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Permalink

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Journal

Carte Italiane, 1(3)

ISSN

0737-9412

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Publication Date

1982

DOI

10.5070/C913011199

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**BOCCACCIO'S *COMEDIA DELLE NINFE*
FIORENTINE AND LITERARY DISSOCIATION:
TO ALLEGORIZE OR NOT TO ALLEGORIZE?***

LUISA DEL GIUDICE

The relatively limited body of criticism on the *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* (also referred to as the *Ameto* or the *Ninfale d'Ameto*) has generally focused on two areas: it has traced the narrative technique of the 'cornice/novelle' back to the "quistioni d'amore" of the *Filocolo* and forward to the *Decameron*; it has also interested itself in unraveling the puzzles regarding the nymphs' identities, which Boccaccio, the gossip columnist, so cleverly concealed in this 'roman à clef'.¹ Sansovino has labelled this work a quasi 'piccolo Decameron'² while Di Pino has considered this the first pastoral of Italian narrative.³

The engaging question however, that a critic faces in dealing with this *Comedia* concerns the conceptual framework in which this pastoral functions. The work is pulled in two directions; toward the real, dictated by the senses, and toward the allegorical, dictated by reason. The spiritual aspirations embodied in this Christian allegory seem to be at odds with the narrative realism, and, while the character of *Ameto* is spiritually elevated and integrated into the allegory, the I-narrator remains bound by the earthly vision and therefore partially betrays the final allegory. The warring halves are not reconciled and the tension is not resolved. The dissociation between narrator, who

*—This paper was read at the 2nd annual American Association of University Professors of Italian conference held in Los Angeles from November 20–22, 1981.

ignores the Christian allegory in favour of courtly values and, the narration of Ameto's transformation, where the realistic is resolved into allegory, is acute.

Many are uncomfortable with Boccaccio the allegorist and relieved that the 'true' Boccaccio finally emerges in the *Decameron*, and suggest that the decision to write in the allegorical mode is a sort of tribute to Dante, to Florence, to a literary tradition. However, this is only partly true; Boccaccio is not merely paying tribute to his distinct cultural heritage but is still conceptually burdened by it. Yet, if poetical success in the allegorical mode may be seen as reflecting the incarnation of real inner experience⁴, the poetical failure of the allegory in this work may reflect a lack of conviction on a more intimate level.⁵

The *Comedia* intends to add another chapter to Boccaccio's Book of Love. The prologue clearly delineates this subject matter; the narrator states that he is writing, not as a poet, "ma piuttosto amante", promising, as inherent in the title 'comedia', a "lieto fine". He tells the story "con voce convenevole al mio umele stato", also alluding to the tone and middle style proper to a 'comedia'. Striking a familiar defensive stance, as though defending what others may call frivolous, he speaks of Love:

...i cui effetti se con discreta mente saranno pensati, non troverò chi biasimi quel ch'io lodo [...] Questi, del ben vivere umano maestro e regola, purga di negligenza, di viltà, di durezza e d'avarizia li cuori de' suoi seguaci; e loro esperti, magnanimi e liberali e d'ogni piacevolezza dipinti rendendo con vigilante cura.

Nowhere in the prologue are the Christian allegorical intentions mentioned. The earthly lover's language is steeped in the courtly love tradition. He returns in his memory to the graceful garden of love and retells "quel che con gli occhi presi, e con l'udire", a sensual recapitulation of the "delizie mondane" to which he will refer in the epilogue.

In the context of the story itself the main character is Ameto. Allegorically he represents humanity in its natural and primitive state which becomes civilized and enlightened through Christian love. A young hunter in the Arcadian woods, Ameto falls in love with Lia,

representing Christian Faith, and this love transforms him from beast to man through the mediation of the nymphs, whose allegorical tales prepare the way for Ameto's conversion. Ameto is then ultimately capable of contemplating and comprehending the Heavenly Venus (Divine Truth, God).

As the natural exemplary of human life, Ameto enacts the psychological representation of the stilnovistic doctrine, and, this drama of the ennobling power of love in man is distanced through the pastoral setting.⁶ This setting dramatizes Boccaccio's allegorical intentions, since the pagan world, populated by satyrs, wood nymphs, dryads and shepherds, symbolizes well the state of mankind awaiting the Christian transformation.

This, however, is not a traditional allegorical setting: while the pastoral normally has a mythical and atemporal quality about it, this Arcadia is geographically specific. It is located in the area between the Arno and the Mugnone just outside Florence (the same location as for the *Decameron*). This tension between the allegorical, the pastoral and the historical/realistic, informs the entire work and is present 'in nuce' in the title itself: besides merely indicating the 'lieto fine' or the middle style, 'comedia' calls to mind a Christian allegory in the dantesque tradition; "ninfe" are vital members of the arcadian community; and, "fiorentine" refers to a geographical reality and to specific women. Thus, the various narrative levels can accommodate the nymphs who are at the same time beautiful Florentine (and Neapolitan) women, wood nymphs, and also representative of the Theological and Cardinal virtues. Mopsa, for instance, may symbolize Wisdom (Sapienza) but she is also historically identifiable as Lottiera di Odoaldo della Tosa if the clues in her self-presentation are closely examined. Likewise, Emilia, who represents Justice, is Emililana dei Tornaquinci, and so on.

The allegorical dimension all through the work appears to be episodic rather than continuous. The elements which obviously belong to the allegory of love do not include other passages which are so potently realistic as to seriously challenge our ability to allegorize them: the seduction ritual of Mopsa, the description of the grotesque and sexually feckless old husband, the adulterous aspects of the nymphs' tales. The wealth of historical references, smatterings of

legend, myth and chronicle, such as the descriptions of the origins of Florence and Naples, are also elements of a technique of digression or ornamentation, which have nothing to do with the over-all allegory. The final allegorization then, especially concerning Ameto would appear as insufficiently developed and to come too abruptly.

Ameto first appears as a sensual creature blending in harmoniously with the voluptuous landscape. He leads a simple and rugged life until one day he hears a "graziosa voce in mai non udita canzone" (III)*, an alluring sound, so startling and divine that Ameto follows it to its source and finds the "grazioso coro" of nymphs. Ameto, who is very receptive to pleasurable stimuli, is overwhelmed by the sounds (at first) and then the sights: "indietro timido ritratto, s'inginocchiò e, stupefatto, che dir dovesse non conoscea." Lia sings of active faith and love for others and promises happiness to the devoted lover and thus establishes her allegorical nature. Her words are perhaps the most openly moralistic of all, except for those of the 'tenzone' between the shepherds Acaten d'Academia and Alcesto d'Arcadia who represent respectively, the worldly life and the ascetic life (XIV). According to a not uncommon application of erotic metaphors to the spiritual even in early Christian writings, there is some ambiguity in Lia's promise that to he who turns his eyes to her: "io gli farò quel diletto sentire/che più suol essere agli amanti caro/dopo l'acceso e suo forte disire." (IV, 49-51) The degree of physicality to be attached to the verb "sentire" is not clear.

The "grazioso coro" of nymphs who gather to honour Venus, engage in demonstrating the power of love in their lives for Ameto's sake:

accìò che ben conoschi come la tua Lia, molto da te amata, è più da
dovere essere, sappi per esemplo de' nostri amori sollicito ubidire
notate le nostre cose. (XVIII)

Ameto is placed at the center of the circle and is made arbiter of the group. He is both symbolically and structurally at the center as part of

* textual references immediately follow each quotation and refer to the chapters in G. Boccaccio's, *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine*, in *Opere minori in volgare* (ed. Mario Marti), Rizzoli, Milano, 1971

the 'cornice', and he is its regulating mechanism, selecting each nymph in turn to speak; he is also the subject to whom the seven tales are directed. His role at the center is however a passive one;⁷ he seems to be in a world of his own: "come se quivi non fosse, fiso la cantante, alienato mirava" (V), and consequently fails to see that the nymphs' tales are full of allusions to his own story. The final conversion therefore appears abruptly at the end because it is insufficiently prepared.

The physical beauty of the nymphs fascinates Ameto and the following are frequent refrains: "con occhio vago rimira, e tutte insieme e particolarmente ciascuna considera"; "rimirandola tutta con occhio continuo, tutta in sè la loda." There is method in Ameto's analyses of the nymphs: Ameto "riguarda essamina, distingue e conferma in sè delle venute ninfe la mira bellezza." Ameto's descriptions however appear far too detailed and sophisticated for a mind just recently acquainted with female beauty. As through Ameto's gaze we are made aware of Boccaccio the connoisseur, the descriptions provide a valuable document for establishing the esthetic code of female beauty for Ameto/Boccaccio and perhaps for an age. The check list includes the "ampia, piana e candida fronte", the "non occhi, ma divine luci", the "candide e ritonde guance", "l'odorante naso", the "bella bocca", the "candida gola", "spazioso petto", "piccolissimo piede". (IX) The styles of dress are described with the scrutiny of a tailor's eye and there is particular fascination for the elaborate hair styles which again are described with amazing precision. The hidden treasures, the "celestiali pomi" set the wheels of desire in motion as Ameto debates "dove perverebbe la pronta mano, se data le fosse licenzia." (IX) Ameto conjures up his erotic fantasies "e con occhio mentale trapassa i vestimenti", "con lussurioso occhio rimira" (XV), thus reflecting the primacy of Ameto's senses over his reason.

This lustful reaction however is not entirely unwarranted since the tales themselves are not completely chaste nor moralistic. We are confronted with women of flesh and bone, each married, each telling of her essentially adulterous love. The moral edification of such a love rests in the fact that it is motivated by the Heavenly Venus and that each nymph, representing a specific virtue, is given the task of converting and civilizing her symbolic opposite. Mopsa/Wisdom for instance, must seduce Affron the foolish, who obstinately resists her

efforts. (XVIII) Mopsa admits that the attraction is physical: "piacque agli occhi miei la sua bellezza". The other nymphs and Ameto will say the same. Mopsa tries to lure Affron to shore with words but is unsuccessful. Finally, putting aside her shame, Mopsa undresses and Affron: "rotta ogni durezza, volse la prora a noi." The tension between such realistic passages and their allegorical intent is acute. There is no sublimation of physical love for spiritual; rather, both have their right to co-exist.

Many references are made to Ameto's listening and watching and we are assured that he had "non meno gli occhi a loro che gli orecchi a' parlamenti tenendo sospesi." It seems doubtful. If Ameto had paid as much attention to what he heard as to what he saw, he would have understood a great deal more by the end of the afternoon. His conversion in addition, would not appear so abrupt to the reader. Love, in Ameto's case, is not blind, it is deaf. After Ameto's conversion we note a subtle change in his auditive abilities now that his intellect is strengthened and therefore: "più possibile molto che prima, gli orecchi al canto e 'l cuore a' dolce pensieri quivi concede." (XLVI) The clear distinction which is consistently made between hearing and sight offers interesting new implications for the traditional stilnovistic phenomenology of love which heavily favours the function of the eyes.⁸

The redundant quality of Ameto's reactions to each tale in his ongoing interior monologue would seem to confirm a certain atemporality which is proper to the arcadic setting. Yet all is not as static as it may appear. Ameto is undergoing gradual change and so he must if the metamorphosis is not to appear completely as imposed from above. He does for instance catch glimpses at "il ver ascoso", the hidden truth, for he refers to his past ways as those of error⁹, and shows at times a new serenity and temperance: "Egli caccia da sè le imaginazioni vane, alle quali gli effetti conosce impossibili, e alle vere cose entra con dolce pensiero." (XXXI) The question is however, whether Ameto has been sufficiently prepared for his final transformation.

Lia's tale is of particular importance, for it is the tale within a tale which speaks directly of Ameto's transformation and thereby allegorically interprets the work for the reader. She has drawn Ameto

out of his "mentale cechità con la mia luce a conoscere le care cose, e volenteroso l'ho fatto a seguire quelle." (XXXVIII) Her song begins in a familiarly dantesque way:

O voi ch'avete chiari gl'intelletti....
 deh, rivolgetevi alquanto ad udire
 il mio parlare e attenti notate
 il ver ch'ascoso cerca scoprire. (XXXIX, 1-4)¹⁰

She continues with a long profession of faith. But despite the clearly Christian message and the reference to the allegorical end, and, despite the aerial *Psychomachia*,¹¹ the battle between Good and Evil in which seven white swans (representing the nymph/virtues) defeat seven storks (vice/lovers), Ameto is astounded but is still uncomprehending of the allegorical import.

At this instant there is sweet singing as Venus breaks through the clouds in a stream of light, and Ameto recognizes her as the celestial Venus, not the profane ("non quella Venere che gli stolti alle loro disordinate concupiscenzie chiamano dea.")¹² The scene that follows is obviously inspired by Dante's purification ritual in the Terrestrial Paradise but with some comical undertones. Before Ameto realizes what is happening, the nymphs have pounced upon him, stripped him of "i panni selvaggi", and thrust him into the purifying waters; each nymph performs her symbolic part of the ritual by drying his eyes, strengthening his eyesight, dressing him and breathing into his soul. The resolution is conventional and the brevity of this episode suggest a dwindling interest in pursuing its outcome.

There is again an invocation to the Muses, as the once semi-illiterate Ameto¹³ asks for poetical assistance required to capture the essence of the personal encounter with Venus/God. At this moment the texture of the narration seems to change and the aspirations and anxieties are the narrator's rather than Ameto's. The narrator wishes to sustain his literary vision, his refuge from the harsh realities of life, and seems to care little for prolonging Ameto's religiously ecstatic moment.

Ameto turns to Venus in a feverishly long prayer, pledging his faith and asking what he shall do in order to gain her favour for all eternity. Venus' reply is brief and evasive: "Spera in noi e fa bene; e i tuoi disii saranno vicini" (XLIV) and vanishes. The miracle takes place rather

abruptly. No sooner has Ameto emerged from the fount than he has overcome terrestrial sensuality and is re-evaluating his past experience from his post-conversion perspective. He now understands the true meaning of Lia's song, the shepherds' tenzone, the identity of the young lovers and with this a major reversal:

le ninfe, le quali più all'occhio che allo
'ntelletto erano piaciute, [e] ora all'ntelletto
piacciono più che all'occhio. (XLVI)

Ameto concludes that "d'animale bruto, uomo divenuto essere li pare." Ameto has been humanized and spiritualized. The allegory of transformation is over. The sensual has been renounced. This new Ameto makes a brief appearance, remaining just a moment longer to ponder these events, smiling at his good fortune and then also disappears.

The nymphs of flesh and bone fade into symbolic abstractions and so does our interest in them. Ameto no longer dwells on his love for Lia; she is given no special distinction but blends into the 'grazioso coro' as each nymph returns to her home. The Lia/Ameto relationship remains as ambiguous as it was. Little is known of the personal love story as the realistic side of the relationship is sacrificed for allegory's sake. Lia is thus only symbolically functional as Christian Faith. While the nymphs' tales were sexually explicit, Ameto's is chaste, and his physical desires are only figuratively satisfied through imagination, sublimated in erotic fantasy for the nymphs.

Love transforms Ameto and the story ends on this threshold; we are not shown "gli effetti" or how this new force operates in his life, as for instance, in a later characterization of such types, Boccaccio is careful to do with Cimone in the *Decameron*. Ameto is left facing the future with his back toward us. He too fades into the scenery, back into nature, just as, at the start, he had come from it. He is no longer the Ameto we had come to know and love but a symbol of redeemed man, and yet, we remember him most, not as a symbol of enlightened humanity, but as an impressionable young man with an active erotic imagination, falling in love for the first time.

This 'dusk scene' reminds us that we are in an idyllic pastoral setting as the allegory ends and nature takes over: the shepherds

return to their homes, the birds to their nests as the cicadas give way to the crickets.¹⁴ Man and nature take rest as night falls; peace and harmony reign.

The I-narrator too comes out from where he was hiding and watching among the foliage all the afternoon, stretches his legs and takes one last look at this vision of perfection before returning to where there is "malinconia e eterna gramezza". He leaves behind the company of beautiful and charming women to face his father, "un vecchio freddo, ruvido e avaro."

A serious problem arises once we return to 'reality', to the narrator's perspective. His evaluation of Ameto and the nymphs seems to upset the adequately resolved allegorization of the work. There is a discrepancy between Ameto's understanding of his story and the narrator who ignores the transformation of Ameto. Once Ameto leaves the scene, our laborious efforts of reconciliation between the literal and the allegorical tend to be questioned rather than confirmed.

There is identification of the narrator with Ameto in part as he remembers the passions and frustrations encountered that afternoon: "così de' miei pensieri e nel disio/conoscea que' d'Ameto." (XLIX, 37-38) From this point on however, their paths diverge. The narrator states that on many an occasion, while watching, he wanted to shake Ameto, to make him stop staring uncouthly and lustfully at the nymphs. There is also envy over Ameto's privileged position: "E di lui invidioso, palesare/tal volta fu mi volli" (43-44), unable to bear Ameto's luck: "e con quel cuor/che io pote' sostenni/vederlo a tanta corte presidente/parlar con motti e con riso e con cenni." (47-48) While Ameto personally experienced this joyous company the narrator could only watch. All is but a vision, an afternoon's escape from gloom and the narrator now laments its conclusion.

The narrator's memory does not retain Ameto's transformation, nor the symbolic value of the nymphs. In fact the final allegory seems to have passed him by. The narrator recapitulates:

Quivi biltà, gentilezza e valore,
leggiadri motti, essempla di virtute,
somma piacevolezza e con amore;

quivi disio movente omo a salute,
 quivi tanto di bene e d'allegrezza,
 quant'om ci pote aver, quivi compiute
 le delizie mondane, e lor dolcezza
 si vedeva e sentiva.... (XLIX, 67-74)

The worldly pleasures ("le delizie mondane") are what he values most, the gratification of the senses of sight and sound stripped of their spiritualizing functions. The nymphs remain to him, beautiful, charming and witty women, full of life. Ameto is not enlightened humanity but an "alto signor di donne tante e tali." Where Ameto has been converted the narrator has not. This dissociation between the unconverted narrator and the narration of transformation, sharpens the ambivalence, the tension, at the core of the work. Ameto's allegory does not seem of the narrator's creation but of the over-seeing author, in which case the author and I-narrator are not one. Both Ameto and the narrator therefore are characters intrinsic to the 'fictio'. Ameto represents the edification of love in the stilnovistic tradition while the I-narrator is bound by the earthly pleasures and courtly values. This literary disconnexion reflects a mind adhering to the Christian framework and rebelling at the same time.

Notes:

1. H. Hauvette, *Boccaccio* (Paris: Colin, 1914) seemed to think that "la chronique scandaleuse" with which Boccaccio "prit un malicieux plaisir à [en] colorer ses fictions poétiques", must have been the work's greatest attraction for Boccaccio's contemporaries. The critic concludes that for us "l'*Ameto* a perdu d'intérêt." (p. 116) A. E. Quaglio (Introduction to *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine*, ed. A. E. Quaglio, in *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. V. Branca, v. II, Milano: Mondadori, 1964, p. 674) also speaks of "Un'aria maliziosa di cronaca", of "una divertita e maliziosa cronaca mondana" which pervades the work. One might be troubled in trying to reconcile the supposedly "malicious" game Boccaccio plays here with the higher allegorical intentions of the work. For two samples of the 'dizzying' sort of criticism which attempts to establish the nymphs' identities, see: E. H. Wilkins, "Pampinea and Abrotonia" in *Modern Language Notes*, 23, No. 5 (May 1968), pp. 137-142; and, C. Antona-Traversi, "La Lia dell'*Ameto*" in *Giornale di Filologia Romanza*, 4, No. 9, pp. 129-143. Both are equally impossible to follow.
2. The *Comedia delle ninfe fiorentine* was called "quasi un piccolo Decameron"

by Sansovino in the Cinquecento, probably on the basis of the cornice/novelle structure. See: N. Sapegno, *Storia letteraria d'Italia: Il Trecento*, Milano: Vallardi, 1966, p. 306.

3. In defining this work as the first pastoral of Italian narrative, Di Pino draws attention to a 'shift' from a lyrical to narrative form. See: G. Di Pino, *La polemica del Boccaccio*, Firenze: Vallecchi, 1953, p. 62.

4. See C. S. Lewis for a brilliant analysis of the significance and development of allegory and symbolism from ancient literature to the Renaissance: *The Allegory of Love*, London: Oxford U. Press, 1936 (and especially chapter II: "Allegory").

5. Boccaccio's use of allegory in this work has troubled many. A brief survey of its evaluation may be useful. Hauvette, (op. cit., p. 14) is totally unsympathetic to Boccaccio's allegorical intentions and concludes that "tout est superficiel et frivole dans cette laborieuse allégorie", that particularly in regard to Venus symbolizing God and Mopsa Sapienza: "La disparité absolue, paradoxale entre le signe employé et la chose signifié atteint ici les confins du grotesque." F. MacManus (*Boccaccio*, London: Sheed & Ward, 1947) compares allegory in Dante, where one arrives at the final illumination through details that are, every one of them, both things and symbols in preordained place: "they are works of asceticism in method and in mind", to Boccaccio, who was incapable of such asceticism: "He was unable to see the things themselves and through them at the same time."; "He was beguiled by the appearance and forgot the deeper realities, until the last moment" (p. 198). J. Luchaire (*Boccaccio*, Paris: Flammarion, 1951) defines Boccaccio "un de ces écrivains qui sont des peintres qui pensent par images beaucoup plus aisément que dans l'abstrait". The allegorical figures are at the same time beautiful women and this mixture of "le sérieux et la malice" is not rare in Boccaccio's works; however, the critic suggests Boccaccio was probably sincere in believing that carnal love and virtue actually were reconcilable, that "la joie des sens" was not incompatible with "l'exaltation de l'âme." A. Scaglione (*Nature and Love in the Late Middle Ages*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: U. of California Press, 1963) states that: "Even while Boccaccio was still under the direct spell of his great master, his imitation of Dante's sublime allegories was somehow contradictory and out of focus." He goes on to say that there is a lack of harmonious and logical transition from the naturalness of the loves to the allegorical interpretations attached to them and that the superimposition of Dolce Stil Novo and Platonic Love is unconvincing. C. Grabher ("il culto del Boccaccio per Dante" in *Studi danteschi*, Firenze: Sansoni, 30 (1951) pp. 129-159) dryly and categorically states that allegory is for Boccaccio "del tutto estranea alla sua vera Musa"; in this work he adds, "diventa quasi un giuoco della fantasia o anche una specie di prezioso e raffinato elemento decorativo sul fondo realistico della narrazione: come per innalzarla in una più aristocratica atmosfera letteraria." N. Sapegno (op. cit., pp. 307-308) more soberly and with perceptive brevity notes that the allegory is not as forced and absurd as some would suggest: "sì invece che essa, come ogni allegoria, rimane estranea alla sostanza dell'opera, costruzione artificiosa dell'intelletto, giustapposta in un secondo tempo [...] l'allegoria pertanto, sebbene estrinseca alla poesia dell'*Ameto*, è ben lungi dall'essere, per lo scrittore, un meschino espediente."

Quaglio's assessment (op. cit., p. 671) while original, minimizes the tension between the real and the allegorical which does, in any case, persist: "a noi interessa puntare sul miracolo di una poesia dell'allegoria orrenuta con il rifiuto degli slanci lirici, sciogliendo il motivo in chiave psicologica nello svillupo narrativo. Allargati i piani, il narratore abbassa i limiri del simbolo e fonde per la prima volta—su una prospettiva tutta terrestre e corposa—in una creatura primigenia le sue ansie sovrasensibili."

6. See the interesting article of G. Velli, "L'*Ameto* e la pastorale, il significato della forma" in *Boccaccio: secoli di vita* (Atti del congresso internazionale: Boccaccio 1975, University of California, Los Angeles), eds. M. Cottino-Jones and E. Tuttle, Ravenna: Longo, 1975.

7. There is little struggle in *Ameto* to understand the true meaning of the tales, nor is there a quest for enlightenment; *Ameto*'s conscious desire for faith is very limited. Grace is bestowed upon him. The nymphs therefore fill an active and determining role, *Ameto* a reactive and passive role. *Ameto* is as "uno specchio immobile" across whom the tales pass and are reflected, but *Ameto* fails to see that these tales allude to his own story (D. Pino, op. cit., p. 67).

8. We should note that *Ameto* is first lured toward Love by a "graziosa voce in mai non udita canzone" and not by the conventional slings and arrows which transfix the lover through eye contact. In this Christian allegory, the Word, the transforming instrument of Love, is clearly linked to the sense of hearing, in a profound way: Lia's song must have its effect on the intellect which receives through the ear and understands the hidden truth ("il ver ascoso"). The function of the eyes however, long the conceived viaduct of spiritual elevation in the Stilnovistic doctrine of love, seems here to be perverted. The sense of sight in *Ameto*'s case provokes only lust, an ecstasy not of the spiritual nature. We are therefore tempted toward a parodistic interpretation of Boccaccio's distortion of the Stilnovistic phenomenology and metaphysics of love. A. B. Givens (*La dottrina d'amore nel Boccaccio*, Messina-Firenze: D'Anna, 1968) suggests that Boccaccio is 'outgrowing' this doctrine: "vogliamo anzi aggiungere che proprio nel fatto che la conclusione dell'*Ameto* ci pare forzata e fredda, appare [anche] superato il concerto d'amore stilnovistico." (p. 97)

9. E tu, da me non conosciuto, Amore,
da poco tempo in là, il qual m'hai tratto
dalla vita selvaggia e dallo errore,
istato rozzo infino allora e matto, (XVI, 22–25)

These lines suggest a moral awareness which is neither supported by *Ameto*'s behaviour nor by his wishful thinking about the nymphs.

10. Inf. IX, 61–63.

11. I have adapted this term from C. S. Lewis' (op. cit., p. 55) definition of "Psychomachia": 'bellum intestinum,' Holy War, battle of the virtues and the vices—a favourite theme of the Middle Ages.

12. See: R. Hollander, *Boccaccio's Two Venuses*, New York, Columbia U. Press, 1977.

13. *Ameto* does try his hand at being a love poet as he composes a song for Lia

(VIII): "Le tue bellezze, degne d'ogni canto, / non possono esser tocche col mio metro", he prefaces, but then tries just the same. The song is full of earthly imagery, "complimenti grossi" and punctuated with "donna del cor mio", "caro mio disire", popular refrains 'borrowed' by Ameto from the standard love poetry. Boccaccio's challenge of putting into Ameto's mouth words appropriate for this uncultured lad is met, and the characterization successful in this respect. Di Pino (op. cit., p. 66) notes in this song "il gusto letterario dell' illetterato".

14. Inf., XXVII, 25-42.