

*Donneschi suoni: Women and Music in Boccaccio's
Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine (1341–42)*

Boccaccio completed his *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* (also known as the *Ameto*) in 1342 after a decade-long stay in the opulent court of Maria of Anjou in Naples. The Angevin court resounded with music and boasted magnificent visual objects.¹ Numerous French composers, including Adam de la Halle, visited Naples at the end of the thirteenth century, bringing with them a rich tradition of monophonic and polyphonic secular music, most likely known to Boccaccio through performances and extant manuscripts. Boccaccio himself wrote three texts that were set to music during his lifetime, and musical descriptions fill so many pages of his manuscripts that musicologists mine his writings for evidence of Trecento musical culture.² While scholars have examined the influence of the pastoral tradition and Dante on the *Ameto*,³ they have yet to examine the vital role music plays in the text. This paper will focus on the music making women that populate this work and argue that Boccaccio in the *Ameto* employs a complex musical narrative with inserted poetic texts sung primarily by female characters, in which the author indicates that the texts are to be sung.

Musical overview

Boccaccio introduces nineteen texts into the *Ameto*.⁴ Fourteen poetical texts are inset songs (4, 8, 11, 16, 19, 22, 24, 27, 30, 33, 36, 39, 45, 47), four are recited poems (2, 41, 43, 49) and one is a dialogue accompanied by music (14).

¹ See Sabatini 1975.

² For Boccaccio and music see Bonaventura 1914, Brown 1977 and Beck 1997.

³ See Giuseppe Velli 1977, Del Giudice 1982, Smarr 2002 and Tylus 2013.

⁴ While the original sources for the *Ameto* do not include numerical divisions, for the purposes of this paper I will make use of Antonio Enzo Quaglio's book and paragraph numeration in his edition of the *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* (Boccaccio 1964). As per Quaglio, the entire musical dialogue between Alcesto and Acaten will be treated as one selection. Translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

Quaglio number	Character	Virtue	Nature of music	Title	Color
II	Narrator		Recited	Quella virtù, che già l'ardito Orfeo	
IV	Ninfa Lia		Sung (canzone)	Cefiso con le sue piacevoli onde	
VIII	Ameto		Sung (canzone)	Febo salito già a mezzo il cielo	
XI	Teogapen		Sung (canzone)	Nasce del buon voler di questa diva	
XIV	Alcesto & Acaten		Sung (versi cantando)	Come Titan del sen dell'Aurora	
XVI	Ameto		Sung	O voi, qualunque iddii, abitatori	
XIX	Mopsa	Knowledge	Sung	Pallade, nata del superno Giove	"di rosato vestita" (17.8). Seated to Ameto's right.
XXII	Warrior in Emilia's Story		Sung	Quantunque il capo oppresso di Tifeo	"di sanguigno vestita" (20.5).
XXIV	Emila	Justice	Sung	Diana, gli aspri fuochi temperante	
XXVII	Adiona	Temperance	Sung	La graziosa e bella mia Pomena	"di purpurea veste coperta" (25.4).
XXX	Acrimonia	Fortitude	Sung (versi)	Da' caldi fiati del turbido Noto	"di bianco vestita" (28.10).
XXXIII	Apiros	Charity/Fire	Sung (versi)	Si come il foco, in fummi oscuri molto	"di vermiglio vestiva" (31.17).
XXXVI	Fiammetta	Hope	Sung (versi)	L'alta corona e bella d'Adriana	
XXXIX	Lia	Faith	Sung (versi)	O voi ch'avete chiari gl'intelletti	

XXI	Venus		Recited	Io son luce del cielo unica e trina	
XLIII	Venus		Recited (divine parole)	O care mie sorelle, per le quali	
XLV	Nymphs together		Sung	O anima felice, o più beata	
XLVII	Ameto		Sung	O diva luce che in tre presone	
XLIX	Narrator		Recited	Fra la fronzuta e nova primavera	

Table 1. Inserted poetry/songs in Boccaccio's *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine*

Boccaccio indicates clearly which texts are sung by introducing the inset songs with such words as, “così ricominciò la sua canzone la cantante” (3.19); “così cominciò a cantare” (7.14); “ricominciò a cantare” (10.4); or in the case of Alcesto's and Acaten's dialogue, “Alcesto, cominciante co' suoi versi cantando” (13.5) and so on. By contrast the spoken texts, such as the two by Venus, begin with the words, “pervenne una voce soave così dicente” (40.9) and “la santa dea udio così parlante” (42.5). The introductory phrases specified above are punctuated with a colon, indicating that the texts flow from the narrative into poetry. The first and last interpolated poems (2 and 49) are distinguished because they begin after a period.

Boccaccio assigns his narrator and characters specific texts to recite or sing. The narrator, who is male, begins and ends the work by reciting a poem, which provides a frame to the story. The poem “Quella virtù, che già l'ardito Orfeo” begins the narrative, while “Fra la fronzuta e nova primavera” ends the work. These texts articulate the boundaries of the linear narrative, which is inhabited by the narrator, nymphs, Ameto, the shepherds and Venus.⁵ This poem is followed by a series of inset songs, each introducing primary characters. The first inset song (4) is sung by Lia, the leading nymph in the story: Ameto is given poem 8; Teogapen 11; Alcesto and Acaten, the musical dialogue (14). As one can see in Table 1, the singing male musical figures, Ameto, Teogapen, Alcesto and Acaten, are introduced

⁵ Boccaccio also includes allusions to music in the narrator's opening poem, beginning with the story of Orpheus and Eurydice and mentioning Orfeus' music and singing (22.1–5).

in the first third of the *Ameto*, before all the other nymphs. Boccaccio gives Ameto a second song, framing the male music. The nymphs sing the next group of songs that accompany the longest part of the *Ameto*, in which each nymph describes her amorous history in praise of Venus. Venus follows, who, unlike the other characters, except the narrator, does not sing, but rather recites two poems (41 and 43). Indeed, for Boccaccio, Venus is to be sung to and about — but she herself does not provide melodies to her words.

Ameto's singing provides a kind of musical refrain for the entire work and his three performances (8, 16, 47) capture his transformation brought about by his time with the nymphs and their music, from rustic shepherd to pastoral philosopher. Indeed, Boccaccio gives Ameto the most songs to sing. In assigning music to his characters, we see Boccaccio ending where he began, with the narrator's recitation and proceeding musically through Ameto toward the nymph's songs and then back away from them to the conclusion. There also appears to be a kind of halfway point in the storytelling, which is elaborated by insert song 22. Text 22 consists of the only instance in the *Ameto* where a song is sung within the framework of a story told by a nymph — reminiscent of two stories from the *Decameron*, Day 10, novellas 7 and 8. Therefore Emilia sings two songs: one during the story and one after. In carefully distributing the poems and songs to his characters in the *Ameto*, Boccaccio has created a kind of musical grid, a forerunner of the ten-story, ten-song structure more clearly delineated in the *Decameron*. In addition, in the *Ameto* one finds the same number of singing female characters as in the *Decameron*.

Donneschi suoni

Music-making women play fascinating roles in Boccaccio's *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine*. Female characters range from Venus to seven nymphs, and each has her own signature tune. Venus functions as the deity to whom music is played and sung. Lia, the nymph, is responsible for the action of the story, for it is her song that catches Ameto's attention and sets the plot in motion. Lia's song inspires the young shepherd to change his ways. Singing women also participate in fashioning the narrative itself: as participants in the formation of the intricate story structure and as metaphorical guides in the transformation of Ameto from rustic shepherd to tempered philosopher. While Lia's songs summarize the nature of the plot, those of the nymphs reflect their own characters. The female characters are not vying for Ameto's soul, but are contributing as singers to the joyous celebration of love. Thus in Boccaccio's female characters we see the emancipation of female virtue

in the form of music. Music is the vehicle for love, and confident women sing without fear of reprisal.

Feminine music propels the entire story because it is the sound of a “graziosa voce” that attracts Ameto to the nymphs in the first place. Before being attacked by the dogs while resting under a shady tree, Ameto hears a most graceful voice singing a song he had never heard: “subito dalla vicina riva pervenne a’ suoi orecchi graziosa voce in mai non udita canzone” (3.9). This marvelous music causes Ameto to speak the following words to himself: “Id-dii sono in terra discesi” “The Gods have descended on earth” (3.10). It is important to note that at the beginning of the *Comedia*, Ameto responds to the music with words and that his words are perceived as masculine in response to the attacking dogs. Later in the comedy, he will respond in music — a sign of his transformation from rustic shepherd to educated man. Ameto follows “la dolce nota” (3.12) until he finds more nymphs near a riverbank. Some put their feet in the water while others listen to a song that one of the most beautiful nymphs was singing (“una di loro più gioconda sedendo cantava,” 3.15), and Ameto recognized it as the one he had heard in the fields (“dalla quale conobbe la canzone prima alle sue orecchie esser venuta,” 3.15). He thinks that they are goddesses and Boccaccio explains that Ameto’s response is once again to speak, but the author tells us that Ameto did not know what to say (“che dir dovesse non conoscea,” 3.16). In the following passage, Boccaccio introduces the idea of “donneschi suoni” (3.18), or feminine sounds, to describe the sound of the nymphs. Boccaccio describes Ameto shouting at the nymphs’ dogs, trying to stop them from attacking him. But the dogs, used to “donneschi suoni,” only become more agitated by the harsh quality of his voice. The nymphs hear the commotion and manage to silence the dogs, before noticing Ameto, whom they recognize and try to calm. They then return to their pleasantries and begin to sing again. The fact that they restart their song is unique in the trope of the madrigal texts set to music in the Trecento. More typical behavior is found in Masini’s madrigal “Nel chiaro fiume diletto e bello,” where the woman asks the fisherman to leave (“O me!” dicend’ a me “dè vatten via / Che ’l partir più che ’l stare è cortesia”).⁶

The appearance of the first inset song, “Cefiso con le sue piacevoli onde,” at this point is fascinating because it suspends the linearity of the narrative. The representation of the *donneschi suoni* adds a new layer of narrative complexity requiring the nymph, in a sense, to backtrack and start over. In other words, the storyline follows Ameto hearing the music and finding the

⁶ Cited from Carducci’s essay “Musica e poesia nel secolo XIV” (in Carducci 1893, 357).

nymphs. One nymph is singing. She interrupts her singing in order to stop another kind of sound, one that is unpleasant: the dogs barking at Ameto. Once the dogs are quieted, she begins again, this time with an inset song. It is during the restart that Boccaccio inserts the text, even though the nymph, in this case Lia, was singing the same song prior to its appearance. The linearity of the narrative is once more disrupted after the inset song when Boccaccio writes that Ameto moves closer to the nymphs while listening: “poi che de’ cani gli fuggì la paura e l’angelica voce ebbe ricominciata la bella canzone, con timido passo a quelle si fece vicino” (5.1). But one is led to believe, from reading and reaching the end of the inset song, that it is completed. Boccaccio backtracks to describe Ameto listening to it *after* it is over.

Ameto’s transformation is a gradual process that begins with his own singing. After leaving the nymphs and returning home, tired and hot from looking for them, Ameto lies on the ground in a shady spot and begins to sing, “Febo salito già a mezzo il cielo” (8.1) in which he praises the nymphs’ beauty. Ameto makes music hoping that the nymphs might hear him, just as he heard the singing nymphs. Unfortunately, it does not work and, once finished, Ameto returns home, after which Boccaccio begins a long description of feasts made in praise of Venus. Ameto’s ability to sing encourages the nymphs to let him participate in the festivities.

The nymphs’ songs

Each nymph sings about a particular figure, and in praising this figure, a picture of a virtue takes shape.⁷ Mopsa (knowledge) sings about Pallade (Pallas) and describes how she purges all fog from their hearts and renders intellects healthy: “co’ suoi effetti si sforza a purgare / ciascuna nebbia delli cor mondani, / sol che ’l turbato la lasci operare, / rendendo quinci gl’intelletti sani” (19.8–31); Emilia (justice) sings of Diana’s scale: “Costei, di spade armata, in man tenendo / giusta balluca, graziosamente / l’umile essalta, il superbo premendo (24.16–18); Adiona (temperance) sings of Pomona who does not allow, and even disdains, out-of-bounds undertakings: “Le ’mprese furibonde vieta e sdegna” (27.28); Acrimonia (fortitude) sings of an unsettled Notus: “in ogni cosa mostrando Fortezza” (30.34); Agape (*caritas*)

⁷ Scholars have written about the allegorical qualities of the nymphs. See, e.g., Del Giudice 1982. Jane Tylus writes, “As both their own songs and the final song of Ameto in chap. 47 partially identify them, the seven women can be said to be figures of the following virtues: Mopsa, Prudence; Emilia, Justice; Adiona, Temperance; Acrimonia, Fortitude; Agapes, Charity; Fiammetta, Hope; Lia, Faith” (2013, 398 n. 10).

sings about fire, which can be understood as charity and passion for the divine: “Sì come il foco, in fummi oscuri molto” (33.1); the inset song poetry of Fiammetta is more difficult to relate to a particular virtue, though Tylus assigns the virtue of hope to her; Lia (faith) sings the longest song, which Tylus has related to faith, though the word is never uttered in her text.

Adding to the general obfuscation of the nymphs’ identities, Boccaccio does not clearly provide their names. Sometimes the nymph’s name is only given after the story and song are performed. And sometimes he does not include the nymph’s name at all. The music, as understood through the inset songs, provides an imagined key to their names. Indeed there are seven songs that correspond to seven notes of a traditional medieval musical scale. One can imagine that each nymph had her own way of singing, perhaps starting on a different tone and singing in a different tempo. This is an interesting problem and suggests perhaps that there might be something in the imagined musical accompaniment that fills in the blanks regarding their allegorical associations. Boccaccio intends for music to provoke the imagination, as when Ameto, reacting to Adiona’s song, dreams of being embraced: “Egli alcuna volta imagina d’essere stretto dalle braccia dell’una e dell’altra” (28.5).

The seven nymphs’ storytelling follows a similar pattern: 1) Ameto chooses a nymph, not by name, but by describing the color of her clothing; 2) She tells a story about her love; 3) She sings a song (the six nymphs’ songs are much shorter in length than those sung by Ameto or Lia); 4) Boccaccio describes Ameto’s reaction to her story and her song; 5) We learn the name of the singing nymph⁸; 6) Ameto praises her words and song. While Ameto and the nymphs follow this basic roadmap set up by Lia, Boccaccio includes many nuances that suggest a more organic and fluid interpretation of the role of women in the narrative structure. Ameto’s responses vary from a few words to an expansive appreciation of the women, which suggests a slow and subtle transformation, captured in his struggle between his appreciation of the women’s looks and their songs. Their looks represent a superficial kind of love (as we understand in modern feminist terms): the enjoyment of their sounds represents a deeper appreciation of the virtues the nymphs represent.

⁸ Indeed, scholars suggest that the nymphs’ stories reveal their identities. For instance, Bernadette Marie McCoy notes the different allusions to knowledge in Mopsa’s inset song. See McCoy 1978, 95–96.

In the case of the first nymph's story and song, Ameto chooses the nymph to his right, "di rosato vestita" (17.8),⁹ who recounts her love for Affron and sings in a pleasing manner: "con piacevole nota e soave cantando, cominciò questi versi: // 'Pallade nata del supremo Giove'" (18.40–19.1). Boccaccio elucidates Ameto's reaction to the song straight after its completion: "L'udite voci e i ferventi amori, la mira bellezza, e l'angelico suono con nota mai più da lui non sentita" (20.1), which stresses Ameto's sensual reaction to the performance.¹⁰ Beginning first with sound, then with sight, Ameto concludes that he desires to be Affron, the subject of the nymph's love. We finally learn the name of the nymph who went first: Mopsa (20.4). Ameto then praises her words and song: "lodate le parole e la canzone dell'ubidente donna" (20.5). Boccaccio clearly differentiates between words and song, even though on the page the music appears only as words. The reader is to imagine the song and imagine the reactions to its specific notes. Boccaccio is careful to add the word *note* in his descriptions of the song to insure, I believe, that readers 'hear' the song rather than simply read its words.

Ameto's attention to the nymphs seems slowly to drift from the visual to the auditory. With regard to the third nymph, Ameto instructs her to go next: "O bella donna, seguite le prime col grazioso canto e col parlare" (25.3), asking her to sing, then speak. But the nymph, who is dressed in purple, follows Lia's opening commands and begins to speak her story about her love for Dioneo. She then sings the inset song "La graziosa e bella mia Pomena." But Ameto is not ready to forfeit his natural instincts; Boccaccio follows the song not with Ameto's commentary on the story or the song just heard, but rather with Ameto's evaluation of the relative beauty of the nymphs: "Ameto con occhio ladro riguarda l'aperte bellezze di tutte quante" (28.1). The omission of his evaluation of their song at this point suggests a step back or pause in his transformation. Ameto is somewhat embarrassed about this long distraction ("e vergognatosi un poco, si mirò intorno," 28.10) and chooses the next nymph who is dressed in white. She sings "Da' caldi fiati del turbido Noto," after which Boccaccio suggests that Ameto's desire for the nymphs is more tempered ("con più temperato disio," 31.1) and Ameto returns to speaking about his love for Lia. He begins to wonder if he could tell a story as beautifully as the nymphs do.

⁹ More so than any other quality, the color of the nymphs' clothing defines their identity.

¹⁰ Boccaccio also includes the *brigata's* reactions to songs in the *Decameron*, of course.

A female singer takes control at this point. More than an hour after finishing Ameto's oration, the nymph, dressed in "vermiglio" and laughing, decides to tell her story because Ameto is too distracted to choose the next nymph. After which she sings her song, the introduction to which is a bit different than that of the other songs. For Boccaccio informs the reader that the nymph with a beautiful tone added notes to the following verses ("con lieto canto appresso mise in nota i seguenti versi," 32.61). This statement implies that the nymph knew the words first, and then added her notes spontaneously. This is the second time in the *Comedia* that Boccaccio provides an indication about performance practice: first he suggests that Teogapen added notes to music, and here he indicates that Adiona added music to an already composed text.

After hearing Adiona's song ("Ma come a' suoi orecchi pervenne la bella Ninfa," 34.2), Ameto launches into a long soliloquy praising the nymph and expressing sympathy for her condition. Boccaccio reverts again to mentioning the singing ("Ma, poi che lungamente sé per cotali pensieri ebbe tratto, sentendo la donna avere cantato, alla bella giovane di verde vestita rivolto disse," 34.15) and describes Ameto asking the next nymph, who is dressed in green, to narrate the story of her loves. This nymph is named Fiammetta, and we learn her identity before she sings her song, "L'alta corona e bella d'Adriana" (36.1). Boccaccio does not provide Ameto's reaction to her song.

After Lia narrates the nymphs' final and longest story of loves (and the lengthiest musical text), "O voi, ch'avete chiari gl'intelletti" (39.1), they see in the sky seven white swans and seven storks (40.3) flying toward them. They hear the birds make a loud sound ("e con romore grandissimo quivi fermatisi, investavano il cielo, 40.3) and watch a battle take place between them, from which the swans emerge victorious. Ameto is frightened and stupefied by the ruckus ("stupefatto e quasi cieco per lo udito tuono," 40.8), recalling how he was terrified by the barking dogs, as Boccaccio once again bookends Ameto with noise. Boccaccio writes that he is almost 'blinded' by the loud noise, which suggests a kind of synesthesia represented in the 'listening' of imagined music read in the inset songs. After a short time, Ameto hears spoken words. Boccaccio describes the delightful words reaching his ears ("Ma non fu lungo l'attendere, ché di quella a' suoi orecchi pervenne una voce soave così dicente" (40.9): "Io son luce del cielo unica e trina" (41.1). At the end of the poem, Venus offers a self-conscious appreciation of her own sound by encouraging Ameto not to be afraid of her ("non vi spaventi il mio venir sonoro / né l'alta luce in queste parti oscure," 41.18–19). They then hear her recite a second poem, entitled "O care mie sorelle, per le quali" (43.1). Once the poem is complete, the nymphs rush over to

Ameto who was still stupefied by Venus. He significantly does not hear the nymphs coming when Lia tosses him into a clear fountain. The nymphs wash him, specifically his eyes, with which he can now finally look at Venus.

Ameto's ultimate transformation from rustic shepherd to educated man is captured in music. Once Venus disappears, the nymphs encircle Ameto and all together sing "O anima felice, o più beata" (45.1). This is the first time the nymphs sing together, and their song represents the unification of the circle in melody.¹¹ Following the musical text, Boccaccio writes that Ameto listened intently to the song and comments that he was more prepared for it than before, his ears and heart more ready to accept it: "Così ornato come avete udito, s'era Ameto rimasto con lieto animo, ascoltando il cantare delle donne; il quale, sentendosi mente più possibile molto che prima, gli orecchi al canto e 'l cuore a' dolci pensieri quivi concede" (46.1). Immediately after acknowledging that he is hearing the songs more clearly, Ameto recalls his primitive life in comparison: "Egli [... fa] della sua primitiva vita comparazione alla presente" (46.2). He recalls the time the dogs scared the nymphs and laughs about his arduous loves. And specifically, he understands with serene insight Lia's first song ("e con vista serena conosce l'udita prima canzone della sua Lia," 46.2), and the shepherds' songs that only his ears found delightful ("[q]uindi i canti de' pastori, che solamente l'orecchie di lui aveano dilettrate," 46.3). He admits that the nymphs once pleased his eyes more than his intellect ("Similmente vede che sieno le Ninfe, le quali più all'occhio che allo 'ntelletto erano piaciute, ed ora allo 'ntelletto piacciono più che all'occhio," 46.3). Remarkably, the women sing throughout this astounding chapter wherein Ameto expresses his appreciation and acceptance of his change from brutish animal to man¹² and is compelled because of his joy to sing a final song: "come esse finirono il canto loro, così cominciò a cantare" (46.5).

And more importantly with regard to the importance of the *donneschi suoni*, it is in his music that Ameto most clearly and succinctly reveals the identities of nymphs and the virtues they represent. In expressing his gratitude to the nymphs ("insurgo a ringraziarti," 47.8) in his last song, "O diva luce che in tre persone" (47.1), Ameto mentions clearly the name of each

¹¹ The coming together of musical lines, or melodies, in one unison song often represents love in music. The most famous example of this is Mozart's "Là ci darem la mano" from *Don Giovanni*. In this famous seduction duet Don Giovanni sings first, followed by Zerlina. The two characters begin to sing together only after Zerlina agrees to be with him.

¹² "[D]animale bruto, uomo divenuto essere li pare" (46.4).

nymph in the order in which they sang to him: this is in contrast to the unnamed nymphs in the earlier stories and songs. In Ameto's inset song we find: 1) Mopsa described as opening his mind to knowledge ("la caligine obstando allo 'ntelletto, / ch'agli occhi miei del tutto ti toglia, / con l'operar di Mopsa e col suo detto," 47.16–18); 2) Emilia holding the sword of Astrea (justice) in 47.19–21; 3) Adiona linked to temperance ("per cui su si canta / la loda di Pomena, a' tuoi piaceri / misurò la mia cura tutta quanta," 47.22–24); 4) Acrimonia fortifying him ("fortificando me a' tuoi voleri / Acrimonia," 47.25–26); 5) Agapes representing passion for the divine, instilling charity ("Quindi Agapes del tuo foco eternale / m'accese, e ardo sì intimamente / ch'appena credo a me null'altro eguale," 47.28–30); 6) Fiammetta contributing to his feeling of hope ("E la Fiammetta, più ch'altra piacente, / sì m'ha ad in te sperar l'anima posta / ch'ad altro non ha cura la mia mente," 47.31–33); and 7) Lia having faith in Ameto ("Simile tutta a me chiara e disposta / s'è la mia Lia con gli effetti suoi, / che di que' nullo da me si discosta," 47.34–36). In Ameto's song, we see a concretization of information into a focused and comprehensible list of allegorical attributes. The imagined music that accompanies his words also suggests a deeper understanding of their identities, in sounds rather than words.

The inset song ended, Boccaccio follows with an rich description of a relatively quiet soundscape. We read not only of Ameto's silence ("[t]acque Ameto," 48.1) but also of the birds' silence ("i gai uccelli, tacendo," 48.1) because it is the end of the day. Silence brings us back to the beginning, before the storytelling. Boccaccio mentions that the cicadas are silent, but one can begin to hear the strident "grilli" (48.2). He then describes the stars in the sky and ends with Ameto saying goodbye and returning home. The incantation is interrupted by a final poetical text, "Fra la fronzuta e nova primavera" (49.1), spoken by the narrator, who had watched and heard the nymphs and Ameto, which once again accentuates the importance of women's songs linking reason and melody:

per quella entro soave il sentia
per ogni parte andar con la biltate,
col ragionare e con la melodia
di quelle donne, che in veritate
io senza me grand'ora dimorai
in non provata mai felicitate. (49.16–21)

Boccaccio juxtaposes sight and sound: "ma tutto questo m'usciva di mente / qualor nel viso ne rimirava alcuna / o udiva cantar sì dolcemente" (49.49–51). And the narrator, too, leaves the scene, first describing what he heard and what he saw ("io mi levai del luogo ov'era quatto / stato ad udire e a

vedere, il giorno, / tanto di ben quanto fu patefatto,” 49.58–60), but unlike Ameto, the narrator returns to his normal life full of sadness for what he cannot attain. Boccaccio ends the work with praise for Niccolò di Bartolo del Buono di Firenze (50.3), to whom the work was dedicated. With the introduction of his name, the reader is firmly back on earth and out of the realm of celestial music.

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