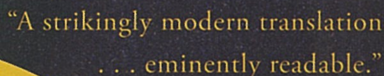

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PEN CENTER USA'S LITERARY AWARD FOR TRANSLATION

The

DECAMERON

GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO

Translated by WAYNE A. REBHORN

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The Decameron

Preface

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10. Paganino da Monaco abducts the wife of Messer Ricciardo di Chinzica, who, after finding out where she is, goes and befriends her abductor. When he asks Paganino to give her back, the latter agrees to do so, provided that she wants to go. She refuses to return to Messer Ricciardo, however, and after his death, becomes Paganino's wife. 188

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4. Dom Felice teaches Frate Puccio how to achieve blessedness by performing an act of penance he devises for him, and while Frate Puccio is carrying it out, Dom Felice has a good time with the friar's wife. 228
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6. Ricciardo Minutolo loves the wife of Filippello Sighinolfi, and upon learning how jealous she is, he makes her think that his own wife would be meeting with Filippello at the baths the next day and thus persuades her to go there herself, after which she discovers that she had really been there with Ricciardo although all along she thought he was her husband. 241
7. Angered by his lady, Tedaldo leaves Florence, but returns some time later disguised as a pilgrim, speaks with her, making her aware of her error, and not only liberates her husband, who has been convicted of having murdered him and been sentenced to death for it, but makes peace between the husband and his own brothers, after which he discreetly enjoys himself with his lady. 250
8. Having consumed a certain powder, Ferondo is buried for dead, but the Abbot, who has been enjoying his wife, removes him from his tomb, imprisons him, and makes him believe he is in Purgatory, until he is finally resuscitated and then raises as his own a child his wife had with the Abbot. 268
9. Having cured the King of France of a fistula, Giletta of Narbonne asks for the hand of Beltramo of Roussillon, who marries her against his will and then, in disdain, goes away to Florence. There he courts a young woman, whom Giletta impersonates, sleeping with him and bearing him two children, as a result of which he finally comes to cherish her and acknowledge her as his wife. 279
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1. Tancredi, Prince of Salerno, kills his daughter's lover and sends her his heart in a golden chalice. Sprinkling it with poison, she drinks it down and thus dies. 308
2. Frate Alberto, having given a lady to understand that the Angel Gabriel is in love with her, assumes the angel's form himself and sleeps with her on numerous occasions, until, scared by her relatives, he throws himself out of her house and takes refuge in that of a poor man. The next day the latter leads him to the piazza dressed up like a wild man, where he is recognized and apprehended by his fellow friars who proceed to incarcerate him. 319
3. Three young men fall in love with three sisters and run away with them to Crete, where the eldest sister kills her lover out of jealousy. The second, by giving herself to the Duke of the island, saves her sister from death, but she herself is killed by her own lover who then takes flight with the eldest sister. The murder is blamed on the third sister and her lover, who are arrested for it and confess, but fearing execution, they bribe their guards and flee, now destitute, to Rhodes, where they die in poverty. 330
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6. After Andreuola, who is in love with Gabriotto, tells him about a dream she had, he tells her about one of his and then, suddenly, dies in her arms. While she is carrying him back to his house, assisted by one of her maids, they are arrested by the officers of the watch. She explains what happened to the *podestà,* who tries to rape her, but she fends him off. Her father learns of what has been going on, and since his daughter has been found innocent, he procures her 349

release. She, however, absolutely refuses to go on living in the world any longer, and instead, becomes a nun.

7. Simona loves Pasquino, and while they are together in a garden, Pasquino rubs his teeth with a sage leaf and dies. Simona is arrested, and as she attempts to show the judge how Pasquino met his death, she rubs one of the leaves against her teeth and dies in the same manner. 358
8. Girolamo loves Salvestra, but yielding to his mother's prayers, he goes to Paris, and when he returns, he finds that Salvestra has gotten married. After sneaking into her house, he lies down at her side and dies. His body is borne to a church, where she, too, dies at his side. 363
9. Messer Guiglielmo Rossiglione slays his wife's lover, Messer Guiglielmo Guardastagno, and gives her his heart to eat, but when she finds out about it later, she throws herself down to the ground from a high window, and after her death, is buried with her beloved. 370
10. The wife of a doctor assumes that a lover of hers, who has taken an opiate, is dead and puts him in a chest, which two usurers carry off to their house with the man still inside. When he comes to, he is arrested as a thief, but the lady's maid tells the Signoria that she was the one who stuck him in the chest, which the usurers stole, thus enabling the lover to escape the gallows, while the moneylenders are condemned to pay a fine for having taken the chest. 374

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1. Cimone acquires wisdom through his love for his lady Efigenia, whom he then abducts at sea. Imprisoned in Rhodes, he is freed by Lisimaco, with whom he once again abducts both Efigenia and Cassandrea during their wedding. They then flee with their ladies to Crete, where they get married, after which they are summoned to come back to their homes with their wives. 390
2. Gostanza is in love with Martuccio Gomito, but when she hears that he has died, in her despair she sets off alone in a boat, which is carried by the wind to Susa. Upon finding him alive in Tunis, she reveals herself to him, and he, who was a great favorite of the King's 402

because of the advice he had given him, marries her and then, having become a rich man, returns with her to Lipari.

3. Fleeing with Agnolella, Pietro Boccamazza runs into a gang of thieves, and while the girl escapes through a forest and is led to a castle, Pietro is captured by them. He manages to get out of their clutches, however, and after one or two more adventures, he happens upon the castle where Agnolella is staying, gets married to her, and returns with her to Rome. 409
4. Ricciardo Manardi is discovered by Messer Lizio da Valbona with his daughter, whom Ricciardo marries, thus remaining on good terms with her father. 417
5. Before he dies, Guidotto da Cremona entrusts a young girl to the care of Giacomino da Pavia. Later, in Faenza, Giannole di Severino and Minghino di Mingole fall in love with her and come to blows on her account, but when she is identified as Giannole's sister, she is given in marriage to Minghino. 423
6. Having been found with the girl he loves, who had been given to King Frederick, Gianni di Procida is tied to a stake with her, and they are about to be burned when he is recognized by Ruggieri de Loria. He is then released and becomes her husband. 430
7. Teodoro falls in love with Violante, the daughter of his master, Messer Amerigo, and gets her pregnant, for which he is condemned to be hanged. While he is being whipped along the way to the gallows, however, he is recognized by his father and set free, after which he takes Violante as his wife. 437
8. In love with a lady from the Traversari family, Nastagio degli Onesti spends all his wealth without obtaining her love in return. At the urging of his friends and family, he goes away to Chiassi where he sees a young woman being hunted down and killed by a knight and devoured by two dogs. Nastagio then invites his relations as well as his beloved to a banquet where she sees that same young woman being torn apart and, fearing a similar fate, accepts Nastagio as her husband. 445
9. In love with a lady who does not return his affection, Federigo degli Alberighi consumes his fortune, spending it all on courting her, until the only thing he has left is a single falcon. When she comes to call on him at his house, he serves it to her to eat because he has 452

nothing else to offer her. Upon discovering what he has done, she has a change of heart, takes him as her husband, and makes him a rich man.

10. After Pietro di Vinciolo goes out to have supper, his wife invites a young man to come to her house, but hides him underneath a chicken coop when her husband returns. Pietro tells her that while he was eating at Ercolano's place, they discovered a young man who had been brought there by his wife. Pietro's wife criticizes her severely, but then an ass unfortunately steps on the fingers of the young man underneath the coop, and when he screams, Pietro runs out and sees him, thus discovering his wife's deception. In the end, however, because of his own perversion, he reaches an understanding with her. 459

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1. A knight offers Madonna Oretta a horseback ride in the form of a story, but he tells it in so disorderly a fashion that she begs him to set her down on foot. 475
2. By means of a single phrase, Cisti the baker makes Messer Geri Spina see how he has made an inappropriate request. 477
3. With a ready retort, Monna Nonna de' Pulci silences the unseemly banter of the Bishop of Florence. 481
4. Chichibio, Currado Gianfigliazzi's cook, saves himself by means of a prompt retort that converts his master's anger into laughter, allowing him to escape the unpleasant fate with which Currado had threatened him. 484
5. Messer Forese da Rabatta and Master Giotto the painter, returning from Mugello, cleverly mock one another's disreputable appearance. 488
6. Michele Scalza proves to certain young men that the Baronci are the noblest family in the whole wide world or even in the Maremma, and wins a supper. 491
7. When Madonna Filippa's husband discovers her with a lover, she is called before a judge, but secures her freedom by means of a prompt and amusing reply, while also getting the statute changed at the same time. 494

8. Fresco urges his niece not to look at herself in the mirror, if, as she has said, she is annoyed by the sight of disagreeable people. 497
9. With a clever quip, Guido Cavalcanti justly puts down a group of Florentine gentlemen who had taken him by surprise. 499
10. Frate Cipolla promises a group of peasants that he will show them a feather belonging to the Angel Gabriel, but when he finds lumps of coal in its place, he declares that they were the ones used to roast Saint Lawrence. 502

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1. Gianni Lotteringhi hears a knocking at his door during the night and awakens his wife. She makes him believe it is the bogeyman, and after they go and exorcise it with a prayer, the knocking stops. 520
2. When her husband returns home unexpectedly, Peronella stashes her lover in a barrel. Her husband has sold it, but she says that she herself had already done so to a man who had climbed inside to see if it was in good condition. Leaping out of the barrel, the lover gets the husband to scrape it out and then to carry it back home for him. 526
3. Frate Rinaldo goes to bed with the mother of his godson, but when her husband discovers them in her room, they get him to believe that he was using an incantation to cure the little boy of worms. 531
4. Tofano locks his wife out of the house one night, and when she cannot get back in despite all her pleading with him, she pretends to throw herself down a well, but drops a large rock into it instead. Tofano comes out of the house and rushes over to the spot, at which point she slips back inside, locks him out, and screams insults at him. 537
5. Disguised as a priest, a jealous man hears his wife's confession and is given to understand that she is in love with a priest who comes to see her every night. Then, while her husband is secretly keeping watch by the front door, the wife has her lover come to her across the roof and passes the time with him. 542
6. While she is with Leonetto, Madonna Isabella is visited by a certain Messer Lambertuccio, who has fallen in love with her. When her husband then returns, she sends Messer Lambertuccio out of the 551

house with a dagger in his hand, and her husband winds up escorting Leonetto home.

7. When Lodovico reveals to Madonna Beatrice how much he loves her, she persuades her husband Egano to dress up like her and sends him out into a garden. She then sleeps with Lodovico, who gets up afterward, goes into the garden, and gives Egano a beating. 556
8. A man becomes jealous of his wife when he discovers that she has been tying a piece of string to her toe at night so that she will know when her lover has arrived. While her husband is off pursuing him, the lady gets another woman to take her place in bed. The husband beats the woman, and having cut off some of her hair, goes to fetch his wife's brothers, but when they discover that his story is untrue, they direct a stream of insults at him. 563
9. Nicostrato's wife, Lidia, is in love with Pirro, who asks her to do three things to persuade him that she is sincere, and not only does she do all of them, but in addition, she makes love to him while Nicostrato is watching and gets her husband to believe that what he saw was unreal. 572
10. A woman is loved by two Sienese, one of whom is the godfather of her child, and after he dies, he returns to his companion, as he promised he would, to tell him all about what people do in the Beyond. 583

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1. Gulfardo borrows a sum of money from Guasparruolo after having agreed to pay his wife exactly that amount in order to let him sleep with her. He gives it to her, but later tells Guasparruolo, in her presence, that he returned it, and she admits that he did. 593
2. The priest of Varlungo sleeps with Monna Belcolore in exchange for a cloak he leaves her by way of payment, although then, after borrowing a mortar from her, he sends it back and asks her for the cloak he left behind as a pledge. The good woman returns it, while directing a witty jibe his way. 596
3. Calandrino, Bruno, and Buffalmacco go down along the banks of the Mugnone in search of the heliotrope. Believing he has found it, 603

Calandrino returns home with a load of stones, and when his wife scolds him, he gets angry and beats her. Finally, he tells his friends the story, which they know better than he does.

4. The Rector of Fiesole is in love with a widow, who does not return his affection, but while he is in bed with one of her maids, thinking he is sleeping with the widow, her brothers contrive to have him discovered there by his Bishop. 613

5. Three young men pull down the breeches of a judge from The Marches while he is sitting on the bench and administering justice in Florence. 619

6. Bruno and Buffalmacco steal a pig from Calandrino, and then, pretending to help him recover it, they get him to undergo a test involving ginger pills and Vernaccia wine. They give him two of the pills, one after the other, consisting of dog ginger seasoned with aloes, which make it appear as though he himself had stolen it. Finally, they force him to pay them blackmail if he does not want them to tell his wife about it. 623

7. A scholar falls for a widow who is in love with someone else and gets the scholar to spend a winter's night waiting for her in the snow. Later on he persuades her to follow his counsel and spend an entire day in the middle of July, naked atop a tower, exposed to flies and gadflies and the sun. 630

8. Two men are close friends, and when one of them sleeps with the other's wife, and he finds out about it, he arranges with his wife to have his friend locked up in a chest on top of which he then makes love with his friend's wife while he is inside. 655

9. Eager to be made a member of a company of privateers, Master Simone, a physician, is persuaded by Bruno and Buffalmacco to go one night to a certain spot, where he is thrown into a ditch by Buffalmacco and left to wallow in filth. 660

10. A Sicilian woman masterfully relieves a merchant of the goods he has brought to Palermo, but when he later returns, pretending he has much more merchandise than before, he borrows money from her and leaves her with nothing but water and tow instead. 677

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1. Madonna Francesca is courted by a certain Rinuccio and a certain Alessandro, but is not in love with either man, and since neither one can complete the task she assigns him, the first being required to enter a tomb and pose there as a corpse, while the second must climb inside and carry out the supposedly dead man, she discreetly rids herself of both of them. 695
2. Arising hurriedly in the dark, an Abbess rushes out to catch one of her nuns who was reported to be in bed with her lover, but the Abbess herself was with a priest at the time and places his breeches on her head, thinking she is putting her veils there, with the result that when the accused nun sees them and points them out to the Abbess, she is acquitted and from then on is able to spend time with her lover at her leisure. 701
3. Egged on by Bruno, Buffalmacco, and Nello, Master Simone makes Calandrino believe he is pregnant. Calandrino then gives them all capons and money in return for medicine, and he is cured without having to give birth. 705
4. At Buonconvento, Cecco, the son of Messer Fortarrigo, gambles away not only everything he possesses, but the money belonging to Cecco, the son of Messer Angiulieri, as well. He then runs after him, clad only in his shirt, saying that he has been robbed, and causes Angiulieri to be seized by some peasants, after which he puts on Angiulieri's clothing, mounts his palfrey, and rides away, leaving him behind in nothing but his shirt. 710
5. When Calandrino falls in love with a young woman, Bruno makes a magic scroll for him, with which he no sooner touches her than she goes off with him. Then, however, he gets caught by his wife and finds himself in a very serious and unpleasant predicament. 715
6. Two young men find lodging overnight, and while one of them goes to bed with their host's daughter, the host's wife inadvertently sleeps with the other. Then the youth who was with the daughter gets into bed with her father, and thinking he is talking to his companion, tells him everything. A great commotion ensues, at which point the wife, realizing her mistake, gets into bed with her daughter and by means of a few choice words restores the peace. 724

7. Talano d'Imolese dreams that a wolf rips up his wife's throat and face, but when he tells her to be on her guard, she ignores him, and that is exactly what happens to her. 730
8. When Biondello plays a trick on Ciacco about a dinner, Ciacco cleverly avenges himself by arranging for Biondello to get a shameful beating. 733
9. When two young men ask Solomon's advice, one wanting to know what he must do to gain people's love and the other how he should punish his obstinate wife, Solomon tells the first to love and the second to go to Goosebridge. 738
10. Donno Gianni is prevailed upon by *compar* Pietro to use an incantation in order to turn his wife into a mare, but when the priest comes to stick on the tail, *compar* Pietro says he did not want one and completely ruins the spell. 744

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1. A knight in the service of the King of Spain feels he is being inadequately rewarded, so the King offers him irrefutable proof to demonstrate that it is not his fault, but that of the knight's own malevolent Fortune, and in the end bestows quite a handsome gift on him. 753
2. After having captured the Abbot of Cluny, Ghino di Tacco cures him of a stomach ailment before releasing him, and when the Abbot returns to the court of Rome, he effects a reconciliation between Ghino and Pope Boniface and makes him a friar in the Order of the Hospitallers. 757
3. Envious of Nathan's reputation for courtesy, Mithridanes sets out to murder him. After accidentally coming across him without recognizing him, and being informed by him as to how he might do the deed, he finds him, just as Nathan had arranged it, in a little wood. When Mithridanes realizes who it is, he is filled with shame and becomes Nathan's friend. 763
4. Messer Gentile de' Carisendi comes from Modena and takes the lady he loves out of the tomb in which she had been buried for dead. After she is revived and gives birth to a male child, Messer Gentile 771

restores both her and her little boy to Niccoluccio Caccianemico, her husband.

5. Madonna Dianora asks Messer Ansaldo for a garden in January as beautiful as it would be in May, and he provides it for her by hiring a magician. Her husband then gives her permission to satisfy Messer Ansaldo's desires, but upon hearing of her husband's generosity, Messer Ansaldo releases her from her promise, and the magician releases Messer Ansaldo from his, refusing to accept any sort of payment from him. 779
6. The victorious King Charles the Old, having fallen in love with a young girl, feels shame over his foolish fancy and arranges honorable marriages for her and her sister. 785
7. Upon learning that a young woman named Lisa had become ill because of her fervent love for him, King Peter goes to comfort her, after which he weds her to a young nobleman, and having kissed her on the brow, from then on always calls himself her knight. 792
8. Sophronia thinks she is marrying Gisippus, but she actually becomes the wife of Titus Quintus Fulvius with whom she travels to Rome, where the impoverished Gisippus eventually turns up. Believing that he has been slighted by Titus, Gisippus claims to have killed a man so that he will be put to death, but Titus recognizes him, and in order to save him, says that he himself committed the crime. Upon witnessing this, the real murderer reveals himself, at which point they are all released by Octavianus, and Titus not only gives his sister to Gisippus in marriage, but shares everything he possesses with him. 801
9. Disguised as a merchant, Saladin is honorably entertained by Messer Torello, who, when a Crusade is launched, establishes a time period for his wife to wait before she remarries. He is taken prisoner, but because of his skill in training falcons, he comes to the attention of the Sultan, who recognizes him, reveals himself in turn, and entertains him lavishly. Having fallen ill, Messer Torello is transported by magic in a single night to Pavia, where his wife's second marriage is about to be celebrated. She recognizes him, and he then returns with her to his house. 820
10. Induced by the entreaties of his vassals to take a wife, the Marquis of Saluzzo, wanting to choose one his own way, selects the 839

daughter of a peasant. After he has had two children with her, he makes it look to her as though they have been put to death. Later on, pretending to have grown weary of her, he claims he has married another woman and arranges to have his own daughter brought home as though she were his bride, meanwhile having turned his wife out of doors wearing nothing but her shift. On finding that she has borne everything with patience, however, he takes her back home again, dearer to him than ever, shows her their grown-up children, and honors her as Marchioness and causes everyone else to do so as well.

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Day 1, Introduction

Here begins the first day of the Decameron, *in which the author explains how it came about that the individuals, who will soon make their appearance, were induced to come together in order to converse with one another, and how, under the rule of Pampinea, they speak on whatever topic each one finds most agreeable.*

Most gracious ladies, whenever I contemplate how compassionate you all are by nature, I recognize that, in your judgment, the present work will seem both somber and painful, for its opening contains the sad record of the recent, deadly plague, which inspired so much horror and pity in all who actually saw it or otherwise came to know of it. But I do not want you to be afraid of reading beyond this introduction, as though you would always be going forward amid continual sighs and tears. You will be affected by this horrific beginning no differently than travelers are by a steep and rugged mountain, for beyond it there lies a most beautiful and delightful plain, which will supply them with pleasure that matches the difficulty of both their ascent and their descent.[1] And thus, just as happiness at its limit turns into sadness, so misery is ended by the joy that follows it.

This brief pain—I call it brief because it is contained in just a few words—will be quickly followed by the sweetness and pleasure that I have just promised you and that such a beginning would not, perhaps, have led you to expect, had I not explained what is about to happen. And truly, if in all honesty I could have led you where I want to go by any route other than by such a difficult path as this one will be, I would have done so gladly. But because, without recalling these events, I could not explain the origins of the things you will read about later on, I have been forced by necessity, as it were, to write it all down.

Let me say, then, that one thousand, three hundred, and forty-eight years had passed since the fruitful Incarnation of the Son of God when the deadly plague arrived in the noble city of Florence, the most beautiful of any in Italy.[2] Whether it descended on us mortals through the influence of the heavenly bodies or was sent down by God in His righteous anger to chastise us because of our wickedness, it had begun some years before in the East, where it deprived countless beings of their lives before it headed to the West, spreading ever-greater misery as it moved relentlessly from place to place. Against it all human wisdom and foresight were useless. Vast quantities of refuse were removed from the city by officials charged with this function, the sick were not allowed inside the walls, and numerous instructions were disseminated for the preservation of health—but all to no avail. Nor were the humble supplications made to God by the pious, not just once but many times, whether in organized processions or in other ways, any more effective. For practically from the start of spring in the year we mentioned above, the plague began producing its sad effects in a terrifying and extraordinary manner. It did not operate as it had done in the East, where if anyone bled through the nose, it was a clear sign of inevitable death. Instead, at its onset, in men and women alike, certain swellings would develop in the groin or under the armpits, some of which would grow like an ordinary apple and others like an egg, some larger and some smaller. The common people called them *gavoccioli,* and within a brief space of time, these deadly, so-called *gavoccioli* would begin to spread from the two areas already mentioned and would appear at random over the rest of the body.* Then, the symptoms of the disease began to change, and many people discovered black or livid blotches on their arms, thighs, and every other part of their bodies, sometimes large and

* *Gavocciolo* is a Tuscan word meaning a swelling or protuberance; it is a diminutive and derives from the late Latin *gaba* (Italian *gozzo*), meaning goiter, crop, throat, or even stomach. These swellings are called *bubboni* in modern Italian and buboes in English (from the Greek word for groin or gland), and it is from this term that we get the name of the sickness, the bubonic plague. It was also called the Black Death because of the black spots on the body that were due to internal bleeding and that Boccaccio will describe in the next sentence.

widely scattered, at other times tiny and close together. For whoever contracted them, these spots were a most certain sign of impending death, just as the *gavoccioli* had been earlier and still continued to be.

Against these maladies the advice of doctors and the power of medicine appeared useless and unavailing. Perhaps the nature of the disease was such that no remedy was possible, or the problem lay with those who were treating it, for their number, which had become enormous, included not just qualified doctors, but women as well as men who had never had any training in medicine, and since none of them had any idea what was causing the disease, they could hardly prescribe an appropriate remedy for it. Thus, not only were very few people cured, but in almost every case death occurred within three days after the appearance of the signs we have described, sometimes sooner and sometimes later, and usually without fever or any other complication. Moreover, what made this pestilence all the more virulent was that it was spread by the slightest contact between the sick and the healthy just as a fire will catch dry or oily materials when they are placed right beside it. In fact, this evil went even further, for not only did it infect those who merely talked or spent any time with the sick, but it also appeared to transfer the disease to anyone who merely touched the clothes or other objects that had been handled or used by those who were its victims.

What I have to tell is incredible, and if I and many others had not seen these things with our own eyes, I would scarcely dare to believe them, let alone write them down, no matter how trustworthy the person was who told me about them. Let me just say that the plague I have been describing was so contagious as it spread that it did not merely pass from one man to another, but we frequently saw something much more incredible, namely that when an animal of some species other than our own touched something belonging to an individual who had been stricken by the disease or had died of it, that animal not only got infected, but was killed almost instantly. With my own eyes, as I have just said, I witnessed such a thing on many occasions. One day, for example, two pigs came upon the rags of a poor man that had been thrown into the public street after he had died of the disease, and as

they usually do, the pigs first poked at them with their snouts, after which they picked them up between their teeth and shook them against their jowls. Thereupon, within a short time, after writhing about as if they had been poisoned, both of them fell down dead on the ground, splayed out upon the rags that had brought about their destruction.

These things and many others like them, or even worse, caused all sorts of fears and fantasies in those who remained alive, almost all of whom took one utterly cruel precaution, namely, to avoid the sick and their belongings, fleeing far away from them, for in doing so they all thought they could preserve their own health.

Some people were of the opinion that living moderately and being abstemious would really help them resist the disease. They, therefore, formed themselves into companies and lived in isolation from everyone else. Having come together, they shut themselves up inside houses where no one was sick and they had ample means to live well, so that, while avoiding overindulgence, they still enjoyed the most delicate foods and the best wines in moderation. They would not speak with anyone from outside, nor did they want to hear any news about the dead and the dying, and instead, they passed their time playing music and enjoying whatever other amusements they could devise.

Others, holding the contrary opinion, maintained that the surest medicine for such an evil disease was to drink heavily, enjoy life's pleasures, and go about singing and having fun, satisfying their appetites by any means available, while laughing at everything and turning whatever happened into a joke. Moreover, they practiced what they preached to the best of their ability, for they went from one tavern to another, drinking to excess both day and night. They did their drinking more freely in private homes, however, provided that they found something there to enjoy or that held out the promise of pleasure. Such places were easy to find, because people, feeling as though their days were numbered, had not just abandoned themselves, but all their possessions, too. Most houses had thus become common property, and any stranger who happened upon them could treat them as if he were their rightful owner. And yet, while these people behaved like wild animals, they always took great care to avoid any contact at all with the sick.

In the midst of so much affliction and misery in our city, the respect for the reverend authority of the laws, both divine and human, had declined just about to the vanishing point, for, like everyone else, their officers and executors, who were not dead or sick themselves, had so few personnel that they could not fulfill their duties. Thus, people felt free to behave however they liked.

There were many others who took a middle course between the two already mentioned, neither restricting their diet so much as the first, nor letting themselves go in drinking and other forms of dissipation so much as the second, but doing just enough to satisfy their appetites. Instead of shutting themselves up, they went about, some carrying flowers in their hands, others with sweet-smelling herbs, and yet others with various kinds of spices. They would repeatedly hold these things up to their noses, for they thought the best course was to fortify the brain with such odors against the stinking air that seemed to be saturated with the stench of dead bodies and disease and medicine. Others, choosing what may have been the safer alternative, cruelly maintained that no medicine was better or more effective against the plague than flight. Convinced by this argument, and caring for nothing but themselves, a large number of both men and women abandoned their own city, their own homes, their relatives, their properties and possessions, and headed for the countryside, either that lying around Florence or, better still, that which was farther away. It was as if they thought that God's wrath, once provoked, did not aim to punish men's iniquities with the plague wherever it might find them, but would strike down only those found inside the walls of their city. Or perhaps they simply concluded that no one in Florence would survive and that the city's last hour had come.

Of the people holding these varied opinions, not all of them died, but, by the same token, not all of them survived. On the contrary, many proponents of each view got sick here, there, and everywhere. Moreover, since they themselves, when they were well, had set the example for those who were not yet infected, they, too, were almost completely abandoned by everyone as they languished away. And leaving aside the fact that the citizens avoided one another, that almost no one took care

of his neighbors, and that relatives visited one another infrequently, if ever, and always kept their distance, the tribulation of the plague had put such fear into the hearts of men and women that brothers abandoned their brothers, uncles their nephews, sisters their brothers, and very often wives their husbands. In fact, what is even worse, and almost unbelievable, is that fathers and mothers refused to tend to their children and take care of them, treating them as if they belonged to someone else.

Consequently, the countless numbers of people who got sick, both men and women, had to depend for help either on the charity of the few friends they had who were still around, or on the greed of their servants, who would only work for high salaries out of all proportion to the services they provided. For all that, though, there were few servants to be found, and those few tended to be men and women of limited intelligence, most of whom, not trained for such duties, did little more than hand sick people the few things they asked for or watch over them as they died. And yet, while performing these services, they themselves often lost their lives along with their wages.

As a result of the abandonment of the sick by neighbors, friends, and family, and in light of the scarcity of servants, there arose a practice hardly ever heard of before, whereby when a woman fell ill, no matter how attractive or beautiful or noble, she did not object to having a man as one of her attendants, whether he was young or not. Indeed, if her infirmity made it necessary, she experienced no more shame in showing him every part of her body than she would have felt with a woman, which was the reason why those women who were cured were perhaps less chaste in the period that followed. Moreover, a great many people chanced to die who might have survived if they had had any sort of assistance. In general, between the inadequacy of the means to care for the sick, and the virulence of the plague, the number of people dying both day and night was so great that it astonished those who merely heard tell of it, let alone those who actually witnessed it.

As a result of the plague, it was almost inevitable that practices arose among the citizens who survived that went contrary to their original customs. It used to be the case, as it is again today, that the

female relatives and next-door neighbors of a dead man would come to his house and mourn there with the women of the household, while his male neighbors and a fair number of other citizens would assemble in front of the house with his male relatives. After that, the clergymen would arrive, their number depending on the social rank of the deceased, who would then be carried on the shoulders of his peers, amid all the funeral pomp of candles and chants, to the church he had chosen before his death. As the ferocity of the plague began to increase, such practices all but disappeared in their entirety, while other new ones arose to take their place. For people did not just die without women around them, but many departed this life without anyone at all as a witness, and very few of them were accorded the pious lamentations and bitter tears of their families. On the contrary, in place of all the usual weeping, mostly there was laughing and joking and festive merrymaking—a practice that women, having largely suppressed their feminine piety, had mastered in the interest of preserving their health. Moreover, there were few whose bodies were accompanied to church by more than ten or twelve of their neighbors, nor were they carried on the shoulders of their honored and esteemed fellow citizens, but by a band of gravediggers, come up from the lower classes, who insisted on being called *sextons* and performed their services for a fee. They would shoulder the bier and quick-march it off, not to the church that the dead man had chosen before his demise, but in most cases, to the one closest by. They would walk behind four or six clergymen who carried just a few candles—and sometimes none at all—and who did not trouble themselves with lengthy, solemn burial services, but instead, with the aid of those *sextons,* dumped the corpse as quickly as they could into whatever empty grave they found.

The common people and most of those of the middling sort presented a much more pathetic sight, for the majority of them were constrained to stay in their houses either by their hope to survive or by their poverty. Confined thus to their own neighborhoods, they got sick every day by the thousands, and having no servants or anyone else to attend to their needs, they almost invariably perished. Many expired out in the public streets both day and night, and although a

great many others died inside their houses, the stench of their decaying bodies announced their deaths to their neighbors well before anything else did. And what with these, plus the others who were dying all over the place, the city was overwhelmed with corpses.

For the most part, the neighbors of the dead always observed the same routine, prompted more by a fear of contamination from the decaying bodies than by any charity they might have felt. Either by themselves or with the aid of porters, whenever any could be found, they carried the bodies of the recently deceased out of their houses and put them down by the front doors, where anyone passing by, especially in the morning, could have seen them by the thousands. Then the bodies were taken and placed on biers that had been sent for, or for lack of biers, on wooden planks. Nor was it unusual for two or three bodies to be carried on a single bier, for on more than one occasion, they were seen holding a wife and a husband, two or three brothers, a father and a son, or other groups like that. And countless were the times when a couple of priests bearing a cross would go to fetch someone, and porters carrying three or four biers would fall in behind them, so that whereas the priests thought they had one corpse to bury, they would have six or eight, and sometimes more. Even so, however, there were no tears or candles or mourners to honor the dead; on the contrary, it had reached the point that people who died were treated the same way that goats would be treated nowadays. Thus, it is quite clear that things which the natural course of events, with its small, infrequent blows, could never teach the wise to bear with patience, the immensity of this calamity made even simple people regard with indifference.[3]

There was not enough consecrated ground to bury the enormous number of corpses that were being brought to every church every day at almost every hour, especially if they were going to continue the ancient custom of giving each one its own plot. So, when all the graves were full, enormous trenches were dug in the cemeteries of the churches, into which the new arrivals were put by the hundreds, stowed layer upon layer like merchandise in ships, each one covered with a little earth, until the top of the trench was reached.

But rather than go on recalling in elaborate detail all the miseries we

experienced in the city, let me just add that the baleful wind blowing through it in no way spared the surrounding countryside. The fortified towns there fared just like the city, though on a smaller scale, and in the scattered villages and farms the poor, wretched peasants and their families died at all hours of the day and night. Without the aid of doctors or help from servants, they would expire along the roads and in their tilled fields and in their homes, dying more like animals than human beings. They, too, became as apathetic in their ways as the city dwellers were, neglecting their property and ignoring the work they had to do. Indeed, since they thought every day was going to be their last, they consumed what they already had on hand, neglecting what they might get in the future from their animals and fields and from all their past labors. Thus it came about that oxen, asses, sheep, goats, pigs, chickens, and even dogs, who are so loyal to men, were driven from their homes and left to roam freely through fields in which the wheat had not even been reaped, let alone gathered in. Nevertheless, many of the animals, as if they were rational beings, would eat well there during the day and then return home full at night, needing no shepherd to guide them.

To leave the countryside and return to the city: what more can be said except that the cruelty of the heavens—and perhaps, in some measure, that of men, too—was so great and so malevolent that from March to the following July, between the fury of the pestilence and the fact that many of the sick were poorly cared for or abandoned in their need because of the fears of those who were healthy, it has been reliably calculated that more than one hundred thousand human beings were deprived of their lives within the walls of the city of Florence, although before the outbreak of the plague perhaps no one would have thought it contained so many.*

* Boccaccio's estimate of the number of deaths due to the plague is somewhat exaggerated, perhaps for the sake of rhetorical effect. Historians, relying on various fourteenth-century chroniclers, think that about 60 percent of the population, or anywhere from fifty to eighty thousand people, perished in Florence and the surrounding countryside. Boccaccio's interest in rhetorical effect is also evident in the heightened language of the following paragraph.

Oh, how many great palaces, beautiful houses, and noble dwellings, once filled with lords and ladies and their retainers, were emptied of all their inhabitants, down to the last little serving boy! Oh, how many famous families, how many vast estates, how many notable fortunes were left without a legitimate heir! How many valiant men, how many beautiful women, how many lovely youths, whom Galen, Hippocrates, and Aesculapius—not to mention others—would have judged perfectly healthy, dined in the morning with their families, companions, and friends, only to have supper that evening with their ancestors in the next world![4]

Since my own grief will be increased if I continue to meditate any longer on so much misery, I want to pass over what I can suitably omit and tell what happened one Tuesday morning while our city was in these straits and had been practically deserted. As I later learned from a trustworthy person, seven young women, who had just attended divine services and who, in keeping with the requirements of the times, were dressed in mourning attire, found themselves in the venerable Church of Santa Maria Novella, which was otherwise almost empty. Each one was the friend, neighbor, or relative of one of the others, none had reached her twenty-eighth year or was under eighteen, and all were intelligent, wellborn, attractive, and graced with fine manners and marvelous honesty. I would tell you their real names, but there is a good reason that prevents me from doing so, which is that I do not want any of them to feel shame in the future because of the ensuing stories, which they either listened to or told themselves. For the rules concerning pleasure, which are rather strict today, were then, for the reasons I have already given, very lax, not just for women of their age, but even for those who were much older. Nor do I wish to supply the envious, who are ready to censure the most praiseworthy life, with material that might allow them to denigrate the honesty of these worthy ladies in any way by means of their filthy gossip. However, so that what each one said may be understood without confusion, I intend to identify them by means of names that are either wholly, or partially, adapted to their characters. We shall call the first of them, who was also the oldest, Pampinea, and the second Fiammetta; the third and

fourth, Filomena and Emilia; then let us say that the fifth is Lauretta and the sixth Neifile; and to the last, not without reason, we will give the name Elissa.*

By chance rather than some prior agreement, they had all come together in one part of the church and were sitting down more or less in a circle. After finishing their prayers, they heaved a deep sigh and began talking among themselves about the terrible times they were going through. After a while, when all the others had fallen silent, Pampinea began to speak as follows:

"My dear ladies, we have all heard many times that there is no harm in exercising our rights in an honest way. Now, every person on earth has a natural right to maintain, preserve, and defend his life to the best of his ability. In fact, the proof that we all take this for granted is that men are judged innocent if they sometimes kill others in self-defense. Thus, if the laws, to which the welfare of every human being has been entrusted, concede such a thing, how can it be wrong, provided no one is harmed, for us or for anyone else to use whatever remedies we can find in order to preserve our lives? When I pause to consider what we have been doing this morning as well as on previous mornings, and when I think about the subjects we have discussed and what we have had to say about them, I realize, just as you must realize, too, that each of us fears for her life. I am not surprised by this, but considering that we all have the natural feelings shared by women, what really does surprise me is why you have not taken any steps to protect yourselves from what each of you has a right to fear.

"Instead, here we sit, in my opinion, as if our sole purpose were to count the number of corpses being carried to their graves, or to hear whether the friars inside the church, whose numbers have practically dwindled away to nothing, are chanting their offices at the specified hours, or to exhibit, by means of our clothing, the quality and quantity of our miseries to anybody who might show up here. And if we go outside, either we see the dead and the sick being carried everywhere about us; or we see people, once condemned and sent into exile for

* On the names and the number of the seven women, see Headnote 1.

their misdeeds by the authority of the civil law, mocking that law as they rampage through the city committing acts of violence, knowing that those who enforce the law are either sick or dead; or we are tormented by the dregs of our city who, thirsting for our blood, call themselves *sextons* now and go about everywhere, both on horseback and on foot, singing scurrilous songs to add insults to our injuries. And all we ever hear is 'So-and-so is dead' and 'So-and-so is about to die.' If there were anyone left to grieve, we would hear nothing but doleful laments everywhere.

"And when we return home, I do not know whether you have the same experience that I do, but since, out of a large household of servants, there is no one left except my maid, I get so frightened that I feel as if all the hairs on my head were standing on end. And what terrifies me even more is that wherever I go in the house, wherever I pause for a moment, I see the shades of those who have passed away, and their faces are not the ones I was used to, but they have strange, horrible expressions on them that come from who knows where. For these reasons, whether I am here or outside or in my house, I am always anxious, and all the more so, because it seems to me that there is no one possessing sufficient means and having some place to go to, as we do, who is left in the city except us. And as for the few people still around, they make no distinction, as I have often heard and seen for myself, between what is honest and what is not, and prompted only by their appetites, they do what promises them the most pleasure, both day and night, alone and in groups. Moreover, I am not speaking only of laymen, but also of those cloistered in monasteries, who have convinced themselves that such wicked behavior is suitable for them and only improper for others. Breaking their vows of obedience, they have given themselves over to carnal pleasures, and in the belief that they will thereby escape death, they have become wanton and degenerate.

"And if this is so—and it most manifestly *is* so—then what are we doing here, what are we waiting for, what are we dreaming about? Why are we lazier and slower than all the other inhabitants of this city in providing for our safety? Do we consider ourselves less valuable than they are? Or do we believe that our lives, unlike those of others, are

tied to our bodies by chains so strong that we need not worry about all these things that have the power to harm them? We are mistaken, we are deceived, what bestial stupidity for us to think this way! The clearest argument against us is the frequency with which we are forced to recall the names and conditions of the young men and women who have been struck down by this cruel pestilence.

"Although I do not know if things appear to you the way they do to me, for my part I have come to the conclusion that the best thing for us to do in our present situation would be to leave the city, just as many have done before us and many are still doing, lest we fall prey through timidity or complacency to what we might possibly avoid if we desired to do so. We should go and stay on one of our various country estates, shunning the wicked practices of others like death itself, but having as much fun as possible, feasting and making merry, without ever overstepping the bounds of reason in any way.

"There we will hear the little birds sing and see the hills and plains turning green, the fields full of wheat undulating like the sea, and thousands of kinds of trees. There we will have a clearer view of the heavens, for, even if they are sullen, they do not for all that deny us their eternal beauties, which are so much more attractive to look at than are the walls of our empty city. Moreover, the air is much fresher in the country, the necessities of life are more abundant, and the number of difficulties to contend with is smaller. Although the peasants are dying there in the same way that the city dwellers are here, our distress will be lessened if only because the houses and the people are fewer and farther between. Besides, if I am right, we will not be abandoning anyone here. Rather, we can truly say that we are the ones who have been abandoned, for our relatives, by dying or fleeing from death, have left us alone in the midst of this great affliction as if we were no kin of theirs. Nor will anyone reproach us if we adopt this plan, whereas if we do not, we will be facing sorrow and grief and possibly death itself.

"Consequently, if you please, I think it would be a good idea for us to do what I suggest, taking our maidservants with us and having everything we need sent after. We can live in one place today and another tomorrow, pursuing whatever pleasures and amusements the present

times offer. And if death does not claim us before then, let us go on living this way until such time as we can perceive the end that Heaven has decreed for these events. Just remember that it is no less unseemly for us to go away and thus preserve our honor than for the great majority of the others to stay here and lose theirs."

Having listened to Pampinea, the other women not only applauded her advice, but were so eager to take it that they were already beginning to work out the details among themselves, as though they were going to get right up out of their seats and set off at once. But Filomena, who was very prudent, declared: "Ladies, although what Pampinea has argued is very well said, that is no reason for us rush into it, as you seem to want to do. Remember, we are all women, and every one of us is sufficiently adult to recognize how women, when left to themselves in a group, can be quite irrational, and how, without a man to look after them, they can be terribly disorganized. Since we are fickle, quarrelsome, suspicious, weak, and fearful, I am really worried that if we take no guide along with us other than ourselves, this company will fall apart much more quickly, and with much less to credit to ourselves, than would otherwise be the case. We would be well advised to deal with this problem before we start."

"It is certainly true," said Elissa, "that man is the head of woman, and without a man to guide us, only rarely does anything we do accord us praise.[5] But how are we to get hold of these men? As we all know, the majority of our male relatives are dead, and the others who remain alive not only have no idea where we are, but are fleeing in scattered little groups from exactly the same thing we seek to avoid ourselves. Nor would it be seemly for us to take up with those who are not our kin. Therefore, if self-preservation is the purpose of our flight, we must find a way to arrange things so that no matter where we go in quest of fun and relaxation, trouble and scandal do not follow us there."

The ladies were engaged in their discussion, when lo and behold, who should come into the church but three young men, though none so young as to be under twenty-five, in whom neither the horrors of the times, nor the loss of friends and relatives, nor fear for their own lives had been able to cool down, let alone extinguish, the love they

felt. The first was named Panfilo, the second Filostrato, and the last Dioneo, all of them very pleasant and well bred.* In the midst of all this turbulence, they were seeking the solace, sweet beyond measure, of catching a glimpse of the ladies they loved, all three of whom just so happened to be among the seven previously mentioned, while several of the others were close relatives of one or another of the men. No sooner did they catch sight of the ladies than the ladies caught sight of them, whereupon Pampinea smiled and began: "Look how Fortune favors us right from the start in placing before us three discreet and worthy young men who will gladly guide us and serve us if we are not too proud to ask them to do so."

Neifile's entire face had turned scarlet with embarrassment because she was the object of one of the youths' affections. "Pampinea, for the love of God," she said, "be careful about what you are saying. I know for certain that nothing but good can be said of any one of them, and I believe they are more than competent to carry out this task. I also think they would provide good, honest company not only for us, but for many women more beautiful and finer than we are. But since it is perfectly obvious that they are in love with some of us here, I am afraid that if we were to take them with us, through no fault of theirs or of our own, we would be exposed to censure and disgrace."

"That really does not matter in the least," said Filomena. "If I live like an honest woman and my conscience is clear, let people say what they like to the contrary, for God and Truth will take up arms on my behalf. Now, if only they were disposed to accompany us, then we could truly claim, as Pampinea has said, that Fortune favors our plan."

Having heard what Pampinea had to say, the other ladies stopped talking and unanimously agreed that the men should be called over, told about their intentions, and asked if they would like to accompany them on their expedition. And so, without another word, Pampinea, who was related by blood to one of the men, got up and went over to where they stood gazing at the women. After giving them a cheerful greeting, Pampinea explained their plan and asked them on behalf of

*On the names and the number of the three men, see Headnote 1.

all the women if, in a spirit of pure, brotherly affection, they might be disposed to accompany them.

At first the young men thought they were being mocked, but when they saw that Pampinea was speaking in earnest, they replied happily that they were ready to go. In order to avoid delaying their project, they all made arrangements then and there for what they had to do before their departure. The next day, which was a Wednesday, after having carefully prepared everything they needed down to the last detail and sent it all on ahead to the place where they were going, they left the city at the crack of dawn and started on their way, the ladies traveling with a few of their maids, the three youths with three of their servants. Nor did they go more than two short miles from the city before they arrived at their first destination.

The place in question was some distance from any road, situated on a little mountain that was quite a pleasant sight to see with all its shrubs and trees decked out in their green foliage.[6] At the top there was a palace, built around a large, lovely courtyard, containing loggias, great halls, and bedchambers, all of which were beautifully proportioned and adorned with charming paintings of happy scenes. Surrounded by meadows and marvelous gardens, the palace had wells of the coolest water and vaulted cellars stocked with precious wines, wines more suitable for connoisseurs than for honest, sober ladies. When they got there, the company discovered to their great delight that the palace had been swept clean from top to bottom, the beds had been made up in their chambers, every room had been adorned with seasonal flowers, and the floors had been carpeted with rushes.

Soon after reaching the palace, they sat down, and Dioneo, who was the merriest of the young men and had the readiest wit, said: "Ladies, we have been led here more by your good sense than by our own foresight. Now, I do not know what you intend to do with all your troubles, but I left mine inside the city gates when I passed through them with you just a short while ago. Hence, you must either prepare to have fun and to laugh and sing along with me—as much as is consistent, of course, with your dignity—or you should give me leave to go back there to reclaim my troubles and stay in our afflicted city."

As though she, too, had gotten rid of such thoughts herself, Pampinea replied to him gaily: "Very well said, Dioneo. We should have fun while we are living here, for that is the very reason we fled our sorrows back there. But since things that lack order will not last long, and since I am the one who initiated the discussions that led to the formation of this fair company, I think that if we are to preserve our happiness, we have to choose a leader from among ourselves, someone whom we will honor and obey as our superior and whose every thought will be aimed at enabling us to pass our time together agreeably. Moreover, to allow us all to experience the heavy burden as well as the pleasure of being in command, and thereby to prevent those who are not in charge from envying the person who is, I think that the burden and the honor should be assigned to each of us in turn for just one day. The first ruler is someone we should all elect, but as for those who follow, the person who has been in charge on a particular day should, when the hour of vespers approaches, choose his or her successor.* Then this new ruler will be free to determine the place where we will go and to dictate the manner in which we are to live during the period of his or her reign."

They were all quite happy with Pampinea's proposal and unanimously elected her Queen for the first day, whereupon Filomena quickly ran over to a laurel tree, for she had often heard people say that its leaves were quite venerable and conferred great honor on those worthy individuals who were crowned with them. Having gathered a few branches, she made a magnificent garland of honor, which, during the time the company remained together, was placed on each person's head as a clear sign of royal sovereignty and authority.[7]

Once she had been crowned Queen, Pampinea summoned the servants of the three men as well as the women's maids, who were four in number. She then ordered everyone to be silent, and when they were, she said:

"So that I may begin by setting an example for you all that will allow our company to be able to live free from shame and will make our experience here an ever more orderly and pleasurable one for as long as we

*Vespers: evening. On the canonical hours, see Headnote 2.

choose to stay together, let me first appoint Parmeno, Dioneo's servant, as my steward and entrust him with the care and management of our entire household as well as everything pertaining to the service of our dining hall.[8] I want Sirisco, Panfilo's servant, to be our buyer and treasurer and to carry out Parmeno's orders. Tindaro, who is in Filostrato's service, shall take care of his master's bedchamber as well as those of the other two men whenever their own servants are prevented by their duties from doing so. My maid Misia will be in the kitchen full-time with Filomena's maid Licisca, where they will diligently prepare all the dishes ordered by Parmeno. We want Chimera, Lauretta's maid, and Stratilia, Fiammetta's, to act as the ladies' chambermaids and to clean all the places we frequent. Finally, if they wish to stay in our good graces, we desire and command all of the servants to take care that, no matter what they see or hear in their comings and goings, no news from the outside world should ever reach us unless that news is good."[9]

Having summarily given out her orders, which everyone commended, she rose gaily to her feet and declared: "Here there are gardens and meadows and lots of other truly delightful spots in which we are free to walk and enjoy ourselves. However, at the stroke of tierce, let us all return here so that we can eat while it is still cool."*

After the merry company was given leave to go by the Queen, the young men and their lovely companions set off on a leisurely walk through one of the gardens, talking of pleasant matters, making lovely garlands out of various types of foliage for one another, and singing songs of love. Then, when they had spent as much time there as the Queen had allotted them, they returned to their lodging where they found Parmeno had been quite diligent in carrying out his duties, for when they entered one of the great halls on the ground floor, they saw that tables had been set up, laid with the whitest tablecloths on which there were goblets gleaming like silver, and that the whole room had been adorned with broom blossoms. At the Queen's behest they rinsed their hands in water and went to sit in the places Parmeno had assigned them.

* Tierce: midmorning. On the canonical hours, see Headnote 2.

Exquisitely prepared dishes were brought in, the finest wines were at the ready, and without a sound the three servants began waiting on them. The entire company was delighted that everything was so beautiful and so well presented, and all through the meal there was a great deal of pleasant talk and much good cheer. Since everyone knew how to dance, as soon as the tables were cleared away, the Queen sent for musical instruments so that a few of their number who were well versed in music could play and sing, while all the rest, the ladies together with the young men, could dance a *carola*.* At her request, Dioneo took up a lute and Fiammetta a viol,[10] and the pair began playing a melodious dance tune together, whereupon the Queen, having sent the servants away to eat, formed a circle with the other ladies and the two young men, and all began dancing at a stately pace. After that, they sang a number of pleasant, happy little songs, and continued to entertain themselves in this manner until the Queen, thinking it was time for a nap, dismissed them. The three young men consequently retired to their bedchambers, which were separated from those of the ladies. There they found not merely that their beds had been neatly made, but that their rooms were as full of flowers as the hall had been, and the ladies made a similar discovery, whereupon the entire company undressed and lay down to rest.

Not long after nones had struck, the Queen got up and had the young men and all the other women awakened, declaring that it was harmful to sleep too much during the day.† They then went off to a little meadow where the grass, shaded everywhere from the sun, grew lush and green, and where, feeling a gentle breeze wafting over them, the Queen asked them to sit down in a circle on the green grass. She then spoke to them as follows:

"As you can see, the sun is high, the heat is intense, and nothing can be heard but the cicadas up in the olive trees. To take a walk and go somewhere else right now would be the height of folly, since it is so lovely and cool here, and besides, as you can see, there are boards set up for backgammon and chess. However, although we are free to

* *Carola*: a dance in which the dancers joined hands and moved in a clockwise direction, usually accompanied by music and the singing of the dancers themselves.

† Nones: midafternoon. On the canonical hours, see Headnote 2.

amuse ourselves in whatever way we like, if you would take my advice in this, we should not spend the hot part of the day playing games, for they necessarily leave one of the players feeling miffed, without giving that much pleasure either to his opponent or to those who are watching. Rather, we should tell stories, for even though just one person is doing the talking, all the others will still have the pleasure of listening. And by the time each one of you will have told his or her little tale, the sun will be setting, the heat will have abated, and we will be able to go and amuse ourselves wherever you choose. Now, if you like what I am proposing, let us put it into effect, but if you dislike it, since my only desire is to carry out your wishes, let us all go and spend our time doing whatever we please until the hour of vespers."

The entire company, the ladies and the young men alike, praised the idea of telling stories.

"Then, if that is your pleasure," said the Queen, "my wish is that, on this first day, we should all be free to speak on whatever topic each of us finds most agreeable."

Turning to Panfilo, who was seated to her right, the Queen graciously asked him to start things off with one of his stories. Upon hearing her command, Panfilo responded with alacrity, and as all the others listened, he began speaking as follows.

NOTES

Preface

1 Boccaccio follows the principles of medieval rhetoric and opens his work with a proverb: "misery loves company." He also personalizes the idea, for earlier in his career he had memorialized his suffering for the love of Maria d'Aquino, referring to her by the pseudonym of Fiammetta, in his work of the same name. Fiammetta ("little flame") will reappear as one of the ten narrators of the *Decameron*. In the next sentences, he acts out one of the conventional tropes of courtly love by stressing his low condition in relationship to the beloved and to love itself (although the experience of loving was also thought in the Middle Ages to be so ennobling that it compensated for whatever degradation the lover might experience).

2 Melancholy ("black humor") meant more than just an unhappy mood, as it does today. In the medical theory of Boccaccio's time, the body contained four "humors" (blood, choler, and phlegm, in addition to melancholy) that determined both its physical functions and the mental states accompanying those functions. Good health required that all four humors be in balance, so that to have one, such as melancholy, become dominant was to suffer a serious disease.

3 Boccaccio's different names for the narratives comprising his collection are not synonyms, nor can they be applied individually to distinct subsets of them. Furthermore, all of these names are, to some degree, approximations, since the genres they label were rather fluid in the period. Nevertheless, some distinctions can be made among them. "Story" (Italian: *novella*) was a late medieval descriptive term, fairly new in Boccaccio's lifetime, that defined a story focused on a single incident. "Fable" probably refers less to something like the moralizing tales of Aesop than to what the French called a *fabliau*, a short tale usually concerned with lower-class characters in which the main action involved their tricking one another in pursuit of money or sex. A "parable," by contrast, was a story with an explicit, usually conventional moral, like the parables recounted by Christ in the New Testament, or like similar tales told throughout the Middle Ages and typically called *exempla*. Finally, "history" (or "story," *istoria* in Italian) identifies a narrative involving elevated and important historical persons or incidents.

4 In insisting that his stories will offer readers both "pleasure and useful advice," Boccaccio is rephrasing the well-known and widely endorsed dictum of the Roman writer Horace who said that art should be both *dulce* ("sweet") and *utile* ("useful"); see his *Ars poetica* (*The Art of Poetry*) 343.

Day 1, Introduction

1 Boccaccio's image of the reading of his work as the making of a journey up a difficult mountain recalls the opening of the *Divine Comedy* in which Dante is trying without success to climb a mountain (Purgatory). In the next sentence, Boccaccio rephrases *Proverbs* 14:13.

2 For Florentines in this period, the year began on March 25, the date of the Incarnation or Annunciation, and in fact, the plague did appear for the first time in Florence in April 1348. As Boccaccio's next sentence explains, it had started in Asia—to be precise, in the Crimea—from which it was brought by sea to Sicily in 1346. In that same sentence Boccaccio offers two conventional explanations for the disease: the influence of the stars, and God's anger at the sins of humans. Boccaccio's description of the plague, although pretending to be an eyewitness account, is generally based on earlier accounts such as that by Paulus Diaconus in his eighth-century *Historia Longobardorum* (*History of the Lombards*).

3 Boccaccio is, of course, being ironic in this sentence. Those "things," which the wise, like the simple, must learn to bear, are the suffering and death that are part of the "natural course of events," that is, the human condition.

4 Aesculapius (in Gk., Asclepios) was the Greco-Roman god of medicine; Galen (2nd c. CE) and Hippocrates (5th c. BCE) were the two most famous doctors of the ancient Greek world.

5 Elissa's opening remark alludes to Ephesians 5.23.

6 Although some scholars have attempted to identify this palace with a specific country villa Boccaccio owned, the ensuing description is so general and so idealized—and is so similar to the description of the palace to which the group goes at the start of Day 3—that it makes more sense to see it as being inspired not by Boccaccio's recollection of a specific place, but by the literary tradition of the *locus amoenus*, the "pleasant place" that serves as a setting for pastoral poetry. This tradition lies behind similar descriptions in Boccaccio's earlier works and in such medieval classics as *The Romance of the Rose.*

7 Crowning a victorious athlete or a poet with leaves from the laurel tree, which was sacred to Apollo, was an ancient Greek custom; the Romans awarded such a wreath to a victorious general. The custom of crowning writers and poets with laurel wreaths was revived in 1315 by the citizens of Padua for the humanist scholar Albertino Mussato, and then, more famously, when, on April 8, 1341, Petrarch was crowned poet laureate by the Roman Senate on the Capitoline Hill.

The names of all the servants who accompany the group into the countryside have Greek roots, although they are taken by Boccaccio, for the most part, from Roman comedy and satire. They function generically as "names for lower-class servants" rather than pointing, through their etymologies, to specific qualities the individual servants might possess.

"News" in this sentence translates Boccaccio's *novelle,* which can also mean "stories."

The viol (Boccaccio writes *viuola;* the more common French name was *vielle*) was a stringed instrument like the modern violin, but with a longer, deeper body, and

an indeterminate number of strings; it could be bowed or plucked and was used to accompany singing or dancing.

1 There is no specific source for this story, although hypocrisy is frequently a subject of satire in the Middle Ages, and there were occasional cases in various countries of criminals and the like actually being venerated as saints.
2 Musciatto di Messer Guido Franzesi (d. 1310) was a merchant from Tuscany who grew rich in France where he served as a counselor to the French King Philip the Fair (Philippe le Bel, b. 1268, ruled 1285–1314), who did, in fact, make Musciatto a "gentleman." The latter wickedly advised the king to falsify his coinage and to plunder the Italian merchants living in France; and he also had a close business relationship with a certain Cepparello da Prato. King Philip's brother, Charles Sans Terre (Charles "Lackland," 1270–1325), was the third son of Charles III. Although the Count of Valois, Maine, and Anjou, he owed his nickname of "Lackland" to his failure to acquire a kingdom. In 1301 he was invited by Pope Boniface VIII (b. ca. 1235; pope 1294–1303) to bring an army to Italy in order to support papal forces fighting the Florentines. Note that "Tuscany," like "Lombardy" (the usurers mentioned later in the story are identified as Lombards), was often used in this period to refer to all of northern Italy.
3 Cepparello da Prato (or Ciapperello Dietiaiuti da Prato) was a historical personage whose name appears in documents from the period as a receiver of taxes and tithes for King Philip and Boniface VIII. Although he did have business relations with Musciatto Franzesi, he was not, as Boccaccio says, a notary; moreover, he was married and had children. The "Ser" before his name is short for "Messer" and is an honorific, like calling someone "sir," but without the implication of aristocratic status. On titles and forms of address, see Headnote 3.
4 Like other Italian cities of the time, Florence had *fossi*, "garbage pits," on its outskirts. However, *fossi* could also refer to pits dug in unconsecrated ground where suicides, heretics, the excommunicated, and even usurers were dumped. According to the chronicler Giovanni Villani (ca. 1275–1348), such bodies were thrown into the *fossi*, that is, the *fossati* or (dry) moat, outside the walls of Florence. The specific meaning of Boccaccio's term is thus hard to determine even if the general meaning of what will happen to Ciappelletto is clear enough.
5 Ciappelletto's last words here echo a line from the *Te Deum*: *quos pretioso sanguine redemisti* ("whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy precious blood").
6 The friar begins by asking Ciappelletto about sins of incontinence (lust, gluttony, sloth, avarice, and anger).
7 According to Church law, the celebration of the Sabbath began at vespers on the preceding Saturday, and since nones (midafternoon) was the canonical hour before vespers (sunset), it was not officially part of the Sabbath. Out of feigned religious scrupulousness, however, Ciappelletto extends the observance of the Sabbath back to nones as well.

8 Panfilo begins the final paragraph of his story by echoing the formulas used at the ends of medieval saints' lives.
9 This is the only case in the *Decameron* in which the narrator of the story is mentioned, albeit briefly, at the end.

Day 1, Story 2

1 Although there is no specific source for this story, arguments like the one that Abraham makes at the end can be found in a variety of medieval sermons and stories.
2 In French, the last name of Giannotto di Civignì could be Souvigny, Chauvigny, Chevigny, or Chovigny, all typically French names. His first name would be Jehannot or Jeannot in French, and both it and the Italian variant Boccaccio uses are diminutives, meaning "Little John." Since Giannotto could be a form of Boccaccio's own first name, and Giovanni is the new name that Abraham will adopt later in the story, Boccaccio may be encouraging readers to see both characters as projections of the author himself.
3 Popes typically address the cardinals as "fratres," "brothers."
4 In the late Middle Ages, the University of Paris was an intellectual center celebrated for the study of philosophy and theology.
5 I.e., there was nothing to lose because if Abraham stayed home, he would not become a Christian any more than if he went to Rome and saw how decadent it was.
6 Boccaccio's Italian for the first of the clergy's euphemisms, "procurement," is *procureria*, which means simply to obtain the means to live. His second, "daily rations," is *substentazioni*. *Substentatio* (or *susstentatio*) was a late Latin word that referred to a monk's meager daily allowance of food. Both terms are clearly ironic, and the second one in particular deepens Boccaccio's religious satire in the story.
7 Abraham's repeated architectural metaphors for the Church recall the biblical notion that Saint Peter, the first bishop of Rome, was the rock on which the Church was built (see Matthew 16:18). His counterintuitive argument here is not Boccaccio's invention; it exists in many of the sources of the story.

Day 1, Story 3

1 Stories of the wise Jew and the three rings were widespread in the Middle Ages, including a version that appeared in the *Novellino* (73), sometimes leading to the conclusion that Christianity was the true ring and at other times endorsing a notion of skeptical tolerance. Similar stories continued to appear after the *Decameron* as well, and included, most famously, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's Enlightenment play *Nathan der Weise* (*Nathan the Wise*, 1779). The name Melchisedech (or Melchizedek) means "king of justice" and was common among the ancient Hebrews; see, for example, Genesis 14.18 and Psalms 110.4. Saladin (Salah al-Din, 1138–93) was the Sultan of Cairo, and he was most famous for the reconquest of Jerusalem from the crusaders in 1187. A popular figure in medieval literature, he was celebrated for his knowledge, his chivalry, his military leadership, and his generosity. Dante placed

him among the great pagan figures in Limbo (*Inferno* 4.129), Petrarch exalted him in his *Trionfo della Fama* (*Triumph of Fame* 2.148–50), and Boccaccio speaks glowingly of him in his earlier work, the *Amorosa visione* (12.28ff.) as well as here in this story and in *Decameron* 10.9, where his generosity in particular is on display.

2 Lending money at interest (*prestare a usura,* in Boccaccio's Italian) was widely practiced in the Middle Ages by Jews and by many Christians as well. Although it was classified by the Church as a sin, the sin of usury, which is the term (*usura*) Boccaccio employs here, it seems unlikely that he considered it one.

Day 1, Story 4

1 Versions of this story were widely diffused in the Middle Ages, appearing in French *fabliaux* as well as in the *Novellino* (54), which was one of Boccaccio's models.

2 In his first story, Dioneo lives up to his name by focusing on the body and, in particular, on illicit sexuality, as he will do repeatedly in the stories he tells on the other nine days. In fact, when he is made King on the seventh day, he chooses as its topic the (sexual) tricks that women play on their husbands. And, starting on Day 2, he is allowed to tell the last story, thus ending almost every day on a note of sexual license that often parodies what goes on in the preceding stories.

3 Lunigiana is a mountainous region in northwest Tuscany extending from Emilia-Romagna down to the sea. It had two Benedictine monasteries in the fourteenth century, that of Montelungo near Pontremoli and that of the Priory of Santa Croce del Corvo near Lerici. The latter is the more likely candidate for the one in this story, since it was the scene of an encounter between Dante and a monk named Frate Ilaro whose letter describing their encounter Boccaccio had transcribed in his *Zibaldone* (*Notebook*).

4 The narrator calls him "Messer l'abate" in this sentence. I have retained this Italian title "Messer," as I have done generally throughout this translation, rather than replace it with something like "Mister" or "Master." In most cases, it is used before a person's name as a sign of his status, but in satirical stories, like this one, it is clearly ironic. An abbot might well deserve such an honorific, but this one clearly does not, especially at this point when he is doing a sexual appraisal of the girl. On titles and forms of address, see Headnote 3.

5 This last clause (in Italian: *peccato celato è mezzo perdonato*) was a proverbial saying in the fourteenth century, as was its contrary, "a sin confessed is half forgiven" (*peccato confessato è mezzo perdonato*), a saying still current in Italian.

6 Monasteries typically had rooms to incarcerate monks who violated the rules.

Day 1, Story 5

1 There are various versions of this story in Eastern collections such as *The Book of the Seven Sages* and *The Thousand and One Nights* as well as in popular traditions of storytelling in Europe. Monferrato is a region of Italy to the south of Turin lying along the roads running between France and Genoa.

2 By referring to specific historical figures, Boccaccio dates his story to the time of the Third Crusade (1189–92), which attempted unsuccessfully to retake Jerusalem from Saladin who had conquered it in 1187. The Crusade was led by the French King Philippe Auguste, known as "le Borgne" ("the One Eyed"), together with the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa and the English King Richard the Lion-Hearted. The Marquis of Monferrato, Corrado degli Aleramici, was a successful commander who was named the Defender of Constantinople and of Tyre and then the King of Jerusalem before he was assassinated on April 28, 1192. In the story, he is called a "Gonfalonier (i.e., Standard-bearer) of the Church," an honorific title that popes bestowed on various kings and noblemen between the thirteenth and the seventeenth centuries. He had succeeded to the title of Marquis of Monferrato upon the death of his father Guiglielmo in 1190, and he had already been in Palestine for several years before he was joined there by the crusaders in 1189. Boccaccio's story is thus set sometime in the months before March 1191, when Philippe signed a treaty of alliance with Richard in Sicily while they were on their way to the Holy Land. However, Boccaccio departs from the historical record in two important details. First, the Marquis did not leave a wife behind him in Monferrato. A widower when he went to the Holy Land, he married Theodora, the sister of the Byzantine emperor in 1187, but then abandoned her and married Isabella, Princess of Jerusalem, in 1192; neither of his wives was ever in Monferrato. Second, Philippe did not stop in Monferrato on his way to Genoa to sail to the Holy Land. This interweaving of history and fiction is typical of Boccaccio's stories.

3 Falling in love with a lady from afar, merely on the basis of her description, was a commonplace in medieval romance. This motif is consistent with other suggestive details in the story that seek to create an idealized portrait of a courtly and chivalric society of the past. The Marchioness's final quip to the king works, of course, to undercut this idealization to some extent.

Day 1, Story 6

1 There were several Inquisitors who served in Florence during the fourteenth century and of whom Boccaccio may have been thinking when he composed this story. In general, they were disliked for their decadent lifestyles, for trumping up charges of heresy, and for taking bribes in exchange for reducing the charges they would make.

2 Contrary to popular opinion, there was no papal institution, no tribunal, known as the Inquisition during the late Middle Ages (although there would be such official tribunals later: the Spanish Inquisition, established under Ferdinand and Isabella in 1478, and the Holy Office, established by Pope Paul III to fight Protestantism in 1542). In a papal bull of 1231, however, Gregory IX instituted the practice of appointing special investigating judges called *Inquisitores haereticae pravitatis* to investigate heresy and bring heretics to trial. (Boccaccio uses a vernacular translation of this official title for the Inquisitor in his story.) The ultimate punishment for unrepentant heretics was burning at the stake.

3 Nothing is known of the historical Cinciglione whose name appears in this sentence; he was apparently a famous drinker.

4 Epicurus (341–270 BCE) was a Greek philosopher who saw pleasure as the end of life. Although the pleasure he advocated was simple and relatively innocent, he came to be associated with sensual excess in the Middle Ages and was also believed to have denied the immortality of the soul. Dante accordingly places him in the circle of Hell reserved for the heretics (see *Inferno* 10.14–15).

5 According to the rule of their order, the lives of the friars were to be modeled on that of their founder, Saint Francis of Assisi. They were to wander from town to town, preaching and aiding the poor and the sick, while living in poverty themselves and avoiding any contact with money.

6 The largest Franciscan convent in Florence was attached to the Church of Santa Croce.

7 This is a slight paraphrase of the beginning and end of Matthew 19:29: *Et omnis . . . centuplum accipiet, et vitam aeternam possidebit* ("And everyone . . . shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life").

8 The leftover broth is the watery liquid that remains after one has eaten the meat and vegetables cooked in it. The implication is that the friars eat gluttonously while not giving the poor much in the way of substantial nourishment.

Day 1, Story 7

1 There is no source for this story, although some critics see similarities with *Novellino* 44 and Peter Alphonsi, *Disciplina clericalis* (*A School for Clerics*) 4.

2 Messer Can della Scala is said to be a *magnifico signore,* which I have translated as "great lord." However, the adjective really means "grand," "magnificent." It defines the idealized lifestyle of the secular and religious elite as being one of splendor and lavish expenditures and also of generosity and hospitality. Avarice or miserliness is clearly opposed to this set of characteristics. The noun form of *magnifico,* namely *magnificenza,* which is applied to both Can della Scala and to the Abbot of Cluny in the story, has sometimes been translated as "magnificence" and sometimes as "munificence," that is, generosity.

3 Messer Can della Scala is also referred to more simply as Messer Cane in the story. He is usually called Cangrande (or Can Grande) della Scala (1291–1329) who was the ruler of Verona. His magnificence and generosity were well known and had been celebrated by Dante (*Paradiso* 17.76–93). The liberality of Frederick II (1197–1250), King of Sicily and Holy Roman Emperor, was also well known. One sign of such lordly munificence was to arrange for elaborate festivals, as Cangrande does in this story. Scholars have not, however, been able to identify the festival in the story with any particular one Cangrande organized.

4 Nothing is known about this Bergamino who was most likely a storyteller by profession. His name may simply mean that he came from the town of Bergamo. Boccaccio groups him with the other *uomini di corte,* a phrase translated as "court entertainers"

to avoid suggesting that they were "courtiers," that is, individuals, often aristocrats, who were more permanent residents in the courts that were attached to powerful rulers and noblemen. In Boccaccio's time, the word *corte* meant such a body of individuals, but it also referred to a festival like the one Cangrande della Scala plans to hold, and to which "court entertainers" such as Bergamino would flock from all over the peninsula.

5 During the first half of the twelfth century, Hugh d'Orléans, who was called "Primas," "the Primate," by his friends at the University of Paris, was a canon in Cologne. He may have been the author of numerous satirical poems and drinking songs in Latin, writing under the name of Golias. He was imitated by many other poets, known consequently as Goliards, whose works were often critical of the Church and eventually provoked it to attempt to suppress them. The *Carmina Burana* is the best-known collection of verse produced by these poets.

6 The Benedictine Abbey of Cluny, located in Burgundy, was founded in 910 by Duke William the Pious of Aquitaine. It controlled a number of abbeys elsewhere, including one in Paris, and by the late Middle Ages its wealth had become legendary. It is not clear which abbot is the one involved in this story. Note that another abbot from Cluny appears in 10.2.

7 A poem in which wine is celebrated as being superior to water is attributed to the historical Primas.

8 This last clause rehearses a formula used by rulers welcoming ambassadors to their courts; it is used again at the end of the story, and essentially means something like, "you have the run of the place."

Day 1, Story 8

1 There is no source for this story. The Grimaldi was among the oldest and most powerful families in Genoa and was often allied with the Florentines. Since no Ermino Grimaldi has been found, it is likely that Boccaccio invented him as a representative of the proverbial miserliness of the Genoese. Guiglielmo Borsiere (d. ca. 1300) appears to be a historical figure, and his witty remark was recorded as historical by various fourteenth-century writers, including Boccaccio himself, when commenting on Dante's *Inferno* 16.70–72, where Guiglielmo is placed in the circle reserved for the sodomites. In this canto of his poem Dante also denounces the nouveaux riches of Florence in his own time for their pride and materialism, and this denunciation may inform Boccaccio's own critique (through Lauretta) of his contemporary society in this story. Note that Guiglielmo's last name means "purse maker" and may thus not be a true surname. He is assumed to have had that profession and then abandoned it to become a denizen of various courts in Italy. On his characterization as a "court entertainer," see 1.7, note 4.

Day 1, Story 9

1 A version of this story can be found in the *Novellino* (51). The first King of Cyprus was Guy de Lusignan (b. ca. 1129, ruled 1192–94). He had been installed as king by Richard the Lion-Hearted, who conquered the island on his way to the Holy Land during the Third Crusade. Guy's insufficiency and weakness were well known. There is no record, however, of the personal transformation he underwent that is described in this story. Godfrey of Bouillon, who is mentioned in the story, was actually the leader of the First Crusade and had taken Jerusalem in 1099; Boccaccio's reference to him here is anachronistic.

Day 1, Story 10

1 There is no source for this story. The leek image used in it may well have been proverbial, and Boccaccio himself employs it in the Introduction to Day 4.

2 Master Alberto is probably Alberto de' Zancari (b. ca. 1280) who was a professor of medicine at the University of Bologna and was still alive in 1348. He was indeed famous, and his second wife was called Margherita. The protagonist of the story is named Malgherida (the Bolognese form of Margherita), and her surname, Ghisolieri, was, in fact, that of a prominent family in the city, although no Malgherida Ghisolieri has been found in the historical record.

3 In describing Master Alberto's infatuation—the "flames of love," his inability to sleep, the beauty of his beloved's face, etc.—Boccaccio employs the language of courtly love, which had been used by the poets of the so-called *Dolce Stil Novo* ("Sweet New Style"), including Dante, Guido Cavalcanti, and Guido Guinizelli, in the preceding century. Dante is, of course, a constant presence in the *Decameron,* and Cavalcanti is the protagonist of 6.9.

Day 1, Conclusion

1 Pampinea is paraphrasing a medieval proverb: *providus est plenus, improvidus extat egenus* ("the provident one will be full, the improvident will wind up needy"). The moment she has chosen to name the next Queen is the canonical hour of vespers, which marks the end of one liturgical day and the start of the next. Her decision heightens the ritual-like nature of what they are doing, as does her use of the proverb here and her reference to the deity in the next sentence, which echoes Luke 20.38.

2 Filomena was the one who worried at the start about the women going off into the countryside without any men along to guide them. Hence, Pampinea is pronouncing her "prudent" here.

3 Emilia's song invites allegorical interpretation, as Boccaccio's next sentence suggests. Some critics see the "good that makes the mind content" (*ben che fa contento lo 'intelletto*) as God, who is contained within the beauty she sees in her mirror. Dante speaks of the damned in Hell as having lost *il ben dell'intelletto* (*Inferno* 3.18: "the good of the intellect"; cf. *Purgatorio* 27.103 and *Paradiso* 26.16). Dante took this concept from

Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* 6.2), for whom the "good of the intellect" meant the truth that the intellect has as its proper object; Dante then redefined it as the truth that is the proper object of all human striving and knowing, namely, God. Other critics, however, have imagined the good of which Emilia sings as wisdom or one of the liberal arts.

Day 2, Story 1

1 Although there is no literary precedent for this story, its characters appear to be historical. Stecchi and Martellino were lower-class professional entertainers (*buffoni*), whom Sacchetti also mentions in his *Trecentonovelle* (*Three Hundred Stories*) 144. There was a Saint Arrigo who worked as a humble porter (or perhaps a wood carrier) while he was alive. When he died on June 10, 1315, the church bells rang of their own accord, and after a reverent crowd had taken his body into the cathedral, it became the source of miracles, one of the first being the curing of a cripple. The tomb of the Blessed Arrigo can still be seen in the Cathedral of Treviso. Also lying behind the story is the episode in the New Testament in which a man stricken with palsy cannot be brought before Christ because of a crowd and has to be lowered down to him from the roof (see Mark 2:3–12 and Luke 5:18–26).

2 The "Germans" here are probably compatriots of Arrigo rather than mercenaries and most likely hailed from Bolzano in the far north of Italy where German is still spoken.

3 In the early fourteenth century, Treviso was in fact governed by a Ghibelline *podestà* from Gubbio named Manno della Branca. *Podestà* was the name given to the chief magistrate, usually functioning as a judge, in the towns of northern and central Italy during the late Middle Ages. On titles and forms of address, see Headnote 3.

4 Boccaccio's phrase, which I have translated as "a thorough shellacking," is *senza pettine carminato*; it means literally that Martellino was being "carded without a comb." Wool was carded in Boccaccio's time by means of heavy iron carding combs that were drawn through it to straighten out the fibers and remove dirt and debris. Such combs were also used as torture devices to tear off the skin of their victims. Saint Blaise, the governor of Sebastea (Sivas in modern Turkey), was martyred by being carded and then having his head cut off, and in representations he often appears holding such combs in his hands. In Boccaccio's day, "being carded" was slang for being beaten.

5 The strappado was an instrument of torture that consisted of a rope running through a pulley affixed to the ceiling. The victim's hands, tied behind his back, were attached to the rope, and he was hauled up into the air by them, then suddenly released, his fall being stopped with a jerk before he hit the ground. Such jerks, which would have dislocated most people's shoulders, were supposed to make the victim confess the truth.

6 The Agolanti was a noble Florentine family that was exiled from the city in the thirteenth century, and some of its members were in Venice and Treviso where they probably worked as bankers. A certain "Bernardus de Agolantis de Florentia" appears in a document concerning a miracle performed by the Blessed Arrigo on

June 20, 1315, and at least one critic thinks that this member of the family may have told the tale in Florence that Boccaccio is reworking here.

Day 2, Story 2

1 There are precedents for Boccaccio's *novella* in Asian story collections such as the *Panchatantra* (4.1) as well as in the *Novellino* (99). However, its true origins can be found in the widely known legend of Saint Julian the Hospitaller, also known as Saint Julian the Poor, the patron saint of travelers. Probably of French origin, the legend is romantic fiction rather than historical fact. It concerns a nobleman who killed his parents unintentionally and then performed various acts of penance, which included building a hospice, taking care of the poor, and offering hospitality to travelers, until an angel, disguised as a traveler, told him he had been forgiven. Well into the Renaissance, travelers did, in fact, offer a variety of prayers to Saint Julian, and it is worth noting that in Boccaccio's time, the "hospitality" of Saint Julian often included the furnishing of one's guest with a bed companion. There is a Castel Guiglielmo in the province of Rovigo not far from Ferrara, and it is possible, considering the accuracy of the details Boccaccio supplies about the setting of the story, that he might have traveled there at some point.

2 Filostrato's claim that his story will be merely "profitable" echoes the Horatian dictum that poetry should be *dulce,* "sweet," and *utile,* "useful" or "profitable"; see the *Ars poetica* (*The Art of Poetry*), 343. Although he implies that his story may not be particularly "sweet," most readers would disagree.

3 Marquis Azzo VIII d'Este da Ferrara (1263–ca. 1308) is the most likely candidate for the figure to whom Boccaccio is referring. Dante identifies him as a patricide (*Inferno* 12.109–11).

Day 2, Story 3

1 This story has no literary source, but is a development of the widespread folktale about a youth who makes his fortune by conquering the heart of a princess. The motif of a noble man or woman traveling in disguise as a member of a religious order was also well known in medieval literature.

2 There are historical records documenting the existence of the Lamberti and Agolanti families in Florence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The former were merchants and the latter moneylenders. Note that a Sandro Agolanti appears in 2.1.

3 There was, in fact, a community of Italian merchants and moneylenders in England during the late Middle Ages. There was also one in Bruges, a city through which the brothers' nephew Alessandro will travel later on in the story.

4 It is difficult to determine the exact historical event Boccaccio is thinking of here. A struggle broke out in 1173, pitting Henry II (1154–89) against his sons who were led by the eldest one, also named Henry. Peace was made in 1174, but the rebellion was renewed in 1181, and only ended in 1183 with the death of Prince Henry.

5 The fact that the Abbot is dressed in white means that he belonged to one of the orders of the Cistercians.

6 In order to avoid the marriage her father has arranged for her, the "Abbot" has come to ask the Pope to use his ecclesiastical authority and marry her to someone else of her choosing. The Pope in question may be Alexander III (b. 1100/1105, pope 1159–81) who had close ties to Henry II of England.

7 It is difficult to say which King of Scotland Boccaccio has in mind. William I (1143–1214) is a possibility, but he was not very old at the time the story supposedly takes place.

8 There were, in fact, three kings of Scotland named Alexander (Alessandro in Italian): Alexander I (1078–1124), Alexander II (1198–1249), and Alexander III (1241–86). Alexander III married the daughter of Henry III of England. Moreover, one of the daughters of Henry II of England married an Italian, Guiglielmo di Sicilia. All of these historical details resonate with the story, but their exact relevance is uncertain.

Day 2, Story 4

1 Although this story has no literary source, it generally recalls Greek romances, such as Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe* and Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon,* works whose heroes experience the highs and lows of Fortune as they wander around the Mediterranean world, often over a period of many years.

2 There are records of the Rufolo family living in Naples and Ravello in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The branch in the latter city was extremely wealthy and cultured, as can be seen today from the palace it possessed there and from the pulpit dedicated to the family in the city's cathedral. A certain Matteo and his son Lorenzo, who managed a lucrative trade with Greece and Egypt, were condemned to prison by the Angevin rulers of Naples in 1283 for having joined in the uprising against their rule called the Sicilian Vespers. Lorenzo was later pardoned, but after becoming a pirate, he was captured and died in a Calabrian stronghold in 1291. In the story, Boccaccio is clearly recollecting the time he himself spent in Naples and the surrounding region as well as the story of Lorenzo, although he has given his version of it a happy ending.

3 Cephalonia is the largest island in the Ionian Sea off the west coast of Greece. Corfu, to which Landolfo will eventually drift, is a small island to the north close to the southern tip of present-day Albania.

4 Trani is a town on the Adriatic coast of Italy about twenty-five miles west-northwest of Bari.

Day 2, Story 5

1 There are many literary and folkloric antecedents for various aspects of this story, although it is difficult to speak here of "sources." The story contains, however, quite

specific references to places in Naples, where Boccaccio spent a substantial time in his youth, as well as to individuals associated in different ways with the city. A certain Andreuccio da Perugia appears in a fourteenth-century document, although he was not a horse trader by profession and for that reason does not seem a model for Boccaccio's character.

2 This story is unique in the *Decameron* in that it begins quite directly, with scarcely any mention of the reaction of the listeners to the previous story or anything more than a passing reference to the rules of the storytelling game they are playing. Nor does the narrator supply a moralizing framework within which to place the narrative she is about to present.

3 Malpertugio was a commercial area of Naples near the port and the arsenal in which many foreign merchants, including those from Sicily, located their businesses. Not far away was the Bardi bank in which Boccaccio had worked when he was in Naples. Needless to say, the district also attracted prostitutes, thieves, and all sorts of riffraff.

4 The houses of Anjou and Aragon were struggling in the later Middle Ages for control of the kingdoms of Naples and Sicily. Charles I of Anjou, supported by the Papacy—thus making him a Guelf—took control of the two kingdoms in the 1260s. His harsh rule, however, led to an uprising against him in 1282 known as the Sicilian Vespers. The French and their Guelf supporters were expelled from the island, and in 1296, the Guelfs' opponents there, the Ghibellines, had Frederick II of Aragon proclaimed king of the island, over which he reigned until 1337. Boccaccio's story is set some time after the Treaty of Caltabellotta in 1302, by which Charles II of Anjou, then King of Naples, gave up all claims to Sicily after a series of unsuccessful attempts to restore the Angevins to power there. The lady's fictitious husband presumably took part in one of those attempts.

5 Greco is the name of a wine grape, originally from Greece, that is grown in southern Italy. Although there is a red variety, when people speak of "Greco," they usually mean the white wine, which is most likely what Andreuccio and the lady are drinking here.

6 The Ruga Catalana ("Catalan Street") was named for the numerous Catalan expatriates living there who were attached to the Angevin court. By turning left and going up this street, Andreuccio is heading away from the sea.

7 Boccaccio calls this character Scarabone Buttafuoco. His last name was—and is—common in Sicily; it means "throws fire," and hence, perhaps, could be translated as "Spitfire" or "Belchfire." His first name is probably a common noun, not a name. *Scarabuni* meant "thief" in Sicilian and may thus identify him as the leader, the "boss," of one of the gangs of criminals who terrorized Naples in the period (their modern successor is the Camorra, the Neapolitan equivalent of the Mafia). *Scarabone* also suggests *scarafuni,* which means "scrounger" and derives from *scarafaggio,* "cockroach."

8 There was an archbishop named Filippo Minutolo who had been an important figure in the Kingdom of Naples and who had died, not during the heat of the summer as Boccaccio's story suggests, but on October 24, 1301. His tomb can still be seen in the chapel of the Minutolo family in the Cathedral of Naples.

Day 2, Story 6

1 Although many parallels to the events in this story may be found in various saints' lives, in collections such as *The Thousand and One Nights,* and in popular romances, no single text can be claimed as its source. Moreover, the historical context evoked—the struggle among the Hohenstaufens, the Aragonese, and the Angevins for control of the Kingdom of Sicily, which included all of southern Italy from Naples on down—plays only the most general role in the story, even though certain events in that struggle are relevant at particular junctures in the plot.

2 Frederick II (1194–1250), a Hohenstaufen, was King of Sicily from 1198 and Holy Roman Emperor from 1220. After his death, he was succeeded by his son Conrad IV (1228–54), following whose death a period of conflict ensued until Manfred (ca. 1232–66), Frederick's illegitimate son, was crowned king in 1258 (he claimed the title of Holy Roman Emperor in 1263). As a Ghibelline, he was opposed by the Papacy, which supported the Guelf Party and which unsuccessfully offered the throne of Sicily to various rulers until Charles of Anjou accepted it in 1263. Charles invaded Italy two years later and defeated and killed Manfred on February 25, 1266, at the battle of Benevento. Both the Capece and the Caracciolo were prominent aristocratic families in Naples, and although there is no record of an Arrighetto Capece, a Corrado Capece was the governor-general of Sicily under Manfred. After the latter's death, Corrado led an uprising against the Angevin rulers of Sicily, but was captured and hanged. He had a wife whom various historical sources name Biancofiore or Beritola of the Caracciolo family, which was also firmly opposed to Angevin rule in Sicily. Boccaccio includes a Beritola of the Caracciolo-Carafa family in his early poem, the *Caccia di Diana* (*Diana's Hunt*), 1.23. Throughout the story, Beritola Capece is referred to as *madama,* the dialectal equivalent of *madonna,* or "my lady."

3 Lipari is about twenty-five miles north of Sicily. Ponza, mentioned in the next paragraph, is some seventy miles west of Naples. Contrary to what the narrator says, it was not uninhabited in Boccaccio's time.

4 Currado (Conrad) II Malaspina (d. 1294) was the Marquis of Villafranca and ruled over Lunigiana, a region that consisted of portions of Tuscany and Liguria in northern Italy. Currado was celebrated by Dante and others for his love of his family and his generosity (see *Purgatorio* 8.109–39). As Ghibellines, the Malaspina family would have welcomed fugitives such as Madama Beritola and her family who had been chased out of Sicily by the Angevins. The Kingdom of Apulia (or Puglia) was another name for the Kingdom of Naples.

5 The Doria family played an important role in the economic, military, and political life of Genoa from the twelfth century onward. There is no record of any of its members having the name of Guasparrino (a Genoese dialectal variant of Gasparino, the diminutive form of "Gasparo," or Casper, the name of one the three Magi).

6 Boccaccio has invented a daughter for Currado, perhaps deriving her name, Spina, from the last two syllables of her family name, Malaspina. By contrast, her husband was a historical character: a certain Niccolò, a dependent of the Malaspina, lived in

the Val di Gragnano, the Valley of the Gragnano River (hence, Niccolò da Grignano, as Boccaccio spells the name of the river).

7 Boccaccio is alluding to the rebellion called the Sicilian Vespers. Its name derives from the fact that a riot, which broke out at the hour of vespers in the Church of the Holy Spirit outside of Palermo on Easter Monday, March 30, 1282, resulted in the killing of a band of French soldiers inside the church and led to the massacre of two thousand Frenchmen in Palermo itself. The rule of the Angevin King Charles I had been very unpopular in Sicily, and the rebellion, later called the War of the Sicilian Vespers, soon spread from Palermo to the rest of the island. Giovanni da Procida (1210–98) was a Ghibelline who had been with Manfred when he was defeated by Charles in 1266. Giovanni had fled the island and spent the next years attempting to drum up support to oust Charles until finally enlisting Peter III of Aragon (1239–85), who had married Manfred's heir. Peter was, in fact, attempting to foment a rebellion when the Sicilian Vespers occurred. Giovanni then came to the island, as did an Aragonese army later in 1282, and the war continued until a peace treaty was signed in 1295, followed by yet another in 1302, at which time Frederick III (1272–1337), Peter's son, was finally accepted as the island's king, thus beginning a long period of Spanish rule in Sicily. Note that the "fourteen years" referred to in the next paragraph would put Beritola's flight from Sicily in 1268; it should be sixteen years, since Manfred was defeated by Charles in 1266.

8 Boccaccio echoes a remark made by Peisistratos, whose wife was demanding capital punishment for a youth who had kissed their daughter in public, to which Peisistratos replied that if he put those who loved him to death, he did not know what he would do with those who hated him. This anecdote appears in Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri IX* (*Nine Books of Memorable Deeds and Sayings*), 5.1.2, and was rehearsed throughout the Middle Ages, including by Dante in *Purgatorio* 15.94–105.

9 Giannotto and Spina are engaging in a type of marriage called *per verba de presenti* (or just *verba de presenti*), an extra-ecclesiastical practice or custom that involved the exchanging of vows, usually in front of a witness. The Church recognized such a marriage as valid, although it insisted, with only limited success, that the couple had to wait to consummate it until after a wedding ceremony in a church.

10 The opening of this sentence is a direct quotation of the first two lines of Canto 7 of Dante's *Purgatorio*, which recounts in elevated style how Dante's guide, the Roman poet Vergil, embraced the medieval Italian troubadour Sordello.

11 Lerici is a port in the Gulf of La Spezia not far from the mouth of the Magra River where travelers coming from Genoa or elsewhere usually disembarked before going on to the provinces of Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna.

Day 2, Story 7

1 Alatiel, the heroine of the story, actually sleeps with just eight men; the first ship's captain who seizes her is prevented by his wounds from taking her to bed. This story

has some general plot similarities to *The Tale of Anthia and Habrocomes,* a romance by the third-century Greek writer Xenophon of Ephesus. There are also parallels to stories in *The Thousand and One Nights,* to various versions of the Tristan story in medieval romances, and at the most general level, to stories of wandering about the Mediterranean, including those of Odysseus and Aeneas.

2 Boccaccio is quoting a line from Seneca that had become quasi-proverbial: *venenum in auro bibitur* (*Thyestes* 453: "poison is drunk from a golden cup").

3 The Sultan's name is fictitious, although an Amminadab appears in the Bible as the father of Nahshon, one of the followers of Moses (Numbers 1:7 and 7:12), and as one of the ancestors of Christ (Matthew 1:4). His daughter's name, Alatiel, is likewise fictitious, although it might be an anagram for "La Lieta," "The Happy One." The different parts of her name are particularly suggestive: "ala" is the word for "wing" and thus evokes the heroine's "flight" around the Mediterranean, while the ending of the word, "tiel," points to the names of angels, such as Raphael and Michael, which end in "el," the Hebrew word for "God," thus ironically underscoring the un-angelic character of Alatiel's earthly experience.

4 In Boccaccio's time, the Kingdom of Algarve was an Islamic state that included most of the Mediterranean coast of North Africa as well as a portion of the Iberian Peninsula (the southernmost province of Portugal is still called by that name); *el Gharb* was the Arabic name for "the West."

5 Pericone da Visalgo is a purely fictitious character. His first name is a diminutive of the Catalan *Pere* (Peter); his last is the name of a castle in Majorca, a large island off the east coast of Spain almost directly south of Barcelona and east of Valencia.

6 The notion that wine functions as "Venus's assistant" (or minister or companion) has been a commonplace since antiquity and can be found in several of Boccaccio's favorite classical authors, including Horace, *Odes* 3.18.6–7 and 3.21.21, and Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 2.11 and 2.15.

7 The Duke of Athens, like the Prince of Morea, is a fictional character. However, Boccaccio had known a real Duke of Athens, Walter of Brienne, who had been made the ruler of Florence in 1342–43. The Duchy of Athens, which included Attica and Boeotia, was created in 1205 during the Fourth Crusade, when the territory was taken from the Byzantine Empire. It was then held by a variety of European rulers until it fell to the Turks in 1456.

8 The notions of love as a poison and as a snare or trap were commonplaces in the courtly love tradition. For some examples of the former, see Petrarch, *Canzoniere* (*Song Book*) 152.8 and 207.84; of the latter, see 55.15 and 165.5–8.

9 There was, in fact, a Constantine who was the son of the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II (1259–1332, ruled 1282–1328) and whom Boccaccio may have known about. However, the name, like Manuel, may simply be generic for Byzantine rulers. Constantinople was the capital of the Byzantine Empire until it fell to the Turks in 1453 and was renamed Istanbul.

10 Aegina is the name of both a city and the island on which it is located. It is about twenty miles southwest of Athens. Chios, mentioned in the next paragraph, is a Greek island just off the coast of Turkey.

11 Smyrna, the modern Izmir, is a city on the east coast of Turkey not very far across the Aegean Sea from the island of Chios.

12 Osbech, or Uzbek (ruled ca. 1312–ca. 1342), was a Mongol who was the Khan of the Golden Horde in what is now southern Russia. He had good relations with both Christians and Muslims and encouraged the Black Sea trade of the Venetians and the Genoese. Boccaccio turns him into the King of the Turks and has him engage in a fictional struggle against the Byzantine Empire.

13 Like Osbech, Basano is a fictional character. By the early fourteenth century, Cappadocia, a province in Asia Minor, was not an independent state, but was ruled by the Turks. The name of Boccaccio's character may be a reflection of that of Baudon Bassian (in Italian, Baldon Bassano) who was the chamberlain of King Robert of Naples (ruled 1309–43). His Italian-sounding name might also be meant to suggest that he is a Christian.

14 Rhodes is an island strategically located off the southwest coast of Turkey, to the south of both Chios and Smyrna. Now a part of Greece, it was much disputed in the Middle Ages by the Byzantine Empire, the Arabs, the Genoese, and others, until it was captured by the Knights Hospitaller in 1309 who held it until it was taken by the Turks in 1522.

15 Currently an independent republic, Cyprus is a large island south of Turkey and west of Syria and Lebanon that was part of the Byzantine Empire until it was conquered by crusaders in 1191 and ruled by various Europeans states until it was annexed by Venice in 1489 and eventually fell to the Turks in 1570.

16 Paphos was a major center on Cyprus for the worship of Aphrodite in classical times. The Greek goddess of love was said to have been engendered in the Mediterranean Sea when the god Chronos cut off Uranus's testicles and threw them into the water. Some versions of the myth have Aphrodite coming ashore at Paphos; others, on the island of Cythera.

17 Antigono's name, like Antioco's, is generic and is meant to evoke the Hellenistic eastern Mediterranean. His full name is Antigono di Famagosto, which means that he is from the town of Famagosto, which, like Paphos, is located on Cyprus. Although the King of Cyprus is not identified by name, the island was, in fact, a kingdom. It had been part of the Byzantine Empire until 1192, when it became an independent state ruled by the crusader Guy de Lusignan. During the period in which Boccaccio sets his story, the early fourteenth century, the relevant kings would have been Henry II of Jerusalem (ruled 1310–24) and Hugh IV (ruled 1324–59).

18 Aigues-Mortes, a walled city on the coast of Provence to the east of Montpellier, had a flourishing commerce with Florence and Genoa. Its name means literally "Dead [i.e., stagnant] Waters," referring to the marshes on which the city was built. The name suggests a contrast with the literal and sexual storms of Alatiel's Mediterranean odyssey.

19 Although Alatiel's saint seems her, or Antigono's, clever invention, there was, in fact, a sanctuary dedicated to San Cresci in Valcava ("Saint Grows-in-the-Deep-Valley") that was located in Mugello, a river valley about fifteen miles north of Florence. "Cresci" is short for Crescenzio, or, to use his more usual Latin name, Crescentius,

an eleven-year-old Christian martyr who was brought to Rome during the persecutions of Diocletian in the early fourth century, CE, and was tortured and beheaded after he refused to deny Christ. The appellation "Valcava," which I have translated as "Deep Valley," really means something like "the valley of the mine," most likely because a mine of some sort was located in the Mugello valley.

20 Boccaccio's story is the first recorded instance of this Italian saying: *Bocca basciata non perde ventura, anzi rinnova come fa la luna*. It is composed of two clauses, each of which is a perfect hendecasyllabic line (the standard Italian verse line in Petrarchan sonnets and the *Divine Comedy*), and the two clauses are also almost rhymed (*ventura* and *la luna*). What I have translated as "charm" (*ventura*) means, literally, "adventure" or "luck," which is the central theme of the story. The saying has a romantic quality that Verdi famously brings out by means of his wonderful musical setting of the words when they are sung by the young lovers in *Falstaff*, his last opera. Boccaccio's story is, of course, anything but romantic—it is, indeed, a satire of romance—and the saying is, instead, witty and ironic.

Day 2, Story 8

1 The initial plot element in this story, the false accusation of a spurned woman, is widespread in world literature: it can be found in various Eastern collections, such as *The Thousand and One Nights* as well as in the myth of Phaedra and the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife in the Bible (Genesis 39). Boccaccio probably also knew about Pierre de la Brosse, a surgeon at the court of Philip III of France, who was executed for treason in 1278 after having been accused of attempted rape by the queen, Mary of Brabant. Dante alludes to Pierre in a passage of *Purgatorio* (6.19–24), and his story was told at length by various commentators on the passage. The story of the love between Giannetta and Giachetto, which appears later in this tale, may be modeled on that of Antiochus I of Babylonia and Stratonice, which is recounted by Plutarch in his *Life of Demetrius* (38) and in Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri IX* (*Nine Books of Memorable Deeds and Sayings*), 5.7. Note that the rubric, or title, to the story has the Count going to Scotland; in the story itself, it is clear that he goes to Ireland.

2 The Roman Empire had been re-created in 799 as the Holy Roman Empire, and Charlemagne was crowned the first Holy Roman Emperor the following year. Then, in 962 it was transferred from France to Germany when Otto I of Saxony was crowned Emperor in Rome. When Boccaccio speaks of the power of the Empire being "transferred" (*transportato*) from one country to the other, his verb echoes the medieval notion of *translatio imperii* (transfer of rule), which saw world history as a linear movement from the Roman Empire to its successor under Charlemagne. Although Boccaccio thus inserts his story into history, many of the specific events he recounts, such as the war launched by the French King's son after his coronation, have no historical basis.

3 Boccaccio is echoing the notion of courtly love, codified in a treatise such as Andreas Capellanus's *De amore* (*On Love*), which presents it as something more suited to the

upper classes than the lower (although Boccaccio does see the latter as experiencing some form of love, as Masetto the peasant does in 3.1).

4 It was customary to tear down the houses belonging to traitors.

5 Violante was the name of one of Boccaccio's children who died at the age of six or seven in 1355. The new names given to the children are Italianized versions of French names: Perotto from Pierrot ("Little Peter") and Giannetta from Jeanette ("Little Jean"). Boccaccio would have encountered the first name frequently at the Angevin court of Naples, while Giannetta was a name he used for his mother (see, for instance, *Il Filocolo* 5.8), and he jokingly called himself Giannetto in a letter to a friend. The "French tramps" mentioned in the next sentence is probably an allusion to friars belonging to the Dominican Order that had been founded in France in the thirteenth century and had established itself in Italy by the time Boccaccio was writing.

6 Strangford Lough is an inlet on the Irish Sea in Ulster. It was a frequent point of entry into Ireland during the Middle Ages.

7 When Giannetta refers to herself as a "maiden," she uses the word *damigella*, a Gallicism (from *demoiselle*) meaning "damsel," which also contributes to the French atmosphere of the story.

8 The Count is referred to both in this sentence and in subsequent ones as a *prod'uomo*, a word that I have consistently translated as "worthy man." The term is actually an Italianization of the French *prod'homme* or *prud'homme*, which meant "valiant [*preux*] man," but also "man of discretion" because of the connection between *prud-* and *prudent*. Thus, a more accurate, though wordy, translation would be "man of valor and discretion." Boccaccio's use of an Italianized French term is clearly meant to contribute to the French atmosphere of the tale, which is also suggested by other words, such as the use of *madama* (Fr. *madame*) for the more standard Italian *madonna*.

9 The text mistakenly has the King lavishing honors on Giachetto here.

Day 2, Story 9

1 There are many medieval and Renaissance stories in various languages in which a husband makes a wager on his wife's fidelity. Boccaccio has replaced the kings and noblemen, who were the subjects of the stories preceding this one, with merchants from Genoa and Florence. This replacement is a testimony not just to his actual acquaintance with Italian merchants in Paris (and elsewhere), but to his celebration throughout the *Decameron* of the *ingegno* of his heroes and heroines. *Ingegno* is the kind of practical intelligence, wit, or cleverness that may be found in people of all kinds, but is a major requirement in those who are engaged in commerce. Boccaccio's story influenced other stories in its turn and eventually found its way to England, to become one of the plot strands in Shakespeare's late romance *Cymbeline*.

2 I have rendered Boccaccio's Italian proverb (*lo 'ngannatore rimane a piè dello 'ngannato*) as closely as I can. Unfortunately, it has no exact equivalent in English. There is a large group of folktales, including many from the Middle Ages, that involve a

trickster who is eventually fooled and defeated by his dupe. They are sometimes called "biter-bit" tales, using a slightly archaic expression ("biter" once meant "trickster" or "deceiver"), which nicely captures the inversion implied by Boccaccio's proverb. The Italian proverb can also be found in Sacchetti, *Trecentonovelle* (*Three Hundred Stories*) 198.

3 A number of rich merchants and noblemen from Liguria, the province in which Genoa is located, shared the family name of Lomellin. Boccaccio was familiar with merchant circles in Paris, and the rivalry between Florentine and Genoese merchants there was well known. Ambruogiuolo, who will appear a little later in the story, comes from Piacenza, a city in the region known as Emilia-Romagna in north-central Italy. Merchants from that city were also quite active in France during the late Middle Ages.

4 Ambruogiuolo's sententious remark echoes a famous line in Ovid's *Amores* (*Loves*): *casta est quam nemo rogavit* (1.8.43: "she is chaste whom no one has propositioned").

5 This is the first time the story supplies the name of Bernabò's wife. Zinevra is Genoese for the more standard Italian Ginevra, a fairly common name in the Middle Ages because of the fame of Saint Geneviève, who lived in Paris during the fifth century and was celebrated for her austerity and piety. She is credited with having saved the city from destruction by the Huns under Attila in 451 and for passing through enemy lines to bring food to the city when it was under siege in 464. In the story, Zinevra clearly shares a number of the traits of her namesake, including her virtue and her energy.

6 Women disguising themselves as men was a common motif in the folklore and literature of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

7 Segner En Cararh is a typical Catalan name: "Segner" is an honorific coming from the archaic Catalan "senyer," equivalent to the Spanish "Señor"; and "En" is the equivalent of the Spanish "Don" (from Lat. *dominus,* "lord"). In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Catalans were often allies of the Genoese against the Venetians. Alba, the name of the town where the Catalan captain has gone for water, may be either the modern Albisola or Albenga, both of which are on the Ligurian coast not far from Genoa, but also not far from the town of Finale, from which Zinevra takes her new last name.

8 At this point in the narrative, once Madonna Zinevra has disguised herself as a man, Boccaccio's pronouns referring to her change their gender from feminine to masculine (with one exception later on). They change back again near the end of the story when she finally reveals herself in public to be a woman. In translating the text, I have respected the specific gender of each reference to her.

9 Acre was a fortified coastal city in Syria (now in Israel) that was held for the most part by various crusaders from 1104 until it fell to the Arabs in 1291, marking the end of the crusaders' presence in the Holy Land. Its fall, widely lamented in Europe, did not prevent the city from being a trading center between the Christian West and the Muslim East. Boccaccio's story thus takes place some time after 1291.

10 Boccaccio briefly reverts to using the feminine pronoun for Madonna Zinevra at the start of this paragraph, perhaps because he is dealing with her inner thoughts

and feelings rather than her actions and the impressions she makes on others in her role as Sicurano. By the end of the paragraph, the masculine pronoun has displaced the feminine one.

Day 2, Story 10

1 This story of a May–December marriage has so many antecedents in world literature that identifying any one of them as its source would be a mistake. There was a quarter in Pisa called Chinzica, but there is no record of a Ricciardo ever having lived there. His wife comes from the Gualandi family, which was well established in the city, but there is, likewise, no record of a Bartolomea among its members.

2 The ugliness of Pisan women was proverbial among Florentines. In the Italian, Dioneo speaks of *lucertole verminare* ("wormlike lizards"), an expression that is Neapolitan in origin and refers to a small greenish lizard found in the Campagna.

3 Vernaccia wine is a white wine made from a varietal of the same name that is grown throughout Italy. The name derives from a word meaning "vernacular," i.e., "local." Nowadays, when people say Vernaccia, they are usually referring to the Tuscan white wine, Vernaccia di San Gimignano, but in Boccaccio's time that was not necessarily the case.

4 Ravenna was famous for having almost as many churches as there are days of the year, thus making practically every day a saint's day. Calendars made there would have been attractive to schoolboys because they contained nothing but holidays.

5 Ember Days is the English name (Lat. *quater tempora*) for the periods of fasting to be observed in the four seasons of the year, specifically on the Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday following four specific holy days: the first Sunday in Lent; Whitsunday or Pentecost; Holy Cross Day (September 14); and St. Lucia's Day (December 13). They are also referred to as Ember Weeks.

6 Monte Nero is a promontory located some twenty miles south of Pisa.

7 Although he is called Paganino da Monaco (Paganino of Monaco) in the rubric that serves as the title for the story, here Boccaccio supplies his family name *da Mare,* which was that of a well-known noble family in Genoa. There are no historical records concerning this figure, although there are many instances of members of important Italian families becoming pirates or bandits in the late Middle Ages. Boccaccio features such figures in 2.4 (Landolfo Rufolo), 2.6 (Guasparrino Doria), and 10.2 (Ghino di Tacco). The Monaco from which Paganino hails was a notorious haven for pirates at the time.

8 Boccaccio writes *essendo a lui il calendaro caduto da cintola,* which I have translated as "he had lost his calendar." More literally, the phrase means that the calendar had fallen off his belt, which is apparently where people would carry it.

9 After being sheared, raw wool had to be cleaned, a process that involved washing it and then beating it. Boccaccio clearly uses beating, or "whacking," wool as a metaphor for sexual intercourse here.

10 The lady's sexual wordplay in this sentence is brilliant. First, she replaces Ricciardo's *in peccato mortale* ("in mortal sin") with *in peccato mortaio* ("in mortar sin"). Then,

as she looks to her future with Paganino, she transforms the phrase even more cleverly into *imbeccato pestello,* which I have translated as a matter of living "with the *pestle's-in,*" a pun on "*pestle sin.*" More literally, the phrase means a "pestle [that has been] put in a [baby bird's] mouth [to feed it]." Boccaccio will later see mortar and pestle in such sexualized terms in his Introduction to Day 4, in 8.2, and in the Author's Conclusion.

11 Another untranslatable set of plays on words. The first of the phrases is: *di farla in tre pace.* This contains a play on the expression *fare patta,* meaning "to finish a card game in a stalemate," and thus, "to accomplish nothing." The entire phrase would mean something like "to accomplish nothing three times in a row." But there's also a play on *patta* and *pace* ("peace"), suggesting that the matches were not all that energetic. The second phrase *rizzare a mazzata* means "to straighten [something] by dint of blows [as with a *mazza,* a mace]." However, the phrase can also refer to lifting up a fishing rod to see if any fish are dangling there. I can see no way to work this second meaning into my translation. Note that in her next sentence the lady will refer mockingly to Ricciardo as a *pro' cavaliere.* I have rendered this as "sturdy rider" to bring out the latent sexual meaning, but it meant something more like "valiant or worthy knight," a phrase suggesting that *rizzare a mazzata* may be less about fishing than about wielding a mace, as knights were wont to do.

12 Dioneo's phrase here is *non montavano un frullo,* which could be rendered: "[his words] did not amount to anything," i.e., they made no difference. However, a *frullo* is a bone that has been hollowed out and tied to a cord, and that when whirled in the air makes a sound like the sound of the word itself. *Frullo* was also used for the sound certain birds make when they take off in flight.

13 Boccaccio's original reads: *Il mal furo non vuol festa.* The word I have translated as "hole," *furo,* is a parody of the Pisan pronunciation of *foro.* Although *foro* means "hole," it could also mean "the bar" or "the law courts," a meaning that is ironic in context, since Messer Ricciardo is, after all, a judge. However, the word Boccaccio actually supplies, *furo,* also suggests "thief" (Lat. *fur*), a meaning that likewise seems to fit the context, since Ricciardo's wife has been stolen from him. In fact, the "evil thief" could be the lady herself as well as Paganino since she prefers to remain "stolen."

14 Referring to the dispute at the start of 2.9 between Bernabò and Ambruogiuolo concerning the chastity of Bernabò's wife, Dioneo uses an Italian saying that is untranslatable in any direct way: *Bernabò . . . cavalcasse la capra inverso il chino* (lit.: "Bernabò . . . was riding a she goat down a slope [or toward a precipice]"). The Italian saying *cavalcare la capra* (lit., "to ride a she goat") means to do something stupid, deceive oneself, get things all wrong. Dioneo develops the saying by having the rider go *inverso il chino* ("down the slope" or "toward the precipice"). His having Bernabò ride a she goat rather than a horse is also in keeping with his conception of women (and men) as driven by their sexual appetites, since goats were well known for their randiness.

Day 2, Conclusion

1 The younger women in the company—Filomena, Neifile, and Emilia—frequently blush as a sign of their modesty and innocence. Sparkling or glittering eyes were an attribute of Dante's Beatrice (see, for example, *Purgatorio* 12.89–90), but they were also a cliché in courtly love and popular poetry more generally, as was the association of women's faces with roses. The "morning star" is Venus.

2 Both Fridays and Saturdays were days for fasting. Note that the Sabbath was celebrated in Florence between noon on Saturday and noon on Sunday.

3 Neifile's topic focuses on the *industria* displayed by people in getting what they want. I have translated that key word as "resourcefulness," but it actually has a range of meanings from industriousness and hard work at one extreme, through resourcefulness and inventiveness, down to cleverness and trickiness at the other.

4 Pampinea's song reflects her general serenity and happiness. Its motifs can be traced back to Petrarch's *Canzoniere* (*Song Book*). For examples, see poems 14, 26, 59, and 70.

Day 3, Introduction

1 This new palace is very much like the first one the company stayed in, the only exception being the walled garden next to it that is accorded an elaborate description that evokes the Garden of Eden. Halfway to the hour of tierce would make it in between sunrise and midmorning. On the canonical hours, see Headnote 2.

2 Boccaccio's narrator says that the members of the company considered the owner of the palace to be *magnifico*. Although that word started being used as a substantive in the fifteenth century to mean a great and noble person (Lorenzo de' Medici was known as *il Magnifico*), when Boccaccio was writing it was an adjective that meant someone endowed with greatness, nobility, and especially, generosity or liberality. In the Aristotelian tradition, it was one of the defining features of aristocrats and referred to a liberality of expenditure combined with good taste. That Boccaccio is thinking of just such an aristocratic sense of the word is evident in his use of *signore* ("lord") when speaking of the owner of the palace.

Day 3, Story 1

1 There are antecedents for this story in the *Novellino* (62) as well as, more generally, in the *fabliau* tradition.

2 Lamporecchio is a small village near Pistoia to the north of Florence.

3 Nuto's oath in this sentence ("unless God gives . . .") is *il faccia Idio san delle reni*, which means literally, "May God make him sound in his loins." It may reflect the fact that the Bible frequently connects God with the loins (see Psalms 16:7, 26:2 and 73:21).

Day 3, Story 2

1 Although there are many antecedents for the groom's cleverness and the King's prudence in tale collections that appeared before the *Decameron,* no particular story can be identified as the source for this one.
2 Agilulf, who had been the Duke of Turin, ruled over the Lombards from 590, the year in which he married Theodolinda, the widow of King Authari, until his death in 616. The Lombards had taken Pavia in 572 and controlled most of Italy north of the Po River. Boccaccio's source for this historical information is the third book of the eighth-century *Historia Longobardorum* (*History of the Lombards*) of Paulus Diaconus. This work was also a source for Boccaccio's description of the plague in the Introduction to the first day.
3 According to the conventions of courtly love, even though the lover is rejected or ignored by his beloved, the very fact that he loves such a worthy object serves to ennoble him.

Day 3, Story 3

1 There is no source for this story.
2 After Saint Gregory the Great celebrated thirty Masses for the soul of the monk Justus in 590, the "Gregorian Thirty," as they were called, would be offered on thirty consecutive days for a specific soul in Purgatory, after which that soul would be released into Heaven. The "forty" in the text may either be Boccaccio's mistake or the lady's exaggeration.
3 They are making comments here at the expense of the lady's husband.

Day 3, Story 4

1 There is no source for this story, which was also told by Chaucer, in a very different way, in *The Miller's Tale* and by Giovanni Sercambi in *Il novelliere* (111 and 117). The figure of the gullible religious devotee appears frequently in the *Decameron*; see, for instance, 3.3 and 7.1. "Dom" was a title (from Lat. *dominus,* "lord") given to monks who had earned some sort of distinction, such as, in this case, having completed theological studies at the prestigious University of Paris. Felice means "happy, fortunate." Puccio is a pet name; it derives from Giacopuccio and means "Jimmy."
2 San Pancrazio is a church in the center of Florence not far from Santa Maria Novella. Tertiaries (from Lat. *tertius,* "third") were lay members of the "third order" of the Franciscans (after the Friars Minor and the Poor Clares); they did not have to follow all the rules of the order or live in the monastery, but took simple vows and were allowed to wear the habit.
3 The Flagellants were organized bands of the devout who whipped themselves in public. They started appearing in the twelfth century and became quite numerous after the outbreak of the plague in 1348.
4 Casole: a town in the Val d'Elsa some seventeen miles to the west of Siena.

5 "Frate Nastagio" (Anastasius) here is probably meant as a generic name for preachers, since there is no collection of sermons attributed to such a person. There were many versions of the Lament of Mary Magdalene circulating in late medieval culture.

6 Both Saints Benedict and Giovanni Gualberto were frequently depicted in the Middle Ages as riding on an ass. The image here is, of course, sexual in nature.

Day 3, Story 5

1 There is no source for this story. The Vergellesi, or Vergiolesi, was a prominent family in Pistoia, and one of its members, named Francesco, was sent on a political mission to France in 1313 and became a *podestà* in Lombardy in 1326.

2 When Zima speaks, he uses the conventional, hyperbolic language of courtly love, thus demonstrating that his linguistic skill is as refined as his taste in clothing and personal adornment.

Day 3, Story 6

1 There are many precedents for this kind of story in Eastern collections. Ricciardo Minutolo came from an important family in Naples, one of whose members, an archbishop named Filippo Minutolo, who died in 1301, is mentioned in 2.5. There was a Filippo (Filippello is the diminutive) Sighinolfi who held various administrative positions under Queen Giovanna I of Naples (b. 1328, ruled 1344–82); Boccaccio was on friendly terms with the family. Catella, the name of Filippello's wife, is an endearing form of Caterina. The baths were notorious as places where lovers met for trysts and prostitution was regularly carried on.

2 Since the woman who manages the baths is essentially arranging romantic trysts and illicit sexual liaisons, the narrator's references to her as "the good woman" are obviously ironic. The Minutolo family actually owned a bathhouse in Naples in the early thirteenth century, which may explain why the next sentence says that the good woman was very much in Ricciardo's debt.

3 Ricciardo's arguments here are the same ones that Tarquin used after raping the Roman matron Lucretia; Boccaccio rehearses them in his *De mulieribus claris* (*On Famous Women*), 48, and could have found them in Livy, *Ab urbe condita* (*From the Founding of the City*), 1.58, and Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri IX* (*Nine Books of Memorable Deeds and Sayings*), 6.1.

Day 3, Story 7

1 There is no source for this story.

2 The two families of the Elisei and the Palermini were among the oldest and most prominent in Florence. There were no Tedaldos, Aldobrandinos, or Ermellinas in either of them, however, although those first names were rather common in the city.

3 Ancona is a seaport on the Adriatic somewhat more than a hundred miles to the east and slightly south of Florence. Not far away there is a town called San Lodeccio

(or Saludeccio), which explains the name Tedaldo assumes when he arrives in Ancona.

4 Tedaldo's statement about converting her tears into laughter inverts biblical notions in both the Old and New Testaments emphasizing how laughter will—and should—be turned into sadness; see Proverbs 14:13 and James 4:9. But at the same time, Tedaldo is also bringing the lady a secular version of the "good news" Christ brings to humanity in the New Testament.

5 Satan was frequently depicted as eating sinners in medieval art, such as in the Baptistery in Florence. Dante's three-headed Satan has three mouths with which he chews for eternity on those whom Dante saw as the ultimate betrayers: Judas, Brutus, and Cassius.

6 The closest parallel to this quotation in the Bible is Acts 1:1: *coepit Jesus facere et docere* ("Jesus began both to do and teach"). For more general parallels, see Matthew 4:23, Mark 1:21, and Luke 4:18.

7 Tedaldo's distinction here between lust, on the one hand, and robbery and murder, on the other, follows the usual Aristotelian and Thomistic distinction, which Dante also uses in the *Inferno,* namely that between sins of incontinence, such as lust and gluttony, which involve defective appetite, and those of violence, such as murder, which involve a perverted will (i.e., malice).

8 Compare this attack on the gluttony of friars to that at the end of 1.6.

9 Faziuolo is the diminutive of Bonifazio (Boniface). His full name identifies him as coming from Pontremoli, which is in Lunigiana, the northernmost part of Tuscany.

Day 3, Story 8

1 This story has, at best, vague antecedents in French *fabliaux* and tales from the East.

2 Penitents typically kneeled at the feet of their confessors; the confessional booth was only introduced after the Council of Trent met to reform the Catholic Church (1545–63).

3 The Old Man of the Mountain was Rashid ad-Din As-sinan (d. 1192), leader of the Syrian branch of a Shiite sect known as the Assassins that was active between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. He got his name from the fact that his stronghold was a fortress at Masyaf in the mountains of northern Syria. His followers were called Assassins (Hashishim) from the hashish they smoked, which induced visions before they were sent off to murder their enemies. In his *Il milione* (*The Million,* known in English as *The Travels of Marco Polo*), from the late thirteenth century, Marco Polo described how the Old Man of the Mountain supposedly had a beautiful garden in the mountains that he identified as Paradise. He attracted a following of young people, would put them into a deep sleep, and have them transported there, after which he had them consume a drug before sending them off on their murderous enterprises. Boccaccio actually transcribed this passage from *Il milione* in his notebooks and wrote in the margin *il veglio della montagna* ("The Old Man of the Mountain").

4 The "Ark-Ranger Bagriel" (*Ragnolo Braghiello* in Italian) is Ferondo's corruption of either "Archangel" or "Angel Gabriel" (*Arcagnolo* or *Agnolo Gabriele*), revealing a verbal deficiency he shares with other dupes in the *Decameron*. His linguistic confusion is especially funny in the original, since he is conflating the high with the low, the word for archangel or angel with that for spider (*ragno*), and the name Gabriel with the word for breeches (*le brache*) to which a diminutive ending has been added.

Day 3, Story 9

1 The bed trick, which is central to Boccaccio's plot, was a widely diffused motif in both Eastern and Western story collections during the Middle Ages. Shakespeare's *All's Well That Ends Well* is based on this tale, which he may have read in Antoine de Maçon's French version of the *Decameron* of 1545 or in William Painter's translation, in his *Palace of Pleasure,* of 1575. All the characters in the story appear to be fictitious. The names Beltramo (Bertram) and Giletta (the Italianized form of the French Gillette, itself the feminine form of Gilles) were widely diffused in the Middle Ages.

2 Roussillon, whose capital city is Perpignan, is a region in southwestern France bordered by the Mediterranean to the east, the Pyrenees to the south, and Andorra to the west; in the late Middle Ages it was part of Aragon and was controlled by the rulers of Catalonia. Narbonne was a port town on the Mediterranean to the east of Roussillon, some thirty-five miles from Perpignan.

3 A fistula is an abnormal connection between an organ or a blood vessel and some other part of the body; it is often caused by surgery as well as infection and inflammation.

4 Montpellier was an important trading center in the late Middle Ages and had a famous medical school. It lies approximately halfway between Italy and Spain and is about six miles from the Mediterranean and sixty miles from Roussillon.

Day 3, Story 10

1 There are only the vaguest of antecedents for this story. Throughout history there were a number of holy men named Rustico who were known for their continence, including several saints, the most famous of whom was probably Saint Rustico of Narbonne (d. 461). Rustico's name was probably meant to recall such figures, but it is clearly ironic in the story and was most likely chosen because of its "meaning": Rustico is a "rustic," a rube, who badly overestimates his ability to satisfy Alibech. The latter's name is equally suggestive. It is meant to sound Arabic: the name Ali was well known in western Europe during the Middle Ages as being that of Mohammad's follower who founded the Shiite branch of Islam (see Dante, *Inferno* 31–33). However, "Ali" could also suggest the idea of nourishment (*alimentare* means "to feed"), and "bech" might evoke the idea of eating (*beccare* means "to peck at [like a bird]"). These meanings of Alibech's name may be relevant at the climax of the

story when the exhausted Rustico can no longer handle his all-too-willing pupil, and the narrator makes a joke about a bean and a lion's mouth.

2 This last phrase also occurs in Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* (2.7), where it has a similar sexual meaning.

Day 3, Conclusion

1 Neifile's last phrase is, in Italian, *l'ossa senza maestro avrebbono apparato a sufolare,* which could be rendered more literally as: "your bones, without a teacher, would have learned how to whistle." The essence of her gibe is that Filostrato, like Masetto with the nuns, would have been so worn out from having served the "sheep" sexually that he would have been reduced to nothing but hollowed-out bones emptied of their marrow. That they would be making a whistling sound allows for two different interpretations. One is that the men would be reduced to a heap of hollow bones that had been turned into flute- or pipe-like instruments through which the wind could whistle. This meaning derives from the fact that *sufolare* (*zufolare* in modern Italian) means not just to whistle, but to play an instrument, such as a pipe or a flute, a *zufolo,* that makes a whistling sound. Another possible interpretation has Neifile compounding her insult by implying that Filostrato would be reduced to a skeleton hanging on a gibbet, the fate usually meted out to lower-class criminals, through which the wind would whistle as it blows.

2 The song of Messer Guiglielmo and the Lady of Vergiù was evidently an Italian version of the fourteenth-century French poem *La Chastelaine de Vergi* ("The Mistress of the Garden").

3 Lauretta's phrase here, *lassa innamorata* ("cast down, tired out, or exhausted by Love"), seems intended to echo the meaning of Filostrato's name ("cast down, or overcome, by Love"). The third line of the song is based on the last line of Dante's *Commedia,* which describes God as *L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle* (*Paradiso* 33.145: "The love that moves the sun and the other stars").

4 Lauretta's melancholy song anticipates the sad tales that will be told on Day 4. Critics have attempted to link it to Boccaccio's own life and to allegorize it in various ways, but with little success.

5 The reference to the setting of the stars indicates that the group has stayed up past midnight.

Day 4, Introduction

1 Boccaccio's image of a fierce wind striking the tops of trees is taken from Dante, *Paradiso* (17.133–34). In what follows, Boccaccio will defend the artistic value of the low genre of vernacular prose. He will also deal with potential critics of the perspectives and themes he adopts in his works, anticipating their objections and responding to them one by one. It is possible that the thirty stories of the first three days of the *Decameron* were already in circulation at this point, but there is no hard evidence that that was the case.

2 Boccaccio's reference to his work as being *senza titolo*, "without a title," is clarified by what he wrote in his commentary on Dante, in which he says that Ovid's love lyrics, his *Amores (Loves)*, were often dubbed *Sine titulo (Without Title)*, because of the diversity of the work's contents. A similar statement might be made about the *Decameron*, which offers many different kinds of stories. Note that Boccaccio's claim about his humble and low style is an example of false modesty; he is extremely capable of manipulating many different stylistic registers in his work.

3 Boccaccio is citing Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri IX (Nine Books of Memorable Deeds and Sayings)*, 4.7.2: *sola miseria caret invidia.*

4 The partial tale that Boccaccio recounts here has antecedents in the Indian epic the *Ramayana*, as well as in *Barlaam and Josaphat*, a Christianized version of the life of the Buddha that came to the West through a variety of intermediaries. The story was widely diffused thanks to translations of this last work, and it appeared in the *Novellino* (14), among other texts. Note that several members of the Balducci family were employed by the Florentine banking firm of the Bardi, for which Boccaccio's father also worked.

5 This image of the leek also appears in 1.10.

6 Guido Cavalcanti (ca. 1259–1300), Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), and Cino da Pistoia (ca. 1265–1336) were the three greatest practitioners of the *Dolce Stil Novo* ("Sweet New Style"), a type of courtly love lyric celebrating women's beauty and linking it to philosophical truths. Guido appears in the *Decameron* as the protagonist of 6.9, and Dante is a constant, though implicit, presence in Boccaccio's work. Cino was a lawyer as well as a poet, and Boccaccio apparently attended his lectures on law in Naples.

7 The Apostle is Paul. See his letter to the Philippians 4:12: *Scio et humiliari et abundare ubique et in omnibus institutus sum et satiari et esurire et abundare et penuriam pati* ("I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need").

8 Boccaccio's "warmth" may be referring to the "heat" of love and passion, or to some warm feeling of sympathy his critics might have for his work.

Day 4, Story 1

1 Although there is no specific source for this story, one of the most popular in the *Decameron*, a poisoned chalice does appear in a love story in Paulus Diaconus's *Historia Longobardorum (History of the Lombards)*, 2.28, as well as in the French *Roman du Châtelain de Couci (The Romance of the Lord of the Castle of Couci)*. The characters in Boccaccio's story are not historical, but their names are those of various Norman princes, who did, in fact, control Salerno, although none of its rulers was named Tancredi in the period before Boccaccio wrote his story.

2 Note that this is Guiscardo's only speech in the story. His words may be seen as echoing Vergil's in the tenth eclogue (69: *Omnia vincit Amor*: "Love conquers all") and perhaps those of the tragic lover Francesca in Dante's *Inferno*: *Amor, che a nessun*

amato amar perdona (5.103: "Love, that does not pardon someone who is loved for not loving").

3 Ghismunda is addressing Guiscardo's heart, and it was a common belief in Boccaccio's time that the soul of an individual was lodged in that organ.

Day 4, Story 2

1 Boccaccio was familiar with several versions of this story that were circulating in the Middle Ages. They are all traceable back to Greek antiquity to such works as Chariton of Aphrodisias's romance *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, the *Romance of Alexander* of the Pseudo-Callisthenes, and the story of Mundus and Paulina in Flavius Josephus's *Antiquities of the Jews* (18.7).

2 According to the rule of their order, the lives of the Franciscans were to be modeled on that of their founder, Saint Francis of Assisi. They were to wander from town to town, preaching and aiding the poor and the sick, while living in poverty themselves and avoiding any contact with money. On the basis of topographical references in the story, one may imagine that the protagonist joins the convent of Franciscans that was attached to the Venetian Church of Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari that is located to the south of the Grand Canal and the Rialto bridge.

3 What I have translated as one of the "most authoritative churchmen" in Venice appears in Boccaccio's Italian as one of the greater *cassesi*. This word comes from Arabic and appears in Turkish as well, and in the sixteenth century it was used to denote a particularly important Christian priest. The fact that Boccaccio employs it here suggests that it had already gained some currency by the fourteenth century, and perhaps especially in Venice, which had substantial communities of Middle Eastern traders. If so, then Boccaccio is using it for the sake of providing something like local color.

4 No historical figure has been found with whom Frate Alberto may be identified. His name, Berto (short for Alberto) della Massa, suggests he may be imagined as having come from Massa Lombarda, a town close to Imola, which lies to the southeast of Bologna in the province of Emilia-Romagna.

5 Boccaccio gives vent to anti-Venetian sentiments here and throughout this story. He may have been motivated by the fact that Venice was a great political and commercial rival to Florence in the fourteenth century (as it would continue to be for the next two hundred years).

6 Madonna Lisetta's name is given in the Venetian fashion: she is Lisetta (short for Elisabetta, "Elizabeth") from the House ("Ca'") of the Quirini (or, more usually, Querini), an important family in the city. In the late Middle Ages, there were many women in that family whose first names were variants on Elisabetta. The reference to "lover" in the next sentence is my translation of *amadore*, the variant that Boccaccio uses for *amatore* (lover) and whose spelling is intended to suggest Venetian dialect.

7 Boccaccio's word for "friend" here is *comare*. Technically, this means godmother, but it often simply designated a close female friend, a neighbor, and a gossip, as it does here.

8 The Maremma was a sparsely populated, marshy, desolate, inhospitable area in the southwestern part of Tuscany. Madonna Lisetta's reference to it as being something on a par with the world suggests, again, the limits of her knowledge and intelligence.

9 The Rialto was one of the business centers of Venice where the only bridge spanning the Grand Canal was located. It was on the opposite side of the canal from Lisetta's house.

10 Although it is not clear which festival is occurring here, the activities associated with it in the story were shared with many festivals throughout the year, and especially with carnival. Among those activities were dressing people up as wild animals or wild men and staging a hunt, which typically involved tying a boar up with a chain and then setting dogs on it, dogs like the two Frate Alberto will be leading. The dogs were normally chained as well. In the story, Frate Alberto himself becomes a version of the chained animal, and he is physically and symbolically punished by the crowd for his mockery of religion and his violation of marriage. Festival times were often used by the populace of towns and cities to visit such unofficial justice on those who broke the largely unwritten rules of the community.

11 Frate Alberto is being dressed as a wild man. In medieval and Renaissance folklore, such figures were believed to dwell in the woods and were usually represented as hairy, naked or semi-naked, and carrying a stick or club. Since they were symbolic of everything opposed to civilization, Frate Alberto's being dressed up like one is certainly suggestive.

Day 4, Story 3

1 There is no specific antecedent for this story, although it contains many motifs that can be found in Greek romance.

2 Lauretta's definition of anger is derived from Aristotle (*Rhetoric* 2.2.2 [1378a–1380a]), by way of Saint Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologica* 2.2, question 158).

3 In Provençal, "N'" is an honorific, the equivalent of the Spanish "Don."

4 A brigantine was a fast, sleek sailing vessel often used for piracy or espionage in the Mediterranean.

5 Candia, the modern Heraklion, was the largest city on Crete, which the Venetians had purchased from the Byzantine Empire in 1204; its name came from the Arabic word for the city, Khandaq ("Moat"). The Peruzzi family of Florence had a branch of their bank there.

Day 4, Story 4

1 There is no specific antecedent for this story, although some scholars want to relate it to a supposed historical event reported by a medieval chronicler, Roberto di Torigny, namely the capture of a galley containing a princess, the daughter of a king who ruled over North Africa and Spain, by ships belonging to William II of Sicily in 1179 or 1180. William II ruled from 1166 to 1189, but contrary to what Boccaccio says in the story, he had no children and was succeeded by his aunt Gostanza (Constanza).

Gerbino is an entirely fictitious character, as is the King of Granada, whose country was not established as such until the thirteenth century. His name could be Sicilian, deriving from *sgirbinu,* meaning "light blue," or from *gerbo,* meaning "uncultivated land." He could also be named after the island of Djerba (*Gerba* in Italian), which lies just off the Tunisian coast.

2 Elissa, who is named after Dido, the Queen of Carthage, in Vergil's *Aeneid* tells the only tale on Day 4 that has a North African connection.

3 Barbary usually refers to the entire northern coast of Africa west of Egypt, including the modern countries of Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco, but here it seems limited to Tunisia, which is called the Kingdom of Tunis.

4 Vergil is the likeliest source for the epic simile being used here; see, for example, *Aeneid* 9.339–42.

Day 4, Story 5

1 There is no specific source for this story, although the tragic ghost of a former lover does appear in Apuleius, *Metamorphoses,* 8.8 and 9.31. The beginning of the song cited at the end of the story resembles that of a song in Neapolitan dialect that has been preserved in several different versions, although none recount the tale that Boccaccio provides to explain why a woman would be weeping over a pot of basil. The sexual innuendo involved in the song, in which a woman complains about a man's having stolen her pot of basil, has been considerably transformed in Boccaccio's story. This story is the source of Keats's poem *Isabella; or, The Pot of Basil.*

2 In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Messina actually had various "colonies" composed of merchants from San Gimignano, the celebrated "City of a Thousand Towers" in Tuscany, that was an important center of the wool trade in the period. There were also close connections among traders in Messina and Naples, to which the three brothers move at the end of the story.

3 Since Salerno is not especially known for its basil, this could be a slip of the pen on Boccaccio's part, who might have been thinking of the basil of Benevento, which was famous for its powerful aroma.

Day 4, Story 6

1 There is no specific source for this story.

2 This name is probably a deformation of da Ponte Carali, or Poncarale, the name of an important family in Brescia, one of whose members had been the *podestà* in Florence and later in Siena during the 1340s. There was also a Brescian named Paolo di Negro who held a military position in Florence in 1347–48. Gabriotto, the name of Andreuola's lover, who is mentioned two sentences later, is a Brescian version of Gabriele.

3 Traditionally, red roses were associated with the passion of love, while white ones signified regeneration and resurrection after death, thus linking together the two motifs of love and death, which the roses continue to evoke throughout the story.

Day 4, Story 7

1 There is no specific source for this story. However, the Florentine setting is rendered with great historical accuracy. Simona and Pasquino are the first tragic working-class heroes in European literature.

2 Just beyond the San Gallo gate on the north side of Florence stood the church of the same name, together with its convent and hospital, all of which dated back at least to the early thirteenth century. According to Franco Sacchetti (ca. 1330–1400), people would go there to the pardoning on the first Sunday of every month both to obtain indulgences (pardons) for their sins and to enjoy a day in the countryside. Lagina is the diminutive form of Lagia, itself short for Adalagia (Adelaide), then a popular name in the city. Puccino, the first name of Pasquino's friend, who is mentioned in the next sentence, is the diminutive of Jacopo (Jacopino), or Jimmy. His nickname, *lo Stramba,* is pejorative and means "the odd or eccentric one," which I have turned into "Kooky."

3 Since antiquity, medical authorities thought that sage had various curative and health-giving qualities. But there was also a superstition in the Middle Ages that toads were venomous and would leave traces of their venom behind when they chewed on the leaves of plants.

4 Pasquino's two other friends are *l'Atticciato* and *il Malagevole.* The first nickname means someone who is husky or stocky. The second means someone who is awkward: hence, Clumsy.

5 Guccio the Slob (*Guccio Imbratta*) also makes an appearance as the servant of Frate Cipolla in 6.10. The Church of San Paolo is today that of San Paolino.

Day 4, Story 8

1 There is no specific source for this story.

2 The Sighieri family lived in the quarter of San Pancrazio, and many of its members belonged to the guilds of the merchants and the money changers. According to his will, a certain Giovannone di Michele Sighieri owned property in France, albeit in the southern part of the country.

3 Boccaccio says that the boy's mother believed she could *fare del pruno un melrancio,* which I have translated as "turn a plum into an orange tree," meaning that she thought she could transform something less valuable into something of greater worth. *Pruno* could mean "thorn" or "thornbush" here, but "plum (tree)" seems likelier.

4 Boccaccio says that Girolamo died, *ristretti in sé gli spiriti.* The phrase means that he repressed or held back his (vital) spirits *in sé,* that is, either inside himself or in themselves. In Galenic medicine, which dominated the Middle Ages, the human organism lives because the lungs transfer *pneuma,* that is, air or vital spirits, to the heart, which heats them and distributes them throughout the body. Girolamo has supposedly stopped this process, possibly suffocating himself by holding his breath.

Day 4, Story 9

1 Versions of this story can be found in romances throughout the late medieval period. Boccaccio's narrator indicates that his story is based on some Provençal account of a (fictitious) love triangle involving the troubadour Guilhem de Cabestaing (1162–1212), his lord Raimon de Castel-Rossillon (d. 1209), and the latter's wife Saurimonda de Pietralata who married Raimon in 1197, was remarried in 1210, a year after Raimon's death, and was still alive as late as 1221. The motif of the eaten heart can also be found in the courtly love tradition immediately preceding Boccaccio. In his *Vita nuova* (*The New Life*), 3, for instance, Dante has a dream in which his heart is eaten by a woman.

2 The preceding clause is a translation of *s'armavano assai*. This is the reading in the most important manuscript of Boccaccio's work, the Hamilton codex, although there is a variant in other manuscripts: *s'amavano assai*. In this case, the clause would read: "they loved one another very deeply."

3 In the Provençal versions of the story, Rossiglione is in fact punished by King Alfonso II of Aragon (b. 1152, ruled 1162–96), who inherited the County of Roussillon in 1172. Note that he died before the events in the story could have taken place.

Day 4, Story 10

1 This story has no specific antecedent, except for the motif of the lover hidden in a chest, although in most cases, the lover gets inside it of his own volition in order to avoid detection by the lady's husband.

2 This is Matteo Selvatico from Mantua (Lat. *Mantuanus*, often corrupted as *Montanus*; hence, It. *della Montagna*: "of the Mountain") who dedicated a huge encyclopedic work on medicine to King Robert of Naples (b. 1277, ruled 1309–43) in 1317 and died, a very old man, some time after 1342.

3 Messer Ricciardo di Chinzica appears in 2.10.

4 Boccaccio is probably thinking of Ruggiero Meli or Mele, who lived a dissolute life and eventually became a bandit during the reign of Queen Giovanna of Naples (b. 1328, ruled 1343–82). Aieroli (or Agerola) was the name of a tract of land that was owned by Ruggiero's family and that he often used in his escapades.

5 This last clause is an Italian saying, meaning that someone was fast asleep or dead to the world: *egli aveva a buona caviglia legato l'asino*. A literal translation would be: "he had tied his ass to a good peg (or post)."

6 Half tierce means halfway between prime and tierce, i.e., between dawn and midmorning.

7 In Italian, Dioneo says she was someone *alla quale strignevano i cintolini*. Literally, this means that her laces—usually the ones holding up one's stockings—were too tight. In modern English we might say that her shoes were pinching her feet.

8 What I have translated in this sentence as "nice little piece of God's creation" is Boccaccio's *cristianella di Dio*, a phrase that means literally "God's little Christian woman (or girl)." *Cristianella*, the diminutive of *Cristiana*, occurs nowhere else in

Italian literature according to Salvatore Battaglia's *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana* (*Great Dictionary of the Italian Language*), which defines it as *povera donna*, "poor woman," and goes on to specify that "poor" implies both scorn and affection. My sense is that in this context it implies the former more than the latter since the judge is about to take advantage of the maid and the word reflects his (and Dioneo's) perspective on the matter.

Day 5, Story 1

1 Although this story contains many motifs from Greek romance, there is no single source for it. The theme of its first half—the educational and transformative power of love and beauty—made it quite popular, and it was both imitated by later writers and made the subject of paintings by Botticelli, Veronese, Rubens, and others.

2 Cimone's real name, Galeso, comes from a Greek word meaning "milk," but Boccaccio's etymology for "Cimone" is misleading. It could be related to the Greek words for goat or for the muzzle of an animal, but is more likely meant to recall the historical Cimon (510–450 BCE), who was the son of Miltiades, the hero of the battle of Marathon. Cimon himself became a famous political leader and general in Athens who was celebrated for his bravery in the naval battle of Salamis, but who was said to have been somewhat simpleminded when he was a young man by both Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri IX* (*Nine Books of Memorable Deeds and Sayings*), 6.9.3, and Plutarch in his *Life of Cimon*. The name might also suggest the Italian word *scimmione*, which means "large monkey" or "ape." The name of Cimone's father, Aristippo, is also Greek and may have been chosen simply for that reason, although there was a famous philosopher named Aristippus (ca. 435–366 BCE) who was a follower of Socrates and founder of what was known as the Cyrenaic school of hedonism. Efigenia, Cimone's beloved, is Boccaccio's Italianized version of Iphigenia ("wellborn"), but it is hard to see much of a connection between her and the tragic Greek heroine. All the other characters likewise have Italianized versions of Greek names, which seem chosen primarily to suit the setting of the story.

3 In Italian, she says, *Cimone, rimanti con Dio*, which means, literally, "Cimone, abide [remain] with God." Although she is essentially saying "good-bye," her phrase is a variant of the more usual *va' con Dio* (nowadays: *addio*), and she has no doubt chosen it because she really does want Cimone to *remain* where he is and to let her get away.

Day 5, Story 2

1 There are a few antecedents for the advice that Martuccio offers the King and even more for Gostanza's voyage at sea, but there is no specific story on which this one is modeled. Lipari is the largest of the Aeolian islands off the northern coast of Sicily. During the late Middle Ages it was often used as a base by pirates, which is what the hero of this story becomes. Note that Lipari also figures in the story of Madama Beritola (2.6).

2 Although there is no historical record of a Martuccio Gomito, there were many people named Gomito living in the Kingdom of Naples in Boccaccio's day. Martuccio is the diminutive of Martino; Gostanza is a variant of Costanza (Constance).

3 Boccaccio is usually quite accurate about geography, but a light, northerly wind would have driven Gostanza's boat to the shore of Sicily, not to Susa (which does indeed lie about a hundred miles south of Tunis).

4 Meriabdela may be a mistake for Muliabdela. *Muli-* derives from an Arabic word meaning "my lord," and *-abdela* is an Italianized version of Abd Allah, which was the actual name of several kings who ruled in Tunis during Boccaccio's lifetime.

Day 5, Story 3

1 There is no antecedent for this story, although the protagonists of medieval romances typically wander through landscapes filled with surprises and adventures.

2 There were two families named Boccamazza living in Rome in the fourteenth century, one of which had an Angela in it who was still alive in 1394 and may have been a descendant of Agnolella. There were no Pietros, however, in either branch of the family, and nothing is known about the family of Gigliuozzo Saullo. Boccaccio's complaint here about the decadence of contemporary Rome is not an isolated one in his works and is a sentiment he shared with Petrarch. Both were reacting to the decay of the city during the period known as the Babylonian Captivity, when the Papacy was transferred to Avignon between 1305 and 1377 and was under the thumb of the French kings, leaving Rome to be overrun by gangs of bandits. Boccaccio's reference to Rome as being once "the head of the world" is a translation of a common inscription found on Roman coins, *Roma caput mundi.*

3 Anagni is a town about thirty miles southeast of Rome. To get there, the couple plans to follow the ancient *via Latina* that continued on to Naples. Scholars have suggested that they make a wrong turn at Casale Ciampino, about nine miles outside of the city, and then get lost in the forest of Aglio near Frascati.

4 The Orsini was a powerful, aristocratic Roman family who, as Guelfs, supported the Church in its struggle with the Holy Roman Empire in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Their enemy was the Colonna family, who, as Ghibellines, backed the Empire. Presumably, the soldiers who capture Pietro are members of the Colonna faction.

5 One branch of the Orsini family had taken its name from the properties it owned near the Campo dei Fiori in Rome, and one of its members, who was, in fact, named Liello (most likely a diminutive of Raffaello), lived around the end of the thirteenth century and the start of the fourteenth. His wife was Banna di Tolomea de' Leoni di Montanea, and she was still alive in 1352. The family actually did have a castle east of Grottaferrata. Note that one of Boccaccio's friends and patrons was Niccolò Orsini who often entertained the writer in his castles.

Day 5, Story 4

1 Although a number of different stories have been proposed as sources for this one, none of them is sufficiently close to merit that label. However, the nightingale, which is central to the story, was frequently associated with sex throughout medieval European literature.

2 Lizio da Valbona is a historical character, a Guelf lord who was a minor military and political figure in the second half of the thirteenth century, and who was celebrated for his nobility and generosity. Lizio appears as a character in the *Novellino* (47) and is mentioned by Dante in *Purgatorio* 14.97, a line that also contains a reference to Arrigo Mainardi. In Boccaccio's story, the family name appears as Manardi, and there was no Ricciardo among its members.

3 According to ancient and medieval medical theory, women became colder (i.e., colder humors such as melancholy became more dominant in them) as they aged.

Day 5, Story 5

1 This story has many touches that recall Roman comedy, especially the recognition scene in Plautus's *Epidicus*. Most of it takes place in Faenza, a northern Italian city southwest of Ravenna, thirteen years after the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II captured it in 1241. Fano, which is also mentioned in the story, is, like Ravenna, on the Adriatic, but farther south. Giannole di Severino and Minghino di Mingole were common names in medieval Faenza.

2 What I have rendered as *podestà* here is actually called the *capitano della terra* ("Captain of the Town") in the text, a figure who was also identified as the *capitano di giustizia* ("Captain of Justice"), and whose functions resembled those of the *podestà*.

3 There is a town named Medicina quite close to Bologna, and there were several families in the province of Emilia with that surname, but Boccaccio's character has not been identified with any specific historical figure from the area.

Day 5, Story 6

1 This story is a reworking of a central episode from Boccaccio's own *Il Filocolo*, but it is adapted here to a very specific historical context. The Hohenstaufen family of Germany had controlled Sicily in the early thirteenth century as part of the Holy Roman Empire, but had been ousted from it by Charles of Anjou, who, with papal support, became king of the island in 1265. The Sicilians disliked his rule, however, and in 1282, a group of French soldiers were killed in Palermo around the time of vespers, thus beginning the War of the Sicilian Vespers, which the House of Anjou and the Papacy lost to the House of Aragon, whose rulers were related to the Hohenstaufens, and thus to the Empire, by marriage. Frederick III (or II) of Aragon, the King Frederick of the story, was named regent for the Aragonese monarchy in 1291 and became King of Sicily in 1296, ruling the island until 1337. Ruggieri de Loria (or di Lauria) (ca. 1245–1305) was, in fact, his Admiral, and since he would leave Sicily

in 1297 or 1298 and begin serving the House of Anjou (although he was eventually reconciled with Frederick), the incidents described in the story would have occurred in 1296–97. Moreover, the girl in the story is identified as the daughter of Marin Bolgaro, and although there is no evidence that this nobleman helped hold Ischia for Frederick, that island did remain under his control until 1299. Finally, the young man, Gianni di Procida, is later revealed to be the son of Landolfo di Procida, the supposed brother of Gianni di Procida (or Giovanni da Procida) (1210–98), a doctor and diplomat who worked for the Aragonese cause in Sicily and was made Lord Chancellor of the island in 1283.

2 Restituta was apparently a popular name on Ischia because the people of the island were especially devoted to Saint Restituta, a North African saint and martyr who died in either 255 or 304.

3 Gianni's swimming from one island to the other recalls the classical tale of Hero, whose lover Leander would swim across the Hellespont to be with her until he accidentally drowned one night (and she killed herself in response). Boccaccio could have read the story in the third book of Vergil's *Georgics* or in Ovid's *Heroides* 18 and 19, and had already told it at greater length in his *Filocolo* earlier in his career.

4 La Cuba was a building, surrounded by gardens, that William II, King of Sicily, had constructed outside Palermo in 1180. The name may refer to its cubical shape or, more likely, came from a Moorish word meaning a recessed place. The building survives to this day.

5 Gianni sails from Punta Campanella, here called Minerva, which is across from the island of Capri at the southern tip of the Gulf of Naples, to the town of Scalea, which is in Calabria about halfway between Naples and the Straits of Messina.

Day 5, Story 7

1 There is no specific source for this story. It takes place during the reign of William II, the Norman King of Sicily (b. 1155, ruled 1166–89). The Abate (Abbate) family, to which Amerigo supposedly belongs, were *capitani,* that is, leaders of the local militia, in Trapani under the Normans and, after them, under the Aragonese. There is no Amerigo among its members, although there is an Arrigo who was a privy counselor to King Frederick II in the next century.

2 The Armenia in question here is what historians refer to as Lesser Armenia, which was founded in the twelfth century by Armenians fleeing from their homeland in what is now the northeastern part of Turkey (as well as in areas to the east) and settling in Cilicia, which lies on the Mediterranean in the southeastern part of Turkey just north of present-day Syria and Lebanon. The Armenians had actually been Christians since the fourth century, and Lesser Armenia, being the easternmost Christian country on the Mediterranean in the later Middle Ages, was an important way station for Italian merchants trading with the East as well as a staging ground for various Crusades. The Crusade that is mentioned later in the story is presumably the Third, which was launched in 1189, although Boccaccio also refers there to the "King" of Armenia, which is anachronistic, since Lesser Armenia only

became a kingdom in 1199. Note that the kidnapped boy's name, mentioned in the next sentence, is Greek and means "God's gift."

3 The daughter of the Count of Antwerp in 2.8 is also named Violante, as was Boccaccio's own daughter who died in 1355.

4 The storm here is modeled on the one in Vergil's *Aeneid* (4.100ff.), which leads Dido and Aeneas to take refuge in a cave, with the same result as for Boccaccio's young couple.

5 Laiazzo (Ayas), a port city in Lesser Armenia, was an important center of trade between East and West in the second half of the thirteenth century.

6 Messer Currado would be guilty of breaking the law by punishing Pietro either because Violante's acceptance of him would mean that he was not guilty of raping her, or because it was customary for a condemned man to be freed if a woman agreed to marry him.

Day 5, Story 8

1 Tales of diabolic hunts were widespread in ancient and medieval literature and folklore, and theologians used them to describe the punishments of the damned. For Nastagio's astute use of the scene for his own ends, there are also precedents, such as Peter Alphonsi's *Disciplina clericalis* (*A School for Clerics*) 14, a work with which Boccaccio was certainly familiar. However, the most important influences on Boccaccio's tale were the punishments described in Dante's *Inferno* (e.g., those meted out to the profligate in *Inferno* 13 and to the sowers of discord in *Inferno* 28) as well as Boccaccio's various sojourns in Ravenna where his tale is set (he lived there at least four, and possibly five, times between 1346 and his death in 1375). Chiassi, or Classi, to which Nastagio retires, is a forested spot on the shore of the Adriatic outside of Ravenna; the name is recalled in that of the modern town Sant'Apollinare in Classe.

2 The Onesti was a noble family in Ravenna, although no Anastagio can be found among its members in the fourteenth century. Boccaccio could have learned about the family from commentators on Dante who, in *Purgatorio* 14.107–10, has Guido del Duca, a member of the family, lament the dying out of other notable families in Ravenna such as the Traversari and the Anastagi. Paolo Traversari, who is mentioned in the next sentence, served as the patron for various poets; he died in 1240, leaving behind a single daughter named Aica. Guido degli Anastagi appears later in the story, but there is no historical record of any Guido in the family.

3 Boccaccio echoes Dante here in his selection of the date (April was traditionally a month associated with visions and with both the Annunciation and the Crucifixion); the location (at the very start of the *Commedia* Dante finds himself in a dark wood); and Nastagio's being transported into the forest (Dante is similarly transported into the forest of the Earthly Paradise; see *Purgatorio* 28.22–23). Note that some medieval commentators identified pine trees as symbols of immortality because they remained green throughout the year.

4 In many of the sources of this story, the woman is being punished in Purgatory, not Hell.

Day 5, Story 9

1 Although there are several Eastern tales involving birds who sacrifice themselves for people, and several medieval stories vaguely rehearse a similar motif, there really is no precedent for Boccaccio's tale except perhaps for Ovid's story of Baucis and Philemon, who sacrifice their only goose for guests who turn out to be gods and reward them for their generosity (*Metamorphoses* 8.611–724). In the Middle Ages, the falcon was considered a symbol of the triumph over lust and over the passions more generally, and it was, of course, a hunting bird trained and used by the members of the upper classes.

2 Hailing from a prominent family that lived in the Santa Croce quarter of Florence, Coppo (Giacopo, or Jacopo: James) held numerous important civic positions during the first four decades of the fourteenth century, including that of Gonfaloniere (Mayor) in 1315; he died sometime before April 1353. Sacchetti features him in two of his stories in his *Trecentonovelle* (*Three Hundred Stories*), 66 and 137.

3 The Alberighi, one of the oldest families in Florence, lived in the Porta San Piero quarter near the church bearing their name, the Chiesa di Santa Maria degli Alberighi, and not far from the home in which Dante had grown up. By the early fourteenth century, they had fallen on hard times, as Dante notes in *Paradiso* 16.88–93.

4 Campi, or Campi Bisenzio, is a tiny town a few miles to the northwest of Florence not far from Prato.

Day 5, Story 10

1 The source of this story is Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* (9.14–28), one of Boccaccio's favorite works, which he was actually making a copy of at the time he wrote the *Decameron*.

2 The story is set in Perugia, which apparently had a reputation for homosexuality in the period and was otherwise one of Florence's mercantile rivals. The Bardi bank, for which Boccaccio's father worked, had a branch there. There was, in fact, a Pietro from the well-known family of the Vincioli who held various administrative positions in and around the city at the end of the thirteenth and start of the fourteenth centuries.

3 The old woman's phrase is *mi desse fuoco a cencio*, which means literally "he would give me fire for my rag." She is referring to the fact that in the Tuscan countryside, people would take a rag and go to their neighbors for a light to start their fires with back home, since a rag would burn longer than glowing coals or a lighted brand.

4 Ercolano was a common name in Perugia, since Sant'Ercolano (Saint Herculanus) was the patron saint of the city. He had been a bishop there and had been martyred by the Ostrogoths in 549.

Day 5, Conclusion

1 Although none of the songs Dioneo mentions is extant, all of them have a generic similarity to the kinds of popular songs that were sung during carnival and on other festive occasions. Some of the titles are clearly equivocal and sexual in character, while others remain obscure. That all had some sort of erotic content, however, can be inferred from the reaction they provoke among the ladies.

2 A few scholars want to assign "But it's not yet the month of October" to either Elissa or Dioneo, but most think it is part of the title of the song. If so, then the song involves, hypothetically at least, two speakers, a man who invites a woman to fill up her cask (with wine), and the woman who protests that it is not yet October, the month in which wine-making would occur. The sexual double entendre in the title is unmistakable in this case.

Day 6, Introduction

1 During his youth Boccaccio had himself composed a long romance on the ill-fated love of Troilus for Cressida called *Il Filostrato,* whose title is constantly recalled in the *Decameron* by the name Filostrato that Boccaccio gives to one of the three young men in the company whose lovelorn condition matches that of Troilus. Since *Il Filostrato* also features an unfaithful heroine, their singing the poem at this point anticipates the dispute between the servants that is about to occur.

2 This is the only time in the *Decameron* when the idyllic retreat of the ten young storytellers is interrupted by any sort of external reality. The servants' argument rehearses one of the main themes of the text, the ubiquity of sexual desire and, in particular, its importance for women, as well as touching on the themes of this day, namely quick retorts and witticisms, as well as that of trickery, which will become the chosen topic for the next day. This is also the only place after the start of Boccaccio's work where the servants' names are mentioned (except for when Tindaro is said to play the bagpipes), and it is the only place where they actually speak.

3 Although *Sicofante* sounds like the English "sycophant," it is not connected with that word. Rather, it is a Greek-based name, like those of the servants in the *Decameron,* and since the etymology of the word is uncertain, it is impossible to know if Boccaccio means anything by it other than to say that Sicofante belongs to the same class of characters as Licisca and Tindaro.

Day 6, Story 1

1 Boccaccio's story has an antecedent in the *Novellino* (89), but can also be counted more generally as one of a host of stories that are told during trips, including those in Sercambi's and Chaucer's collections. Boccaccio is, of course, actually equating horseback riding and storytelling here. The Madonna Oretta of the story was the wife of Geri Spina, who appears in the next story. She was left a widow by him in 1332 and was apparently considered something of a wit. *Oretta* is short for *Lauretta,*

which is the diminutive of *Laura,* but it also suggests the meaning "little, or brief, hour" (*ora* means "hour"), thus underscoring one of the faults of the knight's narrative, its long-windedness. Note that in the opening sentences of the story, Filomena deliberately reprises Pampinea's framing statement at the start of 1.10.

2 In this story, Boccaccio offers a commentary on the art of storytelling itself. By having the knight make a mess of his narration, Boccaccio implies that his own stories are free of the particular flaws the knight's displays. Coming roughly at the halfway point in the collection, the story thus focuses readers on the issue of proper and improper modes of storytelling as one of the main themes of the collection. In this way, the *Decameron* also parallels the *Divine Comedy,* which devotes its central canto (*Purgatorio* 17) to the poem's chief concern, love.

3 Boccaccio's word here is *pecoreccio,* which means "sheepfold," the muddy, mucky place where the sheep sleep at night.

Day 6, Story 2

1 There is no literary source for this story, which may be a retelling of a well-known anecdote. Cisti (short for Bencivenisti) was a fairly common name in Florence in the fourteenth century, and a certain *Cisti fornaio* (Cisti the baker) does appear in a document of 1300 from the Chiesa di Santa Maria Ughi next to which Cisti's bakery is located in the story. Geri Spina was Geri (short for Ruggeri) di Manetto Spina (d. 1321 or 1322) who was a merchant and a figure of some political importance in Florence.

2 The ambassadors sent by Pope Boniface VIII (b. ca. 1235, pope 1294–1303) were attempting (unsuccessfully) to negotiate peace between the White and the Black Guelfs. After defeating the (imperial) Ghibellines at the battles of Campaldino and Caprona in 1289, the Guelf (papal) Party had itself split into these two factions, the Blacks continuing to support the Papacy, while the Whites allied themselves with the Empire. Messer Geri was one of the heads of the Blacks.

3 Cisti is saying that the flagon is large enough to contain the water of the Arno, the river that flows through Florence.

4 Cisti is being extremely polite and deferential, essentially saying that from the time Messer Geri started tasting the wine, it became his, and that since Cisti was now merely its guardian, he wanted to give up that role and hand the wine over to its rightful owner.

Day 6, Story 3

1 There is no literary source for this story.

2 Antonio degli Orsi di Biliotto degli Orsi was made Bishop of Fiesole in 1301 and served as Bishop of Florence from 1309 until his death in 1322. He held the office of Privy Counselor to the English King Edward II in 1310, helped to defend Florence from a siege by the Holy Roman Emperor Henry VII in 1312, and was a widely

cultured individual who owned a large library. Despite being described here as a "wise and worthy prelate" by Lauretta, he was, however, also renowned for his avarice, and that may be why Boccaccio thought of him for this story. Dego della Ratta, or Diego de la Rath (d. 1343), first came to Naples in the retinue of Violante of Aragon, the bride-to-be of King Robert (b. 1277, ruled 1309–43). Dego served the King in various capacities and was his representative in Florence in 1305, 1310, and 1317–18.

3 A certain Nonna de' Pulci was mentioned briefly in a Florentine document of 1340, as was the Rinucci family, to whom the Bishop was in fact related. Porta San Piero, in which Nonna was living, was a quarter of the city named after a gate on its eastern side; it lay along the route where the Florentine *Palio* was run.

Day 6, Story 4

1 There is no literary source for this story, although Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* contains an episode involving a cook who makes off with a haunch of venison (8.31). Currado di Vanni di Cafaggio Gianfigliazzi, who lived around the turn of the fourteenth century and was known for his lavish lifestyle, was a member of an important family associated with prominent Florentine bankers, including the Peruzzi. Dante places one of the Gianfigliazzi in the circle of Hell reserved for the usurers (*Inferno* 17.58–60). Boccaccio knew several members of the family in his own day and celebrates at least two of them in his minor works.

2 Peretola is a small town in Tuscany just a short distance from Florence in the direction of Prato. Currado Gianfigliazzi actually owned property in the area.

3 Currado calls Chichibio a *ghiottone,* which meant "glutton," but also had the extended meaning of "rogue, rascal, knave, or scoundrel," all of which fit Chichibio well, since Currado thinks his cook cut off the crane's leg in order to eat it.

Day 6, Story 5

1 Although there is no extant source for Boccaccio's story, later Renaissance writers treated it as historical. Forese da Rabatta (d. 1348) was a well-known jurist who was a professor at Pisa (1338–39), held various political offices in Florence, including those of Prior and Gonfaloniere (Mayor) between 1320 and 1340, and served as the city's ambassador to Pisa in 1343. Although it is generally agreed that he died in 1348, he is mentioned in historical records as late as 1359. Giotto di Bondone (1266/67–1337) was, of course, the famous painter whose innovative works have been seen as inaugurating the Renaissance from at least 1549–50, when Vasari's *Le vite de' più eccellenti architettori, pittori, e scultori italiani* (*Lives of the Most Eminent Italian Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*) appeared. He was greatly admired by both Petrarch and Boccaccio who celebrated him in several other works beside the *Decameron*. Mugello is an area northeast of Florence; both Forese and Giotto were born there.

2 Pampinea's story is that of Cisti the baker (6.2).

3 The Baronci were proverbial for their ugliness. See 6.6 for more details.

4 A more literal rendering of the final clause in the story would be that Messer Forese perceived that "he had been paid in coin equal in value to the merchandise he had sold."

Day 6, Story 6

1 There is no extant source for Boccaccio's story. The Maremma was a large marshy region about thirty-five or forty-five miles southwest of Florence. Sparsely populated, infested with brigands, and a breeding ground for malaria, it was a place to which numerous Florentines were exiled. Guido Cavalcanti, a leader of the Guelf faction, was sent to it in 1300 and died there, most likely of malaria. When Michele Scalza, who is celebrated for his wit in the story, couples it with "the whole wide world," he is parodying a kind of provincialism: he is speaking like someone who does not really have any idea how large the world truly is, someone who thinks that Florence is huge and the area around it in Tuscany is practically the entire world, although he has some sense that there is also an enormous, scary place called the Maremma that is even farther away. Scalza's parody here is consistent with the clever argument (including its false logic) by which he wittily "proves" the Baronci to be the noblest family in Florence. The Baronci was an actual middle-class family who lived near the Cistercian-run Church of Santa Maria Maggiore, where one of its members, a certain Tommaso Baronci, served as Prior in 1346, 1354, and 1361. The Baronci's awkwardness and ugliness were apparently proverbial. As for the witty Michele Scalza who is the protagonist of the story, nothing is known about him.

2 Montughi was a pleasant hill to the north of Florence beyond the Porta San Gallo and overlooking the valley of the Terzolle River; a number of Florentine families had built villas there. The Uberti and Lamberti, who are mentioned in the next sentence, were indeed among the oldest, most distinguished families in the city.

3 The Vannini (named after San Giovanni, the patron saint of the city) was a prominent Florentine family; Neri is short for Rinieri. There were any number of families named Fiorentino in the city, so it is impossible to identify precisely who this particular Piero was.

4 Scalza's argument here was scandalous, indeed blasphemous, to Catholics in Italy after the Counter-Reformation, since it presented a less than perfect God, and for centuries Italian editors of the *Decameron* either changed this part of the tale or replaced the tale entirely. English translators followed suit until John Payne returned to Boccaccio's original text in 1886.

Day 6, Story 7

1 There is no precedent for this story.

2 The Pugliesi and Guazzagliotri families were important families in Prato who were also notorious enemies; the latter played a principal role in the expulsion of the former from the town in 1342. Prato is about seventeen miles northwest of Florence.

3 The lady's remark echoes Matthew 7:6: *Nolite dare sanctum canibus* ("Give not that which is holy unto the dogs"). In Boccaccio's time, the words *sanctum* and *sacrum* could refer to a woman's body.

Day 6, Story 8

1 There is no precedent for this story, although throughout his career Boccaccio often satirized women for being vain and admiring themselves in the mirror. Looking into the mirror was also, however, associated with the virtue of prudence and with the contemplative life, and it was a conventional metaphor for seeing the truth, which is what Fresco means when he uses it later in the story.

2 Fresco da Celatico is Francesco from Celatico, a town in the Arno valley where he could have had a villa or a farm, but since he is not given a family name, his precise identity has not been determined. Cesca is short for Francesca and is a pet name.

Day 6, Story 9

1 Guido Cavalcanti (ca. 1255–1300) was, along with Dante, the leading poet of the *Dolce Stil Novo* ("Sweet New Style") as well as being Dante's close friend. His poetry justifies his being termed a logician and natural philosopher by Boccaccio. In the tenth canto of the *Inferno* Dante places Guido's father in the circle of Hell reserved for those, including the Epicureans, who did not believe in the immortality of the soul. This was the most likely source of the notion that Guido was also an Epicurean. The quip attributed here to Guido had been assigned to other figures earlier in the Middle Ages and first appeared in the *Dialogues* of Pope Gregory the Great (4.3) in which a passage from Psalm 48 in the Bible was cited to condemn the Epicureans for denying the immortality of the soul: *domus suas in saeculo tabernacula sua* (12: "their sepulchers shall be their houses forever"). (The King James Bible identifies this as Psalm 49:11 and translates it rather differently.)

2 Boccaccio denounces avarice and greed throughout the *Decameron*. See, for example, 1.8, 3.5, 6.3, and 8.1.

3 Betto (short for Brunetto) Brunelleschi came from a Ghibelline family, but was a White Guelf for a short time and a friend of both Guido Cavalcanti and Dante, who dedicated a sonnet (99) to him. However, after the defeat of the White Guelfs in 1301, which led to Dante's exile, Betto became one of the leaders of the Black Guelfs. In 1311, after having caused the death of another leader, Corso Donati, he was himself assassinated by two of Corso's young kinsmen.

4 The Cavalcanti family lived in Orsanmichele, an area in the center of Florence named after the *orto* (kitchen garden) of the monastery of San Michele. A building designed to be a grain market was built there in 1337, and between 1380 and 1404, it was converted into the church we see today. The Corso degli Adimari, which Guido is taking as he walks from Orsanmichele to the Baptistery of San Giovanni, is now called the Via Calzaiuoli. The Baptistery was the second-oldest building in the city and had been rebuilt in its present octagonal form around 1059;

it was surrounded by a cemetery containing Roman sarcophaguses that Florentine families had moved there and were using as tombs. The Church of Santa Reparata was located on the site next to the Baptistery where the Duomo, or Cathedral of Florence, to be named Santa Maria del Fiore, would be built, starting in 1294. By the middle of the fourteenth century, when Boccaccio was writing the *Decameron,* the old Church of Santa Reparata had not yet been demolished, although a great deal of work had been done on the new cathedral, which locals would continue to call Santa Reparata for quite some time. The porphyry columns mentioned in the next sentence still flank Lorenzo Ghiberti's *Gates of Paradise* on the east side of the Baptistery. The columns were given to Florence by the Pisans in 1117 in gratitude for the city's assistance in their fight against Lucca; the Pisans had originally taken them from the island of Majorca.

Day 6, Story 10

1 There is no direct source for this story, although analogues may be found in Eastern collections such as the *Panchatantra,* and in the Middle Ages there was an abundant literature concerned with the abuse of relics, such as a swindle involving the "arm" of Saint Reparata that occurred in Florence in 1352.

2 Certaldo, which is about eighteen miles southwest of Florence, was probably Boccaccio's birthplace, and although he often referred to it elsewhere with warmth, here it is viewed more critically. Boccaccio spent the last years of his life there, living in his house in the citadel (the upper part of the town); he was buried there as well. The friars of Saint Anthony, mentioned both earlier and in the next sentence, were members of the oldest monastic order, which was founded by Saint Anthony of Egypt (ca. 251–ca. 356) around 313. (This Saint Anthony should not be confused with the Franciscan friar Saint Anthony of Padua.) Saint Anthony was venerated for protecting animals from diseases and was often represented with a pig at his feet. By Boccaccio's time, however, friars in the order were condemned for their greed, which Dante denounces in *Paradiso* (29.124) where he identifies them with their own pigs that were allowed to wander freely in the streets.

3 Marcus Tullius Cicero (106–43 BCE) and Marcus Fabius Quintilian (35–96 CE) were, of course, the two most important Roman writers on rhetoric. Although Quintilian did give speeches in the law courts, his greatest fame was as a teacher and writer. By contrast, Cicero was so celebrated for his public oratory that his name (often in the form of "Tully," or *Tulio,* as it is in Boccaccio's story) became a byword for eloquence.

4 Cipolla refers to the saint as the *baron messer Santo Antonio,* which could be translated as the "Baron Messer Saint Anthony." *Baron,* though normally a title for men in the secular hierarchy, was also used as an honorific for saints.

5 Both Bragoniera and Pizzini are the names of families that lived in Certaldo in Boccaccio's day. The Pizzini owned property that adjoined Boccaccio's, and a Biagio Pizzini was a close friend of Boccaccio's father.

6 Guccio's three nicknames in Italian are, in order: *Balena, Imbratta,* and *Porco.* The first one translates directly as "Whale" and the last as "Pig," while *Imbratta* means

"he who makes a mess": hence, the Slob. Historical records from the years between 1318 and 1335 mention the existence of someone variously referred to as Guccio Aghinetti, Guccio Porcellana, and Frate Porcellana, who lived in the quarter of San Paolo in Florence and worked in the Hospital of San Filippo. There is also a document dating from 1305 that mentions a Guccio Imbratta (a Guccio Imbratta makes an appearance as a gravedigger in the *Decameron* at the end of 4.7). Lippo (short for Filippo) the Mouse (*Topo*), who is mentioned in the next sentence, was a proverbial character to whom various eccentricities and jokes have been attributed.

7 It is impossible to duplicate Boccaccio's triple rhymes: *tardo, sugliardo e bugiardo; negligente, disubediente e maledicente; trascutato, smemorato e scostumato.* A more literal translation would be: "slothful, filthy, and untruthful; neglectful, disobedient, and foul mouthed; careless, witless, and ill mannered."

8 The Baronci were proverbial for their ugliness. Boccaccio refers to them in this way in 6.5 and 6.7.

9 A possible alternative translation for the last part of this sentence might be: "he knew how to say and do more than God ever could." The serving girl's name, which is mentioned earlier in the sentence, is short for Benvenuta. The phrase translated as "gentleman by proxy" is *gentile uomo per procuratore,* which means "gentleman through, or by way of, the procurator (or prosecutor)." In other words, he enjoys a title that does not attach to his person, just as someone delivering a warrant for a prosecutor may possess the title and authority of the prosecutor, though only temporarily. In bragging of his wealth, Guccio says he has *de' fiorini piú di millantanove,* "of florins more than *millanta* and nine" (*millanta* is a fanciful derivative from *mille,* "thousand," and refers to any very large, indeterminate number).

10 The monks of the Abbey of the Hospitallers in Altopascio near Lucca were renowned for the generous portions of soup they prepared for the poor twice a week. The cloth, most likely silk, of the East was famous for its wealth of colors, as Boccaccio himself noted in his *Esposizioni* on Dante's *Inferno* (17.8); Tartary here is probably China. The Lord of Châtillon is a fictional title meant to suggest great wealth.

11 The "friends" referred to here are male; the "neighbors" are *comari,* technically, a term identifying the godmothers of someone's child, but often used for close female friends from the neighborhood, or gossips, as it is here.

12 Frate Cipolla's sermon is a brilliant performance, filled with words designed to impress and mystify the people of Certaldo that have much less exalted meanings a more sophisticated audience would "get." He also uses truisms and tautologies and sometimes seems to produce sheer nonsense. "Parts of the world where the sun rises" in this sentence is meant to suggest the East (the direction in which we see the sun rise), but the phrase literally means all countries, because the sun rises everywhere. The "Privileges of the Porcellana" is a nonsense phrase, whose literal meaning is obscure. It may be linked to Frate Cipolla's servant, who was called Guccio Porco and whose real last name may have been Porcellana, or it may refer to the sodomitical practices often associated with the clergy. However, this name and most of the following ones, while suggesting faraway places, also designate streets and quarters in Florence, and they take us on a journey, generally from east to west, through the

city. There was thus both a street and a hospital named Porcellana near the Arno to the east of the Ponte Vecchio. In the next sentence, Venice (*Vinegia*) and Greekburg (*Borgo de' Greci*, the "burg or suburb of the Greeks") were quarters lying between the Piazza della Signoria and Santa Croce; they were also the names of streets. Algarve (*Garbo*) was a street of that name (now via Condotta), while Baghdad (*Baldacca*) was a street near Orsanmichele, although both names are meant to suggest exotic lands (Algarve was the name of a kingdom in the southern part of the Iberian Peninsula). Parione, perhaps meant to suggest "Paris," is the present-day via da Santa Trinità alla Carraia, and Sardinia (*Sardigna*) was a deserted stretch of shoreline on the Arno. Although Saint George (*San Giorgio*) was the name of a quarter near the Dogana, or customshouse, as well as one in the Oltrarno (the part of Florence on the left bank of the Arno), the Straits of Saint George (*Braccio di San Giorgio*) may suggest something like the Bosphorus.

13 Conland and Clownland are *Truffia* and *Buffia*. *Truffia* comes from the verb *truffare*, "to deceive, con," whereas *Buffia* suggests *buffone*, "clown," as well as *beffare*, "to trick, play a practical joke on." Liarland is the *terra di Menzogna* (*menzogna* means "lie"). The denunciation of the clergy in this sentence is focused on abuses generally associated with the Order of Saint Anthony whose members Dante accused not merely of fattening themselves on the offerings they received, but also of mystifying others with the empty language of their sermons ("money that has not been minted").

14 To clothe pigs in their own guts is to make sausages, while carrying bread on sticks can be done with *ciambelle*, ring-shaped buns, and wine can be put in a sack if the sack is a wineskin. All three expressions have phallic overtones. Abruzzi, an actual region in southern Italy, is sufficiently far away to appear exotic. The Basqueworm Mountains translates *montagne de' bachi*, literally, "Mountains of the Worms," but *bachi* also suggests Basques, another faraway people.

15 Parsinippia is *Partinaca*, which means "parsnip," perhaps to suggest the spices and delicacies of the East; it may also mean a "fantastic, unbelievable story," for which modern Italians would say *carota* ("carrot"). Pruningbills is my punning translation of *pennati*, the pruning hooks or tools with curved blades that were used to prune vines; the word contains a play on *pennuti*, "feathered ones," i.e., birds. Maso del Saggio was a Florentine, by profession a broker or middleman, who was known in his own time for his tricks and his mocking humor. He makes an appearance as a trickster in 8.3 and 8.5.

16 The Patriarch's name is a translation of the Old French *Nemeblasmez Sevoiplait*, which echoes the kinds of allegorical names one finds in such works as *Le Roman de la Rose* (*The Romance of the Rose*).

17 Boccaccio is satirizing the cult of holy relics here by assigning material parts to spiritual entities. The "whole and sound" finger of the Holy Spirit is bawdy and blasphemous as well. There is no adequate way to translate *Verbum-caro-fatti-alle-finestre* ("Word-flesh-made/get-you-out-the-windows"), which plays on the biblical *Verbum caro factum est* ("the Word was made flesh," John 1:14).

18 The two "books" Frate Cipolla gives the Patriarch are part of a complex set of puns. What he says is that *gli fece copia* of them, a phrase that I rendered as "I . . . gave him,"

and which means both that "I gave him a gift of" and "I gave him plenty of." Moreover, both of the book titles suggest sodomy, a practice with which the cloistered male clergy were frequently associated in Boccaccio's time. The first of the "books" is *le piagge di Monte Morello,* the slopes (or, as I rendered it, the "dingle") of Mount Morello, while the second one is *il Caprezio,* a made-up word that plays on the Italian *capro,* or male goat, and that may also contain a pun on the name of a Latin author such as Lucretius (*Lucrezio* in Italian, although the *-tius* ending in Latin was pronounced as though it started with the letter *z*). The "teeth of the Holy Cross" contains a play on the notion of the "arms" of the cross. Gherardo di Bonsi was an important member of the *Arte della lana,* the Wool-Workers Guild, and was devoted to the saint after whom he was named, Saint Gherardo (1174–1267), who was one of the earliest followers of Saint Francis and was frequently represented wearing *zoccoli,* or sandals. Note that *zoccoli* had associations with sodomy as well in the period.

Day 6, Conclusion

1 The word for "tricks" in this sentence is *beffe,* which can also be translated as "practical jokes" or "pranks" or "con games." Moreover, the verb *beffare* not only meant "to play a trick on," but also "to mock or make fun of," thus underscoring the potentially sadistic element in such tricks and the way they "put down" the one who is their victim.

2 The Valley of the Ladies is a literary fiction, an idealized description of a natural spot that presents a perfect balance of Nature and Art. It is a version of the *locus amoenus* ("pleasant place"), a commonplace that goes back to the Garden of Eden in the Bible and to the ancient tradition of pastoral. To some degree, all the settings in which the ten young men and women tell their stories are examples of such an idealized natural spot, although Boccaccio heightens the idealization in this particular case. It is noteworthy that he produces this description just after Dioneo has suggested a topic for storytelling that has met with resistance from the women in the group and that they retreat to a valley that is, as its name would suggest, their natural place.

3 The word that Pampinea uses here for "tricked" is the slightly less charged *ingannati,* which lacks some of the scornfulness that would have been implied by *beffati.* Dioneo's reply, however, suggests that he sees the two terms, for his purposes, as interchangeable.

4 Elissa's song, like most of the others in the *Decameron,* is a love lament, and it should also be remembered that Elissa is another name for the love-stricken, tragic figure of Dido in Vergil's *Aeneid.* Her reference to red and white flowers at the end of the poem alludes to the marriage ceremony in which women were adorned with orange blossoms, lilies, and roses.

Day 7, Story 1

1 This tale has no literary antecedent, but seems to be one of many such popular stories current in Florence during Boccaccio's life.

2 A number of men named Lotteringhi worked at different times as agents for the Bardi bank during the fourteenth century. Some of them were connected to the confraternity of the Laud Singers. There was no Gianni (short for Giovanni) among them, however.

3 There were many popular religious texts in the vernacular such as the ones named here. Saint Alexis was a Florentine mystic who, with six companions, founded the Order of the Servites, or Servants of Mary, some time after 1233. The text may be referring to the *Ritmo de Sant'Alessio,* one of the earliest examples of Italian verse. There were many laments attributed to Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) who was a key figure in the spread of the austere Cistercian Order during the twelfth century. Finally, the Laud of the Lady Matilda was one of many hymns of praise for the German mystic Mechtilde of Magdeburg (ca. 1210–ca. 1285), whose fame was spread in Italy by the Dominicans who also happened to own the monastery at Santa Maria Novella.

4 There was a real Monna Tessa who was a member of the Mannuccio family that lived in the quarter of San Frediano on the far side of the Arno; she was born in 1307 and was married to Neri (short for Rinieri) Pegolotti. The name Tessa, short for Contessa, was common in Tuscany because of the fame of Matilde di Canossa (1046–1115), the Countess (*Contessa*) of Tuscany, who supported the Papacy against the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV, sometimes even donning armor and leading troops into battle. Mannuccio is a nickname used as a family name; it is derived from Alamanno, a name adapted from that of a group of Germanic tribes (the *Alamani*). One of the districts in the San Frediano quarter was called Cuculia ("Cuckoo"), because it had a chapel containing a painting of the Virgin with a cuckoo in it. Tessa's father's name may thus symbolically foreshadows the cuckolding Gianni is about to receive.

5 Putting the skull of an ass on a stake in order to protect one's crops was a practice going back to Etruscan times.

6 Gianni names two popular medieval hymns. The first was a prayer to God said at the end of the day: *Te lucis ante terminam* ("To Thee before the light has ended"). The second was to the Virgin: *O intemerata* ("O unspotted [Virgin]"). It was also mentioned by a robber in 2.2. In the first of the hymns appear the words *procul recedant... noctium phantasmata*: "may the phantoms of the night stay far away." In his *Specchio della vera penitenza* (*The Mirror of True Penitence*), Jacopo Passavanti (1302–ca. 1357) defined what Monna Tessa calls a *fantasima* as a kind of satyr or a bogeyman (*gatto mammone*) that went about at night disturbing people. While it is possible to translate the Italian word, which is derived from the Latin *phantasmas,* as *phantom,* Passavanti's description makes *bogeyman* a better choice, in that it is an old English word for Satan who was traditionally imagined as being part animal with cloven hooves and a tail just like a satyr. Moreover, since Boccaccio's tale expresses some skepticism about such creatures, even though the credulous and extremely pious Gianni does not, it seems appropriate to use a word that in modern English has a slightly old-fashioned character and is chiefly employed when talking with children. Finally, Boccaccio's own drawing of the figure in the Hamilton codex is clearly the portrait of (the top half of) the Devil.

7 Spitting was a common practice in rites of exorcism.

8 Federigo actually says *I denti!* meaning "the teeth." There are two explanations for his words. The first is that he wishes Gianni would expel his own teeth when he spits. The second is that Federigo is pretending to be the bogeyman and is saying that his own teeth are being drawn out by the magic spell. In my translation, because Federigo says this "under his breath" (*pianamente*), I selected the first possibility as the more likely.

9 There was a Giovanni di Nello who was a successful apothecary and who was buried in Santa Maria Novella in 1347 where he had had a chapel built at his own expense. He did not live in the quarter around the Porta San Piero, however. Emilia condemns Gianni di Nello as being *non meno sofficiente lavaceci* than Gianni Lotteringhi; her phrase, which I have rendered as "no less a pea brain," literally means he was "just as good at washing chickpeas," i.e., not good for very much at all.

Day 7, Story 2

1 This story, like 5.10, derives, from a tale told in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* (9.5–7), one of Boccaccio's favorite authors, occasionally following it word for word.

2 Peronella was a common name in Naples at the time. It comes from the French Peronnelle ("little Peter," with a feminine ending).

3 In 1324 the brothers Giovanni (Giannello is a diminutive) and Niccolò Scrignario were living on or near the Piazza Portanova, which is not far from the harbor in the Avorio neighborhood where the story is set. Their family was an important one in the city at that time.

4 Not far from the neighborhood in which Peronella and her husband live there was a chapel dedicated to Saint Galeone (San Galione in Neapolitan), also known as Saint Eucalione.

5 The man who wants to buy the barrel is offering five silver *gigliati*, coins minted in Naples around 1300. They got their name from the *gigli* ("lilies") with which they were decorated. I have turned these coins into the more familiar *ducats*.

6 With the image of the Parthian stallions and mares, Boccaccio is recalling not just Apuleius, but several passages in Ovid's *Ars amatoria* (*The Art of Love*), 1.209–10 and 3.785–86. The Parthians, an Iranian people in central Asia, were famed for turning their backs and feigning retreat on their horses before bringing their enemies down by shooting arrows expertly behind them. Boccaccio may have been thinking of Parthian horses in particular because of this trait.

Day 7, Story 3

1 Although there are many stories in medieval collections that have one spouse being discovered by the other in bed with a lover and yet managing to salvage the situation with some clever trick, there are no precedents for the particulars of Boccaccio's tale. Frate Rinaldo serves as *il compare*, the sponsor or godfather, for the couple's child. In the Middle Ages, the relationship between a child's parents and its godparents was

so sacred that any sort of sexual relationship between them was considered incestuous. Throughout the story, the woman Frate Rinaldo sleeps with is called *la comare,* which could mean "godmother," but here it means the mother of Frate Rinaldo's godchild. Both words, *compare* ("godfather") and *comare,* were also used as familiar terms of address—as they still are in southern Italy—for people who had not sponsored a child at baptism, but were simply one's good friends and neighbors. There is no exact modern English equivalent for the words; although "gossip" once had the same set of meanings, the word is now pejorative and primarily means a woman who talks about people behind their backs. I have thus chosen to use "neighbor" in preference to "gossip."

2 This is not the Saint Ambrose who is the patron saint of Milan, but the Blessed Ambrogio (Ambrose) Sansedoni of Siena (1220–86) who had a chapel dedicated to him after his death in his native city, where the story takes place. There may be a pun, suggested by the name of the saint, on the old word *brogio,* which meant fool or simpleton, thus reinforcing the characterization of the husband in the story.

Day 7, Story 4

1 This story is a reworking of an exemplary tale (14) from the *Disciplina clericalis* (*A School for Clerics*) of Peter Alphonsi. Stories about women's deceptiveness were, however, widespread in medieval literature.

2 Tofano is short for Cristofano (an alternative version of Cristoforo: Christopher). There is a record of a Tofano, the son of a notary, living in Arezzo in the mid-fourteenth century. The town also has a *pozzo di Tofano* ("Tofano's well"), but it was probably called that because of Boccaccio's story. Tofano's wife is named Ghita, which is short for Margherita.

3 In her next-to-last sentence, Lauretta has recourse to a rhymed proverbial saying: *E così, a modo del villan matto, dopo danno fé patto.* A more literal translation would be: "And so, just like a crazy (or stupid) peasant, after (his) defeat (or harm or damage), he made a pact (or treaty)." Lauretta's last sentence echoes her praise of Love at the start of the story, although why she condemns Avarice (*soldo*: money, pay) is unclear. The structure of the sentence itself is puzzling, for she first says "long live Love," then "death to Avarice," and then adds *e tutta la brigata,* which I have translated as "and all his company," meaning all those associated with Avarice. But some editors and translators feel that this last phrase is actually the object, like "Love," of "long live." Thus, what Lauretta may be saying is: "So, long live Love and all his company, and death to Avarice!" Or even: "So, long live Love, and all our company, and death to Avarice!"

Day 7, Story 5

1 Although the theme of this story was widely diffused in medieval literature, no specific source has been found for it.

2 Penitents typically kneeled at the feet of their confessors; the confessional booth was only introduced after the Council of Trent (1545–63) met to reform the Catholic Church.

3 For "spoiled his holiday," the text says that *ella gli aveva data la mala pasqua,* which literally means, "she had given him a bad Easter." However, *pasqua* in this phrase was used to mean any holiday, and the general sense is that she spoiled things for him.

4 What the wife really says here is that she would *porti le corna,* "put horns on his head," i.e., make him a cuckold. The horns metaphor is still actively used by contemporary Italians. To make the sign of the horns by extending the index and fifth fingers, while clenching all the rest, remains the Italian equivalent of "giving someone the finger" in American culture. The mention of a hundred eyes may well be an allusion to the mythological figure of Argos, a giant possessing many eyes (his epithet was *Panoptes,* "all seeing"), who was tasked with guarding a sacred white heifer by Hera. The heifer was in actuality the nymph Io, and Zeus sent Hermes to blind and then kill Argos so that he could sleep with her.

Day 7, Story 6

1 Although the theme of this story can be found in a number of tales from the Middle Ages, including those in collections such as *The Thousand and One Nights,* no individual story can be identified as its source.

2 There were various Latin sayings in the Middle Ages to the effect that Love and Wisdom were incompatible with one another.

Day 7, Story 7

1 Stories about deceived husbands who get beaten by their wives' lovers were widespread in medieval European literature, especially in French *fabliaux.* There are no precedents in those texts, however, for the more courtly elements that appear in the first part of this story.

2 The Galluzzi was a prominent family in Bologna, but none of its members was ever named Egano. The wife's name, of course, means "blessed" (*beata*) and thus suggests a contrast with—if she is not a parody of—the Beatrice who was described by Dante in elevated terms as his beloved in *La vita nuova* (*The New Life*) and whom he made into his heavenly intercessor and guide in the *Divine Comedy.*

3 Falling in love at a distance (*amor de lonh* in Provençal) was a convention of courtly love literature and was assumed to be a trait distinguishing the refined people of the upper classes in the Middle Ages. The motif has already appeared in other stories in the *Decameron* (1.5 and 4.4).

4 A game of chess by means of which the players reveal their love for one another was a commonplace in courtly romances; losing at it was often a preliminary move in a seduction.

5 The women of Bologna are generally regarded positively in the *Decameron* (see also 1.10 and 10.4), unlike those of Pisa (2.10), Venice (4.2), and Milan (8.1). Of course, the narrator may be speaking ironically here.

Day 7, Story 8

1 There are many tales in Eastern collections such as *The Thousand and One Nights*, as well as in French *fabliaux*, which involve an unfaithful wife tricking her husband by putting another woman in her place.
2 The Berlinghieri was a merchant family that rose to prominence in the middle of the fourteenth century; none of them was named Arrigo or Arriguccio, however. This story, like 3.3, may be read as an implicit warning to the nouveaux riches, the *gente nuova*, in Boccaccio's world about their excessive social ambition.
3 The mother's comment alludes to the fact that merchants and notaries used to carry their quill pens and inkwells around in holders that they attached to their belts or put in the back pockets of their pants. Her diatribe against Arriguccio is generally filled with insults that associate him with filth and excrement, and in this particular example, she actually uses the word *culo*, which I have translated as "butt," but could be rendered as "ass." The mother's speech gives voice to the hostility that Florentine aristocrats not only felt to the nouveaux riches, the *gente nuova*, in their society, but also to country lords who had once controlled the city and were now associated with lawless violence, as the reference to Arriguccio's having "come up here from some country lord's gang of thugs." The word she uses here for what I have translated as "gang of thugs" is *troiata*, which is defined as the band of men-at-arms who served a feudal lord. It is an unusual word, and there is good reason to think that she chooses it because it echoes *troia*, the word for "sow," which was beginning to acquire in Boccaccio's time its modern slang meaning of "whore."
4 The Guidi family was a byword for aristocratic status.

Day 7, Story 9

1 This story is a retelling of the *Comoedia Lydiae* (*The Comedy of Lydia*), a work written by the twelfth-century French poet and theorist Matthieu de Vendôme, which Boccaccio had transcribed with his own hand. The two motifs that make up the story—the trickery used by a woman on her husband to prove herself to her lover, and the enchanted pear tree—were widespread in medieval literature.
2 Nicostrato is the only name that Boccaccio changes from his source, in which the character is called Decius. This change may have been dictated by a desire to make the name fit the Greek setting, but since it means "triumphant warrior," the change can also be seen as ironic. Boccaccio retains the name of Lidia's maid, Lusca, from his source, where it is the Latinized version of the French *louche*, which means "squint eyed" or "disreputable."

3 Chaucer's *The Merchant's Tale,* which generally follows Boccaccio's story quite closely, but may not be directly derived from it, has Pirro and Lidia, somewhat improbably, making love together in the tree rather than on the ground.

Day 7, Story 10

1 Although there are many examples in medieval religious literature of people returning from the grave to admonish those still alive, this story expresses a definite skepticism on the subject. It is also critical of the Sienese, archrivals of the Florentines throughout the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Finally, it satirizes what was called *il comparatico,* the quasi-sacred relationship between the godparent and parent of a child, which forbade any sexual relationship between them.
2 Elissa's story is 7.3.
3 The Mini and the Tura were lower-class families in Siena, and while no Tingoccio Mini appears in the historical record, there were two men named Meuccio di Tura. The endings of both men's first names are diminutives and express endearment. Tingoccio comes from Lotterringo, which is in turn derived from the Germanic Lother or Lutherr, which means "brave warrior." Meuccio is the diminutive of Meo, which is short for Bartolommeo (Bartholomew). The Porta Salaia neighborhood is in one of the *contrade* ("quarters"), that of the *Selva* ("Forest"), into which Siena is famously divided to this day.
4 The Anselmi was also a lower-class family, but nothing is known of this particular branch. The wife's name Mita is short for Margherita. The Camporeggi neighborhood is in another one of the *contrade* of Siena—namely that of the *Draco* ("Dragon").
5 More literally: "I skinned myself by doing it" *(io me ne scorticai).* Even while being tormented in the afterlife because of his sin, Tingoccio cannot resist making an erotic joke of sorts.
6 Frate Rinaldo appears in 7.3.

Day 8, Introduction

1 The company did not go to church the preceding Sunday. This is thus their only contact with the outside world during their sojourn in the country.

Day 8, Story 1

1 Boccaccio could have found versions of this story in various French *fabliaux,* and after him it was reworked by Giovanni Sercambi in *Il novelliere* (32) and by Chaucer in *The Shipman's Tale.* Gulfardo may be an Italianized version of the German name Wolfard; Guasparruolo means Little Caspar; and his wife Ambruogia is named after the patron saint of Milan, Saint Ambrose (Ambruogio in Italian). None of these characters appears in the historical record, although their names, including Guasparruolo's family name, Cagastraccio, were typical in the period. That Boccaccio

makes Ambruogia rapacious may indicate his low opinion of the Milanese more generally, something that is perhaps suggested as well by his reference to the "Milanese fashion" at the end of Day 3.

2 See 6.7.

Day 8, Story 2

1 There is no specific source for this story, although its theme, like that of the preceding story, was widespread in medieval literature.

2 Varlungo was a village in the Valdarno just a short distance from Florence; it has long since been incorporated into the city. In such towns throughout Tuscany, it was the custom to plant an elm tree, like the one mentioned in the next sentence, near the local church in order to provide shade for the parishioners when they gathered there on Sunday afternoons in the summer.

3 The names of husband and wife were fairly common in Tuscany, and historical records document the existence of a Belcolore in Varlungo and of a Bentivegna, who was an associate of Boccaccio's, in Certaldo. Her name means "Fair colored," and his, more suggestively, "May you have joy of the club" (or, alternatively, "may you get a good drubbing from the club, or mace"). A large number of other characters with typically rustic Tuscan names make brief appearances in the story as well. "Grinding at the mill" means having sex; the metaphor also appears in 4.10 and the Author's Conclusion.

4 "The water runs down the ravine" (*L'acqua corre la borrana*) was a popular dance song that was very sexually suggestive. The peasant dances Monna Belcolore leads are the *ridda,* a round dance, and the *ballonchio,* a type of *saltarello,* a dance featuring jumping and leaping.

5 Bentivegna mangles the legal terminology, confusing such words as *parentorio* for *perentorio* (peremptory); *pericolatore* for *procuratore* (solicitor, attorney); and *giudice del dificio* for *giudice del maleficio* (judge of the criminal court). There was an actual Buonaccorso di Ginestreto whose presence in Florence has been documented between 1341 and 1354.

6 Lapuccio is the diminutive of Lapo, a nickname for Giacopo (James or Jacob). Naldino is a diminutive nickname for Rinaldo or Arnaldo. Nothing is known about these two characters.

7 Belcolore's comment here is untranslatable. She says that Biliuzza *se n'andò col ceteratoio*: she "went off with the *ceteratoio.*" Scholars think this word may be a corruption of *eccetera* ("etcetera") to be found in legal documents; it is as though Belcolore sees Biliuzza as the victim of some legal arrangement containing special clauses and technical language that confused her and led to her impoverishment. Or the word may be a corruption of *cetera* (*chitarra*: guitar), suggesting either that she wound up with a belly swollen like a guitar, or that she was left with nothing but a bit of music.

Day 8, Story 3

1 This story, set in a working-class milieu, has no specific literary antecedent. The heliotrope was a name for a sandstone, green with blood-red streaks, that some medieval thinkers believed could render its bearer invisible; such a power was mentioned by Pliny, *Istoria naturalis* (*Natural History*), 37.60.165. The Mugnone is a stream that flows into the Arno near Florence; in the hot months of summer, it is usually just a dry bed. The protagonist of the story will be featured again in 8.6, 9.3, and 9.5, and by the sixteenth century his name had become a byword in Italy for someone who was a pathetic simpleton and dupe.

2 Calandrino was the nickname of the painter Nozzo (short for Giannozzo) di Perino who lived in Florence in the early part of the fourteenth century. He was probably a pupil of Andrea Tafi and thus a member of a school that resisted the new realism associated with Giotto. There are some frescoes of no great importance that he painted in a villa at Camerata, but his real claim to fame is his simplemindedness and gullibility. His nickname may refer to a square with hinged arms used by stonecutters and painters to measure angles or, more likely, to a kind of lark, since birds in general were frequently seen as being gullible, as the verb *uccellare* (to catch birds, to make a fool of) suggests. The word is also a diminutive of Calandro (Lark), a fairly widespread name in the period. Note that in this sentence Florence is said to be full of *nuove genti*, which I have translated as "bizarre characters." Although the phrase could be rendered more literally as "new people," the word *nuovo* had a range of meanings from the more positive, such as unfamiliar, strange, or unusual, to the more negative, such as bizarre or weird. The same adjective is applied later in the sentence to Calandrino himself, who is said to be a man *di nuovi costumi*, a phrase that I have rendered as "strange habits." At the end of the paragraph, Maso del Saggio is said to be planning to make Calandrino believe *alcuna nuova cosa*, "some far-fetched (i.e., novel) notion." Finally, near the end of the story, Bruno and Buffalmacco ask Calandrino, *che novelle son queste?* which I have translated as "What's the story here?" It would have been more accurate, though less idiomatic, to have said, "What are all these strange goings-on about?"

3 Bruno was Bruno di Giovanni d'Olivieri, a minor painter who was active in the first decades of the fourteenth century, and who worked along with Buffalmacco, an acknowledged master artist. Buffalmacco's real name was Bonamico (ca. 1262–1340), and like Calandrino, he was a pupil of Andrea Tafi. He was a more accomplished artist, however, and the remains of his paintings can still be seen in the Badia in Florence, the Cathedral of Arezzo, and, perhaps, the Camposanto in Pisa (*The Triumph of Death*). He was reputed to be quite a prankster, and writers after Boccaccio, including Sacchetti and Vasari, told stories about him. The nickname Buffalmacco comes from a combination of *buffo*, an alternate for *beffa*, meaning "trick" or "prank," and *macco*, the name of a soup made from shelled fava beans, thus suggesting the character's pleasure in eating, but also his relatively slender income, since bean soup was the food of the poor.

4 Maso del Saggio is also remembered as a prankster by later writers. Although he was, by profession, a broker or middleman, he was known in his own time for his tricks and his mocking humor. He was mentioned by Frate Cipolla in 6.10 and will appear again as a trickster in 8.5.

5 Maso's discourse conjures up a magical land of plenty for Calandrino. This was a fantasy place that appears in various kinds of popular literature throughout the Middle Ages (and after). Maso calls it *Berlinzone,* which I have translated as "Gluttonia," since Florentines at the time referred to someone who stuffed food into his mouth as a *berlingaio.* He places it in the land of the Basques, which was "beyond beyond" for fourteenth-century Italians, and he also says it is in the *contrada che si chiamava Bengodi. Bengodi* is made up of *godi* (enjoy) and *bene* (well), and thus means something like the "land of real enjoyment, or pleasure," but since food is the central feature of Maso's fantasy country, I have turned *Bengodi* into "Gourmandistan."

6 Vernaccia wine is a white wine made from a varietal of the same name that is grown throughout Italy. The name derives from a word meaning "vernacular," i.e., "local." Nowadays, when people say Vernaccia, they are usually referring to the Tuscan white wine, Vernaccia di San Gimignano, but in Boccaccio's time that was not necessarily the case.

7 Not only does Maso fool Calandrino by talking of fantastic places and using equivocal expressions, but like Frate Cipolla, he sometimes comes close to talking nonsense, although he uses an impressive style as he does so in order to dupe his listener. In this sentence he says, *Haccene piú di millanta, che tutta notte canta,* which means, literally, "There are more than a thousand (miles) to there, which sing all night long." Maso renders his statement impressive by using the variant *millanta* for *mille* (it means "a thousand," but also refers to any very large number) and by rhyming that word with *canta* (sings). *Millanta* also suggests *millantare,* a verb meaning to boast or brag. That Calandrino is appropriately impressed is indicated by his response that the place is farther away than Abruzzi, the name for a province in Italy that at the time belonged to the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and that was used proverbially, like the country of the Basques, to mean a land "at the other end of the earth."

8 Maso is punning here when he says *Sì é cavelle.* It can be translated as "It's really nothing" in the sense that the extra distance to Gluttonia is nothing at all, but also that Gluttonia itself is nothing at all, that is, a complete fiction.

9 Settignano and Montisci (more correctly, Montici) are hills (and towns) near Florence, just as Monte Morello is.

10 This is another bit of linguistic foolery on Maso's part. Speaking of the emeralds, he says *rilucon di mezzanotte vatti con Dio.* The first part of this clause speaks of how the stones shine in the middle of the night, but the word *mezzanotte* (middle of the night) is followed by a standard locution for "good-bye," *vatti con Dio* ("God go—or be—with you"), which I have rendered as "good-night to you," perhaps because Maso's clause is structured by a process of association: speaking about the middle of the night leads him to say good-bye, since it is long past bedtime.

11 Faenza is a reference to the old Faenza Gate that was located less than half a mile to the west of the present-day train station of Santa Maria Novella in Florence. There was a convent just outside it in Boccaccio's day.

12 Boccaccio's Italian here reads: *noi avremmo perduto il trotto per l'ambiadura.* Literally, this means, "we would have lost the trot for the sake of the amble." The proverb involves two different gaits of horses. The amble is a leisurely pace that is more comfortable for the rider, whereas the trot is faster, but less comfortable. Also, the trot is a natural gait for horses, whereas they must learn to amble, and they may lose the ability to trot if they do. Thus, Buffalmacco's proverb means essentially that they will potentially be losing a sure thing (the natural gait of the trot that is sure to lead them to the prize of the heliotrope) by doing something that promises to be easier (ambling, or going to the Mugnone right away), but is less sure (because ambling has to be learned and may keep them from getting to their goal as they could by trotting there).

13 Canto alla Macina means "Millstone Corner" and actually exists at the intersection of Via Ginori and Via Guelfa. Having Calandrino live at a place associated with another stone (probably because there was a mill there once) makes sense in terms of the imagery in the story.

14 The name Tessa, short for Contessa, was common in Tuscany because of the fame of Matilde di Canossa (1046–1115), the Countess (*Contessa*) of Tuscany who supported the Papacy against the Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV, sometimes even donning armor and leading troops into battle.

Day 8, Story 4

1 There are multiple classical sources for this story, including Plautus's *Casina,* Ovid's *Fasti* (*On the Roman Calendar*) 3.667–96, and one of Quintilian's *Declamationes* (*Declamations*), 363, as well as the French *fabliau* entitled *Du prestre et d'Alison* (*Of the Priest and Alison*) by Guillaume le Normand. The Rector was the chief ecclesiastical dignitary in a cathedral or a collegiate church.

2 Picarda was a very common name in Florence during Boccaccio's time, so it is impossible to identify the woman with any particular historical figure. It is equally impossible to identify the Rector in the story.

3 The Rector's derogatory comment here means that women are so soft, so pliable, that they could be easily moved ("hammered") to do any man's bidding, whereas true silver is resistant enough so that a hammer is able to impress the design of a coin on it. He is implying both that women are not worth much (they cannot be turned into real coins) and that they are malleable and thus superficial and easily persuaded. The hammering metaphor has an additional sexual suggestiveness that puts women down even further.

4 Ciuta is short for Ricevuta, an unusual given name, which is probably itself short for *per grazia ricevuta,* which means "for a received grace," suggesting that Ciuta's parents may have prayed to have a child and then named her as they did because God

chose to grant her to them as an expression of His grace. Boccaccio's explanation for Ciuta's nickname is incomprehensible in English. In Italian we are told that she had a *cagnazzo viso* ("*cagnazzo* face"), so that everyone called her Ciutazza, adding the ending of *cagnazzo* to Ciuta to create her derogatory nickname. There is some debate about the meaning of *cagnazzo.* Dante uses the word to describe the faces of the damned who are stuck in the ice at the center of Hell (see *Inferno* 32.70), which suggests that the word means "livid," that is, discolored, perhaps purplish red, from the cold. But *cagna* means "bitch," leading some translators to read *cagnazzo* as an adjective deriving from that noun and thus seeing Ciuta's face as being "doglike." Since we are told she has a bad complexion, and since there is nothing else doglike about her face, I have chosen to translate *cagnazzo* as "discolored," without, however, ruling out the canine association.

5 Ciutazza's mistress is offering her a *camiscia* (*camicia* in modern Italian), which now means "shirt" or "blouse," but in the Middle Ages referred to the long, shirt-like undergarment worn by both sexes (which has since been replaced by bras and slips for women and undershirts for men). In this context I have called it a "shift," although "smock" would work equally well.

6 The narrator refers to the Rector, the *proposto,* here as *messer lo ploposto,* ridiculing him by playing nonsensically on his title. Since "rector" and "provost" are virtually equivalent terms to render the Italian *proposto,* half of modern translations using the one and half the other, my choice of rector allows for the pun I use in this sentence for his title, a pun that Boccaccio, admittedly, did not intend, but that nicely captures both the sexual appetite of the character and his general stupidity.

Day 8, Story 5

1 There is no specific antecedent for this story, although Florentines were well known for playing practical jokes on outsiders. The judge in this story is named Niccola da San Lepidio, which means he comes from the town of San Lepidio, now known as Sant'Epidio al Mare, which is located in the southern part of the province known as *Le Marche* (The Marches). Florence frequently found its *podestà* and the magistrates who worked with them in that region, which is west and slightly south of Tuscany.

2 Although Matteuzzo has not been identified, Ribi was a well-known professional entertainer, according to the writer Sacchetti, who recounts several of the clever quips he was supposedly responsible for making; see his *Trecentonovelle* (*Three Hundred Stories*), 49 and 50. Matteuzzo is a pet name for Matteo (Matthew); Ribi, a nickname for Garibaldo, Ribaldo, or Riberto.

3 Santa Maria a Verzaia was a church near the Porta San Frediana, a gate in the walls of Florence on the south side of the Arno.

4 Ribi actually says he will appeal the matter to the *sindacato,* which is really short for *il momento del sindacato.* The "moment of the *sindacato*" was the moment when all the magistrates in Florence ended their tenure in office and delivered a report (the *sindacato*) about their activities. At that moment, citizens could appeal their cases to the magistrates, known as *sindacatori.*

Day 8, Story 6

1 There is no specific antecedent for this story, although it has some general points of contact with a number of medieval tales involving trickery where the prize pursued is bacon, which is precisely what Calandrino would turn his pig into.

2 There is an untranslatable pun here: Calandrino has been complaining that his pig has been "stolen" (*imbolato*), to which Bruno replies that he cannot believe it has "flown away" (*volato*).

3 The bread and cheese test was a widespread magical rite in the Middle Ages in which people suspected of theft were given a portion of bread and cheese to eat over which a magical formula had been recited. Their inability to swallow it was assumed to be proof of their guilt.

4 Vernaccia wine is a white wine made from a varietal of the same name that is grown throughout Italy. The name derives from a word meaning "vernacular," i.e., "local." Nowadays, when people say Vernaccia, they are usually referring to the Tuscan white wine, Vernaccia di San Gimignano, but in Boccaccio's time that was not necessarily the case.

5 Forty *soldi* were worth about half a florin, which was a reasonably valuable coin at the time.

6 There is a debate about what exactly "dog ginger" (*zenzero canino*) is. Some scholars think the phrase refers to an inferior type of ginger, while others argue that it is a name for "water pepper" (*Persicaria hydropiper*), a marsh weed with an acrid juice. Yet another school of thought believes that "dog ginger" was a euphemism for "dog excrement," which was, in fact, occasionally used in medieval medicine. "Hepatic aloes" (*Liliacea amarissima*) was a bitter, nauseating drug used as a purgative. "Hepatic" ("pertaining to the liver") refers to its dark red color.

7 Since the florin was a fairly valuable coin, and "six" was used in the period to mean something like "a large, indefinite sum," Buffalmacco is suggesting that Calandrino made a killing when he sold the pig.

8 A more literal translation of the last words of the story—*col danno e con le beffe*—would be that Calandrino is left "with the loss and with the tricks (that had been played on him)," or "with the loss and the ridicule (he had been subjected to)."

Day 8, Story 7

1 There is no specific literary antecedent for this story, although it is clearly related to a long tradition of misogynistic writing throughout the Middle Ages. Many scholars also see it as being autobiographical, the reworking of an unhappy episode in Boccaccio's life, which he also wrote about in his *Corbaccio* (1354–55), a virulently misogynistic work about a widow who had jilted him.

2 Elena is Helen, and her name cannot help but evoke that of Helen of Troy. The scholar's name Rinieri is less suggestive.

3 My "nether regions" is a compromise. Boccaccio writes *in inferno*, "in the direction of Hell." Most translators see this as an emphatic way of saying that she did not stare

down at the ground and translate the phrase accordingly. But in the context of a story filled with allusions to devils, serpents, Hell, and Dante's *Inferno*, Boccaccio's phrase is quite suggestive.

4 What Boccaccio actually says here is: *che di mal pelo avea taccata la coda*. A literal translation would be: "who had attached to him a tail with (tufts of) bad hair." The clause connects the scholar to traditional images of the devils, such as the ones who appear in Cantos 21–22 of Dante's *Inferno*, one of whom is named *Malacoda* ("Bad Tail"). The devils were traditionally supposed to be cunning and malicious, as Dante's are, and as the scholar is.

5 This may be a slip on Boccaccio's part in that the scholar could not have known about the question the lady had asked her lover. Or perhaps she may have revealed this in some way when she was asking Rinieri for his assistance.

6 The scholar's "snares" *(lacciuoli)* here may be an ironic reference to the snares that courtly love poetry said women used with men and that were frequently identified, metaphorically, with their hair. The word also looks forward to the end of the story where the lady is said, in a phrase alluding to Dante's *Inferno*, to have a plentiful supply of snares or tricks.

7 The lady's "plentiful supply of tricks" (*a gran divizia lacciuoli*) echoes the scholar's boast about having many snares or tricks (*lacciuoli*) earlier in the story and also constitutes an allusion to the anonymous Navarese, a con man appearing in Dante's *Inferno*, who *avea lacciuoli a gran divizia* (22.109: "had snares [or tricks] in abundance") and uses one of them to escape the clutches of the devils who are about to punish him.

Day 8, Story 8

1 There is no specific literary antecedent for this story, although many medieval *fabliaux* feature husbands and wives doing the sorts of things that happen here.

2 The comment about the ass recalls the one made at the end of 5.10, which in turn goes back to one made by a merchant who is talking with his colleagues at the start of 2.9. The point of the comment is that when an ass bumps into a wall, he is, in a sense, bumped back by what he has run into. In other words, he gets a blow from the wall equal to the one he gave it. Fiammetta's advice is clear: in matters of revenge, do not seek an excessive retribution, but go "tit for tat." The story thus becomes something of a parody of the serious punishments meted out to the damned in Dante's *Inferno* where their suffering was God's perfectly calibrated "revenge" for the sins they had committed.

3 Both the Tavena and the Mino (actually, the Tolomei) were real families in Siena, and there are documents from the fourteenth century that mention a Spinello from the former and a Zeppa from the latter. Spinelloccio is a double diminutive derived from Crispino, the name of the saint who was the patron of shoemakers, tanners, and leather workers (Crispino might also suggest that the character has curly—*crespo*—hair). Zeppa is short for Giuseppe (Joseph), the husband of the Virgin Mary, who was a carpenter by trade and became the patron saint of workers and craftsmen.

The names of both characters thus speak to the social position assigned them in the story as well-to-do *popolani* ("commoners"). The Tolomei were actually a cut above that status, however. As we see in the next sentence, the two men are neighbors in the Sienese *contrada* ("quarter") located near the Porta Camollia, one of the eight gates of the city on its northern side; the gate has been preserved to this day.

4 Boccaccio refers to the couple as doing a *danza trevigiana* ("Trevisan dance"), which I have translated as a "jig." The Trevisan dance was apparently quite lively and possibly obscene. Its equivocal meaning here does not need further commentary.

Day 8, Story 9

1 There is no specific literary antecedent for this story, although it reflects a belief in magic that is a staple of many classical and medieval stories.

2 There was, in fact, a da Villa family: a Messer Simone da Villa is mentioned in a history of Pistoia as living between 1315 and 1326; and a Messer Simone Medico ("Doctor") was buried in Santa Croce in Florence around the middle of the fourteenth century. The doctor's family name means, essentially, that he is from the country, reinforcing the notion that he is simpleminded, something of a bumpkin. Via del Cocomero corresponds to a section of the present-day Via Ricasoli near the Mercato Vecchio, which is where the house of Boccaccio's two trickster painters, Bruno and Buffalmacco, is located (cf. 9.3). *Cocomero* means "watermelon," and thus, like the earlier reference to the sheep, constitutes a comment on Messer Simone's intelligence: his head is as (relatively) empty as a melon.

3 The hospital of San Gallo had a devil's head painted on its façade with multiple mouths, each devouring a sinner. This iconography was widespread in the late Middle Ages. Dante's *Inferno,* for example, features a three-headed Satan, whose three mouths are devouring those whom Dante saw as the most sinful traitors in the history of the world: Judas, Brutus, and Cassius.

4 Bruno refers to Simone as *vostra qualitativa mellonaggine da Legnaia,* which I have rendered as "your qualitative melonosity of Legnaia." *Qualitativo* was an adjective used in contemporary philosophical writing; it has no precise meaning here, but is designed to make what Bruno is saying sound impressive. The reference to *mellonaggine,* "melonosity," like later ones to pumpkins and cucumbers, is a comment on Simone's lack of intelligence, his empty-melon-headedness. Legnaia is a village not far from Florence that was famous for its watermelons. Montesone (or Montisoni) in the next sentence is a hill near Florence with a famous cross on its summit.

5 Bruno addresses Simone as *maestro mio dolciato,* "my sweet (or, more accurately, sweetened) Master." "Sweet" here is an antonym for "salty," meaning witty or clever; hence, my "dull-cified," i.e., sweet means dull or stupid. Bruno will repeatedly use this opposition between sweet and salty, that is, between stupid and witty, in addressing Simone. Michael Scot (ca. 1175–ca. 1235) was a scholar and mathematician whose translations of Aristotle from Arabic and Hebrew initiated the late medieval vogue for the Greek philosopher. Scot wrote works on philosophy, astrology, and alchemy, and served as the court astrologer for Holy Roman Emperor

Frederick II. Although he has been praised for his learning, Dante placed him in Hell with the magicians and soothsayers (see *Inferno* 20.116–18). Commentaries on the *Divina commedia* speak of the magical banquets Scot supposedly held for his followers.

6 Bruno's list of famous women veers between real people and places, on the one hand, such as the Basques, the Sultan, Osbech, and Norwega (*Norrueca* is, perhaps, a corruption of *Norvegia*, "Norway"), and pure fantasy, on the other. *Barbanicchi*, which has been left as it is in Italian, may suggest "barbarians"; "Chitterchatterer" is *ciancianfera*, the "bearer of *ciancia*," which means "chitchat"; and *semistante*, which I have rendered as "Semistanding" (*semi-* means "half," and *stante* is the present participle of *stare*, "to stay, stand, or be") also distantly suggests *almirante* ("admiral") or *amorante* ("lover"). *Scalpedra di Narsia* suggests both *scalpitare* ("to claw") and *puledra* ("female colt") to Italian scholars. However, Bruno's *Narsia* may be a reference to the Umbrian town of Norcia (Lat. *Nursia*), which was the birthplace of Saint Benedict, the founder of Western monasticism, who was known in the Middle Ages as Saint Benedict of Narsia (as well as of Nursia, Norsia, and Norcia). If so, then *Scalpedra* may be a play on words on both *scapolare* ("scapular"), the hooded cloak worn by monks over their shoulders (Lat. *scapula*), and *cattedra* (Lat. *cathedra*), the name for a bishop's seat in a church that was accordingly called a cathedral. Hence my decision to make her the "Scapulathedral of Narsia." Legends concerning Prester John were brought back to Europe by crusaders after about 1200, identifying him as the legendary Christian ruler of an empire in Asia or Africa, sometimes specified as Ethiopia, who was going to retake Jerusalem for Christendom. He supposedly signed himself simply as Prester John, i.e., John the Priest. Florentines called him Presto Giovanni ("Quick John"). His wife Skinkimurra (It.: *Schinchimurra*) is, of course, a pure fabrication; her name is possibly intended to suggest the exotic language Prester John was imagined as speaking.

7 Cumin seeds are very aromatic and were used not only to flavor dishes, but also in medicines, including those to control flatulence.

8 Bruno is making a bawdy play on the actions involved in weaving.

9 The figure of Lent would have been that of an emaciated woman. An *Agnus Dei*, the "Lamb of God," was the figure of a lamb bearing a cross or having a small cross above it; it was a symbol of Christ. Since doctors diagnosed diseases by examining patients' urine, it would make sense for Master Simone to have a urine flask painted over his front door. Cats and mice were frequently represented in medieval painting and sculpture, although there are few examples of actual battles between groups of them. Cats were usually associated with the Devil; mice sometimes had similar associations, but were also linked to weakness and hence to frail humanity.

10 *Gumedra* seems sheer nonsense, but Marco Polo had spoken of the Genghis Khan who lived in a region called *Altai*. *Altarisi* could thus be seen as a conflation of that place-name with the word for "altar," *altare*, although it could also be a comical corruption of *Tartary*.

11 Bruno is caricaturing the names of two medical authorities in the Middle Ages, the Greek physician Hippocrates, and the Arabic philosopher Avicenna. Bruno's

Porcograsso (for Hippocrates) means "Fat Hog"; his *Vannaccena* (for Avicenna) means "Vain [or empty] Supper."

12 Peretola is only a few miles from Florence.

13 Cacavincigli is the name of a street or alley in Florence associated with lowlifes. The first part of the word, *caca,* means "crap" and thus anticipates the end of the story. Simone offered the woman ten Bolognese *grossi,* the early modern equivalent of which was the Dutch or English groat, a silver coin of relatively modest worth.

14 Bruno's nonsense, which sounds impressive and which he is counting on Simone not to understand, can only be approximated in translation. Bruno first tells the doctor that his singing would beat *le cetere de' sagginali,* literally, "the lyres (or harps or whistles) made from sorghum stalks." The word *cetere* can also refer to the mumbo jumbo of doctors and lawyers who were given to saying *etcetera* a great deal. Then Bruno says to the doctor: *sí artagoticamente stracantate,* literally, "you sing beyond the limits (*stra-*) in so super (*arta-,* or *arci-* in modern Italian) Gothic a manner." "Gothic" was clearly already a pejorative term for the art and architecture of the late Middle Ages. However, since the word begins with *arta-,* Simone is meant to hear it as praise for his *artfulness.*

15 Vallecchio is a small town in Tuscany near Castelfiorentino about eighteen miles southwest of Florence.

16 When Bruno says that Simone's wise words would "draw pious old ladies right out of their boots," his term for them is *pinzochere,* which meant the pious laywomen who associated themselves with various religious orders, but who did not take vows, did not live in convents, and could choose to marry. Many went around barefoot—hence the humor of Bruno's comment, which is another bit of the deliberate obscurity that he uses to make fun of the linguistically challenged Simone. Boccaccio seems to have thought such women were generally hypocrites.

17 Bruno refers to his *grande e calterita fede,* his "great and *calterita* faith (or word)." *Calterita* is the past participle of *calterire,* which means "to bruise" or "to damage," and thus really means *bad* faith. It is another bit of verbal mumbo jumbo on Bruno's part.

18 There was a professor of medicine named Guiglielmo da Saliceto who was active in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, although it cannot be certain that Boccaccio is thinking of him here. Forlimpopoli is a town located between Forlí and Cesena; the name has farcical overtones. Simone calls himself a good *segretaro,* using a word that could mean in the late Middle Ages both a "keeper of secrets" and the person who was entrusted with his master's secrets, as well as with correspondence and the like, that is, a secretary. *La Bergamina* (the "Woman from Bergamo"), who is mentioned in the next sentence, has not been identified.

19 The narrator refers to Simone as *maestro sapa,* which I have translated as "Master Sappyhead." Since *sapa* is actually concentrated grape juice, once again Simone's lack of wit, his lack of "salt," is the point of the joke.

20 High up on the façade of the church at Passignano there is a painting of God the Father. Buffalmacco's playing on the word "High" (*alto* in Italian) works on the assumption that the parochial Simone has never seen the image.

21 Buffalmacco uses a word Boccaccio appears to have made up here: *frastagliatamente*. The verb *frastagliare* means to cut an intricate design or cut something into pieces, and by extension, to confuse or deceive by talking in a grandiose and extravagant manner. Simone is supposed to hear, perhaps, the idea of "intricate detail" as a form of sincere praise. Hence, I have translated it as "frankastically," conflating "frankly," "fantastically," and "sarcastically."

22 Here begins a series of scatological puns inspired by the countess's name. In Italian she is the *contessa di Civillari,* the name of a spot in Florence near the monastery of San Jacopo a Ripoli that was used as an open sewer and an outhouse of sorts. Buffalmacco says the Countess is the most beautiful thing in *tutto il culattario dell'umana generazione*. The key word here is *culattario,* an Italianized play on a late Latin word such as *collectarium* (*collecta,* or "assembly," plus *-arium,* "place of"). The initial part of the word has been replaced with *cul-*, from *culo,* meaning "butt." Hence, "ass-sembly."

23 The Countess's trip to the Arno refers to the practice of taking household waste to be dumped into the river at night. There actually is a town near Arezzo called Laterino that had existed since Roman times and had been the source of jokes as early as the *Curculio* (*The Weevil,* 4.4) of Plautus (254?–184 BCE).

24 "Her staff and pail," *la verga e 'l piombino,* is an untranslatable pair of puns. *Verga* means both the staff or rod a ruler held and a cleaning instrument, while *piombino* (from *piombo*: "lead") could mean a (lead) seal or a pail or bucket. The Countess's retainers all refer to different sizes and forms of human excrement. They are called *il Tamagnin dalla Porta, don Meta, Manico di Scopa, lo Squacchera,* which mean, respectively: the little old man who keeps, or stays by, the door; don turd; broom-handle; and the loose one (*Squacchera* comes from a verb meaning "to squirt"), i.e., diarrhea.

25 The tombs outside of Santa Maria Novella were erected around 1314, thus suggesting a possible date for the story. Although "Bath" will have a special meaning in the story, there was an actual "ceremony of the bath" in which knights-to-be were washed of their imperfections.

26 The festival they no longer celebrate is probably the *Gioco del Veglio* ("Game of the Old Man") in which someone would impersonate the Devil. It was banned in 1325.

27 Buffalmacco is going along the present-day Via della Scala. His route takes him by the hospital of Santa Maria della Scala (founded 1316; later the monastery of San Martino) toward the nunnery of San Jacopo di Ripoli, which had been founded in 1300–01 and contained paintings by Bruno and Buffalmacco, according to Vasari.

Day 8, Story 10

1 There are multiple antecedents for what happens in this story both in Eastern and Western collections, although Boccaccio's rendering of the mercantile environment is unique. The theme of the "biter bit," the trickster who gets tricked, has appeared before in the *Decameron*; see, for example, 2.9 and 8.7.

2 "Customshouse" translates Boccaccio's *dogana,* which was a word of Arabic origin, as are several others in this opening paragraph, all of which enhance the exotic feel of the story.

3 In Boccaccio's time there were many women who worked as barbers, thus explaining his recourse to such imagery in this paragraph.

4 The Cignano was an important Florentine family, and there are archival records attesting to the existence of a Niccolò di Cecco da Cignano from the mid-fourteenth century. He may have been a member of the Compagnia Scali, a firm that dominated the cloth trade in the Kingdom of Naples, which included Salerno (as well as Palermo, except for a brief period in the late fourteenth century when the island of Sicily was ruled by the House of Aragon). Salabaetto means something like "the fast liver" or "the happy one"; both meanings could apply to the protagonist of the story.

5 Iancofiore is Sicilian for Biancofiore, the Italian equivalent of the French Blanchefleur ("white flower"), the name of the heroine who appears in the eponymous French romance; the heroine of Boccaccio's earlier prose romance *Il Filocolo* was called Biancofiore. Iancofiore is referred to as *Madama* on several occasions in the story, a linguistic equivalent for *Madonna* ("my lady") in keeping with the Sicilian setting; I have accordingly kept her title as it is.

6 Baths were not places to wash oneself in the late Middle Ages, but to bathe, relax, and socialize, as one does today in a spa. However, they also served as popular locations for romantic trysts and functioned as houses of prostitution. The Italian word for the place, *bagno,* would enter English as *bagnio* in the seventeenth century and became a standard euphemism for brothel. Note that a bathhouse serves as a setting for a romantic tryst in 3.6. Salabaetto's drawing the ring across his eyes two sentences later indicates how precious it is to him (i.e., as precious as his eyesight).

7 Pietro Canigiano was Boccaccio's rough contemporary who held various positions of responsibility both in the Kingdom of Naples and in Florence, although after 1378 his houses in the latter were destroyed, he was forbidden to hold office, and he died in prison in 1381. Caterina di Valois-Courtenay (1301/1303–46) was titled the Empress of Constantinople in that she was the descendant of one of the French noblemen who, along with the Venetians, had captured the city in 1204 during the Second Crusade and had created the Latin Empire of Constantinople (it was eventually retaken by the Byzantines in 1261). Caterina was married to Philip I of Taranto (1278–1331), the fourth son of Charles II of Anjou, "the Lame," King of Naples (1254–1309). It was said that she was responsible for the initial worldly success of Niccolò Acciaiuoli (1310–65), a member of an important banking family and a close friend to both Boccaccio and Pietro Canigiano. I have Dioneo refer to him as "a compatriot of ours," but in Italian he is said to be *nostro compare. Compare* technically meant godfather, but it often designated a close male friend, a gossip, and so, Dioneo's term indicates that Canigiani has a somewhat closer social connection to them than "compatriot" might suggest.

8 Monaco was a notorious haven for pirates, as can be seen in 2.10.

9 Boccaccio is citing a widely diffused proverb: *Chi ha far con tosco, non vuole esser losco.* Translated literally: "He who has to do with a Tuscan does not want to be squinting."

Day 9, Story 1

1 There are many stories in medieval literature in which women impose virtually impossible tasks on would-be lovers in order to keep them at bay, but there is no particular tale that is the source for this one.
2 The Palermini was a noteworthy Ghibelline family from the quarter of San Pancrazio in Florence who had been exiled in 1267; another member of the family appears in 3.7. The Chiarmontesi was an important Florentine family living near the Orsanmichele that had originally been Ghibelline and had likewise been exiled in 1267; it later switched political allegiance and turned Guelf.
3 The Lazzari was a powerful Guelf family in Pistoia and included among its members Dante's Vanni Fucci, who is punished among the thieves in Hell (see *Inferno* 24.122–51), as well as a famous lawyer named Filippo de' Lazzari. There is no record of any Francesca de' Lazzari.
4 The name Scannadio means literally "he slits the throat of God."

Day 9, Story 2

1 Versions of this story can be found in devotional works, such as Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea* (*The Golden Legend*), 146, as well as in several French *fabliaux*.
2 The Abbess's name is unusual, but the family name Usimbardi did exist at the time.

Day 9, Story 3

1 The theme of the pregnant man is very ancient and was widespread in classical and medieval literature, from the Greek geographer Strabo's *Geography* (3.4) through Marie de France's fable *Du vilain et de l'escarbot* (*The Peasant and the Beetle*) to the *Legenda aurea* (*The Golden Legend*), 89.
2 The joke here is that Calandrino's "two hundred *lire* in small change" (*dugento lire di piccioli contanti*) are not worth all that much, although he fantasizes about buying a farm with them.
3 The original speaks of Calandrino going about *comperando terra come se egli avesse avuto a far pallottole*: "buying earth (or land) as if he had to make pellets." The pellets in question were clay projectiles shot out of crossbows. The point here is that the only "farm" Calandrino has enough money to buy would be a tiny plot just large enough to obtain clay for making pellets; there would not be not enough land, in other words, for a proper farm, which was what anyone with social ambitions would have wanted to purchase in Boccaccio's time.
4 Nello di Dino (or Bandino) is mentioned in several documents at the start of the fourteenth century, and like Bruno and Buffalmacco, he may have been a disciple

of Andrea Tafi, a painter who is best known for his work on the mosaics in the Florentine Baptistery. Nello is said to be a relative of Calandrino's wife in 9.5. Nello is short for Antonello or another name ending in *nello*.

5 Master Simone da Villa appeared in 8.9, where he was identified as a particularly stupid doctor from Bologna and was the object of a complex practical joke that Bruno and Buffalmacco played on him.

6 In 8.9, Master Simone is said to live on the Via del Cocomero (the present via Ricasoli), which was near the Mercato Vecchio where Bruno and Buffalmacco also lived. Note that "Cocomero" means "watermelon," and that here Master Simone lives "at the sign of the Melon," that is, he advertises his practice by means of a sign with a melon painted on it. Both watermelon and melon are, of course, images of his (empty) head.

7 Here Boccaccio replaces *Simone* with *Scimmione,* deforming the name only slightly (in pronunciation), while turning it into the word for monkey or ape.

8 In the original, Simone assures Calandrino he will be *piú sano che pesce* ("healthier than a fish").

9 Master Simone sends Calandrino a little bit of *chiarea,* which critics have glossed in various ways. The word may derive from the French *clarée,* meaning "liquor." Since Calandrino finds it inoffensive, "spiced wine" seems a reasonable translation, since it was often used as a cure itself or as a base for other medicines.

Day 9, Story 4

1 There is no known source for this story, although some of its motifs can be found in various popular narratives.

2 These are both historical characters from prominent Sienese families. Cecco Angiulieri, or Angiolieri (ca. 1260–ca. 1312), was a poet, who wrote burlesque verse, addressing one of his sonnets to Dante. It is recorded that Cecco di Fortarrigo Piccolomini was condemned to death for murder in 1293, although the sentence was apparently never carried out. Another one of Angiulieri's sonnets was addressed to him. Note: Cecco is short for Francesco.

3 Scholars have suggested several candidates for the cardinal in question, but none of them convincingly. Ancona is a seaport on the Adriatic and was one of three Marches (borderlands) that owed allegiance to the Papacy in the Middle Ages. It is now the capital of the Italian province known as *Le Marche* (The Marches), which lies directly to the east of Tuscany and Umbria.

4 Buonconvento is a small town about twenty-five miles southeast of Siena. Seven miles farther on, heading east (toward The Marches), lies the town of Torrenieri, which is mentioned later in the story, and Torrenieri, in turn, is almost halfway to Corsignano (now known as Pienza), which is also mentioned later on.

5 I have used colloquialisms in this passage to reflect the fact that Fortarrigo's speech, here in particular, is larded with Sienese expressions. Indeed, Boccaccio uses them throughout the story, such as consistently replacing the more standard *giocare* or *giuocare* ("to play, gamble") with the Sienese *giucare*.

Day 9, Story 5

1 This story has no literary antecedents.

2 The Cornacchini was a important family of merchants in Florence in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries and owned a house in Via del Cocomero, which is close to where Bruno, Buffalmacco, and the others lived. Camerata, a hill just below Fiesole where many suburban estates were located, has been mentioned before in 7.1.

3 Niccolosa was a common name in Tuscany at that time. Her pimp is referred to as *il Mangione. Mangione* may possibly be his last name, which is how I have translated it, even though it is preceded by the definite article, since such a procedure was—and still is—common enough in the Tuscan dialect of Italian. It is also possible, however, that *il Mangione* may be a sobriquet, so that his "name" is "The Glutton." Camaldoli was a lower-class quarter in Florence.

4 Calandrino called Niccolosa a *lammia*. The word had been used since classical antiquity for a female monster with the body of a snake and the head of a woman who supposedly came out at night to kill children and drink their blood. The word could also have the less threatening meaning of an enchanting nymph or fairy or siren. Calandrino intends it in this second sense, but the other meaning may resonate in context.

5 Calandrino is mangling the conventional language of courtly love here.

6 This last comparison is simpler in Boccaccio's Italian: *come va la pazza al figliuolo*. Literally, it means "as the madwoman goes for her child (or son)." It was a proverbial expression for anyone who pursued without restraint the person whom he or she loved passionately.

7 See 9.3.

Day 9, Story 6

1 There are several *fabliaux* that narrate versions of this story, including Jean de Boves's *De Gombert et des deux clers* (*Gombert and the Two Clerks*) and the anonymous *Le meunier et les deux clers* (*The Miller and the Two Clerks*). Chaucer's *The Reeve's Tale* does so as well and may have been influenced by Boccaccio's version of the story. Note that the valley of the Mugnone, which provides the setting for the story, also appears in 8.3; the Mugnone flows from Fiesole south to Florence, and at one time entered the Arno near the Ponte Vecchio.

2 In this sentence, Boccaccio writes simply that Adriano *caricò l'orza* ("he yanked his rope"). The *orza* was the rope or cable attached to the yardarm of a sailing ship. The expression *caricare l'orza* meant to make or keep the line taut (so that the sail attached to the yardarm would swell out in the prevailing breeze). I have had to fill out Boccaccio's phrase in order to bring out the obscene double entendre it contains.

3 Pinuccio's enthusiasm expresses itself as a rhyming couplet in the Italian original.

Day 9, Story 7

1 Although there is no direct precedent for this story, there are a number of tales in European literature concerning obstinate wives who ignore warnings and die as a result.

2 Several stories earlier in the *Decameron* concern prophetic dreams; see 4.5 and 4.6 for examples.

3 There are records of a family called Imolese (or da Imola or Imole) that lived in Florence during Boccaccio's lifetime, although the name suggests that at some point it had come from Imola, a city in Romagna. Talano is short for Catalano, apparently a relatively common name at the time. (Catalano was actually a family name that was widespread in Italy, especially in the south, and indicates that its ancestors had most likely come originally from the region of Catalonia in Spain.)

4 This was apparently a proverbial saying. The Italian reads *Chi mal ti vuol, mal ti sogna,* and could be translated more literally as: "He who wishes you ill has bad dreams about you."

5 The wife's comment that her husband would "do well for himself if he were eating dinner with the blind" is another proverbial statement, the gist of which is that one who eats with the blind can easily take advantage of them by helping himself to whatever food he wishes to have.

Day 9, Story 8

1 Although there is no direct precedent for this story, the Ciacco who is featured in it was clearly taken by Boccaccio from Dante's *Inferno* where he is punished for the sin of gluttony (see 6.38–57). There have been attempts to identify him with the minor poet Ciacco d'Anguillaia, but unconvincingly. Ciacco is short for Giacomo or Jacopo (James), although the name was also slang for "hog." There is no record whatsoever of the Biondello ("little blond guy") who appears in the story.

2 Biondello is said to be "cleaner than a fly," because flies always seem to be cleaning themselves off with their legs. Biondello wears a tight-fitting *cuffia,* a kind of skullcap, a head covering usually worn by women, over which one might place a hat. These details, together with his long blond locks, suggest that he is something of a dandy.

3 A prominent and extremely wealthy merchant who was celebrated for the open house he kept, Vieri de' Cerchi was the leader of the party of the White Guelfs in Florence. He was exiled from the city in 1300, but soon returned, only to see his party defeated the next year by its enemies, the Black Guelfs, after which he went into exile and died in Arezzo around 1305. Corso Donati, whom Biondello mentions in his next comment, was, by contrast, of noble origin and the head of the Blacks, and he, too, must have kept a great table. Corso had also been exiled from Florence in 1300, but returned to the city in 1301 with the aid of Pope Boniface VIII and Charles de Valois, King of Naples, defeating his enemies and sending not only Vieri into exile, but Dante Alighieri, who had married Gemma Donati, a distant relative of Corso's, as well. Corso was finally assassinated in 1308 by an angry mob after having been

accused of conspiring to become the head of the state. The political feud between Vieri and Corso forms the background for the practical joke that Biondello plays on Ciacco.

4 "Huckster" is my translation of *barattiere,* which means a person who sold cheap goods in the public market or had some sort of (low-end) gaming table there. The word was also used for those who sold public offices for money, which is how most Italians know it from Dante's *Inferno,* where it identifies a particular group of sinners who are punished for their fraudulent behavior by being boiled in pitch (see Cantos 21 and 22). In translations of Dante, *barattiere* is often rendered as "grafter," but since the man in this story is willing to participate in Biondello's practical joke for a presumably small sum of money, it is unlikely that he would have been engaged in the sale of public offices. The Loggia de' Cavicciuli to which he is taken was located in the Corso degli Adimari, now the via Calzaiuoli, where the family Cavicciuli-Adimari owned various properties. Filippo Argenti degli Adimari, who is mentioned later in the sentence, was immortalized by Dante in the eighth canto of the *Inferno* as epitomizing the sin of wrath. So angry is he there that he winds up biting himself in his rage, an action that Boccaccio's story recalls later on just before Filippo runs into Biondello.

5 The two Italian words used by Ciacco here, *arubinare* ("rubify," i.e., turn ruby colored) and *zanzeri* ("little drinking buddies"), are made-up words—made up by Boccaccio as well as by Ciacco—and are seemingly designed to irritate Filippo by taunting him simply because they are unfamiliar. The word *zanzeri* actually could have two quite distinct meanings according to Italian lexicographers: there is the more neutral "drinking buddies or companions," and the more scandalous "catamites or boy prostitutes." Although this second meaning became the dominant one several centuries after Boccaccio wrote, there is no firm evidence that it would have meant that for Boccaccio. Nevertheless, since that meaning cannot be excluded here, I have attempted to capture both senses of the word with my translation by making the "drinking buddies" little ones.

Day 9, Story 9

1 Although there is no specific source for this story, there are many precedents in both Eastern and Western literature for the figure of Solomon as a sage as well as for the punishment given to the shrewish wife.

2 See 9.7.

3 Versions of this proverb were widely diffused in the late Middle Ages.

4 Melisso is the Italianized form of the name of the pre-Socratic Greek philosopher Melissus of Samos who lived in the fifth century, BCE. Giosefo, whom he meets in the next paragraph, is a variant of the name Giuseppe (Joseph). In Boccaccio's day, Laiazzo, or Lajazzo (Ayas), was a prosperous port in what was called Little Armenia, or Cilicia, a kingdom founded by Armenians fleeing from the Turks; it was located on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean in what is now the country of Turkey.

Day 9, Story 10

1 There are many stories in which human beings are turned into animals in both antiquity and the Middle Ages, including one of Boccaccio's favorites, Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*.

2 Barletta was a coastal city northwest of Bari in the southern Italian province of Apulia (Puglia) where the Bardi bank, for which Boccaccio's father worked, had a branch. This is the only story in the *Decameron* set in this region of Italy. Gianni di Barolo, who is introduced in this sentence, means Gianni from Barletta, Barolo deriving from the Italianized version of the Latin name of the town. Pietro da Tresanti means Pietro from the town of Tresanti.

3 Zita (which means "little girl" in the Tuscan dialect) was a common name in southern Italy, and there was a Saint Zita (ca. 1212–72) from Tuscany who was the patron saint of maids and domestic servants. Carapresa ("dear—or precious—acquisition") is the name of the woman from the island of Trapani off the northern coast of Sicily who appears in 5.2. Giudice ("Judge") was also a common southern Italian name, and an actual Giudice Leo appears in chancellery records from the town of Bitonto. The wife's name, which appears a little later in the story, is Gemmata, which means "one adorned with gems."

4 Bitonto was a market town ten miles west of Bari and held a famous fair on All Saints' Day, just eleven days before a similar fair at Barletta. Boccaccio chooses the name, however, for its suggestiveness, since it could be read as *bi-* (or *bis*) + *tonto*, "twice stupid." Pietro is twice stupid, first for being tricked by the priest, and then, according to his wife, for having to return to his ordinary life. That we are repeatedly told he uses an *ass* to carry his goods is also suggestive.

Day 10, Story 1

1 There are many stories in classical, Eastern, and medieval literature that turn on the protagonist's choice between two or more objects, often coffers as in this case, that are seemingly identical, but only one of which actually contains a treasure. This plot device appears in English literature most famously in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, in which Bassanio wins Portia's hand in marriage by choosing the right casket.

2 The Figiovanni was a noble Florentine family that also owned property in Certaldo, some of which may have been adjacent to the house where Boccaccio spent his last years. The Spanish King Alfonso, who is mentioned in the next sentence may have been Alfonso III of Castile (b. 1155, ruled 1158–1244), who was celebrated by many, including Dante, for his liberality as well as for the wars he waged against the Moors. He has also been identified with Alfonso X, the Wise, King of Castile (b. 1221, ruled 1252–84), whose generosity was proverbial.

Day 10, Story 2

1 There is no precedent for this story, which is treated as historical fact by several medieval chroniclers as well as by commentators writing on Dante's *Purgatorio,* which mentions Ghino in passing (6.13–14); Boccaccio's story is, however, the ultimate source for all of their accounts. Ghino di Tacco, who died in either 1303 or 1313, was a Sienese nobleman who, from his youth, had been a bandit like the rest of his family. After being banished from Siena by the counts of Santafiore in the 1290s, he captured the stronghold of Radicofani, which was located near a main road between Siena and Rome, and from there he preyed on travelers passing to and from the Holy City. Ghino murdered a judge in Rome, which is what Dante mentions about him, and for which he was condemned by Pope Boniface VIII (b. ca. 1235, pope 1294–1303), who eventually pardoned him (as he does in this story). Ghino was famous as a kind of "Robinhood" character, a view that Boccaccio seems to accept, although he was clearly also a brutal, violent man who was eventually assassinated himself. His first name is probably short for "Borghino," a family name that identifies someone as a town dweller (*borgo* means "town") and that appears frequently in late medieval documents from central Italy; Ghino was also a family name in the period. The Benedictine Abbey of Cluny, located in Burgundy, was founded in 910 by Duke William the Pious of Aquitaine. It controlled a number of abbeys elsewhere, including one in Paris, and by the late Middle Ages its wealth had become legendary. There were many Benedictine monasteries in the region around Siena. Note that another unidentified Abbot of Cluny is mentioned in 1.7. The Hospitallers, also called the Knights Hospitaller, were members of the Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, which was originally attached to a hospital founded in Jerusalem around 1023, but became a religious and military order in 1099 during the First Crusade and was charged with defending the Holy Land. In Boccaccio's time, they had established themselves as the rulers of Rhodes, the Holy Land having been recaptured by Islamic forces in 1291.

2 Excommunications are directed at individuals, banning them from participation in the sacraments of the Church. Interdicts are wholesale bans on religious activities in an entire region.

3 Corniglia is one of *le Cinque Terre* ("The Five Towns") perched on cliffs overlooking the Mediterranean that are located in Liguria between Genoa and La Spezia. The town is surrounded by vineyards to this day, although the grape varietal called Vernaccia is not produced there. However, Vernaccia derives from a word meaning "vernacular," i.e., "local," and is a white wine made from a varietal of the same name that is grown throughout Italy. Nowadays, when people say Vernaccia, they are usually referring to the Tuscan white wine, Vernaccia di San Gimignano, but in Boccaccio's time that was not necessarily the case.

Day 10, Story 3

1 There are some antecedents for this story in Persian and Arabic literature, and especially in Arab legends concerning Hatim Tai, a heroic character from the pre-Islamic period who was celebrated for his courage, wisdom, and unmatched generosity. A story in Arabic about this figure may have shaped elements in the life of Saint John the Merciful (also known as Saint John the Almsgiver), which is included in Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda aurea* (*The Golden Legend*), 27; Saint John, who was the Patriarch of Alexandria from 606 to 616, was famous for his liberality, especially toward the poor. In Hebrew, the name Nathan means "he who has given." The name Mithridanes (Boccaccio writes "Mitridanes") seems to be Boccaccio's invention. It may have been meant to echo Mithra or Mithras, a Persian god who was the center of a mystery religion practiced in the Roman Empire from the first to the fourth century, CE, but since the character in the story has little or nothing in common with the Persian god and the religious practices he inspired, Boccaccio may simply intend to evoke the exotic by means of his name, just as he does by situating the story in faraway China.

2 Both Nathan and the palace he has built (which is referred to in the next sentence) seem to echo what the Venetian Marco Polo reported about Kublai Khan and his residences in Cathay (i.e., northern China), but Boccaccio has deliberately named the Genoese, not the Venetians, as the source of his story, perhaps because of a typical Florentine sense of rivalry with Venice. That rivalry may also be seen in the story of Frate Alberto (4.2).

3 Nathan says that the world is "miserissimo," which I have translated as "quite a miserly place," but the word could also mean that the world is "quite a wretched place."

Day 10, Story 4

1 Various antecedents for this story can be found in Eastern tale collections as well as in classical and medieval literature in the West. Boccaccio had already told a version of this story in his early prose work, *Il Filocolo*.

2 Bologna is not in what is now identified as the province of Lombardy, but in Boccaccio's time the entire region north of the Apennines was referred to as Lombardy. The Carisendi, like the Caccianemico mentioned in the next sentence, was actually a noble family in the city, and there is still a leaning tower there named after them. Catalina is the Bolognese form of Caterina (Catherine).

3 Modena and Bologna are about twenty-four miles apart.

4 Gentile's name means "noble" or "gentle," and the word designates both a class position and a set of ethical attributes. In some ways, the story identifies its protagonist's magnanimous behavior as the epitome of gentility or gentle behavior, but there are moments, such as this one, in which Gentile makes himself into the godfather of Niccoluccio's child and names the child after himself, that may give one pause.

Day 10, Story 5

1 As with the preceding story, Boccaccio had told a version of this one in *Il Filocolo*. It has Eastern antecedents in Chinese, Indian, Persian, and other literatures as well as in that of medieval France. Chaucer's *The Franklin's Tale* resembles it, although scholars are not sure that Chaucer knew the *Decameron* the way he knew (and translated or adapted) many of Boccaccio's earlier works. It is more likely that both writers were working from a common, probably French, source.

2 Friuli, a province located in the northeastern part of Italy, was—and is—known for its severe winters. Udine is its main city. Neither Dianora nor her husband have last names in the story, and thus their identities cannot be determined. Nor can that of Ansaldo Gradense, who is mentioned in the next sentence, although his last name means his family probably came from the town of Grado, which was also located in Friuli.

3 Boccaccio is echoing a classical notion, formulated by Cicero as *Nil difficile amanti* (*Orator* 10: "Nothing is difficult for a lover").

4 In her conclusion, Emilia is referring, of course, to the previous story.

Day 10, Story 6

1 There is no literary source for this story. Its principal figure, Charles the Old, usually referred to as Charles I (1226–85), was Charles of Anjou who ruled as the King of Sicily from 1266 to 1282, when he was expelled from the island; he was known thereafter as the King of Naples, which he controlled until his death. Charles, who also appears in the tale of Madama Beritola (2.6), is generally treated sympathetically by Boccaccio. He was actually a notorious womanizer, and since the story is set just after 1266, he can hardly be called "the Old."

2 Manfred (1232–66), a Hohenstaufen and son of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, had usurped the throne of Sicily from his nephew Conradin (1252–68) in 1258. The Papacy wished to detach the Kingdom of Sicily (which included Naples and southern Italy) from the Holy Roman Empire, and enlisted Charles of Anjou to conquer it, which he did by winning the battle of Benevento on February 26, 1266, at which Manfred was killed. This led to the expulsion from Florence of the Ghibellines, who supported the Empire, and the reinstatement of the Guelfs, who supported the Papacy.

3 This character cannot be identified with any specific historical figure, although the Uberti was a powerful Ghibelline family in Florence. Its most famous member was Farinata degli Uberti, immortalized by Dante in *Inferno* 10, who had served with Manfred in his victory over the Florentine Guelfs at the battle of Montaperti in 1260. Farinata died in 1264, but after defeating Manfred in 1266, Charles had Farinata's children hunted down, imprisoned, and murdered. Boccaccio's Charles is a very different ruler. Note that some critics have found it strange for Boccaccio to have Messer Neri, a Ghibelline, elect to live anywhere in Charles's realm.

4 Castellammare di Stabia is a resort on the southeast side of the Bay of Naples. The Angevin rulers of the city had a summer palace built there in 1310.

5 Guy de Montfort, one of Charles's most loyal followers, was appointed his vice-regent in Tuscany in 1270. During that same year, in revenge for the killing of his father, he murdered Prince Henry, the nephew of Henry III of England, in the Cathedral of Viterbo during High Mass. Dante places him in the part of Hell reserved for those who committed acts of violence against their neighbors (see *Inferno* 12.119–20).

6 Ginevra and Isotta (or Isolde) were common names in courtly romances.

7 Medieval theologians believed there were nine (in some cases, seven) orders of angels arranged in a hierarchy. The most influential classification was that of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite from the fifth century, whose hierarchy included (ranging from the from lowest to the highest): Angels, Archangels, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Dominions, Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim.

8 Conradin I, Manfred's nephew, led an army to Italy in an attempt to retake Sicily from Charles in 1267. He was defeated at the battle of Tagliacozzo in August 1268, and after he fled, he was captured and turned over to Charles, who had him tried and beheaded in Naples on October 29. With Conradin's death, the legitimate branch of the Hohenstaufens became extinct.

9 In the preceding sentence, Count Guy rehearses a well-known saying of Publilius Syrus: *Bis vincit qui se vincit in victoria* ("he conquers twice who, when victorious, conquers himself"). In this sentence, he echoes the argument, though not the exact words, that the Roman general Scipio Africanus used to persuade Massinissa, a Roman ally, to give Sophonisba, the beautiful wife of the defeated African king Syphax, up to the Romans rather than to ravish her; see Livy, *Ab urbe condita* (*From the Founding of the City*), 30.14.

10 The Palizzi family was one of the most powerful in Messina and had ties to the Uberti; Matteo was a common name among its male members. There was a Guiglielmo d'Alemagna (William of Germany) in the retinue of Charles's son in 1306, and the family was still flourishing in Boccaccio's time.

Day 10, Story 7

1 Several chronicles recount the story of a certain Macalda di Scaletta who fell in love with King Peter of Aragon after he entered her town as a conqueror. There was also a now-lost poem on the subject, from which the poetical material in the center of this story may derive. Boccaccio's story thus seems an unfolding of the kind of biographical scenario that courtly love lyrics often seem to be alluding to. Since Peter of Aragon was a Ghibelline (and thus a supporter of the Holy Roman Empire's claims in Italy), while the protagonist of the previous story was a Guelf (and thus a supporter of the Papacy), the two stories balance one another nicely.

2 There were seven distinct families named Puccini living in Florence during this period, but none of them had a Bernardo among its members. The King Peter mentioned in the next sentence was Peter III of Aragon (b. 1239, ruled 1276–85). Famed

for his great stature and physical strength, he became ruler of Sicily in September of 1282, after the French, who had held the island since 1266, were expelled during the revolt known as the Sicilian Vespers, which began on March 31, 1282.

3 To joust "in the Catalan fashion" meant to follow the rules established in Catalonia, which had been united with the Kingdom of Aragon in the twelfth century.

4 There was a Mino d'Arezzo (Minuccio is a diminutive) who was a minor thirteenth-century poet active in Sicily during this period. King Peter was also a poet and welcomed poets and musicians in his court.

5 The viol (Boccaccio writes *viuola;* the more common French name was *vielle*) was a stringed instrument like the modern violin, but with a longer, deeper body, and an indeterminate number of strings; it could be bowed or plucked and was used to accompany singing or dancing. "Dance tunes" is my translation of *stampita,* a rhythmic instrumental composition accompanying a poem.

6 A Mico da Siena is named by Dante in his *De vulgari eloquentia* (*On Vernacular Eloquence*), 1.13, and a song directly attributed to him is preserved in a Vatican codex. The name Mico was short for either Michele or Amico ("Friend") and was quite common in Sicily in the period. It is most likely, however, that the poem is Boccaccio's and represents his attempt to compose verse in the then somewhat archaic style of the so-called Sicilian School, a group of poets who were attached to the courts of Frederick II and his son Manfred. These poets wrote during the middle third of the thirteenth century and included Tuscans and Sicilians as well as King Frederick himself. In keeping with the archaic flavor of Boccaccio's poem, I have elected to translate it using at times slightly older forms of English.

7 Cefalú is located in the province of Palermo; Calatabellotta, in that of Agrigento. I have translated Boccaccio's *terre* (lit. "lands") as "fiefs" in order to reflect the emphatically medieval character of this story. Even though fiefs and the feudal system are usually thought of as being typical of northern rather than southern Europe, Sicily had been conquered by the Normans in the eleventh century and was later ruled by the Hohenstaufens, the Angevins, and the Aragonese, all of whom maintained versions of the feudal system in the island.

Day 10, Story 8

1 The earliest direct antecedent for the first portion of this story is the second exemplary tale found in the fourteenth-century *Disciplina clericalis* (*A School for Clerics*) of Peter Alphonsi, which influenced a number of later works, any one of which may also have been known to Boccaccio. The celebration of friendship in the second portion of the story as a force that can triumph over love and even the fear of death is mostly a retelling of the legend of Damon and Pythias, but it echoes themes found in various Eastern story collections as well as in a host of classical texts from the West, ranging from Cicero's *De amicitia* (*On Friendship*) through Quintilian's *Declamationes* (*Speeches*) to Valerius Maximus's *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri IX* (*Nine Books of Memorable Deeds and Sayings*). Boccaccio's story, frequently translated into Latin, enjoyed great popularity in Europe over the next several centuries.

2 Octavianus (or Octavius) was a member of the Second Triumvirate, along with Mark Antony and Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, between 43 and 30 BCE. Boccaccio is using "generic" Roman names for both the father Publius and his son Titus, and although there was, in fact, a quite important Roman clan at the time called Quintus, none of the families in it was named Fulvius. Chremes, who is mentioned in the next sentence, is named after a character in one of Boccaccio's favorite comedies, Terence's *Phormio*; his son's name is entirely Boccaccio's invention; and the philosopher Aristippus, who is mentioned later, is named after Aristippus of Cyrene, a Greek philosopher who lived in the fourth century, BCE. Sending one's sons to Greece in order to study philosophy was a common practice among Roman aristocrats, something Cicero comments on in the introduction to his well-known *De officiis (On Duties)*.

3 In Florence the legal age at which girls might marry was twelve. Sophronia's name comes from a Greek word meaning "soundness of mind" and hence "wisdom," thus suggesting that the story can be read as an allegory in which the two friends both embody the art they are studying: they are "lovers of wisdom," which is what the word "philosophy" means in Greek.

4 Boccaccio is echoing a sentiment to be found Ovid's well-known *Remedia amoris (The Remedies for Love)*: *principiis obsta* (91: "oppose [things] at the start").

5 Gisippus tells his friend that he should have the girl because he is *molto più intendente di me,* which I have translated as "more intent upon having her." *Intendente* here means Titus is more focused on the girl, more taken with her, but the word can also mean that he has a superior understanding of her (and her worth?), since the verb *intendere* can mean "to understand," or that, in other words, he is something of a connoisseur. Elsewhere in the *Decameron*, *intendente* can mean "wise," so while that meaning is probably not the main one here, it is not to be excluded altogether.

6 Being a Roman, Titus's "god" in this case must be Jupiter, not the Christian God, and hence I have not capitalized the pronouns referring to him in the following sentences.

7 Boccaccio's text admits two possible readings here, although the one I have chosen seems the more likely. Gisippus says that giving up Sophronia will not be a loss for him, because *a un altro me la transmuterò di bene in meglio*. In addition to meaning "I'll be transferring her, as it were, to my other—and better—self," this could be rendered as: "I'll be transferring her to my other self, thereby changing her lot for the better."

8 Titus's opinion of the Greeks reflects a belief that was current in Boccaccio's time.

9 Titus has argued that it is presumptuous for people to claim they know what the gods ordain, but that is precisely what he is doing here.

10 In an anecdote Boccaccio may well have known that was recorded by Pliny the Elder, *Historia naturalis (Natural History)*, 36.85, and Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri IX (Nine Books of Memorable Deeds and Sayings)*, 8.12.3, the painter Apelles (late fourth century, BCE) would hide behind a curtain while people viewed his paintings. Once a shoemaker remarked that a sandal Apelles had drawn lacked a loop, and Apelles corrected it, but when the shoemaker later

criticized Apelles's drawing of the subject's leg, Apelles looked out and told him he had gone too far.

11 Marcus and Varro are, again, generic Roman names. A praetor was an elected magistrate who was subordinate to the two consuls who together had supreme military, administrative, and judicial authority in the Roman Republic.

12 Boccaccio's text here rehearses the so-called Golden Rule, which can be found in many religions, including various places in the New Testament, such as in the Book of Luke: *et prout vultis faciant vobis homines et vos facite illis similiter* (6:31: "And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise"). Boccaccio's text echoes the sentiments involved, but not exactly the words of the Vulgate Bible.

Day 10, Story 9

1 The first part of this tale has antecedents in stories concerning Saladin that spread his legend throughout Europe, including some that had him going about among Christians in disguise. One such story appears in the *Novellino* (23), for example. There are even more antecedents in the literature of the Middle Ages for elements in the second half of Boccaccio's tale (Messer Torello's magical voyage and his appearance at the wedding of his wife).

2 Saladin (Salah al-Din, 1138–93) was the Sultan of Cairo and was most famous for the reconquest of Jerusalem from the crusaders in 1187. A popular figure in medieval literature, he was celebrated for his knowledge, his chivalry, his military leadership, and his generosity. The Frederick I (1122–90) who is mentioned in the next paragraph—also known as Frederick Barbarossa ("of the Red Beard")—was a German King and Holy Roman Emperor (from 1152 on). One of the leaders of the Third Crusade, with Richard the Lion-Hearted of England and Philip II of France, which began in 1189, he drowned in the Saleph River, which is in modern-day Turkey, the following year.

3 Since both Muslims and Christians made pilgrimages in the Middle Ages, Saladin's doing so would not have been perceived as unusual.

4 There are records of a Torello who was Frederick II's *podestà* in various cities during the early thirteenth century; he may also have been a poet who wrote works in Provençal. Torello was a popular name in Tuscany in the late Middle Ages and is a nickname (with a diminutive ending) probably derived from Salvatore; *torello* in Italian means "little bull," although how that could apply to Boccaccio's character is uncertain. The last part of his name means that he comes from Strà (or Strada, "Street") in the province of Pavia, which is about twenty miles south of Milan and lies on the east bank of the Ticino River.

5 Boccaccio is following inaccurate contemporary accounts of the battle of Acre. The city, called Saint John of Acre, had been captured by crusaders in 1104, but was taken back by Saladin's army in 1187, only to be attacked two years later by members of the Third Crusade. Saladin attempted to lift the siege unsuccessfully, and the crusaders eventually captured the city in 1191. During the siege, disease ravaged the camps of both the armies. Acre was finally recaptured by the Muslims in 1291.

6 The Church of San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro ("Saint Peter in the Sky of Gold") stands in the center of Pavia.

7 Dignes (more accurately, Digne) is a town in the French Alps at one time controlled by the Angevin rulers of Naples.

8 Although magic has a significant presence in medieval literature, Boccaccio is skeptical about it, as he clearly is in 8.7, and he rarely accords it much of a place in the *Decameron*. On this day, however, which is devoted to examples of magnanimity, his narrators sometimes include magical elements, thus giving their stories an increasingly exalted—if implausible—character.

9 Adalieta is a diminutive of Adelaide, a popular name among noble families.

Day 10, Story 10

1 Although there are many examples of faithful wives put to harsh tests in medieval literature, the clearest "source" for this story is that of Job in the Bible. No scholar has been able to find anyone in the historical record who resembles Griselda. Indeed, her name seems to have been invented by Boccaccio, possibly as an ironic variation of Criseida, the notably unfaithful lover of Troilo (Troilus) in his romance *Il Filostrato*. Saluzzo is a town south of Turin lying in the foothills of the Alps. It was ruled by a series of marquises between 1142 and 1548, one of whom named Gualtieri was mentioned in a document dating from 1174 to 1175.

2 Dioneo is alluding to the language used by the heroine in 7.1.

3 Dioneo's phrase here, *matta bestialità* (lit.: "insane bestiality"), echoes Dante, who uses it to sum up the two types of sins in the lowest regions of Hell (see *Inferno* 11.82–83). The concept was developed by Saint Thomas Aquinas in his commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, 7.1.1.

4 Giannucole is a diminutive of Giovanni and means "Johnny" or "Little John."

5 Griselda's response here echoes what Mary says to the Angel Gabriel: *Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum* (Luke 1:38: "be it unto me according to thy word").

6 Compare Job's words: *nudus egressus sum de utero matris meae et nudus revertar illuc Dominus dedit Dominus abstulitsit nomen Domini benedictum* (Job 1:21: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord").

7 Panago (or, more correctly, Panico) was located near Bologna and was ruled by counts of the Alberti family.

8 Another biblical allusion, this time to Mary's *Ecce ancilla Dei* (Luke 1:38: "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord").

9 Gualtieri's "I believe I may boast" (*credendomi poter dar vanto*) is a formula used by medieval knights who would boast, often at the dinner table, of some heroic deed they had done or some extraordinary possession they had, challenging the others present to match their claim.

Day 10, Conclusion

1 Boccaccio is here paraphrasing Dante's *Convivio* (*The Banquet*): *Conviene adunque essere prudente, cioè savio: e a ciò essere si richiede buona memoria de le vedute cose, buona conoscenza de le presenti e buona provedenza de le future* (4.27.5: "Thus one must be prudent, that is, wise, for which it is necessary for one to have a good memory of things seen in the past, good knowledge of those in the present, and good foresight with regard to those in the future").

The Author's Conclusion

1 Boccaccio's self-defense here was a commonplace in medieval poetics.
2 In the early Middle Ages, Christ was depicted on the cross with four nails hammered into his two hands and feet. A new tradition arose in the late twelfth century of their being just three nails (one for the two feet together), because of the symbolic significance of the number three. Boccaccio's references to Christ as male and Eve as female, like his reference to Christ on the cross, may also evoke the image of the naked body, which has particular resonance at this point in his text.
3 Boccaccio's last comment here refers to a common saying about how topsy-turvy the world is, but it also recalls an earlier story (9.2) in which the crime of an adulterous Abbess is discovered because she has mistakenly placed her lover's breeches on her head.
4 In medieval literature concerned with Charlemagne (the so-called "Matter of France"), the Paladins were his twelve peers; the term was later extended to mean all knights. It originally designated the Roman emperor's chamberlain and personal guards who lived with him in his palace in Rome on the Palatine Hill (from which the word is derived). The term was later used for high officials in the Catholic Church, the Holy Roman Empire, and various countries throughout Europe.
5 Aside from the sexual banter in this passage, Boccaccio is doubtless joking about the fact that he was actually quite corpulent.
6 The Lamentations of Jeremiah were sung during Holy Week; there were several medieval poems on the Passion of Christ; and there were several other poems called The Complaint (or Lament) of Mary Magdalene to which Boccaccio may be alluding, although his reference in this case may simply be generic. (The Lament is also mentioned in 3.4.)
7 Boccaccio is, of course, being ironic in praising friars for avoiding hard work. His image of their "grinding when the millpond is full" is a reference to their sexual behavior, suggesting that they have sex, but only at infrequent intervals (i.e., "when the millpond is full"). That they smell like billy goats may refer both to their filthiness and to their randiness, since goats have been credited with excessive sexual appetites since antiquity. Note that all of these statements about friars have appeared before, sometimes verbatim, in the *Decameron* (see Cipolla's comments in his sermon in 6.10 for the references to friars avoiding hard work and the allusion to goats, and a comment about the priest of Varlungo in 8.2 for the millpond image).

LITERATURE

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Cover design by Steve Attardo / NINETYNORTH

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