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**Courtship, Violence, and the Formation of Marriage
in the Early Modern Italian Novella Tradition**

By

Sara Elizabeth Christina Russell

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Committee in Charge:

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Abstract

Courtship, Violence, and the Formation of Marriage
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Doctor of Philosophy in Italian Studies

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This dissertation examines the intersection of courtship, violence, and the formation of marriage in early modern Italian legal and fictional narratives. My investigation begins with the marriage *causae* of Gratian's *Concordia discordantium canonum*, more commonly known as the *Decretum*, then moves on to a selection of novellas from Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* and culminates in a series of close readings from Bandello's *Novelle*. My analysis of these texts reveals complexity and ambiguity in the representation of all stages of courtship and marriage formation in addition to depicting conflict between parents and offspring in the formation of marriage. Emphasizing the role of storytelling within canon law and the intrusion of legal systems (both real and fictional) into storytelling, my reading of coercion and violence is grounded in the broader historical context of courtship and marriage formation.

This study comments on the changes in canon law on marriage between 1140 and the Council of Trent; during this span of time, the increasing attention paid to the will of both the man and the woman involved in a potential courtship or marriage called for the differentiation between forced sex and clandestine relationships. The works of Gratian, Boccaccio, and Bandello, written in the twelfth, fourteenth, and sixteenth century, respectively, suggest a movement toward a growing acceptance of the definition of marriage based on consent and an increasing differentiation between consent and coercion to sex, abduction, and marriage.

Whereas other scholars have focused on identifying the narrators' or authors' attitudes or perspectives about women in general or violence more specifically, my dissertation undertakes the innovative task of analyzing the function of violence in relation to courtship and marriage. More specifically, I discuss the significance of Gratian's, Boccaccio's, and Bandello's depiction of the slippage between consent and coercion, which struggle against each other in these texts, yet remain so tightly interwoven that it is often difficult to untangle them. In the works of Gratian, Boccaccio and Bandello, the representation of coercion and violence underscores the importance of consent.

Introduction to Dissertation

Summary of Dissertation Project

While many scholars have noted the numerous representations of sexual violence within Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Matteo Bandello's *Novelle*,¹ the lack of critical attention to contemporary understandings of law has limited the reading of their novellas.² This dissertation deals with the centrality of the concept of consent in early modern Italian legal and fictional narratives. Beginning with the *causae* of Gratian's *Concordia discordantium canonum* (ca. 1140), more commonly known as the *Decretum*, the most important compendium of medieval canon law, my investigation then moves on to a selection of novellas from Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* and culminates in a series of close readings from Matteo Bandello's *Novelle*.³ The resulting analysis of these

¹ For violence in Boccaccio see for example Vittore Branca, *Boccaccio medievale* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1956); Millicent Marcus, "The Sweet New Style Reconsidered: a Gloss on the Tale of Cimone (*Decameron* V.1), *Italian Quarterly* 81 (1980): 5-16; Millicent Marcus, "Misogyny as Misreading: A Gloss on *Decameron* VIII, 7," *Stanford Italian Review* IV, (1984): 23-40; Millicent Marcus, "Cross-Fertilizations: Folklore and Literature in *Decameron* 4.5," *Italica* 66 (4) (1989): 383-98; Ray Fleming, "Happy Endings? Resisting Women and the Economy of Love in Day Five of Boccaccio's *Decameron*," *Italica* 70.1 (1993): 30-45; Jessica Levenstein, "Out of Bounds: Passion and the Plague in Boccaccio's *Decameron*," *Italica* 73.3 (1996): 313-35; Albert Ascoli, "Pyrrhus' Rules: Playing with Power from Boccaccio to Machiavelli," *MLN* 114 (1999): 14-57; Marilyn Migiel, *A Rhetoric of the Decameron* (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: Toronto UP, 2003). Roberta Morosini, "Penelopi in viaggio 'fuori rotta' nel *Decameron* e altrove. 'Metamorfosi' e scambi nel Mediterraneo medievale." *California Italian Studies* 1.1 (2009-2010). For violence in Bandello, see for example Adelin Fiorato, L'Image et la condition de la femme dans les nouvelles de Bandello," *Images de la femme dans la litterature Italienne de la Renaissance: prejuges misogynes et aspirations nouvelles: Castiglione, Piccolomini, Bandello*, Ed. Andre Rochon (Paris: Univ. de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1980): 169-286; Nadia Setti, "Racconto di un destino e destini di un racconto: Il caso della Duchessa di Malfi," in *Trasgressione tragica e norma domestica: Esempari di tipologie femminili dalla letteratura europea*, ed. Vanna Gentili. Rome: Storia & Letteratura, 1983 (161-90); Adelin Fiorato, "Scrittura narrativa e patologia nelle *Novelle* del Bandello," In *Gli uomini le città e i tempi di Matteo Bandello. Il convegno internazionale di studi Torino-Tortona-Alessandria-Castelnuovo Scivria 8-11 novembre 1984*, Ed Ugo Rozzo (Tortona: Centro Studi Matteo Bandello e la cultura rinascimentale, 1985): 301-20; Daria Perocco, "Bandello tra la pratica dell'amore e il governo dell'onore," in *Gli uomini le città e i tempi di Matteo Bandello. Il convegno internazionale di studi Torino-Tortona-Alessandria-Castelnuovo Scivria 8-11 novembre 1984*, ed. Ugo Rozzo (Tortona: Centro studi Matteo Bandello e la cultura rinascimentale, 1985): 205-18; Josephine Donovan, "From Avenger to Victim: Genealogy of a Renaissance Novella," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 15.2 (1996): 269-88; Ullrich Langer, "The Renaissance Novella as Justice," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52 (1999): 311-41. For violence in both Boccaccio and Bandello, see Nancy Elizabeth Virtue, *Representations of Rape in the Renaissance Novella* (Dissertation), University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1993; and Giancarlo Mazzacurati, *All'ombra di Dioneo. Tipologie e percorsi della novella da Boccaccio a Bandello* (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1996): 49-68.

² The status of clandestine marriage is an important example of this phenomenon. Important novellas by both Boccaccio and Bandello are often read without reference to the role of clandestine marriage. Thus the novella of Andreuola and Gabriotto in the *Decameron*, a novella of clandestine marriage, is not consistently distinguished from novellas in which there is secret love but no marriage takes place; Bandello's novella of Didaco and Violante, similarly, is often read as a feminist revenge narrative rather than as a novella that engages in complex ways with the legal and social problems surrounding the practice of clandestine marriage at the eve of the Council of Trent.

³ In spite of being the most important Italian *novelliere* of the sixteenth century, Bandello has been largely neglected by mainstream scholarship. This issue cannot be discussed apart from the larger problem of relative scholarly paucity of work on sixteenth-century Italian *novellieri*. An additional factor to be taken

texts⁴ reveals the central role of consent within the complex and ambiguous web of relations between members of a potential couple and between parents and offspring. Emphasizing the role of storytelling within canon law and the intrusion of law and legal systems (both real and fictional) into storytelling, my reading of coercion and violence is grounded in the broader framework of courtship and marriage formation.⁵ The works of

into consideration is the controversial, contradictory, and encyclopedic nature of Bandello's work, which, along with the absence of a frame story, many readers find daunting. Beginning around the middle of the twentieth century, authors such as Petrocchi, Porcelli, Bragantini, and Mazzacurati discussed Bandello's role within the Italian novella tradition. Subsequently, on the basis of the groundbreaking work by Adelin Fiorato, who wrote extensively on Bandello's life and works within a historical context, and Delmo Maestri, who has written numerous books and articles on Bandello and served as editor of the most recent edition of the *Novelle*, Bandello has been most recently reevaluated by Reinier Leushuis, Marilyn Migiel, Elisabetta Menetti, and Daria Perocco.

⁴ During the course of my research, I came across a 1993 dissertation written by Nancy Elizabeth Virtue (*Representation of Rape in the Renaissance Novella*, U Wisconsin Madison, Department of French, 1993) which discusses Gratian's *Decretum*, two of Boccaccio's novellas (2.7 and 2.10), and Pierre Boaistuau's greatly transformed re-adaptation of some of Bandello's novellas in the *Histoires tragiques*, in addition to numerous literary texts from the French novella tradition. While there may be some superficial similarities between Virtue's dissertation and mine, the two projects are quite different in nature, scope, and conclusions, mainly because my dissertation regards violence in relation to marriage, and hers places rape at the center. Virtue is perhaps the first literary scholar to provide a careful reading of Gratian's position on sexual violence. Another author who has worked on the intersection between legal and literary representations of sexual violence is Kathryn Gravdal, who both in her book *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia UP, 1991) and in her article "Poetics of Rape Law in Medieval France," in *Rape and Representation*, edited by Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver (New York: Columbia UP, 1991: 207-226) juxtaposes secular and ecclesiastical law, courtroom records, and literature from fourteenth- and fifteenth-century France. While her reading of canon law tends to generalize, sometimes at the expense of accuracy, Gravdal's approach is useful in many other respects, and she provides a rich analysis of rape narratives in a variety of genres, including hagiography, *pastourelle*, chivalric romance, and animal fables. Gravdal's sources, which include literature as well as prescriptive legal sources and court records, study the interplay between law and literature in order to conduct a different kind of legal and social history. See Virtue (1993: 54-61) for a critique of Gravdal's reading of Gratian.

⁵ The works of Ullrich Langer, Kathy Eden, and Michael Frost shed light on the tradition of legal rhetoric that greatly influenced the medieval and early modern legal and literary traditions. The relationship between legal/ethical thinking and the novella is, most explicitly discussed in Ullrich Langer's "The Renaissance Novella as Justice," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52 (1999): 311-41. Langer notes that theories of justice pervade the fabric of the early modern novella; Cicero's model of justice, quite influential during the period, saw "the preservation of the common good as a condition *sine qua non* of the recognition and compensation of individual merit and as a consequence of the rewarding of merit and the punishment of demerit" (Langer 314). This view is often dramatized in the novella tradition, as will be seen for example in Chapter Three. Kathy Eden's *Hermeneutics and the Rhetorical Tradition: Chapters in the Ancient Legacy and its Humanist Reception* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1997) discusses the impact of classical rhetoric on early modern readers and writers. Of particular interest to my dissertation project are her observations on the connections between conflict, legal rhetoric, and interpretation (2). In the novellas of Boccaccio and Bandello, especially those that refer to the law and/or legal systems, readers are challenged to grapple with the scenarios presented. Eden discusses the importance placed by humanists on the law, equity, and *caritas* (57-58). Eden does not discuss these themes in relation to the novella tradition, but her observations on the place of law in relation to rhetoric and the importance of equity and charity in moderating the potential rigidity of law are particularly useful for readers of the early modern novella. Michael Frost's *Introduction to Classical Legal Rhetoric: A Lost Heritage* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005) discusses the ways in which law functions within a larger rhetorical frame of reference. In the classical

Gratian, Boccaccio, and Bandello, written in the mid-twelfth, mid-fourteenth, and mid-sixteenth century, respectively, reflect and respond to the growing acceptance of the increasing differentiation between consent and coercion to sex, abduction, and marriage.⁶

This study comments on the changes in canon law on marriage between around 1140, when Gratian composed the *Decretum*, and the Council of Trent (1545-1563).⁷ During this span of time, the increasing attention paid to consent as foundational to marriage called for the distinction between the will of the spouses themselves – both individually and as a couple – and that of parents and/or other family members.⁸

tradition, rhetoric functioned within a legal context (5); during the middle ages, furthermore, rhetoric was part of a larger, interdisciplinary web of genres that shaped and influenced each other.

⁶ Very little is known about Gratian and the historical context in which he wrote the *Decretum*, although his lasting impact on canon law is universally acknowledged, and it is well known that he definitively emphasized mutual consent of the spouses as fundamental to the formation of marriage. For scholarship on Gratian, see Stephan Kuttner, “The Father of the Science of Canon Law,” *Jurist* 1 (1941): 2-19; Stephan Kuttner, *Gratian and the Schools of Law, 1140-1234* (London: Variorum, 1983); Stephan Kuttner, *Harmony from Dissonance: An Interpretation of Medieval Canon Law* (Latrobe, PA: Archabbey Press, 1960); Stephan Kuttner, “Research on Gratian: Acta and Agenda,” in *Studies in the History of Medieval Canon Law* (V. Aldershot: Variorum, 1990) Stanley Chodorow, *Christian Political Theory and Church Politics in the Mid-Twelfth Century: The Ecclesiology of Gratian’s Decretum* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, U California P, 1972); John T. Noonan, “Gratian Slept Here: The Changing Identity of the Father of the Systematic Study of Canon Law,” *Traditio* 35 (1979): 145-72; and Anders Winroth’s *The Making of Gratian’s Decretum* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000).

⁷ James Brundage’s *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (Chicago and London: U Chicago P, 1987) argues that the Catholic Church developed its attitudes and laws on marriage and sexuality while assimilating new cultures, asserting its power over secular authorities, and defining itself against non-Catholic Christianity. Throughout the course of his thorough study, Brundage identifies the defining moments in the history of marriage and sexuality in Christian Europe, from the origins of Christianity through the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Reformation. Furthermore, Brundage’s more recent *The Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession: Canonists, Civilians, Courts* (Chicago and London: U Chicago P, 2008) provides a comprehensive history of medieval law and its practitioners, including a wealth of historical and legal resources that have enriched my understanding of medieval marriage law.

⁸ Consent takes center stage in Michael Sheehan’s posthumous volume *Marriage, Family and Law in Medieval Europe: Collected Studies* (Toronto: U Toronto P, 1996), which discusses the history of Christian marriage from the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries, with a focus on England. Sheehan argues that canon law for the most part protected women’s freedoms. He successfully documents the growing understanding during the middle ages of marriage as founded on mutual consent of the spouses.

Furthermore, Sheehan discusses a number of particular clandestine marriage disputes, demonstrating the difficulties involved in proving that a clandestine marriage had taken place if one of the spouses left the marriage and attempted to contract a new one. The problems caused by disputed marriages led to a number of new traditions, such as banns and the exchange of vows in the front of the church, which helped encourage marriage as a public practice, discouraging clandestine marriage without, however, making it invalid. Sheehan’s case studies on clandestine marriage and consent offer a historical counterpart to the fictional clandestine marriage narratives analyzed in chapters Two and Three. See also Charles J. Reid, Jr., *Power Over the Body, Equality in the Family: Rights and Domestic Relations in Medieval Canon Law* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Cambridge, UK: William B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004). Reid notes that there were diverging views on the matter of the bride’s consent to marriage versus her parents’ prerogative to expect her to go along with their plans for her, and he carefully analyzes the problem of parents who forced their sons and daughters into unwanted marriage arrangements, discussing the canonists’ understanding of how force and fear can take on different forms in different contexts and their sometimes surprisingly nuanced understanding of how various degrees of psychological pressure impaired women’s perception of their freedom to reject a match imposed by their parents. Reid’s study provides legal background on the matter, and his careful analysis of the variations of opinions on the rights of men

Boccaccio wrote the *Decameron* immediately after the Black Death of 1348, the very moment in which secular law increased its attempts at wresting some jurisdictional control over sexual and marital matters from the Church (Brundage 1987: 547). The Church's consensual model contrasted with the secular-aristocratic model, founded on dynastic interests and family control.⁹ In fact, partly on the basis of safeguarding the couple's consent, clandestine marriage was regarded by canon law as illicit but not invalid (Reid 53).¹⁰ The practice, though discouraged, was tolerated by the Church for centuries, to be finally banned by the Council of Trent.¹¹ As I will show further on, both Boccaccio and Bandello deal with clandestine marriage as one aspect of the problem of consent.

Bandello's *Novelle*, written during the period leading up to the Tridentine marriage reforms, reveal a deep interest in formation of consensual and/or coerced relationships of various kinds, with reference to the broader framework of legal and social history, in addition to the rich novella tradition that preceded him. Bandello, a former Dominican who spent the final years of his life as Bishop of Agen,¹² looked to the future as well as to the past in constructing his plots; the first three parts of the *Novelle* were published nine years after the Council of Trent was convened in 1545, and the collection as a whole considers a number of important canon law questions in light of the unique religious and political situation of the time.

and women reminds readers of the multiplicity of views within canon law and the unresolved nature of many issues affecting the formation of marriage.

⁹ See Georges Duby, *The Knight, the Lady, and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Pantheon, 1983) for a discussion of medieval marriage, with particular emphasis on France. Duby argues that marriage united families even more than it united the spouses and that it functioned as the "backbone of social order" (74). While carefully planned marriage alliances could establish and keep peace in communities, struggles and conflict often surrounded relationships between men and women, between families, and between different social classes when it came to courtship and the formation of marriage.

¹⁰ See also John T. Noonan, "Power to Choose", *Viator* 4 (1973): 419-34; Gene Brucker's *Giovanni and Lusanna: Love and Marriage in Renaissance Florence* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: U Chicago P, 1987); and R. H. Helmholz, *The Spirit of Classical Canon Law*, (Athens and London: U Georgia P, 1996: 229-56) for a discussion of the Church's position on clandestine marriage.

¹¹ *Des heiligen ökumenischen Concils von Trient Canonen und decrete in neuer deutscher Uebersetzung. Nebst den gleichfalls in's deutsche übertragenen einschlägigen Constitutionen des älteren rechtes und vielen declarationen der S. Congregatio interpretum Concilii tridentini, sammt historischen einleitungen zu den einzelnen sitzungen, mit gegenüberstehendem Grundtexte nach der römischen Ausgabe vom Jahre 1862 und vollständigem inhaltsregister. Mit einem anhang: Die dogmatischen Constitutionen des Batikanischen concils und die neueren päpstlichen entscheidungen. Herausgegeben von Franz Ser. Petz (Passu, Joseph Bucher, 1877: caput 24); *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, translated and introduced by Rev. H. J. Schroeder, O.P. (Rockford, Ill.: Tan Books and Publishers, Inc., 1978: 184)*

¹² Born in 1485, Bandello entered the Dominican convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan at age twelve. He studied at the University of Pavia, was professed in 1505 and left the Dominican Order in 1526. He entered into the service of Cesare Fregoso, a general with ties to France, in 1529 and served as bishop of Agen from 1550 until his death in 1561. The first three parts of his *Novelle* were published in Lucca in 1554 and the fourth part was published posthumously in 1573 in Lyon. For a biography on Bandello, see Adelin Charles Fiorato, *Bandello entre l'histoire et l'écriture: la vie, l'expérience sociale, l'évolution culturelle d'un conteur de la renaissance* (Florence: Olschki, 1979).

The focus of my undertaking is to analyze the function of violence specifically in relation to courtship and the institution of marriage.¹³ Furthermore, I discuss the significance of Gratian's, Boccaccio's, and Bandello's depictions of the slippage between consent and coercion, which struggle against each other in these texts yet remain so tightly interwoven that it is often difficult to untangle them. In fact, the dissertation shows that coercion and violence, while prohibited by canon law, were nevertheless sometimes involved in marriage formation. Additionally, courtship played an ambiguous role, sometimes functioning as an alternative to sexual violence, as a prelude to marriage, or merely as a seduction scheme involving a false promise of marriage in exchange for sex – clearly a violation of canon law.¹⁴ Boccaccio's and Bandello's narratives engage with canon law definitions of marriage, including the position that marriage and violence should be mutually exclusive. As will be seen, these *novellieri* represent violence as a tool that can be deployed against women, men, the couple, the parents, and even against the institution of marriage itself. Violence as discussed here takes on many forms – from threats, to physical violence, to sexual violence – and can be used to force a marriage

¹³ Thomas Kuehn's *Law, Family, and Women: Toward a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: U Chicago P, 1981) focuses on the legal position of women in late medieval and early modern Italy with a strong emphasis on fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Florentine social history. In synthesizing his findings, Kuehn notes that, contrary to the image that Klapisch-Zuber and others have presented of women as invariably manipulated by fathers and/or husbands, reality was more complex. The law, Kuehn argues, simultaneously imposed restrictions on women and "institutionalized and protected rights in and through women" (6). In Kuehn's account, women appear sometimes empowered, sometimes powerless. Citing "the ambiguous role of continued paternal control in the *patria potestas*" (13), Kuehn argues against the view that women at marriage merely passed from the control of their fathers to that of their husbands. He observes, moreover, that women brought grievances to court through a *mundualdus*, but often did so in order to further the interests of their fathers, husbands, or other men who exerted control over them. Early modern Italians, Kuehn states, had a good general awareness of law. This is an important point to keep in mind as we read Bandello's novellas of clandestine marriage disavowed by one of the partners; indeed, novellas 1.42 and 1.54 refer to the possibility of legal recourse, as will be seen in Chapter Three. See also Anthony Molho, *Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1994).

¹⁴ Raymond of Peñafort addresses this problem in his *Summa* on marriage when he asks:

Pone quod aliquis desponsat aliquam, non habens propositum contrahendi, sed decipiendi, ut sic possit ab ea copulam extorquere carnalem; deinde cognoscit eam carnaliter; numquid stabit hoc pro matrimonio? In hoc casu diversi diversa sentiunt. Mihi tamen videtur, salvo meliori iudicio, quod si ille non proposuit eam ducere in uxorem, nec umquam consensit in eam, non debet ex illo facto matrimonium iudicari, cum in eo substantia coniugalis contractus non valeat inveniri; quoniam ex altera parte dolus solummodo adfuit, et defuit omnino consensus, sine quo cetera nequeunt foedus efficere coniugale. Iste autem deceptor, si veram vult agere poenitentiam, necesse habet illam sine fictione ducere in uxorem, quantum in eo est, si potest, vel dare ei virum sibi convenientem, vel alias satisfacere sibi, iuxta testimonium Veritatis: "Si offers munus tuum ante altare", etc. (2.4)

[Suppose that someone is engaged to a woman without any intention of contracting marriage but of deceiving so as to be able to extort carnal copulation from her. Will this not count as marriage? In this case there is a diversity of opinion. However, saving a better judgment, it seems to me that he had no intention of marrying her nor did he ever give his consent to her. From this fact there should be no judgment of marriage since the substance of a conjugal contract cannot be found in it. . . . However, if the deceiver wishes to make true penance, he must marry her without deceit as far as it is possible for him, or provide her with a man suitable for her, or otherwise make satisfaction to her in accord with the words of Truth, "If you make a gift at the altar," etc. (Matt. 5.23).] (2.4)

Clearly, regardless of the various solutions offered, there was an awareness of the problem of deceitful courtships.

when the spouses do not consent, or to prevent a marriage between members of a consenting couple.

For the purposes of this dissertation, it is necessary to note that during the span of time of Gratian, Boccaccio, and Bandello, there was not a concept that corresponded exactly to today's definition of 'rape'.¹⁵ Sex crimes involving women were defined not merely on the basis of violence against the victim, but also from the point of view of the person or persons who had control over her (Brundage 1987: 209-10). Additional factors included the status of the hymen before and after the crime, and the woman's social status and profession (Brundage 1987: 531). For example, the violent sexual assault of an unmarried servant girl by a nobleman was unlikely to be punished (Ruggiero 96), while that of a nubile aristocratic woman by a man of lower station was punished very severely (Ruggiero 92). By contrast, when an unmarried man sexually assaulted a virgin who was his social equal, marriage often resulted (Ruggiero Chapter Four, *passim*). Further complicating these aspects of the problem is the fact that consensual sex between a virgin and her lover was legally regarded as *raptus*, which had the meaning of abduction and defloration with the intent to contract marriage (Gratian C. 36 q. 1 c. 2). The same term was applied to the non-consensual abduction and violation of a virgin by a man who wished to marry her.¹⁶ As will be shown further on, Gratian noted the distinction between violence against the woman and violence against the parents, with important implications for the discussion of *raptus* and marriage.

Gratian's *causae* are brief fictional narratives followed by legal questions, a discussion of the (often conflicting) views of past authorities who addressed aspects of these questions. Gratian then attempts to 'harmonize' conflicting authorities in his own answer to his legal questions. Thus he both codifies and analyzes; this process reveals an interconnection between canon law and the narrative structure of the novella.¹⁷ In other

¹⁵ This is clearly illustrated in Elizabeth Cohen's "No Longer Virgins: Self-Presentation by Young Women in Late Renaissance Rome," in *Refiguring Woman: Perspectives on Gender and the Italian Renaissance*, edited by Marilyn Migiel and Juliana Schiesari (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1991: 169-91), where parental claims of violence often struggle against daughters' narratives of consensual sex. See also Thomas and Elizabeth Cohen, *Words and Deeds in Renaissance Rome: Trials Before the Papal Magistrates*, (Toronto, Buffalo, and London: U Toronto P, 1993: 103-34) for an account of the trial and torture of a Spanish music teacher charged with abduction and sexual assault of a girl who testifies clearly that she begged him to let her come with him to Naples and the sex they had along the way was not forced. Additionally, Nancy Virtue notes that "the socio-legal rape discourse of the time, while beginning to recognize notions of female sexual integrity, by no means presents one coherent concept of rape as forced coitus" (1993: 21) and that "[a]ny discussion of rape in the Renaissance . . . must be done with an awareness of . . . how the absence of any unambiguous signifier of sexual violation might affect these representations" (1993:30). It is important to note that while certain changes in the understanding of sexual violence took place from the twelfth through the sixteenth centuries, even in the seventeenth century there was not a real distinction between consensual sex and violent defloration.

¹⁶ A notable example recalled by Duby comes from the works of Guibert of Nogent, who commented a marital strategy sometimes employed by nobles: violating women with desirable social and financial connections in order to contract advantageous marriages (153). In addition, Duby's study, for all its attention to the powerful influence of both secular and ecclesiastical forces, does not neglect to mention the ideological forces at work throughout medieval and early modern French society; for example, he refers to abduction as a stronger version of courtly love in the aristocratic military class (Duby 146).

¹⁷ The *Decretum* is comprised of three parts. The first part consists of 101 *distinctiones*; the second part includes thirty-six *causae* (short fictional stories followed by legal commentary and codification), with a treatise on confession inserted in the middle of Causa 33. The third part regards the sacraments. The *causae* deal with a variety of issues relating to canon law. However, those numbered twenty-seven to thirty-six are

words, Gratian is simultaneously a teller of tales and an interpreter of law: the discussion that follows the legal questions raised by the plot of each *causa* instructs his audience on how to read and interpret his stories, as well as the legal tradition into which he inscribes them. Additionally, although the format of the *Decretum* demands clear answers to the legal questions raised, Gratian does not hesitate to meander into thorny, intricate, and paradoxical plot lines, thus raising the possibility of alternative, dissonant answers that conflict with those he ultimately proffers.¹⁸

It must be noted that the fictional nature of Gratian's narratives is not extraneous to the legal tradition. Indeed, as James Brundage remarks in *The Medieval Origins of the Legal Profession* (2008):

Twelfth-century canon law teaching . . . involved [an] academic exercise, the disputation, a well-established pedagogical device commonly used in teaching liberal arts and theology at least from the time of Peter Abelard (ca. 1079-1142). The Disputations in the law schools were essentially debates about legal issues that arose from a fact situation. In a disputation a teacher described a scenario, which could either be hypothetical or real, and then challenged students (or other teachers) to respond to the legal questions that the scenario raised. (120)

Gratian, whose text seems better suited for the university classroom than as a manual for practitioners trying to solve cases directly before them, appears to have integrated at least some aspects of the disputation tradition into the fabric of his *Concordia discordantium canonum*.¹⁹ Thus law and narrative were deeply intertwined; this interconnection can be traced back to classical times.²⁰ The construction of narrative is crucial both in the

directly concerned with matters relating to sex and marriage. It is from among these *causae* that I draw the narratives discussed in the section on Gratian. Anders Winroth's *The Making of Gratian's Decretum* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000) has focused on the manuscripts of the *Decretum*, establishing the existence of a first recension, most likely the one created by Gratian, which is about half the size of what was previously considered the *Decretum*, dating back to about 1140, and a second one, with about twice as many canons added by later redactors. Winroth's painstaking study of the various manuscripts has thus made it possible to identify later additions to the *Decretum*, separating these additions from the original version, and demystifying many of the problems surrounding the interpretation of this important source of canon law. Winroth explains:

The discovery that Gratian's *Decretum* is not one book but two has manifold implications. To begin with, it has become easier to read and interpret the *Decretum*. Many have complained that Gratian's discussion is rambling and that it fulfils but poorly the promise of the work's original title . . . to harmonize the contradictions in canon law. The first [recension] is more succinct and to the point than the text previously known (the second recension). This makes it less confusing for the reader, who will be able to distinguish between Gratian's original argument and the later additions of the second recension. (3)

¹⁸ Gratian understands the role of conflict in answering a legal question, and the conflict plays out not only in the original title of the *Decretum*, but in the convoluted narrative examples he creates in the *causae* and in the contradictory opinions (from the Bible, Church fathers, classical authors, and councils, letters, and opinions of ecclesiastical authorities, often decontextualized to fit his purposes).

¹⁹ Brundage (2008) observes: "the cases . . . seem very much the product of classroom teaching. Positing hypothetical questions based on them was a well-established technique for teaching law, one that had been used in the Roman schools of antiquity and that twelfth-century teachers of Roman law continued to employ in Gratian's day. The recensions of Gratian's *Decretum* . . . are emphatically academic law books designed for, and responding to, the needs of teachers rather than practitioners" (102).

²⁰ In his *Introduction to Classical Legal Rhetoric: A Lost Heritage*, Michael Frost acknowledges the presence of fictional narrative within classical legal rhetoric: "under the Greek and Roman code-based

literary texts and in the legal setting. Gratian's narratives are nevertheless similar to novellas in their structure; however, the audience and purpose of his brief fictional vignettes necessarily differ from the audience and purpose of the typical novella. Even after Gratian, canon law on marriage remained connected to a narrative tradition. For example, Stephen of Tournai (1128-1203), who in addition to being one of Gratian's most important commentators, served as bishop of Tournai from 1192, held that the original trial occurred in the Garden of Eden, presided over by God after the infraction of Adam and Eve (Brundage 2008, 9). Stephen's example confers great importance onto law, inscribing the history of trials onto one of the earliest and most important biblical narratives.

It should be emphasized, however, that canon law and narrative are linked not only in isolated, albeit striking, examples such as that cited above. The two most relevant forms of canon law narrative, besides the above-cited *disputatio*, are decretals and penitentials, which occupy opposite ends of the fact-fiction spectrum. On the one hand, papal decretals – official documents which responded to a bishop's inquiry on how to handle a particular marital or sexual situation – implied an already existing story, first acted out in real life and then brought to the attention of the bishop and, ultimately, of the pope himself. On the other hand, penitentials – collections of sins and their punishments written for priests as an aid to confession – imply possible, plausible, implausible, and even impossible situations. In other words, while decretals are solidly grounded in actual facts, when dealing with penitentials, it is sometimes only the imagination of the author that leads to the implied story.²¹ Curiously enough, as Pierre Payer notes in *Sex and the Penitentials: The Development of a Sexual Code, 550-1150*, priests were reticent to use questions derived from penitentials in confession, because they feared that such questions might suggest a sin that had never been imagined by the penitent (8, 56).

Whereas Gratian's narratives are designed as an aid to reflect on the law, Boccaccio and Bandello aim to reach a far broader audience for a much less restricted set of purposes. I now move from fiction within law to discuss the representation of law within fiction. Boccaccio's *Decameron* is set in, and was written shortly after, the Black Death of 1348, that is, at the very beginning of the time period, spanning from 1348 through the Reformation, during which secular courts began to challenge the previously unquestioned power of ecclesiastical courts to adjudicate marriage and sex crime cases. "The new activism of civil governments in dealing with sexual problems was in part a

systems . . . advocates were free to reason inductively from numerous historical and hypothetical, or 'invented,' examples instead of relying on judicial 'examples' (precedents)" (29).

²¹ I am grateful to Professor Laurent Mayali, who in a lecture on the status of children in medieval canon law pointed out the need for caution when reading canon law sources and penitentials; just because there is a canon prohibiting a certain behavior does not mean the behavior was common or that it even happened at all. For scholarship on penitentials, see Oscar D. Watkins, *A History of Penance*, London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1920; Ludwig Bieler, ed., *The Irish Penitentials*, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae*, vol. 5, Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1963; Maria G. Muzzarelli, *Una componente della mentalità occidentale: i Penitenziali nell'alto Medioevo*, Bologna, Patron 1980; Allen J. Frantzen, *The Literature of Penance in Anglo-Saxon England*, New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1983; John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer, eds., *Medieval Handbooks of Penance: a Translation of the Principal "Libri Poenitentiales" and Selections from Related Documents*, New York: Columbia UP, 1990; Maria G. Muzzarelli, *Penitenze nel medioevo: uomini e modelli a confronto*, Bologna, Patron, 1994; Mino Marchetti, *Peccati, peccatori e penitenze della chiesa medioevale di Siena: il libro penitenziale della Chiesa di Siena e la celebrazione liturgica delle ordalie o giudizi di Dio*. Siena: Cantagalli, 2000.

response to the social and demographic dislocation that resulted from the epidemics of 1348 and after,” notes Brundage (1987: 546-47).²² Trained in canon law, Boccaccio was sensitive to the legal issues surrounding the formation of marriage and the attendant conflict between parents and offspring, as well as the shifting balance of power between ecclesiastical and secular courts. Law appears frequently in the *Decameron* and is perhaps nowhere more famously dramatized than in the novella of Madonna Filippa (6.7), who inspires a change in a fictional statute in Prato that ordered the capital punishment of all adulteresses. Madonna Filippa argues that she did not shortchange her husband, but only bestowed upon her lover sexual favors that were the leftovers of her own abundant lust. By appealing to the medieval law principle of “quod omnes tangit”, she inspires a new law which spares women who commit adultery for love, but which condemns to death those who commit adultery for the sake of financial gain. Another compelling example can be found in novella 2.10, whose protagonist is Madonna Bartolomea of Pisa, married against her will by her parents to an aged and impotent judge, Riccardo. After she is kidnapped by the lusty pirate Paganino, she refuses to return to her husband, inveighing against forced marriage, which she compares to prostitution. References to law and the legal system pervade this novella as well. Additional examples can be found in novella 4.6, where the podestà of Brescia tries to seduce Andreuola during the investigation of her husband’s death; and in novella 5.1, where the corrupt magistrate Lisimaco conspires with Cimone to abduct Efigenia and Cassandra from their respective weddings.

Bandello, like Boccaccio, discusses marriage with reference to legal disputes, representing aspects of concern prevalent during his time. It is worth noting in this regard that while Boccaccio’s novellas are often discussed in relation to their historical context – for example, the Black Death of 1348 – only a handful of scholars, Fiorato foremost among them, have adequately contextualized Bandello historically.²³ Indeed, the marital and sexual scenarios Bandello presents engage strongly with matters relevant both to the

²² Interestingly, even before the period which Brundage describes the growing assertiveness of secular courts, Trevor Dean notes,

in 1332 King Robert of Naples issued an edict eloquently forbidding ‘lascivious and insolent young men’ of the city of Naples from the ‘abominable corruption’ of abducting young girls from their fathers’ houses, or kissing them in public places, by which they subverted the proper procedure, divinely ordained and parentally controlled, for arranging marriage. . . . King Robert ordered that judges prosecute offenders ex officio, even if no accusation was laid. His penalties were severe: loss of property of inheritance, for the man; loss of dowry and inheritance, for the woman. (Dean 92)

This legislation, which went into effect about two decades before Boccaccio wrote the *Decameron*, regarded matters of interest to cities throughout Italy and the novellas both reflect and respond to the concerns surrounding marriage during Boccaccio’s own time.

²³ In his extensive study *Bandello entre l’histoire et l’écriture*, Adelin Fiorato acknowledges the prominence of law in Bandello’s collection, and at the same time notes that this prominence sets Bandello apart from other novellieri of his time:

Sans doute Bandello doit-il aussi à la tradition familiale et à l’environnement juridiques qui l’ont influencé dès enfance son intérêt singulier pour les hommes et les choses du prétoire: les juristes sont en effet fort bien représentés parmi les dédicataires et les narrateurs de ses nouvelles et nombre de récits ont pur theme des process, des litiges et des jugements, où les homes de loi et la procédure jouent un rôle important et assez insolite dans la tradition narrative. Notamment les faits divers tragiques que content ses nouvelles se terminent souvent devant le tribunal: le droit, instrument de l’autorité légitime, est un des piliers du monde idéologique bandellien. (16)

canon law tradition and to society at large, at the dawn of the Tridentine period. This is one reason why his novellas on clandestine marriage must be discussed in the context of the Council of Trent, which issued its decree on marriage reform in 1563, two years after his death. In sum, by deliberately invoking marital and sexual scenarios that had been under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Church, Bandello responds to the social and political circumstances of the Protestant and the Catholic Reformation.

Alongside the abolition of clandestine marriage, the Council of Trent ushered in a period of increased secularization of many marital and sexual matters: the Church continued to define moral standards, but secular courts took over the task of dealing with most legal aspects of these issues (Brundage 1987: 574). Anticipating these important changes that were being discussed during the last years of his life, Bandello often brings the discussion of marriage and illicit sex into a secular forum, and several of his narratives place the authority to make judgments on Christian morality not only in the hands of the Church, but in secular hands as well. Bandello's cast of characters includes secular rulers depicted as directly or indirectly responsible for making decisions which traditionally would have been made in an ecclesiastical court. For example, rulers such as Duke Alessandro de' Medici and Count Guido Rangone (who appear, respectively, in novella 2.15 and in the dedicatory letter preceding it) adjudicate marriage and sex cases without deferring to bishops.²⁴ To sum up, whereas in the mid-fourteenth century, Boccaccio represented the efforts of couples to assert their own will in the formation of marriage, two centuries later, Bandello represented the transition of marriage law from ecclesiastical to secular control.

²⁴ This novella and its implications are discussed in detail in Chapter Four. At present, it must be noted that it provides an example of the importance of the dedicatory letters that precede the novellas. Readers should not dismiss the significance of Bandello's decision to relate the 214 novellas in the collection as originating from multiple narrators, each named in the dedicatory letter preceding the novella. Various viewpoints and judgments coexist in juxtaposition, as in a dialogue, challenging the reader to engage with the opinions presented. The task of identifying the author's personal views seems not only almost impossible to fulfill, but also appears counter to the multi-vocal structure Bandello chooses to adopt in his collection. As Delmo Maestri notes in his "Bandello e Giraldi-Cinzio: due progetti di novellistica fra Pieno e Tardo Rinascimento," in *Gli uomini le città e i tempi di Matteo Bandello. Il convegno internazionale di studi Torino-Tortona-Alessandria-Castelnuovo Scivria 8-11 novembre 1984*, ed. Ugo Rozzo (Tortona: Centro studi Matteo Bandello e la cultura rinascimentale, 1985): 139-56, Bandello's decision to place a dedicatory letter at the beginning of each novella in which he states that he is writing down a story he has heard from somebody else is a tool that masks his own authorial subjectivity and his own judgments (143). This places the responsibility for interpretation of the novellas with the readers. Elisabetta Menetti, however, offers a somewhat different account of the significance of the dedicatory letters in *Enormi e disoneste: le Novelle di Matteo Bandello* (Roma: Carocci, 2005):

Nelle *Novelle* l'interpretazione è sempre orientata, sia dallo scrittore in prima persona sia dalle sue molteplici maschere, rappresentate dai numerosi cortigiani narratori. Nella ricezione di Bandello, lettore e imitatore del *Decameron*, la soglia di libertà (e di ambiguità) ermeneutica presente nel capolavoro di Boccaccio viene risolta dall'imposizione di una voce autoriale più accentuata, che si avvale anche dell'eco di quella dei tanti narratori. (Menetti 20-21)

Thus we must note that there is some disagreement on the extent to which Bandello leaves his novellas open to reader interpretation. Questions remain: Where does his opinion end and the opinion of his narrators begin? Do his narrators imbue the novellas and the collection as a whole with a multi-vocal quality, leaving readers to reach their own conclusions, or are the narrators simply screens for Bandello's own opinions? And if the latter is the case, are readers then led by the author and narrators to partake in the same ideology?

Summary of chapters:

The material in Chapter One provides legal and historical background on the formation of consensual and non-consensual marital and sexual relationships; this background is essential to understanding literary representations of the marital and sexual scenarios in Boccaccio and Bandello. The first part of Chapter One provides an overview of canon law on marriage, elopement, abduction, and sexual violence. I describe the jurisdictional struggles between ecclesiastical and secular courts in settling such matters. Moving on to a specific text where canon law and narrative intersect, the chapter then offers a reading of three *causae* from Gratian's *Decretum* that focus on marriage, sex, and violence.

Boccaccio, who studied law with the famous jurist and poet Cino da Pistoia, frequently weaves aspects of these issues into his short stories, with reference both to law and to economic concerns relevant during his time. This is the basis for Chapter Two, which discusses the marital and sexual economies that emerge in the *Decameron*. While critics have long noted Boccaccio's engagement with the courtly love tradition, my contribution is unique insofar as I propose that such an engagement finds its logical basis in the concept of an amorous debt: this enables me to shed new light on how women function as part of an economy.²⁵ These features engage with the contrasting models of marriage coexisting during Boccaccio's time: the Church's consensual model and the aristocratic model founded (and sometimes forced) on the basis of dynastic and/or monetary exigencies.

The novellas by Bandello selected for analysis in Chapters Three and Four offer insight into the legal and literary tradition preceding him, as well as an engagement with the legal and literary debates ongoing during his own time. More precisely, Chapter Three deals with Bandello's clandestine marriage narratives, commenting on the family violence that pervades them.²⁶ My reading exposes a rift between the consensual model

²⁵ Following in the tradition of Vittore Branca's argument in *Boccaccio medievale* (Firenze: Sansoni, 1956), that the *Decameron* functions as an "epopea mercantile", Giuseppe Mazzotta in *The World at Play in Boccaccio's Decameron* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986), Millicent Marcus in "Cross-Fertilizations: Folklore and Literature in *Decameron* 4.5, *Italica* 66 (4) (1989): 383-98, and Roberta Morosini in "Penelopi in viaggio 'fuori rotta' nel *Decameron* e altrove. 'Metamorfosi' e scambi nel Mediterraneo medievale," *California Italian Studies* 1.1 (2009-2010), have noted that there are elements in Boccaccio's novellas that parody mercantile economies. I broaden the horizon by noting the presence of an economy of desire, complete with language that describes an amorous debt owed by the beloved to the lover.

²⁶ Few scholars have focused extensively on Bandello's representation of women, much less his representation of violence against women. Adelin Fiorato, the most important twentieth-century Bandello scholar, published an article in 1980 entitled "L' image et la condition de la femme dans les nouvelles de Bandello," in *Images de la femme dans la littérature Italienne de la Renaissance: préjugés misogynes et aspirations nouvelles: Castiglione, Piccolomini, Bandello*, ed. Andre Rochon (Paris: Univ. de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1980) 169-286. Throughout this lengthy article, he mentions the diversity of topics in the collection and how the representation of different kinds of women, while reflecting the variety of topics in general, still connects women to marriage, the home, and the private sphere. In "Scrittura narrativa e patologia nelle *Novelle* del Bandello," in *Gli uomini le città e i tempi di Matteo Bandello. Il convegno internazionale di studi Torino-Tortona-Alessandria-Castelnuovo Scivria 8-11 novembre 1984*, ed Ugo Rozzo (Tortona: Centro Studi Matteo Bandello e la cultura rinascimentale, 1985) 301-20, Fiorato discusses some of the bloodiest novellas in the collection, many of which involve women either as victims or perpetrators of violent acts of rage, often motivated by revenge. Suggesting that women are under ordinary circumstances as criminally responsible as men for the acts of violence they choose to perpetrate, Fiorato

of marriage propagated by canon law and the sometimes violent control exerted by families, who placed marriage strategy over the consent of the couple. As my analysis shows, these secret-marriage narratives invite reflection on the abuse of the sacrament by those men who lured women into such unions, only to disavow them later. By exposing the dangers of such marriages, these novellas emphasize the importance of marriage contracted freely with mutual consent and unimpeded by unwarranted family or social interference. Readers are invited to reflect on conflicting viewpoints and to participate in a dialogue opened up by Bandello and his many narrators on this complex and delicate matter.

Moving from clandestine marriage narratives, which symbolize the couple's mutual consent, often to the exclusion of other factors, the analysis then shifts towards coerced sexual and marital relationships. Chapter Four discusses sexual violence in Bandello's narratives, and demonstrates that women are represented as aesthetic objects that function like literary texts. Bandello's beautiful virgins are in themselves morally innocuous, but when exposed to the gaze of perverse men become vulnerable to exploitation. The rapists within his novellas blame women's beauty for their own loss of self-control. Additionally, the chapter juxtaposes novellas dealing with the violation of virgins and of married women with Augustine's discussion of sexual violence and suicide in the *City of God*. By emphasizing the multiplicity of voices represented in these novellas and their intertexts, I argue for a more careful reading of Bandello's complex work.

notes that women might be held less culpable when they react violently against themselves or others when they are wronged sexually, when their honor has been taken from them through violence or trickery.

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Chapter One Legal and Historical Background

“His auctoritatibus euidenter ostenditur, quod nisi libera uoluntate nulla est copulanda alicui” (Gratian C 31 q. 2 c. 4).
“*With the liberty of love affirmed, the positive power of choice was canonized*”
(Noonan 434).

“For consent has no place where fear or force is present, so neither does marriage, which is contracted through consent alone” (Raymond of Peñafort 11.1).

As mentioned in the Introduction, medieval and early modern law and practice in the areas of sex and marriage resonate in important ways with Boccaccio and Bandello’s short stories. The present chapter emphasizes the role of consent in the areas of marriage, abduction, and rape from the twelfth century through the Council of Trent. Such an overview of this aspect of legal history is intended to prepare the reader for the analysis of the literary texts presented in the second, third, and fourth chapters. After providing an overall picture of the major historical changes, I discuss two of Gratian’s fictional *causae*, which are particularly rich and valuable not only for their novella-like quality but also because of Gratian’s extraordinary influence on the entire canon law tradition that followed him.

Consent, as formulated by Gratian, eventually came to be understood as constitutive of marriage. At its inception, this bold theorization stood in opposition to the secular-aristocratic understanding of marriage, with the parents’ will and families’ economic and social interests placed at the forefront. When at the instance of Pope Gregory IX Raymond of Peñafort compiled the *Decretals* in 1234, a most important compilation of canon law, the Church emphasized the couple’s consent, borrowing and adapting from Gratian’s *Decretum* and making many of his points into the Church’s official position on marriage.¹ For example, as a concession to the freedom of choice and as a protection against coercion, two points strongly articulated by Gratian, it permitted couples to contract marriage clandestinely, even without a priest, witnesses or parental approval. Clandestine marriage was discouraged, however, and was illicit but not invalid. From Alexander III, who decreed that those who married clandestinely were indeed married,² until the Council of Trent’s marriage reform was articulated in the 1563 decree *Tametsi*, which outlawed clandestine marriage, the balance of power over marriage formation shifted, with parents asserting less control and with the consent of offspring increasingly integrated into marriage practice.

The historical introduction that follows provides an overview of canon law on consent-based marriage; consent is also discussed in relation to abduction and rape. By the twelfth century there was an attempt by Gratian and others to distinguish between the consent of the parents and that of the parties themselves. It is Gratian’s emphasis on the latter which over time shaped not only the letter of the law but legal practice as well. The

¹ For information on Raymond of Peñafort, Gregory IX, and the *Decretals*, see: Josep Maria Mas i Solench, *Ramon de Penyafort* (Barcelona: Rafael Dalmau, 2000); Ferran Valls i Taberner, *San Ramón de Penyafort* (Barcelona: Labor, 1979); Kenneth Pennington, *Popes, Canonists, and Texts, 1150-1550* (Hampshire, Great Britain, and Brookfield, Vt: Variorum, 1973: 471-80).

² Wernz, *Jus Decretalium*, IV, title III, no. 516.

triumph of consent in the Church's understanding of marriage must be contextualized within the jurisdictional struggles between ecclesiastical and secular courts, as well as in relation to the family's role in marriage formation.

Marriage Law: Jurisdictional Battles

Two main judicial systems operated in medieval and early modern Europe: canon law on the one hand and secular law on the other hand, occasionally coming into conflict over matters pertaining to marriage and sexual behavior.³ Clandestine marriage can be understood in part as a symptom of the struggle between canon law and secular law, as well as a symptom of the sometimes conflicting interests of the couple and the parents/families in marriage formation. Some city statutes legislated against clandestine marriage even as ecclesiastical courts continued to assert the validity, indissolubility, and sacramentality of these secret marriages. Indeed, secular law, which insisted on the importance of parental consent to marriage, sometimes treated clandestine marriage as a crime closely related to the abduction of a woman by a man.⁴ From the canon law standpoint, however, if two people wanted to marry secretly, there was no need for the woman's removal from her father's home: a clandestine marriage could occur anywhere.

³ In his *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, James Brundage identifies three distinct phases in the jurisdictional history of marriage in medieval and early modern Europe. During the first phase, a time of intense scholarship and practice beginning in the eleventh century, the Church asserted its primacy over matters relating to sex and marriage. Brundage notes that by the end of the eleventh century,

Canonical courts enjoyed their greatest success in securing exclusive jurisdiction . . . over marriage litigation. . . . This monopoly on marriage questions represented a momentous victory for Church reform, as well as a source of considerable power for the Church's jurisdictional system. Royal courts and local courts, to be sure, continued to exercise jurisdiction over some aspects of domestic relations But by 1100 the Church had secured virtual supremacy in the adjudication of issues relating to the formation of marriage and the separation, divorce, and remarriage of those whose marriages failed. (*Law, Sex, and Christian Society* 223)

Ecclesiastical courts continued to hold almost complete control over cases relating to marriage and sexuality until the mid-fourteenth century, when secular courts began to assert authority over sex crimes, including rape. However, there is some scholarly disagreement over exactly when the secular courts began to compete against ecclesiastical courts for jurisdiction. According to Trevor Dean, for instance, the struggle in Italy began even earlier, immediately after the *Decretals* were compiled in 1234, as evidenced by legislation enacted during this time period (93). A second phase nevertheless began sometime between 1234 and 1348 and ended in 1517, when, as Brundage and Dean agree, secular courts began vying for control over cases related to marriage and sexuality; however, ecclesiastical courts "remained the primary tribunals for dealing with marriage, divorce, and separation litigation; in addition they continued to deal routinely with a wide range of sex crimes and offenses, including adultery, fornication, rape, prostitution, and homosexual activities" (Brundage 547). Thus, during this period of transition, both secular and ecclesiastical courts asserted jurisdiction over sex crimes. During the third phase defined by Brundage, which began in the wake of the Reformation, jurisdiction over marriage and sex cases changed, with secular courts increasingly empowered (574). Even though there is some disagreement over the exact dates delimiting each phase (a disagreement doubtless owing to geographical variations and differences in sources examined) the phases identified by Brundage nonetheless have a valid application to the study of the history of marriage.

⁴ As shown further on, this crime, *raptus*, did not take into account whether or not the woman had consented. This is because it was the parents' consent, not hers, that mattered.

The contrasting systems of canon law and secular law sometimes came into conflict, as discussed by Trevor Dean, who aptly describes the tensions:

[S]ecular legislation ran counter to the canon law of marriage, according to which matrimony was contracted by free consent of the couple. No other consent was necessary to form a valid union; the formation of marriage should be free of any restriction imposed by parents, lords or governments. Yet within a few decades of the full enunciation of this principle by Popes Alexander III and Innocent III, Italian cities began to row in the opposite direction, to preserve or recover some parental control, and as the decades passed, those efforts against the canonical current intensified. No sooner had the period of ecclesiastical legislation on these matters closed, with the *Decretals* of 1234, than the period of secular legislation began. Such insistence on the requirements of parental consent was supported too by the academic civil lawyers: by the early thirteenth century, they had reinterpreted their Roman-law texts to allow for the canonical position that consent alone made a marriage, but still insisted that such consent include that of the parents, as well as that of the couple. In the late fourteenth century, the renowned jurist Baldus opined that statutes punishing those who married without parental consent were valid, because such action was ‘against good mores’ and ‘creates capital hatred’. (93)

Recognizing parental stakes in the marriages of offspring, these laws attempted to enforce intergenerational communication and cooperation. Even while secular legislation continued these efforts, canonists, decretists, and decretalists attempted to address the vast implications of consent-based marriage. For instance, in the late twelfth century and first half of the thirteenth century, respectively, Alexander III and Gregory IX struggled to develop criteria to identify the threshold beyond which the level of force and fear inflicted was excessive; they also grappled with what to do about marriages identified as forced.

As James Brundage shows throughout *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (1987), the eleventh-century spiritual reform movement gave rise to the conditions for the rigorous codification of canon law that occurred over the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This codification culminated in a set of tools deployed by the Church in defining and enforcing acceptable codes of moral and sexual conduct. It was within this context that the model of marriage as founded on the consent of the couple developed. Framing Gratian’s *Decretum* (1140), the reforming popes, from Gregory VII (1073-1085) to Innocent III (1198-1216), asserted the Church’s authority over the marital and sexual lives of kings and limited the ability of families to arrange marriages against the will of one or both spouses.⁵ Indeed, as will be seen throughout the dissertation, both Boccaccio and Bandello portray the conflict between an aristocratic model of marriage formation, in which the family controls the choice of a spouse, and the Church’s ideal of marriage, in which the spouses freely choose to contract marriage with each other.

⁵ See also Georges Duby’s *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest* for a history of the Church’s involvement in the marriages and sex lives of monarchs.

The Triumph of Consent

Canon law's increasing emphasis on the consent of the spouses had two important consequences. First, the Church adopted an increasingly strong stance against marriages coerced through force and fear. Second, while canonists continued to disapprove morally of clandestine marriage, they tolerated it legally out of deference towards consent. Irvin Resnick contends that the emphasis on consent was directly linked to the struggle between secular and ecclesiastical law:

An important goal of the Gregorian reform movement had been to free the churchmen from lay control and to subordinate lay society to ecclesiastical culture. Since marriage was viewed by churchmen as a sacrament and an act of religious significance, it was important to church authorities to gain control of the social institution as well. A way of asserting its control was to substitute for customary forms defining marriage an alternate model. One feature of marriage doctrine in the twelfth century, especially in schools around Paris, was the proposal of the consent of the parties themselves as an efficient cause of marriage. This ecclesiastic model . . . would in effect limit the power of heads of families. Since it was the consent of the two parties to marriage that was essential, parental approval might be desirable but not necessary. (352-53)

It must be noted that the Church's support of consensual marriage was not entirely disinterested; consent for its own sake was a strong motivation factor, but there were other factors that cannot be ignored: limitation of family control over marriage, control over the marital separations and divorces of monarchs, and the articulation of the Church's power over the institution of marriage.⁶ From the canon law point of view, utmost importance was placed on "the construction of a structure in which Christian marriage because it was a sacred matter was controlled by the Church and not by the family" (Noonan 1973: 429). The continued struggle between canon law and secular law over jurisdiction and the enduring power of families over marriage formation show that the Church did not immediately consolidate her power over families and society in this matter. Despite its motivations, the emphasis on the consent of the spouses led to the recognition of the will of sons and even daughters as important, even when it differed from that of the parents.

A watershed moment for consent can be pinpointed in Causa 31 of the *Decretum*, where Gratian boldly declared, "His auctoritatibus euidenter ostenditur, quod nisi libera uoluntate nulla est copulanda alicui" [These authorities make it plain that no woman is to be coupled to anyone except in accordance with her free will] (q. 2 c. 4).⁷ As John Noonan (1973) has observed, while Gratian's focus on the consent of the spouses is quite radical, it is not entirely unprecedented, and, as mentioned previously, has its original roots in the spiritual reform movement that began in the eleventh century. Gratian built his claims in part on the foundations laid by Ivo of Chartres and about half a century before he set to writing the *Decretum*. Ivo, bishop of Chartres between 1091 and 1116, had placed the will of daughters on an equal level with that of their parents; he had also argued that virgins should not be "forced to accept husbands against their parents' will or

⁶ See Resnick and Helmholz for a fuller discussion of these issues.

⁷ I gratefully acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Marco Prina and Filippo Andrei with translations from Gratian.

against their own” (Noonan 1973: 428). Gratian extended this concept, expanding the centrality of female will and accounting for the fact that at times the daughter’s will did not coincide with that of her parents. He further advanced the position that no woman should be forced into an unwanted marriage bond, even by her own parents, in spite of important authorities whose view differed from his own:

Potentially damaging as [previous] sources were to Gratian’s position . . . none of them was recognized by the master himself as fatal to his severe and emphatic *No* to parentally compelled marriage. Gratian’s superiority to his sources is perhaps nowhere more evident. He had against him . . . the three most influential Fathers of the Western Church, Ambrose, “Augustine,” and Jerome, and formal teaching by two of the greatest Popes, Leo I and Nicholas I . . . For his conclusion, he had an analogy in Saint Paul, “Ambrose,” a remote text of Nicholas I, and two decisions of a modern pope. He did not bother to cite the opposition, to contrast Ambrose with “Ambrose,” Nicholas with Nicholas, to explain “Augustine,” Jerome, and Leo. With mastery he moved to assert his doctrine.⁸ (Noonan 1973: 424)

Once Gratian asserted that no woman should be forced into a marriage against her will, the principle of uncoerced consent to marriage was highlighted by a number of popes, canonists, decretists and decretalists. For instance, Pope Alexander III (1159-1181) enacted important changes in his decretal *Cum locum*, which spells out “in the Church’s positive law the principle articulated by Gratian” (Reid 45). Only in a later decretal, however, did Alexander III take further steps to remedy coerced marriages that had already taken place: in *Veniens ad nos*, he declaimed that such marriages were invalid and, in the same decretal, he “articulated the legal standard to be used in judging whether a particular marriage was brought about through impermissible coercion.” Thus emerged the concept of the *constans vir*, that is to say, “[w]here a steady man would have been overwhelmed by fear or unable to resist the force brought to bear against him, the marriage was declared invalid” (Reid 45). It should be noted that the concept of the *constans vir* applies to both men and women.

Building on this important foundation, subsequent authorities such as Raymond of Peñafort (1175-1275), the Dominican friar and canonist who compiled the *Decretals* on behalf of Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241), worked towards additional innovations, leading to a more nuanced and personal application of the law: it was understood that different people responded differently to threats and coercion, depending on the context (Reid 46-47). This awareness of individual differences among litigants allowed for a subjective application of the law.⁹ Raymond of Peñafort develops the *constans vir* theory in his

⁸ When Noonan places quotation marks around the name of an authority, he does so in order to point out that the attribution was erroneous.

⁹ Richard Helmholz discusses the practical applications of the *constans vir* theory in the context of coerced marriage cases:

Cases arising under the impediment of coercion . . . left a good deal of discretion to the judge. We cannot formulate an exact rule, from canonists or from practice, as to exactly how much force was necessary to meet the canonical test. All we can say is that the menace of loss of a person’s inheritance or the threat of serious physical harm, backed with the sight of the instruments by which it was to be inflicted, appears to have weighed heavily with the judges. There had to be proof of the real possibility of the use of force or of the imminent loss of one’s expected inheritance. The light fear, the ‘reverential’ fear which has been more largely developed in

Summa on marriage, beginning with a definition of the terms: “Vis est maioris rei impetus qui repelli non potest. Metus est instantis vel futuri periculi mentis trepidatio” [Force is the impulse of a greater thing that cannot be repelled. Fear is mental trepidation at a present or future danger] (11.2).¹⁰ Raymond argues that beyond a certain threshold, violence impedes marriage:

Circa impedimentum violentiae sive metus nota quod, ex sui natura, etiam sine constitutione Ecclesiae, matrimonialem consensum excludit. Nam ubi metus vel coactio intercedit, non potest consensus locum habere; per consequens nec matrimonium, quod solo consensus contrahitur. Sed quia inter vim et vim magna est differentia, et inter metum et metum, ideo videndum est: quid sit vis sive coactio, et quid metus; quae violentia excusat, et quis metus. (11.1)

[Note that by its very nature, even without the constitution of the Church, the impediment of violence or fear excludes matrimonial consent. For consent has no place where fear or force is present, so neither does marriage, which is contracted through consent alone. But because between force and force there is a great difference and between fear and fear, we must look at what force or coercion is and what fear is; what violence excuses and what fear excuses.]¹¹

Where is the threshold, and how can it be identified? Raymond distinguishes between degrees of coercion and their impact on the *constans vir*:

Ut autem scias quae vis vel quis metus excuset, not quod coactio seu vis alia levis, alia violenta. Levis non excludit consensum matrimonialem; violenta consensum excludit. Quae sit violenta coactio patet, scilicet, cum quis capitur, vel trahitur, invitatus ducitur vel ligatur. Item metus alius cadit in constantem virum, alius non. Ille qui cadit in constantem virum excusat et excludit consensum matrimonii. Quis autem metus excuset et cadat in constantem virum, dic quod metus mortis et corporis cruciatus. Item metus stupri et servitutis. (11.3)

[However, that you might know what force or fear excuses, note that some coercion or force is slight, another violent. Slight force does not exclude marital consent; violent force excludes consent. It is clear what violent coercion is, for example, when one is dragged, lead away unwillingly, or bound. Again, some fear falls on a steadfast man, another does not. What falls on a steadfast man excuses and excludes marital consent. However, what would be the fear that would fall on a steadfast man and excuse? Say that it would be fear of death and bodily torture. Again, fear of sexual violation and enslavement.] (Peñafort 11.3)

Catholic canonical practice of our own day played no part in marriage litigation of the later Middle Ages. The force and fear which moved a constant man had to be more than the insubstantial threat, the minor inconvenience, or the parent’s urgent entreaty. We should not wonder at the paucity of divorce actions under this heading. ([1978] 94)

It is important to note that the new standards applied to potential dissolution cases based on force and fear did not result in widespread recourse to the ecclesiastical courts in an attempt to dissolve marriages.

¹⁰ Raymond composed his *Summa* on marriage shortly after compiling the *Decretals*. According to Pierre Payer, he drew both from his own work on marriage in the *Decretals* and from Tancred’s *Summa* on marriage (*Raymond of Peñafort: Summa on Marriage*, “Introduction” [Medieval Sources in Translation 41, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005]: 5).

¹¹ English translations of Raymond of Peñafort’s *Summa on Marriage* are taken from Pierre Payer’s translation (Medieval Sources in Translation 41. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2005).

However, while he undertakes to identify forms of coercion that are sufficient to manipulate the *constans vir*, Peñafort does not suggest that all people respond in the same way to attempts at coercion; rather, different people respond differently to different degrees of force and fear, he notes:

Item nota quod talis metus caderet in unum qui non diceretur cadere in alium, quia non est versimile homines clarae dignitatis in urbe timuisse, vel quod rex parvi militis metu timeat. Verumtamen si apertissimas probationes habeat, repellitur praesumptio quae contra eum est, ut ibidem dicitur; et sic iudex secundum diversitatem personarum et locorum iudicabit qualis sit metus, et iudicabit matrimonium aliquod, vel nullum. (11.3)

[Again, note that such fear might fall on one and would not be said to fall on another because it is not likely that men of distinguished worth would have been afraid in the city or that a king should fear a small army. Nevertheless, if he has the clearest proofs of this fear, the presumption against him is removed In this way a judge will judge what the quality of the fear is according to the differences of persons and places, and will judge the marriage to be something or nothing.] (Peñafort 11.3)

Where marriages had been contracted by means of force and fear, the Church offered recourse. But there is a time limit that applies to when recourse can be sought: “Item nota quod qualiscumque sit metus vel violentia in matrimonio contrahendo, si mulier, quae allegat metum, stetit per annum et dimidium cum marito, vel consensit in carnalem copulam, non debet postea audiri si allegat metum vel violentiam” [Again, note that whatever be the fear or violence in contracting a marriage, if the woman, who alleges fear, remained for a year and a half with her husband or consented to carnal intercourse, she ought not be heard afterwards if she alleges fear or violence] (11.4). Those affected by force and fear were expected to act within a reasonable period of time; failure to bring suit within such a timeframe resulted in the presumption that the marriage was valid.¹²

Raymond of Peñafort’s *Summa* on marriage, along with the *Decretals* he compiled on behalf of Pope Gregory IX, exemplifies canon law’s commitment to safeguarding consent-based marriage and distinguishing between mild pressure and excessive coercion.¹³ An even more important difficulty for medieval ecclesiastical authorities, from Gratian to Peñafort and even beyond, consisted in unraveling complexities involved in individual cases to reveal the truth, so that an equitable decision

¹² Even before Peñafort, Peter Lombard had argued that spouses, who were joined by force and proceeded to live together peacefully “aliquo temporis spatio” [for a certain amount of time], were offering a form of post-facto consent and therefore could not later object (*Sententiae in IV libris distinctae* 4.29.1.4, quoted in Resnick 361). Resnick notes: “This judgment that silence implies consent after the fact – despite clear evidence of compulsion earlier – attests to a difficulty consent theorists had to overcome. A marriage doctrine that treats consent as a necessary and sufficient cause may extend ecclesiastical control over this institution, but it also could provide a clever advocate with the means to dissolve marriages more easily and with greater frequency” (361). Thus, once again, it is apparent that the Church was not merely motivated by the disinterested desire to uphold consent for its own sake: a second motivation had to do with limiting secular control over the institution of marriage.

¹³ See for example, C. 6, C. 13, C. 14, C. 21, and C. 28 of the *Decretals* for a discussion of coercion and consent to marriage.

could be reached.¹⁴ One important reason for this is the psychological pressure that families continued to exert over marriageable people. In fact, while Gratian's pronouncement against coerced marriage was revolutionary in identifying the will of the spouses as separate from that of the parents, it did not at first "disturb the prevailing pattern of parentally arranged marriages The standard set scarcely maximized free choice. It did nothing to liberate a son or daughter from psychological and social pressure" (Noonan 1973: 433). Gratian, as we have seen, had a strong and lasting impact on canon law, but this change *de jure* did not have an immediate impact *de facto* on family life and marriage practices.¹⁵ However, with the innovations articulated by Peñafort, there was a possibility to begin bridging the gap between the normative criteria against coercion and real-life situations. In practice, with the *Decretals*, clandestine marriage became the main option available to people whose parents opposed their union.

Clandestine Marriage

Facing a variety of obstacles, such as scandal, social disapproval, and parental opposition, couples who married clandestinely had in their favor the Church's legal – though not moral – support. According to Gratian's conceptualization of consent to marriage, "[t]he simple words 'I take you as my husband,' 'I take you as my wife' once said, the Church had to recognize the couple as married, whatever social objection was made to the union. A clandestine union was illegal, but one [already] made was valid" (Noonan 1973: 430). As mentioned earlier, this powerful speech act required neither priest nor witnesses. In the deeply stratified world of medieval Western Europe, the social status of the bride and groom could be an issue for the family and for society, whereas it was not an impediment

¹⁴ Discussing how this developing legislation was applied in practice, Noonan introduces the case of an eleven-year-old girl who sought annulment on the basis of force and fear a year after the marriage took place. The outcome of such a case depended on a number of important issues:

Honorius III had informed the bishop of Bergen that hearing was not to be denied women who fled their betrothed "before carnal coupling has occurred." Cardinal Hostiensis treated the year and one-half of cohabitation as creating an irrebuttable presumption of coitus; but as to the effect of coitus itself he had doubts. A woman could allege that she had been known against her will: "I do not think she should be denied in advance." Innocent IV, treating of coerced religious profession, indicated that it should be left to a judge to determine how long the coercion had affected the will of the coerced person and implied that the same rule held for marriage. In any event, a woman could prove she had stayed against her will. These observations by the most important of curial canonists suggest that by mid-thirteenth century no hard-and-fast rule – no one-and-one-half-year statute of limitations – was being enforced. (Noonan 432-33)

Interestingly, as illustrated by the contrast between Honorius III (reigned 1216-1227) and Innocent IV, who reigned from 1243 to 1254, not everyone was applying the year-and-a-half statute of limitations seen in Raymond's *summa* on marriage. Again, the suggestion that a judge should determine how long the wife had been impacted by force and fear highlights the attempt to apply the law fairly by examining each case in its own context.

¹⁵ Whatever the number of compelled marriages, it is unlikely that many of them were prosecuted:

Marriages annulled for force and fear between 1140 and 1540 were probably not many. If one may generalize from the dioceses that have been examined, actions for annulment on any ground were comparatively rare and actions on the ground of force and fear were extremely rare. Less than one percent of the marriages made would ever have been questioned on this ground. (Noonan 433)

to the sacrament of marriage, which was available to anyone, regardless of social status.¹⁶ As will be seen in Chapter Two, many of Boccaccio's novellas focus on the high stakes for the couple wishing to exercise their Church-given right to choose each other in defiance of their families' wishes and of social expectations. Of course, however, traditional social norms and moral values favored reverence and obedience of offspring towards their parents: "The headstrong girl marrying for love alone, against the desires of her family, did not win the approval of the canonists for upholding the ideal of free consent in marriage. She was within her rights, and she should incur no penalty or punishment, but she was acting against a legitimate authority" (Helmholz 1978: 91).

Even though parents often exercised the prerogative to choose a spouse for their offspring, and even though social conventions supported that prerogative, it is virtually impossible to determine how families approached and solved intergenerational tensions around marriage formation. When approached with a son or daughter's wish to marry a particular person, parents could, of course, choose to assent.¹⁷ Even parents in the midst of contracting a specific marriage alliance might relent when faced with their child's strong stance against such a marriage.¹⁸ The degree of compromise and negotiation that took place within families in these situations is impossible to reconstruct. Personal preferences aside, marked differences in socioeconomic status presented a daunting obstacle to a would-be couple.¹⁹ In spite of the obstacles, marriage for love in the period from the *Decretals* of 1234 to the Black Death of 1348 was not unheard of: "Both in law and in reality, marriage for love was not only conceivable but also practiced, at least by men and at least in some regions of Europe" (Brundage 1987: 431).

In late medieval clashes over selection of a marriage partner, social class was an important area of conflict, as attested by some of the surviving records from ecclesiastical and secular courts. Although clandestine marriage between social unequals was implausible, courts were not irremediably prejudiced against such marriages and did uphold them when there was sufficient evidence.²⁰ For instance, Gene Brucker's

¹⁶ As Noonan notes, "No restrictions [on the right to marry] were based on race, color servitude, illegitimacy, caste, or hereditary status. Greater range of choice was recognized in the canon law than had ever existed in the Roman Empire or was to exist in the United States until *Loving v. Virginia* in 1967 invalidated the state statutes on miscegenation" (Noonan 430). Of course, there was a discrepancy between the ideals and reality: "A giant democracy in which everyone might marry anyone is not the way the medieval world was customarily perceived by its inhabitants. Such a democracy was the heavenly city of Gratian" (Noonan 430-31).

¹⁷ This is the case in Boccaccio's novella 4.6, discussed in Chapter Two.

¹⁸ Bandello's novella of Romeo and Julietta dramatizes the parents' anguish at their daughter's refusal to accept the husband they have chosen for her; yet they follow social conventions and push forward with the marriage, exerting violent physical and emotional pressure on their daughter, as I discuss in Chapter Three.

¹⁹ The Church recognized that in certain situations, public marriage would present a hardship for the couple, including "marriage between a person of noble rank and a non-noble, since these unions excited opposition and scandal . . . marriage of a rich person to a poor one, as these upset the social order . . . marriages in which there was reason to fear parental wrath" (Brundage, *Law, Sex, and Christian Society* 443).

²⁰ Helmholz, analyzing a large number of medieval marriage cases litigated in ecclesiastical courts, notes that in the course of legal proceedings based on contested marriage claims, where one person asserted that the marriage had occurred and the other denied this claim, there was a rebuttable presumption against the likelihood of marriage contracted between two people from different social classes:

One striking sort of evidence commonly recorded relates to the status and the wealth of the parties. . . . It was unlikely that a very rich man would have married a very poor girl. And such evidence

Giovanni and Lusanna: Love and Marriage in Renaissance Florence provides rich evidence of the difficulties faced by social unequals wishing to forge a union. In Florence in 1453, the artisan Antonio heard that the aristocratic bachelor Giovanni della Casa was seen to be courting his recently widowed sister, Lusanna.

Concerned about the reputation of his sister and his nubile daughters, Antonio sent a mutual friend, Giuliana . . . to appeal to Giovanni to cease his perambulations. Giovanni then came to see Antonio and told him of his love for Lusanna. Antonio, however, would not consider the possibility of an illicit relationship, and he insisted that Giovanni “give her a ring,” that is, that he marry Lusanna. When Giovanni finally consented to a wedding ceremony, Antonio argued for the presence of a notary On this point, however, Giovanni della Casa demurred. His father, Ser Lodovico, would disinherit him if he learned of his son’s matrimony, which must therefore be kept secret. “What, then, are we to do?” asked Antonio. Giovanni suggested that he ask his friend Fra Felice Asini to officiate at the wedding, and that proposal was accepted by Antonio and Lusanna. (Brucker 16)

The difference in Giovanni and Lusanna’s social class made public marriage unfeasible; Giovanni’s family would likely impose disastrous financial consequences on him if they discovered that such a marriage had taken place. Some time after marrying Lusanna, however, Giovanni entered marriage negotiations with a Florentine noblewoman named Marietta.²¹ Lusanna petitioned the court of Archbishop Antoninus, presenting sufficient

was not at all excluded by the canon law. In a more socially stratified society than our own there was perhaps reason for using wealth and position as one criterion in judging the parties’ intentions and actions. Such facts, in any case, were often introduced into evidence. (Helmholz 132-33)

He continues, noting that disparity in social class was not necessarily counter to the ruling that marriage had taken place:

It is pleasant to be able to produce a striking case in which the court heard such evidence, but disregarded it. The facts of the case, heard at York in 1407, seem to have been these. Agnes Nakerer met and fell in love with a travelling minstrel named John Kent. He married her clandestinely, apparently without her parents’ knowledge and certainly without their consent. When they learned of their daughter’s adventure, they quickly caused her to contract marriage with John Thorpe. The resulting dispute came before court as a multi-party suit. . . . In the litigation, Thorpe’s attack on Kent and his witnesses was particularly strong. Kent was described as lacking in the most basic rudiments of honesty, and derided as a ‘public minstrel and juggler, frequently, dishonestly, and shamefully engaged in . . . displays of his body for the sake of profit.’ . . . But against all this, the York court held in favor of the minstrel and against the marriage with Thorpe which the family obviously preferred. Prejudicial evidence was not necessarily conclusive evidence. (Helmholz [1978] 133)

²¹ This case typifies the reasons for the changes introduced in canon law regarding clandestine marriage at the Council of Trent; as articulated in the session on marriage reform,

Verum, cum sancta synodus animadvertat, prohibitiones illas, propter hominum inobedentiam, iam non prodesse; et gravia peccata perpendat, quae ex eisdem clandestinis coniugiis ortum habent, praesertim vero eorum, qui in statu damnationis permanent, dum, priore uxore, cum qua clam contraxerant, relicta, cum alia palam contrahunt, et cum ea in perpetuo adulterio vivunt. Cui malo cum ab ecclesia, quae de occultis non iudicat, succurri non possit, nisi efficacius aliquod remedium adhibeatur; idcirco, sacri lateranensis concilii sub Innocentio III celebrati, vestigiis inhaerendo, praecipit, ut in posterum, antequam matrimonium contrahatur, ter a proprio contrahentium parochio tribus continuis diebus festivis in ecclesia inter missarum solemnias publice denuntietur, inter quos matrimonium sit contrahendum (24 caput 1)

evidence and witnesses to convince the ecclesiastical court that a valid clandestine marriage had taken place. Interestingly, Giovanni attempted to benefit from the social stigma attached to marriages between social unequals – the same stigma that had forced him to keep his marriage to Lusanna secret in the first place. His lawyer argued that “Giovanni was young, handsome, virile, and rich; Lusanna was old (at least forty, he claimed), she was sterile, and her social condition was vastly inferior to that of her lover. A marriage between two individuals of such unequal backgrounds was improbable, indeed, unthinkable” (Brucker 50). Yet, Lusanna’s lawyer retorted, social equality was not a necessary precondition of marriage; rather, the free consent of the parties to marriage “in the presence of witnesses” proved the existence and legality of the nuptials.

Thus in 1455 the court of Archbishop Antoninus was in the process of hearing evidence on the validity of this marriage. A jurisdictional battle erupted between Antoninus and the podestà of Florence, Messer Giovanni della Porta of Novara (Brucker 44-47). The podestà did not have the audacity to argue that his court should have jurisdiction over the marriage case itself, but he nevertheless attempted to sabotage the authority of Antoninus’ court by launching an investigation into Giovanni’s allegation – one week after Antoninus began investigating the marriage case – that Lusanna had poisoned her first husband, Andrea di Antonio Nucci. The podestà scorned Antoninus’ repeated attempts to stop the criminal investigation from proceeding until after the ecclesiastical court had ruled on the matter of the marriage. An outraged Antoninus then excommunicated the podestà. Antoninus’ purported motivation lay in ensuring a fair outcome in the marriage case, but clearly, in insisting that he should rule on the marriage case before the podestà began a criminal investigation, he was acting on the assumption “that ecclesiastical justice had priority over its secular counterpart and that in any jurisdictional dispute the lay judge must defer to the clerical” (Brucker 45-46).

The power struggle between the podestà (who sympathized with Giovanni’s position) and the office of Archbishop Antoninus (who ruled that Lusanna’s clandestine marriage to Giovanni was valid) illustrates contrasting views on marriage and class, combined with the jurisdictional battle for control over marriage. This case also exemplifies the podestà’s stake in ignoring this marriage between an aristocrat and an artisan’s daughter, with the aim of helping Giovanni marry the noble Marietta instead. This is just one example of the ongoing jurisdictional struggles between canon law and secular law in matters of marriage formation. A deeper look at secular law on clandestine marriage may shed light on these struggles.

As already mentioned, Italian city states upheld a vision of marriage formation that differed substantially from Gratian’s model. Charged with maintaining the social order, they predictably did not condone clandestine marriage, which could drive a wedge between families and even among members of the same family. Yet several cities made a pronounced effort to balance the interests of parents with those of offspring. Laws

[the holy council . . . considers the grave sins of those who . . . when having left the first wife with whom they contracted secretly, they publicly marry another and live with her in continual adultery, and . . . therefore, following in the footsteps of the holy Lateran Council celebrated under Innocent III, it commands that in the future, before a marriage is contracted, the proper pastor of the contracting parties shall publicly announce three times in the church, during the celebration of the mass on three successive festival days, between whom marriage is to be contracted . . .]
(*Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* 183)

requiring parental consent obviously aimed to discourage clandestine marriage; at the same time, they also addressed the problem of families that neglected to make arrangements for their daughters to enter married life, by allowing women above a certain age to get married without parental consent. Secular legislation during the late medieval period offers insights into this issue:

Most cities . . . had laws requiring parental consent to daughters' marriages. There was, however, great variety among these, and some significant limitation. Cities set differently the age below which consent was required: fifteen at Vercelli, sixteen at Ascoli and Todi, eighteen at Padua, twenty at Arezzo, Brescia, Pisa, Sarzana, Vicenza, twenty-five at Piacenza, Perugia, Mirandola. Penalties were almost always financial and rarely involved loss of dowry rights. Above those ages, women were sometimes explicitly allowed to marry without consent. At Treviso this permission was enacted to remedy negligent delay by parents in marrying their daughters: after a woman reached twenty years, two close kinsmen could give her in marriage and award her a dowry. . . . Some cities allowed the mother to consent, if there was no father living; others created a hierarchy of consenting kin in which mothers were placed after paternal grandfathers or brothers, or were excluded altogether. (Dean 89)

These laws attempted to reconcile the interests of parents and of offspring; while they granted an important role to parents and kin, they addressed the problem of daughters who remained unmarried due to parental negligence beyond an age at which spinsterhood was considered unsuitable.²² The extraordinary situation of these women evidently required extraordinary measures, but this only highlights the important role parents were expected to play in the formation of their children's marriages. The statutes' solicitude towards those forced into an unseemly spinsterhood is juxtaposed with increasingly severe penalties doled out to those who defied the customary parental consent to marriage. At stake was the fact that both of these problems – negligence on the part of parents and defiance on the part of offspring – reflected negatively on the family and the city state. Dean notes that laws in favor of parental consent became increasingly rigorous during the 1400s, eventually escalating to include the death penalty:

At Verona, the penalties, having been fixed and financial in the 1276 statutes, were made discretionary and mixed (that is, corporal and pecuniary) in 1475. At Belluno, another city under Venetian rule, a new law, apparently of 1424, remarked that the previous financial penalty gave 'incentive to do wrong', and provided a new penalty of death for abductors and their accomplices. The duke of Ferrara responded to complaints about the many marriages 'that are made secretly and dishonestly', by making prosecution easier . . . This was to make clandestine marriage a matter of public and official concern. (Dean 91)

It is evident from this change in the city statutes that civil governments had grown increasingly anxious to discipline those who by contracting marriages without parental or social approval disrupted the social order; these marriages were criminalized and conflated with abduction. This movement towards corporal punishment and the death penalty suggests the desire to deter future clandestine marriages, in addition to punishing those that had already occurred. Similarly, these stiff penalties are related to a conflation

²² The issue of parents and brothers who neglect to arrange marriages for their dependent daughters and sisters is developed by Boccaccio in novellas 4.1 and 4.5 of the *Decameron*, as discussed in Chapter Two.

between clandestine marriage and abduction, an issue that will be discussed at greater length in the next section of this chapter.

From the thirteenth through the mid-sixteenth century, the tensions between canon law and secular law in the area of clandestine marriage endured. Then, in 1563, two years after Bandello's death and after many years of heated discussion, the differences between canon law and secular law in the area of clandestine marriage were resolved with a change in the Church's position. The Council of Trent adopted *Tametsi*, the decree that spelled out marriage reform, eliminating "the conditions under which clandestine exchange of consent had for so long remained a viable option for those who wished to avoid public knowledge of their marriages" (Brundage 1987: 564). In the words of the Council,

Tametsi dubitandum non est, clandestina matrimonia, libero contrahentium consensu facta, rata et vera esse matrimonia, quamdiu ecclesia ea irrita non fecit; et proinde iure damnandi sint illi, ut eos sancta synodus anathemate damnat, qui ea vera ac rata esse negant . . . nihilominus sancta Dei ecclesia ex iustissimis causis illa semper detestata est atque prohibuit. Verum, cum sancta synodus animadvertat, prohibitiones illas, propter hominum inobedentiam, iam non prodesse; et gravia peccata perpendat . . . idcirco, sacri lateranensis concilii sub Innocentio III celebrati, vestigiis inhaerendo, praecipit, ut in posterum, antequam matrimonium contrahatur, ter a proprio contrahentium parochi tribus continuis diebus festivis in ecclesia inter missarum solemnias publice denunciatur, inter quos matrimonium sit contrahendum: quibus denunciationibus factis, si nullum legitimum opponatur impedimentum, ad celebrationem matrimonii in facie ecclesiae procedatur; ubi parochus, viro et muliere interrogatis, et eorum mutuo consensus intellecto, vel dicat: Ego vos in matrimonium coniungo, in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus sancti; vel aliis utatur verbis, iuxta receptum uniuscuiusque provinciae ritum. Quod si aliquando probabilis fuerit suspicio, matrimonium malitiose impediri posse, si tot praecesserint denunciations; tunc vel una tantum denunciatio fiat, vel saltem parochi, et duobus vel tribus praesentibus matrimonium celebretur. Deinde ante illius consummationem denunciations in ecclesia fiant, ut, si aliqua subsunt impedimenta, facilius detegantur: nisi ordinarius ipse expedire iudicaverit, ut praedicate denunciations remittantur: quod illius prudentiae, et iudicio sancta synodus reliquit. Qui aliter, quam praesente parochi, vel alio sacerdote de ipsius parochi, seu ordinarii licentia, et duobus vel tribus testibus matrimonium contrahere attentabunt; eos sancta synodus ad sic contrahendum omnino inhabiles reddit: et huiusmodi contratus irritos et nullos esse decernit, prout eos praesenti decreto irritos facit et annullat. (24, caput I)

[Although it is not to be doubted that clandestine marriages made with the free consent of the contracting parties are valid and true marriages so long as the Church has not declared them invalid, and consequently that those persons are justly to be condemned . . . who deny that they are true and valid . . . nevertheless the holy Church of God has for very just reasons at all times detested and forbidden them. But . . . the holy council recognizes that by reason of man's disobedience those prohibitions are no longer of any avail . . . therefore, following in the footsteps of the holy Lateran Council celebrated under Innocent III, it

commands that in the future, before a marriage is contracted, the proper pastor of the contracting parties shall publicly announce three times in the church, during the celebration of the mass on three successive festival days, between whom marriage is to be contracted; after which publications, if no legitimate impediment is revealed, the marriage may be proceeded with in the presence of the people, where the parish priest, after having questioned the man and the woman and heard their mutual consent, shall either say: "I join you together in matrimony, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," or he may use other words, according to the accepted rite of each province. But if at some time there should be a probable suspicion that a marriage might be maliciously hindered if so many publications precede it, then either one publication only may be made or the marriage may be celebrated forthwith in the presence of the parish priest and of two or three witnesses. Then before its consummation the publication shall be made in the church, so that if any impediments exist they may be the more easily discovered, unless the ordinary shall deem it advisable to dispense with the publication, with the holy council leaves to his prudence and judgment. Those who shall attempt to contract marriage otherwise than in the presence of the parish priest or of another priest authorized by the parish priest or by the ordinary and in the presence of two or three witnesses, the holy council renders absolutely incapable of thus contracting marriage and declares such contracts invalid and null, as by the present decree it invalidates and annuls them.] (*Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* 183-84)

Ultimately, in spite of the insistence on the publication of marriage, there was an attempt to meet the needs of couples to contract it without coercion. The Council of Trent clearly strove to balance the compelling interests of individuals, families, and society while protecting the integrity of the sacrament; simultaneously, it affirmed the Church's role in the wider social frame of reference. Couples wishing to marry could no longer do so without a priest or without witnesses; the Council made clandestine marriages invalid from that time forth. Of course, this should not be seen as a mere concession by the Church to secular law. Quite the contrary, whereas canon law originally permitted clandestine marriage in order to increase its control over the family and society, it outlawed the practice because it allowed couples to contract marriages impulsively and often in a spirit that was anything but sacramental.²³ As a consequence, in the period after the Council of Trent:

The role of canonical courts in dealing with sex offenses declined precipitously. Municipalities and royal governments in many parts of the West assumed greater responsibility for the regulation of public morality, while theologians increasingly viewed the internal forum of the confessional as a more appropriate venue than the courts for the chastisement of sex offenses that took place in private. . . . Canon law continued to enunciate standards of sexual behavior for Catholic Christians, but enforcement of those standards had passed in other hands. (Brundage 1987: 574)

²³ See for example, Erasmus' "The Institution of Christian Matrimony" (translated and annotated by Michael J. Heath. In *Collected Works of Erasmus*, Vol. 69. Ed. John W. O'Malley and Louis A. Perraud. Toronto: U Toronto P, 1999: 203-438).

Through its reform, the Council brought canon law in line with secular law, and erased the internal contradictions represented by the Church's definition of these marriages as legally valid but morally illicit. Couples who wished to marry, but did not have the support of their parents, were now responsible for resolving the matter by going to the bishop's court and addressing the issue openly. Nonetheless, the Council of Trent anticipated the possibility that couples might resort to abduction as a way of escaping parental control. Thus, it also addressed the problem of *raptus* in its marriage reform and attempted to resolve some of the long-standing difficulties associated with this complex crime. The next section provides a brief history of the major developments in laws on *raptus*.

***Raptus*, Sexual Violence and Marriage**

Closely related to, and sometimes overlapping, the issue of clandestine marriage in medieval legal sources is *raptus*.²⁴ In canon law, the concept of *raptus* involved the removal of a woman from her parents' home for the purpose of having sex with her and marrying her. It did not necessarily exclude the woman's consent, because it could refer to the consensual 'abduction' of a woman against her parents' wishes as well as the abduction of an unwilling woman. A modern reader of these sources could easily superimpose onto *raptus* today's concept of rape, which, of course, we understand as the sexual assault of a person who does not consent. As will be shown later, this is a concept that begins to emerge in legal sources around the fifteenth century. In fact, abduction and rape were not distinct in the medieval period as they are today, and the term *raptus* was often applied indiscriminately to a number of crimes which ranged, according to our modern perception, from consensual elopement to violent abduction and rape. In order to understand the legal history of *raptus*, it is necessary to take a step back from the Council of Trent to the beginning of the period covered in the dissertation. In general terms, while the word originally denoted abduction, *raptus* was fundamentally understood as a sex crime: "Although *raptus* [meant] any type of abduction, whether the victim was sexually molested or not," by the early twelfth century there was a general consensus among canonists that "the abduction of a woman by a man created a presumption that the perpetrator had molested his victim" (Brundage 1987: 209). Because canon law focused on marriage as founded on consent between the spouses, and did not exclude the woman's willing participation in *raptus*, canonists differed substantially in their positions regarding the permissibility of marriage after *raptus*.

More precisely, the Church's interest in limiting parents' interference in their children's marriage plans resulted in a puzzle for canonists: could a man marry a woman he had raped, eloped with, and/or abducted? Are there differences based on whether the woman's will, or that of her parents, is violated? In the late eleventh century, some canonists argued that "inability to marry the ravished woman, so that the ravisher might not benefit from his crime" should be included among the punishments inflicted on men guilty of *raptus*, but this controversial opinion was not widely shared (Brundage 1987: 209). Ivo of Chartres (1091-1116) responded to this complex problem by stating that it must be determined whether or not the woman had consented to being abducted. As

²⁴ See also Virtue (1993: 42-47) for a history of canon law legislation against *raptus*.

Brundage summarizes, “Ivo’s collections . . . indicate that the victim’s consent to sexual intercourse was becoming an essential element in determining the nature of *raptus* and the severity of its punishment” (1987: 209). This crucial shift lay in approaching the problem by recognizing the woman’s will, both as an abstract possibility in itself and as a criterion used to distinguish between forced abduction and consensual elopement.²⁵ The view that a woman’s consent was a fundamental element in *raptus* was consistent with the effort to distinguish between the motives of the man, the woman, and other parties such as parents, brothers, or other family members. While this distinction did not take hold at once throughout all of the Christian West, it gradually became integrated into the understanding of struggles over marriage and consent.

A generation after Ivo, canon law’s concern for marriage as a contract between spouses worked towards an easing of laws restricting marriage following *raptus*: “In keeping with the Church’s policy of enabling couples to marry despite opposition from their families, legislators and canonists sought to eliminate abduction as a marriage impediment”; Gratian did just this in his *Causa 36*.²⁶ Additionally, a decretal issued in the early thirteenth century by Pope Innocent III was instrumental in shaping the tendency of subsequent canonists to allow marriage following abduction if the parties consented (Brundage 1987: 397). Brundage notes, however, that even in the fourteenth century there was still a lack of consensus among canonists “on the question of whether abduction, with or without carnal knowledge, was an impediment to subsequent marriage between attacker and victim” (1987: 470). The Council of Trent’s session on marriage reform attempted to clarify under what conditions marriage between an abductor and the woman he had abducted was permissible: “Decernit sancta synodus, inter raptorem et raptam, quamdiu ipsa in potestate raptoris manserit, nullum posse consistere matrimonium. Quod si rapta a raptore separata, et in loco tuto et libero constituta, illum in virum habere consenserit, eam raptor in uxorem habeat . . . Teneatur praeterea raptor, mulierem raptam, sive eam uxorem duxerit, sive non duxerit, decenter, arbitrio iudicis, dotare” (24, caput vi). [The holy council decrees that between the abductor and the one abducted there can be no marriage so long as she remains in the power of the abductor. But if the one abducted is separated from the abductor and is in a free and safe place, and consents to have him for her husband, the abductor may have her for his wife . . . The abductor shall, moreover, be bound, whether he marries the one abducted or not, to bestow on her at the discretion of the judge a suitable endowment.] (*Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent* 187-88). The Council attempted to provide a coherent response to *raptus* where in the past confusion and inconsistency had prevailed. This reformulation expressed contempt for the crime, yet it left open the possibility of reparation through marriage, within a framework that demonstrated that the abducted woman must be in a setting where she could – in theory, if not in practice – freely consider whether or not to consent to marriage.

In the area of secular law, the issue is further complicated by the fact that *raptus* was viewed primarily as a threat to the social order and to family structure, with legal

²⁵ Virtue observes that “it could and has been argued that, despite ecclesiastical condemnation of *raptus*, abduction prevailed because it provided men (and perhaps even women) a certain amount of freedom in determining whom they married” (1993: 40).

²⁶ Gratian’s *Causa 36*, along with *Causa 32*, is discussed in detail in the next section, which analyzes the importance of these fictional cases.

differences from city to city. To cite an extreme case, by the middle of the fifteenth century, some Italian cities favored the death penalty in cases where abduction was not followed by marriage between the parties. For example, in Modena, “Borso d’Este approved in 1454 . . . a new law that penalized abduction with hanging,” even if it was preceded by a betrothal approved by the woman’s father; this demonstrates the government’s concern “to prevent the irregularity of betrothal and abduction not followed by matrimony” (Dean 92). The severity of the punishment in Modena’s law suggests that *raptus* was considered to be a serious problem; Borso d’Este’s decision to punish the crime with death may also reflect his eagerness to deter future abductions and elopements and regularize those that had already taken place. To return more generally to the city states, marriage was seen as the ideal solution whenever possible. In other words, abduction was regarded by secular law as an aspect of a larger problem involving courtship – whether consensual or violent – not followed by marriage, while canon law emphasized consent as integral to the definition of marriage.²⁷

The case of Venice illustrates the shift from an overarching concept such as *raptus* to the idea of sexual violation of a woman, in addition to the city’s concern for preserving social order and family structure. As mentioned above, it was only in the fifteenth century that the legal concept we now call ‘rape’ emerged from the above-

²⁷ In Causa 27, for instance, Gratian discusses the implications of *raptus* of an engaged girl by a man who is not her betrothed. According to some authorities, Gratian notes, if a betrothed woman is abducted by a man other than her betrothed, the latter has the choice of either marrying her or leaving her free to marry another: “Si sponsus raptam recipere noluerit, liceat sibi nubere alii. Raptor publica penitencia mulctetur. Raptam uero, si sponsus recipere noluerit, et ipsa eidem crimini consentiens non fuerit, licentia nubendi alii non negetur” [If the betrothed does not wish to marry the abducted woman, it is licit for him to marry another. The abductor must do public penance. If the abducted woman did not consent to the crime and her betrothed does not wish to marry her, she is not to be denied permission to marry another] (C 27 q 2, c. 33). While the abducted woman and her betrothed are free to marry each other or to dissolve their engagement and contract a different one, the ravisher is not to fare as well: “si quis sponsam alterius rapuerit, publica penitencia mulctetur, et sine spe coniugii maneat. Et si ipsa eidem crimini consentiens non fuerit, licentia nubendi alii non negetur” [if someone abducts another man’s betrothed, he must make public penance and will remain without hope of marrying. And if she was not a willing party to the crime itself, she should not be forbidden from marrying another] (C 27 q. 2 c. 34). This, Gratian explains, is because the betrothal represents a marriage that is *initiatum* rather than *ratum*, and that sexual consummation ratifies the marriage and makes it indissoluble. However, he muses, it seems preferable for the abducted woman to be restored to her betrothed: “Desponsatas puellas et post ab aliis raptas placuit erui, et eis reddi, quibus ante fuerant desponsatae, etiam si eis a raptoribus uis illata constiterit.” [Maidens who are betrothed and then abducted by others are to be taken and given back to those to whom they were betrothed before, even if they allowed themselves to be carried off with violence by the abductors] (C 27 q 2 c 46). By raising the point of the engaged woman’s cooperation to abduction by another man, Gratian reminds his readers that the difficulties surrounding the ambiguous definition of *raptus* are inextricably linked to whether or not the woman gives consent to the *raptus*. When the abducted woman, far from being an unwilling victim of the abduction, not only consents to the crime but remains with her abductor and refuses to be restored to her betrothed, “Communione priuetur sponsa, nisi raptorem deserere, et ad sponsum suum redire uoluerit” [the betrothed woman is to be deprived of communion, unless she forsakes the abductor and wishes to return to her betrothed] (C 27 q 2 c 42). For, Gratian reflects, “Sed aliud est priori conditioni renunciare, et de nuptiis cum alio agere; aliud est rapi, hoc est illicite constuprari” [but it is one thing to renounce one’s prior condition, and to contract marriage with someone else; it is one thing to engage in *raptus*; it is another thing to engage in illicit sex] (C 27 q 2 c 43). The engaged woman who disregards her engagement, becomes an accomplice in her own *raptus*, and then marries her abductor will be punished for not renouncing her engagement.

mentioned category of *raptus*.²⁸ The most detailed study of an Italian secular court's response to rape appears in Guido Ruggiero's *The Boundaries of Eros*. Ruggiero shows that with its concern for maintaining the social order, the Venetian government dealt in its laws and in its courtrooms with "sexual behavior that threatened marriage and family" (9), and its response was an attempt to preserve these institutions. Mirroring precisely its treatment of consensual fornication outside of marriage, the Council of Forty ordered rapists to marry their victims when the parties were social equals. The almost seamless transition from rape to marriage was not restricted to Venice; Brundage observes that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, several Italian cities allowed a rapist to escape prosecution if the victim and her family agreed to marriage (1987: 531 n. 196). These laws, significantly, were based on consent to marriage *following* the rape, when the options of the raped woman and her family were already limited by her loss of virginity. Although the rape of a virgin was potentially quite disruptive to her marriage prospects, in cases where the rapist belonged to a higher class than hers, the penalties for the crime ranged from nonexistent to minimal. There are exceptions, which, in the case of Venice, for example, include some instances in which the victim was a very young child (Ruggiero chapter 5, *passim*). In general, however, when a young unmarried woman or girl lost her virginity as a result of rape, she faced such bleak marriage prospects that she might allow the sexual 'relationship' initiated by her rapist to continue, especially if she – or her family – perceived it to be her only means of securing a marriage and escaping further stigmatization.²⁹ Ruggiero cites the following case, for instance, which in Venice was representative of 'normality' and which resonates with the general picture of secular law in Italy:

A noble, Pelegrino Venier, had raped a young noble girl, Marcella Marcello Although the case brief was typically laconic with the violence of the crime minimized, the Forty sentenced Pelegrino to a year in jail and a fine of 1,600 ducats for Marcella's dowry. The Forty also gave Pelegrino the option of agreeing to marry his victim within one year, thus avoiding all penalties. Apparently he

²⁸ Even before the fifteenth century, one can catch a glimpse in the sources of an attempt to categorize as a crime what we now call 'rape', but it is also clear that the legal concept was articulated only later. In Causa 36, when Gratian describes the violent usurpation of a girl's virginity from a man who did not forcibly abduct her, he recognizes that a crime has taken place but struggles to define it after clarifying that clearly *raptus* has not taken place. Because the legal concept of rape was not available to him, he defines the crime in terms of "rapina", that is, theft. Moreover, in reading medieval theological sources, it is clear that there was a concept of non-consensual sex, but this was not a legal issue. St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, is among those who discuss whether or not a husband may forcibly consummate marriage with his resisting wife.

²⁹ Thomas Cohen explains, however, that loss of virginity prior to marriage did not irremediably damage a girl; the loss was a handicap, but not an insurmountable one:

Careless historians sometimes write that in the Renaissance a girl had a stark double choice: fierce virginity till marriage or whoredom. Reality was far, far grayer. In the marriage market, except among the highest classes, a hymen was in fact just one commodity among many at play. It was a great asset, just as its absence was a costly liability. But other things, wealth especially, could tilt marriage-market scales. A nonvirgin was shamed but hardly damned if her family could proffer assets with which to endow a marriage or, at a higher price, a nunnery berth. (Cohen *Love and Death* 142-43)

Thus the consequences of defloration, whether as a result of rape or consensual sex, should not be oversimplified.

seemed a good catch to the Marcello family and Marcella was willing or persuaded to go along. (Ruggiero 106)

Opportunism by the woman's family has thus been read as one possible element shaping the response to rape, which violently limited a young woman's marriage options. Such marriage strategizing could also motivate a man to commit rape in the first place, however, as other cases studied by Ruggiero clearly indicate. Indeed, taking advantage of the fact that marriage was the 'penalty' for rape, men could use the crime as an expedient for securing a desired marriage alliance. In other words, careful calculation of the crime and systematic selection of the victim could make marriage function as a prize rather than a punishment for the rapist. Ambitious bachelors were in the position to select a victim whose dowry was desirable and take a gamble on the outcome of prosecution. As Ruggiero notes, jail sentences did not typically exceed periods of six to twelve months, so the stakes were not particularly high in the unlikely event that the victim's family should not accept marriage as reparation. To cite another example from Ruggiero, an eleven-year-old girl was raped by a man who coveted her dowry; he was convicted, and the Forty ordered a light jail sentence, to be served only in the event that he should not marry his young victim (39). The view of rape as integral to marital strategy is further exemplified in by men who falsely claimed to have raped girls whom they wished to marry. Ruggiero mentions a case, for instance, in which a man spuriously claimed that he had had frequent sexual contact with a prepubescent girl in an attempt to secure her – and her substantial dowry – as a marriage prize (37), in spite of the fact that sexual relations with prepubescent children were not socially accepted.³⁰

It is crucial to keep in mind that most early modern Italian women were not in a position to exercise a great degree of choice in marriage. Therefore, the idea of marriage to someone who had raped her was not as shocking to an early modern woman as it is to today's reader. Elizabeth Cohen notes, for instance, that even as late as the seventeenth century, "[t]he law gauged damage to economic and social assets rather than suffering and psychological trauma. Best reparation was to marry the victim to the criminal, who thereby restored the honor he had wrecked and bore the financial burden he had inflicted. Second-best compensation was money for a dowry" ("Trials" 60). In other words, because rape was regarded as just one facet of male sexual behavior and was to some extent expected, as well as accepted, as long as the social hierarchy was not challenged, the transition from rape to marriage was not as appalling as it is today.³¹ Generally speaking, the outcome of both violent rape and consensual courtship was usually

³⁰ Ruggiero briefly describes the kinds of heterosexual rape that received the harshest punishment: The victimization of children . . . was treated with a stern hand. Wives, though much less important, were more valued than widows by the measure of penalties. Unmarried girls of marriageable age, however, found their rapists penalized with little more than a slap on the wrist. When rape struck down the social hierarchy, it could virtually disappear as a crime. . . . Rapes that crossed social boundaries upward, however, were quite another matter and entailed penalties of unique severity. (96)

Thus it must be noted that the application of penalties for rape were not necessarily equitable, at least in Venice, and penalties were based in part on the perceived social value of the woman who had lost her virginity as a result of rape.

³¹ Bandello dramatizes this in his novella of Aelips (2.37), who for the duration of the novella fights ferociously against King Edward's advances and is prepared to kill herself rather than allow him to rape her; but when at last he asks her to marry him, she joyfully consents.

determined not by the woman's consent, or the level of violence inflicted on her, but by the relative social status of the man and woman involved.

Some of the cases that were brought to the attention of the authorities have left a written trace for historians to read and interpret. The system of interviewing witnesses, the questions asked of them, and the manner of recording their testimonies affected the judicial response to rape and as a result continues to affect our current understanding of the rape cases archived. Obviously, the written records available to scholars present a set of problems for modern readers. One important area of concern regards the cultural and historical contexts in which these records were produced; another challenge relates to the interpretation of the rhetoric that characterizes these records. Not only does the legal treatment of rape rely on the use that the court makes of testimony collected from victims and witnesses; the language chosen by notaries to document rape also reflects to some extent the court's attitude. Elizabeth Cohen explains the importance of contextualizing rape accurately within the early modern framework:

Where sexuality was a common trait of men and women, the modern paradigm that constructs a moralized opposition between bestial male aggressor and unsullied female victim worked less well. . . . For premodern Europeans, who accepted pervasive male dominance as a principle of earthly authority, the crime [of rape] had less resonance. What the modern world calls rape was for early modern Italy a number of legal and social offenses. As a rule, however, nonconsensual sex was taken seriously only where, usually as defloration, it attained the interests of families that counted. It evoked grave response only where social hierarchy was offended. Most rape was simply a natural expression of a reigning male dominance. ("Trials" 66- 67)

The legal import of sexual assault was highly dependent on any number of factors that according to today's standards, might seem extraneous to the crime itself, including the state of the victim's hymen before and after, the social status of victim and rapist, and the impact of the assault on the social order of the community in which it took place. In early modern Italy, sex and sexual violence had very different connotations about gender than they do today; Cohen suggests that as "a natural expression of . . . male dominance," heterosexual rape was in many ways a reflection of female inferiority to males, with important implications about how law and society dealt with the crime. Along the same lines, Ruggiero remarks that "[a]ccustomed to the victimization of women, especially those of lower status, this society may have come to see the one sex crime that clearly victimized women as merely an extension of an exploitative sexuality that was quite common and not particularly troubling" (90). Once again, readers of medieval and early modern sources must exercise caution in the interpretation of texts, both attempting not to apply the legal, social, and psychological categories that pertain to our own time and culture, and also realizing that such detachment from our ideology is not entirely possible. Elizabeth Cohen offers invaluable insights into how scholars might approach historical sources, including trials:

In assessing rape and its consequences, one must take account the whole of the known evidence, interpreting each piece in light of the rest. The character of the sources is also crucial. No record from the past is transparent; judicial testimonies pose special problems, not alone because their rich color and dramatic narrative create compelling illusion of straightforward truth. Also, trials are multivocal,

shaped at once by the conventional formalities of legal language and practice and by the diversity of the speakers' political, social, and cultural positions. What witnesses said is no impartial photograph of their world; rather, more or less consciously, they paint a picture that reflects their capacities and their stakes, both in and out of court. Constrained also by the rules of perjury, they were pressed to tell a story that conformed to the categories of the law and withstood the rigors of inquiry. In the end, the judges heard a cacophony of sincere assertions, naïve dissimulations, wily plausibilities, and stonewalling lies. For modern scholars, to lift such statements out of their context in the larger record is tempting, but risky. Instead, wary of their own credulity, readers must proceed carefully, keeping a close eye to the complex layering of text and to strategic rhetoric. (Cohen "Trials" 56)

Trial records present not an unbiased narrative of factual details, but versions of the truth shaped and delimited by the purposes and perceptions of the many different people involved. While we cannot possibly glean the full truth through these numerous and inevitable distortions, a careful reading of the sources as narratives shaped by historical circumstances can be rewarding.

To sum up, in a society concerned with preserving the moral and the social order, sex crimes – from the medieval overarching concept of *raptus* to a more specific understanding of non-consensual sex – were dealt with in relation to marriage and social class. More precisely, these crimes must be understood in light of the family's prerogative to exert control over a daughter's future placement and the Church's insistence on primacy of consent. Gratian's discussion of *raptus* and marriage in the twelfth century, as will be seen in the next section, raises important questions that continued to be discussed over the centuries that followed. His enduring influence on later these debates, coupled with the richness and complexity of his brief narratives, makes his *causae* particularly compelling and relevant to this study.

Raptus and Marriage in Gratian's Decretum

The intersection of marriage and *raptus* in Gratian's *Decretum* is most strikingly explored in Causa 36 and Causa 32, because both of these *causae* contain elements that suggest an early attempt to deal with crimes that by the fifteenth century will be legally conceptualized as 'rape'. To begin with, Causa 36 provides an example of a sex crime that is outside of the medieval concept of *raptus* perpetrated in order to contract a marriage, although he still uses the word *raptus*. The narrative itself is rather brief: "Filiam cuiusdam patre ignorante quidam muneribus illexit, ad conuiuium inuitauit; finito conuiuio iuuenis uirginem oppressit. Quo conperto a parentibus iuueni traditur puella, ac more nubentium a iuene dotatur, et publice in uxorem ducitur" [A man enticed someone's daughter with rewards, without her father's knowledge, to come to a dinner. After the dinner, the young man assaulted the virgin. When her parents discovered this, they gave the girl to the young man, and, according to the nuptial customs, the young man gave her a dowry and publicly took her as wife] (C 36). The central element in the narrative is what we now describe as 'rape', apparently premeditated. Other details, such as the gifts used to coax the girl into coming to the dinner, enhance the plot and the

characters, prompting the audience to wonder about the man's motives as well as the degree to which the girl was cognizant that she was being lured into a possible trap. Without overtly addressing these questions, Gratian reveals the complexity of the persons and events around which a series of legal questions might be asked. He then moves on to articulate those questions which interest him the most: "Queritur, an ille raptum admiserit? Secundo, an rapta raptori nubere possit, patre assensum prestante?" [It is asked whether he committed abduction. Second, whether the abducted woman can marry the abductor if the father gives consent] (C. 36 q. 1 c. 1). In answering the first question, Gratian attempts to distinguish between *raptus* (abduction followed by sex, with marriage as its goal), seduction, and other forms of unlawful sexual intercourse:

Sed non omnis illicitus coitus, nec cuiuslibet illicita defloratio raptus appellatur. Aliud enim est fornicatio, aliud stuprum, aliud adulterium, aliud incestus, aliud raptus. Fornicatio, licet uideatur esse genus cuiuslibet illiciti coitus, qui fit extra uxorem legitimam, tamen specialiter intelligitur in usu uiduarum, uel meretricum, uel concubinarum. Stuprum autem est proprie uirginum illicita defloratio, quando uidelicet non precedente coniugali pactione utriusque uoluntate uirgo corrumpitur Raptus admittitur, cum puella a domo patris uolenter ducitur ut corrupta in uxorem habeatur, siue puellae solummodo, siue parentibus tantum, siue utrisque uis illata constiterit; hic morte mulctatur. Sed si ad ecclesiam cum rapta confugerit, priuilegio ecclesiae mortis impunitatem promeretur.

[But not every illicit sex act, nor every illicit defloration, is to be called *raptus*. For fornication is one thing; *stuprum* is another; adultery is another; incest is another; and *raptus* is another. Fornication, while it seems to be a certain kind of illicit coitus that takes place outside of marriage, nonetheless is seen to involve particularly widows, prostitutes, and concubines. *Stuprum*, in fact, is properly said of the illicit defloration of virgins, in the moment in which manifestly a virgin is not corrupted by a preceding conjugal pact according to the will of each. . . . One speaks of *raptus* when a girl is violently taken from her father's home and corrupted³² in order to be had as a wife, whether the violence is directed against the girl alone, against the parents alone, or both; it is punished by death. But should the abductor take refuge in a church with the abducted woman, he is to be granted impunity from death through ecclesiastic privilege] (C. 36 q. 1 c. 2).

Fornication, *stuprum*³³ and *raptus* are defined in relation to marriage: they take place between people who are not married to each other. Interestingly, none of the definitions include mention of the marital status of the man, but the marital and sexual status of the woman or girl is fundamental. According to Gratian, fornication tends to involve women who have already lost their virginity and whose marriageability is thus not impacted by the crime. By contrast, both *stuprum* and *raptus* involve virgins, and the distinction between the latter two crimes is founded on the absence or presence, respectively, of the intent to create a marriage. This intent can be one-sided, of course, and when the abducted woman does not wish or intend to marry the abductor, her abduction and defloration, carried out without her consent, can lead to the additional possibility of a

³² It must be noted that in these instances, 'to corrupt' has the meaning of 'to debase' rather than the more common meaning, 'to destroy the integrity of'.

³³ Interestingly, the word *stuprum* persists still today in some Romance languages, but with the very different meaning of 'rape' (for example, Italian 'stupro', Spanish and Portuguese 'estupro').

marriage which she does not wish to contract. Furthermore, when Gratian notes that the violence can be directed against the maiden only, her parents only, or both, the issue of consent remains in the foreground. Indeed, if she is abducted against her parents' wishes but she herself consents, then it is the parents' consent that is disregarded. If, by contrast, she is abducted with her parents' assent but not her own, then both her parents and the abductor are violating her consent. Finally, if both the parents and the maiden object to the abduction, then clearly the abductor is pursuing his goal of marriage, in spite of the lack of consent from both his hoped-for spouse and her parents.

At this point in his analysis, Gratian defines *raptus*, stating that the man in this case did indeed commit abduction: "Raptus quoque est illicitus coitus a corrumpendo dictus; unde qui rapto potitur stupro fruitur." ["*Raptus* is also defined as an illicit sexual act with the aim to corrupt a woman; it follows that one who commits *raptus* benefits from *stuprum*" (C. 36 q. 1 c. 1).³⁴ However, *raptus* is characterized by three essential elements: the maiden's forcible removal from her father's home, the deflowering of the maiden, and the aim to marry her, whereas *stuprum* is merely aimed at satisfying lust and can include the woman's consent.³⁵ It was evident to Gratian that anyone who committed *raptus* was implicitly committing *stuprum* as well, but not viceversa. Clearly, if a man abducts and deflowers a maiden with the intention to marry her, and if, as Gratian argues in Causa 31, no woman may be compelled to marry anyone against her will, then *raptus* has important consequences for the consensual definition of marriage, depending on whether or not the woman consented to being led away and to the ensuing sex act. Gratian continues his discussion of the questions presented in Causa 36, distinguishing between *raptus* and seduction:

Hic autem neque parentibus, neque puellae uim intulisse uidetur, cum neque illis prohibentibus, neque illa renitente uiolenter abducta sit. Aliud enim est promissionibus aliquam seducere, aliud uim sibi inferre. Unde, quia neutri uis illata probatur, raptor hic iure dici non debet.

[It is evident that, in fact, no violence has been used against either the parents or the maiden, in the case in which she is violently abducted without her parents intervening to prevent it, and without the maiden's own opposition. It is one thing to seduce a woman by promises; to constrain her by force is another. Hence, because here none experienced violence, this man may not be called an abductor by the law] (C 36 q. 1 c.3)

This last sentence refers not to the rape in the *causa*, but to its prelude, that is, the man's success in convincing the girl with gifts and blandishments to come to the dinner. The

³⁴ Similarly, in Causa 27, Gratian defines *raptus* in relation to *stuprum*: "Quid sit raptus? Raptus est illicitus coitus, a corrumpendo dictus; unde qui rapto potitur stupro fruitur" [What is *raptus*? It denotes an illicit sexual act that aims to corrupt a woman; it follows that one who commits *raptus* benefits from *stuprum*] (C 27 q 2 c 48-49). As in Causa 36, Gratian here emphasizes that *stuprum* is involved in the act of *raptus*. He goes on to note, moreover, the contrast between two kinds of women involved in the crime of *raptus*. On the one hand there are those women who willingly consent to the violence of the abductor and on the other hand there are those women who are violently abducted against their will (C 27 q 2 c 49). Thus the importance of consent returns to the forefront, and the contrast between women who give and those who withhold consent to abduction is a fundamental one.

³⁵ I wish to thank Laurent Mayali for his nuanced explanation of the differences between *stuprum* and *raptus* in medieval canon law.

woman's consent to being led away is thus an important element in assessing the nature of the man's infractions.

Gratian recognizes that abduction, while implying force, does not necessarily imply force against the abducted woman. He allows for the categorization of *raptus* depending on who is victimized by the crime: sometimes the term indicates violence against the parents and not against the girl (that is, when the girl consents to being led somewhere); sometimes it involves violence against both the girl and her parents; in other cases, it entails violence against the girl but not against her parents, as, for example, when the father is a willing party to the violent abduction and rape to which the maiden does not consent at any point:

Ex hac auctoritate liquet, quod aliquando uis infertur parentibus, et non puellae, cum dicitur: 'si puella raptori consenserit'. Aliquando utrique uiolentiam perferunt, cum premittitur: 'si raptor cum rapta confugerit, et feminam ipsam uiolentiam pertulisse constiterit.' Puellae autem et non parentibus uis infertur, cum uoluntate patris puella uiolenter abducitur, ut eius patiatur concubitum, cuius copulae numquam adhibuit consensum.

[This authority makes clear that sometimes violence is carried out against the parents, and not the girl, as it is said: "if the girl gives consent to the abductor." Sometimes both {the girl and her parents} endure violence, as is made clear, "if the abductor fled with the abducted woman and it is found that the woman herself suffered violence." Violence is inflicted on the girl but not on her parents, however, when she is violently abducted with her father's consent in order to submit to the abductor's bed without having ever consented to intercourse.] (C 36 q.1 c.2)

Interestingly, Gratian acknowledges the potential for collusion between the abductor and the maiden's parents and/or the maiden herself; in the latter case, we should note the corollary that abduction can include cases of consensual elopement-like behavior by a couple against the backdrop of parental disapproval. The girl's father still has the ultimate say in whether the abductor may take the abducted woman as his wife, but perhaps his role in controlling his daughter's eventual marriage match is weakened by her lack of virginity. Even in the centuries that followed Gratian's writing of the *Decretum*, there is the continued problem of abduction as a form of consensual marriage-making in defiance of parental control, "with the girl as a willing, even perhaps organizing, party . . . either to escape her father, or to make (or make public) a clandestine marriage" (Dean 101).

Gratian further complicates the definition of abduction and its distinction from other forms of illicit copulation, however, by distinguishing between two types of *rapina*:

Sed rapina dupliciter fieri dicitur; aliquando enim res ipsa rapitur, aliquando ipsius rei usus tantummodo uiolenter eripitur. Res ipsa tunc rapitur, cum uiolenter domino eripitur, ut in perpetuum teneatur; aliquando uero non res ipsa affectatur, sed usus eius domino prohibente uiolenter usurpatur. Hic ergo raptum admisit, quia florem uirginitatis puellae renitenti uiolenter eripuit.

[But it is said that *rapina* can occur in two ways; in fact sometimes the thing itself is seized, sometimes only the use of the thing itself is removed violently. The thing itself is then seized when it is violently removed from its owner, in order to be kept forever; yet indeed sometimes the thing itself is not coveted, but its use alone is violently usurped despite its owner's refusal. Therefore this man

committed *raptus*, because he violently snatched the flower of virginity from the resisting girl. (C 36 q.1 c.2)

This discussion of *raptus* in terms of *rapina* stresses the girl's ownership of her virginity.³⁶ While he did not act as an abductor in coaxing the girl into leaving her father's home in order to have dinner with him (C 36 q. 1 c.3), he is nevertheless an abductor due to his usurpation of the young girl's body, transforming her perpetually from virgin to non-virgin. Whereas, in the first instance, Gratian hesitated to label the crime *raptus*, due to the girl's consent to going from her father's home to the place where the dinner occurs, here Gratian clearly focuses on the importance of the maiden's lack of consent to sex. He distinguishes her consent to going to the dinner from her lack of consent to sex and thus concludes that the man committed *raptus*. This distinction might surprise twenty-first century non-feminist American readers who are still part of a culture where an invitation to dinner often presumes sex afterward.

Gratian notes that according to canon law, an abductor may not lawfully marry the woman he has abducted: "Nunc queritur, an purgato uicio rapinae raptor in uxorem possit raptam accipere? Quorum coniunctio auctoritate sanctorum canonum penitus prohibetur" [And now it is asked whether the abductor can take the abducted woman as a wife once the crime of *rapina* has been atoned for. The union of these two is utterly forbidden by the authority of the holy canons] (C. 36 q. 2). Before rethinking the prohibitions of these holy canons, Gratian complicates the issue with yet another distinction, this time between persons and behaviors: "His auctoritatibus euidenter datur intelligi, quod raptor in uxorem raptam ducere non ualet. Sed raptor et rapta nomina sunt uiciorum, non personarum. Vicia autem cum per penitentiam purgata fuerint, nomina eorum abolentur" [From these authorities it is evident that the abductor may not take the abducted woman as a wife. But *raptor* and *rapta* are names of blemishes, not of persons. Moreover, after blemishes have been purged through penance, their names are abolished as well] (C 36 q. 2, c. 6).³⁷ Because penance can bring about the transformation described above, marriage is possible after the eradication of the blemish of *raptus*:

Prohibetur ergo premissis auctoritatibus rapta copulari raptori ante, quam uicium rapinae aboleatur, donec ille raptor, et illa iure rapta appellatur. Ceterum, cum illa patriae potestati restituta fuerit, et raptor suae rapinae penitentiam, egerit, cum uoluntas parentum utriusque in unum conuenerit, non prohibentur ad inuicem copulari.

[Thus the aforementioned authorities prohibit the abducted woman to join with the abductor before the stain of *rapina* is eradicated, that is, while he is lawfully called *raptor* and she *rapta*. Also, when she is returned to her father's authority, and her abductor has carried out his penance for *rapina*, if the wills of her parents

³⁶ Virtue, who also analyzes this passage, offers an interpretation that differs from mine. She assumes that the owner of the thing being violently snatched is the father, not the young woman herself, and then concludes that "according to this distinction, the father is completely excluded from the determination of *raptus* for the first time in legal history" (Virtue 1993: 60). It seems to me, on the other hand, that Gratian is discussing the girl's ownership of her virginity. Furthermore, while this passage offers a definition of *raptus* that goes beyond ideas of paternal power over marriageable daughters, it is not clear to me that Gratian intends to *exclude* the father from the definition of the crime – rather, I would argue that he is expanding the definition to *include* cases where the crime is determined not only in relation to the father, but also in relation to the girl, even in cases where the father's role is not central.

³⁷ I thank Laurent Mayali for his assistance with the translation of the legal meaning the word "vicia".

and of both are in agreement, they should not be prohibited from joining together.] (C 36 q. 2, c. 7)

The possibility of a reparatory marriage is present where the “voluntas” of the couple and of the parents of both is consistent with marriage; the pivotal role of consent cannot be over-emphasized in this case. Additionally, here Gratian suggests that *raptus* is a form of dissonance that can be atoned for through penance and the harmonizing power of marriage. Let us reflect on the solution of focusing on behaviors that blemish, which can be atoned for, rather than people, who would presumably retain their identity over time.³⁸ This distinction seems motivated in part by a desire to reconcile the above-mentioned “holy canons” prohibiting marriage between abductor and abducted with Jerome, whom Gratian quotes as saying that marriage may be contracted between assailant and victim if the father consents: “. . . uirgo in ciuitate deprehensa a uiro, et illi per uim copulata. Si uoluerit pater eius, dotabit eam iste uir, quantum iudicauerit pater, et dabit precium pudicitiae eius” [. . . a virgin snatched by a man in the city and joined with him through force. If it is her father’s will, the man must endow her according to the father’s discretion, and then give the price of her virtue] (C 36 q. 2, c.6). Should the father not wish to unite his daughter to her assailant, however, Gratian concedes, unlike Jerome, that the father is free to endow her and betroth her to another (C 36 q. 2, c.6). This canon paraphrases biblical law:

If there is a young woman, a virgin already engaged to be married, and a man meets her in the town and lies with her, you shall bring both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death, the young woman because she did not cry for help in the town and the man because he violated his neighbor’s wife. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. But if the man meets the engaged woman in the open country, and the man seizes her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die. You shall do nothing to the young woman; the young woman has not committed an offense punishable by death, because this case is like that of someone who attacks and murders a neighbor. Since he found her in the open country, the engaged woman may have cried for help, but there was no one to rescue her. If a man meets a virgin who is not engaged, and seizes her and lies with her, and they are caught in the act, the man who lay with her shall give fifty shekels of silver to the young woman’s father, and she shall become his wife. Because he violated her he shall not be permitted to divorce her as long as he lives. (Deut. 22:23-29)

³⁸ Raymond of Peñafort responds to the view that penance erases the stain of a sin when he asks, Sed numquid uxor adultera post paenitentiam potest repellere virum ab accusatione, vel e converso vir uxorem? Videtur quod sic, quia sicut ait Gregorius, “non debet despici in eo quod fuit, quia iam incipit esse quod non fuit. Credo tamen contrarium, quia paenitentia non tollit ius accusandi vel excipiendi vel replicandi in foro iudiciali sive contentioso. Videndum est si ipse antea non fuerit criminosus. [But can an adulterous wife after penance bar her husband from accusation, or vice versa the husband his wife? It seems so because as Gregory says, “he ought not be despised in what he was, because he already begins to be what he was not.” Nonetheless, I believe the contrary because penance does not take away the right of accusing or of opposing or responding in the judicial . . . forum.] (Peñafort 22.5)

Significantly, the location in which the crime takes place is relevant only in the case of a betrothed victim. Whereas Deuteronomy orders that the assailant *must* marry his victim if she is not betrothed to another, Gratian alters the wording, allowing for the marriage *only* if the victim's father agrees that it is a satisfactory solution; significantly, however, no mention is made of the victim's consent by Jerome or in Deuteronomy.

Interestingly, after discussing Jerome, Gratian again returns to conciliar decisions prohibiting marriage between abductor and abducted, then returns to Jerome's authority, concluding, "Hec auctoritas non preiudicat auctoritati Ieronimi, maxime cum illa testimonio diuinae legis nitatur. Legitime igitur post peractam penitentiam raptor poterit sibi copulare quam rapuit nisi pater puellae illam raptori detrahare uoluerit" [This judgment does not conflict with the authority of Jerome, especially because [Jerome] leans on the testimony of divine law. Legitimately, therefore, after having completed the penance the abductor will be able to join with the abducted woman, unless the maiden's father wishes for her to be removed from the abductor] (C 36 q. 2 c 11). These passages provide a clear example of Gratian's aspiration to harmonize discordant canons. In harmonizing, however, he must necessarily dismiss and disregard the conclusions of significant authorities. Most importantly, the insistence on the possibility of a reparatory marriage where the couple and the parents are in agreement is evidence of the pivotal nature of consent, which, as noted above, is absent in Jerome's discussion of marriage between an abductor and abducted.

Gratian examines the intersection of sex, violence, and marriage from a completely different angle in Causa 32, which is in a sense complementary to Causa 36. While in Causa 36 violence is a tool the assailant deploys in an attempt to marry a virgin, in Causa 32 violence is deployed by a misguided husband, who aims to divorce by orchestrating the assault of his own wife, a sterile ex-prostitute, in the hopes of dismissing her as an adulteress after the crime. Here Gratian creates a rich fictional narrative through a curious combination of circumstances:

Quidam, cum non haberet uxorem, quandam meretricem sibi coniugio copulauit, que erat sterilis, neptis ingenui, filia originarii; quam cum pater uellet alii tradere, auus huic eam copulauit, causa solius incontinentiae. Deinde hic, penitencia ductus, ex ancilla propria filios sibi querere cepit. Postea de adulterio conuictus et punitus quendam rogauit, ut ui uxorem suam opprimeret, ut sic eam dimittere posset, quo facto quandam infidelem sibi copulauit, ea tamen condicione, ut ad Christianam religionem transiret. (Qu. I.) Hic primum queritur, an licite meretrix ducatur in uxorem? (Qu. II.) Secundo, an ea, que causa incontinentiae ducitur, sit coniux appellanda? (Qu. III.) Tercio, cuius arbitrium aliqua sequatur, an liberi aui, an originarii patris? (Qu. IV.) Quarto, si uiuente uxore liceat alicui ex ancilla filios querere? (Qu. V.) Quinto, si ea, que uim patitur, pudicitiam amittere conprobetur? (Qu. VI.) Sexto, si adulter adulteram possit dimittere? (Qu. VII.) Septimo, si uiuente dimissa aliam possit accipere? (Qu. VIII.) Octauo, si infidelem sub premissa condicione licet alicui fidelium in coniugem ducere?

[A certain man, who did not have a wife, married a prostitute, who was sterile. She was the niece of a freedman and the daughter of a serf. While her father had wanted to give her to another man, her uncle gave her to this man, who married her only because of his incontinence. Then this man, led by repentance, tried to beget offspring from his own maidservant. After being convicted of and punished

for adultery, he asked someone to assault his wife by force so that he could dismiss her. Having done this, he married a certain infidel, on the condition that she convert to the Christian religion. First, it is asked whether a prostitute may be legitimately taken as a wife. Second, whether she whom one marries only because of incontinence may be called wife. Third, whose will should a woman follow – that of her free uncle or that of her servile father?³⁹ Fourth, while one’s wife is living, is it licit for a man to try to beget children from a maidservant? Fifth, has she who has suffered violence lost her chastity? Sixth, can an adulterer dismiss an adulteress?⁴⁰ Seventh, can he take another wife while his dismissed wife is still alive? Eighth, is it licit for a Christian to marry an infidel under the aforesaid condition?] (C 32)

The narrative describes a passage from prostitute to wife, which Gratian then analyzes in his discussion of the first question, where he concludes that the power of marriage is such that the woman’s previous activities as a prostitute do not impinge on the chaste marriage she has entered.⁴¹ In order to persuade his readers of this, Gratian offers the biblical example of Rahab of Jericho, the harlot whom Hosea married.⁴² The chastity acquired by the ex-prostitute through marriage cannot be taken away or diminished, even through the deceitful acts of others, as this husband erroneously supposes: “Cum fornicationis uicium excluditur, castitatis uirtus asciscitur” [As the blemish of fornication is excluded, the virtue of chastity is increased] (C 32 q. 1 c. 9); “Cum renunciatur inprobitati, statim asciscitur uirtus.” [As depravity is renounced, virtue immediately grows] (C 32 q. 1 c. 9). This virtue cannot be erased by the assault procured by the husband; because the woman has not consented to the sex act, she cannot be defined as an adulteress.

Although clearly this woman has not chosen her own husband, as the narrative makes clear, in discussing prostitutes who get married and thus choose to become chaste, Gratian emphasizes choice, and strikingly he brings into this discussion virgins who choose to retain their virginity: “Virginitas ex consilio suadetur, non ex inperio precipitur” [virginity results from an inner choice; it does not proceed from a command] (C. 13); “Sola est enim uirginitas, que suaderi potest, inperari non potest: res magis est uoti, quam precepti” [For virginity is only that which can be deliberated; its nature is more akin to a vow than to a rule] (ibid). These assertions have important implications for sexual violence described in the *causa*, especially if we juxtapose this discussion of the assault of a married prostitute to *Causa 36*’s discussion of the assault against a virgin: if virginity “results from an inner choice”, then the forcible defloration of a virgin is first and foremost an offense against the sovereignty of the woman’s choice. While Brundage

³⁹ Conspicuously absent from the list of possibilities is the woman’s own will in the choice of a husband.

⁴⁰ Raymond of Peñafort explains in his *Summa* on marriage that a husband is disqualified from bringing a suit against his adulterous wife “Primo, si ipse convincitur fornicari” [if he himself was convicted of fornicating] (22.3).

⁴¹ In the *Decretals* of Gregory IX, compiled by Raymond of Peñafort, it is stated that marrying a prostitute brings redemption of sins (C. 20).

⁴² As Gratian explains,

Unde Ieronimus super Osee libro I: Non est peccatum meretricem ducere in uxorem. Non est culpandus Osee propheta si meretricem, quam duxit, ad pudicitiam conuertit: sed potius laudandus, quod ex mala bonam fecit. Non enim qui bonus permanet polluitur, si societur malo: sed qui malus est in bonum uertitur, si boni exempla sectetur. Ex quo intelligimus, non Prophetam perdidisse pudicitiam fornicariae copulatum, sed fornicariam assumpsisse pudicitiam, quam antea non habebat. (C 32 q. 5 c. 14)

and others emphasize the lack of women's choice with regards to their sexual and marital lives, it is important to note that for Gratian this was an important element to be taken into consideration.

Choice continues to play a prominent role as Gratian analyzes the husband's conduct towards the wife in the fictional narrative at the opening of the *causa*. Gratian states that the violence inflicted on the woman precludes the possibility that she committed adultery. The will, and not bodily experience, is privileged; in Gratian's words, "Quod autem pudicitia uiolenter eripi non possit, multorum auctoritatibus probatur. Est enim uirtus animi, que uiolentiam non sentit. Corpori namque uis inferitur, non animo. Unde, quamuis corpus uiolenter corrumpatur si pudicitia mentis seruetur illesa, tamen castitas duplicatur" [Many authorities demonstrate, moreover, that modesty cannot be violently taken away, for indeed it is a virtue of the soul and is not touched by violence. Violence is inflicted on the body, not on the soul. Thus, even if the body is violently corrupted, if the modesty of the mind is kept intact, chastity is multiplied] (C 32 Q. 5 1 pars). Because she did not consent to such an act, the man's wife did not sin; indeed, as Gratian declares, her virtue has actually increased for this reason. Furthermore, Gratian claims that chastity, because it is a virtue, resides in the soul, and that consequently such violence cannot deprive the victim of her purity.⁴³ Gratian insists that virginity of the mind is superior to physical virginity (C 32 q.5 c1).

Literary authority significantly intersects with the legal authority of the biblical, patristic, synodal, canonical, and conciliar sources when Livy is listed in support of Gratian's position that, due to her lack of consent, the victim of a sexual assault, is not implicated as a sinner. According to Gratian, Livy's story of Lucretia proves that there were two people involved in the violent sex act, but only one of those people – Sextus Tarquinius – committed adultery. Gratian cites Livy's *History* (I, LVIII) both directly and through Augustine's reflections on Livy in the *City of God* (I, XIX) (C. 32 q. 5 c. 4). Gratian insists that a man has no grounds to repudiate his wife if she is assaulted, because she is not an adulteress (C. 32 q. 5 c. 16 d. p. c.). Interestingly, in his *Summa* on marriage, Raymond of Peñafort seems to resist Gratian's exculpatory reading of Lucretia, while still absolving the wife in Gratian's *Causa 32*. He states that there are several cases in which a wife who has committed adultery cannot be accused by her husband. Among these: "Quintus est, si fuerit vi oppressa. Hoc autem intellego de vi absoluta; nam si metu vel praecepto parentum, instantia consanguineorum, vel alia consimili causa fornicaretur cum aliquo, etiam contrahendo cum illo de facto, non excusaretur" (22.3) [The fifth is if she was oppressed by force. However, I understand this of absolute force, for if by fear, the order of parents, the insistence of blood relatives, or another similar cause she fornicates with him, even contracting with him in fact, she is not excused]. Like Livy before him and like the *novellieri* after him, Gratian weaves together a narrative tapestry, creating a singular story which can serve an exemplary purpose, and engaging the critical attention of other canonists along the way.

The woman in *Causa 32* transforms from prostitute to virtuous wife, and her chastity cannot be destroyed by another man's violent attack on her body. In discussing this *causa*, Gratian makes it clear that because the victim's mind does not consent to the sex act imposed, she retains her purity. It is precisely her lack of consent to the act that

⁴³ "De pudicitia quis dubitauit, quin ea sit in animo constituta, quandoquidem uirtus est? Unde a uiolento stupratore nec ipsa eripi potest" (C. 32 q.5 c.4).

keeps the victim chaste and pure, and she remains worthy of praise. Such foregrounding of female choice was not widespread during Gratian's time or even in the centuries after him, but it is clear that Gratian's bold articulation of the importance of female consent and choice had important consequences for legal thought and practice in the area of canon law of marriage.

Conclusions

Consent plays a crucial role in adjudicating cases involving all kinds of marriage, sexual violence, elopement, and abduction. A significant difference between canon law and secular law regarded the attitude towards the role that parents should play in the formation of marriage: according to secular law, parents should, barring certain exceptional circumstances, have authority over their offspring in marriage formation: thus, for example, it was considered a grave offense for a marriage to be contracted without parental approval and consent. In canon law after 1140, the consent of the parties to the marriage was conceived of as essential, whereas parental consent, while preferable, was not in itself constitutive of marriage. Nevertheless, canon law on *raptus* continued for centuries to be affected by the emphasis on parental consent, so that even when two would-be spouses eloped consensually, the lack of parental consent qualified the act as abduction, with potentially grave legal consequences. Yet canonists increasingly distinguished between *raptus* committed against the woman's will and *raptus* committed with her consent but not that of her parents. Thus the consent of the couple itself became increasingly important within canon law on marriage and *raptus*. Gratian articulated the central position that consent should enjoy with respect to the formation of marriage; significantly, he also emphasized the importance of consent when discussing other aspects of female sexuality, such as virginity. While readers can catch glimpses at early attempts to describe what we now call 'rape' in legal terms, it is not until the fifteenth century that such a concept begins to correspond to our understanding of the crime. However, canon law was not fully reflected in social reality. On the one hand, consent was central to the medieval and early modern canon law discussion of marriage and sexuality; it strove to curtail forced marriages, and dealt with the implications of forced and consensual *raptus* on the possibilities for a future marriage involving the abducted woman. On the other hand, medieval canon law did not quite succeed in preventing marriages based on force and fear, nor did it secure to all couples the freedom necessary to ensure access to consensual marriage. It took several centuries for the practice of marriage formation to align itself with the legal principles outlined in this chapter. As will be seen in Chapter Two, Boccaccio's *Decameron* also engages in literary terms with the tensions between consent and coercion to sex and marriage, as well as the tension between parents and offspring in control over marriage formation.

Chapter Two Secrets, Debts, and Force: Courtship and Marriage in Boccaccio's *Decameron*

“The whole of the *Decameron* is, in a sense, a quest for order and unity achieved, somewhat ambiguously, through marriage” (Mazzotta 55).

Lisabetta chiusa nel suo pianto silente fino alla morte, Simona che fanciullescamente inconsapevole getta la sua vita come un fiore sulla tomba dell'amato, Girolamo e Salvestra indissolubilmente uniti da amore nella infanzia e poi nella morte subitanea, Gostanza tutta timida e tremante di fronte all'ignoto ma non per questo trattenuta dalla disperata "inchiesta" amorosa, tutte queste inesorabili figure di amanti che sembra che si illuminino di un fascino più trepido nello stagliarsi così fragile ed esili sullo sfondo oscuro di quel mondo dominato dal danaro, dalla cupidigia, dalla inesorabile spietatezza della convenienza economica. (Branca 1956: 83)

Building on the legal and historical background provided in Chapter One, this chapter investigates Boccaccio's representation of the struggle between the secular-aristocratic model of marriage and the consensual model advanced by canon law. Gratian's greatest innovation is marriage theory, as seen in Chapter One, was the concept that consenting spouses were free to marry each other – barring any legal impediments – regardless of wealth or social status. In the centuries between Gratian and Boccaccio, moreover, Popes such as Alexander III (1159-1181), Innocent III (1198-1216), Gregory IX (1227-1241) worked steadily at codifying canon law and introducing new legislation against forced marriages. However, these important legal and theoretical innovations did not immediately transform the reality of marriage. In this chapter, I show that these matters were crucial concerns in Boccaccio's fiction in the mid-fourteenth century.

As evidenced from the above quote from Vittore Branca's now half-century old study, the tension between love and money in the *Decameron* has long been acknowledged by scholars. Giuseppe Mazzotta goes even further, observing that “there is so little of the *Decameron* that its not absorbed within the nomenclature of economics or is not, at least, affected by it, that the ‘ragion di mercatura’ is taken to be nothing less than the ground of all values, the implied paradigm by which loyalties, social bonds, love and even literature itself are appraised” (76). Shortly afterwards, he reflects that “wealth, money, and honor almost always . . . interfere with each other” (78). Discussing this interference within the context of the history of marriage law and the literary tradition of courtly love, I propose that Boccaccio's engagement with courtly love finds its logical basis in the concept of an amorous debt, a concept that enables me to shed new light on how marriage and desire are subsumed under and even redefined by economic interests.¹

¹ On the presence of courtly love in Boccaccio, see for instance: E. Michael Gerli, “Boccaccio and Capellanus: Tradition and Innovation in Arcipreste De Talavera,” *Revista de Estudios Hispánicos* 12 (1978): 255-74; Millicent Marcus, “The Sweet New Style Reconsidered: a Gloss on the Tale of Cimone (*Decameron* V.1),” (*Italian Quarterly* XXI (81) (1980): 5-16; Varda Fish, *From 'Benigne Love' to the 'Blynde and Wynged Sone': Troilus and Criseyde as a Literary Critique of the Filostrato and the Tradition of Courtly Love Poetry* (Dissertation, 1981); Millicent Marcus, “Misogyny as Misreading: A Gloss on *Decameron* VIII, 7,” (*Stanford Italian Review* 4.1 (1984): 23-40; Douglas, A. Burger, “The Cosa

The privileging of economic interests in the formation of marriage makes the secular-aristocratic model incompatible with the consensual model advanced by the Church.²

The first section of the chapter analyzes consensual heterosexual relationships between unmarried persons who associate with each other in spite of actual or anticipated parental objections; these relationships are often violently and sometimes fatally punished by the woman's family members, who disapprove of her chosen sexual partner, usually on the basis of socioeconomic status. These young couples give themselves over to the service of love and pay little heed to their families' dynastic and economic strategies.³

The novella of Lisabetta da Messina (4.5) points out the tragic consequences of the family's excessive focus on maximizing financial gains and minimizing financial losses. Apparently reluctant to invest in a dowry for their sister's marriage, Lisabetta's three merchant brothers neglect to place her on the marriage market and then, when they discover her sexual involvement with an employee of theirs, they murder the unfortunate young man. Ghismunda's father Tancredi (novella 4.1) desires all of Ghismunda's love for himself and thus withholds her from the marriage market after she is widowed; when his intrusion into her bedchamber reveals her tryst with a servant, he pays Ghismunda back for the way she has 'consoled' him by having her murdered lover's heart delivered to her in a goblet; she in turn pays him back by killing herself, thus depriving him of "ciò che egli più amava". Novella 5.7 portrays the family violence that can result when an illicit love affair with a household slave ends in pregnancy, and an apparently peaceful resolution is made possible only with the discovery that the young man, purchased from pirates, is in fact the son of a nobleman. As long as Violante's lover is believed to be a slave, the father and the local governor prepare to kill the lovers and their newborn baby; as soon as his nobility is revealed, the lovers' fathers begin planning a reparatory marriage.

Along the same lines, the novellas in which socially mismatched lovers secretly marry rather than merely carry on sexual affairs reveal a tension between the aristocratic model of marriage based on social equality and family interests on the one hand, and on the other hand the consent-based view of marriage propagated by canon law. In novella 5.3, Pietro and Agnoletta run away from Pietro's hostile family and get married in a castle outside of Rome. Andreuola and Gabriotto (novella 4.6), by contrast, marry secretly in Andreuola's garden and enjoy a brief period of marital bliss until Gabriotto's sudden death in the garden brings the matter to the attention of the podestà's court; yet ultimately it is Andreuola's father, Messer Negro, who resolves the situation by honoring

Impossibile of Il Filocolo and the Impossible of the Franklin's Tale," *Chaucer and the Craft of Fiction*. Ed. Leigh A. Arrathoon (Rochester, MI: Solaris, xxv, 1986: 165-178); Paolo Squillaciotti, "Tristano Risarcito e Folchetto Vendicato: Tracce di tradizione cortese in *Decameron* II 3 e IV 3," *Studi sul Boccaccio* 28 (2000): 73-86. For a discussion of the controversy over the incompatibility of marriage and courtly love, see Henry A. Kelly, "Clandestine Marriage and Chaucer's 'Troilus,'" *Viator* 4 (1973): 435-58.

² As mentioned in the Introduction, Boccaccio studied law and was well aware of legal issues, including those relating to marriage. It is worth noting Boccaccio's connection to Cino da Pistoia, one of the most brilliant legal minds of the age, as well as a great poet. The connection is documented for instance by Vittore Branca, "L'incontro napoletano con Cino da Pistoia," *Studi sul Boccaccio* 5 (1969: 1-12).

³ Jessica Levenstein asks readers to consider the possibility of a connection between lovesickness and the plague: "given that the plague's connection to eros suggests the indomitable nature of passion, would it not be possible to conceive of an internal epidemic, impossible to elude?" (314).

his daughter's choice of a spouse and aligning himself with the Church's definition of marriage.

In order to clarify the connections and disconnections between Boccaccio's representation of secret sexual liaisons and secret marriages, it should be noted that, even from a late medieval perspective, one could not simply assume that two marriageable people who have sex, even if they love each other, would get married, given the chance.⁴ However, scholars who have discussed love and marriage in Boccaccio tend to be divided in two camps that do not take these factors into consideration. On one side are those who relegate love in the *Decameron* to a courtly tradition that views love and marriage as mutually exclusive.⁵ On the other side are those who argue rather that lovers tend to marry whenever possible.⁶ I argue instead that love and marriage are neither mutually

⁴ The various permutations need to be acknowledged. There can be sex without love, love without sex, and love and sex together. Similarly, there can be love without marriage, marriage without love, or love and marriage together. Marriages, in turn, can be either with or without sex. These possibilities should not be conflated within the critical tradition. Unlike non-marital sex between lovers from different classes, which often ends in murder by the woman's father or brothers, consensual marriage, even between social unequals, can be redemptive. As Boccaccio muses in *De mulieribus claris*, translated by Judith Brown (London, England, and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2001):

[S]acri conjugalis amoris vires et audaciam mulierum paulum contemplerur. Instituto nature, veteri et indissolubili nexu firmato, nonnulli volunt dissidentium coniugum nullum fore perniciosus odium; sic et convenientium amorem excedere ceteros. Nam rationis igne succensus non urit ad insaniam, sed in complacentiam calefacit et tanta caritate corda copulat, ut eque semper cuncta nolint velintque; et tam placide assuetus unitati, ad continuationem sui nil omittit, nil agit tepide vel remisse; et si hostis fortuna sit, ultro labores et pericula subit et vigilantissimus in salutem mediantur consilia, remedia comperit et excudit fallacias, si exigat indigentia.

[L]et us consider briefly the power of sacred, wedded love . . . [S]ince marriage is an ancient and indissoluble bond of nature, there is no more deadly hatred than that of discontented wives, just as there is no greater love than that of women who live in harmony with their husbands. For this fire of love, when ignited by reason, does not inflame to madness but warms to mutual accord; it joins hearts in such affection that husbands and wives share the same desires in equal measure.

Accustomed to such peaceful union, love does whatever is necessary for its own preservation; it does nothing lax or lukewarm. If Fortune is unfriendly, love gladly endures toils and dangers and, ever watchful, makes plans for its safety, discovers remedies, and invents deceptions if need be.] (31.10-11, p. 127)

Boccaccio highlights not only the joyful serenity of spouses who love each other but the discord and misery of spouses who do not. Without marriage, love is irrational, and without love, marriage is marred by "deadly hatred."

⁵ These scholars are following in the footsteps of C.S. Lewis' *Allegory of Love*, in turn influenced by Gaston Paris. Among these, for example, is Erich Auerbach, who states: that Boccaccio's "ethics of love is a recasting of courtly love, turned several degrees lower in the scale of style, and concerned exclusively with the sensual and the real" (226) and argues: "The *Decameron* develops a distinct, thoroughly practical and secular ethical code rooted in the right to love, an ethics which is in its very essence anti-Christian" (226).

⁶ Henry Ansgar Kelly, for example, in his analysis of the *Decameron*, argues: "There are numerous instances of lovers who desire to marry and actually do marry as a matter of course. Sometimes lovers are seemingly indifferent to marriage, but not opposed to it. When they are able to marry, they do so, four times out of five" (*Love and Marriage in the Age of Chaucer* 53). In order to make this claim, Kelly is forced to dismiss important evidence to the contrary, for example, the case of all the couples who find themselves alone in a position to exchange words of present consent (4.1, 4.5, 5.4, 5.7, etc.). Additionally, in discussing courtly love and clandestine marriage in the context of medieval literature and culture, Kelly argues:

exclusive nor identical, but rather can overlap at times. Because, as explained in Chapter One, all that was required for a clandestine marriage to take place were words of future consent followed by sex or simply words of present consent (even without witnesses), the absence of clandestine marriage in many of the narratives of clandestine sex indicates that Boccaccio did not envision these two categories as completely overlapping each other.⁷ Clearly, young marriageable people engaged in sexual relationships have much in common with those who contract clandestine marriages; nevertheless, I argue that readers must distinguish consent to sex, which does not necessarily imply consent to marriage, from consent to marriage, which almost inevitably implies consent to sex.⁸ The inhabitants of Boccaccio's world were deeply attuned to this distinction, and by presenting narratives whose nuanced engagement with these issues is simultaneously entertaining to a broad audience and relevant to the ongoing debates on marriage law, Boccaccio encourages readers to enter a dialogue on consent and coercion to sex and/or marriage.

While the violent disciplining of secret relationships between socially mismatched people may suggest marriage as a peaceful resolution, marriage itself can also be contracted with violence, as I will show in the next section of the chapter, which focuses on coerced marriages and offers close readings of four novellas: 3.9, 5.4, 5.8, and 5.1.⁹ In

Students of literature in recent times have often been misled in their approach to Chaucer and other medieval authors because of erroneous ideas about marriage. The theory of courtly love, for instance, postulated that true love was incompatible with marriage. We now know, however, that no such postulate was operative as a general rule, whether in literature or real life. What is clear, in fact, is that with very few exceptions there is a bias in favor of marriage on the part of serious medieval lovers; that is to say, when they got the chance to marry, they generally took it. ("Clandestine Marriage and Chaucer's 'Troilus'" 435).

Interestingly, the tension between modern scholars who interpret medieval fiction through the lens of courtly love on the one hand and prevailing attitudes about love and marriage on the other hand is to some extent paralleled by the tension between medieval fictional lovers who chose the 'courtly' approach to love on the one hand and marriage on the other hand.

⁷ It must be noted that the concept of clandestine marriage does not by definition exclude parental knowledge; for example, while most of the clandestine relationships and marriages discussed in this chapter are motivated by a perceived need to hide the facts from parents or other relatives, the marriage of Ricciardo and Caterina in novella 5.4 is also clandestine, yet it is initiated – indeed coerced – by Caterina's father, without the knowledge or consent of Ricciardo's relatives. For a discussion of clandestine marriage in medieval literature, see for example: Robert P. Roberts, "Love in the *Filostrato*," *The Chaucer Review*, 7(1) (1972): 1-26; Henry Ansgar Kelly, "Clandestine Marriage and Chaucer's 'Troilus,'" *Viator* 4 (1973): 435-58; John Maguire, "The Clandestine Marriage of Troilus and Criseyde," *The Chaucer Review* 8(4) (1974): 262-278; Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Love and Marriage in the Age of Chaucer* (Ithaca: Cornell UP), 1975; Karl P. Wentersdorf, "Some Observations on the Concept of Clandestine Marriage in 'Troilus and Criseyde,'" *The Chaucer Review* 15(2) (1980): 101-26; Andrew J. Finch, "Parental Authority and the Problem of Clandestine Marriage in the Later Middle Ages," *Law and History Review* 8(2) (1990): 189-204.

⁸ See Chapter One for a fuller discussion of marriage and consent.

⁹ The topic of violence in the *Decameron* has of course garnered ample critical attention. For example, Marilyn Migiel's *A Rhetoric of the Decameron* discusses violence towards women in the *Decameron* with great insightfulness. Teodolinda Barolini's "Le parole son femmine e i fatti sono maschi" has furthered scholarly interest in how words, deeds, and gender interact together in the *Decameron*. Ray Fleming analyzes novellas 5.8 and 5.9 as narratives in which the ending is happy only for the two male protagonists after whom the stories are usually remembered. Millicent Marcus' "Misogyny as Misreading: A Gloss on *Decameron* VIII, 7," *Stanford Italian Review* 4(1) (1984): 23-40 discusses the famous tale of the scholar Rinieri's cruel revenge against the fickle widow Elena. The novella of the patient Griselda cruelly put to

3.9, Giletta cures the king of France from a grave illness, earning as payment for her medical services the husband of her choice; thus the reluctant Beltramo is forced to marry her in fulfillment of the king's debt to Giletta. In 5.4, a nobleman discovers his daughter, Caterina, lying in the company of a noble neighbor, Ricciardo, and forces the young man to choose either a hasty marriage or an instantaneous death. In 5.8, Nastagio degli Onesti, operating under the assumption that his beloved owes him fulfillment of his desires, obtains his goal in a most unconventional way. He forces the young lady to witness a terrifying otherworldly scene in which a man chases down a naked woman, kills her, and feeds her heart and entrails to his dogs in punishment for unrequited love. The scene of violence has its desired effect, and Nastagio's beloved offers herself up sexually to him. Nastagio, however, is aware of her enticing dowry and marries her instead. In novella 5.1, Cimone loves Efigenia and, desiring to marry her in spite of her own bitter objections, her family's wishes, and her previous engagement, abducts her from the ship that is carrying her to Rhodes, where she is to be married. Cimone is apprehended and imprisoned in Rhodes, then escapes from prison and kidnaps his beloved from her own wedding after killing her husband (leaving "piena la casa di sangue e di romore e di pianto e di tristizia") and transports her by ship to Crete, marries the unwilling Efigenia, and eventually returns with her to his native Cyprus. This novella, which deals with forced marriage and with abduction, serves as a link to the final section of the chapter.

The final section, which deals with narratives of abduction (sometimes culminating in marriage), points out that all of the novellas in the *Decameron* where men abduct women take place on the sea; I argue that this emphasizes women's status as merchandise exchanged among men. These novellas have often been read as reflections on the emerging mercantile ethic.¹⁰ Without disputing the validity of these conclusions, my reading suggests that the mercantile theme in turn functions as a reflection on

the test by her husband Gualtieri has also been discussed by numerous scholars, including Marcus in the final chapter of *An Allegory of Form*. Additionally, in *A Rhetoric of the Decameron*, Marilyn Migiel notes that "readers . . . have rarely chosen to see individual instances of violence against women in the *Decameron* as very significant to the reading of the work as a whole" (147). Keeping this lacuna in scholarly work on the *Decameron* in mind, I attempt to shed light on how coercion and violence interact with courtship and marriage formation. Additionally, despite abundant criticism of violence in the *Decameron*, few scholars have endeavored to explain the almost complete absence of explicit references to sexual violence in the novellas. One only needs to recall the typical categories of courtship at that time in Italian history to understand how rape was thought of as part of the courtship process (Ruggiero, *Boundaries*, 90; Cohen, *Trials* 66). Tobias Gittes's article on the "Valle delle Donne" is one of the few works discussing the presence, just beneath the surface, of rape narratives in the *Decameron*. The scholarship cited above is a testament to the rich and varied interest in the gendered reading of Boccaccio's narratives. While the debate on whether Boccaccio was a feminist or a misogynist may never be resolved, many scholars have contributed to Boccaccio criticism by studying the representation of relations between the sexes in the *Decameron*. Yet the tendency to interpret the behavior of characters in light of their gender is not always productive; my own examination of violence and coercion, which takes as a starting point the wider context of courtship and marriage formation, reveals that both men and women can be found as perpetrators and victims of coercion and violence.

¹⁰ See especially Vittore Branca, *Boccaccio Medievale*. Firenze: Sansoni, 1956. See also Mazzacurati, Giancarlo. *All'ombra di Dioneo. Tipologie e percorsi della novella da Boccaccio a Bandello*. Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1996, pp. 45-77. For a much more recent treatment of narratives in which women travel by ship over the Mediterranean, either of their own free will or as objects of male exchange, see Roberta Morosini, "Penelopi in viaggio 'fuori rotta' nel *Decameron* e altrove, 'Metamorfofi' e scambi nel Mediterraneo medievale." *California Italian Studies* 1.1 (2009-2010) (forthcoming). I would like to thank the author for advancing me a manuscript.

contemporary ideologies and practices surrounding love and marriage. Three novellas will be discussed in this section: 2.7, 4.4, and 2.10. Alatiel travels around the Mediterranean for two years on the way to her future husband (novella 2.7), passively and silently passing from man to man, her beauty a catalyst for desire, violence, and abduction. In novella 4.4, by contrast, the daughter of the king of Tunis, Gostanza, urges her beloved Gerbino to abduct her from the ship transporting her to the king of Granada, the husband chosen for her by her father. Finally, Bartolomea (novella 2.10) labels as prostitution her sexless and non-consensual marriage to the elderly judge Riccardo. By contrast, she maintains that the pirate Paganino, who after forcefully abducting her from a boat enters into a consensual relationship with her, is like a husband to her – indeed, after Riccardo dies, Bartolomea weds Paganino. As I will show, Bartolomea challenges readers to engage with the definition of marriage and the distinctions between consent and coercion. The restriction of freely contracted marriage and the violent coercion of marriage are, I argue, two sides of the same coin: consensual marriage violently denied or punished; non-consensual marriage violently imposed.

The emphasis on sexual and marital economies and the contrast between consent, on the one hand, and coercion, on the other, suggest an alignment with canon law's consent theory of marriage. These narratives call attention to that which they almost completely obliterate: a vision of marriage in which the consent of the couple overrides even family authority and social class conventions.

Secret Relationships in the *Decameron*

The conflicts that emerge in the novellas between the interests of the couple and the conventions of family, social class, and tradition place importance on the couple's role in initiating a relationship, which may or may not culminate in marriage. While narratives that bring together courtship, violence, and the formation of a sexual relationship can be found throughout the *Decameron*, Days Four and Five feature a succession of such novellas. This is not surprising, given that the prescribed topics are love stories with tragic and happy endings, respectively. When couples in the *Decameron* choose to form secret relationships, the choice is usually based on the actual or anticipated objection by the parents or other family members of the couple, often because of a notable discrepancy in the socioeconomic status of two young lovers, which can elicit severe parental wrath. It is noteworthy that in 4.1 and 4.5, the female protagonists are apparently driven to initiate liaisons as a substitute for the negligence of their male relatives in arranging marriages for them.¹¹ Regardless of other circumstances, however, almost all of the clandestine courtships and marriages included in Boccaccio's collection involve class difference.

Lisabetta of novella 4.5 is one the *Decameron's* best-remembered victims of tragic love. Her parents dead, she is both controlled and neglected by her brothers, who guard her jealously but make no arrangements for her to marry even though she is beyond the usual age. The young woman falls in love with Lorenzo, an employee of her brothers,

¹¹ While Boccaccio does not explicitly discuss the connection between this negligence and the reluctance to pay a dowry, the novellas in which relatives are negligent in making arrangements for a woman's marriage implicitly allude to dowry, with the exception of 4.1, where the father has incestuous motives for not marrying off his daughter.

who are wealthy merchants. When they discover the secret relationship, her brothers conspire to kill Lorenzo and hide his body in a secret makeshift grave, without any mention of the affair to anyone. Lisabetta silently mourns his disappearance until one night his burial place is revealed to her in a dream. The unhappy young lady exhumes Lorenzo and covers his lifeless body in kisses. Unable to take his entire body home with her, she severs his head and conceals it in a pot, wherein she plants basil. She continually waters the pot with her tears, and when her brothers take note of her melancholy obsession with the plant, they take it from her and discover, to their horror and dismay, Lorenzo's decomposed head concealed under the earth. Frightened, they dispose of the plant and the head and, fearing that their crime will be discovered, leave hurriedly. Alone, Lisabetta wastes away and dies for want of her basil pot.

What is perhaps most striking in this tale is the recurrence of secrecy at every level of the narrative. Every action by the characters is covered up, literally and figuratively, the moment it is discovered. Secrecy and violence silently go hand in hand. Even the smell of Lorenzo's rotting flesh is covered up by the sweet fragrance of the basil. Conspicuously, this cycle of secrecy and violence begins with the brothers' disregard for social conventions requiring the placement of a young woman of Lisabetta's age in marriage. While his critical discourse is excessively charged with *pathos*, Branca captures the essence of the conflict between love and mercantile ethics in the novella:

La poesia dell'elegiaco vaneggiare amoroso di Lisabetta da Messina, fino alla morte silente in un pianto silente, palpita così trepida e pietosa proprio perché si leva come un fiore delicatissimo di gentilezza nello squallido paesaggio di quello spietato ambiente di mercanti toscani: di quei fratelli così brutalmente assorti nei loro traffici e nel loro denaro da non avere né un'occhiata né un pensiero per la sorella tutta abbandonata a una dolce attesa d'amore Tra le ragioni del sentimento, del cuore e quelle del chiuso interesse, dell'ostinato calcolo non v'è possibilità d'intesa: e queste non potranno che soffocare con la loro smisurata forza quei palpiti trepidanti. Il ritmo pietosamente tragico ed elegiaco della novella nasce proprio da questa opposizione, tanto più grave perché questo amore di una donna della classe dei 'soci' per un povero 'garzone' sembra voler travolgere le barriere che regolavano con leggi ferree la vita delle 'compagnie'. Lo scandalo è una minaccia che pesa sulla reputazione mercantile, che può compromettere gli affari: l'eliminazione di Lorenzo è perciò decisa rapidamente, come una necessaria operazione commerciale (Branca 1956: 85)

Branca summarizes the novella's message: "il pietoso, sconcolato appassire e morire del fiore dell'amore nel terreno indurito dell'assoluto dominio della 'ragion di mercatura'" (1956: 86). Branca's analysis takes into account love but does not discuss marriage; yet, as noted above, the cycle of secrecy, violence, death, and decay is set in motion by the brothers' reluctance to make arrangements for Lisabetta to marry. To expand on Branca's argument about the brothers' tragic focus on money, it should be noted that, while there are significant problems arising from their emotional control and manipulation of Lisabetta, their negligence also suggests a concern for maximizing financial gain while minimizing expenditures: thus a dowry would have been inconvenient. Yet in the end the brothers – and their business prospects – are compromised by the results of this excessive parsimony, as indicated by the haste with which they leave Messina to avoid the consequences of a possible discovery of their crime.

Critical perspectives on the intertext that purportedly inspired the novella – namely, the ballad that appears at the end of the narrative – further enrich an analysis of the tension between family control and the choice of the couple. For example, Millicent Marcus, who analyzes the story of Lisabetta in relation to the popular ballad in “Cross-Fertilizations: Folklore and Literature in *Decameron* 4.5”, observes:

What becomes clear in analyzing the full text of the ballad is that Boccaccio has transformed this comic poem of emotional progress into its very opposite – a tragic prose account of decline and ultimate demise. Nothing could be further from the whimsical folk song of loss and projected recovery than the macabre tale of Lisabetta. . . (Marcus [1989] 386)

Why, we might ask, does Boccaccio transform the original song’s comic message into its very opposite? Does this transformation hint once again at the tension surrounding love and marriage mentioned above, of which mercantilism is an important aspect?

This reading finds support in the article by Marcus, who documents a series of transformations in the novella. Noting the symmetry between, on the one hand, Lisabetta’s tears and the fragrant “rose water and orange petal distillations,” and on the other hand, Lorenzo’s rotting head (“the sentimental attentions that issue from above the plant . . . are matched or surpassed in efficacy by the putrefaction which enriches the soil from below” [387]), Marcus explains that their purpose is “to emphasize the Ovidian passage from one form of life to another” (388). In addition to these literal metamorphoses, Marcus highlights another sort of metamorphosis at work in the story: “Most obvious are the pairings and alternations of the dyads *testa-testo* and *pianto-pianta* which reveal the metamorphic power of Lisabetta’s imagination to turn heads into flowerpots and tears into flourishing plants” (392). I would add that these alternations conspicuously involve a grammatical transformation from feminine to masculine or masculine to feminine – as grammatical gender changes, objects undergo a process of transubstantiation; for example, a head turns into a pot, and tears turn into and nourish a plant.

I argue that the transformation of the comic folksong about progress into a tragic tale of death and decay implies a contrast between the fertility resulting from the decay of Lorenzo’s rotting head on the one hand and on the other hand the sterility imposed by the brothers, who first ignore their sister’s marriageability and then murder her lover and thus cast her into a sorrow that consumes her, eventually to the point of death. The alternative to such sterility and death, of course, and one suggested from the beginning of the novella, is marriage, with the obvious implication of fertility and offspring. Marcus acknowledges the importance of marriage, a theme she discusses in relation to the family dynamic rather than to the mercantile ethic:

Added to the violence of a double uprooting is the agony of dismemberment – the family, as a corporate entity, is “decapitated” by the pre-narrative death of the father. In the very organization of the story’s anagraphic introduction, Boccaccio attributes the family’s woes to its headlessness and rootlessness, to its absence of father and fatherland . . . (388-89)

She continues: “Without paternal guidance it seems that the brothers are incapable of guaranteeing the normal generational succession of property, power and sexual self-expression that Lisabetta’s timely marriage would help bring about” (389). The brothers’

neglect serves as a pretext for the novella's contrast between love and death, comedy and tragedy:

It is the blockage of natural human sexuality – the refusal to marry daughters or sisters on time, or to let physical attraction take its normal course, that leads to tragic love and the consequent dismemberment or disfiguration of the bodies which aroused such dangerous passions. Where the excised hearts of *Dec.* 4.1 and 9 revealed the difference between comic love in which hearts were given away metaphorically in marriage, and tragic love in which hearts are literally removed to preclude any future embraces, Lorenzo's severed head serves a similar purpose. It too represents the difference between the comic and tragic outcomes of sexual passion. (390)

This memorable novella, full of rich symbolism and pathos, is laden with specific references to secrecy which have garnered scarce critical attention in relation to the theme of secret sexual relationships. Indeed, the hidden, buried body, then later the hidden, buried head (hidden, as mentioned above, not only visually by the soil that covers it but also olfactorily by the fragrances that cancel out the stench of Lorenzo's rotten flesh) is an insistent call for the reader to pay attention to the theme of secrecy as it connects to violence – both the violence that prevents Lisabetta and Lorenzo from courting each other openly and the violence that punishes their transgression. At the root of the secrecy and violence is the social and legal problem of family interference in courtship and marriage.

The conflict between the prerogatives of the couple, on the one hand, and of family, class, and society, on the other hand, is clearly exemplified in the novella of Ghismunda and Guiscardo. Tancredi, prince of Salerno, representing both power within the family and political power, delays in marrying off his daughter Ghismunda, keeping her at home beyond the age at which other young women of her station are usually married (4.1.4).¹² After a short interlude during which Ghismunda is married and widowed, she returns to Tancredi. He neglects to make a new match for her, and she, “veggendo che il padre, per l'amor che egli le portava, poca cura si dava di più maritarla, né a lei onesta cosa pareva il richiederlo, si pensò di volere avere, se esser potesse, occultamente un valoroso amante” (4.1.5).

Although Tancredi's reluctance to arrange a second marriage for Ghismunda motivates her search for a lover, once she chooses Guiscardo, a valiant man in her father's employ, the class asymmetry of the two lovers adds a second layer of urgency to keep the relationship secret. Tancredi discovers the relationship by trespassing on the private space of Ghismunda's bedroom, thus learning what would have otherwise

¹² Trevor Dean explains that several Italian cities explicitly dealt in their statutes with parental negligence in marrying off a daughter by a certain age. In Treviso, if a woman who had reached the age of twenty had not been married off by her parents, “two close kinsmen could give her in marriage and award her a dowry” (89). In the case of a fatherless girl,

[W]hen the brothers or other kinsmen delayed her marriage beyond the age of fourteen (Osimo), fifteen (Camerino), or eighteen (Parma, Faenza, Lodi), she was allowed to marry without their consent and without penalty. There were, though, some conditions attached: at Faenza there had to be at least ten witnesses to the marriage from the girl's neighborhood; at Camerino the marriage had to take place in a city church (very unusual), in the presence of the *podestà* . . . and civic councilors. (Dean 90)

remained secret due to the diligent discretion of the lovers.¹³ After his discovery, however, Tancredi considers himself dishonored by his daughter because of Guiscardo's low birth:

E or volesse Iddio che, poi che a tanta disonestà condurre ti dovevi avessi preso uomo che alla tua nobiltà decevole fosse stato; ma tra tanti che nella mia corte n'usano, eleggesti Guiscardo, giovane di vilissima condizione, nella nostra corte quasi come per Dio da picciol fanciullo infino a questo dì allevato; di che tu in grandissimo affanno d'animo messo m'hai, non sappiendo io che partito di te mi pigliare. (4.1.27)

¹³ Tancredi's incestuous demeanor towards his daughter has attracted much scholarly attention and has received various explanations. See for example Carlo Muscetta, *Giovanni Boccaccio* (Bari: Laterza, 1972, 221); Guido Almansi, *The Writer as Liar: Narrative Technique in the Decameron* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975, 22); Giuseppe Mazzotta, *The World at Play in Boccaccio's Decameron* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1986: 134-151); Roberto Fedi, "Il 'regno' di Filostrato. Natura e struttura della Giornata IV del *Decameron*, *MLN* 102 (1987): 51; Jessica Levenstein, "Out of Bounds: Passion and the Plague in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, *Italica* 73.3 (1996): 323. Mazzotta has noted that in novella 4.1 there is a tension between naturalism and incest:

At first glance, the two readings in terms of naturalism and incest are contradictory, for if one upholds the rights of nature, the other is a sharp refutation of the very assumptions of a naturalist ideology. Incest is unavoidably the stumbling block of naturalism in that, as an irresistible or unconscious passion, it announces as illusory the belief in the rationality of desire; more than that, as a metaphor of transgression, it makes nature not the symbol of order, but the locus where, once interdictions are abolished and instinctive desire . . . is the law, undifferentiated chaos holds sway. . . . Ironically, then, from this perspective, to consider incest as the unspoken dimension of the novella would logically lead to construing it as a plea for laws which might bridle the free movement of desire. (135)

Interestingly, Marcus argues that the absence of a mother contributes significantly to the development of unhealthy family dynamics and, eventually, to the tragic ending, of this novella and of novella 4.5, discussed above:

Tancredi's delay in marrying his daughter, and his consequent refusal to arrange for her remarriage once her . . . husband had died, was attributed to a pathological possessiveness which made of Ghismunda a surrogate spouse. Had there been a real wife and mother on the scene (albeit a dead one whose memory would have informed the family's emotional life), Ghismunda would not have had to fill this unnatural void in her father's overwrought psyche. Even if a mother could not have guaranteed a timely marriage, the suggestion is that she would have intervened to tame the ferocity of paternal or fraternal response to fornication. (Marcus, "Cross-fertilizations," 389)

While Marcus emphasizes a contrast between violent, controlling fathers on the one hand and mild, mediating mothers on the other hand, Boccaccio's novellas suggest that some fathers are violent and controlling while others are composed and obliging. It should be noted, for example, that Madonna Giacomina's role in novella 5.4 does not change the outcome of the novella, as Migiel notes in "Encrypted Messages: Men, Women, and Figurative Language in *Decameron* 5.4"; similarly, Violante's mother is unable to stop Amerigo from attacking her in novella 5.7; Messer Negro of novella 4.6, on the other hand, has no wife but is among the most mild and merciful parents of the *Decameron*. In his *Medieval Households*, David Herlihy also emphasizes the potential for mothers to act as mediators, which he interprets as a function of the age difference between spouses: "The mother . . . was ideally placed to serve as intermediary between the often conflicting male generations. She remained much nearer in years to her children, was easier to approach, and emotionally more committed to their welfare" (121). Herlihy also states that mothers were "well placed to listen and to speak, to convey pleas and proposals in both directions" (121). The sources he uses to substantiate the claims about mothers' greater emotional investment in their children are literary, not historical, however, and should therefore be interpreted with caution.

In analyzing this important passage, Mazzotta notes that Tancredi's "opposition between 'nobiltà' and 'vilissima condizione' . . . evokes the prince's political values, his belief in a pattern of vertical order, in a scheme held together by the bonds of a simultaneously natural and social hierarchy" (144). Ghismunda's retort to Tancredi, by contrast, is an argument that distinguishes nobility of soul from noble birth:

Di che egli pare, oltre allo amorosamente aver peccato, che tu, più la volgare opinione che la verità seguitando, con più amaritudine mi riprenda, dicendo (quasi turbato esser non ti dovessi, se io nobile uomo avessi a questo eletto) che io con uom di bassa condizione mi son posta. In che non ti accorgi che non il mio peccato ma quello della Fortuna riprendi, la quale assai sovente li non degni ad alto leva, a basso lasciando i dignissimi. Ma lasciamo or questo, e riguarda alquanto a' principii delle cose: tu vedrai noi d'una massa di carne tutti la carne avere, e da uno medesimo creatore tutte l'anime con iguali forze, con iguali potenzie, con iguali virtù create. La virtù primieramente noi, che tutti nascemmo e nasciamo iguali, ne distinse; e quegli che di lei maggior parte avevano e adoperavano nobili furon detti, e il rimanente rimase non nobile. (4.1.38-40)

Ghismunda is keenly aware that her sexual transgression pales in comparison to her social-class transgression in Tancredi's view. According to her argument, since Tancredi does not object to the illicit relationship per se, and since he objects mainly to Guiscardo's apparent lack of nobility, Guiscardo's nobility of character, which is the only true form of nobility according to Ghismunda, should atone for any defects perceived by Tancredi.¹⁴

In stark contrast to Ghismunda's argument that "tutti nascemmo e nasciamo iguali", we find Tancredi's tyranny. In *An Allegory of Form*, Marcus notes that it is no "accident that one of the protagonists of Boccaccio's first tragic tale is a tyrant" (44); she goes on to note that the theme of tyranny runs through the entire novella: "Not only is the theory of love which wreaks havoc on the lives of Tancredi, Ghismunda, and Guiscardo a despotic one, but so is the tale itself which exerts over its readers a relentless power" (44). It seems to me that the tale's insistence on tyranny on the one hand and

¹⁴ This argument seems derived in part from a dialogue in Capellanus' *De amore*:

Dixisti etiam, te ex vili generi ortam. Sed in hoc longe maioribus te dignam fore laudibus ostendisti et maiori nobilitate gaudere, quum nobilitatem tibi non generis vel sanguinis propinavit origo, sed sola probitas et compositio morum digniori te nobilitatis specie ditaverunt. Nam homines universos ab initio prodiit una natura, unque omnes usque ad hoc tempus tenuisset aequalitas, nisi magnanimitas et morum probitas coepisset homines nobilitas inaequalitate distinguere. (Capellanus 26)

You said, too, that you come from a humble family. But this shows that you are much more deserving of praise and blessed with a greater nobility, since yours does not come from your descent or from your ancestors, but good character and good manners alone have given to you a more worthy kind of nobility. In the beginning the same nature created all men, and to this day they would have remained equal had not greatness of soul and worth of character commenced to set some men apart from each other by the inequality of nobility. (Parry 38; cf. also Ovid, *Metamorphoses* II 846)

In addition to engaging with Capellanus' discussion of nobility, however, Boccaccio also evokes Guinizzelli's representation of nobility of soul in "Al cor gentil reppara sempre amore" and with Dante's subsequent commentary on this theme, both in *Purgatorio* 26 and in the fourth chapter of *Convivio*. For a discussion of these two intertexts, see Maria Luisa Ardizzone, "Guido Guinizzelli's 'Al cor gentil': A Notary in Search of Written Laws," *Modern Philology* 94.4 (1997): 455-74.

Ghismunda's insistence on equality on the other hand suggest a view of love fraught with ambivalence: while love inspires Ghismunda to see the nobility hidden within the most humble of men, she herself argues that her sexual desire also renders her completely incapable of resisting or overcoming her bodily passions – it is a tyrant:

Sono adunque, sì come da te generata, di carne, e sì poco vivuta, che ancor son giovane; e per l'una cosa e per l'altra piena di concupiscibile disidero, al quale maravigliosissime forze hanno date l'aver già, per essere stata maritata, conosciuto qual piacer sia a così fatto disidero dar compimento. *Alle quali forze non potendo io resistere*, a seguir quello a che elle mi tiravano, sì come giovane e femina, mi disposi e innamorai mi. (4.1.33, emphasis added)

Marcus notes that the view of love presented in the novella engages with Capellanus's treatise:

Ghismunda is following the dictates of Andreas Capellanus to perfection. Her choice of Guiscardo, based on ethical considerations, illustrates the very logic of Andreas's arguments for the superiority of adultery over matrimony. Since marriage partners are bound by contract to gratify each other's desires, they are not free to reward probity with love as adulterers can. This Ghismunda does, and she proceeds according to the four steps prescribed by Andreas in his *De arte honeste amandi*. . . . Ghismunda only deviates from this code in her reversal of the sex roles assigned to the knight and the lady. (1979: 46)

What are we to make of the novella's affinity to Capellanus and to the courtly love tradition? Marcus notes that Guiscardo's view on the power of love ("Amor può troppo più che né voi né io possiamo" [4.1.23]) "[s]yntactically and ideologically . . . recalls Dante's damning commentary of courtly love which he placed in the mouth of Francesca da Rimini" (*Allegory* 49).¹⁵ The association of Ghismunda with Francesca, who grieves the loss of her beautiful body (Amor . . . / prese costui de la bella persona/ che mi fu tolta;/ e 'l modo ancor m'offende [*Inf.* v.100-102]) becomes even more accentuated when we note, with Jessica Levenstein, the insistence on Ghismunda's fleshly desires: "As she herself explains to her father . . . she is not made of stone; she has no choice but to obey the promptings of the flesh. Indeed, Ghismunda's constant repetition of the word *carne* both emphatically identifies her with her physical self, and underscores her carnal cravings" (Levenstein 323). On the one hand, love is represented as a tyrant; on the other hand, Ghismunda also recognizes her free choice: "mi disposi e innamorai mi" (4.1.33).¹ The narrator also portrays Ghismunda's choice to deviate from chastity: "veggendo che il padre . . . poca cura si dava di più maritarla, né a lei onesta cosa pareva il richiederlo, si pensò di volere avere, se esser potesse, occultamente un valoroso amante" (4.1.5). The word "onesta" is key: for within the bounds of marriage Ghismunda would have the chance to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh without jeopardizing her virtue; yet she hesitates to ask Tancredi to put these conditions in place because it does not seem "onesta cosa" to ask for such a thing; rather than making the unseemly request for the chance to remarry, Ghismunda sets her mind on secretly taking a lover. This choice is compromised from the start, however, because it equates "cosa

¹⁵ Marcus is not alone in noting this connection. See also, for example, Luigi Russo's "Postilla critica a Ghismunda e Guiscardo," *Il Decameron. Venticinque novelle scelte e ventisette postille critiche*. (Firenze, Sansoni, 1944).

onesta” with the mere appearance of virtue; the idea of “volere avere . . . occultamente un valoroso amante” implicates Ghismunda in a hypocritical decision-making process.

Before killing herself, Ghismunda displays two virtues traditionally associated with men: courage and eloquence, while Tancredi displays his effeminacy. It is worth noting that this gender reversal – not to mention generational reversal, as Ghismunda takes on the wisdom of a parent in educating the irrational and petulant Tancredi – arises in the context of Ghismunda’s discussion of the vulgar mind’s reversal of what really constitutes nobility. In the end, Ghismunda’s suicide functions in part as punishment for Tancredi’s refusal to take her courage and eloquence seriously, just as he did not see Guiscardo’s inner nobility, he did not see Ghismunda’s inner valor and virility.¹⁶ At the same time, the novella’s intertextual allusions to Capellanus and Dante suggest an implicit reversal of moral values: the privileging of bodily pleasure over virtue; the privileging of non-marital relations over the sacrament of marriage.¹⁷

As noted above, the discovery of a secret relationship can bring to light a host of struggles over a couple’s right to act independently of parental approval. A secret relationship remains secret until some unexpected event brings it to light. The noble Amerigo of novella 5.7 is not the sort of father who would intrude unannounced into his daughter’s bedchamber, but, like Tancredi, he does not wish or expect his daughter, Violante, to carry on with men beneath her station. Just as in 4.1, the revelation of a relationship between a noblewoman and a plebeian man brings with it the possibility of death for both protagonists. Violante’s lover is Pietro, a servant whom Amerigo bought from pirates. After Violante finds out that she is pregnant, and her attempts to induce an abortion fail, she realizes that her sexual transgression will soon be visible to others. Pietro, fearing for his life, plans to run away; by threatening to kill herself if he leaves, Violante persuades Pietro to remain in Amerigo’s household. As a condition of his staying, however, Pietro demands secrecy regarding his role in fathering the child:

- Come vuoi tu, donna mia, che io qui dimori? La tua gravidezza scoprirà il fallo nostro; a te fia perdonato leggiemente, ma io misero sarò colui a cui del tuo peccato e del mio converrà portare la pena.

Al quale la giovane disse:

¹⁶ It is in a sense Tancredi’s refusal to believe Ghismunda when she states, “io t’acerto che quello che di Guiscardo fatto avrai o farai, se di me non fai il simigliante, le mie mani medesime il faranno” (4.1.44) that leads to Ghismunda’s death. Heedless of his daughter’s words – “non credette . . . lei sì fortemente disposta a quello che le parole sue sonavano” (4.1.46) – he has Guiscardo killed and has his heart brought to Ghismunda in a golden goblet. As Mazzotta notes, Tancredi thus “lays bare and disfigures . . . the root of all love literature, which in the heart finds the metaphoric source of nobility, virtue and love, and, thus, mistakes the metaphor for a literal reality” (149). Furthermore, he adds: “Unlike the poets of the Sweet New Style . . . Boccaccio shows how love lapses into madness and violence. He also shows . . . how the violence of the father . . . is a metaphoric displacement of love. In short, he probes the tragic paradox of the heart, at once the seat of love and violence” (151).

¹⁷ Additionally, the novella highlights Ghismunda’s choice to take a secret lover rather than to marry secretly and thus preserve her honor before God, if not before Tancredi. Marcus also acknowledges that the novella raises the issue of marriage, yet she (like Ghismunda before her) focuses on the role that Tancredi would have played rather than discussing the possibility of a clandestine marriage initiated by the spouses themselves: “If Tancredi had really wanted to ‘console’ his daughter, he could have done precisely that by giving Guiscardo’s heart figuratively in marriage” (1979: 60).

- Pietro, il mio peccato si saprà bene; ma sii certo che il tuo, se tu nol dirai, non si saprà mai.

Pietro allora disse:

- Poi che tu così mi prometti, io starò, ma pensa d'osservarlomi. (5.7.19-21)

Pietro assumes that he will be held more culpable than Violante and that he alone is endangered by their liaison. As it turns out, however, when Amerigo finds his daughter in the throes of labor, he rushes upon her with a drawn sword, threatening to kill her if she continues to withhold the identity of the baby's father. She accordingly reveals the truth of her affair with Pietro, and it is with the greatest of difficulty that Amerigo restrains himself from killing Violante on the spot for this dishonor. He controls himself for the time being, however, and appeals to the military governor, Currado, who condemns Pietro to death. Amerigo's recourse to a secular authority rather than an ecclesiastical one reflects both secular views of marriage as informed by dynastic interests and by the fact that canon law, unlike secular law, excluded the death penalty and severe forms of corporal punishment. Additionally, by appealing to Currado rather than killing Pietro himself, Amerigo displays the awareness that the law can be dangerous when taken into one's own hands, whereas delegating one's grievances to the proper authorities can provide at least partial satisfaction of one's desire for revenge.¹⁸ Not appeased by the prospect of Pietro's death alone, Amerigo orders his servant to murder Violante and his newborn grandson as well. By pursuing his own private 'justice' against his daughter, Amerigo betrays the view that Violante, unlike Pietro, is entirely subject to his own authority.

Amerigo views Violante's relationship with Pietro not so much as a sexual transgression as a social-class transgression, for which Pietro and Violante merit death – there can be no reparation for this crime; marriage between such unequals would be unthinkable. Everything changes, however, when the noble Fineo passes through town just as Pietro is being escorted to his death, for Fineo claims Pietro as his lost son, Teodoro, kidnapped by pirates many years ago. Significantly, the recognition itself (and consequently the escape from death) is made possible by the public spectacle of leading the prisoner to his fate only partially clad, displaying the birth-mark that would otherwise have remained hidden, and ironically the ritual manner in which his death sentence is carried out leads to the possibility of life and redemption. Once Fineo recognizes the condemned man as his own son and proves Teodoro's nobility, the nature of the transgression changes, along with his name and identity: suddenly, Teodoro is a noble man who, after engaging in fornication with a nubile noblewoman, has evidently fathered an illegitimate child. No longer is death the only possible recourse: the illegitimate relationship is now reparable through marriage.

Like the novella of Lisabetta, the novella of Violante and Teodoro insists on the tension between what is hidden and invisible, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, what is apparent, manifest, visible. The secrecy of a clandestine relationship depends on the lack of outward signs; once such signs appear, the couple is at risk of detection and subject to family and legal discipline. Violante's evident pregnancy is a sign that places both members of the couple and their child in danger of death; later, the equally

¹⁸ The fear of taking the law into one's own hands is seen also in novella 6.7, where Madonna Filippa's husband restrains himself from murdering his adulterous wife because he fears the legal consequences and thus takes the case to Prato's secular court instead.

unplanned revelation and detection of Pietro's birthmark tips the scales in the opposite direction, restoring the chance of life to the couple and their child, on the condition that the clandestine relationship be regularized through marriage. Teodoro and Violante find out only by accident that they are indeed social equals, but this only serves to emphasize the role of class difference in clandestine relationships.

It is clear from the above examples that Boccaccio portrays couple-initiated relationships as problematic for families, especially for noble and/or wealthy families when there is a significant difference in social class between the members of the couple. The reaction exhibited by the fathers and brothers of Ghismunda, Lisabetta, and Violante, leading as they do to death or near-death of one or both members of the couple is a sign of excessive cruelty. That these transgressions are punished so often in these narratives with death points out the disparity between the offense and the punishment, suggesting the need for moderation in the interest of a more peaceful model for family and society.

Clandestine Marriage in the *Decameron*

Secret marriages, like secret love affairs, are frequently linked to class differences in the *Decameron*, and it is not surprising that several prominent authorities on canon law acknowledged that differences in class between two spouses justified keeping a marriage secret. As noted in the Introduction and in Chapter One, during the centuries before Boccaccio wrote his *Decameron*, Gratian's claim that marriage is based on the free and uncoerced consent of the spouses was repeated by other important authorities on canon law and the importance of this precept can be observed in court records as well as in prescriptive documents. Legal records, of course, are not the only account we have of clandestine marriages during the medieval and early modern periods, and Boccaccio's fiction allows readers to have a glimpse into the struggle of the couple to overcome actual or expected resistance from family members in the formation of a marriage between social unequals.

Andreuola, the daughter of the noble Messer Negro, secretly marries her non-noble and less wealthy neighbor, Gabriotto, in novella 4.6: "e acciò che niuna cagione mai . . . potesse questo lor dilettevole amor separare, marito e moglie segretamente divennero" (4.6.9). They continue meeting secretly to enjoy their married bliss, but Gabriotto dies one night in the garden, and Andreuola, wishing him to be buried honorably by his family, bears his body to his home but is discovered on the way by the podestà's family.¹⁹ While Andreuola stands before the podestà, the latter attempts to seduce her in exchange for clemency; when she refuses the offer, he tries to rape her but finds that she defends herself "virilmente" (4.6.35) and is therefore moved to propose marriage instead (4.6.37). Andreuola's virile self-defense engages with the etymology of her name, which is a diminutive and feminized modification of Andrea, which derives in turn from a modification of the Greek *andros*, the genitive form of *aner*, meaning virile man. Andreuola refuses this second offer as well. Andreuola, who has chosen to contract

¹⁹ In "A Metaphor for Social Exchange: The Florentine Plague of 1630," *Representations* 13 (1986):139-63, Giulia Calvi notes that in novella 4.6, "[c]landestine burial, by denying the free flow of tears, thus impedes the completion of the rituals of mourning" (153-54). Though Calvi does not link Andreuola's attempt to bear Gabriotto's body back to his family secretly to the theme of clandestine marriage central to the story, the former is clearly a consequence of the latter.

a clandestine marriage without her father's knowledge or consent, appears vulnerable to the podestà, a symbol of authority outside of the family. The magistrate attempts to offer her a sort of legal safeconduct in exchange for the fulfillment of sexual favors; yet when she remains virile in the face of his importunate advances, he desires her not only as a sexual prize but as a wife. While on the one hand his attraction to Andreuola's virility might be designed to amuse the readers, on the other hand there is a more sober component to this part of the narrative, where Boccaccio brings consensual clandestine marriage and attempted coerced sex/marriage face to face, with the podestà's powerful legal and social role further emphasizing the contrast between consent and coercion. Andreuola's plight might seem quite desperate at this point; however, her father intervenes, and the narrative again focuses on how marriage formation issues might best be resolved when first addressed openly within the family.

Unwilling to negotiate her case with the podestà, Andreuola prostrates herself before her father, revealing the truth about her clandestine marriage and begging for his forgiveness: "questo perdono non vi domando perché la vita mi sia perdonata ma per morire vostra figliuola e non vostra nemica" (4.6.39). Messer Negro responds:

Figliuola mia, io avrei avuto molto caro che tu avessi avuto tal marito quale a te secondo il parer mio si convenia, e se tu l'avevi tal preso quale egli ti piaceva, questo dovea anche a me piacere; ma l'averlo occultato della tua poca fidanza mi fa dolere, e più ancora vedenotel prima aver perduto che io l'abbia saputo. Ma pur, poi che così è, quello che io per contentarti, vivendo egli, volentieri gli avrei fatto, cioè onore sì come a mio genero, facciagli alla morte. (4.6.40-41)

This novella contrasts intra-family discipline over sexual and marital matters and the extra-family discipline represented by courts of law; in fact, once the marriage is no longer secret, the father is restored to his authoritative position. Additionally, Messer Negro's reaction is consistent with the ideal envisioned by canonists, who hoped that parents would demonstrate acceptance of their children's choice of marriage partner, as discussed in Chapter One.²⁰ Fearing otherwise, however, Andreuola conceals her marriage and her husband from him until she finds herself at the mercy of the podestà. Uncertain as to whether he will accept her chosen husband, she chooses secrecy over openness; even though Messer Negro does not pose a threat to Andreuola's free choice of a marriage partner, she assumes that he does. This story, therefore, points to a deeper social problem: the all too frequent interference, especially among families with money and status, of parents in marriage formation.²¹ The events following Gabriotto's death reveals Messer Negro to be a benevolent father who accepts his child's choice of a spouse and allows his own will in this matter to conform to hers. As we shall soon see, not all fathers reveal such a disposition.

²⁰ Messer Negro further embodies the ideal father in terms of canon law on marriage at a later moment in the novella, when the podestà asks Messer Negro for Andreuola's hand in marriage. Messer Negro does not give the podestà an answer but consults Andreuola instead, asking her what she wishes to do without exerting pressure on her, and when she replies she does not wish to marry the podestà, his response once again takes into account her will.

²¹ While each individual father had the option to recognize his daughter's wishes, the power over women enjoyed by men in medieval and early modern society created the presumption that paternal power would be foremost in any decision affecting a daughter (Noonan 1973: 431); see also Thomas Kuehn's excellent discussion of *patria potestas* and legal guardianship of women in *Law, Family, and Women: Toward a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy* for in-depth discussion and analysis of this issue.

In the absence of unexpected benevolence, what forces can rein in parental obstinacy towards a match between social unequals? Boccaccio presents a different solution in 5.3, supplanting parental authority by means of outside mediation. Pietro loves Agnolella, and manages to obtain her love in return: “amandola, tanto seppe operare, che la giovane cominciò non meno ad amar lui che egli amasse lei”. It is unclear what steps he takes to obtain her love, but the word “operare” suggests work and effort, rewarded by an equally strong love.²² Love is once again figured as a strong force, but unlike the love of Guiscardo and Ghismunda, which results in a sexual relationship, Pietro’s love for Agnolella motivates him to seek her hand in marriage: “Pietro, *da fervente amor costretto*, e non parendogli più dover sofferire l’aspra pena che il disiderio che avea di costei gli dava, la domandò per moglie” (emphasis added). Pietro is from one of Rome’s noblest families, the Boccamazza, whereas Agnolella is the daughter of a well-respected plebeian, Gigliuzzo. Pietro asks Agnolella’s relatives for their consent to the match that he and Agnolella desire. When his relatives get wind of this, however, they rebuke him for wishing to contract such a marriage, and they inform Gigliuzzo that they will never approve the union between their family and his. Pietro is discouraged, seeing that the match will only be possible if Gigliuzzo stands up to the threats and intimidation of the Boccamazza family: “e se Gigliuzzo l’avesse consentito, contro al piacere di quanti parenti avea, per moglie la figliuola avrebbe presa” (5.3.7-8).

Rather than continue to negotiate with the families, given the hostility of the Boccamazza clan, Pietro and Agnolella confirm their love and their desire to marry each other, and they resolve to run away to a nearby town, where they intend to exchange marriage vows in the presence of more supportive acquaintances. Unfortunately, they take a wrong turn and run into a group of men who try to kill Pietro while Agnolella flees into a forest on horseback. Pietro eludes his captors and wanders into the forest in search of Agnolella. The lovers endure terrifying dangers before they are reunited the following day at a castle whose owners are friends of both their families.

The lady of the castle, described by the narrator as saintly, listens to their story and, judging that their marriage is justified not only by their mutual consent but also by their survival in the face of danger, interpreted as a sign of divine approval for their match, she takes the place of their parents in approving their marriage. She serves as witness to the marriage, while her husband pays for the feast. Additionally, she reconciles Pietro and Agnolella with their families. Thus the two young people return to Rome and live happily ever after, blessed by peace and marital bliss. This novella suggests that when there are no reasonable impediments, two consenting people should be able to marry and that their families should accept their choice. When parents stubbornly refuse to recognize their offspring’s right to contract a marriage based on mutual consent between the spouses, then the authority of the parents over the couple may be usurped by others, in this case the lady (and, to a lesser extent, the lord) of the castle.²³

²² The connotations of “operare” stand in contrast to those associated with the verbs “acquistare” and “guadagnare,” as will be seen in the analysis of novella 3.9 further on.

²³ Branca notes that in spite of the adventures and wanderings of the young couple, some of the people and places in the novella are real:

Quella foresta desnsa di sorprese e di agguati, non è una foresta di maniera, come i boschi incantati dei romanzi cavallereschi. È la selva d’Aglia, presso Frascati, cioè sulla via che i mercanti fiorentini e il Boccaccio stesso assiduamente e ansiosamente percorrevano tra la loro città e Napoli . . . E la rocca dove nel candor mattinale si dissolvono finalmente le angosce dei

Social inequality between prospective marriage partners presents a series of daunting obstacles, often leading to clandestine courtship and/or clandestine marriage. There is no clear solution in the novellas where class difference threatens the hopes of lovers, but readers can surmise that parents should ultimately respect their offspring's choice of marriage partner; analogously, the novella of Andreuola and Gabriotto (4.6) also suggests that instead of circumventing parental approval altogether, there should be an attempt to secure parental approval before such a marriage. A sophisticated reader familiar with marriage law would likely read the plight of the couples in these novellas in relation to the discrepancy between ecclesiastical and secular views of marriage.

Coerced Consent to Marriage

The issue of coerced consent to marriage emerges in a number of novellas in the *Decameron*, most of them in Day Five. Marriage, Boccaccio suggests in these novellas, can be coerced by either member of the couple or by their parents, as well as by secular authorities. Let us now return to novella 5.7 and the marriage of Teodoro and Violante. Only when Teodoro's long-estranged Christian (and noble) father, happens upon the scene and claims his son does Amerigo rethink his violent revenge, and happily consents to the marriage of Teodoro and Violante. Amerigo now repents having instructed his servant to kill Violante and the baby and rushes home, only to find his servant berating Violante for hesitating too long between death by poison and death by sword. Both Amerigo and Fineo express their wish for a marriage between Violante and the now-manifestly noble Teodoro; and when the two young people are asked for their opinion on the matter, each expresses consent. Indeed, the last few paragraphs of the novella include repeated emphasis on the eventual marriage as based on the consent of the couple, the fathers, and the governor. Yet there is a tension between the surface-level appearance of consent and the threats that lurk beneath.

For all of this emphasis on consent, there are numerous indications that consent carries with it a serious price, in this case Teodoro's life. First, upon recognizing his son, Fineo approaches Currado, asking for his son to be spared if Violante will agree to marry him, thus atoning for their previous affair: "Messere, colui il quale voi mandate a morire come servo, è libero uomo e mio figliuolo, ed è presto di torre per moglie colei la qual si dice che della sua virginità ha privata; e però piacciavi di tanto indugiare la esecuzione

due innamorati, è uno dei castelli romani in cui il Boccaccio era stato insistentemente invitato a soggiornare dal suo amico e ammiratore Niccolò Orsini, protettore dei fiorentini: proprio un appartenente alla famiglia di quel Liello Orsini da Campo di Fiore nominato nella novella come signore del luogo. (1956: 106)

These elements of realism serve in part to connect the fictional representation of clandestine marriage to the reader's own social context. Regarding these realistic elements, Baratto remarks:

I dati storici e di cronaca, insomma, sono qui utilizzati non per rilevare lo stato di anarchia in cui versano Roma e la regione che la circonda, né tanto meno per un'indagine di carattere politico e sociale, ma solo per garantire la plausibilità della notte avventurosa dei due giovani, anche nei particolari più minuti e apparentemente irrilevanti Ma tutte le peripezie dei due giovani trovano . . . una motivazione che, se appare naturale e spontanea, rivela in realtà nello scrittore una calcolatissima attenzione al verosimile In questa dimensione storica il Boccaccio immette, con la variante pure non nuova della disuguaglianza sociale tra i due protagonisti, uno schema cortese che gli viene da un lungo esercizio letterario quello di un amore contrastato e a alla fine vittorioso di due giovani. (*Realtà e stile nel Decameron*. [Roma: Editori Riunti, 1984]: 41)

che saper si possa se ella lui vuol per marito, acciò che contro alla legge, dove ella il voglia, non vi troviate aver fatto” (5.7.42). Fineo clearly views Teodoro’s newly discovered status as a freeborn, noble man rather than as a slave as an essential component to the possibility of reparation through marriage; Fineo also expects the execution to be carried out if no marriage takes place.

Amerigo confers with Fineo on the possibility of marriage: “Di che messer Amerigo contento, andatosene là dove Fineo era, quasi piagnendo, come seppe il meglio, di ciò che intervenuto era si scusò e domandone perdono, affermando sé, dove Teodoro la sua figliuola per moglie volesse, esser molto contento di dargliele” (5.7.46). Fineo’s reply confirms not only the acceptance of marriage among social equals as a remedy for premarital sex, but also the need to punish Teodoro in the event that he should refuse the possible marriage match: “Io intendo che mio figliuolo la vostra figliuola prenda; e dove egli non volesse, vada innanzi la sentenza letta di lui” (5.7.47); this shows that Teodoro’s consent is set within a coercive context: marriage as reparation for premarital sex, or death as punishment for refusal.

In any case, Teodoro readily accepts the marriage match when Amerigo and Fineo offer it to him: “Essendo adunque e Fineo e messer Amerigo in concordia, là ove Teodoro era ancora tutto pauroso della morte e lieto di avere il padre ritrovato, il domandarono intorno a questa cosa del suo volere. Teodoro, udendo che la Violante, dove egli volesse, sua moglie sarebbe, tanta fu la sua letizia, che d’inferno gli parve saltare in paradiso, e disse che questo gli sarebbe grandissima grazia, dove a ciascun di lor piacesse” (5.7.49). It is important to note that Teodoro’s choices are still limited. While presumed to be a servant, he faced certain death. As a nobleman, he is ‘free’ to ‘choose’ between marriage and death. It is possible, of course, that even if he were not facing death as the only alternative to marriage, Teodoro might still choose to marry Violante, but the coercive context of the choices given him cannot be denied.

Similarly, when she is consulted, Violante also gives her consent:

Mandossi adunque alla giovane a sentire del suo volere; la quale, udendo ciò che di Teodoro era avvenuto ed era per avvenire, dove più dolorosa che altra femina la morte aspettava, dopo molto, alquanto fede prestando alle parole, un poco si rallegrò e rispose che, se ella il suo desiderio di ciò seguisse, niuna cosa più lieta le poteva avvenire che d’essere moglie di Teodoro; ma tuttavia farebbe quello che il padre le comandasse. (5.7.50)

Both Teodoro and Violante, then, each having narrowly escaped death, express consent to the match on the condition that their fathers also wish for the marriage to take place. Analogously, as noted above, Fineo and Amerigo consult with each other and agree to the marriage, provided that Teodoro and Violante also give their consent. Whereas the text contains references to consent at almost every level, the marriage is presented as an alternative to death.²⁴ As readers, we do not know whether Teodoro and Violante would have chosen to marry in the absence of this threat. Additionally, certain elements within the narrative point out that the lovers’ story could have gone terribly wrong.²⁵ By

²⁴ Violante’s mother, present in the earlier part of the story as Violante’s accomplice in hiding the pregnancy from Amerigo, is apparently not consulted on the matter.

²⁵ “Messer Amerigo, che già credeva la figliuola e ’l nepote esser morti, fu il più dolente uom del mondo di ciò che fatto avea, conoscendo, dove morta non fosse, si potea molto bene ogni cosa stata emendare; ma

emphasizing Fortune (5.7.43), by recourse to a far-fetched plot of anagnorisis, and by describing how close both Amerigo and his servant get to killing Violante and the baby, Boccaccio draws a close link between courtship, violence, and the formation of marriage.

Paternal power to choose life or death for a daughter and those she cares for is almost absolute in this novella, showing that even when a daughter secretly violates her father's wishes, his discovery can unleash great violence, supported by those in positions of authority over the community, in this case, Currado. The novella of Violante, in which an extraordinary set of unpredictable truths emerges at just the right moment, does not offer any solution to ordinary cases of clandestine relationships between social unequals. Rather, the implausibility of the anagnorisis only magnifies the difficulties faced by social unequals.

In 5.7, we noted that the father's discovery of his daughter's sexual involvement with a man alleged to have been born into a low social position led to his designing to have the couple and their child put to death. What, then, might a father's reaction be when he discovers that his daughter has a lover whose social status exceeds her own? Let us investigate how this plays out in novella 5.4, narrated by Filostrato. Messer Lizio and Madonna Giacomina are somewhat negligent in watching over their daughter Caterina when Ricciardo visits (5.4.6-7), though at all other times, Caterina is "con maravigliosa diligenza guardata" (5.4.5). One night, Ricciardo and Caterina arrange to consummate their love, and they meet on the veranda outside of Lizio's bedroom. When Lizio finds the couple sleeping naked together, Caterina holding Ricciardo's member in her hand, he brings his wife to witness the spectacle and suggests that this presents a great opportunity to trap Ricciardo into marrying Caterina:

Donna, guarda che per quanto tu hai caro il mio amore tu non facci motto, ché in verità, poscia che ella l'ha preso, egli sì sarà suo. Ricciardo è gentile uomo e ricco giovane; noi non possiamo aver di lui altro che buon parentado; se egli si vorrà a buon concio da me partire, egli converrà che primieramente la sposi; sì ch'egli si troverà aver messo l'usignuolo nella gabbia sua e non nell'altrui. (5.4.37-38)

Lizio is not upset by the tryst; on the contrary, he delights in the possibility of turning it to his advantage by creating a *parentado* between his family and the Manardi. Without catching the lovers *in flagrante*, Lizio might not have secured such a favorable marriage match for his daughter. Messer Lizio does not simply count on Ricciardo marrying Caterina out of love and goodwill; rather, he secures the promise – and the ensuing act – of marriage from him by means of a death threat:

Ricciardo, questo non meritò l'amore il quale io ti portava e la fede la quale io aveva in te; ma pur, poi che così è e a tanto fallo t'ha trasportato la giovinezza, acciò che tu tolga a te la morte e a me la vergogna, prima che tu ti muova, sposa per tua legittima moglie la Caterina, acciò che, come ella è stata questa notte tua, così sia mentre ella viverà; e in questa guisa puoi e la mia pace e la tua salvezza acquistare; e ove tu non vogli così fare, raccomanda a Dio l'anima tua. (5.4.43)

Caterina entreats her father to withdraw the death threat, to no avail. Ricciardo agrees to marry Caterina, motivated – Filostrato tells us – by a number of factors, including "la vergogna del fallo commesso e la voglia dello emendare, e . . . la paura del morire e il

nondimeno mandò correndo là dove la figliuola era, acciò che, se fatto non fosse il suo comandamento, non si facesse" (5.7.44).

disiderio dello scampare, e oltre a questo l'ardente amore e l'appetito del possedere la cosa amata"; he thereupon "*liberamente e senza alcuno indugio* [disse] sé esser apparecchiato a far ciò che a messer Lizio piaceva" (5.45, emphasis added). The discrepancy between the list of factors purportedly motivating Ricciardo's choice and the assertion that he agrees to Lizio's terms without any delay undermines the credibility of the list, and calls attention to the coercive nature of Ricciardo's predicament. Indeed, the only factor that Ricciardo can respond to instantaneously is the fear of death, while the remaining factors require more deliberation and reflection. Thus readers might question how free Ricciardo's choice is.

In commenting on this novella, Marilyn Migiel notes that "the free agency of the young lovers is a myth" (*Rhetoric* 129), but, in discussing Ricciardo and Caterina, she goes on to remark that "[t]heir 'success,' if one wishes to call it that, is the result of the compatibility for the expression of their desires with that of the dominant ideology of their immediate family and community" (*Rhetoric* 129). I would argue, however, that there is no evidence that Ricciardo and Caterina actually wish to marry each other; indeed, when Lizio threatens Ricciardo with death if he refuses to marry Caterina, she tearfully asks her father to rescind his harsh judgment. Let us compare the case of Ricciardo's hasty nuptials to a real-life case in fifteenth-century Venice:

[O]ne night . . . when a certain Giacomo was caught hiding in the room of Ventura, he was convinced by her family that marriage was an excellent idea. In fact, one member of the family reported that when the young man was asked if he wanted to marry into their family, "he replied willingly that he was content and he had not come [to her room] for any other reason." We may be permitted our perhaps uncharitable doubts, however, for Giacomo's marriage was preserved for us when he later claimed that he was forced into it against his will. (Ruggiero 28)

The similarities between the two stories is striking, suggesting that Ricciardo's plight was not altogether implausible in early modern Italy, considering the frequent references to the role of force and fear in marriage formation. As Charles Reid notes, Alexander III's notion that threats sufficient to compel a *virum constantem* reflected the need of canon law and ecclesiastical courts to draw a line beyond which a marriage was considered forced and was therefore invalid. Even if the person forced to consent to marry is guilty of fornication, that "person's fault was irrelevant in determining whether he was the victim of force and fear" (46). Ricciardo's capitulation before the death threat should be understood within this context.

With his ambition to climb the social ladder, Messer Lizio manipulates Ricciardo's fear, apparently only feigning the violent anger which other fathers such as Messer Amerigo genuinely experienced. By persuading Ricciardo of the possibility of imminent death, he elicits the consent which Ricciardo may not have otherwise given. Lizio's counterfeit – yet credible – threats challenge the consent model of marriage proposed by the Church. A crying Caterina and a Ricciardo so terrified that "parve che gli fosse il cuore del corpo strappato" (5.4.42) may or may not have chosen each other as marriage partners under a different set of circumstances; Lizio's actions deliberately sabotage the couple's freedom to choose.

Even more extreme is the role of fear in the famous story of Nastagio degli Onesti (5.8), where the threat of eternal violent punishment after death motivates consent to

marriage.²⁶ Filomena relates how Nastagio is in love with the unnamed daughter of Paolo Traversaro. Nastagio, having inherited a large sum of money at his father's death, is "ricchissimo" (5.8.5). His beloved, however, is "troppo più nobile che esso non era" (5.8.5) and is "cruda e dura e salvatica" (5.8.6); furthermore, "né egli né cosa che gli piacesse le piaceva" (5.8.7) – a phrase emphasizing her utter lack of consent. Nevertheless, he hopes "con le sue opere di doverla trarre a amar lui" (5.8.5). Readers soon find out the nature of these "opere", which have nothing to do with industriousness but consist in the squandering of his wealth: "perseverando . . . e nello amare e nello spendere smisuratamente" (5.8.9). Nastagio becomes so despondent that he often considers taking his own life. Pressured by his friends to give up this self-destructive lifestyle, he retreats to his family's vacation home. One Friday afternoon while walking in a nearby pine forest, Nastagio chances upon the shade of Guido degli Anastagi, who after pursuing and killing the woman he once loved, feeds her heart and entrails to his dogs. Nastagio, initially very disturbed by the scene, attempts to intervene on the woman's behalf, but Guido explains that he ended his life as a result of his unrequited love; ever since his beloved's death, he is condemned to spend his Friday afternoons hunting the cruel woman whose denial of love drove him to suicide.²⁷ Realizing that he can manipulate this dreadful weekly spectacle to his advantage, Nastagio arranges for his beloved's presence at a banquet which he times to coincide with the return of Guido Anastagi and his victim. At the banquet, the young woman beloved by Nastagio reacts to the ghastly spectacle according to his designs, recognizing that it has been staged particularly for her:

Ma tra gli altri che più di spavento ebbero, fu la crudel giovane da Nastagio amata, la quale ogni cosa distintamente veduta avea e udita e conosciuto che a sé più che a altra persona che vi fosse queste cose toccavano, ricordandosi della crudeltà sempre da lei usata verso Nastagio; per che già le pareva fuggire dinanzi da lui adirato e avere i mastini a' fianchi. (5.8.40)

Terrified, she offers herself up unconditionally for Nastagio's sexual pleasure, with no strings attached, and he in turn responds with an offer of marriage, setting the stage for a licit sexual relationship:

²⁶ See Jill Ricketts, *Visualizing Boccaccio: Studies on Illustrations of the Decameron from Giotto to Pasolini* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 1997): 59-89. Ricketts focuses in depth on the panels, presented as a bridal gift to Lucrezia de' Medici, depicting the infernal hunt scene in *Decameron* 5.8, relating the coercion and violence in the novella to the Ovidian version of the myth of Philomela's rape and mutilation by Tereus.

²⁷ When Nastagio first witnesses the dreadful scene, he attempts to intervene in favor of the young woman, but Guido stops him, saying: "lascia fare a' cani e a me quello che questa malvagia femmina ha meritato" (5.8.19). It is important to note that the torture is construed as something the woman has, in a sense, earned, for what she "pensò e operò" in relation to Guido (5.8.26). She is indirectly implicated in Guido's suicide: "per la sua fierezza e crudeltà andò sì la mia sciagura, che io un dì con questo stocco il quale tu mi vedi in mano, come disperato m'uccisi" (5.8.21); additionally, Guido's beloved is punished both "per lo peccato della sua crudeltà e della letizia avuta de' miei tormenti", for she was "lieta oltre misura" at the news of Guido's suicide (5.8.22). It is worth noting that in Capellanus' *De amore*, the woman who rejects her suitor is labeled a murderess: "si me igitur tui amoris spe frustratum dimiseris, me protinus mortem subire compellis, cui tua postea nullatenus poterit prodesse medela, et ita poteris homicida vocari" (Capellanus 92) [If, then, you send me away without the hope of your love, you will drive me to an early death, after which none of your remedies will do any good, and so you will be called a homicide (Parry 67)].

E tanta fu la paura che di questo le nacque, che, acciò che questo a lei non avvenisse, prima tempo non si vide, il quale quella medesima sera prestato le fu, che ella, avendo l'odio in amor tramutato, una sua fida cameriera segretamente a Nastagio mandò, la quale da parte di lei il pregò che gli dovesse *piacere* d'andare a lei, per ciò che ella era presta di far tutto ciò che fosse *piacer* di lui. Alla qual Nastagio fece rispondere che questo gli era a grado molto, ma che, dove le *piacesse*, con onor di lei voleva il suo *piacere*, e questo era sposandola per moglie. La giovane, la qual sapeva che da altrui e che da lei rimaso non era che moglie di Nastagio stata non fosse, gli fece risponder che le *piaceva*. (5.8.41-43, emphasis added)

The emphasis on various forms of the verb 'piacere' contrast with her earlier attitude ("né egli né cosa che gli piacesse le piaceva" [5.8.7]) and reinforces the supposed transformation from hate to love. Additionally, the novella only mentions the lady's parents when she informs them of her decision to marry Nastagio; they accept this decision without any hesitation, in spite of the fact that she is of a station somewhat higher than his. Indeed, her parents' generous acceptance of her freedom to choose her own husband appears to increase her blameworthiness in rejecting Nastagio. Moreover, the fact that Nastagio does not just accept the young lady's offer of sex but wants to marry her indicates that he wants to own her publicly and perpetually (along with her dowry). In fact, having squandered his money in his attempt to win her over, Nastagio is in great need of her dowry, which provides a strong incentive for him to marry her rather than merely enjoying her sexual favors.²⁸

The Dantean intertexts (*Inferno* xiii and *Purgatorio* xiv) have been acknowledged by critics who discuss the novella. Of particular relevance to this discussion of marriage in 5.8 is that, by referring readers to *Purgatorio* xiv, Boccaccio suggests that the marriage of Nastagio and the Traversari lady will be a childless one.²⁹ The second Dantean intertext regards the hunt scene in *Inferno* xiii, where in the wood of the suicides, the squanderers are chased by dogs in a scene similar to that of Guido chasing the young woman whose rejection drove him to his death. Through these intertexts, Nastagio is associated with both the suicides and the squanderers, and the union between Nastagio and the Traversari is implicitly sterile.

²⁸ See Ray Fleming, "Happy Endings? Resisting Women and the Economy of Love in Day Five of Boccaccio's Decameron," *Italica* 70.1 (1993): 30-45, who interestingly, interprets the marriage as a sign of "Nastagio's moral superiority to the woman" (33). In taking into account the marriage within the context of Nastagio's squandering and her dowry, my reading clearly differs from Fleming's.

²⁹ The Traversari and the Anastagi were two of the foremost noble Ghibelline families from Ravenna; "Guido del Duca (in Circle II of Purgatory) mentions them among the ancient worthy families of Romagna and speaks of [the Anastagi] and of the Traversari as being without heirs and consequently on the eve of extinction, *Purg.* xiv. 107-8" (Toynbee 35). I am grateful to Albert Ascoli for bringing this to my attention. It must be noted, furthermore, that Dante associates the Anastagi and the Traversari with courtly love:

la casa Traversara e li Anastagi
(e l'una gente e l'altra è diretata),
le donne e' cavalier, li affanni e li agi
che ne 'nvogliava amore e cortesia
là dove i cuor son fatti sì malvagi. (*Purg.* xiv. 107-11)

In Boccaccio's retelling, then, Nastagio's courtship of the reluctant woman – and the perverse economy associate with courtly love – is juxtaposed not only with squandering and suicide but also with infertility.

In his discussion of the novella, Ray Fleming remarks that “Nastagio’s nameless lady . . . exists as an implied object of exchange. She . . . is not important as a woman or character in the masculine economy that defines her” (33). In addition, he notes:

The seeming *naturalness* of the more subtle forms of coercion is precisely the quality that ordinarily allows that coercion to escape critical attention. The literary notion that violence against the inflexible woman is often not only effective, but, ultimately, precisely what she needs, is a notion endorsed over and over again by much of canonical literature. (Fleming 32)

I would go even further than Fleming, arguing that novella 5.8 exposes the expectation by some lovers that the beloved owes them a sort of debt, in which the lover (usually a man, but a woman in novella 2.8³⁰ and, in modified form, in novella 3.9) expects the beloved to return his love and provide sexual satisfaction in exchange for sexual desire. This expectation is in a sense parallel to the marital debt; its terms are clear: if the beloved does not reciprocate love, she – or less often he – is viewed as uncharitable, pitiless, and cruel. We might call this debt the ‘courtship debt’ or the ‘amorous debt’.³¹ It is a small step from admiration to rape or coercion for those who subscribe to the reasoning behind this amorous debt. Along the same lines, it should be noted that in the *De amore*,³² Capellanus argues that once a woman in a courtship situation has given consent to sex, she owes her lover a sexual debt thereafter:

Ad hoc igitur te volumus penitus edoceri, quod, licet purus amor potius quam mixtus sive communis sit cunctis hominibus eligendus, non tamen uni licet amantium sui coamantis rebellem existere voluntati, nisi forte inter amoris initia concorditer pepigerunt, quo numquam mixto frurentur amore, nisi libera utriusque voluntas et plena concordia postularet. Sed quamvis talis conventio colligavit amantes, ut non licet amatori ultra nisi plena concordia postulare, non tamen recte agit mulier, si sui coamantis in hoc parere voluntati recuset, si ipsum viderit in sua

³⁰ In novella 2.8, the king’s daughter-in-law attempts to persuade the count of Anguerra to gratify her sexual desire (and like Nastagio, conflates rejection with murder), but when he refuses to dishonor his lord, she retaliates with a false accusation of rape (a scenario strongly reminiscent of Potiphar’s wife’s false accusation of rape against Joseph):

E così detto, ad una ora messesi le mani né capelli e rabuffatigli stracciatigli tutti, e appresso nel petto squarciandosi i vestimenti, cominciò a gridar forte:

- Aiuto aiuto, ché ’l conte d’Anguerra mi vuol far forza.

Il conte, veggendo questo e dubitando forte più della invidia cortigiana che della sua coscienza e, temendo per quella non fosse più fede data alla malvagità della donna che alla sua innocenza, levatosi come più tosto poté della camera e del palagio s’uscì e fuggissi a casa sua, dove, senza altro consiglio prendere, pose i suoi figliuoli a cavallo, ed egli montatovi altresì, quanto più poté, n’andò verso Calese. (3.8.22-23)

³¹ Fleming, in contrasting Nastagio to Federigo degli Alberighi in the novella that follows this tale, notes, “the ‘grant’ . . . that Federigo makes to Monna Giovanna . . . is . . . no less than the recognition that true love, as opposed to unbridled passion, entails a responsibility to the beloved, the responsibility to accept her possible rejection of the widely accepted rationale of Dante’s Francesca: “Amor, ch’a nullo amato amar perdona” (38).

³² Mazzotta discusses the novella of Nastagio alongside Capellanus’s work, noting that the “two textual strands are drawn together by Boccaccio to emphasize the violence of desire as well as the contradictoriness of the ethical norms which attempt to structure it” (88). He remarks, additionally, that Capellanus’s work is deeply preoccupied with “probing the interplay between desire and economy” (89), concluding that “the steady concern is to place love outside the scheme of economic values” (90).

persistere voluntate. Singuli namque tenentur amantes in amoris exercendo solatis cunctis inter se mutuis voluntatibus obedire. (Capellanus 312)

[Now, we want you to be fully instructed on this point – that although all men ought to choose a pure love rather than a mixed or common one, still one of the lovers may not oppose the desire of the other unless at the beginning of the attachment they made an agreement that they would never engage in mixed love except by the free will and the full consent of both parties. But even if the lovers have made an agreement that neither may ask for anything more unless both are agreed to it, still it is not right for a woman to refuse to give in to her lover's desire on this point if she sees that he persists in it. For all lovers are bound, when practicing love's solaces, to be mutually obedient to each other's desires. (Parry 167)

Love, Capellanus suggests, is a slippery slope that creates a burden on the beloved to satisfy her lover's requests. Barely camouflaged beneath the surface-level focus on mutual agreement between lovers is the insistence that a woman must give in to her lover's desires even if they are contrary to hers. The smallest gesture on the woman's part is sufficient to create this obligation: "Et firmiter credimus esse tenendum, ut, si mulier alicui spem sui largiatur amoris vel alia sibi amoris primitiva concesserit, et ipse tali non reperiantur indignus amore, magna mulieris iudicatur offensa, si diu sperata denegare contendat" (Capellanus 310) ["We believe we must firmly hold that when a woman has granted any man the hope of her love . . . and she finds him not unworthy of this love, it is very wrong for her to try to deprive him of the love he has so long hoped for" (Parry 167)]. If we read the story of Nastagio and the Traversari woman in juxtaposition with these passages of Capellanus, we can hardly fail to note that the Traversari woman is placed in a double bind by Nastagio's unrelenting courtship. If she refuses him, she is cast as cruel, even a murderess; if she gives him any hope whatsoever, she becomes obligated to fulfill it. Nastagio manages to persuade his beloved that although she has offered him no hope whatsoever, she nevertheless owes him a sexual debt.

The scene of the *caccia infernale* has the power to transform through fear not only the Traversari woman, but the local women as a group: "tutte le ravignane donne paurose ne divennero, che sempre poi troppo più arrendevoli a' piaceri degli uomini furono, che prima state non erano" (5.8.44). Within this fictional story, readers witness the development of a pseudo-Dantean contrappasso, one that suggests not the power to edify, but to debase through fear of eternal punishment. The women of Ravenna succumb to the false logic that their refusal to comply with male desire on demand will have drastic and eternal consequences for them.

There is a call-and-response structure built into novellas 4 and 8 of Day Five, with Filostrato interpellating Filomena in 5.4 and with Filomena's response to Filostrato in 5.8. Together, the two novellas offer a pessimistic reflection on the forces actually underlying marriages that appear to be consensually agreed upon by the bride and groom and their respective families. Filostrato, in choosing the nightingale as a centerpiece in his story of fornication leading to marriage entrapment, as discussed above, makes reference to Filomena, whose name in turn looks back to the Ovidian Philomela, raped by her brother-in-law Tereus, who attempts to prevent her from bearing witness to the crime

by cutting out her tongue.³³ Philomela conveys the story to her sister, Procne, and after the two women take revenge against Tereus, Philomela is transformed into a nightingale. Migiel notes that the two stories Filostrato tells on Day 4 and Day 5 (4.9, the story of Guglielmo Rossiglione, and 5.4, the story of Ricciardo and Caterina) both refer to Filomena:

Finally, as the transposition takes place on classical Latin terrain, the nightingale (*Philomela*) stands for Filomena, the woman of whom Filostrato is presumed to be enamoured. Thus, the ‘nightingale,’ the name assigned to ‘quella cosa che voi tra gli uomini più vi vergognate di nominare’ . . . also masks *that thing which Filostrato is incapable of speaking*. (Migiel, *Rhetoric*, 137)

Filomena does not miss Filostrato’s reference to herself in his story, and her tale of the noble Traversari woman’s entrapment by the less noble and profligate Nastagio, with the brutal details of the terrifying ploy used to ensnare the young noblewoman, constitutes her reply to Filostrato. In her response, Filomena suggests a connection between marriage and rape; by focusing graphically on violence as the basis for the formation of a sexual and marital relationship, she subtly reminds Filostrato of the violence concealed in his story’s use of the nightingale, symbol of Philomela’s rape and transformation. The etymology of Filostrato’s name is not to be ignored in this analysis.³⁴ Filostrato’s name, which in Boccaccio’s spurious etymology means “vanquished by love,” aligns him with Nastagio’s own self-perception as a victim, whereas in fact both Nastagio and, to a lesser extent, Filostrato, are acting as the aggressor in a courtship.

Only one woman in the *Decameron* chooses a husband and marries him against his wishes.³⁵ I am referring, of course, to Giletta (3.9), who is unusual not only in marrying a man who does not want her, but also in her profession, for like her father, she is a talented doctor. When Giletta hears that the king of France, under whose tutelage Beltramo lives, suffers from a fistula, she rejoices at the king’s misfortune, hoping that by healing him, she can obtain Beltramo as her husband. Thus she goes to Paris, seeking an audience with the king, who only shows her his fistula because she is “bella giovane e avvenente” but does not trust her healing abilities (3.9.9). Although the king does not believe that the young woman can possibly heal him where so many male doctors have

³³ While Ray Fleming does not discuss the Ovidian intertext, his observations regarding the woman’s silence in Boccaccio’s novella 5.8 are particularly interesting in juxtaposition with Tereus’ forcible imposition of silence on his victim: “The women in Nastagio’s tale are effectively silenced. His lady speaks (but not directly or in her own voice) *only* at the very end of the story to announce her submission” (35).

³⁴ See Albert R. Ascoli, “Pyrrhus’s Rules: Playing with Power from Boccaccio to Machiavelli,” *MLN* 114 (1999): 20.

³⁵ It must be noted that the final novella in the *Decameron* also alludes to a man marrying reluctantly (though not because he is forced in any way by the woman). Gualtieri, the marchese of Sanluzzo, is pressured by his subjects to marry, although he has no wish to do so (10.10.4-5). He finally responds to them: “Amici miei, voi mi strignete a quello che io del tutto aveva disposto di non far mai” (10.10.6). However, he goes on to insist on the matter of choice of a marriage partner within this coercive context: “Ma poi che pure in *queste catene* vi piace d’annodarmi, e io voglio esser contento; e acciò che io non abbia da dolermi d’altrui che di me . . . io stesso ne voglio essere il trovatore, affermandovi che, cui che io mi tolga, se da voi non fia come donna onorata, voi proverete con grave vostro danno *quanto grave mi sia l’aver contra mia voglia presa moglie* a’ vostri prieghi” (10.10.8, emphasis added). Gualtieri then goes on to choose as his wife the beautiful and virtuous but extremely poor Griselda. It is not by chance that in dramatizing the tension between coerced marriage and the free choice of a marriage partner, the noble Gualtieri also chooses to emphasize social class differences as an important site of the struggle between coercive and consensual models of marriage.

failed him, he nevertheless grants her the chance to try once she offers to be burned if she fails to restore his health. If, on the other hand, she succeeds, the king promises, “noi vi mariteremo bene e altamente” (3.9.15). Giletta presses the king: “veramente mi piace che voi mi maritate, ma io voglio un marito tale quale io vi domanderò, senza dovervi domandare alcun de’ vostri figliuoli o della casa reale” (3.9.16), and the king promises to reward her with the husband of her choice.

Having recovered within a short time thanks to Giletta’s wise ministrations, the king tells her, “voi avete ben *guadagnato* il marito” (3.9.17, emphasis added), and she replies: “Adunque, monsignore, ho io *guadagnato* Beltramo di Rossiglione, il quale infino nella mia puerizia io cominciai ad amare e ho poi sempre sommamete amato” (3.9.18, emphasis added). Interestingly, while Giletta juxtaposes her love for Beltramo with her having ‘earned’ him, the connection here is somewhat more indirect than in the novella of Nastagio, for Giletta earns Beltramo through her work rather than simply through loving him. Bound by his promise, the king informs an indignant Beltramo that he must marry Giletta, although “[g]ran cosa parve . . . dovergliene dare” (3.9.19). Compelled by his debt to Giletta, the king in turn compels Beltramo to marry her. Beltramo expresses his indignation at having become an object of exchange: “voi mi potete torre quanto io tengo, e donarmi, sì come vostro uomo, a chi vi piace; ma di questo vi rendo sicuro che mai io non sarò di tal maritaggio contento” (3.9.24). Beltramo marries Giletta “mal volentieri” (3.9.26) and tells the king he is returning to his lands in order to “consumare il matrimonio” but instead flees to Tuscany and joins the Florentines in the war against Siena (3.9.28). Meanwhile, his bride administers Rossiglione capably and earns the love of his subjects, but laments her husband’s absence. She sends a servant to Florence, stating that if he wants her to leave his domains, she will; Beltramo replies: “Di questo faccia ella il piacer suo; io per me vi tornerò allora ad esser con lei che ella questo anello avrà in dito, e in braccio figliuol di me *acquistato*” (3.9.31, emphasis added). Giletta decides to take up the challenge and, under the pretense of taking a pilgrimage, goes to Florence, where she finds out that Beltramo is in love with the daughter of an impoverished noblewoman. Giletta capitalizes on the woman’s misfortune, just as she has capitalized on the king’s misfortune: “veggio vostra figliuola bella e grande e da marito, e . . . il non aver ben da maritarla ve la fa guardar in casa. Io intendo che, in merito del servizio che mi farete, di darle . . . de’ miei denari quella dote che voi medesima a maritarla onorevolmente stimerete che sia convenevole” (3.9.44).³⁶ She goes on to explain her story to the noblewoman, adding: “Forse mi farà Idio grazia d’ingravidare: e così appresso, avendo il suo anello in dito e il figliuolo in braccio da lui generato, io il *racquisterò*” (3.9.47). Giletta, who earlier orchestrated a transaction in which the king was to reward her with a husband, now sets about regaining her husband by engaging the services of the Florentine noblewoman and her daughter. In both cases, as already noted, Giletta sets up the transactions on the basis of another’s misfortune; additionally, in both transactions, a service provided by a woman or women is to be rewarded with marriage. Giletta, notably, continues to view Beltramo as an object that she can purchase; by extension, she views marriage as a commodity as well: “il *racquisterò* e con lui dimorerò come moglie dee dimorar con marito” (3.9.47).

³⁶ The alliteration of “merito” and “maritarla” echoes the earlier alliteration of “merito”, “marito” and “maritarem” in an earlier exchange between Giletta and the king (3.9.14-15).

In this guise, Giletta secures the ring as a token of Beltramo's love and enjoys frequent couplings with her husband, who in turn rewards the sexual favors he believes he is receiving from the impoverished Florentine girl with "parecchi belle e care gioie" (3.9.49); additionally, before arranging for Beltramo and Giletta to lie together, the Florentine noblewoman "ebbe l'anello, quantunque gravetto paresse al conte" (3.9.49).³⁷ This situation continues until Giletta realizes she is pregnant. Beltramo eventually returns home, having heard of Giletta's departure from Rossiglione. Some time after his return, he is surprised by the arrival of his wife, carrying twin sons who greatly resemble him and wearing his treasured ring on her finger. She reminds him of his promise, and he "pose giù la sua ostinata gravezza e in piè fece levar la contessa, e lei abbracciò e baciò e per sua ligittima moglie riconobbe, e quegli per suoi figliuoli. . . . [E] da quel dì innanzi, lei sempre come sua sposa e moglie onorando, l'amò e sommamente ebbe cara" (3.9.61).

There is no question that, happy ending notwithstanding, this is a story of forced marriage. As a result of the king's promise to Giletta, Beltramo is objectified and turned into a prize. While he reluctantly marries Giletta in recognition of the king's authority over him, it is ultimately his own promise, "io per me vi tornerò allora ad esser con lei che ella questo anello avrà in dito, e in braccio figliuol di me acquistato" (3.9.30) which binds him to accept her and, ostensibly, to love her. The story might leave the reader skeptical, however, for it is hard to imagine love and esteem following on the heels of his earlier contempt, or that Beltramo could really be so pleased that Giletta has construed his remarks on the impossibility of his returning to her as if the terms of impossibility were a set of challenges for her to fulfill. The birth of not one, but two, sons from Giletta's undercover couplings with her husband adds a further layer of implausibility to the story. These elements push the boundaries of suspended disbelief too far, perhaps, for readers to suppose that they are intended to accept the happy ending at face value. The story seems designed precisely to elicit skepticism at the claim that forced marriages can truly end in happiness.

Howard Cole argues that in this novella, "Neifile seems bent upon insuring our approval of Giletta's virtue as well as of her wit and perseverance. The queen is the first narrator not to grant at the outset that her protagonist's goal is sexual, glossing over Giletta's desire as an 'infinito amore e oltre al convenevole della tenera età fervente'" (51). Cole does not acknowledge, however, that even Neifile suggests that there is something immoderate and inappropriate about Giletta's love. Nevertheless, Cole focuses on the representation of Giletta as virtuous and pious:

In attempting to make Giletta more virtuous than the protagonists of simple virtue stories, [Neifile] feels obliged to invest both gaining and regaining with religious sanctions. It is during the story's two critical moments, when Giletta tries to have or hold her unwilling husband, that we hear the most about God and are most likely to recollect the sanctimonious fakery of the preceding stories. (Cole 51)

Additionally, Cole sets Giletta's virtue and morality against the remainder of the tales from the third day:

All stories told on the Third Day conclude happily-ever-after, but usually because the protagonist is rewarded for his cleverness, not his goodness. From a strictly

³⁷ The payment of debts often seems to weigh on those who pay them. As noted above, when the king must give Beltramo to Giletta, it seems like a "[g]ran cosa"; similarly, we learn that Giletta's request "[g]ran cosa parve . . . alla gentil donna" (3.9.48).

moral perspective, in fact, many of the decent characters end up less happily; it is at their expense that the desired was acquired or the lost recovered. By having her protagonist continually speak of and ostensibly gain God's aid, Neifile is the only narrator to attempt a reconciliation of wit and virtue, to celebrate ingenuity and resolution within a moral frame of reference. (Cole 53)

While Cole successfully describes what lies at the surface of the novella, he does not satisfactorily analyze the text to inquire how Neifile's intention might differ from Boccaccio's larger message. A closer reading exposes the tension between Neifile's association of Giletta with virtue and godliness on the one hand, and on the other hand the violence and immorality hidden just under the surface. According to Cole, the story of Alibech and Rustico retroactively transforms the moral valence of the previous stories of Day Three, including that of Giletta:

The unannounced theme of hypocrisy that emerges in the first eight tales is amply illustrated in the 'dissoluto' Rustico. But Alibech is no hypocrite. Being 'semplicissima,' she cannot recognize, much less confess, her 'fanciullesco appetito,' and we leave her to glorify God as sincerely in Neerbale's bed as she ever did in Rustico's. In her honest confusion of sexual and divine service, Alibech seems to point back to Giletta, a heroine equally sincere though not quite so obviously misguided. Certainly it is no coincidence that the Third Day ends with a pair of heroines who gain and regain sexual ends while their narrators stress their innocence. (Cole 55)

This begs the question, unanswered by Cole, of whether Giletta is indeed innocent, or, for that matter, sincere. In order to answer this question, we must take into account that she deliberately – and through trickery – attempts to gain and then regain as her husband, both in name and in deed, a man who explicitly declares that he does not wish to have her as his wife, and manages to do so by capitalizing on the misfortune of others.

One of the most famous characters of the *Decameron*, Cimone (5.1), like Nastagio and Giletta, is in the unenviable position of wishing to marry somebody who does not reciprocate this desire. Cimone, uncouth beyond measure, falls in love with the beautiful Efigenia while she sleeps and then undergoes a sort of amorous conversion, becoming educated and well-mannered. However, when he asks her hand in marriage, her father, Cipseo, denies Cimone's request, because Efigenia is already betrothed to Pasimunda. Efigenia does not seem involved in the choice of Pasimunda, but does appear to accept the choice her father has made on her behalf; Efigenia seems both willing to do her father's bidding and unwilling to give in to Cimone. She responds with distress and anguish when Cimone attempts to thwart her impending transfer to Pasimunda's control, demonstrating that she does not consent to being abducted by Cimone.

The story of Cimone and Efigenia has garnered much critical attention. Erich Auerbach remarks in *Mimesis*, for example: "Thus, the story of Cimone (5.1) – which, like the earlier *Ameto*, has education through love as its central theme – clearly shows that it has descended from the courtly epic. The doctrine that love is the mother of all virtues and of everything noble in man . . . is a heritage from courtly culture and the *stil nuovo*" (226). Auerbach further argues that in the novella of Cimone "Boccaccio expresses his attitude most clearly", providing a "reflection of the magic of courtly love" (226). Similarly, in "Boccaccio and the Boundaries of Love," Louise George Clubb perhaps misses the point when she states, "[t]he doctrine of the 'cor gentil' is acceptable,

indeed attractive to [Boccaccio], a bourgeois Florentine enamoured of a Neapolitan aristocrat, and his tale of Cimone endorses both the affinity of Amor with the ‘gentle heart,’ and the refining power of love” (190), because she does not acknowledge the violence that is inextricably linked with stilnovist love in novella 5.1. As Millicent Marcus acknowledges, Clubb is not alone in consigning Cimone’s violence to oblivion:

Critics, unable to ignore the second half of the tale either dismiss it as “un’appendice avventurosa” – a narrative afterthought with no real bearing on the doctrinal themes of the first part, or as proof that love knows no laws other than its own and will not be bound by social or legal restraints. Any nervousness the reader might experience with respect to this second interpretation, or any reluctance to embrace the happy ending predicated on such themes, is attributed to the limitations of our modern perspective. According to this criticism, our twentieth-century squeamishness prevents us from accepting the comic resolution effectuated by wholesale and gratuitous violence and hence from reading the second half of the story with due seriousness. Such a defense of Boccaccio really turns out to be a back-handed insult to him: by casting the blame for reader discomfort on the readers themselves, the critic is implying that Boccaccio is not the master of his rhetorical effects – an implication which Wayne Booth, among others, has soundly disproved. (Marcus 1980: 5)

While Cimone remains unpunished and is eventually able to return home and reintegrate himself peacefully into his community, his violence and Efigenia’s bitter tears and resistance at the time of the abduction trouble the purportedly happy ending of the story. Indeed, as Marcus reflects, the discrepancy between Cimone’s amorous conversion on the one hand and the violence he commits to obtain possession of Efigenia on the other hand makes the violence more shocking and disturbing for the reader. Rather than being edified by the sight of a lovely woman, Cimone is transformed from being harmlessly uncouth to being dangerously violent.

Additionally, it is important to note that Cimone does not act alone when he manages to kidnap Efigenia. After kidnapping Efigenia while she is on the ship bearing her to Rhodes, where Pasimunda is waiting, Cimone is captured and imprisoned. There, he is approached by Lisimaco, the magistrate of Rhodes, who is in love with Cassandra, betrothed to Pasimunda’s brother Ormisda. The brothers are planning a joint wedding, and Lisimaco, having heard of Cimone’s bold kidnapping attempt, proposed a joint kidnapping, which takes place during the wedding feast, where the grooms are murdered violently and the weeping brides are carried off:

Le novelle spose cominciarono a piagnere e a gridare, e il simigliante l’altre donne e i servidori, e subitamente fu ogni cosa di romore e di pianto ripieno. Ma Cimone e Lisimaco e’ lor compagni, tirate le spade fuori, senza alcun contasto, data loro da tutti la via, verso le scale se ne vennero; e quelle scendendo, occorse lor Pasimunda, il quale con un gran bastone in mano al romor traeva, cui animosamente Cimone sopra la testa ferì e ricisegliele ben mezza e morto sel fece cadere a’ piedi. All’ aiuto del quale correndo il misero Ormisda, similmente da un de’ colpi di Cimone fu ucciso, e alcuni altri che appressar si vollero da’ compagni di Lisimaco e di Cimone fediti e ributtati indietro furono. Essi, lasciata piena la casa di sangue, di romore e di pianto e di tristizia, senza alcuno impedimento stretti insieme con la loro rapina alla nave pervennero: sopra la quale messe le

donne e saliti essi . . . essendo già il lito pieno di gente armata che alla riscossa delle donne venia, dato de' remi in acqua lieti andaron pe' fatti loro. (5.1.66-69)

This passage highlights the bloodshed that occurs at the original wedding feast. Cimone and Lisimaco are “lieti” while the women, weeping and screaming, turn into their “rapina”. This scene hardly conveys the image of consensual courtship. Things do not improve with the weddings that follow: “E pervenuti in Creti, quivi da molti e amici e parenti lietamente ricevuti furono: e sposate le donne e fatta la festa grande, lieti della loro rapina goderono” (5.1.70). The weddings are quite one-sided: the men actively marry their “rapina” and enjoy it.³⁸ This is similar to the ending of novella 5.8 in which “E la domenica seguente Nastagio sposatala e fatte le sue nozze, con lei più tempo lietamente visse” (5.8.44). The theme of marriage as an action undertaken by only one spouse, the spouse who desires it, and of the happiness enjoyed by this one spouse highlights the complete lack of reciprocity.

This lack of reciprocity can also be seen in Cimone’s idea that his own desire legitimates the relationship, while Cipseo’s idea of marriage is based on promise by father to future husband. Cimone contrasts these two models: “Nobile donna, non ti sconfortare; io sono il tuo Cimone, il quale per lungo amore t’ho molto meglio meritata d’averne, che Pasimunda per promessa fede” (5.1.33). Both models presuppose exchange of women (and their transportation, legitimate or illegitimate, on ships, symbolizes this exchange) with no reference to female will or consent. Cimone notably uses economic language to articulate his sense of entitlement to possess Efigenia: “Quel che mi mosse è a me grandissima cosa a avere *acquistata* e a voi è assai leggiera a concederlami con pace: e ciò è Efigenia, da me sopra ogni altra cosa amata, la quale non potendo io avere dal padre di lei . . . da voi . . . m’ha costretto amore a *acquistarla*” (5.1.31, emphasis added). Additionally, once Cimone succeeds in abducting Efigenia the first time, “più che ogni altro uomo contento dell’*acquisto di così cara preda* . . . diliberò co’ suoi compagni non essere da tornare in Cipri” (5.1.35, emphasis added). Efigenia is conceived both as an “acquisto” – which suggests that she is an object that can be purchased – and as a “preda” – which suggests that she is simply booty.

Additionally, we should note in the names of Efigenia and Cassandra a reference to the classical Greek tragic characters Iphigenia and Cassandra, suggesting that readers ought to read this novella through that particular lens. While critics tend to read the ending as happy, the tragic events of the story and the tragic intertexts cast doubt on this reading. The counterfeit happy ending only serves to emphasize the contrast between consent and coercion. The lack of consent by the women, in addition to the violence, tears, and bloodshed, cast doubt on the happy ending.

Given the difficulty in reconciling the idea presented in the first part of 5.1 – that love edifies men and leads them closer to divinity and perfection through the beloved – with the second, violent, half of the novella, it might be worth taking into consideration the words of Guido Guinizzelli:

Passa per via adorna e sì gentile
Ch’abbassa orgoglio a cui dona salute,
E fa ’l de nostra fé se non la crede;

³⁸ In her analysis of this novella, Roberta Morosini also notes the bloodshed and violence which serve as a prelude to the nuptials and remarks on this passage in which the women are clearly reduced to the status of “bottino” (15).

E no' lle pò appressare om che sia vile;
Ancor ve dirò ch'ha maggior vertute:
Null'om pò mal pensar fin che la vede.

Not only does the sight of the lovely Efigenia not lower Cimone's pride, but it leads him to outrageous levels of hubris; not only does her sight not stop him from thinking evil thoughts, but it leads him to commit a number of evil and violent acts. The two disparate parts of the novella – the first on love and courtliness but not on marriage; the second on violence and marriage but not love – call attention to Cimone's use of violence as a tool in satisfying his desires. In this story, love and marriage are connected to each other only by Cimone's violence. His love for Efigenia, far from exalting him, leads him to disregard her wishes by taking her violently against her will and that of others. Cimone is an extreme example of the pitfalls inherent in the discourse of courtly and stilnovist love. Boccaccio seems to mock the idea that earthly love can purify and exalt men (not just here in 5.1, but in 2.7 as well, as will be seen shortly), because the attendant feelings of desire provide at least an impulse for disordered behavior, such as fornication, rape, and abduction. To continue our comparison between the novella and Guinizzelli's poem, Cimone is a man of base mind who draws near the beautiful woman, and his temporary conversion only adds to his brutish ways: the more he takes on the ways of noble lovers, the more he feels entitled to possess his beloved, if not with her consent, then by force. Cimone's desire and his devotion to the code of courtly and stilnovist ideals of love propel him to adopt the reasoning of the amorous debt mentioned above. His desires can only be satisfied by violence. Other tales, such as the story of Alatiel, are also revealing of this disturbing trail of violence and betrayal. Transported as merchandise in ships, the women in the next section travel around the Mediterranean with varying degrees of objectification and agency.

Abduction Narratives

In his most influential study, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Ferdinand Braudel observed: "The whole Mediterranean consists of movement in space. Anything entering it . . . may be caught up in the flow of its life blood, ferried over great distances, washed ashore to be taken up again and passed on endlessly" (Vol 1: 277). Perhaps this seemingly endless process of movement and passing on of 'merchandise' is best exemplified by novella 2.7, the story of Alatiel and her many sexual adventures with men who do not share a common language with her. Here, as seen in the tale of Cimone, female beauty incites desire, and desire can incite violence, often in the form of abduction.³⁹ Mazzacurati devotes a chapter to this novella in his *All'ombra di Dioneo*, reflecting not only on the surface-level playfulness but on the underlying violence as well, and exploring the novella's connection with the mercantile world. He notes that "l'oggetto Alatiel è collocato come merce di scambio su di una

³⁹ According to Georges Duby, under feudal law, an unbetrothed abducted woman could be betrothed and married off to the abductor with her father's consent and a small penalty: "marriage was a matter of free choice – not of the bride and groom, but of the bride's relations" (38). Abduction, though, could be used to manipulate – "by husbands to get rid of wives, by brothers to deprive a sister of her inheritance, and by fathers to avoid the . . . expense of a wedding" in addition to those cases in which the abduction was motivated by "desire to possess" (39).

nave” (49). Additionally, he remarks that “Boccaccio poteva . . . inveire contro la volgarità dei mercanti che trattano Alatiel come merce e come oro, proprio rivolgendosi alla classe che sull’accumulo ‘mercantile’ di merce e d’oro fondava istanze egemoniche” (71, n. 20). In fact, the novella’s theme implies a criticism not only of a mercantilistic thirst for possessions but of the mercantilization and objectification of women.⁴⁰

A trail of violence follows Alatiel as she passes from man to man along a journey of almost Odyssean proportions.⁴¹ Alatiel’s father, the Sultan of Babylon, gives her in marriage to the king of Garbo as a reward for his help in a war. The sultan sends Alatiel off on a ship that is supposed to carry her to her destination. After a shipwreck off the coast of Maiolica, the sailors die, and Pericone, a local lord, finds Alatiel, along with some of her surviving female servants; he brings the ladies and the most precious goods salvaged from the ship to his home. When he sees Alatiel’s beauty and noble demeanor, “subitamente seco diliberò, se ella marito non avesse, di volerla per moglie, e se per moglie avere non la potesse, di volere avere la sua amistà” (2.7.21).

Interestingly, there is an emphasis on Pericone’s will (“diliberò . . . di volerla”) in a novella which suggests that female beauty renders men incapable of self-control. This simultaneous conflation and distinction between deliberation and desire (already seen in the reading of novella 4.1) points out a set of problems that recur in many of these narratives: what causes love? What are the beloved’s obligations towards the lover? To what extent is the lover capable of emotional and behavioral self restraint? If the beauty of the beloved is seen as the cause of love, then the lover is likely to feel ensnared by the beloved and might attempt to ensnare her in return. If the lover believes that the beloved’s bewitching beauty drives him out of his senses, then he rationalizes that he is not responsible for his actions; indeed, perhaps she is perceived as culpable for the violence inflicted against her. However, on an extradiagetic level, the narrative questions this logic, suggesting that the lover’s capitulation into love’s bondage and his resulting behavior has its roots in a deliberate choice.⁴² This predisposes the audience to adopt a skeptical attitude towards the men who resort to violence and treachery in order to usurp the place of Alatiel’s sexual partner.⁴³ As Pericone grows more and more desperate in his

⁴⁰ Marcus, along the same lines of Mazzacurati, notes that Alatiel “is a mercantile commodity, transferred from port to port and literally consumed by various possessors” (Marcus 1979: 40).

⁴¹ As Marcus observes, in fact, “Alatiel’s odyssey has not only sexual and political, but also economic implications, for her itinerary approximates the medieval trade routes of the Mediterranean world” (Marcus 1979: 39).

⁴² We are familiar with the literary representation of love as a madness that diminishes responsibility for the lover’s actions. This view, so harshly criticized by Boccaccio, is not present merely in literature, but is documented in law as well. Guido Ruggiero notes that starting in the mid-fifteenth century (about a century after Boccaccio wrote the *Decameron*), this very same logic gained favor in the Venetian courts: “Love, rather mad passion in the eyes of the age, made fornication and adultery . . . somewhat different crimes is language and in fact. . . . The shift from active to passive mood, the absence of transcendent ordering principles, and the madness of love itself . . . all contributed to a more relaxed attitude toward those who committed crimes in love’s bondage” (23) because “[r]easoned crimes were seen as more dangerous [than] crimes based on emotions” (33). While the concept of love as an overwhelming force that strips an individual of his or her agency is quite foreign to the western world today, it is also true that in many countries, murders that are premeditated and carried out “in cold blood” are typically associated with stiffer penalties than those that are not.

⁴³ Novella 2.7 is not the only place in which Boccaccio suggests that the lover is complicit in love-madness and retains agency and responsibility. In *De mulieribus claris*, he intones: “O quam dulcis, quam suavis hic amor! Quem cum horrere ac fugere debeamus, in deum extollimus, illum colimus, illum supplices oramus

quest to fulfill his desire, he decides to stop at nothing: “veggendo che le sue lusinghe non gli valevano, dispose lo ’ngegno e l’arti riserbandosi alla fine le forze” (2.7.25). Clearly, Pericone views himself as entitled to enjoy Alatiel’s sexual favors, with or without her consent, even by deceit or by force.

Alatiel begins her adventure with a strong resolve, which weakens quite quickly and then seems to vanish altogether. When she perceives that Pericone desires her, she reflects that “a lungo andare o per forza o per amore le converrebbe venire a dovere i piaceri di Perdicon fare” (2.7.23); she then incites her three surviving servants to preserve their chastity, “affermando sé avere seco proposto che mai di lei se non il suo marito goderebbe” (2.7.24). However, Pericone succeeds in getting her drunk and in this state, Alatiel becomes completely uninhibited and climbs naked into Pericone’s bed. There, Pericone “le si coricò allato e, in braccio recatalasi senza alcuna contraddizione di lei, con lei cominciò amorosamente a sollazzarsi” (2.7.30). At this point, Alatiel undergoes a conversion away from her earlier moral frame of reference: “quasi pentuta del non avere alle lusinghe di Pericone assentito, senza attendere d’essere a così dolci notti invitata, spesse volte se stessa invitava non con le parole . . . ma co’ fatti” (233). Over the next two years, Alatiel is violently abducted and passes from man to man, her beauty inspiring a chain of murders. Alatiel travels around the Mediterranean with captor after captor. Her status as merchandise is highlighted by the text; for example, after Pericone’s brother Marato murders Pericone and takes her, along with “gran parte delle più preziose cose di Pericone” off with him (2.7.35), the two owners of the ship engaged by Marato to transport them fall in love with Alatiel and “convennersi di fare *l’acquisto* di questo amor comune, quasi amore così questo dovesse patire come la mercantia o i guadagni fanno” (2.7.39). After a long succession of similar mishaps, Alatiel eventually meets Antioco, who had served her father in Alexandria, and he helps her return to her father, who believes she is still a virgin, and as a virgin she marries the king of Garbo.

Whereas in novella 2.7 of the *Decameron* it is the sight of the beautiful Alatiel, completely unaccompanied by verbal communication, that causes men to fall in love her and desire to possess her sexually at any cost, in novella 4.4 it is reputation alone that causes love, and written correspondence to nourish it and lead to a promise of marriage, which the lovers try to bring to fruition by means of consensual abduction. Gerbino, grandson of William II of Sicily, and Gostanza, the daughter of the king of Tunis, plot together for him to attempt to abduct her while she is being transported to Granada, where the husband chosen for her by her father is waiting.⁴⁴ The abduction goes horribly wrong, however, because the sailors in charge of the princess kill her in order to prevent her from ending up in the hands of any man other than that chosen for her by her father – a move which should recall Virginius’ killing of Virginia to spare her from rape, with the notable difference that the princess desires to marry and have sex with Gerbino consensually.⁴⁵ Later, Gerbino’s own grandfather orders his death by beheading. This

et sacrum ex suspiriis lacrimisque conficimus, supra adulteria incestque offerimus et obscenitatum nostrarum coronas immictimus!” [How sweet, how delicious is this Love! Although we should flee from him in horror, we elevate him to the status of a god, honor him, pray to him as suppliants, and sacrifice to him with our tears and sighs. We offer him rape, adultery and incest, and on him we place the crown of our own lewdness] (23.17, p. 97).

⁴⁴ Roberta Morosini discusses this novella in comparison to 5.2, another novella in the *Decameron* whose protagonist, Gostanza da Lipari, travels by sea, but with far happier results (12-13).

⁴⁵ For the story of Virginia, see Livy III.44-48 and Boccaccio’s *De mulieribus claris* LVIII.

novella emphasizes the difference between marriage initiated by the couple and by the family. By rebelling against her father's choice of a mate for her, Gostanza represents an interesting contrast to Efigenia. While in 5.1 Efigenia continues to submit to her father's authority and accepts Pasimunda, the princess is not content to allow her father to determine her future on her behalf; her interactions with Gerbino demonstrate her desire to play a greater part in shaping her own destiny, or at least in the choice of a husband.⁴⁶

The examples above highlight the contrast between consensual (4.4) and non-consensual abduction (5.1). Disrupting the polarity implied by this contrast, in novella 2.10, Dioneo suggests that non-consensual abduction can at some point develop into a consensual relationship as result of consent – albeit *post facto* consent – by the abductee.⁴⁷ Bartolomea, we find out at the beginning of the novella, has been given over as wife to an old man who is unable to satisfy her sexual appetite. Paganino the pirate attacks the ship carrying Bartolomea while she and her husband are taking a trip, carries Bartolomea off, and takes her as his concubine. Finding her captor's sexual prowess to her liking, she enjoys the consequences of her abduction and consents, based on her post-facto sexual enjoyment, to the relationship. When her husband tracks her down and tries to 'rescue' her from her captor and take her back as his legitimate wife, she objects wholeheartedly, threatening to accuse her husband of rape if he makes any further attempt to take her back. He leaves and dies soon after. Thereupon, Bartolomea and Paganino decide to marry.

This novella represents two contrasting worldviews on marriage: one in which women are objects of exchange among men, and the other is the view of marriage – or cohabitation culminating in marriage – as founded on the couple's consent. Even though this novella emphasizes the role of sexual enjoyment in marriage to the point of humorous exaggeration, there is a serious note in the sharp contrast Bartolomea draws between her marriage to Riccardo and her relationship with Paganino: she describes her

⁴⁶ Morosini argues that the novella is perhaps more about youthful whims than about real love:

Perché Boccaccio fa finire tragicamente la storia di Gostanza di Tunisi con la sua violenta morte? Per la Gostanza saracena il Mediterraneo è semplicemente un mare che porta l'eco di una speranza di felicità di amore lontano e sconosciuto e che per questo diventerà anche la sua tomba. Ha osato affrontare quelle acque senza timore e senza amore, per puro capriccio. Per lei che si è innamorata per fama del siciliano Gerbino, il Mediterraneo che la separa da lui non esiste. Tutto, anche l'amore, è un gioco. Il motivo dell'innamoramento da lontano, l'*amor de lonh* di Jaufré Rudel, è stato desemantizzato e ha perso, dunque, la sua poesia: l'innamorata è un po' troppo "crucciosa" (IV, 4, 10) e gioca con l'amore. Quando viene a sapere di dover partire per Granada per sposare il re, manda un messaggero ad informare Gerbino del suo viaggio e imporgli con un ricatto, non per amore, di salvarla: "se così fosse valente uomo come si diceva e se cotanto l'amasse quanto più volte significato l'avea" (IV, 4, 15). Gerbino, dal canto suo, interviene, ma "solo per non parer vile" (IV,4,15). (12)

⁴⁷ In discussing this story within the context of Day Two, ("chi, da diverse cose infestato, sia, oltre alla sua speranza, riuscito a lieto fine"), Howard Cole notes:

Dioneo's specious application is not the only element conspicuously at odds with the queen's solemn instruction; the story he is suddenly reminded of mocks the very topic she has proposed. . . . Dioneo voluntarily subjects himself to the topic with the following results: the "chi infestato" is Bartolomea, one of Pisa's handsomest girls and the unwilling bride of an aged judge; the "diverse cose" that torment her are single – and obvious; the "lieto fine" so "oltre alla sua speranza" is her most fortunate kidnapping . . . by Paganino, who frees her from the judge's perpetual fast-days and Lenten vigils. ("Dramatic Interplay in the *Decameron*: Boccaccio, Neifile, and Giletta di Nerbona, *MLN* 90 [1] [1975]: 44-45)

marriage to Riccardo as resulting from her parents' lack of concern for her honor and happiness, while she describes her relationship with Paganino as both consensual and fulfilling.

Bartolomea is not alone in her perception of the importance of mutual consent. When Riccardo comes to retrieve her from Paganino, he attempts to negotiate an agreement with the pirate regarding Bartolomea's placement. Moreover, by offering Paganino a ransom in exchange for returning his wife, Riccardo reveals the attitude that women are not only objects of exchange among men but that they have a monetary value (2.10.17-18). Paganino, who clearly has a different set of views on marriage, responds by proposing that instead of discussing Bartolomea's fate between themselves and without reference to her wishes, they should consult her directly and allow her to choose between returning to Riccardo or remaining with Paganino. Whereas Riccardo views Bartolomea as an object of exchange among men, Paganino brings Bartolomea's views and wishes to the forefront. The two men then summon Bartolomea and Riccardo asks her, in the presence of Paganino, to return to him. When she refuses, Riccardo protests that she is only speaking in this manner because she is afraid to speak her mind in Paganino's presence. This is interesting because, for the first time, Riccardo acknowledges his awareness of the potential for a woman to feel coerced and to capitulate to the desires of others in the face of fear and pressure. Riccardo therefore asks Paganino to grant him the right to interview Bartolomea alone. Paganino agrees to this on condition that Riccardo promise that he will not attempt to kiss Bartolomea against her will, once again expressing concern for her consent.

Additionally, once Riccardo is in the presence of his estranged wife, he appeals to Bartolomea not only on the basis of morality but also using affectionate expressions towards her, which she vehemently rejects and clearly does not reciprocate. Indeed, she assures Riccardo, if he will not stop pressuring her, she will scream and accuse him of attempting to rape her; this threat highlights her intention of not returning to an unsatisfactory life based on an agreement to which she never consented.

Interestingly, both of Bartolomea's relationships with men begin with some form of force: her marriage to Riccardo is imposed on her by negotiations between her parents and Riccardo; Paganino abducts her forcibly from a fishing boat in the sea and takes her to Monaco. While the second relationship is initiated by a more dramatic act of non-consent (forcible abduction followed by rape), it is clear that Bartolomea, though initially violated by Paganino, develops a consensual relationship with him, which she contrasts to her marriage to Riccardo, to which she never gave and will never give her consent.⁴⁸ Bartolomea's first marriage bears the outward marks of legitimacy but is irremediably flawed by Bartolomea's lack of consent before, during, and after the marriage; her non-consent suggests that their marriage is an imitation of rape, and a sexless one at that.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Bartolomea would not find herself alone in chiding her parents for forcing her into a marriage against her will. In an effort to admonish against coerced marriages, "Urban II [made] an awkward attempt to impute the sins flowing from a coerced marriage to the account of those who coerced" (Noonan 433). Readers familiar with canon law would likely be engaged by Boccaccio's evocation of the debate on coerced marriage.

⁴⁹ Bartolomea is portrayed as having two objections to her first marriage: first, it was contracted without her approval, and second, her husband observes a great number of feast days in order to cover up his impotence. Bartolomea's consent to her relationship with Paganino is associated with Paganino's sexual prowess, implying that sexual enjoyment is fundamental to Bartolomea's happiness in a relationship. As

Conversely, while Bartolomea's relationship with Paganino bears the outward appearance of *raptus*, the consent and affection between them suggests that this outwardly illegitimate relationship emulates marriage; their marriage after Riccardo's death is a further indication of the marital affection between Paganino and Bartolomea.

Readers might well wonder why, with all of the potential threats at her disposal, Bartolomea chooses to threaten Riccardo with an accusation of rape. This particular threat is strategically significant: Bartolomea simultaneously underscores her lack of consent to the marriage and Riccardo's impotence. A coerced marriage has the potential to be rape-like; yet in the case of Riccardo and Bartolomea, given the husband's impotence, this possibility does not come to fruition. Rather, readers are faced with the realization that within her relationship with Riccardo, Bartolomea never consented to marriage but would have wanted to have sex with her husband, as she laments his preposterous observance of holy days. Ultimately, Bartolomea's speech act functions as both threat and insult: the very prospect of a rape accusation against Riccardo is a stinging reminder of his inability to perform sexually.

The narratives cited above involve abduction and/or attempted abduction of a woman by a man who attacks the ship that is carrying her from one destination to another. Why do so many of the stories of abduction, regardless of whether or not there is complicity between the abductor and abductee, occur in this way?⁵⁰ The abduction of women from ships while they are being transported from one place to another highlights the status of women as merchandise and as objects of exchange among men. As in the case of the novella of Giletta (3.9), whose objectification of Beltramo stuns the careful reader into reflecting on the nature of happy marriage, these novellas seem designed to encourage the audience to engage with the distinction between consent and coercion to sex and marriage.

In the novella of Paganino and Bartolomea, female consent to marriage is lightheartedly juxtaposed with female enjoyment of sex, but it raises a more serious question: where do we draw the line between marriage and abduction? In other words, Boccaccio is inviting readers to consider whether the handing over of a woman to a husband with her parents' consent, but without her own can be understood as a 'marriage'. Bartolomea points out the effect of this coercion on her: "dicovi così, che qui mi pare esser moglie di Paganino, e a Pisa mi pareva esser vostra bagascia" (2.10.38). Thus she suggests that forced marriages are not marriages at all, but something illicit and sinful; by contrast, she challenges the definition of her adulterous relationship with Paganino as sinful by insinuating that it resembles true marriage more closely than her

Nancy Virtue has shown, this novella, in addition to going along with stereotypes about women's insatiable sexual appetite, also questions the distinction between abduction and consensual marriage: "the real abduction, in [Bartolomea's] mind, took place when she was married off by her father to a dispassionate . . . and nearly impotent man" (1993: 110); Virtue concludes: "By . . . making an abductor out of a husband and vice versa, Dioneo (or Boccaccio) transforms a story of abduction into a defense and celebration of female sexual and personal freedom" (1993: 113). It is not clear to me that this novella functions as such a celebration, but it is certainly clear that the novella is making a statement on the complicated relationship between consent and coercion.

⁵⁰ Perhaps the only other narrative in the *Decameron* which involves a man who considers abducting a woman is 10.6, in which King Charles plans to take the twin daughters of Messer Neri from his home in order to enjoy them sexually, and in this story, the king changes his mind in response to the edifying advice of his vassal, Count Guido.

relationship with Riccardo. This suggestion may seem preposterous, but it draws attention to the importance of affection, sex, love, and choice in the selection of a partner. Of Bartolomea's two marriages, the second, which she consents to of her own free will, is more closely aligned with the vision of marriage proposed by canon law.

Further, Bartolomea insists that by forcing her to marry Riccardo against her will, her parents have dishonored her: "Del mio onore non intendo io che persona, ora che non si può, sia più di me tenera; fossonne stati i parenti miei quando mi diedero a voi! li quali se non furono allora del mio, io non intendo d'essere al presente del loro" (2.10.37). Parents who force their daughters into unwanted marriages, she argues, are pandering them; forced marriages, consequently, appear to lack the sacramental quality enjoyed by their consensual counterparts. As Mazzotta notes in *The World at Play in Boccaccio's Decameron*, Riccardo is a comical figure embodying excessively punctilious attention to legalistic conventions. I would go even further, arguing that the thematization of legalistic conventions in the novella points to the blatant violation of canon law on marriage that takes place when Bartolomea is married off to Riccardo against her will.

Conclusions

These stories as a group present a complex interplay between love and marriage, which do not coincide perfectly but which do not exclude each other either, but sometimes appear together and sometimes appear alone. Furthermore, the contrast between forced marriages on the one hand and consensual marriages on the other serves to bring particular attention to the role of consent. Coercion is associated with violence and greed. From the point of view of characters such as Lisabetta's brothers, Messer Lizio, and Nastagio, marriage itself functions at least partly in economic and/or pragmatic terms: Lisabetta's brothers, in their parsimony, seem guided by their reluctance to invest in a dowry for their sister. For Messer Lizio, instead, marriage represents the opportunity to climb socially by forging an alliance with a wealthier family – it is perhaps no accident that the novella, which mentions a hasty clandestine marriage contracted under duress with only the two lovers and Caterina's parents present and a second ceremony with families and friends on both sides present (5.4.49), does not mention a dowry.

For Nastagio degli Onesti (5.8), marriage to the noble Traversari woman – and consequently the acquisition of her dowry – represents a solution to his earlier squandering. The concept of an amorous debt owed by the beloved to the lover is raised in this novella, which emphasizes the violence implicit in such a conception of courtship. The marriage which follows, moreover, conflates possession of the desired woman and of her material goods. The desired woman herself is conceived as a material good in novella 5.1, wherein Efigenia and Cassandra are defined as "preda" and 2,7, wherein Alatiel's lovers negotiate for Alatiel's love in terms of an "acquisto" which functions according to the rules of "la mercantia o i guadagni" (2.7.39). However, it would be a mistake to suggest that only men in the *Decameron* view the object of their desire in such terms; the most striking example of a woman who follows the logic of the amorous debt is Giletta in novella 3.9, where the verbs "acquistare" and "guadagnare" emphasize her objectification of her beloved and reduce her marriage to an economic transaction.

A theme that recurs throughout several of Boccaccio's novellas of secret courtship and secret marriage is the authority of the family sometimes in contrast with,

and sometimes in concert with the secular courts. As discussed above, in novella 4.6 we met a *podestà* who takes advantage of Andreuola's precarious situation, while her father remains unaware of the marriage she and Gabriotto have secretly contracted. In novella 4.1, Tancredi is both father and prince, and as such presumably exerts a double authority over his household and subjects; however, his tyrannical behavior leads to tragedy when, in a fit of jealous rage, he decides to have his daughter's lover murdered. In novella 5.7, moreover, Messer Amerigo, thirsty for revenge against Violante and Pietro, plots both their deaths: he decides to have his daughter unceremoniously killed within his own home, delegating the task to a servant, without any reference to the law. Pietro, by contrast, he hands over to secular justice for public execution. Conspicuously absent in both cases is any recourse by either parents or offspring to ecclesiastical courts. This would of course call Boccaccio's contemporaries to reflect on the particular problematics of the secular-ecclesiastical struggle for jurisdiction over marriage and on the very differing understandings of marriage in each realm: canon law's consensual model and secular law's emphasis on family control and social order.

The juxtaposition of economic and mercantile concerns with the formation of marital and sexual relationships further highlights the contrast between secular and ecclesiastical models of marriage. Economic and mercantilistic themes run through this entire chapter, and words such as 'acquistare' and 'guadagnare' are part of the lexicon of courtship and marriage formation. In relationships and marriages desired mutually by both members of the couple, socioeconomic discrepancies were often an obstacle to the couple's free choice. In cases where one party desires a relationship or marriage in spite of the other party's objection, the economy of desire implicit in the amorous debt suggests that love and desire can be perceived as commodities, at the expense of the will of the beloved object. The transportation of women as merchandise in licit exchanges that culminate in marriage, or in illicit exchanges involving abduction, also highlights these themes.

Chapter Three

“Si viene ai lacci, al ferro ed ai veleni”: Clandestine Marriage in Bandello’s *Novelle*

As noted in the previous chapter, Boccaccio associates clandestine relationships and clandestine marriage with intra-family and inter-family conflict, often revolving around the issue of class difference in selection of a partner. As will be seen, furthermore, the conflict between church and family interests is no less prominent in Bandello than in Boccaccio; indeed, family and social prohibitions are seen as both a cause and an effect of clandestine marriage. In this chapter, I argue that in Bandello in particular clandestine marriage is inextricably linked to coercion and violence, ranging from the most subtle threats to the most outrageous acts of murder. Bandello’s narratives additionally reveal a multiplicity of legal and social problems arising from the practice: for example, clandestine marriages when disputed were difficult to prove and could thus be followed by bigamy; they sometimes elicited violent reactions from disapproving family members or even disavowed spouses. By pointing out the abuse of clandestine marriage by couples and the difficulties involved when families and legal systems fail to honor the sacramentality and mutual consent that were supposed to lie at the heart of marriage, Bandello opens up a dialogue on the problems of marriage and consent.

Bandello’s collection abounds with cases of clandestine marriage resulting from families’ restriction of free choice. The violence and coercion pervading the plots engage with the canon law definition of marriage as a sacrament taken freely by the uncoerced mutual consent of the spouses. The exigency for clandestine marriage, therefore, points to pre-existing coercion and the many measures, subtle and not so subtle, taken to enforce it; when efforts at family or social coercion fail and the couple marries anyway, clandestine marriage in turn can lead to more violence. For example, as we shall see, the violence encountered by the duchess of Malfi, her majordomo, and their children in novella 1.26 is not merely a *result* of the clandestine marriage; rather, the potential for violence leads to the secrecy surrounding the marriage in the first place. In this novella, clandestine marriage occurs because of anticipated family violence, and after attempts at secrecy fail, the discovery of marriage is followed violent retaliation. Thus, clandestine marriage does not cause these underlying problems, but its discovery can unleash them. An additional theme that arises in this novella and in several others discussed here is that of the representation of the role of the cities to which couples belonged. Alongside the discussion of clandestine marriage in Bandello’s *Novelle*, this chapter discusses to some extent the cities to which the couples belong, arguing, for example, that the representation of Venice as an exceptionally just city raises the issue of justice within family, law, and society.¹

Even in the absence of family disapproval, so strong in the novella of the duchess of Malfi, clandestine marriage is nevertheless fraught with grave difficulties. Fatherless

¹ As will be shown, the “myth of Venice” is alluded to in several of the novellas as a symbol of justice and freedom. The myth of Venice has been discussed by numerous scholars. See for instance Frederic C. Lane, *Venice. A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 1973), Edward Muir, *Civic Ritual in Renaissance Venice* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1981), John Martin and Dennis Romano, *Venice Reconsidered* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins UP, 2000), David Rosand’s *Myths of Venice: The Figurations of a State* (Chapel Hill: U North Carolina P, 2001), and Stanley Chojnacki, *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice: Twelve Essays on Patrician Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000).

daughters, who in the *Novelle* encounter little family interference in the formation of marriage, are victims of a different form of violence, namely, disavowal of the marriage. In the novella of *Domenica and Boientis* (1.54), Boientis secretly marries the low-born *Domenica* only because she will not submit to him sexually outside of marriage, but he later violates the sacrament and abandons her at the beginning of her first pregnancy, having decided not to treat the marriage as a permanent bond; he ensures her silence by means of threats, thus maintaining control of the situation. Yet within a few months, once *Domenica* is remarried and expecting a second child, Boientis successfully appeals to the bishop's court for the recognition of the first, clandestine marriage. Even more dramatic is novella 1.42, in which *Didaco* forsakes his wife, *Violante*, after secretly marrying her, and contracts a second marriage with another woman. *Violante* brutally avenges her injured honor; unlike Boientis, she does not appeal to the law until after her own actions have made it impossible for her husband to be 'restored' to her.

The most famous of *Bandello's* clandestine marriage narratives is, of course, that of *Giulietta and Romeo* (2.9), who marry secretly in spite of the ongoing violent feuds between their families; even after the marriage, violence continues to accrue in various forms: *Romeo* murders *Giulietta's* cousin, and *Giulietta's* father forces her to accept marriage to the Count of *Lodrone*. I will discuss the hallowed novella of *Giulietta and Romeo* in juxtaposition with a much less known clandestine-marriage narrative which *Bandello* sets in Venice rather than Verona, and in which, due in part to the legal system prevailing in Venice, the outcome is happy rather than tragic. *Elena and Gerardo*, an aristocratic Venetian couple, decide to marry without the knowledge or consent of their parents, even though they (unlike *Giulietta and Romeo*) have no reason to expect any parental opposition or displeasure at the prospect. Thus, clandestine marriage can also involve subtle forms of manipulation and deceit by the couple against the family.

I now proceed to a more detailed reading of the five narratives introduced above. The tensions between family control over marriage on the one hand, and on the other hand the Church's model of marriage as founded on the consent of the couple, is represented clearly in novella 1.26, the story of the duchess of *Malfi*, where representatives of both the Church and two different city states participate in limiting a couple's marital freedom and in punishing them for their marriage. Choosing as protagonists of this novella the cardinal *Luigi d'Aragona*, the duchess of *Malfi*, and *Antonio Bologna*, real-life individuals, some of whom who were known to members of his audience, *Bandello* embeds the narrative firmly into the social context, inviting readers to to engage with the social and legal issues that arise.² The duchess (whose name is not mentioned in the novella, but whose identity as *Giovanna d'Aragona* is easily recognizable from historical records³) was the daughter of the noble *Enrico d'Aragona* and sister of cardinal *Luigi d'Aragona*. The fear of violence motivates the clandestine marriage of *Giovanna* and her majordomo, *Antonio*; yet the secret cannot be kept forever, and its discovery culminates in the brutal massacre of the duchess, her husband, and their children by assassins hired by her brothers. The duchess struggles with her role after her husband's death: she does not wish to remarry openly because this would mean

² *Bandello* insists particularly on his own personal connection with *Antonio Bologna*, with whom he came into contact in Milan during the year before *Antonio's* murder.

³ See *Carlo Godi, Bandello. Narratori e dedicatari della prima parte delle Novelle* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1996), 137-41.

relinquishing her relationship with her son,⁴ nor does she wish to remain celibate during the remainder of her youth: “ritrovandosi di poca età, gagliarda e bella, e vivendo delicatamente, né le parendo ben maritarsi e lasciar il figliuolo sotto altrui governo, si pensò di volersi trovare, s’esser poteva, qualche valoroso amante e con quello goder la sua gioventù” (322). Giovanna falls in love with her majordomo, who loves her in return. Not wishing to offend God by having an illicit relationship, yet realizing that in marrying Antonio openly, she will incur the wrath of her own male relatives, she views clandestine marriage as the best course of action, as she explains in her own words:

Ed in vero giudico esser assai meglio provedermi di marito che far come fanno alcune donne, le quali con offesa di Dio e con eterno biasimo del mondo agli amanti in preda si danno. . . . Il perché, dopo molti discorsi sovra ciò fatti, m’è caduto ne l’animo trovarmi un gentiluomo ben qualificato e quello prendermi per marito. Ma per schifar le mormorazioni del volgo ed altresì per non cader in disgrazia dei signori miei parenti e massimamente di monsignor cardinale mio fratello, vorrei tener la cosa celata fin che venisse occasione che si potesse con men mio pericolo manifestare. (1.26, pp. 323-24)

It is worth noting that the duchess’ decision to find a man to love echoes Ghismunda’s in *Decameron* 4.1: “si pensò di volere avere, se esser potesse, occultamente un valoroso amante” (4.1.5); the wording is clearly and deliberately repeated by Bandello (“si pensò di volersi trovare, s’esser poteva, qualche valoroso amante”), who reworks the theme presented by Boccaccio: whereas Ghismunda chooses a worthy lover for a sexual relationship, the duchess decides to select and then marry a man worthy of her love. Moreover, Giovanna explicitly chastises the behavior of women such as Ghismunda, “le quali con offesa di Dio e con eterno biasimo del mondo agli amanti in preda si danno” (323).⁵ Along the same lines, her fear of her brothers’ possibly violent interference in her

⁴ Christiane Klapisch-Zuber discusses the dilemma of young widows in “The ‘Cruel Mother’: Maternity, Widowhood, and Dowry in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries,” *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, Trans. Lydia Cochrane (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1985): 117-164. The widow’s children belonged to the agnatic line and only rarely remained with a mother who remarried into a new family (125); widows with children were usually the subject of opposing pressures as their natal kin stressed the value of remarriage, while the husband’s family stressed her duties to the children (120). Widowed mothers who remarried honored their natal families by allowing new alliances to be formed; on the other hand, they “left with [the] dowry but without [the] children” (125), causing concerns about the abandonment of young children and financial damage to the deceased husband’s household. Rhetoric from the period abounds in invectives against women who left their children in order to remarry (ibid).

⁵ It is interesting that critics have tended to dismiss the importance of the marriage as legitimate, which Girolamo Visconti, Bandello’s narrator, so deliberately contrasts to the illicit relationship of Guiscardo and Ghismunda. Perocco compares the story of the duchess of Malfi to Boccaccio’s novella 4.1, noting that it is “un caso molto simile, in un certo senso parallelo (la donna è nobile, l’uomo è sottoposto), nella novella della Duchessa di Malfi, Bandello si comporta in modo ben diverso, esibendo con brutale precisione le conseguenze che nascono da un rapporto frutto dell’amore di una donna di rango superiore con un uomo a lei inferiore. Andare contro le regole del ‘buon vivere civile’ può portare solo a fine tragica per i protagonisti, alla condanna ed alla punizione dell’infrazione” (206); she only brings up the marriage in order to argue that Bandello opposes misalliances: “Ma il matrimonio per l’uomo del Cinquecento . . . è un contratto in cui l’amore non è necessario, o se c’è, è assolutamente non previsto e comunque biasimevole e nocivo quando si presenta come passione, pur all’interno della sua istituzionalizzazione. Prima si considera la famiglia, il censo, lo status, poi si penserà ad innamorarsi, con l’avvertenza di restare nell’ambito delle possibilità di un ‘ben regolato’ amore” (205-06). Nadia Setti goes even further, suggesting that Giovanna and Antonio’s relationship is in some sense in conflict with the assumptions underlying marriage: “La tragicità . . . nasce dal conflitto tra due economie: quella dell’accumulazione e

private life strongly recalls the tragic story of Lisabetta da Messina and her brothers (*Decameron* 4.5). The duchess seeks to balance the role of mother with her need for sexuality and companionship and with her culture's moral standards. Through her actions and through her speech directed at Antonio, she emerges as a character endowed with subjectivity and agency.

The marriage, contracted clandestinely through the mutual consent of both spouses, results first in the secret birth of a son. However, the birth of the couple's second child, a daughter, does not go unnoticed, and this news reaches the ears of her brothers, "i quali, avendo inteso la sorella aver partorito, ma non sapendo chi fosse il padre, deliberarono non portar questa vergogna sugli occhi, e con gran diligenza cominciarono con molti mezzi a spiar ogn'atto ed ogni movimento che la duchessa faceva" (325).

Antonio senses danger:

Io dubito assai che non abbiano qualche indizio di me e che un giorno non mi facciano uccidere. Voi meglio di me conoscete la natura loro e sapete com'un di loro sa menar le mani. E perché penso che contra voi mai non incrudelirebbero, tengo per fermo che, come mi avessero fatto ammazzare, che altro non saria.⁶

Però io ho deliberato andarmene a Napoli, e dato ivi ordine a le cose mie ridurmi in Ancona, ove averò il modo che le mie entrate mi saranno mandate. Io ci starò fin che si veggia che questo sospetto esca di capo ai signori vostri fratelli. (325)

Antonio takes their children with him and hopes to evade the grasp of the suspicious brothers. His wife agrees, and consequently, Antonio takes their children with him and hopes to find safety. Giovanna later makes arrangements to join him and their children in Ancona, but spreads the word that she is going on a pilgrimage to Loreto instead. When she and her servants are near Ancona, she announces her intention to visit Antonio; once they arrive there, Giovanna proclaims the truth about the marriage and informs her servants that she will remain with Antonio, leading a private life with her marriage publicly known rather than continue to lead a public life as duchess but with her marriage known only privately:

mantenimento dei beni che ispira la politica matrimoniale a difesa del patrimonio, e un'economia di godimento che è organizzata secondo gli investimenti del desiderio e le leggi del piacere, e dunque in grado di sconvolgere la stabilità della prima" (162). I acknowledge that the contrasting economies are indeed important – not least because this novella opens up a debate on whether marriage should function as a way of transmitting wealth and dynastic lineages or as an affective union based on the Church's consensual model. However, I contend that Setti mislabels the second one, which is not an economy simply based on pleasure, but is a real marriage based on love (even years after their secret marriage, they are described as "amandosi più di giorno in giorno") and on the creation of a family. Desire and pleasure certainly have a part within this system, but are integrated within the marriage. Along the same lines, Setti takes a narrow view of the clandestine marriage: "La messa in scena del matrimonio segreto conferma la Legge ma allo stesso tempo la distorce, parodiandone gli elementi formali (la cameriera funge da testimone invece dei fratelli, per esempio)" (Setti 169). Because canon law explicitly allowed clandestine marriage and recognized its importance when couple's families represented a threat to the couple's free consent, it is important to note that this is more than a mere parody of legal marriage. Moreover, it must be kept in account that the duchess's brothers, with their violent desire to control their sister, are themselves outside of the law, and this is precisely what causes Giovanna and Antonio to marry secretly and privately rather than openly and publicly.

⁶ In the novella of *Violante and Pietro/Teodoro*, discussed in Chapter Two, Pietro makes the same mistake: "La tua gravidanza scoprirà il fallo nostro: a te fia perdonato leggiermente, ma io misero sarò colui a cui del tuo peccato e del mio converrà portare la pena" (5.7.19).

Quivi, dopo che da tutti si fu desinato, avendo voglia la duchessa di cavarsi la maschera, sapendo che a questo bisognava venire, fatti chiamar tutti i suoi in sala, in questo modo parlò loro: – Tempo è oggimai che io, gentiluomini miei e voi altri servidori, faccia a tutto il mondo manifesto quello che dinanzi a Dio è stato una volta fatto. A me essendo vedova parve di maritarmi e tal marito prendermi quale il mio giudizio s’aveva eletto. Il perché vi dico che sono già alcuni anni passati che io sposai, a la presenza di questa mia cameriera che è qui, il signor Antonio Bologna che voi vedete, ed egli è mio legitimo marito, e seco, perciò che sua sono, intendo di rimanere. Fin qui io vi sono stata duchessa e padrona e voi mi sète stati fedeli vassalli e servidori. Per l’avvenire attenderete aver buona cura del signor duca mio figliuolo, e a quello come è conveniente sarete fedeli e leali. Queste mie donzelle accompagnerete a Malfi, le cui doti, prima che io partissi del Regno, feci depositare sul banco di Paolo Tolosa, e gli scritti del tutto sono nel monastero di Santo Sebastiano appresso a la madre de le monache. Ché de le donne io altra per adesso meco non voglio che questa mia cameriera. La signora Beatrice, che fin qui è stata mia donna d’onore . . . è del tutto sodisfatta. Nondimeno negli scritti che vi ho detto ella troverà buona provigione per maritar una de le sue figliuole che a casa ha. Se dei servidori ce n’è nessuno che meco voglia restare, egli sarà da me ben trattato. . . . E per conchiudere, a me più piace viver privatamente col signor Antonio mio marito che restar duchessa. – (327-28)

Through the striking symbolism of removing the mask, Bandello’s narrator, Girolamo Visconti, foregrounds the occult, covert, and charade- or carnival-like aspects of clandestine marriage. At the same time, Giovanna’s words highlight the contrast between public marriage, visible to society, and clandestine marriage, in the most extreme cases known only to the couple and God. She also displays her subjectivity in the speech acts she performs with respect to her servants – she is both a character and a storyteller, in addition to shaping the destiny of others through her decisions.⁷ Before abdicating, she provides her servants and their daughters with generous dowries and with the choice of continuing to serve her in her new life or of serving the new duke loyally and faithfully. The duchess’ charity, however, is met only by betrayal on the part of her servants.

The newly reunited family does not enjoy a peaceful private life for very long: the servants who choose not to remain with their mistress send word to her brothers in Rome of these events. The cardinal, Luigi, immediately responds by exerting pressure to have the couple and their children expelled first from Ancona (with the help of the cardinal of Mantova, Giulio Gonzaga, who was Julius II’s papal legate to Ancona, cf. Bandello 328) and then from Siena, with the help of Alfonso Petrucci, cardinal of Siena and brother of the head of the Signoria of Siena. Antonio and Giovanna deliberate to go to Venice, where they hope to find safety, traveling, along with their children and servants through Tuscany and Romagna. When they reach Forlì, they see that their pursuers are drawing closer. Still believing that violent retaliation will be directed only against Antonio, not against herself or the children, the duchess persuades him to ride on with their firstborn son as quickly as he can, leaving her and the younger children behind. Instead of going to Venice, Antonio goes to Milan and inexplicably stays there for a year, in spite of being warned that his brothers-in-law have paid for his murder. One day on his

⁷ For definitions and examples of speech acts, see John L. Austin, *How to do Things with Words*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1962.

way to Mass, he is murdered by four hired assassins, who after the crime “a loro bell’agio andarono ove più loro parve a proposito, non ci essendo chi volesse prendersi cura per via di giustizia di cacciargli” (332).

This novella emphasizes the contrast between the ideal of consent-based marriage on the one hand and the reality of family control on the other. Readers are reminded not only of the power of brothers and other male relatives over a widow’s life, but also of the difficult situation of widowed mothers, who faced the loss of their children if they remarried. Interestingly, Giovanna abdicates her political role but not her role as mother in her attempt to find a balance between her marriage with Antonio and her role in her family and social milieu. Yet Daria Perocco views the duchess of Malfi as a negative example of unbridled passion: “Quando poi le ragioni del sentimento prevalgono ed assistiamo al tentativo della donna di rinunciare alle proprie cariche per divenire unicamente una moglie allo stesso livello sociale del consorte, allora Bandello ci fa assistere alla violenza con cui si abbatte la punizione familiare e sociale” (1985: 206). Perocco interprets the tragic ending as proof that Bandello himself is punishing the duchess and Antonio and their children, without taking into account that Bandello’s narrator carefully depicts the cardinal as author of the violence, and this depiction is complete with details that show the cardinal’s hypocrisy, bad faith, and contempt for the Church’s position on marriage, making it rather unlikely for readers to deduce that Bandello is aligning himself with the violence procured by the cardinal. The cardinal, according to Perocco’s logic, would become an instrument for Bandello’s own condemnation of the marriage.

The choice for clandestine rather than public marriage results from the brothers’ coercive insistence for control over their sister’s marriage; the clandestine marriage in turn triggers more violence on their part. The novella also highlights the contrast between the Church’s model of consensual marriage and the secular model of male-controlled exchange of women on the marriage market. Additionally, this narrative emphasizes that the plight of women is intertwined with that of their spouses and children. These issues are further developed by the dedicatory letter preceding the novella, a letter that focuses on the theme of violence and injustice against women:

Quanto saria bene che alcune consuetudini che sono in quei mondi nuovi . . . fossero in queste nostre contrade, a ciò che tutto il male che si fa cessasse e non si sentisse ogn’ora: – Il tale ha morta la moglie, perché dubitava che non lo facesse vicario di Corneto; quell’altro ha soffocata la figliuola, perché di nascosto s’era maritata; e colui ha fatto uccider la sorella, perché non s’è maritata come egli averebbe voluto. – Questa è pur certamente una gran crudeltà, che noi vogliamo tutto ciò che ci vien in animo fare, e non vogliamo che le povere donne possino far a lor voglia cosa che sia, e se fanno cosa alcuna che a noi non piaccia, subito si viene ai lacci, al ferro ed ai veleni.⁸ Ma quanto ci starebbe bene che la rota si raggirasse e che elle governassero gli uomini! Pensate pur che farebbero la vendetta di quante ingiurie e torti sono loro dagli uomini crudeli stati fatti. Ci saria ben questo almeno, che, essendo naturalmente

⁸ Bandello is alluding here to Boccaccio’s novella of Violante and Teodoro, in which the enraged Amerigo forces his daughter to choose “qual vuole . . . di queste due morti, o del veleno o del ferro” (5.7.30). An additional similarity worth noting is that Violante and her lover, like Giovanna and Antonio, mistakenly believe that violence by the woman’s family does not threaten the woman herself (5.7.20).

pietose e dolci di core, si placarebbero di leggero e sariano pieghevoli a ricever le nostre preghiere, perché di sangue, di veleno, di morti e di lagrime la lor pietosa natura non è troppo vaga. E nel vero, grave sciocchezza quella degli uomini mi pare che vogliono che l'onor loro e di tutta la casata consista ne l'appetito d'una donna. Se un uomo fa un errore, quantunque enorme, per questo il suo parentado non perde de la sua nobiltà. Se un figliuolo traligna da l'antica virtù dei suoi avoli . . . per questo non perdono la degnità loro. Ma noi facciamo le leggi, l'interpretiamo, le glossiamo e le dichiariamo come ne pare. (319-20)

This passage calls attention to the shocking prevalence of violence perpetrated against women by husbands, fathers, and other family members and envisions a different, less violent cultural practice. Laws written by and for men are identified as a significant factor in the promulgation of social injustice and imagines a world in which the tables are turned. Yet it must be noted that while the dedicatory letter presents the novella as an example of violence against *women*, the novella makes clear that such violence is never merely limited to women. Curiously, in contrast to the dedicatory letter's assertion that violence against women is ubiquitous, Giovanna and Antonio do not seem to share in this perception of violence. They mistakenly perceive that only Antonio, as a man, is at risk of violent retaliation; yet there is no clear-cut distinction between violence against the individual on the one hand and on the other hand against the couple and family to which the individual belongs.

Furthermore, the dedicatory letter points out the uncomfortable coexistence of stereotypes about female sexuality and high standards for female chastity.⁹ While it advocates justice towards women and expresses confidence in women's ability to rule justly and clemently over men, in its ambivalence, this letter seems to subscribe at least in part to the sexual stereotypes that it criticizes. The ridicule cast on men who rely on their female relatives for their own supply of honor implicitly questions women's ability to rein in their sexual appetites. Indeed, the duchess of Malfi's troubles begin with her decision not to suppress her womanly desires. While women are not explicitly blamed for male violence, the letter does not express much confidence in their ability to contain their

⁹As James Brundage notes,

Both Origen and Tertullian blamed women for luring Christian men into sexual indulgence that they might otherwise have been strong enough to resist. Women, Tertullian declared, are the devil's door: through them Satan creeps into men's hearts and minds and works his wiles for their spiritual destruction. Origen's condemnation of women was equally severe. He believed that women are more lustful than men and that they are obsessed by sexual desire. Like Tertullian, Origen considered woman a primary source of carnal corruption in Christian society. (*Law, Sex, and Christian Society* 64)

Additionally, according to the anatomical and physiological theories of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, women "were said to be variable and changeable because of the delicacy of their physical constitution and, for the same reason, softheaded and yielding" (Brundage 426). However, Brundage explains, "[b]ehind the veil of modesty lurked the specter of insatiable female sexual appetite"; yet "despite these common beliefs about female lustiness, canonists nonetheless maintained that both law and morality required a higher standard of sexual restraint from women than from men" (Brundage 427). This high standard for women had very significant consequences: "immodest women might cause men to commit murder and other horrid crimes, as David did when he was bewitched by the sight of Bathsheba bathing" (Brundage 428).

own sexual passions. How, then, readers might wonder, could they be trusted to rule over men?

The dedicatory letter, in juxtaposition with the novella, suggests that women are oppressed by the emphasis on female chastity as a tool for building or maintaining male honor. As the letter points out, news of ruthless murders of women by male kin is as commonplace as it is horrific. Adelin Fiorato's "L' image et la condition de la femme dans les nouvelles de Bandello" discusses the dedicatory letter accompanying 1.26, along with the novella, and summarily dismisses the invective against violence by placing it within courtly rhetoric idealizing, praising, and protecting women in purely abstract terms, stating that in reality, female autonomy was simply inconceivable to the author: "Mais ce n'est là qu'utopie de courtesan qui veut plaire aux dames. Dans la réalité, l'indépendance ou l'autonomie de la femme ne sont guère concevables dans les milieu que traverse Bandello" (214), without even commenting on whether Bandello might have envisioned the possibility of opening up a dialogue on whether women were entitled, if not to autonomy, to protection from bodily harm inflicted by angry fathers and husbands, with all the negative repercussions for families and society. Fiorato summarizes his position on Bandello's attitude towards women: "Bandello aime visiblement les femmes et cherche constamment à leur plaire. . . . Bref! Le conteur aime se présenter dans le rôle du courtesan courtesé qui réussit auprès des femmes" (183). Fiorato's analysis is clouded by his perception of Bandello as both traditional moralist and flattering courtier; ironically, Fiorato's excessive focus on identifying Bandello's position limits his reading of the novella. I contend, on the other hand, that the novella and the dedicatory letter engage both provocatively and passionately with the *querelle des femmes* and that, despite the ambivalent representation of women in the novella and letter, these texts nevertheless contribute to the debate on women by challenging readers to consider how they and their society are limited by ideology and experience; the reference to other cultures (real or imagined) with different, less violent ways of life further invites the audience to reflect on these issues.¹⁰

Venice is represented as an unreachable safe haven where families live in peace under just laws; the (utopian) "new worlds" are held up as an elusive example of the possibility of non-violence, yet without any reference to legal systems (for the purposes of the letter, the "new worlds" are utopian in the fullest sense of the word). It is important to note the emphasis on laws and power in relation to violence: "*Ma noi facciamo le leggi, l'interpretiamo, le glossiamo e le dichiariamo come ne pare*" (320). Because men write and interpret the laws at whim, the letter argues, women are vulnerable to exploitation and violence. This reflection on law refers to the formula "quod omnes tangit," a medieval legal concept which held that those laws that touch all people should be approved by all people.¹¹

¹⁰ Regarding the reference at the beginning of the dedicatory letter to cultures in the 'new worlds', Setti remarks "L'auspicio formulato nella prefazione si situa . . . nell'altrove, in un altro mondo appena scoperto e non integrabile nel vecchio mondo. Come leggere questo augurio? Forse come il segno di una trasformazione sotterranea in atto nel presente del vecchio mondo, non ancora sancita dalla Legge, ma coesistente con essa in modo 'illegale', reperibile negli indizi di disgregazione del sistema" (165).

¹¹ Boccaccio entertainingly presents this legal concept in his novella of Madonna Filippa (*Decameron* 6.7).

Significantly, the dedicatory letter also echoes Canto 37 of the *Orlando furioso*, whose introductory stanzas discuss the misogynistic tradition in which male writing disparages women for every flaw:

Non basta a molti di prestarsi l'opra
in far l'un l'altro glorioso al mondo,
ch'anco studian di far che si discuopra
ciò che le donne hanno fra lor d'immondo.
Non le vorrian lasciar venir di sopra,
e quanto puon, fan per cacciarle al fondo:
dico gli antiqui; quasi l'onor debbia
d'esse il lor oscurar, come il sol nebbia.

(37.3)

and remains silent on their virtues:

E di fedeli e caste e saggie e forti
stato ne son, non pur in Grecia e in Roma,
ma in ogni parte ove fra gl'Indi e gli Orti
de le Esperide il Sol spiega la chioma:
de le quai sono i pregi agli onor morti,
sì ch'a pena di mille una si noma;
e questo, perché avuto hanno ai lor tempi
gli scrittori bugiardi, invidi et empi.

(37.6)

This misogynistic tradition, the poet-narrator contends, stands in contrast to several contemporary authors whom he praises for praising virtuous women (37.8). Furthermore, Bandello's suggestion "*Ma quanto ci starebbe bene che la rota si raggirasse e che elle governassero gli uomini!*" engages with Ariosto: "Non le vorrian lasciar venir di sopra,/ e quanto puon, fan per cacciarle al fondo" (37.3.5-6).

Albert Ascoli's "Body Politics in Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*" points out that the Ariostan narrator ultimately sabotages his own gynophilic argument throughout the canto; this ambivalence parallels the ambivalence in Bandello's dedicatory letter noted above. Ascoli eloquently summarizes the ambivalence in Ariosto's canto:

On the one hand, the whole of the canto reveals that the Ariostan narrator, and perhaps Ariosto himself, are not the enemies but the exponents of an envious male misogyny. On the other, the explicit naming of the male envy in the proem and the dramatization of its mechanisms throughout the canto allows a reader to reach such a conclusion, implying a genuine ideological critique of patriarchy and an innovative reflection on gender identity. (77)

Interestingly, Bandello's dedicatory letter, much like the female reign imposed by Bradamante and Marfisa (37.115-117) refers to an alternative to misogynistic rule. By implicitly calling the female violence and revenge in Canto 37 of the *Orlando furioso* to the reader's attention, however, the text casts doubt on women's fitness to rule with clemency and compassion. It must be noted at the same time, however, that prior to abdicating, the duchess herself serves as a small-scale model of just and charitable rule by a woman. She, unlike Drusilla of Ariosto's Canto 37, is not violent, but demonstrates generosity and charity towards her dependents. Ultimately, the answer may be the refrain

repeated over and over in the novellas and dedicatory letters in Bandello's collection: not all women are the same. For example,

era bene presuntuosa e temeraria pazzia giudicar tutte le donne d'una maniera, come anco errore grandissimo esser si conosceva a dire che tutti gli uomini fossero di medesimi costumi, veggendosi tutto il dì il contrario manifestamente, perciò che così negli uomini come ne le donne tante sono le differenze e le varietà de le nature quanti sono i cervelli, e che dui fratelli e due sorelle, ad un medesimo parto nati, saranno il più de le volte di contrario temperamento e di costumi diversissimi, e ciò che piacerà ad uno dispiacerà a l'altro. (1.21, 252)

This point is also made in the dedicatory letter preceding novella 1.27:

...tutte le donne non sono d'un temperamento, ma sono come ha fatto la natura nei suoi parti, che sempre non gli fa tutti buoni. Né perché ci sia talora una malvagia femina si vogliono l'altre sprezzare; anzi per una buona, ché molte ce ne sono, deveno tutte l'altre esser dagli uomini sempre onorate e riverite, perciò ch'io porto ferma openione che mai non sia lecito contra le donne incrudelire.
(333)

The story of the duchess of Malfi suggests that violence is both a cause and an effect of clandestine marriage. The novella and the dedicatory letter that accompanies it dramatize the connections between family violence, violence against women, and clandestine marriage. The violent control and punishment exerted by family members over marriageable women has serious repercussions in this story not only for the female protagonist, but for her husband and children as well. The tragic outcome of the story – deadly violence not only against a woman, but against an entire family – could have been entirely prevented by the cardinal's acceptance of the Church's position on consent as constitutive of marriage. Indeed, by casting a cardinal as the duchess's brother and killer, Bandello's narrator draws attention to the fact that as a representative of the Church, he is ostensibly responsible for upholding the freedom to contract marriages based on consent; at the same time, the senseless cruelty of the family's violent assertion of control over marriage is highlighted. The cardinal, contrary to all reason and law, uses his connections to influence and corrupt secular authorities in the cities where his sister and her family attempt to escape the threat of his violence. Readers are thus called to consider an important social and legal problem: the implementation of canon law on marriage was dependent on the men who are placed in a position of power to uphold it; when such men placed more emphasis on their personal or family interests than on the law, they eroded and subvert the law's power. The conflict of interest between family interests and the Church's interests are dramatized vividly in this novella.

A different problem is pointed out in the clandestine marriage narrative of Bandello's novella 1.54. In Brescia, Boientis, a presumptuous notary turned quack doctor, courts Domenica, a girl from a humble family. Finding her unwilling to give herself over to his sexual desires,

si deliberò di prenderla per moglie, ed avuto stretto ragionamento con lei e con la madre, gli promise che la piglierebbe per sposa; di che tutte due si mostrarono contentissime, parendole che il loro avviso avesse buon fine. Andò adunque un giorno il Boientis, essendo d'aprile, ed in presenza de la madre sposò legittimamente, quanto a le parole ed intenzione, la sua Domenica, e quel dì medesimo colse il frutto del suo fervente amore tanto affettuosamente quanto dir

si possa. Così la tenne e con lei quasi ordinariamente si giaceva, in casa perciò di lei, trovando sue scuse se teneva il matrimonio segreto e non la menava a casa. (624)

Boientis exemplifies the view of clandestine marriage as a last resort for a man who can find no other means of persuading a particular woman to have sex with him; in a sense, the recourse to clandestine marriage can function as an alternative to seduction or even sexual violence. Indeed, in “L’image et la condition de la femme dans les nouvelles de *Bandello*,” Fiorato notes that when the characters’ social or family background does not favor marriage, a man who courts a young woman might make a deliberate choice to propose clandestine marriage rather than taking the alternative of sexually assaulting her (196). While Fiorato does not refer specifically to novella 1.54, this concept can clearly be applied to the nuptials of Boientis and Domenica.

Ostensibly a notary, Boientis should have knowledge of the law and apparently sees the opportunity to use clandestine marriage as a tool to obtain sex without the burden of adhering to the marriage as he would if it were publicly known.¹² The very absence of a notarial contract (and of witnesses beyond his bride and mother-in-law) allows Boientis to treat the union with the same lightness as if it were the casual sexual affair he initially sought out. Indeed, Boientis eventually stops making excuses for keeping the marriage secret, and eleven months after the marriage, with Domenica in the early stages of pregnancy,

disse a la suocera che non voleva la Domenica più per moglie, e che se aveva ardimento mai di dire ch’egli l’avesse sposata, che le farebbe far uno scherzo che non le piacerebbe La povera madre che si vedeva privata d’aita e di consiglio non sapeva che si fare, e tanto più si trovava di mala voglia quanto che, ad istanzia di Boientis, messer Antonio Martinengo, che sempre l’aveva favorito, la mandò a minacciare e bravarle su la vita se ella o la figliuola ardivano dir parola di questo sponsalizio. (624)

Clearly, the practice of clandestine marriage can leave an abandoned wife with little recourse, especially when the husband’s threats are backed up by political alliances and favoritism. Boientis presumes to atone for his repudiating his wife by contributing twenty gold ducats towards her dowry so that she may remarry speedily; thus, Domenica manages to find a husband before her pregnancy becomes obvious. More than a year after pushing his wife into bigamy, Boientis later changes his mind again:

Venuta l’altra quadragesima, andò il Boientis a confessarsi e trovato un venerando sacerdote a San Faustino, fu da lui domandato se aveva moglie. Egli non volle negar la verità e gli narrò come il fatto stava de la Domenica. Il santo monaco che era persona intelligente, conoscendo per le parole del penitente il contratto e consumato matrimonio esser vero e indissolubile, gli disse: – Figliuol mio, né altri né io in questo caso ti possiamo assolvere, se tu non ripigli tua moglie, la quale per quanto tu mi dici è tua legittima sposa. (626)

Boientis petitions the bishop for the return of Domenica on the basis of the preexisting clandestine marriage, which is valid and indissoluble. After the evidence has been

¹² Boientis’ character is inspired in great part by Boccaccio’s Maestro Simone (*Decameron* 8.9). Boientis, *Bandello* relates, “tanto fece e tanto disse . . . che divenne notaio, ancora che molte fiata egli scrivesse di quelle scritture che poi egli stesso non sapeva né intender né leggere” (621).

presented, the bishop's court agrees that Domenica is Boientis's lawful wife and awards the firstborn child to Boientis and the second-born to Domenica's second husband:

Il vescovo ordinò che il vicario facesse ciò che di ragione era da fare. Il che il vicario fece diligentissimamente, e citate le parti e datole conveniente termine a provar le lor ragioni, poi che il processo fu autenticamente finito, col consiglio d'alcuni dottori che aveva chiamati, pronunziò sedendo *pro tribunali*, ed a Gian Maria comandò che restituisse la Domenica al Boientis, ma che si ritenesse i venti ducati per le spese che fatte le aveva; e così come egli tolse la Domenica gravida del Boientis medesimamente che il Boientis la ripigliasse gravida di lui, a ciò che la cosa andasse di pari. Il nato figliuolo fu giudicato al Boientis; o maschio o femina che nascesse, a Gian Maria; e che tra i dui rivali si facesse pace: il che si fece. (627-28)

While Boientis can hardly be considered the victim in this case, this passage discusses the legal recourse available to an injured party when a second marriage was openly contracted following a clandestine marriage. The narrative emphasizes aspects of legal procedure and details of the judicial ruling in this case, mixing the absurd story of Boientis with references to a real legal context. The bishop's vicar provides a solution to this legal problem by following the law and principles of equity, yet there is something dissatisfying about his legal solution. As Ullrich Langer points out in "The Renaissance Novella as Justice," "[t]he law is, presumably, an expression of justice . . . but in another sense justice can be conceptually prior to the law and even a corrective to it" (313). One reason why the court's decision disappoints readers is because it fails to provide closure, defined by Langer as "the resolution of the logic of exchanges between characters" (Langer 317). This novella, interestingly, explicitly denies readers such closure, depriving them of "the satisfaction one derives from seeing a cycle of revenge ending, needs having been satisfied, merits and demerits recognized, rewarded and punished" (Langer 318).

Throughout the novella, Domenica is represented with the utmost passivity. Girolamo Roberti, the narrator, expresses only Boientis's subjectivity; there is, by contrast, a conspicuous void when it comes to Domenica. Not only is she disenfranchised, apparently due to gender, age, social status, and fatherlessness, but there is a complete erasure of her *inner* reactions to being abandoned by Boientis, married to a second man, reconciled to Boientis, losing her second child – readers merely see her outward reactions to being buffeted hither and thither from man to man, marriage to marriage; even her access to her own children is beyond her active control. So complete is the obliteration of Domenica's subjectivity that readers are haunted by the void. Indeed, the narrative forces readers to assume a passivity analogous to Domenica's with respect to the silences surrounding Domenica's emotional experience.

Boientis's casual treatment of the marriage bond compounds the potential ill effects of its secrecy. While Domenica herself could conceivably have appealed to the bishop for recognition of the marriage after Boientis' initial change of heart, her belief in his threats ensures her complicity in the continued secrecy. Unlike her real-life counterpart, Lusanna (discussed in Chapter One), who in 1455 brought her clandestine marriage case before the archbishop of Florence, Domenica remains silent after being abandoned by her first husband. Additionally, in contrast to (and compounding) Domenica's perceived powerlessness, Boientis' background – however problematic – as a notary suggests some knowledge of the law and the ability to manipulate it to a certain

extent. The narrative thus implies that while before God a clandestine marriage holds full sacramental power, the *de facto* force of clandestine marriage is strongly dependent on the behavior of the spouses; this leaves room for vulnerability, fraud, and deceit. This objection to clandestine marriage raised by the narrative was indeed prevalent on the eve of the Council of Trent, and it was the very difficulty of proving the existence of a clandestine marriage, with the ill effects on the abandoned spouse, that led to the passage of *Tametsi*. Girolamo's narrative elicits disdain for Boientis: he is "più presuntuoso che le mosche" (621); while working as a notary, he suffers from an inability to decipher his own handwriting (621); he dresses pompously (623); and he speaks arrogantly in spite of the fact that he says nothing but "pappolate" (626-27).¹³ At the same time, the novella emphasizes the plight suffered by Domenica, disavowed and threatened by her husband, bullied into a life of deceit and bigamy, and then summoned back from her second, more peaceful marriage to live again with the inconstant Boientis. The novella suggests that clandestine marriages are attended by a number of unpleasant risks: one spouse can abandon the other with impunity; one spouse can marry a second time while the original spouse is still living; and the unwitting spouse and children of the bigamist can suffer substantial upheavals if the bigamist is returned to the original spouse.¹⁴

Taking the chaotic scenario of clandestine marriage and abandonment much further than in the story of Boientis and Domenica, novella 1.42 is one of the most sensational tales in Bandello's entire collection. Didaco pursues Violante, who is far beneath his station, seeking a sexual relationship with her, but Violante rebuffs him, invoking the standard ideal of female chastity:

E ben che egli fosse molto eloquente e bel parlatore, e promettesse a la madre e a la figliuola cose assai, e volesse innanzi tratto buona somma di danari darle, e quando poi si volesse maritare provederle di conveniente e ricca dote, nondimeno altra risposta da Violante aver non puotè se non che ella se gli conosceva molto esser ubligata per l'amore che egli diceva di portarle, e che ne le cose oneste ella era presta di compiacerli, ma che viveva con questo animo deliberato di prima voler morire che perder la sua onestà. (497)

Violante emphasizes the crucial role of honor; it is unclear whether she does so in order to manipulate Didaco into marrying her or whether she intrinsically values honor. Nevertheless, as Perocco notes: "La giovane che, in Bandello, si trovi ad essere oggetto di attenzioni non strettamente matrimoniali percepisce il desiderio come offesa alla sua rispettabilità; il non distinguere nettamente il confine tra pubblico e privato fa identificare sempre il desiderio . . . come attacco all'onorabilità pubblica" (1985: 212). Thus, Violante emphasizes the importance of honor over sexual gratification. For Didaco, instead, marriage is a last resort employed to obtain it from a woman who drives a hard bargain: "Il povero amante che . . . senza fine Violante amava . . . veggendo che a patto nessuno, per arte che sapesse usare, per amante ottener non la poteva, deliberò prenderla per moglie" (497). The subordination of marriage to lust is a clear reversal of the

¹³ As Godi explains, Bandello casts as the novella's narrator Girolamo Roberti, a real doctor, a native of Brescia with a medical degree from Bologna, who of course would have an interest in contrasting his own intelligence and credentials to the foolishness and quackery of Boientis (Godi 1996: 295).

¹⁴ As Adelin Fiorato pertinently notes, the story of Domenica and Boientis "illustre bien la problématique des mariages clandestins" and the conflict between "le canon de l'indissolubilité du mariage fondé sur le consentement mutuel des époux et la nécessité de régler les unions clandestines, sources d'innombrables conflits et désordres" (1980: 201).

Christian ideal in which lust is subordinated to marriage. However, ignoring this problem, the parties come to an agreement:

E così restarono in questa conchiusione: che egli ad ogni piacer suo sposaria a la presenza de la madre e dei fratelli, quando volesse, Violante. . . . Non stette il signor Didaco dui giorni che egli rivenne, e a la presenza de la madre, dei dui fratelli e d'un suo servidore che seco aveva condotto, del quale molto si fidava, sposò solennemente per parole di presente la sua tanto desiata Violante, pregando perciò ciascun di loro che per alcuni convenevoli rispetti questo spozalizio fin che egli lo publicasse tenessero segreto. Sposata che egli l'ebbe, la notte seguente seco se n'andò a giacere e con grandissimo piacer suo e soddisfazione di Violante consumò il santo matrimonio. (498)

While God and a select number of witnesses are privy to the marriage, Violante's neighbors are not, and because of the secrecy of the marriage itself, Violante is taken for a courtesan:

molti che non sapevano come il fatto si stesse, veggendo lei superbamente abbigliata, stimarono che il cavaliere avesse l'amor de la giovane per prezzo comperato e che quella come amante o amica si godesse. E tanto più facilmente pareva loro che il vero stimassero, quanto che il cavaliere spesse fiato di giorno domesticamente in casa le andava. Ella, ancora che qualche cosa di questo mormorar sentisse, nulla se ne curava sapendo come il fatto era e sperando in breve col publicamento del matrimonio sgannar ciascuno. (499)

Although the narrative offers an uneasy welding of lust and marriage, Bandello reminds the reader that marriage, even undertaken clandestinely, was a sacrament. This passage highlights the gaping chasm between public and private, between appearance and reality; Violante hopes that over time the marriage will be published and the disparate realms will become reconciled as a result. Unbeknownst to her, however, Didaco grows weary of her – “o che del basso sangue di Violante si vergognasse o che di lei fosse sazio o che altro a ciò lo spingesse” (499) and develops other plans, aided by the very clandestinity of the marriage.¹⁵ While putting on every appearance of being a devoted and faithful husband, he makes empty promises to Violante and her mother and brothers in response to their requests for him to acknowledge the marriage publicly. Then, only a year after the marriage, he negotiates with a noble family for marriage to a different woman, and “egli questa altra publicamente prese per moglie” (499). Violante does not appeal to ecclesiastical authorities for recognition of the marriage, but pushes the matter into an even more private realm by plotting revenge:

¹⁵ Ariosto's episode of Bireno and Olimpia in Canto 10 of the *Orlando Furioso* (modeled on the myths of Theseus-Ariadne and Phaedra) also dramatizes the abandonment of a spouse resulting from weariness. In both cases, the use of the word “sazio” should be noted:

Non pur sazio di lei, ma fastidito
N'è già così, che può vederla a pena;
e sì de l'altra acceso ha l'appetito,
che ne morrà se troppo in lungo il mena:
pur fin che giunga il dì c'ha statuito
a dar fine al disio, tanto l'affrena,
che par ch'adori Olimpia, non che l'ami,
e quel che piace a lei, sol voglia e brami.
(*Orlando furioso* 10.13)

I would like to thank Albert Ascoli for calling these intertexts to my attention.

[D]eliberò se possibil era di . . . prenderne tal vendetta quale a sì biasimevol sceleraggine si conveniva, a ciò che per l'avvenire gli uomini non fossero così facili ad ingannar le povere donne. E a nessuno il suo fiero proponimento manifestando, aspettava qualche oportuna occasione, dandole l'animo che il cavaliere le caderebbe a le mani. Deliberata adunque di farne altissima vendetta, andava tra sé imaginando il modo che tener doveva, e in questo mezzo, lasciato il pianto, attendeva a viver più allegramente che poteva.¹⁶ (500)

Violante decides to mete out a memorable punishment that will serve as an example for other men. It is interesting that she keeps her plans for revenge secret in spite of the fact that her brothers and mother have been very involved in the preceding stages of the relationship. Far from appealing to her brothers to carry out revenge or to the ecclesiastical court for justice, Violante usurps the role of both men and God by deciding to pursue her revenge against Didaco. Thus, the next time she sees him, she pretends to accept his decision, and convinced of Violante's good faith, Didaco decides to spend the night with her. However, once again there is a rift between appearances and reality. Didaco is taken in by Violante's words and his gullibility allows her to inflict an exemplary punishment on him.¹⁷

Didaco goes to Violante's house at nightfall, "poi che . . . buona pezza fu stato con la nuova sposa con cui cenato aveva e seco ancora non s'era congiunto" (502). Her mind on the revenge she is about to consummate, Violante greets him "molto lietamente" – recalling the behavior of Ariosto's Drusilla, who, on the eve of her marriage to Tanacro "si mostra tutta lieta, e finge/ di queste nozze aver sommo disio" (37.61.1-2); similarly, Violante's revenge recalls Ariosto's Olimpia's behavior towards her first husband, whose murder she commissions on her wedding day (9.41). Violante's dissimulation of her true intent is successful, and the outcome of Didaco's misinterpretation is very grim indeed. Once he falls asleep, Violante and her maidservant Giannica, her only accomplice (modeled on Drusilla's "vecchia" in 37.66 of the *Orlando furioso*) bind and gag Didaco securely, and when he wakes, Violante rails against him:

Ahi, sleale, perfido, villano e crudel cavaliere, non più per le scellerate opere tue cavaliere ma vilissimo uomo, quanto mi duole che io di te non possa pubblicamente negli occhi di tutta la città quella vendetta prendere che la scelaraggine tua merita! Ma di modo sì fatto ti punirò che a quanti ci sono e che dopo noi verranno sarai esempio, a ciò che di beffar le semplici ed incaute fanciulle debbiano guardarsi, e quando volontariamente hanno fatto una cosa che nel cospetto di Dio è accetta, che la conservino. (503)

Violante's desire for public rather than private vengeance can be interpreted as a reaction to the havoc caused by the privacy of their clandestine marriage. The bed is in a sense a symbol of the private and secret nature of their marriage, and it is above the bed that

¹⁶ Violante echoes the words of another of Bandello's characters, Collatino, husband of the violated Lucrezia in novella 2.21: "Adesso ti deve diletta e giovar il vivere, ché vicina sei a veder questo adultero andar in estrema rovina" (851).

¹⁷ Didaco has a clear Boccaccian antecedent in the figure of Elena, the widow of novella 8.7, who trusts Rinieri, the scholar she has tricked and thus gives him the opportunity to carry out his savage plan of revenge. Violante, like Boccaccio's scholar, professes a pedagogical motive for the revenge: Rinieri's motive is to teach Elena not to toy with men's affections; Violante's motive is to teach all men not to deceive women with promises, blandishments, and abuse of the marriage sacrament.

Violante chooses to end her husband's life: "Non conosci, traditore, questo luogo, ove con simulate parole il matrimoniale anello mi desti e con più falsi parlari la mia verginità mi rapisti? Ecco, mancator di fede, il letto geniale che tu sì leggermente hai violato" (503).¹⁸

As she speaks, Violante presents her revenge as being directly linked to Didaco's prior actions; she construes the torture as a contrappasso: "– Ahi, quante bugie tutte a mio danno ordinate questa falsa lingua m'ha detto! Ma lodato Iddio, ella nessun'altra più ne ingannerà. – Dicendo questo, con un paio di forbici gli tagliò più di quattro dita di lingua" (503). She mutilates Didaco's tongue in a gesture reminiscent of Philomela's mutilation by Tereus in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.¹⁹ Violante continues to mutilate Didaco in a manner that recalls the revenge of Procne and Philomela, who kill Tereus' (and Procne's) son Itys and dismember him.²⁰ Violante, significantly, is at once Tereus, Philomela, and Procne; at once assailant, victim, and avenger. Violante effects a metamorphosis from victim to assailant.

After the introductory invective, Violante proceeds to a systematic anti-blason that is at once direct and indirect dismemberment: after decrying his false words and promises, cutting out his tongue, she decries the fingers with which he placed the ring on hers, and cuts off his fingertips: "Slealissimo, perché con queste dita mi desti il matrimonial anello? Perché mi sposasti? Perché dopoi con le braccia il collo m'avvinchiasti, se ad altri elle devevano un non legítimo anello donare?"²¹ Next, she

¹⁸ Particular attention should be given to the word "violato", given Violante's name. The pairing suggests that Violante and Didaco are co-complicitous in a cycle of clandestine marriage and violence; yet a closer look at the analogy Violante: violante :: Didaco : violato, which on the surface might suggest that Violante is the actor in dispensing violence while Didaco is the passive receiver of violence, is complicated by the context in which the word "violato" appears: "tu . . . leggermente hai violato" is a strong accusation, not only attributing agency to Didaco, but also accusing him of doing so with levity – a factor which adds gravity to the offense he has committed.

¹⁹ It is important to note that Tereus cuts out Philomela's tongue in order to prevent her from telling the truth about being raped, while Violante claims to cut out Didaco's tongue to prevent him from telling seductive lies.

²⁰ Tereus cuts off Philomela's tongue after he rapes her for the first time, when she vows to report his crime: "Ipsa pudore proiecto tua facta loquar" (VI. 544-545). Tereus rapes Philomela again, repeatedly, after mutilating her (VI. 561-562) and holds her captive. Philomela weaves the story of the rape into a tapestry which she sends to her sister, Procne. As is well known, the myth culminates in a horrifying act of violence by the two sisters, who murder and dismember Tereus's son Itys, then cook him and serve him to Tereus, who, unaware of the deception, unwittingly consumes his own child.

²¹ The most obvious examples of the blason or effictio tradition are to be found in Petrarch's *Canzoniere*. For example:

Non pur quell'una bella ignuda mano,
che con grave mio danno si riveste,
ma l'altra et le duo braccia accorte et preste
son a stringere il cor timido et piano.
Lacci Amor mille, et nesun tende invano,
fra quelle vaghe nove forme honeste
ch'adornan sí l'alto habito celeste,
ch'aggiunger nol pò stil né 'ngegno humano:
li occhi sereni et le stellanti ciglia,
la bella bocca angelica, di perle
piena et di rose et di dolci parole,

gouges out his eyes after condemning the lust that arose from them: “occhi ladri che degli occhi miei sète qualche tempo stati tiranni” (503). The blason and dismemberment continue: “Né di questo contenta, poi che qualche altra parte del corpo che per onestà mi taccio gli recise e quasi per ogni membro de l’infelicissimo cavaliere ebbe i suoi taglienti ferri adoperati, al core si rivolse” (504). Having finished with Didaco, Violante then places the dismembered body in a basket under her bed, covered by a cloth. Notably, she does not do this with the intention of concealing the crime; quite the contrary, her ultimate goal is to proclaim the crime as publicly as possible:

Quella matina, d’un pezzo avanti desinare, venne il servidore de l’infortunato cavaliere secondo ch’era solito, per accompagnar il padrone a casa de la nuova sposa. Come Violante lo vide, così gli disse: – Se tu vuoi intendere ove il tuo signore è ito, va e conduci qui il signor viceré se tu vuoi, perciò che ho commissione di manifestarlo a lui e non ad altri. Altrimenti facendo, tu ti affatichi indarno. – (505)

The (temporary) concealment of Didaco’s body and the strategic decision to defer the moment of truth-telling in order to gain an audience before the viceroy further underscores Violante’s urge to move the matter into the public sphere after the secret marriage and privately consummated revenge. After receiving Violante’s instructions, the servant goes to Didaco’s family members, who ask Violante to reveal Didaco’s whereabouts. She tells his kinsmen, as she has already told the servant before them, to summon the viceroy. Violante is summoned before the viceroy, and before the viceroy’s men and all others who have gathered for the occasion, she openly proclaims what she has done, citing her defense of her own honor:

Io né a negar né a pregare mi saprei disporre,²² parendomi che troppo gran vigliaccheria sarebbe d’una cosa volontaria e pensatamente operata temer

che fanno altrui tremar di meraviglia,
et la fronte, et le chiome, ch’a vederle
di state, a mezzo dí, vincono il sole.
(CC)

It is important to note that the second line of this poem is echoed by Violante when she states: “Ahi, quante bugie tutte a mio danno ordinate questa falsa lingua m’ha detto!” (Bandello 503).

And:

Ov’è la fronte, che con picciol cenno
volgea il mio core in questa parte e ’n quella?
Ov’è ’l bel ciglio, et l’una et l’altra stella
ch’al corso del mio viver lume denno?
Ov’è ’l valor, la conoscenza e ’l senno?
L’accorta, honesta, humil, dolce favella?
Ove son le bellezze accolte in ella,
che gran tempo di me lor voglia fenno?
Ov’è l’ombra gentil del viso humano
ch’òra et riposo dava a l’alma stanca,
et là ’ve i miei pensier’ scritti eran tutti?
Ov’è colei che mia vita ebbe in mano?
Quanto al misero mondo, et quanto manca
agli occhi miei che mai non fien asciutti!
(CCIC)

Violante’s indebtedness to Petrarch and Petrarchism is a topic that merits further discussion, of course.

²² These words echo Ghismunda’s words to Tancredi: “Tancredi, né a negare né a pregare son disposta” (Boccaccio 4.1.31).

punizione. Voglio adunque, il vero con buon viso liberamente confessando, diffender la fama mia, a ciò che se nessuno per il passato ha di me sinistra opinione avuta, sappia ora certissimamente che io del signor Didaco Centiglia moglie vera sono stata e non bagascia. Mi basta che l'onore mio sia salvo, avvenga mò ciò che si voglia. Io, signor viceré, questa notte passata, con l'aiuto di questa schiava che meco è, da la ricevuta ingiuria stimolata, quella vendetta ho preso che m'è paruta convenevole a l'ingiuria che egli fuor d'ogni ragione, non l'avendo io offeso, m'ha fatta, e con queste mani da quello scelerato corpo ho la vituperosa anima cacciata. Egli l'onore tolto m'aveva ed io a lui ho la vita levata. Ma quanto più si debbia l'onore che la vita apprezzare è troppo manifesto. (507)

Like Livy's Lucretia (and others, real and fictional, who follow in her footsteps), Violante insists that because honor is more important than life, her revenge is justified. Nevertheless, unlike those women who interpret this principle to mean that their honor is more important than their own lives, Violante strikingly rates her own honor as more valuable than her husband's life. In her article "Bandello tra la pratica dell'amore e il governo dell'onore" Daria Perocco discusses the relationship between public and private in the novella, arguing that:

Con l'uccisione del reprobò, la vendetta potrebbe essere conclusa. Violante, però, vuole che questo suo atto venga reso pubblico perché chiunque avesse potuto sopporre un atteggiamento di leggerezza nella difesa del suo onore potesse invece constatare la fermezza nel perseguirlo fino alla morte. . . . Violante non è mai totalmente appagata di una vendetta che è conseguenza di un tradimento prevedibile, perché frutto di un errore iniziale. La donna, infatti, nell'ipotesi bandelliana, deve essere consapevole che l'uomo è tratto dalla forza del desiderio amoroso a compiere atti di cui potrà solo pentirsi: primo fra tutti una promessa di matrimonio con una donna di natali "tanto bassi" come era lei; e l'infrazione al codice è impensabile al punto che nessuno dei vicini che mormorano potrebbe sopporre l'esistenza di un legame legale tra Violante e Didico. (Perocco 1985: 213)

Perocco neglects to mention that Didaco does not merely make a promise of marriage, but does in fact marry Violante, as the court itself acknowledges in the investigation that follows the grim revelation of Didaco's death: "Furono esaminati la madre, i fratelli ed il servidore, e si trovò che in effetto egli non poteva di ragione sposar la seconda moglie" (507). This outcome begs the question of why Violante did not make use of the court to have her marriage recognized before (or instead of!) killing Didaco. From the legal standpoint of the investigation within the narrative, Didaco's dead body, while it brings attention to the case, does not add any evidence to it. From the standpoint of literature, however, Didaco's tortured and dismembered body points out a logical flaw: Violante's wrath, and its violent byproduct, is used as a measure of the wrong done to her by Didaco. The narrative points out the legal recourse available to Violante, who – like the fictional Boientis and like the historical Lusanna – could have brought evidence and witnesses of her clandestine marriage to a bishop, precluding Didaco's second nuptials.

It is noteworthy, additionally, that it is the viceroy's court (and not an ecclesiastical court) that investigates the crime and the marriage that preceded it; by insisting on speaking before the viceroy's court, Violante shows awareness of her access to the law. Why, readers might ask, does she seek out a secular court rather than the

ecclesiastical one? Perhaps because Didaco, as one of the greatest men of arms in the land, is known to the viceroy and his court; perhaps, more relevantly, because the secular court is the most appropriate venue for dealing with murder, as opposed to the strictly marriage-related problems that Violante faced before choosing to kill her husband. The murder is, of course, an alternative to seeking legal recourse through the ecclesiastical courts and necessitates involvement by secular authorities. The decision to make public the marriage, disavowal, and murder also stands in contrast with Didaco's decision to acknowledge the marriage, thus undeceiving those who believe, based on deceptive appearances, that Violante is Didaco's mistress.

The novella of *Domenica and Boientis* points to the possibility for a woman abandoned by her husband to seek justice: as we saw, Boientis goes out of his way to threaten his wife and mother-in-law, both directly and through his powerful patron, precisely in order to prevent either of them from bringing the clandestine marriage to light. The potential effectiveness of the system is later dramatized when he presents the case to the bishop, who rules on the validity of the marriage and orders that the spouses be reunited. Violante knows she is legally in the right regarding her marriage, yet she willfully disregards the legal solutions available, citing the defense of honor as justification for the violent revenge she has perpetrated against Didaco. She invokes the same standards of female chastity and honor in her very first conversation with Didaco and in her final, brutal revenge against him. True to her name, Violante violently literalizes metaphors about the value of female honor, suggesting a dangerous, excessive side to the rhetoric.

This novella is among a rather small number of novellas by Bandello to have received significant critical attention, yet it has been traditionally misread by scholars who do not understand the legal context. Indeed, there is a critical tradition that claims Violante's revenge is justified. Most prominently, in "L' image et la condition de la femme dans les nouvelles de Bandello," Fiorato presents an interesting reading of Violante's novella which acknowledges the horrific nature of Violante's actions and justifies them at the same time:

Le conteur figrole parfois avec une cruauté raffiné le supplice du coupable, comme dans les cas di Didaco . . . qui, ayant abandonné la jeune Violante après l'avoir épousée secrètement, est mutilé par celle-ci avec une incroyable minutie puis assassin atrocement avec l'aide d'une esclave . . . L'horreur est ici porteuse d'une morale exemplaire . . . Le conteur justifie en effet la vengeance de l'«épouse» bafouée qui préfère le crime et la mort au déshonneur . . . (202-03)

Fiorato conflates Violante's desire to teach all men a lesson with Bandello's own narrative intent; thus, Violante's violence becomes the conduit for Bandello's "morale exemplaire." By contrast, rather than assume that Bandello "justifies" Violante's butchery, I contend that the narrator leaves several specific clues that Violante chooses violence instead of legal recourse; these clues invite the reader to reflect on Violante's violation of the law, both in failing to resort to it when there is still a non-violent solution possible and in seeking her own savage revenge outside of the law. Additionally, by downplaying the legal significance of the marriage between Violante and Didaco (as illustrated by the quotation marks he places around the word "épouse"), Fiorato misses the opportunity to note that Violante does indeed have access to the law and consequently alternatives to violence, as Bandello, and his audience, very well knew. As a result,

Fiorato's conclusion that Bandello himself justifies Violante's violence is unconvincing.²³ There is no indication that her violence is justified to anyone but herself and her maid (the conspicuous absence of any mention of the mother and brothers from the revenge narrative reinforces this reading); her execution by the forces of the law is a further reminder of law and justice in contrast to violent self-help.

Moreover, both Violante's thirst for revenge and the mad pleasure she takes in meting it out detract significantly from the argument that it is justified. Violante ultimately emerges as a lawless sadist. If this were not enough, her conduct contrasts sharply with the utopian vision of a woman-ruled society where justice triumphs, described in the dedicatory letter to 1.26: "*Ci saria ben questo almeno, che, essendo naturalmente pietose e dolci di core, si placerebbero di leggero e sariano pieghevoli a ricever le nostre preghiere, perché di sangue, di veleno, di morti e di lagrime la lor pietosa natura non è troppo vaga*" (1.26, 320). Violante's violence is a far cry from justifiably avenging her honor; rather, it is explicitly represented in terms that contradict a just regime led by women.

Ariosto's Canto 37, discussed in connection with the story of the Duchess of Malfi, is recalled in this novella as well. Violante's violent excesses are in a sense the fulfillment of Drusilla's revenge fantasies:

Tu dunque avrai da me solazzo e gioia,
io lagrime da te, martiri e guai?
Io vo' per le mie man ch'ora tu muoia:
questo è stato venen, se tu nol sai.
Ben mi duol c'hai troppo onorato boia,
che troppo lieve e facil morte fai;
che mani e pene io non so sì nefande,
che fosson pari al tuo peccato grande.
(*Orlando furioso* 37.71)

The several echoes of Canto 37 of the *Orlando furioso* within the narrative of Violante's revenge demand further analysis. Drusilla was initially the object of Tanacro's violent sexual desire – as a host, Tanacro fell in love with Drusilla, wife of his guest Olindro and murders him and kidnaps her violently in spite of her clear remonstrations (37.55-56). Intent on preserving her honor against her husband's killer, she tries, unsuccessfully, to kill herself by jumping off a cliff. Seriously injured, she is nursed back to health against her wishes by Tanacro, who in the meantime, has decided to marry her rather than simply rape her:

E mentre che s'indugia a risanarla,

²³ Similarly, Josephine Donovan in her article "From Avenger to Victim: Genealogy of a Renaissance Novella," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 15.2 (1996): 269-88 defines Bandello's novella 1.42 as a "feminist revenge story" (269). Perhaps the only scholar who does not interpret Violante's revenge as justified by the narrative is Ullrich Langer, although he does not consult Bandello's own text but Pierre Boiastuau's re-adaptation in the fifth story of the *Nouvelles tragiques*: "The [viceroy's] judgment . . . indicates that revenge is inadmissible . . . and that *excessive* revenge . . . is the cause for her capital punishment" (332-33). Langer further acknowledges the legal context: for example, "the conditions of the clandestine marriage are described in detail" (333). Curiously, those scholars who interpret Violante's story as a feminist exemplum have not discussed the relation between the novella and the female narrator, Leonora Buonavicina. See Godi (1996: 230-36) for a discussion of the female narrator and female dedicatee, Camilla Gonzaga.

di celebrar le nozze si prepara;
ch'aver sì bella donna e sì pudica
debbe nome di moglie, e non d'amica.
(*Orlando furioso* 37.57.5-8)

Drusilla, everything taken from her, including her power to kill herself, concentrates her efforts on murdering Tanacro with the utmost stealth and secrecy.

Tant'ella odia più lui, tanto è più forte,
tanto è più ferma in voler porlo a morte.
(*Orlando furioso* 37.58.7-8)

Drusilla invents a spurious wedding custom which requires her and her husband to share a glass of wine, which she has poisoned for the occasion. Clearly, the fact that her old maidservant gives Drusilla poison on demand highlights the fact that Drusilla could have killed herself without also killing Tanacro.

We should not neglect to note that Drusilla's narrative parallels that of Ariosto's Issabella, who, kidnapped by Rodomonte after he has murdered her betrothed, Zerbino, endeavors to preserve her chastity in any way possible, even at the cost of losing her own life.²⁴ Issabella, like Drusilla, uses stealth in her plan, but unlike Drusilla, focuses on a plan that ends her own life rather than that of her would-be assailant. Issabella's deceives the drunk Rodomonte into slicing her head off with his sword to test the miraculous properties of her invulnerability bath and earns the poet-narrator's praise:

vattene in pace, alma beata e bella!
Così i miei versi avesson forza, come
ben m'affaticherei con tutta quella
arte che tanto il parlar orna e còme,
perché mille e mill'anni e più, novella
sentisse il mondo del tuo chiaro nome.
Vattene in pace alla superna sede,
e lascia all'altre esempio di tua fede.
(*Orlando furioso* 29.27)

Drusilla's violence, on the other hand, is exerted against her captor, and leads to Marganorre's repressive and misogynistic rule, which is later overturned and reversed by the intervention of Bradamante, Marfisa, and Ruggiero. It is important to reflect on the differences in the narratives of Violante and Drusilla as well as on their similarities, for Drusilla is avenging both her husband's murder and her own attempted rape and preventing an unwanted marriage from occurring, whereas Violante is avenging her reputation, emphasizing that she is owed, in Ariosto's words, "nome di moglie, e non d'amica" (37.57.8). Additionally, whereas Drusilla commits the murder-suicide to prevent becoming Tanacro's wife, Violante commits murder to punish her husband for disavowing their clandestine marriage and to preventing him from consummating his public marriage with another woman.

While Issabella's brutal death receives a lovely encomium, the deaths of Drusilla and Violante are not represented so sympathetically. Both women go to their deaths with a savage kind of pleasure: Drusilla "Finì il parlare insieme con la vita;/e morta anco pareva lieta nel volto" (37.75.1-2), and Violante and her servant "le quali pubblicamente furono

²⁴ See Albert Ascoli, "Like a Virgin: Fantasies of the Male Body in the *Orlando Furioso*," In *The Body in Early Modern Italy*, ed. W. Stephens and J. Hairston (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).

decapitate . . . andarono tutte e due così allegramente a la morte come se fossero andate a la festa” (507-08). Their immoderate joy lacks any hint of sadness with relation to their actions or the situations that led them, justly or unjustly, to revenge; their approach to the impending punishment functions as a parody of a martyr’s death. The excess of joy parallels the excess of violence. Both Violante and Drusilla are a threat to male law.

Violante’s revenge also strongly echoes the story of Olimpia, narrated in cantos 9, 10, and 11 of Ariosto’s great poem. Olimpia loves Bireno but is pursued by Arbante, son of the king of Frisa, who in his quest to obtain her hand, violently kills her father and brothers and captures Bireno. She is forced to marry Arbante (9.32-36), but notably this forced marriage signifies for her both a desire for her own suffering and for the pursuit of revenge. Before acquiescing to the marriage, she states defiantly, “Per un mal ch’io patisco, ne vo’ cento/ patir . . . / esser morta, arsa viva, e che sia al vento/ la cener sparsa, inanzi che far questo” (9.34.1-4). Even after agreeing, her desire for death persists, but is accompanied by an equally strong desire for revenge:

Io che sforzar così mi veggio, voglio,
Per uscirgli di man, perder la vita;
Ma se pria non mi vendico, mi doglio
Più che di quanta ingiuria abbia patita. (9.36. 1-4)

Olimpia sets a trap for Arbante, in the form of a man who strikes her bridegroom in the marital bed with an ax (before the marriage can be consummated) and then Olimpia cuts his throat (9.41). In the aftermath of these events, Olimpia goes to Frisa to rescue Bireno. This story of violently forced marriage and violent revenge then becomes intertwined with the theme of abandonment (which as we have seen serves as the immediate pretext for female revenge in *Bandello’s* novella 1.42). Bireno marries Olimpia at the end of Canto 9, but he has fallen in love with the young daughter of the now-deceased king of Frisa; he ruthlessly abandons Olimpia on a deserted island, leaving her exposed to countless dangers before Orlando rescues her from a vicious sea monster. What is striking about Olimpia is her attitude towards forced marriage (and the forced sex that accompanies it). Like Drusilla, she experiences both the masochistic desire to hurt herself and the sadistic desire to pursue revenge; this is in opposition to Issabella, who concentrates all her efforts towards masochistic self-annihilation, thus earning the narrator’s undivided praise. Violante is, in the end, no Issabella. Like Drusilla and Olimpia, she exhibits both sadistic and masochistic responses to her plight; unlike her Ariostan counterparts, who first pursue self-destruction and then revenge, Violante reverses the chronological order.

Bandello’s insistent reference to Ariosto’s narratives of Olimpia, Drusilla, and Issabella implicitly calls into play the affinity between two commonplace pretexts for female revenge: coercion to sex and/or marriage, and disavowal of marriage. The unlikely affinity between Violante and Issabella, in particular, seems to challenge readers to reflect on these connections; along the same lines, these intertextual references reinforce the concept of clandestine marriage as an alternative to sexual violence; however, clandestine marriage does not, in these stories, rein in manipulation, coercion, or violence. Rather, Didaco’s choice to use clandestine marriage as a temporary means of gaining sexual satisfaction leads directly to his desecration of the sacrament and his violation of the marital bed; indeed, Violante explicitly accuses Didaco of rape in connection to his disavowal of their consensual marriage: “con simulate parole il

matrimoniale anello mi desti e con più falsi parlari la mia verginità mi rapisti” (503). The subordination of marriage to sexual pleasure also indirectly sets in motion Violante’s violent revenge, which results in Didaco’s demise. However reprehensible Didaco’s behavior might be, in any case, the novella does not justify Violante’s response. Rather, it suggests that Violante, who deliberately summons the attention of the law after murdering Didaco, could have and should have taken her marriage case to court rather than pursue personal revenge.

The two preceding novellas deal with clandestine marriages contracted with the mothers’ knowledge (fathers are notably absent) and subsequently disavowed by one partner. I now turn to novellas addressing the conduct of parents following clandestine marriages contracted without their knowledge. The story of Giulietta and Romeo (2.9) begins rather inauspiciously with a reference to Romeo’s marketplace approach to the search for love. Romeo, tired of being ignored by the woman he has pursued for two years, “cominciò andar su le feste, e dove vedeva la ritrosa donna, mai non volgeva la vista, ma andava mirando e considerando l’altre per scieglier quella che più gli fosse a grado, come se fosse andato ad un mercato per comprar cavalli o panni” (730). He and Giulietta happen to gaze upon each other and are smitten; when Giulietta asks him what he wants from her, Romeo has the audacity to ask for admittance into her bedchamber, much to Giulietta’s outrage. Once again, a man’s request for sex is used by the woman in a quest for marriage:

– Vorrei, – rispose Romeo, – che voi amassi me com’io amo voi e che mi lasciate venir ne la camera vostra, a ciò che più agiatamente e con minor pericolo io potessi manifestarvi la grandezza de l’amor mio e le pene acerbissime che di continuo per voi soffro. – A questo Giulietta alquanto d’ira accesa e turbata gli disse: – Romeo, voi sapete l’amor vostro ed io so il mio, e so che v’amo quanto si possa persona amare, e forse più di quello che a l’onor mio si conviene. Ma ben vi dico che se voi pensate di me godere oltra il convenevole nodo del matrimonio, voi vivete in grandissimo errore e meco punto non sarete d’accordo. E perché conosco che praticando voi troppo sovente per questa vicinanza potreste di leggero incappare negli spiriti maligni ed io non sarei più lieta già mai, conchiudo che se voi desiderate esser così mio come io eternamente bramo esser vostra, che debbiat per moglie vostra legitima sposarmi. Se mi sposarete, io sempre sarò presta a venir in ogni parte ove più a grado vi fia. Avendo altra fantasia in capo, attendete a far i fatti vostri e me lasciate nel grado mio vivere in pace. – Romeo che altro non bramava, udendo queste parole, lietamente le rispose che questo era tutto il suo disio e che ogni volta che le piacesse la sposerà in quel modo che ella ordinasse. (735-36)

The secret marriage is contracted, with the knowledge only of Frate Lorenzo, who hopes to gain glory in the event that the secret marriage is followed by peace between the Montecchi and the Capelletti:

Fra Lorenzo . . . promise far tutto ciò che Romeo voleva, sì perché a quello non poteva cosa veruna negare ed altresì ché con questo mezzo si persuadeva poter pacificare insieme i Capelletti e i Montecchi ed acquistarsi di più in più la grazia del signor Bartolomeo, che infinitamente desiderava che queste due casate facessero pace per levar tutti i tumulti de la sua città. (737)

However, Lorenzo's hopes for peace between the two hostile families are dashed when Tebaldo dies at Romeo's hand; Romeo flees, leaving Giulietta behind, even though she begs him to allow her to accompany him, disguised as a page. Thus, separated from her husband, Giulietta pines away and grows despondent. Giovanna, Giulietta's mother, surmises that Giulietta is melancholy for lack of a husband; it is in a sense, the absence of communication between parent and offspring (which mirrors Giulietta's silence towards her parents regarding her secret nuptials) that contributes to the tragic ending of the story, just as much as the unfortunate and ill-timed brawl that results in Tebaldo's death. As Giovanna explains to her husband, Messer Antonio:

Io più volte l'ho dimandata la cagione di questa sua mala contentezza ed ho spiato da ogni banda per venirne in cognizione, e nulla ho potuto intender già mai. Ella mi risponde sempre d'un tenore, che non sa che cosa s'abbia; e tutti quei di casa si stringono ne le spalle né sanno che se ne dire. Certo è che alcuna gran passione la tormenta, poi che così sensibilmente ella va come cera al fuoco consumandosi. E poi che mille cose tra me m'ho imagnate, una sola m'è venuta a la mente, per la quale io dubito forte che avendo vedute tutte le sue compagne esser il carneval passato divenute spose e che di lei non si parli di darle marito, che quindi nasca questa sua tristezza. (744)

Giovanna, like Romeo earlier in the novella, sees young women as goods rather than people: "m'è paruto, marito mio, dirtene un motto, parendomi ch'oramai sia tempo che tu debbia procacciarle un buono ed onorato partito e non tenerla più senza marito, perché cotesta non è *mercadanzia* da tener per casa" (744, emphasis added). This passage also highlights the contrasting perspectives on marriage. If we envision views on marriage existing along a continuum, at one extreme is the ecclesiastical view of marriage as a sacrament founded on free uncoerced consent between the spouses, and at the other extreme is the secular-aristocratic view of marriage as a tool available for manipulation and control by dynasties, feudal lords, and parents; it is this latter view of marriage that Giovanna dramatizes. The tragic outcome of the novella, then, is in great part a result of the conflict between the two extremes. The secrecy of clandestine marriage allows Romeo and Giulietta to live a double life in which they secretly and privately partake in the consensual, sacramental version of marriage while at the same time appearing to comply with the aristocratic demands for family control.

Yet it would be inaccurate to characterize Giulietta's parents as wholly insensitive to their daughter's well-being. Indeed, mixed in with the pronounced lack of communication between parents and offspring noted above is parental concern for Giulietta's happiness, as illustrated by Messer Antonio's plan for finding a husband who will be pleasing to Giulietta:

Moglie, poi che tu non hai potuto cavar altro de la malinconia de la nostra figliuola, e ti pare che se le debbi dar marito, io farò quelle pratiche che più al proposito mi parranno per trovarle marito condecante al grado de la casa nostra. Ma vedi tu fra questo mezzo spiare se ella talora fosse innamorata e da lei intender che marito più gli piaceria. – Madonna Giovanna disse di far tutto ciò che saperia, e non mancò di nuovo d'investigare e da la figliuola e dagli altri di casa quanto seppe e puoté; ma nulla mai intese. (744)

Interestingly, however, Giovanna's investigation, which involves questioning people close to Giulietta and observing Giulietta herself, does not include asking Giulietta

directly about her thoughts on marriage. As a result, Giovanna concludes inaccurately that Giulietta's melancholy derives from the desire for a husband; only after marriage negotiations with Paris di Lodrone have been successfully undertaken does Giovanna inquire about Giulietta's opinion on the matter:

Messer Antonio lo disse a la moglie, ed ella parendole cosa buona e molto onorata, lo disse a la figliuola, del che Giulietta se ne mostrò fuor di modo dolente e trista. Madonna Giovanna ciò veggendo, si trovò pur troppo di mala voglia, non potendo indovinare di questo la cagione. E poi che molti ragionamenti ebbe con Giulietta fatti, le disse: – Adunque, figliuola mia, a quello che io sento tu non vuoi marito. – Io non vo' altrimenti maritarmi, – rispose ella a la madre, soggiungendo che se punto l'amava e di lei le caleva, che non le favellasse di marito. La madre udendo la risposta de la figliuola, a quella disse: – Che vuoi tu adunque essere se non vuoi marito? Vuoi tu farti pinzochera o diventar monaca? Dimmi l'animo tuo. – Giulietta allora le rispose che non voleva esser pinzochera né monaca e che non sapeva ciò che si volesse, se non morire. (745)

Giovanna and Antonio, for all their solicitude regarding Giulietta's happiness, are unable to involve their daughter in the effort to resolve or to understand her melancholy. Similarly, even though Antonio hopes to discover whether there is a particular man Giulietta might wish to marry, her parents do not in fact ask her whether nor whom she might want to marry before they set about making arrangements. The parents' lack of communication is reciprocated by Giulietta: even now, she is not open with her mother about her secret marriage. Matters do not improve once Antonio is informed of this conversation. He attempts to deal with Giulietta himself and becomes increasingly menacing:

– Figliuola mia, veggendoti oggimai d'età da marito, t'ho ritrovato uno sposo molto nobile, ricco e bello, il quale è signor e conte di Lodrone. Perciò disposti a prenderlo e far quanto io voglio, ché simili onorevoli partiti si trovano di rado. – A questo Giulietta con maggior animo che ad una fanciulla non conveniva, liberamente rispose che ella non voleva maritarsi. Il padre si turbò forte e salito in còlera fu vicino a batterla. Ben la minacciò rigidamente con agre parole, ed a la fine le conchiuse che volesse o no, fra tre o quattro giorni ella deliberasse andar con la madre ed altre parenti a Villafranca, perciò che quivi doveva venir il conte Paris con sua compagnia a vederla, e che a questo non facesse né replica né resistenza se non voleva che le rompesse il capo e la facesse la più trista figliuola che mai fosse nata. (745)

The narrative describes Giulietta's feelings during the ensuing trip to Villafranca, reflecting on the impact of the force and fear exerted on the young woman: “Or fu pur forza che andasse a Villafranca, ove il padre aveva un bellissimo podere. Ella v'andò con quel piacere che vanno i condannati a la morte su le forche ad esser impiccati per la gola” (746).²⁵ Later, after Giulietta returns with a happy countenance, hiding the fateful powder given her by Frate Lorenzo, her parents react by unwishing for the impending marriage: “Onde perché pareva loro ancor troppo giovanetta,²⁶ volentieri, se con onore si fosse

²⁵ The contrast with Violante's joy at her own impending death is worth noting, again in terms that underscores the normal displeasure experienced by the condemned.

²⁶ Giulietta is almost eighteen and Romeo is twenty-one.

potuto fare, l'averebbero tenuta dui o tre anni senza darle marito; ma la cosa col conte era già tanto innanzi che senza scandalo non si poteva disfare ciò che fatto era e conchiuso” (751-52). Clearly, they have an over-simplified view of the causes and cures of their daughter's depression. All of these factors, combined with a cascade of unfortunate and ill-timed coincidences, lead to the tragic outcome so well-known to generations of readers, revealing the hazards of poor communication between parents and offspring and the vulnerability of those who choose clandestine marriage: Giulietta marries secretly because she fears parental disapproval; yet the continued secrecy leads her down a slippery slope towards an untimely death and exposes her to countless risks along the way.

The story of Giulietta and Romeo is of course strongly associated with the city of Verona, where tourists flock to see the balcony where Giulietta supposedly listened to Romeo's entreaties. What if, we might ask, two lovers very much like Romeo and Giulietta married secretly not in Verona but in a different city? In novella 2.41, the story of Elena and Gerardo, the felicitous combination of clemency by family members and a secular government that honors consensual marriage leads to a happy outcome, an outcome which Bandello strongly links to the city of Venice, where the story takes place. Its resemblance to the story of Romeo and Giulietta is evident in the summary preceding the novella:

Uno di nascoso piglia l'innamorata per moglie e va a Barutti. Il padre de la giovane la vuol maritare: ella di dolore svenisce e per morta è seppellita. Quel di medesimo ritorna il vero marito e la cava de la sepoltura, e s'accorge che non è morta, onde la cura e poi le nozze solenni celebra. (vol. 2, p. 66)

The church alone cannot stand as guarantor for consensual marriages – there are too many other forces. The happy resolution of Elena's story suggests the important role of the law in limiting intra- and extra-familial opposition to consent-based marriage. The novella's narrator, the Veronese Gerardo Boldiero, who had ties to Bembo and Aretino and is mentioned by Marin Sanudo (Godi 2001: 301-303), suggests that only when the court is prepared to discipline those members of society who stand in the way of the couple's rights to contract marriage can the problem be resolved. It should be noted, furthermore, that the novella's dedicatee, Charles Brachet, was a jurist (Godi 2001: 297).

Elena is a young and extremely naïve fourteen-year-old girl from a noble family; one day, frustrated that her older female friends are looking out of the window instead of playing children's games with her, she is introduced to a new game, that of gazing at young men:

Avvenne che, una festa, una de le quattro sorelle, molestata da Elena perché non si voleva levar dal balcone, così le disse: – Elena, se tu gustassi parte di questo nostro piacere che noi prendiamo a trastullarci qui a queste finestre, a la croce di Dio, tu ci dimoraresti così volentieri come vi stiamo noi, e punto non ti curaresti de la «forfetta». Ma tu sei una semplice garzona e non t'intendi ancora di questa mercanzia. – Elena, non mettendo mente a parole che se le dicessero, attendeva pure a chiamarle al gioco e fanciullescamente molestarle. Venne una festa nel cui giorno, impedita per altre cagioni, le quattro sorelle non potero venire a diportarsi con Elena. Del che ella, rimasa trista e malinconica, s'affacciò ad una de le finestre che era dirimpetto a la casa de le compagne sovra il canaletto. Quivi se ne stava tutta sola e dolente di non trovarsi con le sue compagne, com'era a quei

tempi consueta. Or ecco che, dimorando la semplice fanciulla di tal maniera, avvenne che Gerardo con la sua barchetta passando per andar a trovar la barbiera, vide la fanciulla a la finestra e la guardò così a caso. Ella ciò veggendo, a quello si volse, e con allegro viso, come a le sue compagne più volte aveva veduto fare a' lor innamorati, cominciò a guardarlo. Del che Gerardo meravigliatosi, che forse mai più a quella non aveva posto mente o non veduta, amorosamente guardava lei; ed ella pensando che così fare fosse un gioco, quasi ridendo riguardava lui. (Bandello 2.41; vol 2 p. 68)

It is important to note that the word 'mercanzia' is used in reference to the game of looking at young men, again calling attention to the economic aspects of courtship and marriage; this is reinforced by the novella's location in Venice, a city whose economy was tied to trade, and by the fact that Gerardo himself is a merchant.²⁷ Gerardo falls prey to Elena's game and makes a habit of diligently passing by under Elena's window with great regularity, whereas Elena continues to view the pursuit as a game reserved only for non-working days:

Onde Gerardo di nuovo fuoco abbrusciando, la pratica de la barbiera in tutto abbandonò e di se stesso intieramente a la vaga fanciulla fece dono. Ma *ella, che semplicissima era* ed ancora il petto agli strali amorosi aperto non aveva, quando Gerardo dinanzi a le finestre di lei passava, ancor che volentieri lo vedesse, né più né meno lo guardava come se il mirarsi insieme fosse stato un giuoco. Frequentava ogni dì, e quattro e sei volte il giorno, l'innamorato giovine quel camino né mai gli veniva fatto di veder Elena se non il dì de la festa, perciò che la fanciulla, non essendo ancora in lei destato amore, riputava i giorni del lavorare non esser convenevoli al suo gioco. (Vol 2 pp. 69-70, emphasis added)

The narrator seems to chuckle at Elena's simplemindedness while setting up the contrast between play and work. Even this early in the novella, there are a number of clear references to Boccaccio's *Decameron*. Boccaccio's description of Alibech is grafted onto the character of Elena: "*La giovane, che semplicissima era e d'età forse di quattordici anni*" (Boccaccio 3.10.6, emphasis added) – Bandello copies not only the theme but the age ("una fanciulla di tredici in quatordecim anni" [67]) and Boccaccio's very words: "Elena, che semplicissima era" (68); "Ma ella, che semplicissima era . . ." (69).

Additionally, the contrast between workdays and feast days in the context of love and sex recalls Boccaccio's novella of Bartolomea and Paganino (2.10), in which the aged jurist Riccardo observes an outrageous number of holy days as an excuse for abstaining from sex with his wife and consequently loses her to a pirate whose sexual vigor recognizes no holidays.²⁸ One might wonder why Bandello evokes novella 2.10 of the *Decameron* in the story of Elena and Gerardo. In my opinion, he does so in order to stress the mercantile aspects involved in courtship and marriage formation: while Paganino is a pirate who illicitly steals another man's wife and whose business it is to appropriate the goods belonging to others, Gerardo is a merchant who lawfully engages in trade; Venice is a

²⁷ Another important aspect of the representation of Venice in this novella, of course, is the layout of the city itself; the waterways that lead Gerardo right under Elena's windows are particularly noteworthy, for instance. See Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, "Toward an Ecological Understanding of the Myth of Venice," in Martin and Romano, eds., *Venice Reconsidered* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins UP, 2000) for further discussion of these features.

²⁸ It should be noted that both novella 2.10 and novella 3.10 of the *Decameron* are narrated by Dioneo.

mercantile city with a reputation for justice and good laws. In both stories, the female protagonist is positioned between two men and, while remaining in a sense the object of trade among men, manages to assert some agency in her destiny.

Let us now return to the story of Elena: as it happens, her nurse, Nena, is Gerardo's former wet nurse and feels a deep sense of loyalty towards him. This partly explains why she acts as go-between after Gerardo confesses his love for Elena to her; to Elena she says: "io l'amo come figliuolo, e sempre sono stata domestica di casa sua e da tutti ben vista ed accarezzata. E perciò io non meno desidero il bene, onore ed util suo, che io mi faccia il mio proprio, sì come anco desidero ogni tua contentezza, e tanto per te e per lui sempre m'affaticherei quanto per persona che oggidì conosca" (75). Nena gives Elena a quick lesson on the facts of life:

a la fanciulla fece conoscer gli inganni che sotto quel gioco amoroso si nascondevano, e quante volte le semplici giovanette ed altre donne restano dagli uomini gabbate. Fecela anco capace quanto ciascuna donna di qualunque grado si sia, debbia stimar l'onore e quello con ogni diligentissima cura conservare. Ultimamente le disse, quando l'ebbe altre cose assai dimostrate, *per venir a l'intento suo*, se ella volesse con onesto modo terminar questo suo gioco amoroso, poi che gioco lo nomava, che le dava il core di far sì fattamente che ella diverrebbe sposa del suo Gerardo. (75-76, emphasis added)

When the nurse reports the conversation to Gerardo, the young man "si contentò molto volentieri di prenderla per sua legitima moglie, e tanto più di miglior animo quanto che seppe quella esser figliuola unica di messer Pietro" – clearly, he is motivated not only by affection but also by the financial and dynastic prospects involved in marrying Elena. Nena arranges for Gerardo to return on a day when Pietro, Elena's father, is out on business and she is scheduled to do the washing. While the nurse is wholeheartedly enthusiastic about the plan, Elena herself is of two minds regarding the clandestine marriage: "Spaventavala e di freddo ghiaccio la riempiva a dever far questo senza saputa e licenza del padre, e temeva che alcuno grande scandalo ci nascesse" (76). Yet in the end she decides to marry Gerardo "avvenissene ciò che si volesse" (77). The nurse usurps the role of Elena's father and also the role of priest. There is no explanation as to why neither Elena nor Gerardo discusses the issue with anyone other than Nena, who officiates at a wedding ceremony that takes place in Elena's bedroom:

–Eccovi qui al capo di questo letto l'immagine rappresentante la gloriosa Regina del cielo con la figura del suo figliuolo nostro Salvatore in braccio, i quali io prego e voi altresì pregar devete che al matrimonio, che insieme sète per parole di presente per contraere, diano buono principio, miglior mezzo ed ottimo fine. – Detto questo, la buona balia disse le belle parole che in simili spozalizzi, secondo la lodata consuetudine de la catolica romana Chiesa, dir si sogliono comunemente. E così Gerardo a la sua cara Elena diede l'anello. (77-78)

The nurse invokes the Virgin Mary as a symbol of authority and orthodoxy in the female space that is the young girl's bedroom. Yet the words she uses are the legal phrases that make marriage according to the traditions of the Church. Nena usurps not only the paternal power of Elena's father but the male power of the Church in assuming the role of matchmaker and officiant of the secret marriage between her two young charges. She then leaves the youngsters to consummate their marriage and attends to the laundry; the narrator insists on the clandestinity of the marriage: "Ciò che gli sposi serrati in

camera facessero, perché testimonii non ci erano, io non vi saperei dire; ma persona qui non è che non lo possa a punto come fu imaginare, da se stesso facendo giudicio se in simil caso trovato si fosse” (78).

Through careful choices of particularly charged words and imagery, Bandello inserts this narrative into the Petrarchan and Boccaccian discourses on love, invoking a fictional, idealized view of love in addition to the real world of clandestine marriage in Venice. As a result of the marriage, Elena “si trovava la più contenta donna che fosse in Vinegia, e benediva l’ora e il punto che Gerardo aveva veduto. Ma che diremo de le mirabilissime e poderose forze de l’amore? Il quale, se entrando nel petto a Cimone, di rozzo, ignorante e selvaggio, non uomo ma bestia che era, in un tratto lo rese accorto, gentile, saggio ed umano, il medesimo fece d’Elena” (78). The connections with Petrarchan lyric and Boccaccian novella would be difficult to miss.²⁹ However, along with this explicit series of connections, Bandello beckons readers to consider a more subtle set of implications. By recalling the novella of Cimone,³⁰ whose short-lived experience of edifying love is but a brief parenthesis in a life that is first brutishly uncouth and then violently brutish, Bandello juxtaposes Elena’s Venice with Cimone’s pagan world³¹; Elena’s choice to marry secretly before an old nursemaid is juxtaposed with Cimone’s choice to win his bride through violent abduction rather than by her consent or her father’s; and Elena’s Alibech-like naiveté is juxtaposed with Cimone’s uncouthness.³²

²⁹ Petrarch’s Sonnet 61 is clearly echoed in the passage:

Benedetto sia ’l giorno e ’l mese et l’anno
e la stagione e ’l tempo et l’ora e ’l punto
e ’l bel paese ’l loco ov’io fui giunto
da’ duo begli occhi che legato m’anno;
et benedetto il primo dolce affanno
ch’i’ ebbi ad esser con Amor congiunto,
et l’arco e le saette ond’i’ fui punto,
et le pighe che ’nfin al cor mi vanno.
Benedette le voci tante ch’io
chiamando il nome de mia donna ò sparte,
e i sospiri et le lagrime e ’l desio;
et benedette sian tutte le carte
ov’io fama l’acquisto, e ’l pensier mio,
ch’è sol di lei sì ch’altra non v’à parte.

³⁰ Boccaccio introduced Cimone by stating, “di grandezza e di bellezza di corpo tutti gli altri giovani trapassava, ma quasi matto era e di perdita speranza, il cui vero nome era Galeso; ma, per ciò che mai né per fatica di maestro né per lusinga o battitura del padre, o ingegno d’alcuno altro, gli s’era potuto mettere nel capo né lettera né costume alcuno” (Boccaccio 5.1.4).

³¹ This juxtaposition is further emphasized by Elena’s very name. Moreover, Elena’s name strengthens Bandello’s evocation of violent texts from the classical Greek tradition. By associating Elena with both the violent abductor Cimone and the seductive Helen, whose abduction by Paris sparked a long and violent war, Bandello suggests that Elena’s lack of effort to secure her father’s consent to her marriage implicates her as a willing participant in her own symbolic removal from her father’s control. Godi notes that the dedicatee of the novella, Charles Brachet, was a “persona colta e amante dell’antichità” (2001: 295).

³² See Chapter Two for a discussion of the novella of Cimone. Additionally, in *The World at Play in Boccaccio’s Decameron*, Giuseppe Mazzotta connects the novella of Cimone with the theme of play, which is also prominent in Bandello’s novella of Elena and Gerardo: “The stilnovistic dream that love ennoble man is flagrantly parodied as Cimone’s newly acquired virtue turns into a veritable madness of love. The narrative (one is reminded of *Othello*) takes place in Cyprus, the island of the mad Venus, and Cimone’s love succeeds only after generating mighty wars” (200).

Curiously, two years after the marriage, Messer Paolo, Gerardo's father, unknowingly pays Gerardo back for contracting marriage without parental consent by pledging Gerardo's service on a galley headed for Barutti: "desideroso, come generalmente i buoni padri sono, che il figliuolo suo cominciasse avvezzarsi ai traffichi de la mercanzia e si facesse pratico nei maneggi de la città, accordatosi del prezzo, a nome di Gerardo, senza avergliene fatto motto, ne prese una [galea]" (79). Gerardo is shocked by his father's actions and ruefully informs him of his inability to obey. However, when Gerardo informs Elena of his refusal to act in conformity with his father's wishes, she bitterly rebukes his lack of filial piety (perhaps this exhortation is also designed to call the readers' attention to her own lack of filial piety). Elena begs her consort to comply with his father's wishes:

Deh, cara vita mia, quanto gravemente errato avete a non ubidir prontamente a vostro padre! Ahi misera me e più che tre volte misera se non conosciuta ancora, ancor non veduta, di tanto danno, di tanto disonore e di così acerba doglia al mio onorato suocero son cagione! Non averà egli, come mi conosca, giusta cagione di poco amarmi? Non dirà egli che io sia il disconforto e, che più importa, la manifesta rovina de la casa sua? Certo che egli lo potrà ben dire. Vi prego adunque . . . se punto m'amate, ché pure io mi persuado esser da voi amata, e se del vostro amore mai debbo veder ferma prova, che per ogni modo vogliate ubidire a vostro padre, e per questi pochi mesi sofferire pazientemente l'allontanarvi dagli occhi miei. Sì che, marito mio caro, andatevene felice, tanto di me ricordevole quanto io sarò di voi, che di continuo col pensiero vi verrò seguendo ovunque anderete, come colei che eternamente vivere e morir vostra desidero. E cessi Iddio che io mai vi sia cagione che sempre con vostro padre non stiate in quella concordia a pace che a tutti dui si conviene! (81-82)

Gerardo is absent, then, for about six months, during which time Messer Pietro chooses a husband for Elena, who is predictably shattered by this turn of events. Wishing neither to defy her father's will nor to dishonor Gerardo, she holds her breath and wishes to die, but enters a state so near death that everyone believes that she is truly dead. She is buried in the family tomb just as Gerardo returns to Venice.³³ Upon hearing this doleful news, he decides to kill himself, but not before opening the tomb and lying next to Elena. He confides his secret marriage to a trusted shipmate who agrees to help him open the tomb. Lying next to his wife, Gerardo refuses to leave without her and insists on taking her body with them back to the boat, where his companion rebukes him for embracing and kissing her dead body. Gerardo at length perceives signs of life and his shipmate, though skeptical, investigates the matter as well and finds a heartbeat. The two men bring Elena to Gerardo's mother's house, where she is nursed back to consciousness and regains her health.³⁴ Then Gerardo convinces his sister and his brother-in-law, Lionardo, to take her in until the marriage is revealed to Messer Paolo.

³³ In Da Porto's earlier version of the *Giulietta and Romeo* story, Giulietta dies precisely by holding her breath and hoping for death; it seems no coincidence that Bandello's Giulietta fails to accomplish this rather unrealistic feat. Giulietta's death is narrated by Da Porto as follows: "E detto questo, la sua grande sciagura nell'animo recatasi, e la perdita del caro amante ricordandosi, deliberando di più non vivere, raccolto a sè il fiato e per buono spazio tenutolo, e poscia con un gran grido fuori mandandolo, sopra il morto corpo morta ricadde" (58).

³⁴ This recalls Boccaccio's novella 10.4, in which Gentile de' Carisendi discovers that his beloved, who is buried in a tomb, is still alive, and restores her to her husband.

Within a few short days of Gerardo's return, the plot thickens even further, as Messer Paolo presses Gerardo to get married; Gerardo prolongs the deception by stating that he is not ready for marriage. Messer Paolo, desperate to see Gerardo settled, coaxes his son, offering him free choice of a spouse as an incentive for marriage: "Se tu vuoi moglie, di questo ti compiacerò io, mentre che sia a te convenevole, che tu la prenda a tuo modo" (92). Armed with this enticement, Gerardo decides to reveal his long-held secret; when he tells his father about his marriage with Elena, Messer Paolo "disse che il dì seguente dopo desinare intendeva con la vista d'Elena certificarsi del vero: e che, essendo così, molto se ne contentava" (92). Gerardo asks for and easily obtains his father's forgiveness; this again leads to the question of why the marriage was kept secret from the beginning.³⁵ Father and son are reconciled, and Messer Paolo and his daughter-in-law meet each other soon afterwards.

Messer Paolo then arranges for the solemnization of the marriage in the Church, and the bride is presented as a foreigner, but she is recognized by the man to whom her father had promised her; he and his companions persuade the patriarchal court to open the tomb and when they discover that Elena's body is not there anymore, tempers rise, and the Council of Ten steps in to prevent a violent fight between the jilted fiancé and Gerardo:

Si partirono di chiesa e di lungo andarono al Patriarcato, ove tanto dissero che il patriarca concesse loro che potessero aprir lo avello ove Elena era stata seppellita. Quivi non vi trovando né ossa né polpa, concitarono i dui giovini un gran romore, e venuti ove si facevano le nozze, volevano per ogni modo Elena, dicendo l'uno di loro che dal padre di lei a lui era stata promessa. E moltiplicando in parole, Gerardo col rivale si diedero la fede a le venti ore di trovarsi con spada e targa in uno di quei campi di Vinegia. Ma venuta la cosa a la cognizione del consiglio dei capi dei Dieci, furono proibite l'arme e determinato che civilmente si procedesse. Così dedutta la lite in giudizio, non sapendo il giovine che la voleva altro allegare

³⁵ As in the case of Giulietta's relationship with her parents, the need for intergenerational communication regarding the formation of marriage is clearly an issue in the novella of Gerardo and Elena. Additionally, it must be noted that Gerardo's silence regarding the marriage emphasizes the fact that, especially among the upper classes, fathers were seen as having the authority over whether, and when, his offspring should contract marriages. For customs regarding marriage practices of Venetian nobles, see Guido Ruggiero's *The Boundaries of Eros: Sex Crime and Sexuality in Renaissance Venice* and Stanley Chojnacki's *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice: Twelve Essays on Patrician Society*. It is worth noting that in Bandello's novella 1.33, when Livio professes his love for Camilla, she states that she cannot be his unless they marry and presses him to speak to her father: "Per questo conviene che noi facciamo le cose nostre saggiamente, e che se il tuo amore, come tu dici, verso me è sì grande, che tu mi domandi a mio padre per moglie, che mi rendo certa che non me ti negherà, e così averai l'intento tuo onoratamente" (404). Livio agrees, and Camilla's father gives his conditional consent to the match; the couple will have to wait for Claudio, Camilla's brother, to return and give his consent in turn before the couple may proceed to marry (404). Livio and Camilla, "pensando che 'l fratello anch'egli se ne sarebbe contentato" and viewing "la cosa quasi per fatta" due to the father's consent (404), secretly and privately, without anyone else's knowledge, exchange words of present consent but wait for Claudio to return before consummating their clandestine marriage, which they plan to consummate after Claudio gives his consent and the marriage is publicly solemnized. However, when Claudio returns, he arbitrarily refuses to consent to the union. This novella, which ends tragically with the death of the young married couple (they consummate their marriage after learning the bad news; Livio dies of excessive joy and Camilla thereupon dies of grief), suggests first and foremost the importance of marriage as contracted by mutual consent of the couple and second that the father's subordination to his son's will profoundly disrupts the family's ability to function.

se non la promessa del padre,³⁶ e Gerardo provando per la balia che sposata l'aveva e consumato il matrimonio, e questo istesso confermando Elena, fu giudicato lei esser vera moglie di Gerardo. (92)

Bandello is deliberately unclear on the venue where the dispute is “condotta in giudizio”; interestingly, both the Patriarcato and the Consiglio dei Dieci are named in the passage directly preceding mention of the “lite”: we thus know that at the Patriarcato the two men persuade the authorities to open Elena’s crypt and that the Council of Ten steps in to prevent bloodshed afterwards. We also know that the dispute over whether Elena belongs to Gerardo or to the man chosen by her father is taken “in giudizio” and resolved according to standards of canon law on marriage: the marriage to Gerardo prevails because it is not merely *initiatum* through words of future consent, but contracted by words of present consent and moreover consummated; additionally, Nena serves as a witness for the existence of the clandestine marriage, proving that she is truly Gerardo’s wife and putting an end to the dispute. In the end, things are put to right, and Elena’s father, who is not involved in the court’s proceedings, accepts the ruling after the fact:

Messer Pietro che fuor di Vinegia allora era, intesa la novella, e conoscendo Gerardo esser giovine nobile e ricco, quello accettò non solamente per genero ma per figliuolo, di maniera che il buon Gerardo di ricco divenne ricchissimo e lungamente in pace ed allegrezza visse con la sua Elena, spesso rimembrando gli infortunii passati con lei e con la cara balia, i quali minimissima parte furono di tutti i lor danni, andando poi sempre di bene in meglio. (94)

This can happen in Venice because the highest secular judicial body, the Council of Ten, is sufficiently strong to prevent violent disruption to the social order. The benign understanding of the patrician parents of the clandestine spouses in this novella is in harmony with the characterization of Venice as a bastion of secular justice and of good rule, within both the private and public spheres.

Conclusions

Clandestine marriages emerge in Bandello as highly problematic, sometimes dangerous, and occasionally lethal; these narratives are haunted by the specter of violence. More subtly, there is a stark mercantilistic aspect to many of these novellas, where clandestine marriage is the result of a bargaining process in which a man agrees to marriage so he can have sex with a woman who will not otherwise satisfy his requests. Even in those novellas that do not overtly depict such a crude exchange, both women and courtship are represented as merchandise, as seen in the novella of Giulietta and of Elena, respectively.

Domenica and Violante are unique among the women in this chapter because they contract clandestine marriage with the knowledge and consent of their family. Notably, however, neither Violante’s family nor Domenica’s includes a father. In both novellas,

³⁶ Again, there is a reference to the novella of Cimone, who, “volendo onesto fine porre al suo disio, più volte fece tentare Cipseo padre d’Efigenia che lei per moglie gli dovesse dare; ma Cipseo rispose sempre sé averla promessa a Pasimunda nobile giovane rodiano, al quale non intendeva venirne meno” (5.1.24). Cimone later tells Efigenia that her father’s promise to Pasimunda is not reason enough to bind her to such a marriage: “Nobile donna, non ti sconsortare; io sono il tuo Cimone, il quale per lungo amore t’ho molto meglio meritata d’aver, che Pasimunda per promessa fede” (5.1.33).

the mother plays a fundamental role in the formation of clandestine marriage; in Violante's case, her brothers also give consent to the arrangement. The remaining clandestine marriages discussed here are contracted without the knowledge or consent of any family member, even (as in the case of Elena and Gerardo) where the families are not particularly likely to object. Not one of these clandestine marriage narratives depicts a father who consents to his daughter's secretly marrying a man. What implications might be drawn from this? Perhaps because the father's role symbolizes both authority over and protection of his offspring, one might wonder whether the absence of paternal consent to these secret nuptials underscores not only the potential for disruption of family life and of the social order, but also the vulnerable state of anyone who contracts a clandestine marriage. Similarly, nubile women who do not have paternal protection (women such as Domenica and Violante) appear vulnerable to exploitation.

Let us return then, to the dedicatory letter that precedes the novella of the Duchess of Malfi, a letter in which fathers, brothers, and husbands who commit acts of violence against women are harshly rebuked. Should readers conclude, as the letter seems to suggest, that women would govern society better than men? The vulnerability of women in fatherless households and the dysfunctional marriages that result from the negotiations between a potential bridegroom and the bride's mother (along with the bride) suggest otherwise. One possible – yet unstated – solution is for fathers to protect their daughters with wisdom and without violence, much as Boccaccio's Messer Negro did in novella 4.6 of the *Decameron*, discussed in the previous chapter. It is important to note, however, that the complex and often contradictory perspectives on clandestine marriage place even such a solution in the context of a large dialogue, with no clear answers offered to readers.

Like Boccaccio, Bandello often associates clandestine marriage with differences in class between the spouses and with power struggles between parents and offspring in marriage formation. Silence and secrecy between parents and offspring in matters of marriage, Bandello's narrators suggest, can be profoundly disruptive. Openness between parents and offspring is crucial, and the actions of parents who force their offspring's marriages or impede consensual marriages are called into question. These novellas raise an important question for readers to consider: can the practice of clandestine marriage, which allows couples to marry in spite of unwarranted parental objection, serve as a substitute for any effort to secure parental approval for marriage?

Interestingly, only one novella in this selection unambiguously depicts the resolution of a clandestine marriage dispute by an ecclesiastical court; this is the novella of Boientis, a novella, moreover, which can hardly be held up as a model to be emulated. In many of the novellas examined here, the role of the Church in settling marriage matters is severely undermined: the duchess of Malfi's brother, a cardinal, is preoccupied not with the sacramental nature of marriage but with his desire to control his sister's marital future and with his shame at her choice in marrying a man whose status is below hers (and of course, the cardinal's). His violent reaction is completely outside of the law and has nothing to do with any Christian model of marriage and family. Similarly, Frate Lorenzo is more preoccupied with the earthly fame he will enjoy if the clandestine marriage he celebrates between Giulietta and Romeo brings peace between the two warring families. This is a decidedly secular attitude towards marriage and recalls the

tradition of arranging marriages between spouses from warring families for the express purpose of bringing about peace.³⁷

One of the most memorable characters in Bandello's collection, Violante, defends her murder of Didaco by stating that honor is worth more than life. In the next chapter, we will see a different interpretation of the same precept: women who believe that honor is worth more than life itself are prepared to die to protect their virginity or to amend its loss.

³⁷ See, for example, Teodolinda Barolini's "Dante and Francesca da Rimini: Realpolitik, Romance, Gender" (*Speculum* 75.1 [2000]: 1-28), for a discussion of these practices and their representation in the literary canon.

Chapter Four: Sexual Assault and Misreading in Bandello's *Novelle*

“Young beauties force our love, and that's a rape” (John Donne, Elegy IX)

“*Di solito, la resistenza è scarsa: spesso è come se le vittime accettassero, in tacita, necessaria intesa, l'ineluttabilità del rapporto sessuale che con la forza viene loro richiesto*” (Scarabello 77)

“Unmarried girls of marriageable age . . . found their rapists penalized with little more than a slap on the wrist” (Ruggiero 96)

But since purity is a virtue of the mind and has as its companion a strength of mind that chooses to endure any evils whatever rather than consent to evil, and since no one, however magnanimous and shamefast, has it always in his power to decide what shall be done with his flesh, having power only to decide what he will in his mind accept or refuse, who, if that same mind is sane, will hold that he loses his shamefastness if by chance his flesh is seized and held down and a lust not his own is put in play and sated on it? (Augustine, *The City of God* I.XVIII)

Sexual Assault in Bandello's Novellas: an Introduction

In Chapter Three, male sexual desire was shown to be a factor motivating clandestine marriage in Bandello's *Novelle*; this chapter examines novellas in which the same desire can motivate outright sexual violence. The novellas by Bandello examined here, deeply ambivalent and conflicted, represent virgins as neither desiring nor enjoying such sexual contact, while married women unable to resist an assailant are stained by guilt and transformed into accomplices by the pleasure they experience during a sexual assault.¹ I argue that Bandello's novellas that have as their theme sexual violence are inextricably linked to reading and misreading. By engaging with Augustine's discussion of sexual violence and suicide in *The City of God* and by setting up individual novellas in relation to theological debates such as Augustine's, moreover, Bandello also places various novellas in opposition to each other, forcing readers to struggle with the inconsistencies.²

Novellas depicting the sexual assault of virgins and those depicting the sexual assault of married women, I argue, problematize each other in important ways, and only by juxtaposing different novellas can we begin to reflect on these problems and their

¹ It is important to bear in mind that in Bandello's time the legal and social understandings of sexual violence were still tied to factors external to the violence itself. Thus virginity, social class and marital status played an important role in how the crime was defined and perceived. As discussed in the Introduction and in Chapter One, during the twelfth through the sixteenth centuries, there was no single word that corresponded exactly to our word 'rape.' Several different words could be used to denote a sexual assault, and most of those words had other meanings as well. For example, *sforzare* means both 'to force' and 'to rape'; other terms used include 'fare violenza.'

² For instance, among novellas that depict married women faced with the threat of sexual assault, readers can hardly help but wonder why two novellas so similar as 1.3 and 1.24, examined in the final section of the chapter, end so differently, depending on how much violence the would-be assailant is willing and/or able to inflict on his victim. Whereas in the former case, the successful assault leads to a consensual adulterous relationship, in the latter case, an unsuccessful attempt at seduction gives rise to a hagiographic narrative.

implications.³ Moreover, when we take as a group Bandello's novellas that depict sexual violence, we must not dismiss the ambiguities and tensions within each novella, the tension often observed between a novella and its dedicatory letter, and the tension between one novella and another. I argue that these tensions and ambiguities are evidence that Bandello's aim is not moralizing and didactic, as so many of his critics seem to assume, but dialogic.⁴

Bandello's novellas that represent sexual assault engage critically with three long-held ideas that prevailed during his time: first, that women's beauty provokes rape; second, that men ensnared by the love of beautiful women lose control of their actions; and, third, that women always share some responsibility for their own sexual violation.⁵ Bandello not only associates sexual violence with misreading, but also inserts his narratives on sexual violence in a dialogue with each other, with themselves, with their dedicatory letters, and with important theological and legal discussions on the topic, Augustine's foremost among them. Bandello's dialogic strategy, far from revealing clear answers to readers, places the reader in crisis by revealing the impossibility of resolution.

Several of the narratives analyzed here implicate courtly love in a distorted set of courtship strategies at odds with the consensual view of marriage propagated by the Church. That is to say, the expectation that the beloved will reward courtship with sexual favors, without reference to consent, contributes strongly to the sexual violence in these stories. If the victim is unmarried, such violation in turn becomes either an obstacle to the victim's future marriage prospects or leads directly to marriage between ravisher and victim; if the victim is married, her wifely honor is at stake. Bandello's narrators do not absolve assailants of responsibility, regardless of the woman's beauty, and the blame for the wicked desire that spawns sexual violence resides in the eyes of the beholder.

As suggested above, the concept of a debt owed by the beloved to the lover plays a prominent role in these novellas. According to the flawed logic of the amorous debt, beautiful women incite men to pursue them and, as the source of male desire, owe fulfillment of that desire.⁶ Consequently, if they do not fulfill their lovers' desires willingly, they can be compelled to pay the debt by force. Women who are loved thus deserve to be violated if they will not consent to their lovers' entreaties.⁷ As will be

³ For example, Bandello's novella 2.21, which re-tells the story of the rape of Lucretia, raises issues that complicate the representation of the suicide of sexually assaulted virgins.

⁴ Issues surrounding misreading of Bandello have been discussed by Marilyn Migiel in her March 2007 Renaissance Society of America paper entitled "Reading the *Decameron* with Matteo Bandello." I thank Marilyn Migiel for providing me with a copy of her paper.

⁵ This issue is discussed in Angeliki Laiou, *Consent and Coercion to Sex and Marriage in Ancient and Medieval Societies* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1993). Laiou notes, for instance, that "any woman . . . who is forced into sexual intercourse . . . is thought in any case to have given some sort of consent; and she remains tainted by the act" (193).

⁶ This theme was treated, of course, by Dante in Canto V of the *Inferno*, in which Francesca describes the logic of courtly love which has condemned her and Paolo to eternal punishment:

Amor, ch'a nullo amato amar perdona,
Mi prese del costui piacer sì forte,
Che come vedi ancor non m'abbandona. (5.103-105)

⁷ Nadia Setti remarks in her discussion of Bandello's narratives that "la donna è spesso una figura ambivalente: idealizzata e superinvestita come oggetto sessuale durante l'innamoramento, essa può trasformarsi in oggetto d'odio in seguito del suo rifiuto della soddisfazione richiesta; anzi, a questo punto è essa stessa a essere rappresentata come agente della castrazione" (163).

demonstrated shortly, the violators in Bandello's narratives treat the woman's initial consent (or lack of consent) to sex as an irrelevant step; they hope that consent will be secured after the assault. The amorous debt emerges in Bandello's narratives as misreading: the man who gazes on a beautiful woman and imagines that her beauty entitles him to her sexual favors – who imagines on some level that she either reciprocates or should reciprocate his desire – is a misreader.

I show in the first part of the chapter that in Bandello's narratives depicting the assault of virgins, the assailant's gaze is analogous to perverse interpretations of fictional texts whose sexual content offers the potential to titillate readers who are predisposed by their own dirty minds to attribute a pornographic intention to the text. This, in turn, should alert readers about the importance of careful reading. Bandello's beautiful virgins are like texts which are in themselves morally innocuous, but which when exposed to the gaze of perverse men become vulnerable, though not blameworthy. The perverse men within Bandello's novellas blame the woman's beauty for their own loss of self-control. They are, in a word, like those readers who look for a simple message in a text and take it at face value.

This chapter begins with an analysis of novellas in which Bandello depicts the assault of virgins, who are explicitly associated with innocence.⁸ The heroines of novellas 1.8 and 2.7 are praised after displaying their determination to endure death rather than lose their honor, whereas in 2.15 and 2.42, violation is followed by marriage. Several clues within these narratives, however, indicate that such marriages are tainted. The chapter then moves on to discuss Bandello's portrayal of married women who confront sexual violence and the possibility of dishonor in novellas 1.3 and 2.21, and a married woman whose innocence is miraculously manifested before the eyes of her deceived husband (1.24). In these novellas, it must be noted, married women do not desire sexual assault and invariably resist it; yet the successful violation of any married woman leads inevitably to pleasure and a form of *post facto* consent. By representing inconsistent views of married women's chastity, with unsuccessful assaults ending in sainthood and successful assaults ending in whoredom, and by invoking Augustine's discussion of the rape of Lucretia, Bandello troubles the encomiastic treatment of suicide in novella 1.8.⁹

⁸ Fiorato's "L' image et la condition de la femme dans les nouvelles de Bandello" effectively contextualizes the novellas within Bandello's historical milieu and argues that the representation of women in the novellas is tied to the Reformation and the Council of Trent. He discusses the importance in Bandello's collection of the role of the young virgin, a figure often appearing in the service of Tridentine ideology, as many of these maidens are prepared to fight and die for their chastity. Often from a humble background, the virtuous heroines in Bandello's collection, Fiorato notes, understand that courtship and affection directed at them by men can be just as insidious as sexual violence (194). Marriage often appears in these novellas as a reward for virtue, and virginity functions as currency in the marriage market (195). When the characters' social or family background does not favor marriage, a man who courts a young woman might make a deliberate choice to offer the woman clandestine marriage rather than taking the alternative of assaulting her (196).

⁹ The effect on readers of this juxtaposition is analogous to that resulting from the juxtaposition of the three characters from Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* discussed in Chapter Three: Olimpia, Drusilla, and Issabella.

Assault of Virgins

In the period from the Black Death to the Reformation, James Brundage notes, “punishment of convicted rapists was often far less severe than the statutes prescribed. Fines, imprisonments for brief periods, or some combination of the two were the commonest penalties” (530), and some “statutes . . . voided rape prosecutions if both parties were unmarried and were willing to marry each other, provided that the woman’s parents approved the match” (531). Brundage adduces that “academic lawyers and some legislators . . . maintained that sexual assaults on all women – save for prostitutes – merited equal penalties, but courts failed to apply this egalitarian doctrine in practice” (531). In Bandello’s novellas, assaulted virgins, especially those from the lowest social classes, emerge as innocent and pure, while their attackers (often from higher social backgrounds) appear in a most unsympathetic light. I contend that by explicitly portraying the violence of men who overcome virgins, Bandello implicitly aligns himself with the authorities cited by Brundage, thereby criticizing the inequities so often observed in these cases.

Perhaps the best-known narrative of sexual violation in Bandello’s collection is novella 1.8, the story of Giulia of Gazuolo. The novella is based on a brief story presented by Castiglione in the *Il libro del cortegiano*, in the context of a discussion regarding the virtue of women who kill themselves after being assaulted. Let us begin with Castiglione’s version of the story, which appears in chapter XLVII and is narrated by Messer Cesare. A nameless “contadinella” working in the fields with her sister in Gazuolo “non molti mesi fa” enters a house for a drink of water; inside, “il patron della casa . . . vedendola assai bella e sola, presala in braccio, prima con bone parole, poi con minacce, cercò d’indurla a far i suoi piaceri; e contrastando essa sempre più ostinatamente, in ultimo con molte battiture e per forza la vinse” (246). The unfortunate girl returns to work, “scapigliata e piangendo” (246), but remains obstinately silent when her sister beseeches her to tell her what the matter is; rather, “mostrando di racchetarsi a poco a poco e parlar senza perturbazione alcuna, le diede certe commissioni; poi, giunta che fu sopra Oglio, che è il fiume che passa accanto Gazuolo, allontanatasi un poco dalla sorella, la quale non sapea né imaginava ciò ch’ella si volesse fare, subito vi si gittò dentro” (246). Although her sister runs along the river’s edge and offers her a rope each time she rises to the surface of the water, “la costante e deliberata fanciulla sempre la rifiutava e dilungava da sé; e così fuggendo ogni soccorso che dar le potea vita, in poco spacio ebbe la morte; né fu questa mossa dalla nobilità di sangue, né da paura di più crudel morte o d’infamia, ma solamente dal dolore della perduta virginità” (246). Messer Cesare reflects,

Or di qui potete comprendere quante altre donne facciano atti dignissimi di memoria che non si sanno, poiché avendo questa, tre dì sono, si po dir, fatto un tanto testimonio della sua virtù, non si parla di lei, né pur se ne sa il nome. Ma se non sopraggiungea in quel tempo la morte del vescovo di Mantua . . . ben saria adesso quella ripa d’Oglio, nel loco onde ella se gittò, ornata d’un bellissimo sepulcro per memoria di così gloriosa anima, che meritava tanto più chiara fama dopo la morte, quanto in men nobil corpo vivendo era abitata. (Castiglione 3.47, pp. 247)

In spite of the insistence on the fame she deserves, the violated girl in Castiglione's narrative has no age, no name, and no voice; this lack of identity is reinforced by the specific identification of the land that she comes from and the river where she drowns. By withholding the victim's name, Cesare insists on her exemplarity while stripping her of her identity. The nameless girl does not speak about the crime she has suffered; there is no testimony, and therefore not even the surviving sister can re-tell the victim's story.

This story, for all its claims to truth, is unabashedly lacking in verisimilitude. Absurdly, Messer Cesare tells this story as fact, yet he insists on the lack of actual witnesses, calling the suicide "un tanto testimonio della sua virtù" and thus reminding the readers that the only living person who knows what happened inside the house is the man said to have assaulted her. Cesare does not state that the man came forward to confess his crime, and readers have no reason to believe that a man responsible for the suicide of an innocent girl would have any motivation to do so. How, then, does Cesare, or anyone else, for that matter, know what happened inside that house? As stated above, there are no witnesses. The nameless victim refuses to reveal the reason for her suffering, preferring to die with the secret, and leaving it to the men of this world to imagine and tell her story. Admittedly, these problems arise in part from genre: indeed, the anecdote related by Messer Cesare is only one of several brief exemplary narratives found within the courtly dialogue tradition. It is by reappropriating the narrative and incorporating it into the novella tradition that Bandello develops and transcends the themes in the original narrative.¹⁰

Bandello's novella 1.8, narrated by Gian Matteo Olivo, adds voice and narrability to the violated girl, though it still glorifies her ultimate self-silencing through suicide. Giulia is a virtuous girl from a humble background, a peasant whose noble demeanor suggests a much higher station than her own. A young Ferrarese man in the service of the bishop falls in love with her and attempts in vain to win her affections by speaking to her amorously at a dance which they both attend, but she reminds him that her social rank does not allow her to entertain his "favole" (109). While she is beautiful and participates in social activities, she is careful to set a clear boundary, which the suitor does not respect. On the contrary, he goes to great lengths to follow her around and professes his desire for her on many occasions, although she repeatedly exhorts him to desist from such behavior (109-10).

As we might expect, the young man plans to take Giulia's virginity by force: "A la fine non potendo . . . più sofferire di vedersi sì poco gradire, deliberò, avvenissene ciò che si volesse, se la comodità bella si vedeva, quello per viva forza da lei prendere che ella di grado dar non gli voleva" (110-11). He stalks Giulia and plans to assault her with help from an accomplice. The two men follow the peasant girl into a remote place where she is performing chores to assist her family. There, the importunate suitor again entreats her to give in to his desires, and she begs him once again to desist and speeds up in an

¹⁰ Daria Perocco describes the structure of the *Novelle* and relates it to the tradition of dialogue and/or debate:

Si tratta insomma di un sistema in teoria estensibile *ad infinitum*, in cui all'aggregazione per via tematica suggerita dal modello boccacciano si è sostituita una tensione polimorfa che ha il suo nucleo non interno alle novelle, ma piuttosto esterno a esse, appunto nel mondo della discussione cortigiana, nella recita delle single vicende e nel dibattito, talora esplicito, che le incornicia. Si può addirittura dire che le novelle nascano spesso dalla costola di un dibattito, e che tendano a sviluppare in tensione narrativa quello che è un dilemma iniziale. (1993: 11-12)

attempt to elude him. However, once they reach a field which Giulia must cross in order to return home,

il giovine, poste le braccia al collo a Giulia, la volle basciare; ma ella, volendo fuggire e gridando aita, fu da lo staffiero presa e gettata in terra, il quale subito le mise in bocca uno sbadaglio a ciò non potesse gridare, e tutti dui la levarono di peso e per viva forza la portarono un pezzo lungi dal sentiero che il campo attraversava; e quivi, tenendole le mani¹¹ lo staffiero, lo sfrenato giovine lei, che sbadagliata era e non poteva far contesa, sverginò. La miserella amaramente piangeva e con gemiti e singhiozzi la sua inestimabil pena manifestava. Il crudel cameriero un'altra volta, a mal grado di lei, amorosamente seco si giacque, prendendone tutto quel diletto che volle. (111-12)

The assault is represented in tangible physical terms, with emphasis on the way in which the accomplice gags Giulia into silence and holds her body still. She cannot scream or move away from her assailants' grasp; the reader is forced to imagine her attempts to speak and cry out in spite of the gag. The alliteration of "amaramente" and "amorosamente" insists on the contrast between Giulia's bitter suffering and her attacker's counterfeit version of love. The impersonal, one-sided enjoyment of the assailant at the expense of his suffering victim is further emphasized by the use of reflexive verbs with a third-person singular masculine subject.

After assaulting her twice, Giulia's assailant allows the gag to be removed, and then he attempts to soothe her verbally: "cominciò con molte amorevoli parole a volerla rappacificare, promettendole che mai non l'abbandonaria e che l'aiuteria a maritare, di modo che starebbe bene" (112). Giulia does not give into these promises, nor to the "dolci parole" that follow. Seeing that she is not receptive to his suggestions, the assailant – in a gesture that symbolizes his desire to extend the effect of the gag, which has at this point been removed– steps up his effort to silence her ("rachetarla"): "con larghe promesse e con volerle allora dar danari" (112). Giulia, however, is not moved by his attempt to provide financial compensation for her lost virginity, any more than by his promises: "il tutto era cantare a' sordid." Her reading of his words is cautious; whereas he felt "seduced" by her beauty before the assault, she is not seduced or persuaded by his words afterwards. Giulia's only response is an exhortation of her own: "Giovine, tu hai di me fatto ogni tua voglia e il tuo disonesto appetito saziato; io ti prego, di grazia, che omai tu mi liberi e mi lasci andare. Ti basti quanto hai fatto, che pur è stato troppo" (112). Giulia's refusal of the two alternatives offered to her by her assailant as a reparation – marriage and money – engages with the options available to non-virgins at the time, with marriage and prostitution the two most obvious possibilities in the secular world.¹²

¹¹ Diane Wolfthal notes that holding the hands or wrists is an established symbol of sexual violation in medieval and early modern iconography (108).

¹² As Thomas Cohen notes, marriage and prostitution were not the *only* possibilities available to a nubile nonvirgin:

Careless historians sometimes write that in the Renaissance a girl had a stark double choice: fierce virginity till marriage or whoredom. Reality was far, far grayer. In the marriage market, except among the highest classes, a hymen was in fact just one commodity among many at play. It was a great asset, just as its absence was a costly liability. But other things, wealth especially, could retilt marriage-market scales. A nonvirgin was shamed but hardly damned if her family could proffer assets with which to endow a marriage or, at a higher price, a nunnery berth. (Cohen, *Love and Death* 142-43)

Pushed into sexual maturity as a result of forcible defloration, a young woman may not wish to “choose” either of these paths.¹³ Because of Giulia’s humble social station, her family cannot afford a dowry; however, rather than seizing the chance to make the best of the situation and accept the assailant’s offer to help her get married, Giulia refuses, choosing instead suicide by drowning.

Giulia ensures that her suicide will speak for her long after it leaves her silent, however. Before killing herself, she returns home and dresses in her best white clothing and, accompanied by her little sister, recounts these terrible events to an elderly woman who lives nearby, ensuring that her story will be retold and remembered.¹⁴ As Giulia jumps into the Oglia River, her sister’s screams summon numerous townspeople to the scene, ensuring that her end will have many witnesses. After her death, she is remembered and her virtue celebrated:

Fu il corpo ritrovato, e divulgatasi la cagione per che s’era affogata, fu con universal pianto di tutte le donne ed anco degli uomini del paese con molte lagrime onorata. L’illustrissimo e reverendissimo signor vescovo la fece su la piazza, non si potendo in sacro seppellire, in un deposito mettere che ancora v’è, deliberando seppellirla in un sepolcro di bronzo e quello far porre su quella colonna di marmo ch’in piazza ancor veder si puote. E in vero per mio giudicio, quale egli si sia, questa nostra Giulia non minor lode merita che meriti Lucrezia romana; e forse, se il tutto ben si considera, ella deve esser preposta a la romana. (113-14)

Unlike the nameless girl in Messer Cesare’s narrative, Giulia does not merely deserve to be remembered and monumentalized – she is. At the same time, the comparison of Giulia to Lucrezia subtly reminds the reader that this is all a fiction. Ultimately, Giulia is merely a fictional heroine, and the only monument created in her memory is Bandello’s novella.

Giulia’s sexual violation puts into question her status as a fit product for the marriage market and for the production of future offspring. However, when she destroys her own sullied body, Giulia solves a problem for patriarchal society. Just as Virginius kills his daughter Virginia in order to prevent her from being defiled, Giulia takes on the task of purifying her family once she has been polluted by rape.¹⁵ According to Robin Bott,

Such destruction of the female body reveals an attitude towards these raped women analogous to attitudes towards disease or diseased tissue – the damaged body part must be excised in order to prevent further harm to the whole. In this formulation, the female subject is reduced to the status of a mutilated body part or some dangerously contaminated flesh that may infect the father, making the destruction of the raped woman not only permissible, but also highly desirable. (190)

While on the one hand her suicide might wash away the stain of defilement, allowing society to return to normal, on the other hand Giulia’s testimony functions as retribution.

¹³ We must note that Giulia’s family is too poor to offer Giulia an escape from the secular world, because entry into a convent required a dowry.

¹⁴ Like Bandello’s *Violante*, discussed in Chapter Three, Giulia deliberately makes an exemplum of herself. The white clothing, furthermore, symbolizes purification, as does the choice of killing herself by drowning in the river. More specifically, both the white clothing and the water evoke baptism.

¹⁵ For the story of Virginia, see Livy III.44-48 and Boccaccio’s *De mulieribus claris* LVIII.

In telling her story, a story that can then be re-told by others, she exposes the guilt of her assailants and affirms her own innocence, alerting her family and neighbors that such violence has been perpetrated against her. The act of bearing witness occurs within a relational framework, one woman communicating to another who will be capable of re-telling that narrative.¹⁶

Ultimately, Bandello's representation of Giulia is ambivalent. On the one hand, it presents a revision of Castiglione's story by endowing the simple country girl with some individual qualities: a name, an age, a voice, and the ability to give testimony.¹⁷ By contrast, her assailants' names and ages are not specified. It is important to keep in mind, however, that Gian Matteo Olivo, the narrator, celebrates Giulia's testimony within the context of her suicide. By drowning herself, Giulia is a heroine for patriarchy because she removes the burden of her damaged chastity from society. By endowing her with particular attributes, however, the narrator allows the reader to empathize with her individual struggle. While novella 1.8 arouses compassion for Giulia's suffering and reminds the reader of the importance of bearing witness through narrative, Castiglione's original narrative fulfills neither of these functions, but stands out as a counterfeit tale that emphasizes the narrator's creativity to the utter exclusion of a verisimilar portrait of his protagonist, thus invalidating the narrative's claims to authenticity.

In addition to giving a voice to an innocent maiden, novella 1.8 offers an alternative to the courtly love tradition, devaluing medieval views on love and social class, exemplified clearly in a passage of Andreas Capellanus' *De Amore* suggesting that a noble man courting a lower-class woman may resort to force, thus avoiding the trouble of more refined and time-consuming courtship rituals:

Si vero et illarum te feminarum amor forte attraxerit, eas pluribus laudibus efferre memento, et, si locum inveniatis opportunum non differas assumere, quod petebas et violento potiri amplexu. Vix enim ipsarum in tantum exterius poteris mitigare rigorem, quod quietos fateantur se tibi concessuras amplexus vel optata patiantur te habere solatia, nisi modicae saltem coactionis medela praecedat ipsarum opportune pudoris. (Capellanus 272)

[And if you should, by some chance, fall in love with some of their women, be careful to puff them up with lots of praise and then, when you find a convenient

¹⁶ It is worth recalling Adriana Cavarero's discussion of narrability, elaborated in *Tu che mi guardi, tu che mi racconti. Filosofia della narrazione* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1997):

Il sé narrabile, come aspetto costitutivo dell'unicità, non è pertanto il frutto di un'esperienza intima e separata, ossia il *prodotto* della nostra memoria. Non è né l'esito fantasmatico di un progetto, né il protagonista dell'immaginario della storia che vorremmo avere. Non è una *finzione* che possa distinguersi dalla *sua realtà*. Esso è piuttosto il sapore familiare di ogni sé nella distensione temporale del suo consistere in una storia di vita che è questa e non altra. La qual cosa assurge a un principio generale: perché all'esperienza per cui l'*io* è immediatamente, nel sapore irriflesso dell'esistere, il *sé* della propria memoria narrante, corrisponde la percezione dell'altro come il *sé* della sua propria storia. Non importa, appunto, che questa storia dell'altro sia conosciuta per filo o per segno o sia del tutto ignota: l'altro, l'altra ha una storia di vita ed è un'identità narrabile la cui unicità consiste anche e soprattutto in questa storia. . . . [D]iremo quindi non solo che *chi* ci appare si mostra unico nella forma corporea e nel suono della voce, ma che questo *chi* viene anche già da noi percepito come un sé narrabile con una storia unica. (49)

Clearly, while the heroine of Messer Cesare's narrative lacks some fundamental aspects of narrability, Bandello's Giulia, though fictional, fits in many ways the description of "sé narrabile."

¹⁷ In opening the novella, Bandello states that Giulia is seventeen years old but appears to be fifteen.

place, do not hesitate to take what you seek and to embrace them by force. For you can hardly soften their outward inflexibility so far that they will grant you their embraces quietly or permit you to have the solaces you desire unless first you use a little compulsion as a convenient cure for their shyness.¹⁸ (Parry 149-50)]

The detailed depiction of Giulia and her suffering stands in stark contrast to the callous treatment of peasants in Capellanus, most blatantly evidenced in the invitation to use force against peasant girls and women.

It is hard to say whether Bandello directly read Capellanus. While humanists and their followers often scoffed at the likes of him, it must be acknowledged that Capellanus continued to be read throughout the Renaissance and afterwards. John Parry notes, for instance, that in addition to enjoying considerable circulation in manuscript form, both in Latin and in vernacular translations, the *De amore* was also printed in the 1470s. The two known Italian translations are believed to have been completed during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and the one “attributed without any good reason to Andrea Lancia . . . was printed in 1561 under the name of Giovanni Boccaccio” (Parry 23).

While Capellanus’s treatise suggests that people of noble birth enjoy a higher degree of moral sophistication than common folk, Bandello’s narrator presents in Giulia a powerful example to the contrary. Similarly, novella 2.7, which we shall examine next, offers a narrative whose various elements recall Giulia’s story, but with dramatically different results. Significantly, the novella, narrated by Annibale Macedonio, is prefaced by the observation that “molte fiata sotto umili ed abbietti panni di gente mecanica e plebea albergano svegliati animi e nobilissimi spiriti” (710), emphasizing the possibility of misinterpreting reality based on outward appearances and commonplace perceptions. Like Giulia, the nameless Neapolitan girl in this novella is a beautiful virgin; like Giulia’s assailant, the abbot Gesualdo is a lustful man who, unable to seduce, decides to engage in violence; and like the Oglio river, the Sebeto river receives the female body. Unlike Giulia, however, this young girl successfully defends herself first by attacking Gesualdo with his own weapon and then by throwing herself into the Sebeto river to prevent the abbot’s armed cronies from overcoming her, to prevent violation rather than to respond to it.

Having fallen in love with the nameless girl, Gesualdo frequently strolls around her neighborhood in the hopes of catching a glimpse of her, “ove se la fortuna gli era tanto propizia e favorevole che a le volte a le finestre o altrove la sua giovane vedesse, *si sforzava* su gli occhi, poi che il parlare gli era vietato, dimostrarle come per amor di lei tutto si struggeva” (711, emphasis added). While Gesualdo feels overcome by her beauty, the girl is “non solo . . . bella ma . . . accorta e scaltrita”; furthermore, she is virtuous: “come colei che d’eccellente ingegno e di grand’animo era e che vie più l’onore che cosa di questo mondo stimava, finse mai sempre di nulla avvedersi, in modo che mai di sguardo o di buon viso o d’altro atto non diede a l’amante suo speranza” (711). Annibale, the narrator, focuses on the young woman’s character in addition to her beauty, conveying a sympathetic portrait to the audience. Nevertheless, it is important to note the ambiguity surrounding her pretense of unawareness with respect to Gesualdo’s

¹⁸ It must be noted that “shyness” is not an accurate translation of “pudor,” which denotes virtue and modesty.

infatuation, an ambiguity exemplified by the phrase “mai sempre.”¹⁹ Perhaps one purpose of this ambiguity, which reaches even greater heights later in the narrative, is to incite readers to engage with the text’s sometimes contradictory messages.

Just as the narrator presents the beautiful young lady in a positive (albeit ambivalent) light, he also casts Gesualdo in a negative light by implying that his attempt to assault her is inexcusable. Her beauty is widely acknowledged: “Aveva ella un aspetto tanto formoso e bello, ed era tanto aggraziata, che da tutti universalmente si giudicava per una de le più belle e graziose fanciulle che fossero in Napoli” (710); yet there is a distinction, on the one hand, between beauty as an attribute of this virtuous and intelligent maiden and, on the other hand, Gesualdo’s perception of her beauty as ensnaringly seductive: “Ed in modo le gittò l’ingorda vista a dosso che prima che si partisse da vederla *si sentì tutto in poter di lei esser rimasto*, cominciando a conoscere che nel partirsi da quella pareva che le radici del core se gli strappassero” (711).²⁰ Gesualdo feels utterly powerless before the girl’s beauty and does not view himself as responsible for his feelings or for his actions: “si conobbe esser così de le bellezze di costei invaghito che il volersi ritirare ed altrove porre i suoi pensieri era cercar di chiuder tutta l’acqua del mare in una carraffa di vetro” (711). Yet this perception of passivity is implicitly flawed, for clearly not all of the men who have beheld her beauty decide to attack her, as he does, so the defect is within the beholder’s “ingorda vista.” Gesualdo feels overpowered, yet, in contrast to those men who gaze on a beautiful face without misinterpreting beauty as an invitation to assault, he does not try to master his emotions; rather, he puts all of his efforts (“si sforzò”) into overpowering her, with the ultimate intention of assaulting her (“sforzarla”).

The abbot engages in stalking behaviors, thus learning that the girl and her parents are planning an outing. His depraved desire is described in no uncertain terms:

Questo poi che l’abate seppe, da ceco ed insano amore, che più tosto furor chiamar deverei, che a la giovane portava vinto ed accecato, deliberò fra se stesso, quando amorevolmente e di commun consenso del suo amore profitto alcuno cavar non poteva, pigliarne quel frutto per viva forza che tanto si brama, e la sua giovane, cui senza non gli pareva di poter vivere, ai poveri parenti ne la strada publica rapire. (712)

In spite of his awareness that she is unwilling to gratify him, Gesualdo views the girl as his own (“la sua giovane”), as if his desire were enough to bind her to him; his decision to take her virginity by force is a manifestation both of his misinterpretation (in viewing the young girl as his own) and of his subscription to the logic of the amorous debt. When he informs his servants and other accomplices of his intentions, they arm themselves in preparation to ambush the young woman and her family, waiting at the ‘ponte de la Maddalena.’ The attack is described in detail:

[L]’abate . . . vista la sua donna così bella, di nuovo desio sentendosi il petto fieramente acceso, fattosele innanzi e tratta del fodro la tagliente spada, cominciò

¹⁹ The “sempre” in the phrase “mai sempre” is, of course, intensifying, but the choice of this phrase rather than a different formulation of the same idea is significant, especially taking into consideration the other ambiguities in the narrative, discussed further on.

²⁰ The phrase “ingorda vista” refers back to Boccaccio’s re-telling of the rape of Lucretia by Tarquinius in *De mulieribus claris*: “Sextus, Superbi filius, *impudicos oculos* in honestatem atque formositatem caste mulieris *iniecit*” (48.3, emphasis added).

a volerle far violenza per rapirla; onde i servitori veggendo quello che il loro signor faceva, tutti ad un tratto con l'arme in mano fecero un cerchio a la giovanetta . . . Né di questo contenti, al petto ed a la gola dei gridanti e mercè ad alta voce chiamanti padre e madre de la giovane, tutte le spade vibrarono, cercando talmente da la figliuola separarli che più di leggero quella potessero gremire. Da l'altra parte l'abate *si sforzava* a la giovane le mani metter a dosso e di quella impadronirsi. (713, emphasis added)

Unperturbed by the danger and determined only to overcome it, the girl then demonstrates her quick wits, which she uses in the service of a plan designed to preserve her chastity:

. . . tantosto che la intrepida giovane vide l'abate a lei avventarsi e gli altri rabbiosamente a torno ai parenti combattere . . . con animo forse più forte, audace e magnanimo che a fanciulla di così basso legnaggio non era convenevole . . . a l'abate rivolta . . . disse: – Signor abate, dammi quella nuda spada che hai in mano, a ciò che io per me stessa faccia in un punto di te, signore, e di me aspra vendetta contra questo mio geloso padre che . . . è sempre stato cagione che io non abbia mai dimostro d'aggradir l'amor tuo che portato m'hai. . . [A] le parole de la fanciulla il troppo credulo amante, di nuovo stupore e meravigliosa letizia ripieno, diede quella intiera ed indubitata fede che a le cose certissime prestano quelli che facilmente il tutto credono.²¹ Onde tutto ad un tempo a la scaltrita ed animosa sua innamorata la candida e morbidetta mano stendente, la spada ignuda porse. Ella subito che si vide aver la desiata spada in mano, con grandissimo coraggio al sempliciotto abate . . . arditamente e non con viso femminile²² disse: – Abate, tirati a dietro e non mi t'appressare, ché . . . io senza rispetto veruno mi diffenderò. (714-15)

The success of the young woman's stratagem, notably, is dependent on Gesualdo's gullibility – that is, his propensity to misread. Gesualdo's sword strongly symbolizes the threat of sexual violence; it is charged with sexuality, as exemplified by the phrases “la spada ignuda,” “nuda spada,” “la desiata spada in mano.” At the moment when he hands over his sword to the crafty young lady, moreover, Gesualdo relinquishes something of his masculinity; having tried to overcome the young girl by force, he is imperiled through a combination of her stealth and his own gullibility. By contrast, once she holds the sword in her hand, the young lady is unquestionably virilized, “animosamente la guadagnata spada vibrando, come se lungo tempo ne le scole da schermir fosse avvezzata” (715). Yet even in the midst of this empowering scene, she is represented as Gesualdo's “innamorata,” underscoring again the abbot's misreading: his projection of his own feelings onto his beloved suggests that he imagines her to love him in response to his importunate desire towards her.²³ The ambiguity contained within and raised by this

²¹ This is an echo of Boccaccio's novella 1.1, in which the friar “sì come colui che pienamente credeva esser vero ciò che ser Ciappelletto avea detto: e chi sarebbe colui che nol credesse, veggendo uno uomo in caso di morte dir così?” (1.1.74).

²² Compare to Boccaccio's description of Ghismunda: “dolore inestimabile sentì, e a mostrarlo con romore e con lagrime, come il più le femine fanno, fu assai volte vicina; ma pur, questa viltà vincendo il suo animo altiero, il viso suo con maravigliosa forza fermò” (4.1.39).

²³ It must be noted that “innamorata” also has the meaning of “beloved”; Bandello himself uses the word in this sense in novella 1.42, discussed later in this chapter, where Maria, who is drugged and assaulted by Pietro, a man she does not know, is referred to as his “innamorata” (100).

passage simultaneously represents Gesualdo as a misreader and emphasizes the task of Bandello's own readers, who are called on to sift through the ambiguity and make meaning of the text. The ambiguity in the narrative, then, functions as an exhortation to readers to interpret the text and the meanings encoded in the beautiful woman's body and in the gaze of the lecherous abbot.

When Gesualdo realizes the deceit, he instructs his servants to attack the girl, who, along with her parents, is injured in the skirmish. Even this does not stop her from her continued efforts to defend herself:

la tratta spada colse di taglio ne la faccia de l'abbate e nel mezzo del traverso del naso e di una guancia gli fece una profonda piaga. Ella in quel medesimo punto che l'avventata spada ferì l'abbate, a Dio divotamente raccomandatasi, di salto giù dal ponte . . . si gittò ne le lucide e correnti acque di Sebeto, più tosto eleggendo ne l'acque miseramente perire che perder il pregio de la sua verginità. E così il bel fiume lei a seconda ne menava via, che aiutata da le vesti sovra acqua ancor si sosteneva. Aveva il romore de la mischia ed il gridar dei poveri feriti fatto venir molti a così crudel spettacolo. Da alquanti di costoro che sapevano nuotare e che a l'acque si gettarono, fu fuori del fiume la giovane mezza morta cavata. L'abbate che . . . ingannato si ritrovava, e che sapeva per mano dei suoi servidori la giovane e i parenti di lei esser sciocamente feriti e se stesso con il fregio nel volto, non volendo tornar dentro la città, se n'andò a le sue castella. (716)

The abbot's emotional shame is etched clearly on his face and is represented in emasculating terms, for "dare la sfregia" denotes the disfiguring cutting of the face of a female prostitute by an angry male client.²⁴ Furthermore, Gesualdo's disfigured visage is a distorted counterpart to the girl's own beautiful face, which he violates with his "ingorda vista." Indeed, while she is described as beautiful, even provocative, there is a clearly articulated distinction between the way she looks and the way Gesualdo sees her:

Quivi riscontrò il furioso abbate la sua bella innamorata, che tutta *vezzosa e snella* insieme col padre e madre, innanzi però a loro come più *gagliardetta*, se ne veniva. E per l'arsura del caldo che era grandissimo, essendo circa la fine del mese di giugno, ed altresì per la fatica del caminar a piedi, pareva che la giovane fosse più bella del consueto. Ella tutta *ardita e snella* andava or qua or là gentilmente risguardando, e l'annellate e bionde chiome sotto un *galante e vezzoso cappello* copriva, a la cui ombra i *vaghi e lucidissimi occhi* di quella non altrimenti vi scintillavano che le dorate e chiare stelle sogliano ne l'ampio e sereno cielo fiammeggiare. Era poi nel viso e delicate guance da vermiglio e nativo colore la sua pura candidezza tanto ben mischiata, che a chiunque la mirava faceva d'inusitata dolcezza sentir nuovo e dolcissimo ingombramento... (713, emphasis added)

Alongside the condemnation of Gesualdo's behavior and the praise of the maiden's self-defense, this passage has the effect of creating an ambivalent rift in the narrative that can only be resolved through careful reading. On the one hand, Gesualdo's would-be victim is likened to a temptress (perhaps she is even a sort of Alcina, or a siren); on the other hand, she is approximated to the male heroes of chivalric romance (or perhaps to a

²⁴ See for example Margaret Rosenthal, ed. and trans., *Veronica Franco: Poems and Selected Letters*, Chicago: U Chicago P, 1999 (245).

Marfisa-like virago).²⁵ At once innocent virgin and provocative temptress, she undergoes a metamorphosis from female to male the moment the sword passes into her hand. Yet the text makes clear that it is Gesualdo who misreads the young girl's beautiful body as pornographic and attributes voluptuousness not only to girl herself but also metonymically to inanimate objects associated with her, such as her hat.

By throwing herself in the river, the Neapolitan maiden recalls Giulia's drowning; but whereas Giulia drowns herself after being assaulted, the young woman in 2.7 throws herself in the river to prevent an assault, "più tosto eleggendo ne l'acque miseramente perire che perder il pregio de la sua verginità." As Angeliki Laiou pertinently notes, moralizing stories about women who manage to defend themselves through virtuous deception posit a strong message: "Women can avoid rape or abduction. There are alternatives, hard ones to be sure, such as death or a form of living death, but nevertheless they are there for the woman who really does not consent" (195). The heroine of novella 2.7 is ready to face death rather than lose her chastity, and, though she survives, it is her determination to preserve her virginity (a determination fortuitously matched by the singular physical and mental prowess she displays) at any cost that makes her worthy of praise and brings shame to Gesualdo:

E veramente che ella merita tutte quelle chiare lodi che a pudicissima e castissima donna dar si possono. E se a le vertuti a' nostri corrotti tempi l'onore si rendesse che appo i romani ed altre genti straniere anticamente si rendeva, qual statua, qual

²⁵ Some of the descriptive terms, such as "ardita," "gagliarda," and "vezzoso," that refer to the young woman are derived from the chivalric tradition. To cite some examples from the *Orlando furioso*, the adjective "ardito" recurs numerous times in reference to knights; "snello" tends to refer to animals but also to Cloridano; the term "gagliardo" applies to knights and to Bradamante and Marfisa, whereas Angelica is "mal gagliarda"; Gabrina is described as "vezzosa" in canto 20, whereas in canto 23, the term applies to Doralice. Additionally, Dante evokes the specter of the dolce stil nuovo, both through the chiasmus "inusitata dolcezza . . . nuovo e dolcissimo" and through the novella's descriptive imagery. For example, the description of the Neapolitan maiden subjected to the abbot's gaze can be productively juxtaposed with the following poem from Dante's *Vita nuova*:

Tanto gentil e tanto onesta pare
la donna mia quand'ella altrui saluta,
ch'ogne lingua deven tremando muta,
e li occhi no l'ardiscon di guardare.
Ella si va, sentendosi laudare,
benignamente d'umiltà vestuta;
e par che sia una cosa venuta
da cielo in terra a miracol mostrare.
Mostrasi sì piacente a chi la mira,
che dà per li occhi una dolcezza al core,
che 'ntender non la può chi no la prova;
e par che de la sua labbia si mova
uno spirito soave pien d'amore,
che va dicendo a l'anima: Sospira.

Unlike the humble stilnovist poet lover, whose eyes do not dare to look upon the beautiful woman, Gesualdo impudently "le gittò l'ingorda vista a dosso"; yet lines 9-11 of Dante's poem resonate particularly strongly with the passage in which the "nuovo e dolcissimo ingombramento" is described. Like the lady in Dante's poem, the young Neapolitan woman "mostrasi . . . piacente a chi la mira" – though of course, the lover's interpretation of beauty in the two texts could not be more strikingly different. The "inusitata dolcezza" and "nuovo e dolcissimo ingombramento" in Bandello's text are paralleled by the "dolcezza" bestowed on the lover's heart in Dante's poem, where, as in Bandello, there is a sense of newness ("ntender non la può chi no la prova").

colosso di qual si voglia materia o quai titoli potrebbero questo magnanimo e gloriosissimo atto di questa giovane napolitana agguagliare? Certo, che io mi creda, nessuno. Cotale adunque fine ebbe il poco regolato amore de l'abbate Gesualdo, il quale volendo per forza conseguir la grazia de la sua innamorata, perpetuo odio e disgrazia ne riportò. (717)

Annibale, the narrator, suggests that a chaste woman endowed with physical strength and perspicacity can use her skills in the service of protecting her virginity, virtuously earning the praise of others and increasing the honor of her family. In ambushing his prey, Gesualdo (supported by multiple accomplices, who like him, are armed) has a distinct advantage over the maiden and her parents. Nevertheless, she makes a number of quick decisions and, through a combination of skill and luck, manages to save both her virginity and her life. Finally, the observation that the protagonist deserves a monument but none would be equal to her worth harks back to the story of Giulia and to its source in Castiglione's brief narrative.

While not all the innocent victims of sexual violence are poor, penurious nubile girls are exemplary because their families are unlikely to have the means to pay the dowry necessary to help them make a marriage match. At the same time, the poverty of these families made them particularly vulnerable to a variety of pressures. Thus, a woman who refuses to relinquish her chastity in spite of financial obstacles confronting her family can be exalted even more than a woman of less modest means.

Sexual violence as a prelude to marriage

Is death the only remedy for sullied virginity? Such a bleak proposition demands that readers search for alternatives, and in fact the narrators of the novellas discussed in this section insinuate that while marriage between assailant and victim seems technically permissible from a certain vantage point, it is also intrinsically problematic. The two narratives that follow highlight the way in which forcible defloration limits the free choice that lay at the very heart of the canon law definition of the marriage sacrament.

In novella 2.15, Pietro, a favorite among Alessandro de' Medici's courtiers, assaults the daughter of a miller, and Alessandro adjudicates the case by ordering marriage between assailant and victim.²⁶ The novella deals explicitly with the issue of justice, and in the opening, the narrator praises Alessandro as a lover of justice who leads his subjects with the approval of the Church:

Alessandro de' Medici, il quale, come sapete, è stato il primo che col favor de la Chiesa sotto titolo di duca ha occupato il dominio de la nostra republica fiorentina, ha molte parti in sé che al popolo lo rendono grato; ma tra tutte non mi pare che nessuna ce ne sia che meriti esser agguagliata a la giustizia, de la quale egli mostra esser tanto amatore che nulla più. (Bandello vol. 1 2.15, 816)

At the outset of the narrative, Pietro falls in love with the girl's beauty and desires to enjoy her sexually, but she fails to reciprocate: "ella punto di lui non si curava, e tanto mostrava aggradir l'amor che Pietro le portava quanto i cani si diletano de le busse" (816-17). Strikingly, Bandello echoes Boccaccio's characterization of Ser Cepparello in *Decameron* 1.1: "Delle femine era così vago come sono i cani de' bastoni; del contrario

²⁶ Alessandro became duke of Florence in 1532 and was murdered in 1537.

più che alcun altro tristo uomo si dilettaua” (1.1.14);²⁷ this intertextual allusion implies a contrast between deviant and normal sexuality. This narrative, like the previous one, is ambivalent: if readers accept the logic of the amorous debt, the *mugnaia* would be the pervert; if readers accept law and Christian views of morality, then the real pervert is Pietro.

As dictated by an infelicitous economy of desire, the nameless young woman further enhances Pietro’s yearning by means of her lack of interest in him:

E perché il più de le volte avviene che quanto più un amante si vede interdetta la cosa amata egli più se n’accende e più desidera venir a la conclusione . . .
l’amante tanto si sentì accender de l’amore de la detta mugnaiuola che ad altro non poteva rivolger l’animo, di modo che desperando di conseguir l’intento suo e non potendo molto lungamente restar in villa, più sentiva crescer l’appetito e l’ardente voglia di goder la cosa amata. Onde provati tutti quei modi che gli parvero a proposito di facilitar l’impresa, come sono l’ambasciate, i doni, le larghe promesse e talora le minaccie ed altre simili arti che dagli amanti s’usano . . . poi che s’accorse che pestava acqua in mortaio e che effetto alcuno non riusciva, avendo assai pensato sopra la durezza de la fanciulla e sentendosi indarno affaticare ed ogni ora mancar la speranza, dopo varii pensieri che assai combattuto lo avevano, deliberò, avvenissene ciò che si volesse, rapir la giovane e quello che con amore ottener non poteva, goderlo con la forza. (2.15; 817)

The narrative minimizes Pietro’s initial agency, as if he lacked the power to control his burning desire. He lets himself passively be ravished by the girl’s beauty, and since she will not return his ‘love’ consensually, he responds by ravishing her. This is strikingly similar to Gesualdo’s self-perception as helpless, another instance in which the suitor feels entitled to collect a sexual debt from the beautiful woman who has seized his heart. Pietro, who mistakes her chastity and lack of interest in him for cruelty, believes in his right to satisfy his lust; he responds to the figurative *raptus* – his feelings of love and desire – with a literal *raptus*.

Aided by two accomplices and an unspecified number of servants, the courtier violently takes the girl from her father’s home:

Onde per non dar indugio a la cosa, parendo lor un’ora mill’anni d’aver rubata la mugnaiuola, come la notte cominciò ad imbrunire, tutti e tre con i famigli loro, prese l’armi, se n’andarono al molino dove ella col padre era, e a mal grado di lui che fece quanto seppe e puoté per salvezza de la figliuola, quella violentemente rapirono, minacciando al padre che direbbero e che farebbero. E ben che la giovane piangesse e gridasse e ad alta voce mercé chiedesse, quella menarono via. Pietro quella notte, con poco piacer de la giovane che tuttavia con singhiozzi e lagrime mostrava la sua mala contentezza, colse il fiore de la verginità di lei, e tutta notte con quella si trastullò, sforzandosi di farsela amica. . . (2.15; 817-18)

It is noteworthy that the force (‘forza’) in the scene is displaced from the violation of the maiden, described in terms of Pietro’s one-sided pleasure (‘si trastullò’), to his efforts to make her into his friend (‘farsela amica’). The pleasure that masks the violence of the assault, however, is phrased by means of reflexive verbs with a third-person-singular male subject, perhaps the most prominent of which is *sforzandosi*, which used reflexively

²⁷ I would like to thank Albert Ascoli for pointing this out to me.

means straining himself, but which is derived from the transitive verb *sforzare*, to rape.²⁸ Though on the one hand the narrative strikingly displaces Pietro's violence, on the other hand the woman's lack of consent is emphasized. His actions, moreover, are represented not merely in terms of forced sex but conjure up the image of masturbation as well.

After failing to prevent his daughter's abduction and ravishment, the miller seeks justice by asking the duke for a hearing. After threatening to kill the suppliant if no proof is discovered to substantiate his accusation, Alessandro goes to Pietro's country house and tricks the courtier into opening the door of the chamber where the miller's daughter is locked up. Under questioning, the unhappy woman relates the events to the duke, who delivers his verdict:

Il duca allora con un viso di matrigna a Pietro ed ai suoi compagni disse: – Io non so chi mi tenga che a tutti tre or ora non faccia mozzar il capo. Ma io vi perdono tanta sceleratezza quanta avete commessa, con questo che tu, Pietro, adesso sposi per tua legitima moglie questa giovane e le facci duo mila ducati di dote, e che voi altri dui partecipevoli del delitto gli facciate mille ducati per uno di dote. E non ci sia altra parola. Ora, Pietro, io te la do come mia sorella carnale, di maniera che ogni volta che io intenderò che tu la tratti male, io ne farò quella dimostrazione che d'una mia propria sorella farei. – Onde allora fece che Pietro la sposò e che l'obbligo dei quattro mila ducati da tutti tre fu fatto. E così a Firenze tornò, ove generalmente da tutti questo suo giudizio fu con infinite lodi commendato. (2.15; 819)

In this scene, the duke, a symbol of secular rule, responds to the father's appeal for justice by usurping the father's traditional place in negotiating his daughter's marriage. As documented by Trevor Dean in "Fathers and Daughters: Marriage Laws and Marriage Disputes," secular law recognized the important (though not essential) role of a father in the formation of his offspring's marriages;²⁹ nevertheless, Alessandro utterly discounts the miller's authority over the girl, treating her instead as if she were his own ward. The duke's adoption of the girl as "mia sorella carnale" is part of a series of rather startling family and gender transformations resulting from the assault, not least of which is the duke's symbolic transformation into Pietro's stepmother, which highlights a gender reversal as well as a not-entirely authentic parenting relationship. Disregarding the miller's paternal authority over his daughter, the duke takes on the role that a nubile woman's brothers would ordinarily fill in the absence of a father.

Additionally, Alessandro usurps the ecclesiastical jurisdiction by ordering the parties to marry, threatening the offender and his accomplices with death, in clear violation of the marriage sacrament and canon law on marriage. Furthermore, the miller's daughter is not once asked whether she desires Pietro's hand in marriage.³⁰ There are

²⁸ *Sforzare* means both "to force" and "to assault sexually"; uses of "sforzare" with this latter meaning can be found in Guidotto da Bologna, Bernardino da Siena, Marin Sanudo, and Gabriele d'Annunzio, among others.

²⁹ See also Thomas Kuehn, "Women, Marriage, and *Patria Potestas* in Late Medieval Florence," in Kuehn, *Law, Family, and Women: Toward a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy* (London: U Chicago P, 1991): 197-211.

³⁰ The resemblance of this fictional story to real-life legal cases in Renaissance Florence is uncanny: Samuel Cohn, Jr. notes that in Florence and its territories, "the courts gave the rapist the opportunity of marrying his victim as a way of avoiding the full force of the law . . . the consent of the victim was not . . . a . . . condition for the marriage" (120).

strong indicators of coercion on two levels: first, by abducting and assaulting her, Pietro violates her clear refusal to participate in the requested sexual liaison; later, Alessandro orders the marriage without bothering to ask whether she consents to the arrangement. The narrative does not explicitly state that she opposes marriage as reparation for the crime. However, there is an undeniable discrepancy between, on the one hand, the victim's resistance to the courtship, abduction, and sexual violence, and on the other hand, the duke's later decision, camouflaged as 'justice,' to order marriage without consulting either daughter or father on the matter – to say nothing of the tyrannical death threat against the miller.

One notable difference between this narrative and those of Giulia and the Neapolitan girl is the conspicuous absence of the victim's subjectivity. Aside from passing references in 2.15 to the victim's displeasure at being courted and ravished by Pietro, her feelings and thoughts are not represented; more significantly, readers are not allowed even the briefest glimpse into her reaction to Alessandro's verdict. I contend that it is only the absence of female subjectivity in the narrative that allows the 'resolution' of marriage following forced defloration. The conspicuous absence of subjectivity, however, also calls upon readers to question Alessandro's verdict and by extension the claim that he is just.

The historical Alessandro de' Medici was appointed to the position of duke by Clement VII, a Medici Pope. Far from enjoying a reputation for justice, he was known as a tyrant.³¹ Even more damning, perhaps, is Alessandro's own reputation as a debaucher who did not hesitate to use violence when pressing women for sex; notoriously, shortly after Luisa Strozzi, a married noblewoman from a prominent family, successfully rejected his advances, she mysteriously died of poisoning. The historical background would most likely have predisposed Bandello's sixteenth-century readers to adopt a skeptical attitude towards the soundness of Alessandro's judgment and his vision of justice, and his apparent involvement in Luisa's poisoning might cast doubt on his ability to respect and implement the law.

In order to make some sense of the contradictory role played by the duke, it is crucial to examine the narrative context in which Bandello presents the novella.³² The dedicatory letter which introduces it is addressed to Luigi Gonzaga, marquis of Castiglione; in the letter, Bandello recalls that Gonzaga's brother-in-law, count Guido Rangone, recently ordered the execution by hanging of a man convicted of sexual assault. Additionally, we must not neglect to note the identity of the novella's narrator, who is none other than Vincenzo Strozzi, son of Filippo Strozzi and brother of the aforementioned Luisa. Vincenzo was a member of the large group of prominent anti-Medicean Florentines living in exile; in Venice, his father Filippo welcomed Alessandro's murderer, Lorenzino de' Medici, as a new Brutus. Bandello's choice to cast Vincenzo Strozzi as narrator, combined with the duke's reputation as a tyrant, undermines the interpretation of Alessandro's verdict as just. The dedicatory letter adds

³¹ See, for example, Melissa M. Bullard, *Filippo Strozzi and the Medici. Favor and Finance in Sixteenth Century Florence and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980) and Marcello Vannucci, *Lorenzaccio. Lorenzino de' Medici: un ribelle in famiglia* (Roma: Newton Compton, 1984).

³² For a discussion of the narrator and dedicatee of the novella, in addition to historical background on Alessandro de' Medici and other historical figures portrayed in the novella and dedicatory letter, see Carlo Godi, *Narratori e dedicatari della seconda parte delle Novelle* (Roma: Bulzoni, 2001): 109-15.

poignancy to the narrative context, for Vincenzo Strozzi prefaces the novella by noting, “Sapete se la casa mia ha cagion di lodarsi d’Alessandro Medici duca di Firenze” (815). This ambiguous remark draws readers’ attention to the relationship between the murdered duke and the Strozzi family. Bandello’s dedicatory letter relates that Count Guido Rangone was deeply grieved to send the ravisher to his death but did so in the interest of justice:

Aveva il signor conte Guido Rangone vostro cognato e, come sapete, luogotenente generale in Italia di Sua Maestà cristianissima, comandato che qui in Pinaruolo un giovine molto prode de la persona s’impiccasse, perciò che egli aveva sforzata violentemente una giovane . . . Essendone poi anco esso signor conte da molti capitani e valenti soldati pregato, tutti brevemente risolse: che senza fine gli doveva far morir un uomo, fosse chi si volesse, non che poi un soldato e valente; ma che era necessario che la giustizia avesse luogo e che simil enorme delitto non restasse impunito, perciò che se l’esser giusto stava ben a tutti i rettori e giudici dei popoli e a tutti i prencipi e signori, che meno non stava bene a un capo e governatore d’esserciti, nei quali l’ubidienza e giustizia era più che necessario che sessequisse. E così il misero e sfortunato giovine pagò un poco di piacer venereo con il prezzo de la vita e fu impiccato. (814-15)

Count Guido Rangone’s execution of the young soldier and duke Alessandro’s forced marriage of Pietro to his victim: in juxtaposition, the dedicatory letter and novella offer two very different versions of ‘justice’ following sexual assault.³³ Because the letter and novella are dedicated to Guido’s brother-in-law and the novella is narrated by a known enemy of Alessandro’s, there is reason to believe that the narrator, Vincenzo, would view Alessandro’s conception of ‘justice’ as morally inferior to Guido’s. Readers, furthermore, are confronted with these two models and must choose between Alessandro’s, keeping in mind the kind of ruler he is, and Guido’s. The count, unlike Alessandro, represents the just secular ruler many sixteenth-century Europeans might hope for as a solution to widespread incompetence and corruption in marriage and cases. Indeed, James Brundage has observed in *Law, Sex and Christian Society* that during the centuries spanning from the Black Death through the Reformation, a number of lawyers and jurists expressed frustration with widespread injustice in the adjudication of sexual assault cases (531).

In addition to the counter-example provided by count Guido Rangone, an important source from the novella tradition would have resonated with Bandello’s audience. I am referring to Masuccio Salernitano’s novella 4.47, which, along with the contrasting narratives offered by the dedicatory letter and novella, provides an example of the execution of ravishers rather than the attempt to solve the problem of sexual violence by transforming it into a lifelong relationship between assailant and victim.³⁴

³³ In an article on Bandello and Machiavelli, Delmo Maestri briefly discusses the dedicatory letter to novella 2.15, in fact, and notes that “Bandello contrappone . . . la ‘giustizia’ di Guido Rangone alla ‘inumana crudeltà’ di Annibale XVIII capitolo del *Principe*” (163). See Delmo Maestri, “Fra Bandello e Machiavelli: un intreccio di interesse e di riprovazione” (in *Du Pô a la Garonne. Recherches sur les échanges culturels entre l’Italie et la France à la Renaissance*, Actes du Colloque International d’Agen [26-28 septembre 1986] organisé par le Centre Matteo Bandello d’Agen, Agen: Centre Matteo Bandello d’Agen, 1990:157-177).

³⁴ Masuccio’s novella in turn hearkens back to *Decameron* 10.6, in which King Charles is tempted to seduce the twin daughters of a vanquished enemy but resists after listening to his courtier’s advice.

Masuccio's example is rich and fascinating, and a short summary is necessary in order to understand the intertextual references Bandello evokes in his own novella. The king of Sicily visits a nobleman in Castile, and two of his most cherished knights violently deflower the two daughters of their Castilian host. The king, deeply grieved, forces his knights to marry the young women so as to restore their honor, and then immediately afterwards attends to justice by ordering the decapitation of the husbands, leaving the women free as widows to remarry honorably should they wish to do so. Incidentally, in Masuccio's narrative, it is the king himself who endows each of the sisters with a ten-thousand florin dowry from his own coffers.³⁵

The distorted and puzzling version of Alessandro's 'justice' encourages readers to engage with the underlying social and legal contexts. Emerging from a deeper analysis, especially in juxtaposition with the narrative presented in the dedicatory letter and the intertextual reference to Masuccio's *Novellino*, is the suggestion that duke Alessandro's example could be taken as injustice, in spite of the words used to introduce the novella.³⁶ The decision to cast a duke in place of a bishop in the role of judge in a marriage case is not politically neutral, considering the religious, social, and political debate sparked by the spread of Protestantism and the Catholic reactions to this movement, although it is a logical conclusion of the Medici's popes' politicization of his office in making Alessandro duke. The juxtaposition of Count Guido Rangone and Duke Alessandro's respective responses to sexual violence by their subjects clearly indicates the need for responsible secular adjudication of such cases; the possibility of human failure is equally clear. As Brundage puts it, even before 1517 there was "a growing disenchantment among Western Europeans, including rulers, with the capacity of ecclesiastical institutions to deal adequately and fairly with marital problems and sexual behavior" (547).

While in 2.15 Pietro has marriage thrust upon him as a consequence of his own violence, a different Pietro in novella 2.42 uses sexual assault as a means to achieve his objective of marrying the woman he desires. There is a bitter enmity between the two families involved, and the story is set on the island of Zelanda. Pietro is in love with the daughter of his family's enemy and yearns to marry the girl, who is the beneficiary not only of a dowry but of a very large inheritance bequest from her father "ancora che Antonio non desse se non mille cinquecento ducati di dote a la figliuola, nondimeno ella dopo la morte del padre ne ereditava più di trenta mila. Per questo ella era da molti desiderata e chiesta per moglie" (vol 2 p. 95). Due to the enmity between the two

³⁵ Even after Bandello's death, his novella 2.15 left a legacy, indeed an international one: the prolific Spanish playwright Lope de Vega (1562-1635), who was influenced by a number of Bandello's novellas, wrote a play entitled *El mejor alcalde, el rey*, in which a ruthless nobleman, Don Tello, abducts, imprisons, and sexually violates a betrothed virgin, Elvira. Her fiancé and her father appeal to the king of Spain, who listens attentively to the story and resolves the issue by returning to Masuccio's solution rather than bypassing the father's authority as Alessandro does in Bandello's novella: the king orders Don Tello to marry Elvira, then executes him, leaving the original betrothed couple free to marry each other with the blessing of Elvira's father. Donald McGrady's article, "*El mejor alcalde, el rey*: Its Italian Novella Sources and its Influence on *I promessi sposi* (MLN 80.3 [1985]: 604-18) traces the reworking of Masuccio's novella by Bandello, Giraldo Cinzio, and eventually de Vega and Manzoni himself, examining the ways in which each successive author responds to previous ones.

³⁶ Masuccio's *Novellino* was widely read during Bandello's time, and served as a source for the various versions of the Giulietta and Romeo stories (discussed in the third chapter), including those by Da Porto, Clizia, and Bandello himself.

families, Pietro does not have the courage to ask for Maria's hand in marriage. Instead, he weaves a strange plot to vanquish the girl sexually in the hope of eventually gaining her as his wife:

Ora essendo Pietro sul fervore di questo suo innamoramento, discoperse il tutto al Mappa e caldamente lo pregò che gli volesse invitar Maria figliuola d'Antonio Velzo ad un giardino, ove da lui sarebbe ordinato un banchetto e non vi sarebbe altra figliuola, perciò che voleva, co l'imbriacar la fanciulla, conquistarla e prendere di lei amorosamente piacere, veggendo che altra via non aveva né sapeva immaginarsi per cogliere il frutto di questo suo amore, e con questo mezzo sperando poi d'averla per moglie. Il Mappa, udendo così fatta domanda, ne riprese agramente Pietro, dicendogli che per lui era prestissimo di esporre quanto al mondo possedeva, ma che non voleva a modo nessuno tradir una semplice fanciulla e tutto il suo parentado, e perder la grazia di tutti gli isolani dai quali conosceva esser amato, essortandolo a non tener questa via, perché sarebbe un risvegliare di nuovo la nemistà e pigliar l'arme in mano, ove egli così di leggero potrebbe esser ucciso come ammazzar altrui. (96)

Pietro's friend Franco Mappa, a Florentine merchant, refuses outright to lend a hand in the girl's undoing, on the grounds that such a plot against an innocent virgin's honor is nothing short of treachery. Pietro, however, ignores the admonition and persists with his plan by finding a different accomplice, who earns the girl's mother's permission to invite the young lady to a banquet, where Pietro's friend gets her very drunk by serving her from a "gran fiasco" of wine specially "confezionato" by Pietro and reserved for her alone. The banquet proceeds exactly according to Pietro's plan:

Ora tanto bebbero e ribebbero, (e in tutti i cibi era pepe ed altre spezierie che incitano la sete), che Maria soverchiamente bevendo, si trovò alloppiata, a subito dopo il desinare si corcò sovra un letto per dormire. Veduto Pietro che il suo disegno gli riusciva, avendo il tutto da l'amico inteso, venne ove ella giaceva, ed appresso di lei si mise e tre volte amorosamente seco si trastullò. Ma ella, per cosa che Pietro si facesse mai non fece motto alcuno, né più né meno come se fosse stata morta, tanto era dal vino confettato alloppiata. (98)

The sex act is approximated to necrophilia as well as narcissism – or possibly masturbation (the text calls attention to the third-person singular reflexive verbs in addition to Maria's death-like state: *si corcò, si mise, si trastullò*, etc.).

In the aftermath, "ella de la giacitura che Pietro nel giardino aveva fatto restò gravida" (98-99). This sentence is quite remarkable in the way it attributes the "giacitura" to Pietro alone, emphasizing Maria's complete lack of agency. Pietro has drugged the wine, possibly with opiates, to produce such an unnatural state in Maria, who is "alloppiata" to the point that Pietro must take special measures in order to return her to consciousness: "Ella dormì più di quattro grosse ore, e vi fu assai che fare a farla tornar in sé; pure con alcuni rimedii che Pietro aveva apprestati fecero così che ella, quasi come se da gran sonno svegliata, diceva che si sentiva un poco doler il capo" (98). Pietro is "lietissimo dell'amoroso inganno" (98), which from his point of view is even more successful than he initially realizes, considering her pregnancy.

The poor girl knows neither that she was assaulted nor that she is pregnant, but her mother notices the pregnancy – this results in the following exchange between the two women:

– Figliuola mia, che cosa è questa ch’io veggio dei casi tuoi? che hai tu fatto? – Io non ho fatto nulla, – rispose ella. – Pur troppo averai fatto, – soggiunse mezza irata la madre; – bisognerà pure che tu lo sappia. Ma dimmi figliuola, il vero: con qual uomo sei tu giaciuta? – Oimè, madre mia, – disse Maria, – che vi sento io dire? Io non giacqui mai con uomo del mondo, madre mia cara, ed assai mi meraviglio di ciò che voi ora mi dite. – Figliuola mia, – disse allora la pietosa madre, – a quello ch’io veggio, tu sei gravida, e bisogna pure che qualche uomo t’abbia ingravidata. Tu non sei già piena di Spirito santo. Ma guai a te se tuo padre se n’accorge! Egli certamente ti anciderà, ché non vorrà mai sopportare così fatta vergogna, e per forza ti farà egli dire a chi tu averai del tuo corpo compiaciuto. – (99)

This explicitly recalls Boccaccio’s novella 5.7 (discussed in Chapter Two) and takes issue with Amerigo’s insistence that it is impossible for a girl not to know by whom she was impregnated.³⁷ And so does Antonio, Maria’s father:

[I]l padre accortosi, venne in tanta còlera che fu quasi per ammazzarla. Pur, temendo de la giustizia, non le fece altro male che di darle qualche schiaffo e dirle grandissima villania, con minacciarla fieramente. Volendo poi ad ogni modo sapere di chi ella fosse gravida, mai non poté altro da lei cavare se non che egli la poteva uccidere e far di lei tutti gli strazii del mondo ma che mai non trovarrebbe che uomo vivente ingravidata l’avesse. Diedele il padre dei punzoni e de le pugna pur assai ed in capo non le lasciò capello che ben le volesse. Ma che! egli la poteva, se voleva, strangolare e martoriar pur assai, che in effetto ella non avrebbe mai saputo che altro dire di quello che si diceva. (100)

Of course, the girl’s pregnancy causes a scandal and diminishes her value on the marriage market, even in the fictional social and moral milieu of Zelanda: “se una figlia da marito si truova gravida, ella resta infame e, per ricca che sia, con grandissima difficoltà trova marito del grado che trovato averebbe se ella fosse stata pudica, tanto è l’onestà in prezzo appo tutte quelle genti” (100). No matter what her family’s financial worth, the moral blemish cast upon her by Pietro works against her and to his advantage by driving away other suitors. When he hears of Maria’s pregnancy, Pietro “ne ebbe un piacere indicibile” (100); although his initial scheme was somewhat indefinite, the fortuitous pregnancy, along with the cultural dictates on proper female comportment, have stacked the odds in his favor by weakening the girl’s value as a bride.

When the baby, a boy, is born, Pietro discovers the identity of his wet nurse; he visits the infant frequently and pays the wetnurse generously, twice as much as the wage paid by Maria’s mother. Antonio, on the other hand, is ill-disposed towards his grandson, and it is only because of Maria’s mother that the baby is not left on the doorstep of an orphanage; Maria herself has very limited (and only secret) contact with her newborn son because she fears Antonio’s wrath. Later, Pietro gathers the courage to speak to Antonio, who initially believes Pietro’s request for Maria’s hand is in jest. Pietro insists that he is asking in earnest, and the conversation continues:

– Signor Antonio, io non burlo e parlo del miglior senno che io abbia. E se volete, io vi darò adesso la fede a la presenza d’un notaio e di testimonii e accetterò

³⁷ “Ma egli, men presto a creder che la donna non era stata, disse ciò non dovere esser vero che ella non sapesse di cui gravida fosse, e per ciò del tutto il voleva sapere; e dicendolo, essa potrebbe la sua grazia racquistare; se non, pensasse senza alcuna misericordia di morire” (Boccaccio 5.7, 26).

Maria per mia legitima sposa. – Antonio allora, deposta l'ira disse: – Pietro, se tu vuoi far questo, io ti darò tremila ducati per la dote e t'accetterò per figliuolo. – Io non cerco vostri danari, – rispose Pietro, – ma domando Maria, che so esser giovane da bene ed onesta. – Insomma s'accordarono e andarono a casa, ove Pietro toccò la mano a Maria e la basciò, accettandola per sua moglie ed in presenza di molti la sposò. (103)

Pietro ruins Maria's honor by sexually assaulting her, only to redeem it by marrying her. This premeditated scheme brings peace and harmony on a superficial level while exposing a deep-rooted conflict caused by sexual violence. Because the victim loses her honor, she is in effect at the mercy of her assailant, who in marrying her is seen to be acting in the interests of her honor and her family's. It is unclear whether in the end Pietro receives a dowry for Maria, but the last sentence of the novella reminds readers that he stands to gain financially from his marriage: "dopo la morte di suo suocero erediterà quello che vale più di trenta mila ducati, con una casa sì ben fornita di tutti i mobili che ci bisognano, come qual altra che in Medimburgo sia" (105). Interestingly, Pietro's secret treachery early in the narrative is overshadowed at the end by his public act of apparent charity in marrying a ruined girl. The fact remains, however, that he has himself deliberately ruined her in order to obtain her. An even darker alternative reading of the story is possible, given that readers learn in the second sentence of the novella that Pietro's brother killed the only son of Antonio, leaving Maria as his only child and sole heir of his immense fortune valued at 30,000 ducats (95), emphasizing that Pietro benefits financially not only from his own violation of Maria but also from his brother's earlier murder of Maria's brother.

When we consider these two novellas of forcible defloration followed by marriage, 2.15 and 2.42, a fundamental question of fairness arises: given that the female protagonist in each case gave no consent to the loss of her virginity, does the outcome present sufficient reparation for sexual assault?³⁸ As already discussed, there are several elements in the narrative, dedicatory letter, and wider historical and intertextual context that cast doubt on Alessandro's decision. First, he forces Pietro to marry his victim by threatening him with death if he refuses – a clear violation of canon law on marriage. Second, he justifies the high dowry he exacts from Pietro and his accomplices by usurping the miller's paternal authority. Finally, neither the miller's daughter nor her father is asked for an opinion on the impending marriage. Alessandro's 'justice' is ultimately founded on the assertion of his own political might: his power over members of the aristocracy (who could potentially represent a threat to his political authority); power over the sacrament of marriage; power over the marital decisions of peasant families. Perhaps the universal praise for his verdict can best be explained by his might over the people rather than by a sincere belief in the justice of his decision.³⁹

³⁸ As Raymond of Peñafort states in his *Summa on Marriage*, "ubi metus vel coactio intercedit, non potest consensus locum habere; per consequens nec matrimonium, quod solo consensus contrahitur" [consent has no place where fear or force is present, so neither does marriage, which is contracted through consent alone] (11.1).

³⁹ For a discussion of Bandello and Machiavelli, which could inform this topic, see Delmo Maestri's "Fra Bandello e Machiavelli: un intreccio di interesse e di riprovazione" (in *Du Pô a la Garonne. Recherches sur les échanges culturels entre l'Italie et la France à la Renaissance*, Actes du Colloque International d'Agen [26-28 septembre 1986] organisé par le Centre Matteo Bandello d'Agen, Agen: Centre Matteo Bandello d'Agen, 1990:157-177).

Pietro and Maria's story is similarly problematic. While the narrative does not explicitly point to anyone forcing Maria to marry Pietro, there is no word on her role in the process, which emerges as blatantly one-sided in the terse description: "Pietro toccò la mano a Maria e la basciò, accettandola per sua moglie ed in presenza di molti la sposò" (103). Maria receives the actions of Pietro, just as she was the passive (indeed, unconscious) recipient of sexual violence. This unilateral formulation of their marriage formation recalls the ending of Boccaccio's novella 5.8, in which Nastagio degli Onesti "la domenica seguente . . . sposatala e fatte le sue nozze, con lei più tempo lietamente visse" (5.8, 44). Not only is Pietro and Maria's marriage tainted by lack of reciprocity between the spouses; it is made possible only through the victimization of a woman so incapacitated by large amounts of drugged wine that she is in no position to know what is being done to her, much less to give the consent required by canon law. Pietro's unilateral decision to take away Maria's honor greatly handicaps her marriageability. His actions are at best morally dubious. The marriage, however, restores Maria's honor and the child's legitimacy, while also bringing peace between warring families. Readers are left wondering whether the end justifies the means.

Adulterated Wives: Sexual assault, Pleasure, and Married Women

As discussed in Chapter One, Gratian asserted in his *Decretum* that a married victim of sexual violence remains innocent as long as she does not bend her will to conform to that of her attacker (C. 32 q. 5). Bandello's novellas, on the one hand, portray the successful efforts of several wives to stave off a potential assailant, and on the other hand, depict as complicit those who are unable to prevent an attack altogether. The complex connections between honor, violation, and pleasure are provocatively explored in Bandello's novellas.⁴⁰

In the first two novellas discussed in the next section, the assault of a married woman sparks her apparent enjoyment and complicity. While at first glance these two novellas may seem quite different from each other, upon closer scrutiny, the female protagonists reveal themselves to be strikingly similar in many respects. In novella 2.21,

⁴⁰ Since wives owed their husbands sexual fidelity, and since the violation of wives challenged the marital relationship and could potentially lead to the begetting of children who were not the husband's, no discussion of the assault of married women would be complete without a mention of honor. As Thomas and Elizabeth Cohen cogently explain,

Different strictures lay on men and women. It is sometimes said, with some exaggeration, that a man's honour hung on what he did, and a woman's on what she did not do. In fact, by her beauty, clothing, industry, wit, modesty, and social grace, a woman could win honour for herself and for her menfolk. But, far greater than all the good she could do was harm she brought if she trespassed against the rules of sexual conduct. She owed virginity before marriage, continence after. (Cohen and Cohen, *Words and Deeds* 24)

Even more to the point, Patricia Cholakian discusses the connection between honor and sexual violence, showing how the perception of female enjoyment of sexual assault was built into the very etymology:

A man's honor signified physical courage, a woman's signified chastity. This double meaning of "honor" also blurred the meaning of a related concept – rape. In French, "elle est ravie" can mean either "she is ravished" or "she is delighted"; and in English, the word "rapture," which contains "rape" at its root, also connotes sexual pleasure. Thus the English word "rape" (sexual violation) and the French word "rapt," or abduction, both carry the presumption of women's rapturous collaboration in the undoing of the male line. The "honorable" woman was the one who was not subject to "ravisement" or sexual desire. (Cholakian 233)

Bandello, through the narrator Baldassare Castiglione, re-tells Livy's story of the rape of Lucretia, while in novella 1.3, narrated by Ottonello Pasini, Eleonora is violated by Pompeio and then agrees to carry on a consensual affair with him. Both women are seduced to some extent by the pleasure encountered during the sexual assault; they merely respond to the pleasure in different ways, Lucrezia with suicidal shame and Eleonora with adulterous glee. We saw in Chapter One that Gratian's *causa* 32 insists on the innocence of married women who withhold consent and thus retain their chastity, refusing, on the basis of the inherent lack of consent to sexual assault, to heap on them the stigma of adultery; these novellas raise the issue of the dangerous desire that might arise during the course of a sexual assault, polluting the married victim and transforming her into an adulteress.⁴¹

In novella 2.21, Bandello's 'Castiglione' retells the story of Tarquin's brutal violation of Lucretia and her subsequent suicide. He poignantly represents the victim's self-silencing as motivated by the desire to prevent the world from learning of the pleasure she experienced. Before moving on to an analysis of the novella itself, let us begin with the dedicatory letter, addressed to Lucrezia Gonzaga di Gazuolo, which introduces the narrative in the context of a courtly debate over issues of Christian morality:

Per questo essendo io a Diporto con madama di Mantova, la signora Isabella sorella de l'ava vostra materna, ella mi comandò che io prendendo le Decadi liviane, dinanzi a lei leggessi lo stupramento di Tarquinio in Lucrezia, con la morte di lei; il che per ubidirle feci. . . . Letto che io ebbi il tutto, desinammo. Dopo il desinare si parlò assai su questa istoria da messer Benedetto Capiluppo e da Mario Equicola, perciò che messer Benedetto molto lodava Lucrezia, e Mario diceva che ella era stata pazza ad ammazzarsi. Questionando questi dui sopravvenne il nobile e dotto cavaliere il conte Baldassare Castiglione, al quale madama disse quello che io aveva letto e quanto tra i dui s'era tenzonato, soggiungendogli: -Io vedeva, quando voi sète entrato, che il Bandello voleva entrar in sacrestia e dir sopra questa disputa ciò che diceva Santo Agostino nel suo dotto libro de la Città di Dio, di modo che si faceva un fatto d'arme. Ma voi avete col venir vostro levato via ogni romore. Vi piacerà adunque, poi che qui sète, dirne il parer vostro. Il che credo io che narrando tutta l'istoria come fu, ma ornandola con quelle cose verisimili che vi pareranno a proposito, più di leggero e con più sodisfacimento di noi altri farete. – Si voleva il Castiglione scusare, ma non gli essendo da lei ammessa cosa che per fuggir questo carico dicesse, a dir si dispose e narrò quanto in questa mia novella leggerete.⁴² La quale avendo allora scritta e adesso volendola por nel numero de l'altre mie novelle, ho pensato non ci esser persona a cui meglio donar la potessi che a voi. Al vostro adunque

⁴¹ It is interesting to note that the position represented by Bandello's narrators is at odds with Gratian's account. As discussed in Chapter One, Gratian's *causa* 32 insists on the absolute innocence of the assaulted wife, an ex-prostitute, while in *causa* 27 he expresses deep concerns regarding consecrated virgins who when assaulted succumb to sexual pleasure and desire further sexual contact with their assailants, whom they sometimes marry. It should be noted that Gratian also states that chastity resides in the soul and cannot be destroyed by violence: "De pudicitia quis dubitavit, quin ea sit in animo constituta, quandoquidem uirtus est? Unde a uiolento stupratore nec ipsa eripi potest" (C 32 q. 5 c. 6).

⁴² It should be noted that this sentence echoes Ghismunda's words to her father Tancredi: "mi disposi e innamorai mi" (Boccaccio, *Decameron* 4.1.35).

*onorato nome quella intitolo e consacro, rendendomi certo che vi debbia esser cara, come sempre aver care le cose mie avete dimostrato, ben che del mio nulla ci sia, essendo io semplice recitatore di quanto il gentile, dotto e facondo Castiglione disse.*⁴³ *Spero ben tosto darvi del mio: il libro de le mie stanze, tutto composto in vostra lode, ove vederete come io mi sforzo a farvi immortale.*⁴⁴ *Ma se al mio volere mancano le forze, averò almeno fatta al mondo nota la volontà che ho, che le vostre divine doti siano celebrate. State sana.*⁴⁵ (Bandello 843-44)

The account of how the story comes to be narrated is worthy of note. Before ‘Castiglione’ arrives and tells his version of the story, ‘Bandello’ reads Livy’s version aloud in order to entertain his companions. A debate follows, and before ‘Bandello’ has the chance to express his own opinion, ‘Castiglione’ enters.⁴⁶ In order to prevent ‘Bandello’ from speaking, Isabella (whose claim that she knows his position so well that she does not want to hear it directly from him sends a strong message about reading and misreading to

⁴³ In this sentence, the first-person narrator of the dedicatory letter deliberately distinguishes himself from the narrator of the novella, who in turn does not coincide perfectly with the real-life Castiglione, anymore than the Pietro Bembo who features as a speaker in Castiglione’s *Il libro del Cortegiano* corresponds exactly to the real-life Pietro Bembo.

⁴⁴ These words clearly echo Dante’s words to Brunetto Latini: “m’insegnavate come l’uom s’eterna” (*Inferno* XV.85), prompting readers to question the possible relationship between Lucrezia and Brunetto’s concerns for earthly fame (not to mention that Bandello the author casts the ‘Bandello’ of the dedicatory letter as a sort of Brunetto: while Dante’s Brunetto sought to make himself eternal, the ‘Bandello’ of the dedicatory letter seeks to eternalize Lucrezia, who here stands in both as the dedicatee and, by extension, the eponymous protagonist of the novella). Additionally, as will be seen shortly, Augustine finds Lucretia’s preoccupation for fame blameworthy. On a different note, the choice of the verb “sforzarsi” in the sentence “mi sforzo a farvi immortale” is remarkable, given the subject being discussed; indeed, just a few lines below the novella’s summary begins with an echo: “Sesto Tarquinio sforza Lucrezia” (844). If we take the last two sentences of the dedicatory letter, furthermore (“*Spero ben tosto darvi del mio: il libro de le mie stanze, tutto composto in vostra lode, ove vederete come io mi sforzo a farvi immortale. Ma se al mio volere mancano le forze, averò almeno fatta al mondo nota la volontà che ho, che le vostre divine doti siano celebrate*”), we note in the word “forze” an insistence on the same theme, and the ‘Bandello’ who is addressing Lucrezia Gonzaga replicates within himself the tension between his own “forze” and his “volontà” which are so dramatically at the center of Augustine’s discussion of violated women in *The City of God*. To return to *Inferno* XV, it is worth noting that in the tercet following the line cited above, Dante brings up the question of intertextuality:

Ciò che narrate di mio corso scrivo,
e serbolo a chiosar con altro testo
a donna che saprà, s’a lei arrivo. (88-90)

In these passages, both Dante and Bandello encourage careful and critical reading and show how meaning changes when a text is placed in relation to others.

⁴⁵ Several details must be emphasized here. First, the novella is dedicated to Lucrezia Gonzaga di Gazuolo; the reader will recall that Giulia of novella 1.8 is from Gazuolo, as is the nameless heroine of the source story narrated by Messer Cesare in Castiglione’s *Il libro del cortegiano*. Second, the fact that Castiglione is cast as the narrator of this novella is certainly important. Third, ‘Castiglione’ is asked to narrate his own version of the story of Lucrezia, with the addition of any details of his choice, in order to prevent ‘Bandello’ from entering into the discussion and thus aligning himself with Augustine. ‘Castiglione’ thus enters the “tenzone,” and one should not suppose that he does so without reference to Augustine’s text. I am not suggesting that Bandello the author should be conflated with the ‘Bandello’ who appears in the dedicatory letter; extreme caution should always be applied in these cases. I am emphasizing Bandello’s elaborate framing of this story within a larger debate whose dialogical and dialogic elements cannot be ignored.

⁴⁶ I am using quotation marks around names to distinguish the historical authors, Bandello and Castiglione, from the characters Bandello creates in his fiction.

the audience) asks ‘Castiglione’ to retell the story. The debate is characterized in terms of a *tenzone*; the choice to base the narrator of the novella on none other than Baldassare Castiglione strongly reinforces the dialogic framework, in which readers themselves are also invited to participate.⁴⁷

Moving on to the narrative, Tarquinio falls in love with the industrious and beautiful woman after Collatino displays “la bella Lucrezia che, nel mezzo de la sala tra le sue donzelle al lume sedendo, certi lavori di lana faceva che allora s’usavano, e tuttavia lavorando, tra quell’altre che lavoravano” (846). Returning alone to Collatino’s house, Tarquinio attempts to seduce Lucrezia, but to no avail: “mai non puoté con lusinghevoli parole, con larghissime promesse e con terribilissime minacce, né con quanta paura le sapesse fare, indurla che compiacer gli volesse. Quanto egli più pregava tanto più ella costante gli resisteva, disposta prima di morire che mai violar il nodo del santo matrimonio” (848). Tarquinio thereupon threatens her in her bed; holding a sword up to her throat, he vows that if she does not submit to his desires, he will slice her throat and kill one of the household slaves and then claim to have caught her having sex with the slave. Lucrezia, who treasures her reputation as “castissima,” is so horrified at the threat of posthumous defamation that she stops resisting. He then takes all the pleasure of her he wishes to, but Lucrezia shows none, and lies still as a statue, “ché in atto nessuno né in parole se gli mostrò pieghevole” (849).

After he leaves, Lucrezia dresses in black and summons her father and husband home, telling them of the reprehensible crime she has endured and professing a desire to end her life to prove her lack of consent: “Nel tuo letto, Collatino, sono impressi i vestigi d’un altro uomo che di te. Gli è ben vero che questo corpo mio solamente è violato, *perciò che mai l’animo mio a commetter l’adulterio non ha consentito*, il che con la morte mia a tutto il mondo chiaro e manifesto apparirà” (850, emphasis added). Her kinsmen do not understand her desire to die; indeed, vowing revenge, Collatino urges her to live on: “Adesso ti deve diletta e giovar il vivere, ché vicina sei a veder questo adultero andar in estrema rovina” (851). Collatino continues, simultaneously issuing a verdict⁴⁸ of his wife’s innocence and distinguishing her from the hordes of women who, despite initial resistance, enjoy forced sex and consent *post facto* to further sexual contact with the assailant:

Tu come donna a l’improvviso còlta, il corpo ne le forze del nemico sforzatamente hai lasciato, *ma l’invitta mente libera e casta in tuo arbitrio riservasti*. Il perché

⁴⁷ For a discussion of the narrator and dedicatee of the novella, see Carlo Godi, *Narratori e dedicatari della seconda parte delle Novelle* (Roma: Bulzoni, 2001): 151-56.

⁴⁸ As Stephanie Jed notes in her analysis of Coluccio Salutati’s *Declamatio Lucretiae*, which served as a source for Bandello,

Beyond the close connection between narratives in general and the legal systems in which they are constructed, there is, specifically, a legal setting in which most accounts of Lucretia’s rape take place. Livy’s account of this rape . . . becomes a sort of metaphorical courtroom: the only witness called to testify on behalf of Lucretia’s innocence is Lucretia’s death (“mors testis erit”). And although Lucretia absolves herself from guilt (“me absolvo”), she submits herself to the punishment for adultery. (3)

In Bandello’s case, Lucrezia’s male relatives absolve her, but she pronounces herself guilty, as will be seen further on. For Salutati’s *Declamatio* as a source for Bandello, see Jed (93). Bandello’s indebtedness to Salutati is discussed in detail by Ottavio Besomi in “Un cartone umanistico per Bandello (II 21), in vol. II of *La novella italiana. Atti del Convegno di Caprarola 19-24 settembre 1988* (Roma: Salerno Editrice, 1989): 861-83.

se tu gloria acquistar brami, qual maggior gloria esser ti può che sapersi che ad un giovine fervidamente amante e lascivamente i suoi appetiti saziante, non donna viva ed amorosa sommessa ti sei, ma di modo egli t'abbia avuto come se una rigida e marmorea statua ne le braccia tenuto avesse?⁴⁹ *Ché molte donne ancora che sforzate siano, nondimeno sentendo i soavi e pien di succo baci, gustando la dolcezza dei dolci abbracciamenti, e mosse da la lascivia di molti atti che si fanno, lasciata la prima durezza, a poco a poco dal diletto sensitivo piegate, volontariamente poi agli sfrenati appetiti consentono.* Arroggi a questo, Lucrezia mia, che a l'adultero consentito non hai per téma del morire, ma per schifar infamia, perciò che allora il corpo solo a l'assassino lasciasti quando egli di metterti a canto nel letto uno svenato servo ti minacciò. Il padre tuo ed io d'ogni colpa ti assolviamo e liberamente giudichiamo che innocente sei. Né il padre tuo ed io soli pronunziamo questa sentenza, ma Bruto e Valerio e tutti i propinqui nostri il medesimo affermano, pregandoti che la vita conservi mentre che ella è degna d'esser conservata. (852-53, emphasis added)

Perhaps it is precisely Collatino's distinction that unsettles Lucrezia even further, for she does not continue to accept that she is so different from other women, whom he characterizes as less virtuous.⁵⁰ On the contrary, Lucrezia increasingly depicts the assault as adultery, referring to herself as "non la tua moglie, ma una bagascia di Tarquinio" and to the potential offspring as "per adulterio . . . nasciuto" (854).⁵¹ Lucrezia's mention of a possible pregnancy is no random detail; rather, it increases the suggestion that she felt pleasure. As Irven Resnick points out, Galen's theory that conception occurred by means of the joining of both male and female sperm (362) and the idea that "semen is created only when the soul is moved with delight" were still widely accepted within the Christian

⁴⁹ There are two references to Novella 4.1 of the *Decameron* in this sentence. The first is to Tancredi's disbelief at his daughter's behavior: "mai non mi sarebbe potuto cader nell'animo, quantunque mi fosse stato detto, se io co'miei occhi non lo avessi veduto, che tu di sottoporti ad alcuno uomo, se tuo marito stato non fosse, avessi, non che fatto, ma pur pensato" (4.1.26), and the second is to Ghismunda's response to Tancredi: "Esser ti dovea, Tancredi, manifesto, essendo tu di carne, aver generata figliuola di carne e non di pietra o di ferro; e ricordarti dovevi e dei, quantunque tu ora sia vecchio, chenti e quali e con che forza vengano le leggi della giovinezza" (4.1.33). Moreover, the image of Tarquinio holding in his arms a marble-statue version of Lucrezia evokes the Ovidian myth of Pygmalion, suggesting the possibility that Lucrezia could potentially become more sexually available to Tarquinio. It is notable that Giulia's monument consists in a "colonna di marmo ch'in piazza ancor veder si puote" and that in novella 1.24, discussed further on, the story of the virtuous noblewoman falsely accused of adultery by her disgruntled suitor is "sculta in marmo nel luogo ove il caso occorre" (303).

⁵⁰ The contrast between his own wife as exceptionally virtuous compared to other women reminds the reader of the debate between Bernabò and Ambrogiuolo in *Decameron* 2.9.13-20 regarding Bernabò's claim that his wife, Zinevra, is exceptionally chaste as well as exceptionally skilled, and Dioneo's ridiculing of Bernabò's position once the novella is told (2.10.3-4). This connection between Boccaccio's version of Livy's story of Lucretia and Boccaccio's novella 2.9 should also remind the reader that the beginning of novella 2.9, in which Bernabò and other Italian merchants in Paris gather together to discuss their women, refers the reader to Livy's version of the story. As is well known, Boccaccio offers his own version of the story of Lucretia in Chapter 46 of his *De mulieribus claris*.

⁵¹ Lucrezia discusses the potential for pregnancy with great alarm: "Ma che sarà di me se di quello sceleratissimo tiranno lo sparso seme, in me gettate le radici, a far il frutto venisse? Sosterrò io di starmi in vita fin che d'un figliuolo di così superbo e vizioso uomo come è Sesto divenga madre?" (854). Along similar lines, Jed notes that in Coluccio Salutati's version of the story, "Lucretia has suffered the loss of two primary properties – one social and one biological – as a consequence of Tarquin's assault: she has lost . . . chastity . . . and control of her reproductive organs" (41).

tradition (with notable exceptions, such as Albertus Magnus).⁵² The obvious implication was that children were “an objective sign of consent” between the parties (Resnick 362); Resnick further notes that this view:

had unfortunate implications for an understanding of rape. If pregnancy could occur only when the seed was created, and if the seed could only be a product of internal delight or pleasure, there could be no rape when a pregnancy resulted, for the pregnancy was proof that the woman took pleasure in the experience and thereby offered her (perhaps silent) consent. (362)

In combination with other narrative elements indicative of pleasure, Lucrezia’s suggestion that offspring could result from the assault puts into question the definition of the act as forced sex.⁵³

As Patricia Cholakian notes, “[d]esire is . . . projected as a possible consequence of rape, a danger from which the virtuous woman is never safe. This has the effect of making the victim’s innocence dependent upon a lack of desire, and reinforcing silence as the only way to deny her guilt” (235). Lucrezia rejects Collatino’s verdict of innocence: “Se io a la vita mia perdono, non conoscete voi chiaramente che ad una adultera già perdono?” (856). She goes on to indicate that even though she lay still as a statue while Tarquinio assaulted her, she could not help enjoying the act:

Ma per dir il vero, credete voi che ancora che l’animo mio fosse stimato ai piaceri de l’adultero ritroso e che la ragione non volesse a l’adulterio consentire, che il senso e l’appetito concupiscibile non si sia in qualche particella diletta ed abbia tanto o quanto al piacer consentito? Il mio peccato non deve in modo alcuno restar senza punizione. Perdonami, padre mio, e tu, carissimo marito, non ti turbare; perdonatemi voi, dèi e dèe, a cui la santa pudicizia è sacrata: *poi che la cosa a questo è ridotta e niente deve esser celato e conviene innanzi a voi il vero manifestare*, io il pur dirò. Era ben io ritrosa, era io ostinata contra l’adultero e disposta a non gli consentire, ma non potei già tanto attristarmi e tanto dai disonesti abbracciamenti rivocar l’animo, che il fragile e mobil senso alquanto non si diletta e i mal ubidienti membri qualche poco di piacere non sentissero, ché io non sono di legno né generata fui di pietra, ma sono donna di carne come l’altre.⁵⁴ *Quella trista ed ingrata diletta, quello qual che si fosse piacere, merita esser con la mia morte castigato*. E certo troppo più potenti si sentono le forze de la libidine col diletto dei carnali congiungimenti che altri non pensa. (855, emphasis added)

⁵² Indeed, as James Brundage points out, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the importance of the wife’s pleasure during sex was emphasized by many authors, for it “seemed critical not only to medical writers but also to theologians who relied on their expertise in such matters, since they believed that only when a woman ‘emitted her seed’ could conception occur. Failure of either partner to achieve orgasm rendered intercourse nonprocreative and thus presented a moral problem, particularly if the woman deliberately refrained from sexual pleasure” (*Law, Sex, and Christian Society* 459).

⁵³ Of course, this does not suggest that Boccaccio subscribed to the view that pregnancy was necessarily correlated with pleasure by both participants in the sex act. We need only remember the novella of Maria (2.42), who is impregnated by Pietro while in a state of drug-induced unconsciousness that approximates death itself.

⁵⁴ This passage once again links Lucrezia with Ghismunda: “Esser ti dovea, Tancredi, manifesto, essendo tu di carne, aver generata figliuola di carne e non di pietra o di ferro” (Boccaccio 4.1.33).

Lucrezia's suggestion that she felt some pleasure during the assault complicates her earlier assertion that her mind did not consent to the crime.⁵⁵ This complication in the narrative evokes Augustine's analysis of Livy's story, wherein readers are asked to consider:

Quid si enim (quod ipsa tantummodo nosse poterat) quamvis iuveni violenter inruenti etiam sua libidine inlecta consentit idque in se puniens ita doluit ut morte putaret expiandum? Quamquam ne sic quidem se occidere debuit, si fructuosam posset apud deos falsos agree paenitentiam. Verum tamen si forte ita est falsumque est illud, quod duo fuerunt et adulterium unus admisit, sed potius ambo adulterium commiserunt, unus manifesta invasione, altera latente consensione: non se occidit insontem . . .

[What if – but she herself alone could know – she was seduced by her own lust and, though the youth violently attacked her, consented, and in punishing that act of hers was so remorseful that death seemed to be due expiation? . . . If this is the case . . . and both committed adultery . . . one in open attack and the other secretly consenting, then she did not kill herself innocently . . .] (Augustine I.XIX).⁵⁶

Augustine emphasizes that only Lucretia herself truly knows whether she gave some unspoken consent to the crime, and it is particularly important to note from this point of view that the narrator 'Castiglione' has his character Lucrezia attempt to give voice to this secret desire.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Augustine connects the issues of reputation and suicide to Lucretia's concern for her reputation: If Lucretia did not consent to the crime, her suicide would suggest that "Puduit enim eam turpidudinis alienae in se commissae, etiamsi non secum, et . . . *laudis avida nimium*, verita est ne putaretur, quod violenter est passa cum viveret, libenter passa si viveret" [For she was ashamed of another's foul crime committed on her person, even though not committed with her, and being . . . *too greedy of praise*, she feared that if she remained alive, she would be thought to have enjoyed suffering the violence that she had suffered while alive] (Augustine I.XIX, emphasis added). Similarly, in novella 2.21 of Bandello's collection, Lucrezia has three

⁵⁵ Augustine discusses the delicate question of whether some pleasure, and thus some consent, can result from sexual violence:

Sed quia non solum quod ad dolorem, verum etiam quod ad libidinem pertinent, in corpore alieno perpetrari potest, quidquid tale factum fuerit, etsi retentam constantissimo animo pudicitiam non excutit, tamen pudorem incutit, ne credatur factum cum mentis etiam voluntate, quod fieri fortasse sine carnis aliqua voluptate non potuit.

[But since it is not only the occasion of pain, but also the occasion of lust that can be inflicted on another's body by force, in the latter case, though shamefastness, to which a superlatively steadfast mind holds fast, is not thrust out, yet shame is thrust in, shame for fear that the mind too may be thought to have consented to an act that could perhaps not have taken place without some carnal pleasure.] (Augustine I.XVI)

⁵⁶ All citations in English and Latin are taken from: Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, Vol. 1, trans. George E. McCracken (London: William Heinemann, Ltd. And Cambridge, Mass: Harvard UP, 1957).

⁵⁷ As Jed notes, Salutati's Lucretia "defends her decision to commit suicide on the basis of her fear . . . that she will eventually begin to feel the pleasure of her rape, if she continues to live, attempting to cultivate chastity again in her own raped and contaminated body" (46). Clearly, Bandello takes this point much further by having his Lucrezia admit to pleasurable feelings during the assault. While Salutati's Lucretia is cutting herself off through suicide from the potential pleasure she may feel in the future, Bandello's Lucrezia kills herself in part to cut herself off from the pleasure she has already felt.

motives in killing herself – to silence the voice of her pleasure, to preserve her reputation for chastity, and to punish herself for the pleasure she felt – a pleasure which transforms the assault into an adultery. Even though Lucrezia chastizes herself by committing suicide, she cannot completely regain her chastity, a treasure which, in her own words, “né per fatica né per oro piú si può ricuperare” (855).⁵⁸

This portrayal of Lucrezia places her in close affinity to Eleonora who, as will be seen shortly, enjoys the forced sexual encounter so much that afterwards she continues to engage in sexual activity with her assailant. Indeed, Lucrezia strongly suggests that were she to continue living, she turn progressively further and further away from chastity: “Sapete non esser cosa al mondo che sia piú mutabile de la femina.”⁵⁹ Io non vorrei che differendo di darmi il convenevol castigo, le cose disoneste incominciassero a dilettermi e a poco a poco mi cangiassi l’animo che ora aver mi sento” (854). Unlike her predecessor in Livy, Bandello’s Lucrezia portrays herself as a woman who, unable to oppose Tarquinio due to the proud desire not to be defamed after death, is contaminated by the pleasure she feels during the assault.⁶⁰ The narrator suggests that Lucrezia ought to have chosen death and its consequences (defamation in this world, glory in heaven) over submitting, however passively, to Tarquinio.⁶¹

In *The City of God*, Augustine offers some fundamental reflections on “stupra⁶² commissa, non solum in aliena matrimonia virginesque nupturas, sed etiam in quasdam

⁵⁸ By contrast, in the *Declamatio Lucretiae*, Lucretia views suicide as a means “to regain what she has lost” rather than mere “punishment for adultery” (Jed 41). Jed further notes that the restoration of chastity takes place through “the images of cutting, touching, and breaking” (42); Lucretia’s attempt to regain her chastity through suicide functions as a kind of excision:

Although Lucretia overtly claims that that she is guilty of adultery and asks for a death sentence as a punishment for this crime, in effect she demands to be convicted with another purpose in mind: by cutting off her own life, Lucretia hopes not only to escape infamy and vindicate the loss of chastity but to recover her chastity in death (“mori pudicam”). By means of suicide, Lucretia hopes to liberate herself from contamination by another’s lust and thereby restore her body to its former “integrity.” (Jed 42)

In Bandello’s 2.21, there is only the most tenuous illusion of such ‘liberation’ through suicide.

⁵⁹ Here again Bandello is referring the reader back to Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, novella 2.9, in which Ambrogiuolo argues that “universalmente le donne sono piú mobili” whereas “ho sempre inteso l’uomo essere il piú nobile animale che tra’ mortali fosse creato da Dio” (2.9.15); Ambrogiuolo is of course echoing Filomena, who in the Introduction to Day 1 states that “femine” such as herself and her companions are “mobili, riottose, sospettose, pusillanime e paurose” (Day 1 Intro 75). In his notes to *Decameron* 2.9, Branca notes that Boccaccio in turn is borrowing from Virgil: “varium et mutabile semper femina” (*Aeneid* IV 569). It is likely that Bandello had both Boccaccio and Virgil in mind when composing Lucrezia’s speech.

⁶⁰ Lucrezia herself discusses the problematic nature of her preoccupation with her reputation: “Il disio che io aveva d’acquistarmi il pregio e titolo d’onestà m’ha fatto bersaglio di così vituperosa ingiuria” (Bandello 855).

⁶¹ Raymond of Peñafort similarly refuses to exonerate married women who give in under similar circumstances; whereas a wife “si fuerit vi oppressa” [if she was oppressed by force] is not considered an adulteress, he specifies: “Hoc autem intellego de vi absoluta; nam si metu vel praecepto parentum, instantia consanguineorum, vel alia consimili causa fornicaretur cum aliquo, etiam contrahendo cum illo de facto, non excusaretur” [I understand this of absolute force, for if by fear, the order of parents, the insistence of blood relatives, or another similar cause she fornicates with him, even contracting with him in fact, she is not excused] (Peñafort 22.3).

⁶² The reader is reminded that in late antiquity under Roman law the term *stuprum* referred to “certain kinds of fornication” (excluding relations with prostitutes or slaves, for example), as Brundage notes in *Law, Sex, and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (29).

sanctimoniales” [violations not only of married women and maidens expecting to marry but even of certain consecrated virgins] (I.XVI). Augustine begins by arguing that “virtutem, qua recte vivitur, ab animi sede membris corporis imperare sanctumque corpus usu fieri sanctae voluntatis, qua inconcussa ac stabili permanente, quidquid alius de corpora vel in corpora fecerit quod sine peccato proprio non valeat evitari praeter culpam esse patientis” [the virtue whereby a good life is lived controls the members of the body from its seat in the mind and that the body becomes holy through the exercise of a holy will, and while such a will remains unshaken and steadfast, no matter what anyone else does with the body or in the body that a person has no power to avoid without sin on his own part, no blame attaches to the one who suffers it] (I.XVI).

Let us pause to compare Bandello’s narratives of Giulia (1.8) and of Lucrezia (2.21, which he deliberately pairs together, not only through the explicit reference to Lucrezia at the end of novella 1.8, but because both novellas refer to Baldassare Castiglione (novella 1.8 intertextually, and novella 2.21 through the choice of narrator) and to Gazuolo (novella 1.8 is set in Castiglione, and novella 2.21 is dedicated to Lucrezia Gonzaga di Gazuolo). Gian Matteo Olivo, narrator of novella 1.8, judges Giulia’s suicide as exceedingly noble, and explicitly juxtaposes her with the Roman Lucretia: “E in vero per mio giudicio, quale egli si sia, questa nostra Giulia non minor lode merita che meriti Lucrezia romana; e forse, se il tutto ben si considera, *ella deve esser preposta a la romana*” (115, emphasis added). These two novellas reflect on the tremendous consequences of virginity and/or honor destroyed by violence. On the surface level of the narrative, the novella of Giulia includes several important exonerating details: the crime takes place in a remote location, where Giulia’s voice is unlikely to be heard; she is attacked by two men, and the *cameriero* further thwarts her ability to scream by gagging her, so that she is able to produce indistinct sounds of protest during the assault but not screams capable of summoning help, especially considering the location of the crime.⁶³ Lucrezia gives in to her assailant for fear of posthumous defamation, while Giulia is physically overcome by two violent men and does not engage in any kind of negotiation with them, and thereby acquires fame rather than losing it. Thus there are not as many extenuating circumstances in Lucrezia’s case. Additionally, her admission that she enjoyed the sexual contact forced upon her by Tarquinio and her fear she will crave it again suggest that coerced consent is an approximation of complicity.

If on the one hand novella 1.8, like the short story told by Messer Cesare in *Il libro del cortegiano*, seems to celebrate suicide, on the other hand it is necessary to note that this novella is embedded into a dialogue not only with novella 2.21 but also, by extension, with Augustine, whose remarks on suicide by women who are violated are worthy of mention. He contrasts the case of Lucretia’s suicide to violated women who “tamen nec in se ultae sunt crimen alienum, ne aliorum sceleribus adderent sua, si . . . illae in ipsis homicidia erubescendo commiterent” [. . . did not avenge a crime not their own upon themselves, but feared to add crimes of their own to those of others, which they would have done, if . . . they blushing had committed murder upon themselves]

⁶³ It is worth noting in this regard that the location of a sexual assault is extremely important in Biblical law, which makes a distinction between crimes that take place in the city and those that take place in the country, where a woman may have cried out for help without being heard (Deut. 22:22-28). The Biblical intertexts, of course, are extremely rich and could supply enough material for an additional chapter on the subject of sexual assault in Bandello.

(Augustine I.XIX). Giulia's monument itself – a bronze tomb mounted on a marble column – is described in terms that remind the reader that if her suicide cleanses the stain of the sexual violation from the community, it creates a worse stain, one that prevents Giulia from being buried in holy ground: “L’illustrissimo e reverendissimo signor vescovo la fece su la piazza, non si potendo in sacrato seppellire, in un deposito mettere che ancora v’è, deliberando seppellirla in un sepolcro di bronzo e quello far porre su quella colonna di marmo ch’in piazza ancor veder si puote” (114).

Both novellas make a distinction between the violation of the body, which can occur against the will of the person being violated, and the power of the will to keep the mind chaste in spite of physical violation. After Giulia recounts her story to her elderly neighbor, she remarks that “se il corpo mio fu per forza violato . . . sempre l’animo mio restò libero” (115); Before confessing that she felt some pleasure, Lucrezia declares that “perciò che mai l’animo mio a commetter l’adulterio non ha consentito” (850), and her husband attempts to comfort her by expressing a similar distinction: “il corpo *ne le forze* del nemico *sforzatamente* hai lasciato, ma l’invitta mente libera e casta in tuo arbitrio riservasti” (852, emphasis added). The insistence on mental chastity is a clear echo of Augustine:

Sed cum pudicitia virtus sit animi comitemque habeat fortitudinem, qua potius quaelibet mala tolerare quam malo consentire decernit, nullus autem magnanimus et pudicus in potestate habeat, quid de sua carne fiat, sed tantum quid adnuat mente vel renuat, quis eadem sana mente putaverit perdere se pudicitiam, si forte in adprehensa et oppressa carne sua exerceatur et expleatur libido non sua?

[But since purity is a virtue of the mind and has as its companion a strength of mind that chooses to endure any evils whatever rather than consent to evil, and since no one, however magnanimous and shamefast, has it always in his power to decide what shall be done with his flesh, having power only to decide what he will in his mind accept or refuse, who, if that same mind is sane, will hold that he loses his shamefastness if by chance his flesh is seized and held down and a lust not his own is put in play and sated on it?] (Augustine I.XVIII)

Indeed, even though damage may be inflicted on the body, as long as the mind remains chaste, the body as well must be considered pure, and the purity of the mind extends even to a body that has been physically ravaged:

Si autem animi bonum est, etiam oppresso corpora non amittitur. Quin etiam sanctae continentiae bonum cum immunditiae carnalium concupiscentiarum non cedit, et ipsum corpus sanctificatur, et ideo, cum eis non cedere inconcussa intentione persistit, nec de ipso corpora perit sanctitas, quia eo sanctae utendi perserverat voluntas et, quantum est in ipso, etiam facultas.

[If, however, purity is a possession of the soul, neither is it lost when the body is violated. And, what is more, the virtue of holy continence, when it does not yield to the uncleanness of carnal desires, hallows the body itself as well and therefore, when it remains steadfast and unbroken in intent not to yield to desire, the holy quality of the very body is not destroyed, because the will to employ it in a holy manner endures, and, as far as in it lies, the capacity also. (Augustine I.XVIII)⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Compare to Gratian: “De pudicitia quis dubitavit, quin ea sit in animo constituta, quandoquidem uirtus est? Unde a uiolento stupratore nec ipsa eripi potest” (C. 32 q.5 c.4). Additionally, Augustine states that “nec ipsi corpori aufert sanctitatem violentia lididinis alienae, quam servat perseverantia continentiae suae”

It is important to keep in mind that Lucrezia confesses that she has yielded to Tarquinio's lust; thus, according to the Augustinian logic, her body and her soul are both marred.

Because sexual violence is believed to pollute,⁶⁵ the fear that others will interpret the rape as a sexually pleasurable experience for the victim allows for her continued victimization and minimizes the chance that the crime will be reported. Lucrezia herself in novella 2.21 blatantly calls the resolve of married women into question, and Bandello, through the narrator 'Castiglione,' asks his reader to consider the implications of the suggestion that the honor of a wife depends less her intrinsic qualities than on the actions of the men around her. In this view, wives emerge as morally vulnerable to attacks on their chastity, and they can mutate quite suddenly from virtuous wife to sex-crime victim to adulteress.

The representation of women's purported enjoyment of sexual assault emerges again in novella 1.3, narrated by Ottonello Pasini and dedicated to Lucio Scipione Attellano, in which Eleonora, noble and married, is relentlessly pursued by Pompeo, also a member of the nobility. Eleonora reckons with Pompeo's status as "de' primi della città" (46) and advises him to seek the favors of a different woman and to desist from his courtship. Pompeo, however, does not relent. In response, Eleonora becomes increasingly "dura e ritosa" (46).⁶⁶ One day Pompeo hears that Eleonora's husband is away in the country, and he takes advantage of Eleonora's vulnerability by entering her home and then her chamber without invitation or permission, finding Eleonora at work on "certi suoi lavori di seta" (47). This line is particularly interesting because it implies an affinity between Eleonora and her predecessor Lucrezia, who was first glimpsed by Tarquinio as she worked on "certi lavori di lana . . . che allora s'usavano" (846).⁶⁷

[the violence of another's lust does not deprive even the body of its holiness, which is preserved by the steadfastness of one's own control] (Augustine I.XVIII); "ita non amitti corporis sanctitate etiam corpore oppresso, sicut amittitur et corporis sanctitas violata animi sanctitate etiam corpore intacto" [the holiness of the body is not lost while holiness of the soul remains, even though the body is forced to yield, just as holiness of the body is lost when holiness of the soul is violated, even though the body remains intact] (Augustine I.XVIII).

⁶⁵ As Laiou notes, "the woman who has been forced to sleep with someone is tainted, polluted. It is the act itself which changes the status of the woman, not her consent or absence of consent" (192-93).

⁶⁶ Pompeo subscribes to the logic of the amorous debt. Given the insistence on wifely chastity both in Bandello's novellas and in society, the reader cannot fail to note the double standard: one the one hand, married women are supposed to guard their chastity; one the other hand, when they reject a lover's advances, they are criticized for being too harsh. The theme of wifely chastity is poignantly explored in the above-cited novella of Zinevra, Ambrogiuolo, and Bernabò (*Decameron* 2.9) as well as in many novellas by Bandello, most notably 2.21, discussed above, and Bandello's 1.21, which explicitly refers to Livy's version of the Lucretia story, *Decameron* 2.9, and Bandello's novella of Lucrezia. All of these narratives share the theme of the husband who brags about his wife's beauty and chastity and in the attempt by one of his companions to seduce the wife as a result. An additional theme shared by all of these novellas is spinning, as discussed below.

⁶⁷ Through the theme of spinning, in addition to the theme of wifely chastity tested as a result of a husband's foolish bragging, Bandello's novellas 1.3 and 2.21 are also linked to his novella 1.21 and to Livy's account of the rape of Lucretia. It should be noted that the virtuous Bohemian noblewoman who is the protagonist of Bandello's 1.21 imprisons her attempted seducers as a punishment for their attempted crime and forces them to spin in exchange for food, a detail recalling Hercules, forced to wear a dress and spin.

When Eleonora looks up and sees him, she asks him why he has entered her home and beseeches him to leave, invoking the protection of her honor and of their lives.⁶⁸ Presently, her husband, who was never out of the city at all, returns, and Eleonora speedily hides Pompeio under a crimson dress. Eleonora's husband enters the chamber where Pompeio is hidden, and he tells his wife about the virtues of his newly purchased sword. Eleonora challenges him to demonstrate his weapon's worth by cutting her dress in half. The narrator emphasizes Eleonora's intentionality: "Era in quel punto montata la fantasia a la donna di far una solenne paura a l'amante, e per questo invitava il marito a voler tagliar la veste, *non perciò avendo l'animo che l'effetto seguisse*" (49, emphasis added). Just as her husband is about to deal his blow to the dress, Eleonora stops him, sparing Pompeio. However, because the would-be lover is unaware of Eleonora's state of mind, he takes her words at face value. Eleonora's intent is different, namely to deter him through fear from any further attempts at seduction, as evidenced from the threat she utters after her husband takes his leave again: "Or via, andate per i fatti vostri, e più non mi molestate di cose d'amore, perciò che ogni volta che voi ardirete venirmi in casa a questo modo, io di tal moneta vi pagherò, e forse di peggiore" (50-51).

This threat does not have its intended effect on the suitor; indeed, immediately after Eleonora utters these words, he is motivated to pursue revenge: "E pensando in che modo poteva goder del suo amore e de la donna vendicarsi, gli cadde ne l'animo uno strano pensiero, e altro non aspettava se non l'occasione" (51).⁶⁹ In order to carry out this aim, Pompeio secures the help of his sister, Barbara, Eleonora's neighbor and friend, who lures Pompeio's beloved into his bedroom by pretending that he is deathly ill and unable to speak. She leaves Eleonora alone in the dark room, where he seizes her by the neck and informs her that she is at his mercy.⁷⁰ He makes clear to her in a long speech that if she will not yield to his sexual urges, he will resort to further violence in order to have his way. Eleonora struggles against him and tries to scream and cry for help, but to no avail – Pompeio violates her "più fiato" (53), then leads her into another room, where, in a gesture that is part blason, part symbolic dismemberment, he displays her naked body, piece by piece, to a number of noblemen as the prodigious cure for his feigned illness. The reader might well imagine that Eleonora, whose face remains covered by a sheet during this scene, senses the threat of group violence by the men in the room, who, "sommamente la commendarono, desiderando di saporirla" (54-55), just as Pompeio feared grave injury while lying underneath the dress in Eleonora's home.

Once his friends leave, Pompeio persuades Eleonora, still crying bitterly over the betrayal and outrage she has suffered, to consent to further sexual contact with him: "e tante cose le disse che la si pacificò. E già gustato avendo gli abbracciamenti de l'amante esser più saporosi di quelli del marito, si lasciò in tutto passar la còlera, e fece di modo

⁶⁸ With regard to the historical incidence of adulterous relationships among nobles, "low levels of prosecution may well reflect several virtually contradictory factors: an unwillingness to prosecute the crime, a reluctance by noble males to initiate such crimes, a difficulty in freeing noblewomen from clan discipline, and an extreme caution in pursuing such affairs" (Ruggiero 62).

⁶⁹ This game of trickery and revenge is modeled in part on Boccaccio's 8.7, the famous tale of the scholar and the widow, with the most notable exception that in Boccaccio's version, the vengeful scholar Rinieri does not ultimately pursue a revenge that entails obtaining sexual gratification from the widow, Elena.

⁷⁰ Novella 1.10 of Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptaméron* contains a similar scheme, that is, in Amadour's feigned illness as a way of entrapping Floride in his bedroom, where he can attempt to assault her (72). Like Pompeio, he relies on friendship and trust in order to secure a visit from his intended victim.

che lungo tempo goderono del loro amore” (55). Even though Eleonora did not acquiesce to Pompeo’s requests prior to the assault and although she protests afterwards, she subsequently consents to future sexual activity, a decision which appears retroactively to excuse his sexual violence by giving consent after the fact. Pompeo effects the passage from pre-meditated assault to a consensual, loving, affair by means of verbal persuasion. Given the novella’s details, readers might be skeptical that Eleonora could have enjoyed the “abbracciamenti” of her assailant enough to forgive him for his treacherous behavior towards her, let alone to consent to an affair.⁷¹ The suggestion that there is no true chastity in women who experience any degree of pleasure (and no married woman who experiences sexual assault seems to escape pleasure during the crime) is framed within a larger debate and must not be taken at face value. The same holds true for the contrast between virgins and women who have had sexual experience prior to being sexually assaulted.

Alongside wives who succumb to pleasure once assaulted are those who manage to resist sexual violence, whether through luck or through skill. It is important to note that Bandello’s *Novelle* include several notable examples of wives who virtuously manage to prevent sexual violation. To cite just one example, in novella 1.24, a rich baron keeps a den of lions; a majordomo in his service falls in love with the baron’s chaste wife: “*non misurando ben le sue forze e meno considerando la nobiltà ed onestà de la sua padrona, da le bellezze di quella abbagliato*” (304, emphasis added), thinks only of ways in which he might obtain the object of his desire. Thus, “*non avendo ardire con parole farle manifesto l’intento suo, si sforzava diligentissimamente servendola . . . fare che ella de l’animo di lui s’accorgesse*” (304, emphasis added). His attempts at nonverbal communication fail, and, desperate to ask the lady to comfort him with her sexual favors, the majordomo professes his love to her; yet she is not pleased: “Ella, udendo così estrema follia, rivoltatasi molto turbata al maggiordomo gli fe’ un’agra riprensione minacciandolo di farlo gettar in bocca ai lions, se mai più fosse oso parlare di cotal

⁷¹ We should note that this is not the only account of a transition from sexual assault to consensual sex. This evokes *Decameron* 3.6, in which Ricciardo Minutolo tricks Catella to meet him in a dark room, having persuaded her that her husband will be there for a rendez-vous with his mistress; Catella, after finding out that she has been deceived, agrees to further sexual contact with Ricciardo on the basis that his caresses are superior to those of her husband’s. For a fuller discussion of *Decameron* 3.6, see Chapter Two. Additionally, the coerced-to-consensual-sex sequence is not limited to fictional narratives. In a real-life counterpart to these fictional plots, we see that the seducer was ultimately unsuccessful in securing consent to an affair from his would-be victim. Ruggiero cites a 1346 case whose details are reminiscent of Pompeo’s assault of Eleonora, (except that the victim in this case is of inferior social status to that of the perpetrator):

A noble, Maffeo Polani, had pestered Isabetta, wife of Pietro di Cremona . . . with the hope of getting her to agree to have an affair with him. Finally, having failed to win her favors, he went to the house where she and her husband were living . . . There he attempted to take by force that which he had not been able to win by persuasion. (Ruggiero 97)

Ruggiero notes that many a rapist hoped that “his violent attack would lead to an affair” (103); Maffeo was by no means an aberration. The perceived potential for a violent assault to be followed by further sexual contact might explain why the novella tradition so frequently represents women as initially resistant to sexual assault but subsequently enjoying it and desiring further contact with the assailant. More fundamentally, however, Eleonora embodies a number of negative stereotypes about women as fickle and sexually insatiable. By attributing pleasure to violated women, an author undermines the importance of respecting boundaries set by women. Eleonora emerges at the end of the narrative as equally culpable as Pompeo.

pazzia” (304-05). She cautions him, “Sia questa l’ultima e la prima volta che tu abbi errato, e più non ci tornare, perché tu amaramente pagaresti e questa e quella. Fa pensiero di non esser caduto in tanto errore e non ti metter più a cotanto rischio. Io per me ci metterò sopra i piedi e ti prometto che al mio e tuo signore non ne farò in modo alcuno motto. Attendi a far l’ufficio tuo secondo che solito sei, e levati queste frenesie di capo” (305).

Up to this point, readers will note that there are similarities between this story and the first part of novella 1.3, in which Eleonora attempts to dissuade her suitor and makes a grave threat against him if he continues to pursue her. The reader familiar with novellas of attempted seduction is well aware that the majordomo could have chosen to use force in his attempt to obtain his ends. Indeed, the possibility of physical violence is strongly hinted at through the use of words such as “forze” and “si sforzava” (304); furthermore, the majordomo’s lack of “ardire” (304) seems to be the only reason why the noblewoman is not confronted with direct sexual violence. After the majordomo is rejected, readers remain aware of the potential for sexual violence as a last resort for the spurned lover. However, his reaction notably stops short of sexual violence; the violence he exerts towards the woman who has rejected him is both cowardly and manipulative. Afraid that the lady might not keep her promise, and concerned that if she tells her husband, the latter might put him to death, the majordomo determines to weave a plot that will result in her death instead. He persuades a simpleminded young servant to hide under the lady’s bed at night and to get up before daybreak. Ensuring that a gentleman of good repute witnesses the simpleton’s exit from the lady’s bedchamber, the majordomo then accuses her of adultery, with corroboration from the misled witness.⁷² On the next night, the majordomo calls the baron when the young simpleton leaves the lady’s room, and the baron then decides to feed his wife to the lions. The entire town shows up to witness the spectacle. The innocent lady prepares to die, serene except for the haunting thought that her reputation will be tainted after her death: “non le dolendo altro se non che con tal infamia restasse il suo nome appo i viventi” – her concern for posthumous defamation links her to Lucrezia. The narrator confidently interjects: “Tuttavia l’innocenzia sempre è da Dio aiutata” (307).⁷³ The lions caress the lady rather than devour her, and the large crowd instantly applauds this great miracle that has replaced the cruel spectacle they have been eagerly anticipating. The majordomo tries to flee at this point, “Ma Dio, che voleva che fosse punito, fece che il cavallo mai non volle andar innanzi” (307). Now the lord decides for the first time to summon the simple young servant, who immediately tells the truth. Next, the lord removes his wife from the lions’ den and interrogates the majordomo, who confesses his treacherous plot and is consequently sent to the lions, who naturally tear him to pieces at once. “Restò la dama come prima era in grandissimo credito del marito e di ciascuno altro, avendo mille volte esso suo marito chiesto perdono che così a furia fosse corso e non avesse più maturamente investigata la cosa, dando così di leggero l’orecchie al malvagio, maligno e traditore suo maestro di casa” (306). The miraculous

⁷² Readers familiar with Livy’s story of Lucretia and later re-writings, including Bandello’s, could hardly fail to notice that the majordomo’s strategy of creating ‘evidence’ that the lady is engaging in adultery with a social inferior enacts Tarquin’s threat of killing Lucretia and a slave and placing the bodies next to each other in order to compromise Lucretia forever.

⁷³ Readers, of course, can hardly be expected to take this statement at face value, for countless innocents suffer terrible struggles in so many of the narratives, not to mention in real life (and this is not to suggest that Bandello’s novellas aim at a mimetic representation of life)

elements of the story, which clearly evoke the Biblical episode of Daniel in the lions' den (which, like this narrative, is associated with divine justice), highlight the fact that in real life, innocent people can and do suffer undeserved punishments, stressing the need for an effective investigative procedure, not hasty rush to judgment.⁷⁴ Divine intervention, conspicuously lacking in many a novella, is not always within reach either in fiction or in reality.⁷⁵

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the first part of this narrative bears a striking resemblance to the beginning of the novella of Eleonora and Pompeo. When we reflect that what separates the ultimately adulterous Eleonora of novella 1.3 from the ultimately celebrated lady of novella 1.24 is the degree of physical force exerted by the man, we might wonder why Bandello weaves novellas in which women's virtue is so utterly dependent on forces outside of themselves. To push this question even further, does the virtue (or vice) deriving from such moral heteronomy really pertain to the female protagonists at all? By portraying *married* women as morally heteronomous while portraying virgins as morally autonomous, Bandello invites readers to reflect on the status of married women.

Conclusions

The novellas analyzed in this chapter strongly associate the sexual assault of virgins with misreading and misinterpretation. The beauty of women functions as a text left open to interpretation (just as in Boccaccio, readers are responsible for the interpretation of the text). Dishonest men may well blame women's beauty for their wicked desires and even for the actions they choose to commit in response to those desires, but this seems to be an error of attribution. The various novellas presented here complicate each other, and a further level of complexity is added when one considers the dialogue between Bandello's novellas and the intertexts they evoke.

On the surface level of the narrative, novellas 1.3 and 2.21 suggest that the assault of a married noblewoman effectively activates the latent concupiscence that perhaps lies hidden within the heart of every woman with sexual experience; thus can a wife's chastity be destroyed by violence. Novella 1.24 does not solve the problem; it but shows instead the miraculous triumph of a woman faced with unjust death but not with sexual assault by the man who desires her. Lucrezia's preoccupation with her fame in the world compromises her morally, her choice to let Tarquinio defile her due to concern for her reputation is emphasized. On the other hand, novella 1.8 suggests that Giulia, who has done everything possible to resist her attackers and faced no choice in the matter whatsoever, is not guided by selfish motives in choosing suicide. As a peasant with

⁷⁴ This theme is notably developed by Boccaccio's novella of Zinevra, cited above, in which the husband's belief in false evidence results in his ordering a servant to kill his wife. Bandello's readers familiar with Boccaccio have before them the example of Zinevra, who, unlike the noblewoman in novella 1.24, manages to take direct action to save her life, start a new life elsewhere, and eventually present evidence of the truth to her husband, thus restoring the previous order.

⁷⁵ Notably, Girolamo Negro, the novella's narrator, prefaces the story by stating that the story he is about to tell is "sculta in marmo nel luogo ove il caso occorre" (303), raising once again the issue of monuments that celebrate female virtue.

purportedly little honor to lose,⁷⁶ she evidences a deep commitment to her society's moral values and her own virtue. Similarly, the Neapolitan maiden is praised for her courageous efforts to protect her chastity at all costs. Yet the Augustinian intertext complicates the picture by questioning the connection between suicide and virtue.⁷⁷

While the miller's daughter and Maria, who marry their respective assailants, do not incur blame for their role, a shadow is cast over such marriages. By writing narratives in which forcible defloration results in the victim's death or marriage to her assailant, Bandello invites readers to consider the possibility that marriage can only mask the destruction and damage inflicted by sexual violence against individuals, families, and the social and moral order. In spite of Augustine's assertion that mental chastity preserves the body's integrity as well, it is clear that on some level, virgins who are violated lose their hymens and thus are less viable on the marriage market, even though they incurring no moral blemish. Married women who are violated face a far worse stain: an irreversible loss of chastity. Bandello's narrators strongly suggest that it is not the women that seduce men, but that it is the besotted gaze of evil men that provides a false justification for sexual violence. Thus the fault does not lie in the way a woman looks, but in the way she is looked at.

⁷⁶ See Cohen and Cohen, *Words and Deeds in Renaissance Rome*, passim, for a discussion of the interplay between honor, shame and social class dynamics. For example, they note that the perception of honor was directly proportional to social status (185).

⁷⁷ In light of Augustine's remarks on suicide of violated women, the symbolism of baptism implicit in Giulia's preparation for suicide complicates the reader's task of interpretation.

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