

## Manipulated, Misrepresented and Maligned: the Censorship and *Rassetatura* of the *Decameron*

In spite of the considerable popularity it enjoyed, the *Decameron* had its share of detractors who hotly objected to the text on the basis of its scandalous content, namely depictions of a corrupt clergy and explicit sexual content (and many combinations of these two themes). The opposition to Boccaccio's work was not enough, however, to quash the enthusiasm of those who would read the book "cognominato Prencipe Galeotto." This led to a rather tedious problem: since the *Decameron* could not be suppressed from the European literary consciousness, how could the text be fashioned into a more innocent, less offensive version? Could this aim be accomplished while simultaneously maintaining the jouissance and wit for which it was celebrated? Of the many censured iterations that attempted to deliver a diet *Decameron*, so to speak, two are of particular importance: the Deputati edition (published in 1573), and the Salviati edition (published in 1582). Since unflattering representations of clergy and sexually suggestive scenarios posed a significant problem for those who would render the *Decameron* innocuous, I examined a selection of *novelle* from *stampati cinquecenteschi* of both the Deputati and Salviati editions to discover if these textual elements were indeed censored and, if so, how they were edited. Having found that *novelle* portraying the clergy in an unkind light and/or included overtly sensual material were indeed censored, I sought to compare the variations in techniques utilized by these editors. In order to study the degree to which their textual interventions degraded Boccaccio's original work, I evaluated how different these finished products were from the primary text.<sup>1</sup> A mere transformation of names or locations within certain *novelle*, for instance, would ultimately render Boccaccio's text only slightly different, whereas intrusions on plot structure would drastically alter the source material; both

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<sup>1</sup> I compared the censored versions to Branca's 1992 Einaudi edition. I also consulted Branca 2002 to determine whether any of the passages of the Deputati and Salviati editions I cite here share particular variants of importance; to the best of my knowledge, they do not.

techniques can indeed be found — albeit to different degrees — in the Deputati and Salviati editions. By considering the specific approaches utilized in revising the original text (keeping in mind the historical and political milieu that gave rise to these expurgated versions), I will illustrate the extent to which the Deputati and Salviati adaptations of the *Decameron* generated texts that were not merely distinct from Boccaccio's prototype, but were ultimately unique in and of themselves.

An examination of the *rassettatura* of the *Decameron* must first consider several key studies. The work of George Putnam focused largely on the historical context of Church-mandated censorship. Peter Brown's contributions to the study of Salviati's particular censorship of the *Decameron* provide sharply critical insight,<sup>2</sup> especially with regard to the techniques and motivations of Salviati's problematic approach to censorship. Chiecchi and Troisio examine the historical and political pressures that were experienced by the editors (both the Deputati and Salviati) who took on the thorny task of revising the *Centonovelle* and provide commentary on the textual changes in certain censored tales. Guyda Armstrong has written extensively on its reception in the English-speaking world and on the repercussions that the censorship of the *Cinquecento* has had on subsequent English translations. In building upon these contributions, my research into the work's revisions provides a comparative consideration of the editorial techniques to which the work was subjected. I aim to highlight the extent to which the directive of censorship ultimately led to the generation of new texts, texts utterly dissimilar from their progenitors.

Before delving into the textual analysis of the specific modes of censorship enacted upon the *Decameron*, it is critical first to understand the political and historical context that led to these revisions. The reasons for which Boccaccio's book fell victim to criticism and manipulation can be traced to the text's central mission and to its crucial themes. Teodolinda Barolini succinctly reconstructs the very foundation of the *Decameron*:

From its first clause, indeed from its first word, the *Decameron* signals its nontranscendence: "Umana cosa è aver compassione degli afflitti," begins the author, locating us in a rigorously secular context and defining its parameters. At this point, *compassione degli afflitti* belongs to an amorous register, referring to Boccaccio's past affliction as a lover for whom his friends felt pity; thus, he claims that he is writing the *Decameron* to repay their kindness, since "la gratitudine, secondo che io credo, trall'altre virtù è sommamente da commendare." [...] Here again, the Proem continues to insist on a human set of values, for gratitude is technically not a virtue at

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<sup>2</sup> In addition to his critical biography of Salviati, Brown has written various articles on the famous censor. See Brown 1957, 1957b and 1969.

all, but a social grace, a virtue only in that it makes life more livable. And, because he wants to make their lives more livable, Boccaccio writes for the ladies, shattering their enforced contemplation with *novelle*, news of life, life-surrogates.<sup>3</sup>

Barolini thus underlines two critical elements at play within the text: its designation to a female audience, and the deeply social conceits of the *Decameron*. Inspired by the social virtue of gratitude, Boccaccio creates a text that can console and distract women from the pains of love. Ever the witty entertainer, the author of the *Centonovelle* evoke a flesh-and-blood world in which human relationships dominate, thus placing himself in opposition to Dante, who guides his readers from the profound depths of *Inferno* to the transcendent heights of *Paradiso*. Without a guide, his readers are free to interpret and respond to the text; furthermore, the presence of events, locales and characters that correspond to true life further heighten the sense of verisimilitude, which, for some, is considered a fundamental trait of the text.<sup>4</sup>

A text that combines historicity and invites personal interpretation can, however, prove to be problematic. The many tales that depict explicit sexual situations and satirize the Church became the subject of much controversy, and they were indeed the same that were ultimately censored. Ultimately, the moralizing interpretation of the *Decameron* that would demonize the book as pernicious and obscene endured for centuries, yet this pejorative vision of Boccaccio's work was merely one of several conflicts that were manifested in the censored editions of the *Deputati* and *Salviati*.

The significant political, social and religious tumult of the *Cinquecento*, monumentally manifested in the Inquisition, Protestant Reformation and Counter-Reformation, had a crucial role to play in the fortune of the *Decameron*, as these events collectively produced a historical moment of intense anxiety. The work of Putnam in particular sheds light on the ways in which the controversies of the period resulted in serious attempts to censor literature. Indeed, one must look as far back as the Council of Trent to

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<sup>3</sup> Barolini 2006, 224. Barolini represents one of several perspectives on the nature and purpose of the *Decameron*, but other scholars differ. Kirkham (1993) pursues a moralizing Christian or humanist approach; Singleton (1944) sees it as a literature of pleasure and escape; and Hollander (2004) explores the incapacity of morality to repress human nature.

<sup>4</sup> It must be noted that this notion of realism has been challenged. Baratto (1970) perceives a plurality of narrative modalities in the *Decameron* that transcend the imitation of real life and instead feature realistic detail as a means to create a realm of credible un-reality. Branca similarly rejects the notion of the *Decameron* as a text concerned solely with flesh-and-blood characters and concrete events (1998, 28–29).

comprehend the extent of the Church's involvement in the policing of secular entertainments. In 1559, the papacy began to publish an ongoing, frequently updated list of books forbidden to Christians. This list — whose last publication occurred as late as the 20<sup>th</sup> century — was referred to as the *Index librorum prohibitorum*. In 1563, the Council codified the ban's Rule 7 as follows:

Books which professedly deal with, narrate or teach things lascivious or obscene are absolutely prohibited, since not only the matter of faith but also that of morals, which are usually easily corrupted through the reading of such books, must be taken into consideration, and those who possess them are to be severely punished by the bishops. (In Janz 423)

Yet while the rules concerning the types of books that could not be read were clear, the application of these mandates were not nearly as straightforward. As Putnam explains, the statutes of the Roman Inquisition that concerned the censorship of books were to be equally enforced in every state that operated printing presses, yet it was exceptionally difficult to enforce the procedures delineated within these statutes. Printers in Rome, for instance, were required to act immediately in withdrawing or cancelling the printing of condemned books. In other states, however, printers were allowed anywhere from thirty to ninety days to become aware of and act upon prohibitory proclamations (1967, 273).

The difficulty in completely removing a calamitous book from the public was immense, and the case of the *Decameron* proved to be particularly challenging for the Church. Over the course of the centuries, innumerable books were added to the *Index librorum prohibitorum*, and it must be noted that it was not, as a rule, permissible to publish censored versions of books in the *Index*. In this sense, the *Decameron* was unique, which is a characteristic that naturally leads to questions regarding the motives for which it was granted this unusual consideration.

The story of the *Decameron*'s censorship began to unfold in 1559, the year Pope Paul IV first placed the book on the *Index*; after the confirmation of its prohibition in 1564, there was a considerable public outcry against the decision of the Church, causing Pope Gregory XIII to accord it a special allowance. Together with the Duke of Tuscany, the pope's Inquisition launched a commission of experts (called the *Deputati*), to produce a revised version of the *Decameron*. One of these *Deputati*, Vincenzo Borghini, did the majority of the work on this, the first *Deputati* edition, published by the Giunti of Florence in 1573. As I will later highlight, the textual interventions of this version were minimal: erotic liaisons were left untouched, and only instances that directly parodied the Church or the clergy were changed

(generally by demoting the sinful cleric in question to the status of a layperson). The Deputati edition was clearly unsatisfactory to Sixtus V, who returned Boccaccio's text to the *Index*. Once again, the resounding demand of the public made it impossible to disallow its consumption, so Sixtus V commissioned another version. This edition, published in 1582 by Lionardo Salviati, was still not acceptable to the Church (and was even less satisfactory to its readers), yet it seems the papacy overlooked this edition, as readership continued, and Salviati's edition was not placed back on the *Index* (Putnam 309–10).<sup>5</sup>

Beyond the demands of the Council of Trent, the situation was further complicated by the political and linguistic interests of the Tuscan Duchy. Cosimo de' Medici was among the most ardent supporters of a revised version of the *Decameron*, as he endeavored to preserve this notable Tuscan text and thus maintain the Tuscan dialect as a contender in the *questione della lingua*.<sup>6</sup> Thus the motivations behind the censorship transcended the popularity of the *Decameron*, entering into a decidedly political sphere. The efforts of the Tuscan Duchy to elevate their language above every other vernacular within the Italian peninsula played a pivotal role in the call for a censored *Decameron*. Cosimo de' Medici understood the significance of the *Decameron* and realized that a removal of the text from the Italian canon would be a blow to the Tuscan cause in the linguistic debates unfolding at this time. From this general sketch of the rationales behind the censorship of the *Decameron*, two protagonists emerge: the so-called Deputati (led by Vincenzo Borghini) and Lionardo Salviati,<sup>7</sup> and it is upon these versions that I conduct my analysis.

As I underlined earlier, the popularity and relevance of the *Decameron* inspired the Church to grant it a special exemption from exile to the *Index*, and so the call to recreate Boccaccio's text was first undertaken by a group of Florentine academics led by Vincenzo Borghini. One of the major contributions to the study of this censorship, *Il Decameron sequestrato*, provides deeper insight into the difficulties facing the Deputati. Chiecchi and Troisio provide compelling evidence of the personal reservations these academics

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<sup>5</sup> Also relevant to the contextualization of these censored versions are Brown 1974, Chiecchi and Troisio 1984, Armstrong 2013.

<sup>6</sup> See Mordenti.

<sup>7</sup> In addition to the censored edition of the *Decameron*, Salviati compiled a two-volume philological treatment of the revised versions of Boccaccio's text. *Degli avvertimenti della lingua sopra il Decamerone* would ultimately play a crucial role in elevating the *volgare* in the linguistic debates of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Marco Gargiulo (2009) provides important perspectives on Salviati's significance in the promotion of the vernacular.

faced when revising Boccaccio's text. They comment on the work of the Deputati, highlighting the tensions simmering between culturally motivated Florence and religiously inspired Rome:

[...] in seno all'Accademia fiorentina, all'interno dei tre o cinque membri del gruppo emerge quel Vincenzo Borghini riconosciuto [...] come il vero promotore della rassetatura decameroniana del 1573. Egli raccoglie delle proteste fiorentine e delle mediazioni tentate da Cosimo I e dal suo ambasciatore Strozzi in seno all'assemblea conciliare a favore del *Decameron*, assumendo *in primis* l'incarico del *donec corrigatur*.

Dalla parte della fiorentinità, il gruppo dei Deputati si confronta con l'Inquisizione [...] incaricati, da parte romana, di guidare e controllare la riforma del *Decameron*. Questa antitesi Roma-Firenze è fondamentale per intendere il difficile incarico espurgativo nel quale i Deputati furono inseriti, per un verso come esecutori di un ordine censorio imposto e nello stesso tempo onorifico, e per altro verso come depositari della cultura e della lingua toscane. (Chiecchi and Troisio 1984, 30–31)

The conflicting interests of Rome and Florence, Church and State, are central to the approaches undertaken in the censorship, and the difficulty of the task of Borghini and his colleagues can thus be appreciated more fully. To tamper with (albeit upon the orders of the Church and the Florentine state) a cultural and linguistic repository such as the *Decameron* was a task which required extreme literary and political agility.

It is indeed this dexterity of textual and civic manipulation that is to be compared in the two versions. When evaluating the Deputati edition alongside that of Salviati, one immediately notes the extent to which the censors sought to preserve the original text. The transformations made to the *Decameron* in the Deputati version are miniscule compared to those seen within the Salviati text, and this unwillingness to manipulate Boccaccio's text more aggressively was indeed the reason for the commissioning of Salviati's version. Peter Brown highlights the clear directive at the heart of the censorship:

An examination of the nature of this revision is revealing of the demands which, at this stage, the Inquisition made on literature. The main purpose of the work is the one outlined in the "nota santa": "Nota hauta [*sic*] da Roma dal R.mo Mons.r del Sacro Palazzo. Avvertimento per rassetar il Boccaccio [...] terzo: che per niun modo si parli in male o scandalo de' preti, frati, abbatì, abbadesse, monaci, monache, piovani, provosti, vescovi, o altre cose sacre, ma si mutino l'j nomi, o si faccia per altro modo che parrà meglio." The attention of the Inquisition, as is here plainly seen, remained focused on those aspects of the *Decameron* which might bring the Church into disrepute. (Brown 1974, 162–63)

The version of the *Deputati*, so much closer to the original *Decameron*, was judged immoral by the purveyors of the Inquisition, and Granduca Francesco thus called for a second edition. With a zeal far surpassing that of his predecessors, Salviati set out to reconfigure the *Decameron* as a manual of morality and attempted to render the text more ‘Christian’ through the use of three principle techniques. Firstly, he removed all content that could be considered offensive by the Church. For example, the “monaco caduto in peccato” (1.4) becomes “un giovane,” while his “abate” is transformed to his “superior.” Beyond this relatively straightforward technique, his second major tool of censorship is to be found in the use of textual glosses, which allowed Salviati to direct the reader’s interpretation of each tale while stressing the moral instruction that he believed was to be extracted from each *novella* (Brown 168–69).<sup>8</sup> The didactic nature of the second instrument utilized by Salviati in his censoring of the *Decameron* served to establish a radically different relationship between the reader and the text. The reader was no longer merely consuming the tales for personal enjoyment but was instead called upon to seek ethical direction within each *novella*. The problematic nature of the first and second techniques pales in comparison to the third, of which Brown harshly remarks:

There were [...] stories which did not respond to such gentle treatment, and for these he had in mind measures so radical that they amounted to the transformation of the entire structure in which their interest lay. The comparatively simple expedient which he adopted was to alter the end in such a manner that the whole became a ‘moral tale’ with a medieval flavor. (Brown 169)

Faced with certain *novelle* that could not be subtly manipulated, Salviati elected simply to remove their endings and give them entirely new conclusions; notable examples include 3.6 (in which Salviati rewrites the story so that Catella commits suicide out of guilt and Ricciardo pledges himself to continual penance) and 6.10 (in which Frate Cipolla, not a friar but instead a layman in disguise claiming to possess a phoenix from Noah’s ark, is discovered and violently punished by those he had duped). Of course, this aggressive approach to remodeling the *Decameron* did not go without harsh criticism. Salviati complained of his detractors:

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<sup>8</sup> It must also be noted that Salviati would not be the last to impose a vision of ethics onto the *Decameron*, as scholars such as Marilyn Migiel (2015) have proposed such readings; naturally, others, such as Robert Hollander (2004) and Teodolinda Barolini (2006, 224–44), have opposed such perspectives in favor of interpretations that do not hinge so greatly on the text’s supposed moral function.

[...] tanta è stata l'invidia che per quel solenne favore m'è piovuta addosso per ogni parte. [...] Ma la mia fatica è stata talor lacera da chi mai non la vide; e molti n'hanno renduta testimonianza che non ne lessero pur mai il titolo.<sup>9</sup>

His critics condemned him for maiming the text so brutally — and with so little regard for its legibility — as to leave it unrecognizable. Put simply, Salviati molded the *Decameron* into a hideously disfigured moral manual. In viewing the Deputati and Salviati editions side by side, one can detect two poles: on one side, a desire to maintain the source text, and on the other, a mission to manipulate it. The intersection of varying interests (from the Church, from the Tuscan state, and from the editors themselves) thus culminated in *Decamerons* that were markedly different from the one written by Boccaccio.

A closer look at the textual modifications logically begins with the Deputati version, which preceded the Salviati edition. Their objective was to mold the *Decameron* into a text approved by the Church; their instructions were clear enough, as the Order of Rome stated: “Che per niun modo si parli in male o scandalo de' preti, frati, Abbati, Abbadesse, monaci, monache, piovani, provosti, vescovi, o altre cose sacre” (Chiecchi and Troisio 32).

The task of identifying and collecting every single offensive instance within the *Decameron* would have been immense, and one can detect a degree of hesitation on the part of the Deputati. When they allude in a letter to the scandalous scenes “narrate da quell'autore, perché conosceva non essere stato proibito per questo,” one senses that they had a consideration for the context in which Boccaccio wrote, and that they did not wish to assign blame to him (Chiecchi and Troisio 34). In other words, they did not believe that Boccaccio wrote his text with the intention to offend. Chiecchi and Troisio, however, remark drily that, “Spetta ai Deputati, perciò, affermare che il Boccaccio fu ‘catholico et fedele christiano’” (34). Nevertheless, I will provide some examples of passages in which they sought to realize this objective through subtle textual changes.

One novella of the Deputati edition that effectively illustrates their approach to Dioneo's first tale, whose rubric reads, “Un monaco, caduto in peccato degno di gravissima punizione, onestamente rimproverando al suo abate quella medesima colpa, si libera dalla pena” (1.4.1). The Deputati adjust it slightly: “Uno *scolare*, caduto in peccato degno di gravissima punitione, honestamente rimproverando al suo *maestro* quella medesima colpa,

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<sup>9</sup> From a letter sent by Salviati to the *Granduca* Francesco de' Medici (cited in Brown 1974, 167).



si libera dalla pena.” Shortly thereafter, they make further changes. We read:

Fu in Lunigiana, paese non molto da questo lontano, un monistero già di santità e di monaci più copioso che oggi non è, nel quale tra gli altri era un monaco giovane, il vigore del quale né la freschezza né i digiuni né le vigilie potevano macerare. (1.4.4)

In the Deputati version:

Fu in Parigi un collegio già di dottrina e di scolari più copioso che hoggi non è, nel quale tra gli altri era un giovane, il vigore del quale né la freschezza, né le fatiche degli studij, né le vigilie potevano macerare. (emphasis mine)

Interestingly, these are the only notable alterations to the *novella*. The adjustment to the orientation of the tale from an Italian monastery to a Parisian academic college serves to exculpate not only the clergy but, more broadly, Italians in general, as one may interpret the decision to orient the sinful locale outside of Italy as an attempt to direct the shame elsewhere. Moreover, the substitution of a college for a monastery functions perfectly: all of the challenges of the ecclesiastic life are transmuted into secular equivalents (the solitude, the lack of release for sexual impulses, and the tiring and monotonous existence of the academic, to name a few). The Deputati elected ultimately to leave the description of the sexual act between the country girl and the abbot who, in this version, becomes the *maestro*. The decision to leave the sexual scene intact thus makes sense; the locale in which the tale takes place has been converted from spiritual to secular and from Italy to France, and the protagonists have been transformed from clergymen to scholars. The sexual content of the revised *novella* thus does not, in the strictest sense, go against the decree to remove any content that speaks ill of the Church and its members. What might surprise one instead is the decision to leave the infamous quote of the abbot (here *maestro*): “peccato celato è mezzo perdonato” (1.4.16). Salviati in his version eliminated it completely, as it is a notable example of the way in which Boccaccio toys with questions of sin and punishment, a theme that appears as early as the *Decameron*’s introduction. The Deputati could have similarly chosen to remove it, or to at least substitute a less spiritually charged word in place of “peccato,” perhaps “crimine,” for example. To remove or alter it, however, would be to erase one of the many infamous aphorisms for which the *Decameron* is known. Given their efforts to do the most minimal level of damage to Boccaccio’s text, their decision to leave the *motto* unedited is indeed comprehensible.

While the Deputati edition can be considered a kind of model of minimal textual contamination, I turn now to the Salviati version to provide a degree of contrast. He tellingly opens his edition with a note to his readers:

Della diligenza posta da noi in questa opera, niuna cosa vogliam dire. Il lettore per se stesso, e scorrendo le note delle dette differenze, e leggendo con attenzione tutto 'l libro, il conoscerà di leggieri: e noi dal suo giudizio, ne in questo, ne in altro no' intendiamo d'appellarci. Cio diremo bene con sicuro animo, che il maggiore ardite, che abbiamo preso nel correggere del testo, è stato d'uno accento, o d'un punto, o d'una divisione: ne questo co-tanto abbiamo fatto, senza ogni volta darne notizia al lettore. E piu tosto c'è piaciuto di lasciarsi le difficoltà, che di torle via, come si dice a capriccio. (Salviati 1581, 3)

He attempts to convince the reader that the changes made to Boccaccio's text are negligible, and mainly stylistic or orthographical in nature; what's more, he defends his right to alter the text in ways he deems insignificant. The very fact that he feels the need to assure the reader of the triviality of his revisions can be considered a red flag in and of itself. Salviati was aware of the extent to which he altered the text and hoped to downplay the severity of his authorial interventions.

The story of the abbess who puts her lover's *brache* on her head (9.2) can be considered similar to the monk's tale (1.4) in the sense that both deal with immoral and unchaste actions of the clergy, yet the approaches taken by Salviati and the Deputati could not be more distinct from one another. Salviati curiously chooses to orient 9.2 in the same place in which the tale of Masetto da Lamporecchio unfolds, which, in his version, is in Alexandria instead of in Tuscany. In order to understand better the events of Salviati's retelling, it is essential to look first at his version of Masetto's tale (3.1), since the transformations made to the earlier *novella* reappear in the later tale. He begins:

Ad Alessandria fu gia una grandissima, e bella torre, nella quale il Signor della contrada, a cui dicevano l'Ammiraglio, sotto la cura d'una sua donna, molte pulzelle soleva tener racchiuse. Del numero delle quali al Soldano di Babilonia, a cui egli era soggetto, ogni tre anni una volta, tre ne mandava per tributo [...]. Quivi, tra gli altri che lietamente il raccolsono, fu un giovane ebreo lavoratore forte, e robusto, e secondo huom di villa, con bella persona, il cui nome era Massèt: ma percioche a Lamporecchio, non guari di qui lontano, era nato, e i primi anni dimoratovi della sua giovinezza. (Salviati 1581, 138–39)

Once again, the reader notices the distancing technique utilized within these censored editions. Gone is the Italian monastery, replaced instead with a tower in Alexandria, owned by an admiral (further, a subject of the sultan of Babylon) who enjoys the company of a harem of young women.

The gardener is no longer known as Masetto, but has now been fashioned as “Massèt,” a robust Jewish youth who eventually succeeds in seducing these ladies, who violate their vow to remain faithful to the admiral (in contrast to nuns who must remain faithful to Christ).

By converting the Italian locale into a foreign one and by transforming the characters from clergy people into non-Christians, the censoring editor creates a large gap between the original tale and the revised one. Furthermore, he fashions an Orientalizing parallelism even more dangerous than in Boccaccio’s original *novella*. The harem of the admiral of 3.1 is utilized by Salviati once more in 9.2, and there is yet again conflict behind the closed walls of the admiral’s palace. Various changes are therefore made to retain a sense of narrative continuity. The abbess becomes “la donna del serraglio,” the priest is transformed into “un suo amante,” the nuns are demoted to “le giovani,” and the veils of the mother superior are simply called “certi veli, li quali in capo portava.” As if these textual adjustments were not enough to convince the reader that this was indeed a different tale from Boccaccio’s, Salviati writes at the end: “Conclusione da saracine e infedeli, com’ell’erano” (478).

By inserting this personal judgment, Salviati conclusively underlines the distance and disparity between the Christian sinners of the original *novella* and the so-called infidels of his version. Salviati’s interventions thus generate new *novelle* oriented in foreign locales, tale in which non-Christians behave lasciviously and deceitfully. They are no longer tales of the *Decameron*, but narratives focused on the perceived lustfulness and brutishness of non-Western characters.

The strategies deployed by Salviati and the Deputati eventually become somewhat predictable. In the Deputati edition, any tale or detail that depicts the clergy in a negative light is secularized; in the Salviati version, all sexual content is excised, and anything that portrays the Church in an unflattering way is either secularized or removed completely. While it is not necessary to examine every last instance of censorship (since it inevitably follows a very clear pattern), I would be remiss if I did not bring the arguably most controversial *novella* of the *Decameron* into this examination, as it necessitated much harsher approaches to its revision. The tale of Rustico and Ali-bech (3.10) proved to be the most challenging for the editors, as no amount of secularizing of characters or changing of small details could possibly render the tale even remotely appropriate for post-Tridentine readers. The humor and message of the tale are built into its very structure, and so it would necessitate much more significant changes than other *novelle*. It is, therefore, one of the most revealing testaments to the differences in the two *ras-sestature*’s techniques of censorship.

Boccaccio's rubric reads: "Alibech divien romita, a cui Rustico monaco insegna rimettere il diavolo in Inferno; poi, quindi tolta, diventa moglie di Neerbale" (3.10.1). In the version of the Deputati it becomes: "Alibech divien Romita, poi quindi tolta, diventa moglie di Neerbale." The Deputati then proceeded to remove the entire complicating action of the *novella*, putting in its place an asterisk:

Ed ella, pervenuta a lui e avute da lui queste medesime parole, andata piú avanti, pervenne alla cella d'uno romito giovane, assai divota persona e buona, il cui nome era Rustico, e quella dimanda gli fece che agli altri aveva fatta.\* Hora avviene che un fuoco s'apprese in Capsa, il quale nella propria casa arse il padre d' Alibech.

Salviati instead chooses to remove every word he deems offensive or suggestive, in the process creating a text that is virtually incomprehensible, yet demonstrative of his characteristically stringent style of revision. I provide a snippet that illustrates his technique:

Disse Rustico: Tu di vero \* in scambio di questo.

Disse Alibech \*

A cui Rustico disse \* e dicoti, che io mi credo \* percioche, se questo \* pur mi darà \* ove tu vogli \* tu mi darai grandissima consolatione e farai grandissimo piacere, e servizio, se tu \* in queste parti venuta se \* . (Salviati 197).

This is the pivotal moment in which Rustico begins his sexual manipulation of Alibech, yet one would never know it thanks to the frequent use of asterisks. The entire novella reads this way, and one is left confused by Salviati's bizarre technique. While the Deputati similarly removed a large portion of the text, the story can be thought to make some sense: Alibech leaves Capsa, encounters a hermit, and returns home after a fire consumes her town. In the Salviati version, the reader is left bewildered and aggravated by the frequent gaps in the text, which he makes no attempt to fill or explain in any way. At the end of the *novella*, he leaves a peculiar note in the margin: "Si lasciano questi fragmenti per salvare piu parole, e piu [sic] modi di favellare che si può" (197). Once again, one sees the heavy handedness with which Salviati approached the *Decameron*, yet one may wonder what use he had for such a strange technique.<sup>10</sup> I would posit that it was designed to frustrate readers into abandoning the tale. Reading an entire *novella* fashioned in such an incomprehensible manner is an exercise in devotion, and it is not

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<sup>10</sup> While Salviati did not employ this censorial strategy often, there are a few other instances of it within his version of the *Decameron*; in 9.10.17–18, for instance, he eliminates the description of the sex act that takes place between Don Gianni and the wife of a dimwitted parishioner, and instead inserts an asterisk.

inconceivable that many readers might simply throw their hands up after enduring a few paragraphs of total lexical nonsense. Salviati thus succeeds in creating a *novella* whose purpose is totally dissimilar from Boccaccio's; it is to frustrate rather than to entertain. By discouraging readers from finishing the tale and by preventing them from reaching conclusions about its content, Salviati was able to degrade the *novella* in a way the Deputati did not. Such efforts to repel readers from engaging with this notorious *novella* would, eventually, erase its scandalous content from the literary consciousness of those who would pick up the *Decameron*; in this sense, Salviati's technique was particularly vicious and had far-reaching repercussions. While the textual omissions could have possibly generated a sense of curiosity in its readers, its mark was already imprinted onto the fortune of the *Decameron*. Indeed, as Guyda Armstrong illustrates, later translated editions in English and French exhibited similar censorial techniques with regards to this particular tale.<sup>11</sup>

Salviati and the Deputati succeeded in spawning bastardized versions of the *Decameron*; these editions were ultimately a far cry from Boccaccio's original, as they lacked the cutting social commentary, the criticisms of the clergy, and the resulting richness and humor. The destabilizing motto of 2.7, "Bocca baciata non perde ventura, anzi rinnova come fa la luna," is, in many ways, emblematic of the *Decameron* and its censorship. Alatiel, having been subjected to manipulations and mishandlings, was still the creator of her own narrative; her story could be changed, but her true experiences could not be obliterated. Those acting on behalf of the Church (and, to a lesser degree, to represent the interests of the Tuscan language in the *questione della lingua*) could attempt to transform the *Decameron* into a wholly different book, yet the true text would prevail; its legacy was not destroyed by the efforts of Salviati and the Deputati. Underneath the lexical falsifications and authorial interventions, there was a text that would retain its realism and resonance. Boccaccio's work would never lose its sweetness but would inevitably be renewed in all its clever joy.

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<sup>11</sup> Armstrong 2013, 221.

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