# Crime and its Punishment: Alfonso Ceccarelli's False Chronicles

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*This article focuses on the tradition of false chronicles in the early modern period, presenting some famous impostors and forgers, their motives, methods and justifications for their work. One interesting figure in the history of forgeries was Alfonso Ceccarelli (1532–1583), a medical doctor who, in order to acquire easy money, began composing fictive historical documents such as family trees that traced a family's roots to important bishops, popes and ancient heroes. To give credibility to these fictive genealogies, Ceccarelli compiled historical manuscripts, which he passed off as genuine documents, and he referred to non-existent chronicles to verify his claims. When his frauds and forgeries were finally revealed and he was publicly accused in court, Ceccarelli confessed that he had indeed created many kinds of documents, but he appealed to his good intentions and insisted that when he added something to an old book, he justified it by adding truth. Ceccarelli's case is particularly fascinating because he was severely punished for his forgeries; before his death he produced an apology that questioned the distinctions between true and false histories. This article argues that Ceccarelli's story reveals important conventions in traditional historiography (to use his expression) and broadens our notions of the functions and significance of such falsifications in rewriting the past.*

## Defining Forgeries

This article discusses the reasons why historical documents and chronicles were fabricated and how early modern impostors and forgers justified their actions. In order to provide some background I will first briefly present what was understood by the concept of literary forgery in the early modern period; secondly, I will present some famous sixteenth-century fabricators in order to illustrate their practices, and thirdly, I will focus on one figure in the history of forgery, Alfonso Ceccarelli (1532–1583, also known as Ciccarelli), who, in order to earn easy money, gave up his career as a medical doctor and began composing fictive historical documents, family trees and chronicles. Ceccarelli's case

is particularly compelling, because he was severely punished for his forgeries. Before his death he produced an apology in which he questioned the conventional methods of historiography. In an almost postmodern way Ceccarelli tried to justify his forgeries by appealing to the dominant cultural practices of producing and reproducing new texts through invention and copying.[1] What should we make of Ceccarelli's argument that his manner of correcting history with useful additions and interpolations merely stabilised former truth? How could such forgeries be justified? What were the usual punishments for such frauds? The main argument here is that Ceccarelli's case shows us some important conventions in traditional historiography (to use his expression) and broadens our notions of the functions of forged chronicles and other falsifications in rewriting the past.

First of all, it should be recognised that, according to early modern critics, literary thefts, forgeries and the misuse of sources were common phenomena. Literary frauds were addressed in a number of seventeenth-century Latin treatises, including ethical, philosophical and polemical works. These treatises have remained relatively unknown and unstudied, and therefore modern critics are unaware that in these works literary frauds were, for example, divided into different types.[2] In a plagiarised text the author usually intentionally adopts and steals the writings of others and publishes them as his own, whereas in a forgery the author intentionally fabricates texts and attributes his own falsifications to someone else.

'Suppositions' or replacements (*suppositiones*) were mentioned as a separate class of literary fraud, and this is the class which we today associate with forgeries. According to Burkhard Gotthelf Struve's literary-historical dissertation *De doctis impostoribus* (1703), there were two main ways of making such forgeries (*suppositiones*): the first was by changing words or entire passages in old books; the second was by publishing books under a false name.[3] The latter category included several sub-forms:

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1    Postmodern critics have often considered borrowing, imitation and even plagiarism as inevitable or creative literary practices; see Kivistö 2012, 292.
2    One type of literary fraud was plagiarism. In his important philosophical dissertation on plagiarism entitled *De plagio literario* (1673), the Leipzig philosopher and jurist Jacob Thomasius (1622–1684) defined plagiarism as literary theft in which an author transcribed the writings of others and represented them as his own, deliberately suppressing the name of the original author with intent to deceive (§98). Thomasius's treatise and other early modern texts on plagiarism identified different types of plagiarism, each of which reflected the quantitative extent of the stolen material and the nature of the theft. These types were given Latin names: *totale* (total), *partiale* (partial); *manifestum* (evident), *occultum* (concealed); *crassum* (thick, obvious, concerning both words and ideas) and *subtile* (subtle, concerning thoughts alone); see Thomasius 1673, §50, §265–282. These categories have not usually been recognised in modern works. For a more detailed discussion of these treatises and for discussion of early modern plagiarism, see Kivistö 2012 and 2014, 118–134. Parts of the present article previously appeared in the latter publication in slightly different form.
3    Struve 1703, §II. For Struve, *suppositions* (*suppositiones*) were one type of literary frauds (*fraudes, imposturae*). Another interesting text that mentioned learned imposters was the archivist Johann Gottfried Büchner's *Schediasma historico-literarium de vitiorum inter eruditos occurrentium scriptoribus*, which was published in Leipzig in 1718. On suppositions, see Büchner 1718, Cap. II, Sect. II, §VII–VIII. Büchner was the first to collect a bibliography of writings about scholarly sins. In his treatise Büchner identified books on scholarly vices in general or specifically related to certain professions (see Kivistö 2014). He divided suppositions into different types relying on Struve's dissertation.

authors could publish their own writings under someone else's name, or they could use pseudonyms. Works were often published that were falsely attributed to Aristotle, Plato, Homer, Hippocrates and Galen.[4] These acts of concealment were not always contemptible, but they were criticised if the author published something suspicious, infamous or heretical under a fictitious name, or if such compilers falsely added the names of illustrious authors to their own modest creations, thereby attempting to gain money, credibility or merit.[5]

Struve described how newly written texts were presented as old manuscripts in order to deceive those who venerated antiquity. It has been argued that the fabrication of classical fakes and antiquities became big business around the early sixteenth century, whereas in the Middle Ages classical fakes and inscriptions had been rare.[6] The antiquarian interests of the Renaissance humanists inspired the production of pseudo-antique artworks and 'rediscovered' historical texts, whereas religious controversies produced other kinds of forged documents. The invention of the printing press and the growing book market made the dissemination and circulation of (true and false) knowledge much easier than before. The corpuses of Latin inscriptions, for example, included a vast number of fake inscriptions, produced when Renaissance antiquarians and other men were inspired by nostalgia for the past.[7] 'Classical' forgeries included ancient stones and inscriptions, which cheaters secretly buried and which, when unearthed, passed for ancient monuments and original epigraphic writings. These pranks also found their way into literary storytelling, in satirical texts ridiculing experts and enthusiasts who would not praise anything unless it was old and ancient and who were easily deceived in their enthusiasm. In his famous lectures on learned charlatans from 1715, Johann Burkhard Mencken ridiculed the learned Jesuit, Athanasius Kircher, for his admiration of antiquity:

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4    Morhof 1714, I. I. IX.4.

5    Struve 1703, §II: "De illis autem potissimum agemus, qui scriptis suis illustrium nomina praefixerunt, vel ut fidem aliquam scriptis facerent, vel ut fallerent ementes, vel ut sententiam suam stabilirent". See also Büchner 1718, Cap. II, Sect. II, §VIII. Büchner mentions several learned imposters, such as Annio da Viterbo and Alfonso Ceccarelli.

6    See Stephens 2004, 206–207; Hiatt 2004, 9; Constable 1983, 14; Bernheim 1908, 331–376. Of course, there were many other kinds of forgeries in the Middle Ages, such false relics. Bernheim distinguishes between different types of forgeries, ranging from material forgeries, such as relics, statues and coins, to written documents, such as inscriptions, privileges and chronicles. He also mentions the oral tradition of telling sagas as an instance of untrue stories, which rely in their narration on historical events or memories of the events. Bernheim states that the additions made to these stories are not forgeries in the strict sense unless they are entirely fictitious and intentionally falsified to serve some purpose, such as vanity, local patriotism, false religiosity or something else. Aetiological explanations could also be fabricated with certain ends in mind. According to Hiatt, the two primary types of non-textual forgeries in the Middle Ages were the manufacture of relics and the counterfeiting of coins. Another characteristic feature of the medieval forgeries was that the forger was usually an anonymous figure, whereas in the post-medieval period the identity of the forger was significant in the discussion of such frauds. Hiatt 2004, 13–14. Hiatt argues that especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries forgeries were often produced to substantiate a genealogy or to provide evidence for historical arguments, whereas in the Middle Ages the motivations had been different (such as seeking to assert the antiquity of certain privileges or writing pseudo-hagiographies). Hiatt's opinion is that forgeries were very common in the medieval period, for example, in monasteries. Hiatt 2004, 9.

7    Grafton 1990, 28.

Some mischievous youths of Rome, hearing that a building was to be erected on a certain site, resolved to put Kircher's ingenuity to the test. So they secretly buried there a rough stone on which they had designed some appealing voluptuous figures. When the foundation of the new structure was being dug, the stone was found – and promptly, admired as a new monument of antiquity, remarkable for its perfection. At once an interpreter was sought, and Kircher was chosen. As soon as he saw the stone, he began to leap and dance for joy – and to give a beautiful interpretation of the circles, the crosses, and all the other meaningless signs.[8]

In this case the reason for the forgery was simply to humiliate and ridicule the unsuspecting Kircher, who was known for his love of oriental languages, antiquities and ancient relics. The literary reproduction of this story in Mencken's oration served similar purposes of derision and scorn for learned authorities.

Struve recorded another story about the Portuguese poet Henric Cajado (Cajadus, d. 1508), a disciple of Angelo Poliziano, who had buried three marble tablets outside the city walls of Sintra on which he had inscribed some verses. Cajado's forgery was meant as a joke; he arranged everything so that the treasure was found by his drunken friends. The tablets were praised as ancient relics and their inscriptions read as oracular sentences predicting how India would someday be conquered by the King of Portugal. This all happened in the very year that the king actually travelled to India. The king, who was aware of the joke (and apparently also of the forgery), ordered that the prediction be printed and distributed in the Christian world as evidence of his success and brave deeds.[9] It appears that the reasons for fabricating historical documents ranged from profit and jest to deceiving those who adored antiquity. However, there were also reasons other than mockery for fabricating ancient texts, and these reasons will be illuminated below through other sixteenth-century cases.

## Famous Fabricators

Struve and other early modern critics of forgeries mentioned several famous fabricators from the past. Their colourful lives served anecdotal writing and provided material for amusing stories about deceivers and their victims. A continuing critical interest in past forgers partly stems from their intriguing and deviant personalities, as these interesting figures were going against the mainstream in their ways of writing history. On the other hand, modern scholars have found it fruitful to study forgers who falsified not just for economic gain or other selfish reasons, but for some higher purpose or those whose

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8    Mencken, *De charlataneria eruditorum,* 1715, 38–39. English translation in Mencken 1937 (ed.), 86 (translation by Francis E. Litz).

9    Struve 1703, §XXVI. Similar stories about buried and 'rediscovered' inscriptions were attached to legends of Annio da Viterbo (see e.g. Stephens 2004, 207).

activities somehow influenced the course of history.[10] Some of these forgers worked on ancient relics, while others were more interested in drawing on written historical records. By studying the motives behind these falsifying activities, it is possible to identify some recurring reasons for the success of forged historical documents. These reasons often point to the vanity of those who commissioned the forged texts or to the conceits of the reading public.

One of the most famous and also most studied fabricators, someone who forged entire books and advertised new writings as old manuscripts, was Annio da Viterbo (Giovanni Nanni, ca 1432–1502), a Dominican friar and papal theologian celebrated for his exceptional linguistic skills, remarkable manuscript discoveries and pseudo–archaeological findings.[11] Many of his findings, however, were entirely fictive, including some marble stones which were 'discovered' near Viterbo and which passed for ancient treasures.[12] Annio forged chronicles that he attributed to ancient sources, including his most famous composition, the Chaldean chronicle *Berosi sacerdotis Chaldaici antiquitatum libri quinque*, which he wrote ca 1492 and published ca 1498. His edition, also known as *The Antiquities of Annius*, was believed to contain writings by ancient authors, but the collection was his own creation. It included forged works under the ancient names of the Babylonian astronomer Berosus, Cato Maior, Archilochus, Sempronius and many others.[13]

Annio's *Antiquities* was reprinted many times: between 1498 and 1612 eighteen Latin editions were published. The work inspired many later adaptations and rewritings of national histories in France as well as elsewhere.[14] Richard L. Kagan observes that while "documenting" the early history of the Spanish ruling house, Annio da Viterbo's forged history of antiquity allowed Ferdinand II, the King of Aragon, to assume that his Spanish monarchy was older than those of his rivals.[15] Annio's major goal was to prove that his hometown of Viterbo was the oldest city in Europe and that the Etruscans were the most learned and ancient people in history.[16]

Annio da Viterbo's forgery was quickly detected – the first suspicions were raised in 1504 by Italian humanists[17] – but his authority was not unanimously dismissed. In any case throughout the early

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10   See Constable 1983, 7.
11   See Struve 1703, §XXV–XXX. Annio da Viterbo has also been studied by many modern scholars. See Stephens 2004; Ligota 1987; Grafton 1990; Grafton & Blair 1990, 8–38; Grafton 1991, 76–103 and Schmidt-Biggemann 2004, 421ff. Ligota provides useful additional references to studies on Annio da Viterbo's case, his motives, influence and the use of his texts in ideological contexts. Ligota's own article examines Annio's writing methods in his forgeries; these methods included chronology, the use of various authorities, onomastics (the use of names as the most reliable historical evidence) and euhemerism (the reduction of gods to human status).
12   Struve 1703, §XXV. See also Stephens 2004, 207.
13   Annio da Viterbo 1552; Struve 1703, §XXVIII; Büchner 1718, Cap. II, Sect. II, §VIII.
14   See e.g. Stephens 2004, 204–205.
15   Kagan 2009, 49.
16   Stephens 2004, 208.
17   Ligota 1987, 44 n2; Stephens 2004, 206. Struve 1703, §XXVIII observes that the famous Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives also discussed Annio's *Antiquities* as forgeries.

modern period he was famous for his forgeries. The "Chaldean Antiquities" was also mentioned in Mencken's list of impostors (*falsarios et sycophantas*) who forged entire books (presented here with the rhetorical device of *praeteritio*):

> I pass over other sycophants and impostors who have forged whole books: Annius of Viterbo, with his "Chaldean Antiquities"; Inghirami of Florence, with his "Etruscan Antiquities"; Antonio Dominic Fiocci, with his book on "Roman Judges and Priests," falsely accredited to Fenestella; Hieronymus Roman de la Higuera, with his bogus "Chronicles" under the names of Flavius Lucius Dexter, Marcus Maximus, Braulio, and Heleca; Antonio Lupian Zapata, with his history ascribed to Hautbert; and Gregor de Argaez, with his history supposed to be by Liberatus. They were all wise enough to say beforehand that everything was described exactly in accord with the old manuscripts. Some – Zapata, for instance – hoping to be believed the more easily, attempted to persuade their readers that they had secretly taken manuscripts from foreign libraries. Others, like de Argaez, invented new histories to support the forgeries they had previously published.[18]

Annio da Viterbo was also known for having traced the origins of the Borgia family to Isis and Osiris,[19] while still others traced family lineages as far back as the beginning of the human race.[20]

Sometimes accusations of forgeries and plagiarism were used as a means of destroying someone's reputation as an upstanding citizen. A good example is the sixteenth-century Italian orator and poet Giovanni Gioviano Pontano, whose enemies claimed that, having found Cicero's texts in the library of Monte Cassino, Pontano made small changes and published the texts under his own name. Yet according to Struve, this rumour was false, a result of the anger that Pontano's biting verses aroused in his contemporaries.[21] Thus, sometimes the hostility of colleagues gave rise to accusations of dishonesty; for example, although Angelo Poliziano's Latin translations of Herodian's histories were generally greatly admired, some of his rivals declared that he had borrowed his translation from another humanist, Gregorius Tiphernas (Gregorio Tifernate).[22]

Stealing manuscripts from public libraries for personal use seems to have been rather common.[23] For example, in 1622 Duke Maximilian of Bavaria decided to send a large collection of manuscripts and

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18  Mencken 1715, 86–87. English translation in Mencken 1937 (ed.), 125–127 (translation by Francis E. Litz).
19  Grafton 1990, 38; 2009, 74.
20  Mencken 1715, 89–90.
21  Struve 1703, §XLVII.
22  Struve 1703, §XLVIII. Struve also described how some imposters burned their original sources so that no one would recognise their forgery. George Rüxner was rumoured to have burnt the source text of his sixteenth-century book of tournaments so that no one would be able to use it. The original was an old codex from Marburg written in the Saxon language. Struve 1703, §XLIX.
23  For that reason, in some medieval and early modern libraries larger books were chained to the shelves; other books could only be used behind locked cage doors. I thank an anonymous referee for this note.

book treasures from Heidelberg to Pope Gregory XV. It was Leone Allacci (Leo Allatius, ca 1586–1669), a Greek scholar and librarian for the Vatican, who was responsible for supervising the transport and conveying the famous library of Heidelberg to Rome, but many of the treasures were lost before they reached Rome. They ended up in the private collections of cardinals and other men.[24] The sixteenth-century Lutheran reformer from Istria, Matthias Flacius Illyricus, for his part, disguised as a monk and using a false name, stole material from German abbeys and libraries. If he was unable to steal an entire book, he used a knife to cut the most interesting pages from the manuscript; the knife – *cultellus Flacianus* – became almost proverbial. By using this method, Matthias Flacius Illyricus collected excerpts from old manuscripts and composed new texts to go with them. He justified his actions by appealing to his good intentions: he had committed the crimes for the common good so that private knowledge, stored in cloisters, would become public.[25] The thefts were thus part of his anti-Catholic activities. It has been noted that Flacius was in fact a hard-working and ambitious scholar, who collected and edited a large number of documents; ultimately, his reputation was destroyed by his enemies who spread gossip about his razor.[26]

## The Methods and Motives of Fabricators

A chronological framework, describing a whole series of events starting from the very beginning of the world or from biblical happenings, was crucial to Annio da Viterbo's method of writing history. He emphasised the primacy of chronology in the same way as chronicles are dominated by a chronological structure. Annio also followed the principle that since no historian could be his own authority, he had to rely on official records and other historical sources.[27] These sources were not necessarily written by historians, since, for Annio, historians were no better or more privileged authorities than other writers; some of their stories were true and some were false, and one had to select the best sources. Christopher R. Ligota has described how Annio da Viterbo had recourse to the testimony of ancient poets, geographers and even satirists in order to glean the most useful information.[28] One can imagine that poets were invaluable for going back to mythical times and providing descriptions of periods inaccessible to historians. Annio gave special significance to place names when drawing up his chronologies, since the names of founders, towns and other places formed the best type of historical evidence for recording past

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24  Struve 1703, §LIII. Allacci's role in these events was investigated, but according to Struve he defended himself successfully. I will return to Allacci soon, since by coincidence he is our main source for Ceccarelli's case.
25  On Flacius, see Struve 1703, §LIV.
26  Grafton 2009, 104 mentions that Flacius was falsely accused of using a razor to get what he wanted.
27  Ligota 1987, 48.
28  Ligota 1987, 48, 51, 54.

events.[29] All the names were "verified" with reference to historians and other sources and explained in various ways in order to "reveal" the story behind the toponyms. Needless to say, the method left room for creative interpretation.

Concerning chronicles, it is important to note that they were often anonymous and the authors difficult to identify, but by the same token uncertain authorship aroused curiosity, and many chronicles were attributed to known authors.[30] False chronicles have been a peculiar feature of documentary writing throughout history.[31] Especially in seventeenth-century Spain, historians invented chronicles about their own towns to celebrate the mythical past of the locale. This activity was part of a wider search for new sources that would document the early history of Christianity in Spain.[32] The most famous false chronicle in Spain was the so-called Dextro-Máximo chronicle by the Jesuit of Toledo, Higuera (ca. 1595), who was also mentioned on Mencken's list of impostors given above. The name of Higuera's chronicle referred to the late fourth-century Roman writer Flavius Dexter and to the continuator of his work, a seventh-century writer and bishop named Maximus, whose writings this forged chronicle was supposed to contain. These fictions and fables were challenged in the 1660s by so-called innovators who attacked all mythical representations of the past and demanded more critical writings of history.[33]

Richard L. Kagan, who is among those who have studied this curious phenomenon of Spanish historiography, has explained that the reasons for fabricating chronicles were usually political. Kagan has shown how princes and other political leaders employed chroniclers to celebrate their (the princes') victories, justify their actions and build up their reputations, in effect, paying to create a favourable impression of their political achievements and thereby legitimate their rule. Kagan observes that in the sixteenth century nearly all towns and rulers used the services of hired chroniclers to write official accounts of a glorious past, often transforming history to establish a favourable impression of a ruler's accomplishments.[34] Kagan further states that "controlling the past was essential to controlling the future, or at least the future's understanding of a particular ruler or regime."[35]

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29  Ligota 1987, 52–54.

30  The polyhistor Vincent Placcius mentioned several chronicles written under false names in his *Theatrum anonymorum et pseudonymorum* in 1707. For example, Joseph Scaliger composed an anonymous Greek chronicle. Grafton 1990, 31.

31  Bernheim 1908, 365–369, argues that annals and chronicles have always formed an important subgroup among forgeries. Bernheim mentions several Italian chronicles that were forgeries. One fabricator was the German abbot Johannes Trithemius, who composed false chronicles about the Franks and great Benedictine houses. His falsifications are studied, for example, by Grafton 2009, 70–78, and Staubach 1988, 263–316.

32  Kagan 2009, 257.

33  See Kagan 2009, 256–265; Godoy Alcántara 1868. Godoy Alcántara's book is the foundation work on Spanish false chronicles. See also Katrina Beth Olds's extensive dissertation on the topic: Olds 2009. It has been observed that Higuera's forgery has been well-known at least since the work of the seventeenth-century Spanish bibliographer, Nicolas Antonio, whose *Censura de historias fabulosas* was published posthumously in 1742.

34  Kagan 2009, 10.

35  Kagan 2009, 11.

Different versions sometimes competed for the official or truthful interpretation of events, and sometimes unfavourable accounts were deliberately branded as fabrications so that the more laudatory memory would prevail. Kagan's account allows us to see that the narrative practices and processes of chronicle writers involved several techniques for preparing a sympathetic interpretation of history that would satisfy the individual who commissioned the text. Chroniclers could select relevant sources and arrange them in a favourable way to show a family's alleged ancient ancestry, for example, or demonstrate the divine origin of a town and its founders. Highlighting facts by dramatizing them was another common practice.

Thus, one of the motivations behind forgeries was to provide material for the commissioner of the text to support and confirm the view of the past that he (or a town or a church) considered valid and wanted to perpetuate. Yet the motivations behind forging varied, the same as with any other historians or chroniclers, and ranged from direct commissions to more spontaneous activities. Some forgers were driven by love of a subject, others by feelings of anger towards their rivals or enemies. The reasons for producing forgeries included financial profit and ambition, careerism, amusement, derision and the wish to ridicule authorities – or "the sadistic pleasure derived from seeing others fooled", as Anthony Grafton has put it in his book on forgers and critics.[36] Grafton has emphasised that some forgers were simply irresponsible persons who were completely uninterested in ethical questions, but their activities were often useful in giving impetus to the intensive development of textual criticism. Sometimes the forgers were actually skilful, hard-working individuals fully competent in philology and historical studies. It has been observed that Annio da Viterbo was very careful in modifying and polishing his epigraphic forgeries.[37] Moreover, forged writings also included many familiar and verifiable facts.

According to Alfred Hiatt, Annio da Viterbo marked a clear change in the production of forgeries, because instead of searching for personal gratification or producing forgeries to satisfy an important patron, his main goal was to construct a seamless world history and the history of the Etruscans.[38] Annio's motivation was thus partly the same as that of genuine historiographers. Because Annio was highly critical of the methods of writing history, the concepts of forgery and criticism intertwined in his activities. In the following section, I will concentrate on another, slightly less well-known, but equally talented forger and intriguing figure from the early modern period who tried almost every kind of forgery.

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36  Grafton 1990, 38. On forgers' selfish motives, see also Bernheim 1908, 331.
37  However, Stephens notes that Annio was perhaps not as learned as he is often believed to be. Stephens 2004, 213–214.
38  Hiatt 2004, 11.

## The Crime

One of the most industrious and creative fabricators of historical documents outside Spain was Alfonso Ceccarelli, who put together several historical texts and claimed that they were genuine documents. His historian's activities started developing around the 1560s, when he gave up his career as a medical doctor and began composing fictive genealogical trees for famous families, as well as for less well-known clans, first in Marche and Umbria and then in Rome, Florence, Bologna and elsewhere.[39] Ceccarelli's forgeries were commented on in later polemical literature. The German Protestant theologian Gottlieb Spitzel, in his work on the unhappy scholar, *Infelix literatus* (1680), devoted one section of this book to the tragic life of Ceccarelli, who was exhibited as a warning of the fate of a literary impostor who desired worldly fame.[40]

Ceccarelli's story was borrowed from *Antiquitatum Etruscarum fragmenta* (1642) by Leone Allacci, in which the author made Ceccarelli's crimes known to the world. Alois Riegl has argued that in Allacci's time historians and others who used historical sources were still being deceived by Ceccarelli's forgeries, and therefore Allacci thought it important to give an overview of these crimes.[41] Allacci mentioned several historians misled by Ceccarelli's sources,[42] and he described how Ceccarelli wrote his falsifications (*imposturae, falsificationes, fraudes*) by using names other than his own and even invented or created manuscripts, antiquities and acta that he passed off as historical. Drawing his information from the Vatican archive, Allacci also detected other possible impostors. Here, I will focus on Ceccarelli's story as it was presented in Allacci's version of events.[43] Allacci's reliability may of course be questioned, as his approach is clearly polemical and his tone indignant; he describes Ceccarelli's activities in terms of different (moral) maladies (*lues, pestis*).[44] But even if Allacci's account may not

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39  On Ceccarelli, see Allacci 1642, 255–360. Ceccarelli's case is also briefly described in Struve 1703, §XXXI, with reference to Allacci's account. For further information on Ceccarelli, see Riegl 1894; Fumi 1902, 213–277; Pistarino 1958; Petrucci 1979. On late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Italian articles on Ceccarelli, see the references in Mercati 1951, 72.

40  See Spitzel 1680, Commonefactio XIIX. On Spitzel, see Kivistö 2014.

41  Riegl 1894, 195–196.

42  Allacci 1642, 357–360. These historians include Petrus Riguardatus, who wrote *Historia monastica*; Monaldus Monaldeschus de Cervaria, who wrote *Commentaria historica*; Ferdinandus Marra, who wrote *Chronologia familiarum*, and others. Allacci observed that these historians also imitated Ceccarelli's fabrications and sometimes appealed to non-existent sources. See also Riegl 1894, 194.

43  I am heavily reliant on Allacci's account (1642) here, because Allacci devoted a whole treatise to Ceccarelli's case and this treatise is the main historical source for Ceccarelli's activities. As the main sources for his account, Allacci used the correspondence between Ceccarelli and Alberico Cibo-Malaspina, the Prince of Massa, and Ceccarelli's written apology for his falsifications (see below). Allacci received these documents from the Vatican archive and its prefect Felice Contelori. Allacci 1642, 261. Some of Ceccarelli's autograph papers, miscellaneous correspondence and falsifications have been preserved in the Vatican Library (Vat. lat. 12487–12488). Like Allacci, Riegl (1894) studied various documents in the Vatican Library related to Ceccarelli and his sentence. Riegl mentions several documents that Allacci did not use in his investigations; these include notebooks written by Ceccarelli in the late 1570s and various letters. Here my interest is in studying how fraudulent activities were justified rather than in righting the falsehoods committed by Ceccarelli.

44  Allacci 1642, 255.

be entirely unbiased, it is the main source for Ceccarelli's case and also a useful one, since it allows us to see how Ceccarelli justified his activities. One of my arguments here is that Ceccarelli's case is considerably more complex and ambiguous than his critics have suggested.

Allacci mentioned more than 120 authors quoted by Ceccarelli who either did not exist or did not write the books Ceccarelli attributed to them. Allacci added three indices to his life of Ceccarelli as set forth in *Antiquitatum Etruscarum fragmenta* in order to take into account all of Ceccarelli's work. The first index contained a list of the texts usually attributed to Ceccarelli. One of Ceccarelli's main activities was to make up illustrious family trees for famous families, tracing the family's roots back to important bishops, cardinals, popes and ancient heroes and "verifying" these identities by inventing great ancestral names.[45] These genealogies included those for the families Boncompagni, Casa Cibo, Casa Farnese, Santa Croce and Casa Conti Romana, as well as several other clans in Bologna. Allacci's list of forgeries also mentioned the history of all noble families in the world (*De historia familiarum illustrium totius orbis*).[46]

To give credibility to these impressive, albeit fictive, genealogies, Ceccarelli had recourse to supposedly old manuscripts, which he also fabricated. These included imperial and papal documents and privileges of ancient and medieval emperors (*Imperatorum ac Pontificum diplomata, ac Privilegia*), which supposedly contained ancient family names that proved the family ancestry. These false privileges were attributed, for example, to Charlemagne, Otto I and other rulers.[47] Like Annio da Viterbo, Ceccarelli was careful with names and used these as proof in his chronologies and genealogies. According to Allacci, Ceccarelli could add fictitious cognomens to existing proper names and thereby make up fake individuals at will.[48] He added information to original texts or changed their passages to serve his own purposes and verify his claims. One of his fabrications was a family tree for Guido Cavalcanti, a Florentine nobleman, whose family, according to Ceccarelli, stemmed from ancient times and was represented in an old chronicle written two hundred years earlier – an example of Ceccarelli's habit of appealing to old chronicles to confirm a family's noble ancestry.[49]

Ceccarelli's writings also contained several town histories, astrological texts, horoscopes and predictions, as well as lives of priests. He offered astrological services to customers and pretended that his wisdom, which in fact was his own creation, was based on old Greek, Arabic and Chaldean

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45 Allacci 1642, 258 (. . . "ex capite ipse suo Maiorum nomina fingere").
46 Allacci 1642, 292–304 ("Index primus"). On Ceccarelli's false genealogies, see Tiraboschi 1789; Bizzocchi 1991 (who notes the medieval background of genealogies and discusses their social dimensions in sixteenth-century Italy).
47 Allacci 1642, 258. See also the list of imperial privileges given in Riegl 1894, 227–232 (103 items, all produced by Ceccarelli).
48 Allacci 1642, 258.
49 According to Riegl (1894, 203), in 1581 Ceccarelli mentioned to a representative of the Cavalcanti family that he had in his possession several old chronicles that referred to the Cavalcantis.

sources. He wrote predictions for old cardinals who cherished dreams of ascending the papal throne and revealed the future to them, asking them to keep his secret prognostic letters to themselves and not show them to anyone until they were elected to the papacy.[50] All the "genres" of forgery that Ceccarelli employed were traditional; for example, in the Middle Ages privileges and property rights were rather commonly forged.[51] Amusingly, it appears that Ceccarelli did not forget his former career as a medical doctor, since one of his mythical works was entitled *De omnifaria arthritidis curatione*, in which he recommended medication for the pain caused by gout and boasted that he was the first doctor to cure gout. Gout was also a disease that often figured in parodies and satirical contexts.[52]

Allacci's second index contains a list of manuscripts that Ceccarelli claimed to have in his personal library. These included many otherwise unknown or spurious chronicles, such as *Chronicae Carrarienses, Castrenses, Gualdenses,[53] Senenses, Spoletanae, Viterbienses, Urbevetanae, De Brunforte* and *Canapinenses*. Other annals and chronicles explicitly mentioned here were *Ioachimi Abbatis Chronica, Ioannis Filii Comitis Nicolai de Barbiano Chronica, Ioannis de Capistrano Chronica, Ioannis Petri Scriniarii Chronicon,* Selinus's *Chronica,* Ioannes de Virgilio's *Chronica* (allegedly from Dante's time), *Petri Baccarini de Horta Chronicae* and *Petri de Caffarellis Chronica*.[54] Apparently, many of these writers were Ceccarelli's pseudonyms or other invented names. Some of these chronicles were actually fabricated and produced by Ceccarelli, whereas others did not exist at all, but were probably merely the product of his imagination.

Allacci's third index contains Ceccarelli's source texts to which he referred in verifying his claims, but which were equally suspect as being spurious and were no longer extant in Allacci's time if they had ever existed at all. Again, these sources included numerous chronicles and other texts forged or invented by Ceccarelli: Albertus Patriarcha Hierosolymitanus's *Chronicae, Anselmus civis Brixiensis Chronicae,* Aymo's (the brother of Bede) *Chronicon Ecclesiae Romanae* from 690, Bernardinus Ligurinus's and Pigurinus's *Chronicae,* Brunus de Garleonis Neopolitanus's *Chronica* and many other chronicles from different regions of Italy.[55] One chronicle on the origin of the world by the Spanish bishop Decius "confirmed" that the Donation of Constantine had taken place in 460, whereas Epiphanius's chronicles

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50  Allacci 1642, 276, 298, 301.
51  See, for example, Constable 1983, 8. For a more profound view of different forgeries in the medieval period, see the articles in *Fälschungen im Mittelalter.* Several articles in this volume also deal with the vague distinctions between fiction and historiography.
52  On this treatise, see Allacci 1642, 299–300. In Paracelsus's funerary monument in Salzburg it is also stated that he succeeded in curing gout, which was usually thought to be incurable. On gout in parodic and satirical writings, see Kivistö 2009. Allacci (1642, 291) and Spitzel also quoted Ceccarelli's epitaph to his wife, which described her as the sweetest woman in the world. It is difficult to say how sincere this epitaph was considering the writer's notorious reputation as a fabricator. Ceccarelli also wrote a book on truffles (*Opusculum de tuberibus*), which was a parody and falsification.
53  On Ceccarelli's *Chronicae Gualdenses scripturae antiquae,* see Heullant-Donat 2005.
54  Allacci 1642, 305–329 ("Index secundus").
55  Allacci 1642, 330–357 ("Index tertius").

dated the event to 340. Ceccarelli's false chronicles, which he attributed to certain bishops, included Dorotheus's *Chronicon de primatu ecclesiae Romanae* from 451.[56]

The false texts were identified with familiar critical methods: studying the vocabulary and style of a text and its coherence, relying on the seller's word (which could, of course, be unreliable) and detecting anachronistic expressions, mistakes and inconsistencies, which revealed that the chronicles were not as old as claimed. For example, in the chronicles related to Siena the author (considered to be Ceccarelli) tells about the construction of the city towers in Siena; these, however, did not exist at the purported time of writing. Allacci rightly wondered how an author allegedly writing in 970 could know about events happening in the fourteenth century.[57] Another work supposedly fabricated by Ceccarelli, *Monaldeschi fragmenta annalium Romanorum*, which tells the story of the Monaldeschi family of Orvieto, was considered spurious because in its pages the author records his own death at the age of 115.[58]

According to Allacci, all of this was done by Ceccarelli for profit, to acquire money and to make a career. Allacci talks about a business affair (*mercatura, negotium*).[59] It was assumed that Ceccarelli did indeed earn substantial sums by composing family trees and local histories, since rich families in Italy and France, uncertain of their origins, paid considerable fees to historians to trace their roots and find distinguished ancestors. Town (and cloister) histories served similar purposes; they were intended to show that a town had ancient origins. These qualities gave a place authority and a distinguished reputation and sometimes meant concrete benefits in the form of special rights.[60] Ceccarelli knew many noble families in his capacity as a medical doctor, which apparently helped him build contacts. Alois Riegl quotes passages from Ceccarelli's notebooks from the late 1570s, and their brief remarks record Ceccarelli's health, mention the women he made pregnant and the sums of money he was given for his literary activities. Ceccarelli mentions that in 1578 he created many documents that were believed to be ancient texts, from which he profited nicely; he specifically mentions the sums of 25 and 19 scudi. For his history of the ancient Conti family, he received several financial donations from the bishop of San Gregorio in 1579 and 1580. Likewise, he received several sums (of 12 scudi and 25 scudi) from members of the Savelli family for providing them with privileges telling about their family.[61]

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56  Allacci 1642, 336–337.
57  Allacci 1642, 308.
58  See Gibbon 2013, 300.
59  Allacci 1642, 259.
60  Cf. Ceccarelli's interpolation in the history of the ancient city of Tadino; on this episode, see Heullant-Donat 2005, 232 et passim. Such additions to official histories often led lives of their own in later historical writing as well as in politics, whenever towns and their rulers competed for power.
61  Riegl 1894, 201–202, 210–211. According to Riegl, these notebooks from 1578–1580 are preserved in the Vatican Library (Cod. Vat. 6158, fol. 115–125).

Ceccarelli's services were extremely popular, at least if we believe the descriptions given by Allacci, who claimed that Ceccarelli managed to fool many common and learned men who desired his services and who considered him a supreme authority to the point that, for a while, his name was on everyone's lips. One may wonder how it was possible that learned men allowed themselves to be deceived by forgeries to such an extent despite the texts' manifest fraudulence. It is true that forgers were sometimes skilful historians, albeit unethical. Ceccarelli quickly earned a reputation for being an expert in genealogy. One reason for his success was undoubtedly the continuing interest in the services he offered to powerful men by drawing up their histories in a favourable way. Cities desired records that would testify to their heroic pasts, and Ceccarelli was ready to find great ancestors and useful records whenever these were needed. The success of forgers has been explained by the fact that they told people what they wanted to hear about their past.[62] Sometimes these services probably satisfied simple curiosity.

Another reason for the success of historical forgeries was their professional style. It has been said that Annio da Viterbo's *Antiquities* was in fact a well-written and coherent work.[63] Forgers understood the value of source criticism, and the most successful of them relied on seemingly convincing historical methods and careful source criticism. Annio da Viterbo emphasised (ironically, from a later point of view) that a historian should select his sources very carefully and verify his claims by reference to the best historical and archaeological sources. Stephens argues that it was precisely this mimetic aspect of Annio's writings and his seemingly meticulous philological apparatus that ultimately deceived his contemporaries.[64] At the same time his philological precision raises questions about the valid narrative techniques of historiography and exact knowledge.

As for Ceccarelli's case, Allacci's account reveals how in the 1570s men became suspicious of him and began asking Ceccarelli to disclose his sources and even show them to readers, since no one else had seen them. The alleged source texts were not found in booksellers' shops or in libraries when people began looking for them in the libraries of Milan, the Vatican and elsewhere. It turned out that many authorities used by Ceccarelli were completely unknown, even by name. Allacci mentions that Alberico Cibo-Malaspina (1534–1623), the Prince of Massa, who had used Ceccarelli's services in the 1570s, wrote to Ceccarelli asking to see the original manuscripts, anticipating that the dark origins of his family had not been reliably described by Ceccarelli. Cibo announced that if he was not allowed to see the sources, it was difficult to regard them as reliable, but if they existed, he promised to purchase

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62  See Stephens 2004, 203.
63  Stephens 2004, 214–215.
64  Stephens 2004, 217.

them at a considerable price. According to Allacci, Cibo also asked other literate men to search for the authoritative texts mentioned by Ceccarelli. One learned scholar, Adriano Polito, sought Ceccarelli's authoritative sources in booksellers' shops and in all the libraries of Rome, including the Vatican and Jesuit libraries, and consulted his learned contemporaries and pedagogues. But in vain: no one had heard of these writers or of their books. Allacci reports that some bishops, such as the Bishop of Novara, also asked Ceccarelli to show his sources; in reply, Ceccarelli prattled on about everything else but these sources. When he could no longer avoid the questions, his responses were vague – either he had once owned the book or heard about its contents from someone else. Cardinal Sirleto, a famous linguist who worked in the Vatican Library, was yet another person who insisted on seeing Ceccarelli's sources, curious that no one else had seen them.[65]

## Ceccarelli's Apology

When Ceccarelli's frauds were finally revealed and he was publicly accused in court, he responded to the accusations by writing a defence of his actions (usually called *Libellus supplex ad Iudicem* and quoted in Latin by Allacci and later in Spitzel, although the text was originally written in Italian).[66] This interesting document, together with the letters exchanged between Cibo-Malaspina and Ceccarelli over the years starting from 1574, was the main source for Allacci's account of the forger's life. In his apologetic booklet Ceccarelli openly confessed to many of his forgeries, but at the same time he argued that no one should consider his work worthless because it referred to and relied on source texts that were no longer known or available. Allacci noted that in Ceccarelli's view, if men were to believe only texts that they had seen, then many ancient authors should be rejected as completely unreliable. Pliny's and Plutarch's works as well as sacred texts were all composed with the help of earlier sources that were unknown by Ceccarelli's time. By the same logic, *Liber Iustorum* (The Book of the Upright) or *Liber bellorum Domini* (The Book on the Wars of the Lord) mentioned in the Old Testament or the Book of Enoch mentioned in the New Testament should be discredited as unreliable sources of information, since no one had read or seen them either. In Ceccarelli's view the reliability of the narration increased rather than decreased when the author relied on well-established secondary sources.[67]

References to mythical and imaginary authors were meant to prove the authenticity and importance of the forged texts. Ceccarelli argued that his sources were cited and praised by other authors, although

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65  Allacci 1642, 260–268.
66  For Ceccarelli's *Libellus supplex* (which he addressed to his judges) we are dependent upon Allacci; the apology is preserved in a Latin translation of Allacci in Allacci 1642, 278–288. Riegl mentions that he did not find the original document at the Vatican Library, and it may not have survived. Riegl 1894, 214.
67  Allacci 1642, 268–269; see also Riegl 1894, 204–206.

there were very few manuscripts in circulation. However, it appears that many of these authorities ("Fanusio Campano", "Corelli", the Italian chronicles of "Pietro Baccarino", etc.) were in fact names Ceccarelli had himself invented. He used several pseudonyms, including Marco Settimani, Francesco or Fanusio Campano, Bulgars and N. Corelli.[68] In his source criticism Ceccarelli, knowing how important it was to verify events and names by references to mentions made by earlier scholars, appealed to these and other non-existent scholars he had made up. According to Allacci, Ceccarelli claimed to have Fanusio's book on noble Italian families in his personal library and moreover, that Fanusio's work, which he used repeatedly for his forgeries, was praised by many historians.[69] However, these historians too were invented by Ceccarelli, who, aware of the scholarly apparatus that was needed to give credibility to historical writings, created an extensive network of imaginary references and cross-references.

As for the actual location of the manuscripts used, Ceccarelli argued that many of his sources were found in Roman or monastic libraries, although they were not readily available.[70] It is known that Ceccarelli frequently visited various small libraries and studied old manuscripts, which he then imitated in making his forgeries. Sometimes he gave the location of the source texts to give credibility to his fabrications, saying, for instance, that such-and-such a chronicle was compiled according to an exemplar preserved in the abbey of St. Benedict's in Gualdo in Umbria.[71] But it appears that Ceccarelli also relied on entirely imaginary libraries and their librarians, claiming that his sources could be found, for example, in the library of Diego Mendoza in France or in the library of Wilhelm of Choul (D. Gulielmi à Choul).[72] He claimed that he had discovered some works and manuscripts in small towns, obscure chapels and in their libraries and back rooms. He had come across imperial and papal privileges among ancient books in the old chest of a certain curate called Eusebius who lived in the (imaginary) town of Thoscella. And some of his sources, he said, he had already sold or given to princes, who were often reluctant to share their treasures.[73] Similar excuses had been given by Trithemius and other previous forgers of chronicles.[74]

Sometimes the copies were so rare – if they existed at all – that they were retained only in Ceccarelli's own library. An interesting example is a chronicle by Johann Selinus (Giovanni Selino), which, according to Ceccarelli, was in his personal possession. He claimed to have found old works in

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68  These names are later given as Ceccarelli's pseudonyms in various dictionaries; see Lancetti 1836; Weller 1856; Riegl 1894, 205–206n. On Fanusio Campano as Ceccarelli's main source, see Riegl 1894, 219.
69  Allacci 1642, 309.
70  Allacci 1642, 269.
71  Heullant-Donat 2005, 228.
72  Allacci 1642, 269.
73  Allacci 1642, 265; see also Riegl 1894, 207.
74  See Grafton 2009, 73 et passim.

town archives, such as Selinus's compendium *De rebus Italiae* written on parchment and Johannes de Virgilio's fourteenth-century *De origine urbium Italiae*. However, these texts were unknown to other scholars. A related ancient chronicle he claimed to have found was *De rebus memorabilibus Umbriae*, in which the author praised such works as Corradus Essius's *Chronica de Italia*, *Chronica Dominorum de Brunfort*, Johannes Selinus's chronicle *De memorabilibus Italiae*, Mauritius Campanus's *Chronica de Spoletio*, Olympiodorus Hamaal's *De annalibus mundi* and so on.

To verify his claims Ceccarelli asserted that these works had been praised in other ancient chronicles and by such authors as Fanusio Campano, a name that, as noted above, was Ceccarelli's pseudonym. According to Allacci, Ceccarelli's explanations were often contradictory, and it was impossible to verify his sources. Ceccarelli argued that he had seen many of Selinus's chronicles in Rome: *De notabilibus et memorabilibus mundi* was preserved in the Capitolium Archives; *Breve compendium historiae Italiae Ioannis Selini* belonged to another Roman archive; other Selinus texts were found in various Roman libraries. Finally, Ceccarelli declared that he had bought other anonymous volumes in Rome at the Campo dei Fiori, which turned out to be Selinus's historical treatises.[75]

In studying these sources in detail, Allacci managed to obtain Selinus's supposed chronicle or a series of chronicles concerning the Roman past, which Ceccarelli had used in his work. Allacci noted that Selinus's name was in fact added to these originally anonymous works by another hand, apparently the hand of Ceccarelli, since the handwriting and the ink colour of the author's name were different from the rest of the manuscript and the added handwriting closely resembled that found in Johannes Petrus Scriniarius's chronicles. Allacci concluded that both works were forged by the same man.[76]

In his apology Ceccarelli openly admitted that he had ascribed the anonymous chronicles to Selinus by adding the author's name to the volume, but maintained that this was a small crime since he did not attribute the text to himself, as so many historians had done in similar circumstances. Angelo Poliziano, for example, had published Plutarch's book on Homer as his own creation.[77] This confession also brought attention to other fabrications, including works in which Selinus's chronicle was praised before Ceccarelli had made his forgery. It appears that Ceccarelli had already laid the foundations for this particular fabrication by creating works by authors such as Fanusio Campano, Baccarinus and Nicolaus de Barbiano, all of which referred to Selinus.[78] In his history of the Casa Cesarina from 1579, Ceccarelli relied heavily on the testimony of Selinus and Campano, claiming at the end of his document

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75   On Selinus's chronicle, see Allacci 1642, 270–274.
76   Allacci 1642, 272–273.
77   Allacci 1642, 282.
78   Allacci 1642, 274; see also Riegl 1894, 219–220.

that the sources were in his possession and that he had transcribed the references word for word and signed the work in his own hand, a formula which in this case does not confirm authenticity, but does sound deeply ironic (*ad verbum ex ipsis exemplaribus quae citantur . . . manu propria subscripsi*).[79]

In his written defence Ceccarelli confessed that he had created many kinds of documents, claiming that they were genuine, and had published books under names other than his own. But he called attention to his good intentions and insisted that when he added something to an old book, he compensated for it by adding truth (*res veras addidisse ab Auctoribus veris excerptas; pro veritate*).[80] He reminded his accusers that many theologians had likewise appealed to apocryphal sources without any damage to the religiosity or truth of their writings. Ceccarelli argued that he had used unknown sources in the same way and had followed earlier historians' habit of inventing "facts" to confirm what was true.[81] In his view it was possible to add simulated facts if the real ones were lacking, an apology that had been used in the medieval period.[82] Ceccarelli argued that his manner of correcting books with useful additions and interpolations merely stabilised truth (*stabilire enim fulcireque veritatem*) and should not be condemned.[83]

To provide an example of this common practice, Ceccarelli reminded his accusers that none of the four gospels actually mentioned Pontius Pilate's condemnation of Christ, yet this event was considered true by the Catholic Church. Ceccarelli mentioned several authors who, in writing on the life and passions of Christ, added Pilate's reaction to their texts. And yet none of these authors was found guilty of any crime.[84] Ceccarelli said that he too had made interpretations that favoured the church (*pro Ecclesia, & in favorem Ecclesiae . . . pro confirmatione veritatis contra haereticos*);[85] so why should he be condemned when it should be considered laudable to help the church by all possible means? Ceccarelli appealed to his good, religious and Catholic intentions. In fact, Ceccarelli had many predecessors in this sense. As Anthony Grafton has mentioned in reference to Annio da Viterbo, the mendicant friars of the Middle Ages were accustomed to dramatising factual records.[86] By doing so they believed they were doing justice to the sacred subjects, which should not be presented too plainly. Colourful details also made the stories more appealing.

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79  Ceccarelli 1579/2009, (145) 39.
80  Allacci 1642, 284. In the same way, Annio da Viterbo emphasised in the Preface to his Antiquities that he told the plain truth and nothing else ("solam & nudam veritatem").
81  Allacci 1642, 279.
82  Constable 1983, 41.
83  Allacci 1642, 283.
84  Allacci 1642, 279–280.
85  Allacci 1642, 280–281.
86  Grafton 1990, 48.

Ceccarelli confessed that he had invented some imperial privileges in order to give grandeur to certain noble families (*ad decorem Familiarum* and *pro veritate in favorem nobilium et illustrium Familiarum*), as many earlier historians had done before him (apparently also presenting things in a favourable light and supporting the ruling families).[87] He gave here a brief list of earlier historians (Franciscus de Rosieres, Wolfgang Lazius, Francesco Sansovino, etc.) who in the same way had composed privileges to support their claims. He stressed that he too followed the preconceptions and expectations of men, documenting the past along favourable lines and collecting his information from reliable authors and factual sources (*ab auctoribus veris excerptas; ex Auctorum approbatorum libris, aliisque scripturis erui*).[88] His intention was to praise by amplifying his narration with certain added details (*ut laudent, res amplificant*).[89] He appealed to Socrates, who argued that men should always speak well of families, and to the Roman representative of Stoic moral integrity, Cato the Younger, who said that the example of his virtuous ancestors greatly helped him in his own devotion to virtuous living.

Why, then, asked Ceccarelli, was it wrong to show that many families in fact did have noble origins, which helped men to maintain virtue? Ceccarelli claimed that if he had published vilifying words about noble families, then his work should be condemned as insulting, but when he merely praised the nobility of men in words they loved to hear, why should that be considered criminal? People esteemed nobility even more than they worshipped God, and they greatly enjoyed having their families praised. Ceccarelli emphasised that even his imaginative family trees and Italian town histories followed the tradition of praising famous families and beautiful cities.[90] If this practice was mistaken, then all earlier histories, both old and new, were false.

Ceccarelli's main arguments in his defence were, firstly, that he did nothing that had not been done before by other learned men, historians, doctors and writers (*aliorum vestigia sequor; more aliorum id feci*).[91] He gave examples of other historians who had invented privileges or published their works under false names; for example, Marcus Marcellus was an esteemed Roman noble and learned man, who published all of his writings under other names.[92] Secondly, Ceccarelli repeatedly emphasised that all the additions he made, all the compilations he put together from various sources, and all the works he

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87  Allacci 1642, 281–282.
88  Allacci 1642, 284, 283.
89  Allacci 1642, 285.
90  Allacci 1642, 285–286.
91  Allacci 1642, 279, 287.
92  Allacci 1642, 283.

published under pseudonyms had only one goal: to reveal, restore and defend the truth (*pro veritate*).[93] He endeavoured to do justice to the church or the noble families, providing a kind of corrective to official history. His words were like any other additions and appendices normally attached to historiography.[94]

Thirdly, Ceccarelli defended his methods, including the use of verisimilitude, amplification and compilation; in his view these methods were used by all historians. He appealed to the verisimilitude of what he narrated (*verosimilibus fingimus*)[95] and frequently mentioned that when he amplified (*amplificare*)[96] facts or extended (*adaugere*)[97] family merits, he was following the usual custom of writing family histories. He characterised his writing as acts of compilation in which he collected material from different sources and put the pieces together. According to Allacci, Ceccarelli argued that when he came across factual information in different manuscripts and annals which had never been compiled in one work, he decided to present the material in a single document for readers.[98] Like his medieval predecessors, Ceccarelli emphasised the considerable worth of his collecting activity, since the new, coherent presentation was more instructive than the earlier, scattered pieces of information. The snippets of reliable information he had excerpted from different sources taken together formed new historical documents, such as the "Confirmation of the Donation of Constantine" (the Donation of Constantine itself being a famously forged imperial decree) by Theodosius the Emperor. Ceccarelli claimed that this "document", the "Confirmation of the Donation of Constantine", although produced by himself, was created from reliable information about its existence and contents taken from various sources. Although the original document no longer existed, in Ceccarelli's view there was enough evidence about its contents to re-create it and thereby reply to those historians who denied the historicity of the Donation of Constantine.[99] Ceccarelli here placed himself in famous company, since the Donation of Constantine was one of the most influential forgeries ever made, its aim being to promote the independence and claims of the papacy.[100]

It is true that chronicles were rarely created by a single author, but rather were the collective efforts of several writers who gathered and organised information. Ceccarelli knew that he could appeal to an

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93  Allacci 1642, 284 et passim.
94  Allacci 1642, 284.
95  Allacci 1642, 287.
96  Allacci 1642, 285.
97  Allacci 1642, 287.
98  Allacci 1642, 278. Ceccarelli appealed to the usefulness of his compilation activities, just as in the medieval period historians considered compiling to be a useful activity, as it arranged knowledge and made material easily accessible. On the concept and vocabulary of compilation, see Hathaway 1989, who mentions that the concept of compilation was also used in the Middle Ages to describe the writing of chronicles. Hathaway shows how the word compilation, which first implied the defacement of someone's work, turned into a neutral term signifying a legitimate borrowing; this change took place gradually in the twelfth century.
99  Allacci 1642, 278.
100 See Constable 1983, 7; Hiatt 2004, 136–155.

almost endless chain of predecessors here. The phrases Ceccarelli used for his activities referred to the collecting of true and reliable material in one place (*recentiorum de ea scribentium testimonia in unum veluti fascem colligere; ex veris Historiis compilavi*)[101] and to the rearranging and forming of a unity that was useful to readers (*ut una simul omnia concinnarem, collegi*);[102] these expressions resembled medieval notions and defences of compilation.[103] Ceccarelli stressed that he made his compilations to benefit the church and the truth (*in favorem Ecclesiae, pro veritate, ex veris historiis compilavi illud privilegium*).[104]

Furthermore, Ceccarelli admitted that his writings sometimes contained manifest errors, but in his view this was merely human, since all writers inevitably make mistakes. Ceccarelli stressed that he had not made any religious errors or insulted the church, which would have been serious crimes; on the contrary, his mistakes were very small.[105] Apparently, Ceccarelli also imitated old handwriting in his fabrications and used old materials and parchment to strengthen the illusion of antiquity.[106]

In a certain sense Ceccarelli's arguments were valid, since histories had always included narrative techniques that are closer to fiction than non-fiction, and he certainly had many predecessors through the centuries. In his satirical account on learned charlatans, Johann Burkhard Mencken placed historians among the learned impostors, claiming that while they were recounting the exploits of famous rulers or drawing genealogies of illustrious families, historians also often had recourse to "quackery".[107] They inserted long imaginary speeches into their historical accounts and adorned their books with attention-grabbing pictures, which gave beautiful and orderly illustrations of wars, which in reality had been fought without any structured plans. Others invented exciting story lines to make their histories more appealing. They did these things in order to capture the attention of readers. As has been shown, for example, in the case of the fake Spanish chronicles, there was a long tradition in courts and churches of hiring professional writers to prove the ancestry of these institutions, and for this purpose, official historians sometimes invented records of heroic pasts. Thus, Ceccarelli was accurate in saying that he was writing in a long tradition in which the distinction between real facts and mythical events, between

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101 Allacci 1642, 278.
102 Allacci 1642, 284.
103 According to Hathaway, common phrases employed by compilers of histories included such expressions as "to collect into one work" (*in unum redigere*) and "to collect things excerpted from individual *dictores*" (*de singulis dictoribus deflorata colligere*). Hathaway observes that medieval compilers identified two steps in the act of compiling: excerpting and unifying. In its final incarnation the collected material formed a well-arranged unity that was more perfect than the separate pieces of which it was made. Hathaway 1989, 21, 43.
104 Ceccarelli's phrases are found in Allacci 1642, 280, 287 and 278.
105 Allacci 1642, 287–288.
106 On these devices, see De Luca 1706, 325; Riegl 1894, 219–220.
107 Mencken 1937, 122–123.

history and fiction, and ultimately between forgeries and licit forms of history writing, was never clear-cut, given that authentic historical documents often contained elements that, strictly speaking, can be labelled false.[108] Thus, the distinctions among the historian, the forger and the storyteller were not unambiguous either.

## The Punishment

The usual understanding of forgeries today as well as earlier in history is that such texts promoted the forger's selfish ends and were intended to deceive for the purpose of personal gain.[109] However, many forgers have appealed to their good intentions of serving some higher goal than mere personal advancement. As shown above, Ceccarelli referred to his good, pious and honest motivations (*mente non mala, recta mente*) and to his intention to protect truth and justice by correcting inaccurately written sources with (false) documents that served good ends.[110] In the Middle Ages as well, falsifiers had sometimes appealed to their good intentions, for example, an intention to realise God's plans or to establish good and truthful order in the world by means of their forgeries.[111] When these motivations and their possible impact on the punishments of forgers have been assessed, it has been concluded that in the Middle Ages pious motivation did not excuse a reprehensible act.[112] Alfred Hiatt mentions that when legal historians have studied the concept of forgery in the Middle Ages, their research has unambiguously shown that real forgeries and deceptions were severely punished despite the forgers' alleged good intentions. Hiatt argues that the punishments for forgery specified in various medieval legal codes ranged from the cutting off of the hand or fingers to imprisonment and fines.[113] It was reported that forgery was punished whenever it was discovered and that it was not rare to hear about falsifiers who had had their hands cut off.[114] In the case of clerics imprisonment was a usual penalty if the forgery concerned papal or curial documents.[115]

The most severe punishments were often meted out to forgers of official and formal documents, as it was obviously more dangerous to forge legal documents and *fidei commissa* than literary sources. But sometimes historians and chroniclers faced similar consequences, even when their actions had not

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108 See Constable 1983, 10.
109 Hiatt 2004, 7; Constable 1983, 39.
110 Allacci 1642, 283, 288.
111 Constable 1983, 20.
112 Hiatt 2004, 7, with reference to Elizabeth Brown's investigations on medieval forgeries (see Brown 1988); Constable 1983, 20.
113 Hiatt 2004, 8. Hiatt relies here on Peter Herde's studies on the medieval punishments of forgers; see Herde 1988.
114 Constable 1983, 17.
115 Hiatt 2004, 8.

involved any crime. Kagan suggests that in early modern Spain if a hired chronicler fell into disfavour for some reason, he soon found himself jobless on the street; sometimes he could even be violently treated and on occasion, put to death.[116]

Punishment by death for forgery existed long after the Middle Ages. In Scotland, for example, in early modern criminal law it was customary for the fabricators of important papers such as charters or bonds and bills to receive capital punishment. Such a punishment was more likely if the forger had imitated the handwriting and signature of the alleged granter of the deed. Smaller offences could be punished by amputating the hand.[117] This same principle reigned in every part of Great Britain. For example, in early nineteenth-century England the issue of capital punishment for forgeries was widely discussed, and it was observed that forgery was a serious crime that could not be punished too severely. In his *Thoughts On the Punishment Of Death For Forgery* (1830), the British jurist Basil Montagu discussed this penalty in London, noting that forgery was considered a crime of fraud and its immediate effects small, but the later consequences were always alarming. However, this was the time when capital punishment for forgers was finally abolished.[118]

Some forms of punishment remained associated with forgeries and other fabrications. Early modern legal studies, such as Jacob Thomasius's work on plagiarism, listed possible punishments for literary thefts, but in these studies the punishments described were not so severe. In academic circles plagiarists were often subjected to social punishment. Men who were found guilty of stealing other scholars' writings were stigmatised, shamed and excluded from social networks; thereafter, they were unable to find better positions.

The central figure in this case study, Alfonso Ceccarelli, belongs among the unfortunate forgers whose punishments were the most severe possible. Although Ceccarelli claimed in his apology that he was not the only one guilty of unethical action, he was ultimately unable to dissociate himself from the most serious accusations. He was executed under Pope Gregorius XIII on the 9th of July 1583. Ceccarelli was first sentenced to lose his right hand, then he was suffocated and, when pronounced dead, he was burned at the stake. Other versions related that he was decapitated at the bridge of Castel Sant'Angelo

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116 Kagan 2009, 39, 50. Moreover, Kagan (2009, 11) notes that in the courts of the Maya rulers in Central America, the kings sometimes ordered unreliable or unsympathetic historiographers to be violently treated if they had worked in the court of the enemy: sometimes their fingers were amputated so that they could no longer exercise their job. This testifies to the wide condemnation of forgeries.

117 See Burnett 1811, 192–193. Burnett mentions that sometimes the person convicted might be hanged with the forged document around his neck.

118 On the (death) penalty for forgery, especially in eighteenth-century England, see the references to the research articles in Eder 2004, 13, n43.

and then buried at the church Santi Celso e Giuliano near the bridge.[119] Apparently, his willingness to confess his many forgeries did not help his case, since his crime became clear through his own confession (*cum crimen non negasset, falsitatis reus ad supplicium ducitur*).[120] The ultimate reason for the severe punishment came from the fact that Ceccarelli had cheated many important families and fabricated official documents, testaments and privileges, not just literary texts.[121]

## Final Remarks

Allacci admitted that Ceccarelli must have been a clever and witty man, but he condemned and despised Ceccarelli's behaviour, especially because he forged and distorted modern history, which many reliable scholars had worked to establish. Allacci considered it more damnable to distort modern facts than to forge ancient and in many ways uncertain histories by adding darkness to darkness, as Annio da Viterbo had done with his pseudo-classical forgeries. Many families then living were cheated by Ceccarelli's works. Allacci warned that there were many ordinary and also educated men who longed for noble ancestors (*nobilitatem inhiant*), and Ceccarelli had wrongfully created these ancestors. Some men who recognised the forgeries tried to have Ceccarelli's books destroyed, but the texts were too popular, too widely read and stored in too many libraries; in a word, they were too successful to be destroyed.[122] Thus, libraries preserved fake manuscripts along with genuine documents.

Allacci presented Ceccarelli's story as a warning example so that all men would learn to avoid such nefarious activities. But the more general questions that Ceccarelli's actions pose are also crucial: How often do we in fact rely on unknown sources or on texts that we have not read? What is the distinction between fiction and non-fiction in history? Is the discourse of praise (or other value judgements) still used in writing history? Can forgeries have some positive outcomes? Ceccarelli's self-defence reveals how certain kinds of recurring narrative modes of history were supposed to create reliability, and thus his works and forgeries in general raise many fundamental questions about the proper methods of

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119 See the references in Mercati 1951, 72.
120 Allacci 1642, 277.
121 On the accusations presented against Ceccarelli, see his judgement and death sentence ("Sentenza di morte contro di Alfonso Ceccarelli da Bevagna famoso impostore di Scritture antiche"), which is printed in Fontanini 1711, 319–326. Ceccarelli's most serious crimes mentioned here were the composition of the "Confirmation of the Donation of Constantine" (see also Fontanini 1711, 129–131) and several false testaments of noblemen. Fontanini presents the following statement, which mentions that Ceccarelli composed privileges, family trees and histories, thereby cheating noble and illustrious men out of money: "Ac etiam falso composuerit diversa Imperatorum privilegia, genealogias et historias, ac alia praetensorum instrumentorum transumpta, ac illa falso fabricaverit: aliasque falsitates et crimina commiserit in actis causae et causarum hujusmodi deductis et specificatis: pro quibus etiam respective a diversis nobilibus et illustribus personis dictis malis artibus varias pecuniarum summas extorsit. . ." Fontanini 1711, 320–321. Cf. Allacci 1642, 277, and Struve 1703, §XXXI, who mentioned serious crimes related to *fidei commissa*, which ultimately resulted in official accusations against Ceccarelli.
122  Allacci 1642, 255–257.

writing history (for example, concerning truthfulness, source criticism or the motives of the historian). At the same time Ceccarelli's forgeries teach us something about the history of taste, since fraudulent works responded to certain demands and reflected the needs of the time, including the timeless human appetite for magnificent and ancient origins. As Alois Riegl has noted, Ceccarelli was responding to this latter need, the thirst for ancient origins, which was prevalent in the fifteenth century among Italian noble families who wished to find their roots in venerable Roman ancestors or even biblical heroes.[123]

An interesting question is what makes distinguished ancestry so appealing to the point that one is willing to produce forgeries to prove it? It does bring prestige, but why?[124] I would argue that in the case of individuals, one reason is quite often simply vanity, and Ceccarelli's false genealogies served this fashionable and vainglorious desire. But in the case of families, towns, cloisters and whole countries the issue was more complex, since seniority also implies continuity (of power), and ancient roots could justify specific privileges and powerful positions. For example, cloisters were excused from various payments through papal privileges.[125] False genealogies were politically useful: they could be used to attest to a family's nobility, purity or respectability. Thus the question of providing noble ancestry (and noble titles) to commissioners of pedigrees was not only a matter of fashion, but also closely related to the central importance of nobility in history and to the social, economic and legal life of early modern Europe.[126] In religious controversies and many other kinds of cases falsifications could also be helpful in giving legitimate ancestry to ethnic minorities. We know that other fabrication booms took place in Europe, for example, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, along with national romanticism and its collective urge to find mythical and heroic roots for nations.[127] As in earlier centuries a view of the past served the purposes of the present, and forgeries shaped the past "to meet the needs of the living rather than to depict the diversity of the dead."[128]

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123 Riegl 1894, 193; Allacci 1642, 259.

124 I thank an anonymous referee for raising the profound question of the prestige of seniority; however, this question cannot be discussed in further detail in the present article.

125 See Constable 1983, 8.

126 I thank an anonymous referee for this comment. On the proliferation of (noble and academic) titles in early modern Germany, see Kivistö 2014, 134–143.

127 For these later cases and similar practices of producing forgeries, see e.g. Porter 2001; Lass 1988. Lass shows how tradition is always "a selective tradition" and how it is sometimes deliberately falsified in order to serve some political regime or nation-building. Thus, in history, past and present always meet. Porter, for his part, discusses the ambiguous figure of James Macpherson, who compiled the poems of Ossian. Macpherson was branded a forger (by Samuel Johnson and others), one who compiled his poems to satisfy Scottish national longings, but other views have suggested instead that he adapted genuine material to fit his ideas of a national epic. I thank an anonymous referee for these useful references. As Constable 1983 has pointed out, each generation has created its own deceptions, and in the twentieth century the techniques of reproduction have called into question the whole idea of originality and authenticity. Constable 1983, 15.

128 Constable 1983, 20–21.

In sum, forgeries demonstrate how political or personal ends can sometimes lead to manipulation of the facts, presumably for the noblest of ends. At the same time forgeries remind us of how much creative work, imagination and, indeed, originality was in fact required of these (admittedly dishonest) writers. Librarians such as Allacci began to work against falsifications by investigating manuscripts and detecting forgeries. Although Allacci definitely did not pay much attention to the potentially positive outcomes of fraudulent works, one of the positive effects can be seen in the strong impetus they gave to the development of critical tools for studying falsifications, thereby enhancing literary and philological criticism.

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