Renewal through the Classics: Irony, Parody, Intertextuality in the *Decameron*[1]

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to analyse some of the numerous textual references to classical literature which characterise Boccaccio's *opus maius*. Through a process of allusion, 'sympathy', irony and parody Boccaccio manages to renew — i.e. reconstruct — a new world, which has been defined as the 'Fall of the Middle Ages'; but whilst the medieval models (apart from obvious quotations from Dante and Petrarch, Boccaccio's masters) are often ironized or parodied, the classical ones are contemporised and used as tools for the (re)composition of a new literature and a new society.

Keywords:

This article, consistently with the theme of *Skepsi*'*s* first issue, is meant to examine grafts and transplants in Boccaccio's vernacular masterpiece, the *Decameron*. Both the practice of irony and parody through a rereading and reuse of the arts of rhetoric, and also recontextualisation which diachronically questions authorial identities are widely featured in Boccaccio's *ars contaminandi* [art of contamination], intertextuality and renewal of classical and medieval traditions. Such literary results are achieved at their best in the prose fiction of the *Decameron*.[2]

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[1] This article is a longer version of the conference paper delivered at the AAIS Convention 2006, Genoa, Palazzo Ducale, May 25–28, 2006. All translations from languages other than English are mine, except for the *Decameron*, for which I used *The* Decameron *of Giovanni Boccaccio faithfully translated by J.M. Rigg* (London, 1921), available at http://www.stg.brown.edu/projects/decameron/engDecIndex.php. Some language revision and correction seemed appropriate at 6, 7, 14-16; 6, 10, 7.

[2] Boccaccio's *ars contaminandi* in its practical applications within and without the *Decameron* (vernacular prose and Latin poetry) has been one of the main themes studied in my Ph.D. Thesis (E. Santangelo, 'Reading and writing, writing through reading: a study on *imitatio* in Petrarch and Boccaccio' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London, 2007, chapters 1, 5, 6). *ars contaminandi*, as argued in that work, is Boccaccio's personal interpretation of *ars imitandi*, i.e. literary imitation. A modern survey of literary imitation in Italy in the Renaissance is in M. McLaughlin, *Literary imitation in the Italian Renaissance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995). No need to mention that I am strongly indebted to this study. Useful reflections on theory and practice of imitation in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance were developed in H. Gmelin, 'Das Prinzip der *Imitatio* in den romanischen Literaturen der Renaissance', *Romanische Forschungen*, 46 (1932), 83-360, where a general survey of imitative techniques is carried out. The important contributions by G. Pasquali, *Pagine stravaganti di un filologo II. Terze pagine stravaganti, stravaganze quarte e supreme*, ed. by C.F. Russo (Florence: Le Lettere, 1994), pp. 275–82 and

Days 1 and 6 give us plenty of material in this sense. Topics, language, style and characters of the *novelle* (diegetic level) provide the reader with a wide range of examples of irony and parody, achieved through the instruments of intertextuality and contemporisation of literary models.[3] Intertextuality also leads to *contaminatio* [contamination] and, again, contemporisation/renewal of classical and post-classical models as far as the storytellers in the *cornice* [the framework's intradiegetic level] are concerned. Particularly significant features are displayed by Elissa in the *cornice* framing Days 1 and 6. Elissa has little to do with irony and parody, but she nonetheless represents a thriving example of renewal of traditions.[4] In this paper I wish to draw the reader's attention to the diegetic level of the narration. For this reason, I chose to analyse the traits of ser Cepparello (1, 1), Madonna Filippa (6, 7) and Fra Cipolla (6, 10).

The characters of the *Decameron* and their sayings, in most of the dramatic and dialogic parts of the *novelle*, feature that humanistic realism studied by Muscetta and Baratto.[5] Such a realism points to the principles of classical rhetoric. The portraits of ser Cepparello (1, 1), Guccio, Imbratta and Nuta (6, 10) accomplish that *imitatio veritatis* [imitation of truth] recommended to the good orator by Cicero and Quintilian (Cicero, *De inventione* I, 21; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* IV, 2, 52).

The description of *turpitudo* [moral baseness] and *deformitas* [ugliness] and the device of delaying the reader's expectations, enacted in the *novella*-confession of ser Cepparello, do confirm in detail Boccaccio's comic and realistic purpose, pursued through a contemporary application of classical recommendations (Cicero, *De Oratore* II, 58, 236, ff).

F. Ulivi, *L'imitazione nella poetica del Rinascimento* (Milan: Marzorati, 1959) date to the 1950s. Several post-war Italian scholars have also contributed to my research. The studies of Giuseppe Billanovich (may I only mention here *Petrarca letterato. Lo scrittoio del Petrarca* and *Restauri boccacceschi* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1947)), Guido Martellotti (*Le due redazioni delle* Genealogie *del Boccaccio* (Rome: Ed. Storia e Letteratura, 1951)), Giuseppe Velli (*Petrarca e Boccaccio. Tradizione, memoria, scrittura* (Padua: Antenore, 1995)), Vittore Branca (two for all, *Boccaccio medievale e nuovi studi sul Decameron* and the editions of the *Decameron* with their numerous reprints: in this study I used respectively: Milan: Sansoni, 1998 and Turin: Einaudi, 1992), together with the editions of the complete works of Boccaccio (*Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio,* ed. by V. Branca, 10 vols (Milan: Mondadori, 1964–1998)) shed some light on the intertextual fabric of the Latin and vernacular works of Petrarch and Boccaccio.

[3] Contemporisation, a new coinage nowadays quite accepted in the domain of Boccaccio's literary criticism (see V. Branca, *Boccaccio medievale e nuovi studi sul Decameron* (Milan: Sansoni, 1998), pp. 347 ff.), implies recontextualisation and updating of the original sources, as shown by the characters illustrated below. Such a process of contemporisation implies a graft onto a new literary body.

[4] As argued in E. Santangelo, '*Per aspera ad astra*. Una metamorfosi onomastico-semantica nel *Decameron*', *Linguistica e Letteratura*, 1-2 (2003), 11–14. In the article is examined the intertextual metamorphosis undergone by Elissa as a character-storyteller throughout Boccaccio's vernacular works up to the *Decameron* and beyond (*Esposizioni sopra la Comedia di Dante*).

[5] C. Muscetta, *La letteratura italiana. Storia e testi* (Bari: Laterza, 1972), vol. 2.2, p. 307; M. Baratto, *Realtà e stile nel Decameron* (Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 1970), pp. 17–19.

The moral traits of ser Cepparello in *Decameron* 1, 1, 10-15, correspond to all the above. If his baseness [*turpitudo*] and his *insignis improbitas scelere iuncta* [remarkable and criminal wickedness] would possibly distinguish him from the burlesque characters described by Cicero, we have nonetheless to observe that Boccaccio, starting from Cicero's advice, builds up a character who is a *facinerosus* [criminal], well deserving to be hit (=described) *maiore quadam vi quam ridiculi* [with something stronger than the burlesque], but still provoking laughter in the reader. Cepparello, detestable man, provokes his readers to amusement and sympathy, and Boccaccio achieves this result through a clever application of classical principles, transplanted into a medieval setting (characters and environment). The widely used hyperboles (such as the exemplary '*egli era il piggiore uomo forse che mai nascesse* [he was, perhaps, the worst man that ever was born]', 15), and that rhythm of three words and three phrases ('*mali, inimicizie e scandali* [ill-feeling, enmities, dissensions]', 12, and '*Invitato a uno omicidio* […], *senza negarlo mai, volenterosamente v'andava* [Set him on murder […], he never hesitated, but went about it with alacrity]', 13), certainly render this 'lord of evil' a grotesque character. Cepparello's traits are so rhetorically stressed that he almost loses his realistic aspect, as proved by the insistent use of hyperboles and exaggerations. Yet another model for Cepparello is Matthieu de Vendôme's Davus. '*Scurra vagus, parasitus edax, abjectio plebis, / est Davus, rerum dedecus, aegra lues; / fomentum sceleris, mundi sentina, ruina / justitiae, legum laesio, fraude potens* [A wandering buffoon, a greedy parasite, people's despair, / this is Davus, shame and sick plague of everything; / cause for crime, bilge-water of the world, ruin / of justice, scorner of the law, skilful in fraud]' (*Ars versificatoria* 53, 1–4). Cepparello, close to the end, wants to show his gratitude to those who gave him hospitality, preserving their safety and meanwhile saving usury from possible riots: '*per che, non assoluto, anche sarà gittato a' fossi. E se questo avviene, il popolo di questa terra,* […] *veggendo ciò si leverà a romore* [and so, dying without absolution, he will still be cast out into the ditch. In which case the folk of these parts, […] will seize their opportunity, and raise a tumult]' (1, 1, 25-26). This is, finally, a 'disinterested' gesture (the ultimate one) and the Church and the gullibility of the people are the target of this *beffa* (the very first one in the *Decameron*).

Cepparello asks for a '*santo e valente frate'* willing to hear his confession and give him Extreme Unction: his last enjoyable entertainment appears to be this extreme *beffa*. At this point, Boccaccio deploys the device of delayed expectation, a typical mechanism of the comic style, introduced to the West by Plautus and later theoretically illustrated by Cicero (*De Oratore* II, 71, 289) and Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria* VI, 3, 24, 43). But what decidedly attracts the

attention of the reader is the parody of the Sacrament of Confession, enacted by Boccaccio to delay the expectation about the fate of Cepparello and his hosts. Boccaccio and the reader know, in other words, that Cepparello's confession is a false and burlesque confession, and thus it is perceived as a parody. However, the fact that the characters of the *novella* seem to find it true starts the process of literary ironisation: a true problem (the condition of the sinner) and a true device to solve it (the ritual Sacrament of Confession), for an intrinsically false result (true but ineffective absolution).

The first *novella* of the *Decameron* therefore provides the reader with an example of Boccaccio's irony and parody. Classical and medieval models of comic and rhetorical characters are mingled together and contemporised (in other words: grafted) into a late medieval setting. Moreover, Sacraments and devotional literature (lives and deeds of the Saints, collected in the typical medieval form of the hagiography) are reinterpreted through a process of literary ironisation (approaching, in this case, parody). In this respect, the *novella* may be considered as one of the purest examples of renewal of diverse traditions.

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The core of two *novelle* of Day 6 is two outstanding orations, a 'natural' gift of the speaking characters reflecting the sound rhetorical background of the writer. Rhetorical structures (especially the classical *facetiae*) abound in both of them. With a shrewd effective speech, Madonna Filippa escapes conviction (6, 7), and the sparkling oration of Fra Cipolla saves the speaker from scorn (6, 10). A genuinely persuasive speech, and not just the usual prompt reply (as in the *novelle* of Abraham the Jew, Melchisedech, the Marchioness of Monferrato and Bergamino, all in Day 1), gets the two protagonists out of trouble, when life and honour are at stake. In this respect, the orations of Madonna Filippa and Fra Cipolla possess all the characteristics of the *suasoriae*, a late classical form of *oratio* described by Quintilian (*Institutio Oratoria* III, 8, 1, ff).

Madonna Filippa broaches the issue *in medias res*, challenging the judge with an *argumentatio* divided into two parts, *reprehensio* and *confirmatio*.[6]

[6] *Confirmatio* and *reprehensio* are the two parts in which the *argumentatio* is divided, according to Cicero (*De Inventione* 1, 19 ff). A deductive syllogism is underpinning this *argumentatio*. This part of the syllogism is presented as a *reprehensio*, a rebuke against the common points of view of Madonna Filippa's milieu. Madonna Filippa starts from a sheer admission of guilt (the syllogism's statements are rendered in non-italics): 'egli è vero *che* […] nelle quali io sono […] molte volte stata, *né questo negherei mai'*. A general remark about the necessity of communal consent in legislation (major premise): '*le leggi deono esser comuni* […]', is then followed by a minor premise concerning a particular law and a specific group of discriminated people, i.e. women: '*le quali cose di questa* [*legge*] *non avvengono* […] *ché essa solamente le donne tapinelle costrigne*', who possess a peculiar characteristic: they '*molto meglio che gli uomini potrebbero a molti sodisfare*'. What follows is the *confirmatio* of

> La donna, senza sbigottire punto, con voce assai piacevole rispose: –Messere, egli è vero che Rinaldo è mio marito e che egli questa notte passata mi trovò nelle braccia di Lazzarino, nelle quali io sono, per buono e per perfetto amore che io gli porto, molte volte stata, né questo negherei mai; ma come io son certa che voi sapete, le leggi deono esser comuni e fatte con consentimento di coloro a cui toccano. Le quali cose di questa non avvengono, ché essa solamente le donne tapinelle costrigne, le quali molto meglio che gli uomini potrebbero a molti sodisfare; e oltre a questo, non che alcuna donna, quando fatta fu, ci prestasse consentimento, ma niuna ce ne fu mai chiamata: per le quali cose meritamente malvagia si può chiamare (Dec. 6, 7, 13-14).
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> [*The lady, no wise dismayed, and in a tone not a little jocund, thus made answer: 'True it is, Sir, that Rinaldo is my husband, and that last night he found me in the arms of Lazzarino, in whose arms for the whole-hearted love that I bear him I have ofttimes lain; nor shall I ever deny it; but, as well I want you know, the laws ought to be common and enacted with the common consent of all that they affect; which conditions are wanting to this law, inasmuch as it binds only us poor women, who may be much more liberal than men; but the consent of no woman, furthermore, was asked before that law was made nor were they asked for their view of it; for which reasons it justly deserves to be called a bad law.'*]

The following *confirmatio* is the enquiry addressed to her husband through the judge.

> — avanti che a alcuna cosa giudicar procediate, vi priego che una piccola grazia mi facciate, cioè che voi il mio marito domandiate se io ogni volta e quante volte a lui piaceva, senza dir mai di no, io di me stessa gli concedeva intera copia o no. A che Rinaldo, senza aspettare che il podestà il domandasse, prestamente rispose che senza alcun dubbio la donna a ogni sua richiesta gli aveva di sé ogni suo piacer conceduto (15-16).
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> [*'I pray you, go not on to try this matter in any wise, until you have granted me this trifling grace, i.e. to ask my husband if I ever gainsaid him, but did not rather accord him, when and so often as he craved it, complete enjoyment of myself.' Whereto Rinaldo, without awaiting the Podestà's question, forthwith answered, that assuredly the lady had ever granted him all that he had asked of her for his gratification.*]

The oration ends with a sarcastic question, founded upon a semantic *ambiguum*.

> Adunque – seguí prestamente la donna – domando io voi, messer podestà, se egli ha sempre di me preso quello che gli è bisognato e piaciuto, io che doveva fare o debbo di quel che gli avanza? debbolo io gittare a' cani? non è egli molto meglio servirne un gentile uomo che piú che sé m'ama, che lasciarlo perdere o guastare (17)?
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> [*'Then', promptly continued the lady, 'if he has ever had of me as much as sufficed for his solace, what was I or am I to do with the surplus? Am I to cast it to the dogs? Is it not much better to bestow it on a gentleman that loves me more dearly than himself, than to suffer it to come to nought or worse?'*]

The acuity of the joke lies in the interpretation of '*prendere quello che bisogna o piace'*, a semantically ambiguous expression open to metonymic interpretation. Quality (i.e. 'what has to be taken') is exchanged for quantity (i.e. 'how much has to be taken'), and an extensive meaning ('*prendere quello che piace*' here generically stands for 'satisfying one's own sexual appetite') for a restrictive one ('*prendere* [*solo*] *quello che piace*' implies the turning down of what is left).

Filippa's point: '*non che alcuna donna, quando [questa legge] fatta fu, ci prestasse consentimento, ma niuna ce ne fu mai chiamata: per le quali cose meritamente malvagia si può chiamare*'.

Classical rhetoric accepts the use of ambiguous or polysemic expressions, especially if the oration is meant to provoke laughter and it may also apply to perilous situations like the one skilfully untangled by Madonna Filippa (see respectively Cicero, *De Oratore* II, 62, 253–54 and II, 61, 250).

Fra Cipolla makes a clever and humoristic use of Cicero's and Quintilian's rhetoric.

> Era questo frate Cipolla di persona piccolo, di pelo rosso e lieto nel viso e il miglior brigante del mondo: e oltre a questo, niuna scienza avendo, sí ottimo parlatore e pronto era, che chi conosciuto non l'avesse, non solamente un gran rettorico l'avrebbe estimato, ma avrebbe detto esser Tulio medesimo o forse Quintiliano: e quasi di tutti quegli della contrada era compare o amico o benvogliente (6, 10, 7).
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> [*Fra Cipolla was little of person, red-haired, jolly-visaged, and the very best of good fellows; and therewithal, though learning he had none, he was so excellent and ready a speaker that whoever knew him not would not only have esteemed him a great rhetorician, but would have pronounced him Cicero himself or, perchance, Quintilian: and he was gossip or friend or lover of all the countryfolk.*]

Fra Cipolla's oratorical skills merely come from his prompt and acute intelligence, *nulla arte*, according to Cicero's suggestions (*De Oratore* II, 54, 217). So great is his reputation for that natural gift, that the people of Boccaccio's village mistake him for a trustworthy Master of Rhetoric. One of his 'students' is Guccio Porco, who clumsily tries to seduce Nuta with the power of *his own* eloquence.

> E [...] cominciò con costei [...] a entrare in parole e dirle che egli era gentile uomo per procuratore e che egli aveva de' fiorini piú di millantanove, senza quegli che egli aveva a dare altrui, che erano anzi piú che meno, e che egli sapeva tante cose fare e dire, che domine pure unquanche (6, 10, 22).
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> [*And fell a gossiping with Nuta* […] *and told her that he was a gentleman by procuration, and had more florins than could be reckoned, besides those that he had to give away, which were rather more than less, and that he could do and say such things as never were or might be seen or heard forever, good Lord! and a day.*]

If Guccio is probably the *scurra*, so condemned by Cicero (*De Oratore* II, 60, 244, 247) and Matthieu de Vendôme, Fra Cipolla manages instead to persuade and fascinate his audience. His speech (37-52) is a real state-of-the-art oratorical performance.

The storyteller Dioneo says little about Fra Cipolla's gestures, but we can be fairly sure that his eloquence leads to a performance which is much higher than that of a *scurra*. It indeed provokes hilarity: the distinction is again made by Cicero in *De Oratore* II, 61, 251, ff. This new '*Tulio medesimo o forse Quintiliano*' manages to achieve his goal and persuade the people of Certaldo through a contemporisation of the principles of classical rhetoric, the same process enacted by Madonna Filippa. He also operates all the rhetorical skills and the device of delayed expectation which we have seen enacted in Cepparello's confession.

Fra Cipolla's speech, as well as Cepparello's confession, is an oral *beffa* displaying an ironical and parodistic interpretation of the Sacraments and devotional literature. Consistently with a particular kind of *elocutio*, useful for preserving the speaker from scorn, in the rhetorical tools of this *beffa* one may find the *facetiae*, *ambigua*, *subabsurda* and emphatic obviousness defined by Cicero and Quintilian.[7] Fra Cipolla is, in fact, forced to use *facetiae*, *ambigua* and *subabsurda* in order to save his reputation, and this is, for other reasons, the case of Madonna Filippa and ser Cepparello. Cicero and Quintilian are not kind to these ambiguous expressions, otherwise called 'amphiboly' (Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* VI, 3, 47), except for a particular case: when they are used to tackle a difficult situation (*De Oratore* II, 54, 218; 56, 230 and *Institutio Oratoria* VI, 3, 13). In the oration of Fra Cipolla, however, amphiboly, amphibology, *ambigua*, *subabsurda* and emphatic obviousness are all aimed at deceiving the gullible audience of Certaldo, in this sense ironising on the devotional texts which recount travels and miracles of the Saints or the itineraries of the 'holy relics' in the Middle Ages. For example, certain substantives or phrases belong to the category of the *ambigua*, since their meaning is amphibolic within the syntactic organisation of the sentence: this is the case of the metaphorical places of paragraph 38, where each geographical name may recall two different locations, one in Florence (areas, neighbourhoods), the other abroad. The overall meaning of the sentence is that, in the end, Fra Cipolla has not set foot outside Florence.

> — Per la qual cosa messom'io in cammino, di Vinegia partendomi e andandomene per lo Borgo de' Greci e di quindi per lo reame del Garbo cavalcando e per Baldacca, pervenni in Parione, donde, non senza sete, dopo alquanto pervenni in Sardigna. Ma perché vi vo io tutti i paesi cerchi da me divisando? Io capitai, passato il Braccio di San Giorgio, in Truffia e in Buffia, paesi molto abitati e con gran popoli; e di quindi pervenni in terra di Menzogna, dove molti de' nostri frati e d'altre religioni trovai assai […] (38–39).
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> [*On which errand I set forth, taking my departure from Venice, and traversing the Borgo de' Greci, and thence on horseback the realm of Algarve, and so by Baldacca I came to Parione, whence, somewhat athirst, I after a while got on to Sardinia. But wherefore go I about to enumerate all the lands in which I pursued my quest? Having passed the straits of San Giorgio, I arrived at Truffia and Buffia, countries thickly populated and with great nations, whence I pursued my journey to Menzogna, where I met with many of our own brethren, and of other religious not a few.*]

In the following paragraphs of the oration we notice that *caldo* at paragraph 43 refers both to 'bread' and 'weather' ('*l'anno di state vi vale il pan freddo quattro denari e <u>il caldo</u> v'è per niente* [In summer cold bread costs four deniers, and hot bread is to be had for nothing]'), and the '*piagge di Monte Morello in volgare* [the acclivities of Monte Morello in the vulgar]' and

[7] See respectively Cicero, *De Oratore* II, 54, 217; II, 61, 250 and 62, 253-54; Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* VI, 23 and 99. In the quotations Fra Cipolla's amphibologies, *ambigua*, *subabsurda* and emphatic obviousness are underlined.

'*alquanti capitoli del Caprezio* [some chapters of Caprezio]' (par. 46) are real geographical places and metaphorical places of Fra Cipolla's body. The *subabsurda* (nonsense and *adynata*) and the emphatic obviousness of certain expressions perfect the use of amphibology in this *novella*.

Nonsense is indeed names such as '*Truffia*', '*Buffia*', '*Terra di Menzogna*', '*India Pastinaca*', '*Nonmiblasmete Sevoipiace*', '*Verbum-caro-fatti-alle-finestre*'; *adynata* (the Latin '*impossibilia*') are such expressions as '*il dito dello Spirito Santo*', '*il ciuffetto del serafino che apparve a San Francesco e una dell'unghie de' gherubini*', the '*vestimenti della santa Fé catolica e alquanti de' raggi della stella che apparve ai Magi in Oriente, e una ampolla del sudore di san Michele quando combatté col diavole, e la mascella della Morte di S.Lazzero*.'[8]

The emphatic obviousness of several expressions of Fra Cipolla possesses a phonetic and performative aspect which cannot be rendered in writing. In Mortara-Garavelli's words such a process consists in '*dare a intendere più di quanto sia esplicitamente detto* [make one understand more than what is being said]',[9] by giving each phrase an extra-meaning it does not originally possess. This is the case of sentences generating amazement in the audience.

> — Signori e donne, voi dovete sapere che, essendo io ancora molto giovane, io fui mandato dal mio superiore in quelle parti dove apparisce il sole […], alle montagne de' Bachi pervenni, dove tutte l'acque corrono alla 'ngiú. E in brieve tanto andai adentro, che io pervenni mei infino in India Pastinaca, là dove io vi giuro per l'abito che io porto addosso che io vidi volare i pennati, cosa incredibile a chi non gli avesse veduti (37–42).
>
> [*Ladies and gentlemen, you are to know, that when I was yet a very young man, I was sent by my superior into those parts where the sun rises […]. And leaving them, I arrived at the mountains of the Bachi, where all the waters run downwards. In short I penetrated so far that I came at last to India Pastinaca, where I swear to you by the habit that I wear, that I saw pruning-hooks fly: a thing that none would believe that had not seen it.*]

Finally, in the glittering conclusion marking the social achievement of Fra Cipolla before the community of Certaldo, we read: 'Ma prima voglio che voi sappiate che chiunque da questi carboni in segno di croce è tocco, tutto quello anno può viver sicuro che fuoco nol cocerà che non si senta [but first of all I would have you know, that whoso has the sign of the cross made upon him with these coals, may live secure for the whole of the ensuing year, that fire shall not touch him, that he feel it not]' (52). All these natural and unsurprising events are obviously presented as mirabilia, again a classical figure of speech featuring the ornatus of any excellent suasoria (Institutio Oratoria VIII, 3, 6). The two suasoriae of Madonna Filippa and Fra Cipolla, together with the portraits of moral wickedness (Cepparello) and physical ugliness (Guccio and

[8] Relevant translation at: www.stg.brown.edu/projects/decameron/engDecShowText.php?myID=nov0610&expand=day06

[9] B. Mortara-Garavelli, *Manuale di retorica* (Milan: Bompiani, 1994), p. 177.

Nuta), all reflect certain rhetorical issues originally codified by Cicero and Quintilian, then somehow developed by Matthieu de Vandôme, and finally contemporised – if not ironised or parodied – by Boccaccio in the Decameron, in this sense undergoing a process of grafting. Boccaccio's ars contaminandi consists in the combination of pre-existing models,[10] often not adequately mingled together (as in the case of the Latin eclogues of the Buccolicum Carmen). The construction of the fictional character of Elissa in the Decameron shows instead how Boccaccio developed those mere juxtapositions of the models into a mature form of intertextuality, in which ars contaminandi means combination, contemporisation and occasionally, as we have seen, ironisation and parody of the models.

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[10] Above, n. 3.