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Message from the President & the Vice President

SIMONE MARCHESI
KRISTINA OLSON

Dear Friends in Boccaccio,
Many events of note have taken place in our community since our last newsletter: books have been published, prizes awarded, conferences organized in the US and abroad. You will find all of these activities addressed in the pages of this newsletter, which as always aims to celebrate the achievements of students and colleagues and to announce their future endeavors.
We are particularly pleased to confirm that the fourth ABA Triennial Conference will take place at the University of Madison–Wisconsin, on October 3-6, 2019.
We have 13 sessions scheduled for the conference which represents the work of more than forty colleagues, with panels ranging from archival and documentary research, to reception studies as well as roundtables and workshops on the status of the profession and the future of digital humanities. We are very much in debt to Professor Jelena Todorovic, without whose energy and organizational work the symposium would simply have not been possible.
Several volumes of the LB series are nearing completion or publication. We are happy to report that Day 4, edited by Michael Sherberg (Washington University) and Day 8, edited by William Robins (Victoria University), are forthcoming with the University of Toronto Press.
We are also in the process of redesigning the ABA website, which was launched in its present form about a decade ago. While it has served the Association well in the past, functioning as both the archive of the ABA past and the space for showcasing its initiatives, in its present state the website does no longer meet the standards of functionality and ease of use recommended today.
A mock-up of the eventual design is available at https://abaonline.godaddysites.com/ and we welcome all suggestions from the membership. We will ask for your support with this ambitious project, in the form of a fundraising campaign for the final development of the new site by 2020. This newsletter also contains an essay dedicated to the memory of Pier Massimo Forni, whose untimely passing is a profound loss for our field. This reflection was authored by one of his students, Francesco Ciabattoni, but it represents our collective tribute to the life of scholarship he so generously lived and shared with many of us.

With best wishes for the upcoming summer.
Recognizing
Pier Massimo Forni
Francesco Ciabattoni

Pier Massimo Forni died on December 1st, 2018, from complications of Parkinson’s disease, an enemy he had fought valiantly for many years. A leading authority in Boccaccio studies, Prof. Forni worked for thirty year at Johns Hopkins where he founded the Johns Hopkins Civility Project in 1997. After his laurea at Collegio Borromeo di Pavia and PhD at the University of California, Los Angeles (his dissertation on Petrarch remains unpublished), Forni taught at the University of Pittsburgh before joining Johns Hopkins University in 1985. Here he mentored generations of scholars in different areas of Italian studies. While the majority of us chose to specialize in Boccaccio or Medieval Studies, Pier Massimo’s mentoring encompassed the whole range of Italian literature, from novel to poetry and from the Middle Ages to contemporary literature, allowing each student to pursue her or his interest in the most rigorous of manners.

Forni’s publications are many and far-reaching and he was a refined poet himself: his earliest poetic accomplishments (Stemmi, Scheiwiller 1977) were graced with a preface by Maria Corti; he published a second collection of poems nearly twenty years later (Hotel pace dei monti, Greco & Greco, 1996). One of Forni’s favorite expressions to describe the work of the literary critic was “predicare criticamente”: he encouraged students not to content themselves with explaining what a text says, but rather to investigate how it says it through the creative process and its mechanisms.

This investigative technique was a bearing principle of Forme complesse nel Decameron (Olschki, 1992), whose attention to textual responsiveness shows how form, in Boccaccio’s masterpiece, brilliantly reflects content, and how the presence of Ovidian models shapes its revolutionary relational ideology. Adventures in Speech (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996) combines philology, classical rhetoric and contemporary literary theory, mapping the processes that govern the inventio, which is never separated from the dispositio, and the interrelationships between verba and res: the ability of words to change things. The book was later translated into Italian, with the addition of new chapters, under the title Parole come fatti. La metafora realizzata e altre glosse al “Decamerone”, Napoli, Liguori, 2008. Lessico critico decameroniano (Bollati Boringhieri, 1995), which he edited with Renzo Bragantini, brought together some of the world’s leading scholars to probe key concepts of the lexicon of Boccaccio’s masterpiece. Pier Massimo had an extraordinary ability to show us, with a mix of humor and sprezzatura, that acquiring discipline need not be scary or painful, but can rather be a captivating journey toward knowledge.
Manners maketh the scholar, one could easily say, especially in the case of Forni, who in the years of his full professorship founded the Johns Hopkins Civility Project and published best-selling books on the subject, such as Choosing Civility. The Twenty-five Rules of Considerate Conduct; The Civility Solution: What to Do When People Are Rude; and The Thinking Life: How to Thrive in the Age of Distraction (all published by St. Martin’s Press in 2002, 2008, and 2011, respectively).

There is, perhaps, a deeper motivation that conjoins the reading of the Decameron to Forni’s spirit of civility: Boccaccio wrote his masterwork with a therapeutic and prophylactic intent, as Pier Massimo explained in one of his finest essays. Florentine society was reeling from the plague, institutions were shaken, people had given in to a feeling of mistrust and despair. As a way of healing, ten young men and women chose storytelling, the use of the word, as a rationalizing principle against chaos. In many ways the Civility Project follows precisely in these footsteps: being civil, to Forni, meant being mindful of the consequences of one’s actions, choosing to act in a way that will do good. It means being in control of ourselves, in order to live a life of joy and respect.

The legacy that he has bequeathed on us goes well beyond literary wisdom: it points us to a deeper and nobler life; it spurs us to choose actions that will produce happiness and reduce pain. Pier Massimo loved soccer: he had played semiprofessionally, and echoes of his sport passion appear in his poems: “Sai, ho il gioco affranto, elegante, / del buon centravanti a fine carriera.” A soccer player is a man of action, someone who does not just sit and think, but runs, strategizes, makes decisions about how to pass the ball. His wife of eighteen years, Virginia H. Forni, reportedly said: “He loved soccer. He treasured his friends and his students. Nothing made him happier or prouder than to see them succeed. I know he understood and reciprocated the affection they felt for him.”

Pier Massimo Forni was not only a formidable researcher, but a truly superb educator. He was an excellent orator: he knew how to capture an audience and present a difficult subject to non-experts. Pier Massimo has been an example to all who have been so lucky to meet him, not only within the discipline of literary studies, but as a true maestro for our lives.
Sai, sono già cotto
come poeta,
ono ai colpi di tosse,
a ai buoni motti,
i versi hanno il mento rotondo
e le stanze tinelli svedesi.

Sai, ho il gioco affranto, elegante,
del buon centravanti a fine carriera,
protegge la palla col corpo
il moto di spalle un’alta
conversazione;

non vedi come parto distante
come per far venire sera
con che stacco e ironia io sia spento e
sublime?
È grande solo il decoro
con cui prendo la via dello spogliatoio,
i calzoncini intatti, il numero alla schiena.

“We must be as courteous to a man as we are to a picture,
which we are willing to give the advantage of a good light.”
P.M. Forni, Choosing Civility

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS BY P.M. FORNI:
October 3

3-4pm: Workshop for graduate students "The Past and the Future of the Profession"
4-5pm: Rountable, **Boccaccio and Digital Humanities:**
Susanna Barsella, Valerio Cappozzo, Francesco Ciabattoni, Simone Marchesi, Michael Papio
6 pm: Greetings, Awards, Keynote Lecture 1: Marco Cursi
8pm: Reception

October 4th

9:00 - 10:30am:
1) **The Decameron as Ars Poetica:**
Kristen Hook, University of California, Berkeley
*Cavalcanti’s Coals: Finding New Pens Between Dec. 6.9 and 6.10*
Monica Keane, University of California, Davis
*“Lieto ridete: Boccaccio’s Poetics and Decameron V.10*
Brenda Deen Schildgen, University of California, Davis
*Decameron 1.1: the Power of Words*
2) **Dante and Boccaccio:**
Susanna Barsella, Fordham University
*Boccaccio Reading the Stars in Dante’s Commedia*
Beatrice Arduini, University of Washington
*A System of Virtues: Boccaccio’s Philosophical Debt to Dante in Day Ten of the Decameron*
Samantha Mattocci, University of Wisconsin–Madison
*Notes on Boccaccio’s Authorial Voice in the Life of Dante*

11:00-12:30am:
3) **Animals/Zoolinguistics/Ethopoetics:**
Simone Marchesi, Princeton University
*And a Partridge in a Pear Tree: Boccaccio’s Eden and the Language of Translation in Chaucer’s Merchant Tale*
Eleonora Stoppino, University of Illinois
*The Bite of the Wild in Boccaccio’s Decameron*
Eugenio Giusti, *Of Human and Non-Human Animals: the Intersection of Man and Beast in Decameron II, 9*
4) **Holiness and Its Abuses:**
Alessandro Vettori, Rutgers University
*The Unburdening of False Confessions in Decameron 1.1, 3.3, and 7.5*
Lelio Camassa, Università della Basilicata
*The Blessed Arrigo in Decameron II, and in Other Coeval Works*
Pierpaolo Spagnolo, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
*Relics in Boccaccio’s Decameron: The Displaying of the Archangel Gabriel in VI, 10 and IV, 2*

2:00 - 3:00pm: Keynote Lecture 2: H. Wayne Storey

3:30-5pm:
5) **History and Biography:**
Elsa Filosa, Vanderbilt University
*Boccaccio’s Public Offices, 1348–1355*
William Caferro, Vanderbilt University
*Boccaccio’s Embassies and Florentine Diplomacy, 1350–1366*
Martin Eisner, Duke University
*Boccaccio’s Life in Books*

6) **Works other than the Decameron:**
Molly Bronstein, University of California, Berkeley
*Reinventing the Widow’s Grief between Il Filostrato and the Roman de Troye*
Virginia Machera, Università di Cassino
*Per la biblioteca troiana di Giovanni Boccaccio: il caso delle Rime*
Adir Fonseca Jr, University of Oxford
*Love and Fortune in Boccaccio’s Galla*
Valentina Rovere, University of Helsinki
*Nelle biblioteche dei primi lettori di Boccaccio: la più antica circolazione delle opere latine*

5:30pm Book Exhibition

October 5th

8:30 - 9:15am: ABA business meeting

9:30 - 11:00am:
7) **The reception of Boccaccio’s works 1:**
Olivia Holmes, Binghamton University
*From the Tale of the Three Rings to Matrimonio all’italiana*
Christopher Livanos, University of Wisconsin, Madison
*The Three Rings and the Circularity of Faith*
Alberto Iozzia, Indiana University
*“This Horrid Beginning” The Decameron as Secular Archetype of Post-Apocalyptic Fiction.*

8) **The reception of Boccaccio’s works 2:**
Artemis Preeshl, Elon University
*Calandrino: On Turning the Tables on #MeToo*
Stefan Bielański-Bogumiła Bielawska, University of Cracow
*La Fortuna di giovanni Boccaccio in Polonia*
Isabelle Lecocq, The Royal Institute for Cultural Heritage
*Images of a famous Boccaccio’s heroine: the faithful and loving Griselda*

11:30 - 12:30: Keynote Lecture 3: Michael Papio
12:30 - 2:00 - LUNCH
October 5th

2:00 – 3:30pm:

9) The reception of Boccaccio’s works 3: Timothy Kircher, Guilford College  
Prometheus unbound: Prometheus in the Genealogia deorum gentilium and its resonance for later humanism  
Daniela D’Eugenio, Vanderbilt University  
Decameron’s Day VI and Vincenzo Brusantino’s Interpretation  
Nicola Esposito, University of Notre Dame  
Elements of Decameronian Style in Giovanni d’Agnolo Capponi’s Pecorone

10) Medicine and Other Discourses 1:  
Giovanni Spani, College of the Holy Cross  
*Chino di Tacco: brigante cortese e medico.*  
Michael Sherberg, Washington University  
*Decameron V.8, Again*  
Angela Porcarelli, Emory University  
Lost Inside the Frame: Text and Paratext in Giovanni Boccaccio’s Decameron

4:00 – 5:30pm:

11) Medicine and Other Discourses 2:  
Fabian Alfie, University of Arizona  
*Hoofing It On Dry Ground: Sex, Sexuality, and Gender in Decameron 5.10*  
Alessandro Ceteroni, University of Connecticut  
*Lavoro e solidarietà femminile in Decameron V. 2*  
Francesco Giubattoni, Georgetown University  
Musica, danza e norme sociali nel Decameron

12) Boccaccio Polyliblion  
Kathryn McKinley, University of Maryland  
*The Problematics of Oecium: Horace, Poetry and Repose in De casibus 3.14*  
Gur Zak, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
*Boccaccio’s Filocolo and the Polyphony of Consolation*  
Alyssa Falcone, The University of Alabama  
Fool Me Twice: Examining Trust Inside and Outside of the Decameron

3:30pm: Keynote Lecture 4: Marilyn Miguel

Hotels:

1. Lowell Center, one block from the Pyle Center and the library, where the ABA conference will take place.  

2. The Graduate, one block from the Pyle Center and the library, where the conference will take place.  
Guests can call their main line 608-257-4391 and ask for the French & Italian Conference Room Block. Or they can use the following link to book: https://be.synxis.com/?adult=1&arrive=2019-10-03&chain=21643&child=0&currency=USD&depart=2019-10-04&group=101003FREN&hotel=77206&level=hotel&locale=en-US&rooms=1&se_re=0.

Guest will have until September 2, 2019, to make their reservations at both conference hotels. Once the cut-off date has been reached, guests may still book but the discounted rate for the group will not be available.

Participants who opt out of the two conference hotels might want to try some of the hotels on this list: https://www.tripadvisor.com/HotelsList-Madison-Downtown-Hotels-zip3160.html.

Frank Lloyd Wright’s Taliesin Trip on Sunday morning (October 6th) https://www.taliesinpreservation.org/  
More information to come.

Conference registration fee:

Students & contingent faculty: $25  
Regular members: $60  
Non-members: $100
Boccaccio and His World: Proceedings of the Third Triennial Meeting of the American Boccaccio Association
Duke University, September-October 2016
edited by Valerio Cappozzo, Martin Eisner, Timothy Kircher
Heliotropia. A forum for Boccaccio research and interpretation
vol. 15, 2018

Just published!!
**Member news**


Rhiannon Daniels published an article titled *Where Does the Decameron Begin? Editorial Practice and Tables of Rubrics*, «Modern Language Review» 114.1 (2019), 52–78; and in January she was invited to be the first Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies and Center for Italian Studies Fellow in Italian Manuscript Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. During her residency she gave a public lecture on 24 January: *Writing and Reading Rubrics in the Renaissance Decameron*.


Timothy Kircher presented *Boccaccio and the Appearance of Reality: A Phenomenological Inquiry* at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, November 2018.


The American Boccaccio Association is happy to announce the winners of the ABA’s 2018 Velli Prize for 1) the best undergraduate student essay and 2) the best graduate student essay on Boccaccio:

1) Nathaniel Gadiano, Princeton University: *A Translation and Commentary of the Proemio from the Decameron.*

2) Max Matukhin, Princeton University: *Natura contra naturam: Sins Against Nature in Decameron IX.10.*
The budgetary situation of the American Boccaccio Association is quite strong, with over $14,000 in our account from dues and support. But that doesn’t mean that we’re like the medieval dragon of legend, merely sitting upon a hoard of gold. Rather, that amount is dedicated to the numerous activities of the Association, many of which are laid out elsewhere in this newsletter; such activities include awards and prize money, co-sponsoring the conference in Madison WI next October, and defraying the publication costs of the Lectura Boccacii series. Other expenses are being used in a less-visible manner, such as updating the ABA website.

I would like to remind all members that you can renew your regular, student, or sustaining membership via the ABA website, at: http://abaonline.us/membership.html.

You can also feel free to contact me directly for specific questions, at: alfie@email.arizona.edu.

In closing, I would like to thank everyone who has made a donation on top of paying their dues, regardless of the amount. Every donation helps the American Boccaccio Association fulfill its mission of promoting the study and teaching of Giovanni Boccaccio’s life and works.

Thank you!
You can reach the Virtual Brigata

on the

ABA WebPage:
www.ababonline.us

or by joining the

ABA Facebook Group (American Boccaccio Association):
www.facebook.com/groups/796853600461573/

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