Mirrors and Music in the *Decameron*

At the end of the First Day of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Queen Pampinea urges the brigata to make music. Emilia promptly sings "In mine own beauty take I such delight That to no other love could I my fond affections plight,"[1] a ditty about finding pleasure in one's own reflection. She continues, "why seek out past delights, or new ones try When all content within my glass I find?"[2] Scholars have interpreted Emilia's mirror in myriad ways: as a symbol of truth, of God's presence, or of Grammar, one of the Liberal Arts.[3] In this essay, I will examine the mirror in relation to music, first investigating its significance in the *Decameron*, followed by a study of parallel examples in the *Divine Comedy*, visual images of the period, including those by Lorenzetti, Cimabue and Giotto, and Trecento compositions by Lorenzo Masini. In so doing, I will establish that the mirror thoroughly enriched the primary texts in which it was imbedded, serving as a symbol of balance, judgment and transcendence.

The *Decameron's* most prominent mirror appears in Story 8 of the Sixth Day. Emilia, the singer of the mirror song in the First Day, also tells the story of a vainglorious woman: Cesca, the niece of Fresco da Celatico, spends much of her time criticizing others and trumpeting her own virtues. At the end of the story, her exasperated uncle implores: "If you can't bear the sight of horrid people, my girl, I advise you for your own peace of mind, never to look at yourself in the glass" (466).[4] This is followed by the

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[1] *Decameron*, translated by G. H. McWilliam (New York: Penguin Classics, 1995): 69. This essay quotes Vittore Branca's 1987 edition of the *Decameron* (Turin: Einaudi). "Io son sí vaga della mia bellezza, / che d'altro amor già mai / non curerò né credo aver vaghezza" (126).

[2] *Decameron*, "Io veggio in quella, ognora ch'io mi specchio, / quel ben che fa contento lo 'ntelletto" (126). In the footnote to this line, Branca cites a similar passage in Dante, *Purgatorio* 27:103, "Per piacermi a lo specchio, qui m'addorno."

[3] For the sources of these interpretations, see Branca, *Decameron*, 127. Heinrich Schwartz in "The Mirror in Art," *The Art Quarterly* 15.2 (1952): 98–99, argues that the mirror symbolizes purity and the Virgin Mary.

[4] "Figliuola, se cosí ti dispiaccion gli spiacevoli, come tu di', se tu vuoi viver lieta non ti specchiar giammai" (752).

narrator's comment that she was "emptier than a hollow reed" ("piú che una canna vana") and that Cesca "intended to look in the glass just like any other woman" ("anzi disse che ella si voleva specchiar come l'altre"). The "hollow reed" has a clear musical undertone, as reeds were used in musical instruments of the period, such as the bagpipes (played by Tindaro), the shawm and chalumeau. In this story, then, as in Emilia's poem at the end of the First Day, Boccaccio intertwines music and mirrors to embellish, I would argue, the theme of judgment. Essentially, Cesca's story is about poor judgment: her decision not to listen to her uncle will result in her remaining "as witless as before" ("nella sua grossezza si rimase e ancor vi si sta"), and Cesca's tale works as a companion piece to the story that precedes it: Madonna Filippa, a noble lady, "beautifully and exceedingly passionate by nature" (462), is called before a judge because of her adulterous behavior. The judge hears her case, pardons her, and changes the harsh law punishing adulterers.

The music and mirrors metaphor also appears at the end of the Sixth Day during a trip to the Valley of the Ladies, a place of incomparable beauty and perfection first visited by the women, then by the men. The visit inspired the women to dance an additional carole sung to a song by Fiammetta. Elissa follows with the day-ending song "Love, if I ever from thy claws break free" (482). A return trip to the Valley of Ladies on the Seventh Day stimulated more music making: this time the *brigata* was accompanied by the songs of birds, which "seemed to be rejoicing in their coming." At lunch the *brigata* begins to sing, and their songs are repeated note for note by the valley's echo — like a musical mirror image, with the birds supplying new notes.[5] The abundant music (the most concentrated music-making in the entire *Decameron*), judged appropriate by the *brigata* (and echoed by the Valley walls), serves as an aural bridge between the Sixth and Seventh Days.

Indeed, music plays an important role in the representation of good judgment in the *Decameron*. Boccaccio establishes in the *Proemio* that he will narrate 100 stories told by seven women and three men, noting that songs shall be included that the ladies will sing for their amusement. Boccaccio places these songs consistently at the end of each day, setting the tone for the next day's activities, like an overture. During the First Day,

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[5] "E poi che col buon vino e co' confetti ebbero il digiun rotto, acciò che di canto non fossero dagli uccelli avanzati, cominciarono a cantare e la valle insieme con essoloro, sempre quelle medesime canzoni dicendo che essi dicevano; alle quali tutti gli uccelli, quasi non volessono esser vinti, dolci e nuove note aggiugnevano" (787–88).

Pampinea insists that the music and merry-making be reasonable, practiced without overstepping reason in any way. When Dioneo begins nine lascivious songs at the end of the Fifth Day, the *brigata* stops him and demands something more tempered. Music becomes a symbol for good judgment in the *Decameron*. After each performance, the *brigata* contemplates the meaning and performances of the songs; for instance, at the end of the Third Day, after Lauretta had finished her song, some "took it, in the Milanese fashion, to imply that a good fat pig was better than a comely wench. But others gave it a loftier, more subtle and truer meaning, which this is not the moment to expound" (283).[6] The *Decameron* offers the scholar of music a window into the way music was received in the Trecento: in a group setting, in the presence of the singer, listeners criticized the music, mostly on the basis of its words. Music is a cultural barometer in the *Decameron*.

The idea of music as a metaphor for good judgment can be traced to Aristotle through Aquinas and Augustine.[7] Aristotle's longest discussion of music appears in Book 8 of his *Politics*, a text with which Boccaccio would have been familiar from his studies in Naples.[8] For Aristotle young men should study music for three reasons: (1) as amusement, (2) in the formation of good character and (3) in the pursuit of "practical wisdom," or the understanding of the common good. While all three of Aristotle's reasons appear to answer the vexing question of why music appears so systematically in the *Decameron*, it is the third reason that most concerns this discussion. An education in music promotes good judgment in its citizens. This idea is clearly captured in Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *The Effects of Good Government in City*, where justice reigns and women sing and dance in

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[6] "e ebbevi di quegli che intender vollono alla melanese, che fosse meglio un buon porco che una bella tosa; altri furono di piú sublime e migliore e piú vero intelletto, del quale al presente recitar non accade" (456).

[7] Plato's *Republic* is certainly a source too, though it is not clear how much of the *Republic* Boccaccio would have known. For further consideration of Aristotelian influence on Boccaccio's musical aesthetic, see Eleonora M. Beck, *Singing in the Garden: Music and Culture in the Tuscan Trecento* (Lucca: Libreria Musicale Italiana, 1998). See also Aquinas's interpretation of Aristotle's *Politics* Book 8 in the *Summa Theologica*, Part II–II, Question 91: "Of Taking the Divine Name for the Purpose of Invoking It by Means of Praise."

[8] Francesco Sabatini, *Napoli Angioina: Cultura e Società* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1975): 34–38.

the piazza.[9] Also important in this judgment/music iconography is Giotto's figure of *Justice* in the Scrovegni Chapel of Padua[10] (Fig. 1). Women making music appear under the feet of the adjudicating figure in Giotto's picture. Marchetto da Padova, a Trecento musical theorist, underscores the importance of judgment in his treatise, *The Lucidarium* (1317 or 1318). An influential *Ars Nova* theorist and composer, Marchetto devotes an entire chapter, *De iudicio musice*, to musical judgment. For Marchetto, the "judgment of music does not lie in sound alone…,"[11] but in the abstract relationships of the numbers related to musical proportions, such as 2:1 (octave) and 3:2 (the fifth). "The judgment, then, and property of music [lie in] the relation of numbers, which governs everything in it and rules it like a mistress, for, as Remigius states, 'Truth in music lies in the numbers of proportions'."[12] In Marchetto's mind, music was an embellishment or articulation of numbers.

Like the dancing women under Giotto's *Justice*, the day-ending songs in Boccaccio's *Decameron* appear as musical embellishments to the primary representation or narrative: in Giotto's picture justice is decorated with music, in the *Decameron* the *brigata* narrative is framed by music. If music and justice are so interlinked in Giotto's picture (and later in Lorenzetti's *Good Government* and in Bonaiuto's *The Allegory of the Dominican Order*), could music not also be a key to understanding the meaning of the *Decameron*? Music is a reflection of good judgment, and the development of good judgment in the Aristotelian sense is the *Decameron*'s *raison d'être*. What other examples exist to support the argument that the juxtaposition of music and mirrors represents good judgment in the Trecento?

In Ambrogio Lorenzetti's altarpiece in the Palazzo Municipale of Massa Marittima, angels playing music are shown together and depicted with a figure holding a mirror (Fig. 2). Art historians have traditionally read Faith, the mirror-carrying figure, separately from the choir of musical angels. Howard Hibbard has called this attribute "extraordinary" and suggests its Pauline source, from I Corinthians 13:12: "For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then

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[9] For more music and narrative in the Trecento, see Eleonora M. Beck, "A Musical Interpretation of Andrea di Bonaiuto's *Allegory of the Dominican Order,*" *Imago Musicae* 9/12 (1992/1995): 123–38.

[10] Giotto includes a mirror with the figure of *Prudence* in the Scrovegni Chapel.

[11] Marchetto da Padova, *Lucidarium*, translated by Jan Herlinger (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985): 83. "Non est iudicium musice solum in sono.…"

[12] *Lucidarium* 85.

shall I know even as also I am known."[13] Hibbard suggests that the two faces on the mirror represent the two absent members of the Trinity. Diana Norman agrees with this interpretation and adds that the Trinity reading concurs well with her thesis that the altarpiece was made for the Augustinian order in Massa Marittima.[14] Norman Muller, who examined the mirror in depth after the picture's restoration in the late 1970s, notes that the "two heads on the mirror are painted in monochrome against a red bole ground. Since bole was the usual substratum for metallic leaf, the background area around the faces was probably covered with a silver leaf to simulate the reflecting properties of a mirror, rather than gold." Upon closer scrutiny, Muller discovered that Lorenzetti had included a dove above the heads and concludes: "Instead of the double Janus-like heads representing the two absent members of the Trinity, as Hibbard thought, they, with the dove, form the complete Trinity."[15]

A new musical reading of the picture reinforces the Trinity interpretation of Hibbard and others. Music abounds in this picture, and like the *Decameron*, it appears in the frame of the primary narrative, in this case of Mary enthroned. Musicologists are well aware of the importance of the number three in medieval music theory.[16] "Musica perfecta" is used to designate meter that was subdivided into groups of three. The music is perfect because of the number three's embodiment of the Trinity. "Musica imperfecta," on the other hand, was used to designate the division into two.

Lorenzetti's picture represents the "perfect" number not only with the three virtues, but also in the pyramidal shape of the throne and its accompanying steps. The enigmatic presence of music and the mirror in this picture may signal another meaning: the presence of divine justice. The altarpiece is of great interest in this regard because it is one of the first altarpieces with the subject of Mary Enthroned to include musical angels.[17] Lorenzetti painted four musical angels: two play vielles, another plays the

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[13] "A Representation of *Fides* by Ambrogio Lorenzetti," *The Art Bulletin* 39.2 (1957): 137.

[14] Norman, "'In the Beginning was the Word': An Altarpiece by Ambrogio Lorenzetti for the Augustinian Hermits of Massa Marittima," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 58 (1995): 478–503.

[15] Muller, *The Art Bulletin* 61.1 (1979): 101–02.

[16] The *Speculum musica* (c. 1320), an influential Ars Nova treatise by Jacob of Liège, begins with the anomalous dedication, "In nomine Sanctissimae Trinitatis Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti, Incipit Speculum musicae."

[17] Musical angels appear in Giotto's Baroncelli Polyptych of circa 1327; however, the angels are not placed in the central scene.

psaltery, while the angel on the opposite side plays a citole. These are all stringed instruments, which indicates that they are quiet and inspire contemplation. Furthermore, the figure holding the mirror is closest to the angels, who also recall the Trinity. While Norman cites Duccio's *Maestà* (1308–11) and Simone Martini's *Maestà* (1315–16) as possible antecedents to Lorenzetti's image, and while Hibbard cites Nicola Pisano's pulpit in the Siena cathedral, none of these works include instruments.

Prior to the Trecento, musical angels traditionally appeared in Last Judgment scenes. For instance we find two trumpeting angels around the figure of Christ in Cimabue's mosaic of the *Last Judgment* in the baptistery of Florence.[18] Interestingly, in the same row in which the trumpeter is located, an angel holds what seems to be a mirror or glass that reflects several spheres — perhaps a reference to Boethius's *musica mundana* (Fig. 3). Trumpeting angels also inhabit Giotto's *Last Judgment* (1306) in the Scrovegni Chapel and, as in the *Maestà*, form a frame around the seated Christ. Giotto, however, does not include a mirror in this image. We turn to another Paduan Last Judgment for an example of mirror and music: Giusto de' Menabuoi's *Last Judgment* (1376–78) in the Paduan baptistery. Eight musical angels surround the figure of Mary. These angels play a trapezoidal psaltery, a portative organ, another organ, a gittern, a lute, a rebec and a portative organ (Fig. 4). As we can see, the type of music produced in this scene is much more subdued than that of the earlier Last Judgment featuring trumpeting angels. In addition, thirty-eight angels playing musical instruments encircle the figure of Christ, none of whom is blowing a trumpet. In the midst of this orchestra sit two angels, each holding a mirror. One can make out the representations of the sun's rays in these mirrors — another signal of the presence of the divine spirit (Fig. 5). The mirrors' placement in the row of musicians further solidifies the connection between the metaphor of the mirror and the depiction of music as representatives of good judgment. It is not clear what role mirrors could have played with respect to the orchestra of Trecento instruments portrayed by Menabuoi. One could imagine that a "conductor" of some kind might ask an assistant to hold a mirror in order that he could play with the orchestra and direct the ensemble with his back to the group, but we have

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[18] The mosaic is difficult to date and to attribute to one artist. For more on this discussion see Luciano Bellosi, *Cimabue*, translated by Alexandra Bonfante-Warren, Frank Dabell, and Jay Hyams (New York: Abbeville Press, 1998): 275–76. See also the trumpeting angels in Cimabue's *Last Judgment* in the basilica of San Francesco, Assisi.

no evidence of large instrumental groups performing together until the early Baroque period.

Perhaps Dante's *Paradiso,* which supplies numerous examples of mirrors and music, might shed light on this mystery.[19] Indeed, mirrors, together with music, make up one of the most recurrent themes in heaven.[20] Charles Singleton argues in his commentary to Canto 1 of the *Paradiso* that there is a "stress" on the mirror and mirror images throughout. In his commentary on the lines 49–54 ("E sì come secondo raggio suole / uscir del primo e risalire in suso") and following, Singleton imagines: "To see with the light which Beatrice represents in the allegory is to see by reflection, hence the stress on mirrors and mirror images through that part of the journey for which she is guide. In this area of the 'second light' one sees primarily 'per speculum,' whereas beyond this second light lies the light of glory at the end where the pilgrim will see '*facie ad faciem*.'" Interestingly, Singleton quotes the same lines from *Corinthians* I 13:12 cited by Hibbard regarding Lorenzetti's mirror, "We see now through a mirror in an obscure manner, but then face to face."[21] This scholarly repetition prompted me to return to I Corinthians 13, the source of this Trecento mirror iconography for both scholars. The musical metaphor that begins this chapter cannot be downplayed. Chapter 13 of First Corinthians starts with the resounding metaphor: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become [as] sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."[22] Still, we do not find evidence for a mirror held by an angel amid an orchestra of music-playing angels. Even in the most striking poetry connecting mirrors to music, which appears in Canto 9 of the *Paradiso*, Dante elides mirrors with music and judgment. Here we read about heaven: "Aloft are mirrors — you name them Thrones — whence

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[19] I will limit my examination of mirrors in the *Divine Comedy* to *Paradise* though admittedly many important examples also appear in the *Purgatory*. For more see H. D. Austin, "Dante and Mirrors," *Italica* 21.1 (1944): 13–17; and James L. Miller "The Mirrors of Dante's Paradiso," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 46 (1977): 263–79.

[20] Marchetto da Padova reminds the reader of his *Lucidarium* that music "resounds in heaven and on earth" (85).

[21] *The Divine Comedy,* Vol. 3, Part 1, translated by Charles Singleton (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975): 16.

[22] "Si linguis hominum loquar et angelorum caritatem autem non habeam factus sum velut aes sonans aut cymbalum tinniens." Chapter 13 also ends with a verse, "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these [is] charity," which provides another clue regarding faith's presence in Lorenzetti's picture.

God in judgment shines upon us, so that these words approve themselves to us."[23]

Perhaps the most famous mirror image in the *Paradiso* is Dante's description of the three mirrors in Canto 2.[24] Lines 97 to 105 describe an experiment with three mirrors, in which Dante proves that no matter how distant the mirror from an object, it will deliver the object's reflection with equal brightness: "Ben che nel quanto tanto non si stenda / la vista più lontana, lì vedrai / come convien ch'igualmente risplenda" (vv. 103–05). The different placements of the mirrors in this passage does elicit a musicological response, which I am pursuing in another study of Brunelleschi's optical experiment conducted before the baptistery of Florence, after 1425, to demonstrate perspective. Brunelleschi (an ardent student of Dante) used a mirror and a wooden panel to explain perspective.[25] This is of musicological importance because the renowned composer Guillaume Dufay penned a motet, *Nuper rosarum flores,* dedicated to the new Florentine cathedral. This motet has been the subject of enormous debate in musicological circles because it has been argued that Dufay based the motet's tight numerical structure on the architecture of the building.[26] Using the Trecento evidence presented in this essay as a starting point, I will argue that the mirror connects the concept of perspective and imitative polyphony, two decisive leaps in the history of Western culture.[27]

Dante weaves together the mirror experiment and the concept of divine truth in a musical metaphor found in *Paradiso* 28:

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[23] "Sù sono specchi, voi dicete Troni, / onde refulge a noi Dio giudicante; / sì che questi parlar ne paion buoni" (vv. 61–63).

[24] Another mirror reference appears in Canto 26 "for I see it in the truthful Mirror which makes of itself a reflection of all else, while of It nothing itself the reflection" ("perch'io la veggio nel verace speglio / che fa di sè pregio a l'altre cose, / e nulla face lui sé pareglio," vv. 106–08). Singleton's note for this passage (p. 295) cites Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* I, Q. 57, A. 2, Response, that nothing can wholly reflect God, but God reflects everything.

[25] Samuel Edgerton, Jr., *The Renaissance Rediscovery of Linear Perspective* (New York: Basic Books, 1975): 135–36.

[26] See Craig Wright, "Dufay's 'Nuper rosarum flores,' King Solomon's Temple, and the Veneration of the Virgin," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 47.3 (1994): 395–441 which disputes the earlier findings by Charles Warren, "Brunelleschi's Dome and Dufay's Motet," *The Musical Quarterly* 59 (1973): 92–105.

[27] Leonardo da Vinci wrote about proportion in music and in art. See *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, Vol. 1, edited by Jean Paul Richter (New York: Phaidon, 1970), 77.

> After she who imparadises my mind had declared the truth counter to the present life of wretched mortals, as one who sees in a mirror the flame of a torch which is lighted behind him before he has it in sight or in thought, and turns round to see if the glass tells him the truth, and sees that it accords with it as a song with its measure, so my memory recalls that I did, gazing into the beautiful eyes wherewith love made the cord [chord?] to capture me.[28]

Just like a mirror and its reflection of the truth, music (composed of notes) is a reflection of a just meter. I understand this to mean that music (notes) reflects a truth greater than itself — of a divine quality that is present in nature as embodied in metrical divisions that exist in metrical groupings of three (perfection). Furthermore, Dante appears to be working with the dual definition of "accordare" in this passage. "Accordare" means both to tune instruments and to rope something or someone in. While Singleton chooses the metaphor of the rope, it is possible for a group of notes or "chord" of love to have captured the poet's heart (not to mention the heartstrings).

After considering mirrors and music in Boccaccio, Lorenzetti and Dante, the question remains: what role did mirrors play in extant Trecento music? To answer this question, we will focus on the music of Lorenzo Masini, who set two poems by Boccaccio: the madrigal *Come in sul fonte fu preso Narciso* and the ballata *Non so qual i' mi voglia*. A third poem, *O giustizia regina al mondo freno,* set by Niccolò da Perugia, has been attributed to Boccaccio with some reservation.[29] The existence of these Boccaccio settings suggests that the Florentine writer was well connected to musicians of the period (by contrast, Dante's and Petrarch's poetry was not

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[28] Poscia che 'ncontro a la vita presente / d'i miseri mortali aperse 'l vero / quella che 'mparadisa la mia mente, / come in lo specchio fiamma di doppiero / vede colui che se n'alluma retro, / prima che l'abbia in vista o in pensiero, / e sé rivolge per veder se 'l vetro / li dice il vero, vede ch'el s'accorda / con esso come nota con suo metro; / così la mia memoria si ricorda / ch'io feci riguardando ne' belli occhi / onde a pigliarmi fece Amor la corda" (vv. 1–12).

[29] The ballatas in Boccaccio's *Decameron* were not set to music during the author's lifetime. Three sixteenth-century settings exist from Day 2, "Qual donna canterà se non canto i'io," music by Girolamo Scotto (1551), from Day 9 "Io mi son giovinetto e volentieri," music by Domenico Ferabosco (1583) and Gio. Piero Manenti (1574). For more on the ballatas, see Gianluca D'Agostino, "Le ballate del *Decameron*," *Studi sul Boccaccio* 24 (1996): 123–80.

set during the Trecento).[30] Boccaccio joins such poets as Niccolò Solda-nieri, Franco Sacchetti, and Rosso da Collegrano as Trecento lyricists.

Active during the middle of the Trecento, Lorenzo Masini was a canon at the church of San Lorenzo of Florence from around 1348 until his death in 1372 or 1373.[31] Filippo Villani describes him in the *Liber de origine civitatis Florentiae*: "Many memorable Florentines have had a most per-fect grasp of the discipline of music. But there are few who have published anything in that science: among these Bartolo and Master Lorenzo Masini composed more outstandingly and artistically than the rest."[32] Ten madri-gals, five ballatas, one caccia and one *Sanctus* by Masini survive. In addi-tion, a manuscript exists of a plainchant piece called the "Ms. L'Antefana di Ser Lorenço," a singer's guide to rules of *musica ficta* (accidentals).[33] Pirrotta argues that Masini's didactic *L'Antefana* and repertory are proof of his "literary refinement." Masini set poems by Sacchetti, Boccaccio and Soldanieri, and his madrigal *Ita se n'era a star* recalls a passage from Dante's *Purgatory* 28:40–51, describing Proserpina picking flowers.[34] Ma-sini was most likely the teacher or a collaborator of Francesco Landini, the Trecento's most prolific composer, who also worked at the church of San Lorenzo.

Boccaccio's only madrigal text set to music in his lifetime is Masini's *Come in sul fonte fu preso Narciso*. It consists of three stanzas and a ritor-nello. Like the first *Decameron* ballata, this madrigal describes a woman admiring her reflection in a mirror.

The entire poem reads as follows:

Come in sul fonte fu preso Narciso	Like Narcissus admiring his reflection
Di sé da sé, così costei, specchiando	in a fountain, she lovingly looked
Sé, sé ha presa dolcemente amando.	at her image in a mirror.
E tanto vaga sé stessa vagheggia	And she was so pleased with her image
Che, ingelosita della sua figura,	that she became jealous of her figure, and
Ha di chiunque la mira paura.	she feared anyone who looked at it.
Temendo sé a sé non esser tolta.	She fears to lose herself,
Quello ch'ella di me pensi, colui	wants him to think of her,

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[30] Petrarch used the mirror in several of his sonnets, including LV, "Il mio adversario, in cui veder solete," and LVI, "L'oro e le perle, e i fior vermigli e bianchi."

[31] Nino Pirrotta, "On Landini and Ser Lorenzo," *Musica Disciplina* 48 (1994): 5.

[32] Translated by Karen Eales in Alberto Gallo, *Music of the Middle Ages II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985): 128.

[33] Pirrotta, *The Music of Fourteenth-Century Italy*, Vol. 3 (Rome: American Institute of Musicology 1962): I–II.

[34] Michael Long, "'Ita se n'era a star nel Paradiso': The Metamorphoses of an Ovidian Ma-drigal in Trecento Italy," *L'Ars Nova Italiana del Trecento* 6 (1992): 260.

Sel pensi che in sé conosce altrui.	and recognize no other.
Se non m'inganno, me ne par di fore	If I am not fooling myself, it seems to me
Qual fu tra Febo e Danne odio ed Amore.[35]	this occurred between Phoebus and Daphne, hate and love.

Masini sets the poem in typical Trecento fashion. The first and second-to-last syllables of each line contain long melismas, while the other syllables are accorded one note per syllable. So, for instance, Masini has composed a long and elaborate line for the syllable "Co" of "Come" and "ci" of "Narciso." Furthermore, Masini set the poem for two voices, which inhabit, for the most part, two distinct melodic ranges. The top voice is more florid and rhythmically challenging. The more plodding lower voice suggests that it may have been accompanied by an instrument, perhaps a lute or vielle. As a result, the bottom voice is foundational and harmonically driven. Triple meter dominates the verses, while duple meter is introduced in the ritornello for variety's sake.

Unlike fifteenth-century music, late Italian and French medieval music is characterized by a greater interest in melodic line rather than harmonic texture. A listener of this repertory would most likely find pleasure in following the direction of the lines — whether the two converge or split and at which points. In other words, the listener most likely responded to upward, downward and static motions of each line, since lines tended to be conjunct (stepwise), rather than disjunct (arpeggiated). The texture of this repertory is glasslike, such as a Bach fugue would be, rather than thick, like a Brahms ballade, and I suggest that one must listen to Masini like one listens to Bach.

The direction of the lines in *Come in sul fonte* suggests several mirror-like qualities that reflect the meaning of the words.[36] Inversions appear between voices or in the succession of pitches in the same vocal line. For instance in measures 2 and 3 we begin with a "g," descend to "d," and return back to "g" on the syllable "Co" (Ex. 1). This is followed in measure 5 by a clear inversion between the two voices on the words "fu preso Narciso." In the top voice "g" moves stepwise up to "d," while beneath it the lines moves down simultaneously from "d" to "g"(Ex. 2). It is typical of Masini's

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[35] The transcriptions of poetry and music used in this essay are from *The Music of Fourteenth-Century Italy*, Vol. 3, edited by Nino Pirrotta. Author's translation.

[36] Like mirrors, music has a reflective quality: music can imitate or reproduce a line, as in musical imitation. When a mirror is placed to the right of a musical line, it reproduces the line backwards, or in retrograde motion. When the mirror is placed below the line, it inverts the musical line. Brian Newbould, "Mirror Forms" *Grove Music Online*, edited by L. Macy (Accessed 1 August 2006), <http://www.grovemusic.com>.

style to include strictly syllabic passages after the melisma that feature conjunct or stepwise motion in the voices. Unlike sixteenth-century madrigals, these early pieces do not make use of word painting: in other words, particular words are not represented in music. It was typical in later madrigals to find words such as "su" or "giù" "painted" or accompanied by an ascending or descending musical line. The closest the Trecento comes to this kind of text painting may be found in the overall impression of the piece. Madrigals are narrative in spirit, and usually describe a pastoral setting, while ballatas are like soliloquies, describing a state of mind — much like an aria in opera. The music reflects the tone of the words: madrigals are more complex contrapuntally and rhythmically, while ballatas are more melodically captivating. The caccia, the last of the secular genres popular in the Trecento, contains music that imitates the sounds and excitement of the hunt. Masino composed one of these and, as we shall see, it together with the madrigal, feature the most complicated kinds of imitative polyphony.

Ex. 1 *Come in sul fonte mm. 1-3*
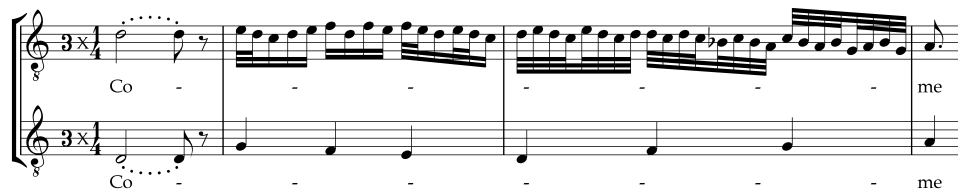
Ex. 2 *Come in sul fonte mm. 5-6*

Ballatas consist of two strands of music, an A and B section, which alternate to follow the pattern ABBA. The form is the same as that of the French virelai made famous by Adam de la Halle, a French trouvère, whose music Boccaccio would have most likely heard during his youth in Naples.[37] Boccaccio's ballata text reads:

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[37] Francesco Sabatini, *Napoli Angioina: Cultura e Società* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1975): 34–38.

Non so qual i' mi voglia.	I know not what I desire most.
O viver o morir, per minor doglia.	To live, or to die in order to suffer less.
Morir vorre', ché 'l viver m'è gravoso,	I should like to die, for life weighs upon me,
Veggendo me per altri esser lasciato.	Now that I am abandoned for another.
E morir non vorre', ché trapassato,	But I should like not to die, for after my death
Più non vedre' il bel viso amoroso.	I could no longer see that fair beloved face.
Per cui piango, invidioso	That is why I weep, envying
Di chi l'ha fatto suo e me ne spoglia.	The man who conquered her and robbed me of her.[38]

Unlike the madrigal, all of Masini's ballatas are monophonic, written for one voice. This indicates that they were written in the early part of the Trecento because by mid-century ballatas by Francesco Landini and his contemporaries were composed for either two or three voices. The monophonic ballata best fits the profile of the *Decameron* songs, although "real" Masini ballatas are much shorter than those sung by the *brigata*. In addition, *Non so qual i' mi voglia* consists of the typical alternation of seven- and eleven-syllable lines, while the *Decameron* ballatas show no such consistency of syllables. I have always been puzzled by the fact that extant Trecento ballatas and those set to music by the *brigata* in the *Decameron* are so different. Boccaccio clearly knew the difference, since he wrote both types of poetry. While Boccaccio scholars routinely describe the *Decameron* poems as ballatas, Boccaccio described the poems more amorphously: the song in Day 1 is called a "canzone" and later a "ballatetta"; Day 2 is a "canzone"; Day 3 is a "canzone"; Day 4 another "canzone," the longest song thus far and within its own stanzas Boccaccio calls it a "ballata." Dioneo sings a "canzone" at the end of Day 5; Elissa performs another "canzone" at the conclusion of Day 6; Filomena sings a "canzone" in the conclusion of Day 7; there is a "canzone" for Panfilo at the end of Day 8; Day 9 ends with Neifile's "canzonetta"; and Fiammetta concludes with a "canzone" in Day 10.

While Boccaccio designates all but two of the songs "canzone" or "canzonetta," they share the same tone and language with Masini's extant ballatas. For instance, Pampinea addresses love in Day 2 "Vien dunque, Amor, cagion d'ogni mio bene," in the same manner as we find in the Masini ballata *Non vedi tu, Amore, che me, tuo servo*. The vocative mode is also found in both Masini and Boccaccio's songs. Ironically, Boccaccio has asked his *brigata* to sing pieces for which we do not have extant examples

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[38] Translated by John Sidgwick. "Landini and Italian Ars Nova," Compact Disc, Opus 111, OPS 60–9206, 1992.

with accompanying music. This suggests two conclusions: (1) that there existed a genre of music during Boccaccio's time which was improvised and never written down in the musical sources, or (2) that Boccaccio invented the genre specifically for the *Decameron*, not as a mirror image of music but rather as in impression of an ideal of music — reminiscent of the implied just music in the Lorenzetti altarpiece. Music is imagined in both contexts. The music sets the "correct" framework for devotion in Lorenzetti and the "correct" soundscape for good behavior in the *Decameron*. Masini, too, was concerned with "good" music, not only penning the aforementioned treatise *L'Antefana* but composing *Dolgomi a voi*, a madrigal addressed to music teachers, urging them to instruct their students: "Se vogliono 'nparare, A llor dite: Pian piano, Ché ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la Comincia dalla mano."[39]

Further evidence suggests that Masini may have been familiar with Boccaccio's writing. Two madrigals, *Di riv' a riva mi guidav' Amore* and *Povero çappator* mention the name Elena. Elena is the beautiful protagonist in the story of the *scolaro* Rinieri (*Decameron*, Day 8.7), and she appears in Boccaccio's *Filocolo* and *Amorosa Visione*. The tone of Masini's *Di riv' a riva mi guidav' Amore* and the *Decameron* story are tantalizingly similar. Masini's narrator comes across women bathing in a river and describes:

Di riv'a in riva mi guidav' Amore	From shore to shore Love led me
Cercand' un sparver. A piè d'un monte	Searching for a hawk. At the foot of a hill
Trova' bagnar più donn' a una fonte.	I found a woman bathing in a fountain.
Era, di biltà nomata, Elena.	Her name was Elena.

Boccaccio's Rinieri meets the widow Elena at a party and she was "piena di tanta bellezza al suo giudicio e di tanta piacevolezza quanto alcuna altra ne gli fosse mai paruta vedere" (946).[40] Another striking similarity between Masini's extant compositions and Boccaccio's *Decameron* is the setting of *Povero çappator*, in "chiusa valle."

Povero çappator, in chiusa valle	I, an unfortunate fieldsman, to this closed valley,
Son aportato con diserto legno	have been brought with my forsaken ship,
Rotto dal mar, al qual dat' ò le spalle.	Worn out by the sea, to which I gave my strength.
Et quel pianeto, ch' a fortunal segno	And that planet, which augurs storms
Governa me, non veggio ch' a so corso	rules over me, I cannot wait for it to end its rule
Pong' ancor fine per darmi soccorso.	in order to rescue me.

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[39] "Ut, re, mi, fa, sol, la" are solmization syllables.

[40] "…and seemed to him the loveliest and most fascinating woman he had ever seen" (587).

Nell'aspettar ognor mi manca LENA,   In my endless wait I miss Lena
Pascendo doglia e rinovando pena.   feeding on grief and renewing my sorrow.[41]

Masini describes a narrow valley inhabited by a laborer who seems to have gotten lost there after a voyage at sea. Masini's protagonist is lead by Venus ("quel pianeto, ch' a fortunal segno"), who, according to Lucia Marino, inhabits the Valley of the Ladies.[42] The musical setting of *Povero çappator* provides an interesting comparison piece with the mirror-inspired *Come in sul fonte Narciso*. Masini infuses this piece with repeated leaps of fourths and fifths, perhaps to capture the hoeing motion of the laborer. The verses do not include instances of contrary motion and there is no imitation between the two vocal lines. The almost syllabic ritornello provides more contrary motion between voices beginning at the interval of the fifth and moving to unison. A kind of mirroring technique does occur in the unique organization of the lower voice. Masini establishes a six-measure rhythmic pattern that repeats throughout the verses in different notes (Ex. 3). In this example the tenor's rhythmic patter repeats twice. This compositional technique, called "isorhythm," and was first employed in thirteenth-century French motets. It later became *de rigueur* in Renaissance motet and mass repertories. Isorhythm is also found in Dufay's *Nuper rosarum flores* mentioned earlier in relation to Brunelleschi's mirror. Only one other Trecento madrigal is isorhythmic: Franceso Landini's *Si dolce non sonò*.

Ex. 3 *Povero zappator mm. 1-14*

Masini's *Ita se n'era a star* is suffused with examples of mirroring technique. The two-voiced madrigal, which describes Proserpina picking flowers, begins with an extraordinary three-measure opening in strict

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[41] Author's translation.
[42] Lucia Marino, *The Decameron Cornice: Allusion, Allegory and Iconology* (Ravenna: Longo, 1979): 85–90.

contrary motion (Ex. 4). This is followed in measure 8 by a passage featuring an ascending sequence (a technique most notably found in the mu-

Ex. 4 *Ita se n'era a star mm. 1-3*

sic of Josquin, one-hundred years later) in both voices (Ex. 5). In this example a four-note motive is imitated between the voices as the motive

Ex. 5 *Ita se n'era a star mm. 8-11*

moves up the scale by one step. The compositional technique invokes the mirror because it imitates (though not in retrograde fashion) the original four-note motive. Unlike the *Come in sul fonte* passage, the mirroring not only appears in the syllabic portions of the piece, but also between voices in the melismatic sections. This requires great skill from the composer and places Masini at the forefront of advances in contrapuntal technique — advances that are more often associated with Renaissance composition. The ascending sequence is followed by a longer scale phrase beginning at "b-flat" and descending "e," which is then imitated in measure fourteen in the lower voice from "e" to "b-flat" (Ex. 6). This succession of passages eliding different textures could be labeled "paratactic form," a designation usually bestowed upon the later motet music of Josquin.

Ex. 6 *Ita se n'era a star mm. 13-15*

Another type of mirroring takes place in Masini's *A poste messe*, a caccia or chase piece. The caccia foreshadows the modern fugue in its use of strict imitation in three voices. The earliest reference to the word "fugue"

is found in Jacob de Liege's *Speculum musicae*, written circa 1310, a mirror of musical practice during the Ars Nova.[43] *A poste messe* begins with a descending vocal line, which at measure 7 is joined by a second voice singing the same music (Ex. 7). At measure 13 the third voice joins in to form a three-voice round or canon of exemplary complexity. Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Panciatichiano 26, the original source of *A poste messe*, includes a one-voice ritornello, which is believed to also have been performed like a round, though it is not written out in three voices in the sources.[44] The three-voice repetition recalls Dante's aforementioned three mirrors, especially when one takes into account Pirrotta's reading of

Ex. 7 *A poste messe mm. 1-13*

the piece. "A unison canon for three equal voices (the third one replacing the normally untexted tenor), adds to the usual variety of calls and sounds of its hunting narrative a calculated effect, at first of intensification and then of slacking — or of approaching and then moving away — obtained by means of the repetition of the following dialogue:

Ecco là ecco là	There it is, there it is
Guarda, guarda, qua!	Look, look here!
Lassa, lassa, lassa	Leave it, leave it, leave it
O tu, o tu, o tu,	O you, o you, o you
Passa, passa, passa!	Pass, pass pass!"[45]

In addition, the repetition of calls captures or mirrors sounds found in actual hunting expeditions. Masini imitates the sounds of birds, dogs and

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[43] Paul Mark Walker, *Theories of Fugue from the Age of Josquin to the Age of Bach* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2000), 7. "Speculum" as a title for medieval treatises has been investigated by Ritamary Bradley, "Backgrounds of the Title Speculum in Medieval Literature," *Speculum* 29.1 (1954): 100–15.

[44] Pirrotta, "On Landini and Ser Lorenzo," 8.

[45] Pirrotta, "On Landini and Ser Lorenzo," 8.

frantic hunters. We read "ciof, ciof, ciof" and "bu, bu, bu," onomatopoetic devices particular only to the genre of the caccia.

To conclude, then, I argue that Masini's precocious use of inversion and imitation in the examples discussed above was informed by his literary knowledge, and that his imagination, like that of Dante, Boccaccio and Lorenzetti, was stirred by the possibilities of the mirror. In Masini's music the mirror becomes a metaphor for different types of contrapuntal techniques. We leave it to the following generations of composers, represented by Dufay and Josquin, to bring linear perspective (as demonstrated in Brunelleschi's mirror experiment) to bear on harmonic depth, as shown in the emergence of pervasive imitation, inversions and sequences in their music. In Boccaccio's *Decameron* and musical poetry, the mirror offers a complex symbol for good judgment and serves as one among many examples of the influence Boccaccio's poetry had on the formation of the Trecento musical aesthetic.

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Illustrations

Figure 1: Giotto, *Justice*. Scrovegni Chapel, Padua.

Figure 2: Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Maestà*. Palazzo Municipale, Massa Marittima.

Figure 3: Cimabue, *Last Judgment*. Baptistery, Florence.

Figure 4: Giusto de' Menabuoi, *Mary Enthroned*, detail. *Last Judgment*. Baptistery, Padua.

Figure 5: Giusto de' Menabuoi, *Mary Enthroned*, detail. *Last Judgment.* Baptistery, Padua.