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PLAYING AN EPIC GAME: GAMES AND GENRE IN BOCCACCIO'S *TESEIDA DELLE NOZZE D'EMILIA*

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To Alice and Beatrice

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the *Teseida delle nozze d'Emilia* through the lens of its representation of games. The *Teseida* is a relatively understudied work in the field of Italian studies, although it has received more attention from English scholars, as it served as a model for Chaucer. Likewise, the relationship between sports, games, and literature has received scarce attention in the study of medieval literature. This dissertation asserts that the *Teseida's* games are privileged spaces within the work for the negotiation and formation of individual and collective identities and poetic authority as well as for the exploration philosophical concepts, such as the roles of agency, chance, and Fate. This dissertation therefore contributes to literary scholarship on the *Teseida* as well as to scholarship on medieval sports and games by exploring how games are employed to produce meaning within the literary text. Because the issues that game play brings to the fore are also those which inform the *Teseida's* position within the generic traditions of epic and romance, the analysis of games undertaken in this dissertation sheds light on the generic alignment of the text and how Boccaccio combines the epic and romance traditions in the *Teseida*. The first chapter analyses the concept of the prize in the *Teseida*, and argues that, rather than a romance prize, Emilia functions as a gift whose exchange forms the basis of the male collective. The second chapter approaches the question of ludic violence by analyzing the treatment of inter and intra textual references to martial combat, both in classical epic and in the first two books of the *Teseida*, in the representation of the "giuoco a marte". The third chapter confronts the contingency of the "giuoco a marte" and the extent to which it allows for human agency to be determinate. I argue that the prayers to Mars and Venus reflect epic determinacy and romance indeterminacy and that the divine interventions dramatize the intersection of contingency and necessity in agonistic sports. The final chapter approaches the funeral games as

the locus of poetic negotiation, in which Boccaccio establishes the superior position of poetry and poetic representation relative to visual representation through his use of ekphrasis, asserts the primacy of epic in the *Teseida* through the prize awarded to Theseus, and assimilates poetic and natural creativity in the figure of Pan. While scholars have treated isolated aspects of the *Teseida's* games, there is no study devoted completely to the games in the work that accounts for the historical and philosophical complexity of the representation of games and sports. By focusing on how games mediate sociological, philosophical, and literary questions, this study demonstrates not only the importance of games to the text, but also demonstrates the complexity of games and the seriousness with which they should be approached in literary studies.

Introduction

Literature and games share many qualities that make the study of one complementary for the study of the other. As Alexis Tadié explains, "the interactions between these two distinct activities involve mutually recognizable principles: rules, conventions, public, community of readers or spectators, figures, industry, journalism, etc."[1] The relationship between sports and literature, however, extends beyond formal similarities. Literature also, Tadié explains, mediates the relationship between sport and society, "the relationship between sport and literature...extends beyond the important but simple level of representation. If our perception of sport can be mediated by the literary text, in most cases, literature enables the reader to reflect on sport in different, and perhaps, literary ways."[2] Although Tadié's observations on the nexus between sport and literature are based primarily on modern sports and modern literature, scholars have begun to notice a similar relationship between medieval games and medieval literature. In the introduction to her edited volume, *Games and Gaming in Medieval Literature*, Serina Patterson demonstrates "not only how medieval games are useful as a lens for examining social, ethical, and political issues, but also how ludic texts mediate cultural identity and interpersonal interaction in different cultural institutions."[3] Her volume is a crucial contribution to the study of both games and medieval literature, as its essays "reflect the widespread prevalence of medieval games as a vehicle for cultural signification" and "their multifaceted relation to literary discourses as systems of meaning, interactive experiences, and modes of representation."[4]

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[1] Alexis Tadié, prologue to *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 29, no.12 (2012): 1656.
[2] Ibid., 1655.
[3] Serina Patterson, "Introduction: Setting Up the Board," in *Games and Gaming in Medieval Literature*, ed. Serina Patterson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 4.
[4] Ibid., 15.

Patterson's volume begins to fill in a lacuna in medieval literary studies, which, with few exceptions, has largely been ignored: the nexus of games and literature.[5] Absent from Patterson's volume, however, is analysis of any work in the Italian vernacular. Boccaccio's *Teseida delle nozze d'Emilia* offers a narrative punctuated by games and game play and thus provides an excellent case study to explore how games function as a "vehicle for cultural signification" within the medieval Italian vernacular tradition.

The *Teseida delle nozze d'Emilia* is a twelve book romance epic written in the *volgare*. While the exact date and location of publication are debated, it was likely written during the late1330s and published either at the end of that decade or the early years of the next.[6] The work was likely begun during Boccaccio's time in Naples. Whether it was completed there or upon his return to Florence is unclear. As the work will be referenced throughout this study, a brief plot summary is necessary. A dedicatory letter written by the author to Fiammetta, in which he claims she will recognize both herself and the author in the main action, precedes the main narrative.[7] The main action, the dispute between two Theban cousins over Emilia, a former Amazon princess, begins in book three. Books one and two provide essential background knowledge about how Emilia and her sister Hippolyta came to Athens after Theseus and his men defeated the Amazons (book one), and how the Theban cousins came to Athens as prisoners after Theseus

[5] For possible explanations for this lacuna see Betsy McCormick, "Afterward: Medieval Ludens," in *Games and Gaming in Medieval Literature*, ed. Serina Patterson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 212-213.
[6] See Michael Sherberg, "The Girl Outside the Window," in *Boccaccio: a Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, ed. Victoria Kirkham, Michael Sherberg, and Janet Levarie Smarr (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 95. See also David Anderson, *Before the Knights' Tale: Imitation of Classical Epic in Boccaccio's Teseida* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 3-6.
[7] See Janet Levarie Smarr, *Boccaccio and Fiammetta: The Narrator as Lover* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 63.

defeated the cruel Theban King Creon at the behest of angry widows (book two). In book three, after seeing Emilia in the garden outside their prison window, first Arcita then Palemone (the Theban cousins) fall madly in love with her. Emilia, aware that she is being admired by the prisoners, adorns herself more carefully and makes more frequent visits to the garden outside their prison window. Arcita and Palemone don't quarrel over her immediately; instead, they initially are companions in suffering, both prisoners of Theseus and Love, equally hopeless in their love for Emilia.

Their friendship begins to turn to jealous rivalry at the end of book three, when, thanks to the negotiations of a friend, Theseus agrees to free Arcita from prison on the condition that he never return to Athens. Much of book four relates Arcita's travels and eventual return to Athens, where, disguised by physical changes from years of travelling and under the pseudonym Penteo, he becomes a servant in Theseus' royal court. In book five, Palemone's servant eventually recognizes Penteo to be Arcita, tells Palemone that his cousin has returned, and conspires with the doctor to release Palemone from prison for the night so he may reunite with Arcita/Penteo in the woods outside of Athens. The reunion quickly turns contentious, and their jealous rivalry turns violent when a fight breaks out between the two cousins over who should pursue Emilia. It just so happens that Theseus and members of his household, including Emilia, are also in the woods on a hunt. Emilia sees the knights fighting and alerts Theseus to the action. At first impressed by their passion, Theseus asks the knights to identify themselves. After learning the identity of the Thebans, Theseus agrees to not punish them for their transgressions, that is, returning against his will and escaping his prison, respectively, and to allow them to settle their dispute over Emilia in a tournament along with 100 men each to take place a year later. In the intervening year, the Thebans spend the year holding jousts and hosting guests as they await the

tournament. A catalog of heroes, who have come to Athens to partake in the tournament, occupies most of book six, preparations for the tournament, including prayers to patron deities Mars, Venus, and Diana by Arcita, Palemone, and Emilia, respectively, book seven. The tournament occupies all of book eight, and the beginning of book nine, when, after circling the theater in victory, Arcita receives an accidental, but ultimately fatal injury. The remainder of book nine relates post-tournament ceremonies and the marriage of Arcita and Emilia. Arcita's death and funeral, including funeral games occupy books ten and eleven. As requested by Arcita prior to his death, Emilia is given to Palemone as a bride following Arcita's death. Emilia's wedding to Palemone, which the Greek kings celebrate by staging "nuovi giuochi," occupies book twelve.

As can be gleaned from this brief summary, games and contests feature prominently in the work. The hunt, the tournament, jousts, and funeral games punctuate the main narrative. The prominence of games, attested not only by the frequency with which they appear in the text, but also by the fact that an entire book is occupied in the narration of a game from start to finish, suggests that games are an important structuring feature of the work, and that to understand the work one must understand its games—how they function within the text to both elucidate and explore the social, psychological, metaphysical and poetic debates that the work engages in and how they place the text in dialogue with other texts. While the games promise insight into the text, the text also can shed light on games. Indeed, by replacing military campaigns with a game to settle the central dispute over Emilia, Boccaccio invites a meditation on games: What is a game? How are games different from war? Do games promote or control violence? Moreover, by providing an extended description not only of the rules and the action of the game, but also the thoughts of the players and spectators, Boccaccio's tournament provides a unique opportunity to

analyze how games mediate relationships between teammates, opponents, and spectators, not to mention how the game shapes the subjectivity of the individuals involved. As Tadié states, "the language of literature sometimes offers a finer understanding of sport because it allows the reader to penetrate the consciousness of sportsmen through the artifice of fiction."[8]

Furthermore, the relevance of games to the *Teseida*, and the relevance of the *Teseida* to games becomes apparent when one considers that the *Teseida* itself is a locus of play, in that Boccaccio engages in a complex generic game, whereby he simultaneously attempts to conform to and push against the conventions of genre by at times blending and juxtaposing generic motifs and subverting generic expectations.[9] The confluence of genre in the work makes its representation of games all the more complex and relevant for literary studies. Since the games function as a space of generic negotiation (in so far as the representation of ludic practices is mediated not only by the historic moment in which it was produced, but also by the treatment of games in the literary traditions from which it borrows and upon which it models itself) the metaphysical, psychological, and sociological insight gained by an analysis of the *Teseida*'s games carries generic implications. Both epic and romance, the two main generic traditions which inform the *Teseida*, have established norms with regards to the functions and types of

[8] Tadié, "Prologue," 1653.

[9] Andrea Gazzoni both describes Boccaccio as "playing the game of genres" in the *Teseida* and the "game of generic expectations" that occurs throughout the text. See Andrea Gazzoni, "Trecento Variations In The Epic Tradition: Dante's *Commedia*, Boccaccio's *Teseida*, And Petrarch's *Africa*" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania 2019), 139, 151, https://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/3599. Barbara Nolan has also identified the *Teseida* as a space of play, although she is less concerned with generic play and focuses instead on the play between "moral paradigms." Barbara Nolan, *Chaucer and the Tradition of the Roman Antique* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 160. Nolan reads the games in the *Teseida* as a reflection of Theseus' temperance and reason. See Nolan, *Chaucer*, 186. Betsey McCormick lists the play with reader expectations as a way in which texts can encompass games. See McCormick, 212. For poetry as a game, see Michael Beaujour, "The game of Poetics," *Yale French Studies* 41, (1968): 58.

games and sport they feature. Therefore, on the one hand, the generic traditions which Boccaccio draws from shape the treatment of the games within the work. On the other hand, the games shape and articulate the position of the *Teseida* among multiple generic traditions.

Most recent scholarship on the poem can be divided into two main camps: that which is primarily concerned with the generic hybridization of the work, and that which interprets the work as a moral allegory. At times these two interests overlap. The emphasis on genre is invited by the text itself. Not only does it bear formal resemblance to classical epic, but the author claims in the poem's *explicit* to have succeeded in writing the first poem to treat Mars in the Italian *volgare*.[10] While a nineteenth century consensus was formed that the poem failed to meet its author's claims, and resembled medieval romance more than classical epic,[11] recent scholarship has attempted to provide a more nuanced appreciation of the negotiation of genres that Boccaccio stages in the work.[12]

In both camps, the generic and the allegorical, scholars have made observations about the games in support of their arguments. For instance, nearly every scholar concerned with genre lists the funeral games as an aspect of the poem which links the poem with the epic tradition. Little scholarly attention has been paid to the funeral games beyond this formal function, however. Indeed, to my knowledge, only three studies have analyzed the meaning of the funeral games within the work. Dominique Battles argues that, in placing the funeral games after the main conflict of his own narrative, Boccaccio intended the funeral games in the *Teseida* to look

[10] Michael Sherberg, "The Girl outside the Window," in *Boccaccio A Critical Guide to the Complete Works*, eds. Victoria Kirkham, Michael Sherberg, and Janet Levarie Smarr (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 96.
[11] For a summary and critique of this view, see Anderson, 1-23.
[12] The most recent study of genre in the *Teseida* is Gazzoni's. See Gazzoni, "Trecento Variations," 140-214.

forward chronologically to the Trojan conflict. She supports her argument by noting that all of the winners are linked in some way to the Trojan conflict, whether by mythographic links to Helen (often referenced in the *Teseida*'s glosses) or by way of their status as characters taken directly from the *Aeneid*.[13] James McGregor argues that the historiated prizes awarded to the winners of the games are emblematic responses to Arcita's death and promote the arts as "antidotes to the *furor* that caused it."[14] In her doctoral dissertation, Francesca Galligan argues that the emphasis on poetic activity in the stories featured on the prizes contributes to the poem's characterization of Arcita as a hero according to the notion of heroism exemplified in the *Divine Comedy*.[15] My work builds on both McGregor's and Galligan's, by exploring how the funeral games and the prizes awarded during the sequence articulate Boccaccio's poetic authority. However, my reading takes into greater account the *agon* of funeral games and assigns greater importance to how the competitors, prizes, and poetics of the sequence characterize the funeral games as a locus of poetic and heroic negotiation. By focusing on the games as the site of poetic competition, my reading underscores how poetic activity is itself a competitive game.

More scholarly attention has been paid to the "giuoco a marte". Some argue that its resemblance to a tournament aligns the poem with the romance tradition and removes it from the domain of epic.[16] Rita Librandi argues that the description of the "giuoco" in the *Teseida*, aligns

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[13]Dominique Battles, *The Medieval Tradition of Thebes : History and Narrative in the Roman De Thebes, Boccaccio, Chaucer, and Lydgate* (New York : Routledge, 2004),78-9.
[14] James H. McGregor, *The shades of Aeneas: The Imitation of Vergil and the History of Paganism in Boccaccio's Filostrato, Filocolo, and Teseida* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 87.
[15] Francesca Galligan, "Epic Poetry in the Trecento: Dante's *Comedy*, Boccaccio's *Teseida*, and Petrarch's *Africa*" (Ph.D. diss., Wadham College, University of Oxford, 2003), 128-9. https://www.academia.edu/648754/Epic_poetry_of_the_Trecento_Dantes_Comedy_Boccaccios_Teseida_and_Petrarchs_Africa.
[16] See, for instance, Guglielmo Volpi, *Il Trecento* (Milano:F. Vallardi, 1898), 95, 96; Piero Boitani, *Chaucer and Boccaccio*, (Oxford: Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and

with the tournaments held at the Angevin court.[17] Perhaps the most consequential study for both the question of genre and the role of the games has been David Anderson's analysis of Boccaccio's use of Statian material in the *Teseida*. Against the notion of the "failed epic" developed in the nineteenth century, Anderson argues that Boccaccio's aim was not to recreate classical epic as the nineteenth century defined it, but to rather follow a program of "allusive transformation" of the *Thebaid*.[18] In his analysis of the "giuoco a marte", Anderson notes repeated and systematic references to the *Thebaid* funeral games, particularly the chariot race, over the course of the game. Particularly relevant for an understanding of the "giuoco a marte" is Anderson's argument that Arcita's fall and subsequent death realizes a death manqué following Polynices' similar accident in the chariot race, where the narrator states that the violence of the war would have been avoided if Polynices' injuries had been fatal. Thus, according to Anderson, Boccaccio creates an "alternate ending" for the fraternal strife that animates his own epic.[19] Anderson also touches upon the relationship between war and games, noting that Boccaccio's game exceeds the scope of epic funeral games, but does not reach the scale of epic war. Thus, the register of the poem's action aligns with the "middle diction" that Boccaccio uses throughout the work.[20] Anderson's work is important not only because it sheds light on how Boccaccio adapted his most explicit classical source, but also because it contextualizes Boccaccio's generic objectives. Most relevant for the topic of games, Anderson's suggestion that the *Teseida* plays

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Literature, 1977), 10; Luigi Surdich, *Boccaccio* (Roma:Editori Laterza, 2001),53. Disa Gambera states that, "chivalrous discourse can install Emilia as a prize for the winner of the tournament..." See Disa Gambera, "Women and Walls: Boccaccio's *Teseida* and the Edifice of Dante's Poetry," in *Boccaccio and Feminist Criticism*, eds. Thomas C. Stillinger and F. Regina Psaki (Chapel Hill: Annali d'Italianistica, 2006), 57.

[17] See Rita Librandi, "Cortesia e caveleria nel *Teseida*," *Medioevo Romanzo* 4, (1977): 58-72.

[18] Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale*, 1-23. For quote, see p. 23.

[19] Ibid., 97-119.

[20] Ibid., 119.

out an alternate ending which averts the gruesome violence of the *Thebaid* suggests that the "giuoco a marte" effectively contains violence, a suggestion I develop further in the second chapter of this study. While his analysis of the references to the *Thebaid* funeral games in the "giuoco a marte" is thorough and convincing, Anderson does not devote much space in his study to Boccaccio's funeral games scene, and concludes that the abbreviated description of the funeral games (relative to sequences in classical epic) "points up the contrast between Boccaccio's 'giuoco a marte' and the athletic games that provided the model for it."[21]

Anderson's work, while an indubitable contribution to the scholarship on the *Teseida*, has its limits, however. As others have noted, Anderson's study does not account for the generic complexity which arises from the multiplicity of sources which Boccaccio incorporated into his text.[22] Therefore, while his observations on the relationship between war and games is convincing, it is nevertheless based only on a comparative reading with one of the *Teseida's* interlocutors. In this respect, Francesco Bruni's consideration of the tournament's sources is more comprehensive, in that it acknowledges the tournament as the site of generic negotiation which blends elements from epic and romance, although Bruni does not offer a close reading of the text as does Anderson. Bruni suggests that the *Aeneid's* funeral games sequence, in which the relationship between games and war is explicit, may have served as inspiration for the "giuoco a marte." At the same time, Bruni notes that Boccaccio borrowed motifs from romance and likens the Athenian theater in which the "giuoco a marte*"* takes place to the loggia from which tournaments were often viewed in a gloss accompanying the description of the theater. Bruni argues that the gloss reflects the contemporary ludic practices in Naples, and cites a passage from

[21] Ibid., 117-19. For quote, see p.119.
[22] Gazzoni, "Trecento Variations," 194-195.

the *Elegia di Madonna Fiammetta* that features similar language to the gloss. Like the tournaments, he notes, Theseus's "amorosa...battaglia," produces death and injury, but in a "cornice ludica."[23] Overall, Bruni asserts that Theseus remains a figure of control throughout the work.[24]

James McGregor disagrees with this assessment in his studies of Boccaccio's representation of classical antiquity in the *Teseida*. For instance, he concludes in *The Shades of Aeneas* that the references to Virgilian death scenes in the tournament indicate that Theseus has lost control of the game, the violence of which approximates warfare.[25] Elsewhere, McGregor had identified the theater as modeled on Roman amphitheaters, which he argues aligns the action with the barbaric Roman gladiatorial contests rather than chivalrous tourneying.[26] McGregor argues that some details of Boccaccio's "giuoco" align with Isidore of Seville's description of the "ludus equestrium" dedicated to Mars, which Isidore condemns, along with all ancient *ludi* dedicated to the gods, as forms of demon worship. Given the similarities, McGregor argues that Boccaccio's "giuoco" not only illustrates Theseus' failure, but that his use of the gods in the "giuoco" "reflects the demonic trend in early Christian polemics."[27] While it is certainly plausible that Boccaccio based his "giuoco" on the gladiatorial contests described by Livy and Isidore, there are two problems with McGregor's conclusion. First, as Anderson has pointed out, divine intervention occurs in the *Thebaid's* funeral games, so McGregor's claim that divine

[23] Francesco Bruni, *Boccaccio, l'invenzione della letteratura mezzana*, (Bologna : Il Mulino, 1990),196-7. For quote, see p.197.
[24] Ibid., 193.
[25] McGregor, *The shades of Aeneas*, 65-76.
[26] James H. McGregor, "Boccaccio's Athenian Theater: Form and Function of an Ancient Monument in *Teseida*" *MLN* 99, no. 1 (January 1984): *passim.*
[27] Ibid., 39. See also James H. McGregor, *The image of antiquity in Boccaccio's "Filocolo," "Filostrato," and "Teseida"* (New York: P. Lang, 1991), 151-159.

intervention in *ludi* was unprecedented, and therefore clearly points to "Christian polemics" must be mistaken.[28] Furthermore, the first sonnet of book nine, which precedes Venus' intervention in the tournament by infernal proxy by two stanzas (which McGregor cites as evidence of the "demonic" nature of the gods), mentions Arcita's "doloroso fato," which, the gloss defines as "la dolorosa provedenza di Dio per Arcita".[29] Given the proximity to Venus' intervention, Venus can thus be read as an agent of divine providence, which undercuts any "demonic" attributes given to Venus in the tournament scene. The larger problem, however, has to do with McGregor's refusal to consider the "giuoco" as a composite of multiple sources and generic influences. He believes efforts, such as Librandi's, to identify chivalric motifs in the "giuoco" as patently misguided, arguing that:

> Because the gods are involved in them, and because the gods are demons, the games are fundamental pagan religious institutions completely at odds with Christian theology and providential history. This is precisely how Boccaccio portrays this game and how he uses it in his poem. It is, despite Theseus' misconception of it an epitome of paganism. It is also the very pivot around which the action and the meaning of this poem turn. If this is lost to anachronism, all is lost.[30]

Although Librandi also overstates the influence of chivalry in the representation of the tournament at the expense of other influences, one cannot deny that they exist in the poem. The investiture scenes which precede the "giuoco" are strong indications of chivalric influence,[31] as is the presence of Emilia and other ladies in the audience.[32] Likewise, McGregor does not

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[28] Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale*, 133n10.
[29] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 9.1.1 and accompanying gloss. All citations of the *Teseida* are taken from Limentani's edition published as volume two of Vittore Branca's *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*. Giovanni Boccaccio, *Teseida delle Nozze D'Emilia*, ed. Alberto Limentani (Milano: Mondadori, 1964). For fate and divine providence in the *Teseida* see Piero Boitani, *Chaucer and Boccaccio*, 19.
[30] McGregor, *The Image of Antiquity*, 159.
[31] Librandi, "Corte e Cortesia," 59.
[32] Ibid., 62, and Bruni, *Boccaccio*, 195.

consider the how Boccaccio's use of funeral game motifs, documented by Anderson, contextualize the violence of the "giuoco" relative to war.[33] Although, like gladiatorial games, they were practiced by pagans, they nevertheless function differently in the epic tradition. This is especially important for the appearance of Erinis as Venus' proxy, which Anderson has argued is modeled on a passage in the *Thebaid*.[34] While the Statian intertext does not diminish her associations with furor and the infernal, at the very least it signals that Boccaccio is in dialogue with multiple texts and traditions, and that single elements may produce polyvalent, and even contradictory meanings.[35]

The "giuoco" does not come from one source, but several, which allows for multiple readings of the game. Jeffrey Hill notes that, even among modern sports aficionados, the meaning of a sport, and one could presume, individual games and matches, remains fluid and under negotiation:

> [Sport] is a rich assemblage of meanings, and the process through which these meanings are transmitted is an uncertain one. To put this point slightly differently, how people "read" sport might vary from person to person, place to place. But this system of negotiating meaning is important, for even the most active sport follower—s/he who plays, administers, and simply watches...—cannot "know" sport more than fractionally by this direct involvement...In short, how sport is *represented* and *mediated* to us is very important for what we understand sport, and by extension, society, to be.[36]

While McGregor argues that the game is mediated and represented in such a way as to condemn it, his argument is based only on one of the literary mediators present in the *Teseida*. It is entirely possible that the game can have significance beyond and even contradictory to McGregor's reading as a condemnation of pagan furor and idolatry.

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[33] Cf. Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale*, 132n5.
[34] Ibid., 107-8.
[35] Cf. Gambera, "Women and Walls," 43.
[36] Jeffrey Hill, *Sport and the Literary Imagination: Essays in History, Literature, and Sport* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 15.

McGregor's arguments, especially those in *The Shades of Aeneas*, have been influential. William Maisch's argument that the failure of Theseus to control violence is rooted in the breakdown of language, which eventually leads to a sacrificial crisis, is based on McGregor's assessment of the tournament's violence.[37] Margaret Hamilton has argued that Theseus's delusion that he can control violence, as asserted by McGregor, is matched by his delusion that "women must be vigilantly regulated to preserve civilized order."[38] Despite his influence, however, I will argue in my second chapter that McGregor's conclusions, particularly those in *The Shades of Aeneas*, are based on a misunderstanding of the game as defined by Theseus and the distinction between ludic and spontaneous violence. I will clarify how the "cornice ludica" identified, but not analyzed, by Bruni is reflected in the intertextual passages that link the ludic to spontaneous violence. By demonstrating how Boccaccio's inter- and intra- textual passages reflect the play quality of the violence they depict, my reading not only confirms that the violence of the game remains within the ludic sphere, but also supports the claim that the *Teseida* is the locus of poetic game play.[39]

In addition to the violence of the tournament and its relationship to epic games and epic warfare, critics both concerned with generic questions and moral allegory have explored the roles of the pagan gods in the outcome of the tournament. From a generic perspective, the gods Mars

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[37] William Maisch, "Boccaccio's *Teseida*: The Breakdown of Difference and Ritual Sacrifice" *Annali d'Italianistica* 15, (1997): *passim*.
[38] Margaret Franklin, "Imagining and Reimagining Gender: Boccaccio's *Teseida delle nozze d'Emilia* and its Renaissance Visual Legacy," Humanities 5, no. 1 (2016): 9, https://doi.org/10.3390/h5010006.
[39] Cf. Nolan, *Chaucer*, 189. Regarding the representation of the "battle-game," in which Boccaccio imitates "the figurative language and classical topoi of classical heroic poetry," Nolan writes that, "it is as if the poet intends to imitate the design of Teseo's noble, moderate game of war." My reading explores the manner in which Boccaccio's representation of the game's violence reflects not simply the moderation of violence, but the interpretation of violence within the ludic sphere.

and Venus are representative of epic and romance, respectively, and thus their interventions in the action are read as a commentary on the generic and thematic priorities of the work.[40] Jane Everson's study, which analyses the tradition of the Italian Romance Epic inaugurated by Boccaccio and expanded upon by Pulci and Boiardo, identifies some of the questions raised by the "giuoco a marte". She states, "what is most stimulating about the account of the battle is precisely the conflicting, contrasting tones used, and which remain unresolved: serious and/or playful, tragedy and/or comedy, real life and/or spectacle."[41] However, Everson stops short of a detailed reading of how the poetics of the text reflect these concepts, instead bypassing the questions by claiming that the text remains ambiguous, and therefore does not consider how answers to these questions impact the generic program of the work. It is precisely these questions which this study will take up.

From the perspective of moral allegory, the gods are treated as representative of the concupiscent and irascible appetites, which must be brought under Theseus's sway.[42] Whether as generic markers or figures of moral allegory, the interventions of the gods in the tournament bring up questions regarding the metaphysics of causality which are explored throughout the text.[43] I will argue for another reading of Mars and Venus based on the specific context in which

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[40] See, for example, Jane E. Everson, *The Italian Romance Epic in the Age of Humanism* (New York : Oxford University Press, 2001), 180-182 and Francesca Galligan, "Epic Poetry in the Trecento: Dante's *Comedy*, Boccaccio's *Teseida*, and Petrarch's *Africa*" (Ph.D. diss., Wadham College, University of Oxford, 2003), 86-95.
[41] Jane Everson, The Italian Romance Epic, 180.
[42] Janet Smarr, *Boccaccio and Fiammetta,* 69. Robert Hollander, *Boccaccio's Two Venuses* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 57-65. Victoria Kirkham, "Chiuso parlare in Boccaccio's *Teseida*," in *Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio: Studies in the Italian Trecento in honor of Charles S. Singleton*, eds. Aldo S. Bernardo and Anthony L. Pellegrini (Bighampton: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1983), 327. Kirkham treats the numerology of book eight and the "giuoco" on pp. 318-19, Janet Smarr, "Boccaccio and the Stars: Astrology in the *Teseida*," *Traditio* 35, (1979): 312, 316.
[43] Piero Boitani, *Chaucer and Boccaccio*, 19-20.

they appear (a game of skill) and the approaches to ludic indeterminacy articulated by Arcita and Palemone in book seven.

The tournament has also received some attention by scholars interested in the *Teseida*'s presentation of gender. Feminist criticism of the work originated with Carla Freccero's essay in which she considers how Boccaccio employs romance to domesticate the Amazons and undermine their epic heritage. She concludes that this strategy of domestication is not entirely successful, as Diana serves as an emblem of the "resistance to the traffic in women" exhibited by Emilia.[44] Feccero's work has inspired that of Margaret Franklin, who argues that the portrayal of the Amazons in the *Teseida* "def[ies] entrenched assumptions of female alterity and inadequacy" by highlighting the virtue and reason of the Amazonian women. In so doing, she argues, the text problematizes Theseus' repudiation of them.[45] Disa Gambera and Hope Weissman have also approached the topic of gender in the *Teseida* by analyzing how the text portrays women as the object of the male gaze. While Gambera does not consider how the gaze functions in the tournament, she does note that Emilia functions as "the prize in the competition between the two lovers," and suggests that Boccaccio expresses uncertainty as to whether the substitution of Emilia for Thebes successfully contains Theban violence.[46] Ultimately, she argues, it is Emilia's body, described in book twelve, which serves to contain the violence which the poem aims to suppress.[47] More generally, Gambera considers Boccaccio's indulgence in the gaze of female bodies as a means of negotiating poetic authority, whereby Boccaccio challenges the poetics of

[44] Carla Freccero, "From Amazon to Court Lady: Generic Hybridization in Boccaccio's *Teseida*," *Comparative Literature Studies* 32, no.2 (1995): *passim.* For quote, see p.237.
[45] Margaret Franklin, "Silencing Female Reason in Boccaccio's *Teseida delle nozze d'Emilia*," *Medieval Feminist Forum: A Journal of Gender and Sexuality* 52, no. 1 (2016): *passim*., https://doi.org/10.17077/1536-8742.1988. For quote, see p.43.
[46] Gambera, "Women and Walls," 56, 57.
[47] Ibid., 63-65.

the gaze employed by Dante.[48] Weissman considers how the male gaze "becomes the primary means of registering male homosocial relationships" in the "triangulated story of Arcita-Emilia-Palemone."[49] Weissman considers Emilia's gaze on Arcita following his victory as a reversal of Arcita's and Palemone's gaze on Emilia in book three, and argues that the reversal juxtaposes female narcissistic desire with male homosocial desire.[50] In the first chapter of this study, I consider additional instances of the gaze in the tournament scene and how they register homosocial desire.

While scholars have treated the games in the *Teseida*, the treatment of the games is nearly always subordinated to a larger argument, and at times amounts to nothing more than a passing remark. Even the most sustained treatments of the games, such as Anderson's work, nevertheless approach the games from narrow, singular perspectives that do not always account for the philosophical complexity of play and game play. The scattered, albeit, at times, brief, treatment of the games across scholarship on the text supports, however, the idea that games can offer insight into the literary, psychological, sociological, and metaphysical stakes underpinning the text, and warrant the primary position in a study of the text. As the locus of sociological, philosophical, and literary negotiation, games produce meaning in complex ways, and thus should be considered from multiple perspectives.

Given the centrality of games to the *Teseida*, and the tournament in particular, I believe that the application of theories developed by sports philosophers and sociologists can contribute to a better understanding of the text and its generic negotiations. Many of the elements that

[48] Ibid., *passim*.
[49] Hope Weissman, "Aphrodite/Artemis // Emilia/Alison: The Semiotics of Perception," *Exemplaria* 2, no. 1 (1990): 101.
[50] Ibid., 105.

trouble generic categorization in the text are also the questions debated by sports theorists (gender, violence, chance vs. skill). This study, then, is primarily concerned with game-related questions informed by theories specific to games and game play. Although I attempt to articulate the implications of my arguments for the generic debates that surround the text, this work is first and foremost a study of games within the text, which, in turn, can inform discussions of genre. It is not, however, an in-depth consideration of late medieval genre, Boccaccio's conception of genre, or modern debates about genre in literature. Nevertheless, this is a literary study. As such, support for my arguments comes from the text itself. Although I occasionally reference sports history to support my arguments, this study is not a study of the history of sports, or the history of the tournament in fourteenth century Italy, nor does it focus primarily on how the games represented in the *Teseida* reflect contemporary ludic practices. Rather, it takes as its impetus the idea that sports and games offer a privileged locus for the analysis of philosophical, psychological, sociological, and, yes, literary questions given their rule-bound artifice, contingency, and generally social setting. Although some of the theories I apply to the *Teseida* were developed in response to modern sports, I believe that they are broad enough in scope to apply trans-historically to medieval sports and games. This is not to say that there aren't significant differences between medieval games and modern sports. Indeed, there are. However, these differences should not blind us to the similarities between medieval and modern sport, nor should they prevent us from using modern sports theory to tease out the complexities of medieval sport, so long as modern theories are applied judiciously.

It is worth briefly clarifying the terminology I will employ throughout this study, given the difficulty inherent in pinning down terms like "game," and "sport". Of course, "giuoco" is the term used by Boccaccio himself to describe the activities that I analyze in this study, for

which the English word "game" is the most appropriate. However, at times I use alternate terminology, such as "sport" or "contest". Allen Guttman divides games between contests and non-contests based on whether winning and losing are at stake. Leapfrog is a game, but not a contest *per se*, although Guttmann notes that almost any game can be made into a contest.[51] For sport, I intend a broad definition, such as "types of games that focus on physical skill."[52]

The first chapter is the most tangentially related to questions raised by sports philosophy, yet is nevertheless relevant to the topic of games and sports as it takes as its central question the role of the prize, which in the *Teseida* is ostensibly Emilia. I argue, however, that in order to fully understand the dynamics of the competition, it must be understood that the true prize is not Emilia, but Theseus's gift of Emilia in marriage, and thus the relationship that victory will establish between the winner and Theseus. I explore the generic implications of the gift-as-prize in terms of how the gift maintains the emphasis on public homosocial relationships as opposed to private amorous desire. I argue that Arcita's gaze in the tournament reveals that his desire for Emilia is a veil for his desire for the authority embodied by Theseus, which his gift confers. As a foil, I analyze Guinevere as prize in Chretien de Troyes' *Chevalier de la charrette* to demonstrate that Boccaccio's treatment of Emilia as prize deviates from that found in the romance, where the symbolic value of the prize is subordinated to the hero's private amorous

[51] Allen Guttmann, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 1-8.
[52] Heather Lynne Reid, *Introduction to the Philosophy of Sport* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012), 49. In the same volume, Reid offers an overview of the relationship between play and sport and games and sport. For Play and Sport see pp. 31-44, for Sport and games, see pp. 45-56. For a defense of the term "sport" to discuss pre-modern ludic activities against those who claim sports to be a unique modern phenomenon, see John McClelland, "Introduction: 'Sport' in Early Modern Europe," in *Sport and Culture in Early Modern Europe*, eds. John McClelland and Brian Merrilees (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2010), 23-36.

desire. In the *Teseida*, I argue, the gaze articulates Emilia's symbolic value as mediator of male relationships. I then argue that Arcita realizes his desire to embody Theseus's authority when he bestows Emilia upon Palemone prior to his death, and that the gift ultimately serves to restore the homosocial bonds of all three male protagonists and affirms male solidarity founded on the exchange of women.

In the second chapter I treat the question of violence in the *Teseida*. I argue that the resemblance of the action of the "giuoco a marte" to war does not constitute a transgression of the game, but it is the game, in so far as play is mimetic. I argue that the inter- and intra- textual references to scenes of spontaneous violence within the "giuoco" create mimetic distance between unregulated violence and the action of the "giuoco." Thus, while the passages acknowledge the similarities between ludic and spontaneous action, they also acknowledge how the ludic framework differentiates that action from spontaneous violence. I then argue that the imitative violence of the "giuoco" is a necessary component for the prevention of spontaneous violence, since it quickly transforms reciprocal violence into generative violence. It is precisely because of the imitative violence of the "giuoco" that the death of Arcita can be an act of generative violence which prevents the violence of both the Theban and Trojan conflicts.

In the third chapter I analyze how the representation of the game confronts contingency, human agency and the role of the gods in determining the outcome of the "giuoco a marte." Prior to my analysis of the "giuoco a marte," however, I briefly consider the association of Fortune and the spinning of her wheel with games and game play in Boethius's *De Consolatione Philosophiae* and Boccaccio's *Amorosa Visione* in order to clarify the Medieval conception of Fortune and contingency in the pursuit of earthly goods. I then argue that the interventions of the gods Mars and Venus, in response to the prayers articulated by Arcita and Palemone, dramatize

the paradoxical relationship between necessity and contingency inherent in agonistic games, whereby necessary contingency allows for the possibility of agency to be determinant. Thus, the tournament remains a game of skill in so far as skill is a possible, but not necessary determinant. Furthermore, I argue that the appeals of the heroes to their respective gods align them with generic traditions of epic and romance not simply in their association with love and war, but in their approaches to determinacy and indeterminacy.

The final chapter focuses primarily on the literary ramifications of ludic competition. Specifically, I focus on the epic tradition of funeral games as a locus for poetic competition to argue that Boccaccio's funeral games are more than a decorative, formal requirement of epic. Rather, I argue that Boccaccio distills the function of classical games as a site of metaliterary discourse and uses the games to engage in multidimensional poetic *agon*. On one level, poetry competes with other forms of representation through the use of ekphrasis, on another Boccaccio negotiates the place of his own epic within the tradition. In awarding Theseus with a shield bearing the triumphs of Phoebus, I argue that Boccaccio signals his own epic as a poetic triumph. Furthermore, in contrasting Phoebus's appearance on the shield and the impotent Phoebus whose hero, Admetus, loses in his event, I argue that Boccaccio underscores the dominance of epic over erotic elegy within his work. Finally, I argue that Boccaccio, in the figure of Pan, assimilates poetic and natural creativity.

Chapter 1: Eyes on the Prize: Gifts, the Gaze, and Genre in the "giuoco a marte"

Non isdegnare adunque il mio amore
Ch'a combatter per te fiero m'induce
ma con preghiere lo sommo Fattore
che creò te e ciascuna altra luce
tenta per me per lo mio onore
il fin del qual più là non si conduce
che per premio poterti possedere
e me per tuo in etterno tenere [1]

> Don't disparage my love that goads me to fight valiantly for you. Rather with prayers persuade the high creator that created you and every other light on behalf of me and my honor, the aim of which is none other than to be able to possess you as a prize and to consider myself yours eternally.[2]

As Arcita readies himself for battle in the tournament, he gazes at Emilia and asks her to intercede on his behalf so he may have her as his prize (per premio poterti possedere). Scholars have considered the competition for Emilia at the heart of the *Teseida* an indication of the influence of romance on the work.[3] In the following chapter, I will argue, however, that Emilia

[1] Boccaccio, *Teseida* 7.125. All citations of the *Teseida* are from Limentani's edition. See Giovanni Boccaccio, *Teseida delle Nozze D'Emilia,* ed. Alberto Limentani (Milano: Mondadori, 1964).

[2] All translations of the *Teseida* are my own unless otherwise noted.

[3] Piero Boitani notes that the duel is reminiscent of French Romances. Piero Boitani, *Chaucer and Boccaccio*, 10, 46. Luigi Surdich refers to the action initiated in Book three as the, "avventura d'amore di Arcita e Palemone," which transforms Theseus into a "re di un mondo cortese-cavallaresco." Luigi Surdich, *Boccaccio*, (Roma:Editori Laterza, 2001), 52. Warren Ginsburg juxtaposes the actions of Theseus in books one and two with those of Palemone and Arcita beginning in book three in terms of epic and romance, "With Teseo, in whom the irascible dominates and gives birth to the concupiscible, Boccaccio presents as epic what Palemone and Arcite play out as romance." Warren Ginsburg, "Boccaccio's Early Romances: the *Filostrato* and the *Teseida*," in *Boccaccio in the European Literary Tradition*, eds. Piero Boitani and Emilia Di Rocco (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2014), 41. Although speaking generally, and not specifically about the love triangle, Wetherbee characterizes the work as, "a romance grafted to the epic tradition." Winthrop Wetherbee, "History and Romance in Boccaccio's *Teseida*," *Studi Sul Boccaccio* 20, (1991-1992):175. See also Winthrop Wetherbee, "Romance and Epic in Chaucer's Knight's Tale," *Exemplaria* 2, (1990): 315.

qua prize, embodies the generic hybridization embodied in the "amorosa...battaglia":[4] she functions both as object to be appropriated (romance) and personified gift (epic). For the true prize for which the Thebans compete, what they each try to appropriate for themselves, is Theseus's gift of Emilia in marriage. In this way, the poetics of her exchange, I argue, maintain as their focus the homosocial relationships that Emilia mediates between the givers and recipients of gifts. I will argue that the employment of the gaze in the *Teseida* reveals that Arcita's desire for Emilia as prize is a veil for his desire for the authority she signifies, specifically the authority exercised in the bestowal of gifts. In order to demonstrate this, I will compare the gaze in the *Teseida* with that in *Chevalier de la charrette*, which serves as a useful foil, since Guinevere's status as romance prize and the common motif of the gaze upon the prize by the hero in both works allows for one to discern how Boccaccio's use of the gaze articulates homosocial desire in the *Teseida*. Rather than the resolution to a private, amorous, dispute, the tournament serves as a locus for the negotiation of the relationships between the three male protagonists and the status of the Thebans within Athenian society.[5] Finally, I will argue that the *Teseida* employs gift exchange to affirm male homosocial networks founded on the exchange of women.

Jane Everson argues that the dispute over Emilia aligns the Thebans with the heroes of romance in that they direct their performances to the female object of their desire,[6] although she

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[4] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 8.8.1.

[5] Cf. Andrea Gazzoni who states, "Arcita and Palemone's rivalry will echo the ruinous fight of Eteocles and Polynices over Thebes, now displaced in Athens and transposed on another scale, more erotic and individual than political and collective," or, "From book III on, Boccaccio encapsulates the epic into a rivalry of individuals. Neither a disturbance nor a detour of a vast epic enterprise, the matter of love itself becomes the epic narrative." See Andrea Gazzoni, "Trecento Variations In The Epic Tradition," 200, 207.

[6] Everson notes, "Boccaccio, with a clearly defined classical surface texture and set of characters, does not so much need heroes that recall classical types as heroes that recall romance

notes that they must also prove their worthiness to Theseus, as Emilia is his gift.[7] Everson, does not, however, consider how Theseus's role as gift-giver differentiates the contest for Emilia as prize from those of romance, and how this difference is articulated through the poetics of the gaze. Roberta L. Krueger observes that the woman *qua* prize motif is found throughout Chretien de Troyes' work and argues that the woman *qua* prize in romance functions first and foremost as an object of exchange. Therefore, she suggests (in a footnote) that woman as the prize constitutes a modification of the woman as gift in an exchange system that forms the basis of social interaction as theorized by Marcel Mauss and Levi-Strauss.[8] Her claim is not without merit, for, as James English notes, a prize shares certain attributes with gifts:

> To begin with, there is at the very core of the prize a crucial ambiguity or duplicity. On the one hand, we tend to think of a prize-including the trophy or medal, the honor it signifies, and whatever cash award accompanies it-as a sort of gift. The presenting and receiving of a prize is not, after all, simply a purchase or payment, not an event perfectly continuous with commerce, not an economic transaction in the narrow sense of the term. It involves both the awarders and the recipients in a highly ritualized theater of gestures and counter-gestures which, however reciprocal in some of its aspects, can be readily distinguished from the drama of marketplace exchange. While one can maneuver for a prize in various ways, for example, one cannot generally bargain or haggle for one. One cannot demand a bigger prize for one's artistic efforts as one might demand a higher price for them. Nor can the donor or presenter of the prize insist openly on any economic recompense or return; such arrangements exist...but they fatally compromise the prize as prize, deflating its prestige and removing it to the sphere of contractual market agreements...On the other hand, "prize" has its etymological roots precisely in money and in exchange. The word is traced to the Latin pretium: "price," "money"... As Huizinga points out, "pretium arose originally in the sphere of exchange and valuation, and presupposed a counter-value."[9]

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types, blood relatives who fall in love with the same woman and for her perform noble exploits which reveal their nobility of character and chivalry." Everson, *The Italian romance epic,* 230.

[7] *Ibid*., 232.

[8] Roberta L. Krueger, "Love, Honor, and the exchange of women in 'Yvain': Some remarks on the female reader," *Romance Notes* 25, no.3 (Spring 1985), 306.

[9] James F. English, *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 6-7.

As much as a prize can resemble a gift, however, it can also resemble a commodity, in that it demystifies the value judgement that gift exchange conceals. Krueger, however, does not consider the implications of the "modification" of gift exchange to prize exchange for the relationship between exchangers in the romances she analyses.

Although exchange plays a significant role in the narrative development of both romance and the *chansons de geste*, Sarah Kay distinguishes the poetics of epic from those of romance in terms of an opposition between gifts and commodities. Kay bases her argument on Marilyn Strathern's conception of gift and commodity economies, where the latter argues that, "in a commodity oriented economy, people experience their interest in commodities as a desire to appropriate goods; in a gift-oriented economy, the desire is to expand social relations." [10] According to Kay, "In a gift economy...the movement of goods is seen primarily as an index of relationships between *persons*. By contrast, in a commodity economy, one thing is exchanged for another...and what is chiefly at stake is the relationship established between *things*."[11] In epic, she argues, a "poetics of the gift" is operative, which stages "a play of irony and ambiguity with respect to relations between persons, as opposed to a poetics of commodity, in which irony and ambiguity stem from the problematic relations between words and things,"[12] which operates predominantly in romance.[13]

Kay argues that because gift exchange underscores the relationships between persons, and because gifts "serve to express reservation and hostility as much as to cement or celebrate

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[10] See Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 143. Cited also by Sarah Kay, *Chansons de geste in the age of Romance*: *Political Fictions* (Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York : Oxford University Press, 1995), 39.
[11] Ibid., 39. Emphasis original.
[12] Kay, 79.
[13] Ibid., 37-43, 185.

male social allegiance," gift exchange in the *chansons de geste,* particularly of women, serve at once to affirm and challenge the idea of male homosocial companionship cemented by the exchange of women.[14] Furthermore, although Kay's primary concern is with poetics, and she does not consider the romance motif of the woman as prize at great length, her application of Strathern's opposition between gift exchange and commodity exchange (i.e. expanding relationships and appropriation) is nevertheless suggestive for my analysis of the prize.

Indeed, Krueger's description of the exchange of women as prizes reflects the emphasis on appropriation over the relationships established in romance. In *Yvain*, Yvain wins Laudine as prize after he kills her husband, thus Yvain appropriates his defeated opponent's wife. Though the prize serves as an index of the victor's prowess, it does not serve as an "index of relationships between persons" like the gift. Likewise, in the customs outlined in the *Chevalier de la charrette*, the woman is prize between knights in so far as she is taken from another knight under whose protection she either has been placed or has placed herself. Although yielding a woman to a foe thus acknowledges his superiority, the recognition serves not to establish kinship ties or friendships based on reciprocation, but rather to end interpersonal engagement. In this way, the prize more closely resembles a commodity, in that, "commodity transactors are self-interested, independent individuals who exchange with people with whom they have no enduring links or obligations."[15]

Indeed, in the *Chevalier de la charrette*, though King Bademagu applies the logic of gift-giving in an attempt to persuade Meleagant to forfeit Guinevere (whom the latter has abducted from Arthur's court) without a fight to Lancelot (who has come to rescue her), his advice

[14] Ibid., 200.
[15] James Carrier, "Gifts, Commodities, and Social Relations: A Maussian View of Exchange," *Sociological Forum* 6, no. 1 (March 1991): 121.

ultimately stems from an attempt to avoid a contest rather than an effort to establish a relationship:

> Qui fet enor, l'anors est soe:
> bien saches que l'enors iert toe
> se tu fez enor et servise
> a cestui qui est a devise
> li miaudres chevaliers del monde.[16]
>
> He who gives honor, the honor is his. Be sure the honor will be yours if you honor and serve this man, who must be the best knight in the world.[17]

In forfeiting Guinevere, Meleagant would demonstrate his own honor by recognizing the superiority of Lancelot. However, as Guinevere is not truly Meleagant's gift, his forfeiture serves not to expand kinship ties, but rather to cut his losses. Since Lancelot's appropriation of Guinevere is inevitable, depriving him of the opportunity to demonstrate his superiority in a fight would prevent Meleagant's humiliation:

> Filz, molt feroies que cortois
> se ceste anreidie lessoies.
> Je te lo et pri qu'an pes soies.
> Ce sez tu bien que hontes iert
> au chevalier, s'il ne conquiert
> vers toi la reïne an bataille.
> Il la doit mialz avoir, sanz faille,
> par bataille que par bonté
> por ce qu'a pris li ert conté:
> Mien escïant, il n'anquiert point
> por ce que l'an an pes li doint,
> einz la vialt par bataille avoir.
> Por ce feroies tu savoir
> se la bataille li toloies.[18]

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[16] Chrétien de Troyes, *Chevalier de la charrette*, 3215-3219. All citations of *le chevalier de la charrette* are taken from Mario Roque's edition. See Chrétien de Troyes and Mario Roques. *Romans De Chrétien De Troyes* (Paris: Librairie ancienne Honoré Champion, 1952).
[17] All translations of the *Chevalier de la charrette* are by Deborah Webster Rogers. See Chrétien, de Troyes. *Lancelot, the Knight of the Cart*, trans. Deborah Webster Rogers (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).
[18] Chretien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier de la Charrette,* 3234-3247.

> Son, you would be courteous to leave your stubbornness. I advise you, I beg you to settle down. For you know it would shame this knight not to win the Queen from you in battle. He would certainly gain more credit taking her as a prize than as a present. I'm sure he isn't looking for her to be handed over peacefully, but expects to fight for her; so you'd be smarter to rob him of his fight.

In this more emphatic plea, terms of active privation, not passive reception, dominate Bademagu's strategic advice: Meleagant's best course of action would be to deprive (*toloies*) Lancelot of the opportunity to seize Guinevere by force (*conquiert*). Thus the prize, even when forfeited voluntarily, aligns itself more with commodity exchange than gift exchange in that it stresses appropriation over the creation and expansion of relationships. Rather than a "modification" of gift exchange, the woman exchanged as prize in the romances is a modification of commodity exchange.

Although the commodity-like aspects of the prize are not absent entirely from the *Teseida*, they are subordinated to the dominant narrative of Theseus's gift as prize. Emilia especially refers to herself in terms that acknowledge her status as exchanged object.[19] In her *planctus* to Amore, she laments that she was given away in stanza ninety-six, yet in the following

[19] Carla Freccero argues that narrator's praise for Diana in the narration of Emilia's prayer and her "preeminence in the pantheon that populates the poem...can be said to mark an ideological moment recognizing female resistance to 'the traffic in women,' although she notes that Theseus' will ultimately prevails over resistance. Carla Freccero, "From Amazon to Court Lady" 237-9. For quote see p. 237. Margaret Franklin argues that Boccaccio endows the Amazons with as much or more rational wisdom than Theseus, and thus the heroism of his suppression of them is problematized, including his denial of Emilia's request to remain a virgin devoted to Diana. Margaret Franklin, "Silencing Female Reason," *passim*., For Theseus' denial of Emilia's request see *Ibid*., 56. In another article, Franklin notes that Emilia is likened to Lavinia in Renaissance depictions of scenes from the *Teseida* on marriage *cassone*. Margaret Franklin, "Imagining and Reimagining Gender: Boccaccio's *Teseida delle nozze d'Emilia* and its Renaissance Visual Legacy," *Humanities* 5, no. 1 (2016), 8-9.Lavinia, she notes, was, "typically read as emblematic of the beneficial alliances that may be established through prudently aligned marriages." Franklin, 8. In likening Emilia to Lavinia, Franklin argues that the painters "sanitize Boccaccio's fraught vision of patriarchal authority." Franklin, 9.

two stanzas she refers to the price that is being paid for her and her beauty.[20] Initially, Theseus uses the term "investire*"* to note that either of the Thebans would make a suitable match for Emilia:

> A l'un di voi sarà bene *investita*,
> però che sete di sangue reale
> e d'alto affare e di nobile vita;
> e ella similmente è altrettale,
> e è sorella a la reina ardita
> che meco stato serva imperiale;
> per la qual cosa sdegnar non dovete
> per moglie lei, se averla potete.[21]
>
> To one of you she will be well *endowed*, since you are of royal lineage and of high esteem and noble life; she is too, since she is the queen's sister, who has served with me; for this reason, you shouldn't disdain her as a wife, if you are able to have her.

The ambiguity of the term allows it to function both according to the "poetics of the gift" and the "poetics of commodity," according to Kay's schema. On the one hand, the irony of the meaning of the word aligns it with the "poetics of commodity," where irony stems from the "problematic relations between words and things," or, in this case, words and their meaning. On the one hand, the term "investire" underscores the value judgement that the gift typically mystifies, but the prize unveils, as evidenced by its etymology. Thus, the term characterizes the exchange of Emilia in terms associated with commodity exchange, albeit commodity exchange in which the initial capital invested ideally is returned to the investor along with a surplus. Indeed Boccaccio employs the term to describe commodity exchange in *Decameron* VIII.X, where Niccolo da Cignano explains to Jancofiore that he does not have the cash she had previously given him

[20] Boccaccio, *Teseida* 8.96.5-6, "né data dovea esser a lor*,"* 8.97.7-8, "O me amara, che da vender non fui cotanto cara!", and 8.98.1-2, "Deh, quanto mal per me mi diè natura questa bellezza di cui pregio fia orrible battaglia rea e dura."
[21] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 5.96. Emphasis mine.

because he has invested all of his funds in Neapolitan goods.[22] The term in the context of the *Teseida* suggests that what is at stake is a relationship between the value of things—because the Thebans are noble and of sufficient value Emilia will retain her value to Theseus if invested in a Theban husband. As we will consider at greater length shortly, the term also implies conferral and bestowal, and therefore, despite the economic connotations, does not remove the transaction of Emilia from the sphere of gift exchange. Irony, then, is supplied by the ambiguity of the word itself. At the same time, however, the remaining lines of the stanza call attention to the kinship ties which marriage to Emilia confers, specifically her proximity to Theseus himself through her relationship to his own bride, Ipolita. Although the verb metaphorically equates the exchange of women with commodity exchange, the passive "investita" suggests that Theseus will maintain a vested interest in Emilia and the kinship relations her marriage establishes. Thus, while the verb characterizes the relationship in transactional terms, "investire*"* nevertheless implies an extended relationship based on mutual interest between transactors. In this way, the term also underscores the irony and ambiguity of the relationship that the "investment" of Emilia will establish between Theseus and her husband, one which both recognizes merit and implies a challenge to it, as one expects a return on the investment. Thus, not only does the term itself combine elements of both gift and commodity exchange, it functions in the text both according to Kay's poetics of the commodity and the poetics of the gift, in that its ambiguity extends to both the relationships between words and their meanings, and the relationships between persons. Ultimately, however, Theseus's emphasis on the relationships which contribute to Emilia's value as bride privileges

[22] "Io non ho un denaio, perciò che li cinquecento che mi rendesti, incontanente mandai a Napoli ad investire in tele per far venir qui." See Boccaccio, *Decameron* VIII.10.

the relationships that his investment of Emilia in the husband will serve to establish, and the ambiguity that is inherent in the relationship between investor and investee.

The poetics employed in Theseus's proposal of the tournament also underscore the kinship relationship at stake in the tournament:

> Chi l'altra parte caccerà di fore
> per forza d'arme, marito le fia;
> l'altro, di lei privato e dell'onore,
> a quell giudicio converrà che stia
> che la donna vorrà, al cui valore
> commesso da questa ora innanzi sia;
> e 'l termine vi sia a ciò donato
> uno anno intero. – E così fu fermato.[23]
>
> Whoever chases the other team out with armed force will be her husband; the fate of the other, deprived both of Emilia and honor, will fall under the purview of Emilia to whose valor he will be commended from then on; you will be given a full year to prepare. And thus it was decided.

Although the loser will be deprived of the prize, the winner will not have conquered Emilia from him, but rather will "be her husband" in so far as he will receive her as wife from Theseus. Thus, the poetics of Theseus's proposal privilege the winner as recipient of the gift, and the kinship ties that victory will confer, over active privation and appropriation.

Let us return, however, to the term "investire". For, in addition to the economic implications discussed earlier, the term provides additional insight into Emilia's symbolic value as mediator of relationships. Originally the term meant "to wear," and came to mean "to bestow," or "confer possession of something onto someone," especially a rank or office, often signified by something worn, as a recognition of merit.[24] One only need to think of the conferral

[23] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 5.98.
[24] See the entry for *investire* in the *Vocabolario degli Academici della Crusca*. Osamu Fukushima defines "investire" as "to concede, grant" in his translation and accompanying etymological dictionary of the *Teseida*. See Osamu Fukushima, *An Etymological Dictionary for Reading Boccaccio's "Teseida"* (Florence: Franco Cesati, 2011), 391.

of insignia typical of investiture ceremonies, insignia which act as external indicators of the authority vested in the wearer, to appreciate the symbolic weight the term carries. Consider, for instance, Ernst Kantorowicz' consideration of the king's material crown as signifier of his vested authority:

> There was a visible, material, exterior gold circle or diadem with which the prince was vested and adorned at his coronation; and there was an invisible and immaterial crown—encompassing all the royal rights and privileges indispensable for the government of the body politic—which was perpetual and descended either from God directly or by the dynastic right of inheritance.[25]

The external, donned, crown, among other insignia,[26] was the visible index of the king's authority, a symbolic representation of the intangible rights, privileges, and duties inherent in the institution of the monarchy. Thus, in using the term "investire" to describe the transferal of Emilia, Theseus identifies her as an index of authority, an external marker of the privileged status his gift will confer on the recipient. Emilia serves to adorn the winner as an indicator the relationship she establishes between the winner and Theseus. Theseus investment of Emilia in one of the Thebans is also an investiture of the victor with authority and status which approximates the winner to Theseus both by establishing kinship ties and by conferring the winner with a marker of his approval.

I would like now to consider how the poetics of the gaze in the tournament diverges from that in *Chevalier de la charrette*, despite superficial similarities, precisely as a consequence of

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[25] Ernst Kantorowicz, The King's Two Bodies (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, 1997), 337. Robert Durling and Ronald Martinez discuss Dante's use of investiture imagery in the *Commedia*. They note, "An important vehicle of the analogy with knightly investiture is the terminology of clothing, which is evident in the terms *addobbare* and *cingere.*" Robert M. Durling and Ronald L. Martinez, *Time and the crystal: studies in Dante's Rime petrose* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 266.

[26] Kantorowicz identifies the fibula, purple, and the scepter as the other principle insignia of the monarch. Kantorowicz, 416.

the symbolic function Theseus attributes to Emilia in the offer of her as his gift in marriage to the winner of the tournament. While both texts feature the gaze of their hero on the female prize, in the *Chevalier de la charrette*, Guinevere mirrors Lancelot's gaze, while the *Teseida* relocates the reflexive gaze from the ostensible prize (Emilia) to the image of Theseus, thus suggesting that Arcita's desire to possess Emilia stems from his desire for the recognition and vested authority she symbolizes.

Scholars have noted the repeated emphasis on performance and the gaze throughout the *Teseida*, and in particular the scene in book three when the Thebans first see Emilia, and, alerted to their gaze, a flattered Emilia performs to increase their desire. Michael Sherberg notes that Emilia's submission to the male gaze, her delight in being its object marks a sharp contrast with Dante's Beatrice.[27] Similarly, Disa Gambera argues that Boccaccio, "depicts women as willingly exposing themselves to the male gaze as a way of imprisoning men. He suggests they collude in the process through which they become fetishized."[28] However, she also observes that, "while the erotic gaze tends to threaten the course of the narrative in the commedia, in the *Teseida* it generates the narrative that unfolds in the following nine books of the poem."[29] Gambera locates the most conspicuous instance of the male gaze in the *Teseida* in the work's final book, where Boccaccio, in describing at length Emilia's beauty following an allusion to the *Inferno*, "is rewriting the relationship between poetry and the female body which Dante had worked to define in the commedia."[30] Regarding the tournament scene, Sherberg notes in passing the emphasis on performativity and spectacle that the shift to the theater generates, noting that "Teseo's

[27] See Sherberg, "The Girl Outside the Window," 103.
[28] See Disa Gambera, "Women and Walls" 54.
[29] Ibid., 53.
[30] Ibid., 43.

judgement elevates the voyeurism of the garden gaze to full spectacle," but does not provide further analysis of the gendered gaze in the tournament.[31] Hope Wiessman, on the other hand, has analyzed the role of the gaze in establishing homosocial bonds in the *Teseida*. Her analysis of the male gaze leads her to conclude that the *Teseida* contributes to the myth "that male gazing leads to male solidarity."[32] However, she is primarily concerned with the relationship between Arcita and Palemone as mediated by their gaze upon Emilia, and does not consider how the gaze relates both to Theseus. Regarding the tournament, Weissman argues that Boccaccio "suppresses the expected gaze at the female trophy" following Arcita's victory by instead representing Emilia's gaze on Arcita.[33] In the representation of Emilia's gaze, Weissman argues that Boccaccio asserts the "difference between male homosocial and female narcissistic desire" by reversing the gender roles of the garden scene.[34] However, because her analysis is concerned only with the homosocial relationship between Arcita and Palemone, Weissman does not appreciate the extent to which Emilia's gaze masks the narcissism of homosocial desire, articulated by Arcita's performance for the male gaze of Theseus, which, I will argue, the descent of Mars dramatizes. In performing for Theseus, Arcita assumes a role analogous to Emilia in book three. The critical difference is that, although Arcita consciously performs for Theseus, it is not to increase Theseus's desire, but to obtain his recognition as an equal or peer

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[31] See Sherberg, "The Girl Outside the Window," 105. Regarding the scuffle in book five Sherberg notes that, "Within the economy of the narrative, both the lovers' desire and [Emilia] must be mastered and channeled for a socially productive outcome." And "Inasmuch as all three protagonists of the love triangle belong to groups defeated by Teseo and are subject to his rule, the king's command restores an Athenian order to a situation that had been running on its own fuel." He also notes that book five's proposals by Palemone (to fight) and Arcita (accept Emilia's choice), "distill into a choice between "epic" solution that reasserts a distinctly male order and a courtly one that validates female desire" See Sherberg, "The Girl Outside The Window", 104.
[32] Hope Weissman, "Aphrodite/Artemis // Emilia/Alison," 107.
[33] Ibid., 105.
[34] Ibid., 105.

for which his gift of Emilia will serve as index. While Gambera's and Weissman's analyses are valuable readings of the text, they focus primarily on the subjective male gaze of the objective female body. In so doing, they fail to account for how masculinity is negotiated as object of the male gaze. Indeed, I will argue that one of the poem's strongest articulations of desire occurs not through the subjective male gaze, but through Arcita's fantasy of being seen by Theseus. The poetics of the gaze, then, reflects the extent to which Arcita's desire for the male relationships that Emilia's gift mediates supersedes his erotic desire for her. In both the *Teseida* and *the Chevalier de la charrette*, then, the tournament is the locus of the construction of self through the projection of (mirror) images.[35] However, whereas in the *Chevalier de la charrette* the role of the reflexive other is played by Guinevere, in the *Teseida* Theseus is the other to whom dramatizations of the self are directed and through whose gaze the self is constructed.

Lancelot and Meleagant eventually face each other in battle to decide who will possess Guinevere. Weakened by injuries sustained crossing the bridge of swords, Lancelot appears to be on the cusp of defeat at the hands of Meleagant. Another spectator suspects that if Lancelot knew the queen were watching him, he would be reinvigorated:

> Mes as fenestres de la tor
> ot une pucele molt sage,
> qui panse et dit an son corage,
> que li chevaliers n'avoit mie
> por li la bataille arramie,

[35] Cf. Fradenburg, who states, "Honor" enacts a problematic of the construction of the self through the image: the way in which, as in Lacan's mirror stage, the image one develops of oneself—of one's body—is constructed by the way in which one is seen. Honor becomes a way of expressing the self's need to be seen in order to constitute self as self; the paradox of a self that must be seen, and hence must appear for—must dramatize itself to—an other to exist as self, is inherent in the concept of honor. The very need to be recognized, to be *seen* as what one is in order to *be*, involves the subject in a perpetual loss of being. To be seen is to be appropriated; as Lacan would put it, it is to become a "signifier" in "the discourse of the other." Louise Olga Fradenburg, *City, marriage, tournament : arts of rule in late medieval Scotland* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 204-5.

ne por cele autre gent menue
qui an la place estoit venue,
ne ja enprise ne l'eüst,
se por la reïne ne fust;
et panse, se il la savoit
a la fenestre ou ele estoit,
qu'ele l'esgardast ne veïst,
force et hardemant an preïst.[36]

But up in the tower there was a very bright girl; it occurred to her that the knight had not set up this fight for her, nor the rest of the petty folk in the square; he would not have undertaken it but for the Queen. The maiden guessed that if he knew she was at the window, in sight of him, watching him, he would recover his strength and courage.

The maiden surmises that it is not only Lancelot's gaze upon Guinevere, but Guinevere's gaze upon Lancelot that will inspire his performance. Lancelot, she assumes, performs for Guinevere. She calls down to him from the tower whence Guinevere is watching, prompting Lancelot to turn around:

Qant Lanceloz s'oï nomer
ne mist gaires a lui torner:
trestorne soi et voit a mont
que plus desirroit a veoir,
as loges de la tor seoir.
Ne, puis l'ore qu'il s'aparçut
ne se torna ne ne se mut
de vers li ses ialz ne sa chiere,
einz se desfandoit par derriere;
et Meleaganz l'enchauçoit
totes voies plus qu'il pooit,
si est molt liez con cil qui panse
c'or n'ait ja mes ver lui desfanse;[37]

When Lancelot heard his name called, he wasted no time in turning round. And looking up, he saw the thing in all the world which he most desired to see, sitting at the tower window. From the moment he saw her, he did not take his eyes off her nor turn his head, but parried behind his back. Meleagant dogged his heels as closely as he could, pleased at the thought that Lancelot had no defense left.

[36] Chretien de Troyes, *Le chevalier de la charrette*, 3634-3645.
[37] Ibid., 3669-82.

Robert Sturges explains, "what should be noted in the absolute absorption of both Lancelot and Guinevere in the image (not, of course, in the subjective reality) of the other: they are, in fact, mirror images of each other..."[38] Because they are each others' mirror images, in gazing upon Guinevere, who gazes upon him, Lancelot becomes fascinated with his own image, much like the pre-oedipal infant in Lacan's mirror stage. The infant, seeing its own image in the mirror, initially forms its conception of self, "in its relationship with an image rather than a genuinely different subject; hence the term "imaginary for this stage of development."[39] Indeed, Sturges argues that Lancelot and Guinevere's relationship remains an imaginary one, a regression from the symbolic order, in so far as Arthur is an ineffective father figure, he never "lay[s] down the law to Lancelot."[40] As they regress from the symbolic order, Lancelot and Guinevere are free to form their own semiology, to privately remake the public language, through which they communicate regressively, outside of the symbolic realm which orders social meaning and intersubjective relationships.[41]

As Sturges observes, because of the Oedipal failure in the *Chevalier de la charrette* and Lancelot and Guinevere's regression to the imaginary order, Lancelot and Guinevere "demonstrate the arbitrariness of the relations between signifier and signified" throughout the work.[42] Sturges notes how, for example, the cart, in the symbolic order signifies criminality, but in Lancelot and Guinevere's private, idioglossia, Lancelot's crime consists of his hesitation to enter the cart.[43] Sturges, however, does not explore how the imaginary order effects Guinevere

[38] Robert Sturges, "La(ca)ncelot," *Arthurian Interpretations* 4, no. 2 (1990), 16.
[39] Ibid., 16.
[40] Ibid., 20-21.
[41] Ibid., 17-19.
[42] Ibid., 20.
[43] Ibid.

herself as signifier of the male relationships which she mediates. Since Lancelot's desire for Guinevere remains in the imaginary order, his desire for her is detached from her role as signifier, and therefore from the connections to other men she symbolizes when exchanged either as gift or commodity within the symbolic order. Lancelot desires Guinevere not in so far as she mediates his relationship to other subjects, but as she mediates his own identity within their "private semiology." This is not to say that Guinevere doesn't serve as an index of Lancelot's superiority over Meleagant nor that his recuperation of her doesn't ascribe honor within Arthur's court. Rather that Lancelot does not desire her primarily for her capacity to signify honor among men.

As has already been suggested, the Oedipal failure of Arthur in the *Chevalier de la charrette* is not repeated in the *Teseida*, where Theseus repeatedly enforces the law.[44] Theseus's enforcement of the law is evident when he encounters Palemone and Arcita fighting over Emilia in the woods in book five. After they identify themselves and confess their transgressions of his laws (Palemone has escaped from his prison and Arcita has returned to Athens from exile) for which they suggest the punishment of death, he gives them the following sentence:

> Allor Teseo: – Non piaccia a Dio che sia
> ciò che dimandi, ben che meritato
> l'aggiate per la vostra gran follia;
> ché l'un contra 'l mandato è ritornato,
> e l'altro ha rotta la mia prigionia,
> sì ch'io non ne saria mai biasimato
> se i' 'l facessi, né faria fallanza,
> ma serverei l'antica buona usanza.
>
> Ma però ch'io già innamorato fui
> per amor sovente folleggiai,

[44] Everson, *The Italian Romance Epic*, 227-228. William C. Maisch claims that, "the Duke of Athens is the champion of logos and the restorer of order," in reference to book one, but claims later that Theseus fails to control the violence of the tournament. For quote see Maish, "Boccaccio's *Teseida*," 89.

m'è caro molto il perdonare altrui,
perch'io perdon più fiate acquistai,
non per mio operar, ma per colui
pietà a cui la figlia già furtai;
però sicuri di perdono state:
vincerà il fallo la mia gran pietate.

Ma non fia assoluto il perdonare,
ch'io ci porrò piacevol condizione,
la qual voi mi prometterete fare,
se io perdono a vostra falligione. –
Essi il promisero, e e' fé giurare
lor di servarla sanza offensione,
e felli insieme far pace solenne;
poi in questo modo con lor si convenne.[45]

And then Theseus: To do that which you ask for would be unpleasing to God, although you'd deserve it on account of your folly, since one of you returned against my command, and the other broke free of my prison. As such, who could blame me if I were to punish you, it wouldn't be a mistake, but indeed in keeping with tradition. However, since I was once in love and for love acted foolishly, I enjoy pardoning others since I benefited from pardons more than once, not on account of my actions, but out of the pity of he whose daughter I took; therefore, rest assured of pardon: my great pity will overcome your folly. The pardon will not be absolute, however. Rather, I will place a pleasant condition on it, which you two must promise to agree to if I pardon your great folly. They promised and he made them swear to uphold it absolutely and make peace. In this way he came to an agreement with them.

Although his sentence is lenient, Theseus nevertheless "lays down the law," thereby reinforcing his authority and the Thebans' lack thereof. As he had once passively benefitted from the leniency of another, he now places Palemone and Arcita in the passive role of accepting his offer of leniency.[46] Indeed, the "piacevol condizione" is none other than the tournament itself. Although not overtly aggressive, the condition which Theseus offers is nevertheless a veiled challenge to the Thebans, an offer that places them in Theseus's debt. Thus, Theseus's offer of

[45] Boccaccio, *Teseida* 7.91-93.
[46] Maisch sees in this passage an "assimilation...between the rival brothers and Teseo," by which Theseus "pays for his yet unpunished crime" by ritually sacrificing one of the Thebans. See Maisch, 94-95.

pardon, like the gifts exchanged in the *chansons de geste*, both "serves to express reservation and hostility as much as to cement...male social allegiance." As a pardon implies guilt, the addition of the "piacevol condizione" simultaneously functions as a penalty for their "gran follia" and the recognition of their nobility. That the Thebans are at once humbled, if not humiliated, and honored by Theseus's gift is evident in their response:

> E risposero a lui umilemente:
> – Signore, a tanta grazia quanta fai
> a ciaschedun di noi, nessun possente
> a ciò guiderdonar sarebbe mai;
> ma que' che 'l cielo e 'l mondo parimente
> governa ti contenti, sì come hai
> noi contentati de l'alto perdono
> del nostro fallo, il qual ci è sommo dono.[47]
>
> And they responded humbly to him: "Sir, no great man could ever match the grace you show to each of us, but may you be blessed by he who governs both heaven and earth equally, just as you have blessed us with the lofty pardon of our folly, which is the highest gift.

Whereas Lancelot's desire for Guinevere is a regression to the imaginary order, Theseus's intervention imposes the symbolic order on Palemone and Arcita. In imposing his law on them, Theseus ensures that the actions performed in the tournament, whether by the Thebans or their teammates, are performed not only for the imaginary other, but for the Other, which he, as law-giver and judge, embodies.[48] Indeed, Arcita implores his men to perform well for Theseus:

> Dunque, per Dio, la vostra virtute
> oggi si mostri davanti a Teseo,
> acciò ch'io prenda di quella salute
> che è il fin che qui venir vi feo;
> non risparmiate le vostre ferute,
> né la morte, al bisogno, per Penteo,
> il qual da morte a vita recherete
> e per vostro in etterno il comperrete.[49]

[47] Boccaccio, *Teseida* 5.100.
[48] Cf. Everson, *The Italian Romance Epic*, 232.
[49] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 7.135.

> Therefore, by God, today demonstrate your virtue before Theseus, so that I may reap that reward which is the reason I summoned you here; don't shy away from injuries, or even death, if needed, for Penteo, whom you will restore from death to life and whose allegiance you will acquire for all eternity.

The presence of the gaze of the Other is reflected in the tournament scene by the of language denoting performance and visual display to describe the action of the participants. The verb "mostrare" (to show, demonstrate), or phrases with similar meanings, such as, "made known/apparent" appear throughout the description of the tournament's combat. In the scuffle between Arcita's men and Palemone's in stanza fourteen the participants, "ben mostravan lor gran probitate." Later, in stanza twenty-one, Pollux, "mostrò aspramente ch'elli era del ciel degno veramente." In stanza twenty-three, "Laertin maravigliosa prova mostrò di sé con Filacide insieme in riscuotere Ulisse" in stanza thirty-one, "Agilleo ancor con gran valore mostrava ben tutto ciò che valea" followed in stanza thirty-two by the following line, "A questo venne correndo Pelleo, mostrando sé degno padre d'Accille." In stanza thirty-five, "Tarso, Cidone, Parmeso e 'l gemello Arion con Acon la lor potenza dimostravan*."* In slightly different terms, but to the same effect Evander "fece da presso sentire come sapeva di spada ferire" in his single combat with Sichaeus which begins in stanza thirty-eight. In stanza fifty-one, "Admeto ...con un baston d'acciaio, chiaro e forbito si fé conoscer qual nell'armi egli era." In stanza seventy-two Arcita's men, "fer maravigliar chi li mirava." As if to drive home the point more clearly, in stanza eighty-six the narrator states, "eran sentite parimente et vedute di costoro l'opere e 'l martiale aspro lavoro." In using terminology that implies spectatorship to describe the performance of the combat itself the text suggests that the combat is meaningless unless it is perceived and interpreted by others. As I will argue in the following chapter, the emphasis on spectatorship and display does not preclude the risk of serious injury or death nor does it indicate

that the fight is carried out without aggression. For, as Fradenburg argues, "[the tournament] "brings out" the theatricality of war—spacing out bodies, elaborating the moment of confrontation, ritualizing gesture—in order to fix, for the gaze, those moments of fascination—of the giving and receiving, the solicitation and destruction, of the gaze—that give the knight his identity."[50] Rather than the absence of violence, the emphasis on spectatorship signals the self-conscious performativity of the violence and the signals violence's function as a signifier of excellence in the order of chivalry.[51]

Nevertheless, Arcita's desire is articulated by the imaginary capacity of the gaze. In fact, not once, but twice does an image of desire inspire his performance in the tournament. The first occurs in stanza seventy-nine, more than halfway through the canto, when Emilia's gaze is praised by the narrator in a brief digression from the narration of the main action; the narrator's praise is prompted, notably, by Arcita's gaze upon her during a momentary pause in fighting:

> Ma mentre che prendeva tal riposo
> così nell'arme, alquanto gli occhi alzati
> gli venner là dove '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.[52]
>
> But while he was taking this break from fighting, he somewhat raised his eyes and they came to that place where he saw the lovely face of Emilia and her beautiful eyes inflamed with such a pleasant light that they made joyous anyone to whom they were turned; and he returned to his previous state, like a fresh spring bloom.

[50] Louise Olga Fradenburg, *City, marriage, tournament,* 208.
[51] Cf. Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: foundations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia : University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 21.
[52] Boccaccio, *Teseida* 8.79.

Francesco Bruni remarks that this passage indicates the influence of romance on the *Teseida*.[53] Indeed, the correlation of the sight of Emilia with renewed valor in the fight does bear resemblance to Lancelot's improved performance once he turns to fight Meleagant with Guinevere in view. However, whereas Lancelot and Guinevere looked at each other (the maiden thought the knowledge that Guinevere was watching *him* would invigorate Lancelot), here the mere sight of Emilia prompts Arcita's action. Nor does his gaze on Emilia elicit dazed fascination as first occurs in the *Chevalier de la charrette*. For Arcita, Emilia's image is inspiring not because she reflects his image, but because as prize she mediates his relationship with other subjects.

Paradoxically, in its praise of the female gaze the text effectively subjugates the female gaze to the male. While the female gaze is ostensibly praised, it is the male gaze that the text represents. Arcita is quite literally keeping his eyes on the prize. Emilia's return of the male gaze may be understood as implicit in the text—if Arcita saw her eyes, does that not imply that she has returned his gaze, that their eyes met, if only momentarily, and thus he received the benefits of her gaze described by the narrator? While this is certainly possible, the text remains ambiguous. If this is the intent of the author, the passage contradicts itself — for implicit in such an argument is the dependency of Emilia's gaze on the existence of another gaze, thus the "luce tanto lieto*"* her eyes contain cannot benefit "qualunque eran voltati*"*, but only those whose eyes are also turned to her. The ambiguity of the passage leaves room for an alternate conclusion: that the male gaze upon the female, not the female gaze itself inspires greatness in men. This reading seems to be supported at *Teseida* VIII.80.5-8:

> cotale Arcita, molto faticato,
> mirando Emilia forte si facea;

[53] Bruni, *Boccaccio*, 188.

> e vie più fiero tornò al ferire
> che prima, sì lo spronò il disire.[54]
>
> In this way Arcita, very fatigued, made himself strong gazing at Emilia and returned as before to the fighting, so much his desire spurred him.

The agency here belongs solely to Arcita. Emilia is the object of Arcita's active participle and there is no indication of reflexive or reciprocal action. Furthermore, the text seems to set up a contrast between the effects of the male and female gaze. Whereas Emilia's gaze has the power to render "gioioso*"* whomever it lands upon, Arcita's male gaze upon her renders him "forte" and "più fiero". Indeed, it is the male reaction to Arcita's rejuvenated performance that the text represents. One of his vanquished opponents returns to consciousness long enough to tell Arcita that Emilia should give him (Arcita) so many kisses as blows Arcita has dealt to him.[55] Here again, the homosocial is privileged: the male approval of Arcita's performance is represented in the text, not that of Emilia, at least not immediately. Because Emilia acts as insignia of vested authority, her value arises primarily from her visibility to men, not their visibility to her. Like the shimmering gold of a crown, her gaze functions to attract the gaze of men and elicit the recognition of the male authority she symbolizes rather than to actively judge and allocate authority herself. The allocation of authority rests in Theseus' purview alone, and it is through his gaze that Arcita constructs his own identity.

Some thirty stanzas later, Arcita has once again grown tired, and this time is reinvigorated by Mars' descent onto the pitch. It seems that whatever surge was provided by the sight of Emilia has faded. Within the fiction of the text Mars descends to the pitch disguised as

[54] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 8.80.5-8.
[55] Boccaccio, *Teseida* 8.83.5-8.

Theseus to goad Arcita to resume active participation. In his speech, Mars appeals directly to Arcita's concern for honor in the homosocial sphere:

> In forma rivestito di Teseo:
> -Ahi, villan cavalier, falso e fellone,
> qual codardia qui fermar ti feo?
> Non vedi tu combatter Palemone
> e per dispetto nomarti Penteo,
> dicendo che 'ntendevi, a tradigione,
> sotto altro nome Emilia possedere,
> la quale elli in aperto crede avere?[56]
>
> Dressed in the guise of Theseus: Alas, boorish knight, fraudulent and evil, what cowardice has made you stop now? Don't you see Palemone fighting and calling you Penteo out of spite, saying that you meant to treasonously possess Emilia under a different name, whom he believed to lay claim to?

Mars begins his oration by accusing Arcita of fraud; by recusing himself from fighting, he (Arcita) is not behaving in a way a true knight would. In doing so Arcita risks revealing a discrepancy between the honorable image the public currently holds and must continue to hold if he is to win Emilia, and the image projected by his inaction. Mars then implores Arcita to turn his own gaze to Palemone, thus inviting him to contrast his shameful, cowardly image with that which Palemone is cultivating. Once again the male gaze upon other men is acknowledged as the driving force behind the progression of the tournament. In addition to Palemone's superior performance, Mars incites Arcita's rage by exposing Palemone's attempt to impugn his already fragile public image through slander. By sitting out, Arcita risks ceding the role of more honorable man to Palemone in terms of prowess on the pitch, and leaving unanswered the challenge to his martial virtues.

Taken at face value, then, Mars's intervention further demonstrates the link between the male gaze and honor in the tournament setting. Men must be conscious of the image they are

[56] Boccaccio, *Teseida* 8.113

presenting to other men and simultaneously employ their own gaze to gauge the position of other men, particularly their enemies. The emphasis on the male gaze becomes more pronounced when one considers the explanation for the scene provided in Boccaccio's gloss to the text. The gloss reads:

> Qui finge l'autore, Marte in forma di Teseo dir villania ad Arcita: dove niuna cosa intende, se non che ad Arcita riposantesi 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.[57]
>
> Here the author imagines that Mars, in the guise of Theseus demeans Arcita. His intent is nothing more than to show how the thought came to Arcita while he was resting that he had been seen by Theseus, and that, seeing Arcita as he was, these words could be said by Theseus that were said in his mind and after he imagined them, he immediately returned to battle.

What is presented as an external force in the text, then, is an allegory for psychological processes. Although the allegory could be read simply as another instance of Mars representing anger (after all, immediately following the parley with Arcita Mars "trascorse in la schiera d'Arcita con parole accese d'ira," and Arcita is described as "infiammato")[58] I believe this particular appearance of Mars is more complex. The soliloquy may result in anger and wrath, but its source is shame, honor's negative. As the gloss makes clear, the allegory represents an internalization of the external male gaze, specifically that of Theseus. Arcita's fantasy, then, is being the object not of the female, but the male gaze. Arcita produces an image of himself as if he were seeing himself from Theseus' perspective. In this way Mars represents the self-consciousness necessary for profit in the economy of honor. One must be able to see oneself as other men might. The contra-factual formation of the sentence is noteworthy: the mere

[57] See Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 8.112.8 and accompanying gloss.
[58] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 8.114.1-2 and 8.1114.5. In his gloss to the temple of mars in book seven (*Teseida*, 7.30 and accompanying gloss) Boccaccio explicitly links Mars with *ira*. See Smarr, *Boccaccio and Fiammetta*, 69.

possibility of being observed in an unfavorable situation, the possibility that slanderous words might be said, is enough of a risk to affect one's behavior.

In doubling himself, in seeing his image as Theseus might, Arcita enacts the Lacanian mirror scene. However, rather than see himself as whole, Arcita sees his own image as incomplete compared to the integral image of Theseus which he fantastically adopts. In assuming the perspective of Theseus in his fantasy, the inadequacy of his own "reflection" is laid bare, for rather than see himself reflected in the wholeness of Theseus, he experiences his own image as lack. Therefore, it is ultimately through Theseus's gaze that Arcita's self must be constituted. Despite the anxiety it produces, the fantasy of being the object of Theseus's gaze suggests Arcita's desire to *have* Emilia is a veil for his desire to *be* Theseus. Whereas Lancelot desires Guinevere as his own imaginary double, Arcita desires to assume the image of Theseus. In other words, the text suggests that, more than Emilia *qua* prize, Arcita desires the right of bestowal and authority that Theseus exercises, of which Emilia is a signifier. In winning Emilia, Arcita also wins the symbolic authority of the right of bestowal, if not of Emilia herself, then, in theory of their progeny.

In his self-conscious performance for the male gaze, Arcita, then, occupies a role similar to that of Emilia in book three, who, conscious of her status as object of the male gaze, acts to please the voyeur. As Gambera notes, this scene at once demonstrates Boccaccio's reworking of the poetics of the female body employed by Dante without completely dismissing the danger that the gaze upon of the female body entails.[59] What prevents Arcita from assuming the feminized role occupied by Emilia in book three is precisely Emilia's presence at the tournament. As Fradenburg notes, "The tournament is...a means of extorting recognition from the male

[59] Gambera, "Women and Walls," 53-4.

"similar"...the lady dramatizes the masculinity of the warrior by being what he is not and by watching his effort from another place."[60] Arcita's performance for Theseus' gaze isn't as the object of desire, but rather so he may have the object of desire, the possession of which signifies Theseus' recognition of Arcita as a "similar" in Fradenburg's terms. Emilia's value as prize, then, stems not from Arcita's desire for a private, erotic relationship, but rather the intersubjective, homosocial, public relationship she signifies as gift. In other words, Arcita's desire for Emilia is not based on how she mediates his relationship to his self, as is Lancelot's desire for Guinevere if one accepts Sturges' argument and its implications, but rather on how she mediates relationships with other males, Theseus in particular. Arcita's desire for Emilia is not antithetical to his integration in the male symbolic order, but rather a desire to be recognized as an authority within the symbolic order.

Indeed, this dynamic is reflected in the poetics surrounding Theseus' granting of Emilia to Arcita following the tournament:

> Ma poi ch'alquanto si fu riposato,
> Arcita ver Theseo cominciò a dire:
> --Signore, adempiuto è il tuo mandato
> con non poco di me greve martire,
> et per quel credo d'aver meritato
> Emilia et perdono al mio fallire;
> la qual dimando, se e' t'è in piacere,
> se elli è tempo ch'io la deggia avere.
>
> Ad cui Theseo con voce graziosa
> rispose:--Dolce amico, ciò m'è caro,
> né disio tanto nessuna altra cosa;
> et però in quel modo che lasciaro
> ad noi i nostri primi, quando sposa
> essi ne l'età lor prima pigliaro,
> vo' che solennemente ti sia data
> et in presenza delli re sposata.[61]

[60] Fradenburg, *Marriage, City, Tournament*, 212.
[61] Boccaccio, *Teseida* 9.81-2.

> After he had rested a bit, Arcita began to say to Theseus: Sir, your mandate has been fulfilled with no small suffering on my part, and for that I believe I deserve Emilia and pardon, which I ask for, if it is pleasing to you, if now is the time where I ought to have her. To this Theseus replied with a gracious voice: Sweet friend, that is important to me, in fact I don't want anything else and in the tradition of our elders, when they took wives, I want that she be given to you and married solemnly in the presence of the kings.

In stressing the hardships endured in order to comply with Theseus' "piacevol condizione", Arcita demands Theseus's recognition in the form of his gift. Moreover, Arcita seeks to minimize the power differential between them, by stressing that now Theseus occupies the role of the indebted party. Athough Arcita remains courteous and not overtly hostile, there nevertheless remains in his demand, in his insistence that he be granted what is owed to him ("la deggia avere"), a hint of the hostility that underlies the gift exchange initiated by Theseus's pardon. Arcita acknowledges the challenge inherent in the "sommo dono" given earlier by Theseus and demands recognition for meeting the terms of the challenge.

Nevertheless, Emilia is ultimately *given* by Theseus, and, implicitly, *received* by Arcita. The bestowal of Emilia follows Emilia's bestowal of gifts on Palemone and her granting of his freedom, a circumstance which momentarily reverses the roles of giver and given. For a brief period, Emilia wields authority delegated by Theseus, since the fate of Palemone, whether he will return to prison or not, is at her discretion. While she has some power of bestowal, this is not the same as that held by the men; as she herself acknowledges:

> E però più a l'amorose pene
> di te conforto non posso donare,
> né dei voler, né a me si convene,
> né ben faria, se I 'l volessi fare;
> ma le greche città, che tutte piene
> son di bellezze assai più da lodare
> che e' non è la mia, dar ti potranno
> giusto ristoro all'amoroso danno,[62]

[62] Ibid., 9.68.

> But I cannot give any more comfort to your amorous pains, nor should you want that, nor is it appropriate, nor would it do good if I wanted to do it; But the Greek cities, which are all full of beauties even more praiseworthy than me, can provide respite from your love-induced suffering.

While she can bestow pardon and gifts of immense value, when it comes to herself and her love, she cannot offer any further comfort. Immediately after occupying the role of giver, she herself is given in marriage to Arcita by Theseus. Emilia quickly goes from the role of giver to the given, from briefly exercising authority to embodying it.

Emilia will not remain in Arcita's possession for long, however. Michael Sherberg notes that the work concludes "ironically with the victor dying as Venus avenges Palemone's defeat and Palemone winning the girl after all."[63] A more precise statement, however, would be that Theseus gives Emilia to Palemone at Arcita's behest. To conclude, I believe a brief analysis of the language surrounding the negotiation of the work's final transaction will prove the *Teseida's* conclusion to be less ironic than Sherberg makes it out to be. Indeed, Jane Everson notes that:

> Arcita gains his prize, Emilia, but dying hands her over to his friend, the ultimate gesture, the winning card in this long-drawn-out 'gara di cortesia'; Palemone loses both the military contest and the chivalric one, but in the end gains the practical advantage; both display courtesy, nobility, humility, and mutual affection, but for Arcita the end is tragedy, for Palemone success and contentment.[64]

While Everson clarifies the logic behind the narrative development, she nevertheless contrasts Palemone's "success" to Arcita's "tragedy." However, if, as I have been arguing, the real prize is not Emilia, but the right of bestowal that she signifies, then Arcita's end is ultimately a success. Indeed, in the ultimate transaction of Emilia, Arcita underscores his position as Theseus's

[63] Sherberg, "Girl Outside the Window", 97.
[64] Everson, *The Italian Romance Epic*, 236.

double. In this way, I will argue, the re-gifting of Emilia serves to restore the integrity of male social fabric through the exchange of women.

As Arcita's wounds sustained in battle become more severe and his death becomes all but certain, he requests one final gift from Theseus *(*per ch'io ti priego per ultimo dono);[65] that upon his death his possessions, including Emilia, be transferred to Palemone:

> E io perciò che più non posso avante,
> voglio aver questo per buon guiderdone;
> e que' che fu così com'io amante
> e la sua vita ha messa in condizione
> di morte e di periglio simigliante
> a me, io dico del buon Palemone,
> per merito del suo amar riceva
> la donna ch'io per mia aver doveva.[66]
>
> And since I can no longer carry on, I would like to have this in compensation: that he who was a lover like me, who similarly put his life at risk, I am referring to the good Palemone, on account of his love, receive the woman whom I should've had as mine.

Although he remains deferential to Theseus's authority, Arcita nevertheless lays claim to Emilia as his to give away. In this way, Arcita recognizes both Theseus and Palemone as his double: like Theseus, Arcita claims authority in Emilia's bestowal. Palemone, like himself before, merits the bestowal of Emilia in his absence. Thus, through the exchange of the gift, as both recipient and donor, Arcita creates a network of links between himself, his friend/rival, and his ideal model. The following stanza reinforces the doubling not only of Arcita and Palemone, but of Arcita and Theseus:

> Questa mi fia tra l'ombre gran letizia,
> che Palemon, cui io molto amo, sia
> tratto per me d'amorosa tristizia,
> possedendo elli ciò che più disia;
> pensando ancora ch'elli abbia divizia
> di ciò che elli ama, per tua cortesia:

[65] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 10.19.2.
[66] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 10.29.

almeno Emilia, mentre fia in vita,
vedendo lui avrà a mente Arcita.[67]

It would give me great comfort among the shades thinking that Palemone, whom I love, be pulled by me from his amorous sadness, possessing that which he desires most, that he has an abundance of that which he loves, on account of your courtesy: At least Emilia, while alive, looking at him will have Arcita in mind.

Using parallel prepositional phrases ("per me", "per tua cortesia"), Arcita underscores his equivalent status to Theseus as benefactor. Although he claims his concern is for Palemone's happiness, the final lines disclose a more self-interested motive: that the exercise of his authority to bestow Emilia to Palemone will ensure that when Emilia gazes on Palemone, she remembers Arcita as the authority by which she was granted. In other words, she will see not the individual man, but the relationships that her gift established and signifies.

Once Theseus agrees to execute Arcita's wishes after his death, Arcita expresses his wishes to Palemone:

E perché tu, sì come io, amato
hai lungamente Emilia graziosa,
io ho Teseo a mio poter pregato
che la ti doni per etterna sposa:
priegoti che da te non sia negato
perché tu sappi che di me pietosa
ella sia stata e a me porti amore,
ch'ell'ha suo dover fatto e suo onore.[68]

And since you, as I, have long loved graceful Emilia, I asked Theseus, as much as I was able, to give her to you as eternal wife: I beg that you don't refuse, since you know how she pities me and that she bears love for me, she has done her duty and honor.

Although Theseus is the subject of the verb "donare," Arcita nevertheless underscores his own capacity as the director of Theseus's action and his role as co-benefactor. At the same time his offer purports to recognize Palemone as his equal, however, Arcita asserts his authority by

[67] Boccaccio, *Teseida,* 10.30.
[68] Ibid., 10.42.

indirectly compelling Palemone to accept his offer, on account of Emilia's love for him. Although not an overt threat, veiled hostility is nevertheless present in Arcita's courteous coercion. Arcita then confirms to Palemone that his marriage to Emilia remained unconsummated:

> E giuroti, per quel mondo dolente
> al quale io vado sanza ritornata,
> che, a dire il ver, giammai al mio vivente
> di lei niuna cosa t'ho levata,
> se non forse alcun bascio solamente,
> al che tale è qual tu te l'hai amata;
> ond'io ti priego, per tua cortesia,
> che tu la prenda e che cara ti sia.[69]
>
> And I swear by that woeful world to which I am headed without return, I truthfully haven't taken a thing from her while living, if not for maybe a kiss or two, thus she is just as you loved her; therefore, I beg that you, out of courtesy, take her and that she be dear to you.

Arcita assures Palemone that he won't be receiving damaged goods if he agrees to take Emilia as his wife upon Arcita's death — Emilia's symbolic value remains intact and untarnished.

Through the gesture of giving Emilia to Palemone, even if initially refused, Arcita restores the cohesion of male bonds, and transforms the doubling that earlier threatened the homosocial harmony into the mechanism of its restoration.[70] Although the hostility of the gift is not elided from the gift exchanges that take place in the text, ultimately the gift serves to cement

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[69] Ibid. 10.53.

[70] Cf. Edwards, who, regarding book one, states, "arms lead to love, and love to the restoration of social structures." Robert R. Edwards, *Chaucer and Boccaccio: Antiquity and Modernity*, (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 27. For book one as a microcosm of the work as a whole, see Bruno Porcelli, "Il Teseida del Boccaccio fra la Tebaide e the Knight's Tale," *Studi e problemi di critica testuale* 32 (April 1986): 62-3. Regarding the fight in book five, Sherberg states, "in pushing his rivalry with Arcita to the point of battle, Palemone privileges his desire for Emilia over his friendship with his cousin, the latter representing the last best hope for a reversal of the terrible history of Thebes and the foundation of a new order grounded in homosocial amity." Sherberg, "The Girl Oustide the Window," 101.

male kinship ties. Arcita assumes the authority which Theseus had gifted him in the form of Emilia, and therefore ensures that the gift of Emilia to Palemone links all three men in a communal bond of reciprocal commitment. Arcita's desire in the poem is to obtain the rights of bestowal and, in this way, assume his place within male society. Ultimately, it is not having Emilia that fulfills his lack, but giving her away that renders him complete. In the end, then, both heroes successfully realize their desires.

In conclusion, let us return to the generic considerations with which we began, in terms of gift versus commodity exchange in epic and romance. I have argued above that the prize of the tournament is Theseus's gift of Emilia, which emphasizes the relationships formed in her exchange. If the mode of exchange, then, aligns the *Teseida* with the *chansons de geste*, in that it maintains the focus on the expansion of relationships through gift exchange, the function of exchange within the poem's narrative arc aligns the poem with romance. For, as Kay argues generally and Finn E. Sinclair posits in his case study of *Daurel et Beton*, the *chansons de geste* ultimately serve to problematize the ideal male order established in part through reciprocal exchange.[71] Romance, on the other hand, serves to "disguise the rifts in the social and symbolic order which the *chansons de geste* exhibit."[72] Indeed, Sinclair notes that *Daurel et Beton* moves from the ideal of gift exchange to commodity exchange as the social fabric unravels due to Gui's

[71] Finn E. Sinclair, "The Power of the Gift: Desire and Substitution in 'Daurel et Beton'," *The Modern Language Review* 99, no.4 (Oct. 2004), *passim*.
[72] Kay, 6. See also 21, where Kay states, "my overall contention is that the *chansons de geste* are more critical of the norms of masculinity than is romance, and that they put in question both social violence and the symbolic fabric on which a masculine social order might claim to rest." Kay argues that the motif of the Saracen princess in the *chansons de geste*, and the narrative authority attributed to the princesses, "ironiz[es] the pretensions of male hegemony." Although she suggests that the Saracen princess motif does not conform to the exchange of women outlined by Levi-Strauss, in that it reveals the ambiguity of gift-giving, her arguments nevertheless revolve around how the Saracen princesses mediate relationships between men, and between individual and collective interests. Kay, 39-45.

treachery and betrayal of his friend, Boves.[73] Utlimately, he concludes, the work reveals the ideal male order as a fantasy, which, once fragmented, cannot be reinstated.[74] Whereas *Daurel et Beton* moves from gift exchange to commodity exchange, the *Teseida* moves in the opposite direction. Emilia initially serves an object to be appropriated by violence, which threatens to rupture male bonds. As the work progresses she becomes a gift, the exchange of which ultimately maintains the fantasy of ideal male solidarity. This movement can also be seen in the doubling that takes place over the course of the tournament and its aftermath. Sarah Kay suggests a further distinction between romance and epic in the relationship between desire and the Other that characterizes the two genres. As she points out, desire in both the *chansons de geste* (epic) and romance conforms to the formula, "all desire is the desire of the other." Nevertheless, she argues:

> ...the epic treatment of this formula conforms more closely with the way Girard would gloss it, since the *chansons de geste* texts accord to the 'other' the status of a separate person. The Romance pattern, by contrast, is closer to the way the formula is used by Lacan, whose 'other' is an 'it', a generalized (masculine) social order to which all are subject.[75]

This distinction, according to Kay, allows for greater conflict of narrative within the *chansons de geste*, whereas the romances focus "fantasy on the perspective of the young male hero."[76] William Maisch has noted that, in their desire for Emilia leading up to the tournament, Arcita and Palemone conform to the Girardian model of mimetic desire, and that Arcita serves as a sacrificial substitute for Theseus himself upon his death.[77] However, my analysis of the doubling that begins with Mars' descent to the pitch and continues subsequent to the tournament

[73] Sinclair, "The Power of the Gift," 906, 910.
[74] Ibid., 913.
[75] Ibid., 170.
[76] Ibid., 171.
[77] See William C. Maisch, "Boccaccio's *Teseida*," 93-6.

demonstrates that this doubling aligns more closely with the Lacanian conception of the other, in which the male protagonists act as doubles of each other in so far as they adopt positions within the symbolic order. Thus, the work moves from discord to harmony, from prize to gift, mediating epic and romance.

Chapter 2: Staying in Bounds: Play and Violence

In a letter to Giovanni Colonna Petrarch echoes Augustine in his judgement of a tournament as an unnecessary display of violence, the glamorization of which he considered barbaric. Indeed, Petrarch blames Neapolitan crime on the violence espoused in the games:[1]

> But is it any wonder that they act brazenly under the cover of darkness without witness, when in this Italian city in broad daylight with royalty and the populace as spectators infamous gladiatorial games are permitted of a wilderness that is greater than we associate with barbarians? [2]

Petrarch's negative assessment of gladiatorial violence in his letter also recalls one written by Seneca in which he expresses the stoic view that "the vices that creep into the circus spectators through the channels of pleasure make them less than human and turn them into beasts no less savage than the ones they watch."[3] Petrarch, following Seneca and Augustine, was clearly of the opinion that ludic violence, especially spectacular ludic violence, encouraged the spread of violence beyond the temporal, spatial, and regulatory limits of the ludic spectacle and engendered criminal activity. As Alessandra Rizzi has shown, the legislative records of the Italian communes over the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries reflect similar apprehension surrounding ludic activity, both physical and otherwise. In an effort to mitigate the

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[1]Rita Librandi contrasts Petrarch's presentation of the Neapolitan games with the tournament in the *Teseida*, which she argues reflects the spectacle of Angevin tournaments. She suggests that the historical context of the authors' times in Naples, the generic contexts in which the assessments appear, and the possibility that Boccaccio was more inspired by courtly tournaments than the more violent games held at Carbonara, which Petrarch may have attended, explain the divergent presentation of ludic activities by the two authors. Rita Librandi "Cortesia e Cavalleria," 66-69.

[2] Petrarch. *Familiares*, V.6.21. For translation, see Francesco Petrarca, *Letters on Familiar Matters*, trans. Aldo S. Bernardo (New York: Italica Press, 2005), 243-5.

[3] Glenn W. Most, "Disiecti Membra Poetae: the Rhetoric of Dismemberment in Neronian Poetry," in *Innovations of Antiquity*, eds. Ralph Hexter and Daniel Selden (New York: Routledge, 1992), 404. see Seneca, *Epist*. 7.2-4. James McGreggor notes that both Seneca's letter and the Augustinian episode at *Confessions* 6.8 likely served as models for Petrarch's letter. See James H. McGreggor, "Boccaccio's Athenian Theater," 16, especially footnote 56.

opportunity for ludic violence to inspire criminal violence, laws were passed that sought to ban certain ludic activities or restrict them to specific times and locations. On the other hand, civic authorities began to appreciate the benefits that play held as well, and their legislative record demonstrates an attempt to strike a balance between the potential danger and potential benefits of play.[4] Therefore, the question of ludic violence's role, whether it limits violence by providing a controlled outlet, or increases violence by allowing or promoting otherwise illicit action was as much a question of the middle ages as it is today. In the following chapter I will argue that the "giuoco a marte", a war game which settles the central conflict of the *Teseida*, serves a cathartic function by imitating the very violence it seeks to prevent.

The "giuoco a marte" offers a unique perspective on the question of ludic violence in literature, since it is in dialogue with other instances of violence, both ludic and otherwise, both inter- and intra-textually: the conflicts of both Thebes and Troy, the funeral games associated with those conflicts, the martial action of the first two books of the *Teseida*, and the duel between Arcita and Palemone in Book five (since their participation in the game is the "piacevol condizione" which Theseus imposes on his pardon for their transgressions of his laws).[5] Several

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[4] Alessandra Rizzi, *Ludus/Ludere: giocare in Italia alla fine del medio evo* (Treviso: Fondazione Benetton, 1995), *passim*. See in particular, however, p. 9, where Rizzi summarizes her argument, "Si può dire...che gli episodi di violenza e il disordine provocati dall'attività ludica spingessero i contemporanei che ne intrapresero l'opera di disciplinamento e repressione, a considerare, nello stesso tempo, il significato e le funzioni del gioco in generale." On p. 18 Rizzi notes that, "molti giochi...furono proibiti non per se stessi, ma per quello che avrebbero potuto provocare se avessero avuto luogo," echoing the sentiments expressed by Petrarch.

[5] Robert R. Edwards writes that for both Boccaccio and Chaucer the *Thebaid*, "seen as an emblem...represents irrational conflict and transgression." See Robert R. Edwards, *Chaucer and Boccaccio: Antiquity and Modernity*, (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave, 2002), 20. Anderson argues that the *Teseida* offers an "alternate ending" to the *Thebaid*, whereby the worst violence is avoided. Anderson, 107-112. However, he emphasizes Arcita's death over the ludic setting in which it takes place together with "Theseus's control" in general for stemming the violence. Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale,* 160. I treat this component of his argument in the final pages of this chapter. Eren Hoffstetter Branch considers

scholars have approached the tournament's violence, especially as it relates to its historical and literary sources, as well as from an allegorical perspective.[6] Although often referred to as a tournament by scholars writing both in English and Italian, neither the phrase *torneo* nor *giostra* appear in the text in reference to the game conceived by Theseus which takes place in Book eight of the *Teseida*. In book five he proposes that a "giuoco palestrale" be held to settle the Thebans' dispute over Emilia, which in book seven is redefined as a "giuoco a marte" and later referred to as a "gioco marziale."[7] Other times the game is referred to as a "battaglia" and characterized variously as "amorosa," "crudele," "aspra," or "dubbiosa."[8] Nevertheless, there is textual evidence that supports the characterization of the game as a tournament: the investiture ceremony that precedes the contest, the presence of court ladies in the audience, the setting of the contest in an amphitheater situated, "poco...fuori della terra," and the regulation of arms by Theseus all support the use of the term tournament.[9] Most of these elements, however, precede

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the rhetorical relationship between the duel in Book five and the "giuoco a marte*."* She argues that the dispute originates as a rhetorical *quistione d'amore*, which, upon Theseus's intervention morphs into a c*ontroversia*. See Eren H. Branch, "Rhetorical Structures and Strategies in Boccaccio's *Teseida*,"in *The Craft of Fiction: Essays in Medieval Poetics,* ed. Leigh A. Arrathoon (Rochester: Solaris Press, 1984), 145-9.

[6] In the allegorical readings, Theseus is often portrayed positively, although the action of the tournament is only treated in passing. Janet Levarie Smarr and Victoria Kirkham identify Theseus as a figure of reason who reigns in the passions demonstrated by the Thebans. Victoria Kirkham, "'Chiuso parlare'," 327. According to Janet Smarr's reading of the text, the tournament represents Theseus's socialization of the irascible appetite in the same way marriage represents his successful socialization of concupiscent, although she does not analyze the tournament in detail. Janet Levarie Smarr, *Boccaccio and Fiammetta*, 69-71. Andrea Gazzoni notes that Theseus is a "civilizing figure" that ritualizes the violence of desire, but does not consider the extent to which such ritualization is ludic. See Andrea Gazzoni*,* "Trecento Variations, 212.

[7] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 8.2.3.

[8] Ibid., 7.8.1, line 3 of the opening sonnet to Book 8 (crudele and aspro modify adoperare), 8.14, 8.91.1.

[9] Rita Librandi, "Cortesia e cavalleria" 59-66, Bruni, *Boccaccio*, 196-199. Rather than a medieval tournament, James McGregor suggests that the setting in the amphitheater aligns the

the actual narrative action of the game, which at times resembles the action of classical epic more closely than that typical of a tournament of the Angevin court in Naples, which, according to Rita Librandi, were, "più che altro occassioni di svaghi mondani."[10] While the chivalric tradition informs certain aspects of the "giuoco" (perhaps most significantly it supplies a paradigm for the thematic combination of love and war), and familiarity with contemporary tournament practices contextualizes the medieval conception of the ludic, the use of the term *tournament* to describe the *Teseida*'s contest (a convenient shorthand which this dissertation at times employs) is a distortion, for it flattens the dynamic combination of multiple historic and literary sources which forms something altogether new, the "giuoco a marte". Likewise, Francesco Bruni's observation that the funeral games of the *Aeneid* offered Boccaccio a paradigm for simulated war, while undeniably true, also distorts the *Teseida's* action, for it implies that the *Teseida*'s game assumes the same balance between real and simulated war exhibited by the funeral games sequence in the *Aeneid*.[11] More nuanced in this regard is the analysis of David Anderson, who claims the funeral games in Book six of the *Thebaid* (the

"giuoco" with another tradition, the munera of ancient Rome. McGregor, "Boccaccio's Athenian Theater," 29-32.

[10] Librandi's characterization these tournaments, which Boccaccio may have attended during his time in Naples, and which she argues are reflected in the *Teseida*, as fought by knights who are, "privati...dell'antica aggressività," does not align with the "giuoco a marte". Librandi, "Cortesia e cavalleria," 60. Although Librandi notes that, "nel corso dello sconto si nota, di tanto in tanto, forse per non venir meno all'usanza dell'epoca un certo accanimento...," and notes in passing the influence of epic on the poem, she overemphasizes the superficiality of the spectaclar elements of the "giuoco a marte." *Ibid.,* 63. James McGregor has identified passages modeled on the *Aeneid*. McGregor, *Shades of Aeneas*, 69-70.

[11] This is more true for Bruni, who argues that, in addition to the medieval tournament, Boccaccio found a classical precedent for games as simulations of war in the *Aeneid's* funeral games. In stressing that Boccaccio's use of the funeral games transforms them from an accessory element to the fundamental structure of the *Teseida*, he fails to differentiate the "giuoco a marte's" relationship to martial action from the funeral games' in the *Aeneid*. Bruni, 200-201.

chariot race in particular) as a primary model for the action of the "giuoco,"[12] but who ultimately concludes:

> The tournament resembles the war of epic tradition more closely than an athletic contest. But the scale of the tournament, if too large for epic games, is also too small for epic warfare. Closest in scale to a medieval tournament, what Boccaccio describes is a little war fought under strict rules that limit but do not eliminate casualties.[13]

While Anderson acknowledges that simulation of war is a component of epic funeral games,[14] he also acknowledges that Boccaccio's game approximates war more closely than typical epic games. Though not a game by classical epic standards, Anderson does not suggest that the "giuoco" ceases to be a game. Although he notes the "giuoco's" proximity to epic warfare, his focus on Boccaccio's adaption of the Statian games prevents him from considering how Boccaccio adapts scenes of warfare to conform to the text's ludic scale. The allusions to Virgilian warfare (deaths especially) form the foundation of James McGregor's reading of the "giuoco" in *The Shades of Aeneas*, where he concludes that the presence of intertextual references to deaths in the main action of the *Aeneid* signal the transgression of the *Teseida's* action from a game to outright war, thus demonstrating the failure of pagan *pietas*.[15] McGregor's reading is based on an erroneous assumption that Theseus intended the "giuoco" to be "bloodless" and influenced perhaps by his own conception of what constitutes a game (which he fails to define).[16] In the following chapter I will reconsider the representation of violence in the *Teseida's* "giuoco a marte".

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[12] David Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale,* 100-117.
[13] Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale*, 119.
[14] Ibid., 98.
[15] McGregor, *Shades of Aeneas*, 69-76.
[16]For instance, McGregor states that it is Theseus's intention that, "this contest be a giuoco, not a battle, but a game or *ludus.*" McGregor, "Boccaccio's Athenian Theater," 33.Such a dichotomy, without a precise definition of terms is an oversimplification, however, since Theseus himself describes the contest as a "*battaglia*...amorosa." The same is true of other remarks, such as his

Rather than attempt to define the game and its violence according to a single historical or literary paradigm, I will argue that the action of the *Teseida's* "giuoco", as defined by the rules set forth by Theseus, exemplifies the mimetic aspect of play. The approximation to martial action does not transgress the bounds of the game, it is the game.[17] Furthermore, I will demonstrate how the text maintains the distinction between its regulated, ludic violence and spontaneous violence by recontextualizing the action to affirm the compliance with the rules of the game in the inter- and intra- textual passages that most closely approximate spontaneous violence. Finally, in addition to remaining circumscribed by the rules, I will argue that the imitative violence of the "giuoco" functions to prevent the spread of spontaneous violence which the dispute between the Thebans threatens to incite, the efficacy of which is evident in the immediate aftermath of the contest. Thus, the ludic framework is instrumental in the containment of the violence as it acknowledges the juridical outcome obtained by violence,[18] while also situating violence in a contextual framework which transforms reciprocal antagonism among the combatants into social cohesion. I will employ Rene Girard's theory of violence outlined in *Violence and The Sacred* to argue that the tournament is a ritual imitation of the sacrificial crisis, which effectively prevents an actual sacrificial crisis from occurring. Indeed, William Maisch identifies the looming threat of sacrificial crisis and non-differentiation as a central theme of the *Teseida*:

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claim that, "human savagery...transforms the game into war," or "the battle in Theseus's theater is...not a game but a war." McGregor, *The Shades of Aeneas*, 67.

[17] Jane Everson's use of the term "mock war" is appropriate for the "giuoco". She, however, places scare quotes around "mock," implying that the action exceeds the mimetic framework.

[18] E. H. Branch notes that the tournament settles the debate of the Thebans by a "rhetoric of brute force." See E.H. Branch, "Rhetorical Structures and Strategies in Boccaccio's *Teseida*," in *The Craft of Fiction: Essays in Medieval Poetics,* eds. Leigh A. Arrathoon (Rochester: Solaris Press, 1984), 151.

> Teseo's Athenian civilization is implicitly menaced by violence, for essential and stabilizing distinctions are undermined by confusion between men and women, men and beasts, human and gods, and above all between the "self" and the Other.[19]

More generally, Maish argues that the violence of the *Teseida* is "rooted in and reflected by the breakdown of language itself."[20] While I agree with Maisch that the narrative and thematic structures of the *Teseida*, up to and including the violence of the tournament, conform to the patterns outlined by Girard (in that it is precipitated by rivalry based on mimetic desire and follows a pattern of symmetry and reciprocity), I disagree that the tournament and its consequent deaths dramatize the failure of Theseus to control violence by means of reason and regulation.[21] Quite the opposite, my analysis will show that the text underscores the rules' capacity to distinguish the tournament's action from the spontaneous violence which it imitates and, through this imitation, keeps at bay.

Jane Everson alludes to the importance of play to an understanding of the tournament. She states, "what is most stimulating about the account of the battle is precisely the conflicting, contrasting tones used, and which remain unresolved: serious and/or playful, tragedy and/or comedy, real life and/or spectacle."[22] Everson stops short of a detailed analysis of the terms she uses or a close reading of how the text incorporates the concepts, instead sidestepping the problem by arguing that the narrative is ambiguous. While she claims that, "on the one hand we are constantly reminded by the poet that this is a spectacle, an audience is present, and the whole show is in a sense under the control of Teseo and the established rules of the game to which the players will adhere,"[23] she nevertheless sets the "spectacular" in mutual opposition to the "real."

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[19] William Maisch, "Breakdown of Difference and Ritual Sacrifice," 86.
[20] Ibid., 85.
[21] Ibid., 92-3.
[22] Jane Everson, "The Italian Romance Epic," 180.
[23] Ibid., 181.

The tournament narrative, she states, varies "between that appropriate to a real battle and that appropriate to a spectacle."[24] She does not consider, however, the possibility that the "giuoco's" approximation to "real" violence contributes to its spectacle, nor the possibility that play can, in fact, be serious. As I will demonstrate, the poetics of the "giuoco" signal the participants' adherence to Theseus' rules even in the representation of action "appropriate to a real battle." The ambiguity Everson perceives is more a result of her oversimplification of the oppositions she identifies, than a contradiction in the text. To better understand ludic violence, it is to these oppositions we must now turn.

In order to analyze the role of the tournament's action it is necessary to clarify to what extent it can be considered properly ludic. McGregor and Maisch argue that the fact that deaths occur, despite Theseus's stated desire that the tournament prevent death, indicates that the tournament exceeds the bounds of the ludic.[25] It can certainly be said that participation in the tournament does not appear to be fun, an adjective typically associated with the notion of play.[26] Indeed, the adjectives associated with the tournament (*aspro*, *crudele*) make clear that the tournament, despite being coined a game by Theseus, is not an instance of frivolous merrymaking for its participants.[27] Putting Theseus's stated goal of avoiding death aside (at least for the moment), it is worth noting that the presence of death *per se* is not incompatible with the concept of play.[28]

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[24] Ibid., 180.
[25] Maisch, *Breakdown of Difference*, 93, and McGregor, *Shades of Aeneas*, 69.
[26] Cf. McGregor, who states that "Theseus ought...to realize that something other than innocent play is involved." McGregor, *The Image of Antiquity*, 155.
[27] Boccaccio, *Teseida* 8, opening sonnet.
[28] Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture*, (1949; repr., London: Routledge, 1998), 89, where Huizinga cites the tournament as an example of play which did not exclude death. Cf. Bruni, who states that deaths in tournaments and likewise in the "giuoco a marte" occur within a "cornice ludica." Bruni, *Boccaccio*, 199.

The association of fun with play stems in part from the assumed opposition between play and serious action and play action and reality.[29] The opposition between play on the one hand and serious on the other is not only a contemporary phenomenon, as such an opposition can be found in classical texts spanning the republican and imperial periods of Roman history.[30] Despite its long history, the perceived opposition between play and seriousness is not as straightforward as it seems. Huizinga, in his seminal work on play, explains:

> Every child knows perfectly well that he is "only pretending", or that it was "only for fun"...This "only pretending" quality of play betrays a consciousness of the inferiority of play compared with "seriousness", a feeling that seems to be something as primary as play itself. Nevertheless...the consciousness of play being "only a pretend" does not by any means prevent it from proceeding with the utmost seriousness, with an absorption, a devotion that passes into rapture and, temporarily at least, completely abolishes that troublesome "only" feeling. Any game can at any time wholly run away with the players. The contrast between play and seriousness is always fluid. The inferiority of play is continually being offset by the corresponding superiority of its seriousness. Play turns to seriousness and serious-ness to play. Play may rise to heights of beauty and sublimity that leave serious far beneath.[31]

In order to make sense of the apparent contradiction of serious play, Roger Caillois distinguishes between the nature of the fiction governing rule-based and imaginative play. Caillois explains:

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[29] Roger Caillois assigns the pleasure derived from ludic activities to their voluntary nature. He writes, “play must be defined as a free and voluntary activity, a source of joy and amusement.” Roger Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*, trans. Meyer Barash (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 6.

[30] Andrea Nuti notes that in the comedies of Plautus, the opposition between play and serious is articulated most frequently with forms of *iocus*, which, at the time, had a limited semantic field and referred almost exclusively to verbal word play and jokes. Virgil and Horace oppose *ludus* to *serius* in the Eclogues, Epistles and Satires, respectively, where *ludus* is used to refer to the “lower” genres of poetry, such as the pastoral and satire. For the opposition between *iocus* and *serius* in Plautus, see Nuti, 49-54. For the opposition of *ludus* and *serius* in poetry, see Andrea Nuti, Ludus e iocus: percorsi di ludicità nella lingua latina (Treviso : Fondazione Benetton studi ricerche; Roma : Viella, 1998) 115-117. For the linguistic evolution of *ludus* and *iocus* (and *ludere* and *iocari*), and how *iocus* came to assume the vast semantic field previously covered by *ludus* in both the late imperial Latin and in some romance language vernaculars, see *ibid*. 196-212.

[31] Huizinga, *Homo Ludens*, 8.

> Many games do not imply rules. No fixed or rigid rules exist for playing with dolls, for playing soldiers, cops and robbers, horses, locomotives, and airplanes—games, in general, which presuppose free improvisation, and the chief attraction of which lies in the pleasure of playing a role, of acting *as if* one were something or someone else, a machine for example...in this instance the fiction, the sentiment of *as if* replaces and performs the same function as do rules. Rules themselves create fictions. The one who plays chess, prisoners base, polo, or baccara, by the very fact of complying with their respective rules, is separated from real life where there is no activity that literally corresponds to any of these games. That is why chess, prisoners base, polo and baccara are played *for real*. (Italics original).[32]

Therefore, while the playing of rule-bound games can be taken seriously by the players, it nevertheless is separated from real-life by the adherence to arbitrary rules.[33] Indeed, even in the classical usage, the term *ludus* and its related forms cannot always be understood in opposition to serious matters. Andrea Nuti notes one fragment from the first century BC (especially notable for our purposes for its topic, gladiatorial combat) in which *ludere* is opposed to *iocari*, "metuo illum: iocari nescit, ludit nimium insaniter." Nuti notes that in this instance, the verb *ludere* represents the more "serious" action, which is juxtaposed with the "just pretend" action articulated by *iocari*. In other inscriptions describing gladiatorial combat, the verb *ludere* refers to the performance, however violent, of the gladiator:

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[32] Caillois, *Man, Play, Games*, 8.

[33] For Bernard Suits game play is defined by voluntary conformity to the constitutive rules of a game. He explains, "We may say...that games require obedience to rules which limit the permissible means to a sought end and where such rules are obeyed just so such an activity can occur." Bernard Suits, *The Grasshopper: Games, Life, and Utopia* (Toronto ; Buffalo : University of Toronto Press, 1978), 32. He later clarifies, however, that this definition does not preclude professionalism or ulterior motives (other than pursuit in the game for its own sake) from the realm of game play. Most succinctly, he states that for game play, as opposed to unconditioned play, "there need be no other reason (than playing a game for its own sake), but there can be." *Ibid.* 144. For Arcita and Palemone, this formal definition of game play best describes the extent to which they are playing since for them the game carries a quasi-juridical weight. For the additional participants, however, this is not the case. For them, participation in the tournament is voluntary and their engagement with violence, by and large, recreational.

> ...quando un gladiatore ludit significa che sta combattendo, sta esercitando suo ruolo, che pur violento e mortale, doveva essere sentito come la rappresentazione di un combattimento autentico.[34]

Thus, especially in the context of mock-war or mock-combat, violent, even mortal, action was included in the semantic range of the ludic. On the one hand, in the gladiatorial context the ludic activity can be said to be serious to the extent that it is not performed for the merriment of the performer and can have grievous consequences. Yet, despite the gravity of gladiatorial activity, there remains one sense in which it can be opposed to "serious" action. Regardless of its violence and mortality, it is still not considered "the real thing". It exists as an imitation of something more "serious."[35] Indeed, the mimetic aspect, which was hinted at by Huizinga as the sensation of "only pretending", according to A. Nuti is a cardinal trait of the ludic, as it bridges the disparate semantic fields that *ludus* and its related forms convey from one context to another. The gladiatorial and public games of Rome were, despite their real violence, thought of nevertheless as imitations of real, authentic conflicts, just as educational exercises (for which the noun *ludus* was used) were imitations of "real-life" scenarios for didactic purposes.[36] Likewise, regarding the ludic "battagliole" of communal Italy, Alessandra Rizzi explains that they were tolerated, despite their violence, because they provided an outlet for antagonism to play out in a regulated setting; "perciò gioco e non realtà."[37]

Indeed, Christopher R. Matthews and Alex Channon explore the implications of mimesis within the context of sports-related violence:

> With respect to the concept of mimesis, participation in sports can be understood as generative of similar emotional experiences to what we might loosely call the 'real-life' situations of which they are a selective imitation (Elias and Dunning 2008 [1986];

[34] Nuti, *Ludus e iocus*, 85.
[35] Ibid., 85-6.
[36] Nuti, *Ludus e iocus.* 94-102.
[37] Alessandra Rizzi, *Ludus/Ludere*, 42.

> Matthews 2014). They have consequences which are usually less severe in an objective sense than those of their real-life equivalents, but, of far greater conceptual importance, consequences which are *experienced differently* by those involved. Regarding dangerous, 'violent', or otherwise socially illegitimate actions, it is the similarity of their emotional feel to these illicit, 'real' acts through which mimetic experiences draw their value, while the differences in their meaning, purpose and typical consequences position them as socially acceptable things which people can legitimately enjoy. This distinction has clear implications for the way in which acts might be labelled as violent, particularly when considering the notion of violence-as-violation, which itself requires a contextual sensitivity well-suited to exploring this balance of sameness and difference surrounding 'real' and mimetic experiences. (emphasis original)[38]

Their observations are particularly relevant for the discussion of the *Teseida*, for they articulate how violence can remain mimetic despite resulting in physical injury:

> Rather than a totally pain/injury-free experience then, this mimetic form of violence represents a relatively controlled risk, enabling the generation of socially significant sensations and emotions, which selectively imitate those felt within 'real life' fights but remain understood and experienced differently by all involved.[39]

According to Matthews and Channon the mimetic dimension is one that, "is a socially legitimate, experientially different variation of other, similar actions (e.g. battles; mass brawls) which occur within altogether different structures of meaning (and also, for that matter, carry the potential to be far more injurious because of it)."[40]

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[38] Christopher R. Matthews and Alex Channon, "Understanding Sports Violence: Revisiting Foundational Explorations," *Sport in Society* 20, no. 7 (2017): 762.
[39] Ibid., 763.
[40] Ibid. Their observations are based on the concept of mimesis articulated by Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, who argue that sports, along with certain other leisure activities, offer mimetic excitement in a safe, tempered form that de-routinizes the mundanity of modern life in industrialized society. Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning, "The Quest for Excitement in Leisure," in *Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process*, eds. Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning (Oxford; New York: B. Blackwell, 1986), 65-66. As Stephen Mennell explains, the mimetic dynamic was not absent from medieval, Roman, or Hellenistic games, but "the skills, physical and temperamental, used in the game contest were closely related to skills necessary in 'real life'; the mimetic distance, so to speak, was relatively small." Stephen Mennell, "The Contribution of Eric Dunning to the Sociology of Sport: The Foundations," *Sport in Society* 9, no. 4 (Oct. 2006), 520. For Elias and Dunning, activities are considered mimetic in so far as the sensations they produce replicate those produced by "real life" situations rather than the explicit imitation of the real-life scenarios themselves as Nuti argues for *ludere* and its related forms. Eric Dunning, *Sport*

I will argue that Boccaccio registers the mimetic context of the tournament's violence in the passages which most closely approximate authentic violence, by creating subtle distance between the tournament passage and its inter- or intra- textual antecedent, often in a manner that reflects the rules imposed by Theseus. Therefore, I will argue that the tournament's play element is reflected not only in its instances of spectacular pageantry, but also in its *imitation* of authentic violence. I will argue that what is imitated in the tournament is not simply martial combat *per se*, but the pattern of reciprocal violence typical of the sacrificial crisis that the conflict between the Theban brothers threatens to unleash on the Lernean community. Through the ludic imitation of reciprocal violence, the tournament manages to prevent an actual sacrificial crisis from occurring. That the violence remains in the ludic sphere is made evident by the comparison of inter- and intra- textual passages describing the tournament's action and the swift move to consensus following the tournament, indicative of the successful restriction of symmetrical violence to spatial and temporal boundaries of play, and the recontextualization of violent action within the mimetic sphere.

As already mentioned, central to the arguments of Maisch and McGregor, is that the violence of the tournament exceeds the regulations stipulated by Theseus. According to both, Theseus conceives of the contest as a non-violent event, but a closer look at the development of the tournament reveals this is not the case. In Book VII, upon seeing the surprisingly high quality

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Matters: Sociological Studies of Sport, Violence, and Civilization (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 27. Nevertheless, I believe Matthews and Channon's observation (that the experiential and hermeneutic values ascribed to mimetic action differ from those ascribed to objectively similar action and its results, i.e. physical pain, injuries or, a step further, death) is applicable to less abstractly imitative violence as well. In the *Teseida* their observation allows the reader to recognize the extent to which its violence, though imitative of war, remains mimetic, as it occurs within different structures of meaning.

of men who have come to fight on behalf of Palemone and Arcita, Theseus re-conceptualizes the contest that will take place for Emilia, which he had earlier proposed as a "giuoco palestrale":[41]

> Questo sarà come un giuoco a Marte,
> li sacrifici del qual celebriamo
> il giorno dato; e vederassi l'arte
> di menar l'armi in che c'esercitiamo;
> e perciò ch'io giudice, non parte,
> qui esser debbo dove noi seggiamo,
> sanza arme i vostri fatti porrò mente;
> però di ben portarvi aggiate a mente.[42]
>
> It will be like a game for Mars, whose sacrifices we celebrate on this given day. We will observe the skill in bearing arms that we train in. Because I am the judge and non-partisan, I must stay here where we sit, myself unarmed, to your deeds I will turn my attention. Thus, set your mind on proving yourselves well.

The shift from a "giuoco palestrale" to a "giuoco a marte" comes after seeing both the number and rank of men who have arrived in Athens to fight on behalf of the Thebans, which Theseus did not expect—"...non credetti che tutta Lernea sotto li regi achivi si movesse per sì poca di cosa," he admits.[43] And, while he asks, "E come poria io mai sofferire vedere il sangue larisseo versare e l'un pe' colpi dell'altro morire come al seme di Cadmo piacque fare" and states that, "all'iddii saria molto odiosa veder qui contro al padre uscire il figlio, et ferir l'un contra l'altro parente co'ferri in man nimichevolmente," because the men have already gathered with the intention and desire to engage in some sort of combative competition,[44] Theseus chooses to oblige them in their desire for armed combat. Rather than a "gioco palestrale", the contest will be

[41] Boccaccio explains in the gloss to 7.4 that the point of the "palestral game" was to force the opponent to the ground (*mettere in terra*) or pin the opponent (*tener fermo*). He describes what he believed to be worn by the contestants and remarks that sometimes women participated, and that Helen was abducted by Theseus during a match.
[42] Boccaccio, *Teseida* 7.13.
[43] Ibid., 7.5.1-3.
[44] Boccaccio, *Teseida* 7.11.

a "giuoco a marte".[45] Theseus's main concern turns to limiting the animosity between the participants, rather than prohibiting bloodshed or death *per se*:[46]

> E acciò ch'odio fra voi non nascesse,
> le lance più nocive lascerete;
> sol con le spade o con mazze l'espresse
> forze di voi contenti proverete;
> e le bipenni porti chi volesse,
> ma altro no: di queste assai avete;
> e quelli a cui il bene ovrar vittoria
> darà, s'avrà e la donna e la gloria.[47]
>
> Lest hatred be born amongst you, you must relinquish your deadliest spears, be content to prove yourselves only with swords or clubs; He who wishes to wield a double-sided axe may do so, but nothing else. Of these things you have plenty; those on whom talent will bestow victory, will also go the woman and the glory.

What would be offensive to the gods, it seems, is not armed combat *per se*, but armed conflict fought "nimichevolmente," which Theseus hopes to avoid by prohibiting the deadliest weapons.

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[45] Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale*, 119. McGregor does not take realize that Theseus redefines the parameters of the game, and that the "giuoco a marte" is distinct from the "giuoco palestral" that he had proposed earlier, as evident in the following statement where he claims Theseus, "wishes this contest to be an 'amorosa...battaglia' worthy of comparison with a 'palestral gioco.'" McGregor, "Boccaccio's Athenian Theater," 33. Perhaps McGregor is confused by Arcita's use of the term "palestral gioco" in his prayer to Mars. Indeed, he cites this instance as evidence that Boccaccio meant for the tournament to be bloodless, "In book seven he compares the impending fight between Palemone and Arcita to such a wrestling match, by which he means to emphasize, I think, that it too, like the Greek palaestra, will be bloodless." However, the gloss explains the use of the phrase in the line McGregor cites (*Teseida* VII.27.3) as follows, "Detto è di sopra che sia il giuoco palestrale, et bene che questo non debbia essere così fatto, parla l'autore al modo poetico…." *Teseida* VII.27.3 and accompanying gloss. McGregor's conclusion, therefore, that the tournament exceeds the bounds of the game, seems to be in part based on a misunderstanding of the game.

[46] Cf. Surdich, *Boccaccio*, 52. See also Smith, IIan M. "'As Olde Stories Tellen Us': Chivalry, Violence, and Geoffrey Chaucer's Critical Perspective in 'The Knight's Tale'," *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 32, (2007): 91. Smith compares this treatment of violence to Chaucer's, and concludes, ironically, that Chaucer's Theseus fails to control violence much in the same way McGreggor concludes that Theseus's attempts at control end in failure. Whereas Smith dubs the Chaucerian Theseus's attempt at control as a failure, he argues that the Boccaccian combatants "largely adhere to Theseus's rules."

[47] Boccaccio, *Teseida* 7.12.

With his re-conception of the contest as a "giuoco a marte", then, Theuseus intentionally allows for more violence than would have been allowed in the "gioco palestrale" originally proposed. Theseus himself acknowledges the approximation of the ludic to the martial, by not only bestowing upon the contest a new name, but a new, additional purpose—providing an opportunity for contestants to demonstrate the skills used in war.[48] Therefore, where other scholars see the tournament's resemblance to warfare as evidence of Theseus's failure to contain violence within the parameters of ludic activity, they fail to recognize that the ludic activity consists of an imitation of war.[49] The restructuring of the game to include some weapons (*spade*, *mazze*, e *bipenni*) implies that some bloodshed is anticipated. However, the restrictions that remain in place (the prohibition of the most deadly weapons, the limited number of participants, the specifications of location and duration) maintain the mimetic quality of the action relative to war.[50] That the tournament constitutes a compromise between the unarmed contest originally

[48] Anderson, *Before the Knights Tale*, 119.
[49] Cf. Anderson, "Before the Knight's tale", 123, "Even in defining the tournament and its rules, Theseus suggests an analogical relation with Thebes and Troy: 'questo sarà come un giuoco a Marte' (This will be like games in honor of Mars), not athletic games but martial games, a little war." Nolan hints at the imitative aspect of the game as designed by Theseus when she states that "Boccaccio...like Theseus, plays with the ceremonies of war." Although she claims the game is a "moderate game of war" she does not adequately explore how the game's representation of violence reflects this moderation despite the inter- and intra- textual references to instances of spontaneous and/or martial violence. She simply states, that "Boccaccio...imitates, in a comedic way, the figurative language and classical topoi of classical heroic poetry." It is difficult to know exactly what Nolan means by 'comedic,' but this explanation is insufficient. For example, the deaths of Artifilo and his brother, discussed in this chapter, are certainly not comedic. Nolan, *Chaucer*, 189. In this chapter, although I provide specific examples of how the representation of the game's violence registers the moderation that Nolan identifies, I argue that equally important as this moderation is the resemblance of ludic violence to spontaneous violence for the *containment* of violence.
[50] Cf. Caillois, *Man, Play, and Games*, 62. Caillois notes, "tournaments are games, wars are not...To be sure, one can be killed in a tournament, but only accidentally, just as in an auto race, boxing match, or fencing bout, because the tournament is more regulated, more separated from real life, and more circumscribed than war."

proposed by Theseus in Book five and the unfettered violence that the Greek Kings were prepared to engage in aligns with the virtues of reason and measure which Janet Smarr argues that Theseus consistently embodies in the text.[51] Neither depriving the Greek kings of the opportunity to fight on behalf of one or the other Thebans nor encouraging unchecked violence that threatens public safety, Theseus's conception of the "giuoco" is situated between two extremes.[52] With this understanding of the "giuoco a marte" in mind, it remains for us to examine the representation of the tournament's action and aftermath to determine the extent to which it registers the mimetic distance Theseus' rules create between mimetic and spontaneous violence.

Let us begin by considering instances in which the tournament's action is linked with martial action of classical epic through intertextual allusions. Rather than signify the transgression of the ludic into war, the resemblance of the tournament's action to martial action signifies the mimetic, imitative quality of the game, for the intertextual references indicate dissimilitude as well as similitude between the ludic and martial action. The first instance of martial death that McGregor cites as illustrative of the transformation of the game into war is the deaths of Artifilo and his brother in stanza fifteen:[53]

> Quivi rimase per misera sorte
> Artifilo Itoneo, il qual ferio
> d'una bipenne il buon Cremiso a morte;
> e mentre lui lo suo fratel pio
> volea levar, li sopragiunse il forte
> Eleno, e orgoglioso il perseguio

[51] Smarr, *Boccaccio and Fiammetta*, 69-71. See also Nolan, *Chaucer*, 155-97.
[52] Cf. Anderson, *Before the Knights Tale*, 98.
[53] McGregor erroneously believes that Artifilo kills Cremiso, but this is certainly not the case. Cremiso appears again later in the tournament at stanza fifty-seven, and Boccaccio clarifies in the gloss that "al frate" refers to Artifilo. McGregor, *Shades of Aeneas*, 69.

e lui uccise ancor similemente
allato al frate dolorosamente.[54]

On account of his dolorous fate, there remained Artifilo the Itonian, whom good Cremissus fatally struck with his two-headed axe; and as his pious brother tried to carry him, the fierce Helenus appeared there, and arrogantly pursued him and killed him painfully next to his brother.

According to McGregor, the near simultaneous deaths of brothers attempting to protect each other is reminiscent of *Aeneid* 10.335-41, especially lines 338-9, "huic frater subit Alcanor fratremque ruentem sustentat dextra."[55] While the passages resemble each other in the action they represent (brothers perishing while coming to each other's aid and offering literal support), for the knowledgeable reader the recollection also demonstrates the extent to which the violence represented in the *Teseida* passage remains limited when compared to its source in the *Aeneid*. For, although the deaths in the *Teseida* resemble those of the *Aeneid*, when one considers the broader context in which the Virgilian deaths occur, the distinction between the two passages, and the mimetic distance it creates, becomes apparent :

...fidum Aeneas adfatur Achaten:
"suggere tela mihi, non ullum dextera frustra
torserit in Rutulos, steterunt quae in corpore Graium
Iliacis campis." tum magnam corripit hastam
et iacit: illa volans clipei transverberat aera
Maeonis et thoraca simul cum pectore rumpit.
huic frater subit Alcanor fratremque ruentem
sustentat dextra: traiecto missa lacerto
protinus hasta fugit servatque cruenta tenorem,
dexteraque ex umero nervis moribunda pependit.
tum Numitor iaculo fratris de corpore rapto
Aenean petiit: sed non et figere contra
est licitum, magnique femur perstrinxit Achatae.

Thus Aeneas speaks to loyal Achates: "Bring me plenty of weapons; my hand will hurl none at Rutulians in vain, of all that once on Ilium's plains were lodged in the bodies of

[54] *Teseida*, 8.15.
[55] McGregor may be basing his argument on that of Peiro Boitani, who also identifies the *Aeneid* passage as an influence for *Teseida* 8.15. Boitani, *Chaucer and Boccaccio*, 68.

> Greeks." Then he seizes a great spear and hurls it; flying, it crashes through the brass of Maeon's shield, rending corslet and breast at once. His brother Alcanor comes to his aid, and with his right arm upholds his falling brother; piercing the arm, the spear flies right onward, keeping its bloody course, and the dying arm hung by the sinews from the shoulder. Then Numitor, tearing the lance from his brother's body, aimed at Aeneas, but he could not strike him in return, but grazed the thigh of great Achates.[56]

Indeed, in the lines surrounding the scene of fraternal affection recalled in the *Teseida*, the subject of the main verbs is the spear which, over the course of a single hurl, manages to pierce armor and flesh, and kill two Rutulians on its "bloody course." Perhaps more than fraternal affection, the passage, following the flight of the spear (itself recycled from previous conflicts to kill anew) demonstrates the efficiency with which killing occurs in martial combat. By recalling a scene embedded within the spear's deadly trajectory, Boccaccio highlights the discrepancy between martial and ludic combat. The reference serves as a reminder of the prohibitions placed on the most efficient weapons, among which are the "lance piu nocive," roughly analogous to the *hasta* featured in the Virgilian passage. Although death may result from both ludic and non-ludic martial violence, the tournament does not promote the efficiency in killing that characterizes war, and therefore remains but a diminutive imitation of martial combat. Thus, Boccaccio's recall of this passage certainly acknowledges the proximity of mock martial violence to authentic martial violence. At the same time, however, by inviting a comparison of the passages, even one based on memory, it underscores the distinctions that separate the ludic activity from the authentic.

Perhaps more significant than the passage's commentary on violence *per* se, however, is its commentary on the intersection of violence and fraternity (or quasi-fraternity). The tenderness the brothers show, their willingness to fight alongside and defend their brother, is, of course, in

[56] *Aeneid* 10.332-344. For Latin and translation see Virgil, *Virgil,* trans. Henry Rushton Fairclough, revised by G. P. Goold (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014) 196-7.

contrast with the strife around which the tournament revolves.[57] Thus these deaths offer another perspective on violence and brotherhood (or male friendship more broadly). In these cases, violence reveals the affectionate bonds shared by brothers, as opposed to the perilous nondifferentiation and competition that characterizes the relationship of Palemone and Arcita. While such a juxtaposition of brothers tragically enduring consequences of violence with the Thebans, whose antagonistic relationship sparked the violent conflict, could be understood as an implicit criticism of the violent conflict, the text undercuts such a reading by praising other fraternal pairs for their coordinated efforts in perpetuating violence. Juxtaposed with tender, albeit brief, description of fraternal love among the tournament's victims, are the scenes in which brothers are shown fighting cooperatively. Immediately following the deaths of Ripheus and Arion, who dies in the arms of his companion, Acon, Telamon is shown gaining the upper hand in battle alongside his brother Phocus.[58] Whatever pathos the text generates with Arion's death in Acon's arms is replaced by implicit praise for a pair of brothers cooperatively engaging in violence.

Similarly, the twins Thoas and Euneos are praised for their skill in battle in stanza twenty-four when the narrator remarks, "ciascun nell'arme forte e poderoso." The appearance of Thoas and Euneos in the tournament, though brief, is nevertheless highly relevant, for they offer another paradigm of quintessentially non-differentiated brothers. Indeed, Rene Girard notes that twins are emblematic of the threat that nondifferentiation poses to society. According to Girard,

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[57] David Anderson notes that in the catalog Boccaccio juxtaposes various examples of male friendships and brotherhood from mythic history. Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale*, 119-30. Ronald Martinez also notes the juxtaposition of both Castor and Pollux and Ulysses and Diomedes with Arcita and Palemone, and considers the Dantean allusions both pairs bring to Boccaccio's text. Ronald Martinez, "Before the *Teseida*: Statius and Dante in Boccaccio's Epic", *Studi sul Boccaccio* 20, (1990) 208-215.

[58] Boccaccio, *Teseida,* 8.37

"Twins offer a symbolic representation, sometimes remarkably eloquent, of the symmetrical conflict and identity crisis that characterize the sacrificial crisis." Although Girard goes on to note that the association with twins and violence is arbitrary (twins in reality are no more predisposed to violence than others) the symbolic association of twins and violence is nevertheless a logical one, since twins embody the non-differentiation that often sparks reciprocal violence.[59] In the *Thebaid* chariot race, the extent of Thoas and Euneos's non-differentiation is explicit:

> ecce et Iasonidae iuvenes, nova gloria matris
> Hypsipyles, subiere iugo, quo vectus uterque,
> nomen avo gentile Thoas atque omine dictus
> Euneos Argoo. geminis eadem omnia: vultus,
> currus, equi, vestes, par et concordia voti:
> vincere vel solo cupiunt a fratre relinqui.
>
> And see, the young sons of Jason, new glory of their mother Hypsipyle, come to a chariot on which both rode: Thoas—family name from his grandfather—and Euneos, called from Argo's omen. Twins, they had everything the same: face, chariot, horses, dress, nor less concord in their prayers; each wishes to win or to be outrun only by his brother.[60]

Whereas non-differentiation leads to violent competition between Arcita and Palemone, the sameness of Thoas and Euneos, whose non-differentiation exceeds that of Palemone and Arcita both in terms of physical likeness and proximity of kinship ties, leads to cooperative support both in the chariot race, despite being ostensible competitors, and, even more obviously, in the tournament where they fight for the same team. Their cooperative enactment of violence, much as their cooperative competition in the chariot race, signifies that likeness need not always lead to conflict. Thoas and Euneos, therefore offer an alternative model of brotherhood and

[59] Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (London and New York: Continuum, 2005), 59-61, 65-66.
[60] Statius, *Thebaid* 6.340-345. For Latin and Translation see Statius, *Thebaid*, ed. and trans. D.R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 350-353.

nondifferentiation to that represented by Arcita and Palemone. An alternative, however, that is nevertheless communicated through violence.

Returning now to the tournament's intertexts with spontaneous violence, we turn to a Statian allusion. Although much of the Statian material that appears in the tournament hails from the *Thebaid's* funeral games sequence, allusions to spontaneous violence in the *Thebaid* are not absent from the "giuoco a marte". After Peleus has been carried outside of the theater on his horse, and thus disqualified Boccaccio compares Peleus's appetite for combat to that of a lion not fully satisfied after a hunt. Although Maisch sees the presence of bestial metaphors as evidence of the depravity of the tournament in that it occasions the effacement of difference between man and beast, in this case the bestial metaphor is employed to illustrate the exact opposite—the efficacy of Theseus's rules and the limits they place on violence:[61]

> E quale, degli armenti ancor bramoso,
> sol pien di sangue rimane il leone,
> cotal Pello, tutto sanguinoso,
> sanza trovar né bestie né persone
> de' già feriti, sen gia polveroso,
> rodendo in sé in sé, tutto fellone,
> perché non s'era ritornar pututo
> com' elli avrebbe volentier voluto.[62]
>
> Just as the lion who, still yearning for prey, remains alone, full of blood, so Peleus, all bloody, not finding neither man nor beast among the already injured, went away, grimy, gnawing at himself, ferocious because he couldn't return as he wished.

Tydeus is described in similar terms in book two of the *Thebaid*, [63] after he kills all but one of the men Eteocles sends to ambush him after departing Thebes, to which he was sent as a peaceful envoy:

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[61] Everson, *The Italian Romance Epic*, 181.
[62] Boccaccio, *Teseida* 8.49
[63] Limentani suggests that the Statian simile is likely the source for this passage. Boccaccio, *Teseida*, ed. Limentani, 897n15. For Boccaccio's adaptation of Statian passages, see Alberto

> ut leo, qui campis longe custode fugato
> Massylas depastus oves, ubi sanguine multo
> luxuriata fames cervixque et tabe gravatae
> consedere iubae, mediis in caedibus astat
> aeger, hians, victusque cibis; nec iam amplius irae
> crudescunt: tantum vacuis ferit aëra malis
> molliaque eiecta delambit vellera lingua.
>
> Even as a lion who has chased the shepherd far from the fields and gorged on Massylian sheep, when his hunger has revelled in blood galore and his neck and mane have sunk heavy with filth, stands sick amid the slaughter, gaping and o'erdone with food, nor any more does his fury swell; he only strikes air with empty jaws and licks soft wool with protruded tongue.[64]

In this instance, the Boccaccian adaption condenses the Statian model considerably, thus maintaining the focus on Peleus's reaction rather than the bestial imagery. In both cases the lions are covered with the blood of their prey, the visual proof of the recent slaughter. However, as Debra Hershkowitz argues, it is the excess of the violent appetite itself that ultimately brings about the end of the Statian lion's (and Tydeus's) rampage.[65] According to the simile, Tydeus desires to continue killing, but simply lacks the energy to pursue that goal. His violence abates only because he is physically incapable of continuing to slaughter. Peleus, although capable of further violence, finds himself quite literally at the limit of the acceptable- the boundary of the theater, and chooses not to transgress that boundary by re-entry into the fray, despite his desire to do so. The Boccaccian simile gives no indication that exhaustion has set in after Peleus's streak of taking men prisoner, but clearly attributes the end to his violence to the theater itself and the regulation it represents. He gapes at empty air not because he has exhausted his violent potential, but because he has met, and respects, the limits imposed by Theseus on violent action. Rather

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Limentani, "Boccaccio "traduttore" di Stazio," *La Rassegna della Letteratura Italiana* 64, (1960): 234-240.

[64] Statius, *Thebaid* 2.675-81.

[65] Debra Hershkowitz, *Madness of Epic: Reading Insanity from Homer to Statius*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 255.

than the wilderness invading the theater, here the theater keeps the most savage impulses at bay and acts as an emblem for the artifice of play.[66]

The game's status as an imitation of spontaneous violence is reflected by intra-textual references to passages describing instances of spontaneous violence. As noted earlier, the tournament arises in response to previous violence in Book five. The direct link between the tournament and the scuffle of Book five is reflected in the description of the initial action of the tournament:

> Così adunque le schiere animose
> li gran destrieri urtaron con li sproni;
> sanz'aver lance, co' petti, focose
> insieme si ferir de' buon roncioni.
> La polver alta tutti li nascose
> in un nuvol di sé; e degli arcioni
> usciron molti allor, che non montaro
> più a caval, né quindi si levaro.[67]
>
> Thus, the fervid ranks hit their mighty horses with their spurs; Without gleaming spears the chests of their horses clashed. The kicked-up dust hid them within a cloud; Many fell from their saddle who did not re-mount their horses, nor did they get up.

When compared with the initial action of the dispute from book five, the verbal resonances are unmistakable:

> E' non avevan lance i cavalieri,
> e però insieme giostrar non potero;
> ma con li spron punsero i buon destrieri,
> e con le spade in man presso si fero
> l'un verso l'altro, e sì si scontrar fieri,
> che maraviglia fu, a dir lo vero,
> e sì de' petti i cava' si feriro,
> che rinculando a forza in terra giro.[68]
>
> The knights were without spears, and thus couldn't joust; Instead, they struck their horses with their spurs and with swords in hand they approached one another, they clashed so

[66] For the wilderness invading the theater, see McGregor, *Shades of Aeneas*, 71.
[67] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 8.7.
[68] Ibid. 5.65.

> valiantly, it was truly a wonder, and chests of the horses struck in such a way as to rebound forcibly and fall to the ground.

This recall serves as a reminder of the private dispute at the heart of the conflict, which the tournaments seeks to resolve, and implies that the tournament is a replay of the earlier violence on a larger scale. The actions depicted are strikingly similar; in both stanzas the fighters goad their horses "con li spron", and in both cases the climactic clash between the two forces is represented via the reciprocal impact of the horses' chests. Likewise, both end with unhorsed riders on the ground, in a pre-figuration of Arcita's fall.[69] While the action is the same, the reprise in Book eight clearly registers the expansion the tournament entails. The individual "cavalieri fieri" of the original conflict have been replaced by "schiere animose." It is tempting to interpret the intratext as a condemnation of the tournament- a needless expansion of violence from a minor public dispute into a major public conflict. Indeed, the description of the combat in Book five elegantly registers the non-differentiation of the combatants in the symmetry of its action. Both Arcita and Palemone perform the identical actions simultaneously, and their force is so equal that the collision of their horses results in both riders being thrown to the ground. Likewise, the reprisal in Book eight illustrates the extent to which the non-differentiation has been extended to the respective teams of the principal combatants. However, in re-presenting the action of the skirmish in book five, the text draws attention to the mimetic nature of the tournament- that it exists as a mirror of a more "real" violence, which, unregulated, had the potential to spread unchecked. Indeed, in echoing the earlier stanza, the reprise in Book eight calls attention to the very mechanism which endows the tournament with its mimetic quality and distinguishes its violence from the "authentic" violence both of Book five: the rules imposed by

[69]Martinez, "Before the *Teseida*," 209.

Theseus. It is as a result of the rules that the combatants described in Book eight fight "senza aver lance," for, as already noted, Theseus prohibits use of "le lance più nocive" among the participants. Lances, the text implies, are more appropriate for authentic combat.[70] The implicit association of lances with authentic martial action in Theseus's prohibition of their use in the game aligns with earlier mentions of lances in the text. For instance, lances are used in the duel between Theseus and Creon in Book two ("Allora lance e saette pungenti cominciarsi a gittar tra le due genti" and e "con le lance ciaschedun s'infesta di vender bene il romper quelle caro"),[71] and in Book seven, when Theseus explains that he did not envision that a war would result from his challenge to the Thebans in Book five he specifically mentions lances:

> Ma certo, quand'io loro in pace posi
> e nelle man di cento e cento diedi
> l'amor di quella ond'eran sì bramosi,
> non mi credetti che lance né spiedi
> né troppi ferri chiari o rugginosi
> né gran cavai né grandi uomini a piedi
> dovesser terminar cotanto foco,
> ma esser ciò com'un palestral gioco.[72]
>
> Of course, when I made peace between them and in the hands of one hundred each I placed the love of her for which they were so zealous, I didn't believe that lances, nor swords, nor so many rusty or glinting arms, no warhorses, nor foot soldiers should put out the flame, but that it would be like a palestral game.

Here, the presence of lances is placed in direct opposition to the ludic activity of the "palestral gioco." Thus, their absence in the "gioco a marte" attests to its ludic nature in that they differentiate the play violence from authentic martial activity.

This is not the case, however in the stanza from Book five, which also notes the absence of lances. In this instance, it is presumably on account of the spontaneity of the armed conflict

[70] Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale*, 123.
[71] *Teseida*, 2.54.7-8 and 2.55.4-5.
[72] Ibid., 7.4.

that Arcita and Palemone “non avevan lance” and, consequently, “giostrar non potero”. It is significant that the reference to jousting only appears in the Book five stanza and is not repeated in the recurrence in Book eight. For, in this instance, the absence of lances prevents the more ludic/artificial form of mock-war, the joust, from taking place and instead a spontaneous, though nevertheless symmetrical, brawl ensues.[73] Jousting, in fact, is mentioned elsewhere in the text as a pastime so disassociated with war that it is listed among the amusements undertaken by the Thebans during the period of peace leading up to the tournament:

> Altro che canti, suoni e allegrezza
> nelle lor case non si sentia mai,
> e ben mostravan la lor gentilezza;
> a chi prender volea davano assai;
> astor, falconi e can di gran prodezza
> usavano a diletto, né giammai
> erano in casa sanza forestieri,
> conti e baroni e donne e cavalieri.
>
> E vestien robe per molto oro care,
> con gran destrier, cavalli e pallafreni;
> e nulla si lasciavano a donare,
> sì eran di larghezza i baron pieni;
> giostre faceano e grande l'armeggiare
> con lor brigate ne' giorni sereni;
> e ciascun s'ingegnava di piacere
> più ad Emilia, giusto il suo potere.[74]
>
> One heard nothing ther than songs, music, and joyfulness in their houses, and they demonstrated well their courtesy. They gave splendidly to whomever was in want. They enjoyed the use of hawks, falcons, and valorous dogs, nor were their homes ever without visitors such as counts, barons, ladies, and knights.
>
> They wore precious garments, and rode great warhorses, stallions, and palfreys. There wasn’t anything that they would hesitate to give, so great was their largesse. They held jousts and splendid tournaments with their friends on pleasant days, and each tried as much as he was able to be more pleasing to Emilia.

[73] For the distinction between joust and tournament, see David Crouch, *Tournament* (London: Hambledon and London, 2005), 116-121.
[74] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 6.8-9.

While one can assume the Thebans are not jousting against each other, but rather hosting jousts for the pleasure of the "conti e baroni e donne e cavalieri" in their company, it is noteworthy that such pastimes are included alongside more abstractly mimetic leisure activities such as falconry and music performed *a diletto*.[75] Elsewhere in the text, then, jousting is presented as a benign diversion so distinct from martial warfare that it poses no threat to public order. Thus, whereas the absence of lances in the stanza from Book five precludes the formalized, mimetic play-violence of the joust, their absence signifies formalized play-violence and precludes truly martial combat in the similar stanza in Book eight. In other words, whereas the absence of lances in Book five prevented a game, and led to authentic violence, the same absence in Book eight prevents war. That the initial action of the public conflict of Book eight closely resembles that of the private conflict from which it arose reflects not only the continuity of the central dispute from one conflict to the next, but also the mimetic nature of the tournament's action. In echoing the initial description of the antecedent violence, the text underscores the extent to which the tournament's violence is artificial and contrived, rather than spontaneous. Furthermore, while it registers the numerical expansion of the conflict from two individual combatants to their two respective teams, it simultaneously acknowledges the restriction of violence that rule-bound artifice entails. Thus, in his poetics Boccaccio mirrors the imitation that qualifies the tournament's violence as ludic. Although the Book eight passage resembles that of earlier violence, it nevertheless has the opposite effect: where one represents the transgression beyond artifice, the other represents the conformity of artifice and imitation. Despite the fact that the actions appear objectively similar, the significance of the stanza is altered by and reflects the

[75] Here I am using the term "mimetic" according to Elias and Dunning's use of the term to describe leisure activities which produce excitement. See footnote forty on page sixty-seven of this dissertation for bibliography and explanation.

imposition of the ludic framework when it is repeated in book eight. Thus, much like ludic violence, which, despite its resemblance to illegitimate violence, nevertheless exists within "different structures of meaning," the intra-textual passage, despite its resemblance the earlier passage, produces a different effect precisely because of the "different structure of meaning" established by the rules of the game.

Theseus's survey of the battle later in book eight similarly recalls an earlier action of his. After the tournament has been raging for some time, the narration shifts from the action on the pitch to describe the reactions of Egeus, Theseus, Hypollita, and Emilia. As Theseus observes the action, he is shown taking note of which participants are performing most valorously:

> 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.[76]
>
> Similarly, he noted clearly the feats of each, and who sought death for honor, and who feared dying for glory, and who applied more skill in battle, and who had the most feirceness, who disdained the fight, and who did nothing. He noted everything silently to himself.

This description of Theseus's action echoes very closely an earlier description of a similar action during his battle with Creon in Book two:

> E ben vedea chi con tremante mano
> moveva i ferri, e chi arditamente
> sovra' nemici suoi valor sovrano
> combattendo mostrava, e chi niente
> pigro operava dimorando invano;
> li qua' gridando spregiava vilmente,

[76] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 8.90.

lodando gli altri, e per nome chiamando
or questo or quel, gli giva confortando.[77]

And well he saw who wielded weapons with trembling hands, and who showed himself valorous fiercely fighting his enemies, and who, lazy, accomplished nothing, fighting in vain, whom he scolded and admonished, while praising the others, calling this one or the other by name, goading them on.

Both stanzas are structured around a series of overt oppositions. The brave soldier is opposed to the coward, the ardent, skilled fighter is opposed to the inept. Verbal resonances can also be found, with forms of *ardire* appearing in both, as well as identical forms of *vedere* to describe Theseus's action. While the similarities point to the analogous relationship between the "giuoco a marte" and truly martial combat, slight divergences remain and indicate that, although analogous, the "gioco a marte" is not tantamount to war. Absent in the book eight stanza is any mention of the "nemici," which appear in the Book two stanza, underscoring the friendlier nature of the tournament as mandated by Theseus. Whereas the book two stanza ends with Theseus shouting at his men, goading them to fight more intently, the stanza in book eight ends with Theseus keeping his observations to himself, presumably in an effort to maintain impartiality. Rather than goad men to violence, following his observations in book eight Theseus converses with those participants who, disarmed, have been disqualified from further combat:

Elli avea seco li prigion chiamati,
e de' lor casi con lor si ridea;
e, come volle, quivi disarmati
seco ciascun reverente sedea,
tenendo dell'affar diversi piati:
chi questi e chi quegli altri difendea;
ma tututti dicean ch'alcun vantaggio
non vi vedean, ma eran d'un paraggio.[78]

He had called the prisoners over to him, and they laughed about their fates, and as he wished, each reverently sat there unarmed with him, having diverse chats about the affair,

[77] Ibid., 2.57.
[78] Ibid., 8.92.

> some defended these and some others, but each said that they didn't see either with the advantage, but that it was even.

The presence of the participants-turned-spectators underscore the artifice that underlies the tournament's combat, as does the levity with which they reflect on their fate in the tournament. They are evidence that, by and large, the rules of the tournament are being respected: participants exit the fight once they've been disqualified rather than fighting to the death. The amicable conversation that occurs in book eight is contrasted with the single combat that ensues following Theseus's observations in book two. Theseus and Creon's duel is one fought between "uomin che s'odiavan mortalmente," in direct opposition to the "amorosa...battaglia" structured by Theseus's rules.[79] Thus, in the instances in which the tournament's violence recalls spontaneous violence, whether from within the *Teseida* or from classical epic, the resemblance always stops short of duplication, and the fiction created by the rules, which distinguishes the tournament's action from authentic violence, is in some way acknowledged.

Up to this point I have considered how the poetics of Book eight reflect the rule-bound artifice of the tournament's action relative to spontaneous violence and warfare. Although the action of the tournament is continually juxtaposed with authentic violence in a manner that both acknowledges resemblance and marks divergence, one cannot deny the pattern of reciprocal violence characteristic of the sacrificial crisis that appears throughout the tournament. I noted earlier how the first stanza to describe the action of the tournament reflects the spread of symmetrical violence from the two principal combatants to their respective teams. The stanza that immediately follows that examined earlier reinforces the symmetry of the conflict with a description of each team striking their opponent and being repelled "per le percosse equal."[80]

[79] Ibid., 8.8.1-2.
[80] Ibid., 8.8.3.

The symmetrical and reflexive nature of the conflict is rendered syntactically in stanza twenty, in which "ciascun feriva e era ferito." Up until the one hundred and nineteenth stanza of book eight, the action of the tournament seems carefully structured to maintain the equilibrium between not only the two Thebans, but also their respective teams. Each hero or teams' action is matched by a response in kind from the opposing team, which prevents one team from gaining the advantage and ensures continual violence. At first glance, the symmetrical pattern of violence appears to lend support to Maisch's argument that Theseus's Athens is in the midst of a true sacrificial crisis, which Maisch argues is quelled by the ritual sacrifice of Arcita. In his reading of the poem, however, Maisch devotes little attention to the "giuoco" or its immediate aftermath. Following McGregor, he asserts that Theseus' attempt to control the game is "doomed to failure," and that "the nonviolent game is soon out of control".[81] This misinterpretation perhaps explains why Maisch does not recognize the important role the tournament plays in ensuring the efficacy of the ritual sacrifice of Arcita. For, the symmetry of the violence in the tournament reflects not an authentic crisis, but an engineered, artificial one designed to preclude the manifestation of non-differentiation through authentic violence. As Girard points out, an essential component of ritual sacrifice, which aims to prevent a true sacrificial crisis by imitating the original sacrifice in a ritualized setting, is the imitation of the crisis itself that precedes the sacrifice.[82] Girard cautions that, like play, for the ritualized crisis and sacrifice to be an effective prevention, it must remain within its bounds:

> The diluted force of the sacrificial ritual cannot be attributed to imperfections in its imitative technique. After all, the rite is designed to function during periods of relative

[81] The only episode from the "giuoco" that Maisch analyses at length is Mars' intervention disguised as Theseus, which he claims is "the ultimate confusion of Teseo and Mars" in the work. However, he admits the gloss explaining the intervention "somewhat" mediates the "tragic confusion." Maisch, "Breakdown of Ritual," 93.
[82] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 102-3.

> calm; as we have seen, its role is not curative, but preventive. If it were more "effective" than it in fact is—if it did not limit itself to appropriate sacrificial victims but instead, like the original act of violence, vented its force on a participating member of the community—then it would lose all effectiveness, for it would bring to pass the very thing it was supposed to prevent: a relapse into the sacrificial crisis.[83]

One might argue, along the lines of Maisch and McGregor, that the presence of additional deaths in the tournament constitutes the very transgression that, according to Girard, renders the ritual ineffective and ignites an authentic crisis. However, as Mathews and Channon's remarks on sports-related-violence reminds us, the mimetic dimension of games places its action "within altogether different structures of meaning" than the action they imitate, and produces consequences which are, "experienced differently by those involved."[84] Because they apply too narrow a conception of the ludic to the action of the *Teseida*, they do not recognize the extent to which this mimetic dimension recontextualizes the fatalities in which it results, and thereby neutralizes the potential of those fatalities to incite violence beyond the prescribed bounds. Indeed, the best evidence that the symmetrical opposition which drives the tournament is contrived and inauthentic is found in the description of its aftermath, where the movement from reciprocal violence to consensus occurs.

After the violence itself has ended its outcome is enacted as the action moves from the ludic space of the theater, located outside the city, and back to the royal palace in Athens.[85] In this procession, consensus building around the outcome of the tournament begins. The procession legitimizes the finality of the outcome, thereby marking an end to the period

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[83] *Ibid*., 107.
[84] Matthews and Channon, 763.
[85] The spatial indicators for the procession are located in the subheadings between stanzas 28 and 29 and between 47 and 48 of book nine. The first reads, "Come Arcita in su un carro triumphale rientrò in Actene" and the second "Come, pervenuti al real palagio, Arcita dismontò." This is consistent with the earlier description of the theater being located outside the city at *Teseida* 7.108.1.

dedicated to reciprocal violence, and the inception of generative, unanimous violence. The differentiation achieved in the tournament is unmistakably reflected in the procession: Arcita makes his way to the city in a triumphal chariot (which is said to be more splendid than any ever seen in Rome),[86] the members of the winning team exhibit their victory symbolically by displaying the arms of those conquered in the amphitheater, while those of the losing team process unarmed, and thus deprived of symbolic markers of prowess. The "sembianza vittoriosa" displayed by the "pomposa turba" of victors is contrasted several stanze later with the disposition of the defeated, who "ad capo chino et disarmati, ad piè venien, nell'aspetto turbati."[87] Significantly, the sight of the participants, still bearing the signs of the violence in which they partook, affects the memory of the violence itself among the spectators:

> E spesse volte, le prede mirando,
> le guaste veste e i voti destrieri,
> li givan l'uno a l'altro dimostrando,
> dicendo: – Quel fu del tal cavalieri,
> e questo del cotale –; e, ammirando,
> le cose state più che volentieri
> recitavan fra lor, ch'avean vedute
> il dì, com'eran gite e come sute.[88]
>
> Often, looking at the spoils, the damaged clothes, the empty horses, they turned to each other and said, "this belonged to so and so, this to so and so," and, gazing, they more than happily recounted what had been, the things they had seen that day, how they had come about and how they ended.

Thus, the processional enactment of the differentiation achieved through violence shapes the collective memory of the violence. As they see the horses, emptied of their riders, and the participants still covered in gore, the spectators recount the battle and assign it meaning from a retrospective perspective. The violence that appeared symmetrical and reciprocal when in-

[86] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 9.31.
[87] Ibid. 9.35.3-5, 9.43.7-8.
[88] Ibid. 9.42.

progress is recontextualized as univocal as its outcome is enacted in the procession. It matters not that Arcita, the victor, is eventually sacrificed as opposed to Palemone, the loser. What is significant is that the procession results in the exaltation of Arcita as the champion and the denigration of Palemone as the loser, which, while distinguishing them, nevertheless grooms each for the role of sacrificial victim, whether literal or symbolic.[89] For, in characterizing the sacrificial victim, Girard states:

> What we are dealing with, therefore, are exterior or marginal individuals, incapable of establishing or sharing the social bonds that link the rest of the inhabitants.[90]

Much like Girard's examples of the King and the Pharmakos, both the status of champion and loser marginalize the individual. In Girard's words, the champion, like the King, on the one hand "escapes from society, so to speak, via the roof" and the defeated, much like the pharmakos, "escapes through the cellar."[91]

Following the display of the tournament's outcome, however, the distinction achieved by the tournament is quickly erased among the non-central actors. After Arcita's triumphal procession through Athens, Theseus addresses the members of the losing team:

> Perché se oggi non vi fu donata
> vittoria, ciò non fu vostro difetto,
> ma cosa fu avanti assai pensata
> nel chiaro e santo divino intelletto;
> il quale Emilia mostra abbia servata
> al piacevole Arcita e lui eletto
> per isposo di lei: di che dovete
> esser contenti, poi più non potete.

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[89] Theseus articlates the consequences for the loser in Book five, "l'altro, di lei privato e dell'onore, a quel giudicio converrà che stia che la donna vorrà, al cui valore commesso da questa ora innanzi sia"*Teseida*, 5.98.3-6. The loss of "onore" and the subjugation to the female may be interpreted as a symbolic sacrifice, as it expels the loser from male society. Emilia eventually restores Palemone's freedom to him, giving him the choice to leave Athens or stay. *Teseida* 9.70.1-2.
[90] Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 12.
[91] *Ibid*., 12-13.

Né vi dovete di voi biasimare
che non abbiate bene adoperato;
ma sol gl'iddii ne dovete incolpare,
se degno è ciò ch'egli han diliberato
di potere altra volta permutare,
ched e' non l'hanno per voi permutato;
ma credo che deggiate esser contenti
a lor piacer, poi di noi sono attenti

Questo ch'è stato, non tornerà mai
per alcun tempo che stato non sia;
però vi priego quanto posso assai,
amici car, per vostra cortesia,
che l'abito, che avete pien di guai
vestito per dolor, cacciate via,
e nel pristino stato ritornate,
e con noi insieme tutti festeggiate.[92]

If you were not given victory today that is not due to your shortcoming, rather it was something determined ahead of time in the clear and holy divine intellect, which demonstrates that it has withheld Emilia for the charming Arcita and he has been elected as husband to her: about which you should be content, as there's nothing else you can do.

Nor should you fault yourself if you did not perform well. Only the gods you should blame, if that which they judged within their purview to alter another time is worthy that they didn't alter in your favor. I believe that you should be content to be at their pleasure, since they are devoted to us

That which has been will not return for any time that might come; so, dear friends, I beg as much as I can, on account of your courtesy, that you cast off your armor, which you donned painfully with many troubles, and return to your pristine state and celebrate with all of us together.

While earlier in his speech Theseus admits that he is not fully convinced that outcomes are predetermined, nor does his audience find his argument entirely convincing,[93] whether or not Theseus or the other contestants are convinced by the theological argument, is less important than the practical effect the argument has on them—that a consensus is formed that the dispute is

[92] Boccaccio, *Teseida,* 9.59
[93] Branch observes, "Palemone's men accept Teseo's speech as rhetorical display, pleasing but fictitious." Branch, "Rhetorical Structures and Strategies," 152.

settled, and Arcita is the recognized victor.[94] Nor is it coincidental that Theseus addresses members of the losing team. As Girard points out, it is the victims of violence who pose the most imminent threat of reciprocation.[95] In the case of the tournament, it is the members of the losing team, not just Palemone individually, who pose this threat. By evoking the divine to form a consensus among the losing team, Theseus ensures that the tournament definitively resolves the dispute and does not precipitate additional violence. In his request that the members of Palemone's team cast of their tournament garb, which they have born "pien di guai", and return to their pristine state in order to join in the festivity, he effectively ushers in the conclusion of the mimetic *agon*. The period of pretend opposition is over, and animosity is replaced with ritual sociability and consensus. In short, while Theseus' speech ensures the outcome of the tournament insofar as it concerns the central disputants is acknowledged by the additional participants, it simultaneously underscores the mimetic context within which the action occurred and within which the consequences of that action are interpreted.

[94] Bruce Lincoln has outlined common narratives often imposed on violence by both the victors and the losers in order to explain and justify the use of force or the suffering of defeat. Many of the patters he identifies hinge upon a belief in the religious or moral superiority of the victors, which they use to justify their force, and shortcomings by the losers, to which they attribute their domination, and, upon repentance for, may attempt insurgent violence against their perceived oppressors. See Bruce Lincoln, *Gods and Demons, Priests and Scholars: Critical Explorations in the History of Religions,* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 86-8. Peter Brown also notes that the ordeal likewise hinged upon blurred boundaries between sacred and profane, objective divine-human interaction, and an appeal to consensus rather than rational authority. Brown suggests that while the practice of the ordeal may seem barbaric and arbitrary to contemporary readers, it was less barbaric than the never-ending vendettas that arose after its disuse. See Peter Brown, "Society and the Supernatural: A Medieval Change," *Daedalus* 104, no.2 (Spring, 1975): 133-151.

[95] Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 20-21.

Once dismissed from the palace, the losing combatants prepare themselves for the festivities that are to follow by removing any lingering signs of the violence in which they had just participated:

> per che lieto ciascun quanto poteo,
> sanza dimor, tornò al suo ostello;
> quivi d'abito nuovo si rifeo,
> sì come prima, piacevole e bello,
> e a cui fu bisogno medicare,
> tosto fur fatti medici trovare.
>
> Gli altri, che non curavan di riposo,
> tornaro a corte con fronte cangiata;
> e 'nsieme si rivider con gioioso
> aspetto, come se fra loro stata
> non fosse il dì battaglia; e grazioso
> sollazzo insieme ciascuna brigata
> faceva quivi, per amor d'Arcita,
> che si desse conforto e buona vita.[96]
>
> Thus, they were as happy as could be, and each returned to their lodgings without delay; where each refreshed themselves with new clothing, and became as handsome and charming as they were before, and for those who required medical attention were sent to doctors.
>
> Others, who didn't care for rest, returned to court with changed semblances, and together mingled joyfully, as if there hadn't been a battle between them that day; and each group engaged in gracious frivolity in honor of Arcita, which gave comfort and good life.

By cleaning themselves and returning to courtly garb, the participants remove any sign of the recent violence from their bodies, and all continue as if no violence had occurred at all. Along with the traces of the violence, the participants remove the symbolic status produced by the violence that they had enacted in the procession. No longer divided into teams of symmetrical opposition, or winners and losers, the removal of the signs of violence amongst themselves is replaced by generative consensus among the participants. By forfeiting the statuses enacted in

[96] Boccaccio, *Teseida* 9.61.3-8, 62.

the procession in favor of unanimous consensus, the participants also resume their pre-ludic identities as Greek kings co-existing peacefully, as if no battle had occurred. The differentiation achieved by the tournament through violence retains its significance only in so far as it concerns the principal antagonists, Palemone and Arcita.

This swift return of the additional participants to their pre-tournament status reveals the integrity of the play quality of the action performed during the tournament. Caillois notes that play is corrupted when it extends beyond the spatial and temporal limits ordained by the rules. If a contest is ludic, however, the end of the play brings about the end of the feigned rivalry and a return to the challenges of ordinary life.[97] Caillois notes:

> It is remarkable that in agon, alea, and mimicry, the intensity of play may be the fatal deviation. The latter always results from contamination by ordinary life. It is produced when the instinct that rules play spreads beyond the strict limits of time and place, without previously agreed-to rules. It is permissible to play as seriously as desired, to be extremely extravagant, to risk an entire fortune, even life itself, but the game must stop at a preordained time so that the player may resume ordinary responsibilities, where the liberating and isolating rules of play no longer are applicable.[98]

Indeed, the limits of time and space of play are respected in the *Teseida*. Because the public crisis played out in the tournament was inauthentic, imaginary in the sense that it produced an image or likeness of an actual crisis, the additional participants quickly cast off their feigned antagonism, signified by the quick removal of the physical signs of violence inscribed on their bodies, as an actor casts off a costume.

While the vestiges of reciprocal violence can be erased from the bodies of the living, the same, however, cannot be said of those who died during the combat. Yet, the play quality of the tournament's violence is even reflected in the burial of the dead bodies. Following the erasure of

[97] Caillois, *Man, Play, Games,* 46.
[98] *Ibid*., 49-50.

violent vestiges from the living, and the festive celebration of the formal betrothal of Arcita and Emilia, the Greek kings return to the theater to tend to the dead. As part of the funerary procedures, they make a sacrifice to Stygian Jove, "acciò che 'n pio loco ponesse que' che per lo lor valore erano il giorno morti combattendo, l'anime lor per altrui offerendo."[99] While the sorrow of the Greek kings is acknowledged, the deaths are not characterized as murders, but rather as self-sacrifices. In the aftermath of the tournament lives were not taken, but given as a demonstration of valor. Rather than signify violence and potentially arouse desire for revenge, the bodies signify liberality. By characterizing the deaths not as murders, but rather as acts of self-sacrifice, the text demonstrates the extent to which the ludic framework of the violence limits its potential to spread. Therefore, although the deaths constitute a "real world" consequence of the play activity, they do not signify the transgression of the ludic into the ordinary, but rather illustrate paradoxically the mimetic quality of the violence insofar as they do not precipitate reciprocation beyond the pitch as ordinary violence would. It is in this sense that the action of the tournament produces consequences that are less serious than spontaneous violence, despite its resemblance to spontaneous violence.

It is precisely this effect that necessitated the expansion of the violence from a private to collective endeavor in the first place. The private dispute threatened the collectivity because of violence's ability to spread infectiously. However, by expanding the violence to the collective on a voluntary basis, members of society, the very members of society who might otherwise be involved in spontaneous violence, benefit from the generative consensus formed following the ritualized, mimetic enactment of the sacrificial crisis. This ensures that the symmetrical violence

[99] *Teseida*, 10.6. For funerary ritual and sacrifice, see Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 269-271. For Boccaccio's imitation of the funeral practices in antiquity, See McGregor, *Image of Antiquity*, 139-145.

permitted temporarily by the tournament effectively prevents the spread of reciprocal violence after the ritual period has ended. Rather than the death of Arcita *per se*, it is the recontextualization of violence within the mimetic framework of the ludic that prevents the tragedy of the *Thebaid* from repeating itself. Indeed, that Boccaccio recognized the ludic as instrumental in the containment of violence is evident when one considers David Anderson's argument that the death manqué at *Thebaid* 6.513-517 serves as the basis for Boccaccio's adaptation of Statian material in the *Teseida*. Anderson convincingly argues that the *Teseida* realizes the *Thebaid*'s narrator's apostrophe (following Polynice's fall from his horse during the chariot race) in which the narrator laments that, if only Polynices had died from his injuries, the war would have been prevented, and grand funeral rites instead would have taken place in honor of Polynices. The tournament's action, Anderson notes, borrows heavily from the chariot race for its action, including Arcita's fall from his horse, and is followed by the grand funeral rites just as the *Thebaid* passage indicates.[100] In so doing, Boccaccio, "composed the story of Palemone and Arcite on the *Thebaid* itself...as an extended simile wherein his main action develops as an analogy to the main action of the *Thebaid*."[101] However, because the death manqué motif appears twice in the *Thebaid* (once during Polynices fight with Tydeus in Book one and once in the funeral games),[102] the choice of the ludic setting, as opposed to an instance of spontaneous violence, for its realization in the *Teseida* was deliberate. It is significant that Boccaccio selected the second occurrence, associated with ritualized *agon*, to inspire his re-working of the Statian material. Indeed, Boccaccio draws attention to his imitative strategy by echoing the *Thebaid's* first instance of the death manqué in Emilia's lament during the tournament:

[100] Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale,* 108-112.
[101] Ibid., 131.
[102] Ibid., 134n14.

> Deh, or gli avesse pur Teseo lasciati,
> quando noi li trovammo nel boschetto,
> combatter soli! Almen diliberati
> sariensi in lor di me, et con dilecto
> avrebbe l'un gli abbracciar disiati
> di me, tenendol nel suo cor distrecto
> sanza scoprirsi; et io non sentiria
> per lor né ira né malinconia.[103]
>
> Alas, if only Theseus had let them fight alone we found them in the woods! At least they would have resolved their dispute amongst themselves, and one, with delight, would have my desired embraces and would hold it in his heart without revealing it, and I wouldn't feel either sadness nor anger for them.

Like the first death manqué of the *Thebaid*, Emilia wishes the dispute had been settled privately, in a smaller-scale conflict. Significantly, Theseus's intervention in the earlier conflict which her lament references is modeled on Adrastus's intervention in the conflict between Tydeus and Polynices, which inspires the first death manqué in that work:[104]

> Forsan et accinctos lateri (sic ira ferebat)
> nudassent enses, meliusque hostilibus armis
> lugendus fratri, iuvenis Thebane, iaceres,
> ni rex insolitum clamorem et pectore ab alto
> stridentes gemitus noctis miratus in umbris,
> movisset gressus, magnis cui sobria curis
> pendebat somno iam deteriore senectus.[105]
>
> And mayhap they would have unsheathed the swords that girt their sides (so anger urged) and the young Theban would have fallen by an enemy's weapon for his brother to mourn (and better so), save that the king, whose old age, sober and careridden, hovered in asleep no longer sound, wondered at this unwonted hubbub in the dark of night and the groans shrilling from the depth of their breasts and thither took his way.

The correspondence between Emilia's lament and the first death manqué is one of inversion, however, since Emilia's lament assumes a retrospective stance on previous violence which appears relatively tame compared to the violence which inspires her lament, while the narrator's

[103] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 8.108.
[104] Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale*, 102.
[105] Statius, *Thebaid*, 1.428-434.

death manqué foreshadows yet greater violence that awaits the heroes. Thus, in looking back to the earlier conflict of Palemone and Arcita, whose resolution was modeled on that imposed by Adrastus in the conflict of Polynices and Tydeus, Emilia's lament simultaneously juxtaposes the ludic activity of the tournament with the augmented violence of the siege of Thebes. Consequently, despite her ostensible lament of violence's expansion, Emilia implicitly underscores the relative containment of the *Tesieda'*s violence vis-à-vis that of the *Thebaid*. In so doing, her lament demonstrates that the tournament succeeds in doing what the spontaneous violence in both the *Teseida* and *Thebaid* could not—prevent the escalation of violence. Furthermore, the recollection of the first death manqué in Emilia's lament serves to underscore Boccaccio's more extensive use specifically of the second appearance of the motif in the *Thebaid*, including his deliberate recreation of the ludic context in which the second motif appears. Given the possible choice between the two instances of the death manqué in the *Thebaid*, Boccaccio's choice of that associated with ludic action as the basis for his "alternate ending," signals that the ludic setting is as important as the realized death of Arcita in the *Teseida*, for it ensures the death will be mourned and not avenged.

Chapter 3: La dubbiosa battaglia: Contingency, Chance, and Skill in the "giuoco a marte"

Questions related to contingency occupied medieval philosophers as they reconciled the Christian doctrines of providence and free will with those of respected pagan philosophers and authors. In addition to responding to debates within Christian philosophy, authors of medieval literature, especially those imitating classical models, engage with generic questions concerning contingency when they employ classical tropes to represent (in)determinacy, whether it be intervention by the Olympian gods, Fortune, or Fate. To the extent that the hero's fate was both knowable and inexorable, classical epic leaves little space for contingency. On the other hand, contingency is virtually an ontological requirement for the romance hero, who, without the looming threat of the uncertain future could not attain his heroic status. Nevertheless, it is not Romance, but rather the Boccaccian novella which, according to Peter Sloterdijk, exemplifies the shift that began in the fourteenth century, in which man goes from passive recipient of his dealt fortune to active participant in the shaping of his environment. To illustrate this shift, Sloterdijk employs a ludic metaphor, that of a ball game. The metaphor is particularly apt, given that contingency is the essence of play, and, consequently, games and sport. To this end, representations of ludic activity are uniquely suited to offer insight into the concept of contingency, as they provide space in which contingency must be confronted and acknowledged.

This chapter will look at how the philosophical and literary concepts of contingency are reflected in Boccaccio's *Teseida*. I will argue that the *Teseida* already reflects movement toward the concept of contingency that Sloterdijk attributes to the post-plague Renaissance, in which human agency can influence, although not fully determine, the indeterminate. Boccaccio explores the paradoxical relationship between human agency and contingency in the *Teseida* tournament, in which agency can be exercised through voluntary exposure to the contingent. I

will demonstrate that, despite the apparent interventions of the gods, human agency nevertheless determines the tournament's outcome. Rather than a metaphysical opponent (Fortune), contingency in the tournament is but one of two factors that mediates the opposition between the human antagonists, the other being martial skill. I will show that the agency of the antagonists resides in their free choice of agonistic strategy (exemplified in the prayer of Arcita) or aleatory strategy (in the prayer of Palemone), which together determine the course of events in the *Teseida*. Furthermore, I will argue that both the relationship of Mars and Venus to each other and to each of the Theban opponents dramatizes the paradoxical yoking of contingency, necessity, and agency identified by Steven Connor in agonistic game play. Prior to analysis of the tournament however, I will provide an overview of the concepts of contingency and Fortune, paying close attention to the nexus between contingency and play.

I. Contingency in Play and Games

According to Roger Caillois contingency is a *sine qua non* of game play. Any activity that is wholly predetermined, whose outcome is a forgone conclusion ceases to be a play activity, and therefore a game.[1] This is not to say that sports and games do not include some ritualized and highly regulated elements. Indeed, Caillois posits that all games occupy a point on a continuum between the poles he terms *ludus* one the one hand, a form of play that is highly structured and rule bound, to *paidia* on the other, a form of play unconstrained by rules, play in its purest form.[2] While games are a regulated form of play, in order for them to remain games, their rules must not be so rigid as to remove all contingent elements from the activity. It is for this reason that Foucault distinguishes the chariot race of the *Iliad* with the modern conception of

[1] Roger Caillois, *Man Play and Games*, trans. Meyer Barasch (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 7-8.
[2] Ibid., 13.

sports and games. As he points out, the representation in the text makes clear that the race's intent was not to measure athletic skill, but rather to stage a "liturgical unfolding" of the relative status and strength of the participants already known by participants and spectators alike.[3]

Assuming contingency in any ludic event, in addition to the *ludus*/*paidia* scale, Caillois posits a classification of games by their dependence on competition (*agon*), chance (*alea*), vertigo (*ilinx*), or mimicry.[4] As Caillois explains, *agon* and *alea* are parallel and complementary forms of play. Shared between these two types of game play is the assumption of equal chances of winning among the players at the outset of the game. What separates them is the extent to which a player relies on his own agency. In games of chance, the player relies on everything *but* his own potential, instead, "the player is entirely passive; he does not deploy his resources, skill, muscles, or intelligence."[5] On the other hand, in games of competition the players rely *primarily* on their own capabilities.[6] I stress primarily, because, as Steven Connor, Franz de Wachter and Filip Kobiela point out, there remain elements of chance in agonistic games that appear as a range of phenomena beyond the control of the player and which may affect, or even determine, the outcome.[7] The mere presence of chance elements in competition does not classify a game as aleatory. Indeed, Kobiela only classifies as aleatory those elements determined by external randomizers as required by the rules of a game, preferring other terms for chance events which

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[3] Michel Foucault, "First Lecture: April 22, 1981" in *Wrong-Doing, Truth Telling: The Function of Avowal in Justice*, eds. Fabienne Brion and Bernard E. Harcourt, trans. Stephen W. Sawyer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), 39.
[4] Caillois, *Man Play and Games*, 11-35.
[5] Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, 17.
[6] Ibid., 15, 74.
[7] Steven Connor, *A Philosophy of Sport* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2011), 167; Franz de Wachter, "In Praise of Chance: A Philosophical Analysis of the Chance Element in Sport," *Journal of the Philosophy of Sport* 12, no.1 (1985): *passim*; Filip Kobiela, "Kinds of Chance in Games and Sports," *Sport, Ethics, and Philosophy* 8, no.1 (2014): *passim*.

may occur, but are not required, as part of a game. Echoing Caillois' insistence that contingency must remain for a game to be a game, Steven Connor notes:

> Of course, sport can be thought of as an attempt to draw everything into the sphere of will and intention...But, in order to effect that very neutralization of every contingency that is the horizon of every sport, it is necessary for the players of sport, and for the sport itself, deliberately to expose themselves to contingency, in order to negate the negation of human will that contingency represents, to deflect the deflection of human purpose back into rectitude.[8]

Sports, then, are the locus of a paradoxical confluence of necessity and contingency, in which contingency becomes necessary in order for agency to be possible.[9] I will demonstrate that the interventions of the pagan gods Venus and Mars in the *Teseida* dramatize this paradoxical binding of chance and necessity that animates sports *agon*. Rather than forces that dominate human agency, the gods represent the paradox inherent in agonistic games: only by exposure to the contingent can contingency itself be confronted with agency. As I will demonstrate in the following section, the idea that the embrace of contingency was necessary for agency to be operative was already emerging in the late middle ages, especially within the romance genre.

II. Contingency in Context: Classical, Medieval and Renaissance Conceptions

Before turning to the literary texts, it is worth clarifying the terminology that will appear throughout the chapter. What did the terms chance, fortune, and contingency mean to the authors of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries? In Boethius's translation of Aristotle's *de Interpretatione*, he uses the term *contingens* to refer to those future events which are neither necessary nor impossible, those which may or may not occur and to the language which speaks of such events.[10] Medieval conceptions of contingency existed, of course, within the framework

[8] Connor, *A Philosophy of Sport*, 158.
[9] Ibid., 168.
[10] Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Fortune's Faces: The Roman de la Rose and the Poetics of Contingency* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 21.

of Christianity and the belief in the divine providence of an omniscient God. The presence of an omniscient God, who knows all and sees all things in time and space, does not preclude contingency or human agency. The insistence of free will within Christian philosophy revolved around moral and theological issues. If man were not free to determine his own actions how could he be held responsible for sin? If man's will was overtaken by passion and temptation conferred by the original sin, to what extent could he be said to be acting freely as opposed to being moved by passions? In his *De consolatione philosophiae*, Philosophy confronts the issue by explaining that God perceives all things, past, present, and future, as if they were present. To further illustrate her point, Philosophy explains that God perceives time as if viewing time from a top a mountain, with all time spread below him within his view.[11] Just as a human observing a man walking does not impose necessity on the action of walking, nor does the providence of God impose necessity on human action. According to Aquinas, God intended for some actions to be done necessarily and some contingently, produced by proximate causes. Thus, contingent activities are contingent according to the divine will and, to the extent allowed by the first cause, are subject to human will and actions for their outcome.[12] In this way, divine providence is not coterminous with Fate as represented in the epics of classical antiquity, which significantly limited, if not removed completely, human and in some cases, divine agency.

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[11] Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae*, V, prose VI. For all citations and translations of the *Consolatione* see Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. S. J. Tester (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973).

[12] Rudi te Velde, "Thomas Aquinas on Providence, Contingency, and Usefulness of Prayer," in *Fate, Providence, and Moral Responsibility in Ancient Medieval and Early Modern Thought: Studies in Honor of Carlos Steel,* eds. Peiter D'Hoine and Gerd Van Rie (Leuven: Leuven University Press: 2014), 540-548.

Aspects of contingency, its fortuitousness, mutability, and consequent unpredictability are embodied by the medieval figure of Fortune.[13] To fully understand Fortune one must go back to the writings of Aristotle. In the *Physica*, Aristotle discusses *tyche* (*τύχη*), what one might call luck or fortuitous events. Because *tyche* is the result of accidental causes and not per se causes, it represents irregularities that are rare and unpredictable, given they don't follow the regular patterns of nature and therefore cannot be studied as nature can be. Because its causes are accidental, the outcomes of events that fall under *tyche* are often unintentional. For this reason, *tyche* is opposed not only to nature, but also to skill, which relies on practiced performance and mastery to bring about one's intended result.[14] By the late Republican era, the Roman conception of Fortune, which survived through the middle ages largely unaltered, had assumed many aspects of Aristotelian *tyche*, especially its unpredictability.[15] Because Fortune is unpredictable and unknowable, human calculation and reason are useless opponents to her whims. According to Vergil's explanation in *Inferno* VII, the permutations of Fortune are *oltre la difension di senni umani*.[16] Relative to Fortune, humans are passive playthings, entirely subject to her caprice. Boethius was instrumental in forming the medieval conception of Fortune, whose mutability the prisoner laments in the *Consolatione*. Daniel Heller-Roazen notes in particular the impact that the Boethian concept of Fortune (in which bad Fortune is revelatory and instructive, while good Fortune is deceptive) had on Jeun de Meun's conception of Fortune in the second

[13] Some medieval writers, such as St. Augustine and Isidore of Seville posit an etymological link between *fortuna* and *fortuito*, although that etymology is false. See Heller-Roazen, *Fortune's Faces*, 68-9.
[14] John Dudley, *Aristotole's Concept of Chance: Accidents, Cause, Necessity and Determinism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 39-42.
[15] Heller-Roazen, *Fortune's Faces*, 66-7.
[16] Dante Alighieri, *Inferno* VII.79-81. See also Vinceno Cioffari, *The Conception of Fortune and Fate in the Works of Dante*, 34.

part of the *Roman de la Rose*, in which erotic love is explicitly linked to Fortune as "qui vient de Fortune".[17] As Heller-Roazen notes, the unpredictability which love shares with Fortune render both antithetical to Reason.[18]

The medieval and Christian concept of contingency is not the only such conception at play within the *Teseida*. As a literary work, it is informed not only by the contemporary philosophical debates regarding contingency, but also the literary traditions from which it borrows, the most prominent of which are classical epic and medieval romance. The pagan gods whose interventions apparently shape the narrative are a clear borrowing from the epic tradition, in which the determinism of Fate dominates. According to the pagan notion, based largely on the epic literary models of the *Aeneid* and *Thebaid*, fate is an inexorable force even when opposed by the gods, much less mankind. At best, if portents of bad fortune are recognized, the ill-fated event, whether it be war or the death of an individual, can be delayed by human or divine intervention, but cannot be altered.[19] There is little, if any, space given to free will in the epic/pagan system. Indeed, some have argued that the epic hero is heroic insofar as he readily acquiesces to the will of the gods.[20]

The differences between pagan and Christian conceptions of contingency are reflected in the genres to which they gave rise. In contrast to the epic hero who may know his fate but is

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[17] Heller-Roazen, Fortune's Faces, 66.
[18] Ibid., 69.
[19] See William J. Dominik, "Critiquing the Critics: Jupiter, the Gods, and Free Will in Statius' *Thebaid,*" *Zetemata Monographien zur klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* 142, (2012): 196-198.
[20] For Fate and heroism see Gunnar Carlsson, "The Hero and Fate in Vergil's *Aeneid*," *Eranos acta philological suecana* 43, (1945): 113-124, 135. For an overview of the questions of providence, fate, and divination in epic, but especially the *Thebaid*, see Valerio Neri, "Dei, Fato, e divinazione nella letteratura latino del I sec. d.C.," *Aufetieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung* 2, (1972): 1974-1981, 2006-2026.

unable to alter it, the romance hero is expected to venture into the unknown and in so doing risk himself in the pursuit of the object of his desire. Indeed, *avventura* is etymologically linked with contingency and the unknowable future (*avvenire*).[21] Will Hasty notes the tendency to articulate the romantic hero's embrace of contingency, using ludic metaphors, most often the wager or the roll of the dice or the speculative "wager of self". In light of the ludic imagery often utilized in early romance, Hasty identifies romance as the site of a cultural shift, one in which knights and ladies are simultaneously the players and the played in an ongoing competition for limited material resources.[22] Hasty notes, "medieval people understand themselves in love to be like dice, jostled and moved by a force largely beyond their control." Nevertheless, they retain hope that they might be able to manipulate circumstances to their advantage, as active players, in the face of amorous adversity.[23]

Peter Sloterdijk identifies the fourteenth century as turning point in a new concept of human agency. According to Sloterdijk, it was following the plague in the fourteenth century that people recognized their own potential to shape their environment, which would continue to evolve into the twentieth century, reaching its fulfillment with the recognition of humanity's role in climate change.[24] Much like the heroes of romance identified by Hasty, Sloterdijk illustrates the paradigmatic shift, of which none other than the Boccaccian novella is emblematic, using a ludic metaphor: while the men of the Renaissance remain a plaything of supernatural and external forces ("una palla di gioco nelle mani di potenze sovraumane") they begin to recognize

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[21] Steven Grossvogel. *Ambiguity and Allusion in Boccaccio's Filocolo* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1992), 173.
[22] Will Hasty, *The Medieval Risk-Reward Society: Courts, Adventure, and Love in the European Middle Ages* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2016), 101-4.
[23] Ibid., 131-9. For quote, see p.138.
[24] Peter Sloterdijk, *Che cosa è successo nel xx secolo?*, trans. Maria Anna Massimello (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2017), 149.

their own capacity to respond to those external forces with forces of their own—to play with that which plays with them.[25] Sloterdijk identifies the Boccaccian novella as a precursor to the age of information and news, elements of increasing importance in the new world order, in which humans have the capacity to actively manipulate both their symbolic and physical environments based on constantly changing and updated information.[26] Given the embrace of contingency in medieval romance, it should come as no surprise that the *novelle* which Sloterdijk credits for the embrace of human agency in the face of contingency have been read by Vittore Branca as a romance that celebrates the adventures of the newly emergent mercantile class and emphasizes their reliance on *ingegno* and more active relationship with Fortune.[27]

Sloterdijk cites Machiavelli's conception of Fortune as illustrative of the paradigm shift that began following Europe's recovery from the black death. Rather than the medieval trope of avoiding Fortune and her fluctuations by adhering to spiritual asceticism, in Machiavelli one finds a concept of Fortune that is to be embraced.[28] Sloterdijk clarifies that the Renaissance conception of Fortune and contingency does not free one from the effects of external forces completely, but that her influence can be managed so that her benefits are harnessed while minimizing her adverse effects. Sloterdijk explains:

> Alla luce di questi ricordi speculativi possiamo dire ora più chiaramente che cosa significhi la fede che il Rinascimento nutre nell'esistenza dell'uomo, in un campo

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[25] Peter Sloterdijk, *Che cosa è successo nel xx secolo?*, 158.
[26] Ibid., 149-167. Regarding games of Alea Caillois states, "The player is entirely passive; he does not deploy his resources, skill, muscles, or intelligence." See Caillois, *Man, Play and Games*, 17.
[27] Vittore Branca, "L'epopea dei Mercanti," *Lettere Italiane* 8, no. 1 (January-March 1956): 10, 22-24.
[28] Sloterdijk, *Che cosa è successo nel xx secolo?*, 161. See also Vincenzo Cioffari, "The Function of Fortune in Dante, Boccaccio and Machiavelli," *Italica* 24*,* no. 1 (March 1947): *1-13.* Cioffari states, "The most important feature of Machiavelli's conception is the relation of Fortune to *virtù*. There are innumerable references to both powers as controlling human affairs—always in contrast with each other." Cioffari, "The Function of Fortune," 9.

> sottoposto alla perenne tensione di poteri influenti. La Fortuna è per così dire la presidente del moderno Parlamento degli influssi. Sotto la sua presidenza si sviluppano forme di vita per le quali tutto ruota attorno alla gestione intelligente delle incertezze. Tali forme di vita si basano generalmente sull'assioma secondo cui l'uomo non è né padrone né servo, né onnipotente né impotente, oscilla continuamente tra forze soccorrevoli e altre forze perniciose; è sempre il terzo elemento nell'alleanza tra le due componenti del destino, resta sempre invischiato in un intreccio di poteri e tendenze dal cui groviglio estrae con maggiore o con minore energia qualche filo con cui tessere la propria veste.[29]

I will demonstrate that the *Teseida's* tournament, despite the apparent determinism of the gods, reflects this modern approach to contingency, in which human agency plays along with the forces that play with it. Rather than aleatory passivity to the mutability of Fortune, the gods' interventions in the tournament show the extent to which contingency is necessary for agency to be possible. In order that the contrast between the role of contingency in the tournament, which makes agency possible, and thus an agonistic game, and the concept of contingency represented by Fortune, which dominates human agency, be more striking, it is worth considering the tradition of Fortune as a player herself. For, in these representations, another paradox emerges: the game against contingency personified is never truly contingent.

III. Fortune at Play

The nexus between game play and contingency is reflected in the use of ludic metaphors to characterize the activity of personified Fortune. As Andrea Nuti notes, the association of gameplay with seemingly illogical interventions of super-human forces (Fortune especially) was already commonplace among classical authors. Nuti explains:

> L'atto, da parte di una Potenza sovrumana, di manipolare i destini degli uomini secondo un disegno ingiusto e incoerente fa sì che le venga attribuito il comportamento di chi compie un'azione priva di fine prattico, non allineata a principi di logica e giustizia umana: l'unico fine è il divertimento, ottenuto sovvertendo la normalità delle cose, le aspettative logiche.[30]

[29] Sloterdijk, *Che cosa è successo nel xx secolo?,* 162.
[30] Andrea Nuti, *Ludus e iocus*, 181.

In the *Consolatione*, Philosophy, ventriloquizing Fortune herself, characterizes her activity as a game:

> Haec nostra vis est, hunc continuum ludum ludimus: rotam volubili orbe versamus, infima summis, summa infimis mutare gaudemus. scende si placet, sed ea lege ne utique[1] cum ludicri mei ratio poscet, descendere iniuriam putes. An tu mores ignorabas meos?
>
> For this is my nature, this is my continual game: turning my wheel swiftly I delight to bring low what is on high, to raise high what is down. Go up, if you will, but on this condition, that you do not really think it a wrong to have to go down again whenever the course of my sport demands. You were hardly unaware in my ways![31]

Indeed, the logic that man freely chooses to submit to Fortune relies in part on the ludic metaphor. Just as play is a voluntary action in which one accepts the risks inherent in the rules of a given game, so too is relying on the whims of Fortune for one's happiness. According to Philosophy, fault lies with the player and not the game. To safeguard oneself from mutability, one must turn one's attention away from mutable goods toward the self, which is not within the purview of Fortune. In other words, the only strategy for keeping mutability at bay is to abstain from Fortune's game altogether. Indeed, Philosophy acknowledges the futility of opposition when, a few lines prior to the description of Fortune's game, she dares the prisoner to contest her:

> Quovis iudice de opum dignitatumque mecum possessione contende. Et si cuiusquam mortalium proprium quid horum esse monstraveris, ego iam tua fuisse quae repetis, sponte concedam.[32]
>
> Contest with me the possession of wealth and office before any judge, and if you can show that any such thing is the property of any mortal, I shall immediately and perfectly readily grant that those things you want back were indeed yours.

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[31] Boethius*, De Consolatione Philosophiae*, II, prose ii29-34. See also Cioffari, *The Conception of Fortune and Fate in the Works of Dante*, 24.
[32] Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, II, prose ii.5-9.

While her dare tempts the prisoner to engage with her agonistically ("mecum contende"), as we will see, Fortune never occupies a true position of opponency. She sports not for victory, but for diversion.

Boccaccio's treatment of Fortune in the *Amorosa Visione* is influenced by Boethius's treatment of her in the *Consolatione,* as well as Dante's treatment in the *Commedia*.[33] In canto thirty-four, the guide describes Fortune as a one who jousts with whom she pleases and against whom there is no defense, "Così costei con cui le piace, giostra, sempre abbattendo chi s'oppone ad essa."[34] Although opposition to Fortune is futile, the poet/dreamer nevertheless characterizes mortals' relationship with her as agonistic. Looking at a depiction of her wheel, he sees, "molti de' mortai, i quai su per la ruota aderpicando s'andavan con le man non sanza ingegno alla sommità d'essa montando."[35] The application of "ingegno" and the attempt to actively mount her wheel imply the mortals' challenge to Fortune as mistress of her wheel. The poet/dreamer himself, in acknowledging Fortune states, "Costei ch'io veggio qui voltare conoscio i' per nemica veramente."[36] Several lines later, the poet reinforces the antagonism of "nemica" with his lament, "Ell' ha contro di me e *opposta* e messa: ne prieghi, ne saper, ne *forza* alcuna pacificar mi può giammai con essa (emphasis mine)."[37] Although acknowledging the futility of his efforts, the poet unmistakably presents his relation to Fortune as one animated by *agon*.

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[33] Michael Papio, "Un richiamo boeziano nelle opere del Boccaccio," *Heliotropia* 11, no. 1 (2014): 72-3.
[34] Giovanni Boccaccio, *Amorosa Visione*, 34.49-50. Citations of the Amorosa Visione are taken from Vittore Branca's edition, found in volume 3 of *Tutte le Opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, Giovanni Boccaccio, *Tutte le Opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. Vittore Branca (Milan: Mondadori, 1964) vol. 3.
[35] Ibid. 31.39-42.
[36] Ibid. 31.50-51.
[37] Ibid. 31.55-57.

The *De casibus virorum illustrium* offers a scenario in which Fortune is challenged and defeated, this time by another allegorical figure: Poverty. After defeating Fortune in a wrestling match Poverty refers to Fortune's wheel as a *ludum volubilem*.[38] Although the participants in the *certamen* described in the *De Casibus* are both allegorical, the scene constitutes a fable meant to illustrate the limits of Fortune's influence on human circumstances. As reward for her victory over Fortune, Poverty commands that Fortune tether her negative influences to a stake in the public square, thus preventing them from freely associating with people who do not actively seek them out and untether them.[39] The text implies that the unfortunate situations in which men find themselves are not the consequence of the pre-determined movements of the heavens or the caprice of Fortune, but rather that their misfortune stems in part from their own choices in the pursuit of wealth and mutable goods. Although the *De casibus* does not go as far to suggest that Fortune can be mastered by man, it does imply that men are capable through their own actions of avoiding the worst consequences of seemingly fortuitous events. Furthermore, it indicates that those who find themselves in dire circumstances, like many of the figures profiled in the *De Casibus*, bear some responsibility for their ruin.[40] The fact that Poverty defeats Fortune,

[38] Before giving her sentence, Poverty says to Fortune, "Erat animus ludum istum tuum volubilem frangere..."P.G. Ricci translates the sentence as, "Avevo intenzione di rompere codesta tua ruota che gira," but this translation does not capture the ludic association that is clearly present in the Latin. See Giovanni Boccaccio, *De casibus virorum illustrium*, eds. Pier Giorgio Ricci and Vittorio Zaccaria (Milano: Mondadori, 1983), III.i. Poverty as the anectode to Fortune is also a theme in Henricus Septimellensis's *De diversitate fortunae et philosophiae consolatione*. See Cioffari, *The Conception of Fortune in the Works of Dante*, 38.

[39] "...tuo quippe in arbitrio, postquam sic errori veterum visum est, posuere superi fortunium infortuniumque, ego medium volo tanti imperii subtrahere, et iubeo ut in publico infortunium palo alliges firmesque catenis, ut non solum nequeat cuiusquam intrare limen, sed nec inde discedere, nisi cum eo qui nexus soluerit*."* Giovanni Boccaccio, *De Casibus de virorum illustrium*, III.i.

[40] Francesco Ciabbatoni, "'Decameron' 2: Filomena's Rule between Fortune and Human Agency,"*Annali d'Italianistica* 31, (2013): 178.

however, implies the same logic as Philosophy's advice to the prisoner: the best antidote for Fortune is to avoid her goods altogether.

The different types of play represented in the examples above reflect the philosophical attributes of Fortune. Consistent with Nuti's observations, in the *Consolatione* she plays her game for sheer enjoyment, not motivated material gain or loss. The very mutability of her game brings her singular pleasure. According to Caillois's classification system, Fortune's game from her perspective is not agonistic, nor is it based on chance. Rather, it is deliberate action on her part aimed at nothing other than her own diversion, and thus most closely resembles the games in Caillois' category of *ilinx* or vertigo.[41] Just like Fortune's whims, this type of game is completely antithetical to any regulation, unlike games of skill, chance, or mimicry, which can all occupy various positions on the *ludus*/*paidia* scale.[42] When engaging with Fortune, however, humans do not participate in an *ilinx* type game, but rather a contest against Fortune herself, a joust as in the *Amorosa Visione*, a foolish attempt to impose regulation and stability upon her movement.[43] However, the lack of contingency in human efforts to oppose contingency arise from the fact that although an enemy, Fortune is never truly an opponent, as the game she plays does not align with the game played against her. Connor notes that for there to be true opposition in a game, the players must both play to the same ends:

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[41] Caillois defines games of *ilinx* as "those which are based on the pursuit of vertigo and which consist of an attempt to momentarily destroy the stability of perception and inflict a kind of voluptuous panic upon an otherwise lucid mind. In all cases, it is a question of surrendering to a kind of spasm, seizure, or shock which destroys reality with sovereign brusqueness." Although many of the examples he gives rely on momentary physical disorientation (spinning, falling, etc.) he also lists causing disruptions, such as causing an avalanche of snow to fall from a roof for pleasure, as activities which fall into this category. As such, Fortune's spinning of her wheel meets the criteria for a game of this type. For quote, see Caillois, *Man, Play, Games*, 23. For additional examples of *ilinx* type games, see *ibid*. 23-4.

[42] *Ibid.*, 31.

[43] Cf. Boethius, *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, II, prose i.53-62.

> An opponent, such as is abstractly constituted in a game, can be regarded as having precisely the same interests and motivations as me, namely, for the period of the game, the desire to win it by causing me the loss of the game.[44]

In turn, opponency is necessary for victory, since victory is necessarily privative:

> Winning, as opposed to succeeding, implies an antagonist, someone who is as prepared as you are to risk losing in order to win...I cannot win in sport without beating my opponent, without humbling them, diminishing the scope of their subjectivity and pride in themselves.[45]

In playing her game, however, Fortune risks nothing. As stated above, she plays neither to win nor lose, but simply for diversion. Since Fortune can't lose at her game, man can't win. While her position as player affords her unrestricted freedom, the only options available to human players are to play (to ascend her wheel and yield to her movements) or not to play (to eschew the pursuit of worldly goods). To play with Fortune is to accept a passive place on her wheel, as the only strategy available to human contenders is an aleatory one. According to this conception of contingency, submitting oneself to Fortune does not facilitate agency, on the contrary, by submitting oneself to contingency as represented by Fortune, one forfeits one's agency altogether. However, as I will show, the contingency of the tournament in the *Teseida* differs from the forfeiture of agency represented by the wheel of Fortune precisely because the tournament is truly agonistic, not only in the sense that privative victory is possible, but because both skill and chance contribute to the outcome.

IV. *Teseida*

At first glance the action of the *Teseida* seems to be governed by an epic conception of contingency: that is, events are predetermined by superhuman forces and no amount of human ingenuity can alter them. As noted in the previous chapter, following the tournament Theseus

[44] Connor, *A Philosophy of Sport*, 190.
[45] *Ibid*., 187.

acknowledges the possibility that human actions are futile in the face of divine intervention, and suggests that perhaps the outcome of the tournament was divinely preordained and not contingent upon human action or skill: "Perché se oggi non vi fu donata vittoria, ciò non fu vostro difetto, ma cosa fu avanti assai pensata nel chiaro e santo divino intelletto."[46] Victory isn't earned, but *given* according to the "santo divino intelletto." Likewise, while Emilia is unable to decipher Diana's attempt to disclose the eventual outcome of the tournament to her in response to her prayer, the accompanying gloss makes clear to the reader how the dispute over Emilia will be settled.[47] Furthermore, the tournament remains indecisive until the interventions of Mars and Venus on behalf of Arcita and Palemone, respectively. Mars's intervention provides Arcita with victory in the tournament, fulfilling the request of Arcita's prayer to Mars in Book seven. Subsequent to Arcita's victory, however, Venus intervenes, causing Arcita's fatal injury, thus fulfilling Palemone's request to her that he gain Emilia by whatever means she deem appropriate. The intervention of the gods in the tournament comes against the backdrop of the repeated invocations of and references to Fortune within the work, particularly in the first six books.[48] Indeed, the sixth book opens with an apostrophe to Fortune, and attributes much of the

[46] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 9.57.1-4. See also *ibid.* 9.53.5-8. "...contra di lor l'umane posse invan s'affannano, e sono ingannati chi per senno o per forza contastare volesson contra il loro adoperare." For all citations of the *Teseida*, I am using Alberto Limentani's edition, which can be found in the second volume in *Tutte le Opere di Giovanni Boccaccio,* ed. Vittore Branca. See Giovanni Boccaccio, "Teseida", ed. Limentani in *Tutte le Opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. Vittore Branca (Milan:Mondadori, 1964). Translations of the *Teseida* are my own.
[47] Piero Boitani*, Chaucer and Boccaccio*, 17.
[48] At *Teseida* 5.55.5, when Palemone insists on fighting, Arcita claims it was Fortune that "ci ha qui lusingando menati." At 5.94.4 Theseus blames fortune for the death of Acates, to whom he had planned on marrying Emilia. Likewise, at 7.1.1 the peace following Theseus's intervention in the woods is attributed for fortune, "Mentre che la Fortuna sì menava in Attene le cose in allegrezza..." Change often is attributed to Fortune's mutability rather than to human action. For instance at 1.138.5, the happy marriage of the amazons with the Athenians occurs, "perché Fortuna avea cambiato volto."

plot development to that point to her influence, undercutting any claim that human actions had heretofore shaped the plot.[49]

Several scholars have seized on Boccaccio's indication in the glosses that accompany the description of the gods' abodes that Venus and Mars are allegories of the concupiscible and irascible appetite, respectively, and have thus read their interventions, and the misfortunes that arise from them, as moral allegory.[50] Such a reading places the work in alignment with Boethius's position on Fortune in the *Consolatione*, as passion-driven pursuit of mutable goods subjects one to the mutability of Fortune. As others have noted, however, the moral allegory does not provide a satisfactory explanation as to why Palemone should lose the tournament but gain Emilia, given that both are driven to the same extent by unmeasured passion.[51] While the outcome is logical (concupiscence aligns with love, irascibility with combat), that Palemone ultimately succeeds in attaining his desire should not be read as an endorsement of the concupiscent appetite, or a preference for concupiscence over irascibility, both of which, in their basest forms, Boccaccio presents in a less than flattering light.[52] Robert Hollander points out too, that, despite their flawed character traits, both Palemone and Arcita "get what they have sought" from the gods; Palemone marries Emilia and Arcita, "dies a better man in a scene full of mutual admiration and forgiveness."[53] Thus, the tournament's outcome and aftermath dramatizes the

[49] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 6.1-5.
[50] Smarr argues that in the *Teseida*, as in the *Filocolo*, marriage acts as to subdue the madness of love, and reads the text allegorically as Reason (Theseus) overcoming the irascible and concupiscible appetites. Smarr, Boccaccio and Fiammetta, 67-79. For Mars and Venus as astrological influences see Smarr, "Boccaccio and the Stars," 306-317. Hollander sees a doubling of both Mars and Venus in the work, suggesting there is righteous furor and foolish furor, just as there is sensual and rational love. Hollander, Boccaccio's Two Venuses, 53-65.
[51] Hollander, *Boccaccio's Two Venuses*, 64.
[52] Ibid. 55-64, Smarr, *Boccaccio and Fiammetta*, 69-82.
[53] Robert Hollander, *Boccaccio's Two Venuses*, 64.

paradox of Boethian Fortune, wherein apparent good fortune is bad (although this too will reveal itself to be good) and apparent bad fortune is good.[54] The repeated invocation of Fortune, by narrator and character alike, combined with the pre-determined interventions of the gods in the tournament, suggest that the determining forces in the *Teseida* are anything but human agency.[55] Indeed, regarding the tournament Andrea Gazzoni concludes that, "if there is a resolution, it is one imposed by Fortune, not by the hero's force."

Despite their prayers to the gods and previous invocations of Fortune, the characters approach the tournament not only as contingent, but contingent specifically upon their performance. Perhaps the passage that best acknowledges the uncertainty of the battle is found in Arcita's speech where he describes the stakes of the tournament in a series of mutually exclusive oppositions:

> Ma tuttavia, per una antica usanza
> servar, m'ascolterete, se vi piace:
> in voi è ferma la mia speranza,
> in voi la vita e la mia morte giace,
> in voi la pena e la mia dilettanza,
> in voi è la mia guerra e la mia pace,
> in voi sta e nel vostro potere
> quanto di bene o male io posso avere.[56]
>
> But in any case, in observance of an old custom, please listen to me: my hope rests with you, with you my life and death lie, with you my pain and delight, with you my war and peace, with you and within your power lies however much good or bad that I may have.

Although using *and* instead of *or* to connect the opposing terms (which Daniel Heller-Roazen identifies as the linguistic marker of contingency *par excellence*),[57] the fact that the terms are in

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[54] Cf., Andrea Gazzoni, "Trecento Variations," 214, where he notes the "divergent outcomes of *Fortuna.*"
[55] Boitani notes that Boccaccio employs Fate, Fortune, and the pagan gods indiscriminately throughout the work, often conflating them in the glosses. Boitani, *Chaucer and Boccaccio*, 19-20.
[56] Boccaccio, *Teseida* 7.134.
[57] Daniel Heller-Roazen, *Fortune's Faces*, 24.

each case mutually exclusive means that only one of any given pair will accurately describe Arcita at the tournament's conclusion. Once the tournament is finished Arcita will be either dead *or* alive, find himself in pain *or* delight, be at peace *or* at war. Since, though, at the time he makes his speech the outcome remains uncertain, both are equally possible, as likely to occur as not to occur. Death is as likely as survival, pain as likely as delight, a good outcome as likely as a bad outcome. Thus, in this case *and* signifies the uncertainty and contingency that the tournament represents. Furthermore, Arcita identifies his own teammates and their performance on the pitch as the factor upon which the various outcomes are contingent. Not with the gods or fate, but *in voi* (referring to his men) lies the capacity to determine which of the two possibilities will become reality.[58] Elsewhere in the text the narrator acknowledges the tournament's unpredictability when describing the reactions of the spectators. Theseus is described as viewing a "dubbiosa battaglia,"[59] whose outcome (*fin*) he cannot predict since, "sì si mutava spesso il caso d'essa."[60] Even Emilia, who did not recognize the significance of Diana's message during her visit to the temple, laments the uncertainty of the tournament's outcome as it unfolds.

What are we to make of the discrepancy between the reader's knowledge of the determination of the tournament by divine forces and the action of the mortal participants? Are we to conclude for the *Teseida*, as Nora Corrigan has for Chaucer's adaption of the work in "The Knight's Tale," that the discrepancy between the characters' perception and reality demonstrates the extent to which the characters are deluded in believing they possess the capacity to influence

[58] The text does not provide the content of Palemone's speech to his men, but merely states that, "con alte voci li suoi invitava a grandi onori, e a ben far l'incora quanto poteva, e molto glien pregava." *Teseida*, 7.145.2-4.
[59] Boccaccio, *Teseida* 8.91.1-2.
[60] Ibid., 8.91.4-5.

the outcome of the tournament?[61] I will argue that, although the interventions of Mars and Venus in the tournament are like those of Fortune in earlier Books of the *Teseida* in that they appear as external determinant forces, they nevertheless represent forces inherent in *agon* in the manner in which they triangulate the opposition between the principle combatants. Furthermore, it is not that the characters fail to recognize the limits of their own agency vis-à-vis the gods, but rather fail to recognize the paradoxical interdependence of contingency and necessity inherent in game play. More significant than the choice of divinity *per se*,[62] the prayers distinguish the heroes in the relative positions of necessity and contingency that they articulate. Because both necessity and contingency mediate the conflict between the Thebans, neither player is able to fully determine his outcome by addressing one or the other alone, but remains vulnerable to the effects of his opponent's prayer. Although the effects of the contingent, to which Palemone appeals, ultimately prove more potent than the effects of skill, the outcome of the tournament and the larger pursuit of Emilia are nevertheless actively shaped by the choices of the participants themselves.

That each divine entity fulfills the petition of their respective hero suggests an active role for the characters, although rather than being located in their martial action, their agency lies in part in the performance of ultimately felicitous speech acts.[63] The adversarial relationship of the prayers is manifested in the divine conflict they (re)ignite:

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[61] Nora Corrigan, "The Knight's Earnest Game in the *Canterbury Tales,*" in *Games and Gaming in Medieval Literature*, ed. Serina Patterson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 149.
[62] Gazzoni suggests that the choice of deity provides a modicum of distinction between the two heroes. Gazzoni, "Trecento Variations in the Epic Tradition," 214.
[63] I am basing my argument on Austin's theory. J.L. Austin, *Doing things with Words* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955) 4-11. Ronald Martinez has notes the importance of persuasive speech for the work as a whole. Ronald Martinez, "Before the *Teseida*: Statius and Dante in Boccaccio's Epic," *Studi sul Boccaccio* 20, no. 1 (1990): 212-14. For how the prayers reflect prayers in classical epic, see McGregor, *Image of Antiquity*, 109-112.F

> Di Palemon le voci adunque udite,
> subito gì la dea ove chiamata
> era, per che allora fur sentite
> diverse cose en la casa sacrata,
> e sì ne nacque in ciel novella lite
> intra Venere e Marte; ma trovata
> da lor fu via con maestrevol arte
> di far contenti i prieghi d'ogni parte.[64]
>
> The prayers of Palemone heard, the goddess immediately turned to where she had been called, and thus were heard diverse things in the sacred abode, and a new fight broke out between Mars and Venus; but among themselves they found a way with masterful skill to fulfill the prayers of both sides.

While the narrator notes that the outcome is reached "con maestrevol arte" on the part of Mars and Venus, the reader is deprived of specific details of the quarrel, in stark contrast to the extended description of the developments in the tournament. However, it becomes apparent in the text that, despite the narrator's insistence on divine "arte" the determinant elements are supplied by the requests themselves, not the gods. Each prayer exemplifies either necessity (Arcita) or contingency (Palemone), mirroring the structure of agonistic conflict itself. As Steven Connor explains:

> There are, first of all, the antagonists. Classically, there are two of these, the two opponents. But there are also sports and games in which competitors compete against each other by competing against a third element - time in the case of a race, or height in the case of the high jump. We may call this third element necessity, and specifically the necessity of limit, as there will always be a limit to one's possible speed, strength, endurance, or flexibility. In classical games of opposition, the necessity of limit triangulates the antagonism between the two parties. In races, the presence of multiple opponents triangulates the antagonism between the runner and his limits. This third element, of physical limit, is in play in all sports, mediating the relationship between opponents.[65]

Although Connor is specifically discussing modern sports, his observations here are applicable to the tournament as well, for in it martial skill acts as necessity of limit through which the

[64] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 7.57.
[65] Steven Connor, *A Philosophy of Sport*, 167.

antagonism of the Thebans will ostensibly be mediated. Connor, like Caillois, notes, however, that even in games mediated predominantly by skill, contingency is not eliminated, "competitors do not just strive against necessity, they must also work with and against chance."[66] Connor illustrates the structure of the game as a cross, with the player and opponent occupying either end of the horizontal axis, intersected perpendicularly by the vertical axis of necessity at one end and chance on the other.[67]

If we consider carefully the petitions of each of the Thebans to their respective deities, we see this structure reflected in the *Teseida* as well. In his appeal to Mars, Arcita's focus is on overcoming Palemone with regard to the tournament's necessity of limit, to outdo Palemone's martial performance and emerge the victor:

> Dunque m'aiuta per lo santo foco
> che t'arse già, sì come me arde ora,
> e nel presente mio palestral gioco
> con le tue forze nel pugnar m'onora;
> certo sì fatto don non mi fia poco,
> ma sommo bene; adunque qui lavora;
> s'io son di questa pugna vincitore,
> io il diletto e tu n'abbi l'onore.[68]
>
> Thus, help me on account of the holy flame that once burned within you, and burns in me now, and in the present palestral game honor me with your power in the fighting; indeed, such a gift would not be trivial to me, but the highest good; so set your mind to this; if I am victor of this fight I will have its delight and you will have the honor.

Though the contest will not, in fact, be realized as a "palestral gioco" and the skill, or necessity of limit, will be armed combat rather than "pugnar," Arcita's request is that Mars furnish him with the skill necessary to emerge victor, i.e. overcome the contingency of the tournament with his performance. This, of course, happens, and, despite Palemone's equal performance for most

[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 7.27.

of the tournament, Arcita eventually gains the upper hand thanks to Mars's intervention. Palemone, on the other hand, appeals to Venus to either exploit the contingency of the tournament or bypass the determination of the game's contingency altogether:

> Il modo trova tu, ch'io non ne curo;
> o ch'io sia vinto o ch'io sia vincitore
> m'è poco caro, s'io non son sicuro
> di possedere il disio del mio amore;
> però, o dea, quel che t'è men duro
> piglia, e sì fa che io ne sia signore;
> fallo, i' te ne priego, o Citerea,
> e ciò non mi negare, o somma dea.[69]
>
> You find the way, I don't care about that; whether I am loser or winner is of little importance to me unless I am assured of possessing the desire of my love; do what is easiest for you, and in this way make me the master; I beg you, O Citerea, please don't deny me this, o highest goddess.

In his request, Palemone suggests that victory itself may be indeterminate in the dispute over Emilia and incapable of providing the assurance of Emilia that makes victory itself desirable.[70] Paradoxically, Palemone adopts an indeterminate strategy in the pursuit of a guarantee. Rather than proscribing a determinate action, he instructs Venus, "il modo trova tu," thus embracing mutability and contingency in the interest of security. While Arcita confronts the contingent aspect of the game with skill sufficient to secure victory, his success is limited, as we will see. In appealing to the gods, the heroes articulate their freely adopted approach to the indeterminacy of the game. Rather than determined by the gods, the tournament conforms to the freely made choices of the players in confronting contingency.

The appeal to distinct divinities by Palemone and Arcita mirrors the structure that Connor recognizes at the heart of sports *agon*. Mars and Venus represent the poles of the vertical axis,

[69] Ibid., 7.47.
[70] Cf. Corrigan, "The Knight's Earnest Game," 152.

necessity and contingency respectively, with Palemone and Arcita occupying the horizontal. While Arcita pleads to Mars to supply him with the skill necessary to confront the contingency of the tournament, Palemone requests the inverse of Venus, that she exploit contingency, if necessary, to overcome skill in determining who ultimately possesses Emilia. The prayers, reflect what Connor refers to as the "contrasting intentions" implicit in the ludic exposure to contingency:

> To play a sport is to put oneself at stake, to wager yourself against the play of chance itself. There are always two contrasting intentions in this. One seeks to overcome chance, imposing purpose and direction upon the indefinite; but the other overcomes chance only by subjecting oneself to it, playing with and against it-playing it out.[71]

In participating in the tournament, both players enact the wagering of themselves against contingency. However, Arcita confronts contingency with the intention of imposing determination upon it, whereas Palemone subjects himself not only to the indeterminacy of the game, but the indeterminacy that extends beyond the confines of the game.

The paradoxical necessity of contingency for skill to be operative is evident in the interactions of Venus and Mars as agents as well. Venus, representative of the indeterminacy of the game which Palemone exploits, literally allows Mars, representative of Arcita's skill, to decide the game, to subdue her temporarily:

> 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.
> Ma già vedendo Venus che le genti
> di Palemon non potean dar ristoro
> a la battaglia più, rivolta a Marte,
> disse: "Oramai fornita è la tua parte.
>
> Bene hai d'Arcita piena l'orazione,
> che, come vedi, va vittorioso;

[71] Connor, *A Philosophy of Sport*, 168.

> or resta a me quella di Palemone,
> il qual perdente vedi star doglioso,
> a mio poter mandare a secuzione."
> A la qual Marte, fatto grazioso,
> "Amica," disse, "ciò che di' è 'l vero;
> fa oramai il tuo piacere intero."[72]
>
> Above the high bow of Minerva Venus and Mars stood and attentively watched those below, content with the ordering of their prayers. Seeing that Palemone's men could not regain the upper hand in battle, Venus turned to Mars and said, "you've done your part; you've fulfilled Arcita's prayer so well that, as you see, he will be victor; now it remains to me to fulfill that of Palemone, who you see is the woeful loser." To which Mars, said, graciously, "Friend, what you say is true, do now whatever you please."

As Venus allows for Mars' force to be felt in the tournament, so too does the indeterminacy of play allow for the possibility of agency to be determinate. This possibility, however, does not ever fully eliminate contingency. While contingency in games is necessary for skill to be a possible determinant, skill is only ever a possible determinant, never a necessary one.

When we consider the effect that each petition has on the players, it becomes clear that, in addition to the cross envisioned by Connor, the two petitions create a formation of inverse triangles, where each hero will receive not only the positive outcome they requested, but also the negative outcome implied by the request of their opponent. Arcita will outdo Palemone in skill, but will succumb to the contingency which Palemone exploits, whereas Palemone, despite nearly equal effort in the fight will lose the tournament, but ultimately gain Emilia. Because agonistic sports are the locus of the paradoxical unification of contingency and necessity, both heroes' ends are determined by a combination of skill and chance.

The link binding each prayer to both players' outcomes is made explicit in the gloss accompanying Venus's intervention:

> L'autore in questa parte, da quello che avvenne prese cagione alla sua fizione, cioè alla composizione fatta tra Marte e Venere, de' quali ciascuno volle servire colui il quale

[72] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 9.2-3.

> pregato l'avea: perciò che, come di sopra si legge, Marte in forma di Teseo sollecitò Arcita alla vittoria e spaventò quegli di Palemone, per la qual cosa Arcita vinse: ora, a volere mostrare che Venere abbia operato a fare che Palemone avesse Emilia, introduce lei ad essere cagione della morte del vittorioso Arcita, acciò che, morto lui, Emilia rimanga a Palemone; e, come nel testo si legge, il cavallo d'Arcita adombrò e ersesi e ricaddegli in su il petto. Certissima cosa è le bestie adombrare per alcuna spaventevole cosa la quale loro pare vedere; ma quello che egli si veggano, ovvero vedere si credono, niuno il sa. Finge adunque l'autore essere stata Erinis, l'una delle infernali furie quella che spaventò il cavallo…E come detto è di sopra dice costei mandata da Venere similmente, perciò che per lo adombramento del cavallo segui poi quello di che Palemone aveva pregata Venere, cioè che Emilia fosse sua, come ella fu.[73]
>
> The author, in this part, bases his fiction on what happened previously, namely, the agreement made by Venus and Mars, who each wanted to serve he who had prayed to them: thus, as one reads above, Mars, in the form of Theseus, urged Arcita to victory, and frightened Palemone's men, and in this way Arcita won. Now, in order to show how Venus worked so that Palemone could have Emilia, [the author] introduces her as the cause of victorious Arcita's death, so that, with him dead, Emilia remained for Palemone; as one reads in the text, Arcita's horse got startled and fell on his chest. Horses certainly get scared by things they believe to see, but nobody knows what they actually see or think they see. The author pretends, therefore, that it was Erinis, one of the infernal furies, which frightened him...And, as is stated above, says that she was sent by Venus, since the startling of the horse leads to what Palemone had requested of Venus, that Emilia be his, as she was.

The gloss acknowledges the "fizione*"* that characterizes the gods' interventions,[74] and offers a "real life" explanation for the events described: Mars' intervention dramatizes the psychology of motivation, whereas horses are unpredictable and easily startled inexplicably, lending verisimilitude to the author's pretense that, in the fictional world, such a fright was caused by Erinis at the instruction of Venus. The pretense of the gods acting in response to the prayers, however, assigns causality to the prayers articulated by the players absent in the "real life" scenario, especially that offered in place of the fictional action of Venus. While the

[73] Boccaccio, *Teseida* 9.5 and accompanying gloss.
[74] Francesca Galligan argues that Boccaccio's use of the pagan gods in the *Teseida* anticipates his defense of the pagan gods as poetic fictions in the *Genealogia*. Galligan notes that in the *Teseida* the gods function variously as, "representations of natural phenomena and poetry, and as vehicles for discreet Christian elements." Francesca Galligan, "Epic Poetry of the Trecento," 80.

psychological explanation for Mars' intervention retains causality for Arcita in achieving victory, his self-consciousness spurs him to action, the explanation offered for Venus' intervention leaves unanswered the question of causality—what really caused the horse's fear is unknown, and the author only pretends it is Erinis. By identifying the intervention of Venus and Erinis as a fiction, the gloss removes the causal link between Palemone's prayer and the accident which the narrative posits.[75] According to the gloss, it is mere fiction that, rather than simply expecting mutability passively, Palemone, in embracing mutability, actively brings chance into conformity with his intention. Indeed, as Connor notes, the idea of luck is itself a fiction, which distinguishes the axis linking chance and necessity of limit described earlier from that which the antagonists in sports contests occupy:

> Participants in sport will often attempt to draw chance into conformity with human values and expectations...turning chance in to luck, good or bad. But in reality, chance has no such orientation. This is why, although chance is symmetrical to necessity, in that it provides the conditions within which all human endeavor must operate, it is not precisely or necessarily opposed to it. If necessity represents the limits within the field of sport and game, then chance represents the pure openness of the game, the possibility of its being played, the dimension of unpredictability which it must necessarily inhabit if it is to be a game. Although chance is distinguished from necessity, precisely because necessity is determined and determining, and chance is the undeterminable, it is also penetrated by it.[76]

While Boccaccio acknowledges the fiction of luck as such, the fiction of the gods functions nevertheless to veil a truth. For, while Palemone's prayer in reality may not have a direct causal link to the random behavior of the horse, his choice to appeal to contingency nevertheless

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[75] Nolan notes that Arcita's fall from his horse, "brings into sharp focus the calculated tension between the poetic covering or fiction and the author's underlying study of moral causality," but only considers this tension relative to Arcita's actions, and does not consider how the tension between the "*false* causes presented in the fiction" and those provided in the gloss also invite consideration of the causality of Palemone's actions and choices. Nolan, *Chaucer*, 190. Emphasis original.

[76] Connor, *A Philosophy of Sport*, 167.

contributed to the outcome of the game, by clearing the path to victory for Arcita. Furthermore, by underscoring the chiastic relationship between the misfortune each character suffers and their respective gods, the gloss reveals the extent to which outcomes of games are mutually dependent on contingency and necessity.[77] The "composizione" between the gods and the mutual effects they both have on the outcome of the game reflect the integration of necessity and contingency that animates game play. While these elements mediate the opposition between the antagonists, they themselves are not opposed to each other, but symmetrical in that they represent the symmetrical elements of agonistic play. The fiction of the gods' actions speak not to divine determinism, but rather to the paradox of contingency necessary for agonistic play to be possible.

That the element of contingency, represented by Venus, ultimately supersedes the skill-based element (or "necessity of limit," in Connor's terms), illustrates that the effort to overcome the ludic contingency with skill, while not futile (for Arcita does achieve victory and remains the victor even after death), does not extend to the life outside the arena. As Stephen Connor notes:

> Champions are those that command a field of action, but they are themselves commanded by the field of possibilities that are delimited by the game. Champions are said to be those who can focus intently on the goals...but this makes them subjects who consent to be absolutely determined, or subjected to this singular aim or arena of achievement.[78]

Indeed, Arcita fails to consider that in seeking the skill sufficient for victory, he not only determines the game's outcome, but subjects himself to this very determinacy. In attaining victory through skill, Arcita only subdues contingency finitely, not infinitely.[79]

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[77] Cf. Warren Ginsberg, who attributes the mutual effect of each player allegorically, stating, "the relation between the appetites shape the events they both experience." Warren Ginsberg, "Boccaccio's Early Romances," 40.
[78] Connor, *A Philosophy of Sport*, 189.
[79] Cf. Surdich, *Boccaccio*, 55; Everson, *Italian Romance Epic*, 178.

The very possibility of victory, however limited in scope it may be, distinguishes the tournament from conceptions of play involving Fortune, such as those in the *Amorosa Visione* or the *Consolatione*. In these instances, the opponent is contingency itself in the form of Fortune, and the only choice available to the human player is to play or not to play, to engage in the acquisition and maintenance of mutable goods, or to eschew interest in mutable goods in favor of secure heavenly goods. The tournament, however, places contingency, (represented by Venus) in a mediating role along with skill (Mars) between two human opponents, in the sense that they are engaged in the same zero-sum game in which victory by one signifies the privation of victory of the other. While contingency is a necessary component of the game, it is paired with the possibility of a second determining factor, skill, which the fact of contingency itself makes possible. In this way, the tournament exemplifies the Renaissance mentality identified by Sloterdijk, in which man is neither omnipotent nor impotent, master of nor slave to the determining forces of his circumstance. Both contestants, through their prayers, are partially successful in influencing the determining forces of chance and necessity, and their partial influence together shapes the outcome of the game. Arcita confronts the contingency of the tournament and gains victory as he had requested. Palemone embraces mutability and ultimately possesses Emilia. However, at the same time each individual remains vulnerable to forces beyond their control, which prevent each from matching their intentions with their actions. Palemone, despite a valiant effort, loses the tournament. Arcita, despite his win, loses Emilia.

To summarize, the tournament remains a game of skill despite the interventions of the gods, since the gods represent elements internal to contests. Furthermore, in exploiting these elements to different ends, the players themselves determine the outcome of the game. Arcita's application of skill together with Palemone's indifference to the tournament's outcome secures

Arcita his coveted victory. Although the game acknowledges the potential of skill to determine the indeterminate, the narrative arc reveals that skill is nevertheless subordinate to chance in the long run. While not impotent, skill is only capable of shaping the immediate future, which, in turn, is mutable.

Rather than, or perhaps in addition to, the appetitive passions, the pagan gods enact the paradoxical relationship between chance and necessity inherent in agonistic play, in which both are interpenetrative of the other. While the interventions of the pagan gods differ from those of classical epic, in that they represent not superhuman determinism, but the deterministic forces of agonistic games, their alignment with necessity and contingency reinforce the generic associations made earlier in the text (Mars representative of epic and Venus representative of Romance).[80] Mars is not representative of epic simply because of his association with war, but because he represents the agonistic strategy adopted by Arcita, which strives for determinacy of the contingency of the game with skill. Venus, on the other hand, represents not only the amorous interests of romance, but also the contingency inherent in the genre and the aleatory approach exemplified by romance heroes. Because of the necessity of contingency inherent in ludic *agon*, however, Mars can only function with the consent of Venus. Arcita's skill is sufficient to confront the contingency of the game and determine the outcome in his favor. However, because skill is determined by confines of the game, victory attained through skill represents only a limited, not absolute, mastery of contingency. In selecting a strategy that accommodates the mutable, Palemone exemplifies the romance ethos of yielding to the indeterminate in the interest of personal gain.

[80] For Mars and Venus as representatives of generic traditions, see Galligan, "Epic poetry of the Trecento," 86-95.

V. Conclusion

That games and play were considered contingent activities is reflected in the numerous occasions in which Fortune is represented using ludic language, whether playing her own game or engaging in ludic activity with human opponents. That the events in which Fortune is opposed by human efforts are portrayed as forgone conclusions reflects that Fortune cannot ever be defeated, since she never occupies an oppositional role. She plays not to win or lose, but simply for the autotelic diversion which her play affords. While one can freely choose to participate in her game, this participation necessitates that human participants adopt a passive stance, entirely subject to her movement. While engaging in her game, the only player is Fortune herself, while humans represent passive playthings. Rather than allow for agency, submission to Fortune precludes agency. The agonistic game of the *Teseida*, however, reflects the shift in attitude toward fortune that Sloterdijk identifies in so far as the active participation of human agents determines the contingent outcome of the game. Here contingency is not an considered an opponent, but a necessary mediator of the opposition between antagonists who mutually assume risk in their agreement to participate in the game. The interventions of the gods, rather than external deterministic forces, as in classical epic, represent the approaches of the heroes in confronting the contingency according to the rules of the game. Arcita, in appealing to Mars, determines the outcome of the game through superior skill, thus depriving Palemone of victory. Palemone, on the other hand, appeals to the very contingency that makes Arcita's use of skill possible, and, while it does supply Arcita with victory, by embracing the very mutability that animates game play, Palemone attains Emilia despite his loss. Together, the interventions of the gods and their relationship to one another dramatize the paradoxical binding of contingency and necessity in agonistic sports, where contingency is necessary in order for agency to be possible.

The ultimate triumph of the aleatory strategy adopted by Palemone does not render the game a game of chance, nor does it render Palemone entirely passive, since, in intentionally selecting an aleatory strategy, Palemone actively shapes the outcome of the game. Rather than negate human agency in the tournament, contingency allows for it.

Chapter 4: Boccaccio's Two Phoebuses: Funeral Games as Poetic Competition

In the *Genealogia deorum gentilium* Boccaccio uses the metaphor of a fighter entering the ring (*gymnasium*) to characterize his defense of poetry against the accusations of the ignorant. Dante uses a similar metaphor to characterize his argument for imperial autonomy in *Monarchia* III: in articulating his argument he metaphorically enters the arena to hurl his opponents from the ring (*gignasium* and *palaestra*).[1] The use of such metaphors serves to underscore the agonistic nature of the philosophical debates in which the authors engage through their texts. In the epic tradition, funeral games often play a similar role, albeit less explicitly than the arena metaphor employed by Dante and Boccaccio. As a traditional component of epic, funeral games are a natural locus for poetic competition, as they offer the opportunity for poetic imitation and innovation through manipulation of themes and motifs that appear during the sequences of athletic events.[2] In keeping with the epic tradition, Boccaccio includes a funeral games sequence in his early epic, the *Teseida*, albeit on a much smaller scale than those of his predecessors (primarily Virgil and Statius).[3] Despite being shorter than similar scenes in classical

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[1] For Boccaccio's use of the metaphor, see Giovanni Boccaccio, *Genealogia deorum gentilium,* ed. and trans. Vittorio Zaccharia (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editori S.P.A, 1998), 1392-3. XIV.vi. For Dante's use, see *Monarchia* III.i.iii. See also Kay's note to *gignasium,* which explains that the word, along with *palaestra*, is associated with wrestling, and that Dante apparently engages in a mixed metaphor, since he previously described metaphorically arming himself. Dante Alighieri, *Dante's* Monarchia, trans. Richard Kay (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1998), 199.

[2] Helen Lovatt, "Epic Games: Structure and Competition," in *Structures of Epic Poetry*, eds. Christiane Reitz and Simone Finkmann (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 413. For an example of how Statius manipulates the games of his own epic models, see Helen Lovatt, *Statius and Epic Games: Sports, Politics, and Poetics in the Thebaid* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 12-19.

[3] A. Limentani identifies Virgil and Statius as Boccaccio's primary sources. According to Limentani, Boccaccio most closely follows Statius in book 11 of the *Teseida*. Limentani was of the opinion that the epic elements of the work were the work's weakest points, referring to the epic portion as "inerte" on p.242 of his introduciton. See pp.232-242 in Limentani's introduction to *Teseida*.

epic, in the following chapter I will argue that the games sequence of the *Teseida* distills from classical epic games sequences their function as a locus for poetic discourse and competition. I will argue that Boccaccio's use of ekphrasis displaces the *agon* from athletic events to that between representational modes, and that Boccaccio's descriptive technique renders visual representation dependent on poetic representation. Furthermore, I will argue that the two appearances of Phoebus in the games sequence (the first on a shield awarded to Theseus and the second providing aid to Admetus in the boxing match) constitute a generic competition between the epic and elegiac traditions. Finally, I will argue that Boccaccio represents the competition between Nature and poetic creation in his depiction of Pan on the final prize awarded in the games sequence.

The funeral games have received very little scholarly attention beyond being identified as an element that aligns the work with classical epic.[4] Scholars who have treated the games tend to isolate the components of the games in their readings; Dominique Battles bases her argument that the games foreshadow the Trojan conflict on the winners of the events, and does not consider the significance of the prizes nor the use of ekphrasis.[5] James McGregor offers extensive readings of the prizes, and importantly notes the repeated allusions to musical and poetic activity in the scenes depicted on the prizes. However, his analysis is limited to how the scenes on the prizes, including the allusions to poetry and music, serve as allegorical responses to the death of Arcita. Among the most important contributions of McGregor's reading of the funeral games, however, is that Boccaccio's funeral games are integral to the fabric of his poem,

[4] See, for example, Boitani, *Chaucer and Boccaccio*, 10; Bruni, *Boccaccio*, 190. Limentani, "Introduzione," in *Teseida delle Nozze D'Emilia*," vi; Lucia Battaglia Ricci, *Boccaccio* (Roma : Salerno, 2000), 97.
[5] Battles, *The Medieval Tradition of Thebes,* 75-83.

and are not merely decorative.[6] Although he concludes his analysis of the first prize, featuring the feats of Pallas by stating that, "Boccaccio's particular achievement in *Teseida*...would seem to be the discovery that, through their differences history and allegory can reinforce rather than destroy each other," he is not primarily concerned with how the games sequence reflects Boccaccio's poetic ambition, and largely limits his discussion to the material depicted on the prizes.[7] I will offer different readings of two of the prizes (the shield and the helmet), taking into consideration the games not as a response to death, but as the site of poetic negotiation. Francesca Galligan argues that the references to poetry on the prizes awarded in the games characterize Arcita, the honoree of the games, as an epic hero according to a Dantean conception of heroism.[8] Like McGregor, Galligan does not consider the games as a locus of negotiation, and focuses solely on games as an expression of veneration. Helen Lovatt explains, "by celebrating the death of a great hero, those competing enact a potential struggle to replace him."[9] Arcita may be the honoree of the games, yet it is possible that the poetic endorsement signified by the prizes is directed toward the winners of the games, not to Arcita alone. While all of these authors' readings of the games and prizes are valuable, they do not consider the broader philosophical and literary debates (e.g. the tension between representational modes, the generic tension within the work, and the tension between art and nature) with which Boccaccio engages in his funeral games sequence, nor do they account for the games as a locus of competition and negotiation. In

[6] McGregor, *Shades of Aeneas*, 85.
[7] Ibid., 95. McGregor also claims, "Boccaccio's poem itself is demonstrably like the emblematic honors of Pallas. It figuratively addresses the Fall of Man, just as it literally addresses the death of Arcita. Its aim is to provide a response, even an antidote, to the fundamental human disaster." McGregor, *Shades of Aeneas*, 94. For his analysis of the prizes, see McGregor, *Shades of Aeneas*, 85-96, 104-10.
[8] Galligan, "Epic Poetry in the Trecento," 128-9.
[9] Lovatt, "Epic Games: Structure and Competition," 411.

incorporating the various elements of the funeral games (the competitors, the prizes, the poetics) my reading will contextualize the funeral games sequence within broader literary and philosophical discourses concerning the relationship between visual and verbal representation, between poetic genres, and between poetic art and nature.

The *Teseida's* games are held in honor of Arcita, who dies in book ten as a result of the injuries suffered in book seven at the end of the tournament ("giuoco a marte"). The funeral games sequence of the *Teseida* occupies only ten stanzas total and features four events (the "corso," "unta palestra," "cesto," and "desco") for each of which one historiated prize is awarded (horse coverings for the "corso," a shield for the "unta palestra," a pair of golden cups for the "cesto," and a helmet for the "desco"). A total of seven named contestants compete over the course of the four events: Castor and Ida compete in the footrace, which ends in a tie, Theseus is the victor of the wrestling match, Pollux defeats Admetus in the boxing match ("cesto"), and Evander beats Sarpedon in the discus throw. Despite the many differences between the games sequences of classical epic and the one featured in the *Teseida*, Boccaccio is nevertheless highly indebted to his classical models for the events themselves, since, as he admits in a gloss, he is unfamiliar with the details of some of the events he mentions.[10] In the glosses that accompany the main narrative, Boccaccio explains as best he can to the reader the basic structure of each event, even comparing the "desco" to contemporary ludic practices, but

[10] In the gloss to stanza sixty-four, which narrates the cesto, Boccaccio states, "Quello che cesto si sia non abbiamo oggi assai chiaro." See gloss to *Teseida*, XI.64 on p. 625 in Limentani edition. For Boccaccio's reliance on Statius for his games sequence, see David Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale: Imitation of Classical Epic in Boccaccio's Teseida* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 100-119, esp. p.118. Anderson provides a detailed analysis of how the Statian games inform the main action of the *Teseida*, but treats the *Teseida*'s funeral games in passing, only noting that the events are borrowed from Statius and their order has been altered in Boccaccio's work."

his unfamiliarity with the games themselves is one likely explanation for the lack of athletic detail in the games sequence.[11] The representation of the four events and their corresponding prizes occupies eight of the ten stanzas, followed by one stanza in which the narrator relates that there were additional events and prizes that are not described individually and one final stanza in which the narrator compares Agamemnon's performance in the "gioco detto ceriale" as more deserving of an award than any prize awarded at any of the athletic contests of ancient Greece.

One of the most striking features of the *Teseida's* funeral games is its relative abundance of ekphrastic description. By and large, Boccaccio replaces the athletic action found in classical games scenes with ekphrastic description.[12] While the use of ekphrasis in a funeral games sequence is not without precedent, the amount of text dedicated to ekphrastic description is. Both Virgil's and Statius's games feature at least one historiated prize which the authors briefly describe. Whereas historiated prizes are awarded for all featured events in the *Teseida*, they are only awarded for the first event (the boat race in the *Aeneid* and the Chariot race in the *Thebaid*) in the funeral games of Virgil and Statius.[13] Therefore, while Boccaccio's games seem diminutive in many respects when compared with those of classical epic, the use of historiated prizes and the percentage of lines dedicated to their description, especially if one includes the

[11] In the gloss accompanying stanza sixty-six he explains desco as follows, "Desco era una palla ritonda, la quale a quel tempo essi usavano di gittare e in pinta e in volta, come oggi si gittano le pietre…" In book one there is a similar gloss to stanza sixty, in which Theseus promises to honor Minerva with games if he should be victorious against the Amazons. The gloss explains, "Solevano gli antichi fare certi giuochi ad honore degl'iddii, sì come li Fiorentini fanno, ad honore d'alcuni santi, correre diversi palii." For possible sources for the historical information Boccaccio includes in his glosses see McGregor, "Boccaccio's Athenian Theater," 11-13.
[12] McGregor, *Shades of Aeneas*, 85.
[13] Ibid., 86. McGregor rightly claims that none of the prizes for the Virgilian footrace are historiated, but he does not consider the prizes for the boat race. He notes Statius' historiated prize for the chariot race, however, and argues that Boccaccio's prize for the footrace (horse coverings) is an amalgamation of Statian prizes (horse, cloak, crater).

glosses that accompany the descriptions, represent an expansion on Boccaccio's part. The funeral games of the *Aeneid* occupy roughly five hundred lines of text, of which Virgil dedicates eight to the description of the prize awarded to Cloanthus. By comparison, of the eighty lines that comprise the *Teseida's* game sequence, thirty-seven (nearly half) are dedicated to ekphrastic description. While such extensive use of ekphrastic description may seem out of place in a games sequence, which are typically dominated by narration of athletic action, the suitability of ekphrasis as a substitute for ludic *agon* becomes more apparent when one considers the *agon* inherent in ekphrastic description—that between visual and poetic representation.[14] As Murray Krieger explains:

> ...in [the] poetics of *ekphrasis* we find an ambivalence between, on the one hand, the defensive concession that language, as arbitrary and with a sensuous lack, is a disadvantaged medium in need of emulating the natural and sensible medium, and on the other hand, the prideful confidence in language as a privileged medium in its very intelligibility that opens the sensible world to the free-ranging imagination without being bound by the limitations of the sensible as revealed in the visual field. The superior access of natural signs to the sensible world received by our eyes can be countered by the superior aspect of language, as arbitrary signs, to the intelligible world received by our inner vision, the eye of the mind.[15]

Boccaccio was clearly keen on the capacity of ekphrasis to reflect on differing representational modes. Immediately following the funeral games sequence, Boccaccio engages in a lengthy ekphrasis of Arcita's funeral monument which amounts essentially to a re-telling of the narrative up to that point via ekphrasis.[16] Albeit less explicit, the reflection on representational modes is no

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[14] Johannes Bartuschat, "Appunti sull'ecfrasi in Boccaccio," *Italianistica: Rivista di letteratura italiana* 38, no.2 (May/August 2009): 71, where Bartuschat refers to ekphrasis as a place where literary culture and visual culture meet. See also James A.W. Heffernan, *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 23.
[15] Murray Krieger, "The problem of Ekphrasis: Image and Words, Space and Time—and the Literary Work," in *Pictures into Words: Theoretical and Descriptive Approaches to Ekphrasis*, eds. Valerie Robillard and Els Jongeneel (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1998), 7.
[16] See Boccaccio, *Teseida* 11.69-90. See also Bartuschat, "Appunti sull'ecfrasi in Boccaccio," 83. Hanning refer to the temple as the "summit of literary self-consciousness." Robert W.

less self-conscious in the ekphrastic descriptions featured in the funeral games sequence, which have received less attention than the temple.[17]

The juxtaposition of representational modes that ekphrastic description entails is most discernable in instances of what A.W. Heffernan calls representational friction, or that "which occurs whenever the dynamic pressure of verbal narrative meets the fixed forms of visual representation and acknowledges them as such" or "when the poet's language registers the difference between the medium of visual representation and its referent."[18] In other words, representational friction lays bare the competition between visual and verbal media inherent in ekphrastic passages. The description of graphically fixed poses is one of the characteristics, according to Heffernan, that distinguishes Virgilian ekphrasis from that of Homer and supplies Virgilian ekphrasis with much of its representational friction.[19] We find examples of such fixity in the description of the cloak:

victori chlamydem auratam, quam plurima circum

Hanning, "'The Struggle between Noble Designs and Chaos': The Literary Tradition of Chaucer's Knight's Tale," *The Literary Review* 23, no. 4 (Summer 1980): 525.

[17] Limentani notes that the ekphrastic descriptions on the temple echo those of Purgatory and anticipate those of the Amorosa Visione. However, he does not analyze the ekphrastic descriptions that occur during the games sequence. Instead, he suggests that Boccaccio's shortened the games sequence to proceed more quickly to describing the temple. See Limentani, "Boccaccio traduttore di Stazio," 237. Likewise, Rainer Stillers limits his analysis of Boccaccio's poetics of ekphrasis to the descriptions of the abodes of Mars and Venus in book seven and the temple in book eleven. Stillers argues that Boccaccio's descriptions of the houses of the gods reflect the author's preference for love poetry over martial epic, despite the poet's claims to have written the first poem to treat the deeds of Mars in book twelve. Furthermore, Stillers argues that Boccaccio's use of ekphrasis does not hinge on the competition between visual and verbal media. However, because he does not consider the ekphrastic descriptions of the games sequence, which are set within the context of competition, his conclusions are incomplete. For his analysis of the houses of the gods see Rainer Stillers, "Ekphrasis als Poetik: Zu Giovanni Boccaccios *Teseida*," in *Text-Interpretation-Vergleich Festschrift für Manfred Lentzen zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Joachim and Elisabeth Leeker (Berlin: Erich Smidt Verlag, 2005), 434-437. For his analysis of the temple, see ibid., 437-443.

[18] Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 19.

[19] Ibid. 27.

> purpura Maeandro duplici Meliboea cucurrit,
> intextusque puer frondosa regius Ida
> velocis iaculo cervos cursuque fatigat,
> acer, anhelanti similis; quem praepes ab Ida
> sublimem pedibus rapuit Iovis armiger uncis;
> longaevi palmas nequiquam ad sidera tendunt
> custodes, saevitque canum latratus in auras.
>
> to the winner, a cloak wrought with gold, about which ran deep Meliboean purple in double waving line, and, woven in, the royal boy, with javelin and speedy foot, on leafy Ida tires fleet stags, eager and seemingly breathless; him Jove's swift armour bearer has caught up aloft from Ida in his talons; his aged guardians in vain stretch their hands to the stars, and the savage barking of dogs rises skyward.[20]

Ganymede caught in the Eagle's talons as his guardians' hands stretch upward is an instance in which Virgil captures the fixity of graphic representation in his verbal description. This, in addition to the details about the cloak's construction, i.e. it made of gold (thread, presumably), with Meliboean purple in a double waving line, and the fact that the image is woven, call to the reader's attention that the Ganymede narrative they are encountering is ostensibly dependent on an image which Virgil describes. By introducing elements of graphic fixity and material construction into the narrative, the poem achieves realism in so far as it creates the illusion that the objects described are real and not imaginary.[21]

One would expect numerous instances of representational friction in the ekphrastic passages of the *Teseida's* games scene, given the agonistic setting, and indeed there are plenty to be found. Notably, however, Boccaccio's method of supplying the representational friction in his text differs substantially from his classical predecessors. Boccaccio's description of the prizes eschews the graphic fixity and material detail that Virgil and Statius employ.[22] Indeed,

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[20] Virgil, *Aeneid*, 5.255-7. Here I am using G.P. Goold's translation. See Virgil, *Aeneid*, ed. G.P. Goold (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014), 488-9.
[21] See Heffernan, *Museum of Words*, 32.
[22] Statius employs similar techniques in his seventeen line description of two prizes offered to the first and second finishers of the chariot race: Hercules' bowl featuring the slaughter of the

Boccaccio's descriptions of the prizes' material aspects do more to confuse the reader than facilitate realistic imagination. For instance, the horse coverings awarded for the foot race are said to be "o dipinti o forse tessuti in modo di storie."[23] The gloss accompanying the description of the cups explains that the images of the twelve labors of Hercules were "intagliate" on the cups, when the main text describes the image of Hercules as "scolpito".[24] Boccaccio's description of images also lacks the "graphic fixity" identified by Heffernan. Boccaccio lists episodes depicted, but provides no description of specific poses, scale of the images, or arrangement of images on the objects. Take, for instance, the description of the horse coverings featuring Minerva:

> Vedeasi ancor le fistule sonare,
> Le quali ella trovò primieramente;
> poi con Aragne folle disputare,
> e di Vulcan si vedea vincente;
> e altre istorie assai, le quali contare
> non è ben convenevol al presente.[25]
>
> One saw her playing the pipes, which she found first; then one saw the foolish dispute with Arachne and one saw her victorious over Vulcan, and other stories, which it is not appropriate to recount at this time.

Although the various scenes depicted here are connected by the adverb *poi*, which hints at a linear arrangement of images, the text remains ambiguous since the main verb in each case is *vedeasi*, and thus it is unclear if the images are described in the order purportedly seen by the

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Lapiths, and a mantle on which is woven scenes of Leander's crossing of the Hellespont. Hercules, "holds raging Hylaeus, twisting the beard and plying his club," and Leander's "hands seem to move sideways, he seems about to alternate his arms, you would think his hair in the thread would not be dry." See Statius, *Thebaid* 6.532-545. For all citations and translations of the *Thebaid*, I am using Shackleton Bailey's edition. See Statius, *Thebaid*, ed. and trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey, (Cambridge: University of Harvard Press, 2003), 366-67.

[23] See Boccaccio, *Teseida* 11.60 and accompanying gloss.

[24] For *scolpito*, see Ibid. 11.65.2. For *intagliate*, see accompanying gloss.

[25] Ibid. 11.61.1-6.

observer/narrator or if they are arranged in that order on the prizes. Furthermore, the text supplies no graphic details such as poses or colors used to depict the images.

Instead, text registers representational friction inherent in ekphrasis by juxtaposing the language of sight with that of narration throughout the passage and the accompanying glosses. Forms of "vedere" occur five times in the passage.[26] "Vedeasi" opens stanzas sixty one and sixty three, which describe the horse coverings and shield, respectively, and appears again in the seventh line of stanza sixty-two. Regarding the images of Minerva on the horse coverings, Boccaccio tells us, "di Vulcan *vi si vedea* vincente," and the images on the shield are "belle ad *vedere*."[27] The insistence on the act of seeing reminds the reader of the tension between the visual medium being described and the verbal medium used to describe it. The implied competition is underscored in the text by the proximity of the language of poetic or musical representation to verbs of seeing. The "vedeasi" that opens stanza sixty-one is balanced by "sonare" at the end of the same line. Similarly, in stanza sixty-two only the proper noun "Marsia" separates "vedeasi" from "sonando" in line seven, which in turn is followed quickly by "sonar" in line eight. There is slightly more separation between "vedeasi" at the beginning of stanza sixty three and "cantar" and "canzone" which appear in line five, but the intermediate text features well-known symbols of poetry and music, such as Parnassus and the nine muses in the description of the shield that effectively stand in for poetic action.[28] These examples of juxtaposition arise from the fact that, with the exception of Hercules on the cups, the prizes

[26] Bartuschat notes Boccaccio's tendency to include *verba vivendi* in other ekphrastic passages. See Bartuschat, "Appunti sull'ecfrasi", 81 and 83.
[27] For the description of the horse coverings, see *Teseida*, 11.61.4. For the shield, see *Ibid*.11.63.8. Emphasis mine.
[28] See p. 147 for full quotation.

depict musical/poetic action. In other words, the juxtaposition is a result of the content depicted (musical/poetic) and the supposed mode of representation (ostensibly, visual/material).

This is not the case in stanza sixty-one, where "Si vedea" is followed quickly by "altre istorie" which the author refuses to narrate (contare). Here, the juxtaposition arises from the object represented (visual media) and the actual mode of representation itself (poetic/verbal). The explicit juxtaposition of representational modes extends to the glosses to the main text as well. In the gloss to 11.60.3, Boccaccio states, "Negli ornamenti di questi cavalli…pone l'autore che fossero o dipinti o forse tessuti in *modo di storie* tutti gli onori di Pallade, e primieramente pone quello del nominare Actene, il quale di sopra si *scrive*."[29] That the images ultimately derive from poetry is made explicit in the gloss that corresponds to the description of the sheild featuring Apollo, in which Boccaccio states, "*scrivono i poeti* le Muse essere nove ottime cantatrici e abitare allato ad una fonte la quale è in sul monte Parnaso, e quivi cantare loro versi; nel mezzo delle quali *dicono* che Appollo siede et suona mentre elle cantano."[30] Rather than narrative ostensibly based on image, the Boccaccio's ekphrasis renders image dependent on poetic representation, and thus elevates poetic representation over figural.

Furthermore, by eschewing the methods with which classical poets achieved a sense of realism when engaging in ekphrasis, Boccaccio emphasizes the rhetorical function of ekphrastic passages. In his essay on ekphrasis in Alexandrian poetry, Alessandro Perutelli suggests that ekphrastic passages can function within a text much like rhetorical figures according to Genette's use of the term "figure".[31] Perutelli proposes the rhetorical capacity of ekphrasis as an alternative

[29] Emphasis mine.
[30] See gloss accompanying *Teseida*, 11.63. Emphasis mine.
[31] For a summary of Genette's use of the terms figure and rhetoric see Christopher Harlos, "Rhetoric, Structuralism, and Figurative Discourse: Gérard Genette's Concept of Rhetoric" *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 19, no. 4 (1986): 209-223. Harlos sums up Genette's theory as follows

to traditional functions, which he presents as a bi-polar spectrum, with the narrative function on one end (in which the ekphrastic passage is somehow integrated into and furthers the main narrative) and descriptive (in which the ekphrastic passage is purely decorative) on the other.[32] Like rhetorical figures, then, the content of the ekphrastic passage participates in the text's production of meaning through a connotative process, much like a simile or an allusion.[33] In privileging this aspect of his ekphrastic passages, Boccaccio subsumes the images within poetic discourse. Boccaccio encourages his readers not to think of the images as literal images, but figuratively as poetic devices. That the prizes function in this manner is hardly a revelatory observation, and critics have proposed readings under the assumption that the scenes described on the prizes contribute to the meaning of the text. Along these lines, James McGregor refers to the prizes as a "series of emblems in the manner of an allegorical pageant."[34] What has not been identified, to my knowledge, is how Boccaccio's descriptive technique in the games sequence foregrounds the rhetorical function of the ekphrasis within the text at the expense of creating the illusion that the objects represented are real.[35] By providing limited, vague, or, at times,

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on p. 218, "rhetoric is a semiotic system distinct from other semiotic systems because of the non-arbitrary relationship between signifier and signified in the creation of the sign. In this system, rhetorical figures have a dual purpose: (1) *as signifiers* they refer to a *second* connotated signified, and *as signs* they communicate the presence of a poetic state of discourse which implies at least the potential for deviation from denotative meaning."

[32] Perutelli provides a passage from Aeschylus's *Seven Against Thebes* as exemplary of the narrative function of ekphrasis and one from the Pseudo-hesiodic *The Shield of Heracles* as exemplary of the descriptive function. For a brief summary of Perutelli's argument. Alessandro Perutelli, "L'inversione speculare: per una retorica dell'ekphrasis," *Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici* 1, (1978): 92.

[33] D.P. Fowler, "Narrate and Describe: the Problem of Ekphrasis," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 81 (1991): 34-35.

[34] For quote, see McGregor, *Shades of Aeneas*, 104. For McGregor's reading of the ekphrastic passages, see McGregor, *Shades of Aeneas*, 85-96 and 104-10.

[35] Bartuschat comes to a similar conclusion regarding the *Amorosa Visione*. According to Bartuschat, Boccaccio generally prefers an "encyclopedic" style of ekphrasis over one rich in figural detail, and Bartuschat suggests Boccaccio's emphasis instead is on the emotional

contradictory pictorial and material details, Boccaccio privileges the significance of the content, derived from poetry, over the iconographic detail. While on the literal level Boccaccio uses language to mediate images, on the figurative level, the "images" he describes serve to mediate poetic texts. In so doing, Boccaccio asserts the superiority of verbal representation over visual, since content on the prizes is taken from poetry and reimagined poetically. Rather than the verbal, in Boccaccio's ekphrasis it is the visual medium that is arbitrary, since it is irrelevant whether the images are painted, etched, sculpted, or woven.

The privileging of the rhetorical function of ekphrasis over the purely descriptive is also evident in Boccaccio's tendency to provide only partial descriptions of the scenes depicted. After enumerating various scenes depicted on the horse coverings, Boccaccio concludes with, "...et altre ystorie assai, le quai contare non è ben convenelvol al presente."[36] He concludes the description of Theseus' shield in a similar manner, saying "et oltre ad queste v'eran molte cose, tutte in honor di Phebo...," and in the gloss to the cups states, "Eran in questi nappi intagliate le xii fatiche d'Alcide, cioè d'Ercule; delle quali qui di due solamente fa menzione."[37] Rather than list every aspect of a character's mythography, Boccaccio lists only the most pertinent. Whereas confusion surrounding the material and graphic details limits those aspects of the prizes to participate in a connotative production of meaning, the lack of precision as to the content enhances its ability to participate in a rhetorical system of meaning. By providing incomplete

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response provoked by images, both in the *Teseida* and *Amorosa Visione*. While this may be true for other instances of ekphrasis in the *Teseida*, such as the descriptions of the temples of Mars and Venus in book seven and Arcita's funeral monument in book eleven, it does not seem to be the case for the prizes, the description of which does not refer to any emotional response either by employing *visibile parlare* or describing reactions of observers of the prizes. See Bartuschat, "Appunti sull'ecfrasi in Boccaccio," 79-88.

[36] See *Teseida*, 11.61.5-6.

[37] For the shield honoring Phoebus, Ibid. 11.63.6-7. For the cups depicting the labors of Hercules see gloss accompanying stanza sixty-five.

descriptions, the prizes become allusions to entire mythic traditions as opposed to single myths or works, and, as a result, their potential for connotative meaning is greatly expanded.

That Boccaccio underscores the rhetorical function of ekphrasis rather than its descriptive potential, sheds light on the role of the games within the narrative as well. Like the ekphrastic passages included in the sequence, the games sequence seems to constitute a pause in the main narrative (the marriage of Emilia). Although the games are integrated into the narrative in so far as they are prompted by Arcita's death (they are, after all, funeral games), they do not further the narrative in any meaningful way. If the games sequence were omitted, the narrative arc of the work would remain largely intact. Placed after the tournament, the *Teseida's* games are deprived of even the most basic function assigned to games in classical epic, providing a preview of war,[38] or foreshadowing to some extent the climax of the main narrative. Much in the same way he concludes the descriptions of so many of the prizes, Boccaccio concludes the narration of contests by stating, "molti altri ancor che con costor giucaro, li quali sarebbe lungo il raccontare."[39] This suggests that, like the prizes offered for the games, the games' primary function within the text is rhetorical: not only do they stage literal athletic competitions, but figurative philosophical and poetic competitions. That the games are minimally integrated into the narrative does not relegate them to a purely decorative role.[40] Rather, it shifts the emphasis to

[38] The funeral games of the *Thebaid* are specifically referred to as such at 6.3-4. Battles, *The Medieval Tradition of Thebes,* 76. Battles argues that Boccaccio's games retain their "proleptic function" relative to the Trojan conflict.
[39] Boccaccio, *Teseida,*11.67.1-2.
[40] Cf. Boitani. Though he doesn't include the games as an example, argues that, "everything which is not an organic part of the structure of the 'tale' finds its justification in its exoticism and in the pleasure of the audience behind it," although he also asserts that, "allegory and decoration cannot be separated in the *Teseida*." Boitani, *Chaucer and Boccaccio*, 12-13. As noted earlier, McGregor argues that the games are not, in fact, purely decorative, but does not connect the role of the games to the use of ekphrasis. McGregor, *Shades of Aeneas*, 85.

their connotative significance—that of ludic *agon*. The role of the games, then, is to frame poetic discourse against an agonistic backdrop while acknowledging funeral games as a traditional locus for poetic discourse. Indeed, the agonistic framework of the games matches the various levels of poetic competition that Boccaccio engages in: with other poets, with other art forms, and, finally, with contemporary critics of poets and poetry.

Let us now turn from the mode of description and material details of the prizes and consider the significance of the content they feature within the framework of the games. As I have noted, the relevance of the prizes' content has received some scholarly attention, all of which recognize the repeated emphasis on music and/or poetry among the scenes introduced into the text via the prizes. Johannes Bartuschat notes that by featuring artistic contests and activities on three of the four prizes (Minerva inventing the fistula and her weaving competition with Arachne on the horse coverings, Apollo's defeat of Marsyas on the shield, and Pan on the helmet) Boccaccio implicitly equates artistic accomplishment with more traditional heroic action (the labors of Hercules on the cups). Bartuschat's observation, while undeniably important, does not consider how the prizes relate to the competitors to whom they are awarded.[41]

The entire sequence's emphasis on music/poetry is undeniable. In addition to the scenes showing gods and goddesses playing musical instruments, many of the contestants featured in the games are linked to music or poetry either in the games sequence or earlier in the text. Castor, Pollux, and Evander, in addition to being perennial stars of the epic genre, all can be associated with music via the content on the shields they carry in book six.[42] Indeed, only two of

[41] Bartuschat, "Appunti sull'ecfrasi in Boccaccio", 83.
[42] Castor and Pollux's shield features the seduction of Leda by Jupiter, disguised as a swan. In the *Genealogia*, Boccaccio proposes two explanations for the form taken by Jupiter both of which reference the swan's song. The first interprets the swan as a metaphoric representation of seduction through music, since swans are particularly vociferous animals, the other is that Jupiter

the contestants, Sarpedon and Idas, cannot be connected with music or poetry beyond the fact that they are characters taken from classical epic. That poetic activity, poetic competition especially, features so prominently in the sequence acknowledges funeral games as a locus for poetic rivalry and underscores the *agon* inherent in poetic activity.

The manner in which Theseus and Admetus are connected to poetic activity is more complex than those mentioned above, and to their roles in the funeral games we now turn. Both Theseus and Admetus are associated in some manner with Phoebus/Apollo within the sequence (Theseus is awarded with a shield that features Phoebus and Admetus is aided by Phoebus in the *cesto).* Beyond linking Theseus and Admetus to poetic activity generally, I will argue that the Phoebus associated with Theseus represents the epic tradition and that the Phoebus associated with Admetus the elegiac through a series of inter- and intra-textual references.[43]

Theseus can be associated with music and poetry through the poem that bears his name, the *Teseida*. That Theseus is privileged among the contestants, and thus has a special function in the games sequence, is clear from the fact that he alone is mentioned in connection with the

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was old when he fell in love with Leda and swans are white and canorous (*canorus*) as they near death. If we accept the first explanation, Castor and Pollux owe their very existence to music. Evander's ancestral link to music is much more straightforward, as his shield features Mercury lulling to Argos to sleep with his lyre. For a description of Castor and Pollux's shield see *Teseida* VI.25. For an explanation of the rape of Leda, see *Genealogia* XI.vii. For citations from Books XI and XII of the *Genealogia*, See Giovanni Boccaccio, *Genealogie deorum gentilium*, ed. Vittorio Zaccharia (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editori S.P.A, 1998) 1090-1. For a description of Evander's shield see *Teseida* VI.38-9. Boccaccio notes in the *Genealogia* that Evander was said to be the child of Mercury due to his eloquence. See *Genealogia* XII.lxiii on p.1232-3 of Zaccharia edition.

[43]A. Limentani lists both traditions as ones which Boccaccio draws from in the *Teseida*. He also specifically identifies Arcita with the elegiac tradition, stating that his elegiac monologues throughout the work render him the most fully developed character of the work. See Limentani's introduction to the *Teseida* in *Tutte le Opere di Giovanni Boccaccio,* ed. Vittore Branca. See p. 233 for list of literary traditions identified by Limentani See p. 242 for Arcita as influenced by elegy.

wrestling match. Whereas the description of all other events includes two contestants, a winner and a loser (or two winners in the case of the *corso*), the wrestling match is the only event for which only the victor is named. One could argue that the anomaly is simply a nod to Theseus' reputation as a skilled wrestler, which the text references in book seven and again in the games sequence.[44] If this were true, however, Idas would have been the sole name mentioned for the *corso* and Pollux for the *cesto*.[45] Reputed skill alone does not account for Theseus's unique treatment in the games sequence.

Rather, because Theseus stands in metonymically for the work as a whole, by naming him alone in his event, Boccaccio calls attention to the singularity of his poetic achievement, the first poem to treat arms in the Italian vernacular.[46] Indeed, the shield awarded to Theseus features images that connotate poetic excellence:

> Ma poi nell'unta palestra Teseo
> per virtù propria meritò l'onore,
> però ch'al tempo suo me' ch'altro il feo,
> e ben lo seppe Elena; e per maggiore
> gloria li fece lì recare Egeo
> un bello scudo e di molto valore,
> nel qual vedeasi Marsia sonando,
> sé con Appollo nel sonar provando.
>
> Vedeasi appresso superar Fitone,
> e quindi sotto l'ombre graziose,
> sopra Parnaso, presso a l'Elicone
> fonte seder con le nove amorose
> Muse e cantar maestrevol canzone;
> e oltre a queste v'eran molte cose,

[44] In a gloss accompanying stanza four in Book seven, Boccaccio explains briefly that Theseus met Helen while still young in a wrestling match. In the games scene after announcing Theseus as the winner the narrator states, "però ch'al tempo suo me' ch'altro il feo, e ben lo seppe Elena." See Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 11.62.3-4.
[45] Idas's fame as a runner is mentioned at *Teseida*, XI.52-3. Pollux beats King Amycus in a boxing match during the voyage of the Argonauts, which Boccaccio mentions in the entry on Castor and Pollux in the *Genealogia*.
[46] Boccaccio, *Teseida* XII.84.6-8.

tutte in onor di Febo, con molto oro,
belle a vedere e care per lavoro.[47]

Then in the wrestling Theseus merited the honor for his virtue, since he was the best wrestler of his time, which Helen knew well. To add to his glory, Egeus had a precious shield brought there on which one saw Marsyas playing, challenging his own playing against Apollo.

One saw him overcoming Python, and then under the gracious shade on Parnassus, close to Helicon sitting with the nine lovely muses, and signing a masterful song, and besides this there were other things, all in honor of Apollo, with much gold, beautiful to see and of good workmanship.

Apollo engages in and wins a musical contest, and is shown singing ("cantar maestrevol canzone") while seated with the muses on Parnassus. As McGregor notes, the awarding of a historiated shield has precedent in the epic tradition (although not as part of the games sequences) and the presentation of the shield to Theseus clearly aligns him with Aeneas and epic heroism,[48] and, thus, metonymically, the poem with the epic tradition. As a representative of the work as a whole, Theseus's victory represents Boccaccio's triumphant foray into the epic genre, worthy of the recognition of Apollo and the muses.[49]

While Phoebus's role on Theseus's shield appears straightforward enough, his role in the games sequence as a whole is complicated by his second appearance, this time in association

[47] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 11.62-3.
[48] McGregor reads this association as "ironic" since he believes Theseus to be an antihero. Indeed, he believes the fact that he competes in the palestra in the funeral games serves to remind the reader of his failure to control the passions of the Thebans in the "giuoco a marte." McGregor does not consider Theseus as representative of the *Teseida*. McGregor, "Shades of Aeneas," 106
[49] Martinez notes, the awarding of prizes in the funeral games is part of Boccaccio's motif of poetic laureation in the *Teseida*. However, he does not consider the shield specifically nor its generic implications. Theseus is crowned twice in the earlier books, once for his victory over the Amazons and once for his victory over Creon. Both instances, argues Martinez, can be associated with Boccaccio's desire for poetic laureation. Martinez, "Before the *Teseida*," 206. See also Ginsburg, "Boccaccio's early Romances", 42n19.

with Admetus, which occurs only four lines after the conclusion of the shield's description. Like the other events, the narrative text mentions the contest itself only briefly:

> Poi al cesto giucando assai più degno
> Polluce si mostrò, che avanzato
> aveva Admeto, pien d'alto disdegno,
> da Phebo male in ogni cosa atato; [50]
>
> Then at boxing Pollux demonstrated more worth, since he defeated Admetus, full of disdain, poorly helped by Phoebus in every endeavor.

Although short, the reference to Phoebus is nevertheless consequential as it introduces multiple inter- and intra-textual allusions to the game sequence. The most obvious of these allusions is the intertext it creates with the funeral games for Opheltes in book six of the *Thebaid*. Admetus participates in the Statian games as a contestant in the chariot race, but ultimately loses to Amphiarus due to the intervention of Apollo on Amphiarus's behalf.[51] The Statian material, however, is not Boccaccio's only source for the Admetus/Apollo myth, as aspects of the myth's textual tradition not present in the *Thebaid* appear throughout the *Teseida*. In particular, Boccaccio borrows heavily from the myth's treatment in Roman elegy. As Frank Copley explains, two explanations for Apollo's servitude to Admetus are offered in classical literature. According to one, Apollo was sent by Jupiter as punishment for the murder of the cyclops. The other, likely familiar to Boccaccio via Roman elegy (especially Ovid) presents Apollo's servitude as voluntary, accepted as *servitium amoris*.[52] While Apollo certainly has a fondness for Admetus in the *Thebaid*, calling him *carus*, the romantic/erotic element is downplayed, since the

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[50] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 11.64.1-4.
[51] Statius, *Thebaid*, 6.491-512. Apollo's intervention in the chariot race is the model for Venus' intervention in the "giuoco a marte," as Anderson points out. Anderson, *Before the Knight's Tale*, 107.
[52] Frank Olin Copley, "Servitium amoris in the Roman Elegists," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 78, (1947): 286.

term also applies to Amphiarus, and Apollo states that his servitude was ordered by Jove.[53] Indeed, Statius appears to oppose the elegiac tradition in Apollo's denial that his servitude rendered him inferior to Admetus,[54] since the debasement that the servitude entails is a cornerstone of the elegiac presentation of the myth.[55] That Boccaccio was not only aware of this aspect of the myth, but identified it with erotic elegy is evidenced in his discussion of the tradition in *Genealogy* 14.[56] Within previous books of the *Teseida*, Boccaccio invokes the romantic aspect of the relationship that binds Apollo to Admetus.[57] The myth is first introduced in book four when Arcita appeals directly to Apollo for assistance as he returns to Athens to pursue Emilia disguised as a slave:

> Sì come te alcuna volta Amore
> costrinse il chiaro cielo abandonare
> e lungo Anfrisio, in forma di pastore,
> del grande Ameto a gli armenti guardare,
> così or me il possente signore
> qui in Attene ha fatto ritornare,
> contra 'l mandato che mi fé Teseo,
> allor ch'a Peritoo mi rendeo.[58]
>
> Just as sometimes Love compelled you to abandon the clear heaven to look after the herd of the great Admetus in the form of a shepherd along the Amphrysus, now the powerful lord has compelled me to return to Athens against the mandate Theseus made when he handed me over to Peritoo.

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[53] For the adjective carus, see *Thebaid*, 6.374. For Jove's command that Apollo serve Admetus, see Ibid. 6.376.
[54] *Ibid*. 6.377-8.
[55] Copley, "Servitium amoris in the Roman Elegists," 290-300.
[56] See *Genealogia,* 14.16. Boccaccio says regarding the elegists, "Magnis igitur, imo permaximis vacant redargutores nostri, non enim parvum est amori obsequi, cuius viribus primo Phebus, inde Alcides, monstrorum domitores, cessere!"
[57] Massimo Sanelli, "Fenomenologia di Amore e Stile Lirico nel *Teseida*," *Medioevo Romanzo* 20, (1996): 442. Kirkham considers the numerological significance of Arcita's invocations of Apollo as lover, but does not consider the generic implications. Victoria Kirkham, "Chiuso parlare," 337-8.
[58] Boccaccio, *Teseida* 4.46.

In his appeal to the god Arcita cites the god's weakness in the face of love much as the elegists did.[59] Like Apollo, Arcita is willing to endure the indignities of servitude despite noble birth in the interest of love. The gloss accompanying the line explains the myth referenced, although Boccaccio makes a conspicuous alteration: it is not Admetus himself, but his daughter, with whom Apollo is so enamored that he is willing to perform the *servitium amoris*. While this change removes the erotic element from the relationship between Admetus and Apollo it maintains a hierarchical, homosocial relationship in which Admetus has the power advantage as the possessor of what Apollo desires. Given this shift, it is appropriate that the next invocation of the myth in the narrative, again spoken by Arcita, occurs as he makes his final petitions to Theseus shortly before his death in book ten. Like the instance in book four, Arcita cites the myth in defense of his own behavior:

> Tanto mi diede ancor di pronto ardire,
> che sotto nome stran nelle tue mani
> mi misi, a rischio di dover morire;
> e certo a ciò non mi furon villani
> l'iddii, anzi facevan ben seguire
> i miei pensieri interi e tutti sani;
> né mi vergogno che in tuo onore
> io ti sia stato lungo servidore.
>
> Febo si fece servidor d'Ameto,
> mosso da quella medesma cagione
> che io mi mossi, e sì dolce e quieto
> servì, ch'egli ebbe la tua intenzione;
> e certo io il seguiva mansueto,
> se el non fosse stato Palemone;
> né dubito che ciò ch'io disiava
> m'avessi dato, s'io mi palesava.[60]

[59] As previously mentioned in note 43 in the current chapter, Limentani associates Arcita with the elegiac tradition. However, he does not specifically trace the association of Arcita with the Apollo/Admetus myth.
[60] *Teseida*, 10.24-5.

> Love filled me with such immediate burning that under a strange name I placed myself in your hands, at the risk of death. In that the gods were not unfavorable to me, indeed they allowed things to follow my intention completely and safely. Nor am I ashamed that I long served as servant in your honor.
>
> Phoebus made himself servant of Admetus, moved by the same reason that I moved myself, and he served so sweetly and calmly that he fulfilled his intention; and certainly I would have continued gently, if Palemone weren't around; nor do I doubt that you would have given me what I desired if I disclosed myself.

Like the Roman elegists, Arcita proclaims that he was unashamed of the servile role he adopted and endured on account of love precisely because he was following the example set by Apollo when he entered the service of Admetus. Arcita follows the elegiac model of citing Apollo as an *exemplum* of love's power, the influence of which prompts men to act in a manner that would otherwise be deemed inappropriate.

One must keep the elegiac presentation of the myth in the previous books in mind when approaching the final reference to the myth in book eleven. Whereas the reference to the myth in the *Thebaid* games scene illustrates the power of fate and the gods to control the actions of men, and the powerlessness of men in face of inexorable divine forces, the elegiac treatment of the myth speaks instead to the weakness of the divine Apollo against the forces of Love and the humiliation he endured under love's influence. Given the elegiac treatment of the myth elsewhere in the *Teseida*, the failed intercession of Phoebus on Admetus' behalf in the *Teseida* games sequence can be read as a commentary on erotic elegy and the exempla it provides. The fact that the "help" Apollo offers Admetus in the *cesto* is ineffective, if not detrimental, reminds readers that obsession beyond reason is ultimately unproductive, if not destructive, as is the

poetry which promotes or enables such passion.[61] This moralizing reading aligns with the epitaph on Arcita's funeral monument, which cautions against succumbing to Love.[62]

Independent of moral considerations, contemporary literary theory supports the inferior position of elegy, erotic or otherwise, as elegy was considered by many medieval theorists to occupy the lowest level on a generic hierarchy in terms of style. In the *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, for instance, Dante defines the elegiac style broadly as "that of the miserable", and notes that one writing elegy should avail himself of only of the humble style. Tragedy, on the other hand, exemplified by the *Aeneid*, required lofty diction and comedy either a lofty or humble diction.[63] Both the broad scope of elegy, expanding beyond, but certainly including erotic elegy, and the association of elegy with a lowly style were established traditions, and Dante is hardly being provocative in the classificatory scheme of the *De vulgari eloquentia*.[64] By including a reference

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[61] This reading aligns with Boccaccio's treatment of erotic elegy in the *Genealogia*, where Boccaccio makes reference specifically to the *servitium amoris* tradition as employed by the elegists in book fourteen. Here, he refers to the elegists' homage to love, "whose power first overcame Phoebus then Hercules," as a lure which attracts the ignorant and unscrupulous reader and encourages indecent behavior. Boccaccio *Genealogia deorum gentilium*, 14.16. Clearly Boccaccio associated the *servitium amoris* with the elegiac tradition popularized by Ovid, Catullus, and Propertius. Translations of material from books fourteen of the *Genealogia* are Charles G. Osgood's. Giovanni, Boccaccio and Charles Grosvenor Osgood, *Boccaccio on poetry; being the preface and the fourteenth and fifteenth books of Boccaccio's Genealogia deorum gentilium in an English version with introductory essay and commentary* (New York : Liberal Arts Press, 1956), 77. Some may argue that the disdain for erotic elegy Boccaccio displays in the *Genealogia* was only adopted later in his career, as many of his early works seem to adopt and celebrate elegiac components. Robert Hollander, however, argues that Boccaccio's early works, including the *Teseida*, are in fact be denunciations of the elegiac ethos. Hollander argues that the elegiac components of Boccaccio's early works are to be taken ironically as an attack on the literary tradition which Hollander refers to as the "religion of love". For Hollander's general argument, see Robert Hollander, *Boccaccio's Two Venuses* 1-3. For Hollander's reading of the *Teseida* specifically, see *ibid*. 53-65.

[62] *Teseida*, 11.91. The final line of the stanza reads, "dunque ti gaurda da amore."

[63] Dante, *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, 2.4.5-6.

[64] For the treatment of elegy by medieval theorists see Pier Vincenzo Mengaldo, "l'elegia 'umile' (De vulgari eloquentia, II, iv, 5-6)" *Giornale Storico della letteratura Italiana* 143,

to the *servitium amoris*, an elegiac tradition *par excellence*, into the games scene, Boccaccio underscores elegy's inferior position relative to other traditions, since its representative is not only defeated in his event, but Phoebus associated with elegy is clearly inferior to that associated with epic (Theseus).

One cannot help to contrast the impotent Phoebus that appears in connection to Admetus with the description of the shield given to Theseus for winning the wrestling match. Indeed, the proximity of the two appearances suggests that such juxtaposition is intentional. Unlike the Phoebus whose aid to Admetus was futile, the Phoebus honored on the shield is unmistakably divine. Triumph, especially poetic triumph, is at the heart of the depictions of Apollo on the shield, and supports the argument that the text's juxtaposition of the mythic traditions associated with Apollo have stylistic as well as moral implications. In associating the triumphant Phoebus with Theseus via the epic motif of a historiated shield, and the impotent Phoebus with Admetus, his elegiac lover, Boccaccio promotes his poem as one in which epic values of order, virtue, and duty are celebrated and triumphant over the subversive values of erotic elegy. Indeed, as Bruno Porcelli notes, Theseus is the best representative of the "virtus rationalis" among the poem's characters,[65] a virtue which, Porcelli claims, "è assai simile a quella *directio voluntatis* che per il Dante del *De vulgari eloquentia* costituiva il terzo dei magnalia propri della poesia di stile tragico."[66] By associating the triumphant Apollo with Theseus, representative of virtue, and the

(1966): passim., and Maggie Fritz-Morkin, "Dante's Blood Elegies," *Dante Studies* 135, (2017): 107-114.

[65]Bruno Porcelli, "Il *Teseida* del Boccaccio fra la *Tebaide* e *The Knight's Tale*," 62.

[66] Ibid., 62-3.

Admetus with the impotent Phoebus, whose passion Arcita often invoked, Boccaccio identifies his poem as one in which virtue is promoted over the impotent generic strand of elegy.[67]

That the two appearances of Apollo in the *Teseida* funeral games are meant to be read in opposition to each other is further supported by the fact that both appear to be inspired by the same passage in the *Thebaid*. As noted earlier, the *Thebaid* serves as the clear intertextual source for Apollo's intervention on behalf of Admetus in the funeral games, and the elegiac implications of the myth in the *Teseida* are supplied through intra-textual passages. Indeed, stanza sixty-three, which continues the description of the shield awarded to Theseus, quoted in full above, echoes the first lines of the description of the god just before his intervention in the Statian games:

> Interea cantu Musarum nobile mulcens
> concilium citharaeque manus insertus Apollo
> Parnasi summo spectabat ab aethere terras.
> * * * * *
> orsa deo, nam saepe Iovem Phlegramque suique
> anguis opus fratrumque pius cantarat honores.
>
> Meanwhile Apollo was soothing the noble company of the Muses with his song, and with hands upon his lyre watched the earth from Parnassus' ethereal summit. * * *—for often had he piously sung of Jupiter and Phlegra and the serpent, his own achievement, and the praises of his brothers.[68]

Although the Statian description of Apollo continues to include details not mentioned by Boccaccio, and Apollo seated on Parnassus with the muses is common enough not to amount to an intertext in and of itself, the descriptions have in common the detail about Apollo's defeat of

[67] Cf. Porcelli, 63, "nasce, pertanto, la convinzione che il Boccaccio abbia voluto trattare nel *Teseida* non uno soltanto (secondo quanto egli dichiara) ma tutti i tre magnalia danteschi, disponendoli, per di più, secondo una graduatoria che stabilisce la superiorità dell'amore rispetto alla guerra, e della giustizia rispetto agli altri due." Porcelli does not, however, consider how this is dramatized in the funeral games.
[68] Statius, *Thebaid*, 6.355-9.

the serpent and both feature Apollo in the musical act. Furthermore, the passages contain similar syntactical structures. In both passages, the poetic activity contained in the first sentence, which describes the scene on Parnassus, is expressed in subordinate clauses, with the main verbs being those of seeing (*spectabat* and *vedeasi*). Whereas Apollo views the games from the summit of Parnassus in the Statian passage, it is the reader who is asked to view Apollo in the *Teseida's* passage. Whereas the Statian passages features Apollo actively singing the "honores fratrum" in the second sentence, the representational action of the *Teseida* passage is performed by the artist/poet, who depicts scenes "tutto in onor di Febo" on Theseus's shield. Together with the fact that both passages appear within the context of their respective works' funeral games scene, these commonalities suggest an intentional intertext. Significantly, Apollo's song is complete and his lyre retired when he spies the funeral games about to take place on the Nemean plane:

> finis erat, differt avidas audire Sorores,
> dumque chelyn lauro textumque illustre coronae
> subligat et picto discingit pectora limbo,
> haud procul Herculeam Nemeen clamore reductus
> aspicit atque illic ingens certaminis instar quadriiugi.
>
> It was over, and he puts off the Sisters eager to listen. While he binds the lyre and the bright fabric of his garland to a laurel bush and ungirds his breast of the embroidered cincture, not far away, drawn by the cheering, he sees Hercules' Nemea and there the vast semblance of a chariot race.[69]

His intervention in the chariot race then, which is beneficial to Amphiarus and detrimental to Admetus, is not associated with the poetic act. By depicting Apollo on the shield in the poetic act, Boccaccio underscores the prestige of his poetic endeavor, and denies the same poetic prestige to erotic elegy represented by his intervention the games.

[69] See Statius, *Thebaid* 6.365-70.

Furthermore, by literally re-presenting the poetic action of Statian Apollo on the shield presented to Theseus, Boccaccio identifies his own poem as a continuation of the poetic action inaugurated by Statius, one worthy of poetic prestige conferred by epic. Whereas the games in the *Thebaid* interrupt Apollo's poetic activity and foreshadow the bloody conflict to come, those of the *Teseida* mark the resolution of conflict and return to peace in Theseus's Athens that will culminate in the marriage of Palemone and Emilia in book twelve. Thus, the *Teseida's* games, together with the *Thebaid's* games effectively bookend the conflict initiated in the *Thebaid* and subsequent conflict that forms the main narrative of the *Teseida*. In featuring Apollo's poetic activity on the prize awarded to Theseus Boccaccio unites poetic and ludic activity, which Statius had implicitly distinguished in his treatment of Apollo's intervention. In uniting the poetic with the ludic, Boccaccio underscores the agonistic component of poetic activity, while simultaneously crowning his own poetic action as the victor in a crowded field.

The final prize described explicitly by the narrator, is a helmet featuring Pan awarded to Evander. Of all the prizes, the description of the helmet features the most iconographic detail, as the narrator notes that pan is depicted, "in quella vera forma che gli danno gli Arcadi allor che figurar lo fanno." Although it requires familiarity on the part of the reader with iconographic tradition of Pan, it nevertheless provides more detail about the image than any of the previous descriptions, which privilege narrative action, but offer little iconographic description. Paradoxically, the most profound discussion of poetic creation and its position relative to Nature, is introduced in the work via the iconography of Pan and his pursuit of Syrinx.

The relationship between poetry and nature and poet and nature is one that Boccaccio explores in the *Genealogia*. In his defense of poetry in book fourteen Boccaccio asserts that poets are not the apes of philosophers, but rather the apes of nature. H.W. Janson points out that

Boccaccio's use of ape imagery significantly alters the meaning of the metaphor and reflects a more positive view on the mimetic relationship between art, specifically poetry, and nature than earlier uses of ape imagery, which were typically disparaging. Rather than derivative, art, and the imitation it entails, is cast in a positive light as a by-product of nature, since the artist, like the ape, by nature is predisposed to imitation.[70] Indeed, Boccaccio positively links nature and poetry in more ways than one in the *Genealogia*. Not only is there a strong mimetic link in terms of poetry's content,[71] but natural settings are identified as ideal for the conception of poetry as it allows for the contemplation necessary for the creative process.[72] As Janson notes, "Boccaccio makes it plain that an artist becomes an ape of nature not merely by the outward imitation realistic detail but by a kind of fundamental allegiance to nature as his source of inspiration."[73] While Boccaccio claims he would accept the charge that poets are the "apes of nature" (as opposed to the anticipated charge that they are the "apes of philosophers"), his own definition of poetry suggests that Boccaccio did not regard poetry or poets as mere imitators, but rather as divinely inspired creators in their own right. Boccaccio defines poetry in the *Genealogia* as, "…fervor quidam exquisite inveniendi atque dicendi, seu scribendi quod inveneris. Qui, ex sinu Dei procedens, paucis mentibus, ut arbitror, in creatione conceditur, ex quo, quoniam mirabilis sit, rarissimi semper fuere poete."[74] Although he clarifies that a poet must be pre-disposed toward poetry by divine inspiration and god-given talent, his conception of poetry as the creation

[70] Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore,* 287-93.
[71] *Genealogia* XIV.XVII.5, where Boccaccio writes that poets describe in their verses the very workings of nature.1469.
[72] *Ibid.* XIV.XI.4.1424-5.
[73] Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore*, 293.
[74] *Ibid*. 14.7.1. 1398-9.

of the poet, and invention of the poet's mind, assigns the poet with a considerable amount of creative agency.

Let us now return to the helmet emblazoned with Pan. Whereas the other prizes are accompanied by glosses that provide additional details about the myths depicted on them, that accompanying the helmet is incomplete. Fortunately, Boccaccio devotes a relatively lengthy exposition to the Pan/Syrinx myth in the *Genealogia* and his summary of the myth in the *Geneologia* might provide some hints as to what may have been included in the accompanying gloss had it been completed:

> De quo talem Theodontius recitat fabulam. Dicit enim eum verbis irritasse Cupidinem et inito cum eo certamine superatum, et victoris iussu Syringam nynpham Arcadem adamasse, que cum satyros ante lusisset, eius etiam sprevit coniugium. Pan autem cum illam urgente Amore fugientem sequeretur, contigit ut ipsa a Ladone fluvio impedita consisteret, et nynpharum auxilium precibus imploraret, quarum opere factum est ut in palustres calamos verteretur. Quos cum Pan motu ventorum sensisset, dum invicem colliderentur, esse canoros, tam affectione puelle a se dilecte quam delectatione soni permotus, calamos libens assumpsit, et ex eis semptem disparibus factis fistulam, ut aiunt, composuit, eaque primus cecinit, ut etiam testari videtur Virgilius...
>
> Theodontius tells the following tale about him. He says that Pan spoke words that angered Cupid, engaged him in a contest, and lost, and that the victorious Cupid commanded him to fall deeply in love with the Arcadian nymph Syrinx, who, although in the habit of teasing satyrs, spurned his advances. With Love urging him on, however, Pan pursued the fleeing nymph, who had to halt when she reached the river Ladon, implored with prayers the nymphs for their assistance, and was turned with their help into swamp reeds. When Pan noticed that the motion of the wind caused these to collide with one another and make melodious sounds, moved as much by his affection for the girl as by his delight in the sound, he merrily collected the reeds and from them, as they say, made a pipe of seven unequal lengths. He was the first to make music with this, as Vergil also bears witness...[75]

Of course, we cannot know precisely what Boccaccio intended to include in his gloss to the *Teseida*, and therefore any observations made based on the above summary can be only

[75] *Genealogia deorum gentilium* I.IV. For earlier books of the *Genealogia*, I am using Jon Solomon's translation. See Giovanni Boccaccio, *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods*, ed. Jon Solomon (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2011, 56-7.

speculative at best. One must be cautious too, since earlier glosses do not correspond with the explanations given in the *Genealogia*, which was completed decades after the completion of the *Teseida*.[76] It seems unlikely, however, that background information on the myth alluded to by the image on prize, such as what we find in the *Genealogia*, would not be included, since that is precisely the information included in the glosses that are present, and the mythic tradition of Pan is much less complex than that of Apollo or Minerva, where the greatest inconsistencies exist between the *Teseida* and the *Genealogia*. In any case, we can proceed with confidence that the text does in fact allude to the myth summarized above, since Pan is described in the text as "sonando." At the very least, then, the Syrinx myth is referenced by the pipe in which the pursuit resulted. Therefore, while the details of the myth that might have been mentioned in a gloss are debatable, that the text alludes to the Syrinx myth is not. The suitability of the myth is evident from the summary above as it shares several elements in common with the other mythic tales featured on previous prizes – there is explicit competition, and Pan, like Minerva, is said to be the first to play a new instrument.[77] Thus, Boccaccio's first and last prize of the sequence feature poetic inventors. The emphasis on poetic invention on the prizes, of course, reflects Boccaccio's own aspirations for the *Teseida* as a whole, that is, to be the first to write epic in the vulgar

[76] As Solomon explains in his introduction to the *Genealogia*, Boccaccio worked on the *Genealogia* over the course of several decades, constantly revising and editing entries to accommodate new information. It is unclear when Boccaccio began writing, but his interest in the topic was sparked at an early age, during his stay at Kings Robert's court in Naples. See Giovanni Boccaccio, *Genealogy of the Pagan Gods*, ed. Jon Solomon, viii-xiii.

[77] McGregor notes that Minerva is identified as the inventor of both the fistula and weaving on the horse coverings. See McGregor, *Shades of Aeneas*, 87-8. He notes that Pan, "combines the musical traits of Apollo and Minerva and is also associated with the woods in a way that might relate him to Hercules." McGregor, *Shades of Aeneas*, 109. McGregor suggests Pan is another figure who "exerts self-control" through song. In a footnote, he suggests Pan may be a Christ figure. McGregor does not consider Boccaccio's own allegoresis of the myth in the *Genealogia*. McGregor, Shades of Aeneas, 110, 129n8.

tongue. More generally, though, it reflects Boccaccio's conception of poetry as an invention of the poet's mind, following an act of divine inspiration. As Boccaccio goes on to explain in the *Genealogia*, he reads the myth of syrinx and Pan as an allegory for the process of artistic invention:

> Syringam autem lusisse satiros et Pana fugientem, atque a Ladone moratam et ninpharum suffragio in calamum versam, circa nostros cantus iudicio meo aliquid bone considerationis abscondit. Hec enim spretis satyris, id est ingeniis rudibus, fugit Pana, id est hominem natura aptem natum ad musicalia; nec equidem actu fugit sed existimatione cupientis cui in dilatione videtur cessari quod optat. Hec tunc a Ladone sistitur donec instrumentum ad emictendam meditationem perficitur…ex quo sumere debemus, uti calamorum radix terre infixa est, sic et meditatio musice artis et compertus exinde cantus tam diu latet in pectore inventoris, donec emictendi prestetur organum…
>
> As for Syrinx sporting with satyrs and fleeing Pan, as well as being delayed by the Ladon and turned into a reed with the approval of the nymphs, I think these seem to hide something of great interest about our songs. For, spurning the satyrs, that is, unrefined instincts, she flees Pan, that is, man who is by nature fit for making music, and she does not flee in reality but in the belief of the one who is desirous, to whom a delay means that the object of one's desires seems to be slipping away. Then she is stopped by the Ladon until the instrument producing the contemplated music was finished...From this we should posit that the root of the reeds was fixed in the earth just as the contemplation of the musical art and then the song found later resided for a while in the heart of the inventor until the instrument of release presented itself...[78]

Syrinx is the song as conceived by the musician, and only after the proper instrument presents itself can the conceptual song be realized and produced. While Boccaccio speaks of specifically musical composition in the passage above, given the intimate connection between music and poetry, it does not seem unreasonable to conflate musical and poetic discourse. Indeed, Boccaccio highlights early poetry's proximity to music, such as its incorporation of meter and rhythm in his explanation of poetry's origins.[79]

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[78] *Ibid*. I.iv.

[79] See XIV.VII. and XIV.VIII. Although Boccaccio uses the broader term *carmen*, as opposed to *cantus*, in the *Genealogia*, he nevertheless speaks of regulated time and sonority when referring to early poetry, underlining the similarities between musical and poetic arts. Nam primi, qui, hoc inflati spiritu, exquisite rudi adhuc seculo cepere loqui, ut puta carmine, tunc omnino loquendi

The interpretation of the myth quoted above is in fact the second interpretation Boccaccio offers. After the summary of the myth, Boccaccio begins his exposition of the myth as follows:

> Et quoniam supra Pana naturam naturatam esse dicta est, quid sibi voluerint fingentes eum a Cupidine superatum, facile reor videri potest. Nam quam cito ab ipso Creatore natura producta est, evestigio cepit operari, et suo delectata opere, illud cepit amare, et sic a delectione irritat amori succubuit.
>
> Because we said earlier that Pan was created nature, I think we can easily understand what they intended to mean by the fiction that he was conquered by Cupid, for as soon as nature was produced by the Creator himself, it immediately began its work and, delighting in that work, fell in love with it, and so, stirred by its delight, succumbed to love.[80]

This initial interpretation foregrounds, like the subsequent one, the desire and pursuit at the core of creative processes. However, in this interpretation, Pan stands in not for a poet, but Nature. According to the *Genealogia*, then, the Pan/Syrinx myth allegorically signifies both natural and poetic creation when taken as a whole. By uniting the processes in one iconographic image, Boccaccio characterizes the relationship between musical and poetic composition to natural creation not as mimetic, but rather as corresponding processes. Like Nature, the poet/musician receives inspiration directly from god, and, desirous to pursue the inspiration creates unique and new material. The poet/musician, therefore, is an inventor in so much as nature is.

Assuming that Boccaccio's understanding of the myth at the time of writing the *Teseida* was similar to that expounded in the *Genealogia*, one can understand Pan's image, then, as an icon of both natural and poetic creativity and invention. In representing both processes in a single

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genus incognitum, ut sonorum auribus audientium etiam videretur, illud pensatis moderavere temporibus, et, ne delectationem nimia brevitate subtraheret, aut longitudine plurima luxurians tedium videretur inferre, certis mensuratum regulis atque infra diffinitum pedum et sillabarum numerum coercuere. *Cf*. Ex quibus aliqui, pauci tamen, quos interfuisse creduntur Museus, Lynus, et Orpheus, quadam divine mentis instigatione conmoti, carmina peregrina mensuris et temporibus regulata finxere et in dei laudem invenere.

[80] Boccacio, *Genealogia* 1.4.

image, Boccaccio highlights the intimate connection of artistic invention with created nature, and suggests that the two processes exist on an equal plane rather than in a hierarchical relationship.

With the final prize, then, Boccaccio takes on poetry's greatest contest, the charge that poets and poetry are poor imitations of nature. This culminates a series of poetic contests which progressively increase in scope, beginning with competition between verbal and visual forms of representation, expressed through the emphatic use of ekphrasis, generic competition expressed through inter- and intra-textual references and finally ending with the competition between poetic invention and Nature. In so doing, Boccaccio not only retains but capitalizes on the function of funeral games as a *locus* for poetic *agon*, despite limiting description of the athletic contests which formed the bulk of the narrative in classical games sequences. Boccaccio's poetic *agon* is not limited to the content represented on the prizes, but extends to the very poetics of ekphrasis that dominate the games sequence by which Boccaccio asserts the superiority of verbal, poetic representation over visual representation. Furthermore, the significance of Phoebus' appearance on the shield given to Theseus can only be fully appreciated when considered along with the reference to his intervention in the action on Admetus' behalf. For, by itself, the appearance of Apollo on the heroic emblem of the shield functions as an instance of poetic laureation as it asserts Theseus' preeminence as an epic hero, and thus the *Teseida's* preeminence as an epic poem. However, when taken together with the reference to Phoebus' ineffective intervention on behalf of his elegiac lover, the appearance of Apollo on the shield articulates the result of the generic agon internal to the poem between heroic order and elegiac subversion, wherein heroic order ultimately triumphs. The games serve not only as a response to the death of Arcita, but as a metaphor for poetic competition, which Boccaccio engages in via the

content featured on the historiated prizes, the poetics of ekphrasis, and the narrative details of the events themselves.

Coda: Rules Made to be Broken?

To conclude, let us take a step back from the *Teseida's* representation of games and consider briefly how the *Teseida* itself is a "move" in a broader poetic game. In the introduction, I noted that among the similarities between sports, games, and literature, is the fact that they are all rule-bound activities. In chapter two, I demonstrated how the poetics of the "giuoco a marte" reflect the rules imposed on the game by Theseus. In his representation games, Boccaccio appears to be keenly aware of the importance of rules to game play. If Boccaccio is also keenly aware of his own participation in a literary game how are we to understand Boccaccio's application of the rules in the game which he plays as poet? To answer this question, let us briefly consider how rules function in both games and literature, and how Boccaccio's play articulates his relationship to those rules.

John Leyerle has explored how rules supply the form that allows both games and literature to be at once playful and serious endeavors:

> In playing a literary game the author freely selects elements from ordinary experience, characterized by randomness, and imposes patterns on it as he uses the elements to form the order of his text. This order arises from the rules that limit and define the game by giving it form, the serious aspect of play. Form is serious because it imposes order on undifferentiated, random experience, the process that is generally thought of as creation and characterized by joy in the performance...any activity that imposes form is serious and is characterized by joy; the combination is generally called play in the doing and game in the formal result. Like music, literature is play and a theory of its structure based on game rules is no more than a recognition of a basic aspect of the creative act of writing; it is playful in its inventive freedom and serious in its formal order.[1]

[1] John Leyerle, "The Game and Play of the Hero," in *Concepts of the hero in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance : papers of the fourth and fifth annual conferences of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, State University of New York at Binghamton, 2-3 May 1970, 1-2 May 1971*, eds. Norman T. Burns and Christopher J. Reagan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), 75-6.

Leyerle's musings about games and literature are inspired by the representation of games in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. According to Leyerle, the literary game has multiple paradigms (the game of the hero, the game of the pilgrim, the game of courtly love), each with its own set of rules.[2] However, Leyerle suggests that the rules in these literary games "would be empirically based because they are found in the texts, not imposed on them."[3] Furthermore, Leyerle suggests that, "the rules are rarely codified, but arise from usage and are conventional; as a result of this flexibility, changes flow readily."[4]

However, it is this very flexibility of the rules which, according to Steven Connor, distinguishes conceptual art from sports and games.[5] For, as Connor points out, in games and play "playing is the willing but unnecessary subjection to necessity. You can live without obeying the law without ceasing to be alive, but if you do not play by the rules, you are not playing in a special, more flexible or creative way. You are not playing at all."[6] Conceptual art, on the other hand, "typically makes rules for itself."[7] Because of the flexibility of the rules and their application in the arts, an artist can't win or lose like a sportsman can—that is, in a way dictated by steadfast rules voluntarily adopted. Only in certain situations "which voluntarily and genuinely subject themselves to some form of game-structure" can the artist win or lose, and thus be analogous to the sportsman.[8] I suggested that the *Teseida* is itself a locus of generic play, in which Boccaccio pushes up against the limits of the rules established for the various genres which he blends and juxtaposes in the work. The poem is the site of play in more ways than one,

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[2] Ibid., 68-74.
[3] Ibid., 74
[4] Ibid., 75.
[5] Connor, *A Philosophy of Sport*, 147.
[6] Ibid., 146.
[7] Ibid., 147.
[8] Ibid.

however. For, it is also Boccaccio's "move" in both the synchronic and diachronic competition among poets vying for poetic glory, which is reflected in the poem's repeated references to laureation, such as the laureation of Theseus following his victory over Creon in book two.[9] That one conspicuous variation on the theme of laureation occurs during the funeral games (the shield awarded to Theseus) underscores the nexus between poetic composition and games as inherently agonistic activities that can be won according to rules voluntarily adopted. However, given Boccaccio's tendency to subvert generic expectations throughout the text, it also invites the reader to question the appropriateness of the game/literature analogy, especially concerning the role that rules and norms play in games and (poetic) art. To what extent do the constitutive rules of sports and games allow for the flexibility allowed by the rules governing poetic play as theorized by Leyerle without ceasing to be a game? Or, conversely, how do the norms of poetry allow for flexibility while still functioning as rules that "limit and define" poetic form as a game? How does Boccaccio's relationship to those rules characterize him as a player of a game? Is he not, by manipulating the generic norms, perverting the game, rather than playing it seriously? I would argue, that, to the contrary, Boccaccio's manipulation of the rules in this instance does not threaten play, but rather generates play and prolongs the game, keeping it from getting dull. Thus, to conclude, it seems appropriate to consider briefly how the rules structure game play, and the how the player relates to those rules in order to understand how a writer can bend them without breaking them in a manner that is generative of, rather than antithetical to, game play.

Indeed, the rules are central to Bernard Suits' definition of game play, as an "attempt to achieve a specific state of affairs [prelusory goal] using only means permitted by the rules

[9] Boccaccio, *Teseida*, 2.95. For Laureation in the *Teseida*, see Martinez, "Before the *Teseida*" 206.

[lusory means] where the rules prohibit use of more efficient in favor of less efficient means [constitutive rules] and where the rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity [lusory attitude]."[10] Because the rules of a game constitute the game itself, to break the constitutive rules of the game means to cease playing that game, and thus precludes the possibility of victory in that game. One may take home the trophy as a result of cheating or lying, explains Suits, but one cannot truly win a game that one isn't playing in the first place.[11] In order to grasp how poetry is analogous to a game despite the flexibility of the rules governing poetic form, we must return to Connor, who also notes that, in addition to the constitutive rules that structure and differentiate individual games (football vs. rugby, for example), in sports and games there is an additional, implicit rule that one take the game seriously and play to win. As Connor explains, this unarticulated stipulation is indeed the condition under which the rules of the game become implacable. To not do so, according to Connor, would be a form of cheating.[12]

Helpful here is Bernard Suits' distinction between the player, the trifler, and the cheat, and how each relates to the rules and ends of a game. A trifler, according to Suits, is a quasi-player, who conforms to the rules of the game, but whose moves, though all legal, are not directed at winning as defined by the rules. He gives the example of a chess player who makes chess moves, not in order to check-mate his opponent, but rather to get a certain number of his own pieces to the other side of the board, for instance.[13] In this instance, the trifler is not playing chess because of a "deficiency of zeal in seeking to achieve the prelusory goal of chess."[14] The cheat, on the other hand, suffers from an excess of desire for the prelusory goal, in so far as s/he

[10] Suits, *The Grasshopper*, 41.
[11] Ibid., 24.
[12] Connor, A Philosophy of Sport, 172.
[13] Suits, *The Grasshopper,* 45-6.
[14] Ibid., 46.

is willing to break the rules of the game to achieve it. Suits explains that, "triflers recognize the rules but not the goals, cheats recognize goals but not rules, players recognize both rules and goals, and spoilsports recognize neither rules nor goals."[15] Like the trifler, the cheat, despite his/her disregard for the rules, operate within the "institution" of the game, for they "violate the rules in their prescriptive application only because of his expectation that they will be observed in their descriptive application."[16] Someone conforming to all of the constitutive rules of the game, but not playing to win or not playing seriously would be a trifler, then, not a cheat, since cheats break the rules in an attempt to (fraudulently) claim victory. Connor notes, however, that the player, if he is truly a player who takes the game seriously, occupies a paradoxical position:

> ...the injunction to take sports seriously implies the requirement to abide by the rules. And yet...a feature of sports is that the rules constitute constraints against which the players must contend. Implicit in this, if it is combined with the injunction to play the sport seriously—that is, to play it to win—is the tendency for players to push right up to the edge of what the rules will allow...Often, too, the struggle with the rules will generate new forms of strategy, which have not been explicitly proscribed up to that point, but may seem to require to be curbed or forbidden thereafter. The tendency of honest play, then, which not only observes the explicit prohibitions, but also keeps faith with the implicit imperative to play seriously, is paradoxically to push the player toward infringement. The very word 'infringement' suggests that the effect of the pressure to play seriously and to try one's best will be to encourage players to take risks with the rules—not flagrantly to ignore them, but to push them to their limits, to go to their edges.[17]

The line between taking risk with the rules in order to identify the freedom they afford, to play seriously, and breaking the rules in such a manner that one can no longer said to be playing at all, then, is a fine one indeed. However, Connor notes that they are indeed different. He explains, "whereas playing honestly resists and takes risks with the rules, and seeks advantage by finding ways to succeed within what the rules permit, or do not explicitly proscribe, cheating gains

[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid., 47.
[17] Connor, *A Philosophy of Sport*, 177.

advantage from the expectation of other players following the rules."[18] The player, then, works from within the space outlined by the rules, whereas the cheat only appears to. It is in this sense, that Connor is correct to say the cheat "plays at playing" not because he doesn't play to win in the sense that he is not interested in victory, but that he doesn't play to win in the sense that, in breaking the rules he is not playing at all, but only appears to be doing so.[19] Nevertheless, this paradox demonstrates that even the "implacable" rules of sports and games leave room for the flexibility afforded by poetic norms.

This tension between freedom and confinement defined by the rules can be also be understood in terms of the difference between constitutive rules and rules of skill according to Suits' definitions. Filip Kobiela explains, "In contrast to the proscriptive nature of constitutive rules, the rules of skill are instructions in suggesting the most efficient way of achieving a prelusory goal. Games are paradoxical since they are governed by both the principle of efficiency and inefficiency."[20] If we think of the constitutive rules as boundaries which allow for a circumscribed area of freedom which must be exploited to achieve a game's lusory goal (winning), then one who masters the rules of skill are always creating tension with the constitutive rules by experimenting with the freedom they allow. It is at this point of tension, I would like to suggest, that Boccaccio operates in his employment of the rules of genre within the *Teseida*. For, his composition would not be comprehensible if it weren't for his acknowledgement of the rules of epic, romance, elegy, and the various other genres he draws

[18] Ibid., 178.
[19] Connor suggests that the cheat "plays at playing" on p.172. On p. 178 he notes that, "all play involves the occasional infringement of rules, but only cheating involves the simulation of play itself."
[20] Filip Kobiela, "The Ludic Background of Constitutive Rules in Bernard Suits," *Argumenta* 4, no. 1 (2018): 129.

from in the composition of the *Teseida*. Thus, rather than exempting himself from the rules as does a cheat, Boccaccio resists the rules of generic form by taking risks with the rules and seeking new ways to succeed within them. Indeed, his success as a poet depends precisely on the visibility of his generic manipulations. Boccaccio, then, does not break the rules, as a cheat would, but explores the space that the constitutive rules of poetry leave open, pushing against those constitutive rules to expand the possibilities which they encompass. If he were not to do so, indeed, he wouldn't really be playing the game to which they give form, but would rather be only a trifler at the game of poetry. Let us take, for example, the funeral games discussed in the final chapter of this study. Including them in the work is an attempt to conform to the formal requirements of epic, as many scholars have noted. However, in the playing out of this formal requirement, Boccaccio, as I have argued, both maintains one of the functions of funeral games in classical epic, the site of poetic competition, and apparently deviates from the means used to achieve this state of affairs. Rather than supply *agon* through a narrative of the athletic competitions themselves, ekphrastic description supplies the requisite *agon* of Boccaccio's games sequence. Thus, his games sequence fulfill the formal requirements of epic, but in a manner that had not yet been exploited to the extent it is in the *Teseida*. While both Virgil and Statius had included ekphrasis in their games sequences, it had not been used as a substitute for athletic action. Nevertheless, their use of ekphrasis in their games scenes authorizes the practice as one located within the constitutive rules of epic funeral games and provides the visibility necessary to see Boccaccio's expansion of the practice in his own funeral games as a competitive move. This departure, then, is not due to laziness, nor a lack of seriousness to engage in the poetic competition of which the funeral games are emblematic. Quite the opposite, the deviation is Boccaccio's attempt to explore the space left open by the constitutive rules of poetic

competition which had previously been ignored or underutilized by previous poets, and thus push against the restraints of the constitutive rules by expanding the freedom they afford from within the space they circumscribe.

The funeral games are exemplary, then, of how Boccaccio both applies and resists the rules of the poetic game in his text. As in the funeral games, the juxtaposition of generic tropes and the play with reader's expectations that Boccaccio engages in throughout the text do not threaten the integrity of poetic game in which he participates by breaking its rules, nor does it invalidate his own move in the game as extraneous to the play allowed by the rules. Rather, the experimentation with the rules of genre and poetic production of meaning display the utmost seriousness with which Boccaccio plays the poetic game. In his manipulation of the rules of skill, he pushes against the constitutive rules of genre, in a manner that opens up a new space of play within the poetic game, a space further explored by poets of the Cinquecento. In so doing, Boccaccio demonstrates his own authority as a player of the poetic game, as one who moves freely within the area demarcated by the rules. While form provides seriousness to the play of poetry, as in games, the player is only serious in so far as he tests the rules and risks infringement in play.

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