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Bodies without Minds, Minds without Bodies

Tales of the Night in the *Fabliaux* and Boccaccio

I would like to explore with you something that has always struck me as one of the little observed, but defining, elements of medieval storytelling, which has deeper meaning for the ways in which literature intersects with culture and society in France of the High Middle Ages and in Italy of the late Middle Ages, verging on the Renaissance. I am thinking of the way that tales written in French, known as the *fabliaux*, and tales contained in Boccaccio's *The Decameron*, as well as those that make up Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, bring into focus what we think of as clock time, or "bourgeois time" in the phrase of Jacques Le Goff. These short stories, which are themselves bound by time, have important consequences for the relationship of body and spirit. Consciousness of chronological time is not only a key element of narrative structure, but makes for a fundamental shift in the mental structure of one of the true moments of turning in the West – that is, in the making of a world that is recognizably our own.

First a word about the *fabliaux*, some 160 or 170 comic tales in verse, which circulated in both oral and written form, between the last quarter of the twelfth century and the first quarter of the fourteenth.

The *fabliaux* are a social mirror of their time. This first important expression of European literary realism represents an extremely valuable source of information about daily life in an age from which few documents survive, and those which do survive deal with domains of thought and imagination far removed from everyday experience. The comic tale bears witness to the great urban renaissance of the twelfth century as well to what went on in the countryside. This world of feudalism in decline, of renewed economic activity, of manufacturing, transportation, and selling of goods, of rampant materialism and social mobility, yields a panoramic image of dispossessed knights and rich peasants, and of the "new men" exercising the new trades connected to the revival of European commerce – salt and spice merchants, bakers, grocers, blacksmiths and artisans, seamstresses, money changers, book-keepers, carters, wandering students and clerics, as well as the prostitutes, pimps, procuresses, dicers, and thieves who inhabit the demimonde of the brothels and taverns in which so many scenes from the *fabliaux* take place.

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Witness to the rise of a middle class, the Old French comic tale is filled with middle men and ne'er-do-wells who freeload, like the impoverished antiheroic hero who, "had no trade, but used to go/ from town to town, where in the castles/ of various and sundry vassals/ he lodged and ate at their expense"¹ – and who admits to making his living as a professional fornicator: "I am a fucker one can hire,/ and I maintain, if you require/ my services, I'll service you,/ and you'll be thankful for them, too!"². The fabliaux are a key to the habits of the common people of the High Middle Ages, to how men and women worked, travelled, ate, bathed, slept, made love, eliminated, wiped their posterior parts, dressed, arranged their hair, made up their faces. They are a virtual catalogue not only of the "arts and trades" of medieval France, but of the orders of society – ecclesiastical and lay, rural and urban, noble, bourgeois, and peasant. With one notable exception: they contain few examples of the great feudal princes, the barons and dukes which dominate the epic and the romance; and the King of France is completely absent.

The fabliaux provide a unique vision of the emerging domestic unit, its living arrangements, and the means by which those living under the same roof related to each other in what is an embryonic version of the modern nuclear family. Like ancient comedy, the medieval comic tale is the literary form appropriate to the representation of the family, depicting as it does the private life of the thirteenth-century household. These comic tales take us into the living rooms of rich bourgeois. More important, they take us into their bedrooms where we are treated to a privileged view of medieval erotic life.

Most of the fabliaux are anonymous. Only a few can be attributed to known authors like Jean Bodel, Rutebeuf, or Jean de Condé. To judge by the original language preserved in some forty-three manuscripts, the fabliaux are products of the North and Northwest part of France. They portray the goings-on of those who inhabit Picardy, Hainaut, and Normandy, with specific mention of such towns as Cambrai, Abbeville, Compiègne, Arras, Douai, Amiens, and Paris. Urban in outlook, they extol the values of markets and of towns – quick wits, an ability to assess and to anticipate the actions of others, inventiveness when it comes to buying and selling, flexibility, a sense of timing, and persistence.

It is this sense of timing and persistence that brings me to discuss what I have noted as a sub-genre of the fabliaux, which figures in Boccaccio as well. This is the tale of a single night, stories framed by the time limits of dusk to dawn, also know

¹ "The Fucker", in *The Fabliaux. A new verse translation*, N. E. Dubin (transl.), H. Bloch (introduction), New York 2013, 839–860, 839 ff.

² *Ibid.*, 849.

as the tale of an “Italian night”, and whose chronological limits and compression stand in stark contrast to the natural cycles of day and night, summer and winter, the canonical hours, or the yearly sequence of local and general saints’s days of the liturgical calendar. Beyond the Middle Ages, the tale of one night is to be found in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* and *Midsummer’s Night Dream* as well as in Alfred de Musset’s Florentine extravaganza *Lorenzaccio*, though in the nineteenth century, the tale of one night is transformed into the tale of one day, as seen in James Joyce’s *Ulysses* or Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs Dalloway*.

An uncanny transformative power lurks in the tale of one night, as the experiences of a few hours often work to change the life course of an individual, or at least to alter his or her financial situation. There are a lot of beatings and castrations in the fabliaux, but few deaths – except in the tales of a single night. In the classical one-night fabliau *Estormi*, the loyal wife of a good man, who has fallen on hard times, is harassed by three priests, each of whom promises a large sum of money if she will sleep with him. She makes an assignation with each for a particular hour. When the first priest arrives, Yfame’s husband John hits him over the head with a cudgel, and calls his nephew Estormi, who is at the time carousing at the local tavern, to come bury the body, which he does. When the second arrives and meets the same fate, John convinces Estormi that he buried the body badly, since the priest has returned and needs to be reburied. The same happens with the third. Finally, Estormi, deeply fatigued from all the digging, meets a priest wandering home in the early hours of the morning (in from another fabliau), and, thinking it is the same priest who will not be buried, kills and buries him definitively just for good measure. In the tale known as *Du Segretain Moine* or *The Portable Priest*, a luxurious cleric is killed by a watchful husband who disposes of the body in the monastic latrine where it is discovered by a prior.

The monk who had sustained the blow
 sat on the pot, jaw hanging low;
 the other brothers lay in slumber.
 Near where they ate, one of their number
 had his bed. He was the abbey’s prior,
 who’d overeaten and had dire
 need to go out and defecate;
 in fact, he didn’t dare to wait.
 No sooner had he reached the privies,
 he started to remove his skivvies
 at the first toilet in the john,
 sensing his movement coming on.
 He looked up and found that place filled
 by the sacristan who’d been killed
 and sat there quite immobilized.

“Disgusting!” he exclaimed, surprised.

“The sacristan sleeps in the loo!

I’ll see he’s punished for it, too....³

The prior returns the dead sacristan to the husband’s house. Astonished, the husband hides the corpse under Farmer Thibaut’s manure pile in a sack in which thieves had previously placed a stolen ham. The thieves, retrieving their booty and transporting it to the tavern where they have been drinking, open the sack, discover the substitution, and return it to the hook in Thibaut’s barn from which it had been stolen in the first place. Thibaut, finding a dead priest in the place of his ham, straps it to a horse which returns to the monastery, stumbles, and is ultimately blamed for the monk’s death. *Du Segretain Moine*, *Du Prestre qu’on porte* and *De la longue nuit* tell a similar tale.

One spectacular example of the tale of one night is the fabliau known as *Aubérée*, the story of a mismatch between a young woman, in love with a young man, but married for financial reasons to an old widower. *Aubérée*, a seamstress who mends garments, and sews tales, manages to knit the two young lovers together for a night, under the stipulation that they leave in the morning. “Early next morning, when dawn breaks/ and Mistress Auberée awakes,/ she readies for them in the kitchen/ a roast of pork and also chicken,/ and then all sit down to a feast./ Not one is timid in the least;/ instead they eat and drink their fill,/ and both make use of with goodwill/ the services of Auberée”⁴. *Aubérée* takes place in the town of Compiègne, and what the clever seamstress does is to knit together a “con” with a “pigne”, one of the words in Old French for penis, after which they must disappear at dawn, *Aube* + *errer*.

The night in the tavern or brothel provides a natural setting and time frame for the tale of one night, and here the classical example is *Boivin de Provins*, the story of a rustic farmer who comes to town, positions himself in front of Mabel’s “maison close”, then begins to recount out loud the story of his rising monetary fortunes and lost family. Mabel, taken in by the ruse, pretends to be Boivin’s lost niece, and invites him in for dinner and a night with a virgin, after what Boivin tells her is (an epic) seven years of abstinence. The plan is to cut Boivin’s purse when he takes his pants off. “Ysane was first to get in bed,/ and, calling on God’s name, she pled/ insistently Fouchier not to hurt/ her, so he had to lift her skirt/ to do his business, and pulled off,/ to bare her rump, her nether coif,/ and while his member grew more solid,/ she felt around to find his wallet./ She feels around, and he embraces/ her tightly, and his prick he places/ in her cunt, shoves it to

³ “The portable Priest”, *ibid.*, 715–760, 737 ff.

⁴ “Auberée”, *ibid.*, 277–315, esp. 301.

the nuts,/ beats them against her ass and ruts,/ which means he's fucked her, I suppose./ He sees, while hiking up his hose,/ his two cut purse-straps hanging free./ 'Alas!' he cries. 'Oh, woe is me!/ This day for me has been a curse!/ Mabile! Niece! Someone's cut my purse!'"⁵. Boivin, however, has beaten the brothel schemers to it, and, after what looks like a false castration, "purse" being a synonym for testicles, he emerges with a night on the town, a good dinner, a roll in the hay, and a story to tell, for which he is paid: "Boivin went to the magistrate/ and told him the whole story straight/ from end to end and word for word,/ and when the dignitary heard,/ who had a taste for ribaldry,/ he had him tell his family/ and friends the many things he'd done,/ a source of merriment and fun./ Boivin stayed three days as his guest,/ and the provost made a bequest/ to him of half a pound. Boivin/ made this fabliau in Provins"⁶.

The space of a day is important for Boccaccio, since it can, as he makes clear in the Introduction, determine the course of life and death: "How many valiant men, how many beautiful women, how many lovely youths, whom Galen, Hippocrates, and Aesculapius – not to mention others – would have judged perfectly healthy, dined in the morning with their family, companions, and friends, only to have supper that evening with their ancestors in the next world!"⁷. It is clear that the plague compresses time, making it possible to live what seems like a lifetime in a few hours, and it structures it, the tale sequence organized according to the narrative rulers over a day.

Where the Boccaccian night is concerned, one thinks of two tales in particular: Andreuccio da Perugia (II, 5) and the tale of Pinuccio and Niccolosa (IX, 6) both of which recount the peregrinations of a single dusk to dawn.

Despite his origin in what was a city, "Andreuccio da Perugia" is the tale of a country boy who, like Boivin, goes to town, a theme that crops up in literature over and over again in the delicate negotiation between town and countryside that is most fully developed in the fable genre to which belongs the tale of the country mouse and city mouse, or Marie de France's tale of the wolf and the dog.

"Andreuccio", a horse dealer by trade, goes to Naples to buy stock; yet when he finds none to buy, he makes the mistake of showing his purse in public. When one of the local prostitutes catches a glimpse of his 500 florins, she arranges to invite him to visit her. Andreuccio, the rube or country boy, does not realize that he is in the "Fleshpots" part of town, and he is completely taken in by what amounts to a bit of play acting on her part. "Clasping him about the neck, she

⁵ "Boivin de Provins", *ibid.*, 599–621, esp. 615.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 619 ff.

⁷ G. Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, W. A. Rebhorn (transl.), New York-London 2013, 13.

stood there for some time without saying anything as though she were overwhelmed by tender feelings. Finally, as she wept, she kissed him on the forehead and said in a broken voice: ‘O my Andreuccio, how happy I am to see you’⁸. She then goes on claim that she is his long lost sister whose father conceived her in Palermo, then returned to Perugia, abandoning her mother, “a gentlewoman who was at that time a widow”. In this she creates not only a flattering fictitious noble genealogy for a man who is not far from serfdom, a poor merchant at best, but she creates a debt. “In fact, she loved him so much that she cast off her honor as well as her fear of her father and her brothers, and became so intimate with him that it led to the birth of the person you see before you”⁹. Madonna Fiordaliso is a brilliant rhetorician, reminding Andreuccio that her mother “surrendered herself body and soul to this man, without so much as knowing who he was”¹⁰ just as Andreuccio will soon do to repay the debt. For when he accepts to spend the night she places him with a page, knowing full well that sooner or later nature will call, and when it does the servant boy will lock Andreuccio outside on the plank over the alleyway between two houses that serves as a latrine. Andreuccio is, so to speak, “in deep shit”, from which he emerges trying to get back in until the neighbors and the woman’s bouncer chase him away. Freed from the brothel, Andreuccio hides in a shed where a couple of robbers have stored the tools necessary to rob the grave of the Archbishop of Naples, who has just been buried that day. Before they can proceed, however, they decide to wash up Andreuccio in a nearby well. They lower him in but take flight when a couple of policemen appear, and, themselves thirsty, pull Andreuccio from the depths. Andreuccio and the thieves proceed to the cathedral where they open the tombstone and lower in Andreuccio who hands out most of the goods, miter and robe, keeping for himself the Archbishop’s ring that is worth more than 500 florins. When Andreuccio cannot find the ring they loosen the prop of the stone and shut him in such that he faces death lying on top of the archbishop’s corpse. Only two possibilities emerge from the hero’s enclosure: either he will die amidst the stench, or he will be rescued and hanged as a thief – until a couple of priests, who also had the idea of robbing the grave, lower one of their number in. Andreuccio grabs the descending legs of the priest who shouts, scaring off the rest of the gang and allowing Andreuccio to escape, for “day was already starting to break”¹¹.

This is a story whose determining moments are those of chance: the meeting with the old woman and the prostitute in the market, nature’s call while in the

⁸ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁹ *Ibid.* 107.

¹⁰ G. Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, G. H. McWilliam (transl.), London 1995, 100.

¹¹ Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, Rebhorn, 117.

bedroom, the meeting with the thieves, then with the policemen, and, finally, the second tomb robbers who save Andreuccio from the first. It is as if Boccaccio were telling us in this tale that life consists of lucky and less lucky breaks, for it would be harder to imagine in the space of a night a greater number of reversals of fortune. Here is where the tale takes on a mythological ring, for Andreuccio's wanderings, it is true, cause him to circulate throughout the town of Naples, to do Naples by night, but he also travels repeatedly up and down: from the earthly paradise filled with delicious food, perfume, clothes, and a beautiful woman down into the latrines; from the street where he has been saved down into the well, and back up; finally, from the cathedral into the archbishop's tomb and thoughts of death, before rising, and, "contented beyond his wildest hopes", leaving "the cathedral by the way he had come"¹². Andreuccio, it seems, lives a lifetime in a night. And while it is true that he doesn't trade a single horse, he dies symbolically and is resurrected several times, leaving town richer than when he arrived. The moral of the tale is, I think, placed in the mouth of one of the thieves who reminds him: "Listen buddy, you may have lost your money, but you should really thank God for the accident that happened to you when you fell down and couldn't get back into the house. Because if you hadn't fallen, you may rest assured that as soon as you were asleep, you would have been killed, and in that case you would have lost your life as well as your money. But what's the use of crying over it now? You have about as much chance of getting a penny of your money back as you have of plucking the stars out of the sky. And there's a very good chance you'll be killed if that guy ever finds out you've said a word about it"¹³. The moral of the tale is completely particular: keep your mouth shut and you won't get killed, take risks and you will be rewarded, no matter how many times you fail, try and try again. One cannot even say that Andreuccio is a particularly energetic protagonist. He is rather reactive, knowing more how to accept an opportunity when it is presented than actively to seek it out.

The Decameron Day IX, Story 6¹⁴ is the tale of the city boy of Florence who wants to sleep with a country maid, whose father occasionally receives overnight guests in the family's cramped quarters. This, too, is a tale about compression, of time, of course, and of space. It is a version of the fabliaux known as *Gombert and the Two Clerics* or *The Miller and Two Clerics*, and will be picked up later by Chaucer in *The Reeve's Tale*. As the late Lee Patterson once said to me over the phone, *The Reeve's Tale* is the most "emplotted" of all the *Canterbury Tales*, and

¹² Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, G. H. McWilliam, 110–111.

¹³ Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, Rebhorn, 114.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 724 ff.

for this reason I have decided that only a flow chart will serve to keep straight who does what to whom in the dark. To begin, Pinuccio who loves Niccolosa passionately arranges to stay the night in the cramped bedroom which contains three beds and a crib for Nicolosa's little brother. This is the *status ante quem*, diagram:

#1

When Pinuccio is sure everyone is asleep, he crosses the room to Niccolosa's bed¹⁵.

#2

Then, by chance, and it is often chance that determines all in Boccaccio, a cat knocks something over elsewhere in the house, causing "the man's wife to wake up with a start" and to grope her way in the dark in the direction of the noise:

#3

Meanwhile Adriano, Pinuccio's friend has to go to the bathroom but was unable to get by the cradle which he moved and set down by his own bed.

#4

Having discovered the source of the noise, the wife returns and gets into the bed next to the crib besides Adriano, "thinking she was lying down with her husband. Adriano had not yet gone back to sleep, and when he realized what had happened, he gave her a warm reception, after which, without uttering a single sound in the process, he yanked his rope until it was taut and his sail was all swollen out, much to the wife's great satisfaction"¹⁶.

#5

Meanwhile, Pinuccio, who has finished with Nicolosa, wants to return to his own original bed, but finding the cradle in front of it, he gets into bed with the husband. Thinking that the man beside him his Adriano and not the girl's father, he confides. "About that Niccolosa, I have to say, there's nothing could be sweeter in any way. By God's body, I've had more fun with her than any man's ever had with a woman. And let me assure you, since I left here, I've managed to get into her country house six times"¹⁷. When the husband begins to argue with Pinuccio, the wife, complains about the loud speech of what she thinks to be the guests, until Adriano replies and she realizes she has been in the wrong bed and the wrong man has been in her since returning from the kitchen. Whereupon, "wise

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 711.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 726–727.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 727.

woman that she was", she got up and without a word moved the baby's cradle beside her daughter's bed and got in bed with her.

#6

Finally, pretending to be awakened by her husband's complaining about what Pinuccio has done to Niccolosa, the wife claims that "he's lying through his teeth", for she, the wife, has been sleeping beside her, the daughter, all night. Adriano, coming to their aid, admonishes Pinuccio for his habit of sleep walking, as Pinuccio returns to his original bed, and the wife to hers, before which she again places the cradle.

#7

This is a story about planning (Pinuccio's trip to Mungone), about movement, about the seizing of opportunities, about intelligence and the use of ruse in a changeable world, which is where I would like to leave you. That is, with the thought that, within the set number of characters and of beds in fixed relation to each other, the tale presents a series of tableaux, of combinations and recombinations, in short a circulation of bodies and of pleasures which make a larger point about other tales as well as about the whole: that the world is constantly in flux, that proper action is at every moment entirely contextual in a world whose shifting appearances call for alertness or recognition, intelligence or quick thinking, flexibility and creativity. These is the vision of the new European entrepreneurial class as well as a formula for success in a world in which no instant is like any other and the one who remains most conscious of life's particularities is the one who gets ahead. The hero of the tale is, of course, the baby whose cradle has circulated between everyone's bed and who has seen it all.

There are numerous and important differences between the Old French versions of the tale of the mayhem of two clerics in the dark of the night. And this is a difference between body and mind. In *Gombert*, one of the two students "fresh from school"¹⁸ falls in love with the mother in the peasant's house in which they are lodged, the other with the daughter. It is Gombert who goes out to urinate, leaving his wife Jill's bed free for the dalliance that competes with that going on already in the bed of the daughter. Gombert, in fact, unlike the miller in *The Miller and the Two Clerics* or the miller of Chaucer's *Reeve's Tale*, is completely innocent, generous with his guests, and the victim of the two clerics who plot against him, the moral being simply "don't let students into your house". *The Miller and the Two Clerics* is the sad tale of two clerics, evidently orphans, raised in a monastery, and who, in time of famine, not plague, borrow a horse and a sack of wheat

18 J. Bodel, "Gombert", in Dubin, Bloch, *The Fabliaux*, 513–525, 513.

on credit, then head to the mill. There, the dishonest miller, like Chaucer's miller Simkin, steals their horse and their grain, forcing the clerics to stay for dinner, after which the shenanigans of the long night of seduction and cuckoldry begins. In what is a distinguishing detail, the miller each night locks his daughter in a chest to prevent just the kind of attack on her virtue that occurs as soon as mother and father are asleep. The Old French versions of this long night of sexual permutations, involve an iron ring which one of the clerics lifts off the fireplace where pots are hung in order to seduce the daughter, who, in the dark, thinks it gold. In this particular example, the cleric uses the ring in order to gain access to the chest: "I've brought a gold ring for your pleasure;/you've never had so rare a treasure./The force residing in its stone/is well attested, widely known:/no girl, however fancy free,/however loose, will fail to be/a virgin if she keeps on/her finger till the crack of dawn./Here, take it as a gift from me'. She quickly handed him the key"¹⁹.

Details of plot and character aside, the major difference between Boccaccio's tale of Pinuccio and Niccolosa is the motivating drive of deep shared sexual longing, "The girl had caught the eye of a young gentleman from our city, a lively, attractive youth who spent a lot of time in the countryside, and he fell passionately, fervently, in love with her. For her part, she took great pride in having won the affection of such a young man, and making every effort to keep his love for her alive by behaving with the greatest affability toward him, in the process she likewise fell in love"²⁰. In the place of the vulgarity of Gombert or Chaucer's miller's wife, who, in advancing the plot of the shifted cradle, get out of bed to urinate, it is the accident of a cat knocking things over that wakes Boccaccio's wife out of bed; and it is Andriano who "by chance" responds "to the call of nature". Nor do we find the vulgarity in the description of coupling that we do in, say, *Boivin de Provins*, which is more of a physical sex act than love making. And, in its ending, the plot of Boccaccio's Day IX, Story 6, differs most from its Old French avatars. In the place of the farcical fist-a-cuffs between the invasive clerics and Gombert, or the unnamed miller of "The Miller and the Two Clerics," or Chaucer's miller Simkin, the wife, having responded to Adriano's "warm reception", slips into Niccolosa's bed, by then vacated by Pinuccio, who is now in the husband's bed; and she proceeds to invent a plausible explanation for all the upset: "Didn't you hear what he says he did to Niccolosa tonight?" her husband replied. 'He's lying through his teeth,' she said. 'He didn't sleep with Niccolosa, because I've been

¹⁹ *The Miller and the Two Clerks*, in R. Harrison (transl.), *Gallie Salt. Eighteen Fabliaux translated from the Old French*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1974, 161.

²⁰ Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, Rebhorn, 724.

lying here all this time and haven't slept a wink since I got in'"²¹. The mother's lie is doubled by that of Andriano, who claims that Pinuccio, who has bragged to the father – "By God's body, I've had more fun with her than any man's ever had with a woman. And let me assure you, since I left here, I've managed to get into her country house six times"²² – has been sleepwalking and dreaming.

The story of Pinuccio and Niccolosa differs from its equivalent fabliaux versions in that the two clerics's "adventures" are not bounded by a single night. Love in the fabliaux is a strictly physical event, which occurs between the sheets, which neither originates in inner feelings nor leaves any sentimental residue. It is captured more accurately by the word "sex" than by love. The fabliaux are quick and dirty, but they clean up their mess. If you are a husband, you may be assured that if you let a monk, a priest, or a cleric into your house, he will end up in bed with your wife or daughter; there is no way of keeping them out, even if you lock the door or lock your daughter in a chest. But the fornicating priest is a type, who doesn't fall in love, and even if priests look alike and keep coming back from the dead, as in *Estormi*, their stereotypical identity doesn't circulate from one tale to another.

Pinuccio and Niccolosa, in contrast to every couple in the fabliaux, love each other before Day IX, story 6 begins. Their love has grown, and the love that brings them together endures beyond the comic antics of their first night: "From then on, Pinuccio found other ways to spend time with Niccolosa, and since she swore to her mother that he had unquestionably been dreaming, her mother, who certainly recalled Adriano's embraces, was left with the conviction that she had been the only one awake that night"²³. While inside of the temporal frame of the "Italian night", Day IX, story 6 is a fabliaux, with all the earmarks of trickery and comic relief. On either side of the two friends night in the valley of Mugnone, is a courtly love story, with all the earmarks of delicacy, suffering, secrecy, and, unlike the courtly lyric in either Provençal or Old French, intermittent satisfaction.

Day 9, Story 6 combines the idealism of court culture with the urban values of the burgeoning city-states of the northern and central Italian peninsula or the towns and communes of northern and north-western France: rampant materialism and a love of money along with a celebration of the bodily appetites, sexual and gastronomic; quickness on one's feet in a world of shifting values and perspectives, whose meaning is not fixed, but as relative to each other as the five and a half actors in the dark; quick-witted prospective thinking, seen in the

²¹ *Ibid.*, 728.

²² *Ibid.*, 727.

²³ *Ibid.*, 729.

appropriation of the iron ring later transformed into gold in the fabliaux, and by Pinuccio's scouting of the layout of Niccolosa's father's house before spending the night there and again after everyone has settled down for the night; a sense of timing, knowing when and how to act: "After everything had been arranged in the room, Pinuccio made a mental note of it all and waited a little while until he thought everyone was asleep"²⁴.

I leave you with the suggestion that Boccaccio's tale combines courtly and realistic genres, while the fabliaux rejects any hint of courtliness, aristocratic magnanimity, or deeds of chivalry because the Italian city-state, Florence in particular, elides the difference between town and country, mixes a feudal economy and an economy of the marketplace, to an extent that is unthinkable in France, where nobility and its castles remain in the countryside, and the cities swell with avid new men and women of middle class. This finally is the meaning of the temporal bounding of the tale of a single night, according to which, in the space between dusk and dawn, time is compressed, speeded up, and made dynamic via a series of reversals of fate. The "Italian night" works to suppress the variable and irregular canonical time of monasteries and cathedrals, or the chivalric time of liturgical feasts and gatherings of the court, by the bourgeois time of cities, with its starting dates and deadlines, its regular chronological divisions of minutes, hours, and days. Chronological clock time is necessary for the calculation of interest and the payment of debts, the delivery of goods, or simply the intersection of the individuals who inhabit urban space. This is a supersession more fully realized in the towns and communes of northern France than in the city-states of fourteenth-century Italy, as seen in the clerics, who leave the miller's daughter and wife in the morning, and Boccaccio's Pinuccio who keeps coming back.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 726.