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## Where does the *Decameron* begin? Editorial practice and tables of rubrics

### Abstract

**Tables of rubrics**, though present in manuscripts and editions of the *Decameron*, are ignored in the critical literature and treated as instrumental **paratext** in a recent **critical edition**. This article argues that tables of **rubrics** should be viewed as part of the *Decameron*, proposing a new definition of paratext. Analysis of tables presented in editions of the *Decameron* up to 1600 contributes new empirical evidence to the relationship between **editorial fashioning** and literary interpretation: the *novelle* and characters of the *brigata* are emphasized at the expense of the primary **narrator**, which continues to have an impact on **Boccaccio's authorial status**.

### Keywords

rubrics; rubrication; titling; paratext; editors; editing; print culture

The answer to the question ‘Where does the *Decameron* begin?’ seems obvious at first glance. Some seven hundred years into the publication history of this canonical text, what we have come to understand as the contents is replicated across the many critical editions available in print and online: the Proem, followed by one hundred *novelle* organized into ten days of storytelling, and a Conclusion.<sup>1</sup> However, many editions contain a wealth of additional material and a certain degree of pre-knowledge is often required in order to locate Boccaccio’s text. A good example of this is the most recent Italian critical edition (eds

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<sup>1</sup> Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, MS Hamilton 90 (also known as ‘MS B’) was definitively established as an autograph in the 1960s, after which readings from this manuscript have formed the core of critical editions. The most recent critical edition by Amadeo Quondam, Giancarlo Alfano, and Maurizio Fiorilla (Milan: BUR Rizzoli, 2013) corrects some readings in the critical text established by Vittore Branca, which Fiorilla judged to be errors in the autograph.

Quondam, Alfano and Fiorilla, 2013) where the opening lines of the Proem do not appear for a full 127 pages and Boccaccio's text is regularly interrupted by editorial notes at the beginning of each Day of storytelling, so that the reader is constantly switching between authorial text and modern paratext.<sup>2</sup>

Whilst it is far from unusual to find scholarly editions in which the beginning of the authorial *text* is not aligned with the beginning of the *book*, there is a larger question at play here which concerns our ability as readers (and editors) to be able to distinguish between editorial paratext, which is made up of historical and discursive notes designed to supplement and support the text, and the authorial text, whose literary and aesthetic qualities we perceive to be the product of the mind of Boccaccio. The complex semantics of the book are not a question of instinct or commonsense, but must be learned. While readers accustomed to critical editions and the conventions of scholarly criticism are not likely to encounter any difficulties locating the text within the 2013 *Decameron*, it is nevertheless crucial that readers are able to understand what it is that they are reading, and also that editors and publishers fully understand the impact of their decisions on the interpretation of a work.<sup>3</sup> Editors occupy a privileged position, not only as private readers, but as readers who have the ability to shape the reading experience of others through their control over the verbal and visual codes which

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<sup>2</sup> The volume opens with a title-page and publishing details, a sixty-page introduction, followed by a shorter 'Scheda dell'opera' offering additional commentary on the structure of the text and its themes, a biography of the author, a bibliography, and editorial notes which cover the textual tradition in some detail as well as give details of the current editorial practice. It is not unusual to find substantial paratextual frontmatter in critical editions of the *Decameron*, although the 2013 edition is particularly generous in this regard. For comparison, Vittore Branca's edition for Mondadori's Oscar Classici series includes 77 pages of preliminary essays and bibliography in the 2004 print, while Mario Marti's edition for BUR (14<sup>th</sup> edn, 1998) contains a scant 33 pages of frontmatter.

<sup>3</sup> The role of the editor has a history itself. In this essay I use the terms editor and publisher to refer broadly to the wide range of agents charged with the role of shaping the presentation of the text. In this context I am primarily concerned with the editors of printed editions, but the role of editor also extends to manuscript production, as we shall see in the case of Boccaccio.

together present a text in the physical form of the book (whether handwritten, printed or digital).

The aim of this essay is therefore to pause on, and examine in more detail, a process of textual classification and navigation which we usually take for granted and pass over without comment. In the following discussion I will use tables of rubrics as a case study for exploring the impact of editorial responsibility on literary interpretation and on the definition of what we consider to be the boundaries of the text. Tables of rubrics have been a previously invisible element within Boccaccio scholarship, which come to light through this focus on the text as a combinatory process of authorship and editorship. We will see how Boccaccio's own editorial practices indicate that the table of rubrics might legitimately be considered as the beginning of the text of the *Decameron*, in contrast with modern editorial theory (and thus modern scholarship), which commonly relegates the table of rubrics to a secondary role as functional paratext whilst nevertheless purporting to reconstruct authorial authenticity. The history and impact of editorial fashioning will be developed further through an analysis of editions of the *Decameron* printed between 1470 and 1600. I will use examples of early modern editorial practice in order to reveal the ways in which the presentation of rubrication has emphasized different elements of Boccaccio's complex voicing strategies, influencing subsequent generations of readers. New editions of the *Decameron* (whether in Italian or in translation) show no signs of abating, and the digital platform continues to suggest new functional and aesthetic possibilities for the presentation of texts. As we move forwards, therefore, it is more important than ever that we look backwards at the publishing history of the *Decameron* and understand how editorial practice has exerted influence over its readers, so that we in turn can make informed decisions as editors and readers.

### **Tables of rubrics as authorial text**

The table of rubrics is rarely, if ever, discussed as a textual feature in Boccaccio scholarship, but the individual rubrics of which the table is composed have received some attention.<sup>4</sup>

These individual rubrics are found throughout Boccaccio's text, marking the opening of each day and the *novelle* within it. They are a familiar component in medieval manuscripts of all genres: the term 'rubric' was first applied to sections of text highlighted in red ink, and subsequently came to be synonymous with headings and titles.<sup>5</sup> Within manuscript culture, a rubricator might be engaged in addition to a scribe, with the specific job of adding headings and simple initials in coloured ink after the main part of the text had been copied.<sup>6</sup>

We know from the extant autograph manuscript of the *Decameron* that the text of the rubrics was composed by Boccaccio. As the copyist of his own manuscripts, he is not only the author of the rubrics but also their editor, choosing where to position them in relation to the text and controlling their appearance. The multiple narrative entry points layered into the

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<sup>4</sup> See Antonio D'Andrea, 'Le rubriche del *Decameron*', in *Il nome della storia* (Naples: Liguori, 1982), 98-119; Jonathan Usher, 'Le rubriche del *Decameron*', *Medioevo romanzo*, 10.3 (1985), 391-418; Angela Milanese, 'Affinità e contraddizioni tra rubriche e novelle del *Decameron*', *Studi sul Boccaccio*, 23 (1995), 89-111; Raymund Wilhelm, 'Alle soglie della narratività: le rubriche del *Decameron* nella traduzione francese di Laurent de Premierfait (1414)', *Romanische forshungen*, 113.2 (2001), 190-226. See also the related study Vittore Branca, 'Il tipo Boccacciano di rubriche-sommari e il suo riflettersi nella tradizione del *Filostrato* e del *Teseida*', in *Tradizione delle opere di Giovanni Boccaccio* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1991), II, 525-37.

<sup>5</sup> On definitions of rubrics, see Christopher De Hamel, *Scribes and Illuminators* (London: British Museum Press, 1992), p. 33; Raymond Clemens and Timothy Graham, *Introduction to Manuscript Studies* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 24-25; Peter Beal, *A Dictionary of English Manuscript Terminology: 1450-2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 352.

<sup>6</sup> Rubrics continue after the introduction of printing with moveable type, initially added by hand in spaces left blank by early printers, sometimes printed in red and, more commonly still, in the same black ink as the main text. Printed rubrics might be distinguished from the rest of the text through the use of different typefaces, the addition of paraph marks or printers' flowers, or simply through spacing. See the entry on rubrics in Michael F. Suarez and H. R. Woudhuysen, *The Oxford Companion to the Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 1112; and detailed discussion of hand rubrication in incunables in Margaret M. Smith, 'Patterns of Incomplete Rubrication in Incunables and What They Suggest about Working Methods', in *Medieval Book Production: Assessing the Evidence*, ed. by Linda L. Brownrigg (Los Altos Hills, CA: Anderson-Lovelace, 1990), pp. 133-46.

*Decameron* make it organically predisposed towards the need for titles and intertitles.<sup>7</sup> These are organized into the following system: an incipit, which encompasses both a title which stands for the work as a whole and an intertitle for the Proem: ‘Comincia il libro chiamato Decameron, cognominato principe Galeotto, nel quale si contengono cento novelle in dieci dì dette da sette donne e da tre giovani huomini. Proemio.’; as well as a series of intertitles marking the end of one day and the beginning of the next, noting the chosen King or Queen and the theme which will shape the *novelle*; and a further set marking the opening of each *novella* which summarizes the plot; closing with an intertitle for the Author’s Conclusion, and an explicit: ‘Qui finiscie la decima e ultima giornata del libro chiamato Decameron, cognominato prencipe Galeotto.’ Perhaps inspired by Boccaccio’s own use of the catch-all term ‘rubrica’, previous scholarship has referred to these collectively as rubrics.<sup>8</sup>

Boccaccio scholarship has emphasized the narrative, literary value of rubrics beyond a purely instrumental function as signposts to mark beginnings or endings, or as summaries to jog the memory. Raymund Wilhelm provides a useful review of the field: ‘le rubriche sono da considerare, non solo in funzione delle novelle stesse, e pertanto come elementi subordinati, ma come piccole composizioni autonome [...]. Le rubriche del *Decameron* si pongono [...] “accanto alle novelle con pari dignità, spingendosi ben al di là si una mera

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<sup>7</sup> Gérard Genette uses the term ‘intertitle’ to refer to ‘the title of a section of a book’, in other words, a heading or sub-title which is hierarchically inferior to the title of the work as a whole, in his *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 295. Discussion of the *Decameron* on pp. 299-300 is rather inaccurate and shows no knowledge of the autograph manuscript and later traditions.

<sup>8</sup> An exception is made for the opening rubric or incipit, which is often referred to as a title, with the reference to ‘prencipe Galeotto’ described as a ‘subtitle’. Boccaccio himself uses the term ‘rubrica’, writing this term underneath several of the rubrics in the autograph: see Marco Corsi, *Il ‘Decameron’: scritte, scriventi, lettori: storia di un testo* (Rome: Viella, 2007), p. 162. Note, however, that Usher distinguishes between ‘la rubrica “composite”’, used for the rubrics introducing each day, and the ‘forma “semplice”’, reserved for rubrics summarizing each *novella*, p. 395.

funzione servile”<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the rubrics expose the complex ways in which authorship encompasses editorial activity. Jonathan Usher suggests that the rubrics were composed after the text of the *novelle*, such that they reveal Boccaccio’s role as a reader of himself. More than simple summaries of the plot of the various *novelle*, they enable us to see how Boccaccio values his own work.<sup>10</sup> This perspective on the rubrics emphasizes not simply the significance we should attribute to them as ‘authored texts’, but also the insights they reveal into Boccaccio’s own reading practices as he shapes the presentation of his own work. The rubrics thus have the potential to reveal both the world of the text (that which is contained within the *novelle* and *cornice*) and the world of the author (the ways in which the text has been constructed, merging together elements of the framestory and the historical world beyond it).<sup>11</sup>

Individual rubrics located within the framestory and *novelle* could be gathered into one easily-accessible and consultable location at the opening or closing of the text, which I will refer to as a table of rubrics.<sup>12</sup> The table of rubrics is thus not qualitatively different from

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<sup>9</sup> Wilhelm, pp. 192-93. Wilhelm himself is more cautious and prefers to classify the rubrics ‘come tipici esempi della forma discursiva del *riassunto*’ (p. 221).

<sup>10</sup> See especially Usher, p. 408; p. 417, n. 39.

<sup>11</sup> See also Milanese’s comments on the literary value of so-called instrumental texts (p. 91). and K. S. Whetter, *The Manuscript and Meaning of Malory’s ‘Morte Darthur’: Rubrication, Commemoration, Memorialization* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2017), in which the use of rubrication is ‘more authorial than scribal’ (p. 31).

<sup>12</sup> Modern definitions of rubrics frequently do not reference tables of rubrics. Keith Busby notes that rubrics ‘may also be collected in tables of contents placed at the beginning or at the end of manuscripts’, in ‘Rubrics and the Reception of Romance’, *French Studies*, 53.2 (1999), 129-41 (p. 132). Malcolm Parkes describes the development of ‘analytical tables of contents’ in manuscript, which ‘listed the major topics discussed, in the order in which they occurred in the text. The placing of chapter-headings before each book of the text was an ancient practice; but in the thirteenth century they were brought together in one place and arranged in tabular form’: ‘The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio* on the Development of the Book’, in *Medieval Learning and Literature: Essays Presented to Richard William Hunt*, ed. by J. J. G. Alexander and M. T. Gibson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. 115-41 (p. 123). Parkes also describes ‘a table of the *tituli* of each chapter’ appended to Vincent of Beauvais’s *Speculum* (p. 133), which most closely fits my own definition of tables of rubrics. These are to be distinguished from *tabulae* in which ‘the entries can be amplified further into a series of definitions in alphabetical order’ (p. 132). In the context of the printed *Decameron*,

individual rubrics, since it contains the same text and exposes a similar combination of authorial and editorial activity. The difference is one of organization and placement in relation to other parts of the text. Although the first quire of the autograph manuscript is missing, it seems entirely likely that it would have contained a table of rubrics.<sup>13</sup> An earlier manuscript prepared in the decade preceding the extant autograph by a neighbour of Boccaccio, Giovanni d'Agnolo Capponi, and probably under the direct supervision of the author himself, opens with a table of rubrics which leads directly into the Proem.<sup>14</sup> The first centuries of the textual tradition indicate that the table of rubrics is a stable paratext, and it is often the first text to appear ahead of the Proem.<sup>15</sup>

The composition of individual rubrics, and their collection into a table, is therefore intimately connected to, and authenticated by, the historical practices of Boccaccio as an author, editor, and copyist. Within the narrative fiction of the *Decameron* the rubrics are part of the process by which the narrator edits, organizes, and explains the texts of the *brigata*. When he takes on the task of writing down what happened to the young Florentines who meet during the plague he is implicitly assuming responsibility, not only for committing to paper (or parchment) their words and deeds, but also for presenting those words and deeds

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I am deliberately distinguishing between tables of rubrics which gather together a system of rubrics originally authored by Boccaccio, and tables of contents, which might reference non – authorial additions, such as an editor's introduction or preface. As we shall see below, early modern editors commonly referred to the collection of rubrics as a 'Tavola'. Other useful studies of rubrics include Sylvia Huot, "'Ci parle l'auteur": The Rubrication of Voice and Authorship in *Roman de la Rose* Manuscripts', *SubStance*, 17 (1988), 42-48; Ana M. Gómez-Bravo, 'Arranging the Compilation', in her *Textual Agency: Writing Culture and Social Networks in Fifteenth-Century Spain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 164-86; K. P. Clarke, "'Sotto la quale rubrica": Pre-reading the *Comedia*', *Dante Studies*, 133 (2015), 147-76.

<sup>13</sup> See Cursi's description of the manuscript: 'Sono caduto tre fascicoli: il primo, posto all'inizio della copia, conteneva presumibilmente la tavola iniziale delle rubriche', p. 161.

<sup>14</sup> Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Italiano 482. A digital facsimile is available via Gallica: <<https://goo.gl/qA9CJX>> [accessed 13 February 2018]. See also Cursi, p. 218.

<sup>15</sup> See Rhiannon Daniels, *Boccaccio and the Book: Production and Reading in Italy 1340-1520* (London: Legenda, 2009), p. 96. Within the Italian printed tradition pre-1600, 56 out of 59 editions include tables of rubrics.



according to the conventional standards of scribal culture, using a legible script on ruled lines, and accompanied by other features – such as rubrics – which render the text recognizable as text. Unlike other elements of scribal practice, however, rubrication is a privileged feature within the narrative: it is not simply implicitly present, but explicitly highlighted at a metaliterary level in the final Conclusion. Here, the narrator presents a final set of justifications for the content and language of the text he has finished relating, and then incites his critics to take responsibility for their own reading practices by using the summary information given at the head of each *novella* to make an informed decision about whether or not to proceed to read it:

Tuttavia chi va tra queste leggendo, lasci star quelle che pungono e quelle che diletano legga: elle, per non ingannare alcuna persona, tutte nella fronte portan segnato quello che esse dentro dal loro seno nascose tengono. (Conclusion, 19)

This instruction seems to endorse a medieval precedent for hypertextual reading: in other words, using the rubrics to move from *novella* to *novella* in a manner which might not necessarily respect the linear chronology implied by the frame story. Thus the rubrics present and frame the text of individual *novelle*, whilst ironically subverting the composite text made up of the *novelle* in linear order.

The narrator's comment has been interpreted as an instruction to use the individual rubrics preceding each *novella*, but in practice, the reader who wished to manage their own reading experience in this manner would do well to use the rubrics located in the table of rubrics. Thus, rubrics located within the text and replicated in the table of rubrics standing at its opening are bound into the narrative world. Indeed, taken to its full extension, the

narrator's advice to his readers is to begin a reading of the *Decameron* by consulting the table of rubrics.

### **Tables of rubrics and modern editorial practice**

Returning to the 2013 edition of the *Decameron*, however, we find the table of rubrics not only physically distanced from the rest of Boccaccio's text and located at the very end of the volume, following over 150 pages of modern indexes and paratext discussing the historical context, but significantly altered.<sup>16</sup> The 'authenticity' of Boccaccio's rubrics is disturbed and diluted as the rubrics authored by Boccaccio's fourteenth-century hand are mixed up and barely distinguishable from rubrics authored by modern editors.<sup>17</sup> Thus, for example, each section of the table which corresponds to each of the Days in the *Decameron* includes a rubric labelled 'Introduzione', which links to the introductory comments supplied by the primary narrator (in other words, authorial text), alongside a rubric labelled 'Scheda introduttiva', which refers the reader to the exegetical notes prepared by a modern editor. It is only existing familiarity with the text of the *Decameron* that enables the reader to understand the table fully, arguably contravening the narrator's suggestion that the reader use the rubrics

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<sup>16</sup> The table of rubrics is labelled 'Sommaro', pp. 1835-51. Modern Italian readers are accustomed to locating their tables of contents at the end of the text, in contrast with Anglo-American readers who expect to find a table of contents at the beginning.

<sup>17</sup> This is not an issue which unique to the 2013 *Decameron*. For example, the Penguin edition translated by McWilliam (rev edn, London 2003) blurs the lines between authorial and editorial parts of the text even further by presenting parts of the authorial text in the table of contents – named as 'Prologue' and 'Author's Epilogue' – in the same uppercase typeface used to indicate modern editorial paratexts, such as 'Select Bibliography'. In some editions the rubrics themselves have been rewritten: see, for example, Guido Waldman's translation for OUP's Oxford World's Classics series (1998) in which he has aimed 'to preserve the element of surprise' (p. xxxiii); in Cormac Ó Cuilleain's reworking of John Payne's translation for the Wordsworth Classics edition (2004), the authorial rubrics are dramatically recast 'as a quick memory prompt, rather than reproducing the summaries from each story' (p. LXXV). Branca's two-volume Mondadori edition (2004) is more faithful to the structure of the autograph, although it is frustrating to have to turn to a separate volume to consult the notes.

*before* approaching the text of the *novelle*.<sup>18</sup> The result is a table of contents which reflects the contents of the entire material edition (not simply Boccaccio's text). It allows readers who might not yet have begun to read to gain a good sense of the overall scope and scale of the volume, and it might perhaps persuade a prospective reader that this edition will be more suitable than another. However, this is altogether different from the table of rubrics found in early manuscripts, which gathers together in one place the system of titles, or rubrics, which are dispersed throughout the text, such that it becomes an outline of the authorial work, excluding any other editorial additions.<sup>19</sup> It is puzzling, therefore, that the editors and publishers of the 2013 critical edition have apparently chosen to ignore the precedent suggested by Boccaccio's autograph and related manuscripts, when it is clear that in other aspects they have made an effort to be as faithful as possible to his design.

Authenticity remains a guiding principle for editors in the twenty-first century, even while the concept of a single 'authorial' text, whose limits can be defined and described, is deeply unfashionable. Textual criticism has not yet fully caught up with the post-structuralist sensitivity to its own theoretical limitations and the multiple possibilities of contextualized interpretations which are opened up once the concept of authorship is de-centred. The Anglo-American editorial tradition is broadly divided into a Greg-Bowers-Tanselle camp which continues to adhere to the concept of authorial intention, and a body of re-theorized textual

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<sup>18</sup> On closer inspection, a change in typeface between roman and italic signals a difference.

<sup>19</sup> On the use of ordering systems within manuscript culture, see for example: *Taxonomies of Knowledge: Information and Order in Medieval Manuscripts*, ed. by Emily Steiner and Lynn Ransom (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015); Parkes, 'The Influence of the Concepts of *Ordinatio* and *Compilatio*'; Mary A. Rouse and Richard H. Rouse, 'La naissance des index', in *Histoire de l'édition française. I. Le Livre conquérant: Du Moyen Âge au milieu du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, dir. by Henri-Jean Martin and Roger Chartier, 3 vols ([Paris]: Promodis, 1982), I, 77-85; Daniel Sawyer, 'Navigation by Tab and Thread: Place-Markers and Readers' Movements in Books', in *Spaces for Reading in Later Medieval England*, ed. by Mary C. Flannery and Carrie Griffin (London: Palgrave, 2016), pp. 99–114.

scholarship based on a positive assessment of variance.<sup>20</sup> Italian philology, however, remains firmly rooted in the Lachmannian tradition of stemmatics, and, while there have been criticisms and revisions of the method and calls to incorporate authorial variance,<sup>21</sup> the central concern remains to create a critical edition based on a notion of ‘the original’.<sup>22</sup>

Within Boccaccio studies, the existence of an extant autograph manuscript of the *Decameron* continues to nourish attachment to the author as the highest authority.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, a key innovation in the 2013 edition is to provide not only an accurate critical text, but to join this together with the visual hierarchy of initials which Boccaccio used in the autograph to signal the voicing strategies operating within the text, thus combining a commitment to the authenticity of Boccaccio’s authorial intentions with an investment in his role as the editor and publisher of his own work. In this context it is particularly striking, therefore, that this same modern edition does not fully replicate the order of texts originally located within the autograph (Table of Rubrics, Proem, Ten Days of storytelling, Conclusion), but chooses to

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<sup>20</sup> For an expert overview of key proponents of New Bibliography, W. W. Greg, Fredson Bowers, and G. Thomas Tanselle, see Kathryn Sutherland, ‘Anglo-American Editorial Theory’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Textual Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 42-60. For proponents of a social theory of editing and bibliography which incorporates a positive notion of variance, see the work of Jerome McGann, D. F. McKenzie, and David Greetham. See also Philip G. Cohen, ‘Textual Instability, Literary Studies, and Recent Developments in Textual Scholarship’, in *Texts and Textuality: Textual Instability, Theory, and Interpretation*, ed. by Philip G. Cohen (New York: Garland, 1997); *Textual Scholarship and the Material Book*, ed. by Wim Van Mierlo (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Some of these calls for revision now date back almost a century: see for example, Giorgio Pasquali, *Storia della tradizione e critica del testo* (Florence: Le Monnier, 1934).

<sup>22</sup> See Alfredo Stussi, *Breve avviamento alla filologia italiana* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2010): ‘così si riesce a produrre un’edizione critica, cioè a formulare un’ipotesi criticamente fondata su com’era l’originale perduto’ (p. 7). See also Susan Kovacs’ comments that there has been only a small move away from author-centred and text-centred practices of textual analysis and interpretation in her ‘Discourse Analysis and Book History: Literary Indexing as Social Dialogue’, in *Textual Scholarship and the Material Book*, ed. by Wim Van Mierlo (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), 243-62 (pp. 243-44).

<sup>23</sup> Boccaccio began to make the extant copy in the early 1370s, and continued to work on it up until his death, continually editing and revising, such that it is deemed to contain several redactional stages within it. A select number of other manuscripts and editions have also achieved a privileged status as key philological witnesses, among them Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, MS 42.1 (MS Mn), copied by Francesco d’Amaretto Mannelli in 1384.

separate the table from the rest of the text. The implication is that there is a qualitative division between the two versions of the rubrics (those within the text and those outside the text) which underlines a hierarchical understanding of orders of text. In this scenario, the table of rubrics is in service to the ‘authentic’ and ‘original’ rubrics found within the text. One element of Boccaccio’s text is privileged as ‘text’ and the other is more or less ignored, editorially and critically, as supporting ‘paratext’.

This example serves to expose the interconnected relationship between editorial practice and literary interpretation. The table of rubrics may have been relegated in this way because it does not feature in discussions in the critical literature. Similarly, the critical literature does not comment on tables of rubrics, perhaps precisely because they are typically divorced from the rest of the text within modern editions and thus do not present themselves as an object of study. The fate of the table of rubrics is an important reminder that an edited text can only ever be the product of editorial decisions. Even in the case of a canonical author such as Boccaccio, who has benefitted from centuries of scholarly attention, and with privileged access to an autograph manuscript, we must not lose sight of the fact that the edited text that we study is not a direct line to the author’s voice, but rather an editorial construction.<sup>24</sup>

### **Definitions of paratext**

I have described the role of the table of rubrics in the 2013 edition as supporting paratext, indicating a hierarchy of values in relation to parts of the text. Genette’s seminal study on paratext has opened up a field of enquiry which allows us to ‘see’ texts which otherwise would have remained invisible to the scholarly eye. However, Genette’s taxonomy of the

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<sup>24</sup> For a similar comments on the relationship between editorial practice and authorial intention, see Helen Fulton, ‘The Editor as Author: Re-Producing the Text. A Case Study of Parry’s *Gwaith Dafydd Ap Gwilym*’, *Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand Bulletin*, 19.2 (1995), 67-78.

book implies a degree of clarity about what constitutes paratext (and therefore ‘text’) which in practice is difficult to identify. Much recent work has tended to emphasize the inseparability of text and paratext, rather than focus on a hierarchical relationship.<sup>25</sup> In fact, even Genette’s own attempts at definition contain an inherent acknowledgement of the difficulty of establishing boundaries. He sets out an initial distinction between the text and the ‘verbal or other productions’ which accompany it, but then continues: ‘although *we do not always know whether these productions are to be regarded as belonging to the text*, in any case they surround it and extend it, precisely in order to *present it*’ (first emphasis is my own; second emphasis belongs to Genette).<sup>26</sup> Although logic dictates that there must be a way of identifying the moment in which one passes from one zone to another, Genette insists that the paratext is not itself a single linear ‘boundary or sealed border’. Indeed, the multiple images he uses to describe it – ‘threshold’, ‘vestibule’, ‘zone’, or ‘fringe’ – suggest that the limits of paratext (and by implication, text) resist precise definition.<sup>27</sup>

Laura Jansen identifies a similar concern with Genette’s definition in her study of paratext in Roman literature, and offers a helpful reconfiguration of the relationship between text and paratext which is worth quoting at length, not least because the table of contents in this example can usefully be substituted for our table of rubrics:

What does the preposition *para* do for the word textuality? The preposition *para* is typically understood to mean ‘beside’ or ‘next to’, a meaning that may contribute to a configuration of the paratext as a separate, detachable, and thus peripheral, feature

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<sup>25</sup> See, in particular, *Renaissance Paratexts*, ed. by Helen Smith and Louise Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> Genette, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> p. 2. See also Sherman’s critique of Genette’s metaphors in the context of early modern books in William H. Sherman, ‘On the Threshold: Architecture, Paratext, and Early Print Culture’, in *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies after Elizabeth L. Eisenstein*, ed. by Sabrina Alcorn Baron, Eric N. Lindquist, and Eleanor F. Shevlin (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), pp. 67-81.

of the text. For example, if we take *para* to mean simply ‘beside’, then a modern paratext such as a table of contents will not be considered a part of the text, but a feature which, despite supplying crucial information about its organization, remains *outside* its contents. But the sense of the paratext as a detachable category is less than clear-cut when put under close scrutiny. [...] A word in *para* does not therefore simply mean that something is ‘beside’ or ‘next to’ something else, but also implies that it is ‘part of’ that something else. To bring in the example of a table of contents once more, this feature of the text then becomes *both part and not part* of the text, in so far as it is intrinsic, from an authorial viewpoint, to the text’s narrative and thematic organization, but simultaneously extrinsic to it because it is placed before the text itself (or after, in the case of French, Italian and Spanish book culture). Paratexts and, by extension, the methodology of paratextual reading thus respond to a ‘both/and’ rather than an ‘either/or’ kind of logic. Paratexts are neither fully attached to nor detached from the text, but they conform to a liminal zone between its inside and outside. In sum, they are semantic and physical thresholds of interpretation for *both* the private *and* public spheres of a text.<sup>28</sup>

We have seen how the table of rubrics is intrinsic to the narrative, containing micro-texts with their own literary value, which the narrator also explicitly directs readers to use in order to form an active reading strategy. The table of rubrics is nevertheless also placed before the Proem, such that it appears outside what we have understood as the text. The ‘both text/and paratext’ configuration re-establishes its position within the canonical set of texts comprising *cornice* and *novelle*, whilst recognizing its difference in relation to the world of the *brigata*.

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<sup>28</sup> *The Roman Paratext: Frame, Texts, Readers*, ed. by Laura Jansen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 4-6.

We might go further, however, and argue that in the context of the *Decameron*, the configuration ‘both text/and paratext’ applies not only to the table of rubrics, but also to other textual elements which occupy a similarly liminal position in relation to the diegetic activities of the *brigata*. The main diegesis is framed in the outermost layer by the first-person accounts of the Proem and final Conclusion, which have been described as authorial paratext.<sup>29</sup> These are the locations where the narrator explicitly assumes the editorial task of writing down what has happened, using the opening and closing of the text to justify and explain the processes involved in this task. Whether implicitly or explicitly viewed as (authorial) paratext, the Proem and Conclusion have been positioned in the scholarship as proportionally less important than the *novelle*, perhaps precisely because they share similar functional, editorial qualities with the table of rubrics.<sup>30</sup> By proposing that the table of rubrics is seen as part of the same system of textual elements as the Proem and Conclusion, I am both arguing for its elevation in status from paratext to text, at the same time as acknowledging the complexity of the thing we call ‘text’.

### **Tables of rubrics in early modern editions 1470-1600**

Thus far we have seen how a methodological focus on editorial presentation can shed light productively on parts of the text which have otherwise been neglected, reminding us that the

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<sup>29</sup> See the useful discussion in Guyda Armstrong, ‘Paratexts and their Functions in Seventeenth-Century English *Decamerons*’, *Modern Language Review*, 102.1 (2007), 40-57 (pp. 40-41). Armstrong does not comment on tables of rubrics.

<sup>30</sup> Robert Hollander has commented that ‘Boccaccio’s *Proemio* is probably the most neglected part of the *Decameron*. Robbed of wide recognition of its rightful and important place as introduction to the whole by the (justly) closely studied *Introduzione*, it is frequently forgotten and almost always underattended’: see ‘The *Decameron* Proem’, in *The ‘Decameron’: First Day in Perspective*, ed. by Elissa B. Weaver (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 12-28. Writing more recently on the title, Marco Veglia also comments ‘con l’eccezione forse dell’agile profile di Luigi Surdich [...] non si è adeguatamente riflettuto sulla natura e sulle implicazioni del “cognome” del libro’: ‘Messer Decameron Galeotto: un titolo e una chiave di lettura’, *Heliotropia*, 8-9 (2011-12), 99-112 (p. 100).



table of rubrics should be valued as text in the same way as individual rubrics, and indeed, other parts of the text ‘authored’ by the narrator. The downplaying of the table of rubrics in the 2013 edition has also begun to reveal some of the ways in which editorial presentation and literary interpretation are intimately connected. Let us now move on to consider the corpus of fifty-nine editions of the *Decameron* printed in Italy before 1600 in order to consider the status of table of rubrics amongst early modern editors, and the ways in which its presentation may have influenced early modern readings of the text.

### *The placement of tables of rubrics*

The overwhelming majority of early modern editors and publishers clearly considered the table of rubrics an indispensable component of the reading experience of the *Decameron*: with only three exceptions, every edition of the *Decameron* in Italian printed in Italy before 1600 includes a table of rubrics. In this context, the editions of 1484, 1498, and 1526 – which lack the table – stand out as interesting anomalies, and it is worth pausing a moment to consider what we might learn about the function of the table of rubrics from its absence.<sup>31</sup> The presentation of both the 1484 and 1498 editions suggests that commercial desire for profit was a foremost concern in these cases, rather than attention to the finer points of textual integrity. In these early years of the new technology, the *Decameron* was reprinted with startling frequency, indicating that there was a ready market which had the potential to be expanded. The *Decameron*, from Proem to Conclusion, is a long text, and printers seem to have worked hard to keep the costs of the first folio editions as low as possible, presumably in the interests of growing a readership and making a profit. In 1484, Battista Torti’s edition made the most economical use of paper yet, with an increased text space and number of lines

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<sup>31</sup> Venice: Battista Torti, 1484 (ISTC ib00727000); Venice: Manfrino de’ Bonelli, 1498 (ISTC ib00728300). A digital facsimile is available via Biblioteca Europea di Informazione e Cultura (BEIC): <<https://goo.gl/dVUgfV>> [accessed 13 February 2018]; Venice: Giovanniantonio da Sabbio and brothers, 1526 (CNCE 6269). The *editio princeps* ([Naples (?): ‘Printer of Terentius’, 1470(?)] (ISTC ib00725200) contains a table with abbreviated rubrics which will be discussed below.

of text per column, surrounded by narrow margins.<sup>32</sup> Up until 1484, the tables of rubrics included in previous editions are all located within a separate quire, and therefore it would have been an easy decision to exclude this opening quire in the interests of keeping paper costs to a minimum. Although the 1498 edition seems at first glance to be of a different order, since it replicates the woodcut illustrations which had been introduced in 1492, in practice its printer, Manfrino de' Bonelli, seems motivated by a similar desire to capitalize on the success of the illustrations whilst keeping paper costs to a minimum. By omitting both the table of rubrics and the embryonic title-page, which the De Gregori brothers had also included for the first time in their 1492 edition, Bonelli managed to use the same number of sheets of paper as were used by Torti in 1484.<sup>33</sup>

The Da Sabbio brothers' reasons for omitting the table of rubrics in their edition in 1526 may also have been inspired by a desire to save paper costs. This edition is part of the first generation of *Decameron* editions to be printed in octavo format and the first to combine the octavo format with the italic typeface in the context of the *Decameron*. The size of the text space in the 1526 octavo is virtually identical to the text space found in the first octavo edition of 1525 (Gregorio De Gregori), but the introduction of an italic font necessarily altered other aspects of the layout, such that while the 1525 edition had managed to include 39 lines of text per page, the 1526 edition has only 31 lines, resulting in an edition which is fully 48 leaves longer than its immediate predecessor.<sup>34</sup> In this context, cutting the table of rubrics saved at least a full quire. It seems unlikely that editors would have made this decision if they had considered the table of rubrics to be an integral or integrated part of the text, especially since a note to readers at the end of the 1526 edition explicitly states that the

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<sup>32</sup> See also Daniels, p. 105; p. 193.

<sup>33</sup> The biography of the author, also introduced as an innovation in the 1492 edition, is seen as less indispensable and retained, placed at the end after the Author's Conclusion.

<sup>34</sup> Venice: Gregorio de Gregori, 1525; CNCE 6263. This consists of 348 fols with a text space of 122 x 74mm compared with the 1526 edition which consists of 396 leaves and a text space of 122 x 72mm.

aim is to restore the text to its original reading ('Avenga che nel stampar della presente opera molta diligenza sia stata da noi usata; accio che quella alla primiera sua lettione recassimo'), and a *corrigendum* is added based on readings from 'antichi testi'.<sup>35</sup> In all three of these cases, therefore, the table of rubrics was apparently seen as a disposable item which could be sacrificed for economical reasons without disrupting the reader's experience and enjoyment of the text.

Returning to the majority of early modern editions in which the table of rubrics is a consistent presence, we find that it is rarely positioned as an organic part of the main text and almost always located in a separate quire.<sup>36</sup> This material separation between text and table is underlined through the use of signatures. The opening quire containing the table of rubrics was frequently signed with a letter which was distinct from the usual alphabet span beginning with 'a': thus the quire containing the table might be labelled with a capital 'A', or a Greek letter such as 'π', or a symbol such as ✂. That this was a deliberate and conscious separation is most visible in the collation of the *editio princeps* of c. 1470: here the table contains an abbreviated set of rubrics, such that the opening quire consists of only two leaves, while in

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<sup>35</sup> Fols 3C11<sup>v</sup>-12<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> The few exceptions tend to concern tables of rubrics which are added to the end of the volume, e.g. Venice: Francesco di Alessandro Bindoni and Mapheo Pasini, 1533 (CNCE 6287), where the table of rubrics is added to the end of the text, beginning at the end of the penultimate quire (fols 3L7<sup>r</sup> -3M7<sup>v</sup>). Other editions which do not place the table of rubrics in a separate quire include: Venice: Bernardino di Vidali, 1535 (CNCE 6291), table of rubrics fols FF6<sup>r</sup>-GG6<sup>v</sup>; Brescia: Ludovico Britannico, 1536 (CNCE 6292), table of rubrics fols LLL6<sup>r</sup> -MMM8<sup>r</sup>; Venice: Giovanni de Farri da Rivoltella and brothers, 1540 (CNCE 6297), table of rubrics fols 3I7<sup>v</sup>-3K8<sup>r</sup> (digital facsimile available via Google Books: <<https://goo.gl/kM1MbY>> [accessed 13 February 2018]). Parkes notes that 'in many thirteenth-century manuscripts the table of contents occurs in a separate booklet which has been added to the beginning or end of a book some time after it had been written, but by the beginning of the fourteenth century the table was copied by the scribe as part of the book', p. 123.

contrast, the remainder of the text (which does not include any further paratexts) is contained within quires ranging between eight and fourteen leaves long.<sup>37</sup>

Placing the table of rubrics in a separate quire builds in a degree of flexibility to the structure of the edition, and in just over half of the early modern tradition (30 editions), the table is positioned in front of the Proem and, in 26 editions, it appears after the final Conclusion. At first glance, therefore, the early modern tradition does not unilaterally adhere to the model of the autograph manuscript and open with the table of rubrics, although, on closer inspection, it seems as though it is the earliest editions, produced the first decades between 1470 and 1516, which are more likely to place the table at the beginning, while the trend for positioning it towards the end of the edition is more prevalent from the 1530s onwards.<sup>38</sup> Of course, the placement of a (para)text at the beginning or end of a volume does not necessarily signal its degree of perceived authorial authenticity, or the direction of reading, which does not always proceed in a linear fashion from left to right, as the primary narrator himself advises in the Conclusion. As print culture develops and matures in the sixteenth century, the quantity of paratextual material which is included within editions increases the choices available for the positioning of the table of rubrics, and potentially enables us to see more clearly how and why it is being utilized.

Here, Gabriele Giolito's 1546 edition stands as a useful example: Giolito is a key player in the move to introduce ever greater supporting material into editions of the *Decameron*, which is divided between the front and back of editions, sandwiching

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<sup>37</sup> A digital facsimile is available via BEIC: <<https://goo.gl/RvPibB>> [accessed 13 February 2018]. Subsequent editions containing longer tables of rubrics tend to fill a quire which is a comparable size to quires used for the remainder of the text (most frequently quaternions), although the table remains separated in this way.

<sup>38</sup> In principle, readers could thus choose to have the table of rubrics bound into their individual copy at either the beginning or end, according to personal whim. In practice, however, I have not found evidence of this variance, and a register of quires reflecting the intended order was customarily printed at the end of the volume from 1484 onwards.

Boccaccio's text in the middle.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the frontmatter in the 1546 *Decameron* consists of a title-page (fol. \*1<sup>r</sup>), a dedication addressed by Giolito to the Delphine of France (fols \*2<sup>r-v</sup>), a medallion portrait of the author and laudatory sonnet by Lodovico Dolce (fol. \*3<sup>v</sup>), and a biography of Boccaccio by Francesco Sansovino (fols \*4<sup>r-6v</sup>). The table of rubrics (fols a1<sup>r-4v</sup>) appears after the end of the final Conclusion, and after a register, a printer's device, and a colophon (fol. 2I3<sup>v</sup>). Following the table of rubrics we find another title-page (fol. b1<sup>r</sup>), announcing the opening of the paratextual backmatter which consists of a letter from Giolito addressed to his readers (fols b2<sup>r-v</sup>), a glossary of vocabulary, sayings and proverbs used in the *Decameron* (fols b3<sup>r-c4<sup>r</sup></sup>), notes on historical people and places mentioned in the text (fols c4<sup>v-6v</sup>), and a list of epithets used by Boccaccio (fols c7<sup>r-e6v</sup>). The paratextual material can thus be classified as frontmatter designed to introduce the edition itself (title-page and dedication) and contextualize the historical author (portrait, sonnet, biography), while the backmatter is designed to assist the reader's navigation through the structure and interpretation of the text. Within this schema, the table of rubrics is held in tension between its connections to both the authorial text and the editorial paratext in the backmatter, separated from the final words of the Conclusion by verbal and visual markers signalling the literal and metaphorical end of the text (a rubric 'IL FINE', the register setting out the material construction of the edition, and the printer's colophon), whilst not being incorporated within the section of paratextual backmatter marked by the second title-page. Given the abundance of supplementary material included in this edition, it is especially notable that the table of rubrics retains its original function as a single, easily-accessed location in which to find an exact reproduction of the individual rubrics otherwise scattered throughout the whole text, and that it has not strayed into the territory of the table of contents. There is no reference within the table to any other element beyond the authorial text, even

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<sup>39</sup> Venice: Gabriele Giolito, 1546 (CNCE 6312).

within the rubric for the table itself which refers exclusively to Boccaccio's text: 'Tavola sopra il presente libro chiamato Decamerone & cognominato Principe Galeotto'.<sup>40</sup> Thus it retains both physical and symbolic connections to the authorial text found in the autograph even though it is no longer located at the beginning of the edition.

Another good example of the way in which the table of rubrics remains closely linked to the rest of what we think of as the text of the *Decameron* and does not commonly move into the realms of the table of contents is demonstrated in the first two editions to include additional *novelle* by authors other than Boccaccio. The trend for adding extra *novelle* is relatively short lived, beginning with Filippo Giunta's Florentine edition of 1516 and repeated in the three editions which immediately follow in 1518, 1522 and 1525.<sup>41</sup> Giunta trades on the inclusion of extra *novelle* as a selling point for his edition, proudly announcing their presence on the title-page ('CON TRE NOVELLE AGGIUNTE'), and they are further anticipated in the rubric which signs off the end of the text of the *Decameron*: 'Finisce il Decamerone di messer Giovanni Bocchaccio. Seguitan tre novelle del medesimo auctore nuovamente ritrovate.' (fol. N6<sup>r</sup>) Within the main text, each additional *novella* is prefaced with a summary rubric and a number in a manner which imitates the style of the *cento novelle*, but they remain absent from the table of rubrics. Whether this was the result of a simple oversight on the part of the compositor (and proof-reader) who was referring to the text and layout of a previous edition, or a deliberate omission in order to retain the symmetry of the

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<sup>40</sup> Fol a1<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> Florence: Filippo Giunta, 1516 (CNCE 6240); Venice: Agostino Zanni, 1518 (CNCE 6245) <<https://goo.gl/SrDZKT>> [accessed 13 February 2018]; Venice: House of Aldo Romano and Andrea Asolano, 1522 (CNCE 6258) <<https://goo.gl/2fDjj6>> [accessed 13 February 2018]; Venice: Bernardino de Viano, 1525 (CNCE 6264). In the 1522 and 1525 editions, rubrics for the three new *novelle* are added to the end of the table of rubrics, without making a material distinction between *novelle* which form part of the *Decameron* and those that fall outside it.

original text, more astute readers were suspicious of the authenticity of the additional *novelle*.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Titling and tables of rubrics***

The titling of the table of rubrics itself has the potential to indicate the imagined relationship between text and table, as well as between the table and other paratexts. For a significant stretch of the early tradition, tables of rubrics are not identified with a rubric which labels the table as a table. The first edition to introduce a rubric for the table is the Florentine edition of 1527, which explicitly labels the table as a ‘tavola’ and incorporates the title and subtitle of the work into the heading: ‘Tavola sopra il libro chiamato Decameron cognominato Principe Galeotto nel quale si contengono cento novella in dieci di dette da sette Donne & da tre giovani huomini’.<sup>43</sup> The table of rubrics follows the title-page and stands in front of the opening of the proem. The title-page limits itself to giving the title as simply ‘Il Decamerone’, and naming the author, as well as signalling the quality of the editorial effort which has been expended: ‘nuovamente corretto et con diligentia stampato’ (fol. 2A1<sup>r</sup>). In this context, the opening of the table of rubrics offers an adjunct to the title-page, with a supplementary title, which enables the producers of the edition to strike a balance between the punchy impact of a title-page which transmits the essentials of titling and authorship mixed with claims for quality editorship, and a table of rubrics which offers a fuller reflection of Boccaccio’s own titling practices. Moving through the edition chronologically, the rubric for the proem mirrors the preceding rubric for the table, both in the layout of its design, and its wording, which

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<sup>42</sup> More than one reader chose to ‘correct’ his or her copy by scoring out the attribution to Boccaccio. See Daniels, p. 125.

<sup>43</sup> Fol. 2A2<sup>r</sup>; see the digital facsimile available via Google Books: <<https://goo.gl/rz4qzw>> [accessed 13 February 2018]. A few earlier editions do not include a rubric, but do add a running header which reads ‘TABULA’: see Venice: Bartolomeo Zanni, 1510 (CNCE 6234); Venice: Agostino Zanni, 1518 (CNCE 814733); Venice: Bernardino de Viano, 1525.

alters only the opening words.<sup>44</sup> In comparison with the previously untitled tables of rubrics, therefore, the table is now more clearly identifiable as an independent paratext with its own title, but is at the same time more explicitly bound to the authorial text on which it depends. The rubric introduced in this edition of 1527 becomes the most commonly used rubric for tables throughout the rest of the tradition, with a subset of editions choosing instead to use an abbreviated version, closely modelled on the first instance of this shortened form which is first used in 1529: ‘Tavola sopra il libro chiamato Decamerone Cognominato Prencipe Galeotto’ (fol. \*1<sup>r</sup>).<sup>45</sup>

In 1541, Bindoni and Pasini inaugurate a slightly different tradition of title rubrics for the table of rubrics, using the simple formulation: ‘Tavola delle novelle’ (fol. \*3<sup>r</sup>) (see Figure 1). This is undoubtedly necessitated by the desire to distinguish between the table of rubrics and a glossary included at the end of Boccaccio’s text entitled ‘Tavola d’i vocaboli piu difficili & d’alcuni de proverbi & modi di dire usati dal Boccaccio’ (Fols 2K7<sup>v</sup>-8<sup>v</sup>). The result of this functionally-directed change of wording is to focus attention onto a particular area of the text – the *cento novelle* – and thus, by implication, to downplay the authorial paratext of the *cornice*. As I noted above, the rubrics instituted by Boccaccio include a

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<sup>44</sup> Thus the rubric for the table begins: ‘TAVOLA SOPRA IL LIBRO CHIAMATO | *Decameron*’, while the rubric for the proem opens: ‘COMINCIA IL LIBRO CHIAMATO DECA- | *meron*’ (fol. a1<sup>r</sup>).

<sup>45</sup> The full version is included in the following editions: Venice: Marchio Sessa, 1531; Venice: Nicolò d’Aristotile detto Zoppino, 1531 (CNCE 6285); Venice: Pietro de Nicolini da Sabbio, 1537 (CNCE 6294); Venice: Agostino Bindoni, 1545 (CNCE 6308); Venice: Comin da Trino, 1552 (CNCE 6326); Venice: Paulo Gherardo, 1557 (CNCE 6341); Florence: Filippo & Iacopo Giunta and brothers, 1573 (CNCE 6361) <<https://goo.gl/Zggh6J>> [accessed 13 February 2018]; Venice: Filippo & Iacopo Giunta and brothers, 1582 (CNCE 6372); Florence: Stamperia de Giunti, 1582 (CNCE 6373) <<https://goo.gl/JJqKgd>> [accessed 13 February 2018]; Venice: Filippo & Iacopo Giunta and company, 1585 (CNCE 6382); Venice: Giorgio Angelieri, 1594 (CNCE 6399); Venice: Alessandro Vecchi, 1597 (CNCE 6404) <<https://goo.gl/r7gLXR>> [accessed 13 February 2018]; shortened versions are found in editions by Francesco di Alessandro Bindoni and Maffeo Pasini, (Venice 1529; 1533 (CNCE 6279; 6287 )); Venice: Bartolomeo Zanetti, 1538 (CNCE 6295); editions by Gabriele Giolito (Venice: 1542; 1546; 1548; 1550 (CNCE 6302 and 6303; 6312; 6316; 6319 and 6320), a digital facsimile of the 1550 edition is available via Google Books: <<https://goo.gl/qDXx7i>> [accessed 13 February 2018]; Venice: Giovanni Griffio, 1549 (CNCE 6318).



system of titles which point up the authorial paratext (rubrics marking the beginning and ending of days with their nominated-royal and chosen theme), as well as the individual *novelle*. The wording of editions printed by Giolito in the 1550s reinstates some reference to the *cornice*, whilst simultaneously continuing to direct attention first and foremost towards the *novelle*, and now also subtly inserting a claim for editorial thoroughness: ‘Tavola di *tutte* le *novelle*, che nelle dieci giornate del Decamerone si contengono’ [emphasis added].<sup>46</sup> Although the framing device of ten days of storytelling is referenced, the role of the primary narrator who voices his own experiences in the first person (in the Proem, introduction to Day IV and Conclusion) remains excluded from the label and this gesture towards a definition of the *cornice*. [insert Figure 1]

A further choice of titles for the table is established by Valgrisi (1552; 1557), who seeks to describe more precisely what the function of the rubrics might be: ‘La tavola di tutti gli argomenti o titoli o sommari delle cento *novelle* in questo libro contenute’ (fol. 2M1<sup>r</sup>).<sup>47</sup> Somewhat ironically, the desire for clarification introduces further complexity as readers are now required to interpret what the similarities or differences might be between [rubriche], ‘argomenti’, ‘titoli’, and ‘sommari’, in much the same way as the primary narrator engenders a centuries-long quest to understand the significance of another set of closely related terms to describe the text used in Proem, 13: ‘cento *novelle* o favole o parabole o istorie’. In this way, the primary narrator’s role in the *cornice* is not explicitly included but retained as an intertextual echo, thus tying together two sections of the authorial paratext, Proem and rubrics.

### ***The contents of tables of rubrics***

There is a considerable degree of homogeneity in the contents of tables of rubrics. From 1471 onwards the text used for the summaries of the *novelle* is remarkably stable, and each table

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<sup>46</sup> Venice 1552 (CNCE 6327 and 6328).

<sup>47</sup> Venice: Vincenzo Valgrisi, 1552 (CNCE 6329); Venice 1557 (CNCE 6340); this title is picked up again in Venice: Fabio & Agostino Zoppi and Onofrio Farri, 1590 (CNCE 6393 and 6394) <<https://goo.gl/a5B25o>> [accessed 13 February 2018].

elects to represent the structural division into ten days which is set up in the main text, so that a table of rubrics typically consists of ten subdivisions of rubrics which correspond to each of the ten days. Each of these rubrics is linked to a folio number, which naturally varies according to the layout of the individual edition; these folio numbers are included, even when the edition does not contain printed foliation, indicating that one of the principal aims of the table is to serve as a locating device.<sup>48</sup> However, the table of rubrics does not always replicate exactly the rubrics which are contained within the text. Editions which contain the most significant variations include the expurgated editions, dating from 1573 onwards, and also the *editio princeps*, which elects to offer a truncated version of the rubrics contained in the manuscript source text (or texts). The abbreviation in the *editio princeps* frequently results in an incomplete sentence, rendering the rubric incomprehensible beyond the immediate context of the text, and at best offering the name of the main protagonist, and a means of registering the order in which the *novelle* are told. Thus, for example, the rubric for the first *novella* reads: ‘Ser Ciappelletto con una sua falsa confessione’, followed by ‘Abram giudeo da giannotto di ciugni’; ‘Melchisedech giudeo con una novella’ (fol. a1<sup>r</sup>).<sup>49</sup> In this case, the rubrics have lost the function intended by the primary narrator in the Conclusion, as they no longer operate as coherent texts in their own right which can serve to assist the reader to choose which *novella* to turn to, and instead are most likely to work in service to the text as a

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<sup>48</sup> In order to make full use of the references readers would have to foliate the edition by hand. The system of foliation reflected in or predicted by the table of rubrics never includes the table itself, such that the table remains materially separate from other parts of the authorial text.

<sup>49</sup> See link to digital facsimile in note 41. Compare these with equivalent (full-length) rubrics taken from the authorial text in Venice: Christoph Valdarfer, 1471 (ISTC ib00725300): ‘Ser Ciappelletto chon una falsa confessione inganna uno sancto frate & essendo stato in vita un pessimo huomo morto se e reputato sancto’; ‘Abram iudeo stimolato da Gianotto de civigni perche divenisse christiano va incorte di Roma & veduta la malvagita di cherici torna ad parisi & factosi christiano’; ‘Melchisedech iudeo chon una sua novella di tre anella scampo un gran pericolo apparecchiati dal soldano’ (fol. A2<sup>r</sup>).

finding aid for *novelle* for which the reader already has some knowledge or desire for knowledge acquired independently of this edition.

The *editio princeps* stands as a unique example of an edition which deviates significantly from the standard choice of full rubrics.<sup>50</sup> In many cases, however, the tables contain *additional* information such that they could be described not simply as a subordinate summary to the main text, but as an independent text in their own right. In the first editions of the *Decameron* printed in the early 1470s, there can be a lack of correlation between the text of the table of rubrics and the rest of the text simply because printed rubrics were not included in the main body of the text: instead, there are spaces left at the head of text openings in which the purchasers of individual copies could elect to commission rubricators to add rubrics by hand, or indeed could choose to copy out their own rubrics in their own hand.<sup>51</sup> In those copies where book owners have not provided hand-decoration, the table of rubrics therefore fulfils a vital function, not only for simple orientation but also as the sole witness to these aspects of the authorial text. It is only from 1478 that rubrics begin to be printed at the head of each novella, ensuring that each copy within the edition is furnished with the same text.<sup>52</sup> However, the printed rubrics in the main text are shortened forms which abbreviate the longer versions provided in the table of rubrics, and therefore the table of rubrics continues to be the sole mechanism by which a reader might choose to act upon the advice of the primary narrator and make his or her reading choices based on a reading of the summaries (see Figure 2).<sup>53</sup> This is therefore a reversal of the scenario we are presented with

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<sup>50</sup> Expurgated editions still follow the model and include full summaries, which are expurgated in line with the expurgated text.

<sup>51</sup> See, for example, editions printed in 1470, 1471, 1472 (Venice: Pietro Adamo de Micheli; ISTC ib00725400).

<sup>52</sup> Printed rubrics which mark the movement between the days of storytelling are still not included at this date.

<sup>53</sup> For example, compare the abbreviated rubric in the main text ‘Novella de ser ciappelletto’ with the table which provides a full rubric, fixes the *novella* within the chronology of the text and locates it within this particular edition: ‘Ser Ciappelletto con una sua falsa confessione

in the 2013 edition, where the rubrics dispersed through the text are reproduced faithfully within their original contexts and the table is detached and its function altered to perform as a repository for the whole volume. In these early examples, indeed, editorial liberties are taken with the internal rubrics, throwing into relief the textual importance of the table.

[insert Figure 2]

The Florentine edition printed in 1483 is the first to include printed summary rubrics for individual *novelle* in the main body of text; here, too, we also have printed rubrics for the divisions between days for the first time, as well as the first instances of printed woodcut initials. The 1483 *Decameron* stands in relative isolation from the rest of the tradition, neither appearing to take account of previous editions, or to influence printers who followed immediately in turn.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, this instance of contiguity between the table of rubrics and the rest of the text is apparently ahead of its time, and does not become a consistent part of the tradition until over two decades later when interestingly, and perhaps not coincidentally, it is another Florentine edition printed in 1516 by Filippo Giunta which re-introduces summary rubrics into the body of the text and rubrics for the opening (and ending) of the days which map directly onto the table of rubrics. In between these points in time marked by the Florentine editions, illustrated editions are produced with woodcuts which reproduce scenes from the *cornice* and the *novelle*. The impact of these woodcuts has already been remarked upon both in terms of their contribution to the history of early print culture, as well as the role they play in the context of interpretation and navigation through the text.<sup>55</sup> However, looking again at the woodcuts in this precise context of the development of rubrics we can see that in

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inganno uno santo frate. & essendo stato in vita un pessimo uomo morto se e reputato santo: novella prima a car.viii.’ (Venice: Giovanni da Reno, 1478; ISTC ib00725800).

<sup>54</sup> [Florence: Sant’Iacopo di Ripoli, 1483] (ISTC ib00726500) <<https://goo.gl/LtsqKz>> [accessed 13 February 2018]; see also Daniels, p. 105.

<sup>55</sup> See, for example, Mirella Ferrari, ‘Dal Boccaccio illustrato al Boccaccio censurato’, in *Boccaccio in Europe: Proceedings of the Boccaccio Conference, Louvain, December 1975* (Louvain: Louvain University Press, 1977), pp. 111-33.

an edition which does not include summary rubrics in the main text, but only the shortened abbreviations which are restricted to noting the names of the main protagonists, the positioning of the woodcuts at the head of each *novella*, and the manner in which each illustration contains more than one scene, emphasizes the extent to which the illustrations stand for visual summaries of the plot.<sup>56</sup>

In those examples where the table contains the full rubrics and the main text includes only abbreviated versions, we have already seen how the table can operate not simply as a summary device but as a text which provides the sole access to portions of text. The summary rubrics form part of the ‘authorized’, authorial text. In addition, and in contrast, approximately half of the tables of rubrics included in editions printed before 1600 introduce a set of rubrics which did not originate with Boccaccio, but seem to be a particular feature of the early printed tradition.<sup>57</sup> These are a set of eight rubrics placed between the rubric for the first day and the rubric for the first *novella* of Day I, which – read consecutively – provide a summary of the activities of the *brigata* as they discuss how to respond to the situation they find themselves in when they meet in the church of Santa Maria Novella, culminating in their decision to take it in turns to tell stories. The rubrics are closely related to the structure of the text as it is narrated in the introduction to the first day, but the precise text of the rubrics is an editorial addition, since it summarizes Boccaccio’s text, rather than lifting sections of ‘authorial’ text directly into the table. The first edition to introduce these rubrics – Valdarfer’s 1471 edition – does not provide references to foliation for these particular rubrics, although the summary rubrics do include folio references (see Figure 3). This model is

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<sup>56</sup> A good example is the first illustrated edition printed by Giovanni and Gregorio de Gregori in Venice in 1492 (ISTC ib00728000) <<https://bit.ly/2JdeFCs>> [accessed 11 July 2018].

<sup>57</sup> It is difficult to verify this with absolute precision, since the opening leaves containing the table of rubrics in the autograph manuscript are lost. These extra rubrics do not appear in five manuscripts held in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale: Italiano 62 <<https://goo.gl/Bz8U1z>>, 63 <<https://goo.gl/YpSHKf>>, 482, 484 <<https://goo.gl/N6HmkB>>, 487 <<https://goo.gl/9bkXAW>> [accessed on 13 February 2018]. Within the printed tradition, these additional rubrics first appear in 1471 and continue through to 1573.

repeated in subsequent editions until the 1492 includes folio references for each rubric in the table, which then becomes the standard throughout the sixteenth century.<sup>58</sup>

[insert Figure 3]

The new rubrics would seem to be added in recognition of the fact that readers might require some extra navigational help through the first day, which is disproportionately lengthy in relation to other aspects of the *cornice*.<sup>59</sup> The rubrics in the table correspond to paragraph divisions marked in the text with spaces for coloured initials added by hand in the early editions and later by printed woodcut initials, so that it is relatively easy to leaf through the text and match each rubric to the correct location. Nevertheless, and indeed, *because of* this attention to orientation, the lack of foliation in the first editions is puzzling and may stem from recognition (conscious or otherwise) that they originate from a new textual tradition which is separate from the summary rubrics for the *novelle*, which can be traced back to Boccaccio both through the narrator's references in the text and from the material tradition originating from the author. An absence of references to foliation emphasizes the role of the table of rubrics as a text in its own right, and it also gives the *brigata* a more significant voice.

In a table of rubrics which concentrates on the summary rubrics for the *novelle*, what is emphasized is the neat symmetry of the text as a ten-part structure. The voice of the primary narrator who frames the *novella* summaries is privileged, but it is as a third-person narrator acting in his 'scribal role' and standing outside the narrative events.<sup>60</sup> The new rubrics which mark divisions in the introduction to Day I give increased emphasis to the

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<sup>58</sup> However, note that the 1483 edition has a folio reference for the rubric announcing the beginning of Day I.

<sup>59</sup> Using the Italian text hosted online by the *Decameron* web as a guide (<[http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian\\_Studies/dweb/](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Italian_Studies/dweb/)>), which includes additional headings to distinguish narratorial voices and numbering for the paragraphs, the introduction to Day I numbers 7295 words in contrast with the Proem (1012 words), introduction to Day IV (2719 words), and Author's Conclusion (1822 words).

<sup>60</sup> See the narrator's definition of himself as a scribal conduit in Conclusion, 16-17 and Rhiannon Daniels, 'Narrators and Audiences', in *The Cambridge Companion to Boccaccio*, pp. 36-51.

*cornice*, and specifically to the *brigata*, since the rubrics do not reference the primary narrator's interventions in the first person and his description of the plague which occupies almost one half of the introduction. This lack of attention to the narrator's voice in the first-person may also explain why the other significant points at which the primary narrator intervenes are also effaced in the table of rubrics: the introduction to Day IV is never marked as a significant location in these early modern tables. The Proem is afforded a rubric which is separate from Day I in only a small number of early modern editions, and the Author's Conclusion has an even more limited visibility, being included only in the 1492 illustrated edition and at least one other imitation of this format.<sup>61</sup>

### **Conclusion**

We have seen, therefore, how the table of rubrics – with very few exceptions – is a canonical element within early modern printed editions of the *Decameron*. It is not only a perennially-present feature (with the exception of the three editions discussed above), which readers would be accustomed to see, but the contents and format of the rubrics included is also relatively stable and rigorously functions as a microcosm of the text. At this early stage in the printed tradition it remains a table of rubrics rather than a table of contents and is thus closer in intended function to Boccaccio's autograph manuscript. In some cases, the table of rubrics assumes a much more important role than we might have imagined based on the function of the 2013 edition, providing the only location for readers to access the text of Boccaccio's rubrics, which are not always included within the body of the text. When new additions to the table of rubrics are introduced by early modern editors, they are arguably less structurally

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<sup>61</sup> A rubric which reads 'PROEMIO' appears in the following editions: Florence: Heirs of Filippo Giunta, 1527 (CNCE 6271) <<https://goo.gl/hpKfUv>> [accessed 13 February 2018], 1531 (Zoppino and Sessa), 1536, 1537, 1545, 1573, 1582 (Florence and Venice), 1585, 1594. A rubric for the author's conclusion is included in the 1510 edition.

significant than the 2013 decision to convert the table into a table of contents, and remain fully rooted in the text of the *Decameron*, enhancing the relationship between text and table.

We have also seen the ways in which editorial manipulation of the table of rubrics can operate a subtle, and yet powerful, influence over interpretation of the text. By observing the way in which the rubrics emphasize the contents of the *novelle* at the expense of the *cornice* we see how the complexity of narrative voicing at play within the text is glossed over. Early modern editors and printers did not seem interested in signalling distinctions between narrative levels, no doubt because they did not regard the primary narrator to have a voice which could, or should, be seen as separate from that of Boccaccio the historical author. Indeed, Boccaccio himself probably did not encourage this separation, since the early system of rubrics included in the Capponi manuscript (Paris, BN, It. 482) marks the Conclusion as the direct voice of the author: ‘Conclusionone de llauctore’ (fol. 214<sup>v</sup>).<sup>62</sup>

It would be too extreme to suggest that underplaying the role of the primary narrator in the table of rubrics removes his role entirely from view within the work, since the text of the Proem, Conclusions and extended Introductions to the first and fourth days remain, and we cannot know how carefully and to what extent individual readers studied the table of rubrics. There is limited but compelling evidence to suggest that from the very beginning of the text’s reception, readers did pay attention to the outer layer of the *cornice*. One of the earliest and most enigmatic responses to the *Decameron*, contained in the so-called Strozzii fragment, is made up almost entirely of framing parts: the conclusions from days I-IX. Petrarch’s reading of Boccaccio celebrates the Griselda novella most famously, but it should not be forgotten that he also reserves some of his rather restrained praise for the narrator’s

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<sup>62</sup> Note that this rubric is included in the main body of the text, but is not incorporated into the table of rubrics. <<https://goo.gl/SoQWzL>> [accessed 26 July 2017]. Editors of the 1492 edition elaborate on this precedent with their more expansive gesture to the contents encapsulated by the rubric: ‘Excusatione dello auctore in defensione del la sua opera’ (fol. z2<sup>r</sup>).



rhetorical skill in the introduction to Day IV and the final Conclusion.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, underplaying the role of the primary narrator in the table of rubrics provides a simplified and reduced view of the text's structural and intellectual complexity as well as its moral ambiguity. The three most significant moments in which the primary narrator speaks in the first person provide moments of highly-charged rhetorical authority which simultaneously offer a sense of purpose for the text whilst ironically undermining the same sense of purpose. Without the primary narrator's voice in the table of rubrics the text is presented as a symmetrical and numerically predictable anthology, open to being plundered for individual *novelle*. It thus becomes apparent that Boccaccio's own configuration of the table of rubrics anticipates a strand of modern criticism which has preferred to read the text as a straightforward collection of entertaining stories.

When the outer layer of the *cornice* is downplayed within the table of rubrics, the oral world of the *brigata* is foregrounded. After all, the primary narrator's main contribution (within the terms of the narrative) is to transfer the exploits of the *brigata*, including the *novelle* related over the ten days combining both individual and collective memories, via another, unnamed oral source, into writing. Even without the presence of the primary narrator, however, the table of rubrics stands as a mnemonic for written culture, since indexes can only function in the context of texts which are fixed in time and space.

Beyond Boccaccio studies, what can this study of the table of rubrics tell us about the role of paratext in the first century of print? We have already seen that in the context of the relationship between the table of rubrics and the rest of the *Decameron*, it is too reductive to

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<sup>63</sup> The Strozzi fragment is Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, MS II II 8, dated 1358-63: see Cursi, pp. 196-97. For Petrarch's letter of 1372-73, see Francis Petrarch, *Letters of Old Age: Rerum senilium libri I-XVIII*, trans. by Aldo S. Bernardo, Saul Levin, and Reta A. Bernardo, 2 vols (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), II. Books X-XVIII, Sen. XVII. 3, p. 655. See also Giovanni Morelli's use of the narrator's plague description in his own *Ricordi: Mercanti scrittori: ricordi nella Firenze tra medioevo e Rinascimento*, ed. by Vittore Branca (Rusconi), pp. 207-14.

consider definitions which seek to identify the degree to which a text might be considered authorial or editorial, since it is impossible to disentangle these roles. Likewise, drawing a distinction between a semantic, narrative function, and a pragmatic, indexical one is undercut by the way in which the rubrics in the *Decameron* have a literary function which is not mutually exclusive with the indexical function endorsed by the primary narrator. Defining the relationship as one of text and paratext is equally slippery and liable to dissolve as soon as we start to probe how it works in practice. If we take Jansen's cue to view the paratext as both part and not part of the text, we must consider the table of rubrics with the same seriousness as other parts of the authorial paratext, such as the Proem or the final Conclusion. There may be sound editorial reasons (such as cultural familiarity) for locating the table at the end of the volume rather than at the beginning, but these must be justified in the context of its relationship to and function as text.

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Figure 1: Opening of the table of rubrics with the short title ‘Tavola delle novelle’. Venice: Bindoni and Pasini, 1541; London: British Library © British Library Board 88.i.8, fol. \*3<sup>r</sup>.

Figure 2: Opening of novella I. 1 introduced with a short printed rubric ‘Novella de ser ciappelletto’. [Vicenza]: Giovanni da Reno, 1478. London, British Library © British Library Board C.4.i.8, fol. a8<sup>r</sup>.

Figure 3: Opening of the table of rubrics, including additional rubrics for the Introduction to Day I. [Venice]: Christoph Valdarfer, 1471. London, British Library © British Library Board IB. 19756, fol. A2<sup>r</sup>.