Family Trees in the *Thebaid*: The Missing Links.

Scholarship has often seen the *Thebaid* as a pessimistic depiction of genealogy. Where epic heroes would normally celebrate their parentage and parade it as a sign of their heroic character, the *Thebaid* repeatedly shows the obverse side: descendants are punished for the crimes of their ancestors and sons inherit the criminal character of their fathers. In the *Thebaid*, a lineage can be a hazard and even a noble lineage can guarantee nothing. While this is not entirely true in all cases, it is certainly true that the *Thebaid* often presents genealogy in a negative way and subverts the traditional epic paradigm.

This paper examines the lineages of the seven heroes against Thebes as given in the *Thebaid*: Adrastus, Polynices, Tydeus, Amphiarus, Parthenopaeus, Hippomedon and Capaneus. A comparison of the heroes’ genealogies, and the patronymics marking their genealogies, is revealing. Statius does not consistently deal with the parentage of all his heroes, and he repeatedly dwells on the paternity of Adrastus, Tydeus, Amphiarus, and Polynices. Paternity in different ways is an important part of the identity of these four heroes.

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For his other heroes, however, it is not mentioned. No paternity is ever given for Parthenopaeus but Statius repeatedly emphasises Parthenopaeus’ mother, Atalanta. In the case of Hippomedon and Capaneus, no parentage is given, though Statius vaguely alludes to them having noble families.

Since genealogy has been recognised as such an integral part of the first four heroes, why this glaring inconsistency with the other three? This paper attempts to explain Statius’ inconsistent treatment of genealogy and how this is a significant aspect of the heroes’ characterisation. It will argue that while genealogy is often problematic, even ominous, it is actually used for a variety of purposes in the *Thebaid*. Sometimes genealogy is positive, other times perverse, and sometimes omitted altogether for different purposes.

**Genealogy and Statius**

**Adrastus**

Of all the characters of the *Thebaid*, Adrastus shows the keenest interest in genealogy. He asks Tydeus and Polynices their origins, and later Hypsipyle. He also proudly boasts his own genealogy. At the wedding of his daughters, he displays the *imagines* (‘busts’) of his ancestors as an aristocratic Roman would. His Argive lineage is again displayed in detail at the funeral games of Opheltes. Statius too draws attention to Adrastus’ magnificent lineage, tracing it on both sides to Jupiter. Such allusions to his patrilineal descent (it is standard for mothers to be omitted) are part of his public self-presentation. Genealogy matters to him.

Statius also repeatedly identifies Adrastus by his lineage, using the patronymic *Talaionides*. In Homer, the patronymic conveys prestige and status. So too in the *Aeneid*.

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4 ibid., 1.444–45.
5 ibid., 5.25.
6 ibid., 2.215–22. All translations in this article are my own.
9 ibid. 1.392.
10 In Homer, it is generally the rule except for a few characters like Achilles and Aeneas: Higbie, *Heroes’ Names, Heroic Identities*, 122–23.
Aeneas himself is referred to as *satus Anchisa* and *Anchisiades*. He is also regularly addressed by this patronymic. The patronymic is particularly used in grandiose, high register language, for example, when the Sibyl addresses Aeneas with the ornately embellished, ‘born of divine blood, Trojan, son of Anchises’. Latinus too is addressed as ‘king outstanding scion of Faunus,’ which Servius *ad loc.* explains is a ‘conciliation by office, then by genealogy’. Ascanius too is addressed by Apollo with the honorific, *Aeneide,* soon after he takes command in his father’s absence. Turnus likewise has a patronymic, *Daunius heros.* However, none of Aeneas’ trusted companions have patronymics or an explicit genealogy, conveying their lower standing. Like Homer, Vergil associates genealogy and patronymics with a certain level of status. Statius recapitulates this epic tradition of conferring patronymics on regal figures like Adrastus.

The first instance of Adrastus’ patronymic occurs after the night of the arrival of Tydeus and Polynices. He is *Talaionides* before his first counsel with Tydeus and Polynices. The second instance of the patronymic is immediately after the drought of Book 4. Hypsipyle had rescued the Argives by pointing them to the only remaining supply of water. Adrastus stands amidst his contingent, named as *dux Talaionides*.

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13 ibid., 6.126, 6.322, 6.348.
15 ibid., 7.213. See Servius *ad loc.*
16 Verg. *Aen.* 9.653
17 ibid., 9.310–12.
18 ibid., 12.723.
20 This survey of pre-Statian poetry must be brief, but it is helpful to illustrate how his contemporaries use genealogy in this aggrandising way. For example, in Silius Italicus’ *Punica*, Fabius Cunctator is descended from Hercules (2.3; 6.627ff.); Regulus is of *Hectorea gens* (2.342–3); Pedianus is descended from the mythic Antenor and is so addressed as *Antenoride* (12.258); Phillipus has an eminent lineage claiming Achilles as his ancestor (15.292); and ultimately the conclusion of the Punic war is an affirmation that Scipio Africanus is the child of Jupiter (*proles Tarpei Tonantis*, 17.654). ‘Silius liebt es, beim ertsen Auftreten neuer Personen ihre Herkunft anzugeben, besonders in den Schlachtberichten’: E. Burck, *Historische und epische Tradition* (Munich: C. H. Becksche, 1984), 7 n.9. On the other hand, a lack of aristocratic origins and a famous *nomen* is depicted as unfavourable. Varro comes from lowly plebeian origins (8.246–47) and consequently is unworthy of the toga (8.258–59). Valerius Flaccus’ *Argonautica* similarly begins with its programmatic line “we sing first of seas crossed by great sons” (1.1) immediately emphasising their glorious lineages. The patronymic clearly is an honorific: Jason is never addressed by first name but regularly by patronymic (1.226; 2.380; 8.178,192, 442), but lowly characters like the messenger Echion never have a patronymic.
(‘commander, son of Talaus’). Here Adrastus is surrounded by a crowd of princes, suggestively an affirmation of his preeminence. The use of this patronymic occurs in a situation in which Adrastus exercises authority. He is dux, their leader, and his genealogy is connected with his command. The third use of the patronymic occurs in Book 6 during the funeral games. After Hippomedon wins the discus, Adrastus then orders the victory prize to go to him. In all cases, the patronymic, the marker of his patrilineal descent, occurs in striking moments when Adrastus is in a public setting performing his role as king. Adrastus conforms to the epic tradition of the king with the regal, aggrandising lineage.

**Tydeus**

Tydeus is indisputably a Homeric hero, the ‘heroic figure who parades his Homeric roots’. Though in Statius’ *Thebaid* Tydeus becomes a bestial and crazed figure, committing the egregious crime of cannibalism, nonetheless he begins as a heroic character. Statius first tells of him, *maior in exiguo regnabat corpore virtus* (‘greater courage reigned in his small body’), a line evoking his description in Homer, *Τυδεύς τοι μικρὸς μὲν ἐην δέμας, ἀλλὰ μαχητής* (‘Tydeus had a small body but he was a fighter’). As proof of his strength, he single-handedly defeats fifty Thebans in Book 2 and in his *aristeia* in Book 8, he conquers a number of prominent Thebans with the support of Pallas.

Like a traditional Homeric hero, Tydeus identifies himself by his father’s name and lineage. Tydeus announces himself to Polynices and Adrastus emphasising his noble lineage with Oeneus and Mars as forefathers. Tydeus’ boast of his genealogy in

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22 ibid., 5.18.
23 ibid., 6.722.
this provocative way to Polynices has Homeric antecedents.31 Tydeus consequently
is portrayed as a Homeric figure, of noble ancestry, who conforms to the heroic
martial code. He can boast a lineage extending all the way to Mars himself, a comp-
pelling promise of his capabilities as a warrior.32 Statius points to this association
with Oeneus and Mars elsewhere too: Tydeus bears a sword of Oeneus which had
been presented to him by Mars as a gift,33 and Lactantius Placidus commenting on
these lines reads this as another affirmation of Tydeus’ lineage from Mars.34 He also
carries a helmet bearing the image of Mars.35

Statius also emphasises Tydeus’ connection to the Calydonian boar hunt. Tydeus
did not participate in the boar hunt but Statius twice connects Tydeus in some way
with it. After his exile from Calydon, Tydeus arrives at Argos dressed portentously
with the hide of the boar, Tydea per latos umeros ambire laborant/ exuviae, Calydonis
honos (‘the spoil, the Calydonian reward, struggles to enclose Tydeus along his broad
shoulders’).36 While he may be banished for his fratricide, Tydeus is nonetheless hon-
oured by the gift of the Calydonian boar hide. This hide itself struggles to enclose his
shoulders, implying that for all his shortness of stature Tydeus is broad-shouldered
and muscular, bigger and perhaps more menacing than the beast which Meleager
defeated. Tydeus’ connection to the Calydonian boar hunt is emphasised later, as
Tydeus is compared to the boar itself.37 It is an ironic reversal as Tydeus is likened
to the boar hunting his fellow Calydonians and brother.38 As Keith explains:

In likening Tydeus to the Calydonian boar, Statius emphasizes not only the hero’s
Calydonian provenance but also his genealogy, for the simile closes (Theb. 2.474–75)
with an especially close evocation of Ovid’s description of the heroism of Tydeus’s
half-brother Meleager in killing the beast (Met. 8.419).39

31 It is reminiscent of Asteropaius (21.157–160): H. Juhnke, Homerisches in römischer Epik flavischer
32 See also Ripoll, La Morale Héroïque dans les Épopées Latines d’Époque Flavienne, 70.
35 Stat. Theb. 4.111.
36 ibid., 1.489–90.
37 ibid., 2.469–71.
38 ibid., 2.474.
also points to his own fratricide and monstrous character by associating him with the monster that
persecuted his family.
While he himself did not participate in the hunt, he bears the spoils of the boar, affirming him as a member of a line of heroes that produced such heroes as Meleager.  

Tydeus too often bears a patronymic, most frequently in a martial context. He is a royal figure of noble ancestry and therefore an authoritative figure like Adrastus. The first time it is used, it is when he returns from the monomachy against the fifty Theban soldiers. He is covered in blood, a visible proof of his *virtus* and military power. Adrastus gives orders to his slaves, *at nunc egregium tantoque in sanguine ovanatem/ excipite Oeniden* (‘And now take the son of Oeneus, eminent and rejoicing in such blood’). Tydeus is eminent, covered in blood signifying his martial valour, and finally the son of Oeneus, a warrior of noble pedigree. Each element of the tricolon reinforces his heroic, valiant, royal character. Similarly when the Argives prepare to set out to Thebes, the recurrence of the patronymic reaffirms his prestige: *undique magnanimum pubes delecta coronant/ Oeniden, hilarem bello notisque decorum/ vulneribus* (‘then the chosen youth surround the great-hearted son of Oeneus, happy in war and decorated with noticeable wounds’). War is something he revels in and he has honour from his noticeable wounds, *nota vulnera*. His patronymic and demonstrated heroism prove that he is a worthy member of the Calydonian household.

The patronymic occurs again when Tydeus wrestles with Agylleus, the son of Hercules, in the first Nemean Games in honour of Opheltes. Tydeus’ athletic prowess is undeniable and he could have entered any event of the Nemean games. At 6.864–7, Tydeus is compared to wild boars and bears. Tydeus’ match with Agylleus further highlights Tydeus’ heroic status. Statius makes veiled references to Hercules throughout this scene but, ironically, when Tydeus lifts Agylleus, Tydeus

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40 Keith also explores more subtle allusions to Tydeus’ patrilineal descent and Ovid’s Meleager: Keith, ‘Ovidian Personae in Statius’ Thebaid’, 392.
43 ibid., 4.112–4.
45 Lovatt, *Statius and Epic Games*, 204.
is the one compared to Hercules lifting Antaeus. In an ironic inversion, Tydeus becomes Hercules and Agylleus Antaeus. This scene is a proof of Tydeus’ strength, managing to defeat a Heraklid. The patronymic at 6.870 is contextually significant. Tydeus is an epic, heroic figure and the patronymic associates him with the heroes. It is significant that one of the primary ways to refer to Hercules in the *Thebaid* is by his patronymic. Like Hercules, Tydeus is a patronymic-bearing hero. Ironically, he is more Heraklean than a Heraklid himself.

The final example of the patronymic for Tydeus occurs at the very start of his *aristeia*: the son of Oeneus is eminent. The Argives have suffered a significant loss since coming to Thebes, losing Amphiaras at the end of Book 7. Tydeus is the pivotal character of Book 8 who renews the Argive war effort and achieves conquest over the Thebans. The occurrence of the patronymic at the start of his *aristeia* signals his heroic, valiant character. This is Tydeus’ final moment of heroic achievement and he owns that day, *Tydeos illa dies* (‘that was the day of Tydeus’). Tydeus’ patrilineal descent is ultimately part of his characterisation as a heroic figure.

**Amphiaras**

Amphiaras’ genealogy is also important to his identity as an augur. In Homer, seers generally have a patronymic. A similar pattern can also be seen in Vergil. Significantly in the *Thebaid*, so too is Amphiaras often referred to by his patronymic, *Oeclides*. Little is known about Oecleus and he does not seem to have figured

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48 ibid., 1.486; cf. 5.401; 6.312; 8.499; 10.647; 11.47.
49 Ultimately the similarities between Tydeus and Hercules end with Tydeus’ anthropophagy. Hercules is a heroic figure who attains apotheosis. He is also deferential to Minerva (8.502–16). Tydeus on the other hand commits cannibalism and offends Minerva just as she is about to reward him with immortality. See W. Dominik, *The Mythic Voice of Statius* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 51.
51 ibid., 8.663.
52 As Higbie observes, men and women with a religious calling in the Homeric epics tend to come ‘from the highest social class’ with rich genealogies: Higbie, *Heroes’ Names, Heroic Identities*, 8–9. Higbie mentions the exception of Calchas and Teiresias who are supposedly never given patronymics. A minor quibble here, since Calchas is given a patronymic (Hom. *Iliad* 1.69) and while there is some corruption about the line, whether μάντις or Κάλχας, no modern edition removes the patronymic, *Θεστορίδης*.
53 For example, in the *Aeneid*, Panthus Othryades (Verg. *Aen.* 2.319) and Deiphobe Glauci (6.35), and Haemonides (10.537).
significantly in myth.\textsuperscript{55} The name \textit{Oeclides} however is used more regularly in the \textit{Thebaid} than by any other writers, though Statius gives no other genealogical details.\textsuperscript{56}

Pointedly, in the \textit{Odyssey}, Oecleus’ grandfather, Melampus, was a famous seer,\textsuperscript{57} as was his cousin once removed.\textsuperscript{58} The patronymic therefore follows an epic convention of assigning patronymics to seers but also is a reminder of Amphiarraus’ family connection to this vocation. Reinforcing his status as a seer, the patronymic Oeclides tends to occur in situations where Amphiarraus is performing his priestly, augural role or when this role is impugned. This is a common pattern for all the priests of the \textit{Thebaid}, who have a patronymic and often a father connected with augury, except for Tiresias.\textsuperscript{59} Amphiarraus’ patronymic occurs just before he prays to Jupiter seeking an omen for whether to set out to war;\textsuperscript{60} Statius uses it after Capanus questions his prophecy and suggests that he is merely a coward avoiding war out of self-interest.\textsuperscript{61}

After the death of Opheltes, he is named as \textit{pius Oeclides} just before he instructs the Nemeans to carry out the honorary games.\textsuperscript{62} The patronymic in these cases seems to be associated with Amphiarraus’ role as priest and augur, following Homeric convention. Amphiarraus’ genealogy, even if little is known about his father, affirms him as a suitable augur.

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\textsuperscript{55} Writers tend only to mention Oecleus (other times spelled at Oecles) in genealogies of Amphiarraus (for a selection of examples, see Hom. \textit{Il}. 15.244; Eur. \textit{Suppl}. 925; Pind. \textit{O}. 6.13, 8.39; Aes. \textit{Sept}. 382; Ov. \textit{Mat}. 8.317.) As far as I can find, only Pseudo-Apollodorus attributes any deed to Oecleus beyond fathering Amphiarraus (he dies fighting Laomedon in Hercules’ war with Troy: 2.134.7).

\textsuperscript{56} Unlike in prior literature Statius does not make any explicit familial link between Amphiarraus and Adrastus. Pausanias (7.17.7) notes that they are descendants of Phoroneus and Pindar (\textit{N}. 9.12–62) has Amphiarraus married to Adrastus’ sister, Eriphyle. See Frederick M. Ahl, ‘Statius’ ‘Thebaid’: A Reconsideration’, \textit{ANRW} 32.5 (1986), 2801–2912, 2863.

\textsuperscript{57} See Brill’s \textit{New Pauly} ‘Melampus’ 1. Amphiarraus’ uncle is also a seer (Hom. \textit{Od}. 15.252).

\textsuperscript{58} Hom. \textit{Od}. 15.252.

\textsuperscript{59} Melampus from Amythaon (Stat. \textit{Theb}. 3.452–53); Manto, the daughter of Teiresias (4.463–65); Thiodamas the son of Melampus 8.278–79); Maeon, the son of Haemon (2.692–93).

\textsuperscript{60} Stat. \textit{Theb}. 3.470.

\textsuperscript{61} ibid., 3.620. It is worth noting that, as Fantham notes, in contrast to earlier tellings of the myth, it is Amphiarraus, not Adrastus, who is publicly abused for delaying the war: E. Fantham, ‘The Perils of Prophecy’ in \textit{Flavian Poetry}, ed. R. R. Nauta et al. (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006), 158. The effect is to make Amphiarraus a tragic hero, who knows the future and knows that he cannot change it, patiently enduring public ignominy.

Bad blood

Hippomedon
In other heroes, Statius suggests the inheritance of criminality and ancestral stigma.63 Hippomedon’s ancestry is uncertain. Some mythographers name Talaus, Aristomachus or Mnesimachus as the father of Hippomedon.64 Statius suggests some relation to Atreus, as Tydeus appeals to Hippomedon to bring the head of Melanippos to him if there is ‘any blood of Atreus in him,’65 but it is never explicitly clarified what their kinship is. The fact that Atreus’ crime of feeding Thyestes with his children is roughly contemporaneous with the beginning of the Theban war does make Tydeus’ appeal to Hippomedon significant.66 He expects Hippomedon to reiterate the same evil as Atreus and, like Atreus, be complicit in cannibalism. Hippomedon’s ancestry is not very developed in the Thebaid; yet Statius links him suggestively to Atreus, implying that he shares the criminal impulses of Atreus and perhaps further up the family tree, Tantalus.

Polynices
The theme of inherited bad blood is strongly emphasised in Polynices. His ancestry is a source of shame, not heroic validation.67 Polynices himself is unwilling to disclose his paternity for fear that it will alienate him. Statius, however, repeatedly uses the patronymic, Oedipodionides,68 to refer to Polynices suggesting that he will share in

64 Paus. 2.20.5; Apollod. 3.6.3; Hyg. Fab. LXX; Sophocles names Talaus as the father of Hippomedon: Oed. Col. 1317–18.
65 Stat. Theb. 8.742. Lactantius however reads Argei and glosses it to mean Argiui. From Hill’s apparatus criticus, it is clear that Atrei is the dominant reading in the manuscripts. Consequently I will go with the reading of Atrei. The scholiast suggests that Atrei means Argiui, where the name Atreus metonymically denotes all Argives. This is indeed possible. Consequently Hippomedon may not at all be related to Atreus by blood, but pointing out ethnic connection to Atreus would still have sinister undertones.
67 Hence, scholarship has rightly acknowledged the pessimistic view of genealogy in the Thebaid. Davis most comprehensively documents the occasions in which contemporary events in the Thebaid are linked to prior Theban and Argive history suggesting a ‘genetic predeterminism’ in the Theban and Argive races: see Davis, ‘The Fabric of History in Statius’ Thebaid’, 464–75.
68 The patronymic is only attested before in the Scholiast of Pindar (Σ N. 4.32.4) but probably originated in epic verse, as the patronymic ending -ionides is a common variant used metri causa (compare Talaionides, Hom. II. 2.566; 23.678; Stat. Theb. 2.141; 5.18). It is not Statius’ coinage as Parkes claims:
his father’s *impietas*. By using the patronymic, Statius suggests the two sons are not recognised on their own terms but more as extensions of Oedipus.70

The first time he is asked by Adrastus, Polynices is reluctant to disclose his parentage. He has lineage, but he is hesitant to disclose who his father is.71 Polynices’ *aposiopesis* at this moment indicates his shame. Where the reader would expect him to reveal his place of origin and genealogy, he becomes silent because all these things are stigmatised. In context, Polynices’ silence is significant. Tydeus had just revealed his lineage proudly,72 but Polynices knows that whatever his lineage, he cannot emulate Tydeus.73 On the second occasion when asked by Adrastus more forcefully, Polynices relents:

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\begin{align*}
\text{non super hos divum tibi sum quaerendus honores,} \\
\text{unde genus, quae terra mihi, quis defluat ordo} \\
\text{sanguinis antiqui: piget inter sacra fateri.} \\
\text{sed si praecepsit miserum cognoscere curae,} \\
\text{Cadmus origo patrum, tellus Mauortia Thebe,} \\
\text{est genetrix Iocasta mihi.74}
\end{align*}
\]

You should not ask me during these rites of the gods, from where my race comes, what land is mine, what lineage of ancient blood flows down to me. But if care hurries you to find out who this miserable man is, Cadmus is the origin of my fathers, my land is Martian Thebes, my mother is Jocasta.

Polynices’ reluctance to reveal his paternity here is a central irony of the epic: heroes

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69 It is only once separately used for Eteocles at 4.491.
70 As Ganiban argues, at the final duel between Polynices and Eteocles, the distinctions between the two brothers and Oedipus are collapsed, see R. Ganiban, *Statius and Virgil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 185–90. Some scholars see Eteocles as the worse brother and Polynices as a more sympathetic character. For a summary of the scholarship, see Coffee, ‘Eteocles, Polynices, and the Economics of Violence in Statius’ “Thebaid”, 415–21. I follow Hardie, that the characters as mostly indistinguishable, see P. Hardie (1993), 21–24. Notwithstanding the fact that there are important distinctions between the brothers, Jupiter never distinguishes the brothers but lumps them together as *Oedipodionidae* (7.216). Their shared impious origin is enough to merit punishment.
72 ibid., 1.464–5.
73 Bernstein, *In the Image of the Ancestors*, 70.
normally invoke their ancestry as an explanation and even proof of their heroic status.\textsuperscript{75} In an androcentric world, it is unexpected for an epic figure to identify himself by matrilineal descent and to actively avoid mention of paternity.\textsuperscript{76} For Polynices, however, the very mention of his father is inappropriate while rituals are being undertaken.

Bernstein contends that Polynices’ immediate disinclination to reveal his paternity forms the central theme of the \textit{Thebaid} and its pessimistic model of kinship.\textsuperscript{77} This is highlighted when Adrastus immediately consoles Polynices after he indirectly reveals he is the son of Oedipus, explaining that he can strive to be different to his ancestors and work to exonerate himself of their crimes by his own meritorious actions.\textsuperscript{78} However, Adrastus’ suggestion here is antithetical to many other voices of the \textit{Thebaid}, which assert the indelibility of ancestral stigma, as repeatedly reaffirmed by Jupiter.\textsuperscript{79} Adrastus’ consolation is ‘pathetically wrong,’\textsuperscript{80} as the whole Theban narrative is predicated on the notion that people must suffer for the punishments of their ancestors’ crimes.

The first time the patronymic, \textit{Oedipodionides}, occurs is in Book 1:

\begin{verbatim}
interea patriis olim vagus exul ab oris
Oedipodionides furto deserta pererrat
Aoniae. iam iamque animis male debita regna
concipit, et longum signis cunctantibus annum
stare gemit.\textsuperscript{81}
\end{verbatim}

Meanwhile a wandering exile, the son of Oedipus travels in secret through the deserted regions of Aonia. More and more he thinks malevolently about the kingdom owed to him and he groans that the year has come to a standstill with the seasons delaying.

\textsuperscript{75} Parthenopaeus is the only other character of the Theban to omit his father when talking about his own genealogy: Bernstein, \textit{In the Image of the Ancestors}, 217, n. 20; cf. M. Dewar, \textit{Statius Thebaid IX} (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 175–6.
\textsuperscript{77} Bernstein, \textit{In the Image of the Ancestors}, 69–72.
\textsuperscript{78} Stat. \textit{Theb}. 1.688–93.
\textsuperscript{80} Ahl, ‘Statius’ \textit{Thebaid}, 2855.
\textsuperscript{81} Stat. \textit{Theb}. 1.312–6.
As Ripoll notes, it is significant that Polynices is marked immediately ‘par la fatalité de l’hérédité’, presumably because Polynices will be just like his father, killing his own kin. Key words emphasise his connection to Oedipus. The adjectives *vagus* (‘wandering’) and *exul* (‘exile’) recall Oedipus’ exiled status in other tellings of the Theban civil war in which Oedipus is condemned as an exile to wander with only the aid of Antigone. The verb *gemit* (‘he groans’) also recalls Oedipus’ own plaintive role in the *Thebaid*. *Animis male concipit* (‘he thinks malevolently’) also shows his shared malevolence with Oedipus, both conceiving ill-will against their family members. Finally the adjective *patriis* (‘of the fatherland’) puns on the etymology of *patria* (‘fatherland’) and *pater* (‘father’). Statius’ choice of language deliberately evokes connections between Polynices and Oedipus and the patronymic is an early suggestion that Polynices will repeat the impietas of his father. Like a tragic figure, ‘le poids de l’hérédité remplace la gloire du nomen’. Omen trumps nomen.

Later throughout the chariot race of the Nemean games, Polynices is named by various epithets, *Labdacides*, *Echionides*, *exsul Aonius*, *Thebanus*. As Lovatt observes, ‘[h]is name continually changes but always relates to his Theban past.’

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83 See Hershkowitz, ‘Patterns of Madness in Statius’ *Thebaid*, 279. Also, as Keith notes, exile is a repeated theme of the Theban household and the words *exul* and *pererrat* also recall Cadmus’ exile and Actaeon’s wandering in the woods: Keith, ‘Ovidian Personae in Statius *Thebaid*, 386–87. Obviously Statius’ Oedipus himself is not an exile, differing from the account of Sophocles, nor is he a prisoner of his son, as in Euripides: F. Delarue, *Stace, Poète Épique: Originalité et Cohérence* (Louvain: Éditions Peeters, 2000), 145. Consequently, Polynices’ exile does not intratextually relate him to Oedipus, but intertextually.
84 Oedipus refers earlier to his own *paternos gemitus* (1.78).
85 That said, it is important not to condemn Polynices as purely villainous. As Dominik notes, Polynices is uncertain whether he should confront his brother or flee. The thought of fratricide never enters his mind until he is assailed by the Furies: Dominik, *The Mythic Voice of Statius*, 39. Coffee also notes that Polynices in contrast to his brother shows much more concern for human lives: N. Coffee, ‘Eteocles, Polynices, and the Economics of Violence in Statius’ “Thebaid”, *The American Journal of Philology* 127.3 (2006): 440.
86 While, for example, Sophocles’ Oedipus may be a tragic figure who inadvertently offends the gods and with care for the city retires into exile, Statius’ Oedipus remains in Thebes, condemns his sons and malevolently desires their downfall. That Polynices will reenact his father’s character is no good thing in the *Thebaid*. Polynices will be a crazed, incestuous character like his father: Ganiban, *Statius and Virgil*, 186–8; 327; Vessey, *Statius and the Thebaid*, 76–77.
89 ibid. 6.467.
90 ibid. 6.504–5.
91 ibid. 6.513.
92 Lovatt, *Statius and Epic Games*, 34.
vealingly, Polynices is firstly named as *Oedipodionides*.\(^93\) It is significant that the first name chosen is the one which most strongly indicates his ignoble origin.\(^94\) Taking the horse of Arion, Polynices is unable to properly control it, because it has sensed *dirus Oedipodionides* (‘the terrible son of Oedipus’).\(^95\) As Lovatt has commented, ‘[t]he weight of *Oedipodionides*, taking half a line, emphasises the inevitability of Polynices’ inheritance: he is *dirus* by virtue of his paternity’.\(^96\) The horse immediately reacts to the presence of Polynices as *Oedipodionides*. Arion possesses a prescience of Polynices’ origin—it is after all the offspring of Neptune. The horse is *insons*;\(^97\) Polynices is *dirus*.\(^98\) Polynices is the incestuous monster that perturbs the innocent, divine stock of Neptune.

Finally, explaining the necessity of the Theban war, Jupiter tells that he cannot prevent the war. The cosmos and moral order require it. He explains, *ast ego non proprio diros impendo dolori/ Oedipodionidas* (‘but I do not punish the sons of Oedipus out of personal grievance’).\(^99\) The appearance of this patronymic again, this time referring to both brothers, signifies their aberrant, reprehensible origin. Again Statius collocates the patronymic with *diros* a word connoting the monstrous and infernal throughout the *Thebaid*. The patronymic functions as a gloss for why Jupiter must punish them. They are the offspring of Oedipus, the result of incest. Eteocles’ filiation by Oedipus is also cited as a reason for his tyrannical rule,\(^100\) and he too is referred to by the patronymic *Oedipodionides*.\(^101\) Ultimately the patrilineal descent is part of Polynices’ identity as a perverse, depraved and cursed character.

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\(^94\) There is a significant irony here. The simile at 6.321–25 compares Polynices and Phaethon, the son of Helios. Lovatt sees Phaethon as a figure for Polynices who ‘overturns the cosmos of the Thebaid’: Lovatt, *Statius and Epic Games*, 32. Rosati notes that the two are similar in that they are both worried about their origins (according to Ovid’s version, Phaethon asked for Helios’ chariot as proof of his paternity.1.747ff.): G. Rosati, ‘Status, Domitian and Acknowledging Paternity’, in *The Poetry of Statius*, ed. J. L. L. Smolenaars et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 191–2. However, in contrast to Phaethon, Polynices wants to conceal his past and paternity, not brag about it.


\(^96\) Lovatt, *Statius and Epic Games*, 34.

\(^97\) According to Pausanias (8.25.4–7) Arion was turned into a mare by Demeter after he attacked her. There is, however, no allusion to this in the *Thebaid*. The horse is unambiguously *insons*.

\(^98\) The word *dirus* is particularly associated with Oedipus, his sons and Thebes. As Smolenaars explains, the word is used for Oedipus’ sons at 1.298, 4.606, 6.254, 12.85, for Oedipus at 1.240 and Thebes at 1.4, 1.162; J. L. L. Smolenaars, *Statius Thebaid VII* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 109.


\(^100\) ibid. 2.465.

\(^101\) ibid. 4.491.
Genealogy and gender

Parthenopaeus

Parthenopaeus, the super-'Camilla/Pallas/Lausus'-in-one-bundle of gorgeousness, sexy gold tunic from mum's needle.102

Statius never names the father of Parthenopaeus.103 Lactantius Placidus gives Meleager as his father.104 Lactantius' genealogies are not based on the Thebaid since he provides both parents of Hippomedon and Capaneus even though Statius never mentions them and he incorrectly identifies the father of Amphiaraurus as Lyceus.105 Servius, however, suggests that Parthenopaeus is the son of Melanippa and Mars or of Melanion.106 Pausanias names Talaus as the father of Parthenopaeus,107 but he also refers to other tellings where Melanion is father.108 Pseudo-Apollodorus also gives Melanion109 but also notes his possible filiation by Ares.110 Tragedians omit mention altogether of his paternity. However, while Parthenopaeus’ genealogy has a great variety of mythographical accounts, Statius uniquely draws attention to his filiation from Atalanta to suggest Parthenopaeus’ failure to assert a masculine identity.

Of particular note is Statius’ matronymic, Atalantiades,111 a curious hapax legomenon. While Euripides and Sophocles refer to Parthenopaeus as Ἀταλάντης γόνος,112 the compound Atalantiades is only found in Statius’ Thebaid. The use of the -des ending

103 Parke summarises the breadth of putative fathers and also suggests ‘literary’ fathers, Meleager, Hippomenes (or Melanion), figures who while not claimed to be fathers of Parthenopaeus in the Thebaid are subtly alluded to: R. Parke, ‘Who’s the Father: Biological and Literary Inheritance in Statius’ Thebaid’, Phoenix 68.1/2 (2009): 24–37.
104 See Lactantius at 1.44–45.
105 See Lactantius at 1.41.
106 Verg. Aen. 6.480.
107 Paus. 2.20.5; cf. 9.18.6.
108 ibid. 3.12.9.
109 Apollod. 3.63.
110 ibid. 3.109.
112 Eur. Ph. 150; Soph. OC. 1322.
to mark matrilineal descent is rare. It is not used by Homer,\(^{113}\) nor in the *Aeneid*.\(^{114}\) The unusualness of this patronymic formed from the mother’s name needs to be explained, beyond merely identifying it as a neoteric poetic form. This patronymic is part of a tension within the *Thebaid*’s representations of Parthenopaeus. He is an extremely young boy, not yet with a beard who has grown up primarily under the tutelage of his mother and he must constantly defend his masculinity in the arena of men. The etymologies of his name play on this. As Hardie notes, Parthenopaeus if taken as a compound ‘*Parthen–opaius*’ means ‘mAidan–face’ but if taken as ‘*Partheno–pai–os*’ means ‘virgin–boy’.\(^{115}\) Both his name and patronymic hint at the issue of his masculinity.

Statius repeatedly plays on the youthfulness of Parthenopaeus.\(^{116}\) Parthenopaeus belongs to the type of warrior hero too young for war, the *Heldenknabe*.\(^{117}\) Parthenopaeus is like Iulus, Pallas, Turnus and Camilla.\(^{118}\) He is the most beautiful of all to participate in the Theban war, but Statius wishes he had come when he were older.\(^{119}\) He is later described as prepubsecent, not yet with the down of beard.\(^{120}\) In Book 6, Statius had already drawn attention to the erotic beauty of the young boy,\(^{121}\) the beauty of his body being so overwhelming that it overshadows his face, *latuitique in corpore uultus* (‘his face hid in his body’).\(^{122}\) Parthenopaeus has a dual identity as a member of a heroic elite but also as a young boy not yet ready for the demands

\(^{113}\) As Dionysius Thracius tells, Ἀπὸ δὲ μητέρων οὐ σχηματίζει πατρωνυμικὸν εἶδος ὁ Ὅμηρος, ἀλλ’ οἱ νεώτεροι (‘Homer does not form the patronymic form from mothers’ names, but the neoterics do’). 1.1.26.1


\(^{115}\) Hardie, *The Epic Successors of Virgil*, 48. The etymology was a subject of ancient discussion, see Dewar, *Thebaid* IX, at *Theb*. 9.613.


\(^{117}\) Schetter, *Untersuchungen zur epischen Kunst des Statius*, 43–44.


\(^{120}\) ibid. 9.703.

\(^{121}\) ibid. 6.571–3.

\(^{122}\) ibid. 6.573. As Schetter notes, the language establishes Parthenopaeus as a παῖς and the phrase *latuit in corpore uultus* evokes Socrates’ words to the young Charmides, ιδεῖλοι ἀποδόναι, δόξει σοι ἄπροσόσπος εἶναι· οὕτως τὸ εἶδος πάγκαλός ἐστιν (‘if he were to undress, you would think he had no face, so beautiful was his appearance.’ *Charm*. 154D): Schetter, *Untersuchungen zur epischen Kunst des Statius*, 53.
of war. This is not just bodily childhood either: Vessey argues that psychologically Parthenopaeus is childlike, taking ‘a childlike delight in the prospect of battle’.\textsuperscript{123}

Even during his death, Parthenopaeus must acknowledge his excessive youthfulness. As he dies he instructs Dorceus to tell his mother, referring to himself, \textit{arma puer rapuit} (‘a boy grabbed weapons’).\textsuperscript{124} Parthenopaeus is a \textit{puer}, not ready for the wars of \textit{uiri} (‘men’) and requires the protection of his mother.\textsuperscript{125} The collocation of \textit{arma} and \textit{puer} also recalls Vergil’s famous \textit{arma virumque}. Parthenopaeus, however, fails to be an Aeneas in the arena of men.\textsuperscript{126} Dymas his guardian suggests that same thing, praying to the moon, Diana, and calling him \textit{tuus puer} (‘your boy’).\textsuperscript{127} Finally when Creon boasts to Theseus of the accomplishments of the Thebans, saying that they are not Amazonian women whom the Athenians are accustomed to, he mentions Tydeus, Capaneus and Hippomedon but omits Parthenopaeus (12.763–5). Parthenopaeus’ death is not regarded as impressive as the others.\textsuperscript{128} Consequently, while he may be a fierce leader with physical, athletic prowess, and a beautiful youth, Parthenopaeus is also presented as a youthful boy, not yet a man.

Indeed, Parthenopaeus is portrayed as an effeminate character, the ‘\textit{Parthen-opaius}’ (‘mAidan-face’).\textsuperscript{129} When Amphion taunts Parthenopaeus in Book 9, Parthenopaeus’ response to Amphion’s battle vaunts reveals his own suspicions of his masculinity, as he tells that he never engaged in womanly activities or acted like a Maenad (9.790–800.) Parthenopaeus taunts the Thebans for their association with Bacchus, their effeminate stereotypes and their contrast from the hunting reputation of the

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{123}{Vessey, \textit{Statius and the Thebaid}, 201. Unlike Lausus, the young son of Mezentius in the \textit{Aeneid}, who dies in defence of his father, Parthenopaeus does not die for \textit{pietas} but “aus der Freude am Kämpfen”: Schetter, \textit{Untersuchungen zur epischen Kunst des Statius}, 47.}
\footnote{124}{Stat. \textit{Theb}. 9.892.}
\footnote{125}{As Atalanta reminds him (4.322–26) he would have been killed by a boar without her intervention. See also R. Parkes, ‘Notes and Discussions: Men from Before the Moon: The Relevance of Statius \textit{Thebaid} 4.275–84 to Parthenopaeus and His Arcadian Contingent’, \textit{Classical Philology} 100.4 (2005): 361.}
\footnote{127}{Stat. \textit{Theb}. 369–70.}
\footnote{128}{Far from being a heroic death, it is highly eroticised: Jamset, ‘Death-Loration: The Eroticization of Death in the “Thebaid”’.}
\footnote{129}{In particular, Parthenopaeus has a ‘feminine beauty’: Sanna, ‘Dust, Water and Sweat: The Statian \textit{Puer}’, 202.}
\end{footnotes}
Arcadians: no Bacchant, *Thyias*, gave birth to him, nor has he ever carried the *mitrae* of the Bacchic rites. Parthenopaeus’ childhood was instead occupied by hunting. While Parthenopaeus’ speech reaffirms his masculinity through his childhood characterised by manly hunting pursuits, it points to his need to establish this masculinity against taunts of boyhood. The fact that Parthenopaeus lacks a father figure whom he could cite as a model for his own masculinity underscores his liminal gender. He can only cite his mother to prove his manliness to Amphion. He is *Atalantiades* and is an uneasy fit in the world of manly heroes, constantly needing to justify and defend his masculinity.

**Aberration**

*Ccapaneus*

Various mythographers identify Capaneus’ father as Hipponous. But this identification is not made only by mythographers: Ovid refers to Capaneus by a periphrastic patronymic as *satus Hipponoo* (‘born from Hipponous’). Statius’ decision not to give a patronymic in this epic poem is significant. In the *Thebaid*, Capaneus is a wild, martial figure whose ancestry is insignificant to his own self-presentation. Statius does tell that he has ancient lineage: *huic ampla quidem de sanguine prisco nobilitas* (‘to this man was nobility from ancient stock’). However, I will argue that Ripoll is misleading in extrapolating from this line that Capaneus is ‘défenseur d’une conception archaïque et aristocratique de la *gloria*’. While he does defend the traditional concept of the martial hero, he disavows ideas of nobility and aristocratic ancestries. The absence of his genealogy is telling. Capaneus desires only public recognition of his strength and valour and is insouciant about genealogy. He is determined to outdo his ancestors. This is what the expression *praegressus auorum facta* really indicates. He does not define himself in relation to his ancestors; he

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130 Paus. 9.8.7.5; cf. 10.10.3.4; Apollod. 1.3.63.4; Hyg. *Fab*. 70.1.5. That said, some mythographers such as Diodorus Siculus may omit his parentage too (4.65.4).
131 Ov. *Ibis*, 470.
133 Ripoll, *La Morale Héroïque dans les Épopées Latines d’Époque Flavienne*, 218.
134 The expression *huic ampla quidem de sanguine prisco/ nobilitas* also recalls Tibullus writing about his patron, Messalla, *nec quaeris quid quaque iudex sub imagine dicat/ sed generis priscos contendis uincere honores* (‘you do not ask what the judge under any bust says, but strive to outdo the ancient honours of your family’, 3.8.30–31). Similar to the Roman Messalla, Capaneus has aristocratic origins, but he only wishes to better them, rather than be content with family glory.
wants glory on his own merits, to achieve sublime heroism.\textsuperscript{135}

Capaneus is first introduced in the proemium,\textit{ alio Capaneus horrore canendus} (‘to be sung with a different horror’).\textsuperscript{136} He is a character of excess and monstrosity to be sung in a way completely different to every other character. It is an idea which Statius returns to before Capaneus’ challenge to Zeus,\textit{ non mihi iam solito vatum de more canendum} (‘no longer to be sung by me in the usual way’).\textsuperscript{137} He is characterised by such fury and excess that he cannot be sung of in the customary way of poets.

Capaneus first enters the narrative as Amphiaraus refuses to disclose the results of the augury. He is given an explicit character description at 3.598–603. Capaneus is immediately here figured as a depraved character. He has\textit{ amor Mauortis} (‘a love of Mars’) and is also a character of excessive rage and pride,\textit{ corda tumens} (‘swelling in his chest’). The next lines are the only reference to Capaneus’ genealogy and are significantly bereft of detail. Capaneus does come\textit{ de sanguine prisco} (‘from ancient lineage’) but unlike other heroes of the\textit{ Thebaid} this is not part of his heroic identity: he has exceeded the deeds of his ancestors. He is instead a\textit{ superum contemptor} (‘a contemptor of the gods’), a phrase identifying him with Mezentius of the\textit{ Aeneid}.\textsuperscript{138} Statius repeatedly plays on Capaneus’ lack concern for family or any social ritual. He wears a breastplate\textit{ non matris opus} (‘not the work of a mother’), showing Hercules killing the Hydra. He also has a helmet depicting a giant.\textsuperscript{139} Capaneus therefore is associated with chthonic monsters. Later in war, Capaneus invokes his own sword rather than any god, treating his sword as a divine power.\textsuperscript{140} Capaneus is the self-made man who disdains the use of anything but his own martial prowess, dismissing any\textit{ dolus} (cowardly strategy) or divine assistance. He refuses to participate in the Doloneia of Book 10, disdaining to rely on strategy or follow the gods.\textsuperscript{141} Capaneus

\begin{flushright}
Stat.\textit{ Theb}. 1.45. \\
ibid. 10.829–30. \\
Burck,\textit{ Das römische Epos}, 329. \\
Stat.\textit{ Theb}. 9.548–9. \\
ibid. 10.259. \\
\end{flushright}

Kyle Conrau-Lewis

Family Trees in the\textit{ Thebaid}: The Missing Links
wants to test whether the rites have any significance or if Apollo is false. He is the antithesis of Amphiaraus, the pious devotee of Apollo. He again shows his disdain and scepticism of religious rites and divine authority.

Capaneus most notably is the hero of extreme virtus (‘manliness’) who challenges Jupiter to combat. Prior to his theomachy, he stands tall above the city like a giant: *eminuit trepidamque adsurgens desuper urbem/ vidi et ingenti Thebas exterruit umbra* (‘He stood and rising up looked down on the frightened city and terrified Thebes with his shadow’). His physical height as he climbs the walls and meet the sky is reminiscent of the Aloidae, Otus and Ephialtes, who attacked Jupiter. The gigantic associations with Capaneus are repeated later as the gods congratulate Jupiter after killing Capaneus, as though he had defeated one of the giants. He is intimidating enough that the gods feel shame from the fear he induces as he challenges Jupiter.

Capaneus himself does not feel fear and is not perturbed by the ominous lightning about him but rather claims, as though Jupiter himself, that he will use the lightning to his own advantage. He is eventually struck by the lightning and his whole body shines. Even then, he astoundingly survives. The armies fear the spectacle of his burning body, but he continues to stand. Capaneus’ rage would go on had not his body forsaken him. He has an intractable will and would want to continue in the fight with Jupiter.

In this light, Capaneus’ lack of any explicit parentage is a reminder of his outsider status. He acts like a monstrous creature himself. The consistent lack of a patronym-

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142 ibid. 10.847.
143 Vessey, *Statius and the Thebaid*, 158.
145 *Theb.* 10.259.
146 ibid. 11.7–8.
147 ibid. 10.917–18.
149 ibid. 10.929.
150 ibid. 10.930–35.
151 ibid. 10.937.
ic underscores his transgressive nature in the *Thebaid*. Capaneus’ distinctive feature is his refusal to participate in the social order. He disdains the gods, is associated with monsters, worships his own sword and never mentions his family. But he is the one to serve Tydeus the head of Melanippus, a role which in other tellings of the myths was given to Amphiaraus, and to challenge Jupiter. The absence of Capaneus’ lineage in the epic is part of his portrayal as a socially anomalous and aberrant figure.

**Conclusion**

Adrastus and Tydeus both proudly display their genealogy. Adrastus’ paternity is part of his claim to regal power, similar to a number of epic kings, like the *Iliad’s* Agamemnon or *Aeneid’s* Aeneas; Tydeus’ filiation from Oeneus and familial connection to the Calydonian boar hunt is his claim to heroic martial prowess. Statius also repeatedly reminds his audience of Amphiaraus’ paternity by Oeoleus, a traditionally important feature of seers in epic.

It is in the case of Polynices that ancestry is shameful. The fact that he is the son of Oedipus makes him an impious character filled with the same fury and malevolence as his father. He is as prone to criminality as all his Theban ancestors. Though not sketched out in detail, Hippomedon’s family connection to Atreus is a disturbing hint at his criminal character. In contrast to these four heroes, however, Parthenopaeus’ matrilineality is repeatedly emphasised. Parthenopaeus’ father is never given, an omission which subtly hints at Parthenopaeus’ liminal gender. In the case of Capaneus, however, the absence of genealogy is a significant part of his characterisation. Capaneus seeks greater and greater glory, even challenging the gods, making himself into a terrifying, gigantic monster.

Ultimately, Statius presents a myriad of perspectives on genealogy. Sometimes genealogy is positive, establishing a hero’s royalty or heroic valour. At other times it is shameful. And in other cases, the absence of an explicit genealogy is equally significant, suggesting liminal gender or an outsider status.