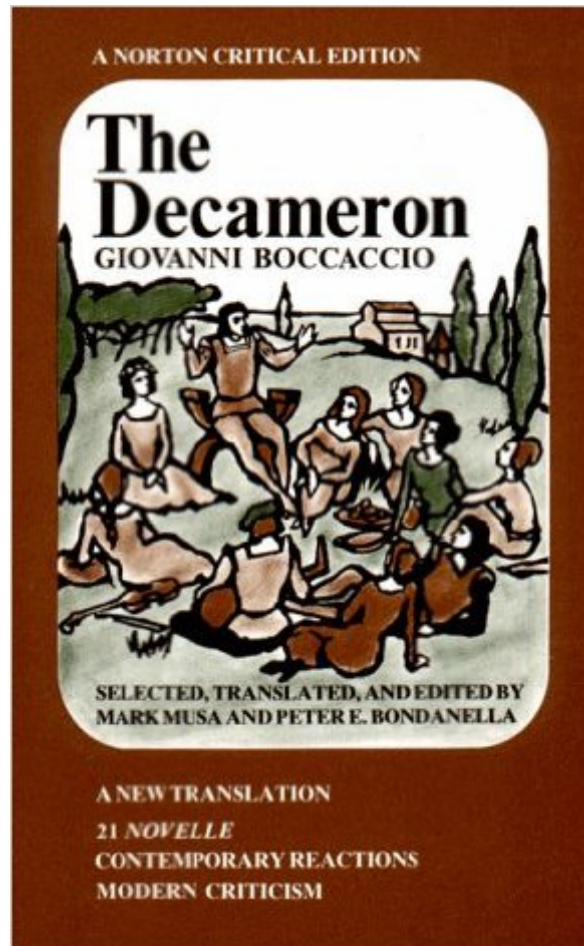


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The Decameron: A New Translation (Norton Critical Editions)



Synopsis

This volume contains twenty-one of the hundred novelle that comprise Boccaccio's masterpiece. The stories have been chosen to represent the most notable of the author's themes and the most characteristic and influential examples of his narrative technique. All are in new translations by Mark Musa and Peter Bondanella which successfully capture Boccaccio's variations in diction and sentence structure. "Contemporary Reactions" includes Petrarch's letters to Boccaccio after completion of *The Decameron* and the responses of such Italian Renaissance figures as Leonardo Bruni, Filippo Villani, Giannozzo Manetti, and Ludovico Dolce, all of which have been translated for this edition. "Modern Criticism" includes interpretations by Ugo Foscolo, Francesco De Sanctis, Erich Auerbach, Aldo D. Scaglione, Wayne Booth, Tzvetan Todorov, Robert J. Clements, and Marga Cottino-Jones. Thomas G. Bergin's important historical overview is published here for the first time, while Ben Lawton's study of Pier Paolo Pasolini's filming of *The Decameron* and a general essay by the editors were written specially for this volume.

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Customer Reviews

'The Decameron' is a series of 100 stories, ten stories told each night by ten different people who had left the city for a country sojourn to escape a time of plague. Giovanni Boccaccio, an Italian author known as part of the founding trinity of Italian literature (the others are Dante and Petrarca), was born in 1313, and produced most of his literary works by his mid-30s. The ten characters in 'The Decameron' were all young people, much like Boccaccio, and the passions, interests and

issues of his own age is illustrated among these folk -- Boccaccio's possibly-fictitious love, Fiammetta, is similarly one of the characters here. This edition by Norton does not include all 100 stories, but rather 21 selected stories, many of the more popular ones, selected by professors Mark Musa and Peter Bondanella (professors at my university when I was there 20 years ago), who are also known for their editing and translation of works by Dante and Machiavelli. There are selections from each 'day' (set of 10 stories), as well as a few of the extra texts, such as a prologue, introduction, and overall conclusion by Boccaccio. These are edited to fit together, as Boccaccio's tales often would wind from one story to the next, making a selection of disconnected stories difficult in transition without editing. There are also two different kinds of critical analytical materials included in this Norton Critical Edition. The first includes personal correspondence samples, particularly between Boccaccio and Petrarca; these date even after the writing of 'The Decameron', showing the interest and reactions. These materials include other contemporary and closely-following generations' reactions and influences from 'The Decameron'.

The first baby steps in Italian prose, away from the mystical, the ascetic, the heavenly, the Papacy towards the sensuous, the sexual, the clever, and the bourgeoisie, were taken by Boccaccio in his hundred tales, Decameron. These lively (if sometimes awkward or hesitantly told) stories reveal everyday men--and many women, at last--keeping up appearances, fooling priests and potentates, and striving to express their fleshly, calculating, and grasping desires. Narrated by seven young ladies and three gentlemen fleeing Florence during the Black Plague of 1348, these clever schemers may succeed or fail, but their ambitions energize these tales. They promote the Renaissance humanist, eager to hear from his peers. Twenty-one representative novelle were chosen for a 1977 Norton Critical Edition; the somewhat ironically surnamed Francisco De Sanctis sums up their appeal as human comedy: "The flesh entertains itself at the expense of the spirit." Considered in the triad if below Dante, we get the next two conversing, via the letters of Petrarch, who chides his old friend Boccaccio for recanting (I wonder if Chaucer knew this when he abandoned his frame-tale scheme for his Canterbury project?) and threatening in a state of guilt to burn his manuscripts. Colleagues tended in their biographical accounts to admire not these "new" tales so much as his more edifying ones, inspired by the classics. Later, scholars weigh in. Seeing this was issued in 1977, I'd reckon as with other Norton Critical Editions (yes, this has a few footnotes if not many), that a revision with some newer scholarship might enhance its value.

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