“'Tis humane to have compassion on the afflicted; and as it shews well in all, so it is especially demanded of those who have had need of comfort and have found it in others…”

The proem of the Decameron makes it clear that this work is written for those who have no way to relive themselves of their heartache, boredom, or frustrations because “they may go where they will, may hear and see many things, may hawk, hunt, fish, ride, play or traffic. By which means all are able to compose their minds, either in whole or in part, and repair the ravage wrought by the dumpish mood, at least for some space of time; and shortly after, by one way or another, either solace ensues, or the dumps become less grievous.” In other words, the narrator intends this work to be written for women in order to help them cope with their broken hearts and heavy moods. The narrator hopes that those afflicted will be able to find solace through the entertaining stories about love, fortune, wit, and sex. Because of these statements, many have claimed that Boccaccio’s work is a feminist one, allowing the women who read it to the take on assertive characteristics and become sexually aware.

This is a project that is based on the notion that we can use the computational methods of the Digital Humanities to help us determine whether or not The Decameron can be considered a feminist work. Although it's difficult to quantify exactly what makes a work "feminist" we believe that by marking up the text in a way that will help us quantify the behavior of the characters. Specifically, we plan on contrasting the behavior of the men against the behavior of the women. We say "behavior" because we are marking up both actions and speech. Through marking up the types of things the men and women of The Decameron do or say, we'll be able to better evaluate whether or not we can truly say that this is a "feminist" text.