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Patricia Eichel-Lojkine (dir.),

Le seuil de l'acceptable : expression des idées et représentations imaginaires "limites" à l'âge moderne (XVIe-XVIIe siècles)

« Straparola dicing with sauciness »

Patricia Eichel-Lojkine (Université du Maine, 3.LAM)



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Résumé

Cet article interroge les différents seuils de l'acceptable dans la réception des *Facétieuses Nuits* (*Le Piacevoli Notti*) de Straparole. Il montre dans un premier temps que, dans les années 1550, l'obscénité ou l'érotisme ne sont véritablement problématiques que dans la mise en scène d'un personnel clérical. Est mise en relief la singularité du travail de traduction-adaptation de Larivey qui fait passer dans son *Straparole* français une grande partie du contenu censuré en Italie par la Contre-réforme. Dans un deuxième temps, la question de l'acceptable dans les *Nuits* est abordée par un autre biais : l'hybridation du merveilleux et de l'impudique dans l'histoire d'« Adamantina » (la nouvelle V, 2, qui a été l'objet d'une double traduction par Louveau et par Larivey) débouche sur une analyse montrant la portée symbolique et critique de ce conte.

Mots-clés

xvie siècle ; Straparola/Straparole ; *Le Piacevoli Notti* ; *Les Facétieuses Nuits* ; Louveau ; Larivey ; traduction ; (ré)édition ; réception ; indécence ; impudeur ; contes ; gens d'Église ; rire ; obscénité comique ; scatologie ; censure ; réception ; impertinence

Abstract

This papers deals with the limits of acceptability in the reception of Straparola's *Facetious Nights*. At first, it demonstrates that, in the 1550s, censorship began to react to obscene or erotic elements which were not a problem in themselves unless churchmen were involved in the stories. It highlights the peculiar way in which Larivey's translation imports in the French *Straparole* some of the content that had been censored in Italy by the Counter-Reformation. Secondly, the issue of acceptability is discussed using another method : « Adamantina »'s story (novela V, 2, translated in French by both Louveau and Larivey) mixes marvellous and indecent motives and it leads to an analysis evaluating the symbolic and critical aspects of this fairy tale.

Keyword

Sixteenth century ; Straparola ; *Le Piacevoli Notti* ; *The Facetious Nights* ; Louveau ; Larivey ; translation ; (re)edition ; reception ; indecency ; shamelessness ; (fairy) tales ; churchmen ; laughter ; obscenity as a comic element ; scatological humor ; impertinence

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What you were forbidden to do yesterday, you will be required to do tomorrow (Beaumarchais, *The Marriage of Figaro*)

Is everything permissible in the worthy pursuit of curing melancholy? It is generally recognised that comic effects owe much to the transgression of proprieties. Indeed so, but when does it stop being funny? Beyond the broader question of what could raise a laugh (a question valid for both internal and external audiences in the context of such a frame narrative as used by Straparola), we propose to restrict ourselves to just a few “fables”. They will have an editorial history that shows that they aroused the censors’ suspicions (churchmen placed in salacious situations); or test another boundary, generic in nature, that capitalized on dissonance, on the risqué hybridization of marvellous with scatology.

I. Verging on the illicit: facetia, transgression and reception

*Le (tredici) piacevoli notti*¹ counts among a number of widely disseminated collections of entertaining stories, themselves largely inspired by earlier short stories or “*facetiae*” in Italian or Latin doing the rounds in Italy (e.g. Girolamo Morlini, Franco Sacchetti, Poggio). Straparola’s two tomes were exceedingly well received as evidenced by the significant number of re-prints (23 between 1554 and 1608, Venetian all of them)² and propagated in turn in other books and in other languages.

1. Framing the problem

The material at hand is rich as evidenced by the following re-prints, adaptations or recasting:

- French translations: the *Facétieuses Nuits de Straparole* were translated and adapted by Jean Louveau from 1560 (for the first part) and by Pierre de Larivey from 1572 (for the second part, alongside a revision of Jean Louveau’s translation of the first part);
- Sansovino’s anthology: a selection of Straparola’s short stories were included in

¹ *Le Piacevoli Notte*, Venice, Comin da Trino, 1551 [1550 ancient style] for t. I, Nights I to V; Comin da Trino, 1553, for t. II, Nights VI to XIII. This paper will especially consider the “corresponding” French texts provided by Louveau and Larivey, in effect a limited choice of a few “fables”.

² List provided by editor D. Pirovano (*Le Piacevoli Notti*, Rome, Salerno, 2000, t. II, Nota al testo, p. 805-826). Cf. EICHEL-LOJKINE P., *Contes en réseaux. L’émergence des contes sur la scène littéraire européenne*, Genève, Droz, 2013, p. 134 and BIDEAUX M. (ed.), *Les Facétieuses Journées de Gabriel Chappuys*, Paris, Champion, 2003, p. 129.

that oft republished 1561 anthology (*Cento novelle scelte da i più nobili scrittori per Franc. Sansovino*, Venice, 1561);

- Giambattista Basile's recasting of some stories
- Illustrated editions of the *Notti* published at the turn of the 16th and 17th century, by Alessandro de' Vecchi in 1599 (engravings taken from Sansovino's anthology), and, in 1601 (republished in 1604 and 1608) by Zanetto Zanetti with new plates, now fitting the storyline.

When addressing the impact of censorship, it is worthwhile cross-referencing two sets of data: the unfolding of its action over the century and the modulation of this action (short stories suppressed, expurgated or lightly altered). The cross-referencing of these two sets of measures neatly brings out two short stories casting clergy types in unseemly situations: the story of the "Crucified Priest" The Priest and the image-carver's Wife (VIII. 3, present in the 1553 edition, suppressed thereafter) and the story of the competition in obscene prowess between three nuns (VI, 4, suppressed in 1597, extant in the Larivey translation).

It is worth recalling that the *Notti* exercised the censors' attention in 1555, 1565 then 1597. Leaving aside the detail of the changes in each edition it becomes clear that:

- the tales with a blasphemous content were censored as early as 1555;
- stories involving clergy in salacious positions were altered or removed in 1565
- stories also implicating church figures though obviously perceived as more anodyne endure from one edition to the next until 1597 and even figure in the 1561 Sansovino anthology.

Setting the chronology and severity of the changes against the targeted themes, also gives a measure of how cultural the notion of licence actually is. All the stories of clergy in improper situations were gradually removed from Straparola's editions between 1555 and 1595, (according to an order and a reasoning we are yet to fathom) and also from Sansovino's anthology – Sansovino who "had retained very few licentious or anti-clerical subjects"³ and may even have self-censored, whittling down the number of short stories taken from Straparola from twenty-two (1561 ed. of the *Cento novelle...*) to ten (1563 ed.) then to five (1566 ed.).⁴

As it happens, research on the censorship of short stories – not least the *Decameron* – have proliferated in recent years. The texts were expurgated on the basis that "*per niun modo si parli in male o scandalo de' preti, frati, Abbati, Abbadesse, monaci, monache, piovani, provosti, Vescovi o altre cose sacre*".⁵ This was the sole criterion; the erotic content was not, as such, a problem.

³ BIDEAUX M. (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 131

⁴ BIDEAUX M. (éd.), *op. cit.*, p. 130-131. However after this downwards curve, Straparola's representation grows again in the 1598 edition.

⁵ "There should be no sort or form of evil or scandalous talk about priests, friars, abbots, abbesses, monks, nuns, parish priest, dean, bishops and other sacred things." LAZZERINI L., « 'Secondo l'ordine del sacro concilio di Trento'. Il

2. The tales of Messer Tiberio and of the Three Rival Nuns

The tale of Messer Tiberio (VIII. 3) figured only in the edition princeps of the second tome (Venice, Comin da Trino, 1553). In it, a libidinous priest falls into the trap set for him by the woman he harassed and by her sculptor husband whereby he ends up having to freeze crucified on a sideboard, narrowly escaping emasculation under the husband's chisel. Outrageous though it is, its near-sacrilegious content is not new (the tale is close to some of Morlini and Sacchetti's short stories, or the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles*, as well as some fabliaux). But in 1555, it was found unacceptable by the authorities and would be replaced by two more anodyne stories that could materially be fitted in the same slot. In the face of the reformation's inroads, the Church lashed out at written works and condemned e.g. Poggio's *Confabulationes* in 1559. Now in Poggio's book, there is a short tale (Facetia 12) where the "live crucifix" idea was freely exploited with a like intent of poking fun at a dullard (or a group of them): "A master craftsman asked of a deputation of peasants whether they wanted their crucifix dead or alive" (*De rusticis nuntiis interrogatis an vellent crucifixum vivum vel mortuum ab opifice*). In the same way, in the Straparola story discussed here, beyond the lecherous priest, it is the blasphemous nature of a life crucifix that has ceased to be acceptable.

OTTAVA. 51
FRATE TIBERIO PALAVICINO
 apostata, poi fatto prete secolare, et maestro in Theologia ama la moglie di maestro Chechino intagliatore, ella con consenso del marito in casa l'introduce. et trovato da lui con una ignominiosa beffa fuori lo manda, et da morte lo libera. Favola. 111.



È HOGGIDI gratiose donne, e capi chiericali (ragionando però tuttavia di tristi, et non di buoni) attendono a loro studij, dandoci buoni esempi, et vivendo santamente secondo la regola loro, gli huomini ignoranti, et plebei non harrebbono tanto ardire con saule ragionar di loro, anzi li terrebbono in tanta ueneratione, che toccando le fimbrie delle lor vestimenta si riputerébbono salui, et beati. Ma, per cio che si sono mescolati con secolari, dandosi al mondo, et alle lasciuie, et facendo quello, che a noi uietar deurebbono, senza riguardo alcuno et in publici, et in priuati luoghi di loro ampiamente si ragiona. Essendo adunque cosi non resterà di raccontarui una favola d'un apostata, laquale quantunque sia alquanto lunga, fara nondimeno piaceuole, et ridicolosa, et forse di non poco sodisfamento uostro. Dicouo adunque, che in Firenze città nobile, et amica fu un riuerendo padre, maestro Tiberio per nome chiamato. Di qual ordine egli si fuisse, non ardisco affermare, per cio che hora non mi souuene. Costui era huomo letterato, ualente predicatore, sottile.

G ij

Straparola (Giovanni Francesco) : Le Piacevoli Notti..., Venice, Comin da Trino, 1553 (BSB/MDZ : Po.it.966-1/2), p. 52 : the beginning of the tale VIII.3 (Frate Tiberio Palavicino) that figures only in the edition princeps

Decamerone censurato di Manrique e Borghini, 1571-1573 », Boccaccio e la nuova ars narrandi, Atti del Convegno internazionale di studi Istituto di Filologia Classica, Università di Varsavia (10-11 October 2013), Warsaw, 2015, p. 53-69 (here p. 55).

So how does this story of “crucified priest” fare in the translation by Larivey that is our direct concern? That translation-adaptation is not based on the *editiones principes*, but on an ulterior edition (probably 1555), since the 8th Night, the story of Messer Tiberio told by Arianna (VIII, 3) has been dropped and replaced by the two replacement texts. However Larivey seems to have had sight of the 1553 Venetian edition since the unexpurgated story of the crucified priest found in it resurfaces in the French *Straparole*, where, instead of being set in the 8th night, it has moved to the 9th Night and is recounted by another storyteller (Fable IX, 4 told by Vincende). This modification is but one of those Larivey performed on the original text, notably dropping all the short stories *Straparola* had extrapolated from Morlini. However the surprise reprise of this dramatically rich-veined tale is most interesting both in the context of salaciousness and of what is known of Larivey’s later career as an author of facetious comedies (1579).

Not content with “rescuing” a story by then vanished from the Italian editions, he altered and supplemented the description of its internal reception by the “Company” for where, at the end of Messer Tiberio’s “*favola*” the mention of general hilarity promptly gave way to the setting of the enigma, Larivey chooses to dwell awhile on the image of the priest stark naked and almost castrated. He triggers with it the irrepressible laughter that follows: “The gentlemen and ladies laughed well enough at the sight of the unfortunate priest standing crucified on the sideboard all night long in fear of the merest cough [...]”.⁶

Several other “*favole*” from the “*notti*” interweaving clergy and bawdy themes – with an audacity that gave Italian publishers pause for thought – found their way unimpeded into the French *Facétieuses nuits*. To wit the story of the obscene competition between the three nuns vying for the abbatial role (VI. 4, suppressed in the 1597 edition of the *Piacevoli notti*): one pisses through the eye of a needle, the next succeeds in controlling and modulating her fart in such a way as to displace the four millet seeds placed on the dots of a dice whilst leaving the one on the central dot undisturbed and the last crushes a peach kernel to smithereens with her anus. The subsequent scene of reception, faithfully translated by Larivey makes it clear that it is not the church setting that shocks the circle of “*devisants*”: only the ladies are offended – not in truth because of the implication of nuns – but because the depiction of female sexual organs demeans them – much to the men’s greater glee.

This cleavage is allowed to transpire often enough at suggestive enigmas but few instances are to be found in the tales themselves. “Obscenity is frequently established in relation to a female reaction whether actual or imagined” says Hugh Roberts.⁷ So we have here a configuration of

⁶ *Straparole-Larivey*, IX, 4, éd. P. Jannet, t. II, p. 207. Translation of the French quote (*Straparole-Larivey*) by the translator of the paper.

⁷ ROBERTS H., « L’euphémisme comique et les limites de l’obscénité au début du XVII^e siècle, *Obscénités renaissantes*, ROBERTS H., PEUREUX G., WAJEMAN L. (dir.), Genève, Droz, 2011, p. 254. See also “Obscenity can therefore be called into being by invoking women or soliciting reactions from them” in *Obscenity in sixteenth and seventeenth-century France* in *French Studies*, Vol. LXVII, No. 4, 535 – 542. <http://fs.oxfordjournals.org/content/67/4/535.full.pdf>

“restricted acceptability” (Jean-Pierre Cavallé), restricted, in this instance to a group: the company’s male element. This configuration gives an approximate idea of what the authorial entity deemed *possible* and “feasible” in terms of public reaction to risqué stories and even, perhaps, of what it considered *desirable* in terms of tolerance, broadmindedness, indeed licence. In fact, in the last third of the 16th century, the French *Straparole* had less to fear from the censors than its Italian source; it did not have to walk the hazy line between what sells (in this instance laughter and fantasy-inducing “lasciviousness”) and the boundaries of the say-able when it comes to “eutrapelia”. For memory, censorship was exclusively religious in France before the Wars of Religion (1562) that is before the advent, at the end of the century, of a politically-driven censorship; furthermore, central power did not censor on the grounds of immorality or obscenity before the 17th century. Although book importation was controlled as from the Edict of Chateaubriant (1551), the few tomes of entertaining short stories hailing from Venice were hardly of concern (Geneva was firmly in the cross-hair) and among conceivably suspicious genres, tragicomedy scored higher than facetious short stories.

To sum up this section, the success of Straparola’s short stories is there to remind us that in the 16th century’s cultural environment, obscenity did not initially arouse indignant or offended reactions but primarily laughter – the extraordinary success of Poggio’s *Facetiae* is proof enough of that. However, against this fairly broad-minded backdrop, that “same” saucy discourse would be diversely received when changing language (Italian/French), setting, place and release date. The comparative analysis of a few significant short stories from the *Notti* and the *Nuits* shows how entertaining literature gradually found itself confronted to repression in the second half of the century as well as how it represented a “moot territory” in which there were no pre-established resolution of the acceptable/unacceptable split, but instead a negotiation process. We have, via its outcomes, but an indirect knowledge obtained by comparing Straparola’s several Venetian editions and by setting side by side the solutions found by Straparola’s string of publishers and Larivey’s publishers in Paris, Lyon and Rouen. Over and above themes bound to exercise the Inquisition, Straparola’s collection probes the confines of acceptability in comic discourse from a completely different angle requiring a thoroughly poetic approach. We refer to the poetic and generic singularity of some of his short stories which throw the reader off balance in that they combine two registers perceived as incompatible: the marvellous and the obscene.

II. Capitalizing on unorthodoxy: the match of ribaldry with marvellous

1. *Adamantina and the doll: presentation*

Not only does Straparola's collection set no distinction between "realistic" short stories and marvellous tales but the very same "fable" may prove both marvellous and facetious-obscene as is the story of Adamantina and her doll (cycle ATU. 571C, The Biting Doll).⁸

The story in brief:

In Bohemia, an old woman bequeaths her two daughters a small chest filled with tow. Cassandra, the eldest spins it into thread that her sister Adamantina is to sell at the market. However, on the market square Adamantina is drawn to a beautiful doll, which an old woman trades for her thread.

Arriving home with the doll, she is roundly scolded and beaten by her sister, from whom she takes shelter with her doll in another room. She cuddles the doll, rubs her tummy with oil from the lamp wraps her in clean rags and lay her by her side in the bed. Shortly, she is awoken by the doll crying "the stool, mother, the stool." The girl attends to her need only to find that, instead of excreta, coins came out to the great rejoicing of the sisters thus reconciled.

News of the wonder get around and a malevolent neighbour succeeds in being taken in the sisters' home, after appealing to their kindness (under pretence of a row with her husband who, she claims, has assaulted her). In the place, she secretes the doll away in the small hours but the scatological adventure turns sour when she gets home: the doll, not recognising her mother in the usurper, repeatedly fills the rag she is offered with foul-smelling ordure. Soon enough the husband throws it on a muckheap whence it is loaded into carts by peasants on their way to manure their fields.

Breaking from the hunt to relieve himself, King Drusiano finds nothing to wipe himself but that doll a manservant has brought him. Now the thing viciously grabs his private parts in an unrelenting grip. Back in the palace, the king, despairing ever to be released has a proclamation read throughout the kingdom promising his liberator one third of his kingdom if a man, and, if a maid, his hand.

A great many would-be helpers rush to the palace but the doll's grasp only gets tighter at their sight until, at long last, Cassandra and Adamantina show up and recognise the doll who answers the request of her little mother, throwing itself in her arms.

True to his word, the king marries Adamantina and finds her sister a worthy husband. The doll disappears never to be heard of again.

Here is a tale the bawdy (specifically scatological) motifs of which do not appear to have raised

⁸ Related tales : *La papara* (« The Goose ») by Basile (*The Tale of Tales*, V, 1) and for the "All stick Together" motif, Grimm's « Golden Goose » (KHM 64).

much reprobation. In keeping with the positive response of the fictitious audience, it slipped unchallenged through the censor's mesh at each new Venetian reprint. Not before 1597 did the "favola" get altered in Daniele Zanetti's reprint and this only in one detail (the image of the royal bell-like testicles is replaced by somewhat vaguer "virili parti"). Jean Louveau translated the tale in 1560, a translation adopted by Larivey, with only a few minor alterations, in 1572. At the end of the century, Zanetto Zanetti enhanced the tale with an unambiguous woodcut vignette: it shows, amid a delightful pastoral setting, a king crouching to relieve himself with a doll stuck fast to his bottom and surrounded by helpless retainers. («*Adamantina Figliula di Bagolana Savonese, per virtù di una poavala, di Drusiano Rè di Boemia moglie divenne*», V, 2, ed. 1601, reprint 1608).



Straparola (Giovanni Francesco) : Le Piacevoli Notti..., Venise, Zanetto Zanetti, 1608 (Venice, Bibl. Marciana, C 075C175) : First part, V. 2 (Adamantina)

2. The critical function of laughter

This tale is a forceful reminder of Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani's observation that laughter is based on the transgressive enjoyment of a mental image (realized in the Zanetti edition) of bodies in obscene postures.⁹ And yet, this obscene tale is a fairy tale as well. The story's dynamics leads a poor maid to a royal union thanks to a magical object. The overturning of the initial situation whereby wholly deprived people gain access to the sphere of power and wealth goes hand in hand with the transition from maternal love (Adamantina and her doll) to conjugal bond (Drusiano and Adamantina) and (for Drusiano) from thwarted sexuality to liberated sexuality. The magical object's role is twofold: party to a swap, it procures wealth at first (like *Donkeyskin's* gold-dropping donkey) then, after a misadventure (a theft symmetrical to the initial swap), it sets up the mediation that brings together two worlds intended never to meet (palace and hovel) in stages: after being dumped in the open then spatially displaced and used for arse-wiping, it clings like a leech, before being removed. In this progression the arse-wiping move obviously has

⁹ *La Conversation conteuse, La Conversation conteuse*, Paris, PUF, 1992, Chap. « "Les Paroles ne sont jamais puantes". Poétique de la scatographie », p. 155-156.

a pivotal role and it is not so much Rabelais who springs to mind here than Poggio (Facetia 4).

Once the magical object no longer serves to advance the narration, after Adamantina's social rise to the top (and the king's converse *mésalliance*), it remains for it to vanish – according to a narratologic code, which comes unusually close to being spelt out in the text by a narrator who speaks in the first person.

The threads around corporal anal and genital bodily functions and faeces (scatological motives) serve to answer all sorts of libidinal satisfactions, including perverse eroticism: bodies get massaged (the doll), bowels move (the doll and the king), a female mouth bites and a female hand clutches male genitalia. As for the excretion of solid gold faeces, Freud's fantasmatic equation: ordure – money – child – present – penis hardly needs citing.

- At the level of images, the lining up in a coherent storyline of improper motives moving from castration to sexual exchange, from need to desire calls on:
- A supernatural dual-purpose object, both priceless treasure and miserable arse-wiper;
- A grotesque vision conflicting and connecting in the same breath arse and head (bottom and crown), refuse and fecundity, also to be found in Poggio (Facetia 137);
- Images of an ambivalent (aggressive-erotic) nature such as the grab cum embrace of the testicles or agony-pleasure exquisiteness;
- A correlation between, on the one hand the reversal and the alliance of gross extremes (the doll passing from a male arse to female arms) and the upturning of the social order on the other (*mésalliance* between a prince and a peasant girl).

Neither does the tale dispense with a critical function. In fairy tales princes having to surrender half their kingdom (to their rescuer) or their hand (to a heroin) are not a rarity. And Drusiano is not the sole instance of a grandee brought low through his crotch either. A parallel may be drawn not with the crucified priest threatened by the sculptor's chisel but with Castorio, a nobleman who ends up "gelded" by a peasant in Starparola's Fable VI. 2 (*"Castorio desideroso di divenir grasso si fa cavar tutti due i testicoli à Sandro, & essendo quasi morto vien dalla moglie di Sandro con una piacevolezza placato"*).



Straparola (Giovanni Francesco) : Le Piacevoli Notti..., Venise, Zanetto Zanetti, 1608 (Venise, Bibl. Marciana, C 075C175) : Second part, VI. 2 (Castorio)

The translators in no way bowdlerised the explosive amalgamations found in Adamantina's and Castorio's tales wherein laughter serves to merge the sexual – indeed scatological threads with that of social inequality. The prince with crushed balls (Drusiano), the emasculated nobleman (Castorio) suffer the respective humiliation of having one's every move hampered by a bum clinging doll or depending on the wiles of a lowly born rescuer. They are "brought to naught" whilst resting at the mercy of a poor country orphan (Adamantina) or as a peasant (Sandro in Castorio's story) turns out to have every power over them. The marvellous component (via a magic object) is not meant to mask social tensions, which also transpire in other stories (IX.3), or to idealise or sublimate those realities (as will frequently be the case, 150 years later, in the French fairy tales) but on the contrary to increase the punch of the conjured images.

In conclusion

A life crucifix, a crunched kernel, a biting doll: saucy "fables", the greater claim of which was to amuse, have proved a good "way into" the exploration of the notion of confines of acceptability in their two functions: the shifting ideological boundary between the admissible and the illicit closely watched by ecclesiastical censorship, and the esthetical boundary between two dissonant registers that would diverge and become two distinct genres in the following century (the facetia and the fairy tale).

This approach has helped encompass the unconscious projections on this older material of ulterior codes: in the confines of a collection of entertaining short stories, laughter inspired by obscene or scatological situations was not problematical as such – just as long as the figures involved were not clergy. In this event, some filtering came into place in Italy but in a pragmatic, circumstantial, gradual way. For instance, the blasphemous representation of a luxurious priest as a life crucifix aroused the Church authorities (tale suppressed in 1555) long before they were perturbed by the portrayal of three nuns practicing the arts of aiming with their pee, mastering the modulation of their fart and crunching a fruit kernel with their anus (tale removed in 1597). Furthermore, both those tales survived unfettered in their French translations. The upshot of the

censoring process on the Venetian editions (including Sansovino's self-censorship) is that, as from the years 1560-1570, French readers had an easier access to Straparola's unexpurgated texts than their Italian counterparts.

Beyond those clerical strands, comical ribaldry was pretty well left alone. "Coprography", grotesque images, inventions involving neutered grandees endured throughout the century, equally unscathed in Italian and French editions, whether in the texts or the pictures.

The mawkishness we unquestioningly associate with marvellous tales turns out to be misconceived, an anachronic projection. Far removed from the aesthetics of the *Cabinet des fées*, marvellous and earthiness marry well enough in some of the tales Straparola collected, such (folk?) tales as the noble assembly, gathered in the fictitious Murano palace, receives approvingly, causing no blush to the cheeks of demure ladies in waiting (V.2). The fact that Louveau produced their translation in 1560 (adopted with only minor adjustments by Larivey in 1585) and that Basile used related storylines and themes in his "Goose" (V.I), posthumously published in 1636, invites us to broaden our view of literary history by opening our mind to its "possibles": a possible where the fabliaux and facetiae tradition could coexist with the poetics of the marvellous tale and where neither the black pudding of the *Ridiculous Wishes* nor Donkeyskin's gold-dropping donkey would be perceived as incongruous singularities; a possible in which the fairy tale would not relinquish its bawdy or grotesque elements – as feminine and aristocratic sensitivities would demand at the end of the 17th century, even as the infatuation with this new literary genre was spreading to the Parisian elites; a possible in which tales intended to do away with gloom would not be divorced from the critical themes