

From Multifaceted Mosaic to Disjointed Anthology: The Distorted Castilian Echo of Boccaccio's *Decameron*

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Abstract. The fifteenth-century Castilian translation of the *Decameron* is nothing more than an echo of Boccaccio's original text. To understand the level of distortion one must consider the textual transmission of the original, both to understand the author's intentions and to assess whether this corresponded with what early readers actually read. The Italian tradition certainly included personalisation by scribes, with a significant number of manuscripts containing only extracts from the *cornice* and individual *novelle* as part of anthologies. It is through this process that we reach the Castilian translation, transmitted through a manuscript (E) and five printed editions, the earliest of which is S. What is striking is that E, by choice of the compiler or scribe, only contains fifty *novelle* in a disrupted order, omitting the majority of the *cornice*; S, on the other hand, contains one hundred *novelle* but, like E, omits the *cornice* and reorders the *novelle*. The text of the *Decameron* has become so distorted in E and S that they transform Boccaccio's narrative stratification into mere anthology. The textual similarities suggest that E and S are in fact one translation, despite their drastic structural differences, meaning they were copied from different sources sharing a genealogical ancestor. Thus, they are two different redactions of the same echo of Boccaccio's text.

The *Decameron*, since Boccaccio's death in 1375,¹ has enjoyed a widespread dissemination across Europe, circulating in Italian (Florentine vernacular) and in other European vernaculars. In 1429 a Catalan translation of the text was produced,² the earliest extant translation originating in the Iberian Peninsula, which survives in a single manuscript witness that contains all one hundred tales, or *novelle*, and the narrative frame (*cornice*); the only structural change is the replacement of the *canzoni* sung at the end of each day with Catalan songs.

¹ Marco Cursi, *Il Decameron: scritture, scriventi lettori: storia di un testo* (Roma: Viella, 2007), p. 44.

² Caroline Brown Bourland, 'Boccaccio and the Decameron in Castilian and Catalan Literature', *Revue Hispanique*, 12 (1905), 1–232 (pp. 25–32); Johan Boccacci, *Decameron. Traducció catalana publicada segons l'únic manuscrit conegut*, ed. by Jaume Massó Torrents (New York: The Hispanic Society of America, 1910); Barbara Renesto 'Note sulla traduzione catalana del *Decameron* del 1429', *Cuadernos de Filología Italiana*, Núm. Extra (2001) 295–313.

The earliest witness of a Castilian translation is the mid-fifteenth century³ manuscript (hereafter E) which contains fifty out of the one hundred *novelle* in a disrupted order and omitting the *cornice*. The first edition of the Castilian translation was printed in Seville in 1496 (hereafter S) and differs from E in that it contains one hundred *novelle*. However, like E, the *cornice* has been omitted and the *novelle* reordered. S was reprinted four times over the sixteenth century, between 1524 and 1550.

There are three levels of distortion that resulted in this deconstructed Castilian translation: the distortion within the Italian tradition of the text; within the process of translation; and within the textual tradition of the translation itself. The process of early textual transmission is one that is riddled with distortions, therefore textual scholars must take into account a level of subjectivity and human error that will undoubtedly occur. Thus, the Castilian translation of the *Decameron* is an echo: it is not a perfect reproduction of Boccaccio's text transposed into a different language, but an adaptation filtered through a sequence of human perspectives. It is not the initial, crisp reverberation, but the faint, muffled sound one hears before it dissipates into the air.

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Italian textual tradition

The first level of distortion to consider is the textual history and transmission of the *Decameron* in Italian. The aim here is not to attempt to find a textual model for the Castilian translation but to provide a brief overview of how the *Decameron* was read and circulated in the first century after its completion. This will provide some insight into the variation that occurred within the manuscript tradition that might set a precedent for the structural changes we encounter in the Castilian translation.

According to Branca and Vitale, there were two redactions of the *Decameron*.⁴ The earlier one is witnessed by manuscript P, transcribed by Giovanni d'Agnolo Capponi c.1365–1369 possibly from a service copy; the second, known as the Hamilton 90 codex or B, is the only extant autograph manuscript and dates to c.1370.⁵ In B we see how Boccaccio, in the final years of his life and after

³ The lack of an *explicit* indicating the date and location in which the manuscript was completed prevents us from settling on a precise date, though the style of the gothic hand indicates that it was completed in the mid-fifteenth century. Bourland, p. 32; Julian Zarco Cuevas, *Catálogo de los manuscritos castellanos de la Real Biblioteca de el Escorial* (Madrid: Escorial. Real Biblioteca, 1924–1929), 3 vols, II (p. 108); José Blanco Jiménez, 'Il manoscritto escurialense del Decameron', *Miscellanea Storica della Valdelsa*, 83 (1977), 54–84 (p. 55); Mita Valvassori, 'Libro de las Ciento Novelas de Juan Bocacio de Certaldo', *Cuadernos de Filología Italiana*, Núm. Extra (2009) 3–340 (p. 11).

⁴ Vittore Branca and Maurizio Vitale, *Il capolavoro del Boccaccio e due diverse redazioni* (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2002). See also: Vittore Branca, 'Su una redazione del *Decameron* anteriore a quella conservata nell'autografo hamiltoniano', *Studi sul Boccaccio*, 25 (1997) 3–131.

⁵ Vittore Branca and Pier Giorgio Ricci, *Un autografo del Decameron (Codice hamiltoniano 90)* (Padua: CEDAM, 1962).

almost twenty years of its circulation, revisited the text of the *Decameron* and made systematic changes on linguistic, stylistic and narrative grounds. The subsequent transmission of the text contained in B by no means eliminated the redaction already in circulation: as Brian Richardson states '[t]his later version of the *Decameron* was read less widely: about thirty of the extant manuscripts are related to P, about twenty to B'.⁶ The status of B as an autograph copy with revisions made by Boccaccio himself led Branca to establish this text as the authoritative version, which he would then use as the base text for his critical edition.⁷

Once the text of B was established and widely accepted by scholars, very little critical attention was paid to the other fourteenth- and fifteenth-century manuscripts. The first to study each one and provide extensive detail on their history and material condition is Marco Cursi. He describes sixty manuscripts, finally shedding light on the 'oscurità dalla quale è avvolta la tradizione del *Centonovelle*'.⁸ Where Branca only mentions if a manuscript was a partial copy (as opposed to a fragment or deteriorated witness) by writing *parziale* next to the entry, Cursi indicates which parts of the text were copied. This is invaluable information as these partial copies show how scribes personalised the text of the *Decameron* for private or commercial use. The manuscripts in question are those numbered 9, 11, 12, 14, 27, 30, 31, 53 and 55. All of these include at least one *novella*, and four of them also include an element of the *cornice*: 14 includes an extract from the introduction to Day IV (paragraphs 33–34); 27 consists of the conclusions to days I–IX and *novella* IX.10; 31 includes the introduction to Day III; 55 includes an extract from the introduction to Day IV (paragraphs 12–30) which contains the interpolated *novella* by the narrator. These personalised copies, contained in miscellanies and anthologies, show an appreciation as much for elements of the *cornice* as for individual *novelle*.

Though none of the above witnesses present the same level of deconstruction as the Castilian translation, it sets a precedent for a scribal culture intent on personalising a text where it suits the reader's needs. Above all, this shows that any structural changes made to the text of the *Decameron* in this period, apart from attesting to the popularity of any single *novella* (specifically IV.1), do not follow any particular pattern, but are guided by individual preferences. In any case, the predominance of complete witnesses along with the occasional inclusion of elements of the *cornice* in miscellanies, shows that the Castilian translation certainly displays an anomalous attitude by omitting the *cornice*.

Now that Cursi has provided us with detailed information on the material history of the witnesses, followed by an assessment of the *Decameron*'s

⁶ Brian Richardson, 'The Textual History of the *Decameron*', in *Boccaccio: A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, ed. by Victoria Kirkham, Michael Sherberg and Janet Levarie Smarr (London: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 41–49 (p. 42).

⁷ Vittore Branca, 'Introduzione', in Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron: edizione critica secondo l'autografo hamiltoniano*, ed. by Vittore Branca (Florence: La Crusca, 1976), pp. 1–CXXXV (p. xcvi).

⁸ Cursi, p. 12. 'the obscurity in which the tradition of the *Centonovelle* is enveloped'. All subsequent translations are my own, unless otherwise stated.

early reception by Rhiannon Daniels,⁹ the field of the textual history of the *Decameron* would certainly benefit from an exhaustive analysis of the text of these sixty witnesses, if not to construct a definitive *stemma codicum*, at least to trace the linguistic and textual variation that occurs.

Information on the presence of the *Decameron* in Spain, on the other hand, is scarce, with the most valiant attempts having been made by José Blanco Jiménez.¹⁰ As is clear from the work of Branca and Cursi, there are no witnesses of the *Decameron* in Italian in Spain, and Blanco was unable to recover any evidence of the prior existence of any manuscripts in his archival research.¹¹ The only manuscript witnesses of the *Decameron* in Spain are the Catalan translation and E.

The Escorial Manuscript

The most striking difference between this manuscript and the Italian text as written by Boccaccio is its anthologised structure.¹² E begins with nine chapters containing Boccaccio's introduction in which he describes a plague-ridden Florence and introduces the ten narrators of the tales, known as the *onesta brigata*. What follows are only fifty tales, presented in the order shown in TABLE 1.¹³

I,1	I,2	I,3	I,5	I,6	I,8	I,9	I,10	II,1	IV,3
VI,8	VI,2	VI,5	VIII,5	IX,3	IX,4	VI,3	VI,4	X,9	VI,9
VI,10	V,1	X,8	IX,9	X,1	V,3	II,4	VI,1	V,6	II,6
X,3	III,5	IV,1	V,8	V,9	V,4	II,10	VII,7	VII,9	VIII,7
VII,5	VII,6	VII,8	X,4	X,5	X,6	VII,1	VII,2	VII,3	VII,4

TABLE 1. Tales in E

Each *novella* is preceded by a short preamble in which the *brigata* reacts to the previous tale and introduces the new narrator for the following tale. As the order of the tales is so disrupted, the *novella* referenced in the introductions very rarely corresponds with the one that precedes it in the manuscript. The first tale to be omitted is I.4, told by Dioneo, but this is not taken into account

⁹ Rhiannon Daniels, *Boccaccio and the book: production and reading in Italy 1340–1520* (London: Legenda, 2009).

¹⁰ José Blanco Jiménez, 'Le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio in Spagna nel '400 e '500: una prima valutazione bibliografica', *Miscellanea Storica della Valdelsa*, 83 (1977), 35–52; 'Presencia de Boccaccio en España (con algunas correcciones)', *Mapocho*, 26 (1978), 35–64.

¹¹ Blanco Jiménez, 'Le opere', p. 36.

¹² As there has been no full assessment of all extant witnesses in Italian, it is impossible to know if any of them are genealogically related to the Castilian translation. Therefore, the only option for comparison is the text established by Branca (see n. 7), from which all references to the Italian text are taken.

¹³ Juan Carlos Conde, 'Las traducciones ibéricas medievales del *Decameron*: tradición textual y recepción coetánea', in *Actas del IX Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Hispánica de Literatura Medieval (A Coruña. 18–22 de septiembre de 2001)*, ed. by Carmen Parrilla and M. Pampín (Noia: Toxosoutos, 2005), pp. 105–22 (p. 107).

by the compiler,¹⁴ who, in the introduction to the fifth *novella*, still references the omitted tale and narrator:

La nouella de dioneo contada con un poco de verguença pungio los coraçones delas dueñas presentes, la qual verguença asas demostro enel honesto color que enlos gestos suyos se ençendio¹⁵

where the Italian reads:

La novella di Dioneo raccontata prima con un poco di vergogna punse i cuori delle donne ascoltanti e con onesto rossore nel loro viso apparito ne diede segno¹⁶

E presents an almost word for word translation of the introduction to 1.5, where such close adherence to the original text impedes understanding rather than aiding it. These preambles, along with the introduction in chapters 1–9, are all that remains of the *cornice*: the introductions and conclusions to each day have been entirely omitted, along with Boccaccio's *Proemio* and *Conclusione dell'autore*. Through the *cornice* the reader is presented with a thematic structure for the *novelle*, as each night the monarch sets a theme for the following day; we are shown how the members of the *brigata* interact with one another and their staff and where they choose to tell their tales. All of this impacts how we read the tales themselves.

Several questions arise from even a cursory glance at this witness: why was the diurnal structure of the *Decameron* abandoned? Why do the first nine *novelle* conform to their original order (with two omissions), when there appears to be no discernible logic for the remaining forty-one? What criteria, if any, were employed to select the *novelle*? Beginning to answer these questions would require an in-depth thematic analysis of the *novelle* included to try to discern a pattern. However, the results of such a study can only confirm what we have seen in the history of the Italian text: many alterations and anthologisations of the *Decameron* were based solely on personal preference. Without a wider tradition of this text (E being the only witness), we cannot extrapolate those results and apply them to the preferences of a wider readership. This may be possible with S, as will be shown below, because the multiple editions and surviving witnesses attest to a level of popularity we cannot be certain E achieved.

¹⁴ As will be shown below, E and S likely share a genealogical model, despite presenting vast structural differences. Thus, a translator refers to the person who created the “original” translation from which both E and S derived. The compiler of E, then, is the person who selected the fifty tales. This may have been the scribe, but not necessarily the original translator. The same applies for S, where the compiler is the person who selected the order of the tales, but this will not necessarily overlap with the original translator or the compositor.

¹⁵ Madrid, Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo El Escorial (RBME), J.II.21, fol. 22^r. See footnote 16 for the relevant translation.

¹⁶ Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 1.5.2. ‘The story told by Dioneo at first pricked the hearts of the listening ladies with somewhat of shamefastness, whereof a modest redness appearing in their faces gave token’, *The Decameron of Giovanni Boccacci*, trans. by John Payne (London: Villon Society, 1886), 3 vols, 1, p. 70 <https://archive.org/details/decameronofgiovao2bocc_o/mode/2up> [accessed 16 August 2020].

The Seville Incunable

The Castilian translation was first printed in Seville in 1496 by Meinardo Ungut and Stanislao Polono. Like E, it begins with the narrator's introduction (chapters 1–11) and little else of the *cornice* is retained. The most obvious difference between the two texts is the fact that this edition includes one hundred *novelle* as opposed to fifty, ninety-eight of which correspond to the ones in Boccaccio's text.¹⁷ In S there is an attempt to adhere to the *Decameron's* daily structure, evidenced by the fact that the first twenty *novelle* stray very little from Boccaccio's original order, as seen in TABLE 2.¹⁸ The first tales of the subsequent two "days" are v.1 and iv.1 respectively and both include an introductory paragraph which contains the *cornice* description of the *brigata's* morning before they tell their stories.

I,1	I,2	I,3	I,9	I,8	I,4	I,5	I,6	I,7	I,10
II,1	II,2	II,3	II,4	II,5	II,6	II,7	II,8	II,9	II,10
V,1	V,6	V,3	V,7	V,8	III,4	VII,3	IX,6	VII,5	III,2
IV,1	IV,2	IV,6	IV,3	IV,4	VIII,5	IV,9	VIII,8	IX,2	IV,10
VI,5	VI,6	VI,7	VI,8	VI,1	VI,2	VI,3	VI,4	VI,9	VI,10
VIII,1	VIII,2	IX,3	VIII,10	IX,9	X,1	X,3	X,6	X,8	X,9
III,5	V,4	VII,8	VII,7	VII,9	VIII,7	X,4	X,5	VII,1	VII,2
VII,4	II,9	III,7	?	III,6	V,9	IX,10	(X,10)	IX,4	III,1
III,3	III,10	III,8	IV,5	IV,8	V,2	V,10	VII,6	VII,10	VIII,3
VIII,4	VIII,6	IX,8	X,7	X,2	IX,1	IV,7	V,5	IX,7	VIII,9

TABLE 2. Tales in S

Further evidence of the compiler's attempt to retain a vestige of the ten-tales-per-day structure is that the narrators for some *novelle* were changed so no narrator would speak twice in a "day" or ten-tale period, as shown in TABLE 3. The table shows us that only the first fifty *novelle* adhere to this structure. On the sixth "day" Neifile, Filostrato and Pampinea each speak twice, and then the structure breaks down completely as introductions to the *novelle* dwindle to nothing, and no attempt is made to ensure continuity with the preceding

¹⁷ The two exceptions are the seventy-fourth and seventy-eighth *novelle* in the table (labelled 'Capitulo lxxiii [sic]' and 'Capitulo lxxvii [sic]' in the corresponding rubrics). *Novella* 73 does not appear in the original Boccaccian text, and it replaces ix.5. Bourland, p. 45; María Hernández Esteban, 'El cuento 73 de *Las cien novelas de Juan Bocacio ajeno al Decameron*', *DICENDA*, 20 (2002), pp. 105–20. The tale corresponding to x.10, the tale of Griselda, is modelled on the Latin reworking by Petrarch, rather than Boccaccio's original. For an exhaustive analysis of this anomalous tale, see Juan Carlos Conde and Víctor Infantes, *La Historia de Griseldis* (Lucca: Mauro Baroni, 2000).

¹⁸ Conde, 'Las traducciones', p. 111.

Panfilo	Neifile	Filomena	<i>Emilia</i>	Lauretta	Dioneo	Fiam- metta	<i>Elissa</i>	Filostrato	Pampinea
Neifile	Filostrato	Pampinea	Lauretta	Fiam- metta	Emilia	Panfilo	Elissa	<i>Filomena</i>	Dioneo
Panfilo	Pampinea	<i>Lauretta</i>	<i>Filomena</i>	<i>Neifile</i>	<i>Dioneo</i>	Elissa	<i>Filostrato</i>	<i>Emilia</i>	<i>Fiammetta</i>
Panfilo	Pampinea	<i>Fiammetta</i>	Lauretta	Elissa	<i>Dioneo</i>	<i>Neifile</i>	<i>Filostrato</i>	<i>Emilia</i>	<i>Filomena</i>
<i>Pampinea</i>	<i>Filomena</i>	Filostrato	Emilia	<i>Elissa</i>	<i>Panfilo</i>	<i>Neifile</i>	<i>Lauretta</i>	<i>Fiammetta</i>	<i>Dioneo</i>
Neifile	Panfilo	Filostrato	<i>Pampinea</i>	Emilia	Neifile	Filostrato	Fiam- metta	<i>Pampinea</i>	<i>Dioneo</i>
			Filomena	<i>Emilia</i>	Pampinea		Emilia		Filostrato
	<i>Dioneo</i>			<i>Dioneo</i>	<i>Dioneo</i>	Dioneo			

TABLE 3. Narrators in S

Plain type indicates no change to the narrator of the tale, italics indicate that the narrator has changed and blank cells indicate where no narrator is mentioned in the introduction or that there is no introduction.

novella or to avoid narrators speaking more than once in a “day”. Indeed, on the eighth “day” Dioneo is the only narrator who is named, and what is more absurd is that three of the four *novelle* attributed to him in S were not originally narrated by him. At this point we may be tempted to ask why the structural changes were applied with so little consistency; perhaps the compiler lost interest, or maybe even ran out of time. Like with E, a thematic examination of the new order is required to determine why certain *novelle* were prioritised by this compiler.

One translation?

The drastic structural differences between E and S may lead one to believe that they are two independent translations; an analysis of their approaches to translation may also support that fact. In general, E presents a word-for-word translation, where S shows a preference for plot and heavily edited descriptive passages. An example of this can be seen in tale v.4, in the initial description of the protagonist Caterina, shown in TABLE 4. There are no noteworthy deviations from the Italian text in E whereas in S there are many omissions (italicized in the Italian). These omissions do not add anything to the plot, but merely emphasise or reiterate what is already there.

<i>Italian</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>
la quale <i>oltre ad ogni altra della contrada</i> , crescendo, divenne bella e <i>piacevole</i> : e per ciò che sola era al padre ed alla madre rimasa, <i>sommamente</i> da loro era amata <i>ed avuta cara</i> e con maravigliosa diligenza guardata, <i>aspettando essi di far di lei alcun gran parentado</i>	¶ la qual allende de toda otra dela encontrada creciendo se fizo bella τ plazible τ por que sola ment era al padre τ ala madre quedada era dellos amada τ avyda muy cara τ con maravillosa diligençia guardada esperando ellos de fazer della alguno grand emparentado	la qual creçiendo se fizo bella. τ por que sola al padre τ a la madre que dada era dellos amada: τ con diligencia guardada.

TABLE 4. Comparison of *novella* v.4.5 with E and S.¹⁹

<i>Italian</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>S</i>
ornamento del cielo leggiadri motti alcun leggiadro ornamenti del corpo	afeyte y apostura del cielo graciosas τ breues palabras et prestas los preciosos motes τ palabras presas grande vicio τ apostamiento del cuerpo	afeyte y apostamiento del cielo graciosas τ breues palabras et prestas los graciosos motes y palabras prestas guarnicion τ apostamiento del cuerpo

TABLE 5. Comparison of *novella* 1.10.3–5 with E and S.²⁰

Despite this, there are instances in which both texts present the same approach to certain passages and deviate from the Italian in an almost identical fashion, as seen in TABLE 5. Each of these examples is an instance of amplification, a common rhetorical device used by medieval writers. In the first and last examples the translator does not opt for the simplest solution by translating ‘ornamento’ (‘decoration’) with its Castilian equivalent. A reason for this may have been that the translator preferred to use an alliterative pair of words, which may not have been possible had ‘ornamento’ been retained. In the last example the noun ‘ornamento’ is translated differently, with ‘guarnicion’²¹ (‘adornment’) instead of ‘afeyte’ (‘trimming’). The adjective

¹⁹ Boccaccio, *Decameron*, v.4.5. ‘who grew up fair and agreeable beyond any other in the [contrada]; and for that she was the only child that remained to her father and mother, they loved and tendered her exceeding dear and guarded her with marvellous diligence, looking to make some great alliance by her.’ Adapted from Payne, II, p. 184; RBME, J.II.21, fol. 117^v; Brussels, (KBR), Inc.B.399, fol. 123^v.

²⁰ Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 1.10.3–5. ‘ornament of the sky’; ‘witty sallies’; ‘sprightly saying’; ‘adornment of the body’ (Payne, I, p. 91 <https://archive.org/details/decameronofgiovaioibocc_o/page/n7/mode/2up> [accessed 16 August 2020]; RBME, J.II.21, fols. 27^r-29^v; KBR, Inc.B.399, fols. 18^v-19^v).

²¹ ‘guarnicion’ (decoration) in S is ‘grande vicio’ (‘great vice’) in E. This is clearly an error as it does not correspond with the Italian. This may be a misreading of an older text (from which E may have been copied) where ‘guarnicion’ looked similar to ‘grande vicio’ due to the gothic script that was used.

'leggiadri' ('graceful') is amplified to encompass three adjectives, and along with this the translator uses hyperbaton on the final adjective positioning it to the right of the noun. Clearly, there were purely rhetorical motives for these changes, as they elevate the style of the Castilian, but do not accurately reflect what is rendered in the Italian. In the third example, 'leggiadro' is used by itself and the aforementioned 'motti' ('sayings') are implied, yet in both E and S the word 'motes' has been added. We see a difference here between E and S, as the former uses 'preciosos' ('beautiful') where the latter uses 'graciosos' (elegant). It is reasonable to assume that this variation was caused by a misreading, as 'pre' and 'gra' would look similar in gothic script. Another difference is 'presas' ('taken') in E as opposed to 'prestar' ('witty') in S. This was probably an error in E, due to the fact that in the previous example 'prestar' was used in both witnesses to amplify the meaning of 'leggiadri motti'.

From this short passage we can draw some initial conclusions regarding the relationship between E and S. The similarities between all four examples, in terms of both vocabulary and syntax, show that they derive from the same original translation because there is nothing in the Italian that would lead two different translators to those precise solutions in Castilian. However, the fact that the earlier text E contains errors not present in S ('grande vicio' and 'presas') shows that S is not directly derived from E and therefore they were copied from different sources that shared a textual model. A provisional *stemma codicum* can be drawn from this evidence, see FIG. 1, where Ω is the original translation. A full assessment of errors must be carried out between the two texts to confirm a genealogical link, but the evidence collected so far strongly suggests that they are parallel reverberations of a single echo of the *Decameron*.

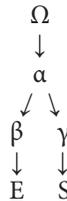


FIG 1. *Stemma codicum* for E and S

Textual transmission of S

There were four sixteenth-century reprints of S, of which fifteen copies survive: Toledo 1524 by Juan de Villaquirán;²² Valladolid 1539 by Diego Fernández de Córdoba;²³ Medina del Campo 1543 by Pedro de Castro;²⁴ Valladolid 1550 by

²² Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (BSB), Res/2 P.o.it.11; Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (BNCF), MAGL.1.5.55.

²³ KBR, V.6884c; BSB, Res/2 P.o.it.12.

²⁴ Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional de España (BNE), R/11313; London, British Library, c20d6; Rome,

Juan de Villalquirán.²⁵ The proximity and occasional collaboration between the printers of these editions²⁶ tempered any substantial distortions. An analysis of the first eleven chapters of the text has shown that meaningful errors are incredibly rare, and that the most significant and consistent changes that take place are conscious decisions by each of the compositors to modernise the grammatical and graphical presentation of the text. The reprints of the Castilian translation thus represent a diachronic echo, where the language of each edition differs from the one that preceded it and conforms to contemporary linguistic developments.

All further echoes of this translation and any other Castilian translation of the *Decameron* are abruptly dulled after the Valladolid 1550 edition. This is unsurprising because 1559 saw the publication of the first *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* by Inquisitor General Valdés, in which the *Decameron* was listed in the Castilian and Portuguese language sections.²⁷ The next comprehensive list was published in 1583 by Quiroga, and the *Decameron* appears in all four language sections: Latin, Castilian, Portuguese and Italian.²⁸ A direct result of this is that there would be no updated translation until the nineteenth century: 'La inquisición española suprimió todas las tiradas en lengua castellana [...] Durante tres siglos no se reimprimió el Decameron en castellano'.²⁹ The prohibition of this work also partially explains why so few witnesses remain on the Iberian Peninsula, either in Italian or Castilian.

Conclusion

The *Decameron*, given a cursory glance, appears to be a simple anthology of one hundred tales; or, at least, this was the reaction of the compiler of the Castilian translation. My aim with this paper was to explore the processes by which such drastic variation could occur, and though we have seen that there was a predilection for personalisation in the early transmission of the *Decameron*, there certainly was not the same disregard for the *cornice* as in the Castilian translation.

Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (BAV), Stamp.KKK.VIII.39; Turin, Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria di Torino (BNUTO), Res. 243; Orléans, Médiathèque municipale, 2°D2428 Fonds ancien 1.

²⁵ Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), Rés. Y2 D-207; Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (ÖNB), *38.A.32; Lisbon, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (BNP), Res. 266°; Oxford, Bodleian Library, G 4.2 Art.; Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek (HAB), A: 13.2 Eth. 2°; Porto, Biblioteca Pública Municipal (BMP), L-13-18.

²⁶ Juan Delgado Casado, *Diccionario De Impresores Españoles, Siglos XV-XVII*. (Madrid: Arco-Libros, 1996). For Diego Fernández de Córdoba, see pp. 224–26; for Pedro de Castro, see pp. 131–33; for Juan de Villalquirán, see pp. 713–14.

²⁷ Jesús Martínez de Bujanda, *Index de l'inquisition espagnole 1551, 1554, 1559* (Sherbrooke: Centre d'études de la Renaissance, 1984), nn. 540, 696.

²⁸ Jesús Martínez de Bujanda, *Index de l'inquisition espagnole: 1583, 1584*, (Sherbrooke: Centre d'études de la Renaissance, 1993), nn. 247, 1834, 1918, 1930, 1979.

²⁹ Antonio Palau y Dulcet, *Manual del librero hispano-americano* (Barcelona: A. Palau, 1949), 28 vols, II-B, p. 291. 'The Spanish Inquisition suppressed all print-runs in Castilian [...] The *Decameron* would not be reprinted in Castilian for another three centuries.'

The textual history of the *Decameron* is nothing if not a series of echoes, becoming more distorted with every reverberation throughout history. Boccaccio's stratified mosaic of narrative voices, audiences and tales was often torn to pieces and rebuilt as the scribe or compiler chose. It is through such tendencies that we reach the Castilian translation. The decision to deconstruct and anthologise the *Decameron* may not have been made by the original translator: this may have occurred in the textual history of the model used for translation, or even within the early tradition of the translation, in archetypes α , β and γ shown in FIG. 1.

Scholars of the Italian tradition of the text have aided us in reaching the source of these echoes and stabilising it by producing a critical edition of the Italian text. My own research will allow me to produce a critical edition of the Castilian translation and afford it its place in the field of Boccaccio's reception in Europe.³⁰ This distant echo of Boccaccio's *Decameron* has become a text in its own right, and careful study can enlighten us not only on the reception of the *Decameron*, but the act of reading itself, as well as highlighting the importance of the *cornice* Boccaccio so carefully constructed, and what is lost when it is stripped away.

³⁰ Emily Di Dodo, 'A Critical Edition of the Medieval Castilian Translation of the *Decameron*' (forthcoming doctoral thesis, University of Oxford, 2022).