

**THE MARQUIS OF SALUZZO, OR THE GRISELDA STORY
BEFORE IT WAS HIJACKED**

CALCULATING MATRIMONIAL ODDS IN *DECAMERON* 10.10

Teodolinda Barolini

Characters and Frame

In this article I propose to read the last story of the *Decameron* as the story not of Griselda, but of Gualtieri, the Marquis of Saluzzo. So indeed does Boccaccio present it in his summary:

Il marchese di Sanluzzo da' prieghi de' suoi uomini costretto di pigliar moglie, per prenderla a suo modo piglia una figliuola d'un villano, della quale ha due figliuoli, li quali le fa veduto d'uccidergli; poi, mostrando lei essergli rincresciuta e avere altra moglie presa a casa faccendosi ritornare la propria figliuola come se sua moglie fosse, lei avendo in camiscia cacciata e a ogni cosa trovandola paziente, piú cara che mai in casa tornatalasi, i suoi figliuoli grandi le mostra e come marchesana l'onora e fa onorare. (*Decameron* 10.10.1)¹

[The Marquis of Saluzzo, obliged by the entreaties of his subjects to take a wife, follows his personal whims and marries the daughter of a peasant. She bears him two children, and he gives her the impression that he has put them to death. Later on, pretending that she has incurred his displeasure and that he has remarried, he arranges for his own daughter to return home and passes her off as his bride, having meanwhile turned his wife out of doors in no more than the shift she is wearing. But on finding that she endures it all with patience, he cherishes her all the more deeply,

brings her back to his house, shows her their children, who have now grown up, and honors her as the Marchioness, causing others to honor her likewise.]²

Refashioned in Latin by Petrarch in *Seniles* 17.3, with a title that makes this a tale on wifely obedience, *De insigni obedientia et fide uxoria* (*On the Renowned Obedience and Fidelity of a Wife*), and since then read as Griselda's tale, the subsequent appropriations rotate around Griselda's exceptionalism.³ The story's originator is Boccaccio, and this essay will be devoted to *Decameron* 10.10, which anticipates many of the later developments while presenting a stark examination of the will to power that later versions have blunted or obscured.⁴ Petrarch began the work of obscuring Boccaccio's message by allegorizing it, as noted by Louise Vasvári: "He became the first of many rewriters to take possession of *Griselda* and silence the violence and indeterminate moral of the story, by ripping it from its frame in the *Decameron*, amplifying and translating it into Latin for a male readership, turning Griselda into a Job figure, and in this new garb bestowing it on Boccaccio." Vasvári focuses "on the violence in the much-neglected literal level of the story, suggesting that it deals not with an isolated case of senseless cruelty but represents, rather, a classic case of sexual abuse of the sort that is inevitable in patriarchal social structure."⁵ I too will focus on the literal level, reading the story in social and historical context as the story of a man of power forced to marry against his will.⁶

Griselda's exceptionalism is featured already in Boccaccio's rubric, where it appears as the discovery of the Marquis, who finds her to be absolute ("a ogni cosa") in her etymological *pazienza*, her ability to suffer and tolerate life's contingencies, the various *cose* that befall us: "e a ogni cosa trovandola paziente [on finding that she endures it all with patience]." She responds to her torments by not responding, by suppressing all emotion. Boccaccio describes her face thus: "senza mutar viso [without changing her expression]" (28, 31), "con fermo viso [with steady expression]" (42), "col viso non solamente asciutto ma lieto [with visage not only dry (from lack of tears) but happy]" (68). She is unchangeable in her stoicism, and life's contingencies—new events as they unfold—have no purchase over her: "di niente la novità delle cose la cambiava [no event, however singular, produced the slightest change in her demeanor]" (58). Boccaccio constructs Griselda as though she were the embodiment

of the universal properties of unswerving obedience and fidelity, while at the same time he specifies “accidents” or attributes that are particular to her:⁷ the attribute of her birth and social background, daughter of Giannucole the shepherd; the attribute of her passion for Gualtieri and love for her children, reiterated throughout the *novella* to preclude the *lectio facilior* that she is simply without affect;⁸ and the attribute—perhaps hardest for us to swallow, and to which I will return at the end of this essay—of her great intelligence (she is “*savia*” [38, 58] and ultimately reputed by the people of Saluzzo to be “*sopra tutti savissima [the wisest of all]*” [66]).

Griselda’s exceptionalism makes her susceptible to being essentialized—in literary terms, allegorized—and by the same token resistant to being historicized. This was a risk that Boccaccio took when he constructed her: in order to keep the moral stakes of his *novella* high and its power dynamic troubling, Boccaccio carefully includes the accidents that make Griselda a particular and not a universal. By not allowing Griselda to be a pain-free universal, by keeping her “real,” Boccaccio writes a tale that inflicts *punture* (wounds: this is the word used by both Griselda and Gualtieri). Gualtieri savors the sweetness of assuaging the pain he inflicted (“*con somma dolcezza le punture ristorare che io ti diedi [and delectably assuage the pains I have inflicted upon you]*” [62]).⁹ These *punture*—the forced removal first of Griselda’s daughter, then six years later of her son, both presumably murdered, followed by the repudiation of Griselda herself, sent home to her father, and then by the instruction that she prepare her former home for her husband’s remarriage and personally welcome the new bride—are inflicted also on the reader. The drive to use allegory to whitewash and rationalize the moral wounds that this tale inflicts on the reader is therefore strong. Following Petrarch, there is a long tradition of reading the *novella* allegorically, as part of an overarching view of the *Decameron* as an upward journey from vice to virtue.¹⁰

Boccaccio himself has seemed to suggest an allegorical reading of his story, through the extreme labels adopted by his narrator, Dioneo. At the beginning of the *novella*, Dioneo claims that the Marquis is notable not for munificence but for his “*matta bestialità*” (3; note: McWilliam’s translation “senseless brutality” renders the careless young noble, and is appropriate as a first pass; however, the expression needs ultimately to achieve its full Aristotelian and Dantean patina, rendered in the translation “mad bestiality,” as per

the *Ethics* and the *Inferno* cited below), and at the end he notes of Griselda that “anche nelle povere case piocono dal cielo de’ divini spiriti [celestial spirits may sometimes descend even into the houses of the poor]” (68). While suggestive, these labels are not in fact allegorical, but rather point to an Aristotelian spectrum of human behavior:¹¹ as commentators have long noted, *bestialità* is a category from Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 7, which begins by stating that the three moral states to be avoided are vice, incontinence, and bestiality, and continues, “The contrary to bestiality is most suitably called virtue superior to us, a heroic, indeed divine, sort of virtue” (*NE* 7.1). Moreover, the expression “matta bestialità” echoes *Inferno* 11, where Dante explicitly cites the *Ethics* in order to designate non-allegorical categories of sinners in his hell.¹²

Dioneo challenges us with his rhetorical shifts in register: in 10.10 he employs sexually allusive metaphoric language in the passage that immediately precedes the moral label “matta bestialità.”¹³ Such language is frequently associated with a specific *novella*; when repeated it has the dynamic effect of cutting across the grain of the *Decameron*’s narrative structure and creating unforeseen hermeneutic opportunities for characters in one story to comment upon those in another. In the prologue to 10.10, Dioneo uses this high-density semiosis to yoke the man who cuckolds Gianni Lotteringhi in 7.1 with the virtuous husband of the preceding tale, Messer Torello of 10.9: “Il buono uomo, che aspettava la seguente notte di fare abbassare la coda ritta della fantasima, avrebbe dati men di due denari di tutte le lode che voi date a messer Torello [If the poor fellow, who was looking forward to raising and lowering the werewolf’s tail on the very next night, could hear the praises you are heaping on Messer Torello, he wouldn’t give you twopence for the lot of them]” (2). Many a *Decameron* story appears to grow from the seed of a metaphor, and in this case the reference is not only to the characters of 7.1, but also to the erotic metaphor that word-stamps 7.1, that of the werewolf’s erect tail. Outside of metaphor, Dioneo is saying: Federigo di Neri Pegolotti, the man who engaged in an adulterous affair with Tessa in 7.1, and who was told to leave unsatisfied one night, but looked forward to a better outcome on the next, would not be so impressed by the virtues that kept Adalieta constant to Torello.

The allusion at the beginning of 10.10 thus brings into play a story from Day 7, the day devoted to the tricks that adulterous women play on their husbands “o per amore o per salvamento di loro [either in

the cause of love or for motives of self-preservation].” Dioneo also alludes to 10.9, the story of Torello and Adalieta: this too is the story of a marriage,¹⁴ which comes to the brink of the “adultery” that is almost forced upon Adalieta when her brothers, thinking Torello is dead, try to remarry her. The story of Torello in turn connects to 2.9, another story where an absent husband gambles on the fidelity of his wife (Bernabò is away in Paris as a merchant at the outset of 2.9, while Torello departs on crusade during the course of 10.9), although the tests administered by Torello, which occur briefly during his wife’s soon to be aborted wedding ceremony, are benign compared to Bernabò’s attempt to kill Zinevra or the thirteen years of suffering imposed by Gualtieri. Most significantly, Dioneo begins 2.10 by reinterpreting 2.9,¹⁵ and he similarly begins 10.10 by suggesting a reinterpretation of 10.9.

Matrimonial calculus—a very high-stakes poker game—provides the context for the power struggle in *Decameron* 10.10, which is why Dioneo prefaces his story with one coded reference to adultery and closes it with another. In the last sentence of 10.10, he advocates adultery as a suitable retribution for a husband who sends his wife packing in only her shift:¹⁶ “Al quale non sarebbe forse stato male investito d’essersi abbattuto a una che quando, fuor di casa, l’avesse in camiscia cacciata, s’avesse sí a un altro fatto scuotere il pilliccione che riuscito ne fosse una bella roba [For perhaps it would have served him right if he had chanced upon a wife, who, being driven from the house in her shift, had found some other man to shake her fur coat for her, earning herself a fine new dress in the process]” (69). Here the sexually allusive language, *scuotere il pilliccione*, which echoes previous usages in 4.10 and 8.7, allows Dioneo to conclude his story by returning provocatively in his last sentence to the dominant motif of identity and dress. He is also suggesting the *beffa* that Griselda would have played on Gualtieri “per salvamento di sé [for self-preservation]” had this story belonged to Day 7.¹⁷ Dioneo’s remark intervenes retrospectively at the moment when Griselda’s fortunes are at their nadir—when she has been *cacciata*, hunted from the house, “fuor di casa,” in only her shift, “in camiscia”¹⁸—and imagines that at that moment she transfers her allegiances to a man who will buy her a “bella roba” at a price less dear than that exacted by Gualtieri.

Dioneo uses sexual allusions in *Decameron* 10.10 to conjure a matrimonial calculus in which he devalues constancy and fidelity in marriage, much as he did in his opening remarks to *Decameron* 2.10,

where he critiques Zinevra for returning to Bernabò in 2.9. There are many salient points of contact between Zinevra and Griselda. Both women are exceptional (albeit in very different ways) and both put up with husbands who are defined by Dioneo in terms of their “bestialità,” not a common word in the *Decameron*.¹⁹ Both women are notable for their constancy; Zinevra, too, has a “fermo viso,” like Griselda (*Dec.* 2.9.50). Both are able to use clothes to transform themselves: Zinevra puts on male clothes and “becomes” a man;²⁰ Griselda exudes high status and nobility of spirit as soon as she is clothed as a Marchioness.²¹ In both, the story summaries focus on the husbands,²² but the stories have been read as about the wives. Most of all, Dioneo points to both Zinevra and Griselda as examples of women who are endowed with nobler spirits than their husbands and yet cleave to them against all reason. Griselda, of course, does not leave Gualtieri, and at the end of the *novella* she is again sumptuously dressed, a divergence from Dioneo’s final sentence that makes his backward glance at her *camiscia* all the more telling: nothing that she gained in the way of status or prestige, he implies, can compensate for how she was treated along the way, during the many years of her compliance with a brutal authority.

Gualtieri’s Game

Dioneo’s coded references to adultery invoke a matrimonial power struggle. In a sense, however, they distract us, because in *Decameron* 10.10 the power struggle between the Marquis and his wife is secondary to that between the Marquis and his men.²³ Boccaccio’s protagonist, the Marquis of Saluzzo, offers us far better traction than Griselda for a historicized reading of the *novella*. The Marquisate of Saluzzo is a historical reality,²⁴ and Gualtieri’s actions and the premises for his actions reside in a historically defined and accessible system of behavior that can be interpreted and critiqued. (Tommaso III Marquis of Saluzzo was so convinced of the historical basis of Gualtieri’s story that he penned a justification of the man he assumed was his ancestor.)²⁵ I interpret Gualtieri’s actions as his strategic response to being forced to marry, in a historical context and in the light of game theory: “According to rational choice theory, a person makes a ‘rational choice’ if it can be described by payoff maximization.”²⁶ In my analysis, Gualtieri consciously seeks to maximize

the payoff of an action—getting married—that he categorically does not want to undertake and that he describes as having feared.²⁷

Boccaccio begins with a character, the Marquis, whom he immediately inscribes within a particular set of social institutions and power structures: “Il marchese di Saluzzo da’ prieghi de’ suoi uomini costretto di pigliar moglie, per prenderla a suo modo piglia una figliuola d’un villano [The Marquis of Saluzzo, obliged by the entreaties of his subjects to take a wife, follows his personal whims and marries the daughter of a peasant].” Boccaccio here delineates the components—a lord, his *uomini* or vassals, the *villani* or peasants—of a form of rule common in Italy beginning in the fourteenth century, *signoria* (Dante calls it *tirannia*),²⁸ in which a locality is ruled by one family in hereditary fashion and that dynasty is supported by an aristocracy. John Larner writes as follows about *signoria* in Piedmont, a region whose five ruling feudal houses include that of the Marquis of Saluzzo:

Elsewhere *signoria* took different forms. In Piedmont the towns were split by the same factions that were found in those of the Veneto, Emilia, and Lombardy. Here however the beneficiaries were not faction leaders, native to the towns, but the five principal feudal houses of the region. These normally succeeded in securing their submission by the explicit acknowledgment of “vasselage”. . . . [A]t the beginning of the fourteenth century, the counts of Savoy, from Chambéry, with lands in France, on Lake Lemane, and in the Susa and Aosta valleys, held Ivrea; while their sub-vassals, the counts of Acaia-Savoy, from Pinerolo, held Turin and most of the area north of the Po. The Marquess of Saluzzo held the upper Po and Varaita valleys and lands extending south of the Po to Carmagnola; the Marquess of Monferrato, from Chiavasso, held Alba and Casale. Finally the Angevins of Naples and Provence controlled Asti and Alessandria.²⁹

Having delineated the governance structure in which he places his protagonist, Boccaccio turns to marriage, the institution that systematically regulates and manages class and gender power dynamics, and he engineers a problem that explores the power dynamics of marriage contracts at their limits. He sets up his protagonist in

the first sentence as a great lord who—precisely because he is not married—is able to dispose of his time as he wants, engaged in the typical sports of the aristocracy, without any constraints or obligations to do otherwise. Dioneo makes explicit the causal link between the Marquis’s freedom and his unmarried status and adds that Gualtieri was wise (*savio*) for giving no thought to marriage:

Già è gran tempo, fu tra’ marchesi di Sanluzzo il maggior della casa un giovane chiamato Gualtieri, il quale, essendo senza moglie e senza figliuoli, in niuna altra cosa il suo tempo spendeva che in uccellare e in cacciare, né di prender moglie né d’aver figliuoli alcun pensiero avea; di che egli era da reputar molto savio. (4)

[A very long time ago, there succeeded to the marquisate of Saluzzo a young man called Gualtieri, who, having neither wife nor children, spent the whole of his time hunting and hawking, and never even thought about marrying or raising a family, which says a great deal for his intelligence.]

In the next sentence we learn that the Marquis’s vassals—his *uomini*, “men”³⁰—do not care for the status quo. They offer to find Gualtieri a wife who will make them happy by providing an heir and future lord, and make him happy as well (*contentarlo*):

La qual cosa a’ suoi uomini non piacciendo, piú volte il pregaron che moglie prendesse, acciò che egli senza erede né essi senza signor rimanessero, offerendosi di trovargliel tale e di sí fatto padre e madre discesa, che buona speranza se ne potrebbe avere e esso contentarsene molto. (5)

[His followers, however, disapproved of this, and repeatedly begged him to marry so that he should not be left without an heir nor they without a lord. Moreover, they offered to find him a wife whose parentage would be such as to strengthen their expectations and who would make him exceedingly happy.]

Gualtieri replies by pointing to the constraint that his men are placing on him: “voi mi strignete a quello che io del tutto aveva

disposto di non far mai [you are pressing me to do something that I had always set my mind firmly against]" (6). The problem is that of a man of power who does not want to marry, but whose very status as a man of power and lineage and wealth and position within a courtly and dynastic setting offers his vassals the leverage with which they can force him to do this one thing—and this one thing only—against his will: “contra mia voglia [against my will]" (8).³¹ The Marquis’s vassals have the right to pressure him to marry in order to ensure the lineage and the social order.

From the *Decameron*’s outset, Boccaccio sets himself to probe the social order around the dynamic of liberty versus constraint. To this end the *Proemio* points to the contrast between the mobility of men and the confinement of women, who are “ristrette da’ voleri, da’ piaceri, da’ comandamenti de’ padri, delle madri, de’ fratelli e de’ mariti [forced to follow the whims, fancies, and dictates of their fathers, mothers, brothers, and husbands]" (*Proemio* 10). Boccaccio enlists gendered questions in order to address pressing ethical concerns: what are the constraints that a society, in the interests of order and stability, can legitimately place on the autonomy and freedom of some of its members? To what degree do those whom society has denied (some of) the pleasures of life have the right to seek out those pleasures for themselves? What societal laws may be violated in the process? Can a society withstand the violation of its laws? All the above ethical questions—which I first formulated with respect to the women of the *Proemio*—are applicable with only minimal modifications to the problem that Boccaccio formulates in *Decameron* 10.10:³² the problem not of the confinement of the powerless but of constraint applied to the powerful. In the great cartography of human existence in which Boccaccio maps the ethical dilemmas that arise as a natural consequence of the complexity and particularity of social interactions, he has moved to the point of farthest remove from his point of origin: from the *donne ristrette* of the *Proemio* to the *marchese costretto* of *Decameron* 10.10.

In characterizing Gualtieri, Boccaccio returns to the gendered template established in the *Proemio*, where men can use their freedom to distract themselves from the pains of love: “per ciò che a loro, volendo essi, non manca l’andare a torno, udire e veder molte cose, uccellare, cacciare, pescare, cavalcare, giuocare o mercatare [For if they wish, they can always walk abroad, see and hear many things, go fowling, hunting, fishing, riding, and gambling, or attend to their

business affairs]” (*Proemio* 12). This template has a long history of association with maleness and freedom, and especially with maleness as constructed in a feudal, dynastic, and courtly setting (the concluding verb *mercatare* speaks volumes about Boccaccio’s attempted “courtoisification” of the merchant class)—which includes the faux feudal/courtly settings invoked by urban Italian authors such as Dante, Folgore da San Gimignano, and Boccaccio. In his sonnet “Sonar bracchetti e cacciatori aizzare” Dante opposes the courtly male world of exteriority and the hunt to the courtly female world of interiority and bondage to Love.³³ Folgore da San Gimignano, in his sonnet cycle, equips his noble group of young men, “brigata nobile e cortese,” with key masculine accoutrements: “cani e uccelli e danari per ispeze [hounds and hawks and money to spend]” (*Dedica alla brigata* 4).³⁴ When St. Catherine wants to condemn a rogue priest she writes that “va brigatando co’ secolari, cacciando e uccellando come se fusse uno secolare e uno signore di corte [he pals around with men of the world, hunting and fowling as though he were a lay person and lord of a court].”³⁵

Gualtieri wants to spend his time fowling and hunting like the young men of Folgore’s *brigata* and as befits a *signore di corte*: “in niuna altra cosa il suo tempo spendeva che in uccellare e in cacciare” (4). His men do not like his lifestyle, which they fear will leave him without an heir and them without a lord. But, like the hunter of Dante’s sonnet “Sonar bracchetti,” Gualtieri does not want to be bound in the chains of Love, which for him, in the more historicized context of the *novella*, are rather the chains of matrimony: “Ma poi che pure in queste catene vi piace d’annodarmi” (8). The question as he sees it revolves around preserving his liberty, and, while he knows that he must comply with the letter of his vassals’ request, he seeks to negotiate a solution that will allow him to remain uncompliant in spirit. He wants a marriage that requires no compromises on his part, one that he can execute “a modo suo”—in his own way. He does not want to change his way of life, and he fears the loss of control that marriage will entail.³⁶ This is what he means when he says that he seeks a marriage that will afford him “vita assai consolata” (9): a “life of great consolation” signifies, for Gualtieri, a life that admits of no compromises.

How is Gualtieri to guarantee that he can marry without making any change in his life? He does not like the odds of finding a wife who adapts to his mode of living as compared to one who does

not—"quanto grave cosa sia a poter trovare chi co' suoi costumi ben si convenga e quanto del contrario sia grande la copia [how difficult it is to find a person who will easily adapt to one's own way of living, and how many thousands there are who will do precisely the opposite]" (6)—and he foretells a "hard life" to the man who errs in his matrimonial calculations: "e come dura vita sia quella di colui che a donna non bene a sé conveniente s'abbatte [what a miserable life is in store for the man who stumbles upon a woman ill-suited to his temperament]" (6). He scoffs at the offer of his men to find him a wife, noting that they are foolish to believe that they can judge daughters from their fathers and mothers, and thus find a wife who will please him: "a' costume de' padri e delle madri le figliuole conoscere, donde argomentate di darlami tal che mi piacerà" (7). As a result of these considerations, Gualtieri accepts his duty to the patriline in theory while in practice requiring absolute freedom in the choice of wife. Moreover, he threatens dire consequences if his men should fail to honor whomever he should choose:

Ma poi che pure in queste catene vi piace d'annodarmi, e io voglio esser contento; e acciò che io non abbia da dolermi d'altrui che di me, se mal venisse fatto, io stesso ne voglio essere il trovatore, affermandovi che, cui che io mi tolga, se da voi non fia come donna onorata, voi proverete con gran vostro danno quanto grave mi sia l'aver contra mia voglia presa moglie a' vostri prieghi. (8)

[Since, however, you are so determined to bind me in chains of this sort, I am ready to do as you ask; but so that I have only myself to blame if it should turn out badly, I must insist on marrying a wife of my own choosing. And I hereby declare that no matter who she may be, if you fail to honor her as your lady you will learn to your great cost how serious a matter it is for you to have urged me to marry against my will.]

In other words, Gualtieri, in complying, also exacts compliance. Nor is it a trivial thing, within a courtly feudal structure, to require that vassals should undertake to place above themselves in a feudal hierarchy and honor as their *donna*—liege lady—someone who might not be socially acceptable. But they are desperate, and they do

not understand Gualtieri's game. The pact is sealed, the first of many that punctuate this story of covert deal making and negotiation. As though to confer the force of law, the men signify their assent, as Griselda will later do, when she says "Signor mio, sí" (21):³⁷ "I valenti uomini risposon ch'eran contenti, sol che esso si recasse a prender moglie [To this the gentlemen replied that if only he would bring himself to take a wife, they would be satisfied]" (8). According to Patrucco, Boccaccio implies that Gualtieri requires the approval of his men in order legally to contract the marriage: "il *placet* dei quali, a quanto sembra, gli è necessario per contrarre matrimonio." He notes that such a procedure is in strict conformity with the laws of the Marquisate of Saluzzo:

Tale circostanza è perfettamente conforme alla legge del paese, anche nei suoi minimi particolari. Per non diffondermi troppo in prove, basti ricordare che nel 1202 il marchese Bonifacio di Saluzzo essendosi fidanzato in Vercelli con Maria figlia di Comita di Sardegna, ha bisogno dell'approvazione dei suoi consignori. Ed invero il 25 luglio 1202 la contessa madre Alasia e sessanta "viri" di Saluzzo confermano e ratificano di buon grado gli sponsali del marchese Bonifacio.³⁸

[Such procedure conforms perfectly to the laws of the land, even in the smallest details. To restrict myself to only a few proofs, it is enough to remember that in 1202 the Marquis Boniface of Saluzzo, having contracted an engagement in Vercelli with Maria daughter of the Count of Sardegna, requires the approval of his men. And in fact on 25 July 1202 the Countess mother Alasia and sixty "viri" of Saluzzo confirm and ratify the nuptials of the Marquis Boniface.]

Boccaccio at this point moves to Gualtieri's choice of wife and his second pact, which he makes with his future father-in-law:

Erano a Gualtieri buona pezza piaciuti i costumi d'una povera giovinetta che d'una villa vicina a casa sua era, e parendogli bella assai estimò che con costei dovesse potere aver vita assai consolata. E per ciò, senza piú avanti cercare, costei propose di volere

sposare; e fattosi il padre chiamare, con lui, che poverissimo era, si convenne di torla per moglie. (9)

[Now, for some little time, Gualtieri had been casting an appreciative eye on the manners of a poor girl from a neighboring village, and thinking her very beautiful, he considered that a life with her would have much to commend it. So without looking further afield, he resolved to marry the girl; and having summoned her father, who was very poor indeed, he arranged with him that he should take her as wife.]

But after these two relatively brief sentences, Boccaccio returns to the first and most important pact: the one that Gualtieri made with his men. Before revealing the woman whom he has already chosen, and with whose father he has already contracted, Gualtieri stresses again that he has complied with his men against his own desires—“egli v’è piaciuto e piace che io mi disponga a tor moglie, e io mi vi son disposto piú per compiacere a voi che per disiderio che io di moglie avessi [since you persist in wanting me to take a wife, I am prepared to do it, not because I have any desire to marry, but rather in order to gratify your wishes]” (10)—and solemnly reiterates the pact he made with them and his intention to hold them to their promise:

Voi sapete quello che voi mi promettete, cioè d’esser contenti e d’onorar come donna qualunque quella fosse che io togliessi; e per ciò venuto è il tempo che io sono per servare a voi la promessa e che io voglio che voi a me la serviate. Io ho trovata una giovane secondo il cuor mio assai presso di qui, la quale io intendo di tor per moglie e di menarlami fra qui e pochi dí a casa; e per ciò pensate come la festa delle nozze sia bella e come voi onorevolmente ricever la possiate, acciò che io mi possa della vostra promessa chiamar contento come voi della mia vi potrete chiamare. (11–12)

[You will recall the promise you gave me, that no matter whom I should choose, you would rest content and honor her as your lady. The time has now come when I want you to keep that promise, and for me

to honor the promise I gave to you. I have found a girl after my own heart, in this very district, and a few days hence I intend to marry her and convey her to my house. See to it, therefore, that the wedding-feast lacks nothing in splendor, and consider how you may honorably receive her, so that all of us may call ourselves contented.]

The men once more give their assent:³⁹ “I buoni uomini lieti tutti risposero ciò piacer loro e che, fosse chi volesse, essi l’avrebbero per donna e onorerebbonla in tutte cose sí come donna [As of one voice, the good folk joyously gave him their blessing, and said that whoever she happened to be, they would accept her as their lady and honor her as such in all respects]” (13). Only after this second assent do preparations for the nuptials with an as yet unspecified bride proceed.

While critics have tended to fast-forward to the nuptial ceremony with its scandalous stripping naked of the bride, Boccaccio devotes much attention to these preliminaries, where the Marquis analyzes his situation and determines the best outcome for himself under adverse circumstances. We then watch as the Marquis establishes the terms that will maximize his likelihood of success—defined as attaining a marriage that will not compromise his ability to do as he pleases—and minimize his likelihood of failure: he secures the compliance of his men *before* he reveals the identity of the new Marchioness. He then uses the license he receives from his men to choose someone so low in station that he will have complete dominion over her. More importantly, he will have dominion over the whole situation, meaning that he will not be caught up in the social dynamic of carefully scripted interactions that accompanied marital alliances, a dynamic that offered a woman’s family ample opportunity to critique and control a man’s behavior. When Gualtieri has Griselda stripped before being re-dressed in her new clothes (which, to preserve the mystery of his choice, he had prepared on the back of a young woman of similar size [14]), he is signifying his power over his men as well as his power over his wife. Or rather, his power over his wife is a way of signifying his power over his men. He is doing that which is socially unacceptable by having her stripped, just as he did that which was socially unacceptable by choosing a shepherd’s daughter. He is letting everyone know that—once having acceded

to the social pressure to marry—he will not be further governed by societal pressures or conform to others' views of what is right: he will do whatever he wants.

The Marquis chooses to live in a social reality of his own construction, and the key to its construction is the lowly social status of his wife.⁴⁰ Griselda's lowliness means that she lacks the network of kin that serves to protect a woman from marital abuse. While in Day 7 Boccaccio shows us adulteresses who turn to their natal families for support, so that their husbands have to keep them despite their infidelity, Griselda's father meekly takes back his faithful daughter after she has borne the Marquis two children. Giannucolo seems worse than no kin at all, as though constructed within the economy of the tale to throw Griselda's full powerlessness into relief. Providing no recourse whatsoever, he saves the exact clothes that she wore before her wedding, as he has daily expected her to be returned to him: "Giannucolo, che creder non avea mai potuto questo esser ver che Gualtieri la figliuola dovesse tener moglie, e ogni dí questo caso aspettando, guardati l'aveva i panni che spogliati s'avea quella mattina che Gualtier la sposò [Giannùcole, who had never thought it possible that Gualtieri would keep his daughter as his wife, and was daily expecting this to happen, had preserved the clothes she discarded on the morning Gualtieri had married her]" (48). The father's worthlessness as a source of honor and protection for the daughter is underscored when he becomes the recipient of Gualtieri's patronage in the story's conclusion: "e Gualtieri, tolto Giannucolo dal suo lavorio, come suocero il pose in istato, che egli onoratamente e con gran consolazione visse e finí la sua vecchiezza [and Gualtieri, having removed Giannùcole from his drudgery, set him up in a style befitting his father-in-law, so that he lived in great comfort and honor for the rest of his days]" (67).

Griselda has no dowry from her father, and therefore she has no protection. There is a deep irony in the narrator's comment that the wedding is as grand as if Gualtieri had taken a daughter of the king of France: "Quivi furon le nozze belle e grandi e la festa non altramenti che se presa avesse la figliuola del re di Francia [the nuptials were as splendid and as sumptuous, and the rejoicing as unrestrained, as if he had married the King of France's daughter]" (23). If Gualtieri had married the daughter of the king of France, all the leverage and superiority would have been on her side of the equation, and the grandeur of the wedding would have been an attempt

on his part to reassert some importance for the Marquis of Saluzzo. The daughter of the king of France could have come to Gualtieri with a small and nominal dowry, but for the opposite reasons of a Griselda: in a princess's case, because the bestowing of her hand would in itself be of such disproportionate value to what the Marquis has to offer, and the kinship network that protects her would be so unassailable. Moreover, if Gualtieri had married the daughter of the king of France—or even had he married the daughter of one of his vassals—there would have been lengthy negotiations and contracts, unlike Gualtieri's easy dealings with the old shepherd.

Griselda's lack of dowry was part of Gualtieri's calculus when he decided to marry her. He tips his hand when he sends her away, telling her to return with her dowry to her father's house: "ma che tu a casa Giannucolo te ne torni con la dote che tu mi recasti [return to Giannùcole's house with the dowry you brought me]" (43). A woman's dowry belonged to her in theory, but in practice it was frequently not returned.⁴¹ By telling Griselda to take her dowry, and showing his acute awareness that she has none, Gualtieri is in effect letting us know how easy it is to send away a dowryless woman. Griselda too shows her understanding of the calculus of dowries, saying that she has considered the finery received from him over the years not as hers but as though on loan (44),⁴² and that she is well aware that he took her "ignuda," naked, so that "neither paymaster on your part nor purse nor packhorse on mine" will be required for her departure: "Comandatemi che io quella dota me ne porti che io ci recai: alla qual cosa fare né a voi pagatore né a me borsa bisognerà né somiere, per ciò che di mente uscito non m'è che ignuda m'aveste [As to your ordering me to take away the dowry that I brought, you will require no accountant, nor will I need a purse or a pack-horse, for this to be done. For it has not escaped my memory that you took me naked as on the day I was born]" (45). She interprets her nakedness at her wedding ceremony as the material representation of her lack of dowry and protection. She—not her father—bargains with Gualtieri, noting that she brought her virginity into the marriage and cannot take it away again. In exchange for that unreturnable commodity, her virginity ("in premio della mia virginità che io ci recai e non ne la porto [But in return for my virginity, which I brought to you and cannot retrieve]" [45]), she asks for "una sola camiscia sopra la dota mia [only one shift over and above my dowry]" (45).⁴³ This talismanic *camiscia*, featured at the story's beginning and end,

is the sign not only of Gualtieri's humiliation of Griselda but also of her ability to negotiate some dignity and protection for herself.

Negotiations, contracts, dowries: all the customary protections afforded women against excess male power, excess male willfulness, and excess male liberty are absent in *Decameron* 10.10. These protections are absent to such a degree that the story demonstrates by contrast what Klapisch-Zuber calls the "regulating force" of a dowry:

From the top of Tuscan society to the bottom, families ran to the notary to establish a dowry, and a marriage without a dowry seemed more blameworthy than a union unblessed by the Church. The dowry penetrated to the very heart of the social ideology of the time. It was what guaranteed honor and the share of respect due each individual: it ensured the nubile girl and the widow a marriage that respected the taboos concerning feminine purity; it conferred and proclaimed before all the social rank of the marrying couple and their families. It was therefore a regulating force in society.⁴⁴

By choosing as wife the daughter of the shepherd, a woman without a dowry, Gualtieri evades the regulation of his life that his vassals had sought to impose.

Indeed, Gualtieri has carefully constructed a set of circumstances that allows him to evade the deep logic of his society even as he apparently invokes it. Thus, he invokes the rules of his society in testing Griselda, representing the births first of a daughter and then of a son as negative events due to her lack of noble pedigree: he must send away their children, he says, because they are lowly born and displease his vassals. In Gualtieri's reversed and mendacious account, the birth of the male heir—the event most desired by his men—is precisely the reason that he will now have to divorce Griselda and take another wife:

Donna, poscia che tu questo figliuol maschio facesti, per niuna guisa con questi miei viver son potuto, sí duramente si ramaricano che un nepote di Giannucolo dopo me debba rimaner lor signore: di che io mi dotto, se io non ci vorrò esser *cacciato*, che non mi convenga fare di quello che io altra volta feci

e alla fine lasciar te e prendere un'altra moglie. (35;
italics mine)

[Woman, from the day you produced this infant son, the people have made my life a complete misery, so bitterly do they resent the thought of a grandson of Giannùcole succeeding me as their lord. So unless I want to be deposed, I'm afraid I shall be forced to do as I did before, and eventually to leave you and marry someone else.]

The Marquis here applies to himself the same past participle of *cacciare* that is used in the story's beginning and end for Griselda, who is "in camiscia cacciata [driven out in her shift]." Gualtieri thus constructs himself as the pitiful object ("non ci vorrò esser cacciato") of the very activity that denotes his seigneurial status, to hunt and persecute others. The verbal echo keeps us focused on the distinction between persecutor and persecuted and makes Gualtieri's lie all the more telling: the Marquis claims to fear that his men will forcefully "hunt" him from his place of power, when in fact his goal has always been to circumvent his men and to deprive them of even their legitimate power over him.

In this manner Gualtieri checkmates his men. For many years, he thwarts their goal of achieving an heir for the Marquisate of Saluzzo: his daughter and son, sent away and believed killed as infants, are brought home from Bologna only at the ages respectively of twelve and six. However, although apparently childless for all those years, the Marquis is married, and his men are no longer able to constrain him to do anything about his childlessness. He plays on his men what is effectively an elaborate *beffa*, a carefully wrought program of manipulation and deceit carried out over time through deeds in addition to words in order to achieve dominion over circumstance: for instance, he stages the receipt of counterfeit letters from Rome to convince his subjects that he has received a papal dispensation to divorce and marry again. His goal is to feel free of the noxious constraint that forced him to marry against his will in the first place; he wants to show himself and everyone else that he and none but he is master of his life and destiny. Griselda's complete subservience represents as well the complete subservience of his men and subjects. Time passes in this *novella* in order to signify Gualtieri's achievement of dominance, but also the price he is willing to pay for it.⁴⁵ Gualtieri calls back his children and reinstates Griselda as Marchioness only

when he is satisfied that he has won the contest between himself and his men. He allows society to have what it wants only when he has proved to himself and others that he can have what he wants.

What Gualtieri wants is to make sure that he can do whatever he wills. Thus, although he is very happy with Griselda, who is the epitome of obedience and compliance,⁴⁶ and although his subjects are happy to honor her⁴⁷—an important detail, as it confirms that the vassals fulfill their promise to honor whomever their lord should choose—he feels compelled to verify the submission of wife and subjects. How is he to know that his will has no limits if he does not perform it? Hence, he performs the *punture* of Griselda, which—like the nuptial ceremony—are public performances of Gualtieri’s supremacy. He tells Griselda that he is divorcing her “in presenza di molti [before a large number of people]” (42). Only the performance of power can create the opportunity for the active submission that he craves, enunciated by Griselda precisely by contrasting her low social status to his *onore e consolazione*. “Signor mio, fa di me quello che tu credi che piú tuo onore e consolazion sia, che io sarò di tutto contenta, sí come colei che conosco che io sono da men di loro e che io non era degna di questo onore al quale tu per tua cortesia mi recasti [My lord, deal with me as you think best for your own honor and consolation, for I shall rest content whatever you decide, knowing myself to be their inferior and that I was unworthy of the honor which you so generously bestowed upon me]” (28). The phrase *onore e consolazione* means that Griselda recognizes that for Gualtieri *consolazione* is tied up with his *onore*, and that for him *onore* means that as the lord he should not ever have needed and does not now need to accept any impositions on his self and his life’s choices by others. She tells him that his will is all that matters, and she elides her will completely, compensating him somewhat for the imposition of the other on his self that he experienced at the hands of his men.⁴⁸ In the culminating scene, the Marquis performs the public restitution to Griselda of her children, her husband, and her status as a “vanto” of his success, a public boast that he has managed the task of being married better than any man alive: “e io sono il tuo marito, il quale sopra ogni altra cosa t’amo, credendomi poter *dar vanto* che niuno altro sia che, sí com’io, si possa di sua moglier contentare [and I am your husband, who loves you above all else, for I think I can boast that there is no other man on earth whose contentment in his wife exceeds my own]” (63; italics mine).⁴⁹

At the climactic moment when Gualtieri explains all, he says that he is a teacher, and that his behavior, for all that it might have seemed “*crudele e iniquo e bestiale*” (61), was purposeful. His goal was to teach Griselda how to be a wife, to teach his men how to keep a wife, and to achieve “*perpetua quiete*” for himself:

volendoti insegnar d'esser moglie e a loro di saperla tenere, e a me partorire perpetua quiete mentre teco a vivere avessi: il che, quando venni a prender moglie, gran paura ebbi che non m'intervenisse, e per ciò, per prova pigliarne, in quanti modi tu sai ti punsi e trafissi. (61)

[I wished to show you how to be a wife, to teach these people how to choose and keep a wife, and to guarantee my own peace and quiet for as long as we were living beneath the same roof. When I came to take a wife, I was greatly afraid that this peace would be denied me, and in order to prove otherwise I tormented and provoked you in the ways you have seen.]

The Marquis explicitly includes his men in his didactic reach, for they are his students along with his wife; one could say that his men are his chief students, because it was they who initially had the power to interfere with him. He takes to an existential extreme the inclination of Folgore's *lieta brigata*, which does not want to have wives to supervise or curtail their extravagant feasting: “*e non voler la moglie per castaldo* [and not to want a wife as manager]” (*Di luglio*, 14). And what is the lesson that the Marquis has taught? He feared he would lose “*perpetua quiete*”; in other words, he feared loss of control. Griselda had to be tested so that Gualtieri can show himself and his men that he has successfully maintained control. He has taught the lesson of how to be married while keeping oneself at the *status quo ante*, how to deprive marriage—and any other social contract—of its power to effect change.

Gualtieri's goal is not to be changed. This is what he means by *perpetua quiete* and by *consolazione*. He achieves his goal, as he states when he restores Griselda to her position, saying, “*parendo a me aver di te quella consolazione che io desiderava* [it appears to me that I have received from you that consolation that I desired]” (62) and as the narrator confirms: “*lungamente e consolato visse* [he lived

long and in consolation]” (67). His “consolation” is to have brought another into his life without allowing any signs of otherness.⁵⁰ In legal terms, this means that he wants a wife he can be rid of as easily as he can take her on; he wants to be able to invoke and revoke marriage contracts at will. But his goals go significantly beyond the legal, to the ontological and existential: he wants the other to be present without being present, without registering any sign of a separate will, without, in fact, being other.

In *Decameron* 10.10, Boccaccio explores the dark side of liberty: liberty at the margins, freedom that brooks no compromises with the surrounding society. In the Marquis of Saluzzo, he develops a protagonist who is pressured by his society and calculates extreme ways to resist that pressure. Gualtieri is a person who games the system: he does not buy into the social order he lives in; he seeks out its loopholes to exploit them to what he perceives as his advantage. Like others in the *Decameron*, he is essentially a gamester, a cynical *beffatore* capable of working systematically to achieve dominion and control. He is in a lineage that goes back to Ciappelletto—but Ciappelletto’s goals are modest in comparison to Gualtieri’s.

Decameron 10.10 is a story about a power struggle: Gualtieri experiences his vassals’ pleas to marry as a usurpation of his control over his own life and he resists, visiting his didactic discipline on the wife who is unfortunate enough to be the stand-in for the men.⁵¹ As a *beffatore*, Gualtieri could perhaps be best compared to Lidia in 7.9, another gamester whose cleverness and perseverance in pursuit of her goals has not received accolades from critics, readers, or members of the *brigata*: like Gualtieri, Lidia engages in outrageous and sadistic behavior as part of an elaborate *beffa* to achieve power.⁵² Her goal is to teach her husband to accept her definition of what is, so that she may in the future enjoy safe sex with the young courtier she loves. Gualtieri’s goal is to teach his wife to accept his definition of what is, so that he may enjoy his life after marriage as much as he enjoyed his life before it. The two characters are similarly proactive: Lidia is not defending herself, like the more sympathetic wives of Day 7, but acts cunningly and violently to secure what she wants in the future; Gualtieri too does not defend himself from an interfering wife, but behaves cunningly and violently toward his docile wife to make sure he will never have to brook interference in the future. Both stories involve escalating tests, but in 7.9 the violence, which is physical rather than psychological, is visited by the wife on

the husband. Of Lidia, Panfilo says that she benefited in her rash enterprise from a benign fortune and that the ladies should not follow her example: “E per ciò non consiglierai io alcuna che dietro alle pedate di colei, di cui dire intendo, s’arrischiasse d’andare [Consequently I would not advise any of you to take the risk of following her example]” (7.9.4). Dioneo similarly says of Gualtieri that it is a shame that fortune favored his mad and bestial behavior and that his example should be eschewed: “la quale [matta bestialità] io non consiglio alcun che segua, per ciò che gran peccato fu che a costui ben n’avenisse [Nor do I advise anyone to follow his example, for it was a great pity that the fellow should have drawn any profit from his conduct]” (10.10.3).

Dioneo is right: it is indeed a *gran peccato* that good came to Gualtieri from his unethical schemes. But this could happen because Gualtieri lived not in a fairy tale world, but in the real world as Boccaccio—and we—still know it. The greatest *peccato* of all is what happened to this story in real history, after the *Decameron*. While Lidia’s exploits, with Panfilo’s less emphatic cautionary signpost, have in fact occupied a kind of taboo space, Dioneo’s warning was thrown aside and the tale that he designates the opposite of exemplary became precisely an exemplum of wifely obedience. The *peccato della fortuna* is here writ large for all to see: it seems impossible—almost risible—that this tale could be taken as a conduct manual for wives, used in real time to illustrate the wedding chests of a bride’s trousseau and as an accepted albeit debated model for wifely virtue.⁵³ And yet so it has been. While Lidia’s lessons to her husband have been read as idiosyncratic and offputting, Gualtieri’s lessons to his wife have been read as prescriptive and universal.

Dioneo’s final statement in *Decameron* 10.10 is one of his signature rhetorical rollercoasters, moving from grandiloquent rhetorical questions to the sexually allusive call to adultery discussed earlier. He observes that, as divine spirits may reside among the poor, “there are those in royal palaces who would be better employed as swineherds than as rulers of men [come nelle reali di queglii che sarien più degni di guardar porci che d’avere sopra uomini signoria]” (68).⁵⁴ Here too, Petrarch’s translation rips the story off its moorings, as he refashions Walterius as an “ideal ruler.”⁵⁵ In Boccaccio’s story, an investigation into power and *signoria*, lordship over others, the Marquis of Saluzzo is not worthy of holding “lordship over men [sopra uomini signoria]” (68). Lordship as Gualtieri lives it could be

defined as indulgence of the ability to produce contingency in the lives of others, just because he has the power to do so: his motivation for testing his wife is therefore described with the phrase “entratogli un nuovo pensiero nell’animo [a new thought having entered his soul]” (27).⁵⁶ If *Decameron* 10.10 seems at times not realistic,⁵⁷ this is not because it is allegorical, but because it pursues the question of *signoria* to a logical extreme, demonstrating the susceptibility of human institutions and activities to corruption: governance structures, social hierarchies, marriage and childbearing customs, nuptial and divorce agreements, even papal dispensations. Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, supremely attentive to humans in society, is invoked again by Dioneo in his precise denomination of the form of rule, *signoria*, enjoyed—and abused—by the Marquis of Saluzzo.

The capriciousness of power is evidenced by that untrustworthy barometer, the view that the Marquis’ subjects hold of their lord. They call him *poco savio* when he first marries Griselda, before coming round to the idea that he is the most *savio* man in the world, for having calculated the matrimonial odds so supremely well:

dicendo, dove dir soleano Gualtieri aver fatto come *poco savio* d’averla per moglie presa, che egli era *il piú savio* e il piú avveduto uomo che al mondo fosse, per ciò che niuno altro che egli avrebbe mai potuta conoscere l’alta virtù di costei nascosa sotto i poveri panni e sotto l’abito villesco. (25; italics mine)

[And whereas they had been wont to say that Gualtieri had shown some lack of discretion in taking this woman as his wife, they now regarded him as the wisest and most discerning man on earth. For no one apart from Gualtieri could ever have perceived the noble qualities that lay concealed beneath her ragged and rustic attire.]

They consider their Marquis *savissimo* at the story’s end. However, they account Griselda more wise even than he: “e savissimo reputaron Gualtieri, come che troppo reputassero agre e intollerabili l’espierienze prese della sua donna, e sopra tutti savissima tenner Griselda [Gualtieri was acknowledged to be very wise, though the trials to which he had subjected his lady were regarded as harsh and intolerable, whilst Griselda was accounted the wisest of all]”

(66). In other words: according to popular opinion, when all is said and done, Griselda successfully managed the Marquis to become a Marchioness.⁵⁸ This conclusion, the product of the unstable moral lens of those who are subservient within a dominance structure, makes us all the more grateful for the moral message iterated and reiterated by the story's narrator. Dioneo considers Gualtieri *savio* in the story's first sentence—a man who only wants to hunt is indeed wise not to marry—and never again, for his actions upon marriage fall under the rubric *matta bestialità*. Dioneo's rhetoric shifts and shimmers, but his moral compass is straight and true.

—Columbia University

NOTES

1. Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, ed. Vittore Branca (Turin: Einaudi, 1980, rev. 1992). Citations by day, story, and paragraph number will be inserted directly into the body of the article.
2. The translation is that of G. H. McWilliam, *The Decameron*, 2nd ed. rev. (London: Penguin, 1995). I occasionally modify the translation to make it more literal.
3. The point of departure for modern scholarship is J. Burke Severs, *The Literary Relationships of Chaucer's "Clerkes Tale"* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942). See also Robin Kirkpatrick, "The Griselda Story in Boccaccio, Petrarch and Chaucer," in *Chaucer and the Italian Trecento*, ed. Piero Boitani (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
4. Chaucer scholars have written copiously on Petrarch's translation of *Decameron* 10.10, explicitly credited by Chaucer as his source for the *Clerk's Tale*. In "Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale*," *Studies in Philology* 97 (2000), 255–75, John Finlayson compellingly shows that "much of Chaucer's originality is a return to elements of Boccaccio's version" (274). See also Emma Campbell, "Sexual Poetics and the Politics of Translation in the Tale of Griselda," *Comparative Literature* 55 (2003), 191–216; Amy W. Goodwin, "The Griselda Game," *The Chaucer Review* 39 (2004), 41–69; and Leah Schwebel, who echoes Finlayson's thesis in "Redressing Griselda: Restoration through Translation in the *Clerk's Tale*," *The Chaucer Review* 47 (2013), 274–99. Most recently, Jessica Harkins further buttresses Finlayson by providing examples of Boccaccian language translated by Chaucer; see "Chaucer's *Clerk's Tale* and Boccaccio's *Decameron* X.10," *The Chaucer Review* 47 (2013), 247–73.
5. Louise O. Vasvári, "The Story of Griselda as Silenced Incest Narrative," *La Corónica* 35 (2007), 139–56, citations 139 and 140. An earlier feminist

appreciation of Boccaccio's tale, which reads it as a "*reductio ad absurdum* of the traditional concept of marriage," is that of Shirley S. Allen, "The Griselda Tale and the Portrayal of Women in the *Decameron*," *Philological Quarterly* 56 (1977), 1–13, citation 6.

6. An example of a figurative reading that complements my historicist reading is Susanna Barsella, "Tyranny and Obedience: A Political Reading of the Tale of Gualtieri (*Dec.*, X, 10)," *Italianistica* 42.2 (2013), 65–75; Barsella reads Gualtieri as a "figure of tyranny" (69) while Griselda "embodies the passive, obedient, and unwilling subjects forced by their own impotence to bear the despotic rule of a prince" (71). My thanks to Barsella for sending me her essay in proofs.

For Stefano Giovannuzzi, "La novella di Gualtieri (*Decameron* X 10)," *Filologia e critica* 21 (1996), 44–76, *Decameron* 10.10 is the fitting conclusion of a work about failure: "L'*exemplum* di Gualtieri è dunque il punto in cui si precisa una meditazione amarissima sul potere, ma anche dove si smentiscono le trombe delle 'magnifiche sorti e progressive' intonate dalla brigata. Il lungo novellare è approdato a nulla [The *exemplum* of Gualtieri is therefore a very bitter meditation on power, and also gives the lie to the *brigata's* paeans to a magnificent and progressive destiny. The long story-telling has arrived at nothing]" (61). Our interpretations, for all that they overlap in linking Gualtieri and power, are completely divergent: Giovannuzzi reads Gualtieri ahistorically, as "Gualtier dimonio" whom he swaps for "Santa Griselda" (57; here he makes programmatic Alessandro Duranti's labels of the two characters, in "Le novelle di Dioneo," *Studi di filologia e critica offerti dagli allievi a Lanfranco Caretti* [Rome: Salerno, 1985], vol. 1, 1–38, citation 26). Giovannuzzi goes so far as to commend Petrarch for having cured the "infezione non sanata di Gualtieri [unhealed infection of Gualtieri]" that is untreated at the *Decameron's* end (57). He sees Dioneo as a force for disorder, has no concept of redemptive disorder, and moralizes language, viewing low language as signalling the morally corrupt: from the "cancer" of Dioneo's first story, 1.4 (50), through the "novellaccia" 5.10 (73), to the "cruda volgarità" of the expression *scuotere il pilliccione* with which Dioneo concludes 10.10 (53). In Giovannuzzi's dyspeptic reading, the *brigata's* journey has been "un progredire senza progresso, per cui l'unico risultato possibile è ritornare circolarmente al punto di avvio [a progressing without progress, in which the only possible result is to return in a circle to the point of departure]" (75). For a view of the *Decameron* as a circular journey that nonetheless progresses, not in a linear ascent, but by instructing its protagonists and preparing them for life and death ("O costor non saranno dalla morte vinti o ella gli ucciderà lieti [Either these people will not be vanquished by death, or they will welcome it with joy]" [9.Intro.4]), see Teodolinda Barolini, "The Wheel of the *Decameron*," 1983, rpt. *Dante and the Origins of Italian Literary Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 224–44.

7. I am using Aristotelian language as Dante used it in the *Vita Nuova*, where he refers to love as "an accident in a substance": "ché Amore non è per sé sì come sustanzia, ma è uno accidente in sustanzia [because Love is not a substance in himself, but is an accident in a substance]" (*VN*, 25.1). For a reading of

- the *Decameron* from this perspective, see Teodolinda Barolini, “The Essential Boccaccio, or an Accidental Ethics,” Afterword to *The Decameron*, trans. Mark Musa and Peter Bondanella, rev. ed. (New York: Signet Classics, 2010), 809–21.
8. Griselda is “carnalissima de’ figliuoli [doting on her children]” (38); for her Gualtieri is, even after the removal of her children, “colui al quale voleva tutto il suo bene [the man she adored]” (41). When Gualtieri instructs Griselda to welcome his new bride as though she were mistress of the house, we learn that his words pierced her heart like knives, for “she was not able to put aside her love for him as easily as she had put aside her good fortune [non aveva così potuto por giù l’amore che ella gli portava come fatto aveva la buona fortuna]” (51).
 9. Griselda uses *punture* in paragraph 59, and Gualtieri replies using the same word in paragraph 62, in a phrase that justifies Vasvári’s reference to “a standard sado-masochistic scenario” (“The Story of Griselda as Silenced Incest Narrative,” 142): “intendo di rendere a te a un’ora ciò che io tra molte ti tolsi e con somma dolcezza le punture ristorare che io ti diedi [I now intend. . .to restore to you in a single instant that which I took from you little by little, and delectably assuage the pains that I have inflicted upon you]” (62). Gualtieri also uses the verb form, “I pierced you [ti punsi e trafissi]” (61). The sexual connotations are evident.
 10. See Ferdinando Neri, “Il disegno ideale del *Decameron*,” orig. 1934, rpt. in *Storia e poesia* (Turin: Chiantore, 1944), 73–82, followed by Vittore Branca, *Boccaccio medievale*, orig. 1956, 3rd ed. rev. (Florence: Sansoni, 1970). On Griselda as a “feminine *figura Christi*, who stands diametrically opposite to the *figura diaboli* which had opened the book, Ser Ciappelletto,” see Marga Cottino-Jones, “Fabula vs. Figura: Another Interpretation of the Griselda Story,” *Italica* 50 (1973), 38–52, citation 50. On Griselda as the embodiment of the Christian virtue of humility within a moral trajectory that leads from “Ser Cepparello, the ‘father of lies’ and *figura superbiae*,” see Victoria Kirkham, “The Last Tale of the *Decameron*,” *Mediaevalia* 12 (1989), 205–23, citation 213.
 11. See Goodwin, who writes of these labels: “We might see them loosely as two ends of a spectrum running from the subhuman to the superhuman” (“The Griselda Game,” 47). On Aristotle’s *Ethics* and *Decameron* 10.10, see also Barsella, “Tyranny and Obedience.”
 12. Dante writes of “le tre disposizion che ’l ciel non vole, / incontinenzia, malizia, e la matta / bestialitate [the three dispositions that heaven does not want: / incontinence, malice, and mad / bestiality]” (*Inf.* 11.81–83).
 13. Dioneo’s warning label has been insufficiently appreciated by the critical tradition, undoubtedly because of his penchant for jokes and sexual metaphors. And yet Boccaccio explicitly aligns himself with “levity” and not *gravitas* in the *Conclusionone dell’autore* (“afferma che io non son grave, anzi son io sì lieve che io sto a galla nell’acqua [I have little gravity. On the contrary, I am so light that I

- float on the surface of water]" [23]) and his Author's Conclusion is a veritable thesaurus of the text's sexual metaphors. For the importance of these metaphors as bridges between the world of sexual activity (women) and the world of activity *tout court*, i.e., life (men), see Barolini, "*Le parole son femmine e i fatti son maschi: Toward a Sexual Poetics of the Decameron* (*Decameron* 2.9. 2.10, 5.10)," 1993, rpt. *Dante and the Origins of Italian Literary Culture*, 281–303.
14. On *Decameron* 10.9 as the "climax of the marriage theme," see Allen, "The Griselda Tale," 10.
 15. For Dioneo's "rewriting" of 2.9, see Barolini, "*Le parole son femmine e i fatti son maschi*," 286–90.
 16. The word *shift* is used by modern translators for Boccaccio's *camiscia*. The equivalent contemporary word in English was *smock*; see Laura F. Hodges, "Reading Griselda's Smocks in the *Clerk's Tale*," *The Chaucer Review* 44 (2009), 84–109.
 17. If we accept the thesis that I put forward in this essay, that Gualtieri in effect plays an elaborate *beffa* on his men, then Griselda's adultery in Dioneo's imagined story could be viewed rather as her *controbeffa* to Gualtieri's initial *beffa*, and their story would be a reversed analogue of 8.7.
 18. Dioneo here echoes the opening summary, which contains the phrase "lei avendo in camiscia cacciata."
 19. The word *bestialità* appears only six times in the *Decameron*, twice with reference to Bernabò (2.9.54 and 2.10.3). Translators render Bernabò's *bestialità* as "stupidity," while Gualtieri's is "brutality," but Bernabò is not merely stupid: he sends a servant to carry out Zinevra's murder, in a scene that will be echoed in the servant who goes to Griselda to take away her daughter (an echo of 2.9 in 10.10 noted by Branca, 1239). Giovannuzzi describes 2.9 as an "antefatto" of 10.10 in "La novella di Gualtieri," 53.
 20. "Zinevra, when the need arises, will effortlessly take on the attributes of maleness in a paragraph where she changes her clothes and her name while Boccaccio changes the gender of his participles, moving from one sentence's 'Col quale *entrata* in parole' to the next's 'di miglior panni *rimesso* in arnese' (2.9.43)" (Barolini, "*Le parole son femmine e i fatti son maschi: Toward a Sexual Poetics of the Decameron*," 285).
 21. The Marquis' stripping and re-dressing of Griselda, especially as a trope for translation (Petraarch's and then Chaucer's), has captivated critical attention. Less attention has been paid to Boccaccio's detail on this issue, which begins with the specification that Gualtieri uses another woman as model in order to cut and size Griselda's marriage clothes (14) and proceeds to the "pannicelli romagnuoli e grossi [coarse, thick, woolen garments]" (52) that she wears to arrange his wedding. Also neglected, perhaps because it does not fit with the

trope of the translator having all power over the translated, is the agency that Boccaccio consistently grants Griselda in these transactions around dress. Like Zinevra, who is able to transform her essence, “becoming a man,” Griselda becomes a marchioness, to the amazement of all (24). Boccaccio stresses Griselda’s ability to use clothing transformatively, and in a way that her husband cannot undo. Thus, she obeys the instruction to come to the palace in her poor garments but she is able to transcend the garments and what they signify, and is effectively able to generate her own significance: “e venuto il giorno delle nozze, come che i panni avesse poveri indosso, con animo e costume donnesco tutte le donne che a quelle vennero, e con lieto viso, ricevette [And when at last the nuptial day arrived, heedless of her beggarly attire, she bade a cheerful welcome to each of the lady guests, displaying all the warmth and courtesy of a lady of the manor]” (53). Boccaccio suggests more agency in Griselda’s transformation than we seem comfortable accepting.

22. Comparison of the summaries of 2.9 and 10.10 is instructive. Both summaries refer to transformative dress and both begin with the male protagonist.
23. Analogously, the power struggle of 2.9, fought vicariously (and successfully) by Zinevra, is between Bernabò and Ambruogiuolo.
24. The Marquisate of Saluzzo extends from Manfredi I (born 1142) to Gabriele (died 1548). Although the name Walterius has been attested in a side branch of the family by Carlo Evasio Patrucco, no Marquis was named Gualtieri: “Si constatò colla storia alla mano che nessun marchese mai di Saluzzo portò il nome di Gualtieri”; see C. E. Patrucco, “La storia nella leggenda di Griselda,” *Piccolo archivio storico dell’antico marchesato di Saluzzo, Anno I* (Saluzzo: Bovo e Baccolo, 1901), 279–305, citation 281–82. See Patrucco, 284, for the documents naming a “Ualterius de Busca et de Salucijs.” Branca dismisses the possibility of a historical scaffolding undergirding Boccaccio’s story. Although Patrucco’s enthusiasm about finding the actual Gualtieri is misplaced, he offers very worthwhile documentation of the statutes of Saluzzo regarding marriage and divorce.
25. Tommaso III (1356–1416) was the author of *Le chevalier errant*, written probably between 1394 and 1396, in which the hero is asked to explain Gualtieri’s harsh treatment of his wife. It seems that the king of Russia pawned off his pregnant daughter as though a virgin on Gualtieri’s father, leaving the son soured on matrimony. This section of *Le chevalier errant* is printed and translated by Richard Firth Green in “Why Marquis Walter Treats His Wife So Badly,” *The Chaucer Review* 47 (2012), 48–62. Green notes: “Thomas III had no difficulty in believing that Walter and Griselda were his own ancestors. But in this case Thomas III found little in the behavior of Marquis Walter to be proud of: in fact, he went to considerable trouble to find a way to excuse it” (50). It is curious to me that Tommaso III seems not to know the names of his own ancestors: his “marquis Gaultier de Saluces” is the son of William, who is the son of Bertran. None of these are names of actual Marchesi di Saluzzo.

26. Michael Suk-Young Chwe, *Jane Austen, Game Theorist* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013), citation 11.
27. None of this is intended as moral justification of Gualtieri; as Chwe points out, it is possible to be both strategic and selfish. Austen is demonstrating the opposite: that it is not necessarily selfish on the part of a woman to be strategic. Chwe writes: “For Austen strategic thinking is not equivalent to selfishness. Of course some people exemplify both strategicness and selfishness, such as Willoughby and Lucy Steele. But one can be strategic with benevolent intentions” (*Jane Austen, Game Theorist*, 133).
28. John Larner describes the steps by which the communes became *signorie* in *Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch (1216–1380)* (London and New York: Longman, 1980); see especially chapter 7, “Party-leaders and *signori*.” Dante uses the term *tirannia* in *Inferno* 27 for the towns of Romagna; “the formalization of lordship in the legal institutions of the towns” occurred in Romagna mainly after Dante’s death (see Larner, 139), so he was on sound footing in considering them *tirannie* rather than *signorie*.
29. Larner, *Italy in the Age of Dante and Petrarch*, 139.
30. Branca glosses “*sudditi, vassalli*” (subjects, vassals). Patrucco, “La storia nella leggenda di Griselda,” 288, documents the statutory existence of *boni homines* in the records of the Marquisate of Saluzzo.
31. There is another nobleman in the *Decameron* forced to marry, and that is Count Beltramo di Rossiglione in 3.9; the rubric describes him as “*contra sua voglia sposatala [having married her against his will].*” The stories share a feudal setting and lexicon; the Count’s vassals are called “*buoni uomini*” in 3.9.34, as are those of the Marquis in 10.10.13 and 10.10.40.
32. I formulated these questions in “The Essential Boccaccio,” 811. The only modification was to insert “some of” in parentheses into one of the questions.
33. See my introductory essay to *Sonar bracchetti* in Dante, *Rime giovanili e della “Vita Nuova,”* ed. Teodolinda Barolini with notes by Manuele Gagnolati (Milan: Rizzoli, 2009).
34. The text is from *Il giuoco della vita bella, Folgore da San Gimignano: studi e testi*, ed. Michelangelo Picone (San Gimignano: Nencini Poggibonsi, 1988). For more on this material see Barolini, “Sociology of the *Brigata*: Gendered Groups in Dante, Forese, Folgore, Boccaccio—from *Guido, i’ vorrei* to *Griselda*,” *Italian Studies* 67 (2012), 4–22.
35. *Libro della divina dottrina*, ed. Matilde Fiorilli (Bari: Laterza, 1928), ch. 130, 283. The incompatibility of hunting with clerical orders is still a theme in Anthony Trollope’s *Framley Parsonage*, whose vicar is almost ruined by too much hunting

and the expense of consorting with gentlemen who hunt (*secolari e signori di corte* in St. Catherine's language).

36. In *The Governance of Friendship: Law and Gender in the Decameron* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2011), Michael Sherberg explains: "In attaching terms to his acquiescence Gualtieri seeks to restore order by exerting control over his marital situation" (225).
37. Patrucco points out that Giannucolo must be a free man, in order to contract with Gualtieri to give away his daughter, and that Griselda must be a free woman, in order to give her assent to Gualtieri: "perchè il matrimonio sia valido, è necessario che sia donna libera" ("La storia nella leggenda di Griselda," 292).
38. Patrucco, "La storia nella leggenda di Griselda," 293.
39. The *cassone* painter Pesellino fully appreciates the importance of these interactions between Gualtieri and his men, according to Cristelle L. Baskins, "Griselda, or the Renaissance Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelor in Tuscan *Cassone* Painting," *Stanford Italian Review* 10 (1991), 153–75: "Underscoring the themes of seigneurial autonomy and privilege, the bowed heads of Gualtieri's subjects indicate consent" (161).
40. Again, the comparison with Beltramo di Rossiglione in 3.9 is instructive. Beltramo is outraged that he is forced by the king to marry a lady doctor ("medica") rather than a lady of lineage as befits his rank ("conoscendo lei non esser di legnaggio che alla sua nobiltà bene stesse" [3.9.22]). Beltramo does not want to take a wife from a rich bourgeois family. Gualtieri goes far below doctors to shepherds.
41. As noted by Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "The Griselda Complex: Dowry and Marriage Gifts in the Quattrocento," in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 213–46: "In practice, it proved extremely difficult for a widow even to recuperate the dowry on which she was to live and which her legitimate heirs or their guardians tried desperately to keep until her death" (216).
42. "During the days or months preceding the marriage and within the year following, the husband provided what was in effect a wardrobe for his wife, a kind of countertrousseau" (Klapisch-Zuber, "The Griselda Complex," 219); "More than one widow left the conjugal roof under such conditions, leaving behind to the heirs (who might be her own children) not only the dowry and the trousseau, which they were slow indeed to return to her, but also the ritual wardrobe of her wedding" (ibid., 226).
43. Grace Delmolino defines virginity a "non-refundable deposit" in rather: "The Economics of Conjugal Debt from the *Decretum* to *Decameron* 2.10: Boccaccio, Canon Law, and the Loss of Interest in Sex," forthcoming in *Reconsidering Boccaccio: Medieval Contexts and Global Intertexts*, ed. Olivia Holmes and Dana E. Stewart.

44. Klapisch-Zuber, “The Griselda Complex,” 214. Klapisch-Zuber mainly writes about Tuscan society. Patrucco claims that *Decameron* 10.10 is in line with practices regarding divorce and dowry restitution in Saluzzo; see “La storia nella leggenda di Griselda,” 296. Victorian literature opens a fascinating window onto similar practices in more recent times: a woman without a dowry is still referred to by Trollope as “portionless” and his novels are full of discussions of marriage (and divorce) settlements. Victorian scholars seem unaware that Frances Hodgson Burnett’s 1901 *The Making of a Marchioness* is a retelling of the Griselda story within the conventions of the realist novel: in this version the poor but well-born Emily Fox-Seton is able to transform the Marquis of Walderhurst, who is not cruel but whose humanity is “buried under self and inhuman conventionality” (part 2, ch. 18). Burnett carefully constructs her tale around an aristocrat who “knew he must marry and thought it very annoying” (part 1, ch. 1) and a woman who is “so good that she is almost silly” (part 2, ch. 12) and who experiences a “divinely innocent passion for a self-centred man” (part 2, ch. 18). Emily Fox-Seton shares Griselda’s self-abnegation, but in this novel set in England there is one line that cannot be crossed: “She has some of the nicest blood in England in her veins” (part 1, ch. 3).
45. The passage of time is key to this story, as Gualtieri himself notes: “intendo di rendere a te a un’ora ciò che io tra molte ti tolsi [I now intend to restore to you in one hour that which I took from you over many hours]” (62). Wasted time further connects 10.10 to 2.9, which features the theme of women whose youth is wasted while their husbands travel; for *perder tempo* as a gendered issue, see Barolini, “*Le parole son femmine e i fatti son maschi*,” esp. 293–98. The fourteenth-century scribe and commentator Francesco Mannelli glosses Gualtieri’s great restoration scene thus: “Pisciarti in mano Gualtieri! chi mi ristora di dodici anni? [Go piss on your hand Gualtieri! Who will give me back twelve years?];” cited in Branca, 1247). Mannelli is echoing *Decameron* 3.5: “perché perdo io la mia giovinezza? Questi se ne é andato a Melano e non tornerà di questi sei mesi; e quando me gli ristorerà egli giammai? quando io sarò vecchia? [What am I doing? Why am I throwing away my youth? This husband of mine has gone off to Milan and won’t be returning for six whole months. When is he ever going to give me back my lost time? When I’m an old woman?];” (3.5.30). However, Gualtieri is different from previous husbands: his perversity is such that he is willing to waste his own youth, as well as Griselda’s.
46. Griselda “era tanto obediante al marito e tanto servente, che egli si teneva il piú contento e il piú appagato uomo del mondo [she was so obedient to her husband, and so compliant to his wishes, that he thought himself the happiest and most contented man on earth]” (10.10.24).
47. “E similmente verso i subditi del marito era tanto graziosa e tanto benigna, che niun ve ne era che piú che sé non l’amasse e che non l’onorasse di grado [At the same time she was so gracious and benign towards her husband’s subjects, that each and every one of them was glad to honor her]” (10.10.25).

48. She states that she wants nothing but what gives him pleasure: “Signor mio, pensa di contentar te e di sodisfare al piacer tuo e di me non avere pensiere alcuno, per ciò che niuna cosa m’è cara se non quanto io la veggo a te piacere [look to your own comfort, see that you fulfill your wishes, and spare no thought for me, since nothing brings me pleasure unless it pleases you also]” (36).
49. Of the expression “dar vanto” (to boast), Branca writes: “Frase di un preciso e solenne significato nella società feudale [A phrase endowed with a precise and solemn significance in feudal society]” (1247).
50. Left unpacked in this essay is the question: What does it mean that Gualtieri is the lexically most consoled character in the *Decameron*? I argue that Gualtieri’s achievement of *consolazione* through the complete self-effacement of the other is not a goal that the *Decameron* is advocating, but rather is one extreme on the spectrum of Boccaccio’s philosophy of consolation; see Barolini, “Boccaccio’s Philosophy of Consolation: The Place of the Other in Life’s Transactions,” forthcoming in *Boccaccio 2013 in Washington DC: Atti del convegno a Georgetown University e all’ambasciata italiana*, ed. Francesco Ciabattone, Elsa Filosa, and Kristina Olson (Ravenna: Longo, 2015).
51. Boccaccio’s sympathy for women is built into the story directly through Dioneo’s interventions and indirectly through this mechanism: Griselda, as a woman and a wife, has to pay the price for the men’s transgression.
52. On *Decameron* 7.9, and on the relation of the *beffa* to power, see Albert Russell Ascoli, “Pyrrhus’ Rules: Playing with Power from Boccaccio to Machiavelli,” *MLN* 114 (1999), 14–57.
53. Baskins notes that Boccaccio’s tale “is not among the subjects frequently found on *cassone* panels” (“Griselda, or the Renaissance Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelor,” 156); it is remarkable that it should be chosen at all. Green makes the point that not all contemporaries were comfortable with the story of Gualtieri and Griselda, in “Why Marquis Walter Treats His Wife So Badly.” On later Griselda treatments, see Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, “(In)alienable Possessions: Griselda, Clothing, and the Exchange of Women,” *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 220–44, who print the title page to *The Pleasant and Sweet History of patient Grissell*, London, 1630, on page 240. The title continues: “Shewing how she from a poore man’s Daughter, came to be a great Lady in France, being a patterne for all vertuous Women.” The woodcut perfectly exemplifies the gendered tropes captured by Boccaccio in the *Proemio* of the *Decameron*: a woman spins in a house in the foreground while men on foot and horseback hunt and caper among trees and animals in the background.
54. A context for Dioneo’s intriguing transition from shepherds to swineherds may be found in Nancy Freeman Regalado, “Swineherds at Court: *Kalila et Dimna*, *Le Roman de Fauvel*, Machaut, and the *Decameron*,” in “*Chanson legiere a chanter*”:

Essays on Old French Literature in Honor of Samuel N. Rosenberg, ed. Karen Louise Fresco and Wendy Pfeffer (Birmingham: Summa, 2007), 235–54. Regalado discusses a catch phrase in *Le Roman de Fauvel*—“Porchier mieus este ameroie / que Fauvel torchier [I would rather be a swineherd than curry Fauvel]”—and shows that the repeated phrase serves as an indictment of injustice and tyranny at court. I concur with Regalado’s assessment that at the end of the *Decameron* the catch phrase recurs with its “identifying fingerprints: the image of the swineherd and the concern for good government” (247), although I would not agree that in Boccaccio’s usage the swineherd “no longer opposes the unjust ruler” (248). Rather, Boccaccio’s point is that a swineherd may well be more deserving to hold lordship over men than an actual lord. My thanks to Nancy Regalado for sending me her essay.

55. See Martin McLaughlin, “Humanist Rewriting and Translation: The Latin *Griselda* from Petrarch to Neri de’ Nerli,” *Humanistica* 1–2 (Pisa: Istituti Editoriali e Poligrafici Internazionali, 2006), 23–40: “Petrarch’s modifications of the tale consistently point in the paradoxical direction of actually turning him into an ideal ruler, who has just one slight flaw” (25).
56. *Griselda* is described as the opposite, impervious to the new: “di niente la novità delle cose la cambiava [this new and strange turn made not the least alteration in her demeanor]” (58).
57. For instance, Baskins comments: “no real husband would tolerate the public stripping of his bride” (“*Griselda, or the Renaissance Bride Stripped Bare*,” 173).
58. We cannot exclude the possibility that *Griselda* exerted agency in choosing to be a subservient Marchioness deprived of all agency rather than a shepherdess. See above note 21 for the topic of *Griselda*’s agency.

