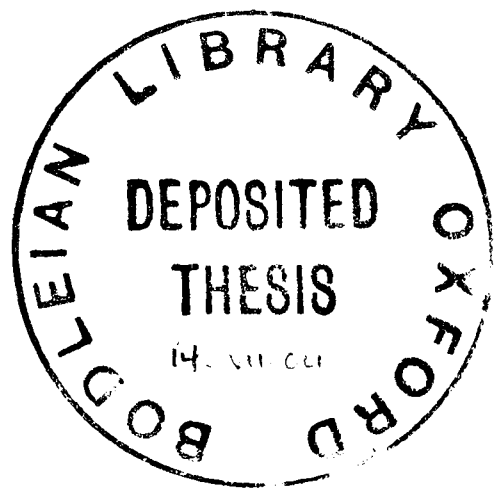
Epic poetry of the Trecento: Dante's Comedy, Boccaccio's Teseida, and Petrarch's Africa.

Francesca Galligan,

Wadham College, University of Oxford.

Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

Michaelmas Term 2003. [i.e 2004]



Short Abstract.

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This thesis locates Dante's Divine Comedy (1307-1318), Boccaccio's Teseida (c.1340-1), and Petrarch's Africa (c.1338-9) within a developing tradition of epic poetry. The works are usually treated separately, and are classed as epic to a varying degree, but I show that a reading of them as epic in light of each other enhances understanding of each, and illuminates more generally a history of the epic genre. I explore the extent to which the authors considered epic to be a distinct literary form, and counteract the notion that there was no conception of the genre in the Middle Ages. I show that similar responses to key areas of epic writing underlie surface differences between the poems. Where critics have tended to explore classical influences, I emphasise the importance of medieval epic texts for the formation of all three poems. I argue that in important respects the Comedy constitutes a new epic model for Petrarch and Boccaccio. I focus on Dante's development of the classical warrior hero into the contemporary Christian poet-hero, exploring his development of themes from 12th century Latin epics including the Anticlaudianus and Alexandreis. I suggest that the resulting emphasis on the theme of poetry is echoed in the Teseida and Africa. I argue that the Teseida revolves around issues of genre that are played out through the poems' gods and heroes, and that ultimately it resolves itself as a Dantean epic, through the hero Arcita. I show that the focus on poetry in the Africa, achieved both through the inclusion of poets as characters (including Petrarch himself) and by the explicit discussion of poetry within Book IX in particular, and the location of a Christian god at the heart of this historical narrative, reflect a treatment of key issues that bears similarity to that of Dante in the Comedy.

Long Abstract.

Epic poetry of the Trecento: Dante's Comedy, Boccaccio's Teseida, and Petrarch's Africa.

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The thesis takes as its starting point the notion that there is a body of literature that together forms an epic genre, and that in Western Europe this genre begins with the works of Homer, passes through Greek and Roman literature, and continues into and beyond the Middle Ages, thereby encompassing a range of works, languages, locations and a vast time-scale. The genre is often defined in specific terms, for example, as a long narrative in hexameters, divided into a number of books, about kings, battles and journeys ("res gestae regumque ducumque et tristia bella", Horace, Ars poetica 73), one or more central heroes, gods who influence the action, and a number of smaller features including *katabasis*, *ekphrasis*, extended simile, and *locus amoenus*. There are two significant difficulties for a medieval Christian poet writing epic within this tradition: what to do with the pagan gods; and how to present a hero and subject that appeals to and has meaning for a Christian readership.

I focus on three poems by Italian writers of the 14th century: Dante's Divine Comedy (1307-1318), Boccaccio's Teseida (c.1340-1), and Petrarch's Africa (c.1338-9). Although the poems are not normally studied together, and each has been classed as epic to a varying degree, I show that reading the poems as epics in light of each other not only enhances understanding of each work, but also illuminates more generally a history of the epic genre.

The thesis locates the Comedy, Teseida, and Africa within a developing tradition of epic poetry. I explore the extent to which the authors had a conception of epic as a literary form, and counteract the notion that epic was not considered a genre in the Middle Ages. I illustrate the way in which similar responses to key areas of epic writing underlie apparent surface differences between the poems. Where critics have tended to explore classical influences, I emphasise the importance of medieval epic texts for the formation of all three poems. I argue that in important respects the Comedy constitutes a new epic model for Petrarch and Boccaccio, and I approach the Teseida and Africa in light of the prominence Dante gives to the topic of poetry through his creation of the poet-hero and the inclusion of poets as characters, and explore the implications of his unambiguously Christian universe for Boccaccio and Petrarch's treatment of the gods and religion.

In a short first chapter, I examine terms used to describe epic in late antiquity and the Middle Ages, including *epos*, *epicus*, and *heroicum carmen*. My purpose is to counter the suggestion that there was no conception of an epic genre in the Middle Ages, and to show that Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio all use genre terms that allow for a notion of epic. I consider the extent to which epic was seen as a genre, and definitions given of what the genre consisted of, looking at a range of Latin writers from the 4th to the 13th centuries including Servius, Bede, and Hugh of St Victor. I then turn to a discussion of the terminology Dante uses to describe the Comedy and Aeneid, and I suggest that his lack of a conventional word for epic should not lead to the conclusion that he had no conception of an epic genre. I show that by contrast, Petrarch, and Boccaccio to a lesser extent, refer to epic in a way that accords more with standard classical and medieval terminology.

In my second chapter, I suggest the epic context within which Dante composed key episodes of the Comedy. I explore the parallel between his Ulysses and Walter of Châtillon's Alexander, to show how the latter serves as a flawed heroic model from which Dante moves away. I then

highlight the way in which Alain of Lille's Anticlaudianus presents Dante with alternative allegorical heroes and a new epic task consisting of a journey to heaven. I suggest that Dante's development of the poet-hero, and his reshaping of the heroic task as both a journey to heaven and the setting of this journey into verse, grows from and expands upon earlier epic themes. By exploring the Comedy in light of these two 12th century Latin epics, I show that Dante is working within a developing epic tradition, and I suggest his poem as a model and precedent for the Africa and Teseida.

I turn to the Teseida in my third chapter, to examine the prominence of the theme of genre. I begin by considering why the poem has often been described as a romance rather than an epic, comparing it briefly with earlier vernacular romances including the Roman de Thèbes. I argue that the question of whether the poem is an epic or a romance is a central concern that the author presents and works to resolve through his treatment of the poem's gods and heroes. Through a detailed discussion of the gods and heroes of the poem, I demonstrate how classical epic and medieval romance are represented respectively by Mars and Venus, and Theseus and Palaemon. I show that like Dante's Ulysses, Theseus is presented as a limited hero, and that Boccaccio explores alternatives to the classical type through Palaemon and Arcita. I suggest that the hero Arcita, who is commonly linked with Palaemon as a romance hero, is raised beyond the limits of classical epic and medieval romance to represent an epic influenced by Dante. The arguments I offer for this interpretation include a new explanation of Arcita's name, which I show to be an anagram of *carità*, and a discussion of the parallel between passages from the end of the Teseida and episodes from the Comedy.

In my fourth chapter I explore how the emphasis on poetry in the Africa, together with Petrarch's handling of the divine, again show an approach similar to that of the Comedy, revealing the influence of a developing medieval epic tradition on the composition of the poem. I begin with a

brief consideration of Petrarch's sources, to emphasise that although critics have tended to dwell on the importance of Livy, the significance of classical and in particular medieval poetic models are crucial for interpretation of the poem. I divide the remainder of the chapter into two main sections. In the first, I focus on the emphasis given to the theme of poetry through Petrarch's use of poets (including himself) as characters; through the prominent voice of the poet as narrator; and through the discussion of poetry that takes place within the narrative of Book IX. I consider the relationships between the poets who appear as characters and the hero Scipio, and suggest that these echo the grouping of Dante, Vergil, and Statius in the Comedy. In the second section I argue that Petrarch's treatment of the divine, like the emphasis on poetry and its connection with the hero, is fundamentally medieval: like Dante, he locates the Christian God at the centre of his poem. Through a detailed examination of the gods of the Africa, I show that Petrarch veils a Christian divine system in the poem in loosely classical garb, in accordance with the demands of his historical subject, and that pagan elements are used to highlight the virtue of the Romans in contrast to their doomed African enemies. I explore this latter point with an examination of the presentation of heaven and hell, and of the association made between different characters and these realms, including Scipio and heaven, and Sophonisba and hell.

As I state in my conclusion, this thesis shows the continued appeal of epic for writers of the Middle Ages, both as a source of inspiration, and as a vehicle for the expression of complex and conflicting issues. By considering the Comedy, Teseida, and Africa together as epic, we cast light on the way in which all three engage with and contribute unique and shared elements to a long history of the epic genre.

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Introduction.

This thesis locates Dante's Divine Comedy, Boccaccio's Teseida and Petrarch's Africa within a developing tradition of epic poetry that continues beyond classical Greek and Latin literature into the Middle Ages.

In a short first chapter, I examine terms used to describe epic in late antiquity and the Middle Ages, including *epos*, *epicus*, and *heroicum carmen*. My purpose is to counter the suggestion that there was no conception of an epic genre in the Middle Ages, and to show that Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio all use genre terms that allow for a notion of epic. I consider the extent to which epic was seen as a genre, and definitions given of what the genre consisted of, looking at a range of Latin writers from the 4th to the 13th centuries including Servius, Bede, and Hugh of St Victor. I then turn to a discussion of the terminology Dante uses of the Comedy and Aeneid, and I suggest that his lack of a conventional word for epic should not lead to the conclusion that he had no conception of an epic genre. I show that by contrast, Petrarch, and Boccaccio to a lesser extent, refer to epic in a way that accords more with standard classical and medieval terminology.

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By exploring the poems in this way, I present detailed new readings of the Comedy, Teseida and Africa that take account of a developing and continuing epic tradition. I highlight medieval epic influences on all three poems, where critics have tended to dwell on relationships with classical literature, and I illustrate the similar way in which Dante, Boccaccio and Petrarch approach a set of shared issues in composing what appear on the surface to be rather different poetic enterprises. I show the merits of studying the poems in relation to one another, and illuminate the history of epic more generally by showing ways in which the genre expands and develops beyond the ancient world. By suggesting a continuous epic line that passes into and through the Middle Ages, I highlight the important role of 12th century Latin epic production, hoping to bring these poems to a wider audience.

The thesis takes as its starting point the notion that there is a body of literature that together forms an epic genre, and that in Western Europe, this genre begins with the works of Homer, passes through Greek and Roman literature, and continues into and beyond the Middle Ages, thereby encompassing a range of works, languages, locations and a vast time-scale. The genre is often

defined in specific terms, for example, as a long narrative in hexameters, divided into a number of books, about kings, battles and journeys,[1] one or more central heroes, gods who influence the action, and a number of smaller features including *katabasis*, *ekphrasis*, extended simile, and *locus amoenus*. Such definitions are of limited use, as certain of these features become more or less prominent over time, and each individual feature is neither necessary nor sufficient for a work to be deemed an epic. For this reason, it is difficult, and indeed unhelpful, to attempt to define epic purely by prescribing a range of features or characteristics. Epic is more aptly described as being "continuous in spirit, discontinuous in form",[2] with each new work building on an existing tradition, and adding its own peculiarities of form and content, while still engaging with epic writing of the past. The genre expands to encompass innovations, and the new works themselves become a part of the tradition.

There has been a tendency among critics (perhaps influenced by Renaissance humanism) to consider medieval epics alongside classical ones, using the latter as the model or standard by which the epic nature of the work (and its success as an epic) is to be determined. This approach, unsurprisingly, concludes that a poem such as the Comedy is so different from classical epics that it cannot be of the same genre. I suggest in response that elements (particularly of the Comedy) that seem most at odds with conceptions of epic on a classical model have their origins in the epic tradition of the earlier Middle Ages that responds to, continues, and develops from classical antiquity. My approach is thus to highlight the importance of seeing the epic tradition as a developing one, that encompasses key works of the Middle Ages, and to emphasise the role of

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[1] Horace – "res gestae regumque ducumque et tristia bella" (Ars poetica 73).

[2] Astell, (1994), p.4. Her argument allows for works as diverse as the Book of Job and Boethius' Consolation to be described as epic. While I agree with the need to widen conceptions of epic beyond forms familiar from classical literature, to capture the fluidity of medieval concepts of the genre, I would not necessarily conclude as she does that the form and content become irrelevant in the face of "epic truth". Chiri (1939) also uses the idea of a shared epic spirit as the justification for his grouping of varied medieval Latin texts.

medieval influences alongside classical ones on the formation of the Comedy, Teseida, and Africa,[3] thereby placing the poems within their medieval context.

I have chosen to focus on these three poems not only because they are close to one another in time and location, but because I suggest that Dante's Comedy forms a crucial model for the later works. Since the works appeared, there has been a tendency to see them separately, partly because of what the authors themselves say on the matter. When Petrarch and Dante have been juxtaposed, it has been as Petrarch the lyric poet and Dante, and the Teseida tends to be appropriated into the world of romance, following Chaucer's lead. Everson (2001) is the only recent critic to have considered the Africa and Teseida together, but our approaches are fundamentally different (in spite of an examination of similar aspects of the poems), as she is concerned with exploring the works from within a history of romance, and looks at classical epic and medieval romance influences on the Teseida and Africa (therefore not Dante and medieval Latin texts), emphasising the role of the poems in shaping later literature. It is unusual for any of these three poems to be included in studies of epic poetry.[4] I suggest that such a comparison is important not only for the interpretation of each work, but for an understanding of epic history more generally.

While my choice of the Comedy and Africa are fairly straightforward (the Comedy is Dante's only narrative poem, and the Africa is clearly epic in nature even on a classical model), preference for the Teseida over the Filostrato, Filocolo, or Decameron needs brief explanation. Of Boccaccio's works, the Teseida appears most closely to engage with epic: its name brings to mind

[3] For an idea of the varieties of epic literature in the earlier Middle Ages, see Raby (1934), and Chiri (1939), who focuses on medieval Latin epic in Italy. I have provided brief descriptions of those epics discussed in this thesis in Appendix 1. While I do not suggest all were known or available in Italy in the 14th century, they provide an idea of the epic context within which these later epics fall.

[4] There is a chapter on the Africa in Boyle (1993). Surveys of medieval epic, such as Scholler (1977) tend to focus on earlier vernacular poems.

classical epic (Aen*eid*, Theb*aid*, Achill*eid*, Il*iad*, etc.), and its structure, subject, use of sources, and the fact that its purpose is "cantare di Marte" (all of which are discussed in detail within the thesis) show authorial desire for epic affiliation.

In exploring the engagement of the poems with a developing epic tradition, I focus on three main areas of inquiry: the theme of poetry; the presentation of gods and religion; and the hero. Poetry is given prominence in all three works, through extended authorial voice, poets as characters, and allusion to earlier epic. I argue that the prominence of this theme in the Africa and Teseida is influenced by Dante's portrayal of a poet-hero, and that he in turn expands on traces of this theme in earlier medieval literature. Servius links gods and heroes as pertaining to epic: "est autem heroicum quod constat ex divinis humanisque personis",[5] and both topics present particular challenges for the medieval Christian writer influenced by classical epic. Feeney (1991) has comprehensively explored the gods of classical epic, and the sections of this thesis that concern gods are in a sense a continuation of his research. A similar survey of medieval epic has not, to my knowledge, been undertaken, nor are there any works that compare questions of religion in the Africa, Teseida, and Comedy, though several studies consider the authors' general approaches to the topic.[6] The notion that gods form an integral part of epic, however problematic - "However readers and scholars may have reacted to the gods in epic, it was a datum that the form demanded their presence"[7] – creates conflict for Christian writers, whose leading religious figures warn of the dangers of classical literature, specifically on account of its gods.[8] The question of how these authors retain the divine elements of epic without compromising Christianity is of interest not only in itself, but gives greater insight into the poems more generally.

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[5] In Vergilii carmina commentarii, vol.1, p. 4.
[6] These will be mentioned where relevant within the thesis.
[7] Feeney, (1991), p. 35.
[8] See Chapter 3, pp. 77ff.

I treat the topic of religion briefly as regards the Comedy (Dante's poem is set in an unambiguously Christian universe, and pagan gods are mentioned infrequently), then I employ a similar approach to the Africa and the Teseida. Starting with a survey of the frequency and kind of gods found in the poems, I explore their role and impact, the poets' handling of them, and religious activity within the narratives in general. I argue that underlying the Olympian names we find forces that are not in conflict with the notion of a Christian god, and that pagan divinities are used both for the sake of classical form, and in order to convey a Christian undercurrent for the poem. In this way, Petrarch and Boccaccio recreate layers of meaning in their gods that echo the way in which the gods of classical epic were read and interpreted in the Middle Ages.[9]

Although much criticism exists on epic heroes, those of the Comedy, Africa, and Teseida tend not to feature in general surveys, with preference being given to classical heroes, those of non-Italian vernacular literature, and heroes of the later renaissance.[10] I argue that the epic tradition as it develops in the Middle Ages provides a crucial basis for the heroes of each poem. A study of these poems in relation to one another reveals that a shared response to the problem of adapting the classical epic hero for a medieval epic with a Christian readership underlies obvious surface differences between a living Florentine poet, a Roman general from classical history, and the various protagonists of Boccaccio's poem (Theseus the mythological hero from Greek and Roman legend, and Palaemon and Arcita). My inquiry gives particular importance to the connection made between poetry and the hero. The connection has minor precedents in classical literature,[11] and expands in 12th century epic such as the Anticlaudianus. I explore Dante's development of the connection into the poet-hero as a solution to writing epic in a medieval

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[9] For allegorical interpretations of the gods, see the Ovidius Moralizatus. Comparetti (1997) provides a comprehensive study of the allegorisation of the Aeneid more generally.

[10] An example of this is the collection of articles edited by Burns & Reagan (1976), in which Dante's Ulysses is discussed (rather than Dante), and in which an article on Boccaccio focuses on the heroes of the Decameron. Studies of the individual heroes, and their relationship with this thesis will be discussed within relevant sections of the thesis.

Christian era, and I suggest that his achievements influence Petrarch and Boccaccio, both of whom link the role of poet and the topic of poetry with the hero.

[11] Statius links Domitian's role as poet and hero in his invocation at the start of the Achilleid: "cui geminae florent vatumque ducumque / certatim laurus" (I.15-16).

CHAPTER 1: The Epic Genre in the Middle Ages.

This chapter examines terms used for and descriptions given of epic from late antiquity and the Middle Ages. A range of Latin authors is first considered, to show a variety of thought about epic. Having established this context, I consider the epic terminology used by Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, and the extent to which this draws on existing traditions.

As underlined in the introduction, my approach in this thesis is to explore in depth poems from a brief but important period in the long history of epic poetry, setting them in the wider epic context. An important first step is to counter the suggestion that there was no conception of an epic genre (or of genre at all) in the Middle Ages. This is a view held perhaps most strongly by Barański:

> Philologically speaking, a genre is not a genre when – regardless of what others might think – a particular community of writers and readers does not recognise it as such; and doubly so if the concept of genre itself doesn't appear to belong to their intellectual baggage. (1995 a, p.18).

He says that "as a rule, the Middle Ages examined and perceived literature in relation to all sorts of categories other than that of genre" (1995 a, p.16). Jauss offers a similar view: "Medieval theorists judged poetry primarily according to styles, and not according to generic norms" (1982, p.77). One might ask at what point a style becomes a genre; in the case of "epic style", there seems little separating such a notion from a concept of epic as a genre, as suggested by Iannucci's statement that Dante, when writing the Inferno, was still "to a large extent under the influence of a stylistically oriented concept of genres" (1973, p.3). A second obstacle is that Dante himself does not use standard terms to describe poems that we think of as epic: the Aeneid is called a *tragedìa* (Inferno XX.113),[1] and the Comedy, by contrast, a *comedìa* (Inferno XVI.128; XXI.2)

[1] Dante's references to other epics are mostly indirect, thus we can only guess that he would have described the works of Statius, Lucan, Homer, and other epic writers as *tragedìe*, based on his reference to the Aeneid.

and a *poema sacro* (Paradiso XXV.1-2; also XXIII.62). Terms for epic, such as *epos* and *carmen heroicum*, are absent from his vocabulary. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that none of his early commentators use epic terms to describe the Comedy, even though these terms were still in use for poems we would class as epic, as Petrarch shows with his description of the Africa as "heroic[um] carm[en]" (Seniles XVIII.1). Although these factors might suggest that it is an error to group these three poems under a common title of epic, I suggest that in exploring the Comedy, Teseida, and Africa as epic, we set them within a literary context and history that is essential to an understanding of each enterprise.

By "epic" I mean that which we call epic when speaking of classical literature, and also the term in its broader application in the Middle Ages, where new sorts of subject are added to the genre, as discussed below. I am not implying that the modern term "epic" exactly equates with the late antique or medieval terms for epic. The modern term has come to encompass even more variety of form (film, the novel) than was possible in the Middle Ages. Rather than attempting to define the epic genre through a set of rigid criteria, I suggest that there are an evolving set of practices that are sufficiently defined and coherent to be grouped together as a category, and that they have enough continuity with ancient epic for that category to be labelled epic.

1.1. Use of Classical Terms.

epos, *epicus*, and *heroicum carmen / metrum* are the classical Latin terms for epic.[2] While *epos* is translated precisely as "epic", and *epicus* as the adjective relating to this, *heroicus* describes both the deeds of heroes (or something that is epic), and also refers more specifically to the metre of epic, i.e. hexameters. The association of genres with particular metres thus stems from the classical world, and continues into the Middle Ages. The Medieval Latin Dictionary from British

Sources lists the same two meanings for *heroicus*: "heroic" / "concerned with heroic persons and deeds", and "written in hexameters" / "composing hexameters".[3] As *heroicus* appears to have largely taken over from *epos* and *epicus*,[4] individual contexts determine whether it describes only the hexameter of the works in question, (and thus whether epic came to be understood merely as something in hexameters) or whether a broader conception of epic beyond its metre is to be understood. While *heroicum carmen* is at times used as a synonym for *hexametrum*, (and thus offers no comment on content or other stylistic matters),[5] there are important instances where the term means more than metre.

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[2] For example, Horace – "forte epos" (Satires I.10.43); Ovid "Virgilio nobile epos" (Remedia amoris, 396); Cicero - "Ennium summum epicum poetam" (De optimo genere oratorum 2); Quintilian - "heroici carminis sonum" (Dialogus de oratoribus 10.4).

[3] The sorts of examples the dictionary has in mind are descriptions of Christ or other holy men in Biblical exegesis or saints' lives – "anno heroicae incarnationis" (Cartularium Saxonicum CS 926), and not necessarily the sort of thing we would want to include under the heading epic.

[4] Jerome (AD 350-420) uses *epicus* to distinguish epic writers from other kinds of poets: "ducibus, philosophis, oratoribus, historicis, poetis, epicis, tragicis, comicis" Epistulae, (Cetedoc, Cl. 0620, epist. 112, vol. 55, par. 3, pag. 370, linea 6). This slightly haphazard list includes terms not entirely equivalent to each other, for example, *epici*, *tragici* and *comici* are really a sub-set of *poetae*, as implied elsewhere: "poetae, si epici sunt, homerum atque uergilium; si lyrici, pindarum et flaccum crebro sermone concelebrant" Commentarii in prophetas minores, (Cetedoc, Cl. 0589, SL76, In Amos, Lib. 1, capp. q, linea 113). This second quotation not only states that there are various sorts of *poetae*, but matches the names of artists with their branch of poetry: Homer and Vergil are given as examples of epic poets as distinct from, for example, lyric poets. A quotation from the 11th century shows that *epos* still survives as a term. Egbertus Leodiensis writes "Mendicans dispergit epos tenuat que thalia", and the scholia pick up on this: "Epos utile carmen inde epica pagina id est laudabilis" Fecunda ratis, (Cetedoc, lib. 1, pag. 50, scholia ad versum 212.) This comment offers a positive judgement on the epic genre as something useful and to be praised.

[5] Examples of *heroicus* being applied purely to metre include: Jerome, "Iuuencus presbyter natione hispanus euangelia heroicis uersibus explicat" Eusebii Caesariensis Chronicon. Hieronymi continuatio, (Cetedoc Cl. 0615 d (A), pag. 232, linea 18); Sedulius Scotus frequently mentions *heroici metri*, and *heroici versus* (Donati artem maiorem, Cetedoc); Augustine of Hippo, "ut in heroico, arma uirum que cano, troiae qui primus ab oris" De Musica, (Cetedoc Cl. 0258, lib. 5, col. 1151, linea 21); Cassiodorus (485 – c.580) places *metrum heroicum* exclusively next to iambics as one of two main types: "Poetis etiam, terentiano testante, duo primum metra principalia sunt tributa, id est heroicum et iambicum, unum quod erigeret, alterum quod placaret." Uariarum libri duodecim, (Cetedoc, Cl. 0896, lib. 2, epist. 40, linea 74); "ut puta in heroico metro pro spondeo [...] ut Virgilius in duodecimo" Ars Laureshamensis, (Expositio in Donatum maiorem. Cetedoc, vol. II, pars 1, pag. 168, linea 54); Hugh of St Victor, "Dactylicum hexametrum siue heroicum" (De grammatica, Cetedoc, cap. 13, pag. 137, linea 1853). When Fulgentius uses *epicus* in the 5th century, it is not clear whether he uses it simply as an equivalent of *heroicum carmen* relating to metrical form, as could be the case when he says "Nam et Apollofanes in epico carmine scribit" Mitologiarum libri tres, (Cetedoc, Cl. 0849, lib. 1, cap. 2, pag. 18, linea 7), and similarly, "Quintus Fabius Lucullus in epico carmine ait" Expositio sermonum antiquorum, (Cetedoc, Cl. 0851, cap. 31, pag. 120, linea 6.) or whether he means it to encompass both meanings. Strictly speaking, the vocabulary suggests that he does mean more than metre, as dictionaries do not provide examples of *epicus* being used of metre.

Servius (4th century) describes the Aeneid as heroic, and explains that the heroic entails features including metre, style, type of action, characters, and a mixture of truth and fiction:

> nam est metrum heroicum et actus mixtus, ubi et poeta loquitur et alios inducit loquentes. Est autem heroicum quod constat ex divinis humanisque personis, continens vera cum fictis [...].
> [...] est autem stilus grandiloquus, qui constat alto sermone magnisque sententiis. Scimus enim tria esse genera dicendi, humile medium grandiloquum. Intentio Vergilii haec est, Homerum imitari et Augustum laudare a parentibus.
> (In Vergilii carmina commentarii, p. 4, 3ff.).

This suggests that none of the individual features are singly sufficient to define the genre. While the first use of "heroicum" refers purely to metre, the second seems to describe the genre of the poem, naming it epic because of its combination of more general characteristics. "stilus" is cited as a sub-category of the heroic, that is, *stili* match various poetic categories, thus epic goes with "grandiloquum". Isidore of Seville (560-630) seems to have types of poetry rather than metres in mind when he lists "heroicum" alongside elegy and bucolics: "A rebus quae scribuntur, ut heroicum, elegiacum, bucolicum" Etymologiarum siue Originum libri XX, (Cetedoc, Cl.1186, lib. 1, cap. 39, par. 9.) Like Servius, he describes *heroicum carmen* in terms of subject – "Heroicum enim carmen dictum, quod eo uirorum fortium res et facta narrantur" (Etymologiarum as above).[6] Isidore also introduces new terms of reference for describing the poetry of the Aeneid. Where Servius had explained the *genera dicendi* with reference to high, medium, and low styles, he uses a different tripartite division, involving the role played by the poet:

> Apud poetas autem tres characteres esse dicendi: unum, in quo tantum poeta loquitur, ut est in libris Vergilii Georgicorum: alium dramaticum, in quo nusquam poeta loquitur, et est in comoediis et tragoediis: tertium mixtum, ut est Aeneide [...]
> (Etymologiarum XX; Cetedoc, Cl. 1186, lib. 8, cap. 7, par. 11).

The Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources lists "heroice" as meaning "in the heroic manner, i.e. in hexameters", which suggests a necessary link between epic and hexameters.

[6] Note that these comments appear in a section titled "De metrica". Elsewhere he uses the term with specific reference to metre: "Quod metrum ante Homerum Pythium dictum est, post Homerum heroicum nominatum" (Etymologiarum XX, Cetedoc, Cl. 1186, lib. 1, cap. 39, par. 12).

He implies that the Aeneid has aspects of bucolics, comedy, and tragedy in it because of the way in which the poet uses his voice. Note that he speaks of comedy and tragedy as dramatic genres ("dramaticum"), as they were classified in the ancient world, and are also now. This provides an interesting contrast with definitions of tragedy and comedy given by Dante, and the idea of epic as a mix of elements of other poetry is relevant to a view of the Comedy as epic. Bede (672/3-735) also suggests that the Aeneid is a mixture of things, and although he does not use particular generic terms to describe it, his conception of an epic genre is revealed by the pairing of the Iliad and Odyssey with the Aeneid:

> Coenon est uel micton in quo poeta ipse loquitur et personae loquentes introducuntur, ut sunt scripta ilias et odyssia homeri et aeneidos virgilii et apud nos historia beati iob, quamuis haec in sua lingua non tota poetico, sed partim rethorico, partim sit metrico uel rithmico scripta sermone [...]
>
> (De arte metrica, Cetedoc, Cl.1565, cap. 25, linea 20).

Like Isidore, he focuses on the voice of the poet and those of his characters as being the common (and thus defining?) characteristic that links the poems. His mention of Job in the same breath as Homer and Vergil is typical of medieval attitudes towards the Book of Job, and shows a broad conception of epic as something that encompasses a range of forms and registers (for example, the religious nature of the Book of Job, compared with the pagan mythology of the Aeneid and Iliad).[7] He says that "heroicum" is another name for hexameters, but attributes the reason for the name to more than the metrical form:

> Metrum dactylicum exametrum, quod et heroicum uocatur, eo quod hoc maxime heroum, hoc est, uirorum fortium, facta canerentur, ceteris omnibus pulchrius celsius que est...
>
> (De arte metrica, Cetedoc, Cl.1565, cap.10, linea 2).

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[7] Astell (1994, p. 1ff) gives examples of the way in which the Book of Job was considered heroic from the 4th century onwards, for example, (p. ix) – "Saint Gregory the Great's influential Moralia in Job, composed shortly after Boethius' Consolation, firmly established the Book of Job as a divinely inspired heroic poem, depicting the trials of a "true man" and innocent sufferer. Following both Jerome and Gregory, Isidore of Seville, Bede, and Rabanus Maurus point to Job as a biblical example of heroic poetry comparable to the epics of Homer and Virgil." Astell says that Origen and Chrysostom describe Job as "a heroic model of Christian fortitude" (p. 1). The idea that the Book of Job was written in hexameters is explained thus: "On the authority of Josephus, Saint Jerome [...] advanced the mistaken notion that the Joban dialogues (Job 3:1 – 42:7) were written in hexameters" (p. 1). She notes that the "Book of Job [...] as a biblical model for medieval epic, fails to accommodate the notion of a continuous epic tradition, defined in purely formal terms" (p. 2), thereby suggesting that formal aspects are not a necessary requirement for a medieval work to be considered an epic.

Epic, he implies, is a poem about the deeds of brave men.[8] His verdict on epic as being more beautiful and loftier than other forms contrasts with classical poetics, where tragedy (in its normal sense of drama) is the highest genre.[9]

The 9th century provides an important new angle on the idea of epic. John Scotus Eriugena (810-877) introduces a new dimension into the discourse:

> Ac si aperte diceret: quemadmodum ars poetica, per fictas fabulas allegoricas que similitudines, moralem doctrinam seu physicam componunt ad humanorum animorum exercitationem – hoc enim proprium est heroicorum poetarum, qui uirorum fortium facta et mores figurate laudant – ita theologia, ueluti quedam poetria, sanctam scripturam fictis imaginationibus ad consultum nostri animi et reductionem a corporalibus sensibus exterioribus [...]
>
> (Expositiones in hierarchiam caelestem, Cetedoc cap. 2, linea 141).

In bringing in allegory, he reveals an aspect of the genre that is of particular relevance to poets of the Middle Ages: allegory forms an important part not only in the interpretation of classical epic, but also in the composition of medieval epics including those of Alain of Lille and Dante. While many writers attribute allegorical meaning to the Aeneid before and after this period (for example Bernardus Silvestris), Eriugena suggests it in a more theoretical sense as being typical of the genre. The other important aspect of the quotation above is the way in which theology is likened to poetry – "ita theologia, *ueluti quedam poetria*" (my italics). This connection is often attributed to Boccaccio,[10] and is of fundamental importance for poetic enterprises such as the Comedy and the Anticlaudianus, where poetry and theology are shown to work side by side, and where poetry is something sacred ("poema sacro").[11] The connection made by Eriugena shows the breadth of

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[8] Boniface (672/5 – 754), talking specifically about metres, also mentions the content of epic: "Quibus uirtutibus nomen solum obtinuit, ut heroicum uocaretur, ad memorandas scilicet heroum res." Ars metrica, (Cetedoc, Cl. 1564, linea 67).

[9] Aristotle, Ars poetica 26.

[10] Scott and Minnis (1988, p. 387ff) mention Boccaccio as the one to forge the link theoretically, coming up with "the startling proposition that theology is poetry and poetry is theology" (p. 388).

[11] Note that Macrobius also talks about the divine aspect of Vergil's poetry: "non mortali sed divino ingenio"; "magnam similitudinem divini illius et huius poetici operis invenies." (Saturnalia 5.1.18ff).

thought on poetry that existed in early medieval periods. He also echoes Bede's exact words with his "uirorum fortium facta", though he adds a further aspect that goes beyond deeds, claiming moral import for epic – "moralem doctrinam".

The 10th century offers an example of *heroicum* used of actions: Herigerus Lobiensis writes that "gesta heroica sanson / commendant" Uita tertia Ursmari Lobiensis, (Cetedoc, lib. 1, pag. 192, versus 455), which provides a further example of a connection between the Bible and epic that we saw with Bede.

In the 12th century, Bernardus Silvestris mentions the role of the comic in a discussion of the Aeneid:

> Poetarum quidam scribunt causa utilitatis ut satirici, quidam causa delectationis ut comedi, quidam causa utriusque ut historici, unde Oratius 'Aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poete / aut simul et iocunda et ydonea dicere vite.' Et in hoc opere ex ornatu verborum et figura orationis et ex variis casibus et operibus hominum enarrandis habetur quedam delectatio. (Commentum super sex libros Eneidos Virgilii, Proem, 11ff).

In citing motivations for writing, Bernardus suggests that comic poets are an example of poets who seek to delight. But in stating that the Aeneid is delightful ("quedam delectatio") there is the suggestion that the two have something in common. While the link is not a strong one, Bernardus' view that the Aeneid shares some ground with comedy is of interest for a discussion of Dante's notion of comedy.

Hugh of St Victor (1096-1141), echoing Bede's words four hundred years later, uses *heroicum* as a synonym for *hexametrum* while setting the subject of epic alongside metre in his explanation:

> Dactylicum hexametrum heroicum dicitur propterea quod eo maxime heroum facta canerentur quia ipsum pulchrius excellentius que ceteris prolatum est.
> (De grammatica, Cetedoc, cap. 13, pag. 138, linea 1897),

Arnulf of Orleans similarly comments on the first line of Lucan's Bellum Civile: "CANIMUS dicit quia poete non ore proprio tantum loquntur sed de spiritus reuelacione" (p. 7).

However, his words a few lines earlier suggest *heroicum* as a genre:

> Heroicum quo heroum facta scribuntur; elegiacum quo miserie describuntur; bucolicum quo cura boum uel pecorum; genethliacum quod de generatione cuiusquam scribitur; epithalamicum quod de nuptiis scribitur
>
> (De grammatica, Cetedoc. cap. 13, pag. 137, linea 1866),[12]

though metre and genre here seem inseparable. Elsewhere, Hugh lists different kinds of poetry where metre is not mentioned:

> huiusmodi sunt omnia poetarum carmina, ut sunt tragoedie, comoedie, satire, heroica quoque et lyrica, et iambica, et didascalica quedam, fabule quoque et historie, illorum etiam scripta quos nunc philosophos appellare solemus
>
> (Didascalicon de studio legendi, Cetedoc, lib. 3, pag. 54, linea 14).

Epic is included as a genre in its own right, and is distinguished from a wide variety of other forms of poetic composition, all of which are later conflated into Dante's tripartite scheme of tragedy, comedy and elegy. In his Derivationes, Uguccione of Pisa (c.1178-1210) includes definitions of *epos*, *epicus*, "heroycus cantus", and *heros*. Referring to Martial, he explains:

> Epos grece latine dicitur laus et inde epicus cantus id est laudabilis unde marcialis carmen epica uulgo lorica que pagina consonarent. Videtur tamen epica posita per dactylica. Dactilus enim est inuentus ad describendum gesta eroum ex quibus consecuti sunt laudem. Vel epicus componitur ab 'e' et pede. quasi sine pede idest prosaicus.
>
> (MS. Bodley 376, f.57v).[13]

His equation of *epos* with *laus* has no linguistic basis, and implies that *laudabilis* is to be read as "praising" rather than "praiseworthy".[14] When he uses "Dactilus" in the third line above, it is synonymous with "epicus". He also suggests that "heroically" means "in dactyls", while at the same time explaining the origin of "heroicus" as relating to the content of epic:

> [...] Item ab heros heroycus cantus cum sic dicitur de magnis viris. et heroycus inuenitur per dactilicas quia gesta heroum dactilice metro solent describi. unde priscianus.

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[12] His view of elegiacs as the metre of woeful things could lie behind Albert of Stade's decision to write his epic in elegiacs rather that hexameters, as discussed below.

[13] Note that Balbus, whose Catholicon was based on Uguccione's Derivationes, and who enjoyed a readership that eclipsed that of his predecessor, echoes this passage almost exactly: "Epycus ab epos quod est laus dicitur epycus cantus cum id est laudabilis. Unde Marcialis. Epyca uulgo lierica [sic] quae pagina consonaret. Videtur tamen hic epyca poni pro dactilica. Dactilus enim inuentus est ad describenda gesta heroum ex quibus consecuti sunt laudem. Vel epycus componitur ab e et pede. Id est prosaycus. Potest ibi legi epyca id est prosayca" (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Canonici Misc. 576, dated in its colophon to 1286. There is scattered and inconsistent pagination in the manuscript, hence I make no reference to folio numbers, but the entries are arranged in alphabetical order.)

[14] Even though "laudabilis" is not attested as meaning "praiseworthy" in the Medieval Latin Dictionary.

[...] heroyce idest dactilice (f.87v),[15]

Paget Toynbee (1902, p. 101) suggests that "Dante was undoubtedly familiar with the Magnae derivationes", pointing out that he names Uguccione in Convivio IV.6. He also suggests that he is the source for Dante's definition of *comedìa* and *tragedìa*, and though he makes no comment on the terms quoted above,[16] his suggestion that Dante was familiar with Uguccione's work is important.

A poem written shortly before Dante's time shows that while the hexameter was considered the metre of epic, a poem not in hexameters could still aspire to the epic genre. This suggests again that metre is not seen as a requirement of epic, and illustrates poets' willingness to experiment with epic forms. Referring to Homer's "heroic" metre, Albert of Stade, writing in the 13th century, explains in his proem why his epic will be in elegiacs:

Res gestae regumque ducumque ferocia facta
Quo scribi possent numero monstravit Homerus.
Scilicet heroico, dicetur forsitan; isti
Currere versiculi quia deberent pede tali,
Quodque per exiguos magnorum magna virorum
Proelia non deceat elegos scripsisse, probabunt.
Sane concedo, sed gesta miserrima scribo
Et strages miseras miserorum, qui misereri
Noluerant sibi nec aliis sed morte metebant
Se misera misere, misero stimulante furore.
Per miseros igitur elegos hoc ducere carmen
Decrevi miserum, sortem miseratus eorum
De quibus hic legitur, miseri qui castra sequuntur.
Hac noster ratione stilus non debuit istas
Scribere nec debuit heroum carmine mortes,
Sed numeris sub disparibus lex metrica saltat,
Tamquam, de miseris haec est narratio, dicat. (Proem to Troilus, 18-34).

[15] Balbus: "Heroicus cantus cum ab heros dicitur. Virorum heroicum carmen Heroica gesta sunt que de magnis uiris narrantur. Et heroicus inuenitur per dactilicas quia gesta heroum dactilico metro solent describi. Unde Priscianus in libro primo minoris dicit de quodam uersu. Est enim Dimetrum Iambicum conuinctum pentimetri heroice id est dactilice. Et corpus penultimus heroicus."

[16] Nor do any other Dante commentators I have come across who cite passages from Uguccione as an influence on Dante, (eg. Kelly, 1989).

The first two lines here are a quotation from Horace,[17] which shows that classical discussions of epic were still influential on, and understood by, epic poets in the 13th century. Albert argues that the heroic metre, as illustrated by Homer, is suitable for the deeds of kings and of leaders; the Troilus, an epic on the Trojan War, also deals with the deeds of kings and warriors, but his focus is the wretched state of his subjects, not their glory. He shows his frank intention to go against what he acknowledges to be the epic norm, writing in elegiacs, perhaps influenced by Hugh of St Victor's "elegiacum quo miserie describuntur" (quoted above, p. 16). Albert's intention is not straightforward; after all, this proem is in hexameters. He places himself on solid epic ground (writing in hexameters of Homer and his metre) before taking his poem off on a new elegiac epic track. Albert suggests that previous accounts of the Trojan war have been false:

> Taliter historiae Troianae demere falsa
> Promere vera meus ivit in arma stilus (Troilus, De processu auctoris 3-4),

and that he wants "scribere vera". The repeated use of "arma" again sets him against Vergil and the traditional epic model that he wishes to avoid: a model that he classifies in terms of metre (though, as he shows, by his own enterprise, hexameter is not a necessary feature of epic) and by subject, which has its own term – *heroicum* – to describe it.

Conversely, the author of the 13th century pseudo-Ovidian De Vetula justifies his use of hexameter rather than pentameter for a work that he says is not about heroes:

> Queritur unde michi quod opus processerit istud
> Versibus hexametris solum, nec subduplicarim
> More meo pentemimerim, cum nullus heroum
> Hic describatur, sed qui perlegerit ipsum
> Sedulus, inveniet serviti semper amoris
> Amodo me debere iugo subducere, sicque
> Respondere sibi poterit cur, evacuate
> Causa, debuerit causatus et evacuari
> Versus amatorum proprius Venerique dicatus. (De Vetula 15-23).

[17] Ars Poetica 73-4, though Horace has "tristia bella" instead of "ferocia facta".

The work, like the Troilus, presents a challenge to preconceptions of the link between subject and metre, as the hexameter is used as a substitute for the pentameter, which the author states he can no longer use as his life has become devoid of love. The poem is useful as a precedent for the Comedy in addition to its challenge to the link between hexameter and epic: it is an account of "Ovid's" life in exile, narrated in the first person, and divided into three books. The third book is about love, presented through philosophical and theological discussion:

> De cantu capiam partem quam musica scribit
> Adque creatoris laudem mea cantica vertam.
> Ascendam in celum, si demonstratio pennas
> Annuat, et cursus astrorum verificabo,
> Instrumenta levans et scribam posteritati, (III.27-31).

The modern editor Rabathan (1968, p. 2) notes that some readers saw the work as evidence that Ovid became Christian, and he points out that Petrarch mentions it in the Seniles, and that Pietro di Dante quotes it twice in his commentary on the Comedy. In spite of clear differences, the poem provides an interesting precedent for Dante's epic developments.

This brief survey shows that far from having no conception of the genre, writers of the Middle Ages had both fairly clear and also diverse ideas of epic, and that the various terms from classical Latin survived beyond the ancient world. Whether or not one could derive a single definition of epic from this evidence is less important than the fact that (diverse) notions of an epic genre existed. The exploration of these terms helps to allay fears about seeing the Comedy as epic on two counts. Firstly, it is clear that hexameters are not necessary or sufficient for classing a work as epic (relevant also for the Teseida). Secondly, descriptions of the hero that accompany discussions of genre present the hero in a manner much more akin to the protagonist of the Comedy than to a pagan warrior hero. The Medieval Latin Dictionary adds a third meaning to its definition of *heroicus* – "lordly, noble; of the Lord; spiritual hero", which is of importance for the growing sense in which epic becomes Christianised, and of particular relevance to a work such as

the Comedy, where the heroism of the hero is largely spiritual.[18] Meanings attributed to "heros" also reveal the increasing connection between Christianity and epic, or at least the Christian appropriation of epic terms: the Medieval Latin Dictionary defines "heros" as "1) (mythical) hero, 2) great and good man, 3) lord, chief, magnate, 4) the Lord".

Isidore suggests that (epic) heroes are suited to heaven: "Nam heroes appellantur viri quasi aerei, et coelo digni propter sapientiam et fortitudinem" Etymologiarum siue Originum libri XX, (Cetedoc, Cl.1186, lib.1, cap. 39, par. 9), and so provides a precedent for classing Dante as a hero even though his journey to heaven is not epic on a classical model. Uguccione uses the medieval term *baro* to explain the role of the hero, even though his specific examples are of classical figures (Hercules and Aeneas), thereby suggesting that concepts of epic in the Middle Ages have allowed for medieval developments:

> Heros ab her uel herus [...] id est baro, uir fortis et sapiens et potens que uir herus que dominus terre. uel *heroicus quasi ethereus quia pro sapientia et fortitudine celo dignus est.* Propter quidem heroes dicuntur qui olim post mortem credebantur deificari ob sua merita, ut hercules eneas et consimiles [...] (f.87v),[19] (my italics).

But the sentence highlighted is of most import for this thesis: echoing the sentiments of Isidore, he says that a hero is a man who is worthy of heaven on account of his strength or courage and wisdom. This is a precedent for Dante's creation of a hero who, in the Comedy, wins his way to heaven through a combination of resolve and fortitude, and *sapientia* and mental preparation. Uguccione's definition suggests the very guide-lines by which Dante is to reinvent the classical Aeneas. The hero of the Comedy falls within Uguccione's description of the role; while Dante avoids epic terms such as *heros*, *epicus*, and *heroicus*, crucial aspects of his poem fall under medieval definitions of the heroic.

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[18] The idea of transferring heroic warrior virtues to a spiritual plane occurs before Dante, for example in Gregory the Great's use of military language to describe Job: "sed in his omnibus circumacto gravitatis suae clypeo, ubique munitus astitit, undique venientibus gladiis vigilanter obviavit" (Moralia in Job, preface 11); "Arbitrari tamen verius possumus, quod idem beatus Job, qui certamina spiritalis pugnae sustinuit, etiam consummatae suae victoriae gesta narravit" (preface 3).

[19] Again, Balbus has an identical entry.

I shall now consider Dante's replacement of epic terms (used by writers with whom he was almost certainly familiar) with *tragedìa*, *comedìa*,[20] and *poema sacro*, to suggest that his terminology does allow for a conception of epic.

1.2. Dante and Epic Terminology.

Dante's tripartite division of literature into *tragedìa*, *comedìa* and *elegia* has been amply studied, in terms of what he meant in using these descriptions, where his terminology evolved from, how his theory applies differently in his various works, and how his early critics reacted.[21] Kelly (1989, and 1993) gives a convincing explanation of how *tragedìa* came to encompass non-dramatic works, and how a writer such as Dante was justified in using it to describe poems we think of as epic.[22] He and Barański have studied the history of the term *comedìa*, and argue that it encompasses such a broad range of meaning and styles that it is an appropriate description for the Comedy.[23]

But even when we acknowledge various precedents for seeing the Aeneid as *tragedìa*, and for interpreting *comedìa* in such as way that it could be applied to a work such as the Comedy, we might still ask how *comedìa* and *tragedìa* relate to existing medieval terms for epic. Kelly, who uses the term "genre" for this period, says that *tragedìa* included our "epic" (1993, p. 94), but does not explore the implications of this, nor does he consider whether Dante had a conception of epic as a genre in itself. Barański, whilst arguing that *comedìa* and *tragedìa* are not genres in the modern sense, and that *comedìa* refers to an all-embracing kind of writing (surely implying genre?), also calls the Comedy a "great epic poem" (1995 b, p. 79), but he does not explain

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[20] While *elegia* is the third term in his tripartite scheme of classification, it is not particularly relevant here.
[21] See especially Iannucci (1973), Kelly (1989, 1993), and Barański (1995 a & b).
[22] This goes some way towards explaining doubts raised by, for example, Hainsworth (1991, p. 139) about a period "When even an intuitive perception of the literary kinds was lost – when Dante could call his narrative poem a comedy and the Iliad a tragedy, when Lucan was thought to be a historian" (p. 139).

whether epic thus equals *comedìa*, or whether, as Kelly suggests for *tragedìa*, *comedìa* includes epic. In either case, it would seem that epic can be both comic or tragic, and that comedy and tragedy can be different epic approaches. Neither Kelly nor Barański consider *comedìa* and *tragedìa* in relation to *epos* or *carmen heroicum*, nor what these latter terms might have meant for Dante's theory of poetry. While the apparent absence of a theorised view of epic on the part of Dante (and the absence of epic words from his vocabulary) no doubt lies behind the silence over *epos* and *carmen heroicum*, describing the Comedy as epic without fully exploring what epic means both to us and to Dante is problematic, and the issue deserves similar attention to that bestowed on *comedìa* and *tragedìa*. Just as we cannot talk about the Comedy as "comedy" without considering what Dante and his contemporaries might have meant by it in relation to what we mean by it, so we need to do the same for "epic", even if Dante has no obvious word for epic.

Dante does use a term that suggests overarching scope, that is of greater use in understanding his conception of genre than *comedìa* or *tragedìa*, and that is more compatible with a notion of epic. In Paradiso the Comedy is referred to as "poema sacro" (XXV.1-2) and "sacrato ...poema" (XXIII.62). In classical Latin, *poema* has a broad application, meaning both a metrical composition or poem, and a composition of poetic quality whether metrical or not, and thus had no special affiliation with epic. Outside of the Comedy, Dante uses *poema* only in Latin, to refer to works in the vernacular – "vulgariter poetantes sua poemata multimode protulerunt" (DVE ii.3.7; ie. *canzoni*, *ballate*, and *sonetti*) - and it is never coupled with "sacrum".[24] Within the Comedy he does not explain the meaning of "poema sacro", nor how it relates to *comedìa* (and to

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[23] Kelly (1989); Barański (1995 b).

[24] See also "dicimus vulgarium poematum" (DVE ii.8.58), and "cum de mediocri poemate intendemus" (DVE.ii.13.5). He does not use the term in any of his other Latin works. "poetando" also relates to epic composition: in Inferno XXV.99 it is used of Lucan and Ovid's poetry; in Purgatorio XXI.98, of the Aeneid; in Purgatorio XXII.89 it is used of Statius; and in Purgatorio XXII.129 and Paradiso XXX.32 it refers to the Comedy.

his description of the Aeneid as *tragedìa*), nor whether it applies to a wider range of features and relates very generally to his poetic enterprise; in other words, whether it refers to an overarching genre that encompasses comedy, such as epic. The Grande dizionario della lingua italiana attests that Dante is using *poema* for the first time in Italian, and cites it as a sort of parallel term for epic:

> [poema=] Composizione letteraria in versi, per lo più di carattere suddivisa in più parti, che può avere vario tono e argomento (e a seconda della materia si distinguono poemi epici, eroici o mitici, storici, cavallereschi, eroicomici, didascalici, ecc.); l'uso di tale termine (in tempi moderni, sul modello francese) è talvolta esteso anche a componimenti poetici più brevi e di carattere lirico. – Anche: il genere letterario che comprende tali composizioni.
>
> (Grande dizionario della lingua italiana).[25]

On this definition, we might reasonably infer that "poema sacro" means "sacred epic".

But Hugh of St Victor, echoing Isidore,[26] presents an obstacle to seeing *poema* as "epic". His statement that "poesis opus multorum librorum; poema opus unius" (De grammatica, Cetedoc cap. 13, pag. 137, linea 1871) implies that epic, normally associated with book division, would be *poesis*, not *poema*, which is a continuous undivided poem. In addition, Isidore suggests that Lucan's Bellum Civile is not a *poema*, though the modern reader would certainly consider it an epic: "Lucanus ideo in numero poetarum non ponitur, quia uidetur historias conposuisse, non poema" (Etymologiae XX, Cetedoc Cl.1186, lib.8, cap.7, par.10).[27] On the other hand, Boccaccio uses *poema* to refer to the Aeneid, for example, "in eo poemate" (Genealogie deorum gentilium XIV.13.14). *poema* is thus used in a variety of ways, often, but not exclusively, of epic. But *poema sacrum* seems to have a closer epic affiliation. Gennadius Massiliensis (5th century) says of Prudentius: "quo anno sacra poemata Prudentius scripserit" (De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis,

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[25] Ed. S. Battaglia, (1961).
[26] "Poesis dicitur Graeco nomine opus multorum librorum, poema unius" (Etymologiarum siue originum libri XX, Cetedoc Cl.1186, lib.1, cap.39, par.21).
[27] Note an anonymous 7th century writer, who also talks of *poema* in terms of structure – "POEMA (id est structura)" (Anonymus ad Cuimnanum, Expositio latinitatis, Cetedoc, Cl.1561 c, cap.1, linea 331).

Patrologia Latina Vol.058, col. 1067), which Fulbert of Chartres echoes - "sacro poemate".[28] But most telling of all are Macrobius' descriptions of the Aeneid as "sacrum poem[a]" (Saturnalia 1.24.13), and of the Iliad as "divin[um] carm[en]" (5.14.7) which provide illuminating precedents for epic as a "poema sacro" even if Dante himself had never read this. "poema sacro" provides a less constricting description of the Comedy than *comedìa*, and is more fitting given Dante's own words:

> Da questo passo vinto mi concedo
> più che già mai da punto di suo tema
> soprato fosse comico o tragedo;
> chè, come sole in viso che più trema,
> così lo rimembrar del dolce riso
> la mente mia di sè medesmo scema. (Paradiso XXX.22-7).

These lines suggest that while Dante encompasses the roles of both *comico* and *tragedo*, ultimately, in order for his poem to progress further, he supersedes both of them. He becomes the writer of a Christian epic - the "poema sacro". This suggests that comedy and tragedy fall under a larger generic umbrella in Dante's conception of genre, and the breadth of epic definitions in the Middle Ages suggests that this larger genre is epic. In the Comedy, Dante uses *poema* only in Paradiso, where he shows explicit consciousness of his role as poet. This contrasts with the fact that use of *comedìa* is limited to Inferno, that is, a place without hope. Dante can move beyond comedy and tragedy (exemplified by the Inferno and Aeneid) because his "poema" is "sacro", and has been aided by the hand of heaven, "al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra" (Paradiso XXV.1-2). His epic is no longer a comedy, nor is it a tragedy like the Aeneid: it is a sacred enterprise that has the consent of heaven. The religious affiliations suggested by "sacro" are not prohibitive of interpreting "poema" as "epic", as we have already seen how parts of the Bible were viewed as epic.[29] This draws the task of epic poet and God together in striking fashion. In Paradiso, Dante challenges us with the idea that the Comedy is and is not epic, in the same way

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[28] Epistola XCVII, Patrologia Latina vol. 141, col. 0247.
[29] In addition we might note that another term used to describe a work - "volume" is used by Dante for the enterprise of both Vergil and God (Inferno I.84; Paradiso XXXIII.86).

that Ovid plays with genre in the Metamorphoses. Ovid is cited so frequently in Paradiso because he provides an example of an epic that defies epic conventions and thus helps to illustrate Dante's purpose. Grayson (1980, p.63) sees a similar defiance of generic convention in the terms "poema sacro":

> [Dante] referred to the Comedy as his 'poema sacro' not merely because its subject concerned divine things, but because he felt himself as a poet endowed with sacred inspiration. It was this powerful conviction and his all-embracing vision of heaven and earth, of man and eternity, that broke down all his earlier theories of poetry, and dictated in practice a kind of artistic freedom which no rules and prescriptions could contain, nor have ever since succeeded in classifying.

But while Grayson emphasises Dante's originality, and his stretching of generic boundaries, the epic genre is of sufficient scope to provide a classification for the Comedy. To describe the work as *poema sacro* rather than *comedìa* is to acknowledge its role in a history of epic, while also allowing for Dante's innovations within the genre.[30]

My survey of the survival of classical terms for epic shows that notions of a heroic genre as a distinct and broad poetic form existed throughout the Middle Ages. The diversity of ways in which epic was explained or described illustrates that far from being a rigid genre, it was something fluid, with room for variation in terms of metre, subject, length and language, with a place for the comic, tragic, bucolic, the secular and religious, and for widening definitions of the hero. These descriptions give it the appearance of a genre with an almost all-encompassing scope, of the same breadth that Barański and Kelly give to *comedìa*. But choosing to explore the Comedy as epic rather than comedy provides a view of the poem that we can make sense of, both in light of modern, classical, and medieval genre terminology, and, more importantly, in terms of literary history. Seeing the Comedy as an epic sets it beside those texts of most importance to Dante in writing the poem: we gain much more insight into the Comedy by examining the

[30] "Divina" is almost certainly a later addition to "Commedia", which was taken to be the title of the poem. It helps to angle the work more towards the idea of "poema sacro", and thus gives a better overall sense of the epic nature of the work than simply "Commedia".

relevance of the Aeneid, the Thebaid, the Bellum Civile, the Anticlaudianus, the Alexandreis, and other epics, than we do by trying to measure it up against "comic" texts. This is a point Iannucci hints at (1973, p. 6). Barański (1995 b) attempts an exploration of Dante's knowledge of comedies, but provides few results. J.M. Downes (1997, p. 2) notes that

> [...] the name *epic*, for example, works as a tool or map for organising our experience of the textual world; it provides us with a set of expectations to be met (or more rarely, not met) by a text.

Dante does not have any "comic" texts in mind with which he wishes us to compare the Comedy, and the prominence given to Vergil and Statius suggests our attention should be elsewhere, with epic. Dante sees tragedy and comedy in the texts most influential on him, which are epics. The tradition from which he draws is largely that of epic poetry, and he guides us to this, highlighting the debt he owes to the epic tradition, while at the same time emphasizing his innovation and difference. The title "Commedia", assuming that it was meant to be such, is one of Dante's most powerful tools in challenging us to reconsider the poem and its relationship with its models.

1.3. The Epic Terminologies of Petrarch and Boccaccio.

In contrast to Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio do discuss epic in terms recognisable from antiquity, which suggests a more theorised conception of epic. Petrarch frequently uses the term *heroicus*, usually in a context that would equate with a notion of epic. For example, when describing how he was inspired to write the Africa, he says:

> Cogitatio incidit, et valida, ut de Scipione Africano illo primo, [...] poeticum aliquid heroico carmine scriberem, (Seniles XVIII.1, p. 882).

In his explanation of Bucolicum carmen I, he says of Scipio, "iuvenis sidereus dicitur sive propter heroycam virtutem qua maxime viguit" (Familiares X.4.33 to Petrarch's brother), which echoes Isidore and Uguccione on the connection between the hero and heaven.[31] Vergil the epic poet is described as "heroycum poetam" (Familiares XXIV.11.1-2), and his verses are lofty – "totum

[31] Petrarch also says "Heroos canerem" (Epistolae metricae III.10.18, ad Brunum Florentinum).

altisonis illustrant uersibus orbem" (Bucolicum carmen I.90).[32] This echoes Dante's attribution of a high style to Vergil, but without bringing in "tragedy". In addition to a high style, another characteristic is ascribed by Petrarch to the Aeneid: it is a "divin[um] op[us]" (Familiares XXIII.19), and a "divin[um] carm[en]" (Seniles 4.5/4.4 to Federico Aretino).[33] This is of relevance in understanding Dante's use of "poema sacro" to describe the Comedy. As "poema sacro" is synonymous with Petrarch's "divin[um] carm[en]", we might infer that Petrarch views the Aeneid in the same way that Dante sees his Comedy, that is, as supreme epic. Petrarch notes that Scipio's "Carmine fama sacro caret hactenus" (Bucolicum Carmen I.120), with the implication that his own *heroicum carmen* will fill the gap. He also appears to equate *carmen sacrum* (or its variations) with *heroicum carmen* or *epos*,[34] and he uses *heroicus* of Biblical writing – "Veteris Testamenti Patres heroyco atque aliis carminum generibus usi sunt" (Familiares X.4.49-50), thus echoing ideas mentioned above of parts of the Bible being considered epic. (It is not clear here whether Petrarch simply has metre in mind; "generibus" suggests something more.) Dante's own term "poema sacro" is even used by Petrarch with reference to the Bible:

> sacrum illud poema quod beatum virum, scilicet Christum, canit nascentem morientem descendentem ad inferos resurgentem ascendentem reversurum [...]
> (Familiares X.4.7).

Petrarch thus creates an interesting parallel between the Bible and epic: specifically, the Aeneid. His description of the Bible could also apply to the Comedy, not only because both are "sacrum [...] poema", but also because each shows a hero moving from earth to hell to heaven. Petrarch's use of *heros* and *heroicus* – in other words an epic terminology – places him within a tradition of discussions of poetry that stems from the classical world. But at the same time he adds to his

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[32] Note also "altiloqui [...] Maronis" (Epistolae metricae II.2). However, the context of the Bucolicum carmen quotation reveals that Petrarch has several authors in mind: "tum silvas et rura canunt atque arma virosque".

[33] Also "Vergilium [...] divino illo in opere" (Seniles 4.5/4.4 to Federico Aretino), and "diuinum stili artificium" (Rerum memorandarum libri II.16).

[34] I have not encountered the term *epos* in Petrarch's writings, but indices for his terms are patchy.

terminology the phrase that Dante uses to describe his own epic poem. Petrarch's combination of the old and the new is also reflected in his epic practice, where he brings together traditional epic elements with aspects of Dantean epic, as will be discussed with reference to the Africa in Chapter 4.

Boccaccio says little on the subject of epic and terms with which to describe it. From the few descriptive comments that he does make, it would seem that he has a conventional conception of and terminology for epic. He describes Vergil and Homer as "heroici" (Genealogiae XIV.9.7), and, in contrast with Dante, he uses tragedy solely of drama – (Commentary on Inf. 4.1) "assai più pienamente ne scrive Seneca tragedo, *in tragedia Herculis furentis*", as one would expect from classical categories and the medieval critical tradition based thereon. He also says "Et tu, Iob, qui labores tuos atque patientiam heroico metro scripsisti" (Genealogiae XIV.16.2), which, while not necessarily implying genre, again links epic and biblical writing. As will be shown in Chapter 3, his conception of epic is largely expressed practically through his poetry, rather than being theorised.

CHAPTER 2: Dante and the Medieval Epic Tradition.

> Perciò Dante *non ha* precursori: perciò, non al tenebroso Medio Evo europeo appartiene la *Divina Commedia* [...].[1]

2.1. Introduction.

This chapter explores the Comedy as a poem informed by a developing epic tradition. Although the most prominent aspects of the narrative – the central Dante-protagonist and his actions - seem highly challenging to a notion of the poem as epic, I suggest that Dante's presentation of them develops from within an epic tradition. I illustrate this by focusing on the Alexandreis and the Anticlaudianus, and the extent to which they foreshadow Dante's choice of hero and epic task. I suggest that Dante's solution to the problem of making an epic narrative meaningful for a Christian readership is to create the poet-hero whose new epic task is both to undertake and to describe a journey to God. I argue that the Alexandreis provides an example of the limitations of a pagan epic hero for a Christian writer; that the Anticlaudianus offers allegorical alternatives, setting these within a loosely Christian universe; and that Dante's absorption of these medieval epic currents results in his creation of the poet-hero who shares characteristics with classical epic heroes, but who ultimately progresses far beyond the confines of his predecessors.

I suggest that Dante creates a new epic model. The replacement of a pagan divine system with a Christian one, the prominence given to poetry through the presence of Vergil and Statius as significant characters, and the choice of a poet as hero, in a world where poetry and the universe are both described as "volume",[2] are fundamental epic developments.

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[1] F. Torraca (1905), p. 30.

[2] Dante applied himself with "grande amore" to Vergil's "volume" (Inferno I.83), and uses the word again to describe the universe in his vision of God – "legato con amore in un volume" (Paradiso XXXIII.86).

Some of the first Dante commentaries contain mention of Walter of Châtillon.[3] The Lombardus commentary (1322) quotes a passage from the Alexandreis: "Unde ait poeta: 'incidit in Sillam, qui vult vitare Caridim'"[4] (commentary on Purgatorio XIV.31-40), and Benvenuto da Imola (1380) describes Walter as: "Gallicus ille qui describit Alexandreidam metrice", (commentary on Inferno 14. 31-39). While the work is also mentioned in a couple of modern commentaries,[5] little has been written on the relationship of the two poems. Torraca, Avalle, and Toynbee suggest some points of parallel, but the Enciclopedia Dantesca, in a short entry on Walter, claims that these attempts to see a connection between the Comedy and the Alexandreis have been neither persuasive nor necessary.[6] Avalle (1966, p. 58) mentions "rapporti speciali" between the two texts, but concludes, after mentioning some of the points of similarity which I will discuss in this chapter, that

> è molto probabile che la somiglianza vada ancora una volta riferita a quel patrimonio di formule fisse, immagini ed espressioni stereotipe che s'accompagna di norma ai "temi" letterari al di là di ogni più preciso rapporto fra i loro prodotti. (p. 66).

This chapter seeks to show that there is a relationship between the two works.

As with Walter, Alain is mentioned in connection with the Comedy from the early commentaries onwards. Guido da Pisa refers to "Alanus" (commenting on Inferno XXIV.103-8); L'Ottimo Commento paraphrases passages from Alain's De planctu naturae (commenting on Purgatorio XX. 10-12, 82); the Cassinese Commentary names the Anticlaudianus - "alanus dum in suo Anticlaudiano poetando dixit"; the first redaction of Pietro di Dante's commentary describes

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[3] All references and quotations to commentaries on the Comedy are taken from electronic texts of the Dartmouth Dante Project.

[4] A variant on Walter of Châtillon's "Incidis in Scillam cupiens uitare Caribdim" (Alexandreis V.301).

[5] Eg. Longfellow (1867), on Purgatorio X.33: "With this description of the sculptures on the wall of Purgatory compare that [...] of the tomb of the Persian queen in the Alexandreis of Philip Gualtier", by which he means Walter of Châtillon; Singleton (1970-75), on Inferno 26. 116-117 - "*non vogliate negar...gente*: For an earlier expression of a similar aspiration, see the Alexandreis [...]. Torraca (1895, p. 154) notes that the poem was known to Arrigo da Settimello at the end of the twelfth century and the Faentine chronicler Tolosano in the first part of the thirteenth century; thus it was in circulation in Dante's time."

Alain as "ille magnus theologus et poeta" (Commentary on Inferno I.101-5), and all redactions quote from the Anticlaudianus; and Benvenuto notes a textual variant involving Alain.[7] This suggests the extent to which readers of Dante were familiar with the works of Alain. In spite of these early references, little attention has been given to Dante's use of the earlier poet. Some interest arose in the 1950s and 1960s, with several articles suggesting links between the two.[8] There seems to be general consensus that the Anticlaudianus is of importance for a study of the Comedy as epic. Raynaud de Lage (1951, p. 117), comparing the Anticlaudianus with the De Planctu Naturae, draws an epic line that passes from classical epic though the Anticlaudianus to the Comedy: "L'Anticlaudianus semble plus classique d'abord et déroute moins qui connaît L'Enéide et la Divine Comédie". Cilento (1957-8, p. 39) says the same thing a few years later:

> In un certo senso, come genere letterario, potremmo collocarlo [the Anticlaudianus] a mezza strada tra l'Eneide e la Divina Commedia. È una trasposizione dell' epicità classica in un campo spirituale.

This reflects the approach that I take in this chapter: that the Alexandreis and Anticlaudianus play an important part in understanding the epic nature of the Comedy.[9] The Enciclopedia Dantesca also has an entry on Alain, in which Vasoli suggests that the De Planctu Naturae and

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[6] Enciclopedia Dantesca, vol. 3, p. 293.

[7] Pietro di Dante quotes several passages from the Anticlaudianus, eg. "Alanus, dum in suo Anticlaudiano ita inquit: Pestis Avaritie" (1344-55 redaction, comm. on Inferno I.100-105); Codice Cassinese on Paradiso XXX.46; Benvenuto on Inferno 4. 141-141 "Post Orpheum debet sequi Linus in ordine; nam, sicut scribit Augustinus XVII de Civitate Dei, Orpheus, Linus, et Museus fuerunt primi poetae theologi. Linus enim propter eius excellentiam dicitur a Virgilio filius Apollinis, qui Apollo est Deus sapientiae, Deus poetarum. Et adverte quod aliqui textus habent Alano, sed hoc ex ignorantia dictum est; nam Alanus non meruit reponi in numero istorum, nec locari juxta Tullium, quamvis sit commentator modernus Rhetoricae novae Tullii." Some modern commentaries also mention Alain: Fallani (1965); Bosco-Reggio (1979); Pasquini-Quaglio (1982).

[8] Ciotti (1960) considers textual parallels alongside more general similarities. Dronke (1960): "Several passages in the Commedia suggest that Dante knew the Anticlaudianus well" (p. 120). See also Curtius (1956), and Witke (1959). There is also a thesis by E. Bossard ("Alani ab Insulis Anticlaudianus cum Divina Dantis Alighieri Comoedia collatus thesim ante facultatem litterarum pictaviensem", 1885) that I have not been able to consult.

[9] Busnelli and Vandelli (1964, vol. 1, pp. 188-9) also see the Anticlaudianus as a forerunner of Dante's type of "comedy": "Filosofia, teologia, e altre scienze vi si intrecciano, secondo il senso letterale, morale e allegorico, inteso dall'autore, sicchè parecchi ravvicinamenti vi si potrebbero fare alla Divina Commedia, essendo l'Anticlaudianus una umana Commedia."

the Anticlaudianus are important for the Comedy:

> Sono appunto questi scritti che hanno maggiore interesse per gli studiosi di questioni dantesche non foss'altro che per la possibile eventualità di una loro diretta o indiretta influenza sulla struttura e su alcuni temi della *Commedia*. (1970-8, vol. 1, p. 90).

I argue that a study of the Alexandreis and the Anticlaudianus alongside the Comedy provides vital insight into Dante's new heroic direction, and in particular that Walter's Alexander and Alain's Prudence form important models for the later poet.

2.2. Limited Warrior Heroes: Alexander and Ulysses.

The Comedy contains several types of heroes, all of whom, to some extent, function as models for Dante's presentation of himself. At times he is an Aeneas, an Adam, an Achilles, and a Ulysses, but above all, he is a contemporary Florentine poet and a Christian. This chapter will explore Dante's decision to choose himself as his poem's hero, rather than a mythical warrior hero, a classical soldier such as Alexander or Scipio, Charlemagne or Roland, or an allegorical figure such as Alain's New Man.

Inferno XXVI presents one of the most appealing episodes of the Comedy, and has attracted a great deal of scholarship. My interest lies in Dante's treatment of the classical warrior hero (exemplified by Ulysses), and the resulting parallel with Walter of Châtillon's Alexander. I shall argue that this parallel suggests the Ulysses episode is an acknowledgement of the limitations of the pagan classical hero and a move forward from that model.

2.2.1. The Origins of Dante's Ulysses.

Dante had no direct access to Homer's Odyssey, from which to draw information on Ulysses. Although I shall discuss several possible classical Latin sources for some elements of his story, I suggest that it is the Alexandreis that offers Dante a source both for selected details and more

importantly for the general approach to and tone of the hero's final journey. The Alexandreis mentions Ulysses only twice,[10] but its hero Alexander suffers a fate striking in its foreshadowing of Dante's Ulysses. Alexander serves as a precedent for Dante's Ulysses, and this is important more generally as an indication of the evolving epic background against which Dante constructs his poem.

The Aeneid, which has a strong presence in the Comedy both textually and through the presence of Vergil as a character, mentions Ulysses several times, and provides at least two of the reasons why he appears with the fraudulent in the eighth bolgia of Hell. Dante cites three examples of Ulysses' deception, of which Vergil mentions two: the wooden horse and the theft of the Palladium. Ulysses is one of those inside the horse,

> [...] illos patefactus ad auras
> reddit equus laetique cauo se robore promunt
> Thessandrus Sthenelusque duces et dirus Vlixes, (Aeneid II.259-61),

and he is later singled out in Laocoon's warning against accepting the "gift":

> [...]'o miseri, quae tanta insania, ciues?
> creditis auectos hostis? aut ulla putatis
> dona carere dolis Danaum? sic notus Vlixes?' (Aeneid II.42-4).

The second - the theft of the Palladium - links him explicitly with Diomedes, his partner in Dante's Hell, and Aeneas recounts the episode with condemnation:

> [...] impius ex quo
> Tydides sed enim scelerumque inuentor Vlixes,
> fatale adgressi sacrato auellere templo
> Palladium caesis summae custodibus arcis,
> corripuere sacram effigiem manibusque cruentis
> uirgineas ausi diuae contingere uittas, (Aeneid II.163-8).

Thus Dante could have drawn on the Aeneid for this negative side to Ulysses' character.

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[10] IV.542-3 - "arte [...] Vlixea", and VIII.229-32, on the theft of the Palladium.

However, Ulysses' own story of his final journey owes only one possible detail to Vergil: his mention of Circe, who appears in Eclogue VIII.70, "carminibus Circe socios mutauit Vlixi". The more likely source is Ovid, who mentions the length of time Ulysses and his companions spent with Circe – "annua nos illic tenuit mora" (Metamorphoses XIV.308), echoed by Dante's "Circe, che sottrasse / me piú d'un anno" (Inferno XXVI.92-3). Horace is a source for the connection between Ulysses' quest for virtue and knowledge and the notion that this involves a voyage:

> rursus quid virtus et quid sapientia possit
> utile proposuit nobis exemplar Vlixen,
> qui domitor Troiae multorum providus urbis
> et mores hominum inspexit, latumque per aequor, (Epistles I.II.17-20).

Homer's Teiresias prophesies a final journey to be undertaken by Ulysses after returning to Ithaca:

> ἔρχεσθαι δὴ ἔπειτα, λαβὼν εὐῆρες ἐρετμόν,
> εἰς ὅ κε τοὺς ἀφίκηαι οἳ οὐ ἴσασι θάλασσαν
> ἀνέρες, οὐδέ θ' ἅλεσσι μεμιγμένον εἶδαρ ἔδουσιν·
> οὐδ' ἄρα τοὶ ἴσασι νέας φοινικοπαρῄους,
> οὐδ' εὐήρε' ἐρετμά τά τε πτερὰ νηυσὶ πέλονται.
>
> [...] you must then set out once more upon your travels. You must take a well-cut oar and go on till you reach a people who know nothing of the sea and never use salt with their food, so that our crimson-painted ships and the long oars that serve those ships as wings are quite beyond their ken.[11] (Odyssey XI.121-5).

Of particular interest is the claim that Odysseus' death will come from the sea:

> [...] θάνατος δέ τοι ἐξ ἁλος αὐτῳ
> ἀβληχρὸς μάλα τοῖος ἐλεύσεται, [...] (Odyssey XI.134-5).[12]

I have already mentioned that Dante had no direct access to Homer, but details such as these filtered through various Latin texts, as Boitani (1994) shows. However, Homer is not a source for a final journey of Ulysses towards Mount Purgatory. Horace's XVIth Epode connects a

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[11] Translation by Rieu, (1946), p. 174.

[12] "Death will come to you out of the sea, Death in his gentlest guise" Rieu, (p. 174). For a discussion of the ambiguity of "ἐξ ἁλος", meaning "out of the sea", as I prefer to translate it, or "far from the sea", and the treatment of the passage by early writers, see Boitani (1994), pp. 18-19.

journey of Ulysses with this destination by negative association. Virtuous people ("vos quibus est virtus" 39) in despair over civil war should, he says, seek "beata [...] / arva, divites et insulas" (41-2), where the Golden Age reigns, and where even the most adventurous seafaring hero has not been:

> non huc Argoo contendit remige pinus,
> neque impudica Colchis intulit pedem;
> non huc Sidonii torserunt cornua nautae
> laboriosa nec cohors Vlixei: (Epodes XVI.57-60).

This passage, with its association of such a journey with *virtus*, might have given Dante the idea for Ulysses' final journey.

Thus far, possible sources for Dante's Ulysses offer only fragmentary details about the hero and almost nothing relevant to the final journey that he recounts in the Comedy. But Dante did not invent the idea of a classical hero undergoing such a voyage. Walter of Châtillon's treatment of Alexander and his death provide Dante with a model for a hero of boundless ambition who undertakes an epic voyage beyond human limits.

2.2.2. Parallels with the Alexandreis.

The two Greek warrior heroes - Dante's Ulysses and Walter's Alexander - sail (literally in the case of Ulysses, and figuratively in the case of Alexander) towards the Earthly Paradise, driven by ambition, and are killed before they reach it. Alexander, as discussed below, refers to such a journey as a possible future venture, but sailing is also used as a metaphor for his ambitions and lifelong journey toward his goal of domination. Ulysses' journey is an inversion of this, as it takes place within the literal level of the narrative, yet also has a wider metaphorical meaning, by suggesting Dante's own life, or the life of any person, as a journey with a similar goal.

Dante portrays Ulysses with negative details that echo Walter's treatment of Alexander. Ulysses' lack of concern for family duties –

> né dolcezza di figlio, né la pièta
> del vecchio padre, né 'l debito amore
> lo qual dovea Penelopé far lieta,
> vincer poter dentro a me l'ardore
> ch'i'ebbi a divenir del mondo esperto, (Inferno XXVI.94-8)

contrasts him both with Aeneas (mentioned one line previously), whose care for his family is one of his main characteristics,[13] and also with Homer's account of his character.[14] There is a precedent for this lack of familial *pietas* in Walter's Alexander, whose ambition to conquer the world is not curbed by concerns for duty to his family -

> Tanta sub inuicto bellandi corde uoluntas,
> Tanta parentis erat obliuio, tanta sororum. (Alexandreis I.375-6),

no matter what danger they might face:

> [...] 'non me diuellet ab armis
> Et curru Darii licet impiger ales ab alto
> Missus Athlantiades uerax michi nuncius ipsas
> Afferat a Persis raptas cum matre sorores.' (Alexandreis V.243-6).

Dante's presentation of Ulysses' voyage also parallels several details of sailing from the Alexandreis.[15] The summary prologue to Book X begins "Oceanum decimus audaci classe fatigat", and the book itself opens with an image of the sea:

> Sydereos fluctus et amicum nauibus amnem
> Prebuerat Zephirus, et iam statione soluta
> Longius impulerat acclinis nauita classem,
> Ignarus quo tendat iter uel quam procul absit

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[13] For example, he carries his father from Troy whilst holding Ascanius' hand: "succedoque oneri; dextrae se paruus Iulus / implicuit sequiturque patrem non passibus aequis" (Aeneid II.723-4). The contrast is also one that holds more generally: Aeneas is in Limbo, Ulysses is in Hell; Ulysses is a flawed sinner, Aeneas is merely pagan, but creates a lasting legacy through the foundation of Rome.

[14] Where, like Aeneas, his concern is for his father, wife and son: "ἀμύμονα δ' οἰκοι ἄκοιτιν νοστήσας εὕροιμι σὺν ἀρτεμέεσσι φίλοισιν." (Odyssey XIII.42-3): "May I find my wife and dear ones safe and sound in my home when I reach it", trans. Rieu (1946), p. 203.

[15] Cf. sailing as an image for following Christ – Purgatorio XXII.62-3.

Hactenus Oceani populis incognitus amnis. (Alexandreis X.1-5).

Later in the book, as he batters the Ocean, "Iamque reluctantem Pelleus classe minaci / Fregerat Oceanum" (X.168-9), Alexander expresses his intention to pass Spain:

> Constituebat enim miser ignarusque futuri,
> Depositis rebus Asiae, transferre sarissas
> Penorum in fines, et Numidiae peragratis
> Finibus Hyspanas, [...] (X.171-4),

and to go beyond the Pillars of Hercules,

> [...] quibus Herculis esse columpnas
> Fama loquebatur, ultra descendere metas
> Occiduumque sibi bello submittere solem. (X.174-6).

Dante transforms this intention into action. Ulysses does pass Spain - "vidi infin la Spagna" (Inferno XXVI.103), and the Pillars of Hercules –

> [...] venimmo a quella foce stretta
> dov' Ercule segnò li suoi riguardi, (XXVI.107-8),

but a warning is added: the pillars do not merely mark the boundary of the known world, but explicitly the point beyond which mortals should not pass, "acciò che l'uom piú oltre non si metta" (107-9). "metta" even echoes "metas" (Alexandreis X.175), and in both passages the word appears at the end of a line, creating an aural link between the two.

Likewise, Alexander's threat to probe those places which Nature has hidden,

> [...] quas Natura remouit
> Gentibus occultas calcabitis hoc duce terras. (Alexandreis IX.574-5),

becomes more of a threat in the Comedy with Ulysses' actual voyage. Leviathan and Nature interpret Alexander's intention as a threat to the Earthly Paradise:

> [...] cuius si fata secundis
> Vela regant uentis, caput indagare remotum
> A mundo Nyli et Paradysum cingere facta
> Obsidione parat, et ni tibi caueris, istud
> Non sinet intactum Chaos Antipodumque recessus

Alteriusque uolet nature cernere solem. (Alexandreis X.95-100),

and the paradise is the biblical Eden,

Que tua laus, coluber, uel que tua gloria primum
Eiecisse hominem si tam uenerabilis ortus
Cedat Alexandro? [...] (Alexandreis X.102-4).[16]

As Eden is sacred to those sharing Walter's Christian convictions, the Greek hero is shown to pose a threat to Christianity by intending to enter such a place unbidden, in the spirit of domination, as an unworthy rival of Adam and Eve. Ulysses threatens the same Earthly Paradise by going beyond mere intent and actually sailing towards the mount of Purgatory:

[...] n'apparve una montagna, bruna
per la distanza, e parvemi alta tanto
quanto veduta non avea alcuna. (Inferno XXVI.133-5).

Ulysses' earlier exhortation to his men -

"O frati," dissi, "che per cento milia
perigli siete giunti a l'occidente, [...]" (Inferno XXVI.112-3),

not only betters that of Alexander, whose "mille tryumphos" (Alexandreis IX.559) are lesser than Ulysses' "cento milia perigli", but also emphasizes his misplaced loyalties caused by overriding ambition: referring to his men as "frati", Ulysses has replaced standard familial relationships with those that further his purpose.

Dante also transfers the metaphorical imagery linking Alexander's death with a sea journey into the literal level of his Ulysses narrative. Alexander's final night is described with a series of

[16] While the alliance between Nature and Leviathan might appear puzzling, Walter's intention is not to present the former as an evil force in league with the devil, bent on destroying human kind, but in a Christian neo-platonic sense as a manifestation of divine power. She has imposed limits on humankind that are about to be violated, and this is the reason she manifests her outrage at the intended invasion of Paradise. Her appeal to Leviathan's pride in having cast out humanity from Paradise might seem to be in contradiction with her role as a Christian neo-platonic divine power, but her goal itself is compatible with a Christian universe, as she seeks to prevent one who is unsuitable from entering a sacred Christian location. As the poem presents the life of a pagan, Nature's true Christian purpose is veiled with an anger that can be understood in pagan terms, and the latter is the face she presents to Leviathan to secure his help.

maritime images, even though he is not on the sea:

> Iam maris undisonis rota merserat ignea solem
> Fluctibus, et preceps confuderat omnia tetro
> Nox elementa globo. tenuit prodire uolentes
> In lucem stellas solito lugubrior aer
> Nocturnus. lunam noctique preesse statuta
> Sydera caligo nubesque suborta repressit.
> Illa nocte oculis Cinosuram nauta requirens
> Nunc Elicen uetitumque mari se mergere Plaustrum,
> Cum nusquam auderet sine sydere flectere cursus,
> In medio iacuit prora fluitante profundo.
> Funus Alexandri mortis presaga futurae
> Omnia lugebant. [...] (Alexandreis X.330-42).

The elements in turmoil in the first lines of this passage reflect the disturbance created by the knowledge of Alexander's impending death. In the midst of the turmoil we see an unidentified *nauta*, whose usual reliance on the stars for guidance proves impossible. Left deliberately nameless, the *nauta* can be partly equated with Alexander, who is suddenly bereft of his accustomed good fortune, or, to extend the imagery of the passage, his lucky star. Both stars and good fortune are taken for granted, and the withdrawal of either threatens ruin. The repetition of *mergo* in the passage (330 and 337), although used of heavenly bodies, reflects the likely fate of the sailor stranded in the middle of the sea. Immediately after the image of the floundering sailor come the words "Funus Alexandri", and the proximity of the two images confirms the applicability of the whole passage to Alexander's own ruin. Although killed by poison on dry land, Alexander's death is described, using *mergo*, as a drowning:

> Sed iam magnanimi fatalis uenerat hora
> Rectoris mersura caput, [...] (Alexandreis X.375-6).[17]

Walter also uses the images of sea journeys and drowning for life and death in general, as revealed by a metaphor towards the end of the poem:

> Verrimus equoreos fluctus uitamque perosi
> Et caput et merces tumidis committimus undis (Alexandreis X.440-1).

[17] His poisoning is described thus: "uina ministris / Circumferre iubet. et qui securus ab hoste / In bello tociens hostilia fuderat arma, / Et pater et dominus cadit et perit inter amicos." (Alexandreis X.382-5).

Dante inverts the imagery to furnish Ulysses with a literal drowning, "'l mar fu sovra noi richiuso" (Inferno XXVI.142). Likewise Walter's description of the sea at night here forms part of Ulysses' actual journey:

> Tutte le stelle già de l'altro polo
> vedea la notte, e 'l nostro tanto basso,
> che non surgea fuor del marin suolo.
> Cinque volte racceso e tante casso
> Lo lume era di sotto da la luna, (Inferno XXVI.127-31).

Dante's night sky provides a location for Ulysses' last night, and Ulysses himself becomes the *nauta* of Walter's imagery. Although Dante, like Walter, mentions the moon and the stars, his stars are not covered by cloud, and his moon shines. This variation suggests Ulysses' responsibility for his own fate, as he is not suddenly afflicted by a withdrawal of navigational signals, like the *nauta*, nor by a withdrawal of his star in the sense of good fortune, as Alexander is.

However, like that of Alexander, Ulysses' transgression is checked by a higher power. Alexander incurs the wrath of Nature and Leviathan, who send Proditio to destroy him. Walter draws attention to the fact that there is no opposition to the plan from fate, Fortune, or the gods:

> Quis furor, o superi? quid agis, Fortuna? tuumne
> Protectum tociens perimi patieris alumpnum?
> Si fati mutare nequis decreta uolentis
> Vt pereat Macedo saltim secreta reuela
> Carnificum. [...] (Alexandreis X.205-9).

They are all implicated in his downfall. But Dante shows, though allusively, the real power at work behind these neo-platonic figures which Walter's pagan narrative cannot explicitly exploit: Ulysses' fate is in the hands of the ultimate ruler of the universe, namely, the Christian God. He dies "com'altrui piacque" (XXVI.141).

For a fuller understanding of Dante's purpose in presenting this fallen hero, we need to look at

Walter's reasons for portraying a hero whom he finally condemns.

Walter highlights certain aspects of Alexander's character that he shows to be dangerous, and in conflict with *virtus*. Aristotle tells Alexander early in the poem that he has the potential for *virtus* which must be realised in action, "Materiam uirtutis habes, rem profer in actum" (I.83). But in spite of this potential, he shows signs of rashness, for example in leaping into the city of the Sudracae:

> Queritur an fortis facto an temerarius isto
> Rex fuerit, sed si contraria iungere curas,
> Et fortis fuit et facto temerarius isto [...] (Alexandreis IX.371-2).

Rashness is criticised elsewhere in the poem with the example of Nicanor and Symachus, whose "temeraria uirtus" has no limit: "nullo contenta modo est temeraria uirtus" (IX.117). Thus Walter shows that rashness is associated with over-ambition, and he offers precedents for Alexander's fate in others who aim too high and are destroyed as a result. Bessus and Philotas are examples of those who fall while metaphorically climbing. Philotas' literal fall emphasizes his metaphorical ruin:

> Princeps militiae factus ductorque cohortis
> Parmenione satus, modico post tempore lapsus,
> Scandere dum querit, fato dampnatus et exul
> Obruitur saxis. [...] (Alexandreis VIII.327-30);

Bessus' crucifixion is referred to as a metaphorical fall,

> Exitus hic Bessus. qui dum conscendere temptat,
> Labitur; imperium dum querit et imperat, in se
> Regreditur, domini ponens insignia seruus. (Alexandreis VIII.355-7);

and even Leviathan's fall foreshadows that of Alexander,

> [...] 'scelerum pater' inquit 'et ultor,
> Quem matutini superantem lumine uultum
> Luciferi tumor etherea deiecit ab arce,
> Ad te confugio tandem miserabilis, ad te,
> Quem, ne nulla tibi perdenti sydera sedes

Esset, in hac saltim terrarum nocte recepi.' (Alexandreis X.82-7).[18]

Alexander himself is warned to curb his ambition both by his men,

> Velle hominum dominos diis indignantibus esse;
> Astra infensa sibi solitumque negantia lumen;
> Prescriptos homini regem transcendere fines,
> Affectare polum, patriae contempnere sedes;
> Vnius ad laudem tot inire pericula, tantas
> Fortunae uariare uices. [...] (Alexandreis III.488-93),

and by his conquered enemy Porus, who says "ipse / Exemplum tibi sum" (IX.307-8). By ignoring these examples, Alexander is destroyed, and himself becomes an *exemplum* – "Magnus in exemplo est" (X.448).[19] He is an example of over-ambition, and of a life guided towards the wrong goal: instead of focusing on the "eternum [...] bonum" (Alexandreis X.434), he is waylaid by the "fallax gloria rerum" (X.437) that "Mortales oculos uanis circumuolat alis" (X.438).

The reference to God inherent in the notion of the *eternum bonum* suggests Alexander's lack of respect for divine power, and this is shown more specifically by his transgression of imposed limits. Nature appears as a neo-platonic divine force, compatible with notions of the Christian God. For Walter and the reader, who see her as a manifestation of God's power, it becomes apparent that Alexander, in his planned violation of the limits Nature has imposed on humankind, acts in violation of God's laws. The warnings to Alexander to curb his ambition function within the pagan framework of his narrative, and therefore Alexander is shown to ignore his own moral system. His ignorance of the true God is not permitted as an excuse for his excessive behaviour. Walter condemns Alexander not simply because, as a pagan, he lacks Christian *virtus*, but also because he is not a virtuous pagan.

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[18] Cf. Albert of Stade's Troilus: at the end of the poem, the poet addresses the reader, with a similar metaphorical warning against ruin – "Tu, qui sublimes conaris scandere turres, / Te lapsu subito praecipitante rues" VI.885-6.

[19] Here again we might compare Albert of Stade: "Ite! igitur per exemplum, genus o mortale reorum / Ad

This seems to be Dante's reason for his imitation and reiterated condemnation of the Alexander type of hero. As a virtuous pagan such as Ripheus (even though he is an exception) can enjoy Christian salvation, Dante shows that his condemnation of Ulysses is not merely because he is a pagan hero. Although Ulysses' motivation is not the "fallax gloria" that drives Alexander, he is not a figure of virtue. Ulysses' crimes of deception give him his place in the Christian hell, but again it is his transgression of an imposed limit that causes his death and is emphasized as his downfall.[20] It is not with Christian hindsight that Ulysses calls his last journey "folle volo" (125); even as a pagan he should have known not to challenge bounds imposed on mortals. Like Walter, Dante also brings out the relevance of such a transgression from a Christian perspective, using "martira" (Inferno XXVI.55), and by showing similarities between Ulysses and Adam. Adam confirms that seeking knowledge is not a sin, but that crossing a boundary without permission is:

> [...] non il gustar del legno
> fu per sé la cagion di tanto essilio,
> ma solamente il trapassar del segno. (Paradiso XXVI.115-7).[21]

Ulysses' fault is likened to original sin. Adam's "gustar del legno" is the tasting of the fruit of the tree of knowledge (in other words, the equivalent of Ulysses' search "a divenir del mondo esperto, / e de li vizi umani e del valore" Inferno XXVI.97-9),[22] but *legno* is used elsewhere in the Comedy for "boat". Ulysses' taste for sailing is thus equally well represented by "gustar del legno" as the sin of Adam and Eve. In addition to this, "ligno" is used in the Aeneid to refer to the Trojan Horse - a crime in which Ulysses was implicated -

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finem duxit quos mala vita malum" (Troilus VI.867-8).

[20] Cf. Petrarch Triumph of Fame II.18: Ulysses – "che desiò del mondo veder troppo", and III.13-4 – "Questo cantò gli errori e le fatiche / del figliuol di Laerte". By contrast there is one positive mention of him: "Quel sí pensoso è Ulisse, affabile ombra, / che la casta mogliera aspetta e prega" (Triumph of Desire III.22).

[21] Note also the structural parallel occasioned by Adam and Ulysses appearing in the XXVIth canto of Paradiso and Inferno respectively.

[22] Another warning against seeking the wrong sort of experience is given in relation to the giant Ephialtes, whose resting place is Hell: "Questo superbo volle essere sperto / di sua potenza contro 'l sommo Giove" (Inferno XXXI.91-2).

[...] sic notus Vlixes?
aut hoc inclusi ligno occultantur Achiui,
aut haec in nostros fabricata est machina muros, (Aeneid II.44-6).

The crimes of deception mentioned in the Aeneid give Ulysses his place in Dante's Hell. But the very word used by Vergil in describing one of these deceptions - "ligno" - is transformed by Dante to produce wider implications. The transgression of Ulysses as he himself presents it in Inferno XXVI has moved away from his deception in the Aeneid to a crime against God – the "gustar del legno" and the "trapassar del segno" first committed by Adam and Eve. [23]

But Dante makes his rejection of this hero who is doomed both within his own pagan system and from the Christian perspective more explicit than Walter. Even at the moment of death, Alexander thinks he is going to greater things:

[...] summum deinceps recturus Olympum
Ad maiora uocor, et me uocat arduus ether
Vt solium regni et sedem sortitus in astris
Cum Ioue disponam rerum secreta breuesque
Euentus hominum superumque negocia tractem. (Alexandreis X.405-9),

and while Walter shows the reality of Alexander's doom by describing his tomb,

[...] cui non suffecerat orbis,
Sufficit exciso defossa marmore terra
Quinque pedum fabricata domus, qua nobile corpus
Exigua requieuit humo [...] (Alexandreis X.448-51),

Dante goes a step further. Lest any ambiguity remain about the fate of such a hero, he pursues him to the afterlife to fix his location firmly in Hell. This extension of Walter's ambiguity towards and final condemnation of the classical hero reveals Dante's desire to clear the way for a new, alternative, heroic figure, with more relevance for the Christian reader and more potential in

[23] Dante also journeys "per dar lui esperienza piena" (Inferno XXVIII.48), but his difference from Ulysses is that he has God's permission. The use of "legno" here contrasts strongly with its positive connotation in Dante's invocation to Apollo in, where he says "vedra' mi al piè del tuo diletto legno / venire" (Paradiso I.25-6). The presumption that merely arriving in Purgatory will lead to the knowledge sought is also shown to be misguided: "Voi credete / forse che siamo esperti d'esto loco; / ma noi siam peregrin come voi siete" Purgatorio II.61-3.

a Christian universe.

Jason, the first man ever to sail, provides an example of a similar hero who is also condemned. Although Dante cites his crime as his treatment of Medea and Hypsipyle –

> Isifile ingannò [...]
> [...]
> Lasciolla quivi, gravida, soletta;
> tal colpa a tal martiro lui condanna;
> e anche di Medea si fa vendetta. (Inferno XVIII.92-6),

Jason is also mentioned in Purgatorio II, which begins with sailing imagery, and brings Ulysses to mind. The implied linking of the two sailors here through imagery strengthens the sense in which they provide a parallel example of heroic transgression. Joseph of Exeter also provides criticism of Jason:

> [...] aurique cupido
> audendi transgressa modum trans equora misit,
> qui raperent thalamos, spoliarent templa metallis.
> siccine mortalis finem metitur hiatus?" (De Bello Troiano I.61ff).[24]

Jason's position as a condemned pagan warrior hero with a penchant for sailing also shows him to be another version of the Ulysses type of hero from which Dante moves away.

How does Aeneas fit into this argument? The line I have taken could be seen as implying that he too, as a warrior hero from classical epic who is not located in heaven, shares in Ulysses' status as doomed hero. But while Dante does leave Aeneas behind as a hero that has no place in a Christian afterlife, and therefore unsuited to his poetic task, he is less categorical in his abandonment of him. For a start, he is confined to Limbo rather than hell, so lacks only the three theological virtues, rather than being sinful.[25] Secondly, the positive allegorisation of him that

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[24] Likewise "rapturus" is hardly positive: "Esonides primus undas assumsit in usus / Phryxeam rapturus ovem" (I.71-2).
[25] Dante's view of the status of Limbo is expressed by Vergil: "quivi sto io con quei che le tre sante / virtú non si vestiro, e sanza vizio / conobber l'altre e seguir tutte quante" (Purgatorio VII.34-6).

took place in late antiquity and the Middle Ages provides him with a meaning beyond that attributed to him in classical literature.[26] For this reason, it is less of a step for Dante to take in developing the allegorised Aeneas into a new kind of hero than it is to do the same with a figure such as Ulysses. But his limitations as a classical figure still necessitate a change of some sort, as Dante suggests by moving forward from him.

2.2.3. Dante as an Alternative to Ulysses.

Dante's portrayal of himself as the hero of his poem is clearly a new departure within the epic tradition, as will be discussed in greater detail below. Although Dante moves away from the Ulysses model of heroism, he is clearly fascinated by him, and returns to him in the narrative, comparing his own progress with that of the condemned Greek. Ulysses (and therefore also Alexander) functions as the basis upon which Dante builds his new hero, as parallels between them show. Most of these well-documented similarities merely reinforce the difference between the two, and emphasize the new ground that Dante as hero is breaking.[27] At the very beginning of the poem, Dante uses an image of himself that suggests his success where Ulysses failed. In a simile to describe his inability to reach the pass, Dante presents himself as one who has escaped to a shore:

> [...] come quei che con lena affannata
> uscito fuor del pelago a la riva
> si volge a l'acqua perigliosa e guata (Inferno I.22-4).

His escape mirrors the escape that Ulysses would have hoped for as he drowned in sight of land.

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[26] See Comparetti (1997), ch.8. Dante gives him divine authorisation – "e' fu de l'alma Roma e di suo impero / ne l'empireo ciel per padre eletto" (Inferno II.20-21), giving him a lasting legacy that has value in Christian terms. He is also "giusto" (Inferno I.73-4).

[27] Thompson (1974, pp. 64-73) covers specific shared detail: *esperienza* (Inferno XXVI.116 / XXVIII.48); *cammino* (XXVI.122 / I.35); *alto passo* (XXVI.132 / I.26-7); a *folle* journey (XVI.125 / II.35); *falso piacer* (Purgatorio XXXI.34-6 / XIX.19-21). Kirkpatrick (1987, pp. 345ff) points out the repetition of "com' altrui piacque" and "esperto" in Purgatorio I.130-6, and the shore untouched by sailors, arguing that Dante dramatizes the reconciliation with the "altrui" of Inferno XXVI, but he argues that the initial points of similarity give way to a range of contrasts, for example Dante's humility compared with Ulysses' *hubris*.

In other words, Dante's starting point (on a metaphorical shore) is a step on from where Ulysses' journey ended. Dante could even be playing with this connection through Ulysses' ambiguous reference to his ship - "il primo canto" (Inferno XXVI.138) - which directs the reader straight back to Inferno I and the image of Dante as one who has escaped from the sea.[28]

Later in the poem, Dante refers to his journey as though it were a sea voyage:

> O voi che siete in piccioletta barca,
> desiderosi d'ascoltar, seguiti
> dietro al mio legno che cantando varca,
> tornate a riveder li vostri liti:
> non vi mettete in pelago, ché forse,
> perdendo me, rimarreste smarriti.
> L'acqua ch'io prendo già mai non si corse; (Paradiso II.1-7),

and although his ploughing of unfurrowed seas and encouragement of his followers likens him to Ulysses, Frankel sees the passage as a further condemnation of the Greek.[29] She argues that Dante's advice to his followers here is much more cautious than that which Ulysses gives to his men, and that this caution, given the parallels between the two, shows Dante to be in a sense a better hero than Ulysses. Dante's dream of the siren in Purgatorio XIX also links him with Ulysses,[30] but the link is used to show difference, as where Ulysses managed to withstand the song of the siren on account of his own heroic strength, Dante is saved from the sound by a holy lady.[31] Thus Dante places himself briefly in the role of classical epic hero, only to withdraw himself in a manner that emphasizes the Christian nature of his poem. Dante's journey is also a search for an experience of knowledge: Vergil explains his own role as "per dar lui esperienza

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[28] Both are, of course, attempting to reach a mountain: in Dante's case it is "il dilettoso monte" (Inferno I.77), and for Ulysses, "una montagna, bruna / per la distanza" (Inferno XXVI.133). In both cases it seems to be Mount Purgatory.

[29] Frankel (1986, pp. 106-7) argues that Dante incarnates his old self (the self of the Convivio) in Ulysses, and condemns him to show a rejection of that state.

[30] Cf. Purgatorio XIX: the Siren who appears to Dante in a dream also appeared to Ulysses - "Io volsi Ulisse del suo cammin vago / al canto mio": the "cammin" reminds us of Dante's own journey – "nel mezzo del cammin" (Inferno I.1), where Dante had lost the "diritta via".

[31] This suggests Dante is more akin to Aeneas, who receives help from a heavenly woman (Venus) throughout the Aeneid.

wisdom, claiming in the Convivio that:

> [...] tutti li uomini naturalmente desiderano di sapere. La ragione di che puote essere ed è che ciascuna cosa, da providenza di propria natura impinta, è inclinabile a la sua propria perfezione; onde, acciò che la scienza è ultima perfezione de la nostra anima, ne la quale sta la nostra felicitade, tutti naturalmente al suo desiderio semo subietti. (Convivio I).

Nardi's statement that "non è consentito alla ragione umana di violare i segreti divini" (1942, p. 96) needs qualification: access to such secrets is only forbidden when God himself is unwilling, as in the case of both Alexander and Ulysses. But Dante has divine power on his side, and is aware of his past error and his own limits. For Ulysses awareness came too late. As Kirkpatrick (1987, p. 346) argues,

> [...] in Purgatorio I it is triumphantly clear that the mind can only function at its best – avoiding false counsel and rejoicing in true 'esperienza' – when it does acknowledge the limits that are proper to it.

Dante is concerned to avoid the "folle volo" of Ulysses, and thereby shows an awareness of human limits.[32] He assumes Ulysses' journey, picking up where the earlier hero left off, on the shore of the Earthly Paradise near to where the Greek ship sank, in language that is an explicit echo of the episode involving the Greek:

> Venimmo poi in sul lito diserto,
> che mai non vide navicar sue acque
> omo che di tornar sia poscia esperto. (Purgatorio I.130-2).

But although he turns his mind to the ancient hero twice more, the references serve both to reinforce his condemnation, and to emphasize the spiritual distance between the two figures, signified by the literal distance Dante has travelled away from him.

With the condemnation of Ulysses, Dante affirms the need for something more than classical heroism, virtue, or knowledge, for humanity's ultimate goal of salvation: he emphasizes the need for grace. The poetic structure of the Comedy requires a hero on whom the effects of grace can

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[32] Inferno II.35 "temo che la venuta non sia folle". Note that Dante speaks of his own "follia" (Purgatorio

for grace. The poetic structure of the Comedy requires a hero on whom the effects of grace can be revealed, who is not a priori doomed to failure, and through whom we might see our own way. It is the Ulysses episode that clears the path for such a hero. Pazzaglia (1989, p. 127) argues that

> il registro epico della vicenda d'Ulisse viene dissolto nella rigida prospettiva teologica di Purgatorio I.130-2, e ancor più nella dimensione emblematica di Paradiso XXVII.82-8, dove tuttavia il "varco folle" diventa punto cardinale nella geografia d'un itinerario salvifico.

In response to this, I suggest that the epic tone of the episode is not lost, but absorbed into the figure of Dante, the newly evolved epic hero of his age, and that the "itinerario salvifico" becomes the new epic journey.[33] To understand better the kind of hero that Dante represents, the sorts of tasks he is to perform, and the relation of this new kind of hero to the epic genre, I turn now to a medieval epic precedent for the new role of the epic hero.

2.3. The Hero and the Heavenly Journey.

Dante was not the first to look beyond the heroic exemplar of Ulysses, Aeneas, Jason, and Walter's Alexander for a hero suited to a new kind of epic poem. Alain of Lille's criticism of Walter's Alexandreis and Joseph's De bello troiano suggests a tiredness about epic:

> Illic pannoso plebescit carmine noster
> Ennius et Priami fortunas intonat; illic
> Mevius, in celos audens os ponere mutum,
> Gesta ducis Macedum tenebrosi carminis umbra
> Pingere dum temptat, in primo limine fessus
> Heret et ignauam queritur torpescere musam; (Anticlaudianus I.165-70).

In the Anticlaudianus, Alain offers a way out of this epic impasse by exploring allegorical epic writing that contains new types of hero. I will illustrate how his reformulation of the epic hero provides a foundation for that of Dante, who draws both on the character of Prudence (and to some extent the New Man), and on her new epic journey. Like Prudence, Dante the hero ascends through the heavens to an audience with God, and many details of the journey in the Latin epic

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Paradiso XXVII.82 - "io vedea di là da Gade il varco / folle d'Ulisse".

[33] On the idea of the *miles christianus*, see Bolgar (1971). Images of arms were also used to describe holy

parallel that in Dante's poem.

2.3.1. The Guides.

Dante, like Prudence, is guided through an otherwordly realm unknown to him, following the precedent set in Aeneid VI when Aeneas is guided through the Underworld by the Sibyl.[34] Prudence embarks on her journey with Reason, who, acting as her charioteer, guides her in the literal level of the poem in a very practical way. But her allegorical role is also apparent: she tames the five senses (signified by the Five Horses that pull the chariot), and provides an understanding of all that pertains to the senses in the heavenly spheres. But both the senses, and Reason who governs them, have limits which are exceeded by Prudence on her journey, and thus become redundant. Prudence grows confused just as she is about to ascend to the Empyrean:

> [...] heret
> Mens animusque fluit, dubitat cum mente uoluntas
> Ipsa nec in certo defigitur anchora mentis. (Anticlaudianus V.43-5).

Emphasis is placed on the difficulty of the ascent - "Difficilis consensus ad hanc facilisque recessus" (V.57), and "Difficiles igitur aditus facilemque ruinam" (V.70), and the horses, similarly tested, halt "uictique labore" (72). Reason, losing control over them - "Non Racio sursum deflectere possit habenas" (76), becomes redundant, and is replaced by a "puella poli".

Dante echoes this by having Vergil, who is allegorically associated with reason, as his guide through Hell and Purgatory.[35] Like Alain's charioteer who relied on the skill of the Seven Liberal Arts in creating the vehicle for the heavenly ascent, he guides Dante "con arte", but also falters like Alain's Reason:

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men, for example Bernard of Clairvaux calls St Malachy God's "bellator" (Life of Malachy 17.7-8, p. 228).
[34] Dante's Vergil thus parallels the Sibyl in the Aeneid, which has interesting implications for the Vergil character's capacity for prophecy and truth.
[35] "per gli antichi commentatori Virgilio è sostanzialmente la ragione umana", Consoli, Enciclopedia Dantesca, vol.5, p.1039.

[...] Il temporal foco e l'etterno
veduto hai, figlio; e se' venuto in parte
dov'io per me piú oltre non discerno.
Tratto t'ho qui con ingegno e con arte; (Purgatorio XXVII.127-30).

Vergil continues to accompany Dante for three more canti, but after he resigns from his role as guide, "lo tuo piacere omai prendi per duce" (XXVII.131), the next person to appear is a heavenly maiden to lead him further - "e là m'apparve [...] una donna soletta" (Purgatorio XXVIII.37-40).

Dante's treatment of the maiden also echoes the Anticlaudianus. Alain's "puella poli" (also called "regina" – VI.19) is not named,[36] and Dante's Matelda – the first maiden to appear to the hero in the Earthly Paradise - is not named for five canti after she makes her entrance, appearing at first as "bella donna" (Purgatorio XXVIII.43). The *puella poli* gleams,

[...] tanto fulgore decoris
Preminet ut stellas preditet fulgure, lumen
Lumine multiplicans et lucem luce, nec ipsi
Lumen adoptiuum largiri censet Olimpo. (Anticlaudianus V.91-4),

and is likened to a goddess on account of her beauty:

[...] Hanc argumenta decoris
Esse deam monstrant, instancia nulla refellit
Quod decor ipse probat faciesque simillima celo. (Anticlaudianus V.98-100).

Like her, Matelda also shines, and is said to excel the goddess of beauty herself:

non credo che splendesse tanto lume
sotto le ciglia a Venere, trafitta
dal figlio fuor di tutto suo costume. (Purgatorio XXVIII.64-6).

Dante's focus on Venus rather than Alain's non-specific "deam" is appropriate not only on account of Venus' beauty, which Dante does not dwell on, but also because of Venus' role as goddess of love. Matelda's brilliance reflects the love of God that shines in all the regions of heaven, and therefore to liken this brilliance to that of the classical figure of love shows Dante's

[36] Several critics attempt to identify her, including the poem's editor Bossuat (1955), whose page headings

blending of pagan and Christian themes. Matelda guides Dante through the Earthly Paradise to Beatrice, a second heavenly maiden, echoing a second maiden in the Anticlaudianus who aids Prudence when she ails under the *puella poli*'s care, and leads her to God. Alain's second female figure is named as "Fides" (VI.23). She is the sister of the *puella poli,* and is superior to Prudence's first guide, Reason:

> [...]celeste profundum
> Scrutatur solisque Dei penetralibus heret,
> Cui Racio nichil affirmat, cui sufficit ipsa
> Credulitas et sola Fides, Racione remota. (Anticlaudianus VI.19-22).

The *puella poli* and Faith are linked by sisterhood. Similarly, Dante links Matelda and Beatrice with a shared reference to Venus and love. When Beatrice appears, Dante's feelings are expressed through a Vergilian reminiscence - "d'antico amor sentí la gran potenza" (Purgatorio XXX.39), which echoes Dido's words about her love (caused by Venus) for Aeneas - "agnosco ueteris uestigia flammae" (Aeneid IV.23). This mention of "amor", followed by praise of Beatrice's beauty

> O isplendor di viva luce etterna,
> chi palido si fece sotto l'ombra
> sí di Parnaso, o bevve in sua cisterna,
> che non paresse aver la mente ingombra,
> tentando a render te qual tu paresti
> là dove armonizzando il ciel t'adombra,
> quando nell'aere aperto ti solvesti? (Purgatorio XXXI.139-45),

brings Matelda and her beauty to mind. By linking Matelda's beauty to that of Venus, the link between the two maidens comes full circle. Matelda receives Dante from Vergil's care, and leads him until Beatrice takes over. Alain's *puella poli* leads Prudence from the guidance of Reason, and hands her over to Faith. Thus there is a precedent for Dante's progression as hero from a figure of Reason to two successive heavenly women in this earlier epic.

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name her as Theology. See Dronke (1966), p.120.

2.3.2. The Mirror Device.

Like Prudence, Dante is dazzled by heavenly light, so Beatrice, just like Alain's Faith, presents him with a means of growing accustomed to the light without being overwhelmed. Under the guidance of the *puella poli*, Prudence enters the Empyrean, but is dazzled and afflicted by a torpor that even an "exquisita [...] pocio" (Anticlaudianus VI.106) cannot cure:

> Languescit tamen exterior nec ferre nitorem
> Sustinet empireum nec tantum fulgur Olimpi. (VI.114-5).

It is only Faith's provision of a mirror that enables her to bear the light:

> Hoc speculum mediator adest, ne copia lucis
> Empiree, radians uisum, depauperet usum. (Anticlaudianus VI.127-8).[37]

Dante gives this image of the mirror a wider application in the Comedy, as all the inhabitants of heaven act as mirrors of God's light. For example, Cacciaguida's soul shines "si fe' prima corusca, / quale a raggio di sole specchio d'oro" (Paradiso XVII.122-3), and is referred to as "quello specchio beato" (XVIII.2), and Adam reads Dante's desires from the divine mirror:

> [...] io la veggio nel verace speglio
> che fa di sé pareglio a l'altre cose,
> e nulla face lui di sé pareglio. (Paradiso XXVI.106-8).[38]

But more importantly, Dante's guide (like Alain's Faith) provides him with a mirror. The difference here is that the mirror is her own eyes:

> fin che 'l piacere etterno, che diretto
> raggiava in Beatrice, dal bel viso
> mi contentava col secondo aspetto (Paradiso XVIII.16-8).

She produces a true reflection of God's radiance, as Dante shows in this simile:

> 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

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[37] Also - "Oblatum Fronesi uisum deffendit ab omni / Luminis occursu speculum, ne debriet illam / Celestis splendor oculosque reuerberet ignis." VI.204-6.
[38] See also Paradiso IX.61-2.

li dice il vero, e vede ch'el s'accorda
con esso come nota con suo metro;
cosí la mia memoria si ricorda
ch'io feci riguardando ne' belli occhi
onde a pigliarmi fece Amor la corda. (Paradiso XXVIII.4-12).

She reflects the "piacere etterno" into Dante's eyes, so that his eyes also become a mirror:

"Ficca di retro a li occhi tuoi la mente,
e fa di quelli specchi a la figura
che 'n questo specchio ti sarà parvente." (Paradiso XXI.16-18).

Like Prudence, Dante is dazzled:

Oh vero sfavillar del Santo Spiro!
come si fece subito e candente
a li occhi miei che, vinti, non soffriro! (Paradiso XIV.76-8)

and even physically afflicted by heaven's brilliance,

Qual è colui ch'adocchia e s'argomenta
di vedere eclissar lo sole un poco,
che, per veder, non vedente diventa;
tal mi fec'io a quell'ultimo foco (Paradiso XXV.118-121).[39]

But rather than relying on an external mirror to help overcome this (as Prudence does), Dante's focus is on improving his own function as a mirror of God's light. As he moves closer to God, his wish to see better is expressed in terms of making a better mirror of his eyes:

come fec'io, per far migliori spegli
ancor de li occhi [...] (Paradiso XXX.85-6),

thereby imitating Beatrice and the angels (Paradiso XXIX.142-5). His transformation of the mirror device from object to person highlights his didactic purpose. His living mirrors act as examples for Dante the hero to become a mirror himself, to show that he does not need to rely on an external device. Dante's achievement in learning to use his own eyes as a mirror is greater than that of Prudence, who remains reliant on the mirror given to her by Faith, and his vision of God is more direct. Dante emphasizes the need for and the possibility of the self to achieve a

[39] Cilento (1957-8, p. 33) mentions the similarity: "Come Dante, la Prudenza oppressa dalla grandezza delle visioni cade in un alto sonno."

vision of God.[40]

The Anticlaudianus portrays two heroes. The first is Prudence, a personified virtue, whose epic task is to ascend to God to collect a perfect human soul. The second is the New Man, who, armed with powers of the Virtues, engages in a *psychomachia* against vice, and reestablishes the Golden Age on earth. The personification (Prudence) and the representative of humanity (New Man) need to be considered allegorically, if we are to understand the poet's purpose in using them. Thus Alain shifts the focus of his poem from the literal level that is prevalent in classical epic to a spiritual and allegorical level. (That is, he writes his poem as he would have understood classical epic through the medium of allegorical commentaries.)

Dante the hero also has allegorical significance, and is commonly seen as fulfilling the journey of everyman. He seeks a way out of vice by agreeing to follow Vergil, as well as more literally agreeing to follow him from a dark place.[41] His epic journey is a spiritual struggle more than a test of physical strength, and its purpose is to cleanse his soul so that, like the New Man, he can return to earth and attempt to aid others in finding the divine. Alain's poem offers Dante an example of how this new kind of epic hero can function, but, in using him as a foundation, Dante goes beyond Alain's achievement.

2.4. Dante and Religion.

Dante's choice of hero also allows for a shift in presentation of the divine, thus again he goes a step beyond Alain. Walter suggests the need for a Christian hero; Alain portrays two non-pagan heroes who are compatible with an allegorical Christian universe; Dante goes a step further by presenting himself as a Christian epic hero in an explicitly Christian universe. He thus resolves

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[40] Cf. "te sovra te corono e mitrio" (Purgatorio XXVII.142).

some of the divine issues facing medieval writers of epic that resurface with Petrarch and Boccaccio. However, although Christianity is openly portrayed throughout the narrative, and although Dante's view of paganism is stated clearly in the first canto – "li dei falsi e bugiardi" (Inferno I.72), not all divine matters are entirely straightforward. How are we to understand references to these lying gods (including invocations from the author himself) in a clearly Christian universe?

Ten of the twelve Olympian gods are mentioned in the poem. Many of these references are to mythological stories, for example Juno, "Nel tempo che Iunone era crucciata / per Semelè contro 'l sangue tebano" (Inferno XXX.1-2), and,

> Vedea Timbreo, vedea Pallade e Marte,
> armati ancor, intorno al padre loro,
> mirar le membra d'i Giganti sparte (Purgatorio XII.31-3).

Olympian names are also used to describe particular phenomena, for example the "figlia di Latona" who is mentioned several times simply means the moon,[42] "Nettuno" is a synonym for the sea,[43] and "Marte" stands either for war or the influences that lead to it.[44] The names are also used to describe the planets. These uses of gods' names are not problematic, as they simply enrich Dante's poetry, and do not present the gods as powers. The issue becomes more complicated when some sort of power or history is implied. For example, Dante refers to two fathers of Florence: the "primo padrone", who is Mars, and the "Batista", representing the Christian force that takes over. It is perhaps telling that the reference to Mars is voiced by a condemned suicide in hell with no hope of salvation, and with nothing to lose by mentioning an Olympian in an historical context.

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[41] Common interpretation links the three beasts in Inferno I with vice.
[42] Purgatorio XXIX.78; Paradiso X.67, XXII.139, XXIII.26, XXIX.1.
[43] "non vide mai sí gran fallo Nettuno" (Inferno XXVIII.83); "che fe' Nettuno ammirar l'ombra d'Argo" (Paradiso XXXIII.96).
[44] Inferno XXXI.51.

error in believing in them, speaking of the ancients "ne l'antico errore", with reference to their belief in Venus (Paradiso VIII.6),[45] and explicitly contrasting pagan worship with Christian:

> Lí si cantò non Bacco, non Peana,
> ma tre persone in divina natura (Paradiso XIII.25-6).

On the other hand, he suggests some degree of Christian compatibility when he calls on Apollo in the opening of Paradiso. His description of Apollo as "O divina virtù" (I.22) echoes that used of God in Inferno V - "la virtú divina" (36) - and "padre" (I.28) is a typical means of addressing the Christian God. This seems to suggest a parallel between the two which conflicts with the idea that Apollo's voice ("Peana", quoted above) is not heard in heaven.[46] Dante the poet needs Apollo's help to bring him through Paradiso, just as the Dante protagonist needs God's grace to reach the central point of paradise: both are essential to his enterprise. The invocation also mentions Minerva and the Muses, suggesting that for them too there is a role beyond their fictional pagan powers. In the case of Minerva, some ground has already been prepared for making her acceptable, as Beatrice appears garlanded with "le fronde di Minerva" (Purgatorio XXX.68). The Muses are "o sante Muse" (Purgatorio I.8), thus it would seem that powers connected with poetry are given special status in Dante's Christian world.

Jupiter is also presented as somewhat of a split personality. Mentions of him in Inferno are made by, or concern, pagans, and seem to refer to Jupiter as an Olympian. For example, he is

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[44] Inferno XXXI.51.

[45] Sapegno notes that in the Convivio, Dante says that love is caused by the Holy Spirit, not by a goddess. This is echoed in the Comedy, where Dante does not attempt to assimilate her into his Christian scheme in the way he does with Apollo and Jupiter. The other two mentions of Venus in the Comedy are: sinners in Purgatory cite her alongside Diana and Helice ("di Venere avea sentito il tosco" Purg. XXV.132); Matelda excels her in beauty ("non credo che splendesse tanto lume / sotto le ciglia a Venere, trafitta / dal figlio" Purgatorio XXVIII.64-6), which shows Venus herself at a moment of weakness, not as a powerful goddess. Note that in the Anticlaudianus the New Man slaughters Venus (IX.242ff) – Alain has no place for her in his universe containing God.

[46] For Apollo as allegory of Christ, see the Ovidius Moralizatus. For further instances of Dante's Christianisation of the pagan, note the demonisation of Charon ("Caron demonio" Inferno III.109), Cerberus ("lo demonio Cerbero" Inferno VI.32), and Pluto ("maladetto lupo" Inferno VII.8, i.e. a demon of greed).

mentioned by Capaneus (Inferno XIV.52ff), who is himself a mythological figure, and by Ephialtes, who, again as a mythological giant set his power against "il sommo Giove" (Inferno XXXI.92). But in Purgatorio we are presented with Jupiter as the Christian God: "O sommo Giove / che fosti in terra per noi crucifisso" (Purgatorio VI.118-9), echoing the words used by Ephialtes for Jupiter the Olympian. While the "uccel di Giove" (Purgatorio XXXII.112) in the Earthly Paradise clearly again refers to the Christian God, mention of Jupiter in the same breath as Mercury and Mars in Paradiso IV.62 complicates the matter, as all three names are cited there as planetary influences.

While Dante's attitude to and treatment of the Olympians is at times ambiguous, he is clear in his opinion of another divine figure who is given responsibility for much that happens in medieval epic. Fortune, an ambiguous force in the Alexandreis and Anticlaudianus (and throughout much literature of the Middle Ages) is firmly set in place by Dante as a force acting on God's behalf in a Christian universe:

> Colui lo cui saver tutto trascende,
> fece li cieli e diè lor chi conduce
> sí ch'ogne parte ad ogne parte splende, (Inferno VII.73-5).

Fortuna "provede, giudica, e persegue / suo regno come il loro li altri dei" (86-7), by which he means she takes her place with God's ministers - "con l'altre prime creature lieta / volve sua spera e beata si gode" (95-6).

To conclude, by choosing a Christian hero, Dante gives himself greater freedom in his presentation of the divine. Building on the steps taken in the presentation of God in the Anticlaudianus, he places an unambiguously Christian God at the centre of his universe, and surrounds him not with allegorical figures of virtues, as Alain does, but with a full throng of

surrounds him not with allegorical figures of virtues, as Alain does, but with a full throng of angels and holy ministers, as well as portraying Satan and devils.[47] Having taken this step, Dante can openly challenge beliefs he thinks are mistaken, as he does with Venus and Fortune, without compromising the truth of his own narrative. There is no major struggle between pagan and Christian in the narration of the Comedy, as Dante has chosen a Christian world viewed through the eyes of a Christian protagonist. There is simply no need for Olympians, and when they do appear in some guise, they are without power and substance.

2.5. The Creation of the Poet Hero.

In considering the role of Dante as epic hero, a further obstacle presents itself: a hero's deeds are normally recounted by a narrator in the third person. By presenting his poem in the first person, Dante seems to be aligning the work with genres other than epic. While there has been speculation on the texts that might have inspired Dante in this - vision literature (Liber Scalae), the confession genre (Augustine, Abelard), Boethius, or classical writers such as Horace, Juvenal, or Ovid - an obvious influence has been overlooked.[48] I suggest that this apparent departure from epic is itself a development of an epic *topos*, namely, the hero recounting his deeds to an assembled band of listeners, for example, Odyssey IX-XII, or Aeneas in Aeneid II-III. Without disputing the importance of influences such as Augustine and Boethius, I suggest that Dante's combination of hero and poet (which results in the two becoming one) is an expansion of the voice of the epic hero as we find it in classical epic. Again we see in earlier medieval epic an increasing prominence given to the role of poet and a growing connection between poet and hero.

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[47] By contrast Alain surrounds his Leviathan with personified vices.

[48] See Morgan (1990), and Villari (1865), on vision literature as sources for Dante. The origins of first person narrative are considered briefly by Bloomfield (1971), p.34ff. He suggests that the major influences on Dante and Chaucer's use of "I" was the Romance of the Rose and Alain of Lille. He suggests Horace, Juvenal, Ovid, Boethius, and Augustine as the inspiration for Alain and Guillaume. We might add Brunetto

The Anticlaudianus provides an example of the increasing importance of the poet in epic narration. Chance (1983, p. 241) sees the poem as a defence of art; an illustration of what poetry can achieve; and argues:

> As the stages in the creation of the New Man shift, so does the poet (or Artist) change, as if the 'persona' were the epic hero himself.[49]

Genius, she argues, is depicted as an artist (specifically an epic poet) to indicate that the best of man lies in his potential to create. Vergil's "arms and the man" are interpreted by Alain allegorically, she says, and the arms become the powers of the mind:

> Wedding the classical type of the epic hero to the Christian role of the artist, he [Alain] becomes a true Homo Novus – the Artist as Epic Hero. (p.247).

Let us consider the emphasis that Alain gives to the idea of a new role for the epic poet.

On the threshold of the Empyrean, Alain sets a new poetic programme. In language reminiscent of Vergil's Eclogues he sets aside his "tenui [...] Musa susurro" (Anticlaudianus V.265), and the "fragilis uersus" of his enterprise thus far, choosing a "maiorem [...] liram" over the "parua" of the work to this point.[50] To effect this elevation, he must become a prophet; in other words a direct channel of God's truth. In order to fulfill this new role, he needs God's help, represented by "Musa Ioui" (V.271). This programmatic statement plays on the invocation in the verse prologue to the poem. Echoing his earlier words,

> Autoris mendico stilum falerasque poete,
> Ne mea segnicie Clio directa senescat,
> Ne iaceat calamus scabra rubigine torpens. (verse prologue 1-3),

Alain says: "Carminis huius ero calamus, non scriba uel actor"(V.273) – he will be the prophet or vessel rather than the creator.[51] A long invocation to the "Summe parens, eterne Deus

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Latini's Tesoretto to this list, as well as the De Vetula, referred to in Chapter 1 of this thesis.

[49] She argues that four digressions in the narrative illustrate this.

[50] Cf. "paulo maiora canamus", Vergil, Eclogue IV.1.

[51] This image of the writer as God's pen occurs in Gregory's Moralia in Job, Preface 2: "Cum ergo rem cognoscimus, ejusque rei Spiritum Sanctum auctorem tenemus, quia scriptorem quaerimus, quid aliud

uiuensque potestas" (278ff) follows, and this new source of inspiration will repair its vehicle (the poet) - "Tu repara calamum, purga rubigine linguam" (V.301), just as Alain prayed for his pen to be renewed for him in the verse prologue. The fountain of inspiration requested in the opening invocation - "Fonte tuo sic, Phebe, tuum perfunde poetam" (verse prologue, 7) becomes the "fontem sicienti" (V.303) provided by God himself. Thus the re-evocation of the same imagery highlights the changing role of the poet.

To emphasize that a writer cannot proceed further without heavenly aid, Alain reveals the failure of *intellectus*, *ratio*, and *sapientia* in the Empyrean, and the impotence of classical writers:

> [...] heret
> Intellectus, hebet racio, sapiencia nutat,
> Tullius ipse silet, mutescit musa Maronis,
> Languet Aristotiles, Ptholomei sensus obumbrat (Anticlaudianus V.369-72).

We have seen that Dante also draws a line beyond which Vergil, as a character and poet, in spite of his *intellectus*, *ratio*, and *sapientia*, can no longer explain things, and that a new epic poet is required for this elevated task.[52] Alain shows that with divine aid he can proceed further into the mysteries of nature and the secrets of heaven than classical writers. His words on his changing art -

> Hactenus insonuit tenui mea Musa susurro,
> Hactenus in fragili lusit mea pagina uersu,
> Phebea resonante cheli; sed parua resignans,
> Maiorem nunc tendo liram totumque poetam
> Deponens, usurpo michi noua uerba prophete.
> Celesti Muse terrenus cedet Apollo,
> Musa Ioui, uerbisque poli parencia cedent
> Verba soli, tellusque locum concedet Olimpo. (Anticlaudianus V.265-72),

precede an invocation to "Summe parens, eterne Deus uiuensque potestas" (278).

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agimus, nisi legentes litteras, de calamo percontamur?" Note that Vergil is described as "autore" (Inferno I.85), a position that Dante must exceed by becoming a vessel for God's words, hence a prophet. Cf. In the final sonnet of the Teseida, the Muses refer to Boccaccio as "o vate" (12), suggesting that he has, by the end, become a poet-prophet.

[52] Hence Dante's references to raising poetry in Purgatorio I.8 and IX.70ff.

Dante casts himself in the role of prophet from the start of Paradiso, combining the two roles of poet and hero in one.[53] The invocation in the first canto of Paradiso calls, like Alain's opening invocation, on Apollo,

> O buono Apollo, a l'ultimo lavoro
> fammi del tuo valor sí fatto vaso,
> come dimandi a dar l'amato alloro. (Paradiso I.13-5),

and the emphasis is on Dante as vehicle for God's truth ("vaso" equating with Alain's "calamus"). He expresses the need for greater divine help than required thus far:

> Infino a qui l'un giogo di Parnaso
> assai mi fu; ma or con amendue
> m'è uopo intrar nell'aringo rimaso. (Paradiso I.16-8),

showing that even simple authorial tasks involve tremendous effort in heaven:

> O diva Pegasea che li 'ngegni
> fai gloriosi e rendili longevi,
> ed essi teco le cittadi e'regni,
> illustrami di te, sí ch'io rilevi
> le lor figure com'io l'ho concette:
> paia tua possa in questi versi brevi! (Paradiso XVIII.82-7).

The divine nature of his poem is later referred to: "'l poema sacro / al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra" (Paradiso XXV.1-2), and suggests once more that he, as the earthly part of the equation, becomes, with the help of heaven, a vehicle for the heavenly.

The linking of poet and hero is made explicit in Dante's exhortation to his reader in Paradiso II ("mio legno che cantando varca"; "L'acqua ch'io prendo" 3ff). I mentioned the passage earlier in a discussion of the contrasts and similarities between Dante and Ulysses, but its real import is its poetic context. The image of sailing reinforces the epic nature of Dante's task, but is used to highlight the poetic purpose behind Dante the protagonist's journey through heaven.[54] The

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[53] He has also been prophesied – "forse è nato / chi l'uno e l'altro caccerà del nido" (Purgatorio XI.98-9).
[54] Sailing is of course a commonly used poetic image for writing, but it perhaps worth noting that Alain uses

hero's literal journey within the narrative is combined with awareness of the poetic voyage of the poet under the guidance of Apollo, Minerva, and the Muses. Dante the poet-hero will be a greater source of admiration than Jason the hero - "non s'ammiraron come voi farete" (Paradiso II.17), because he is driven not like the "gloriosi" who seek fame and riches, but by "La concreta e perpetua sete / del deiforme regno" (19-20). Dante's metaphorical sailing is of a more useful kind than Jason's or Ulysses' literal journey, and runs parallel to the other main sailing metaphor, used for the Church:

> Pensa oramai qual fu colui che degno
> collega fu a mantener la barca
> di Pietro in alto mar per dritto segno (Paradiso XI.118-20).

As a poet, he will be able to share with others his experience of God's truth.

Entering the Empyrean, Dante leaves Apollo behind and appeals, like Alain, to God himself:

> O isplendor di Dio, per cu'io vidi
> l'alto triunfo del regno verace,
> dammi virtú a dir com'io il vidi! (Paradiso XXX.97-9),

and God is the object of the final invocation of the poem:

> O somma luce che tanto ti levi
> da'concetti mortali, a la mia mente
> ripresta un poco di quel che parevi,
> a fa la lingua mia tanto possente,
> ch'una favilla sol de la tua gloria
> possa lasciare a la futura gente; (Paradiso XXXIII.67-72).

Like a prophet, Dante seeks to enlighten those who come after him, but the enormity of the task is once more emphasised, as to take away even "una favilla sol" of God's glory, requires the help of the most powerful being in the universe. This – the ultimate task that requires God's aid – is the new epic task required of the new epic hero.

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the image of himself – in his invocation to God he says "duc nauta ratem portumque timenti / Dona, celesti perflans mea carbasa uento" (V.304-5).

Dante's meeting with Cacciaguida in Paradiso XV highlights this new role of the poet-hero, stressing through prophecy Dante's own forthcoming role as prophet. We see how Dante, after his words in Inferno II, becomes to some extent a combination of Aeneas and Paul, that is, a hero and a poet-prophet. He shows similarities with Aeneas in having his future prophesied by the Anchises (Cacciaguida) figure, and he becomes the "everyman" to whom Aeneas was allegorized, but the future reveals his task as the prophet, hence Pauline, figure.[55] Dante's epic task is to set in words what he is shown throughout his otherwordly journey: "rimossa ogni menzogna, / tutta tua vision fa manifesta" (Paradiso XVII.127-8). Like a prophet, his vision of the truth will provide goodness for others, "vital nodrimento / lascerà" (131-2), and, like an epic hero, he will gain honour, "e ciò non fa d'onor poco argomento" (135). As the reformulated hero, Dante the character is not used to provide an example, as Alexander is, but rather, as poet-hero, he is provided with the *material*, and the poetic means, with which to provide an "essemplo" for others (140).[56] This he does by revealing the fates of those who have died, and the achievement of a flawed human in reaching a vision of God though grace.

Expanding on ideas of the hero from both classical and medieval exempla, Dante thus develops the epic hero into the poet-hero, to suit the new heroic task of presenting God's truth to humanity. With its focus on this new type of hero, and on the role of poetry, the Comedy remodels epic, illustrating its versatility, its capacity for development in new directions, and its scope for encompassing the demands of a Christian world and a medieval culture. As a combination of an allegorical figure and a contemporary Florentine, Dante the hero provides a new angle on heroism, with Dante the poet recasting an ancient poetic form for a medieval

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[55] A key parallel between Paul and Dante is the latter's description of himself as "vaso" in an invocation to Apollo (Paradiso I.16), that echoes Paul as "lo Vas d'elezione" (Inferno II.28).

[56] The term "essemplo" is even used by Dante: "Però ti son mostrate in queste rote / nel monte e ne la valle dolorosa / pur l'anime che son di fama note, / che l'animo di quel ch'ode, non posa / né ferma fede per essemplo ch'aia / la sua radice incognita" (Paradiso XVII.136-41); "color che sono in terra / tutti sviati

Christian audience.

Dante creates a new epic model that portrays a Christian universe and has a poet-hero at its centre. These two developments influence Boccaccio and Petrarch in writing the Teseida and the Africa, in spite of the decidedly classical appearance and subject matter of these later poems. While Dante minimises conflict between Christian and pagan by portraying a Christian world and a contemporary hero, both Petrarch and Boccaccio return to a pagan period. They face the same problem as writers of epic before Dante in how to convey a convincing message for a contemporary audience through pagan heroes set in a pre-Christian world. Although on the surface both poets appear to shun Dante's solution of choosing a contemporary hero set in a Christian world by returning to classical subjects, I will in the remainder of this thesis illustrate the extent to which Dante's developments prove irresistible to Petrarch and Boccaccio in the Africa and Teseida.

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dietro al malo essemplo!" (Paradiso XVIII.125-6).

CHAPTER 3: Boccaccio's Teseida and Genre.

3.1. Introduction

> [...] tu, o libro, primo a lor cantare
> di Marte fai gli affanni sostenuti
> nel volgar lazio più mai non veduti.
>
> [...] tu primo col tuo legno
> seghi queste onde, non solcate mai
> davanti a te da nessuno altro ingegno (Teseida XII. 84.6 - 85.3).

In these two passages from the end of the Teseida, Boccaccio emphasizes the originality of his enterprise,[1] confirming with a gloss that he considers himself the first Italian writer of martial epic: "cioè, che mai in rima non è stata messa, prima che questa, alcuna istoria di guerre" (gloss XII.85.2). His claim poses several interpretative problems for the reader, not least because the poem itself contains a strong romance element that seems difficult to reconcile with conceptions of epic. I shall show that the generic question lies at the heart of the Teseida, as Boccaccio himself intends, and shall argue that the poem is neither a transformation of a single classical work, nor a clumsy epic based loosely on a variety of sources that wavers between epic and romance. Instead, I suggest that the Teseida is a work fundamentally concerned with the writing of poetry, and therefore influenced by the emphasis Dante places on poetry in the Comedy. The reader is asked to consider types of writing, and to question the forms of imitation classical epic and romance, as the poet himself does. What appear as Boccaccio's generic ambiguities are, I shall argue, a practical critique of poetry. I shall consider two main aspects of the poem: Boccaccio's gods, to show how the Olympians are manipulated to present a variety of information beyond their divine status; and his heroes, through whom his interest in kinds of epic is clearly illustrated. I shall conclude that Boccaccio presents three types of writing: epic

[1] Boccaccio's image for his originality in Italian poetry is unoriginal; the image of the poet as sailor not only occurs frequently in the Middle Ages, but in particular is used (in Italian) by Dante: "mio legno" and "L'acqua ch'io prendo già mai non si corse" (Paradiso II.3, 7).

following classical models, romance, and a new medieval epic, and that he is led by his concern for truth and Christianity to suggest a preference for Dante's model of medieval Christian epic. The Teseida offers itself both as an epic and a romance, but crucially resolves itself as a Dantean epic.

The importance of Dante as a model is one of the most significant differences between my approach and that of Everson (2001), who is the most recent English critic to examine the Teseida in depth. Although she too considers the heroes of the poem, and the themes of love and war, her study focuses on classical and romance influences (therefore no medieval Latin epics or Dante), and is concerned with the poem only in terms of its relevance to the development of the romance genre, in particular to works that come after it. She also approaches these questions from a social context, emphasizing reader expectations. Our conclusions and approaches to the poem are thus polarized by respective focuses on romance and epic.

3.2. Genre and the Teseida

Critics vary in their generic definitions of the poem. Some, such as Crescini (1887, pp. 218-9), describe it simply as epic - "un poema epico", "composto secondo il tipo dell'epopea classica"; some qualify the term, for example, Highet (1949, p. 90) calls it the "first Italian epic - or rather the first after Dante", acknowledging an important precedent; the Dizionario biografico degli Italiani (1968, vol. X, p. 844) refers to "il tentativo dell'autore di rinnovare in volgare il genere epico", but then says "la sostanza del racconto rimane ancorata agli schemi del romanzo cortese medievale", and this combination of the two is the favoured position of most critics, from Bennet's "the Teseida, for all its classical frame and classical allusions, and its gloss à la Servius [...] keeps the spirit and assumptions of the courtly romance" (1983, p. 107) to Bergin's "[the poem is a] hybrid, not true epic at all but with pretentious epic trappings that strain and distort the

simple love romance that it might have been." (1981, pp. 118-9).[2] In trying to resolve this generic difficulty, many compare the poem with classical epic models. Anderson (1988, p. 3) provides a comprehensive study of the relationship between the Teseida and Statius' Thebaid, arguing that "Boccaccio aimed not for a 'faithful reconstruction' of the epic genre, but for a creative transformation of a single classical epic".

There are two problems with this: firstly, Anderson does not say whether Boccaccio's product - this "creative transformation" - belongs finally to an epic or a romance tradition (or whether it is a new genre);[3] secondly, and more importantly, to see the Teseida as following a single epic rather than following an epic tradition more generally means to ignore both the vast array of other classical and more importantly medieval textual influences on the poem, and Boccaccio's own stress on generic questions throughout the work. McGregor (1991 a & b) explores the influence of the Aeneid on the Teseida, but avoids the issue of how the Aeneid is used alongside other epic sources, so again is unsatisfactory on the larger issue of Boccaccio's generic scheme. Boitani (1977), taking a broader view, provides an invaluable list of epic reminiscences in the Teseida, showing the influence of a variety of epic sources: he lists Ovid's Metamorphoses, the Thebaid, Aeneid, Dante's Comedy, and Boccaccio's Filostrato. But again, he does not provide an explanation of how, in generic terms, these varied influences come together in the Teseida, and how and why these works are combined in a poem with clear romance elements.

First, as I have already considered what is meant by calling a work "epic",[4] I shall now explore definitions of "romance". The New Shorter English Dictionary describes romance as "a medieval

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[2] Bennett, (1983), p. 107. Bergin, (1981), pp. 118-9. Wetherbee (1991-2, p. 175) offers a similar view.
[3] As Boitani (1983, p. 188) thinks.
[4] See Introduction and Chapter 1.

vernacular verse, or later prose, narrative relating the legendary or extraordinary adventures of some hero of chivalry".[5]

The Encyclopaedia Britannica says:

> Romance, as a separate genre, is distinguished from epic and religious narrative by the fact that it recounts fictions for their own sake, for the delight and wonder they evoke, and not for any religious, political, didactic, or edifying purpose.[6]

Yunck (1974, p. 1) singles out various elements as being characteristic of romance:

> sumptuous descriptions of buildings and fortified cities, fine clothes and rich armour, marvels of flora, fauna, and architecture, sorcery and enchantment, [...] a new concern with finesse in manners, [...] a sense of the exotic which the medieval writers found in the classical past.

He also states that romance is a genre of self realisation, and that love is the supreme moving force in the characters of romance:

> The romance is fundamentally a narration of a knight's fulfillment of himself, the realization of his potentialities, the accomplishment of his secular pilgrimage, his achievement of *joi* through love and war, (p. 16).[7]

These definitions suggest the difficulty of pinpointing exactly what makes a poem romance rather than, for example, epic.[8] While the costumes and surrounding world change from the classical to the medieval, and metres, layout, and verse form vary from familiar epic models, it is less easy to define how the narration itself differs from that of epic, as both contain the deeds, wars, tournaments, duels, loves, travels, and adventures of one or more central heroes. Webber (1987, p. 8) states that the action of a romance involves two moves: the hero is either killed then avenged by a second hero, or a single hero has two missions that involve different epic actions. The links here with epic are further strengthened by virtues common to both types of hero. Jackson (1985,

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[5] Similarly, Highet (1949): "The word romance simply means a poem or story written in one of the vernacular Romance languages instead of Latin – and so, by implication, less serious and learned" (p. 49).
[6] Vol.19, pp. 483-4, Chicago (1969).
[7] Jackson (1985, p. 177) echoes this sentiment, saying that the purpose of romance is the "glorification of love between the sexes and the self-realisation of the individual. Both these objects were so far removed from the themes of epic poetry that a new milieu had to be constructed within which they could operate".
[8] Paschal (1980, p. 11) says "The roman was contemporary with the chansons de geste and at its inception used many of the same procedures". See Wetherbee (1992, pp. 177-8) for some of the differences between epic and romance.

p. 177) says that the virtues associated with epic heroes (he cites bravery, loyalty and generosity) are among those of the knightly code, though others, including mercy, moderation, and good manners are added to these. The influence of classical texts lies behind many of the connections between romance and epic, and makes an absolute separation between the two difficult. Classical epics also contain elements or episodes that could be described as romance. Apollonius Rhodius' Argonautica is a classical example of a poem where epic subject, theme, and form are combined with a strong interest in love and its effects, and which might be referred to as a romance epic. Another example is Joseph's De bello troiano, where again the Trojan war (an epic theme) is presented in epic form (hexameter verse), but with elements strongly suggestive of romance.[9] So too the Byzantine Digenis Akritis is often described as an epic romance,[10] and some of its romance characteristics will be discussed below. Even a poem like the Aeneid that is firmly lodged in the epic tradition has central episodes which focus on love, and which could be seen as the fore-runners of romance.[11] The romantic interlude presented by Aeneid IV, where Vergil traces the physical and psychological effects of love on his hero as well as on Dido, placing the epic action on hold while the love story works out its course, serves as an example of the broad scope of epic which can and does encompass love as a central theme. This example again emphasizes the perils of attempting a rigid separation of romance and epic, and of assuming the two to be necessarily conflicting forms of narrative.

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[9] For example: the opening words "Yliadum lacrimas"; the judgement of Paris; a lengthy description of Helen of Troy as the culmination of the "epic" catalogue; the prominent role of women generally in the poem; and the kinds of descriptions used of the great Trojan warriors, such as Hector – "Hector magnanimum librato culmine pectus / Erigit, intorto candet coma crispa capillo / Succinctum complexa caput blandeque recisos / Furatur vox blesa sonos. Pernicia membra / Mens placida in cives, faciem lanugo serenam / Induit. At visus acies obliqua cadentes / In geminas spargit partes semperque supina / Occiduo stabilem contristat lumine vultum." (IV.49-56)

[10] Jeffreys, (1998, p.xvii): the "genre of the Digenis [...] seems to combine epic elements, clustering in the story of the hero's father, with a more romantic treatment of Digenis himself. The result of this research has been inconclusive: the poem is often described as an epic romance". (Though the summary in the cover of the edition calls the poem "epic".)

[11] McGregor, (1991 a), p. 10.

In order to build a picture of the sorts of romance Boccaccio might have been familiar with, I shall look at distinguishing features of the three earliest French examples - the Roman de Troie, the Roman de Thèbes, and the Roman d'Eneas, as well as later works such as the Roman de la rose, the Aucassin et Nicolette, and the Digenis Akritis.[12] Taken together, these works show the differing forms of romance, from the short (approximately 1000 lines) Aucassin et Nicolette in prose and verse to the Roman de Troie (with 30316). The Eneas, although comparable in length with the Thèbes, by contrast, has no book divisions. Though different in form, these works share elements that group them together as romances. Most notable is the transposition of aspects of epic into a medieval setting: just as the form of these works differ from that of epic, so do the minor formal features of epic such as epic similes, *ekphrasis*, and invocations, for example, the *ekphrasis* on the pavilion silks in the Thèbes (3235ff). This modernisation also extends to place names (French names occur throughout the Thèbes, such as "Valflorie" (3013, 3030, 3781)), to the types of place visited (prison, in Thèbes 3750ff), dress, such as Antigone's appearance in a tunic and squirrel cloak seated on a palfrey (Thèbes 3123ff), Medea's ermine (Troie 1231-3) and Parthenopeus, who is "vestuz a guise de Franceis" (Thèbes 4197), and fighting, such as the wearing of lovers' tokens on the sleeve (Thèbes 4777-9). These examples confirm Yunck's suggestion that "[t]he medieval romancer made no attempt to absorb and recreate the spirit of a historical past" (1974, p. 23). Romances, following on from classical epic, still allow for monsters (Thèbes 704-5), and magical characters, such as the sorceress in Eneas (1990), but also introduce their own new types of supernatural beings, such as fairies (Thèbes 1679, and Eneas 4102). Love, the prominent preoccupation of romance, also links these works. It is the topic of extensive conversation, for example by Lavine and her mother (Eneas 7923ff), the focus of endless scenes of misery ("Et m'angoisse tout diz / qui ne me lait repoz avoir" (Eneas 9982-3)), and the reason behind almost all the action in the works, from the extra-marital liaisons of the Digenis Akritis (V, VI) to weddings (Eneas (10305), Digenis Akritis IV). Christianity almost uniformly

[12] See Branca (1977, p. 38) for the French literature available to Boccaccio in Robert's library in Naples.

constitutes an important part of romance,[13] from the prominent Christian conversions in the Digenis Akritis (the conversion of the Emir (I), and a woman (V)), the building of a church by the hero (VII) and the prayer to Christ at the end of the poem, to Amphiaraus the "archevesque" (Thèbes 2120), the appointing of a new bishop (5544ff), Easter (Troie 4807) and Christian epilogues (Troie and Eneas).[14] These Christian elements replace the pagan gods, and create a sense, if not constantly of Christanity, then at least of a human focus to the works.

These are the sorts of models that Boccaccio would have had for the composition of his own romances. The Filostrato and Filocolo are based respectively on the the Roman de Troie and the Floire et Blanchefleur romances.[15] Although classical (and epic) material occurs in both works, it is used to support the main theme of love, and the tone of the works is accordingly lowered, as Boccaccio himself suggests in his prologue to the Filostrato, with his description of it as "leggier rima".[16] While the Teseida shares aspects in common with Boccaccio's earlier romances, such as the classical setting of the Filostrato, classical allusion and imitation, and the interest in love as a theme, and while the Filocolo and Filostrato certainly contain elements which might be deemed epic,[17] there are good reasons for seeing the Teseida as a different kind of work; not least, Boccaccio's own emphasis on the difference between this work and what has gone before, as

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[13] Though use of the Olympians is generally avoided in the Eneas, so are overt references to Christianity. Yunck comments, "In a narrative so thoroughly feudalized as Eneas, it is remarkable that almost no specifically Christian imagery, piety, or theology is to be found" (1974, p. 27). Webber's claim (1987, p. 8) that romance has war between Christians and infidels as its backdrop is a less universal one than he might have hoped, as the examples I am discussing are not concerned with holy wars (though crusading sentiments are found in the Digenis).

[14] "Celui gart Deus e tiegne e veie / Qui bien eissauce e monteplie!" (Troie 30315-6); "Or nous doinst Diex du ciel la gloire / ou cherubim et serafin!" (Eneas 10332-4).

[15] See Branca (1977, p. 38); Encyclopaedia Britannica, (1969), vol.19, p. 495; Dizionario biografico degli Italiani, (1968), vol.X. p. 844.

[16] Note Highet (1949) on metre and general lowering of tone: "Homer's hexameters gallop forward with the irresistible rush of a chariot in a charge; the short-line couplets of the romances and other such medieval poems jog along, league after league, as patiently as the little horses that carried the knights on their interminable quests" (p. 49).

[17] The Filocolo: Juno's anger and desire to destroy the Trojans echoes the Aeneid; sea-journeys (Book III); minor epic features such as epic similes (p. 25), the heroic stories portrayed on the palace walls (p. 103). The Filostrato opens with "greci re [...] nell'armi forti" (1-2), and there is war at the start of Book IV.

quoted in the introduction to this chapter. The form of the poem is also important, as Anderson (1988, pp. 138-9) shows. Given his desire to classicize, it is not surprising that Boccaccio should choose to distinguish the Teseida further from his romances by conforming to this epic "norm".[18] Thus the twelve books of poetry that comprise the Teseida set it firmly apart both from the nine books of the Filostrato, and the five books of prose of the Filocolo. The glosses are a further indication of Boccaccio's desire to recreate classical epic: the texts of epics that he would have read would almost certainly have contained glosses, as Anderson (1988) demonstrates with Boccaccio's own copy of the Thebaid, and so by providing glosses to his own work, he turns it into an instant classic. Some see Boccaccio's imitation of the twelve book epic format and his apparent imitation of the number of lines of the Aeneid as a pedantic and slavish attempt to recreate classical epic. But the 9904 lines of the Teseida do not exactly replicate the number of lines of the Aeneid, which has only 9896 lines, and the figure for the Teseida is for the text alone, without any of the summary sonnets (168 lines) and general introductory and concluding sonnets (46 lines). In addition to these, there are of course the glosses and the prose letter to Fiammetta.

In addition to his use of Mars, and the absence of explicit Christian reference, Boccaccio's sources for the Teseida set it clearly apart from his romances.[19] The main sources of inspiration for the poem are epics, unlike the romance works used as the base for the Filocolo and Filostrato. Boitani's list of the Teseida's epic borrowings includes 12 from the Aeneid, 27 from the Metamorphoses, and 55 from the Thebaid,[20] and Velli (1979) explores Lucan as a source for

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[18] I do not argue that for a poem to be epic it must have twelve books, merely that this conscious decision on the part of the author to conform to his most prominent classical models in this respect is further evidence of his epic intent.

[19] On sources for the Teseida see Crescini, (1887), Savj-Lopez, (1900), and Martinez (1990-1).

[20] Boitani, (1977), ch. 2. But he omits any mention of Lucan. This is unfortunate, especially in light of Boccaccio's words at the end of the Filocolo, where he talks about types of poetry: "E quelli [versi] del valoroso Lucano, ne' quali le fiere arme di Marte si cantano, lasciali agli cavalieri insieme con quelli del tolosano Stazio" (Book V, p. 564). Given the role of Statius' poem in the Teseida, we might reasonably expect the Bellum Civile to have a similarly important presence. (Lucan also appears among the Greek and Roman poets in part 5 of the Amorosa Visione.) There is thus, as far as I am aware, a gap waiting to be filled with a study of Lucan's influence on the Teseida.

Arcita's apotheosis.[21] While the Teseida has much in common with Apollonius' Argonautica, not least the commencement of the love theme in the third book of the poem, it is not clear whether Boccaccio would have had access to this work. However, the case for his knowledge of the Digenis Akritis is more persuasive, as Henry and Renée Kahane (1945) argue.[22] They compare passages from the Teseida and the Digenis, and cite the name of the hero as further evidence of a connection, as discussed below. While Boccaccio also draws on the medieval romances in the Teseida, as he does in the Filostrato and Filocolo,[23] his most prominent medieval source is Dante. Boitani's list of borrowings includes more passages from the Comedy (72 passages in total) than from any other source, including the Thebaid. However, the relationship between the Comedy and the Teseida has been largely overlooked.[24] The influence of Dante on the poem can be seen not just in verbal allusion, but in Boccaccio's treatment of the gods, in the shaping of his heroes, and in the prominence of poetry as a theme. I shall conclude that he has primarily epic models in mind when composing the Teseida, and that the Comedy is one of these, and that the Teseida is therefore a poem composed within an epic tradition that takes account of medieval developments.

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[21] Velli, (1979).

[22] Boccaccio himself suggests that he is using a Greek source: " E' m'è venuto in voglia con pietosa / rima di scrivere una istoria antica, / tanto negli anni riposta e nascosa / che latino autor non par ne dica, / per quel ch'io senta, in libro alcuna cosa" (I.2.1-4), clarified by a gloss "non è stata di greco traslatata [sic] in latino". It is not clear how seriously we should take this statement, as many medieval writers employed this tactic to add gravitas and authority to their work. (The most infamous of these is probably Geoffrey of Monmouth, who claims to have used "quendam Britannici sermonis librum uetustissimum" (part 1) as his mystery "source" for the Historia Regum Britanniae.) Boccaccio could be imitating the Roman de Troie, which says it is a French translation from a Latin source.

[23] See Savj-Lopez (1900) for his borrowings from the Thèbes and Rose (pp. 63-78), and Crescini (1887) for the relationship between the Teseida and the Thèbes and other romances; see Boitani (1977) for echoes of the Filostrato in the Teseida (pp. 61-71).

[24] Martinez (1991-2) addresses the issue. While he sees Statius and Dante as Boccaccio's main sources of inspiration in the Teseida, and highlights several places where Boccaccio draws on Dante, his argument takes a different path from mine, as he says that Boccaccio wanted to distinguish the "transcendently based poetics of the Commedia from the secular, epic Teseida" (p. 206).

3.3. The Gods.

At first sight, the range and frequency of gods that appear in the Teseida are comparable to those of classical epics. The poem contains twelve Olympians, as well as Fortune and minor divinities such as Ceres, Pan, Aurora and Bellona.[25] The Aeneid contains only four divinities not cited in the Teseida - Iris, the Manes, the Penates, and Saturn[26] - and its 467 citations of gods' names are comparable to the 498 references made in the Teseida. This figure for the Teseida includes citations in the glosses; 229 citations of gods by name occur in the poem, which is less than half the number that occur in the slightly shorter Aeneid. (Comparisons with other epics are discussed below.) By allowing the Olympians a prominent place in his poem, Boccaccio appears to go against the examples of Walter of Châtillon, Alain of Lille, Nivard of Ghent, and Dante, who show that an epic can be written with minimal Olympian involvement.[27]

Boccaccio's decision to reinstate the gods is therefore an interesting one, and probably due in large part to his choice of a classical mythological setting for the poem rather than Dante's contemporary world or the historical setting of the Alexandreis. Olympian names also provide useful classicizing elements for a medieval writer, and suggest an antiquarian interest in a past world.[28] However, in so doing, Boccaccio took a brave step, opening his poem to the sorts of criticisms considered in the Genealogiae:

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[25] Boccaccio does describe even more minor divinities as gods, for example: "[Fauni]: iddii de' boschi" - "[Driade]: dee degli alberi" (gloss V.62.3); "[Priapo]: dio degli orti" (gloss V.62.7).

[26] As Roman gods, it is perhaps not surprising that the Penates and Manes are absent from a poem set in a pre-Roman era.

[27] Cf. Crescini (1887, p. 218): "possiamo osservare che, mentre i troveri francesi, ne'poemi tratti da tradizione antiche, ci ripresentano la matera classica spogliata dell'apparato deistico, il Boccaccio, poichè, a differenza di essi, attingeva direttamente alle fonti classiche, agli autori latini, e aveva, inoltre, più alto e più libero intelletto, introduceva nella poesia volgare le deità pagane." A possible exception is Joseph of Exeter's De Bello Troiano, in which gods are fairly prevalent, though usually as names rather than as characters.

[28] Glosses such as that on the pagan afterlife - "fu oppinione degli antichi che ogni anima n'andasse in inferno" (gloss. II.31.5) - suggest a historical curiosity on the part of the author, and a desire to inform the reader. Note that when Theseus visits temples in Thebes, he appears to do so out of curiosity, as a tourist, rather than a worshipper: "ad ammirare / cominciò i templi di qualunque iddio" (II.72.5-6). The gods also provide a focal point for pagan ritual, which occurs frequently throughout the poem.

> Preterea eorum poemata esse dicunt obscura nimis atque mendacia, lasciviis plena et deorum gentilium nugis atque ineptiis referta, asserentia Iovem, quendam adulterum et spurcidum hominem, nunc deorum patrem, nunc celorum regem, nunc ignem, nunc aerem, nunc hominem, nunc taurum, nunc aquilam, et huiusmodi inconvenientia; (p. 934).[29]

In the following sections I shall consider reasons why Boccaccio employs the gods in his poem, starting with the defence he offers in the Genealogiae; I shall then examine the way in which the gods function in the poem, and the kinds of meaning Boccaccio directs us to see in them through his glosses. I shall suggest that the poet is clear about the fictional status of his gods from the very start of the poem, and that he is interested in what they can represent, rather than in their divine status per se. I shall show that as consciously employed fictions, the gods are manipulated by the poet to highlight the central concern of the poem with poetry and genre, and specifically epic and romance. I suggest that the glosses Boccaccio provides as an aid to reading the poem are a key factor in his reinstatement of the pagan gods.

3.3.1. Defence of the Gods in the Genealogiae.

Although the Genealogiae (begun c.1350) was written after the Teseida (c.1340-1), when the author had undergone a change in the types of work he wrote (encyclopaedic texts such as the De casibus virorum illustrium), the language in which he wrote them (Latin), and, according to some, a change in ideology,[30] it can usefully be considered alongside the Teseida, as it seems to provide a crystallization of the ideas practised in the poem.[31]

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[29] Note that a quotation from Jerome occurs several times in the Genealogiae that encapsulates a prominent view of (pagan) poetry: "Demonum cibis sunt carmina poetarum" (Genealogiae XIV.18, p. 1026).

[30] V. Branca (1977), pp. 91ff, 106ff. By contrast, Smarr (1986, p. 8): "I am led to conclude that Boccaccio's basic ideas about the purposes of literature did not greatly change during his life. For, despite what most critics have said, the love stories written in the first half of Boccaccio's career are not devoid of the moral and religious concerns of his later years".

[31] Smarr (1979, pp. 303, 309) uses the Genealogiae to back up her argument on Boccaccio's astrological beliefs; Anderson (1988, pp. 150-2) discusses the relevance of the Genealogiae to Boccaccio's imitation of Dido and Aeneas; and Boitani (1977, p. 7), "already in the Teseida he uses the kind of exegesis which he will elaborate in the Genealogiae, to give meaning to these stories of the gods".

In the Genealogiae, Boccaccio's defence of the gods' role in poetry consists of several points relevant to the Teseida. Firstly he connects the idea of poetry with religion by suggesting that poetry proceeds from God, "ex sinu Dei procedens" (XIV.7, p. 940); that it arose out of worship, "voluerunt verba componi per que ipsius deitatis laudes et magnalia monstrarentur" (XIV.8, p. 950); and that poets are endowed with some sort of divine intelligence and truth, "eruditissimos quidem atque divino quodam animo et artificio preditos" (XIV.1, p. 900). Hence Vergil is said to be a philosopher - "Virgilium fuisse phylosophum" (XIV.10, p. 966) - whose works, along with those of other ancient poets, contain deep meaning:

> insignes viros, lacte Musarum educatos et in laribus phylosophie versatos atque sacris duratos studiis, profundissimos in suis poematibus sensus apposuisse [...] (XIV.10, p. 970).

However, as the truth instilled in poetry is veiled by its authors,

> Quis [...] Virgilium [...] arbitretur eruditissimum hominem ob ostentandum eloquentiam suam, qua prefecto plurimum valuit, Aristeum pastorem in penetralia terre ad Cyrenem Matrem deduxisse, aut Eneam, ut patrem videret, ad inferos, absque abscondito sub fabuloso velamine intellectu scripsisse? (XIV.10, pp. 966-8),

and therefore not immediately obvious, misunderstandings arise about its value. The veil, Boccaccio suggests, was used in order to protect the truth, and this is the method of the Holy Spirit:

> [...]ut que apposita viluissent labore ingeniorum quesita et diversimode intellecta comperta tandem faciant cariora. Quod longe magis Sanctum fecisse Spiritum unusquisque, cui sana mens est, debet pro certissimo arbitrari. (XIV.12, pp. 980-2).

He defends the ancient poets against the charge of deceit, arguing that their fictions are not the same as lies: "poetarum fictiones nulli adhereant specierum mendacii, eo quod non sit mentis eorum quenquam fingendo fallere" (XIV.13, p. 986). The poets knew that there was really only one god:

> Quis enim sui tam inscius sit, ut existimet quemque in laribus phylosophie versatum tam dementis esse sententie, ut credat deos esse quam plurimos? Si satis sani sumus, facile debemus credere eruditos viros studiosissimos fuisse veritatis investigatores, eosque, quo humanum potest penetrare ingenium, attigisse et absque ambiguitate novisse unum tantum Deum esse, ad quam notitiam devenisse poetas eorum in operibus percipitur liquido. Lege Vergilium, et orantem invenies: "Iuppiter omnipotens, precibus si flecteris

> ullis" etc. quod epythetum nemini deorum alteri datum comperies. (XIV.13, p. 990).

The "gods" thus represent functions of the one divinity:

> Reliquam autem deorum multitudinem non deos, sed dei membra aut divinitatis officia putavere, quod Plato, quem theologum nuncupamus, etiam opinatur. (XIV.13, p. 990),

but were called gods for convenience, "Talibus autem ob venerationem officio conforme deitatis dedere nomen" (XIV.13, p. 990). Use of multiple gods, he argues, is simply a literary feature:

> Multos autem deos scripsisse poetas, cum unus tantum sit Deus, negari non potest, sed minime illis in mendacium imputandum, quia non credentes neque firmantes, sed more suo fingentes scripsere. (XIV.13, p. 990).

But although he says that the ancients believed only in one god, Boccaccio adds that their views of divinity were imperfect:

> non dubito poetas gentiles de vero Deo minus recte sensisse, et sic de eo non nunquam quod minus verum fuerat scripsisse, et sic, ut isti volunt, mendacium [...] (XIV.13, p. 990),

which he says is not surprising – "Nondum enim lux illa veritatis eterne in terris effulserat" (p. 992). He then defends the variety of meanings given to the gods with another Christian comparison:

> ipsum verum et unicum Deum nunc solem, nunc ignem, nunc leonem, nunc serpentem, nunc agnum, nunc vermem, nunc etiam lapidem a sacris describi Licteris. (XIV.14, pp. 1000-2).

Thus Boccaccio's main argument is that both ancient (pagan and biblical) and contemporary poetry contains truths that are to be sought out by the reader, who must look beneath the veil of the surface meaning and the "gods" this contains. Boccaccio gives examples of the sorts of things we are to find, for example, with reference to the appearance of Mercury in Aeneid IV:

> Per quem [Mercury] Virgilius sentit seu conscientie proprie morsum [Aeneas], seu amici et eloquentis hominis redargutionem, a quibus, dormientes in luto turpitudinum, excitamur, et in rectum pulchrumque revocamur iter, id est ad gloriam [...] (XIV.13, p. 996).

I shall now consider the implications of this for the Teseida, to suggest that Boccaccio draws the reader's attention to a range of meanings in his gods in order to exempt them from claims of corruption.

3.3.2. The Gods in Action.

The view in the Genealogiae that the gods are a poetic fiction (and therefore a tool for the poet) is emphasized in the Teseida from the opening line: Boccaccio's gloss instructs us that the Muses in the poem are used "secondo l'antico costume de' componitori" (gloss. I.1.1). At the mention of Mars, a gloss informs us that "Vuole in questa parte l'autore mostrare, poeticamente fingendo, qual fosse la cagione che movesse Teseo" (gloss I.14.1). Boccaccio thus imitates the ancient poets and their fictions, referring to them frequently in the glosses, for example – "Scrivono fingendo i poeti" (gloss I.15.6).[32] As in the Genealogiae, the notion of error is also raised: comments such as "Giove, il quale gli antichi dicevano che n'era iddio" (gloss, I.59.3)[33] are coupled with more open statements on ancient thought - "Nettunno e Glauco, secondo le fizioni poetiche e gli errori degli antichi, sono due degl' iddii del mare" (gloss I.55.3).[34] While "gli antichi" suggests distance from "moderni" such as the poet himself, Boccaccio shows that he is joining this world of fiction: "Qui finge l'autore" (gloss, VIII.112.8). This does raise a problem: Boccaccio's argument in the Genealogiae that ancients cannot be blamed for their mistaken beliefs about God cannot excuse his own use of the gods. Hence he partakes of the fiction while openly acknowledging it to be such, and guides us with his glosses to the meanings that he bestows on his gods as representatives of natural phenomena and poetry, and as vehicles for discreet Christian elements.

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[32] Also - "li poeti fingendo scrivono" (gloss I.59.3).
[33] Also - "tenevano gli antichi che fosse dea della sapienza" (gloss I.60.1); "Imeneo appo gli antichi fu tenuto lo dio delle nozze" (gloss I.134.7).
[34] Cf. Dante's Vergil - "vissi [...] / nel tempo de li dei falsi e bugiardi" (Inferno II.71-2).

While some of these meanings are found in classical epic, the glosses suggest that the medieval reader needs assistance in interpreting the gods, and this allows Boccaccio to manipulate the reader's interpretation to suit his purpose. For example, the lines

> Febo, salendo con li suoi cavalli
> del ciel teneva l'umile animale,
> ch'Europa portò sanza intervalli
> là dove il nome suo dimora aguale;
> e con lui insieme graziosi stalli
> Venus facea de' passi con che sale, (III.5.1-6)

are glossed with "Vuole qui l'autore discrivere che stagione era [...]; e questo mostra per discrizioni de' pianeti in cielo". "Febo" is frequently glossed in the poem to highlight this astrological meaning.[35] Smarr (1979) argues for a comprehensive astrological scheme running throughout the poem, and explains the gods purely as astrological phenomena. As planetary bodies, they influence human emotion, for example, she argues that "the astrological significance of Mars in combination with Venus is agreed upon by all: adultery and lust".[36] While it is certainly the case that the reader is at times directed to astrological meanings for the gods, to see them only as such is limiting. To take Smarr's own example, if Mars and Venus are purely planetary influences, then their combination in the tournament should lead to adultery and lust, but instead it leads to the chaste marriage of Arcita and Emilia. We thus need to allow for the other meanings to which Boccaccio directs us, including natural phenomena, such as "[Vulcano]: cioè il fuoco" (gloss, VII.38),[37] or emotions - "[Erinis]: furia" (IX.4.6).

But what of the idea that underlying his pagan scheme Boccaccio shows us the workings of a Christian god? Are his gods functions of the one God, as the Genealogiae suggests of gods in general? There is a neo-platonic attitude in the presentation of some divinities that could suggest a scheme compatible with Christianity. The Fates are shown to be neo-platonic forces acting on

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[35] Eg. "[*Febo*]: Febo, il sole" (gloss III.5.1).
[36] Smarr, (1979), p. 310.
[37] See also V.35.1 and VII.37.8.

behalf of the one God, and thus to have a possible role in a Christian universe: "Fati sono le disposizioni divine, le quali sono liete e dolenti chiamate, secondo che colui di cui si parla lieta o dolorosa cosa riceve" (gloss. IV.31.1).[38] Hence "il doloroso fato" of Arcita (IX.1.1) is explained: "cioè la dolorosa provedenza di Dio per Arcita" (gloss). Boccaccio sets out their role clearly in another gloss, showing their rule over birth, life, and death: "Scrivono i poeti tre essere le fate nelle mani delle quali la generazione, la vita e la morte sia di ciascuno che vive" (gloss, X.32.2). Hence when Arcita dies, his death is said to have been caused by the fates: "fu da' fati estinto" (XI.89.5). Boccaccio does not gloss Fortune, who is used in medieval Latin epics including the Alexandreis, Anticlaudianus, and Ysengrimus as a neo-platonic force compatible with both Christian and pagan systems, and thus as a less complicated way of presenting divine intervention than use of the Olympians (which she and her neo-platonic siblings such as Nature and Genius replace). By describing her as "L'alta ministra del mondo" (VI.1.1), Boccaccio echoes Dante's "alli splendor mondani / ordinò general ministra" (Inferno VII.77-8), using the earlier poet as the authority for the compatibility of Fortune with a Christian system. By not justifying her position as a neo-platonic force with a gloss, Boccaccio appears to take Dante's explanation of her for granted. However, her position in relation to that of the fates in the Teseida is somewhat confused. Characters generally refer to her in connection with worldly matters (for example, she is responsible for Arcita's changed appearance - "la fortuna ria / così deforme l'avesse renduto" (IV.56.6-7), Nestor's good looks (VI.31.7-8), and exile - "Omè, Fortuna dispietata e fella, / che t'ho io fatto che sì mi se' rea?" (IV.11.4-5)), and her characteristic fluctuation separates her from the inevitability of Fate.[39] However, Boccaccio also names her as responsible for the death of Achates (V.94.5-6), thereby confusing her function with that of Fate. Boitani, pointing out the overlap, concludes:

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[38] See also gloss VII.83.1.

[39] "Ma i dolenti fati, i qua' tirando / gian d'una in altra miseria costui, / vegnendosi il suo fine appropinquando, / con poca festa [...] fin ch'al veduto termine pervenne, / dove si ruppe il fil che 'n vita il tenne" (IV.31).

> Which of these powers is to be pre-eminent Boccaccio never finally decides. If he had done so, the work would have had a resolutely more 'modern' look. Yet neither on the other hand does he present them in an hierarchical order, which would have conformed to a medieval pattern [...].[40]

But Boccaccio does not appear to endow all his divine figures with obvious neo-platonic roles, and his cast lacks several key neo-platonic players, including Nature, Philosophy and Genius. However, there are hints of Christianity underlying references to figures besides the Fates.[41]

There are many references in the poem to a single divine entity that suggest Christianity, and that echo Dante's descriptions of God. In Book II, Boccaccio refers to "il piacer divin" (II.2.5), which Dante uses of God - "ver lo piacer divin che mi refulse" (Paradiso XXVII.95)[42] - and two lines later Theseus' "velo / della 'gnoranza" is broken, which suggests that there is a meaning to be discovered under the literal level of the narrative, just as Boccaccio emphasizes in the Genealogiae.[43] Mention of the "chiaro e santo divino intelletto" (IX.57.4) again echoes Dante's description of God as "divino intelletto" (Inferno XI.100), and has Christian overtones. While a gloss on "te che l'universo giri" (IV.45.5) reveals that the poet means the sun, we might again compare Dante's God who "move il sole e l'altre stelle" (Paradiso XXXIII.145), as well as medieval allegorisations of Apollo as God.[44] Theseus refers to "quel che 'l mondo circunscrisse" (XII.6.5), and Dante uses the same word of God – "non circunscritto, e tutto circunscrive"

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[40] Boitani, (1977), p. 20; and on Boccaccio's indecision about powers: "Here we have another of those crucial knots in which Boccaccio's mind remains entangled in the Teseida: Mars and Venus, Fate (or divine Providence), and Fortune should, each of them, determine the course of events. Instead, in Book IV it seems to be Fate (or divine Providence) that takes the lead; in Book VI, it is Fortune's turn; in Books VII and IX it falls to the gods." (p. 19).

[41] Compare the neo-platonic worlds described, for example, by Alain of Lille in the Anticlaudianus and De Planctu Naturae. McGregor (1991 b) argues repeatedly that Boccaccio's "pagan divinities are represented not as veiled figures of God's Providence but as demons" (p. 44). The poem itself provides little reason for seeing them in such a harsh light.

[42] Also "piacer santo" (Paradiso XIV.138).

[43] Boccaccio could be addressing the reader here, and pointing her towards the underlying Christian significance of the episode. (In addressing the hypothetical reader as "her", I intend no claim for the gender of the historical reader.)

[44] See Bersuire's Ovidius moralizatus.

(Paradiso XIV.30).[45] Reference to the creator - "lo sommo Fattore, / che creò te e ciascuna altra luce" (Teseida VII.125.3) – also suggests Christianity, especially as Dante refers frequently to God as *Fattore* in the Comedy.[46] The Teseida also contains many instances of a non-specific "dio" that suggest monotheism, for example "Dio non mancò mai a virtuoso" (III.68.8).[47] Like Dante, Boccaccio uses *Giove* to refer to a single god compatible with the Christian one. "[Giove]: dio" (gloss X.18.8) implies more than the fact that Giove is the name of a god. Arcita and Emilia both pray to a Giove who is "sommo" ("O Giove, sommo iddio" (IV.52.3), "O sommo Giove" (VIII.101.5)), which echoes Dante's "al sommo Giove" (Inferno XXXI.92), and "o sommo Giove / che fosti in terra per noi crucifisso" (Paradiso VI.118).[48] Palaemon prays:

> - O Giove pio, che con ragion governi
> la terra e 'l cielo e doni parimente
> a ciascheduna cosa ordini etterni,
> volgi gli occhi ver me e sii presente
> e con giustizia il mio voler discerni,
> il quale ora si fa consenziente
> a quel del mio signor: nel che s'io sono
> peccator, priego che mi dei perdono. (XII.34.1-8),

and several things about this suggest Christianity, including a god that is "pio", a god who acts with *giustizia*, the fact that Palaemon describes himself as a sinner, and the possibility of *perdono*.

These details provide hints of a divine system beyond that of paganism, with an omnipotent god at its heart, but Boccaccio does not take them as far as Petrarch does in the Africa, as will be discussed in Chapter 4. The Teseida's most prominent gods are Mars and Venus, and it seems that by giving more scope to gods other than Jupiter, Boccaccio allows himself less room to suggest Christian compatibility. The difficulty of explaining the roles of Mars and Venus in

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[45] Also Purgatorio XI.2.
[46] Inferno III.4, XXXIV.35; Purgatorio XVI.89, XVII.102, XXVII.2; Paradiso VII.31, 35, IX.128, XXVI.83, XXX.21, XXXIII.5.
[47] Also II.83.7-8; X.19.3.
[48] Also Palaemon - "il signore / del ciel soccorre a chi se stesso aita" (X.48.5-6).

Christian terms (compared with Jupiter) suggests that Boccaccio's point in using the gods lies elsewhere, that is, in what they can represent for the poet rather than in their divinity.

Boccaccio limits the scope and power of his gods in a number of ways, emphasizing the difference between classical presentations of the gods in epic and the Teseida, in spite of outward appearances. By choosing to focus on Mars and Venus, and thus upsetting the traditional divine hierarchy which places Jupiter first in terms of importance, Boccaccio emphasizes his distance from and manipulation of the pagan system. The order of frequency with which he mentions gods is: Mars (44), Venus (35), Apollo (27), Amore and Jupiter (25), Diana (14), Juno (13), Vulcan (7), followed by others less frequently mentioned.[49] This contrasts with the Aeneid, where the name of Jupiter dominates the list, with 85 occurrences, followed by Apollo (61), Juno (57), Mars (51), Venus / Cytherea (40), Fortuna (24), Minerva and Neptune (21 each), Aurora (19), Vulcan (16), the Manes and Bacchus (12 each), Diana and Iris (11 each), Ceres (12), Saturn and Amor / Cupid (7 each), Mercury (6), Pan and Pluto (1 each). Boccaccio also differs from his main model, the Thebaid, where Jupiter and his various names occur more than that of any other god, followed by Apollo and Mars, Fate, Athena, Juno, Bacchus, Diana, Venus and the rest.[50] Before moving on

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[49] Note also that, in spite of Theseus' words - "Minerva, che il sommo loco / tra l'iddii tien nella nostra cittade" (I.60.1-2), the goddess is named only 5 times in the poem.

[50] Feeney (1990, p. 346) argues that Jupiter's role is limited in the Thebaid: "The problem of Jupiter's involvement or inaction will prove to be one of the poem's greatest areas of anxiety". He claims that Apollonius and Lucan also treat Jupiter ambiguously, thus there are classical epic precedents for the Teseida, although not in respect of actual frequency of names. Feeney's statement that "Statius' radical departure from both Homeric poems (and the Aeneid) lies in his removal of the gods, and especially the supreme god, from the resolution of the poem's action - Jupiter's place is taken by the human Theseus" (p.357) - is also relevant to the Teseida, and perhaps the Thebaid is Boccaccio's model here. Note that in the Alexandreis Mars is named most frequently (48 times), and his nearest rivals are Apollo (19), Jupiter (19), Minerva (6). Like Boccaccio, Walter elevates Mars in a poem largely about war. Apollonius' Argonautica, by comparison, makes most frequent reference to Zeus (95), then Apollo (62), Ares and Athena (30 each), Aphrodite (25), Hecate (20), Poseidon (18), Helios (16), etc. Zeus is clearly dominant, though again Feeney suggests that he is not incorporated as a character in the poem (pp. 65-6), and in spite of the importance of the themes of love and war, Ares and Aphrodite are mentioned fairly infrequently. Note also the difference from the romances. Thèbes includes few mentions of the Olympians: Apollo and Jupiter (6 each), Pallas (4), Mars and Vulcan (3), Fortune (2), Pluto and Diana (1); Venus is notably absent. The gods of the Eneas are: Amor and Vulcan (4 each), Cupid, God, Fortune, Pallas, Venus (2 each), Aeolus, Fama, Apollo, Furies, Juno, Jupiter, Mars, Neptune, Pluto, Persephone (1 each). Troie cites them more frequently, with Amor and Deus dominating the list. Filostrato: Amore (67), Fortuna (21), Jupiter

to the roles played by Mars and Venus, there are certain other limitations placed on the gods that are noteworthy. Firstly, the sphere within which they appear is restricted to earth, when in other epics we might also expect to see them in heaven or hell.[51] By restricting their powers of movement in this way, Boccaccio increases the sense in which they are poetic fictions rather than divinities. Secondly, we might note the elevation of human characters to the level of the gods. While it is not uncommon in classical literature to compare humans with gods, Boccaccio appears to play with the question of divine reality. For example, Arcita says of Emilia "Vener è qui discesa veramente!" (III.13.3).[52] There seems to be more at work here than the presentation of Arcita's human perspective and the impact Emilia has on him. Nor is it simply a case of rhetorical hyperbole, as not all of these comments come from the mouths of characters: Boccaccio as narrator describes Emilia's "viso divino" (III.31.5), and "angelico viso" (IV.53.8), and says "quasi dea fosse quella damigella" (VII.128.6). There is a play on concepts of truth that is of significance in understanding the Teseida's gods: Emilia is not merely likened to Venus, but said to be "truly" her. Arcita's use of "veramente" is reinforced by Palaemon's "Per certo questa è Citerea" (III.14.6).[53] A human not only appears like a goddess, but is also specifically described as being truly divine, where no assertion of this sort occurs in connection with the divinities

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(11), Apollo and Pallas (5), Mars (4), Venus (3), Muses (1). Filocolo: Venus (64), Jupiter (56), Apollo (45), Mars (31), Juno (24), Amor (21), and many others. Most of these citations describe astrological phenomena. After the Christian conversion, the view of the gods is: "I vani iddii e fallaci periscano" (V. p. 528).

[51] Venus' descent to the Underworld, reported in Book IX, refers to an action outside the narrative time of the poem, therefore is not an example of her acting in a different sphere. If we do include this case, it is unusual. Olympians are usually shown on earth and in heaven, and *katabasis* is reserved for humans or neo-platonic divinities, such as Nature in Walter of Châtillon's Alexandreis. See Feeney (1990, p. 343) on the continual movement between the spheres (Olympus, earth, Underworld), although he does say "only human characters may move in all of the poem's three realms" (p. 358).

[52] This motif occurs throughout the poem: "né san se questa è dea ne'regni santi / che sia qua giù venuta ad abitare, / o se donna mondana" (III.26.5-7); "Qualunque dea nel cielo è più bella, / nel cospetto di lei parrebbe oscura" (IV.35.1-2); "il ciel donde venisti, o lume chiaro" (VII.123.8); "né credo che il ciel n'abbia altra equale / a te" (VII.124.3-4); "Venere la credette" (XII.65.7); "questa mirabile dea" (XII.66.6).

[53] See also at the feast, where every man "dicea / che veramente ell'era Citerea" (IV.51.7-8). Cf. Petrarch – "il viso di pietoso color' farsi, / non so se vero o falso, mi parea: /[...] Non era l'andar suo cosa mortale, / ma d'angelica forma [...] / [...] uno spirito celeste, un vivo sole / fu quel ch'i'vidi; et se non fosse or tale" (Canzoniere 90).

themselves. This "true" Venus is prayed to alongside Mars and Venus, as though to emphasize her "divine" status:

> Ciaschedun chiama in suo aiuto Marte
> e Venere e Emilia insiememente,
> e imprometton doni; (V.75.1-3).

While these prayers suggest the power Emilia holds over the two men, her association with Mars and Venus here lessens the status of the Olympians. The possibility that she is the equal of the gods – reinforced by "insiememente"- is hardly favourable to the classical divine hierarchy, with the implication that one might as well pray to a mortal as to an immortal, as the Olympians themselves have no more power than mortals.[54] She is even said to sing better than Apollo – "canta me' che mai cantasse Appollo" (III.40.7).[55]

3.3.3. Mars and Venus: Love and War; Epic and Romance.

In this section I shall consider the prominence given to Mars and Venus, but shall also reveal the limitations that Boccaccio places on them as characters and divinities. I shall examine the limitations he places on their action within the poem, and his method of drawing attention away from their surface meaning as gods, and his encouragement of the reader to look below the literal level of the narrative. I suggest that Boccaccio uses Mars and Venus above all as representatives

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[54] Compare Filostrato, where this elevation of humans to the divine plane is even greater: "tu [Fiammetta] mi se' Giove, tu mi se' Apollo, / tu se' mia musa" (I.11), and III.36, where Creseida takes on the role of Cupid, firing darts at herself. Boccaccio does not go as far in the Teseida. He suggests Emilia's power, but places her alongside the gods rather than in their place. The difference presumably has to do with a compromise between elevating humans, as he has done in his romances, and thereby undermining the Olympians, and a desire to create a recognisable classically influenced epic, with some significant role for the gods. This elevation of the Emilia to "divine" status is unproblematic if we see the gods merely as manifestations of emotion affecting humans, as human emotions ultimately arise from or are compatible with humans themselves.

[55] This is in spite of warnings against trying to rival gods including Apollo: "Marsia fu ottimo sonatore, intanto che egli presunse di volere sonare a pruova con Apollo" (gloss XI.62.7); Arachne, described as "Aragne folle" (XI.61.3), and Niobe – "Mostrato è di sopra come i figliuoli e le figliuole di Niobè per la sua superbia fossero uccisi da Apollo e Diana" (gloss X.8.1). The disastrous ends met by these characters highlight the relative powerlessness of the gods in the Teseida. On a similar note, there is no retaliation for disrespect of the gods: compare Theseus' anger at Mars and Minerva (I.58ff) with Thebaid X.899ff, where Capaneus is immediately struck down having disparaged the gods.

of the themes of love and war, and of the narrative genres associated with these, that is, romance and epic. This last point will become clearer throughout the remainder of the chapter.

The promotion of Mars and Venus as the poem's most significant divinities is clear from the start:

> Siate presenti, o Marte rubicondo,
> nelle tue armi rigido e feroce,
> e tu, madre d'Amor, col tuo giocondo
> e lieto aspetto, e 'l tuo figliuol veloce
> co' dardi suoi possenti in ogni mondo; (Teseida I.3.1-5)

They are coupled throughout the poem, and prevail fairly equally over it, as the gloss to this invocation suggests:

> Perciò che trattar dee e di battaglie e d'amore, invoca similemente l'aiuto di Marte, secondo gli antichi pagani iddio delle battaglie, e Venere, madre d'Amore, e Cupido, cioè Amore. (gloss I.3.1)

This establishes the link between the gods and the themes of the poem (love and war), through which Boccaccio explores the genres of epic and romance. As with his other gods, the poet draws attention away from their "divine" status, directing the reader instead to his concern with poetry. An early indication of the limitations Boccaccio imposes on the divine figures in his text occurs here, in this first introduction. From her first appearance, Venus is denied her full status as Olympian deity responsible for love. She is referred to as "madre d'Amor", and not named. Likewise the gloss does not mention her as goddess of love, but again as the mother of Amor. The presence of Cupid both in the invocation and the gloss also shows a confusion of the responsibilities of Venus and Cupid that does not occur in classical texts, where Cupid's role is to carry out the practical side of Venus' decisions to inflame her victim with love.[56] Mars and Venus' dominance at the start is typical of the rest of the poem; they do dominate over other gods in terms of number of times mentioned, but they are also given a limited active role.[57]

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[56] Aeneid I.657-722; Argonautica III.112-166, 275-298.

[57] Yunck, (1974), says that the poet of the Roman d'Eneas is "a rationalist, writing for a civilized, sophisticated, and enlightened Christian audience, and he is clearly embarrassed by Vergil's gods, perhaps disturbed that an ancient poet so noble, and a storyteller so polished, should be encumbered by an

Boccaccio delays their appearance as *dramatis personae*, thereby further undermining the extent to which they are like gods from classical epic. Mars and Venus appear as the only two "visible" deities within the narrative, although they are visible only to the reader, never to the characters themselves, which is a further significant difference from classical epic. Mars' first appearance as a character does little to raise his profile as an active Olympian. Although the choice of adjective suggests activity ("sanguinoso" I.14.1), and he carries a shield and moves in a way that suggests personification, "col suo carro avanti procedeo" (I.15.4), his role in rousing Theseus is abstract: "si fé sentire al crucciato Teseo, / in lui di sé un fier caldo lasciando" (I.15.2-3). The focus is on "fé sentire" rather than a physical action. The passage is clarified by a gloss: the god is no more than an explanation of why Theseus decided to fight the Amazons,

> Vuole in questa parte l'autore mostrare, poeticamente fingendo, qual fosse la cagione che movesse Teseo contra le donne amazone a fare guerra; (gloss, I.14.1).

Thus Theseus' desire to go to war is not the will of the gods; the god is used as an explanation of the human desire to do so. "Mars" is used to give a sense of the concrete to what is not concrete, and is thereby reduced to "la cagione".

It seems that here too the reader is presented not with an Olympian as we know him from classical literature, but as an allegory, or an astrological influence.[58] At the start of Book III, Mars is rested: "Nel terzo a Marte dona alcuna posa / l'autore" (sonnet, III.1-2), which seems odd given that his character has not exerted himself in the poem thus far. One way to make sense of this, as Smarr (1979) argues, is to take the passage astrologically, so that here we see the waning

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anthropomorphic polytheistic superstition" (p. 10), and that, in omitting "as much Olympian material as he can [...] he especially avoids depicting the pagan divinities in action" (p. 12).

[58] Boccaccio might be following or exaggerating a classical precedent here, as Feeney (1991, p. 368) says the same of Statius' Mars: "Statius' Mars is something new [...] in his allegorically obsessive patterns of

influence of the planet Mars rather than a tired Olympian character. While this astrological argument carries some weight, there is another way of understanding Mars. Here, as elsewhere, the author uses "Mars" synonymously with "war", thus this second passage reveals that war as a theme is to be rested. Connected with this is a third meaning that "Mars" stands for epic poetry, as the poem is referred to as "cantare di Marte" (XII.84.6-7). Thus astrology, the theme of war, and genre are all brought together in the meanings given to "Mars".

Mars' reappearance in Book V again disappoints anyone expecting to see a god of classical epic interfering personally in the action of the narrative. He appears as a cause of human emotion rather than a fierce anthropomorphic Olympian:

> Marte, che troppo s'era riposato,
> entrato in Palemon novo sospetto
> il suo compagno udendo ritornato,
> dimostra il quinto a lui entrar nel petto (sonnet, V.1-4).

The opening verses of the book emphasize his lack of a physical presence in the action of the poem, as he is not even mentioned in the text after this supposed reappearance. Here, too, it seems that "Mars" refers both to the planet (and reflects the reemergence of a planetary martial influence on the action of the poem), and to the return of war as a theme, hence an epic mode of writing, after the romance of the previous books where Venus (love) has dominated.

Thus far the sense that Boccaccio is not interested in exploring the gods of the Teseida as divine characters finds confirmation in the lines of the poem. When Arcita's prayer travels to Mars' abode, the poet devotes a lengthy passage to describing the place, and it seems that the god himself might finally appear in character amid this physical description of his home. The first mention of him in the passage,

> Era allor forse Marte in esercizio

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behaviour, in his lack of affiliation or epic personality"; he is a Mars who has forgotten his mythological personality and has become a mere allegory.

di chiara far la parte rugginosa
del grande suo e orribile ospizio (VII.29.1-3),

is shown by a gloss to portray the god at leisure, "Vuole per questo mostrare l'autore Marte allora essere ozioso" (gloss, VII.29.1). But we are not actually shown the god at all, in spite of the lengthy account of his home and those who dwell there. The only sight we get of him is of his likeness depicted on the walls: "era il tempio tutto istoriato / da sottil mano" (VII.36.1-2):

in ogni luogo con aspetto fiero
si vedea Marte torbido e altiero (VII.37.7-8).

It seems that his reality is being denied, and that at his most real he is a picture on the wall. Even the picture is not obviously a portrait of the personified god, as this quotation shows, but can again be taken to refer either to war in general, or to the martial influence of the planet Mars, and hence to a warlike spirit in the warriors depicted. The only indications of his presence are two verbs of action describing the god: "sentì" (VII.38.6), and "sen gio" (VII.39.3). Thus, after the long description of Mars' home that seems to build up to the moment of his appearance, Boccaccio once again cheats us of a glimpse of this key figure in the poem. The explanation for this is shown in a gloss on the passage, where the god's status is revealed as "l'ardore dell'ira" (gloss VII.37.8).[59] This is in stark contrast to the Thebaid, which Boccaccio draws on for the house of Mars, where the god appears and speaks in full bloody glory:

[...] Hyrcano in sanguine pulcher
ipse subit curru, diraque adspargine latos
mutat agros, spolia a tergo flentesque catervae (Thebaid VII.69-71ff.).

By refusing to follow literary tradition in giving Mars a role as character in his epic, Boccaccio confirms that he uses him for a new purpose.

Boccaccio's treatment of Venus likewise shows the limitations of the poem's gods as characters. When Palaemon's prayer is carried to her abode, it seems that she too will not appear in person: "Ma non vedendo Vener" (VII.63.1). Although Venus does then appear to the messenger, the

episode is as unsatisfactory as that involving Mars. The scene is carefully constructed to present Venus in a negative shady light (literally and metaphorically), so that when she does finally appear in person, she is unlike the anthropomorphic Olympian Venus of classical epic. Her abode is dark - "il luogo vide oscur nel primo gire" (VII.64.5), and the goddess is not easily seen. When she is visible, she is introduced merely as "lei": "vide lei nuda giacere / sopr'un gran letto" (VII.64.7-8). Although a verse of physical description then follows, the goddess does not speak or act, and the granting of the prayer is briefly executed, "fu conceduto sanza niego" (VII.66.8). Thus any physical presence Boccaccio conjures with descriptions of her body is undermined by the body's silence and lack of action. The description heightens our expectations of seeing the goddess in action, with the result that the disappointment is also increased. Although the portrayal of Venus gives some sense of her as a character, like that of Mars it adds little to her active role in the poem. Once again, a lengthy gloss on the passage reveals how we are to read the episode:

> è da sapere che come di sopra, dicendo Marte consistere nello appetitio irascibile, così Venere nel concupiscibile. La quale Venere è doppia, (gloss, VII.50.1).

One of these "Venuses" is "onesto e licito disiderio", the other "quella per la quale ogni lascivia è disiderata". Thus the reality of these "gods", in the poet's opinion, lies in their status as dispositions for emotions, or in other words ethical realities of the type discussed by Aristotle in the Nicomachean Ethics. They are real only in terms of the emotions that they effect in humans, as the examples of Palaemon and Arcita show in the Teseida.

The tournament in Book VIII provides a classical epic backdrop both for the activities of warriors, and for the reappearance of the gods.[60] McGregor (1991a) describes the games as "an

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[59] Also, "finsero i poeti la casa di Marte, cioè l'appetito della guerra" (gloss, I.15.6).
[60] Boitani (1977, pp. 61-71): cf. Aeneid VIII.526, and Thebaid VI.404. See also Teseida VIII.49.1-2 and Thebaid II.675ff (an epic simile in an epic warrior context), and Teseida VIII.120.7-8 and Thebaid VI.485-90. Classical models are also important, as the first line echoes both the Aeneid and the Thebaid. See Anderson (1988) for how the Thebaid lies behind Boccacio's tournament (p. 97ff). He sees it as simulated

epitome of paganism": they are firmly set within a pagan context, as they are dedicated to the gods, the characters pray to the gods, and gods intervene in the action. All this, he argues, shows the danger of paganism, as a game destroys so many lives. While the element of criticism on Boccaccio's part is debatable, the prominence of the gods is clear. Venus and Mars watch over the mock battle - "Marte riguardava d'alto loco, / e Venere con lui, i combattenti" (VIII.112.1-2). Mars, following classical epic tradition, takes on human form to speak directly to Arcita:

> in forma rivestito di Teseo:
> - Ahi, villan cavalier, falso e fellone,
> qual codardia qui fermar ti feo? (VIII.113.1-3ff.).

Finally the god, albeit in disguise, appears to involve himself directly in the action and speak to a character as a character himself. But Arcita's reaction to him shows this not to be the case. Arcita does not reply to the "Theseus" who addresses him, nor does he even seem to be aware of the presence of his lord, let alone a god. The only effect Mars has on him, even though he tries to influence him through human means, is to enter in his breast a passion for war:

> E detto questo, trascorse en la schiera
> d'Arcita con parole accese d'ira; (XIII.114.1-2),

whereby Arcita becomes "infiammato" (114.5). This contrasts strongly with similar scenes in the Aeneid where characters are aware of the presence of a god, even if after the event.[61] Here Arcita shows no awareness of his divine visitor. The conclusion to draw is that Mars is not real in narrative terms as the Olympians were in classical epics, and again, a gloss shows where the "truth" of Boccaccio's presentation lies:

> Qui finge l'autore, Marte in forma di Teseo dir villania ad Arcita: dove niuna altra cosa intende, se non che Arcita reposantesi venisse in pensiero che da Teseo veduto fosse starsi, e che da lui, così vedendolo, potessero essere dette cotali parole chenti nel testo si dicono, le quali egli immaginando, subitamente sé e poi li suoi raccese alla battaglia.
> (gloss, VIII.112.8).

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war, or war on a smaller scale. This reduction in scale and complexity, he suggests, retains the focus on personal rivalry (p. 98).

[61] For example, Aeneas, on seeing Venus: "quid natum totiens, crudelis tu quoque, falsis / ludis imaginibus?" (Aeneid I.407-8); and Aeneid IV, where Mercury appears to him as a god (268ff). By contrast, the characters of the Teseida are blind to the Olympians, for example Emilia fails to recognise the portents given by Diana (VII.91-2), which Boccaccio explains to the reader in a gloss.

However, when Mars' action and speech here is balanced by Venus' later in the tournament, the result cannot be allegorised in the same way. At the start of the ninth book, both are still watching the warriors:

> Sovra l'alta arce di Minerva attenti
> Venere e Marte a rimirar costoro
> stavan, fra sé dell'ordine contenti
> che preso fu per li prieghi fra loro. (IX.2.1-4).

But when Palaemon, Venus' charge, seems not to be faring well, she addresses Mars (speaking for the first time within the poem), and the words of both are reported in direct speech. A camaraderie between the two is also alluded to, which adds to the strength of the personifications:

> A la qual Marte, fatto grazioso,
> - Amica – disse, - ciò che di' è 'l vero; (IX.3.6-7).

Finally, we see them as something akin to the gods of classical epic. To strengthen this impression, the narrator mentions Venus' recent descent to the Underworld:

> Ell'avea poco avanti visitati
> gli oscuri regni dell'ardente Dite
> e al re nero aveva palesati
> i suoi disii; (IX.4.1-4).

At this point, Boccaccio offers glosses that do not detract from the "reality" of this action, but in fact help to promote the truth of the story by explaining key references:

> - 2. [*Dite*]: è una città in inferno così chiamata. – 3. [*al re nero*]: cioè a Plutone. – 4. [*di quella*]: città di Dite. – 5. [*furie*]: infernali. [*alti*]: cioè grande. – 6. [*Erinis*]: furia.
> (gloss, IX.4).

Venus' descent is alluded to in the lines of the poem as a literal event. However, the episode is somewhat undermined by the fact that her journey to hell is only referred to, and takes place outside the narrative time frame and beyond the lines of the verse: it suggests no more activity than the countless references to mythological stories in the poem's glosses, and emphasizes the relative inactivity of the gods as characters in the poem. The episode also contains an allegorical meaning. The appearance of the Furies summoned by Venus is explained as part of the author's

"fizione" as a convenient way of explaining the death of a character. Speaking of the author, Boccaccio says:

> ora, a volere mostrare che Venere abbia operato a fare che Palemone avesse Emilia, introduce lei ad essere cagione della morte del vittorioso Arcita, (gloss, IX.5).

He does not give a specifically allegorical meaning to Venus, but says that his presentation of the Furies is based purely on the need to explain the otherwise mysterious death of Arcita. They are allegories of hellish fear:

> Certissima cosa è le bestie adombrare per alcuna spaventevole cosa la quale loro pare vedere; ma quello che egli si veggano, overo vedere si credono, niuno il sa. Finge adunque l'autore essere stata Erinis, l'una delle infernali furie, quella che spaventò il cavallo, e disegnala forte spaventevole a vedere, acciò che più renda scusata l'animosità del cavallo; e dice lei essere stata infernale furia, per lo doloroso effetto che seguì dello adombrare del cavallo, che fu la morte d'Arcita. (gloss, IX.5).

Venus' raising of these allegories casts her in an allegorical light as the inciter of fury.

The purpose of Mars and Venus in the poem is to highlight the themes of love and war, which in turn represent the genres of epic and romance in the work. Their role as manifestations of anger and passion (leading to war and love) reflect the nature of the poem itself. Anger and passion, and love and war are the main preoccupations of all the characters within the poem, but particularly of Arcita and Palaemon. The narrative alternates between these two themes, as though literally influenced by the changing domination of the planets Mars and Venus. Mars as a god dominates Books I and II, and the mode of writing is martial epic. When Venus takes over in III as Mars is rested, she brings with her the theme of romance and its accompaning mode of writing; thereafter the two are less clearly separated.[62] By using Mars and Venus as his main gods and as representative of two types of poetry, Boccaccio specifically draws the reader's attention to the generic question, and away from the problematic status of the gods. This use of divinities as poetic or generic markers also extends, unsurprisingly, to the Muses, who are given an unusual

speaking role at the end of the poem. They have the final word on the poem's genre by adding "delle nozze d'Emilia" (romance) to "Teseida" (epic). Thus epic and romance are coupled throughout by the pairing of Mars and Venus, and by the Muses at the end of the poem. [63]

To conclude, Boccaccio does not reproduce the words, actions, roles and characters of the Olympians as they are in classical literature, even though he allows them some of the same meanings as manifestations of human passions, and as astrological phenomena. The glosses, the introductory letter, and the Genealogiae direct us to allegorical meanings. These nominally classical figures add to the sense of classical epic that Boccaccio creates in his poem, but are altered to give a human focus in the work, and thereby a focus more typical of romance.[64] Divinities are superfluous in the sense that they do not provide Boccaccio with an easier way of narrating events (such as the reason for Arcita's fall from his horse), but serve as crucial vehicles for the poem's concern with genre, and echo the central interest in differences between classical epic, romance, and epic inspired by Dante, that will be considered in more detail in the next section.

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[62] For the linking of Mars and Venus with war and romance themes and narrratives within the poem, see Kirkham (1983).

[63] Epic and romance are balanced by several other pairs throughout the poem, including Arcita and Palaemon, as discussed below. Most of the significant characters, including Mars and Venus, are associated with both romance and epic, for example, we see Theseus and Hippolyta as warrior king and queen of their respective peoples (therefore in an epic role), but also as lovers, once war is over. Note too the descriptions of the Muses as "o sante donne" (12.52.1), and "o sacre Muse" (sonnet, Book 1.12.1), which reflects the special status given to them in the Genealogiae - "Et sic honeste sunt Muse, et poete honesti sunt homines" (XIV.20).

[64] Note also the lack of the supernatural more generally in the poem. There is no magic, and no monsters. It seems that, apart from the gods, which he goes to great lengths to explain in any case, Boccaccio attempts to limit use of the extraordinary or unbelievable in his poem.

3.4. Genre and the Hero.

The heroes of the Teseida, like the gods, are also used to highlight generic ambiguities within the poem, and through them we gain greater insight into Boccaccio's programmatic intentions. The answer to the question of whether the poem is a romance or an epic is played out through its heroes. The three main heroes – Theseus, Palaemon and Arcita – are, I will argue, each associated with a certain kind of writing. Theseus, presented first, is portrayed as a hero of classical epic, of the same model as Aeneas, and Statius' Theseus. He represents both the generic model (epic) and the specific example (Thebaid) with which Boccaccio starts his poem. By presenting a familiar epic hero first (whose actions are taken largely from classical epic), Boccaccio shows the origins and development of two other heroic types, and of two other types of poetry, in the poem. When Palaemon and Arcita become involved in the action, the shift in tone represents a move from epic to romance. However, the progression is more complex. Palaemon and Arcita, although similar in many ways, are ultimately used for different purposes: Palaemon is linked with romance as a genre; Arcita is the hero of medieval epic as exemplified by Dante. It is through Arcita that the poet, following Dante's lead, signifies the redemption of the epic hero. He allows him to rise to heaven leaving behind the doomed worlds both of classical epic (doomed for its folly[65] and paganism), where men such as Theseus are hero, and of romance, signified by Palaemon, which is doomed for its focus on earthly rather than divine love. Thus the three heroes are used to underline the movement in the poem away from classical epic towards romance, and the move from romance to a new epic influenced by developments in the Comedy. The three run concurrently, illustrating the way in which the later two genres are dependent on classical epic; the position of the Teseida within a developing epic tradition; and the difficulties in clearly delineating generic boundaries.

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[65] Theseus and Hippolyta at their wedding: "promettendo che [...] /nella prima follia non tornerieno" (I.135.6-7).

3.4.1. The Limitations of the Classical Model: Theseus as Epic Hero.

Theseus, the poem's namesake in the same way that Aeneas is the hero of the Aeneid, Odysseus the hero of the Odyssey, and Achilles that of the Achilleid, is portrayed as an epic hero on the classical model, and his nature, deeds, sphere of action and similarity to other classical heroes firmly suggest the genre to which he belongs.[66] There is a strong sense of classical epic at the start of the poem, beginning with Boccaccio's gloss - "Nel principio del suo libro fa l'autore, secondo l'antico costume de' componitori, una sua invocazione" (gloss I.1), and Theseus is the hero at the centre of this epic start.[67] His name appears eight times in the introductory letter to Fiammetta, compared with only five and four for Arcita and Palaemon, as well as in the first line of the sonnet giving a summary of the work next to the word "vince", and his is the only name in the introductory sonnet to Book I. In the opening two books, the action of the poem centres on Theseus, not just as hero, but as epic hero from a classical mould.

However, I shall argue that negative aspects and non-classical elements are included to suggest that the classical model is problematic for a medieval Christian poet, and that elements more suited to a romance hero or to a Christian hero are included as alternatives. These alternatives are then realised in other characters within the poem, once the model of comparison – Theseus the classical hero - has been established.

Readers of the poem might have known Theseus from a variety of sources including Ovid and the Thebaid. Boccaccio builds on the literary and mythological history behind the character by providing him with an epic narrative context. The journeys and war in Books I and II of the

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[66] Bergin (1981, p. 122): "Theseus has a true claim to epic stature; he is warlike, heroic, wreathed in an aura of legendary majesty, and he does not languish over Hippolyta. He defeats her on the field of battle, marries her by force, and makes her a docile wife. And it is the attraction for war and the cause of justice, not love or lust, that moves him to intervene in Thebes".

[67] Books I and II are not devoid of romance elements, such as the "bel castel" (I.47.4) of the Amazons; "la real corte" (I.133.6); and the false start of Book II, which, while promising war, is in fact similar to the start

Teseida provide Theseus with the opportunity to live up to our expectation of a mighty warrior hero: he is "fervente [...] / a vengiare" (sonnet I.3-4); he sails to war "col suo navilio e con l'armata gente" (6); he has "viva forza" (10); and he is a conqueror - "combattendo / [...] vincesse" (10-11).[68] Thus immediately we have a picture of a warrior hero familiar from classical epic, and the action of the first book continues the image. Theseus' anger in response to the cowardice of his troops - "di rabbia tutto in sé si consumava" (I.57.3) - shows him with that epic characteristic most associated with Achilles, "Μηνιν άειδε θεά Πηληϊάδεω Άχιληος / ουλομένην" (Iliad I.1-2);[69] and in fighting, he shows his power:

> Ma il numero di lor, ch'era infinito,
> ogni ora la battaglia rinfrescava;
> questo contra Teseo fiero e ardito
> il campo lungamente sostenava;
> esso sanza riposo e ispedito
> ferendo, or qua or là correndo andava,
> e ammirar di sé ciascun facea
> che 'n quello stormo mirar lo potea. (I.73).

Here, in the midst of an infinite host, he is an example of a hero to be emulated. Anger and strength are two among his several heroic traits. To reinforce Theseus' stance as hero modelled on classical epic, Boccaccio uses an epic simile of a wolf:

> Né altramente infra le pecorelle
> si ficca il lupo per fame rabbioso,
> col morso strangolando or queste or quelle [...] (I.74.1-3).[70]

In Book II, Theseus speaks of "vendetta" (II.38.8) against Creon, and his confidence of victory - "io son già di vittoria sicuro" (II.39.6) - is supported again by a picture of his strength:

> Il buon Teseo, sopra un alto destriere,
> con una mazza in man pel campo andava
> ferendo forte ciascun cavaliere

---

of Book III, with its focus on the weather and time of year (II.1, 3). But these elements are subsidiary to a larger epic picture.

[68] While Wetherbee's (1991-2, p. 176) suggestion that the Amazon war is transformed into a ritual of courtship, and his subsequent view of it as an unepic adventure has some basis, Boccaccio nonetheless chooses to begin the poem with war, and this is a significant step in the direction of epic.

[69] "Goddess, sing of the accursed wrath of Achilles son of Peleus" (my translation). See too, "con la spada furioso" (I.74.6), and "Così Teseo fieramente andando" (I.75.1).

[70] See also I.42.1-7, where Theseus is like a ravenous "leoncel". Note that Walter of Châtillon describes Alexander as a "leunculus" (Alexandreis I.49).

e abbattendo cui elli incontrava, (II.56.1-4).

Epithets used of Theseus in the first book add to this powerful picture: he is "fiero" (I.68.2) and this is often coupled with "ardito": I.73.1; I.119.4. He is "duca" (I.13.4)[71], "gran" (I.49.1), "vincente" (sonnet II.2), "nobile" (X.17.4), "magnifico" (VII.100.1), of "magnifico onore" (II.93.1), and moved "per virtù" (II.62.2). He is concerned with justice - "era famosissimo vendicatore d'ogni ingiuria" (gloss, II.10), and stands against Creon's "superbia" (II.62.7). These attributes, coupled with his concern for glory - "la mia gloria" (II.26.5) – equip him as a warrior hero. As judge of the tournament, he considers the conduct of the combatants in the terms of the warrior values with which he himself is familiar:

> Esso vedeva e conosceva aperto
> qual di lor fosse più nell'arme esperto.
>
> E similmente assai chiaro notava
> l'opere di ciascuno e 'l suo ferire;
> e chi la morte per onor cercava,
> e chi temeva per gloria morire,
> e chi più arte en la battaglia usava,
> e chi aveva o più o meno ardire,
> e chi schifava e chi facea niente,
> tutto vedea in sé tacitamente. (VIII.89.7 – 90.8).

The repetitive rhythm of these lines adds to the formulaic effect, as though this were the code of war that Theseus, as a warrior hero ("la tua prodezza, la qual già sapeva / ciaschedun regno" (II.5.6-7)), recognises. Here too, we see the values of "onor" and "gloria" which Theseus holds in repute. His prowess as speaker is shown by his persuasiveness ("persuadendo" (sonnet, II.7)), and the emotion he inspires:

> E sì gli aveva vergogna spronati
> con le parole del fiero Teseo
> ch'egli eran presti e arditi tornati (I.68.1-3).[72]

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[71] Though this means *duke* in Italian, it also functions as a verbal imitation of the Latin *dux*, which, in medieval Latin, means both *duke* and *leader*. Thus the word is applicable both to an epic and a romance hero. Boitani (1977, p. 52) comments that the title "betrays the classical-feudal (dux-duca) ambiguity of the character".

[72] Cf. Nestor and Ulysses.

In his speech to his men in Scythia, his concern is again for the heroic values that his men are lacking: he speaks of "disonore" (I.64.4), "valore" (I.64.6), and being "onorato" (64.7). Likewise, in his response to the entreaties of the Greek women, he mentions "il regnar glorioso" (II.37.5), "onori" (II.37.6), and "onor" (II.38.4). In other words, his motivations for action stem from the kind of values that he himself uses to judge other warriors. In addition to this, Theseus is "buon" (I.53.5; II.72.1; X.16.8), "magnanimo" (I.16.1),[73] and kind – "benignamente" (I.79.6), and he has a pious aspect, linking him to Aeneas: "da intima pietà" (II.43.4); "pietosamente" (VII.102.4).[74]

Theseus' heroic status is frequently illustrated by hints of his similarity to other epic heroes, and imitation of the actions in which these other heroes are involved. Comparison of Boccaccio's Theseus with that of the Thebaid raises notable differences, in spite of the Teseida being in some ways a response to and a continuation of the Thebaid (a connection which in itself offers Theseus a background).[75] In the Thebaid Theseus is "victor" (XII.532, 544), "dux" (XII.523, 639), and is described with an animal simile (bull – XII.601), and these are all aspects that Boccaccio's presentation shares. But the focus in the Thebaid is on Theseus' history, in terms both of genealogy and past deeds. He is the "Neptunius [...] heros" (XII.588), or simply "Neptunius" (XII.665) or "aequoreus" (XII.730): his divine parentage is mentioned more often than his alternative human parent, whereas Boccaccio is silent on the divine element.[76] Two similes liken him to gods: he is like Jupiter (Thebaid XII.651ff) and Mars (XII.733).[77] Theseus' shield in the Thebaid portrays his past glories (XII.665ff), and the image of the hero portrayed by the shield is confirmed by the appearance of the warrior in the poem:

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[73] This word is used to describe Theseus in the Thebaid: "Thesea magnanimum" (XII.795).
[74] Although "pietà" here seems to mean *pity* rather than *piety*, the verbal echo brings the original Latin meaning to mind in this epic context.
[75] Anderson, (1988).
[76] XII.546, 769.
[77] Note Theseus (Teseida V.99) is like the Jupiter of the Thebaid (VII.223-6).

terror habet populos, cum saeptus imagine torva
ingreditur pugnas: bis Thesea bisque cruentas
caede videre manus; (Thebaid XII.672-4).

He is a hero whose past deeds prove his heroic status. By contrast, the Teseida shows only a passing glimpse of the shield ("coperto dello scudo" I.74.7), but there is no *ekphrasis*, nor mention of any depiction on the device. By ignoring Theseus' heroic past and possible divine parentage, Boccaccio seems to deny him his full heroic status, and by avoiding *ekphrasis* he also denies this part of the poem an important feature of classical epic. In spite of these differences, Boccaccio does call Statius' Theseus to mind by echoing episodes from the Thebaid involving the hero. Hence Theseus is addressed by the Greek women in both poems,[78] and Creon's words, as well as Theseus' response to him, are similar.[79] He is also linked to epic heroism by his similarity to other characters in the Thebaid, for example Adrastus.[80]

Theseus is also an Aeneas figure, and imitation of the Aeneid is most noticeable in Books I and II of the Teseida, emphasizing the epic beginning Boccaccio gives to his poem. Besides being "pio" (II.32.5), Theseus, with his slaughter of Creon in battle, echoes Aeneas killing Turnus:

il vide il duca nel viso cambiato;
e già era freddato tutto quanto:
per che conobbe l'anima dolente
esser partita dal corpo spiacente. (Teseida II.66.5-8),

[...] ast illi soluuntur frigore membra
uitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras. (Aeneid XII.951-2),

and Boccaccio's echo of "frigore" with "freddato" increases the sense of connection between the passages. The similarity between Theseus and Aeneas first occurs when Fama carries news of Theseus' plans to fight the Amazons to their queen Hippolyta – "cotal novella tosto rapporta / ad Ipolita" (I.21.5-6). The news sends her into a rage - "di furore accesa" (21.8), and a simile

[78] Cf. Teseida II.25ff, and Thebaid XII.540ff, eg. "Isposa fui de Capaneo" (Teseida II.28.5ff), and "ausa ante alias Capaneia coniunx" (Thebaid XII.545ff).
[79] Eg. "Dite a Teseo ch'io sono apparecchiato / della battaglia" (Teseida II.52.1ff), and "accipimus, veniant; sed ne post bella querantur" (Thebaid XII.691ff).

describes her running frantically about her land like a wild boar (I.38). Aeneas' preparations to sail away from Carthage, "eadem impia Fama / furenti detulit armari classem cursumque parari" (Aeneid IV.298-9) send Dido into a similar rage: "totamque incensa per urbem / bacchatur". If Hippolyta is a Dido figure receiving bad news, then Theseus is to be linked with Aeneas. This is brought out more clearly in another passage influenced by the Aeneid.[81] At the start of Book II, Theseus is roused from his leisurely life with his new Amazon wife by the apparition of Perithous, who urges him to sail home. Many elements of the episode recall Mercury's visit to Aeneas in Aeneid IV. Perithous' opening words,

> - Che fai tu ozioso
> con Ipolita in Scizia dimorando,
> sotto amore offuscando il tuo famoso
> nome? Perché in Grecia oramai
> non torni, ove più gloria avrai assai? (II.4.4-8),

echo those of Mercury in the Aeneid: "qua spe Libycis teris otia terris?" (Aeneid IV.271). But the concern for glory, which Mercury thinks is not enough to move Aeneas, "si nulla te mouet tantarum gloria rerum" (72), is used by Perithous as the main reason Theseus should return. Aeneas' forgetfulness of his kingdom and affairs - "heu, regni rerumque oblite tuarum" (267) becomes Theseus' forgetfulness of his courage:

> la tua prodezza, la qual già sapeva
> ciaschedun regno, hai qui messa in oblio (Teseida II.5.6-7).

Vergil's "uxorius" is transferred to Theseus' speech to Hippolyta - "con donnesco parlar" (II.8.2). Both Theseus and Aeneas are left in fear after the apparition, though Aeneas' fear, heightened by the knowledge that Mercury is sent by the gods, "Aeneas aspectu obmutuit amens, / arrectaeque horrore comae et uox faucibus haesit" (IV.279-80) outweighs that of Theseus, which soon abates, "Ma poi che la paura luogo diede" (7.1). The first of two main differences between the episodes is that Boccaccio replaces Mercury with a human. This reflects both the limited role that

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[80] Teseida XI.11-12, and Thebaid IV.45-53.
[81] Boitani (1977, pp. 61-71) mentions only Aeneid IV.272 at this point, but the episode is imitated much more widely.

Boccaccio chooses to allow the gods, as discussed above, and a practical rendering of a passage which is read allegorically in the Genealogiae.[82] Boccaccio reworks the episode to avoid giving prominence to an Olympian in the narrative. However, the apparition is cast in new light by the revelation on Theseus' part that the message comes from heaven:

> [...] si ruppe il velo
> della 'gnoranza, e con intera fede,
> che non lì Peritoo, ma che dal cielo,
> da qualche deità la qual provede
> al suo onor con caritevole zelo,
> era venuto cotal ragionare; (Teseida II.7.2-7).

Knowing that the message came from the gods makes the episode much more akin to that in the Aeneid, but the apparently human face of the messenger allows Boccaccio to avoid clear apparitions of the gods. The mention of "velo", and the use of "caritevole" suggests that Boccaccio is alluding to the Christian god here, and that he expects his readers to realise this. The second main difference between the episodes is their outcome. Aeneas slips silently away from Carthage leaving Dido behind; Theseus immediately invites Hippolyta to come with him, and they leave together:

> E fatto questo, entrò sanza dimoro
> in mare, e 'nsieme Ipolita reina (9.1-2).

Boccaccio rewrites the tragedy of Aeneid IV with this happy ending to Theseus' stay in Scythia.[83] He legitimises the love that to medieval readers of the Aeneid might be troubling, thereby smoothing over and transforming aspects of classical epic for his audience. Boccaccio is not correcting his model as much as adapting it for a medieval audience whose opinion of heroism has altered, and at the same time he amends his Dido figure, whom he praises in Genealogiae XIII.12.[84]

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[82] Genealogiae XIV.13.16. Petrarch also replaces Mercury with a human character in his retelling of the episode: see Africa III, discussed below, p. 189.
[83] Hence McGregor (1991 b, pp. 52-3): "Theseus' assumption of the perfected career of Aeneas is plainly established in Books 1 and 2 of the Teseida".
[84] On Boccaccio's treatment of Dido, see Kallendorf (1989), ch.3. Aeneas had to abandon Dido to fulfil his heroic destiny, but note that Odysseus was not less of a hero for having a wife. However, Alexander in the

Theseus is also linked with other heroes besides Aeneas, and these fall into two categories: those which reinforce his classical heroic status, and those which suggest a new type of hero. Illustrations of the first sort are Theseus as Hercules:

> Essi da te quell'animo gentile,
> ch'ancor simile ad Ercul prometteva
> de farti, dipartito? (Teseida II.5.1-2);

and, in contemplating his battle position,

> E tornandoli a mente come Alcide
> a l'Idra, che de'suoi danni crescea,
> avea la vita tolta, seco vide
> che là dov'era Ipolita volea
> sua pruova far [...] (Teseida I.84.1-5).

Further examples, although echoing other medieval epics rather than classical ones directly, achieve the same result of reinforcing Theseus' heroic nature. In attacking the Amazons, Theseus jumps off his ship before all his men, exposing himself to danger:

> sanza scala por ne saltò giuso,
> né si curò perché fosse ferito
> da molte parti; ma, come duca uso
> di tal mestier, più si mostrava ardito,
> sé riparando e di sopra e dintorno;
> e fuor dell'acqua uscì sanza sogiorno. (Teseida I.66.3-8)

This is similar to Alexander's actions in his attack of the city of the Sudracae in the Alexandreis. There, he climbs a ladder (note that Theseus does without) before all his host and leaps alone into the besieged city full of enemies:

> [...] rex, ausus mirabile dictu
> Atque fide maius, saltu se prepete dira
> Barbarie plenam preceps inmisit in urbem, (Alexandreis IX.366-8).

Alexandreis is warned by Aristotle not to get involved with women, and has only one very brief and reluctant dalliance (I.164ff; VIII.36-48). Boccaccio chooses the Aeneid as model for Theseus' departure from Carthage. He does not merely gloss over the episode as in the Thebaid, but replaces one epic model with another, but then goes on to alter the second model, as though neither are satisfactory for his purpose.

Whether or not Boccaccio had access to the poem, the similarity shows the sort of action that an epic hero based on classical models performs, thus adding to Theseus' heroic status.

The second category of hero with which Theseus is compared suggests the need to move beyond the classical model. The similarity of Theseus to Dante's Ulysses, while emphasising his classical heroism (Boccaccio treats the Comedy here as a classic), also hints at a need to move on from him as a model. In the introductory sonnet to Book II, Theseus' speech to his men is described as "picciola orazione" (6), an imitation of Ulysses' "orazion picciola" (Inferno XXVI.122). The speech itself contains verbal reminiscences, such as "non per esser triste / come bruti animali" (Teseida II.44.7-8) and "fatti non foste a viver come bruti" (Inferno XXVI.119), and "tante perigliose cose" (Teseida II.45.2) and "per cento milia perigli" (Inferno XXVI.112-3), and suggest the similar position of the hero of each episode.[85] Ulysses' speech leads to disaster, and although Theseus too is ultimately doomed to an unenlightened earthly life, while heroes such as Dante and Arcita rise beyond this, Boccaccio makes alterations to distance his hero from Ulysses' fate. Theseus offers his men a clearly defined goal,

> Andiamo adunque, e lui, fiero Creonte,
> umil facciàn con le spade tornare, (Teseida II.47.1-2),

compared with Ulysses' offer of "l'esperienza" (116) of the unexplored world. Like Ulysses, Theseus has a mixed attitude to his family duties,

> Teseo adunque, sanza rivedere
> il vecchio padre o parente o amico
> uscì d'Attene [...] (Teseida II.49.1-3),

that echoes Dante's Ulysses ("nè la pièta / del vecchio padre" 94-5), though ultimately he does not neglect his duty to his father. Aegeus greets Theseus on his return to Athens,

> entrarono in Attene, e quivi Egeo,
> suo vecchio padre, incontro li si feo. (Teseida II.91.7-8),

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[85] Again, these reminiscences are not listed by Boitani.

and accompanies him in his triumph, "accompagnato dal suo padre" (II.96.2). This paternal concern adds to the more prevalent sense of Theseus as an Aeneas figure. Thus, while Theseus has elements in him of the Ulysses type, we return again to the idea of him as Aeneas. [86]

This particular combination of elements both of the Ulysses and Aeneas types of hero shows the way that Theseus' similarity to other heroes goes beyond the classical, as it is also found in the Dante-hero of the Comedy. Parallels between Theseus and Dante reveal the new elements in Theseus' heroic status, and suggest that epic heroes drawn on the classical model can develop in medieval epic in a variety of directions. Theseus addresses his men with "Ahi, vitupero della gente achiva" (I.61.3), which echoes Dante's words about the sorry state of Pisa - "Ahi Pisa, vituperio della genti" (Inferno XXXIII.79). His fear at the admonition of Perithous in Scythia, which I earlier suggested linked him with Aeneas, also links him with Dante: "Ma poi che la paura luogo diede" (Teseida II.7.1-2) - "Allor fu la paura un poco queta" (Inferno I.19). He is also linked with the medieval romance tradition (the ambiguity of "duca" (I.13.3), also used by Dante of Vergil); "barone" (I.49.1), "greci cavalieri", (I.135.1), "signor" (I.13.3; II.82.2; IV.85.3). But Theseus is a flawed character, and thus his development away from the classical hero is limited. When Hippolyta judges him by the standards of knightly and courtly behaviour, he is shown to fall short:

> Tu non hai fatto come cavaliere
> che contro a par piglia debita guerra,
> ma come disleale uom barattiere
> subitamente assalisti mia terra,
> e come vile e cattivo guerriere
> mai non pensasti, se 'l mio cor non erra,
> che 'l guerregiar con donne e aver vittoria
> del vincitore è più biasmo che gloria. (I.104.1-8).

As a positive example of a hero, he is at times lacking.[87] It is only through wholly new figures that a new kind of epic hero can emerge, as Dante reveals in casting himself as the protagonist of

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[86] But Theseus is also associated with the Greeks of the Aeneid, Aeneas' great enemies: Teseida I.31, I.40.

his epic. The developments hinted at in the character of Theseus are explored more fully in the new characters of Palaemon and Arcita, who have less of a familiar literary background.

Theseus takes a subsidiary role when Boccaccio turns to Palaemon and Arcita. He is not mentioned in the opening lines of the sonnet to Book III, as he is in the first two books, but only in the tenth as the recipient of Perithous' request. He does not appear in person until the 47th stanza of the book, and is almost entirely absent from Books IV and VI. In the introductory letter to Fiammetta, Boccaccio shows that his central subjects are Palaemon and Arcita:

> Dico adunque che dovendo narrare di due giovani nobilissimi tebani, Arcita e Palemone, come, innamorati d'Emilia amazona, per lei combattessero, primamente posta la invocazione poetica, mi parve da dimostrare e donde la donna fosse e come ad Attene venisse [...].

And again in the 6th stanza of Book I:

> Con ciò sia cosa che la principale intenzione dell'autore di questo libretto sia di trattare dell'amore e delle cose avvenute per quello, da due giovani tebani, cioè Arcita e Palemone, ad Emilia amazona, sì come nel suo proemio appare, potrebbe alcuno, e giustamente, adimandare che avesse qui a fare la guerra di Teseo con le donne amazone, della quale solamente parla il primo libro di questa opera. Dico, e brievemente, che l'autore a niuno altro fine queste cose scrisse, se non per mostrare onde Emilia fosse venuta ad Attene [...] (gloss I.6.1).

Here, as already illustrated above in discussion of the gods, Boccaccio uses the impersonal and distancing nature of the glosses to explain an aspect of his poem without directly affecting the flow of the narrative. The gloss makes clear that Theseus' role is as accessory to his main purpose of presenting the story of Palaemon and Arcita's love: he simply provides background to the story of Palaemon and Arcita rather than being a hero in his own right. He becomes an overseer and arbiter of events in which he himself has no direct part. His heroic nature is at times

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[87] For a negative example of his behaviour, see the two references to Helen - V.92; XI.62.4 and gloss: "per amor sovente folleggiai" (V.92.2). See also the Filocolo - "beata Arianna [...] ingannata dal sonno e da Teseo" (II. p.79).

touched on, and he is likened again to heroes such as Ulysses,[88] but generally he appears as a feudal lord to whom the younger heroes pledge allegiance. For example, Palaemon says to him:

> Caro signor, da me più degnamente
> che la mia vita amato [...] (Teseida XII.21.1-2),

showing loyalty and love of his lord, and he is "dolce mio signore" (III.52.4). His role becomes one of speaking and observing, rather than of acting.

At the end of Book II, Theseus hands his laurel crown to Mars:

> [...] a Marte l'offerse, e dalla fronte
> con man le frondi di Pennea levate
> diè similmente [...] (Teseida II.95.3-5).

This triumph is the climax of the "classical" epic part of the poem. Although the laurel signifies the victor, it also belongs to the poet, and as Boccaccio says in the opening of the poem that he hopes to be crowned with laurel for his poetic achievement, "[le] frondi amate / da Febo, delle quali ancor la fronte / spero d'ornarmi" (I.1.4-6), there is almost certainly a symbolic aspect to the reference here at the end of Book II. Mars – epic poetry – receives his crown, and the poet moves on to a different victory. Mars (war, and classical epic) is rested, thereby opening the way for another influence on the poem. Without losing his links entirely with epic, the poet replaces this old battle poetry with a new poetry of new battles: "sarà da me di Cupido cantato / e delle sue battaglie" (III.1.6-7). He does not abandon epic so much as set it to one side (just as with Mars), and move on in a different direction. This direction is romance. The narrative shifts its focus from Theseus to Palaemon and Arcita, and love and its effects become the central theme.[89]

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[88] For example, the speech to Palaemon in IX.51ff.

[89] McGregor (1991 b, p. 46) disagrees: "Theseus is its central character, and the episodes in the poem represent a series of problems presented to him". The Argonautica and Digenis Akritis also change theme in this way in the third book, and the change is particularly noticeable in the latter. Book I begins, " Επαινοι και τρόπαια κατορθωμάτων / του τρισμάκαρος Ακρίτου βασιλείου, / του ἀνδρειοτάτου τε γενναιοτάτου", ("Praises and trophies for the achievements / of the thrice-blessed Basil the Frontiersman, / and the bravest and most noble"), and Book III - "Οὕτως δουλος πας ὁ ἔρων του ἔρωτος ὑπάρχει· / ἔστι γαρ οὗτος δικαστης βασανίζων καρδίας / των μη τηρούντων ἀκριβως τας ὁδους της ἀγάπης·" – "Thus every lover is a slave of Eros, / for Eros is a judge who tortures the hearts / of those who do not follow correctly the paths of love" (III.1-3). (Text and translation, Jeffreys, 1998).

3.4.2. Palaemon and Arcita: Romance Heroes?

The autograph copy of the Teseida (Florence, Bilioteca Medicea-Laurenziana, Cod. Acquisti e Doni 325) reveals by its layout that Boccaccio is ultimately more interested in Palaemon and Arcita than he is in Theseus: Book III opens with the largest decorated capital of the work, thereby suggesting that the poem really begins with the third Book. This section will consider how Palaemon and Arcita serve as romance heroes for this new beginning, before exploring differences between the two that reveal Boccaccio's presentation of a third kind of writing, that is, the Dantean epic that replaces the romance and classical epic heroes with a new one. I shall show that this move is confirmed by the link between Arcita and Dante, as well as by that suggested between Arcita and Boccaccio. By seeing Arcita as a hero inspired by the hero of the Comedy, the Teseida appears as a medieval epic akin to the genre as remodelled by Dante. Thus Boccaccio offers a critique both of classical epic and of romance, both genres with which he flirts throughout the poem, but both of which (again following Dante) he ultimately shows to be only a foundation for a Christian epic poet to build upon.

When Palaemon and Arcita appear, it is clear that they are not the same kind of hero as Theseus. Although found in epic surroundings on the battlefield at Thebes, they are wounded and weeping youths:

> due giovani feriti dolorando
> quivi trovaron, sanza alcun riposo;
> e ciaschedun la morte domandava,
> tanto dolor del lor mal gli agravava (II.85.5-8),

and allow themselves to be taken prisoner. They begin Book III in a similarly unepic way as "duo prigion" (sonnet III.4). After this, they are victims of love, (just as they have been victims of war):

> elli accendesse in amorosa
> fiamma, mostrando poi l'aspro dolore

del soverchio disio e l'animosa
voglia di far sentire il lor valore (III.5-8),

and this is the focus of Boccaccio's characterisation of them. Book III.5 sets the scene for falling in love, as both the season and the position of the stars are favourable: "Volendo dimostrare il cielo essere ottimamente disposto a fare altrui innamorare" (gloss, III.5.6).[90] The room in which Palaemon and Arcita are detained overlooks a garden that is "amoroso" - "allato allato al giardino amoroso" (III.11.3) – as they tend to be in romance. Emilia appears in the garden singing love songs, "cantando be' versi d'amore" (III.10.7), while she makes garlands.[91] This is the romantic scene in which Palaemon and Arcita are properly introduced.

Characterised largely by their weeping - "Deh, lasso me! or che vo cercando / me' sospir dispietati e angosciosi" (IV.10.1-2) - their dismay at being imprisoned shows the kind of mood they maintain throughout the poem:

[...] in suppremа tristizia
e quasi più che ad altro al pianger dati,
del tutto d'ogni futura letizia
dovere aver giammai più disperati, (III.3.2-5).

As mentioned above (p. 98) similes used to describe Theseus generally add to his epic heroic status. By contrast, those used of Arcita and Palaemon emphasize the force of their sorrow, for example:

Né escion delle sicule caverne,
allora ch'Eol l'apre, sì furenti,
ora le basse e ora le superne
parti cercando, li rabbiosi venti,
come costor delle parti più interne
producean fuor sospiri assai cocenti, (III.27.1-6),

and their love increases like the effect of serpent venom:

E come avven che 'l dente del serpente

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[90] See Kirkham (1983, p. 310) for the special significance of Venus and the number 3, and Smarr (1979, pp. 312-5) on the position of the stars.
[91] Cf. Matelda - "una donna soletta che si gía / cantando e sciegliendo fior da fiore" (Purgatorio XXVIII.40-1).

pria lede altrui con picciola morsura,
sé dilatando poi subitamente
offusca il membro della sua mistura,
poi l'uno e l'altro successivamente
infin che 'l corpo tutto quanto oscura;
così costor di dì in dì, mirando,
d'amore il fuoco gieno aumentando. (III.33).

This is not the kind of heroic reinforcement with which similes are accustomed to provide classical epic heroes. Just as similes are adapted to portray the effects of love, so comparison with classical heroes also illustrates the new direction that this poem is taking when it focuses on Palaemon and Arcita. For example, their love makes them forget all else:

Era a costor della memoria uscita
l'antica Tebe e 'l loro alto legnaggio (III.36.1-2).

This brings to mind Theseus' own forgetfulness in Scythia, which is imitative of Aeneas in Carthage, as mentioned above (p. 102). By contrast, Palaemon and Arcita have no kingdoms to govern, no wars to fight, no cities to found, and no destinies to fulfil.

Their status as romance heroes is confirmed by the words used to describe them. They are: "li due scudieri" (III.20.1); "amanti [...] / discontenti" (III.42.1-2); "baroni / [...] come dragoni" (V.75.7-8); "baroni" (V.105.3; sonnet, VI.2); "i due amanti" (VII.95.1), and most frequently, "cavalier" (V.37.7; V.45.1; V.80.2, 4; V.83.1; VII.116.3; IX.74.2). Physical descriptions of the two men are not given in a warrior context (they could have been described on the battle-field at Thebes in full warrior garb), but in the surrounds of a prison:

Era Palemon grande e ben membruto,
brunetto alquanto e nello aspetto lieto,
con dolce sguardo e nel parlare arguto;
ma ne' sembianti umile e mansueto,
poi che fu innamorato, divenuto;
d'alto intelletto e d'operar secreto,
di pel rossetto e assai grazioso,
di moto grave e d'ardir copioso. (III.49)

This description of Palaemon specifically refers to the influence of love on his appearance (5). That of Arcita is similar, mentioning the same kinds of features, but also likens him to a "rosa

d'aprile" (III.50.3), suggesting weakness and femininity.[92] Although Palaemon is "d'ardir copioso", and Arcita has "gran coraggio " (III.50.7, in speaking, not action), the tone of the descriptions is one of nobility and humility, in other words, courtly attributes rather than heroic ones.

The physical surroundings of Palaemon and Arcita also emphasise their romance status. Classical heroes do not normally frequent prisons, or inns, as Palaemon does: "se n'andò all'ostiere" (V.27.3). The grove which Arcita visits as Theseus' disguised servant has the key elements of a classical *locus amoenus*, offering trees, birds, water and grass:

> Egli era bello, e d'alberi novelli
> tutto fronzuto e di nova verdura;
> e era lieto di canti d'uccelli,
> di chiare fonti fresche a dismisura,
> che sopra l'erbe facevan ruscelli
> freddi e nemici d'ogni gran calura; (IV.65.1-6).[93]

However, Boccaccio imposes medieval detail on this epic feature, as the place is used for hunting:

> conigli, lepri, cervi e cavriuoli
> vi si prendean con cani e con lacciuoli. (IV.65.7-8).

Likewise, settings that could allow Palaemon and Arcita epic action – the duel in the wood (Book V) and the arena in Books VII-VIII – seem to avoid it.[94] In the duel scene, Arcita refers to the disastrous history of his and Palaemon's ancestors.[95] The list, which ends with Palaemon and Arcita, also includes Polynices and Etiocles (V.59.1). As Theban brothers in conflict, they provide a parallel with Boccaccio's two characters, and the link is strengthened by the common ancestry of all four, as well as by the strong presence of the Thebaid in the poem. The reference

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[92] In the Roman de la Rose, the rose is a woman. However, Digenis Akritis is described as rosy –"*ροδινον*" (IV.198). The rose is an important religious image in the Comedy, and the description is perhaps a hint of Christian potential in Arcita that is discussed below.
[93] Compare Dante's Earthly Paradise (Purgatorio XXVIII).
[94] Porcelli (1986, p. 60) disagrees: "le due grosse sequenze epiche del Teseida [sono] il duello e lo scontro delle schiere".

initially casts the scene in epic mould, showing Palaemon and Arcita as the most recent in a line of conflict. But having set up the comparison, Boccaccio reveals that the strife between these two relations is complicated by a persisting love of each other, which suggests that they will not suffer the same fate as their epic ancestors. Coming upon his sleeping rival, Palaemon refers to Arcita as "O bello amico molto da lodare" (V.36.5). They greet each other warmly, "E 'nsieme si far festa di buon core" (V.39.1), and use terms of affection, "dolce amico caro" (V.39.4). Attempts to resolve the rivalry with words fail, and the minimal fighting is described in terms of a medieval joust:

> E' non avean lance i cavalieri,
> e però insieme giostrar non potero; (V.65.1-2).

When Palaemon is wounded, Arcita's care of him again distances him from the epic heroic model:

> e 'n su l'erbetta fresca e sopra i fiori
> teneramente a giacer lo poneva;
> e poi con man delli freschi liquori
> del vicino rivo a suo poter prendeva,
> e 'l viso li bagnava [...] (V.69.3-7).

The tenderness is not typical of a warrior for his enemy, but reflects the love of Arcita and Palaemon for each other in contrast to the model of classical epic heroes Etiocles and Polynices, Aeneas and Turnus, or Achilles and Hector.

The tournament to decide whom Emilia will marry also provides Palaemon and Arcita with an occasion for epic heroic action comparable with that of Theseus, but is again used to distance them from classical epic heroes. Although the tournament is presided over by both Mars and Venus,[96] and thus influenced by epic and romance, its epic nature is generally seen as subsidiary

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[95] Boccaccio comments – "Vuole qui mostrare Arcita che tutti li suoi predecessori [...] abbiano fatta mala morte" (gloss, V.57.1).
[96] See Kirkham (1983, p. 318) for the significance of Mars' and Venus' numbers (3 and 5) here.

to the romance. According to Anderson (1988, p. 119), Boccaccio "violates epic decorum",[97] and Boitani (1977, p. 10) argues that both the duel in the wood and the tournament are medieval, and evoke the world of French romances and the *cantari* tradition, as the lack of epic features is compensated for by reference to contemporary custom. However, there are many epic features including: the long catalogue of extraordinary warriors present, which draws on the Thebaid (IV.44ff); the many heroes shown in combat; the involvement of the gods; Palaemon and Arcita's similarity to other epic heroes including Ulysses, but more significantly the pairs Polynices and Etiocles and Aeneas and Turnus;[98] the martial language used of the tournament "il fiero incominciare / [...] dello stormo" (sonnet, VIII.1-2); and the appearance and actions of the heroes as warriors:

> [...] Arcita, asciugando il sudore
> che sanguinoso gli gia trascorrendo
> giù per lo viso [...] (VIII.78.4-6).

A parallel between this fight and the Trojan War is suggested by Emilia's similarity to Helen:

> Deh, quanto mal per me mi diè natura
> questa bellezza di cui pregio fia
> orribile battaglia, rea e dura,
> che qui si fa sol per la faccia mia!
> [...]
> Oh, quante madri, padri, amici e frati,
> figliuoli e altri, me maladicendo,
> davanti a l'are staranno turbati [...] (Teseida VIII.98.1-4, 100.1-3).

But as Theseus points out, the contest is not meant to be an epic battle:

> qui non ha zuffa per acquistar regno
> o per pigliar perduto ereditaggio,
> qui non è tra costor mortale sdegno,
> qui non si cerca di commesso oltraggio
> vendetta, ma amore è la cagione,
> com'ho già detto, di cotal quistione. (VII.7.3-8).[99]

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[97] He argues that the conflict is of middle scale, thus too small for an epic war, and middle diction, hence again unepic. However, he does show that the inspiration for the episode lies in the Thebaid (p. 100-31).
[98] See McGregor (1991 b), pp. 47, 58-60, 72,74.
[99] He also says "leggier per amor ne combattemo" (VII.9.8), and limits the kind of weapons to be used (VII.12).

It is instead placed within a romance frame. First, its status as spectacle is emphasised in the first line of the book - "il teatro" (VIII.1.1), and again at VIII.47.2 and VIII.48.2. Boccaccio's reinvocation of the Muse (VIII.2), as though to raise the tone of the passage, is coupled with a reminder that the event is merely a game ("gioco marziale" VIII.2.3). This notion of spectacle is increased by reference to those watching: the action is suspended to describe both Theseus judging the contenders (VIII.89-91), and Emilia evaluating her feelings in a speech focused on Amor (note the repetition of "Omè, Amor" VIII.96.2, 99.1).[100] The spectators provide a frame for the action just as the theatre does. The warriors themselves are not immune to the romance framework within which they perform martial roles, as Arcita reveals. He is roused from resting by the sight of Emilia:

> [...] 'l viso amoroso
> vide d'Emilia e' belli occhi infiammati
> di luce tanto lieta, che gioioso
> facean qualunque a cui eran voltati;
> e tutto in sé tornò quale in prima era,
> sì come fior per nova primavera. (VIII.79.3-8).

"Amor" drives him, creating "la molta prodezza" (81.5-6) that he then shows in battle. Although Mars, (thus war, and epic,) has the upper hand in that Arcita (who prayed to him) wins, the context of love within which the tournament takes place gives it more of a romance aspect.

Palaemon and Arcita's status as romance heroes is thus reflected in the setting in which they find themselves, and the actions they perform.[101] However, within this romance frame, Boccaccio treats his two heroes differently, with prominence given to Arcita. He is named four times in the introductory sonnet to the poem, compared with one mention of Theseus, Palaemon, Emilia and Creon, and the focus is on his pain and his actions:

> Nel primo vince Teseo l'Amazone,
> nel secondo Creon certanamente;

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[100] Note that the qualities she admires in Arcita are courtly ones (VIII.126).
[101] For their behaviour as knights see eg. Arcita swearing loyalty to Theseus (III.57), and to Perithous (III.73).

nel terzo amore *Arcita* e Palemone
occupa, e 'l quarto mostra *la dolente*
vita d'Arcita uscito di prigione;
il quinto la battaglia virilmente
da Penteo fatta col suo compagnone,
e 'l sesto poi convoca molta gente
alla battaglia; il settimo li afrena,
l'ottavo l'un di lor fa vincitore,
il nono mostra *il triunfo e la pena*
d'Arcita, e l'altro il *suo mortal dolore*;
e l'undecimo *Arcita* al rogo mena;
l'ultimo Emilia dona all'amadore. (Introductory sonnet, 1ff; my italics).

When they are mentioned together, Arcita almost always comes first.[102] He is also the one who speaks first, (III.12, III.20, III.39), and acts first: his visit to the temples is narrated first (VII.22 ff.), and he enters the arena at the tournament before Palaemon (VII.114 ff.). His speech is often recorded word for word in the text, when that of Palaemon is passed over. For example, Arcita's praise of Emilia's beauty is recorded at VII.123-127, but Palaemon's similar view is not told in full:

[...] Palemon, ch'ancora la mirava,
quasi con questa medesma favella
tacito sotto l'elmo ragionava, (VII.128.3-5).

Likewise at VII.145, Arcita's rousing of his troops lasts for eleven verses, but Palaemon is given only four lines:

[...] e Palemone ancora
con alte voci li suoi invitava
a grandi onori, e a ben far l'incora
quanto poteva, e molto glien pregava: (VII.145.1-4).

At VIII.11.6, Arcita, as Palaemon's victim, is described as "il buono Arcita". Palaemon's pain in battle is deliberately not described by the author:

Se Palemone allora fu cruccioso,
soverchio qui saria ciò raccontare,
e però di narrarlo mi riposo:
ottimamente il può ciascun pensare. (VIII.123.1-4)

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[102] For example, gloss II.10; sonnet VIII; VIII.21; VIII.85.

Arcita is the one allowed to leave prison (III.53 ff); his courage in battle is described before that of Palaemon (VIII.115 ff.); and Emilia chooses him as husband (VIII.126 ff). His triumph is greater than that of Theseus (IX.31.ff.), and, as McGregor points out, the whole of the poem is portrayed on his tomb, as though this point were the culmination of the work.[103] The only place in which Arcita does not dominate is the sonnet to Book XI, when he is dead. But even here, he is mentioned as many times as Palaemon (though Palaemon's name does finally come first). There is more to this predominant ranking than alphabetical consideration. Although so often paired, Boccaccio focuses more on Arcita than on Palaemon because it is through Arcita that the movement from one heroic type to another takes place, and because it is through Arcita that he shows possibilities for a medieval epic hero.

The clue as to why Arcita is singled out lies in his name, which does not seem to appear in earlier literature. By contrast there are precedents for Palaemon, including a shepherd in Vergil's third Eclogue,[104] and a minor divinity in the Thebaid (I.14; VIII.135),[105] though the most likely source is a romance:

> Aprés ceux eissi Palemon,
> qui tint Carmyn et tint Azon,
> riches ducs et de grant parage (Roman de Thèbes 10563).

Some suggestions have been put forward concerning the origins of *Arcita*. Savj-Lopez (1990, p. 76) suggests "arquitenens" / "arcitenens", in other words, Apollo, and while this hypothesis is interesting in light of my argument for the connection of Arcita with poetry, it seems unlikely. The Kahanes (1945) also argue against this as far-fetched, and have the same view of Hinckley's derivation from "Archytas" in Cicero's De Senectute, preferring their own conclusion that the

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[103] McGregor (1991b): the *ekphrasis* on the tomb "ties the whole of the Teseida, as it is epitomized here, to the death of Arcita. In effect, it makes the whole of the Teseida an ekphrasis on the tomb of that hero" (p. 84). However, in spite of this observation, McGregor gives no special significance to Arcita as a character.
[104] Smarr, (1979), p. 331.

name comes from Digenis Akritis (or "Akritas"): "the name of the hero is practically the same in both works: *Akritas* in the Digenis Akritas and *Arcita* in the Teseida" (p.415). In addition to the difference in spelling, the Greek name derives from the word for frontier, and seems unhelpful in respect of Boccaccio's Arcita, especially as the main actions and characters of the two heroes are different. There is a solution to the riddle in the lines of the poem itself, that indicates the direction in which Boccaccio develops his hero: Arcita, the spelling of the name as it occurs in Boccaccio's autograph manuscript, and hence the modern editions, is an anagram of *carità*. This is the vital clue to Arcita's role as a new hero compatible with Christianity; he is the symbol of one of the three great Christian virtues. The name he adopts in exile – Penteo – also has Christian connotations, as Ghisalberti (1932, p. 198) suggests in a discussion of Arnulf of Orleans's interpretation of Ovid: he says Arnulf explains Penteo as "Un vero santo è Penteo (III.7) come suona l'interpretazione stessa del suo nome: totus in deo."[106]

Arcita, with the Christian potential in his name, is presented as a new hero through whom we can move beyond the flawed romance figure of Palaemon.[107] Negative aspects of Palaemon increase the sense that we should leave him behind. He is jealous of Arcita, for example,

> [...] paurosa gelosia
> lo stimola che Arcita, dell'amore
> d'Emilia forse rinvestito, sia
> per suo sollecitare di prigion fore (V.2.1-3),[108]

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[105] Palaemon is another name for Melicertes (son of Ino, and grandson of Cadmus), in whose honour the Isthmian Games were instituted (Oxford Classical Dictionary, p. 953); the name thus has Theban connotations that align Palaemon with the past.

[106] Kirkham's (1983, p. 322) suggestion that Penteo comes from πεντε, the Greek for 5, because Arcita, the protégé of Mars, is associated with Mars' number, is not particularly convincing; it seems as likely that the name hints at Christianity, with its echo of repentance (*pentimento / pentirsi*).

[107] The sense that Palaemon, as a figure of romance, is something that needs to be moved on from poetically, is also suggested by his epic characteristics. Note that in the tournament his right-hand men are Ulysses and Diomedes (both of whom Dante condemns to hell), whereas Arcita is aided by Castor and Pollux, who are made into stars and praised by Dante (Paradiso XXII.112ff), as discussed below. Martinez (1991-2, p. 212) states that the Teseida has two outcomes: the epic tragic death of Arcita, and the comic erotic destiny of Palaemon. While he is right to see a generic distinction, I suspect his idea of the epic that Arcita is involved in is different from mine.

[108] And III.60.7.

and self-obssessed - "quasi nel cor moriva di dolore / per la fortuna sua" (III.60.2-3). He is the one keen to fight – "di tal guerra non sarà mai pace, / poi quel di ch'io ti priego mi contendi" (V.44.3-4), and is completely responsible for creating fraternal strife between them, just as Oedipus was a source of grief:

> E sì come Tesifone, chiamata
> del cieco Edippo nella oscura parte
> dov'elli lunga notte avea menata,
> a'due fratei del regno con su'arte
> mise l'arsura, così a lui 'ntrata
> con quel velen che 'l suo valor comparte,
> d'Emilia aver [...] (V.13.1-7),

and the gloss says, "così entrata nel petto di Palemone vi generò la discordia che seguita, che fu tra lui e Arcita". He asks Arcita to give Emilia up, "io ti priego molto caramente / che tu consenta che ella sia mia" (V.40.3-4), and when Arcita is mortally wounded, Palaemon's predominant thoughts are for his lost chance at winning Emilia:

> Palemon tristo d'una e d'altra cosa,
> del mal d'Arcita forte li dolea,
> ma più assai sua fortuna angosciosa,
> che perditor quivi fatto l'avea (IX.21.1-4).

He is fired by emotion and pride ("con voce orgogliosa" V.64.5) when Arcita is guided by reason:

> Non mi si possa mai rimproverare
> ch'io sia cagion di battaglia con teco;
> tu mossa l'hai e tu pur la vuoi fare,
> e pace schifi di voler con meco; (V.63.1-4),

and Arcita suggests "piano amiamo intrambendui" (V.46.7), and even forsees that circumstances could change so that Palaemon wins Emilia (V.47). Palaemon, by contrast, "più di ciò non volle udire" (V.48.1). Although in hindsight Palaemon realises he has done wrong - "ingiustamente fu nemico" (XI.34.8), Arcita acts well throughout the poem. Arcita, if we look back on him, is essentially Christian in character: he is pious (eg. III.42ff); he is only angry when he is justified in so being, and even then he hides it,

> Dentro al cor nascose la sua ira,
> e disse: - Palemon, gran ragione hai

di mal volere a chi per te sospira, (V.74.2-4);[109]

he is reasonable, for example "perché vuo'por te e me in periglio / forse di morte [...]?" (V.45.2-3), and "volentier vorrei / con teco pace"(V.63.8); he is merciful, drawing out the point that has pierced Palaemon in the duel "soavemente" (V.69.2) and "teneramente" (V.69.4); and he loves wisely - "saviamente amava" and "ben lo sapea fare" (IV.61.1, 4).[110] Above all, he performs the ultimate act of *carità* by giving Emilia to Palaemon on his death-bed:

> [...] io ti priego, per tua cortesia,
> che tu la prenda e che cara ti sia. (X.43.7-8).[111]

In his life he aimed at "virtù perfetta", and says that he found "quel ben perfetto" (X.108.4), but was cut short by death (X.102.3). In addition, he is chaste, leaving his marriage to Emilia unconsummated: "di lei niuno cosa t'ho levata, / se non forse alcun bascio solamente" (X.43.4-5). His characteristics and behaviour together create "lo supremo onor della sua vita" (XI.49.8) that is honoured at his pyre. Not only is he the hero most compatible with Christianity in the poem, but he shows himself to be worthy of Christianity with his deeds and ultimate Christian gift of love.

3.4.3. Arcita, a New Epic Hero.

Book IX, as the opening sonnet tells us, shows the fall of Arcita. It is this fall that leads to his rise as a hero of the Dante type, and fulfils the Christian potential in his name. Just as Book III (which marks the official start of the section of the poem that is about Palaemon and Arcita), contains only allusion to the Comedy, and no other epic,[112] thereby emphasising a break from the classical epic influences evident in Books I and II, so here the author chooses Dante as inspiration

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[109] Compare Palaemon – Fortune "mis'ella in esso / con matto imaginare un tal furore" (VI.3.2-3), and cf. Dante's "matta / bestialitade" (Inferno XI.82-3). Note Boccaccio's criticism of anger not tempered by reason: "li crudeli fini che hanno l'ire non mitigate dalla ragione" (gloss, VII.30.1).

[110] Smarr's (1979, p. 321) insistence on Arcita as a figure of lust for which he is punished - "Arcita's fall is even more closely connected to his lust" seems mistaken. Arcita is anything but a figure of lust, and does not even consummate his marriage.

[111] There is a possible play on words here: by saying "cara ti sia" to Palaemon, Arcita is in effect saying "may Emilia be your Arcita", as "cara ti" is again an anagram of the hero's name.

for his hero's fatal fall. The Comedy, as mentioned above, is the text most alluded to in the Teseida, and Arcita is the focus of many of these allusions.[113] The first line of the book refers to fate, and ends with a Dantean allusion - "è più montato sovra il verde smalto" (IX.1.8) - that echoes Dante's description of Limbo, "Colà diritto, sopra 'l verde smalto" (Inferno IV.118). More importantly, the Furies that cause Arcita's horse to throw him are also modelled on those of the Comedy:

> Venne costei di ceraste crinita,
> e di verdi idre li suoi ornamenti (Teseida IX.156.1-2)

and

> e con idre verdissime eran cinte;
> serpentelli e ceraste avean per crine (Inferno IX.40-1).

The context of these lines in the Comedy is also relevant, as there the Furies threaten Dante, thus Boccaccio imitates the words of the Comedy in a context which has some similarity with that of the original.[114] The image also reinforces the sense that Arcita is like Dante. As Arcita's fall approaches, the wind and sky change, just as they do in the Comedy when Dante too is about to fall (albeit faint):

> Li venti dier non usato romore,
> e 'l ciel più ner cominciò a parere;
> il teatro tremò [...] (Teseida IX.6.5-7).

Boccaccio echoes Dante's "la buia campagna / tremò" (Inferno III.130-1) and "La terra lagrimosa diede vento" (Inferno III.133). After Arcita falls, his life is referred to as "la vita smarrita" (IX.22.8), which brings to mind the opening lines of Inferno, where Dante's way (which has a wider application than the physical route) is "smarrita" (Inferno I.3). The description is also

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[112] Except one reference to the Metamorphoses (cf. Teseida gloss III.5.1 and Met. II.870-5).
[113] See Boitani (1977), pp. 61-71. Note that 11 textual echoes link Arcita specifically with Dante the hero, compared with 2 for Theseus and 3 for Palaemon. Martinez (1991-2) mentions "Dante's example as a kind of telos of poetic achievement to which Boccaccio aspired" (p. 205), and "With Arcita's apotheosis the Dantesque allegoria of the Teseida may be said to reach its fulfilment" (p. 211-2). However, Martinez does not see the infuence of the Comedy as generic, and this is where I differ from him.
[114] It is clear that Boccaccio has Dante in mind here, as after his description of the Furies, Dante mentions their allegorical meaning - "mirate la dottrina che s'asconde / sotto 'l velame de li versi strani" (IX.62-3), and Boccaccio feels the need to clarify his own use of these creatures with a long gloss on the passage.

repeated just before Arcita's actual death (Teseida X.57.1). Arcita, on seeing Emilia after his fall, is described by a simile that again shows his similarity to Dante the protagonist:

> Quali i fioretti richiusi ne' prati
> per lo notturno freddo, tutti quanti
> s'apron come dal sol son riscaldati,
> e 'l prato fanno con più be' sembianti
> rider fra le verdi erbe mescolati,
> dimostrando lieto a' riguardanti, (Teseida IX.28.1-6).

Dante uses a similar simile to show his reaction to hearing about the woman that he loves:

> Quali i fioretti, dal notturno gelo
> chinati e chiusi, poi che 'l sol li 'mbianca
> si drizzan tutti aperti in loro stelo (Inferno II.127-9).[115]

In both cases the hero is gladdened by the sight or sound of his lady. Other references to Inferno also surround Arcita as he dies. When his fellow warriors see him, they are sadder than they would be on the banks of Acheron:

> più che se al lito tristo d'Acheronte
> se ne vedesse per passare alcuno; (Teseida IX.46.5-6),

echoing Dante's "la trista riviera d'Acheronte" (Inferno III.79). After these many allusions to Dante's Inferno, Book X, in which Arcita dies, opens with a reminiscence of Paradiso.[116] Boccaccio refers to the constellation of Leda to describe the time - "Il gran nido di Leda ogni bellezza"(X.1.1ff), thus imitating the moment that Dante ascends to the Crystalline sphere of heaven:

> del bel nido di Leda me divelse,
> e nel ciel velocissimo m'impulse. (Paradiso XXVII.98-9).

Boccaccio's allusion to this movement in Dante presages Arcita's own rise to heaven later in the book. Arcita speaks of his coming death as an inescapable pass – "io mi veggio venire al passo il qual nessuno uom può fuggire" (Teseida X.17.7-8), which brings to mind another pass that

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[115] Cf. Filostrato - "Quali i fioretti, dal notturno gelo / chinati e chiusi, poi che 'l sol gl'imbianca, / tutti s'apron diritti in loro stelo" (II.80).

[116] For the place of Purgatory in what seems to be Arcita's spiritual or moral development, see Martinez (1991-2, p. 210): "The presentation of Arcita's fortunes as a painful but purgatorial education [...] is a major element in Boccaccio's plot".

proves fatal – the "alto passo" where Ulysses' ship sinks - "poi che 'ntrati eravam nell'alto passo" (Inferno XXVI.132), as well as a pass which only allows the dead past - "lo passo / che non lasciò già mai persona viva" (Inferno I.26-7). But Arcita, like Dante, rises where Ulysses does not. As Arcita dies, those with him think they see him in the sky - "nel cielo esser li pare" (X.85.3). With his acknowledgement of the will of God - "qualora piace omai a l'alto Giove" (X.85.7), Arcita echoes Ulysses' hindsight of the Christian God. Ulysses dies "com' altrui piacque" (Inferno XXVI.141), and in the context of the Comedy the "altrui" is God. Arcita's many references to a non-specific God suggest his Christian compatibility.[117] Arcita speaks of deserving more than the "aura morta" (X.95.4), and this is how Dante also, on his emergence into Purgatory, describes the realm he has just left - "L'aura morta" (Purgatorio I.17). Although Arcita has been likened to both Ulysses and Dante, it is at this point that his characterisation is clarified, and he is shown to be a Dantean hero. He is the figure who rises in contrast to the fall of Ulysses, escaping the "aura morta" that is the lot of a pagan. The opening of Book XI shows his soul rising to the eighth heaven,[118] as Dante does in Paradiso:

> l'anima leve se ne gì volando

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[117] Arcita makes several references to a non-specific god: III.82.5, III.82.6, V.63.5, "VII.135.1, VII.142.1, (X.113.7); "lauda Penteo / la man di Giove d'ogni grazia piena, / che lavoro sì bello e grande feo" (IV.73.6); "esso [amore] la fede mia fé santa e pura" (X.23.4); and some prayers are granted - "Passò i cieli alor quella preghiera, / e seguì d'Arcita l'effetto" (III.83.1-2). Palaemon makes similar, though fewer, references, eg. "'l signore / del ciel" (X.48.5-6). See Smarr (1979, p. 332) on this.

[118] Smarr (1979, p. 329) suggests Macrobius as the reason behind the choice of the 8th heaven. Martinez (1991-2, p. 211) sees Arcita and Palaemon as parallel to Castor and Pollux, and notes that Dante was born under the Gemini, providing an important parallel between Arcita and Dante. The 8th heaven, as the Comedy shows (Paradiso XXII.152), is that of the Gemini. The text of the Teseida is conducive to this link between Arcita and Pollux, as Pollux is also shown to be worthy of heaven - "quivi Polluce mostrò aspramente / ch'elli era del ciel degno veramente" (VIII.21.7-8), and the gloss - "perciò che Polluce, dopo la sua morte, fu deificato per la sua vertù". The 8th heaven is the sum of Mars and Venus' numbers – 5 and 3, hence, if we follow Kirkham's arguments about numerology, this heaven could be seen as fitting for a hero who combines epic (Mars) and romance (Venus) elements, and in so doing moves beyond both. Note that in the 8th heaven, Dante refers to the poem as "lo sacrato poema" (XXII.23.62), and for Boccaccio to pick this as Arcita's destination again suggests a generic programme at work: Arcita is the hero of Boccaccio's "sacrato poema", ie. the new epic that leads the hero to heaven. Note also that Scipio, in Cicero's Somnium Scipionis (De re publica 6.9), is taken to the 8th heaven, whence he too looks back at the earth, where he is warned against sensual pleasures - "namque eorum animi, qui se corporis voluptatibus dediderunt earumque se quasi ministros praebuerunt inpulsuque libidinum voluptatibus oboedientium deorum et hominum iura violaverunt, corporibus elapsi circum terram ipsam volutantur nec hunc in locum nisi multis exagitati saeculis revertuntur" (De re publica 6.26). For the influence of this, see Smarr (1979), p. 329.

ver la concavità del cielo ottava (XI.1.3-4).

Arcita admires the "stelle ratiche" (1.6; that is, the planets that Dante also visits) for "l'ordine loro e la somma bellezza" (1.7), and hears their music that is full "d'ogni dolcezza" (1.8). Then, in a Dantean moment, his soul turns back to look at the earth:

> Quindi si volse in giù a rimirare
> le cose abandonate, e vide il poco
> globo terreno [...] (XI.2.1-3).

This recalls two passages in the Comedy: in the eighth sphere of Paradiso, which is that of the fixed stars, Dante looks back to earth,

> Col viso ritornai per tutte quante
> le sette spere, e vidi questo globo
> tal, ch'io sorrisi del suo vil sembiante;
> e quel consiglio per miglior approbo
> che l'ha per meno; e chi ad altro pensa
> chiamar si puote veramente probo. (Para. XXII.133-8);

and he does the same in Paradiso XXVII, looking back at Ulysses' course:

> [...] io vedea di là da Gade il varco
> folle d'Ulisse, e di qua presso il lito
> nel qual si fece Europa dolce carco. (82-4).[119]

Dante's realisation of the comparative lack of value in earthly things (shown in the first of these two quotations) is echoed by Arcita, "ogni cosa da nulla stimare / a rispetto del ciel" (XI.2.5-6), who, like Dante, smiles as he looks back at earth:

> e seco rise de' pianti dolenti
> della turba lernea, la vanitate
> forte dannando dell'umane genti,
> li quai, da tenebrosa cechitate
> mattamente oscurati nella menti,
> seguon del mondo la falsa biltate,
> lasciando il cielo [...] (XI.2.1-7).

His self-realisation is summed up by "seco rise",[120] and his ability to see the grave error ("forte dannando") of humanity is starkly contrasted with the blindness of those on earth, including,

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[119] The two passages in Paradiso are linked by the echoed image of "l'aiuola" (XXII.151, XXVII.96).

presumably, Palaemon, Emilia, and Theseus. His final destination is "nel loco che Mercurio li sortio" (XI.3.8), which, although left unspecified, we might reasonably assume to be heaven, in light of the immediate context as well as the poet's words in the summary to Book X that "l'alma rende all'immortali iddei" (14). Mercury is also mentioned in the line before this, as though to confirm his later role in settling Arcita in heaven.[121]

Arcita's ascension to heaven also finds a parallel in the story of Castor and Pollux. These two warriors fight on Arcita's side in the contest, and a gloss confirms that the text,

> quivi Polluce mostrò aspramente
> ch'elli era del ciel degno veramente (VIII.21.7-8),

alludes to deification: "perciò che Polluce, dopo la sua morte, fu deificato per la sua vertù". Apotheosis is thus presented within the narrative as a possible eventuality, and prepares us for Arcita's fate. [122]

Arcita's status as a Dantean hero is also suggested by an allegorical consideration of the poem. Although Boccaccio does not point out allegorical meanings in his human characters as he does for the gods, some critics have attempted to read them in this way.[123] While I disagree with the

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[120] Arcita's words on the joy that only love of Emila can bring - "né so ancor che luogo me tenere / debba di là nella vita dubbiosa; / ma se con Giove sanza te istessi, / non credo che giammai gioia sentissi" (X.105.5-8) are shown to have been mistaken, as he rejoices here in the heavenly kingdom of God's love.
[121] Smarr (1979) and Velli (1979), disagree, arguing that Arcita has not deserved a place in heaven, and similarly Porcelli (1986) offers a negative reading of Arcita in Books IX-XI.
[122] A further condemnation of Palaemon can be seen by a comparison of his warriors: he is helped by Ulysses and Diomedes, whom Dante locates together in hell. Arcita's death also echoes that of Pompey in the Bellum Civile. Like that of Arcita, Pompey's soul sees the heavens (including "stellasque vagas" IX.12), and looking back he becomes aware of the blindness of humanity – "quanta sub nocte iaceret / Nostra dies" (13-4), and he laughs at human folly, "risitque...ludibria" (14). He goes to a part of heaven that is set aside for heroes: "Semidei manes habitant, quos ignea virtus / Innocuos vita patientes aetheris imi / Fecit, et aeternos animam collegit in orbes" (7-9). Boccaccio might have had this passage in mind as a justification of Arcita's heavenly destination. However the similarity ends when Pompey's soul is said to rejoin the world as "vindex" (17). See Velli (1979).
[123] Smarr (1986 & 1979), and Kirkham (1983).

view of Arcita and Palaemon as *ira* and *concupiscentia*,[124] the suggestion that Theseus is an allegory of reason has interesting implications for Arcita, and finds some justification in the text.[125] If he does represent reason, his guidance (or tempering influence) results in one character going to heaven (Arcita), and the other staying on earth enjoying the fulfilment of an earthly passion (Palaemon). If we think of the model of the Comedy, Arcita is to be praised and Palaemon condemned, as Dante, under the guidance of Vergil (often seen as a figure of reason) is taught to reject earthly love and romance in favour of the divine.[126]

The influence of Dante in the creation of Arcita is also illustrated by the hero's connection with poetry. While he is not a poet-hero, I have shown his links with the poet-hero of the Comedy. By likening Arcita to Dante, Boccaccio invites an equation of Arcita with himself. While the connection between Boccaccio and Arcita is contested, as some critics see the author in the figure of Palaemon, there is some evidence for linking the hero and the poet.[127] Boccaccio suggests in the introductory letter to the poem that he is represented by one of Palaemon and Arcita, but "quale de' due si sia non discuopro, ché so che ve ne avvedrete" (p.5). There is also evidence of a covert message from the author to Fiammetta in one of Arcita's speeches to Emilia:

> [...] ma tu che rara
> savia tra l'altre se', conoscer puoi
> ciò ch'i'domando, tacend'io, se vuoi. (VII.126.6-8).

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[124] Their prayers to Mars and Venus seem to be the main justification for this, and it is difficult to read their characters purely in these terms: both are to some extent guilty of lust, and Palaemon is much angrier than Arcita, as has been illustrated.

[125] He does occupy a position of rule and judgement over the men; he stands for fairness (hence his reaction to Creon); he acts to resolve conflict, for example in bringing the duel in the woods to a halt.

[126] Cf. Cato's rebuke of Casella's love-song in Purgatorio II.120-3. Smarr (1979, p. 330) nonetheless draws the opposite conclusion.

[127] Smarr (1986, p. 250), gives a summary of positions: Crescini (1887) sees Boccaccio as Arcita, because both lose their objects of desire; Limentani (1992) agrees on account of Arcita's greater lyrical effusion; so too does Torracca (1905), because Arcita flirts secretly. Whitfield (1938) states that Emilia is generally taken to represent Fiammetta (p. 24), and that the parallel between Arcita and Troilus (for example Teseida IV.32 and Filostrato V.70) provides a justification for seeing Boccaccio as Arcita (p. 25), but also sees similarities between Palaemon and Boccaccio (p. 28).

This echoes Boccaccio's praise of Fiammetta's cleverness in the introductory letter to the poem, and seems oddly meaningless for Emilia. While Limentani's punctuation does not support my reading, the passage could be taken as an authorial aside.

Arcita is linked with the composition of poetry, as his words to Amor show:

> [...] sempre il tuo onore in grazioso
> verso da me lieto cantato fia; (IV.71.5-6).[128]

He also composes verse, "queste e altre più parole ancora / metteva in nota lo giovine amante" (IV.78.1-2),[129] and in Book IX he is said to be himself worthy of song, "in gloria d'Arcita ognun cantava" (41.7). Palaemon refers to him as "O ombra pietosa" (XI.36.1), repeated by Emilia ("pietosa ombra" XI.39.5-6), which echoes one of Dante's most notable uses of the word to describe Vergil ("ombra" Inferno I.66). Arcita's links with Apollo also suggest his connection with poets.[130] He prays in Apollo's temple on his return to Athens (IV.42ff), and again - "O chiaro Febo, per cui luminato / è tutto il mondo [...] mettete in me sì del vostro valore" (IV.75.3-4, 7) where a gloss explains Febo as "iddio della sapienza": in other words, although Arcita is ostensibly addressing the sun, Apollo also illuminates the world through wisdom in the form of poetry. Apollo is called on as witness to Arcita's unwillingness to fight Palaemon (V.62.2; V.70.5ff). Arcita is the only character in the poem to be shown wearing laurels, and this happens twice: "coronato [...] di verde alloro" (IX.32.6-7), and "incoronato di frondi d'alloro" (XI.15.7, in his coffin). Although the context is one of martial victory, he also fulfils Boccaccio's wish as poet to be crowned with laurel (I.1). Arcita likens himself to Apollo,

> Febo si fece servidor d'Ameto,
> mosso da quella medesma cagione
> che io mi mossi [...] (X.25.1-3),

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[128] And "cantava" (IV.62.1).
[129] Cf. Dante's use of *nota* to describe the Comedy: "per le note / di questa mia comedía" (Inferno XVI.127-8).
[130] Cf. Albis (1996), on Apollonius' Argonautica: "Phoebus' role as patron of the poet and also of the Argonauts already associates the narrator with his heroes" (p. 27).

and Apollo's fondness for him is represented by the darkness of the day on which Arcita dies:

> Il giorno venne oscuro e nebuloso,
> e questi Febo s'avea messi avanti
> al viso, acciò che 'l morire angoscioso
> d'Arcita non vedesse [...] (X.92.1-4).

As the third most frequently named god in the poem, Apollo's presence is an important one, and it is fitting that he is connected specifically with Arcita, the poet's favoured hero. Poetry and heroism are further linked in Arcita's funeral rites. The gifts Theseus bestows on the pyre are his symbols of kingship:

> lì le veste purpuree, con ingegno
> fatte, si videro addosso a colui;
> lo scettro e' pomo e l'eccelsa corona
> per lui al fuoco del suo rogo dona. (XI.36.5-8).

The symbolic significance of handing over the emblems of dominance, power, and royalty reflect the status to which Arcita, though dead, has risen. He is crowned in death, a point which could be seen as ironic (as in death he is powerless on earth), but which in fact confirms his similarity to the Dantean hero. Dante too is metaphorically endowed with the emblems of kingship as he enters the Earthly Paradise, "te sovra te corono e mitrio" (Purgatorio XXVII.142): he and Arcita, in the realm of the dead, are made kings. This in turn suggests the emptiness of earthly kingship and power, and the vanities that Arcita has left behind. The emptiness of Palaemon's "O luce etterna, o reverendo onore / del nostro sangue" (X.48.1-2) is highlighted by his almost immediate lack of further thought for his friend.[131]

The connection between poetry and the redeemed hero is further highlighted by a web of references in the funeral games held in Arcita's honour. As McGregor (1991 b, pp. 85-96) points out, the prizes that the victors are awarded are striking in their connection with poetry. The first few prizes relate to Pallas and those connected with her: a horse-cover portrays her, and a gloss explains the mention as a reference to the discovery of the "sampogne", a discovery which

heralded the beginning of poetry. Arachne is then mentioned (61) as one who, as a composer of images, was punished by Pallas.[132] Vulcan also appears, desiring to marry Pallas, as the gloss informs us. The next prize, a shield given to Theseus, portrays Apollo, another patron of poetry (XI.61). What began as a heroic topos (the *ekphrasis* on Theseus' shield in the Thebaid) submits to Dante's influence and is covered by images about the creation of poetry. Here too there is allusion to the Comedy, as Marsyas is mentioned (XI.62).[133] The other figures on the shield glorify Apollo, (for example his victory over the Python), and emphasise his connection with poetry, hence the Muses on Helicon, and another prize portrays Pan ("iddio sonando" XI.66.6). The poet uses these images of poetry to confirm Arcita as a hero created under the influence of the Comedy where the theme of poetry is made central through the poet-hero.

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[131] XII.48.1, quoted above.
[132] Cf. Purgatorio XII.43-5, and Jacoff and Schnapp (1991) for her programmatic importance in the Comedy.
[133] Paradiso I.20ff, where Dante elevates his poetic theme with an invocation, hence the connection with poetry and genre.

3.5. Conclusion.

While Boccaccio is not making a religious point in the Teseida in as obvious a way as he is in the Filocolo where the theme of Christian conversion suddenly dominates the work, I suggest that the Teseida ultimately reveals something about the value of poetry. The moral message is dressed not in religious garb, but in that of genre. The Teseida is a poem in which the reader is encouraged to consider genre. It is a poem that shows connections between one genre and another, comparing generic models by means of the respective merits of the hero of each type. And it is here, through the heroes themselves, that Boccaccio's generic point can be seen. Theseus and Palaemon have many virtues, but also several faults. Arcita alone is blameless, and never criticized by the author; he alone is shown to merit a place in heaven. His rise to heaven is possible because of the type of medieval epic that he represents, that is, a tradition that encompasses Christian poems such as the Comedy.

The Teseida thus serves as an example of how a poet following Dante can return to a mythological setting while at the same time encompassing key features of the Comedy such as an unknown hero, hints of Christianity, and a central interest in poetry and genre. Chapter 4 explores how Petrarch incorporates these same concerns for Christianity and the theme of poetry (especially Dante's connection between poet and hero) into his Africa, in spite of the classical historical setting that he gives it.

CHAPTER 4: Poetry, Heroes, and Gods in Petrarch's Africa.

4.1. Introduction.

Petrarch's Africa, unlike the Comedy and the Teseida, is unambiguously an epic poem. Its form (hexameters, divided into books), language (Latin), style (elevated), subject[1] (Second Punic War) and characters (Scipio Africanus, gods) immediately align it with classical epic models such as the Aeneid or Bellum Civile, and suggest a serious epic undertaking. In addition, Petrarch describes himself as "poeta" (Africa I.19), a term he uses of Vergil - "heroycum poetam" Familiares XXIV.11 - and which Dante uses of Vergil in the Comedy ("Poeta fui" Inferno I.73), and the Africa as an epic, "poeticum aliquid heroico carmine" (Seniles XVIII.1). The question of genre is not one that needs to be asked. Instead we might ask why it is that Petrarch's response to the same stimuli as Boccaccio and Dante – classical literature and medieval Christian thought – produced a poem that seems to be so different from the Teseida and the Comedy. The language issue alone reveals Petrarch's specific intention to recreate a classical epic, where Dante and Boccaccio instead suggest a move away from this, with their use of Italian. This apparently backwards move (which really suggests humanist foresight) has led critics to various condemnations of the Africa, ranging from a poetic exercise in versifying Livy (discussed below), to Everson's recent (2001) treatment of it as a dead-end, or abortive attempt to revive a literary form unsuited to its time.

In this chapter, I shall suggest that while the poem superficially resembles a classical epic, its treatment of key themes labels it as medieval (by which I mean post-classical), and akin to the Teseida and Comedy. I shall show that Petrarch, through his handling of the themes of poetry, the gods, and the hero, attempts something as innovative as Dante or Boccaccio in the Comedy and the Teseida in his desire to harmonise classical pagan literature with his

[1] In Bucolicum Carmen I, Petrarch sets out his view of subjects suitable for epic: "Hi Romam Troiamque canunt et prelia regum, / Quid dolor et quid amor possit, quidve impetus ire, / Qui fluctus ventosque regat, qui spiritus astra, / Necnon et triplicis sortitos numina regni / Expingunt totidem varia sed imagine fratres" (75-9). By this reckoning, the subjects of the Teseida and the Comedy are both appropriate for epic. Epic style is described as "altisonis [...] verbis" (90).

medieval Christian age. I shall argue that to see the Africa as versified Livy is to underplay the emphasis Petrarch places on poetry throughout the work, thereby missing the parallel between Petrarch's enterprise and that of Dante and Boccaccio in the Comedy and Teseida.

Both Dante and Boccaccio express theories of poetry; both include examples of their theories in their epics; and both the Comedy and the Teseida are works that fundamentally revolve around questions of poetry. However, neither of these epics presents the topic in such lengthy and unveiled terms as Petrarch in the Africa. His presentation of poets as characters parallels that of Dante in the Comedy, but Africa IX takes the topic further, with a discussion of poetry occupying much of the book. The prominence given to poets and poetry in epic is a medieval development, initiated mainly by Dante with himself as poet-hero. In focusing to such an extent on ideas about poetry and poets, Petrarch is continuing a medieval epic topos. This is the first and most important sense in which the Africa is not merely an imitation classical epic, but a product of a more sophisticated intention. The prominence of poetry as a theme (as well as the contrast Petrarch draws between the Africa and the De Viris, discussed below) also suggests that the Africa is more about poetry than history, and therefore not merely versified Livy. One of the points Petrarch makes about poetry is that it should have its foundation in truth: "Scripturum iecisse prius firmissima veri / Fundamenta decet" (Africa IX.92-3). He says that liars are not poets,

> Qui fingit quidcumque refert, non ille poete
> Nomine censendus, nec vatis honore, sed uno
> Nomine mendacis (Africa IX.103-4),[2]

and in the Liber sine nomine 6, (p. 75), "Ego scribam, Veritas dictabit". Although referring to his desire to denounce Clement VI (using this idea of truth as a rhetorical feature), he shows a similar zeal for presenting truth in the Africa:

> In quod eum studium non vis pretiumve movebit,
> Non metus aut odium, non spes aut gratia nostri;
> Magnarum sed sola quidem admiratio rerum,
> Solus amor veri. (Africa II.451-4).[3]

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[2] Cf. Boccaccio, who says that poets are not liars (p. 77 above).

This "truth" is taken by many critics to refer to historical fact.[4] While history is undeniably important in the Africa (in terms of sources, subject, and more generally), I will suggest that by truth, Petrarch has in mind Christianity, not history. The importance of Christian truth and its relation to classical literature – a medieval preoccupation dwelt on by Boccaccio with some attempt at resolution in the Teseida – informs Petrarch's treatment of the gods present in his epic, and leads him beyond Boccaccio, to a resolution closer to that of Dante, where a Christian God sits at the helm of the poem's religious system.[3] In this sphere, the Africa again reflects the relevance of medieval literature and thought for Petrarch.

As evidence for these views, I shall explore three main areas of the poem. Firstly, I shall briefly consider the sources of (or influences on) the Africa, both to show that while Petrarch starts with a historical source, the poem is not history, but presents the primacy of poetry over history, and to suggest the importance of certain medieval texts that parallel the Africa or face similar problems. Secondly I shall explore the extent to which poets (and with them poetry) are made prominent in the poem, to suggest both that its historical nature has been overemphasised, and, more importantly, that the presence of poets continues Dante's innovation. Thirdly, I shall examine the way in which Petrarch treats religion in the poem. I shall argue that while his use of pagan gods adds a classical element, these gods are empty names, as in the Teseida, and that Petrarch places a Christian religious system beneath the cover of these pagan divinities.

Before turning to Petrarch's sources, I want briefly to set my work in the context of existing criticism of the poem. There has been little criticism of the Africa in English. In addition to a

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[3] This appears to be a pun on Dante's mention of "salus, amor, et virtus" (De vulgari eloquentia II.4.61) as the three topics suitable for the high style. The Africa is about *salus* and *virtus*, and Petrarch stretches Dante's epic boundaries, turning *amor* specifically into *amor veri*.

[4] K. Foster (1984, pp. 144-5) speaks of "factual truth"; Bergin and Wilson (1977, p. x) - " that ingredient of historical truth which for Petrarch was the essential element of poetry"; Bernardo (1962, p. 103).

handful of useful articles,[5] an English translation, and an unpublished doctoral thesis (Seagraves, 1976) that provides helpful data but limited interpretation, Bernardo (1962) has written the only book on the poem. His study of the Africa begins from a similar starting point as my own: he is interested in how Petrarch attempts to combine classical and medieval, and Christian and pagan. He sees Scipio as the solution, arguing that, as a model of virtue, Scipio provides Petrarch with the blend of history, philosophy, and poetry that he required. He focuses on virtue, and Scipio's function as the instrument through which Petrarch instructs. He also provides a detailed account of how Petrarch's Scipio compares with other literary Scipios, such as that of Livy, and that of Petrarch's De viris illustribus. My concern is less for the ideals Petrarch seeks to embody in Scipio, and the historical nature of his character, than for how Petrarch uses him to highlight his poetic concerns. Through Scipio he does achieve a blend of pagan and Christian, medieval and classical, not by making him virtuous, but by making him a quasi-Christian friend of poets. My approach also shares something in common with Everson's (2001) exploration of the Teseida and the Africa as different examples of a reaction to the same stimuli. But where her focus is on the unsuitability of the Africa as a model for what came after it, my interest lies in the models that set the Africa on its course. While Everson briefly touches on this, the models she suggests are romances and, as she calls it, "the matter of France". My focus, by contrast, is on medieval Latin and contemporary Italian models, and my consideration of the Africa as part of a continuing epic tradition sets this thesis apart from the work of both Bernardo and Everson. Other useful studies are those that explore sources, in particular Bruère (1961), and De Nolhac (1907, in French). While substantially more has been written on the Africa in Italian, most of this dates from the first part of last century, and since its focus is largely on hunting out classical allusion in the poem, it can be profitably reassessed. Giannarelli (1987) adopts a more modern approach in considering the effects of Petrarch's combination of sources, though her study is limited to a short section of Book I. In the only recent Italian book to focus principally on the Africa, Colilli (1993) provides a valuable examination of the

[5] J. Foster (1979); Mommsen (1942); Mustard (1921).

role of truth in the poem, equating Petrarch's "verum" with Heidegger's concept of Being. I have drawn on this insight in my own discussion of truth, using the Heideggerian "Being" as a useful analogy for Petrarch's conception of Christian truth. A comparison of the Africa with the Teseida and the Comedy has not been attempted at any length, due at least in part to Petrarch's own distinction between his writing and that of Dante (and, by implication, Boccaccio's vernacular works). This is a gap that, for reasons given above and below, I hope at least in part to bridge.

4.2. Sources.

In this section I illustrate the range of influences relevant to the Africa, to show the extent to which seeing the poem as versified Livy is misleading and limiting. While the poem does draw on Livy, the relevance of other prose, and especially both classical and medieval verse, should not be underestimated.[6]

Livy's Ab urbe condita (in particular books XXIX-XXX) provides the historical "facts" of Petrarch's account of the final stages of the Second Punic War, both in the Africa and the De viris illustribus, acting, as Carlini (1902, p. 163) describes it, "come fonte inesauribile di storia". From Livy he takes his characters, and most of their actions, including episodes that become poetic centrepieces in the Africa, such as the relationship between Massinissa and Sophonisba. Corradini's notes to his edition of the poem refer the reader to Livy more often than to any other writer, and this is perhaps not surprising in light of Petrarch's scholarship in reassembling the separated decades. De Nolhac (1907) shows that Petrarch's marginal

[6] There is a certain insistence among critics on wanting to label the Africa as history, or on claiming that bits of it are so. Carlini's suggestion that so many sources are blended that Scipio becomes fantastical, not historical (1902, p. 134), is an example of a certain kind of approach to the poem – that it is history – that can be more of a hindrance than a help in understanding it. Festa initially sees the relationship between history and poetry in the Africa as a struggle (1923, p. 289), with poetry winning from Book VII onwards. But he later talks of the "carattere storico di tutto il racconto" (1926, p. 88). By contrast Bernardo's view that the first 4 books of the poem are philosophical, and the second 4 historical seems odd in its enforcement of such a formal division, and seemingly ignores the crucial presence of Book IX (1962, p. 110). He also seems undecided on the issue, referring to the poem as "basically a poeticizing of the biography [De viris]" (p. 21), but then asserting that "The idea that the

comments on Livy, for the period that overlaps with the subject of the Africa, become more orderly, with additional summaries and comments at the base of each column of text. The description of these summaries,

> un sommaire analytique d'une ou deux lignes, comportant quelques appréciations personnelles et permettant de retrouver avec une grande facilité, en même temps que l'ordre chronologique, les moindres détails du récit. (vol. 2, p. 31),

suggests the closeness with which Petrarch followed Livy as a direct source, marked beforehand to provide quick access to relevant sections.

The kind of historical account that Livy offered to Petrarch contains many elements that lend themselves to poetic treatment, such as dreams (eg. Ab urbe condita XXI.22.6ff), ritual and sacrifice (eg. XXII), the possibility of Scipio's mysterious birth (XXVI.28), the formation of friendships (XXVI for Laelius, XXVIII for Massinissa), weddings (eg. XXX – Sophonisba and Massinissa), and triumphs (XXX). Where Livy passes over the wedding and triumph with no details, he provides the narrative frame within which Petrarch creates key imaginative episodes in his epic. However, although Livy is openly quoted and cited as an *auctoritas* in the De viris, he is a silent and unmarked source in the Africa.[7] Though referred to by name (Africa VI.735), this is for his role as a historical figure, rather than as writer.

Africa is but an attempt to versify Livy is, of course, infantile" (p. 168). Pacca (1998, p. 52) also describes the poem as versified history.

[7] "Et quoniam quod dicturus sum vix fidem meo forsan ex ore mereretur, ipsa Titi Livii verba ponam" (De Viris XII.39-41). De Nolhac draws our attention to Livy's role as *auctoritas* elsewhere in this period, including Dante's: "come Livio scrive, che non erra" (Inferno XXVIII.12). The introduction to the De Viris suggests its main difference from the Africa: "Historiam narrare propositum est" (Proemium 5-6). In it Petrarch combines several accounts into a coherent whole – "ex diversorum dictis unum feci" (Proemium 18), and although he claims to take his "facts" from his sources rather than the words of his sources themselves ("nec tamen verba transcribere sed res ipsas" 8-9), the De Viris abounds in direct quotation, resulting from a concern to explain things properly, for example "ait Livius" (2ff). On poetic imitation see: Familiares XXIII.19 "curandum imitatori ut quod scribit simile non idem sit" (p. 516), "imitationem non dicam fugiet sed celabit" (p. 514), and "ut ex multis et variis unum fiat, idque aliud et melius" (516); the rest of this letter; and McLaughlin (1995). Epic, by contrast, is usually silent about its sources, especially those in prose. An exception to this is Joseph of Exeter, who states openly that his epic draws on Dares - "Maeoniumne senem, mirer, Latiumne Maronem / an vatem Phrygium Martem cui certior index / explicuit presens oculus, quem fabula nescit?" (De bello troiano I.24). Petrarch's comments in his Coronation Oration tackle the difference between history and poetry more generally: "inter poete et historici et philosophi, seu moralis seu naturalis, officium hoc interesse, quod inter nubilosum et serenum celum interest, cum utrobique eadem sit claritas in subiecto, sed, pro captu spectantium, diversa" (Coronation Oration 9.7). Here the difference lies not in subject, but in the method of telling the story. There is a playful allusion to Livy

Passing similarly unremarked are Petrarch's two other main historical sources: Florus' Epitome bellorum omnium annorum DCC, and Valerius Maximus' Factorum ac dictorum memorabilium libri. The first, from the second century AD, is a condensed account of Roman history, and although it is often thought of as an abridgement of Livy, it is noted in the Oxford Classical Dictionary that the text is often at variance with him. The second, from the early first century AD, is arranged not as a chronological history, but under a series of headings of mainly moral or philosophical nature. Valerius had a strong influence on Petrarch's works,[8] and De Nolhac states that Petrarch was familiar with Florus before he was with Livy, citing Florus as Petrarch's preferred historical style: "Florus, qu'il avait lu avant Tite-Live, semble être resté modèle préféré au point de vue du style historique".[9] Corradini (1874) often names all three historians - Livy, Florus, and Valerius Maximus - as the possible sources or inspiration for a particular line or episode in Petrarch. This suggests the difficulty in pinpointing a precise author behind much of the historical substance in the Africa.[10] Petrarch's combination of borrowings is often such that we can no longer identify individual texts behind his poetry, and this is certainly a deliberate ploy suited to poetry not history.

Cicero is the prose writer that Petrarch draws on most after Livy. De re publica VI, where Scipio the Younger dreams of Scipio Africanus appearing to him, provides a model for Scipio Africanus' dream in Africa I-II. The dreamer's guide in Cicero becomes the dreamer himself in the Africa. Petrarch draws on Cicero's narrative structure, his characters, and, as for example Corradini (1874) has shown, on the words of his text. But having borrowed much, Petrarch then fills out his own account with a range of different influences, as Gianarelli (1987) demonstrates in an examination of a short section of the dream. Petrarch uses the prose

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at Africa III.69-70, where Scipio says "Nomen fortasse Siphacis / Audisti", where the reader would indeed know the name, probably from Livy.

[8] De Nolhac, (1907), vol.2, p. 45, et passim.

[9] De Nolhac, (1907), vol.2, p. 34; and p. 35 for quotations from Petrarch in praise of Florus, from his life of Caesar. Petrarch's grand manuscript of Livy, bought in 1351, also contains Florus (De Nolhac, vol.2, p. 13).

text as a starting point for his poetry, much as he does Livy. Echoes of Cicero's writings – mainly works other than the De re publica – occur throughout the poem, making Cicero the fourth most frequently echoed author in the Africa. However, these echoes are nowhere as prominent nor as dense as they are in Petrarch's recreation of the Ciceronian dream.[11]

Critics often focus on Cicero's language and style as a model for Petrarch. For example, De Nolhac (1907, Vol. 1, p. 213ff) devotes an entire chapter to Cicero, showing how Petrarch loved him and his style from boyhood, and explores the implications of comments such as that in Familiares XXIV.4, where Petrarch calls on Cicero as "O Romani eloquii summe parens". De Nolhac does not explore the relevance of this for the style of the Africa, presumably because of the gulf between prose and verse. However, Carlini (1902, p. 163), though vague, implies that Cicero's language and style was one of three major influences on the Africa:

> nella ricostruzione dell'epopea classica si propose a guida e ad interprete la triade famosa: Cicerone, Vergilio e Livio; il primo come maestro di latinità e di sentimento classico, il secondo come modello di poema epico, il terzo come fonte inesauribile di storia.

Petrarch's esteem for Cicero is evident from a selection of his comments, such as "Sunt quidem Ciceroniana ista verissima", and "de ipso ueri fonte potauerat quae scribebat" (De remediis utriusque fortune Book I.44),[12] but as with his historical sources, Petrarch remains silent about him in the Africa, allowing echoes to pass unremarked.

The importance of poetic sources in the Africa can be seen partly by the way in which Petrarch interrupts history with poetry. For example, the plot of I.81ff, on the origins of the war, comes from Livy, as Corradini (1874) points out, but several verses echo Lucan, not in

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[10] Cf. Gerosa (1966, p. 20) on Petrarch's reluctance to stray from Livy.
[11] Cicero's Dream of Scipio was transmitted only through Macrobius (see Keyes's introduction to his translation), so the effect of Macrobius' commentary on Petrarch's reading of it must be kept in mind. See Bernardo (1962, p. 111ff) on the dream.
[12] Bernardo (1962, p. 115) suggests that Cicero seemed to Petrarch to present a wisdom close to Christian truth, as regards ideas of purgatory.

terms of plot, but in terms of poetic features and descriptions.[13] Book I.115ff, treating of Roman victory in Spain, draws on Livy, and the tone is that of a historical, matter of fact, and unembellished narrative, but this first main foray into history is interrupted by a stag simile that suggests poetry, and the same happens at I.266-76, where a simile modelled on the Aeneid is set into a passage of Livian history.[14] Likewise, Scipio is of course a historical hero, but reminiscences in the opening section about him suggest poetry (mention of the Pillars of Hercules and Nature barring the way bring to mind Dante's Ulysses and Walter of Châtillon's Alexander, and this is followed by three Aeneid echoes).[15] This leads into Scipio's dream, in which the hero appears in several literary guises, but most especially, as Giannarelli (1987) argues, as Vergil's Aeneas. She argues that this flitting from history to poetry shows an obsessive need on Petrarch's part for variety, but it could also be interpreted as a reminder that this is a poetic enterprise (with prominent poetic textual sources), showing that history can have a presence in poetry, as suggested elsewhere:

> Quicquid labor historiarum est
> Quicquid virtutum cultus documentaque vite,
> Nature studium quicquid, licuisse poetis
> Crede: (Africa IX.97-100).

The distinction between history and poetry is nevertheless a fine one for Petrarch, as illustrated for example by the way in which poets are referred to as witnesses for their narratives: of Homer, he says "nisi testem spernere Homerum" Africa III.375, and Ennius is "assiduus rerum testisque comesque" (Africa IX.10-11) to the events of the war.[16]

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[13] Africa I.82, on Carthaginian jealousy, "Sed gravius tulit inde parem", echoes Bellum Civile I.125-6, "Nec quemquam iam ferre potest Caesarve priorem / Pompeiusve parem"; Africa I.89-90 – "animisque incesserat addita duris / Tristis avaritia et nunquam satiabile votum" – cf. Bellum Civile I.158-70 – "Hae ducibus causae; suberant sub publica belli / semina"; Africa I.92 – "dignus sibi quisque videri / Omnia cui subsint, totus cui pareat Orbis" and Bellum Civile I.109-11 – "Dividitur ferro regnum, populique potentis, / Quae mare, quae terras, quae totum possidet orbem, / Non cepit fortuna duos".
[14] Africa I.266-76ff – "Ceu dum velamina pastor / Fida gerens apibus"; Aeneid XII.587-92ff – "inclusas ut cum latebroso in pumice pastor / uestigauit apes".
[15] Africa I.127ff; cf. Inferno XXVI.107ff, and Alexandreis X.174-6, passim. For the three Aeneid echoes (Africa I.138 – Aeneid XI.606; Africa I.140-2 – Aeneid VII.104-5; Africa I.154-5 – Aeneid V.719-21), see Giannarelli (1987).
[16] Note a definition he gives of history: "Quid est enim aliud omnis historia quam Romana laus?" (Apologia contra cuiusdam anonymi Galli calumnias p.1187). See Mommsen (1942) on this. Waller (1980, p. 10) argues that "history is redefined by Petrarch as a literary construct, open to the same possibilities and subject to the same limitations as other literary constructs", but although this suggests

The poetic source that the Africa echoes most frequently (and which provides a good example of a text that is both historical and poetical) appears to be Lucan's Bellum Civile. Bruère's study of this influence lays to rest De Nolhac's assertion that Petrarch "ne semble pas avoir imité Lucain dans l'Africa".[17] Bruère demonstrates that the Bellum Civile acts as an important model for the Africa on three counts: firstly, as a general model of epic concerning Roman history; secondly, as a source for specific subject matter; and thirdly, as a poetic source that Petrarch recalls with extensive verbal reminiscence. He argues that "Petrarch owes more to Lucan than to any other Latin poet, not excepting Virgil" (1961, p. 98). While Bruère himself admits that many of the reminiscences he lists amount only to "brief echoes", these echoes are at times grouped together to form a more substantial one, such as, for example, Petrarch's passage on the causes of the war.[18] This group of reminiscences is important because it comes at the start of the actual narrative of the poem; it sets the classical epic tone with which Petrarch hopes to infuse his work, and continues the sense of epic established by the poem's frame, as discussed below (p. 150ff). Given the apparent prominence of Lucan, and his relevance as a poet who attempts something similar to Petrarch in the Africa, it is perhaps surprising that more studies have not explored how Petrarch viewed and drew on the Bellum Civile. Questions remain, such as whether Petrarch used him more for historical details, or as a poetic model.[19] Dante lists Lucan as the fourth in his group of poets in Limbo (Inferno IV.90), after Homer, Horace and Ovid,[20] and while in the obvious sense he is a poet, De Nolhac's suggestion that Petrarch began to see him as more than a writer of history suggests that at some point, and for some people, the Bellum Civile had

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a fluidity of definition, it seems unhelpful: Petrarch does find history in literature, but has ideas of what history is that set it apart from other literary topics.

[17] Bruère (1961); De Nolhac, (1907), vol.1, p. 195.

[18] See Bruère (1961) p. 84ff.

[19] For an example of both in close proximity, see II.22ff, where four reminiscences of Lucan are used for poetic purposes, not events, then Lucan's words on Pompey and Caesar are echoed in Petrarch's account of Rome's future. Africa III opens with two echoes of Lucan at the start, then III.68-9, on enemies in war, where Petrarch mentions Pharsalia.

[20] He is mentioned again by Dante together with Ovid, in Inferno XXV, where he is clearly used as an example of poetry.

greater import as history than as poetry.[21] An exploration of this would prove useful for further consideration of Petrach's own approach to him. Again, Petrarch is silent about this source in the Africa itself, and says little about Lucan elsewhere in his writings.[22]

Petrarch read the Aeneid, at least in part, as history. His criticism of the Dido and Aeneas story is that it is fictitious because it was historically impossible. Impossible not because both Dido and Aeneas are mythological characters, but because he sees them both as historical, living three hundred years apart:

> Si aliunde nesciremus, magnus testis est Hieronymus, non sacrarum modo, sed et secularium literarum peritissimus, in eo libro, quem aduersus Iouinianum haereticum scripsit, mille compactum, confertumque historiis: neque uero Aeneam ac Didonem coetaneos fuisse, aut se uidere potuisse, cum trecentis annis, aut circiter haec post illius obitum nata sit, norunt omnes, quibus aut ratio temporum, aut Graiae Punicaeque historiae notitia ulla est, (Seniles 4.4, p. 788).

He points out that only fools are not aware of this:

> Quis enim nisi pars uulgi sit, quis usquam, quaeso, tam indoctus, ut nesciat Didonis et Aeneae fabulam esse confictam, uerique locum inter homines, non tam ueri auidos, quam decore, et uenustate materiae, et dulcedine, atque arte obtinuisse, fingentis usqueadeo, ut iam tristes, et inuiti uerum audiant, ac praescripta dulcis possessione mendacii spolientur. (Seniles 4.4, p. 788).[23]

However, in the Africa, the Aeneid is used as a source of poetry, as its scope for historical import does not coincide with Petrarch's historical period. Since Festa's claim that "L'influsso classico, specialmente di Virgilio, si sente a ogni passo, nella frase, nelle immagini, nell'invenzione stessa di certi particolari e di certe situazioni" (1926, p. 77), Seagraves (1976) and J. Foster (1979) have explored the extent to which the Africa is influenced by Vergil. Both focus on verbal reminiscences and similarities in subject matter. Seagraves also provides appendices that include tables of Vergilian vocabulary in the Africa,

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[21] De Nolhac (1907) vol.1, p. 195. However, he also implies that Lucan did not provide Petrarch with a useful model of how poetry might have historical *gravitas*: "il ne saurait désormais le considérer comme une source historique bien sûre; c'est à propos de Lucain qu'il reconnaît qu'on puisse ne pas ajouter foi aux récits de l'histoire faits dans la forme poetique" (vol.1, p. 196). Note also Arnulf of Orléans – "non est iste poeta purus, sed poeta et historiographus. Nam historiam suam prosequitur et nichil fingit" (Glosule super Lucanum, Accessus, p. 4, line 1).

[22] He is mentioned as a suicide in Petrarch's letter to Vergil (Familiares XXIV.11.15).

as well as an extensive list of 210 Vergilian "reminiscences".[24] There are scant echoes of the Georgics and the Eclogues in the Africa,[25] but, unsurprisingly, it is Vergil's epic that Petrarch most frequently draws on. Two episodes in the poem that are most clearly indebted to the Aeneid are: the relationship between Sophonisba and Massinissa (Book V), which echoes that of Dido and Aeneas (Aeneid IV); and Scipio's father pointing out past and future Roman heroes in heaven (Books I and II), which parallels Anchises and Aeneas in Aeneid VI. In terms of verbal imitation, and in spite of Petrarch's concerns to avoid obvious echoes of Vergil,[26] references to the Aeneid rank third in a list of the Africa's borrowings (even after Seagraves's list has been whittled down). De Nolhac also has a chapter on Petrarch and Vergil, which provides useful insight into this relationship, but which has limited and general comment on the Africa itself, such as "Petrarque, qui a choisi l'Énéide pour le modèle unique de son Africa" (1907, vol. 1, p. 193).[27] The Africa is also in some sense a continuation of the Aeneid, with Scipio taking on the role of Aeneas (specifically in the dream in Africa I and II, as Giannarelli shows). The fact that the dream and his role there have Christian overtones is an example of the way in which Petrarch tries to link paganism and Christianity (the pagan classical hero in a Christian heaven), and the classical and medieval.

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[23] He adds that Vergil constructed this fiction knowingly – "scientem lusisse contenderem" (p. 788). Note also Joseph of Exeter's De bello troiano I.24, quoted above, where he casts doubt on the historical reliability of Homer and Vergil (see p. 136 above).

[24] Many that he includes are too dissimilar or too unremarkable (i.e. ordinary words used to describe something in an ordinary manner) to be called allusions or reminiscences, for example: Africa III.54 "vicimus:imbelles teneant licet arma lacerti" is said to be an allusion to Aeneid VI.485 – "Idaeumque etiam currus, etiam arma tenentem"; or "tum gladium dextrae, clipeum dedit illa sinistrae" (Africa V.359) and "clipeum ex aere sinistrae / subligat" (Aeneid XI.10-11) - it is not clear where else one would put a shield.

[25] See Corradini (1874). Petrarch's Bucolicum carmen suggests the range of influence that Vergil had on the poet in terms of what he chose to compose. He emulates Vergil the poet, not just Vergil the epic poet. While there is a bias towards the Aeneid in the letter to Vergil, Petrarch's mention of the Eclogues and Georgics, echoing Vergil's own language, presents the poet as the summation of his works: "Tityrus ut tenuem senior iam perflat avenam, / Quadrifido cultu tuus ut resplendet agellus, / Et tuus Eneas vivit" (Familiares XXIV.11.55ff).

[26] "Quod hodiernum erat, est decima pastorii carminis egloga, cuius quadam in parte ita scripseram ; 'solio sublimis acerno'; postmodum vero dum relegeretur, attendi simile nimis esse virgiliano carmine [...] Mutabis ergo et loco illius pones ita" (Familiares XXII.2).

[27] Carlini (1902, p. 163, quoted above, p. 138) agrees that Vergil provided the epic model for the Africa.

Although Vergil too remains unnamed in the Africa, Petrarch reveals his esteem for the poet elsewhere. As this area has been well covered by studies on Petrarch, I include very few examples, to give merely some idea of the sorts of things Petrarch says of him. In a letter addressed to Vergil, the title of which includes "latinorum principem poetarum", Petrarch addresses him as "Eloquii splendor, latie spes altera lingue, / Clare Maro" (Familiares XXIV.11), and this is echoed in Rerum memorandarum libri II.17.7, where Vergil and Cicero are described as the parents "romane eloquentie". As a model of Latin poetry, Petrarch places him above all: "Inter ingenia Latinorum...nescio quem Virgilio pretulerim" (Rerum memorandarum II.16.1-2).

The Aeneid is described as *divinus* – "divino illo in opere", and "divino carmini" (Seniles IV.4; pp. 785, 789),[28] and Petrarch provides several discussions of how he read this epic. For example, he sees the poem as allegorical: "fere nullus apud hunc Poetam uersus, sine tegmine est" (Seniles IV.4, p. 785),[29] with natural, moral, and historical meanings behind the allegory. He also sees a central underlying meaning to the Aeneid: "Virgilium [...] cuius finis ac subiectum, ut ego arbitror, Vir perfectus est" (p. 786). His description of the Underworld implies that the Aeneid is a blend of fact and fiction: on the one hand the realm is "ubi fictionum nullus aut modus, aut numerus" (p.787), on the other, it reveals "alterius uitae statu[s]", which is similar to the claim made in the letter to Can Grande about Dante's Comedy. The Aeneid is thus read in such as way that we can extract meanings similar to those found in the Comedy.[30]

While Lucan and Vergil act as the most influential models of epic for Petrarch, we might briefly consider the role of Statius. He provides another example of a Roman epic in which the subject of war is central. De Nolhac thought it probable that Petrarch owned a copy of the

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[28] Note that he does not read Vergil's 4th Eclogue as messianic, but as referring to the coming of an Emperor: De otio religioso p. 27-8; Trinkaus (1970), p. 657. In this respect Petrarch differs from Dante in his treatment of Vergil and Statius.

[29] Note that Petrarch also read allegory in the Gospels, as he says in Familiares X.4.

Thebaid,[31] and given his prominence in the Comedy, we might expect similar interest from Petrarch. However, there is only a handful of echoes of the Thebaid in the Africa.[32] The reason for this is most probably that while Statius offers a model of classical epic in Latin, his subject is not Roman history, and that for this reason Petrarch prefers Vergil and Lucan as his epic models. However, the few echoes that are present serve as important epic markers (discussed below, p. 151ff), showing that for the Africa's content, and perhaps style, the Thebaid has little relevance, but for the very fact of writing an epic, i.e. of framing one's subject in an epic narrative, Statius provides Petrarch with a model.

Ovid is another minor source in the Africa, and scattered reminiscences to a range of his works occur (mostly concerning mythology).[33] Whether or not a modern critic chooses to call the Metamorphoses an epic,[34] the poem has little to offer Petrarch as a model for the sort of epic that he is writing. However, as Mustard (1921) argues, it seems that a key imaginative episode in the Africa is at least partly influenced by the Metamorphoses: the palace of Syphax or Truth in Book III contains parallels with Ovid's Palace of the Sun at the start of Met. II. This provides an example of the way that classical mythological poetry was adapted for the Africa.[35]

Two important final classical influences remain: Homer and Ennius. I have placed these last, because the direct influence they could have exercised on Petrarch is limited by the availability of their texts in the fourteenth century. De Nolhac discusses Petrarch's knowledge of Homer, and his quest for a Latin translation of the Greek texts that he owned but could not read. He shows that Petrarch did acquire translations at a late stage of his life,

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[30] See also Rerum memorandarum libri III.50, for further allegorical interpretations of the Aeneid.
[31] De Nolhac (1907), vol.1, p. 113.
[32] Everson (2001, p. 100) claims that the Africa's "major thematic sources, apart from Livy, are Vergil and Statius", but provides no supporting evidence.
[33] See Corradini (1874).
[34] It is considered epic in the Oxford Classical Dictionary, and see Otis (1970).
[35] Note Calcaterra's comments on Petrarch's use of Ovid: "con alta intelligenza e con senso superiore di artista, evitò di cristianizzare i suoi miti e ad un tempo disdegnò di valersene soltanto a fine di

but there seems to be no evidence for access to Homer at the time work on the Africa was begun.[36] There is no evidence of a Homeric textual presence in the Africa, beyond a possible echo in the opening lines.[37] However, Homer was a real presence for Petrarch, as his letter to him suggests.[38] The lack of textual presence is made up for by the presence of Homer as a character. He is not only named several times (as *vates*, and *dux*, echoing Dante's description of Vergil), but appears as a character in Book IX in Ennius' account of a dream, discussed below (p. 163ff).[39]

Petrarch fashions himself as "alter Ennius", in that he chooses the same language (Latin), subject (Scipio) and form (epic) as the classical poet. However, the fragmentary nature of Ennius since antiquity meant that Petrarch would have had little first-hand knowledge of his poem.[40] J. Foster's article, though entitled "Petrarch's Africa: Ennian and Vergilian influences", focuses largely on Vergil. He gives only a brief consideration of the role of Ennius as a source, and refers to Petrarch's comment on Ennius in Familiares XXII.2.11ff:

> Petrarch reveals in his letters that he has looked at Vergil a thousand times, at Ennius only once. The poet Ennius is not strictly an influence at all on the Africa, in the sense of an object of imitation or assimilation.

He cites only one passage as reminiscent of the Annales:

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erudizione. Se ne giovò per contro come di belle figurazioni artistiche, le quali con immaginazione colorita disvelavan le passioni umane." (1942, p. 40).

[36] See De Nolhac (1907, vol.2, p. 156ff): Petrarch acquired a Latin translation of his Greek Homer in the 1360s. De Nolhac notes that Petrarch's marginal notes to his copy of the Iliad suggest that there was a translation of the text in existence, to which Petrarch had access before he acquired his own (p.172), but its identity remains a mystery.

[37] J. Foster (1979, p. 280) touches on this. Horace includes a translation of the first two lines of the Odyssey in his Ars Poetica, quoted below, p. 151.

[38] Familiares XXIV.12. Petrarch's estimation of Homer is revealed in phrases such as "Ad summam amor ad te meus sole clarior ferventiorque est, extimatio ingens ut nullius maior" (323-5), and he forges a sense of connection between them with "tu, primi semper certus loci, cum ego, ultimus hominum" (120). The keeness with which he hoped to read Homer is expressed by "Non, hercle, auidius neque diutius Ulixem tuum sua Penelope expectauit quam ego te".

[39] Lafferty (1998, p. 100) argues for the importance of Homer in the Alexandreis, which suggests a further interesting parallel between the two medieval poems.

[40] De Nolhac (1907, vol. 2, p. 294) suggests that Petrarch first encountered Ennius through Macrobius' Saturnalia. Skutsch, in his introduction to the text of the Annales, provides a useful summary of which authors drew on Ennius, and from his list it seems likely that Petrarch knew the Annales from the 50 quotations in Cicero, the 40 in Macrobius, and the 75 in Servius. The inspiration for Petrarch's use of him might have come from Cicero's mention of him dreaming of Homer, in De re publica 6.10, just before Scipio's dream.

> The general ambience of the surviving Ennius is incorporated, chiefly in Book 9, but only one notably reminiscent passage stands out [Africa VI.345-52, and Annales 194-201 V, preserved in Cicero]. (1979, p. 281).

The unavailability of Ennius' text allows Petrarch to set himself up as a better Ennius – one who is no longer "rustic" (a fault noted by Petrarch in Familiares X.4 - "Ennium, de eo multa scripsisse non sit dubium rudi et impolito, ut Valerius ait, stilo")[41] and who might do Scipio greater justice – without fear of being unfavourably compared to his predecessor. By linking himself to Ennius, he provides classical *auctoritas* for his work, but an *auctoritas* that cannot be proved right or wrong, and that can be surpassed. As with Homer, Petrarch fills the void left by the unobtainable text of Ennius with his own fictional Ennius, and supplies the Roman with his own words, giving Ennius the sort of voice that his lost poetry cannot provide. It is no coincidence that the only two writers for whom Petrarch creates a character (other than himself) in the Africa are both lost to him as sources, as will be discussed below.

Many critics suggest that Petrarch had little interest in medieval literature, and thus gloss over the question of medieval sources for the Africa.[42] While it might seem odd to suggest medieval "sources" for a poem that so clearly aspires to a classical epic on the history of Rome, for which we have ample and demonstrable classical sources, medieval influences are both plentiful and central to Petrarch's enterprise, as more recent critics demonstrate. Rico (2001, p.42) observes that "la passione classicista del Petrarca non può evitare molto spesso di nutrirsi di alimenti medievali", and Fenzi (1976, p. 229), following a similar line with his investigation of Petrarch's "Palace of Truth", attempts "di aprire il testo di Petrarca al

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[41] De Nolhac also notes a marginal comment from a draft of the De Viris: "Homero Virgilioque precone dignior quam Ennio!" (1907, vol. 2, p. 194).

[42] Mommsen (1942) argues that Petrarch views the medieval period as a dark age, compared with the classical period that was a time of light (see especially pp. 234-6). De Sanctis (1945, p. 246) – "tutto quel tempo di poi, che fu detto il medio evo, gli apparve una lunga barbarie". Everson (2001, p. 97) - "Far from standing in the long line of vernacular and medieval epics examined above, the Africa seems deliberately to break with this immediate past, and self-consciously to owe nothing to any tradition other than that of the writers of classical Rome". The "vernacular and medieval epics" that Everson considers are the Chanson de Roland and Arthurian tales, and her view might have been altered by a consideration of Latin texts such as the Alexandreis, or the Comedy, which are more likely to have had an influence on the Africa than French vernacular texts. Petrarch's dislike of French poetry is expressed in the Apologia contra Galli calumnias.

confronto ampio e disinteressato con la cultura del suo tempo".[43] Petrarch's relationship with medieval epics is of particular interest. There is little doubt that he was familiar with the Alexandreis, probably, as Rico suggests, from his school days.[44] Fenzi suggests that:

> Conosceva, in particolare, l'Alexandreis, che poté dargli più d'un suggerimento per il palazzo della Verità e, forse, stimolarne l'emulazione, vista la sua nota e violenta polemica contro le tesi anti-romane del 'barbaro' Gautier,

and argues that Books II. 451-4, and IX.92-3 contain "la polemica contro Gautier de Châtillon",[45] and Velli (1988) lists textual echoes of the Alexandreis in the poem, and suggests several similar episodes, including, perhaps most interestingly, the richness of Scipio's triumph. Though Petrarch shows disdain for the French poet (presumably in part on account of Walter's anti-Roman attitudes), calling him "levissimus quidam [...] vanissimusque Gallorum",[46] there are several parallels between the two works: both are an attempt by a medieval Christian author to create a Latin epic on a classical model; both follow one main classical prose historical account; and both concern a historical pagan soldier and leader who is held up to some extent as a moral example. Both authors face similar difficulties, such as the rendering of a prose history into an epic poem, the problem of how to treat the pagan gods, and to what extent they might allow their own religion to effect their narrative. Notably, neither hero takes part in *katabasis*, though in both cases this *topos* is transferred to a character other than the central hero. Both suggest the narrowness and vanity of human life. In these ways, the Alexandreis provides the closest example of what Petrarch himself is trying to do with the Africa. There are two significant differences: firstly, where Petrarch gives a Christian slant to his poem, suggesting that the paganism of his Roman characters contains a shady prefiguring of Christian Rome, Walter draws a biblical background against which he sets the paganism of his characters, for whom there is no

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[43] For echoes of Martianus Capella, Boethius, the Bible, Dante, Lactantius, and Isidore, see Corradini's notes (1874), and those of Bergin and Wilson (1977). Cararra (1931) also gives some consideration to medieval influences.

[44] Rico (2001), pp. 41-2. Pacca (1998, p. 53) also notes that Walter is the only medieval writer named by Petrarch in his marginal notes.

[45] Fenzi, (1976), pp. 186, 204. See also De Nolhac (1907), vol.2, p. 232.

[46] Apologia contra Galli calumnias, p. 1076; See also Familiares XIII.10.7, with specific reference to the Alexandreis: "illud enim macedonicum par a plebeio poeta celebratum, in tanta luce veterum nec nomine dignum reor".

possibility of redemption or a coming light - he attempts no kind of synthesis of paganism and Christianity; secondly, where Petrarch presents Scipio in a continuously favourable light, Walter finally condemns Alexander by holding him up as an example of excessive ambition ("Magnus in exemplo est" X.448).

Petrarch also shows some familarity with the Anticlaudianus, though again he criticises it and its author:

> Quid sibi igitur uult Gallus? An non uidet quid alienigenae quoque de se ipsis et de nostris senserint? Sufficiat sibi Anticlaudianus Alani sui, paulo minus taediosus Archethrenio. Poetae ambo barbarici multum pariter se diffundunt, multum frustra se torquent, mirum nisi etiam multum sudent.
>
> (Apologia contra Galli calumnias, p. 1081).

Velli (1988) lists some echoes of Joseph of Exeter's De bello troiano in the Petrarchan corpus, though none specific to the Africa, apart from the suggestion that the laurel mentioned in Paris' dream might be linked to the importance of the laurel in Petrarch. The poem does serve as a parallel undertaking on a general level, as it is also based on a prose history (Dares), and in spite of its mythological bent and early romance tendencies, the author nevertheless aspires to some kind of historical standard (see p. 151 below).

Of the various medieval influences on the Africa, that of most interest for this thesis is Dante. Petrarch's assertion that he did not read Dante until the 1350s is generally accepted as false,[47] and in spite of his emphasis on the vernacular nature of Dante's compositions - "cum ut vides, odii materia nulla sit, amoris autem plurime, et patria scilicet et paterna amicitia et ingenium et stilus *in suo genere* optimus" (Familiares XXI.15; my italics), and "uir uulgari eloquio clarissimus fuit" (Rerum memorandarum libri ed. 1581, p. 427), the Comedy, as I demonstrate below, serves as an important precedent for central aspects of Petrarch's epic.

[47] See Feo's "Petrarch" entry in the Enciclopedia Dantesca, and Trovato (1979).

Some similarities between the Africa and the Teseida are mentioned below, though it is worth bearing in mind that Petrarch would not have known the poem in the first years of composing the Africa.[48]

4.3. Petrarch and Poetry.

In this section, I explore the way in which Petrarch presents himself as epic poet. My purpose in so doing is to argue that Petrarch's focus on poets and poetry within his epic is innovative if we consider the poem only in light of the classical models of epic that he himself presents us with through allusion and the roles of Ennius and Homer. The emphasis on poets and poetry, I shall suggest, stems from either the example of, or the same guiding concerns as, Dante and his creation of the poet-hero in the Comedy. Firstly, I examine the extensive comment of the authorial *persona* at the beginning and end of the Africa, to argue that this framing of the poem with such a prominent voice of the author is an exaggeration of a feature of classical epic that is favoured by medieval poets. Secondly, I consider the mentions made of Petrarch by other characters in the poem, arguing that these add to the prominence he gives himself in the frame of the poem. Again, I will suggest that his decision to portray himself as a character echoes the choice Dante made in presenting himself as poet-hero. Thirdly, I argue that the roles of Ennius and Homer as characters in the poem, and in particular the way in which they are connected to Petrarch, parallels Dante's use of Vergil and Statius as guides for his hero in the narrative of the Comedy. Finally, I suggest that all these parallels with the Comedy point to the intimate connection Petrarch wishes to forge between the notion of hero and poet, and that Dante's placement of himself in the position of epic hero exerts more influence on the later poet than Petrarch himself might have acknowledged. While both poets

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[48] Wilkins (1961, p. 19) and Dotti (1987, p. 66) agree that Petrarch was inspired to write the Africa in 1338 or 1339. Limentani (1992, p. 481) dates the Teseida to 1340-1341. Likewise, Boccaccio would have had no access to the Africa before writing the Teseida: his friendship with Petrarch began much later (see Wilkins, passim). They first communicated with each other in 1350 (p. 93), and met later that year. There is evidence that Petrarch was still revising the Africa in 1349 (p. 83), but he seems to have stopped working on it in 1352 (p. 119), which is not long after first meeting Boccaccio. Petrarch saw Dante only once, in his youth (see Familiares XXI.15), but Wilkins also mentions that "While in Verona [1345] Petrarch enjoyed acquaintance, perhaps friendship, with Dante's son Pietro" (p. 52).

are responding to the classics in quite fundamentally different ways, similarities between them are striking, and seem more than coincidence on the part of Petrarch. Though Petrarch separates Dante's poet-hero into the two distinct characters (poet and hero) typical of earlier epic, he nevertheless goes to great lengths to connect the two, to show that the tasks of the poet and the hero are to be rewarded with equal triumph, and that together they can win everlasting glory.

4.3.1. The Prominence of the Author.

We have seen with Dante how the traditionally minimal authorial and impersonal voice of the epic poet is altered to such an extent that the author becomes the literal hero of his own work: hero and poet become one. This is one of the most innovative features of his work, and one for which there is no precedent in classical epic. Petrarch, who aims at writing a much more decidedly classical poem (and not just classical, but also historical), gives himself as epic poet a novel prominence, bringing himself into his poem from its very beginning with "Et michi". While it is not surprising for an epic poet to speak as narrator at the start of his work (for example Vergil and Lucan – "cano" (Aeneid) and "canimus" (Bellum Civile)), we might consider the relationship of Petrarch's opening with possible models. "Et" suggests a continuation of something, and "michi" is more emphatic than Vergil's "cano". The circle of writers Petrarch seeks to join with his "Et michi" is not that of the historians such as Livy, from whom he takes his historical subject, as this would not require the use of "Musa". It suggests rather an epic poet or a circle of epic poets, such as that which Dante joins in Inferno IV. It could be Ennius who, as the writer of an epic account of Petrarch's chosen subject, plays an important role in the Africa both in person and as a theoretical model. But whether or not Petrarch has Ennius in mind here, the words he chooses at the start of his poem are those of Homer and Vergil:

> Et michi conspicuum meritis belloque tremendum,
> Musa, *virum* referes, *Italis* cui fracta sub armis (Africa I. 1-2),

echoes both

Arma *uirumque* cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris
Italiam fato profugus [...] (Aeneid I.1-2; my italics),[49]

and "Musa, mihi causas memora" (Aeneid I.8), as well as the opening of the Odyssey, which appears in Latin in, for example, Horace's Ars Poetica: "dic mihi, Musa, virum," (141). At this stage, Petrarch appears to be interested only in poetry, and shows no concern for mentioning his main source (Livy) for the historical "facts" of his account. This link to the past contained in "Et michi" is not a link to his historical sources but to examples of classical epic.

However, the brief authorial "cano" and "canimus" of Petrarch's two most prominent epic models in the Africa are then set aside for the more author-centered beginning of Statius' Thebaid. Statius, with his reference to himself as author, and to his patron, offers the kind of beginning preferred by medieval authors.[50] Petrarch's dedication to King Robert (19ff) echoes that of Statius to Domitian. While there are no close verbal reminiscences, the programmatic similarity is striking: both poets say that the contemporary deeds of their dedicatee will be the subject of future poetry, but that they dare not attempt such a topic at this point in their careers.[51] Petrarch says,

[...] alio fortassis carmine quondam
[...]
Nomen et alta canam Siculi miracula regis (I.41, 43),

as "tua maxima facta / Non ausus tetigisse prius." (I.57-8). Statius looks to a time "cum Pierio tua fortior oestro / facta canam" (I.32-3). Note that just as he echoed the beginnings of the Odyssey and Aeneid, here too his first allusion to the Thebaid is to a point very near its

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[49] The first line of the Annales is "Musae, quae pedibus magnum pulsatis Olympum".
[50] This applies to historians, such as Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose Historia regum britanniae is often thought of as a sort of prose epic (and to his Vita Merlini written in hexameters), as well as to poets such as Alain, Walter, and Joseph of Exeter.
[51] Cf. Joseph of Exeter, who says in his introduction to the De bello troiano that one day he will sing a song that will be much greater – it will be the song of his patron's holy wars: "te sacre assument acies divinaque bella / tunc dignum maiore tuba, tunc pectore toto / nitar et immensum mecum spargere per orbem" (I.57-9), which suggests the importance of a Christian element.

beginning. Petrarch then specifically refers to the example of Statius, as well as Vergil and Lucan,[52] in choosing a more distant subject:

> [...] Troiamque adeo canit ille ruentem,
> Ille refert Thebas iuvenemque occultat Achillem,
> Ille autem Emathiam Romanis ossibus implet. (I.50-2),[53]

and places himself alongside them by beginning the next line with "Ipse ego". Having introduced Statian reminiscences in line 19ff, there is an echo of Lucan in the next line: Petrarch's "Hesperieque decus" (20) and "Te precor" at the start of 23 shows similarity with Lucan's "O decus Haemonidum" (VI.589), and "Te precor" appears in the same metrical position in VI.591. Thus the opening is clearly constructed to reflect epic throughout.

But as I suggested in relation to the presence of "Et michi", Petrarch's epic model is not necessarily a classical one. The opening of his poem shows similarity to Walter's Alexandreis. Walter begins with a prose prologue in which his preoccupation is poetry, and what a poet might hope to achieve. Because of this initial focus, when the poem itself starts, Walter makes his invocation impersonal. His choice of an imperative is Homeric rather than Vergilian, yet his words are close to those of Petrarch: "Musa refer" (Alexandreis I.5) appears in the same metrical position as "Musa, virum referes" (Africa I.2). Where Petrarch turns to his patron with "Te quoque" in line 19, Walter does so in 12, with "At tu". Most significantly, both poets mention laurels. Walter desires laurels - "Funde sacros fontes et crinibus imprime laurum" (Alexandreis I.25), and Petrarch shows us that he has them already, thanks to his patron,

> Iudice quo merui vatumque in sede sedere
> Optatasque diu lauros titulumque poete (Africa I.21-2).[54]

In line 71, Petrarch moves away from his view of himself and his task, to discuss the causes of the war that he will narrate. This is similar to the structure of the Alexandreis, where

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[52] In Lucan's case, the gap is still a sizeable hundred odd years. The action of his poem ends in 47 BC, and was written some time between the poet's birth in 39 AD, and death in 65 AD.
[53] Note that no distinction is made here between different kinds of epic.

Walter has 42 lines of prose followed by 26 lines of verse about himself and his poetic enterprise. By contrast, Statius ends his introduction after 45 lines. So, as the extended introduction in which the poet focuses on himself is largely a medieval development following on from later classical epic, the Africa reveals its medieval influences in its opening lines. But Petrarch again alters the pattern followed by Walter: he imitates the length of his introduction, but returns to a classical style by removing the prose preface. His initial discussion of poetry is thus grounded in the poetry of the work itself.

The extended voice of the poet at the start of the Africa gains extra importance from the fact that it is coupled with a symmetrically placed and similarly long passage at the end of the work. Vergil as narrator remains silent at the end of the Aeneid, and Lucan, Petrarch's other important model, leaves his epic unfinished. Once again, it is Statius who provides a classical example of the authorial voice at the end of epic, beginning the final 22 lines of the Thebaid with an emphatic "Non ego" (XII.797). This is the model followed by Alain of Lille for his Anticlaudianus. In particular, his statement that his humble tamarisk should give way to the mightier laurel,

> [...] nec antiquos temptes equare poetas,
> Sed pocius ueterum uestigia semper adorans
> Subsequere et lauris humiles submitte miricas. (Anticlaudianus IX. 410-2),

echoes Statius' reverence for the Aeneid at the end of the Thebaid. The end of the Africa seems also to owe something to Statius.[55] The classical poet's "Non ego" becomes the "Ipse ego" (IX.404) and "Nunc ego non" (IX.410) with which Petrarch opens his closing lines about himself.[56] But as with the opening, Petrarch plays with both classical and medieval models of epic. He addresses his poem, stressing the time he has spent on it, "O mea non

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[54] Petrarch mentions his laurels again in this opening section, when he says that his future account of Robert's deeds will win him another laurel: "Altera temporibus pulcerrima laurea nostris" (I.70). He is thus outdoing on several levels Walter's attempts to gain a metaphorical laurel.

[55] The direct absence of the Aeneid here at the end of the poem is made up for by the allusion to Statius, where Statius mentions the Aeneid: "nec tu divinam Aeneida tempta, / sed longe sequere et vestigia semper adora" (Thebaid XII.816-7); Statius makes the reference for Petrarch.

[56] The lacunae in the Africa reflect its incomplete state, and there is speculation that Petrarch would have originally intended the complete poem to comprise twelve books. However, the end as we have it is clearly written as an end, regardless of the incompleteness of the rest of the poem.

parvo michi consummata labore" (IX.421), as Alain does in an almost identical position in his ninth and final book, "O mihi continuo multo sudata labore" (IX.410).[57] Walter, who has a strong authorial presence throughout the Alexandreis, also turns, in the closing lines, from general statements ("O felix mortale genus" X.433) to comments that explain his poetry (how he uses Alexander as "exemplum"), himself, and his future poetic intentions. In the final nine lines he returns to his patron, whom he hopes will wear the poets' ivy along with his *sacra mitra* (X.464-5). He names both himself ("Galteri" X.463) and his patron ("Guillermi" X.469). Petrarch also names himself (IX.232), and speaks again of his patron (IX.423ff). Petrarch has a total of 79 lines in which he speaks as poet at the end of the Africa. This contrasts with Walter's 22 lines spoken *in propria persona* and 14 of actual closure. So once again, Petrarch amplifies a feature of epic that allows him to emphasise poetry. Statius acts as his model for the authorial voice at the close,[58] and the lengths to which Petrarch takes this feature reflect an extension of the development of this *topos* in medieval epics such as the Alexandreis. The force of presenting the poet's own voice at the beginning and end of the work, and the discussion of poetry involved in each case, serves to lodge notions of poetry, and in particular of Petrarch and his conscious attempts to give form to his views of poetry, firmly in the mind of the reader. The poem is, in a sense, wrapped within a discussion of the poet and his poetic purpose. This acts not merely as a frame, but also as the standard for the rest of the poem and the emphasis placed within it on poetry; it alerts us to the centrality of poetry within the work. But I will now turn to what Petrarch says in his closing lines, and examine the innovative force of his ending, to see why he extends the scope of his voice beyond the few lines set aside by the authors of his epic models.

As with his beginning, Petrarch weaves a dense texture of references to epic, creating a sense of closure by bringing in echoes of the end of other poems. For example, Statius' "nec tu

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[57] Perhaps Petrarch and Alain both drew on Statius: "o mihi bissenos multum vigilata per annos / Thebai" (Thebaid XII.811-2). Petrarch quotes these very lines in Coronation Oration 10.7. Compare Dante's "m' ha fatto per molti anni macro" (Paradiso XXV).

divinam Aeneida tempta, / sed longe sequere et vestigia semper adora" (XII. 816-7) is reworked: Petrarch too follows "vestigia" (IX.405), and "longe sequere" is developed into "ter centum labentibus ordine lustris" (IX.404). Although the vestigia have become "rara", Petrarch is nevertheless following in epic footsteps, and clear ones at that. Statius' "livor" in the second last line of the poem appears as "Invidie" in the last line of the Africa. The last line of the Metamorphoses is also echoed, adding further epic closure: Petrarch's "Irrita ne Grai fierent presagia vatis" (409) draws on Ovid's "siquid habent veri vatum praesagia" (XV.879). Like the Thebaid, the Metamorphoses does not have a strong presence in the Africa, but it plays a similarly important part in the last lines of the poem. Petrarch's concern for "Tempus edax" (482) contrasts with Ovid's assertion that his own work will be untouched by "edax [...] vetustas" (XV.872), and the boast that Jupiter's flame will not harm the Metamorphoses is echoed by Petrarch's "mediis [...] flammis" (478). The reference to Scipio's "marmoreo [...] busto" (417) brings to mind the hero's tomb at the end of the Alexandreis – "exciso defossa marmore terra / Quinque pedum fabricata domus" (X.449-50). Also the "exigua [...] tellure" (431) within which Robert's remains are now contained echoes Walter's "nobile corpus / Exigua requieuit humo" (450-1). Robert's spirit's attitude to leaving earthly life reflects that of Arcita at the end of the Teseida: "rideat" (Africa IX.437) echoes "rise" (Teseida XI.3.1); both men see human error - "vanitate", "cechitate", "biltate" (Teseida XI.3.2,4,6) and "Erroresque hominum" (Africa IX.438); and both look back - "si volse in giù a rimirare" (Teseida XI.2.1), and "retro despectat" (Africa IX.434). The common source for both is probably Cicero (De re publica 6.19), hence a circular effect is created by the return to Cicero in the final stages of the poem.

Other elements add to the sense of circularity. There is a parallel invocation of the Muses, the negativity of which contrasts with the positive note on which the poem opened:

> Nunc ego non ausim vos hinc ad tristia, Dive,
> Materiamque trucem post tot modo leta vocare. (IX.410-1).

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[58] Note how relevant the Thebaid is for the beginning and end of the Africa, but how little Petrarch draws on it in the rest of the poem.

Scipio's father had said that Petrarch would detain the fleeing Muses, but now Petrarch himself urges them to flee: "longe fugite" (IX.412). As well as the invocation, the poet also returns to his patron, but here too the image is a negative one. The "iter" that Robert opened for him earlier,

> Praeterea in cuntos pronum sibi feceris annos
> Posteritatis iter: [...] (I.26-7),

has now been closed because of Robert's death: "Speratum tibi clausit iter" (IX.426). This image, in its positive form, also occurs at the close of the Thebaid, "iam certe praesens tibi Fama benignum / stravit iter" (XII.812-3), adding a further example of the way in which other epics are woven into the texture of the Africa both thematically and structurally. Lucan is also used to create epic texture here. For example, Petrarch advises his book that a safe refuge might be found in a poor man's house:

> [...] secura repostum
> Angustumque precare locum sub paupere tecto (Africa IX.471-2),

which, as Bruère (1961) notes, draws on a passage in the Bellum Civile describing Caesar taking shelter in a poor man's hut during the war,

> [...] praedam civilibus armis
> Scit non esse casas. O vitae tuta facultas
> Pauperis angustique lares! [...] (Bellum Civile V.526-7).

The parallel is complimentary to Petrarch's book, suggesting that it deserves the same shelter as a mighty leader in time of war. This implies a heroic status for poetry, and the equation of poet and hero is an echo of the poet-hero link Petrarch focuses on, as illustrated below. This echo of Lucan is a calculated allusion to an epic passage that offers Petrarch reassurance for his poem's future. The transfer of concern from a Roman leader to a poem says much about Petrarch's focus.

Petrarch thus frames his narrative with extended imitation of epic beginnings and endings, placing it alongside both classical and medieval works.[59] He amplifies his models to underline the importance of epic poetry as a theme. Two other features of the work enhance this emphasis, and are unfamiliar from classical epic: firstly, the presence of the poet himself as a character in the narrative; secondly, the way in which much of Book IX is given to a discussion of epic poetry, while the epic action is put on hold. The second of these features highlights the first, as the culmination of the discussion of poetry in Book IX is the appearance of Petrarch in a dream. I will now turn to the presence of the poet beyond the authorial comment at the beginning and end, to show the extent to which poetry is a central concern throughout.

Petrarch's only precedent for the poet as character in his own epic is Dante, though at first glance the two appearances bear little similarity. Petrarch is not on a journey; he does not struggle as a character as Dante does; and he is not the poem's hero (though he makes himself as close to the hero as he can, given his historical constraints). However, I argue that Petrarch's emphasis on poets (Ennius and Homer, as well as himself) echoes the prominent presence of poets in the Comedy.

Petrarch's two appearances are brief, and both occur in dreams. The first of these is in Book II, when Scipio's father gives a vague prophecy of a future poet. Although the episode takes place in a dream, Petrarch further distances himself from the "reality" of the narrative with the father's "Cernere [...] videor" (II.442); the vision within a vision is so uncertain that he cannot venture a "video". The future poet is left nameless, and the vagueness continues: we are not told when he will live, but only that it will be "post secula multa" (II.441), and that he will come from "Finibus Etruscis" (II.442). The unnamed poet is then linked with Ennius,

[59] This framing is repeated to some extent within individual books: Book VIII has 4 allusions to Lucan in the first 22 lines (and no allusions to anything else), and in the last 3 lines, J. Foster (1979) notes an echo of Aeneid IV; Book VI.1. echoes the Bellum Civile and the Thebaid, and the end of it includes

providing a theme that is to be more fully developed in the parallel vision of the poet in Book IX, discussed below (p. 170ff). This is also the first mention of Ennius in the poem, and it is indicative of Petrarch's purpose to show him here as depending on Petrarch for his own appearance. The two appear at opposite ends of the same scale of Latin epic –

> Iste rudes Latio duro modulamine Musas
> Intulit; ille autem fugientes carmine sistet; (II.445-6),

yet Petrarch's effort is considered more impressive ("carior" 449) because of his distance from the events of the poem ("procul" 450); hence Petrarch's keenness to emphasise the distance of the Petrarch-character from the events of the poem at the start of the episode. By prophesying himself, Petrarch creates an *auctoritas* for his work; an *auctoritas* that is enhanced by the fact that this view of him is relayed in a heavenly context, and adds a sacred element to his enterprise.[60] His appearance here gives him a role in "history" that his own voice in the introduction could not give.

The episode also contains difficulties. Although Petrarch is to be such a great writer, Scipio's father emphasises that all things, including books, fade away:

> Sed quid tamen omnia prosunt?
> Iam sua mors libris aderit: mortalia namque
> Esse decet quecumque labor mortalis inani
> Edidit ingenio. (II.454-7).

The father suggests that there are greater glories than being written about. This seems to contradict Petrarch's statement that Scipio's greatness is such that he deserves a poem to praise him. The assumption that poetry is confined to the worldly - to the things that pass away - is one that Petrarch, having raised it, can then attempt to disprove by suggesting the apotheosis of poetry (in particular classical poetry). Just as Rome is raised up to heaven metaphorically, through the Church, and Scipio is raised to heaven both in this dream and through his triumph, so too is the poetry that tells of these things. In praising Scipio for his

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three Lucanian reminiscences in close succession; Book VII opens with Lucan, ends with Livy, and Book V opens with Livy, moves to the Aeneid in 46ff, and ends with the Aeneid.

virtue, rather than for his fame, there is the hope that a poem that is a vehicle for virtue will survive. Petrarch seems unconcerned about leaving question marks over the ultimate value of poetry.[61]

4.3.2. Poetry and Poets in Book IX.

The second dream in which Petrarch appears is in Book IX, and the book functions as an expansion of the themes raised in the first dream, namely, the relationship between Petrarch and Ennius, the role of poetry, and the connection between poetry and heroes. Before I turn to Petrarch's appearance here, I shall first consider the book more generally, to reveal the extent of the epic context in which Petrarch appears. Although it presents the culmination of Scipio's achievements, the focus of much of the book is on poetry. The uniting of these two subjects within a single book suggests a joint triumph for Scipio and epic.

As though to emphasise his departure from classical epic, Petrarch opens the book with a situation that parallels one in the Aeneid, but that highlights the difference between the two contexts. The first lines of Aeneid V describe Aeneas sailing away from Carthage, looking back on flames from Dido's pyre; the opening lines of Africa IX also show the hero sailing away from the African coast, and the end of Book VIII also tells us that he too leaves flames behind, as he burns the Punic ships. Aeneas and his companions are troubled – "triste per augurium Teucrorum pectora ducunt" (V.7), while Scipio's men go "bella canentes" (IX.8) in victory. Petrarch emphasises the calmness of the sea: "placidum [...] iter" (2) and "Non rauca procellis / Equora" (2ff); which again contrasts with the "caeruleus [...] imber" (10)

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[60] This also picks up on the invocation to God at the start of the poem, where Petrarch hopes for divine sanction. We might compare Dante, and the way in which he suggests a divine authority for his poem when he is in heaven, "'l poema sacro / al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra" (Paradiso XXV.1-2).
[61] The motif is one that recurs in Petrarch's works: Rerum vulgarium fragmenta 264.6; Triumphus temporis 114, 116-7, "ogni cosa mortal Tempo interrompe". Similar doubts are suggested by Oderisi in Purgatorio XII, where the context is specifically art and literature: "Oh vana gloria de l'umane posse!" (91).

that hangs over Aeneas. Petrarch plays with the Aeneid in this way to create an epic start to his book, while introducing difference as a marker of his poetic innovations.[62]

The sudden appearance of the character Ennius at the start of the book is the first indication of the parallel Petrarch creates between his own two appearances. Just as the two were mentioned together in Book II, so here, in another dream, the one leads to the other. Ennius' account of a dream provides a context as removed from the poem's action as Publius' words in the dream of Books I-II. Yet the presentation of Petrarch himself is this time more concrete, as though this book were the fulfilment of an earlier shadier hint at the future. The uncertainty of "Cernere [...] videor" (II.442) is replaced by "Aspexi" (IX.217) in a strong position at the start of a line. The "Finibus Etruscis" (II.442) are left behind for a more precise location, "clausa sub valle" (IX.216), which is Petrarch's reference to Vaucluse. This takes us back to the authorial introduction at very beginning of the poem, and Petrarch's reference to finding his muse in Vaucluse, thereby fulfilling the "prophecy" of Book IX.

Petrarch's subject was referred to in Book II as Scipio's "gesta" (II.442). This is now clarified as epic in two ways. Firstly, Petrarch reclines under "teneras [...] lauros" (IX.218), and is about to twine the foliage in his hair ("viridante comas meditantem incingere ramo" IX.219). We might compare this with the model of Tityrus/Vergil, resting under beech (Eclogue I.1).[63] Petrarch alters Vergil's pastoral scene to give emphasis to his epic enterprise, the "quid [...] / Egregiumque altumque nimis" (220-1) that he composes in the place of Vergil's Eclogues.[64] While Vergil went on to compose epic, Petrarch presents himself as one who is from the very

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[62] Of course, by drawing on a gloomy passage from the Aeneid, Petrarch emphasises the contrasting joy of the triumph he relates.

[63] The scene in which Petrarch in presented is a kind of *locus amoenus* that brings Vergil's Eclogues to mind: "viridique in gramine septum / Arboribus variis nitidissima flumina iuxta / Ac gelidos inter fontes rupesque prealtas" (IX.275-7). Note, for example, the picture of the poet of the Eclogues – "Haec sat erit, diuae, uestrum cecinisse poetam, / dum sedet et gracili fiscellam texit hibisco" (Eclogue X. 70-1).

[64] There is a perhaps a pun on "Egregium": Petrarch is moving away from the flock (i.e. pastoral) towards another greater sort of poetry, just as Vergil moved on from the Eclogues and Georgics (both of which contain livestock) to the Aeneid.

first associated with the laurel that crowns him so early in life for his epic. Secondly, the identities of the work and the author are made explicit:

> Francisco cui nomen erit; [...]
> [...] titulusque poematis illi
> AFRICA. (232, 235-6),

with the name and title in emphatic positions in both cases.[65] The "gesta" will take the form of "poema".

Another feature that links Petrarch's two appearances is the emphasis on time. The link creates a sense of fulfilment, and of a prophecy growing clearer. In Book II, he is prophesied "post secula multa" (441). In Book IX, he is said to be "sera de gente" (222), and, with a sense of the apocalyptic, he belongs to an "ultima [...] etas" (223), and he will come "Tempus in extremum" (230)[66]. This sense of age surfaces again, with "senescenti [...] Rome" (246) and "annose [...] matri" (247). The distance relates in both cases to poetry, as Petrarch attempts to show the absence of poetry in his own time. Scipio's father says of the Muses and Petrarch, "ille autem fugientes carmine sistet" (II.446), and this is echoed verbally in Book IX, "Ille diu profugas revocabit carmine Musas" (229), and emphasised with "veteresque Elicone Sorores / Restituet" (230-1). The "re-" of "revocabit" and "restituet" underlines Petrarch's connection with the past. The idea that Petrarch will bring poetry back into a barren age is made specific with an image of offspring from a barren mother:

> Iste senescenti tantum illo in tempore Rome
> Carior, annose quantum contingere matri
> Filius ille solet, quem post lacrimosa sepulcra
> Natorum vidue sterilis tandem attulit alvus. (250-3).

The vagueness of "post secula multa" in Book II is clarified somewhat by Homer,

> Illa quidem, que iam lustris nil tale ducentis
> Viderit (IX.250-1),

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[65] The Teseida also states its title within the work, as does Dante if we take "comedìa" as a titular reference. Though the practice probably stems from Statius' "Thebai" (Thebaid XII.812), it is otherwise rare in classical epic, and thus makes the coincidence of Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Dante all doing so the more striking.

[66] Against the age of his era, Petrarch's own youth is emphasised, creating a sense that he does not belong there.

and later too by Petrarch, when he returns with his own voice – "Ipse ego ter centum labentibus ordine lustris" (404).[67]

Petrarch's motivations for writing are mentioned in Book IX, just as they are in his first appearance. However, where it was "solus amor veri" in Book II (454), here Homer says "Quantus aget laudum stimulus!" (237). This apparent change has to do with the proximity of triumph in the poem. From 240, the subject returns to the laurel, and this symbolic portrayal of Petrarch's familiarity with the laurel so many centuries before his birth acts as a justification for the apparent alteration of his motivations in writing. Mention of his triumph connects the passage to Petrarch's own words to his patron at the start of the poem, and offers a brief account of the event in the form of a prophecy that we know from the start of the poem to have been fulfilled. We see Petrarch both ascending and descending the Capitoline, "Hic tandem ascendet Capitolia" (238), and "insigni florentia lauro / Tempora descendens" (240-1), and the continuation of the discussion of the laurel after his descent,

> [...] tanta est reverentia lauri.
> Omnibus ex silvis iam nunc sibi gratior una est
> Delphica [...] (IX.242ff),

creates a sort of parallel Coronation Oration. Thus we see Petrarch's poetic triumph in miniature, in a prophecy that the writing of the poem in which the prophecy occurs itself fulfills the prophecy. The De Viris is also prophesied, but in such a way as to make clear that it will be history, not poetry like the Africa: in writing it, Petrarch will be "Historicus" (260), and he will treat of Roman history from its beginning, providing a kind of chronicle that will record "titulos" and "nomina" (260). Mention of the De viris here seems designed to emphasize the poetic nature of the Africa. We are also told of other future works where Petrarch will record events of his own time, and this again links the passage of prophecy with the real-time voice of Petrarch the author in his invocation to his patron at the start of the Africa. The prophecy that says he will write of contemporary deeds,

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[67] Homer refers to a period of 1000 years, Petrarch to one of 1500, so with the narrative of the Africa ending in 202 BC, Homer places Petrarch in the 9th century AD, and Petrarch rightly places himself in

> At si vita manebit
> Longior, et nullo prevertet turbine ceptum
> Impetus alter iter, tunc ampla volumina cernes
> Magnarum rerum vario distincta colore
> In tempus perducta suum. (IX.363-7),

is one that he himself hopes to fulfil, as he says in Book I:

> Ipse tuos actus meritis ad sidera tollam
> Laudibus, atque alio fortassis carmine quondam
> (Mors modo me paulum expectet! non longa petuntur)
> Nomen et alta canam Siculi miracula regis (I.40-3),

where we see a similar hope that death will stay away long enough ("Longior" / "non longa petuntur") for this new enterprise. So again, Petrarch makes a specific link between the Petrarch prophesied in Book IX, and himself as poet of the Africa in which we read these things. Petrarch's appearance in Book IX will be considered in greater detail below.

I shall now turn to the relationships both in Ennius' dream and in Book IX more generally. Three poets appear as characters central to much of Book IX: Homer (mentioned twice before - III.375, and IV.37 - where Ennius is also referred to),[68] and Ennius and Petrarch (referred to by Scipio's father in Book II). For all three, this is the first time that they appear in the poem as relatively concrete characters. Petrarch creates a complex texture that binds these three poets to each other and to Scipio. His point in so doing is threefold. Firstly, the presence of the three poets as characters gives substance to the discussion of epic. Secondly, the connection between the three allows Petrarch to reveal his desired poetical heritage (as the inheritor of Homer and Ennius),[69] thereby providing both information on the sort of tradition in which he sees his poem, and classical *auctoritas* for his work. Thirdly, poetic relationships parallel the Comedy, and specifically, by linking the poets with Scipio, I suggest that Petrarch draws on Dante's refiguration of the epic hero as poet-hero, and that the relationship between

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the 14th century. Homer's reference to 1000 years is thus probably not meant to be taken literally.

[68] Laelius links them: "Maximus insano iuveni vigilavit Homerus: / Rusticus egregio vigilat nunc Ennius" (IV.37-8), where the context is their efforts to portray their respective heroes. This link implies an interesting connection between Scipio and Achilles, as the two subjects of these poets.

[69] The first gives him poetic kudos, and the second provides both the Roman element so central to his work, and a poetic model in Latin that can be improved. Both are also considered to be the first Greek

Ennius and Scipio provides an historical example of the connection that Petrarch envisages between himself and his hero.

4.3.3. Homer and Ennius.

The relationship Petrarch creates between Ennius and Homer stems from a comment by Cicero that Ennius greatly admired Homer:

> fit enim fere, ut cogitationes sermonesque nostri pariant aliquid in somno tale, quale de Homero scribit Ennius, de quo videlicet saepissime vigilans solebat cogitare et loqui, (De re publica 6.10).

Thus while the relationship is a fabrication, it has a classical literary basis. The inclusion of the poets as characters is in keeping with the general exposition of epic poetry in Book IX. In addition to their suitability to a discussion of epic, Homer and Ennius are made specifically relevant to Petrarch: as his chosen poetic forebears, they provide a context for Petrarch's poem. Together they create an environment of poetic comradeship,[70] and suggest that they too will be sympathetic to a new epic enterprise. Homer's appearance in Ennius' dream as "dux" parallels the poetic relationships in the Comedy, where Vergil acts as *dux* to the poet-hero. Generally, Petrarch's Homer corresponds with Dante's Vergil, and Ennius with Dante's Statius. But we might think too of the role Homer plays in the Comedy, as the "poeta sovrano" of the "bella scola" into which the poet-hero is welcomed. In the Africa, Homer's connection with Ennius creates a sense of an epic circle into which Petrarch is admitted. Petrarch and Dante thus similarly base their enterprise in the world of classical epic (though Dante has Horace in his group),[71] yet by choosing to couch his relationships in terms that parallel Dante's, Petrarch creates a double background for his poet's characters: they belong both to a classical world and to a famous medieval representation of poets that first places the poet himself and his poetic forebears in the roles of epic heroes (the Comedy).

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and Latin epic poets. Ennius is the first to write Latin epic in hexameter; Naevius and Livius Andronicus wrote before him in Saturnian verse.

[70] For example, Homer's "mecum ex equo, nam dignus es" (180) to Ennius.

Petrarch prepares the way for the appearance of Homer with an early reference in Book IX. Ennius, fearing that he will not do Scipio justice with his poetry, echoes Alexander the Great's words (according to Cicero) on seeing the tomb of Achilles:

> Macedum rex magnus amici
> Forte videns saxum Eacide titulosque sepulcri,
> 'Fortunate' inquit 'iuvenis, cui nominis illum
> Preconem reperire fuit!' (IX.51-4),

and worries that Scipio has only him as poet,

> At tibi, summe ducum, claro quo nullus Homero est
> Dignior, in reliquis blanda inque hoc durior uno
> Me solum Fortuna dedit. (IX.58-60).[72]

This heralds the account of Ennius' dream. But before beginning on the dream itself, Ennius states his admiration for Homer:

> Milibus ex tantis unus michi summus Homerus
> Unus habet quod suspiciam, quod mirer amemque. (IX.144-5).

Here he speaks much like Dante's Statius to Vergil (Purgatorio XXI-XXII).[73] Ennius (like Dante's Statius) represents the author's own admiration of Homer (Dante's Vergil) and of classical poets in general, an admiration we know about from Petrarch's letters to Vergil and Homer. Just as Statius' fondness for Vergil as *auctoritas* leads to his characterisation as one who worships Vergil in the Comedy, so Petrarch transposes the idea of Homer as *auctoritas* in Ennius' work into emotional admiration in Ennius the character. In both cases the sense of *auctoritas* is central: Dante was able to use Vergil's text directly, so could claim him as an outright authority; Petrarch, without access to Homer, creates the admiring figure of Ennius as the go-between, the author through whom he approaches Homer.

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[71] On Petrarch and Horace, including the former's letter to the latter, see De Nolhac (1907), vol. 1, pp. 180ff, et passim.

[72] This whole episode also occurs in the Alexandreis, and Alexander says Achilles' greatest fortune was to have Homer recount his deeds - "summum tamen illud honoris / Arbitror augmentum, quod tantum tantus habere / Post obitum meruit preconem laudis Homerum" (I.481-3), and hopes for similar good fortune – "O utinam nostros resoluto corpore tantis / Laudibus attollat non inuida fama tryumphos!" (I.484-5). The implication is, of course, that Walter is his Homer. Petrarch might have had Walter's passage in mind (its presence in another epic is important), though Cicero provides a common source for both (Pro Archia X.24) – "Atque is tamen, cum in Sigeo ad Achilles tumulum astitisset: 'o fortunate,' inquit, 'adulescens, qui tuae virtutis Homerum praeconem inveneris!'". Petrarch's words are closer to this than to those in the Alexandreis.

[73] Compare Statius' praise of Vergil, which also contains the word thousand –"Al mio ardor fuor seme le faville, / che mi scaldar, de la divina fiamma / onde sono allumati piú di mille" (XXI.94-6).

His admiration for him locates him in heaven,

> Ille michi e celo veniens tam sepe videtur,
> Ut stupeam potuisse hominem sic alta tenere,
> Astrorum sic nosse vias, sic climata terre! (IX.146-8),

yet, as Petrarch makes clear in the dream itself, he in fact comes from the Underworld:

> Aspice qualis erat quondam dum vixit Homerus.
> Huc ego vix tandem reserato carcere Ditis
> Emersi, tacite perrumpens viscera terre. (IX.175-7);

The similarity with Dante's Vergil is apparent here,[74] and is exploited further later in the dream, as I shall show. Although removed from him in time, as he acknowledges – "ante novos reges et tempora Rome / Floruerit" (148-50), Ennius treats Homer as a constant companion:

> Presentemque animo ficta sub ymagine feci.
> Hoc sine nulla dies abiit, nox nulla sine illo. (151-2).

Here again we might think of Petrarch himself, and the way in which he too imagines the authors of the past as recipients of his letters. Homer makes "longam breviare viam" (154), and by mentioning this, Ennius shows himself to be like Homer, as at the moment of speaking, he too is making a long sea voyage shorter for Scipio by entertaining him with words.

Ennius' dream reveals more about the way in which Petrarch links him with Homer. Inspiration for the dream, as for that in Books I-II, is found in Cicero: in recounting the beginning of his dream, Scipio mentions Ennius' dream of Homer – "in somno tale, quale de Homero scribit Ennius" (De re publica 6.10). This dream is not described any further, as Scipio turns to his own dream. Petrarch creates playful intertextuality by having Ennius ask "Quis somnum dixerit illum?" (159): Cicero, in referring to the dream, did not describe it, but describes another; Petrarch goes one better by including both Ennius' and Scipio's dreams in his own work. And the reference back to De re publica 6.10 presents this dream as a parallel to that of Africa II; a parallel enhanced by the fact that Ennius and Petrarch are mentioned in

[74] Also cf. Cato's words to Dante and Vergil in Purgatorio I.41 - "fuggita avete la pregione etterna".

both dreams. Cicero, in the Academica, refers to Homer's appearance to Ennius in a dream: "cum somniavit, ita narravit: 'Visus Homerus adesse poeta'" (Academica II.51).[75] These words are an exact quotation of an Ennian fragment attributed to Annales I.[76] Cicero's citation of this poetic topos of inspiration no doubt suggested to Petrarch the idea of presenting a lengthy dream about Homer in his characterisation of Ennius.

When Homer appears, he is described much as Vergil describes Charon, the ferryman who takes his passengers to another world. Vergil's

> terribili *squalore* Charon, cui plurima mento
> *canities inculta* iacet, stant lumina flamma,
> *sordidus* ex umeris nodo dependet amictus
> [...]
> iam *senior* [...] (Aeneid VI.299-301, 304)

finds several echoes in Petrarch's

> Aspicio adventare *senem*, quem rara tegebant
> Frusta toge et *canis* immixta et *squalida* barba.
> Sedibus exierant oculi. Cava frontis ymago
> Horrorem *inculta* cum maiestate ferebat. (Africa IX.167-70; my italics).[77]

In addition to the echoes highlighted, both authors mention dress, "sordidus [...] amictus" / "toge", and both descriptions have unusual eyes (Charon's are flaming, Homer's are missing). Petrarch's description of Homer is strikingly different from the symbolic portrait that Dante gives of his "poeta sovrano", "con quella spada in mano" (Inferno IV. 88, 86). By presenting Homer in the manner of a character from classical epic, Petrarch gives him a classical air, and the choice of Charon as inspiration for the details suits Homer's otherworldly role in Book IX.[78] When his identity is revealed to Ennius, several other epic episodes are brought to mind. Firstly, Ennius' attempts to embrace his feet,

> Procubui voluique pedes contingere pronus:

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[75] Note also Academica II.88 – "cum experrectus esset Ennius, non diceret se vidisse Homerum sed visum esse".
[76] Skutsch (1985) labels this fragment 3.
[77] Dante's description of Charon bears little similarity to Petrarch's description of Homer, beyond his initial "un vecchio, bianco per antico pelo" (Inferno III.83). Walter of Châtillon provides an earlier example of Vergil's description of Charon being transferred to a writer: Walter's Aristotle is described - "macer pallens incompto crine magister" (Alexandreis I.59).
[78] He comes from Dis, as Charon does, and leads the way to a vision of the future, as Anchises does in Aeneid VI only after Charon has allowed Aeneas to cross the Styx.

Umbra fuit nudeque heserunt oscula terre. (178-8)

suggest a parallel with Aeneas' attempts to embrace the shades of both Creusa and Anchises.[79] Petrarch is here placing poets in the roles of epic heroes, following in the path already trodden by Dante in the encounter between himself and Casella:

> Ohi ombre vane, fuor che ne l'aspetto!
> Tre volte dietro a lei le mani avvinsi,
> e tante mi tornai con esse al petto. (Purgatorio II.79-81).

Secondly, this prostration before an admired poet echoes Statius' reaction to Vergil in Purgatorio:

> Già s'inchinava ad abbracciar li piedi
> al mio dottor [...] (Purgatorio XXI.130-1),

where both poets are shades: "tu se' ombra e ombra vedi" (XXI.132). Petrarch's "umbra fuit" also brings to mind Vergil's appearance in Inferno I, where he is "non omo, omo già fui" (Inferno I.67). Dante had already transformed the classical epic appearance of the dead hero in a dream (Hector, Aeneid II; Anchises, V.722ff) into the figure of the dead poet appearing to another living or dead poet, thus Dante, combined with hints of a classical precedent in Ennius, appears to be behind Petrarch's inspiration here. Traces of the Comedy continue throughout the encounter, with Ennius addressing Homer as "Dux o carissime" (217), and "dux" (278).[80] In both texts, the older poet functions as physical guide and as guide in the sense of literary model. The latter is suggested by the way in which Ennius and Homer echo each other's words in this dream. For example, Ennius' "nisi fallor" (220) is picked up in the next line by Homer's "Non falleris" (221), and the former's "Aspexi iuvenem" (217) is echoed in the same metrical position by Homer's "Agnosco iuvenem" (222). And when Ennius says of Petrarch "Iam michi carus erat" (272), he is echoing the words of both Scipio's father in Book II ("multo michi carior ille est" II.449), and, more recently, Homer's "Iste [...] Carior" (IX.246-7).

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[79]Creusa: "ter conatus ibi collo dare bracchia circum; / ter frustra comprensa manus effugit imago, / par leuibus uentis uolucrique simillima somno." (Aeneid II.792-4); Anchises – "ter conatus ibi collo dare bracchia circum; / ter frustra comprensa manus effugit imago" (VI.700-1).

[80] Dante calls Vergil "duca" – Inferno II.140, and from then on, *duca* and *poeta* become his standard address for him.

Petrarch thus builds on hints from the classical world that Ennius saw himself as the inheritor of Homer. Ennius is thought to have claimed something of this sort in the Annales, and Skutsch (1985, p. 3) refers to a claim that Ennius wrote that only Homer was worthy of speaking about Scipio, which "may have put into Ennius' mind the idea to claim in the Annals that he was Homer reborn". Petrarch's building of this link allows for the bond that he wishes to see between himself and Homer.

The illustration of the relationship between Homer and Ennius also serves one further purpose. Petrarch uses Homer's literal blindness to make a point about the status of classical poetry. The point made above about "dux" referring to Homer's role as both a physical and a literary guide is significant when we consider Homer's words on this – "Tu cecum ne sperne ducem" (IX.211). Though Homer was blind literally, he was not so metaphorically, as he had access to "archana" (IX.202). Just as he urges Ennius not to shun a blind leader, so he suggests that the blindness of the ancients with regard to certain (Christian) truths is not a reason against reading and imitating ancient literature: this is a case in which the blind are worthy leaders of the less blind. Thus Petrarch is implicitly suggesting that contemporary comments on the shortcomings of classical literature are perhaps misguided, and that, though its authors are "blind", ancient works provide valuable guides.[81] Homer's blindness thus becomes a kind of metaphor for contemporary views on the state of classical poets in general, but by stressing his access to "archana", Petrarch provides a clear response to this negative image.

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[81] The debate stems from Augustine, and we see a response to it in Petrarch's work, not just in the Secretum, but also Bucolicum Carmen I and the letter explaining this poem to his brother, as well as in a letter to Boccaccio where Petrarch urges him not to take a priest's advice and give up the study of literature (Seniles I.5). However Mommsen (1942, p. 228) argues that Petrarch shows inconsistency over this in Familiares VI.2: on the one hand, Mommsen argues, Petrarch denies the value of secular knowledge and says everything is to be referred to eternal religious truth; on the other, he emphasises the history of pagan Rome. The Africa (like other works) offers evidence for Petrarch's concern not to renounce secular knowledge, but to show how it can contain eternal religious truth. Cf. Boccaccio, discussed above, p. 77ff.

4.3.4. Petrarch and Ennius.

The relationship between Petrarch and Ennius is interesting not so much for its own sake, as for the connection that Petrarch forges with other poets through his presented proximity to Ennius. His link with Homer is dependent on that between himself and Ennius (Petrarch's only access to Homer is through Latin intermediaries, as the emphasis in IX on Homer speaking Greek to Ennius – "Graioque hec more profatur" (172) reveals),[82] and his crucial relationship as poet with his hero is largely illustrated by that between Ennius and Scipio. Before moving on to these connections between poets and hero, I first consider briefly how Petrarch builds on the link first forged between himself and Ennius in Book II.

As with Homer, the impossible influence of Ennius' poetry on the Africa is given a concrete aspect through the poet as character. Petrarch uses Ennius' poetry; not that of the Annales, but that of the poetry he himself has created for him in the Africa. For example, Ennius refers to Scipio as "stirpisque deorum / Certa fides" (IX.24-5), and Petrarch echoes "Ennius'" words when, as narrator, he describes Scipio's triumph: "generisque ferebat / Etherei frons alma fidem" (340-1). Ennius, in his discussion of poetry, talks about envy: "Mortalia Livor / Carpit; [...] Mors Invidiam consumit" (34-5). Although his context concerns deeds, Petrarch echoes this in the last line of his poem, transferring the words to the subject of poetry – "Invidie tristes contemnere morsus" (483). So too Ennius' discussion of the laurel and its meaning for poets and heroes is an echo both of Petrarch's Coronation Oration, and of his words *in propria persona* in the final section of the poem.[83] This shows them sharing a

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[82] Petrarch's letter to Homer again mentions the language barrier: "Dudum te scripto alloqui mens fuerat, et fecissem nisi quia lingue commercium non erat. Nam nec grecis literis discendis satis felix, et tu latinas" Familiares 24.12. Cf. "ei sarebbero schivi, / perch'e' fuor greci, forse del tuo detto" (Inferno XXVI.74-5).

[83] His response to Scipio's "quid laurea signet" (IX.72) covers some of the points Petrarch makes in his Coronation Oration, for example the pairing of poets and heroes (*caesares* and *poetae* of C.O. 11.1 become "duces vatesque" in Africa IX.111); the sense of the immortal (Africa IX.112 "Immortale decus viror immortalis utrisque / Indicat", and C.O. 11.18 – "et huius quidem viriditatis immortalitas, immortalitatem tam bello quam ingenio quesiti nominis prefigurans causa fuisse potest cur hac potissima fronde et cesares coronarentur et poete"; and perhaps most noticeably the fact that it is impervious to thunderbolts – "contemptrice fulminis fronde" (C.O.11.20) and "Iure ergo contemptrice fulminis fronde coronantur hi, quorum gloria illam, que, more fulminis cunta prosternit, sola non metuit: vetustatem" (C.O.11.20), echoed in Africa IX – "hanc frondem rapido non fulmine vexat /

(fictional) common poetic ground. Another indication of the connection between them occurs when Ennius expresses a hope for a future poet:

> [...] Currentibus annis
> Nascetur forsan digno qui carmine celo
> Efferat emeritas laudes et fortia facta
> Et cui mellifluo melius resonantia plectro
> Calliope det fila lire vocemque sonoram. (IX.60-4),

referring unwittingly to Petrarch. This idea of the poet as one prophesied in advance is present in Purgatorio XI:

> cosí ha tolto l'uno a l'altro Guido
> la gloria de la lingua; e forse è nato
> chi l'uno e l'altro caccerà del nido" (97-9),

where the implication is that the "è nato" refers to Dante.[84] The way in which Ennian poetry will become Petrarchan is made clear by another echo of Ennius' words here. Calliope is named only twice in the Africa: here, by Ennius, then again by Petrarch when he returns as narrator,

> Hic quoque, Calliope, quamquam sub fine voceris,
> Dextra veni seroque favens assiste labori. (IX.322-3).

By repeating her name, Petrarch makes his desired inheritance unmistakable, and shows he is directly fulfilling Ennius' hopes for him. In addition, Ennius treats Scipio as a model of virtue, for example:

> Volvebam quod nulla ferent iam secula maius
> Eximie virtutis opus, quam nostra quod etas
> Leta videt, [...] (IX.27-9),

and this is the slant that Petrarch himself gives to his portrayal of Scipio, emphasising his virtue.[85] So too, we might see Petrarch's reference to himself - "Et terra pelagoque vagus" (281) - as an echo of Ennius' fictional life on Scipio's campaigns, that we see when he

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Iupiter" (117-8), and "Iam fame quod fulmen erit, nisi sola vetustas / Omnia prosternens?" (120-1). So the Coronation Oration is an echo of the words that Ennius has spoken in the Africa: with his oration, Petrarch shows that his words stem from his (fictional) Ennius, and "Ennian" words on the laurel become those of Petrarch the poet at his coronation, when he becomes the inheritor and imitator (in terms of being part of a triumph) of his fictional Ennius.

[84] Cf. The Roman de la Rose: Jean de Meun prophesies himself, and the writing of the poem fulfils the prophecy – "Puis vendra jehans chopinel" (10569ff).

[85] On this, see Seagraves (1980), and Bernardo (1962).

appears at the start of Book IX on a ship with his hero. This sense of journey connects the two poets, but also suggests their similarity with epic heroes, as I explore below.

Finally, Ennius' reaction when he sees Petrarch illuminates Petrarch's conception of himself as poet. The sort of favour he hopes to find as a "classical" poet is reflected in the way he has Ennius and Homer react to him. Ennius transfers his affection from Homer to the vision of the future Petrarch:

> Pulsabar hanelo
> Pectore, visendi cupidus cupidusque loquendi
> Interea, et magnum – quis credere posset? – Homerum
> Dulcibus optabam verbis imponere metam. (IX.268-71).

His breathless enthusiasm ("hanelo / Pectore"), and the emphasis on "cupidus" reflect the feeling that is so vast in Ennius that he wants the Homer he has previously worshipped to stop talking. He silences Homer in order to hear this new voice. This silencing does not necessarily involve a judgement on classical literature: rather than suggesting that the time for classical epic is over, the episode shows Petrarch in a continuous tradition of epic, where one voice takes over directly from another.[86] His epic appears as a direct continuation of a classical tradition, and as a work that classical poets themselves would recognise as worthy of praise. Ennius does admire Petrarch: "mirabar" (284), and Petrarch's response to his greeting - "vix auditaque salute / Sustulerat gravis ille oculos et dicta parabat" (284-5) - shows interaction between the two. Yet just as Petrarch prepares to speak, Ennius wakes to find himself in Petrarch's narrative. Thus while his voice is not heard within the dream, it is heard throughout this work in which Ennius himself appears. The poem becomes the fulfilment of the words about to be uttered by the Petrarch of the dream.

4.3.5. Ennius and Scipio.

The relationship Petrarch creates between Scipio and Ennius has no basis in history, although Petrarch himself would probably have been unaware of this. Skutsch (1985) notes that

though Ennius did serve in the Roman army, he did so under Fulvius. When he died (169 BC), a statue of him was placed with those of Publius and Lucius Scipio in front of the tomb of the Scipios, as Ovid recounts: "Ennius emeruit [...] contiguus poni, Scipio magne, tibi" (Ars Amatoria 3.409).[87] Then, says Skutsch, Valerius Maximus "adds the absurd notion that the poet's statue was placed there because Africanus wished it", and Pliny

> perhaps misunderstanding Ovid, compounds the nonsense by confusing the grave of Africanus at Liternum with the family grave of the Scipios and ascribing to Africanus a desire that his name should be read together with that of the poet. (pp. 1-2).

Livy makes no mention of Ennius in his history of Scipio. While it is ironic that this aspect of the "history" of the Africa should thus be a fabrication, Petrarch's responsibility for this seems slight. So, assuming that he read these mentions of Scipio and Ennius as Valerius Maximus and Pliny had done, we should ask not why he created this relationship, but why he decided to elaborate on the scant "facts" he had about it.[88]

Ennius' interaction with Scipio within the literal level of the narrative illuminates a more general theory of poetry that Petrarch applies to his own relationship with his hero: namely, that of a close circular relationship between poet and hero. Firstly, there is a suggestion that heroes give poets their voices. They provide the subject for a poetic enterprise, and in so doing, they gain fame, thus both poet and hero benefit from the relationship. A literal example of this abstract idea is given at the start of Book IX, where we are suddenly told of Ennius' silent presence throughout the action of the narrative, and his long silence is only broken by Scipio:

> 'Numquamne silentia rumpes,
> O michi multorum solamen dulce laborum?
> Fare, precor; [...]' (IX.13-5),

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[86] While Petrarch would no doubt have liked the Africa to rival the Aeneid, Iliad, and Odyssey, he only explicitly mentions bettering the "unpolished" Annales (see p. 146 above).

[87] But note also Cicero, "Carus fuit Africano superiori noster Ennius, itaque etiam in sepulcro Scipionum putatur is esse constitutus ex marmore" (Pro Archia IX.22).

[88] Bernardo (1962, p. 115) suggests the connection between Scipio and Ennius reflects Cicero's Somnium Scipionis, where writers stand in heaven alongside men of action. While this is no doubt partly true, Petrarch is also picking up on Dante's more powerful joining of the poet and hero.

and when he stops speaking ("Dixerat" 124), Scipio again encourages him to continue – "ledis brevitate tua" (125), and "Ergo age!" (127), with the result that "Tunc ille coactus / Incipit" (131-2). "solamen dulce" suggests a closeness between the two; an emotional bond created by poetry. Poetry not only brings praise to heroes and poets, but it creates the bond between them. Secondly, Ennius himself picks up on the images used by Scipio's father in Book II to suggest that he is not a poet worthy of a subject such as Scipio. His "rudes [...] Musas" (II.445) are reflected in the rustic images with which he describes himself:

> Sed nostra peritia fandi
> Nondum propositam valuit contingere metam,
> Nuper ab exiguis radicibus orta, nec ante
> Cognita per Latium, Argolicis contenta colonis. (IX.45-8),

and in the detail that this way of writing has only recently come from Greece. Thus Ennius lives up to the image of himself presented by Scipio's father. This sense of inadequacy furthers Petrarch's claim to Ennius' subject. But in spite of this, Scipio considers Ennius to be the greatest of poets:

> Parce, precor, verbis: tibi non, me iudice, vates
> Meonius nec iure tibi preponitur altus
> Euripides[89] aut quos claro cognomine Grai
> Concelebrant. Alio nolim me carmine dici,
> Si dicendus ero. (IX.65-68).

This praise makes Scipio's later attitude towards Petrarch (his desire to hear about him and to be written about by him) the more poignant: Scipio will abandon his beloved Ennius (whom he considers to be greater than Homer) for another even greater poet. His preference here for a Roman over any Greek poet also furthers Petrarch's purpose in elevating the poetry of Rome;[90] and the Africa, as a "Roman" poem, will depict Scipio as the great Roman hero in the manner appropriate to him.

The bond between Ennius and Scipio is strengthened by the latter's desire to know about poets and poetry:

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[89] Ennius began his translations of Greek tragedies early in life, thus Scipio might rightly mention his work in this field as a comparison with his greater present task.
[90] It is unclear whether Petrarch would have known that Ennius was not born a Roman.

[...] que sint permissa poetis,
Famoseque rei certos agnoscere fines
Te liceat monstrante michi: quid laurea signet
Tam ducibus claris quam vatibus addita sacris. (IX.72-5).

Scipio's desire to understand poetry again suggests his empathy with Ennius, and he acknowledges the connection between poets and heroes in their sharing of the laurel. Ennius' reply suggests that this link is a necessary one:

Quisquis enim se magna videt gessisse, necesse est
Diligat eternos vates et carmina sacra. (IX.87-8).[91]

The idea that the hero loves poetry, and that he finds it soothing,

[...] nobis animum dulcedine quadam
Pulcra movent, et continuis hoc pectus ab armis
Dulcia concussum placide capit otia lingue. (IX.75-7),

and "permulcet iter" (291),[92] helps to elevate the status of poetry, showing its value in the eyes of heroes. Finally, Scipio and Ennius are joined, first in Homer's description of "Capitolia vestra" (238, where "vestra" must refer to them both), then in Petrarch's account of their triumph, when Ennius walks at Scipio's side:

Ennius ad dextram victoris, tempora fronde
Substringens parili, [...] (IX.400).

Ennius' "fronde" picks up the "lauro frondente" with which Scipio is "coronatus" (398). Their joint triumph shows a clear link between poet and hero.

4.3.6. Petrarch and Scipio.

Echoing this visible joint triumph are traces of another, and ultimately more important, bond between a poet and his hero. Several points suggest a parallel between Petrarch and Scipio. Ennius calls Scipio "iuvenis" (IX.24), which Scipio uses in turn of Petrarch ("iuvenem" IX.304). The strongest connection made between the two comes in the description of

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[91] Ennius seems to have epics in mind – "longum [...] laborem" (95).
[92] Ennius' soothing speech is of future things; note how Petrarch in the dream is also soothed – "venturi presagia mulcent" (245), and how the idea of his own coming soothes Scipio – "mulcent" (303), thus we see again the connection Petrarch makes between himself and Ennius, and himself and epic hero. Cf. Decameron VI.1, where tales on a journey are said to help pass the time.

Scipio's triumph.[93] The passage begins with "Ipse coronatus" (IX.398), with reference to Scipio. Ennius is then named in the same position two lines later, similarly garlanded, as quoted above. Then after four more lines, Petrarch appears at the start of a line as "Ipse ego" (IX.404), which balances the "Ipse coronatus" used of Scipio. The shared "Ipse" links them, (and indeed the emphatic "ego" is required to clarify the different subject), and "ter", although part of a numerical description, is at first sight a further link between Scipio, Ennius, and Petrarch, who is the third in this collective triumph.[94] The "frondente" and "fronde" used to describe Scipio and Ennius' coronations become "frondibus" (407) for Petrarch's own triumph, and "loco simul" (407) emphasises the connection. The "cognomine claro" that Petrarch will gain (407) echoes "cognomine solo" used of Scipio (391).

Scipio's reaction to Ennius' account of Petrarch is – "Seu sunt, seu talia fingis, / Dulcia sunt" (302-3),[95] which echoes his words on Ennius' own poetry as "dulce" (IX.14), but also suggests the fulfilment of Ennius' vision, since Petrarch's poetry, as yet unwritten in the history of the narrative, will find favour with Scipio. Again, Scipio shows fondness for the future Petrarch, much as his relationship with Ennius is shown to be an emotional bond - "Complector" (305), and "Diligo, quisquis erit; si nullus, diligo nullum" (307). He is the first one to call Petrarch "poetam" in the poem (304), thereby clearing any doubt in the minds of the poet characters (and the reader) about what the Petrarch of the Africa will be (i.e. a poet, not "historicus"). He sees him as something "promissum" (306), which has almost religious overtones in keeping with the prophetic otherworldly nature of Petrarch's appearances.

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[93] Bernardo (1962, p. 198) argues that "Scipio's climb up the Capitoline seems to differ considerably from Dante's climb to heaven, and yet, for Petrarch, it did not". However, while there certainly is a parallel between the triumphs of these two heroes, the more striking connection is that Petrarch's triumph as poet (entailing through Ennius a parallel with Scipio) echoes that of Dante the poet hero.
[94] Compare Inferno IV, where Dante joins the "bella scola" – "io fui sesto tra cotanto senno" (102).
[95] Cf. Vergil's "dolce dir" (Inferno XIII.55). Scipio's lack of concern over whether Ennius has made these things up or not is interesting in terms of Petrarch's own fabrications. While of course he has provided a true prophecy of himself, he has fictitiously placed the prophecy in Ennius' mouth, so "fingis" applies to him in an historical sense. Scipio's acceptance here of poetic "ficta" provides Petrarch with a justification for his poetic licence. He fictitiously provides a true prophecy (therefore doing away with the sense of fiction) while at the same time has his Roman hero excuse poetic *ficta* as being of no great consequence for a poet, much as Petrarch explains away some of Vergil's fabrications.

Petrarch appears to include Ennius in his conception of ancient heroes, thereby narrowing further the gap between poet and hero. In talking of his own triumph he says "Heroum veterum tantos imitatus honores" (408), where the context has just provided the examples of Scipio and Ennius.[96] Petrarch presents the triumph of poet (himself and Ennius) and hero (Scipio), in place of Dante's single poet-hero. While Dante as protagonist represents both poet and hero, Petrarch separates the two into separate characters (connecting them again in such a complex way) because of his desire to write a Roman epic, complete with classical historical subject. In this respect, the view of him as an early renaissance figure (as opposed to Dante) seems reasonable, as he, unlike Dante, has a specific desire to create a poetic form that is a direct descendent of classical epic. However, medieval theorising on poetry, and the awareness of medieval poets of their own craft, create the kind of poetic preoccupation that causes Dante to include poetry as a central subject in his Comedy, especially in the form of the poet-hero. Petrarch's prominent references to himself in the Africa – as narrator, and as the character of a future poet – are the result of his trying to reconcile the needs of a classical historical epic for a single warrior hero with Dante's reformulation of the hero as poet. The classical element demands the Scipio hero, but the medieval element requires the strong presence of the poet. Petrarch's answer to this is to include both, and to create a series of connections to bring the two as close together as he can while retaining the basic form demanded by his classical aspirations.

[96] While Petrarch might merely have Ennius' position as Roman soldier in mind here, his presentation of him in the Africa is solely as a poet, thus he is not simply linking two fellow soldiers, but soldier and poet.

4.4. Religion and the Gods.

Sic simus omnia, quod ante omnia cristiani simus. (Familiares VI.2.4)

Just as medieval preoccupations with poetry produced a new emphasis on poets and their art within epic itself, so another medieval concern affects the way in which Petrarch writes his epic. His concern for the "firmissima fundamenta veri" is not necessarily a concern for historical truth: I have argued above that a sense of history is less important in the Africa than a sense of poetry. I propose that we consider instead the idea of a Christian truth as being the *verum* Petrarch sees as fundamental to his enterprise. Petrarch handles religion in the Africa in such a way that his hero Scipio is presented as being compatible with a Christian universe. In so doing, he hints that Scipio's triumph is an earthly version of the glory that awaits him in the afterlife. Here again Petrarch follows the lead established by Dante for the hero of the Comedy, and Boccaccio's apotheosis of Arcita.

In her recent book on romance epic, Everson (2001) investigates what she sees as a paradox in the contemporaneous flourishing of romance and humanism in Italy. But there is a difficulty inherent in humanism itself, leaving aside the issue of romance. The difficulty for a poet such as Petrarch, who seeks to renew the classical epic form, is that his classical models depend largely on the actions of the pagan gods. In classical epic poetry such as the Aeneid, we enter the realm of the pagan gods. Boccaccio's treatment of the gods (discussed in Chapter 3, above) involved giving unprecedented prominence to Mars and Venus, thereby overturning the divine hierarchy, and reducing these gods to little more than symbols of love and war, and thus epic and romance. His gods little resemble the powerful Olympians of, for example, the Aeneid. But Boccaccio was not trying to reproduce classical epic in the same way that Petrarch was with his return to Latin, and therefore had more freedom to do with the gods as he liked. For Petrarch, seeking to detain the Muses of classical poetry as they fled his age, the problem was more difficult: how was he to present a historical subject (on which, in hindsight, the pagan gods had no influence) in imitation

of classical poetic form (where gods and divine forces do play a role), without compromising his "history", his poetry, or his Christianity?[97] Paradoxically, his answer was to take his more classically oriented poem further along the path of Christianity than Boccaccio had done in his largely medieval Teseida.

Firstly I illustrate that Petrarch's approach to the problem of presenting a historical epic that includes the gods of classical literature without compromising his own Christianity, is to turn Jupiter into the Christian God, and to locate him in a Christian heaven that contrasts with a pagan hell. God provides a Christian context for the powers of Fate and Fortune, leaving other divine powers little room for manoeuvre. I then focus on human characters and religion, to show that Rome and her people, though at the time pagan, are shown to be pious and convincing ancestors of Christian Rome, whereas Carthage and her people are portrayed as impious, scornful, and ignorant of the idea of God. The religious stance of Petrarch's Romans (in particular Scipio) shows Roman paganism to be a shadowy early version of Christianity, and suggests a harmonious view of virtuous Roman paganism and Christianity. I suggest that Petrarch, by showing Rome in its unconscious early stages of preparation for Christianity, goes beyond Walter of Châtillon's solution of neo-platonic forces by adding an unambiguously Christian God, and unlike Walter's Alexander, Petrarch's Romans are presented as the unknowing ancestors of Christian Rome. Petrarch thus attempts to reconcile Christianity and classical Roman paganism through a sense of historical continuity, and it is his Roman subject that allows him to take this step.[98] The truth on which the Africa has its foundations is divine truth, and in this respect, Petrarch presents an alternative to Dante's Comedy.

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[97] See Festa (1926, p. 6) on this sense of struggle between art and religion.

[98] Trinkaus (1970) gives a similar argument that the Africa presents a vindication of divine truth through historical events. However, Colilli (1993) leaves out history in his discussion of poetry and theology as ways to divine truth. I think it important not to equate Petrarch's notion of truth with history, but agree that history provides him with an example of the way in which divine truth has existed in non-Christian times.

Although most critics of the Africa mention religion, the majority of comments are cursory and concern Petrarch's general views of religion in light of his corpus.[99] The aim of this chapter is to provide a detailed study of Petrarch's religious scheme within the poem, to complement more general accounts of the poet and religion. Secondary literature will thus be mentioned where appropriate in the proceeding sections.

4.4.1. Poetry as Divine.

Petrarch, following classical and medieval custom, speaks of the divine inspiration that is required to write poetry:

> cum in ceteris artibus studio et labore possit ad terminum perveniri, in arte poetica secus est, in qua nil agitur sine interna quadam et divinitus in animum vatis infusa vi
> (Coronation Oration 2.6, p. 1258),

and suggests that poets themselves have something of the divine in them: " 'sanctos' appellet 'poetas', quod deorum munere nobis commendati esse videantur".[100] Poets and their work are "eternos vates et carmina sacra" (Africa IX.88), and, more importantly, Petrarch says that he is writing "pia carmina" (Africa I.15), and he suggests that he will write the *carmen sacrum* that Scipio deserves:

> Carmine fama sacro caret hactenus, et sua virtus
> Premia deposcit; pavitans ego carmina cepi
> Texere. (Eclogue I.120-3).

Thus we find a parallel of Dante's description of the Comedy as *poema sacro*, presenting the Africa as an alternative to Dante's vernacular rendering and transformation of classical epic.[101] Petrarch's own appearance in dreams in the poem adds a further prophetic element to his work,

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[99] It is notable that Piggioli (1952) is silent about the Africa in a book on Petrarch's religious thought, and he serves as an illustration of the way in which the poem's religious issues have often been passed over.
[100] Coronation Oration 2.7; this is Petrarch quoting Cicero quoting Ennius. Note that Petrarch also refers to Vergil's "divinum stili artificium" (Rerum mem. 2.16). (See above, p. 143.)
[101] Festa (1923, p. 299) also sees this as an explicit echo of Dante's enterprise: "anche l'Africa vuol essere considerata come 'poema sacro, al quale ha posto mano e cielo e terra' e secondo l'intenzione dell'autore dovrebbe essere il nostro grande poema nazionale".

and a sense of divine authorisation, and divine purpose. But in what sense are we to understand the Africa as a divinely inspired and sacred poem? In the same sense as the Aeneid, whose poet is "pulcherrime vatum" (Familiares IV.11.10), or like Dante's Comedy, where the poem and its 'sacred' aspect can be understood as a form of divine revelation of the Christian God? Although Petrarch, like Dante, associates the commencement of his poem with Holy Week, the Africa is not an openly Christian poem seeking to present God in his glory to wayward humanity. Petrarch's aim is not to present divine revelation. We might better understand the idea of truth through Colilli's (1993) association of poetic truth in the Africa with Heidegger's concept of Being. For him, Being is Truth, and is revealed in the poem through motifs of veiling and unveiling. Although Heidegger's notion of Being is not a religious one, the concept needs to involve the divine if we want to relate it to Petrarch: as a Christian, his notion of the kind of fundamental truth contained in Heidegger's Being would almost certainly involve the divine - that is, the idea of God himself. The parallel that Colilli suggests between these two writers separated by so many centuries is useful precisely because he attempts to show that an underlying concern for truth (Heidegger's Being, and Petrarch's Christian sense of divine truth) can be relevant to literature regardless of the actual terms in which such a notion is couched. Though Colilli does not do this, we could use the same concept to link the pagan poetry of Vergil and other classical writers with medieval Christian writers, as Petrarch at times seems to do, with the concept of Being representing the underlying truth that different religious systems seek to express. This seems to be Astell's strategy when she argues that "epic truth [...] becomes identified with the biblical word itself"(1994, p. 85). Colilli's suggestion that Petrarch is concerned not with what Being (or divine Truth) is, but with including and revealing it (as opposed to Grassi's (1988) view of Petrarch's concern for truth in ontological terms) eases the problem of working out exactly what Petrarch means by truth.[102] By emphasising the importance

[102] Grassi, (1988). Colilli (1993). Note Bernardo (1962, p. 210): "Through most of his life Petrarch held the belief that the procedures or techniques of both poetry and theology are the same". For similar attitudes,

of truth in poetry, Petrarch sets a standard that makes his own task of presenting the divine, in an epic set in a pagan era, a difficult one.

4.4.2. The Gods.

Petrarch makes three clear statements about truth and the Olympians. Firstly, in the Africa itself, he states that Greek poets invented stories about the gods through lack of comprehension:

> Huc olim Argolici finxere poete
> Convenisse deos [...]
> Quod fictum est ideo quia numina magna putabant
> Sidera, (Africa II.379-82).

The same opinion is expressed in Coronation Oration 5: "Iovem cum diis ceteris, id est stellis". This is ambiguous, as it could mean that the gods are all merely stars, or that Jupiter is God and the other "gods" are stars around him, as portrayed for example in the Comedy and other medieval cosmologies. In a passage in the Liber sine nomine, Petrarch addresses more directly the fictional status of the gods themselves:

> Quod licet forte Virgilius ignoraret, cui Deus ingenium excellens eloquiumque prestiterat, verum hec a sapientibus abscondita et parvulis revelanda negaverat, illud certe non ignorabat peritura esse regna omnia, que initium habuissent. Ingenii igitur cautela usus est: siquidem ubi immortalitatem romano pollicebatur imperio, non ipse loquebatur ex persona propria, sed Iovem loquentem inducebat, ut *mendacis dei mendax oraculum esset et falsa promissio*. Ipse autem ad gratiam populi romani alieno mendacio utebatur. At alibi quando ex persona sua loqui voluit, *veritatem ipsam* idem poeta non tacuit. Ait enim: "Res Romane perituraque regna". Quis non clare videat, inter imperium sine fine perituraque regna quid intersit! Sed hic Virgilius, ibi Iupiter loquebatur: hic homo ingeniosus, ibi *falsus deus*.[103] (III [IV]; my italics).

Although "veritatem" is not used here in the context of religious truth, the sentiment of the passage concerning the fictional status of Vergil's Jupiter is clear: "falsus deus" expresses in no uncertain terms the emptiness lurking behind the names of the Olympians. And as the god himself is "falsus" (i.e. a lie), his words are also to be seen as lies, so Petrarch suggests that we should not

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see Chapter 1 of this thesis.

[103] Note Petrarch's marginal comments on Homer's gods: *δαίμονας* is translated as "demons", and Petrarch adds "Omnes dei gentium demonia. Notanda confessio testis huius antiquissimi et maximi" (De Nolhac 1907, vol.2. 178).

believe even the words of the gods in classical literature. However, Petrarch suggests that as Vergil himself was aware of the nature of his god,[104] he was able to use him to his own benefit, as a means of expressing what Vergil could not *in propria persona*. Thus the god functions as a useful instrument for imparting information that the poet knows to be historically dubious. This creates a complexity: for the purposes of the characters in the work of fiction, the god appears to be speaking the truth, but for the reader, statements that have proved to be untrue in the course of time only highlight the empty promises of empty gods, and increase the sense of admiration for Vergil who himself knew "veritatem ipsam". So the Olympians were lies, and, as such, lied.

Apart from serving a useful function in imparting false information, Petrarch explains the allegorical function of the gods, much as Boccaccio does in the Genealogiae. For example in Seniles IV.4 Venus is "Venus obuia, syluae medio, ipsa est uoluptas" (p.786), and "Haec Aeneae genetrix fertur, quod etiam Viri fortes ex uoluptate generantur". So, when reading the Africa, we might bear in mind that Petrarch viewed the Olympians as lies, but ones that can be usefully employed in poetry to portray an underlying meaning, as Vergil's works show. But however useful an allegorical technique the Olympians are, Petrarch, like Boccaccio, avoids presenting them as fully anthropomorphised characters, unwilling to invest too much in the face value of figures that he views as lies. As in the Teseida, the frequency of citations of gods' names in the Africa is not matched by their importance as characters within the narrative. Yet it seems unsatisfactory to explain their presence as merely bestowing epic proportions, as Bernardo (1962) suggests, if we consider that the poem is based on truth and the pagan gods are false.

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[104] Petrarch might have had Inferno 1 in mind here, where Vergil says he lived "nel tempo de li dei falsi e bugiardi" (72). Note that Petrarch also offers a long defence of Cicero in Familiares XI.1.9ff, suggesting that had Cicero heard of Christ, he would have believed in and written about him – "nam ut altissimi et divini prorsus ingenii fuerat, si vidisset Cristum aut nomen eius audivisset, quantum ego opinor, non modo credidisset in eum sed eloquio illo incomparabili Cristi preco maximus fuisset" (Familiares XI.1.13), and that Cicero says nothing against Christ – "nichil enim contra Cristum Cicero loquitur, quod certe meminerim" (XI.1.9). He says Cicero, like Vergil, referred to the Olympians "seculi sui morem sequens" (Familiares XI.1.10).

Petrarch's use of pagan divinities in the Africa is more limited than in Boccaccio's Teseida, even though his epic more obviously adheres to classical models. There are several types of divine power in the poem. Aside from the Christian God, Petrarch uses eleven of the twelve Olympians of classical literature,[105] as well as gods such as Pan, the Muses, and underworld divinities such as the Manes and Bellona. He also uses Fate, Fortune (and their variant forms discussed below) and Nature, which have their origins in classical literature but were favoured by medieval writers (particularly neo-Platonists) as compatible with the workings of a Christian universe. He also uses a range of personifications (again frequent in classical literature) such as Fama and Aurora which have some divine status, and are often anthropomorphised in the manner of the Olympians.[106] My discussion of these forces will focus on the first three categories: the Christian God, the Olympians, and Fortune and Nature.

Jupiter is the Olympian most frequently mentioned (approx. 47 times),[107] followed by Mars (23 times), Apollo (21 times), the Muses (18 times), then Venus and Juno with only 6 mentions each, and others less frequently cited. The obvious differences between this list and that of the frequency of gods in the Teseida are: the reinstatement of Jupiter as dominant divinity; the subsequent demotion of Mars and Venus (note how little Venus features in the Africa, compared not only with the Teseida but also with classical models such as the Aeneid); and the frequency with which the Muses appear. The reasoning behind Petrarch's citations seems fairly obvious: Jupiter is in his rightful place as chief divinity, and the traditional Olympian hierarchy observed by Vergil and Statius among others is preserved as seems appropriate for an epic closely

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[105] The Olympians are generally defined (according to the Oxford Classical Dictionary) as the twelve gods that appear in the Parthenon frieze: Aphrodite, Apollo, Ares, Artemis, Athena, Demeter, Dionysus, Hephaestus, Hera, Hermes, Poseidon, Zeus. Petrarch uses the Roman equivalents of all of these except Artemis (Diana).

[106] Note that Vergil calls Fama "dea foeda" (Aeneid IV.195).

modelled on classical literature; Mars as god of war takes second position in an epic that focuses on war (and he appears in the top four most cited gods in the Aeneid and Thebaid); Apollo, within the top four in the Aeneid, Thebaid, Bellum Civile, and Teseida, retains his position in a poem in which ideas of poetry and poets are a chief concern; and the Muses, cited more often than in any other epic poem I have encountered, reflect the extraordinary focus Petrarch gives to the concept of poetry. With an approach similar to Boccaccio's in the Teseida, the Olympians have a minor role in the action of the Africa, and appear on the whole not as characters, but as an array of lifeless references. Jupiter is in some sense an exception, because Petrarch presents him with a different sort of role, as will be discussed below.

Petrarch appears purposefully to avoid presenting the Olympians in such a way as to pose any real threat to Christian ideology.[108] In this regard, his underlying intent and strategies used are similar to those of Boccaccio in the Teseida. Firstly, the Olympians appear as personifications. For example, Apollo's name is used as a synonym for the sun (I.129-30; V.694; IX.326), and the day (II.120), and Mars is used to convey the image of war (eg. "dubio sub Marte" I.564; "Mavortia virtus / Fecit iter" I.192-3). As I argued in the case of the Teseida, although this treatment accords with classical usage, Petrarch and Boccaccio show the limitations of the gods by substituting the anthropomorphic presence familiar from classical literature with these minor personifications. Secondly, the Africa presents them as pictures, in other words, static and lifeless images. The longest passage on the Olympians occurs in an *ekphrasis*; they are given a two-dimensional presence, and here too we are reminded of Boccaccio's *ekphrasis* for his most detailed descriptions of Mars and Venus in the Teseida. After describing the signs of the zodiac

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[107] My figures are taken from the index to Festa's edition, though I have noted that there are some gaps in this. Where omissions have come to my attention, I have included the missing data in my calculations.
[108] Everson's argument that Petrarch "attempted, not very successfully but certainly seriously, to Christianise the pagan gods" (2001, p. 64) applies to Jupiter and Apollo only. He equates Jupiter with the Christian God, and Apollo with Christ, but the other gods are given such a small role that they are not

on the wall of Syphax's palace, Petrarch includes a lengthy passage describing the Olympians.[109] Starting with "Iupiter ante alios" (III.140), approximately five verses are given to each of a variety of gods, although Apollo is given notably more space (discussed below). Petrarch conforms to a traditional hierarchy by treating Jupiter first. Although Wilkins argues for Petrarch's purely descriptive intent in the *ekphrasis*,[110] the poet does use allegory to reinforce the harmless nature of his portrayal of classical gods. The depictions on the walls function on two levels: they are accessible to the characters of the epic as representations of the traditional classical gods, and therefore accord with the historical setting of the poem; but Petrarch builds in a way for the Christian reader to understand these false divinities. Although these other meanings are not specifically Christian, they provide an alternative way of seeing the figures as something other than pagan divinities. Carlini (1902, p. 78) argues that all the pictures of the gods portrayed here are symbolic – "ogni dio è rappresentato simbolicamente, secondo il significato che diede alle antiche divinità il Medio Evo", though he does not give details of these other meanings.[111] Corradini (1987, p. 426) fills the gap in the case of Apollo, explaining the god's different ages as the passing of time, "Haec de temporis velocitate dicta esse videntur", and the role of his accompanying beasts:

> Tres Poetam aetates hoc monstro significasse, minime dubitaverim; tria enim capita et reflexo iunguntur serpente, qui annorum saeculorumque circuitum repraesentare solet, et simul fugientia tempora signant.

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really divinities of any kind, and do not need to be made Christian. Petrarch's strategy is to show that his poem can function with only one God.

[109] Wilkins (1957, p. 512) notes that Petrarch's selection of divinities is taken from Isidore.

[110] His argument that "Petrarch was the first writer to compose a sequence of pictorial descriptions of pagan divinities freed from interpretative incrustations and designed solely for the purpose of adornment" (1957, p. 513) seems odd in light of his subsequent discussion of the way in which Bersuire drew on Petrarch's description in his allegorical Ovidius Moralisatus. On the allegorical meanings of Bersuire's gods, see Bernardo (1962), p. 137ff.

[111] Mustard (1921, p. 103) sees the influence of Martianus Capella here, as Mercury is depicted with the three Graces: this is further evidence of the allegorical nature of the depictions.

Thus the pattern we see emerging here is one of the gods as functional devices, with accessible meanings,[112] that increase the classical air of the poem without entailing any serious theological stance.[113]

Similes provide a further example of this. Although not very frequent, they are another way in which the gods seem to be used as a conventional feature of classical literature: an adornment of the kind that Wilkins (quoted above) sees in the poem's *ekphrasis*. The gods function as a point of comparison for the central human characters. Scipio is like Mars,

> [...] Namque arma movente
> Milite ab adverso non Mars violentior urget
> Infesto themone Trachas [...] (IV.310-2),

and, a few lines later, like Jupiter - "Sic [...] Iupiter" (IV.316ff), and Sophonisba, with her radiant beauty, is like Venus – "Sic [...]Venus" (V.59ff). The battle in Book VII is compared with that between the gods and the giants. The warriors are likened to the gods drawn up for battle, and the vividness with which the deities are described in the simile makes their absence at this battle the more noticeable:

> [...] Ceu bella Gigantes
> Si renovent indigna deis, stentque agmina contra,
> Fulmine deposito procedat Iupiter ingens
> Mercuriusque comes; tum pars adversa Typheum
> Mittat, et huic comitem se turpis homunculus addat;
> At longe armati spectent commercia fratres
> Terrigene: tum parte alia furor ipse deorum
> Conticeat: promat Phebus teneatque sagittas,
> Horrificamque minax quatit procul egida Pallas; (VII.164-172).

The reduction of the gods to a position of powerlessness in *ekphrasis* and similes is continued by the way that they are apparently watching the action of the poem, but do not interfere with it. For

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[112] Though it is worth noting that the other gods in this *ekphrasis* receive no explanation from critics. If they can be allegorised, as Carlini suggests, then perhaps we should seek help from Bersuire.

[113] This seems to be Belloni's approach: he sees *ekphrasis* as a way of describing the gods without causing trouble – "la reggia d'un barbaro, imaginata secondo i modelli classici e la fantasia medievale, offerse al

example, Jupiter and Mars watch Scipio fight: "Illum tote acies, illum miratur ab alto / Iupiter" (VII.953ff), "cernensque ex ethere Mavors" (VII.1069). Although this is similar to the watching gods in the Teseida,[114] Petrarch's gods only ever watch; he does not allow them to affect the fight in person, as Boccaccio does. Another example, again familiar from my discussion of the Teseida, is the reference to actions performed by the gods in other literature, such as Apollo's pursuit of Daphne in Metamorphoses I:

> [...] Forte ille memor quibus alma decore
> Virginis Hemonie flagrasset pectora flammis;
> Laureaque ante oculos stabat sua sacra, tremendo
> Prodigio prerepta sibi, tum vita relicti
> Dura nimis, luctusque gravis, simul oscula trunco
> Fixa diu tenero vitaque abeunte tepenti; (Africa V.478-83).

The active god of Ovid's mythology is reduced here to a personification of the sun – "Litus ad Hesperium properans urgebat anhelos / Phebus equos" (477-8), and the mention of his old role highlights the difference. We are also told, as Mago passes the Italian coast, of a connection between this and Venus and Minerva:

> [...] Sulcantibus equor
> Insula iam Venerique placens a litore
> Exoritur, contraque sedet fortissimus Erix
> Ausonius, Sicule retinens cognomina ripe.
> Collibus his ipsam perhibent habitare Minervam
> Spernentem patrias olei dulcedine Athenas. (VI.856-61).

Yet Venus and Minerva barely appear in the poem, and as they are not explored as characters, we have no terms of reference with which to understand the relevance of their connection with this place. The mention here highlights their absence in the poem, and their names merely add a sense of the classical.

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poeta il modo di descrivere quell'Olimpo pagano che direttamente egli non volle far entrare nel poema come elemento integrale" (1912, p. 74-5).

[114] "Sovra l'alta arce di Minerva attenti / Venere e Marte a rimirar costoro / stavan" (IX.2.1-3).

A further way in which Petrarch restricts divine involvement is the substitution of the divine with the human. An example of this is the role played by Scipio in the Massinissa and Sophonisba episode in Book V. Their affair is clearly modelled on that of Dido and Aeneas in Aeneid IV, but Mercury's warning in the Aeneid is given here by Scipio (Africa V.386ff; Aeneid IV.265ff).[115] Massinissa is told to set aside his feelings for Sophonisba for the sake of glory ("decora" 420ff, 433) and virtue. Passion in the Africa scene is base – "damnosa voluptas" (V.407), and the idea seems to be that Massinissa should be motivated to abandon it for his own sake because it is bad for him, not because his passion prevents him from fulfilling his role ordained by the gods, as it does Aeneas. Petrarch thus strikes a double-blow against the gods: not only is Vergil's Mercury replaced by a virtuous human, as in the Teseida, but also the reason for stopping passion is relocated to the human; human virtue, not fear of the divine, is emphasised.

Petrarch employs other more substantial strategies for avoiding Olympian action. The main thrust of religious activity in the poem comes from Fate and Fortune, who are more easily assimilated with Christianity than the Olympians who dominate the Aeneid. These two figures are given unusual prominence by Petrarch as the first and third most frequently cited form of divine power. Though they retain many of the characteristics attributed to them in classical and earlier medieval literature, the difference is that here they become the most active of divine powers. That Fortune is mentioned more frequently than Jupiter suggests two things: firstly, that Petrarch's divine hierarchy is closer to that used by Lucan and Walter, who favour historical approachs to their historical subjects, than to Vergil, where the mythical period in which the action is set allows for a different understanding of divinity; and secondly, that Christianity can lie behind the events of the poem without being obviously at the fore. (This will be explained with discussion of the role of Jupiter.) The concept of Fortune as a divine power compatible with

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[115] See Seagraves (1976, p. 168-70) on the notion of duty in these parallel episodes. Cf. Boccaccio, p. 103 above.

a Christian God is common in much medieval literature, and her role in a Christian universe is clarified by Dante.[116] In light of Petrarch's concern for truth within his poetry, it is not surprising that the most frequently cited divine power is one that was widely used in the Middle Ages, compatible with Petrarch's Christian Jupiter, as well as being familiar from classical literature.

At the beginning of the Africa, Petrarch sets up a Christian framework for the function of divine powers. Although he follows common epic practice by invoking the Muses, he then calls on God, where we would expect to see an Olympian named, as happens in the Aeneid, Thebaid, and even the Teseida. The address begins ambiguously, "o certissima mundi / Spes superumque decus" (I.10-11), as this ruler of the gods could still be the Jupiter of the pagans, but his position as god of gods is then clarified: "quem secula nostra deorum / Victorem atque Herebi memorant" (I.11-12). He is then explicitly shown to be Christian with reference to him as the crucified son, "quem quina videmus / Larga per innocuum retegentem vulnera corpus" (I.12-3), and then the father - "summe parens" (I.14). The novelty of this dedication is emphasised by Petrarch's hope that the Christian god likes epic:

> [...] Tibi multa revertens
> Vertice Parnasi referam pia carmina, si te
> Carmina delectant; [...] (I.14-6).

The poet's lack of confidence (however contrived) underlines his awareness of a break with classical epic tradition in calling on the Christian God for help in writing epic. This has the double effect of underlining the novelty both of the opening of the poem, and of involving the Christian God in an epic.[117] Having asked the Muses to help him with his story, what is the divine help that Petrarch then wants from God when he says "auxilium fer" (I.14)? The context suggests help in creating a poem that presents Christian truth. By turning to God at this point, Petrarch lays a foundation for future references to the divine, ensuring that we have the Christian god in

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[116] "ella s'è beata e ciò non ode: / con l'altre prime creature lieta / volve sua spera e beata si gode" (Inferno VII.94-6).

mind rather than the Olympians. It is for this reason that the most frequently named powers are ordered as they are: Fortune, Jupiter, Fate. As discussed in Chapter 2 (pp. 57-8), the name Jupiter is used by medieval authors including Dante to refer to the Christian God, or, at the very least, to an ambiguous god of gods who could be the Christian God in all but name. The Jupiter of the Africa is not the Olympian of mythology (though Petrarch is inconsistent in this respect, as the mythological Jupiter does appear at times), but the Christian God, and it is a point that critics agree on.[118] The most persuasive evidence for this is his appearance in person in Heaven, when Rome and Carthage[119] go to win his favour. Mars, whom Rome and Carthage pass on their way up to heaven, is very definitely a planet, and not an Olympian, appearing with one of the constellations he governs - "Quaque rubens Martis metuendi luminis astrum / Scorpio chelarum amplexu caudaque tegebat" (VII.518-9). The dwellers of heaven are not *dei* (gods), but referred to more ambiguously as "celicole" (VII.522; heaven-dwellers), which, as we see later, includes angels.[120] The heaven contains choirs, "comitatumque choreis" (VII.683), and Jupiter speaks as the Christian God. His concern is for virtue above all else,

> [...]Virtus michi clara placere
> Sola potest animique habitus, quam dicere sedem
> Ipse meam nunquam erubui. [...] (VII.688-90),

and virtue has found refuge in his heaven, "terris incognita Virtus / Huc refugit" (677). He places mortal things in perspective relative to the things of heaven:

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[117] Cf. Dante's invocations to the Muses and to Apollo, p. 62 above.
[118] Sabbadini (1927), p. 354: "Petrarca ebbe una nobile e superba concezione: far...fino a trasformare, con l'audacia dell "sommo Giove" dantesco (PurgatorioVI.118) lo stesso Giove in Cristo", and this lies at the core of Petrarch's concern for the truth; and Carlini (1902, p. 116) on the Christianisation of God in the episode with Rome and Carthage. More recent commentators do not concern themselves with this issue. Their silence suggests that they agree with the early critics.
[119] These personifications are ambiguous, as they are reminiscent of both classical and medieval sources. Some critics point out the obvious classical influence (Seagraves (1976), J. Foster (1979) on echoes of Aeneid). Petrarch seems to imitate the Aeneid here to highlight the diffference between the Olympian Jupiter and that of the Africa, while perhaps at the same time suggesting that we can see traces of the later God in the earlier one. On the other hand, the journey of Rome and Carthage to heaven is reminiscent of the allegorical voyage of Prudence in the Anticlaudianus, and might be understood as a Christian allegory rather than a reworking of pagan personifications. See also Carrara (1928, p. 114), on these as a renewal of pagan fictions.

Corpora qui placeant oculis mortalia nostris,
Aut fragiles artus, aut forma fugacior umbris?
Omnia sunt eterna michi, splendorque decorque,
Divitie stabiles mansuraque gloria regni. (VII.684-7),

which sets him clearly apart from the Jupiter of classical literature, where his fondness for human flesh is all too apparent.[121] But above all, he foretells the coming of Christ,

[...] Placida sic Virgine captus
Iam rapior; sacri sic mulcent ubera lactis! (VII.723-4),

and his future kingdom on earth (the Church), "mea maxima sedes" (VII.718). At the end of his speech, God is surrounded by the heavenly hosts, who, with their wings and concern for peace, are clearly angels:

Talia narrantem cunti gaudentibus alis
Celicole umbrabant atque agmina nuntia pacis. (VII.725-6).

Through the course of this episode, Petrarch has brought the reader to see Jupiter not as the pagan Olympian deity, but as the Christian God. In so doing, he shows how Jupiter at least can make an open transition from pagan to Christian literature, without the aid of allegory.

With the presence of a Christian Jupiter, Petrarch provides an anchor and meaning for more ambiguous references to "Deus": "si vestra Deus dedit ora videre / Mortales oculos" (I.429-30); "Deo" (I.451), "Deus" (I.465), "Dei" (I.470, 498), "Deo" (I.486), "Deus ille deorum" (III.285). Taken individually, the references could apply either to the Olympian Jupiter or to the Christian God, but with the presence of a Christian Jupiter within the poem, the obvious way to understand them is as the Christian God.

However, Petrarch's references to Fortune outnumber those to Jupiter, and the presence of Fate just below Jupiter in this ranking create a sense that God and his Christian universe are being

[120] Note also that Festa, in the index to his edition of the poem, divides "celicole" into two categories – "gli angeli" (VII.522, 568, 726), and "i numi" (V.590, 735; VIII.710).

swamped by random forces. Fortune most frequently affects the human characters of the poem, but Petrarch is not endorsing the view that the universe, with a Christian God at its centre, is governed by random chance. He presents Fortune (and by association Fate, as I discuss below) as a power lesser than the Christian God:[122]

> [...] Nec regnum Fortune ignoro iocantis
> Rebus in humanis. At nulla potentia summo
> Est equanda Deo [...] (VII.420-22),

and under his command,

> [...] Nam ni divinus inesset
> Spiritus, haudquaquam hoc homini Fortuna dedisset, (Africa I.443-4).[123]

This view was not unusual in the neo-platonist tradition, where Fate and Fortune appear alongside God as manifestations of divine providence.[124] Dante twice calls Fortune "beata" (Inferno VII.94, 96), and assigns her a role in his Christian universe (see p. 58 above). In light of this, the presence of Fortune need not necessarily be seen as a threat to a Christian view of the universe. Petrarch benefits doubly from his frequent use of Fate and Fortune. As they are prominent in classical literature, their names bring with them a certain amount of classical literary baggage. This suits the classical aspirations of the Africa. But at the same time, by portraying them in a text in which God is also present, Petrarch, like Dante, provides a role for them that can be understood in Christian terms. As well as adding classical imagery while adhering to a religious scheme compatible with Christianity, Petrarch's use of these divine powers tells us something else about

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[121] Especially in Ovid. Note Petrarch's marginal comments on Zeus in his Latin Homer – "Libidines Iouis multe. Pulcer deus insanorum miserorum." (De Nolhac 1907, vol. 2, p. 178).

[122] Note that while Fortune is often mentioned, she does not speak, nor is she the centre of any scenes (cf. her role in the Anticlaudianus), in contrast with Jupiter. She is thus less substantial, and more easily assigned a subordinate role.

[123] Jupiter has the ultimate say – "Quam Fortuna premat, cui stet Victoria parti, / Non est nosse prius; nisi quod cui conscia mens est / Iustitie, nostrum licet hanc sperare favorem" (VII.694-6). Also: "Hec nunquam Fortuna dabit, quia cunta potenti / Sunt servata Deo" (Africa I.450-1); and III.286, where Laelius fears that Fortune might favour Carthage, and hopes God would prevent such a thing.

[124] See, for example, the role of Fortune and Fate in the creation of the New Man (the soul granted by God to the Virtues) in Anticlaudianus VII-VIII. Astell (1994; p.24) also draws attention to Servius – "'fata' dicta, id est Iovis voluntas", and Lafferty argues that "The Alexandreis illustrates a basic tenet of Boethius' Philosophiae consolatio, that Fortune and Fate are essentially two different perceptions of divine providence."(1998, p. 62).

the poem. Fortune is the most frequently cited divine force in the Bellum Civile, and in Walter of Châtillon's Alexandreis, she comes second, above Jupiter.[125] By adding this further link between his epic and classical historical epic, Petrarch reveals more of his strategy in approaching matters of divinity. Lucan provides little scope for the Olympians in his historical epic, preferring to use Fortune to describe the workings of the recent historical past,[126] and Petrarch appears to be drawn more to this model for his historical epic than to epic such as the Aeneid set in the distant (mythological) past. Petrarch improves on Lucan's strategy of limiting use of the Olympians by adding to what he might have thought of as a gap in Lucan's poem (a gap that could not be filled by a pagan author): a Christian God to anchor the actions of Fate and Fortune.

Thus far, I have tried to explain why Fortune and Fate appear so frequently in the Africa. I will now turn to how they are presented, to provide further evidence of their compatibility with a Christian God. Petrarch makes clear distinctions between the different facets of fate and fortune,[127] while at the same time keeping the figures themselves insubstantial. Both of these approaches add to Petrarch's Christian scheme. One could group Fortuna, Fata, Sors, Fors, and Parcae together as different names for roughly the same thing, but Petrarch maintains distinctions. Thus he uses Fatum or Fata to refer to death or time, and things that are final and unalterable. By contrast, Fortuna is used of temporary circumstances. An illustration of this difference is the way that Fortuna is cited as the reason for the recapture of Spain (IV.258), but the Fates will decide the long-term future of Rome (II.116). Alongside these are Sors, which seems synonomous with Fate in that it is used predominantly to refer to the end of life (a warrior meets "Sors invida" I.381, and Scipio ponders the death that "Sors imperiosa" has prepared for him - III.13) and Fors,

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[125] Mars tops the table with 48 mentions; Fortune is cited 31 times, and Jupiter 19.
[126] Cf. Lafferty (1998, p. 46), on the Alexandreis – "the gods who appear in Walter's epic (Fortuna, Natura, Mars, Victoria) can all be understood as representing aspects of historical reality".
[127] I use lower case "f"s here, as I mean the concepts themselves in general terms.

which appears only once as the force responsible for bringing warring ships together.[128] The anthropomorphised version of Fate (the Parcae who spin and cut the thread of human life) occurs much less frequently than *fata*,[129] and this reflects Petrarch's general avoidance of portraying anthropomorphised powers that are more difficult to align with the notion of a Christian God. Thus mentions of Fortune, whose bodily form is described in such detail and at great length in so many medieval texts,[130] are restricted to little more than the occurrence of her name. This tactic, as well as perhaps reflecting a general desire to de-dramatise, serves Petrarch's purpose of presenting these powers in such a way that the Christian reader can assimilate them most easily with God, while nevertheless feeling as though she (the reader) is in a "classical" text. Although these different aspects of "random" events are thus described by different names, the frequency with which Fate and Fortune are mentioned in close proximity to each other is striking. Eight of Fate's appearances are within ten lines (usually much less) of a reference to Fortune, and the two appear to work together, for example, "Quid [...] Fata velint aut quid Fortuna minetur" (III.709). This suggests that the same force is at work behind the façade of Fate and Fortune, and as Petrarch chooses to portray a Christian God in the poem, this force appears to be the Christian God. Fate, Fortune, and their other similar manifestations become another way of talking about the Christian God. Thus they too become a Christian truth, and help to present a sense of religious truth in the poem.

Other divinities that are prominent in the poem – Apollo and the Muses – are also shown to be in harmony with the Christian God: Apollo is suggested as a Christ figure, and the Muses, as his helpers, also take on a Christian hue. Apollo is notable for the long description he receives in the

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[128] "Fors contraxerat ambas / [...] classes" (III.470-1).
[129] Six times in the whole poem.
[130] Ysengrimus III; Anticlaudianus V, and IV describes her abode, which also reflects her appearance.

ekphrasis in Book VI (where he has 18 lines compared with Jupiter's 2).[131] There are three main reasons why Petrarch might have given such a prominent role to Apollo in the *ekphrasis*, and why his name occurs so often in the Africa.[132] Each of these reasons reveals that Petrarch uses him not as an Olympian with a role in the literal level of the poem, but as a figure whose symbolic or allegorical meaning is of great importance. Firstly, as the god of poetry, he is suited to a poem in which the theme of poetry receives such prominence. Hence he is portrayed alongside the trappings of poetry: in the *ekphrasis*, he is described with his lyre ("cithare species a[u]gusta[133] canore / Icta videbatur sonitum perducere ad aures" III.165-6) and with the laurel ("Dulcis odorifere lauri viridantis [...] / Umbra" 170-1); and in Book IX, he is shown to be behind Ennius' genius – "summus Apollo / Ingenium celeste dedit" (18-9). His status as god of poetry is one of the standard aspects of the classical pagan Apollo, but by playing with various iconographic representations in the *ekphrasis*, Petrarch suggests that his importance transcends his classical origin. His appearance is based heavily on Ovid,[134] and the description of him ends by stressing poetry. Petrarch shows that while he avoids recreating Ovid's interest in the anthropomorphic aspect of Apollo as a god involved in action, he still draws on Ovid's text for the association of Apollo with the laurel and poetry. In his Coronation Oration, Petrarch calls Apollo "poetarum deus" (11.14), but in the Africa he appears less as a literal god of poetry, and more as the embodiment of or inspiration for poetry – the bestower of "ingenium celeste".

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[131] Apollo is the obvious one to make prominent if we see the model behind the passage as Ovid's palace of the sun, as Mustard (1921) suggests. This casts the *ekphrasis* in a classical light, with Apollo classically personified as the sun, rather than the medieval interpretation of him as Christ.

[132] Wilkins (1957, p. 517) also points out that the description of Apollo in III.156-67 has no parallel in Petrarch's sources (Fulgentius, Isidore, Neckham, Maurus). This gives extra weight to the notion that Petrarch is drawing particular attention to Apollo, both here and in the poem in general.

[133] I prefer the manuscript variant "augusta" to Festa's own choice of "angusta".

[134] Cf. Metamorphoses I.452ff. Note that Petrarch interprets this Ovidian passage in the Coronation Oration (11.18), explaining Apollo as the sun, and his role in the Daphne story as the nourishing influence on a growing plant. Petrarch does also use the physical explanation of Apollo in the Africa, tending to divide Phoebus meaning the sun from Apollo meaning something else. For "Phebus" as a name for the personified sun, see: I.130; II.12, 212; V.478, 694; VI.454, 563, 581, 866; VII.753; IX.292. "Phebus" is also used to refer to the god as a warrior: VI.509; VII.171.

Acknowledging this move away from the literal is central to understanding two other reasons for Apollo's prominence. Petrarch himself provides a clue as to how we might understand the divinity of Apollo: Familiares X.4.242ff gives him an allegorical role as Christ, reinforced by the idea that if he is the god of wisdom, he must also be Christ, as Christ is the wisdom of god: "Vera quidem Dei sapienta CHRISTUS est" (Familiares VI.2). There does not seem to be any direct evidence that Apollo functions as a Christ figure in the Africa, however, Bersuire's reading of the *ekphrasis* passage is telling: his allegorical portrayal of the gods included Apollo, in Bernardo's words, as "Christ or God in his aspect of Wisdom, and his laurel as a symbol of devotion to the cross of the Lord".[135] If Bersuire was inspired by Petrarch, it seems likely that his reading of the Africa passage was allegorical. If Petrarch assumed that his reader would interpret Apollo allegorically, as Bersuire did, it seems clear why he felt able to dwell on Apollo to such an extent in the *ekphrasis* (at the expense of Jupiter) and in the poem in general.[136]

There is a third way in which we can understand the figure of Apollo. Petrarch frequently draws on the story of Apollo and Daphne throughout his works. His fascination with these two figures seems to lie in their role as representations of himself and Laura. Bernardo's statement that Laura "is as a Christian Daphne to a Christian Apollo" (1962, p. 68) suggests the parallel: if Daphne is Laura, Petrarch is Apollo. While evidence for this interpretation occurs mostly outside the Africa, there are traces of it within the poem. For example, the Ovidian Apollo that the *ekphrasis* brings to mind is the "hero" of the best-known version of the Apollo and Daphne story (Metamorphoses I),[137] and his love of the laurel in Ovid, visible both in the *ekphrasis*, and in

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[135] Bernardo (1962), p. 138. He also argues that Petrarch probably saw his own gods allegorically, and he cites Canzoniere 137 as evidence of further instances of the gods as allegory.

[136] Seagraves adds a further facet to an allegorical interpretation of Apollo, pointing out the presence of echoes of Capella's De nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae in the description of Apollo in the *ekphrasis* in Africa III. (1976; p.82).

[137] The equation of Laura and Daphne, hence Petrarch and Apollo is one of the recurring themes of Petrarch's writings. See too Africa V.478ff, where Apollo remembers his love of Daphne, in what is, in a sense, an entirely gratuitous memory of his love, designed as a reference to Petrarch's love for Laura. Apollo's pity for Massinissa, whose loves are described as "similes" (484) to his own, adds a new

Book IX ("Hinc deus ingenii lauros amat almus Apollo" 114), is echoed by Petrarch's prophecy of himself in Book IX:

> Hinc modo tantus amor, tanta est reverentia lauri.
> Omnibus ex silvis iam nunc sibi gratior una est
> Delphica; (IX.242-4).

So the depiction of Apollo in the *ekphrasis* of Book III combines three different aspects of Apollo, all of which become Christian under Petrarch's treatment: he is poetry (that is, divine inspiration); he is Christ; and he is Petrarch (a Christian writer). But at the same time, he becomes these things from his roots as a pagan god in a particular classical text (Metamorphoses), thus Petrarch gains a classical element to his characterisation while showing something new.

The idea of Apollo as poetry is strengthened by frequent mention of the Muses within the poem. They are named 18 times, and 13 of these mentions are in Book IX, which is the book that most directly concerns itself with poetry. Here too we might question Petrarch's decision to call them goddesses ("dearum" Africa IX.81).[138] Although he addresses individual Muses (for example Calliope, IX.322) as well as the group collectively, they are not described in detail anthropomorphically.[139] Petrarch teases us with the name "goddesses", and challenges our idea of what this means. The poem allows no scope for these "goddesses" to be developed in the manner we might expect from pagan divinities in epic literature, and while the Muses in classical literature are not usually given lengthy personifications, the frequency with which they are named here is unusual. Their closeness to Apollo suggests that, if they are divine, and work alongside the embodiment of poetry who is also a Christ figure, then they must similarly be divine in a way that is compatible with Christianity. Petrarch seems here to reinforce the notion that poetry is divine in

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dimension to the Sophonisba story: if their love is like that of Apollo for Daphne, then it is also like that of Petrarch for Laura, who is his Daphne. This would then cast the whole episode in a more sympathetic light.

[138] Elsewhere Petrarch calls them sacred: "Pyeridum sacrarum" (Epistolae metricae III.26.6).

[139] They appear only as indistinct figures who sing (III.171ff) and dance (IX.115) in Apollo's company.

origin, and his frequent mention of the (divine) Muses suggests that we are to consider the Africa as divine in origin, hence containing truth in a religious sense.

4.4.3. Heaven and Hell.

To match his Christian God, Petrarch creates a Christian heaven, and, by contrast, a pagan hell. While many Christian writers describe both realms, most include overt Christian details (Dante is the obvious example of this), or at least portray the regions as realms compatible with Christianity (such as the Neo-Platonic portrait Alain of Lille creates in the Anticlaudianus). Classical models underlie Petrarch's portrayal of heaven and hell, adding further weight to the idea that classical paganism was in some respects a shadowy formulation of the truth. This notion is given substance by the association of virtuous Roman characters with heaven, and impious Carthaginians with hell. But in spite of strong classical elements, I shall show that Petrarch's presentation of these otherworldly realms parallels Dante's Comedy.

The Africa contains three portrayals of heaven, each with a different religious focus, as though to cover the main religious positions with which Petrarch contends in the poem. The first (Scipio's dream in Books I and II) is a journey to an ambiguous, classically influenced heaven, devoid of gods, and somewhat reminiscent of Dante's visit to heaven; the second (shown in the *ekphrasis* of Book III) is a heaven inhabited by the pagan gods; the third (the heaven visited by Rome and Carthage in Book VII) is a heaven in which the Christian god is present as the governor of the universe. Other critics have suggested a different interpretation. I shall show that Belloni's statement that the heaven of the opening two books is a Christian counterpart to the Olympus of the *ekphrasis* in Book III - "quell' Olimpo pagano [...] che ha il suo perfetto contrapposto cristiano nelle sedi celesti alle quali Scipione sale in sogno per volere di Dio e dove di Dio ha la

visione" (1912, p. 75)[140] - must be treated with caution, as there are no explicitly Christian aspects to the episode; and that Colilli's stance against Dantean traces in the first heaven - "L'eterna dimora (ossia il Paradiso) dei romani dipinta nei primi due libri del poema latino ha veramente poco a vedere con il mondo anagogico del Paradiso dantesco" (1993, p. 47) - ignores the spectre of the Comedy that looms in the mind of the reader on encountering this scene. Through a discussion of Petrarch's descriptions of heaven, I will show that a distinction is made between pagan and Christian representations, not, as Belloni says, between the heavens of Books I-II and III, but between those of III and VII. The heaven of I and II remains deliberately ambiguous in its position at the start of the poem, only to be revealed in hindsight as Christian after God's appearance in the heaven of Book VII. Petrarch's reluctance to relate his passage to Dante's (or indeed anyone else's) by making it obviously Christian at the beginning of the poem lies behind the ambiguity.[141] Both share Cicero (through Macrobius) as a source, but Petrarch's dream contains so much more than can be explained with reference to Cicero alone: he deliberately challenges us to consider other presentations of the otherworld, most notably Vergil, and the Comedy, which is the most closely contemporary depiction of a long epic ascending to a Christian heaven. The ambiguity of the opening heaven allows for later clarification of its religious status (i.e. Christian or pagan), and after leading us on a false trail with the pagan heaven of Book III, the question surrounding the first heaven is answered by God's dominion over that in Book VII. The similarity of these two "real" heavens, in contrast to the static image presented on the walls of the palace, suggests that they share a Christian orientation.

Physical details of the heaven presented in Scipio's dream in Books I and II are scarce, and there are only nine identifiable allusions to Cicero's Somnium in Scipio's dream in the Africa, in spite of the amount of coverage that it has received as a source. Petrarch must thus have taken his

[140] It is worth noting, however, that Scipio does not have a vision of God in this dream: God himself is absent from the picture.

details from elsewhere, or made them up. While some details echo Vergil,[142] several are close to Paradiso, in spite of the language difference. We are told that it is a "sedesque [...] quietas" (I.209), full of light and peace in comparison with earth:

> Illic *pura* dies, quam *lux eterna* serenat,
> Quam nec luctus edax nec tristia murmura turbant,
> Non odia incendunt. (I.219-21; my italics);

which is an almost exact copy of Dante's "pura luce" (Paradiso XXX.39), and "luce etterna" (Paradiso II.20).[143] Petrarch's heaven is full of joy - "leto [...] cielo" (II.338) - and bliss "habes sine fine beatus / Et sine mensura" (II.480-2), and it is where the throngs of joyous souls - "beatas [...] animas" (I.447-8) - dwell, and where the stars are located (I.580ff). In addition we might consider how much of a physical presence Scipio himself has in this episode. Petrarch seems to waver between two models for the scene: a dream vision (Somnium Scipionis) and a literal journey to an otherworldly realm (Aeneid). At first it seems that we are not to imagine Scipio as physically present in heaven. The vision comes to him in his sleep,[144] and there is no mention of his literally ascending to heaven; rather we might contrast his lack of movement with the description of how, when he dies, his soul will fly to heaven – "Evolat assurgens animus" (I.464).[145] But once he is there, elements of a physical presence are suggested: he thanks God for allowing him to cross the "alti [...] limina mundi" (I.429); there is a concern with time, "Nam breve tempus adest moneorque in castra reverti" (I.432);[146] and his own physicality is referred to, "mortalia celo / Membra vehis" (I.438-9); his father mentions his mortality, "mortalem"

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[141] Note the biblical presence in the description – Africa I.220-3.
[142] See Giannarelli (1987).
[143] Also, Paradiso V.8; X.136; XXIV.34; XXXIII.83, 124.
[144] His father also emphasizses the dream nature of the episode – "Ambigue subito tibi somnia noctis / Omniaque implicite vanescent visa quietis: / Si qua animo memori vestigia forte manebunt, / Somnia vana tamen, mentemque errasse putabis" (II.7-10).
[145] Note that advice is given on how to enter heaven after death (in the form of on how to behave while alive), eg. I.481ff, and II.425-6.
[146] Also I.442-3 and II.2. Cf. "Ma perché 'l tempo fugge che t'assonna" (Paradiso XXXII.139); "la notte resurge [...] / è da partir" (Inferno XXXIV.68-9).

(II.340);[147] and his bodily presence is emphasized by four words in swift succession: "vivo" (I.442), "videre" (I.445), "spectare" (I.447) and "pedes" (I.448). His physical presence is contrasted with that of his father as they walk together – "tamen una erat umbra duorum" (II.331), which echoes Purgatorio III.19ff, where Vergil's lack of a shadow surprises Dante –

> Io mi volsi dallato con paura
> d'essere abbandonato, quand'io vidi
> solo dinanzi a me la terra oscura (Purgatorio III.19-21),

and leads Vergil to emphasize his non-corporeal state:

> Vespero è già colà dov'è sepolto
> lo corpo dentro al quale io facea ombra: (Purgatorio III.25-6).

Scipio's descent from heaven is described physically, in contrast to the mysterious way in which he finds himself in heaven at the start of the dream:

> [...] dextraque sequentem
> Per nitidum conducit iter. Iam prona cadentis
> Calcabant convexa poli, gradibusque suprema
> Linquebant levibus, (Africa II.328-30).

Scipio's father draws his attention to what he calls a matter of truth – "Huc aures intende pias et pectora veri / Plena refer" (II.341-2), with the term repeated again – "tum cernere verum / Heu miseri sero incipiunt" (II.404-5). The truth that is expressed concerns mortal life and the role of glory within it. The fact that Petrarch chooses to portray moral truths in this first heaven is important to our understanding of the concept of religious truth. This heaven, however much it is modelled on pagan representations, nevertheless has the capacity to unveil truth. Because the passage does follow classical models, we might see this as evidence in favour of the view (shared by Dante) that classical paganism was capable of revealing shadows of the truth.

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[147] Note that Dante's mortal state is also mentioned in Paradiso – "li mortai piedi" (XV.82), and "io, che son mortal" (XXI.61).

This vision of heaven is clearly compatible with that of Christianity, and the parallel becomes more obvious when we consider Petrarch's other two descriptions of heaven. The third heaven described in the poem is introduced with an invocation:

> Hic michi, Pyerides, quoniam maiora pusillis
> Viribus aggredior, si vos ab origine semper
> Dilexi coluique libens, si rite vocavi,
> Hic prebete animos totoque Elicone favente.
> Avia Castalie sitiens convexa pererro;
> Urget amor fameque trahit spes blanda decore. (VII.500-5),

which immediately suggests the special significance of what follows, just as Vergil's "paulo maiora canamus" (Eclogue IV.1; note the echo of "maiora") heralds a change of theme and new gravitas, and Dante's invocation of Apollo in Paradiso I (13ff) alerts the reader to a greater theme in the realm of heaven. Petrarch's invocation comes after a lacuna, and the lines immediately before this describe the armies' preparations for war. The start of a battle often occasions the re-invocation of the Muses, (for example, Teseida VIII.2.1, at the start of the martial games), but here Petrarch plays with the reader, elevating his poetry not for the theme of war, but for his description of heaven and God.[148] He lays aside the activity in the battle-camps with the coming of night, and turns instead to his higher theme – the realms of heaven. Though there is not much description of the layout of this third picture of heaven, some structure can be gleaned. The journey to this heaven requires passing the stars,[149] as in Scipio's dream, and "fores" (VII.521) echoes "limina" in Book I. The journey is also described as physical: "Ethereas matrona virens perlabitur auras" (VII.509), and "ibat" (VII.514). The nature of the characters who make the journey – personified Rome and Carthage – emphasises the distance established in Book I between human characters and heaven. Scipio was only able to go to heaven in a dream vision,

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[148] Note that God himself mentions raising the poetic tone – "Maiore canendum / Voce aliud superest" (VII.708-9; Cf. Vergil Eclogue IV) as he proceeds to tell of the coming of Christ. This and VII.500ff, quoted above, show that speaking of God is poetry's highest achievement, and demands the poet's greatest effort. In this Petrarch agrees with Dante and Boccaccio.

[149] Note that Petrarch includes a detail of Scorpio appearing next to Mars. While Mars might seem like an obvious planet to mention just before a battle, his purpose in adding Scorpio becomes interesting when we note that Scorpio appears in Purgatorio XXV.3, where Dante is told "la verità" on the creation of the soul.

and here both humans and gods are kept away from heaven, with Petrarch choosing to portray two personifications rather than follow his source for the episode, which is the ascent of Venus and Juno in Aeneid X.[150] Carlini's statement that Petrarch could not use mythology here – "Il Petrarca, non potendo usare mitologia, personificò [...] due idee astratte" (1902, p. 116) is right: to bring in the pagan gods at this point would be to undermine his revelation of God himself on the throne of heaven. It would be less easy to accept his Jupiter as Christian if those supplicating him were two pagan goddesses, thus the personifications solve the problem for him by adding an allegorical tone to the passage. The presence of the Vergilian text (stripped of its gods) in the background in this central scene where God speaks again suggests that Petrarch viewed pagan texts as capable of conveying (imperfect) versions of the truth. The inclusion of God constitutes the major difference between this portrayal of heaven and that of the first two books. We see him, he speaks, and he is surrounded by angels (725). His presence here, in light of the similarity of the two passages, suggests that he also existed as an unspoken presence in the first heaven.

Thus Belloni (1912) is essentially right in arguing that the heavens of Books I-II and VII are Christian. He is also right in seeing the portrayal of heaven in Book III as a pagan representation. After the lacuna at the end of the *ekphrasis* in Book III, Petrarch implies that he has described heaven and hell: "A superum regnis centrum perducta sub imum" (264). But the *regna superum* to which he refers do not correspond with heaven as it is described elsewhere in the poem. Its main similarity is that it is not a place human characters can travel to, as it is a static representation on a pagan palace wall. The passage reveals a clear contrast between false and real heavens in the Africa as a whole, and casts doubt on Festa's thesis of the Palace of Truth.[151]

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[150] J.Foster comments on this influence, stating that "Petrarch's recasting of this scene is of course in Christian terms throughout" (1979, p. 285), but Carlini points to Lucan's personification of Patria as a likely influence (p. 116); a sensible reminder that there is nothing intrinsically Christian about personified cities.

[151] Given the Ovidian influence (textual echoes are mentioned specifically by J. Foster (1979), Corradini (1874) and Bruère (1961)) in a setting where there are very few reminiscences overall, and the presence of

Petrarch is only indirectly showing truth in the heaven in Book III in the form of absence of the truth. This is a heaven populated by the Olympians, and as such, he warns us, it is a fiction that distracts from the real thing. The whole scene is artificial, from the use of gems to depict "realities", to the static and contrived nature of the *ekphrasis* that is the vehicle of description. The zodiac and the astral bodies are represented by gems on the ceilings. These gems imitate the heavenly bodies, and there is a warning here in that Atlas, the figure responsible for this craftsmanship, came to a sticky end. Unless we dismiss it as a mere passing reference, the mention of Atlas seems to be a calculated warning that attempts to recreate God's heaven with gems are surely a distraction and destructive. The gems lure the viewer into a false world where things (including the gods) look like the truth, but are not: they are "velut [...] sidera" (III.92), and "ceu lumina" (III.95), and a rival to the sun, "carbunculus ingens / Equabat solare iubar" (101-2). Petrarch dwells on the realistic appearance of this carbuncle:

> [...] mira virtute putares
> Hunc proprios formare dies, hunc pellere noctes
> Solis ad exemplum. (103-5)

to suggest the difficulty in telling true from false.[152] The gods themselves are also depicted in bright gold: this richness and spectacle contrasts sharply with what we know to be the emptiness of the concept of the Olympians in the Africa. Heaven, given a physicality in Books I and VII, is presented here as a false place of gold and gems; attractive, but of no real substance.

Where Dante struggles to describe the reality of heaven, Petrarch seems to have more to say about his real heaven than about this false one inhabited by the Olympians. He condemns the pagan heaven by mummifying it in his *ekphrasis*, in favour of a realm not only compatible with

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the pagan gods, it seems odd to consider this the "Palace of Truth". Petrarch cannot here be representing literal truth, as the pagan gods are clearly false. Perhaps he draws attention to the issue by highlighting the absence of truth. Festa seemingly has allegorical truth in mind, which explains the influence of Martianus Capella and Alain of Lille on the passage. See Fenzi (1976).

the Christian God, but one in which God himself is present and revealed. In contrast to Dante, Petrarch, somewhat hindered by his pagan hero, holds back on sending a conscious Scipio to heaven, and from giving him a direct vision of God. The first passage, with its historical and physical elements, tells us that heaven is real, and the third that the real heaven contains the Christian God. The second description (Book III) provides a contrast: we should not be deceived by some heavens (namely that in which the pagan gods reside) with their alluring appearance.

Macrobius describes Vergil's hell as a combination of "poeticae figmentum et philosophiae veritatem", and he reads it allegorically,[153] revealing further meaning in a pagan text. But Petrarch, in his two descriptions of hell in the Africa, bypasses Macrobius and Dante (who fits the realm into a Christian universe) to return to a classical presentation of a pagan underworld. The first appearance of hell is in the *ekphrasis* of Book III, tellingly at the end of the section on the pagan gods. In 20 lines, Petrarch describes places and characters familiar from Aeneid VI (Cerberus, Charon, Acheron, the 9 regions), but aside from these names, the passage appears to contain no textual echo of Vergil or any classical source. The second passage, located in Book VI and therefore an explicit parallel with Aeneid VI, is longer (73 lines), and contains many of the same elements as the first passage that are also found in Aeneid VI (Stygian marsh, Lethe, Charon's boat, grief).[154] While Petrarch's depictions of heaven owe much to classical influence, as discussed above, he adds elements (God) that show its Christian nature. By contrast, his hell is

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[152] See Bernardo (1962, p. 134) on the carbuncle as medieval symbol of truth. For the general allegorical tone of the passage, see Fenzi (1976, p. 128ff) on Alain of Lille and Martianus Capella, and Corradini (1874), who sees 174-80 as an allusion to De Nuptiis Mercurii et Philologiae 1, p. 3.

[153] Saturnalia I.9.8, as mentioned by Whittaker (1923) p. 63. See also Seniles 4.5 on the fiction of hell.

[154] Africa VI.1-73 echoes Aeneid VI at: 12ff (Aeneid VI.433-6), 13 (426), 20 (442), 21 (440), 42 (443) and 42 (653). In addition there are 8 reminiscences of Lucan's Bellum Civile (see Bruère p. 92), and an echo of the Thebaid (1ff – Thebaid VIII.1ff). Note that the passage starts with echoes of the Bellum Civile and the Thebaid, and that the Aeneid has a presence from line 12ff, thus we should view it as heavily classical in general, and not merely an obvious echo of the Aeneid. See Kallendorf (1989, pp. 31-41) and Carlini (1902, p. 116), both of whom emphasise the classical nature of the passage.

devoid of Christian detail.[155] And here again we might use Dante as a comparison: Petrarch chooses to Christianise one realm, but not another, while Dante does both. This suggests that Petrarch is not interested in the truth of his hell in the same way that he is interested in the truth of his heaven where God resides. His interest in hell is a poetic not a theological one. Influenced by his classical orientation, he uses hell to comment on his human characters, and while this is of course a motivation in Dante, Petrarch shows no interest either in integrating the pagan hell into a Christian conception of the universe, or in making theological or philosophical comment about the state of human life and death through the presentation of hell. God is not mentioned in Petrarch's hell, as he is in Dante's; the only gods are pagan (Pluto and Persephone), and the only characters who go there are pagans (Sophonisba) with no traces of a redeeming Christian character. Dante sends his Christian hero to a Christian hell, but Petrarch, by keeping his nominally pagan hero from a clearly pagan hell questions our perception of Scipio as pagan, suggesting that he is fitted for something else – namely, the Christian heaven of Books I-II that he has already visited. This pagan hell is not part of Scipio's universe, but is reserved for the irredeemably pagan enemies of Rome. The force of using a pagan hell to condemn Sophonisba in a world which the author inclines towards Christianity is potent, and perhaps more so than locating her in a Christian hell. Petrarch deliberately keeps paganism alive in connection with hell.

4.4.4. Human Characters and the Gods.

One of the earliest criticisms levelled against the Africa was in response to Mago's dying speech,[156] and it suggested that the sentiments expressed by the pagan Mago are anachronistic, as they are the words of a Christian. Petrarch defends himself against this claim in Seniles II.1 by

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[155] Feo (1974, p. 163) compares Petrarch with Peter of Eboli to highlight the absence of Christian elements in the former's hell: "Pietro raccoglie anche la tradizione degli inferi, ma, con un gusto cristiano medievale di cui in Petrarca non c'è ombra, trasforma l'oltretomba pagano nell'inferno dei dannati", and the same is true of Dante.

saying that the episode presents what is "universally human", not specifically Christian.[157] In this section, I consider the extent to which Petrarch portrays the characters of the Africa praying and performing rituals to and speaking about the gods. I suggest that in contrast to both Boccaccio's interest in pagan ritual in the Teseida, and to Christian ritual in the Comedy, pagan customs make a limited appearance in the Africa, in spite of its fundamentally classicising nature. However, Scipio and other Romans are shown to be pious, and I argue that the concept of religion is one with which the Romans in the poem, and particularly Scipio, are deeply concerned. The association of Rome with piety and Carthage with impiety occurs throughout the poem, and Petrarch exploits this connection to hint at Rome's Christian future. His own characters cannot, for the sake of historical accuracy, be Christian (hence the criticism of Mago), but by showing them to be pious in a non-specific way through a scarcity of ritual and particular pagan detail, he presents a capacity for religion compatible with the future status of Christian Rome. In other words, although he draws back from making them Christian, he reveals a religious capacity in his characters that would, were they born later, fit them for Christianity.[158]

The few rituals that are described in the poem are performed by Romans, and are not dwelt on at length. In Book I, Scipio's father recounts his exhortation to his soldiers, which suggests a reward for their toil:

> Accelera, bene nata cohors [...]
> [...] Romanas semper ad aras
> Cum lacrimis recolenda piis et ture perenni! (I.309-11).

In Book IV we are told that Scipio often prays in Jupiter's temple,

> namque ubi sol oritus, solus solet ille remotis
> Omnibus in cellam Iovis, augustissima nobis
> Tarpeio que colle sedet, cui sacra paventes
> Rite sacerdotes celebrant, secutus ad aram

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[156] See, eg. Carlini (1902), pp. 106ff.
[157] See K. Foster, (1984, p. 146); the translation comes from him.
[158] Rico (2001, p. 47) points to Augustine's view that the ancients could approach the truth of faith, but not even the most virtuous could equate with Christians.

Intrare et limen foribus firmare reductis.
Hic quasi multa loquens tempus terit, [...] (IV.115-20).

Petrarch distances the ritual by describing it in general terms rather than portraying a specific occasion within the narrative on which Scipio goes to the temple. In Book VIII, portents occur in Rome (470ff), and the high priest performs sacrifices:

[...] summusque sacerdos
Succintus de more Iovem superosque faventes
Iunonisque minacis opem Latoniaque astra
Invocat, et Martem pingui mollire iuvenco
Romani patrem imperii [...]
[...] Sic religiosus opima
Certatim tepidis altaribus aggerat exta. (VIII.472-6, 480-1).

Carthaginian envoys are later shown Roman temples (VIII.879ff), and Rome is the setting for Scipio's triumph, which is the climactic ritual of the poem. The prophecy Homer makes in Ennius' dream looks forward to Scipio leaving a garland and first fruits on the altar,

[...] dum templis serta relinquet
Primitiasque suas sanctas affiget ad aras. (IX.252-3),

but the religious element of the ritual at the end of the poem is minimal: amid much singing, Scipio ascends the Capitol, gives thanks to the gods in general, "gratesque deis persolvit amicis" (IX.388), and leaves a pile of treasure in the temple of Jupiter (IX.389-90). There are no sacrifices or priests, and the prayers are not related in the narrative. At the climax of the poem, Petrarch's decision to present pagan ritual with such a small religious content might appear surprising. But this ritual in particular is one where it makes sense for him to limit the religious element. The triumph and crowning of Scipio serve as a bridge between the classical (pagan) Roman world and Petrarch's contemporary (Christian) one. By not dwelling on religious detail in Scipio's triumph, he presents it as something with more general relevance. His own coronation as poet in a ceremony in Rome parallels that which he here describes for Scipio and Ennius – the ancient ritual is still relevant in a Christian world, and a pagan triumph is shown to be in essence

the same as that of a Christian poet. In other words, the ritual of the pagan world can, in a modified form, also have a place in a Christian one.[159]

The potential for elements of classical Rome to make the transition to a Christian setting, hinted at here by the parallel of Scipio and Petrarch's laurel crown, also occurs more generally in the portrayal of characters in the Africa. While depicting the enemy as impious (as Petrarch does with the Carthaginians in the poem) is nothing new, Petrarch makes a point of comparing the Romans and Carthaginians in terms of their religious attitudes, as though to say that if his heroes cannot be specifically Christian, they can at least be the pious forerunners of the city that became the seat of Christianity. This contrast is brought out early in the poem: Rome and Carthage have "Adversosque deos odiosaque numina utrinque" (I.106), and a treacherous Carthaginian envoy underlines the difference with his use of "vestros" – "Per sacra Tonantis, / Per vestros, Romane, deos" (VI.331-2). In Book II, Scipio's father describes the difference between Roman and Carthaginian leaders, "Sanctior his preerit castris, dux impius illis" (II.26), and then reinforces the point by listing Pietas (II.64) as one of the virtues on the Roman side, and "Contemptusque Dei" (II.67) as a vice aiding the Carthaginians. Petrarch himself calls Carthage "Impia Carthago" (VII.1038), and Scipio, in two different speeches, mocks his enemies' lack of piety. Firstly, he asks "Credis adhuc non esse Deum?" (VII.385), and mentions the Carthaginians' hatred of God, "Deus ille, Deus quem vos contemnitis" (VII.395), and their mistaken understanding of what is fiction: "Quamquam tibi fabula vana est, / Hanibal, esse Deum" (VII.378-9).[160] This is reinforced by,

> Impia gens, credes tandem tot cladibus ullum

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[159] Hence, at the end of the siege of Cartagena, sacrifice is performed to a select group of divinities who, except for Jupiter (whom we already know to be the Christian God), pose little threat to Christianity, as their powers lie only in protecting the holy city – "Iovem Frigiosque Penates / Romuleamque animam cuntosque ex ordine divos / Custodes Latii, quorum Capitolia cure / Credita perpetue mundi caput esse merentur" (IV.326-9).

[160] Note that what appears to be *fabula* to one person is truth to another. Thus *fabula* becomes essentially meaningless.

Esse deum celo, qui nostros vindicet actus,
Cui scelus omne odio, cui sint mortalia cure? (VIII.660-1).[161]

Scipio's way of talking of the divine points the reader towards the Christian God, but Hasdrubal, when he describes Rome as "Urbs accepta deis" (VIII.992) and "divum domus" (VIII.994) refers to the gods in the plural. Hasdrubal shows a differing incomprehension from that of Scipio,[162] who more usually refers to God in the singluar. Petrarch personifies this contrast between Roman and Carthaginian attitudes towards religion through the figures of Rome and Carthage as they present themselves before God. Carthage refers frequently to the Olympians: Juno is mentioned in the first line of her speech (VII.524); "deorum" (528); Mars – 542, 544; 553 - "Iovis", and "Iupiter" 570. Rome is much more ambiguous. She addresses god as "O magni suprema potentia mundi" (592), and "O superumque hominumque sator rerumque creator / Optime" (595-6), which has a Christian tone,[163] especially "rerumque creator". Although she mentions some traditional attributes of the Olympian god, such as his thunderbolt ("tua fulmine dextra corusco" 607), and calls him Thunderer ("Tonantis" 643), the only other Olympian she names is Juno, referring back to Carthage's own speech ("Sed enim Iunonia iactat / Hospitia et superos hac sperat voce movere" 640-1). Rome's religious awareness far exceeds that of Carthage, as she openly hints at the coming of Christianity: "populi ignosce nepotum, / Quos nova religio faciet tibi forsan amicos" (657-8). Rome is humble and worshipful in God's presence, Carthage is not; Rome knows of the coming of Christianity, Carthage does not.

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[161] Also "gens perfida" (VIII.645); "stirpem profanum" (VII.375)

[162] Compare Alexander's bafflement at Biblical symbols in the Alexandreis (Lafferty, 1998). With respect to religion, the Alexandreis and the Africa show striking differences, not just in Walter's choice of neo-platonic divinities. The Alexandreis has no rituals, prayers, or invocations, and instead has Old Testament citations, to contrast the enlightened part of the ancient world with that of the Greeks and their enemies in the poem, highlighting Alexander's paganism. Alexander is set against a Jewish / Christian tradition, with no chance for enlightenment. In this sense, the poem does not represent a syncretist view of religion. But it is similar to the Africa in that Rome's enemies are irredeemably pagan.

[163] Note, however, that Vergil twice calls Jupiter "hominum sator atque deorum", as Astell points out (1994, p. 25).

Syphax refers to Africa as "tellus adversa deis" (VI.225),[164] and his sigh ("heu") suggests that he laments this fact. So too Hannibal says the gods are hostile to Carthage – "testes facio, quos sensimus hostes / Esse deos" (VIII.281-2). But Petrarch is at pains to show that the Carthaginians themselves are hostile to the gods, and not the other way around. He suggests that the fault lies in their lack of belief and impious behaviour, and that they are not merely the victims of random hostile divine forces. For example, Hannibal's attack on the temple of Juno as he leaves Italy is impious, and Petrarch emphasises this point by modelling the scene on two other famous moments of sacrilege – the theft of the Palladium by Vergil's Ulysses (Aeneid II.163ff), and the slaughter of Priam at the altar by Pyrrhus (Aeneid II.506ff). Hannibal is "iratus mundo superisque sibique" (VI.468), and he is "Sevus inhumana [...] ira" (VI.475). His crime of slaughtering the innocent and defenceless taking refuge in the temple is described as sacrilege,

> [...] Sic ille profanus
> Commaculatque sacros postes iurandaque Penis
> Iunonis simulacra sue vultusque deorum
> Terrificos, (VI.480-3),

and Petrarch mocks this libation of slaughter:

> Hec sacra contentus diis persolvisse marinis,
> Dux ferus et celi contemptor[165] maximus alti (VI.484-5).

Hannibal's ignorance of and contempt for divine matters is then emphasised with his address - "tu quisquis es ille, deorum / Maxime" (VI.494-5), and his reference to Jupiter as "Ausonii defensor perfide mundi" (VI.497). When defeated, he goes "Accusansque omnes hominesve deosve" (VII.1124), and shuns temples – "non publica templa [.../...] petiisse" (VII.1128-9). Sophonisba is also used to emphasise the religious difference between the two sides. She is the only character to travel to hell, and to be specifically positioned there, and functions as a substitute for the epic hero whom Petrarch is unwilling to show in a pagan hell. He can condemn her as an enemy both

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[164] By contrast, Rome is in Hannibal's own words "Urbs accepta deis" and "divum domus" (Africa VIII.992, 994).
[165] Seagraves (1976, p. 287) also points out that Vergil describes Mezentius as "contemptorque deum" (Aeneid VIII.7).

of Rome and of virtue, and associate her with hell, where doing the same of his hero would be less desirable. In his description of her, Petrarch includes references to Venus and Jupiter. Venus is used to describe her beauty (59-60), and the Jupiter mentioned is that of Ovid, who would be interested in an attractive woman.[166] These references, combined with the physical way in which she is described, and the gods she chooses to call on ("per sidera testor / Alta poli, regumque fidem Manesque deosque" - V.150-1),[167] cast her in a particular light: she is a doomed pagan, with no hope of redemption. Massinissa's vain idea that she would charm the gods ("Dulcia non celum mulcentia" V.538) is again used by Petrarch as a sign of incomprehension of the divine,[168] and Massinissa is condemned by his desire that he and Sophonisba be a single shade in hell ("O utinam infernis etiam nunc una latebris / Umbra simus" 5.546ff).[169] His assumption that he will be in hell is contrasted with his view that Scipio will go to heaven:

> O utinam infernis etiam nunc una latebris
> Umbra simus, liceat pariter per claustra vagari
> Mirtea [...] (V.546-8)
>
> Ille quidem astrigeros tractus celumque tenebit
> Dux sacer, humanis in totum moribus impar (V.555-6).[170]

But Scipio is not the only one destined for heaven, as Petrarch suggests that all Romans under him will also end up there. Hannibal is filling heaven with dead Romans, "Complevit celum

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[166] Sophonisba's beauty is such that Jupiter would desire her - "Stabat candore nivali / Frons alto miranda Iovi" (V.22-3), and "tum brachia quali / Iupiter arctari cupiat per secula nexu" (V.51-2). But clearly the Jupiter referred to here is not the Christian God of the Africa, but the pagan Jupiter of the Metamorphoses.

[167] Sophonisba's inclusion of "regumque fidem" is purposefully out of place in this address to divinities. The Manes, gods of the underworld, reveal her pagan mindset that cannot comprehend redemption, and she uses "deosque", a non-specific reference to the gods in general. These four references add to the picture of a woman who, as a corrupting influence on a noble warrior, is allotted a place in hell. Compare Scipio's prayer, when he calls on Jupiter, the Sun, the Penates, and *patria* (I.353ff) – in other words, he prays to God and country.

[168] Note too Scipio's reference to Massinissa's fearlessness towards the gods – "Massinissa, ingens, - quem nec turbata fatigent / Equora, nec toto descendens Iupiter igne, / Non ferus infesto concurrens numine Mavors" (VI.149-51). Scipio says this as a form of praise, but if Jupiter is the Christian God, then this lack of fear is surely a bad thing. Even if the "empty" pagan gods are meant here, one might still expect respect that indicated piety.

[169] Cf. Dante's Francesca and Paolo, who show that such a union in hell brings no joy ("miseria" Inferno V.123).

[170] On Scipio's heavenly resting place, see also Africa II.181-2, 261-2.

nostris ferus Hanibal umbris" (I.418), and this is where Scipio seems to believe his warriors will go when they die:

> Miles Romane, precor te:
> Aut vince aut morere: mecum nunc ultima tenta.
> Hec via vel Romam, vel certo tramite ducit
> Ad superos. [...] (VII.1063-6).

It appears that those who belong to the city that becomes the city of God are to be saved, in contrast with their enemies. However, there are two difficulties in the notion that Petrarch is categorically enforcing a mode of impiety and damnation on Rome's enemies, and piety and a Christian compatibility on the Romans. Firstly, even if we accept Petrarch's defence of Mago's dying speech as universally human, we need to look further at the moment of his death:

> [...] Dixit; tum liber in auras
> Spiritus egreditur, spatiis unde altior equis
> Despiceret Romam simul et Carthaginis urbem,
> Ante diem felix abiens [...] (VI.913-6).

His soul rises as it leaves his body, and he looks back on Rome "altior".[171] The question of whether he rises to heaven is left open: while Petrarch seems not to have Dante's concern for keeping pagans out of heaven (see Scipio's family in Books I-II), there is no specific reference to heaven here, thus no real reason for assuming that this is an apotheosis. The second problem is the curious parallel drawn between Christ and Hasdrubal, who leads the freed Carthaginian prisoners back to their ships like God freeing souls from hell:

> Navigat in patriam, victor, captivaque secum
> Agmina mittuntur. Liceat terrestria celo
> Equare, eternis mortalia, maxima parvis:
> Sic prope descendens celo sua vincla resolvit
> Captivis antiqua potens et Tartara fregit
> Voce Deus secum in patriam miseranda reducens
> Agmina et exhaustas longis cruciatibus umbras. (VIII.998-1004).

While Petrarch adds a note of caution with "Liceat", this is still an extraordinary description of Rome's recent enemy, and even Scipio himself is nowhere shown to be this similar to Christ.

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[171] The similarity with Arcita's apotheosis in the Teseida would seem to suggest further that Petrarch edges Mago towards something more than paganism, though the passage seems more Ciceronian than Dantean.

Hasdrubal has come to accept religion in spite of his background, as revealed just before this episode, where a senator doubts the validity of Hasdrubal's oath on the gods:

> Dicite per quos
> Subsistet pax ista deos fedusque secundum;
> Nam primos sprevistis, (VIII.838-40),

and is reassured by Hasdrubal:

> [...] Tunc fronte modesta
> Hasdrubal assurgit paulum, "Perque" inquit "eosdem
> Periuris adeo infestos iurabimus istam
> Pacem alia servare fide" [...] (VIII.840-3).

While Petrarch thus shows that the impious can become pious, the full import of the simile of Christ remains mysterious.[172]

The character of Scipio and the suggestion of his divine origin constitute the culmination of the idea that virtuous Roman pagans are compatible with the future of Rome as the seat of Christianity while the pagan Carthaginian enemy is not.[173] There are three mentions of his divine birth in the poem. Firstly, Laelius hints at it in his description of Scipio to Syphax:

> Non illum nostro iuvenem de more creatum
> Dixeris; atque ideo non omnia falsa est
> Fama virum super astra levans. Nam protinus alto
> Persuasum est multis hominem hunc descendere celo. (IV.101-4),

and he describes the story of the serpent that, he says, is well known – "Fabula sed vulgo nota est" (IV.106). The story has travelled far enough for Hannibal also to know and refute it – "cuius dant credula summis / Secula numinibus [...] ortum" (VII.199-200). Petrarch's third mention of it occurs in Scipio's triumph – "generisque ferebat / Etherei frons alma fidem" (IX.340-1), and its presence here suggests its significance. Just as the heroes of classical epic

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[172] Petrarch's sympathy towards Hasdrubal at this point could be partly explained by a parallel between the poet and the Carthaginian: Hasdrubal becomes a tourist of Rome, just as Petrarch himself was, and his desire to see Rome ("Quodque libens longinqua petam super equora, Romam / Et mundi vidisse caput" VIII.855-6) and joy on seeing the city ("non aliter stupuit..." VIII.858) no doubt stem from Petrarch's own enthusiasm. Nevertheless, the Christ simile seems somewhat extreme.

have divine blood in them (most notably, of course, Aeneas),[174] so too Scipio is shown to be something more than human.[175] However, it seems unlikely that Petrarch would have believed the serpent story to be literally true, so one might ask how he justified including such a story from a historical point of view. When he says in the triumph that Scipio has a heavenly origin, Petrarch does not appear to mean this in the sense that Vergil meant Aeneas had a divine parent (Venus), as he does not link him to any particular divinity. This leaves open the question of what kind of divine origin is implied: whether he parallels Christ, as J. Foster (1979, p. 280) suggests, or whether he is divine in origin in that his soul comes from heaven (in accordance with the general neo-platonic view on the origin of souls, as illustrated for example by the New Man in the Anticlaudianus).

Other divine aspects to Scipio's characterisation include his echo of Christ's words on his fate –

> I modo qua ceptum est, patrieque ignosce furenti;
> Nescit enim quid agat. (Africa III.20-1).[176]

Laelius' description suggests he is more than mortal,

> Atque hominem supra: vix illum fulgidus equat
> Iuppiter aut puro pharetratus in ethere Phebus (IV.68-9),

though the context of this concerns his physique. Scipio also gleams in battle like Apollo (Christ) – VII.750ff, and is described with a sun metaphor - 220-31.[177] He is akin to the gods,

> [...] Modo fama per omnem
> Volvitur Hesperiam, iuvenem venisse supernis
> Dîs similem. [...] (IV.90-2),

and stands out over other mortals in a simile that links him with light:

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[173] This has its origin in the classical world: the Oxford Classical Dictionary (p. 398) notes "The so-called 'Scipionic legend' (in its later form Scipio is the son of Jupiter) had already come into existence [just after the time of his triumph]". See Scullard (1970) passim.
[174] Seagraves notes that "nate dea" is the third most frequent epithet Vergil uses to describe Aeneas (1976, p. 291). This suggests the importance of his divine background to the poem, and it is perhaps not surprising that Petrarch might also be interested in reproducing this aspect of Aeneas in his own hero.
[175] His men also think God commands them through him (IV.144).
[176] Luke 23.34. Scullard (1970, p. 14) discusses the popular ancient view that Scipio was divinely inspired.
[177] See Bernardo (1962), p. 40.

Vincitur ut celo species telluris opace,
Florida sic omnes tellus premit Itala terras;
Utque nitet celi pars purior una sereni,
Italia sic Roma potens prefulget in ipsa;
Solque velut radiis fulgentia sidera vincit,
Scipio sic omnes superat. (Africa IV.95-100).

(Light is of course Dante's image for God in the Comedy.) Laelius also talks of his piety (his worship at Jupiter's tomb), and his faith – "Quanta fides superum" (IV.143). His anger is like that of the gods – "haud aliter quam si Iovis ira trisulcum / Torsisset male firma domus in culmina telum" (IV.233-4), and in battle he is like Jupiter – "Non tecta relinquunt / Ocius imbelles Iovis instimulante columbe / Armigero" (IV.287-9).[178] Bernardo argues that Scipio's role in the Massinissa and Sophonisba episode shows that "not only is he a leader of men and nations, but a savior of souls", and that his virtues are more than human, and thus allow him to create Rome as city of man and city of God.[179] This is the sort of sentiment St Peter has towards Scipio in the Comedy, "l'alta provedenza che con Scipio / difese a Roma la gloria del mondo" (Paradiso XXVII.61-2),[180] and leads to Bergin and Wilson's description of him as both a Roman conqueror and a Christian saint (1977, p. x).[181]

While the limitations of his pagan historical narrative prevent Petrarch from making Scipio overtly Christian, he connects him to a Christian future by hinting at a Christian compatibility, and by connecting them with poetry, which bridges the gap between the two eras. As a result of Petrarch's focus on these two themes (Christianity and poetry) in his presentation of his hero, Scipio serves as a positive example for a Christian age, succeeding where Walter of Châtillon's Alexander fails.

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[178] Also, "Sic atra serenat / Nubila pacifico despectans Iupiter ore" (IV.316ff).
[179] (1962), pp. 30, 158.
[180] See Bernardo (1962), p. 169.
[181] Mann (1984, p. 51) suggests the same.

Conclusion.

The Comedy, Teseida and Africa all deal with contradictory and conflicting issues that arise from attempts to harmonise classical and medieval influences in a single work. All three poems suggest the value of lessons from the ancient world, while at the same time attempting to recast and present this value in terms more relevant and accessible to a medieval Christian readership.

Rather than being the source of the problem, on account of an expectation of gods and warrior heroes, the epic genre proves to be a suitable vehicle for these complex enterprises. Not only does the genre have strong classical associations that create a sense of authority, but it also demonstrates an ability for change and development, and the scope to encompass new forms and subjects. Epic provides Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch with the space within which to work through complex issues of narration such as the divine, the role of poetry, and the potential within a hero, and, in the context of the time, it presents a palatable and familiar framework for the reader.

The Comedy is generally held to be the most successful resolution of the conflicting demands of pagan and Christian, and classical and medieval, and its influence on subsequent literature and art bears testimony to this. Although all three poets work within an epic tradition, Dante's choice in portraying a Christian universe through the eyes of a medieval Christian poet-hero provides him with a different starting point from Petrarch and Boccaccio, and sets the poem on a clear religious direction from the beginning. The choices made by Boccaccio and Petrarch contain their own inherent difficulties, and in this sense the two face a harder challenge in reconciling classical and medieval Christian religious ideologies with their respective mythological and classical worlds. The difficulties faced by Boccaccio are somewhat eased by the aid of his glosses in explaining aspects of his poem such as his use of gods, and his mythological subject provides an opportunity

for allegorical explanation. Petrarch's choice of a historical subject that can be held up against its historical source, presents him with the difficult task of composing a convincing Latin epic that nevertheless takes account of medieval developments concerning religion, the need for expressing truth, and new epic models. While the Africa may seem unsatisfactory on some level - its unfinished state suggests Petrarch's inability to resolve certain concerns - it nevertheless serves as an ambitious and serious attempt to tackle difficult issues.

The continuing epic tradition to which all three poems belong provides important precedents for the development and exploration of key areas of epic, and furnishes the poets with the basis on which to take the examples of their twelfth century predecessors even further. Concerns that run through medieval epic are continuing ones, and pass beyond Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio to be faced by poets such as Tasso, Sannazaro, and Milton. Rather than singling Petrarch out as beginning the process of restoration of classical epic, I suggest that we see all three poems as engaging with and contributing unique and shared elements to a long history of the epic genre.

Epic provides a connection between the ancient and medieval worlds, and serves as a suitable vehicle for the medieval interest in antiquity that continues throughout the Middle Ages. The appeal of Rome, which bridges the gap between pagan and Christian through its two incarnations as Empire and Church, parallels the appeal of epic, which, through adaptation and expansion, similarly makes the transition into and through the medieval world.

Appendix: A Brief Description of the Most Significant Medieval Latin Epics Mentioned in the Thesis.

Mid-12th century — **Ysengrimus, Nivard of Ghent.**

Ghent; 7 books; hexameters. Subject: beast-fable recounting the deeds and pranks of the wolf-monk Ysengrimus, and Reynard the fox.

1180s — **De bello troiano, Joseph of Exeter.**

France; 6 books; hexameters. Subject: Trojan War, from its causes to the fall of Troy.

c.1182 — **Alexandreis, Walter of Châtillon.**

Reims; 10 books; hexameters. Subject: achievements of Alexander the Great, from boyhood to death.

c.1184 — **Anticlaudianus, Alain of Lille.**

France; 9 books; hexameters. Subject: allegory concerning the virtues, involving a trip by Prudence to heaven to collect a new human soul with which to refresh the human race.

13th century — **Troilus, Albert of Stade.**

Germany; 6 books; elegiacs. Subject: the Trojan War, including its causes and the fall of the city.

Bibliography.

Notes

- Bibliographical references within the thesis are given by author's surname and date of publication only, with full bibliographical details provided here.

- References within the thesis to "Cetedoc" refer to the Library of Christian Latin Texts, which is the electronic database constructed from the corrected versions of the Corpus Christianorum Series Latina. References to Patrologia Latina also refer to the electronic database rather than to the printed version.

- References to and quotations from Dante commentaries within the thesis are taken from the electronic texts of the Dartmouth Dante Project.

- In some cases, more than one edition of a text has been cited in the bibliography. Quotations in the text are taken from the most recent available edition.

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