Gendered Narrative Practice in Two Versions of "The Patient Wife"[1]

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During the past few decades feminist folklore studies have read women's narratives as reflecting their lived experiences and social history (Webster 1986; Radner and Lanser 1993; Abu-Lughod 1993; Hollis 1993). Unfortunately, many collectors and critics still overlook the importance of gender or evaluate tales according to preconceived notions of gender relations, so that subversive uses of folktales are often downplayed. For example, Haya Bar-Itzhak and Aliza Shenhar (1993) have collected a Jewish Moroccan variant of "The Patient Wife" and read it negatively, saying that it "indicates to what extent the women have internalized the values and norms of a patriarchal society" (36).[2] This tale, an analogue of the medieval Griselda legend,[3] is currently found in folk repertoires in North Africa, Europe, and the Middle East.[4] While an initial reading of the tale might suggest that it endorses 'traditional' gender relations, some female narrators use this story to exaggerate and concretize the cultural forces that oppress them.[5] Within a Tunisian Beldi[6] context, Ghaya, a contemporary narrator, uses this tale to explore possibilities for men's and women's roles in the family and society. On the other hand, Boccaccio's medieval version foregrounds competing definitions of masculinity, such that the female character recedes into the background.[7] In this study, we shall examine Ghaya's modern Tunisian oral variant ("Sabra"[8]) and Boccaccio's medieval European version, focusing on the articulation of gender within the two performances.

Context helps us to interpret a tale in-depth (Bauman 1978; Degh 1969; Pentikanen 1971), but a tale must also be understood on the basis of many variants; one version may point to what another silences. "Sabra" informs our reading of "Griselda," helping us see how the two variants explore gender issues differently. The narrative voice expresses its gendered perspective in both the content and the style of the tellers' aesthetic expression.[9] While it may seem that there is a simple correlation between the gender of the teller and the gendered perspective of the narrative, in fact the tales express a multiplicity of masculine and feminine perspectives, due to the complex ethos of the individual in his/her social context. We can see Boccaccio exploring at least two different masculine views of Griselda in his tale: Gualtieri's view conflates her gender and social inferiority in his exercise of power over Griselda, while Dioneo, the narrator, focuses on her eroticism and sexuality. In "Sabra," we hear a diversity of female voices that present conflicting views of Sabra's behavior; the dominant view that emerges

overtly challenges the husband's abusive behavior by focusing on the wife's voice and her criticism of her husband.

Hejaiej collected Ghaya's version of "Sabra," summarized below, in 1992; the audience consisted of three marriageable girls and two young married women. Ghaya reflects her experience of marriage in her narration. She identifies closely with Sabra, whose patience and humility she sees as great strengths, as traits that arm the self and enable survival. Ghaya said that her own patience and faith in God enabled her to find some solace in her unhappy marriage.[10]

> *Sabra's father, a king, advertised her qualities as a wife, demanding three loads of gold, "one for her beauty, one for her patience, and one for her wisdom," as her bride-price. An unnamed Prince arrived, seeking "kinship with his honour the king," and married her. The Prince took Sabra to his distant land, accompanied only by her black maid Dadah. Alone with her maid in an ornate but isolated palace, Sabra must do housework, "as though she had never been a princess." Eventually, Sabra gave birth to a son while the Prince was away at war. When he returned, Dadah took the child to him; he kissed it then threw it into the sea. Dadah returned home weeping and told Sabra what had happened. Sabra ordered her to be silent and greeted the Prince as though nothing were wrong. The same happened with a second son and a daughter. After fifteen years the Prince told Sabra that he wished to marry again and asked her to find him a young bride as beautiful as she. Sabra searched for a year, enduring the insults of other women when she told them the bride was for her own husband; finally she told the Prince that she could not find anyone. The Prince told her to ask for the daughter of an old woman who lived nearby; Sabra offered three baskets of jewels for the beautiful girl. The Prince had four rooms added to the palace. During the marriage ceremony, the Prince forced Sabra to participate in the ritual by giving him away and accompanying the couple into the nuptial chamber. Sabra's scarf brushed a candle and caught fire; putting it out with her hand, she said, "You took away my children and burned my flesh and blood. Now I have a rival, my patience is exhausted and my wisdom has run out." The Prince kissed her, told her that their children were not dead, and that he had been testing her patience and endurance throughout these years. Sabra, the Prince, the*

> *children, and their spouses were reunited and all lived together in Sabra's palace.*[11]

Ghaya uses the tale of "Sabra" to express her subjectivity (Pentikainen 1978, Degh 1969, Bauman 1986, Basgoz 1987) indirectly. The opening formula *Kan ya ma kan*, >once upon a time,' sets the scene in the distant past, but Ghaya soon interweaves into it her personal history. This imaginary frame serves as a veil for self-expression, revealing the self indirectly, as Radner and Lanser note in their discussion of coding strategies in women's oral narratives (1993:423). Ghaya's subjectivity is evident as she reflects her world and her concerns in her tale; she presents Sabra as a Beldi woman caught between loyalty to her class values and horror at her husband's barbaric behavior. "Sabra" functions as a cathartic dramatization of Ghaya's own life in literal and figurative meaning; it also serves as a model for other women. Sabra's situation connects on the metatextual level to the teller and audience, in the circumstances of their lives and what they have to resist. Ghaya voices an affirmative view of suffering and patience as character and consciousness-building trials.[12] "All sacrifice is good," she says, if it benefits the family as a whole; she endorses negotiation and passive resistance as strategies that bring greater fulfillment to women. Ghaya uses this tale to express a generational perspective; she criticizes divorce, which has become quite common in modern Tunisia, because it impedes personal growth for both men and women.[13] Ghaya's use of the Tunisian proverb, "She who was patient built a happy home," points to the affirmative implication that humility and patience are a wife's resources to resist adversity and reinforce the unity of the family. While her values may be traditional, Ghaya emphasizes that patience and wisdom benefit women, enabling them to resist oppression and to negotiate roles within marriage.

"Sabra" begins with a conventional, patriarchal frame which focuses on Sabra as a commodity, advertising her qualities as beautiful, wise and patient; the husband's desire to test her is the direct result of her father's demand for an excessive bride-price. Soon the patriarchal frame is subverted, shifting the focus onto the alternate story of Sabra's experience. Within the social context of the telling, men are absent from the audience; within the tale, the male perspective is silenced. The deep structure of the tale reflects a schema of disorder, conflict, and restoration of order, a common folktale structure. The husband creates disorder and disintegration by separating the mother from her children, actually throwing the children into the sea. The two genders are presented in conflict and isolated from each other, as Sabra is confined to an interior space while the Prince

is often away, involved in public affairs. At the end, the two of them collaborate to restore order and unite the family.

By focusing on women, Ghaya resists their portrayal as silent objects used to perpetuate a structure that discounts their experience and power. Within the tale, Dadah expresses sorrow over the loss of the children, enabling Sabra to choose silence as a strategy of resistance, to imply to her husband that his cruelty has no effect on her. The bride-search puts her into contact with a wider female community whose critical perspective encourages her to rebel. Sabra's outburst at the tale's climax directly challenges her husband's behavior; her use of the metaphor "you burnt my flesh and blood" (i.e., you killed my children) illustrates her suffering over the children's loss and connects it with the physical pain of her burnt hand. In this speech, Sabra redefines her wisdom and patience as her own resources that enable her to triumph over adversity. Rather than focusing on the husband's reaction to her speech as does Boccaccio, Ghaya foregrounds Sabra's moment of self-realization and self-assertion. While from a masculine perspective the wife-test may seem designed to create a compliant female object, in Ghaya's treatment, it creates a female subject who asserts her own place within the social order.

Ghaya's choice of language, register, and metaphor heighten the significance of the event and reflect her learning and personality. She sometimes uses classical Arabic to lend her tale more authority as well as to show off her education, extraordinary for a woman of her generation. Formulae in Tunisian dialect come from the common repertoire of Beldi women's tales and express female preoccupations such as pregnancy, childbirth and child care: Athree months of craving, three months of fleshing out and three months of tightening skin on bone"; "she gave birth to a bouncing baby boy as beautiful as the moon, praise to God who created him with such beauty"; "the baby girl crawled, toddled, held to the wall and walked; in real life a child grows in a year or two, but just in a couple of words in a tale." These formulae serve as ornaments expressing Ghaya's verbal creativity as well as women's wisdom and shared life experiences. During her performance, the female audience joins in chanting them, in sympathy with the protagonist's experience. Ghaya's final formulaic words, "there is no resignation with a rival, and no patience until the loss of a child," reinforce the limits that Sabra herself set in her outburst, emphasizing their common perspective and the space that Ghaya has created for the female voice.

Boccaccio's version of "The Patient Wife" foregrounds exactly that aspect which Ghaya's elided: the husband's perspective. Nonetheless, he does not exclude women from his audience; on the contrary, Boccaccio focuses on women

as his primary audience, saying that he chose the vernacular instead of Latin to make his collection accessible as well as to replicate the oral performances of his ten narrators. He apologizes to his readers for the occasional vulgarity, claiming that he faithfully reproduces the tales as told; not only does this device enable Boccaccio to deny responsibility for any improprieties, it also enables us to analyze the narrators' strategies as reflecting their personalities, values, and understandings of their stories. Unfortunately Boccaccio limits our ability to discuss the audience's reception, since he does not include their comments in his 'transcription.' "The Patient Wife" appears as the final tale (X.10) narrated by Dioneo, a trickster who holds the privilege of telling the last tale each day. His criticism of Gualtieri's cruelty and sympathy with Griselda's suffering may be designed to appeal to his female listeners; of the ten members of the brigata, seven are women. Unlike many other medieval treatments,[14] Dioneo does not present Griselda as a model wife; rather than celebrating an ideal woman, he uses this tale to focus on definitions of masculinity.

Before discussing the Griselda tale in detail, we shall provide a summary of Boccaccio's version.

> *The Marquis of Saluzzo, Gualtieri, spends his time hunting and pursuing pleasure rather than thinking about his future. His subjects ask him to marry and offer to choose an appropriate wife for him. Gualtieri agrees to marry but insists on choosing his own bride, forcing his subjects to honor any woman that he pick. He already has his eye on Griselda, the daughter of one of his poorest subjects; he makes arrangements for the wedding, including preparing clothing for the bride, without revealing his choice. On the appointed day, Gualtieri rides out with his court, stopping before the poor house that Griselda shares with her father. With her father as witness, Gualtieri has Griselda promise to obey him and never show disagreement or complain; then he has her stripped in front of his court and reclothed with the rich dress he had brought for her. He publicly declares her to be his wife, and they return to court to celebrate the wedding. Soon after Griselda gives birth to a daughter, Gualtieri decides to test her by taking the child away, apparently to kill her. Griselda surrenders her daughter and does not show sorrow. The same happens with a son. After approximately twelve years, Gualtieri tells Griselda that he intends to marry another, nobly-born woman*

> *and asks her to leave the palace, taking only her dowry (she had brought nothing with her from her father's house). Griselda agrees to leave but requests a shift in exchange for her virginity; she then undresses and walks back to her father's house, accompanied by Gualtieri's subjects who decry his cruelty. Gualtieri later calls on Griselda to prepare the palace for his second wedding and, during the celebration, asks her what she thinks of his new bride. Griselda praises her beauty, adding, "But with all my heart I beg you not to inflict those same wounds upon her that you imposed upon her predecessor, for I doubt whether she could withstand them, not only because she is younger, but also because she has had a refined upbringing, whereas the other had to face continual hardship from her infancy" (Boccaccio 1972:822). Gualtieri praises Griselda's patience, reunites her with her children, and starts the marriage anew.*

Dioneo chooses to tell this particular tale in order to counter the day's other performances which had focused on the magnanimity of kings and sultans; instead, he tells of the "matta bestialità" (Boccaccio 1960:644; mad bestiality) of a marchese, presenting the protagonist's lower status and unethical behavior as correctives to the trend of associating ethical behavior with high nobility. Nonetheless, he is not satisfied with his choice of narrative: "come che bene ne gli seguisse alla fine; la quale io non consiglio alcun che segua, per ciò che gran peccato fu che a costui ben n'avvenisse" (1960:644; although it all turned out well at the end, I do not advise anyone [to behave as he did], because it was a great shame that good happened to him). His negative stance in relation to his tale may well be related to his perception of its genre: he sees the tale as an historical anecdote or a novella with a set plot, so he cannot change the ending to produce a more edifying or ethical tale. The fact that he nonetheless tells this particular story suggests that his choice of narrative is also constrained; this is the only tale that he knows (and that has not yet been told) that can counter the day's theme.

Dioneo's assessment of the tale's genre profoundly affects his use of the tale; he presents the story as realistic and believable although remarkable, and shows Gualtieri in control of the plot, planning his behaviors, directing the actions of others, and critically assessing Griselda's performances. Gualtieri carefully maintains his emotional distance from her pain and suffering; this distance enables Dioneo to represent Gualtieri's behavior as chosen, not as a lack of self-control. The 'happy ending' results from Gualtieri's satisfaction with her performance, not

from any wondrous conversion on his part. The plot structure of this tale includes two movements from disorder to order, both of which are initiated by Gualtieri; the first problem is resolved with his successful marriage and the birth of a child, the second with his decision to cease tormenting his wife. This structure underlines his function as the agent of disorder. Dioneo uses this tale to criticize Gualtieri's performance of power based on his gender and social superiority (Wallace 1990; Hollander 1997); although Dioneo rejects Gualtieri's cruelty, he puts forward his own masculine agenda. They compete over their construction of Griselda's identity: Gualtieri sees her as essentially inferior in her class and gender, while Dioneo sees her as an object of desire. He frames his narrative, a tale of conflict between a husband and wife, with another tale of conflict between men; his hostility toward Gualtieri thoroughly colors his performance, overshadowing the character of Griselda.

Dioneo consistently undercuts Griselda's voice and agency by focusing on her husband's perception of her. We first see her through Gualtieri's eyes: "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 aver vita assai consolata. (Boccaccio 1960:646; For a good while Gualtieri had been pleased by the customs of a poor girl who lived in a nearby village, and, considering her beautiful enough, he thought that he could live a very pleasant life with her). Griselda must appear in public in order to fulfill her economic role as the daughter of an impoverished peasant; however, her public movement provokes Gualtieri's desires, as it enables her beauty and manners to be observed by the pleasure-seeking marchese. After the marriage, Dioneo continues to celebrate the power of Gualtieri's gaze:

> *dove dir solieno Gualtieri aver fatto come poco savio d'averla per moglie presa, che egli il più savio e il più avveduto uomo che al mondo fosse, per ciò che niun altro che egli avrebbe mai potuto conoscere l'alta virtù di costei nascosa sotto i poveri panni e sotto l'abito villesco (1960:649).*
>
> *Where they used to say that Gualtieri had acted like a fool in taking her for his wife, now they said that he was the wisest and most sensible man in the world, because no one other than himself could ever have perceived her noble virtue, hidden under her poor clothes and her vile attire.*

Gualtieri penetrates Griselda's disguise, exposing her latent nobility, the act of a powerful and virile man. What could be described as Griselda's remarkable adaptability in so quickly acquiring the norms of her new environment is separated from her and attributed to her husband's insight.

Throughout the tale, Dioneo continues to foreground Gualtieri's perspective. Griselda's climactic speech could be read as voicing her resistance to her husband's demands that she perform submission:

> *<<Signor mio>> ripose Griselda <<a me ne par molto bene; e se così è savia come ella è bella, che >l credo, io non dubito punto che voi non dobbiate con lei vivere il più consolato signore del mondo; ma quanto posso vi priego che quelle punture, le quali all'altra, che vostra fu, già deste, non diate a questa, ché appena che io creda che elle le potesse sostenere, sì perché più giovane è, e sì ancora perché in dilicatezze è allevata, ove colei a continue fatiche da piccolina era stata>> (1960:657).*
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> *"My lord," replied Griselda, "I think she seems very fine; and if she is as wise as she is beautiful, which I believe she is, then I don't doubt at all that you should live with her as the most contented man in the world. But I beg you with all my strength that those wounds that you gave to the other one, who was yours, don't give them to her, because I think she could hardly stand them, because she is so young and also was raised in gentleness, while the other one was subjected to constant torments from birth."*

Griselda speaks in response to Gualtieri's query as to her opinion of his new bride; she praises her yet also rebukes him for his cruel treatment of herself, to whom she refers indirectly in the third person. She subtly declares that her strength as a peasant woman enabled her to survive his cruelty, whereas his noble wife, raised more delicately, lacks her resilience. This statement recuperates her humble origins which Gualtieri had repeated used to justify depriving her of her children and her status as his wife. However, rather than recognize Griselda's criticism, Dioneo shows Gualtieri as focusing on a quite different issue: "Gualtieri, veggendo che ella fermamente credeva costei dovere esser sua moglie, né per ciò in alcuna cosa men che ben parlava . . " (1960:657: Gualtieri, seeing that she firmly believed that other one would be his wife and nonetheless said only good things . .). Apparently he didn't hear her criticism of his cruelty, or he preferred to

focus on her generous impulse to spare his young bride. While the narrative presents Gualtieri's thoughts, it is voiced by Dioneo, whose coolly factual statement endorses the husband's perspective. This collaborative misreading undercuts the power of Griselda's rhetorical strategies, effectively showing that her words fell on deaf ears.

At the end, Dioneo again expresses his dissatisfaction with the >happy ending': "Che si potrà dir qui, se non che anche nelle povere case piovono dal cielo de' divini spiriti, come nelle reali di quegli che sarien più degni di guardar porci che d'avere sopra uomini signoria?" (1960:659; What else can be said, if not that even in poor houses divine spirits can rain down from heaven, while in palaces there may be those who are more worthy of herding pigs than of having sovereignty over men?) This comment contrasts Griselda's divinity with Gualtieri's ignobility, yet it foregrounds Dioneo's hostility toward Gualtieri. Then, after having recognized her superiority, Dioneo quickly brings Griselda down to earth: "'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 sì ad un altro fatto scuotere il pelliccione, che riuscita ne fosse una bella roba'" (1960:659; "It would probably have served Gualtieri right if he'd run into another woman, who, pushed out of the house with nothing on but her underwear, would have immediately found another man to stir up her little triangle of hair and, having done that, get her a nice new wardrobe," Haines 1985:238). I cite Haines' provocative translation to emphasize the force of Dioneo's vulgarity. He presents Griselda as a potential prostitute, exchanging sex for clothing; this comment casts her marriage with Gualtieri into a new light, since she did indeed receive a beautiful dress on her wedding day. Most importantly, Dioneo construes Griselda's sexuality as an instrument for him to use to punish Gualtieri. Foregrounding masculine rivalry over a female object, Dioneo colludes with Gualtieri in eliding Griselda's agency; the alternate ending Dioneo imagines keeps her firmly in her inferior place.[15]

Boccaccio's use of "The Patient Wife" differs markedly from Ghaya's. While they both focus on gender and power issues, Boccaccio is more interested in contemporary Italian politics and the abuses of tyrants; he tailors Dioneo's comments to reflect his political views as well as to express his personality, especially his competitive and often vulgar sexuality. Rather than competing with a character, Ghaya expresses her identification and sympathy as well as her admiration of Sabra's success in defeating her husband. She too uses this tale to criticize contemporary society, focusing on changing gender roles; she expresses an ambivalent view, as she values expanded opportunities for women while lamenting the rising divorce rate. "The Patient Wife" is a particularly apt tale for

exploring gender concerns, definitions of masculinity and femininity, and changing gender roles over time. The central conflict focuses on gender roles within the family and, by implication, in the larger society; since gender definitions are reciprocal, competing definitions of masculinity are bound to affect definitions of femininity, and vice-versa. Because the family is intimately tied to the larger society, this tale logically expands to comment on contemporary politics, abuses of power, and resistance to tyranny.

"The Patient Wife" thrives in many different contexts and cultures in various forms, oral and written. However, these variants have not before been brought into dialogue to explore how they respond to each other's silences. While one performance may develop unique meanings that cannot be assumed to reflect the predominant use of a tale in a given cultural context[16],nonetheless it does point to potential meanings that can be drawn out of a tale. Folklore is a dynamic tradition, enriched by subsequent performances and variant uses; the power of folklore resides in its ability to accommodate and reflect new realities. Not only have we illuminated new meanings as a result of bringing together these two versions of "The Patient Wife," but our work offers a critique of literary scholarship that has ignored the relevance of modern folk variants to the medieval Griselda legend and a rebuke to those who reductively read this tale as essentially misogynistic.

Endnotes

1. We wish to acknowledge the support we received from the Fulbright Program and the University of Iowa's Obermann Center for Advanced Studies, enabling us to complete this article. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from Arabic by Hejaiej and from Italian by Filios.

2. See Jurich 1998 for a similar assessment of their work.

3. Folklorists variously classify "The Patient Wife" as a Griselda analogue (Bar-Itzhak and Shenhar 1993), a variant of the Ogre Schoolmaster (Dawkins 1949) or of Cupid and Psyche (Griffith 1931; Cate 1932; Swahn 1955), or as a previously unidentified tale type (Bettridge and Utley 1971). See Bronfman 1994:7-16 for a brief review of folklore scholarship on the Griselda legend.

4.This tale type currently exists in Western Europe (known as the Griselda legend, AT 887), North Africa, the Middle East, Greece, and Turkey. See Bettridge 1966 for modern European folk versions in English translation; Bettridge and Utley 1971 for seven Greek and Turkish variants; Noy 1968, no. 31 (160-63) for a Jewish Tunisian variant; Hejaiej 1996:97-103 for a Muslim Tunisian variant; Bar-Itzhak and Shenhar 1993:26-35 for a Jewish Moroccan version; and Al-Assimi 1986 for a Muslim Moroccan version. Medieval literary versions include Boccaccio *Decameron* X.10; Petrarch *Seniles* 17.3; *Le Mesnagier de Paris*; *Le Livre Griseldis*; Phillippe de Mézières, *Miroir des Dames Mariées*; Chaucer, AThe Clerk's Tale"; Christine de Pisan, *Livre de la cite des dames*. See Morabito 1988 for a complete bibliography of the Griselda legend.

5. In this article we shall focus on one female narrator's performance; Sa'diyya, another Tunisian storyteller, also uses this tale to criticize dominant gender ideology (Filios and Hejaiej 2002). See also

Bettridge and Utley 1971; while they do not comment on their informants' subversive meanings, nonetheless we can see criticism of dominant constructs of femininity in their performances.

6. Beldi refers to an elite group of city-dwellers who dominated Tunis economically and politically until the French Protectorate in 1881; during the colonial period, the Beldi maintained their social prestige, serving as standards of refinement and urban living. Due to changes in Tunis since independence in 1956, the medina, or old city, is no longer a prestigious area in which to live, so the Beldi have become scattered throughout the newer parts of the city and have lost their class cohesiveness. Many Beldi still maintain a strong sense of cultural superiority, like Ghaya, whose tale, "Long Live the Beldi," presents Bedouin and Black cultures as inferior to that of the Beldi (Hejaiej 1996:189-91). For more information on the Beldi, see Hejaiej 1996:23-34.

7. Hollander 1995 comments that Gualtieri (the husband) ought to be considered the protagonist of the tale; while the European tale is most often identified as the Griselda legend, that does not mean that the wife is consistently presented as the protagonist.

8. *Sabra*, the name of the female protagonist, means >patient' in Arabic.

9. On male and female variants of the same tale, see Holbeck 1987; Taggart 1990; Zipes 1993. Dégh 1995 shows how female tellers foreground women's perspectives, even when narrating tales centered on male characters. On the question of women's narrative strategies, see Stone 1986; Cardigos 1996:16-19, 46-49. For a discussion of gendered narrative practices in North Africa and the Middle East, see Bar-Itzhak and Shenhar 1993:16-22; Dégh 1995:66-67; Hejaiej 1996:23-34; and El-Shamy 1999:8-13.

10. At the time of the collection, Ghaya was in her sixties. As the daughter of an eminent historian, Ghaya was able to attain more education than most women of her generation. She became engaged, but it was broken off due to her poor health; later, her father married her to a wealthy non-Beldi. A respected authority on traditional practices, both literate and popular, Ghaya is much in demand for family celebrations. See her biography in Hejaiej 1996:36-44.

11. The complete story is found in Hejaiej 1996:97-103.

12. Stone 1993:290 discusses how seemingly hostile fairy-tale characters actually provide challenges to spur growth, maturity and transformations.

13. At the time of the collecting, Ghaya brought up the topic of divorce, talking about her son's friend's situation. She felt that they were filing for divorce too soon, in the first year of their marriage, instead of trying to make it work.

14. The Griselda legend appears frequently in medieval collections of didactic tales for women. Griselda is presented as an exemplary wife by Petrarch, Phillippe de Mezieres, and by the anonymous authors of *Le Mesnagier de Paris* and *Le Livre Griseldis*. Christine de Pisan also treats Griselda as a model, but she celebrates her resistance to her husband's abusive treatment, not her ideal passivity. For more on the medieval uses of this tale, see Filios 2002.

15. For more affirmative readings of Dioneo's attitude toward Griselda's sexuality, see Barolini 1993 and Mazzotta 1986.

16. See El-Shamy 1985 for criticisms of too-expansive readings of unique performances.

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