OVIDIAN PERSONAE IN STATIUS'S *THEBAID*

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Contemporary discussion of Statius's *Thebaid* is particularly concerned with elucidating the Flavian poet's debt to Vergil in the *Aeneid* in terms of structure, thematics, and poetics.[1] Indeed, the adulatory tone of Statius's explicit references to Vergil may be said to invite such critical scrutiny into the relation between the two poets (*Theb.* 10.447–48, 12.816–17). In addition to sustained engagement with Vergil's *Aeneid* in the *Thebaid*, however, many critics have observed a pervasive debt to Ovid, especially the *Metamorphoses*.[2] Thus David Vessey notes (1973.120) that the *Thebaid*, like the *Metamorphoses*, "is a 'carmen perpetuum,' 'a blend of continuity and change,' in which there is constant movement, delicate articulation and unbroken development," while Carole Newlands (2002) prefaces a stimulating exploration of Statius's adaptation of Ovidian techniques of landscape representation in the *Thebaid* with the observation that "aitiological myth, internal narrators, an emphasis on female experience and on psychological effects, subtle transitions, a dysfunctional pantheon, the participation of personifications in the narrative . . . are features that Ovid's epic and Statius's share." In this study, I wish to examine further one feature of the Flavian epicist's debt to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, his adaptation of Ovidian characters and techniques of characterization in the *Thebaid*. Particular attention will be paid to Statius's characterization of the leading members of the House of Oedipus (Oedipus, Polynices, Eteocles, and Creon), the Argive

1 Mozley 1963–64, Vessey 1973, Ahl 1986, Hardie 1989, 1993, 1997, Hill 1989, Braund 1996.

2 Feeney 1991.344 n. 107 and 337–91 passim, Hardie 1990.226 n. 13.

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heroes Tydeus and Parthenopaeus, the Fury Tisiphone, and the Theban seer Tiresias.

Statius implicitly acknowledges a debt to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* at the outset of his poem in a proem that reviews the history of Thebes that he will *not* narrate (*Theb.* 1.4–17):[3]

> gentisne canam primordia dirae,
> Sidonios raptus et inexorabile pactum
> legis Agenoreae scrutantemque aequora Cadmum?
> longa retro series, trepidum si Martis operti
> agricolam infandis condentem proelia sulcis
> expediam penitusque sequar, quo carmine muris
> iusserit Amphion Tyrios accedere montes,
> unde graues irae cognata in moenia Baccho,
> quod saeuae Iunonis opus, cui sumpserit arcus
> infelix Athamas, cur non expaverit ingens
> Ionium socio casura Palaemone mater.
> atque adeo iam nunc gemitus et prospera Cadmi
> praeteriisse sinam: limes mihi carminis esto
> Oedipodae confusa domus.
>
> Shall I sing the origins of the dread family, the seizure of the Sidonian maiden, the relentless terms of Agenor's ruling, and Cadmus searching the sea? The line runs far back, if I unfold the tale of the anxious farmer of hidden war who sowed battle lines in accursed furrows and then press on with the incantation by which Amphion bade the Tyrian mountains contribute to the city walls; the source of Bacchus's harsh anger against his relatives' city; the deed of savage Juno; the target against whom unfortunate Athamas took up his bow; the reason why Ino did not blanch at the huge Ionian sea when she leapt in with her son Palaemon. And so now I shall allow the sorrows and successes of Cadmus to pass by: let the turbulent house of Oedipus be the path of my song.

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3 I cite the *Thebaid* from Hill 1983; unless otherwise indicated, translations are my own.

The subjects Statius eschews constitute the core of Ovid's Theban narrative, spanning the third and fourth books of the *Metamorphoses* (2.836–4.603).[4] Indeed, with the exception of Amphion, the characters catalogued by Statius here receive their fullest treatment in extant Latin literature in Ovid's Theban history.[5] Even Amphion, although he plays no role in Ovid's "Thebaid," appears in *Metamorphoses* 6 as king of Thebes and husband of the unfortunate Niobe (6.221, 271, 402), in an episode that reprises the themes of the earlier Theban narrative.

Statius signals his engagement with his predecessor not only in his catalogue of Ovid's Theban subjects but also in his diction. Philip Hardie remarks (1990.226 n. 13) that the "'longa retro series' of Stat. *Theb.* 1.4–16 is virtually a summary of Ovid's Theban books"[6] and compares the phrasing of Ovid's retrospective summary of his Theban tales: *serieque malorum* ("a series of misfortunes," *Met*. 4.564).[7] Statius's disavowal of Ovid's themes (*Theb.* 1.15–16) is itself articulated in Ovidian terms, for Ovid frames his Theban narrative as the story of the illusory prosperity of the exiled Cadmus (*Met.* 3.131–37, 4.564–67) and begins his recital of Cadmus's misfortunes with a similarly paradoxical *sententia* (3.138–39): "prima nepos inter tot res tibi, Cadme, secundas / causa fuit luctus" ("Among so many prosperous affairs, Cadmus, the first source of grief for you was a grandson").[8] Statius thus hints that his predecessor's narrative of the House of Cadmus cannot be so easily dissociated from his own narrative of the House of Oedipus. Indeed, I shall argue that Statius's characterization of Oedipus and his fratricidal sons (brothers) can be interpreted, in part, as a meditation on the careers of the Ovidian Cadmus and his relatives.

Ancient rhetorical theory offered guidelines for the representation in law courts of character and life (*morum ac vitae imitatio*, Cic. *de Orat.*

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4 Cf. Caviglia 1973.88–90, Hardie 1990; cf. Braund 2002, Newlands 2002. Feeney 1991.344 n. 106 suggests that "Statius's entire subject may be seen as supplementing Ovid's treatment of the house of Cadmus in *Met.* 2–4; in his proem (1.4–14) he rejects those areas dealt with by Ovid, and devotes twelve books to the mighty topic skipped over by Ovid in five lines of prophecy (*Met.* 9.403–7). The poem is an epic exaggeration of Ovid's technique of expanding on a model's brevity and abbreviating a model's expansion."

5 Davis 1994 examines the theme of history in Statius's *Thebaid* without reference to literary history.

6 Cf. Feeney 1991.344 n.106.

7 I cite the *Metamorphoses* from Miller, rev. Goold, 1977. All translations are my own.

8 Heuvel 1932 ad loc., cited by Caviglia 1973.90.

3.204, Quint. *Inst. Or.* 9.1.30; cf. [Cic.] *ad Her.* 63–65) that were also followed by students of rhetoric in school, by politicians in the Senate, and by poets in verse (Selden 1992.489–98). Handbooks advise that a legal argument begin with character description (Quint. *Inst. Or.* 4.2.129), and, in a rhetorical culture, it is scarcely surprising that poetic and historical narratives should follow suit. Of particular interest to us are Quintilian's categories for describing persons or, as we should put it, for the technique of characterization (*Inst. Or.* 5.10.23–31; cf. 7.2.27–35). He approaches characterization through the categories of lineage (*genus*), nationality (*natio*), country (*patria*), sex (*sexus*), upbringing and training (*educatio et disciplina*), physique (*habitus corporis*), fortune (*fortuna*), cast of character (*animi natura*), pursuits (*studia*), claims (*quid adfectet quisque*), past actions and words (*ante acta dictaque*), emotion (*commotio*), plans (*consilia*), disposition of mind (*habitus animi*), and name (*nomen*).[9] In our exploration of Statius's debt to Ovidian techniques of characterization, we shall find examples of many of these rhetorical categories.

Statius introduces Oedipus alive and brooding in his self-imposed darkness (*Theb.* 1.46–48): "impia iam merita *scrutatus lumina* dextra / merserat *aeterna damnatum nocte* pudorem / Oedipodes" ("Having probed his impious eyes with deserving hand, Oedipus had already submerged his guilty shame in everlasting night"). The verb Statius uses of Oedipus's self-blinding, *scrutatus*, signals Oedipus's genealogical and thematic descent from Cadmus, who, in Statius's proem, similarly "probes" the seas for his sister Europa (*Theb.* 1.6, quoted above).[10] Oedipus's Cadmean lineage and pursuits are thus reflected in his past actions, as Statius appeals to the model of Ovid's Cadmus seeking his sister throughout the world (*Met.* 3.3–5): "cum pater ignarus Cadmo *perquirere* raptam / imperat et poenam, si non invenerit, addit / *exilium*, facto pius et sceleratus eodem" ("When his father, unaware of the truth, bade Cadmus search out his ravished daughter and added the penalty of exile should he be unable to find her, both pious and

9 As his example of the final category (*nomen*), the use of which he deprecates, he adduces the Euripidean Eteocles' attack on his brother's character through his name (*Inst. Or.* 5.10.31): "nam et illud apud Euripiden [Phoen. 636] frigidum sane, quod nomen Polynicis ut argumentum morum frater incessit" ("For that is also obviously forced in Euripides, when his brother turns to Polynices' name as an argument about character").

10 Ahl 1986.2824; cf. Henderson 1991.31 and 1991.65 n. 37. Statius also alludes to the Senecan Oedipus (*Oed.* 965–67): "scrutatur avidus manibus uncis lumina / radice ab ima funditus vulsos simul / evolvit orbes."

wicked in the same deed"). Like the founder of his line (*Theb.* 1.15, quoted above), moreover, Oedipus has fallen victim to suffering and lamentation through his offspring (*Theb.* 1.76–78): "quin ecce superbi / —pro dolor!—et nostro iamdudum in funere reges / insultant tenebris *gemitusque* odere *paternos*" ("But look at their arrogance—to our grief!—and kings with me long dead, they already mock my blindness and hate their father's groans"). Statius thus characterizes Oedipus by reference to his descent from Cadmus, whose character he, in turn, derives from the past actions of his Ovidian model.

Another allusion to Ovid's Theban history in Statius's characterization of Oedipus has gone unnoticed. Oedipus's self-blinding is itself the literary descendant of the blinding of the Ovidian Tiresias, who was deprived of his sight by the vindictive Juno (*Met.* 3.333–35): "gravius Saturnia iusto / nec pro materia fertur doluisse suique / iudicis *aeterna damnavit lumina nocte*" ("Saturn's daughter is said to have been more seriously pained than was right, out of all proportion to the matter at hand, and she condemned the eyes of her own judge to everlasting night"). The fact that the blind Ovidian Tiresias informs Statius's blind Oedipus confirms the Flavian epic's literary descent from Ovid's Theban history and offers an ironic comment on the conspicuous absence of Oedipus (and the House of Labdacus) from Ovid's "Thebaid."[11]

If Oedipus combines in his character features of both the Ovidian Cadmus and Tiresias at the opening of Statius's epic, at the end of the poem, when Creon orders him into exile from Thebes, he has fully assumed the lineaments of Ovid's Cadmus (*Theb.* 11.669–72, 684, 692, 750–54). Oedipus leaves a land he views as cursed (11.695–96): "fugio excedoque nefandis / sedibus" ("I flee and depart from this impious site"). With just this cast of mind, the Ovidian Cadmus departs from Thebes, viewing the site (rather than his own killing of the serpent of Mars) as impious (*Met.* 4.565–67): "exit / conditor urbe sua, tamquam fortuna locorum, / non sua se premeret" ("The founder departed from his own city, as though the luck of the place, rather than his own, oppressed him"). Statius thus articulates Oedipus's future plans in terms of his literary ancestor's fortune and past actions.

The literary implications of this characterization are drawn explicitly

11 On this absence, see Gildenhard and Zissos 2000, who argue that there is an intertextual dynamic between Ovid's Narcissus and Echo episode and Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus.* Statius's characterization of Oedipus in diction borrowed from Ovid's portrait of Tiresias lends further intertextual support to their argument.

by Statius in Oedipus's farewell to Creon, which functions as a final curse condemning the new incumbent of the Theban throne to repeat the impiety of his ancestors (*Theb.* 11.701–03): "habeas Thebana regasque / moenia, quo Cadmus, quo Laius omine rexit / quoque ego" ("May you hold Thebes' walls and rule them with the luck by which Cadmus, Laius, and I ruled"). Like the Ovidian Cadmus (*luctu serieque malorum / victus*, *Met.* 4.564–65), Oedipus views the devastation of Thebes' current ruling family as a genealogical sequence of disasters enmeshing successive generations in Cadmus's misfortunes.[12] This coheres with the moral that the Statian Jupiter himself draws at the outset of the poem that character is inherited (*Theb.* 1.227–31): "*mens* cunctis imposta *manet*: quis funera Cadmi / nesciat et totiens excitam a sedibus imis / Eumenidum bellasse aciem, mala gaudia matrum / erroresque feros nemorum et reticenda deorum / crimina?" ("The mind implanted in all remains: who does not know Cadmus's funerals, the Furies' battle line so often provoked to warfare from the underworld, the Theban mothers' evil joys, wild wanderings in the woods, the crimes against the gods that must not be mentioned?"). Lineage, ancestral fortune, and past actions, Jupiter insists, all condition contemporary Theban (and Argive, cf. 1.245–47) character. But Statius's Jupiter need not elaborate the dark deeds of the House of Cadmus because they have been chronicled in Ovid's Theban narrative (the god's praeterition recalls that of the poet, 1.15–16). Indeed, Statius's Jupiter here echoes an Ovidian statement of the immutability of character, itself drawn from the Theban history and applied to Cadmus's grandson Actaeon after his transformation into a stag (*Met.* 3.203): "*mens* tantum pristina *mansit*" ("Only his mind remains as it was"). Statius thus adapts a general rule of Ovidian characterization, the mind of the metamorphosed individual remains unchanged,[13] to suggest that his characters inherit a disposition towards crime implanted in their literary ancestors by Ovid.

Creon is therefore far from being the sole successor to Cadmus's (and Oedipus's) ill fortune. Eteocles and Polynices, as the sons (and brothers) of Oedipus (*Oedipodionii . . . fratres*, *Theb.* 10.801),[14] share his Cadmean inheritance of misrule and exile. Like Oedipus, Polynices is expelled from "Echion's court" ("Echionia steterat privatus in aula," *Theb.* 2.310; cf.

12 On the tendency to repeat the past or return to origins in Theban myth, see Zeitlin 1990, especially 152–54, and Henderson 1991.41–42.

13 Solodow 1988.175–76.

14 Statius borrows the coinage from Ovid: *Oedipodioniae . . . Thebae* (*Met.* 15.429).

10.508, 12.73) by the lot that gives Thebes over to the (mis)rule of his brother Eteocles, and he thereby inherits Cadmus's exilic associations.[15] An unnamed Theban draws the link between Cadmus's wanderings and his descendant's exile (1.180–85): "an inde vetus Thebis extenditur omen, / ex quo Sidonii nequiquam blanda iuvenci / pondera Carpathio iussus sale *quaerere* Cadmus / exsul *Hyanteos* invenit regna per agros, / fraternasque acies fetae telluris hiatu / augurium *seros dimisit ad usque nepotes*?" ("Or does the old omen extend to modern Thebes, from the time when Cadmus, bidden in vain to search for the pretty burden of the Sidonian bullock in the Carpathian sea, found in exile a kingdom in Boeotian fields and, in the aperture of the fertile earth, left kindred battlelines as an augury to his late-born descendants?"). Statius dubs both Cadmus and Polynices "the Tyrian exile" (*Tyrii . . . exsulis*, 1.153–54; *Tyrius . . . exsul*, 3.406) on the model of the Ovidian Cadmus, himself a Tyrian (*Met.* 3.35: *Tyria . . . de gente profecti*; 3.129: *Sidonius hospes*; 4.572: *Sidone profectus*)[16] and an exile (*Met.* 3.6–7: *orbe pererrato . . . profugus*; 4.567–68: "longisque erroribus actus / contigit Illyricos profuga cum coniuge fines"). Moreover, the rare adjective *Hyanteus* points specifically to Ovid, for it first appears in Latin in the *Metamorphoses* (5.312, 8.310) and varies the Augustan poet's *Hyantius*, applied to Cadmus's grandson Actaeon as he wanders in the Theban landscape (3.146–47): "cum iuvenis placido per devia lustra *vagantes* / participes operum conpellat *Hyantius* ore" ("When the Boeotian youth addressed with friendly words his comrades in the hunt as they wandered through the trackless wilds").[17] When Polynices leaves Thebes, he rehearses Cadmus's exile and Actaeon's wanderings (*Theb.* 1.312–14): "Interea patriis olim *vagus exsul* ab oris / Oedipodionides furto deserta *pererrat* / Aoniae" ("Meanwhile the son of Oedipus, long a wandering exile from his ancestral lands, traversed the wilds of Boeotia in secret").

In exile, moreover, the Theban prince wears the heroic dress of the founder of his line (1.483–84): "tergo videt huius inanem / impexis utrimque

15 Polynices as *exsul*: *Theb.* 1.312, 2.114, 403, 3.406, 4.77, 6.504, 913, 8.615, 9.52, 10.585, 11.109, 503, 516, 540, 12.59, 394, 444.

16 Statius applies the adjective *Sidonius* to Europa and the bull that ravished her (*Theb.* 1.5, 181), Cadmus (3.180, 300), and their country of origin (8.229, 11.212; cf. 10.648); thence he applies it to Thebes and the Thebans (3.656, 4.648, 7.442–43, 7. 600, 8.218, 8.330, 8.686, 9.144, 9.567, 9.709, 10.126, 10.297, 10.480–81, 11.303). The adjective is frequent in Ovid, who also coined the feminine adjectival form *Sidonis* that Statius uses of Europa (*Theb.* 9.334): see *OLD* s.v.

17 For the rarity of the adjective, see Bömer 1969–86.49 ad loc.

iubis horrere leonem," ("On his back, [Adrastus] sees a lion skin, its uncombed mane bristling in every direction"). Although Statius likens Polynices' lion skin to that worn by Hercules (1.485–87),[18] we may note that the Labdacid is also accoutered in the style of the Ovidian Cadmus in his contest with the serpent of Mars (*Met.* 3.52–54): "tegumen derepta leoni / pellis erat, telum splendenti lancea ferro / et iaculum teloque animus praestantior omni" ("The pelt of a lion was his cloak, his weapons a light spear tipped with shining iron and a javelin, and his mettle more outstanding than any weapon"). Statius thus explains an ancient motif of the mythic tradition—the oracle by which Adrastus recognizes Polynices and Tydeus as the lion and boar respectively to whom he is to marry his daughters—by clothing Polynices in his ancestor's lion skins.[19]

Throughout the *Thebaid*, Statius closely follows Ovid's learned practice of antonomasia (in the form of patronymics and patrilineal and geographical periphrases) in his characterization of Oedipus and his sons. As literary heir to Cadmus's lion skin and exile, Polynices also receives the epithet *Cadmeius heros* (*Theb.* 3.366, 7.492) and shares with Ovid's Pentheus the epithet *Echionides* (*Theb.* 6.467, *Met.* 3.513, 701; cf. *Met.* 3.526: *Echione natus*), a patronymic derived from the name of one of the Spartoi. The brothers' descent from the Spartoi, of course, makes them heirs as well to a tradition of civil war and kindred bloodshed. Statius therefore calls both Polynices and Eteocles *Echionius* (*Theb.* 2.353; 2.90, 3.342, 9.203), itself an Ovidian adjective (*Met.* 8.345, *Tr.* 15.5.53), and characterizes the war they wage as fratricidal with a reference to "Echion's arms" (*armis . . . Echioniis*, *Theb.* 9.645–46). Eteocles receives the epithet more frequently than his brother, however, as befits the possessor of "Echion's court" (2.310, quoted above).

To Eteocles, moreover, Statius applies a simile of a venomous snake that closely reworks Ovid's description of the serpent of Mars from which the Spartoi were descended. Eteocles responds to Tydeus's embassy with the deadly rage of a snake (2.411–14): "ignea corda fremunt, iacto velut aspera saxo / comminus *erigitur* serpens, cui subter inanes / longa sitis latebras *totum*que agitata *per artus* / convocat in fauces et *squamea* colla

18 For Statius's debt to the accoutrements of the Vergilian Hercules here, see Caviglia 1973.140–41 ad loc.

19 On the lack of specification in and motivation of the motif in the Greek traditions of the myth, see Mastronarde 1994.265 on *Phoen.* 411. See Kytzler 1962.150–53 on lion imagery in the *Thebaid* and its symbolism of destructive savagery.

venenum" ("But his fiery heart rages, just as a serpent angered by a thrown rock rises close by when, in its empty lair, a deep thirst, driven through its limbs, musters poison in its throat and scaly neck"). His emotional response of serpentine anger is modeled on the fighting prowess of Ovid's serpent, whose whole body similarly swells with poison ("*corpus* tumet *omne venenis*," *Met.* 3.33), twists its scaly coils, and rears up to defend its lair (3.41–43): "ille volubilibus *squamosos* nexibus orbes / torquet et inmensos saltu sinuatur in arcus / ac media plus parte leves *erectus* in auras" ("The serpent twists its scaly coils in whirling knots and folds itself at a leap into huge arcs, raising itself more than halfway into the air"). The Statian Eteocles thus reveals his genealogical descent from Ovid's snake of Mars by his wrathful reception of Tydeus's embassy. Moreover, Eteocles alone receives the patronymic *Agenoreus* (*Theb.* 3.31), which recalls the Ovidian Cadmus's epithet *Agenorides* (*Met.* 3.8, 81, 90, 4.563; cf. *Agenore natus*, 3.51, 97), and may be meant to associate Eteocles' tyranny (illustrated at, e.g., *Theb.* 2.384–88)[20] with the cruelty and inflexibility of Cadmus's progenitor, emphasized by both Statius (1.5–6, quoted above) and Ovid (*Met.* 3.3–5, quoted above; cf. 3.7–8).

Although, in his proem, Statius undertakes to distinguish his House of Oedipus from the Ovidian House of Cadmus, we have seen that he consistently characterizes the members of Oedipus's family by reference to their Cadmean lineage, fortune, and past events as they are portrayed in Ovid's "Thebaid." In his extensive engagement with Ovidian modes of characterization, however, Statius does not look exclusively to the Augustan poet's Theban narrative. He also adapts non-Theban characters from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in his depiction of leading figures among the Seven against Thebes. For example, just as he reveals Polynices to be the lion of Adrastus's prophecy by reference to an Ovidian model, so he identifies the Theban prince's opponent Tydeus with the boar of the oracle through allusions to Ovid's Calydonian boar hunt. Throughout the *Thebaid* (e.g., 2.541–43, 8.705–06), Statius designates Tydeus as the inheritor of the spoils of the Calydonian hunt, a myth narrated at length by Ovid in the *Metamorphoses* (8.271–444). In his very first appearance in the poem, Tydeus wears the spoils of the boar (1.488–90): "terribiles contra saetis ac dente recurvo / Tydea per latos umeros ambire laborant / exuviae, Calydonis honos" ("Opposite, Calydon's honor, the fearsome spoils of the boar with its bristles and

20 Ahl 1986.2873–85.

curved tusks, strained to encircle the broad shoulders of Tydeus"). In fact, Tydeus possesses the very relics that Meleager had presented to Atalanta in Ovid's account (8.428–29): "protinus exuvias rigidis horrentia saetis / terga dat et magnis insignia dentibus ora" ("Immediately he gives her the spoils, the back stiff with thick bristles and the impressive face with huge tusks").

Statius explicitly compares Tydeus, on his departure from Eteocles' court after the failure of his embassy, to the Calydonian boar (*Theb.* 2.469–77):

> Oeneae *vindex* sic ille *Dianae*
> *erectus saetis* et aduncae *fulmine* malae,
> cum premeret Pelopea phalanx, saxa obvia volvens
> fractaque perfossis arbusta Acheloia ripis,
> iam Telamona solo, iam *stratum* Ixiona linquens
> te, Meleagre, subit: ibi demum cuspide lata
> haesit et obnixo ferrum laxavit *in armo*.
> talis adhuc trepidum linquit Calydonius heros
> concilium infrendens.
>
> Just so the avenger of Oeneus's Diana, his bristles stiff and his cheeks curved with the lightning bolt of his tusks when the Peloponnesian band harried him by rolling rocks in his path and trees broken down from Achelous's steep banks, left now Telamon, now Ixion prostrate on the ground and attacks you Meleager; there finally he is stopped by a wide spear tip and received the iron in his struggling shoulder. Such was the Calydonian hero as he left the still timorous council in a rage.

Ovid's characterization of the Calydonian boar supplies a template for Tydeus's posture as would-be avenger of Polynices' dispossession and for the violence of the Calydonian hero's response to Eteocles' contemptuous dismissal of his embassy.[21] Thus Statius's Tydeus is likened to the Calydonian boar in a phrase (*Oeneae vindex . . . Dianae*, 2.469) that closely recalls Ovid's introduction of the boar as the "servant and avenger of angry Diana"

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21 For a different assessment of the thematics of the simile, see Ahl 1986.2876–77. On Tydeus's "boarishness," see Bonds 1985.232 and Henderson 1991.57.

("infestae famulus *vindex*que *Dianae*," *Met.* 8.272). Moreover the Tydeus-boar's bristles and tusks echo Ovid's specification of the spoils of the boar hunt (8.428–29, quoted above), and are particularly indebted to his descriptions of the boar's savage demeanor (8.284–89): "*riget* horrida cervix, / et *setae* similes *rigidis* hastilibus horrent . . . dentes aequantur dentibus Indis, / *fulmen* ab ore venit" ("His neck is stiff with erect bristles, similar to stiff spears . . . his tusks were equal to those of Indian elephants, a thunderbolt flashed from his mouth"). Statius's application of the language of warfare to the Argive band's tracking of the boar is reminiscent of Ovid's treatment of the hunters' co-ordination of purpose (8.332–33) and of a simile comparing the boar's attack to the shot of a rock from a sling (8.357–58), which Statius has recast as the rocks sent against the boar by the hunters (*Theb.* 2.471).[22] These allusions to the Ovidian boar hunt, in which Diana's avenger attacks and nearly bests the heroes sent against him, characterize Tydeus as bestial in his anger and fighting prowess (thus foreshadowing his cannibalism in *Theb.* 8) and anticipate his singular heroism at the end of *Thebaid* 2 when he is ambushed and outnumbered, like the Calydonian boar, by Eteocles' men.

In likening Tydeus to the Calydonian boar, Statius emphasizes not only the hero's Calydonian provenance but also his genealogy, for the simile closes (*Theb.* 2.474–75) with an especially close evocation of Ovid's description of the heroism of Tydeus's half-brother Meleager in killing the beast (*Met.* 8.419): "splendidaque adversos venabula condit *in armos*" ("And he drove the gleaming hunting spear right into the beast's shoulder"). Elsewhere in the *Thebaid*, Statius invokes the rhetorical categories of lineage and country more straightforwardly in his characterization of Tydeus. He introduces Tydeus as an exile from Olenian Calydon (*Theb.* 1.401–02): "Ecce autem antiquam fato Calydona relinquens / Olenius Tydeus" ("But look, there came Olenian Tydeus, leaving ancient Calydon by destiny"). The emphasis on Tydeus's Calydonian heritage, including the connection with the boar, is made in Ovidian diction, for the earliest attested appearance of

22 Even the Flavian poet's setting of the boar hunt along the banks of the river Achelous recalls the marshy site of the Ovidian hunt (*Met.* 8.334–37). The Statian boar's success against Telamon and Ixion rehearses the Ovidian boar's rushing of Hippalmon and Pelagon, whom the beast knocks over (*prosternit*, 8.361), and revisits the Ovidian Telamon's unheroic stumble (8.378–79): "persequitur Telamon studioque incautus eundi / *pronus* ab arborea *cecidit* radice retentus" ("Telamon follows and, in his enthusiasm for the pursuit, carelessly falls flat, tripped by a tree root").

the adjective *Olenius* is in Ovidian poetry (*Fasti* 5.251, *Her.* 17.188), and, indeed, Ovid may even have specified the setting of the Calydonian boar hunt as "the Olenian fields" (if the text is correct, *Met.* 8.281–82): "et Olenios ultorem spreta per agros / misit aprum" ("And the spurned goddess sent a boar to avenge herself into the Olenian fields").[23] Tydeus himself asserts his Calydonian lineage and explicitly connects his birthplace with the famous boar when he introduces himself to Adrastus (*Theb.* 1.452–54): "maesti cupiens solacia casus / monstriferae Calydonis opes Acheloiaque arva / deserui" ("Seeking solace for a sad mischance, I left the wealth of monster-bearing Calydon and the fields of Achelous"). Here his juxtaposition of Calydon and the river Achelous is perhaps a remembrance of the narrative sequence of *Metamorphoses* 8, where the Calydonian boar hunt (8.271–444) is followed by Theseus's visit to the river's halls (8.549–9.97).[24]

In Tydeus's patrilineage, too, Statius revisits Ovidian models. Tydeus proudly identifies himself as Oeneus's son (*Theb.* 1.463–65): "magni de stirpe creatum / Oeneos et Marti non degenerare paterno / accipies" ("You will find me descended from the stock of great Oeneus and not wanting in my father's warrior spirit"; cf. *Theb*. 2.686–87, 742). His father's name first appears in extant Latin literature in Cicero's translation of a line of Sophocles' *Trachinae* (1050 *apud Tusc.* 2.20), but it is Ovid who relates the myth of Oeneus's contempt for Diana and the goddess's consequent dispatch of a boar to ravage his lands (*Met.* 8.271–300) and thereby brings Oeneus into wider circulation in Latin literature. Ovid also adapts into Latin the patronymic *Oenides*, which he uses of Meleager (8.414; cf. *Her.* 4.99) and Diomedes (*Fasti* 4.76), and he is imitated by Statius, who consistently uses it of Tydeus in the *Thebaid* (2.481, 3.392, 4.113, 6.843, 870, 8.538, 588, 659, 9.38, 50, 10.748), with the exception of a single application to Meleager (5.405).

Statius also has Ovid's account of the Calydonian boar hunt in mind in his characterization of Atalanta and her son Parthenopaeus, one of the Seven, in the *Thebaid*. The Arcadian Atalanta had taken part in the Ovidian boar hunt (bringing up the rear of his catalogue of hunters, *Met.* 8.299–323), and her participation there is commemorated on Parthenopaeus's

23 For the manuscript reading, see Hollis 1970.71 ad 280–81.

24 Vergil introduces the adjective *Acheloius* to Latin poetic diction at *Geo.* 1.9, but Ovid is the only author besides Statius to use it (*Met.* 9.413).

shield in Statius's introduction of the youth at the close of his catalogue of Argive warriors (*Theb.* 4.267–68): "imbelli parma pictus Calydonia matris / proelia" ("Depicted on his unwarlike shield are his mother's Calydonian battles"). Statius introduces the hero in close conjunction with his mother (*Theb.* 4.246–48), whom he represents as engaged in her familiar pursuit of hunting and thus unaware of Parthenopaeus's rash enthusiasm for war (*Theb.* 4.249–50): "torva parens . . . / pacabat cornu *gelidi*que aversa *Lycaei*" ("Your savage mother was pacifying with her bow the opposite side of cold Mt. Lycaeus"). Her activity and its setting Statius derives from Ovid's introduction of Atalanta in the catalogue of hunters ("nemorisque decus Tegeaea *Lycaei*," "and the Tegean huntress, glory of Mt. Lycaeus's glade," *Met.* 8.317), which he further conflates with an earlier Ovidian description of Arcadia as hunting country (from a speech of Jupiter, *Met.* 1.216–17): "Maenala transieram latebris horrenda ferarum / et cum Cyllene *gelidi* pineta *Lycaei*" ("I had crossed Mt. Maenalus, bristling with the lairs of wild beasts, along with Cyllene and the pine groves of cold Mt. Lycaeus").

The Statian Atalanta "remembers"[25] her participation in Ovid's boar hunt when she tries to dissuade her son from joining the Argive expedition by recalling his recent encounter with a boar (*Theb.* 4.322–24): "nuper te pallida vidi, / dum premis obnixo venabula comminus apro, / *poplite succiduo* resupinum ac paene ruentem" ("Recently I paled when I saw you trip, because your hamstring gave out, and nearly fall as you brought your hunting spear in close with a struggling boar"). Parthenopaeus's posture in Atalanta's description mimics that of the Ovidian hunter Emaesimus in his inglorious encounter with the Calydonian boar (*Met.* 8.363–64): "trepidantem et terga parantem / vertere *succiso* liquerunt *poplite* nervi" ("As he trembled and prepared to turn tail, his muscles failed him and his hamstring gave way"). Statius continues the allusion to Ovid's boar hunt as Atalanta warns her son, in a past contrary-to-fact condition, that he is not yet ready for the battlefield (*Theb.* 4.325–26): "et ni curvato torsissem spicula cornu, / nunc ubi bella tibi?" ("And if I hadn't bent my bow and dispatched arrows, where now would your wars be?"). Ovid follows Enaesimus's fall with Nestor's narrow escape from the boar, also expressed in a past counterfactual condition (*Met.* 8.365–66): "forsitan et Pylius citra Troiana perisset / tempora" ("Perhaps even Pylian Nestor would have perished before the time of Troy"). In Statius, Atalanta's memory of the Calydonian

25 On "poetic memory," see Conte 1986.32–95.

boar hunt—an event from the Ovidian past—colors her assessment of her son's recent boar hunt, characterizing Parthenopaeus as an unsuccessful hunter and foreshadowing his immaturity on the battlefield.

Statius's Atalanta wields the bow familiar from her appearance in the Calydonian boar hunt (8.320–21), and she and Diana have instructed her son in these very arms (*Theb.* 4.258–59). Parthenopaeus's fighting style (*Theb.* 9.865–66) is therefore closely modeled on the Ovidian Atalanta's hunting technique (*Met.* 8.380–81). But while the bow and arrows may be appropriate weaponry for the hunt, their use in warfare is deprecated in the epic tradition (Dewar 1991.197–98). Moreover, Parthenopaeus inherits from his mother, along with her weapons, an ill-omened taste for finery (*Theb.* 4.265–70, 9.690–99). Statius's description of his war gear draws heavily on the Vergilian Camilla and Chloreus (Dewar 1991.186), but also reworks Ovid's portrait of Atalanta's hunting gear (*Met.* 8.318–21). Dewar 1991.185–222 shows how closely Statius imitates Camilla's *aristeia* and death in the structure, themes, and verbal details of Parthenopaeus's *aristeia* and death (*Theb.* 9.683–907). But Statius's characterization of the Arcadian huntress and her son (*iuvenis Tegeaeus*, *Theb.* 6.632) is also mediated through Ovid's portrait of Atalanta (*Tegeaea*, *Met.* 8.317). Here we can detect a subtle difference in Statius's use of his Vergilian and Ovidian models. For if Vergil's *Aeneid* supplies the structural framework of this episode in the *Thebaid*, the mythological background of Statius's characters is strikingly Ovidian. The Flavian poet's debt can be seen especially clearly in the characters, like Atalanta, whom he derives directly from Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* It will therefore prove worthwhile to conclude by considering Statius's characterization of the most important of these Ovidian revenants: the Fury Tisiphone in her inaugural appearance in the *Thebaid* and Tiresias and his daughter Manto, who preside over the ghostly apparitions of Cadmus and his descendants in a necromantic scene that models Statius's complex approach to characterization in the *Thebaid.*

The most significant character Statius adapts from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* is the Fury Tisiphone, whose name itself draws attention to the recurrence of murder and vengeance in Theban history. The intervention of the Furies was a well-established feature of the conflict between the brothers Eteocles and Polynices, as Statius implies in Oedipus's prayer to Tisiphone at the very outset of the poem (*Theb.* 1.58–59): "multumque mihi *consueta* vocari / adnue, Tisiphone, perversaque vota secunda" ("And Tisiphone, accustomed to be much invoked by me, approve and favor my depraved

wishes").[26] By specifying the intervening Erinys as Tisiphone, however, Statius follows Ovid, who is the first extant classical author to identify the Theban Fury by this name—when she agrees to punish the descendants of Cadmus for Jupiter's adulteries with Europa and Semele at Juno's request (*Met.* 4.420–511).

Statius introduces the Fury in response to Oedipus's prayer (*Theb.* 1.88–91): "Talia dicenti crudelis diva severos / advertit vultus. inamoenum forte sedebat / Cocyton iuxta, resolutaque vertice *crines* / lambere sulpureas permiserat *anguibus* undas" ("The cruel goddess turned her harsh face to Oedipus's prayer. She happened to be sitting near the unlovely Cocytus, and, having loosed her locks, she allowed her snakes to lap the sulphurous waters"). His description is heavily indebted to Ovid's description of the Furies' snaky locks, their most characteristic attribute (*Met.* 4.454): "deque suis atros pectebant crinibus angues" ("And they were combing the black snakes from their hair"). Tisiphone's serpentine hair receives further emphasis when she assents to Juno's request (4.474–75) and, again, when she sets out for Thebes (4.491–94). Statius takes up and elaborates Ovid's emphasis on Tisiphone's snaky hair in his initial description of her posture beside lake Cocytus in the underworld (quoted above) and in a second description of her demeanor before her departure for Thebes (*Theb.* 1.103–04): "centum illi stantes umbrabant ora cerastae, / turba minax diri capitis" ("A hundred erect snakes, the crowding menace of her terrible head, shadow her face"). Both poets emphasize her serpentine features as part of their assimilation of the Fury's persona to the thematics of Theban history in which Cadmus's killing of the serpent of Mars and the birth of the Spartoi from the creature's teeth model the recurrence of intra-familial violence through the generations.

The Ovidian Fury departs on her errand "without delay" (*nec mora*, 4.481), and her speed is imitated by Statius's Tisiphone ("ilicet igne Iovis lapsisque citatior astris / tristibus exsiluit ripis," "Thereupon she leapt up from the savage banks more swiftly than Jove's fire and falling stars," *Theb.* 1.92–93), as she sets out on the well-known journey to Thebes (1.100–01): "arripit extemplo Maleae de valle resurgens / notum iter ad Thebas" ("Coming up again from the valley of Malea, she immediately seized the familiar path to Thebes"). Denis Feeney (1991.344 n. 106) observes that her journey is "'[f]amiliar' to readers in the first instance from Ovid (*Met.*

26 Cf. Feeney 1991.341. For the tradition, see Venini 1970.20.

4.481–8)," and Statius himself underlines the Fury's literary return to Thebes (*Theb.* 1.101–02): "neque enim velocior ullas / itque reditque vias cognatave Tartara mavult" ("for she neither goes and returns upon any road more swiftly nor prefers kindred Tartarus").[27] The Flavian poet thereby grafts his *Thebaid* onto Ovid's Theban narrative as the latest installment in the violent history of Thebes.

The familiarity of the Fury's route extends to her preparations for the journey, which closely rehearse those of her Ovidian model (1.106–13):

> suffusa veneno
> tenditur ac sanie gliscit cutis; igneus atro
> ore vapor, quo longa sitis morbique famesque
> et populis mors una venit; riget horrida tergo
> palla, et caerulei redeunt in pectora nodi:
> Atropos hos atque ipsa novat Proserpina cultus.
> tunc geminas quatit ira manus: haec igne rogali
> fulgurat, haec vivo manus aera verberat hydro.
>
> Puffy with poison, her skin is distended and glistens with gore; a fiery stench issues from her black mouth, by which long thirst, diseases, hunger, and universal death come upon peoples; a stiff robe covers her back, and dark bosses return to her breast: Atropos and Proserpina herself renew her robes. Then she strikes her twin hands in anger: the one shines with a funereal torch, the other lashes the air with a live snake.

The Statian Fury's cloak (stiff with blood?), venomous gore, and torch all have counterparts in Ovid's portrait of Tisiphone setting out to punish Athamas and Ino (*Met.* 4.481–84): "Nec mora, Tisiphone madefactam sanguine sumit / inportuna facem, fluidoque cruore rubentem / induitur pallam, tortoque incingitur angue / egrediturque domo" ("Without delay, relentless Tisiphone took up her torch dripping with blood and put on a cloak reddened with flowing gore, belted it with a twisted snake, and left the house"). Moreover, her diseased aspect metaphorically figures the mental contagion with which she affects the brothers' minds (*Theb.* 1.123–27):

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27 Cf. Henderson 1991.41.

"atque ea *Cadmeo* praeceps ubi *culmine* primum / constitit *adsueta*que infecit nube penates, / protinus adtoniti fratrum sub pectore motus, / gentilesque *animos* subiit furor aegraque laetis / invidia atque parens odii metus" ("And when she first stopped her headlong rush at Cadmus's roof and infected the halls with her accustomed cloud, immediately the brothers' breasts were struck with dismay, and madness entered their kindred minds along with envy, sickened by happiness, and fear, the father of hate"). Here she re-enacts her role in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, infecting the halls with her "accustomed cloud"[28] and thereby poisoning the inhabitants' minds like her Ovidian model (*Met.* 4.498–99): "inspirantque graves *animas*; nec vulnera membris / ulla ferunt: mens est, quae diros sentiat ictus" ("[The snakes] infect the pair with their savage breath; nor do they bring any wounds to their limbs: it is their minds that feel the dread blows"). Statius's insistent rehearsal in his own Fury of the most repugnant characteristics of the Ovidian Tisiphone functions, on the level of poetics, as an explicit acknowledgement of his literary debt to Ovid's Theban history and, on the level of thematics, as a means of emphasizing the relentless return to origins at the heart of Theban myth.[29]

The same procedure can be seen in Statius's representation of the Theban seer Tiresias. In Attic drama, he is pre-eminently associated with the House of Oedipus, but in his earliest appearance in classical literature, at *Odyssey* 10–11, his primary association is simply with Thebes, and it is his flawless skill in prophecy that Homer highlights (*Od.* 10.492–95, 11.90–151). Ovid retains the Homeric emphasis on Tiresias's accurate prophecies and Boeotian provenance in his characterization of the seer (*Met.* 3.339–40): "ille per Aonias fama celeberrimus urbes / inreprehensa dabat populo responsa petenti" ("Very famous by repute throughout the Boeotian cities, he was giving flawless responses to those who consulted him"). It is appropriate, then, that Tiresias should play a prominent role in Ovid's Theban narrative (from which Oedipus and his sons are conspicuously absent), correctly predicting the strange end of Narcissus (3.340–50) and thereby becoming famous throughout Greece (3.511–12). The seer's lengthiest intervention in Ovid's narrative, however, comes in response to Pentheus's outspoken rejection of his prophecies when Tiresias predicts Pentheus's disastrous contest with his cousin Dionysus (3.513–25). Here, too, Ovid emphasizes

28 Cf. Feeney 1991.344 and Henderson 1991.41.
29 Cf. Zeitlin 1990, Henderson 1991.41–42.

the accuracy of Tiresias's prophetic skill (3.526–27): "talia dicentem proturbat Echione natus; / dicta fides sequitur, responsaque vatis aguntur" ("Echion's son shoves him out of the way as he was saying such things; belief follows his words, and the prophecies of the seer are accomplished"). Indeed, Ovid devotes the remainder of Book 3 to the detailed elaboration of the accuracy of the seer's prediction of Pentheus's fatal struggle with Dionysus. In this way, he implicates Tiresias in the sequence of misfortunes that overwhelms the House of Cadmus in his Theban history.[30]

Statius maintains the epic tradition of Tiresias's prophetic accuracy in the *Thebaid,* but his Tiresias is a prophet who repeatedly returns to the literary past in search of the future, as the Flavian poet builds further on Ovid's association of the seer with the Cadmeids. Introduced in Book 4, Tiresias is summoned by Eteocles to predict the outcome of the attack of the Seven against Thebes (4.406–09): "At trepidus monstro et variis terroribus impar / longaevi rex vatis opem tenebrasque sagaces / Tiresiae, qui mos incerta paventibus, aeger / consulit" ("But the king, fearful at the prodigy and unequal to the variety of terrors afflicting him, ill at ease as is the custom of those who fear uncertainty, consulted the long-lived seer, blind Tiresias, for his aid"). In the reference to Tiresias's longevity, Statius hints metapoetically at his character's illustrious literary genealogy and anticipates the series of allusions he will make to different versions of Tiresias—Homeric, tragic, and Ovidian—in his depiction of the blind seer. Thus in the application of the adjective "discerning" (*sagaces*) to the seer's sightless eyes (*tenebras*), Statius sends the reader to the myth Ovid recounts in *Metamorphoses* 3, in which Tiresias is blinded as a result of taking Jupiter's side in a dispute with Juno. Consulted by the pair for his learning ("placuit quae sit sententia docti / quaerere Tiresiae," *Met.* 3.322–23), Tiresias is punished by the vindictive Juno with blindness when his verdict displeases her, but he receives from Jupiter the power of prophecy in compensation ("pro lumine adempto / scire futura dedit," *Met.* 3.337–38). Statius marks his debt to Ovid in his choice of verb (*consulit*, *Theb.* 4.409), which evokes the overtones of Roman senatorial procedure in the scene with Juno and Jupiter[31] and expressly recalls the action of the nymph Liriope, who consults the seer about

30 Cf. Bömer 1969–86.2.530, who notes that Ovid innovates by connecting Tiresias with the early history of Thebes in addition to the relationship with Cadmus (already close in Euripides' *Bacchae*).

31 On the judicial overtones here, see Coleman 1990.

her son Narcissus in the episode that follows ("de quo consultus . . . fatidicus vates," *Met.* 3.346–48).

Unlike the Ovidian Tiresias, Statius's seer is a devotee of the necromantic arts (*Theb.* 4.409–18).[32] Statius locates his seer's necromancy at the edge of the plain on which the Spartoi fought their fratricidal war (*Theb.* 4.434–35): "extra immane patens tellus Mavortia campi, / fetus ager Cadmo" ("Beyond lies the wide plain of Mars's field, Cadmus's fertile ground"). Inspired by Thebes' violent history, Tiresias explicitly selects this site because it bears the imprint of kindred bloodshed (4.443–44): "Stygiis adcommoda quippe / terra sacris, vivoque placent sola pinguia tabo" ("For the land is indeed suitable for Stygian rites and the soil, rich with living gore, pleases him"). Here he invokes the inhabitants of the underworld (4.473–518) and hears his daughter Manto's report of the underworld vision their necromantic rites have conjured (4.518–35). But the seer grows impatient with her recital and cuts her short, for he has heard it all before (4.537–40): "ne volgata mihi. quis enim remeabile saxum / fallentesque lacus Tityonque alimenta volucrum / et caligantem longis Ixiona gyris / nesciat?" ("Don't [tell] me what's well known. For who doesn't know the rock that continually returns, the deceptive pools, Tityos the food of vultures, and Ixion grown dizzy on his long gyrations?"). Manto describes a conventional Homero-Vergilian underworld, but Tiresias thinks specifically of the underworld tradition of crime and punishment familiar from Thebes' own (literary) history. For, as Feeney notes (1991.343 n. 102), the seer here "refers in the first instance to Ovid's picture of the Underworld" in his Theban narrative (*Met.* 4.457–63). In an effort to stave off this renewed threat of entanglement in the toils of Thebes' textual history, Tiresias interrupts his daughter's recital of the geography of the underworld, bidding her summon Theban and Argive shades to elucidate the outcome of the Argive expedition against Thebes (*Theb.* 4.543–48).

Manto's catalogue of the Thebans drawn by her father's rites (4.553–78), however, offers no escape from Theban history, for it includes the very characters whom Statius had earlier dismissed from his epic (1.4–16), and who constitute the focus of Ovid's Theban narrative. First come Cadmus (*primus . . . Cadmus*, 4.553) and his wife Harmonia ("iuxtaque virum Cythereia proles / insequitur," 4.554–55), with twin serpents drinking

32 In this regard, of course, he is modeled generally on Homer's Tiresias (*Od.* 10.492–95, 11.90–99) and, specifically, on Seneca's Tiresias (*Oed.* 530–658).

from their heads ("geminusque bibit de vertice serpens," 4.555), a vivid reminder of the tradition, narrated by Ovid at the end of his "Thebaid" (*Met.* 4.564–603), that they were transformed into serpents after their misadventures at Thebes.[33] They are accompanied by the Spartoi, who continue their internecine war even in the underworld ("prohibent obstantque ruuntque / spirantum rabie, nec tristi incumbere fossae / cura, sed alternum sitis exhaurire cruorem," *Theb.* 4.558–60; cf. *Met.* 3.116–26), revealing a propensity for mutual slaughter that apparently dooms their offspring to repeated renewal of kindred war. After the Spartoi come the descendants of Cadmus familiar from Ovid's Theban narrative (*Theb.* 4.561): "proxima natarum manus est fletique nepotes" ("Next is a group of daughters and mourned grandsons"). Statius specifies Cadmus's very daughters (Autonoe, Ino, Semele, and Agave, 4.562–67) and grandsons (Pentheus, Dionysus, Learchus, Melicertes, and Actaeon, 4.567–73), whose deaths and metamorphoses Ovid narrates in his Theban history (cf. *Met.* 3.131–35), and the Flavian poet acknowledges his debt to the Ovidian master-text in the accumulation of metamorphic terminology applied to the unfortunate Actaeon (*Theb.* 4.572–73): "necdum ille aut habitus aut *versae* crimina formae / *mutat* Aristaeo genitus" ("Not yet does the famous son of Aristaeus change either his bearing or the reproach of his transformed build").[34]

The final character Manto includes in her recital of the Theban shades is Niobe (4.575–78): "ecce autem magna subit invidiosa caterva / Tantalis et tumido percenset funera luctu, / nil deiecta malis; iuvat effugisse deorum / numina et insanae plus iam permittere linguae" ("But look, the jealous daughter of Tantalus comes up with a great crowd and numbers the dead with proud grief, cast down not at all by her misfortunes; she is pleased to have escaped the gods' power and now to permit her mad tongue more"). Wife of Amphion and queen of Thebes, Niobe appears not in Ovid's Theban history but in his reprise of the motif of Theban impiety in *Metamorphoses* 6. Ovid leads into the episode with Manto's warning to the Theban women not to spurn the rites of Latona (6.157–62) on the model of her father Tiresias, who had advised Pentheus not to spurn the rites of Dionysus (3.514–25). Manto's injunction, however, is ignored by Niobe (6.165–312),

33 See Bömer 1969–86.2.179 for the lacunose tradition of their transformation into serpents. He notes that Ovid's version supersedes the early Greek traditions of their removal to an Isle of the Blessed and a grave in foreign parts.

34 On the terminology of metamorphosis in Ovid's poem, see Anderson 1963.

as Tiresias's was by Pentheus. Ovid, in fact, is the first extant ancient author to connect the daughter of Tiresias, well-known from the Theban material of the Epic Cycle,[35] with the history of Niobe,[36] through whom he establishes several links to the earlier history of the House of Cadmus. Most strikingly, Ovid evokes Cadmus's illusory prosperity in his family in his introduction of Niobe (6.152–56): "multa dabant animos; sed enim nec coniugis artes / nec genus amborum magnique potentia regni / sic placuere illi, quamvis ea cuncta placerent, / ut sua progenies; et felicissima matrum / dicta foret Niobe, si non sibi visa fuisset" ("Many things contributed to her pride; but neither her husband Amphion's arts nor the lineage of both and the power of their great kingdom pleased her—although these things pleased her—as much as her own progeny; and Niobe would have been called the luckiest of mothers, if she had not seemed so to herself").

Statius follows Ovid in connecting Manto with Niobe and Niobe with the House of Cadmus when he represents Niobe as the final member of the House of Cadmus to come in response to this necromantic summons. Indeed, we can see the outline of the Ovidian Niobe not only in Manto's description of the dead queen's undiminished pride in the number of her offspring ("tumido percenset funera luctu / nil deiecta malis," *Theb.* 4.576–77), but also in Statius's introduction of the queen in the midst of her attendants ("ecce autem magna subit invidiosa caterva / Tantalis," 4.575–76), which is closely modeled on Niobe's regal entrance into the *Metamorphoses* (6.165): "ecce venit comitum Niobe celeberrima turba" ("Look, Niobe comes surrounded by a throng of attendants"). Statius's characterization of both Manto and Niobe is thus indebted to Ovidian models.

Scenes of necromancy tend, by their very nature, to constitute essays in retrospection, inasmuch as the dead reflect back on their past actions rather than look forward to future events. We may note, however, that the Flavian poet's thematization of regression extends to the literary level as well, for in his characterization of Tiresias and Manto, to say nothing of Cadmus and his descendants, Statius consistently emphasizes precisely those features that are familiar from the *Metamorphoses.* The necromantic gaze of Tiresias and Manto thus exemplifies Statius's sophisticated approach to characterization in the *Thebaid.* As befits Ovidian characters, they look to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to explain the mythological

35 See Eitrem in *RE* xiv.1355–59.
36 Bömer 1969–86.2.56.

landscape of Statian epic. They themselves, moreover, like the underworld shades they invoke and the other descendants of Ovidian mythological characters who populate the *Thebaid*, enjoy a palimpsestic afterlife in Statius's belated Thebes, forever doomed to repeat their literary ancestors' successes and failures. The Flavian poet thus engages Ovidian characters in the service of his poem's themes as he documents the confusion of generational progression at the heart of Theban myth (cf. *Oedipodae confusa domus*, *Theb.* 1.17). His sophisticated adaptation of Ovidian characters to his own poetic ends reveals him to be a sensitive interpreter of Ovid's techniques of characterization, allusion, and thematics in the *Metamorphoses.*

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