

## Boccaccio's *Decameron* and its influence on Georgian Young People: From Florence to Shamgona

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**Abstract** While the *Decameron* of Giovanni Boccaccio (1313-1375) is a famous and interesting work, it turns out that today's young people in Georgia are not familiar with it. This work deserves more attention in the young adult generation. There are lessons to be learned from virtually all works of literature and a lot can be learned from this work. This study aims to determine the reason why the *Decameron* is less well known and then raise awareness about it. Primary research was held in the village of Shamgona. The target group was 20 to 40 years old. The study aimed to find out the reason why the *Decameron* is less well known among the target group and to plan what can be done to promote the writer's popularity among the young people. As part of the research, the author interviewed each participant twice and conducted a survey, which was anonymous. During the analysis, the probable causes were identified and interventions were identified and implemented.

**Keywords:** Boccaccio, *Decameron*, intervention, popularity

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### Introduction

Boccaccio was a well-known writer but today's young people are not familiar with his writings. Boccaccio, with all his works, put an end to the mysticism and asceticism of the Middle Ages, observing the man of the new era in writing (Petoletti, 2018). He contributed greatly to the development of a flexible and rich Italian literary language. The problem is the following: young people in Georgia are not familiar with foreign writers. Searching for the reason for this through the use of interviews and surveys (Glasgow, 2005), it was discovered that for this age group, social networks are much more popular and important than reading a book. The author then encouraged the target group to read the *Decameron* (Bosco, 2022). They were told about the events within the work drawing a parallel between the black plague and the present-day coronavirus, telling them that ten young people decided to flee the plague and spend time out of town for 10 days. The author did

not reveal the entire content of the book but advised them to also watch the film and the theater production (MacCabe, 2012). This produced results, as, during the re-interviews, it was found that the majority of the target group had read at least part of this book or watched the films.

### Research Question

The research question is this: when there is so much information available about the *Decameron*, why is it still not recognizable; and specifically how familiar are the young people of the village of Shamgona (About, 2012) with Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and how can it be made more popular?

### Method

The traditional method of research in English Philology involves an extensive review of published articles and books (Correa & Owens, 2010). It provides a broad view of the topic, as

well as perspectives from scholars with varying methods and conclusions. To increase the credibility of the research, the author also used personal interviews and anonymous surveys with the target group of young people.

During the interview, the attitude of the person towards the issue can be seen. The interviews allowed the researcher to learn how often they read books by foreign authors, how well they know the Renaissance period, and whether they know who Boccaccio is and what works he wrote.

Through the survey, the author tried to determine the opinions of young people about the causes of the problem and ways to correct it. Open-ended questions were used in the survey, and the survey was anonymous.

## Results

Giovanni Boccaccio was the son of a Florentine Sovdagri and a French woman of distinguished rank (Bosco, 2022). His mother died when he was an infant and he was raised by his stepmother. Giovanni grew up in Florence until the age of ten when he was apprenticed to a merchant in Naples, from whom he was to learn commerce. Despite six years of training, Boccaccio could not maintain an interest in trade. He was acquainted from childhood with the works of the Roman classics (Virgil, Ovid, Seneca, Cicero) and Dante and his heart was drawn to poetry and writing.

In 1340, Boccaccio was invited by his father to return to Florence where he saw a completely different environment from the aristocratic circles of the Palace of Naples, the Republic of the Merchants. After his father's third marriage in 1343, Boccaccio lived in Ravenna and Forli, escaping the black plague that devastated three-quarters of Florence's population. This event was later reflected in the *Decameron*. In 1348 Boccaccio returned to Naples, but after the death of his father, he returned to Florence and finally settled there. In 1350 Boccaccio met Petrarch and came under his influence. He spent the rest of his life and most of his creative years in his native

Florence. In his writings, he paid tribute to both Naples and Florence.

His most important work, the *Decameron*, was written in 1350-1353 but was not published until 1471. This collection of Boccaccio's novels has rightly been called a "human comedy". Most of the novels are of Oriental origin. He revived the masks of French and Italian novels and gave them an individual character, creating a world of merchants, craftsmen, nurses, priests, and happy or unhappy sweethearts. For every character, the main driving force is love, love that is very far from the Platonic concept. Many of the *Decameron's* novels are comedies of true morality; others are heartbreaking pathetic dramas. Many of them have been used as a source by Chaucer, Shakespeare, Marguerite Navarre, Lafontaine, Lessing, and others (Marrone, 2007). In 1362, Boccaccio almost destroyed his masterpiece at the request of a Cartesian monk, Joaquim Chian, who told him about the suffering that awaited him in Saikyo if he did not repent of writing such scandalous works. Boccaccio was ready to destroy his own writings, stop writing, and sell his library. Petrarch persuaded him not to commit this act.

The action in the *Decameron* begins in Florence, where the black plague is raging in the city. Ten young people (seven women and three men) decide to escape the plague and spend time outside the city, in a villa. The ten young people tell ten stories in ten days.

The *Decameron* was translated into Georgian and published in two books by Tedo Sakhokia in 1928. Levan Tsuladze staged the play *Decameron*, which was held at Marjanishvili Theater in Tbilisi. There is also a film about the *Decameron*. With so much information available, it is still not a recognizable work. This is what motivated the author to determine the reason for this.

Subjects were asked why they knew nothing about Boccaccio and why they chose to engage in social networking instead of reading a book. The answer from some young people was

startling. Reading a book takes a lot of time and is tiring, while on social media time passes quickly and is more fun. As for Boccaccio, they did not see any advertisement for the film, otherwise, they would have watched the movie. Finally, they became interested in this work and the research was also fruitful.

The researcher showed the young people the movie and the theatre production, which stirred their interest. A few days later, participants were interviewed again and it turned out that the majority of them had read parts of this book and were eager to get acquainted with even more works by both Boccaccio and other foreign writers.

### Conclusion

Since nowadays people are addicted to the internet, it is necessary for there to be more advertising on the internet about writers and works that are less well known to the Georgian population. When Georgian young people are exposed to the literature of a foreign writer, they do become interested and willing to explore other authors.

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