



Women, Enjoyment, and the Defense of Virtue in Boccaccio's Decameron (The New Middle Ages)

Valerio Ferme

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From the premise that Boccaccio writes the *Decameron* as a go-between to aid women in love to endure the melancholy that love causes them, this book analyzes how, in the parallel world of the narration, Boccaccio's female characters employ storytelling as the "honest" entertainment with which to banish the melancholy engendered by the Black Plague, even as it helps them avoid the shameful behavior embraced by other Florentine women. This "honest" defense of their honor is challenged by the sexually explicit stories narrated by their male companions, who gradually suggest the desire to move from words to action in the overarching narrative. Through an analysis of the dynamics between the women who rule most of the first half of the *Decameron* and their male counterparts, the book provides novel ways in which to read Boccaccio's masterpiece within the context of late medieval society.

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