Giovanni Sercambi. *Novelle* a cura di Giovanni Sinicropi. Bari: Laterza, 1972 (Scrittori d'Italia, 250-251). 2 vols. Pp. 1002.

Born in Lucca in 1348 (the same year of the plague which forms the background of Boccaccio's *Decameron*), Giovanni Sercambi left us, together with his historical *Croniche* and other minor writings, a collection of 156 short stories which constitute his major claim to literary fame. So far, however, only incomplete and incorrect editions of the *Novelle* have been available, and the absence of a satisfactory text is probably responsible for the often cursory judgements concerning Sercambi's narrative *corpus* to be found in handbooks of Italian literature.

Sinicropi's excellent edition is the first complete one (included are, of course, those *novelle* which the pruderie of nineteenth-century editors had deemed unprintable). It is based on the only extant manuscript, the Trivulziano 193, which, though full of scribal errors, is probably fairly close to the lost original. Twelve of Sercambi's *novelle* have also come down to us in an autograph version which the author included in his *Croniche*.

The background of the stories is a journey throughout Italy undertaken by a group of men and women under the leadership of a "preposto," who decided to leave Lucca in order to avoid the plague of 1371-73. The *novelle* are narrated by Sercambi himself, at the command of the "preposto," for the purpose of making each daily trip more enjoyable. Each story is preceded by a brief preface which informs the reader on the developments of the *iter Italicum* (which is based on the itinerary of the geographer Solino as related in Fazio degli Uberti's *Dittamondo*).

Sinicropi believes that the writing of the *Novelle* was begun no earlier than 1399 or 1400 and probably completed in about two years. The world of Sercambi's stories is, in many regards, the same which is portrayed in the Italian novellistica of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; it is, however, much less genteel than that of Boccaccio: the *Novelle* are often based on naked brutality which one can escape only through violence or cunning, and even love has no tenderness. The attitude of the narrator toward the world he describes is disenchanted and pessimistic, tempered, however, by irony, sometimes bitter. Stylistically, the most striking characteristic of this work is the predilection of a syntax which imitates closely that of the spoken language and abhors the elaborate constructions dear to the "tradizione illustre" such as that of Boccaccio's prose.

The text of the *Novelle* is followed, in this edition, by an apparatus of about 225 pages. Sercambi's life and works are discussed in a "Nota bio-bibliografica" (pp. 761-794, which is concluded by a bibliography; an ample "Nota filologica" deals with the manuscript tradition, the pre-existing editions (a total of thirteen, all incomplete and more or less incorrect, the most influential of which was perhaps the one by Renier, published in 1881) and the criteria followed in the present edition, especially concerning the question of spelling; a 66-page "Apparato critico" accounts for the text of the *Novelle*, and indicates variants and editorial departures from the manuscript. Especially valuable is the ample "Glossario," followed by an "Indice dei nomi," which allows one to form a clear picture of the lexical peculiarities of Sercambi's language and will be useful to the less experienced reader for a precise comprehension of the text.

Sinicropi's edition is the work of a highly competent philologist which certainly deserved to be included in the prestigious series of the "Scrittori d'Italia." Minor objections

concerning the solution of some problems of orthography could perhaps be raised, but they are not worth making here. What really counts is that students of Italian literature will from now on be able to read in his entirety an author who, though not of the first magnitude, surely deserves a prominent place within the important genre of *novellistica*.

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François Rabelais. *Pantagrueline Prognostication Pour l'An 1533, avec Les Almanachs Pour les Ans 1533, 1535 et 1541. La Grande et Vraye Pronostication Nouvelle de 1544*. Textes établis, avec introduction, commentaires, appendices et glossaires par M. A. Screech assisté par Gwyneth Tootill, Anne Reeve, Martine Morin, Sally North et Stephen Bamforth. Paris, Genève: Librairie Droz, 1974.

This is, as far as I know, the only critical edition of all the known astrological works and fragments by Rabelais. The *Pantagrueline Prognostication* and the *Almanachs* are available in various forms in most editions of the *Oeuvres Complètes*, but nowhere in so complete a form or with such thorough critical treatment. For the *Pantagrueline Prognostication*, Professor Screech and his assistants have chosen to reprint the text of the first (1533) edition. Changes in subsequent editions (1535, 1537, 1538, 1542, when it became the *Pronostication . . . Pour l'An Perpetuel . . .*; and 1553) are included as variants.

Three very serious prognostications by Henry de Fine (1518 and 1533) and Jean Laet (1533), both of Louvain, are also reproduced, as well as a satirical humanist prognostication, the "Ridicula sed jucunda quaedam vaticinia" of J. F. Ringelbergius—"Il s'agit d'un jeu de l'esprit d'un auteur qui croit fermement à l'astrologie" (p. xiii)—and the satirical prognostications of Henrichmann and Starrenwald from the *Facetiae* of Bebei, to which Rabelais appears to be indebted.

The impressive but somewhat unco-ordinated critical apparatus consists of an introduction, notes on the texts, variants at the bottom of each page of text, notes following the works, an *Index nominum* and an *Index verborum* at the end of the book, two appendices and a *Post scriptum*. The editor recognizes the difficulties this may cause his reader (p.177), but makes few concessions to her. He apologizes that the notes are "copieuses," and yet decides (p. xxiii), inexplicably, to leave his discussion of the evangelical aspects of the *Prognostication . . .* for the Notes, rather than deal with them in the Introduction. The variants are scrupulously numerous (e.g., 1.2. *Jesus le Christ* for *Jesuchrist*; 1.4. *Louin*, *Louvain*, *Louan*, *Louain*, variants for *Lovain*). It would have been extremely useful to have had the explanatory notes on the same page as the text (as in the TLF *Gargantua*) or, at the very least, to have some indication in the text that a passage is footnoted (e.g., letters for variants, numbers for notes as in the Garnier *Oeuvres Complètes*). It is also to be regretted that the *Almanach Pour l'An xli* is reproduced in facsimile only (it is not easy to read), without a typographical transcription as is provided in the *Seuil Oeuvres Complètes*, following Marty-Laveaux.

In his introduction and notes and in his choice of supplementary texts, Professor Screech provides very useful source material for a study of Renaissance attitudes to astrology. However, he does not seem to this reader adequately to account for the comic ambiguity of Rabelais' stance on the subject.