CAPANEUS: HOMER TO LYDGATE

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ABSTRACT

A generation before the war at Troy, king Adrastos led an ill-fated expedition against Thebes. One of his commanders, Capaneus, died so spectacularly that he was virtually guaranteed a lasting place in the myth. He boasted that he would take Thebes whether the gods willed it or not and was subsequently struck from the city's wall by a lightning bolt from Zeus. Despite this simple narrative Capaneus' character is handled in a variety of ways. As would be expected he is at times portrayed as a villain. Thus in Aeschylus' *Septem*, Euripides' *Phoenissae*, and Statius' *Thebaid*, he is an impious, vicious, threatening, and boastful character who is finally punished at Thebes. This portrayal, however, was not the only possibility in handling his character. In Euripides' *Suppliants*, Capaneus is held up as a model citizen whose moderate life and tragic downfall should serve as a lesson to others. The earliest artistic depictions of Capaneus show a similar divergence in characterization. An artist could emphasize the villainy of the hero by including elements like a ladder to scale the Theban wall, a torch to burn the town, a lightning bolt to imply his punishment, or conversely portray him as a vulnerable youth struck down suddenly in war. Christian writers of the Medieval period take these lines of development further. Gower presents him as a warning against excessive pride, one of the seven deadly sins, and Dante lets him rage in hell against God under a continuous rain of lightning. In both the French *Le Roman de Thèbes* and Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* the hero is a noble and beloved knight who, while dying at Thebes, lives long enough to take part in the later Athenian attack on the city.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTATION

MLA in-text style has been followed throughout but for two slight variations. Where there is more than one bibliographic entry for the same author I have included the year of the work as the mark of differentiation rather than the title of the work. If there is more than one work for that author in the same year both the bibliographic entry and in-text citation include an, *a*, *b*, *c*, *etc.* immediately after the year to clarify which work is being cited. Abbreviations used for ancient authors, their texts, modern authors, and journals, are those found in the third edition of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. Where an abbreviation is wanting the full title of the journal has been used. Lastly, unless indicated otherwise, translations of the ancient works are those of the author.

Introduction

Capaneus, a Greek hero active in myth one generation before the fall of Troy, had his place in the epic tradition that grew around a failed attack by Argos on Thebes. The fragmentary remains of the Theban Cycle contain no specific details about him, and Homer's scant references to him are present only in conjunction with his son, Sthenelus, Diomedes' charioteer. Versions of his tale by the fifth century B.C. contain the lasting kernel of his story. He boasted that he would take the city of Thebes whether the gods wanted him to or not, and as he crested the wall of the city Zeus blasted him with lightning.

In his doom he is comparable to the great villains of Greek myth, such as Sisyphus, Tantalus, and Ixion, who suffered terribly for their crimes, and to dire monsters including Typhoeus and various giants that fought the rule of Zeus. Capaneus is a lesson for mortals not to challenge the gods. Around the simple core of his story various authors attached different details. In Aeschylus' *Septem* the level of his villainy is scarcely separable from the mass of aggressive, vicious, and boastful Argive attackers. In the *Suppliants*, the first of Euripides' plays discussed, Capaneus represents a hero who, despite his generally laudable qualities, oversteps himself at the moment of success and is destroyed, while in Euripides' *Phoenissae* Capaneus is again a despicable enemy and one of two heroes chosen by the author as especially dangerous to Thebes. Lastly, in the Roman period, Statius' *Thebaid* intensifies Capaneus' usual traits. Not only is he louder, more boastful, terribly bloodthirsty,

and given to fits of rage, but he becomes linked to destructive and vengeful deities of the underworld, and surprisingly to Zeus, who commands the punishment of Thebes and Argos.

Even in the treatment of Capaneus, whose importance in myth is relatively small, there is variance and sophistication in his handling. From at least the fifth century B.C. onwards what can be called a sympathetic portrayal exists. A kinder presentation of the hero is rooted partly in the story of his wife, Evadne, who so loved him that she threw herself onto his pyre, and partly in the portrayals of the Argive leaders in art, where one can find both neutral presentations of the Argive attackers at the outset of the campaign and individual portrayals of Capaneus as a youth struck down suddenly in war.

This thesis examines the various treatments of Capaneus by authors of the Greek and Roman periods and has three goals. In the first place it is descriptive. The thesis seeks to define what traits and associations are present in various authors' presentations of the hero and, in successive treatments, their sources.[1] A secondary goal is to define what role Capaneus fulfils within a discussed work as it pertains to plot and theme and through this to place into larger context the descriptive element of the thesis. Its third objective is to establish to what degree Capaneus belongs to a recognizable type of hero within the Greek and Roman period. In addition to the above goals the conclusion of the thesis will, in outline, show the lines of development of Capaneus' story in the Medieval period and account for the variant portrayals.

The choice of Capaneus for this study has definite advantages. He is, relative to other

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[1] By traits I mean generally how he is described physically and how he acts. By associations I mean the sorts of outside references made to him through simile, metaphor, and images.

heroes of myth, a minor character and thus a study of this size may reasonably treat his main appearances in the Greek and Roman periods. One could not embark on this sort of examination using Odysseus or Herakles, and hope to cover in any great detail every important appearance. Another advantage is that the hero has not received much scholarly attention. The commentaries on the plays provide some initial guidance, but if he is discussed it is in conjunction with the other Argive leaders in relation to a shield-scene or disputed passage. For the Greek period there is no separate study of the hero. In dealing with Statius the situation is slightly better. A passage by passage discussion of Capaneus forms part of Klinnert's dissertation (11-78), and a small number of articles focus specifically on the hero (Harrison; Fernandelli; Lovatt). Klinnert aside, the Statian scholarship on the hero deals with but one or two passages at the most, and thus overall it may be claimed that no single work, until our examination, brings the surviving accounts of Capaneus of the Greek and Roman periods together in one work and that it is the only work since 1970 to attempt a thorough study of Capaneus in Statius.

Chapter one deals primarily with Aeschylus' *Septem* but begins with the scant mentions of Capaneus in Homer and the early traits commonly associated with the expedition against Thebes from Homer through Pindar. The discussion on Aeschylus sets the pattern for the thesis' approach to the three plays. By way of introduction a synopsis is first provided and next an examination of themes. Aeschylus provides details of both the Argive attackers in general and their chiefs individually. Both characterizations are explored since one's impression of Capaneus is guided not only by his traits but those of the company he keeps. Next Capaneus' specific presentation is detailed. A brief discussion of the relationship of

Capaneus to plot and theme draws the chapter to a close. This early chapter both establishes to a high degree the range of characteristics attached to the ill-fated and impious attack (for the purpose of Aeschylus' play the Argives are portrayed as the most villainous an enemy possible), and also provides early traits associated with Capaneus, such as the wording of his boast, and his connection to giants, that will become the mainstay of his later presentations. There are two smaller topics included in this chapter. Aeschylus' and Euripides' plays contain both a generic view of the Argive chiefs and an individualized presentation of Capaneus himself; this double handling has similarities with depictions found on vases and which are included as parallels to the tragedians' handling.

Euripides' *Suppliants* is the focus of the second chapter. Here we have a less villainous Capaneus. He is presented as a model of moderation whose doom is brought about by hubris at the height of success and who is thus portrayed in a more tragic than vile manner. How one interprets Capaneus in this play is vital to the meaning of the play. Euripides provides a very sympathetic and even laudable portrayal of the hero, and this has garnered several reactions from scholars, from an interpretation of the scene as satire to a demand for excision. The thesis will argue for its inclusion and for an interpretation of the play that requires Capaneus to be presented in a non-Aeschylean manner. Since this play introduces the notion of a sympathetic portrayal of Capaneus, a discussion of this line of tradition in art and literature is also provided.

In chapter three an examination of Euripides' *Phoenissae* shows a return by the dramatist to a more Aeschylean portrayal of the hero. The similar presentation of the Argive leaders of the expedition is again noted and shown to be a technique used to delineate

broadly the character of the attack on Thebes, but more importantly, since each Argive receives in some cases three passages of description, Euripides has the room for individual characterization as well. Euripides' *Phoenissae* is important for the initial stages of the differentiation of specific Argives, a process started in the *Suppliants*, but made more of here as he focuses on two heroes, Parthenopaeus and Capaneus, to represent overall the worst aspects of the Argive attack on the city. The next step, taken by Statius, will be to choose one character for this role.

The last chapter explores Statius' handling of Capaneus. The *Thebaid* has ample room for character delineation. Since each chieftain is handled differently, a section on the shared traits of the leaders of the expedition is not relevant and left off. Instead Capaneus himself is the sole focus of the study. The relevance of the 'impious hero' as a character type to Statius' Capaneus opens the chapter. By the Hellenistic period Capaneus is recognizable as a type of ungodly hero whose traits include impiety, self-reliance, violence, and fury. The audience of Statius' epic would have been familiar with this type not only from their familiarity with Greek myth and the epic genre but with Roman history as well. Next the traits, associations, antecedents, and innovations in the depiction of the hero are examined passage by passage. It will be found that Capaneus' role in the plot is expanded and the epic presents a Capaneus whose power, viciousness, martial excellence, and hubris, while familiar, are of an entirely different magnitude. Lastly, where the examination of Capaneus adds fresh support for variant readings of the text, these arguments have been included in their relevant sections. Most importantly the thèsis explores the neglected theme of 'merit' in the *Thebaid* and why *meruisse* ought to be accepted over the commonly printed *sperare*

of line 9. 939.

The dissertation follows the characterization of one hero in his major appearances across the Greek and Roman periods, through four authors, and two genres. Capaneus shows a remarkable set of consistent characteristics that illuminate the Greek and Roman tastes for both a villain that meets his just destruction and for the hero who falls at the height of his success. For the Greeks such stories were part of their heritage from myth and were likely to be palatable to the Romans on this score alone, but the Romans also had access to historical models for a similar character-type to Capaneus. The resiliency and pliancy of the character, the simple lesson in his fall, and of the popularity of the story of Thebes, meant that the traits discussed herein also provide seeds of the varied presentations of the character, as both villain and champion, in the Medieval period.

Chapter 1: Homer to Aeschylus

Homer to Pindar

Aeschylus provides the oldest surviving and most detailed depiction of Capaneus and will be the main focus of this chapter. However both epic and lyric poets mention Capaneus and the Argive expedition against Thebes; this section will explore what the early poets record specifically about him and how consistent a depiction of the general nature of the expedition against Thebes is preserved by them.

Capaneus appears first in Homer's *Iliad* in conjunction with his son, Sthenelus, who, along with Diomedes and Euryalus, brought 80 ships from Argos to Troy (*Il.* 2.559-568). His name appears seven times in the *Iliad*[2] and at no point is he mentioned independently of Sthenelus.[3] Despite the lack of attention which Capaneus receives in the *Iliad*, Homer does provide three types of information about him: first, the generation of heroes to which he belongs indicates his strength relative to other heroes; secondly, Homer directly describes him by the use of two adjectives *ἀγακλειτός* and *κυδάλιμος*, and lastly, Agamemnon,

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[2] *Il.* 2.564, 4.367, 4.403, 5.108, 5.109, 5.241, 5.319.

[3] Sthenelus is mentioned eleven times in the *Iliad* and only four times without Capaneus (5.111, 5.835, 8.114, and 9.48).

Sthenelus, and Tydeus comment on the Theban expedition in which Capaneus took part.

Capaneus is active in a relatively early stratum of Greek myth; this implies that he is stronger, and perhaps more brutal, than his son and the generation of heroes at Troy. Myth places the failed attack on Thebes about a generation before the Trojan war. Heroes of this generation also took part in the search for the Golden Fleece. Meleager, Tydeus' half-brother, was part of this expedition as well as Herakles. That Herakles had fought with the gods against the giants illustrates the immense compression of time from the birth of the gods until the Trojan war. Even a single generation between the Trojan war and the Theban war implies a difference in the strength of the men at Thebes and Troy. This is illustrated both at *Il.* 5.125 where Diomedes almost goes too far against the gods after he has been granted the "strength of his father" (*μένος πατρώιον*) by Athena and at *Il.* 1.260-265 where Nestor reminds the Argive chieftains that the earlier generation was mightier by far than the present generation. It is safe to conclude from this that Capaneus had a fair degree of strength and ran the same risk of acting hubristically as Diomedes had when under the influence of his father's strength.

A further characteristic of Capaneus may have been violence directed at the gods. Nilsson notes that heroes of the earlier generations are at times in Homer represented acting in a hostile manner against men and gods (201). Nilsson's primary example is Herakles, whose deeds included not only killing a guest-friend for his horses but wounding Hera and Hades as well.[4] Nilsson writes,

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[4]Herakles is not treated by Homer at length, but when he is mentioned his deeds are brutal. Hera and Hades are wounded in *Il.* 319ff. Iphitus is slain in *Od.* 21.25ff. Idas, who went against Apollo with the

> This Herakles is the strong man relying solely on his strength, whom a rough and lawless age created and even appreciated in a certain degree, a reckless violent character who proceeds to extremes, even to rivalling the gods and to raising weapons against them. There is an echo of this type in Homer (201).

As for the actual words used by Homer to describe Capaneus, only twice are there any adjectives attached to Capaneus' name: *ἀγακλειτός*, famous, and *κυδάλιμος*, renowned (LSJ). As will be shown, these words add little to the characterization of the hero.

Ἀγακλειτός is an adjective made up of two parts *ἀγα-*, an intensive prefix meaning here "very" and *κλειτός*, an adjective formed from the noun *κλέος* which in a positive sense means "fame", "glory", "renown" (LSJ). In Homer it describes Thrasymelos, a relatively minor commander under Sarpedon (*Il.* 463), the warriors in general who are under Sarpedon's command (*Il.* 12.101), Priam's gate guards (*Il.* 21.530), and Galateia. (*Il.* 18.45).[5] In the *Odyssey* it describes hecatombs (*e.g. Od.* 3.59) and queen Penelope (*e.g* 17.468). In Hesiod it is attached to the Tyrrhenians (*Theog.* 1016), Neleus (MW 33 (a) 20) and Minos (MW 204.57).

Κυδάλιμος occurs more frequently in epic than *ἀγακλειτός*. *Κυδάλιμος* is made up of *κύδος* "fame" or "glory" [6] and perhaps two adjectival suffixes *-λο* and *-ιμος* of which

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bow (*Il.* 9.558ff), and Lycurgus, who drove Dionysus into the sea (*Il.* 6.130-43), also belong to this category of heroes.

[5] See Appendix, *Ἀγακλειτός* in Homer and Hesiod.

[6] See Appendix, *κυδάλιμος* in Homer, Hesiod and Apollonius of Rhodes.

-λο is simply an adjectival suffix while *-ιμος* indicates ability or fitness.[7] Its meaning would then seem to be "fit for praise" or "fit for honour". In the *Iliad κυδάλιμος* is used to describe heroes such as Menelaus,[8] Ajax (*Il.* 15.415), Nestor (*Il.* 19.238), Thrasymedes and Antilochus (*Il.* 17.378) Achilles (*Il.* 20. 439), the race known as the Solymoi (*Il.* 6.184, 6.204), and it is applied to the heart of Zeus (*Il.* 10.16), Achilles (*Il.* 18.33) and a lion in a simile (*Il.* 12.45). In the *Odyssey* the adjective is primarily attached to Menelaus[9] but modifies also Odysseus (*Od.* 3.219, 15.358, 22.89, 22.238). It is also found with the sons of Castor Hylakides (*Od.* 14.206), the sons of Nestor (*Od.* 17.113), and the sons of Autolykos (*Od.* 19.418). The adjective is used once to describe Eurymachos' heart (*Od.* 21.247). In Hesiod Iolaus (*Sc.* 74, 467) and Kleodaios (MW *Fr.*231) are described as *κυδάλιμος*. In Apollonius, the adjective is found with the descendants of Aeolus (*Argon.*1.143) and Deucalion (*Argon.* 4.266).

Capaneus is both *ἀγακλειτός* and *κυδάλιμος* but as can be seen from the above the adjectives do not appear regularly with his name nor are they found with his name alone. That is, they do not define his character in the same way as the epithet 'swift-footed' does Achilles. Further the first adjective, *ἀγακλειτός*, seems to be rather general. It is applied not just to heroes but also to heroines, gate-guards, and hecatombs and therefore is less pointed than the stronger *κυδάλιμος* which is used to describe only a god or hero or the heart of a god or hero. The one exception occurs when the heart of a lion is modified by the

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[7] See Smyth 1920, 858. 7 and 9 and Buck 472. 3.

[8] Menelaos has this adjective seven times: *Il.* 4.100, 177, 6.302, 13. 591, 601, 606, and 17. 69.

[9] Menelaos has this adjective seven times: *Od.* 4.2, 16, 23, 46, 217 15.5, and 141.

adjective (*Il.* 12.45), but even here the lion stands for Hector in a simile. *Κυδάλιμος*, in fact, primarily belongs in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* to Menelaus, whose name is metrically equivalent to Capaneus', and the use of this stronger adjective at *Il.* 4.403, with Capaneus, if there is a definite reason outside of metre, is probably guided by the context of the passage. At this point Sthenelus has rebuked Agamemnon who has just called Diomedes worse than his father (*Il.* 4.400) by declaring that Diomedes and he are in fact better than their fathers (*Il.* 4.405). Homer, by using the more particular adjective of praise with Capaneus at this point, may have intended to heighten the impact of Sthenelus' claim.

Homer provides scant information about Capaneus through direct description. Some details about him, though, are indirectly given through characters who comment on the nature of the expedition in which he took part. In Book 4 Agamemnon reports what he has heard about Diomedes' father (*Il.* 4.370-400), explaining how Polynices had arrived with Tydeus at Mycenae to gain Mycenaean aid in the war and that the Mycenaeans refused once they saw the portents sent by the gods (*Il.* 4.381). After his speech Sthenelus states that "those men died from their own headlong stupidity" (*κεῖνοι δέ σφετέρῃσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο Il.* 4.409). Later, when Agamemnon puts forth the question of retreat to the Argives (*Il.* 9.17-28), Diomedes takes the opportunity to reply to the accusations which had been leveled earlier by Agamemnon. Diomedes claims that even if all the Argives should depart, he and Sthenelus will stay and see Troy destroyed. The earlier generation had disobeyed the

gods and failed while his generation heeded the gods[10] and just as Diomedes and Sthenelus were rewarded with success at Thebes, they would be rewarded again at Troy for they had come there too with the gods (*σύν γὰρ θεῷ εἰλήλουθμεν Il.* 9.49).

In later treatments of the Theban expedition a boast is commonly put into the mouth of Capaneus that he will destroy the city whether the gods will it or not.[11] How early this statement arose or even if this boast was originally attached to Capaneus is not known; however, it is interesting that there is a reversal of this boast when Diomedes claims that he and Sthenelus would take Troy because of their partnership with the gods (*Il.* 9.48-9). If Homer's audience were aware of Capaneus' boast from its Theban context, then Diomedes' statement in the *Iliad* would have greater force.

Hesiod and the lyric poets generally reflect Homer's presentation of the extraordinary strength of the heroes at Thebes and the ill-fated result of the Argive expedition. Hesiod mentions the Theban expedition once in the *Works and Days* (*Op.* 162-3) where he describes the fourth race of men, the Greeks who attacked Thebes and Troy, as *ἀνδρῶν ἡρώων θεῖον γένος* (*Op.* 159). These demigods, as Hesiod calls them, perished at Troy and Thebes and were removed after their death to the Blessed Isles under the rule of Cronos (*Op.* 156-173).

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[10] This is an important theme in the story of Diomedes in the *Iliad.* In Book 4, Diomedes is granted the power of his father and the tension of the following books arises from how far against the gods Diomedes is willing to go and how close he comes to suffering the same fate as his father. Apollo in fact says to Ares that Diomedes *νῦν γε καὶ ἂν Διὶ πατρὶ μάχοιτο* (*Il.* 5.456).

[11] The boast is present in Aeschylus *Septem*, 427-8 *θεοῦ τε γὰρ θέλοντος ἐκπέρσειν πόλιν / καὶ μὴ θέλοντος* and in Euripides' *Phoenissae* 1175-6 *μηδ' ἂν τὸ σεμνὸν πῦρ νιν εἰργαθεῖν Διὸς τὸ μὴ οὐ κατ' ἄκρων περγάμων ἑλεῖν πόλιν.*

That they are a *θεῖον γένος* is a fair indication of the power of the heroes of this age and conforms to the general practice of Homer who often compares heroes to gods or calls them godlike. Hesiod too, just as Homer had, definitely presents a world which gets worse over time. While Hesiod does not explicitly say that generations within each age worsen, he characterizes his own age as having degenerated in life-span, strength, and especially morality (*Op.*181-201) and he may have considered this principle at work during the earlier ages as well. If so his work may be added as support to the notion that the Theban heroes were stronger and more hubristic than the generation of heroes at Troy and later audiences may have expected such a presentation from their own contemporary poets.

Bacchylides relates an episode from the Theban story in his ninth Ode.[12] The Ode is in praise of Automedes, a victor at the Nemean games, and thus Bacchylides suitably works the foundation myth of the Nemean games into his praise. On the way to Thebes a young child is killed by a serpent, and the Argive forces, in performing funeral games for the boy, establish the Nemean games. Bacchylides states at line 14 that the child, Archemoros, was "a sign of the coming slaughter" (*σᾶμα μέλλοντος φόνου*). His death is the start of the evil fate that hounds the rest of the expedition and should have been an omen powerful enough to send the army home. Bacchylides gives the reason for the continuance of the expedition as hope. He notes at 16-18 that "hope stole away the men's ability to reason and this sent Adrastos, the son of Talaus, to Thebes" (*ἐλπὶς ἀνθρώπων ὑφαιρεῖται νόημα· / ἃ καὶ τότ' Ἄδραστον Ταλ[α]ϊονιδάν / πέμπεν ἐς Θήβας*). The reason given by

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[12] Bacchylides lived from 520-450. This passage may in fact be later than Aeschylus' *Septem.*

Bacchylides for the continuance of the expedition is different from, though not incompatible with, Sthenelus' statement at *Iliad* 4.409.

Pindar, the Theban poet, often draws on Theban myths and the attack of the Argives on Thebes. Twice he refers to ill omens accompanying the expedition and once, possibly, to the character of the chief of the expedition, Adrastus. In *Ol.* 6.16. ff. Pindar quotes the praise of Adrastus who, while he is viewing the plain from which the priest Amphiaraus was swallowed up, says "I miss the eye of my army, both a noble seer and good at fighting with the spear" (*Ποθέω στρατιᾶς ὀφθαλμὸν ἐμᾶς ἱ ἀμφότερον μάντιν τ' ἀγαθὸν καὶ δουρὶ μάρνασθαι*). Carne-Ross, noting that a comparison between Amphiaraus and Hagesias, Pindar's patron, underlies Adrastos' words, summarizes the correspondences thus "Hagesias too was a prophet and skilled in that mimicry of warfare, athletic contest (9)." If Amphiaraus is comparable to Hagesias, then Pindar himself, as the giver of praise, has an affiliation with Adrastus. More importantly Pindar avoids too close an association with that hero and guides his audience's judgment by qualifying the praise with "though not being excessively quarrelsome nor excessively fond of battle" (*οὔτε δύσπριξ ἐὼν οὔτ' ὢν φιλόνικος ἄγαν Ol.* 6. 19). Pindar is reacting to traits associated with the commander of the Theban expedition and while these traits may not reflect the general nature of the Argive chieftains, it should be noted that these characteristics appear in Aeschylus' *Septem*, and are attached to different members of the Seven from this poem down to the time of Statius.[13]

Both Pindar and Homer provide a consistent portrayal of the willingness of the Seven

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[13] Seven is used herein to refer to the Argive chieftains who led the attack against Thebes.

to ignore the warnings from the gods in their expedition against Thebes. At *Il.* 4.381 Agamemnon tells Diomedes that the Mycenaeans refused to aid Polynices against Thebes because of "unfavourable omens" (*παραίσια σήματα*). Pindar provides two other instances in which omens were given to the chieftains and not heeded. At *Nemean* 9. 19 the Argive army is said to have been led to Thebes on "an ill-omened road" (*οὐ κατ' ὀρνίχων*) and he remarks that Zeus "by whirling his bolt" (*ἀστεροπὰν ἐλελίξαις*) urged the army not to proceed on the expedition. Elsewhere Pindar contrasts Adrastus' successful second expedition with the first, saying that the hero Adrastus now is accompanied by "a positive omen" (*ἀρείονος ὄρνιχος Pyth.* 8.49-51).[14]

As a final point Apollodorus 3.10.3 contains an interesting reference to the *Eriphyle* of Stesichorus in which Asclepias is said to have raised Lycurgus (one of Adrastos' nephews) and Capaneus from the dead. This detail of Capaneus' story does not seem to have taken hold and is not used in any of the surviving narratives about the hero.

Homer, Hesiod and the Lyric poets generally provide a consistent picture of the Argive expedition against Thebes. In the main they agree that Adrastus led a force from Argos against Thebes, that there were omens which were ignored at different stages of the journey (while allies were being sought, at the outset of the march, and at Nemea, where Archemorus was killed by a serpent), and that the Argive chieftains, their judgment impaired by hope, rashness, or fondness for battle, perished at Thebes.

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[14]This Ode was composed in 446, several years after the production of Aeschylus' *Septem.*

Aeschylus[15]

The *Septem* of Aeschylus was the concluding part of a trilogy which included *Laius*, *Oedipus*, and the *Septem*. These, together with the satyr play called the *Sphinx*, were performed in 467 B.C. at the Dionysia and took first prize (Dawson 1).

To facilitate a thorough examination of Capaneus in Aeschylus' *Septem*, a synopsis of the play follows along with a discussion of the major themes found within the work. Aeschylus' Capaneus will then be examined in relation to plot and theme; first in conjunction with the other leaders with whom he shares many traits; next through the consideration of his individual characteristics, including his shield image, his boasts, and his doom. After this, two other plays by Aeschylus,[16] the *Purphoros*, which has the story of Prometheus as its subject, and the *Argives*, which deals with the aftermath of the Theban expedition, will be examined.

Since only the final play of the trilogy to which the *Septem* belongs survived, we lack much of the information which would have guided our understanding and responses to the various themes of the play within the trilogy itself, and thus this discussion will be limited to the themes which operate in the surviving play. This loss also hampers our ability to assess the validity of the final portion of the *Septem*, which is now considered by some to be

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[15] Hutchinson's text is used throughout.

[16] The trilogy which included the *Septem* was not the only time which Aeschylus treated the Theban material. His *Eleusinoi* probably dealt with the burial of the Seven at Eleusis after Theseus intervened on behalf of the Argive women (see Euripides' *Suppliants* for a treatment of the same story). Aeschylus also wrote an *Epigoni* which may either have dealt specifically with the sons of the Seven or simply the next generation of Argive warriors.

spurious. However, since the question of the validity of the ending does not affect Aeschylus' presentation of Capaneus, it will not be addressed here at length.

Synopsis

The *Septem* opens with the city of Thebes under threat of attack from Argive forces. Eteocles, as the ruler, advises the inhabitants how to act. He specifically exhorts the three age-groups of men (those too young to bear arms, those of military age, and those too old to bear arms) to do their utmost to aid the city and defend the walls. During this speech he also states what his responsibilities are and reports that he has sent out scouts to spy on the enemy (1-38). One of the scouts then enters and informs Eteocles that the Argive chieftains have taken a blood-oath to destroy Thebes or die trying, and that they have drawn lots to decide which gate each captain is to attack (39-68).

Immediately after Eteocles calls on the gods to protect the city a distraught band of women, the chorus, terrified by the coming attack, enters. Eteocles struggles to keep its actions and words in check. In this section, Eteocles, by arguing with the women, defines what their proper role is in war and peace and what form their prayers should take (69-286). Eteocles exits and the women, now left alone, waver between proper prayer as defined by Eteocles and ill-omened fearful prayer (287-374). The scout and Eteocles return and the enemy chieftains are described along with their shield images. Eteocles stations his champions against each opposing chieftain until the last chieftain, his brother, is revealed

(375-653).[17] After a short out-burst against Polynikes and the curse of his father (654-6) Eteocles decides that he must face his brother. The chorus tries to persuade Eteocles not to embark on such a path but Eteocles is unconvinced and goes to his doom.

The chorus next discusses the ill-starred house of Oedipus (720-91) and the curse which Oedipus uttered against his children. The messenger re-enters with good news about the defeat of the Argives and then reveals Eteocles' fate (792-802) . The chorus begins to lament the deaths of the brothers and are joined by Antigone and Ismene (803-1004).[18]

At 1005ff a herald enters with the declaration from the rulers of the city that only one brother shall receive proper burial.[19] The play finishes with Antigone asserting the rights of Polynikes' burial in defiance of the wishes of the city council and the herald promoting the burial of Eteocles (1005-1084). The chorus splits into two and follows in train to bury Eteocles or Polynikes.

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[17] By "station" I mean here that Eteocles allows his champion, previously chosen (probably by lot as the Argives had), to meet his opponent. The information about each enemy chief is weighed by Eteocles against his chieftain and usually a favourable outcome is indicated. It seems that he could, after the postings have been made, check for propitious omens and, if these proved ill, try to adjust the particulars of the attack.

[18] Line attributions vary between editors at this point. Hutchinson gives them not to Antigone and Ismene but to the leaders of the half-choruses.

[19] That a seemingly new issue is brought to the fore this late in the play is the primary reason that scholars consider the ending suspect. The ending of the play is the most contentious and thoroughly debated subjects concerning Aeschylus' *Septem*. I follow Ryzman who building on Lloyd-Jones' comprehensive defence of the ending of the play retains the final scenes intact. For the various views see the following works: Ryzman, Flintoff, Orwin , Brown a and b, Erbse, Mellon, Tarkow, Dawe, Fraenkel, Lloyd-Jones, and Pötscher.

Themes

Three themes vital to the play are fear,[20] the maintenance of the proper relationship between man and gods,[21] and the unfolding of the curse of Oedipus.[22] These themes operate within a general setting of a siege, with its associated dangers to city and citizen.[23]

The theme of fear is most active in the first half of the play and it is even more dangerous than the physical attack of the enemy. The Argives themselves actively seek to enlist the aid of fear on their side. At line 45 the messenger reports that the Argive chieftains make an oath by "Ares, Enyo, and blood-loving Fear" (†Ἄρη τ' †, Ἐνυώ καὶ φιλαίματον Φόβον).[24] Ares, Enyo and Fear would naturally appeal to the warlike nature of the Seven. Ares as the god of war needs little comment. Enyo appears in the *Iliad* as a war goddess and there has the epithet πτολίπορθος (city-wrecker *Il.*533), an attribute which would make her a useful ally to Argives. Aeschylus has particularly marked out Fear by positioning it as the last member of a rising tricolon and by assigning to it the epithet "blood-loving".[25]

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[20] Coleman provides a very detailed examination of the role of this theme.

[21] See Adkins 32-68.

[22] Most *Septem* scholars discuss this theme but the following especially: Roisman, Long, Hutchinson esp. xxiii-xxx, Winnington-Ingram, Burnett, Smith, Cameron, Smyth (1924) esp. 123-150.

[23] See Cameron 1971.

[24] Hutchinson places Ἄρη τ' within daggers accepting it, though problematic, as more likely than Ἄρην, the form of which is rarely attested (49).

[25] The fleeing army, ancient and modern, is particularly vulnerable to slaughter and controlling fear is still important in military endeavors. Marshall notes that "fear is ever present, but that it is uncontrolled fear that is the enemy of successful operation" (37). Φιλαίματον is a fitting epithet for Fear and since part of the oath involves dipping their hands in bull's blood the epithet has extra force in

The audience has good reason to believe that *Φόβος*[26] has heard the Argive prayer when the chorus enters. From the beginning the chorus uses the dochmiac metre, which conveys the chorus' intense fear.[27] Its first line, "I, afraid, let forth cries of distress" (*θρεῦμαι φοβερὰ μεγάλ' ἄχη* 78), reflects this. The height of its fear is shown by frequent outcries (87, 89, 97, 150, 157, 166, 167), the irreligious form that its supplication of the gods takes (78-180) and the demoralizing rehearsing of all the terrible things which happen to a conquered city (288-368).

Eteocles must restrain the women's fear, for he is quite sure that it will spread to the defenders and cause Thebes to lose the war. It is no easy task to control them; after explaining to them their detrimental effect on morale and the proper method of prayer, he finally commands them "Silence, O wretched woman! Do not frighten those near and dear." (*σίγησον, ὦ τάλαινα, μὴ φίλους φόβει* 262).

The theme of fear is also present during the shield scene. The Argive chieftains actively strive to terrify their opponents by the images on their shields, loud noises, and boasts. The scout even says that Fear is with Hippomedon at the gate he is attacking (500).

The theme is also active when Eteocles decides to fight Polynikes at the seventh

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Aeschylus' narrative.

26 *φόβος* based words appear quite often, see lines 45, 78, 132, 214, 240, 259, 262, 270, 288, 386, 498, 500, 1059.

27 See Hutchinson 57 and Tucker 25 for the aptness of dochmiacs at emotionally charged moments.

gate.[28] The chorus become frightened that, with the kings, the town will be lost (764-5). The resolution of this theme occurs with the removal of the Argive threat and the revelation of Eteocles' death. The resolution is marked by the command from the Messenger to the chorus, "*θαρσεῖτε*" (take heart 792), a command that Eteocles had used in conjunction with men (34) but not the women.

The second theme, the maintenance of the proper relationship between man and gods is Eteocles' specialty.[29] Under the stress of the forthcoming attack every inhabitant must act righteously in order to ensure the survival of the city. In this opening speech, Eteocles defines what he must do (1) and what the men must do (10ff). Conspicuous by its absence is any initial guidance for the women; perhaps because they have no clear role they become subject to the forces of fear. Regardless, it is during the heated conversation which follows their entrance that Eteocles defines their role. He is especially earnest that they do not touch the statues of the gods. In their feverish state, any contact could bring misfortune upon the city. Eventually, however, he is willing to admit that they do have a perfect right to give prayers (236), but only if they follow the proper form.

After Eteocles departs, the chorus, still under the sway of fear, attempts to put into practice his lessons (288ff). Through its prayer it tries in two ways to gain the aid of the gods. At 304 the chorus describes the beauty of the location of Thebes and at 321ff the

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[28] For a discussion of the deep effect of fear on the chorus and the force of the verb *φρίσσω* in this passage, see Manton 77.

[29] This theme is in fact part of the larger theme of maintenance of proper relationships. Winnington-Ingram writes briefly about this theme as it pertains to the sexes (88-93); for a rather cynical view of Eteocles as a military man willing to use whatever argument works best for his own cause see Golden 79-89.

injuries which the inhabitants must suffer if the city falls. In its fearful state the chorus soon leaves any reference to the gods aside and begins to detail at length the suffering which the women will surely endure. The theme as it pertains to the women ends here as the shield-scene begins and the play shifts its focus to the Argive attack.

In the shield-scene the Argive chieftains show that they cannot maintain a decent relationship with the gods and Eteocles exhibits his good sense by setting pious opponents against the impious Argive chieftains. This strategy should encourage the gods to favour Thebes. The defenders are marked by the fact that they are good men, the attackers by their collection of sins; Tydeus reviles the priest Amphiaraus (383-5); Capaneus insults Zeus (427-9); Eteoclus matches himself against Ares (469); Hippomedon has on his shield a picture of Typhon (492-6); Parthenopaeus counts his own strength as everything and the gods as nothing (529-532); Amphiaraus is doomed, as Eteokles interprets it, for joining in with evil companions (597-600); and Polynikes has never walked with justice (662-669).

When Eteocles decides to fight Polynikes, the theme is again brought to the fore. The chorus knows that it is wrong for kin to kill kin and that the act will cause an incurable miasma(681-2). The curse of Oedipus leads Eteocles on and does not let him proceed properly. He goes to his doom at least recouping what he can from an honourable defeat.[30]

The unfolding of the curse is the third theme to be discussed. We first hear of the curse in Eteocles' supplication of the gods at line 70. He calls upon Zeus, Earth and the

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[30] Had Eteocles failed to meet Polynikes, the power of the curse may well have lead to a breached gate, panic, a duel and the loss of the city. At 631 we are told that Polynikes hopes to take Thebes and then kill or at least exile Eteocles.

Curse (*Ἀρά*). He pleads with the gods not to destroy the city and implies that they will be rewarded if the city is left safe. The curse is likely mentioned in the hopes of mitigating any damage which it might cause.[31]

The force of the curse reappears at the end of the shield scene. When Eteocles learns that his brother will oppose him at the final gate, he exclaims "Alas, now indeed the end-bearing curses of father" (*ὤμοι, πατρὸς δὴ νῦν ἀραὶ τελεσφόροι* 655). He feels that there is no escape and his final words bring out both the necessity which he feels is guiding him and the mental state to which the curse has driven him: "you would not escape the evils that the gods give" (*θεῶν διδόντων οὐκ ἂν ἐκφύγοις κακά* 719).[32] This ends the active component of the curse but the chorus and messenger continue to lay stress on the role of the curse upon the destruction of the princes.[33]

Shared Traits of the Argive Leaders

Since the scope and length of a play is by its nature more limited than epic, one cannot expect every character, and especially those on the periphery of the action, to have

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[31] At 788-790 the chorus report that Oedipus declared "and in time they will share out my property with an iron divider in hand" (*καί σφε σιδαρονόμωι δι / ἀ χερί ποτε λαχεῖν / κτήματα*).

[32] See Hutchinson 160 and Tucker 148 who treat the verb as a general second person. Paley accepts the third person singular form and translates the line as "If heaven wills he shall not escape harm (301)." This reading illustrates to a greater degree Eteocles' hatred of his brother and his own willingness to kill him.

[33] See 723, 766, 791,833, 867, 886,894, and 954, at which points the curse is addressed as both *Ἀρά* and *Ἐρίνυς*.

been extensively detailed. So it is with Aeschylus' *Septem*, which must handle in the course of the defense of the city at least fourteen heroes. Thus the Seven and the expedition which they lead are treated generally, and the broad opinions of Homer's Sthenelus, Diomedes, and Agamemnon still hold true for these characters. They are ill-omened, impetuous, and too eager to attack. Capaneus is part of this enemy and as such he shares in their deeds and is marked by similar characteristics. This section will explore the actions of the Argive army, their arms, and the Theban response, in three divisions: First from the opening of the play until Eteocles leaves the stage at 287; second the shield-scene 288-719; third from the chorus which follows Eteocles' final departure at 720 to the end.

1-287

The characterization of the attacking army is primarily accomplished through their actions, the images on their shields, and by the reaction of Eteocles and the Theban women to this information. But even before this Aeschylus turns the audience's opinion against the Argive army. The Thebans are defending their city from a hostile attack[34] and, unlike the Argive attack against Troy, we are not given to believe that there is any justice in the attack rooted in some hostile or shameful act of the Thebans against the city of Argos.

The scout further allies our sympathies with the Thebans in his language and

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[34] Athens was burnt in 480 by the Persians and that event may well have strengthened this bias. Tucker suggests that the avoidance of the term Theban in the *Septem* arose because of Aeschylus' desire to disassociate the negative connotations of modern Thebes and its alliance with the Persians from the Thebes in his play (xxi). At two points (73, 170) it is implied that the attackers do not speak Greek and this would further stress the division between the Thebans who are portrayed as civilized and the barbaric attackers. For the reading of 73 and 170 as referring to different languages and not dialects see Zuntz 1981, 81-95.

description of the activities of the Seven at the opening of the play. He calls them θούριοι "rushing", "raging" (LSJ). The aptness of the adjective may be seen in its application to Ares in the *Iliad* (5.30), and to Xerxes, who foolishly attack Athens (Aesch. *Pers.* 73). The word may also play on an adjective of similar sound θυραῖος, which means "at the door" or "just outside the door" (LSJ). By this clever device Aeschylus conveys the dangerous proximity of the enemy.

The position of Eteocles also helps to define the nature of the war. Eteocles is not portrayed as a villain in this play. The issue of whether he could save the city by turning it over to Polynikes is neither raised nor operating in Aeschylus' *Septem*. Here there will be an unavoidable attack and Eteocles must counter it. The attack on Thebes is inevitable since the Argive leaders, as the scout reports, have sworn a terrible oath.

†Ἄρη τ' † Ἐνυώ, καὶ φιλαίματον Φόβον
ὡρκωμότησαν ἢ πόλει κατασκαφὰς
θέντες λαπάξειν ἄστυ Καδμείων βίαι,
ἢ γῆν θανόντες τήνδε φυράσειν φόνωι.

They swore an oath by Mars, by Enyo, and blood-
thirsty Fear, either having set destructions upon the
city to destroy the town of the Kadmeians
or by dying redden the earth with their death. (45-9)

With this oath the Seven tie their intentions, through a gruesome religious ceremony, to their actions[35] and in effect they ask the gods to judge at this time between themselves and

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[35] Hutchinson points out that such an oath was not unheard of and may be found in Ephor. FGH 70, F 216, Alcaeus fr. 129, and Herodotus 1. 176.2 (50).

their adversaries.[36] By so stressing the inevitability of the actions of the Argives, Aeschylus heightens the tension of the drama. There is no pretense that reconciliation is possible.

The gods whom the Argives choose are also apt. Ares, Enyo and Fear, are all gods present in war. But absent is any mention of Zeus, Hera (patron goddess of Argos), Athena (a companion to heroes and in the *Iliad* an ally of Tydeus), Dike (on whom Polynikes depends), or any of the other major Olympian gods who could conceivably guide them to victory. Aeschylus gives the audience very little reason to cheer for the Argives.

The seriousness with which the Argives take the oath is further displayed by the fact that they attach to the chariot of Adrastos tokens (*μνημεῖα* 49) for their parents. The attackers treat themselves as dead men from the start. Aeschylus does not, however, wish the audience to dismiss the attack as entirely without risk to the defenders and thus the messenger ends his report by highlighting their ferocity. There was no weeping, they had steeled their hearts, and they were like lions with the look of Ares in their eyes (51-2). The comparison of the warriors to lions also has good precedence in epic; it is found in the *Iliad* with warriors such as Menelaos (3.23), Tydeus (5.136), Agamemnon (5.552) and adds to the seriousness of the Argive threat.

The messenger makes a final comparison. Since they are an invading army and the state is in trouble the messenger talks to Eteocles as a helmsman of a storm-blasted ship (62-

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[36] In the *Iliad* the heralds of the Greeks and the Trojans stop Ajax and Hector from dueling by these words at 7. 279-280, *μηκέτι, παῖδε φίλω, πολεμίζετε μηδὲ μάχεσθον· / ἀμφοτέρω γὰρ σφῶι φιλεῖ νεφεληγερέτα Ζεύς* (7.279-280). Hector agrees to the end of the duel and tells Ajax *ὕστερον αὖτε μαχησόμεθ', εἰς ὅ κε δαίμων / ὄμμε διακρίνῃ, δώῃ δ' ἑτέροισί γε νίκην* (7.291-2).

64).[37] The simile emphasizes the noise and perhaps the chaos of a storm as well as evoking the mood of indiscriminate danger bearing down on the state and the relative strength of the small state to the immense threat.

With the entrance of the chorus there is a shift from rational description to emotional reaction. For his part the scout gives a competent account of the activity of the Argive campaign, but the women are left to describe and react to the actual approach of the enemy. They start by giving an image of the breaking of camp, the approach of the Argives to the city, and a nature simile,

> † ἐλεδεμας† δέ γᾶς ἐμᾶς πεδί' ὁπλόκτυπ' ὠ -
> τὶ χρίμπτει βοάν·
> ποτᾶται, βρέμει δ' ἀμαχέτου δίκαν
> ὕδατος ὀροτύπου.
>
> Arm-strikes on the plain
> bring close the shout to my ear.
> It flies, it roars, the whirl of unconquerable
> mountain driven water. (83-6)

Here the sound words, *βόαν* and *βρέμει*, highlight the raw noise associated with the approach of the army; these same words will be found later attached to specific members of the Seven. The adjective *ἀμαχέτου* has clear military overtones and captures the chorus' fearful view of the strength of the opposition. In contrast to the ship of state imagery wherein there is a chance of survival, here there is none. The chorus succumbs to the power of fear

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[37] For an in depth look at the imagery, including the continuous appearance of nautical language, see Cameron 1971, 58-73.

as it is sparked by the reality of an attack of the enemy army and the threat of suffering implicit in its success.

The chorus is especially vulnerable to the sounds and sights of the attack. The women see in the air the dust of the approaching force (81), hear the sounds of the hooves of enemy horses (84), a thunderous sound at 103, and at 114-115 they pick up on the messenger's ship of state imagery and compare the attacking Argives to waves threatening a ship: "a wave of men with nodding plumes seethes white about the city driven by the blasts of Ares" (*κῦμα περὶ πτόλιν δοχμολόφων ἀνδρῶν/ καχλάζει πνοιαῖς Ἄρεος ὁρόμενον*). They see the Seven, standing clear from the mass of the soldiers at 124, hear chariots (150), and the noise of striking stones (153). The data of sight and sound portends the same things to the women, their eventual slavery.

For their part the Argives capitalize on the effect that an onrush of this sort might have on the defenders. In the case of the women they clearly succeed and it is up to Eteocles to halt the panic from spreading through the city.

288-719

This is the most important section for the purposes of defining and analyzing the shared traits of the of the Seven. An examination of these lines will show that Aeschylus generally depicts the Seven as noisy, fiery, and boastful. Similes which bring out their fierceness and bloodlust are also attached to the Seven.

Before the reappearance of Eteocles, the chorus anticipates its fate, should the city

fall, and the women compare themselves to sparrows afraid for their young because of a snake (292-4). This type of simile is well known from Homer, where an omen was given the Greeks by the gods which promised that Troy would fall on the tenth year. The message was conveyed by the appearance of a serpent eating eight chicks and then the mother (*Iliad* 3.326-7). This omen indicated that the Greeks would eat up nine years before Troy would fall. Not only is this simile evocative of the fate of Troy and the danger which threatens Thebes but it also prepares the audience for a continued comparison of the Seven to serpents and other chthonic creatures.

Eteocles reappears on stage with his six champions at the same time as a scout enters. He tells Eteocles the gate at which each Argive captain has been posted. As the scene unfolds two things become clear; first, Thebes is shown to be favored by the gods during fortuitous match-ups; secondly, Eteocles and Polynikes are fated to duel. The Argives in this scene share several characteristics a which will become clear from their actions, shield images, similes, and the reaction of Eteocles, the scout and the chorus.

Before entering on a discussion of the Seven it must be noted that two characters, Polynikes and Amphiaraus, generally do not fit into the corporate character of the Argive chieftains. Amphiaraus is praised by Eteocles, and his only real fault is that he linked his fate with foolish men. Amphiaraus' piety brings out the raw criminality of his companions. Polynikes is leading an attack against his own country and has on his shield an image of Justice leading him home. His motivation and justification for the attack are entirely different from that of the other leaders.

Light and sound begin to be associated with the Seven at 378 and generally reinforce

the impious nature of the Seven. When the scout reports that Tydeus rages (378), Aeschylus uses the verb *βρέμει*, a word used for the roaring of the sea, the clash or ringing of arms, and of the roaring and raging of men (LSJ). Aeschylus capitalizes on each of these meanings. The chorus at 115 had compared the invading army to waves of the sea, the clash and ringing of arms is natural for a warrior and the verb equally suits the war cry of a war-frenzied hero. His impiety is particularly shown by the fact that he reviles the priest Amphiaraus who is waiting for propitious signs to attack (382). Capaneus too is a noisy warrior whose impiety comes through strongly as he boasts loudly, swears that the gods will not stop him, and counts Zeus' lightning as the rays of midday sun (427-31). Eteoclus does not share in the rampant impiety of the others but he is still associated with loud sounds. His horses have been fitted with pipes which give forth a fearful noise (463-464). Hippomedon has a mighty battle-cry, his eyes flash fear, and the god, Fear, himself is said to boast at his gate (498). The impiety of Parthenopaeus is shown by his trust in his own spear more than in gods (529) and his boast that he will take the city despite Zeus (532).

Impiety is further displayed by the images on their shields. Due to the length of a play the shield-images in Aeschylus cannot of course be as elaborate as the shield of Achilles or Herakles and they typically have but one image or symbol. For the most part they represent forces of darkness and destruction, and are flashy and noisy.

Tydeus carries a shield which has bronze bells attached (386) and on it,

φλέγονθ' ὑπ' ἄστροις οὐρανὸν τετυγμένον·
λαμπρὰ δὲ πανσέληνος ἐν μέσωι σάκει,
πρέσβιστον ἄστρων, νυκτὸς ὀφθαλμός, πρέπει.

a fiery sky wrought with stars
and the light of the full moon in mid-shield,
eldest of stars, eye of night, is conspicuous. (388-90)

Eteocles interprets Tydeus' reason for choosing this image. He assumes that the picture is that of night in the sense of death. Aeschylus has borrowed this metaphor from epic. It is found in the *Iliad* seven times, and there Tydeus' son, Diomedes, is among the warriors who causes night to fall on another; and he is the only warrior that has this metaphor twice. To wield such an image on a shield acts as a pictorial boast or threat to an approaching warrior that he will suffer this fate. *φλέγονθ'* stands out since words denoting flash or fire are attached regularly by Aeschylus to the Seven.

Tydeus is also compared to a snake. The messenger says that in his eagerness to join battle he cries out "like the hiss of snakes" (*ὡς δράκων βοᾷ* 381). This threatening sound ties nicely into the chorus' characterization of the Seven earlier, as threatening snakes, as well as directly allotting Tydeus connections to the chthonic realm. In a second simile Tydeus is compared to a horse waiting for the horn to sound the attack (393-4). This comparison underscores his eagerness for combat and shows the aptness of the adjective, *θούριοι,* which the messenger used of the Seven earlier.

Aeschylus describes Capaneus' shield thus:

ἔχει δε σῆμα γυμνὸν ἄνδρα πυρφόρον,
φλέγει δὲ λαμπὰς διὰ χερῶν ὡπλισμένη·
χρυσοῖς δὲ φωνεῖ γράμμασιν "Πρήσω πόλιν."

His insignia has a naked man, a fire-bearer,

and the equipped torch flashes in his hand.
It voices in gold letters "I shall burn the city." (432-4)

This shield is similar to Tydeus' in that it is threatening, bright, and noisy. It is the second shield detailed; Aeschylus is careful to vary these qualities in such a way as to contrast the two warriors. While the picture is a threat, the threat is directed at not an individual warrior but rather the whole town and is more emphatic than Tydeus' shield since it reduplicates Capaneus' verbal threat *ἐκπέρσειν πόλιν* (427) in the gold writing around the rim (*Πρήσω πόλιν* 434). Similar words with connotations of brightness are found in both, *φλέγω* appears at 387 and 431 and the verb *λάμπω* is the root for *λαμπρὰ* at 389 and *λαμπὰς* at 433. As for sound, Capaneus' shield does not have the bells of Tydeus, but in the threat written about the rim is a verb which does indicate sound (*φωνεῖ*).

When the messenger first mentions Capaneus, he calls him a *γίγας ὅδ' ἄλλος* (424).[38] Of course next to Tydeus, Capaneus is tall but the word here brings with it a context of anti-Olympian and Earthborn forces which threatened to topple order. For the giants, Olympus must fall; for the Argives, Thebes. Giants too were considered to be serpentine and were portrayed in art like Typhon with snaky appendages. Thus Capaneus too has chthonic associations.

Eteoclus' shield is described thus:

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38 Tucker (85) seems to take it in this way "Another giant this, greater than he last reckoned." If this is so the scout characterizes all the attacking chieftains as giants and marks Capaneus out as a giant bigger than Tydeus with *τοῦ πάρος λελεγμένου μείζων* (424-5).

ἀνὴρ [δ'] ὁπλίτης κλίμακος προσαμβάσεις
στείχει πρὸς ἐχθρῶν πύργον, ἐκπέρσαι θέλων.
βοᾶι δὲ χοὗτος γραμμάτων ἐν ξυλλαβαῖς
ὡς οὐδ ἂν Ἄρης σφ' ἐκβάλοι πυργωμάτων.

An armed man climbs the ascents of a ladder
against the tower of enemies in his desire to destroy.
And this man shouts in syllables of what was written -
that Ares could not cast him from the towers. (466-9)

Aeschylus again uses threats and noise on this shield. Like the first two shields there is a visual threat. Eteoclus' shield is not, as with Tydeus' shield, a specific threat against a warrior, but similar to Capaneus' shield, a threat against the city.

Figure 1

Noise is present in the shield through the figure on the shield itself by the word *βοᾶ*(465). The threat *οὐδ ἂν Ἄρης σφ' ἐκβάλοι πυργωμάτων*(469) is, as with Capaneus' shield, a promise written about the rim. Here, though, it is directed at Ares, to whom prayers had been offered earlier. It is not unnatural in epic for a powerful hero to stand against a lesser Olympian god. In the *Iliad* for instance, Diomedes wounds both Ares and Aphrodite, but it is a different matter to boast such a deed and strive for it from the outset.

Hippomedon's shield is the most threatening and contains the highest level of chthonic associations. Even the scout admits that he was frightened by the man (490). On his shield is

Τυφῶν' ἱέντα πύρπνοον διὰ στόμα

λιγνὺν μέλαιναν, αἰόλην πυρὸς κάσιν·

Typhon issuing fire-breath through his mouth,
dark smoke, wavering sister of fire. (493-4)

Not only would an attacker confronting such a hero believe that he was facing one who claimed to be a second Typhon in power and destructive force but there is also a general threat of chaos and destruction against the city. Like the earlier shields his is flashy. The description of his shield contains a double reference to fire (*πύρπνοον* 493, *πυρὸς* 494). Typhon is an earth-born monster whose serpentine qualities may be seen in Figure 1.[39] Serpents are linked with the destruction of cities. This connection may be found in the *Iliad*, as mentioned earlier, where Kalchas reminds the Achaians that they were promised by an omen featuring a snake dining on the chicks of a sparrow that Troy would fall in the tenth year (3. 326-7), or in Pindar where Alcmaeon is first to gain the wall of Thebes and carries on his shield an image of a snake (*Pyth.* 8. 44-7). More importantly, for our play, the *Septem's* chorus describes itself at 292-4 as doves who fear the attack of a snake on their nestlings.

Hippomedon's association with snakes is stronger than the previous heroes; not only through the image of Typhon but also by the fastenings of his shield which are made "by the intertwinings of snakes" (*ὄφεων δὲ πλεκτάναισι* 495). Given the preponderance of snaky

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[39] The serpentine qualities of Typhon are described in detail by Hesiod: *ἐκ δὲ οἱ ὤμων / ἦν ἑκατὸν κεφαλαὶ ὄφις, δεινοῖο δράκοντος* (*Theog.* 824-5). Several depictions of Typhon in art bear this out (See Figure 1). During the 6th century A.D. a popular shield band decoration was Zeus threatening Typhon with destruction. Touchefeu-Meynier writes "Zeus menaçant T. est un motif extrêmement répandu sur des brassards de boucliers de la première moitié du VI s. av. J. - C., de fabrication corinthiene et trouvés à Olympie" (*LIMC* v.v 149).

traits it is no wonder that when Eteocles sends Hyperbius, he comments that the warrior will "guard the young as if from a hard storming snake" (*εἴρξει νεοσσῶν ὡς δράκοντα δύσχιμον* 503).

Aeschylus highlights Hippomedon's mindless state which has arisen from his lust for battle by having the scout compare Hippomedon to a Bacchant (497-8). Hippomedon shows the same over-eagerness as Tydeus, Capaneus and Eteoclus, in his desire to attack Thebes.

The fifth warrior described is Parthenopaeus. His shield image, the Sphinx treading down a Cadmeian, is meant to be a visual insult and a threat. The Sphinx is at the heart of the unholy story of Oedipus and his crimes and it is a monster that attacked and killed the citizens of Thebes, just as Parthenopaeus is attempting to do. The shield nicely plays on the fact that Parthenopaeus, a youthful and pretty-faced warrior, is carrying the image of a monster which caused terror and destruction despite also having a maiden's face. Aeschylus writes that Pathenopaeus

> Σφίγγ' ὠμόσιτον, προσμεμηχανημένην
> γόμφοις ἐνώμα, λαμπρὸν ἔκκρουστον δέμας,
> φέρει δ' ὑφ' αὑτῆι φῶτα, Καδμείων ἕνα,
>
> brandished the raw-flesh-eating Sphinx,
> a figure affixed by fastenings, a bright embossed form,
> and she bears under her one of the Cadmeians. (541-3)

The beastliness of the warrior is brought out by the phrase "raw-flesh-eating" (*ὠμόσιτον* 541) and certainly by the visual representation of the Sphinx on the shield. The connection to flash or fire is brought out by the word "bright" (*λαμπρὸν*) at 542. The shield is taken as a boast and Eteocles summons a man against him who is without boasts (*ἀνὴρ*

ἄκομπος 554).

As for the next warrior, Amphiaraus, given the impious nature of the shield devices of his comrades, it is fitting that he has no shield emblem. He is a counter-figure to the other chieftains and by his refusal to make boasts either in word or on his shield he reinforces the similarities of the other chieftains.[40]

Polynikes has a shield-image but not of the same type as his comrades. While his contains a warrior and writing on the rim it contains neither the boast nor the threatening attitude of the other shields. His device is not self-condemning. The scout reports

> χρυσήλατον γὰρ ἄνδρα τευχηστὴν ἰδεῖν
> ἄγει γυνή τις, σωφρόνως ἡγουμένη
> Δίκη δ' ἄρ' εἶναί φησιν, ὡς τὰ γράμματα
> λέγει "κατάξω δ' ἄνδρα τόνδε καὶ πόλιν
> ἕξει πατρώιαν δωμάτων τ' ἐπιστροφάς.
>
> For a man in gold relief, clearly armed,
> Some woman leads, who bears herself wisely,
> She says that she is Dike; in this manner the
> the letters say "I will lead this man, he will
> have the city of his father and occupation of his halls. (644-8)

Neither fire nor flash nor destruction is implied in the shield itself and one only gathers that he is guilty of crime from Amphiaraus (580-6), who berates him for attacking his fatherland and from Eteocles, who states that Polynikes has never been just (662-71).

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40 Bacon notes that Amphiaraus' "language" is framed in words indicating normal conversation *βάζω, λέγω, ἀυδάω*, as compared *with βρέμω, βοάω, αὐπῶ, ἐπαλαλάζω* and that he has no noise making accoutrements as was the case with other members of the Seven (29). Podlecki sees a connection between Aristeides and Amphiaraus, taking his cue from Plutarch's assertion in the *Life of Aristeides* that all eyes turned on Aristeides after Eteocles' praise of Amphiaraus (1966, 37-40). If he is correct Aeschylus may also be contrasting Aristeides' fine character with those of his circle.

The reaction of Eteocles is to send a specifically chosen warrior against each gate's attacker. The defending warriors share attributes which contrast their opponents' loud, flashy, and threatening nature and in this the Theban champions are like the Argive priest, Amphiaraus. Tydeus is matched by Melanippus, a man who "avoids haughty words" (στυγοῦνθ' ὑπέρφρονας λόγους 410); Capaneus, who is especially offensive to the gods, is to be confronted by Polyphontes, who has "the favours of Artemis and the other gods" (Ἀρτέμιδος εὐνοίαισι σύν τ' ἄλλοις θεοῖς 450). Eteoclus, whose horse and shield are noisy, must fight Megareus a warrior who counters idle boasting by his deeds (κόμπον ἐν χεροῖν ἔχων 473); Hippomedon is to face a stalwart warrior who has by luck the picture on his shield of Zeus wielding the fire-bolt (512); against Parthenopaeus is set a man who does not boast (ἄκομπος 554); against Amphiaraus all Eteocles can do is send Lasthenes, a wise and brave young man (622); Eteocles must face Polynikes and see whether or not Polynikes will be led home by Dike (658). In the main it is clear that the opposing warriors have gods on their side, or portray themselves as such, are not given to boasting, and are unlikely to be daunted by the boasts of others.

The response of the chorus is generally emotional and religious. In reaction to Tydeus, it asks the gods for victory (417-18) and it voices its terror over the possibility of its soldiers' death. (419-21). It violently dislikes Capaneus and prays for Zeus to stop him with lightning (453). After Eteoclus' description it prays for Argive failure and Theban victory (481-2) and it hopes that Zeus turns against the impious Argives (483-5). The chorus is sure that Hippomedon will lose since he bears an image of Zeus' enemy on his shield (521-24). After the description of Parthenopaeus it reacts generally to the wild boasts of the chieftains

with a wish that the gods destroy them in Thebes (566-7). The chorus ignores the description of Amphiaraus entirely and reiterates its prayer of 566-7 by asking the gods to destroy its enemy and it specifically calls upon Zeus to slay the enemies outside the gate-towers (629-30). Lastly it characterizes Polynikes as rash for wishing to battle his own brother (677-8).

As a general trend the chorus first shows concern for its own men and hopes for victory in the individual combats but by the end it expresses a desire for total victory: they move from individual to general concern. The response of the chorus returns again to an individual, Eteocles, after his decision to fight Polynikes. The shields generally complement this movement. Tydeus' shield contains an individual threat; the next three have general threats; with Polynikes' shield the audience's attention is brought back to an individual.

720 - End

There is little to be said about the corporate nature of the expedition after 721. The chorus are overwhelmed by its thoughts of Eteocles' decision and the nature of the curse on the house of Oedipus. The outcome of the battles are done away with in the sweeping statement by the messenger "it is well, for the most part, at six gates" (*καλῶς δ' ἔχει τὰ πλεῖστ', ἐν ἕξ πυλώμασι* 799). The corporate victory is brushed aside in order to move onto the more compelling outcome, the death of Eteocles.

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

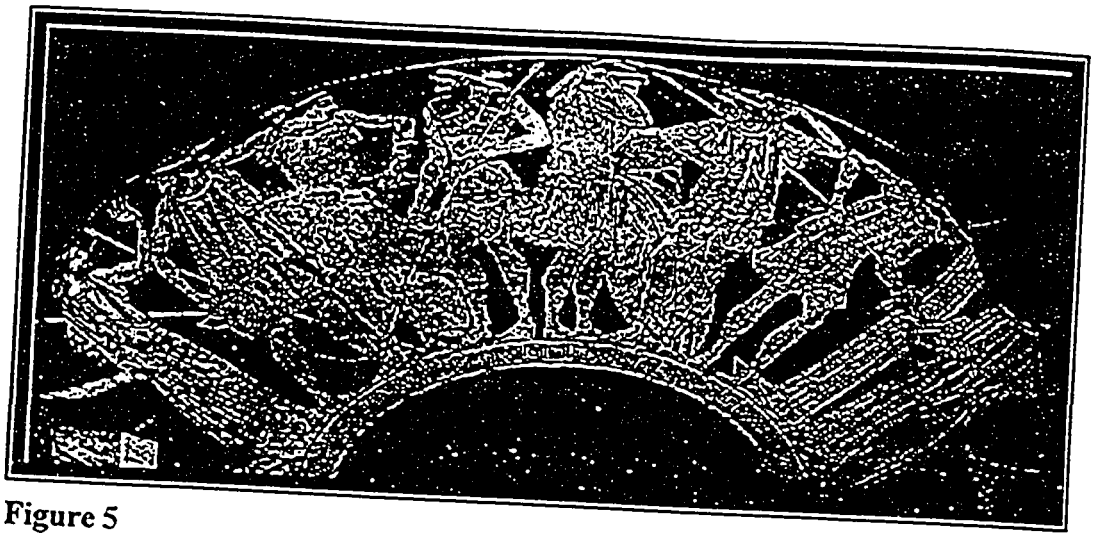

Figure 5

The similar handling by Aeschylus of the Argive chieftains has a parallel in artistic representations of the Seven on vases. The generic view of the Seven may be found in Greek art from the 6th century B.C. on.[41] At least three pieces show a generally undifferentiated scene involving the Seven.[42] These are probably arming scenes or departure scenes and each includes the cutting (Figures 2 and 3) or tying back (Figure 5) of hair. The hair is probably to be left at home but the images are evocative of the actions of the Seven at the outset of the *Septem*, where they leave final offerings (*μνημεῖα*) on Adrastos' chariot. Other than the chariots (Figure 2 and 4), which may indicate Amphiaraus or Adrastos, the characters are not differentiated. The mixing of activities and age also helps create the impression of a generic moment or type-scene. Of those cutting their hair one is a youth (Figure 2) and the other a

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[41] All figures may be dated before the middle of the 5th century B.C.

[42] Figures 3 and 4 are from the same vessel.

bearded warrior (Figure 3), nor are the groups only of one age, but rather they seem to be mixed indiscriminately. In Figure 2, two are beardless youths, in Figures 3-4 four are bearded and three are not, while in Figure 5 the reverse holds true.

The warrior's activities are typical of both the departure for war and preparation for battle. These two points of time are evoked simultaneously by a representation of both arming and beautifying. In Figure 2 various figures are holding arms while another cuts his hair; in Figure 3 four warriors hold arms, one has a jar, one cuts his hair and one combs his; and in Figure 5 warriors variously tie up their hair, cut it, or shine weapons. The scenes are so generic that only the fact that there are 7 warriors indicate that we may have a scene from the Theban myth.

Perhaps part of the appeal of this type of mythological scene is derived from its ability to heroicize a common Greek experience, the outset of an expedition, without unduly focussing a viewer's attention on the unsavoury nature of certain of the individuals, the motivation behind the war, or the outcome of the specific campaign.

Individual Treatment and Role of Capaneus

Capaneus is discussed in but one section of Aeschylus' play, the shield-scene (422-456). This section occupies 35 lines of the central portion of the play (369-719). Each warrior is treated in a similar fashion; the scout provides an initial description, Eteocles reacts and then provides an opposing champion, and lastly the chorus rounds out each section with an emotional response. In the case of Capaneus the Scout gives 15 lines, Eteocles 15 lines, and the chorus 5. There is only one hero, Eteoclus, who receives less attention than

Capaneus, and Amphiaraus, the most detailed Argive warrior, has nearly double the number of lines allotted to him.

Scout's Report: 422-436

Aeschylus has structured the scout's speech in such a way that it moves the audience easily from the section on Tydeus to Capaneus and from the Scout's own report to Eteocles' reply. In its proportions and subject matter this section emphasizes first and foremost Capaneus' boastfulness, next his size, and lastly his fate.

The scout's speech breaks down as follows: 422 acts as a bridge between Tydeus' and Capaneus' passages; 423 informs the audience of the gate which Capaneus will attack; 424 contains a comparison between Tydeus and Capaneus; 425-31 reports three boasts which Capaneus made; 1) that he will destroy the city, 2) that he will not to be held back by lightning, and 3) that lightning is like sun-rays; 432-4 presents Capaneus' shield image; 435-6 contain both an exhortation to Eteocles to counter Capaneus and two questions from the scout; 1) Who is to oppose Capaneus? and 2) Who remain unafraid in the face of his boasts? These two lines bridge the Scout's speech with Eteocles' and with line 422 frame the passage.

As can be seen, Capaneus' boasts take up nearly half the lines (7 of 15) and the lines which follow reinforce this hubristic trait. His extraordinary size is passed over in one line while the two references to lightning remind the audience of his coming fate and further emphasize the foolishness of his words.

A closer look at the passage and its individual sections reveals many of the associations which will be used again and again by successive authors including the gate to

which he is assigned, his relationship to giants, his boasts, his shield, and his death.

The first detail which we hear from the Scout about Capaneus is that he won the lot for the *Electran* gate. This gate has special relevance for Capaneus because of its position and the meaning of its name. First the road to Athens and Plataea issued from this gate and the road actually ran to a higher elevation on the Theban Acropolis than the other roads (Tucker xlii). His boasts must take him further and higher than the other champions, and his fall will consequently be from a higher point.

Secondly, *ἠλέκτωρ* is the base from which the adjective used to describe the gate of Thebes is formed (*Ἠλέκτραισι* 423). The noun may mean the beaming sun or even the element of fire (LSJ). Interestingly, *ἠλέκτωρ* is found in Homer in a martial context. At *Il.* 6.513 Paris' armour is described as beaming bright like the shining of the sun *τεύχεσι παμφαίνων ὥς τ' ἠλέκτωρ,* and at *Il.* 19.398 Achilles is described in a like manner *τεύχεσι παμφαίνων ὥς τ' ἠλέκτωρ Ὑπερίων.* The neuter noun *ἤλεκτρον* (found occasionally in the masculine and feminine) is used to denote amber or pale gold (LSJ). The name has relevance for Capaneus on two levels. As will be discussed later Capaneus compares the power of lightning to sun-beams and he will of course go on to be blasted by Zeus' lightning.

After informing the audience which gate Capaneus will attack, the Scout describes him as "A giant, different from the aforementioned (Tydeus), larger" (*γίγας ὅδ' ἄλλος, τοῦ πάρος λελεγμένου μείζων*). While Tucker took this line to mean that Tydeus was a giant and Capaneus another (85), Cameron defends *γίγας* as referring particularly to Capaneus

(114). If Cameron is right, *γίγας*, in reference to Capaneus, evokes some interesting parallels in size, thoughts, and anti-Olympian attitudes. A brief examination of Homer and Hesiod shows the general character of the giants. Giants are mentioned three times as a race in Homer's *Odyssey*, first in connection with Periboa, the wife of Alcinous, king of the Phaiacians at 7. 58-60

> ὁπλοτάτη θυγάτηρ μεγαλήτορος Εὐρυμέδοντος,
> ὅς ποθ' ὑπερθύμοισι Γιγάντεσσιν βασίλευεν.
> ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ὤλεσε λαὸν ἀτάσθαλον, ὤλετο δ' αὐτός,
>
> The youngest daughter of great-hearted Eurymedon
> who on a time ruled the over-spirited giants
> but he destroyed his haughty people and he himself was destroyed.

This passage uses words similar to Sthenelus' judgment upon his and Tydeus' fathers at *Il.* 4.409, *κεῖνοι δὲ σφετέρῃσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο.* At 7.206 king Alcinous describes their neighbours including the Cyclopes whom he calls the "brutal tribe of giants" (*ἄγρια φῦλα Γιγάντων*). The final mention in Homer relates to the Laestrygonians, who are said at 10.120 to have attacked Odysseus and his comrades not as men but as giants (*γίγασσιν*).

Hesiod gives some details about giants in his *Theogony*. He states that they were born of the earth from the blood of Ouranus' severed genitals and were a mighty race who wore shining armour and wielded long spears (*Theog*, 184-185). In art they may be portrayed as wild warriors or snake-limbed monsters. Sometimes an artist will combine the ideas and

arm the wild-warrior variety with shields which have a snake as their symbol.[43]

Capaneus shows himself fit to be a member of this race in his size and by his thoughts. His great size is mentioned at 424 and his triple boast (426ff) shows his opposition to Zeus, which would also be natural to an *ἄγρια φῦλα*. He can also be included amongst those who *ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο*.

His wrong-mindedness is commented on at 425 by the Scout who notes that Capaneus' "boast signifies thoughts not fit for a mortal" (*ὁ κόμπος δ' οὐ κατ' ἄνθρωπον φρονεῖ*). Aeschylus next emphasizes Capaneus' foolish thoughts by the report of three boasts. In the first boast, rather than directly detailing what Capaneus intends to do, the Scout vaguely summarizes Capaneus' intent by stating that he promises to do terrible things to the towers (426).[44] The scout then states that Capaneus added "and gods willing to destroy the city" (*θεοῦ τε γὰρ θέλοντος ἐκπέρσειν πόλιν* 427). While the audience may not like the intent of the action, there is piety in mentioning the will of the gods in the attack and the phrase "god-willing" would be a normal and, in a martial context, a pious follow-up to such a hope. The scout however ends the report of the first boast with "or not willing" (*καὶ μὴ θέλοντους* 428). The phrase defines Capaneus as impious, and by its delay and reversal of the relatively pious statement, emphasizes Capaneus' hubris.

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[43] A survey of Vian's work indicates that the warrior-types begin to occur in sculpture, ceramics, and bronzes, as early as the 6th century B. C. For the earliest snake -limbed depictions, this type occurs in sculpture mid 2nd century B.C. , in ceramic 400-375 B .C. , and among his *varia* a bronze from the 4th century B.C. Ceramics with giants holding shields on which a serpent is depicted begin to appear in the fifth century.

[44] Hutchinson does not accept this line on account of its similarity to line 549 (114).

Capaneus' words are not empty; the scout reacts to him with the phrase "may fortune not bring to pass" (*ἄ μὴ κραίνοι τύχη* 426). There is tremendous stress in the play on saying and doing the right things. Even the reporting of ill towards the city might bring harm and the messenger is careful to ward off from reality the harm evoked by Capaneus' boasting and his own report of it.

In the second boast Capaneus claims that not even the opposition of Zeus pressing on the plain will restrain him (428-9). He clearly sees himself as on a level to contend with not just any god but Zeus himself. In epic, Zeus's rivals must be destroyed and those that are his greatest rivals often have like traits; such as noise to match the thunder of Zeus and fire to match the lightning.[45] Capaneus is mortal; while he is obviously no match for Zeus, he does make several boasts and bears fire. Aeschylus strives to portray a character who is so confident in his own ability that he imitates the gods.[46]

Besides portraying Capaneus as a hubristic rival of Zeus who must be destroyed, this passage also indicates what Capaneus thought would happen should he push the attack on Thebes too far. He expects a bolt to fall before him (429). This may have been a reasonable assumption, since in the normal course of epic, lightning was used as a serious but not deadly warning to set limits. Diomedes is turned away from his pursuit of Trojans in the *Iliad* by a bolt cast at the ground in front of Nestor's chariot (*Il.* 8.132-6) and Athena is reminded to

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[45] Typhon in Hesiod has the hundred cacophonous heads and fiery breath.

[46] In support of this interpretation Hutchinson cites the Scholia on Euripides' *Phoenissae* 1170 (Σ E. Ph) which records a myth in which Capaneus had actively imitated Zeus and was destroyed for it (113). The source of the myth is not given and while it seems likely that Aeschylus creates a rival for Zeus in Capaneus, there is no guarantee that the Scholia's source has been its direct inspiration.

rein in the attack of Odysseus by a bolt cast at her feet (*Od.* 24. 539-40).[47] Thus the actual occurrence of a direct hit is an extraordinary and highly dramatic event. For Capaneus to be worthy of such a death he must be shown to be an extraordinary sinner. His boasts in the *Septem* help fulfill this requirement.

In his third boast at 430-1, Capaneus dismisses the awesome power of lightning bolts by claiming that they are comparable to the rays of the sun at mid-day. The noun *ἠλέκτωρ* may have suggested this boast to Aeschylus, since "rays of the sun" and "lightning" fall within its range of the meaning.

Capaneus' arms are described at 432-34. Generally his shield reinforces the claims of which he has already spoken. The image on his shield, a naked warrior bearing fire, is another boast. The warrior is specifically portrayed in the nude heroic style of Greek Art. As mentioned earlier, this threat is directed at a whole city and not, as with Tydeus, against an opposing warrior. Again Capaneus' hubris is shown by the outrageousness of his threats. A warrior alone is not enough opposition for Capaneus.

The last boast associated with Capaneus is pictured on his shield in the form of the torch-bearer and is also written around his shield with the words "I will burn the town" (*Πρήσω πόλιν* 434). This is a reiteration of the threat which the messenger had already reported at 427(*ἐκπέρσειν πόλιν*). While the boast does add emphasis to Capaneus' intentions it would also have had special meaning to the Athenians. They too had been under

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[47] In a scene in the *Battle of the Mice and Frogs*, which burlesques this type of warning, a bolt falls between the mighty combatants (288). The ground before the chariot of Amphiaraus in Pindar was opened up for his descent to Hades by lightning (*Nem.* 9. 29).

threat of destruction. Herodotus reports that Xerxes promised never to rest until he had burned Athens (*ἕλω τε καὶ πυρώσω τὰς Ἀθήνας* 7.8), and such a similar boast and the terrors evoked by such a threat against a city must have had tremendous impact on the Athenian audience.

When the messenger finishes his speech (435-6) he asks Eteocles what warrior will be sent against him and states what traits an opponent of Capaneus must have. He gives some direction to Eteocles by suggesting that one is needed "who will not be frightened by the boasts which Capaneus makes" (*τίς ἄνδρα κομπάζοντα μὴ τρέσας μενεῖ;* 436). Here the scout highlights the most dangerous aspect of this Argive, namely the boasts which could inspire fear and therefore defeat.

Eteocles' Response: 437-451

In Eteocles' response to the messenger Aeschylus shows great dexterity in linking themes and ideas from both Tydeus' earlier section and the scout's initial report on Capaneus. Eteocles' speech is structured as follows: 437 presents Eteocles' initial pleasure and contains a reference to Tydeus; 438-9 contains a maxim and the reason for Eteocles' belief that he has judged Capaneus' character rightly; 440-3 displays Eteocles' belief that Capaneus' boasts and intentions will be perceived by Zeus; 444-6 describe what Capaneus' fate will be and counter the boasts reported by the messenger; 447-50 present the opposing Theban chieftain and detail his traits; 451 provides a bridge into the next section.

Eteocles' first reaction to the report on Capaneus is pleasure. Eteocles is consistent in his view that the gods are watching and take a hand in the affairs of mortals. He is certain

that the gods will choose Thebes over Argos if they prove themselves to be more pious. Just as the Scout started with a reference to Tydeus at the start of Capaneus' section, Eteocles refers to the same hero in his response to Capaneus' threat. Tydeus was an advantage to Thebes because of his impiety and so Capaneus after his flurry of impious boasts causes Eteocles to proclaim "on this profit other profit follows" (*καὶ τῶιδε κέρδει κέρδος ἄλλο τίκτεται* 437).[48]

In order to prove that Capaneus is an advantage to Thebes he points out that the foolishness of the man is clearly displayed in his words, that his thoughts do reflect on his willingness to act and that consequently his boasts will reach the heavens (441-3). During the mid-portion of his speech (444-6) Eteocles counters the boasts of Capaneus. Since Capaneus' strength resides so much in his boasts, this process is vital. Eteocles' reply anticipates the outcome of Capaneus' attempt on the city (his first boast) for he says that he is sure that the bolt of the *πυρφόρος* will come upon him (444-6). His use of *πυρφόρος* echoes the Scout's description of the fire-bearer on Capaneus' shield and undercuts Capaneus' boast by a mention of the greatest fire-bearer of them all. In Capaneus' second boast he claims that lightning will not stop him. Eteocles counts exactly on this to happen. He dismisses outright Capaneus' third boast simply by saying at 445-446 that Zeus' lightning will not be as sun-beams.

Lastly Eteocles must have an appropriate warrior to face Capaneus. The warrior, Polyphontes, has qualities which match Capaneus well. He is described as fiery in temper

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[48] I have here followed Page's text because it gives a tighter structure between Tydeus' and Capaneus' sections. Hutchinson has *κόμπωι* for *κέρδει* which would refer specifically to Capaneus' boast.

(*αἴθων λῆμα* 448). Eteocles is willing to fight fire with fire. *Αἴθων* has the same range of meanings as *ἤλεκτρον* and thus the gate again may have suggested the application of this quality to the warrior. His name Polyphontes, presumably *πολυ* + *φονευς* "much- killer", speaks for his deeds and he is a suitable counter to the boasting of Capaneus.[49]

Finally, Polyphontes is an especial favourite of Artemis and the other gods. Eteocles chooses a warrior with established divine favour to counter an especially godless enemy. Is there any relevance to the choice of Artemis? Hutchinson states that Artemis was regularly associated with entrances of houses, tempies and cities and that Aeschylus may have been evoking the image of an actual monument to Artemis at one of the entrances to Thebes (117). Tucker favours viewing Polyphontes, like Hippolytus, as a favorite who probably had dedicated himself to Artemis (90-1). The important question, however, is not why Artemis favours Polyphontes or why indeed she is attached to the Electran gate but why she is involved in protecting the city from Capaneus. It seems likely that Artemis is introduced because she protects maidens and that Capaneus was a specific menace to them. In the chorus' response to the description of Capaneus (452-6) they pray that he be stopped by a bolt before he should reach their homes and cast them out. In Euripides' *Phoinissai,* after Antigone (183-192) has heard the description of Capaneus, she prays to Artemis that the Theban maidens never become his captives. These two passages may hint that part of the

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[49] Zeitlin sees a general trend in the references of the shield-scene to progressive stages in the creation and development of the cosmos. These references start with Tydeus and evoke primeval forces and advance, as chieftain after chieftain is detailed, through the creation of the world, including the rise of gods, men, and aspects of culture and politics (68-71). Capaneus echoes, in his associations, the stage at which gods and men are part of the universe and mankind has attained fire(70).

earlier tradition contained a threat from Capaneus against the Theban women themselves.[50]

Capaneus in Art

Figure 6

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[50]Zeitlin gives another possibility "But the sign, Electran, has another non-related signified - namely, "unwed". By invoking Artemis, the virgin goddess who stands at the site, Eteokles recaptures the sign of Kapaneus by displacing it on to another referent, one who exercises her power by reason of her divinity and presence at the gates" (66).

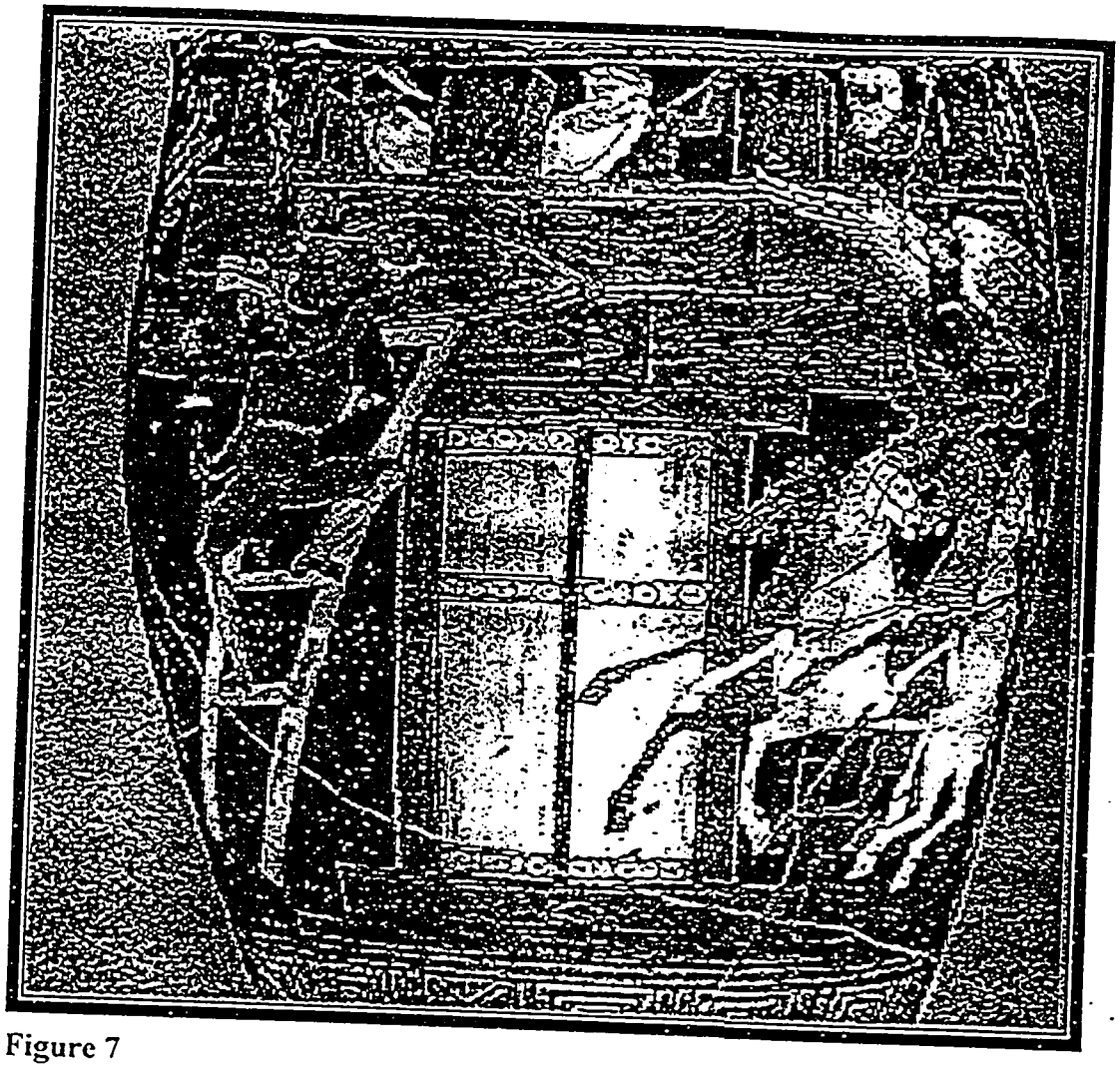

Figure 7

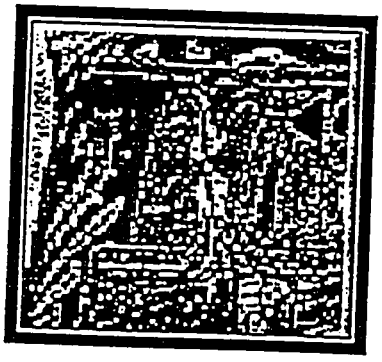

Figure 7: Detail

The individual portrayal of Capaneus, wherein he steps forward from Aeschylus' generic presentation of the chieftains, also has its parallel in art. Portrayals of Capaneus which include some defining trait such as a torch, lightning bolt, ladder, or position on a wall, begin to appear in pottery in the 4th century B. C. (Figures 6 and 7). In Figure 6 a pair of warriors are depicted before a wall, one of whom a may be seen

mounting a ladder. Since neither of the warriors are labelled there is no guarantee that this is not Eteoclus.[51] A ladder is not mentioned in Aeschylus' play in conjunction with Capaneus, but in both Euripides and Sophocles Capaneus is described as the hero who scaled the wall. In Figure 7 the identification is much easier and the image seems to have originated from a dramatic context. The figure is facing the audience in a most unlikely defensive position. A torch is in one hand and an axe is in the other. Near the upper- left corner a fiery bolt (see detail figure 7) may be seen. This indication of Zeus' punishment bearing down on Capaneus who, who is wielding a torch, captures nicely both the idea of Capaneus as a fire-bearer and Zeus as the fire-bearer.

Capaneus' Relation to Plot and Themes

Capaneus furthers the plot only in so far as he is one of the seven chieftains attacking Thebes and thus constitutes a major threat to the city. Capaneus has a minor role in each of the three themes which were discussed in the early part of this chapter, the role of fear, the maintenance of proper relationships, and the fulfilment of the curse of Oedipus. As a member of the Seven, Capaneus shares in their impious, warlike and boastful nature and the fear which they inspire. He took part in their oath sworn by dipping hands in blood and sworn before Ares, Enyo, and Fear. The messenger advises Eteocles to choose someone who will not be frightened by the boasts of Capaneus. He strikes fear into the city by boasting that he will burn the city and by treating Zeus with disdain.

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[51] Eteoclus in Aeschylus had the image of a man with a scaling ladder on his shield.

As far as the proper maintenance of relationship with the gods Capaneus is one of the worst offenders having directed his boasts neither at other men, nor lesser gods but Zeus himself. Eteocles comments that such messages reach Zeus and specifically chooses someone who is favoured by the gods to oppose him.

Capaneus' role in the curse is harder to assess. The only connection that Capaneus has is his participation in the expedition against Thebes which in turn helps fulfil the curse by bringing Polynikes to Eteocles in order that they might both be killed.

Aeschylus' *Argives*

One of the fragments of Aeschylus' *Argives* gives the fate of Capaneus explicitly. The following lines were probably spoken by Evadne, Capaneus' wife.

† Καπανεύς μοι καταλείπεται
λοιποῖς ἃ κεραυνὸς ἄρθρων
ἐνηλυσίων ἀπέλιπεν †

Capaneus is preserved for me
in the remains of the blasted limbs
which the bolt left behind. (Fragment 17, Nauck)

This fragment verifies the lightning strike as part of the traditional conception of Capaneus and may indicate the second major type of portrayal of Capaneus. In the *Septem* Capaneus was portrayed entirely as the villain but the speaker here, if Evadne, probably does not stress that side of Capaneus but rather provides a sympathetic treatment and possibly one which shows him as devoted and loved husband for whose character Evadne's self-sacrifice bears witness.

Conclusion

From Homer to Pindar little is said of direct relevance to Capaneus' character. It is clear from these early authors that the Argive leaders in general were impious men who defied the warnings of Zeus and paid for this mistake at Thebes. Conversely Aeschylus is very important for the establishment of the Capaneus' character. Later authors, to a great degree, will present Capaneus in precisely the same way Aeschylus draws him. He will be tall, loud, and utter threats. He will wield a torch, there will be a frightening image on his shield, and he will be destroyed after challenging the gods. Whether Aeschylus introduced the exact details of Capaneus' character and story or is instead representative of what was typical of the hero from earlier epic is not as important as the *Septem's* influence on the authors to be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

Chapter 2: Euripides' *Suppliants*

General Introduction

Euripides, like other Attic dramatists, often handled the myths relating to Thebes and especially to Oedipus and his family. Two of Euripides' extant plays, the *Suppliants* and the *Phoenissae*, deal with the story of the Argive attack on Thebes, and at least five lost plays, two entitled the *Alcmaeon*, an *Antigone*, a *Hypsipyle*, and an *Oedipus*, would have also, directly or indirectly, dealt with Theban myth. The two extant plays are of particular interest for this study. The first play, the *Suppliants*, deals with the retrieval of the bodies of the Argive chieftains who fell at Thebes, their funeral rites, and the death of Evadne, while the second play, the *Phoenissae*, retells the story of the victory of Thebes over the Argive invaders, the self-sacrifice of Menoeceus, the mutual slaughter of Polynikes and Eteocles, and the exiling of Oedipus. In the *Suppliants*, Capaneus comes off remarkably well. He is praised in the funeral eulogy of Adrastos and his wife, Evadne, is unwilling to live without him. In the *Phoenissae*, though, Capaneus is again presented as a violent, impious warrior.

My approach for these plays is similar to that used with the *Septem*. Each play is treated separately within its own chapter and introduced through a synopsis followed by a discussion of themes. An examination of how Capaneus has been characterized by Euripides in comparison to earlier portrayals follows which also takes into account the hero's shared and individual characteristics. Each play's discussion ends with an examination of political

relevance and Capaneus' role in regard to plot and theme. A special topic is also included in this chapter. Since Euripides challenges his audience to view things in a new light and at times depicts Capaneus in a positive fashion, an analysis of the non-hubristic presentations of Capaneus from art and literature is given.

Introduction to Euripides' *Suppliants*[52]

In the fragmentary remains of Aristophanes of Byzantium's hypothesis, the play is described as *τὸ δὲ δρᾶμα ἐγκώμιον Ἀθηνῶν*. In its basic outline this is an apt description. The play gives honour to Athens through a glorious military victory over the Thebans which was undertaken to guard both divine and Panhellenic rights. It will be seen, though, that the praise of Athens is not the play's only function and that this praise is mixed with a healthy degree of criticism of war, democracy, and the prospects of human progress.

Although the date of the play is not known it is generally assigned to 424-420 due to similarities in the plot to two political situations.[53] In the first place, a battle between Boeotians and Athenians took place in 424 at Delium (*Thuc.* 4. 90-101). After the Athenians suffered defeat and, as is normal for the vanquished, asked for the bodies of their dead, the Boeotians denied them this right. Secondly the play ends with Athena guiding a treaty between the Argives and Athenians and such a treaty was in the works in 420 (*Thuc.* 4.40-

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[52] Collard's edition is used throughout (1975 v.1).

[53] The importance of the Athenian political situation for establishing a date for the play will be discussed in depth later in the chapter but see also Bowie 45-6 for a sweeping account of the similarities.

51), this date is favoured by some.[54] 420 is conveniently close to the affairs at Delium to allow Euripides to take advantage of a religiously charged event, still fresh in the minds of the Athenians, while addressing a current political question.

Euripides often presented less common versions of myths or handled old material in a new way.[55] The *Suppliants* is no exception and there are three developments in the play which are worth noting. In regard to innovations in plot, Plutarch is our best witness. He reports in the *Life of Theseus* (28.3-5) that among the hero's great deeds was his requisition of the bodies of the fallen Argives for Adrastos.[56] Plutarch relates that Euripides' Theseus accomplished this by force while most authors, Aeschylus included, agree it was by treaty. By interposing an Athenian victory over Thebes Euripides undercuts the glory of the Epigoni's achievement a generation later and transfers their fame to Athens.

A second episode which shows a substantial departure from Aeschylean tragedy and epic in general is Adrastus' funeral speech. Theseus strictly tells him not to present the martial deeds of the heroes but rather to expound their virtues for the benefit of educating the young. This request may be a jab at Aeschylus' presentation of heroes in the *Seven*, or against the epic mode, but it also has dramatic relevance to the play and lets Euripides root

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[54] Greenwood, for one, (94-5). The date had first been proposed Musgrave in his 1778 edition of the play.

[55] For example, in his version of the story of Oedipus, Creon puts out Oedipus' eyes.

[56] Where the interment took place is reported variously. In Euripides the common soldiers are buried near Cithaeron, Capaneus at Eleusis, while the urns of the other chieftains presumably go to Argos for burial. In Pindar the chieftains have their pyres at Thebes (*Nem.* IX, 9-27). Diodorus of Sicily relates that the Athenians granted funeral rites to the fallen Argives at the foot of the Cadmeia (IV. 65). Philostratus has Capaneus being buried by his kin in Argos (*Imag.* II. 30).

the Athenian tradition of the Epitaphios with the city's foremost hero, Theseus.[57]

Lastly the story of Evadne's suicide has its earliest survival in Euripides' *Suppliants*. It is an emotional and dramatic highpoint of the second half of the play and marks a sudden and strange turn in the play that has met with various reactions from critics ranging from excision[58] to close thematic analysis.[59]

This chapter examines, through the presentation of Capaneus, each innovation; the first is that Capaneus and Theseus provide the negative and positive examples of the warrior-leader; the second, is owing to Capaneus' appearance in Adrastos' funeral speech; the third is that Evadne guides our interpretation of Capaneus' character; her episode retained popularity through the Classical and Christian periods.

Synopsis

For convenience the play is here divided into six parts. The subject of lines 1-633 is the winning over of Theseus by Aethra, Adrastos, and the chorus to the Argive cause. 634-770 deal with the defeat of Creon and the securing of the dead Argives. 771-989 presents the initial mourning of Adrastos and the chorus and the funeral eulogy of Adrastos. The

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[57] Euripides with *Iphigeneia in Tauris* also uses contemporary elements of traditional practices in the context of the mythic past. In that play he uses the custom of the Taurians of sacrificing men ship-wrecked on their shore that Herodotus reports (4.103). The possible sacrifice of Orestes, though, may seem more vitally integrated into the plot of the *Iphigeneia in Tauris* than the Epitaphios of the *Suppliants*, but the lament or praise of fallen heroes does have its place in epic. See especially *Il.*24 725-775.

[58] Norwood would excise this passage on the grounds that the idea of suicide in a husband's pyre could not have arrived this early in Greece (126).

[59] See Toher 139-140.

death of Evadne covers 990-1113. 1114-1182 completes the dirges, started by Adrastos, with the words of the mothers and sons of the slain. Lastly the oath of peace between Argos and Athens and Athena's guarantee of the future victory of Argos over Thebes ends the play with lines 1183-1234.

Part 1 of the play opens at Eleusis with Aethra, who is present to pray to Demeter and Persephone for the safety of Theseus, herself, and for Athens (1-7).[60] She is being supplicated by a group of Argive women and Adrastos the king of Argos. She has just sent a messenger to summon Theseus in the hopes of winning his aid to help the Argives retrieve their dead. Her initial speech, a prayer, and the setting, a temple, prepare the audience for the religiously charged issues that follow. Over the course of her interview with Theseus, his interrogation of Adrastos and the heated debate on the proper form of government between the Theban messenger and Theseus (110-633), it is decided that Athens will aid Argos. Theseus takes up the cause not as an ally but a champion of the ancient laws. He departs intent on a diplomatic solution but brings a military force lest it fail.

In Part 2, from 634-770, the audience is informed of the battle's result through a messenger speech given by one of Capaneus' henchmen. While the battle hung in balance, Theseus led a counter charge and won the day, but refused to destroy the city. In this speech we learn that Theseus did indeed offer to come to terms first, but that the Thebans in their pride refused. In this part Adrastos stresses that the Argives likewise had originally been

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[60] The choice of setting makes good sense not only because there were graves attributed to the Seven at Eleusis but also because of the play's connection to the story of Demeter and Persephone whose rites were practiced there. The primary point of contact between the two stories is the search of mothers for their children. For an expanded list of similarities see Bowie 54 or in a diffuse form Goff 1995 65-78.

offered terms by their enemy for a peaceful solution but like the Thebans, when given the chance by Theseus to make peace, had also miscalculated their situation and declined. We are also told that the rank and file were buried on the Athenian side of Cithaeron, *i.e.* on friendly soil, while the slain chieftains had been brought to Eleusis.

In Part 3, 771-989 we are given initial songs of mourning and a funeral eulogy by Adrastos. He is warned by Theseus to show the character of the chieftains in his speech and to leave out the details of their deeds and who killed whom. Adrastos' speech is to make the listener a better person by extolling positive characteristics (838-856). In between Parts 3 and 5 falls Evadne's suicide (990-1113). Her episode breaks the relentless gravity of the mourning scene in two and, besides illustrating a dramatically powerful act on stage, reinforces the theme of the harmful nature of extreme actions and the suffering caused by them in war, love, and negotiations. The painfully disjointed conversation between Iphis and Evadne throw into sharp relief Aithra's and Theseus' mutually healthy relationship.

With Evadne's death, mourning begins anew (1114-1182). This is softened only slightly when Athena appears and guides Theseus, who was content with a gentlemen's agreement with Adrastos regarding his debt to Athens, in the establishment of a formal treaty with Argos. She also guarantees success to the Argive children in a future battle against Thebes. The importance of words and the will of the gods when dealing with the uncertain future are joined in this the final part, 1183-1234.

Themes

Euripides restlessly moves from theme to theme in the *Suppliants* as he explores

various facets of the human condition. Four themes will be discussed in conjunction with this play. Firstly, the proper maintenance of the gods' laws, a theme which we saw extensively at work in Aeschylus' *Septem*, is addressed in two ways in this play, in the need of mortals to uphold a Panhellenic practice of allowing burial after battle and in the importance of following clear signs from the gods when dealing with the uncertain future. Secondly, the benefits from remaining free of harmful relationships, which briefly appeared in the *Septem* during Eteocles' comments on Amphiaraus' ill-conceived association with the other hubristic chieftains (597-614), in the *Suppliants* is given larger scope and applies to both familial relations and alliances between states. In Euripides' play Theseus goes to great lengths to separate himself from Adrastos, whom he also berates for making poor marriage alliances for his daughters. Thirdly, the importance of words before deeds is stressed by Euripides who has Theseus attempt to regain the Argive dead first by negotiation. The last theme, democracy, is minor but at times moves forcefully to the fore. Its most blatant appearance occurs in Theseus' argument with the Theban herald (398-597), where the benefits of democracy are debated. Theseus, though, also represents an idealized democratic leader. Not only is he presented as the leader who initiated Athenian democracy but his reluctance to push too far his successful attack on Thebes, and risk failure, provides a living example of the benefits of democracy under a leader who, while keeping an eye on divine laws and wishes, combines reason, words, and a willingness to act in conjunction with the city.[61]

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[61] Theseus and the city are treated as one at 114 by Adrastos and at 293 by Aethra.

The maintenance of the proper relationship with the gods is dealt with in two ways in the *Suppliants*.[62] In the first place the necessity of upholding the old laws concerning burial is championed by Aethra and subsequently by Theseus and drives the action of the first half of the play. Secondly, it is also stressed that the words of the gods must be heeded. This aspect is a marked feature of Theseus' praise of human advancement.

As far as the ancient laws governing burial practice, Aethra is the first to respond to their abuse by the Thebans. In the opening speech she explains to the audience why the Argive women have come to her at Eleusis (1-41) stating at 19 that the women wish to bury their dead but the Thebans refuse their requests and dishonour the laws of the gods (*νόμιμ' ἀτίζοντες θεῶν*). The Argive request is striking in this setting since the women and Adrastos are presenting themselves to Aethra while she is performing a religious duty at Eleusis; to ignore their outrage might taint the fruition of her prayers.[63] At the end of her speech (39-40) she recognizes that Theseus will have two options, either to send them away or to perform some sanctioned act for the gods (*θεοὺς / ὅσιόν τι δράσας* 40). While there may be some danger in ignoring the Argive plight, the women, for their part, do not voice a specific claim for aid through the rites at Eleusis but rather that they are in the right (*ἔχομεν δ' ἔνδικα* 65). They have suffered through a transgression of laws which have general religious application rather than particular relevance to the site.

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[62] For a discussion on this theme as it relates to the punishment of hubris see Conacher 1956, 22.

[63] Aethra is performing a ceremony modeled on the Athenian Proerosia. In this festival first fruits were brought to Eleusis annually by all Greeks on behalf of whom Athens had made a sacrifice to end widespread drought (Mylonas 7). Nevertheless Persephone is associated with Eleusis and is a chthonic deity and thus there may be especial danger in turning down the request.

When Theseus arrives, the conversation shifts from an emotive and sympathetic[64] exchange between Aithra and the chorus to an interrogation of Adrastos by Theseus, who wants to know the exact circumstances of the application for suppliance. He asks directly at 123 how Thebes responded to the Argive request to bury the dead (*τί γὰρ λέγουσιν, ὅσια χρῄζοντος σέθεν;*) and for a time it seems that he will be easily won over. However, once Adrastos reveals that he acted against the gods' wishes in attacking Thebes and had ignored the Theban offer to come to terms before any battle had taken place, Theseus prematurely makes up his mind to ignore the Argive request and to send them on their way, a possibility for which Aethra had prepared the audience. As Adrastos prepares to leave, he calls on Demeter and Persephone to witness the actions of Theseus (262), and the question of the maintenance of proper relationship with the gods is brought to the fore. Theseus of course must take up the cause. It is Aethra who steps in and provides the impetus for Theseus' conversion.

Aethra tells Theseus that he thinks rightly about all things but one and she bids him to look after the foremost things of the gods i.e. rites of burial, and not to err by dishonouring them (*ἐγὼ δέ σ', ὦ παῖ, πρῶτα μὲν τὰ τῶν θεῶν / σκοπεῖν κελεύω μὴ σφαλῇς*[65] *ἀτιμάσας* 301-2). At 303-13 she exhorts Theseus to champion the cause of the gods.[66]

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[64] Aithra is an old woman who dearly loves her son (as the Argive women loved theirs) and is quickly won over. A shift from passionate to rational episodes occurs often in the play.

[65] In his interview with Theseus Adrastos tells Theseus that the Argives come to him *σφαλέντες* "fallen" (128). Aithra here uses the same verb *σφάλλω* in her warning to Theseus perhaps to indicate that Theseus will end up like Adrastos if he does not do what is right.

[66] This is not a simple process Aithra in fact uses several arguments to persuade Theseus to takeup the cause. His motivation is discussed at length in Fitton (431-2) and Gamble (386-93). While the effect of

When Theseus finally takes up the challenge, he does so as a punisher of evil (*κολαστὴς τῶν κακῶν* 341). The Theban act is put into context as a general affront to the gods and the Greeks which must be corrected.

The Theban herald sent to warn Athens not to interfere ignores entirely the issue of proper burial. He instead questions the involvement of Athens in affairs not their own (465-475),[67] the foolishness of a rich city risking its prosperity (476-493), and the intelligence of championing those whom the gods hate (494-510). The obvious omission acts as an indicator to the audience that the Thebans are impious and risk their own good fortune. Theseus counters his argument by claiming at 526-7 that he is safe-guarding a Panhellenic law (*τὸν Πανελλήνων νόμον/ σῴζων*) and at 561-563 that he will not have said that he destroyed the ancient laws of the gods (*νόμος παλαιὸς δαιμόνων διεφθάρη*).

At the battle between Athens and Thebes, Theseus gives the Thebans a chance to come to terms and states again the reason that he and his men are present to guard a Panhellenic law (*τὸν Πανελλήνων νόμον/ σῴζοντες* 671-2) and he uses nearly the exact wording which he used with the herald. Here the plural emphasizes that he is leading a democratic action. The victory of the Athenians over the Thebans completes this theme with a vindication of Theseus' faith and correctness in championing the ancient laws.

The importance of divination in the guidance of mortal action has, as we have seen in Pindar, Homer, and Aeschylus, relevance to the Theban myth. The Argives attacked

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his mother's wishes and his pride may in fact motivate his decision, in the end he does take up the cause and, as will be seen, increasingly claims to champion the ancient laws of the gods.

[67] Perhaps with special relevance to Athenian *πολυπραγμοσύνη*.

Thebes despite the clear warnings not to, warnings which were given by the gods through both omens and the prophet Amphiaraus. Argive culpability in their own defeat and its subsequent misery is pivotal in the discussion between Theseus and Adrastos and must have been a factor in Theseus' original decision not to help the Argives. Theseus asks, in disbelief after Adrastos admits that they attacked Thebes despite Amphiaraus' warnings, did he so easily turn away from the divine (*οὕτω τὸ θεῖον ῥᾳδίως ἀπεστράφης* 159). Theseus can hardly understand Adrastos' reasoning, so alien is it to his own method of operating.

At 201-213 Theseus outlines his understanding of how the world works and all the benefits which the gods give. In Theseus' opinion the gods provide man with intelligence (203), speech (204), food (205), water (206), shelter (208), and commerce (209-10). A last item to the list emphasizes the aid that divination gives to mortals in areas where mankind can not access sure knowledge (211-213). This is given the emphatic final position place and the most lines (3). He caps this portion by stating that mortals err because they believe they are wiser than the gods (218). He will go on to attribute the Argive disaster quite vehemently to this flaw in Adrastos at (231-2) and decide that it would be wise to not associate himself with the Argive cause (246-9). We are not told whether Theseus used diviners before the battle at Thebes. However, since he is confident that he is right, the question is not cloudy and therefore the gods may not need consulting and Euripides' silence on this issue allows the excitement of the unknown outcome of the encounter to build before its favourable result is revealed. The play ends when Athena arrives and gives the divine pronouncement of the gods to the children of the dead Argive chieftains that they will have their vengeance (1214-15). Her advice is timely since Argos' and the children's future is cloudy. Her declaration

wraps up this theme with words reminiscent of Diomedes in Homer. There he states *σύν γάρ θεῷ εἰλήλουθμεν* (9.49), here Athena *τοῖον στράτευμα σὺν θεῷ πορεύσετε* (1226).

The theme of making favourable alliances through marriage, friendship, or treaties is active to a fair degree in this play, and certainly more so than in the *Septem.* In Euripides' *Suppliants* we first meet the theme in Adrastos' request for Theseus' aid. He points out that Adrastos married (*συμμίξας*) his pure or fortunate house to a sullied one, when he should have arranged better marriages, and that the gods ruin the just with the unjust alike (221-8). He asks himself at 246 whether or not he should make allies with such a nation using the word *σύμμαχος* for allies. This should recall the close-sounding *συμμίξας* of 222 and its inherent danger.

Even after he changes his mind Theseus goes to great lengths to separate himself from involvement with Argos. At 333, his move to uphold the a Panhellenic law recasts his involvement as a champion of the gods, not of Argos. Lastly at 591 Theseus, about to march against Thebes, makes it clear that he is unwilling to mix (*ἀναμίγνυσθαι*) his fate with Adrastos in any way. He leaves the Argive king behind at Eleusis.

The theme also arises on a number of individual occasions. Iphis is bemoaned by the chorus as partaking in the lot of Oedipus (*μετέλαχες τύχας Οἰδιπόδα* 1078) because of the suffering which the Theban affair had brought him. Evadne[68] herself, though well matched in character to Capaneus and quite willing to die to be with him, has a marriage that ends unfortunately, despite the lasting fame. Lastly, while Theseus was happy simply to have

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[68] See Wesley165 for an expansion of the theme.

Adrastos remember and pass on his debt of honour to Athens to coming generations, Athena wants formal terms that both keep the cities' fates separate and yet derive benefits for Athens. This treaty is a promise of non-aggression on the part of Argos and active defense should Athens be attacked. It neither promises nor requires anything from Athens.

The importance of words,[69] especially before deeds, appears at important junctures in the play. At 121 one of the questions which Theseus asks of Adrastus is whether he had sent heralds to Thebes to make his claim. At 203-4 Theseus praises the gifts of reason and speech first in his list of the benefits that mortals have been provided with. When Theseus has been persuaded by Aethra to take up the cause, he says he will do it by fair words, or, if not, by the might of deeds (347). In his speech to the herald whom he intended to send to Thebes, he bids him to ask after the corpses first and, should his request fail, to threaten war (382-94). At 669 we are told that the battle at Thebes started with Theseus' words that he came only for the dead, while Creon holds back his herald from speaking at all. Theseus combines words with action but words are presented as the primary tools and the first recourse of a good leader.

At two points we see the lesson of ignoring words. Creon ignored the words or terms from Theseus and failed in his enterprise, and Adrastus had been offered terms by Eteocles and, after pressing the attack, failed. Ignoring words in these situations is a clear mark of the misguided pride which lead Adrastus to attack Thebes and Creon to refuse burial.

At the play's close Athena's guidance of the treaty is a prime example of the

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[69] Shaw discusses Theseus' reliance on words as a mark of his possession of a mixture of traits associated with both the young and the old (6-8). This combination of characteristics allows him to have the fruitful relationship with his mother which is entirely lacking between Evadne and Iphis.

importance of words in maintaining a debt of peace (1183-1209). The words are set in a religious context through ritual, are to be displayed publicly at Delos, and threaten retribution should the conditions under which they were written not remain in force. While her insistence on this point may strike the reader as odd[70] compared with Theseus' generosity, she is acting as a guardian goddess and though, she cuts through Theseus' political naivete, does protect the interests of Athens.

With the introduction of Athens and Theseus into the story of Thebes, Euripides is given an excellent opportunity to introduce a fourth major theme, democracy. Euripides attributes the foundation of democracy anachronistically to Theseus, who is focal in contemporary Athenian pride. At 129 we get a sense of Theseus' commitment to democracy when Theseus asks Adrastus whether he has come alone to get help or with the ascent of the Argive people as a whole. Adrastos' reply that the sons of Danaus beg for his aid satisfies Theseus' democratic sympathies. Later at 238ff he explains the division of the state into three parts. To his way of thinking there are the two extremes of the wealthy and poor, who are apt to drive the state on wrong courses unless the mass of the middle folk act as a corrective. This they can do only in a democracy.

At 349 after Theseus has changed his mind and is in full support of Adrastos, like a true democratic leader, he first puts the question to the state. If he is to act within the democratic model he must let the choice fall to the masses. At this point too Theseus is

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[70] Greenwood leaves it open in his interpretation whether the audience at this point is expected to re-evaluate Theseus' motives and his political wisdom (229). Burian sees her appearance as a mark of tragic reality by "its demonstration of man's inability to preserve Logos unaltered, to learn from past mistakes, to let reason govern emotion" (154).

given the role of having established democracy and made Athens a free realm. Here the main benefit which he states about democracy is that here the soldiers' loyalty will be higher. An expansion of this theme occurs later in Theseus' debate with the Theban messenger.

Given the importance which Theseus and Athens place on democracy it is likely that the Theban herald's first words are meant to set the audience on edge and foreshadow the fiery exchange to follow. The herald initially asks for a despot to whom to report (399) and Theseus' distaste comes through in his rebuke (403-8). He calls the herald's question a false start to his speech and with pride claims that his city is free (405). The herald shows great independence in his denunciation of democracy and may represent contemporary criticisms against this style of government and perhaps exposes weaknesses of the current state of politics which may need a corrective.[71]

The Theban first criticizes democracy for suffering from demagogues who sway the mob for their own gain and then escape punishment by blaming their action on others (412-16). His next argument is that the mob cannot possibly rule since it is ignorant (420-2). Theseus, in defense, attacks tyranny and praises democracy, focusing on the fact that under a despot everyone is treated differently, while democracy promotes equality and even the weak are protected (431-6). He further criticizes tyranny on the ground that it does not trust its native heroes and destroys them out of fear of their power (444-9). Lastly the despot is branded with the crime of stealing women (452-4).

Theseus' distaste for tyranny is emphasized at 518 where after listening to the

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[71] This seems also to be a surrogate speech for an absent confrontation between Theseus and Creon.

demands he scornfully plays on Creon's name, which also means "ruler", by placing it directly beside the word for "acting the despot" (*οὐκ οἶδ' ἐγὼ Κρέοντα δεσπόζοντ' ἐμοῦ*). The last testimony to the democratic view of Theseus occurs in the battle against Thebes and Creon where he uses the plural in explanation of why the Athenians are present (*τὸν Πανελλήνων νόμον / σώζοντες* 671-2). His ego is set aside in favour of the collective. That Theseus wins the battle is indeed a witness that he rightly championed the laws of the gods, safeguarded Panhellenic rites, and successfully kept his fate separate from Adrastos'.

Lastly, although Adrastos is a king, his funeral speech primarily provides models of behaviour for the young which would benefit a democratic state's tripartite structure as established earlier by Theseus.

Relation to Traditional Presentations

We have seen that from Homer to Aeschylus there is fair agreement that the Argive expedition marched upon Thebes in defiance of the signs of the gods and that the chieftains were a loud, war-hungry, boastful group, given to acts of impiety. Euripides, despite his innovations, retains the traditional background of the expedition on the whole as ill-omened and ill-conceived. Capaneus alone out of the dead chieftains receives repeated attention for his hubris and spectacular death.[72]

In the first half of the play there are several statements that direct the audience to see

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[72] Amphiaraus' death is mentioned by a Theban herald as a mark showing the gods' displeasure (496-500). This interpretation is given by a Theban who wishes to convince Theseus not to interfere. The audience may well feel that the messenger is biased and his interpretation wrong.

the *Suppliants* in a traditional manner. Aethra, at 22-3, makes the first association by calling the expedition most ill-starred (*δυστυχεστάτην*). Later at 155-9 Theseus, learning of Adrastos' dismissal of both the signs from the gods and Amphiaraus' advice, reacts to these traditional Argive flaws by denying Adrastos aid. Euripides includes these points to create a dilemma, since the audience knows that Theseus will help the Argives despite their foolishness. The question of whether the Argives deserve burial is made more interesting by their guilt.

The Argive chieftains' eagerness for war, so present in Aeschylus' *Septem*, finds expression in the *Suppliants*. Adrastos tells Theseus, when asked why he attacked Thebes despite the poor omens, "the uproar of the young men overwhelmed me" (*νέων γὰρ ἀνδρῶν θόρυβος ἐξέπλησσέ με*) to which Theseus replies "you pressed on in good courage instead of good counsels" (*εὐψυχίαν ἔσπευσας ἀντ' εὐβουλίας* 160-1). This line is important in interpreting how Theseus thinks and acts: this is a dialogue between leaders; Theseus will not allow Adrastos to shift the blame from himself to his men. As a leader and an elder, Adrastos ought to have shown good judgment in guiding the high-courage of his soldiers. Boldness is not itself faulted by Theseus; indeed it appears as a natural and desirable quality of young men to be guided fortuitously by a leader showing good-judgment. The line implies that the war-lust traditionally attributed to the Argives, as the case in the *Septem*, is not to be considered in this play as inherently bad.

Euripides does not allow the action to move smoothly forward. He maintains interest and excitement in the opening scene by allowing the evocation of traditional traits to guide Theseus at first to refuse aid to Adrastos. Even after Theseus gives in, he cannot escape the

fact that Adrastos erred when he attacked Thebes; Theseus is careful to define his own involvement in the affair as a championing not of the Argives but of the laws of the gods. This stance however does not free Theseus from the slurs of the Theban herald, who invokes traditional details of the story to dissuade him from Athenian involvement. At 495 the herald wonders why Theseus aids those whom hubris destroyed (*ὕβρις οὓς ἀπώλεσεν*)[73] and names two chiefs as particularly criminal, Capaneus and Amphiaraus (496-501).

That the herald should point out Capaneus would not surprise anyone, but his view on Amphiaraus is striking. The Thebans are naturally going to see the Argives in the worst light and so it is fitting for them to take Amphiaraus' interment as a sign of the gods' displeasure. By this inclusion, though, the audience is guided to further mistrust and dislike the Thebans of the play. Not only was Amphiaraus a paragon of virtue but he also had a popular Athenian oracular site in nearby Oropus and was worshiped under the title Zeus-Amphiaraus (Farnell 1921, 60).

In the case of Capaneus Euripides follows traditional depictions of the manner of his death and the reason for it. As mentioned earlier the Theban herald throws the death of Capaneus in Theseus' face and gives a very Aeschylean depiction of the episode at 496-9

> οὔ τἄρ' ἔτ' ὀρθῶς Καπανέως κεραύνιον
> δέμας καπνοῦται, κλιμάκων ὀρθοστάτας
> ὃς προσβαλὼν πύλῃσιν ὤμοσεν πόλιν
> πέρσειν θεοῦ θέλοντος ἤν τε μὴ θέλῃ,
>
> Not correctly then did the bolt-blasted
> body of Capaneus, erector of ladders, burn
> who attacking the gates swore he would

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[73] Reminiscent, in sentiment, of Sthenelus' words at *Il.* 4.409.

destroy the city gods willing or not.

By echoing Aeschylus, Euripides at first guides the audience to believe that he is simply following a well known traditional interpretation of the event, but the style of the passage quickly undercuts the messenger's report. This is a remarkable composition. Not only does it include nearly word for word Capaneus' boast from Aeschylus' *ἐκπέρσειν πόλιν* (427) but incorporates etymology, word play, and alliteration. For etymology the proximity of *καπνοῦται* to *Καπανέως* invites the reader to connect the associations of the base noun *καπνός* "smoke" with Capaneus' doom. For word play both *ὀρθῶς* and *ὀρθοστάτας* have *ὀρθός* at root and the listener is asked to contrast Capaneus role as an 'up-righter of ladders' with his lack of moral 'uprightness'. Lastly the whole passage is connected by alliteration with four words starting with kappas in the first two lines, four starting with pis in the last two and three thetas in the final line.

While the herald does show verbal dexterity here and there earlier in his speech (line 493 for one) nothing else compares to this portion in ornateness. The four lines are so overwrought that Euripides, by attributing them to the herald who has earlier incurred Theseus' dislike and who is a clear supporter of tyranny, may well have meant them to sound suspect. This in combination with the herald's clearly questionable slur against Amphiaraus begins to pave the way for the defense of the chieftains, given in Adrastos' funeral speech.

Of less importance are the appearance of general elements from Capaneus' story. The lightning strike is probably the most prominent element associated with Capaneus and is mentioned elsewhere in the play. At 640 Capaneus' henchmen refers to the event, at 859

Adrastos points out his body as the one that lightning flew through, and at 934 his corpse is called lightning-stricken. The ladder as a method of taking the walls is present at 497. While this element was not included in Aeschylus' play, it is found early on in art and may be assumed to be a traditional part of the story. His death at the Electran gate is kept by Euripides. The messenger who witnessed the defeat of Creon at the hands of Theseus in fact was a henchman of Capaneus. After his capture by the Thebans in the Argive attack he had been placed in a tower at that gate. The gate, as has been shown, was an apt place for Capaneus to perish both because of its height and name. It is an apt place for his henchman as well. Firstly, it is at the highest point of the Theban Citadel and would afford the best view of Theseus' victory. Secondly, it is at the gate whose road issues towards Athens. The Athenians are the combatants and would have approached Thebes by that route. Thirdly the connotations of Electran are again put to use. Capaneus' henchman starts his account with "the bright ray of the sun, a clear beam, struck the earth" (*λαμπρὰ μὲν ἀκτὶς ἡλίου, κανὼν σαφής, /ἔβαλλε γαῖαν* 650-1). While the messenger may be simply advertising the truth of his account by saying that the event occurred in the full light of day, the language emphasizes location by evoking one of the meanings of *ἠλέκτωρ*, "the beaming sun".

Capaneus pushes the limits. He goes further and higher than any other Argive in his attack on Thebes and certainly raises the bar on impiety. He doesn't know when to back down, and his henchmen makes him a paradigm of this fault at 726-30.

τοιόνδε τοι στρατηγὸν αἱρεῖσθαι χρεών,
ὃς ἔν τε τοῖς δεινοῖσιν ἐστιν ἄλκιμος
μισεῖ θ' ὑβριστὴν λαόν, ὃς πράσσων καλῶς
ἐς ἄκρα βῆναι κλιμάκων ἐνήλατα

ζητῶν ἀπώλεσ' ὄλβον ᾧ χρῆσθαι παρῆν.

It is necessary for men to choose such a general
who among dangers is strong and
who hates the hubristic race that although they do well
seek to traverse the high-most rung of ladders
and lose the wealth which is theirs to enjoy.

This is spoken by the henchman after he notes that Theseus actually stopped his army after victory and proclaimed again that he was there not to destroy the city but to retrieve the dead. Theseus knew when to stop, but, like Capaneus, Adrastos did not. The image is strikingly drawn from the destruction of Capaneus and applied as a general maxim to nations. While Adrastos and the Argives are certainly included in the maxim, there is however also a latent comparison between Theseus and Capaneus himself. When Capaneus threatened Thebes in Aeschylus he promised to *ἐκπέρσειν πόλιν* (427). Euripides has Theseus negate a similar statement in his reason for coming to Thebes: *οὐ γὰρ ὡς πέρσων πόλιν* (724). This parallel develops a contrast between the two leaders.[74] Theseus had his high-spirits under control, showed good-judgment, and succeeded, while Capaneus did not govern his spirit and failed. This is not the first time that the doom of Capaneus acts as a negative example or warning in a play. In Sophocles' *Antigone*, written 442-1, Capaneus' death is presented to guide our interpretation of Creon's actions and his doom.[75]

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[74] The phrase has a parallel within the *Suppliants* as well which may be more relevant to the reader. Earlier the Theban herald claimed Capaneus promised to *πόλιν/πέρσειν* (498-9).

[75] The parallels are established early in the Antigone. The Argive defeat is summarized in a choral ode at 100-161 and it is interpreted at 127ff. The Argives failed "because Zeus really hates the boasts of the loudmouth" (*Ζεὺς γὰρ μεγάλης γλώσσης κόμπους ὑπερεχθαίρει*). While other traditional attributes like flash, noise, and pride may be found at 128-30, "Zeus, seeing them approaching in full flow

Innovations

When trying to discern innovations in Euripides we are on unsure ground. Plutarch's observation that the retrieval of the dead was accomplished in most accounts by treaty and not, as in Euripides, by force. This scene performs an encomiastic function by attributing military glory to Athens and Theseus, and it allows a discussion of what makes a good leader, and lastly it reinforces the theme of words before action. On two other points we have less to go on. Firstly, Theseus specifically asks Adrastus at 841-3 to talk about the dead chieftains. Theseus is careful to guide the nature of the Epitaphios and directs Adrastus away from the usual "who killed whom and how" summary which one might expect from the epic

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and disdainful in their clashing gold" (*καί σφας ἐσιδὼν / πολλῷ ῥεύματι προσνισομένους, / χρυσοῦ καναχῆς ὑπεροπτείας*), their boasting is given as a primary reason for their failure.

At this point the Sophocles is treating the expedition in general but when he gives Zeus' further reaction to the Argives (131-3) he focuses on an individual, writing Zeus "blasts with brandished fire the man from the heights of the goal who was already eager to proclaim victory" (*παλτῷ ῥιπτεῖ πυρὶ βαλβίδων / ἐπ' ἄκρων ἤδη / νίκην ὁρμῶντ' ἀλαλάξαι*). Capaneus has been specifically chosen by the chorus out of the mass of Argive boasters as the best example of one who came close to success but suffered terrible failure. Emphasis is added to their point by details of his death (134-7); "he fell hurtled (*τανταλωθείς*) to the hard ground, the fire bearer, who, maddened, breathed forth with blasts of enemy winds in his raging attack" (*ἀντίτυπα δ' ἐπὶ γᾶ πέσε τανταλωθείς / πυρφόρος ὃς τότε μαινομένᾳ ξὺν ὁρμᾷ / βακχεύων ἐπέπνει / ῥιπαῖς ἐχθίστων ἀνέμων*.). LSJ give a translation of *τανταλωθείς* taking its cue from scholiasts who equate the word with *διατιναχθεις* "shaken asunder" and *διασεσθεῖς* "shaken violently". It seems possible to me that Sophocles means here "weighed" and in one word is evoking Zeus at the scales which he uses to meet out men's fate at *Iliad* 12.433. Dr. Kingston, McMaster University, has also suggested that *τανταλωθείς* could suggest "turned into Tantalos", implying yet another famous sinner punished for his hubris. The passage picks up many details found in Aeschylus. There are references to sound and light, at 135 Capaneus is called a *πυρφόρος* (the name given to the figure on his shield in Aeschylus) and the participle *βακχεύων* is applied to him which, had been attributed to Hippomedon at *Septem* 496-7. If we areto understand Capaneus' story as parallel to Creon's, it here seems to be that one must not boast, go against the gods, or be puffed up with success. Over the course of the play Creon fails precisely in these areas and he is increasingly marked by rage and madness.

tradition or from Aeschylus to a type of account which would be instructive for the young.[76] Considering how the passage is couched, it is likely that Euripides is telling the audience to expect something new. Secondly, Evadne's death on Capaneus' pyre is first attested in Euripides' *Suppliants* and requires examination here. Early funeral practices, parallel stories, and another Theban myth are thus provided to facilitate an understanding of her death. While his use of her scene with Iphis and subsequent suicide is likely to bear the mark of his own handling and have specific relevance to themes within the play, it seems unlikely that Euripides created the incident *ex nihilo*.

Adrastos' funeral speech strikes critics as odd. Many remark on the discordant effect created by the praise to heroes traditionally portrayed as villains. Since Adrastos begins his Epitaphios with Capaneus, the characterization of this hero is pivotal in debates on how serious the funeral speech is to be taken.

After the successful recovery of the Argive dead Theseus chooses Adrastos to speak in praise of the fallen, directing him thus

> πόθεν ποθ' οἵδε διαπρεπεῖς εὐψυχίᾳ
> θνητῶν ἔφυσαν; εἰπέ γ' ὡς σοφώτερος,

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[76] Thucydides (2.35-46) reports a funeral speech given by Pericles in 430 B.C. Other surviving funeral speeches are later than our play and include one from Lysias delivered for those who perished in the Corinthian War (395-87 B.C.), one from Demosthenes praising those who fell at the battle of Chaeronea (338 B.C.), and one from Hyperides from 322 B.C. Socrates gives a funeral speech in the *Menexenus* reportedly composed by Aspasia, and lastly we have portions of a funeral speech written by Gorgias that has survived in Dionysus of Halicarnassus (*Dem.* 1). In broad outline Thucydides' speech is similar to the later works and in an Epitaphios the Athenians could generally expect to hear about their autochthony (a definite point of pride), illustrious past deeds of their ancestors including both legendary and historical achievements, the importance of the Democratic system, praise of the deeds of the dead, and consolation for the orphans and the parents.

νεοῖσιν ἀστῶν τῶνδ' ·ἐπιστήμων γάρ εἶ.

From precisely where did those men, distinguished among mortals
in valour, rise? Speak, since you are wiser,
to the young of these cities; for you are knowledgeable.(841-3)

His request is for something advantageous to the young[77] and indeed Adrastos shows his recognition of this aspect at the end of the Epitaphios when he says at 913-14, *ἡ δ' εὐανδρία/ διδακτός* and at 917 *οὕτω παῖδας εὖ παιδεύετε*. The didactic function should guide our understanding of the funeral speech to a certain degree.

Theseus chooses the speaker, the purpose, and lastly the subject matter. He does not want a traditional epic catalogue full of battle details. He is quite earnest on this point, stating that no one in the heat of combat could possibly see such details (849-6). His attitude to the epic mode of expression serves many purposes. By it he further undercuts the believability of the criminal stories of the Argive chieftains (they must have arisen during battle), further, he prepares the audience for moral and not purely martial instruction, and lastly, he can take a jab at Aeschylus and epic-writers.

Two of Theseus' ideas from the first half of the play are particularly useful in understanding Adrastos' Epitaphios. The first appeared in his attribution of certain traits to certain age groups. The young are marked by eagerness for battle and the old by good counsel (161). The second is his understanding of the city structure along class lines (238-

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[77] The Argive young are definitely on stage. Adrastos' words would though be good advice for the Athenians conceived of as present at the Epitaphios and members of the Theater audience. *σοφώτερος* may strike the listener as odd, given Adrastos' past mistakes, but may not mean anything more here than "more learned" or "wiser" as it pertains to the subject at hand and shows a respect for an elder that Theseus, recently victorious, can afford.

245). In brief, he believes that there are three divisions in cities made up of the rich, the poor and the middle. The rich and the poor always strive for more (239-43) while the middle group saves the city (244) and guards the order (245).

Adrastos' moralizing character sketches provide examples of men who would function well within Theseus' ordering of the state. I intend first to look at Capaneus in detail, since his sketch is given first, and follow that with a brief look at shared traits. Adrastos says:

ὁρᾷς τὸ λάβρον οὗ βέλος διέπτατο;
Καπανεὺς ὅδ' ἐστίν· ᾧ βίος μὲν ἦν πολύς,
ἥκιστα δ' ὄλβῳ γαῦρος ἦν· φρόνημα δὲ
οὐδέν τι μεῖζον εἶχον ἢ πένης ἀνήρ,
φεύγων τραπέζαις ὅστις ἐξογκοῖτ' ἄγαν
τἀρκοῦντ' ἀτίζων· οὐ γὰρ ἐν γαστρὸς βορᾷ
τὸ χρηστὸν εἶναι, μέτρια δ' ἐξαρκεῖν ἔφη.
φίλοις τ' ἀληθὴς ἦν φίλος, [τοῖς] παροῦσι τε
καὶ μὴ παροῦσιν· ὧν ἀριθμός οὐ πολύς.
ἀψευδὲς ἦθος, εὐπροσήγορον στόμα,
ἄκραντον οὐδὲν οὔτ' ἐς οἰκέτας ἔχων
οὔτ' ἐς πολίτας.

Do you see the man through whom the violent missile flew?
This is Capaneus. For whom there was much livelihood.
He was exultant least in his wealth. He had a
spirit not any greater than a poor man.
He avoided whoever excessively too puffed up by his tables
disdains moderation. For he said there is no good
in gluttony, but temperance suffices.
He was a true friend to friends
-present and not present - the number of which is not many.
His character was guileless, his tongue courteous,
leaving nothing owing to servants
or to citizens. (860-71)

The lament of Adrastos starts with Capaneus. The choice makes good sense. By

separating Capaneus furthest from the death scene of Evadne, the audience is allowed to digest Euripides' strange presentation of the hero well before her appearance and is more prepared to accept her suicide within the logic of the play. Adrastos spends a total of 11.5 lines on Capaneus and covers the following topics, identification of the hero (1.5 lines), his social/economic standing (.5), praise for his moderation (5), praise for his friendship (2), his truthfulness (.5), his restraint (.5), fair treatment of others (2).

Lines 860-1 identifies the hero. That lightning struck him has not been denied in the play and is brought up elsewhere. It is an element of his story which cannot easily be removed and Adrastos does not bring it up to mark Capaneus as a criminal, rather, as we have seen in the messenger speech, one who suffered from hubris at the height of success. He is to be a lesson. There is, however, in the first line a textual problem that has received some notice and does bear on how we are to interpret the Epitaphios in general.

Line 860 of Collard's edition reads: *ὁρᾷς τὸ λάβρον οὗ βέλος διέπτατο;* (1975, v.1). The manuscripts have, however *ὁρᾷς τὸν ἄβρόν οὗ βέλος διέπτατο* while other editions use *ὁρᾷς τὸ Δῖον οὗ βέλος διέπτατο.* The choice hinges on whether we wish to read "Do you see him through whom the violent missile flew?", "Do you see him, the delicate/over-delicate man, through whom the missile flew", or lastly "Do you see him through whom the missile of Zeus flew?". Collard defends his choice on the grounds that *τὸν ἄβρόν* does not fit Capaneus' character as developed by Adrastos and that *βέλος* requires a qualifying adjective to make clear to the audience that the bolt is a metaphor for Zeus' lightning bolt (1972: 140; 1963: 184).

The second reading which Collard dismisses, *ὁρᾷς τὸ Δῖον οὗ βέλος διέπτατο,* is

recorded in Polybius 5.9., who relates that Samos composed the line after Philip V of Macedon had destroyed Thermon, an Aetolian city, in retaliation for the destruction of Dion in Macedon, and that the phrase was written on the remains of Thermon's walls. Collard dismisses *τὸ Δῖον*, despite the fact that it would solve his problem with *τὸν ἁβρόν*, on the grounds that Samos was showing his wit by replacing *τὸ λάβρον* with a different qualifying adjective and that *τὸ Δῖον* was likely chosen to cleverly evoke the name of the Macedonian town Dion.

Hooker accepts the dismissal of *τὸ Δῖον* but supports the manuscript reading of *τὸν ἁβρόν*. He discounts Collard's contention that *βέλος* needs to be qualified since Capaneus was famous for his death (Hooker 64). Hooker then states that Capaneus may in fact be fitly described as *τὸν ἁβρόν* if we ignore how he has been portrayed in the *Supplices* and by earlier authors and focus only on Adrastos' praise (65). Unfortunately Hooker does not go on to argue how the word which means first, "delicate, graceful, beauteous, pretty," but as early as Pindar, "over-delicate, dainty, luxurious," (LSJ) fits in with Adrastos' portrayal of Capaneus as a moderate man. Hooker concludes by stating that *ἁβρός* may have suggested itself to Euripides from details of combat in epic where spears pierce flesh and the flesh is described as soft and delicate and that by using such a word here Euripides evokes Capaneus at the point of his death (65). In his theory lightning would take the place of the piercing weapon. The last point is very speculative and how the association develops Capaneus' presentation or guides the reaction of the audience is left unvoiced. Possibly Euripides may have wished to portray Capaneus in a sympathetic light but this solution seems over subtle.

I am inclined not to follow Collard in his choice. Capaneus' body is on stage and is likely to be pointed out by Adrastos. Further there is only a delay of one line before it is revealed by Adrastos about whom he speaks. Further, Collard's attribution of *τὸ λάβρον* 'violent' to a missile in the context of war, to indicate specifically Capaneus, does not really clarify that the missile is from Zeus and or identify the hero. Lastly his whole argument may be moot if it is remembered that the rest of the Argive chieftains fell, Amphiaraus aside, from being hit by stones and while *βέλος* can be used of almost any missile, *διέπτατο*, "flew through", implies a piercing missile like an arrow or a spear (standing in by metaphor for the bolt of Zeus) rather than a rock. Capaneus' fate is thus conjured without recourse to any special adjective to qualify *βέλος*. The choice then remains between a 'delicate' (*ἁβρός*) Capaneus and a missile "of Zeus" (*τὸ Δῖον*). *ἁβρός* "delicate/over-delicate" does not seem possible for Capaneus, given his characterization in the play both before the funeral speech and in what Adrastos has to say about him after this line of the Epitaphios. That leaves *τὸ Δῖον* which Collard dismissed on the grounds that the poet, Samos, likely showed his wit by changing Euripides to match the circumstances of the destruction of Thermon. I think, though, that this reading is most likely and that Samos was showing his wit by applying the verse, unchanged, to a new context and that this would have been a noteworthy feat.

The primary reason for the debate on the reading is simply that different scholars have reacted variously to the speech. There are several competing interpretations of the funeral speech. Collard, as we have seen, speaks most strongly in favour of accepting the play at face value and taking each hero as possessing "that civic virtue that upholds and furthers common life" (1955a, 15).

This view runs counter to the next camp which sees the speech as satirical or ironic in some fashion. For instance, Gregoire sees the possibility that Euripides is making light of the exaggeration of funeral speech (100).[78] Fitton aptly encapsulates what must strike the audience as strange about the speeches: "Could an Athenian citizen really be expected to bring up children to be a Capaneus or a Tydeus?" (Fitton 439), but unlike Gregoire, he sees the irony as part of a lesson in how the lamentation of the dead further excites (as shown by the children's reaction) war (*ibid.*).[79]

These two interpretations are commonest but there are other possibilities. Norwood has found it so jarring that he suggests its excision in entirety (158). Giles noted the incongruous treatment of Capaneus and explained it as Euripides' attempt to portray Athenian politicians (96). Kuiper looked at the strange presentation of Capaneus' as a reflection of his actual cult standing at Eleusis (124-7). Lastly Burian sees the speech as a device to characterize Adrastos (1985, 147-8) who, in this failed attempt at praise, shows that he has learned nothing from his suffering and that his effect on the children, "shows with disheartening clarity the failure of reasoned discourse, the foundation of Theseus' optimistic kosmos, to change the pattern" (149).

Collard's defence of *τὸ λάβρον* over *τὸν ἄβρόν*, removes what would be an early indication in the speech of Capaneus that Euripides is pushing an ironic /satiric view or that he is characterizing Adrastos negatively. An examination of the content of the rest of the

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[78] Lucas (168), and Conacher (24), also give some credence to this view.

[79] The Epitaphios, though, is not delivered to promote peaceful men.

praise of Capaneus' and its relation to Theseus' world view will counter many of the other points of those who would not take the passage at face value.

At 861 we are told that Capaneus was wealthy (ὦ βίος μὲν ἦν πολύς). This first point of description places Capaneus within the framework of Theseus' tripartite division from 239-43. Theseus' general criticism of this class is that they always strive for more. Adrastos shows with Capaneus how the rich may be beneficial to democracy. He goes to great trouble to explain how Capaneus yet remained a model of moderation (the middle are moderate in Theseus' world view) stating at 862 that Capaneus was not disdainful from his wealth and at 862-3 that his spirit was no greater than that of a poor man's.

Whatever we may think of clothing Capaneus in such a manner, lines 862-3 attracted ancient attention and can be later found applied to other important figures. Diogenes Laertius, in his *Life of Zeno*, claims that that philosopher used always to quote these lines to the young (VII. 19). Plutarch attributed the character of Euripides' Capaneus to the Theban Pelopidas (*Pel.* ii. 5 – iii. 4). Lastly, in the *Deipnosophistae* (iv.158-159), Capaneus' character and maxims are included in the company of others who show the wisdom of moderation in life and eating such as Socrates and Diogenes. These writers are late, 2nd and 3rd century A.D.; however their unapologetic use of Capaneus implies that they took Euripides' specific portrayal of Capaneus as instructive and at face value. Fitton's question of whether "an Athenian could really take seriously the advice to bring up their children to be a Capaneus or a Tydeus" (439)[80] has its partial answer in Diogenes Laertius: yes,

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[80] Further arguments may be added against Fitton's stand; 1) one can encourage the young to be like a hero without evoking their worst moments like Ajax' mad slaying of sheep and subsequent suicide, Herakles' slaying of his wife and children, or Achilles' abuse of Hector's body; 2) We are likely to think of

provided that it was Euripides' Capaneus. We must separate traditional portrayals from the possibilities in characterization afforded to a playwright.

At 864-5 we are told how his character type translates into mundane action, reflective of his spirit, and at 865-6 we are given his maxims. In these three lines moderation is again stressed (864: avoids immoderate tables, 865: gluttony isn't useful, 866: enough suffices).[81] There is a general movement in Adrastos' speech about Capaneus from the epic to the human or mundane. He strives to make Capaneus instructive of civic virtue and not a model young hero of the epic type. Lines 866-7 give something of Capaneus' interaction with others and also helps pull him further away from his usual presentation. He is called a true friend to friends present or not. The consistency and quality of his character is given again in the next line with *ἀψευδὲς ἦθος* (866). The above traits further erode his usual depiction and encourage the audience to see him in a normal civic situation as anything but a vain boaster. These lines prepare the reader for what would otherwise be a startling characteristic, he has a courteous tongue (*εὐπροσήγορον στόμα* 869).

Had we not been led to this point in stages, I would agree with Fitton, who sees this phrase as an indicator that Euripides is being ironic. He states

> The tradition of Kapaneus is quite clear: he was the impious adversary of Zeus, and it was his uncontrolled boasting that led to his downfall. How then could the *στόμαργος* be said to have *εὐπροσήγορον στόμα*? Nor is it an isolated paradox –

Capaneus as having made his sin out of pride at the height of his success and that his character outside of this may not necessarily have been marked by this trait; 3) The audience may well have been initially amused at Euripides' presentation, if it was novel, but since his presentation has clear purpose and logic within the play, amusement may not have been a lasting reaction.

81 *μέτρια δ' ἐξαρκεῖν* (869) has its parallel in the English, "enough is as good as a feast".

> the whole concept of Kapaneus as a master of philosophic moderation (861-866) is ludicrous. (438).

Fitton refers to Capaneus with the word στόμαργος (loud-tongued) which Aeschylus uses of Capaneus at 477 of the *Septem* and in doing so he shows his reliance on Aeschylus for his interpretation of Euripides' presentation. His preconceptions of how Euripides should be presenting him straight-jackets his interpretation of Capaneus within the play and automatically negates any other dramatic possibilities for the character. Capaneus is more of a tragic figure if his normally active qualities have been subverted and led to his destruction.[82]

The final lines (870-1) add nothing special to the characterization of Capaneus. Adrastos simply reiterates the theme that Capaneus treated all equally, stating that he left nothing undone for citizens and servants alike. From beginning to end, the state, as conceived by Theseus, would benefit by Capaneus' example. Capaneus, though rich, has a humble spirit and moderate personality. In addition to the purely civic advantages which Capaneus offers, Adrastos is also able to show how this type is a benefit to friends and servants alike.

While these arguments in favour of taking the speech at face value go far in countering the ironic and satirical view, there are other interpretations warranting examination. Giles sought a solution in the inconsistencies, especially the double presentation of Capaneus, through matching each Argive leader to an Athenian politician

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[82] Capaneus' herald makes the comment at 728-30, in praise of Theseus and in criticism of the leadership of Capaneus, that Theseus is the type of leader who is solid and disdainful of those who let slip present success to ascend the ladder's height.

active at the time of production. The weakness of the Epitaphios would be made up for by the novel presentation of contemporary figures. His handling of Capaneus should be enough to display the general flaws within his theory.

In Capaneus Giles saw the portrait of Nikias, who had proverbial wealth and treated servants and citizens well (16). One would expect in the extended description of Capaneus more of a match with Nikias' vitues than wealth. For Giles does not back up with consistent proof that fair and equal treatment especially marked Nikias. Lastly Giles does not explain why Euripides would choose Capaneus to illustrate Nikias who was known for excessive religiosity. This quality Euripides avoids mentioning with rgard to Capaneus.[83]

Struck in the same way by Capaneus' double treatment, Kuiper offered a religious solution which seeks to explain Capaneus and Evadne's novel presentation in conjunction with cult practices at Eleusis (125-7). While he points out fascinating correspondences which may underlie some of the presentation, he does not determine or defend why Euripides would choose to evoke such practices, when he does, nor how this theory ties in with the other rehabilitated heroes.

Kuiper starts with the statement *"Capaneus heros Eleusine suas sibi accipiebat inferias* "(126). He then notes that, while Euripides in the *Phoenissae* presents the usual portrayal of Capaneus, it is only the Theban messenger who presents it in the *Suppliants*. In this Kuiper seems to ignore the number of times that Capaneus' destruction by the lightning

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[83]Had Euripides touched on religiosity in Capaneus' characterization the arguments for satire or irony would have been stronger.

bolt is mentioned.[84] He goes on to note that Theseus kept Capaneus' body separate from the others as a *ἱερὸν ὡς νεκρὸν*[85] (935), pointing out that this refers to a corpse made sacred by Zeus and not merely dedicated to him. Kuiper posits that Euripides sees Capaneus as a chthonic force after the strike, and that when he etymologizes Capaneus' name by the verb *καπνοῦν*, it is a hidden reference to "*Δία καπνώτην* i.e. *deum inferum*" (*ibid.*). He considers Evadne's voluntary death on the pyre as logical since the wife of a chthonian god ought to descend and makes the equation that as "*Ariadne-Ariagne, Evadne est Evagne, est ἁγνὴ Περσεφόνεια quae tam multas sumit species*" (127).

To Kuiper may be added Cook's comments on Euripides' treatment of Capaneus. Cook numbers him among other heroes who find a good death through lightning and worship afterwards. Included in his list are Aesclepias who was struck and made a god, Erechtheus worshipped at Athens, and Semele (23-9). In a footnote he goes so far as to say that "Kapaneus, struck by the lightning, is charged with divinity and treated as Zeus incarnate" (24).[86] Both scholars have noted that Euripides redefines in part at least Capaneus' lightning strike in relation to current cult practices an mythological parallels. Kuiper, though, fails to explain how this choice adds anything to the play.

It seems more likely that Euripides' Adrastos follows Theseus' injunction and gives

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[84] 495-9, 639-40, 934, 984-5, 1011. If he is thinking of the times when his crime is alluded to specifically he ignores Capaneus' henchmen's lines at 726-30.

[85] At 981 his tomb is given the same adjective and at 1010 called a *Διὸς θησαυρόν*.

[86] I am not sure that Euripides pushed this connection as far as Cook but it would be an interesting reversal for this hero to be "Zeus incarnate" who in some versions imitated Zeus just before his death. Perhaps by having the Theban herald define Amphiaraus' punishment as a clear sign of criminal action he invites the reader to reverse his pronouncement on Capaneus as well.

moral lessons to the young through his portrayal of the civic pre-Theban war lives of the heros and, what is more, that by rehabilitating Capaneus he heightens the impact of Evadne's appearance. In the end the audience may need to see something worthwhile in Capaneus and his relationship with Evadne to care about her and her death; secondly, Euripides needs a way of setting apart Capaneus' pyre so that Evadne can dedicate herself to it alone.

The final interpretation and the most recent is by Burian. He sees the whole encomium functioning in two ways. First, it is a chance to display the character of Adrastos and, secondly, by the reaction of the children to it, it furthers the theme of the "failure of reasoned discourse" (1985, 47-9). His premise is that the speech is "a failed attempt at genuine praise" (1985, 147) and he dismisses its educational worth as of "dubious value to the young" (*ibid.*).

I have shown earlier that later writers did indeed use Capaneus as a good example of behaviour. In the example of Diogenes, his Zeno uses 862-3 to instruct the young. Further, had Adrastos learned nothing, one would expect words which promoted martial valour instead of civic excellence. That is not to say that martial traits are not mentioned but where they appear they are subordinated to the benefit of the state. At 887 Hippomedon, a warrior of massive size, was willing to use his body for the good of the city and Parthenopaeus, a foreigner, wholeheartedly fought for his adopted home (896-9).

The reaction of the Argive young to the speech is not given. We get their reaction to the death and burial of their fathers to which they respond naturally with anger and a desire for vengeance against Thebes. In this they merely show, as Theseus has pointed out, that the young are eager for war. One would have to wait for the outcome of their attack on Thebes,

many years later, to know if in fact they had learned anything. That Athena appears at the end of the play and promises them victory at least removes the question of whether or not they will fight with the gods on their side (*σὺν θεῷ πορεύσετε* 1226).

Before moving on to the episode of Evadne and Iphis the corporate presentation of the Seven so far as it pertains to the funeral speeches should be discussed. The Epitaphios provides an incomplete description of the heroes.[87] Adrastos does not speak about Amphiaraus or Polynikes, whose bodies were not present. Thus our focus will be on the remaining heroes.[88]

Capaneus' praise included civic elements and other traits meant to be instructive to the youth. We should expect a like mix with the other heroes. Euripides cast of chieftains contains the same members as Aeschylus' castbut Euripides follows a different order. After Capaneus, Eteoclus is described. Eteoclus is Capaneus' brother-in-law and his description is kept, like Capaneus', distant from Evadne's episode. He receives 9 and a half lines of description running from 871-880. Capaneus was the example of civic excellence despite wealth while Eteoclus displays excellence in spite of poverty. Like Capaneus' description we are given an indication of his wealth early on. He is *τῷ βίῳ ἐνδεής* (873) yet has great honour. At 875-7 we find out that he actually turned away wealth so as not to be its slave. He has like Capaneus escaped Theseus' censure of the classes by not striving for more. The

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[87] The play otherwise has many points in which Euripides does not keep such an eye to detail. For instance are we to comfortably expect that Jocasta and Atalanta are among the mothers, or that Evadne's mother and children are on stage but remain silent at her death?

[88] Theseus says that he will give their praise but disappoints the audience by his brevity. Of Amphiaraus he says that his manner of death speaks for him and of Polynikes that they were tied by guest-friendship. This would have been a useful fact to Adrastos earlier.

final quality given at 888-90 is that he blames those responsible for misdirecting the state and not the state itself. This seems to be a pointed defence against an argument of the Theban herald who said that a democratic leader could twist people to his will and then have recourse to blame others for the errors which arise 412-16.

The next hero described is Hippomedon (881-7). He receives least attention with 7 lines only. He represents youth's natural eagerness for war and is portrayed as a consummate warrior who devotes himself entirely to training. His saving grace is that his energies are turned towards serving the state (*πόλει παρασχεῖν σῶμα χρήσιμον θέλων* 882). Again eagerness for battle is not inherently wrong but it must properly guided.

From 888-900 we are given a description of Parthenopaeus who is identified first as the son of Atalanta and praised for his beauty (888-890). The focus of the next line is that he is a foreigner; we move quickly into the civic realm. The remainder of the lines highlight two points: 1) he did not cause trouble with the natives (895), and 2) he fought as a native and entirely linked his fortune with his adopted city. The last two lines form a ring structure with the opening reference to his beauty and indicate that despite the attention he attracted he kept himself under control (899-900).[89]

The last hero, Tydeus, is described from 901-8. The passage has but one point and reflects Agamemnon's suggestion in Homer that Tydeus was better in battle than in counsel (*Il.* 4.400). The text is highly deficient and it is hard to say what the original had to say, if

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89 These lines are not accepted by Collard who dismisses them as trivial (1975, v.2 332-3). I believe that they do add to the them of moral instruction present in the Epitaphios.

anything, about his civic virtue.[90]

Capaneus, then, as part of a collective shows by example patterns of behaviour and character which would guide the young well. Highlighted especially among the heroes is their beneficial, controlled, and even interaction among dwellers of the city and their eagerness to act on the state's behalf.

Evadne's[91] episode left a lasting impression in later tradition. Whether Euripides invented her suicide or brought it in from an earlier tradition cannot be known but her story may have been guided by earlier tradition and two other myths. These will be discussed first, followed by the motive for her death and her characterization of Capaneus. With Evadne we have a different sort of praise than Adrastos'. Hers is unbidden, selfish, unguided by Theseus, and heightened by the throes of grief. The ultimate origin of the story may be, as Nilsson noted, a Mycenaean survival of a custom which has parallels among Thracians, Indians, and Scandinavians, where the wife would follow the husband to the grave. His proof is the remains of burnt animal and human bones found at double burial of a king and queen in the beehive tombs at Dendra (118).

There are other myths that may help inform us on this point. The first involves a triad of women who killed themselves at the death of their husbands. This grouping helps to show

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[90] In this I follow Collard who believes lines 901-3 to be more probably Euripides, but asserts 904-6 to be an interpolation and that 907-8, which contains a repetition of the idea again that Tydeus is a better warrior than speaker, have replaced an ending that should relate Tydeus' dedication or value to state (1975 v.2, 334-6).

[91] For a meaning of her name Scholia on Pindar *Olymp.* vi,46 a 10 records that she was so named on account of the *τὸ πλῆθος τῶν ἕδνων ὧν ἔδωκε Καπανεύς*. Even if not valid etymologically, but derived from traditional aspects of the myth, this does imply a fair degree of wealth on Capaneus' part and an equivalent gain of fame or honour on Evadne's from him.

that mythical heroines were capable of such a gesture, though death upon the funeral pyre itself may have struck the Greeks as particularly harsh.[92] Pausanius (x. ii, 7), noting an account from the Cypria which related that Protesilaus' wife Polydora killed herself at the death of her husband, said that she was one of three related women including Cleopatra and Marpessa who committed the same sort of act. Marpessa is an intriguing example for this study since she was married to Idas. From Homer on we know that Idas was of the old generation of heroes who were willing to stand up to the gods. Homer records that Idas took on Apollo for the hand of Marpessa,[93] and later tradition reports that Idas too was struck down by Zeus with lightning.[94] Apollonius certainly portrays him as a braggart. His story runs parallel to Capaneus'; it is a possible comparative from which elements may have been interchanged.

The second story which may have influenced this episode is from the Theban cycle itself. Amphiaraus and Capaneus are somewhat opposite and their stories may have encouraged the polarization of their characters and myths.[95] Amphiaraus' wife Eriphyle was killed by Amphiaraus' sons for selling out their father out of desire for the necklace of Harmonia. This relationship is nicely reversed by the pairing of Evadne, a paradigm of wifely virtue, to the impious Capaneus.

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[92] Philostratus writes that Evadne did not use a knife or a rope, customary methods used by women when they honour their husbands with death (*Imag.* II. 30).

[93] *IL* 9.557-60

[94] *Nem.* 10.71.

[95] This process is completed by Statius.

Euripides not only exploits spectacle in Evadne's scene but also uses it to emphasize several themes. Upon entry Evadne voices her grief and desire to die on her husband's pyre (990-1008). When she mentions her ill-fated wedding to Capaneus, the theme of making beneficial alliances would have been further emphasized by the fact that she has arrived dressed as a bride. Her state of mind as she journeyed to Athens is given at 1001 by the participle *ἐκβακχευσαμένα* and the audience is well prepared for an act of passion which will bring suffering. The focus of her thoughts throughout the scene is on her misery alone and her longing to be with her husband. This causes a complete failure in communication with Iphis and puts her episode in sharp contrast to the fruitful and even discourse between Theseus and his mother. Evadne, just like Creon, is unable to benefit from words, and her subsequent act, like his, is disaster.

Evadne's desire must have struck the audience as strange. Euripides has, though, somewhat prepared the audience, by relating the good qualities of Capaneus, to expect it. Perhaps, given that his own fall was due to ill-timed passion, there is a certain logic in making his wife of like character. Nevertheless it is hard not to be unsettled by her scene when she talks about the good hopes she has for her children. They are on stage along with her own mother and mother-in-law and yet there is no dialogue.

Her motive is given from 1059-63 where she explains to Iphis that she wishes to be the best of wives in excellence by joining her husband in death. She is as extreme in her desire for glory and fame as any youth is for war, yet never tells us what makes Capaneus worthy of such devotion. There is no direct characterisation of Capaneus in Evadne's scene, but her act, especially in a play where Capaneus has been rehabilitated, helps undercut his

traditionally villainous character and an audience's natural animosity towards him.

Sympathetic Presentations of Capaneus

One of the least examined aspects of Capaneus are his non-hubristic presentations of him. While the attention which he receives as a loud, boastful, impious villain is understandable, this should not blind us to other portrayals. The softer presentation of Capaneus may be found earlier than Euripides in art, but is attested to increasingly in surviving literature after him. These softer presentations show that there was a variety of interpretations available and consequently we should not be too narrow in our own expectations of various works.

We have already seen three sources for a sympathetic or at least neutral treatment of Capaneus. In chapter one we saw early Greek vases on which general departure scenes of the *Septem* are depicted, while earlier in this chapter we saw Adrastos' Epitaphios and Evadne's suicide. The focus in this section will be to examine briefly sympathetic treatments found in literature and on two 5th century B.C. Etruscan gems.[96]

Adrastos' rehabilitated Capaneus is as generous a picture of Capaneus as may be found before the Middle-ages. Euripides' Capaneus is referred to in later writers but no Greek or Roman work survives which attempts to follow his lead. However later writers are interested in the story of Evadne's suicide. In Euripides we have an Evadne motivated by grief, love, and fame. Later tradition focuses on her love for Capaneus. The idea of their lost

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[96]The Etruscans were greatly interested in divination and his death may have had especial interest.

love rejoined in death is expressed in a 3rd century A.D. work by Philostratus who wrote short discussions on paintings. Concerning Evadne's picture (*Imag.* 2.30) he states that Capaneus was honoured more than the other leaders since Evadne threw herself on his pyre and would have suffered the lightning bolt for him. He describes a picture not only showing Evadne about to jump on the pyre but also two cupids kindling their torches in the flames who assert that the brands will not be defiled but made more pure.

Statius' genre allowed him far more room for detailing the various characters than the playwrights' had. The majority of the time in Statius Capaneus is described as impious, loud, and monstrous. At some points Statius backs off from the view that Capaneus is entirely a villain and undercuts his own earlier portrayals. These occur towards the close of the epic in books 10 and 11.[97] In Statius, after Capaneus mounts the walls of Thebes, Zeus is reluctant to slay him. Despite the fears that overwhelm the other gods, Zeus laughs, shakes his head and says "what hopes have men after the battles of prideful Phlegra" (10.909). At this point, Zeus is the only one, god or man, who can see that Capaneus is just a mortal. After he has been struck down, Statius gives Capaneus a little more honour. He states that Capaneus would have merited another bolt, had he not died sooner (10.939) and just after this Statius says that Capaneus left deeds behind worthy of praise by Jove (11.11). Statius mixes our dislike for Capaneus with an admiration for how far he pushed the limits of his mortality.[98]

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[97] Statius' presentation of Capaneus is discussed at length in Chapter 4.

[98] For Statius this is not the only time he treats a serious moment with lightness. When Tydeus is ambushed by the Thebans the language paints him as an enraged and fierce but the words also indicate a fearful reaction (2.540-546).

The audience, for whom there is no surprise as to Capaneus' survival, is both invited to laugh along with Jupiter who recognizes the absurdity of the encounter even when his fellow Olympians do not, and to see in Capaneus a marvel. Here is a mortal that stirred the king of the gods to action.

Evadne helps only slightly in his reorientation. Since Statius promotes Capaneus from the start as a brute creature who threatens to destroy Thebes, it is reasonable that at the outset of the poem we are not given an episode which shows him interacting positively with his wife. Statius' focus at the end of his epic is primarily on the recovery of the bodies and the defeat of Creon and does not contain the same extensive funeral scene found in Euripides. While we know Evadne will throw herself into the pyre, we are not given her reasoning for the act. What Evadne does say is short and telling, in an argument to win Theseus' aid, she claims that the princes were neither Cyclopes nor Centaurs (12.553-4) and thus not deserving of ill treatment. Statius lets her undercut and soften his depiction of the chiefs, and she reverses a simile found at the start of the epic in which Statius had directly compared Capaneus as he raged to a Centaur or a Cyclops (3.604-605).

A neutral or sympathetic treatment may be found in art which is quite different from the literary tradition. In art, there is not a focus on the death of Evadne on the pyre. That image seems not to have caught the imagination of the artisans or their audience. Rather, a softer presentation comes across in two ways, the first in generic scenes of the seven chieftains and the second in engraved gems which show Capaneus alone.

In the generic scenes presented in Chapter 1, a group of seven warriors either prepares for battle or for the start of a campaign. Individuals are not marked off by specific traits nor

are they usually named. There are four or five of Greek vases which depict this scene. For specifically sympathetic portrayals of Capaneus there are examples on Etruscan gems which show him arming or about to die. In these the artist has made choices about how close he wishes to bring to mind Capaneus' crime.

Figure 8

Figure 8 is an example of the traditional depiction of Capaneus on a gem. It is an early Roman work from the third to early first century B.C. The artist has included details from Capaneus' story which bring to mind his crime. The ladder is shattered and falls about the wall; Capaneus is hurtling head-long to the ground and lightning issues from his chest.

Figure 9

Like the generic arming scenes of the Seven from Chapter 1, there is a depiction of Capaneus arming on an engraved Etruscan gem from the second half of the fifth century B.C. (Figure 9). Capaneus is shown as a young, beardless warrior, about to arm himself. His helmet, shield, and greaves are at hand. Missing are the markers of his death. It would have been impossible to identify the figure but for the Etruscan 'capne' around the edge.

The last image, Figure 10, is of Capaneus at the moment of death. Again it is Etruscan from the early fifth century B.C.. He is depicted in a heroic/nude fashion that, in combination with his youth, also indicates his vulnerability. The lightning bolt, which usually looks like a flower bloom, is minimized and is shown striking the back of his head. He collapses under the strike. The sword has fallen away from his hand. His legs are folding under him and his shield is not in a defensive position. The maker has contrived an image which portrays Capaneus as a youth struck down suddenly in war.[99]

Figure 10

To conclude, early on, at least from the fifth century B.C., the use of this myth in art occurs in generalized departure and arming scenes where there is no sense that we are to look forward to the doom of the Seven and their associated crimes. While in literature, from the very outset of the campaign and at the beginning of battle, the expedition had been marred by ill-omens, the generalizing depictions leave any such guiding details out. In literature, counter to the traditional presentations, Euripides provided a funeral eulogy meant to inspire good traits and took advantage of contemporary attitudes on lightning to sanctify and separate Capaneus' corpse. To a certain degree he justifies why Evadne could love her

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[99] Perhaps the function of gems as seal-stones may have guided the choice of subject matter. Capaneus' indiscretion may be a polite threat to those who would break the seal.

husband so much. Lastly in the gems, the engraver or his patron could either intensify Capaneus' crime, or focus on his youth, beauty, and defenselessness, by the judicious choice of elements available from the story.

Politics

Politics are more relevant to studies of the *Suppliants* than the *Septem* for two reasons: 1) the political situation at Athens has been used to argue the play's date and 2) it has been proposed that the character-sketches in Adrastos' Epitaphios refer to Athenian political figures.

Arguments for the date of the play generally rely upon matching events within it to contemporary events or gauging the general climate of the play for a parallel tone at Athens.

By far the most prevalent attempt at securing a date begins with the similarities in the play to a battle at Delium in 425. Bowie, who provides the most recent account of the correspondences, notes the following. 1) The Athenian attempt to set up democracies in Boeotia with Boeotian exiles, which precipitated the battle of Delium, parallels Adrastus' aid to the exile Polynikes to take the throne of Thebes. 2) Temples feature in both stories. The Athenians take refuge in the Temple of Apollo at Delium, and the setting for the *Suppliants* is the temple of Persephone and Demeter at Eleusis. 3) Both contain religious issues. Adrastos ignores the signs of the gods, while the Athenians irreligiously occupy the temple of Apollo. 4) Defeat marks both. Adrastos loses at Thebes, the Athenians at Delium. 5) There are two battles in each. At Delium the Athenians are defeated twice and at Thebes Adrastos' loss is followed by Athenian victory. 6) Details of the important battles are similar.

In both, the right wing defeats the left and a commander brings decisive aid. 7) In each there is a refusal of burial. 8) Heralds are turned back in both. 9) The corpses in both situations eventually receive burial (46).

These events do not guarantee a date, but most scholars assume that the play was produced while the events at Delium yet held relevance, since the end of the play closes with a treaty between Argos and Athens. In 420 B.C. these cities were in the midst of cutting a treaty, this has become a favoured date.[100] Other scholars have noted problems with this date. The Argives are portrayed unflatteringly throughout the play, while the treaty benefits only Athens. A date prior to 420 strikes some as more reasonable since the formation and terms of the treaty would still be a matter of discussion.[101]

Zuntz has turned to 424 instead of 420, not on strict historical correspondences, but rather by taking his cues from the general tone and level of optimism portrayed in the play. He sees similarities between the optimism which the Athenians in 424 would have felt, given recent successes in battle, and the mood portrayed by Theseus in the play. He also sees a like mood in Aristophanes' *Knights*, produced in the same year (1955a, 88-91).[102]

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100 Giles notes Hermann's proposal of this date and then supports it through his own criteria (95-97). Kuiper considers 420 very suitable on the grounds that the play was likely to have been written while events of 424-421 were yet fresh (105 and 121). Bates thinks that the play was written not too much before the Athenian alliance with Argos at 420 (196-7). Greenwood too favours this date (94).

101 Toher notes that the play reflects a point at which the possibility of an alliance was yet under discussion (342).

102 By mood he seems here to mean that while these two poets were poets of peace the *Suppliants* and the *Knights* are not strictly anti-war plays. Adrastos' defeat is disastrous but avoidable if men are pious and Theseus' victory is not bitter. In the *Knights*, Aristophanes makes fun of Athenian leaders and the folly of the Athenian citizens' who choose them, but the war itself is outside the target of his humour.

422 has also been proposed on the grounds that there is particular point to Adrastos' rejection of the peace offering and subsequent defeat, and an offer made by Sparta to Athens before Sphacteria was taken. Zuntz reviews and rejects this view (championed by Wilamowitz) on the grounds that, despite turning the offer down, Athens took Sphacteria and generally had a full year of military successes (1955a, 60-1)

Lastly Toher, who focusses on funeral and ritual lamentation, supports 420 on yet different grounds, claiming that by that date Athenian institutions, including state funerals, were weakening and Euripides' play provides an examination of this institution, including both the benefits from observing proper form and the damage that arises when resolution from grief is not attained (343). Giles' theory is that the inconsistency in Capaneus' portrayal arises from the playwright's recasting of political figures in the description of the Seven; we have seen how he matches Capaneus to Nikias, and it should be noted that Giles proceeds to attribute each sketch to a political figure. His views have not been accepted by most scholars and indeed his correspondences seem a little too light in some cases to inspire confidence in his theory. Giles matches Eteoclus known for poverty but great honour to Lamachus who was brave but poor (96). To Hippomedon, marked by zeal for the soldier's life, he matches Demosthenes, whom Giles calls "the greatest of Athenian generals". Despite Gile's own admission that "no full account of him is preserved for us" he is quite confident in the identification (*ibid.*). Hippomedon is however represented as a great soldier, but not as a fine strategist or inspiring leader. For Parthenopaeus he matches Alcibiades, who would have been young at the time of the play's production. The focus of Parthenopaeus' praise in Euripides, though, is equally about youth and good-looks and how Parthenopaeus, though

a foreigner, causes no problem with citizens and has whole-heartedly adopted his home (890-898). How Alcibiades' matches these points is left unexplained. To Tydeus, Giles matches Laches, who was simply a model of courage. He may indeed be like that hero, but the text of Adrastos' praise at this point is so defective that certainty is not guaranteed.

Capaneus' Relation to Plot and Theme

Even though his role is limited by the fact that his death has occurred before the start of the play, Capaneus plays a larger role in the *Suppliants* than in the *Septem*. As a member of the Seven, burial must be obtained for him and he receives, as they do, praise from Adrastos and a general lament from the Argive mothers and children. Our attention is focused on him, more so than the other chieftains, by his separate pyre and the arrival and suicide of his wife.

Capaneus has relevance to some of the important themes, but not all. The theme of the proper maintenance of the divine laws works with Capaneus actively and passively; passively in that his is one of the bodies that must receive its proper burial rites, actively in that he was a member of an expedition that ignored the signs of the gods and went too far in his words and aspirations thus inviting Zeus' punishment.

In the theme of keeping oneself from harmful relationships, Capaneus is relatively free from blame. He is, rather, the weight that drags many others down by their association with him. He is at the centre of misfortune for his children, Evadne, and through her Iphis.

The importance of words before deeds has special point for Capaneus because of his relationship to threats or boasts. He does practice words before deeds but they are the wrong

words; his deeds go unfulfilled. Had he shown more control he might, like Diomedes, have only warranted a warning bolt or threatening thunder.

Capaneus is a prime example of the necessity of acting rationally rather than acting passionately. Capaneus' lesson is strengthened by the fact that he was known for good and moderate behaviour but in war, where youth-inspired courage is at its highest, he failed because he acted passionately and without thought. Evadne suffers from a like flaw. Having escaped her guardian, she arrives in a fit of grief at her husband's pyre. Her mad act is driven on by sorrow which cannot find any immediate and rational resolution except by joining Capaneus in death. Her death, in turn, is a terrible and grievous blow to Iphis her father.

The theme of democracy has limited application to Capaneus. Adrastos' Epitaphios presents a Capaneus who would be very useful in a democracy. In Theseus' world-view a democracy suffers from rich men and the poor men since these two groups always strive for more. Capaneus is presented as a rich man of humble spirit who wants not and is thus no threat to the state. Capaneus also provides a negative example for democratic leadership. A good leader is like Theseus, who has success and knows when to stop. Capaneus and Adrastos both push too far and risk too much.

Conclusion

One of the most important things that can be taken from Euripides' treatment of Capaneus is the range of presentations available to poets in handling their material. This can be seen especially in his double presentation in the *Suppliants* and also in Euripides' interpretation of lightning.

Euripides' use of Capaneus as the traditional villain is in perfect keeping with our understanding of Capaneus and the nature of the Argive expedition. This "normal" view of Capaneus, however, arises from a paucity of information relating directly to the hero. Our first lengthy treatment of Capaneus in Aeschylus' *Septem* has a stifling effect on a balanced reading of Euripides' *Suppliants*. Aeschylus was perhaps too successful in characterizing the attacking Argives collectively and individually as villainous and thus, when we are confronted with Euripides, it is harder to shift from seeing Capaneus as the consummate villain to Capaneus as a hero who, despite making an error at a pivotal moment, is generally a model of moderate behaviour within the context of the funeral speeches.[103]

Euripides' use of lightning also adds intricacy to his treatment of Capaneus. In the *Suppliants* lightning not only punishes Capaneus, but also makes his corpse hallowed. This redefinition allows Euripides to separate the corpse from the common pyre in order to facilitate Evadne's suicide. If Kuiper is right, further interest in the scene is created through references to cult practices at Eleusis.

Euripides' *Suppliants* was influential in two ways. First, he helped to popularize Evadne's story, setting the stage for the overly romanticized versions which follow, and secondly, later authors appreciated and reiterated the words of the moderate Capaneus. Euripides' presentation of Capaneus as a model citizen did not find similar favour. His spectacular death made him perfect for the role of the villain, and in the Roman period Statius does not shy away from attributing all the worst traits of the Seven to him. Indeed

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[103] The range of presentations of Capaneus, from traditional to sympathetic, on vases and gems also counter a too narrow view of the hero.

Euripides returns to a traditional presentation of him in the *Phoenissae*, the next play to be considered.

Chapter 3: Euripides' *Phoenissae*

Introduction to Euripides' *Phoenissae*[104]

Euripides' *Phoenissae* was performed around 410 B.C. with two other plays, the *Chrysippus* and the *Oenomaos*.[105] If the identification of the members of the trilogy is correct the plays would have been bound thematically through the treatment of stories in which curses and abnormal familial relationships play a major role. In the *Phoenissae* Oedipus' curse causes the death of his sons at each other's hand; in the myth of Chrysippus, Pelops' curse upon Laius for his son's rape gives rise to the abnormal relationships within that family, and in the story of Oenomaus, who harbours incestuous desires for his own daughter, Pelops, having betrayed Myrtilus and thrown him from a cliff, is cursed by him. Some ancient criticism of the play has survived in the third of the ancient hypotheses to the play wherein

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[104] Mastronarde's 1988 edition is used throughout.

[105] Conacher provides an overview of the scholarship for rejecting or accepting these plays as members of the same trilogy (1967, 228, n. 1). The most important argument for the make-up of the trilogy is found in the fragmentary hypothesis of Aristophanes which Mastronarde gives as † *...καὶ γὰρ ταῦτα ὁ Οἰνόμαος καὶ Χρύσιππος καὶ < > σῴζεται.* † (1988, 8). He however does not believe that these titles refer to *Phoenissae's* trilogy because of the corrupt state of the hypothesis and since "a didascalic reference to a trilogy would normally be in the form of a listing of the three titles in the dative after the poet's name. . . . Instead the titles survive in the nominative in a subsequent sentence " (1994, 37-8).

it is faulted for being overfull (*παραπληρωματικόν*) and episodic (*ἐπεισοδιῶδες*).[106] All but one modern critic, Meredith, would cut away at least some of the fat especially at the play's end.[107]

There is little innovation as far as the traditional portrayal of six of the seven Argive chieftains go. Polynikes' character alone suffers reworking, and, more in this play than in either the *Suppliants* or the *Septem*, evokes sympathy from the audience. More noticeable are the innovations in the plot, for we have a narrative line that is built up in part by episodes from Theban myth which we have not in the earlier versions encountered, including Polynikes' return to the city for reconciliation, the suicide of Creon's son, Jocasta's survival after the discovery of Oedipus' relationship to her, her attempt to reconcile Polynikes and Eteocles, and lastly, the survival and exile of Oedipus after the death of his sons.[108]

As with the *Suppliants*, the question of when and how the play ends has received generous debate. The question does not interfere with the interpretation of Euripides' presentation of Capaneus' appearances in the *Phoenissae's* teichoscopia, shield-scene, and Eteocles' rallying of the troops, and thus will only be discussed where it impacts on the broader issues of the play.

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[106] This is an apt criticism for a play which seeks to cover so much of the fall of the house of Laius. The same hypothesis criticizes the dramatic importance of specific scenes, such as the teichoscopia, Polynikes' appearance in the city, and Oedipus' emergence from the palace's depths.

[107] For a defense of the play, as we have it, as a coherent work see Meredith 97-103.

[108] Whether Euripides contrived the elements for his play or merely adapted less known myths cannot be determined.

Synopsis

The play opens with Jocasta detailing the sordid history of the house of Oedipus from Cadmus' foundation of Thebes to the present strife between Polynikes and Eteocles (1-87). In this play Laius is guilty of ignoring Apollo's advice. The god had warned him that his offspring would kill him and that his whole house would walk in blood (20). The first half of the warning, Laius' death, has been fulfilled before the start of the play and the second half of the warning is the subject of the play itself. Polynikes and Eteocles, like Laius, start the play guilty. By sealing Oedipus inside the house and by mistreating him, they draw upon themselves his curse that they will divide the halls with iron (63-68). Their response was to avoid the outcome by taking turns governing Thebes. This strategy failed when Eteocles refused Polynikes' his turn, and Polynikes returned home with an army at his back. We thus start with a house which, like Atreus' in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, is poised to fall. The doom of the royal family emphasizes the theme of family strife and adds suspense to the play, since a way must be found for the city to extricate itself from the ruin of its ruling family.

88-201 present a teichoscopia featuring Antigone. At its outset we have a subtle composition of character that will be repeated throughout the play, the old leading or being led by the young. Here an aged servant leads Antigone to the palace roof to view the troops. The scene focuses on the human side of the characters. Antigone is youthful and she is both nervous and excited at the prospect of seeing her brother. The old servant is concerned about fulfilling Antigone's wishes while protecting her from the slander of Theban women, should they see her out of the palace. Most importantly, the servant fears that the city will be lost since the Argives come justly (*σὺν δίκῃ* 154). His words, evocative of Polynikes' shield in

Aeschylus which had Justice leading a warrior (*Septem* 643-8), shows that not all Thebans side with Eteocles and that Polynikes will receive a sympathetic treatment.

In the first chorus, 202-260, the Phoenician maidens give their reason for being present. They were on their way to Delphi to serve Apollo but had been detained in Thebes by the attack of the Argives. The choice of a foreign chorus made up of Phoenician women is apt for a number of reasons: 1) the Phoenicians are tied to the city through the common ancestress, Io; 2) they, like other figures of Theban myth (including Polynikes, Tydeus, Cadmus, Oedipus and Antigone), leave their homeland; 3) as foreigners they are a little more distant from the action of the play and thus can comment on it in a different manner than natives, and lastly (4), as has been noted by at least one scholar, the sacrifice of a citizen of a city under stress of war, the role which Menoeceus fulfils in the *Phoenissae*, has its parallels elsewhere in Greek literature but seems to be a Phoenician practice.[109]

As they finish Polynikes enters and converses with the chorus (261-300). He, like his sister, is presented in a human rather than heroic fashion. He is fearful lest his brother use the excuse of the negotiations for peace to kill him. The chorus inclines us to favour Polynikes. The women are excited to see him and name him the rightful ruler (291-5).

At 301-354 Jocasta arrives and laments that her proper role of mother has been destroyed by her sons' disagreement, and at 319ff she states that Eteocles was in the wrong in exiling Polynikes. She clings to the view that reconciliation is possible and her determination makes her a sympathetic character whose noble but futile attempts at

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[109] See Rubeffat 14-31. Our best witness of this practice is the Carthaginian custom of sacrificing noble-born children to Moloch.

reconciling the brothers make the relentless working out of the curse of Oedipus seem much more powerful and terrible. Polynikes and Jocasta commiserate with one another from 357-377 and Polynikes is shown to have tremendous care for his family.

In the ensuing conversation, Jocasta's resignation to the will of the gods is emphasized as well as the things which Polynikes suffered in exile (378-426). Throughout this section, Polynikes' love for his homeland is implicit and at 407 is made explicit by his very inability to quantify its importance: "you could not say how dear it is" (*οὐδ' ὀνομάσαι δύναι' ἄν ὡς ἔστιν φίλον*). Before Eteocles arrives Polynikes relates how he won the hand of Adrastos' daughter and why he has returned with an army. Jocasta's role, as reconciler, is put to the test in the following scene. For her sake both Polynikes and Eteocles have come together for this final chance at peace; and as the mitigator, she sets the terms of the debate and makes the final remarks after each combatant has his say.[110]

Polynikes speaks first, promising to talk simply and directly since only lies need elaboration (469-496). He claims that he lived up to his end of the bargain while Eteocles did not. For his part Eteocles does not gloss over his crime. He admits that he will do anything to retain power for the great benefits which it brings and at 524-5 gives his credo, "if wrong can ever be right it is most right to do wrong for rulership" (*εἴπερ γὰρ ἀδικεῖν χρή, τυραννίδος πέρι / κάλλιστον ἀδικεῖν,*).[111] The chorus, rightly, condemns his words

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110 Pearson believes that since no other tragedian has Jocasta survive the revelation of Oedipus' incest that the interview is a Euripidean invention (xxiii).

111 Pearson notes that Eteocles embodies the character type of Thrasymachus who states in Plat. *Resp.* 338c a similar sentiment *εἶναι τὸ δίκαιον οὐκ ἄλλο τι ἢ τὸ τοῦ κρείττονος ξυμφέρον* (xi. n.2).

but it is left to Jocasta to expose fully the weak ground on which each son stands. She criticizes Eteocles for his ambition and Polynikes for attacking his homeland.

The brothers' exchange is fruitless and merely provides each hero with a chance to voice his unalterable stance. Eteocles though comes off worse in the argument between the brothers which follows. He is shown as greedy, ambitious, cruel in his accusations, and cold-hearted in his denial of any contact between Polynikes and his family (588-624).

The next chorus, 638-689, is the first of four odes which detail famous Theban myths. The odes are similar in that they highlight stories of Cadmeians who oppose monsters for the safety of the city and they form a cycle which puts into context Menoeceus' death by presenting him as the next in a line of Theban saviors.

Creon and Eteocles discuss the safety of the state at 670-783. Again champions are chosen to guard each gate. After putting the defenses in order, Eteocles arranges for the marriage of Antigone to Haemon, the summoning of Teiresias, and the decree that Polynikes' body not receive burial in Thebes. This last act shows Eteocles' terrible cruelty and his reluctance to share with Polynikes space in Thebes even after his death. All the necessities for the fall of the house of Oedipus are now in place.

At 784-833, the chorus complains about the damage Ares causes. His detriments are contrasted with the benefits derived from Dionysus, Thebes' native god. The women also speak out against Strife, a goddess linked to Ares, but pivotal too in the division in the house. They review the story of Oedipus' slaying of the Sphinx and his cursing of Polynikes and Eteocles; at 813-14 the chorus begins singing of the foundation of the walls of Thebes. The chorus seems to be hinting that the city needs a second founder, a second start.

Teiresias enters at 834, led by his young daughter. The old prophet dislikes Laius' family and startlingly claims that he would never have revealed what he knows to Eteocles because of his haughtiness. He does, though, reveal to Creon that his son, Menoeceus, must be sacrificed to save the city, since, by this act, compensation for the death of the snake of Ares will be paid to the god and his favour will be won. The city may thus secure a fate separate from the that of the doomed house of Oedipus.

Creon tries to convince Menoeceus to escape into exile but Menoeceus has the same concerns over his survival in a foreign land which Polynikes had mentioned earlier; the want of a place to go and lack of money. Ultimately Menoeceus chooses to lie to his father and to sacrifice himself for his country (960-1018). Of all the males in the play only he has the moral strength to act properly.

The next choral ode, 1018-1066, reviews again the story of the Sphinx, Oedipus' victory over her, his marriage to Jocasta, and the strife of their sons. This story brings out the danger to state and family which familial division causes and brings into sharp focus the heroic act of Menoeceus. The audience knows at this point that the city will be saved, though the exact details of the victory are left until later in the play.

Jocasta then enters and learns of the fate of the attack against Thebes and her sons' decision to fight one another (1067-1263). She is glad that they are alive but, when she presses the messenger for more details, she discovers that they are solving their strife by one on one combat. The sons here, unlike in Aeschylus, actively seek to destroy each other. The curse thus acts less mysteriously but more terribly in Euripides' play. 1270ff marks the return of Antigone. She is summoned by Jocasta to help her bring peace to the family. This

is Jocasta's last appearance and she transmits her tragic role of reconciler to Antigone, who is to become the last support of Oedipus and champion of funeral rites for Polynikes.

Just after1284-1309, wherein the chorus predicts the mutual death of the brothers, Creon enters with the body of his dead son and learns of Jocasta's last ditch effort to unite her sons. With 1335-55 a messenger arrives to tell Creon of the outcome. He informs him that the sons of Oedipus are dead and Jocasta as well 1356-1479. Arriving too late to stop the combat, she was able to embrace both sons while they yet lived and received silent tears from Eteocles (he is not allowed by Euripides to redeem himself by words), while Polynikes was alive enough to speak. He focuses primarily on his love of his family but also seeks burial in his homeland. Eteocles had denied him this and it seems that although Creon could allow the act, he chooses to support Eteocles' last wishes.

The messenger also reveals how Menoeceus' sacrifice saved the city. Both sides claimed victory in the initial melee and the stalemate was to be resolved by a duel between the two. The Argives stood unarmed watching the battle while the Thebans kept their weapons close. The Thebans therefore had the advantage when the duel ended inconclusively and battle erupted. In the sudden attack they carried the day. While this may not be as dramatic as the direct appearance of a god in battle, by allowing the working out of divine affairs in a human way, Euripides adds a touch of mystery to the story.

At 1480-4 the chorus indicates that the corpses are now on stage and Antigone begins a lament for all the lost members of the house; Oedipus arrives on stage by 1530.[112]

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[112] Kitto fastens on this as one of the passages that show that the play looked forward at its ending primarily to the banishment of Oedipus and that the burial by Antigone may have been hinted at but could not have had as important a place (1939, 106). He believes that an interloper brought in enough lines on

Euripides had reserved a place for his appearance by following a version which yet had Oedipus alive during the battle. Without the sons' strict guard he may exit from the palace depths; furthermore by summoning him, Antigone acts like Jocasta as a uniting force in this macabre family reunion.[113]

At 1555 Antigone relates to Oedipus that the house fell due to his curse and at 1567-1581 that Jocasta's doom was linked to their own. In 1581-2 the chorus sets up the next series of tragic events with their hope that things go better for Oedipus (*εἴη δ' εὐτυχέστερος βίος*). With that, Creon arrives and announces at 1583 that Antigone is to marry Haemon, and at 1594, that Oedipus is to be exiled. Oedipus reacts strongly against this and asks instead for death. At 1625-83 Creon tells Antigone that she will not be allowed to bury her brother. She shows great resolve and an unyieldingness to marrying Haemon that even includes a threat to murder him on their wedding night.

In the end Antigone claims that she will do more than she can possibly accomplish and the question arises whether she leaves the play with Oedipus or whether he shuffles off alone. It would be strange dramatically for the sightless Oedipus to wander instinctively off in the right direction but it would be tragically satisfying for the final fragmentation of the family to have Oedipus go to his doom at Colonus and Antigone stay behind to bury her brother and suffer her Sophoclean fate, a tradition sufficiently strong to be presupposed if she stays. Her remaining would also emphasize the futility she and Jocasta experienced earlier

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this matter to bring the play in line with Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* and removed only lines which ran directly counter to this adaptation.

113 Meredith perceptively notes that the dominant interest in her characterization is an evolution from the school-girl of the teichoscopia, to the heroine of the family"(98).

in trying to nurture and reconcile their family. It may be possible that we are to have Antigone wander off with Oedipus on the presumption that she will find time after escorting him to Athens to return for the burial of the body.

At 1763 Oedipus resigns himself to the will of the gods and the chorus concludes the play with an invocation to Victory, praying that the goddess accompany the chorus always. This sentiment arises as much from the elation at the victory of a city through whose founder they are related as witnessing the fall of a troubled family. The reaction of the chorus may run parallel to the audience's. Firstly, the fall of the house of Oedipus ranks in myth in its terrible and total destruction with the fall of the house of Agamemnon, and the failure of both families is underscored by horror; secondly, the victory of a city, which is attained by sacrifice, has specific relevance to the Athenian tradition of the sacrifice by Erechtheus of his children to ensure victory, and general application for every citizen during war, since their livelihood and citizenship are debts to the land which they may well be called upon to pay.

Themes

There are three themes which are especially active in the *Phoenissae*: 1) strife and reconciliation, 2) the destruction of the house of Laius,[114] and 3) homeland and exile. The pair, strife and reconciliation, have been grouped together as one theme since they work in tandem to provide the tension and direct the tragic action of the play. Jocasta and Antigone work in vain to bring the family together against the unstoppable progression of the curse

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[114] This theme was present to a less degree in the other plays discussed earlier but in the *Phoenissae* receives expansion.

which promotes the disunion and destruction of the entire family. The destruction of the house of Laius is at the heart of the narrative of the play. The house is fated to fall because Laius ignored the warning of the gods, because Eteocles and Polynikes abuse Oedipus, and lastly because Oedipus curses his own sons. Since the royal family is in control of Thebes, the fate of the city is also involved in their doom, and if it is to survive, it must find its own salvation. In this play the city's victory is bought by Menoeceus' sacrifice. The love of one's homeland and the calamity of exile has its relevance to several characters. Polynikes has come from Argos to Thebes out of exile with an army. Menoeceus turns away from exile at the cost of the city's safety to self-sacrifice on its behalf. Lastly Oedipus must leave Thebes, a city on which his fortunes and failure hinged. It cannot be said to have raised or nurtured him, nor to have been fully a source of joy and success. He was in fact to be doomed by the gods to wander the land as a living example of the gods' powers, had his sons not interfered and imprisoned him.

Strife and reconciliation is a major theme and which is heightened by the display of the damage which strife can do within a family and ultimately the state. Family disunity is a mark of the myths concerning Laius and his family. Oedipus had been exposed by his father, Oedipus slew his father, Polynikes and Eteocles locked Oedipus away, and he cursed them for their abuse. Family relationships are muddled and meaningless.

The play starts in the midst of things. The strife between the brothers is already present and is threatening to work itself out through battle. Jocasta, the foremost force interested in bringing the two together to allay the strife, at 85 asks Zeus himself to grant a

reconciliation (*σύμβασιν*) for the sons.[115] The damage which the strife has brought to the family is best seen in Jocasta's interview with Polynikes. She laments at 341-9 that in his marriage with his foreign bride there was no part for her or Ismene in the ceremony. Strife between the brothers has upset normal family relationships.

Polynikes is presented very realistically as a caring son. Though he cannot back away from his course of action, he seems much more able than Eteocles to feel the import and the pain at the realization of what his choice means. At 374 he recoils in horror from the mournful appearance of his mother and says how terrible strife between kin is and how unlikely reconciliation.. At 435-6 he shows that he recognizes Jocasta's role by stating that it is up to her to reconcile them and before the commencement of the interview of the brothers, Jocasta again asks a god to be a judge and mediator of the troubles (468). Jocasta's role is consistent throughout the interview. She tries to counter the ambition of Eteocles and the threat of the attack of Polynikes. The brothers' steadfast adherence to their own flawed view of the situation underlines the futility and tragedy of Jocasta's efforts.

With 547-8 she asks for an equal sharing of the power and at 587 the chorus states that they too want from the gods a reconciliation (*ξύμβασιν*). The gods are seen as the only powers which can intervene to save the affair. Note also here that Polynikes' pitiable situation is made worse by Eteocles who denies him any further contact with his family.

At 657-664 we learn that there is a longstanding debt in Thebes to the serpent of Ares which Cadmus killed when he was establishing the city. There must be a reconciliation

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115 This union ironically is brought about in their combat.

between Ares and the Thebans for their city to survive. In Menoeceus' sacrifice we see how beneficial an act of reconciliation can be for the safety of the city and how impoverished the motives are which have led the brothers to put the city at risk in their wars. There is also, I think, an assumption that the two points of crisis are separate, though they coincide. The debt would have to be paid sooner or later and, though paid now, grants safety to the city but in no wise releases the sons of Oedipus from their curse.

At 776-8, with the passing of Eteocles from the stage, the curse acts upon another figure. Creon inherits Eteocles' role when he accepts Eteocles' command not to bury Polynikes. This strange request, born from the influence of the curse on Eteocles or from some unnatural hatred, comes in the same breath that betrothes Antigone to Haemon, Creon's son. The breaking of the ties between his family and Oedipus' at the death of Jocasta is to be somehow fixed by this betrothal. Creon, however, is too close to the house of Laius to escape unscathed when it falls.

At 865-877 Teiresias adds fuel to the fire by suggesting to Creon that the city would be much better off by the exiling of all the members of Oedipus' family. This is reworked by Creon and becomes a command which he places on Oedipus when the old blind king issues from his den. Teiresias introduces another instance of separation, for he informs the audience about earlier problems between the seer and Oedipus' family. Teiresias says that he is willing to advise Creon on how to save the city and also adds that he would not have provided this service to the sons of Oedipus. He thinks that they have treated the gods poorly by not allowing Oedipus to wander free as a lesson to other men and he is angry enough at them to exclaim that Thebes would be better off if the whole family were expelled.

With 1271-1281 we return to Jocasta who enrols Antigone in making a last ditch effort to reconcile the brothers. There are interesting parallels and reversals in this scene. We saw Eteocles pass on the divisive role to Creon and now we have Jocasta passing on the role of mitigator to Antigone. The reversal in age-groups is marked. Eteocles, a young man, passes his role to an old man, Creon. Jocasta, an old woman, passes her role to Antigone, a young girl. The language in Jocasta's and Antigone's conversation marks the passing on of the role at 1277: AN. What am I to do? (*δράσω δὲ δὴ τί;*), IO. You will undo the strife of your brothers (*συγγόνων λύσεις ἔριν.*).

At 1444-1450 the curse has finished Eteocles and Polynikes. It lifts enough from Polynikes that he, in his dying moment, speaks of his brother not as an enemy but a beloved family member. He is like Jocasta and also passes along to Antigone family responsibility by asking her to procure his burial. By killing herself after her sons' deaths, Jocasta is again unable or denied the ability to take part in familial duties.

Strife however is not done with the family, nor is the destruction of the family complete. At 1482-4 the corpses are finally joined in death and have their common lament from Antigone at 1493-4. A very strange family reunion occurs at 1539 when Oedipus comes on stage and questions Antigone as to who has died and why. The strife has at this point united all on the stage and facilitates the agon between Antigone and Creon and the final dispersal of the characters. Antigone claims she will go with Oedipus into exile, a supportive familial role inherited from Jocasta, while an Eteoclean Creon maintains that Oedipus is to be exiled and that Polynikes must not be buried.

Much of the above thematically overlaps with the curse and the fall of the house of

Oedipus but the curse and the fall is a theme more sensitive to the predicament of the whole family of Oedipus and thus the choral odes, which detail more distant aspects of the family's history, add as much to its expression and presentation as the general action on stage.

At line 20 Jocasta recounts Phoebus' warning that the house would walk through blood if Laius has a child. We are then told that he does have a child and thus the audience is guided to expect the play to display the terrible destruction of the house. She tells how Laius tried to avoid the curse by exposing the child on the slopes of Cithairon. This ploy commonly fails in folklore, and attempt to avoid fate, as usual, only brings it to fruition. At 67 this point is reiterated; Polynikes and Eteokles avoided the desire of the gods, who wished Oedipus to be exiled, and hid him away. After his abuse under their care he cursed them. They try to avoid his curse by alternate exile and this lead to their present strife.

At 340 the curse from Laius' grave is said to be influencing the events and at 379 Jocasta claims that the gods are ruining the house of Oedipus. At 380 Jocasta states that Polynikes was wed under a curse, deriding the marriage because, through it, Polynikes gained allies which he wrongly uses against his homeland and because the wedding was removed from its proper locale and function at Thebes amongst family. 475-6 mentions again the children's attempt to escape the curse. At 499 Euripides illustrates the effect of the curse on Oedipus' children by their blind adherence to questionable motives. They are well able to state their grounds but entirely unable to modify them and have fruitful discourse. At 754 the extreme effect of the curse can be seen as the brothers pray to meet each other in battle, in contrast to Aeschylus' *Septem* where the two are brought together unexpectedly.

At 811 the Sphinx is called a new curse but as the pivotal victory/disaster point of

Oedipus' story she may also be seen as a component of the accomplishment of Laius' doom. Teiresias at 870 gives, I think, the proper response to the bad blood of the house of Oedipus. If they are doomed, it seems best for the city to be done with them once and for all.

At 972ff the play focuses on the sacrifice of Menoeceus. Had he been more like his father or his aunt's family, he too would have tried to escape his duty and bring ruin on his city. In fact this was Creon's solution. His virtuous act throws into relief the selfishness of the other male characters. Although Menoeceus is given the opportunity to escape and doom the city, he embraces the chance to repay his homeland. The youngest members of both Laius' and Creon's family are relatively free of the curse.

Soon after his sacrifice the chorus predicts the death of the brothers in single combat and blames the encounter on the Erinyes (1303-6), and at 1356-7 Jocasta is drawn into the destruction. At 1370, through a messenger's speech, we are confronted by the horror of the deed, and at 1426-7 the chorus' response is again that the curse is working itself out. At 1495 strife and murder are the theme of Antigone's lament over her brothers and at 1555 Antigone answers Oedipus' question as to how his sons and mother died with "your avenging daimon" (*σὸς ἀλάστωρ*). The remainder of the fall of the house is left incomplete.

The next theme encompasses both the love and importance of one's homeland and the effects of voluntary or forced exile. At line 5 we have a reference to Cadmus and his place in the story of Thebes. He was for all intents and purposes exiled from Phoenicia, though it was couched in terms of a demand not to return unless with his sister. His journeys lead him to establish a new city, Thebes, after the slaying of a serpent. The chorus itself has been uprooted from their city and are to be sent to Delphi when it is safe. The removal of

Oedipus from Thebes at his birth is not quite an exiling, at least of the type we have at the end, so much as a failed attempt at murder. Nothing is straightforward with Oedipus, including his eventual exile. Oedipus really has no homeland to call his own. The closest land to which he owes his nurturing would be his adoptive parents' home at Phocis, which he had left permanently to govern Thebes. His burial site in Colonus, in the grove of the Furies, is the nearest he comes to finding a home. Yet, these facts aside, Oedipus laments leaving Thebes to the same degree as Polynikes had.

Exile in Polynikes' and Eteocles' story is straight forward. Each were to take their turn at exile. At line 72 we learn that Polynikes had chosen to go into exile first, and in his wanderings came finally to Argos, where he met Adrastos and wed his daughter. Eteocles, by refusing to go into exile and deciding to retain power, keeps Polynikes in exile and thus brings the confrontation, which the struck deal was to prevent, closer.

The possibility of the fall of Thebes also brings out concerns about being forced to leave Thebes. At 185 Antigone worries about being taken captive and shudders to think that the Theban maids will be taken away by Capaneus as slaves to the Argive women. At 201 we learn that the Phoenician maids themselves were captured in war and being sent as an offering to Delphi. Their removal from their homeland and their position as having suffered through war make them excellent witnesses to the destruction at Thebes.[116]

At 358-9 Polynikes' love for his fatherland is voiced among those concerns which beset an exile. At 368 his realistic reaction to being home is shown by his memory of all the

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116 Sending women as a thank-offering to Delphi is part of the Theban myth as well. Tiresias' daughter is sent there at the fall of Thebes by the Epigoni (*Schol.* Ap. Rhod. 1308b).

places in the Theban environs that mattered to him when he grew up there.[117] His sensitivity to his homeland, to his family, and to his debt to the city, work harder on his psyche than on Eteocles', though he still will not relent on his attack. Jocasta is quite deadly in her rebuke that Polynikes is wrongfully attacking his homeland and must consider whether he is willing to dedicate Theban spoils in Theban temples as a mark of his victory.

In the exchange between Eteocles and Polynikes, Eteocles' insults have everything to do with the fact that Polynikes attacks his own home while Eteocles, despite his ambition, is free from that guilt, and at 614-28 Polynikes defines his being turned away as a fresh banishment and that he departs like a bondman into exile.

At 638 the chorus sings again of Cadmus and his foundation of Thebes. This sets the stage for the appearance of Tiresias and further talk of exiles. Tiresias explains vehemently that it would be best for Thebes for the line of Oedipus to be excluded from the city because of their inability to rule. Immediately following Tiresias' interview Creon is earnest in bidding his own son to leave the city. The earlier talk of city and homeland, love at home, suffering abroad, add to the importance of the decision which Menoeceus must make. He chooses death. The last member of the dragon-born who can claim debt to the earth sacrifices himself and at 991 exclaims that he will not shirk his duty to Thebes. At 1590 we have the exile of Oedipus upon emergence from the palace. He should have, according to Tiresias, been sent out as a message to the world from the start, perhaps to have Tiresian-like wanderings, nevertheless divine will has human ramifications and one cannot feel that Creon

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117 These include the *γυμνάσια*, another element used to blend the heroic-age with normal Athenian experience.

comes off very well in forcing the issue, despite Oedipus' willingness to suffer the god's will, and despite the oracle which would have him sent to Colonus.

Antigone is put into a terrible position. Had it not been for Polynikes, who is to be kept from finding rest even in death, she probably would have left with Oedipus, and the theme of exile would have a neat conclusion with the last members of Laius' family wandering off into exile. Instead there is the strained dialogue which puts her at double purposes. She promises to both stay for the burial and to leave with her father. Whatever she decides, it is certain that Oedipus, at least, leaves.

Shared Traits of the Argive Leaders

My method for this portion will be to present in an abbreviated form (Tables 1-3), the character traits associated with the Argive leaders as they are presented in the teichoscopia, the shield-scene, and Eteocles' rallying of the Theban troops. At its heart this play does not treat the Argives and their captains in a new way. Fine details, such as their shield design or how each dies may vary but the leaders are conceived and portrayed in a negative fashion quite similar to their Aeschylean counter-parts. Before considering the shared traits it should be noted that the characterization of the army and the leaders as a whole add to the overall effect. Thus as soon as Antigone sees the host of attackers she is most struck by the glare. We had in Aeschylus an emphasis on flash, light, and noise. There is no difference here in the fearful equipment of the enemy, and the frightened reaction of Antigone parallels the reaction of Aeschylus' chorus. Note especially the sensual . . . *κατάχαλκον ἅπαν / πεδίον*

ἀστράπτει (110-11). While the κ,χ,κ, imitates the noise of clashing bronze it is left to the servant to comment on the effect of the noise. He states at 112-113 that Polynikes has not come weakly (οὐ . . .φαύλως) but noisily (βρέμων)

The categories used in the following tables deserve some preliminary remarks. The terms have been chosen from the traits associated with the Argive leaders from Aeschylus; only the idea of 'noisiness' *i.e.* clashing, and shouts, as a heading has been found absent in Euripides' description of the individual heroes. Where a phrase can be applied to more than one category I have placed it in both. Under the heading of threat/boast I have placed verbal and visual threats. I am distinguishing between beasts and monsters as a category. For beasts I include fierce creatures from nature while for monsters I have in mind the fabulous creatures of myths. Finally if a word is used which indirectly makes relationship between an Argive and a categorized trait, it has been included in the chart and is further qualified in each section's discussion.

Table 1: Teichoscopia

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	flash/fire	threat/boast	beast	monster	foreign	force of nature
Hippomedon	129 blazing-gaze or starry shield (ἀστερωπὸς <ὡς> ἐν γραφαῖσιν)	129 star-field on shield =night and thus a threat of death (ἀστερωπὸς <ὡς> ἐν γραφαῖσιν)		128 giant (γίγαντι γηγενέτᾳ προσάμοιος) 129-30 not like a mortal (οὐχὶ πρόσ / φορος ἀμερίῳ γέννᾳ)		

Tydeus					132 strangely armed (ἄλλος ἄλλος ὅδε τευχέων τρόπος) 138 barbaric arms (ὅπλοισι, μειξοβάρβαρος)	
Parthenopaeus				146 fierce look (ὄμμασι γοργὸς)		
Capaneus		179 insults city (τὰ δεινὰ τῇδ' ἐφυβρίζει πόλει) 184 overbearing boasting (μεγαλαγορίαν ὑπεράνορα)				

Our first look at the enemy captains occurs in a teichoscopia featuring Antigone and an old servant who survey the Argive troops as they approach the city. A truce has been arranged, with a result that this is not as threatening an advance as if they were directly launching their attack as in Aeschylus' *Septem*. The typical traits at this time are spread out across the Argive leaders and are not dense. Each leader is given a fairly distinct treatment, and the two warriors that resemble each other the most, Hippomedon and Capaneus, appear at either end of the catalogue. Adrastus receives too little notice to have a place in this catalogue. Both Amphiaraus and Polynikes receive a positive treatment that sets them apart from their fellow commanders.

The most contentious line as it pertains to this analysis is 129 which is given in Mastronarde's text as *ἀστερωπὸς <ὡς> ἐν γραφαῖσιν* and can be interpreted either as

referring to Hippomedon's fiery gaze or as indicating that there is a star-field on his shield. For either interpretation the phrase stands in the flash/fire category, but if one accepts it as referring to the shield, a reference to stars might also imply the night-sky and a threat of death descending on the city. As a last note, Parthenopaeus is described at 146 as having a terrifying look (*ὄμμασι γοργὸς*). *γοργὸς* might evoke the monster the Gorgon, especially with the mention of his look (*ὄμμασι*). I have entered this data under the 'monster' category. If the Gorgon is meant to be connected to Parthenopaeus it also offers a neat explanation of his name beyond his youthful beauty. His name can mean 'maiden-faced' and is now connected to another specific maiden, the Gorgon, who also has a very striking face.

Table 2: Shield-Scene[118]

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	noise	flash/fire	threat/boast	beast	monster	foreign	force of nature
Parthenopaeus			1108-9 Atalanta slays boar (ἐκηβόλοις τόξοισιν Ἀταλάντην κάπρον / χειρουμένην Αἰτωλόν)				
Hippomedon					1115 Argus (Πανόπτην)		
Tydeus		1121 torch (λαμπάδα)	1121-2 Prometheus with torch (δεξιᾷ δὲ λαμπάδα / Τιτὰν Προμηθεὺς ἔφερεν ὡς πρήσων πόλιν)	1120 lionskin (λέοντος δέρος ἔξων ἐπ' ασπίδος)			

118 For a discussion on whether 1104-40 is an interpolation see Mastronarde 1994, 456-8, who counters the view.

Polynikes			1124-5 horses (Ποτνιάδες .../... πῶλοι)	1124-5 horses (Ποτνιάδες .../... πῶλοι)			
Capaneus			1131-2 taking the city (πόλιν / φέρων)		1131 giant (γίγας ... γηγενὴς)		
Adrastos			1138 Hydra eating Thebans (δράκοντες ἔφερον τέκνα Καδμείων γνάθοις)		1135 Hydra (δράκοντες)		

This short shield-catalogue starts off with Parthenopaeus' shield that has on it Atalanta, his mother, wounding the Calydonian boar. I have entered it under the category of threat since he is declaring his familial prowess and thus linking his own ability to kill with that of his mother. Hippomedon has Argus on his shield named not directly but as Panoptes. The shield positively portrays Hippomedon as a warrior always watching or on guard by linking him to this monster.[119] With Tydeus we start getting some details familiar from Aeschylus' presentation of the *Septem*. Here Tydeus is described as Prometheus with his torch in hand as though to burn the town. This is a clever reuse of Capaneus' shield from Aeschylus as well as his boast (432-5). There are problems with the interpretation of whether the lion-skin is part of the shield on which the image of Prometheus is depicted or whether Tydeus bears a lion-skin for a shield and is directly called Prometheus. For the purpose of this discussion, since in either case the same categories would apply, that is 'threat/boast' and 'beast', the textual problem need not interfere with this analysis.[120]

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[119] For the tentative identification of this relationship, see Mastronarde 1994, 460.

[120] For a discussion of Tydeus appearance, see Mastronarde 1994, 465-6.

Polynikes' shield has the image of Potnian steeds, and if Mastronarde's interpretation is correct that 'Potnian' identifies the team as the 'flesh-eating horses of Glaucus of Patniae' (1994, 466) then the image is quite threatening, ties Polynikes somewhat to beasts, and perhaps even evokes the deadly and uncontrollable effect of the curse. Capaneus' shield, a giant bearing off the city after it has been levered from the ground, links him to Hippomedon, who was compared by Antigone to an earth-born giant.

Adrastos' shield is the most interesting. His shield emblem is a Hydra (again serpents) bearing off the children of Cadmus (1137-8). Its is a highly referential shield and bears some investigation since Statius' Capaneus inherits his shield. This Hydra-shield[121] has a beast whose "snakes were bearing away from mid-wall the children of Cadmus in their jaws." (*ἐκ δὲ τειχέων μέσων/ δράκοντες ἔφερον τέκνα Καδμείων γνάθοις* 1137-1138). Adrastos' hundred-headed Hydra is grotesquely threatening;[122] it is particularly apt for an Argive attacker, and relates specifically to Menoeceus' self-sacrifice.

Snakes are elsewhere associated with the seizure of cities. Pindar reports that in the capture of Thebes by the Epigoni, Alcmaeon, who was first to enter Thebes had on his shield a serpent (*Ol.* 8.45-7). Likewise when Aeneas sees Pyrrhus before the doors to Priam's chambers he compares that hero to a serpent (*Aen.* 2.469-475). More to the point, Adrastos' shield reworks a simile from Aeschylus' *Septem* where the Theban women, anxious for the

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[121] For the identification of the 100 snakes as the Hydra and not just a heap of serpents, see Mastronarde 1994, 469.

[122] In Aesch. *Septem* 491-494 Hippomedon's shield has Typhon belching fire and at 539-43, Parthenopaeus' shield depicts the Sphinx bearing a Cadmeian under her.

city are

> . . . δράκοντας ὥς τις τέκνων
> ὑπερδέδοικεν λεχαίων δυσευνήτορας
> πάντρομος πελειάς.
>
> just as some all-tremulous dove
> for her nested young is terribly
> frightened of the awful bed-mates, snakes. (*Septem* 292-4)

Aeschylus' simile itself has an antecedent in Homer. At *Il.* 2.308- 316 Agamemnon relates that the Achaians saw a serpent eating eight chicks and a mother bird at the outset of the campaign, which was interpreted by Calchas in the following manner,

> ὡς οὗτος κατὰ τέκνα φάγε στρουθοῖο καὶ αὐτήν,
> ὀκτώ, ἀτὰρ μήτηρ ἐνάτη ἦν, ἣ τέκε τέκνα,
> ὣς ἡμεῖς τοσσαῦτ' ἔτεα πτολεμίξομεν αὖθι,
> τῷ δεκάτῳ δὲ πόλιν αἱρήσομεν εὐρυάγυιαν.
>
> just as this snake devoured the sparrow's eight chicks
> and her, the mother who bore them, was the ninth,
> so we will wage war for so many years there,
> and on the tenth we will take the broad-streeted city. (*Il.* 2.326-9)

In both the simile and the omen snakes are the aggressors and threaten or portend doom. Euripides heightens the monstrosity of the attack on Thebes and level of violence inherent in its destruction by the multiplication of the snakes and the collective form of the monstrous Hydra. Further, by attaching snakes to Adrastos he follows Aeschylus, who attached serpentine qualities to a number of the Argive attackers.[123]

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[123] Tydeus cries out like a snake at 381 while Hippomedon's shield has snaky Typhon (see Hesiod's description *Theog.* 824-5) and shield fastenings in the shape of serpents (493-5).

Goff (1988 150-151) counters Foley's (127) comment that the Hydra is rather meaninglessness to Thebes by an exploring of the relevance of snakes and the Theban hero Herakles to Theban history. Goff both presents Creon's son, Menoeceus, as a hero who takes the place of Herakles as a beast-conquering savior-hero of Thebes and also provides an excellent account of how Adrastus' shield evokes Parthenopaeus' shield from Aeschylus through another depiction of a beast which bears off Thebans (1988 150-1).

Mastronarde provides two other points relevant to the adoption of the Hydra as an Argive crest 1) the region of Argos was renowned for its abundance of snakes, and 2) Argos would have been pleased to advertise its status by a famous monster inhabitant. He notes that other monsters like the Minotaur and Scylla are found their on coins (1994: 469).

At a stretch, the Hydra may suggest the many pronged, simultaneous attacks on the gates of Thebes by the Argive chieftains, and, through its regenerative powers, the later successful capture of the city by the offspring of the attackers. The image too has general connections to the circumstances under which Herakles' performed his labours. Eurystheus, an Argive ruler, confronted Herakles with the task of slaying the Hydra. Now Adrastos, another king of Argos, threatens Thebes with the same beast. The shield demands of an opposing warrior that he be another Herakles to defeat this new threat. As stated above, Menoeceus takes up the challenge and Adrastos' shield-image is made to foreshadow the defeat of the Argives.

Table 3: Rallying of the Troops

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	flash/fire	threat/boast	beast	monster	foreign	force of nature
Parthenopaeus	1154-4 calls for fire (βοᾷ / πῦρ)	1154-5 calls for fire and levers to destroy the city (βοᾷ / πῦρ καὶ δικέλλας, ὡς κατασκάψων πόλιν)		1154 a whirlwind (τυφὼς)	1153 no Argive he (οὐκ Ἀργεῖος)	1151 a whirlwind (τυφὼς)
Capaneus		1175-6 boast that Zeus won't stop him from taking the city (μηδ' ἂν τὸ σεμνὸν πῦρ νιν εἰργαθεῖν Διὸς / τὸ μὴ οὐ κατ' ἄκρων περγάμων ἑλεῖν πόλιν)				

The death of each warrior is not given in extensive detail. In fact not all the warriors are not even discussed. This catalogue is not to be a hero by hero detailing but rather a quick survey of the Messenger's limited exposure to the action of the battle as he follows Eteocles about. At 1153, the detailing of the death of the chieftains begins with Atalanta's vicious son. By calling for fire to burn the city and levers to raise its walls, he acts out both the threat of Capaneus' shield (a giant bearing the city off) and Euripides' comparison of Tydeus to Prometheus. Interestingly enough, he is crushed under a portion of the town (a battlement outcropping). There is irony in having him unable to bear, like the giant on Capaneus' shield, the weight of the city. We also get a hint of what will be a major Roman preoccupation, the death of a beautiful youth. Parthenopaeus comes very close to epitomizing or localizing all the traits of the attackers and has the broadest range of traits. I suggest that *τυφὼς*, which describes his attack as whirlwind, is meant also to evoke the giant Typhoeus. Indeed the very close *Τύφως* is a contracted form of the giant's name. Euripides does not provide a

sympathetic or sad image of lost youth; he maliciously destroys Parthenopaeus' beauty whose head is splattered and his cheeks are darkened with blood (1159-60).

1165-71, Tydeus' portion, which is capped with a rallying of the troops by Eteocles and apparent dismissal of any threat from Tydeus, does not detail his death; and the high point in the description is a simile comparing Eteocles to a hunter cheering his hounds.

The last warrior's death to be detailed is that of Capaneus (1172-1186). He receives more attention in comparison with the other chiefs, and his death by lightning provides the signal to Adrastos, as it does in the *Suppliants*, to withdraw from battle. The usual elements are present. He climbs a ladder (1173), makes the Aeschylean threat that the fire of Zeus will not stop him (1175) and is struck down (1181). His portion is capped with a simile, to be discussed in detail in the next section, comparing him to Ixion. The two deaths included, Capaneus' and Parthenopaeus', would provide the audience with a satisfaction arising from an end fitting to their evil characters. Further, the audience has been prepared for their deaths by Antigone's rather specific reaction to them in the teichoscopia. All the chieftains are detailed there but Parthenopaeus (151 ff.) and Capaneus (184 ff.) receive a more vitriolic condemnation.

Omissions in this catalogue include Hippomedon and Amphiaraus (the two are not mentioned at all) as well as any expansion on the manner of Tydeus' death. Traditionally Amphiaraus was swallowed by the earth when pursued by the Theban forces. His death could occur either in the first or second part of the battle. Likewise the defeat of the other chieftains may be assigned to either point. Euripides may have held off from describing the demise of all the heroes to keep the focus on Eteocles and Polynikes. Certainly the horror

of the brothers' combat would be undermined by the more horrific details of Tydeus gnawing on the skull of a Theban, and perhaps Amphiaraus' death might also be too distracting. The omission of Hippomedon, though, is hard to explain.

To conclude, though not as pronounced as in Aeschylus, there is a certain degree of similar handling of the characters. One may still talk of a set of shared traits operating in this play which intensifies the impiety of the whole enterprise and of its individual members. The image of a figure with a torch or other item to destroy the city is common to Capaneus, Tydeus, and Parthenopaeus. Threats and boasts are used by all the Argive chieftains (Amphiaraus excepted). A foreign or alien nature is attributed to Tydeus and Parthenopaeus and an association with monsters is also frequent; occurring with Hippomedon, Parthenopaeus, Capaneus, and Adrastos. The Argives escape in Euripides from excessive comparisons to beasts and natural forces.

Individual Treatment of Capaneus

Capaneus is featured in three longer passages. The first is Antigone's reaction to the various heroes in the teichoscopia (181-192), the second during the messenger's description of the Argive's arms (129-133), and the third during the messenger's detailing of the defeat of the Argives (172-186).

Passage 1 (Antigone)

ἰώ,
Νέμεσι καὶ Διὸς βαρύβρομοι βρονταὶ
κεραυνιόν τε φῶς αἰθαλόεν, σύ τοι
μεγαληγορίαν ὑπεράνορα κοιμίζεις·
ὅδ' ἐστιν, αἰχμαλωτίδας

182 bis

185

ὃς δορὶ Θηβαίας Μυκηνῆίσιν
< >
Λερναίᾳ τε δώσειν τριαίνᾳ,
Ποσειδανίοις Ἀμυμωνίοις
ὕδασι δουλείαν περιβαλών.
μήποτε μήποτε τάνδ', ὦ πότνια,
χρυσεοβόστρυχον ὦ Διὸς ἔρνος.
Ἄρτεμι, δουλοσύναν τλαίην.

O!,
Nemesis and loud-roaring thunders of Zeus,
and smoky light of the bolts, you
put to rest the over-vigorous boasts .
It is this man, who (says) he will give Theban
spear-won maidens to Mycenaean women,
to Lernean trident, to the Amumonian waters of
Poseidon, encircling them in slavery.
Never, never, O Artemis, queen,
golden haired offspring of Zeus
may I endure that slavery.

Passage 2 (Messenger)
Καπανεὺς προσῆγε λόχον ἐπ'' Ηλέκτραις πύλαις·
σιδηρονώτοις δ' ἀσπίδος τύποις ἐπὴν
γίγας ἐπ' ὤμοις γηγενὴς ὅλην πόλιν
φέρων μοχλοῖσιν ἐξανασπάσας βάθρων,
ὑπόνοιαν ἡμῖν οἷα πείσεται πόλις.

Capaneus led his company against the Electran gates.
There was on the steely impress of his shield
an earth born giant bearing on his shoulders the whole
city entirely torn away from its base by a crow-bar,
a suggestion to us of what the city will suffer.

Passage 3 (Messenger)
Καπανεὺς δὲ πῶς εἴποιμ' ἄν ὡς ἐμαίνετο;
μακραύχενος γὰρ κλίμακος προσαμβάσεις
ἔχων ἐχώρει, καί τοσόνδ' ἐκόμπασεν,
μηδ' ἂν τὸ σεμνὸν πῦρ νιν εἰργαθεῖν Διὸς
τὸ μὴ οὐ κατ' ἄκρων περγάμων ἑλεῖν πόλιν.
καὶ ταῦθ' ἅμ' ἡγόρευε καὶ πετρούμενος
ἀνεῖρφ' ὑπ' αὐτὴν ἀσπίδ' εἱλίξας δέμας,

κλίμακος ἀμείβων ξέστ' ἐνηλάτων βάθρα.
ἤδη δ' ὑπερβαίνοντα γεῖσα τειχέων
βάλλει κεραυνῷ Ζεύς νιν· ἐκτύπησε δὲ
χθών, ὥστε δεῖσαι πάντας· ἐκ δὲ κλιμάκων
ἐσφενδονᾶτο χωρὶς † αλλήλων † μέλη,
{κόμαι μὲν εἰς Ὄλυμπον, αἷμα δ' εἰς χθόνα}
χεῖρες δὲ καὶ κῶλ' ὡς κύκλωμ' Ἰξίονος
εἱλίσσετ'· εἰς γῆν δ' ἔμπυρος πίπτει νεκρός.

But how to tell of Capaneus raging?
For he was advancing with the approaches of the
long scaling ladder and made such boasts,
the holy fire of Zeus would not keep him from
the raising of the city from the citadel height. At the
same time as he was speaking thus, under a hail of stones,
contracting his body under his shield, he crept upwards,
alternating the polished rounds of the rungs of the ladder.
Zeus struck him with the bolt as he surmounted the
cornice of the wall. The earth rang out
and thus all were frightened. His limbs
were sling-shot from the ladder diversely,[124]
{hair to Olympus, blood to the earth,}
hands and arms were whirling like the wheel of
Ixion. The fiery corpse falls to the earth.

Passage I is the response of Antigone to the presence of Capaneus, as she is looking at the Argive leaders from the palace roof. Her initial question directs us to expect an Aeschylean Capaneus. She inquires "where is he who keeps terribly reviling this city, Capaneus?" (*ποῦ δ' ὃς τὰ δεινὰ τῇδ' ἐυβρίζει πόλει, / Καπανεύς;* (179). Capaneus' connection to boasting or threats is well attested in Aeschylus' *Septem* (425, 437-451, 452) and Antigone asks particularly after Capaneus, the only chieftain she mentions by name; she

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[124] Mastronarde proposes the deletion of 1184 as the least obtrusive correction to the text (1994: 476-7). This would have the benefit of leaving some of the graphic details of Capaneus' death in place and preserve the vivid comparison of Capaneus to Ixion.

knows that he has said terrible things.

She is told by the old servant that he is calculating the height of the walls (180-181). Euripides presents Capaneus as about to make his traditional assault on the citadel. Antigone reacts to his threat of assault in a very personal way. She calls on deities, Nemesis and Zeus, (through his aspect as thunder); in this she resembles the chorus of the *Septem* who pray for lightning to strike Capaneus down (*Septem* 452-4). Her next concern is an emotional expansion on the chorus' fear in Aeschylus, that Capaneus will seize them from their chambers (*Septem* 454-6). Antigone is horrified that it will be through such a warrior as Capaneus that Theban maidens will be given to Mycenaean women as slaves. Her rather epic-flavoured address to Artemis (190-3) forms a frame with 182-184 around her central concern, slavery in a foreign land, and reiterates this same fear.

The gods mentioned are very apt.[125] By calling on Nemesis, Antigone points out that Capaneus has transgressed and is worthy of punishment. By calling on the thunder of Zeus Antigone suggests and foreshadows the means by which Capaneus will be punished and lastly by invoking Artemis, she calls on a goddess who, as a maiden, should care about Antigone's and the other Theban girls' welfare.

Passage 2 is spoken by the Scout who reports that Capaneus shield image is of a giant levering a city from its height. The association of Capaneus to a giant may have been suggested by Aeschylus' *γίγας* (*Septem* 424). There is more to the shield however. As Goff notes this is the only shield which the messenger interprets as sign to the city (1988 149).

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[125] Antigone also calls on Artemis at 152.

The base connections are obvious: Capaneus, like the giant, will raze the town, and giants and Capaneus suffer death by Zeus' lightning. As Goff adds, the use of *γηγενὴς* evokes Thebes troubled history with her earth-born men and monsters (1988 149).[126]

There are three other correspondences which Goff overlooks. First, Capaneus' giant is portrayed bearing the city away, matching Antigone's fear of being borne away to Mycenae. Secondly the giant is removing the city from its heights. Capaneus at the Electran gate attacks the city walls at it highest point. Lastly, Euripides may be suggesting a titanic rebellious figure in portraying the giant. The audience is somewhat prepared for this since earlier Euripides reuses Aeschylus' picture on Capaneus' shield for his Tydeus at 1121-2. Instead of a naked fire-bearer, Tydeus has Prometheus threatening to burn the town (*... ὡς πρήσων πόλιν*).[127] The twisted use by Tydeus of a figure, whose gift of fire to mankind was to be a benefit, as a provider of weapons of war fits the barbaric characterization of the attackers. Capaneus' image may be meant to suggest another Titan, Atlas, in a diminished fashion. Both Capaneus and Atlas are rebellious and both carry systems of order on their back, he the city and Atlas the cosmos. Capaneus' shield would also show a neat reversal in evoking Atlas. The Titan is a symbol of the maintenance of stability while Capaneus is its destroyer.

The third passage, which is the longest, details Capaneus' death and includes a brief but poignant simile. This portion also emphasizes Capaneus' traditional traits and reuses or

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126 Also noted by Morin 61-2.

127 Note the similarity to Aeschylus' *ἐκπέρσειν πόλιν* (427) and *πρήσω πόλιν* (434).

expands the traits mentioned in the first two passages. Like the second passage, *Καπανεὺς* emphatically begins the line. The dramatic situation is heightened here by the loss at which the messenger finds himself for words for the actions of the hero. At 1172 *ἐμαίνετο* is used and reinforces the characteristic portrayal of Capaneus as raging mad. At 1173 the language becomes expansive and adds an epic flavour to the climax. The periphrasis also slows down the pace and we see Capaneus ascend the ladder in slow-motion, stage by stage, before the lightning hits. At 1173 the messenger introduces Capaneus' boast with the word "boasted" (*ἐκόμπασεν*). This introduction agrees with Antigone's description of Capaneus in her question at 184 and also recalls Aeschylus' language in the *Septem*, *ὁ κόμπος* (425), and *κομπάζοντα* (436). 1175-6 contain his boast directed at Zeus that the lightning would not stop him from razing the city. This boast picks up on the intent of 428-9 of the *Septem*, in which Capaneus claims that a bolt landing before him would not restrain him. *ἑλεῖν πόλιν* of 1176 picks up the suggestion (*ὑπόνοιαν*) on the shield of the destruction of the city by playing on the meaning of *αἱρέω* as "take away" and "destroy" (LSJ). 1176-1179 detail in precision his progress up the ladder. Euripides exploits the diminished pace to create effect and develop the final image of Capaneus mounting the wall before the terse *βάλλει κεραυνῷ Ζεύς νιν* of 1180 signals the swift strike of Zeus' bolt. A great sound accompanies the blast and it causes fear on both sides. The actual event is described in gross detail and rivals Euripides' description of the crushing of Parthenopaeus at 1157-62. In both descriptions Euripides focuses on the overall destruction of each soldier by a missile (the level of gore is dictated by editorial choices). As in the *Suppliants*, the bolt has a double meaning, it both destroys a braggart and is the omen given by lightning which signals

Adrastos to retreat.

The fiery corpse is compared to Ixion's wheel. On the surface this is a fit comparison since Capaneus is on fire and a picture of Capaneus spun violently from the wall is vividly drawn. The simile is also effective by virtue of the story of Ixion who was bound to a fiery wheel after attempting to rape Hera. There are correspondences between Ixion and Capaneus. First, Ixion and Capaneus threaten women. Ixion attacks Hera and, though Capaneus represents a threat of destruction against the whole city, our view is guided by Antigone who sees him in particular as bringing slavery upon the maidens. Secondly, Capaneus performs an act equal to those outrages committed by the great sinners of Greek myth. Lastly Capaneus' fiery death and Ixion's fiery punishment are a lesson to mortals to remember their place.

Politics

Politics enter this play to a far lesser degree than in Euripides' *Suppliants*. This is partly due to the return to a traditional presentation of the Theban myth and characters, the relatively secure date of 410 B.C. for production, the lack of pointed political discourse, and the general disagreement of authors over the authenticity of several portions of the play, especially the ending, which has overshadowed much of the scholarly debate.

Scholars have generally taken a cautious view of the political relevance of this play but no politician has been linked to Capaneus. Spiro (7) saw allusions to the Athenian victory in the battle of Cyzicus in 410 with line 852 which Pearson (xxxii) dismisses as unlikely along with the attempt to match Polynikes' journey into Thebes with Alcibiades'

trepidation at returning to Athens[128] and a parallel between Polynikes' lament over exile and Alcibiades' speech to the army at Samos concerning exile.[129] Pearson favors Radamacher's view (236), though calls it "no less uncertain" (Pearson xxxii), that 202f and 281f. are allusions to the Carthaginian victory over the Selinuntians in 410.[130]

Rawson (111) supports Romilly (28) in denying a close association between Alcibiades and Polynikes, and rather turning to the general political setting for contemporary Athenian relevance in the play and noting that, in the conflict, "the divided and wretched atmosphere at Athens, and its longing for reconciliation are undoubtedly reflected" (111). She also views Menoeceus as a paradigm for the city to follow, stating "Menoeceus' departing words, with their lesson of unselfish patriotism, must have been meant to leave a deep impression on their audience in the unhappy years of 410 or 409" (111). She too, though, in the conclusion of the article, is forced to take a softer stance on the political relevance of the play and adds that our understanding of Euripides' message is hindered by the question of the authenticity of Menoeceus' scene and the lack of information concerning Euripides' motives in leaving for Macedonia (126).

If Capaneus has any relevance to the politics, it must be general. He perhaps represents the horrors of civil strife and foreign opportunism but also must reinforce the necessity for pious action and both the suddenness and horrific nature of the downfall of

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[128] Xen. *Hell.* 1.4, 18, Plut. *Vit. Alc.* 32.

[129] Thuc. VIII. 81.

[130] Diod. Sic. XIII.44.

those who go to far.

Capaneus' Relation to Plot and Theme

Capaneus has less importance in the *Phoenissae* than in the *Suppliants*. There is no eulogy from Adrastus nor suicide of Evadne in his pyre. He is, though, more pivotal in this play than in the *Septem* on two counts. First, the lightning bolt that kills him is also the signal for Adrastos' retreat and secondly, Euripides gives the spectacular details of Capaneus' destruction. His relevance to the themes is minimal and the moderate impact of his appearance overall in the play derives somewhat from his threat to Thebes and his impious boasts, but again mostly from the horrific image of his death. The same lack of primary relevance to the plot and theme may be seen in the hero's relationship to politics. If the political lesson of the play is rooted in the theme of strife and reconciliation, Capaneus is simply part of the representation of the intensity of risk which a city runs during civil strife.

Conclusion

In Euripides' last treatment of the Theban myth he returns to a traditional presentation of the Argive chieftains. They are allowed to act in an Aeschylean mode. This frees Euripides to explore the fall of the house of Oedipus, the role of strife in civil deterioration, and the power of individual sacrifice in saving the state. This is not to say that Euripides contributed nothing new to the tradition. He gave Capaneus a different shield device which in its bare threat and subtle mythologic references summarizes the hero's traditional presentation. The shield captures both the gigantic proportions of the hero first found in

Aeschylus as well as his Titanic threat against the Thebes.

Chapter 4: Statius' *Thebaid*

Introduction

When Statius composed his *Thebaid* he was writing at a time when the epic had, as a genre, regained popular favour (thanks largely to the *Aeneid*). His work is one of four post-Virgilian epics that have survived from the last half of the first century A.D.. The others are Lucan's *Pharsalia*, Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, and Silius Italicus' *Punica*.[131] Statius' epic is lengthy he has the space to develop each character fully. As a result the generic nature is submerged and secondary to the individual portrayal of each hero.[132] Thus the Argive Tydeus becomes the hot-headed warrior, fierce in war, but also extremely dedicated to the cause of his friend, Polynikes. Parthenopaeus is portrayed as the beautiful, youthful soldier, doomed to die tragically in battle. Hippomedon is made a superb warrior whose strength is broken in a fantastical battle with a river. Amphiaraus is fully drawn as a devoted priest who

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131 The relationship among these authors and Statius is hard to determine. Lucan is available to all, but, outside of this work, since Statius published about 91-2 A.D. we can only be sure that he had access to a majority of Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*, a work which was left incomplete in 92-3 A.D.. It is possible that Statius was familiar with the initial portion of Silius Italicus' epic (or with whichever part the author had started) since, although planned as early as 88 A.D., it was still in a state of revision at Silius Italicus' death in 102 A.D.. For a discussion of the relative dates of the epics see Ripoll 3-8.

132 Vessey categorizes each of the heroes as presenting a specific "humour". His list is as follows, Oedipus = bitterness and hatred, Eteocles = tyranny, Polynikes = vengeance and envy, Adrastus = tranquility and wisdom, Tydeus = *ira*, Amphiaraus = priestly piety, Hippomedon = brute force, Parthenopaeus = innocence, Capaneus = blasphemy, and Theseus = mercy and justice (1973: 66). This scheme is too simple to capture Statius' handling of the characters. *Ira*, for instance is at least as important for Capaneus' character as it is for Tydeus'.

is rewarded by Apollo with a noble death and apotheosis. Adrastos is characterized as an elderly king whose heroic youth is past but whose old-age still carries authority. Polynikes is made even more sympathetic than in Euripides' *Phoenissae* as the exiled prince forced by the Furies to attack first his native city and then his brother. Capaneus is the only representative of that brutal hubristic hero common to the works discussed thus far. All the worst traits of the Argives converge in him. Further, his role in the *Thebaid* is, compared with the traditional narrative, greatly enhanced. He is the martial means by which Jupiter's will is to be carried out and represents the vengeance of the Furies threatening Thebes. The Furies have in Capaneus a hero worthy of his task. Capaneus' expanded and intricate role also provides Statius with ample opportunity for intertextual references. Not only are Capaneus' earlier appearances in Aeschylus and Euripides reused but echoes of Sophocles, Apollonius, Virgil, Lucan, Valerius Flaccus, and Silius Italicus are also to be found. This generous treatment of the hero and the complexity of Statius' epic demands a slight change in the approach to the material. I will initiate my examination with a synopsis of the plot. Following this I will explore the possible models for Statius' characterization of Capaneus, then move through the appearances of Capaneus in the order in which they are found in the *Thebaid.*[133] During the course of the examination the following will be specially investigated: 1) the range of Capaneus' portrayal, 2) the reuse of earlier elements and how they add to his characterization, and lastly 3) the reworking of type-scenes from earlier epics.

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133 Klinnert's study of Capaneus furnished in outline the approach (11-78). Only once is this scheme left behind. The depiction of the death of Capaneus is discussed along with the analysis of how he is armed.

His relationship to two major themes of the work, madness and merit, will be explored as they arise in the discussion of each of the passages. Lastly I have not included a section on the political significance of the hero or Thebes in general. Statius was dependent on the patronage of Emperor Domitian and other wealthy Romans. It seems unlikely to me that he was willing to put this at risk by writing a metaphor for the Roman state that would implicate Domitian in the criminal aspects of Thebes or Argos.[134] If the *Thebaid* has a political thrust the story may stand generally, as Lucan's *Pharsalia* had done specifically, as an expansion of the horrors that come from civil war. That one man could save the state, despite its guilt, by personal sacrifice, as Menoeceus does Thebes, perhaps also added broad relevance to the epic.

Four passages will receive extended treatment because of their importance and length within the poem.[135] They are, first, his argument with Amphiaraus before the outset of the expedition (3.592-677), second, the description of Capaneus and his arms in the marshalling of the troops (4.142-177), third, the boxing match at the funeral games of Opheltes (6.729-825), and lastly the events leading to his death (10.825-906). Of less importance but worth examination for the consistency of Capaneus' presentation are a handful of smaller passages including his first mention in a brief catalogue of heroes at 1.45, the death of his corresponding bird in an augury at 3.537-9, his slaying of the snake which killed Opheltes

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134 Hardie, in a discusion on whether *Silv.* 3.5.32-3 is a criticism of the emperor for the poet's loss at the *Capitolia*, also finds it unlikely that Statius would risk challenging Domitian (145).

135 For convenience, the pertinent passages from the *Thebaid* and their translation have been included at the start of their appropriate sections.

at 5.565-587, his battle at Thebes with Eunaeus, a priest, at 7.649-687 and Hypseus at 9.540-569, and the mentions of Capaneus after his death, including the reaction of the gods to his threat (11.1-20) and our final image of his shade at the river Lethe (11.69-70).

Synopsis

The story of the *Thebaid* falls roughly into two halves.[136] Books 1-6 deal with the prelude to the war including its causes, the mustering of the Argive troops, and their journey to Thebes. Books 7-12 detail the deaths of the Argive chieftains, the battle between Polynikes and Eteocles, and the recovery of the Argive dead through Theseus' aid.

The main events are as follows. In the first book Oedipus gains Tisiphones' and Jupiter's support to punish his sons. Jupiter relays his decision to the Olympians and decides to use this opportunity to punish Thebes and Argos as well for their ancient crimes. Polynikes next makes his way to Argos and, after a fight with Tydeus for shelter in the porch of Adrastos, is accepted into the house of the king. In Book 2 Eteocles' lust for power is stirred by Laius, whose ghost is brought to Thebes by Mercury for this purpose. Polynikes and Tydeus are married to the daughters of Adrastos and later Tydeus journeys to Thebes as an ambassador for Polynikes to put forth his claim to rule. Eteocles denies Polynikes his turn at governance and also sets an ambush of fifty men against Tydeus. Minerva helps the hero defeat them. In Book 3 Mars is sent to stir Argos with war-lust and the Argive priests

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136 The division is not exact. At the start of Book 7 Jupiter rouses Mars to send the Argives on to Thebes, for they have been delayed by the funeral rites to Opheltes. It is not until 7.424 that Hippomedon leads the troops to the Theban side of the Asopus river where they set camp in sight of the enemy city.

perform augury. Capaneus and Amphiaraus fight over the delay of the expedition, since it lacks favourable omens, but Capaneus, supported by the nobles and regular soldiery, gets his way. Book 4 gives the catalogue of troops in which Capaneus' arms are described and soon after the expedition commences. For their part, the Thebans hold a necromantic ritual in order to divine Thebes' future. The remainder of this and the following book focus on Hypsipyle whose ward, Opheltes, is killed by a serpent while she speaks to the Argive chieftains. Capaneus slays the serpent and the Argives must protect Hypsipyle from the vengeance of the baby's father, Lycurgus. In Book 6 the Argives hold contests, which become the foundation for the Nemean Games, in honour of the dead child. Capaneus enters a boxing match with Alcidemus, a descendant of Pollux, and is fought to a stand-still. In Book 7 the Argives finish the journey and after a failed attempt by Jocasta to reconcile the brothers the battle starts. At this time Capaneus claims his first kill, Eunaeus, a priest of Bacchus. Amphiaraus has his aristeia at the close of the book and is swallowed by the earth. In Book 8 Thiodamus becomes the chief Argive priest and the book closes with the wounding of Tydeus and the delivery by Capaneus of his enemy's body. This act allows Tydeus to avenge himself by gnawing on his Melanippus' skull and brain. In Book 9 both Hippomedon and Parthenopaeus die. Hippomedon dies fighting the river Inachus and is buried by Capaneus under his own armour and that taken by Capaneus from Hypseus, a Theban warrior who dared disturb the body of Hippomedon. Just after this a spear wound kills Parthenopaeus in his chariot. In Book 10 there is an ill-fated night raid on the Theban camp by Hopleus and Dymas, Menoeceus, Creon's son, kills himself to save his city, and Capaneus is struck down by Jupiter as he assails the walls. In Book 11 Polynikes and

Eteocles' duel, and after their death Creon, in command of Thebes, orders that the bodies of the Argives, Polynikes included, be left unburied. In Book 12 Theseus supports the Argive cause and, after the defeat of Creon, the bodies are buried.

The Impious Warrior

By the time that Statius handles Capaneus there are several other heroes with whom Capaneus shares traits. The three heroes which most influence and match the portrayal of Capaneus are Ajax from Sophocles' play of the same name, Euripides' Herakles from *Hercules Furens* and most importantly Apollonius of Rhode's Idas, who consistently exhibits traits, episodes, and relationships which may be found with Statius' treatment. These portrayals are important, despite the range of dates in showing that by Apollonius' time a definite and recognizable heroic type is detectable and available for Statius' later presentation of his Capaneus.

Sophocles strengthens traits already present in Homer's Ajax to create a hero whose heroic impulse is, in the end, self-destructive. In Homer, Ajax is much like the other heroes in his understanding of the world but is marked as something of a relic of an earlier age by his tower-shield,[137] an item already out of use when the myths at Troy were being formed.[138] He does not despise or treat lightly the gods in Homer but it is notable that no god helps him at 7. 200-205 in his combat with Hector and while he asks his men to pray to Zeus, he

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137 Ajax's massive shield is described by Homer as *σάκος ἠύτε πύργον* (*Il.* 7. 219).

138 Willcock notes that while the shield with the epithet *ἀμφιβρότης* refers to the Mycenaean body shield, described at 7.219, at three other points it refers to the small round shield (v. 1. 203).

himself does not. His prowess is expressed by the less defendable position of his ship at one end of the beach-head (8.224). Ajax also exhibits the size and proportions which Statius borrowed and exaggerated for Capaneus. At *Il.* 3.225-229 Priam asks Helen after the identity of Ajax whom he describes as towering above the other Argives by head and broad shoulders. The style of the initial line may have been adapted by Aeschylus in his description of Capaneus in his catalogue. Homer has τίς τ' ἄρ' ὅδ' ἄλλος Ἀχαιὸς ἀνήρ ἠύς τε μέγας τε (*Il.* 3.226), and Aeschylus' γίγας ὅδ' ἄλλος τοῦ πάρος λελεγομένου /μείζων (*Septem* 424-5). Her answer, that he is gigantic (πελώριος) Ajax, emphasizes his size. In Sophocles' *Ajax*, Ajax's independence is increased and while he is on familiar terms with the gods, his great pride in his own strength becomes his downfall. At 767-774 the messenger relates that Ajax twice blasphemed. First he spurned the gods by saying that any one could be victorious with their help (767-9) and secondly he dismissed Athena's aid by telling her to help the Greeks who needed it (774-5).

Ajax is tremendously destructive in his anger and madness, a quality he shares with Herakles in Euripides' *Hercules Furens*. In this play Herakles, by slaying his wife and children, shows traits of the brutal Herakles which is preserved in Homer.[139] Incidents of his brutality include the wounding of Hades and Hera at *Il.* 5. 319ff. and the murdering of his guest-friends for horses at *Od.* 21. 25ff.

Heroes who are hostile to the gods are likely to be hostile to priests, their representatives. Apollonius capitalizes on the strained relationship between another parallel

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139 For a full discussion on Herakles in Homer see Nilsson 199-203.

to Capaneus, Idas the braggart, and Idmon the priest of Apollo.

Homer provides our first details of Idas at *Il.* 9. 558-560

> Ἰδεώ θ', ὅς κάρτιστος ἐπιχθονίων γένετ' ἀνδρῶν
> τῶν τότε, καί ῥα ἄνακτος ἐναντίον εἵλετο τόξον
> Φοίβου Ἀπόλλωνος καλλισφύρου εἵνεκα νύμφης·
>
> and Idas, who was the strongest of men on earth
> at that time, even took up the bow against lord Phoebus
> Apollo for the sake of the slender-footed maiden.

Thus we again have a hero from an early stratum of myth. He has close interaction with the gods and, like Herakles, does not shrink from taking up arms against them. Like Capaneus, he was slain by lightning. Pindar relates in *Nem.* 10.71 that Idas and his brother, Lynceus, fought Castor and Polydeuces and that Idas was killed by Jupiter. Idas' adversary in Apollonius is a priest, Idmon, who, like Amphiaraus (Capaneus' enemy), came on an expedition though he knew that he was doomed (139-141). The warrior-priest and the bellicose leader seem often to be at odds. Perhaps a ruler, accustomed to having the final say, naturally has trouble with priests who are more obligated to follow their god than ruler. Even in Homer's *Iliad* this tension may be found. Agamemnon provides two instances. He harshly rebukes Calchas at 1.107-8 and insults Chryses 1.31. A more pointed example comes from the Trojans and concerns the interpretation of an omen in the *Iliad* by Poulydamus for Hector (12.230-250). Poulydamus has correctly identified the import of an omen in a way that displeases Hector who first scolds him "If indeed you earnestly propose this word, / then the gods themselves have ruined your mind "(12.233-4) and next threatens him"but if you hold yourself from the slaughter or avert / another by your talk from battle,

/ straightway beaten under my spear you will lose your life" (12.248-250). This explosive relationship was also present in Aeschylus' *Septem* between Amphiaraus and Tydeus. It was common for augury to be practiced before battle but at 383-384 a frustrated Tydeus reviles Amphiaraus for holding the Greeks back from attacking the city, attributing the delay not to the lack of auspicious results but the cowardice of the priest.

Apollonius capitalizes on this tension from the start of the *Argonautica*. At line 1.151 Idas is introduced and given the epithet *ὑπέρβιος*. Apollonius gives an Idas who, although the episode with Marpessa and his death by lightning remains unmentioned in the epic itself, is just the sort of hero who would confront Apollo and quarrel with the sons of Jupiter. Actions and words at the start of an expedition are ominous and his claim that the endeavor will succeed even if a god oppose them (*καὶ εἰ θεὸς ἀντιῶτο*), threatens the success of the enterprise (1.470).[140] After he is rebuked by Idmon, he attacks the priest, making both a physical threat and calling into question his ability as an augur (489-491). The ultimate failure of Idas to bring about a martial solution for the completion of the quest for the Golden Fleece forms a lesson about man's place in the cosmos and his reliance on divine aid. This was Athena's lesson to Ajax, and even Hector is shown to be wrong in opposing Poulydamus. Conversely Herakles, bully and benefactor, won great honour in pushing the limits of mortality and human endeavor and despite his failings reached godhood in conflagration. Statius is willing to adapt both lines in his presentation of Capaneus and mixes praise and censure in his handling of the character-type.

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140 He also praises and claims to rely on his spear more than Zeus (1.465-8) and thus shows the same striving for independence from divine aid as Sophocles' Ajax.

Introductory Lines (1.41-5 and 3.539-40)

The introductory portion of Statius' poem (1.1-45) covers a lot of ground. It announces the general subject of the epic, the battle between Polynikes and Eteocles (once at 1.1-3 and again at 1.33-7), reminds the reader of the mythic history of Thebes (1.4-16), praises emperor Domitian (1.17-31) and introduces, in a five line catalogue, the five Argive heroes who will figure prominently in the action (1.41-5).

Before Statius gives his mini-catalogue of Argive chieftains he calls on the Muse, Clio. Caviglia notes that line 41 imitates Horace's 1.12.1 in which the poet asks Clio which man she bids to celebrate (1.96-7).[141] The reference is more than a gratuitous nod to an important Roman poet; rather, Statius puts the reference to good use. In the first place he is invoking the aid specifically of the Muse often considered the Muse of History. Statius heightens the seriousness of his epic by classifying it as history. Further he adds an ironical twist, for while Horace called on the Muse in a poem which praises the heroes and gods pivotal in making Rome, Statius calls on her to detail heroes who generally are working to destroy a city. Bennett notes that Horace's lines are an imitation of the opening of Pind. *Ol.* 2 (216).[142] This poem has relevance to our epic as well. It covers the alternating fortunes of Thebes starting with Cadmus and ending with the victory of the Epigoni (*Ol.* 2.22-45).

Following this invocation Statius proceeds to list the heroes and give hints about the

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141 Compare Statius' *Theb.* 1.41 *quem prius heroum, Clio, dabis?* to Hor. *Carm* 1.12.1-2 *quem virum aut heroa lyra vel / acri Tibia sumis celebrare, Clio?*.

142 *τίνα θέον, τίν' ἥρωα, τίνα δ' ἄνδρα κελαδήσομεν;*

main element of their stories. Mention of Capaneus comes last and the order of the catalogue sets down the order in which Statius will detail each captain's death later. In this list the poet merely says that "Capaneus must be hymned with a different sort of terror" (*atque alio Capaneus horrore canendus* 1.45).[143] The poet begins here his regular practice of adding a personal response to Capaneus' story and may be reminded too of Euripides' messenger in the *Phoenissae*, who wonders how to speak of Capaneus' madness (1172).

There is a secondary introduction and foreshadowing catalogue in Book 3 at 3.539-545 which forms a companion piece to the one just discussed. In this passage omens are given through birds which presage the doom of the expedition and the specific death of each captain.[144] While the normal omen given at the start of the Argive expedition is lightning, here bird-omens allow Statius more room to characterize his heroes and foreshadow their deaths. The passage is also engaging. As a literary puzzle it challenges the reader to match each bird with the relevant hero and also to work out the relevant detail of each chieftain 's

[143] Shackleton-Bailey's text is used throughout. Frieseman proposed *alto* at 1.45 but *alio* seems fitting in the sense of 'another sort/kind" as at *Theb.* 2.776 (*hic aliae caedes, alius furor*). There is too, I think, an implied comparison between the horror arising from the death of Parthenopaeus, the beautiful but doomed youth who appears just before Capaneus in the catalogue. Parthenopaeus' death elicits a powerful but sympathetic response most unlike the horror arising from the deserved but terrible immolation of Capaneus. *alto* in its sense of "deep" or "profound" may have seemed simply clearer in defining the *horrore*. Caviglia notes that the sentiment of 10.829 (*non mihi iam solito vatum de more canendum*) does not support reading *alto* (97).

[144] Statius' interest in this rite may have sprung from his father who taught officials the skill (*Sil.* 5.3.182). Statius has the priests in this episode attempt two different types of divination. The first at 3.456-9, which was common amongst the ancient Greeks, involved inspecting the organs of sacrifices and was performed before the start of an expedition (see Pritchett 109-11). This method proves fruitless to Melampus and Amphiaraus. The organs continuously come up unhealthy. In the Greek practice the leader merely kept repeating the sacrifices until auspicious entrails were found, but the Argives try a second method, augury, and by this discover the fate of the expedition. Active augury is a Roman practice and shows Statius' willingness to mix Greek and Roman usages. Further the appearance of birds in epic as omens (passive augury) is common enough in epic to lessen the incongruity of the intrusion of a Roman rite here.

demise from his omen. Capaneus' bird (3.539-40) is described thus, "this one seeking the heights burned under the sudden light of the sun and relinquished its courageous spirit" (*hic excelsa petens subita face solis inarsit / submisit animos*).[145] For Capaneus most of the traits have clear correspondences, including the bird's rising, being set on fire, and dying. Besides the riddling aspect of the passage there is also an interesting literary allusion in Capaneus' comparison of lightning to the heat of the mid-day sun which has been adapted by Statius from Aeschylus' *Septem* (445-6). His position in the series of birds is at the start, and the order is a general reversal of that found in lines 1.41-5 with exception that the Amphiaraus, who is watching the event, sees his own doom climactically last and that birds representing Polynikes and Adrastos have been included.

Lastly the birds used have interesting correlations. Swans represent Thebans in general but eagles stand in for the individual Argive chieftains. These are colourfully called

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[145] Alton argues for *solus* stating "It is absurd to represent this first eagle as perishing by sun-stroke; it typifies Capaneus, who tried to take Thebes singlehandedly . . . Capaneus blasted by lightning, perished in splendid loneliness" and he takes the *Iovis ira sinistri* of 538 to indicate Jupiter' lightning and to be referred to again with 539's *subita face* (179). I take 3.537-8 (. . . *quae saeva repente/victores agitat leto Iovis ira sinistri*?) as "What fierce anger of Jupiter suddenly drives on the victors to death?" I do not think that an inauspicious bolt of lightning is the agent by which the audience conceives the birds to be driven. Jupiter's anger and design for vengeance on the Argives and Thebans explain why the birds go to their doom. Snijder also notes that *saeva Iovis ira* may simply stand in for Jupiter as *saevae Iunonis ob iram* stands for Juno at *Aen.*1.4 (215). Secondly, the augury is relying on a strange natural event to reflect the end of Capaneus. A sudden flash of sun-light is a fit correspondence to the flash of lightning which strikes Capaneus at his death. While the reference to his death is obvious even disguised as sunlight, this method does allow for some mystery. Lastly, in agreement with Snijder, I do think that Statius is cleverly reusing Capaneus' own misguided analogy from Aeschylus in which the hero compared lightning's effect to the heat of the sun's rays. In Statius' scene the sun's rays are equivalent to the lightning! This use of Aeschylus' *Septem* goes against Vessey's statement that no certain borrowings from Aeschylus are attested (1973 69). These arguments also counter Houseman's opinion who agrees with Alton but offers *Iovis* for *solis* (68). Snijder, giving Icarus as an example, adds that heat and height were anciently associated. Icarus is a very apt comparison here and Statius may have meant the omen to recall Icarus' story as a pendant tale to Capaneus'(216). Both heroes are young, impetuous, ignore warnings, go to high, are burnt, and fall to the earth.

at 3.532 the weapon-bearers of mightiest Jupiter (*armigeras summi Iovis*). The choice reflects that martially the Argives are stronger than the Thebans and their defeat is more to be wondered at. It also reinforces that the Argives are the means by which the will of Jupiter is accomplished. The Argive attack will bring terrible but fated destruction to both parties.

Capaneus and Amphiaraus: 3.592-677

irrupere Argos maestique ad limina regis
bella animis, bella ore fremunt; it clamor ad auras,
quantus Tyrrheni gemitus salis, aut ubi temptat
Enceladus mutare latus; super igneus antris
mons tonat: exundant apices, fluctusque Pelorus
contrahit, et sperat tellus abrupta reverti.
Atque hic ingenti Capaneus Mavortis amore
excitus et longam pridem indignantia pacem
corda tumens (huic ampla quidem de sanguine prisco
nobilitas sed enim ipse manu praegressus avorum
facta, diu tuto superum contemptor et aequi
impatiens largusque animae, modo suaserit ira),
unus ut e silvis Phološ habitator opacae
inter et Aetnaeos aequus consurgere fratres,
ante fores, ubi turba ducum vulgique frementis,
Amphiaraš, tuas 'quae tanta ignavia' clamat,
'Inachidae vosque o socio de sanquine Achivi?
unius (heu pudeat!) plebeia ad limina civis
tot ferro accinctae gentes animisque paratae
pendemus? non si ipse cavo sub vertice Cirrhae,
(quisquis is est, timidis famaeque ita visus) Apollo
mugiat insano penitus seclusus in antro,
exspectare queam, dum pallida virgo tremendas
nuntiet ambages. virtus mihi numen et ensis,
quem teneo! iamque hic timida cum fraude sacerdos
exeat, aut hodie, volucrum quae tanta potestas,

experiar.' laetum fremit assensuque furentem
implet Achaea manus.

<Amphiaraus' Reply 619-648>

Illum iterum Capaneus: 'tuus o furor auguret uni
ista tibi, ut serves vacuos inglorius annos
et tua non umquam Tyrrhenus tempora circum
clangor eat. quid vota virum meliora moraris?
scilicet ut vanis avibus natoque domoque
et thalamis potiare iacens, sileamus inulti
Tydeos egregii perfossum pectus et arma
foederis abrupti? quod si bella affera Graios
ferre vetas, i Sidonios legatus ad hostes:
haec pacem tibi serta dabunt. tua prorsus inani
verba polo causas abstrusaque momina rerum
eliciunt! miseret superum, si carmina curae
humanaeque preces! quid inertia pectora terres?
primus in orbe deos fecit timor! et tibi tuto
nunc eat iste furor; sed prima ad classica cum iam
hostilem Ismenon galeis Dircenque bibemus,
ne mihi tunc, moneo, lituos atque arma volenti
obvius ire pares venisque aut alite visa
bellorum proferre diem: procul haec tibi mollis
infula terrificique aberit dementia Phoebi:
illic augur ego et mecum quicumque parati
insanire manu.' Rursus fragor intonat ingens
hortantum et vasto subter volat astra tumultu.
ut rapidus torrens, animos cui verna ministrant
flamina et exuti concreto frigore montes,
cum vagus in campos frustra prohibentibus exit
obicibus, resonant permixto turbine tecta,
arva, armenta, viri, donec stetit improbus alto
colle minor magnoque invenit in aggere ripas:
haec alterna ducum nox interfusa diremit.

They burst into Argos and at the doors of the sad king
howl for wars with their hearts, wars with their voice; the shout
goes to the heavens, as great a groan as from the Tyrrhenian brine, or
when Enceladus tries to shift sides; from the caves the fiery
mount thunders above: the heights overflow, and the Pelorus
draws together his waters, and the ruptured land hopes to be rejoined.
And here Capaneus was roused by an immoderate love for
war and he seethed, his heart long since impatient with

a lengthy peace (there was ample nobility for him from ancient blood; but indeed he surpassed the deeds done
by a host of his ancestors. For a long time, without harm, he was a despiser of the gods above, he had no time for
moderation, and was right full of spirit, if only anger urged),
like some dweller from the woods of shady Pholoë and
an equal to rise up among Aetnean brothers.
Before your portals, Amphiaraus, where the mob of leaders and complaining multitude were, he cries out 'For what great cowardice
Inachians and you O Achaians of kindred blood,
do we, so many clans girded for war and ready in our hearts,
hang at the plebeian gates of one citizen (Oh let it shame!)?
Not if he, (whoever he is - Apollo, he seems to cowards
and in report), under the hollow height of Cirrhae, should
bellow secluded deep in his maddened cave,
could I wait while the sickly maiden announces her
frightening riddles. Courage is my divinity and the sword
that I hold! So now let the priest come out here with his
frightening delusion, or today, let me test what great power there is in birds.' He roars a glad word and the Achaean band encourages him by their assent as he rages.

<Amphiaraus' Reply 619-648>

Capaneus addresses that man a second time: 'O let your madness
foretell those things for one man alone, for you, that you may nurse
rather ingloriously empty years and that the Tyrrhenian sound
may never come about your temples. Why do you delay better promises
for the men? Evidently so, lying in your bed, you may lord it over
birds of no account, your son, and your house. Are we to be silent while
unavenged the breast of excellent Tydeus has been pierced and there
are weapons of broken peace? But if you prohibit the Greeks
from waging very fierce wars, go as a ambassador to our Sidonian
enemies: These wreaths will give you peace. Sure your words lure
out the causes from the empty heaven and the hidden movements
of things! The gods above are pitiable if songs are a worry and the
prayers of humans! Why frighten weak hearts?
Fear first made gods in the world! Now let that your madness
go safe; but at the first trumpets when then we drink
hostile Ismene and Dirce from our helmets, don't then,
I warn, be ready to come in my way, at the sight of wing or guts,
to delay battles, when I am eager for arms
and trumpets: Far distant will this soft fillet be from you
and the madness of terrifying Apollo: There I myself
am the augur and whoever with me is prepared

to go battle-mad. The mighty roar of those cheering again sounds
and flies beneath the stars with vast uproar;
as a swift stream whose spirit the spring winds furnish
and mountains divested of their thick chill,
when she exits into plains and to no avail there are hindering
obstacles. Dwellings, fields, flocks, and men make a noise
in the mingled whirl, until the roguish stream stands weaker
against a high hill or finds banks on a great mound.
Interposing night divided these retorts of the leaders.

Much of the second half of Book 3 involves divination. This narrative thread starts properly at 3.440 when Adrastos, concerned over the coming war, turns to Amphiaraus for guidance. Amphiaraus and his older comrade, Melampus, first attempt to draw good omens from entrails (3.456-459), but when this fails they turn to augury. At this time they witness the previously discussed battle between the swans and the eagles (3.539-545). Having learned of his fate and the outcome of the expedition, Amphiaraus secludes himself in his chambers and is only forced out by a war-hungry mob of young men who arrive at the palace residences (3.592).[146] Capaneus represents their cause and an argument erupts between himself and the priest (3.598-677).

In this highly crafted piece Statius contrives an argument between Capaneus and Amphiaraus, the representatives of piety and hubris. This passage introduces Capaneus and Amphiaraus and gives a suitably inauspicious start to the Argive campaign. In doing so

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146 Klinnert maintains that Ten Kate wrongly interprets that at the start of this passage a storm arises (11, n.1). In his defense, Ten Kate is merely setting the scene when he first speaks of the failed augury and then the retreat of Amphiaraus into his hall (107). When he moves on to the arrival of the young men at the palace, Ten Kate's lively language (*Deinde tempestas cooritur cum magno fragore et tonitru; bellum parant incolae Argorum . . .*) plays on Livy's *coorta tempestas cum magno frangore tonitribusque* (1.16.1). Ten Kate's summary of the entire scene of the gathering of the Argives and their mobbing of Adrastus' palace is aptly described in terms of a storm.

Statius cleverly transfers the exchange of insults between Apollonius' Idas and Idmon to Capaneus and Amphiaraus. The opponents, as in the debates of Euripides, do not reach an understanding, but merely, amongst lively personal attacks, state their unflinching position.[147] The exchange is also reminiscent of shepherds' singing contests from pastoral poetry, where each competitor tries to outdo his opponent's songs partly by reusing his competitor's language and themes. Capaneus' final reply, while winning him victory in words, underscores the tragic outcome of the debate: the start of war. Statius also seems to cast Capaneus deliberately like Flaminius, a popular politician and military commander of Rome, who foolishly led his troops into Hannibal's ambush at Lake Trasimene.[148] After an overview of the structure of the passage, I will discuss each section with an eye to the dramatic situation, characterization, adaptation of earlier material and parallel situations.

Table 4: Structure of 3.592-677

		Rings	Similes	Sound
3.592-597	Argives arrive at Palace and yell for war.	⌐A		
	Simile	⌙		x
3.598-619	Capaneus is introduced.		x	
	Simile	⌐B		
	Capaneus calls for war.	|	x	
	He insults Amphiaraus, divination, and gods.	⌙		
	Argives yell in approval.	= C		
3.619-647	Amphiaraus tries to reason with the mob.	(Central Passage)		x
	He groans.	= C		x

[147] Amphiaraus, who finally relents, does not give in to Capaneus, but to incontrovertible destiny.

[148] Statius calls on Clio, Muse of History, at 1.41 during the introductory portion of his poem and he thus prepares the reader for a blending of the genres. Here and in the ambush scene of Tydeus at 2.496-526 Statius draws on the Roman defeat at Trasimene.

3.648-669	Capaneus calls for war.	] B	
	He insults Amphiaraus, divination, and gods.]		
3.670-677	Argives yell in approval.		
	Simile	] A	x
		x	

Amphiaraus' portion is the longest single unit, 3.619-647, and makes up the central passage, it is framed by the sound found at the end of his and Capaneus' earlier speech, which make up ring C. The larger ring, B, contains Capaneus' denouncement of delay, and his abuse of Amphiaraus' vocation and the gods in general (3.598-619 and 3.648-669). The outer ring, A, features Argives yelling and a connected simile (3.592-597 and 3.670-677).[149] Similes are frequent in this passage and help bind its structure. They also imply a link between Capaneus and the Argives, who also receive a simile, while marking a disjunction between the crowd and Amphiaraus, who receives no simile. Sound is another structuring unit. The Argives yell three times and in approval twice. Their noise frames the entire passage (a feature of Ring A) and in Ring C accent the isolation and resignation of Amphiaraus, whose lone exasperated groan stands against the collective cry of approval awarded Capaneus.

The short section running from 3.592-7 contains two moods, that of war-frenzy and sadness. The war-frenzy is strong throughout but Statius lets gloom and sadness lie in the background. It is first evoked by *maestus*, used to describe the king, and *gemitus*. The language is also noticeably violent and noisy. The verb *irrumpere*, with its connotations of

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149 Lines 3.592-597 are also a bridge passage from the previous section. There the Argives are pictured clamoring at the palace of Adrastos while in this passage the audience is given a close-up of the mob as they swarm about Amphiaraus' dwelling.

"bursting in", "breaking in", and "invading" (*OLD*), anticipate the belligerent picture of the Argives who *fremunt* -another menacing word- at the doors. The repeated *bella* both emphasizes the specific demands of the men and may mimic a repeated chant "War!, War!". The sheer volume of their noise (*clamor*)[150] warrants two similes. The first is drawn from nature and compares the grievances of the Argives to the *gemitus* of the Tyrrhenian sea. *gemitus* captures the noise of the sea and is apt for the loud complaints of the Argives. With its meaning of "lament" *gemitus* may also play on the fate of the doomed men who will be lamented over by their wives in Book 12.

Statius next moves from this simile, which uses a familiar natural event, to one derived from myth.[151] In the second simile the points of contact are widened and apply to the larger situation. *tonat*, used of the noise of the mountain as it erupts, picks up the sound of the soldiers, while the reference to Enceladus hints at the fiery destructive impulses at work within the Argives and about to be released. The simile also refers to the ancient idea that Sicily was once joined to the mainland.[152] The expansion of the simile *fluctusque . . . reverti* may seem to wander from the direct relevance of the simile, as often happens with extended similes in epic, but there may be relevance. Klinnert sees a connection in the longing of the Achaians for war and the longing of the mainland for union (11). Violence is again present in *abrupta* (the second last word) which recalls the *irrupere* at the start of the passage.

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150 Snidjer notes that *it clamor* is Virgilian and provides the following examples *Aen.* 5.451, 4.666, 8.595, 9.664, 11.192, 12,409 (238).

151 Both similes would have been exotic in Greek Epic but in Roman Epic are rather mundane.

152 For a list of classical references to this theory, see Klinnert 11.

This portion is programmatic; many details are fleshed out and carried throughout the debate: the young men and their violent and loud attack are represented by a specific character and specific complaints are made, the sad undercurrent finds a living voice in Amphiaraus, and lastly the outset of the war is decided and its outcome revealed.

The second section runs from 3.598-619. The passage may be divided into two parts. The first, 3.598-607, details the character of Capaneus and is followed by two similes. The second larger portion, 3.607-19, reports his speech and is accompanied by the acclaim of the crowds. The first half is broken up by a long parenthesis which expands on Capaneus' character and runs from 3.600-602 and ends with two similes which flesh out his general character and physical appearance. The *hic* (3.598)swiftly shifts our attention from the mass of men at the palace to Capaneus in their midst. The description that follows shows Statius' craft and ability to rework the tradition. In his catalogue of the Argive leaders in the *Septem*, Aeschylus first mentions Capaneus' size. Here Statius does not overtly refer to this quality but rather, like Euripides' description of Capaneus in the *Suppliants*, focuses on moral characterization. Statius is interested primarily in providing psychological details and emotional tendencies, but whereas Euripides characterized Capaneus as a model of the balanced citizen, Statius soon makes it obvious that his Capaneus is far more brutal and harmful to the state. The crowd and Capaneus are stirred up by war which acts as an external force, since Jupiter has sent Mars to rouse the Argives, and as an internal force. For although Capaneus can be discounted from those who are influenced just now by Mars, he is characterized as possessing an *ingenti . . . Mauortis amore* (3.598). Interestingly, this is the normal quality of youth in Euripides' *Suppliants*.

Any further investigation by Statius of Capaneus' mood at the time and his immediate actions are left off for a parenthetical expansion of his character. Statius teases the audience by not giving Capaneus' size while using words that imply amplitude. Thus we have had *ingenti* at 3.598 and this is followed by other words of magnitude, *ampla* at 3.600 and *larga* at 3.603.

It has been noted by Ten Kate that Statius deliberately leaves out the parentage of Capaneus (105). Ten Kate explained this as an attempt to keep Adrastos, who is generally a good, though misguided character, free from the blemish of being related to such a horrific character. There may however be two other functions. First, Statius' Capaneus is fiercely independent. This makes the ownership of his qualities more remarkable, since they spring from himself alone and are not to be attributed to superior ancestry. Secondly, the silence reinforces line 3.601-2. His fame has fully surpassed that of his ancestors. Capaneus again defies limits. Here he reverses the usual epic rule that generations weaken over time.

Diu tuto at 3.602 conveys the impression that his characteristics are longstanding and implies that soon he will meet retribution for his hubris. Capaneus is painted in a few deft strokes as unlikeable. It should be noted that as the madness of war is heightened, Capaneus is less discordant with the general situation and this will have a softening effect. By detailing him in peace, Statius heightens his worse qualities at the beginning of the epic. The next short details are ethical; and there may be some deliberate undercutting of Euripides' presentation of Capaneus as a virtuous citizen. *aequi impatiens* (3.602-3) certainly counters the thrust of the depiction in the *Suppliants* as well as *largusque animae* (3.603). *modo suaserit ira* (*ibidem*) implies that Capaneus' character is dynamic. His character is channeled

in the above way when he is angered. Since Capaneus grows angry in many episodes, this has prompted Klinnert to take Capaneus as a typical *'iratus'* character-type of the same sort as Virgil's Mezentius (18). Statius' use of the phrase *superum contemptor* (3.602) has also been recognized as a reference to Virgil's description of Mezentius in the *Aeneid* who is described as *contemptor deum* (Aen. 8.7) and with whom Capaneus shares traits (Legras 216, Ten Kate 107, Klinnert 18).

Two short similes are next given, both drawn from myth. This parallels Statius' treatment of the other Achaians to whom he attached a simile, and so links Capaneus to them. In the second Capaneus is compared to a Cyclops and in the first to Centaurs. The references are allusive since they must be puzzled out from *Pholoës habitator* (3.604) in the first case and *Aetnaeos . . . fratres* (3.605) in the second. A centaur may not catch the idea of size but certainly captures Capaneus' wildness and beastliness. The Cyclopes do, I think, imply that Capaneus may be of extraordinary size and also reflect again Capaneus' uncivilized behaviour. Notably the Cyclopes were also the weapon-makers of Jupiter and Capaneus functions in Statius as a character who delivers Jupiter's punishment. *consurgere* "to rise" or "to stand" at 3.605 in the simile shifts the reader to the present situation and is perhaps the verb to be supplied in the ellipse before *ante fores* at 3.606. The detail of Capaneus rising is placed in the simile rather than the main narrative. Also throughout the passage Capaneus is presented as a popular leader of aristocratic birth who gives the impassioned case for war for two powerful groups: the leaders and common citizens (*turba ducum vulgique frementis* 3.606), who are assembled at the palace.

3.619-647 contains Amphiaraus' speech, which is not directed at Capaneus but rather

at the young men. He publicly states that the expedition is doomed to fail but will not inform Capaneus of his coming death.[153] At 3.620-1 he gives a partial defense of his actions, claiming his reluctance is not based on cowardice as Capaneus contends. While Amphiaraus does not wish to enter into debate with Capaneus and speaks mostly to the crowd, he often refers to Capaneus' madness. Thus at 3.620 - 3 he claims he has come out ... *alio curarum agitante tumultu / non equidem effreno iuvenis clamore profani / dictorumque metu, licet hic insana minetur* and at 3.627 addresses him as *vesane.* Amphiaraus interprets Statius' characterization of Capaneus for the audience and by purposefully remaining silent about Capaneus, he attempts to separate Capaneus from the crowd (*nam te, vesane, moneri/ ante nefas unique tacet tibi noster Apollo* (3.627-8). His statement emphasizes his own association with Apollo and his sadness described as *maestus* at 627 link him with Adrastus, also given the same adjective (3.592). In the end he cannot sustain his position. The expedition is fated. The youths are destined to ignore the warnings and Amphiaraus likewise. He resigns himself at the end of the speech with *sed quid vana cano, quid fixos arceo casus? / ibimus* (645-6). With that his speech breaks off and he groans (*gemuit* 647). I believe that this noise at the end of a section forms a ring with the praise of Capaneus in his speech and heightens the pathos of the situation. Capaneus was vindicated by the yells of the massed men, for Amphiaraus there is only his lament.

Lines 3.648-669 show that Capaneus is not finished. This "debate" painfully continues despite the surrender of one of the contestants. As in his first speech Capaneus

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153 For a discussion of the strategies used by the combatants to attempt to isolate one another from their audience see Fring 16.

abuses the priest's office, the priest's valour,[154] and the gods. There is a marked use of words of fear (*tremendas* 3.614, *metu* 3.622, *timor* 3.661) throughout. Amphiaraus' pious fear before the gods is presumed by Capaneus to be a fear of men in battle while his own fearlessness is completely devoid of limits. The language of sanity and insanity are strong as well (*insano* 3.614, *insana* 3.622, *vesane* 3.627, *insanire* 3.669). Capaneus can call Amphiaraus insane because of the madness inspired by Phoebus and treats it as a real madness that contributes nothing to war and victory, while his own battle-madness will make him the leader in war. Capaneus ends with a personal threat of violence against Amphiaraus. This follows the pattern of arguments between priests and warriors discussed earlier.

There is an extended simile followed by the intercession of night in the next passage (3.669-677). The simile is important in that the shouts of approval show a marked concession and enthusiasm for Capaneus' words and proclaim him as the victor in the agon. The simile captures the noise of the crowd well enough. The crashing halt of the water at last on a hill offers a denouement, as night does at 3.677, and thus adds tonal quality. Further the simile also foreshadows the outcome of the war. The expedition will be carried along in its furor only to be broken on the hill of Thebes.

Statius allows night to bring the argument to an end. In Homer, one of the ways that single-combat is resolved is by the arrival of night, as in the case of Hector and Ajax, and likewise general battle ends with setting of the sun. This detail heightens the martial and dangerous aspect of the debate. The specific wording of this last line *haec alterna ducum*

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154 Capaneus' hope that Tyrrhenian horns do not ring about Amphiaraus' temples also picks up on the roar of Tyrrhenian waves at 3.494.

nox interfusa derimit (3.677), recalls Virgil's bucolic matches. Virgil uses *alterna* in the *Eclogues* at 3.59 and 7.19 of songs sung in competition. Statius' use of the same word here heightens the tone. The hostility of the match perhaps captures Menalcas' and Damoetas' mutual disdain but there is much more at stake here and Statius may be deliberately bringing our attention to grave differences between his agon and Virgil's song competition; first, the winner and loser attain the same prize: war; secondly, the lightness of the bucolic setting is juxtaposed to the seriousness of war; thirdly Capaneus is left, after the withdrawal of Amphiaraus, to outdo his own words; and lastly, the judges are biased from the start and thus the victor of the match is obvious from its outset.

While the parallels to other arguments between warriors and priests from Greek sources are at play, including Hector's exchange with Poulydamus (211-250) [155] and Idas' ill-fated words at the start of the voyage of the Argonauts in Apollonius of Rhodes (1.463-471), the Romans were not without an example of this stock argument or hubristic type of character. Flaminius, the doomed Roman general in the battle against Hannibal at Lake Trasimene, has also influenced Statius. His story is given by Polybius (3.75-85), Livy (22.1-7), and Silius Italicus (*Pun.* 4.704-5.678), and that episode shares some of the same points as Capaneus'. Present in all the historical and epic accounts is a moral condemnation of Flaminius for causing the disaster, a charge present in Polybius, from whom Livy and Silius Italicus drew details for their account, and Silius Italicus. Both historians show a dislike for

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155 Hector, like Idas and Capaneus, makes threats against an opponent who foresees doom. Poulydamus is not technically a priest but in this episode he rightly reads the omen sent by Zeus and tries to keep Hector from fighting the Greeks at their ships.

this popular leader who was too eager to wage war.[156]

In Silius Italicus, Flaminius is chosen by Juno as a fit leader for the Romans for the coming disaster (4.109-110). The tragedy is foretold by evil omens and an augur speaks out against the attack (*Pun.* 5.59-74). In general the exchange between the two is marked by more civility than is present between Idas and Idmon, and Capaneus and Amphiaraus. The words though, do emphasize the impiety of the commander. Silius states that, in consideration of the omens, each man prayed that Flaminius not go against the heavens (5.104 . . .*ne caelicolas contendere perstet*). The leader's fierce independence is shown by his refusal to wait for aid from a second Roman army on the way (5.114-16) and he also gives a statement about his sword at 5.118-120, *augur adest ensis*, which is quite in line with Capaneus' claims. This statement is capped by the equally Capanean "empty superstition is ugly under arms, virtue is the only god that thrives as a virtue of warriors" (*deforme sub armis/vana superstitio est; dea sola in pectore virtus/ bellantum viget* 5.125-7). Flaminius is in a position of untested power over his troops. There is no narrative need for him to win an argument, thus a heated interchange with a priest is omitted. The Roman soldiers must follow and the audience's sympathy for the doomed soldiers and their distaste for the leader are made more acute.

The reliance of Silius on Statius or vice versa may not be established but Silius' version of Flaminius and Statius' Capaneus share many traits. For both authors all the worst

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156 Since commanders generally used diviners there may be a tendency to label any one who led troops into disaster as impious. For if the gods do not lie than he must bear the responsibility for the mistake. Rashness and impiety is connected to three opponents of Hannibal in Livy, Flaminius, who comes off the worst, Varro who led at the battle of Cannae, and Minucius, who after a brief encounter with Hannibal, had to be saved by Fabius.

traits of Flaminius were present in the work of earlier historians.[157] He had been portrayed as over-eager, willing to ignore omens, and overly-reliant on the virtue of arms. Statius' linear narrative allows for a confrontation at the start of the expedition which would explain why it went ahead despite the warnings from the gods. In this he had a ready Roman model in the figure of Flaminius and a fit character in his own hubristic Capaneus who could easily be placed in a confrontation with a priest.[158] This type of confrontation was common in epic and Apollonius' parallel use of Idas and Idmon at the start of the expedition of the Argo would have offered a promising frame-work.

Since the language of insanity and sanity is used in this portion it is opportune to indicate the importance of 'madness' as a theme in the *Thebaid* and the relevance of Capaneus to 'madness'. Jupiter has promised the punishment of Thebes and Argos through this war. Both cities are guilty and are led to their destruction. In the case of the Argives, they are blind to all the signs of the gods warning them not to continue with the expedition. This blindness or impetus towards self-destruction is a function of the Furies who contribute to the fury and madness of both cities. In the *Thebaid* Capaneus also takes on this role. In the above passage, he rouses the Argives to war and later he spurs them on to continue their attack on Thebes, even though many of the leaders have fallen (10.482-488). He himself shows madness through his continuous contempt of the gods and a tendency in peace to lose

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157 Silius Italicus was working on at least part of his epic as Statius was finishing his.

158 A similar scene is detailed very briefly by Aeschylus who has Tydeus and Amphiaraus argue about the delay in battle at Thebes, (*Septem* 382). Tydeus though has too good a relationship with Athena in Statius to be portrayed as impious and he has just had a lengthy episode to himself in Book 2.

his mind once he has been angered (3.602-3).[159] His madness is especially apparent before his destruction and is discussed next.

Capaneus' Shield-Image: 4.165-177

At pedes et toto despectans vertice bellum
quattuor indomitis Capaneus erepta iuvencis
terga superque rigens iniectu molis aenae
versat onus; squalet triplici ramosa corona
Hydra recens obitu: pars anguibus aspera vivis
argento caelata micat, pars arte reperta
conditur et fulvo moriens nigrescit in auro;
circum amnis torpens et ferro caerula Lerna.
at laterum tractus spatiosaque pectora servat
nexilis innumero Chalybum subtemine thorax
horrendum, non matris, opus; galeaque corusca
prominet arce gigans; atque uni missilis illi
cuspide praefixa stat frondibus orba cupressus.

And on foot looking down by a whole head on the war
Capaneus wields four hides torn from unmastered bulls
and upon it a burden that keeps it firm by an overlaying of
a bronze mass; the Hydra is squalid, branching with a triple crown,
fresh with death: part flashes rough with live snakes
engraved with silver, part is hidden with a discovered
trick and dying grows dark on the yellow gold;
around the torpid river and the Lerna grey-blue in iron.
a corselet of steel-plates bound by thread without number[160]
guards his wide flank and spacious chest,

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159 'Madness' has a traditional role in epic and a place already in Theban myth. In Euripides' *Phoenissae* the brothers exhibit madness, under the influence of the Furies, in pursuing kingship at the cost of trying to kill close kin. For a detailed analysis of 'madness' in the *Thebaid* and the epic tradition see Hershkowitz esp. 247-301. Hershkowitz aptly assesses the *Thebaid* as 'an epic about madness, pervaded by madness, dependant on madness not only for its initial impetus bur also for its continued movement'(248). For a recent look at the same theme see Lovatt.

160 I take *chalybum* as referring to steel plates sewn on the corselet. In this way the appearance of Capaneus in his scaled armor would match the appearance of the skin of the Hydra.

a fearful work, no mother's; on the gleaming helmet a giant
projects from its heigh; and the missile for that man alone
a cypress stands deprived of its branches and topped with a point. 175

Capaneus' next appearance is the second major passage and contains a description of his physical characteristics as well as his war panoply. This passage is a companion piece to the ethical depiction given earlier. Because of the shield's pervasive meaning for the rest of the epic some of the later material, especially Capaneus' death-scene, is detailed in this section.

Aeschylus, in the *Septem*, armed Capaneus with a shield displaying a torch-bearer (432), while Euripides, in the *Phoenissae*, gave his shield an image of a giant carrying off an uprooted city (1131-2). When Statius treats this same matter in his *Thebaid*, he chooses the image of a Hydra (4.168-172). The aptness of the attribution of the Hydra and Statius' skill as a poet may be seen through an examination of 1) other warriors who bear like shields (this motif appears in Euripides, Virgil, and in Statius' contemporary Silius Italicus), 2) chthonic aspects of Capaneus and the Hydra, 3) the use of the shield in foreshadowing, 4) parallels in the handling of Capaneus' death-scene and the description of the Hydra, and lastly 5) the reappearance of elements of Capaneus' shield from the *Septem* and *Phoenissae* during the course of his assault on Thebes' walls.

The earliest of the Hydra-shields appears in Euripides' *Phoenissae*. Its importance has been discussed earlier. Of the Roman authors, Virgil is the earliest Roman author in which the device can be found. Virgil allots it to Aventinus in the catalogue of Italian troops in Book 7 of the *Aeneid*,

Post hos insignem palma per gramina currum
victoresque ostentat equos satus Hercule pulchro
pulcher Aventinus; clipeoque insigne paternum
centum angues cinctamque gerit serpentibus hydram;

After these, fair Hercules' son, fair Aventinus,
displays in the field his chariot distinguished in victory and his
conquering horses. He bears on his shield his father's
token: a hundred snakes and the Hydra ringed with serpents.

His shield is briefly detailed and is quite similar to Adrastos' in the *Phoenissae*. Especially to be noted is the double mention of serpents. In Virgil *centum angues* and *serpentibus* (7.658) both refer to the snaky heads of the Hydra and match Euripides' *ἑκατόν ἐχίδναις* (*Phoen.* 1135), also taking the first place in its line, and *δράκοντες* (1137). Virgil presents Aventinus as the son of Hercules and Rhea and his shield indicates family pride[161] and his belief in his own prowess. Virgil emphasizes their similarities with the repetition of *pulcher* in 7.656 and 7.657 and presents Aventinus as a true son of Hercules through the adjective *Herculeo* at line 7.669 and his attire:

. . . tegimen torquens inmane leonis,
terribili inpexum saeta cum dentibus albis
indutus capiti, sic regia tecta subibat,
horridus, Herculeoque umeros innexus amictu.

wrapping about a lion's monstrous covering, whose
unkempt mane and white teeth adorned
his terrible head, so he advanced to the royal halls,
bristling, shoulders bound with Herculean garb.

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161 Likewise Parthenopaeus' shield displays the deeds of his mother, Atalanta (*Phoen.* 1106-1109).

Aventinus, just as Hercules had, wears a lion-skin. Virgil presents an attacker with a fierce image that *horridus* (1.669), with its double application as "bristly" in reference to the mane and "dreadful" in relation to his general appearance, aptly attests. The description also blurs the distinction between the hero and the beast. White teeth adorn both the hero's head through wearing the trophy and at the same time adorn the trophy itself.

Aventinus ceases to figure in the *Aeneid* after the catalogue, and we are denied further connections between his accoutrement and his character. The most noticeable difference between his shield and Adrastos' in the *Phoenissae* is the lack of a specified target, such as the Trojans, for the Hydra to menace. What role Virgil meant for Aventinus, if any, is hard to assess, but the character of a hubristic boaster like Capaneus or Adrastus, which is taken up by Mezentius, the *divum contemptor* in the *Aeneid*, would unlikely be meant for Aventinus as well.[162]

. . . . Silius Italicus, writing about the same time as Statius, provides us with a warrior who combines traits of both Euripides' Adrastus and Virgil's Aventinus. Since this hero appears in the early part of Silius Italicus' work it is possible that one author was responding to the other's work. The warrior Theron, a priest of Hercules (*Alcidae templi custos araeque sacerdos, Pun.* 2.150), bears, like Aventinus, a close relationship with that hero.[163] This

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[162] See *Aen.*7.648. All the other heroes but Aventinus who bear a shield with a Hydra could be characterized by this epithet.

[163] For discussions on the relationship between Hercules and the heroes of the Punica, see Bassett and Vessey 1974. For a full treatment of the importance of Hercules as model for moral action as opposed to purely martial deeds in Flavian epic see Ripoll (86-190).

warrior's shield too differs in no significant way from the others, again the Hydra is present, again the hundred snakes. Silius Italicus writes,

> sed, fisus latis humeris et mole iuventae,
> agmina vastabat clava nihil indigus ensis.
> exuviae capiti impositae tegimenque leonis
> terribilem attollunt excelso vertice rictum.
> centum angues idem Lemeaeque monstra gerebat
> in clipeo et sectis geminam serpentibus hydram. (*Pun.* 2.154-9)
>
> but having relied upon his broad shoulders and his youthful
> vigour, he was wasting the troops with his club. He had no
> need of the sword. The spoils placed on his head and the
> skin of the lion bear the terrible mouth opened wide on that distinguished
> head. Likewise he was bearing a hundred snakes and the
> monster, a Hydra, whose heads double each time they are cut, on his shield.

The reminiscences of Virgil are unmistakable. Repeated words occur densely with *Pun.* 156 and 157's *capiti, tegimen, leonis,* and *terribilem* which are pulled from *Aen.* 7.666-7's . . . *tegimen torquens inmane leonis, / terribili inpexum saeta cum dentibus albis.* Borrowing is especially blatant in line 2.158-9 *centum angues idem Lerneaeque monstra gerebat / in clipeo et sectis geminam serpentibus hydram* which has its antecedent in Aen. 7.657-8's *clipeoque insigne paternum / centum angues cinctamque gerit serpentibus hydram*. Both *centum angues* and *serpentibus hydram* take the same place in their lines.

Theron, whose name plays on the Greek *θήρ*, beast, outdoes Aventinus in the imitation of Hercules. He not only wears the lion-skin but also wields a club. His acts, though undertaken in defense of his city, are disturbing in their cruelty and are perhaps meant to evoke Homer's Herakles, who is capable of both benefitting mankind and committing brutal deeds against gods and men. Ultimately Theron's savagery becomes repulsive to the

gods and they abandon him after he kills Absyte, a Numidian queen, and places her head on a pike (*Pun.* 2. 197-205). Like Adrastus' shield in Euripides the image of Theron's Hydra links the bearer as much to the conqueror as to the beast.

On Theron's shield the display of a myth foreshadows Theron's episode. This warrior-priest operates more within a fantastic setting than an historical one. In the first place, he is pitted against Asbyte, a fierce female warrior, whose troops are also women. Just as Hercules had his battle with the amazon Hippolyta, now a similar episode is replayed at Saguntum. Secondly the story evokes the coming of the Amazons in the epic cycle as well as the story of Camilla in the *Aeneid*.[164] Theron's death is also reminiscent of the death of Troy's city- protector, Hector. Hannibal's slaying of Theron in revenge for the death of Asbyte mirrors Achilles' vengeance on Hector for the death of Patroklus, and he even pursues Theron before the walls of his native city (*Pun.* 2.49). Hannibal does not go so far as to abuse the corpse but the queen's troops march with his corpse three times around her pyre (*Pun.* 2.266) and parallel Achilles' dragging of Hector three times around the tomb of Patroklus (*Il.* 24.14-16).

Theron's death and the treatment of his body afterward provide a fitting end to his acts in this battle. He is figuratively emasculated. The women throw the trappings of his office, the head-dress and the club, into the fire, he himself is burnt until his beard (a sign of manhood) is singed from his face, and lastly his body finds a suitably Homeric end by being thrown to the birds (*Pun.* 2.264-9).

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[164] Asbyte's manner of life is even compared to the Amazons' at 2.73-6.

As a last point in conjunction with Theron, the Hydra is not just the monster which Hercules defeated. In Virgil there are two types. One is at the gate of the underworld with other multiform creatures and seems to represent the Nemean Hydra (*Aen.* 6.257-293). The other guards the gate to Tartarus and thus acts like Cerberus in keeping down the worst of the earth-born monsters, like the Titans (*Aen.* 6.584.6). Valerius Flaccus seems to have this creature in mind at *Arg.* 3.224-228 where he compares the doomed Cyzicus to Coeus, a titan, who, though having escaped his bonds and eager for an assault on heaven, is turned back by Cerberus and the Hydra. As a gate keeper, Theron acts like the Hydra, not just in that he keeps the destructive force of Hannibal from the city, but also in that Saguntum marks the starting point for Hannibal's attack on Italy.[165] If Rome had acted faster Hannibal would not have been unleashed on Italy and infernal war would have been contained.

Although Capaneus does not have Aventinus' or Theron's personal link to Hercules, he can be viewed, as Vessey points out, as a fallen or sham Hercules (1973 155 n.2). Like the Hercules in the *Hercules Furens* of Seneca, he rages against the gods and threatens them (955-973).[166] His slaying of the snake that killed Opheltes has been likened to a Herculean labour gone wrong, since the beast was Jupiter's pet; thus the act incurs the anger of the father of gods and men (1973 188 n.14). Lastly, when Capaneus retrieves Melanippus' body

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[165] This is part of his function as the priest of Hercules. Hannibal taunts him at 240 calling him *bone ianitor urbis.*

[166] Statius and Seneca also connect their heroes to similar anti-Olympian activity. In Seneca Hercules threatens to pile up mountains to create a path for his attack on Olympus (971-3) while Capaneus' climb to the top of the walls of Thebes is compared to Otus and Ephialtes' similar piling of mountains for their assault on heaven (*Theb.* 10.849-852).

for Tydeus, his return is compared to Hercules fetching the Erymanthian boar for Eurystheus (*Theb.* 8.749-750).

If Theron is a beast, Capaneus is a monster. Statius constantly portrays him as a *gigans*. When he is introduced to the reader he is berating Amphiaraus for holding up the campaign against Thebes and he is described as "one at home in the forests of dark Pholoë or equal to spring up among Aetnaean company" (*unus ut e silvis Pholoës habitator opacae / inter et Aetnaeos aequus consurgere fratres*, 3. 604-605).[167] In this example he is just the sort that would be welcome amongst the Cyclopes. In the catalogue of the Argive army he is depicted "though on foot, looking down by a full head upon the battle-ready " (*at pedes et toto despectans vertice bellum*, 4.165).[168] Lastly, after his fall, Statius writes that Capaneus'

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167 His antagonism is partly modeled on Aeschylus' Tydeus who quarreled with Amphiaraus when the priest sought to delay the impending attack on Thebes (*Septem* 375-83).

168 Aeschylus again provides the first witness to Capaneus' height, though Statius has exaggerated this trait beyond the relatively humble *γίγας ὅδ' ἄλλος τοῦ πάρος λελέγμενου μείζων* (*Septem* 424). Fernandelli believes that the start of Statius' passage *at pedes* 'on foot' alerts the reader to look to Euripides' description of Hippomedon in the *Phoenissae* for a parallel shield to Capaneus' Hydra-shield (hesitantly 94, but forcefully 97). While Hippomedon's shield provides interesting correspondences to Capaneus' shield in Statius, and lends support to *nigrescit* over *ignescit* and a combined technical and narrative meaning for *conditur* (Fernandelli 95) it is doubtful that Hippomedon would naturally spring to the reader's mind from the phrase. First, Capaneus is a foot-soldier. He is not a charioteer like Amphiaraus and thus there is real point to this detail within the story. Secondly Statius emphasizes his height by having him look down on the ranks (4.165). This point would be lessened were he in chariot. Lastly Aventinus from Virgil is a more relevant match. He carries a Hydra-shield (7.658-9) and wears Herculean garb (7.676-8). While he displays a chariot Virgil uses the phrase *ipse pedes* to describe his arrival. Capaneus' position in the catalogue of Theban forces is immediately after the ranks of Herculean garbed soldiers from Nemea.(4.54-156). While Capaneus does not lead them, the proximity of his description to theirs, the similarity between his shield and Aventinus', and both hero's position on foot *at pedes / ipse pedes* makes a connection to Aventinus more natural than with Hippomendon. Both Aventinus, Hercules' descendant, and the Nemean soldiers, who sing Hercules' praises as a benefactor of mankind (4.157), have legitimate and healthy connections to Hercules and this heightens the perversity of Capaneus' association with the Hydra.

corpse covers the plain "as great in extent as the defiler of Apollo's mother is stretched out in Avernus" (*quantus Apollineae temerator matris Averno/tenditur*,11. 12-13).[169] Both Euripides and Aeschylus had earlier equipped Capaneus with a threatening shield; his shield in Statius may easily be seen as reinforcing his monstrous qualities.

Hydra-shields are not terribly complex works. They pale beside the descriptive fullness of the shields of Achilles (*Il.* 18.478-697), Hercules (*Sc.* 141-317), Aeneas (*Aen.* 8.626-731) or Hannibal (*Pun.* 2.406-452). While Capaneus' shield in Statius receives a mere seven lines (*Theb.* 4.166-172) it is still the most intricate of the shields discussed. It is rich in metallic colour and tone and is crafted from bronze, gold, silver and iron. The Hydra itself is depicted as partially slain and it is captured in its death-throes.

Statius did not equip Adrastus with this image in the *Thebaid*. Unlike the active and martial portrayal of Adrastos in Euripides, Statius' Adrastos is past his prime for active participation in war. Statius compares him to an old bull who, though weak in neck and shoulders, is yet the leader of the herd (4.69-71). His dignity has been enhanced by time and he is described at 11. 427 as "venerable by far in rule and age" (*et regnis multum et venerabilis aevo*).[170] This makes the image of a frightful Hydra, or even a half-dead Hydra,

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169 The comparison of Capaneus, a sinner, to another of the famous sinners,Tityos, is apt and has its antecedent in Euripides' comparison of Capaneus' fall from Thebes' wall to Ixion spinning on his wheel (*Phoen.* 1180-6). The criminality of Tityos is emphasized by the passive *tenditur* (*Theb.* 11.13) which reminds the reader that he was punished, like Prometheus, by being fastened to a rock and plagued by vultures. The size of Capaneus' corpse on the plain also may bring to mind gigantic Ares' fallen form at *Iliad* 21. 407 where the god is said to cover seven plethra.

170 4. 38-40 contains a similar sentiment. For a comparison to Virgil's Latinus see Kytzler 223.

unsuitable for the noble Adrastus but as a result available for Capaneus.

But Statius does not just detail Capaneus' shield, as with Silius Italicus' description of Theron, the rest of Capaneus' arms are also described. Here they are not meant as badges of office or to specifically evoke Hercules, rather they reinforce his chthonic associations. His spear is a stripped down cypress tree (4.177) and this is not the only funereal aspect to his arms. Harrison notes that the swamp on his shield, which Statius describes at 4.172 as *amnis torpens*, is meant to invoke the underworld by calling to mind the *torpentes lacus* twice used by Seneca (250). To Harrison's argument two other points of interest may be added. First, threes mainly occur in Statius in chthonic contexts. The earth-born serpent which kills Opheltes and is killed in turn by Capaneus has a tri-cleft tongue and a triple row of teeth (5. 509); soldiers march three times around Opheltes' tomb to honour him (6. 217); the fury enrages her victims by lashing them three times (7. 579); on the third day after the battle ends the Thebans bury their dead (12. 50).[171] Therefore it is not surprising that *triplici* appears in conjunction with the Hydra (4. 168). Further the monster's position beside the Lernean swamp parallels our last image of Capaneus in the underworld beside the Stygian stream (*et insignem Stygiis fovet amnibus umbram* 11. 70-1).

A second set of possibilities exists for the prevalence of chthonic associations. Capaneus may be considered, with his mad and unholy rage, a creature of the furies. Williams briefly alludes to this possibility and this idea bears expansion (126). Capaneus is

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171 Note also the appearance of cypresses and the use of threes in the ceremony to summon Theban spirits at 4.456-61.

praised by the whole underworld upon his death and is said to be bathing his spirit in the Stygian rivers. It is as if he has come home and is refreshing himself after the long battle. Indeed Capaneus' reception in the underworld is in direct contrast with the entrance of his counter-character, Amphiaraus. The good priest's sudden appearance upset Hades' order and frightened the ghosts (*rupit et armato turbavit funere manes, horror habet cunctos* 8.3-4). Capaneus' shield also perverts the relationship found with the image on Amphiaraus' shield, the Python. This serpent monster is depicted entirely dead and indicates Apollo's total victory over this chthonic force (4.222). As his priest, Amphiaraus' shield promotes an important episode in his patron's career. Capaneus' monster is not fully slain and in a sinister manner implies only a partial victory of order over chaos; while Amphiaraus has a clear connection to Apollo through his shield, Capaneus' association with Herakles is left blurred.

There are strong connections between Tisiphone, the fury, and Capaneus. His appearance on the battlements of Thebes replays our first view of her. In an early scene set in Hades she is described as wielding a torch in one hand and a water snake, that is a *hydros*, in the other (1.113). When Capaneus mounts the wall of Thebes he has a torch in one hand and his shield depicting the Hydra in the other (10. 925ff). The number of snakes in her description also match the number on the Hydra-shields of Adrastos, Aventinus, and Theron. He is particularly free from their effect since he seems to naturally act in accordance with them and at only one time (11. 88-93) does he need enraging or spurring on by her. The outrages that he commits are as great as any of the chieftains who are under the Furies' direct control except in one episode: Tydeus compelled by the Eumenides dines on Melanippus'

brains (8. 761-762). But even here Capaneus figures. He searches out that warrior and delivers the body back to Tydeus (8. 745-750). He is also perversely interested in burial. After Hippomedon dies, Capaneus honours him by burying him in weapons and pieces of armour (9. 562-565). Lastly, although the destruction of Thebes had been entrusted to the Furies by Jupiter, its ruin could be delayed by the death of the king's son. His sacrifice scene is framed by two passages featuring Capaneus. In the first, Capaneus drives back the Thebans and so harries them that the townsfolk believe that the slain chieftains' ghosts have come back in that one warrior (10. 748-751). In the second, Capaneus scales the walls of Thebes, threatens the inhabitants and the gods, and is killed by Jupiter. The implication is that, had Menoeceus lived, Capaneus would have fulfilled both the vengeance of the Furies and the will of Jupiter.

Other connections between Capaneus and his shield are present. Klinnert notes that the Hydra and Capaneus are monsters that die by fire (27).[172] Often, too, Statius foreshadows the individual death of one of the Seven. He does this in the ornithoscopia where Capaneus's corresponding bird burns up in fire (3. 539-540), to a certain degree in the games of Opheltes where Capaneus is halted from destroying a weaker foe and one which he towers over by stronger interference(6.813-4),[173] and he has Hades himself sanction Capaneus' acts against

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172 A similar ironic use of Capaneus' shield image is present in Aeschylus where he exhibits the image of a fire-bearer and he is later killed by the greatest fire-bearer of them all.

173 Thebes is equated with Alcidamus and Jupiter with the manful retention of Capaneus by the other Argive chieftains.

the gods and foretell his death by lightning (8. 75-77).[174]

While Capaneus' shield in Statius performs this simple function of foretelling his death by fire, the nature of the shield representation also foreshadows specific qualities of Capaneus' demise and both descriptive passages are handled in the same way.

When Statius describes the Hydra he starts with "The Hydra is squalid, branching with a triple crown, fresh with death (4.168-9)." But the Hydra is not dead. Statius has given a summary statement of the shield and next brings the reader closer, detailing its half-dead state; "part of it flashes cruel with living snakes worked in silver, part falls back from the devised stratagem and dying grows dark against the yellow gold (169-171)." Some have found fault with 170's *arte reperta* and the fact that both *ignescit* and *nigrescit* are represented in the manuscripts has also caused discussion (Harrison 247-252, Fernandelli 89-98) but the alternative readings do not undercut the overall picture of the Hydra depicted lingering between life and death.

Statius starts the death-scene of Capaneus in a like manner. He begins with a summary statement "The lightning bolt thrust by Jupiter killed him while he was speaking such things" (*talia dicentem toto Jove fulmen adactum / corrupuit* 10. 927-8). He is not however instantly destroyed. He slowly disintegrates. First his helmet crest vaporizes (10. 928), next the shield-boss falls from the shield (10. 929), his limbs catch fire (10. 929-30), then his hair starts burning (10. 932), his armour grows sizzling hot (10. 932-933) and finally

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[174] Given that Capaneus' portion of the catalogue of troops ends with a digression that includes Thamyras' and Marsyas' ill-fated competition with the gods (4. 182-186) the passage also foreshadows Capaneus's own hubris induced death.

his body is consumed and his soul laid bare (10. 937-8). He is made aware of his destruction as he is destroyed. Even as his limbs are burning he tries to remove his breast-plate (10. 933). He survives the first moment of the strike, stands and faces heaven and lives long enough to prop himself against the wall (10. 935-6). Statius caps the scene by saying that Capaneus could have merited another bolt had his limbs held out a little longer (938-9). Statius is interested in portraying the moments between life and death of both the Hydra and Capaneus.

In Statius' rich and detailed account of Capaneus death he does not leave behind the hero's earlier shield-devices but allows Capaneus to enact them. Aeschylus presents Capaneus with a shield on which a naked fire-bearer with a torch in his hand is detailed and around its rim is written the threat "I will burn the city" (432-4). In Statius, when Capaneus tired of battles with mortals he decided to mount the walls of Thebes and he took a ladder made from two tree trunks and armed himself with an oak torch. From his position on the walls he sees lightning flashing about Thebes and says "now it is fitting for me to use these fires against Thebes, from here to refresh my torches and inflame my wearied oak." (*'his' ait, 'in Thebas, his iam decet ignibus uti / hinc renovare faces lassamque acccendere quercum.'*10. 925-6). This last detail in particular brings to mind Aeschylus's image of the fire-bearer, the shield's boast, and Capaneus' own vow to destroy the city.

Euripides' shield image of Capaneus in the *Phoenissae*, that of a giant bearing off the city on its back, (1131-2), is developed to a fair degree by Statius. As shown, Capaneus' height is often emphasized in the narrative. While Capaneus cannot lift the whole city, he is often portrayed as destroying or lifting parts of the battlement. The first time this motif

occurs in his *unus omnibus* where amongst his other activities, portraying every threat against Thebes, he reduces towers with rocks (10.744-751). This detail is also picked up in the final book. When Theseus approaches the city, the tired Thebans must issue out for battle since Capaneus has ruined the battlements (12.705-6). Earlier when he had gained the walls there is an extended description of Capaneus tearing the bridging from the inner abutment of the protecting wall (10-877-882) and, even as the sky blackens and foreshadows his doom, he is described as clinging onto the heights which he no longer sees (10.923). After he falls smouldering bits of towers remain in his hand (11.9).

Both important moments, the wielding of fire and the tearing of the abutment occur just before Capaneus' death. By the inclusion of aspects of the earlier insignia from Euripides and Aeschylus, Statius provides a literary culmination to rival the spectacular climax of Capaneus' career. After giving a nod to his predecessors, Statius then returns to the descriptive style used of the Hydra's demise earlier and provides the fiery end merited by Capaneus' actions and foreshadowed by his own shield.

Capaneus and Opheltes' Snake: 5.565-573 and 5.583-587

. . . 'at non mea vulnera,' clamat
et trabe fraxinea Capaneus subit obvius, 'umquam
effugies, seu tu pavidi ferus incola luci,
sive deis, utinamque deis, concessa voluptas,
non, si consertum super haec mihi membra Giganta
subveheres.' volat hasta tremens et hiantia monstri
ora subit linguaeque secat fera vincla trisulcae,
perque iubas stantes capitisque insigne corusci
emicat, et nigri sanie perfusa cerebri
figitur alta solo.
<the death throes of the snake>

ipse etiam e summa iam tela poposcerat aethra
Iuppiter, et dudum nimbique hiemesque coibant,
ni minor ira deo gravioraque tela mereri
servatus Capaneus; moti tamen aura cucurrit
fulminis et summas libavit vertice cristas.

. . . 'But not my wounds,' Capaneus declares,
and advances in the way with his ashen spear. 'You will
not escape, whether you are a fierce native of a feared grove,
or a delight given the gods - may it be the gods -
not if you drew a giant joined above these limbs
against me.' The quivering spear flies and enters the
gaping mouth of the monster and cuts the fierce
bindings of the triple tongue, it shines through the erect
crests, the insignia of its flashing head, and is fixed deep in the
soil covered with the gore of the dark brain.
<the death throes of the snake>
Indeed Jupiter himself now called for his spears from the high
air, and already storms and clouds had started to come together,
but for the fact that the anger of the god was less and
Capaneus was preserved for weightier missiles; yet the wind
of the stirred bolt flew and touched the lofty crests on its height.

Statius, having given a comprehensive picture of Capaneus' nature and physical appearance, at last in Book 5 shows his physical prowess. The relative importance of Capaneus, Amphiaraus, and Tydeus in comparison to the other Argive chieftains may be seen in the author's willingness to focus on their activities to a far greater degree than on those of the other Argive chieftains before the arrival of the expedition at Thebes. Capaneus' first battle is with a monstrous serpent. On the way to Thebes the Argive expedition is put on hold as its chiefs speak to the exiled queen of Lemnos, Hypsipyle. As she relates the story of the Lemnian women from their neglect of Aphrodite, to the slaughtering of their husbands, and to the arrival of the Argonauts, her ward - the child Opheltes - is slain by a serpent.

Upon discovering the snake, both Hippomedon and Capaneus attempt to slay it.

Hippomedon goes first and casts a large rock whose details Statius elaborates as one by which a field is marked (*quo discretus ager* 5.559). Hippomedon's cast hits home but does not harm the serpent. Capaneus then casts his spear and mortally wounds the beast.

Statius uses this episode to emphasize Capaneus' ungodliness, raw strength, and his coming death. In order to show Capaneus' impiety, Statius must make the snake as guilt-free and as divine as possible. Statius relates that the snake was locally said to be sacred to Jupiter (5.511)[175] and that it had been stirred not by hunger but by thirst, since a severe drought was afflicting the land (5.520). The drought, though, is another sign, like lightning and thunder, which was meant by Jupiter to discourage the ill-fated Argive expedition. The expedition itself is at least partly to blame as well for the death of the child. The child is killed accidentally (the snake is called *ignaro serpente.*) by the tail of the snake as it passes (5.538-540). Lastly Statius attempts to raise sympathy for the snake by including details of its mourning by Lernean and Nemean nymphs along with fauns (5.580-582).

Capaneus' spear-cast is introduced by harsh words, just as if he were encountering an enemy soldier on the field, and puts him squarely in his traditional role as a boaster and a *contemptor deum.* His hope that the snake is a favourite of the gods (5.566), which turns out to be true, marks his unfailing distaste for gods. His self-confidence is shown by his willingness to take on a giant at 5.570; with this inclusion the main icons attached to his battle gear: snakes and a giant (on his crest) are recycled by Statius in this episode

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175 The snake is called a *sacer horror* at 5.505 and rather then taking it as Mozley 'the accursed terror' (41). It is better understood as 'holy-terror', in the sense that, though monstrous, it is a divinely sanctioned guardian of Jupiter's' grove.

surprisingly, as enemies which Capaneus wishes to conquer. Thus Capaneus, here as in the shield-scene, vacillates between being a monster and being a slayer of monsters. Capaneus' success in slaying the serpent marks a great, though unholy, achievement. Hippomedon's boundary stone seems to mark a limit of what man can or should do, while Capaneus' deadly strike pushes limits.

There is also foreshadowing. The snake leaves with Capaneus' spear and takes it to the temple of Jupiter (5.575-577), perhaps anticipating Statius' disarming of Capaneus in the lightning blast at his death in Book 10. Further, Capaneus has also drawn Jupiter's anger with the slaying of the serpent and is almost slain here (5.583-587). Statius shows excellent skill in portraying the present and future anger of Jupiter by having the winds stirred by the readied lightning graze the top of Capaneus' helm. This helm has a giant on its summit. By adding this wind Statius plays out in miniature the death of Capaneus. If this interpretation is right, the giant on the helmet represents Capaneus on the wall, and the wind, from the bolt, represents Jupiter's lightning. As a final point, the slaying of the snake marks Capaneus as an avenger of the dead. As seen in the previous section Capaneus is involved with death and funerals. He plays that role here and the scene prepares the audience for his later involvement with Hippomedon's and Tydeus' deaths.

The Boxing Match 6.729-825

nunc opus est animis: infestos tollite caestus
comminus; haec bellis et ferro proxima virtus.'
Constitit immanis cerni immanisque timeri 730

Argolicus Capaneus, ac dum nigrantia plumbo
tegmina cruda boum non mollier ipse lacertis
induitur, 'date tot iuvenum de milibus unum
huc,' ait, 'atque utinam potius de stirpe veniret
aemulus Aonia, quem fas demittere leto,
nec mea crudelis civili sanguine virtus.'
obstipuere animi, fecitque silentia terror.
tandem insperatus nuda de plebe Laconum
prosililit Alcidamas: mirantur Dorica regum
agmina, sed socii fretum Polluce magistro
norant et sacras inter crevisse palaestras.
ipse deus posuitque manus et bracchia finxit
(materiae suadebat amor); tunc saepe locavit
comminus, et simili stantem miratus in ira
sustulit exsultans nudumque ad pectora pressit.
illum indignatur Capaneus ridetque vocantem,
ut miserans, poscitque alium; tandemque coactus
restistit, et stimulis iam languida colla tumescunt.
Fulmineas alte suspensi corpora plantis
erexere manus; tuto procul ora recessu
armorum in speculis, aditusque ad vulnera clausi.
hic, quantum Stygiis Tityos consurgat ab arvis,
si torvae patiantur aves, tanta undique pandit
membrorum spatia et tantis ferus ossibus exstat.
hic paulo ante puer, sed enim maturius aevo
robur, et ingentes spondet tener impetus annos,
quem vinci haud quisquam saevo neque sanguine tingi
malit, ut erecto timeant spectacula voto.
Ut sese permensi oculis et uterque priorem
speravere locum, non protinus ira nec ictus:
alternus paulum timor et permixta furori
consilia; inclinant tantum contraria iactu
bracchia et explorant caestus hebetentque terendo.
doctior hic differt animum metuensque futuri
cunctatus vires dispensat: at ille nocendi
prodigus incautusque sui ruit omnis et ambas
consumit sine lege manus atque irrita frendit
insurgens seque ipse premit. sed providus astu
et patria vigil are Lacon hos reicit ictus,
hos cavet; interdum nutu capitisque citati
integer obsequio, manibus nunc obvia tela
discutiens, instat gressu vultuque recedit:
saepe etiam iniustis collatum viribus hostem

(is vigor ingenio, tanta experientia dextrae est)
ultro audax animis intratque et obumbrat et alte
assilit. ut praeceps cumulo salit unda minantes
in scopulos et fracta redit, sic ille furentem
circumit expugnans; levat ecce diuque minatur
in latus inque oculos, illum rigida arma caventem
avocat ac manibus necopinum interserit ictum
callidus et mediam designat vulnere frontem:
iam cruor, et tepido, et tepido signantur tempora rivo.
nescit adhuc Capaneus subitumque peragmina murmur
miratur; verum ut fessam super ora reduxit
forte manum et summo maculas in vellere vidit,
non leo, non iaculo tantum indignata recepto
tigris: agit toto cedentem fervidus arvo
praecipitatque retro iuvenem atque in terga supinat,
dentibus horrendum stridens, geminatque rotatas
multiplicatque manus. rapiunt conamina venti,
pars cadit in caestus; motu Spartanus acuto
mille cavet lapsas circum cava tempora mortes
auxilioque pedum, sed non tamen immemor artis
adversus fugit et fugiens tamen ictibus obstat.
Et iam utrumque labor suspiriaque aegra fatigant:
tardius ille premit, nec iam hic absistere velox,
defectique ambo genibus pariterque quierunt.
sic ubi longa vagos lassarunt aequora nautas
et signum de puppe datum, posuere parumper
bracchia: vix requies, iam vox citat altera remos.
ecce iterum immodice venientem eludit et exit
sponte ruens mersusque umeris: effunditur ille
in caput, assurgentem alio puer improbus ictu
perculit eventuque impalluit ipse secundo.
clamorem Inachidae, quantum non litora, tollunt,
non nemora. illum ab humo conantem ut vidit Adrastus
tollentemque manus et non toleranda parantem:
'ite, oro, socii, furit, ite, opponite dextras,
festinate, furit, palmamque et praemia ferte!
non prius, effracto quam misceat ossa cerebro,
absistet, video; moriturum auferte Lacona.'
nec mora, prorumpit Tydeus, nec iussa recusat
Hippomedon; tunc vix ambo conatibus ambas
restringunt cohibentque manus ac plurima suadent:
'vincis, abi; pulchrum vitam donare minori.
noster et hic bellique comes.' nil frangitur heros,

ramumque oblatumque manu thoraca repellit
vociferans: 'liceat! non has ego pulvere crasso
atque cruore genas, meruit quibus iste favorem
semivir, infodiam, mittamque informe sepulcro
corpus et Oebalio donem lugere magistro?'
dicit; at hunc socii tumidum et vicisse negantem
avertunt, contra laudant insignis alumnum
Taygeti longeque minas risere Lacones.

"Now the need is for spirit: Lift the dangerous boxing gloves for hand to hand fighting; this excellence is most like wars and iron."
He stood up, a terrible sight, a terrible fear,
Argive Capaneus, and while he donned on his arms
the unworked hides of oxen, dark with lead, himself
no softer, "Grant me here one out of so many thousands of
youths," he says "and would that rather my opponent
came from the Aonian line, whom it were proper to send to death,
and my virtue were not piteous with a citizen's blood."
Their spirits were senseless, and fear caused silence.
Finally unexpectedly Alcidamus, from the naked stock of
the Laconians, jumps up: the Doric hosts of the chiefs
are astonished, but his compatriots knew his reliance on Pollux,
his trainer, and that he had flowered among the sacred gymnasia.
And too that the god himself fashioned his hands and framed his arms (love for his subject was compelling); then often he made him his opponent for hand to hand combat, and marveled at him standing equal in wrath;
exultant lifted him and held him bare to his chest.
Capaneus resents that one and laughs at him as he challenges,
as though he pities, and asks for another; and at last compelled
he took his stand, his relaxed neck now begins to swell under the spurs.
Bodies raised on tip-toe they straighten their
fulminating hands; heads apart at a safe distance on the
heights of their shoulders, entrances to wounds shut. This one,
as extensive as Tityos surging from Stygian fields, if the
cruel birds allowed it, he reveals on every side such a size
of bulk and towers fierce with such bones.
This one was recently a boy (but truly his strength is more mature
than his age), and his young ardour promises remarkable years.
No one wishes see him beat nor bathed with fell blood.
So they fear the spectacle with attentive longing.
As they sized each other up with their eyes, both hoped
for the earlier opportunity, not initially was there anger or blows:
for a little there was shifting fear and strategies mixed with

rage. They only drove back with a punch opposing arms and their
gloves probe and grow dull from the grind.
This one, more skillful, checks his spirit, fearful of the
future, he delays and husbands his strength. But that man, wasteful
when it comes to a chance to harm and reckless with his body, attacked and
exhausted both hands, in disorder, wholly committed. Angered he gnashes his
teeth while attacking and he drives himself on. But the Laconian
prudent from his craft and alert with native skill, cast
back these blows. Now and then with a nod of his quick controlled head
he is safe, and now scattering with his hands the opposing
throws, he advances a pace and retreats his head:
He often even attacked his enemy, though unequal in strength,
(such force of talent, such experience in his right)
daring beyond his inclination he gets in, he overshadows and he
attacks from above. As headlong a wave dives upon a
threatening rock in a heap and retreats broken. In this way the one
circles attacking the other as he rages; behold he lifts himself and
threatens his flanks and eyes, he misleads the other,
who guards against the stiff weapons, and skillfully interposed an
unexpected blow with his hands and marks him with a wound mid-brow.
Now there is blood and Capaneus' temples are stained with a warm stream.
Capaneus does not yet realize it and wonders at the sudden murmur
that goes through the ranks. Indeed as he drew his
wearied hand over his strong brow and he saw blood-spots on the
surface of the hide, not a lion, not a tiger felt such scorn after being
struck by a javelin: violently he drives the retreating opponent the
length of the grounds, and he forces the youth backwards and even prone
on his back. Grinding his teeth terribly he doubles then
multiplies his whirled punches. The winds take their strength,
part fall on gloves; the Spartan with careful dodging, and sometimes
with the help of his footwork, wards off a thousand deaths which fall about his
hollow temples. He does not however retreat unmindful of skill
and though fleeing throws punches in the way.
And now on both sides the effort and struggling breaths are fatiguing:
That one attacks more slowly, now this one evades less swiftly.
Equally they rest, both having sunk to their knees.
Just like when the wide waters weary the wandering sailors
and they rest their arms for a time at sign from the stern:
scarce is there repose and now another order stirs the oars.
Behold, again he eluded the unrestrained attacker and withdraws
falling on purpose with his shoulders tucked down. The other is hurled
on his head and the boy naughtily strikes him with another blow
as he rises and Amycus himself grows pale at his success.

The Laconians raise a racket the woods and shores can't equal.
As Adrastus sees Capaneus striving from the ground,
raising his fists, and preparing unsufferable things:
'Go, I beg, comrades, he's gone mad, go, bar him with your arms,
hurry, he's gone mad, bear the palm and the prizes!
He will not stop before he mixes bones with broken skull,
I can picture it; lead off the doomed Laconian.'
Without delay Tydeus rushes forth and Hippomedon does
not refuse the commands; then barely do they bind his
arms with their efforts and restrain his hands and at last
they exhort him with many a word: 'you win, go, it is fair to give
life to the weaker. He is one of us and a comrade in arms.' The hero
is in no way subdued, he pushes away the branch and offered corselet
screaming: 'Let it be! Am I not to bury these cheeks, by which
that half man earned his favour, with gore
and thick dust and to send him from an inglorious grave
and to give the corpse to his Oebalian master to mourn?
he speaks; and his comrades turn him away, swollen with anger and denying
that he had won, opposite the Laconians praise the son of illustrious
Taygetus and from a distance laughed at the threats.

The funeral games of Opheltes are the subject of the 6th book of the *Thebaid*. During this episode Capaneus has his third major appearance. Each chieftain participates in an event, and Capaneus' event is boxing. Statius had a wealth of sources from which to draw in crafting the bout. Funeral games were common in epic and our episode has parallels in both Homer's *Iliad* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. As an added complication, the boxing match itself is a type of heroic single combat and thus appears in non funereal-combats in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as well as in Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica*, Theocritus' 22nd *Idyll*, and Valerius Flaccus' *Argonautica*. Statius' blending of sources is acute in this passage.[176]

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176 For an overview of Greek and Roman boxing see Poliakoff 68-88. For the rather unflattering response of Roman writers(by this Wistrand means prose writers) to such sport see Wistrand 48-54. Greek athletic contests were practiced as early as 186 B.C. and found especial popularity in the first century A.D. under a variety of Emperors including Augustus, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. Domitian's

The passage divides into four larger units. Lines 6.729-759 are introductory and give the event and the competitors. Lines 6.760-795 detail the first round of the fight and include a general description of each boxer's style as well as Capaneus' wounding and subsequent rage. Lines 6.796-805 cover the second round from the renewal of the contest after the competitors' short rest until Capaneus is knocked to the ground. Lastly, lines 6. 806-825 wrap up the contest with the intervention of Adrastos in the match, the dragging away of Capaneus from the fight, and the awarding of the prizes.

Statius uses the first section, 6.729-759, to introduce the combatants; he includes at the start of the match a reference to the battle between Ajax and Diomedes at *Iliad* 23.811-25. Adrastos summons the competitors and notes that the excellence found in boxing is most like battles and like iron, *i.e.* sword or spear fighting (*haec bellis et ferro proxima virtus* 6.730). Besides calling for the sort of event that one would expect Capaneus, who has been champing at the bit for battle, to be interested in, the lines also indicate that Statius will not be giving us a duel such as is found at *Iliad* 23.811-25.[177] That duel was fought out in full armour by Diomedes (connected through his father, Tydeus, to Theban myth) and Telemonian Ajax, and in Homer's funeral games comes close to a battle-field encounter.

While Statius does not include armed combat in his funeral games he is aware of Homer's use of armed combat and follows its general structure. If his reader has Homer's

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Capitoline Games were in the Greek mode and already in place before the publication of the *Thebaid*. A permanent stadium was built for the celebration of the games which could hold some 30 000 spectators (See Friedlönder 117-130). Statius, besides presenting a traditionally epic funeral game, could through the *Thebaid* capitalize on the public popularity of Greek athletics as well as show support for the Emperor.

[177] Stated at 3.598-600.

match in mind, he may expect a match between two opponents, one known for his size (*μέγας* is used to describe Ajax at the outset, 23.810), the other for his might (Diomedes is *κρατερός*, 23.811), the battle will astound the audience with its ferocity (*θάμβος* holds the viewers, 23.815), one opponent will go too far and so threaten the life of the other that the fight must be called (Diomedes keeps stabbing at the neck of Ajax, 23.821 and the Achaians fear for Ajax' life, 23.822), and the prize will go to the most menacing combatant (Achilles gives the main prize, a sword, scabbard, and belt, to Diomedes, 23.824-5). As for the general development of the fight, Statius follows this passage but he also creates interest by combining this episode with another famous match, the battle between Pollux and Amycus, and letting the details fall into place in surprising ways.

Capaneus is the first to stand; Statius dwells on the frightful aspect of his appearance before and after his challenge to the other soldiers.[178] *immanis* is used emphatically through its appearance twice in one line (6.731) and line 6.738 is given over to the effect of his challenge on the spectators: their spirits were astounded and terror caused silence (*obstipuere animi, fecitque silentia terror*). Capaneus' eagerness for battle is reinforced by his actions. Even before he issues his challenge he binds the cestus on his hands. Statius compares the hero to his own rough gauntlets. His challenge starts civilly with the calling out of an opponent from his audience (6.734), but his blood-thirst is evident to all when he voices his

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178 Klinnert notes that Statius reverses his approach to this passage from that of the catalogue by dwelling on Capaneus' size (27). In the catalogue this aspect was only given indirectly. Here *immanis* likely refers in the first place to his size but its secondary sense 'monstrous' is surely at work as well.

remorse at not having a Theban opponent to kill (6.734-6).[179]

Lines 6.739-746 introduce a Laconian, Alcidamus, who is willing to fight Capaneus. Alcidamus is no base contender but was personally trained by Pollux, famous in myth for his boxing skill. Capaneus does not know the youth's background and his reaction is one of scorn. He pretends to pity the lad, mocks his challenge, and asks for another opponent (748). Statius focuses somewhat on the winning looks and erotic charms of the handsome boy throughout the match. He uses the adjective *nudus* twice, once at 6.739 to describe the Spartans in general and again at 6.746 of Alcidamus in particular. The words used of Pollux's training of the boy focuses on physical contact (6.739), and Pollux's joy in the boy's skill is emphasized by the hero's embrace (. . . *nudumque ad pectora pressit* 6.746). When he successfully hits Capaneus with a slightly underhanded strategy Statius calls him a naughty boy (*puer improbus* 6.804), language which may be rooted in Virgil's 8th *Eclogue*. There Eros himself is called naughty twice . . . *puer improbus ille?/improbus ille puer* (49-50). Capaneus himself recognizes that part of the reason that Alcidamus has won the favour of the crowd and perhaps the special training of Pollux, is his fair cheeks (6.819-20).

References to a famous teacher draw in a host of parallel combats with varying outcomes. Alcidamus famous trainer has a clear parallel in Virgil's funeral games for Anchises. In that combat Dares, who will lose the match, eagerly takes up the challenge, and

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179 Klinnert dwells on Statius' polarized description of the combatants. He believes that Capaneus is painted in an entirely monstrous way while Alcidamus is merely portrayed as a sympathetic figure but that this should not be taken to mean that the characters are flat since both Capaneus' reaction to the fight and his opponent change through-out the episode and Statius makes Alcidamus a skillful underdog whose abilities may not be taken too lightly (33-4).

is met by a reluctant Entellus. Entellus' teacher was Eryx who was famous in Sicily (5.393) and dared even to box with Hercules (5.414). In the boxing match of the funeral games in the *Iliad*, Epeios, who will win the event, takes up the challenge first and, after coaxing (as in Entellus' match), Euryalos, steps up (23.677). Euryalos' father was Mekisteus who was the victor over the Thebans in the boxing matches at the funeral games of Oedipus (23.678-80). If these were the only stories at play the reader might think that Statius is building suspense as to how the match will end. There is, though, a final series of combat which indicates at least the nominal victor of the battle.

Pollux was a famous boxer and in literature his most important bout is with the Bebrycian king Amycus. This story has general relevance to that of Capaneus. Pollux is the son of Jupiter, and through his student, Alcidamus, Capaneus is again brought into opposition with Jupiter. Pollux's battle with Amycus also acts as a pendant story that warns of the result of going against the gods. Amycus had been treating his guests violently and therefore transgressed the laws that Jupiter safe-guards and like Polyphemus in the *Odyssey*, gets his just deserts. The battle is recounted in Apollonius of Rhodes (2.1-97), Theocritus' 22nd *Idyll* (27-134), and in Valerius Flaccus (4.99-343). Much of Statius' handling reflects his predecessors'.

To start from the beginning, at 6.729 we have a swift movement into the match by Adrastos, whose words emphasize the warlike nature of the contest. His words lead directly into the description of the combatants, starting with that of Capaneus at 6.731ff and that of Alcidamus at 6.740ff. After each of the combatants' initial description, a reaction is given. The Argives at 6.738 are said to be terrified, while Capaneus' disdainful and trivializing

reaction to Alcidamus is given from 6.747-9. At 6.750-757 the relative strength of each opponent is described with an emphasis on size for Capaneus (6.753-5) and the youth and early promise of strength in Alcidamus (6.756-7). The remainder of the introductory passage reveals that the Laconians both pray for Alcidamus' victory and remain fearful of the outcome (6.758-9).

The introductory portion of Theocritus' 22nd Idyll runs from lines 27-83. Theocritus dwells on the landscape first (27-43) taking care to make it as inviting as possible in order to put into contrast the gruesome match about to take place as well as the relatively brutal looking Amycus. Theocritus describes his physique at 44-52. Besides emphasizing his size (his chest is called *πελώρια* and his back *πλατύ* 46) Theocritus also describes him as made of iron, likening him to a statue that has been hammered out of that metal (*σαρκὶ σιδηρείῃ σφυρήλατος οἷα κολοσσός* 47). Amycus and Pollux then have a brief conversation in which Amycus refuses hospitality to him, challenges him to a fight, and sets the prize of the defeated as slavery (53-74). The introduction is concluded by each opponent summoning their own comrades (75-82). Statius' introduction picks up on some of this material. The roughness of Capaneus is made clear in a comparison of the hero to the gloves he is wearing which are made of lead and unworked hide (6.732-3). Both treat poorly their intended foe: Capaneus wishes for a Theban to kill (6.737) and Amycus is inhospital (53-74). Lastly, both fights are set up as if they were single combat on the battle-field: Adrastos introduces his contest with a reference to wars and battles (730) while the stakes that Amycus settles upon will make the loser the thrall of the victor, that is, a spear-won captive (71).

Apollonius of Rhodes does not use an introductory dialogue to illustrate the criminal

qualities of Amycus, rather he describes him directly as such before the challenge to a match is made. At 2.4 he is called *ὑπεροπλήεστατον ἀνδρῶν* and at line 9 this quality is given a short illustration, he is inhospitable in not asking after the sailors' origin and in this insults them (*ὑπερβασίῃσιν ἄτισσεν*). His challenge follows immediately (11-17). He demands to fight their best warrior (*τὸν ἄριστον* 15). This personal challenge is gracious compared to Capaneus' neutral call for one from so many thousands of youths present (*... tot iuvenum de milibus unum* 734) which denies a positive adjective to his opponent to be. Amycus' challenge here, like Capaneus', is met by a strong reaction. The Argonauts are angered and Pollux quickly takes up the challenge (19-21).[180] This contrasts with Capaneus' opponent who is said to rise 'finally' (*tandem*). The valour, and confidence of Pollux is marked. Pollux rebukes Amycus at 22-24 in his formal acceptance to a fight. Apollonius does not leave in doubt his hero's moral position and valour, while Statius does not let Capaneus' opponent reply to the challenge. He merely lets Alcidamus' connection to Pollux speak to the hero's skill and piety (6.740-42). The reliance of the youth on action rather than word is also in keeping with his Laconian heritage (6.739).

In Apollonius, the battle is defined as a moral battle. The audience expects the pious son of Jupiter to beat the inhospitable son of Poseidon.[181] In Statius, the moral quality is active and we do expect Capaneus to suffer. However Statius adds another dimension to the contest. If we can see this battle as expressing qualities useful in war, as Adrastos stated

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180 In this they are shown to be more valorous than the Argive chieftains who delay before taking up Hector's challenge 7.92-3.

181 Just as we expect Polyphemus to pay for his impiety.

(6.729-30), then we are also seeing a contest between two very different styles of warfare. Alcidamus represents a controlled, skilful, and pious approach to battle, Capaneus an unrestrained, furious, impious style.[182] While both are futile in a war that the gods do not sanction, Statius gives a partial indication of which is better. Just before Capaneus dies he spurs on Alcidamus and his band to keep attacking Thebes. They do and actually make it inside the city. They are ultimately trapped and killed there but their skill attains as high a degree of 'success' as Capaneus' fury. It is interesting that Alcidamus himself receives a eulogy from Statius on his actions and virtue while Capaneus is left nearly without praise.

Statius and Apollonius allow the challenger to react to his opponent. Amycus is now silent and keeps his eyes fixed on his adversary. Apollonius compares him to a lion who keeps his eyes on the man who first wounded him when he is surrounded by hunters (2.25-7). While indicating the seriousness with which Amycus takes the match and his hatred for his opponent, the simile also foreshadows the wildness of Amycus' boxing-style and Pollux' danger. There is no simile in Statius at this point, but Capaneus' reaction is in keeping with the Bebrycian's. After laughing at his challenger and pretending to pity him (6.747-8) he readies to face him. Statius writes that Capaneus' neck swells (*colla tumescunt* 6.749), a sign of his anger.

They include next a fresh description of the opponents including similes. Both start

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182 Vessey, notes that the same *furor* that drives Capaneus here also drives him to go against the gods later. He notes two other connections between this episode and his death-scene. A reference is made to their hands flashing like lightning bolts (*fulmineas* 6.750) and this may at a stretch evoke Capaneus' death by lightning. As well Capaneus first laughs mockingly at his opponent at 6.747 (*ridet*) and is made fun of in turn by the Laconians at the end of the match at 6.825 (*risere*). When he threatens Jupiter, the god laughs before striking him down (*risit*) (1970 433-44).

with the issuer of the challenge. Amycus is likened to a son of Typhoeus or of the Earth herself 2.39-40. At this point the adjective *πέλωρ* is again used and the main connection to the simile is size. The reference to Typhoeus also marks Amycus as anti-Olympian and a fitting match for Pollux, the son of Jupiter. Statius stresses Capaneus' size by comparing the size of his limbs to Tityos' (6.753-5). This simile does mark him as impious and perhaps foreshadows his defeat. The two youths are described next. Apollonius compares Pollux to a star (40-42). This reference puts him in heavenly company but also should remind the audience that Pollux will be deified and that one of his aspects is as a light for sailors in danger.[183] Statius does not give Alcidamus a simile, he instead dwells on the age of the youth and his strength (6.756-7). Boxing matches are often about age, though youthfulness is no guarantee to victory.[184] Apollonius' introduction is fuller than Statius' and includes both more conversation as well as an arming scene, Statius moves quickly into the match itself.

The last of the authors who deal with this episode is Valerius Flaccus, an author whose work, the *Argonautica*, Statius could have consulted. Valerius Flaccus' treatment of the episode runs over 200 lines, twice as long as Theocritus', Apollonius', and Statius' versions. Lines 4.99-200 set the scene for the match. Valerius Flaccus dwells on this aspect at length, including Neptune's lament for his soon to be killed son (4.114-132), a meeting with a fellow visitor to the land who lost a companion to Amycus in a boxing match (4.133-

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183 The opposition of this hero, who will be a protector of sailors in rough seas, with a son of the sea is also apt.

184 Odysseus is the elder in his fight with Irus at *Od.* 18.1-183 and this theme is emphasized at the outset of their match. Diomedes is the younger victor in his combat with Ajax at *Il.* 23.651-699. In the *Aen.* 5.368-460 Entellus is reluctant because of his age to fight.

173), and a description of the horrific cave dwelling of the Bebrycian king (4.174-198). The description of the cave contrasts with Theocritus' pleasant setting. The author points out early that Amycus challenges visitors to a match, so our initial reaction to the landscape stands in for our reaction to the king himself. This is so with the Argonauts whose silent gazes at 4.189 (*atque oculos cuncti inter se tenuere silentes*) would also have been apt had the giant appeared first. Here, as in the other versions, Pollux takes up the challenge first (4.190-192). His visage is called starry at 190 (*sidereo ore*) which is perhaps meant to remind the reader of Apollonius' comparison of Pollux to a star (*οὐρανίῳ .. / ἀστέρι* 2.40-41).

With 4.199 ff. another introductory portion, similar to those we have already seen, is given.[185] At Amycus' arrival there is an accompanying simile comparing him to a mountain (4.202-3). Apollonius' Amycus is presented as rough and rugged as Theocritus' who was compared to an iron statue and as Statius' Capaneus who was compared to his own lead and hide gloves. He issues his challenge at 4.206-221 and shows his disdain for his opponents by assuming his victory over them; he claims that he will stop all from crossing the Bebrycian sea (4.220-221). During his challenge he also shows his disdain for Juppiter, a mark of Polyphemus and of Capaneus, with his stern words 'Jupiter is king on other shores' (*aliis rex Iuppiter oris*) (4.219). Valerius Flaccus' *Argonauts* are as valorous as Apollonius' crew and many take up the challenge, but here again Pollux does so first.

The clearest point of contact between Statius' and Valerius Flaccus' bout occurs with the accentuation of the youth of the opponent. Valerius Flaccus focuses on the youth of

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185 Valerius Flaccus draws on the *Odyssey's* Polyphemus for his characterization of Amycus throughout.

Pollux and Amycus' reaction. Statius follows the same strategy. Capaneus' response can be characterized as a mocking disdain, while Amycus is at first enraged at the prospect of fighting a small and too young opponent.[186] This is no honourable match. Amycus and Capaneus are not happy with the choice of their opponent. Capaneus' disdain is showed in his pretence of pity for Alcidamus. A similar reaction is had by Amycus at 4.240-242 which could be taken as genuine pity but since they also carry a threat of violence and death are likely to be mocking as well.[187] Statius may well have drawn his *ut miserans* of 4.748 from this passage. Valerius provides more impact to his setting by not only having the usual group of Bebrycians and Argonauts watch, but also by including as spectators the ghosts of the defeated victims of Amycus (4.258-260).

Theocritus, Apollonius of Rhodes, Valerius Flaccus and Statius all break up the match into two parts. Theocritus' first round runs from 83-106. These twenty-four lines portray Pollux's skill from the start and there is no doubt that Amycus will be defeated. The giant is abused terribly from the start; the first round ends with Pollux knocking Amycus flat out on the ground (106). Theocritus is only interested in showing the complete mastery of Pollux and does not let the outcome hang in contention. In Apollonius of Rhodes the first round again runs about 20 lines (2.67-87) but this author makes more out of the struggle and is followed in his handling by both Valerius Flaccus and Statius. In Statius this portion runs from 6.760-6.95.

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186 Valerius gives the vivid detail *sanguineosque rotat furiis ardentibus orbes* (4.235)

187 His Amycus laments the loss of beauty that Pollux will suffer, implies that he will return as an ugly corpse to his mother, and questions his willingness to die at Amycus' hand (4.240-243).

First, the match is made more even and thus more dangerous to Pollux and more exciting for the audience. Apollonius accomplishes this by describing Amycus' attack in terms of a simile. As the son of Neptune, he is fitly compared to the sea-waves that threaten to crush a ship which just manages to escape by the skill of the helmsman (2.70-73). The simile is excellent in that it also includes nautical imagery and complements Pollux' ability to escape the dangerous opponent. This wild attack is juxtaposed against Pollux' probing of Amycus' style for weak points (2.76-7). The mutual punishment each man gives and endures is described in another simile which compares the continuous falling of fists to the striking of ship-builders' hammers (2.79-83). The match in Apollonius is broken up by the weariness of the combatants who must retire and rest before resuming the match. As a brief comparison, Statius' first round picks up on the cleverness of Alcidamus, which is given greater expansion, and on Capaneus' wildness, which is likewise fully described over the course of the 36 line description (6.760-795). Statius breaks up Apollonius' clustering of similes and allots one to each character at different stages of the match. He cleverly reverses Apollonius' image of the sea crashing against a ship by comparing the continual attack and retreat of Alcidamus in his assault on Capaneus as a wave striking and falling away from a cliff (6.777-8). Capaneus is marked throughout as wild and incautious (esp. 6.767-9) while his opponent is skilful and prudent (6.765 *doctior*, 6.769 *providus*, 6.770 *vigil*). It is fitting that Capaneus falls for a clever feint by Pollux and is wounded at 6.783. At this point Capaneus is further enraged; Statius compares his anger to that felt by a wounded tiger or lion (6.787-788). His comparison may have been drawn from Apollonius' simile at 2.26-7 which compared Amycus' gaze locked on Pollux to that of a lion's when it singles out the

hunter who wounded it.[188] The fight between Amycus and Pollux is even at this point and soon the wearied opponents take a break. In Statius, the break occurs as Capaneus, still smarting from the wound to his pride, pursues Alcidamus about the field (6.788-95). While Statius is at pains to make the fighting seem even, Alcidamus is forced to retreat; he is clearly outclassed in strength. At the point when Entellus furiously pursues Dares about the field in Virgil, the match is called and Entellus given the prize (5.461-464). In Statius, Adrastos does not seize on this moment to end the match, and so the violence escalates.

In Valerius Flaccus the first round runs from 4.261-281 and is thus about the same length as Apollonius' account. He follows Apollonius more closely than Statius does. Valerius Flaccus fastens on Apollonius' comparison of Amycus to waves assailing a ship and applies details of the simile to both fighters. While the actual wave is missing in Valerius he still uses a wild natural event, that of strong wind (*rapax turbo* 4.261-2), to capture the wild style of the fighter, while Pollux is now a helmsman keeping his ship sound amongst the waves which the winds have aroused (4.268-71). Statius seems to have picked a particular detail of Capaneus' attack from Valerius Flaccus in round one. Statius notes that in Capaneus' fury, his efforts land in the wind (*rapiunt conamina venti* 6.791). Valerius had emphasized the same point with Amycus, noting that he wasted his strength and fury in the clouds (*effudit nubibus iras / ardoremque* 4.273-4).

Valerius emphasizes the brutality of the battle and his opponents even while resting on break are fierce. They are compared to Lapiths or Paeonians who are revived by Mars on

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188 This is also apt for Amycus since he wears a lion's skin.

the field of battle (4.280-1). Statius instead fastens on the gradual weariness of the two in the third section of this episode (6.791-801) and supplies a simile to bring out the cost of their sustained effort (6798-801). They are compared to rowers to whom the signal for a rest is given (5.800). The effect of Valerius' simile is to sustain the pitch of battle and valour in the transition from round one to two. Statius is careful to release the strain and tension of battle for the audience so that he may energetically renew the battle in the second round. This he accomplishes by the simile. At 5.801 the sailors in the simile are called back to their work and likewise the boxers are. Statius speedily puts them to the oar, and the opponents to battle by extension. With the clipped and verbless 'scarcely a rest' followed with the emphatic 'now another order speeds the oars' (*vix requies, iam vox citat altera remos*) the match resumes.[189]

Theocritus' round two is marked by the sudden felling of Amycus (106), who rises and begins to earnestly strive to kill Pollux in the match. Even so Theocritus, who is after all writing a hymn in honour of the Dioscuri, gives all the glory to Pollux, who continues to punish the giant. He even grows stronger as the match progresses (113-4) until he delivers a crushing blow to Amycus' temple, followed by a severe beating to his body and head (123-130). The fight ends with Pollux forcing the giant to swear to cease his challenges (134). Round two and the end of the fight in Apollonius is far more final and quickly over. The two clash, coming together as Apollonius notes with a climax-marking simile, like bulls fighting for a cow (2.89-90). Amycus foolishly strikes downward with a chopping blow at Pollux

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189 The simile is also fitting since both boxing and rowing strains the arms to the limit.

who dodges the blow and strikes him mortally above the ear-crushing the skull (90-97). His resolution is markedly different from Theocritus', whose conclusion brings peace. At the death of Amycus in Apollonius there is a general melee with Amycus' subjects in which the rest of the Argonauts are glorified.

Valerius finds a mid-point between the narrative of both authors in his handling. His Pollux wounds Amycus in stages and he becomes more wild with anger, until in his rage he becomes completely open to attack and his adversary snaps his neck with a particularly vicious blow (282-312). The relentless fall of blows is brought out by their comparison to an overseer keeping time for the beating hammers of the Cyclops (4.286-8). While this captures the unworldly and terrible sounds of the beatings it also hints at Jupiter's power and his guardianship of hospitality, which among other things Amycus has transgressed. There is however no fight between the Argonauts and the Bebrycians. These immediately flee and Valerius' scene ends with the Argonauts gazing at the size of the outstretched corpse and congratulations for the victor (4.315-343).

Statius follows all three authors in the close of his match. His final round (6.796-805), as in Theocritus', is swift. In it Capaneus charges his opponent, who strikes him down (6.802-805). The audience may expect Capaneus to be knocked out but the effect of the blow is much different. Capaneus gets up, and is even stronger in his anger. Capaneus' rage leads to a different outcome in the narrative. His opponent is proved to be no Pollux. His fury is so terrible that his opponent and king Adrastos take note.[190] Round 2 is thus handled

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[190] The terrible speed and suddenness of his fall is brought across by Statius' handling. We are told he is hit and our next image is through Adrastos' eyes who only sees him getting up (6.808). Statius

quickly; and the tension mounts suddenly as Alcidamus realizes that he has been too lucky in landing his punch. Even if it was a little underhanded, Capaneus had it coming, and while pleasing, it puts Alcidamus in great danger. The poet states that he grows pale at landing his blow home (*eventuque impalluit ipse secundo* 6.805).

The fourth part of this passage runs from 6.806-825 and here Statius leaves behind models based on the match between Amycus vs. Pollux. He returns in general to the resolution found in the *Iliad*, between Diomedes and Ajax. There the prize goes to the fighter who puts his opponent at the most risk. The Achaians feared for Ajax, Adrastos now fears for Alcidamus and interferes (6.809-12).[191] The official contest is resolved with this and Capaneus is dragged against his will from the field. He is far from satisfied and wants the chance to crush the skull of his opponent, which was his deadly intent, present at the start of the event. Even if the Laconian had been up to the task of stopping Capaneus, which he does not seem to be, victory would have to come through the death of his opponent and Statius needs Capaneus around for a while yet.

In the end Statius manages to replay the match between Amycus and Pollux and uses it to good effect in characterizing Capaneus as a monster.[192] He writes a tight episode

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deliberately skims over the details.

191 There are Virgilian echoes here. When Entellus received the prize bull for beating Dares in Virgil's boxing match, before he hangs up his glove for good he strikes the bull on the head and kills it. Virgil describes this as . . . *effracto inlisit in ossa crebro:* (5.480). Adrastos pictures Alcidamus similarly in saying that Capaneus will not stop sooner . . . *effracto quam misceat ossa cerebro* (6.811).

192 Ten Kate judged this passage to have more impact than any of the earlier scenes in defining how monstrous Capaneus is and states *mea opinione poeta in libro VI eum in maius auctum descripsit, ut virum qui omnia iura divina et humana contemnat* (109).

drawing from the duel between Diomedes and Ajax in such a way as to award a prize of victory to Capaneus without letting him win. The match fulfils the audience's expectation for the moral victory of piety over impiety. He also lets the underdog, always a crowd pleaser, succeed.[193] Lastly Statius foreshadows elements from the later battles at Thebes. Lightning, though here only subtly (*fulmineas... manus* 6.751-2), as well as Capaneus' rage are both present at his death. Interestingly, in Book 10 Capaneus encourages Alcidamus and his followers to press on against the city; they are killed after breaking through the Theban gates. For his part Capaneus' rage and impiety will cause his own death at the moment of victory (10.482-508). Neither the overmastering fury of the one nor the smart valour of the other are of use in unholy war.

Capaneus' Minor Battles at Thebes: 7.649-687, 9.540-569

Capaneus fights Eunaeus

Quis tibi Baccheos, Eunaee, relinquere cultus,
quis lucos, vetitus quibus emansisse sacerdos,
suasit et assuetum Bromio mutare furorem?
quem terrere queas? clipei penetrabile textum
pallentes hederae Nysaeaque serta coronant,
candida pampineo subnectitur instita pilo,
crine latent umeri, crescunt lanugine malae,
et rubet imbellis Tyrio subtemine thorax,
bracchiaque in manicis et pictae vincula plantae
carbaseique sinus, et fibula rasilis auro
Taenarian fulva mordebat iaspide pallam,
quam super a tergo velox gorytos et arcus
pendentesque sonant aurata lynce pharetrae.

193 Capaneus laughs at the youth when he takes up the challenge (*ridet* 6.745) and there is satisfaction when the Spartan's comrades ridicule Capaneus in turn at the end of the match (*risere* 6.825)

it lymphante deo media inter milia longum
vociferans: 'prohibite manus, haec omine dextro
moenia Cirrhaea monstravit Apollo iuvenca;
parcite, in haec ultro scopuli venere volentes.
gens sacrata sumus: gener huic est Iuppiter urbi
Gradivusque socer; Bacchum haud mentimur alumnum
et magnum Alciden.' iactanti talia frustra
turbidus aëria Capaneus occurrit in hasta.
qualis ubi primam leo mane cubilibus atris
erexit rabiem et saevo speculatur ab antro
aut cervum aut nondum bellantem fronte iuvencum,
it fremitu gaudens; licet arma gregesque lacessant
venantum, praedem videt et sua vulnera nescit:
sic tum congressu Capaneus gavisus iniquo
librabat magna venturam mole cupressum.
ante tamen, 'quid femineis ululatibus,' inquit,
'terrificas, morìture, viros? utinam ipse veniret
cui furis! haec Tyriis cane matribus!' et simul hastam
expulit; illa volans, ceu vis non ulla moretur
obvia, vix sonuit clipeo et iam terga reliquit.
arma fluunt, longisque crepat singultibus aurum,
eruptusque sinus vicit cruor. occidis audax,
occidis Aonii puer altera cura Lyaei.
marcida te fractis planxerunt Ismara thyrsis,
te Tmolos, te Nysa ferax Theseaque Naxos
et Thebana metu iuratus in orgia Ganges.

Who persuaded you, Eunaeus, to leave behind Bacchic
rites, who the grove, from which his priest is forbidden
to remove himself and to acquit your accustomed madness for
Bromius. Whom could you terrify? Pale ivy and Nysaean
garlands ring the vulnerable plait of your shield and
a bright trim lines your ivy entwined javelin,
your shoulders are hid by hair, your cheeks flower with down,
your un-warlike corselet shows the red of Tyrian thread,
arms in sleeves, feet decorated with sandals,
linen drapery, a polished pin of gold clasps your
Taenariam cloak with yellow jasper.
behind and above rattle a swift case and bow
and quiver lined with a leopard-skin.
He goes midway amongst the thousands, the god
causing madness, screaming: 'Restrain your hands, Apollo revealed
these walls with a good omen in the Cirrhaean cow;

mercy! the rocks came freely, of their own will, into them.
We are a godly race: Jupiter is a son-in-law of this city
and Mars a father-in-law; we do not lie calling Bacchus our foster
child and mighty Hercules.' As he was speaking such vain words
violent Capaneus, armed with his towering spear, opposed him.
Just as when a lion in its gloomy caverns has aroused its
first rage in the morning and spies from the fierce cave
either a deer or young bull that not yet fights with horns,
he goes rejoicing with a roar; although arms and flocks of
hunters challenge, he sees his prize and recognizes no wounds;
In such a way Capaneus, overjoyed with this unequal
match shakes the cypress which was about to fly with its massy weight.
first however, 'why do you, with these girlish howls,' he says,
'alarm men, you who are about to die? would that that very god
for whom you rage come! Hymn these deeds to Tyrian mothers! With that
he propelled his spear; that weapon of renown, flying as if
there was no force to counter it, as soon as it clashed on the shield, it exited the back.
The weapons slip away, his gold jingles with his prolonged sobs,
expelled blood overwhelms his garment. Bold, you die, lad,
you die, a second sorrow for Aonian Lyaeus.
Exhausted Ismara lamented you with broken thyrsi,
and Tmolus you, and fierce Nysa you, and the Naxos of Theseus,
and Ganges foresworn from fear into Theban revels.

Capaneus avenges Hippomedon

Tandem adiit Hypseus capulumque in morte tenenti
extrahit et torvos laxavit casside vultus;
itque per Aonios alte mucrone corusco
suspensam ostentans galeam et clamore superbit:
'hic ferus Hippomedon, hic formidabilis ultor
Tydeos infandi debellatorque cruenti
gurgitis!' agnovit longe pressitque dolorem
magnanimus Capaneus, telumque immane lacerto
hortatur librans: 'ades o mihi, dextera, tantum
tu praesens bellis et inevitabile numen,
te voco, te solam superum contemptor adoro.'
sic ait, et voti sese facit ipse potentem.
it tremebunda abies clipeum per et aerea texta
loricae tandemque animam sub pectore magno
deprendit: ruit haud alio quam celsa fragore
turris, ubi innumeros penitus quassata per ictus
labitur effractamque aperit victoribus urbem.

cui super assistens, 'non infitiamur honorem
mortis,' ait. 'refer huc oculos, ego vulneris auctor;
laetus abi multumque alliis iactantior umbris!'
tunc ensem galeamque rapit clipeumque revellit
ipsius; exanimumque tenens super Hippomedonta,
'accipe' ait 'simul hostiles, dux magne, tuasque
exuvias, veniet cineri decus et suus ordo
manibus; interea iustos dum reddimus ignes,
hoc ultor Capaneus operit tua membra sepulcro.'
sic anceps dura belli vice mutua Grais
Sidoniisque simul nectebat vulnera Mavors:
hic ferus Hippomedon, illic non segnior Hypseus
fletur, et alterni praebent solacia luctus.

At last Hypseus approached and dragged off the sword that
Hippomedon was clinging to in death and freed his grim face from the helmet;
and he goes amongst the Aonians displaying the helmet aloft on
the flashing sword-tip and he shows his pride in his boast:
'Here is savage Hippomedon, here the fearsome avenger
of unholy Tydeus and conqueror of the bloody
stream!' Great hearted Capaneus marked him from afar
and restrained his anguish, he exhorts his spear shaking it with his
monstrous arm: 'Aid, O my good right, you the only
present and sure power for me in war, I call on you,
I, despiser of the gods above, reverence you alone.'
He speaks thus and he himself provides the power of the prayer.
The quaking fir travels through the shield and bronze plates
of the corselet and at last finds the spirit beneath his
great breast: he falls with no different crash than a lofty
tower, when shaken deep through many blows
it collapses and bares the city, broken open, to the conquerors.
Standing above he speaks to this man, 'We do not deny the honour
of your death. Turn your eyes here. I caused the wound.
Depart happy and more boastful by far than the other souls!'
Then he seizes the sword and helmet and pulls away the
shield of the renowned hero; and holding them above lifeless Hippomedon
says, 'Receive, O great leader, your own spoils and likewise
enemy spoils, glory will come to your ashes and your own rank
to your shade; meanwhile until we render due fires,
Capaneus, as avenger, covers your limbs with this tomb.'
In this way hazardous Mars was scattering harsh exchanges
of war and wounds too to the Greeks and Sidonians in turn:
on this side savage Hippomedon, on that side Hypseus, no more glorious,

is mourned, each side's grief gives solace to the other.

Capaneus has two relatively minor battles at Thebes which ensure that his presence and his basic qualities are not forgotten by the reader in the packed action of the second half of the poem.[194] The first is with a priest of Bacchus, Eunaeus, at 7.649-687 and the second is with Hypseus, the slayer of Hippomedon (9.540-569).

The first episode comes after a catalogue of quick kills, included by Statius to give the audience an idea of the mutual slaughter going on between the Argive and Theban ranks. This general episode falls in line with the epic practice of starting a new phase in battle with a relatively undetailed list of kills.[195] The next important episode, of any length, after our scene is the aristeia and death of Amphiaraus. His death, by which the Argives lose their priest, is anticipated somewhat by the corresponding earlier death in this episode of the Theban priest Eunaeus. The alternating deaths started with our passage are picked up in the mutual loss of a priest on both sides.[196]

The passage itself is a mere 38 lines; by far the most lines deal with the priest who, in his chariot and rich eastern/religious garb, is terribly out of place (7.649-687). The usual

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194 Statius must cover the aristeiai and deaths of 6 important Argive chieftains in the course of the second half of the poem.

195 *Iliad* 5.38ff, 5.705ff, 13.169ff., 14.511ff.

196 Argive Tydeus kills Theban Pterelas (7.632-9). Argive Hippomedon kills Theban Sybaris (7.640). Theban Menoeceus kills Argive Periphas (7.640). Argive Hippomedon kills Theban Itys (7.640). Theban Haemus kills Argive Caeneus (7.644). An Argive kills Theban Abas (7.642). Tydeus' episode lies slightly outside of the pattern. His slightly longer match forms a frame with Capaneus' slaying of Eunaeus. The overall pattern of kills is TTATATT which while showing a general alternation gives more of the glory to the Argive forces.

madness associated with a priest of Bacchus is here turned into a mad folly which the poet and Capaneus question. [197] It first comes out in the voice of the poet himself, which intrudes here to add pathos to the scene. His own bewilderment at the scene is emphasized in the description of the priest's showy gear. Being a priest in battle is fine but it is still battle.

The actions of the priest are not in fact meant to be martial. He is, at this extreme juncture, trying to make peace. The priest calls on the Argives to cease their war on Thebes and lists his city's native gods, including Jupiter, Mars, Bacchus, and Hercules, at 7.666-8, to convince the Argives that Thebes is a holy city and that it was unholy for any to attack it. The words are poignantly called vain (*frustra* 7.668) and I think the poet is getting at something other than simply vain boasts. The priest says nothing untoward. His words and the reality behind them simply bear no fruit. Thebes' guilt is blatant in Statius at the start of his poem where *sontes* (1.2) is used as its epithet. The attack on Thebes is not to be stopped for Jupiter himself has promised their punishment.

The poet does not in anyway build this as a fair fight. Capaneus' appearance before the priest with his cypress-spear, a tree associated with graveyards and the underworld, grimly juxtaposes this terrifying warrior with the unwarlike priest. Capaneus ands the poet are equally astonished (7.649-651). Both assume the priest means to frighten off the attackers and use similar verbs: the poet *terrere* (7.652), Capaneus *terrificare* (7.678). Capaneus, though, is more derisive and also ups the stakes in the attack by wishing for

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197 The disdain of the Argives for the rites of Bacchus may also be seen in Tydeus' taunts over the Thebans he slew when they attempted to ambush him at 2.663-7. He brings out the difference in the madness of war and of Bacchus with 2.666's *hic aliae caedes, alius furor*.

Bacchus himself to be present (7.678-9). When he at last lets fly his spear the encounter is over with a terrible swiftness echoed in the short description, "as soon as it clashed on the shield, it exited the back" (*vix sonuit clipeo et iam terga reliquit* 7.681). It is an unstoppable missile that exits as quickly as it enters. *terga* 'back' or 'backs' may refer to both the inside of the shield and the priest's back as well. Statius gives no further details about the spear but rather focuses on the death of the Euaneus. He entered the scene noisily and slips off to death noisily. His drawn out sobs cause gold on his garment to ring and he is mourned throughout Bacchus' lands (7.685-7).

Their meeting is also characterized as that between a lion and a deer or young bull through a simile which breaks up the action and aptly characterizes the situation (7.670-2). Capaneus is again a predator and his opponent is aptly the weaker prey in the comparison, a deer and a bullock. This ties in cleverly to aspects of the worship of Dionysus and Capaneus' general opposition to the gods. The wearing of a faun-skin is part of Statius' conception of a Bacchic follower, and the reference to a bullock may remind the reader of Pentheus' vision of Dionysus with horns in Euripides' *Bacchae*.[198] The simile is also martial. *arma* (7.673) is used of the hunters' weapons and must bring to mind the bellicose meeting of the warrior and the priest. Further, just as the lion takes joy in killing, (*fremitu gaudens* 7.673), so does Capaneus (*gavisus* 7.675), and both put themselves at risk in battle; the one with hunters, the other with soldiers. Notably Statius gives the lion, and therefore Capaneus,

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198 In the same ambush scene of Tydeus as mentioned above the celebrants are conceived of bearing fawnskins (*nebrides*) and a thyrsus (*thyrsi*) at line 2.663.

more honour and power than the hunters by using the word *greges* (7.673) in the simile. *greges* can mean "troop" or "band" but it is also used in pastoral contexts to mean "flock" or herd. Even though Capaneus attacks a weaker prize, the soldiers in his way are really no more of a challenge.

Two authors, Klinnert and Smolenaars are especially useful for this passage.[199] Klinnert notes how out of place Eunaeus is in a war setting and links the extended description of the priest to Virgil's Chloreus who leads Camilla to her downfall in the *Aeneid*.[200] So strange is the encounter that Klinnert hints that it may in fact parody war encounters.[201] Further, in Euaneus' exhortation for peace Klinnert compares him to Amphiaraus and his attempt to dissuade the Argives from initiating their campaign (40). Eunaeus' meeting with Capaneus quickly leads to the priest's death and implies that Amphiaraus will die also, albeit indirectly, because of a lost a match with Capaneus. Klinnert notes that Capaneus again strives to destroy the attendants of gods as he had with the snake of Jupiter (41). While he fails to see any further structuring connections between the two passages, he does however point out fertile connections between this battle and that between Capaneus and Alcidamus in the funeral games of Opheltes (42), and grimly notes

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199 Klinnert 39-42, Smolenaars 293-331 (esp. 293-296).

200 Klinnert notes the following correspondences between the two authors: 1) *Theb.* 7. 658 *carbaseique simus* = *Aen.* 11.775 *'simusque . . . carbaseos'*, 2) *Theb.* 7.659 *fulva* = *Aen.* 11.776 *fulvo*, 3) *Theb.* 7.660 *a tergo arcus* = *Aen.* 11.774 *ex umeris . . . arcus* (39 n. 97).

201 Er wirkt fast wie eine Parodie kriegerischer Ersheinung (Klinnert 39).

that gods and men are distant in Statius and he who can factor them out succeeds here (42).[202]

In Smolenaars' brilliant and comprehensive commentary the scene is analysed as a confrontation between a priest striving for peace and the bestial Capaneus who confronts the weaker character as Turnus, Mezentius, and Menelaus do their enemies (311-12). His analysis is rich with correspondences from earlier sources and well-argued interpretations of difficult lines from this passage. There are a few points on which we differ and that is mainly the importance of models for the interpretation of the narrative. While nearly exhaustive in its search for models often there is no reference to the relevance of those models to the narrative. The following is his table comparing Statius' episode to its sources.

Table 5: Smolenaars' Comparison of Sources of *Thebaid* 760ff

	Th. 760ff.	*Il.* 3.23ff.	*Aen.* 10.723ff	*Aen.* 10.454ff
	Capaneus	Menelaus	Mezentius	Turnus
1	leo	λέων (23)	leo (723)	leo (454)
2	primam ...mane erexit rabiem,	πεινάων(25)	impastus (723) vesan fames (724) comasque arrexit (726)	
3	cubilibus atris saevo ab antro		stabula alta (723)	
4	speculatur	(ἐνόησεν 21) (ὀφθαλμοῖσιν ἰδών 28)	(speculatus 769) conspexit (725)	specula... ab alta (454) vidit (454)
5	cervum aut iuvencum fremitur gaudens	ἔλαφον . . .ἢ αἶγα (24) ἐχάρη (23)	capreum aut ... cervum (725) gaudet hians immane comasque arrexit (726)	taurum (455)

202 This is a fair reading of the action at this point, however the gods are fairly active elsewhere. The Fury, Tisiphone, does take up Oedipus' prayer for revenge (1.87) and Minerva appears personally to Tydeus after his ambush (2.683-700). Soon after our episode Apollo will guide the reins of Amphiaraus' chariot (7.737-9).

6	arma gregesque lacessant venantum	σεύωνται ... κύνες ... αἰζηοί (26)		
7	praedem videt et sua volnera nescit	κατεσθιει (25)		
8	sic gavisus congressu iniquo	ὣς ἐχάρη (27)	sic ruit ... alacer (729)	viribus imparibus (459)

Given the number of correspondences it is as likely that we are dealing with a type-scene, but there are some minor links in the situations. This chart of sources puts Capaneus on the winning side of each of these combats through his connection to their victors, Menelaus, Mezentius, and Turnus, and in two of the cases, Mezentius and Turnus, the men go on to die in their campaign when they encounter stronger opposition. Smolenaar's starting point may also have undercut the breadth of his analysis. In his brief introductory sentences at 293 he writes 'In Homer priests do not partake in battle, though their sons do, (e.g. *Il.*. 5.9ff.). In Latin epic, however, . . . " This swift skimming of the possible influence of Greek models sets the tone for his largely Latin focussed account. A passing reference to the Greek epics which do have or would have had fighting priests would have been worth mentioning.[203]

In consideration of this passage as an encounter between a Greek hero and a luxurious and effeminate warrior, Smolenaars gives a commendable analysis of Statius' episode in relation to the battle between Menalaus and Paris. Of further importance, though unmentioned by Smolenaars, is the meeting of Glaukos and Diomedes. The passage pits together unlikely and uneven combatants. Diomedes clearly outclasses Glaukos and the

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203 It is very likely that the early *Thebais*, and the *Epigoni* had Amphiaraus or one of his sons as fighting-priests.

theme of oriental luxury is stronger with Lydian Glaukos, than with Paris in his encounter with Menalaus. If a comparison is to be made to Diomedes and Glaucus' meeting the peaceful outcome of their encounter heightens the bloody outcome of Capaneus' and Eunaeus' meeting.

The initial pattern of the scene as it involves Capaneus also matches Capaneus' earlier encounter with the serpent of Jupiter and the passage is handled in the same way. This passage may be more important than the others, since Statius would be able to assume that his readers had a somewhat fresh recollection of his own earlier passage.

Table 6: Comparison of 5.505-82 to 7.649-687

	Snake	Eunaeus
1) Introduction of an Enemy connected to a god	5.505-533	7.649-668
2) Wish of Capaneus for a more divine opponent	5.565-570	7.678-9
4) Mighty spear-cast	5.571-74	7.679-681
5) Description of the death	5.575-578	7.682-683
6) Special/Supernatural lament for the dead.	5.579-582	7.683-7

Capaneus' desire for a bigger and worthier opponent is one of his regular traits and present both in his fight with Alcidamus and will motivate his attack on the Olympians in Book 10.

Lastly the story with the priest is not just a reworking of the earlier scene set to mortal combat but it acts as a pendant story to Capaneus'. He too will go beyond himself and his own ability to another sphere of action in which he has no place. Further he will be out-

classed by Jupiter, an opponent who can destroy him as easily as he does the priest. He too will make empty words before being struck down, and his attack on the priest and Jupiter's on him are handled in the Latin in much the same way. Notably there is a similar use of the participles to denote the overlap in the words of the one and the action of the other *iactanti talia frustra/turbidus aeria Capaneus ocurrit in hasta*[204] (5.668-9) at the scene of Eunaeus' death and *talia dicentem toto Iove fulmen adactum /corrupuit* (10927-8) at the death of Capaneus.[205] *talia* figures in both and the action is handled in the same way, the words are broken by violent action and death follows. Capaneus' power position seems really emphasized by the alternating of the noun-adjective pairs *turbidus Capaneus/ aeria hasta* and looks forward to the gruesome force of the cast. Both men are destroyed terribly. The scene also has a nice reversal. Here Capaneus stops a boaster as he himself will be stopped in the middle of his boasting.

In Capaneus' second minor battle (9.540-569), over the course of 30 lines, Statius presents a rather strange episode that features the hero as an avenger of the slain Hippomedon and a guarantor of his funeral rites (9.540-569). The scene opens with Hypseus, an important Theban warrior, who strips the freshly fallen corpse of Hippomedon of its sword and helmet. Hypseus does not slay Hippomedon but he is presented as his equal, and his high status as a warrior merited mention in the catalogue of Theban forces at 7.309-

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204 *in hasta* (5.669) is comparable to the less defined idiom *in armis* 'under arms' found in Virgil, *Aen.* 9.376 and Caesar *Gal.* 7.11.6. (*OLD*).

205 This formula is also used by Statius for Tisiphone when she turns her attention to the praying Oedipus (*talia dicenti crudelis diva severos/advertit vultus* 1.88).

29. His exultant words at the death of a major Argive leader attracts Capaneus' attention. After praying to the power of his own right arm, Capaneus kills him with a spear-throw. Capaneus then retrieves Hippomedon's arms, taking those of Hypseus as well, and heaps a makeshift tomb above his fallen comrade. Both Hypseus and Hippomedon, in turn, are given a brief funeral speech as well by Capaneus.

The passage is very tight and the economy of words helps, through marked repetition, to solve the main question of the passage: Does Hypseus give a true representation of Hippomedon as a warrior? To start, Statius implies that Hippomedon, Hypseus, and Capaneus, are similar through the use of *magnus* to describe each hero. Capaneus is called *magnanimus* at 9.547, Hypseus' chest is called *magnus* at 9.553, and Capaneus addresses Hippomedon as *magnus* at 9.562. This episode also resolves who has the best claim to such terms. The sorting is primarily done through epithets. Hypseus gives lots of honour to Hippomedon by calling him *ferus* (9.544), *formidibilis ultor/Tydeos* (9.544-5), and *debellator cruenti gurgitis* (9.545-6) while Capaneus, as mentioned, is called *magnanimus* (9.547). Hypseus' praise is hyperbole. It is meant to raise the status of the trophies that he carries and the Theban victory in the death of Hippomedon. In fact, Capaneus had retrieved the body of Melanippus for Tydeus and fulfilled his comrade's dying request. Hippomedon was killed by the river. He was not *debellator* in the sense of conqueror. That leaves the epithet *ferus*. The issue is settled by the poet who mentions both Capaneus and Hippomedon towards the end of the passage. He refers to Capaneus as *ultor* (9.565) and Hippomedon merely as *ferus* (9.568). He does so in a line that repeats exactly (with a slightly different meaning of *hic*) line 9.544 which introduces through Hypseus three possible epithets for Hippomedon. At

9.568 he uses the only truthful one and Capaneus is shown to have rightful claim to *ultor*.

Hypseus is also presented as a Theban version of Capaneus. He is a boaster, he is large, and he has some disdain for the gods. Hypseus has inherited his impiety from his father, Asopus, a river god, who raged against Jupiter, because of the theft of his daughter (7.328-9). The similarity between the two runs deeper. Both fight with Amphiaraus. At 7.723, Hypseus encounters the priest and casts a spear with a prayer to his father that shows a hostility towards Phoebus that is worthy of Capaneus himself, 'it is holy for me to despise Phoebus if the father of gods strove with you' (*fas et mihi spernere Phoebum/tibi conlatus divom sator* 7.733-4). The throw misses and kills Amphiaraus' charioteer and strangely Capaneus becomes in this episode the *ultor* of a companion of Amphiaraus. Lastly Hypseus' death is brought about by the words, 'he shows his pride in his boast' (*clamore superbit* 9.543). This draws Capaneus' ire as Capaneus' own boasts will lead to his downfall. It seems, in part at least, that Capaneus' encounters at Thebes are about defining who is the biggest, loudest, and most powerful.

Certain of Capaneus' traits are typical in this passage. He is again the avenger of the dead. He slew the snake that killed Archemorus, he delivered the corpse of Melanippus to Tydeus, and now he slays Hypseus for disturbing the corpse of Hippomedon. For the second time he is present following an aristeia. He was present at Tydeus' death and is present again here. He shows hubris. This is clearly seen in the prayer to his right arm at 9.548-50.[206]

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206 Dewar notes the formulaic *ades o mihi* for prayers is present along with other words appropriate to a sacred setting (*praesens, numen, voco,* and *adoro*) and that these add to the profanation in Capaneus' oath(162).

Idas in Apollonius of Rhodes makes a similar prayer at 1.466-8, as does Mezentius in Virgil at *Aen.* 10.773 ff.[207] He is involved here with a noisy encounter. He has at this point already encountered Amphiaraus in a loud argument at the outset of war, and at Thebes silenced Eunaeus' call for peace. There is foreshadowing once more as another boaster falls to a more powerful individual. The raw individuality of the hero comes through loud and clear. With his prayer he strives for personal ownership of his deeds. For this reason he wants the dying Hypseus to take a good look at him (9.558) and to voice with pride Capaneus' name in the underworld (9.559-60). His 'I myself caused the wound' (*ego auctor vulneris* 9.558), emphatically proclaims his deed as his own and no one else's. Lastly, Capaneus, by slaying this hubristic warrior, may again be considered as fulfilling the will of Jupiter by punishing Thebes. Perhaps Statius hints, too, that Capaneus is Jupiter's *ultor*.

Statius also plays with the notion that Capaneus is an infernal power. His prayer to his right arm, his *numen*, contains 'you' three times (9.549, 9.550 twice). Threes often come up in chthonic contexts in Statius; here they hint that Capaneus is to be associated with the underworld. In the short speeches which he delivers over both Hippomedon and Hypseus he is very concerned about each hero's shade. Capaneus assures Hypseus that he died at the hands of a hero worthy of his status and one about whom he can boast in the underworld (9.558-9). Besides giving Hippomedon preliminary burial rites and promising him a full funeral, Capaneus claims, upon returning his war-gear, that *veniet... ordo/manibus* (9.564-5). I have translated this as 'your rank will come to your shade'. I take it either that shade

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[207] In his argument with Amphiaraus he claimed that the only god he worshiped was his sword (3.615-16) and at 10.485-6 he claims his drawn sword is a sure omen of victory.

will have the proper marks of his rank now (with the returned equipment), or that future funeral rites will be on a level worthy of his rank. It is possible to interpret *manibus* as plural, rather than plural for singular, and that by the return of the arms or by the future funeral rites, the proper rank of Hippomedon will be displayed to the spirits of Hades. All interpretations point to Capaneus' concern for the afterlife of a hero's spirit and its reputation in the underworld. Capaneus himself will make his mark in the world of the living and amongst the inhabitants of Hades (11.70-71).

Death of Capaneus: 10.738-939

Aristeia of Capaneus 10.738-755

Turbidus interea ruptis venientia portis
agmina belligeri Capaneus agit aequore campi,
cornua nunc equitum, cuneos nunc ille pedestres,
et proculcantes moderantum funera currus;
idem altas turres saxis et turbine crebro
laxat, agit turmas idem atque in sanguine fumat.
nunc spargit torquens volucri nova vulnera plumbo,
nunc iaculum excusso rotat in sublime lacerto,
nullaque tectorum subit ad fastigia quae non
deferat hasta virum perfusaque caede recurrat.
nec iam aut Oeniden aut Hippomedonta peremptos
aut vatem Pelopea phalanx aut Arcada credunt;
quin socium coisse animas et corpore in uno
stare omnes, ita cuncta replet. Non ullius aetas,
non cultus, non forma movet; pugnantibus idem
supplicibusque furit; non quisquam obsistere contra,
non belli temptare vices: procul arma furentis
terribilesque iubas et frontem cassidis horrent.

Invocation at the Start of Capaneus' Death-Scene 10.827-836

Hactenus arma, tubae, ferrumque et vulnera: sed nunc
comminus astrigeros Capaneus tollendus in axes.
non mihi iam solito vatum de more canendum;
maior ab Aoniis poscenda amentia lucis:
mecum omnes audete deae! sive ille profunda

missus nocte furor, Capaneaque signa secutae
arma Iovem contra Stygiae rapuere Sorores,
seu virtus egressa modum, seu gloria praeceps
et magnae data fama neci, seu laeta malorum
principia et blandae superum mortalibus irae.

Capaneus' Approach to the Theban Wall 10.837-52

Iam sordent terrena viro taedetque profundae
caedis, et exhaustis olim Graiumque suisque
missilibus lassa respexit in aethera dextra.
ardua nox torvo metitur culmina visu,
innumerosque gradus gemina latus arbore clausos,
aerium sibi portat iter, longeque timendus
multifidam quercum flagranti lumine vibrat;
arma rubent una clipeoque incenditur ignis.
'hac,' ait, 'in Thabas, hac me iubet ardua virtus
ire, Menoeceo qua lubrica sanguine turris.
experiar quid sacra iuvent, an falsus Apollo."
dicit et alterno captiva in moenia gressu
surgit ovans: quales mediis in nubibus aether
vidit Aloidas, cum cresceret impia tellus
despectura deos nec adhuc immane veniret
Peleion et trepidum iam tangeret Ossa Tonantem.

Capaneus Scales the Walls 10.870-882

utque petita diu celsus fastigia supra
eminuit trepidamque assurgens desuper urbem
vidit et ingenti Thebas exterruit umbra,
increpat attonitas humilesque Amphionis arces:
'pro pudor, hic faciles carmen imbelle secuti,
hi, mentita diu Thebarum fabula, muri!
et quid tam egregium prosternere moenia molli
structa lyra? simul insultans gressuque manuque
molibus obstantes cuneos tabulataque saevus
distruit: absiliunt pontes, tecti trementis
saxea frena labunt, dissaeptoque aggere rursus
utitur et truncas rupes in templa domosque
praecipitat frangitque suis iam moenibus urbem.

Capaneus Challenges the Gods 10.888-906

. . . cum mediis Capaneus auditus in astris:
'nullane pro trepidis, 'clamabat, 'humina Thebis
statis? ubi infandae segnes telluris alumni,
Bacchus et Alcides? piget instigare minores:
tu potius venias (quis enim concurrere nobis
dignior?); en cineres Semeleaque busta tenentur!

nunc age, nunc totis in me conitere flammis,
Iuppiter! an pavidas tonitru turbare puellas
fortior et soceri turres exscindere Cadmi?'

Aristeia of Capaneus 10.738-755

Meanwhile on the even ground of the battle-bearing plain,
violent Capaneus drives the columns coming from the opened gates.
now that man drives the cavalry wings, now the wedge
formations of the infantry, and the chariots that ride down corpses of their
drivers. Likewise he opens tall towers with stones and their thick storm.
Too he drives the squadrons of horses and reeks of blood.
Now whirling his sling he scatters about fresh wounds with flying lead.
Now, his arm stretched forth, he spins the javelin in the air,
and no spear approaches the heights of the walls which
does not return bathed with the blood of men.
And now the Pelopean Phalanx does not believe that the son of Oeneus
is dead, nor Hippomedon, nor their prophet, nor the Arcadian;
but that the spirits of their comrades all stand in one body,
he so compensates for all. Neither age, nor accouterment,
nor beauty of any is troublesome; he rages equally against those
fighting and those begging for mercy; no one dares to stand
against him, nor to try the chances of battle: From a distance the arms of
the raging warrior, his crests and helmet front, cause fear.

Invocation at the Start of Capaneus' Death-Scene 10.827-836

No longer arms, trumpets, iron and wounds: but now Capaneus must
be raised to the star-bearing heavens for hand to hand fighting.
This is not the time for me to sing in the accustomed manner of prophets;
a greater madness must be begged from Aonian groves.
Dare, all you goddesses, with me! Whether his fury
was sent by fathomless night, and the Stygian sisters seized arms
against Jupiter and followed Capaneus' standards, whether virtue
overstepped the limit, whether dangerous glory and fame are given
for an impressive death, whether the joyful starts of evil
deeds and enticement are spawned of the anger of gods for mortals.

Capaneus' Approach to the Theban Wall 10.837-52

Now the affairs of the earth appear worthless to the man and there is
loathing of boundless massacre, and after his own missiles and those of the
Greeks have been long spent and his right hand is tired, he looked into the air.
Directly he measures the difficult heights with his fierce
gaze and he bears an aerial course for himself, countless steps
covered on each flank with a tree, Frightful from afar
he shakes an oaken torch cleft with blazing light;
then too his arms redden and fires flash on his shield.
'On this road', he says, 'onward to Thebes, my lofty

excellence orders me to go on this road, where the tower is slippery with
the blood of Menoeceus. I shall prove what good are sacrifices or whether
Apollo is false. He speaks and exultant surges forth with alternating steps
towards the captive walls: just as the heaven saw the sons of Aloeus midst the
clouds, when the impious earth was rising about to look
down on the gods, not as of yet did massive Pelion come
but already Ossa vexed the roused Thunderer.

Capaneus Scales the Walls 10.870-882

And when at last, high above the long roofs, long
sought, he is conspicuous, and standing forth he looks from above on
the frightened city and panics Thebes with his massive shadow,
He upbraids the thunder-struck and lowly towers of Amphion.
For shame, these (stones) lightly followed a song not fit for war
to make these walls, the counterfeit fable of Thebes.
And what is so excellent in overthrowing walls stacked by
the gentle lyre? Then he impiously leaps, hand and foot, upon the
wedge wall-supports that oppose him with their weight and
fierce he weakened the stones: The bridge-works fly apart, the stone
ties of the quaking roof slip, and after the foundation-wall
has been denuded again he uses the broken stones against temples and
hurls them against homes and now shatters the city with its own walls.

Capaneus Challenges the Gods 10.888-906

. . .when Capaneus was heard midst the stars:
He exclaims, do no powers stand up for trembling Thebes?
where are the lazy offspring of the cursed land,
Bacchus and Alcides? Its irksome to incite lesser beings:
Rather you come (who indeed is more worthy to join battle
with us?); behold the ashes and pyres of Semele are taken fast!
now come, now strive against me with all your flames, Jupiter!
or are you stronger at troubling frightened girls with
your thunder and destroying the towers of your father-in-law Cadmus.

In Book 10 Capaneus has several opponents. His first is the general mass of Theban warriors, the second is the city of Thebes, and the third is Jupiter.[208] At each of the first two

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[208] Although this is a pivotal moment in a major character's story little has been written on the death of Capaneus. Klinnert's dissertation is still the longest sustained examination of the character's death. Lovatt, who focuses on the madness of Capaneus in the funeral games, comments briefly on this passage (113-114). She sees Capaneus' disdain for the walls of Thebes as his attempt to leave even the limits of the poetically constructed world of the *Thebaid* and attain reality (114). Further in her view Jupiter is reluctant to destroy the hero since he sees himself in Capaneus (*ibid.*) This is an intriguing idea since Capaneus has served him so well and there is mimicry of Jupiter by the hero, but strangely Lovatt sees their

stages of his attack the narrative follows the same pattern used with Capaneus' encounter with Jupiter's snake at 5.505-582 and Eunaeus at 7.649-668. In those earlier fights he takes on an opponent while wishing for a stronger and more worthy adversary. Book 10 builds impressively to the point where this wish is fulfilled by Jupiter.

At the start of the last day of the Argive attack on Thebes, Capaneus takes the initiative and rouses the troops (10.482-8). This is to be his day. Adrastos and Polynikes do play their part in energizing the men but only after Capaneus speaks and their role is done away with in a line and a half.[209] In his speech Capaneus uses words similar to those found at the start of the expedition, when he argued with Amphiaraus and in his vengeance on Hippomedon's slayer. He again treats his presence and readiness to battle as an omen of victory.[210] The weapons in his hand and his drawn sword signals the terrible deeds of battle to come. This is a pregnant speech and bears examination.

hortatur Capaneus: "satis occultata, Pelasgi,
delituit virtus: nunc, nunc mihi vincere pulchrum
teste die; mecum clamore et pulvere aperto

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shared trait as 'being bored': "Capaneus has grown bored of mortal battles . . . Jupiter at the beginning of the poem has grown bored of divine vengeance" (*ibid.*). She is taking *taedet* found in both as 'bored'. This does not seem enough of a similarity for someone like Capaneus to elicit the empathy of Jupiter. It is more likely that in the earlier passage Jupiter is complaining hyperbolically about being physically tired out from always casting lightning bolts on sinners. Capaneus whose strength is not yet spent can rightly be termed 'bored'.

209 Polynikes' personal role in the attack on his city is underplayed by Statius who presents him sympathetically as the wronged party in the dispute. Polynikes would not cut a good figure urging the Argives on to kill his own citizens. Statius downplays the civic crime aspect of his attack and even has him restraining himself in the general melee from fiercely attacking his enemies (7.689-90).

210 In the first instance he claims that at Thebes he will be the augur (3.668.669) in the second he calls on his good right as an *inevitibile numen* (9.548-550).

ite palam, iuvenes: sunt et mihi provida dextrae
omina et horrendi stricto mucrone furores."
sic ait; ardentes alacer succendit Adrastus
Argolicusque gener, sequitur iam tristior augur. (10.482-8)

Capaneus encourages: "Pelasgians, our concealed virtue has lain
hid enough: now, now it is fair, as I think, to conquer with Day
as a witness; youths, come with me openly, with a shout and
dust visibly stirred: and, as I see it, the tokens of my right
are prophetic and dreadful the acts of rage once the sword is
hand drawn." Thus he speaks: Adrastos, in high spirits, and his Argive
son-in-law inflame the seething men, more sadly now the augur follows.

The previous night's activities loom large in Capaneus' speech. The night before the gods had indicated to the new Argive seer, Thiodamas, that a night raid would have a favorable outcome. Capaneus is willing to lend his sword to one of the participants but, since the gods have guaranteed success, he sees no glory in the raid for himself and he does not go. Capaneus is looking, as Turnus does at Aen. 9.153 (*luce palam certum est igni circumdare muros*), for glory in the full light of day. Capaneus in no wise wants his deeds hidden. Thus he wishes the day's campaign to start with noise and visual prominence (*mecum clamore et pulvere aperto / ite palam* 10.484-5). A new sword-oath draws them forth and he acts the part of the Furies by enraging the men and urging them on against Thebes. Though short, this speech contains some of the same elements as his speech before the Argives with Amphiaraus and it has the same effect. The men are roused, and again an augur is drawn along despite himself. Capaneus had warned Amphiaraus not to try to stop at Thebes with ill-omened words. Thiodamus, Amphiaraus' replacement, is sad here. He knows the outcome and does not attempt to take Capaneus on. The presence of Capaneus

and his egomaniacal claims are incredibly strong and bring out his willingness to put himself to the fore. The first person personal pronouns *mihi* (10.483) *mecum* (10.484) *mihi* (10.485), show his confidence and focuses the men's hope of victory on the presence of Capaneus, as their leader. The urgency in the *nunc*, *nunc* (10.483), the raw power of Capaneus' personality, and the swift and dramatic conclusion of the speech with Capaneus drawing his sword, have their effect. The Argives rush so quickly against the city that the enemy are hard pressed to shut the gates.

Capaneus' signal to attack and his presence in battle are supposed to mark victory but Statius immediately undercuts the truth of Capaneus' words. He does not want the audience to be caught up by Capaneus' words. In the first place, the seer's demeanor is rather gloomy (*tristior* 10.488), and, secondly, the first troops which Statius describes go directly to their death. Statius last used the Laconians and Alcidamus in the boxing match. Here in the midst of Capaneus' last day the poet finishes their story. They fight into Thebes itself, are trapped inside by the closing of the gate, and are killed (10.493-508). This is as close to victory as the Laconians could hope. The youth, Alcidamus, is well chosen by Statius since he is one of the only Argive characters portrayed in such a way as to make the audience sympathetic to his plight.[211] His death is a tragic outcome of the rashness of the Argive leaders, and the sympathy and sadness aroused by it projects the message that the Argives are off to a bad start.

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211 Two others, Hopleus and Dymas, died in the night attack. But their characters were specifically drawn out for that scene. The same strategy would have slowed down the quick narrative of the second half of Book 10. Theoretically Thiodamus could have played this role as well but perhaps that would have been too forced and Statius would still need to wrap up the Laconian hero's story elsewhere.

Capaneus is given a summary aristeia at 10.738-755. Here he is shown to be deadly in all aspects of war. Statius redirects his aristeia from an expansive list of kills of numerous or important enemies to a short list that gives the impression of Capaneus as a one man army swiftly accomplishing many varied deeds.[212] This narrative strategy abstracts Capaneus' attack on Thebes by opposing him to the collective forces on the field, as later it will be against the city wall, and then her dwellings inside. Most importantly he is not bound by limits. He slays, as his encounter with Eunaeus emphasizes, all who come in his path without care. This scene also shows that there is no Theban warrior who can oppose him, and that even their army as a whole is no match. This lack of worthy opposition will soon cause Capaneus to grow restless. By showing quickly that Capaneus is the master of the field Statius can move on to his discontent. Heroes like Capaneus push against limits. Since he cannot find competition here, he must look elsewhere. First the city walls, and next the gods are challenged.

Capaneus' arms are detailed in the catalogue of Argive troops and his crest mentioned in the encounter with the snake, but now they are shown to be effective, for they frighten his enemies (10.754-4). The repeated appearance of the arms shows that Statius is quite interested in them and that they represent more than a catalogue detail or opportunity for ecphrasis. By reminding the audience here of their importance, Statius sets the groundwork

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212 It is also a traditional strategy. In the leisurely combats in Homer there is time to give lots of details of combatants and through this indicate their relative worth. When Achilles takes to the field the Trojan army is routed by him alone, there is a bare kill list, that seeks to impress by the number of dead in given in swift succession (see *Iliad* 20.455-486 for a kill list but 20.498-503 and 21.1-16 for general and extensive slaughter). Statius takes this strategy one step further in presenting only general slaughter.

for their dissolution in lightning later. The dissolution or undoing of his arms will correspond with the dissolution of Capaneus' threat against Thebes.

His success is so great that the Argives believe that the souls of their defeated commanders champions have come together in Capaneus. This adds to his characterization as an underworldly force and perhaps ties into his shield-image, the Hydra. The Hydra represents regenerated threat after death. There has been no gain to the Thebans through the deaths of the Argive leaders. Statius is bringing together, in his battle-speech and in this passage, the typical character traits of the hero in order that his death-scene, which largely plays on these aspects of the hero, will have as much force as possible.

Statius needs still to present the Argives as threatening despite the destruction of most of her leaders. He can not bolster the Argive ranks from without, and yet the Argives must, for his version of the story, be so threatening that the son of Creon, Menoeceus, will sacrifice himself to save the city. Statius lets the task fall on Capaneus' shoulders alone.[213]

At 10.827 Statius takes up Capaneus' tale. Since it is strange and difficult it needs a fresh invocation and a different manner of presentation.[214] With the second invocation he uses a cluster of questions, much as he had done at the start of the very poem (1.3-16). The

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213 While Turnus is the focus of Italian resistance to Aeneas and may have suggested the need of a pivotal hero on which to hang the fortunes of the Argives, as often with Capaneus Silius Italicus offers a tantalizing parallel in his presentation of Hannibal. At line 1.39 of the *Punica* we are told that Juno armed this man alone against destiny (. . . *hunc audet solum componere fatis*) and from 1.319-326 Hannibal is given his own *unus omnibus* which highlights his great personal threat to Rome.

214 *alio* is a key word with Statius in describing Capaneus and at 1.45 Statius says of Capaneus' story . . . *alio Capaneus horrore canendus*. There is something special in this hero's story that requires a broader level of interpretation and varied approach.

questions are deliberately ambiguous and are not meant to solve the question of what primarily motivates Capaneus' mad assault on Thebes and the gods, but rather point to Statius' own complex presentation of the hero. The possibilities given here are the influence of the infernal powers (10.833), limitless valour (10.834), the desire for a death equal to his deeds (108.34-5), or that he was so successful that he was lead to push for more and more criminal deeds by the gods so that they could then destroy him (10.835-6).

These aspects in varying degrees have been operating from the start of the narrative. Statius has connected Capaneus to the underworld forces earlier, and here he gives an impressive image that attributes the influence of the Furies on him without taking away from his natural tendency to madness, for they in fact follow his lead. He too has shown no respect for station or rank in his deeds, and also a restlessness that pushes him to find worthier opponents. This seems to be the point of the 10.834. He has surpassed mortal limits and is no match for immortals. The third possibility begins to operate relatively late in the poem and is suggested most prominently in the killing of Hypseus and the burial rights of Hippomedon, wherein he is interested in the reputation or fame of mortals above and below the ground. The last possibility is interesting in that it is a function of the gods to lead hubristic men to their doom by giving them the opportunity to go too far. Jupiter spared Capaneus when he slew his pet snake for his later doom, and there is no doubt that in doing so he naturally was led by his own character to such heights of hubris that Jupiter must now destroy him.

Statius gives a clear picture of Capaneus' activities as he scales the wall 10.837-852. At 10.837 we have the discontent of Capaneus in victory that leads him to look for more of

a challenge. This discontent seems to be linked to glory, and the fact is that, as things standd on the field of battle at this point, there is no one able to oppose him and therefore no goal. He has the power to continue to slaughter. His wildness in the scaling of the wall is shown by the tools he uses, just trees, joined together, and is typical of earlier items which are roughly made or originate in violence. These trees are left wild and ready for use, his boxing gloves were made of bands of unworked (*cruda* 6.733) leather, his spear is a cypress tree bereft (*orba* 4.177) of its limbs, and the leather for his shield was torn (*erepta* 4.166) from the back of untamed bulls. At 10.845-6 Capaneus claims that his virtue is driving him to go on this way to Thebes. This picks up on Statius' question, in his invocation, of what motivates Capaneus. Here it is his virtue that drives him to break limits and to seek glory, possibly through death. Klinnert notes how closely Virtue is wrapped up in death and that seeking glory is thus a privilege of mortals and defines them in apposition to the gods who, being immortal, cannot die and therefore are, by these terms, unable to win glory (48). This formula works if virtue is understood from Capaneus' view. Glory arising from virtue as a moral quality of course cannot be applied in such a pleasing way to his story. Only Theseus manages the proper balance. For Capaneus though, since he forces Jupiter to act within the martial definition of virtue, Klinnert's theory has fair relevance.

The torch, as Klinnert notes, is connected with heroes threatening destruction. In the case of Turnus, too, it represents the working of nefarious powers through the hero (50). Capaneus has early claim to this symbol through his boasts about burning. At 10.843 Statius gives brilliant details to the ascent of Capaneus with a torch in hand and armour and shield aglow (*arma rubent una clipeoque incenditur ignis* 10.844). This is an excellent description

of light reflected back through blood on the metal combined with the glowing armour of heroes in battle. Statius lets the audience decide for themselves whether Capaneus is having his moment of glory through his own power or whether a god has, as Athena does with Diomedes and Achilles, granted him unearthly power.[215] His fiery aspect also foreshadows the actual burning of Capaneus to come.

Capaneus chooses to scale the wall at a point where Menoeceus threw himself off and left a smear of red on the stones. The choice of this location hints that, had Menoeceus not sacrificed himself for the good of Thebes, Capaneus would have taken the city. The location is also chosen to reinforce that Capaneus' assault is a test of both Apollo's prediction, that the city will be safe, given through Tiresias, and that Capaneus will die at Thebes, hinted at by Amphiaraus.[216] Other heroes test the will of the gods in Homer. When Diomedes' pushed too far against the city of Troy and threatened to take it, though he was not destined to, Jupiter cast lightning to keep Diomedes back (8.130-6).[217] Capaneus is not given a warning shot. He pushes too hard on the limits, whereas Diomedes knows his and turns the chariot

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215 Athena makes Diomedes' armour glow at *Iliad* 5.3-7; Achilles glows with power from Athena at 18.203-14. Statius is not obvious about a god's hand in martial deeds elsewhere. That Athena had helped Tydeus defeat the Thebans who ambushed him on his way back from Thebes is only revealed towards the end of the carnage at 2.686-9, though in this case the audience would have been more aware of her interference since the scene was detailed in by Homer. It will be revealed later that the Fury Tisiphone is present during his mad assault.

216 If this is right than Statius either allows Capaneus special knowledge of events or assumes that the words of Tiresias have already spread through the Argive forces.

217 Patrokles too had to be pushed back three times before Apollo got his message through to him that the city was not doomed to fall at his hands (16.698-709).

At 10.850ff Capaneus re-enacts shield-images from earlier authors and begins to wreck the city. This is his second opponent of his last day's battle. The reaction of the Thebans is predictable they are entirely frightened by his menace. For his own part, he is disgusted with the unworthiness of his own accomplishments and reviles the city's foundations. His discontent finds a target in wrecking the wall's structure (10.881-2). He removes, after a boast, a roofed section of the battlement. He also shows the same lack of care in choosing the targets of his wrath. It is another sign that he knows no limits when he destroys both houses and temples(10.881). There is also something raw and primitive in his casting of stones; in this he may remind the audience of the Laestrygonians or Cyclopes which Odysseus encounters. On the wall, the outer limit of the city, he is also at the conclusion of his place in the narrative as well. Statius' audience will know that Menoeceus' sacrifice has guaranteed city's safety, and further, Hades, angered over Amphiaraus' sudden appearance, promised that Capaneus will attack the Olympians (10.76-7).

His actions, as he is perched on the wall of Thebes, affects the Thebans and the Olympians. Throughout the epic there are gods acting for and against Thebes who quarrel over Thebes' fate. At 10.883-4 they do so because the madness released on earth has reached the heavens. Capaneus himself partly solves their debate: he challenges the gods. The gods are manifestly disturbed by his impious boasts and take his threat seriously (10.905). Whatever gods were on the side of the Argive forces with Capaneus at their head are now discouraged; and even Hera is silent after Capaneus' outburst. The world reacts to Jupiter's arming and signals that the king of gods is about to act. So impressive is the arming of the

god that it deserves a simile comparing it to the sort of arming that one would expect were a Titan to escape. The use of a simile also means that an important event in the narrative approaches.

> . . . Stygias rupisse catenas
> Iapetum aut victam supera ad convexa levari
> Inarimen Aetnamve putes. . .
>
> You might believe that Iapetos
> burst his Stygian chains or Inarime and Aetna, though
> conquered, rose to the vaulted upper world. 10.915-17

Iapetos may seem odd choice but he seems to have had a leading role in the battles between the Titans and the Olympians.[218] Statius uses Iapetos' role as a leader of anti-Olympian forces to parallel Capaneus' role as a leader of an assault on the heavens and to indicate that he, just as the Titans had, will overreach himself. Capaneus is soon blasted by Jupiter's lightning. Since his death-scene has been discussed earlier it only remains to examine the importance of reading *meruisse* instead of the accepted *sperare* of 9.939.

Merit

The final lines of the description of the death of Capaneus introduce a question rooted in the important yet neglected theme of merit in the *Thebaid*. Statius ends Book 10 and Capaneus' deathscene with lines 938-9: "if his limbs had failed a little more slowly he could have hoped for a second lightning bolt" (*paulum si tardius artus / cessissent, potuit fulmen*

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218 Valerius Flaccus, in the *Argonautica*, lets the defeat of Iapetus stand for the defeat of the Titans by the Olympians (1.563).

sperare secundum). Scholars including Ross, Shackleton-Bailey, Lasueur, Melville, Hill, Klinnert, Williams, Mozley, and Barth, accept the *sperare* of manuscript P over the ω-group of manuscripts' *meruisse* which, for comparison, gives the meaning "he could have merited a second lightning bolt". I intend to show that *meruisse* is as appropriate a reading as *sperare*, first by reviewing the arguments for *sperare* and secondly by exploring the importance of 'merit' in the *Thebaid* and especially in Capaneus' story.

The reasoning for the choice of *sperare* is not given by a number of the scholars mentioned earlier. Of the Latin editions, Hill's and Klinnert's texts fall into this category; of those editions with text and translation, Mozley's gives without comment the translation of 10.939 as "he might have expected a second thunderbolt", and lastly for straight English translations, there is Melville's "he could have hoped from Jove a second blow" and Ross's "he might have hoped to feel a second bolt".

For the remaining scholars, line 10.939, once *sperare* is accepted, sparks some comment as to what the line means. Very recently Shackleton-Bailey translates 10.939, as "he might have hoped for a second bolt", and adds the note, "his spirit was undaunted and he would have welcomed an encore" (v. 3 195). Lesueur comments that "the pride of Capaneus was not satisfied therefore by only one lightning bolt. As in the case of Tydeus the will remains intact, the body alone has been defeated"(82).[219] Shackleton-Bailey and Lesueur are pretty much in line with Williams' opinion. He explains the line as "he (Capaneus) had wished for Jupiter's thunderbolt and would have wished for another" (135).

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219 My translation of Lesseur's statement "l'orgueil de Capanŕe ne se satisfait donc pas d'une seule foudre. Comme dans le cas de Tydŕe, la volontŕ reste intacte, le corps seul est dŕfaillant'.

Interestingly, Williams also includes a comment from Barth from 1664: "The reading suggests more truly Capaneus and Papinius. You could find nothing more suitable for the natural sharpness/acumen of the author and the destroyed ambition of the hero." (*magis Capaneum et Papinium sapit lectio (sc. sperare). Ilius perditae ambitioni, huius affectato acumini nil accomodatius inveneris*).

Whether or not *sperare* or *meruisse* is more Statian I may not be able to argue definitively, but, as a partial defense, I will be able to show that under similar circumstances Statius does refer to merit. This issue aside, scholars agree in general that there is an audacious, ambitious quality to Capaneus' character that would not be quelled had he survived the lightning-strike. This is a fair assessment of Capaneus' character, and the case for *sperare* may be strengthened further in relation to this point, so that the two readings may be balanced fairly.

Williams provides support for the aptness of *sperare* within the specific setting. He points out that at 10.904-5 Statius has Capaneus, who is perched on the Theban walls amidst a gathering storm, says "Come now Jupiter, now strive against me with all your flames!" (*nunc age, nunc totis in me conitere flammis Iuppiter!*). The hyperbole of the scene and Capaneus' daring is represented here as it is in William's second example, the words of Zeus in Book 11: "One man alone engaged in impious battles and dared to fall by my right." (*impia bella / unus init, aususque mea procumbere dextra*).

To these may be added other instances that show this is a regular trait of Capaneus. First he impiously hopes that the serpent that killed Archemorus is a favorite creature of the gods, presumably since it would provoke them to confront him (5.568-9). Secondly when

he encounters Eunaeus on the battle-field, he wishes that Bacchus were present too (7.678-9). Further, Statius gives the motive of Capaneus' mounting the walls of Thebes at 10.837-8 as his weariness of earthly battles. Once he mounts the walls he demands not only the lightning-bolt with "lightning, hey, where is the lightning" (*fulmen, io, ubi fulmen* 10.889), but the appearance of the gods as well. Williams mentions his challenge to Jupiter in this scene (135), but Capaneus does not start there. Before challenging the king of the gods he demands Bacchus and Hercules as opponents, but then takes back his words, since only Jupiter in his eyes would be a worthy adversary (10.899-903).

The use of *sperare* and the explanation of the line as referring to Capaneus' spirit then is apt. Had his body the strength after the initial blast, his spirit would have yet driven him on against the gods. Only one editor, Beraldus, supports *meruisse*. His 1685 edition was adopted and commented on by Valpy. He, however, can in no way be said to champion the reading. He writes "some codices have *sperare*, not indefensibly" (*quidam codices, sperare, non male* 1392).

Nevertheless much may be said in favour of *meruisse*. The idea of merit sets the plot in motion, offers the method by which Thebes will save itself from complete destruction, is critical in the individual narratives of each of theArgive leaders, appears regularly with passages about Capaneus' death, and is used by Statius in reference to his own poem.

Merit is a key factor in setting up the plot. Oedipus has been abused by his sons and after calling on the Fury, Tisiphone to aid him, he starts his plea at 1.60 with "if I have well-earned anything" (*si bene quid merui*), and from there he lists all the terrible deeds of his life which helped fulfil the purposes of the Furies. Tisiphone is convinced and just after Jupiter

takes notice of Oedipus' request too. Oedipus was guilty of crime but he had also accepted, by self-inflicted blindness, the duty of punishment. Jupiter recognizes this and ascents: "Your blindness has earned, earned, your hope of Jupiter as an avenger" (*meruere tuae, meruere tenebrae / ultorem sperare Iovem* 1.240-1).

The story is not just about the mutual strife between Eteocles and Polynikes that Oedipus demands, but Jupiter also uses this opportunity to punish Argos and Thebes for their past crimes. Merit thus works explicitly by setting the action in motion, but also lurks more subtly behind the plot, since the rest of the story details the wages earned by the characters and cities involved.

Within this harsh setting the idea that a doomed city can be saved by the personal sacrifice of one man, willing to take on punishment for the community, is also stressed and will be the method by which Thebes is able to extricate itself from its inherited guilt. This idea is presented in Book 1 in the story of Coroebeus. The story is told by Adrastos to Polynikes as an explanation for rites that are maintained in Argos in honour of Apollo. The god had decided to punish Argos for the accidental death of one of his children and sent a monster to plague the city. The monster is killed and Apollo, still angry, begins to strike down the Argives with sickness. Coroebeus confronts the god and offers himself as the guilty party and to take the punishment of the god on himself alone. The god then relents and Argos is spared. Merit shows up several times in the story. Most importantly when Coroebeus asks Apollo to spare the Argives, since he alone is guilty, he says "What do the Argives deserve?" (*quid meruere Argi*? 1.651). At the end of his speech he gives himself up to the judgment of Apollo at 1.657: "That is sufficient: I have earned that you be unwilling

to spare me (*satis est: merui, ne parcere velles*). Coroebeus, like Oedipus, accepts his guilt and, and though he is without hope, the result is success. Argos is spared. This scene foreshadows the sacrifice in Book 10 of Menoeceus, the son of Creon, who throws himself off the walls of Thebes in order to atone for Cadmus' slaying of the serpent of Ares. By his sacrifice he cancels out one of the early crimes of the Thebans and gains victory for his city. The language used in his death-scene does not include *mereo* but the idea, set up in Book 1 by the parallel story of Coroebeus, is still in play.

Besides playing a large role in the plot, merit also shows up in the individual treatments of the Argive leaders. The death of a hero, including the afterlife in the case of Amphiaraus, will tie into their actions. For most of the Argive leaders a question of the merit of the manner of death they suffer is raised.

Amphiaraus is the first to die. His story is about merit. He has been a good and noble priest of Apollo and the god rewards him for his virtue by causing the earth to split open sending the priest to the underworld so that he will not be polluted by a wound in battle. When Amphiaraus appears in the underworld, this intrusion is not appreciated by Pluto, who, after a rant against the Olympian gods, begins to contemplate the punishment that Amphiaraus has earned. Amphiaraus cuts him off and sets forth his case. The priest is still in shock by the sudden descent and the passage into the underworld seems to him to be a punishment of sorts. He says at 8.102-3, after claiming his innocense, "I did not so deserve to be stolen from nurturing light" (*nec alma/sic merui de luce rapi*). What Amphiaraus does not realise is that he is being rewarded by Apolo and that he will be accepted as a chthonic deity and given a prophetic shrine near Athens.

Merit is not used specifically in conjunction with the death of Tydeus. But the idea is implicit in his story. Athena wanted to reward Tydeus' valour with immortality, but he commits a crime, cannibalism, and his chance at immortality is lost. Further the scene may pick up on a parallel situation involving Tydeus and Athena earlier where the idea of merit is explicit. In Book 2 Tydeus has survived an ambush of fifty Thebans with the help of the goddess. He gathers all the arms of the slain and affixes them to a tree as a tribute for her help. Statius inserts his voice at 2.704-5 explaining the action of the hero, "Pallas, for you, since you have earned it, he prepares a fine trophy from the bloody slaughter" (*meritae pulchrum tibi, Pallas, honorem sanguinea de strage parat*).

Hippomedon, like Achilles, battles a river. As Hippomedon finds himself overwhelmed in the stream and is confronted with the idea of being drowned (not a very heroic way to go), he complains to Mars: "Indeed do I not deserve to fall by the sword?" (*adeone occumbere ferro/non merui* 9. 509-510). Juno hears his prayers and Hippomedon is rewarded with a more honourable death.

Parthenopaeus, the son of Atalanta, is a sympathetic figure. His death in battle at Thebes is brought about by his eagerness. He really is too young to be there. He admits as much, and his own responsibility in his death with the words to be delivered to his mother, "I deserve, reluctant mother, to have suffered the penalty, I took up arms although just a boy (*merui, genetrix, poenas invita capesse; / arma puer rapui* 9.891-3).[220]

Polynikes and Eteocles have earned their punishment by their treatment of Oedipus.

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220 Atalanta was unwilling to allow her son to go to war.

Merit is important in their story. With irony, after the story of Coroebeus, Adrastos encourages Polynikes, who is embarrassed at being a son of Oedipus, "Only you, unlike them, deserve to atone for your family in favorable circumstances" (*tu modo dissimilis rebus mereare secundis/excusare tuos* 1.691-2). It is too late for him to extricate himself from the crimes of the Thebans and the curse of his father. Neither he nor Eteocles can be like Coroebeus.

Statius returns lightly to the theme of merit at the death of the brothers. When Eteokles receives a death-wound and falls, he plays dead, conserving his strength until Polynikes comes in to strip him of his armour. Then Eteocles stabs him, mortally wounding him too. They have earned this fate. At this point Polynikes asks his brother "Are you still alive and does your anger still remain, Oath-breaker! You will never deserve quiet halls" (*vivisne an adhuc manet ira superstes, perfide, nec sedes umquam meriture quietas*? 11. 569). Polynikes develops the idea further by saying that he will pursue his case in the underworld and demand judgment from Minos himself (11.570-573).

The appearance of merit at these points may lead one to expect it in conjunction with the death of Capaneus and this interest of Statius in merit in the epic overall can be combined with its significance to Capaneus' story.

I take the meaning of line 10.939 with *meruisse* as "he would have merited another bolt" and as referring to the fact that Capaneus has insulted the gods so much, in his challenge, and impiety, that he had earned in advance of his death more than one bolt and that had he survived Jupiter would have paid him in full. His story is about crime and punishment, and there are clear references to merit in passages about Capaneus.

While death of the Jupiter's serpent supports the reading of *sperare*, it provides a parallel situation to Capaneus' death-scene and stronger support for inclusion of *meruisse*. The disdainful slaying of the snake nearly costs Capaneus his life. Jupiter arms himself with lightning and is about to throw a bolt, but he stops himself. Capaneus would have been struck down but for the fact that "the anger of the god was less and Capaneus was preserved for weightier missiles" (*ni minor ira deo graviorque tela mereri / servatus Capaneus* 5.587). The episode rehearses elements from Capaneus' death-scene. The two passages would have more impact if linked by *mereo*. In another instance, late in the work but also relevant to Capaneus' death, Eteocles brings up a question of merit. When a messenger arrives to tell Eteocles that his brother is approaching and challenging him to battle, he interrupts the sacrifice that he is making Jupiter for striking down Capaneus and preserving the city, with "What has Capaneus deserved?" (*quid meruit Capaneus?* 11.249). He wonders what Capaneus had done to merit a death that would be more suitable for his brother.

I think that merit in conjunction with Capaneus both before his death scene and after and the simple story at the heart of Capaneus' story, a challenge the gods followed by punishment, make merit acceptable at the moment of his death and more so than *sperare*. As a final note, the poet himself, in this poem is concerned about merit. Statius was not a rich man writing at leisure. He depended upon pleasing his patrons and his general audience. Vessey writes that these

> "were men of influence and wealth, either actively engaged in the imperial service or in a life of comfortable and affluent leisure. Cultured and critical dilettantes, many of them toyed with the art of poetry, dabbled in philosophy and spent their wealth in creating or acquiring works of beauty . . .to such men, Statius was obliged to pay his

respects for the sake of reward and encouragement." (1973, 27)

Statius, then, was in the business of earning his keep by the merit of his work. Further he was also competitive and, like his father, contended in public games with his poetry.[221] This is another milieu where a poet is rewarded for the production and recital of worthy poetry. Statius' interest in merit is reflected twice in his words at the end of the *Thebaid*. In both cases the idea of merit ends a task. In the first case the poem itself: "my poem has earned it port from the wide water" (*mea longo meruit ratis aequore portum* 12.809) and in the second the poet's own addendum to his poem "after my death deservedly honours will be conferred" (*et meriti post me referentur honores* 12.819). To conclude, there is on the one hand the widely accepted *sperare* which points to the daring, restless, hubristic aspects of Capaneus' character and more specifically his death- scene, and on the other, *meruisse*, a thematic word. Merit sets the plot in motion, it is the basis for the resolution of Argive threat against Thebes, and a question of merit is raised at the death of each Argive chieftain. It also completes the narratives and the poem itself. For Capaneus merit has direct relevance to the moral function of his story and is found in both a scene that foreshadows his death as well, just after the event at 11.249, in Eteocles's question *quid meruit Capaneus*?

Aftermath

With the death of Capaneus there are two stripes on the wall; Menoeceus' red streak

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221 See Hardie 142-147.

from his suicide and the scorched mark of Capaneus' decent (11.4). The Olympian gods were entirely caught up in the madness of Capaneus' assault and see glory in Jupiter's deed. There is now a slight distancing of the author from Capaneus' presentation as a monster which can be detected in how he looks at the actions of the gods. While they welcome Jupiter as if he has just defeated the giants or, specifically, Enceladus, Jupiter sees nothing significant in the victory (11.7-8). Since Capaneus has been likened to giants and monsters earlier in the work, this comparison is apt, but in truth there was never any real risk to Jupiter who stood outside the struggle and the madness which he initiated. There was definitely risk to Capaneus. Through his warrior courage, his attempt to surpass limits, and mode of death he wins glory even Jupiter can praise (11.11).

In Book 10's image of Capaneus' corpse lying on the battlefield there are points that relate to earlier descriptions of the hero. First, there are still chunks of the city in his hand (11.9). He has been portrayed as one who tears at the city. Secondly, in a hyperbolic comparison he is likened to the outstretched corpse of Tityos. His size is once more a key trait and again he is linked to a famous sinner (11.8). Thirdly, he is still offensive to Thebes in that his smouldering corpse burns the enemy fields (*hostiliaque urit/arva* 11.16-17). Lastly, Capaneus had claimed all along that he was to be an omen for himself and those who followed him. There is very clever irony in his immolation, since this is the omen that scatters the Argive forces. They are characterized almost as miniature Capaneuses, since, as they flee, they believe that they are on fire and that Jupiter hounds them (11.23-25). Capaneus' death also signals to the Thebans that they should renew their attack against the now routed Argives.

Statius seems reluctant to leave Capaneus alone. The hero did serve the poet well over the course of the narrative of the *Thebaid* and when Statius returns to a scene in Hades featuring the Fury, Megeara, he notes that Capaneus is nearby (11.70-1). Statius indicates that Capaneus has gained other-worldy fame: "Capaneus is praised by the whole crowd of Hades and nourishes his remarkable shade in Stygian streams" (*dum coetu Capaneus laudatur ab omni / Ditis et insignem Stygiis fovet amnibus umbram*). His corpse may be unhappy and lie on the earth with a scowl (*torvus . . . visu* 11.10) but there does not seem to be a spill-over of his anger in the Underworld, and the picture is peaceful, quiet, and almost pleasant. He has come to the limit and won his fame among the Olympians, mortals, and now the shades of the underworld.. There is also careful arrangement of words in this last picture. Perhaps Statius is honouring Capaneus poetically with 11.71's *insignem Stygiis fovet amnibus umbram*, which, while not filling up its line, nevertheless contains the pattern for a golden line. As a final note on Capaneus in the Underworld, we had earlier the suggestion by Statius in his invocation that the Furies had a part in his actions. At 11.90-91 and now, Tisiphone claims her part in this scene by telling her sister Megaera that she was mixed with the raging arms of the man (*ego mixta viri furialibus armis* 11.90).

Capaneus' overall importance is proved in how he is used to prepare for later events of the *Thebaid*. Statius had needed Capaneus to keep the Argive threat of Thebes strong, and even after his death Capaneus' role proves useful. When Theseus brings his army to Thebes Statius provides the answer as to why the weakened town does not just settle in behind their walls. His solution is that Capaneus had so wrecked the battlements that they were of no more use (12.706). Further Capaneus' wife, who is his match in rage (righteous

anger in her case), convinces Theseus to go to war (12.546-86). Capaneus had roused the forces for the Argive attack on Thebes, while his wife dd the same with the Athenians.

If Capaneus has earned fame improperly by trying to surpass normal limits, Theseus provides the model for pious and controlled action. The poet invites comparisons to the two heroes' character. His spear, like Capaneus', is a tree tipped with a point (*ferrataque arbore* 12.769). He is part of vengeance for evil crimes, that is another *ultor*. He however knows his limit and holds off from attacking the city itself. Rather, he is only interested in killing the criminal Creon.[222] and once this is done, the war is over, a treaty is made on the battlefield, and Theseus is invited into Thebes as a friend (12.782-4). That a focus on the moral aspect of leaders should be so strong so late is not surprising since Theseus had strictly this same role in the *Suppliants*. As we have just seen, Capaneus, who was as powerful a warrior as Theseus, perish by following a different road to virtue and fame.

Conclusion

Statius' Capaneus is important to the plot of the *Thebaid*. He champions the Argive desire for the war against the will and advice of Amphiaraus. He slays the snake that killed Archemorus. He has a hand in Tydeus' loss of immortality and the makeshift burial of Hippomedon. With the death of four of the Argive leaders, it is up to him to raise the martial spirits of the troops, and, had Menoeceus not sacrificed himself, he would have been key in the destruction of Thebes. Lastly, had Capaneus not destroyed the walls of Thebes, Theseus

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222 The Argives have suffered their final defeat and slaughter and the Thebans must as well. This alteration of the suffering of Theban and Argive forces is consistent throughout the *Thebaid*.

would not have been able to rid the city of Creon's rule and impious commands. Statius' Capaneus, while performing his role, displays many of the traits of the Argive leaders from Homer, Aeschylus, and Euripides. He is impious, violent, boastful, fiery and bellicose. Madness pervades the *Thebaid*, and Capaneus often shows this trait as well. He insults the gods, challenges them to battle, and becomes enraged easily. He is not out of place, the doomed cities are madly coming together to their mutual destruction. The most important difference is that this is his natural bent, and while he may be influenced by the Furies, he is not driven out of character. An indication of this is that once the madness of war strikes the Argives and the battles, start Capaneus is less and less out of place; ultimately has his most peaceful moment in the underworld. Merit is also an important theme. Cities and brothers are brought together because they have earned punishment. The theme is active at the death of each of the chieftains and, besides definitely occurring in conjunction with Capaneus after he earns Jupiter's wrath by slaying the divine snake and in Eteocles' scornful question from 11.249 "*quid meruit Capaneus*", it could very well be present in the last line of Capaneus' death-scene in the reading of *meruisse* over *sperare* at 10.939.

Conclusions and Medieval Presentations

The survival of the story of Capaneus was guaranteed in the Greek and Roman period by the popularity of Theban myth among dramatists and epic-writers. The moral aspect of his story - if you challenge the gods you will be punished - and the simple but spectacular plot - a challenge followed by a lightning blast - are the enduring elements of his story in both periods. Upon this rather narrow foundation there is room for varying depictions of the hero, which are guided by the larger narrative within which Capaneus appears.

Aeschylus presents the Argive attack from the point of view of the besieged. The plight of the Theban citizens and the decision of Eteocles to meet his brother in combat are more crucial to the play than an individual presentation of each Argive leader. The attackers are undifferentiated and give a general impression of threat and violence. As a result, Capaneus neither deviates from his later characterizations nor stands out appreciably from his comrades. In Euripides' *Suppliants*, the core of Capaneus' story is retained but his character is rounded out. He errs at the height of success and is punished. His character is not to be considered impious through and through. He merely has the normal, too valorous spirit of youth that a proper leader, like Theseus, can control in himself and moderate others, but which goes uncontrolled by Adrastos. The rehabilitation, if this is not an overstatement, is helped by the presence of Capaneus' wife and her suicide in his pyre. In the last major

surviving treatment of the story in the Greek period, the *Phoenissae*, Euripides presents Capaneus in the Aeschylean mode. He is one of two characters chosen by the author to show how bad the Argive attackers are. Capaneus and Parthenopaeus both receive lengthy treatment and are given particularly brutal deaths. If one looks for a general trend over the Greek and Roman period, the association of the Aeschylean traits (threats, violence, boasts, beastliness, impiety, fire, noise) to fewer and fewer leaders is certainly noticeable.

Since Statius' *Thebaid* is lengthy, giving him greater scope for delineation of character, and is also written from the point of view of the attackers rather than defenders, each Argive hero has a greater individual presence. Once Capaneus had been chosen to play the role of the impious attacker Statius could attach to him the most negative details of the Argives from earlier presentations of the Seven, as well as present him in a similar way as ambitious, self-reliant, contemners of gods, like Idas, Mezentius, and Flaminius. The biggest change to Capaneus' handling in Statius comes from his relevance to plot. In Statius the Argives and Thebans are doomed by their past crimes to suffer destruction in war. Capaneus becomes the primary vehicle for the ruin of Thebes and comes close to accomplishing the task. Capaneus is a near unstoppable force of destruction and is thus both closely aligned with the Furies and the fulfilment of Jupiter's will. This role becomes more exaggerated as the other chieftains, Amphiaraus, Tydeus, Hippomedon, Parthenopaeus, die and the responsibility for Thebes' punishment comes to lie on his shoulders alone.

A neutral or sympathetic portrayal of Capaneus as well as the Aeschylean portrayal are represented in the artistic as well as literary tradition. Greek vases use the outset of the Argive expedition to portray generic scenes of the arming of young men before a campaign,

a common sight in the ancient world, and in these images there is no hint of crime or ill-omen. For individual presentations of Capaneus, found on Roman and Etruscan gems and Greek vases, Capaneus' crime is emphasized by the inclusion of details from his death. The ladder, ascent, or lightning bolt, may be present, or Capaneus may be shown as a young man, defenseless, being struck down suddenly in battle.

There is also great variance in the treatment of Capaneus in the Middle-Ages. While it is not within the scope of this Thesis to examine in detail the depictions of Capaneus in the later periods I would like to close this study by indicating in broad strokes how Christian writers reacted to his story.

In the Medieval period Statius' poem had considerable popularity. There is much in the work much that would resonate with an audience steeped in the biblical tradition. The idea that one inherits guilt from past generations is a Theban theme and parallels the idea of original sin. The importance of merit would also interest a period which focused on the afterlife and one's place in heaven and hell. While the whole story was allegorized,[223] this was not necessary to guarantee the popularity and survival of the *Thebaid*. It was suitably

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223 *Super Thebaiden* was probably written in the 12-13th century and is a very brief and poorly sustained allegorical presentation of the myth of Thebes from Laius' marriage to Jocasta to the intervention of Theseus on behalf of the Argives. By the time of its composition Statius' *Thebaid* had already attained its popularity (for authorship and date see Whitebread 235-7). The allegory does not in fact follow Statius but a loose working of the myth of Thebes. In its interpretation 7 Greek leaders swear to follow Adrastos to Thebes. These 7 represent the 7 liberal arts. The allegory proves to be too neat for Statius' narrative and is not applicable. In the allegory neither Polynikes counts as a member of the 7 since he is allegorized as Greed nor Adrastos since he represents Philosophy, the source of the 7 arts. Thus a reader using the allegory as a map to the epic would soon be left 2 chieftains/liberal arts short and would be forced to leave the interpretation behind.

moral, even in a Christian setting, without this expediency.

Dante's *Inferno* (*circa* 1319) contains a very striking image of Capaneus still rebelling against Jove (14.46-72). Capaneus is punished under an eternal rain of fire with those who do violence against god, specifically blasphemers. His character has undergone very little change. He is large (14.46), he is mad (14.66), and he scorns God (14.52-60,14.70). Alive, Capaneus could endure only one bolt; dead, his soul suffers continual blasts. We are told, however, that it is not the pain of the punishment which tortures him - indeed Dante's attention is drawn to him because he seems unaffected (14.46-7) - but rather Capaneus' own rage and fury, which cannot find fulfillment (14.65-66). Capaneus' mental anguish is his particular punishment. Typical traits of Capaneus aptly become the source of his own suffering.

Part of Dante's strategy in adapting myth is simply to replace Jove with God and to assume a crime against one is a crime against the other. The same strategy may be seen in Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (1390 A.D.), which in detailing the seven deadly sins uses Capaneus' traditional presentation as an example of the folly of Pride (1.1977-2020). There is no sympathetic turn to Gower's handling as he retells Capaneus' story following, generally, Statius' presentation. Gower starts with a definition of the particular kind of pride from which Capaneus suffers. It is called by Gower 'surquiderie' and defined as 'to despise' (1.1978). From this Gower explains that Capaneus, described as proud (1.1980), was so sure of himself that he ignored the gods, thought it foolish to pray to them, and that such actions arose from fear (1.1983-7). His death, when he trusted most to his own strength, is a sign that strength is lost unless it is well governed (1.2004-2009). In the attack on the city Gower

claims "Godd took himselve the bataille/Agein his Pride" (1.2000-2001).[224] Even though he has shifted Capaneus' crime to one against the Christian God and placed his sin within a Christian context, he disturbs Capaneus' role and story to no appreciable degree.

The Irish *Togail Na Tebe* (the *Sacking of Thebes*), is for the most part a translation of Statius' *Thebaid*. When this translation took place is not known but Manuscript Eg[225] is dated to 1478 A.D; and its precursor E[226] contains archaic language which is found in Old Irish (Calder xii-xiii). Its most unusual feature is the inclusion of lines within the text that seem originally to be glosses to Statius' work. The story of the founding of Thebes, passed quickly over by Statius, is treated at length at the start of the poem, and often what is left unsaid by the poet is expanded and explained.

Two passages are particularly intriguing. First, the *Togail Na Tebe* details the battle of Cadmus with a four-headed giant snake as part of the foundation story for the city (149-50). The Hydra may then not seem as advantageous an emblem for Capaneus as it was for Statius. Presumably, had the image been retained, it could have been read as indicating that a second snake of Mars is attacking Cadmeians. The author responds more simply and removes the specific image of the Hydra from Capaneus' shield. On this version of the shield "serpents, toads, and monsters are depicted" (1485-6).[227] The author has maintained more

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224 Peck's edition is used throughout.

225 Egerton Manuscript # 1781 (British Museum).

226 Edinborough Manuscript: Advocates' Library Gaelic MSS. VIII, Kilbride Collection, No. 4.

227 Calder's edition and translation is used throughout.

obvious chthonic and destructive qualities of the shield as it is found in Statius but lost the rich allusions to other classical works and the interplay of Capaneus as a slayer of monsters, and a monster himself. Secondly, as mentioned, the *Togail Na Tebe* is more than a translation of the *Thebaid*. It also elucidates what the reader may find troubling. Fresh comments on the death of Capaneus specifically interpret how the death of the hero could be considered praiseworthy. E has "Nevertheless it was right for the nations to remember the deeds of that lad, and for the gods to extol him afterwards" to which has been added in Eg, "for a man with the strength of a hundred heroes would not have fallen were not gods to cast him off" (4284-7). The scribe in the first case gives a nod to Statius' attribution of praise to Capaneus for the extent of his deeds, while the second tries to locate the specific reason for the praise, which, for him, is his raw strength. A powerful warrior, even misguided, can still gain praise for this trait. This point aside, since the *Togail Na Tebe* follows Statius quite closely, the general impression, even in consideration of his deeds, is still of a violent, impious monster.

The sympathetic or positive tradition of Capaneus is represented in the French *Le Roman de Thèbes*, a 12th century A.D. work. *Le Roman de Thèbes* recasts the story of Thebes and includes details drawn from tales of knights and ladies as well as elements that would have been familiar to the European audience from the first Crusade. Capaneus is one of the knights who supports the campaign against Thebes and he has the role of good and noble warrior. This is striking in itself but more interesting is the number of times that even in this guise familiar traits from Statius appear.

First, his size is retained. He is introduced as belonging to the race of giants

(2007).[228] Secondly, while polite, he is still opposed to Amphiaraus and advises Adrastos both not to listen to his advice and declares that Amphiaraus is a coward (2053-5). Thirdly, the story of Hypsipyle is retained but turned into a romance episode in which Capaneus comes to the aid of a lady in distress and slays a menacing serpent (2377-2439). Fourthly, within this same episode we get details of his weapon. In *Le Roman de Thèbes* it is of the normal variety, but that which he uses to slay the serpent is of the rough sort found in Statius. Capaneus uproots an oak sapling and, after sharpening one end, spears the monster (2425-2439). Fifthly, his fury and habitual anger are amply attested. The author often describes him as speaking or attacking in rage (2052, 2413, 2431, 10088). As a sixth point his death-scene follows in general that of the *Thebaid*. He scales the wall and, while lightning does not strike him down, his death is still attributed to a missile weapon, a rock (10093-6). Lastly the fact that Capaneus lives longest of the Argive leaders in Statius, not counting Polynikes and Adrastus, is carried further in *Le Roman de Thèbes*. In this poem his death is postponed until after the duel between Polynikes and Eteocles. He dies ultimately during the attack on Thebes led by Theseus.

In *Le Roman de Thèbes* Capaneus is a good and noble knight. As the most outspoken hero, traditionally, against the Greek gods, Capaneus has the opportunity, in *Le Roman de Thèbes*, to rail against paganism and to represent a Christian knight's reaction to paganism in the east. Two manuscripts, B and C, not accepted by Constans in his critical edition, are witness to an episode which puts Capaneus in this role. In the excised passage, Capaneus

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[228] The line numbering follows Coley's translation of Constans' edition.

passes over the wall of Thebes, wrecks a Theban temple, and curses the gods (9242-9376). The gods then hold a counsel, Jove decides that Capaneus should be destroyed, and Capaneus is blasted by lightning (9377-9632). Capaneus, who has been the paradigm of a good knight, seems now to act impiously. The passage on its surface seems discordant and is understandably relegated to *Appendix II* in Constans. If, however, it is kept in mind that Capaneus is in fact wrecking a Theban temple and insults Theban gods, both pagan institutions, than the argument for excision is weaker. Two scholars, Blumenfeld-Kosinski (7-11) and Battles (37-45), have tried to place the episode within its larger context. Battles argues convincingly that Capaneus becomes a spokesman against paganism and therefore that Capaneus' character is consistent throughout the work (7-11),[229] while Blumenfeld-Kosinski sees Capaneus in his traditional role as a blasphemer and wrecker of civilization and takes the temple and pagan gods as representing the learned pagan past. Capaneus' story, which ends in this version in lightning, is a clear warning against those who would destroy the ancient and priceless culture of the pagans (7-10).

Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*, written in the first quarter of the 15th century, follows *Le Roman de Thèbes* in general but is more influenced by a later prose redaction of the poem from the *Histoire de Edippus* portion of the 13th century *Histoire Ancienne jusqu' à César*. The redaction reduces Capaneus' role, and the hero falls to the background as simply a very impressive knight. Lydgate's introduction of Capaneus is short, "And excelling by

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229 He does not refer to the parallel of Amphiaraus in Lydgate, who is damned to hell for worshiping pagan gods, a neat inversion which might have bolstered his argument.

worthynesse of fame/The noble kyng called Campaneus (2606-7).[230] The hero neither confronts Amphiaraus at the outset nor kills the snake for Hypsipyle. His role is so reduced that the only hints that he might have been more important to the story at one time is first his survival, as in the *Le Roman de Thèbes*, into the second attack on Thebes led by Theseus and secondly the praise of Adrastos after he has been struck down from Thebes' wall by a rock

> Campaneus was on the wallys slayn;
> With cast of ston he was so overlade,
> For whom Adrastus such a sorrowe made
> That no man myght reles hym of his peyne. (4545-4549)

We have seen the survival of the core of Capaneus' story over the course of some 2000 years. Sadly in Lydgate his tale has lost even its simple form and its moral force. Without these traits there is nothing to guide or cement his character and role. Capaneus rages neither against gods nor devils in disguise. He is struck down without deed or word and not by lightning but by a rock. If an author were to follow Lydgate, ignoring all other sources, it doubtful that Capaneus would survive into the next narrative. On the other hand Lydgate does illustrate well the wandering course of the survival of the Theban myth and of the resiliency of the story of Capaneus within it. At the start of the 15th century, in Lydgate's English poem, based on a prose summary of a French Romance with roots in Statius' *Thebaid*, which itself is full of allusions to Greek epic and drama, Capaneus, even in his shortest role, is still being struck from the wall.

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230 Edward's edition is used throughout.

Appendix

Ἀγακλειτός in Homer and Hesiod[231]

Iliad

2.564	καὶ Σθένε|λος Καπα|νῆος	/	ἀ|γακλει|τοῦ φίλος|υἱός
12.101	Σαρπη|δὼν δ' ἡ|γεῖτο	/	ἀ|γακλει|τῶν ἐπι|κούρων
16.463	ἔνθ' ἦ|τοι πάτ|ροκλος	/	ἀ|γακλει|τὸν Θρασύ|μηλον
18.45	Δωρὶς|καὶ Πανό|πη	// καὶ	ἀ|γακλει|τῇ Γαλα|τεια
21.53	ὀτρύ|νων παρὰ |τεῖχος	/	ἀ|γακλει|τοὺς πυλα|ωρούς
Odyssey			
3.59	σύμπα|σιν Πυλί|οισιν	/	ἀ|γακλει|τῆς ἑκα|τόμβης
7.202	ἡμῖν,| εὖτ' ἔρ|δωμεν	/	ἀ|γακλει|τὰς ἑκα|τόμβας
17.370	κέκλυτε| μευ, μνη|στῆρες	/	ἀ|γακλει|τῆς βασι|λείς
17.468	κέκλυτε| μευ, μνη|στῆρες	/	ἀ|γακλει|τῆς βασι|λείς
18.351	κέκλυτε| μευ, μνη|στῆρες	/	ἀ|γακλει|τῆς βασι|λείς
21.275	κέκλυτε| μευ, μνη|στῆρες	/	ἀ|γακλει|τῆς βασι|λείς

Hesiod

Theog. 1016	πᾶσιν | Τυρσή|οῖσιν	/	ἀ|γακλει|τοῖσι ἄ|νασσον
Fr. 33 (a) 20	μαρνάμε|νος Νηλ|ῆος	/	ἀ|γακλεῖ|τοῦ περὶ |τεῖχος
Fr. 204.57	Δευκαλί|δης, Μί|νως	/	ἀ|γακλει|τοῖο γεν|έ[θλης

Κυδάλιμος in Homer, Hesiod, and Apollonius of Rhodes

Iliad

4.100	ἀλλ' ἄγ' ὀ|ΐστευ|σον	//	Μενα|λάου |κυδαλί|μοιο
4.177	τύμβῳ ἐ|πιθρῴσ|κων	//	Μενε|λάου |κυδαλί|μοιο
4.403	τόν δ' υἱ|ὸς Καπα|νῆος	/	ἀ|μείψατο |κυδαλί|μοιο
6.184	δεύτερον |αὖ Σολύ|μοισι	/	μα|χέσσετο |κυδαλί|μοισι
6.204	μαρνάμε|νον Σολύ|μοισι	/	κα|τέκτανε |κυδαλί|μοισι
6.392	κουριδί|ην δ ἄλο|χον	//	Μενε|λάου |κυδαλί|μοιο
10.16	ὑψόθ' ἐ|όντι Δι|ὶ,	// μέγα| δ' ἔστενε|κυδάλι|μον κῆρ	
12.45	αἰχμας| ἐκ χει|ρῶν·	// τοῦ |δ' οὔ ποτε|κυδάλι|μον κῆρ	

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231 This adjective does not appear in Apollonius of Rhodes. In this and the following table a "/" indicates a Feminine Caesura and a "//" indicates a Masculine Caesura.

13.591	ὣς ἀπὸ |θώρη|κος	//	Μενε|λάου |κυδαλί|μοιο
13.601	Πείσα|νδρος δ' ἰ|θὺς	//	Μενε|λάου |κυδαλί|μοιο
13.606	Πείσα|νδρος δὲ σάκ|ος	//	Μενε|λάου |κυδαλί|μοιο
15.415	Ἕκτωρ| δ' ἄντ' Αἴ|αντος	/	ἐ|είσατο |κυδαλί|μοιο
17.69	ἀντίον| ἐλθέμε|ναι	//	Μενε|λάου |κυδαλί|μοιο
17.378	ἀνέρε| κυδαλί|μω,	//	Θρασυ|μήδης| Ἀντίλο|χός τε
18.33	χεῖρας ἔ|ξων Ἀχιλ|ῆος·	/	ὁ |δέ ἑστενε|κυδάλι|μον κῆρ.
19.238	Ἦ, καὶ |Νέστορος |υἷας	//	ὀ|πάσσατο |κυδαλί|μοιο,
20.439	πνοῇ Ἀ|χιλλῆ|ος	//	πάλιν |ἔτραπε|κυδαλί|μοιο
Odyssey			
3.219	ὡς τότ' Ὀ|δυσσῆ|ος	//	περι|κήδετο |κυδαλί|μιοι
4.2	πρὸς δ' ἄρα |δώματ' ἔ|λων	//	Μενε|λάου |κυδαλί|μοιο
4.16	γείτονες |ἠδὲ ἔ|ται	//	Μενε|λάου |κυδαλί|μοιο
4.23	ὀτη|ρὸς θερά|πων	//	Μενε|λάου |κυδαλί|μοιο
4.46	δῶμα καθ' |ὑψερε|φὲς	//	Μενε|λάου |κυδαλί|μοιο
4.217	ὀτη|ρὸς θερά|πων	//	Μενε|λάου |κυδαλί|μοιο
14.206	ὄλβῳ | τε πλού|τῳ	//	τε καὶ |υἱασι |κυδαλί|μοισιν.
15.5	εὕδοντ' |ἐν προδό|μῳ	//	Μενε|λάου |κυδαλί|μοιο
15.141	οἰνοχό|ει δ υἱ|ὸς	//	Μενε|λάου |κυδαλί|μοιο
15.358	ἡ δ' ἄ|χεϊ οὗ |παιδὸς	/	ἀ|πέφθιτο |κυδαλί|μοιο,
17.113	ἐνδυκέ|ως ἐκό|μιζε	/	σὺν| υἱάσι |κυδαλί|μοισιν.
19.418	Αὐτόλυ|κος δ' υἱ|οῖσιν	/	ἐ|κέκλετο |κυδαλί|μοισι
21.247	ἐντανύ|σαι δύνα|το,	//	μέγα |δ' ἔστενε|κυδάλι|μον κῆρ·
22.89	Ἀμφίνο|μς δ' Ὀδυ|σῆος	/	ἐ|είσατο |κυδαλί|μοιο
22.238	ἡμὲν Ὀ|δυσσῆ|ος	//	ἠδ'| υἱοῦ |κυδαλί|μοιο
Hesiod			
Sc. 74	πλήν γ' Ἡ|ρακλῆ|ος	//	καὶ|κυδαλί|μου Ἰο|λάου;
Sc. 467	υἱὸς |δ' Ἀλκμή|νης	//	καὶ |κυδάλι|μος Ἰό|λαος
Fr. 231	θεσσάμε|νος γενε|ὴν	//	Κλεο|δαίου |κυδαλί|μοιο
Apollonius of Rhodes			
Argon. 1.143	γείνατο| κυδαλί| μοις	//	ἑνα|ρίθμιον| Αἰολί|δησιν
Argon. 4.266	χθὼν τότε|κυδαλί|μοισιν	/	ἀ|νάσσετο|Δευκαλί|δησιν,

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