TYDEUS: THE SAETIGER SUS OF STATIUS' THEBAID

By

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Meis Parentibus Sororibusque Bellis
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<td>CJ</td>
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<td>LIMC</td>
<td>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae (eds. H.C. Ackermann and J.R. Gisler, Zurich, 1981-)</td>
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TYDEUS: THE SAETIGER SUS OF STATIUS’ THEBAID

By

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May 2008

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My study examines Tydeus’ participation in the Thebaid of Statius. I argue that Tydeus’ story echoes the structure of Ovid’s Calydonian Boar Hunt (Met. 8.260-444). At the time of his cannibalism, however, Tydeus’ story diverges from that of the Calydonian Hunt as the madness of the epic overcomes him. At this point, the poem can no longer contain the hero, and he promptly removes himself from the narrative. The cannibalism of Tydeus in Book 8 serves three purposes. First, it acts as an intertextual device by which Statius ‘ingests’ Ovid’s account of the Calydonian Boar through Tydeus’ cannibalism. Second, Tydeus’ anthropophagy eliminates him from the narrative fabric of the Thebaid when his madness grows to the point that it cannot be contained within the poem. Third, Tydeus, in eating the brain of Melanippus, becomes ‘other’ to men, gods, beasts, and the story. Because of this alienation, Tydeus loses the immortality promised to him by Athena.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: STATIUS’ TYDEUS

This study examines the role of Tydeus in Statius’ *Thebaid*. I shall argue that Statius narrates the hero’s story in a way that recalls Ovid’s Calydonian Boar Hunt (*Met.* 8.260-444). At the critical point of Tydeus’ cannibalism, however, Statius diverges from the Calydonian scenario as the *furor* of the epic overcomes his hero. Ovid’s account of the Calydonian Boar is an apt basis for intertextual analysis for three reasons. First, the most famous mythological hunts takes place in the land of which Tydeus is a native: Calydon. Second, the cat-and-mouse scenario present in Ovid’s account of the Calydonian Hunt is reflected in Tydeus’ story with the Theban host. Ovid’s rendering of the hunt has earned the descriptions ‘burlesque’ and ‘comic’ because the author of the *Metamorphoses* elevates his language in this scene in order to mimic the verse of the epic poets and lampoon the incompetence of Meleager’s hunting party.¹ Ovid’s narration, despite these interpretations, remains a sound basis for comparison because, in parroting the language of the epic poets, he must himself indulge in the lofty language of epic. In short, he must use the system to abuse it. My third reason for using Ovid’s account for intertextual analysis is that Tydeus’ story in the *Thebaid* and the Calydonian Boar’s participation in the *Metamorphoses* share explicit verbal echoes and structural similarities. This final point, however, must be demonstrated over the course of my discussion. In basing Tydeus’ story on Ovid’s burlesque Calydonian Boar Hunt, Statius appropriates the story into the elevated world of epic and ultimately subsumes the Ovidian tradition as part of the *Thebaid’s* omnipresent *furor*.

I will conclude with a discussion of Tydeus’ anthropophagy in light of contemporary and ancient comments about cannibalism (both literary and literal) and epic *furor*. Recent scholarship has shed light on a subject dubbed by Freud (1950: 27-74) as ‘taboo’.

Anthropologists have become skeptical of alluded cases of cannibalism, but false accounts of cannibalism are interesting in and of themselves for terms such as “cultural-boundary maintenance” and “the other” (Arens 1979: 137-62). Horace’s *Ars Poetica* paints the mad poet as a blood-sucking leech who lives off the bodies of the epic and tragic dead. Persius (*Sat. 5*) plays on the idea of eating as a metaphor for composing and reciting verse and criticizes epic and tragic poets as cannibals who consume the limbs of their slain when offering verses for recitation. Juvenal *Satire* 15 examines a scene of cannibalism in Egypt and concludes that madness of this sort is not even present in wild animals. In all three cases, madness is present as the force that drives people to cannibalism. The remainder of this section will discuss Statius’ divergence from the tradition of his Greek sources and introduce scholarship pertinent to my discussion of Tydeus.

The story of the Seven against Thebes is told most extensively in *Iliad* 4 and 5, Aeschylus’ play of the same name, pseudo-Apollodorus’ *Bibliotheke* 6, and Statius’ *Thebaid*. After Oedipus’ self-realization and disgrace, the king designates that his two sons, Eteocles and Polynices, rule Thebes alternatively, with one brother staying in the city as monarch for a year and the other spending the year in exile. At the end of each year, the brothers are to switch roles. Eteocles is the first to rule, and when his year ends he refuses to abdicate the throne to his brother. Polynices, in exile at Argos, musters an army led by seven heroes from around Greece and marches on the city of Thebes. The expedition fails to take the city and instill Polynices as king, but Eteocles is killed in the effort, along with his exile brother and five of the other Seven: Amphiaraus, Hippomedon, Capaneus, Tydeus, and Parthenopaeus. Adrastus survives the war.

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3 Cf. *Od.* 19.106-12 where the Cyclopes are described by Odysseus as the most uncivilized creatures on earth (with Doughterty 2001: 122-42 and Cook 1995: 93-110).
and returns to Argos, while Creon takes up rule in Thebes. This is the general framework within which Statius operates in his *Thebaid*, and for the most part he stays true to his Greek predecessors.

For immediate purposes, I will focus on the character of Tydeus. The hero’s thirst for battle is legendary, but Statius includes slight variations and new details in his version of Tydeus. For instance, the scene of Tydeus’ death is somewhat different from that as told by Apollodorus. In Aeschylus, Apollodorus, and Statius, Tydeus’ killer is named Melanippus; however, in the Greek writers, Tydeus and Melanippus are heroic equals who die by one another’s hand in single combat. Statius relates that Melanippus’ javelin strikes Tydeus from afar in the midst of the latter contending with the entire Theban army. Homer and Aeschylus allude to the hero’s cannibalizing of Melanippus, but pseudo-Apollodorus explicitly states this, saying that after Amphiaraus gives the head to Tydeus he also drives the father of Diomedes to eat it. In Statius, Capaneus retrieves Melanippus’ body and Tisiphone forces Tydeus into eating the man’s brains. Thus, the main points in the narrative remain the same, but Statius innovates in order to reemphasize scenes that are particularly important to his version of the myth. The account of the *Bibliotheke* showcases the criminality of Amphiaraus in not only retrieving the head of Melanippus but also leading Tydeus to cannibalism; Statius, however, focuses the blame for the act on Tisiphone, the fury who drives the majority of the action in the poem. These might seem to be minor discrepancies between Statius and his predecessors, but they will prove to be important for interpretation of Statius’ epic.

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5 Aeschylus does not narrate the death of Tydeus. The audience is simply told that Tydeus is standing on the banks of the Ismenus River at one point in the play and later he is reported dead by the hand of the slain Melanippus.

6 Aeschylus’ account does, however, draw attention to animosity between Tydeus and Amphiaraus. This is never brought up in Statius’ account as Amphiaraus and Tydeus never address one another and the seer dies one whole book before Tydeus.
The final quarter of the twentieth century witnessed a reevaluation of Statius’ poem and its place in Latin Epic. Vessey (1973), Ahl (1986), McGuire (1997), and Dominik (1994) all sought subsersive readings of the *Thebaid*, concluding that the oppressive Domitianic regime dictated a literary climate that was simultaneously constrictive for the *literati* and patronizing towards the emperor. These seminal discussions on Statius’ epic at times suffer from anachronistic biases that view Flavian Epic in general as ‘protest literature’ (Coleman 2003: 17-18). I will not be concerned with Statius’ political motives, but will instead focus on the character of Tydeus and how the poem’s *furor* operates at the level of narrative.

Hardie (1993) interprets the *Thebaid* as an exploration of man’s unique position between gods and animals. This polarized conception of the world is a hermeneutic present not only in Vergil, but Homer as well (Hardie 1993: 66-67). With mankind standing on an ‘isthmus’ between the respective abysses of gods and beasts, distinctions between the two ends of the spectrum tend to collapse onto one another or become fluid in the world of epic. With Tydeus as a case-in-point, Hardie briefly observes the hero reflecting traits of men, gods, and animals (1993: 69). He does not explain, however, to what effect Statius confounds Tydeus’ human identity. As I shall argue, the varying degrees of the humanness of Tydeus indicate how war-crazed, and thus animalistic, he becomes.

The majority of my discussion is an intertextual analysis between Ovid and Statius. Conte (1986) offers the best approach for an intertextuality study by showing that poetic allusion is not always driven by emulation, but rather it concerns the construction of ‘figures’. Figures appear when the reader identifies and understands the original text of an allusion and appreciates the figurative space between that original and the present text. In this way, the reader combines the two signs in order to make a new one and thus gains insight into the text before them. More

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specifically, Statius’ Tydeus operates intertextually with Ovid’s Calydonian Boar by way of ‘integrative allusion’. Statius does not always quote Ovid directly, but rather the structuring and ideas contained within key scenes in the Thebaid recall Ovid’s Calydonian Boar Hunt. Statius incorporates key moments in Ovid’s account into his own, casting Tydeus as the boar and the Thebans as hunters. In this way, the reader is able to identify and appreciate the hero’s relationship with the Theban host as a figurative hunting game.

Hershkowitz (1995: 52-64) interprets the madness of the Thebaid as following a controlled progression whenever it infects a character. This progression operates at many levels in the poem, both within and across particular scenes. In this way, the furor of the epic works at the narrative level and offers the interpreter insight into the madness of poetic composition. Using Hershkowitz’ model I shall argue that when Tydeus succumbs to the poem’s furor in Book 8, the epic can no longer contain his madness and he must be removed from the story.

My examination, then, will focus specifically on Tydeus, drawing attention to the hero’s animalistic characteristics and, more generally, the hero’s madness. Using Ovid’s Calydonian Boar Hunt as a model, I will trace Tydeus’ participation in the Thebaid’s figurative hunt concluding that Tydeus’ cannibalism in Book 8 is exclusively furor-induced and serves as an intertextual device to symbolize the hero’s ingestion of his own narrative.
CHAPTER 2
TYDEUS AS BOAR

This chapter examines Statius’ initial image of Tydeus as boar up to his departure from the court of Eteocles, where Statius introduces the first of four boar similes in the *Thebaid*. That each of these similes is used in connection with Tydeus is significant in and of itself. No other character in the *Thebaid* is surrounded by boar imagery. Tydeus is linked to the story of the Calydonian Boar by way of epic simile, continuities in likeness, and allusion. Books 1 and 2 outline Statius’ mode of characterization for Tydeus, where he is called not only *immodicus irae* but also *saetiger sus*.

**The Calydonian Boar Mythology**

The myth of the Calydonian Boar Hunt would have been familiar to Statius and his audience from texts such as *Iliad* 9.529-99, pseudo-Apollodorus *Bib.* 1.8.1-6, and Ovid *Met.* 8.260-444. The general series of events runs as follows: Diana, angry at Oeneus for forgetting to sacrifice to her, sends a larger-than-life boar to ravage the countryside of Calydon. Oeneus then issues a call for the best hunters to exterminate the pest, led by his son Meleager, and accompanied by one woman, Atalanta, with whom Meleager immediately falls in love. The boar eludes his pursuers at first then dispatches a number of them. Eventually, Atalanta’s arrow finds its mark, but the boar rampages until his coup de grace from Meleager. Meleager presents Atalanta with the pelt, *exuvias*, which includes the head and back of the boar’s hide. The men protest that Atalanta has received the prize because of Meleager’s love for her, but Meleager assures them that he sincerely does this out of custom and common courtesy. From here, Ovid’s narrative eases into the story of Meleager and Althaea. The brief Homeric account says nothing about Atalanta. Tydeus’ story in the *Thebaid* corresponds to certain key moments in Ovid’s account of the Calydonian Hunt, and thus invites a thorough comparison of the two narratives.
In addition to these literary portrayals, visual representations of the hunt on Roman sarcophagi offer pictorial exempla for the staging of both the Calydonian Hunt and Tydeus’ story in the *Thebaid*.

**Statius’ Tydeus**

The association of Tydeus with boar imagery is not an innovation of Statius;¹ however, he employs the motif in a particular way. For instance, according to the chronicler pseudo-Apollodorus, Tydeus and Polynices bear the emblems of a boar and lion on their respective shields, while Statius dresses his heroes in boar- and lion-skin mantles. As a result, the hero resembles a half-boar, half-human creature. Statius also diverges from the Greek sources in his narration of Tydeus’ embassy to Thebes. In the *Iliad*, Agamemnon and Athena tell Diomedes that his father went to Thebes before the assault and challenged the young men there to athletic contests, defeating all of them (*Il. 4.370-400 and 5.802-8*); Agamemnon mentions the ambush on the hero’s return to Argos, but Athena does not. Statius recalls Agamemnon’s words from the *Iliad* and the *Bibliotheke* account, but he and the mythographer do not agree exactly. According to pseudo-Apollodorus and Agamemnon, after Tydeus challenged the Theban young men to single combat, they attempted to ambush him on his return to Cithaeron where the Argive army has set up camp (*Bib. 3.6.3 and Iliad 4.384-6*). Statius’ Tydeus sets out from Argos on behalf of his new brother-in-law Polynices to demand that Eteocles step down and then returns a year before the first attempt of the Theban expedition. As a haughty (*superbus*) ruler, the Eteocles of the *Thebaid* rebukes Tydeus’ request and the exile leaves the Theban court immediately only to come across his fifty assailants on his return to Argos. Statius, the Homeric version and the *Bibliotheke* at least agree on the number of Theban assassins, but only Statius and pseudo-Apollodorus give the name of the sole survivor, Maeon. In addition to placing the majority of

¹ Cf. Aeschylus *Sept. 575* and *Bib. 3.6.1.*
the blame for the war on Eteocles’ shoulders, Statius’ innovation at this point allows the poet to introduce Tydeus into a figurative hunting game with the Theban army, begun in Book 2 upon the hero’s return from Thebes and concluded in Book 8 with his death. Instead of spending time on Tydeus’ challenge to the Thebans, Statius concentrates on the hero’s encounter in the forest on his return to Argos.

The Saetiger Sus

Before Tydeus enters the narrative, Statius anticipates the hero’s entrance by likening him to a boar. At Theb. 1.395-7 Adrastus relates that Apollo’s oracle tells of the coming of two beasts, a boar and a lion, to marry his daughters:

cui Phoebus generos (monstrum exitiabile dictu!
mox adaperta fides) fato ducente canebat
saetigerumque suem et fulvum adventare leonem.

This first image of Tydeus as boar not only foretells the future husband of Deipyle but also introduces Statius’ primary mode of characterization for Tydeus. The second adjective used in connection with Tydeus in the epic is saetigerum, “bristle-bearing.” Saetiger contains double significance for Statius’ Tydeus. At one level, it indicates that Tydeus merely dons his bristles—in that he carries them around on his shoulders. Taken with suem, however, saetiger implies that boar’s bristles are a part of Tydeus’ person or subject, since a boar does not simply wear its coat;

\footnote{2 Indeed Tydeus’ challenge to athletics in the \textit{Iliad} and single combat in Apollodorus gives the Thebans at least some ammunition in their case against Polynices and the rest of the Seven (Vessey 1973: 141-7).}
\footnote{3 Tydeus travels from Argos, he and Eteocles exchange speeches (3 in all), and then the hero leaves immediately (106 lines). Conversely, Tydeus leaves Thebes, comes across the Theban ambush, slaughters all but Maeon, then dedicates his spoils to Pallas (261 lines).}
\footnote{4 Cf. Bib. 3.6.1.}
\footnote{5 All translations are my own; I have followed Shackleton Bailey 2003. “To him [Adrastus] Phoebus riddles of sons-in-law (a prodigy deadly to tell, but the truth of which was soon revealed) with fate leading the way: a bristly pig and a tawny lion would come.”}
\footnote{6 Second because Statius’ first mention of Tydeus comes at \textit{Theb}. 1.41 during a priamel asking Clio with whom the poet should begin his story: \textit{immodicum irae / Tydea}?}
\footnote{7 \textit{OLD} s.v. “saeta,” “gero,” and “saetiger”.

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to be sure, boars are known by their erect manes. 8 As for word order, *saetigerumque suem et fulvum adventare leonem* are interlocked. *Saetigerum* and its complement *fuluum*, both adjectives, occur in the “A” positions of the synchesis, while the corresponding nouns *suem* and *leonem* stand in the “B” positions. Adrastus’ oracle places Tydeus’ animal first and Polynices’ second, but within the narrative of the *Thebaid*, the order of their arrivals is reversed; Polynices comes to Adrastus’ palace a little while before Tydeus. The two dactyls borne by *saetigerumque suem* could be the reason for this inversion, since the fast-sounding syllables in the first two feet of the line offer balance to the slower prosody of the third and fourth. But Tydeus’ signifier occurring first in the line foreshadows that he will perish first of the two heroes. Tydeus’ animal is followed by the lion at line’s end, which stands for Polynices, who dies last of the Seven.

Statius also inverts the order of each hero’s arrival in order to make an explicit allusion to the *Aeneid*. The adjective *saetiger* appears eighteen times in extant Latin, twice in the *Thebaid* (1.397 and 8.532), and all of which are found in poetry. Vergil uses the word three times in the *Aeneid*, the first coming just before the midway point of the story. At the beginning of Book 7, Aeneas sails by the island of Circe, close enough to hear the sounds of the beasts she keeps there:

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hinc exaudiri gemitus iraeque leonum
vincla recusantum et sera sub nocte rudentum,
saetigerique sues atque in praesepibus ursi
saevire ac formae magnorum ululare luporum,
quos hominum ex facie dea saeva potentibus herbis
induerat Circe in vultus ac terga ferarum (Aen. 7.15-20). 9
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Statius echoes Vergil’s *saetigerique sues* (*Aen. 7.17*) with his own *saetigerumque suem* (*Theb. 1.397*), directing attention to the island of the mythological witch Circe. It is significant that

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8 Cf. *Il. 13.473 and Od. 19.445-6; Lucr. 5.696, 6.974; Aen. 7.17, 11.198, 12.170; Met. 8.376, 10.549, 14.289, *Fasti* 1.352; Seneca *Med. 644; Valerius Arg. 3.50; Martial *Spect. 13.93.1; Silius Pun. 3.23, 3.277.
9 “From here are heard the groans and anger of the lions lashing against their chains and indignant under the early evening, and the bristly pigs and also the bears raging in their cages, and the shapes of large wolves howling, whom the savage goddess Circe had turned with powerful herbs from the faces of men into the hides and expressions of beasts.”
both phrases are in the same metrical position at the beginning of their respective lines. Yet whereas Adrastus’ oracle tells of the coming of two actual animals, Circe’s island is populated by men that have been turned into animals (Aen. 7.19-20). Statius pushes the Vergilian image further, depicting Tydeus caped with a boar-hide mantle, thus confusing the distinction between Tydeus-man and Tydeus-boar. Vergil’s plural saetigerique sues, moreover, contrasts with Statius’ singular saetigerumque suem. The group of Virgil’s man-pigs is condensed into the singular saetiger sus that describes Tydeus. Ganiban argues that Book 1 of the Thebaid is modeled on Book 7 of the Aeneid since both relate the arrivals and betrothals of their heroes (Ganiban 2007: 3-20). Book 7 of the Aeneid is an appropriate model for Statius’ Book 1 because, as Vergil says, maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo / maius opus moveo (Aen. 7.44-5). Aeneid 7 is a new beginning. Statius marks the entrance of Tydeus with an echo of Vergil’s maius opus, but this connection has more meaningful implications than just giving Statius a point of entry into his epic. Aeneas and his men sail by the shores of Circe, just close enough to hear the groans of Odysseus’ men. So, Vergil acknowledges the Odyssey in his own epic—indeed, he is quite indebted to it—but Aeneas directs his ships away from Homeric poem. Vergil is not rewriting an Odyssey; to be sure, the second half of the Aeneid is more of an Iliad (Barchiesi 2001: 16-17). In the same way, Statius picks up his story from Aeneid 7, in effect passing over the Odyssey and the “Odyssey-an” half of the Aeneid (Hardie 1993: 62). The beginning of the “Iliad-ic” half of the Aeneid serves as Statius’ beginning for the Thebaid. Whereas Vergil bypasses the unfortunate group of saetigeri sues, Statius lifts one from the Aeneid and unfolds its story in the Thebaid.

The men-turned-pigs on Circe’s island shed further light on Tydeus’ condition at the beginning of the Thebaid. In the Aeneid, the men on the island are aware enough to struggle

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10 See also: Hardie 1993: 60-5.
against their bonds and moan at their condition since Circe’s spell has only changed the outward appearance of each man: *quos hominum ex facie dea saeva potentibus herbis / induerat Circe in vultus ac terga ferarum* (*Aen.* 7.19-20). In the *Thebaid*, on the other hand, Tydeus still acts and speaks as a human being, but his clothing and stature—Tydeus’ outward appearance—resemble something inhuman. Statius thus seems to construct Tydeus at the outset as part man and part beast. This blurring of distinctions will become increasingly fluid as the madness of war consumes Tydeus, until he ultimately degenerates into a completely animalistic state.

Four lines after Adrastus’ oracle, Tydeus’ entrance is marked by an *ecce* (*Theb.* 1.401) that calls the king’s attention to the approach of the fulfillment of Apollo’s riddle. The proximity of the ‘behold!’ to Adrastus’ oracle prompts an equation of Tydeus with the boar of the riddle before the audience is introduced to the hero. Moreover, Statius’ physical description of Tydeus, occurring just before the duel with Polynices could be ascribed to a stocky man or muscular boar:

… sed non et viribus infra
Tydea fert animus, totosque infusa per artus
maior in exiguo regnabat corpore virtus (*Theb.* 1.415-17).\(^{11}\)

In contrast to Polynices, Tydeus is stocky in build, resembling a low weight-class wrestler. Statius recalls the Homeric Tydeus in casting the hero so squat: ἥ ὀλίγον οἱ παῖδα ἐοικότα γείνατο Τυδεύς / Τυδεύς τοι μικρός μὲν ἐνν δέμας, ἀλλὰ μαχητής (*Il.* 5.800-1).\(^ {12}\) After describing Tydeus as ὀλίγον, μὲν… ἀλλὰ contrasts the hero’s μικρός δέμας against his warlike spirit (μαχητής). Furthermore, Tydeus’ accoutrements, described about eighty lines

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\(^{11}\) “…but not even less in strength does his spirit carry Tydeus, and a greater courage [than Polynices’], poured through all of his limbs, resides in his small frame.”

\(^{12}\) “That Tydeus did give birth to a son as small as he was, for Tydeus was of small frame, but a fighter nonetheless.”
later, make explicit Statius’ casting of Tydeus as boar. After examining Polynices’ lion-skin cape (1.482-487), Adrastus spies Tydeus’ boar-hide equivalent:

terribles contra saetis ac dente recurvo
Tydea per latos umeros ambire laborant
exuviae, Calydonis honos (Theb. 1.488-90).13

Tydeus wears his identity on his shoulders. The hero’s name follows directly after the description of his boar hide, thus paralleling Tydeus closely with the “terrible bristles and backward curving tusk” of his cape. A comparison with Ovid’s description of the Calydonian boar hide given to Atalanta shows marked resemblences: protinus exuvias rigidis horrentia saetis / terga dat et magnis insignia dentibus ora (Met. 8.428-9). Both poets speak of bristles (saetis: Theb. 1.488 and Met. 8.428), tusks (dente/dentibus: Theb. 1.488 and Met. 8.429), and “spoils” (exuviae/exuvias: Theb. 1.490 and Met. 8.428). Additionally, the noun Calydonis (Theb. 1.490), alludes specifically to the site of the most famous of mythological boar hunts. Thus, Statius picks Ovid’s pelt from Metamorphoses 8 and drapes it around Tydeus’ shoulders. Coupled with Tydeus’ short stature, his boar-hide cape effectively completes Statius’ initial image of Tydeus as boar. These references to Tydeus’ mantle also serve to cast Tydeus in a figurative Calydonian boar hunt, staged across the span of Books 2 to 8.

In Book 2 Tydeus travels the same road from Argos to Thebes that Polynices takes in Book 1 from Thebes to Argos.14 Once Tydeus, wearing the ambassador’s olive branch, concludes his embassy to Thebes, the disappointed hero turns to leave in haste (Theb. 2.467). Once again, the Calydonian Boar is evoked to describe Tydeus’ exit:

… Oeneae vindex sic ille Dianae
erectus saetis et aduncae fulmine malae,
cum premeret Pelopea phalanx, saxa obvia volvens

13 “Opposite him [Polynices], the honorable spoils of Calydon work to get across Tydeus’ wide shoulders, terrible with bristles and backward curving tusk.”
14 See Vessey 1973: 324 for the significance of the road between Argos and Thebes in the Thebaid.
This simile foreshadows Statius’ motives for Tydeus’ return trip to Argos. The simile first introduces the boar as the *vindex Oeneae Dianae* and then alludes back to Tydeus’ boar-hide cape in *erectus saetis et aduncae fulmine mala* (*Theb. 2.469-70*), essentially identifying the hero with the Calydonian Boar. Ovid’s initial description of the Calydonian Boar is comparable:

… et Oenios ultiorem spreta per agros
misit aprum, quanto maiores herbida tauros
non habet Epirus, sed habent Sicula arva minores.
sanguine et igne micant oculi, riget horrida cervix,
et saetae similis rigidis hastilibus horrent:
fervida cum rauco latos stridore per armos
spuma fluit, dentes aequantur dentibus Indis,
fulmen ab ore venit, frondes afflatibus ardent (*Met. 8.281-9*).  

In light of *Theb. 1.488-90* (the description of Tydeus’ boar-hide cape), the equation of Tydeus with the Calydonian beast is unmistakable. *Met. 8.286-7* (*fervida cum rauco latos stridore per armos / spuma fuit…*) also invites comparison with Statius’ *per latos umeros ambire laborant / exuviae* (*Theb. 1.489*). Ovid’s Calydonian Boar sprays his wide shoulders with spittle from his mouth while Tydeus, with equally *latus* shoulders, dons his boar-hide costume across

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15 “Just as that avenger of Oenean Diana, rigid with spikes and the bolt of his terrible jaw, when the phalanx of Pelops pressed upon him, rolling rocks that were in the way and broken trees from Achelous’ irrigated shores, now Telemon is on the ground, now leaving behind Ixion having been laid low he came up against you, Meleager; there at last he ceases at the spear thrust and he relaxes the iron in his resolute shoulder. So the Calydonian hero left the council at this point fearful while gnashing his teeth, as if the thrown is denied to him, and he hastens along the paths and throws off the branch of suppliant olive.”

16 Cf. Ovid only a few lines before the entrance of the boar: “…causa petendi / sus erat, infestae famulus vindexque Dianae” (*Met. 8.271-2*).

17 “then [Diana], having been scorned, sent a pig into the Oenian fields, the avenger, than which Epirus does not have larger bulls, but the Siculan fields have smaller ones, his eyes threaten with blood and fire, his bristly neck stands on end and his mane, similar to rigid spears, bristles. Glowing spit flew across his wide shoulders with a loud shriek, his teeth are akin to the teeth of Indian elephants. Lightening came from his mouth, and his temples burned with his snorting.”

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his muscular frame. At this point, Tydeus is the boar version of himself, ready to be hunted by Eteocles’ men. Returning to Statius’ simile, lines 2.471-4 describe only some of the boar’s victims as he rages against Meleager’s hunting party: Telemon and Ixion (Theb. 2.471-4); one can compare this with Ovid’s list of victims that the Calydonian boar first lays low (Met. 8.359-64). The final image of the boar in Statius’ simile, interestingly, is his death at the hands of Meleager (Theb. 2.474-5). In a simile explaining the way Tydeus rushes out of the Theban court, it is curious that Statius carries the comparison all the way through to the boar’s death. Indeed, the Iliad’s two boar similes (Il. 11.414-20 and 13.470-5) and the Aeneid’s only boar comparison (Aen. 10.707-16) construe their boars surrounded by hunters, in a defensive

1 Statius’, Vergil’s, and Ovid’s boars all have roots in Homeric models for their actions. Cf. Il. 11.414-20 and 13.470-5:

> ὡς δ’ ὅτε κάρπιον ἄμφὶ κύνες θαλεροὶ τ’ αἰξηοὶ σεύνονται, δ’ ὃς τ’ εἴσε βαθεῖς ἐκ ἑυλόχυο
> θῆρων λευκὸν οἶδόντα μετὰ γναμπτῆι γένοντι
> ἀμφὶ δ’ ἄδειος, ὅποι δ’ ὅτε κόμπος οἶδόντων
> γίγνεται, οἷς μένοισιν ἄφαι δεινόν περ ἑόντα,
> ὡς ὥσ τόπ’ ἄμφι’ Οὐασην Δἰ φιλὸν ἐσσεύοντο
> Τρώες (Il. 11.414-20).

> ἀλλ’ οὐκ Ἰδομενῆα φόβος λάβε τῆλυγετον ὡς,
> ἀλλ’ ἐμεν’ ὃς ὅτε τις σὺς οὐφρείν ἀλκί πεποίθως,
> ὃς τε μένει κολοσυρτὸν ἐπερχόμενον πολὺν ἀνδρῶν
> χώρῳ ἐν οἰσπόλῳ, φρίσσει δ’ ὅτε νύντον ὑπερθεν’
> οὐθελαμὼν δ’ ἄφαι οἱ πυρὶ λάμπετον αὐτὰρ ὅδοντας
> θήγει, ἀλέξασθαι μὲνοισιν κύκλος ἤδε καὶ ἄνδρας (Il. 13.470-5).

> “Just like dogs and stout hunters coming in around a boar, until he comes from his deep thicket, sharpening his white teeth against his curved jaws, they surround him with their aim while under the din of his teeth the men stand firm against him coming: just so at that time do the Trojans close in on Odysseus, friendly to Zeus.”

> ἀλλ’ οὐκ Ἰδομενῆα φόβος λάβε τῆλυγετον ὡς,
> ἀλλ’ ἐμεν’ ὃς ὅτε τις σὺς οὐφρείν ἀλκί πεποίθως,
> ὃς τε μένει κολοσυρτὸν ἐπερχόμενον πολὺν ἀνδρῶν
> χώρῳ ἐν οἰσπόλῳ, φρίσσει δ’ ὅτε νύντον ὑπερθεν’
> οὐθελαμὼν δ’ ἄφαι οἱ πυρὶ λάμπετον αὐτὰρ ὅδοντας
> θήγει, ἀλέξασθαι μὲνοισιν κύκλος ἤδε καὶ ἄνδρας (Il. 13.470-5).

> “But fear does not lay hold of Idomeneus the beloved son, just like some mountain boar trusting in his strength, he stands his ground against the large rabble of men coming at him in the lonely place as he bristles up his back on top. His eyes flash like fire; indeed he sharpens his tusks, outraged to defend himself against dogs and men alike.”

I refer to these similes later in discussing Tydeus’ movements on the battlefield at Thebes. Significantly, though, the boars of the Thebaid execute more varied maneuvers in the face of their attackers.
position. In contrast, Statius’ four similes involving boars depict the animals not only defensively (as with the Haemon simile in Book 8) but also offensively (as in the similes in Books 2 and 6). As I shall argue, the Book 2 simile not only condenses Ovid’s version of the Calydonian myth but also foreshadows and provides the outline of a subtext in the *Thebaid*: Tydeus’ engagement in a figurative Calydonian Boar Hunt.

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19 Cf. *Od*. 19.439-54 where Odysseus and the men of Autolycus close in on their boar (defensive at first) until it charges at Odysseus and wounds him (offensive secondly). Vergil models his sole boar simile on these Homeric models; Ovid and Statius are indebted to them as well. Remarkably, it is the boar from *Odyssey* 19 that gives Odysseus the scar on his leg by which his nurse recognizes him upon his return to Ithaca. Statius, then, makes an ‘incision’ into the *Odyssey* at the point where Odysseus is wounded and pulls out one of his Homeric boar-models (cf. Barchiesi 2001: 29-31). I refer to this scene again in discussing Tydeus’ *aristeia.*
CHAPTER 3
THE FRAMING CALYDONIAN BOAR HUNTS

Tydeus the Hunted

The complex image of Tydeus as boar is further developed in two complementary scenes, the first occurring in Book 2, after Tydeus’ embassy to Thebes, and the second in Book 8, just before Tydeus takes his fatal arrow. These scenes anchor Tydeus’ portion of the story within the overall narrative structure of the Thebaid and frame the cat-and-mouse scenario between Tydeus and the Theban host. The language and structure of the two scenes, moreover, pit Tydeus against Eteocles and the Thebans in an allusive Calydonian Boar Hunt, initiated by Tydeus’ confrontation with the fifty Thebans on his return from Thebes and concluded by his death in Book 8.

Beginning with the simile at Theb. 2.469-79 Statius moves into the first episode of Tydeus’ figurative boar hunt. Tydeus is wearing his boar-hide coat on his return from the court of Eteocles (Theb. 2.541), so the initial image of a cadre of hunters sent into to the countryside in order to exterminate a boar—or boar-like figure—recalls the story of the Calydonian Boar. Depictions of this scene in artwork, such as the contemporary Frascati Sarcophagus (SarkRel XII 6. no. 7 pl. 4) generally display the Calydonian Boar emerging from his cave and then confronted by Meleager, Atalanta, and others from the hunting party. On the Frascati Sarcophagus, the majority of the hunting party is shown turned towards the boar, menacing him from both sides. This sarcophagus helps to understand the structure of Statius’ ambush scene because it showcases the boar surrounded and outnumbered by Meleager’s hunting party, an image helpful not only for the ambush scene of Book 2 but also boar-hunting scenes generally. The sculptor has paid enough attention to detail that the boar’s musculature and bristled coat are highlighted
to the extent that a mohawk-like crest of hair rises from the creature’s broad hide.\footnote{Cf. a similar sarcophagus in the Doria Pamphilj, Rome: \textit{SarkRel} III 2 no. 231 pl. 79.} Roman reliefs contrast the boar’s hoary coat (and thus, bestial nature) with the smooth skin (and thus, human refinement) of the hunting party. In each scene, the artist has crowded the hunters into a small space around the boar, which, as the focal point, menaces its assailants at the point of death. The Frascati Sarcophagus depicts a frame in the narrative just before the boar dies, as Meleager thrusts his spear towards the boar’s head, making contact with his face or mouth. The point of contrast in this image is simple: the savage beast confronted (and conquered) by heroic men.

Statius recalls the language of Ovid’s Calydonian Hunt in narrating the assemblage of the Theban assassination party. Eteocles’ preparation in the \textit{Thebaid} to reflects Ovid’s selection of the Calydonian hunting party:

\begin{quote}
nec piger ingenio scelerum fraudisque nefandae
rector eget. iuvenum fidos, lectissima bello
corpora, nunc pretio, nunc ille hortantibus ardens
sollicitat dictis, nocturnaque proelio saevus
instruit, et (sanctum populis per saecula nomen)
legatum insidiis tacitoque inuadere ferro
(quid regnis non uile?) cupidit (\textit{Theb.} 2.482-8).\footnote{“Nor is the ruler idle as he doesn’t lack wit for crimes and nefarious treachery. The choicest bodies of the most faithful youths he incites, inflaming them now with money, now with words of encouragement, and savagely he set up a nocturnal fight, and he desires that this embassy attack [Tydeus] (the holy name for peoples through all ages) with silent swords (for what is not cheap for royalty?)”}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
diffugiunt populi nec se nisi moenibus urbis
esse putant tutos, donec Meleagros et una
lecta manus iuvenum coiere cupidine laudis (\textit{Met.} 8.298-300).\footnote{“The people flee in different directions, and they don’t think themselves safe unless inside the walls of the city, until Meleager and a single band of youths is chosen to convene with desire for praise…”}
\end{quote}

In both passages specially selected young men are called for duty: \textit{iuvenum fidos, lectissima bello / corpora (Theb.} 2.243-4) and \textit{una / lecta manus iuvenum (Met.} 8.299-300). Yet whereas the men on the Calydonian Hunt are motivated by a desire for praise (\textit{cupidine laudis}), Eteocles’
intention is treachery (*insidiis...invadere...cupit*); to be sure, Statius chastises the band dispatched against Tydeus:

... exit in unum
plebs ferro iurata caput: ceu castra subire
apparet aut celsum crebris impulsibus urbis
inclinare latus, densi sic agmine facto
quinquaginta altis funduntur in ordine portis.
macte animi, tantis dignus qui crederis armis! (2.490-5)

*Plebs*, by synecdoche, refers to the Theban band and is used by Statius to display Eteocles’ overzealous handling of Tydeus’ assassination. In an apostrophe condemning the Theban king’s action, Statius exaggerates the finite number of men sent to kill Tydeus into an indeterminate number of plebeians, a disparity that becomes even more highlighted since *plebs* follows *unum*, thus pitting the two conflicting ideas against one another. For Ovid, a cast of heroes comparable to the Argonauts hunt the boar. Thus, he can deploy the stock motif of the ‘catalogue of heroes’ (*Met.* 8.301-17); Statius, on the other hand, lowers Tydeus’ assassins to anonymous plebeian status. Statius’ *plebs-unum* contrast, then, enforces the many-against-one scenario that describes not only the Calydonian boar against Meleager’s hunters, but also Tydeus’ situation against the Theban ambush.

As the audience finds out later, a number of the Theban assassins are, in fact, formidable warriors (*Theb.* 2.570-6) and, like the participants on the Calydonian Boar Hunt, they encounter their assignment in the wilderness:

fert uia per dumos propior, qua calle latenti
praecelerant densaeque legunt compendia siluae.
lecta dolis sedes: gemini procul urbe malignis
faucibus urguentur colles, quos umbra superni
montis et incuruis claudunt iuga frondea siluis

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4 “A plebeian army with sword goes out assigned to one head: as if it was about to attack a camp or bring down some lofty city’s tall walls with a battering ram, thus packed into a drawn-up column fifty men pour out from the city’s gate in order. What valour! You who think yourself worthy so many arms!”

5 See Hardie 1993: 27-32 for a discussion of the all for one / one for all motif in later Latin Epic.
This setting is comparable to Ovid’s description of the wooded site for the confrontation between the Calydonian boar and Meleager’s men:

concava vallis erat, quo se demittere rivi
adsuerant pluvialis aquae; tenet ima lacunae
lenta salix ulvaeque leves iuncique palustres
viminaque et longa parvae sub harundine cannæ:
hinc aper excitus medios violentus in hostes
fertur, ut excussis elisi nubibus ignes (Met. 8.334-9). 7

Met. 8.339 sets the Calydonian hunt at dusk, the same time of day that Tydeus comes across the Theban band in the woods. 8 The meeting point in each author is also marked by a deep valley that cuts through earth and rocks: Statius’ “mediasque arte secat aspera rupes / semita” (Theb. 2.496-504) versus Ovid’s “concava vallis erat, quo se demittere rivi / adsuerant pluvialis aquae” (Met. 8.334-5). Both Ovid’s and Statius’ groves are rural, serene, and peaceful—stark contrasts to the respective combats that are about to take place there.

The locus amoenus motif appears in a Vergilian hunting scene as well. When Ascanius is out with his hunting dogs in Aeneid 7, the hounds spy Silvia’s pet deer floating down a stream:

ille manum patiens mensaeque adsuetus erili
errabat siluis rursusque ad limina nota
ipse domum sera quamuis se nocte ferebat.

6 “A more direct route runs through the thickets, by a hidden way they hasten forth and they traverse the gains of the dense forest. A place for crime is chosen: a distance from the city twin hills are contained by an angry pass, which the shade of the mountain and the leafy ridges with curving woods enclose (Nature pointed out ambush for the place, indeed, blind aid for hiding), a rough trail cleaves the middle of the rocks; below which lie fields and spread out plains across wide spaces.”

7 “There was a concave valley where rivers of pouring rain were accustomed to send themselves down; the tender bottom of the depression held a willow tree and here there were slender reeds and marshy rills and twigs and small canes under long twigs: hither the excited and violent boar is carried into the middle of the enemies, right when the stars were beginning to show with the clouds having been shaken off.”

8 Statius does not say here that it is dusk, but later the audience finds out that the sun is setting: “…adversaque sub umbra / flammus aeratis lunae tremor errat in armis.” (Theb. 2.531-2), “…cooperat uamenti Pheobum subtexere palla / Nox et caeruleum terris infuderat umbram (Theb. 2.527-8), and “…fuscas intervolat auras / haste.” (Theb. 2.539-40).
The deer of *Aeneid* 7 and Tydeus both return home at dusk. Additionally, as Ascanius’ hounds spot the deer some distance away while he is on or near a stream, so Tydeus comes across the *locus amoenus* and picks out the helmets of his assailants. Vergil highlights the disparity between the rustic stream of the deer and the commotion of the dogs upon seeing. They are referred to as rabid (*rabidae*) while they stir up a clamor (*commovere*) at the sight of the deer. These images are in stark contrast to the *fluvio secundo* and *ripa viridante* that convey the deer back home. In addition to *Metamorphoses* 8, the hunting scene from *Aeneid* 7 is echoed in Tydeus’ combat in the woods, though not on as grand a scale as Ovid’s boar hunt. Just as Vergil’s deer eludes Ascanius and his dogs after being struck with an arrow (*Aen. 7.500*), so Tydeus survives the encounter with the Theban ambush. Tydeus returns to Argos with news of the attempt on his life (*Theb. 3.324-406*)—one of many factors leading to the Theban expedition—just as Vergil’s deer returns home wailing, thus (with the help of Allecto) inciting the Latins to war (*Aen. 7.500-39*). In both stories, a scene of hunting-gone-wrong acts as an impetus for battle.

The circumstances and initial setup of the Calydonian Boar Hunt and Tydeus’ foray in the woods thus seem to be similar, but the hero’s first confrontation with the band has yet stronger connections to Ovid’s mythological hunt. Eteocles’ men arrive at the Sphinx’s pass before Tydeus, but Tydeus spies them from a distance and shouts in order to instigate confusion, thus initiating combat with the Theban soldiers:

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9 “He [the deer] enduring her hand [Silvia’s] and accustomed to his mistress’ table was wandering in the woods back to his known threshold and bearing himself homeward though it was early evening. At a distance the rabid dogs of the hunter Iulus disturb his wandering, though he happened to be floating down a favorable current and lightening his labors on the green bank.”
ille propinquabat siluis et ab aggere celso
scuta uirum galeasque uidet rutilare comantes,
qua laxant rami nemus adversaque sub umbra
flammceus aeratis lunae tremor errat in armis.
obstipuit visis, ibat tamen, horrida tantum
spicula et inclusum capulo tenus admovet ensem...(Theb. 2.529-34)10

The root meaning of *spiculum* (2.534) is “a sharp point,” and the word occurs at Geor. 4.74 in referring to the stinger of a bee, a fauna connection. Here one should translate *spicula* simply as arrows, but its adjective *horrida* (2.533) recalls Ovid’s description of the Calydonian boar’s hide:
sanguine et igne micant oculi, riget horrida cervix, / et saetae similes rigidis hastilibus horrent
(Met. 8.284-5). So, in preparation for his encounter with the Thebans, Tydeus not only readies his quiver of arrows, but also bristles the rough hair, as it were, of his boar-skin cape.

This reading is reinforced a few lines later. After Tydeus greets his adversaries, they reply with a silent throw of the javelin:

Ecce autem uasto Cthonii contorta lacerto,
quo duce freta cohors, fuscas interuolat auras
hasta; sed audenti deus et fortuna recessit.
per tamen Olenii tegimen suis atraque saetis
terga super laeuos umeros uicina cruori
effugit et uiduo iugulum ferit irrita ligno.
tunc horrere comae sanguisque in corda gelari.
huc ferus atque illuc animum pallentiaque ira
ora ferens (nec tanta putat sibi bella parari)...(Theb. 2.535-46)11

Ecce signals the flight of Cthonius’ spear (Theb. 2.538), thus echoing the interjection at Tydeus’ entrance (Theb. 1.401) and also anticipating the *ecce* that commences Tydeus’ last stand (Theb. 8.716). But more important is this javelin’s resting place, Tydeus’ boar-hide mantle. Statius

10 “[Tydeus] was hastening toward the woods and from a lofty mound he sees the shields of men and their crested helmets gleaming red, where the branches leave an opening for the grove and under the fronting shade flaming tremor of the brazen moonlight wonders on their weapons. He is astounded at what he sees, but he goes on anyway, as he pulls more closely his bristly arrows and gently his sheathed sword by the hilt…”

11 “Lo! A spear, launched by the large arm of Cthonius, on whom the cohort relied as general, cleaves the darkening air; but the God and Fortune shunned the endeavor. Nevertheless through his covering of the Olenian boar and the black hide above his left shoulder and near the blood it carries its flight and it strikes his neck ineffectual with widowed wood. Then, his hair stands on end and the blood becomes frozen in his heart. Here and there savagely he points his spirit and his face paling in anger (nor does he think that so many come in war against him).”
makes it clear that Tydeus is unharmed by this spear. Rather, it innocently strikes the neck of his bristly covering, again recalling the circumstances of the Calydonian Hunt. Compare Ovid’s boar struck by spears from Meleager’s hunting party:

cuspis Echionio primum contorta lacerto
vana fuit truncoque dedit leve vulnus acerno;
proxima, si nimiis mittentis viribus usa
non foret, in tergo visa est haesura petito:
longius it; auctor teli Pagasaeus Iason.
'Phoebe,' ait Ampycides, 'si te coluique coloque,
da mihi, quod petitur, certo contingere telo!' 
qua potuit, precibus deus adnuit: ictus ab illo est,
sed sine vulnere aper: ferrum Diana volanti
abstulerat iaculo; lignum sine acumine venit.
ira feri mota est, nec fulmine lenius arsit:
emicit ex oculis, spirat quoque pectore flamma,
utque volat moles adducto concita nervo…(Met. 8.345-57)

In addition to the echo at the end of Met. 8.345 with Theb. 2.538 (ecce autem uasto Cthonii contorta lacerto), the structuring of the scenes is comparable. First, the spears of Echion and Jason and the javelin of Cthonius share source of flight (Theb. 2.538-40 and Met. 8.345-9). Next follows a detailed description of each javelin’s collision with the tough skin of the boar (Theb. 2.540-3 and Met. 8.352-4). Finally Tydeus and the boar react similarly (Theb. 2.544-6 and Met. 8.355-7). The source of each dart is a soldier’s lacertus (Theb. 2.401 and Met. 8.345), and both javelins are launched by means of the same motion, contorta (ibid). Furthermore, both Tydeus’ and the Calydonian boar’s bodies are unharmed not only because they have the same protective covering, but also because divine intervention misdirects each missile. A remarkable

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12 "At first a vane spear-tip was launched from an Echionian shoulder and it gave a light wound in a maple’s trunk; next, if he would have used not so much strength in his throw, it would have hung in the soughed-after hide: it went far, its thrower was Pagasaean Jason. “Phoebus,” said the son of Ampyx, “if I have worshiped you and still do, grant me that which I seek: to make contact with this certain spear!” As much as he was able, the God assented to the prayer for the boar was struck by the spear, but without a wound: it came without its tip. The fury of the beast was moved, nor did he burn with any less of a bolt. He threatens outward with his eyes and flame blows from his chest, then excited with a contracted muscle as a giant mass he flies forward.”

13 This style of narrative is what Horsfall terms ‘telegraphic’. The telegraphic narrative includes the source of an arrow, description of its flight, and its final resting place. Here the arrow is deflected by divine intervention, which comes between the description of the arrow’s flight and its final resting place.
detail, to be sure, indicates that both spears lose their tip: *viduo iugulum ferit irrita ligno* (*Theb.* 2.543) echoes *lignum sine acumine venit* (*Met.* 8.354).

In both the *Metamorphoses* and *Thebaid*, a relatively light trauma is sustained by each character from Atalanta’s and Cthonius’ spears. At *Theb.* 2.540-3 Statius relates that the result of the Theban javelin is nothing more than the weapon coming to rest between Tydeus’ cape and shoulder; Statius paints this picture in a tricolon crescendo (*per...effugit*), postponing the weapon’s final resting place until the third line (*et viduo iugulum ferit irrita ligno*). In light of Statius’ prior references to Tydeus’ boar-skin cape, this constricted view of the line between the hero’s stole and person draws attention to his still-human condition. This space, where the line between Tydeus-man and Tydeus-boar is at its thinnest, receives the spear of Cthonius. When Tydeus sustains his fatal wound in Book 8, however, his mantle and person will both be penetrated, leading to a collapse of human-boar distinction.

When Atalanta manages to wound the boar with an arrow, Ovid says that the beast’s tough hide also protects it from too serious a wound:

*dum levat hunc Peleus, celerem Tegeaea sagittam
inposuit nervo sinuatoque expulit arcu:
fixa sub aure feri summum destrinxit harundo
corpus et exiguo rubefecit sanguine saetas...* (*Met.* 8.380-3)

Using what Horsfall calls ‘telegraphic’ narrative, Ovid’s picture of the arrow being pulled back, let loose, and finding its mark begins at *celerem* (*Met.* 8.380) and does not conclude until *arcu* (*Met.* 8.381). Moreover, while Cthonius’ spear only penetrates Tydeus’ boar hide, coming to a rest between the mantle and his skin, Atalanta’s dart makes enough of a flesh wound in the outer layer of the boar’s skin, *sumnum corpus*, that only an *exiguus* amount of blood trickles onto the...
boar’s rough hair. In both passages, only the boar hide of each character is breached (Theb. 2.541-3 and Met. 8.382-3).

In the initial encounters with their pursuers, both Tydeus and the Calydonian Boar are moved to similar rage. Statius describes Tydeus as ferus (Theb. 2.545). Ovid’s boar, indicated by the substantive feri (Met. 8.355), throws interesting light on Tydeus ferus. One cannot be sure if Tydeus is a wild human or an actual beast. Compare too the frenzy of Tydeus to the boar’s:

huc ferus atque illuc animum pallentiaque ira / ora ferens… (Theb. 2.545-6) and, ira feri mota est, nec fulmine lenius arsit: / emicat ex oculis… (Met. 8.355-6). Moreover, in the line just before (Theb. 2.544), Tydeus’ hair stands on end, or more appropriately, bristles (horrere) after the close call with Cthonius’ spear. Tydeus has degenerated to the level of beast, so much so that he immediately challenges the Theban band to combat, unaware that he is outnumbered fifty to one (Theb. 2.546-54). Similarly, Ovid’s boar is also thrown into a blind rage, ultimately rampaging and dispatching anyone who stands in his way (Met. 8.358-80).

Tydeus’ move after seeing the assemblage of the Theban band finds another comparison in Ovid’s Calydonian Boar Hunt. After spotting his enemies, Tydeus scales a nearby cliff for a possible advantage:

… petit ardua dirae
Sphingos et abscisis infringens cautibus uncas exuperat iuga dura manus, scopuloque potitus,
unde procul tergo metus et uia prona nocendi,
saxum ingens, quod uix plena ceruice gementes
uertere humo et muris ualeant inferre iuuenti,
rupibus auellit…(Theb. 2.555-60).15

15 “He seeks the arduous places of the foul Sphinx and cutting his hooked hands on the sheer rocks he gains a harsh height, having achieved the cliff from which at a distance the danger from behind lies and the way to hurt is down; then he plucks a huge boulder from the rocks, which barely could groaning pack animals carry under a full neck and bring into the city.”
Tydeus, wearing his boar-skin cape, scales a nearby cliff so as to fight his enemy from high ground, cutting himself off from behind. Ovid’s boar also seeks a short refuge before leaping out to resume his rampage: *vulnera fecissent, nisi saetiger inter opacas / nec iaculis isset nec equo loca pervias silvas* (Met. 8.377-8). As the Calydonian boar is forced into a corner and takes a brief respite from the chase, out of reach from his pursuers, so too does Tydeus gain the high ground in his struggle with the Thebans.

A further comparison from the *Aeneid* helps connect Tydeus’ retreat uphill to another boar-hunting scenario. In *Aeneid* 10, Vergil deploys a simile likening Mezentius to a boar being coaxed out of his cave and surrounded by its hunting party near Mount Vesulus:16

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ac velut ille canum morsu de montibus altis} \\
\text{actus aper, multos Vesulus quem pinifer annos} \\
\text{defendit multosque palus Laurentia silva} \\
\text{pascit harundinea \ldots (Aen. 10.707-10)}^{17}
\end{align*}
\]

While Tydeus scales a nearby cliff, Vergil’s boar comes down from his mountain hide-out at the arrival of hunting dogs. Both Tydeus’ cliff and the boar’s lair are marked by their extreme terrain; Tydeus seeks the “arduous places of the vile Sphinx” (*petit ardua dirae / Sphingos*),18 ultimately arriving at, and climbing, a “harsh height” (*iuga dura*), while Vergil’s boar descends from a mountain and swamp that has kept him hidden from hunters for many years: *multos \ldots annos / multosque \ldots* (Aen. 10.708-10). The *Aeneid* passage will be a useful comparandum when Tydeus engages in combat with the Thebans.

Tydeus’ combat with the Theban soldiers is cast in terms reminiscent of the confrontation between the Calydonian hunters and the boar. After throwing the boulder, Tydeus jumps down to face his attackers directly:

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16 This scene is based largely on *Od*. 19.439ff, but cf. also *ll*. 11.414-20, 13.471-6 and Harrison 1991: ad loc.
17 “Just as when a wild boar, driven from its tall mountain by the bite of dogs, which for many years feather-bearing Vesulus protected and the Laurentine marsh has nourished for long with its leafy foliage.”
18 See Vessey 1973: 146 and 197 for Tydeus as the new Theban Sphinx.
mox in plana libens, nudo ne pectore tela
inciderent, saltu praeceps defertur et orbem,
quam procul oppresso uidit Therone uolutum,
corripuit, tergoque et ueste tegmina nota
saepius et hostili propugnans pectora parma
constitit. inde iterum densi glomerantur in unum
Ogygidae firmantque gradum; trahit oius ensem
Bistonium Tydeus, Mauortia munera magni
Oeneos, et partes pariter diuisus in omnes
hos obit atque illos ferroque micantia tela
decuit; impeditant numero seque ipsa uicissim
arma premunt, nec uis conatibus ulla, sed ipsae
in socios errare manus et corpora turba
inuolui prolapsa sua; manet ille ruentes
angustus telis et inexpugnabilis obstat (Theb. 2.580-94).19

Conspicuously, Statius reminds the audience that Tydeus’ head and back are protected from harm by the boar hide he has been wearing since Book 1 (Theb. 2.583). Yet, in Book 1 the covering rests on Tydeus’ back. Here it seems that Tydeus is wearing the boar hide in much the same way that a Hercules figure would, with the mouth and jaws extending over the top of the head, figuratively displaying the wearer not only as triumphing over the animal he has donned, but also as half-man, half-beast.20 Tydeus’ mantle, moreover, is so thick that it effectively protects his head and back from any arrow or sword blow that might come. Tydeus is not just a hero in boar’s clothing, however; he employs the defensive assets that come with covering himself in boar skin. Here Tydeus is still, for all intents and purposes, the boar-version of himself before his slaughter of the Thebans.

19 “Quickly of his own will he jumps down onto level ground, and lest any spear fall upon his nude chest straightaway with a jump he grasps a shield which at a distance he saw fall when Theron was crushed, and protected on his back and neck with his known covering and defending his breast with the enemy shield he took his stand. Thence again the sons of Ogygus are gathered dense into one group and they firm their stance; swiftly Tydeus draws his Bistonian sword, the Martian gift of great Oeneus, and, divided into all possible directions, he faces this group and that as he shakes off the javelins shining with steel. They impede themselves in their number and press their weapons into each other’s, nor does anyone have strength for a good effort, but against their comrades their blows go wild and their own bodies are rolled up in the crowd; whereas he awaits their rushes, thin target for javelins, and he stands there, impregnable.”

20 Cf. Roman statues of Hercules caped thus: Copenhagen, Glypt. 504; Dresden, Staatl Kunstlg H. 159; Munich, Clarac 793, 1983; New York, MMA 1903.12.14; Paris, Louvre 75.
When Tydeus initiates combat with the Theban enemy (*Theb.* 2.588-93 above), Ovid’s account of the Calydonian Hunt again becomes helpful for understanding Statius’ Tydeus. The hero benefits not only because he is a superior warrior but also because he is alone. Indeed his stocky stature makes him an even smaller target, and the sheer number of men vying for Tydeus works against the Theban army (above, *Theb.* 2.590-3). Ovid’s hunters also impede one another:

> erubuere viri seque exhortantur et addunt
cum clamore animos iaciuntque sine ordine tela:
turba nocet iactis et, quos petit, inpedit ictus (*Met.* 8.388-90).  

The Calydonian hunters seem to suffer from the same disadvantage as Eteocles’ men. Whereas the Calydonian boar, having been wounded, makes a small target for javelin throwers, Tydeus’ small frame and lone status make him difficult to reach for more than a few men. Ovid’s men suffer from incompetence and a lack of bravery, but Statius reinterprets the group of hunters in the *Thebaid*, shifting the focus of the hunt from pursuers to pursued. The audience experiences the hunt from the perspective of the boar (that is, the perspective of Tydeus).

The theme of Tydeus facing down a larger number of enemy soldiers gains influence from the *Aeneid* as well. Later I shall return to Vergil’s Mezentius scene (*Aen.* 10.689-908) as a model for the scene of Tydeus’ death, and I have already discussed some depictions of the Calydonian hunt in art, so here I will only focus on how the many-against-one scenario is indicative of a wild-beast hunt in two scenes in the *Aeneid* and *Thebaid*.

Mezentius’ *aristeia* occupies the final 230 lines of *Aeneid* 10. In the *aristeia* of Mezentius, Vergil hints at bestial tendencies; indeed, he constructs two similes likening Mezentius to wild animals (*Aen.* 10.707-18 and 722-8). The first of these similes (cited above) comes at the opening of Mezentius’ death scene and compares Mezentius to a boar on Mount Vesulus. The

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21 “The men felt ashamed and they exhort themselves and add with a clamor their spirits and they throw their spears without order: the cloud is harmful to the others in flight and the blows that it seeks it blocks instead.”
placement and content of this simile are significant for Statius’ Tydeus against Eteocles’ cadre (and later, the Theban army) because: (1) Mezentius, fighting alone against (in theory) the entirety of Aeneas’ men, is compared to a boar surrounded by hunters; (2) this simile serves as the incipit of Mezentius’ drawn-out final combat, a scene whose sequence of events and pathetic atmosphere Statius will allude to for the death of Tydeus at the end of Book 8.

Mezentius’ celebrity status on the battlefield draws attention to himself, so much that he finds himself surrounded by the Trojans and their allies:

> At iouis interea monitis Mezentius ardens
> succedit pugnae Teucrosque invadit ovantis.
> concurrunt Tyrrhenae acies atque omnibus uni,
> uni odisque viro telisque frequentibus instant …

Ille … prolem Dolichaonis Hebrum
sternit humi, cum quo Latagum Palmumque fugacem,
sed Latagum saxo atque ingenti fragmine montis
occupat os faciemque aduersam, poplite Palmum
succiso uolui segnem sinit, armaque Lauso
donat habere umeris et vertice figere cristas (*Aen.* 10.689-92; 696-701).22

These lines invite comparison with *Theb.* 2.584-94, in which Tydeus lays low a number of Thebans from his disadvantaged position (*Theb.* 2.601-12). Immediately following Mezentius’ one-sided encounter with the Trojans, moreover, Vergil employs a simile to highlight the exile’s frenzy in the face of so many. The ordering of the lines is in dispute but does not affect the content for immediate purposes.23

> … postquam inter retia uentum est,
> substitit infremuitque ferox et inhorrruit armos,
> nec cuiquis irasci propiusue accedere uirtus,

22 “But meanwhile, per the monitions of Jupiter, burning Mezentius joined in the fight and attacked the rejoicing Teucrians. The Tyrrhenian battle lines assembled and they threatened one man, only one, with all their hatred and crowded spears...He [Mezentius] lays low on the ground Hebrus son of Dolichaon, with whom also Latagus and Palmus in flight, the one with a rock, indeed a huge piece of mountain he receives in the face and mouth, the other, Palmus, he allowed to be bowled over slowly with his knees cut out, while he gave to Lausus his crest and arms to have and wear on his head and shoulders.”

Vergil names the boar with *aper* at *Aen.* 10.708 (above) and mentions a wooded site for the confrontation between the boar of Vesulus and its hunters (*Aen.* 10.707-10), just as Ovid and Statius do. Moreover, the boar gnashes his teeth, *infrendens* (*Aen.* 10.711 and 718), just as Tydeus expresses his discontent at his departure from the Theban court, *trepidum linquit* *Calydonius heros / concilium infrendens* (*Theb.* 2.477). When surrounded and trapped by his hunters, the boar bristles, *inhorreo* (*Aen.* 10.711) just as Ovid’s boar (*Met.* 8.285 and 428) and the hair on the back of Tydeus’ neck (*Theb.* 2.544). When Tydeus elicits the Theban ambush from their hiding places (*Theb.* 2.546-54), the soldiers are compared to beasts making their first appearance after the shout of a hunter: *ut clausas indagine profert / in medium vox prima feras...*(*Theb.* 2.553-4). Likewise, Vergil’s boar is surrounded by nets, *inter retia ventum est* (*Aen.* 10.710), and the hunting party (and by extension, the Teurcians) prefer to attack the boar from a distance, with spears and shouts, *procul clamoribus instant* (*Aen.* 10.713). Finally, the boar’s thick hide, *tergum* (*Aen.* 10.718), protects him from any casual spear thrust. Congruencies with Ovid (*Met.* 8.348 and 429) and Statius (*Theb.* 2.532 and 583) indicate the same advantages from their respective boars’ *terga*; the Calydonian boar’s hide deflects weak efforts and Tydeus’ mantle protects his head and back.

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24 “…Afterwards he [the boar] is hemmed in among the nets and stops and fiercely he snorts and he bristles at their arms, nor for anyone is there virtue enough to coax him or come any closer, but from a distant they all harass him with spears and safe threats; while he, however, unafraid crowds them into together gnashing his teeth and he breaks spears with his hide: not otherwise are the angers by which Mezentius is ruled, nor is there spirit for anyone [of the Teurcians] clash with drawn sword, they would rather have struck him from afar with missiles and a large clamor.”

At this point in the narrative of the failed Theban ambush, Statius temporarily suspends Tydeus’ participation in his figurative hunt and inverts the hero’s role, electing to cast him in an active role. Up to this point, Tydeus has proven himself a menace to Eteocles by denying the king’s right to power (*Theb.* 2.393-409). Once he leaves for the countryside, he encounters a squad of men under orders to kill him. Along the way, Statius consistently calls attention to the hero’s boar-skin cape and connects him to the land of the Calydonian Boar Hunt, and, by extension, the boar itself. In the first scene of Statius’ figurative hunt, Tydeus escapes with his life, just as a brief respite is afforded to Ovid’s Calydonian boar. Eteocles, however, will have the final word in this story when Tydeus dies an un-heroic death in Book 8, eating the brains of Melanippus. During this intermission, however, Tydeus takes on a different role. From here until the final scene in Book 8, Tydeus turns from hunted to hunter, from passive to active. This inversion takes place once Tydeus turns the tide of the struggle with the Theban fifty and concludes as Tydeus’ body fails on the battlefield at Thebes just before his death (*Theb.* 8.700ff).

**Tydeus the Hunter**

Tydeus is not always the one being pursued. I have already observed how Tydeus must defend himself with the result that he (single-handedly) sways the battle in his favor. Yet Statius inverts the hunting image so that Tydeus becomes the huntsman. This inversion of the Calydonian scenario balances Tydeus’ participation in the story of the Seven, offering a chiastic structure to his portion of the epic. Book 2 casts Tydeus in the Calydonian myth, but midway through the figurative hunt, Statius inverts the roles of the Thebans and Tydeus. The hero turns the battle to his favor, putting Eteocles’ ambush to route, thus opening the first “A-B” frame. In Book 8, Tydeus resumes his role as hunter on the battlefield at Thebes, but this active role is only temporary. With 250 lines remaining in the book, Statius reverses the hunter-hunted relationship again, returning Tydeus to the role of pursued and here closing the second “B-A” frame.
Moreover, the language that Statius employs in the two middle scenes depicts Tydeus as the active participant in his own figurative hunting game. The active-passive oscillation between Tydeus and the Thebans is reflective of the hunter-hunted relationship between the two sides.

Let me return to Book 2 and the end of Tydeus’ foray in the woods with the Theban ambush, for this is, I believe, a critical turning point in the imagery from passive to active, hunted to hunter. After descending from his cliff, the hero evades his attackers and then dispatches a number of them. Indeed, the tide of battle changes in an instant:

… rotat ipse furentem
Deilochum, comitemque illi iubet ire sub umbras
Phegea sublata minitantem bella securi
Dircauemque Gyan et Echionium Lycophonten.
iam trepidi sese quaeque numerantque, nec idem
caedis amor, tantamque dolent rarescere turbam (Theb. 2.607-12).26

Coming face-to-face with his attackers, Tydeus fells four men before the rest of the ambush begins to retreat. In the space of six lines the tide of battle swings in favor of Tydeus as the Theban band slips from the offensive to defensive role. Not even the words of Chromis are able to incite his men to victory. Indeed, his death Statius carries out with a condensed form of ‘telegraphic narrative’: dum clamat, subit ore cavo Teumesia cornus, / nec prohibent fauces (Theb. 2.624). This particular arrow’s flight has been condensed; its source is only indicated by the adjective Teumesia, and what Statius has achieved before in three lines (Theb. 2.538-40) here he fits into five words that occupy not even the entirety of their line. The Thespiadae, curiously, only deserve the macabre pone gravis curvas perfringit lancea costas / exit et in fratrem
cognataque pectora telo / conserit (Theb. 2.635-6).27

26 “He sends Deilochus spinning madly, and he bids that one’s comrade Phegeas to go to the shades threatening wars waged with his ax, and also Dircaean Gyas and Echionian Lycophontes. Now frightened they seek out themselves and they count, nor is there the same love of slaughter, and they grieve that so great a number grows thin.”
27 “From behind a grave lance breaks through his curved ribs and goes forth into his brother and binds the kindred chests with the weapon.”
At the conclusion of this battle, Tydeus unleashes a diatribe that gives the reader a glimpse into the madness of the poet’s hero. Just before Tydeus dispatches Menoetes, he avers that the Thebans underestimated their endeavor:

… 'non haec trieterica uobis
nox patrio de more uenit, non orgia Cadmi
cernitis aut auidas Bacchum scelerare parentes.
nebridas et fragiles thyrsoi portare putastis
imbellem ad sonitum maribusque incognita ueris
foeda Celaenaea committere proelia buxo?
hic aliae caedes, alius furor: ite sub umbras,
o timidi paucique!' (Theb. 2.661-8)\(^{28}\)

The Theban ambush, according to Tydeus, has come unprepared for such a fight. Those who know only the ‘combats’ of Bacchic orgies are no match for the Calydonian hero,\(^{29}\) who places his \textit{furor} beyond that experienced by participants in Bacchic orgies. Before their encounter with Tydeus, the squadron was called \textit{plebs} (Theb. 2.491), but here Tydeus addresses them as a ‘timid handful’ (\textit{timidi paucique}). The magnitude of Tydeus’ frenzy can turn an indefinite number of assassins into a harmless few.\(^{30}\)

At this point, Tydeus is on the offensive, the active player in his figurative hunt. After slaughtering forty nine of the Theban fifty, Tydeus’ energy wanes, bringing him to exhaustion (Theb. 2.668-81). Soon after, Pallas arrives to mollify Tydeus’ rage, now disproportionate to his expired strength, and he acquiesces (Theb. 2.682-90). Next, Tydeus addresses Maeon, the sole survivor of the Theban cohort, in order that he announce the night’s misfortune in Thebes (Theb. 2.697-703). The Book closes with Tydeus dedicating his spoils to Pallas and promising a temple in her honor (Theb. 704-43). As Hershkowitz observes, Pallas, the personification of reason,\(^{28}\) ***...This night is not your three-year celebration that comes from your ancestral custom; you see no Cadmeian orgies here or mothers greedy to foul Bacchus with crime. Did you think that you were carrying fawn-skins and fragile thyrsoi to an unwarlike tune, entrusting shameful battles unknown to real men with the Celaenaean pipe? These are different murders, an entirely different kind of frenzy; go to the shades, timid handful!***\(^{29}\) Cf. Euripides’ \textit{Bacchae} 23-5 and 55-63 for Dionysus’ celebrants as soldiers in the god’s proverbial ‘army’.\(^{30}\) Cf. Vessey 1973: 128ff on this scene.
overcomes Tydeus’ *furor*, the lack of reason; a human aspect overcomes the animal. In contrast, when Pallas leaves Tydeus to ask Jupiter for the hero’s immortality (*Theb.* 8.713-5), Tydeus’ *furor* goes unchecked, resulting in his cannibalism and devolution into sub-human status. Book 2 closes with Tydeus in the active role of the *Thebaid’s* hunting game, and this agency will continue into Book 8 on the battlefield at Thebes. The observations discussed here, Tydeus’ transition from passive to active participant, find their complement in Book 8, where the order of the transition is reversed. This structure of scenes forms a chiastic pattern across Books 2 to 8. Tydeus’ transition from hunted to hunter in Book 2 forms the first “A-B” frame of this chiasmus.

**Tydeus and Mezentius: Closing the Frame**

The opened “A-B” frame of Tydeus’ narrative finds its closing “B-A” components in the second half of Book 8. In this scene, Tydeus resumes his active role as hunter but eventually grows weak under his efforts and regresses back to a state of hunted. Tydeus’ *aristeia* occupies the final 111 lines of Book 8, but, as Statius says at *Theb.* 8.663, *Tydeos illa dies, illum fugiuntque tremuntque / clamantem.*31 The first time the hero’s name appears in the book is at line 458, where he is described as *furens*, chasing not a single enemy but the *Tyria agmina*. Recharged after his night-time meeting with the Theban army, Tydeus enters the battle narrative of Book 8 in his same active role from the end of the fight in Book 2. In addition to complementing the chiastic structure from Books 1 and 2, Tydeus’ final day in battle has as a model Mezentius’ *aristeia* in the *Aeneid* (10.689-908). Tydeus and Mezentius share a similar series of events as they approach death, but their narratives diverge at the critical point of Tydeus’ cannibalism of Melanippus. By modeling Tydeus’ *aristeia* on that of Mezentius, Statius implicates the Tuscan exile as a foil for the Calydonian exile, commenting on the extreme

31 “…that day belonged to Tydeus; him they flee and fear as he shouts…”
madness of the latter. Moreover, the completion of the chiastic structure in Book 8 moves Tydeus from his active-hunter role into the passive-hunted role. As Tydeus reverts to the hunted participant in his figurative hunt, so the fury of the *Thebaid* overwhelms him, excising the hero from the realm of men, gods, and animals.

It is significant that the first simile ascribed to each character compares their movements on the battlefield to natural phenomena; Tydeus and Haemon are likened to two winter avalanches ravaging the countryside (*Theb.* 8.460-5), while Mezentius recalls obstinate rocks in the face of extreme weather (*Aen.* 10.693-6). Moreover, the first wild animal simile in Mezentius’ *aristeia* is that of the boar of Vesulus.

At *Theb.* 8.554 the audience meets Atys, the young man betrothed to Theban Ismene. This man’s circumstances and garb are similar to those of Acron, one of Mezentius’ victims. Both men are betrothed, expecting marriage after the war. Acron is *infectos linquens profugus hymenaeos* (*Aen.* 10.720), while Atys is *pactus Agenoream primis...ab annis / Ismenen* (*Theb.* 8.554-5). Each man’s costume is known by its purple color, the color of lovers. Acron is described as *purpureum pennis et pactae coniugis ostro* (*Aen.* 10.722) while Atys’ shoulders don a garment with *triplici ostro* (*Theb.* 10.564). For Vergil, Acron is just another victim of Mezentius; he receives twelve lines of treatment in the epic, but five and a half of those are devoted to a lion simile describing the Italian exile. Statius’ Atys has a larger role in the *Thebaid* with thirty eight lines (*Theb.* 8.554-92), but in he ends up as just another victim of Tydeus. Indeed, the Calydonian dispatches him with ease (*Theb.* 8.583-5).

*Theb.* 8.700 marks a crucial point in Tydeus’ story. After his encounters with Haemon, Acron, and Eteocles, Tydeus rampages through the battlefield until he begins to grow tired;

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34 *Aen.* 10.728 is an incomplete line.
indeed his efforts close him off to the enemy with a wall of corpses and equipment: \textit{et iam corporibus sese spoliisque cadentum / claiserat (Theb. 8.700-1)}. Here, Tydeus reverts from the offensive hunter to the passive hunted. At \textit{Theb. 2.607} the hero turns the tide of battle to his favor against the Theban fifty, ending the book as pursuer. With 67 lines remaining in Book 8, however, Statius inverts the Tydeus-Theban relationship and again pits Tydeus alone against the Thebans. He will not survive this encounter. The Thebans surround Tydeus as his strength dissipates, thus recalling Mezentius’ initial engagement with the Teucrians: \textit{concurrunt Tyrrhenae acies atque omnibus uni, / uni odiisque viro telisque frequentibus instant (Aen. 10.691-2)}. In nearly the same terms, Statius describes the way in which the Thebans seek Tydeus: \textit{unum acies circum consumitur, unum / omnia tela vovent (Theb. 8.701-2)}. The one-many contrast in these passages is sharp. Using chiasmus, Vergil encloses the two datives \textit{uni, uni} with the ablative\textit{s omnibus...odiisque}, thus visually depicting Mezentius as surrounded by the hatred of the Trojans. Statius, using parallel syntax, abruptly contrasts \textit{unum} with \textit{acies} and \textit{unum} again with \textit{omnia}. This image also recalls Tydeus’ battle in Book 2 with the Theban assassins. Once surrounded in Book 8, however, Tydeus’ energy wanes and he is wounded. Remarkably, at the time that Tydeus’ \textit{gentilis aper (Theb. 8.706)} falls from his shoulders, his death becomes inevitable: \textit{nusquam ardua coni / gloria, quique apicem torvae Gradivus habebat / cassidis, haud laetum domino ruit omen (Theb. 8.706-8)}.\textsuperscript{37}

Once Tydeus’ cape falls from his shoulders, his body is exposed for an arrow strike from Melanippus. The hero has taken arrows (\textit{summis haec ossibus haerent, / pars frustrata cadunt, partem Tritonia vellit, / multa rigent clipeo}), thus recalling that the Calydonian Boar is wounded

\textsuperscript{35} “The Tyrrhenian columns converge and they attack one man alone with all of their hatred and their thick missiles.”
\textsuperscript{36} “Around one man does the column expend energy, him alone do all of their missiles vow [death].”
\textsuperscript{37} “The lofty glory of his helmet is no longer, where Gradivus surmounted the top of the grim helmet: in no way a lucky omen for the owner.”
by Atalanta (Met. 8.382-3). After Tydeus hems himself in with bodies, he looks to Pallas for help, but the goddess shields her eyes (Theb. 8.700-15). Then, a phantom arrow strikes the hero:

Ecce secat Zephyros ingentem fraxinus iram
fortunamque ferens; teli non eminet auctor:
Astacides Melanippus erat, nec prodict ipse
et uellet latuisses manum, sed gaudia turmae
monstrabant trepidum; nam flexus in ilia Tydeus
summissum latus et clipei laxaverat orbem (Theb. 8.716-21).38

This is a particularly unheroic death for Tydeus. In Aeschylus’ Septem, Tydeus and Melanippus are cast as equals who struggle for one of the seven gates of Thebes in single combat.39 In the Thebaid, Tydeus does not see Melanippus until after he is struck by the man’s arrow. Because he has shot the hero at long range, Melanippus still does not stand out as Tydeus’ killer; he must be identified indirectly by his rejoicing comrades: teli non eminet auctor…sed gaudia turmae / monstrabant trepidum (Theb. 8.717-20). When he is struck by Melanippus’ arrow, Tydeus doubles over on himself (flexus in ilia Tydeus / summissum latus) and relaxes his shield (clipei laxaverat orbem), just as the boar from the simile in Book 2 relaxes his shoulders at the spear-thrust of Meleager: ibi demum cuspide lata / haesit et obnixo ferrum laxavit in armo (Theb. 2.474-5). Instead of shrinking away from his arrow strike like Melanippus, Ovid’s Meleager harries the boar after landing an arrow in the beast’s back:

at manus Oenidae variat, missisque duabus
hasta prior terra, medio stetit altera tergo.
nec mora, dum saevit, dum corpora versat in orbem
stridentemque novo spumam cum sanguine fundit,
vulneris auctor adest hostemque inritat ad iram

38 “Lo! An ashen spear slices the Zephyr bringing mighty wrath and fortune; the author of the missile is not apparent. It was Melanippus son of Astacus. Nor did he show himself and he would have wished to have hidden his handiwork, but the joy of the throng showed him still trembling. For Tydeus, bent over on his groin with his lowered side, had relaxed the circle of his shield.”
39 Sept. 377-421.
Whereas Melanippus is not apparent at first (*teli non eminet auctor*), Meleager rushes upon the boar immediately: *vulneris auctor adest hostemque inritat ad iram*. Moreover, after being struck Tydeus still has the desire to fight; Statius describes him as *cupidum bellare, poscentem hastas*, and *negantem / exspirare* (*Theb.* 8.728-30). This is comparable to the boar’s reaction to Meleager’s spear: *nec mora, dum saevit, dum corpora versat in orbem / stridentemque novo spumam cum sanguine fundit*. Where the men on the Calydonian hunt crowd round the boar and rejoice (*gaudia testantur socii clamore secundo*), the Thebans, still surrounding Tydeus, indicate Melanippus by their celebration (*sed gaudia turmae / monstrabant trepidum*).

After being wounded, Tydeus and Mezentius leave the field of battle and are consoled by their men:41

> tunc tristes socii cupidum bellare (quis ardor!)
> et poscentem hastas mediaque in morte negantem
> expirare trahunt, summique in margine campi
> effultum gemina latera inclinantia parma
> ponunt, ac saeui rediturum ad proelium Martis
> promittunt flentes (*Theb.* 8.728-33).42

*Interea genitor Tiberini ad fluminis undam*
> uulnera siccabat lymphis corpusque leuabat
> arboris acclinis trunco. procul aerea ramis
> dependet galea et prato grauia arma quiescunt.
> stant lecti circum iuuenes; ipse aeger anhelans
> colla fuet fusus propexam in pectore barbam (*Aen.* 10.833-8).43

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40 “But the hand of Oenides [Meleager] has wavering luck; with two sent, one javelin stands in the ground while the other stops in the middle of [the boar’s] hide. He pours out spittle streaming with the recent blood. The author of the wound is there and he incites the enemy to anger and he coats his splendid spears against the other’s arms opposite.”


42 “Then his sad comrades drag him off, still desirous for war (what ardor!) and begging for spears and, though at the point of death, denying to expire. They place him at the furthest edge of the field held up leaning his sides on two shields and they promise that he will return to the struggles of savage Mars.”

43 “Meanwhile, the father [Mezentius] was washing his wounds at the bank of the river Tiber with water and he lightened his load while resting against the trunk of a tree. At a distance his bronze helmet hung from a branch and
Among their men, both Tydeus and Mezentius find quiet repose from the battle. Mezentius cleanses his wound in the Tiber (Tiberini ad fluminis undam) while Tydeus’ men place him at the edge of the field of battle (summique in margine campi). Though one cannot assume that Tydeus is propped up on his own shield (effultum...parma), it is safe to assert that he is unarmed. Mezentius too lays his weapons aside while treating his cut: procul aerea ramis / dependet galea et prato gravia arma quiescunt. Here the two heroes’ narratives diverge. Mezentius, though wounded, battles once more against Aeneas; Tydeus on the other hand, after cannibalizing Melanippus, dies immediately.

Tydeus and Mezentius experience a moment of clarity when both are at the moment of death. Each hero addresses his interment wishes:

“unum hoc per si qua est uictis uenia hostibus oro: corpus humo patiare tegi. scio acerba meorum circumstare odia: hunc, oro, defende furorem et me consortem nati concede sepulcro.” (Aen. 10.903-6)

… “miserescite,” clamat, “Inachidae: non ossa precor referantur ut Argos Aetolumue larem; nec enim mihi cura supreri funeris: odi artus fragilemque hunc corporis usum, desertorem animi … “ (Theb. 8.735-9)

Tydeus and Mezentius have exactly opposite dying requests. Tydeus begs his men, precor, not to inhume his body at Argos or home, nor does he care for funeral rites: non ossa referantur ut Argos / Aetolumque larem; nec enim mihi cura supreri. Mezentius, on the other hand, beseeches Aeneas to bury his body next to his son’s: corpus humo patiare tegi...me consortem
Both exiles, and both savage warriors *par excellence*, Tydeus’ and Mezentius’ requests inspire pathos. Tydeus, covered in blood, finds sympathy in the audience and his comrades, though the audience knows of his imminent cannibalism. Reflecting Stoic ideals, Tydeus renounces the use of his body (*odi artus fragilémque hunc corporis usum*) in asking his men not to go through the trouble of burying him. A funeral to match the exploits of Tydeus would be large indeed, and the men will be busy with funeral rites Hippomedon, Parthenopaeus, Capaneus, and Polynices before poem’s end. Mezentius, conversely, asks specifically for Aeneas to suffer, *patiare*, burial rites for him. Also an exile, Mezentius realizes that he is surrounded by enemies (*scio acerba meorum / circumstare odia*), but his wish to rest next to the tomb of his son brings the audience closer to the Italian exile, contrasting his enemies’ hatred with his own familial piety. Though seeking opposite ends for their respective cadavers, both men succeed in gaining sympathy before their deaths. Moreover, Tydeus’ speech to the men ends Statius’ allusion to Mezentius’ *aristeia*, and for good reason. Mezentius’ speech ends just before Aeneas plunges his sword into the exile’s throat, while Tydeus’ speech, though eliciting pathos in its selfless request, comes before his cannibalism of Melanippus and death.

Leaving Mezentius, I turn to Tydeus’ encounter with Haemon, as it merits discussion in light of Tydeus’ final moments and the *Thebaid*’s hunting imagery at large. After the simile of the winter torrents, Tydeus and Haemon, driven forward by Pallas and Hercules respectively, face each other on the battlefield (*Theb. 8.519-35*). A few lines before this, Hercules reverently yields to Athena, convincing the goddess to spare Haemon from Tydeus (*Theb. 8.502-18*). Tydeus, unaware that Athena has decided to protect Haemon, hurls a spear at the Theban’s face:

```latex
… cedentem Acheloïus heros
impetit, et librans uni sibi missile telum
derexit iactus summae qua margine parmae
ima sedet galea et iuguli ultialia lucent.
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nec frustrata manus, mortemque inuenerat hasta;  
sed prohibet paulumque umeri libare sinistri  
praebeit et merito parcit Tritonia fratri (Theb. 8.522-35).48

This scene complements Tydeus’ actions just before his death. First, as Tydeus takes very
specific aim before launching his dart at Haemon (Theb. 8.522-5) so he threads the needle, so to
speak, in delivering his spear to Melanippus:

ILLE PER OPPORTOS LONGE RIMATUS AMARUM
ASTACIDEN, TOTIS ANIMAE SE COGIT IN ICTUM
RELIQUIS TELEUMQUE IACIT QUOD PROXIMUS HOPLEUS
PRAEBUERAT…(THEB. 8.724-7)49

Pallas earlier offers (praebuit, 8.528) Tydeus’ spear a graze on the shoulder of Haemon. Here
Hopleus offers, praebuerat, the spear with which Tydeus kills Melanippus. Moreover, the space
for which Tydeus takes aim on Haemon’s neck is marked by its small margin for error: derexit
IACTUS SUMMAE QUAE MARGINE PARMAE / IMA SEDET GALEA ET IUGULI VITALIA LUENT (Theb. 8.525). The
shot through the Theban army that kills Melanippus is equally impressive: per oppositos longe
(Theb. 8.724).

In addition, the extent of Haemon’s wound and his reaction recall not only Tydeus’
encounter with the Theban fifty but also Ovid’s Calydonian Boar Hunt. Statius says that
Tydeus’ spear grazes, libare (Theb. 8.527), Haemon’s shoulder, just as Ovid relates that
Atalanta’s arrow makes a minor cut in the boar’s hide: fixa sub aure feri summum destrinxit
harundo / corpus et exiguo rubefecit sanguine saetas (Met. 8.382-3). Moreover, once he takes
the spear, Haemon cannot stay in one place or look Tydeus in the face; he acts, Statius says, like
a Lucanian boar:

48 “…him [Haemon] retreating the Acheloian hero seeks after, and balancing a missile, a throw for him alone, he
aims the javelin at the space where the bottom of the helmet sits on the top of the shield and the vital organs of the
neck shine out. Nor does his hand fail, his spear had found death, but Tritonia forbade it and provided it to lick a
little of the left shoulder and it spared her deserving brother.”
49 “He [Tydeus], having spied the son of Astacus from afar through those between them, forces himself to strike
with all of his remaining strength and throws a dart which nearby Hopleus had furnished.”

47
Tydeus stands before Haemon, yet the latter, startled by the spear’s close-call, cannot make eye-contact with him or stay in one place. Comparable to Haemon’s reaction is that of Tydeus after his close call with the spear of Cthonius; indeed, Tydeus becomes ‘animalistic’ in his reaction: *huc ferus atque illuc animum pallentiaque ira / ora ferens* (*Theb.* 2.545-6). The simile of the Lucanian boar also reminds the audience of the figurative hunting imagery present in the *Thebaid*. In this comparison, Tydeus takes on the active role of the hunter, while Haemon becomes the hunted boar. The Lucanian boar sustains a light head-wound (*cui non infossa cerebro / vulnera*), just as the Calydonian Boar at *Met.* 8.382-3 takes Atalanta’s arrow beneath its ear. This simile, however, contrasts with the previous images of boar-hunting since the Lucanian boar of Book 8 behaves in no way like the Calydonian Boars of *Theb.* 2.469-75 and *Met.* 2.355-80. The boar of Book 2 rampages through Telemon and Ixion before reaching Meleager; Ovid’s boar, after the tipless spear-strike, charges for twenty-five lines before meeting Atalanta’s arrow. The simile in Book 8 with Haemon, however, indicates that the Theban attempts to avoid Tydeus after being struck: *in latus iras / frangit et expertae iam non venit obvius hastae* (*Theb.* 8.534-5). The prey Haemon escapes his hunter Tydeus.

50 “He [Haemon], nevertheless, dares not to stand in the same place nor to come any closer or to endure the countenance of bloody Tydeus, his weak strength and courage left his spirit. Just as when a boar, having been grazed by a Lucanian tip on his bristle-bearing forehead, for whom the wound is not buried deep in his brain, nor is the course of his hand true, he crashes his anger against his side and does not come again in front of the now experienced spear.”
After Tydeus’ address to his comrades, Capaneus hurries to fulfill the hero’s wish, *caput, o caput, o mihi si quis / apportet, Melanippe, tuum!* (*Theb.* 8.739-40). Here, Melanippus is compared to the Tirynthian boar carried by Hercules back to Argos:51

... laeuaque super ceruice reportat,  
terga cruentament concussi uulneris unda:  
qualis ab Arcadio reedit Tirynthius antro  
captiuumque suem clamantibus intulit Argis (*Theb.* 8.747-50).52

By no great leap one could connect the Tirynthian boar of this simile to the Lucanian boar of *Theb.* 8.532-5. The boar that was wounded in the first simile ends up dead in the second. But Melanippus’ comparison to a boar has wider implications than just completing the image begun by the Haemon simile. With Tydeus at the moment of death, the ‘boar’ that got away earlier (Haemon) meets the hero face-to-face (Melanippus) as both are about to expire. Since Tydeus’ *aristeia* completes the hero’s figurative hunting game, the two boar similes in Book 8 seem to play out in miniature Tydeus’ general role in the *Thebaid*. The hero escapes death in Book 2 against the Theban fifty only to perish at the hands of the Theban army in Book 8.53 This connection also helps explain why the Lucanian boar avoids the *experta hasta* of *Theb.* 8.535 instead of charging his attackers like the Calydonian boars of Book 2 and the *Metamorphoses*. After hitting Tydeus rather by accident, Melanippus hesitates to display himself as the source of the arrow: *teli non eminet auctor...nec prodidit ipse / et vellet latuisse manum...* (*Theb.* 8.717-9).

Haemon, moreover, suddenly loses courage and flees Tydeus after being grazed by the Calydonian’s spear: *nec...vultus audit perferre cruenti / Tydeos; aegro animo vis ac fiducia cessit* (*Theb.* 8.529-31). This observation links Melanippus’ simile to Haemon’s through each

51 Cf. visual representations of this scene in various media: New York, MMA 13.60 (marble relief); Frankfurt, Liebieghaus 81 (marble statuette); Naples, Mus. Naz. 9006 (wall painting).
52 “…and upon his left shoulder [Capaneus] brings him back, staining his back with a gush of blood from the traumatized wound: just as when the Tirynthian returned from the Arcadian cave and brought in the captive pig to an applauding Argos.”
53 Cf. Ovid’s boar takes an arrow from Atalanta (*Met.* 8.380-2) then dies by the spear of Meleager (*Met.* 8.414-9).
character’s unwillingness to face Tydeus. However timid Melanippus is, Tydeus still manages to strike him with a spear, thus closing not only the small-scale hunt of Book 8, but also the larger figurative hunt of Books 2 to 8. In Book 8, Tydeus-hunter only wounds Haemon-hunted, letting him escape. Later, Tydeus-hunted dies by Melanippus-hunter. On a grander scale, The Theban hunters let Tydeus-hunted get away in Book 2 only to ‘catch’ him in Book 8. Both scenarios close at the time of Tydeus’ death.

Statius’ boar imagery comes full circle when Tydeus gazes into the eyes of Melanippus after Capaneus has retrieved his body:54

erigitur Tydeus vultuque occurrit et amens
laetitiaque iraque, ut singultantia uidit
ora trahique oculos sesque agnouit in illo,
imperat abscisum porgi, laevaque receptum
spectat atrox hostile caput, gliscitque tepentis
lumina torua uidens et adhuc dubitantia figi.
infelix contentus erat … (Theb. 751-7)55

Tydeus is both happy, _laetitia_, and mad, _ira_; indeed, Statius says that he is out of his mind, _amens_. When he comes face-to-face with Melanippus, Tydeus’ psyche is split. The double elision of _laetitiaque iraque ut_ reinforces the blending and coexistence of Tydeus’ opposing _laetitia_ and _ira_. The antithetical forces of happiness and anger exist within one man, inextricably bound by elision and the polysyndeton of the repeated _–que_ endings. The image of two becoming one begins, however, with the chiasmus of _erigitur Tydeus vultuque occurrit_. The verbs _erigitur_ and _occurrit_, both third-person singulars, stand in the “A” positions while the nouns _Tydeus_ and _vultuque_ occupy the “B” positions. Thus, _erigitur Tydeus_, the left-half of the

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54 Apollodorus _Bib_. 3.6.8 indicates that Amphiaraus not only furnishes the head to Tydeus but also is responsible for inducing the Calydonian to ingest its contents. In the _Thebaid_ Capaneus, all too eager to offer his hand for _nefas_, retrieves Melanippus’ body (Ganiban 2007: 123-7). Tisiphone then drives Tydeus to eat the Theban’s brain.

55 “Tydeus sets himself upright and turns to meet him [Melanippus] face-to-face; he is insane with both happiness and madness as he looks at the gasping face and the fierce eyes and he recognizes himself in the other; then he orders the enemy head to be cut off and brought forth, and he looks savagely at it, having taken it in his left hand, and he swells looking at the pitiless eyes even up to now hesitant to be fixed. Unhappy he was content …”
chiasmus, acts as a mirror to *uultuque occurrit*, the right half; this is a particularly apt mimesis at the point when Tydeus makes eye-contact with the dying Melanippus.

Tydeus sees himself in the eyes of Melanippus: *ut singultantia vidit / ora trucesque oculos seseque agnovit in illo...* (Theb. 8.752-3). Tydeus sees his reflection, but the audience sees two Tydeuses. This image is reinforced by the repetitive prosody of *seseque*, a word in which all three syllables carry the –*e* sound. *Sese*, a substitute for *se*, intensifies the reader’s double vision through the doubling of its syllable.\(^{56}\) The English, “he recognized himself in the other,” is as enigmatic as the Latin, *seseque agnovit in illo*. At face value, this phrase means that Tydeus sees his own reflection in the eyes of the dying man. Taking this literal meaning of *seseque agnovit in illo*, one then considers what Tydeus sees when he sees himself in Melanippus’ eyes. In fact, Statius describes exactly what Tydeus’ head and shoulders look like earlier in his *aristeia*: *iam cruar in galea, iam saucia proluit ater / pectora permixtus sudore et sanguine torrens* (Theb. 8.711-12).\(^{57}\) Tydeus, covered in blood and sweat, looks as he does at the close of his encounter with the Theban fifty:

\[
\begin{align*}
\ldots & \text{gelidus cadit imber anhelo} \\
& \text{pectore, tum crines ardentiaque ora cruentis} \\
& \text{roribus et taetra morientum aspergine manant (Theb. 2.672-4).} \end{align*}
\]

Tydeus sees himself, not only as he appears now (in Book 8), but as he appeared then (in Book 2). But instead of weary and victorious, Tydeus is wounded and dying. It is important to note here that Tydeus sees himself in the eyes of Melanippus without his boar-skin cape; indeed, as he receives more wounds before his final arrow, the hero’s mantle slips from his shoulders:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{tergoque fatiscit / atque umeris gentilis aper (Theb. 8.705-6).} \end{align*}
\]

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\(^{56}\) This choice for the disyllabic *sese* is deliberate here; Statius uses the monosyllabic *se* 30 times and *sese* 27 over the course of the poem.

\(^{57}\) “Now there is blood in his helmet, now a black torrent mixed with blood and sweat washes over his wounded chest.”

\(^{58}\) “A cold shower falls from his panting chest, then his hair and burning face drip with bloody dew and the black spray of the dying.”
Tydeus’ head and shoulders in Book 2 slips from the hero when he reaches the point of no return. Tydeus, without his marked cloak, sees himself as a human in the eyes of another human, a reflection of himself.

*Seseque agnovit in illo* has implications beyond Tydeus seeing his reflection in the eyes of Melanippus. I suggest that Tydeus recognizes himself *within* Melanippus instead of merely seeing his own reflection in the other’s eyes. This interpretation is reinforced by the fact that Statius says ‘he recognized himself in the other’ instead of ‘he recognized himself in the eyes of the other’. Here, Melanippus’ comparison to the Tirynthian boar gains more significance.

Recalling the Tirynthian boar simile, and considering Tydeus’ tendency for boar-like presentation, I suggest that the Calydonian sees himself in the eyes of Melanippus not only as a human, but also the boar, the beast, which he has become. This premise is compatible with the simpler interpretation above. Where Melanippus is brought before Tydeus, Statius reflects the entirety of Tydeus’ story in the *Thebaid* to the hero through the eyes of Melanippus. He sees the *saetigerumque suem* of Book 1 reflected in the *captivumque suem* of Book 8. To be sure, *saetigerumque suem et fulvum adventare leonem* indicates the arrival of Tydeus and Polynices at Argos, just as *captivumque suem clamantibus intulit Argis* describes Hercules returning to the same city with the Tyrinthian boar. Tydeus-boar, looking into Melanippus-boar, recognizes himself and his story in the latter. He recognizes and understands his devolution into beast.

After Melanippus is brought before Tydeus, the Calydonian orders the head to be cut off and brought forward (*Theb. 8.754*). Next, Tydeus picks the head up and returns his gaze to its sinking eyes: *spectat atrox hostile caput, gliscitque tepenis / lumina torva videns et adhuc dubitantia figi* (*Theb. 8.755*). The two present participles, *tepensis* and *dubitanta*, indicate
Melanippus’ liminal state between life and death. Though his head is disconnected from his body, it is still warm and the eyes still have life.\(^{59}\)

Tydeus is content to die with Melanippus’ head in his hands (\textit{infelix contentus erat}) but Tisiphone induces him to defile the man’s skull. Instead of expiring as he holds his killer’s head, Tydeus succumbs once more to the fury of the \textit{Thebaid} under the power of Tisiphone: \textit{plus exigit ultrix / Tisiphone} (Theb. 8.757-8). With Pallas not present to mitigate the \textit{furor} imposed upon Tydeus, the hero resorts to cannibalism as the only outlet for his rage at the moment of death:\(^{60}\)

\begin{quote}
\textit{… iamque inflexo Tritonia patre}
\textit{uenerat et misero decus inmortale ferebat,}
\textit{atque illum effracti perfusum tabe cerebri}
\textit{aspicit et uiuo scelerantem sanguine fauces}
\textit{(nec comites auferre ualent)}… (Theb. 8.758-62)\(^{61}\)
\end{quote}

Whereas Tydeus is covered with the blood of the slain at Theb. 2.672-4 and 8.711-12, here the blood of the living now covers him: \textit{vivo scelerantem sanguine}. Moreover, Statius calls attention to the Lucanian boar of earlier, whose head wound is only skin deep (\textit{penitus cui non infossa cerebro / vulnera}), by repeating \textit{cerebrum}. Whereas the boar of Theb. 8.532-5 sustains a slight wound to his head, Tydeus opens Melanippus’ skull and consumes his grey matter: \textit{atque illum effracti perfusum tabe cerebri…vivo scelerantem sanguine fauces} (Theb. 8.760-1). Melanippus’

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\(^{59}\) Cf. Lucan’s description of Pompey’s decapitation in Book 8 of the \textit{Bellum Civile}. After hacking off Pompey’s head, Septimius attaches it to a pike. But Pompey is still somewhere between life and death here:

\begin{quote}
dum vivunt vultus atque os in murmura pulsant
singultus animae, dum lumina nuda rigescunt,
suffixum caput est … (BC 8.682-4)
\end{quote}

“While his face and expression still live and pulse in murmur of his gasping breath, while his open eyes grow rigid, his head is fixed…”

Commenting on the crime of Septimius, the narrator of the \textit{Bellum Civile} indicates that the former legionary adds further stain to his assassination by planting Pompey’s head on a spear with his eyes still searching for light.

\(^{60}\) Cf. the pediment from Temple A at Pyrgi (\textit{LIMC} vol. 5 pt. 2 Kapaneus 30) for a terracotta depiction of this scene.

\(^{61}\) “And now Tritonia had come from her persuaded father bringing with her immortal glory for the wretch, but she spies him there, doused with the gore of the broken apart brain and defiling his jaws with living blood (nor are any of his comrades brave enough to take it away).”
head is cracked open, *effracti*, just as Tydeus’ cape tears and falls from his shoulders, *tergoque fatiscit / atque umeris gentilis aper* (*Theb. 8.705-6*). Just after Tydeus’ identifying mantle breaks open, exposing him to the Theban army, the hero breaches his killer’s skull and ingests its contents.

*Seseque agnovit in illo* has implications for Tydeus’ anthropophagy. If Tydeus recognizes himself in the eyes of Melanippus, then the hero’s cannibalism has broader ramifications than just alienating the men around him and driving Pallas away: *nec comites auferre valent...fugit aversata iacentem* (*Theb. 8.762; 764*). I suggest that Tydeus consumes his portion of the *Thebaid’s* narrative fabric. When he looks into the eyes of Melanippus, Tydeus recognizes his part of the story, *seseque*. This is reinforced by the two boar similes of Book 8 which play out the hero’s two encounters with the Theban army. The encounter with the Theban fifty in Book 2 corresponds to the Lucanian Boar simile of *Theb. 8.532-5*, and the deadly encounter at the end of Book 8 corresponds to the Tirynthian Boar of *Theb. 8.749-50*. After Tydeus observes his own boar-like nature in the face of Melanippus, he ingests the latter’s *cerebrum*, a word with some nuance in this situation. In one sense this word means simply “the brain,” but by extension its semantic range includes “sense” or “seat of intelligence.”62 So, Tydeus not only consumes the grey matter of Melanippus’ brain, but also the Theban’s “seat of intelligence.” Recalling that Tydeus recognizes himself, that is, his animalistic self, in the man’s eyes earlier, a syllogism makes this connection possible: Tydeus (and the audience) sees ‘himself’ in the face of Melanippus; Tydeus consumes Melanippus’ *cerebrum*; therefore, Tydeus consumes ‘himself’.63

From a narrative perspective, Tydeus’ participation in the *Thebaid* comes to a halt at the moment that he eats ‘himself’. When Tydeus sees himself in the eyes of Melanippus, the

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63 Cf. *Met. 8.875-8* where Erysichthon eats his own body out of extreme *fames*.
audience sees two Tydeuses: Tydeus’ narrative-self (within the eyes of Melanippus) and Tydeus himself looking at the former. Just as Tydeus’ narrative-self (Melanippus) is still at the threshold of death (*lumina...adhuc dubitantia figi*), so Tydeus himself sits dying on the field at Thebes. At this point Tydeus is content to die with the man’s head in his hands: *infelix contentus erat* (*Theb. 8.757*). Tisiphone, however, causes Tydeus to sever his own narrative thread through inducing him to consume his story as reflected in the eyes of Melanippus (*plus exigit ultrix / Tisiphone*). I shall return to Tisiphone’s move here, but it is important to note that the Fury is wholly responsible for Tydeus’ cannibalism. The *furor* of the *Thebaid* overcomes Tydeus and he ingests his portion of the epic. Thus, the madness of the epic operates at a narratological level.64 Tydeus consumes his narrative-self, and both are thus removed from the story.65

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64 See, with de Jong 2004: 41-99, Hershkowitz 1995: 58-9 and my comments below (Ch. 5).
65 Cf. *Il.* 5.802-3 when Athena tells Diomedes that she warned his father not to ἐκπαιφάσσειν while on his embassy to Thebes. The *LSJ* and *LHD* define the verb as ‘to rush madly into the fray’ (s.v. “ἐκπαιφάσσειν”). Broken down into its component parts, the prefix ἐκ- and the reduplicated verb φαίνω, the word can also mean ‘to show or appear outward’ (*LSJ* s.v. “ἐκ-” and “φαίνω”). Tydeus only half-complies with Athena’s admonition. He hesitates to march on Thebes in Book 2, but rushes madly into battle in Book 8, disregarding Athena’s command from the *Iliad*. Additionally, he shows himself to the audience and others in the epic as a war-crazed beast. This warning becomes important when Tydeus recognizes his own madness while gazing into Melanippus’ eyes. Tydeus’ story is projected outward (ἐκπαιφάσσειν) to the hero and audience. At this point, Tydeus is abandoned by Pallas and becomes a cannibal by his own madness. For this breach of the moral order, Pallas revokes Tydeus’ immortality and he consequently falls out of the narrative.
CHAPTER 4
TYDEUS THE WRESTLER

Tydeus struggles without his boar-skin mantle twice in the *Thebaid*. This chapter will analyze and compare two similar scenes of wrestling,¹ important because they provide further balance to Tydeus’ story by interlocking the hero’s armed combats against the Thebans with naked wrestling against one opponent. The duels with Polynices (*Theb. 1.410-38*) and Agylleus (*Theb. 6.826-910*) counterbalance the image of Tydeus as boar in the *Thebaid* and complement Tydeus’ engagements in armed conflict.² At the same time, Tydeus exerts physical dominance over his competition, thus enforcing the hero’s ferocity. Though quite similar, the differing structure and deployment of language in each scene advance Tydeus’ (d)evolution into animal, even when he takes off his boar-skin cape.

After Tydeus arrives at Adrastus’ palace at *Theb. 1.410*, Tydeus and Polynices begin to shout abuses at one another, eventually coming to blows. Before they fight, each one removes his clothes to indicate a challenge to naked combat:

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paulum alternis in uerba minasque
cunctantur, mox ut iactis sermonibus irae
intumuer e satis, tum uero erectus uterque
exertare uerum nudamque lacessere pugnam.
celsior ille gradu procera in membra simulque
integer annorum; sed non et uiribus infra
Tydea fert animus, totoque infusa per artus
maiior in exiguo regnabat corpore uirtus (*Theb. 1.410-17*).³
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¹ In Apollodorus Tydeus wins the boxing while Polynices takes wrestling in the funeral games for Hypsipyle’s son (*Bib. 3.6.4*). Statius’ Polynices nearly dies in the chariot race because of an out-of-control horse (*Theb. 2.389-549*).
² Cf. Bonds 1985 for a discussion of this scene’s similarities with Polynices’ final duel with Eteocles.
³ “For a little while they jumble words and threats in alternation, then soon when their anger swelled enough with these thrown out jibes, then truly standing up each one uncovered his shoulders and challenged to naked combat. The one was taller in step through his long limbs and also at the cusp of years; but no less strength carried Tydeus, which was poured through all of his limbs and greater virtue ruled in his small frame.”
I here return to a passage already discussed in the context of Tydeus’ characterization as boar in order to draw out a contrast with the preparation for the wrestling match between Tydeus and Agylleus at the funeral games in Book 6:

*ergo ubi luctandi iuuenes animosa citauit gloria, terrificos umeri Aetolus amictus exuitur patriumque suem. leuat ardua contra membra Cleonaeae stirpis iactator Agylleus, Herculea nec mole minor, sic grandibus alte insurgens umeri hominem super improbus exit. sed non ille rigor patriumque in corpore robur: luxuriant artus, effusaque sanguine laxo membra natant; unde haec audax fiducia tantum Oenidae superare parem. quamquam ipse uideri exiguis, grauia ossa tamen nodisque lacerti difficiles. numquam hunc animum Natura minori corpore nec tantas ausa est includere uires. postquam oleo gauisa cutis, petit aequor uterque procursu medium atque hausta uestitur harena. tum madidos artus alterno puluere siccant, collaque demersere umeri et bracchia late uara tenent (Theb. 6.834-851).*[^4]

The Book 6 passage expands themes introduced in the brief Book 1 passage *(Theb. 1.412-13).* In the fight with Polynices, Tydeus merely ‘bares his shoulders’, but in Book 6 Statius calls attention to the ‘terrific covering, the pig of his fathers’ that the hero must take off in order to wrestle. Additionally, Statius a second time contrasts Tydeus’ squat frame with that of his lanky opponent with a third description of Tydeus as *exiguus* *(Theb. 6.836-46).*[^5] But here the comparison is inverted since Polynices stands as the comparandum for Tydeus’ prowess in Book 4

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[^4]: “Therefore, when spirit-filled glory of wrestling spurred the youths, the Aetolian stripped his shoulders of their terrific garment, the pig of his fathers. Against him Agylleus boaster of Cleonaean stock raises his tall limbs, nor is he smaller than Hercules in build, thus rising tall with huge shoulders he stands unknowable to men from above. But he [Agylleus] does not have that rigor, the strength of his fathers in his body: his limbs are luxuriant, poured through with lax blood they swim; hence this bold confidence of Oeneus’ son to overcome so great an opponent. Though he [Tydeus] was small to look upon, he had heavy bones and arms tough with muscles. Never did Nature dare to enclose this spirit, so great strength, in a smaller frame. After their skin rejoiced in oil, each one seeks the middle of the sand in their approach and he covers himself with drawn up sand. Then they dry each other’s wet limbs with alternating throws of sand, and their necks sink into their shoulders and they hold their arms bent outwards wide.”

[^5]: * Cf. *Theb.* 2.594 where Tydeus becomes a target that is “angustus telis.”
1, while in Book 6 we learn that Tydeus’ small frame houses exceeding spirit. The boar-lion contrast of Book 1 is present here as well: in Book 1 Polynices wears a lion-skin cape, while in Book 6 Agylleus’ stature merits comparison with Hercules (Theb. 6.838-9), the wearer of the lion-skin mantle par excellence. Agylleus, however, seems unable to control his long limbs (Theb. 6.840-2). Agylleus’ frame invites comparison with Polynices’ height in Book 1 (Theb. 1.414-5 and 6.838-42), since both characters are described as celsus (Theb. 1.414 and 6.852).6 Agylleus is physically so similar to Polynices that the duel in Book 6 essentially restages Tydeus’ first wrestling match with the Theban exile in Book 1. Indeed, rather than exchanging words with Agylleus as he does in Book 1 with Polynices (Theb. 1.410-11), in Book 6 Tydeus showers his opponent with sand (Theb. 6.849-50).

In restaging the wrestling match from Book 1 at the funeral games in Book 6, Statius expands the narrative of the engagement as well. In the respective episodes, Statius deploys five similes that further describe the nature of each brawl. In the first of these, Tydeus and Polynices attack one another like two wrestlers at Olympia:

iam crebros ictus ora et caua tempora circum
obnixi ingeminant, telorum aut grandinis instar
Rhipaeae, flexoque genu uacua ilia tundunt.
non aliter quam Pisaeo sua lustra Tonanti
cum redeunt crudisque uirum sudoribus ardet
puluis; at hinc teneros caueae dissensus ephebos
concitat, exclusaque expectant praemia matres:
sic alacres odio nullaque cupidine laudis
accensi incurrunt…(Theb. 1.418-26).7

Initiated by iam (Theb. 1.418), Tydeus’ and Polynices’ duel begins immediately after the short round of verbal threats. While Statius devotes only five lines to description of the fight itself

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6 Cf. praecelsus (Theb. 6.858).
7 “Now arduously do they shower upon head and face and around hollow temples, like javelins or Rhipaean hail, and they crush each other’s unprotected loins on bended knee. Not unlike when his lustral terms return to the Pisaean Thunderer and the sand grows warm with the crude sweat of men; but yonder the discord of the crowd incites the tender youths, and mothers, now held back, await the rewards: thus fiercely with hatred and incensed by no desire for praise do they rush in.”
(Theb. 1.418-20 and 426-7), he devotes six lines to a simile likening Tydeus and Polynices to two ephebes competing at the Olympian Games (Theb. 1.421-6). The wording of Theb. 1.425-6 problematizes meaning in the lines surrounding the simile. To my mind, sic alacres odio nullaque cupidine laudis / accensi incurrunt has two possible interpretations: (1) Tydeus and Polynices rush in with as much hate for one another as desire for glory which the ephebes possess; or, (2) Tydeus and Polynices, fierce with hate and with no desire for glory, rush against one another just like two ephebes at Olympia. The first offers a visual and psychological comparison between the young ephebes and Tydeus and Polynices, while the second interpretation reads the simile as merely a visual comparison.

The fight between Polynices and Tydeus foreshadows the bout between Tydeus and Agylleus, but Statius introduces a self-referential allusion in the Book 1 simile, briefly describing the wrestling at the funeral games in Book 6. Inasmuch as the match in Book 6 restages and complements the struggle with Polynices in Book 1, Theb. 1.425-6 implies that Tydeus and Polynices rush into combat with as much hate as there is desire in the hearts of two ephebes at Olympia (interpretation [1]). The verb (con)cito (Theb. 1.424 and 6.834) connects the episodes through the common action of young men when overcome by the power of the crowd and desire for glory. Tydeus enters his scuffle with as much anger in Book 1 as desire for glory in 6.

In the simile of Book 1, the boys are motivated by the chaotic discord of the crowd at Olympia (caveae dissensus), in Book 6 by ‘spirited glory’ (animosa gloria). The simile from the fight with Polynices indicates that Tydeus and Polynices fight without the same desire for glory held by ephebes at the games, the same desire that spurs (citavit) Tydeus and Agylleus to enter the wrestling ring in Book 6. What served as a negative example in Book 1 becomes a driving force in Book 6. Yet the back-to-back similes likening Tydeus’ fight with Agylleus to clashes
between wild animals offers the best picture of the vigor with which each wrestler contends.

After Tydeus jackknifes Agylleus, the two men exchange fast blows before being compared to two bulls vying for a mate and then to boars and bears:

> et iam alterna manus frontemque umerosque latusque
collaque pectoraque et uitantia crura laccisit.
> interdumque diu pendent per mutua fulti
> bracchia, nunc saevi digitorum uincula frangunt.
> non sic ductores gemini gregis horrida tauri
> bella mouent; medio coniunx stat candida prato
> uictorem expectans, rumpunt obnixa furentes
> pectora, subdit amor stimulos et uulnera sanat:
> fulmineo sic dente sues, sic hispida turpes
> proelia uillosis ineunt complexibus ursi (*Theb*. 6.864-73). 8

First the flurry of blows between Tydeus and Agylleus (*Theb*. 6.860-1) is comparable to that between Tydeus and Polynices: “*iam crebros ictus ora et cava tempora circum / obnixi ingeminant, telorum aut grandinis instar / Rhipaeae...*” (*Theb*. 1.418-20). The polysyndeton of *Theb*. 6.864-5 becomes condensed into a metaphor for javelins and Rhipaean hail at *Theb*. 1.419-20). Whereas the desire for a mate mitigates any pain incurred during the bulls’ duel, Tydeus and Agylleus struggle impervious to pain because of their desire for glory. The simile, moreover, indicates that the bulls’ rage (*furentes*) is due to carnal desire, without any hope of glory. The victor of the wrestling match, then, struggles for the prize as a bull would for a mate.

Statius frames the simile of the wild animals with two similes of natural phenomena. Tydeus’ strength is akin to that of beasts and nature alike. Early in the match, Tydeus grabs hold of Agylleus at a high point on the latter’s frame and doubles him over just like a cypress bending under the force of the wind:

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8 “And now with alternating hands do they strike forehead and shoulders and arms and necks and chest and evading legs. Meanwhile for a long time do they hang supported by each other’s arms, now savagely do they break against the fetters of one another’s fingers. Not unlike two leader bulls of their herd make savage war; in the middle of the plain their attractive mate awaiting the victor, furiously they clash their thick chests; love supplies his goads and makes their wounds painless: thus like pigs with lightening-bolt tusk, thus ugly bears rush into bristly combat with hairy embraces.”

60
The second simile likens Tydeus to a Spanish hill collapsing on top of a prospector:

… haud aliter collis scrutator Hiberi, cum subiit longeque diem uitamque reliquit, si tremuit suspensus ager subitumque fragorem rupta dedit tellus, latet intus monte soluto obrutus, ac penitus fractum obtritumque cadauer indignantem animam propriis non reddidit astra. acrior hoc Tydeus, animisque et pectore supra est (Theb. 6.880-6).10

In the first simile, Agylleus is the cypress bent over by the wind, or Tydeus; the second compares Tydeus’ strength and vigor to an Iberian mountain after its collapse into a mine. Statius likens Agylleus to a Spanish prospector out for riches, a possible reflection of each character’s desire for the crown in this fight. Almost humorously, Statius reminds the audience—and Agylleus—that he contends with a \textit{parvus hostis} (Theb. 6.859), a contrast to the force of a strong wind or weight of a mine implosion. Recall Statius’ description of Tydeus just before this bout:

\begin{quote}
numquam hunc animum Natura minori / corpore nec tantas ausa est includere vires (Theb. 6.845-6).
\end{quote}

Nature, able to blow over cypresses and crush men under mountains, also fuels Tydeus’ \textit{furor}.

The final simile compares Tydeus’ lifting of Agylleus over his head to the match between Hercules and Antaeus:

9 “[Agylleus], however, just like the queen cypress of the Alpine summit bends her neck against the urging South Wind barely able to hold herself by her root, and she comes near to the earth; suddenly likewise is she returned to the high aether: not otherwise does towering Agylleus of his own will press his long limbs and groaning he bends double against his little foe.”

10 “Not otherwise is the prospector of an Iberian ridge when he has descended below and left daylight and life far behind; if the suspended ground trembles and the ruptured earth gives a sudden crash, he hides buried within the fallen mountain, nor does his corpse, completely smashed and crushed, return to its proper stars his indignant spirit. More fiercely than this is Tydeus upon him in spirit and heart.”
This simile caps the string of comparisons woven into Tydeus’ struggle with Agylleus. After being likened to the wind, a bull, wild boar, bear, and an Iberian hill, Tydeus now achieves Herculean characteristics by body-slamming Agylleus to the sand. Just as this simile closes Statius’ crescendo of comparisons in the wrestling match, so too does Tydeus’ throw of Agylleus effectively end his opponent’s participation in the competition. I now consider the order and content of the five similes just discussed:

Simile 1 (Theb. 6.854-9): Natural Phenomena
   Agylleus—Cypress
   Tydeus—Wind

Simile 2-3 (Theb. 6.864-9): Beasts
   Both—Bulls; Boars and Bears

Simile 4 (Theb. 6.880-5): Natural Phenomena
   Agylleus—Spanish Prospector
   Tydeus—Iberian Mountain

Simile 5 (Theb. 6.893-6): Mythological
   Tydeus—Hercules
   Agylleus—Antaeus

The first and fourth similes occur when Tydeus is on the offensive, the second and third while Tydeus and Agylleus spar with one another on equal terms. The fifth simile caps the bout. The furor with which Tydeus engages in the combat begins as forceful as a powerful wind, then transforms into that of beasts in the wild, then returns to the strength of Nature, and ultimately reaches heroic status, powerful enough to overcome the giant Antaeus. In examining the structure of the scene and the order of the similes, it is apparent that Tydeus’ victory is inevitable. In both similes of natural phenomena and the mythological one, Tydeus is the active force while Agylleus is passive. Tydeus never loses the advantage to Agylleus.

11 “Thus, as the story goes, did the Libyan son of Earth sweat while gripped in Hercules’ arms into the air when his trick was uncovered, there is no hope of falling nor is he able to touch his mother with the tip of his toe.”
Although Tydeus lays aside his boar-skin mantle for the wrestling match in Book 6, he still displays non-human qualities during his duel with Agylleus. Whereas the match with Polynices in Book 1 is interrupted by Adrastus before a decision, the match with Agylleus ends with Tydeus victorious. Throughout the narrative of the *Thebaid*, Statius has surrounded Tydeus with imagery of violent animals in order to show just how frenzied Tydeus’ character really is. The *furor* with which Tydeus enters combat is present even when the hero is competing with his bare hands.\(^\text{12}\)

\(^{12}\) Vessey 1973: 143 points out that Tydeus’ speech to Eteocles in Book 2 is that of a man of action, without the proper respect due to the Theban king.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS: TYDEUS’ ANIMALISTIC RAGE INTERPRETED

Furor in the Thebaid

I have argued that through visual imagery and allusion Statius casts Tydeus as the target of a figurative Calydonian Boar Hunt that unfolds over the course of Books 1 to 8. In two other relevant scenes, Tydeus sheds his boar-skin cape and displays a *furor* akin to that of beasts,¹ and this *furor* comes to a head, so to speak, at the moment of Tydeus’ cannibalism in Book 8. The result is Tydeus’ self-removal from the story.

The extreme form of *furor* in the universe of the *Thebaid* stems from Tisiphone, the fury who drives the greatest amount of the action in the poem. As Hershkowitz has observed, when Tisiphone inflicts *furor* upon a character, a three-step progression of common elements takes place: the expenditure of a large amount of energy, the subsequent dissipation of that energy, and final stagnation or destruction. The energy is indeed madness,

“[T]he objects of the similes display an extreme amount not simply of energy, but of madness. Excessive energy and madness are closely related concepts in the *Thebaid*, so closely related that they are, in fact, inseparable. The pattern of action is, in its essence, a pattern of madness” (Hershkowitz 1995: 54).

The extended simile of the Calydonian Boar in Book 2 can usefully be viewed from this perspective. The first image of the boar is accompanied by two energetic forces, the goddess Diana and lightning from the boar’s mouth: “*Oeneae vindex sic ille Dianae / erectus saetis et aduncae fulmine malae...*” (*Theb.* 2.469-70). Next the boar rampages through Meleager’s men, expending this excess energy (*Theb.* 2.471-4). Here, Statius smoothly transitions the boar from the first (extreme energy) stage to the dissipation stage by means of *linquens* (*Theb.* 2.473). Finally, having met Meleager (*te, Meleagre, subit*), the boar’s energy dissipates, ultimately leading to full stagnation: “...*ibi demum cuspidce lata / haesit et obnixo ferrum laxavit in armo*”

¹ Cf. Seneca *Dial.* 3.1.5-6 on the boar as a symbol for *ira* or *ferocia.*
(Theb. 2.474-5). The boar slows down (haesit) and relaxes (laxavit) under the wound from Meleager’s spear.

This simile is, I suggest, programmatic for Tydeus’ story in the Thebaid. The description of the boar at Theb. 2.470 recalls Tydeus’ entrance in Book 1 and the first description of his boar-skin: terribiles...saetis ac dente recurvo (Theb. 1.488). Next, cum premeret...linquens (Theb. 2.471-3) plays out the respective combats that Tydeus participates in from Books 2 and 8. Finally, the Calydonian Boar takes an arrow (Theb. 2.474-5) just as Tydeus dies after an unheroic javelin strike (Theb. 8.716-7), the stage of dissipation. It may be significant that Meleagre (Theb. 2.474) is rather close in spelling and has the same number of syllabus as Melanippus (Theb. 8.718), Tydeus’ embarrassed killer. Likewise Tydeus’ character in the Thebaid adheres to Hershkowitz’ model: the hero’s combats in Books 2 and 8 require an extreme amount of madness; this madness then transitions into the stage of dissipation at the time that Pallas leaves Tydeus and his boar-hide falls, or grows weary (fatiscat), from his shoulders. When Tydeus is abandoned by his patron deity, the poem’s furor consumes him so much that he loses his promised immortality. Tydeus’ story, then, is offers an example in microcosm of Hershkowitz’ model of madness in the Thebaid.

Tydeus’ four combats in the Thebaid can also be examined as two separate progressions of Hershkowitz’ model. The sequence of scenes is as follows:

Book 1: Tydeus and Polynices wrestle in naked combat
Book 2: Tydeus the Hunted (frame opened): Struggle with the Theban 50
       Tydeus the Hunter (frame opened): Slaughter of Theban 49
Book 6: Tydeus and Agylleus wrestle in naked combat
Book 8: Tydeus the Hunter (frame closed): Struggle with the Theban army
       Tydeus the Hunted (frame closed): Struggle with the Theban Army

The first progression is initiated by Tydeus’ wrestling match with Polynices, in which the extreme madness of the two heroes nearly drives them to use swords: “...forsan et accinctos
lateri (sic ira ferebat) / nudassent enses...” (Theb. 1.428-30). Had the two heroes drawn swords, Statius’ epic would have ended on Adrastus’ doorstep, but Tydeus’ and Polynices’ rabiem cruentam is mollified by the Argive king, thus postponing the unleashing of this frenzy for the Theban ambush. After Tydeus slays all but one of the Theban cohort, fatigue sets in, keeping the hero from continuing in battle. As Hershkowtiz points out, Tydeus is likened to a lion at the close of a feast (1995: 55-6), thus reflecting the hero’s dissipating madness. Indeed, Athena arrives and mitigates Tydeus’ desire for more blood with reason, compelling him to offer spoils to her in thanks for her protection (Theb. 2.649-54); Pallas’ words bring Tydeus’ rage to stagnation. Tydeus gives in to reason in Book 2, but this is not the case in Book 8. The first example of the progression here ends where Tydeus takes Athena’s advice and returns to Argos.

The wrestling match with Agylleus, incited by animosa gloria (Theb. 6.834-5), restimulates the madness that reached stagnation in Book 2. The first progression (from Books 1 and 2) becomes a ‘warm up’ for the second (Books 6 and 8), which ends in Tydeus’ anthropophagy. Whereas Tydeus struggles against fifty men in the forest outside of Thebes in the first progression, in the second he takes on the whole of the Theban army, stalking the battlefield in his active/hunter role. Instead of Tydeus simply dying to receive his immortality from Pallas, i.e., repeating the innocent dissipation and stagnation of his madness from Book 2, in Book 8 his rage dissipates but receives a final jolt just before he dies, thus leading him to indulge in cannibalism. The second progression, then, replays the first, ending with Tydeus completely overcome by furor.

**Horace, Persius, and the Furor of Epic Poets**

Shadi Bartsch (2007) discusses cannibalism as a metaphor for intertextuality among Roman poets. Persius and Horace lambaste epic and tragic poets for filling their verses with the limbs of those who have died in their poems. In the *Ars Poetica* the clutter of dismembered
arms, legs, and heads reflects a bad painting that depicts different animal members attached to one another in no coherent fashion. For Bartsch, this image becomes especially gruesome when one considers Persius’ metaphor of eating and digestion for the reading and recitation of poetry (Sat. 1.1-18). If epic poets ‘serve up’ over-blown morsels in their verses, and if these verses contain the dismembered limbs of their deceased characters, then Persius and Horace cast epic and tragic poets as literary cannibals who live on the flesh of their own. This is an apt metaphor when one examines effects of madness on Tydeus and the satirists’ epic and tragic poets. Out of rage or anger, Tydeus feasts on the blood of humans, completely blind to reason. In the same way, Horace’s epic poetaster, mad with his blood-gorged verses, latches onto an innocent auditor and sucks his blood dry with his poetry. In both cases madness leads to cannibalism and exclusion.

At Theb. 8.762 Athena returns to the battlefield just in time to spy Tydeus consuming Melanippus’ brain. Tisiphone’s snakes stand on end to shield the goddess’ eyes:

… stetit aspera Gorgon
   crinibus emissis rectique ante ora cerastae
   uelauere deam; fugit auersata iacentem,
   nec prius astra subit quam mystica lampas et insons
   Ilissos multa purgauit lumina lympha (Theb. 8.762-6). Pallas, the embodiment of reason, has her eyes shielded by Tisiphone, the embodiment of furor.

The madness of the Thebaid is entirely operative upon this scene. Similarly, Horace’s ‘mad poet’ (vesanum) walks and talks to fleeing listeners while ‘chucking’ verses:

   Ut mala quem scabies aut morbus regius urget
   aut fanaticus error et iracunda Diana,
   vesanum tetigisse timent fugiuntque poetam,

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2 And in the case of the Ars Poetica, tragic poets feed on their audience (see below).

3 “The harsh Gorgon stood there with her hair sent out and her snakes, standing upright in front of her [Pallas’] face, veiled the goddess; turned away she flees him lying there, nor did she return to the stars before the mystic torch and guiltless Elisos had purged her eyes with much lymph.”
Those around the mad poet experience an aversion to his verses. Pallas, upon seeing Tydeus consume Melanippus’ head, turns away (aversata) and flees to the stars. Both characters are under the influence of madness, and in both cases madness and its effects are to be avoided.

Horace, like Persius will later, describes the epic poet as ‘belching up’ (ructor) his verses—verses which are filled with the limbs of the slain (AP 457). Persius also uses a food metaphor for the high-flung language of epic in Sat. 5:

\[
\text{Vatibus hic mos est, centum sibi poscere uoces,} \\
\text{centum ora et linguas optare in carmina centum,} \\
\text{fabula seu maestro ponatur hianda tragoedo …} \\
\text{… “quorsum haec? aut quantas robusti carminis offas} \\
\text{ingeris, ut par sit centeno gutture niti?} \\
\text{grande locuturi nebulas Helicone legunto,} \\
\text{si quibus aut Procnes aut si quibus olla Thyestae} \\
\text{feruebit saepe insulso cenanda Glyconi …} \\
\text{… hinc trahe quae dicis mensasque relinque Mycenis} \\
\text{cum capite et pedibus plebeiaque prandia noris.” (Sat. 5.1-3; 4-8; 17-18)\(^5\)
\]

Persius, recalling Horace’s ructatur (AP 457), expands the image of the epic poet heaving up undigested verses by referring to the epicist’s poetry as offa that has trouble going down the throat of its reciter (ingeris, ut par sit centeno gutture niti). Additionally, Persius symbolizes the composition and recitation of epic and tragic poetry in the boiling stewpot of Thyestes or Procne, two mythological kettles that cook up the limbs of humans. Finally, Persius decides to leave behind Mycenae with its tables awash in heads and legs: mensasque relinque Mycenis / cum capite et pedibus plebeiaque prandia noris.

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4 “Like him whom a terrible itch or the kingly bite or fanatic wandering or furious Diana urges, the frenzied poet, those who come into contact with him are afraid to have touched him and they flee. Boys poke him and the brave follow him. This one, while belching his sublime verses as he wanders…”

5 “This is the custom for bards, to demand for themselves a hundred voices, a hundred mouths, and to pray for a hundred tongues in their songs, whether a tale is served up needing to be wide-mouthed [in its telling] for a sad tragic actor…Where are these things leading? Or how many lumps of food in your robust poetry do you heap up such that there might be a struggle for a hundredfold throat? May those who are about to speak grandly collect the clouds of Helicon, if the pot of Procne or of Thyestes will boil over under anybody’s watch needing to be eaten all too often at boring Glycon’s dinner…from here draw that which you discuss and to Mycenae her banquets with their heads and feet and get to know ordinary lunches.”

68
capite et pedibus plebeiaque prandia noris (Sat. 5.17-18). The satirist makes the epicists and tragedians out to be literary cannibals, or more generally, literary “others.”

Horace’s mad poet engages in a different human feast, one more akin to Tydeus’ lapse into cannibalism. At the close of the Ars Poetica, Horace uses an epic simile to describe the mad poet in his moment of frenzied recitation:

… certe furit, ac velut ursus,
obiectos caueae valuit si frangere clathros,
indoctum doctumque fugat recitator acerbus;
quem uero arripuit, tenet occiditque legendo,
non missura cutem nisi plena cruoris hirudo (AP 472-6).6

The mad poet is overcome by furor (furit). Like a bear, he rushes out of his pen at the audience, scattering them in all directions. After catching his prey, he holds him there and sucks the blood out until sated. Similarly, Tydeus rushes out of the Theban palace at Theb. 2.467 and receives comparison to the Calydonian Boar charging Meleager’s hunting party:

… haec audax etiamnum in limine retro
vociferans, iam tunc impulsa per agmina praeceps,
evolat. Oeneae vindex sic ille Dianae … (Theb. 467-9).7

As I have said, the simile of the Calydonian Boar from Thebaid 2 figuratively plays out Tydeus story in the poem. Tydeus ‘bursts’ into the narrative with his slaughter of the Theban cohort, but meets death with the arrow strike from Melanippus. Before Tydeus perishes, however, he cannibalizes Melanippus. Likewise, Horace’s mad poet bursts from his place of recitation to consume the blood of his auditor. Just as the men on the battlefield at Thebes flee Tydeus (illum fugiuntque tremuntque / clamantem), so too Horace’s mad poet puts his listeners to flight with his verse: indoctum doctumque fugat recitator acerbus). Both Tydeus and the epic poet of the

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6 “Certainly he is mad, and just like a bear who has found a way to break out of the in-the-way bars of his pen, the bitter poet puts to flight the learned and unlearned alike. The one he grabs, truly, he holds him fast and kills him by means of reciting, like a leech he will not let his skin loose until he is full of blood.”

7 “Bravely voicing these things still on the threshold in the back, now he rushes out headlong through the packed in columns. Just like the avenger of Oenean Diana…”
A *Ars Poetica* are insane: *amens* (*Theb.* 8.751) and *vesanum* (*AP* 455). In both, this insanity leads to cannibalism. Tydeus cannibalizes not only Melanippus’ head, but also himself and his portion of the *Thebaid’s* narrative along with it. The mad poet, however, saps the life of his auditor in reciting his poetry. Both figures are driven by madness.

Persius and Horace use the metaphor of cannibalistic epic poets in order to excuse themselves from their company. In essence, Persius and Horace are making the epic and tragic writers ‘the other’. In order to do this, the satirists elevate their own work and condemn the poets who feed on the flesh of their human casualties in fits of poetic frenzy. This is an example of “boundary maintenance” through exclusion. Statius picks up this image and shows Tydeus consuming another man’s brain—a serious breach of poetic decorum, according to Horace (*AP* 89-98)—under the spell of the *Thebaid’s* madness. Statius plays on the image of the mad poet here by forcing Tydeus to eat himself right out of the narrative fabric of the *Thebaid*. When Tydeus looks into the eyes of Melanippus and finds the reflection of himself covered in gore, the hero also sees the trail of dead he has left behind throughout the course of his participation in the Theban saga. He then proceeds to consume his helping of the narrative. Thus, just as Horace’s mad poet feasts on his audience like an epic bear and Persius’ epic writers serve up stews full of limbs, so too does Tydeus participate in and consume the macabre subject matter of his story through cannibalism. His madness has grown so much that he echoes the frenzied reciter of Horace’s *Ars Poetica* and promptly removes himself from the epic.

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LIST OF REFERENCES


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

James Moss Lohmar was born in Dallas, TX in 1984. He began his Latin career at Collins Hill High School, graduating in 2002. He was a two-time scholar athlete in the Southeastern Conference as an undergraduate, and in 2006 he graduated as a member of Phi Beta Kappa from the University of Georgia in Athens, GA with a Bachelor of Arts in Latin and classical culture. He will begin Ph.D coursework in the fall of 2008 after a summer at the American Academy in Rome.