On Land and Across the Sea: Boccaccio's Other Wor(l)ds. Junctions and Interweavings,

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Johnny Bertolio. University of Torino

On Mary Magdalene's Trail: *Alatiel's Intersectional Journey Through the Mediterranean*

In the seventh novel of the tenth day, Boccaccio narrates the literally stormy story of Alatiel, the daughter of the Egyptian Sultan. While traveling to the Kingdom of Algarve within Dar-al-Islam (the land of peace), Alatiel is shipwrecked and, against her will, finds herself in Dar-al-Harb (the land of war). Unable to communicate with her Christian hosts, captors, and abusers due to language and cultural barriers, Alatiel becomes a victim of their predatory behavior, losing both her autonomy and the virginity deemed essential to her status. Upon her eventual return to Egypt, she is compelled to recount her misadventures, crafting a narrative that conforms to her audience's expectations. She claims to have traveled throughout the Mediterranean, visiting locations tied to the medieval legend of Mary Magdalene—a saint whose sexuality was initially nonconforming. Only after her journey from Palestine to Provence, her conversion, and her embrace of a mystical life did Mary Magdalene become an acceptable figure within Christian tradition. Through a strategy of tragic irony, and in contrast to the limited awareness of Alatiel's Egyptian court, Boccaccio draws a parallel between Alatiel and one of Christianity's most controversial female saints. However, he uses this parallel to discuss societal norms, portraying Alatiel as reclaiming control over her own body. In this layered narrative, Boccaccio explores profound themes of agency, identity, and the intersections of culture and gender, highlighting both analogies and differences along the shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

Brittany Asaro , University of San Diego

Sharon Kinoshita, Professor, University of California Santa Cruz

Trading Places: Boccaccio's Decameron 2.9 in/and the Medieval Mediterranean

One of the "*tre corone*" of Italian literature, Giovanni Boccaccio is often, like Dante, associated with the city of Florence. Yet he spent his formative youth in Angevin Naples and, in *The Decameron*, up to 20 of his 100 tales are "Mediterranean" in both setting and theme. Several of these cluster in Day 2, devoted to the theme of misfortune that leads to unexpected happiness, with some aspect of Mediterranean travel proving the catalyst to sudden reversals of fortune. My paper examines Novella 2.9, the tale of Madonna Zinevra, a Genoese merchant's wife falsely accused of infidelity, who cross-dresses as a sailor and escapes to Alexandria, becoming the right-hand "man" of the sultan of Egypt, entrusted with the post of markets inspector in Acre. This line alone illustrates how immediately tale 2.9 speaks to the themes of this conference: maritime mercantile activity, and cross-cultural/inter-confessional exchange across "boundaries" often assumed to prevent or hinder communication and connection. Following on David Abulafia's 1979 demonstration of the interest of reading the *Decameron* through a historical lens, I draw on the work of historians of the high Middle Ages to elucidate Boccaccio's artful interweaving of well-worn tale-types with the realities of his contemporary Mediterranean.

Matteo Leta Postdoctoral Fellow University of Warwick, UK

Boccaccio's Decameron and the Representation of the "Other" in the Italian Renaissance Comedy.

Boccaccio's *Decameron* has long been recognised as a crucial source of inspiration for Renaissance comedy, serving as a "*zibaldone*" of quotations, characters, and episodes for Italian dramatists. However, a recent tradition of scholarship has focused on the depiction of the Mediterranean world in the *Decameron*, and its influence on 16th- and 17th-century plays. Italian Renaissance comedies frequently incorporated exotic elements and characters, such as Ottomans, slaves, and corsairs, in order to reinvigorate classical plots and captivate their audiences. Therefore, this paper aims to explore how Boccaccio functioned as a lens through which dramatists could explore cultural diversity, including through rewritings and adaptations of the *Decameron*. I will examine the role of Boccaccio's *Decameron* in shaping these Renaissance depictions of the Mediterranean World, with a view to understanding how and to what extent this seminal work influenced the construction and staging of theatrical 'otherness' during the 16th and 17th centuries. Through various case studies, such as Sforza Oddi's (1540-1611) and Giambattista Della Porta (1535-1615)'s plays, this paper will thus trace the echoes and transformations of Boccaccio's portrayals of other worlds across the Renaissance stage**.**

Davide Petrassi Ph.D. candidate, Univ. of Macerata, Italy.

Landolfo Rufolo in the Age of Social Media: Sailing Different Seas Between Chaos and Compassion

This proposal offers a contemporary reinterpretation of Boccaccio's tale of Landolfo Rufolo (*Decameron* II.4), transposing the original's metaphorical sea of the Mediterranean into the chaotic, unpredictable expanse of the digital era. Landolfo's tale, marked by loss, survival, and redemption, resonates with the digital age's potential to turn setbacks into opportunities, highlighting the enduring human capacity for resilience. Central to this narrative of recovery is the figure of the compassionate woman who rescues Landolfo. Her quiet, selfless act underscores the potential for humanity and virtue within systems rife with instability and competition. In the context of social media, she symbolizes the pivotal role of empathy and solidarity, offering a counterbalance to the chaos of online spaces. Her intervention reminds us of the importance of individual agency in fostering meaningful connections and mitigating the isolating effects of modern digital life.

By employing the sea as a metaphor, this proposal aims to explore how unpleasant events—both in Boccaccio's time and in our own—can lead to growth, transformation, and unexpected bonds. The guiding question is: in an age of digital tumult, what lessons can Boccaccio's tale teach us about navigating chaos and embracing the redemptive power of compassion?

Berenice Daniele, Ph.D. candidate Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

Giovanni Boccaccio's De Canaria: between humanism and colonialism

The academic research on *De Canaria* began in 1959 with an article by Manlio Pastore Stocchi, who analyzed the genealogical relationship between Boccaccio's treatise and the chapters on the Canary Islands in Domenico Silvestri's *De insulis* and Domenico Bandini's *Fons memorabilium*, as well as the attribution of the treatise to Boccaccio. Following this article, interests in *De Canaria* waned, focusing mainly on philological issues. However, the letter from Alfonso IV of Portugal to Pope Clement VI (February 12, 1345), published by Padoan in 1964, reopened new questions. As the scholar pointed out, comparing it with *De Canaria* could reveal how Boccaccio reworked the merchants' letter used as a source. This paper aims to conduct this textual comparison and examine Boccaccio's treatise alongside Bandini's and Silvestri's texts, as well as other accounts of the Canary Islands' discovery, such as the passage in Petrarch's *De vita solitaria*. The aim is to understand what *De Canaria* represents, considering that it is focused on a literary place and the Islands at the center of a colonial dispute. Therefore, if it is testimony of Boccaccio's humanism

or of a nascent imperial Europe. If the former, how is Boccaccio's humanism articulated in *De Canaria*?

Elorf Javaher, lecturer , Université Jean Moulin III, France

Alatiel and Gostanza: a Non-Christian Woman in the West and a Christian Woman in the East

A cross-analysis of the figures of Alatiel and Gostanza from the *Decameron (*II,7; V,2), who confront cultural otherness through opposing female models, both in action and language. Alatiel, the "saracen," is imprisoned by violent male desire and condemned to silence due to linguistic incomprehension, whereas Gostanza, a christian, demonstrates remarkable resilience by adapting to a new muslim reality and embracing the learning of arabic and craft techniques. These transformations highlight how female identity can evolve in different contexts, subverting pre-existing social dynamics. The analysis emphasizes the intersection between diverse cultures and religions, suggesting that despite their differences, the worlds of the east and west can find points of contact and communication. This study not only enriches the understanding of Boccaccio's «other worlds» but also invites reflection on contemporary challenges related to identity and diversity, promoting ongoing dialogue between cultures and genders in a dynamic and ever-changing Mediterranean.

Teresa Nocita, Associate Professor, Università degli Studi dell'Aquila. Italy

The journey of Alatiel (Decameron II, 7): the Mediterranean as an experience of the self

The story of Alatiel in Giovanni Boccaccio's Decameron (Dec. II, 7) is a symbolic as well as a geographical journey. Her naval route across the Mediterranean, from Alexandria to Majorca, from the Peloponnese to Smyrna, Rhodes and Cyprus, not only represents a physical adventure but also embodies a metaphor for human frailty, fortune and social hypocrisy.
The odeporic experience constitutes the fundamental medium for the protagonist's acquisition of maturity, and for this reason the novella is clearly inspired by the model of the Bildungsroman (coming-of-age novel), already followed by Boccaccio himself in the Filocolo. What appears most peculiar, however, is that in the novella of Alatiel the conquest of the awareness of adulthood also takes place through the confrontation between two cultures, the Western one, embodied by the narrator Panfilo, who is also a reflection of Boccaccio's authorial instance, and the Eastern world, to which the novella's female protagonist belongs.
The present contribution aims to retrace Alatiel's Mediterranean itinerary, recognizing the foundational and symbolic value of each of its individual stages within a path of acquiring self-awareness and awareness of the world.

Anna Dini, Ph.D. candidate in Comparative Literature, UC Berkeley

Saladin, A Mediterranean Exemplar in Decameron 10.9

Saladin's legacy is ubiquitous, temporally and geographically, throughout the Mediterranean world. Born in northern Iraq in the twelfth century, he held several positions throughout his life: vizir, lieutenant, and founder of the Ayyūbid dynasty. His early rise to the position of secretary in the previous Fatimid dynasty garnered a host of critics as well as admirers. In this paper, I argue that Boccaccio's exempla are not mere parodies of contemporary ecclesiastical writings. Instead, this paper will read Saladin's role in *Decameron* 10.9 as a figure that illustrates the long-standing multi-confessional space in the medieval Mediterranean. This paper will demonstrate how Saladin amplifies the mirroring effects of exemplum, encouraging its readers to perform good virtues in this tale type. In sum, the narratological mirroring on the dialogic level expressed in generous acts

and the level of the macrotext with Panfilo's mandate for *magnificenza* in Day Ten places the historical figure at the center of a device that is too often provincialized in a culturally dynamic landscape.

Danielle Stephenson Ph.D. candidate UC Berkeley

Donne Ferme: Refusal and Self-Possession in Decameron I.5 and IV.1

The stasis of women in Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* is often dismissed as passive and powerless, superficially regarded as uncritical, confined by enclosure, and politically ineffective. However, the deliberate immobility of characters like the Marchioness of Monferrato (I.5) and Ghismonda (IV.1) reveals a paradox of constraint and self-possession. Their spatially grounded acts of refusal disrupt patriarchal hierarchies, transforming sites of confinement into contrived theaters of agented expression. These heterotopian spaces complicate the relationship between oppression and autonomy, offering new dimensions to discussions of gender, agency, and resistance in the fourteenth-century Italian context.

Roberto Pesce Associate Professor University of Oklahoma

Boccaccio and the Islamic World: The Influence of Marino Sanudo Torsello

My paper will focus on Boccaccio's knowledge of the Middle East and the Islamic world through the work of Marino Sanudo Torsello (ca 1270-1343), who composed the Secreta fidelium Crucis to retake the Holy Land after the fall of Acre (1291). In the text, Sanudo proposed a naval blockade against Egypt, the strongest Muslim state in the Mediterranean, as the key to retake the region of Palestine. He also examined and explained in detail the reasons why an economic embargo over primary resources such as wood, iron, and pitch, essential elements for the Egyptian military apparatus, in addition to gold and silver, would have led to the implosion and destruction of the Mamluk power. Furthermore, he offered practical options to avoid a shortage of primary resources in the West, such as cotton, sugar, and other products coming from Egypt. Finally, he included several maps and portolan charts in his manuscripts as military instruments to accomplish this task. While this iconographical apparatus has been studied by scholars, from Virginio Bertolini to Michael Papio, who recognize it as one of the sources of the Filocolo, the text of the Secreta has still to be fully examined to understand the influence of Sanudo on Boccaccio, the focus of my paper.

Chiara Coppin, adjunct, University of L'Orientale , Naples , Italy.

Convegno: *On Land and Across the Sea: Boccaccio's Other Wor(l)ds. Junctions and Interweavings*

«Di mare in terra». Reflections on the world of Teseida

With *Teseida* (1339-1341) Boccaccio offers readers an epic poem in the vernacular, written in octave rhyme on the model of Virgil's Aeneid. The work, written between Florence and Naples, is placed in a historical-cultural context favorable to welcoming the memory of Theseus' adventures. At the time of its composition, in fact, the attention of the Angevins to the eastern Mediterranean and the activities of merchants and businessmen in the Greek-speaking lands stimulated interpersonal contacts in which political and economic interests merged with the fascination of the ancient world. The study intends to reflect on the ways of representing the world of *Teseida* with particular attention to the first book, where the sea voyage and the war against the Amazons start a story in which the celebration of war exploits in a distant and mysterious East is accompanied by the theme of gender relations and love. Not only the verses of the poem but also the *Chiose al Teseida* will be examined to grasp the traces of the author's deep interest in geography, navigation

and the sea as a fluid element useful for the construction of the plot, for the representation of the meeting/clash with the other as well as a textual metaphor.

Deidre Klena, Ph.D. candidate, Saint Louis University

"According to what I heard": Boccaccio, Gossip, and Truth along the Late Medieval and Early Modern Mediterranean Trade Networks

> In Boccaccio's 1344 novel *The Elegy of Lady Fiammetta*, set in Naples, the eponymous protagonist, deeply troubled by her lover's sojourn in Florence, encounters a merchant while sitting with friends. This merchant relays what he knows about Fiammetta's lover, namely that he "saw an extremely beautiful young lady entering his house [...] and according to what [he] heard, [they] had just been married,"1 sending Fiammetta into agony. But it is the merchant and, more precisely, what he has *said* that I seek to address. The late medieval and early modern Mediterranean trade networks witnessed not only the exchange of goods, but also the trade of information within and beyond the Mediterranean. Boccaccio's description of Fiammetta and the merchant's encounter will serve as a jumping off point for an examination into both the transfer and truth value of the information—what one may call gossip—travelling along the Mediterranean trade routes. Ultimately, I will assert that the interconnectivity of the Mediterranean trade networks fostered an oral culture that relied on gossip to foster epistemologically questionable transfers of knowledge that were nevertheless culturally impactful. Fiammetta's descent into despair and madness, we may remember, came on the heels of what one merchant heard.

Sara Ronzoni, Ph.D. candidate, University of Padua

Environment, Humanity and Figure: a Journey through Petrarch, Boccaccio and Opicino de Canistris' Geographical Works

The proposal aims to investigate how the 14th century is known to have a crucial role in European studies and discoveries concerning nature, new lands and cartography, since most of these new researches on environment showed a strong connection with ethnography; plus, in Medieval times the Latin expression "facies locorum" was the only in use, as the word "landscape" did not exist yet. As a matter of fact, in Petrarch's *Itinerarium Syriacum* it is common to find examples concerning the historic, literary and artistic evolution of the places described, whereas some among his letters, such as *Fam.* I 4, *Fam.* I 5, *Fam.* IX 13 and *Sen.* IV 3, reveal how some of the most important European towns or cities owed their political fortune to their cultural history and geography. In the same way, Boccaccio's *De Canaria* clearly drives its attention to the idyllic relationship between pure, primitive people and the beautiful environment they lived in. As a conclusion, the proposal aims to further explain the link between humans and nature in a figurative way thanks to some Opicino de Canistris' cartographic studies and drawings, which show the lands embraced by the Mediterranean sea as women, men, monsters and clergy men.

Vincenzo Dimaggio, Ph.D. candidate, University of Indiana

Linguistic Alterity and Identity Negotiation in Boccaccio's Decameron.

> Boccaccio's Decameron constructs its own geography as a dynamic and fluid space of exchange. In the *novelle*'s settings, linguistic alterity can become a crucial element in the negotiation of identity, power, and social status – whereas, at other times, it can be ignored altogether. My paper examines how language functions as both a barrier and a bridge in the *Decameron,* particularly in the novella of Martuccio and Gostanza (*Decameron* V, 2). Here, language difference is not only a narrative device but a very concrete reality that enables characters to navigate shifting social and

economic realities. Unlike the rigid linguistic isolation that defines Alatiel's journey in II, 7, the world of Martuccio and Gostanza illustrates how linguistic permeability fosters agency and reintegration into new cultural environments. By analyzing how Boccaccio represents linguistic diversity—from the Sicilian dialect of Lipari to the *barbaresco* spoken in Tunisia—this paper highlights the *Decameron*'s engagement with the linguistic hybridity of the medieval Mediterranean. Considering the role of language in cross-cultural encounters, I argue that Boccaccio's text mirrors the historical realities of a world where commerce, migration, and diplomacy shaped everyday interactions. In doing so, this paper contributes to broader discussions on the role of language as a mechanism of inclusion, exclusion, and negotiation in premodern Mediterranean societies.

Mark Aloisio, Visiting Assistant Professor Department of History University of NC-Pembroke

Status, Identity and Stored Wealth: The Presence of Things in Boccaccio's Decameron

With his mercantile background at a major banking and commercial firm, it is not surprising that Giovanni Boccaccio had a sharp eye for detail regarding the objects of trade that eventually found their way inside Mediterranean households. Among Boccaccio's works, *The Decameron* in particular teems with references to all kinds of items in possession of men and women of different status. Some of those items hinted at the commercial networks that traversed the fourteenth century Mediterranean bringing exotic or pricey wares: the spices that we are told were available in substantial quantities in Boccaccio's own Florence, a 'Cypriot quilt of the snowiest white linen' in a Neapolitan bedroom fragrant with the smell of roses and orange blossom, and slaves from Armenia brought to Trapani on a Genoese vessel. Other commodities evoke a more mundane existence - an old wine barrel tucked away in a room, assorted items of clothing and furniture, and tools of trade such as a spindle in need of repair. Moreover, as studies by Susan Crane and Daniel Smail among others suggest, things possessed and used also served as markers of status or identity or even as a form of stored wealth. It is these aspects, as suggested in some of the stories in *The Decameron*, that I propose to discuss in my presentation.

Sarah Marie Leitenberger Ph.D. candidate U Penn

Courtesy of the Lady: Madonna Adalieta as a Cultural Ambassador in Decameron X.9

In the *Decameron,* women usually do not cross the Mediterranean independently, willingly, or even consciously: encountering other cultures happens through male force or fortune (e.g. II.7, V.1, V.2), and means survival by hiding their religious, cultural, or gender identity (e.g. II.9, V.2), curbing their participation in the manifold forms of exchange characterizing the male traversers' Mediterranean.

But there is one women who, never leaving the Italian soil, decisively contributes to intercultural exchange without losing her identities: Madonna Adalieta (X.9).

Going beyond previous readings of the relationship between Messer Torello and Saladin, and beyond the characterization of Adalieta as the secondary half of a wedded pair practicing liberality and courtesy together, I aim to show Adalieta's crucial role in the narrative and the construction of a friendship across class, culture, and religion. I argue that Adalieta's unique competencies and virtuous deeds not only facilitate, but significantly shape the exchange between herself and Torello with Saladin.

Referring to scholarship on the importance of clothing in cultural 'passing', I further emphasize the role of textiles, products of female labor and objects of Adalieta's household administration, in bringing about the narrative's turning points and fostering intercultural appreciation.

Reed O'Mara. Dept. of Art History and Art, Case Western Reserve University

Crafting a History of Women: Introducing the Getty's Des cleres et nobles femmes and Le livre de la Cité des Dames Manuscript.

The J. Paul Getty Museum has recently acquired a previously inaccessible fifteenth-century French copy of Boccaccio's *Des cleres et nobles femmes* and Christine de Pizan's *Le livre de la Cité des Dames*.* This manuscript features 108 illuminations executed in the early sixteenth century. These images, which contemporize the events of the narratives and show a close reading of the texts by the artists, present a unique opportunity to explore how women's roles as creators were defined both textually and visually in the later Middle Ages. In this paper, I will introduce the codex and delve into its representation of women's labor, especially the depictions of women as weavers, authors, and painters. I will analyze these images against the Boccaccian text in which they accompany and consider them in tandem with Christine de Pizan's *Cité,* which figures the female author as a creator herself. At play within the manuscript is an inherent tension between Boccaccio and Christine's texts, the latter of which responds to the sexist tropes of the former. Yet, only three illuminations accompany the *Cité,* underscoring the continued primacy of Boccaccio's work and offering an ironic commentary on the efficacy of Christine's efforts to foreground female creative endeavors.

Jonathan Combs-Schilling, Ohio State University

Boccaccio's "Fragile Boat" and Pastoral's Seaward Turn

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Akash Kumar, Associate Professor, UC Berkeley

Boccaccio's Lyric as Archipelago

This paper will consider Giovanni Boccaccio's lyric corpus, ranging from the earliest moments of his literary production to near the end of his life, through the paradigm of Édouard Glissant's archipelagic thinking. Moving between and among these lyrics while focusing on their representation of the Mediterranean and its connectivity permits a new way of not just considering Boccaccio as lyric poet but also emphasizing how these scattered and experimental fragments can form various archipelagoes and come to represent an alternative approach to the domineering movement of Petrarchism that will engulf the world of Italian letters and beyond. What happens when we consider the Baia sonnets and their representations of the corrupting sea that nonetheless revel in its interactive possibilities? How might a sonnet like Su la poppa sedea, a fantastical vision of women traveling together from one island to another, dialogue with issues of gender and mobility in the Decameron? Stemming from my work with Richard Lansing on the first complete English translation of Boccaccio's lyric poetry, attention will also be given to collaborative translation as a critical praxis that can open up new ways of connecting across the sea of languages in an archipelagic mode.

Round table and Chairs of panels

Professors who will chair the sessions or in the round table Janet Smarr, University of San Diego

1. Michael Papio , Univ. of Amherst Mass.
   Chair and discussant

2. Marco Veglia, Professor, University of Bologna
   Chair and discussant

"*Toward the Sea She Went": Three "Healer" Women in the Decameron, Between Eros and Justice*

From novella I.9 to II.9 and III.9, Boccaccio outlines a new image of woman — one that will reshape intellectual, social, and political imaginaries in the West. In other worlds (Cyprus, Paris, Genoa, Acre, Florence…), Boccaccio's women begin to speak other words, as Pampinea and Filomena did in Santa Maria Novella. The tales of the lady from Gascony, Madonna Zinevra, and Giletta of Narbonne form a coherent triptych, opening the *Decameron* to female figures who travel across Mediterranean spaces and bring justice to worlds marked by violence and cynicism. Moving between lands and seas, religions and cultures, these women embody a justice measured by "natural reason," dignity, and eros — what Boccaccio calls *sentimento di donna* — establishing a form of jurisdiction often inaccessible to men. In doing so, they restore what is broken and heal what is wounded, as Giletta (a physician and daughter of a physician) most fully demonstrates. This feminine gesture of reparation, which anticipates Griselda, signals the *Decameron*'s extraordinary modernity: a turn toward "other horizons" and "other words" that reimagine power, love, and the narrative space itself.

3. Rino Caputo, Professor, University of Rome 3

Chair

4. Brenda Schildgen, UC Davis

   Chair and discussant

5. Brian Catlos Univ. of Colorado Boulder

6. Sebastiana Nobili, Univ. of Bologna

   Chair and discussant

   Sailing in Search of the Gods: Boccaccio and the Recovery of Classical Culture, between the Decameron and the Genealogy