

Chapter 5 deals with the theology of odor and the spiritual nose up to 1200, while chapter 6 explains how these theological concepts penetrated into popular culture.

Robinson's book is an original and well-researched contribution to our knowledge of the theories, debates, and applications of smell in the European Middle Ages. By combining diachronic and synchronic analysis, Robinson is able to account for the historical development of this topic through time as well as to delve deep into major texts and problems revolving around the issue of smell in the medieval period. The book also does a good service to scholars, providing a reliable and well-documented account of the theory of olfaction that was standard in the Latin Middle Ages, while showing at the same time how complex and pervasive this topic was. Through the six chapters of her book, Robinson takes advantage of the instruments provided by both intellectual and cultural history, showing that the argument she puts forth is one that eschews such compartmental delimitations.

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Marco Santagata.

*Boccaccio indiscreto. Il mito di Fiammetta.*

Bologna: Il Mulino, 2019. 199 pp. €13.99.

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Marco Santagata's (28 April 1947 - 9 November 2020) *Boccaccio indiscreto. Il mito di Fiammetta* can be considered a biography of Giovanni Boccaccio's early life. But this reading is only partially correct. As the title itself discloses, in addition to the biographical reconstructions (chapters 1-3), Santagata has a more precise goal in mind. He tries to answer one of the still unresolved aporias within Boccaccio's biography, namely his sudden relocation from the Kingdom of Naples to Florence in 1340 (chapters 4-7). Santagata links this absence to Fiammetta's history, noting that it emerges in different times and places with a span of silence in between, and argues that this character and the way she is portrayed may have been one of the reasons why Boccaccio was forced to leave.

The book starts *in medias res*, without a preface or an introduction, and focuses on Boccaccio's first years within the Florentine school and his move to Naples, where he discovers his natural inclination to poetry (1. *Apprendista mercante*). In the Angevin Reign, the author makes his debuts in the literary scene with his first work, the *Caccia di Diana*, which is analysed for its contents and peculiar sources and framed by its cultural context and its audience (2. *Il debutto letterario*). In Naples, Boccaccio attends university, studying canon law, while simultaneously becoming part of the court (3. *Lo studente di diritto*). Santagata proceeds by investigating the myth of Fiammetta, a fictional character who probably represents a natural daughter of King Roberto of Anjou (4. *L'apparizione di Fiammetta*). In Boccaccio's *Filocolo*, considered by Santagata written after his *Caccia*, this myth is still *in nuce*; nonetheless, it demonstrates some of the autobiographical references and historical elements recurrent also among the author's other works. Excepted

from this are the *Teseida* and the *Filostrato*, both written after the author's encounter with Dante and Petrarch's literary production, where Fiammetta is no longer on the scene (5. *Il silenzio su Fiammetta*). After writing these works, Boccaccio is forced to leave Naples and return to Florence (6. *Via da Napoli*). Even though Santagata acknowledges the role of Boccaccio's father in this decision, he suggests another possible reason; he argues that the departure from Naples could have been caused by the court's negative reactions to the publication of the *Filocolo* because of the rumours raised by the allusions to a natural daughter of the king and her relation to Boccaccio himself. When in Florence, Boccaccio's portrayal of Fiammetta changes (7. *Il mito di Fiammetta*): in his *Comedia delle nife fiorentine*, the *Amorosa visione*, the *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta*, and the *Ninfale Fiesolano*, Fiammetta is now the *senhal* for Maria d'Aquino, King Roberto is no longer mentioned, and the relationship between this girl and the author, who is mentioned through his different alter egos, is depicted in a very different way. Santagata's argument is sometime too speculative; occasionally, hypothetical premises are treated as evidence. Still, his argument offers another possible interpretation of Boccaccio's sudden relocation to Florence.

Santagata's argumentation is not strictly historical; from the very first pages, it bends to a more fictionalized narrative, placing this book at an intersection between the author's academic background and his career as a writer. Many of the historical frameworks outlined here are enriched by contributions obtained through the tools of psychoanalytic criticism: «dalla vita e dalla psicologia profonda dell'autore affiorano stimoli, suggestioni, nuclei tematici, complessi psichici, ossessioni ricorrenti, che, attraverso molteplici varchi, ne impregnano l'immaginario e si depositano sulla pagina scritta» ("from the author's life and from his deep psychology we can derive stimuli, suggestions, thematic nuclei, psychic complexes, recurring obsessions, which, through multiple passages, imbue the imagination and settle on the written page", p. 170). Santagata's style gives a narrative and pleasant tone to the entire book, filling the gaps in the surviving documentation with plausible descriptions and reconstructions. These documents themselves are thoroughly analysed as well, as part of the sources on which Santagata's speculations rely. In addition, Boccaccio's texts are often quoted directly, allowing the reader to engage with primary evidence. To support his propositions, Santagata also uses recent scholarship, mostly Italian, which is presented in the footnotes placed at the end of every chapter and listed in entirety in the final bibliography, together with an index of names and places.

Santagata's psychological approach, chosen narrative style, and use of Boccaccio's quotations coalesce in a text intended for non-expert audience. When considered in the context of Marco Santagata's latest book on Boccaccio's whole life (*Boccaccio. Fragilità di un genio*, Collezione Le Scie, Milano, Mondadori, 2019), this text is unlikely to be used by scholars and university students as a biography *per se*. However, it is perfectly helpful to anyone who wants to approach Boccaccio for the first time, would like a narrative introduction to his early career as a writer and catch a glimpse of his humanity, or wishes to be guided into a possible and plausible profile of one of the Italian Three Crowns.

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