

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN BOCCACCIO ASSOCIATION

– *studium fuit alma poesis* –



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ABA OFFICERS

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George Mason University

Valerio Cappozzo - Vice President
University of Mississippi

Maggie Fritz-Morkin - Secretary
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Chapel Hill

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Message from the President

Che si può dire, lasciando stare il contado e alla città ritornando, se non che tanta e tal fu la crudeltà del cielo, e forse in parte quella degli uomini, che infra 'l marzo e il prossimo luglio vegnente, tra per la forza della pestifera infermità e per l'esser molti infermi mal serviti o abbandonati ne' lor bisogni per la paura ch'aveono i sani, oltre a centomila creature umane si crede per certo dentro alle mura della città di Firenze essere stati di vita tolti, che forse, anzi l'accidente mortifero, non si saria estimato tanti avervene dentro avuti?

(I.Introduzione.47)

Dear Colleagues,

I begin my message to you with this quotation from the Introduction to Day One, which I offer as a different kind of “rubric” under which we can contemplate the past several months. In comparison with the peak in Florence described by our Author, we also witnessed a rise in COVID19 related deaths between March and July of this year. Yet, at the end of our *annus horribilis*, we now face additional waves of infections and deaths, as we brace ourselves for an even deadlier period than the one from which we have just emerged.

Such comparisons have now become part of our regular thoughts as readers of Boccaccio, as our current pandemic compels us to consider the relevance of his vernacular opus to our times. The scholarly practice of extracting cultural relevance from earlier historical periods is undoubtedly an important one. In both mainstream and specialized venues of publication, many of us have drawn provocative and compelling connections between Boccaccio’s times and our own. Finding these connections renews our sense of the importance of Boccaccio Studies many centuries after our author’s death.

At the same time, the differences between the scale and nature of our crisis and the one that frames the Decameron are no less important. The COVID-19 pandemic is still — the Fates willing — not as lethal as the Black Death: not in the nature of its contagion nor in the number of deaths that it has claimed.

The United States, for example, has just surpassed the tragic threshold of 298,000 fatalities from COVID-19, a number which is proportionally much smaller than the estimated 100,000 (or 50,000, or 80,000, depending upon the source) lives claimed by the plague for Florence alone during those four months of 1348.

The disparate effects of the plague upon different economic classes resonate with the current situation today. Where Boccaccio narrates that Florence’s “popolo minuto” died in greater number than the elites, impoverished people around the world have succumbed to COVID more frequently than those with better access to high-quality healthcare. While this is one similarity, there are also greater sociological and political differences. If the efforts towards social justice and economic parity in the US are fueled by the optimism that our post-COVID-19 lives might bring progress and relief, we are aware that the longer history of pandemics has shown the opposite to be true; for instance, the second half of the fourteenth century saw even greater financial concentration among the wealthy and the movement further away from shared governance. May we look at such qualitative and quantitative comparisons with an eye to the differences that should not be elided.

Despite the nature of our times – which our field allows us to call “precedented” – we have continued our essential work as scholars and professors. Like the brigata, which mentions the plague sparingly, we stay immersed in a narrative world even with a plague ongoing around us, as much as our individual circumstances allow.



The Association stays committed to programming that supports your work which is more important now than ever. Our official, peer-reviewed journal, *Heliotropia*, which has thrived under Michael Papio's excellent editorship since 2003, has been designated as a "fascia A" periodical in Area 10 by Italy's Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca (ANVUR). Thanks to the tireless efforts of Christopher Kleinhenz and Elsa Filosa, we also have an Annual Boccaccio Bibliography that has been produced for decades. Recently, we have initiated a new Summer School on Boccaccio Paleography in Italy, hopefully to commence in 2021. We have sponsored awards for undergraduate, graduate, and creative works, including the Giuseppe Velli and Attilio Hortis Prizes, and our officers have recently pledged to fund additional scholarships for BIPoC students and scholars. Furthermore, we continue to organize a series of sponsored panels and sessions at international conferences (MLA, RSA). We now count approximately 250 international members from a variety of disciplines, including Italian, English, French, Medieval Studies, History, Art History and Music. We have also created new opportunities to keep us connected in these times when in-person conferences have been impossible. I will highlight a few of these efforts here and then call your attention to the pages that follow for further details.

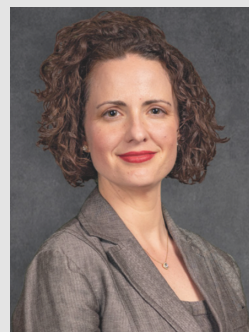
We are extremely proud of the strong progress made with the *Lectura Boccaccii* series published with the University of Toronto Press. This year, two volumes have been published: *Day Four* (November 2020), edited by Michael Sherberg, and *Day Eight* (July 2020), edited by William Robins. Two additional volumes are slated for publication in 2021: *Day Six*, edited by David Lummus, and *Day Nine*, edited by Susanna Barsella and Simone Marchesi. The remaining volumes of the series are all heading towards completion, and we foresee the publication of the remaining volumes (on *Day Two*, *Day Five*, *Day Seven* and *Day Nine*) within the next few years. Such an accomplishment is the fruit of a collective labor that spans many years. The series boasts more than one hundred contributors, with no individual scholar contributing more than one essay to the series. This is an amazing feat of coordination and a testament to the size of our community. The Association is very grateful to all those who continue to make such progress possible: the volume editors, the many individual contributors, and the outside reviewers, in addition to the essential support of our UTP Acquisitions Manager, Suzanne Rancourt.

We have instituted a new Zoom lecture series, the "Virtual Brigata," to keep us connected during these months of physical distance and online conferencing. This is a series of monthly lectures on research-in-progress that deals with any topic related to Boccaccio's life and works. We hope that the series will continue all the way to our Triennial Conference in 2022 (more on that in a moment). We have been pleased to see strong attendance and engagement with our first two lectures, inaugurated by Drs. Alyssa Granacki and Teresa Nocita, and we look forward to our upcoming presentations. Please see the schedule and description of the series in the upcoming pages and consider participating by sharing your current work with our ABA community. We wish to recognize the generosity of Michael Papio and Massimo Riva, who have offered to host these videos on the Decameron Web.

Finally, I am excited to announce that preparations are underway for our upcoming Triennial Conference, to be hosted by the University of Padua in June 2022! We are immensely grateful to our colleagues in Padua for their hospitality and generosity. We look forward with great anticipation to this conference, which coincides with the University's 800th anniversary of its founding. As always, we will offer scholarships to graduate students and contingent faculty members to support conference travel, especially as this will involve overseas travel for many of our members. The Association believes that our first triennial conference in Italy will be a wonderful way to reunite with our colleagues and friends — which will be one of "dolcezza" and "piacere" after we have scaled the "montagna aspra e erta" of this pandemic.

Such a full slate of programming would not be possible if it were not for my industrious and jovial co-officers: Valerio Cappozzo, Vice President; Maggie Fritz-Morkin, Secretary; and Elsa Filosa, Treasurer. Our team has been hard at work since the beginning of our term in July 2020, and we foresee three productive years ahead of us.

Our Association would also not enjoy such vitality if it were not for you, our members. We thank you for your interest, support and collaboration over these years, and look forward to seeing you online — and soon in person.



Kristina Olson

Remembering Franco Fido (1931-2020)

Roberta Antognini, Vassar College

My deepest regret is that I never visited them in Longué-Jumelles in the Loire Valley where they retired in 2009—Franco and Josie, his wonderful French wife, and an exquisite cook. When I went to see him at their home in Providence—at the time he was professor of Italian and comparative literature and chair of the Department at Brown University, where he remained until 1990—Franco told me that he had an allergy that prevented him from smelling and savoring things, unless he took prednisone.

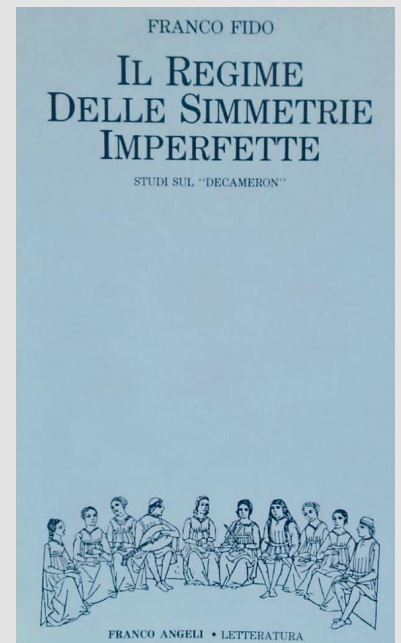
So, sometimes he would do just that for a few days, to be able to taste Josie's superb food. When he first fell ill, he continued, while showing me a room full of books, he was so miserable that in order not to think about it he had personally built the bookshelves. Franco was a book collector, and a few years later, when he was teaching at Harvard, I had the great privilege of visiting his majestic library in Little Compton, the tiny coastal town in Rhode Island where he and Josie had a country house. However, what I remember most fondly of that day is the lobster fishing. Franco had a small boat and a couple of lobster's traps and he took us with him. The adventure included potato hunting in Josie's garden, and, of course, the delicious meal that followed.

I first met Franco when he was visiting professor at Stanford University in 1978-79. Because this is about him and not me, I won't go into details about my personal circumstances, suffice it to say that for an entire semester I sat in his class on Goldoni as an auditor. Franco was born in Venice, and he was fluent in Venetian. He was the nephew of Francesco (Cesco) Baseggio, one of the greatest Goldoni actors of his time. Franco taught his course like an actor, moving around the classroom and mimicking the moves of a harlequin. I sat there refreshed, enthralled by his extraordinary teaching energy, forever conquered. It was the beginning of a beautiful friendship, of a mentor toward his pupil. In the years that followed, even though after Stanford I got to see Franco only sporadically, he was my "angelo custode", always pushing me forward, encouraging me, writing recommendation letters on my behalf and, above all, introducing me to the people who would later become my beloved professors first, and then colleagues and friends. His books—a true Man of Enlightenment, Franco's scholarship has ranged from Dante to Pirandello—accompanied me during my PhD's studies, his essays on Goldoni, of course, but also on Boccaccio and Manzoni (the "Architettura" in the *Lessico critico decameroniano*, and "Il sistema dei personaggi" of the *Betrothed*, essential essays, small masterpieces of clarity). His beautiful, detailed diagrams initiated me into the structural analysis of the texts.

Like many of us in our profession, Franco had moved from Italy, where he was born and where he graduated from the Normale di Pisa—first to France where he taught for a few years, then to this country in 1963 as an assistant professor at UCLA. When he retired from Harvard in 2005, he decided—as some of us will eventually do—to return to the old world. In one of his few emails from France, he complained of the French bureaucracy and of "the pigri artigiani francesi", reminding me of the hilarious adventures of the English author Peter Mayle, when he moved to Provence. But after a while, it was difficult to keep in touch. The distance was not only physical. A friend had told me that he was suffering from depression, and I was afraid to intrude, I was afraid to call, I was afraid to visit.

So, I never did. Kristina Olson's kind invitation to write this tribute has given me the opportunity to say goodbye to Franco and to tell him one last time of my immense gratitude for being my friend for my entire adult life.

For this opportunity, I thank the American Boccaccio Association. It has been a gift.

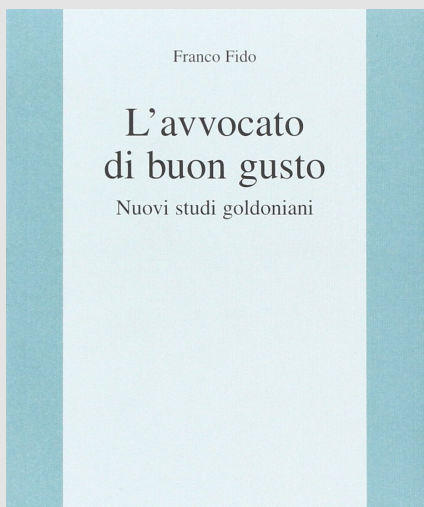
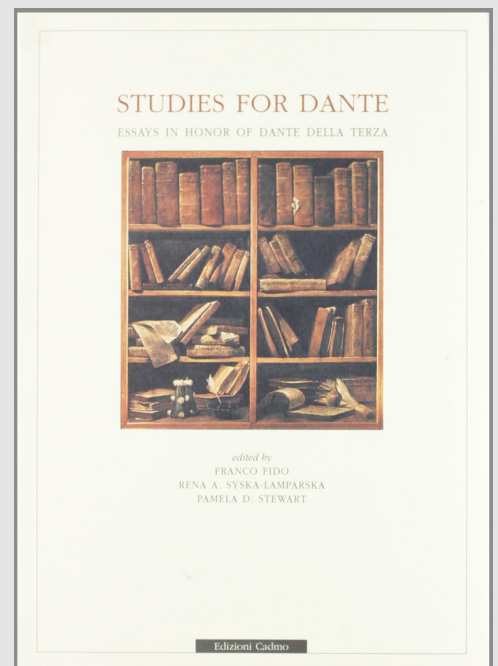
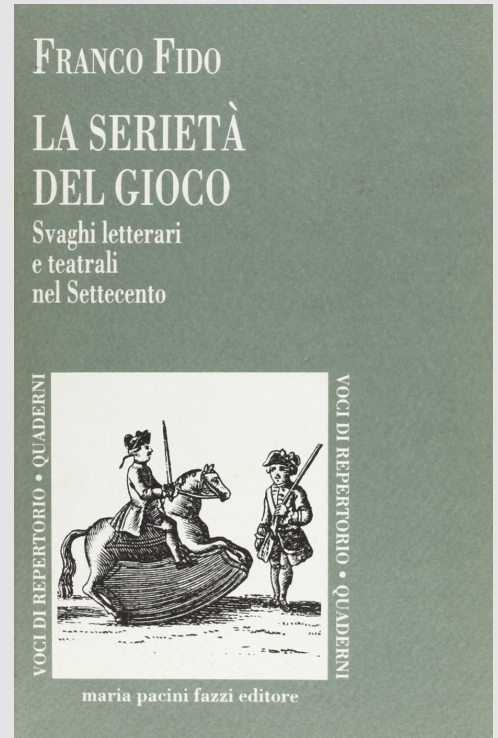


Remembering Franco Fido (1931-2020)

Laura Benedetti, Georgetown University

For my first job as assistant and then associate professor, I had the unique privilege to work with Franco Fido at Harvard, from 1994 to 2002. I could not have dreamed of a more supportive, collegial, and learned colleague to share my passion for and faith in literature. Rarely a day went by when we didn't meet in Boylston Hall, to the point that a visitor who saw Franco talking on the phone in my office jokingly suggested that we knock down the wall between our rooms. I would hear Franco walk down the hall as he returned from yet another book sale, excited about the latest finding that would enrich his phenomenal library, and sometimes carrying a volume he had bought for me—my goodie bag, as he used to call it. Every day there was an author to discuss, a book to discover, an event to organize for the "Seminario del mercoledì" which brought together Italophones and Italophiles from the Boston area and beyond.

The scholar and the man complemented each other beautifully in Franco, as his boundless erudition came to life through brilliant conversation and subtle irony, the same irony that would probably have him exclaim, if he could only read these lines, "Che speranze, che cori, o Laura mia!". Indeed, Franco, indeed. That our time together as colleagues should have come to an end will remain the greatest regret of my academic career, but did not affect our friendship or the influence of his scholarship on me, with his model of the Decameron serving as a Zoom virtual background for one of my lectures as recently as September 2020. But perhaps Franco's greatest and long-lasting gift to me has been my relationship with his beloved Venice, where I keep going back following the traces of authors I wish I could still discuss with him, and where I like to imagine him in spirited conversation with the "buoni compagni" that populate his secular paradise.



Member News

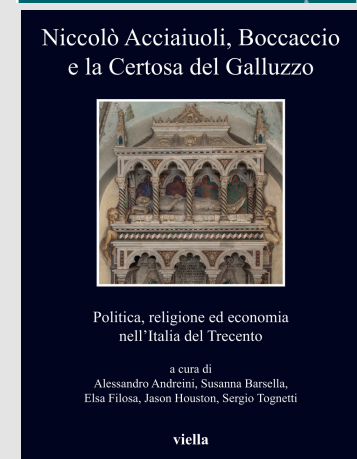
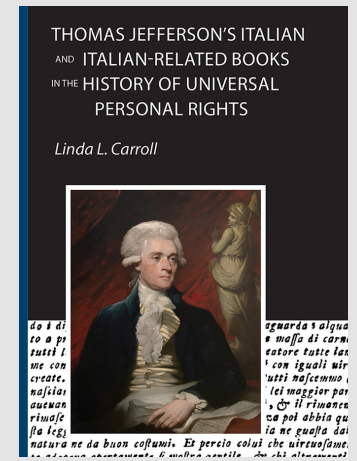
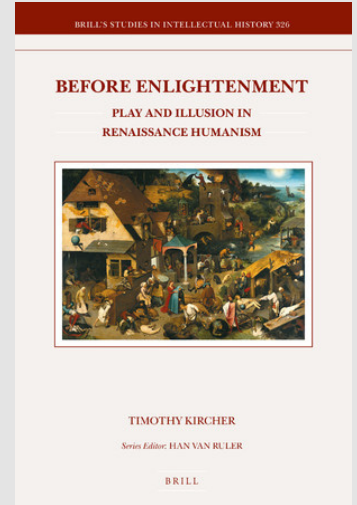
Timothy Kircher's new book *Before Enlightenment: Play and Illusion in Renaissance Humanism* (Leiden: Brill, 2021) draws on a number of Boccaccio's works, including the Decameron and the *Genealogia deorum gentilium*.

Linda Carroll's book *Thomas Jefferson's Italian and Italian-Related Books in the History of Universal Personal Rights*, Robert Viscusi Essay Series 1 (New York:

Bordighera Press, 2019) opens with a comparison of Ghismonda's impassioned affirmation of human equality in Decameron 4.1 and the famous statement in the Declaration of Independence widely attributed to Jefferson, who may have received a copy of Boccaccio's work from Filippo Mazzei. Through the works of Paolo Sarpi, Jefferson may have additionally encountered the thought of medieval canonists and Marsilius of Padua.

Carmen F. Blanco Valdés has just published a Spanish translation and critical edition *Vida de Dante Alighieri. Tratado en honor de Dante Alighieri florentino, poeta ilustre* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2020).

Publication of the volume **Niccolò Acciaiuoli, Boccaccio, e la Certosa del Galluzzo: Politica, religione ed economia nell'Italia del Trecento**, edited by Alessandro Andreini, Susanna Barsella, Elsa Filosa, Jason Houston, and Sergio Tognetti. These are the proceedings of the conference held on June 10-12, 2019 at the Certosa in Firenze, organized with the contributions of the Comunità San Leolino, Gonzaga University of Florence, the International Study Institute of Florence, Fordham University, Vanderbilt University, and the CET Study Abroad program. The event has been funded by the American Boccaccio Association and the Ente Nazionale Giovanni Boccaccio.



The project "[Boccace Numérique Humaniste. Édition numérique pour une étude prosopographique et sémantique de l'humanisme de Boccace](#)" was awarded by the very prominent "Réseau National de Maison de Sciences de l'Homme" (France). This international project combines foundational research with digital technologies to implement a prototype for an edition of a corpus of annotated texts by Boccaccio (1313-1375) in a structuring, interdisciplinary and intersectional perspective. The objective is to produce a representative prototype, within which it is possible to apply a model of digital analysis to identify of the different levels of language, the characters and their sociological features, as well as the development of avenues for further qualitative and quantitative enrichment of the project (ANR, Horizon Europe). The works (one vernacular, two in Latin and their translations in Middle French) on which the work will be based are the most significant parts of the *Decameron* (the framing story, and in particular the preamble, the introduction to days I and IV, Conclusion), *De casibus virorum illustrium* and *De mulieribus claris*. The different competences of the laboratories linked to MSH Val de Loire, MSHS Poitiers and MSHS Sud-Est together with their international collaborators will set up a real multidisciplinary partnership. The MSH Val de Loire will take care of the vernacular and Latin texts and will be in charge of the implementation of the digital infrastructure; the MSHS of Poitiers will coordinate the activity relating to texts in Middle French while the MSHS Sud-Est will provide the necessary support for iconographic and sociological analysis. The main investigators are Sabrina Ferrara and Elena Pierazzo, both professors at the University of Tours, to whom the American Boccaccio Association make their congratulations and wish good work! The international team includes: Chiara Lastraioli (University of Tours), Silvère Mengaldo (University of Tours), Giulia Puma (Université Côte d Azur), Giampiero Scafoglio (Université Côte d Azur), Rosa Maria Dessì (Université Côte d Azur), Joris Pierre-Marie (University of Poitiers), Cinzia Pignatelli (University of Poitiers), Anne Robin (University de Lille), Philippe Guèrin (Sorbonne Nouvelle -Paris 3), Antonio Sotgiu (Sorbonne Nouvelle -Paris 3), Igor Candino (Trinity College), Elsa Filosa (Vanderbilt University), Pamela A. Patton (Princeton University), Marco Veglia (University of Bologna), Renzo Bragantini (Sapienza), Michelangelo Zaccarello (University of Pisa), Franziska Meier (Georg-August-Universität).



THE VIRTUAL BRIGATA

ONLINE LECTURE SERIES 2020-2021



Oct. 30, 3:00pm EST

Alyssa Granacki, Duke University

Ghismonda and Titus Translated: Philosophy Between the Vernacular and Latin (Decameron IV.1 and X.8)

Nov. 9, 12:00pm EST

Teresa Nocita, Università degli Studi dell'Aquila

La prima protagonista femminile del Decameron: per una lettura teatrale della Marchesana di Monferrato (Decameron I 5)

Dec. 10, 4:00pm EST

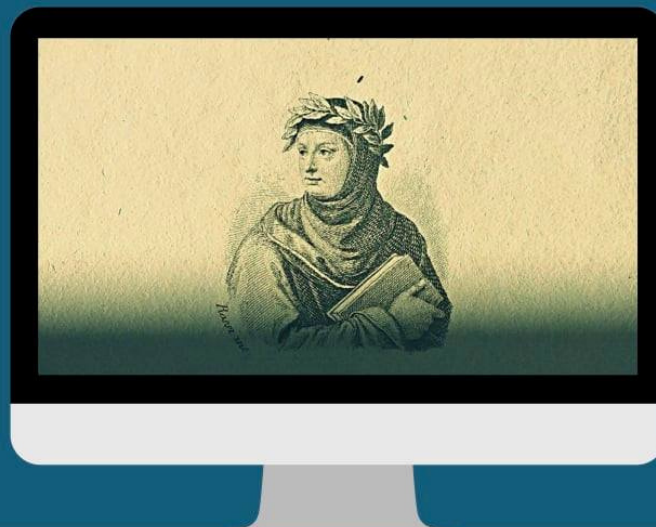
Alyssa Falcone, Youngstown State University

The Decamerone Spirituale (1594) and the Gerotricamerone (1745): A Critical Look at the Decameron, Transformed

Jan. 27, 4:00pm EST

Olivia Holmes, Binghamton University

Gualtieri d'Amore, or the Decameron's Duplicity



The Virtual Brigata

*Online lecture series
2021*

*American
Boccaccio
Association*

Jan. 27, 4:00pm EST

Olivia Holmes

*Gualtieri d'Amore, or the Decameron's
Duplicity*

Feb. 25, 12:00pm EST

Virginia Machera

*Boccaccio lettore di Darete Frigio. Sulle
tracce delle fonti manoscritte del
Certaldese*

Mar. 15, 1:00pm EST

Valerio Cappozzo

*Boccaccio e l'Islam: la creazione di
uno spazio letterario*

April 8, 4:00pm EDT

Albert Ascoli

Solomon and Emilia, or the King and I

May 6, 12:00pm EST

Carmen Blanco Valdés,

*Presentazione del libro: Vida de Dante
Alighieri. Tratado en honor de Dante
Alighieri florentino, poeta ilustre*

Jun. 9, 1:00pm EST

Grace Delmolino

Boccaccio and the Impossible

Open to all.

Links for registration will be shared via social media

Upcoming Conferences

Day and Time TBA

Decameron Day Zero:

The Structure of the Narrative

Organizer: Valerio Cappozzo, University of Mississippi
Chair: Simone Marchesi, Princeton University

“Love, Poverty, and Poetry in the Decameron’s
Fictional Narrator”

Susanna Barsella, Fordham University

“Theological Sources of Decameron I 1”

Maria Pia Ellero, Università della Basilicata

“‘Così adunque operando, si pigliano gli animi de’
suggetti’: Sovranità e potere nel Decameron”

Giovanni De Vita, Università degli Studi di Napoli
“L’Orientale”

“Stasis of Death and Peregrinations
of the Mind: Narrative Oscillation in the Decameron”
Alessandro Vettori, Rutgers University

Boccaccio in Dialogue with the Past: Authors, Themes, and Philology

Organizer: Valerio Cappozzo, University of Mississippi
Chair: Simone Marchesi, Princeton University

Nel segno dell’umana compassione.
Fonti e temi del Proemio del Decameron
Miriam Pascale, Università degli Studi della Basilicata

Sirens and Other Historical Prostitutes:
Ambivalence in Boccaccio’s Latin Works
Jon Solomon, University of Illinois at Urbana-
Champaign

Filippa and the Posthumous Rehabilitation of
Francesca
Bernardo Piciché, Virginia Commonwealth University

Reframing Boccaccio in British Romanticism:
Thomas Stothard and His Illustrations for the Pickering
Decameron (1825)
Francesco Fiumara, Southeastern Louisiana University

New Approaches to Boccaccio and Gender Studies

Organizer: Kristina M. Olson, George Mason
University

Chair: Michael Sherberg, Washington University
Respondent: Kristina M. Olson, George Mason
University

Clothing Makes the Woman
Julianna Visco, Columbia University, New York

Coming to Grips with Dante’s Wrestlers:
Boccaccio’s Esposizioni on Inferno 16
Sara Elena Diaz, Fairfield University

Boccaccio’s Decameron and Theatre

Organizer and Chair: Janet Lavarie Smarr

“Pandemics, the Decameron, and Theatrical
Healing”
Eric Nicholson, Syracuse University, Florence

“Stage Architecture and Stage business in
Decameron Day VII”
Ronald L. Martinez, Brown University

“Boccaccio and his audience: for a theatrical
reading of Decameron I, 1 (Ser Ciappelletto)”
Teresa Nocita, Università dell’Aquila



Upcoming Conferences



ABA Fifth Triennial Conference University of Padua June 9-11, 2022

We are excited to announce that preparations are underway for our upcoming ABA Triennial Conference, to be hosted by the University of Padua, Italy, in June 2022!

We are immensely grateful to our colleagues in Padua for their hospitality and generosity. We look forward with great anticipation to this conference, which coincides with the University's 800th anniversary of its founding. The CFP will be published in the Spring 2021 ABA Newsletter.

As always, we will offer scholarships to graduate students and contingent faculty members to support conference travel, especially as this will involve overseas travel for many of our members.

The Association believes that our first triennial conference in Italy will be a wonderful way to reunite with our colleagues and friends — which will be one of “dolcezza” and “piacere” after we have scaled the “montagna aspra e erta” of this pandemic.

Treasurer's Report

The Association currently has approximately \$11,000 in funds which will be used to sponsor the subvention costs of forthcoming *Lecturae Boccaccii* volumes as well as the future 2022 Triennial Conference. If you wish to renew your regular, student, or sustaining membership, please visit <http://abaonline.us/membership.html> to submit your 2021 dues, as well as to make a donation to the *Lecturae Boccaccii* series, via PayPal. You may also send dues and contributions by mail using the printable form available on the website. Please note that all international members of the Association are now required to pay membership dues. Membership in the American Boccaccio Association costs \$25 per year (\$15 for students).

Sustaining memberships of \$40 provide additional resources for the association's activities. Your membership dues enable the Association to support initiatives based upon the ABA's core mission to promote the work of *il nostro* and more generally Trecento studies. To this end, the ABA is a society of collaborative international scholarship through its web presence, scholarly journal, bibliographic efforts, conference panels, and now the virtuale brigata in time of pandemic, and not least its own triennial conference, which will take place again in 2022.

These funds enable the Association to maintain and enhance these activities, and contribute to future endeavors to support research and outreach in Boccaccio studies. Please contact Elsa Filosa (elsa.filosa@vanderbilt.edu) with any questions about your membership or to suggest potential members of ABA.

FRIENDLY REMINDERS

The ABA newsletter is an invaluable tool for disseminating important information among our members. Please consider sending items of significance, such as notes on work in progress, announcements of general interest and other similar tidbits to Maggie Fritz-Morkin at mfritzm@email.unc.edu. Updated information is available between newsletters on the ABA's web site. Please note that the newsletter will be published on the site only after a six-month lag in order to ensure that the ABA's members receive the principal benefit of its publication.

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

Dues News!!!

If you have not yet paid your annual dues (\$25 regular member / and possibly an eventual donation for the *Lecturae Boccaccii*), please do so on the ABA website:
<http://www.ABAonline.us/membership.html>

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