Pier Massimo Forni. *Adventures in Speech: Rhetoric and Narration in Boccaccio's Decameron*. Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996. Pp. xvi, 155.

Traditional readings of Boccaccio in terms of his realism find new articulation in Pier Massimo Forni's latest contribution. From Domenico Maria Manni to Erich Auerbach, from Francesco de Sanctis to Vittore Branca, we have gleaned valuable insights into Boccaccio's representation in the *Decameron* of the spectrum of human experience. With this study Forni shows himself to be an ardent continuer of this ideological line. However, there is a twist to Forni's realism, which is found in the "realization" of the imagination. He states, "When we think of Boccaccian realism we must think, among other things, of acts of the imagination which entail reaching the sphere of *res* through the sphere of *verba*. This is the kind of realism which Boccaccio criticism will have to investigate in years to come in order to arrive at a comprehensive evaluation of the writer's narrative poetics" (114).

In documenting this shift from *verba* to *res*, the author concentrates on the discursive tools that the ten Florentine narrators use to draw parallels between the diegetic realm of the stories and the extradiegetic level of the storytellers and audience. For example, one technique used to draw these parallels, Forni argues in the third chapter, is the narrators' reliance on the parenthetical clause in the exordia of their stories. This recurring rhetorical method of presentation emphasizes an aspect of normalcy which the listeners may compare to their own context or experience. Among the various examples Forni cites is the exordium of the fourth story during the sixth day: "Curado Gianfigliuzzi, *sí come ciascuna di voi e udito e veduto potete avere*, sempre della nostra città è stato notabile cittadino [Forni's emphasis]," in which the italicized parenthetical clause, Forni argues, is meant to set the scene of a common experience out of which is told the extraordinary, which makes up the story. It is this sort of rhetorical construct, "actualized as narrative action" (83), that is at the heart of Boccaccio's poetics of realization.

Forni touches on a very important issue in his first chapter on "Configurations of Discourse" when he brings to light the functions of the gloss and its response in the *cornice* of the *Decameron*. It is unfortunate that this issue is not taken beyond the critical impasse concerning "truthfulness in storytelling" (23), to consider the wider implications of interpretation. This questioning of the function of the gloss is present in a number of Boccaccio's works, as well as the *Decameron* – not only on the levels of the story or the storytellers, as Forni shows, but also on those of the narrator and author. One intriguing passage worthy of further study in this regard comes in the author's conclusion (p. 1257 in Branca's critical edition of the *Decameron*): "Quali libri, quali parole, quali lettere son più sante, più degne, più reverende che quelle della divina Scrittura? E sì sono egli stati assai che, quelle perversamente intendendo, sé e altrui a perdizione hanno tratto. Ciascuna cosa in se medesima è buona a alcuna cosa, e male adoperata può essere nociva di molte; e così dico delle mie novelle." It

would seem that, among other things, Boccaccio is underlining the inherent ambiguities of the text and the necessity of interpretation, while perhaps poking fun at our attempts to fix truth in a text when even the status of the Sacred Scriptures, Boccaccio implies, depends on how they are interpreted.

Forni's digression in the first part of the fourth chapter, in which he discusses his theme of the "poetics of realization" in terms of the stories of the twentieth-century author, Massimo Bontempelli, turns out to be particularly interesting. Here Forni addresses the risks and ultimate entertainment value of understanding metaphors literally. One of the examples the author gives is Bontempelli's *Il buon vento* in which the protagonist, Massimo, discovers a magic powder that effectively connects the physical and spiritual worlds. Thus when other characters in the story tell Massimo that their hearts bleed for him or that they have a word on the tip of their tongues, they really do, much to Massimo's initial surprise. Work by theorists on the literature of the fantastic (T. Todorov, N. Bonifazi, C. Brooke-Rose, et al.) serves as a point of departure for Forni's discussion of the *Decameron*'s own literalizations of metaphors, including the scraping of Peronella's tub (7.2), and the lending of mortar and pestle by Belcolore and the sacristan (8.2).

"The testing and forcing of rhetorical boundaries between *sententia* and *eventum* is a recurring aspect of Boccaccio's *inventio*," Forni concludes (114). But this point of *adventus* is rather less adventurous than the title of the study suggests. Unfortunately, the emphasis on the analysis of rhetorical forms in Boccaccio's prose effectively relegates hermeneutics and aesthetics to a peripheral domain. The reader of *Adventures* does not have the sense – as a reader of the *Decameron* would – that Boccaccio's venture has its substance in an exploration of the relationship between pleasure and narration, the play and frustrated potentiality in representation, and the crucial role of interpretation that Boccaccio rigorously demands of his narrators and their stories' protagonists, and even of himself, to say nothing of his public.

Readers familiar with Forni's previous studies on Boccaccio, especially *Forme complesse nel Decameron* (Firenze: Olschki, 1992), will find in *Adventures* the further development of previous arguments. The very frequency, however, with which the author must make a variation on the statement that he is presenting here a "substantial addition of new evidence" (x) almost begs the reader to doubt him. Nevertheless, the book, which is a welcome addition to the University of Pennsylvania Press Middle Ages Series, presents an eloquent and concise treatment of a Boccaccian realism, no longer the outcome of ideology, but as the *realization* of the rhetorical imagination.

SHERRY ROUSH

Yale University

Olga Zorzi Pugliese. *Il discorso labirintico del dialogo rinascimentale*. Roma: Bulzoni, 1995. Pp. 143.

We are fascinated by dialogue. As the number of Internet hosts doubles almost every year, more and more people are thinking about dialogue, and calling for it. The ques-