoubted by all the kings of the earth, great-hearted and of high purposes, steadfast in carrying out every great undertaking, firm in every adversity, faithful to every promise, speaking little and acting much, scarcely smiling, chaste as a monk, catholic, harsh in judgment, and of a fierce countenance, tall and stalwart in person, olive-coloured, large-nosed, and in kingly majesty he exceeded any other lord, and slept little and woke long, and was wont to say that all the time of sleep was so much lost; liberal was he to knights in arms, but greedy in acquiring land and lordship and money, from whencesoever it came, to furnish means for his enterprises and wars; in jongleurs, minstrels or jesters he never took delight . . . " Giovanni Villani, *Chronicles*, VII. 1.
13. In Carlo Testa's words, the tale is "an insoluble riddle: namely, the fact that, thanks to its privileged position in fine, the story of Griselda's predicament—depicting a woman's freely chosen submission to marital whim, injustice and cruelty—may appear to encapsulate some authorial statement about the *Decameron* as a whole, strikingly at odds with the principles we thought we had been hearing and learning from Boccaccio until the next-to-last *novella*." Carlo Testa, review of Corinna Laude, *"Daz in swindelt in den sinnen": Die Poetik der Perspektive bei Heinrich Wittenweiler und Giovanni Boccaccio*; and Kurt Flasch, *Vernunft und Vergnugen. Liebesgeschichten aus dem* Decameron." *Heliotropia* III. 1 (2006). Our phrase "hermeneutic trap" may be seen as an alternative to Robert Edwards's description of X. 10 as a "hermeneutic scandal" (*Chaucer and Boccaccio* (Houndmills, UK, and New York: Palgrave, 2002)), for we believe that Boccaccio's tale is not only a "sophisticated provocation to literary understanding" (p. 133)

but also a subtle attempt to introduce an unorthodox revelation without undue commotion. Marilyn Migiel remarks that "one of the great innovations of the *Decameron*, with respect to the tradition, is that it aims to complicate our moral views and our ethical responses" ("New Lessons in Criticism and Blame from the *Decameron*," *Heliotropia* 7.1–2 (2010): 5–30, p. 5). We concur with this position, and will try to show that X. 10 takes it to a radical extreme.

14. Millicent Joy Marcus, *An Allegory of Form: Literary Self-Consciousness in the "Decameron"* (Saratoga, Ca.: Anma Libri, 1979), pp. 102–108, draws attention to Dioneo's reference to VII. 1, concluding that it signals the reader to be open to diverse interpretations of the Griselda story. We will take this a step farther by suggesting that Boccaccio, in referring to Monna Tessa and her *fantasima*, is comparing Tessa's creative revolt against an unjust marriage with Griselda's passive acceptance of injustice.
15. Note the parallel to *Inferno*, XV, where the spirit of Brunetto Latini treats Dante similarly, and see the epilogue in this volume.
16. Cicero uses both of these words to describe Catiline in *1 Cat.* (*ad domesticam tuam difficultatem ac turpitudinem*" and "*rei publicae pestem*").
17. David Wallace, *Boccaccio: Decameron* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 105; Warren Ginsburg, *Chaucer's Italian Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002). Speaking of *De casibus*, Ginsburg remarks that in the 1350s "Boccaccio undertook various important diplomatic missions for Florence; no doubt this service prompted him to think of his work as a new way to incorporate literature into the civil discourse of the commune" (p. 196).
18. Petrarch's Latin version of the Griselda story takes radical liberties with its source, turning Griselda into a wielder of powerful eloquence, elevating her husband's moral stature and completely dispensing with the ironic alternative suggested by Dioneo. See Emilie P. Kadish, "Petrarch's Griselda: An English Translation," *Mediaevalia* 3 (1987), 1–24. We might add that Petrarch's version is plucked from its context in the overall development of the *Decameron*.
19. As noted by Branca, Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron,* 2 vols, ed. Vittore Branca (Turin: Einaudi, 1992), pp. 1237, 1243. On Mannelli's marginalia, see Kenneth P. Clarke, "Reading/Writing Griselda: A Fourteenth-Century Response," in *On Allegory*, ed. Mary Carr, K. P. Clarke, and Marco Nievergelt (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), pp. 183–208.
20. *De mulieribus claris*, ed. and trans. Virginia Brown (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2001), pp. 12f.
21. "Calandrino, che era di grossa pasta," *Decameron*, VIII. 3.31.
22. "In letters to the people of Bologna and Perugia, Salutati linked the liberty that Florence enjoyed, and that he encouraged them to embrace, to the republicanism of ancient Rome. Without mincing words, he denied the legitimacy of papal rule because monarchy could never reflect the will

of the people and could only be imposed on those deprived of liberty." John M. Najemy, *A History of Florence 1200–1575* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), p. 152. Marvin Becker observes that the "surviving records of the meetings of the Florentine Signoria from the over-throw of the despotism of Walter Brienne in 1343 until the oligarchical reaction to the rule of the twenty-one guilds in 1382 reveal that of all the questions faced by the counselors, the one most certain to provoke bitter and protracted debate was that of the commune's relationship with the church." And Richard Trexler remarks "that a commune like Florence might not have been able to institute or revise legislation without the specific permission of another power—to wit, the papacy—conflicts with our most basic assumptions about the nature of the Italian 'state system' of the Late Middle Ages... Despite characterizations of the period from 1343 to 1379 as the most democratic in the republic's history... Florence was much less independent during this period than has generally been realized." Marvin Becker, "Church and State in Florence on the Eve of the Renaissance (1343–1382)," *Speculum* 38.4 (October 1962): 509–27, esp. 509; Richard C. Trexler, "Florence, by the Grace of the Lord Pope..." *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 9 (1972): 118–19.

23. See *De casibus*, VI.xii.5: "amicitias iungimus, virtutes laudamus, vitia deprimimus, doctrinas accipimus et exhibemus et breviter quicquid rationalis anima sentiat propalamus et sentita percipimus."
24. Boccaccio's characterization of Griselda evokes the following Pauline pronouncements on women: "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands." *Ephesians,* 5; "Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor." I *Timothy*, 2.
25. The plague is "*soprastante*" (current, or existing) in the Introduction to Day IX, in other words, two days before Boccaccio sends the *brigata* back to Florence. The summer time frame is established by the frequent references to birds and flowers, the naked swimming, and the setting of the storytelling and festivities outdoors.
26. By Panfilo's accurate count: "*Noi, come voi sapete, domane saranno quindici dí, per dovere alcun diporto pigliare a sostentamento della nostra santà e della vita, cessando le malinconie e' dolori e l'angosce, le quali per la nostra città continuamente, poi che questo pistolenzioso tempo incominciò, si veggono, uscimmo di Firenze*" (X. *Concl*.3) (As you know, it will be fifteen days tomorrow that we left Florence in order to find some means of amusement, to preserve our health and our lives, and to escape from the melancholy, suffering and anguish which has existed continuously in our city since the beginning of the plague) (682).

27. Giorgio Padoan, in his book on Boccaccio's late *Esposizioni*, concludes, "*Appare convincione ben radicata del Boccaccio che l'opera di poesia dovesse esser nota, nei suoi intimi significati, solo a pochi, per non perdere il suo valore; affermazione questa ricorrente nelle scritti di quegli anni*" (Apparently Boccaccio was profoundly convinced that poetry should be understood, in its most esoteric sense, only by the few, so as not to lose its value: a recurrent affirmation in the [his] writing of these years.) *L'ultima Opera di Giovanni Boccaccio: Le esposizioni sopra il Dante* (Padova: Università di Padova, 1959), p. 59.
28. On this see Janet Smarr, "Ovid and Boccaccio: A Note on Self-Defense," *Mediaevalia* XIII (1987): 247–55.
29. The conclusion that Boccaccio was still working on his *Decameron* late in life was reached after study of Hamilton 90, the autograph, by Vittore Branca and Pier Giorgio Ricci. See Victoria Kirkham's review of *Il Capolavoro del Boccaccio e Due Diverse Ridazioni* (Maurizio Vitale, Vittore Branca) in *Heliotropia* 2.1 (2004). Kirkham writes that "Contrary to the Certaldan's legendary biography, the *Decameron* had not been a folly of youth, abandoned and rejected in wiser old age. The hand of Hamilton 90 proved that he, like his friend Petrarch, had continued to revise until the end a vernacular masterpiece ostensibly scorned."

Epilogue: The *Decameron* and Italian Culture

1. Brunetto Latini, *The Book of the Treasure*, trans Paul Barrette and Spurgeon Baldwin (New York: Garland, 1993), p. 1.
2. *De casibus* IX.23; trans. Louis Brewer Hall, *The Fates of Illustrious Men* (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1965), p. 227. We have emended Hall's translation to preserve the sense of the Latin. Petrarch's well-known letter to Boccaccio about the *Decameron* contains virtually the same words, "*vires ingenii tui novi*," and additionally makes reference to Boccaccio's original detractors in terms that seem to refer to the Dominican dalmations: "*Animadverti alicubi librum ipsum canum dentibus lacessitum*" (*Seniles* XVII.3). These words are themselves an echo of the final line of Boccaccio's *De mulieribus claris*, where the author hopes that his readers will take pains to see that his work is not "*laceratum dentibus invidorum*" (lacerated by the teeth of envy), pp. 474f.

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