

The Novel of Feltino*

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Summary

Feltino¹, a man of pasta grossa² and believer of any fola³, is uccellato⁴ by Alberto Salernitano⁵ who, once convinced him that they were expected by trapanesi females⁶, arranges for him to find a few chevaliers, that manifesting great offence, declare themselves to be the relatives of the femine, il vituperano⁷ and threaten of pummelling him. Once reviled the truth, everyone laughs of Feltino and of his confusione⁸ and the company in pleasant conversations and other amusements enjoys the evening until late at night.

*This translation is based on the rendering by Linda Pagli of a novel by Giuseppe Longo. The Italian version, also provided here, is in "vulgar". That is, it adheres to Boccaccio's Decameron style. Only the summary is translated. In order to offer to the reader a feel of the style and of the many shadows that the chosen words offer, some terms are left untranslated, although an explanation is offered. The translation and notes are by Raffaele Giancarlo

¹Here is the first main character of the story. To be noted: The Writer uses his last name. The first letter is kept in capital for stylistic purposes.

²Here pasta is used in a dual sense. It may refer to the figure of a person as well as to its moral constituent. Grossa, here should be translated as tick. The description is very effective and only politely offensive. Depending on the person ego, it may even be perceived as a compliment.

³The root is the Latin fable. However, in Italian, it has two meanings: fable and lie.

⁴He is the object of ucellare, literally to bird. In Italian, there are two versions of the verb. The intransitive, that refers to the capture of birds, possibly with traps. The transitive means to fool someone via flattery. A different kind of trap.

⁵This is the main character. Obeying to the style, he is addressed by first name and his city of provenance, Salerno, deserves the capital letter. There is a historic analogy with Masuccio Salernitano, a nobleman and writer, follower of Boccaccio. This should be contrasted with the Feltino at the beginning: last name and we do not know yet where he comes from.

⁶The Ladies are from Trapani. The use of the word female to refer to women is still in use in many Italian dialects.

⁷They insult him, but vituperare is an extreme activity of insult.

⁸The literal translation is confusion. However, confusione also means embarrassment, to the point of being lost. Here an analogy with cooking is appropriate. The choice of the ingredients and the following of the various recipe stages gives no guarantee of the end results being right. There is some art in having a successful dish. This point is well illustrated (at least to me) by the Neapolitan poetry "o Raú" by Edoardo De Filippo, in which the difference between meat with tomatoes and Neapolitan ragú is described. Here an "uccellare" must result in confusion. That is, the object must be totally lost, not simply embarrassed, otherwise it would have simply been the object of a joke.