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Table of contents available online at <http://www.cambridge.org/us/academic/subjects/literature/european-literature/cambridge-companion-boccaccio?format=HB> (accessed 31 May 2016); doi:10.1086/687889

The Cambridge Companion to Boccaccio nicely complements *Boccaccio: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works* (University of Chicago Press, 2013) as volumes created for the seventh centenary of Boccaccio's birth. In contrast to *A Critical Guide's* chapters on each work, the fourteen essays of *The Cambridge Companion* are organized by topics, divided into four sections: "Locating Boccaccio," "Literary Forms and Narrative Voices," "Boccaccio's Literary Contexts," and "Transmissions and Adaptations." As with any system attempting to deal with so rich and complex a subject, such categories are loose, and the essays speak to each other across their boundaries. The four essays in the "Literary Forms" section all bear "*Decameron*" in their titles, the only essay titles indicating the text they treat; nonetheless, the full range of Boccaccio's writings comes into discussion throughout the volume, and the index can help readers find where particular works are treated. Also unlike *A Critical Guide's* focus on Boccaccio's reworking of the traditions he had inherited, *The Cambridge Companion* looks more to Boccaccio's social contexts, material practices, and reception and influence.

The volume opens with select lists of manuscripts, critical editions, and preferred translations (McWilliams is the *Decameron* translation suggested here, but the later essay on translations compares several), and a chronology of Boccaccio's life, writings, and contemporary events. The list of manuscripts includes both autographs of Boccaccio's own works and his copies and glosses of other texts. The select nature of these lists is justified by reference to other catalogs of Boccaccio's writings and library, especially the Florentine catalog *Boccaccio autore e copista* (2013). The bibliography at the end of the volume is similarly a selection of further readings—mostly in English but also in Italian—organized by topics. Quotations from Boccaccio's Italian are given in English without the original. Contributors to the volume are distinguished international scholars in the field, and the level of scholarship is high and up to date, the slightly belated publication of the volume enabling it to cite the outpouring of new work in the centenary year 2013.

The preface presents Boccaccio "not merely as the author of deservedly renowned literary works, but as the pre-eminent cultural mediator of his age" (xiii). The opening essay, by all three editors, emphasizes Boccaccio's mobility and connectedness within and across literary, intellectual, cultural, social, and political networks, eschewing the traditional linear biography for a "network analysis." They point to the combination of cultural contexts in which he operated as reader, writer, lawyer, businessman, civic official, and ecclesiastic. Seeking out directions for future research, they suggest, for example, replacing the old pursuit of Boccaccio's supposed love life with investigations into the real women who were "authors, translators, printers, artists, or scholars" involved in his afterlife. Beatrice Arduini's "Boccaccio and his desk" looks at the tools, materials, and techniques of Boccaccio's writing practice, including his distinct choices of paper or parchment, script, layout, and ornament. Rhiannon Daniels, "Boccaccio's narrators and audiences," emphasizes the rhetorical and performative qualities of the texts, often with multiple audiences and varying authorial roles,

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which she connects to Bonaventure's four types of writer: *scriptor*, *compiler*, *commentator*, and *auctor*.

In the second section, on "Literary Forms and Narrative Voices," we find Pier Massimo Forni's "The *Decameron* and narrative form," which posits the *Decameron* as "an aggregate of micro-texts" woven into a "macrotext" that by various means creates "a feeling of wholeness" (55). Formally the work thus presents similarities to Dante's and Petrarch's writings. David Lummus, "The *Decameron* and Boccaccio's poetics," ranges more widely among Boccaccio's lifelong Latin and vernacular experiments aimed at "finding poetic forms and languages in consonance with the multiplicity of human experience" (70) and "creating a new vernacular poetics capable of reaching multiple types of readers" (81). Stephen J. Milner, "Boccaccio's *Decameron* and the semiotics of the everyday," like Daniels in her essay, emphasizes the rhetorical and performative nature of the text, which situates itself as "both a product of and intended participant in the social world in which it imagines itself circulating" (83). Milner argues that its ambiguities of meaning aim to teach readers to interpret all forms of communication, textual or social, and to question the reliability of signs. The last essay in this section is Regina Psaki's "Voicing Gender in the *Decameron*." Reviewing the unresolved disagreements about whether Boccaccio endorses or criticizes the social conditions of women, the essay points out gendered asymmetries in speech and silence, such as the fact that female characters are more likely than male to be given indirect discourse or to mock their spouses, but Psaki warns that there remains "considerable overlap" between the genders.

The section on "Literary Contexts" contains Guyda Armstrong's "Boccaccio and Dante," Gur Zak's "Boccaccio and Petrarch," Tobias Foster Gittes's "Boccaccio and humanism," and Marilyn Migiel's "Boccaccio and women." Armstrong divides her topic into two parts: the larger attention goes to Boccaccio's explicit work on Dante—the manuscripts, "argomenti," commentaries, and biographies; briefer but significant attention is paid to his uses of Dantean scenes and phrases within his own writings. Looking at the Latin writings, the Griselda story, and the correspondence, Gur Zak follows Francisco Rico in claiming that the mutual influence of Boccaccio and Petrarch, and even their familiarity with each other's works, has been overstated, and that where they do acknowledge each other, it is often to disagree, both intellectually and ethically. Noting Boccaccio's humanist interests since his very early years—long before his contacts with Petrarch—Gittes discusses Boccaccio's classical readings and transcriptions, translations and imitations, revival of Greek studies and classical genres, compendia of classical biographies, mythologies, and geographical references, and the classicism in his vernacular fictions. He defines three different types of humanist relation to the classical past: the Paduan (Lovati), Petrarchan, and Boccaccian, thus like Zak emphasizing differences between Boccaccio and Petrarch. Migiel suggests turning away from Boccaccio's inconsistent representations of women to attend to who is speaking about them and with what motives. Thus she asks how we as readers judge or respond to problematic narrators, such as those in the *Corbaccio* and *Elegia di madonna Fiammetta*, and what kinds of claim we want to find believable. Somewhat like Milner, Migiel sees Boccaccio's statements as means of testing and provoking the reader rather than as personal assertions.

The section on "Transmission and Adaptation" moves from Brian Richardson's "Editing Boccaccio" to Cormac O'Cuilleain's "Translating Boccaccio" to Massimo Riva's "Boccaccio beyond the text." Richardson surveys developments in the principles and methods of editing since roughly 1800. O'Cuilleain discusses adaptations and imitations along with translations, indicating, for example, the "long line of transmission" from Homer through the *Roman de Troie* to the *Filostrato* and *Troilus and Criseyde*. After attending to early translators (Laurent de Premierfait, Chaucer, Lydgate), he turns to compare a number of recent *Decameron* translations (not including Rebhorn's recent prize-winning one), less to

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choose a favorite than to raise issues that every translator must deal with. Finally, Riva turns to “trans-medial” adaptations, from manuscript to print to internet, from marginalia and miniatures to romantic and pre-Raphaelite paintings, and from theater to film and television. His observations on shifting audiences, from the aristocratic recipients of illustrated manuscripts to the mercantile owners of painted dowry chests and birthing trays, and from high culture to “Decamerotica” films and a television series on political sex scandals, circle us back to the opening essay’s emphasis on Boccaccio’s “mobility” within and across an array of cultural and social networks.

These essays, all well and clearly written, knowledgeable and thoroughly grounded in up-to-date scholarship, combine a quick review of previous work on their topics with an offering of valuable new insights and suggestions for diverse approaches to Boccaccio’s texts. Both readable by students and useful to scholars, this will long remain a necessary and worthwhile volume for anyone venturing into Boccaccio studies.

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