AURAL EKPHRASIS AND STATIAN SOUND IN CHAUCER'S TEMPLE OF MARS

By

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A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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Geoffrey Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, based on Giovanni Boccaccio's *Teseida* and

Statius' *Thebaid*, contains an *ekphrasis* or description of the paintings inside its Temple

of Mars which seems to suggest that they make noise. I believe these noises are taken

from Statius' descriptions (who in turn is imitating Vergil) of Mercury, Mars, and the

Forest of Trophies, and are meant to represent through sound visually depicted, primary

textual objects. I call this manner of sound-description "aural ekphrasis." My continuing

work in this area adds a unique philological comparison of texts and subsequent

conclusions to the conversation about the strangely audio-visual paintings in Chaucer's

Temple of Mars.

CHAPTER 1
STATIUS' *THEBAID*, BOCCACCIO'S *TESEIDA*, AND CHAUCER'S *KNIGHT'S*
TALE: A GENERAL COMPARISON

The story of the Seven against Thebes received several lengthy (and inconsistent)
literary treatments in antiquity—Aeschylus and Antimachus of Colophon's[1] versions
stand out as well-known examples—but the best-known and most influential, begetting,
as it were, a line of works by authors such as Chaucer, Dante, Spenser, and Shakespeare,
whether through primary or secondary exposure, is the *Thebaid* of Publius Papinius
Statius of the first century C.E. His horrifically gory descriptions of battle and
misoporpaks (hater of war) presentation of war (and War) mark his epic adaptation of the
famous legend of Amphiaraus, Capaneus, Hippomedon, Parthenopaeus, Tydeus, and
Adrastus (the sole survivor of the Seven, incidentally) accompanying Polynices in a
campaign against his brother, Eteocles: the two sons of Oedipus battling for control of
the throne of Thebes.

There are twelve books in Statius' *Thebaid*, the ultimate fratricidal confrontation
between these two brothers not occurring until Book XI; Book XII then tells of Creon's
cruel edict against burial, and Theseus' victorious campaign against him. It is at
Theseus' triumphant entrance into Athens in Book XII, after his defeat of the Amazons,
that both Giovanni Boccaccio's *Teseida delle Nozze d'Emilia (The Thesiad of the*

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[1] For both Greek and English versions of Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* see Aeschylus, <u>Seven Against Thebes</u>, 1926, ed. and trans. Herbert Weir Smyth, <u>Perseus</u>, 27 May 2005, available at <www.perseus.tufts.edu/cache/perscoll_Greco-Roman.html#text1>. For the extant fragment of Antimachus of Colophon see Victor J. Matthews, <u>Antimachus of Colophon: Text and Commentary</u>. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996).

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Nuptials of Emily) and Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* pick up the story.[2] The time Statius

spends on his characters, descriptions of the horrors of war, the consequences of both

divine and mortal hatred, and the cursed history of Thebes—so vital to the story's

conflict and its participants because of the *miasma* it has left on them all—indeed

accounts for much of those eleven books (Ross x). It is these elements that give Statius'

version of the legend its emotional power, and as Boccaccio and Chaucer later borrow

and translate Statius, their texts are themselves stained with the *miasma* of all that makes

the Theban saga so terrible as the ancient example *par excellence* of the consequences of

the unloosed reign of chaotic Mars. As we will later see, the stain becomes an aural one

as Chaucer takes images for his Temple of Mars from Statius—and through him,

Vergil—and describes them, not visually, but through sound in what I call "aural

ekphrasis."

Since Statius chose to highlight the emotional facets of the sad futility of human

conflict, he allowed the narrative to hover over them, pinning the reader there to writhe as

every mortal within it does; a quickly moving plot was minor to this point, and as a result

his *Thebaid* has been criticized as lagging (Ross x). Statius has often had the misfortune

of being compared to the two seemingly apotheosized fathers of epic, Homer and Vergil,

consequently condemned as a shoddy imitator, bad narrator, and repetitive, among other

things (Ross xvii). But while he does certainly borrow from these two masters (a known

Roman literary tradition), he approaches them humbly and with veneration, never

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[2] For further summary, comparison, and contrast of the three texts see Robert W. Hanning, "'The Struggle
between Noble Designs and Chaos': The Literary Tradition of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*," The Literary
Review 23.4 (1980 Summer): 519-541; and Statius, The Thebaid, Trans. Charles Stanley Ross (Baltimore:
Johns Hopkins UP 2004), ix-xxxvii; and Giovanni Boccaccio, The Book of Theseus (Teseida delle Nozze
d'Emilia), Trans. Bernadette Marie McCoy (New York: Teesdale, 1974), 2-17.

meaning for his *Thebaid* to enter into competition with their works. He addresses his

epic in an epigraph at the end of Book XII: "*So thrive, I pray,/ but do not envy the divine*

Aeneid./ Follow well back. Always adore her traces" (Ross 354).

Statius has also endured comparison to other, lesser-known writers, such as

Antimachus of Colophon, whose *Thebaid* is so fragmentary and therefore offers so little

evidence that one wonders about the negativity directed towards Statius from so many

directions (Matthews 25). F. M. Ahl presents a prudent opinion of the matter, which I

find helpful for thinking of criticism of Statius, or indeed any author, as a base imitator:

"Much of the debate…seems based on the assumption that Antimachus was long and

tedious. Scholars who like Statius tend to dissociate him from Antimachus; those who

dislike him presume he is an imitator of Antimachus" (Matthews 25). My point in

mentioning these prejudices among classicists over Statius' sources and his use of them is

to illustrate their subjectivity to personal taste and canonical favor, and to situate my

argument firmly apart from them. For my examination of a very small slice of Statius'

Thebaid, the sources used are a careful enrichment of the text, adding depth to the

descriptions and prompting strong emotional responses, stronger for the reader familiar

with them; they are not, in my opinion, gratuitously plugged into the text (if I thought

they were I would be examining Vergil and Ovid's influence on Chaucer, which I am

not).[3] I believe that Statius' careful use of Vergil and Ovid (his two sources on which I

will focus), in particular places or moments is in turn used by Chaucer in at least his

aurally ekphrasticized segments of the wall paintings in the Temple of Mars of his

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[3] For Chaucer as "for his day, a considerable and sophisticated 'classicist'" (xiii), and a discussion of Chaucer's own use of the names of Latin poets as sources (including Vergil and Statius) see John Fleming, Classical Imitation and Interpretation in Chaucer's Troilus (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 56, 73f

Knight's Tale. I think it is highly probable that Chaucer would have at minimum

recognized Statius' use of Vergil and Ovid (and the latter's use of the former) since he

seems to have known them independently, so that he should have known that in adopting

the three images from Statius he was also adopting three genealogies of imitation, which

I think he then aurally ekphrasticized.

Statius' *Thebaid*, as the standardized version of the Seven against Thebes legend

during the Middle Ages, was fourteenth-century Italian vernacular writer Giovanni

Boccaccio's source for his *Teseida delle Nozze d'Emilia (The Thesiad of the Nuptials of

Emily)* (Ross xviiif). But there is a large departure in Boccaccio's version, even though

his keeps the twelve-book format and very basic background of the story. The *Teseida*

presents a less weighty story of Teseo (Theseus) as orderer of chaos, magical transformer

of war-like Ipolita (Hippolyta) and her wild Amazons (including her sister Emilia whom

we never see in Statius) into pleasingly well-mannered and submissive wives-to-be, and

mediator between Arcita and Palemone in their struggle over Emilia. So Eteocles and

Polynices keep their royal blood and noble mien (and their lives), but seem to lose all else

from Statius in order to become for Boccaccio Arcita and Palemone, respectively, the

love-sick brothers willing to die and kill each other not for control of Thebes, but to

possess a domesticated Amazon princess. Palemone wins this contest and he and Emilia

wed after briefly mourning Arcita (Hanning 523f).

Although it is well-known that Chaucer knew the *Teseida* (but perhaps did not have

access to a copy with explanatory glosses, or *chiodi*),[4] and that these elements, which

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[4] For more information about this, dates concerning Chaucer's exposure to Boccaccio, the *Knight's Tale*, etc. see the explanatory notes to the *Knight's Tale* by Vincent J. DiMarco, The Riverside Chaucer, ed. Larry D. Benson. 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton, 1987), 826f. In addition, all Chaucer quotations in this paper will come from this edition.

carry over into the *Knight's Tale*, attest to that, Boccaccio's version does not remain completely faithful to the philological facets of Statius' text that are so important to the game I believe Chaucer is playing with ekphrasis. As a result, it is not necessary to dedicate a great deal of general discussion to Boccaccio's *Teseida*, and I will later in this chapter talk about those particulars I find appropriate and illuminating.[5] This is not to say that Boccaccio's *Teseida* is not important to Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*; simply put, the way Boccaccio uses sound in his Temple of Mars illustrates that Chaucer did not use him as the source for his noise, and that it is Statius and his use of Vergil that inform Chaucer's aural ekphrases.

Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, first in the Ellesmere ordering of *The Canterbury Tales*, probably predates that collection and some argue that it is a version of "Palamon and Arcite, another poem, but edited to fit into the grouping of pilgrimage tales (DiMarco 826). It is significantly shorter than either the *Thebaid* or *Teseida*, the Knight's frequent use of *occupatio* moving the tale along. Arranged into four parts—as opposed to the twelve books of its predecessors—Chaucer follows Boccaccio's narrative in beginning at the end of Statius' Book XII; he also keeps predominant Palamon and Arcite as prisoners and love-sufferers, and the contest for Emelye's hand in marriage. Chaucer's Theseus more carefully controls and "civilizes" the tournament than does Teseo, imposing more strict and elaborate rules of engagement, and building the structure within which they will fight specifically to enclose that act of violence (Teseo's already exists). The Statian horrors of war inherited by the *Knight's Tale* are primarily encapsulated in that theatre,

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[5] For a thorough but not exhaustive study of the influence of Statius and Boccaccio on Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* see Robert W. Hanning, "'The Struggle between Noble Designs and Chaos': The Literary Tradition of Chaucer's Knight's Tale," <u>The Literary Review</u> 23.4 (1980 Summer): 519-41. I use his helpful and well-balanced summary as a guide for some of the following paragraph.

certainly in the battle it contains, but also specifically inside the Temple of Mars in the form of wall paintings. For Chaucer, the temples to Venus, Mars, and Diana are inside the structure somehow, while in Statius and Boccaccio the temples are the real versions in their appropriate locations which a messenger visits on behalf of the character; e.g., in Boccaccio the Prayer of Arcita travels to the Temple of Mars in Thrace.

The paintings, then, as they tend more toward the *Thebaid* than the *Teseida*, they also become more strange and inexplicable. Indeed, the Temple of Mars is one of the most puzzling spaces in all of Chaucer, and one which many, when writing about the *Knight's Tale*, dismiss as an aberration, gloss over with some totalizing explanation, or ignore completely. That the paintings on the wall of the temple of Mars are described in such a way that they appear to make noise is a problem that makes them especially odd, not to mention the many seemingly antecedentless but also proverbial images of violence depicted there. As the note to line 1979 in *The Riverside Chaucer* states, "These sounds, like those of I.1985–86, are literally impossible to have been represented in a painting" (835). Although a few critics have posited good explanations that are certainly supported by the text, I have always thought that there is more happening in those paintings that renders those explanations somewhat hollow and dissatisfying to me.

V. A. Kolve, in his *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative*, devotes an entire chapter to the Knight, discussing at length the "two great images essential to the narrative, the prison/garden and the tournament amphitheatre" (86). He argues that we should imagine the theatres of both Chaucer and Boccaccio to look something like the Colosseum in Rome. This image is both convenient and helpful in order to incorporate the three temples into the structure while still adhering to its general description; it is the

one I generally prefer. Since, as Kolve says, "Nothing that survives from the visual arts

during Chaucer's lifetime furnishes adequate equivalents to these paintings, nor can any

example from the tradition we are about to consider rival their density of specification"

(115), it is necessary to closely examine and incorporate sources. However, some of

those sources that Kolve draws from are images of *Planetenkinder* ("children of the

planets"), from a fifteenth-century German or Dutch *Hausbuch,* which he uses because he

believes that the paintings in the temples of Venus and Mars are indicative of their

planetary influences (which the *Hausbuch* illustrates), rather than their mythological

ones; Diana is the reverse. While these certainly contain likenesses to what Chaucer

describes, and while I think it is possible that Chaucer could have been imagining these,

it seems as if Kolve is perhaps going a bit far afield for reasons, especially since he

neglects to explain how the paintings seem to emit sound. He says later: "The *Hausbuch*

pictures, which depict only planetary influence, display the beneficent and neutral as well

as malign aspects of any planet's influence and offer for each a design that, if a bit more

crowded and irregular than is common in medieval pictorial tradition, is nevertheless

located firmly in two-dimensional space" (122). Two-dimensionality is a good start, and

this explanation certainly fits well into Kolve's book, but it simply does not offer

anything towards understanding the noise dimension of the paintings.

Searching the iconographical tradition of the time (and later) is generally helpful,

but remains for me insufficient, I have chosen to examine the philological one that *The

Knight's Tale* inherits: "Ekphrasis, meanwhile, pretends to suspend linear narrative in

order to reproduce the effect of a temporally arrested work of visual art in stone or paint.

As Andrew Laird[6] put it, 'as language draws attention to the medium of the artwork, it also draws attention to *itself* as a medium'" (Fredrick, 58).

Lois Roney's lively *Chaucer's Knight's Tale and Theories of Scholastic Psychology* presents an interesting alternative explanation of the third part of *The Knight's Tale*. She uses known elements from the medieval "3-Acts mind model,"[7] based on Aristotle and elaborated by Aquinas, to interpret the wall paintings in the three temples, the descriptions of Lycurge and Emetreus, and Saturn's monologue, as a sequence of long *sophismata*[8] meant to illustrate Chaucer's view "that language use and thinking processes interact together to form/reveal the subjectivity of the individual human mind…human subjectivity must therefore be included in any theory of universal human psychology" (162). In the fourteenth century these were all separate subjects, and Roney believes Chaucer wished to combine them here. The images in the Temple of Mars are therefore so strange because they demonstrate Act 1 of this model, "simple apprehension of objects," which is to say that one cannot find relations between them using judgments (Act 2), or reasoning (Act 3) since they are "uncombined objects" that do not "interact with each other" (164-66). They are also "perceived on the outward bodily senses as existing and present," as opposed to the paintings for Venus, which are "inward" (167). It is in this subjective, outward and physical way that we are then to

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[6] Andrew Laird, "*Ut figura poesis*: Writing Art and the Art of Writing in Augustan Poetry," Art and Text in Roman Culture ed. Jaś Elsner (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 75-102.

[7] For further discussion of this and *obligations, insolubilia,* and *sophismata* see the background sections in Section III preceding Chapter 4 in Lois Roney, Chaucer's Knight's Tale and Theories of Scholastic Psychology (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1990), 135-162.

[8] Although this is a versatile term that could refer to many particular types of logical or verbal problems, Roney uses it in only one way, as the "*sophismata* sentence": "test-case sentences meant to be used to bring out abstract problems of metaphysics, natural science, or such." An example she gives for the "natural science" problem of "the concept of instantaneous velocity: 'Socrates will move faster than Socrates now moves'" (138).

interpret not only the weird images, but also the odd sounds present there that Roney only mentions in passing as she focuses on the visual: "rumble," "rese," and "chirkyng." I will argue that these sounds are not present in the Temple as sound but as visual images which must be interpreted by associating them with a tradition of sources; they can therefore not be subsumed under the rubric of "simple apprehension of objects" by anyone other than Arcite, who is the only one who can passively view them, and then only up until the point where the Knight says, using his cryptic expression, "Ther saugh I" (1995).

The issue of noise in Chaucer's Temple of Mars paintings could simply result from the desire to economize space and arrangement of objects, both in the text of an ekphrasis and what it describes. As Michael Baxandall point out, "Again, there is an awkwardness, at least, about dealing with a simultaneously available field—which is what a picture is—in a medium as temporally linear as language: for instance, it is difficult to avoid tendentious reordering of the picture simply by mentioning one thing before another" (3). My speculations on Chaucer's reasons for such ekphrases I will explore later, after close examination of several texts. For now, though, I will move away from the criticisms which, though thoughtful and inventive (Kolve and Roney serving as examples), are in my opinion insufficient and lacking because they do not adequately address the "sound quality" of these paintings.

The *aural ekphrases*—sound-descriptions of visual objects that Chaucer uses in his Temple of Mars on which I will later focus—are direct "shadows," mainly of Statius' descriptions in his *Thebaid*, but also bringing additional richness from Vergil and Ovid. Since most of the lengthy Temple of Mars section from Boccaccio is not a crucial part of

my discussion (even though there are small sections that Chaucer seems to have imported

wholesale), it is not imperative that I include it here, and will therefore only provide

sections when necessary.

Statius' version of the Temple of Mars is meant to be the main seat of Mars in

Thrace, and although it has walls of iron crafted with horrors by Vulcan, it is not an

actual painting itself as it is in Chaucer. Since Statius' version is also unlike both

Boccaccio's and Chaucer's in that the two brothers are Eteocles and Polynices, there is

no Arcita or Arcite to visit such a temple and pray to the god. Rather, it is Mercury who

is sent by Jupiter to Thrace in Book VII of the *Thebaid* with a command for Mars himself

to stop dallying and goad on the Seven against Thebes and their forces (who have

stopped in order to participate in the funeral games for Lycurgus' son). In the following

from Shackleton Bailey's translation we see some of the horrible characters from

Chaucer's paintings, and some candidates for the weird images as well.[9]

> He spoke and the Cyllenian was nearing the land of
> (35) Thrace. As he glided down from the Bear's polar gate, he
> was carried this way and that by the tempest endemic to
> the region, the racks of rain clouds spread over the sky,
> and the first gapings of Aquilo's mouth. His golden mantle
> rattles with pouring hail and the shady Arcadian hat gives
> (40) scant cover. Here he marks barren woods, Mars' shrine,
> and shudders as he looks. There under distant Haemus
> is the god's ungentle house, girt with a thousand Rages.
> The sides are of iron structure, the trodden thresholds
> are fitted with iron, the roof rests on iron-bound pillars.
> (45) Phoebus' opposing ray takes hurt, the very light fears the
> dwelling and a harsh glare glooms the stars. The guard is
> worthy of the place. Wild Impulse leaps from the outer
> gates and blind Evil and ruddy Angers and bloodless
> Fears. Treachery lurks with hidden swords and Strife hold-

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[9] I have not reproduced the original here, because when I later refer to specific lines I will supply the Latin. I have also not supplied the complete Ross version of this passage because I personally prefer the Shackleton Bailey, but will later also supply those from Ross when I discuss them.

(50)   ing two-edged steel. The court resounds with countless
           Threats, Valour most somber stands in the centre, and joy-
           ful Rage and armed Death with bloodstained countenance
           there sit. On the altars is blood of wars, that only, and fire
           snatched from burning towns. Trophies from many lands
(55)   and captured peoples marked the temple's sides and top,
           and fragments of iron-wrought gates and warship keels
           and empty chariots and heads by chariots crushed, groans
           too almost. Every violence, truly, every wound. Every-
           where himself was to be seen, but nowhere with easy look;
(60)   thus had Mulciber portrayed him with his divine art.

Boccaccio removes Mercury as messenger and inserts the prayer of Arcita,

anthropomorphized into the messenger Prayer. His gloss to this transformation reads:

"Here the author imagines that the Prayer has the shape of a person, so that by making it

a person he takes the occasion, consequently, to describe the house of Mars, as something

seen by this Prayer" (196).[10] So in this description there is no "I saugh" equivalent as we

see in the Knight's version, but there is also less pagan agency since Mercury is removed

and Jupiter's place is usurped by Arcita himself. Boccaccio's departure from Statius for

this section, aside from the aforementioned, is mostly in small details.

Chaucer hugs close to Boccaccio for the exterior description of his temple and its

grounds. There are quite a few more lines than those I am reproducing here, but their

images have nothing to do with the "noisy" sections of the wall paintings.

   First on the wal was peynted a forest,   1975
In which ther dwelleth neither man ne best,
With knotty, knarry, bareyne trees olde,
Of stubbes sharpe and hidouse to biholde,
In which ther ran a rumbel in a swough,   1979
As though a storm sholde bresten every bough.

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[10] Unless otherwise stated, all Boccaccio translations will come from the McCoy version; she works from a different manuscript than Traversa, so when appropriate I will also include his version. Incidentally, McCoy renders the Prayer female; Traversa uses the neuter pronoun when referring to "it." I will also not include the *chiodi* (which are in McCoy's translation and not Traversa's) for this section as they are rather lengthy and do not figure into my argument.

And dounward from an hille, under a bente,
Ther stood the temple of Mars armypotente,
Wroght al of burned steel, of which the entree
Was long and streit, and gastly for to see.
And therout came a rage and swich a veze
That it made al the gate for to rese.   1986
The northern light in at the dores shoon,
For wyndowe on the wal ne was ther noon,
Thurgh which men myghten any light discerne.
The dore was al of adamant eterne,   1990
Yclenched overthwart and endlong
With iren tough; and for to make it strong,
Every pyler, the temple to sustene,
Was tonne-greet, of iren bright and shene.
  Ther saugh I first the derke imaginyng
Of Felonye, and al the compassyng;   1996
The cruel Ire, reed as any gleede;
The pykepurs, and eek the pale Drede;
The smylere with the knyf under the cloke;
The shepne brennynge with the blake smoke; 2000
The tresoun of the mordrynge in the bedde;
The open were, with woundes al bibledde;
Contek, with blody knyf and sharp manace.
Al ful of chirkyng was that sory place.   2004

In the next three chapters, each devoted to a different "noisy" moment in the wall

paintings of Chaucer's Temple of Mars, I will argue that what appears to be a moment of

traditional ekphrasis, i.e. originally a visual object or scene described in language,[11] albeit

a strange one, is actually a much more complicated version of that trope: the ekphrasis of

those paintings seems to suggest that they make noise in places. The sounds represented

in the paintings themselves are what I call "aural ekphrases," or the descriptions of visual

(and in this case painted) objects by means of the sounds associated with their linguistic

antecedents in other, source texts (in this case Statius, Ovid and Vergil). In other words,

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[11] For more on Hellenistic use of ekphrasis see Murray Krieger's Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1992), 7f. I prefer, since I am working with ancient sources, to work from this definition rather than the one commonly known and used (especially by Krieger), by Leo Spitzer, "The 'Ode on a Grecian Urn,' or Content vs. Metagrammar," Essays on English and American Literature ed. Anna Hatcher (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1962), 72: "…ekphrasis, the poetic description of a pictorial or sculptural work of art."

these are sounds that describe written objects drawn from primary texts which are then

those visually represented in Chaucer's wall paintings. Below I have provided snippets

from Vergil's ekphrasis of Aeneas' shield; I do this because although I believe Chaucer

ultimately takes the "noises" for his innovation of aural ekphrasis from the sound-

language of Statius, Statius primarily takes it from Vergil; and Vergil could have chosen

a shield for his ekphrasis and had such success with its blending of sight and sound,

knowing of the natural predisposition for the communication of metals inherent in the

Latin language. It is this metallic language, then, that is transferred from Latin shield to

Middle English wall; when we hear the wall, we are meant to remember the shield by

seeing Statian Mercury hovering above the Temple of Mars. In this way it looks like

(and why not since "seem" and "appear" both have visual connotations anyway) each

aural object that I will discuss in this thesis—Mercury, Furor, and the Forest of

Trophies—exists as part of a new *trivium* of Lady Memory: sound, text, and sight. And

if this *trivium* were to have a paradigmatic representation in painting, I would imagine it

would look something like the early fourteenth-century "Lady Memory and the doors of

sight and hearing" (Kolve 26).

Probably the two best examples of the history of similar aural-visual occurrences in

Greek and Roman writing, and indeed the most well-known ekphrases in ancient

literature, are the shield of Achilles in Homer's *Iliad*, and that of Aeneas in Vergil's

Aeneid. For these examples the sounds are mostly ornamental (although it is helpful to

know the stories depicted), and I believe Chaucer changes this with his aural ekphrasis so

that it becomes imperative for the reader to know to what text/s he is referring. Even

though Chaucer did not have direct access to Homer, he surely would have been exposed

to his description of the shield of Achilles at least through Vergil's imitation.

Incidentally, Aeneas' shield was crafted by Vulcan, the same god who, for Statius,

wrought the metalwork that "groans too almost" (VII.59) for Mars' temple in Thrace.

There are four outstanding examples on Aeneas' shield where Vergil muddies the

waters between sight and sound. The first and most important is his singular "silvery

goose" version of Manlius and the geese that saved Rome from the Gauls in 390 B.C.E.:

> In summus custos Tarpeiae Manlius arcis
> stabat protemplo et Capitolia celsa tenebat,
> Romul eoque recens horrebat regia culmo.
> Atque hic auratis volitans argenteus anser
> porticibus Gallos in limine adesse canebat. (VIII.652–56)[12]
>
> On the shield's upper quarter Manlius,
> Guard of the Tarpeian Rock, stood fast
> Before the temple and held the Capitol,
> Where Romulus' house was newly thatched and rough.
> Here fluttering through gilded porticos
> At night, the silvery goose warned of the Gauls
> Approaching…. (VIII.884–90)

The bird does indeed flutter on the shield ("volitans"), but since this participle can also be

translated as "flying around" or "flying to and fro" (which are visual verbs and easily

depicted, with sound secondary to their nature), "flutter" is only one translation, and the

one most allied with sound since in English it has a certain onomatopoeic quality which

"volitans" simply does not. What makes "flutter" a splendid translation is the word in the

Latin before it, "auratis." This word, as the adjective "gilded" and modifying "porticos,"

is conspicuously placed nearer the goose, which is flying and presumably making noise,

which reminds the reader that "auratis" can also be a verbal form (present indicative

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[12] All Latin quotations of the Aeneid come from Vergil, <u>The Aeneid</u>, 1910, ed J. B. Greenough, <u>Perseus</u>, 27 May 2005, <www.perseus.tufts.edu/cache/perscoll_Greco-Roman.html#text1>. For "auratis" following, see ibid. the Perseus Look-Up Tool.

active second person plural), meaning "You [all] hear." As I will discuss more in the

next chapter since "gilded" is an adjective also used to describe Statian Mercury,

"auratis" does not exhaust its associations with only gold and hearing, as "aura" ("breeze,

wind, air" etc.) is another relative. The silver goose "warned" ("canebat"), but this can

also be translated as "sang" and "was gray/hoary." The shield's metal language is

ambiguous and interconnected, but it also tells us, quite literally, that we hear. We can

see just from this one goose what we lose of what we can "hear" in Latin when we

translate it into English. In his Temple of Mars description, Chaucer never tells us that he

hears or we hear, he only says "I saugh," and we in turn see through his ekphrasis; but we

do hear through his use of sound words to describe three visual figures (aural ekphrases),

that, although they are not on a metal shield, they all make metal noise just like Vergil's

shield and later, Statius' Mercury.

> The next three are all regarding the battle of Actium in 31 B.C.E.:

> > Regina in mediis patrio vocat agmina sistro…
> > omnigenumque deum monstra et latrator Anubis…
> > contra autem mango maerentem corpore Nilum
> > pandentemque sinus et tota veste vocantem
> > caeruleum in grenium latebrosaque flumina victos.
> > (VIII.696; 698; 711–13)
> > > The queen
> > Amidst the battle called her flotilla on
> > With a sistrum's beat…
> > > …while monster forms
> > Of gods of every race, and the dog-god
> > Anubis barking, held their weapons up…
> > > …While the great length of mourning Nile awaited her
> > With open bays, calling the conquered home…
> > (VIII.941–43; 945–47; 962–64)

Contrary to the above translation, the verb "to call" ("vocat"), is in the present tense.

Here we are hearing the sound, or voice, of the sistrum, although it is really "Regina"

(Cleopatra), that "vocat." The "barking" of Anubis, which above looks like it would be a participle, is actually an adjective meaning "barker" or just "dog." The "calling" ("vocantem") of the Nile is, however, a present participle. Although the events are in the past, and always ever were in Vergil's time, when we read we experience them as present. Just as the shield tells us "You hear," it is natural that it tells us then what we hear, and in the present tense.

This Vergilian speech of metal accompanies our most important experience of Statius' Cyllenian Mercury as Messenger in Book VII of the Thebaid. As he descends to Mars' Temple to convey Jupiter's orders about urging on the Argives, his golden mantle tells of the violence of the place as much as the ekphrasis topou (ekphrasis of place) that he is described as seeing. This aural history of metal makes its way onto the wall of the Temple of Mars in Chaucer's Knight's Tale as aural ekphrasis and leaves us wondering, "How can a painting possibly make noise?"

CHAPTER 2
AURAL EKPHRASIS OF MERCURY: "A RUMBEL IN A SWOUGH"

The first instance of "noise" we see in Chaucer's Temple of Mars is the line, "Ther ran a rumbel in a swough" (1979). Immediately following is one which adds a little "sound quality" to the image: "As though a storm sholde bresten every bough" (1980); immediately prior is the description of the area around the Temple in Thrace, with its ancient, barren trees. The weather conditions as we see them in Boccaccio are as follows:

For it is set in the Thracian fields, under wintry skies, storm-tossed by continuous tempest, with hosts of everlasting clouds which are changed, now here, now there, by various winds in various places into spring rainstorms, or are hurled down as globules of water merged together by the cold, as the snow keeps hardening little by little to form ice. (30)

Other than "In thilke colde, frosty regioun" (1973), we know nothing else of them from Chaucer; he never mentions hail or the fact that it is a storm, he only says "as though" it is one. In Statius, this hail batters Mercury and the tempestuous winds, pouring forth from Aquilo's (the North Wind) yawning mouth, toss him about as he approaches Thrace. This hail, incidentally, is thrown down on him from clouds described in the Latin as "agmina Nimborum"; "agmina" is a military formation metaphor which, in this context, suggests that even the clouds above Mars' temple are in formation; the hail then, by extension, would be their weapons (Smolenaars 21). I believe that Statius means for us to think of Book X of the *Aeneid*, when Mezentius' son Lausus temporarily buys his father life with his death:

> dum genitor nati parma protectus abiret,
> telaque coniciunt proturbantque eminus hostem
> missilibus. Furit Aeneas tectusque tenet se.
> Ac velut effuse siquando grandine nimbi
> praecipitant, omnis campis diffugit arator
> omnis et agricola et tuta latet arce viator,
> aut amnis ripis aut alti fornice saxi
> dum pluit in terries… (X.800–07)
>
> The father limped away. The soldiers' javelins
> Harassed Aeneas and kept him back, so he
> Took shelter behind his shield in a black rage.
> As when the stormclouds pour down hail in showers,
> Every farmer and plowman leaves his field,
> And every traveler takes cover, snug
> In some good shelter, overhanging bank
> Or rock-vault, while the rain falls….(1124–31)

At one point in the *Thebaid* Statius says that Mercury "shudders" (later I shall discuss other ways of reading it at length), but on one very human level it is a moment when, the hail cueing us to the above passage, we shiver with and for Mercury; for, though immortal, he has no welcome shelter in that cruel place and must remain exposed to assault by the inclement weather. On another very human level we would have, as Romans, felt a pity for the suffering of a deity who had protected us in our travels, through all kinds of weather and dangers, so many times.

Statius' Mercury, in his role as Messenger, is outfitted in his little traveling hat (*petasos*; Latin *galerus*) and golden, traveling cloak (Latin *aurea palla*); he is often depicted and described as carrying his herald's wand (*caduceus*) and wearing winged sandals (*talaria*) as well, but they are not mentioned here. His *palla* is described as *aurea*, the feminine adjective meaning "golden" and "gilded," among other things. As a rich poetic descriptor which makes richer still Chaucer's use of Statius and Mercury in general (as Rhetorician-Trickster *par excellence*), *aurea* appears related to the feminine

nouns *aura*, "wind" and "exhalation" (among many others); and *auris*, "ear"; as well as

the neuter noun *aurum*, "gold" and "golden cup" (among other things made from gold),

but which can also refer to the Golden Age.[1]

The *palla* itself is "a male garment restricted to non-Romans" (Smolenaars 21), and

is the same garment that the young priest of Bacchus, Eunaeus, wears as we see him

before Capaneus notices and kills him. Eunaeus carries a *thyrsus* (a pole used by Bacchic

revelers, wound usually with vine leaves and having a pine cone on top), and is in general

effeminately dressed. In one reading, his gold (which could refer to all of it that adorns

him in various places, his mantle, or his "gold-embroidered *tunica,*") "rattles" as he dies;

in another it is a sort of death rattle, the "convulsive catching of breath of a dying person"

(Smolenaars 317–18). Either way, the verb *crepare* is used just as it is used to describe

the rattling immortal Mercury's mantle makes when the hail hits it. One more example

of this versatile verb is from Book VI (296 in Fitzgerald; 209 in the Latin) of the *Aeneid*,

which refers to the noise the Golden Bough makes as it moves in the wind, although

crepare here is probably most closely translated into English as "tinkling" (Smolenaars

317). This Bough can be read allegorically as Mercury himself, but it is at least his

caduceus, and becomes Aeneas' wand:

> Sed non ante datur telluris operta subire,
> auri comos quam quis decerpserit arbore fetus. (VI.140–41)

> And yet

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[1] All Latin word definitions, unless another source is given, comes from John C. Traupman, <u>Latin & English Dictionary</u> (New York: Bantam, 1995). I am reminded to beware, as Fleming says, "dictionary crawling" (15); I do this for some Latin words to open up all possible meanings that may have occurred to the Roman reader (and therefore also Chaucer as reader) because of the interconnected nature of his literary tradition which makes many meanings of one word (and the various textual loci it is used in) simultaneously available, I suppose itself much like a painting. Fleming also says, "We are dealing with a Chaucerian word before we are dealing with an 'English' word" (15); and I agree, which is why I have not combed Middle English dictionary entries for the Chaucerian words with which I am concerned.

> No one may enter hidden depths
> Below the earth unless he picks this bough,
> The tree's fruit, with its foliage of gold. (VI.204–07)

While these three examples of *crepare* can be translated as "rattle," they are certainly not all the same noise. The various meanings of the verb *crepare* and the related noun *crepitus* ("rattle, creak, rumbel") tie them even more closely to Chaucer as they prominently appear many times in his writings, while one in particular ("fart"), even takes center stage.[2]

Mercury is essentially carried by the North Wind or is struggling to glide on it, and in this way he could be said to be "in" the wind; he could even be visually depicted like this in a painting, which is what I think Chaucer intended when he wrote the aural ekphrasis "Ther ran a rumbel in a swough" (1979): Mercury running/rushing along, rattling as the hail hits him, in the howling gusts of Aquilo. The gloss for "swough" in *The Riverside Chaucer* defines it as "sound of wind"; that for "rumbel" is "rumbling noise," and although this usually connotes a long, low-pitched sound, it is not necessary that hail hitting Mercury's mantle has to be short and high-pitched. Due to the severity of the storm he is navigating, combined with the sound of wind, it is unlikely that one could even differentiate each individual hail-impact in order to call it "short" or "high-pitched." I believe that, just as *crepare* is a versatile sound-word in Chaucer's sources, so is his own "rumbel" equally as versatile and even synonymous.

There are numerous examples of "rumbel" in its various forms in Chaucer, other than that occurring in the *Knight's Tale*. The others, in order from the Knight onwards,

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[2] For further discussion of Chaucer's use of the fart, see Valerie J. Allen, "Broken Air," Exemplaria 16.2 (2004): 305-22; and Peter W. Travis, "Thirteen Ways of Listening to a Fart: Noise in Chaucer's Summoner's Tale," Exemplaria 16.2 (2004): 323-48.

are as follows: "The rumblynge of a fart" (2233), from *The Summoner's* Tale; "The peple cried and rombled up and doun" (2535), from *The Monk's Tale*; "And in the water rombled to and fro" (1322), from *The Canon's Yeoman's Tale*; "The grete soun…that rumbleth up and doun….Herestow not the grete swogh?" (1025–26; 1031), from *The House of Fame*; and "Among al this to rumbelen gan the hevene" (1218), from "The Legend of Dido" in *The Legend of Good Women*.

Interestingly enough, "swough" only occurs in Chaucer three other times after *The Knight's Tale*: "But what she sayede more in that swow/ I may not telle yow as now" (215–16), from *The Book of the Duchess*; "withinne the temple, of sykes hoote as fyr/ I herde a swogh that gan aboute renne,/ Which sikes were engendered with desyr" (246–48), from *The Parliament of Fowls*; "He siketh with ful many a sory swogh" (3619), from *The Miller's Tale*.

So it seems from the examples above that "swough," at least as Chaucer uses it, is the kind of wind that carries sound, whether that of a sigh or words or emotions as sighs, and therefore also meaning: the "swough" is itself a messenger, delivering a collective noise of individual "pieces" of sound. In *The House of Fame* Chaucer explains through his eagle to a dreamer that air is apparently a substance that can "break," almost as if it were something brittle: "Soun ys noght but eyr ybroken" (765). These "pieces," also according to the eagle, have a "kyndely stede" ("natural place") and a "kyndely enclynyng" ("natural inclination") to that place: "Thus every thing, by thys reson,/ Hath his propre mansyon/ To which hit seketh to repaire,/ Ther-as hit shulde not apaire" (753–56). Wind, being air, is "kyndely" to sound, and it naturally carries it as they go to the same place; they "repaire" there so that they do not "apaire" ("deteriorate"), which tells

us that whatever we hear in a "swough" is as it was originally, i.e. the "swough" negates

the ephemerality of sound. However, since the "swough" in the *Knight's Tale* is the

North wind from another text, it too makes a sound (and we probably think of it as

howling), in addition to the "rumbel" or the individual, "ybroken" pieces of air that are

also the sounds of hail battering Mercury's golden mantle. The other construction in

Chaucer very similar to this is also in *The House of Fame* (the eagle speaking again):

> Se here the Haus of Fame, lo!
> Maistow not heren that I do?
> …The grete soun…
> that rumbleth up and doun
> In Fames Hous, full of tydynges,
> Both of feir speche and chidynges,
> And of fals and soth compouned.
> Herke wel; hyt is not rouned.
> Herestow not the grete swogh? (1023–31)

Here we see that the "swough" and the pieces of sound it carries, which run the gamut of

possibilities, at their "kyndely stede": The House of Fame.

In the *Aeneid* Book IV, Mercury carries from Jupiter to Aeneas the command to

leave Carthage and continue on his journey. Jupiter tells Mercury to "Take to your wings

and glide/….Carry my speech to him on the running winds" (304; 308). What follows is

a description that Vergil probably modeled on Hermes' visitation of Calypso, when he

tells her to tell Odysseus to leave, in Book V of the *Odyssey*; Statius probably had at least

this in mind when writing his description of Mercury's descent into Thrace:

> Dixerat. Ille patris magni parere parabat
> imperio; et primum pedibus talaria nectit
> aurea, quae sublimem alis sive aequora supra
> seu terram rapido partier cum flamine portent
> tum virgam capitihac animas ille evocat orco
> pallentis, alias sub Tartara tristia mittit,
> dat somnos adimitque, et lumina morte resignat.
> Illa fretus agit ventos, et turbida tranat

nubile; iamque volans apicem et latera ardua cecnit
Atlantis duri, caelum qui vertice fulcit…
…et vento pulsatur et imbri;
nix umeros infusa tegit; tum flumina mento
praecipitant semis, et glacie riget horrida barba.
Hic primum paribus hitens Cyllenius alis
constitit; hinc toto praeceps se corpore ad undas
misit…. (IV.238–47; 249–54)

He [Jupiter] finished and fell silent. Mercury
Made ready to obey the great command
Of his great father, and first he tied on
The Golden sandals, winged, that high in air
Transport him over seas or over land
Abreast of gale winds; then he took the wand
With which he summons pale souls out of Orcus
And ushers others to the undergloom,
Lulls men to slumber or awakens them,
And opens dead men's eyes. This wand in hand,
He can drive winds before him, swimming down
Along the stormcloud. Now aloft, he saw
The craggy flanks and crown of patient Atlas…
Beaten by wind and rain.
Snow lay upon his shoulders, rills cascaded
Down his ancient chin and beard a-bristle,
Caked with ice. Here Mercury the Cyllenë
Hovered first on even wings, then down
He plummeted….

Not many lines before this is the description of "nimble Rumor," who, although not

directly mentioned with any sort of wind,

mobilitate viget, viesque adquirit eundo,
parva metu primo, mox sese attollit in auras
ingrediturque solo, et capuit inter nubila condit. (IV.175–77)

Thrives on motion, stronger for the running,
Lowly at first through fear, then rearing high,
She treads the land and hides her head in cloud.

Considering then the velocity of Rumor, perhaps Chaucer's "swough" is his more

versatile answer to the ancient periphrasis "with winged words." But then the winds have

also been portrayed as seeming like children, running gleefully away with noises like toys

that the gods have tossed away; here they run away with the "leftovers" to the South,

presumably where the winds take dead words:

> Audiit et voti Phoebus succedere partem
> mentededit, partem volucris dispersit in auras.
> sterneret ut subita turbatam morte Camillam,
> adnuit oranti, reducem ut patria alta videret,
> non dedit, inque Notos vocem vertere procellae. (XI.794–98)

> Phoebus heard, and felt disposed to grant
> His prayer in part; the rest he gave the winds
> To blow away. Granted, Arruns should fell
> Camilla in the shock of death; denied
> That Arruns' land should see the man return:
> That plea the gale winds wafted to the South. (XI.1083–88)

Although the Statian Mercury is similar to the Vergilian version, the former seems

hollow, little more than the embodiment of Jupiter's command, which makes him like

those anthropomorphic utterances we see in *The House of Fame*. Maybe this is how

Chaucer also understood Boccaccio's reasoning (or maybe this was Boccaccio's

reasoning) for using an embodied Prayer. But the fact that Chaucer chose to use Statius'

Mercury (or I should say Vergil's through Statius), rather than Vergil's alone leads me to

believe that Chaucer's opinion of war was much the same as Statius, and his *aural umbra*

Messenger illustrates this.

The Romans generally seem to have differed from the Greeks in their literary

appreciation of verbal cunning and deceit, and their related language of thievery seems to

reflect this.[3] The Greek regard for Odysseus' gift allowed them to overlook or justify his

at times shady dealings; the Romans were often quite nasty towards his trickery, and

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[3] The Greek verb κλέπτω is of course "to steal" (as in English kleptomaniac), but it can also mean "to cheat, deceive, beguile"; hence Hermes' duplicity as god of thieves and rhetoric. Interestingly enough, however, is the Latin verb *furor, -ari*, which means "to steal, plagiarize, obtain by fraud", which is of course related to *furo, -ere*, "to be out of one's mind, rage."

didn't seem too impressed by those practicing it. Take for example the shade of Trojan Deïphobus' bitter invective uttered to Aeneas, calling Ulysses "That ringleader of atrocity" (VI.709); or Sinon's general abuse of "that criminal" Ulysses that wins Trojan trust and opens their gates to the Horse (II.105ff). Aeneas, in his telling of the latter, regrets that he ever trusted Sinon's Greek "crocodile tears." As Fitzgerald points out: "The attitude of the narrator [Aeneas] is that of an honest Roman before his time: grim wonderment at Greek trickery, with a sense that the Greeks are too clever by half, too brazenly good at histrionics and dissimulation" (407). Since Rome, after all, descended from Troy, I can't really blame them for disparaging a Greek that had so many fingers in the Trojan pie of destruction.

There is a tradition in which Sisyphus—the son of Aeolus, keeper or king of the winds—is Odysseus' father, not Laertes. This is yet another link between Mercury, one skilled in rhetoric, and the wind. It is interesting then that Statius' Mercury, differing from Vergil's, cannot even manage the winds he glides on; Chaucer is ambiguous. This odd lack of control is reminiscent of the chaos of Phaëthon's inability to rein Helios' team across the ordered sky. It is also interesting that in the Temple of Mars section of both Statius and Chaucer Mercury never speaks but only rattles, while Vergil's does speak and even gets to take Aeneas to task (IV.360ff.). There is something very strange about this eloquent silence that draws, invites even, our attention to the rhetoric representing Martian chaos.

Statius' Mercury shudders at the "barren woods" and "Mars' shrine" (40), and Boccaccio's Prayer cannot speak at the sight of the "house of Mars" (29). There must be something so terrible in those dead woods and in or on that shrine that makes even

Psychopompos, Mercury as conveyer of souls and frequenter of the Underworld, shudder.

But we cannot forget that we are watching him looking at the Temple of Mars from

above, and maybe with the subsequent description of what he sees we are meant to think

of Aeneas' "inhuman shuddering" (II.730) upon seeing and re-seeing (in telling Dido and

guests) Pyrrhus (or Neoptolemus), and his atrocities the night the Greeks sacked Troy;

perhaps we are even asked to re-read them through Statius:

> Ipse inter primos correpta durabipenni
> limina perrumpit, postisque a cardine vellit
> aeratus; iamque excise trabe firma cavavit
> cobora, et ingentem lato dedit ore fenestram.
> Adparet domus intus, et atria longa patescunt;
> adparent Priami et veterum penetralia regum,
> armatosque vident stantis in limine primo.
> At domus interior gemitu miseroque tumultu
> miscetur, penitusque cavae plangoribus aedes
> femineis ululant; ferit aurea sidera clamor.
> bararico postes auro spoliisque superbi,
> procubuere; tenent Danai, que defiat ignis. (II.479–88; 504–05)

> Pyrrhus shouldering forward with an axe
> Broke down the stony threshold, forced apart
> Hinges and brazen door-jambs, and chopped through
> One panel of the door, splitting the oak,
> To make a window, a great breech. And there
> Before their eyes the inner halls lay open,
> The courts of Priam and the ancient kings,
> With men-at-arms ranked in the vestibule.
> From the interior came the sounds of weeping,
> Pitiful commotion, wails of women
> High-pitched, rising in the formal chambers
> To ring against the silent golden stars…
> Those doorways high and proud,
> Adorned with the takings of barbaric gold,
> Were all brought low: fire had them, or the Greeks.

Next, we see Aeneas watching Politës running frantically away from Pyrrhus to his

parents, Hecuba and Priam, as they huddle with their Penates under the shade of an

ancient laurel tree in a court of the palace. Pyrrhus kills him there with his spear; Priam

addresses Pyrrhus in a moving speech, bravely admonishing him for making him see his

son killed, which "defiled/ A father's eyes with death" (II.700–01), and for not having the

"compunction" (II.705) of his father, Achilles.

> …Hoc dicens altaria ad ipsa trementem
> traxit et in multo lapsantem sanguine hati,
> implicuitque comam laeva, dextraque coruscum
> extulit, ac lateri capulo tenus abdiditensem.
> Iacet ingens litore truncus,
> avolsumque umeris caput, et sine nominee corpus. (II.550–53; 557–58)

> With this,
> To the altar step itself he dragged him trembling,
> Slipping in the pooled blood of his son,
> And took him by the hair with his left hand.
> The sword flashed in his right; up to the hilt
> He thrust it in his body….
> On the distant shore
> The vast trunk headless lies without a name. (II.716–29)

If this or another thousand atrocities facilitated by Mars is what Mercury sees, thinks or is

reminded of, it is easy to understand why *Psychopompos* shudders, and why Aeneas, the

great hero, "stood unmanned" (II.731).

I have already discussed the *palla*, the garment of non-Romans common to both

Mercury and Eunaeus; but as we find out in the comments on Eunaeus, it is also "more

typical of women" (Smolenaars 304). In this same gloss we learn that Statius'

description of Eunaeus "in content…meticulously imitates the sequence of Chloreus'

characteristics" in the *Aeneid*; Chloreus is the "bizarre character…probably to be

understood as a eunuch-priest of Cybele" (XI.1045n.). He is also the person who absorbs

Camilla's attention: she tracks him as Arruns, "ahead of her in cunning" (XI.1035),

tracks her and kills her, her reward for unbridled "girl's love of finery" (XI.1066). In

Statius' *Thebaid*, it is Capaneus (who never seems to speak unless he is taunting or

threatening) whom Eunaeus attracts, not with his fine clothes, but with his boasting.

Statius' use, then, of *palla* instead of another garment-word like *vestis*, connects his

Mercury to not only a non-Roman identity and pubescent youth, but also to femininity

and eunuchism in so many ways that he could not have been ignorant of it—neither, I

think, could Chaucer. These elements certainly figure rhetorically powerful Mercury as

Trickster Unmanned in the face of Mars and his horrific Temple, and I believe are meant

to draw our attention to Mercury just as Camilla and Capaneus each find something in

Chloreus and Eunaeus to captivate them. But that is not to say we should ignore what is

glaring and running out at us from within Chaucer's painting, which I will discuss in the

next chapter.

Statius' Mercury yet again deviates from Vergil's in that he is never named (i.e.

called Mercury), and never speaks. He is only known by two epithets, Cyllenian and

Maenalian, the former referring to the mountain in Arcadia on which he was born, the

latter referring to the mountain range of which Cyllene is a part. If this was not enough

to render him *barbaros* to Statius' text, he also wears a non-Roman *palla* and his

traveling hat, although Statius uses the Latin form *galerus* instead of the Greek *petasos*, is

firmly established as "Arcadian" (VII.39). In the introduction to Fitzgerald's *Aeneid*

translation, Philip Hardie discusses the *rustica* that so fascinated the Romans:

> In book eight pride in Rome's success story is mingled with a wistful nostalgia for
> the irrecoverably lost innocence of an Arcadian origin [through Arcadian king
> Evander's settlement]….in its essence the pastoral world is a self-sufficient and
> alternative universe, not just a reserve of innocence on the margins of the world of
> history; any conflict or even contact with the epic world of expansively imperialist
> kings and cities is fatal to its integrity. (xix)

Arcadian Mercury's silence could echo Statius' pensive nostalgia for this innocence lost

long ago by a civilization that so highly estimated the god of war and the horrors he

brings. Or perhaps Statius' Mercury un-Mercury is simply Jupiter's anthropomorphized

command: commands from Statius' especially dominant and cruel Jove either require no

persuasion or simply threaten instead, and certainly allow no debate (since his power is

absolute), there is no real reason for Mercury to speak directly in the text (Dominik 86).

For Statius, making Mercury mute should, as William J. Dominik points out, straight

away raise a reader's suspicions: "Since the education and training of Statius prepared

him for a career as a poet or an orator, the treatment of speech passages in the *Thebaid*

deserves special attention from the critic. The number, weighting and form of the

speeches immediately draws attention to their importance" (273). Whichever way we

prefer to read Mercury, we must admit that Statius has whittled away at the Olympian he

once was; the *umbra* cast by his Arcadian hat is his only attribute that survives into

Boccaccio, who steals it and gives it to the dead trees (31).

      Mercury is the god of boundaries; he is creator, transgressor, and escort across

established liminal spaces. As *Psychopompos* he escorts souls of the dead to the

Underworld; as *Hypnopompos* he is the sender of dreams. Since *Hypnos* (Sleep) is the

brother of *Thanatos* (Death), it is no wonder that in the *Aeneid* we see a tree of dreams in

the cave leading to the underworld, not long after the tree of the Golden Bough,

> In medio ramos annosaque brachia pandit
> ulmus opaca, ingens, quam sedem Somnia volgo
> Pana tenere ferunt, foliisque sub omnibus haerent. (VI.282–84)

> …a shadowy giant elm
> Spreads ancient boughs, her ancient arms where dreams,
> False dreams, the old tale goes, beneath each leaf
> Cling and are numberless. (VI.386–89)

One can imagine Mercury picking these leaves with their false or deceptive dreams, and

sending them on to dreamers. We only see Mercury twice in the *Knight's Tale*, and the

second occasion is the aural ekphrasis that I am arguing for; the first is when he appears

to Arcite in Thebes:

> Upon a nyght in sleep as he hym leyde   1384
> Hym thoughte how that the wynged god Mercurie
> Biforn hym stood and bad hym to be murie.
> His slepy yerde in hond he bar uprighte;
> An hat he werede upon his heris brighte.
> Arrayed was this god, as he took keep,
> As he was whan that Argus took his sleep;   1390
> And seyde hym thus: "To Atthenes shaltou wende,
> Ther is thee shapen of thy wo an ende."

According to Fleming, Chaucer would group this in with the few other *ambages* or

amphibologies ("Chaucer's two neologisms for the tricky ambiguities of oracles" (50f))

found in his writings, and I agree; Mercury picked this one from that "shadowy giant

elm" especially for Arcite, and then appears before him as *Argeiphontes*, Slayer of Argus

Panoptes (the "All-seeing" guard of Io) (Lenardon I-16). Chaucer's stress on this very

Greek aspect of Mercury prepares us to connect him with Statius' as we "hear" him

appear on the Martian wall as a "rumbel in a swough"; likewise his *ambage* links with

that of Mars, whose "statue…bigan his hauberk rynge,/ And with that soun he herde a

murmurynge/ Ful lowe and dym, and seyde thus, 'Victorie!'" (2431–33). We know how

Arcite's death clears up these ambiguities of Mercury and Mars; but before these is

Palamon's own, very Statian prophesy to his warlike brother: "Arcita, cosyn myn,/ Of al

oure strif, God woot, the fruyt is thyn" (1281–82).

   The most important word thus far for Mercury, and indeed perhaps for the entire

investigation, is *crepare* as it links all three aural ekphrases together: Mercury's cloak

rumbles, Mars rattles the gate, and the Forest of Trophies rattles and creaks. And

perhaps, as this noise reminds us through its *Aeneid* connection with the "fruit" of the

Golden Bough, sacred to Proserpina, it is also closely bonded with the "fruit" of war:

Death (Smolenaars 25).

CHAPTER 3
AURAL EKPHRASIS OF MARS: "A RAGE AND SWICH A VEZE"

The first time we see Mercury in the *Aeneid* he is sent by Jupiter to calm the

Carthaginians by giving them open minds and a peaceful feeling; we are not told exactly

how he does this, but he thereby banishes any aggressive attitudes that might cause

violence towards Aeneas and his men. Immediately before Jupiter commands this, he

predicts a *pax Romana* under the rule of Romulus and Remus when violent Furor,

restrained, will be locked away:

> ….dirae ferro et compagibus artis
> claudentur Belli portae; Furor impius intus,
> saeva sedens super arma, et centum vinctus aenis
> post tergum nodis, fremet horridus ore cruento (I.293–96)
>
> And grim with iron frames, the Gates of War
> Will then be shut: inside, unholy Furor,
> Squatting on cruel weapons, hands enchained
> Behind him by a hundred links of bronze,
> Will grind his teeth and howl with bloodied mouth. (I.394–98)

There was a "famous painting by Apelles of War enchained….placed in the Forum of

Augustus," believed to have influenced this description. But there is also here a tradition

of the Gates of War of the Temple of Janus being ritually opened while Rome was at war,

and closed during times of peace (Fitzgerald 447).   It is fitting that the Augustan Forum

would contain its painted antecedent since Augustus' rule after the Battle of Actium put

an end to civil strife; at his return from that battle he made a great display of closing the

Gates of War. Here is another description from the *Aeneid*:

> Mos erat in Hesperio in Latio, quemprotinus urbes
> Albanae coluere sacrum nunc maxima rerum

Roma colit, cum prima movent in proelia Martem…
Sunt geminate belli portae sic nominee dicunt
religione sacrae et saevi formidine Martis;
centum aerie claudunt vectes aeternaque ferri
robora, nec custos absistit limine Ianus:
has, ubi certa sedet patribus sentential pugnae,
ipse Quirinali trabea cinctuque Gabino
insignis reserat stridentia limina consul,
ipse vocat pugnas…(VII.601–03; 607–14)

There was a custom then in Latium,
Held sacred later in Alban towns, as now
In the world-power of Rome when citizens
First urge the wargod on…
There are two gates, twin gates
Of war, as they are called, by long observance
Looked on in awe, for fear of savage Mars.
One hundred brazen bolts keep these gates closed
And the unending strength of steel; then too
Their guardian, Janus, never leaves the portal.
When the Fathers' judgment holds for war,
The Consul…
…goes to unlock the grating doors
And lifts a call for battle. (VII.827–29; 834–40; 842–43)

So twin metal gates with a hundred metal bolts, with forward and backward looking

Janus as guardian, contain the destructive power of the god; to open them requires a ritual

of divinely sanctified control, and no one dares touch them and risk opening them

accidentally or contaminating themselves.

The difference between the two above passages is the poetic versatility of Furor,

which is to say, the confusion between *furor* ("madness, rage, fury, prophetic frenzy,

passionate love" etc.); Furor (the *prosopopoeia* of one or more of those general

abstractions, or as *antonomasia* for Mars in that capacity); and Mars himself

(anthropomorphized god of War).[1] In general, it could be helpful to think of *furor* as like

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[1] According to Quintilian, *prosopopoeia* is personification whereby we may "bring down the gods from heaven and raise the dead, while cities also and peoples find a voice…we often personify the abstract, as Vergil does with Fame" (IX.ii.31f); *Furor*, as general personified Madness, is an example of this. An

the Greek ἔνθεος (*entheos*) that we see describing the Pythia or Maenads, or similar to

the Greek θυμός (*thumos*), which for Homer "tells him [a man] that he must now eat or

drink or slay an enemy, it advises him on his course of action, it puts words into his

mouth…[it is] the independent inner voice" (Dodds 16).[2] An example of Statius using

furor in a similar fashion is vocalized by Venus as she complains to Mars of Diana's

involvement in the battle:

> …none hanc, Gradive, protervam
> virginitate vides mediam se ferre virorum
> coetibus, utque acies audax et Martia signa
> temperet? en etiam donat praebetque necandos
> tot nostra de gente viros. huic tradita virtus,
> huic furor? agrestes superset tibi figere dammas. (IX.825–30)
>
> Do you not see her, Gradivus, how impu-
> dent in her virginity she carries herself in the midst of war-
> riors' gatherings? And how bodly she governs armies and
> Martian standards? See, she even makes a present of so
> many men of our race, supplies them for slaughter. Has
> valour and rage been made over to her? For you it remains
> to shoot wild deer.

Venus acts like a *thumos*, whipping up with her nagging voice "the resentment hidden in

his silent heart" (*pressum tacito sub corde dolorem/ tempestiva movet* [IX.824–25]),

while what she is really describing is Parthenopaeus as *entheos* with Diana as she

prepares him for a glorious death:

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epithet, or *appositum*, is "an ornament…poets employ…with special frequency and freedom…[that]cannot stand by itself" (VIII.vi.40f); an example of this is the adjective *saevus* in *saevus Mars*, meaning "savage Mars." An epithet understood on its own is *antonomasia*, which "substitutes something else for a proper name" (VIII.vi.29f); an example of this is "'Pelides'" for "the son of Peleus = Achilles" (VIII.VI.28 &n.). I will be basing all subsequent distinctions off of these three. For further discussion of these tropes, see Quintilian, Institutio Oratoria, Trans. H. E. Butler, Vol. 3 (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1976): 316-19; 390f.

[2] For further information on *thumos* see E. R. Dodds, The Greeks and the Irrational, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951).

> Tunc vero exserto circumvolat igneus arcu
> nec se mente regit, patriae matrique suique
> immemor, et nimium caelestibus utitur armis (IX.736–38)

> Then with bow out-thrust he dashes here and there like
> fire, out of his mind's control, forgetful of country, mother,
> self, using the celestial weapons overmuch.

In the previous passage the word *furor*, like *virtus*, is not capitalized because Venus knows she already goes too far in her misrepresentation: Diana cannot possibly command Martian Furor and Virtus to save or favor Parthenopaeus, or for any other reason. If she were to try to save him, she would be going against his Fate, which no god (not even Jupiter) has the power to do. Further, she could not command Mars' retinue because to do so would be to cross the boundary from her power into his which, as we will see below, is taboo. The most she can do is direct his arrows herself and enhance his ability, turning him into a hunter on the battlefield. Incidentally, this comparison of Parthenopaeus with fire because of Diana's direct involvement is very similar to the results of Juno opening the Gates of War for Turnus' advantage, which I believe is Mars' direct involvement. Smolenaars admits in his commentary that distinguishing between the capitalized and un-capitalized versions of this Latin "madness" "seems somewhat arbitrary" (25); perhaps Venus' manipulation of Mars through her misrepresentation of Diana's "use" of *furor* and *virtus* is Statius' way of drawing our attention to how he is not using Furor *versus furor* arbitrarily, and perhaps even it is a humble comment on how his use is different from that of Vergil.

The first Vergilian passage above depicts *impius Furor* or "the madness of civil war" (Smolenaars 32); Fitzgerald simply calls this "the personification of frenzy, madness" (447). On its own Furor would appear to be, as I mentioned above, a general

prosopopoeia; in this case it has with it an adjective acting as en epithet, which cannot stand on its own and still be understood as referring to Furor, as in *Impius*. Together and without context they mean basically "disloyal Madness," which could refer to general, *prosopopoeic* Madness that drives many types of disloyalty; but above they are contextualized behind the Gates of War, and together they become *antonomasia* for the god himself as "the madness of civil war." This is not to say that there is nothing epithetical about this construction since *impius Furor* cannot stand alone in all contexts and refer to Mars, but here it does stand alone as well as "substitutes something else for a proper name." Vergil could be using *impius Furor* in this way (rather than simply *prosopopoeic* Frenzy or even Madness specific to civil war) because he wanted to emphasize Romulus' fated and unifying (and therefore calming) power as ruler (so powerful, in fact, that he could close the Gates and trap Mars in this capacity inside, an allusion probably not lost on Augustus). Romulus was deified as Quirinus, and as such he has been described by Servius as "Mars when he presides in peacetime" (Lenardon 657). This would suggest that Mars is locked behind the Gates because an innocuous version of himself is commingled with the founder of Rome, keeping his prominent position in the Pantheon during peace, or simply "keeping his ratings up."

The second passage does not concern civil war and does not use "Furor"; it shows, rather, Latinus' refusal to open the Gates of savage Mars (*saevi Martis*) at Turnus' bidding, in order to wage war on Aeneas. It uses a simple epithetical construction of an adjective (*saevus*), attached to the nominal Mars. It is enough to subtly convey what is lurking behind the Gates of War, even though it does not explicitly describe it in a manner similar to the first. The Gates are opened by Juno herself because Latinus refuses

to do "the repellent work" (VII.850), and we see what exactly is unleashed: civil war does not occur, but the desire to wage war and prepare for it spreads like fire through the country; all peaceful toil ceases and implements of daily life become weapons. But all of this is orderly in its own way, as the aggression and new weaponry facilitated by Juno's opening of the Gates is turned not towards Turnus, but put under his command and used against Aeneas. It certainly seems that the Gates withhold Mars' power to madden men into violent action (since *saevus* also means "mad" in addition to "savage, fierce, cruel"), regardless of which way it tends. Turnus wants to unleash what is *saevus* about Mars against Aeneas because this will gain him victory; likewise, Romulus wants to trap what is *impius* about Mars because it will undermine his rule. More to the point, both passages describe the same Gates as withholding the same destructive Mars; the only difference lies in what attributes of that power the poet chooses to highlight, and how he employs *prosopopoeia*, *antonomasia*, or *appositum* to accomplish this.

This seems quite confusing, but the reason for creativity is clear, as Quintilian complains about the use of strings of epithets, which are like "an army with as many camp-followers as soldiers, an army, that is to say, which has doubled its numbers without doubling its strength" (VIII.VI.42); Vergil himself (for Quintilian a major source of rhetoric and its uses), was not above Quintilian's reprobation for using too many epithets. In the case of Mars behind the Gates, however, he uses them minimally and employs *antonomasia* to keep as intact as possible that "strength" towards which the reader could be desensitized by lavish series of descriptives. This would severely detract from the triumphs of Aeneas and Augustus, between whom Fitzgerald thinks Vergil intended an analogy: "the hardest and hugest part for both was waging war to end war"

(414); that is, power over the Gates of War, and locking Mars in some capacity behind them.

Statius, on the other hand, goes further than Vergil's use of *antonomasia* to the point of *prosopopoeia* whereby Furor *almost* becomes a character in the *Thebaid*. He fragments the horrible forces of Mars into a *prosopopoeic* retinue that we see hanging about in the Temple of Mars:

> innumeris strepit aula Minis, tristissima Virtus
> stat medio, laetusque Furor vultuque cruento
> Mors armata sedet…(VII.51–53)
>
> …The court resounds with countless
> Threats, Valour most somber stands in the centre, and joy-
> ful Rage and armed Death with bloodstained countenance
> there sit.

He then uses these anthropomorphic forces to represent Mars as more concretely ubiquitous and culpable when he brings them out to "play"; they are not Mars himself as with Vergil's *impius Furor*, but are *prosopopoeic* abstractions representative of him.[3] In other words, they are *prosopopoeic* in that they are personified abstractions, but they are also epithetical or *apposita* because they cannot stand on their own as the same *prosopopoeic* abstractions or accomplish Statius' end in the same way without a patron deity; they are therefore examples of epithetical *prosopopoeia*. For example, in the *Thebaid* we see Furor as a member of the retinue of Mars, Bacchus, and Venus with the Furies in tow. If Furor stands alone, he is general *prosopopoeic* madness, not the Madness we see on the battlefield, the Madness we see in the followers of Bacchus, or

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[3] For example, see Statius' description of the sack of Thebes: "Dire is the spectacle within. Mavors himself would/ scarce take pleasure in the sight. The city is in a frenzy,/ horrorstruck; Mourning, Madness, Panic, and Flight en-/compassed by blind darkness rend it in various discord./ *You might think War had come inside*" (X.556-60 italics mine).

the Madness Hypsipyle tells of that ruins the Lemnian marriage-beds.[4] In this way the

different types of Furor (as he appears in each retinue) has to do with what way the deity

utilizes him, and therefore in what way his talents are controlled. The *Furores* are not

interchangeable, and this is why I believe they are more than just *prosopopoeic* Madness

and are epithetically *prosopopoeic*: for example, what works for Bacchus is taboo for

Mars and vice versa, and we see this on the battlefield when Tydeus kills Menalippus and

eats part of his head; this is a shameful act in Mars' context, but expected in Bacchus'

with *sparagmos* (rending, i.e. killing) and *omophagia* (eating of the raw flesh). In this

way the *Furores* can also be interpreted as *prosopopoeic* abstractions of the liminal

spaces between the powers of deities.

   The differences between *Furores* are also illustrated by their actions.

Chambermaid-like *Furor Iraque* is part of Mars' retinue, arranging his plume (III.424–

25), and we can imagine them dressed as warriors primping their master; we see them,

Ira Furorque this time, in Bacchus' retinue as not *iners* ("lazy" or, really, not ineffective

because of drunkenness) (IV.661). This is not to say that Quintilians' rhetorical

definitions and examples are the ones that either Statius or Chaucer had in mind as

readers and writers, but they are very helpful starting places for my purposes. Chaucer's

usage of Furor is so strange and chimaeric (and this should be no surprise to anyone

familiar with his writing), that one is not sure if he is tending more towards Vergil or

Statius, or layering in the same moment imitations of them both.[5]

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[4] For Martian Furor see the above example (n.2), or others provided in the paper; for Bacchic Furor see *Thebaid* IV.660f.; for Venusian Furor see *Thebaid* V.74.

[5] From this point forward I will specify in what way I am using Furor if I am not using it as the Statian character, since for my discussion of Chaucer's usage it will need to be explicitly clear what Furor or *furor* I am talking about at any given time. The general *furor* meaning "force" is easy to detect.

Statius refers to or imitates the above, penultimate Vergilian passage no less than

five times in his Book VII Temple of Mars (an *ekphrasis topou*, by the by, of about

twenty-three lines), describing what Mercury sees (Smolenaars 26f). The first occurrence

is as follows:

> ….ubi mille Furoribus illi
> cingitur averso domus immansueta sub Haemo.
>
> There under distant Haemus
> is the god's ungentle house, girt with a thousand Rages. (VII.41–42)

Shackleton Bailey has translated "mille Furoribus" as above, Ross as "thousand Furies."

It looks in this first example like the only connection is the capitalized name "Furor," and

certainly in Vergil's example there is only one, not a thousand. Shackleton Bailey calls

these "thousand Rages" a "careless anticipation of 47ff" (meaning of the Temple's

inhabitants) in his note, and although his interpretation is certainly possible, I find it

dissatisfying. To begin with, they "gird" the Temple, while the inhabitants are clearly

distributed throughout. They also occur early in the ekphrasis, and it would make

rhetorical, Roman sense that if one begins by describing the surrounding area or region of

a structure, that one would then continue in that description of the structure, moving

outward inward, describing inhabitants last since they are mobile and not part of the

structure proper. The verb here is *cingere*, which means to "encircle, enclose a space"; it

is also associated with putting on battle gear (*cingi in proelia*) or a sword (*ferrum cingi*).

Then there is the strange occurrence of "the rare adjective 'immansuetus'

('untamed')…coined by Ovid"; this is the same adjective used by Aeneas to describe

Polyphemus in the *Metamorphoses* (XIV.249), and it can also mean "savage" or "wild"

(Smolenaars 25). I believe that the "thousand Rages" are a thousand sections of iron fence surrounding the Temple, and that just as a soldier girds himself with battle gear, so has this wild Temple been surrounded with a fence as awful as it is.

These sections of fence, then, can be seen as a "thousand Furors," meant by Statius to be closely associated with the imagery of Vergil's *impius Furor*, chained up, which it is supposed hearkens back to that painting of Apelles. Vulcan certainly crafted the Temple out of iron, so it is no stretch to imagine he could also fashion an intricate iron fence to enclose it. Perhaps this is why Statius says, "Everywhere himself [Mars] is to be seen, but nowhere with easy look;/ thus had Mulciber portrayed him with his divine art" (*ubique ipsum, sed non usquam ore remisso/ cernere erat: talem divina Mulciber arte/ ediderat* [60–2]). Since the description is so ambiguous, it is not clear what we are to imagine the individual fence-sections looking like. For example, they could all be the same, *impius Furor* from Vergil; to make the scene more terrible, we could also imagine a "thousand Furies" (per Ross' translation based on *furor*'s definition "fury") as symbolizing Allecto's "thousand names" and "thousand ways of wounding" in the *Aeneid* (VII.461-62); then there is Statius' own Furor, and we could imagine the various ways in which we see him in the *Thebaid*; or, we could substitute any combination of these and more.

In this way Statius allows us to "choose your own Furores" and create our own Temples of Mars, answering for ourselves Nisus' question to Euryalus in the *Aeneid* about the *furor* of Mars as they sit above the gate:

> Dine hunc ardorem mentibus addunt,
> Euryale, an sua cuique dues fit dira cupido? (IX.184–85)

> This urge to action, do the gods instill it,

> Or is each man's desire a god to him,
> Euryalus? (IX.252–54)

Perhaps their position helps explain the spots occupied by Chaucer's temples of Mars and Venus over the west and east gates, respectively, of his amphitheatre. Either way, Nisus' question is also important to Chaucer as he to some extent mimics Statius by letting us choose who is rattling the gate.

These Statian, *saturae* fences, then, are those that I believe Chaucer is thinking of when he describes the entrance to his Temple of Mars:

> ….of which the entree
> Was long and streit, and gastly for to see. (I.1983–84)

Not, on the other hand, the entrance of Boccaccio: "The narrow entrance was all iron and the gates were re-enforced everywhere with eternal diamond" (McCoy 32), which the Traversa translation testifies to almost verbatim. Chaucer does not say that it is "narrow" because above he is describing something different from what he below takes from those Boccaccio lines:

> The northren lyght in at the dores shoon…
> The dore was al of adamant eterne,
> Yclenched overthwart and endelong
> With iren tough….(I.1987; 1990–92)

He puts the plural "dores" right after the singular "gate," then continues on with the description of the adamantine but singular "dore" to distinguish between the two: there is a gate before the actual door or doors to the Temple that lets in the northern light. So the gate that is made "to rese" (as below) is something other than what is taken from Boccaccio, and I believe it is from Statius:

> And therout came a rage and swich a veze
> That it made al the gate for to rese. (I.1985–86)

As fences that contain what they encircle need gates to allow movement from one side to another, from containment to freedom presumably (or of course from one form of containment to another), the Statian fence also needs gates; they just happen to be automatons that open whenever Mars approaches (Smolenaars 40), and as such are not mentioned until later when he does (VII.68f). Chaucer's gate could be an automaton—if one imagines that "rage" to be Mars—since he uses a passive construction that equivocates about just who or what is making the gate "rese"; but in that case, the gate would be malfunctioning since it is made "to rese" but does not actually open. Chaucer's very word "rese" adds credence to this reading since in this chapter's second passage from Vergil concerning Latinus and the Gates of War, the verb for unlocking and opening them is *reserat* from *reserare*; "rese" is basically the root of that verb. Chaucer capitalizes on this word in both Latin and English, not only to allow the simultaneous existence of three texts in one textual moment (as I discuss below), but also to emphasize his Mars as trapped within his own Temple boundary, which is exactly the encapsulation that Theseus accomplishes with the amphitheatre.

There are a few more differences between the three instances of Martian gates in Vergil, Statius, and Chaucer. Vergil has Janus as guardian, while Statius' Mars has no guardian: as is fitting to Statius' point, the gates are still presumably those of War of the Temple of Janus, only Mars has been given complete control over them and is free to come and go as he pleases; it is only the retinue members of Statius' Mars that we see milling about inside the Temple that need to be set free by the opening of the gates.[6] Chaucer, on the other hand, has only one gate, no Janus, and has no real Mars. He moved

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[6] Statius departs from Vergil's use of *reserare*, employing instead *dissilire*, meaning "to fly apart, burst, be dissolved" in order to emphasize Mars' powerful control of his own gates (Smolenaars 40).

Statius' gates from further down in the text (where they and Mars who opens them are outside of the *ekphrasis topou*), to within his wall painting; when Mars does appear he, like Mercury before him, is only a shadow of his former self. Chaucer "civilizes" Mars with his ekphrasis of Statius' extra-ekphrastic Mars, merely calls him "rage," (one way of translating *furor* into English), and mocks him as he makes his own gate "rese" (which in the Latin would mean he had control over it like Statian Mars), but since he only "rattles" it in English, he is like Vergil's Mars locked away.

In these ways the two Temples of Mars—Statius' and Chaucer's both— momentarily exist in the same painting at the same time, the Christian subsuming the pagan in a moment of controlled violence. This idea of two texts occupying the same textual moment is the primary reason for aural ekphrasis, the second moment of which in *The Knight's Tale* (the first was Mercury as "rumbel in a swough" I.1979) is as follows:

> And therout came a rage and swich a veze
> That it made al the gate for to rese. (I.1985–86)

For my purposes, I am translating/modernizing these lines:

> And rushing out came Mars in such a Rage
> That he made the gate shake furiously.

This way, "rage" corresponds with "Mars," "veze" with "Rage," and "rese" with "shake furiously" (which is akin to *furor*), so that the passage illustrates more clearly in modern English the connection between *furor*, Furor, and Mars.

I mentioned before that Chaucer's use of *furor*, Furor, and Mars is chimaeric, and it certainly is. A good deal of the ambiguity comes from the fact that he says "rage," uncapitalized and a direct translation of *furor*. But this "rage" also acts as a personified agent in that it shakes the gate, which would indicate a simple form of Furor. More

problematic, however, is the presence (as I will later show) of the Statian Furor, also a shadow of his former self, in the Temple itself. It is difficult to say whether, because of his presence elsewhere, that we should think of Statian Furor as occupying both spots, or whether this would indicate another type of Furor as *antonomasia* as "rage" (like *impius Furor*), or simply Mars himself, patron deity with retinue (even though there is a statue of him in the painting).[7] Certainly the entity shaking the gate in the above lines can simultaneously be all of these, so Chaucer gives us the "choose your own 'rage'" option.

My preference is for the idea that this "rage" is Mars himself, and I particularly like to think of this gate as an automaton malfunctioning, and that this is the reason Mars is *in* a rage (which is why I have translated the above lines as I have). As someone surrounded by the modern technology of automatic shop doors and such, I can certainly appreciate with amusement the image of Mars repeatedly walking up to his gate and it never opening. In this way, Mars, the terrible pagan god of War, with all the terrible images on his Temple walls and all his terrible retinue, is trapped behind his own fence; it would not be the first time that Vulcan played such a joke. And while Chaucer may already have a statue of Mars in that painting that makes him look impressive and powerful, and Arcite might hear "Victorie!" as if it were Mars pronouncing one of Fleming's *ambages*, Arcite dies, Mars called "rage" is rattling the gate in a wall painting, corralled in with his own impotent retinue, and Mercury already prefigures Mars' *ambage* with his own. Simply put, Chaucer has whittled away so extravagantly at Mars that not even his proper epithets are left. He chains his version of the former god not

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[7] I prefer this idea to thinking of it as an actual statue because as part of the painting, although we cannot tell exactly where in the painting it would be, the idea of stars above or the wolf eating the man below are spatially less problematic.

with bronze, but with one Latin noun translated ingloriously into uncapitalized English, trapped by one gate he can no longer command in an aural ekphrasis that further hides him in sound.

When Chaucer says "And therout came a rage," Mars is past, and has made "the gate for to rese" in the past; as such there is no sound to hear, nor has there ever been any sound to hear, because all the sounds have only ever been visual, capable of only ever having been read: Vergil's *impius Furor* rattles his chains, Statius' Mars his freely opening gates, and Chaucer's Mars the gate that locks him in. Then, as most believe, before Vergil there was Apelles and his painting, which seems to have brought the cycle full circle with Chaucer.

Statius' Furor is also present in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale* in a reduced form, although not aurally ekphrasticized. Statius gives him the epithet *laetus* ("happy"), and as such one can imagine him as a terribly dangerous Mad Hatter type. This epithet survives into Boccaccio's *Teseida* as well as Chaucer: "Yet saugh I Woodnesse, laughynge in his rage" (I.2011). "Woodnesse" is Madness, and Madness is Furor, who is here associated through his maniacal laughing ("in his rage") with the aural ekphrasis of Mars: "And therout came a rage…." (I.1985). By robbing Statius' *laetus Furor* of his richness as a character in Mars' retinue, both Chaucer and his Knight exercise control over him. Chaucer says that he laughs, not that he is happy; *laetus*, although not really "laughing," can mean "fortunate," and as such through word substitution he becomes simply Madness.

His curious companion, Virtus ("Virtue"), present in Statius' Temple of Mars, makes an appearance in Boccaccio's *Teseida*, but is seemingly absent in Chaucer's

Knight's Tale. Elaine Fantham seems to think the juxtaposition of Virtue and Furor is "most sinister and significant," and defers to F. M. Ahl's opinion that "one's *uirtus* is one's ability to destroy" (n.205–06). The fact that Furor is happy and Virtus is sad, and superlatively so, is yet another strange element here: *tristissima* can mean that Virtus is "most sad," but it also denotes that she is also a bringer of sorrow of the worst kind. So although one's *uirtus* is the measure of one's manliness, which is obviously augmented by prowess in battle, it is also by its very nature a measure of one's prowess as bringer of Death; the force needed to motivate that prowess in the *Thebaid* is happy Furor, who is happy to oblige. However, Chaucer changes his companion and Virtus becomes "Meschaunce ["Misfortune"],/With disconfort and sory contenaunce" (I.2009–10). So there is then no longer any measure of manliness or prowess or potency as killer in Chaucer's Temple of Mars: there is only a simple crazy (Furor), a socially uncomfortable *prosopopoeia* of Misfortune, and random images of violence with no value and no measure.

Chaucer has frustrated the power and influence of Mars and Furor through painting and Theseus' encapsulation of both the battle and the temples in the amphitheatre. I believe this is the reason he depicts Mars, now a shadow of his former self, as rattling that gate so furiously. Perhaps we may even interpret this aural ekphrasis as the empty "Victorie!" that Arcite thinks he hears Mars speak.

CHAPTER 4
AURAL EKPHRASIS OF THE FOREST OF TROPHIES: "AL FUL OF CHIRKYNG
WAS THAT SORY PLACE"

The last and least obscure of the aural ekphrases from Chaucer's Knight's Tale is

that of the Forest of Trophies surrounding the Fence of a Thousand Furors, surrounding

the Temple of Mars. What Mercury sees as he descends is marked in a sentence that

begins the ekphrasis topou:

> hic steriles delubra notat Mavortia silvas
> horrescitque tuens…. (VII.40–41)
>
> Here he marks barren woods, Mars' shrine
> and shudders as he looks.

Immediately the use of *sterilis* claims this place as one of death, associating it with the

Underworld where all of the trees, except those producing fruit to torture Tantalus, are

barren (Smolenaars 24–25). Although "steriles" modifies the feminine, accusative plural

"silvas" ("woods"), it is conspicuously placed next to "delubra," the neuter accusative

plural for "shrines," which is in turn being modified by "Mavortia"; conversely, the latter

is conspicuously placed next to "silvas." If we were to translate syntactically in addition

to the above translation, then the shrines would be sterile and the woods Martian; this is

of course not proper, but certainly poetically suggested because "shrines" is plural,

thereby not exclusively referring to the Temple itself (contrary to Shackleton Bailey's

translation), and because of Mercury's reaction to this sight.

Mercury shudders at the woods and the shrines and we wonder why since, as I have

mentioned before, this is a god who, as *Psychopompos*, is very familiar with the

Underworld and all of its horrors. So what is it about these woods and shrines that affects

him in this manner? In the *Aeneid* we see what happens to Aeneas' trophies from

Mezentius, whom he slays, the cruel king who lived to see his son dead:

> vota deum primo voctor solvebat Eoo.
> Ingentem quercum decisis undique ramis
> constituit tumulo fulgentiaque induit arma,
> Mezenti ducis exuvias, tibi, magne, tropaeum,
> bellipotens: aptat rorantis sanguine cristas
> telaque trunca viri et bis sex thoraca petitum
> perfossumque locis clipeumque ex aere sinistrae
> subligat atque ensem collo suspendit eburnum
> Tum socios, namque omnis eum stipata tegebat
> turba ducum, sic incipiens hostatur ovantis:
> '…haec sunt spolia et de rege superbo
> primitiae, manibusque meis Mezentius hic est.' (XI.4–13; 15–16)

>   …he first
> In early light discharged his ritual vows
> As victor to the gods. A big oak trunk
> Lopped of its boughs, he planted on a mound
> And dressed it with Mezentius' bright gear
> To make a trophy, god of war, to thee.
> He fitted it with a crest still oozing blood,
> With javelins of the warrior, and his cuirass,
> Twelve times cut and breached. On the left side
> He tied the bronze shield, and he slung the ivory
> Scabbard and sword around the figure's neck.
> Then he addressed the officers…
> '…I stripped
> These arms from a proud king – my offering now,
> First trophy in the war: Mezentius,
> Become this figure at my hands.' (XI.4–15; 19–22)[1]

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[1] Fitzgerald's translation uses the word "figure," but the Latin words he is translating are not *figura*. For example, the dead tree "dressed" in Mezentius' armor is, as Aeneas says when he addresses his troops in the Latin, "Mezentius by my hands"; the word for one of these trophies is *tropaeum*. Considering the long history of the word *figura* and its diverse meanings and uses, it is a bit misleading to use "figure" here in Vergil, although the way Fitzgerald is translating it is probably (and appropriately) most akin to Ovid's use of it in the sense of a metamorphosis (Auerbach 22). For further discussion of *figura*, see Erich Auerbach, "Figura," <u>Scenes from the Drama of European Literature,</u> Trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1959): 11-76.

Fitzgerald's note to this passage tells us that this ritual was performed in Vergil's time by soldiers of the Roman army after battle successes (479), and it is a theme we see cropping up several times. In the following example, Evander, king of Pallanteum and ally of Aeneas, is mourning the death of his young son, Pallas; the scene is the funeral of Pallas and Evander apostrophizes both Pallas and Turnus, who has killed him:

> Magna tropaea ferunt, quos dat tua dextera Leto:
> tu quoque nunc stares immanis truncus in armis,
> esset par aetas et idem si robur ab annis,
> Turne. (XI.172–75)

> ….Men to whom
> Your sword-arm dealt out death are here as trophies,
> Great ones; you, too, Turnus, would stand here,
> A huge trunk hung with arms, had age and strength
> And seasoning of years matched him with you. (XI.236–40)

Later we see the Trojans accidentally cutting down a tree sacred to Faunus who, as a deity associated with life and fertility instead of death like Mars, receives his offerings on a living tree:

> ….nautis olim venerabile lignum,
> servati ex undis ubi figere dona solebant
> Laurenti divo et votas suspendere vestes,
> sed stirpem Teucri nullo discrimine sacrum
> sustulerant, puro ut possent concurrere campo. (XII.767-71)

> ….those who survived
> Shipwreck or storm fixed votive offerings there
> And hung their garments to Laurentum's god.
> The Trojans, treating it like any other,
> Had left a stump but lopped away the tree,
> So they could fight on a clear field. (XII.1039-44)

The reason explicitly stated above for chopping down the tree certainly makes sense, but since we have already seen many trees felled to make offerings, it is tempting to think that the Trojans are such successful warriors that they have even resorted to hubristically

chopping down sacred trees in order to furnish enough dead trunks for all of their votive trophies.

It is hard to imagine the vast number of these trophies that would have to be erected from just one battle, but it is easy to imagine them all collected around the Temple of Mars, forming a barren forest of Martian shrines that would make Mercury shudder. They could even be read as those "thousand Rages" that "gird" the house of Mars, almost dressing it, since this is the way Vergil describes Aeneas affixing Mezentius' armor to the dead trunk (XI.8). In this way they are also linked to Furor, since it is he and Ira that are helping Mars to dress in the *Thebaid*.

It seems highly unlikely that these important scenes would have escaped Statius, or that they would not figure into his writing, since in the *Thebaid* we see Furor in his role as *aide-de-plume*. Clearly the syntax and diction of the text support the "steriles delubra…Mavortia silvas" as a Forest of Trophies. Chaucer would have had twofold exposure to this idea and the terrible nature of it via Vergil and Statius, and Statius' incorporation of the idea is certainly creative, albeit enigmatic. I believe that Chaucer understood the Forest of Trophies in a way fairly similar to how I have described it, and that he then incorporated this into his wall painting in the Temple of Mars. After Statius' description of Vergil's trophies Chaucer would certainly have to be innovative to match or better him, and this probably would have proved difficult since he was describing a flat surface painting instead of an imagined three-dimensional structure. To this end—in addition to allowing a moment in Statius' text (and through his, Vergil's) to occupy the same and single moment as his own *Knight's Tale* in his own *Knight's* Tale—Chaucer created the aural ekphrasis "Al ful of chirkyng was that sory place" (I.2004). The

"chirkyng" is the metal noise, to be sure omnipresent, of the creaking, rattling, and clashing of the vast Forest of Trophies as they are subjected to the same northern wind and hail as Mercury. These Vergilian "trees" would also explain why Chaucer takes time to describe the "bareyne trees olde,/ Of stubbes sharpe and hidouse to biholde" (I.1977–78): the "chirkyng" twenty-six lines later refers to them.

This aural ekphrasis too displays Chaucer's opinion of the futility of war as we come to know this Forest of Trophies in his text as only the creepy sound of "chirkyng," in which there is no honor and no measure of absent Virtus. In this "chirkyng" Chaucer has yet again removed the personal gain of war – stealing the *tropaea* of individual death-prowess and allure of war-booty in one move – by using a noise that is scary not in a dominant, aggressive way so necessary in warfare, but in the repulsively eerie way of the Underworld.

The point to which these three aural ekphrases tend is that Chaucer thinks much the same of war as Statius (and indeed Vergil), and these represent his inventive way of illustrating it. I do not think, however, that the aural ekphrases were crafted in any one-upmanship manner. They allow Statius' *Thebaid* and his use of sources, mostly Vergil's *Aeneid*, to exist simultaneously in three very specific textual moments of his *Knight's Tale* in what seem like a respectful and poetically imaginative furthering of their texts and opinions. Chaucer's very Statian Mercury is silent but he is also the loudest and most ominously onomatopoeic noise of all as the "Rumbel in a swough." He is a conspicuous symbol of the danger of holding one's tongue in the face of war, but also the uselessness of unleashing it and becoming a coward whose "talk is cheap." As Vergil's Turnus reproaches Drances:

….Sed non replanda est curia verbis,
quae tuto tibi magna volant, dum distinet hostem
agger murorem nec inundat sanguine fossae.
Proinde tona eloquio, solitum tibi, meque timoris
argue tu, Drance, quando tot stragis acervos
Teucrorum tua dextra dedit passimque tropaeis
insignis agros. (XI.380–86)

No need to fill this hall with words, big words
You can let fly in safety….Hammer away
With all your rhetoric. Say I'm afraid
When your own sword has left the dead in heaps,
The field brilliant with trophies everywhere. (XI.517f.)

Turnus' speech here links Mercury, Mars, and the Forest of Trophies and perhaps we have here the beginning of Statius' Book VII *ekphrasis topou* of his Temple of Mars. Chaucer's Mars called "rage" rattles his gate to no effect; behind him in the Temple, Furor called simply "Woodnesse" cackles; and Virtus, now "Meschaunce," just looks uncomfortable. The Forest of Trophies too makes its noise, an inglorious shadow of what Turnus above boasts of having caused.

We have in these aural ekphrases of Chaucer a unique opportunity to listen to the sounds from the past that he has recorded together, his own compilation, to boldly and rhetorically confront us with what is quite possibly war's worst sensory element, but certainly its least suspected and prepared for: its noise. One can always close the eyes. These three collections of noise, then, are from the Roman past, but also the ancient Greek as the epithet Cyllenian reminds us. In these aural ekphrases is the resolution beyond that of Arcite's future, of Mars and Mercury's *ambage*: "Victorie!" is not that of the soldier or the general or the politician in support, it belongs to *laetus Mars* who will be both happy and fortunate if we are foolish enough to once again silence the rhetoric of peace by calling it coward, give Mars back his automaton gates, and re-introduce Virtus

and Furor; essentially, if we return again to Statius, and are again swayed by Vergil's

Turnus.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS

I have in the previous chapters presented my philological explanations for

Chaucer's "noisy" Martian wall paintings. To make my discussion more complete,

however, I will in this chapter briefly talk about what his strange use of ekphrasis could

mean for the critical and theoretical traditions of this topos and "medieval noise."

Michael Baxandall—in a book based on a series of lectures designed to address the

question, "If we offer a statement about the causes of a picture, what is the nature and

basis of the statement?"—reminds us that

The nature of language…means that the description is less a representation of the picture,
or even a representation of seeing the picture, than a representation of thinking about
having seen the picture (11).

When we talk about a picture at length, or even superficially, we almost surely describe

what it looks like in some way; when we talk about Chaucer's aural ekphrases, we must

ultimately describe them philologically, because they are less representations of what the

painting in the Temple of Mars looks like, or representations of what Arcite or the Knight

"see" there, than representations of Chaucer remembering having read Statius and Vergil,

and Statius remembering having read Vergil and Ovid.

The use of ekphrasis

in Hellenistic rhetoric was totally unrestricted: it referred, most broadly, to a
verbal description of something, almost anything, in life or art….it consistently
carried with it the sense of a set verbal device that encouraged an extravagance in
detail and vividness in representation, so that…our ears could serve as our eyes
since "[ekphrasis] must through hearing operate to bring about seeing." (Krieger
7)

This could certainly be Chaucer's objective in representing Mercury, Mars, and the Forest of Trophies aurally, and since his tale is an ancient Greek legend he knows through a Roman author, this version of ekphrasis works well. Even though there is quite a bit of detail given about the Temple of Mars' painting and even the Temple itself, most of it is spatially nonsensical; that is to say, that although certain images are described as existing in the painting, in what order or size they exist is almost impossible to tell since the seer does not have to see from left to right as one reads English, and there are no handy prepositions to give it away. In fact, as I stated earlier, the statue of Mars is even difficult to place, not to mention the stars above it or the figures at its feet.

So if ekphrasis is "the illusionary representation of the unrepresentable" like Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (Krieger xv), then Chaucer's particular flavor of Martian ekphrasis is a cache of *ostraka*. They are illusionary not in that they are unrepresentable (each *ostrakon* certainly is, and we can certainly imagine them together as well, in a heap), but that they ever were parts of the same urn and can be represented that way through language, which is at once the tool we use to glue them together, and that which Chaucer used to smash them apart. It is natural for us to attempt to rebuild these pieces because they make us so uncomfortable, but what we are building is a chimaera, a monster. I have done it, am doing it in this thesis, and I have said, "We can imagine Mercury/Mars/the Forest of Trophies…"; this seems to be what Chaucer wanted us to do, and his text asks us to do. But ultimately he has created tangible aural holes that are also *ostraka*, ostracized *aporia* if you will, which, Protean as they are, evade all attempts (including mine) at creating our monster-urn, because as we theorize on the painting as a whole, we put the *ostraka* together without the aural ekphrasis pieces; as we theorize on

the aural ekphrases, we put them together and thereby exclude other *ostraka*; and as we

theorize on just the *ostraka*-images themselves, we impossibly leave them in their heap

because otherwise we are right back at a complete monster-urn with no aural ekphrasis

ostraka. Chaucer has given us a Protean puzzle that our textual archaeology only

complicates further, and as such his Martian ekphrasis is a description of the myth of an

urn, its whole the pieces of many other urns fitting perfectly together; that is to say, the

myth of a painting that visually provides us with the "big picture" at the same time that it

denies it, showing only its parts, which have only ever been textual genetics. The

Sphinx, stealing from the Muses, could do no better than this.

Perhaps his aural ekphrasis is a maneuver intended to explain the very nature of

ekphrasis (or at least the great ekphrases worth imitating), which is to say that they

cannot be translated without describing an entirely new object or place; it is possible that

the confines of at least one of the languages will also prescribe an entirely new way of

looking at it. We do not have a word in English that is associated with gold, wind, and

hearing, nor do we have a verb that means to sing, warn, and be silver; the English shield

of Aeneas is not the same as the Latin one because the ekphrasis cannot possibly be. The

best Chaucer could do was to create a new and fantastic way of referring us to the

original or originals that would leave basically intact the referents. Considering how he

believed sound to work as "eyr ybroken," it would not be a great stretch for him to move

from "pieces" of air, to the "pieces" of original text to which they refer.

Jeffrey Cohen's article on "medieval noise," although it does not discuss these

aural ekphrases found in Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*, approaches the strange animal, as it

were, of noise itself: "Noise is body, monster, materiality, the other, the sound of all

those differences that seem to have been excluded but inhabit the heart of identity" (269).

Cohen further explores the rhetorical ramifications of his "noise monster," from blasts of

noise (such as "battle cries…as the explosive negative" [270]), to the degeneration or

downright absence of noise: "To rob members of the lower classes of their humanity

through the removal of their language is, moreover, a common rhetorical strategy for

medieval writers" (273). What we have in Chaucer is the tangible, present absence of

noise that was never noise in that it was only ever visual (even if by reading the source

texts), or in that it was only ever the visual suggestion of noise (through the Latin of the

source texts); which is certainly to say a "noise-monster." As in Cohen's description, the

sounds of the aural ekphrases do "inhabit the heart of identity" in that they inhabit other,

source texts at the same time, which makes them the sounds of those different texts and

the differences between them; at the same time as this they are also the sounds of

Chaucer's text and the differences between it and its sources. And while the different

translations of *crepare* that dominate the aural ekphrases link Chaucer's ultimately

Christian text with its pagan sources, thereby celebrating sound, they also serve to silence

them through translation, the "removal of their language."

The Lernaean hydra-like nature of these "noisy" wall paintings in Chaucer's

Temple of Mars allows for an inexhaustible number of approaches that continually

multiply and complicate their polytropism; as such this thesis project will always be

incomplete. What I have tried to do is offer an explanation of these strange occurrences

of sound without totalizing (respectfully doing my duty by each author's work), and

which is fairly representative of appropriate criticism while containing it all within the

limits of a thesis. When Vergil tells us in one reading of "auratis," "And here you all

hear the silvery goose as he flutters…" we are invited to look on the shield of Aeneas with Aeneas, to look in the past and see its past future, and to hear the proleptic metal handiwork of the immortal Vulcan; when Chaucer says "Ther saugh I…a rumbel in a swough…a rage and swich a veze, that he made al the gate for to rese…[and]...al ful of chirkyng was that sory place," we are invited to read Vergil with Chaucer and Statius. We are, in other words, invited to hear what we can see, to read what we have read, and through these, to become ourselves part of the Martian ekphrasis.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Valerie Ann Leitner holds two Bachelor of Arts degrees, *summa cum laude*, in English literature and classical studies from the University of Florida (August 2000). She received her Master of Arts in English from the University of Florida in May 2006. Her areas of specialization are medieval to early modern English literature, and classical rhetoric and philology.

Rethinking how sound can evolve into inhabitable space and employing the princi-pals of sound in space this thesis will attempt to redene how people occupy the built envi-ronment through sound and not only the typ-ical visual aspect. This thesis will prove that aural architecture can and will be a sustain-able characteristic of modern architecture. The conceptual and schematic phase of design will have to incorporate the ideas of sound as divisions of space and not sole-ly rely on walls and barriers to dene said space. Applying aural and acoustical systems to create a sensorial relationship wi Speaking walls: ekphrasis in chaucer's house of fame. Mary Olson. The use of ekphrasis has a long history in Western literature. The term at once calls to mind the shield descriptions in the Iliad and Aeneid and the description of Dido's Trojan War wall painting in the latter. These exemplify a tradition which has had a strong influence on succeeding writers, including Chaucer. Â Virgil's use of ekphrasis in his description of the temple of Juno (Chaucer's model for the Temple of Venus) is still different from the above examples in that it generates narrative (Res Ipsae), and in that the viewer of the artifact is Aeneas, who has experienced the events. 122. Olson. Six years and many albums after that promising work, ÃVANGELIST rejoin I, Voidhanger Records and release their most sinister and inventive work to date, â€œMatricide In The Temple Of Omegaâ€. Now, as then, ÃVANGELIST play dark death metal to end all death metal, but it's a matter of fact that they never sounded so bleak, cryptic and derailed. â€œMatricide In The Temple Of Omegaâ€ constantly struggles to gain a shape, to find an intelligible form and escape the painful vice of non-existence. Â Matthew Toye 'Writhes In The Murk' was the first thing I heard from this duo and I started my collection with it. This sees them taking their unhinged and nightmarish sound to even more unhinged and nightmarish places. Favorite track: Ascending Into the Pantheon. ddb.