

TRANSGRESSIVE FIGURES: MONSTERS AND MONSTROSITY IN
FLAVIAN EPIC

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation argues that the monsters in Statius' *Thebaid* and Silius' *Punica* both embody and reproduce dynamics of Flavian culture. These poems are taken together as exemplars of the culture during the reign of Domitian specifically.

I conduct close, sustained, textual analysis of instances wherein monsters adjoin the dynamics of otherness, literary tradition, mytho-historical past and imperial ideology. I begin with a discussion of Statius' potential clustering of Epicurean elements around representations of Hippomedon as a Centaur. As with other discernments of Epicurean hints in mythological epic I assess this as an exploration of the consequences of placing these elements in the text. By using a Centaur for this examination, Statius reveals how monsters are often good spaces for exploration in Flavian epic. I then show that Statius' depictions of hybrid monsters (Centaur, the Minotaur and Arachne) reveal and reinforce tension around 'otherness' in this time period. At the same time, Flavian giants (both in the *Thebaid* and *Punica*) embody the conscious self-positioning of Flavian epicists relative to past models. Statius and Silius use Flavian giants also explore Augustan models of gigantomachy in their own era. Finally, monstrosity can be gleaned in the varied representations of Domitian himself both within and outside of the literary record. Domitian is represented as both bald and long-haired, a feature that exhibits the transgressive monstrosity of depictions of the emperor himself. Flavian monsters both embody these cultural dynamics and reproduce them.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1: HYBRID MONSTERS: CENTAURS, THE MINOTAUR AND ARACHNE.....	13
CHAPTER 2: MONSTERS OF THE PAST: GIANTS AND GIGANTOMACHY IN THE <i>PUNICA</i> AND THE <i>THEBAID</i>	48
CHAPTER 3: A FORMLESS MONSTER: THE <i>THEBAID</i> AND DOMITIAN'S 'HAIR'	84
CONCLUSION	139
REFERENCES.....	142

INTRODUCTION

Pablo Picasso was intrigued by one Classical monster in particular: the Minotaur. One representative painting is Picasso's *Minotauromachy* (1935). This painting uses the monster's savageness to hint at the fragility of civilization amid the political tumult of Picasso's Spain in the 1930s.¹ His depiction contains a jumble of human and animal limbs to the right which represents the Minotaur and evokes the quarrel between Theseus and the monster. To the left of the fight scene, a figure similar to Ariadne holds a guiding light. If we compare this image with Statius' *ekphrasis* of the quarrel on Theseus' shield, we can see similar details:

centum urbes umbone gerit centenaque Cretae
moenia, seque ipsum monstrosi ambagibus antri
hispidam torquentem luctantis colla iuveni
alternasque manus circum et nodosa ligantem
brachia et abducto vitantem cornua vultu.
terror habet populos, cum saeptus imagine torva
ingreditur pugnas, bis Thesea bisque cruentas
caede videre manus: veteres reminiscitur actus
ipse tuens sociumque gregem metuendaque quondam
limina et absumpto pallentem Cnosida filo.
(*Theb.* 12.667–76)

[He carries the hundred cities of Crete on the boss and even himself, in the trappings of the monstrous cave, twisting the hairy neck of the struggling bull (the Minotaur) and various hands grasping about. He binds the riveted shoulders and avoids the horns by turning his face away. Terror grips the people when he goes into battle girded by this savage reproduction. They see Theseus twice and hands twice bloodied with slaughter. Theseus himself recollects the old deeds, gazing at the band of companions, the thresholds once feared and the pale lady of Knossos (Ariadne) with her wasted thread.]

¹ Cahill (2018): "the symbolic force of images such as this one goes beyond the personal, alluding to the savagery that lies just beneath the surface of civilized life, as well as to the mounting political tensions of the 1930s." This painting is even viewed as specifically signaling the Spanish Civil War, which began the following year. The *Minotauromachy* served as a visual source for *Guernica* (1937) which was a painting directly concerned with the Spanish Civil War; see Wylie (1992: 480–82).

Both present a confusing medley of human and bull limbs and an Ariadne at the margins of the images, reminding the viewer of Theseus' salvation. However, the symbolism of these Minotaurs are worlds apart, as the savageness and confusion in Statius' *ekphrasis* does not relate, of course, to the political turbulence embedded in Picasso's *Minotauromachy*. Jeffrey Cohen's comments on monsters across eras are instructive here: "The monster is born only at this metaphoric crossroads, as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment—of a time, a feeling, and a place."² These Minotaurs are both "born" at their respective cultural moments: Statius' Minotaur is a product of Flavian Rome and not Picasso's Spain. This dissertation is a study of monsters in Flavian epic poetry, and in order to situate monsters within the Flavian era I approach these as figures which mirror concerns of the specific culture which created them. I will discuss Statius' Minotaur at length in chapter 1, but first let us look at the Flavian period in more detail.

This period produced four epic poems, as well as the epigrams of Martial, and study of its literature and culture in their own right deserves no justification at present.³ This dissertation focuses on the epic poems of Statius and Silius, both products of Domitian's reign (91–96 CE).⁴

² (1997: 4).

³ For articulations of this point see Boyle (2003: 1); Manuwald and Voigt (2013: 1–4). For early recuperations of the study of these individual poems see Vessey (1973) for Statius and von Albrecht (1964); Hardie (1993). The current period has produced many studies. Note especially: Marks (2005); McNelis (2007); Lovatt (2005) and (2013); Bernstein (2008); Augoustakis (2010); Stocks (2014); Chaudhuri (2014); Walter (2016). Note also recent collected editions: Nauta, Van Dam and Smolenaars (2007); Augoustakis (2013); Maniotti (2016); Bessone and Fucecchi (2017); Augoustakis and Littlewood (2019).

⁴ The *Achilleid* will be discussed in chapter 3, but my focus is primarily Statius' *Thebaid* and Silius' *Punica*. The dating of these two epics is normally placed in Domitian's reign. On the dating of the *Thebaid* Pollmann (2004: 12); Parkes (2012: xv); Augoustakis (2016b: xviii) offer a *terminus ante quem* of 93 CE, while Gervais (2017: xvii) offers 91 CE; all use the traditional internal evidence citing a lack of reference to Domitian's Sarmatian victory in 93 CE; see Coleman (1988: xvi–xvii). On the *Punica*, the traditional dates of composition are from 80/8–96/97 CE; see Marks (2005: 287–88); Augoustakis (2010b: 6–10). See also Bernstein (2017: xxxvii–xli) for a discussion of dating and Silius' contemporaries. Note also Wilson (2013) who challenges the constraints of a strictly Flavian date for the *Punica* based on an encompassing reading of Silius' biography. The dating of Valerius' *Argonautica* has been a point of debate. Hershkowitz (1998: 246) reads it as from Domitian's reign and this is important for her discernment of pessimism in the poem although she does not enter into a discussion of this date. However, Stover (2012: *passim* but especially 7–26) argues for a Vespasianic date (70–79 CE) and argues against the internal evidence while sustaining this reading throughout by means of a more positive reading which coheres better with Vespasian's reign.

Domitian's reign represents a renewed focus on geographic borders through his attention to the European front. Although his efforts were, perhaps, only propagandistic, they are nonetheless culturally significant.⁵ Whether real or projected, Domitian's foreign policy (and accompanying propaganda) was often outward looking.⁶ The Domitianic moment offered a reminder of the *limes* of empire and, as a result, the shifting definitions of Romanness in relation to others along those *limites*.⁷ What is more, Domitian's own disposition towards literary creativity and the arts

Although both recent assertions are connected to the thematic readings of the text, Stover's evidence is more compelling. The *Thebaid* and *Argonautica* are both mythological poems, and the monsters on which I focus are mostly appearing via simile, *ekphrasis* or intradiegetic narrative and are, therefore, more subtle than Valerius' narrative where Jason and the Argonauts come face to face with Amycus (4.133–343), the Harpies (4.485–528), fire-breathing bulls (7.547–606), the sown-men teeth (7.607–643) and the large serpent which guards the Golden Fleece (8.54–120), which itself is not very different from Statius' Nemean episode (5.499–587) but is different from Silius' Bagradan serpent narrative which is told retrospectively (6.101–551). For a recent dissertation which deals with the monsters in Valerius' text, see Scott (2012: *passim* but especially 93–122).

⁵ On Domitian's significant investment in foreign policy, particularly European borders, see Galimberti (2016: 97–99). Domitian's undertakings against the Chatti and in Gaul resulted in many propagandistic assertions: he assumed the title *Germanicus* as is evident from coins (Galimberti (2016: 97–99)); see also Mart. 2.2.3–4. See Tac. *Agr.* 39.1. and Plin. *Pan.* 16.3 for contemporary criticism of the actual effects of Domitian's expeditions.

⁶ Vespasian's ideological program in terms of foreign policy is not entirely distinct from Domitian's. Stover (2012) articulates the connection between Valerius' *Argonautica* and Vespasian's program of expansion: "In Valerius, by contrast, civil war is rejected in favor of collective expansion outward and foreign conquest, a narrative choice made possible by the 'Argonautic moment' inaugurated by Vespasian's accession to power. For as we shall see the Argonautic impulse that distinguishes Valerius' epic project from the claustrophobic narrative of his Neronian predecessor takes its cue from the *princeps* himself" (50). At any rate, Domitian's foreign policy (and surrounding propaganda) crystalized the Flavian period's renewed interactions with borders of the empire.

⁷ The broader imperial period ushered in a cosmopolitan age which created a more vexed and complex identification of Romanness; see Dench (2005); Konstan (2009); Augoustakis (2010: *passim*, but especially 1–14); Richter (2011). On the seeds of such cosmopolitanism in Vergil's *Aeneid*, see Syed (2005); Reed (2007). The awareness of this tension can be seen in the later work of Juvenal (see Umurhan (2018)). Although writing of Rome's origin, Juvenal reveals the concerns of his period at the end of *Satire* 8.272–75: *et tamen, ut longe repetas longeque revolvās / nomen, ab infami gentem deducis asylo; / maiorum primus, quisquis fuit ille, tuorum / aut pastor fuit aut illud quod dicere nolo* ("and nevertheless if you seek far off and unravel the name, you are revealing the race from the infamous asylum; the progenitor of your ancestors—whoever he was—whether a farmer or something which I dare not say"). On the identification of *quod dicere nolo* as a foreigner, see Uden (2015: 143). Imperial expansion, and perceived expansion, led to the absorption of further diversity into the Roman empire. As a result, the difficulties of defining Romanness became even more palpable and by the Flavian period Romanness is often negotiated by the periphery of empire; see Augoustakis (2010). We find a shift, at times, of Romanness to 'others' located at the periphery. This transference appears in the ancient tribes of Tacitus' *Germania*, in the Carthaginians of Silius Italicus' *Punica* and elsewhere; see O'Gorman (1993); Dominik (2003); Dench (2005: 80–82); Augoustakis (2010). Such interchange highlights, thus, a fluidity and tension around 'same' and 'other' during the empire in general and Flavian period in particular. On the complexities of imperial control over the Britons in Tac. *Agr.*, see Dench (2005: 83–86). Note also the earlier example of Jugurtha from Sall. *Jug.*; see Dench (2005: 89–91).

led to a greater poetic output during his reign.⁸ Amid this moment of poetic proliferation we can observe tension concerning the place of the literature of this period relative to past models—in particular in Augustan literature.⁹ This study will examine how monsters both embody aspects of this cultural moment and at the same time reproduce the concerns of the era.

Terms and Definitions

There is no equivalent for the modern English term “monster” in the Ancient Greek or Latin lexicon. I will first separate the modern term from any relatable words in Ancient Greek or Latin, primarily *monstrum* (τέρας).¹⁰ While this dissertation will lean towards the wider range of the English words derived from the Latin *monstrum*, there are significant differences in meaning.¹¹ The Latin *monstrum* is comparable to the Greek τέρας, both signifying “prodigy” or

⁸ On Domitian’s interest in literature, note Suet. *Dom.* 2, 20 and Tac. *Hist.* 4.86.2, both of whom criticize the seriousness of his undertaking. Note also his *De cura capillorum* (discussed in Chapter 3). He also featured literary contests as the games he instituted (the Capitoline and Alban festivals); Nauta (2002: 328–35); Boyle (2003: 23–24). On his literary interests in general, see Coleman (1986); Manuwald and Voigt (2013: 3). At the same time the Domitianic moment bore witness to intense imperial control; see Boyle (2003: 16–18); Manuwald and Voigt (2013: 1–4) on this contrast.

⁹ I will not rehash well-worn arguments concerning the secondariness of Flavian to Augustan literature; for one important explanation of this point, see Hardie (1993). However, the legacy of that literary past and its connection to perceptions of Rome’s mytho-historical foundation will be important in assessing aspects of the *Thebaid* and *Punica*, chiefly in chapter 2.

¹⁰ For similar recent summaries, see Murgatroyd (2007: preface); Scott (2012: 93–100); Lowe (2015: 8–14).

¹¹ In antiquity *monstrum* was seen as related to both the verb *monere* and *monstrare* (*TLL* viii.1446.15). Sextus Pompeius Festus elucidates both etymologies. In his discussion of *monstrum* and *monere* he contends that the word may denote a warning of the future (Lindsay 1967, 125.5–6: *quod moneat aliquid futurum*, “something which warns of something about to happen”) while at (Lindsay 1967, 122.7–8f) he connects *monstrum* and *monstrare* while citing Sennius Capito (*quod monstret futurum, et moneat voluntatem deorum*, “something which shows the future and warns about the intention of the gods”). Modern commentators also read these etymologies into instances of the use of *monstrum*. Note Cohen’s (1997: 4) reading of these multiple etymologies as signifying monstrous ambiguity: “the *monstrum* is etymologically ‘that which reveals,’ ‘that which warns,’ a glyph that seeks a hierophant.” See Augoustakis (2010: 185) on Silius’ use of *monstrum* (6.151) of the Bagradan Serpent to denote a warning for Regulus’ tragic end through the etymological connection with *monere*. See also Scott (2013: 93–122) on Valerius’ manipulation of these different meanings of *monstrum*.

“portent,” referring to something unusual and or premonitory. Such terms were often applied to defective births or physical abnormalities more generally—a use of *monstrum* that will not occupy my attention in the ensuing discussion.¹² By the first century BCE *monstrum* does not necessarily have a negative meaning.¹³ Also, in the first century BCE we can find *monstrum* representing a mythological monster. Here I will be analyzing monsters within this category while not restricting my analysis to creatures that are also lexically identified with *monstrum*. The parameters of such a definition of monsters are complex.

Jacques Derrida’s reference to the monster is helpful: “A monster may be obviously a composite figure of heterogeneous organisms that are grafted onto each other. This graft, this hybridization, this composition that puts heterogeneous bodies together may be called a monster.”¹⁴ Derrida casts the monster as an unexpected creature which defies categorization.¹⁵ Indeed, hybrids, such as Centaurs and the Minotaur, exist across multiple categories. However, monsters who defy categorization are not only hybrids. Giants, while sometimes having snake lower halves, also transgress the usual dimensions of anthropomorphic beings. Such transgression across categories will be crucial for my examination of Flavian epic as it is along

¹² Garland (1995) is a foundational work on disability. See also Gevaert and Laes (2013) on Pliny’s classification of abnormal births, as well as Barton (1995) for analysis of Roman curiosity with human abnormality in the late Republic and early empire. The numbers read as follows for uses of *monstrum*: Statius, 42; Silius, 23.

¹³ See *TLL* viii.1446.4–454.49. See also Lowe (2015: 9–11) on the positive aspects of *monstrum* by the first century BCE and Moussy (1991: 70) on the inherent moral ambiguity of this word. This original meaning is still present in Latin in the first century CE. In fact, it is prevalent in the Flavian epicists and often used in connection with dreams and rituals, making up roughly 25% of its use in the works of Silius, and Statius.

¹⁴ (1974: 386).

¹⁵ Note also Carroll (2003: 40): “the monster is a being in violation of the natural order, where the perimeter of the natural order is determined by contemporary science.”

this parameter that I define monsters: exhibiting transgressive traits.¹⁶ Understanding the role of such figures in literature has been aided by contemporary “monster theory” and its precursors.

Monster Theory

Many aspects of “monster theory” are not novel.¹⁷ In assessing monstrous figures as inherently outcast and non-binary, “monster theory” owes much to Julia Kristeva’s work on the abject which she defines as neither subject nor object and, ultimately, horrifying, because of its inability to be categorized in binary terms.¹⁸ Monster theory has developed through viewing the monster as inhabiting such an abject position.¹⁹ Indeed, it is from this marginalized position that monsters exhibit two characteristics that are important for my analysis here: they are transgressive and serve as a cultural repository of contemporary concerns.²⁰ From this perspective, monsters embody what is unknown and unique, serving as templates onto which cultures inscribe their fears of what is different.²¹ We can observe the tendency to relegate the

¹⁶ Scott (2012) suggests that this, “boundary-breaking, and transgression” are prevalent themes in Flavian epic in general wherein *imperium sine fine* is “not a statement of true fact” (2).

¹⁷ Monster Theory owes much to Bakhtin’s theorizing of grotesque realism in *Rabelais and His World*. Bakhtin (1985) calls the grotesque body “not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits” (26).

¹⁸ (1982). See also Bartsch (1994) and Franzen (2007: 230–38) for an analysis of the abject in her readings of dismemberment in Lucan.

¹⁹ Note also Edmund Leach’s (1967) work on social theory, pointing to the need for discrimination in order to construct society: “There must be absolutely no doubt about the difference between me and it, or between we and they” (34). Prince’s (1984) article, “Dread, Taboo and The Thing,” which synthesizes much of this theory in an analysis of horror films, is an important precursor to modern “monster theory” and will be discussed in chapter 3.

²⁰ This introduction is still seen as the formal inception of “monster theory”; see Mittman (2012). Earlier theories of monsters should be noted: Prince (1988) utilizes theories of the taboo and the abject in an anthropological approach to John Carpenter’s *The Thing* (1982).

²¹ See Cohen (1997: 7): “In its function as dialectical Other or third-term supplement, the monster is an incorporation of the Outside, the Beyond—of all those loci that are rhetorically placed as distant and distinct but originate Within. Any kind of alterity can be inscribed across (constructed through) the monstrous body, but for the

unknown as monstrous in Tacitus' contemporaneous account of the damage to Germanicus' fleet. Some soldiers who had been cast to Britain and sent back during this calamity have trouble articulating what they witnessed in a location unknown to them (*Ann.* 2.24: *ut quis ex longinquo revenerat, miracula narrabant, vim turbinum et inauditas volucris, monstra maris, ambiguas hominum et beluarum formas, visa sive ex metu credita*, "as each one came back from far away, they told of miraculous things, a violence to the wind and unrecognizable birds, monsters in the sea, the indiscernible forms of beast and human, whether actually seen or believed out of fear").²² The soldiers cannot distinguish human from animal (*ambiguas hominum et beluarum formas*), as they are unable to categorize what dwells in these unknown spaces. As a result, this space and creatures become sources of potential fear (*ex metu*). In Tacitus' account, monsters dwell in the unknown and frightful corners of Britain. From their connection to the unknowable, monsters can embody cultural fears and concerns, as we shall see throughout Flavian epic.

However, I propose to uncover another aspect to the role of monsters. J.D. Bellin, in discussing monsters in fantasy films, provides further nuance, arguing that monsters "both *produce* and *reproduce* social discourse and practice."²³ Bellin characterizes monsters'

most part monstrous difference tends to be cultural, political, racial, economic, sexual." The example cited by Cohen and others is of monsters at the edge of medieval maps and manuscripts; see Mittman (2006).

²² Caesar had been to Britain in 55/54 BCE and Claudius annexed much of Britain in 43 CE and by the 70s CE the governor Agricola advanced as far as Scotland. By the time of Tacitus' composition of the *Annales* (around 116 CE) parts of Britain would have been, perhaps, better known to Romans. However, Tacitus' account of Germanicus' expedition in 16 CE is possibly based on a first-hand account of Albinovanus Pedo. This was a time when Britain was still largely unexplored by the Romans and was still, at the very least, always near the boundary of Roman military control and cultural contact.

²³ Bellin (2005: 9); see also Picart and Browning (2012: 3) who class Bellin's work as teratology. Mittman (2013) voices a similar sentiment concerning monsters: "They break and tear and rend cultures, all the while constructing them and propping them up" (1).

embodiment of cultural elements as simultaneously productive.²⁴ Likewise, the literary monsters of the Flavian period embody but also reproduce the concerns of this cultural moment.

Monsters and Classical Scholarship

There has been recent work situated at the intersection of classics, monsters and “monster theory.” Dunstin Lowe’s *Monsters and Monstrosity in Augustan Poetry* (2015) examines in detail monsters in the Augustan period as metaphors for the poetic process. Christine Franzen’s dissertation (1999) focuses on metaphorical monstrosities in imperial poetry including Statius but limited to the poet’s *Silvae*. Claire Stocks has recently brought “monster theory” to bear on Silius’ *Punica* concerning Hannibal’s actions at Capua,²⁵ while Beverly Scott’s dissertation (2012) discusses at length monsters and monstrosity in Valerius’ *Argonautica*.²⁶ What is more, there has been extensive work on giants in particular and the theme of gigantomachy in Flavian poetry, primarily for its metapoetic elements and its traditional division between symbolic forces of order (the Olympians) and chaos (the giants).²⁷ Pramit Chaudhuri’s work on theomachy

²⁴ It possible to read the hint of an active aspect of monsters in Cohen’s statements. He writes that the monster is “a construct and a projection . . .” However, the most influential part of that section “The Monster’s Body is a Cultural Body” promotes the notion of monster as cultural construct; see Mittman (2012) on this aspect of Cohen’s chapter. See also Loza (2013: 53) who critiques the passivity of monsters in Cohen’s thesis relative to Bellin (2005).

²⁵ Stocks (2019).

²⁶ See also Coombe (2019) who uses monster theory quite broadly in analyzing the transgression of chaos and order. Note also Hopman (2012) who does not mention monster theory but echoes the use of monsters as cultural mirrors in her discussion of monsters’ as “unambiguously the product of the human imagination” (xii).

²⁷ Hardie (1986) presents the importance of gigantomachic imagery in Latin epic and Vergil in particular, offering a nuanced reading of the association between Aeneas, Augustan principate, and Jupiter in such scenes (this will be discussed further in chapters 1 and 2); see also O’Hara (1994). Stover (2012: 80, 113–50) analyzes gigantomachy in Valerius’ *Argonautica* as a positive symbol and serves as a way of discussing civil war by disambiguating the opposing sides. For work on gigantomachy in the *Thebaid* see Franchet d’Espèrey (1999) who examines Tydeus, Capaneus and Hippomedon as types of giants. For the *Punica* see Fucecchi (2013) who assesses gigantomachy as a stabilization of the universe through a harsh war which leads to the creation of the principate and Littlewood (2013) who sets gigantomachy in Silius against a Vergilian model. Chaudhuri (2014) treats both the *Punica* and the *Thebaid*. He argues that Silius’ Flaminius and Hannibal figure into intellectual debates often characterized by gigantomachic imagery. He also contrasts the threat posed by an at-times pious Hannibal with Statius’ Capaneus in

(2014) frames giants and gigantomachy as potential threats to the cosmic structure in Statius' *Thebaid* and Silius' *Punica*. Gigantomachy is a critical component in the symbolic binaries often at play in epic poetry and reinforces my analysis of giants as monsters.

Flavian Centaurs have not been discussed in scholarship as extensively, but their allegorically hybrid bodies have been cast as an important cultural element within Flavian epic—primarily the *Achilleid*.²⁸ However, there is still a need to analyze the Flavian monsters in detail, especially as transgressive cultural figures.

Summary of Analysis

At first glance, Centaurs, giants and the Minotaur appear to be present sporadically in the narratives of the *Thebaid* and the *Punica*. These monsters, however, are rarely characters in the diegesis of these poems; instead, either the narrator refers to them in similes (Centaurs, Polyphemus and other Giants); or they are depicted on objects which the narrator describes in *ekphrasis* (the Minotaur); or they are referred to in speeches given by characters in the diegesis (giants and Centaurs). The margins, as discussed above, are the realms of monsters. Indeed, it is from such corners that monsters can be so revealing. As I discuss in chapter 1, Statius uses two brief comments, one by Tydeus (1.457–61) and one by Evadne (12.553–57), to highlight broader anxieties concerning otherness. Both characters reference Centaurs and giants in order to

the *Thebaid*, arguing that there is no real intellectual threat in Hannibal's assault on the Capitoline (12.558–730), but that Capaneus' gigantomachic death (10.449–509) is important for the stability of the cosmos in the *Thebaid*. Note also Lovatt's (2005) metapoetic analysis of gigantomachic undertones in *Thebaid* 6.

²⁸ On the *Achilleid*, see Augoustakis (2014); Chin (2013). On the *Thebaid*, see Parkes (2009). On the *Argonautica*, see Stover (2012: 134–35).

epitomize non-human characteristics or behavior and thereby define humanness through monsters.

This anxiety is borne out in Statius' depiction of the Minotaur in an *ekphrasis* on Theseus' shield (12.667–72). Statius presents the traditionally hybrid Minotaur as a non-hybrid, underscoring slippage between human and monster, same and other. Such exploration of monstrous bodies is apparent elsewhere in the *Thebaid*, in particular two comparisons of Hippomedon to a Centaur (*Theb.* 4.140, 9.220–22). I argue that Statius adds to the representation of Centaurs hints of Epicurean elements which explores the potential placing such elements within mythological epic and around monsters.²⁹ I argue that Statius' hybrid monsters reveal a tension in defining otherness.

Such tension appears outside of Statius' text in the Forum Transitorium and, specifically, Arachne's depiction in the frieze's center. Arachne's liminal state before her transformation into a spider conveys how women can be 'othered' by evoking monsters. Arachne's representation at the threshold between human and monster affirms and re-affirms gender roles in Flavian Rome. Statius' hybrid monsters thus reveal a particular Flavian preoccupation with otherness.

In chapter 2, I argue that the giants in Silius and Statius exhibit concerns about the authors' positioning relative to past literary models, from Homer to Augustan poetry. The theme of gigantomachy in the *Thebaid* and *Punica* explores the past—both literary and mytho-historical. Statius' simile comparing Hippomedon to Polyphemus in *Thebaid* 6 (714–18) is couched in gigantomachic imagery: Polyphemus nearly destroys the storytelling Odysseus within this simile in a significant gesture towards Homer's *Odyssey* and Vergil's *Aeneid*. This passage reveals the potential of monsters to examine the position of Flavian poetry within the epic

²⁹ This reading of Epicureanism in the Flavian period owes much to Newlands (2004).

tradition. At the same time, Statius' Capaneus associates with both sides of gigantomachic conflict in a manner similar to Vergilian heroes. I adopt readings of Vergil's use of gigantomachic imagery as conveying ambiguity concerning Rome's civil wars. Read with this model, Statius' Capaneus comments on the Augustan representation of these symbols during the Flavian era.

Silius' *Punica* offers similar explorations of Augustan representations of gigantomachy, especially in the Cannae narrative. Silius precedes the battle with a reference to *magnanimi* giants who attack Olympus (9.302–7). By analyzing the place of this adjective in Augustan expressions of gigantomachy, I argue that Silius' giants are paradoxically assigned a trait commonly given to Vergil's Aeneas and Jupiter. Ultimately, I argue that these connections to Augustan poetry evoke Rome's mytho-historical foundations. This is conveyed through allusion to Troy/Rome/Olympus and the Temple of Jupiter during the Battle of Cannae, another foundational moment for Rome.

Silius' concluding references to Hannibal in book 17 further reveal how giants explore Rome's foundation and existence. Hannibal presents his continued fame as a challenge to Jupiter's stability on Olympus (17.606–16). At the same time, Silius juxtaposes Hannibal's *imago* with Scipio's foundational deeds during the poem's concluding triumph, as the poet colors Hannibal's fame as a gigantomachic challenge.

In chapter 3, I offer a different perspective on monsters by focusing on the monstrous presentation of Domitian through his hair. Analysis of Domitian's hair centers on contemporary ideals of masculinity, beauty and virtue. I contrast the association of beauty and virility (of long Achilles-esque hair) with deviancy and ugliness linked to baldness. Domitian's representation in art, coinage and his own *De cura capillorum* intersects with the emperor's portrayal in Statius'

poetry. Ultimately, the last Flavian Emperor is represented as both long haired and bald, and through this dual representation Domitian is revealed as a monster.

Chapter 1

HYBRID MONSTERS: CENTAURS, THE MINOTAUR AND ARACHNE

Hybrids epitomize monstrosity under my definition of exhibiting transgression across categories. Hybrids consist of alien parts combined to create an inherently transgressive whole. In this chapter we will focus on how such monsters exhibit a tension around the distinction between human and non-human. We will look at Centaurs, the Minotaur and Arachne, who, though not a hybrid, often appears on the cusp of transformation into a monster; her liminality is analogous to hybridity. Work on classical hybrids in art elucidates the tension of such composite creatures. Jessica Hughes writes that “the hybrids created by classical artists and authors were inherently unstable organisms whose bodies were taken apart as easily as they had been put together.”¹ The compound nature of the hybrid monster creates instability which is, of course, corporeal but also symbolic. These distinct parts often allude to different symbols. Indeed, Statius employs hybrid monsters to express contemporary points of concern. Ultimately, the inherent instability of these monsters effects the cultural concerns inscribed onto their bodies.

First, I focus on a series of Centaur references clustered around the hero Hippomedon in the *Thebaid* (4.139–44; 9.204–24) which may allude to Epicureanism. I then discuss how monsters reveal concerns about otherness through the separation of human and monster. I compare the comments of Tydeus (1.457–61) and Evadne (12.553–7) which both reference Centaurs and Cyclopes to define humanness. These comments reveal contemporary concern about the ability or inability to define humanness. At the same time, the hybrid Minotaur in the *ekphrasis* on Theseus’ shield (12.665–76), further reveals concerns about the separation between

¹ (2010: 107).

human and monster. Reading this passage together with Theseus' representation throughout the *Thebaid* reveals the slippage between human and monster. Finally, Arachne's liminality on the Forum Transitorium showcases the tension concerning gender roles in the Flavian era.

Centaur and Epicureanism

In this section I examine the possibility and implications of reading Epicurean elements around Statius' likening of Hippomedon on horseback to a Centaur in books 4 (136–41) and 9 (220–21). Similar to previous examinations of possible Epicureanism in mythological epic, I argue that the presence of these elements functions as an exploration rather than a consistent allegory. Ultimately, the presence of Epicurean components around a monster—the hybrid Centaur—helps us view the monster as a place for such exploration in Statius' *Thebaid*.

The Centaur's hybridity offers an accessible place for experimentation.² The Centaur, from the classical period onward, provides a paradigmatic example of the uncivilized.³ At the same time the Centaur, as part human, is also associated with aspects of civilization.⁴ For instance, Achilles' tutor Chiron embodies the latter.⁵ This character will be at the heart of Statius' later epic, the *Achilleid*. Although I do not treat this text directly in this chapter, Statius' exploration of Chiron's humanity therein underscores the poet's interest in the symbolic potential

² Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (4.3) connects the varied ethnicities of the Persian empire to Centaurs; see Johnson (2005). Ovid's *Metamorphoses* presents the Centaurs Cyllarus and Hylonome as a "a portrait of a double-hybrid figure that combines human and animal, male and female, and *natura* and *cultus*" (DeBrohun 2004: 450). Hughes (2010: 102) summarizes the scholarship's "focus on the double-body of the hybrid as a symbol of the meeting of, or transition between, ontological categories" (102).

³ The most prominent example of this is the Centauromachy on the Parthenon Frieze which conflates barbarous Persians and Centaurs; see Castriota (1992: 152–165); Hughes (2010: 102). More broadly see duBois (1983).

⁴ Kirk (1970: 160–62); Johnson (2005: 195).

⁵ Kirk (1970: 159–60).

of the Centaur.⁶ What is more, Epicureanism also corresponds to conflicting aspects of Flavian culture.

In Flavian Rome, Epicureanism is placed somewhere between conformity and non-conformity. Epicureanism has been noted for its unconventional character since its Hellenistic origins.⁷ By the late Republican period Epicureanism is often the object of ridicule by conventional Roman thinkers:⁸ Pamela Gordon outlines the connection of Epicureanism to *voluptas* (coded as effeminate) contrasted with Stoicism which by contrast adheres to masculine Roman *virtus* during this same period.⁹ However, Philodemus of Gadara accommodates aspects of Epicureanism to a Roman way of life in terms of pedagogy and economics.¹⁰ Indeed, by the Flavian period Epicureanism was associated with an alternative lifestyle for elite Romans.¹¹ In fact, this lifestyle is epitomized by Statius' accounts of *voluptas* in his own *Silvae* 1.3, which recounts life at Vopiscus' villa. But *Silvae* 1.3 can also be seen as reconciling Epicureanism to Romanness in this age where Roman elites lack true political power in the center.¹² Newlands points out that an Epicurean, villa-centric, lifestyle exhibits a Roman drive for control of nature.¹³ Roman Epicureanism, therefore, represents both a nonconformist lifestyle, associated

⁶ See Heslin (2005). See also Chin (2013) who notes that the Centaurs act "more civilized" (322) than the human Achilles in the *Achilleid*.

⁷ This can be traced to the Epicurean connection to Presocratic "natural philosophy," among other things. Note Epicurus' denial of divine explanations for natural phenomena; see O'Keefe (2014: 1–5).

⁸ Gordon (2014: *passim*) utilizes the criticisms of Cicero and Seneca as epitomizing mainstream Roman thought.

⁹ Gordon (2014).

¹⁰ For the pedagogical aspects of this assimilation, see Asmis (2001); on economics, see Asmis (2004).

¹¹ Newlands (2002: 137–38).

¹² Newlands (2002: 128–32).

¹³ Newlands (2002: 170–72).

with femininity and aspects of assimilation into a traditionally masculine Roman lifestyle by the Flavian period.¹⁴ This cultural background is muted in the *Thebaid* but worth noting for its hybridic characteristic, mimicking the Centaurs we will discuss. The question of Epicurean elements in the *Thebaid* specifically deserves contextualization.

The appearance of Epicureanism in the *Thebaid* and previous mythological epics is often an exploratory exercise as scholars have recently argued.¹⁵ One of the primary characteristics of mythological epic is the active presence and engagement of the divine which conflicts with the atheism of Epicureanism. However, this does not preclude the potential presence of these elements in mythological epic. Such analysis of Epicureanism in mythological epic has centered on Lucretius' *De rerum natura* specifically. Lucretius casts Epicurus as a sage who triumphs over false fear of the divine, valorizing such atheism:

quem neque fama deum nec fulmina nec minitanti
murmure compressit caelum, sed eo magis acrem
inritat animi virtutem, effringere ut arcta
naturae primus portarum claustra cupiret. (Lucr. 1.68–71):

Neither the reputation of the gods or lightning or thunder disturbs him [Epicurus]. In fact, they rouse all the keen virtue of his mind to such an extent that he first desired to break the narrow confines of the gates of nature.

Although mythological epic contains the divine and thus makes such atheism untenable, such hostility and disregard for the divine can be seen in Vergil's *Aeneid* and in Statius' *Thebaid*. This disposition towards the gods is present in Vergil's Mezentius who is termed a despiser of the divine during Vergil's catalogue of troops (7.648: *contemptor divum Mezentius*, "Mezentius, the

¹⁴ This nonconformity does not appear to be political dissidence; see Penwill (2003). This conflict between lifestyles of isolation and community can be connected to Epicurean origins; see O'Keefe (2014: 4).

¹⁵ Kronenberg (2005) and Chaudhuri (2014), both discussed below.

depiser of the gods”).¹⁶ Later, Mezentius emphasizes his contempt for the divine by preying to his own *telum*:

'dextra mihi deus et **telum**, quod missile libro,
nunc adsint! voveo praedonis corpore raptis
indutum spoliis ipsum te, Lause, tropaeum
Aeneae.' dixit, stridentemque eminus hastam
iecit. ... (Verg. *Aen.* 10. 773–7)

‘May my right hand, a god, and spear which I cast forth, aid me! I vow that you, Lausus, draped in Aeneas the plunder from that scoundrel’s body—my trophy.’ He spoke and from above threw the hissing spear ...

Mezentius exhibits an impiety which may have Epicurean elements as Leah Kronenberg has argued.¹⁷ However, Kronenberg still contends that such an allegorical reading is a possibility which only invites examination of the consequences of including those elements within Vergil’s epic. Statius also explores such ramifications through his Capaneus.

Statius’ Capaneus displays similar markers of Epicurean thought. Like Mezentius his disdain for the gods is pronounced through his characterization (3.602: *superum contemptor*, “despiser of the gods”). Capaneus even references the connection between fear and the divine—an Epicurean tenet (*Theb.* 3.661: *primus in orbe deos fecit timor!*, “fear first made gods on the earth!”) in a probable echo of (Lucr. 5.73–75).¹⁸ However, the reading of this character as a consistent proponent of Epicurean atheism is untenable within the narrative of the *Thebaid*. Capaneus yells at Jupiter from the walls of Thebes (*Theb.* 10.904–5: *nunc age, nunc totis in me conitere fiammis, Iuppiter!*, “come now, contend with me with all your flames!”). Ultimately,

¹⁶ Mezentius undergoes many transformations from his first appearance in *Aeneid* 7 to his death in *Aeneid* 10, this progression has been assessed as a journey away from impiety or barbarity; see (Glenn 1971; 1972). La Penna (1999) has cast Mezentius as emblematic of Stoic thought. Kronenberg (2005) argues convincingly for Mezentius’ Epicurean qualities. See also Chaudhuri (2014: 69–77).

¹⁷ (2005).

¹⁸ On this correspondence and others see Chaudhuri (2014: 267–70).

this hero is even incinerated by the divine (10.927–28: *dicentem toto Iove fulmen adactum / corripuit*, “while speaking the bolt overcame him, hurled with Jupiter’s full might”). Although Capaneus is disdainful of the divine, he is clearly aware of the existence of immortals and subject to their authority. However, we should read the encapsulation of Epicurean elements around this character as an exploration of the role of such thought within the *Thebaid* as Pramit Chaudhuri articulates in his reading of Capaneus.¹⁹

I read certain Epicurean traces around the comparison of Hippomedon to a Centaur which similarly do not offer a consistent presentation of Epicurean philosophy. Rather, these elements exhibit an exploration of placing Epicureanism in the text. In these instances, Epicurean elements are clustered around the image of a Centaur, offering the monster as a place for such experimentation.²⁰

There are intertextual correspondences between Statius’ likening of Hippomedon to a Centaur in *Thebaid* 4 (136–41) and Lucretius’ explanation of *simulacra* forming unreal combinations of various monsters (4.130–37). Statius alludes to Lucretius’ *De rerum natura* while introducing Hippomedon, and likening him to a Centaur, during the catalogue of troops:

illum Palladia sonipes Nemeaeus ab arce
devehit arma pavens **umbraque** inmane **volanti**
implet agros longoque attollit pulvere campum.
non aliter silvas umeris et utroque refringens
pectore montano duplex Hylaeus ab antro
praecipitat ... (*Theb.* 4.136–41)

A Nemean steed carried him down from Argos. Fearing the weapons, it filled the field with a large **flying shade** and covered the plain with abundant dust. Just as the two-fold Hylaeus hurries down from his mountain cave. ...

¹⁹ (2014: 270).

²⁰ This is not unlike the metapoetic experimentation which Lowe (2015) points to in Augustan poets. See also Cohen (1997: 7) of monsters in general.

Statius' depiction evokes Lucretius' explanation of how *simulacra* form false shadows of fantastical creatures (4.130–37: *sed ne forte putes ea demum sola vagari ... nam saepe Gigantum / ora volare videntur et umbram ducere late*: “But lest you think that these things [*simulacra*] wander alone by chance [...] often faces of giants seem to fly and lead forth their shadow in all directions”). Indeed, this book length discussion of *simulacra* concludes with an explanation of how *simulacra* can falsely form a Centaur from the image of a horse and rider (4.741: *equi atque hominis casu convenit imago*, “the image [a Centaur] happens by the chance meeting of human and horse images”). Statius' description of a joint shadow formed from the separate bodies of horse and Hippomedon nearly mimics the process of *simulacra* randomly conjoining. This engagement does not, however, present a “Lucretian Centaur” but rather draws attention to the incompatibility of such a creature. The portion of Lucretius' text which Statius engages is, in fact, a refutation of the existence of Centaurs.²¹ Using Lucretian references to create the image of a Centaur is illogical. Nonetheless, Statius' engagement still draws attention to Epicurean elements in the *Thebaid*. In this way, Statius explores Epicureanism within his mythological epic and around a monster.

Statius further highlights this exploration through his use of lightning in book 9. Lucretian Epicureanism is specifically evoked through the image of a lightning bolt wherein Epicurus easily avoids religious fear, metaphorized as lightning bolt.²² Lightning itself is a focus in book 6 of Lucretius' text within a refutation of lightning as evidence of Jupiter's existence (6.400–1: *denique cur numquam caelo iacit undique puro / Iuppiter in terras fulmen sonitusque*

²¹ This is not the only instance where Lucretius focuses on the non-existence of a Centaur (5.878–81: *sed neque Centauri fuerunt nec tempore in ullo / esse queunt duplici natura et corpore bino / ex alienigenis membris compacta, potestas / hinc illinc partis ut sat par esse potissit*, “There were no Centaurs nor at any time would something with a twofold nature and twin body, conjoined from foreign limbs, be able to exist. This would result in the force being unequally distributed”).

²² Lucr. 1.68–71, discussed above.

profundit? “Why does Jupiter never produce lightning and thunder across the earth when the sky is clear in every direction?”). In *Thebaid* 9, Statius twice employs *fulmen*, and both instances bookend the creation of the image of a Centaur. The first instance occurs immediately after Hippomedon’s speech directed to Tydeus’ horse and depicts the horse’s reaction as a lightning bolt (9.218–19: *audisse accensumque putes: hoc fulmine raptum / abstulit et similes minus indignatur habenas*, “you would think the horse heard and was stirred. Hippomedon spurred on the horse which was overcome by this bolt from above and less indignant because the reins were now wielded in nearly the same way”). Immediately following this reference, Statius likens the image of horse and rider to a Centaur (9.220: *semifer aëria talis Centaurus ab Ossa / desilit in ualles*, “Just as a half-wild Centaur leaps down from lofty Ossa into the valleys”).

Statius’ second lightning reference depicts the horse’s death (9.283–86: *figitur et validos sonipes Aetolus in armos / exsiluitque alte vi mortis et aëra pendens / verberat; haud tamen est turbatus fulmine ductor*, “the Aetolian steed was pierced in its broad shoulders and reared high up at the deadly force and, hanging aloft, it beat the air. Nevertheless, the rider was hardly disturbed by this jolt”). This use of lightning underscores Jupiter’s influence,²³ evoked through the *fulmen*, a common term for Jupiter’s favored weapon.²⁴ These lightning bolts may, at the same time, evoke their symbolic potential in Lucretian thought.

Indeed, one can also view Hippomedon’s reaction to these bolts as a further exploration of the potential placement of Epicurean elements in this episode. Hippomedon is undeterred by the lightning from above (9.286: *haud ... turbatus*). Statius’ hero does not display any awareness

²³ See Lovatt (2005: 122). The general metaphorical valence of *fulmen* “like lightning” has been noted; see Dewar (1991: *ad loc.*).

²⁴ See Hardie (1986: 147–8) and Lowe (2015: 210–11).

of the divine potential of this threat and does not accurately perceive his circumstances—striking a pose quite removed from Vergil’s Mezentius, Statius’ Capaneus, already incomplete Epicureans within mythological epic. Hippomedon removes this *telum*, termed a *fulmen* and, as the Centaur is destroyed by lightning, wades into the river which will bring his death. Hippomedon is described as (290: *certior*) as he steps into the mud. This is not an Epicurean victory of *ratio*. Statius employs terms throughout this episode which draw attention to the potential background of Lucretian Epicureanism. In book 4 Statius likens Hippomedon on horseback to a Centaur through an engagement with Lucretius’ work. Indeed, a lightning bolt accompanies Hippomedon mounting Tydeus’ steed (9.218) and riding off as a Centaur. Ultimately, the conclusion of that monstrous image occurs as Hippomedon loosens the reins of the horse (9.286) after it is struck by another lightning bolt.

Any discernment of Epicurean elements within mythological epic should be read as an investigation. I discussed at the opening of this section how other Epicurean elements function within Statius’ *Thebaid*. Statius similarly explores this function while crafting the image of a Centaur in the above passages from books 4 and 9—making use of monsters as spaces for examination. It is my contention here and throughout the following study that monsters are good spaces for such explorations in Flavian epic.

What We Talk About When We Talk About Monsters

The *Thebaid*’s hybrid monsters also explore contemporary concerns about otherness. This aspect of Flavian literature and culture should be understood in connection to contact with foreign otherness during the cosmopolitanism of the early empire and the focus on the empire’s borders under the Flavians (discussed further in the introductory chapter). Such cosmopolitanism

creates tension around the definitions of same and other which are represented in the *Thebaid* through the distinction between human and monster. Statius' hybrid monsters figure prominently as both exemplars of and contributors to the tension around 'same' and 'other'. In fact, Statius' characters even articulate this side of monsters.

In *Thebaid* 1, a quarrel erupts between Tydeus and Polyneices as both attempt to find shelter on Adrastus' stoop. After Adrastus stops the altercation between the two, Tydeus mentions the successful cohabitation of monsters:

... pariter stabulare bimembres
Centauros unaque ferunt Cyclopas in Aetna
compositos. sunt et rabidis iura insita monstribus
fasque suum: nobis sociare cubilia terrae—
sed quid ego? (*Theb.* 1.457–61)

They say that bi-formed Centaurs stable together and that Cyclopes dwell together in Etna. There are even laws among rabid monsters, and they have their own custom: for us to dwell together on earth—but what can I say?

The very language of this passage draws attention to hybrid configurations (*bimembres ... una ... compositos ... sociare*). Within this hybrid language, Tydeus claims that even monsters do what Polyneices has failed to do: live together. First, this aside presents monsters as something distinctly non-human. Second, Tydeus employs monsters to define appropriate human behavior. He uses monsters to epitomize the non-human.

In general, such separation is problematic in a text where humans often act in monstrous ways.²⁵ The irony of Tydeus' comments is evident when compared with Evadne's similar sentiments. In *Thebaid* 12, Evadne mentions the same monsters while beseeching Theseus to secure a proper burial for Capaneus:

sed non Siculis exorta sub antris
monstra nec Ossaei bello cecidere bimembres.

²⁵ See Vessey (1973: 180) for Tydeus' use of "the law of the wild" here.

mitto genus clarosque patres: hominum, inclute Theseu,
sanguis erant, homines, eademque in sidera, eosdem
sortitus animarum alimentaue vestra creati ... (*Theb.* 12.553–7)

But not monsters born in Sicilian caves or the bi-formed Centaurs it is that fell in this war. I set aside their lineage and renowned ancestors. Famed Theseus, they were men, of the blood of men, created under the very stars and same chance and same nurture as you ...

This comment follows the same rhetorical structure of Tydeus: humans are humans because they are not monsters. However, Evadne's comment, similar to Tydeus', differs from the events of the text. Her claim that the men who died in the war were not monsters contradicts numerous comparisons of these heroes to monsters. For instance, Capaneus himself had been compared to these very monsters in *Thebaid* 3 (604–5: *unus ut e siluis Pholoes habitator opacae / inter et Aetnaeos aequus consurgere fratres*: “like one from the woods of dusky Pholoe and as one who could measure up to the Etnean brothers”).²⁶

However, Evadne's comment also differs from Tydeus'. Her denial is false in light of what has happened in the poem, while Tydeus' early comment is not false in terms of the *Thebaid's* narrative and we must look beyond this text to assess Tydeus' claim. Indeed, in the preceding literary representations of Tydeus there are many examples which undercut Tydeus' statement: his cannibalism is clearly evident in the literary and visual sources.²⁷ Judging Tydeus' claim reveals a similar discrepancy to Evadne's. Moreover, Tydeus' comments explicitly

²⁶ Feeney (1991: 161–62). See also Chaudhuri (2014: 292–95) who reads this as a possible comment on the poetic hyperbole of previous comparisons of men to monsters.

²⁷ On Tydeus prowess in battle see Hom. *Il.* 4.391–96; Aesch. *Sept.* 573, see Marinis (2015: 345); Eurip. *Phoen.* 134.; Apollod. 3.6.5. On Tydeus' cannibalism see the Cyclic *Thebais* fr. 9 W; Pherecydes of Athens *FGrHist* 3 F 97; Apollod. 3.6.8: ὁ δὲ διελὼν τὸν ἐγκέφαλον ἐξεπρόρησεν (“cutting it in two he poured out his brains”). On Tydeus' fratricide see Apollod. 1.8.5 wherein Tydeus' murder of his own brother is referenced; the lost *Melannipus* of Accius which recounts a tradition where Melannipus was also Tydeus' half-brother, see Augoustakis (2016b: xxxvii). On Tydeus' association with the Monstrous Calydonian boar see Moss (2012: 155–57); Chaudhuri (2014: 293 n. 107) See also Aesch. *Sept.* 381: ὡς δράκων βοᾷ (“as a dragon, he shouts”). Tydeus' cannibalism was particularly popular in ancient art, see Augoustakis (2016b: xxxiv–xxxvi); see also McClellan (2019: 81–82) for recent analysis of the visual aspects of St. *Th.* 8.751–66.

reference the literary tradition with his use of the Alexandrian footnote *ferunt* (1.458).²⁸ As with Evadne's statement, this characterization inaccurately differentiates monsters and humans.

Through *ferunt*, Tydeus frames his reference to monsters as an appeal to the literary tradition. The examples of the literary past should guide his distinction between human and monster. However, such distinctions offered by literary models are not as stark as his statement implies. Using the literary tradition to help the reader glean the difference between human and monster is not particularly helpful in Statius' text. What is more, *ferunt* draws attention to the complex position these monsters have within the diegesis. Tydeus does not employ his own belief but references the belief of others in the existence of monsters. These creatures are within the diegesis but at a remove from Tydeus' comment. Evadne's comment reinforces this point: by *Thebaid* 12 there is still great confusion concerning the distinction between monsters and humans. Both Tydeus and Evadne provide false assertions of humanity defined simply as not monstrous and, thus, suggest the fragility of such categories. These comments highlight the tenuousness of any differentiation in this text between human 'same' and monster 'other'. This debate is brought to the fore in *Thebaid* 12 where Statius portrays this tension in the image of the Minotaur.

Statius' Minotaur

Let us now look at the *ekphrasis* on Theseus' shield (12.665–76), featuring the Minotaur. The Minotaur, as hybrid monster, offers a focal point for discussions of 'same' and 'other' mapped onto its human (same) and bull (other) halves. Statius' depiction of the Minotaur offers a

²⁸ Ross (1975: 78); Conte (1986: 62–68); see also Hinds (1995: 1–5). Note specifically Tydeus' possible allusion to *Aen.* 12.386: *Centaurs in foribus stabulant Scyllaeque biformes* ("Centauri dwell in the doorway and the bi-formed Scylla").

flash point where the boundary between human and non-human might collapse if the Minotaur appears too human. However, Statius' Minotaur lacks human characteristics and thus avoids such potential collapse of categories. Moreover, Statius' metaliterary coloring of this passage showcases the significance of this monster.

Statius describes Theseus' shield while the Athenian troops approach the walls of Thebes. This *ekphrasis* illustrates Theseus slaying the Minotaur (666–73). Statius also depicts Theseus' response to the images on his shield (673) and how the images affect the internal audience of potential viewers (672):

at procul ingenti Neptunius agmina Theseus	665
angustat clipeo, propriaeque exordia laudis	
centum urbes umbone gerit centenaque Cretae	
moenia, seque ipsum monstrosi ambagibus antri	
hispida torquentem luctantis colla iuveni	
alternasque manus circum et nodosa ligantem	670
bracchia et abducto vitantem cornua vultu.	
terror habet populos, cum saeptus imagine torva	
ingreditur pugnas, bis Thesea bisque cruentas	
caede videre manus: veteres reminiscitur actus	
ipse tuens sociumque gregem metuendaque quondam	675
limina et absumpto pallentem Cnosida filo. (<i>Theb.</i> 12.665–76)	

From a distance Neptunian Theseus corralled the battle line with his grand shield—the beginnings of his unique glory. He carries a hundred cities on the boss and even himself, in the trappings of the monstrous cave, twisting the hairy neck of the struggling bull and alternating hands grasping about. He binds the knotty shoulders and avoids the horns by turning his face away. Terror grips the people when he goes into battle girded by this savage reproduction. They see Theseus twice and hands twice bloodied with slaughter. Theseus himself recollects the old deeds, gazing at the band of companions, the thresholds once feared and the pale lady of Knossos with her wasted thread.

Ekphrases on shields are common in epic. Two notable models for Statius' *ekphrasis* are

Homer's shield of Achilles (*Il.* 18.478–608) and Vergil's shield of Aeneas (*Aen.* 8.626–728).²⁹

²⁹ Note also the Ἀσπίς Ἡρακλέους; the shield of Turnus (Verg. *Aen.* 7.783–92); the shield of Hannibal (Sil. *Pun.* 2.395–456). On reading Statius' passage against Aeneas' shield, see Hardie (1993: 47–48) and Pollmann (2004: *ad loc.*). See Chin (2010) for Statius' *ekphrasis* on the shield of Creneus (9.332–338).

The tragic stage also offers numerous *ekphrases* of other heroic shields from the Theban cycle, but Theseus is excluded.³⁰ In fact, apart from Statius, we have no other *ekphrasis* on Theseus' shield. Statius' *ekphrasis* also depicts the character (Theseus) who is viewing the work of art, evoking two *ekphrases* from the *Aeneid*.³¹

In the following section I will first argue for the metaliterary valence of Statius' *ekphrasis* on the shield of Theseus. I will then examine the hybridity of Statius' Minotaur. Statius experiments with the monster's hybridity by juxtaposing human and animal parts. However, the poet maintains the distinction between human and monster in his representation of the Minotaur. I argue that this monster highlights the permeability of such difference in the *Thebaid*. Ultimately, I set Statius' representation against dynamics of otherness from my earlier discussion of monstrosity as a means to define humanity in the *Thebaid*.

The opening of Statius' *ekphrasis* contains a summary of the subsequent scene (12.666: *propriaeque exordia laudis*, "the beginnings of his unique glory"). This phrase points the reader to the following depiction. However, Statius' word choice (*exordia*) is more than a signpost. *Exordium* is not typically employed for visual representation and stands out. In fact, *exordium* is a literary term often used to refer to the beginning of a speech or story and thus activates possible metaliterary interpretations.³² In the *Silvae*, Statius uses *exordium* to refer to the undertaking of his *Thebaid* with regard to his poetic models (5.3.234: *Thebais urgebat priscorum exordia*

³⁰ Aeschylus' *Sept.*: Tydeus (389–90); Capaneus (432–34); Eteocles (466–9); Hippomedon (493–96); Parthenopaeus (539–43); Polyneices (645–48). Euripides' *Phoen.*: Parthenopaeus (1108–9); Hippomedon (1115–18); Tydeus (1120–21); Polyneices (1125–28); Capaneus (1131–33); Adrastus (1136–40). See Marinis (2015: 344–53) for Statius' engagement with tragic models in his *Thebaid*.

³¹ (1.455–95); (6.23–9), discussed below. Note also the correspondence between this passage and Catullus 64; see Bessone (2011: 138–39).

³² See *OLD*, s.v. *exordium* 4.

vatum, “my *Thebaid* approached the undertakings of ancient poets”). Statius also employs the term twice in the *Thebaid*. Statius organizes the poem for the reader as he calls on Apollo for inspiration (4.649–51: *Phoebe, doce: nos rara manent exordia famae*, “Phoebus, teach us, we have only a small beginning of the story”). Statius uses *exordium* to refer to the beginnings of other poems and establishes the literariness of the term in the *Thebaid*. The character Hypsipyle employs *exordium* as she concludes her narrative (5.36: *quid longa malis exordia necto?* “Why do I bind lengthy beginnings with woes?”).³³ Hypsipyle’s use of *exordium* in this passage signals the metaliterary valence of the story within the poem’s narrative.³⁴ I submit that Statius’ employment of *exordium* in the *ekphrasis* on Theseus’ shield achieves the same effect. It is a term, therefore, associated with artistic endeavor and storytelling. *Exordium*, here, prepares the reader to assess the *ekphrasis* as a comment on the narrative of the *Thebaid* in microcosm and, thus, underscores its importance.³⁵

What is more, the image of the Minotaur on the shield is described as a representation, heightening a metaliterary reading (12.672: *imagine torva*) through the use of *imago*.³⁶ The Minotaur, contained within the *ekphrasis*, is the perfect subject for Statius’ metaliterary

³³ On Hypsipyle’s narrative digression, see Augoustakis (2010: 37–62). On Hypsipyle as storyteller (*Erzählerfigur*), see Walter (2014).

³⁴ *Exordium* also evokes weaving and literary work; see OLD s.v. *exordium* 1b. Hypsipyle’s use of weaving imagery (*necto*) reinforces the storytelling valence of her use of *exordium*. Of course, the metaphor of weaving is at play in the *ekphrasis* passage through Ariadne’s assistance. Statius concludes the *ekphrasis* with the “unwound thread” (*absumpto ... filo*, 676). See Pollmann (2004: *ad loc.*) for the rarity of Statius’ phrase without reference, however, to the storytelling undertones.

³⁵ For this function of *ekphrasis* in the *Thebaid* specifically, see McNelis (2007: 50–75) on Argia’s necklace. For summations of this reading of *ekphrasis* in epic more broadly see Graff (1987: 53); Becker (1995: 4). Putnam (1998: 2) concisely expresses this sentiment in terms of the *Aeneid*: “It will be my presumption that all of Vergil’s notional ekphrases are in consequential ways metaphors for the larger text which they embellish and that, individually and as a group, they have much to teach the reader about the poem as a whole.”

³⁶ TLL vii.1.404.60–406.10.

discourse. The Minotaur has a unique quality among monsters in antiquity: it is engineered by an intelligent hand—Daedalus through his creation of the wooden cow which enables the Minotaur’s conception. Dunstan Lowe observes that “the Minotaur ... being the only ‘designed’ monster in classical myth has a special potential for signifying poetic experimentation.”³⁷ Statius’ *ekphrasis*, colored by the literary *exordia* and this symbol of poetic creativity (the Minotaur) highlights this passage as a metaliterary comment on the creation of the *Thebaid* itself.

Statius’ intertextual resonance with a portion of Vergil’s *ekphrasis* from *Aeneid* 6.22–30 also serves the poet’s commentary on artistic process. In the *Aeneid*, the engraving, made by Daedalus, depicts the labyrinth and the Minotaur. Vergil’s narrative concludes with Daedalus’ failed attempts to depict Icarus’ death (30–33):

contra elata mari respondet Cnosia tellus:
hic crudelis amor tauri suppostaque furto
Pasiphae mixtumque genus prolesque biformis 625
Minotaurus inest, Veneris monimenta nefandae,
hic labor ille domus et inextricabilis error;
magnum reginae sed enim miseratus amorem
Daedalus ipse dolos tecti ambagesque resolvit,
caeca regens filo vestigia. tu quoque magnam 630
partem opere in tanto, sineret dolor, Icare, haberes.
bis conatus erat casus effingere in auro,
bis patriae cecidere manus. ... (*Aen.* 6.23–33)

On the other wall the Knossian land looked out, raised from the sea. There was the cruel desire for the bull—Pasiphae’s secret substitution. There was also the Minotaur—a mixed up type and a bi-formed offspring—a monument of foul lust. Next is quite an undertaking—the house—which is an unsolvable maze. However, Daedalus pitied the Queen’s great love and unwound the tricks and opaque parts of the maze, marking out the blind pathways with thread. You, Icarus, would have occupied a great part in this tremendous work if grief allowed. Twice Daedalus tried to fashion your fall in gold, twice the father’s hands fell. ...

The *ekphrasis* from *Aeneid* 6 contains clear linguistic parallels to Statius’ (*ambages*, *Aen.* 6.29 and *ambagibus*, *Theb.* 12.668; *Cnosia*, *Aen.* 6.23 and *Cnosida*, *Theb.* 12.676; *bis ... bis*, *Aen.*

³⁷ (2015: 183). See also Pigeaud (1988: 216) and Hughes (2010: 105).

6.32–33 and *bis ... bis*, *Theb.* 12.673; *filo*, *Aen.* 6.30 and *filo*, *Theb.* 12.767). Moreover, Vergil's *ekphrasis* emphasizes the artistic process by referencing Daedalus as its craftsman. Vergil's inclusion of Daedalus and Daedalus' failed attempts to complete his work highlight the creative process. Statius brings Vergil's Daedalus into the background of his passage through his allusion to Vergil's *ekphrasis*.³⁸ Moreover, the intertextual nod (*bis ... bis*, *Theb.* 12.673) evokes Vergil's comment on the incompleteness of Daedalus' work, often seen as a comment on the artistic process.³⁹ By bringing up the master craftsmen and his work of art (the *ekphrasis* from *Aeneid* 6), Statius underlines the artistic process in his own *ekphrasis* and, therefore, points the reader to its content.

Let us now turn more closely to the monster at the center of Statius' *ekphrasis*. As I argue, Statius confuses the human and animal aspects of the hybrid Minotaur, exploring the boundaries the Minotaur's halves represent: human and monster. But Statius ultimately asserts the importance of such demarcation by presenting an entirely monstrous Minotaur.

Statius' Minotaur represents a novel interpretation of the monster's hybridity. The Flavian poet's predecessors often engage with the Minotaur's hybridity. Note Vergil's articulation of the Minotaur in the *ekphrasis* discussed above through his use of the adjective *mixtus*: ***mixtum*** ... *genus prolesque biformis* (6.25). Ovid also exploits the Minotaur's hybridity: in *Heroides* 2, Pasiphae provides a similar depiction while enumerating Theseus' achievements (70: *tauri mixtaque forma viri*, "the mixed up form of bull and man").⁴⁰ Statius, however,

³⁸ Statius also references the labyrinth in this passage (667–68: *centenaeque Cretae / moenia*); see Pollmann (2004: *ad loc.*).

³⁹ See Hardie (1993: 47 n. 65) on Statius' allusion to a Vergilian trope of incompleteness.

⁴⁰ Cf. Ov. *Met.* (8.169–70); see Lowe (2015: 185–86). For a more contemporaneous example, see Seneca's *Phaedra* (1170).

explores the Minotaur's hybridity through different means—juxtaposing human and non-human parts. His *ekphrasis* visualizes the jumble articulated by his poetic predecessors. The monster is referenced through three body parts: *colla ... bracchia ... cornua* (670–72), and these body parts are disconnected and strewn amidst the scene. This Minotaur is not explicitly *mixtus*, but human and bull limbs are mixed up throughout this passage.

Statius further manipulates the monster's hybridity by obfuscating the identification of Minotaur and Theseus in his depiction (12.669–71: *hispida torquentem luctantis colla iuveni / alternasque manus circum et nodosa ligantem / bracchia et abducto vitantem cornua vultu*). Statius ambiguously lists *manus* at 670, and the identification of these hands has been the subject of much debate.⁴¹ The syntax allows *manus* (670) to refer to Theseus' struggling hands grasping the monster or both hands of the monster himself. Statius also jumbles subject and object throughout the hexameter which delays the identity of the participants until the very end of the line with the noun *iuvenus*: *hispida torquentem luctantis colla **iuveni*** (670).⁴² In fact, with only this marker, the figure referred to is not explicitly even a Minotaur in this portion of the *ekphrasis*. At the very least, clear identification of Theseus and the Minotaur is difficult in Statius' representation of their mortal tussle.

Statius toys with the distinction between Theseus and the monster by presenting a jumble of body parts which make it difficult to distinguish the hero from the monster. His mingling of human and monstrous body parts underscores the importance of these categories in this passage.

⁴¹ *Manus* could refer to the arms of the Minotaur as Theseus subdues it or Theseus' arms as they subdue the Minotaur; see Pollmann (2004: *ad loc.*).

⁴² This confusing construction echoes the collapse of horse and rider at 8.539–40: *cornipedemque equitemque, ferit: ruit ille ruentem / in Prothoum lapsasque manu quaerentis habenas* ("he strikes horse and rider: Prothous plunges into the one plunging into him while he reaches for the reigns which he has lost hold of"). On the ambiguity of the syntax, see Augoustakis (2016b: *ad loc.*).

However, the differences between human and monster are ultimately maintained, as we shall see. The seeming ambiguity between human and monster, in fact, only draws the readers' attention to the point of separation between human and monster.

Statius' visualization of the Minotaur's hybridity should be compared with Ovid's famed depiction of the monster in the *Ars Amatoria* (2.24: *semibovemque virum semivirumque bovem*, "the half-bull-half-man-bull"). Here Ovid's poetry mimics the hybrid nature of the Minotaur as the pentameter itself divides the hybrid break of the monster.⁴³ Ovid's caesura stands at the point of composition between human and animal. As with Ovid's caesura, Statius features the point of fusion—the point where animal and human meet.⁴⁴ The Minotaur's neck, which is the traditional line between the bull and the human halves in depictions of the Minotaur in literature and art, becomes prominent.⁴⁵ Statius draws the reader's attention to this point of composition.

However, Ovid and Statius represent this point of fusion differently. Ovid's metrical creativity allows the point of contact to remain neither human nor animal. Statius, on the other hand, characterizes the neck with the adjective *hispida* (669). This is not a standard means to describe a human neck, however, since *hispidus* is not necessarily animalistic. In fact, this adjective may refer to the shaggy appearance of a human or an animal.⁴⁶ This adjective does not

⁴³ The caesura occurs between human and bovine halves; see Hughes (2010: 106).

⁴⁴ Hughes (2010) argues that the ancient hybrid is actually fragmented body parts. Such fragmentation, she argues, is achieved by underscoring the point where the animal and human parts meet. At any rate, the point of contact between human and animal is crucial in judging an ancient hybrid.

⁴⁵ Typically the body was human and the head bovine; see Hughes (2010: 106) and Lowe (2015: 184).

⁴⁶ *OLD* s.v. *hispidus* 1.

mark the neck as either animal or human. And Statius foregrounds the point of fusion—a boundary between human and animal.

In fact, Statius' Minotaur lacks human characteristics throughout his representation, beyond his neck. The Minotaur's body, the traditionally human part, reveals the novelty of Statius' creation. The monster's shoulders are knotty (670–71: *nodosa ... bracchia*), a rare depiction for human or animal shoulders. When *nodosus* describes human body parts, it often depicts sickness of the bones.⁴⁷ The adjective may also convey intricacy and could evoke the labyrinth, the monstrous aspect of the Minotaur.⁴⁸ The adjective does not emphasize the humanness of the shoulders but rather gives them a strange connotation. The hands (*manus*, 670), as we discussed above, may not belong to the Minotaur himself. Moreover, *manus* are not strictly used for humans⁴⁹ and, therefore, do not mark the Minotaur's hands as human. However, Statius does assert the standard bovine character of the Minotaur's head by giving this monster horns (671: *cornua*). The monster's head is bovine, which is typical. At the same time, the body of this Minotaur is also partially bovine. Simply put: Statius' Minotaur is hardly a hybrid.

Statius elides the typical human part of the Minotaur by transforming the hybrid into a 'whole' monster during the Minotaur's interaction with Theseus. Why? The assertion of Theseus' humanness depends on the othering of this monster. The Minotaur, which is a very human hybrid,⁵⁰ presents a potent threat to this binary during the quarrel with Theseus. The

⁴⁷ Hor. *Ep.* 1.1.31; Ov. *Pont.* 1.3.23. *Nodosus* may describe bones that are not damaged; see Luc. 8.670–71.

⁴⁸ OLD s.v. *nodosus* 2.

⁴⁹ OLD s.v. *manus* 1a and 1c.

⁵⁰ The standard myth presents the Minotaur as half human, gestated in a human womb and raised in a human household (albeit separated in the labyrinth); see Lowe (2015: 182–88). On Catullus' exploitation of Ariadne's use of *germanus* for the Minotaur, see DeBrohun (1999).

episode offers a flash point where this boundary (between human and monster) might collapse against the intervention of a *too* human Minotaur.⁵¹ Statius' Minotaur must, therefore, shed its human part. Statius rids his Minotaur of sameness, representing only alterity. This non-hybrid-Minotaur asserts Statius' attempt to maintain the boundaries between human and monster—same and other—in this poem. This fluidity is also visible if we focus on Theseus.

Statius' Theseus

Theseus' actions in book 12 play a critical part in resolving the poem's cycle of violence. However, Theseus' position between human and monster during this brief appearance has been given attention in current scholarship.⁵² Indeed, the slippage between Theseus and the monstrous is quite pronounced. We have discussed these traits above in terms of his quarrel with the Minotaur. This confusion between human and monster, related to Theseus, is reinforced in other parts of the *Thebaid* as well. In fact, Theseus' first simile casts him as a bull:

ut modo conubiis taurus saltuque recepto
 cum posuit pugnās, alio si forte remugit
 bellatore nemus, quamquam ora et colla cruento
 imbre madent, novus arma parat campumque lacesens
 dissimulat gemitus et vulnera pulvere celat. 605
 (12.601–5)

As when a bull has put down his fights and recovered his brides and woodlands, if
 the forest groans with a fighter—although his head and neck are drenched with a blood

⁵¹ The possibility of Theseus becoming more monstrous in the interaction is also present in some of Statius' models: Cat. 64.154–57; Ov. *Her.* 10.99. See Lowe (2015: 186) on the role of female characters in shaping this narrative: "Ovid's Phaedra, Scylla and Ariadne(s) all pursue the rhetorical conceit of Catullus 64 in which Theseus became a beast, the Minotaur a brother."

⁵² Positive readings of Theseus' role: Vessey (1973: 314–15); Hardie (1993: 48); Braund (1996); D'Espèrey (1999: 369). Pessimistic readings of Theseus' role: Ahl (1986: 2935); Coffee (2009). For more ambiguous readings see Ganiban (2007), although labeling him as "one of the most disturbingly transgressive characters in the *Thebaid*" (229) does discern positive possibilities (232); Dominik (1994) who depicts Theseus as "ambiguous" (98); see also Hershkowitz (1998: 268–71); Dietrich (1999); Pagán (2000) viewing Theseus' role through the lens of purification; Pollmann (2004: 37–43); McNelis (2007: 162–71).

rain, he prepares renews his arms and provoking the field he covers up his groans and hides his wounds with dust.

Theseus is likened to a bull shortly before the aforementioned account of Theseus' wrestling with the Minotaur. This simile prepares us for the confusion between human and monster which abounds in the *ekphrasis* which I examined above.

Moreover, Statius' account of the wrestling match between Theseus and the Minotaur also corresponds, here intratextually, with the bull simile comparing Polyneices and Eteocles in book 1:

sic ubi delectos per **torva** armenta **iuencos**
agricola imposito sociare adfectat aratro,
illi indignantes, quis nondum vomere multo
ardua **nodosos** cervix descendit in armos,
in diversa trahunt atque aequis vincula laxant 135
viribus et vario confundunt limite sulcos:
(1.131–36)

As when a farmer tries to join two chosen bulls out of a savage group with a yoke. They rebel for whom the neck held up high has not yet stooped lower than their knotty shoulders after many plowings. They pull in opposite directions and loosen the chains with coequal strength, and they distort the furrows with haphazard lines.

seque ipsum monstrosi ambagibus antri
hispida torquentem luctantis colla **iuenci**
alternasque manus circum et **nodosa** ligantem 670
brachia et abducto vitantem cornua vultu.
terror habet populos, cum saeptus imagine **torva**
ingreditur pugnas ... (12.668–673)

We can see the echoes in *nodosus*, *iuencus* and *torvus*, not to mention the correlative ideas of joining (with *sociare* and *ligantem*), confusion via *ambagibus* and *confundant* and alternation with *vario* and *alternas*. What do such intra-textual allusions tell us about Statius' representation of Theseus and the Minotaur?

Polyneices and Eteocles are often 'confused' with one another throughout the *Thebaid*. In book 11, Oedipus is unable to distinguish their corpses (11.611–14: *nec noscere natos* /

adloquiumque aptare licet; dic, virgo, precanti, / quem teneo? “nor was he able to know his sons nor to adjust to whoever he was speaking: ‘speak to me praying, virgin, whom do I hold?’”). Oedipus’ confusion communicates the siblings’ interchangeability. In fact, this transposition is present elsewhere and has been connected to the *confusa domus* of all of Oedipus’ children.⁵³ The family tree of Polyneices and Eteocles is askew, and their kindred blood is more similar than standard brothers. By alluding to this bull simile, Statius thus reinforces the interchangeability between Theseus and the Minotaur.

Another notable intra-text furthers this confusion in Statius’ reference to the myth of Mithras and the bull during Adrastus’ dedication to Apollo: *seu Persei sub rupibus antri / indignata sequi torquentem cornua Mithram*: (1.719–20: “or Mithras twisting the struggling horns under the rocks of a Persian cave”). This passage is a clear intra-text to 12.668–69: *seque ipsum monstrosi ambagibus antri / hispida torquentem luctantis colla iuvenci*.⁵⁴ This reference to man and bull wrestling provides another allegory for Theseus and the Minotaur. But the reference to the Persian cult of Mithras is quite complex.

The conflict between Mithras and the bull can be read as a symbol of control over chaos.⁵⁵ In this reading Mithras’ slaying of the bull symbolizes a triumph of order (Mithras) over disorder (the bull). Indeed, Theseus is compared to Jupiter in the guise of the cosmic orderer in book 12 (650–55)⁵⁶ which would suggest such a reading of this reference to Mithras. William

⁵³ See O’Gorman (2005: 29–33).

⁵⁴ See Vessey (1973: 135–36). However, Dominik (1992: 77) looks askance at Vessey’s connection based on these three words alone.

⁵⁵ Vessey (1973: 136): “Like Mithras’ slaying of the bull, the destruction of monsters by Hercules and Theseus symbolises the defeat of evil and disorder.”

⁵⁶ See Vessey (1973: 314–15); Hardie (1992: 47–48); Hershkowitz (1998: 270).

Dominik's reading also coheres with such readings of divine order: "The image of Mithras, traditionally identified with the sun (and therefore with Apollo), dragging a bull to be sacrificed represents the malevolent gods (especially Apollo) dragging Polyneices and Eteocles to destruction, as the pair are compared frequently with bulls."⁵⁷ Whether connecting Mithras to Jupiter or Apollo, such readings assess Mithras' slaying of the bull as a conflict between distinct forces.

I propose a reading of this reference that is not so stark and incorporates some recent explorations. Mark Griffith has articulated the "codependency" between the forces of moon and sun in relation to the Mithras myth. This reading emphasizes the astrological references of the cult.⁵⁸ With Mithras as an allegory for the sun and the bull as the moon, this conflict is a cyclical transformation (occurring every day) rather than linear destruction.⁵⁹ In this reading Mithras and the bull are not entirely distinct,⁶⁰ as the one transforms into the other at regular intervals. This interpretation does not reinforce separation but rather suggests the connection between the two forces. It is productive to incorporate this aspect of Statius' Mithraic reference. Statius' intra-textual reference further bends the lines between monster and monster killer in the image of Theseus wrestling the Minotaur. Moreover, Theseus' assimilation to bull (*Theb.* 1.131–36) and bull killer (*Theb.* 12.665–676) elsewhere supports this reading.

⁵⁷ (1993: 77).

⁵⁸ Griffith (1993) also connects this passage to the "Romulus and Remus *topos*" and the opening of the *Thebaid* (*fraternas acies*, 1.1).

⁵⁹ Griffith (1993) also incorporates the symbol of rebirth through the sacrificial bull. The bull must die to give birth to the sun so the sun is dependent on the bull.

⁶⁰ See Beck (2006: 198–99).

In order to explain fully my analysis of monsters and Theseus, I pause on the intertextual resonance with Vergil's Hercules and Cacus.⁶¹ The connection between Statius' Theseus and Vergil's Hercules (*Aen.* 8.184–305) reveals the tenuousness of the distinction between human and monster. Vergil vividly depicts the slippage between human and monster. In fact, the Cacus episode is a paradigmatic passage for the potential for humans to act monstrous while fighting monsters in Latin epic.⁶²

Many of the correspondences highlight the interaction between hero and monster. Both images center on deadly wrestling. Both scenes involve the manual killing of a monster, although the narratives of choking and wrestling themselves contain only slight verbal echoes (*Aen.* 8.260: *corripit in **nodum** complexus, et **angit** inhaerens*, “he grabs him, having embraced him into a knot and clinging to him, he strangles him”; cf. *Theb.* 12.665–70: *agmina Theseus / **angustat** clipeo ... alternasque manus circum et **nodosa** ligantem*). Moreover, both scenes take place in cavernous spaces.⁶³ Vergil repeatedly references Cacus' cave (8.193: *spelunca ... summota*; 8.224: *speluncam*; 8.297: *antro ... cruento*; 8.236: *dirarum nidis domus opportuna volucrum*; 8.253: *involvitque domum caligine caeca*; 8.262: *domus atra*), while the Minotaur's home is referred to as a cave in Statius' text (12.668: *monstrousi ambagibus antri*). Both narratives feature a guiding path either into or out of the cave. Cacus goes through great lengths to avoid any guiding path into his cave (8.205–12), while Theseus carries Ariadne's thread which provides a path back (12.676).

⁶¹ For this episode as a structural model for the *Thebaid's* Coroebus episode (1.596–672), see Vessey (1973:101); Ganiban (2007: 13–17); Rebeggianni (2018: 151).

⁶² Lowe (2015: 220–26).

⁶³ This is a standard dwelling for classical monsters: Polyphemus (Hom. *Od.* 9. 152–479; Verg. *Aen.* 3.617); Bagradan Serpent (Sil. *Pun.* 6.146–50); Scylla (Hom. *Od.* 12.80; Verg. *Aen.* 3.431).

Indeed, the connections between Statius' Theseus and Vergil's Hercules go beyond this *ekphrasis* and appear throughout Theseus' depiction in book 12. Evadne gives voice to the natural comparison between these heroes as she concludes her speech by equating the deeds of Theseus and Hercules (12.584: *nec sacer invidet paribus Tirynthius actis*: "nor shall holy Hercules envy your comparable deeds"). The sight of Hercules even causes the monster Cacus to flee in fright (8.222–23: *tum primum nostri Cacus videre timentem / turbatumque oculis*, "then for the first time our guys saw Cacus fearful and disturbed"). Statius' Theseus inscribes a similar type of terror on his shield (12.672–73: *terror habet populos, cum saeptus imagine torva / ingreditur pugnas*, "Terror grips the people when he goes into battle girded by this savage reproduction"). Vergil again references grim spectatorship after Hercules kills Cacus: (8.265–66: *nequeunt expleri corda tuendo / terribilis oculos*, "nor were their terrible eyes able to sate their desire by looking"). Likewise, the grim image on Theseus' shield which causes terror contains the Minotaur's monstrous body.⁶⁴ References to internal audiences, terror and slain monstrous bodies abound in both passages. What is more, the evocation of the Vergilian passage highlights the interaction between hero and monster in the Statian passage.

This intertextual reference suggests the permeability between hero and monster in Statius' text. Theseus rousing his troops (12.613: *omnis ad arma rudes ager exstimulavit alumnus*, "the native land stirred even all the untrained soldiers to arms") corresponds to the intensity of Hercules' assault on Cacus (8.249: *desuper Alcides telis premit omniaque arma / advocate*, "from above Hercules pressed them with spears and called them all to arms"). This intertext characterizes Theseus' marshaling and assault on Thebes as a Herculean quest to kill a

⁶⁴ See Pollmann (2004: *ad loc.*).

monster.⁶⁵ However, as we have seen, the line between Theseus and the Minotaur becomes blurred as we read the *ekphrasis* on his shield. Indeed, Theseus becomes somewhat monstrous though his slippage between bull and bull killer and his confusing tumult with the Minotaur. Theseus goes forth to destroy something which he also embodies. The allusion casts Theseus' march on Thebes as a quasi-Herculean monster-slaying labor. However, the stability of Hercules' role is questionable.

The traditional myth casts Cacus as a human bandit. Vergil changed Cacus into a monster. Cacus is only a monster because of Vergil's decision; in Livy and others, he is a human.⁶⁶ To what extent Statius is aware of this innovation is not entirely clear, but it is notable that the model of monstrosity employed by the Flavian poet is a recent transformation from human to monster. This Vergilian innovation is, already itself, a comment on the interchange between human and monster. The artificiality of Cacus as monster suggests the arbitrariness of the distinctions drawn in the narrative between human and monster.⁶⁷ Moreover, Vergil's Hercules behaves monstrously, further underscoring the permeability of that distinction.

The monstrousness of Vergil's Hercules has been noted by scholars.⁶⁸ Both characters display an affinity for grim trophies: Cacus (8.196–7: *foribusque adfixa superbis / ora virum*

⁶⁵ Rebeggianni (2019: 149) does not discuss this inter text but does see the defeat of Cacus as a model for Theseus' defeat of Creon, citing *Theb.* 12.782–85.

⁶⁶ See Stocks (2019); Hardie (1986) 111–18 and Lowe (2015) 222–6. See Secci (2013) who casts this decision as a meta-poetic comment through the “mythmaking” of the intra-diegetic Evander. Note Liv. 1.7.3: *Quem cum vadentem ad speluncam Cacus vi prohibere conatus esset, ictus clava fidem pastorum nequiquam invocans morte occubuit.* (“when he came to the cave Cacus tried to stop him with force, he was struck by Hercules' club and, in vain, calling out for the aid of the shepherds, he died”).

⁶⁷ Lowe (2015: 220–26). Many have discussed the word play in Cacus' name; see Hardie (1986: 111); Morgan (2009: 176).

⁶⁸ Hardie (1986: 116) points to the confusion with Cacus and Polyphemus where the roles of hero and monster are flipped. See also Lyne (1987: 27–35); Hardie (1993: 66); Braund (1997: 218–19) and Morgan (2009) who incorporate the analogues of Augustus, Aeneas, Turnus and Antony to this discussion of inversion. See also Lowe (2015: 220–26).

tristi pendebant pallida tabo, “the heads of men affixed to the door proudly, hung, pale with grim decay”); Hercules (8.202: *tergemini nece Geryonae spoliisque superbus / Alcides*, “Hercules, proud in the spoils of threefold Geryon”).⁶⁹

Hercules’ means of killing Cacus can also be seen as “monstrous”⁷⁰ behavior as Hercules mirrors the *ira* of Cacus throughout this episode. Many have pointed to Hercules’ rage as somewhat monstrous (8.219–220: *hic vero Alcidae furiis exarserat atro felle dolor*, “here the grief of Hercules burned with black bile amid his raging”; cf. 8.238: *ecce furens animis aderat Tirynthius*, “behold Hercules raging in his mind approached”). Indeed, Cacus is also represented as excessively wrathful (8.205: *at furis Caci mens effera*, “but the mind of Cacus was abundant in rage”). Simply put: Statius’ allusion to the interaction between Cacus and Hercules is an allusion to an instance where a hero becomes quite monstrous, casting his Theseus as potentially monstrous. Theseus, throughout his appearance in the *Thebaid*, complicates further the distinction between human and monster.

To elucidate this presentation of humans and monsters we must, in conclusion, bring Domitianic art into the discussion as it provides insights on Flavian ideology. We will see how the slippage between human and monster—visible in Statius’ Minotaur and Theseus—is also visible in state sponsored art.

⁶⁹ Morgan (2009: 177–78).

⁷⁰ Stocks (2019).

Arachne on the Forum Transitorium

In the Forum Transitorium we will see how otherness is embedded in monstrous forms. The frieze sits on the enclosing wall of the Forum Transitorium, known as *Le Colonnace*. The Forum Transitorium was begun by Domitian but completed by Nerva in 97 shortly after Domitian's death.⁷¹ The Forum Transitorium's frieze is one of the few surviving examples of Domitianic state art.⁷² The frieze plays with the same categories I have already discussed—human and monster—through its presentation of the pre-monstrous Arachne. The transgressive potential of Arachne highlights the categories of human and monster. Ultimately, this piece reveals the instability of the distinction between human and monster similarly to Statius' *ekphrasis*. Arachne in the frieze reveals the permeability of such categorization in the Flavian period; what is more, she reveals contemporary tensions concerning gender specific roles.

Flavian ideology is a buzzword in recent scholarship and will feature prominently in the third chapter of this thesis.⁷³ Flavian ideology emphasizes control through categorization, and this is visible both in Statius' *Thebaid* and on the frieze.⁷⁴ Domitian's conservative social

⁷¹ See Anderson (1984: 119–40, especially 129–31) and D'Ambra (1991: 19–46) for summary and analysis of the Forum Transitorium's construction, composition and dating.

⁷² Anderson (1984); D'Ambra (1991: *passim*, especially 19–46). However, the timeline allows for such a reading, although it is unclear what portions of the Forum Transitorium were completed and when and whether Statius' noted timeline of composition is in fact the case; see Anderson (1984); D'Ambra (1991: 19–46). See also Dietrich for Statius' familiarity with the Forum Transitorium (1999: 49).

⁷³ Rebeggiani (2018: 11–18) most recently cautions against using this term. He argues that imperial ideology was not propaganda in that there existed no office directing a succinct and organized aesthetic program. Second, much of what we think of as imperial ideology is gleaned from Martial or Statius which makes it very difficult to read Statius as a "response" to imperial ideology. See also Ganiban (2007: *passim*) draws attention to the ways in which the *Thebaid* subverts the *Aeneid*'s Augustan ideology. Augoustakis (2010: *passim*) on the contrast between male ideology of empire and the female symbolic.

⁷⁴ However, this control operates in manifold aspects. This comparison isolates gendered roles as the most elucidatory. However, there are similar ideological concerns in many other places. Statius' *Silvae* offers an excellent example of this in describing the construction of the Via Domitiana and the Voltumnus. The river is personified as it is channeled and transformed from a chaotic force (*ego turbidus minaxque*, 4.3.76) into an orderly servant of the emperor (*recti legibus alvei ligasti*, 4.3.75); see Newlands 2004: 301–9).

policies,⁷⁵ which call for a nostalgic presentation of chaste women, required placing the female into distinct social spaces. This aspect of Domitianic ideology is evident in symbolic evocations of weaving—the proper task of chaste women.⁷⁶ Such imagery is ubiquitous and fundamental in the frieze and also present in the *ekphrasis* on Theseus’ shield, which we have been discussing.

With regard to weaving, for instance, one may note how Statius’ *ekphrasis* frames the image of Theseus and the Minotaur with weaving references:

at procul ingenti Neptunius agmina Theseus
angustat clipeo, propriaeue **exordia** laudis
centum urbes umbone gerit centenaue Cretae
moenia, seque ipsum monstrosi ambagibus antri
hispida torquentem luctantis colla iuveni
alternasque manus circum et nodosa ligantem
brachia et abducto vitantem cornua vultu.
terror habet populos, cum saeptus imagine torva
ingreditur pugnas, bis Thesea bisque cruentas
caede videre manus: veteres reminiscitur actus
ipse tuens sociumque gregem metuendaque quondam
limina et **absumpto** pallentem Cnosida **filo**. (*Theb.* 12.665–676)

Statius opens the passage as an *exordium*, evoking the term’s rare but potential meaning, “the warp of a web.”⁷⁷ At the same time, Statius concludes the passage with reference to Ariadne’s used up thread: *absumpto ... filo* at 676. This image is enclosed by references to warp and weft, encoding the image with the symbolic valence of weaving.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ For instance, his renewal of Augustan laws *Lex Iulia de adulteriis coercendis* (Mart. Epig. 6.2,4) and *lex Voconia*; see D’Ambra (1991: 36–37); Bernstein (2008). Note also his renewal of the practice of burying Vestal Virgins found guilty of *incestum* (Plin. *Ep.* 4.11).

⁷⁶ For reference to this symbolism in a Flavian context, see D’Ambra (1991: 49–55); Dietrich (1999). More broadly see Salzman-Mitchell (2005); 119–123.

⁷⁷ *TLL* v.2.1561.30 from *exordior* which has its core meaning as “weave.” A roughly contemporaneous use can be found in Quintilian (5.10.71: *non possum togam praetextam sperare, cum exordium pullum videam*: “I am unable to hope for a dyed toga as I look on the **beginning**”).

⁷⁸ Dietrich (1999) argues that Statius “consciously demarginalises the female voice by *separating* it from the process of weaving.” Dietrich, however, does not discuss this reference in her assessment of book 12.

The frieze provides a far less ambiguous presentation of weaving. Minerva perched above and in the center, on the Attic relief, oversees the narrative below. Minerva is also present in the frieze below: she chastises Arachne in the center. Immediately to the right, three women, of varied ages, tend to the task of weaving. Their staggered ages represent different stages of a woman's life devoted to that task.⁷⁹ To the left, there is an exhibition and inspection of a tapestry.⁸⁰ Both framing images involve the training and completion of the task of weaving. These dutiful, 'real' women at the loom throughout the frieze exist in discrete categories. This categorization via weaving extends to the mythological figures as well—Minerva and Arachne.

The frieze features Arachne punishing Minerva, a distinct moment from the story of their weaving contest: Arachne first challenges the goddess, after they both complete separate tapestries, Minerva punishes Arachne, Arachne attempts suicide and Minerva transforms her into a spider.⁸¹ This transformation from human into spider is a transgression across categories similar to what we have discussed—from human to monster.

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* offers a detailed depiction of this myth, relevant for our discussion as a broader cultural touchstone of the myth and a Statian model.⁸² In Ovid's narrative Minerva weaves Jupiter on his throne in the center—regal and in control (6.72–74: *bis sex caelestes medio Iove sedibus altis / augusta gravitate sedent; sua quemque deorum / inscribit facies: Iovis est regalis imago*, "twelve gods were seated and Jove was sitting on a lofty seat in the middle in weighty reverence; she inscribes each with their own features: Jove is a regal

⁷⁹ D'Ambra (1991: 52–54).

⁸⁰ This tapestry is most likely Minerva's as she can also be seen observing its inspection; see D'Ambra (1991: 53).

⁸¹ This is, essentially, the order of events in the longest surviving narrative from antiquity: Ovid, discussed below. See also Verg. *Georg.* 2.246.

⁸² The *Thebaid's* debt to the *Metamorphoses* has been well studied. For recent work on this topic, see Keith (2002) and (2004); Chin (2013).

image”). Along the corners, Minerva crafts images of transgressive humans, humbled and subdued. She places potential threats near the literal margins of her tapestry (6.85: *quattuor in partes certamina quattuor addit*, “she adds four contests in the four corners”). She depicts, Rhodope, Haemus, the Pygmy Queen, Antigone and Kinyras’ daughter. All of these mythological characters threatened divinities and were transformed as punishment. Notably, Minerva presents these characters post-transformation. They are woven as mountains, birds and temples (6.85–100). These figures are not on the cusp of transgressing categories. She finishes the tapestries edges with olive wreaths (6.102: *operisque sua facit arbore finem*, “with her own tree she completes the borders of her work”)— symbolizing her authority and control over the image.

Arachne’s composition differs greatly. Jupiter is present but not in the center or on a throne. He is in disguise and violently mingling with humans:

fecit et Asterien **aquila** luctante teneri,
 fecit **olorinis** Ledam recubare sub alis;
 addidit, ut **satyri** celatus imagine pulchram 110
 Iuppiter inplerit gemino Nyctaida fetu,
 Amphitryon fuerit, cum te, Tirynthia, cepit,
aureus ut Danaen, Asopida luserit **ignis**,
 Mnemosynen **pastor**, **varius** Deoida **serpens**. (6.108–14)

She made Asterie, held down by the struggling **eagle**; she made Leda, laying beneath the **swan’s** wings. She even added how Jupiter filled beautiful Antiope with twin offspring while concealing himself as a satyr. He, as Amphitryon, deceived you, Alcmena. He, as a **golden shower**, tricked Danaë. He toyed with Aegina, as a **flame** and Mnemosyne, as a **shepherd** and Deo’s daughter, as a **multicolored snake**.

Arachne depicts the rapes of Asterie, Leda, Antiope, Alcmena, Danae, Aegina and Proserpine. Each of these myths includes a transformed, or transforming, Jupiter who is, simultaneously, an eagle, swan, satyr, golden shower, flame and shepherd on Arachne’s loom. By presenting Jupiter as transformed or transforming and mingling with humans, Arachne’s image plays with

transgression across categories. Along the tapestry's borders, where Minerva reasserted her authority using arboreal imagery (6.102: *sua ... arbore*), Arachne presents the commingling of flowers and ivy (6.128: *ultima pars telae, tenui circumdata limbo, / nexilibus flores hederis habet intertextos*, "the final part of the web, finished with a narrow border, has flowers with ivy mixed in").⁸³

The tapestry of Ovid's Minerva corresponds to the Forum's frieze where threats of transgression are subdued. However, Ovid's account of Arachne's tapestry, and the contest in general, contrasts starkly with the frieze. In the frieze there is no hint of nobility in defeat for Arachne. In fact, the contest itself, and Arachne's own tapestry, are elided.⁸⁴ On the frieze Arachne is only a humbled suppliant. Ovid's narrative is not that simple.⁸⁵ Arachne's handiwork in the *Metamorphoses* is superior. Note the emphatic reference to the impressive verisimilitude of Arachne's tapestry (6.104: *verum taurum, freta vera putares*, "you would think the bull and the waves were real"). Arachne's achievement is also evident in Minerva's quick destruction of the rival tapestry (6.129–31). In the frieze, however, this aspect is absent, and Minerva is triumphant.

The subjugation of Arachne in the frieze concerns the 'proper' role for women.⁸⁶ Arachne threatens the symbolic placement of women into the category of weavers. Arachne's weaving is subversive in the myth and the frieze's arrangement responds to this threat by

⁸³ On the narratological play of the tapestry's edge (as well as Minerva's discussed above), see Salzman-Mitchell (2005: 60–61).

⁸⁴ This follows D'Ambra's (1991: 53) reading of the panel (discussed above) as representing Minerva's tapestry.

⁸⁵ On the complexity and meta-poetic repercussions of this myth for reading the *Metamorphoses*, see Anderson (1972: *ad loc.*); Leach (1974); Feeney (1991: 191–94); Segal (2001); Pandey (2019: 20–22).

⁸⁶ D'Ambra (1991:54–55).

centering the image of her chastisement. Arachne challenges divine authority by entering into a contest with a divinity. She does not behave as the other women in the frieze and would not remain within her appropriate category. Ultimately, the contest itself is a type of transgression, and the triumph of Minerva in the frieze represents the defeat of that threat of transgression, offering further commentary on Arachne as monster.

If the goal is to present Minerva as triumphant over this threat to social order, then why does the frieze stop short of Arachne's full punishment—so vivid in the myth? Arachne grovels as Minerva is about to strike her, which normally occurs just before Arachne's attempted suicide and before Minerva transforms her into a spider. The frieze avoids these final stages of her punishment because the image of Arachne as spider would exhibit a transgression across categories which the frieze attempts to avoid. However, this transgressive image is, ultimately, evoked through this notable eschewing of representation.

It is difficult to compare this visual choice to other representations as the scene is quite rare, especially in state sponsored art.⁸⁷ However, if we set the frieze against Ovid's depiction, this is a notable omission, the transformation concludes Ovid's narrative and provides a lasting image. The frieze's viewer, with knowledge of Arachne's eventual monstrous state, must be struck by the unaltered mortality of Arachne. As we have seen, similar dynamics appear in Statius' *Thebaid* around Statius' Minotaur. Avoiding the transgressive elements of Arachne and the Minotaur draws attention to those very elements.

Just like Statius' *ekphrasis*, this frieze does not succeed in placing its monster in a distinct and abject corner. The frieze even calls attention to the monster Arachne will imminently

⁸⁷ *LICM* only lists two instances (Athena 39, Athena/Minerva 416) and neither contain the punishment; see D'Ambra (1991: 48).

become, while Statius' Minotaur underscores the messy hybridity of the Minotaur and its potential for category collapse. At the same time, Statius' Theseus also highlights the tenuous separation of human and monster.

In the preceding analysis, we saw how hybrid monsters offer great insight into the Flavian period. We began by observing how Statius' Centaurs highlight the potential for monsters as spaces for exploration. Tension around the categories of human and monster is quite visible in the comments of Tydeus and Evadne. We then examined how Theseus and the Minotaur expose further the permeability of the categories of human and monster in the Flavian era. We have concluded by examining how this distinction between human and monster extends to the Forum Transitorium. By studying these monsters, we can see the tremendous contemporary tension which hybrid monsters embody and reproduce during the Flavian period.

Chapter 2

MONSTERS OF THE PAST: GIANTS AND GIGANTOMACHY IN THE *PUNICA* AND THE *THEBAID*

“How the system signified was meticulously reproduced, but what it signified was unanchored and open to new interpretations”

—Alexei Yurchak

*Everything Was Forever,
Until It Was No More:
The Last Soviet Generation*

This chapter focuses on references to those giants in Statius’ *Thebaid* and Silius’ *Punica* that communicate particular aspects of the Flavian period—namely its firm orientation to the past. In this chapter, I focus on giants and gigantomachy in Flavian epic poetry as I continue my analysis of monsters and their transgressive aspects. Ultimately, I present the implications of such transgressive figures within the literary and cultural moment of Flavian Rome.

First, I will briefly outline my reading of giants as transgressive monsters and the role of gigantomachy in the epic tradition. As such, I will focus on the Augustan articulations of the theme of gigantomachy. Second, I analyze how Silian references to giants and gigantomachy operate within the context of Silius’ deference to and exploration of Augustan models.¹ I focus on the poet’s appellation of giants by means of the adjective *magnanimus* which frames Silius’ giants as paradoxical figures. I then assess these giants against gigantomachic references in his narrative of the Battle of Cannae, as I argue that Silius’ giants explore the traditional significance of the theme of gigantomachy and its connection to Rome’s mytho-historical past. I then observe

¹ On Silius’ complex relationship to his epic models note the balanced and recent articulations by Bernstein (2017): “I have assumed with Pliny that Silius was a careful reader and adapter of his predecessors, and also the creator of an independent conception of the epic past.” See also Stocks (2019: 247): “His *Punica* claims its place in Rome’s epic canon, but also challenges the validity of the epic story that has been told thus far.”

through Statius' Polyphemus how a giant can be transgressive in terms of literary succession. Statius' Polyphemus in his interactions with the storytelling Ulysses destabilizes the poet's intertextual engagement with poetic predecessors and the tradition around that relationship. In conclusion, I discuss gigantomachic references related to Statius' Capaneus and Silius' Hannibal. As this chapter shows, giants explore Flavian literary and mytho-historical connections to the past.

Giants are Transgressive

As outlined in the introduction, a monster does not need to be a hybrid. A monster, for my purposes, simply exists across categories. The giants of the Greco-Roman period transgress categories in two respects: corporeal and thematic. The latter we shall treat shortly and throughout the chapter within multiple discussions of gigantomachy. But first, let us look at the bodies of Classical giants.

Giants can be hybrids. Most often they appear in this guise with a human upper-half and a serpentine lower half.² The snaky legs of giants are evident in art³ and in the literary record through the Flavian era which is the focus of this dissertation.⁴ This aspect of giants' bodies coheres with their earthbound status as sons of Gaia. In fact, this characteristic is pronounced in a critical passage from Silius' *Punica* (discussed below) where giants are called *terrigenae*

² There is a progression towards this hybrid representation. Initially giants are represented as hoplites in the archaic period. Giants are not depicted with snaky legs in the artistic record until the late 4th or 3rd centuries BCE (*LIMC* s.v., *Gigantes* 389; see Wright (2018: 4).

³ There are numerous examples of anguiped giants in antiquity; see *LIMC* s.v. *Gigantes*, in particular 24, 61d, 92, 93a, 93d, 400, 501–2, 571, 573.

⁴ The giants referenced in Hesiod's *Theogony* are armed and without snaky legs (185–86). By the Roman period, their snaky legs are evident in the literary tradition: Ov. *Met.* 1.85; *Aetna* 46–47, St. *Theb.* 5.569–70; Sil. 9.304 (discussed below); see Wright (2018: 4).

(9.306).⁵ Giants are often displayed with snaky legs because they come from the earth.⁶ As with the hybrids discussed in the previous chapter, giants can exhibit monstrous transgression through their composite bodies.

Giants are also massive, and their excessive size also evokes the potential for transgression. This characteristic spans Greco-Roman antiquity and persists into the Flavian era. In particular, the Aloidae, a subset of giants, are singled out for their massive bulk.⁷ Descriptors of this size often hint at theomachic behavior. This point appears as early as the *Odyssey* where their assault on Olympus is only checked by not reaching maturity and the size that would have come with it:⁸

ἐννέωροι γὰρ τοί γε καὶ ἐννεαπήχεες ἦσαν
εὖρος, ἀτὰρ μῆκος γε γενέσθην ἐννεόργυιοι.
οἳ ῥα καὶ ἀθανάτοισιν ἀπειλήτην ἐν Ὀλύμπῳ
φυλόπιδα στήσιν πολυάικος πολέμοιο.
Ὅσσαν ἐπ' Ὀλύμπῳ μέμασαν θέμεν, αὐτὰρ ἐπ' Ὅσση
Πήλιον εἰνοσίφυλλον, ἔν' οὐρανὸς ἀμβατὸς εἴη.
καὶ νῦ κεν ἐξετέλεσσαν, εἰ ἥβης μέτρον ἴκοντο·
ἀλλ' ὄλεσεν Διὸς υἱός, ὃν ἡύκομος τέκε Λητώ,
ἀμφοτέρῳ, πρίν σφωιν ὑπὸ κροτάφοισιν ἰούλους ... (11.311–19)

At age nine they were nine cubits in width and nine in height. They dared to set up the battle cry of furious war against the deathless ones on Olympus. They strove to set Ossa on Olympus and leafy Pelion on Ossa that they might make a path to heaven; they would

⁵ See also Spaltenstein (1986: *ad loc.*): “Les Géants les fils de la Terre, d’ou ‘terrigena’.”

⁶ On their connection to the Earth see Hes. *Th.* 183–86: ὅσαι γὰρ ῥαθάμιγγες ἀπέσσυθεν αἱματόεσσαι, / πάσας δέξατο Γαῖα· περιπλομένων δ' ἐνιαυτῶν / γείναιτ' Ἐρινὺς τε κρατερὰς μεγάλους τε Γίγαντας, / τεύχεσι λαμπομένους (“as many red drops bled, the Earth received and, after the years passed, she beget the Furies and giants, great and strong, resplendent in weaponry”); Ov. *Met.* 1.157–58: *perfusam multo natorum sanguine Terram / immaduisse ferunt* (“they say that the earth was thoroughly drenched with copious blood of her sons [the giants]”); *Aetna* 67–68: *cum castris agitur Materque iacentis / impellens victos* (“the Mother encouraging her children defeated on the field of battle”); V. Fl. 2.18: *terrigenum ... Gigantum* (“the earth born giants”); Sil. 9.304 (discussed below).

⁷ By the late Republican era, Aloidae are conflated under the category giant, discussed below. The connection between giants’ size and theomachic threat is explicit in the *Odyssey*. On their size, see also Apoll. *Bibl.* 1.6.1–3 on Typhon (μεγέθει μὲν σωμάτων ἀνυπερβλήτους ... ὥστε ὑπερέχειν μὲν πάντων τῶν ὀρῶν). See also Verg. *Aen.* 6.582–83 (*immania ... corpora*).

⁸ Their size is not mentioned by Hesiod.

have achieved this if they had reached maturity. But the one who fair-haired Leto bore killed them before they there was any hair on their temples ...

The Alouidae's size is remarkable for such a young age (9 years old), at which point they begin their unsuccessful assault on Olympus. After remarking that they would have overcome Olympus had they been older (11.317: καί νύ κεν ἐξετέλεσσαν, εἰ ἥβης μέτρον ἴκοντο), Homer reinforces this point in the last line (11.319: πρίν σφωιν ὑπὸ κροτάφοισιν ἰούλου). Simply put: at times the mere size of the giants' bodies threatens the crossing of boundaries. The outsized bodies of ancient giants become the means for their sublime revolution,⁹ as they transgress their place on earth in order to topple Olympus. The earth-born (*terrigenae*) giants¹⁰ with huge bodies always threaten to leave their allotted earthly space and transgress the boundary between earth and sky. This aspect of giants evokes the most common literary trope in Classical literature, namely gigantomachy. Much of the transgression of the Flavian giants we will discuss revolves around the theme of gigantomachy, to which I turn next.

Gigantomachy in the Epic Tradition

Gigantomachy in Flavian epic has been studied extensively.¹¹ Gigantomachy typically refers to the rebellious battle of the giants against the Olympians, after Zeus / Jupiter defeats the Titans.¹² This specific battle is not mentioned in early Greek literature, in spite of Hesiod's aforementioned reference to giants. The earliest Greek reference is not found until the 1st century

⁹ See Hardie (2009); Lowe (2015: 203–6).

¹⁰ Note also Luc. 3.316: *terrigenae ... gigantes*.

¹¹ Franchet d'Espèrey's (1999); Lovatt (2004); Littlewood (2013); Chaudhuri (2014); Stocks (2019).

¹² For a summation of the literary and artistic representations of gigantomachy specifically, see Felton (2012: 111–12).

BCE by the mythographer Apollodorus.¹³ However, the Titanomachy—the assault of the Titans against Olympians—is present in Hesiod’s *Theogony* (617–735), where we also find the Typhonomachy (820–85). As discussed above, the assault of the Aloidae against Olympus is also present in Homer’s *Odyssey* (11.305–25). By the Roman period all of these attacks on Olympus are conflated in literature into a single event, which is called gigantomachy or titanomachy interchangeably, typically referring to these figures as *Gigantes* or *Titanes*.¹⁴ The prime example of this comes from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, where the poet combines the standard gigantomachic narrative with the assault of the Aloidae who pile mountains to reach Olympus.¹⁵ Indeed, by the early imperial period, we can comfortably place such references to these various myths of giants assaulting Olympus under the general umbrella of gigantomachy.

From the Greek iterations to the Roman versions, gigantomachy often represents the triumph of order over chaos.¹⁶ This is explicit in the Pergamum and Parthenon Friezes, for example, where the symbolism of gigantomachy is attached to their respective political moments and ideologies.¹⁷ Such analysis extends to gigantomachic imagery elsewhere. In the discussion that follows, I will tease out the nuances of this binary in the Flavian period. I argue that the

¹³ 1.6.1–2.

¹⁴ See Hardie (1986: 85) on the conflation of different mythological events (Gigantomachy, Titanomachy, Typhonomachy) under the general category of gigantomachy by the Augustan period. See also Lovatt (2005: 115–18) who summarizes the different types of gigantomachy in the imperial period. Note a similar conflation in the *Aetna* 48–53. See also Wright (2018: 4) who places this conflation in the 5th century BCE.

¹⁵ See Ovid *Met.* 1.152–3: *adfectasse ferunt regnum caeleste gigantas / altaque congestos struxisse ad sidera montis*. (“they say that the giants sought heaven and they built-up mountains, already heaped together, towards the stars above”).

¹⁶ For a very recent and sustained discussion of gigantomachy as chaos and disorder in Claudian, see Coombe (2018).

¹⁷ For the specific political implications, see Hardie (1986: 85–156) and on how this modeling can be used in reading such imagery in the *Aeneid*. See Stover (2012: *passim*) for the manipulation of such symbolism for Vespasianic ideology in Valerius’ *Argonautica*.

symbols of gigantomachy are apt for exploration in the Flavian period. I first turn to how Augustan and Neronian evocations of giants and gigantomachy frame the Flavian representations.

Augustan imperium

A standard reading of Vergil's *Aeneid* casts Aeneas' journey as a metaphor for Augustus' imperial program at Rome: Aeneas and Augustus are aligned along with Jupiter.¹⁸ Vergil's Aeneas and Jupiter are both characterized by the adjective *magnanimus*. Of the 12 total uses of this adjective in the *Aeneid*, 5 depict Aeneas (1.260, 5.17, 5.407, 9.205 10.771) and 2 Jupiter (12.138, 12.875). No other one character is referred to with this adjective, except Vulcan who is only labeled as such once (10.561: *magnanimo ... Volcente*, "great hearted Vulcan").¹⁹

What is more, these instances correspond to Vergil's version of gigantomachy. In book 5, the helmsman Palinurus addresses Aeneas while mentioning Jupiter (5.17–18: *magnanime Aenea, non, si mihi Iuppiter auctor / spondeat, hoc sperem Italiam contingere caelo*: "noble Aeneas, even if Jupiter promised it, I would not hope to reach Italy in this weather").

Magnanimus comes from *magnus* and *animus* and is comparable to the Greek μέγα-θυμος.²⁰ The Latin denotes virtue or high-mindedness.²¹ Although it may communicate pride or aggression it also conveys a sense of heroism by the late Republican period. In book 1 Jupiter himself,

¹⁸ Hardie (1986) and (1993); Feeney (1991).

¹⁹ Of the other 4 uses 2 refer to various noble spirits in the Underworld (6.307: *magnanimum heroum*, "great hearted heroes"); (6.649: *magnanimi heroes*, "great hearted heroes"). Of horses (3.703: *magnanimum ... equorum*, "great hearted horses") and of Ismarus' kinsmen (10.139: *magnanimae ... gentes*, "great hearted people").

²⁰ *TLL* viii.102.70.

²¹ *TLL* viii.102.70: *magno, erecto, firmo animo praeditus*.

speaking of Aeneas to Venus, calls the hero *magnanimus Aeneas* (1.260). Moreover, this is also how the poet labels Aeneas in his duel with Mezentius:

hostem **magnanimum** opperiens, et mole sua stat;
atque oculis spatium emensus, quantum satis hastae,
'dextra mihi deus et telum, quod missile libro
nunc adsint! (10.771–73)

awaiting his **noble** enemy, he stood with his own strength; and he measured the distance with his eyes, the same distance which he could lob a spear across, he said: "May this right hand, my god, and the let-loose spear I cast, aid me!"

Aeneas' designation as *magnanimus* is part of his association with Jupiter, a connection which is also reinforced by recalling that Jupiter himself is twice described as *magnanimus* (12.138, 875), making him and Aeneas the characters most often labeled as such in the text. In Vergil's text the adjective acts as a buzzword for the association of Rome, Aeneas and Jupiter. This alignment colors these references as a main component of Augustan gigantomachy. Critically, this theme is evoked by Vergil's likening of Rome to Olympus on earth (6.781–82: *illa incluta Roma / imperium terris, animos aequabit Olympo*: "famous Rome will equal all power on earth and the will of Olympus").

However, this presentation of gigantomachic symbolism is ambiguous in the *Aeneid*. Aeneas himself is compared to the anti-Olympian hundred-hander Aegeon (10.565–70).²² Moreover, Turnus, Aeneas' foe, does not consistently align with giants but is also likened to Olympian forces in book 9.²³ Such complexity extends past the Augustan period.

Flavian giants also owe a debt to the Neronian intermediary epic of Lucan's *Bellum Civile*. Lucan's Caesar (Aeneas' descendent) also appears aligned, at times, with both Olympians

²² Although the hundred-handers assist Zeus in Hesiod's account Vergil's simile; see Hardie (1986: 154–56). See also O'Hara (1994).

²³ 9.672–755. See Hardie (1986: 143–6) and (1994: 4–5).

and giants. Caesar twice uses boulders and pieces of mountains to attempt to defeat Pompeian forces,²⁴ thus recalling the standard gigantomachic weapons. At the same time, Caesar associates himself with and is associated with Jupiter.²⁵ However, the Augustan ambiguity is not present here, and the symbols have different consequences in this text.

Although Caesar is at times aligned with either side of the conflict, Lucan uses gigantomachy to convey vividly the threat of Caesar.²⁶ Specifically, Lucan's inversion of gigantomachic symbolism in his text has been viewed in the conflation of Caesar with Nero. Such conflation places a former anti-Olympian (Julius Caesar) now on Olympus (Nero) in the poem's proem (1.33–38).²⁷ In Lucan's text, giants, in a sense, overthrow Olympus through such association with Caesar. The gigantomachic symbols have been inverted but are consequential. Although Lucan's Caesar is presented on either side of gigantomachy as Vergil's Aeneas, Lucan's engagement does not correspond to Vergil's accounts of gigantomachy. As we saw, in the *Aeneid* the term *magnanimus* is connected to gigantomachy, but this term is far less relevant in Lucan's engagement with the theme.

Although Lucan uses *magnanimus* to refer to both Caesarian and anti-Caesarian forces, the adjective is not attached to Caesar himself or to any direct references to gigantomachy. The poet provides Brutus with a heroic depiction in in book 2 (234–35: *at non magnanimi percussit pectora Bruti / terror*, “but fear did not shake the resolve of noble Brutus”). Sextus Pompey uses it to refer to the killing of his father (9.133: *vidi ego magnanimi lacerantes pectora patris*, “I saw

²⁴ 2.661–62 and 6.34. For the gigantomachic undertones of this imagery, see Day (2013: 173–74). See Henderson (2010: 470) for a discussion of the gigantomachic undertones of 3.84–90.

²⁵ Note 1.196; 3.319–20.

²⁶ See Henderson (2010: 470–1); Day (2013: 272).

²⁷ See Day (2013: 172).

the murderers lacerating our noble father's heart").²⁸ At the same time, Lucan references the voice of the Caesarian Vulteius in his exhortation to his troops (4.475: *rexit magnanima Vulteius voce cohortem*, "Vulteius calmed his cohort with a noble speech").²⁹ Although these references complicate the dichotomy between Caesarian and anti-Caesarian forces they do not directly relate to the theme of gigantomachy. Before Lucan's climactic account of the Battle of Pharsalus in book 7 (215–596), giants and gigantomachy are tellingly characterized:

si liceat superis hominum conferre labores,
non aliter Phlegra **rabidos** tollente **gigantas**
Martius incaluit Siculis incudibus ensis
... (7.144–46)

if it is permitted to compare the deeds of humans with the divine, it was no different than when Phlegra bore witness to the frenzied giants, Mars' sword was heated by Etna's anvil
...

Silius exploits Lucan's imagery before the Battle of Cannae:

Tollitur immensus deserta ad sidera clamor,
Phlegraeis quantas effudit ad aethera voces
terrigena in campis exercitus, aut sator aevi
quanta Cyclopes nova fulmina voce poposcit
Iuppiter, exstructis vidit cum montibus ire
magnanimos raptum caelestia regna **Gigantas**. (9.302–7)

An immeasurable noise went up to the deserted heavens: noises just like the earth-bound army sent up to the ether on Phlegra's fields or the noise with which Jupiter, the creator of the age, demanded fresh lightning from the Cyclopes when he saw the noble giants run forth to snatch the kingdom of heaven—heaping mountain on mountain.

There are parallels in the reference to Phlegra (Luc. 7.145; cf. Sil. 9.303), and the use of the verb *tollo* frames the scene (Luc. 7.145; cf. Sil. 9.302). In fact, the giants (*gigantas*) are in the same

²⁸ Lucan also uses it to refer to a youth who admires Cato (9.805–7: *sed maiora parant Libycae spectacula pestes. / impressit dentes haemorrhoids aspera Tullo, / magnanimo iuueni miratorique Catonis*, "but the Libyan serpents readied greater spectacles, a harsh snake pressed its teeth into Tullus, a noble young man and an admirer of Cato").

²⁹ It is also used to describe Hercules in book 4 (611): *magnanimum Alciden*.

metrical position in both passages (Luc. 7.145 cf. Sil. 9.307). Moreover, both of these similes directly precede the beginning of climactic battles in each text. However, there is a notable difference in the depictions of these giants (Luc. 7.145: *rabidos ... gigantas*; cf. Sil. 9.307: *magnanimos ... gigantas*). Lucan does not gloss his giants with the heroic *magnanimos* but rather with *rabidos*, casting them as crazed and even animalistic. The pejorative valence of *rabidus* does not suggest any ambiguity concerning the characterization of these anti-Olympian giants. Let us now turn to Silius' decision to term his gigantomachic giants *magnanimos* in light of these Neronian and Augustan models.

Silius' Giants

The Battle of Cannae in Silius Italicus' *Punica* forms its own triad of the poem's action and is crucial to our understanding of Rome's construction of its past in the Flavian poet's text.³⁰ Before the battle itself begins, Silius likens the clamor of the gods joining the fray to narratives of gigantomachy. Note the onslaught of anti-Olympian giants (9.305) and the boom of Jupiter's demand (9.307) for lightning bolts upon seeing the approaching giants:

Tollitur immensus deserta ad sidera clamor,
Phlegraeis quantas effudit ad aethera voces
terrigena in campis exercitus, aut sator aevi
quanta Cyclopes nova fulmina voce poposcit
Iuppiter, exstructis vidit cum montibus ire
magnanimos raptum caelestia regna Gigantas.
(9.302–7)

³⁰ On the structural schema of Silius text, see von Albrecht (1964: 133); Ahl, Davis, and Pomeroy (1986: 2505 and *passim*); Delarue (1992); Stürner (2011). On the role of Cannae in Silius' construction of Rome's past, see Niemann (1975: 159–60); Ahl, Davis, and Pomeroy (1986: 2505–2511); Dominik (2006); Stocks (2014: 42, 80–81).

Various types of giants and gigantomachy are at play in this passage. First, the Cyclopes play a typical role as the smiths of Jupiter.³¹ In referring to the giants' army as *terrigena ... exercitus* (306), Silius evokes standard anti-Olympian giants,³² and, by evoking the rooting up of mountains, *extractis ... montibus* (308), the poet activates the myth of the Aloidae.³³ Such conflation is common in the Flavian period, as we have mentioned already. Through these compressed narratives of gigantomachy, Silius reveals the literary fullness of his giants. Ultimately, this simile elucidates Silius' exploration of Augustan gigantomachy.

Silius offers an interesting gloss on the giants assaulting Olympus (9.309: *magnanimos raptum caelestia regna Gigantas*). Martial heroism is the dominant meaning of the adjective by the Flavian period. Statius employs it at the opening of his *Achilleid* for his characterization of Achilles (1.1: *magnanimum Aeaciden formidatamque Tonanti*, "noble Achilles, a cause of concern for the thunderer"),³⁴ while the adjective is prevalent in Statius' *Thebaid* and Valerius'

³¹ The Cyclopes as smith helpers of Zeus can be traced as early as Hes. *Theog.* 503 and appear in this guise at Ap. Rh. *Arg.* 1.509–11, 730–34; Call. 3.9–10, 46. In Latin literature they also appear in this guise but sometimes as helpers of Vulcan: see Ovid *Met.* 3.305–6; *Fast.* 4.287–88, 473; Verg. *Aen.* 6.630–31; 8.414–24; *G.* 1.471–73, 4.170–73; Plin. *NH* 7.197. See Jolivet (2005); Hardie (2009: 79–103); Lowe (2015: 213–216).

³² See Spaltenstein (1986: *ad loc.*).

³³ See Spaltenstein (1986: *ad loc.*; *ad* 3.495) On the gigantomachic appearances of the Aloidae in Latin literature, see the following: Verg. *G.* 1.281–83; Prop. 2.1.19–20; Hor. *Carm.* 3.4.51–52; Ov. *Am.* 2.1.13–14; *Pont.* 2.2.9–10; *Met.* 1.151–55.

³⁴ See Ripoll and Soubiran (2008: *ad loc.*) on Statius' use here to connect his Achilles to Vergil's Aeneas and Homer's Achilles.

Argonautica as well.³⁵ Silius even employs it to depict of his main hero—Scipio.³⁶ By the Flavian period the term often communicates heroism.³⁷

A catalogue of Silius' uses of *magnanimus* is revealing. *Magnanimus* refers to the martial valor of various combatants, cohering with the contemporaneous uses I have just outlined. For example, Jupiter describes Scipio with the adjective while he is urging Mars to join the fray (4.420: *magnanimi* ... *viri*); Juno describes Hannibal with this same adjective as well (17.366: *magnanimum* ... *ducem*). Moreover, these examples of heroism range across the spectrum of ethnic groups in Silius' text: Spaniards (10.220); Italic / non-Romans (1.293, 11.127); Carthaginian (4.806, 17.366) and Roman (2.2, 4.420, 5.675, 10.437, 11.241, 11.525, 16.646).³⁸

³⁵ 21 times in Statius' epic *corpus*, normally related to various heroes: the Centaur Pholus (*Theb.* 2.564); unnamed kings / troops in the *Thebaid* (2.733; 3.55, 3.349, 4.112, 6.268, 7.375); Maeon (3.82); Lycurgus (5.653); Tydeus (6.827); *Ach.* 1.733; Menoecus: 8.357, of his *laus*: 12.72; Capaneus (9.547, 11.1); Aepeyus (10.399); Theseus: (12.795); Caesar: (12.814); Achilles (*Ach.* 1.1). 9 times in Valerius' *Argonautica*: Hercules (1.634); a storm (3.243); Meleager (3.646); Didymaon (3.707); wrestling schools (4.328); Minyae (6.116); a noble suicide custom (6.125); Hypetaon and Gessithous (6.637); Aeetes (7.556).

³⁶ On Scipio as the *Punica*'s hero, see von Albrecht (1964); Marks (2005); Tipping (2010: 138–92).

³⁷ Relevant antecedents include Lucretius' depiction of Phaethon (5.400) and Ovid's portrayal of Achilles (*Met.* 13.298); see also Davis (2015: 158) on the epic flavor of *magnanimus* and its connection to Homeric language. Ganiban (2015: 74) articulates this sentiment: "*magnanimus* ('great-souled'), is a compound that by its very nature picks out the elevated style of the epic genre, offering a translation of the Homeric epithet *megathumos*. In Latin poetry, it is used especially to describe heroic figures."

³⁸ Of particular complexity are the inhabitants of the Italian peninsula outside of the city of Rome itself (*ad magnanimos* ... *nepotes* (11.126) of Capuan heritage) or existing before the founding of Rome (1.291: *Daunia pubes*). Carthaginians, Romans and Spaniards represent discreet groups, but the distinction between Roman and Italian is more complex during both the mid-Republican setting of the poem and the time of the text's composition. Silius' *ad magnanimos* ... *nepotes* looks forward to eligibility of citizenship and a Capuan consul after the Social Wars. Given the negative characterization of the Capuans in this text, this appellation is worth further attention. Spaltenstein (1986: *ad loc.*) who takes the adjective as purely "laudative" *contra* Ruperti (1798: *ad loc.*) who connects it to "Campanum supercilium et Campana superbia." At any rate, the adjective seems to be flexible. Moreover, by presenting both the first Trojan refugees (*Daunia pubes*) and the future Capuan descendants with the same appellation, the use of *magnanimus* points to the term's fluidity. On the complexities of Italic and Roman identities one need look no further than Statius' ambiguous discussion of Italian identity of Septimius Severus in Statius' *Silvae* (4.9.45–46: *non sermo Poenus, non habitus tibi, / externa non mens: Italus, Italus*, "not Punic in speech or attire, nor is the mind foreign: Italian, Italian"). On recent scholarship dealing with this question see Gruen (2005); Dench (2005: 152–221 and *passim*). Note also Hannibal's use of the adjective to ironically describe Decius (11.241); see Spaltenstein (1986: *ad loc.*).

Different groups in Silius' text appear capable of being *magnanimus*.³⁹ The characteristics of this adjective bleed across categories of 'same' and 'other'. What is more Silius' giants also exhibit this transferable characteristic before the Battle of Cannae.

The Battle of Cannae

The Battle of Cannae is crucial for understanding the construction of Rome's past in Silius' text. This battle becomes a critical moment in the Second Punic War as the heaviest single loss of Roman life ever. The perseverance of the Romans in response to this defeat is often echoed outside of Silius' text. Livy, for instance, writes of the lofty spirit displayed in the face of defeat (22.61: *quo in tempore ipso adeo magno animo civitas fuit*, "at which time the city was truly imbued with great resolve").⁴⁰

Greatness born from defeat is explicit in Silius' representation as well. The poet charts this battle along a timeline of Roman achievement in an authorial aside, presenting this defeat as a great boon and, at the same time, as the source of eventual decline (9.351–52: *nam tempore, Roma, / nullo maior eris*, "for at no time, Rome, will you be greater"). This high point is ambiguous. One can see Silius' Cannae pessimistically, since it prophesies a future of decay and civil conflict. Conversely, one may assess the direness of Silius' Cannae as highlighting Rome's

³⁹ This trend in the meaning of *magnanimus* can be observed in the Neronian period. Seneca provides an intriguing gloss of *magnanimus*, applying the adjective to all humans as a marker of their humanity at *Ep.* 104, 23: *magnanimos nos natura produxit et ut quibusdam animalibus ferum dedit, quibusdam subdolum, quibusdam pavidum, ita nobis gloriosum et excelsum spiritum* ("nature made us noble and in the same way it gave savageness, trickery and fear to various kinds of animals, it gave a renowned and lofty spirit to us").

⁴⁰ Cf. Polybius 3.118.8. See Pomeroy (2009: 31 n. 19) who briefly touches on the connection between Livy, Polybius and Silius in terms of Cannae as "testing of the mettle of the Roman people." See also Stocks (2014: 18–19).

future greatness.⁴¹ Simply put: any understanding of Silius' commentary on Rome's past depends on an analysis of the Battle of Cannae. Silius' giants, when read in the context of this major event, offer commentary on the connection to Rome's mytho-historical past.

Rome, Troy and Olympus

There are two interconnected subtexts present in Silius' episode which relate to gigantomachy. The siege and conflagration of Rome (real and imagined) and the siege of Troy. These subtexts also reinforce the links between Silius' battle and the sources of Rome's historical and mythological past. The connection between the founding of Rome and the fall of Troy is a crucial part of Roman self-identification in the Republican period, and its influence continued into the Neronian and Flavian periods.⁴²

Silius' construction of Cannae corresponds to this tradition. This is, primarily, evoked through the mythical conflagration of Troy and Rome's many conflagrations.⁴³ As we read Cannae, we are confronted with a broad set of allusions aligning Troy, Rome and, ultimately, Olympus. Silius' giants explore the Augustan program of connecting Aeneas to Troy and Rome and the symbolic connections of Olympus at Rome.

⁴¹ On primarily negative assessment of Roman decline centered on Cannae, see McGuire (1995: 118); Fucecchi (1999: 339); Dominik (2006: 114–17). On primarily positive assessment of Roman decline centered on Cannae, see Ahl, Davis, and Pomeroy, (1987) 2505–511; Ripoll (1998: 525–26); Marks (2005: 252–56). On a more ambiguous note, see Tipping (2004) and (2010: 38–40).

⁴² On Archaic and Republican Rome, see Cornell (1975); Gruen (1992: 6–51); Erskine (2001: 30–36). On Livy, Kraus 1999); Rossi (2000). On Vergil, Quint (1993: 50–96); Zetzel (1997). See also Erskine (2001: 15–43 and *passim*) for the importance of the Iulii in the shaping of this myth. For broader studies, see Galinsky (1969); Libby (2011). On this Augustan program in art, see Zanker (1988: 201–15 and *passim*).

⁴³ Although not related directly to the burning of Troy, Silius' depiction of the Battle of Cannae alludes to Homeric epic more broadly (discussed below); see Juhnke (1972: 207–13).

Rome is Burning

Silius likens Roman and Carthaginian battle lines to an urban siege, although neither force begins or ends the conflict within city walls.⁴⁴ Such imagery recalls the fall of Troy (always vivid in Roman literary consciousness),⁴⁵ as throughout the battle Silius recalls the possibility of the city being sacked. Paulus describes entering the walls of Rome in shame (10.64: *moenia*),⁴⁶ and later Lentulus meets the dying Paulus and has a vivid vision of the burning and ruin of Rome (10.264–67: *tum visa cremari / Roma viro, tunc ad portas iam stare cruentus / Hannibal; aetoli tum primum ante ora fuere / sorbentes Latium campi*, “then Rome seemed to burn to him, then merciless Hannibal seemed to be at the gates; then for the first time before his face he saw the Aetolian plain, drenching Latium”).⁴⁷ Similarly, Hannibal’s first night of sleep after Cannae is the only check on his immediate desire to storm the gates of Rome (10.332: *optatas nondum portas intrasse Quirini*, “he had not yet entered the longed-for gates of Rome”).⁴⁸ The specter of Rome sacked and aflame appears on the fields of Cannae, alluding to Rome’s mythic past and its ancestor city, Troy.

⁴⁴ As the Carthaginian force leaves their camps, there is mention of the walls at Sil. 9. 217–18: *tum, propulso munimine valli, / fossarum rapuere moras* (“then, with the protection of rampart repelled, they removed the delay of the ditches”). Varro describes the Roman camp as *portas* (9.35). Indeed, the Romans later employ a weapon meant for the siege of cities specifically: *metuenda muris* (9.339). When the Carthaginians break through the Roman lines, the language recalls the storming a city: *perque intervalla* (9.364).

⁴⁵ Hardie (2013: 107) has succinctly summarized this specter: “Every sack, or threatened sack, of Rome is a sack of Troy, and every rebirth of Rome is a rebirth of Troy. Troy and its destruction is the point of origin for Rome, her successive foundations, destructions, and refoundations.”

⁴⁶ For the shame of retreating to Rome, see Littlewood (2017: *ad loc.*).

⁴⁷ On the prophetic nature of this vision, see Cowan (2011); Littlewood (2017: *ad loc.*).

⁴⁸ Entering the gates of Rome is more important than the defeat of the Roman army at Cannae; see Littlewood (2017: *ad loc.*). This is only heightened in Hannibal’s dream itself which contains numerous Homeric parallels; see Juhnke (1972: 213) who points out that these references are limited.

References to Homeric epic reinforce the connection of this narrative to the Trojan conflict—if not the conflagration itself. Silius describes dawn with a Homeric motif (9.180: *conscia nox sceleris roseo cedebat Eoo*, “night, a participant in the crime, yielded to rosy dawn”), while also referencing the Trojan origins of the Romans explicitly during an authorial aside (9.348: *Troia proles*, “Trojan descendants”).⁴⁹ Moreover, the Aetolian plain itself is connected to the Homeric hero Diomedes, a fact which Silius’ Varro mentions on the eve of battle (9.63: *nec Graio posthac Diomede ferentur*, “nor after this will the field be known for Diomedes the Greek”).⁵⁰ Homeric coloring runs throughout Cannae. What is more, amid such evocations of Rome and Troy, Silius also alludes to gigantomachic conflict.

Gigantomachy during the Battle of Cannae

Hints of gigantomachy abound throughout the battle, from mountains fashioned into weapons (9.395–97, 466–68) and Jovian lightning (9.478), to the Olympic characterization of Jupiter in Silius’ depiction of Hannibal’s potential entrance into Rome (9.349–50). Silius uses these allusions to recall gigantomachy and highlight the symbolic valence of storming Olympus in the background of his battle narrative.

Throughout Silius’ battle, the forces and landscape evoke gigantomachic *topoi*. Rocks are repeatedly used for weapons:⁵¹ Paulus is overcome by a massive stone (9.235: *saxum ingens*), and Scaevola is assailed by a rock torn from a cliff—mimicking how giants often obtain weapons during gigantomachy (9.395–97: *silicem scopulo avulsum, quem montibus altis /*

⁴⁹ See Spaltenstein (1986: *ad loc.*) on the rarity of *Troius* compared to *Dardanus* in the *Punica*.

⁵⁰ See Ahl, Davis, Pomeroy (1986: 2508).

⁵¹ Paulus, in death, is given gigantomachic proportions: *misitque viri inter sidera nomen* (308); see Hardie (2009); Volk (2001). Rocks are a standard weapon of gigantomachic forces assaulting Olympus, as explained below.

detulerat torrens, raptum contorquet in ora / turbidus: “raging, he threw part of a rock torn from the cliff which a torrent had brought down from lofty mountains at his [Scaevola’s] face”).⁵²

On the Olympian side of gigantomachy, Silius refers to the standard weapon of Jovian defense: lightning. Juno asks Jupiter to use his lightning bolt against the other gods. Jupiter also threatens to use his lightning against Athena (9.478: *aegide praecellant quantum horrida fulmina nosces*, “you will learn to what extent my harsh lightning excels your aegis”).⁵³ In fact, Jupiter’s threat responds to Athena weaponizing mountains in the style of giants (9.466–68: *hic dea convulsam rapido conamine partem / vicini montis scopulisque horrentia saxa / in Martem furibunda iacit*, “here the raging god threw part of the near-by mountain torn with a quick motion and dread rocks against Mars”). Silius repeatedly inserts into the Battle of Cannae such elements of the mythical assault on Olympus.

Gigantomachic allusions also include Rome itself. This is made explicit in the divine dream sent to check Hannibal’s hasty designs on Rome (9.349–50: *muros / quos intrare dabit numquam regnator Olympi*, “the walls through which the ruler of Olympus will never allow entry”). It is significant that Jupiter, as a check on Hannibal’s entrance into Rome, is described as the *regnator Olympi*, thus associating entrance into Rome and entrance into Olympus. If Rome is likened to Olympus, then Silius’ giants, termed *magnanimus*, are a paradoxical force when read

⁵² See Spaltenstein (1986: *ad loc.*) who suggests that the care taken here suggests that Silius is thinking of a traditional motif. Note also *saxis* (9.397); cf. Ovid’s account of Polyphemus (*Met.* 13.882–84: *insequitur Cyclops partemque e monte revulsam/ mittit, et extremus quamvis pervenit ad illum/ angulus e saxo, totum tamen obruit Acin*, “the Cyclops pursued and sent a piece torn off the mountain and, although it was only the edge of a corner of the rock it reached Acis and entirely overcame him”). On the trope of a giant tearing a rock, see also the discussion below.

⁵³ See Spaltenstein (1986: *ad loc.*) on lightning as Jupiter’s traditional weapon despite the infrequency of the corresponding adjective *horridus*.

with Augustan models. What is more, these symbols also relate to Flavian ideology and the Temple of Jupiter, as we shall see next.

The Temple of Jupiter and Rome's Foundations

The temple of Jupiter is the physical locus for Roman *imperium*.⁵⁴ And it figures directly in our discussion of gigantomachy by its proximity to an actual citadel in the city,⁵⁵ being, therefore, the physical representation of Olympus at Rome. Simply put: if the symbol of Olympus at Rome is embodied by any structure, that would be the Temple of Jupiter.

The temple had long been associated with the expression of Roman imperial control.⁵⁶ Stefano Rebeggiani has recently articulated this connection in a discussion of the Gallic sack of Rome. The temple itself is an important seat for Jupiter and on a certain level seen as his dwelling place.⁵⁷ After the burning of the temple in 69 CE, its restoration is meant to convey the new beginning of the Flavian dynasty. For Domitian the temple is important biographically and as a symbol of his remaking of Rome,⁵⁸ as the third conflagration in 80 CE allowed the new emperor to frame the most recent rebuilding as a symbol for the promise of his reign.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Rebeggiani (2018).

⁵⁵ Lindsay (2010).

⁵⁶ See Lindsay (2010) for a discussion of the temple in the Flavian period.

⁵⁷ Silius' Scipio best articulates this in the Flavian period (10.432: "*Tarpeia, pater, qui templa secundam incolas a caelo sedem*", "father, you who inhabit the Tarpeian temples, second only to your home in heaven"); see Littlewood (2017: *ad loc.*); cf. Sil. 6.692–93.

⁵⁸ Domitian was present during the conflagration of 69 CE (Tac. *Hist.* 3.63–74; Suet. *Dom.* 1.2). See Rebeggiani (2018: 237–40).

⁵⁹ Lindsey (2010); Rebeggiani (2018: 244–47).

The connection between the temple, Jupiter and Domitian is also present in the texts we are discussing here. Silius recalls the conflagration of the temple which Domitian witnessed (3.609: *nec te terruerint Tarpei culminis ignes*, “nor shall the flames of the Tarpeian peak terrify you”)⁶⁰ and the temple as Jupiter’s abode at Rome (3.623–24: *aurea Tarpeia ponet Capitolia rupe / et iunget nostro templorum culmina caelo*, “he will place the golden Capitoline on the Tarpeian cliff and will join the peaks of the temples to our part of heaven”).⁶¹ Statius also mentions Domitian’s role in the Capitoline conflict in 69 CE (1.20–21: *aut defensa prius vix pubescentibus annis / bella Iouis*, “alliance or the battle over Jove defended while he was barely a young man”).⁶² What is more, the role of the temple of Jupiter in the *Punica* is critical. When Jupiter himself wards off Hannibal from entering Rome, Juno refers to the temple as Hannibal’s sought-after goal (12.697–98: *etiamne parabit / nostras ille domos, nostras perrumpere in arces?* “Does he [Hannibal] even prepare to assault our halls and citadels?”).⁶³ After Hannibal retreats, the people of Rome go directly to the Capitoline to give thanks to Jupiter and proclaim Hannibal’s retreat as the triumph of the supreme god (12.741–43: *tum vero passim sacra in Capitolia pergunt / inque vicem amplexi permixta voce triumphum / Tarpeii clamant Iovis ac delubra coronant*, “then the people went from here and there to the Capitoline temple and embraced one another in turn and shouted, with a collective voice, that it was the triumph of Tarpeian Jupiter and they adorned his shrines”). In Silius’ text the defense of the temple of

⁶⁰ Spaltenstein (1986: *ad loc.*).

⁶¹ See Spaltenstein (1986: *ad loc.*).

⁶² See Rebeggiani (2018).

⁶³ See Spaltenstein (1986: *ad loc.*) who, in spite of the ambiguous *domos*, maintains that this is the temple of Jupiter: “Sil ne pense qu’à Jupiter.”

Jupiter is a pseudo-defense of the god's home on Olympus and at Rome.⁶⁴ The temple of Jupiter's association with Roman *imperium* frames Silius' references to gigantomachy as clear comments on Flavian ideology.

Juno's word choice is telling as she pleads for Hannibal to stop assaulting Rome (12.725: *cede deis tandem et Titania desine bella*, "at last, yield to the gods and stop your Giant War").⁶⁵ Her advice frames his retreat as a typical gigantomachic failure. Indeed, her comment, *Titania ... bella*, reads as a stock phrase. However, the collocation, *Titania ... bella*, deserves further scrutiny.⁶⁶ As an abbreviation for gigantomachy it is rare.⁶⁷ The term conflates multiple traditions of mythical war narratives. Juno reduces gigantomachy, titanomachy and typhonomachy into a short-hand for failed attempts against the gods.

Traditionally, gigantomachy articulates a tremendous—even cosmic—opposition between the giants and the Olympians, which often becomes a metaphor for the opposition between order and disorder.⁶⁸ As we have seen, this metaphorical significance is exploited in the Augustan period. Moreover, the myth of gigantomachy even frames the protection of the Roman citadel (the temple of Jupiter). Juno's phrase *Titania bella* compresses the various mythological conflicts into one conflict, arbitrarily labeled *Titanus*. The effect of her phrasing is a slight

⁶⁴ Likening the conflict of 69 CE to gigantomachy is also explicit in Statius' *Silvae* (1.1.79, 5.3.195–98). For detailed discussion of the theme of Celtomachy in this passage, Statius, and Flavian ideology more broadly, see Rebeggiani (2018: 237–61).

⁶⁵ Although Hannibal believes he is rivaling Hercules at this moment, Juno makes it clear that he is only playing the role of a giant; see Hardie (1993: 80); Klaassen (2010: 112); Stocks (2014: 227).

⁶⁶ *TLL* ii.1827.35.

⁶⁷ However, Spaltenstein (1986: *ad loc.*) only mentions traditional titanomachy, ignoring the conflation of such conflicts in this period. For other uses, see Cic. *N.D.* 2.70; Hyg. *Astr.* 2.13, 16; Sen. *HF* 967: *bella Titanes parent*, cf. Sil. 4.435: *Titanum bello*.

⁶⁸ This is also discussed above.

diminution of the significance of the conflicts. The phrase does not reject earlier presentations of these different cosmological battles as one, already well established by the late Republic.⁶⁹ However, within this tradition, this extremely compressed reference explores the continued symbolic potency of such gigantomachic references. But such commentary on the meaning of gigantomachic symbols in the Flavian era is not confined to Silius' *Punica* or even to traditionally gigantomachic giants. In the following section, we turn to a reference to the giant Polyphemus as commentary on literary succession.

Statius' Polyphemus and Funeral Games

The passage in question is densely intertextual and metaliterary. While the intertextual character of Statius' poem is well established,⁷⁰ we shall see how his engagement with the literary models mirrors aspects of monstrous transgression.⁷¹ Statius' monster simile presents a threat to the integrity of his text on one level and more importantly the succession of epic poetry and his poem's place within the tradition. As a result Polyphemus destabilizes the connection between the *Thebaid* and its literary tradition.

Statius' only reference to Polyphemus takes place during the funeral games in *Thebaid* 6. The third event of the funeral games is the discus throw which pits Phlegyas, Menestheus and Hippomedon against one another. After the throws of the first two, Hippomedon bests them both. As Statius describes Hippomedon's winning toss, he likens this moment to the giant Polyphemus tossing a rock after Ulysses' departure (6.716–18):

⁶⁹ Discussed above.

⁷⁰ Hardie (1993); Ganiban (1997); Hinds (1998).

⁷¹ Cohen's (1997: 6) thesis still offers the best summation of this aspect of monsters: "And so the monster is dangerous, a form suspended between forms that threatens to smash distinctions."

tertius Hippomedon valida ad certamina tardos
 molitur gressus; namque illum corde sub alto
 et casus Phlegyaе monet et fortuna Menesthei.
 erigit adsuetum dextrae gestamen, et alte
 sustentans rigidumque latus fortesque lacertos
 consulit ac vasto contorquet turbine, et ipse
 prosequitur. fugit horrendo per inania saltu
 iamque procul meminit dextrae seruatque tenorem
 discus, nec dubia iunctaue Menesthea victum
 transabiit meta: longe super aemula signa
 consedit viridesque umeros et opaca theatri
 culmina ceu latae tremefecit mole ruinae:
quale vaporifera saxum Polyphemus ab Aetna
lucis egente manu tamen in vestigia puppis
auditae iuxtaque inimicum exegit Vlixen. (*Theb.* 6.704–18)

Thirdly, Hippomedon went forth with slow steps towards this contest of strength (the fate of Phelgyas and good fortune of Menestheus served as cautionary tales). He took up the familiar burden on his hand and, lifting it up high, testing his stiff side and strong arms, then he launched it with quite a whirl—he even followed after it. The discus flew with force and, already far off, recalled the hand that launched it and maintained its trajectory. Without a doubt it passed the mark of Menestheus—nowhere near his—it fell far beyond the rival toss and sent a tremor through the green hills and shaded stands of the theater like a mass of crumbling ruin. Just as Polyphemus tossed forth a rock from still smoky Etna, guided by his sightless hand, after the traces of the ship he heard and it landed near Ulysses the enemy.

Discus competitions are rare in epic.⁷² In fact, the only model for such an event at a funerary game comes from *Iliad* 23 (845–90), where Polypoetes bests three competitors. Statius' model can also be found in the non-funerary contest of *Odyssey* 8 (186–98), where Odysseus proves his mettle against Phaeacian taunters.⁷³ However, neither of these passages, or the funerary games from *Aeneid* 5, provide a model for such a literary simile as the one Statius employs here. In fact, there are very few similes in athletic games in epic poetry. Of those similes even fewer capture the moment of success (as here) and of those nearly none includes a reference to a mythological

⁷² See Lovatt (2005: 107).

⁷³ On privileging Homer rather than Vergil, see Juhnke (1972: 110–11); Lovatt (2005: 101–4).

character or story as in the one in Statius.⁷⁴ The uniqueness of this literary reference in such a context draws our attention to Statius' passing simile and its valence within the text. Even more intriguing is the simile's unique relationship to Statius' models. The two most prominent models for the passage as a whole, *Odyssey* 8 and *Iliad* 23, also provide the narrative for the simile, which concludes the episode in Statius' passage. This draws further attention to the self-consciousness of this passing simile. Moreover, this is the only comparison between Polyphemus and Hippomedon although the connections between Statius' Hippomedon and mythological giants are many.⁷⁵ Statius appears keenly aware of this simile's place within the poetic tradition at large, as we discuss next.⁷⁶

This simile contains numerous references to earlier iterations of Polyphemus. These earlier monsters imbue the Statian Polyphemus with varying aspects. Statius' reference to the sound of Ulysses' departing ship is telling (718: *in vestigia puppis/ auditae iuxtaque inimicum exegit Ulixen*). The allusive noun, *vestigia*, opens up to readings against its literary models. As Statius' Polyphemus hurls his rock out into the water, he looks to the echo (*puppis / auditae*) of Vergil's *Aeneid*, where the same monster wades out into the same water (Verg. *Aen.* 3.668–9: *ad*

⁷⁴ *Il.* 23: chariot race (none); Boxing (262–64); wrestling (712–13); running (760–63); armed battle (none); archery (none); javelin (none). *Od.* 8: (none). *Aen.* 5: chariot race (588–90); boxing (375); wrestling (none); running (319); armed battle (none); archery (none). There are no notable similes in Silius' compressed games in *Pun.* 16. The closest use in athletic contest is Statius' likening of the boxing contest to the bout between Antaeus and Hercules (*fama est*) which also takes from previous literature and specifically Lucan's text; see Lovatt (2005: 196–97).

⁷⁵ For earlier gigantic aspects of Hippomedon, cf. Aesch. *Sept.* (488, 89, 500 and specifically his shield emblazoned with Typhoeus at 493); Eur. *Phoen.* 127–30: γίγαντι γηγενέτα προσόμοιος ("like an earthborn giant"); see Marinis (2015: 345–49) for the legacy of these texts in the *Thebaid*. Moreover, Statius uses *arduus* (4.128, 5.560, 6.654, 9.91) of Hippomedon; see Dewar (1991: 75–76). See also Hardie (1986) and (2009) for this adjective with regard to mythological giants and gigantomachy. See also Klinnert (1971: 88–99); Vessey (1974: 220–21); Franchet d'Espèrey (1999: 190–97); Lovatt (2005: 110–21).

⁷⁶ See Hardie (1993: *passim*, but especially 98–105). Note also the slow and deliberate language in describing Hippomedon's approach (6.704–5: *tardos ... gressus*). Statius also consistently references past events in depicting the toss itself: *adsuetam ... casus ... fortuna ... meminit* (6.707–11). Statius prepares the reader for recollection and backwards glances as she approaches the simile.

sonitum vocis / *vestigia* torsit, “he turned his tracks towards the sound of a voice”), following similar tracks (*vestigia*) further back towards his literary antecedents—namely Homer.⁷⁷ Thus Statius’ Polyphemus is standing in well-known and noisy shallows.

Polyphemus is not normally included in discussions of gigantomachy which, as I have outlined, is defined as direct martial confrontations between the giants and the Olympians. However, in Statius’ Polyphemus simile and Hippomedon’s discus toss some gigantomachic undertones have been identified. In fact, this connection has been gleaned since antiquity with the following lines, excised by modern editors, providing an intriguing gloss on Statius’ passage: *sic et Aloidae, cum iam calcaret Olympum / desuper Ossa rigens, ipsum glaciale ferebant / Pelion et trepido sperabant iungere caelo* (“thus also the Aloidae when rugged Ossa trampled Olympus from above, they brought forth icy Pelion itself and hoped to join it to a fearful heaven”).⁷⁸ Elsewhere Polyphemus complicates the distinction between anti-Olympian giant (gigantomachic) and otherwise in his role as a despiser of Jupiter and his likening to other cosmic threats.⁷⁹ Questions of gigantomachy will run throughout my discussion of Polyphemus

⁷⁷ *Od.* 9.480–81: ὧς ἐφάμην, ὁ δ’ ἔπειτα χολώσατο κηρόθι μᾶλλον, / ἦκε δ’ ἀπορρήξας κορυφὴν ὄρεος μεγάλοιο (“as I spoke then he was more angry in his heart, he, breaking the peak off the big mountain, threw it”); *Od.* 9.473–74: ἀλλ’ ὅτε τόσσον ἀπῆν, ὅσσον τε γέγωνε βοήσας, / καὶ τότε ἐγὼ Κύκλωπα προσηύδων κερτομίοισι (“when I had gotten as far as my shout carried, then I began insulting the Cyclops”); Ennius 321 Skutsch: *Cyclopi venter velut olim turserat alte / carnibus humanis distentus* (“just as when the stomach swelled, stretched with human flesh”); Livius Refictus fr. 49 Courtney: *cum socios nostros mandisset impius Cyclops* (“when the impious Cyclops chewed our companions”); see also Lucilius 480 Marx. See Goldschmidt (2013: appendix) for the echoes of Ennius at *Aen.* 3.630. Though not discussing this simile specifically, Juhnke (1972: 110–11) points to Statius’ direct use of Homeric models for the entire discus episode as Vergil’s *Aeneid* does not contain a discus event. Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* is another model for Statius’ simile, where the sound rousing Polyphemus’ ire is Ulysses’ own boasting (13.190: *clamor Ulixis*), as his ship departs: this scene situates itself closely to the Homeric scene as well as Vergilian and is echoed by Statius. Ovid directly references Ulysses departing Sicily in the retelling by Achaemenides, unlike Vergil, who elides this moment, placing Ovid’s reference closer to the Homeric account; see Papaioannou (2005: 91–92).

⁷⁸ Lovatt (2005:111–13; 131–33) on this as a reading of the simile and Hippomedon’s toss as: “gigantomachy frozen at the moment of success” (132). Lactantius does not comment on these lines, neither does Barth (1664), although he includes them in his text and cites Gronovius; see also Berlincourt (2013: 266–67).

⁷⁹ See Hardie (1986: 164–67); Lowe (2015: 217).

as one theme on which Statius draws in order to emphasize the implications of this well-worn scene.

As we have seen before, the throwing of large rocks or pieces of mountains is a standard fixture in depictions of Polyphemus and other giants,⁸⁰ and Statius' reference to a large rock opens up certain associations. Polyphemus' failure in his pitch is a paradoxical image for Hippomedon's successful discus lob. This image of an unsuccessful stone toss is informed by Turnus' failure from *Aeneid* 12,⁸¹ and the connection of these images is reinforced by Hippomedon's earlier attempt to kill the Nemean serpent⁸² with a launched *saxum* (5.558–63). In that earlier scene, the chosen weapon is a type of boundary stone (*Theb.* 5.559: *quo discretus ager*, “where the field was separated”), which is similar to Turnus' stone (*Aen.* 12.897–98: *saxum antiquum ingens, campo quod forte iacebat / limes agro positus litem ut discerneret arvis*, “a great ancient stone which happened to lie in the field so that the boundary, marked on the plain, would distinguish disputed spaces between farms”). The weight of this reference is gleaned through reading Turnus' attempted throw in terms of gigantomachy: Aeneas is likened to Jupiter in this scene by wielding a spear compared to a lightning bolt (12.922), while Turnus

⁸⁰ See Vian (1952); Calame (1985: 153); Lowe (2015: 209–11).

⁸¹ Gervais (2015: 61–62) shows the connections between the Vergilian scene and Tydeus' monomachy in *Thebaid* 2. Here I argue simply for another, albeit more subtle, manipulation of this Vergilian model. The reference to the fiery aspects of Mt. Etna in the Polyphemus simile (discussed below) may also provide a shading of Turnus' emblem on his helmet (*Aen.* 7.785–86: *cui triplici crinita iuba galea alta Chimaeram / sustinet Aetnaeos efflantem faucibus ignis*, “his lofty helm with a threefold mane had a Chimera breathing out Etnean fire from its throat”). Vergil moved the Chimaera from Lycia to Etna; see Williams (1993: 34 n. 20).

⁸² Franchet d'Espèrey (1999: 197 n. 69). This serpent is likened to an anti-Olympian giant by Capaneus (5.569–70: *si consortum super haec mihi membra Giganta / subveheres*: “even if you were melded with giant's limbs”); see Chaudhuri (2014: 227). Capaneus plays the role of both an Olympian and an anti-Olympian here; see also Franchet d'Espèrey (1999: 198–205), Lovatt (2005: 131–37).

declares his hostility to Jupiter (12.894–95: *Iuppiter hostis*) as he is wielding the standard weapon of giants when assaulting Olympus, an image of failure.⁸³

However, Hippomedon's discus toss is successful and provides clear intertextual resonance with the *Aeneid* (12.901–2: *ille manu raptum trepida torquebat in hostem / altior insurgens et cursu concitus heros*, “[Turnus] rising up to a greater height flung the rock swiftly with a tremulous hand, the hero was struck by the force of the motion,” cf. *St. Th.* 6.710: *vasto contorquet turbine et ipse prosequitur*, “he [Hippomedon] swung it with a huge twirl and even followed the toss”). Both warriors also put too much energy in their toss: Hippomedon outruns his volition (*prosequitur*), and Turnus, struck by his motion (*concitus circu*), appears to be moving without volition (*se nec cognoscit euntem*). This Vergilian intertext creates confusion as Statius leads the reader into his simile—meant, of course, to crystalize Hippomedon's success.

This interaction becomes clearer in reading directly Polyphemus' image against Turnus'. Turnus' flop is conveyed as a result of his ignorance (*Aen.* 12.903–4: *se nec cognoscit euntem / tollentemve manu saxumve immane moventem*, “he could not discern himself moving or running as he raised the massive rock with his hand”).⁸⁴ This description underscores Turnus' failure in this passage to recognize his role as ill-fated giant to Aeneas' Jupiter. Likewise, Polyphemus casts forth the stone from his hand in a state of literal blindness: *lucis egente manu* (*Theb.* 6.717). Both ignorant tosses highlight the inevitability of the respective hero's failure which can be read as a comment on the literary tradition. The success of either throw would be calamitous for the respective narrative. The primal text in this discussion is Homer's *Odyssey*, in which the story-

⁸³ Hardie (1986: 147–48) and Lowe (2015: 210–11).

⁸⁴ Vergil also equates Turnus' failure to generational decline through heavy Homeric overtones (12.899–900: *vix illum lecti bis sex cervice subirent, / qualia nunc hominum producit corpora tellus*, “not even twelve men could lift it on their neck with men as the earth brings forth now”). This theme of generational weakening has been read as a self-conscious Vergilian nod to his Homeric model; see Tarrant (2012: 318–27); Lowe (2015: 210–11).

teller of this scene is Odysseus, who survives the encounter and retells the episode at the court of the Phaeacians in *Odyssey* 9. This retelling will be refashioned by Vergil⁸⁵ and drawn on by later epicists, including Statius. Polyphemus' stone must miss Ulysses, preserving the storyteller and the tradition which Polyphemus is being re-inscribed into by Statius. This giant threatens but does not, ultimately, disturb the epic tradition.

The literary 'threads' of this rock deserve attention, especially as Statius elaborates the location of this episode: *ab Aetna* (716). Sicily, with its volcanic Mt. Etna, is—by the Roman period—the standard location for Polyphemus' cave.⁸⁶ The volcanic nature of Etna is evoked in Statius' use of *vaporifera*⁸⁷ and touches upon multiple associations. Mt. Etna factors into narratives of gigantomachy, since mythological explanations often assign the fiery volcano to one of two anti-Olympian giants cast underneath it, after several failed attempts against Olympus.⁸⁸ Statius' reference to fiery Etna also displays an engagement with contemporary discourse concerning natural phenomena which cluster around the volcano. This discussion is the primary focus of the fragmentary and possibly Flavian poem *Aetna*.⁸⁹ This poem exemplifies the debate between explaining Etna's volcanic phenomena as the result of a giant buried underneath or through rational explanation. The *Aetna* argues for the non-mythological only after refuting a

⁸⁵ Not to mention Livius Andronicus' *Odyseia* or the Homeric influence on Gnaeus Naevius and Ennius; see Feeney (2016).

⁸⁶ In Homer's text Polyphemus' island is 'off the map'; see Vidal-Naquet (1986). However, Euripides' *Cyclops* (408 BCE) casts the island as Sicily (*Cyc.* 106, 114); see Seaford (2003) on Euripides' placement and the dating of the play.

⁸⁷ *vaporiferus* only appears in Statius at *Silv.* 1.3.45 and 3.5.96, in both instances referring to Baiae.

⁸⁸ Pind. *Pyth.* 1.20; Callim. 382; Ov. *Met.* 5.252, *Her.* 15.11; Verg. *Aen.* 3.578–82.

⁸⁹ Most commentators point to a *terminus ante quem* of 79 CE (the year of the eruption of Vesuvius, which the poem represents as long dormant) and the presence of Vergilian and Lucretian influence, placing it at least in the early imperial period; see Ellis (1901: xxi–lii); Garani (2009: 1 n. 1).

vivid depiction of gigantomachy (41–73). This discourse, as we shall see, contributes to the gigantomachic undertones of Statius' passage.

Lucretius describes the Sicilian volcano without recourse to the mythological explanation of an anti-Olympian giant buried underneath. He subtracts the buried giant from the discussion and presents the heat from subterranean rocks as the prime cause:

Nunc tamen illa modis quibus inritata repente
flamma foras vastis Aetnae fornacibus efflet,
expediam. primum totius subcava montis
est natura fere silicum suffulta cavernis.
omnibus est porro in speluncis ventus et aeër.
ventus enim fit, ubi est agitando percitus aeër.
hic ubi percaluit cale fecitque omnia circum
saxa furens, qua contingit, terramque et ab ollis
excussit calidum flammis velocibus ignem,
tollit se ac rectis ita faucibus eicit alte.
fert itaque ardorem longe longeque favillam
differt et crassa volvit caligine fumum
extruditque simul mirando pondere saxa;
ne dubites quin haec animai turbida sit vis. (Lucr. 6.680–93)

Now I will explain the ways through which the flame of huge Mount Etna flows forth through vast caverns. First, the whole mountain is naturally hollow underneath and it is propped up with sulphurous caves. In these hollows there is wind and air. Gusts occur when the air moves about rapidly. When the air heats up and is tumultuously moving around, it makes every rock and all it touches hot and it knocks rapid flames from the earth. Then it lifts itself and hurtles directly up through the mountain's throat. In this way it carries its burning far off and scatters ash all around and causes smoke with pitchy hue and shoots out rocks with unbelievable weight—proving the force of the gust.

In Lucretius' version there is no mythological explanation but only a description of subterranean heating which accounts for Etna's volcanic activity.⁹⁰ Statius' giant casts forth steamy Etna

⁹⁰ Hardie (1986: 157–237).

(*vaporifera*), recalling the fuming quality of this volcano from Lucretius' passage (Lucr. 6.691: *fumum*),⁹¹ drawing its inspiration from Lucretius' Etna.

Through its Lucretian elements, Polyphemus' pitch is more layered than a traditionally gigantomachic toss against Olympus. In Lucretius' text, gigantomachy is evoked to opposite ends from martial epic: he uses gigantomachy as a metaphor for the victory of *ratio* over religion, since Epicurus' atomic understanding of the cosmos enables him to storm the heavens (*moenia mundi*).⁹² The crucial difference is that Lucretian gigantomachy is successful, while Statius' engagement with the Lucretian discourse leads to the failure of Polyphemus' skyward lob. I do not suggest that Statius' engagement with this discourse leads to the failure of Polyphemus' pitch.⁹³ However, Lucretian gigantomachy, with its successful and, therefore, subversive connotations, provides yet another type of threat imbedded within this Statian simile. The Lucretian elements of this stone highlight the threat to Ulysses.

I have suggested that the storytelling aspect of the Odyssean Odysseus is in the background of this passage. Odysseus' retelling of this episode in *Odyssey* 9 preserves the narrative so that it may later be retold by Statius after its transmission through various epic models. Polyphemus, by nearly killing this storyteller (*iuxta*) in Statius' passage, presents a threat to that sequence of literary succession. Therefore, Statius' appellation for Ulysses *inimicum ... Ulixen* (6.716) is consequential. There appear to be no instances in extant Latin

⁹¹ See Horsfall (2006: *ad loc.*). I should note the general connection between Sicily and the poetic process from the late Republic onward which Hardie (2002: 323 n. 96): "The description of Etna was a set-piece of *energia*." The observation of Sicily's rich connection to previous poets can be dated to the early imperial period. Seneca urges Lucilius to go there for poetic inspiration and lists previous poets who traveled there (*Ep.* 79.5); see Hutchinson (2013: 80–1). Perhaps this characteristic provides even stronger footing for Statius' toying with tradition in this reference.

⁹² Lucr. 5.113–21; see Hardie (1986) Gale (1995: 43–45); Chaudhuri (2015: 58–63).

⁹³ On divine authority in the *Thebaid*; see Bernstein (2016); Chaudhuri (2015: 291–97).

literature where Ulysses is described with this adjective or any other closely related adjective. One similar appellation is “unlucky” from *Aeneid* 3 (*infelicis Ulixi*), used by Achaemenides when speaking to Aeneas. However, this is easily explained, and one need look no further than Servius’ understanding of the intradiegetic narrator’s concerns for explanation: *quoniam apud hostes loquitur, quaerit favorem eius vituperatione, quem scit odio esse Troianis* (“because it is said to an enemy, he seeks favor through this invective against the one [Odysseus] who he knew is hated by the Trojans”). However, the circumstances differ in Statius’ text. The narrative is not of a Greek feigning disdain for Ulysses in order to appeal to his Trojan would-be rescuers. This adjective (*inimicum*) displays a reference to Polyphemus’ own perspective. The Cyclops is the only character in Statius’ text who would logically label Ulysses an enemy. This simile presents the famed Homeric moment, now seen in reverse—no longer set to Odysseus’ on his ship looking back to the shore. This inclusion of Polyphemus’ perspective underscores the monster’s potential destruction of poetic succession.

Statius’ employment of Polyphemus to examine intertextuality disrupts the process of literary succession. In this brief simile, Statius offers a monstrous metaphor for intertextual agonism: intertextual engagement (Polyphemus) threatens the source of inspiration (Ulysses) while the source text remains just out of reach of the poet’s endeavor. Thus far I have limited the discussion to giants. But it is time to bring into the analysis how both Statius and Silius also liken human characters to giants.

Statius’ Capaneus, Silius’ Hannibal and Flavian Gigantomachy

Statius’ Capaneus and Silius’ Hannibal exist on different sides of gigantomachic conflict in a way which elucidates the role of gigantomachy at large. As a result, I will conclude by

discussing these pivotal characters together and how they comment on the status of gigantomachy in the Flavian era. Capaneus is described as *magnanimus* and is often likened to giants, beginning with his helmet (4.175–76: *galeaeque corusca / prominet arce Gigans*, “a giant is prominent on his helmets gleaming crest”). However, he is also aligned against such forces. In book 5, Capaneus and his companions come upon a monster—the Nemean serpent. The snake is labeled a *monstrum* (5.570). The snake is also given numerous descriptors by the narrator (5.505–6: *sacer horror ... terrigena*, “a sacred horror ... earthborn”) and is compared to other large mythological snakes such as Draco and Python (5.529–33). However, my concern with this passage is not the narrator’s descriptors, but in Capaneus’ address to the serpent and his reference to gigantomachy. This passage illuminates the fault-lines of gigantomachic symbols we have been discussing in this chapter:

... ‘at non mea vulnera,’ clamat
et trabe fraxinea Capaneus subit obuius, ‘umquam
effugies, seu tu pavidus ferus incola luci,
sive deis, utinamque deis, concessa voluptas,
non, si consortum super haec mihi membra Giganta
subveheres.’ (5.565–70)

Capaneus rushed in the way with an ashen spear and shouted: “You will never escape wounds at my hand, whether you are a wild local of this fearful grove or dear to the gods, not if you were part giant, joined above this body against me.

Capaneus alludes to standard depictions of giants as half serpents (*si consortum super haec mihi membra Giganta / subveheres*). Snake-legged giants are explicitly gigantomachic, rendering Capaneus as a giant-killer here. However, he will later be closely assimilated to a giant himself.

Capaneus’ assault on the walls of Thebes and his death precede a reference to gigantomachy at the opening of book 11:⁹⁴

⁹⁴ See McNelis (2007: 143) on the gigantomachic undertones of this passage specifically. See also Fucecchi (1999) for Jupiter’s manipulation of Capaneus as a “would-be giant” (114).

Postquam **magnanimus** furias virtutis iniquae
 consumpsit Capaneus expiravitque receptum
 fulmen, et ad terras longe comitata cadentem
 signavit muros ultricis semita flammae,
 componit dextra victor concussa plagarum
 Iuppiter et vultu caelumque diemque reducit.
 gratantur superi, Phlegrae ceu fessus anhelet
proelia et Encelado fumantem impresserit Aetnen. (11.1–8)

after **noble** Capaneus consumed the fury of his abundant courage and exhaled the lighting-bolt he had received, and the path of the vengeful flame which followed him as he fell to the earth marked the walls, victorious Jupiter settled the concussed regions with his right hand and led back heaven and day with his glance. Gods above congratulate him as if he were panting over the battles of Phlegra and as if he had heaped Etna on smoking Enceladus—worn out.

Statius also likens Capaneus to a gigantomachic force throughout his assault on the walls of Thebes.⁹⁵ As with Silius' giants Statius' presentation of Capaneus as *magnanimus*⁹⁶ encodes a seeming paradox. This apparent conflict points back to the *Aeneid* where the term already conveys the ambiguity of gigantomachic battle, as we have seen. Ultimately, Capaneus' alignment on both sides of a gigantomachic battle explores and reasserts the Augustan ambiguity of these symbols.

Silius' Hannibal similarly comments upon the vicissitudes of gigantomachy as the poet aligns him with both giants and Olympians. Hannibal longs to toss Jupiter from the Tarpeian rock (6.712–13) as a giant. He crosses the Alps (3.477–556) in a gigantomachic manner⁹⁷ and longs to assault Olympus at Rome (12.574–667), as I have discussed above.

⁹⁵ Chaudhuri (2014: 264–91). See also Franchet d'Espèrey (1999: 198–205) and Lovatt (2005: 131–39).

⁹⁶ Statius only uses this adjective twice for Capaneus, once at 9.547, long before he confronts Jupiter directly, and in this instance after Capaneus has fallen.

⁹⁷ See Fucecchi (1999); Chaudhuri (2014: 234–42); Stocks (2019).

At the same time, Hannibal is also likened to Jupiter, in particular in book 17.⁹⁸ Juno describes Hannibal with the same Olympian moniker we have been discussing, *magnanimus* (17.366). Later, during the battle of Zama, Hannibal's *aristeia* complicates these associations as Hannibal's efforts are described as a gigantomachic assault on Olympus (17.475), and he is even mistaken for Jupiter by the stunned soldiers (17.478):

tum Libys invadit mixtae certamina turbae
 convertitque ruens per longum hostilia terga,
 ut cum fulminibus permixta tonitrua mundum
 terrificant, summique labat domus alta parentis:
 omne hominum terris trepidat genus, ipsaque ob ora
 lux atrox micat, et praesens astare viritim
 creditur intento percussis Iuppiter igne. (17.472–78)

Then the Libyan entered the fray of the mixed up forces and, rushing everywhere, he caused the enemies to flee, as when thunder mixed in with lightning terrifies the world and the lofty home of the supreme father totters: the whole race of humans on earth are fearful, a horrifying light shines in their faces and for each man it is believed that Jupiter is present before them and that they are struck by his flame.

Within the span of seven lines Hannibal's onslaught (471: *invadit*) is compared to lightning which threatens the overthrow of Olympus (475: *summique labat domus alta parentis*), before he is also mistaken for Jupiter (478: *creditur ... Iuppiter*).⁹⁹ This paradox is reinforced by the comparison of Hannibal's actions to lightning which shakes Olympus. As lightning is the typical weapon used for Jupiter to defend Olympus,¹⁰⁰ this is a strange simile. Silius distorts the images of gigantomachy by using lightning to evoke the overthrow of Olympus.

⁹⁸ See also Stocks (2019) who views the Capuans' appraisal of Hannibal (11.272: *ipse, deum cultu et sacro dignatus honore*, "he was impressive, with the face and dignity of a god") as turning him into a "Jupiter-like figure."

⁹⁹ See Chaudhuri (2014: 253) who views this reference as evoking Hannibal's earlier defeat by Jupiter.

¹⁰⁰ See Spaltenstein (1986: *ad loc.*) also assesses Hannibal's (478: *intento igne*) as the "l'arme du dieu."

These complications continue as Hannibal surveys his defeat at Zama (17.597–604), when he subtly articulates the undertones of gigantomachy at the conclusion of the *Punica*.

Hannibal speaks to himself and addresses Jupiter:

cum secum Poenus: ‘Caelum licet omne soluta
in caput hoc compage ruat terraeque dehiscant,
non ullo Cannas abolebis, Iuppiter, aevo,
decedesque prius regnis, quam nomina gentes
aut facta Hannibalis sileant. nec deinde relinquo
securam te, Roma, mei, patriaeque superstes
ad spes armorum vivam tibi. nam modo pugna
praecellis, resident hostes: mihi satque superque
ut me Dardaniae matres atque Itala tellus,
dum vivam, expectent nec pacem pectore norint.’ (17.606–16)

Hannibal spoke to himself: “Even if all of heaven comes undone and rushes down on my head and if the earth splits open, you, Jupiter, will never blot out Cannae. You shall fall from your throne before the peoples of the world stop speaking of the titles and deeds of Hannibal. Nor do I leave you safe from me, Rome. Outlasting my homeland I shall live in the hopes of taking up arms against you. For you are the better in this battle, your enemies are waiting: for me it is enough and more than enough that Roman matrons and the Italian earth await me and do not know peace in their heart while I live.”

The theomachic aspect of this claim has rightly been noted, but it should also be viewed as gigantomachic.¹⁰¹ Indeed, there is no clearer goal of gigantomachy than the removal of Jupiter from Olympus (17.608–9: *Iuppiter ... decedesque prius regnis*). The end of Hannibal’s fame is framed as contingent upon a gigantomachic toppling of Jupiter. Although Silius may frame this potential as an impossibility; nevertheless, his language evokes gigantomachy. The nature of Hannibal’s fame, therefore, frames Silius’ concluding commentary on gigantomachy.

Indeed, Hannibal becomes famous outside of the text but also within the remainder of book 17. Hannibal claims that he will forever instill fear in Rome (17.614–16). What is more

¹⁰¹ See Chaudhuri (2014: 254) who points to the potential of this passage to evoke Hannibal’s everlasting fame. He views this reference to Jupiter’s descent (608–610) as akin to “Stoic ecpyrosis” rather than gigantomachy.

during Scipio's triumph at the end of the epic, Hannibal's image attracts attention and suggests an indelible aspect to his notoriety (17.643–44: *sed non ulla magis mentesque oculosque tenebat, / quam visa Hannibalis campis fugientis imago*, "but no other image held the attention and gaze as much as the likeness of Hannibal fleeing from the field").¹⁰² If the loss of Hannibal's fame is the overthrow of Jupiter, then Silius presents successful gigantomachy as perpetually near fruition.

The consequences of gigantomachy at the end of Silius' *Punica* are similar to Statius' Polyphemus, where the stone must always miss Odysseus but is always very close (*iuxta*) to hitting the mark. Gigantomachy in this regard expresses an eternal tension. This arrangement underscores Silius' exploration of these symbols from Rome's mytho-historical past in the Flavian period.

The juxtaposition of symbols of gigantomachy around Capaneus and Hannibal does not point to a primordial opposition of chaos and order, as in Hesiod's *Theogony*, nor does it point to a potent inversion of the symbols such as the one in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, but, rather, to an exploration of the previous employments of these symbols. Capaneus and Hannibal both explore and reassert the Augustan era ambiguity of these symbols. As with Aeneas and Turnus, these characters appear on either side of gigantomachic conflict. However, while operating within this tradition, these Flavian characters also confront Jupiter himself and, in this way, explore the limits of their Augustan models.

Indeed, what we see in the Flavian period is not a simple engagement with these monsters and the themes which cluster around them but one which the monsters refocus. Statius' Polyphemus not only reflects the literary tradition but breaks down that very tradition,

¹⁰² On this description speaking to Hannibal's eternal fame, see Chaudhuri (2014: 255); Stocks (2014: 232–34).

threatening to sever the connection of Statius' *Thebaid* from its Roman models and its Homeric *fons*. Indeed, Silius' *magnanimos ... Gigantas* explore the symbols of gigantomachy.¹⁰³

Similarly, Statius' Capaneus and Silius' Hannibal examine traditional employments of gigantomachic symbolism. In both Statius' intertextuality and Silius' engagement with the symbols of gigantomachy, Flavian giants reveal contemporary concerns over the literary and mytho-historical past of Rome.

¹⁰³ Note the continued degeneration of these symbols in the following century when the Emperor Commodus hosts a macabre recreation of gigantomachy in the gladiatorial arena as described in *Hist. Aug. Comm* 9: *debiles pedibus et eos, qui ambulare non possent, in gigantum modum formavit, ita ut a gentibus de pannis et linteis quasi dracones tegerentur, eosdemque sagittis confecit* ("he changed some who had decrepit feet and those who were unable to walk into a sort of giant to such an extent that they were covered with human clothes and linen, like serpents, he overcame them with arrows."). Cf. Dio 73.20.3: ἐπειδὴ ποτε πάντας τοὺς τῶν ποδῶν ἐν τῇ πόλει ὑπὸ νόσου ἢ ἐτέρας τινὸς συμφορᾶς ἐστερημένους ἀθροίσας δρακόντων τέ τινα αὐτοῖς εἶδη περὶ τὰ γόνατα περιέπλεξε, καὶ σπόγγους ἀντὶ λίθων βάλλειν δοὺς ἀπέκτεινέ σφας ῥοπάλῳ παίων ὡς γίγαντας ("gathering all those in the city who had a sickness related to their feet or some type of bad circumstance, he covered them from the knee down in the likeness of a serpent and giving them sponges in place of stones, he killed them—striking them with a club as if they were giants").

Chapter 3

A FORMLESS MONSTER: THE *THEBAID* AND DOMITIAN'S 'HAIR'

In this chapter I examine Domitian as a different type of Flavian monster. His transgressive characteristics result in a monstrous formlessness across various depictions. I will focus on his hair and baldness within and outside of the literary record, first distinguishing the particularities of formlessness from the types of hybrid (Centaurs and the Minotaur) and monsters (giants) I discussed in the previous chapters. Hybrid and excessive monsters are threatening because they exist across expected categories. Their forms are strange and unsettling because they are transgressive. The presentation of Domitian throughout the era is, as we shall see, transgressive because it contains two forms at once and not, necessarily, an unexpected one.

Such formlessness can be elucidated by modern monster films in which the threat of a formless monster to the constructed boundaries of culture is often presented through overt and extreme symbolism. John Carpenter's monster in *The Thing* (1982) features a creature that can mutate into other characters and is set in a remote research base in the arctic. This monster embodies the formlessness of the arctic and, ultimately, destroys the base which represents culture. Prince's 1988 article "Dread, Taboo and *The Thing*" approaches this film from the lens of Edmund Leach's theories concerning the need for "basic discriminations" for an individual to function in society (as discussed in my introductory chapter). Prince relies on the work of Mary Douglas and Julia Kristeva concerning the abject aspects of the monster, arguing that elements which threaten society appear on the boundaries between categories (also discussed in my introduction). Prince's article views Carpenter's ambiguous "thing" as a manifestation of the threat to an ordered society which comes from the space between categories. Of the monster's

interactions with the base, Prince observes: “Inside is form, outside is formlessness. The basic structural principle of the film involves the transgression of boundaries ... what is outside comes in, formlessness invades form, rupturing and destroying the socially ordered community.”¹

Although less extreme, Domitian’s presentation as bald and well-haired across types of representation also reveals a manner of formlessness. Domitian’s formless representation similarly threatens certain constructs of Flavian Rome by collapsing distinctions around which aspects of culture are built. His dual projection associates the emperor all at once with ambiguous gender, deviant sexuality, virility and potency. I return to these consequences of his representation at the chapter’s conclusion. First, as with the other monsters I have analyzed, let us look at the transgression related to Domitian’s monstrosity.

Domitian as Transgressor

As with the other monsters we have seen, the representations of the emperor, taken together, defy categorization, rendering him as transgressive and thereby monstrous. I begin with two brief accounts of Domitian’s body and behavior. The first comes from Pliny’s *Panegyricus*, a text composed in 100 CE to honor Trajan. Pliny depicts Domitian in negative terms:

ipse occursu quoque visuque terribilis: superbia in fronte, ira in oculis, **femineus** pallor in corpore, in ore impudentia multo rubore suffusa. Non adire quisquam, non adloqui audebat tenebras semper secretumque captantem, nec unquam ex solitudine sua prodeuntem, nisi ut solitudinem faceret. (*Pan.* 48)

He was terrible to meet and see: a haughtiness on his forehead, anger in his eyes, a womanish complexion all over his body, with a shameless ruddiness on his face. No one dared to approach or speak to him; he was always in the dark and concealed, nor would he ever come out from his solitude except to create another place of solitude.

¹ Prince (1988: 124–25). This article represents a precursor to ‘monster theory’ and is firmly rooted in the theories of Mary Douglas, Edmund Leach and Julia Kristeva concerning culture, distinctions, dirt and the abject.

I would like to draw attention to Pliny's adjective *femineus*. During the first century this adjective is often used for transgressive moments when men act 'like women'. It is not used as often to describe feminine qualities of a man's body as here.² It is employed to distinguish purposefully categories of men and women when those categories are in question. For instance, in Statius' *Achilleid*, Thetis dresses Achilles in women's clothing to prevent him from going to Troy (2.35: *femineo ... amictu*, "with feminine clothing") which Odysseus describes as a violation (2.35: *violavit*). Silius uses the adjective to convey the markedly unmanly cries of the surrendering Capuan men (*Pun.* 13.313: *femineum ... ululatum*, "womanly shrieking"). Pliny's use of the adjective also points to transgression. That is, Pliny ascribes feminine characteristics to Domitian's presumptively masculine body. This rendering is not entirely unexpected from a hostile source such as the *Panegyricus*. However, what is significant for my reading is how Pliny criticizes Domitian. He makes sure to place Domitian across categories in order to construct fully his negative sketch of the emperor. In order to convey his portrait of Domitian's body, Pliny must work across categories.

Such category transgression is also evident in a brief description of Domitian found in Tacitus' *Histories*. This passing comment about Domitian's behavior comes via rumor to Vespasian, while Domitian is serving as a young consul:

² This is the only use of this adjective in Pliny's *Panegyricus*. The adjective is not used in any of Suetonius' imperial *Vitae*. Moreover, it is not used by Tacitus to describe any other emperor. The adjective is much more common in poetry and first appears in the late Republican era (*TLL* vi.1.465.15). In Silius' *Punica*, Hannibal considers taking rest in the shade, called *femineum* (1.259); it is also used of gendered division of labor (3.350: *femineus ... labor*; 14.661 *femineus labor*). Hannibal accuses Paulus of cowardice: *cui femineo stant corde timores* (9.263). It demarcates the division between the martial ability of men and women: *femineum credas maribus concurrere vulgum* (14.129). It is also employed in order to characterize negatively the dying noise of Draces: *femineo clamore* (15.468) or to diminish a wound from a spear: *femineis ... unguibus* (1.760–61). It also refers to clothing appropriate for women but worn by the Capuan men: *virum de corpore vestes / femineae* (13.353–4). In Statius' *Thebaid*, both instances refer to laments of women (5.650, 690). In Statius' *Silvae*, it modifies the noun *decus* within a discussion of a beautiful man (2.6.38; discussed below). In Statius' *Achilleid*, it refers to a group meant to be composed only of women (1.602: *agmine femineo*). On the use of this adjective for men, see *TLL* vi.1.466.55–10. This description has been attached to soft feminine cheeks in surviving busts; see Boyle (2003: 34 n. 114). See Williams (2010: 137–76) for the language of femininity applied to Roman men in literature.

Vespasianus in Italiam resque urbis intentus adversam de Domitiano famam accipit,
tamquam terminos aetatis et concessa filio egrederetur ... (*Hist.* 4.51)

Vespasian, intent on Italy and on the affairs of the city, received a rumor about Domitian—that he was transgressing the boundaries of his age and the things appropriate for a son ...

Domitian is described here as incapable of behaving within appropriate age categories: *terminos aetatis*.³ In other words, Domitian does not confine himself to established norms in Tacitus' account of a rumor.⁴ Domitian transgresses expected categories of behavior, note Tacitus' use of *egrederetur* (4.51). As we have seen in the texts of Statius and Silius such transgression across categories is often the trait of a monster. In this chapter I will focus on an understudied aspect of Domitian in order to elucidate this part of his monstrousness: his baldness. Contextualization of Domitian's hair (and lack thereof) offers great insight into his transgressive character. These two post-Domitianic sources (Tacitus and Pliny) are, presumably, hostile and their presentation of Domitian's transgressive elements is not entirely unexpected. In the following sections I will discuss some further hostile sources such as Suetonius' *De vita Caesarum* (wherein Domitian's baldness is represented) and other laudatory sources such as epic poetry, coinage and statuary (wherein Domitian appears to have beautiful hair). These sources have differing attitudes towards Domitian. We may expect Statius' *Thebaid* to contain positive depictions of Domitian and his hair. On the other hand, Suetonius' primarily negative depiction of Domitian's baldness

³ See Schulz (2019: 61 n. 15) on this passage conveying the need to control Domitian. This image of Domitian as one who strives beyond standard categories recurs throughout Tacitus' work: *pleraque ... audebat* (*Hist.* 4.39.2); *tantum licentiam* (*Agr.* 7.2).

⁴ This is not to imply that this is a universal descriptor of Domitian. Indeed, Martial emphasizes positive aspects of Domitian's character, including *quies* and *pudor* (9.79) which present a much more restrained *princeps*; see Pritchett (1990). His diet is also depicted in restrained terms by Suetonius (*Dom.* 21): *non temere super cenam praeter Matianum malum et modicum in ampulla potiunculam sumeret* ("he would not take much during dinner except a Matian apple and a moderate amount of wine in a jug"). In addition to the passages from Pliny and Tacitus, however, similar depictions of transgression are found elsewhere as in the execution of an astrologer who predicted Domitian's imminent death (Suet. *Dom.* 15) or his famed macabre banquet (Dio 67.9). Although this behavior is marked as strange and sinister, the categories transgressed are less explicit than in Pliny and Tacitus. A possible exception, only touched on tangentially below, is his lust as described by Suetonius (*Dom.* 22: *libidinis nimiae*).

is expected given his hostility towards the late emperor.⁵ However, we will also analyze Domitian's own writing, surely a positive representation of the emperor, which reference his baldness and the beauty of hair simultaneously. While some of these representations can be accounted for based on source bias, taken together they reveal a 'formless' presentation of the emperor throughout his representations.⁶ By reading this evidence together, I will argue for a transgressive representation of the emperor across the different sources. By analyzing Domitian and his baldness within and outside of the literature composed during and after his reign, we will understand more fully this representation of Domitian as a type of monster.

Hair in the Thebaid

Hair is important and overlooked in the *Thebaid*. On one hand, the *Thebaid* reaffirms the link between long flowing locks, virility and poetic creativity. On the other hand, the poem also inverts that symbol by imbuing hair with infernal and transgressive elements. What is more, Statius' manipulation of hair in the poem both underscores Domitian's actual baldness and highlights a young Domitian with at least some hair. Ultimately, reading hair in the *Thebaid* elucidates Domitian's transgressive presence. I will begin by outlining the understudied aspect of hair as a symbol of poetic creativity in the poem and show how this metapoetics of hair draws attention to its significance in interpreting the poem.

⁵ Suetonius' depiction of Domitian may be more nuanced. While some have seen Suetonius, especially in terms of Domitian, as exhibiting a balanced representation—including such defamatory details along with some praise; see Waters (1964); Southern (1997: 118) who still sees a progression towards a negative depiction of Domitian in Suetonius. Overall the scholarly contention assesses Suetonius' hostile view towards Domitian; see Jones (2002); Charles (2002); Charles and Anagnostou-Laoutides (2010). For a seminal work on the unreliability of Suetonius, see Wallace-Hadrill (1983: 162–66 and *passim*).

⁶ On the inherent connection between monstrousness and the emperor see Robert Garland (1995: 48–52). He assesses the extreme nature of the principate as trending towards monstrous behavior: "The singular status and excessive power of the emperor constituted an obvious social aggravation" (51).

Hair as a metaphor for artistic creation has a long tradition which goes back to the patron of the arts, Apollo, a god often depicted with long flowing locks.⁷ This connection resonates in the *Thebaid* and Statius' other works. Hair is linked to poetic creativity since the laurel crown of victory for poetic contests is associated with Daphne's hair,⁸ the girl pursued by Apollo.⁹ Indeed, such references extend to his epic in the later proem of Statius' *Achilleid* where Statius begins by asking Apollo to bind his hair with the laurel bay (1.9–10: *da fontes mihi, Phoebæ, novos ac fronde secunda / necte comas*, "give fresh inspiration to me, Phoebus, and bind my hair with the winning laurel").¹⁰ The triangulation of hair and poetic creativity is very much at play in the Statian *corpus*. In the *Thebaid* there are two prominent expressions of poetic creativity via hair attached to different characters. The first is the reference to the locks of Apollo himself (1.698), while the second appears throughout the text with consistent references to the Fury Tisiphone's hair (1.89; 1.115; 2.283; 8.849; 9.152; 11.64).

Statius depicts Apollo's hair during Polyneices' prayer to Apollo:

Phoebe parens, seu te Lyciae Pataraea nivosus
 exercent dumeta iugis, seu rore pudico
 Castaliae **flavos** amor est tibi mergere **crines**,
 seu Troiam Thymbraeus habes, ubi fama volentem
 ingratis Phrygios umeris subiisse molaes. 700
 (*Theb.* 1.696–700)

⁷ On Apollo's long, often beautiful, hair note *inter alia* Hom. *Il.* 20.39, *Od.* 11.318; *Hom. H. Ap.* 177; Phil. *Imag.* 2.1. On Flavian and later implications of this aspect of Apollo, see Newlands (2013). Note also Newlands (2013) on hair as a metaphor for different genres of poetry. Long hair is associated with the fullness of epic poetry and baldness was, by extension, for meagre works. Apollo as an initiator into manhood often receives the first cut of hair (Hes. *Theog.* 347).

⁸ *Ov. Met.* 1.550; see Levine (1995: 82–85).

⁹ *Ov. Met.* 1. 525–52. For this "poetic garland" and its connection to Horace and Pindar, see Keith (2017 :10). See Lowrie (1997: 198) for the appropriation of the laurel from the military to the poetic realm in Horace. And note Horace's articulation of Apollo's role at *C.* 4.2.9: *laurea donandus Apollinari* ("to be adorned with Apollo's laurel crown").

¹⁰ Note the similar phrase in the *Thebaid* (7.170: *nectere fronde comas*, "bind the hair with the laurel"); see Ripoll and Soubiran (2008: *ad loc.*).

Father Phoebus, whether Patara's thickets engage you in the snowy hills of Lycia, or it is your desire to sink your yellow hair in Castalia's undefiled moisture, or, as Thymbrean, you spend time at Troy, where the rumor is that you carried blocks of Phrygian stone on your resistant shoulders of your own volition.

This mention of Apollo's hair (*flavos ... crines*) triggers a reference to Apollo's role as patron of the arts and connects hair to poetic creativity early in the poem. Moreover, the Castalian waters where Apollo submerges (*mergere*) his locks were regarded as a source of poetic inspiration.¹¹ Statius' Apollo soaks his hair in poetically potent waters nearly acting out the metaphorical association of hair and poetic creativity outlined above. This is a poem with poetically charged locks.

This metapoetic valence of Apollo's hair in this passage is reinforced by intertextual references. Statius models this scene on multiple previous representations of Apollo and his connection to the creative process. Statius' scene evokes Horace's *Odes* (3.4.61–62: *qui rore puro Castaliae lavit / crinis solutos*, "[he] washes his unbound hair in the pure water of Castalia").¹² What is more, Horace's poem is itself modeled on Pindar's first *Pythian Ode* (39: Λύκιε καὶ Δάλου ἀνάσσων Φοῖβε, Παρνασσοῦ τε κράναν Κασταλίαν φιλέων, "Lycian and lord of Delos, Phoebus, adoring the Castalian spring of Parnassus"),¹³ which begins with praise of the

¹¹ This connotation owes much to their connection to Apollo and Delphi; see Th. *Id.* 7. 148. For an exhaustive summary of references to Castalia, see Herbert (1978). Of Roman poets see Herbert (1978: 205): "For them Castalia would, if need be, become purely a poetic symbol." For the image of Apollo placing his hair in this spring, see Pind. *Pyth.* 1.39; Hor. *Carm.* 3.4.61–64; for this as a purification ritual, see Miller (2009: 304). The springs are also mentioned by Statius' Oedipus (1.62) and appear at 8.175 as a periphrasis for Apollo (8.175–76: *hoc antra lacusque / Castalii tripodumque fides? sic gratus Apollo?* "Is this [the task] of Castalian caves and pools and the ritual related to tripods? Is this pleasing to Apollo in this way?").

¹² Parke (1978: 205). The themes of *Odes* 3.4 include poets and poetry (3.4.4: *seu fidibus citharave Phoebi*, "whether through the chords or cithara of Apollo").

¹³ Miller (2009: 304).

lyre and Apollo.¹⁴ Both of these model texts present Apollo in his role as an artistic patron and, in Horace's, bathing his hair in the Castalian springs; at the same time, however, both texts treat gigantomachy. Statius' window allusion to Horace and Pindar casts this passage as metapoetically potent: Statius' allusion draws attention to the generic differences between his text and that of his models.

The immediate context of Horace's and Pindar's poems is gigantomachic, while Statius' is not. Polyneices' lengthy prayer (1.696–719) does not include any references to gigantomachy. What is more, the prominent role given to Apollo within a gigantomachic narrative is, essentially, found only in Statius' two models.¹⁵ Moreover, as discussed elsewhere in this thesis, gigantomachy is an important theme of epic poetry. By alluding to the gigantomachic context of his models, Statius' epic poem engages two generically distinct poetic ancestors as they take up the 'proper' theme of epic poetry. As a result, Statius draws attention to the crafting of his poem. This evocation of gigantomachy is pronounced in one noted difference between Horace's text and his model: the expansion of the reference to Castalia. Horace transforms Pindar's κράναν Κασταλίαν φιλέων (1.39) into a scene where Apollo washes his hair in this beloved spring (3.61–64). Statius alludes to Horace's notable expansion of Pindar's phrase as well. This Horatian elaboration presents Apollo sinking his hair into the Castalian waters as a symbol of his purity: *rore puro* (3.4.61). Such pure image of Apollo likely intends to contrast Apollo with the Titans (42–43: *inpios / Titanas*) within the gigantomachic context of Horace's poem, as John Miller has argued.¹⁶ Statius employs the Horatian context by also referencing Apollo's purity in his own

¹⁴ (1.1: χρυσέα φόρμιγξ, Απόλλωνος καὶ ἰοπλοκάμων / σύνδικον Μοισᾶν κτέανον, “golden lyre, just possession of Apollo and scarlet-haired Muses”).

¹⁵ Miller (1998).

¹⁶ Miller (1998).

passage: *rore pudico* (1.697). As such, Statius reminds the attentive reader of the gigantomachic context of his model text and his model's model. Although employing non-epic models while crafting epic, Statius exploits the fact that his models treat a traditionally epic theme, that is, gigantomachy. Thus the Flavian poet draws attention to the poetic process and hair as metapoetic symbols in the *Thebaid*.

And yet, the metapoetics of Apollo's hair within the *Thebaid* primes the reader for a less traditional association: Tisiphone's locks. The references to Tisiphone's hair (1.89; 1.115; 2.283; 8.849; 9.152; 11.64)¹⁷ evoke a metapoetry of hair as well. These references invert some of the positive connotations of hair we saw above, since Tisiphone comes from the world below and is herself transgressive of the boundary between upper and lower worlds (1.96: *Taenariae limen petit inremeabile portae*, "she sought the threshold of the Taenarian gate from which there is no return").¹⁸ As we shall see, this transgression is also communicated via her hair which is evocative of poetic creativity.

In three references to Tisiphone's hair, there is noise produced (1.115, 8.344, 11.64), while in a fourth instance, the hair is ordered to be silent (9.152). In particular, her hair is twice described with the adjective *sibilus*: (1.115–16: *fera sibila crine virenti / congeminat*, "she doubles wild hissing with her verdant hair"; 8.344–45: *vertice crinem / incutiens acuitque tubas et sibila miscet*, "shaking her hair, she hones the tubas and mixes in hisses"). This adjective evokes singing and is thought to imitate the sound of nature.¹⁹

¹⁷ Other characters have snaky hair in the *Thebaid*: e.g. the Gorgons (12.647: *anguicomae sorores*) and Medusa (8.518 and 12.609).

¹⁸ On Tisiphone's infernal character and importance in the poem, see Ganiban (1997: 24–43 and *passim*); Hardie (1993: 81–83); Bernstein (2016: 242); Keith (2002) sees Tisiphone's snaky tresses as a return to horrific origins.

¹⁹ See *OLD s.v. sibilus*; see Quint. 8.6.31 and Briguglio (2017: *ad loc.*). Tisiphone's serpentine hair makes the same sound (*sibilat*) in Silius (2.546–47: *sibilat insurgens capiti et turgentia circa / multus colla micat squalenti tergore serpens*, "on her head and around her tumid neck many serpents, rising up, hiss and gleam on her foul back").

Moreover, her hair is even given the role of an audience, thus highlighting spectatorship and its metapoetic character. Recent studies have pointed to other instances of competing spectatorship in the *Thebaid* as metapoetically robust, primarily focusing on viewership of the fraternal dual.²⁰ Statius' first reference to Tisiphone's hissing hair (1.115) also contains echoes and responses to the noise (116–17: *signum terris ... late Pelopeaque regna resultant*, “a sign to the earth ... the kingdom of Pelop's echoed far and wide”). This response to the hisses of her tresses heightens the performative role of hair and reinforces the impression that it is actually singing a song. Pushing this idea of a performance and response further, we also note a theatrical presentation of this noise:

ut stetit, abrupta qua plurimus arce Cithaeron
 occurrit caelo, fera sibila crine virenti 115
 congeminat, signum terris, unde omnis Achaei
 ora maris late Pelopeaque regna resultant.
 audiit et medius caeli Parnasos et asper
 Eurotas, dubiamque iugo fragor impulit Oeten
 in latus, et geminis vix fluctibus obstitit Isthmos. 120
 (*Theb.* 1.114–20)

When she stopped—where the peak of Cithairon rushes up to the vault of heaven—she doubles wild hissing with her verdant hair. A sign to the earth at which the whole Achaean coast and the kingdom of Pelops echoed far and wide. Parnassus (in the middle of the sky) and harsh Eurotas heard it. The clamor set Oeta wavering on its mountain range and slipping towards its side. The Isthmus barely stood against the twin waves.

Statius offers a natural audience for this noise: the whole earth. The individual listing of different mountains (114: *Cithaeron*; 118 *Parnasos*; 119: *Oeten*), other geographic spaces (117: *ora maris*; 117: *Pelopea ... regna*) and natural forces (*asper* / *Eurotas*, 117–19) recounts the various audience members for this song. Indeed, both the Eurotas and Parnassus are even animated in the

²⁰ See Bernstein (2016) who also argues for the destabilizing effect of such competing viewership; see also Lovatt (2016). On spectatorship in the *Thebaid* more broadly, see Harrison (2013); Lovatt (2013: *passim*).

sense that they are given the ability to hear Tisiphone's song: *audiit* (118).²¹ Tisiphone's hair has an audience that responds to the song produced.

Similarly, in book 8 her hair is also given an audience:

addit acerba sonum Teumesi e vertice **crinem**
incutiens acuitque **tubas** et **sibila** miscet 345
Tisiphone: stupet insolito clangore Cithaeron
marcidus et turres **carmen** non tale secutae.
iam trepidas Bellona fores armataque pulsat
limina, iam multo laxantur cardine Thebae. (8.344–49)

She adds a noise from the harsh peak of Teumesos; shaking her hair, she hones the tubas and mixes in hisses. Drooping Cithaeron is stunned at the uncommon clamor as well as the towers, unaccustomed to following such a song. Now Bellona pounds the trembling doors and fortified thresholds. Now Thebes is exposed at many points.

In fact, Statius describes Tisiphone's hissing hair here as mingling with actual instruments:

acuitque tubas et sibila miscet (345). To this mixture of hissing hair and military trumpets,

Statius provides an audience as well: Mt. Cithaeron, Bellona and Thebes. In particular, Cithaeron is personified through the verb *stupet*.²² The mountain is also depicted with the adjective *marcidus* ("exhausted") which marks it as Dionysian and therefore Theban and may evoke the dramatic stage as well.²³ Most importantly, perhaps, is another audience member: the walls and towers of Thebes (*turres*).

This spectator is metapoetically charged. The word *turres* points to Amphion's traditional role in founding Thebes. Statius had already given prominent placement to Amphion's song in the poem's proem: *quo carmine muris / iusserit Amphion Tyriis accedere montes* ("with what

²¹ For a summary of the epic trope of the resounding landscape dating back to Hellenistic poetry (Call. *Hymn.* 3.56–59) see Briguglio (2017: *ad loc.*).

²² Animals can be the subject of *stupeo* (see Plin. *NH* 27.2.2) as well as natural forces and inanimate objects (*OLD* s.v. *stupeo* 1b). However, Adrastus recently exhibited that behavior (8.250) (see Augoustakis (2016b: *ad loc.*)) and the mountain is later labeled *marcidus* (8.347) which suggests personification in Statius' use of *stupeo*.

²³ See Augoustakis (2016b: *ad loc.*).

song Amphion ordered mountains into Tyrian walls,” 1.9–10).²⁴ In the eighth book, the reference also responds to the intradiegetic storytelling from the night before (8.218–39) when the Thebans drink and sing of their city’s various origin stories—including Amphion’s building project (8.232–3: *alii Tyriam reptantia saxa / ad chelyn et duras animantem Amphiona cautes*, “others [spoke] of the stones creeping towards the lyre and Amphion animating the harsh rock”). The rocks and stones are personified (233: *animantem Amphiona*).²⁵ Indeed, in the storytelling from the night before, these same walls respond *ad chelyn* which is the term used for Statius’ comments on his own role as a poet in the *Thebaid*’s proem (1.33: *nunc tendo chelyn*, “now I play the lyre”).²⁶ The reference to the song-crazed walls of Thebes as part of the audience for the recitation of Tisiphone’s hair can therefore be construed metapoetically. These walls are not inanimate audience members but products of song themselves as well as symbols of song. Both passages place the noise coming from Tisiphone’s snaky hair as a noisy and creative output which has an audience worthy of a performance, evoking poetic creativity and encouraging a metapoetic reading. This is also reinforced by the Fury’s ability to silence her snakes (9.152: *et iussi tenere silentia crines*, “[the snaky] hair was ordered to keep silent”) or to single out a snake to sing (11.64: *crinalem attollit longo stridore cerasten / caeruleae dux ille comae*, “she [Tisiphone] selected a horned snake from her hair—the leader of her dark hair—for a loud hiss”).

²⁴ On Amphion and his song in the tradition see Prop. 1.9.10; Hor. *C.* 3.11.1–2; Hor. *Ars* 394–96; Ov. *Met.* 6.152; Sen. *Oed.* 612. On Ovid as a Statian model see Manasseh (2017: *passim*) and Keith (2002) and (2004). Statius’ reference to mountains (*montes*) is without parallel and may emphasize the power of Amphion’s poetry. Manasseh (2017: *ad loc.*) who likewise emphasize the poetic authority in the Statian use of *iubeo*—also present in this context in Silius’ *Punica* (11.445).

²⁵ See Augoustakis (2016b: *ad loc.*).

²⁶ See Briguglio (2017: *ad loc.*, 9–10) for Statius’ assimilation with Amphion. See also Manasseh (2017: *ad loc.*) and Augoustakis (2016b: *ad loc.*).

Tisiphone's snaky hair often sings—performing the *Thebaid's* connection between hair and poetic creativity.

What is more, Tisiphone herself is transgressive. She is called to cross the boundary between the upperworld and the Underworld early in the poem (1.96: *Taenariae limen petit inremeabile portae*, “she sought the threshold of the Taenarian gate from which there is no return”).²⁷ This transgression is critical for the poem's narrative as Tisiphone sets in motion the fraternal strife of the *Thebaid*.²⁸ Scholars view her role of one of transcendent authority.²⁹ Tisiphone's metapoetic hair also factors in her transgressive characterization in the poem. Statius' opening depiction of Tisiphone prominently features her hair. The scene can be read together with the depiction of Apollo (1.696–700, discussed above). At 1.89, Tisiphone's snaky hair licks the waters:

... inamoenum forte sedebat
Cocytus iuxta, resolutaque vertice crines
lambere sulphureas permiserat anguibus undas.
(1.89–91)

... she happened to be seated by the unpleasant Cocytus and, after she let her hair down, allowed her serpents to lick the sulphurous waters.

The structure of this passage is not unlike Apollo dipping his locks in the Castalian spring we have examined above. Apollo merges his hair into that source of poetic creativity, the Castalian spring, and Tisiphone does the same with the Cocytus. The Cocytus might not be as poetically

²⁷ On Tisiphone's infernal character and importance in the poem, see Ganiban (1997: 24–43 and *passim*); Hardie (1993: 81–83); Bernstein (2016: 242); Keith (2002) sees Tisiphone's snaky tresses as emphasizing a return to horrific origins.

²⁸ 1.114–96. This is a critical element for pessimistic readings of the poem. On Tisiphone and Vergil's Allecto as movers of the major scenes of both epics, see Vessey (1973:75); Hershkowitz (1998: 261); Ganiban (1997: 30–33). The Ovidian Tisiphone is also a model here (*Met.* 4.481–511); see Hill (1990): 117 n. 11.

²⁹ Ganiban (1997: 41–43).

potent as Castalia, but it is a river with a *fons*. She dips her hair in an Underworld river and transfers that infernal element into the world above.³⁰ This passage draws attention to the proximity of Tisiphone's hair (which we have been discussing) and her larger role as Underworld transgressor in the poem.³¹

The correspondence between Tisiphone's metapoetic hair and transgressive action is reinforced at other points as well. Statius describes Tisiphone's snaky hair while assimilating Tisiphone to Thessalian witches drawing the moon to the earth:

centum illi stantes umbrabant ora cerastae,
turba minor diri capitis; sedet intus abactis
ferrea lux oculis, qualis per nubila Phoebes
Atracia rubet arte labor ... (1.103–6)

One hundred snakes, standing upright, cast a shadow across her face—a small group from her dreadful head. Steely fire settled in her hollowed-out eyes, just like when the task of Phoebe blushes behind the clouds owing to Thessalian craft ...

Although the precise subject of the simile is the redness in Tisiphone's eyes, the proximity of this trick to the snakes is telling. The Thessalian trick is depicted involving witches who try to bring the moon down by a song or some type of chanted utterance, labeled with a noun or

³⁰ The infernal setting is made even more emphatic by the possible intertext with Ov. *Met.* (4.453–54) set in the Underworld at the gates of Hades, as the three fates play with their own snaky hair and before Tisiphone appears in that text:

... inamoenum forte **sedebat**
Cocyton iuxta, resolutaque vertice **crines** 90
lambere sulphureas permiserat **anguibus** undas. (Stat. *Theb.* 1.89–91)

Carceris ante fores clausas adamante **sedebant**
Deque suis atros pectebant **crinibus angues** (Ov. *Met.* 4.453–54)

They settled in front of the doors of the prison closed by iron and plucked at the black snakes in their hair.

³¹ We may also discern an infernal potency to the aforementioned Castalian springs. The Python licks up the Castalian waters to feed black venom (1.565–66: *Castaliis dum fontibus ore trisulco / fusus hiat nigro sitiens alimenta veneno*, “spread out at the Castalian springs, it drank heavily, thirsting for nourishment in the black venom”).

participle related to the verb *cano*, typically *carmen* or *cantus*.³² Although *cantus* may be more evocative of the original meaning of spell, by the early imperial period both terms are often interchangeable. Both nouns are used of the Thessalian trick, different parts of a song or different performances of the same song.³³ The conflation of these terms results in the potential for a songy, and therefore creative, undertone to the Thessalian trick in literature of this period. Statius' awareness of this aspect of the trick is evident in book 6, where he labels the witches' utterance *carmen*:

sic cadit, attonitis quotiens auellitur astris, 685
Solis opaca soror; procul auxiliantia gentes
aera crepant frustraue timent, at Thessala victrix
ridet anhelantes audito **carmine** bigas. (6.685–88)

Thus she falls, the shaded sister of the sun, whenever she is removed from the stunned stars; peoples from far off pound for help and are afraid in vain, but the triumphant Thessalian laughs at the panting horses—her chant heard.

The trick contains an unnatural song which brings the moon down to the earth—perhaps the most unsettling and transgressive threat of witches in antiquity.

However, the most significant transgression of Tisiphone's singing snakes is gendered. Unlike the poetic force of Apollo's locks, Tisiphone's voice is feminine, and to an extent her locks are also coded as feminine. As has been shown, such voices are often marginalized in the *Thebaid*, especially when they correspond to metapoetic elements. Antony Augoustakis has discussed this in terms of feminine mourning and epic voices in the *Thebaid*:

On the map of heroic verse narrative, same and other converge in the last book, only to be sharply distinguished in the epilogue, where foreignness becomes 'the

³² It should be noted that the Thessalian trick is not necessarily accomplished through song but through *incantamenta magica*, *defixiones*, often labeled as *carmina* (see *TLL* iii.464.80); *carmina* (Verg. *Ecl.* 8.69); *carmina* (Ov. *Am.* 2.1.23–26); *Thessalicis carminis* (Sen. *Ph.* 91). Their action is also called *cantus*: *excantata voce* (Hor. *Epod.* 5.45); *cantu* (Luc. 6.505); see Hill (1973) for a comprehensive summary.

³³ See *TLL* iii.467.50 for the close connection between uses of *cantus* and *carmen* from the late Republican into the Flavian period.

present in abeyance'. The retreat into the semiotic, namely the utterance of Bacchic cries (Ismene in book 11, the Argive women in book 12) or complete silence (Hypsipyle's ekphrastic stillness in book 6) speak volumes for the relegation of the female to the fringes of the epic landscape and the reinforcement of gender and generic boundaries.³⁴

Augoustakis draws attention to metapoetic moments of transgression represented by feminine voices in the poem. Tisiphone's metapoetic hair exhibits a similar transgression where songs within *the* song draw attention to the boundaries and thresholds in the text. The tension around this gendered aspect of Tisiphone's locks can be observed when she selects a snake / hair (designated by the masculine *dux*) to sing, *caeruleae dux ille comae* (11.64).³⁵ When referenced in the collective, the snaky hair is grouped into the feminine *turba*. This engagement reveals a tension around such metapoetic feminine voices in the poem.

By marking her hair as infernal (dipping it in the Cocytus), by evoking witchy inversions of the natural order (referencing the Thessalian trick) and by ascribing to the snakes a feminine quality, Statius marks Tisiphone's locks as a means for her transgressive presence in the poem. Moreover, construed metapoetically, hair helps us understand Tisiphone's transgression as

³⁴ 90–91. Much of the recent work concerning the *Thebaid's* feminine voices (and their potential for transgression) has centered on the poem's ending. Dietrich (1999) argues for the assertion of a feminine ending through lamentation of book 12 even if it is ultimately superseded by Statius' own voice (90–1). Lovatt (1999) finds more of a middle ground in the authority of female lament: "Lament, then, forms part of an alternative, but not necessarily opposing, female narrative" (137). Lovatt provides compelling arguments for female authoring and metapoetic instances centered around Argia and Antigone. She demonstrates how women can co-opt the metapoetics within a generic form coded as masculine (138). Pagan (2000) maintains the closural importance of Theseus and argues that "the female narrative is both suggested and undermined in the course of Book 12" (126). See also Markus (2004). For work on the ending of the *Thebaid* more broadly, see Vessey (1973: 307–16) on Theseus' resolution to the poem. See also Braund (1996) who argues for the ability of a Romanized Theseus to bring resolution. Putnam (2016) focuses on Statius' closing references to Parthenopaeus and the possible connections of that character to Vergil; see also Seo (2013: 130–41). Gervais (2017) argues that the duel between Theseus and Creon, when intertextually compared with *Aeneid* 12, is a powerful closural gesture but offers only a respite before the return of open-ended themes of violence and mourning in the remainder of book 12.

³⁵ Discussed above.

fundamental to her role and the poem in general.³⁶ Domitian's own hair in the *Thebaid* is also elucidatory.

Statius references Domitian's locks in book 1 and does so in a way which highlights poetic creativity as Apollo himself bestows a laurel on Domitian's hair:

tuque, o Latiae decus addite famae
quem noua maturi subeuntem exorsa parentis
aeternum sibi Roma cupit (licet artior omnes
limes agat stellas et te plaga lucida caeli, 25
Pliadum Boreaeque et hiulci fulminis expers,
sollicitet, licet ignipedum frenator equorum
ipse **tuis** alte radiantem **crinibus** arcum
imprimat aut magni cedat tibi Iuppiter aequa
parte poli), maneat hominum contentus habenis, 30
undarum terraeque potens, et sidera dones. (1.22–31)

And you, O glory added to Latium's repute, O Domitian, whom Rome desires for herself forever even as you undertake to renew the plans of your late father. Although the way through the stars is narrow and a clear realm of heaven welcomes you (free of the Pleiades, Boreas and the cracked lightning), although the charioteer of the fire-footed horses places a radiant halo on your hair, although Jupiter yields an equal share of the great sky, please remain content with the reigns of control over humans and please shun the stars—powerful on earth and sea.

Statius alludes to the myth of Apollo and Phaethon here. His models for this myth appear to be Ovid's account (*Met.* 2.1–149) of the myth and Lucan's proem (1.48: *seu te flammigeros Phoebi conscendere currus*, "or mount the flaming chariot if Phoebus").³⁷ Ovid portrays Phaethon's crowning by Sol/Apollo similarly (*Met.* 2.124: *inposuitque comae radios*, "he put the rays on his hair"). By invoking this myth, Statius aligns Domitian with Phaethon, whose assumption of power ends tragically. At the same time, Statius places himself in the cautionary guise of Apollo. Just as Apollo warned Phaethon about the difficulty in reigning in the steeds, Statius warns

³⁶ See Vessey (1973: 74–76). On the centrality of her *furor*, see Hershkowitz (1998: 54); Ganiban (1997: 32). For Tisiphone as a "personification of *odium* and *furor*," see Hardie (1993: 77–80); Bernstein (2016: 242).

³⁷ Briguglio (2017: *ad loc.*); Manasseh (2017: *ad loc.*).

Domitian to remain content in the rulership of humans (*maneas hominum contentus habenis*).³⁸ The allusion to Phaethon offers a model to caution Domitian away from apotheosis and towards his work on earth—namely the Flavian *imperium* (1.31: *undarum terraeque potens, et sidera donec*, “as ruler of the earth and seas, please shun the stars”). This model extends to a broader parental and imperial message of succession via Jupiter (Apollo’s father) in the *Thebaid*, and Vespasian (Domitian’s father) outside of the text. The passage above focuses on the critical themes of *imperium*, divination and succession. It is particularly crucial for my reading that this weighty passage also mentions Domitian’s hair and underscores its importance in the *Thebaid*. But let us now broaden our discussion to talk about the complexities of baldness outside Statius’ poem.

Roman Baldness

In Greek and Roman thought, baldness is consistently treated in a pejorative manner. For the Romans in particular, baldness is a negative marker in terms of attractiveness, virility and sexual ability. One notable exception comes from the association of baldness with wisdom, leading to the appreciation of baldness in some philosophical schools.³⁹ However, this association was based on the correlation with old age, and thereby, also proximity to death.⁴⁰

³⁸ Briguglio (2017: *ad loc.*); Manasseh (2017: 28): “Statius, therefore, presents himself as Apollo, warning Domitian to forego divine aspirations, and to focus instead on his governance of earth.” What is more, this passage is addressed to the *princeps* and concerns questions of apotheosis and empire; see Penwill (2013); Rebeggiani (2013, 2019).

³⁹ Gordon (2012: 141–42); Draycott (2018: 68).

⁴⁰ Levin (1995: 85–87).

Age is expectedly significant for Roman conceptions of baldness. In terms of beauty, baldness has a complex but generally negative effect on physical appearance,⁴¹ especially what we call today “premature balding.” Present day definitions place such hair loss as early as late teens for men and early forties for women.⁴² Ancient evidence suggests that balding in late teens would have been judged as disfigurement, though we do not have many accounts where balding can be discerned at such an early age. There is evidence that suggests that baldness in the range of ages 29–54 was still remarkable or could be described as disfigurement.⁴³ This late range for what might be considered “premature” balding underscores the overall pejorative characterization of baldness in this period. Baldness—even during old age and, thus, possibly more acceptable—was often downplayed.⁴⁴ Among Romans whose portraiture often exhibited an emphasis on verisimilitude, we still observe embarrassment concerning their baldness (e.g. Julius Caesar).⁴⁵

⁴¹ For an extreme characterization related to shaved head, note the narrator’s comments in Petr. *Sat.* 110 of his shaved head: *spoliati capitis dedecus*.

⁴² The modern medical term and definition are as follows and come from WebMd.com: “**Androgenic alopecia** is a genetic condition that can affect both men and women. Men with this condition, called male pattern baldness, can begin suffering hair loss as early as their teens or early 20s. It's characterized by a receding hairline and gradual disappearance of hair from the crown and frontal scalp. Women with this condition, called female pattern baldness, don't experience noticeable thinning until their 40s or later. Women experience a general thinning over the entire scalp, with the most extensive hair loss at the crown” (<https://www.webmd.com/skin-problems-and-treatments/hair-loss/understanding-hair-loss-basics#1>, last accessed 10/1/2019).

⁴³ Suetonius mentions that Caesar was chided by his soldiers for his baldness (discussed further below) during his Gallic triumph at age 54 (*Caes.* 51). Although it is not known when his hair loss began, that it is still a point worth referencing at this advanced age speaks to the potentially wide range of what could be considered ‘premature’ hair loss. Indeed, Caligula established looking down on his baldness as a capital offense (Suet. *Cal.* 50: *criminosum et exitiale habebatur*), while Suetonius labels Caligula’s baldness a *deformatas* (18.1). Caligula was assassinated at 29; see Draycott (2018: 70–72).

⁴⁴ For contemporary instances of men concealing their baldness—or the topic of stigma over baldness—in old age. see Mart. 5.49; 10.83 Plin. *Ep.* 3.6. Of the stigma over a woman’s baldness in old age, see Mart. 12.7; see also Parkin and Parkin (2003: 82–83).

⁴⁵ Draycott (2018: 70–71).

Premature balding was negative and Domitian appears to have fallen well within the “premature” balding category. His own words cited in Suetonius discuss the beginnings of his baldness *in adolescentia*, before 30.⁴⁶ There can be no doubt that Domitian’s hair loss was premature and, therefore, removed from any connotations of perceived, philosophical wisdom.

Balding was also connected to a lack of virility. Aristotle’s humoreal theories established a set of ideas which, although do not make the connection explicitly, underscore a correlation between hair loss and a lack of virility. Aristotle claims that hair growth and semen production come from the same source and maintains that hair growth for a man is at its peak when he is in the prime of youth.⁴⁷ From this we can infer that there was a correlation between hair loss and lack of virility which continued into the Roman period.⁴⁸

In addition, baldness was also associated with deviant sexual activity.⁴⁹ Julius Caesar’s adultery (*moechum*) and sexual excess (*effutuisti*) is associated with his baldness in a song in *septenarii* by his troops during his Gallic triumph:

Urbanī, servate uxores: **moechum calvom** adducimus.
Aurum in Gallia **effutuisti**, hic sumpsisti mutuum. (Suet. *Caes.* 51.1)

⁴⁶ See *OLD* s.v. *adulescentia* 1; *TLL* i.797.60. Varro (in Censorinus’ *de Die Natali*, 14.2) places *adulescentia* between *pueritia* (1–15) and *iuventus* (30–45). These definitions were legal and did fluctuate (no more than five years) over the late Republic and Imperial periods; see Eyben (2003: 67). On Domitian specifically, see Page (1998: 113–14): “this gives us only a *terminus ante quem* of about thirty years of age. As for a *terminus post quem*, eighteen perhaps?” In terms of dating this work (discussed below), Morgan (1997) convincingly gives it a *terminus ante quem* for Domitian at age 35. This is based largely on Suetonius noting that Domitian pursued literature in his youth.

⁴⁷ Arist. *GA* 5.783b–784a; *HA* 3.11.518a; see Draycott (2018: 67). Note also ps. Arist. *Pr.* 4.31 on the connection of hairiness and lust.

⁴⁸ On the association of baldness with a lack of virility in the Roman period see Mart. 3.74.5–6 and Gal. *Mixt.* 2.261 as well as the Suetonian observations discussed above. See Cantarella (1992: 159): “baldness, for the Romans, was a sign of inadequate virility.” See also Gleason (1995: 68–70) on the connection between hair and virility in the second sophistic. See Newlands (2014: 319–20) for a discussion of this in the context of Domitian’s lack of a male heir.

⁴⁹ See Williams (2010: 139–44) on bodily hair, depilation and masculine sexuality. See also Gleason (1995: 55–81) and Parker (1997).

City-folk, look after your wives, we have a bald adulterer in our midst. You screwed away the gold in Gaul which you took out on loan here.

This adultery should also be set against Caesar's alleged passive relationship with Nicomedes, also celebrated by his soldiers at this same triumph:

Gallias Caesar subegit, Nicomedes Caesarem:
Ecce Caesar nunc triumphat qui subegit Gallias,
Nicomedes non triumphat qui subegit Caesarem.⁵⁰
(Suet. *Caes.* 49.4)

Caesar subdued Gaul; Nicomedes subdued Caesar: Behold Caesar now triumphs (the one who subdued Gaul). Nicomedes has no triumph, although he subdued Caesar.

Note the lampoon's pairing of baldness and various types of sexual transgressions: as an adulterer and a *pathicus*.⁵¹ Amidst these insults the only physical depiction of Caesar is his baldness. Notable are also the inscriptions found on pellets at Perugia from the siege of Lucius Antonius and Fulvia by Octavian, which Mark Antony attempted to break in 41–40 BCE. Appian mentions these pellets, and some have been found.⁵² Among the insults related to penetration inscribed on the pellets, there is one attacking Lucius Antonius and mentioning his baldness (*CIL* 11.6721, 13: *L. Antoni calve, | peristi | C. Caesarus Victoria*, "Lucius Antonius, the bald, you have been defeated, Caius Caesar is victorious").⁵³ The phallic symbolism of these missiles which are lobbed at vulnerable targets, also underscores the connection between lack of virility

⁵⁰ In the same section Suetonius also passes over the lampooning of Calvus on this topic (49.1: *Bithynia quicquid / et pedicator Caesaris umquam habuit*, "whatever Bithynia had and Caesar's *pedicator*"). On the grouping of these lampoons, see Richlin (1992: 96). See Hahn (2015: 162–64) for a discussion of the humorous aspect of these passages, but with no mention of Caesar's baldness.

⁵¹ On the politics of Caesar's presentation of deviant sexual behavior, see Corbeill (1997) and (2002).

⁵² *BC* 5.4.36.

⁵³ Note also *CIL* 11.6721, 14: *L. Antoni calve, Fulvia, culum pandite* ("Bald Lucius Antonius and Fulvia, open your butt"); see McDermott (1942: 37); Charles (2002: 40 n. 86). See also Hallett (1977); Cantarella (1992: 159); Williams (2010: 29, 220).

and baldness. By the late Republican period, therefore, baldness is often associated with ugliness, deviant sexual behavior and impotence.

Baldness in the Flavian Period

Now I will turn to how baldness and hair operate in Flavian literature and the Flavian period. There is a visible connection between hair and beauty in the literature of this era, in particular in young men with long hair. Martial 1.31 and 5.38 describe Pudens' lament over the shoring of the long locks (1.31.4 *longas ... comas*, "long hair") of his favorite Encolpus. The cutting of these locks may represent a transition to an older age and less sexual attractiveness.⁵⁴ Statius offers vivid illustrations of characters whose hair and beauty are connected. For instance, the poet links hair to beauty in *Silvae* 3.4 and in the *Achilleid* (1.162: *fulvoque nitet coma gratior auro*, "his hair gleams more pleasantly than yellow gold").⁵⁵ Set against these exemplars baldness would be, at least, an aesthetic deficiency in the Flavian period. However, the Flavian presentation of baldness is more nuanced.⁵⁶

Indeed, many of the negative connotations of baldness discussed above can be found in analyzing Domitian himself. The connection of deviant sexual activity and baldness is particularly relevant for Domitian who was alleged to have played the penetrated role in sexual

⁵⁴ See Pollini (2003: 157-59) on *capillatus*, *comatus* and *crinitus* as terms denoting long hair in contemporary literature. Note also Petr. *Sat.* 97.2 for a depiction of the younger Giton as *crispus*, *mollis*, *formosus* ("elegant, soft, pretty").

⁵⁵ On the Homeric tradition of Achilles' blond hair, see Ripoll and Soubiran (2008: *ad loc.*).

⁵⁶ This fawning over the beauty of hair does not appear to have upset Domitian. *Silvae* 3.4 is a poem Domitian would have known well, as it praises the beauty of Domitian's long-haired favorite, Earinus. I also do not conclude that the depiction of Achilles' flowing locks in the *Achilleid* was meant to ruffle Domitian. For such a reading, see Benker (1987: 312).

relationships multiple times in his youth.⁵⁷ As we observed in the case of Julius Caesar, such behavior and references to baldness are clustered together.

Domitian also lacked an heir which could also be connected to lack of virility. Domitian was not impotent: he had a son who died in infancy (Suet. *Dom.* 3; Mart. 6.3); and he forced his niece / lover to have an abortion (Suet. *Dom.* 22) as well. Nevertheless, his inability to produce a male heir, paired with his hairlessness, articulates weakness.⁵⁸

Domitian exhibits multiple characteristics normally associated with baldness: lack of virility and deviant sexual behavior, albeit often articulated by hostile sources. However, Domitian's baldness and the discourse around hair in Flavian Rome does not simply cast him as a subject of mockery. As we shall see, Domitian's own writing and the literature of the period (primarily Statius) point to a more complex meaning regarding hair and baldness and its connection to representations of Domitian. Through hair, negative and positive aspects of the emperor come to the fore. In particular, representations of his hair and lack of hair reveals a Domitian who is profoundly transgressive.

Domitian's baldness casts him as transgressive of the upper and lower worlds as the emperor's baldness places him near the threshold of death. Through its correspondence to old age and infancy, baldness was also associated with the liminal moments in life—birth and death. As Levin has discussed from an anthropological perspective, flowing hair was associated with

⁵⁷ Domitian is alleged to have offered himself to Nerva and Claudius Pollo (Suet. *Dom.* 1.1)—both in his youth. Beyond this possibility, which is strikingly like Caesar's alleged affair with Nicomedes, Suetonius recounts Domitian's many sexual proclivities (*Dom.* 22). See also Varner (2008: 200), who conflates this characterization of Domitian and other later, similarly represented, emperors: "After Nero and Caligula, condemned emperors like Domitian, Commodus, and Elegabalus are all criticized for receptive homosexual behavior, prostitution, feminine interest in exotic clothing, and excessive attention to hair care."

⁵⁸ See Newlands (2014: 320) who leans on Suet. *Dom.* 15.1 as evidence that "to be heirless and hairless were signs of weakness."

the middle of life and baldness with both old age and infancy—the margins near birth and death.⁵⁹ Baldness can also symbolize death as a metonymical symbol for the self. The sacrifice of one's hair is often a faux sacrifice of oneself.⁶⁰ This infernal association is borne out in Roman literature specifically.

For instance, one may note the first-century reference in the *Satyrical*. Eumolpus composes a poem on the importance of hair (*Sat.* 109: *coepitque capillorum elegidarion dicere*, “he began to deliver an elegy on hair”) which concludes with baldness (*Sat.* 109: *ut mortem citius venire credas, / scito iam capitis perisse partem*, “that you shall know that death has come more quickly, understand that a part of your head has already passed on”):

Quod solum formae decus est, cecidere capilli,
vernantesque comas tristis abegit hiemps.
Nunc umbra nudata sua iam tempora maerent,
areaque attritis ridet adusta pilis.
O fallax natura deum: quae prima dedisti
aetati nostrae gaudia, prima rapis.
Infelix, modo crinibus nitebas
Phoebo pulchrior et sorore Phoebi.
At nunc levior aere vel rotundo
horti tubere, quod creavit unda,
ridentes fugis et times puellas.
Ut mortem citius venire credas,
scito iam capitis perisse partem. (*Sat.* 109)

That which alone is the excellent part of beauty, the hairs, have fallen away; gloomy winter wipes away the locks of springtime. Now the temples mourn, deprived of their shade, a scorched space laughs at worn down follicles. O deceitful nature of the gods, the joys which you gave first—our youth—you take away first. Unlucky [head], you shone recently brighter than Apollo or Phoebe. But now, smoother than bronze or as round as a garden tuber which rains brought forth, you flee those laughing and fear girls. That you shall know that death has come more quickly, understand that a part of your head has already passed on

⁵⁹ Levin (1995: 85–87).

⁶⁰ Levin (1995: 85–87).

Shortly before this recitation, Eumolpus had devised a plan to shave the heads of Giton and Encolpius in order to disguise them as runaway slaves (Petr. 102–103). This poem designates baldness both as an omen of death’s proximity and even a death for part of the head. Baldness both presages death and marks part of the body as already dead. Domitian himself evokes this morbid resonance of hair in his mock *consolatio* for hair lost by balding (discussed below). If we read this representation of the real Domitian in the background of the *Thebaid*, his baldness casts him along with infernal forces present in the *Thebaid*.⁶¹ The actual baldness of Domitian places him on the threshold between life and death. However, Statius addresses Domitian in the proem to his *Thebaid* and references his hair: *tuis ... crinibus* (1.28). Two representations of the emperor, that is, bald or with hair, exist simultaneously.⁶² Ultimately, this coexistence helps us glean a transgressive and representation of Domitian across sources. Hair reveals the non-binary characteristics of Domitian’s representations, as he straddles the demarcation between beauty and ugliness, weakness and virility. As with other monsters, Domitian eludes an easy categorization.

De cura capillorum

Suetonius tells us that Domitian was so sensitive concerning his baldness that he would attack anyone who raised the topic—even in jest.⁶³ This anecdote is meant to disparage

⁶¹ E.g. Oedipus, Tisiphone and Dis; see Ganiban (1997: *passim*).

⁶² Returning to the question of when Domitian’s hair loss began we can make, at least, some claims relative to the composition of the *Thebaid*. Pliny the Elder claims that Domitian may have been trying to cure his baldness; Pliny died in 79 CE, when Domitian was 28. If we accept the traditional dating of the composition of the *Thebaid* (80–92 CE), then Domitian’s baldness must have been noteworthy, at least to Pliny, by the time Statius would have written, or edited, his proem.

⁶³ Seu. *Dom.* 18: *Calvitio ita offendebar, ut in contumeliam suam traheret, si cui alii ioco vel iurgio obiectaretur*, “he [Domitian] was so sensitive about his baldness that he would consider it invective against him if others were maligned, whether in jest or insult.” I will return to Julius Caesar’s similar sensitivity (Suet. *Iul.* 45.2) below.

Domitian.⁶⁴ But Domitian's attitude towards his baldness is more complex. Domitian was not always perturbed by mention of hair or baldness. *Silvae* 3.4 contains consistent references to the lovely hair of Domitian's lover, Earinus, and this poem appears to have been written with Domitian's approval.⁶⁵ What is more, Martial composed a poem which ridicules a certain Labienus for his baldness.⁶⁶ Martial's poem disparages baldness (5.49.1–3: *vidissem modo forte cum sedentem / solum te, Labiene, tres putavi. / calvae me numerus tuae fefellit*, "when I happened to see you sitting alone just now, I thought there were three of you. The divisions of your bald head deceived me"). Domitian's disposition towards the topic of hair and baldness was, at the very least, nuanced.⁶⁷

Domitian's own comments on hair and baldness have been transmitted by Suetonius.⁶⁸ In a description of Domitian's physical characteristics Suetonius mentions and quotes from one of Domitian's literary endeavors:

quamvis libello, quem de cura capillorum ad amicum edidit, haec etiam,
simul illum seque consolans, inserverit:

“Οὐχ ὀράας, οἷος καὶ γὰρ καλὸς τε μέγας τε;”

⁶⁴ Note the similar tale used to disparage Caligula (Suet. *Cal.* 35, 50); see Adams (2007: 141).

⁶⁵ 3.4.18–19: *Iuppiter Ausonius pariter Romanaque Iuno / aspiciunt et uterque probant*, "Ausonian Jupiter and Roman Juno look on equally and each one approves." The poem was requested by Earinus himself: *Silv. praef.* 3. Although 3.4 contains praise of Domitian and his relationship with Earinus, it is not purely laudatory; see Newlands (2004: 108): "specific praise of Domitian and his favourite is part of a larger project within *Silv.* 3.4 that invites analysis of courtly society rather than mere adulation."

⁶⁶ 5.49. This book of epigrams was dedicated to Domitian; see Morgan (1997: 214 n. 34).

⁶⁷ See Southern (1997: 119) for such contradictions as evidence that "Domitian could accept the change in his appearance with resignation and some humour."

⁶⁸ There is no obvious reason to doubt the authenticity of these comments excerpted from the *De cura capillorum*—couched as they are within invective. On the reliability of this, see Benker (1987). See also the analysis of Morgan (1997); Charles (2002) who read these comments as genuine. Note also Domitian's joke, not on baldness, but hair in Suetonius text (Dom. 20: "*Vellem,*" inquit, "*tam formosus esse, quam Maetius sibi videtur*"; *et cuiusdam caput varietate capilli subrutulum et incanum, perfusam nivem mulso dixit*, "'I wish,' he said, 'to be as pretty as Maetius seems to be to himself'; and he said that the head of a certain guy which was ruddy and white in different spots had turned out that way because he poured honey-wine on snow").

Eadem me tamen manent capillorum fata, et forti animo fero comam in
adulescentia senescentem. Scias nec gratius quicquam decore nec brevius.”
(Suet. *Dom.* 18)

Although in a book (“On the Care of the Hair”) which he dedicated to
a friend, he inserted this passage as solace for the friend and himself:

“Do you not see how beautiful and great I am?”
Nevertheless, the same fate of my hair awaits me, and I endure, with a brave strength,
the fact that my hair is entering old age while I am still young. Take note that nothing
is more pleasing or shorter lived than beauty.”

Although Suetonius only provides this brief excerpt, the content is illuminating. The line which
Domitian quotes and comments upon comes from the *Iliad* (21.108), that is, Achilles’ response
to Lykaon after the latter pleads for his life. Achilles comments on the transitory nature of life:

πατὴρ δ’ εἴμ’ ἀγαθοῖο, θεὰ δέ με γείνατο μήτηρ·
ἀλλ’ ἔπι τοι καὶ ἐμοὶ θάνατος καὶ μοῖρα κραταιή·
ἔσσεται ἢ ἠὲς ἢ δείλη ἢ μέσον ἡμαρ
ὅπποτε τις καὶ ἐμεῖο Ἄρη ἐκ θυμὸν ἔληται
ἢ ὅ γε δουρὶ βαλὼν ἢ ἀπὸ νευρῆφιν ὀϊστῶ. (*Il.* 21.109–13)

I am the son of a noble father, a goddess is my mother; but death and powerful fate wait
for you and me; either morning, afternoon or mid-day will be the time when someone
deprives me of life in battle, either with a spear cast or with an arrow from his bow.

The following commentary by Domitian also analyzes the transitory nature of life and death,
revealing one aspect of his engagement with Homer. However, the precise subject matter differs
greatly. Achilles opines on the brevity of life in a discussion with literal life and death stakes.
Domitian, on the other hand, makes the same argument concerning the premature loss of hair.
Read against the mortal context of the Homeric passage, this excerpt has been cast as a mock
consolation for Domitian’s hair—giving the passage a bathetic element.⁶⁹ However, hair is not
just a rhetorical tool in this passage. The importance of this passage is revealed through

⁶⁹ See Morgan (1997) who sees this as a testament to Domitian’s poetic ability.

contextualization of a series of allusions this brief quote evokes. Multiple connections between Domitian and Achilles are activated here.

Domitian's quotation and commentary evokes Achilles. This Homeric reference is purposeful. In the *Iliad* hair is often a marker of beauty. Hector references Paris' beauty and his hair (3.54-55: τά τε δῶρ' Ἀφροδίτης / ἥ τε κόμη τό τε εἶδος, "the gifts of Aphrodite, your hair and your form") while taunting him in book 3.⁷⁰ Achilles' presence is quite suited to a discourse concerning hair. Achilles was famously beautiful, and this comeliness was often connected to his flowing locks.⁷¹ Domitian's quotation plays on this descriptor by including the adjective καλός. Although Achilles is not discussing his hair specifically when he advises Lykaon to contemplate his beauty, Domitian's inclusion of this description set within his treatise on hair, forges an allusion to Achilles' famously beautiful hair. Therefore, Domitian casts his idealized youthful beauty (before premature hair loss) as Achilles-esque. By alluding to Achilles, Domitian imbues himself with many of Achilles' other positive characteristics. Achilles was an *exemplar* of military prowess, strength and potency⁷²—in other words some of the characteristics which Domitian's baldness underscores as lacking. By alluding to Achilles' hair while discussing his own baldness, Domitian juxtaposes both representations of his hair within this fragment.

⁷⁰ Note also the tragic depiction of Hector's hair and beautiful face as Achilles drags Hector's corpse behind his chariot (Hom. *Il.* 22.401–403: ἀμφὶ δὲ χαῖται / κυάναει πίτναντο, κάρη δ' ἅπαν ἐν κονίῃσι / κεῖτο πάρος χαρίεν·, "his long black hair spread out all around and his face, recently so charming, was entirely in dirt").

⁷¹ Note Martial's reference to Achilles' hair specifically as a type of exemplum (12.82.10: *Achilleas ... comas*, "Achillean locks"). On Achilles' beauty in general, note *Il.* 2.671–74; see King (1987: 3); Stat. *Achill.* 1.159–61; see Chinn (2013). For discussions of this beauty which focus on hair, see Benker (1987: 71–73); Morgan (1997).

⁷² Achilles' military excellence dates to, at least, the *Iliad* where he is consistently called the best of the Achaeans: *Il.* 1.244, 412; 16.271, 274; see Nagy (1999). Achilles' virility is a topic most fully explored in Statius' *Achilleid* wherein the rape of Deidamia is recounted. On the literary models from this part of the *Achilleid*, see Heslin (2005: 237–76). See also King (1987: *passim*).

Domitian's allusion to Achilles in this *libellus* is not without parallel. In portraiture, the emperor is likened to Achilles via Alexander the Great.⁷³ Domitian's portraiture often uses full hair to evoke the image of a beautiful and potent ruler. The well-haired nature of the statuary which idealizes a by-now bald Domitian is conspicuous. Ultimately, the incongruity between this presentation and reality, noted by hostile sources (Suetonius) and even Domitian himself (*De cura capillorum*), is palpable.

Domitian, Nero and Solar Rays

Domitian's hair in portraiture and coinage may also underscore his connection to the emperor Nero. In fact, the focus on hair reveals Domitian's unique connections to Nero. This link is based, primarily, on solar imagery which is an important and well-established aspect of Neronian ideology,⁷⁴ most notable in Lucan's proem (1.45–52).⁷⁵ Solar imagery is also a component of Domitianic ideology and one which may relate to his hair or lack thereof.

⁷³ There are elements of realism in Domitian's portraiture, but there is no evidence of baldness. See Kleiner (1992: 176) who succinctly diagrams the three stages of Domitian's portraiture and coinage relative to the other Flavian rulers: "The first type was developed on coins 72–75 and depicts the emperor with the broad Flavian face but with hair lower on his forehead than was characteristic of the two previous Flavian dynasts. ... Domitian's type 2 portraits correspond to likenesses of the emperor on coins of 75 in which the hair recedes somewhat at the temples... The third type can be seen on coins struck when Domitian was sole emperor of Rome. ... His hair is brushed in waves from the crown of his head over his forehead and arranged in comma-shaped locks." See also Varner (2008: 200): "Domitian's third portrait type, conceived at his accession in 81 and in use for the duration of his principate, is elaborately coiffed." See also Strong (1988: 137): "In portraits he always appears with a good head of hair." As Morgan (1997) points out Achilles is a possible model for depictions of Alexander which Domitian models himself on in portraiture. We know that Domitian evoked Alexander specifically when it came to the presentation of himself in art with flowing locks; Breckenridge (1982: 477–512) notes the "evocation of Alexander the Great's divinizing image" towards the end of his reign, his hair "swept up from his forehead in the tell-tale Neronian fashion, the hallmark of fascination with the mirage of Alexander's fabled power." The allusion to Alexander also suggests possible hints of savageness. Note Luc. 10.1–52; see Morford (1967: 13–19); Fears (1974). But Alexander was also a largely positive model. On Augustan references, note Liv. 9.17–19. For discussion of Alexander as a model of kingship by the Flavian period, see (on Silius' *Punica*) Marks (2005: 32–7, 144–47); Tipping (2010: 169–74).

⁷⁴ Rebegianni (2019: 98).

⁷⁵ See Rebegianni (2019) for this allusion and its connection to chariot driving, another favored pastime of Domitian.

For instance, Domitian is often depicted in literature as radiant. In his *Silvae*, Statius connects Domitian to the sun (4.1.3: *oritur cum sole novo*, “he rises with the new sun”). Statius also describes Domitian’s equestrian statue as shining (1.1.71: *lucemque coruscam, immortale iubar*, “flashing light and immortal radiance”) and compares it to the Colossus at Rhodes (1.1.103–4: *tua sidereas imitantia flammis / lumina contempto mallet Rhodos aspera Phoebos*, “fierce Rhodes would have preferred your eyes imitating starry fire than spurned Phoebus”).

Such radiance is often connected to Domitian’s brow more specifically. In the *Thebaid*’s proem Domitian’s brow is radiant as the crown is placed on his head (1.28: *ipse tuis alte radiantem crinibus arcum*, “places a radiant halo on your hair”).⁷⁶ In Silius’ *Punica* such radiance is connected to his son’s brow (3.629: *siderei iuxta radiabunt tempora nati*, “near by the head of your heavenly son shall radiate”) in a depiction of Domitian’s eventual, future apotheosis. Martial describes the gleaming head of Domitian as well (8.65.4: *purpureum fundens Caesar ab ore iubar*, “Caesar exuding regal gleam from his face”).

This same image is preserved on coin designs, one displaying Domitian, the other Domitia on the obverse, while their son is on the reverse, surrounded by stars. This coin appears to capture the image described by Silius where Domitian and his prodigy shine (*radiabunt*) among the stars, thus hinting at solar imagery as part of Domitian’s intended dynastic plans.⁷⁷ Coinage from 82 CE onwards represents the emperor with a “radiate head.”⁷⁸ Although this is

⁷⁶ See Newlands (2004: 67–69) on the dynastic concerns clustered around this deified son and the image presented on this coinage. See also Petr. 109, discussed earlier, where the beauty of a young man (either Encolpius or Giton) is described in terms of gleaming: *infelix, modo crinibus nitebas*: “unlucky you are who were recently resplendent because of your hair.”

⁷⁷ *RIC* 152, obverse: Domitian; reverse: infant son as Jupiter. *RIC* 154 obverse: Domitia; reverse: infant son as Jupiter. This child died in infancy (Suet. *Dom.* 3; Mart. 6.3).

⁷⁸ *RIC* 108, 109, 215, 287, 289, 296, 297, 299, 300, 372, 374, 477, 479, 480, 482, 534, 535, 537, 618, 621, 642, 643, 644, 645, 705, 706, 753, 754, 804, 805; *RPC* 352, 353, 713, 1191, 1418, 1622, 2032, 2307.

not unlike his post-Augustan predecessors, such representation reinforces the solar crown as part of Domitian's portrait. Indeed, his provincial coinage displays a connection to Sol in particular.⁷⁹

The radiate head or "radial flame coiffure" was a standard component of depictions of Helios in coinage and statuary.⁸⁰ This is evident in the divinity's representation in the Colossus of Nero. Although there is some debate concerning the extent to which the initial, Neronian, creation had reflected Helios or the emperor himself, it is evident that the Colossus had some solar imagery during Nero's reign which would have included a radiant crown.⁸¹ Vespasian's renovations to the statue (75 CE) would have privileged the representation of Helios by the time of Domitian's ascension.⁸² Such solar undertones can be found on coinage depictions. Indeed, some of these representations display the radiant crown of the Colossus quite prominently.⁸³ It appears, moreover, that Domitian may have had a particular fondness for this statue. Coarelli argues that the Colossus would have been aligned with Domitian's equestrian statue featured in *Silvae* 1.1.⁸⁴ I submit that Domitian's propensity for such a connection with Sol/Helios in general is also connected to the radiant crown aspect of the god's representation. In fact, a fondness for crowns among the bald statesmen of ancient Rome is not without precedent.

⁷⁹ *RPC II* 170, 171, 172, obverse: laureate head of Domitian; reverse: Helios in quadriga. See Rebeggiani (2018: 98) for a brief discussion of this coin. *RPC II* 2519, obverse laureate head of Domitian; reverse: Helios/Serapis standing. *RPC II* 2032, obverse: Domitian as Helios; reverse: Artemis standing. *RPC II* 1190, obverse: radiate head of Domitian as Helios; reverse: Nike standing.

⁸⁰ See Hoffmann (1963) who summarizes many such examples and does point out that it was also used for Mithras in the Roman period (122 n. 50).

⁸¹ Lega (1989–90).

⁸² Suet. *Vesp.* 18; see Lindsay (2010).

⁸³ The clearest depiction of the Colossus' rays in coinage comes much later from the 3rd century coinage of Gordianus III. However, it appears to be a stock reference in early literary accounts *Mart.* 1.70.7 and *Spect.* 2.1–3. Moreover, Lega (1989–90: 350) points out the prevalence of coinage depictions in which Nero had a radiate head after 64 CE.

⁸⁴ Coarelli (2009: 83). See also Rebeggiani (2018: 99).

Accounts of Julius Caesar's famed laurel use⁸⁵ are not only concerned with imperial ambitions but also the general's baldness. Suetonius implies that Caesar's shame over his baldness was the main reason he was pleased with the ability to wear a laurel crown:

calvitii vero deformitatem iniquissime ferret saepe obtrectatorum iocis obnoxiam expertus. Ideoque et deficientem capillum revocare a vertice adsueverat et ex omnibus decretis sibi a senatu populoque honoribus non aliud aut recepit aut usurpavit libentius quam ius laureae coronae perpetuo gestandae. (Suet. *Caes.* 45)

He considered the deformity of his **baldness** so horrible because he learned that it was the charge of his detractors in jokes. For this reason he was accustomed to comb his hair forward. Of all the honors decreed to him by the senate and the people (either those he received or usurped) he enjoyed none more than the right to wear a laurel crown at all times.

Caesar's use of a crown to obscure his baldness in Suetonius' account is, admittedly, a distant parallel for Domitian's affinity with solar crown imagery. Caesar, moreover, does not appear to avoid his baldness in portraiture, as much as Domitian does. However, Suetonius' account reveals the existence of such a practice among leading Roman men. In fact, another bald *princeps*, Caligula also wore a crown at times, though not linked to his baldness.⁸⁶ Domitian may evoke a similar obfuscation of baldness through his presentation with a radiant crown. What is more, such representation has other implications as well.

Domitian also connected specifically his brow to depictions of Nero. In particular, the portrait of Domitian in the Palazzo dei Conservatori in Rome has been seen as modeled on Nero in terms of its stylized hair.⁸⁷ Through an identification with Sol via Nero or Nero via Sol, representations of Domitian project a type of crown. Of course, this radiant crown contrasts with

⁸⁵ Suet. *Caes.* 79.

⁸⁶ Suet. *Cal.* 19.

⁸⁷ See Boyle (2003: 34). See also Kleiner (1992: 176–77); Leberl (2004: 70); Schulz (2019: 90) for Julio-Claudian elements of Domitian's portraiture and coinage.

the reality of his baldness as conveyed in his own literary work, hostile sources such as Suetonius and elsewhere.

Domitian's actual baldness is evident in the *De cura capillorum: fero comam ... senescentem* (18). And yet, at the same time, Domitian's composition presents him in his younger age in the guise of the beautiful long-haired Achilles. Essentially, this Homeric quotation and Domitian's commentary convey both images of the emperor simultaneously. This engagement underscores the emperor's baldness and evokes the long locks of a younger Domitian. This passage recalls the potency of Achilles' flowing locks and the baldness of Domitian at the same time—as the latter continues to defy categorization.⁸⁸

We can further elucidate Domitian's baldness by comparing him with his father, who was also bald. Suetonius preserves Vespasian's brief comment about his baldness. On his deathbed a comet appears, and Vespasian produces a pun on *crinitus* and *crinis* as well as *capillus* and *calvus* ("bald"):

Ac ne in metu quidem ac periculo mortis extremo abstinuit iocis. Nam cum inter cetera prodigia Mausoleum derepente patuisset et stella **crinita** in caelo apparuisset, alterum ad Iuniam Calvinam e gente Augusti pertinere dicebat, alterum ad Parthorum regem qui **capillatus** esset. (*Vesp.* 23)

And even very near death he did not stop joking. For among many other prodigies the Mausoleum opened suddenly and a hairy comet appeared in the sky. He said that that the Mausoleum pertained to Junia Calvina from the house of Augustus and that the comet pertained to the Parthian king who has long hair.

Vespasian jokes through the connection of the name *Calvinus* and the adjective *calvus* by referencing Junia Calvina while also toying with the application of the adjective *crinitus* to both

⁸⁸ It is worth noting that Achilles in this passage and elsewhere is quite savage. After this exchange he desecrates and taunts Lykaon's body in the midst of his *aristeia* (21.120–25). This *aristeia* is, of course, concluded by his famous exchange with Hector. As Hector makes similar pleas to Achilles (22.338–42), Achilles only laments his inability to consume Hector (22.346–47). Moreover, in the *Achilleid* Achilles is likened to a Centaur; see Chinn (2013).

comets and human hair. Vespasian engages with the topic of his baldness in a similar manner to Domitian's *De cura capillorum*. However, Vespasian also presents himself as balding consistently in portraiture.⁸⁹ Domitian did not mimic this realistic depiction of himself. In what follows, I argue that this is the very part of Domitian's representations which defy categorization.

Such realistic depictions of Vespasian may reflect his older age (45) at the point of ascension to the throne. While this does explain, perhaps, more realistic aspects of his portraiture, Domitian would have been bald (or balding) at the time of his own ascension in 81 CE. Domitian's engagement with the topic of his baldness and his depiction with hair in portraiture transcends the verisimilitude of his father's representation. Ultimately, this offers a view of Domitian's transgressive appearance across categories of bald and haired as he engages the topic of his baldness in writing but projects some hair in portraiture. This representation is even more revealing when set against the Julio-Claudian models against which the Flavians operate.

Vespasian's realistic portraiture communicates a return to Republican era-verisimilitude and a rejection of aspects of Julio-Claudian portraiture.⁹⁰ However, Domitian's portraiture associates himself with Julio-Claudian decadence and Nero more specifically.⁹¹ The hair in Domitian's portraiture contrasts with the ideological program of his father and, of course, with his actual baldness.

Domitian's coiffure rejects the realism of his father's. What is more, it also contrasts with another post-Julio-Claudian who lacked hair: Otho. Otho was bald—or balding (*propter*

⁸⁹ See Kleiner (1992: 172).

⁹⁰ See Kleiner (1992: 172).

⁹¹ See Kleiner (1992: 176).

raritatem capillorum)—and wore a wig to conceal this fact according to Suetonius: *galericulo capiti propter raritatem capillorum adaptato et adnexo, ut nemo dinosceret* (“because of the thinness of his hair he wore a wig that was personalized and fitted in a way that no one knew,” Suet. *Oth.* 12). This criticism of Otho’s appearance in regards to his baldness is paralleled by the critique of his masculinity. Martial depicts Otho as effeminate (6.32: *mollis Otho*, “soft Otho”).⁹² Note also Juvenal’s characterization (2.99: *speculum, pathici gestamen Othonis*, “a mirror, the companion of Otho the catamite”). Otho’s use of a wig may be a component of this attention to self-grooming characterized as effeminate. It is difficult to judge fully Otho’s representation in coinage and portraiture due to the brevity of his reign. However, none exhibit his balding hair but, instead, present a well-coiffed man presumably because of his wig.⁹³ Conversely, Domitian does not wear a wig. The presence of his hair in art or literature is not the result of any artifice but remains purely fictional. As with Vespasian, comparing Domitian and Otho reveals that the former is represented by two images at once: bald and well-haired.

Feminine Adornment, Masculine Simplicity and Domitian’s “Hair”

Further evidence of ‘real’ hair in Flavian Rome offers context for this analysis. I would like to incorporate the real evidence we have for contemporary hair styles—specifically imperial

⁹² Martial praises the effeminate nature of Otho’s suicide (*et fodit certa pectora tota manu. / Sit Cato, dum vivit, sane vel Caesare maior: / dum moritur, numquid maior Othone fuit?*, “he stabbed his breast with a deliberate stroke. Granted that Cato, in life, was definitely greater than Caesar, was he greater than Otho in death?”).) presenting the complexity of his characterization of Otho’s femininity.

⁹³ His coinage does not display any discernible balding. Most profiles are unadorned with laurel or the radiate style. Coins surveyed: *RIC*: 2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,12,13,14,15,16,19,20,21,22,24; *RPC* 4199, 4200, 4317, 4318, 4319, 4320, 5327, 5354, 5362, 5361. On his representations in coinage and his wig see Kleiner (1992: 168–9). On Roman wigs in general see Bartman (2001: 14).

Flavian women. The unique hairstyles of Flavian women are preserved in the literary record⁹⁴ and busts.⁹⁵ These representations are often described as ornate and big and epitomized by Domitia at the Museo Nazionale delle Terme and Vibia Matidia at the Museo Capitolino.⁹⁶ These portraits of elite women display a high pile of curls which is either somewhat rounded or formed into a type of peak.⁹⁷ Flavian female hair was large and elaborate, a result of the cosmopolitanism of the empire.⁹⁸ Such a cultural reading of Flavian hair styles also falls along gendered lines.

Whereas female hair could express the imperial moment through adornment, male hair was more restrained. Throughout the history of Roman portraiture male hair of leading figures (members of noble families or emperors) was much shorter.⁹⁹ There is little variation between male hair styles in the Flavian period (perhaps exemplified by the Portrait of Vitellius at Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen), the later Trajanic “cap”-like style or much earlier styles.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Juv. 6.502–3: *tot premit ordinibus, tot adhuc compagibus altum / aedificat caput* (“she presses down her head with so many layers and piles up high with so much buttressing”); Stat. *Silv.* 1.2.113–14: *celsae procul aspice frontis honores / suggestumque comae* (“behold the proudness in her lofty forehead, the heaped-up mound of hair”).

⁹⁵ Bartman (2001) has been argued that these extreme hairstyles approximate real hair.

⁹⁶ There is some debate concerning the identity and dating of the latter; see Bartman (2001). Note also the contemporary statues of (possibly) Marcia Furnilla at Copenhagen and Julia Titi at Museo Nazionale delle Terme which also display a halo of hair; see Kleiner (1992: 177–79).

⁹⁷ We can only make limited assertions for the hair of non-elites during this period; see Bartman (2001) and Toner (2015).

⁹⁸ On the trope of captured hair: Ov. *Am.* 1.14.45–46: *captivos* mittet Germania *crines* (“Germany sent captive hair”); Mart. 5.68.1: *Arctoa de gente comam tibi, Lesbia, misi* (“from the Arctic realm, Lesbia, I send hair to you”); Juv. 6.120: *nigrum flavo crinem abscondente galero* (“concealing black hair with a blond wig”). These passages are cited as evidence for the imperial commodification of foreign hair specifically; see Bartman (2001).

⁹⁹ Bartman (2001); Kleiner (1992: *passim*). There are notable exceptions outside of this group of men. See my earlier reference to long-haired boys. Note also Howell (1980: 172); Bartman (2002) and Clarke (2003: 84–86) on long hair as a marker of slave status and or age among young men.

¹⁰⁰ See Kleiner (1992: *passim* and especially 167–77, 208–12).

Of course, within these parameters, Domitian displayed an affinity for the Hellenistic style of Nero's hair, as discussed above. But male hair in the Domitianic period and Roman period more broadly appears close-cropped: this is a necessary deviation from feminine adornment,¹⁰¹ as male hair communicates Roman ideals of civic restraint and self-sufficiency, which women did not need to project in order to maintain status.¹⁰²

Within this schema, Domitian's 'hair' has a tenuous position. Representations of Domitian do not mimic the realistic representation of his balding hair as his father had. Moreover, Achilles-esque hair, idealized in the *De cura capillorum*, is also strangely positioned in this schema. Such hair contrasts with close-cropped male haircuts of Roman portraiture. There is no place for long-flowing male hair among leading Roman men. This type of hair exists somewhere in-between the close-cropped hair of Vitellius and Domitia's ornate mound of hair. Charting Achilles-type hair within and outside of the literary record reveals the transgressiveness of Domitian.¹⁰³

Contemporary Discussions of Hair

Domitian's triangulation of beauty, youth and hair in his work comes from a contemporary literary milieu, including the poems of Statius, Silius and Petronius' *Satyrica*. In fact, there may even be a textual correspondence between Eumolpus' comments on hair found in Petronius' *Satyrica* and the *De cura capillorum*. The dating of Petronius' *Satyrica* is notoriously

¹⁰¹ However, as Bartman (2001: 3) points out this shortness did not necessarily preclude actual effort and adornment.

¹⁰² Bartman (2001).

¹⁰³ Close-cropped masculine hair does not convey the cosmopolitanism of this moment in the way that Vibia Matidia's hair does. Such a representation of imperial cosmopolitanism in hair was not similarly possible for leading men. Masculine beauty conveyed by Achilles' hair reflects Flavian eclecticism in a way which was simply not possible for men in portraiture.

vexed. Although traditionally placed in the Neronian period, a slightly later date has been proposed.¹⁰⁴ Domitian would have been a young (16) literate man during the early circulation of the *Satyrica*—if we accept a Neronian date.¹⁰⁵ This standard dating would place Domitian still in *adulescentia* when the novel was first circulated, a theory which confirms Suetonius’ contention that Domitian undertook literary efforts earlier in life.¹⁰⁶ However, some have argued for an early 2nd century date, which would place the *Satyrica* after the composition of the *De cura capillorum*.¹⁰⁷ Ultimately, whether the influence is from the *Satyrica* to the *Thebaid* or the *Thebaid* to the *Satyrica*—or whether there even is any direct textual engagement—undeniably they both come from the same milieu of discourse concerning hair and loss thereof.¹⁰⁸ The sententia discussed above, which concludes Eumolpus’ poem (109: *ut mortem citius venire credas, / scito iam capitis perisse partem*) evokes the sentiment of Domitian’s *libellus* (Suet. *Dom.* 18: *scias nec gratius quicquam decore nec brevius*). In fact, Eumolpus’ poem begins with *decus formae*.¹⁰⁹

Such a correspondence adds certain elements to Domitian’s *libellus*. In the narrative surrounding Eumolpus’ poem, none of the characters are actually bald but have had their heads shaved, while the hair loss Eumolpus recounts in his poem is due to old age. All of the characters

¹⁰⁴ See Schmeling (2011: xiii–xv). This later date is only possible if one does not identify the author with the Petronius mentioned by Tacitus (*Ann.* 16.18–19) who committed suicide in 66 CE.

¹⁰⁵ See Rose (1971: 46). See also Schmelling (2011: xiii–xv) who supports such a date and also offers a comprehensive summary.

¹⁰⁶ Discussed above.

¹⁰⁷ See Schmeling (2016: xiv) for a recent summary.

¹⁰⁸ This is a point reinforced by the possible correspondence of Eumolpus’ comment and Statius comment on Domitian’s hair in the *Thebaid*’s proem (discussed below). Cf. Petr. 109: *Infelix, modo crinibus nitebas* and St. *Theb.* 1.28: *ipse tuis alte radiantem crinibus arcum*.

¹⁰⁹ This corresponds to St. *Ach.* 1.290 of the maidens of Scyros.

in the *Satyrice* can presumably grow their hair back. The irony is similar to Domitian's use of the consolation motif found in the *Iliad* to discuss hair loss in his text. If Domitian has the *Satyrice* in mind, the humorous irony of the *De cura capillorum* is heightened.¹¹⁰

Bringing Eumolpus' poem into this discussion highlights certain characteristics of this milieu. Hair is a physical embodiment of youth and the beauty normally associated with youth—often encapsulated by the noun *decus*. As we shall see *decus* is recurrent in depictions of idealized young men with flowing hair in contemporary literature. This noun is a common and fitting means to convey beauty related to hair as it points not only to glory but also to adornment.¹¹¹ *Decus* will provide a roadmap for the type of beauty discussed of young men with beautiful.¹¹²

With this cultural milieu in mind, I will conclude with Statius' depiction of Domitian in the *Thebaid*'s proem which may illuminate the presentation of Domitian found in his *De cura capillorum*. First, however, we should put the *libellus* into dialogue with Statius' *Achilleid* and *Silvae*. It has been argued that Statius' depiction of Achilles' hair throughout the *Achilleid* alludes to Domitian's baldness and, perhaps, to the emperor's work. Benker argues for direct engagement in an early depiction of Achilles (*Ach.* 1.162: *fulvoque nitet coma gratior auro*) and Domitian's aside (Suet. *Dom.* 18: *comam in adulescentia senescentem. Scias nec gratius quicquam*). This proposition is intriguing as there are few parallels for this collocation.¹¹³ The

¹¹⁰ See Morgan (1997).

¹¹¹ For adornment of the body and face, see *TLL* v.1.236.5–65; for the connotations of glory see *TLL* v.1.238.35–45. For a brief discussion of the differences between *decus* and *decor*, see Newlands (2011: 210) who argues that they are often conflated.

¹¹² The characters discussed below as *exempla* of youthful male beauty do not often adorn their hair beyond cleaning. This aversion is both representative of contemporary trends for masculine hair (see below) and allows the characters to eschew any feminizing connotations accompanying self-adornment. See Bartman (2001).

¹¹³ See Benker (1987: 312).

argument follows that this passage and other references to the flowing hair of Achilles are meant to embarrass the bald Domitian, an idea which in my opinion is limiting. As we have seen, Domitian appears capable of discussing hair, baldness and appreciating the beauty of another's hair.

However, it is also reasonable to expect a direct engagement between Statius and Homer's *Iliad*. Nevertheless, it is possible that Statius also engages with Domitian's commentary on hair and Achilles. There is no reason to discount the interchange of Domitian's opinion on baldness and hair with Statius' presentation of the emperor's locks whether or not there is a direct intertextual relationship.

In fact, Statius' *Achilleid* conjures the image of young and well-haired Domitian as reflected in the *De cura capillorum* reading of Homer's *Iliad*. Although Achilles' hair is an aspect of his depiction elsewhere in Homer's *Iliad*, Domitian singles out this characteristic in a Homeric passage which is not related to Achilles' hair. In a sense, Statius seems to be illustrating Domitian's own comments. Domitian looks upon the hair he is losing in youth by referencing Achilles. In the *Achilleid*, Statius offers us that same version of Achilles (1.178–80, 328, 771,¹¹⁴ 855), mentioning the beauty of his hair twice. At 1.161–62 the poet describes the beautiful color of Achilles' hair (*fulvoque nitet coma gratior auro*, "his hair shines more pleasantly than yellow gold"). At 1.178–83, Statius expands on the themes of old age and youth with a focus on Achilles' hair:

Protinus ille subit rapido quae proxima saltu
flumina fumantisque genas **crinemque** novatur
fontibus: Eurotae qualis vada Castor anhelus 180
intrat equo fessumque sui iubar excitat astri.

¹¹⁴ *Ach.* 1.32, 771 involve Achilles' interactions with women (Deidamia and Achilles) and may reveal an effeminate aspect to his appearance.

miratur comitque senex, nunc pectora mulcens
nunc fortis umeros; angunt sua gaudia matrem. (1.178–83)

Straightaway he hurries to the nearest river with a quick leap and he renews his fiery cheeks and hair in its spring: just like Castor went into the shallows of Eurotas with his exhausted horse and renews the drooping ray of his star. The old man marvels at him and adorns him, stroking his chest, his strong shoulders. Her maternal pride pains his mother.

As Achilles washes his hair¹¹⁵ two older characters (Chiron and Thetis) look on affectionately and longingly (*miratur*). Chiron's age is emphasized (*senex*), while Thetis' maternal pride is vividly depicted in anguish (*angunt*).¹¹⁶ These representatives of old age in the poem look upon Achilles washing his hair. Not only does he wash but also renews (*novatur*) his hair, an indication of youth.¹¹⁷ The contrast between the old characters and the young Achilles—between old age and youth—is expressed through hair. In fact, this passage appears within broader references to age and beauty in the *Achilleid*. Thetis is planning to take Achilles from Chiron and conceal him as a girl on Scyros while the narrator reminds us of Patroclus' equivalent youth (1.176: *par studiis aevique modis*, “an equal in zeal and age”). Amid these references to beauty, old age and youth, Statius twice (1.161–62, 79) draws attention to Achilles' hair.

Likewise, Domitian draws attention to his tragic predicament of having the hair of old age already as a youth: *forti animo fero comam in adolescentia senescentem* (Suet. *Dom.* 18). Both texts use hair in order to express youth. Domitian's baldness is the prominent topic in his *libellus* and a subtext in the *Achilleid*. At the same time, Domitian is assimilated to the well-haired Achilles in both texts.

¹¹⁵ For the inspiration from V. Fl. 7.644–46, see Ripoll and Soubiran (2008: *ad loc.*).

¹¹⁶ For the psychological insight of this line, see Ripoll and Soubiran (2008: *ad loc.*).

¹¹⁷ See *OLD* s.v. *novo* 5b.

If we extend this possibility to the *Thebaid*, we can note many illuminating parallels. The first centers around an established correspondence between the *Thebaid*'s Parthenopaeus and the *Achilleid*'s Achilles. The similarities of Parthenopaeus and Achilles range from their similarly portrayed mothers, Atalanta and Thetis,¹¹⁸ to the many parallels between the two heroes themselves—both thematic and textual.¹¹⁹ If Statius' Achilles in the *Achilleid* conveys Domitian's youth through his lustrous hair, Statius' Parthenopaeus in the *Thebaid* accomplishes the same end with his long and beautiful hair:

... ast ubi pugna
cassis anhela calet, **resoluto vertice** nudus 700
exoritur: tunc **dulce comae** radiisque trementes
dulce nitent visus et, quas dolet ipse morari,
nondum mutatae rosea lanugine malae. (*Theb.* 9.699–703)

... when his helmet grows hot because of the exertions of battle, his exposed head rises from his unbuckled helm: then his hair and his countenance sweetly gleam with rays and his cheeks as well, although he is grieved that they delay and have not yet been transformed by rosy stubble.

Parthenopaeus' beauty and hair are visible as he removes his helmet. His appearance with his hair exposed (*resoluto vertice*) is described twice with the adjective *dulcis* and as gleaming (*radiis*), thus underscoring long hair as a component of his beauty. When he is introduced in book 4, Parthenopaeus' desire for battle is even framed as the dirtying of his otherwise beautiful hair (4.260: *tubas audire calens et puluere belli flaventem sordere comam*, "yearning to hear the

¹¹⁸ *Ach.* 1.129–34; *Theb.* 4.330–34; see Parkes (2008).

¹¹⁹ *Ach.* 1.159: *ille aderat multo sudore et pulvere maior* ("he raged more with a lot of sweat and dust"), cf. *Theb.* 9.710: *bellantem atque ipso sudore et pulvere gratum* ("as he fights he is pleasing because of the sweat itself and dust"); *Ach.* 1.161–62: *dulcis adhuc visu: niveo natat ignis in ore / purpureus fulvoque nitet coma gratior auro* ("he was still pleasant to look upon: a red flame swims across his snowy face and his hair shines more pleasantly than yellow gold"), cf. *Theb.* 4.274: *dulce rubens viridique genas spectabilis aevo* ("his pleasant blush and the noteworthiness in his youthful age upon his cheeks"); *Ach.* 1.163: *necdum prima nova lanugine vertitur aetas* ("not yet was his age overthrown by fresh down"), cf. *Theb.* 9.703: *nondum mutatae rosea lanugine malae* ("his cheeks had not been changed by rosy down"); see Seo (2013: 125). See especially Parkes (2008: 387): "Achilles is an image of Parthenopaeus."

battle trumpets and to foul his tawny hair in the dust of war”). As with Statius’ Achilles, Parthenopaeus’ depiction centers on his beauty, youth and hair.

In fact, Statius’ Parthenopaeus is an exemplum of youth. His puerile nature is referenced in his inability to grow a beard just before his death (9.703: *nondum mutatae rosea lanugine malae*, “his cheeks had not yet matured with a rosy stubble”) and in many other passages throughout the *Thebaid*.¹²⁰ Parthenopaeus, as Achilles, embodies an idealized youth with beautiful hair. Both heroes are also examples of fleeting youth. Although Achilles’ premature death is not realized in the *Achilleid*, Parthenopaeus’ untimely death is featured in the *Thebaid* (9.877–905). In fact, his death is the final reason for lament in book 12 as it is emphatically referenced thrice before the closing *sphragis*.¹²¹ The short life of a beautiful young man relates to the *sententia* found in *De cura capillorum*, *scias nec gratius quicquam decore nec brevius* (Suet. *Dom.* 18). In this regard, both texts explore a similar theme: the loss of youth.

The specific age group of Parthenopaeus, who is always labeled a *puer* in the *Thebaid*, deserves further examination. There is a notable difference between *pueritia* and *adulescentia* in which Domitian places himself in his own work.¹²² Domitian would have, presumably, had hair during his *pueritia*, if he were still balding during his *adulescentia*. Although still a *puer*, the

¹²⁰ See Parkes (2008). References to his youth: *puerum* (4.256); *puer* (6.602); *o pueri!* (6.628); *puer* (8.743); *pueri* (9.666); *puer* (9. 716); *puer* (9.744); *puer* (9.780); *pueri* (9.810); *puer* (9.877); *puer* (9. 892); *pueri* (10. 421); *pueri* (10. 427); *puero* (10.440); *pueri* (12.127).

¹²¹ For a discussion of Parthenopaeus’ liminality and this passage, see Hardie (1993: 48). For readings of Parthenopaeus’ closural importance more broadly, see Putnam (2016).

¹²² *TLL* i.797.60. Varro, in Censorinus’ *De die natali* (14.2), places *adulescentia* between *pueritia* (1–15) and *iuentus* (30–45). Martial makes Parthenopaeus a model for youth using *iuvēnis* (6.77.2: *tam iuvēnis quam nec Parthenopaeus erat*) and *puer* at 11.86.6, in a poem giving the name to a schoolboy with a cough: *quidquid pueros non sinit esse truces* (11.86.4); see Dewar (1991: xxxvi). Other contemporary references to Statius’ Parthenopaeus may be found in Silius’ *Punica* in the character Podetus (14.492–505); see Dewar (2009: 35) and Sanna (2004) for the correspondence with Statius’ Parthenopaeus. Silius makes no mention of the boy hero’s hair.

long-haired Parthenopaeus may project the idealized beauty of Domitian in his youth. As with Achilles, Parthenopaeus evokes the image pinned for in Domitian's *De cura capillorum*.

What is more, this association reveals transgressive characteristics, already apparent in any association with Statius' Achilles. Achilles in the *Achilleid* cross-dresses and throughout the text exhibits behavior which transgresses standard gender roles.¹²³ The narrative of Statius' Achilles contains moments of gender ambiguity which surpass most other representations of the Homeric hero.¹²⁴ Parthenopaeus' characterization also exhibits gender ambiguity. His name suggests something akin to virginal boy or maiden face which underscores his ambiguous gender.¹²⁵ Moreover, Statius' modeling of Parthenopaeus' death on Vergil's Camilla has been well studied.¹²⁶ This *puer* soldier who is also modeled on Vergil's female warrior offers a complex exemplum of flowing-haired youthful beauty in Flavian Rome.

Parthenopaeus' death scene reinforces the importance of hair. As he is dying, he puts forth his severed locks for his mother to serve in lieu of his corpse:

'frigidus et nuda iaceo tellure, nec usquam tu prope, quae vultus efflantiaque ora teneres. hunc tamen, orba parens, crinem , dextraque secandum praebuit, 'hunc toto capies pro corpore crinem , comere quem frustra me dedignante solebas. huic dabis exequias, atque inter iusta memento ne quis inexpertis hebetet mea tela lacertis dilectosque canes ullis agat amplius antris.'	900 905 (9.898–905)
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¹²³ See Heslin (2005: 237–76) on Achilles' time on Scyros and crossdressing in Scyros as a sign of his delayed transition to manhood and masculine warrior; see also Barchiesi (2005); Russell (2014); Panoussi (2013).

¹²⁴ This episode is not present in the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*. The episode is treated in the *Epithalamium of Achilles and Deidameia* (see Fantuzzi (2012)) and in iconography. See also Cameron (2009).

¹²⁵ Hardie (1993: 48); Jamset (2004).

¹²⁶ Sanna (2004); Seo (2013: 131–32).

“I am cold and laid low upon the naked earth and you are not near, you who could hold my face and be present for my dying breaths. This lock, bereft mother, you will take in place of my body, hair which you used to comb while I was resisting in vain.” He put forth his hair to be cut while saying, “you will give funerary rites to this and among these rituals remember, do not let any novice hand dull my spears or lead my favorite dogs among any caves.”

This poignant scene revolves around the hero’s hair which functions metonymically for the self,¹²⁷ both in terms of his body (*pro corpore*) and also as an autobiographical relic (*comere quem frustra me dedignante solebas*). Thus, the hero’s hair stands in for the fallen young man.¹²⁸ This dedication of the severed locks of a beautiful young man has multiple parallels in the Flavian period and the court of Domitian specifically.

Parthenopaeus’ death evokes another model for youth and flowing locks: Earinus. Statius offers the fullest portrait of Earinus at *Silvae* 3.4. Earinus was a eunuch from Pergamum who became the favorite of Domitian.¹²⁹ He is described as a great beauty with long hair. Earinus also dedicates his locks during a transitional point in his life. While Parthenopaeus dedicates his hair to his mother Atalanta, while he is dying, Earinus offers his hair on the threshold of ‘manhood’¹³⁰ to Asclepius. Earinus’ hair is described throughout the poem (3.4.1, 6, 10, 31, 55, 81, 84, 89, 90),¹³¹ since the poem was composed to mark the dedication of his locks.¹³² Statius

¹²⁷ Levin (1995: 85–7).

¹²⁸ See Seo (2013: 188): “Parthenopaeus’ hair, especially the votive lock, serves as the somatic monument of his *mors immature*.”

¹²⁹ See Henriksen (1987).

¹³⁰ For a discussion of Earinus’ castration, “puberty” and life, see Henriksen (1987).

¹³¹ On the idealized nature of Earinus’ beauty, its relation to his hair and Parthenopaeus within a discussion of doomed youth, see Seo (2013: 141–3).

¹³² The prologue to *Silvae* 3 makes this explicit: *Earinus praeterea, Germanici nostri libertus scis quamdiu desiderium eius moratus sim, cum petisset ut capillos suos quos cum gemmata pyxide et speculo ad Pergamenum Asclepium mittebat, versibus dedicarem* (“Earinus meanwhile, the freedman of our Germanicus, understand how long I delayed his desire when he sought that I would dedicate in verse his hair that he sent with a jeweled case and

even likens the dedication of Earinus' locks to Achilles' dedication of his own hair—further bringing Earinus into this *topos* of beautifully haired youths (3.4.84–85: *huic et purpurei cedet coma saucia Nisi, / et quam Sperchio tumidus servabat Achilles*, “to this [Earinus' locks] the shorn locks of purple Nisus shall yield as well as those which proud Achilles dedicated to Sperchius”). As with Parthenopaeus and Achilles, Earinus embodies the same idealized youthful appearance with flowing hair.¹³³

As with Achilles and Parthenopaeus, Earinus evokes the idealized Domitianic youth referenced in the *De cura capillorum*. There is even a faint verbal echo between these descriptions. Venus marvels at Earinus' face and hair (3.4.31: *miratur puerile decus, vultumque comasque / aspiciens*, “she marvels at his boyish excellence while looking at his face and hair”). The same noun *decus* conveys youth accompanied by good hair here and in the *De cura capillorum* (Suet. *Dom.* 18: *scias nec gratius quicquam decore nec brevius*).

Whether there exists a direct engagement between the *De cura capillorum* and the *Thebaid* or the *Silvae*, these Statian characters convey the same idealized youthful image evoked by Domitian himself. By reading Domitian's hair and his discourse on hair with these characters in mind, we glean a connection of his idealized self-image and these transgressive figures in the literature of the period. With these models of youth, beauty and hair in mind let us return to the *Thebaid* and Domitian himself.

mirror to Asclepius at Pergamum”). *Silvae* 3.4 itself is titled *CAPILLI FLAVI EARINI* but the authenticity of this is doubtful and impossible to verify; on *tituli* in the *Silvae*, see Newlands (2007: 6–7).

¹³³ On the dating of the *De cura capillorum* relative to the *Silvae*, we should bear the following in mind: as mentioned above, Domitian appears to have been notably bald by 79 CE. at the age of 28, a *terminus post quem* for the *libellus*. Based on Suetonius' comments about Domitian's literary pursuits and the category given (*adulescentia*) in the *De cura capillorum* we have a *terminus ante quem* of age 35 in 86 CE. The *Silvae*, on the other hand, were published in 93 and 95 CE; see Newlands (2004: 1); Coleman (1988: xvi–xx).

In the *Thebaid* we can observe direct engagement with Domitian and his hair. What is more, Domitian's own commentary (Suet. *Dom.* 18: *eadem me tamen manent capillorum fata, et forti animo fero comam in adulescentia senescentem. Scias nec gratius quicquam decore nec brevius*) may correspond to the proem of the *Thebaid* (1.16–31) and Statius' presentation of Domitian's hair there. There are numerous, suggestive intertexts between the two. Moreover, as with the possible engagement between the *Achilleid*, the *Silvae* and the *De cura capillorum*, it is reasonable to suspect an engagement, if not with the text directly, then with ideas similar to Domitian's.¹³⁴ As with the *Achilleid* and the *Silvae*, these discussions of hair are culled from the same circle of discourse on hair.¹³⁵

The *Thebaid*'s proem—where Domitian's hair is depicted—touches on the brevity of life. Statius' Phaethon allusion (1.27–29, discussed above) evokes the quickness of life—always a

¹³⁴ Others have found the contemporary influence of this lost work similarly unprovable but quite plausible because of Domitian's well-known preoccupation with hair. Of Philostratus' possible engagement Praet, Demoen and Gyselinck (2011: 1066) conclude: "We cannot be sure that Philostratus had read or even knew this libellus, and even if he did, we cannot be sure that Domitian also referred explicitly to the mourning Achilles who dedicated his long, blond locks to Patroclus, but enough was known about Domitian and his hair-issues to make the association almost inescapable."

¹³⁵ Dio Chrysostom, his biographical details, and his *Encomium on Hair* help to elucidate this milieu. Dio was banished by Domitian in 82 CE, outlived Domitian and is later recalled. There is, therefore, a broad range of potential dates, it seems. He started writing as early as 70 CE. What we have of the *Encomium on Hair* is preserved in Synesius' *In Praise of Baldness* (402 CE). Although Dio's exile should not be attributed to this text and its implied slight on baldness, it has been seen as part of the debate concerning his exile; see Draycott (2018: 74–76). What survives of Dio's text does not mention baldness and the implicit criticism of baldness therein is mostly due to the surrounding commentary of Synesius' text (*Oration* 40.1.1; see Draycott (2018: 74–76)). Dio's text elucidates the same discourse on baldness, which, I argue, Statius is also undertaking. Dio's claim that hair makes a person both beautiful and terrifying (ἡ μὲν γὰρ καλούς τε καὶ φοβερούς ἔοικε ποιεῖν) appears to come from the same view on hair. Domitian's Homeric quote evokes the beauty and impressiveness of Achilles, when he is about to kill: οἷός κ' αὖ καλός τε μέγας τε; (21.108). μέγας has a broad range and here it may point to awe as it often does in describing the power of gods (*LSJ* s.v. μέγας a) and parallels Dio's φοβερούς (*LSJ* s.v. φόβος a). Whether this verbal contact exhibits direct influence, remains inconclusive, but both Domitian (discussed above) and Dio employ Homer's Achilles in their discussion. Dio's chief evidence that Homer placed importance on hair is Achilles' depiction (ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς κόμης πάντας· πρῶτον μὲν Ἀχιλλεῖα). Dio also quotes *Il.* 1.197, where Achilles has flaxen hair: ξανθῆς δὲ κόμης ἔλε Πηλεΐωνα. Indeed, *Achilleid* (1.162) Achilles' flaxen hair is present elsewhere, but it is also a key component of his beauty in Statius' *Achilleid*: *fulvoque nitet coma gratior auro* (1.162). Both Dio's *Encomium on Hair* and Domitian's *libellus* evoke the same intellectual discourse where Achilles was used as an important model to discuss hair.

subtext the Phaethon story.¹³⁶ Moreover, the proem plays on the parentage of Apollo and Jupiter (1.27–29), Vespasian and Domitian (1.23–24),¹³⁷ which also evokes the cycles of life and death. The effervescent nature of life is, as discussed, also conveyed in the *De cura capillorum*: *eadem me tamen manent capillorum fata* (18). Indeed, Morgan has convincingly argued for the evocation of this theme through the allusion to Achilles and his hair in Domitian’s *libellus*.¹³⁸

One textual echo can be found in 1.32–33: *cum Pierio tua fortior oestro / facta canam* (“when I shall sing of your deeds more bravely with Pierian inspiration”) of Statius’ *Thebaid* and Domitian’s *De cura capillorum* (Suet. *Dom.* 18 *animo forti fero comam*). Context reveals the correspondence of these passages. Statius’ *canam* points to the song recounting the deeds of young Domitian in a future poem, while Domitian claims that he endures his premature hair loss bravely (*animo forti*). The hair, in that text, is a symbol of the vigor of youth fading, while he is still young (*in adolescentia*). As Statius assures Domitian that he will sing of his younger years, the poet perhaps echoes the way that Domitian looks upon his younger self (Suet. *Dom.* 18: *forti*; St. *Th.* 1.32: *fortior*). What is more, Statius provides young Domitian with at least some of the hair he is losing in *De cura capillorum*: *tuis ... crinibus* (*Theb.* 1.28).

Indeed, both texts meditate on the early life of the same man—Domitian—and his youth (in the *De cura*, the present; in the *Thebaid*, the past). Where the *Achilleid* offered the well-

¹³⁶ Phaethon’s eternal youth is also mentioned at 6.325: *sed iuvenem durae prohibebant discere Parcae* (“but the harsh Parcae prohibited the youth [Phaethon] from learning”). For further discussion of this allusion and related imperial evocations of Phaethon, Jupiter, Helios from Nero-Severus, see Heslin (2007); Rebeggiani (2013) and (2018).

¹³⁷ See Rebeggiani (2018).

¹³⁸ (1997: 211) in discussing Domitian’s incorporation of Achilles into his mock *consolatio*: “There was a strong association between Achilles and (early) death, but there was also, as I shall now suggest, a strong association between Achilles and *hair*.”

haired Achilles as a possible evocation of Domitian's idealized version of his young self, the *Thebaid* depicts young Domitian himself. In the proem, Statius looks back on Domitian's life:

... limes mihi carminis esto
 Oedipodae confusa domus, quando Itala nondum
 signa nec Arctoos ausim spirare triumphos
 bisque iugo Rhenum, bis adactum legibus Histrum
 et coniurato deiectos vertice Dacos
 aut defensa prius vix pubescentibus annis
 bella Iovis. tuque, o Latiae decus addite famae (*Theb.* 1.16–22)

May the boundary of my song be the confused house of Oedipus. Since I do not yet dare to lend inspiration to Italian sigils and Arctic triumphs, the Rhine twice put under the yoke and the Hister placed in control and the Dacii brought down from their mountaintop alliance or the battle over Jove defended while he was barely a young man. And you, o glory added to Latian fame ...

This structure allows Statius to include a brief account of Domitian's achievements which are listed chronologically backwards, from the present to the earliest known events in Domitian's biographical record. *Itala* / *signa* are expanded upon in lines 18–22 and point to campaigns against the Chatti and Dacians, which Domitian marked with triumphs (1.18: *Arctoos triumphos*) at age 34.¹³⁹ Statius goes further back and mentions the burning of the Capitol by Vitellius in 69 CE (1.22: *bella Iovis*), which Domitian witnessed at the age of 18.¹⁴⁰ Statius emphasizes Domitian's youth in this passage: *vix pubescentibus annis* (1.21).¹⁴¹ In his own *libellus*, Domitian also looks upon his youthful days (*in adulescentia*), as he is currently losing his hair. Domitian opines on the loss of youth by referencing hair loss. Statius presents young Domitian with that

¹³⁹ Southern (1997: 98); Briguglio (2017: *ad loc.*); Manasseh (2017: *ad loc.*). See also Penwill (2013).

¹⁴⁰ Southern (1997: 17); Briguglio (2017: *ad loc.*); Manasseh (2017: *ad loc.*). See also Penwill (2013).

¹⁴¹ *TLL* x.2.2439.20. *Pubescentibus annis* is perhaps less explicit than the category *adulescentia* but refers to roughly the same period (see *OLD* s.v. *pubesco* 1; *L&S* s.v. *pubesco*). Domitian would have been 18, at the beginning of *adulescentia*, which is, as discussed, the period mentioned in his *libellus*. Silius also refers to his age similarly (*Sil.* 3.606: *primo ... in aevo*; 3.608: *iam puer*); see Spaltenstein (1986: *ad loc.*). Martial emphasizes Domitian's youth at this moment (9.101.14: *prima suo gessit pro Iove bella puer*, "still a boy he waged his first battle on behalf of Jupiter").

hair during the same period of his youth: *ipse tuis alte radiantem crinibus arcum / imprimat* (1.28–29).¹⁴² At age 18 Domitian probably would have not yet been balding, whereas the *De cura capillorum* was written as Domitian was prematurely balding. The youthful version of Domitian evoked by his reference to Achilles would have been roughly the same age as the Domitian of Statius' *Thebaid*. Therefore, Statius' text depicts, whether purposefully or not, the version of Domitian from the *De cura capillorum* (at least Domitian at the same age).

Statius' use of the phrase *tuis ... crinibus* (1.28) does not explicitly evoke the long hair opined for in *De cura capillorum*. However, Statius models this scene on Ovid's account of Apollo crowning Phaethon who also mentions hair (*Met.* 2.124: *inposuitque comae radios*, "he put the rays on his hair").¹⁴³ What is more, there is an intertextual connection between this Ovidian reference to Phaethon's hair in Statius' depiction of Parthenopaeus' gleaming hair in book 9 (701: *tunc dulce comae radiisque trementes*, "then his hair and his countenance sweetly gleam with rays").¹⁴⁴ Of course, both Phaethon and Parthenopaeus are in no way balding.¹⁴⁵ Statius' allusion to Phaethon and his hair reinforces my reading of Statius' potentially positive reference to Domitian's hair in the *Thebaid*'s proem. Indeed, within this laudatory portion of the proem it is unlikely that Statius would reference Domitian's hair in order to underscore his lack

¹⁴² *adulescentia* would designate the period from 15–30, with which Statius' reference to Domitian at age 18 would fall.

¹⁴³ Manasseh (2017: *ad loc.*).

¹⁴⁴ Discussed above.

¹⁴⁵ For Phaethon's hair note the ensuing Ovidian narrative which describes how Phaethon's hair is burned off (2.319: *at Phaethon rutilos flamma populante capillos*, "but Phaethon, while the flame was destroying his ruddy hairs") implying that he had a full head of hair before. Note also the depiction of Phaethon's hair on the Krater at the British Museum (GR 1867,0508.1133). On Parthenopaeus' hair see the discussion above.

of hair. The evocation of Phaethon within such context further suggests a positive aspect to this reference to Domitian's hair through the phrase *tuis ... crinibus* (1.28).

The image of young Domitian in the *Thebaid* is conveyed by the vocative address: *o Latiae decus addite famae* (1.22).¹⁴⁶ Statius depicts young Domitian as a boon to the Roman empire. Domitian himself describes the gift of youth and the transitory nature of beauty he is losing with the same descriptor: *scias nec gratius quicquam decore nec brevius* (Suet. *Dom.* 18). This correspondence does not prove an intertextual engagement. However, the identical means to depict the youthful state of the same person suggests that these texts are at least products of the same milieu, only reinforced by the similar, contemporary uses of *decus* as discussed above. We can conclude that they are both products of the same circle of discourse concerning hair, baldness and beauty.

Indeed, Statius may be working directly with the Homeric passage Domitian himself treats (*Iliad* 21.108) as he crafts these connections between idealized beauty and hair throughout his *corpus*. In fact, he surely is operating with the *Iliad* in mind as much as if not more than Domitian's *libellus* as he crafts Achilles in the *Achilleid*.¹⁴⁷ However, Statius' depictions of beauty and hair still project the same type of idealized beauty from the same Homeric *fons* which Domitian draws on in *De cura capillorum*. Statius' Achilles, Parthenopaeus and Domitian reinforce the yearnings inscribed in Domitian's *libellus*, whether or not that text is an intermediate influence on Statius' connections between beauty and hair. Both representations engage with the same, precise, subject matter: Domitian's hair in his youth.

¹⁴⁶ On the common nature of such encomia, note Verg. *G.* 2.40; V. Fl. 1.8. However, neither encomia contain *decus* which is present in Silius' address to Domitian (3.619).

¹⁴⁷ For a comprehensive enumeration of instances of Statius' well attested engagement with Homer's *Iliad* see Junke (1972). In fact, the Homeric scene which Domitian quotes from is reworked by Statius at 9.283–314; see Dewar (1991: *ad loc.*). See also Lovatt (2005: 122–23).

The noun *decus* has another important parallel for this discussion. At *Silvae* 2.6, *decus* depicts a slave who triangulates many of the characters discussed above. Statius dedicates the poem to a slave, Philetos, who may have also had a sexual relationship with his owner and is labeled a *delicatus*,¹⁴⁸ like Earinus. Critically, his hair is featured in a comparison with Parthenopaeus (2.6.42–43: *visu / Parthenopaeus erat; simplexque horrore decoro / crinis*, “he looked like Parthenopaeus; his hair was natural with an adorned roughness”).¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, Statius glosses this type of naturally (*simplex*) beautiful¹⁵⁰ hair by noting that Philetos does not exhibit the femininity of other great male beauties: *non tibi femineum vultu decus* (“there is no womanish adornment on your face,” 2.6.38).¹⁵¹ However, using Parthenopaeus as an exemplum of masculinity is problematic, as we have seen and as Newlands argues.¹⁵² This poem achieves two ends for the present inquiry. It situates the well-haired masculine beauties we have discussed and it highlights the tension around the representation of masculine beauty through beautiful hair in this period. This poem reveals the difficulty of depicting a beautiful, masculine young man in this period. As a result, it offers further insight into the transgressive undertones of Domitian’s association with young male beauties via hair.

¹⁴⁸ Although this is in the title of the poem (*CONSOLATIO AD FLAVIVM VRSVM DE AMISSIONE PVERI DELICATI*), Philetos is nowhere described as a *delicatus*. Newlands (2011: *ad loc.*) sees the title as misleading, but La Penna (1996) argues for such a relationship between Philetos and his owner.

¹⁴⁹ See Seo (2013: 122–45) for a lengthy discussion of Parthenopaeus’ hair and his role as a martial presence.

¹⁵⁰ Seo (2013: 137) refers to *horrore decoro* as a “studied neglect.”

¹⁵¹ See Sanna (2013: 136): “Statius is at pains to portray youthful, masculine beauty, but the (over)emphasis on masculinity with its repeated denials (*non ... femineum ...* appears to be special pleading.”

¹⁵² Newlands (2011: *ad loc.*).

Conclusion

In Statius' *Thebaid*, this brief presentation of Domitian has the following consequences: a positive image of flowing haired, Achilles-esque beauty, as seen in portraiture and evoked in Domitian's *De cura capillorum* coexists with his baldness in Suetonius' account and Statius' presentation of Domitian with hair which actually underscores the emperor's baldness. Indeed, this allusion to Domitian's baldness is intensified, if we read the *Thebaid* against Domitian's comment on his baldness in his *libellus*. Statius' proem points to both the prematurely bald Domitian and the flowing locks of his youth, as the emperor defies an easy categorization. What is more, as we have seen, hair itself is important in the *Thebaid* and applies to transgressive characters. Statius helps us read Domitian and his locks as important pieces for understanding the poem.

Hair is an important symbol in Flavian poetry and the Flavian period. As I have argued its metapoetic qualities in the *Thebaid* draw attention to its significance within the poem. Metapoetic references to hair cluster around both infernal (Tisiphone) and divine characters (Apollo). On one hand, hair conveys a transgressive, feminine voice, while on the other it evokes a more masculine expression of artistic potency. Most importantly, hair elucidates Domitian's own presence in the poem.

Statius mirrors the ambiguities of Domitian's representations outside of the text in his *Thebaid*. On the one hand, Statius provides Domitian with the hair he lacks in the *De cura capillorum*, thus reflecting on aspects of Domitian's ideological program. On the other hand, this representation draws attention to the reality of his baldness. By presenting Domitian with hair, Statius underscores the distance of that representation from reality. By eliciting both versions of

Domitian, Statius' dual interpretation highlights Domitian's formless monstrosity which exists across various representations.

Hair helps us glean Domitian's transgressive nature within and outside of the literary record. Through connections between him and Statius' Achilles, we can observe the characteristics of potency, virility and cross-dressing. While in the *Silvae* hair connects the emperor to the ambiguous gender of the eunuchs Philetos and Earinus, in the *Thebaid* this image also connects Domitian to the warrior ephebe Parthenopaeus. But this is not the only type of Domitianic hair present in the period.

As we have seen, his hair also connects Domitian to Nero and obeys traditional gender roles in portraiture. At the same time, the Flavian emperor also displays an affinity for radiate portraiture and solar crowns. His representations are not confined to an old, bald person or a young, well-haired man—Domitian is both at the same time. Ultimately, this non-binary position presents a view of Domitian's transgressive character. As argued elsewhere, such transgression is strange, unsettling and, ultimately, monstrous. By focusing on hair in and outside of the *Thebaid*, we have observed the same unsettling aspects of Domitian's monstrous representation. As mentioned at the opening of this chapter, Domitian's monstrosity is a type formlessness and this aspect has certain consequences worth stating.

The formlessness of Domitian threatens to collapse distinctions between categories. Contemporary connotations of baldness reinforce Domitian's connection to deviant sexual behavior, impotence and ugliness, while at the same time his connection to long flowing hair associates him with potency and beauty. The distinctions between some of these categories underpin aspects of Roman conceptions of beauty, gender and power. Therefore, the formless presentation of Domitian collapses the distinctions around which certain aspects of Flavian

culture are constructed. Viewing Domitian through his “hair” within and outside of Flavian epic reveals his monstrous formlessness.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that monsters and monstrosity play a critical function in Flavian epic poetry. Despite the paucity of appearances and references to monsters in these texts, they represent important dynamics of the era. While not always factoring prominently in the narrative itself, they shed a light on many of the cultural anxieties expressed in Flavian epic. In this way, Flavian monsters are not only passing references, or relics of earlier epic convention, but communicative of a cultural anxiety at large. A study of Flavian monsters and monstrosity reveals how central monsters are to the Flavian moment.

The preceding analysis focused on instances where monsters and monstrosity not only embody but also reproduce the culture inscribed upon them. In my examination I have shown how monsters reflect cultural elements and also reproduce them. We have seen how the era places certain cultural anxieties onto these monstrous bodies and, at the same time, how these monstrous bodies reproduce such elements.

In particular, this study engaged with hybrid monsters. I examined how these monsters reveal the Flavian moment's tenuous distinction between humans and others. This was discernible in the intradiegetic comments of Tydeus and Evadne, where the only way to define humanness was by means of monsters. We observed Statius' visualization of this tension in the *ekphrasis* depicting the quarrel between Theseus and the Minotaur. This *ekphrasis* presented a hero who could be seen as monster and monster as hero, both stylistically, intra- and intertextually. At the same time, Arachne's near transformation into a monster on the Forum Transitorium revealed the presence of this tension outside of Statius' *Thebaid*.

This study also examined how another type of monster (giants) reveals Flavian anxiety concerning the relationship to Rome's past (both literary and mytho-historical). Statius'

Polyphemus is recast as different from the Vergilian and Homeric prototypes. This giant nearly destroys Odysseus and threatens, in a sense, the continuation of the epic tradition. This brief simile both conveys and reproduces the Flavian anxiety concerning the literary past. At the same time, giants also explore connections to the mytho-historical past in Silius' *Punica*. Silius' *magnanimus* giants function paradoxically within the larger heroic tradition related to gigantomachy and Rome's foundation. As a result, these giants explore the Augustan representations of Rome's mytho-historical foundations.

The study of the monsters necessitated an analysis of the most prominent member of the *gens Flavia*. I have argued for and analyzed the *Thebaid* and *Punica* as Domitianic texts. The texts I have studied were limited to Domitian's reign, and I analyzed the extent to which his projected image functions monstrously—both within and outside of Flavian epic. I focused on Domitian's hair (or lack thereof), and by isolating this physical characteristic, I observed how Domitian is represented in two radically distinct forms—bald and long-haired. What is more, I argued that this dual image was reflected in the *Thebaid*. Ultimately, I assessed this dual representation as a type of transgression which reveals Domitian as a monster.

Monsters in the Flavian era deserve more attention. Monsters and monstrosity are, of course, not only elucidatory in the ways I argued or in the instances I examined. A more comprehensive analysis of gendered aspects of Flavian monsters is needed. Moreover, the manner in which geography should be considered monstrous and, therefore, function within Flavian culture, deserves further attention. To what extent does Flavian literature represent the geography of spaces inside or outside of Roman control as more or less monstrous? Monsters lurk behind many possible avenues of inquiry, and there are many similar questions that could be posed in the context of Flavian literature.

A working title for this dissertation was “Reflections of Transgression: Monsters and Monstrosity in Flavian Epic.” However, this title proved, as we have seen, unsuited to the topic of this study. The monsters of Flavian epic are not merely reflections of the concerns of the day. These monsters reproduce such anxieties and, in doing so, effect those concerns.

Statius provides an appropriate metaphor for this process in the interaction between Achilles and his reflective shield in the *Achilleid* (1.852–71). Achilles comes upon this shield while disguised in the clothing of a girl on Scyros. His reflection elicits a reaction (865–66: *simili talem se vidit in auro, / horruit erubuitque simul*, “as he saw himself, such as he was in the likeness of the gold, he bristled and blushed all at once”).¹ However, one cannot overlook the type of mirror in this scene. The very decoration of this mirror is inscribed with martial action (853: *caelatum pugnas*, “engraved with battles”). Moreover, the shield is even marked with blood from the battlefield (853–54: *saevis et forte rubebat / bellorum maculis*. “and by chance it was bloodied with the savage stains of war”). Indeed, this shield accurately reflects the hero viewing it but, at the same time, the substance of this reflective material effects the hero.² I have argued that there is a similar interaction between Flavian culture and Flavian monsters. These monsters accurately reflect Flavian culture, but their nature as monsters also has an effect. Whether Centaurs, giants, the Minotaur or others, these monsters influence the reproduction of Flavian cultural dynamics. At the very least, I hope to have demonstrated that the Flavian moment cannot be fully understood without its monsters.

¹ On the gendered nature of this reaction, see Taylor (2008: 145).

² On the importance of this moment for the text’s narrative, see Augoustakis (2016a).

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