

FEMALE CHARACTERISATION IN THE EPIC POETRY OF P. PAPINIUS STATIUS

by

Diane Jorge

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Supervisor: Dr K M Coleman, University of Cape Town

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ABSTRACT

"No serious Latinist will deny the probability that Statius will again emerge from the current scholarly re-evaluation of Silver Age Epic as the great poet he seemed to the finest spirits of High Middle Ages and Renaissance, rather than as the pale imitator of Virgil he appeared to the censorious criticism of the nineteenth century, obsessed as it was with its twin heresies of originality and inevitable progress." (Tanner, R G 1986. *Epic Tradition and Epigram in Statius* ANRW II 32.5, 3020)

Publius Papinius Statius (c.AD 40-96) is best known for his occasional poetry, the *Silvae*, which is in scholarly vogue at present. He also composed a monumental twelve-book epic, little known until this century, concerning the myth of the Seven Against Thebes, as well as beginning a poem, popular in the Middle Ages, intended to chronicle the full career of the hero, Achilles. Death prevented the completion of the latter work, so that there are only 1127 lines extant. I here undertake an evaluation of female characterisation in the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*, as a positive contribution to the rehabilitation programme described in the quotation above.

Because Statius' poetry properly observes the ancient literary convention of *imitatio*, an examination of any feature thereof necessarily first takes account of the treatment of these myths before Statius. Although there is no precise literary precedent for the *Achilleid*, there are various possible Greek and Roman sources for the *Thebaid*, among them Euripides' *Phoenissae* and *Hypsipyle*, Apollonius' *Argonautica* and Seneca's *Phoenissae*. Naturally Homer's *Iliad* provided many of the poetical techniques for depicting the pathos of young warriors killed in battle and the subsequent grief of their relatives. A vital consideration, given Statius' reputation as a "pale imitator of Virgil", is to identify the influence of the *Aeneid* on Statius' techniques of characterisation, as well as to assess his usage of Virgilian style and phraseology. An equally significant contribution to Statius' presentation of women, and one of especial importance for the *Achilleid*, is made by Ovidian poetry, particularly the *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides*. To a lesser extent Statius was influenced by contemporary Latin epics: Valerius Flaccus' *mythological Argonautica*, Lucan's politico-historical *Pharsalia* and Silius Italicus' *Punica*.

In analysing the presentation of heroines and goddesses in the *Thebaid*, little attempt is made to divine a method or spirit of characterisation "common" to both poems. Rather, the contrast between the portrayal of female personality in the two epics emphasises the very different tone of each: the distinctly comic tone of the *Achilleid* is reflected in the light-hearted portrayal of the three main characters Thetis, Deidamia and Achilles; on the other hand, the tragic atmosphere of the *Thebaid* is reflected in the intense portrayal of the chief female characters, Argia, Antigone, Jocasta and Hypsipyle.

Insofar as it is ever valid or possible to expect literature to reflect the "real" perceptions and ideals of author and audience, I make some brief attempt to set Statius' treatment of his female characters against the prevailing attitudes and socio-cultural norms of his day. Statius' portrayal of women in his *Silvae* is of some relevance here, though chiefly the poems are to be regarded as literary texts rather than sociological documents.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations of ancient authors and works are normally those found in the Oxford Classical Dictionary. Abbreviations of periodicals and compendia are as follows:

AClass	Acta Classica
AJPh	American Journal of Philology
ANRW	Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung. Berlin: De Gruyter.
AU	Der altsprachliche Unterricht. Arbeitshefte zu seiner wissenschaftlichen Begründung und praktischen Gestalt. Stuttgart, Klett.
AUB(class)	Annales Universitatis Budapestinensis de Rolando Eötvös nominatae, Sectio classica.
BICS	Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies of the University of London
BSTEC	Bulletin de la Société toulousaine d'Études classiques. Université de Toulouse-Le Mirail.
CHCL	Cambridge History of Classical Literature
CJ	Classical Journal
CP	Classical Philology
CQ	Classical Quarterly
CR	Classical Review
CW	Classical World
G&R	Greece and Rome
HSCP	Harvard Studies in Classical Philology
ICS	Illinois Classical Studies
JHS	Journal of Hellenic Studies
JRS	Journal of Roman Studies
LCM	Liverpool Classical Monthly
MH	Museum Helveticum
Mnem	Mnemosyne

PACA	Proceedings of the African Classical Associations
PCA	Proceedings of the Classical Association
REA	Revue des Études Anciennes
RhM	Rheinisches Museum für Philologie
RFIC	Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica. Torino, Loescher.
TAPA	Transactions of the American Philological Association
WS	Wiener Studien

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

This is a special bibliography: only items used more than once and referenced with an abbreviation in the text are cited here: where different works by a single author need to be distinguished, books are referred to by abbreviated titles and articles by date. Books and articles mentioned only once are cited in the footnotes of the relevant chapter. Articles on the topic of textual criticism are not mentioned here: these are cited in full in the APPENDIX B, at the first place in which they are mentioned; thereafter, they are referenced by the author's name and the page number only.

I use the modified Harvard System as set out in *Akroterion*: a publication is cited fully only once, namely here in the bibliography. All references to literature are made in the text itself. Footnotes are only used to provide additional information or arguments. In the bibliography, the following sequence is used: surname, initials, date, title, volume, edition, city, publisher, series title.

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TLL: Thesaurus Linguae Latinae Leipzig, 1900-.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Is a study of female characterisation necessary or even valid for a deeper understanding of the poetry of a lesser-known Silver Latin poet? In undertaking this thesis, I believed that the answer to this question was affirmative. A thorough examination of Statius' female characters will serve a number of "useful" functions which I shall proceed to delineate in this introduction: firstly (Part I of the Introduction), it will situate and evaluate his contribution to the classical epic tradition, wherein, since Homer, female characters constituted a compelling and memorable presence. Secondly (Part II), it will be of intrinsic value to a deeper understanding of form, style and artistic purpose in Statius' poetry. Thirdly (end of Part III) and least importantly for a purely literary study, insofar as the poet's presentation of female personality "reflects" contemporary male attitudes towards women, a study of their characterisation will enhance our knowledge of that socio-cultural phenomenon in the early imperial period.¹ The results of these endeavours will, it is hoped, aid that growing rehabilitation of the literary and moral reputation of a poet who was once influential enough to warrant a place in Purgatory in Dante's Inferno, yet had become so unfashionable by the nineteenth century, that Macaulay could find in the Thebaid only two lines worthy of a great poet.²

I. FEMALE CHARACTERISATION IN SECONDARY EPIC BEFORE STATIUS

II. THE SCOPE OF STATIUS' EPIC POETRY

III. SOME PRELIMINARY STATEMENTS ON METHODOLOGY

I. FEMALE CHARACTERISATION IN SECONDARY EPIC BEFORE STATIUS

It has long since become a trite observation that Homer's is a masculine epic. The female characters in the Iliad, Helen, Andromache, Hecabe, Briseis are consistently portrayed as emotionally intense but practically ineffectual against the objectivising and abnegating attitude of the male characters towards them (see Farron 1979:15-31). Penelope of the Odyssey has no more potency than these. The goddesses of the Iliad are either treated in the same fashion as the human women: Thetis, potent in other myths but helpless to save her son, Achilles, here (Slatkin 1986:1-24); or they are regarded as objectifications of their functions, e.g. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, and the personification of Helen's sexuality (Farron op cit). In the Odyssey, the supernatural attributes of Circe and Calypso preclude them from displaying a truly human dimension, while the goddess Athena loses some of her divine presence in her almost maternal role as omnipresent protector of Ulysses (Lesueur 1986:21).

In Apollonius Rhodius' Argonautica, Medea is a far more substantial character, dominating the second half of the poem. She is instrumental in the functioning of the plot, since it is by her aid that Jason is successful in his mission. Also, with Apollonius' unprecedented interest in psychological motivation and emotional conflict, her portrayal is a uniquely potent one: Medea is not only an innocent maiden, but also a powerful witch and a woman caught in the throes of an intense passion.³ The other female character in the poem is Hypsipyle, who features in the digressionary Lemnian episode: she is treated in a conventionally superficial fashion.⁴

The Roman epic poets, with their twin literary heritage of Hellenistic

poetry and Roman love elegy, displayed a substantial interest in female personality.⁵ Virgil's Aeneid, with its dual agenda of literary aspiration (to rival Homer) and political purpose (to glorify Augustan rule), is essentially a masculine epic. Nevertheless, the digression of the hero Aeneas with queen Dido of Carthage is a central aspect of the plot, and Aeneas' relationship with her can be seen to form a complex critique on the absolute validity of the hero's mission.⁶ Dido herself is a fascinating character: a mature, responsible leader, a beautiful woman, and like Apollonius' Medea, essentially tragic in her emotional conflict - love of Aeneas vs duty to her subjects and loyalty to the memory of her dead husband.⁷ The lesser female characters of the Aeneid have also excited scholarly interest in the last decade: Aeneas' first wife, Creusa, whom he "loses" in the confusion of the last night of Troy;⁸ Andromache, Hector's tragic widow, whom Aeneas meets on his travels in Book 3;⁹ Camilla, the imprudent warrior-maiden;¹⁰ Lavinia, the future Italian wife, a totally passive character who motivates the plot simply by her presence.¹¹ Fascinating cameo performances are provided by Amata, the crazed Latin queen;¹² Dido's sister Anna, Turnus' sister, Juturna.¹³ Juno and Venus motivate the plot on the level of the gods, interfering in typically partisan fashion, while the fury Allecto represents the "dark" side of the supernatural machinery. Virgil's "humanity" in depicting scenes of pathos has often been pointed out, e.g. the lament of Trojan Euryalus' mother in Aen 9.¹⁴

Ovid, with his background in love elegy (Amores) and didactic and mythological erotica (Ars Amatoria, Remedia Amoris, Heroides), portrays female characters in the epic Metamorphoses with a subtle understanding which may easily be misconstrued as misogyny. His portrayal of Medea

(Met 7.1-424) is indicative of his attitude towards the supernatural: he de-emphasises her magical powers, and highlights instead her human fears and desires, and her conflicting loves.¹⁵ Under the unifying theme of metamorphoses, he finds place to include some of his favourite tales of rape, e.g. that of the hero Peleus and the shape-shifter sea nymph Thetis in Met 11.217-65 (Stirrup 1977:170-84).

Statius' Silver Latin contemporaries had varying attitudes towards the portrayal of females, depending on the nature of their themes, and their artistic preferences. Lucan's *Bellum Civile* is a historical anti-Caesarian epic on the subject of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey. Towards this political purpose, there is a notable absence of the divine machinery.¹⁶ In other respects of characterisation, Lucan betrays his debt to Virgil: the main female character, Cornelia, Pompey's second wife, is exemplified by a wifely pietas, devotion and grief, which aligns her with Virgil's Andromache. On the other hand, the epithet *impia* is used of Cornelia's symbolic opposite, the "foreign she-devil" Cleopatra (cf. Aen 8.696ff)¹⁷, as well as of Erictho, the Thessalian witch, who recalls Virgil's *Allecto*.¹⁸ The crazed Latin mothers of Aen 7 have their counterpart in the maddened women of Pharsalus¹⁹, while the spectre of Pompey's first wife, Julia, is a Creusa-figure.

Statius' closest contemporary, Valerius Flaccus, composed a Latin *Argonautica*.²⁰ He inherited from Apollonius the portrayal of Medea's psychological conflict, and further developed it under the influence of Virgil's advanced treatment of the psychology of love in the Aeneas-Dido episode. From Ovid, Valerius learnt a humorous approach towards the divine machinery: the gods in Valerius intervene more often and with greater weight than in Virgil or in Apollonius. This results in a

starker polarisation between Medea's pudor (conceived in terms of the pietas of a Roman filiafamilias, or a Virgilian Aeneas) and the weight of excessive supernatural pressure to fall in love with Jason, and Medea's struggle seems all the more brave and tragic by comparison.²¹ Hypsipyle, in the Lemnian digression, is portrayed in a similarly developed fashion.²²

Silius Italicus' *Punica* is, like that of Lucan, an epic on a historical theme. Its great dissimilarity to the *Pharsalia* lies in the poet's choice of a theme from ancient history and also in his re-introduction of the full gamut of the divine machinery. No female character is prominent enough to deserve a mention here.

As is apparent from the proliferation of footnotes to the above, there has been a healthy amount of scholarly interest in the subject of female characterisation in other secondary epics. On Statius' portrayal of feminine personality in the *Thebaid* and *Achilleid*, very little has been done: Hypsipyle has been treated within the context of her digression (Vessey 1970, Goetting 1969, Arico 1961), Jocasta has been the object of one perspicacious study (Smolenaars 1982), and a couple of turn-of-the-century scholars have made some observations on the female characters of the *Thebaid*, peripheral to the main focus of their studies (Glaesener 1899, Legras 1905). With the exception of general discussions on the *Thebaid* (ANRW 1986), virtually nothing has been written in recent years with a central focus on Statius' female characters, and almost certainly nothing in the medium of English.²³

II. THE SCOPE OF STATIUS' EPIC POETRY

P. Papinius Statius, a Greek-speaking professional poet and rhetorician from Naples ²⁴, was probably born c.50 ²⁵, and is assumed to have died c.96 (Coleman 1988: xix-xx). After some early prize-winning successes, he decided to turn his hand to large-scale epic in the classical tradition. At the time, the mythological epic was popular at Rome (see discussion of Valerius above), and a Latin epic based on Greek myths was particularly appropriate for a bilingual Neapolitan poet at Rome (Hardie 1983:62). From programmatic statements in the Thebaid and remarks in the Silvae ²⁶ we get the picture of the Thebaid produced as the result of long, unremitting toil, subjected to continual revision and polishing: ²⁷ Statius' aim was to follow in Virgil's footsteps in order to achieve for his poem classic status, for himself a place "among the prisca nomina, in the catalogue of divine poets that stretched back into the remote, indeed mythological, ages of the world" (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:43).

²⁸ The Thebaid, begun c.80, took twelve years to write. Statius probably published the Thebaid before January 93, when Domitian defeated the Sarmatae, because the proem mentions only Domitian's first two Danubian expeditions (Theb 1.19). At the end of the poem, he speculates as to whether his epic will survive in the future and comforts himself that it is already growing in repute: iam certe praesens tibi Fama benignum / stravit iter coepitque novam monstrare futuris, / iam te magnanimus dignatur noscere Caesar, / Itala iam studio discit memoratque iuventus (12.810ff). Just as with the Aeneid, Statius' Thebaid was already being read by the emperor, studied and memorised in schools. He does say that his aim is to rival divinam Aeneida - sed longe sequere et vestigia semper adora. He ends by saying that if any livor still

overshadows his work, it will disappear, and after his death the poem will be granted the honours that it has earned (12.818-9).²⁹

There is evidence that Statius' *Thebaid* was popular in his day, and that indeed his stated literary aspirations had been fulfilled.³⁰ In addition to the *Thebaid*, he also wrote a *De Bello Germanico*, the probable theme of which was Domitian's triumph of 83 (Hardie 1983:61).³¹ The *Silvae*, five books of occasional poems, were written between 89 and his death: it is from them that we learn most of what we know about Statius' life. By this stage he was an established poet, with influential friends and patrons, wealthy public figures and not a few literary acquaintances.³²

After the publication of the *Thebaid*, ill health plagued him (two major setbacks had been the death of his father and the Capitoline repulsa, failure in the Capitoline Games either in AD 90 or 94), and he decided to make Naples his home (*Silv* 3.5.37ff). Here, with his confidence in his epic talent bolstered by the success of the *Thebaid*, he set about a new and even more ambitious project: an epic poem dealing with the entire career of the hero, Achilles.³³

The beginning of the *Achilleid* is even bolder than that of the *Thebaid*: he has set himself a large task - to tell the whole story of Achilles' life, not merely the events narrated by Homer (*Ach* 1.3-4 *acta viri multum inclita cantu / Maeonio*). His desire (*amor* 5) is now to complete and exceed the *Iliad* of Homer. He prays Apollo to inspire him in his task (*Ach* 1.10-13: *neque enim Aonium nemus advena pulso / nec mea nunc primis augescunt tempora vittis. / scit Dircaeus ager meque inter prisca parentum / nomina cumque suo numerant Amphione Thebae*). This

hyperbolic claim to be regarded as equal to the bards of old goes far beyond the diffidence revealed elsewhere in the *Silvae* (*Silv* 1.pref) and in the closing lines of the epic itself (*Theb* 12.810-19) (Vessey ³⁴ *Statius and the Thebaid*:43; Dilke 1954:81).

Again, he utters the conventional *recusatio* (14-19) for not yet writing his imperial epic. The mixture of flattery and apology in his tone recalls *Theb* 1.17f. (where he promised to write an epic on Domitian and gave a brief summary of some of the events it would touch on). He says that the *Achilleid* serves as a "prelude" to the imperial epic he is preparing to write: *te longo necdum fidente paratu / molimur magnusque tibi praeludit Achilles* (18-19).

³⁵
The *Achilleid*, begun c.95 , was incomplete at Statius' death in 96, and there are only 1127 lines extant.

What was the scope of each epic, as envisaged by the poet? And how do the female characters fit into this framework? These are questions to which I shall now address myself.

At the beginning of *Thebaid* Book 1, Statius announces his intention to sing of the Seven Against Thebes, since he does not yet dare to embark ³⁶ on the theme of the emperor's German and Dacian campaigns (1.16ff).

The proem of the *Thebaid* (1.1-45) falls into three sections: definition of the *limes carminis* (1-17), *recusatio* (in which he expresses his regret at not being able to devote his pen to a more fitting subject, Domitian's successful wars against the Dacians and Germans) and praise of Domitian (17-31), programme of the whole epic (32-45). In the first section (1-17), in a rhetorical *occultatio* he specifies the extent of

his epic, excluding all material not directly bearing on his chosen theme, i.e. all Theban legends prior to the outbreak of hostilities between the brothers.³⁷ In the third section (32-45), a more positive definition of the scope of his theme is given: a full summary of the dramatis personae and principal events. The heroes are mentioned in the order in which they are killed. Each serves one-dimensionally as the figuration of a particular vice, virtue or quality (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:66), though all are equally victims of fate. The central characters are therefore "figurae or embodiments of various fundamental emotions or qualities" (Vessey ibid 67). The narrative, as suggested in the proem, is constructed according to a process of contrast and antithesis: good vs evil.³⁸

It is generally agreed that there are four major sections in the poem, each with its own dominating theme (Schetter 1960, Kytzler 1962, Vessey 1973). Within the joint and several unities of the narrative, the role of the female characters is seen to be neither ornamental nor peripheral.

The first division is 1.46 - 4.645, which deals with the origins and preliminaries of the war; its action is divided between Thebes and Argos. Within this first section, there is an intricate pattern of balance, e.g. the mustering of the army in Book 4, which is a direct consequence of the Argive marriage in Book 2 (Schetter 1960:323-5). Circular plot structure is also discernible, e.g. in Book 3, which begins with Eteocles' sleepless night and ends with the nocturnal rendezvous of Adrastus and Argia.

The second section is the Nemean interlude, 4.646-7.226. Again, there are correspondences to preceding or forthcoming sections, e.g.

Hypsipyle's visit to Thoas in Book 5, which recalls Argia's meeting with Adrastus at the end of Book 3; or her subsequent journey with her father, motivated by sanity and pietas, which anticipates Argia's journey from Argos to Thebes in Book 12, in search of Polynices' corpse.

The third division, 7.227-12.463, deals with furor at Thebes, the war and its aftermath. The overriding principle of organisation in this section is the successive deaths of the Argive leaders, culminating in Jupiter's elimination of Capaneus (10.827-926). Within this section, there are perceivable interconnections, e.g. the heroism of Hoplaus and Dymas (10.347ff) prefiguring that of Argia and Antigone in Book 12; the allusion to the Argive women at 10.49ff anticipating their appearance at 12.105ff. The duel of Eteocles and Polynices (11.57-579) represents the fulfilment of Oedipus' curse (1.49ff), but not the end of furor's reign at Thebes: the full realisation of Jupiter's plan (1.241-2 *nova sontibus arma / iniciam regnis, totumque a stirpe revellam / exitiale genus*) requires the accession of Creon and an account of his impietas, culminating in the divided flames of the brothers' funeral pyre, 12.429ff (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:182).

The last brief section, 12.464-809, set in Athens and Thebes, deals with the intervention of Theseus and the end of war. Here, the women play a significant role in presenting the antitheses which the poet presents: the mission of the suppliant women illustrates the opposition of Athens and Thebes, Theseus and Creon, justice and cruelty, clementia and furor (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:328).

The Achilleid was meant to cover the entire life of Achilles (Ach 1.4-7). As it is, the poem is incomplete: Book I deals mostly with

Achilles in Scyros and his discovery by the Greek chieftains; Book II.1-167 deals with the voyage to Troy and contains a description of the causes of the Trojan war and an account of Achilles' childhood in Thessaly. After the proem, the poem may be roughly divided into three sections, which correspond to the predominance of each main character respectively: 1.20-396, where Achilles' mother, Thetis, is in control of events; 1.397-2.48, where Deidamia comes into her own as a character; 2.49-167, where the focus eventually comes to rest on Achilles himself. The projected length of the entire poem would presumably have been twelve books. The Scyros story therefore was meant to form a pretty epyllion, and as such, it is more skillfully managed than the story of Hypsipyle in Book 5 of the Thebaid, and the Achilleid would have been even more episodic than the latter digression (Dilke 1954:8). Nevertheless, all we have of the poem is the epyllion itself, so that the two female characters, Thetis and Deidamia, are become major protagonists in the extant poem, and therefore a close examination of their characterisation is essential to the understanding of the whole.

III. SOME PRELIMINARY STATEMENTS ON METHODOLOGY

Before I begin, a few words on methodology might prove illuminating to the reader. Besides the Introduction and Conclusion, there are seven chapters corresponding to the seven female characters of the Thebaid and Achilleid whom I have chosen to examine. Within each chapter, the literary sources for each character are examined: here, I must acknowledge that my research into Statius' Greek sources is mainly secondary, and I am largely reliant on the work done by other scholars. The purpose of Quellenforschung is to raise relevant critical issues,

and thus Statius' narrative and stylistic sources are important insofar as they shed light on details and traits of Statius' techniques of characterisation.

Each chapter focusses on the poet's presentation of the particular female character at hand, and details of the story are provided in order to situate the portrayal.³⁹ I have a particular interest in the similes which are employed to describe each of the characters:⁴⁰ these are treated in a separate category at the end of the discussion of each character, and general observations on Statius' contribution to the device of the epic simile are provided in the Conclusion. Statius' portrayal of real women in his *Silvae*, and his inferred attitude towards them, is discussed briefly at the start of Chapters 2 (wives) and 4 (mothers). As regards textual matters, the preferred reading is given *ad loc*, with explanations reserved for Appendix B.⁴¹

The chief female characters of the *Thebaid*, to whom I have assigned a chapter per head, are: Jocasta, mother of the warring brothers Eteocles and Polynices; Antigone, sister to the brothers; Argia, daughter of Argive king Adrastus and wife of Polynices; Hypsipyle, nurse of Opheltes and guide to the Argive army in their search for water.⁴² They are all figures from a sad and horrible legend, the tale of fratricide and hereditary evil. Thus their characters are noble, tragic, larger-than-life: the mother possessed of majestic dignity and terrifying desperation, the young women and wives epitomising devotion, piety, courage, determination. Wherein (other than maternal devotion) lies there any comparison with the absurd ineffectuality and exaggerated deceit of Achilles' goddess mother Thetis; in what ways (other than

beauty and maidenly modesty) may the naïve and helpless Deidamia be said to resemble the courageous young women of the Thebaid? The primary female characters of the myth of the Seven Against Thebes are vivified by their tragic suffering, those of the Scyros legend are typecast in their comic plight.

In addition, I have included an Appendix (A) on the similes used to illustrate the development of the transvestite Achilles of Achilleid 1, who moves from maternal and erotic subjugation (femininity) to rebellion and self-assertion (masculinity).⁴³

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. Hallett (1984:345) has pointed out that it is feasible to examine Latin poetry on Greek myths in this period, as a source for knowledge about valued kinship ties and familial roles in Roman society, since the differences between the Latin and earlier Greek treatments may be regarded as evidence for the influence of contemporary attitudes, e.g. Statius' portrayal of Antigone as an exclusively loyal and pious soror in the Thebaid, compared to her portrayal in Euripides' (lost) Antigone, where she is represented as wife to Haemon in addition to her sororal role.
2. Life and Letters, Nov 30, 1836: clamorem, qualis bello supremus apertis / urbibus aut pelago iam descendente carina (Theb 3.56-7).
3. For recent studies on Apollonius' portrayal of Medea, see Barkhuizen, J H 1979. The Psychological characterisation of Medea in Apollonius of Rhodes, Argonautica 3.744-824 AClass 22, 33-48. Zanker, A 1979. The love theme in Apollonius Rhodius' Argonautica WS NF 13, 52-75. Beye, C R 1982. Epic and Romance in the 'Argonautica' of Apollonius Southern Illinois University (Literary Structures, ed. Gardner, J).
4. For further explication, see below Chapter 5 (HYPISIPYLE).
5. Hallett (1984:345) warns against the use of Augustan Latin poetry as a source for attitudes towards kinship, since literature of this period focusses rather on "extra-marital erotic attraction and attachment" than on family ties.
6. See Farron, S 1980. The Aeneas-Dido Episode as an Attack on Aeneas' Mission and Rome. G&R (2nd series) 27, 34-47. Also Adamik, T 1982-5. The function of Dido's figure in the Aeneis AUB(class) 9-10, 11-21.
7. On Virgil's Dido, see Monti, R 1981. The Dido Episode and the Aeneid Leiden (Mnem.Suppl.66).

8. This is also potentially critical of the sincerity of the hero's pietas: see Perkell, CG. On Creusa, Dido and the quality of victory in Virgil's Aeneid, in: Foley, H P (ed.), Reflections of women in antiquity New York: Gordon and Breach, 355-77.
9. See West, GS 1983. Andromache and Dido AJP 104, 257-67. Also Grimm, R E 1967. Aeneas and Andromache in Aeneid III. AJP 88, 151-62.
10. See Basson, W P 1986. Vergil's Camilla. A paradoxical character. AClass 29, 57-68.
11. See Todd, RR 1980. Lavinia blushed. Vergilius 26, 27-32.
12. See Castellani, V 1987. Anna and Juturna in the Aeneid. Vergilius 33, 49-57.
13. Hallett (1984:211-2) sees Virgil's portrayal of Venus' maternal guidance of Aeneas, as evidence for the classical Romans' high valuation of motherhood, or their view of its high valuation in their own remote past. The Homeric model for the Jupiter-Venus (quasi father-daughter) relationship in the Aeneid is to be found in the Zeus-Thetis relationship in the Iliad. This stress on Augustus' maternal male kin in the Aeneid was part of the poet's complex political aim: by stressing the emperor's divine ancestry, he sought to provide a powerful validation for the existence of the principate.
14. See Gossage, A J 1969. Virgil and the Flavian Epic, in Dudley, Dr (ed.) Virgil Routledge and Kegan Paul, 67-93.
15. See Rosner-Siegel, J A 1981-2. Amor, Metamorphosis and Magic: Ovid's Medea (Met 7.1-424) CJ 77, 231-43.
16. Nevertheless, the poem contains what Ahl calls "shadows of a divine presence", e.g. the personified Fortuna. See Ahl, F 1974. The Shadows of a Divine Presence. Hermes 102.
17. Cleopatra also functions as a Helen-figure in the poem.
18. Cornelia calls herself impia at 8.96; 9.71.
19. We also recall Apollonius' Lemnian women here.
20. The traditional date for the completion of this poem is 93. It was probably started in 81, the same year as the Thebaid (see Coleman, K M 1986. The Emperor Domitian and Literature. ANRW II.3087-3115).
21. See Martin, JMK 1937. Valerius Flaccus: Poet of Romance. G&R 7, 137-148. Also see: Garson, N R 1965. Some Critical Evaluations on Valerius Flaccus' Argonautica. II CQ n.s.104-20.
22. For further details, see below Chapter 5 (HYPISIPYLE).
23. Roger Lesueur's article (1986), written in French, is the exception here: nevertheless, it deals only with the female characters in the

Thebaid, and those in too brief a fashion to be considered comprehensive. I must add here an important proviso: it is not impossible that my summary of modern scholarship on the subject of Statius' female characters is a little out-of-date with regard to the most recent developments in the field. The index *L'Annee Philologique* is only available for the period up to 1987.

24. It is not within the scope of this study to provide an extended discussion of Statius' early life. Hardie (1983) has excellent chapters on the poet's origins (pp2-14) and his career and friends (pp58-72).

25. He was middle-aged in the mid-nineties: see *Silv* 3.5.13; 4.4.69f; 5.2.128f for reference to his approaching senium in 94/5.

26. There are two autobiographical passages in the *Silvae* (*Silv* 3.5.22-42; 5.3.209-45) which are relevant for competitive entries and epics. At *Silv* 1.5 he contrasts his present *carmen molle* with the *Thebaid* and its *arma nocentia* belonging to Oedipus' sons. At *Silv* 3.2.39-41: he prays to Theban deities Ino and Palaemon on whom he has a special claim, since he is writing an epic about Thebes. At lines 142-3, he imagines how, when he is reunited with his friend Celer, he will tell of the end of the *Thebaid*. At *Silv* 5.3.237f he mentions an epic which he was struggling with: this probably refers to the *Thebaid* (see Coleman 1988:xvii-iii), but might refer to the *Achilleid* or even to the projected epic about Domitian (*Silv* 4.4.99f) or the lost work *De Bello Germanico*: *te nostra magistro / Thebais urgebat priscorum exordia vatum; / tu cantus stimulare meos, tu pandere facta / heroum bellique modos positusque locorum / monstrabas. labat incerto mihi limite cursus / te sine, et orbatae caligant vela carinae.* At 3.5.35f he asserts that his wife alone saw him through the laborious completion of the *Thebaid*: *longi tu sola laboris / conscia, cumque tuis crevit mea Thebais annis.* This suggests that his father was long dead (Coleman 1988:xviii). At lines 16-17 of the Preface to *Silv* book 4, he mentions that he sent to Vibius Maximus an introductory letter requesting him to cast an eye over the enclosed manuscript of the *Thebaid* (Coleman 1988:4 Praef 16-17).

27. There is evidence that the poems of Virgil, Lucan and Valerius were all incomplete, so that the *Thebaid* represents one of the few examples of a Latin epic in the final form intended for it by the author.

28. *Theb* 12.811 *o mihi bis senos multum vigilata per annos / Thebai.* (see Legras, L 1907. *Les dernières années de Stace. Revue des études anciennes* 9, 338-49 at 338f for this dating, accepted by recent scholars).

29. Vessey (1986:2976) believes that the apparent simplicity and humility of the prologue is a guise:

"Just as immortality could be won by Hopleus and Dymas only through their connection with Euryalus and Nisus, so it would seem that the 'honours' due to the 'Thebaid' are no less contingent. But whoever reads the words disproves the assertion - for what is effaced by the words is, by virtue of them, always still unerased. At the last, it is not the divinity but the vestigiality of the 'Aeneid' which is

enshrined and embedded in the textual universe of its adoring worshipper."

For the notion of envy overshadowing a poet's work, see Callimachus Aetia 1, fr.1.17 Pfeiff.; cf. e.g. Ovid Amores 1.15.

30. Read between the lines in Juvenal's criticism of Statius (Sat 7.82-7): Juvenal uses erotic double entendre to contrast the "choice virgin" of Statius' libretto work, the Agave (written for the pantomime Paris) with the "common whore", the Thebaid. This is the motif of poet as pimp, hawking his wares: Juvenal, while acknowledging Statius' popularity as an epic poet, is charging him with being mercenary (Hardie 1983:60-1). Statius chose not to mention his libretto work in his Silv 3.5 and 5.3, no doubt because of Domitian's known views on the subject. For analysis of Sat 7.86, see Jones, F 1982. A Note on Juvenal, Sat 7.86. CQ 32, 478-9.

31. See Silv 3.5.28ff (see also 5.3.227ff, 2.5.22ff, 4.2.65ff). It cannot have been a full-scale epic on Domitian, since by 95 Statius had not yet written one (Ach 1.18f; Silv 4.4.95).

32. Friends with literary aspirations included: Arruntius Stella, Septimius Severus, Plotius Grypus, Atedius Melior, and also Polla Argentaria, Lucan's widow (Silv 2.7) and Vibius Maximus, who was a historian (4.7.53ff).

33. At Silv 4.4 Statius announces the completion of the epic, and the commencement of a new work on magnus Achilles. He says that he had long since felt impelled to write on Achilles, but timor had prevented him: would such a task be too great for him, he asks his friend. The trite ship metaphor for a poem is used here, as at the formal ending of the Thebaid: 12.809 et mea iam longo meruit ratis aequore portum. At 4.4.87-100 (a poetic epistula addressed to Vitorius Marcellus) he abruptly introduces the topic of his own work: all couched in poetic imagery, he says that he has finished the Thebaid (88-92) and that he is engaged on the Achilleid (93-4) and asks whether he should engage upon an imperial epic (95-100 cf. Ach 1.14ff). He calls the Achilleid by the name of its hero magnus Achilles here at 4.4.94, as at 4.7.23-4; Ach 1.19 (to Domitian).

34. At Silv 4.7.23ff (a Sapphic ode addressed to Vibius Maximus), Statius asserts that he has finished the Thebaid, begun the Achilleid and run into difficulties with it. He requests that Vibius return from Dalmatia, saying that without him, his Muse has grown sluggish and the Achilleid founders in its early stages (22-4 tardius sueto venit ipse Thymbrae / rector et primis meus ecce metis / haeret Achilles), whereas with his help, the Thebaid was a success (25-8). There is a hint of pride here, which contrasts with the conventional modesty displayed at Theb 12. 816-7 (Coleman 1988:204).

35. In Silv 5.2. (composed before Domitian's death in Sept 96) Statius is contemplating recitations at Rome of at least part of the Achilleid (5.2.163). See also 5.5.36f.

36. Statius has even been criticised for his choice of material here:

"The Theban legend is unsuitable for epic treatment for more reasons than one. In the first place the story is unpleasant from beginning to end." (Butler, H E 1909. Post-Augustan Poetry from Seneca to Juvenal London, 208).

37. For the rhetorical device of *occultatio* (also known as *praeteritio* or *omissio*), see Ad Her 4.37.

Vessey (Stattius and the Thebaid:60-2) compares the essence of the theme expressed in the first three lines to the proem of Lucan BC 1.1-6, and contrasts it with those of Virgil, Valerius and Silius.

38. The question arises of whether or not the Thebaid may be regarded as a political allegory: Vessey (Stattius and the Thebaid: 63-4) thinks not. Hardie (1986: 37-49) bears out Vessey's belief that "there is nothing to suggest and much to contradict any notion that Stattius was a covert enemy of Domitian." (op cit 63) Rather, "the Thebaid stresses the horrors of disruption and civil discord into which Rome might fall again were it not for the continuity of rule established by Vespasian and maintained by Titus and Domitian." (ibid 64).

39. In the case of the Achilleid, the full narrative will be provided during the course of the examination of each of its characters: this is because the poem is a short one, and also because the characters under discussion occupy that narrative completely.

40. "Similes are specialised worlds, tiny, autonomous states precariously established within larger domains." (Vessey 1986:2984)

41. In the case of the Thebaid, my choice of the Loeb edition was based on the ready availability thereof, rather than on any consideration of merit: my approach is therefore necessarily eclectic (note here, in connection with text cited, my use of lower case v as per Mozley, instead of the conventional u). Similarly, as regards the *Silvae*, I have used the Loeb text, since Courtney's edition (1990 OCT) was not available until very recently.

42. There are, of course, many minor human female characters in the Thebaid (e.g. Camilla, Manto, Evadne, the Argive and Theban matrons), as well as supernatural beings (Tisiphone, Allecto, Megaera, the Sphinx), goddesses (Juno, Venus, Pallas, Diana, Hecate, Iris) and personified abstractions (Clementia, Virtus, Pietas, Ira, Discordia). A thorough discussion of each of these would prove overlengthy: those secondary female figures, however, who have some bearing on the portrayal of the chief female characters, will be discussed *in situ* (e.g. Antigone's sister Ismene, Argia's sister Deipyle, Polyxo, king Crotopus' daughter, Atalanta, Ino, Eurydice).

43. Benker's thesis is that the unheroic portrayal of Achilles in this poem is a subtle political satire on the emperor Domitian (Benker, M 1987. Achill und Domitian. Herrscherkritik in der 'Achilleis' des Stattius diss.) Erlangen-Nürnberg. See the review of Dewar (CR 1989) for an exposé of the inherent flaws in such a thesis.

CHAPTER TWO: ARGIA IN STATIUS' THEBAID

optima coniunx (3.378)

I. INTRODUCTION: WIVES IN STATIUS' SILVAE

II. ARGIA'S ROLE IN SECTION I OF THE THEBAID (BOOKS 1-4)

III. ARGIA'S EFFECT ON POLYNICES DURING THE COURSE OF THE POEM

IV. ARGIA'S ROLE IN BOOK 12

V. SIMILES USED TO DESCRIBE ARGIA

I. INTRODUCTION: WIVES IN STATIUS' SILVAE

In examining the chief female characters of the Thebaid and Achilleid, a question arises which is not central to a literary study, but interesting to examine nonetheless: to what extent do these characters reflect Statius' "real" attitude to women?

In order to be addressed, the question must be framed in a somewhat different manner: in what ways do the female characters of Statius' epic poetry recall his portrayal of women in his occasional poems, the Silvae? Naturally, it is not possible to assess the extent to which this presentation reflects the poet's "actual" view of women, whether personal or representative of his sex.

Here, prior to the examination of the character of Argia in the Thebaid, let us take a brief look at Statius' "attitude" towards wives¹ as evinced in the Silvae.

Argia, is, at the beginning of the Thebaid, the nubile young daughter of Argive king Adrastus; she soon becomes the loving bride of Theban Polynices, and, at the end, she is cast as a desperately loyal

widow. It is in her role as wife and widow, rather than as daughter or sister, that she attains individuality and tragic stature as a character. The other "young wife" figure in the epic poetry is Deidamia of the Achilleid, the daughter of Scyrian Lycomedes and eventual wife of Achilles. The remaining young female characters, Antigone and Hypsipyle, are unmarried, and cannot therefore be classed here: Antigone plays the role of sister to Theban Polynices, and daughter to Oedipus; Hypsipyle is the nurse of Opheltes, and (in her narrative), the jilted lover of the Argonaut leader Jason.

What was the prevailing attitude towards wives, in the time of Statius' writing? Hallett (1984:219-43), with her insistence on the "filiafocality"² of elite Roman society in the classical and early Imperial period, argues that wives were rated low on the scale of men's emotional priorities. Adducing various classical Latin texts as evidence, she asserts that this relatively mean view of wives explains why disloyal or indifferent behaviour on the part of wives was tolerated by their spouses, why the women appear to have exerted little influence over their husbands, and why (upper-class) men who loved³ their wives too dearly, were regarded as behaving inappropriately. She acknowledges the potent characterisation of historical figures like Livia and the younger Agrippina, but insists that in general, self-assertive and powerful women appear to have exerted their influence more upon their brothers and sons than on their husbands (Hallett 1984:232). The early marriage age for elite Roman women, the fact that Roman fathers chose husbands for their daughters, the role of the husband as surrogate-father over his wife in manus marriages; the wife's remaining in her paternal family, in non-manus marriages:⁴ all

these factors must have contributed to the helplessness of wives (Hallett 1984:235). Elite Romans of the classical era were understandably uncomfortable with this state of marital affairs, and there were a number of attempts made to strengthen the marital bond, e.g. Augustus' moral legislation (which sought to reward good and fruitful wives and punish bad ones).⁵ On the other hand, Hallett insists that the negative view of wives was still prevalent in the early second century AD: she cites as example the invective against marriage in Juvenal's sixth Satire, with its portrayal of upper-class wives as selfish, cruel, treacherous and immoral.⁶

Hallett's thesis is original and stimulating, and her book is understandably popular with those interested in feminist history and social science. Nevertheless, a serious scholar of Latin literature or of the Roman family⁷ finds her thesis ultimately untenable. Suzanne Dixon, author of *The Roman Mother* (1988) is such a scholar. In a sensible and thorough review,⁸ Dixon voices her misgivings about Hallett's insistence on the coldness and lack of trust in Roman marriages: she criticises Hallett's one-sided focus on a wife's primary loyalty to her father, brothers and sons, ignoring the wealth of evidence of conjugal love found in inscriptions and also in law (Dixon's review of Hallett 1986 *AJP* 107, at 129-30).

What do we learn from Statius' portrayal of wives in the *Silvae*, about his (and other Roman males') "attitude" towards women? Although Nisbet contends (*Felicitas at Surrentum*, *Stat Silv* 2.2. *JRS* 1978:68) that in the *Silvae*, the wives of Statius' addressees are usually ignored, in fact several wives are mentioned: Polla Argentaria, in the *genethliacon* in hendecasyllables commissioned by her in honour of her late husband

Lucan's birthday (2.7); Pollius Felix's wife Polla⁹, in the poem on their villa at Surrentum (2.2)¹⁰; Priscilla, wife of Abascantus, whose death is the subject of 5.1; Violentilla, the bride of Arruntius Stella in the epithalamium 1.2; Statius' own mother, mentioned without being named in the epicedium on his father (5.3); Statius' wife Claudia, in the poem pleading with her to accept his plan to return to Naples (3.5); his stepdaughter, also in the last-mentioned poem. Where women are mentioned, the general purpose is to add an emotional dimension ("love-interest", as it were) to the poems, thereby channelling attention onto this specifically laudatory aspect of the male addressee (i.e. his devotion to his wife, his good fortune in having such a good wife etc.). The exceedingly favourable portrayal of wives in the *Silvae* is thus part of the eulogy of their husbands in many of these poems. In the single poem addressed directly to a woman (3.5 addressed to his own wife, Claudia), Statius' flattery has an underlying suasorial purpose. The virtues of the named women are thus idealised in the *Silvae*, and potential vices are introduced most often as a contrast to the impeccable female characters Statius describes.

In the *Silvae* then, the qualities admired in an unmarried woman are:
 beauty¹¹, καλοκάγαθία¹², talent or skills¹³, lineage¹⁴, wealth¹⁵,
 virtue¹⁶, maidenly modesty¹⁷. The feature chiefly disapproved of in an
 unmarried maiden is that of infertile leisure.¹⁸

The qualities admired in a married matron are as follows: beauty¹⁹,
 loyalty²⁰, sexual fidelity²¹, wealth²²; lineage²³, modesty²⁴,
 graciousness²⁵, pleasantness of disposition²⁶, innocent pleasures²⁷,
 simplicity²⁸, frugality²⁹, sheltered quiet³⁰, religious piety³¹,

concern for her husband's welfare³² , whole-hearted attachment to a
second husband³³ , obedience (this last a very muted idea in the *Silvae*,
possibly because of the strong personalities of the individual females
concerned).³⁴ The features disapproved of in a married woman are:
wantonness³⁵ , love of popular or vulgar entertainments³⁶ , excessive
gravity³⁷ , excessive austerity³⁸ , overlengthy mourning for the dead
husband.³⁹

In spite of this apparent stereotyping, Statius provides a number of
instances of feminine individuality: the wife may act as behavioral
model for her husband⁴⁰ ; she may have poetical interests and
learning⁴¹ ; she may exhibit strong-willed determination⁴² ; she even
governs her husband (or, out of his love for her, he allows himself to
be dominated)⁴³ . In the eyes of Roman law, marriage is a *concordium*⁴⁴ ,
and Statius does appear to advocate conjugal "equality" as the marital
ideal: marriage as a "partnership", the partners matched in beauty⁴⁵ ,
skill⁴⁶ and chaste affection.⁴⁷

In sum, there emerges in the *Silvae* a picture of the wife which is a
far cry from that posited by Juvenal in his sixth Satire and followed
by Hallett. Statius, for the purposes initially outlined, portrays
wives as generally dutiful, loyal and loving. Nevertheless, his
individual female characterizations, particularly those of Polla
Argentaria, Priscilla and Claudia, are vivified by details of
circumstance and personality, and there are idealistic (or indulgent)
attempts made at portraying conjugal equality. The human women of the
Silvae seem on the whole to be real, individual characters, credible
Roman matronae and puellae of the poet's acquaintance.⁴⁸ As such, we
can discern no trace of the male attitude which Hallett has professed

to discern in literary sources of that period, of wives as "troublesome burdens to their husbands." (Hallett 1984:243)

What relevance do the women of the *Silvae* have for Statius' portrayal of mythological female characters in his epic poetry? The most we can say is that, insofar as the heroines or goddesses appear to possess the positive or negative attributes of the women mentioned in the *Silvae*, the poet may be projecting Roman and personal attitudes about women onto his fictional non-Roman characters and creating "models" for female readers either to emulate or to avoid. On the other hand, there would be numerous reasons for his portrayal of mythological characters as different from real human women: as remote figures from Greek legend, the poet may seek to avoid anachronistic characterisation; or, because the circumstances of legendary heroines are so extraordinary, there can be little connection between their reactions and those of real contemporary women. I believe that Statius had a dual purpose of characterisation: to make his mythological wives (daughters, sisters and mothers) seem both credible human women as well as fictive creations. We shall thus observe the poet's use of both comparison to and contrast with, contemporary reality in the presentation of female epic characters. His heroines are meant to impress themselves on our minds as "living legends", too fantastic to be taken literally, yet at times human enough to move our emotions.

II. ARGIA'S ROLE IN SECTION I OF THE THEBAID (BOOKS 1-4)

According to the Schetter-Kytzler structural analysis⁴⁹, the Thebaid may be divided into four sections. Argia, the daughter of Argive king Adrastus, and the wife of Theban exile Polynices, plays a part in the

first section (chiefly in her marriage to Polynices in Book 2, and her audience with Adrastus in Book 3) and in the last (her search for her husband's body in Book 12). Unlike the characters of Antigone, Jocasta and Hypsipyle, Statius had no direct models for the figure of Argia. She is thus a "new" character, one with whom the poet had more scope for innovation: has he succeeded in creating a memorable figure?⁵⁰

A) THE DOUBLE MARRIAGE IS ARRANGED (1.529ff)

At Argos, king Adrastus has recognised the new arrivals Polynices and Tydeus by their apparel as the fulfilment of Apollo's ambiguous oracle that a lion and a boar are to be his sons-in-law. He resumes the festival banquet and summons Acaste, *natarum haec altrix eadem et fidissima custos/lecta sacrum iustae Veneri occultare pudorem* (530-1).

Argia and Deipyle, the daughters of Adrastus, make a Dido-like⁵¹ epic⁵² entrance. Like their Theban counterparts, Antigone and Ismene, they are models of maidenly modesty and filial obedience (Schetter 1960:51-⁵³2; Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:291-2):

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Nec mora praeceptis, cum protinus utraque virgo
arcano egressae thalamo: mirabile visu,
Pallados armisonae pharetrataeque ora Dianae
aequa ferunt, terrore minus. nova deinde pudori
visa virum facies: pariter pallorque ruborque
purpureas hausere genas, oculique verentes
ad sanctum rediere patrem. 533-9

Their pietas does not save these girls from ultimately suffering the same unhappy lot as the Theban pair (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:100) but at least they are happy for a time, whereas for Ismene, there is only a strange dream of marriage, and for Antigone, no⁵⁵ marriage at all.

B) THE WEDDING (2.202ff)⁵⁶

The fateful marriage takes place in Book 2.⁵⁷ Reports spread through the city that: *hymenaeis / egregiam Argian nec formae laude secundam / Deipylen tumida iam virginitate iugari,...* (2.202-4). Fama carries the news abroad, even to the walls of Thebes, telling of alliance, marriage and - war (205-213).⁵⁸

On the wedding day, the appearance of the "blushing brides"⁵⁹ and their well-wishers is well described, the details reminiscent of an epithalamium:⁶⁰

interior sacris calet et sonat aula tumultu
femineo; casta matrem cinxere corona
Argolides, pars virginibus circum undique fusae
foedera conciliant nova solanturque timorem.
ibant insignes vultuque habituque verendo
candida purpureum fusae super ora pudorem
deiectaeque genas; tacite subit ille supremus
virginitatis amor, primaeque modestia culpae
confundit vultus tunc ora rigantur honestis
imbribus, et teneros lacrimae iuvere parentes. 226-35

The earlier comparison to Pallas and Diana (1.534) is picked up and developed at 227-43 (see Part V below for a detailed analysis of this simile).

Amidst the joy and light of the wedding celebrations, Lachesis' action strikes a discordant and ominous note: the clatter of a shield from Pallas' temple causes the marriage torches to be dimmed and the blast of a trumpet from within the shrine strikes fear into the hearts of the bridal party (249-64). Inevitably, they turn a blind eye to the significance of these prodigies, but their hearts are troubled by these portents of war and marriage doomed (Schetter 1960:96; Mulder 1954:181-

93).

Thus far, Argia and Deipyle have appeared together, almost as if to represent a single indistinguishable female presence at Argos. As such, they motivate action in much the same way as Lavinia in Virgil's Aeneid who, by her mere existence, intensifies conflict between the principal protagonists. Statius' Argia performs this sort of function in the early part of section I of the poem, while she has not yet uttered a single word, nor impressed herself upon us as a character in her own right.

61

C) ARGIA'S NECKLACE (2.265-305, 4.187-213)

The poet comments on these portentous events: nec mirum: nam tum infaustos donante marito / ornatus, Argia, geris dirumque monile / Harmoniae (2.265-7). Then he digresses to tell the sorry history of the previous owners of the necklace (267-96), up to the present time.⁶² Vulcan had vengefully fashioned it as a wedding present for Harmonia, decorated it with infaustae figurae (277), and had it made by Luctus, Ira, Dolor and Discordia (287-8). Semele and Jocasta had been among its previous owners, and now this symbol of Theban hereditary evil is imported into Argos, and the family of Adrastus: tunc donis Argia nitet vilisque sororis / ornatus sacro praeculta supervenit auro (298-9).⁶³ The poet describes the jealousy of Eriphyle (300-5), alluding cryptically to the consequences of her future treachery: digna quidem, sed quid miseri decepta mariti / arma, quid insontes nati meruere furores? (2.304-5).

The story of the perfida coniunx is told later, at 4.190ff. At the

point in the narrative where Amphiaraus is being sorely tried, Eriphyle barter her husband in exchange for the coveted necklace, by persuading him to go to war. Her polar opposite, the loyal unselfish Argia, hands it over readily, eager to aid the cause of the war (*illa libens - nam regum animos et pondera belli / hac nutare videt, pariter ni providus heros/militet* 196-8) and (200-10) considering the necklace as inappropriate attire in her present distressed condition (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:200). The fateful implications of Eriphyle's act are made quite clear: *sic Eriphylaeos aurum fatale penates / inrupit scelerumque ingentia semina movit, / et grave Tisiphone risit gavisia futuris* (4.211-13).

64

D) ARGIA SPEAKS TO POLYNICES (2.306-74)

After the wedding celebrations, thoughts of Thebes and humiliating exile return to haunt Polynices. He recalls the loss of friends and family, and the lone, fruitless fidelity of his sister, Antigone (313-15). Beset by *dolor iraque demens / et ...spes* (319-21), he makes plans to re-establish himself in his rightful position at Thebes (321-32).

Polynices' silent brooding does not go unnoticed by his wife: *sed fidas arcanaque coniunx/senserat* (332-3). Her propempticon (334-52) - which is also her first direct speech in the poem - exemplifies a commonplace of ancient literature, of which the locus classicus in Latin epic is perhaps Dido's confrontation with Aeneas at Aen

65

4.296ff. Argia displays all the typical emotions of the anxious wife who senses that her husband is eager to be away: watchfulness (*nil transit amantes* 335), selflessness (*tua me... / angit, amate, salus*

342-3), fear (348-51), and wifely jealousy (quo tendis iter? ni
consciis ardor / ducit et ad Thebas melior socer. 351-2).

Polynices responds in similarly conventional fashion, with empty words
of philosophic consolation (356-8) and vague promises of future glory
(361-2).⁶⁶ He hurries away to discuss with Adrastus and Tydeus the
possibility of sending an embassy to Eteocles for peaceful resolution
of their differences. It is audax (370) Tydeus who volunteers for the
mission, and so dutiful a wife is Argia, that she even helps to
persuade her sister not to hold back her husband from war (371-4).

In her first active appearance in the poem, Argia has thus established
herself as a loyal, selfless wife. This picture is sustained and
indeed intensified by her behaviour in subsequent scenes in which she
figures.

67

E) THE MEETING OF ARGIA AND ADRASTUS (3.679-721)

Tydeus' mission is, mildly speaking, unsuccessful. Eteocles refutes
Polynices' claims to the throne⁶⁸ and after Tydeus has left the Theban
hall in anger, sends fifty men to ambush him. Tydeus kills them all,
and returns to Argos to demand instant war. All are affected by
Polynices' calculatedly pitiable response, and one man alone preserves
calm and reason - Adrastus. Melampus and Amphiaraus attempt to divine
the fate of Thebes and Argos by means of augury, but the gloomy
revelation of the future is ignored by the men of Argos. Headed by
Capaneus vesanus (627), they clamour for war, and Adrastus can no
longer stem the tide of their fury.

Book 3 begins with the insomnia of Eteocles and ends with the

sleeplessness of Adrastus. In the darkness that symbolises the triumph of Theban furor at Argos, Argia miserata (679), motivated by pity and wifely affection, goes to beg her father for war. Her appearance befits a desperate female suppliant: torn hair and tearstained cheeks (680-1), baby at the breast (682-3). Now Argia resembles another of Virgil's female characters: compare the scene (Aen 2.453ff) where Andromache takes Astyanax to visit her father-in-law.

Argia assures Adrastus that it is not Polynices who has sent her, but her own pervigil angor (690): she can no longer bear her husband's nocturnal suffering (691-5).⁶⁹ She asks for war, appealing to Adrastus' sense of pride and honour as a paterfamilias and as a hospes:

da bella, pater, generique iacentis
aspice res humiles, atque hanc, pater, aspice prolem
exsulis; huic olim generis pudor. o ubi prima
hospitia et iunctae testato numine dextrae! 696-99

She reminds her father of her own blameless conduct: how she married the man chosen by Fate⁷⁰ and her father (700-3). It is her wifely love that compels her to urge his bitter cause (703-5).⁷¹ She knows that it is a grim favour she seeks, and one which she will live to regret:⁷²

et nunc maesta quidem grave et inlaetabile munus,
ut timeam doleamque, rogo; sed cum oscula rumpet
maesta dies, cum rauca dabunt abeuntibus armis
signa tubae saevoque genas fulgebitis auro,
ei mihi! care pater, iterum fortasse rogabo. 706-10

Adrastus' reply (712-20) is full of encouragement: he assures her that her request is a reasonable one, and that she should not give up hope of obtaining the object of her desire (712-15). Timing is crucial, he explains: iustae morae (718-9) will benefit their side in the war that is inevitably to come. Carefully analysed, Adrastus' answer is revealed

to be quite evasive: though he exhorts her not to despair of satisfaction, he nevertheless expresses his doubts as to the advisability of direct hostility.

Tender and loving as this interlude between father and daughter appears, in contrast to the mutual hatred that exists between Oedipus and his sons, the ultimate effect of the incident is to clinch the mastery of furor over pax (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:160). It is the final and most cogent appeal for war made to Adrastus: Polynices' own wife wants to send him out to risk his life rather than to keep him safe at home (Snijder 1968:264). At the beginning of Book 4 the Argive army is mustered ready for the attack on Thebes.

So ends the first triad of the poem, according to Kytzler's analysis of the structure. As with the other three triads, this one begins with a violent opening scene (Oedipus' invocation of the Fury) and closes on a relatively tranquil note (Adrastus placating his daughter).

Nevertheless, within that appearance of tranquillity, there is the promise of furor to come, both in the suppliant desperation of Argia as well as in the boon which she craves. 73

III. ARGIA'S EFFECT ON POLYNICES DURING THE COURSE OF THE POEM (3.374-9; 4.88-92; 11.139ff)

As the war proceeds, we may observe the see-saw effect of pietas and furor on Polynices, the effect of the former (represented by his wife Argia) made all the more tragic by its inherent futility.

When the wounded Tydeus returns from Thebes to tell his tale of ambush and treachery, Polynices is instantly resolved to leave the Argive

court in order to spare them any further involvement in his cause. He will go to Thebes, he says, even though Adrastus and Argia may beg him to stay:
74

scio -nec me adeo res dextra levavit-,
quam durum natis, thalamo quam triste revelli,
quam patria; non me ullius domus anxia culpet
respectentve truces obliquo lumine matres.
ibo libens certusque mori, licet optima coniunx
auditusque iterum revocet socer;... 3.374-9

75
His words show that he is not unaware of their peaceable designs, but that furor, aroused by the despicable behaviour of *Eteocles* and the violent reactions of Tydeus, has temporarily overshadowed the claims of pietas in his heart.

At 3.678, Argia actively intervenes in the course of events by begging her father to hasten the onset of war. Thus, motivated by her love and pity, she knowingly undermines the tenuous restraints of pietas and helps precipitate the avalanche of furor.
76
77

At the beginning of Book 4, Polynices off to war looks forward to his day of victory and to seeing his mother and sisters again. But then he looks back on Argia, and the sight of her misery is powerful enough to drive from his mind the pleasant Theban reveries:
78

iam regnum matrisque sinus fidasque sorores
spe votisque tenet, tamen et de turre suprema
attonitam totoque exstantem corpore longe
respicit Argian; haec mentem oculosque reducit
coniugis et dulces avertit pectore Thebas. 4.88-92

He is sad, but like Aeneas, he goes. Now Argia's own sad prediction (3.707-10) has come to pass: that she regrets bitterly her successful supplication of Adrastus. She will never see Polynices alive again, nor will he be happily reunited with his female kin. But Antigone and

Argia, the two women who here represent the opposing attractions of Thebes and Argos, will meet in Book 12 to cremate the corpses of Polynices and his brother (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:198).⁷⁹

At the end of the war, with only the duel to come, a vision of Argia in mourning garb comes to trouble Polynices:

coniugis Argiae laceram cum lampade maesta
effigiem - sunt monstra deum, sic ire parabat,
has latura viro taedas erat! -: ergo roganti,
quae via quisve dolor, cur maesta insignia, tantum
fleverat atque manu tacitos averterat ignes. 11.142-6

He knows this to be a portent of approaching doom, but he is afraid to be aware. The Fury hastens to overtake him, and finds him at the gate, in a turmoil of indecision. She lashes him mercilessly (150ff), and thereby eradicates the incipient effects of pietas inspired by the image of Argia. In the face of defeat, he loses all hope for sovereignty at Thebes and desires only wicked slaughter and his own death simultaneous to that of his brother's (scelus et caedem et perfossi in sanguine fratris^{exspirare cupit.} 153). He bids his wife farewell, asking Adrastus one final boon: to give his corpse a decent burial and to find a better husband for Argia (187-92).⁸⁰

Still the good has a chance to prevail, when his sister Antigone comes to plead with him a second time (354ff).⁸¹ But Tisiphone intervenes to cancel the work of Jocasta and her daughter (387ff). Eteocles rushes enraged at his brother and the latter responds with no less fury. Polynices especially resents the regal attire of his brother, though his own outfit can scarcely be considered mean. Note his splendid cloak⁸², for example: opus ipsa novarat / Maeoniis Argia modis ac

pollice docto / stamina purpureae sociaverat aurea telae (400-2).
 Polynices' scorn of his own handsome, lovingly-made apparel aptly represents his final repudiation of the influence of Argia, as representative of homely virtue and peace, in favour of kingly ambition and strife.

IV. ARGIA'S ROLE IN BOOK 12

Argia, who has not made a direct appearance since book 4 in the first section of the poem, reappears in the last book of the final section, where she assumes a more active role than she has hitherto done in the poem.

A) ARGIA AND DEIPYLE AT THE HEAD OF THE TRAIN OF MOURNING ARGIVE WOMEN 12.105ff

The mutual destruction of Polynices and Eteocles (11. 572) has not brought an end to the suffering of Thebans and Argives. The new king Creon is a second Eteocles, with a cruentum regimen (11.658), and by his own admission, another Oedipus.⁸⁴ His first act is to forbid the burial of the Argive dead (11.661ff) and of Eteocles, whom he also holds responsible for the sacrifice of Menoeceus. At the beginning of Book 12, during the funeral rites of the Theban warriors, the sight of his son's pyre enrages him further: he repeats his previous decree, promising death to the disobedient (12.94ff).

The scene now shifts to Argos. A sorrowing band of Argive matrons⁸⁵ hastens towards Thebes, led by the royal sisters:

prima per attonitas nigrae regina catervae,
 tristibus inlabens famulis iterumque resurgens,
 quaerit inops Argia vias; non regia cordi,
 non pater: una fides, unum Polynicis amati

nomen in ore sedet; Dirce infausta que Cadmi
moenia posthabitae velit incoluisse Mycenae.
proxima Lernaean Calydonidas agmine mixtas
Tydeos exsequiis trahit haud cessura sorori
Deipyle; scelus illa quidem morsusque profanos
audierat miseranda viri, sed cuncta iacenti
infelix ignoscit amor.

12.111-121

They are all of one purpose, to find their husbands' bodies, but Argia's single-minded devotion is predominant (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:131). Deipyle's devotion is hardly less keen: she (alone) is able to forgive Tydeus' unspeakable act of cannibalism.

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B) ARGIA SETS OUT TO FIND POLYNICES' BODY AND BURY IT (12.141-348)

On the way the women meet Ornytus, a wounded survivor of the Argive army (141ff). He tells them of Creon's orders and advises them to erect empty tombs at Argos, or to implore the aid of Theseus at Athens. The women are horrified at this news and opinion is divided: some want to press on to Thebes and supplicate Creon, others approve an appeal to Theseus, all reject the idea of returning empty-handed to Argos. While the Argive women argue their next move, Argia is suddenly gripped by a most unfeminine desire⁸⁷, rivalling the courage of an Amazon or a Medea:

hic non femineae subitum virtutis amorem
colligit Argia, sexuque immane relicto
tractat opus: placet - egregii spes dura pericli! -
comminus infandi leges accedere regni,
quo Rhodopes non ulla nurus nec alumna nivosi
Phasidis innuptis vallata cohortibus iret. 12.177-182

Rejecting logic, she devises a scheme whereby she may slip away from her faithful band, in order to challenge Creon and the merciless gods, contemptrix animae et magno temeraria luctu (185). Her motivation, however, is entirely human and proper: hortantur pietas ignesque pudici

(186). The thought of Polynices unburied preys on her mind (187-93) and his *anxia mentem / aegrescit furiis et, qui castissimus ardor, / funus amat.* (193-5). Nobler than the rest, she is prepared to make the supreme sacrifice for her husband.

She announces her intention to approach Creon, and warns them not to attempt to hinder her: *illo impetus ingens / auguriumque animi* (203-4). Then, accompanied only by Menoetes, she sets off across the unfamiliar country, asking forgiveness from the shade of her dead spouse only for her delay (209-17) and asserting that Ornytus' warning, far from discouraging her, has actually spurred her on in her desperate venture: *adeo vis nulla dolenti, / mors nusquam saevusve Creon? hortaris euntem,* / Ornyte! (217-9).

On the way, people give her directions *horrescitque habitus miseramque veretur* (221). Like Jocasta, she is fearsome in her grief: *vadit atrox visu, nil corde nec aure pavescens, / et nimiis confisa malis propiorque timeri...* (222-3). She is compared to a votary of Cybele (224-7). Like Jocasta too, her frail body, to the wonder of others, finds strength in grief: *tantum animi luctusque valent! pudet ire Menoeten / tardius invalidaeque gradum miratur alumnae* (237-8).

When Menoetes announces that Thebes is at hand, Argia addresses her appeal to the city of Thebes itself, begging, as *Oedipodis magni... nurus* (260) for the body of her husband. Like the bereaved Ceres (270-7), grieving for the loss of her daughter Persephone, she rekindles her torch (of love). Her blind and desperate impetuosity, as she rushes out on to the plain, is vividly described:

regina Argolicas modo formidata per urbes,
votum immane procis spesque augustissima gentis,
nocte sub infesta, nullo duce et hoste propinquo,
sola per offensus armorum et lubrica tabo
gramina, non tenebras, non circumfusa tremiscens
concilia umbrarum atque animas sua membra gementes
saepe gradu caeco ferrum calcataque tela
dissimulat, solusque labor vitasse iacentes,
dum funus putat omne suum, visuque sagaci
rimatur positos et corpora prona supinat
incumbens, queriturque parum lucentibus astris. 280-90

Juno, observing the fruitless exhaustion of the undeserving sufferer (immeritam Argian 296) approaches the moon goddess, Cynthia, for a favour: that her placitissima cultrix (302) might have more light to see by, and that Sleep might visit the Aonian watchmen (291-311).

On the now floodlit plain, Argia identifies her husband's cloak (ipsa suos noscit miseranda labores 313), although it is nearly masked with blood (quamquam texta latent suffusaque sanguine marcet / purpura 314-⁹⁸5), and near it, she sees Polynices' corpse (315-7). Her reaction is of the predictable feminine variety:

fugere animus visusque sonusque,
inclusitque dolor lacrimas; tum corpore toto
sternitur in voltus animamque per oscula quaerit
absentem, pressumque comis ac veste cruorem
servatura legit. 317-21

She addresses the body distractedly (322-348), asking whether it is really Polynices, who should have returned victorious (322-4), and begging him to open his eyes and acknowledge her presence (325-8). Then, when she forces herself to face the reality of his death (328-9), she turns to reproach, pointing out the futility of the quarrel with Eteocles (quo iurgia? certe / imperium non frater habet 329-30) ⁹⁹, blaming Jocasta and Antigone for their absence (330-2), and reminding Polynices of her own previous attempts to keep him at Argos (333-5).

But then she recalls that she also arranged to send him to his death: *quid queror? ipsa dedi bellum maestumque rogavi / ipsa patrem, ut talem nunc te complexa tenerem* (336-7).¹⁰⁰

She turns away briefly to offer thanks to the gods and to Fortune who have fulfilled her dearest wish - to find his body whole (338-9).

After a vengeful query about the location of Eteocles' body (341-3), she returns to her address of Polynices, reaffirming her pledge of an honourable burial:¹⁰¹

*sed nec te flammis inopem tua terra videbit:
ardebis lacrimasque feras, quas ferre negatum
ardebis, longumque tuo famulata sepulcro
durabit deserta fides, testisque dolorum
natus erit, parvoque torum Polynice fovebo.* 344-8

C) THE MEETING WITH ANTIGONE AND THE FUNERAL OF POLYNICES (12.349-463)

Antigone appears on the scene¹⁰² and demands that Argia identify herself (349ff). Argia is at first fearful and forgetful of her grief (*nihil illa diu, sed in ora mariti / deicit inque suos pariter velamina vultus, / capta metu subito paulumque oblita doloris* 367-9) but then she replies, sensing that the newcomer's loss is similar to her own:

*si quid in hoc veteri bellorum sanguine mecum
quaesitura venis, si tu quoque dura Creontis
iussa times, possum tibi me confisa fateri.
si misera es - certe lacrimas lamentaque cerno -
iunge, age, iunge fidem: proles ego regia Adrasti-
ei mihi! num quis adest? -* 374-9

Linked in their love for Polynices, they fall on the body in frenzied lament (384ff). They piece together the story of his sad life, Argia providing the Argive chapter. She kindly assures Antigone that she was uppermost in her brother's affections (*ego cura minor facilisque*

relinqui 397). Antigone was also more fortunate to be at hand to watch the battle proceedings (nos procul 402).

Thereupon, they wash the body in preparation for burial (409ff). Only one pyre remains aglow, and it is here that they unwittingly commit Polynices' body. Only when the very flames leap apart, does Antigone realise with horror that the pyre is that of Eteocles (429ff). An earth tremor rouses the guards, who rush out on to the plain to arrest the women.
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So ends a horrific and powerfully moving tragic scene¹⁰⁴, one in which Argia develops in stature from a sorrowful young widow to a veritable "Fury" of courage and determination, with a heroism equal to that of the legendary Antigone.

D) THESEUS SAVES ARGIA AND ANTIGONE FROM CREON (12.677ff)

When Theseus' messenger arrives, the two women are still exultant and proud in the face of death:

saevus at interea ferro post terga revinctas
Antigonen viduamque Creon Adrastida leto
admovet; ambae hilares et mortis amore superbae
ensibus intentant iugulos regemque cruentum
destituunt: cum dicta ferens Theseia Phegeus
adstitit.
677-82

Thus they are spared the penalty of their righteous deed, but not before they have passed the ultimate test of courage and proved that death, wicked and insane, indeed has no sting.

E) AFTER THE DEATH OF CREON (12.797-809)

With Creon dead, the Argive women can at last indulge their lust for

mourning (790ff). The poet denies that he has either the time or the talent to recount all the details of the burial, to recount, for example: ...quo more iacens super oscula saevi / corporis infelix excuset Tydea coniunx; / ut saevos narret vigiles Argia sorori... (802-4). Thus the poem ends with the triumph of Theseus, the victory of good over evil, but it is the Argive women, Argia and Deipyle, who are given the departing (non)mention. It is the women, Statius implies, who are the enduring stuff that pietas is made of.

V. SIMILES USED TO DESCRIBE ARGIA

So far, I have traced the development of Argia's character through the unfolding of the narrative. But Statius employs another potent device of characterisation, namely the use of similes, in order to vivify Argia at various significant stages of her role in the poem. These similes are: A) 2.236-43; B) 12.224-7; C) 12.270-7. In the first of these, Argia is described in conjunction with her sister Deipyle, at a stage in the narrative where Argia does not yet constitute an individual personage (see above Part II). However, when she comes to achieve full status as a character in Book 12 (see above Part III), two further similes are employed solely on her behalf.

A) In Book 1, Argia and Deipyle, the maiden daughters of king Adrastus of Argos, are summoned to the banquet to be viewed by their prospective husbands, Polynices and Tydeus. At their entrance, they are compared to Pallas and Diana: mirabile visu / Pallados armisonae pharetrataeque ora Dianae / aequa ferunt, terrore minus. (1.534-6) The simile is resumed and extended at the scene of the wedding (see above Part II) 2.226-43:

interior sacris calet et sonat aula tumultu
 femineo; casta matrem cinxere corona
 Argolides, pars virginibus circum undique fusae
 foedera conciliant nova solanturque timorem.
 ibant insignes vultuque habituque verendo
 candida purpureum fusae super ora pudorem
 delectaeque genas; tacite subit ille supremus
 virginitatis amor, primaeque modestia culpa
 confudit vultus; tunc ora rigantur honestis
 imbribus, et teneros lacrimae iuvere parentes.
 non secus ac supero pariter si cardine lapsae
 Pallas et asperior Phoebi soror, utraque telis,
 utraque torva genis flavoque in vertice nodo,
 illa suas Cyntho comites agat, haec Aracyntho;
 tunc, si fas oculis, non umquam longa tuendo
 expedias, cui maior honos, cui gratior, aut plus
 de Iove, mutatosque velint transumere cultus,
 et Pallas deceat pharetras et Delia cristas.

The origin of this simile is of course Homeric: at Od 6.99-109, Nausicaa playing on the beach with her maidens is compared to Artemis hunting with the woodland Nymphs. The direct common factor here is the outstanding beauty of the central figures, while there is also an implicit similarity in the enthusiasm and pleasure of the retinues in their respective activities. Virgil developed this simile ¹⁰⁶ for his description of the first appearance of queen Dido of Carthage with her courtiers (Aen 1.494ff): in her beauty, graceful movement and active leadership, she is said to resemble Diana leading a dance of a thousand Oreads who crowd around her. ¹⁰⁷ In Virgil and in Homer the comparisons occur in a similar situation, for both women are about to bring protection to fugitives from the sea (Coffey 1961:75).

Statius' rendition of this traditional simile is worthy of close inspection. At their first appearance, the sisters Argia and Deipyle are in their marvellous physical aspect (mirabile visu 534) likened (without respective identification) to the martial goddesses Diana and

Pallas - though, as the poet hastens to add, without arousing the fear that their celestial counterparts do (*terrore minus* 536). A simple correspondence based on physical beauty would have been easy enough to establish, without making reference to the potentially aggressive attributes of the goddesses. The implication, proved to be a deliberate one by the outcome of events in the poem, is that these demure maidens have the makings of heroic combatants. Here we have the first hint of an important device of characterisation that Statius employs with respect to the female protagonists of his poem: by employing "robust" similes to illustrate the appearance, emotions or behaviour of Argia, Antigone and Jocasta (see later chapters) he strives to convey a sense of their righteous desperation and courage.

The simile occurs within a comparable set of circumstances: like Nausicaa and Dido, Argia and Deipyle are victims of fate, on the brink of offering refuge (of a sort) to fugitives, who, like Odysseus and Aeneas, will use their hospitality and then desert them in the pursuit of a mission. But, unlike their literary predecessors, these women do not accept abandonment as their fate or die of despair: they fight and live, long after their men have perished.

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At the wedding, the overriding impression which Statius wishes to give, is of the blushing beauty of the brides. The main elements of the Homeric-Virgilian simile are present, though each with an original twist. There is the surrounding retinue, compared to the *comites* (239) of the goddesses: here a band of Argive matrons, who surround the queen as well as her maiden daughters (*casta matrem cinxere corona / Argolides, pars virginibus circum undique fusae* 227-8). We have the beauty and majesty of the central figures (*ibant insignes vultuque*

habituque 230), and the proud joy of their parents (235 the sight of Artemis/Diana is said to have gladdened Leto's heart, in both Homer and Virgil). Statius, however, has his own point to make: it is not, as in Homer or Virgil, beauty, grace or leadership, but chiefly the maidenly pudor of the sisters (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:8). The fear and guilt for the uncertain future, and the nostalgia for innocent childhood (229-34) causes them to weep, and it is the sight of this virginal modesty, rather than their beauty, that moves their parents to joy (et teneros lacrimae iuvere parentes 235).

Statius' treatment of the goddesses is similarly unique: where Homer portrays Artemis the Archeress hunting with the woodland nymphs, and Virgil has Diana leading a dance, Statius describes Pallas and Diana gliding down from heaven with their maiden companions (236-9). They are equally fearsome in looks and weaponry (utraque telis, / utraque torva genis 237-8): this detail might seem irrational for the purposes of a simile illustrating maidenly pudor, were it not for the awesome component already identified in the characterisation of these heroines.

The final elaboration of the simile (240-3) concerns the question of which of the goddesses (and therefore, the maidens) is the more beautiful. Naturally enough, this detail of the simile does not originate in Homer or Virgil, where Diana alone is used for comparison. With a logic reminiscent of Ovid, Statius feels the need to address himself to the issue where there are two goddesses. The outcome of the "contest" is, of course, a tie, since there can be no distinction between them on the grounds of beauty, even if one could stare forever (240 si fas oculis).
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Even if they were to exchange dress, says Statius, each would suit the outfit of the other (242-3). What could Statius have been intending with this lengthy extension of the simile? It would be simple to put it down to his oft-mentioned fault of over-elaboration. Or perhaps the answer lies more directly with Ovid: at Amores 1.1 7-12, he describes the goddesses and gods exchanging dress and functions to ludicrous effect. Could Statius perhaps, in imitation of Ovid, be adding this detail for comic relief?

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B) In Book 12 (see above Part IV), the young women, Argia and Antigone grow to deserve our admiration rather than our pity, a state of affairs well-illustrated by the poet's choice of similes. Argia, as she makes her way to the Theban battlefield in search of Polynices' body, is said to be as fearsomely determined as the leader of the followers of Cybele (12.224-7):

vadit atrox visu, nil corde nec aure pavescens,
 et nimis confisa malis propiorque timeri:
 nocte velut Phrygia cum lamentata resultant
 Dindyma, pinigeri rapitur Simoentis ad amnem
 ðux vesana chori, cuius dea sanguine lecto
 ipsa dedit ferrum et vittata fronde notavit. 12.222-7

The chief point of correspondence between Argia and the cult leader is in the awesome confidence which they exude as they go to perform their respective duties: the votary to the banks of the Simois, there to fulfil her ritual self-immolation (225-7) ¹¹¹; Argia (222-3) to the Theban battlefield, to find the body of her husband and to bury it in defiance of Creon's orders. They are thus also alike in the haste with which they make for their destinations (praeceps / ...rapit 219-20; rapitur 225), and of course, in the fact that their respective missions involve

a great deal of personal self-sacrifice and courage.

Statius uses this device of the shocking, and superficially inappropriate simile to characterise some of his other female protagonists with the same sense of terrifying heroism, as they sally forth on desperate and difficult missions: Ide, a Theban mother, is likened to a Thessalian witch as she searches for the corpses of her twin sons (3.140-6)¹¹²; Jocasta is compared to a Fury as she goes to plead with Polynices (7.477)¹¹³, and to Agave as she attempts to do the same with Eteocles (11.318-20)¹¹⁴.

Cybele herself features in another simile earlier in the poem, in her benevolent role as Berecynthia mater: at 4.782-5, Hypsipyle laying down the inconsolable baby Opheltes in the grass, is compared to Cybele trying to distract the wailing infant Jove with a dance of the Curetes.¹¹⁵

C) The frenzied grief of Argia, as she rushes forth bearing a torch, onto the plain, is likened to that of the goddess Ceres, searching for her daughter, Persephone¹¹⁶ (12.270-7):

dixit, tectumque adgressa propinquae
pastorale casae reficit spiramina fessi
ignis, et horrendos inrumpit turbida campos.
qualis ab Aetnaeis accensa lampade saxis
orba Ceres magnae variabat imagine flammae
Ausonium Siculumque latus, vestigia nigri
raptoris vastosque legens in pulvere sulcos;
illius insanis ululatibus ipse remugit
Enceladus ruptoque vias inluminat igni:
Persephonen amnes silvae freta nubila clamant,
Persephonen tantum Stygii tacet aula mariti. 12.267-77

The main point of comparison between Argia and Ceres is the torch which they each ignite to light their way: reficit spiramina fessi /

ignis (268-9) corresponds to magna variabat imagine flammae (271). Both are in search of a loved one who has been cruelly snatched away from them: Argia for the corpse of her dead husband, Ceres for her live daughter Persephone, who was abducted by Pluto. Statius embellishes the details of the simile: Ceres follows in the footsteps of the sinister kidnapper (272-3), Enceladus ¹¹⁷ echoes her cries and lights her way with fire (274-5), all the world - but not the underworld - calls "Persephone" (276-7). None of these details has any direct correspondence to Argia's situation, but they serve to heighten the atmosphere of the scene, dark and unholy, illuminated by a single flare of desperate hope.

When we recall the relatively favourable outcome of Ceres' mission ¹¹⁸, we are reminded of the enormity of Argia's trial and of the pathos of her eventual success: she manages to find and bury Polynices' corpse, as she had set out to do (12.409ff), but what a small victory in comparison (to that of Ceres, that is).

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

I. INTRODUCTION: WIVES IN STATIUS' SILVAE

1. At the head of Chapter 4 (JOCASTA), I will again refer to the *Silvae*, this time for a look at Statius' portrayal of mothers: this discussion has relevance for his portrayal of the two chief maternal characters of his epic poems: Jocasta, mother of Theban Eteocles and Polynices in the *Achilleid*; Thetis, mother of Achilles in the *Achilleid*.

2. Hallett has coined this term to describe the following phenomenon which she believes existed in Roman elite society of the classical period: the reciprocal valuation between daughters and fathers, which led to an often impressive amount of respect and power commanded by women vis-a-vis their brothers and later, their own sons.

3. For example, Mercury contemptuously calls Aeneas uxorious, "wife-devoted" at *Aen* 4.265-7; cf. *Suet Divus Claudius* 25.5, 29.1 for criticism of Claudius' uxoriousness.

4. See Gardner (1986:5-14) for explanation of the legal institutions of patriapotestas and manus.
5. See also, for example, the Laudatio Turiae of the end of the first century BC. On this work, see Horsfall, N 1983. Some Problems in the Laudatio Turiae. BICS 30, 85-98.
6. See further Smith, W S 1980. Husband vs. Wife in Juvenal's Sixth Satire. CW 7 3, 323-332.
7. For a precise definition of "family" in the Roman sense of the word, see Dixon (1988:13-35).
8. AJP 1988, 125-30.
9. She is also mentioned at Silv 4.8.
10. Polla Argentaria was Lucan's widow, and it is possible that she is to be identified with Pollius Felix' wife. Nisbet (ibid) re-examines the positive arguments in support of this idea. Both women are praised for similar attributes, doubtless the stock-in-trade of panegyric, but it is interesting to note that both are said to have given encouragement to poets (2.7.83 cf. 2.2.150-3).
11. See the description of Violentilla's beauty in 1.2 (decus...formae 107-8, 113-5) cf. Deidamia at Ach 1.295-6. Height was regarded as a sign of beauty in antiquity. Statius mentions his own stepdaughter's good looks at 3.5.63 (formae).
12. Violentilla (1.2.122) and Statius' stepdaughter (3.5.63) are both said to have the bonus animus that properly accompanies beauty.
13. Statius' stepdaughter is praised for her ability to play the lute, sing and dance (3.5.64-6).
14. Violentilla's lineage is said to be rivalled by her beauty (cui gloria patrum / et generis certabat honos 1.2.107-8).
15. Venus is said to have bestowed on Violentilla a rich bounty, though her mind is a greater dowry (huic quamvis census dederim largita beatos / vincit opes animo 1.2.121-2).
16. The quality of probitas (maidenly virtue, chastity) is highly regarded. See Violentilla going forth to her wedding lumina demissam et dulci probitate rubentem (1.2.12).
17. Statius' step-daughter's virtue and maidenly modesty is said to surpass her abilities (ingenium probitas artemque modestia vincit 3.5.67).
18. Marriage was regarded as a negotium with an obligation to enter into it. Statius' step-daughter, for all her positive attributes, is criticised for wasting her youth and beauty (otia...infecunda 3.5.61). Violentilla is likewise scolded by Venus, before her marriage to

Stella, for her youthful sopor (1.2.162; otia...iuventae 1,2,182).

19. Beauty is one of the foremost characteristics of an admirable wife: Pollius' Polla shines with a girlish charm (nitidae iuvenilis gratia Pollae 2.2.10); likewise, forma is the first attribute which Calliope mentions of Polla Argentaria, when bestowing her as wife upon Lucan (2.7.85); the beauty of the dead Priscilla was such as many a husband would have prized (felix species multumque optanda maritis 5.1.54).

20. Priscilla had a happy and simple loyalty (simplex hilarisque fides 5.1.65); Statius asks his wife Claudia what has become of her nota fides totque explorata per usus (3.5.44; see also 50-1).

21. The quality of sexual fidelity is prized above that of beauty or lineage (5.1.51-2 laudantur proavis seu pulchrae munere formae, / quae morum caruere bonis, falsoque potentes laudis egent verae), and Priscilla certainly excelled here (ex te maior honos, unum novisse cubile, / unum secretis agitare sub ossibus ignem 5.1.55-6). Lucan's Polla was likewise casta (2.7.62), and Statius has no reason to doubt Claudia, who is more faithful even than Penelope (3.5.8-9).

22. Along with all the other attributes, Calliope endowed Lucan's Polla with wealth (censu 2.7.86); Pollius Felix' Polla is generous with her riches (2.2.150-2).

23. Calliope gave Lucan's Polla lineage (sanguine 2.7.86); Priscilla had ancestry along with her beauty (tibi...origo niteret 5.1.53).

24. Priscilla had modesty mixed with her charm (mixta pudori gratia 5.1.65-6).

25. Charm or graciousness (gratia) was likewise bestowed by Calliope on Polla (2.7.86), and Pollius Felix' wife (2.2.10).

26. The quality of comitas, pleasantness of disposition, was also bestowed by Calliope (2.7.85 comitate).

27. Statius' Claudia has innocent pleasures (sordida numquam gaudia 3.5.17); Pollius Felix' wife is always happy (candida semper / gaudia 2.2.148-9).

28. The quality of simplicitas was given to Polla by Calliope (simplicitate 2.7.85), cf. Priscilla at n20 above (simplex 5.1.65).

29. Pollius Felix' wife is frugal (as she is generous to others) in the enjoyment of her riches (docta fruendi / temperies 2.2.152-3); Abascantus' Priscilla was likewise unspoiled by prosperity and kept a modest table for her husband (5.1.118-126).

30. Statius' wife Claudia is given to opaca quies (3.5.17).

31. When Priscilla dies, her religious piety just as her goodness and fidelity is said to have been to no avail (quid probitas aut casta fides, quid numina prosunt / culta deum? 5.1.154-5).

32. Priscilla had in her lifetime a great concern for her husband's welfare (*quae tibi cura tori, quantus pro coniuge pallor!* 5.1.70); Statius describes in some detail the support which Claudia has given him in his career and all aspects of his life (3.5.19ff).
33. Although *univira* was the crowning epithet for a good wife, wholehearted attachment to the second husband was regarded in no lesser light: Priscilla's fidelity was of this kind (5.1.45-50), and so is that of Statius' wife Claudia (3.5.50-1) though she also observes due reverence for her first husband's memory (51-4).
34. Venus asks Violentilla when she will submit to a husband's yoke (*numquamne virili / summittere iugo?* 1.2.164-5); at the end of the poem, Statius exhorts the bride: *vincla diu quaesita fove* (275). These references to obedience were standard in the rules for *epithalamium*: see RE IX, 130.64-134.49 (Maas).
35. Statius says that there is no *lascivia* in Claudia's heart (3.5.14-15).
36. Nor does Claudia delight in the Circus or the theatre (3.5.15-16).
37. Priscilla is praised for having never kept a stern countenance (*nec frons triste rigens* 5.1.64). Claudia appears thus, since she is not keen on Statius' relocation plans (*unde alta mihi fronte et nubila vultus?* 3.5.11).
38. Priscilla likewise evinced no excessive austerity in her habits (*nimiusque in moribus horror* 5.1.64).
39. Statius hopes for an end to Polla's mourning for Lucan (2.7.133-5). This is somewhat of a *consolatio topos*.
40. Priscilla was a role-model for her husband (5.1.121ff).
41. Calliope gave to Lucan a poetess wife to match him in genius (*doctam atque ingenio tuo decoram* 2.7.83). There are suggestions that wives like Polla were patronesses in their own right.
42. Statius' wife "saved" his life when he was ill, in that the gods feared to incur her wrath if he should have died (3.5.41-2).
43. Statius employs the metaphor of the bridled horse to describe the love-struck Arruntius Stella at 1.2.77-8, himself at 3.5.24-8.
44. Statius says of the marriage of Pollius Felix and his wife: *non ulla deo meliore cohaerent / pectora, non alias docuit Concordia mentes* (2.2.153-4).
45. See 1.2.171-3 (the child of Stella and Violentilla should equally draw beauty from both his parents).
46. See n41 above.
47. See 2.2.143-5 (Statius exhorts all such devoted couples to learn

from the example of Pollius and Polla).

48. On the other hand, the supernatural women (e.g. Venus 1.2; Calliope 2.7) appear idealised and unreal, not anthropomorphised or Romanised as much as Latin authors usually do - for details see Chapter 4 (JOCASTA) Part I.

II. ARGIA'S ROLE IN SECTION I OF THE THEBAID (BOOKS 1-4)

49. See Chapter 1 (INTRODUCTION) p9.

50. The influential turn-of-the-century scholar Legras believed so (1905:231) and, in contrast to the harshest criticism of Statius' other female characters, he singled out for praise the poet's portrayal of Argia.

51. See below n54 for corroboration of this reminiscence.

52. Deipyle is, however, a pale shadow of her sister, unlike Ismene, who plays a memorable role in the scene of Atys' death, in Book 8 (Lesueur 1986:24).

53. Vessey (*Thebaid*:100) suggests that Statius' own stepdaughter may have embodied this Roman ideal of filial virtue: see *Silv* 3.5.55ff for an account of this sterling girl's virtues. See also *Silv* 5.1 45ff, 108ff for a definition of the traditional duties of a matrona, as performed by the excellent Priscilla, wife of Abascantus.

54. The simile of Pallas and Diana is resumed and extended at 2.236ff. We are again reminded of the first appearance of Virgil's Dido (*Aen* 1.498ff) who is likewise compared to Diana in graceful beauty. See Part V below for a detailed analysis of this extended simile.

55. See Chapter 3 (ANTIGONE) for details.

56. See Mulder (1954:152-181) for a detailed account of this scene.

57. The marriage leads to the muster of troops in Book 4 - see Chapter 1 (INTRODUCTION) Part II.

58. The treatment of the Rumour topos is modelled on that of *Aen* 4.173ff, where Fama spreads far and wide the news of Dido's liaison with Aeneas.

59. We are especially reminded of *Cat* 64.31ff the marriage of Peleus and Thetis; and of *Silv* 1.2.17ff, 147ff the wedding of Arruntius Stella.

60. These virtuous feelings correspond with the saevus pudor of Ismene (8.645) - see Vessey *Statius and the Thebaid*:291.

61. See Mulder (1954:194-209) for a detailed commentary on this scene.

62. The language here recalls that of *Ovid Met* 4.500ff and *Seneca Medea*

731ff. Statius may have been making use of a direct model for this ecphrasis: Moerner (1891. *De P.Papinii Statii Thebaide Quaestiones* diss. Konigsburg 8-9) suggests Antimachus, but we can really only speculate on the identity thereof.

63. The necklace was made of emeralds set in gold alternated with engraved adamantine figures. The material and workmanship were outstanding. Pausanias (7.24.8-10) tells how the piece was presented to Apollo's temple at Delphi, from where it was later plundered. See Folse (1936:64) for a description of the necklace.

64. See Mulder (1954:210-38) for a detailed commentary on this scene.

65. See also Lucan BC 5.762ff for a similar speech in the mouth of Pompey's wife Cornelia. Like Argia, Statius' Deidamia (Ach 1.927ff) utters her first speech in the form of a propempticon, and there are many similarities of content to be observed between the two speeches.

66. See, for example, Aeneas' reply at Aen 4.333ff. Also Achilles' response to Deidamia at Ach 1.956-60.

67. See Snijder (1968:256ff) for a detailed commentary on this scene.

68. Among Eteocles' refutationes is the argument (2.438-42) that Argia would not like Thebes and that it would be wrong to place their family under her authority (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:144).

69. Recall the scene at Theb 2.336-9. For the simile of the bristling tiger and the jagged rocks as natural insensates, see Dido's words to Aeneas Aen 4.366. Also compare Aen 6.471 and Ovid Met 11.330.

70. For Apollo's prophecy, see Theb 1.482ff.

71. Snijder (1968:262) suggests that this picture of Argia's loyalty might be indirect praise of Statius' own wife, Claudia. See Silv 3.5.

72. For line 710: Argia has already called him back before - see 3.378-9 (below Part III).

73. Her physical state here anticipates her "furious" appearance in the search for her husband's corpse in Book 12, as well as that of the suppliant Jocasta in Books 7 and 11, who is also identified as a figure of violent despair.

III. ARGIA'S EFFECT ON POLYNICES DURING THE COURSE OF THE POEM

74. Vessey (Statius and the Thebaid:150) regards this speech as a cunning rhetorical ploy on the part of Polynices, to stir up the Argives on his behalf.

75. See Appendix B (2.1) for defence of Mozley's reading here.

76. See above Part II.

77. At 12.332-5 Argia herself alludes to her efforts to keep her husband away from Thebes.

78. Compare Argia's location here to 7.243ff, where Antigone climbs a tower to survey the host of Theban defenders. There is a similar departing scene at Ach 2.23ff, between Achilles and Deidamia. The situation of the woman on the tower is a version of the teichoscopy which is a topos of Ancient literature: see for example Ovid's Scylla at Met 8.11ff.

79. See further below Part IV.

80. Polynices' words pathetically prefigure Creon's barbarity later in book 11, as well as Argia's pietas in Book 12 (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:164).

81. See Chapters 3 (JOCASTA) and 4 ((ANTIGONE)).

82. Similarly, Dido gave purple cloaks interwoven with gold to Aeneas: Aen 4.262-4, 11.72-5.

83. By a quirk of tragic irony, it will be this cloak by which Argia identifies Polynices' corpse in Book 12.

IV. ARGIA'S ROLE IN BOOK 12

84. At his son's funeral, he cries: *et nunc Oedipodi par est fortuna doloris/ ac mihi?* (12.86-7). See Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:128.

85. They resemble the suppliant women in Euripides' Suppliants. For a discussion of Statius' Argive women see for example: Kytzler, B 1968. *Der Bittgang der argivischen Frauen*. Theb X.49-83. AU 11, 50-61.

86. See 8.751ff.

87. Argia's transfiguration (12.178) recalls that of the Lemnian women in Hypsipyle's narrative. Polyxo had exhorted them: *firmate animos et pellite sexum!* (5.105). See further Chapter 5 (HYPSSIPYLE).

88. The workings of furor, which Virgil employed to describe the insane behaviour of Dido, Amata and the Latin matrons, becomes a thorough-going theme of Statius' characterisation (Venini 1964:211). Vessey (1986:3003-4) sees the seemingly paradoxical reconciliation of ardor and castitas in lines 191-4 as a witty sententia on Statius' part. I hardly think there is room for humour in a scene as sombre as this: the poet's intention is rather to express the intensity of the desire which takes hold of Argia here, to find her husband's corpse and give it an honourable burial.

89. Venini (1964:207ff) cites this passage in support of her belief that furor in Statius has a human motivation, as well as the divine origin to which Schetter exclusively attributes the demoniacal impulse. Venini thus affiliates herself with the school of thought which identifies in Statius' epic poetry what Krumbholz (1955) has called a

Neigung zum Psychologisieren, an "inclination towards psychologising."

90. She goes by the same route which Polynices took to Thebes.

91. See Appendix B (2.2) for a discussion of the punctuation and possible translation of these difficult lines.

92. Vessey, in endless pursuit of the "mannerist" in Statius, regards these details of Argia's journey, and her appearance to passers-by, as "evidence of the 'cluttering' or 'swamping' of the narrative which the mannerist finds irresistible".

93. See Chapter 4 (JOCASTA). As Venini (1964:203-4) succinctly expresses it, furor is a psychological state in the development from grief to crime.

94. See below Part V for analysis of this simile. It corresponds to the one at 5.782-5 where Hypsipyle is compared to the Berecynthia mater, caring for the baby Jupiter.

95. See Chapter 4 (JOCASTA).

96. There is perhaps an echo of Virgil's Creusa here: *quotiens amissus eunti / limes, et errantem comitis solacia flammae / destituunt gelidaeque facem vicere tenebrae!* (240-2) cf Aen 2. 738-9 *heu! misero coniunx fatone erepta Creusa / substitit? erravitne via seu lassa resedit?*

97. See discussion of this simile below in Part V.

98. For the emendation *marcet*, see Appendix B (2.3).

99. For the emendation here, see Appendix B (2.4).

100. See above 3.378ff.

101. There are echoes here (347-8 in bold type) of Dido's words at Aen 4.327-330. On this passage, see Schetter (1960:119-121). Lines 345-7 have been emended here - see Appendix B (2.5).

102. For a more detailed description of this scene, see Chapter 3 (ANTIGONE).

103. Hyginus (Fab 72) tells us that when Creon's guards came upon the women, Argia fled and Antigone was captured. See Chapter 3 (ANTIGONE) for details.

104. Not, as Vessey (1986:3006) would have it, "a cascade of absurdity".

105. They are compared to Bacchic revellers, a common symbol for female strength - see Chapters 3 (ANTIGONE) and 4 (JOCASTA).

V. SIMILES USED TO DESCRIBE ARGIA

106. Russell (1979:7-8) notes - and discounts - the charges of indecorum and loss of vivacity levelled at Virgil's simile by the ancient grammarian Valerius Probus.

107. The bilateral and irrational correspondences in this Virgilian simile have been thoroughly analysed by West (1969:44).

108. Statius employs a similar comparison at Ach 1.758-60, where Lycomedes' daughters entering the banquet are likened to victorious returning Amazons. Here the robust nature of the simile, lacking the appropriateness it has in the Thebaid, is reduced to the level of the absurd.

109. It has been noted that Statius' fulsome praise of the brides here contains some of the stock elements of an epithalamium. Compare, for example, Silv 1.2, the wedding poem of Arruntius Stella. One of the chief sections of the epithalamium was a eulogy of physical beauty and attributes, though, as Menander Rhetor points out, the praise-poet had to be careful not to be too enthusiastic:

As for the girl, be cautious in describing her beauty because of the scandal that may be caused, unless you are a relation and can speak as one who cannot help knowing, or unless you can remove the objection by saying 'I have heard...' (Rhetores Graeci Treatise II.403.11-14 Russell-Wilson).

110. It appears that Statius was aware of the comic potential of the Pallas-and-Diana simile, for he employs it to that end in Ach 1.824-6, to describe the equal beauty of Deidamia and Achilles.

111. Votaries of Cybele cut themselves with knives in honour of the goddess.

112. See further below JOCASTA Part V.

113. See further below JOCASTA Part V.

114. See further below JOCASTA Part V.

115. See further below HYPSPYLYE Part IV.

116. According to legend, Persephone, daughter of Jupiter and Ceres, as she was picking flowers in the meadows of Enna in Sicily, was carried off by Pluto, god of the underworld.

117. Enceladus was one of the Giants, imprisoned by Jupiter under Aetna.

118. A compromise was reached between Ceres and Pluto, so that Persephone was allowed to spend six months a year above the ground.

CHAPTER THREE: ANTIGONE IN STATIUS' THEBAID

turre procul sola nondum concessa videri (Theb 7.243)

I. INTRODUCTION: PRE-STATIAN ANTIGONE

II. ANTIGONE IN BOOKS 7 AND 8

III. ANTIGONE IN BOOKS 11 AND 12

IV. SIMILES USED TO DESCRIBE ANTIGONE (AND ISMENE)

I. INTRODUCTION: PRE-STATIAN ANTIGONE

The second female character of the Thebaid on whom we focus our attention is Antigone, daughter of Theban Jocasta and Oedipus, and sister of the protagonists Polynices and Eteocles. In contrast to her sister-in-law Argia, Antigone featured frequently in ancient literature, and therefore it is imperative to include a brief preliminary examination of the possible Greek and Roman sources for Statius' treatment of this mythological heroine.

Antigone and Ismene may have featured in Aeschylus' (now fragmentary) play *Seven Against Thebes*, but it is probable that the main characters were Eteocles and a Messenger and that the play dealt with the conflict between the brothers (Kitto 1966:45ff).¹ The first extant source we have for the character of Antigone is Sophocles' play of the same name. The plot takes up where Aeschylus' left off and centres around the dispute over Polynices' burial, and therefore it is only a facet of Antigone's character - her noble suffering and resolve, based on a firm belief in the absolute validity of her claim - that is employed in this tragic tale of her rebellion against the tyrant's order. Indeed, it seems that the title, *Antigone*, is something of a misnomer, for the heroine's fate is already manifest in the opening verses, she herself

exits halfway, and the concluding emphasis is on the character Creon (Kitto 1966:125-31). A brief synopsis of the plot reveals the limitations of her role here. After expressing her intention to Ismene to bury her brother's corpse, Antigone is apprehended in the execution of her defiant act by Creon's watchmen. She is dragged before the king, who ignores her eloquent bid to self-justification and condemns her to rock-walled imprisonment. After the pleas and threats of his son Haemon, to whom Antigone is betrothed, and the warnings of Tiresias, Creon repents and hurries to release Antigone. Too late he discovers that she has hanged herself and Haemon forthwith commits suicide alongside her body. Creon returns to find his wife Eurydice also dead, having stabbed herself upon hearing of her son's demise.

There may have followed a (lost) revival of Aeschylus' play, in which the playwright was inspired by Sophocles' play to add the theme of Polynices' burial at the end (Webster 1967:219). Euripides' *Phoenissae*, perhaps influenced by the revivalist, combines the themes of the Seven Against Thebes with that of Antigone's burial of Polynices. In this play, we observe the deft Euripidean technique of picking up and contrasting the earlier and later entry of a character (Webster 1967:283). Antigone appears first in a relatively cheerful *teichoscopy* with her *paedagogus* on the roof; then, when she has accompanied her mother to the battlefield after the brothers' duel, she re-enters at the head of the procession of mourners and engages in a lyric dialogue with Oedipus. Her role at this stage is not a large one: she is present merely to lead the procession home and thus to be in position for the *Exodos* (Kitto 1966:358). It is in the final scene (doubtless influenced by the revivalist) that Antigone abruptly develops heroic stature, when

she rebels against Creon's orders.

Euripides' *Antigone* is lost, but it has been ascertained that in this play *Antigone* bore a child to *Haemon*, and that her husband helped her to bury the body of her brother (Webster 1967:182). This version of the myth is indeed a far cry from the one employed in the *Phoenissae*, where *Antigone* would rather kill *Haemon* than marry him. According to *Hyginus* (Fab 72), the legend as portrayed in the *Antigone* has Creon hand over the heroine to *Haemon* for execution. The lovesick youth disobeys his father's orders and entrusts *Antigone* to the care of shepherds. When their son has grown to manhood, he goes to the Theban games where Creon recognises him by a birthmark common to all the family. Thereafter, in order to escape Creon's wrath, *Haemon* and *Antigone* kill themselves.

In Euripides' *Suppliants*, another play treating the theme of the burial, *Antigone* has no part to play: after the Thebans refuse to allow the bodies of the Seven to be interred, the mothers of the chieftains, led by *Adrastus*, make successful supplication to *Aethra*, mother of *Theseus* king of Athens, at the shrine of *Demeter*.

Sophocles' *Oedipus Colonus* opens with the banished *Oedipus*' arrival in *Colonus*, led by his daughter *Antigone*. *Ismene* enters to tell of the brothers' quarrel over the throne, and then departs to perform a rite of expiation on behalf of her father, who has profaned the sacred grove of the *Furies* by his entrance. Upon learning the identity of the blind exile, the Elders of the deme would expel him, but they consent to await King *Theseus*' decision. After *Oedipus* has persuaded *Theseus* to protect him, *Creon* arrives with an armed guard to arrest *Antigone*: *Ismene* has already been captured. He makes to arrest *Oedipus* also, but

is prevented by the arrival of Theseus who reprimands him severely and compels him to release his captives. Next, Theseus returns with the rescued sisters. Polynices arrives to win his father's approval for his cause, but Oedipus rejects his insidious advances. He knows the oracle's forecast that victory will attend the side which he favours, and he accordingly invokes upon his sons the curse of reciprocal destruction. Thereupon, peals of thunder call Oedipus to his fate. He leads the way, bidding his daughters farewell and entrusting them to Theseus' care. At last, in the presence of Theseus alone, Oedipus ascends to heaven.

It is thus apparent from the above overview of the Greek sources for the character of Antigone, that Euripides' *Phoenissae* was the most likely Greek model for Statius' teichoscopy in *Thebaid* Book 7 and the burial scene in Book 12, while Sophocles' *Oedipus Colonus* might have provided material for the scene between Oedipus and Antigone in Book 11. It is however more likely that Statius inherited those elements of Euripides and Sophocles which appear to feature in the *Thebaid*, from an intermediate Roman source which combined them.

The chief Latin source for the character of Antigone was doubtless the recently composed *Phoenissae* of Seneca, of which only fragments survive today. The play appears to combine material from Sophocles' *Oedipus Colonus* with that of Euripides' *Phoenissae*: it opens on the blind and exiled Oedipus who together with Antigone has been wandering in wild and deserted regions for three years. The brothers, meanwhile, are poised for open conflict in Thebes. Oedipus expresses the fervent desire to die but his daughter manages to persuade him to continue

living for the sake of preventing the civil war that threatens their beloved land. In the second episode, a Theban messenger arrives to beg aid from Oedipus, who, overwhelmed by grief and anger, refuses to comply. In a later set of fragments, Jocasta is lamenting her sons' predicament when a messenger reports that the battle-lines are drawn up, and Antigone urges her mother to intervene.⁴ The messenger provides a commentary on Jocasta's movements: how her frenzied entreaties have temporarily stayed the arms uplifted to strike. The scene shifts to the field itself where, between the battle-lines, Jocasta first persuades Eteocles to lay down his weapon and then attempts to convince a reluctant Polynices to set aside his mission. In a scene inspired by Euripides' teichoscopy,⁵ Antigone remains behind to observe the proceedings from the palace roof and to shout encouragement. Her words echo those of Jocasta herself exhorting her daughter to hurry in Euripides' version.⁶ Seneca has thus synthesized the two mediation attempts of Euripides and reversed Antigone's role in the action (Smolenaars 1986:275-6).

II. ANTIGONE IN BOOKS 7 AND 8

We see from the above overview that Statius had a wealth of potential source material; our task now is to ascertain how and to what extent he employed the traditional models for the character of Antigone, and also to point out where he innovated.

Antigone's role in Book 7, in the teichoscopy on the roof, and the female deputation to Polynices, is obviously heavily influenced by the Senecan-Euripidean tradition. The modifications of the tradition which we detect, are due to Statius' own poetic purpose. On the other hand,

the episode of the death of young Atys in Book 8 has no parallel in the delineated tradition: in content the scene is a Statian innovation,⁷ in style it is reminiscent of Virgil's Aeneid.

Antigone's role in this section of the poem is contributory and passive, rather than central or active: the teichoscopy (7.243ff) is merely a structural framework for a catalogue of Theban forces, Antigone's mother Jocasta is the main focus of the female deputation at 7.470ff, and it is her sister Ismene whose fears and grief dominate the scene of the death of Atys (8.554ff).

Statius' careful balance of plot structure is discernible in his positioning of the paired female characters. The Argive sisters Argia and Deipyle appear in the first section of the poem (Books 1-4) in the double marriage scene (Book 2); Argia begins to assume shape in the scene with Polynices (Book 2) as well as in the audience with Adrastus (Book 2). After her lingering presence is observable during the course of the poem, Argia achieves full potential as a character in Book 12. Deipyle, on the other hand, is never a distinguishable figure. After the Hypsipyle digression of the second section (Books 5-6), Antigone and Ismene appear in the third section (Books 7-8), where by a clever variation the discrepancy between the portrayal of the Theban sisters is less marked than with the Argive pair. Though it is true that Antigone and Ismene are the Theban counterparts of Argia and Deipyle in this poem, Ismene is a much more memorable character than Deipyle, chiefly for her role in the Atys episode of Book 8. Antigone plays a relatively minor role here. In the final section of the poem (Books 11-12), Antigone's character begins to develop: she has an audience with Polynices in Book 11 (balancing that of Argia with her husband in Book

2); she appears in a scene with Oedipus (balancing that of Argia and Adrastus in Book 3); in Book 12 she unites with Argia to achieve her full tragic potential.

EVENTS OF BOOK 7

A) THE TEICHOSCOPY OF Theb 7.243-373

The Theban catalogue of book 7 balances that of the Argives in book 4, and is cast in the form of a teichoscopy to avoid the repetitiveness that a second catalogue might have incurred. The structure and content of this dialogue scene is also well motivated, as an examination reveals:

8

Turre procul sola nondum concessa videri
Antigone populis teneras defenditur atra
veste genas; iuxtaque comes, quo Laius ibat
armigero; tunc virgo senem regina veretur. 243-6.

The device of a teichoscopy is clearly borrowed from Euripides' ⁹Phoenissae but there are a number of important divergences in Statius' treatment: the identity of the army which Antigone surveys is Theban not Argive, she no longer stands on the roof of the palace, and, most ¹⁰importantly, the role of her paedagogus Phorbas is expanded. In Euripides' play, the paedagogus is a stock slave figure, introduced solely to further the plot by providing information about the Argives. On the other hand, Statius' sympathetic portrayal of the faithful old retainer serves to colour the otherwise functional teichoscopy. Also, the exposition of the tender relationship between the teacher-companion and his beloved alumna provides a suitable introduction to Statius' sometimes fulsome characterisation of Antigone.

Delicate touches of pathos frame the catalogue scene. The lonely,

griefstricken Antigone asks for a catalogue of Theban forces and the old man acquiesces (254-89): sic rudis Antigone, senior cui talia Phorbas (253). Later, she interrupts his speech to ask about Lapithaon and Alatreus, the look-alike father and son, adding wistfully: utinam haec concordia nostris! (7.293). He answers her question and continues the catalogue (294ff), ending on a tearful note as he recalls the death of his old master, Laius (354-361). Antigone soothes him: refovet frigentis amicum / pectus alumna senis (361-2). He recovers somewhat and recounts his only reason left for living:

o mihi sollicitum decus ac suprema voluptas,
Antigone! seras tibi demoror improbus umbras,
fors eadem scelera et caedes visurus avitas,
donec te thalamis habilem integramque resignem:
hoc satis, et fessum vita dimittite, Parcae. 363-7

He starts to resume his list, when Eteocles' speech to the men commences (374ff), bringing to an abrupt end this peaceful interlude. This scene, though of internal and structural merit, provides little material for the characterisation of Antigone in the poem: she is to develop far from the secluded maiden and beloved alumna she appears here.

B) POLYNICES' REACTION TO THE FEMALE DEPUTATION (7.534ff):

Though Euripides gives Antigone and her sister no part in their mother's first mediation attempt¹¹, in Statius' version of this familiar scene Jocasta is accompanied to the battlefield by her two daughters (hinc atque hinc natae, melior iam sexus, aniles / praecipitantem artus... 7.479-80) and Antigone lends her tearful support to her mother's entreaties, though hers is not a "speaking

part" in this scene:

Ipse etiam ante oculos nunc matris ad oscula versus,
 nunc rudis Ismenes, nunc flebiliora precantis
 Antigones, variaque animum turbante procella
 exciderat regnum... 534-7

This scene bears traces of the influence of Livy 2.40¹³, the story of the female deputation to the exile Coriolanus at one of the critical stages of Rome's early history: the presence of Antigone and Ismene here corresponds to the figure of Coriolanus' wife Volumnia plus her two small children at the side of his mother Veturia, in the appeal to Coriolanus (Soubiran 1969:689-699).¹⁴

The effect of the joint appeal of Jocasta and her daughters is temporarily to abate Polynices' fury (536ff), before the opposing speech of Tydeus (539ff) and the intervention of Tisiphone destroy the efficacy of the women's plea. The scene parallels the second mediation attempt in Book 11, where the women approach the brothers separately: Jocasta appeals to Eteocles (11.315ff), Antigone to Polynices (11.363ff). There too, their attempts are doomed to a failure which is rendered all the more tragic for the increased efforts on the part of the women.¹⁵

EVENTS OF BOOK 8: THE DEATH OF ATYS (8.554-654)

The mortality rate of brave young men is high in this poem and, since women play no part on the battlefield, usually a casualty does not warrant a mention in my exposition. However, in terms of plot structure as well as character delineation and tone of narration, a close examination of this particular incident is well justified.¹⁶

Now young Atys is betrothed to Ismene. He has not been put off by his bride's familial curse; on the contrary: ...sponsam quincastus amanti / squalor et indigni commendat gratia luctus (557-8). The undeserved grief which graces Ismene and the polarity between her spotless morality and the taint of her family, commend her to him (Vessey 1986:2994). He is himself egregius (559) and, all in all, the scene should be set for a happy ending: inque vicem, sineret Fortuna, placebant (560).

Naturally impatient for the consummation of his marriage, Atys' martial ire stems from the fact that the war has prevented the wedding from taking place (561-2). Trusting to his resplendent gear alone ¹⁷, he joins the fray and soon he dares to attack Tydeus (577ff), who summarily dispatches him. Tydeus does not even bother to plunder the body - such spoils would bring him contempt rather than honour: ...vix, si bellum comitata relictis, / Deipyle thalamis, illi inludenda tulussem (590-1). His mention of his wife at this point is obvious irony, Ismene and Antigone being the Theban counterparts of Adrastus' daughters.

Tydeus goes on to hunt for nobler prizes (592ff), while Atys' fate inspires his comrades to rally: insurgunt iusto firmata pudore / agmina, cuique suae rediere in pectora curae (605-5). Meanwhile, in their chamber, the Theban sisters bewail their plight, par aliud morum miserique innoxia proles / Oedipodae (608-9). They do not know which brother's victory to pray for, though ultimately tacite praeponderat exul ¹⁸ (615). The sisters are compared to nightingales in their ¹⁹grieving narration (616-21).

Then Ismene tells of her dream (622-35): how she, who could not be

drawn into thoughts of the marriage-bed even if there were abiding peace (ego quae thalamos nec si pax alta maneret, / tractarem sensu²⁰ (625-6) , had been that same night (pudet heu! 626) a bride, whereupon there seemed to be confusion, and a fire had appeared between her and her groom, and his mother seemed to follow her, loudly demanding the return of her son:²¹

- conubia vidi

nocte, soror; sponsum unde mihi sopor attulit amens
vix notum visu? semel his in sedibus illum,
dum mea nescio quo spondentur foedera pacto,
respexi non sponte, soror. turbata repente
omnia cernebam, subitusque intercidit ignis,
meque sequebatur rabido clamore reposita
mater Atyn. 626-33

As a paragon of virginal modesty, Ismene is appropriately shocked at the unbidden thoughts of her forthcoming marriage to the bridegroom whom she scarcely knows by sight. At first she sees her dream as a delusion, a manifestation of her waking anxieties (quisnam hic mortalibus error? / quae decepta fides? curam invigilare quieti / claraque per somnos animi simulacra reverti? 622-4), but after retelling it to her sister, she reinterprets it as an ambiguous presage of doom (quaenam dubiae praesagia cladis? 633). She dismisses the dream, in favour of the wish that her brothers be reconciled: nec timeo, dum tuta domus milesque recedat / Doricus et tumidos liceat componere fratres (634-5).²²

Just then Atys is carried into the palace, servans animam iam sanguine nullo (638).²³ Jocasta is the first to see him, and she summons caram.../ Ismenen (641-2), for whom the dying boy calls. Ismene reacts at first with a proper maidenly modesty which is paradoxically cruel: ...tollebat in ora / virgo manus, tenūit saevus pudor (644-5).²⁴

But Jocasta gives permission for their audience (646-7) and Atys spends his last moments gazing at his betrothed (647-50). After he has breathed his last, Ismene, in the absence of his parents and with the permission of her mother, is finally able to give full and pious vent to her sorrow:

tunc quia nec genetrix iuxta positusque beata
 morte pater, sponsae munus miserabile tradunt
 declinare genas; ibi demum teste remoto
 fassa pios gemitus lacrimasque in lumina fudit. 8.651-4.

In some ways, the tragic romance of the Atys episode balances the marriage scene in Book 2: the maidenly virtue of Ismene recalls the earlier portrayal of Argia and Deipyle. But, as Vessey has pointed out (Stattius and the Thebaid:291-2), the daughters of Oedipus are ever the more unhappy pair, for there is no marriage at Thebes: for Ismene, there is only a strange dream and thereafter a cruel termination of her betrothal. According to tradition, Antigone was betrothed to Haemon, but Statius makes no mention of this fact.²⁶ He prefers to depict her as an uncomplicated heroine, her familial pietas unencumbered, and to give the scene of erotic interest to her sister Ismene.

III. ANTIGONE IN BOOKS 11 AND 12

In these last two books of the poem, Antigone achieves a greater prominence as a character than she has done thus far in the poem: unaccompanied, she addresses an appeal to Polynices in Book 11, and persuades Creon to remit Oedipus' sentence. Finally, in the burial scene of Book 12, she reaches her full potential, together with Argia.

EVENTS OF BOOK 11

A) ANTIGONE'S FINAL PLEA TO POLYNICES (11.354-382)

In Book 11, Tisiphone enlists the aid of her sister, Megaera, in order to bring the war to its conclusion (11.57ff). No-one must be allowed to stand in the way of her ultimate triumph. In this, she does not underestimate the influence that mother and daughter may wield: the brothers themselves are secure, but the people may yet be swayed; even Oedipus appears to have had a disturbing change of heart:

ambo faciles nostrique; sed anceps
volgus et adfatus matris blandamque precatu
Antigonen timeo, paulum ne nostra retardent
consilia. ipse etiam, qui nos lassare precando
suetus et ultrices oculorum exposcere Diras,
iam pater est...

102-7

Immediately Megaera goes to seek out Polynices. She finds him still uncertain, for he has had an ominous vision of his wife, Argia (140ff).²⁷ Tisiphone lashes him into an uncontrollable fury (150ff). Thus driven, Polynices loses even his desire for the throne of Thebes: all he wants is his brother's blood. He informs Adrastus that he is resolved to fight his brother (155ff). His words show clearly that the power of the Fury has prevailed over that of his mother and sisters:

non si atra parens miseraeque sorores
in media arma cadant, non si ipse ad bella ruenti
obstet et exstinctos galeae pater ingerat orbes,
deficiam.

170-173

Later in Book 11, Jocasta and her daughter make a second attempt to pacify the brothers.²⁸ While her mother begs Eteocles²⁹, Antigone, accompanied by old Actor, slips away secretly to the Ogygian wall to address a final plea to Polynices:

At parte ex alia tacitos obstante tumultu
Antigone furata gradus - nec casta retardat

virginitas - volat Ogygii fastigia muri
exsuperare furens; senior comes haeret eunti
Actor, et hic summas non duraturus ad arces. 354-8

The description of the fury of her haste, her neglect of maidenly chastity, her unrivalled strength of gait: all these features serve to identify Antigone here with the desperate and courageous actions of Argia³⁰ and Jocasta³¹ elsewhere in the poem, and to announce that her aristeia is about to begin, in this her first direct speech.

In order to attract Polynices' attention, Antigone wails loudly and utters her speech as desperately as if she is about to fling herself from the wall on which she stands (magno prius omnia planctu / implet et ex muris ceu descensura profatur 361-2). She begs him to lay down his weapons and look awhile on his "enemy" and his worthy grievance:

comprime tela manu paulumque hanc respice turrem,
frater, et horrentes refer in mea lumina cristas!
agnoscisne hostis? sic annua pacta fidemque
poscimus? hi questus, haec est bona causa modesti
exsulis? 363-7

She entreats her brother to relent, by his new family rather than the Theban family he scorns (Argolicos per te, germane, penates - / nam Tyriis iam nullus honos - per si quid in illa / dulce domo, submitte animos 367-9) and also by her own name: rogat illa suorum / Antigone devota malis suspectaque regi, / et tantum tua, dure, soror (370-2).

She appeals to their mutual love (saltem ora trucesque / solve genas; liceat voltus fortasse supremum / noscere dilectos et ad haec lamenta videre, / anne fleas 372-5), and assures him that even as she speaks, their mother is attempting the same plea, with favourable effect, on Eteocles (illum gemitu iam supplice mater / frangit et exsertum

dimittere dicitur ensem 375-6). She asks how he can still be stubborn (fortis 377) towards her, who has been so supportive of him: mihi, quae tua nocte dieque / exsilia erroresque fleo, iamiamque tumentem / placavi tibi saepe patrem? (377-9).³²

Finally, she slyly points out that, by his obdurate behaviour, he is causing his brother's guilt to be lessened by comparison: quid crimine solvis / germanum? nempe ille fidem et stata foedera rupit, / ille nocens saevusque suis; tamen ecce vocatus / non venit (379-82).

Polynices is visibly moved by her words, in spite of the continued insistence of Megaera (382-7). Then Tisiphone intervenes: pushing Jocasta aside, she shatters the gate and propels forth the raging Eteocles (387ff).³³ Once again the efforts of Jocasta and her daughter are brought to nothing by the interference of the Fury.

Statius has here given Antigone a more amplified role from the one she enjoyed in Seneca's *Phoenissae*: in the play, it is Jocasta who undertakes the individual pacification of each brother, while Antigone merely shouts encouragement to her mother from the roof. The supportive role of Turnus' sister, Juturna, in the *Aeneid*, may well have prompted Statius to increase the part which Antigone plays in the unfolding of her brother's destiny.

B) OEDIPUS' LAMENT (580-756)

After the first Theban victory, Oedipus had at last emerged from his self-imposed confinement (8.240ff). His antisocial behaviour appeared noticeably modified:

cunctos auditque refertque,

qui Ditem et Furias tantum et si quando regentem
Antigonen maestis solitus pulsare querellis. 8.247-9

Yet it is not the victory, but war itself which had delighted him, and the prospect of his sons' mutual destruction: inde epulae dulces ignotaque gaudia vultu (254).

The brief mention in Book 8 (248-9) of Antigone's role as her father's guide shows that Statius has inherited from Seneca the apparently irreconcilable dual tradition of Oedipus-the-blind-wanderer and
34
Oedipus-the-prisoner-at-Thebes.

In Book 11, when the duel is ended, Oedipus comes out of his chamber, supported on his left hand side by Antigone (586-7). He commands the woeful Antigone (extrema gementi 593) to lead him to his sons and to lay him on their corpses. Although suspicious of his intent (cunctatur nescia virgo, / quid paret 595-6), she nevertheless obeys, leading him with difficulty through the carnage of the battlefield: impediunt iter implicitosque morantur / arma, viri, currus, altaque in strage seniles
35
/ deficiunt gressus et dux miseranda laborat (596-8). At last her shriek betrays the success of their sorrowful mission (ut quaesita diu monstravit corpora clamor / virginis 599-600), and the father flings himself on the corpses of his sons, grieving mightily (600ff).

Addressing his sons, he absolves himself from culpability, instead blaming furor, the Fury, his parents, Thebes and his own blindness for the ills of their family, and swearing his sincerity by the God of the Underworld, his blindness and his guiltless guide:

furor illa et movit Erinys
et pater et genetrix et regna oculique cadentes;
nil ego: per Ditem iuro dulcesque tenebras

immeritamque ducem, subeam sic Tartara digna
morte, nec irata fugiat me Laius umbra. 619-23

His laments put him in the mood for suicide, and he stealthily looks around for a weapon, lest his daughter should prevent him (...occulte telum, ni nata vetaret, / quaerebat 628-9), which indeed she does (sed cauta manu subtraxerat enses / Antigone 629-30). She hides her own grief, secretly pleased that Oedipus' cruel heart has at last been moved by sorrow: dicentem comes aegra levat mutumque dolorem / ipsa premit, saevum gaudens planxisse parentem (632-3).³⁶

This was the scene inspired by Seneca's *Phoenissae* and Euripides' *Phoenissae* before him: the lament between Oedipus and Antigone over the death of the brothers. The next scene between them is influenced by Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, and Seneca's *Phoenissae*.³⁷

Creon, new king of Thebes, meets the returning pair at the Ogygian gate (665ff), and boldly orders Oedipus to be off. Oedipus, rejuvenated by anger at these haughty words (673-6)³⁸, utters an indignant speech in which he announces his intention to leave with Antigone (duc, age, nata procul 706), but then changes his mind and asks instead for Creon to provide a guide (quid te autem luctibus addo? / da, rex magne, ducem 706-7).

Afraid to be left behind, the wretched Antigone changes their plea (timuit miseranda relinqui / Antigone mutatque preces 707-8). This is her second speech of supplication in the poem (the first was addressed to Polynices 11.363ff), and the differences in technique between the two pleas is interesting to trace: with her brother, she was bold and confident: she had invoked his love paternal and fraternal (368-75),

demanded a reciprocation of her support for him (370-2, 377-9), and emphasized the current success of their mother's mediation attempts (375-6), as well as the guilt of Eteocles (379-82). With Creon, she is humble and self-effacing: she begs Creon to forgive the proud words of her grief-stricken parent (708-71), appealing to his sovereign mercy and pity towards one who himself was once a powerful, just and merciful king (717-23), and promising that she will tame her father's arrogant spirit and keep him apart from the people (723-30). Before the end of her appeal, however, she voices an implicit threat: if Oedipus is exiled, Creon may have to bear the indignity and shame of having Thebes' "dirty laundry" aired to its enemies: *vis Argos eat hostilesque Mycenae / squalidus inreptet, victique ad limen Adrasti / Aonias referat clades, tenuemque precetur / rex Thebanus opem? miserae quid crimina gentis / pandere, quid casus iuvat ostentare pudendos?* (731-5). She concludes by a succinct reiteration of her request: may Creon in his pity allow them to stay so that she may soon bury her old father in Thebes: *conde, precor, quodcumque sumus, nec longa precamur / dona, Creon: miserere senis, maestoque parentis / hic, precor, hic manes indulge ponere: certe / Thebanos sepelire licet* (736-9).

Although her final words are filled with entreaty (*precor...precamur* 736; *precor* 738), there remains, in the word *conde* (736), a hint of her earlier threat: in permitting Oedipus and his daughter to stay, Creon will be able to hide them and, with them, the shame of Thebes.

Thus she prays, though Oedipus leads her away and scorns to be pardoned (739-47). Creon, however, is moved by her prayer, and agrees to remit his sentence partly not wholly, and sends Oedipus to Cithaeron (750-4).

In Athenian drama, Antigone was characterised as noble, as much for her devotion to her father as for her commitment to her brother. She was a tragic, alien figure, almost manly in her uncompromising attitude to blood-ties.³⁹ Statius has made of her a more typically Roman daughter and sister, whole-heartedly attached to her male kin, to be sure, but not without a critical opinion concerning the moral validity of their actions: as a champion of pietas, Antigone cannot endorse the curse which Oedipus has invoked upon his sons, nor the fratricidal hatred of her brothers.⁴⁰

EVENTS OF BOOK 12: ANTIGONE MEETS ARGIA AND THEY DEFIANTLY BURN
POLYNICES' BODY⁴¹

Prior to Theseus' arrival at Thebes, Argia and Antigone meet outside the city to cremate the bodies of Polynices and Eteocles. The funeral scene and the piety of the burial attendants recall the actions of Hypsipyle in Book 5 (313ff), as well as the funeral of Opheltes in Book 6. For this legendary act of brave defiance, Antigone heads Hyginus' catalogue of those women quae piissimae fuerunt (Fab 72).⁴² Whereas Hyginus says that Argia fled and Antigone alone was captured, Statius represents the two women as equals in love and dutiful behaviour. Within Statius' scheme of events, it is necessary that the glory be shared equally between Antigone and Argia: structurally, the pietas of the two women is prefigured by the heroism of Hopleus and Dymas in Book 10 (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:327), while their equal pietas balances the equal impietas of Eteocles and Polynices in Book 11 (Vessey ibid 133n). The details of this famous burial scene probably derive from Callimachus' Aitia fr.105 Pf.⁴³, though Ovid (Trist 5.5.33ff), Lucan (1.549ff) and Philostratus all refer to it also

(Schetter 1960:120).

As Argia keens over the body of her husband, Antigone suddenly appears on the scene, a similar figure of woe: *ecce alios gemitus aliamque ad busta ferebat / Antigone miseranda facem...* (349-50).⁴⁴ Eluding her guards, she, like Argia (12.209ff), has hurried, begging pardon to the gods and her brother for her delay (*deis fratricue moras excusat* 354), direct to the spot where she knew his body lay (358-60). Her cry, as she bursts forth from the city walls, is likened to that of a lioness whose rabies and furor have at last been freed by the death of her mother (356-8).⁴⁵ The comparison of Antigone's heroic courage to the awakened rage of a young lioness is not as inappropriate as it initially appears: as Kytzler (1962:152-3) points out, the choice of simile matches the ghoulish setting, and furthermore, illustrates the poet's point that Antigone's heroism is no less robust than the masculine variety.⁴⁶

When she hears the sobs of Argia and beholds her dishevelled mourning raiment, she erupts in anger: *cuius...manes, aut quae temeraria quaeris / nocte mea?* (366-7). Argia answers nothing, prey to sudden fear (367-9), and they regard each other in silence (370-2). Eventually Argia reveals her identity, and Antigone is immediately remorseful, and willingly relinquishes first place to her partner in woe, berating herself for her cowardly sororal devotion:⁴⁷

*mene igitur sociam - pro fors ignara! - malorum,
mene times? mea membra tenes, mea funera plangis.
cedo, tene, pudet heu! pietas ignava sororis!
haec prior-!* 382-5

With one mind they fall upon Polynices' body in an orgy of grief

(384ff), each telling the other her sad story. In order to console Antigone, Argia contrasts her lot favourably with that of her own: with solemn oaths, Argia assures Antigone that it was his sister, rather than his lost kingdom, his country or his mother, that was Polynices' most dearly cherished love, and that Antigone was the more fortunate of the two women in that from the tower she had had the opportunity to receive his final greeting before the battle:

per tibi furtivi sacrum commune doloris,
per socios manes et conscia sidera iuro:
non hic amissos, quamquam vagus exsul, honores,
non gentile solum, carae non pectora matris,
te cupiit unam noctesque diesque locutus
Antigonen; ego cura minor facilisque relinqui.
tu tamen ex celsa sublimem forsitan arce
ante nefas Graias dantem vexilla manipulis
vidisti, teque ille acie respexit ab ipsa
ense salutatam et nutantis vertice coni:
nos procul. 392-402

If what Argia says of Polynices' devotion to his sister is truthful (though it seems somewhat exaggerated), then Antigone had every reason to expect that her plea in Book 11 (363ff) would be successful, and the tragedy of her failure seems all the more poignant for this piece of hindsight.

Argia then bombards Antigone with questions about the duel, by her words emphasizing the incredibility of the Fury's victory over the mediation attempts of Polynices' female kin: *extremas sed quis deus egit in iras? / nil vestrae valere preces? tibine iste negavit / oranti?* (402-4). Antigone's reciprocal tale is interrupted by the advice of the vigilant Menoetes, who warns them to complete the burial first (404ff). The three equally frail people then carry Polynices' body to the Ismenos river, where Argia and Antigone, like the sisters

of Phaëthon, wash their brother's body (409-15).

Thereafter, they look for fire, but, by chance or heavenly design (*seu forte...seu numine divum* 420), the only pyre still glowing is that of Eteocles. Unaware of this, the women eagerly commit the body to the flames, and it is only when the pyre appears to reject the newcomer (429-36) that Antigone realises with terror whose corpse it bears (*conclamat territa virgo* 436), a conclusion she draws first by logical deduction (*frater erat: quis enim accessus ferus hospitis umbrae / pelleret?* 438-9), and then by recognition (*en clipei fragmen semiustaque nosco / cingula, frater erat!* 339-40). Thereupon she is driven to anger by the extremity of her brothers' continuing hatred (*cernisne, ut flamma recedat / concurratque tamen? vivunt odia improba, vivunt* 440-1). She therefore chides the warring spirits of her brothers, declaring the futility of their ongoing conflict, and urging them on behalf of herself and Argia to lay down their differences at last, or risk causing the suicide of the women:

*nil actum bello; miseri, sic, dum arma movetis,
vicit nempe Creon! nusquam iam regna, quis ardor?
cui furitis? sedate minas; tuque exsul ubique
semper inops aequi, iam cede: hoc nupta precatur,
hoc soror, aut saevos mediae veniemus in ignes.* 442-6

These last words are hardly the grief and sisterly devotion we have come to expect from Antigone: even she recognises - and despises - the impiety of her brothers' hatred.

Thereupon, there is an earth tremor and the split in the pyre widens; the watchmen are awakened and rush out onto the plain (447ff). The women are defiant and bold in the knowledge of their success (452-5).

In fact, they, so recently united in sorrow, are now divided by ambition, as each strives for the greater blame, gripped by a spirited hope for death, the supremely coveted prize of heroic virtue (*ambitur saeve de morte animosaque leti / spes furit* 456-7). Their previous reverence for each other is gone, replaced with something which looks very like anger and hatred, and ironically, their raging (*furit* 457), selfish behaviour, as they vie for the greater culpability, resembles that of the brothers, so shortly before deplored by the women: ⁴⁹

*haec fratris rapuisse, haec coniugis artus
contendunt vicibusque probant: "ego corpus," "ego ignes,"
"me pietas," "me duxit amor." deprecere saeva
supplicia et dextras iuvat insertare catenis.
nusquam illa alternis modo quae reverentia verbis,
iram odiumque putes; tantus discordat utrimque
clamor, et ad regem, qui deprehendere, trahuntur. 457-63*

IV. SIMILES USED TO DESCRIBE ANTIGONE (AND ISMENE)

The similes which help to characterise Antigone and her sister in the poem are: A) 8.616-20; B) 11.644-7; C) 12.356-8; D) 12.413-5

Only one of these similes (C) refers to Antigone alone (balancing B and C of Argia's similes): the first has her in conjunction with her sister Ismene (balancing the simile of Argia and Deipyle at 12.236-43), in the last she features together with Argia. This indicates that Antigone is not such a prominent figure in Statius' scheme of events. On the other hand, the second simile (B) which concerns Ismene alone, is inserted to show that she is a more independent character than Argia's sister, Deipyle, for whom there is no separate simile.

A) Antigone and Ismene, the Theban counterparts of Adrastus' daughters appear together in Book 8, in the scene of Atys' death (554ff). This

episode is itself the structural counterpart of the marriage scene in Book 2, since these maidens are portrayed as balancing Argia and Deipyle in maidenly virtue. (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:291) But, because the daughters of Oedipus are ever the unluckier pair, this is the closest they will come to a marriage scene at Thebes (see above Part II).

As they grieve for sorrows past and present, the girls are compared to nightingales returning to their nests with a tale of woe after the harsh winter (8.616-20):

sic Pandioniae repetunt ubi fida volucres
hospitia atque larem bruma pulsante relictum
stantque super nidos veterisque exordia fati
adnarrant tectis, it truncum ac flebile murmur;
verba putant, voxque illa tamen non dissona verbis.

The nightingales are referred to as Pandioniae volucres (616), a reminder of the mythological origin of these birds. Philomela, daughter of king Pandion of Athens, was changed into a nightingale. She mourns for her son, Itys, whom she killed to avenge the cruelty of Tereus, king of Thrace, to her sister Procne. He had raped Philomela and cut out her tongue. The nightingale is thus a figure of suffering, sadness and sacrifice. Antigone and Ismene are to endure comparable hardships during the course of the war. In the episode to follow, Ismene will see her husband-to-be die before her eyes (636ff) ⁵⁰, and will be accorded the first and only privilege she would have enjoyed as his wife - the sad office of closing his eyes (652-3).

The actual point of comparison which Statius skilfully draws between Oedipus' daughters and the nightingales, is the sound which both make: the varias ...querellas (609) of Argia and Deipyle are likened to the

truncum ac flebile murmur (619) of the birds, who return to their nests after winter and retell their woeful story (veterisque exordia fati 618). The wordless plaint, though not intelligible, is as expressive as words can be: verba putant, voxque illa tamen non dissona verbis (620).

Statius' most likely model for touching bird similes is Virgil.

Descriptions or comparisons involving birds are often drawn in a sympathetic or humanizing fashion in Virgil's Georgics. At Geo 4.511-⁵¹5, Orpheus grieving for Eurydice is likened to a mother nightingale mourning the loss of her nestlings.⁵² In the Aeneid, the bird similes tend to be rather more conventional, using as comparisons the sound or speed of birds.⁵³ There are, however, a couple of poignant exceptions: at Aen 2.515-7, the vulnerability, passivity and mutual affection of Trojan Hecuba and her daughters taking refuge at the altar are compared to that of doves swooping down in a dark storm⁵⁴; at 12.473-8 the pathetic and strangely ominous behaviour of Juturna, trying in vain to save her brother's life, is compared to that of a black mother swallow⁵⁵ scrounging scraps for her starving babies.

We see therefore that, while this kind of bird simile is Virgilian in tone and intent (pathos, tragic prefiguration), the thematic setting and the details thereof appear to be original.

In Book 12, the Argive matrons complain at Athens of Creon's injustice and the similar suffering of their Theban sisters in book 2 is sharply recalled by a nightingale simile (12.478-80).⁵⁶ However, the favourable outcome of their mission⁵⁷ draws a sharp contrast between their fate and that of the Theban women, for whose grief there is no mercy (Vessey

1973:309).

B) By Book 11, the misery of the Theban sisters, Antigone and Ismene intensifies, and the simile at this point is correspondingly more poignant: Ismene, keening over the body of Jocasta, is compared to Erigone grieving inconsolably over the body of her father, Icarius (11.644-7):

qualis Marathonide silva
flebilis Erigone caesi prope funera patris
questibus absumptis tristem iam solvere nodum
coeperat et fortes ramos moritura ligabat.

According to legend, Icarius had been killed by his Attic countrymen after they had become intoxicated on the wine he had given them (which had been a gift to him by Dionysus). When Erigone and the faithful dog Maera found his body, his daughter hanged herself out of grief.

The point of correspondence between the two sorrowing daughters is their weeping: Ismene plangens (644) is compared to Erigone flebilis (645). Though Jocasta's daughter does not carry her grief to the same conclusion as Icarius', the details of the latter's fate are added by the poet, no doubt to reinforce the sense of Ismene's loss: by alluding to Erigone's suicide (646-7) the poet attempts to convey to us the extreme nature of Ismene's present anguish. Likewise at Silv 5.3 Statius' compares his own grief and bitterness at his father's untimely death to the mourning of Erigone for Icarius (and Andromache for Astyanax): nec enim Marathonica virgo / parcius extinctum saevorum crimine agrestum / fleverit Icarium,.... / laqueo quin illa supremo / inclusit gemitus (5.3.74-8).

Like the other Silver Latin epic poets, Statius exhibits an Ovidian

fondness for the mythological simile. It is interesting to compare this simile to the one at 9.401-3, where the nymph Ismenis mourning for her son Crenaeus, is likened to Leucothea grieving for her drowned infant, Palaemon.⁵⁹ There are certain similarities of word and action: Ismene, falling tearfully on the bleeding bosom of her mother (*illius exili stridentem in pectore plagam / Ismene conlapsa super lacrimisque comisque / siccabat plangens* 11.642-4) recalls the nymph Ismenis staining her own bosom with the blood of her son (*his miscet planctus multumque indigna cruentat / pectora* 9.399-400).

The great number of correspondences, both between comparands and comparees of each simile, and between the similes themselves is plain to see: the grief of a daughter of Thebes mourning the suicide of her mother is compared to that of a suicidal daughter whose father has been murdered; the sorrow of an Argive mother mourning the murder of her son is compared to that of a Theban mother mourning the accidental drowning of her son. The women of both sides suffer greatly as a result of the loss of their male kin. Their tragedies are no less compelling than the other great tragedies of legend: in fact, the circumstances of any of these stories are almost interchangeable - it is the great, all-encompassing grief that characterises them all and leaves the lasting impression.

C) Antigone is no less terrifying than Argia in her determination: she bursts out of the city walls like a young lioness hunting for the first time without her mother (12.356-8):

*fremitu quo territat agros
virginis ira leae, rabies cui libera tandem
et primus sine matre furor.*

The comparison of Antigone's heroic courage to the awakened rage of a young lioness is not as inappropriate as it initially appears: as Kytzler (1962:152) points out, the choice of simile matches the ghoulish setting and, furthermore, illustrates the poet's point that Antigone's heroism, like that of Argia and Jocasta, is no less robust than the masculine variety. Like Jocasta, Antigone must fight mad rage with its mirror image: the words of this simile (*fremitu ...territat ...ira ...rabies ...furor*) leave us in no doubt as to Antigone's sincerity in that respect.⁶¹

According to his theory of simile groups in the *Thebaid*, Kytzler identifies a *Grundvorstellung*, a unified common theme with the beast-of-prey similes (as with the cow similes) but is at pains to point out how the individual similes are differentiated. This Antigone simile may be grouped with 8.572 (*Atys*) and 9.738 (*Parthenopaeus*), all three being comparisons to the *primus furor* of young beasts of prey: *Atys* is likened to a young Caspian lion who steals a lamb while the shepherd is away, *Parthenopaeus* to a Gaetulian lion cub who has outgrown his mother's feeding of him and breaks out to freedom on the open plain.⁶² Though the Antigone simile is rather like this latter⁶³, the circumstances of their occurrence are very different: *Parthenopaeus*, reckless and stubborn, has gone to war, without his mother's approval, whilst Antigone, her mother dead, is assuming full responsibility for their mission of *pietas*.

This Antigone simile is also connected with another group of beast-of-prey similes, that describing motherly care for defenceless young. In this group, we have the following poignant pictures: *Atalanta*, as she

5):

sic Hyperionium tepido Phaethonta sorores
fumantem lavere Pado; vixdum ille sepulcro
conditus, et flentes stabant ad flumina silvae.

This is the completion of the simile developed in Book 6 (321-5), where, during Opheltes' funeral games, Adrastus warning Polynices of the temperament of the loaned horse, Arion, is compared to Apollo admonishing Phaëthon when the chariot of the sun was entrusted to him: Polynices' blind pursuit of glory has led to the same grievous end as that of the legendary semideus (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:213).

This simile was probably influenced by Ovid's rendition of the Phaëthon story in Met 2: the phrase Hyperionium.../ fumantem (Theb 12. 413-4) recalls Ovid's description of his burial: excipit Eridanus fumantiaque abluit ora. / Naides Hesperiae trifida fumantia flamma / corpora dant tumulo (Met 2.324-5). Statius also betrays his debt to Ovid by adding a somewhat unnecessary⁶⁸ mention of the metamorphosis of Phaëthon's sisters into poplars (414-5), a detail of the story dwelt upon at some length by Ovid (2.340-366) since it is his ostensible reason for including the Phaëthon episode, a myth which he obviously relished but which is not in itself a tale of metamorphosis.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

I. INTRODUCTION: PRE-STATIAN ANTIGONE

1. For a recently completed edition of this play, see Hutchinson, G O (ed.) 1985. Aeschylus: Septem Contra Thebas edited with Introduction and Commentary. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

2. It has been suggested that her departure with Oedipus must be an interpolation, if she is simultaneously to remain behind for the burial of Polynices (Kitto 1966:359).

3. At the unfinished end of the play, Eteocles states his desire for

supremacy at any cost: imperia pretio quolibet constant bene (Phoen 664).

4. Antigone's presence in Thebes supports the notion that these fragments may belong to a totally distinct play.

5. Eur Phoen 88-201.

6. perge, o parens, perge Sen Phoen 403; ἔπειγ' ἔπειγε, οὐχ ἄταρ Eur Phoen 1280.

II. ANTIGONE IN BOOKS 7 AND 8

7. See, for example, Virgil's poignant treatment of the death of Arcadian Pallas at the hands of Turnus (Aen 10.482ff).

8. Lines 243-5 recall the description of Argia watching her husband depart for the war with the troops: ...tamen et de turre suprema / attonitam totoque exstantem corpore longe / respicit Argian (4.89-91).

9. See above Part I.

10. The name Phorbias probably derives from Sen Oed 838-50.

11. See Chapter 4 (JOCASTA) for details.

12. Statius' familiarity with the Senecan drama doubtless influenced changes which he made, but Vessey (Statius and the Thebaid:274) does not agree with Helm (1892:53ff) that Statius' divergences from Euripides at other points are due to the influence of now lost portions of the Senecan tragedy.

13. See Chapter 4 (JOCASTA) Part III for details.

14. In a different account of the Coriolanus legend, Valeria, sister of the late consul Valerius Publicola heads the delegation of women to Coriolanus' wife and mother: Plutarch (Coriolanus 33) tells that Valeria enjoyed great respect and honour at Rome after her brother's death (Hallett 1984:47-8).

15. See below Part III and Chapter 4 (JOCASTA) Part IV.

16. Vessey (1986:2993) says: "Death is repetitious and only its circumstances, vivified by Wit, can arouse pity and fear. In the 'Thebaid' it is assuredly no humdrum business but elegantly varied both for major and minor figures."

17. The poet adds a subtle touch of credible human pride here: Atys' mother dressed him magnificently, ne coniuge vilior iret (567).

18. See Appendix B (3.1) for a possible emendation in lines 614-5.

19. The suppliant women at 12.478-80 are also likened to nightingales. See below Part IV for discussion of this simile. See Hallett (1984:180-

89) for an examination of the strong bonds between Roman sisters. Literary sources idealise the mutual devotion of sorores, e.g. Virgil and Ovid's portrayal of the close relationship between Dido and Anna: Aen 4.9-53, 416-40, 478-503, 675-87; Ovid Her 7.191-2; Fasti 3.559-66, 571, 597-9, 623-4, 629-40. See also the Laudatio Turiae inscription, which describes the pietas of two sisters towards their dead parents, and towards each other.

20. Vessey (1986:2994-5) suggests that the words pax alta (625) could also mean "deep sleep": Ismene says that she could not think of marriage even if she enjoyed undisturbed slumbers.

21. Vessey (1986:2996) points out the similarity between the sound of the word Atyn (633) and Ityn, the dead son lamented by the nightingale Philomela. The simile at 616-20 strengthens this suggestion.

22. See Appendix B (3.2) for a discussion of possible emendation in these lines.

23. Overall, the description of the dying Atys (637-40) recalls that of Euryalus in Aen 9.431-5. See Vessey (1986:2997-8) for a precise analysis of Statius' reworking of the Virgilian material here.

24. This is, as Vessey has rightly noted (1986:2999), pudor as a "tyrannical and controlling passion."

25. "Wieder tauchen...die Eltern als Randfiguren auf; hier Jocaste in der Funktion einer sittenstrengen Dueña." (Schetter 1960:51-2)

26. Tydeus meets Haemon in battle, 8.480ff, but he is spared.

III. ANTIGONE IN BOOKS 11 AND 12

27. This recalls her effect on him at the time of his departure:

iam regnum matrisque sinus fidisque sorores
spe votisque tenet, tamen et de turre suprema
attonitam totoque exstantem corpore longe
respicit Argian; haec mentem oculosque reducit
coniugis et dulces avertit pectore Thebas. 4.88-92

See further Chapter 2 (ARGIA) Part III.

28. See Chapter 4 (JOCASTA) for details of her second mediation attempt.

29. Jocasta beseeches Eteocles to yield to the voice of reason, which he has more benefit of than his brother:

non mater enim, non obstat eunti
ulla soror; te cuncta rogant, hic plangimus omnes.
ast ibi vix unas pugnas dissuadet Adrastus,
aut fortasse iubet... 11.349-51

30. Thus in Book 12 does Argia leave the band of Argive matrons, in order

to search for her husband's corpse: *sexuque immane relicto / tractat opus* (12.178-9). See Chapter 2 (ARGIA) Part IV for details.

31. For Jocasta's furor and strength during her mediation attempts at 7.474ff and 11.315ff, see Chapter 4 (JOCASTA) Parts III and IV.

32. For the close relationship between Roman brothers and sisters, see Hallett 1984:152-180. She gives instances (170ff) from Roman history of support given *inter se* between brother and sister, while demonstrating how legends of early Rome depict also the strong emotional bond between brother and sister p177.

33. As at 7.474ff. See above Part I and Chapter 4 (JOCASTA) Part III for details.

34. See above Part I.

35. Oedipus' faltering gait (597-8) contrasts sharply with the superhuman strength displayed by his wife Jocasta in her despair and grief (321-3). See Chapter 4 (JOCASTA) Part IV for details.

36. "Even Antigone, portrayed elsewhere as a model of filial piety, finds it impossible to sympathise with her father in his tardy repentance, for she knows that his misery is not undeserved" (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:281).

37. Helm (1892:50-1) believes that any similarity between Statius and Euripides in this scene is due to Statius' employment of Seneca; if he were following the Greek version, the correspondences would have been greater.

38. Oedipus, unlike his wife (see n35 above) could not draw strength from grief (597-8) but is able to be inspired by anger: *...seniumque recessit. / tunc natam baculumque manu dimisit, et irae / innixus tumido vocem de pectore rumpit* (674-6).

39. This uncompromising attitude to blood-ties brings about her death in Sophocles' *Antigone* (905-12) and in Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* (337ff), while her public devotion to her father prompts him to compare his supportive daughters and homely sons to exotic Egyptians, who reverse the role of the sexes (Hallett 1984:72).

40. See further below Part III. Hallett (1984:62-149) insists upon the Roman father's high valuation of his daughter, and argues (133ff) that a Roman daughter owed to her father a standard of deference and unquestioning support far higher than that her brother could expect from her. *Antigone*, on the other hand, seems to evince more sympathy and support for her brother's cause.

41. For beginning of this book, see Chapter 2 (ARGIA) Part IV.

42. Representations of *Antigone* in Roman art support the view that her final act of bravery was the one which epitomised her. Look, for example, at symbolic iconography: *Antigone* is grouped together with other scenes of particularly tragic force (like *Polyxena* and *Marsyas*)

in the underground crypt outside the Porta Maggiore in Rome. The mystery cult connected with this basilica promised eternal salvation to its adherents, and employed these mythical symbols to illustrate "the victory of the transcendental life over the temporal death of the body" (Hinks 1939:129).

43. For this reminiscence, see Spiro, F 1884. *De Euripides Phoenissis* Berlin, 30-1.

44. Antigone was termed *miseranda* also at 11.598, as she leads Oedipus through the carnage of the battlefield, in search of the bodies of the brothers. Now, alone, she seeks again the body of Polynices, this time with a view to burial.

45. See further on this simile below Part IV C).

46. This is a continuation of that characterisation of her *aristeia* that was begun at 11.354ff: see above Part III.

47. See Appendix B (3.3) for discussion of the possible interpretations of this line.

48. See below Part IV D) for a discussion of this simile.

49. For details of the scene in which Theseus saves Antigone and Argia from Creon (12.677ff), see Chapter 2 (ARGIA) Part IV.

IV. SIMILES USED TO DESCRIBE ANTIGONE (AND ISMENE)

50. The previous night Ismene had a prophetic dream, in which Atys' mother seemed to be demanding Atyn (633): the similarity of this word to Ityn (Philomela's dead son) recalls this nightingale simile at 616-20 - cf. n21 above.

51. See, for example, the crows at *Geo* 1.410-14.

52. This simile recalls *Od* 16.216-8 (Briggs 1980:58-9).

53. See, for example, *Aen* 10.262-66; 11.447-458; 7.699-705; 4.252-5.

54. This pathetic quality is recalled at 5.485-518, the description of the dove tied to a tether in the archery contest.

55. Statius has mother bird similes at 5.599-604 (where Hypsipyle discovering the body of Opheltes is compared to a mother bird whose nest has been ravaged by a snake); also 10.458-62 and 12.15-21. See Chapter 5 (HYPSIPYLE) Part IV for discussion of the simile at 5.599-604.

56. *Geticae non plura queruntur*
hospitibus tectis trunco sermone volucres
cum duplices thalamos et iniquum Terea clamant.

57. With yet another bird simile, Statius expresses the relief and joy

which the Argive women experience at their journey's end: calmed by their arrival at the altar of Clementia, they are likened to cranes thankfully migrating for winter (12.515-8):

ceu patrio super alta grues Aquilone fugatae
cum videre Pharon; tunc aethera latius implent,
tunc hilari clangore sonant; iuvat orbe sereno
contempsisse nives et frigora solvere Nilo.

This simile has precedents in Homer Iliad 3.3ff, Virgil Aen 10.264ff and Lucan BC 5.711ff, and here it corresponds in word and tone to 5.11-16, where the Argive warriors, relieved from thirst due to Hypsipyle's aid, are also likened to cranes. The salvation of the Argives in Book 5 foreshadows the help given to their wives in 12. (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:311n2) See further von Moisy (1971:72-4).

58. See further Sturt (1982:839). Examples of other ingenious mythological similes in Statius include: Theb 6.320ff, 893ff; 7.638ff; 8.255ff; 10.76ff, 646-9; 12.413ff; Ach 1.165ff; 484ff. Legras (1905:296-7) gives a total of 49 mythological similes for the Thebaid; Sturt (N J H 1977. Tradition and Innovation in the Silver Latin Epic Simile: A Thematic Study London, diss., 14ff) counts 55 for the Thebaid and 10 for the Achilleid. In fact, twenty-eight percent of the similes in the Thebaid are founded on myth, as compared with ten percent in Virgil's Aeneid (Sturt ibid 280).

59. qualiter Isthmiaco nondum Nereida portu
Leucothean planxisse ferunt, dum pectore anhelu
frigidus in matrem saevum mare respuit infans.

Crenaeus' death is thus prefigured by the implications of an earlier simile (9.328-31) where the young man crossing the river to go to war is compared to Palaemon, racing on his dolphin to his mother's embrace. It is also interesting to note that Ino and Palaemon figure briefly within the actual narrative of the poem: at 1.121-2, Ino hugs her son to her in fear when Tisiphone's sign is heard.

60. See Chapter 2 (ARGIA) Part IV for details.

61. For details of Jocasta's furor, see Chapter 4 (JOCASTA) Parts III and IV.

62. There is a young lion simile at Ach 1.858-63: Achilles, as he defies his mother's instructions and reveals himself to the Greek warriors at the sight of their gifts of weaponry, is likened to a cub who has been taken away from his mother and tamed, but who, when once a sword is shown to him, reverts to his former ferocity and turns on his tamer. See further Appendix A.

63. The freedom aspect, particularly, is shared (liber 9.743 ;libera 12.357)

64. ...raptis velut aspera natis / praedatoris equi sequitur vestigia
tigris (4.315-6)

65. sic aspera tigris
 fetibus abreptis Scythico deserta sub antro
 accubat et tepidi lambit vestigia saxi;
 nusquam irae, sedit rabidi feritasque famesque
 oris, eunt praeter secura armenta gregesque:
 aspicit illa iacens; ubi enim, quibus ubera pascat
 aut quos ingenti premat exspectata rapina? 10.820-6

On this simile, see further Mozley (1933:35); Williams (1972:125); Vessey (Statius and the Thebaid:124).

66. ...non aliter Scythicos armenta per agros / Hyrcanae clausere leae,
 quas exigit ortu / prima fames, avidique implorant ubera nati (5.203-
 5). See further Chapter 5 (HYPSPYLYE) Part IV.

67. Other similes of lions and tigers in the Thebaid: 2.675; 10.529;
 8.124; 8.593; 10.288. Comparisons to tigresses: 3.693; 9.16.

68. It is unnecessary for the purposes of the simile, that is, since it provides no correspondence with the present situation of Argia and Antigone. Nevertheless, the elaboration of the simile contributes to the pathos of the scene, since it serves to accentuate the extreme grief these two women are suffering.

CHAPTER FOUR: JOCASTA IN STATIUS' THEBAID

magna cum maiestate malorum (Theb 7.478)

I. INTRODUCTION: MOTHERS IN THE SILVAE

II. PRE-STATIAN JOCASTA

III. EVENTS OF BOOK 7 AND BEFORE

IV. EVENTS OF BOOK 11

V. SIMILES USED TO DESCRIBE JOCASTA

I. INTRODUCTION: MOTHERS IN THE SILVAE

At the beginning of Chapter 2 (ARGIA), the question was raised of Statius' "real" attitude to wives, as evinced in the *Silvae*. Just as the observations made in Chapter 2 might have relevance for the portrayal of the characters of Argia and Deidamia, a brief look here at Statius' presentation of mothers in the *Silvae* might have a bearing on his treatment of Jocasta, tragic Theban parent in the *Thebaid*, and Thetis, ineffectual supernatural mother in the *Achilleid*.

At the outset, we might ponder on the perception of the maternal role in Statius' day. In accordance with her theory about the "filiafocality" of elite Roman society in the classical period¹, Hallett (1984:66-9) opposes the idea that it was really as mothers that Roman women made an impact on contemporary life: "...even after Roman women had come to occupy other, more `mature' familial roles, they continued to be symbolically and publicly defined as daughters." (Hallett *ibid*:67)

Suzanne Dixon, on the other hand, with her exhaustive book *The Roman Mother* (1988), places the emphasis squarely on the maternal aspect of a

Roman woman's life, and argues for "an authoritative image of motherhood akin to the Roman paternal stereotype":

"The emphasis on maternal forcefulness and its exercise by the widowed mother on her adult son is typical of the literary image of the Roman mother. It reflects the aristocratic ideal of the late Roman republic and the early Empire. The salient role of the women portrayed admiringly in Latin Literature was as disciplinarians, custodians of Roman culture and traditional morality....The ideal mother of Latin literature was a formidable figure." (Dixon 1988:Preface)

In the strict legal sense, it is true that Roman children belonged to their father alone: the father retained potestas over his legitimate children even after divorce, while children of widows or unmarried mothers were sui iuris and required a (male) tutor.² Nevertheless, there does not appear to have been much distinction made between the father's affection towards his child, and that of the mother.³ Motherhood had the official seal of approval in the early imperial period, encouraged by Augustus' legislation⁴ and embodied in the public image fostered of the women of the imperial house (Dixon⁵ 1988:97-8).

There appear to have been strong ties between Roman mothers and their children. Several ancient authors commented on the influence of mother over son, e.g. Seneca (Ad Helviam Matrem De Consolatione 14.2-3ff) who contrasts his own mother favourably with those mothers who sought to satisfy their own ambitions through the offices and financial resources of their sons. Tacitus (Dial 28.6-7) admires several famous mothers for their maternal virtues of disciplina ac severitas.⁶

Legends of early Rome also attest the strength of the bond between mother and son, e.g. the tale of Coriolanus and Volumnia, set in mid fifth century BC. This is the story of a Roman son who regarded his

mother so highly that he abandoned a treacherous march on Rome at the head of an enemy force when she demanded that he withdraw.⁷ It is thus also the story of a mother whose strength and firm moral purpose caused her to become a national saviour (Dixon 1988:188).⁸

Other more prosaic kinds of testimony to the regard of aristocratic men for their mothers, are the several *laudationes funebres* we hear of, e.g. that delivered by Q.Lutatius Catulus in 102 BC to honour his mother Popilia (Cic De Oratore 2.11.44). Inscriptions bear witness also: e.g. early empire, *laudatio* of the noble matron Murdia, dedicated by a son of her first marriage: he praises her qualities of *modestia*, *probitas*, *pudicitia*, *obsequium*, *lanificium*, *diligentia*, *fides*, *sapientia*, and also the fact that she treated all her sons equally in her will.⁹ (Hallett 1984:43) Epitaphs are our main source for information for the status and role of the lower-class mother: unfortunately, these drew heavily on stock formulae¹⁰, such as *matri piae* or *matri optimae* (Dixon 1988:199-202).¹¹

There is also evidence for strong emotional ties between mothers and their daughters. History relates that daughters often regarded their mothers as models for their own conduct: Tacitus *Annals* 16.34.2 tells of how the younger Arria was eager to follow her mother's example and commit suicide with her husband, as her mother had before her. The mother performed a vital role in training her daughter to occupy her place in society, providing her with a husband, and contributing to her dowry.¹² Reciprocally, the daughter owed her mother respectful visits and obedience.¹³

How do we explain the strong position of the mother in a society where

there were powerful legal and moral restrictions on a woman's capacity to act? Hallett (1984:243-57) admits that the greatest number of examples of female dominance in Latin literature are those of mothers over their adult sons, and attempts to explain the phenomenon of mother-son intimacy by reference to factors such as: the son being the mother's protector as sole surviving kin (after her husband and father and brothers have died), the probable closeness in age between mother and son (which might often have resulted in sexual attraction between them), and the relatively late marriage age for boys (which would have kept the son at home longer than the daughter). Dixon (1988:Preface) attributes the strong extra-legal position of the mother to the prevalence of widowhood at Rome, and the woman's ability (in spite of formal limitations on her ability to own and transmit property) to dispose of considerable wealth by bestowal of dowry or by testament. Mothers could arrange marriages and divorces for their children¹⁴, support a son's political candidacy¹⁵, and children could cite descent from both parents in attracting marriage partners or political support.¹⁶

Statius does not make much mention of motherhood or mothers in his *Silvae*¹⁷ but where he does, the impression that we receive is entirely consonant with the tradition as delineated above. Though Statius and his wife Claudia were childless, Claudia had a daughter from her first marriage, and in *Silv* 3.5 her devotion to her daughter is eulogised by the poet. Her maternal *pietas* and *amor*, says Statius, is no less than her conjugal attachment (54-5); her daughter is never absent from her heart or her mind both day and night (55-6); and he compares her, in her devotion to her daughter, to the mythological Alcyone and Philomela

(57-9). He attributes Claudia's reluctance to join him in retirement in Naples, to this maternal devotion, since she worries over the unwed state of her daughter (60-1).¹⁸

Elsewhere in the *Silvae*, Statius provides examples of the great emotional attachment between mothers and their sons, portrays the lamentation of mothers for their dead sons as almost proverbial¹⁹, emphasises the honour of having an aristocratic mother²⁰, and describes the great happiness attendant upon the birth of a child.²¹

In sum, the picture of the dutiful, devoted mother in the *Silvae* fits that which we receive from other literature of the period, legends, inscriptions etc. But what of the maternal characters of his epic poetry: do Jocasta and Thetis conform to the model of the ideal Roman mother? This is no easy question to answer: as characters in epic poems on Greek themes, a legendary mother (from a Greek myth of unnatural incest and fratricide) and a divine mother (from a tale of comic deception), neither is meant to resemble a human Roman mother in characteristics or circumstances. Nevertheless, comparisons may be drawn: Jocasta does appear as the demanding, suppliant *anxia mater* of early Roman myth-history²², the epitome of maternal *pietas*, awesome in her command of respect from her sons and absolute in her grief at losing them²³, supported by her daughters in all her endeavours.²⁴

As regards Thetis, what of the portrayal of supernatural women in the *Silvae*? The supernatural women of the *Silvae* appear idealised and unreal, their characterisation containing little or none of the anthropomorphic or Romanizing elements which Silver Latin poets seemed fond of in such portrayals.²⁵ One exception in the *Silvae*, an example

of the Romanisation of Greek mythological figures, is the depiction of the mother-figure Venus in *Silv* 1.2 (the epithalamium for Stella and Violentilla): Venus, the mother of Aeneas (*genetrix Aeneia* 1.2.11) herself leads forth the bride, prepares the marriage couch and the sacred rites and hides her divinity behind a Latin girdle (*cinctuque Latino / dissimulata deam* 13-14).²⁶ Thereupon there is a whimsical portrayal of Venus reclining on her cushions, languid after love-making, surrounded by a troop of "tender loves" who ask her command: she is kindly (*alma* 51), has starry limbs (*sidereos artus* 141) and is borne rejoicing through the clouds in her jewelled car (143). At lines 106-39, it is described how she took the beautiful child Violentilla to her bosom at birth and beautified her, so that she might grow up in Venus' own image. Likewise, Calliope is said to have taken the infant Lucan to her bosom (*Silv* 2.7.36-8). This is the real human (Roman) practice of the woman taking a beloved baby into her lap as a sign of acceptance or affection: at *Silv* 4.8.13-4 Polla, the wife of Pollius Felix, raises her husband's grandchildren into her lap. Though the lifting of an infant (by the putative father) most commonly signified acceptance of paternity, there are persistent (and perhaps metaphorical) references to children being reared in *gremio matris* / *in sinu matris* (Dixon 1988:130). Venus takes a similarly maternal interest in the welfare of the beautiful boy, the emperor's favourite Flavius Earinus (3.4). Venus, on first catching sight of him, indeed thinks that it is one of her own sons (3.4.28-9) and, when she realises the truth, resolves to save him from a mean fate by presenting him as a gift to the emperor. She bears him away in her chariot (45ff), frets over how she shall clothe him (50-6), worries while he is castrated

(71-2), and lavishly anoints his shorn tresses (91-2).

Does this picture of Venus genetrix have any bearing on the portrayal of divine motherhood in Statius' epic poetry? On a certain superficial level yes: Thetis, at Ach 1.27-8, is similarly portrayed as a Greek goddess in a marriage-chamber, surrounded by her band of followers. At Ach 1.322, we have the anthropomorphic picture of the goddess fondling the baby in her embrace; at Ach 1.893 she is described as *alma Thetis*. Although there are these few correspondences between the treatment of Venus in *Silv* 1.2 and that of Thetis in the *Achilleid*, the qualities of a real Roman mother as described in the *Silvae* are far more evident as we shall see in Chapter 6 (THETIS): for example, devotion to offspring (cf. *Silv* 3.5.54ff), and strong-willed determination to oppose fate (Ach 1.95ff cf. *Silv* 3.5.42). Thetis is characterised more as a human *anxia mater*, beset by fears for the safety of her young son than the potent goddess she superficially evokes (Venus) or the personality she assumes in pre-Statian literature (see Chapter 6 Part I).

II. PRE-STATIAN JOCASTA

Today, mainly due to the influence of Freudian psychoanalysis on Western thought, the myth of the doomed family of Oedipus occupies the same semantic position as it did for the ancients, as a universally accepted symbol of inescapable destiny since time immemorial.

Everyone knows that Oedipus killed his father, married his mother and cursed his sons. And, indeed, that most cursory overview of the tale is all that serves to unite the numerous variations that we find in the early poetic sources. The now traditional identity and role of Oedipus' wife-mother (Jocasta, who committed suicide after unsuccessfully

attempting to reconcile her feuding sons) emerged relatively late, as part of the definitive version of the story which, after being championed by Euripides and popularized by the Roman poets, finally prevailed over the rest.²⁷

In Homer (Od 11.271ff), we first hear tell of the mother of Oedipus and her blameless suffering: during his journey in the Underworld, Odysseus meets the shade of Epicaste, who had hanged herself upon learning of her innocent crime of incestuous (but presumably childless) marriage. Hesiod (Work and Days 163), on the other hand, mentions at least two sons, Phrastor and Laonytos, who were killed in a battle against the neighbouring Minyae, while the cyclic epic Oedipodia (according to Pausanias IX 5,11) contained the tradition that Oedipus sired four children, Eteocles, Polynices, Antigone and Ismene by Euryganeia,²⁸ daughter of Hyperphas. The treatment of the fifth century mythographer Pherecydes well illustrates the prevailing confusion over the issue of the mother's identity (3 F 95): he combines the two main traditions and has Oedipus married first to Jocaste and then to Euryganeia!

The poet Stesichorus, following the lead provided by the cyclic epics rather than that of Homer, expands the role of the mother (of unspecified name) by delaying the moment of her suicide to cast her as mediator between her sons: she intervenes at the very beginning of the conflict, and suggests (218ff) that one of them, chosen by lot, should emigrate. The fifth century tragedians Aeschylus (Seven Against Thebes) and Sophocles (Oedipus Tyrannus), preferring the Homeric version, provide a speedy exit for the disillusioned Jocasta, and, in the former

play, it is Eteocles, not Jocasta, who initiates an attempt at reconciliation with his brother, Polynices. Euripides developed Jocasta as a central character after the literary precedent created (perhaps) by Stesichorus: in his (lost) *Oedipus*, Jocasta stuck loyally to her husband, when the secret of his birth had been revealed and Creon had him blinded; in his *Phoenissae* (261ff), she again takes the initiative to reconcile her sons.²⁹ The latter play in turn served as model for the *Phoenissae* of the Roman tragedian, Seneca, a near-contemporary of Statius.

Jocasta's rich literary past must have presented our poet with an artistic dilemma: which aspect of the received tradition to modify, embellish, or alter in order to make a unique positive contribution to her character development? Her role in the *Thebaid* 7 and 11 indicates clearly the solutions which he arrived at, for, in the areas of tone and dramatic setting, there is no precise equivalent for Statius' Jocasta. However, Statius was substantially influenced in delineation of plot by Euripides' *Phoenissae* and Seneca's *Phoenissae*, while for characterisation of Jocasta he owed much to Livy's depiction of the Roman matron Veturia. It is therefore necessary to examine each of these influences individually. The influence of Virgil's *Aeneid* on the style and method of exposition was pervasive, as we shall observe during a close reading of the text of *Thebaid* 7 and 11 (below Parts III and IV).

Inspired by the recent *Antigone* of Sophocles, Euripides in his *Phoenissae* undertook to revive the Aeschylean *Seven Against Thebes*, but with extensive reworking in the areas of theme, character and plot: the utter selfishness of Eteocles, and its consequences for his family

became his central focus, and accordingly the playwright increased his cast (with enlarged parts for Oedipus and Jocasta) and portrayed the wronged Polynices in a considerably sympathetic light (even adding the theme of his burial at the end). Euripides' treatment of Jocasta was well-known to Roman poets: *ob regna...diris cecidere sub armis / Thebani media non sine matre duces* wrote Propertius (2.9.49-50) of the mediation-scene in the *Phoenissae*. Before we begin to assess the nature and extent of Euripidean influence on Statius, let us review the plot of the tragedy: in the prologue Jocasta relates the past history from Laius' consultation of the oracle and outlines her present tragic circumstances (80ff): Polynices, back from a year's voluntary exile, is at the city gates, demanding from the unwilling Eteocles his rightful term of rule, but she has managed to organise a truce, in order to attempt to reconcile her feuding sons. Following a long lyric dialogue between Antigone and the old paedagogus, Polynices enters cautiously and distrustfully (261ff), and declares that his mother has arranged a temporary cessation of hostilities. Then Jocasta herself arrives and, after a joyful lyrical ode addressed to Polynices (301-54), they engage in a dialogue about his exile and his reasons for leading an army against Thebes. At 446, Eteocles makes an aggressive entrance, and the chiastically arranged discussion commences: Jocasta invites Polynices to plead his case (452-68), Polynices, approved by the chorus, claims his share of the alternate rule (469-96), Eteocles, criticised by the chorus, describes his tyrannical ideal (499-525), and Jocasta replies to Eteocles and Polynices, respectively reproving ambition and civil strife (528-85). In the ensuing stichomythia (or final quarrel 594-637), Eteocles chases his brother out of the city. Jocasta's attempt at

mediation thus fails and war becomes inevitable.

As mentioned before, Euripides imitated the lyric poet Stesichorus in making Jocasta's role central to the action of the plot. We notice, however, two important innovations in the tragedy: firstly, whereas the poet placed the reconciliation scene at the first outbreak of hostilities between the brothers, the tragedian has shifted the dramatic moment to a later stage, when Polynices has already arrived with the Argive army, but before any fighting occurs. Secondly, with the scope of the conflict widened from a rural-aristocratic domestic problem of inheritance in Stesichorus to an urban-democratic political issue involving the entire community in Euripides, the content of Jocasta's speech and her attempted solution is accordingly altered (Slings, van Erp Taalman Kip and Bremer 1986:169ff).

As noted by Vessey (Statius and the Thebaid :279), Euripides consistently favours the character of Polynices: later in the play, it is Eteocles who proposes single combat (1223ff), Eteocles who deals Polynices a mortal blow, only to receive an equally fatal thrust, while he is over-confidently despoiling his brother (1416ff); Polynices' dying words are an affectionate and regretful address to his mother (1444ff). She is present at the duel, having hastened to the battlefield together with Antigone for a second attempt at mediation, but has arrived too late to intervene (1427ff). Upon seeing both her sons dead, she promptly stabs herself with one of their swords and dies in their arms (1459).³⁰ At the end of the play, with Jocasta gone, Antigone emerges as the heroine, banished together with Oedipus by the new tyrant Creon because she refuses to obey his orders to leave unburied the body of Polynices and to prepare for marriage with Haemon.

31

Seneca's *Phoenissae* is a short play (664 lines) consisting of two relatively independent parts, each dominated by the conciliatory actions of a strong female character: the first (to 362), set in the vicinity of Thebes, shows Antigone's efforts to prevent her father from seeking freedom in death; the second part, set in the Theban palace (to 427) and on the battlefield itself (443-664), dramatizes Jocasta's attempted mediation between her two sons, the latter scene providing the bridge between the Euripidean and Statian accounts of her actions. 32

After the scene opens (like the prologue in Euripides) with Jocasta's descriptive complaint, a messenger interrupts (394) to announce that the two armies stand ready for attack, and, supported by Antigone (who has been keeping a watch on proceedings), he implores her to intercede between her sons. A novel and ingenious scene-change is effected, as the messenger describes the hurried departure of Jocasta and her daughter to the battlefield (426-42). 33 The rest of the play is occupied with the mediation attempt, in which Jocasta plays an even greater role than in Euripides, her grief and maternal solicitude, first employed to effect by Stesichorus, achieving its fullest dramatic potential yet: the death wish of the Stesichorean mother (211-7) becomes a bold provocation on the part of the Senecan Jocasta, as she orders her sons to kill their mother before turning their swords against each other. 34 Addressing Polynices, she advises him to establish his kingdom elsewhere; it would be madness to destroy the city one would rule over 35, whereas his brother will find Theban rule sufficient punishment for his greed. The ensuing stichomythia (651-64) predictably results in the failure of Jocasta's mission: while

Polynices is inclined to allow himself to be persuaded by his mother's entreaties, Eteocles asserts the primacy of power over the claims of fatherland and family.³⁶

There is a clear line of development, in dramatic setting and scope, from Stesichorus through Euripides to Seneca: again, the moment of intervention is shifted forward, this time the brothers parley between Argive and Theban lines, as Jocasta obtains a cease-fire after the Argive army have laid siege to Thebes and the battle is already commencing (389-90). And in Seneca, first century Roman playwright and counsellor to Nero, the scope of the conflict appropriately assumes³⁷ "the vast dimensions of empire" (Slings et al 1986:171).

Seneca and Statius both made effective use of a well-known reconciliation scene of Roman history: Livy (2.40) describes how the Volscian Coriolanus, on the point of attacking Rome, was won over by the intercession of his mother, Veturia, accompanied by his wife, Volumnia, and their two small children.³⁸

Influences upon the Senecan mediation scene may immediately be noted: the intensity of emotions in both mother and son (Polynices), and the increased efficacy of the mother's appeal. Statius, as we shall see, taking the lead from Seneca, further exploits the possibilities of the Livian model in order to heighten the elements of dramatic suspense and ultimate tragedy he wishes to create in his poem, and which the plot and characterisation of Euripides' Theban play is unable to provide. Both Seneca and Statius grasped the potential of this famous historical scene, for helping to characterise Jocasta as a credible Roman matrona, whose similarity to Volumnia, that other famous anxia mater,

raises the expectation that she too will become a national saviour, and whose failure is rendered all the more tragic by contrast. ³⁹

III. EVENTS OF BOOK 7 AND BEFORE
A) BEFORE JOCASTA'S APPEARANCE

Like the other main female characters of the poem (Hypsipyle, Antigone, Argia), Statius' Jocasta is possessed of great nobility increased by suffering - perhaps more so than the others, for she alone dies before the end of the war, and receives no alleviation of her misery or consolation for her loss. Even before her appearance in Book 7, the very mention of her name is associated with the hereditary misfortune of her house, and her tragedy is foreshadowed in a number of significant ways.

At the beginning of the poem, Oedipus prays to the gods of the Underworld and to Tisiphone to grant him the curse on his sons. He begins by summarily describing his extraordinary life, from the miracle of his survival as a baby to the nightmarish recent events of his incestuous marriage and resulting blindness. Jocasta features in his tale as the "wretched mother":

si dulces furias et lamentabile matris
conubium gavisus ini noctemque nefandam
saepe tuli natosque tibi, scis ipsa, paravi,
mox avidus poenae digitis caedentibus ultro
incubui miseraque oculos pro matre reliqui 68-72

In book 1, their exiled son Polynices is reluctant to introduce himself to king Adrastus, well aware of the ill omen attached to the mere enunciation of his parentage. Finally, he identifies himself: est genetrix Iocasta mihi (1.681). He need say no more - so infamous is the tale of his kin. Shortly thereafter, in the hymn to Apollo, Adrastus

alludes to Niobe (Thebana mater) whose children were cruelly taken away from her (711): thus he unwittingly anticipates the fate of Jocasta, whose sons are to die in book 11.⁴¹

In book 2, during the account of Polynices' marriage to Adrastus' daughter, Argia, there is a lengthy ecphrasis on the necklace worn by the bride (269-305): Jocasta is listed among the hapless previous owners of dirum monile, which is symbolic of the inherited evil of the Theban dynasty: teque etiam, infelix, perhibent, Iocasta, decorum / possedisse nefas (2.294).⁴²

Book 3 provides a preview of the poet's depiction of maternal bereavement: Ide, mother of the twin sons killed by Tydeus (2.629ff), whose grief is awe-inspiring and horrific, rather than pathetic, is compared to a Thessalian sorceress as she searches the battlefield for their corpses (3.140ff).⁴³ In the same vein is the depiction of the frenzied Jocasta at 7.477.⁴⁴ The single pyre on which Ide places her children's corpses prefigures the funeral of Jocasta's sons in Book 12; her description of their fraternal love (3.165-8) reminds us of the sharp contrast between the two sets of brothers.⁴⁵

B) BOOK 7: APPEAL TO POLYNICES; THE BACCHIC TIGERS

Forty years after the appearance of Seneca's *Phoenissae*, our poet, approaching the well-known theme of Jocasta's mediation, chose to stamp his mark of originality on the tradition by omitting the actual parley between the brothers (thereby cleverly delaying the moment of their confrontation until the climax of the poem) and substituting Jocasta's separate appeals to each of her sons: first Polynices (7.474ff), then

Eteocles (11.315ff).

In the former case, he elaborated a scene which was not present in previous accounts, and merely alluded to by Euripides:⁴⁶ Jocasta's pre-war journey to Polynices' camp, accompanied by her two daughters, inviting her son to return home for a reconciliation with his brother. The influence of Euripides' mediation scene is minimal: Jocasta's attempt to act as mediatrix, her long and impassioned plea - all are unavoidable generic similarities between related incidents. There are more parallels of word and sense with the corresponding scene in Seneca's play, as we shall see. But the most obvious (literary and historical) model for the particular set of circumstances we find in Book 7, is the delegation of Veturia to her son, Coriolanus, described in Livy 2.40.⁴⁷ The correspondences of characterisation, tone and structure raise the hope in Statius' narrative, impossible in Euripides and Seneca, of an equally successful outcome to Jocasta's mission, and its ultimate failure (inevitable because of the curse of Oedipus) seems all the more tragic by contrast.⁴⁸

Besides the above-mentioned change of plot, Statius introduced considerable innovation with respect to the characterisation of Jocasta, transforming her from the relatively rational mediatrix of his predecessors, into "een uitzinnige, sarcastische furie" (Smolenaars 1986:273):

ecce truces oculos sordentibus obsita canis
exsanguis Iocasta genas et brachia planctu
nigra ferens ramumque oleae cum velleris atri
nexibus, Eumenidum velut antiquissima, portis
egreditur magna cum maiestate malorum.
hinc atque hinc natae, melior iam sexus, aniles
praecipitantem artus et plus quam possit euntem
sustentant. venit ante hostes, et pectore nudo

claustra adversa ferit tremulisque ululatus orat
admitti... 7.474-483

At the break of day⁴⁹, she emerges from the gates of Thebes, a figure more terrifying than pathetic⁵⁰, whose appearance and emotions owe more to Livy's Veturia⁵¹ and Virgil's Furies⁵² than to the Jocasta of Euripides⁵³ or Seneca⁵⁴.

The echoes of Virgil, in addition, make an important contribution to the meaning of the scene: Jocasta must assume the outward appearance (and attitude) of a Fury in order to be a worthy opponent for Tisiphone in the battle for the brothers' allegiance. Finally, when her fierce attempts are seen to be unsuccessful (with Polynices or Eteocles), she will visibly deflate into the pathetic old woman of the tragedies⁵⁵ - though by virtue of her forceful efforts more tragic than they.

Jocasta claims the right, as the guilty mother of the war (*impia belli / mater* 483-4) to be admitted to the camp (in his *aliquod ius exsecrabile castris / huic utero est* 484-5)⁵⁶. Her effect on the army is immediate: *trepidi visam expavere manipuli / auditamque magis* (485-6)⁵⁷. The expectations of a furious outburst, aroused by the associations with a Virgilian Fury, are not in vain: *clamorem horrendum luctu furiata resolvit* (489)⁵⁸. She demands to see her son: *Argolici proceres, ecquis monstraverit hostem, / quem peperit? quam inveniam, mihi dicite, natum / sub galea?* (490-2)⁵⁹.

Polynices (*Cadmeius heros* 492) gives a loving welcome to his frantic mother (*attonitae* 492)⁶⁰, but she repudiates his affection as a pretence⁶¹, deliberately construing each aspect of his behaviour in a

negative fashion: quid molles lacrimas venerandaque nomina fingis, /
 rex Argive, mihi? quid colla amplexibus ambis / invisamque teris
 ferrato pectore matrem? (497-9).⁶² She emphasises the fact that she can
 scarcely recognise in this powerful Argive leader her own poor exiled
 son (500-4). Then, speaking as his mother, she commands and entreats
 him by any filial devotion he may bear her to accompany her back to
 Thebes for an attempted reconciliation with his brother, which, if it
 fails, will leave Polynices in no doubt as to the legitimacy of his
 claim:

si verba tamen monitusque tuorum
 dignaris, dum castra silent suspensaue bellum
 horrescit pietas, genetrix iubeoque rogoque:
 i mecum patriosque deos arsuraque saltem
 tecta vide, fratremque - quid aufers lumina - fratrem
 adloquere et regnum iam me sub iudice posce:
 aut dabit, aut ferrum causa meliore resumes. 504-10

She anticipates the fact that Polynices may fear a trap (anne times, ne
 forte doli, et te conscia mater / decipiam? 511-2) and reassures him of
 her sincerity: not so far has parental loyalty fled (non sic miseros
 fas omne penates / effugit: vix Oedipode ducente timeres 512-3).
 Thereupon, softening her previously belligerent tone, she confesses her
 love for him, in spite of his sinful conception and his present
 madness: nupsi equidem peperique nefas, sed diligo tales, - / a dolor!
 - et vestros etiamnum excuso furores (514-5). Finally, she anticipates
 even his refusal to accede to her pleas and makes a powerful appeal to
 his sense of shame: calling him saeve⁶³ if he persists, she voluntarily
 offers herself and her daughters (and even her husband) as his
 captives (516-9).

Next, she turns to address the assembled Argive army, appealing to

their pudor (519), reminding them of their own families (520-2), and begging them to grant her request, finally uttering the conventional (Euripidean) wish not to live to see the war (526-7). Her words have a devastating effect on the men:

tumidas frangebant dicta cohortes
nutantesque virum galeas et sparsa videres
fletibus arma piis. 527-9

She has managed to recall pietas in them; they are as docile as lions who have caught their prey (529-533).⁶⁵ Polynices is clearly moved by her appeal, and is eager to accompany her (534-8), when Tydeus, iustae...memor...irae (538), breaks in. With heavy irony, he proceeds to demolish Jocasta's arguments, fighting rhetoric with rhetoric (539-59), unequivocal in his belief that war is the only solution to the brothers' disagreement. The reaction of the army is expressed in a simile, balancing the one describing the effect of Jocasta (529-33): the Argives change like the sea when it is snatched from the calm North wind by the tempest South (559-61). Love of strife, recently tempered by the grief-crazed mother, is rekindled in them by the stern warrior: arma iterum furiaeque placent (562).

But Tydeus' opposing viewpoint, however persuasive, was not enough reason (in Statius' opinion) for Polynices to repudiate his mother's appeal; there must be an element of superhuman compulsion: fera tempus Erinys / arripit et primae molitur semina pugnae (562-3).

It was an essential part of the story that Jocasta's plea, however forceful, could not succeed. In keeping with his thematic design, Statius does not place individual blame on a character (Polynices, Tydeus, or - later - Eteocles), but instead ascribes the failure of her

appeal to the workings of furor, personified as the intervention of the Fury, Tisiphone, who arranges that the Argives kill two tigers sacred to Bacchus (7.564-607).⁶⁶

The effect of Tisiphone on the tigers is akin to that of Tydeus on the Argive army: *has ubi vipereo tactas ter utramque flagello / Eumenis in furias animumque redire priorem / impulit, erumpunt non agnoscentibus agris* (579-81). Goaded to fury, the tigers kill Amphiaraus' charioteer, and when the Argives retaliate by attacking the beasts, the Thebans are incited to react.⁶⁷ Jocasta is forced to flee the scene (...*fugit exsertos Jocasta per hostes / iam non ausa preces* 609-10)⁶⁸, and the Argives are filled with renewed savagery (615-6). Thus open battle is provoked (625ff), the hatred of the brothers so intense that the proposed mediation never even gets a chance to take place.⁶⁹

Fighting is spirited on both sides⁷⁰, until the Argives are dismayed by the strange disappearance of Amphiaraus (who is swallowed up by a chasm in the earth). They have begun to retreat when night interrupts the fighting. The Thebans rejoice in victory and Oedipus, for the first time since his self-imposed incarceration, shows himself out of doors (8.240ff).

IV. EVENTS OF BOOK 11

A) JOCASTA'S APPEAL TO ETEOCLES; THE ROUT OF PIETAS

In book 10, bewailing the apparent injustice of her son's death,⁷¹ Menoeceus' mother compares herself unfavourably to Jocasta:

*potitur natis Iocasta ducesque
regnantesque videt: nos saeva piacula bello
demus, ut alterni - placet hoc, tibi, fulminis auctor? -
Oedipodionii mutent diademata fratres?* 798-801

This is a cruelly ironic statement, for during the course of the following book Jocasta loses both her sons and her own life. Eleven is indeed a grim book, dominated by furor, where good is banished by sin and crime. Even after the death of the brothers, there is no respite from evil (for Creon proves to be a second Eteocles). Only in book 12 (with the coming of Theseus) is there a return of light and hope to guilty Thebes.

In book 11 (315ff), Jocasta makes a second attempt to prevent fighting, this time by making an appeal to Eteocles as he leaves the Ogygian gate on his way to meet his brother in single combat. In appearance she is more terrifying than before (7.470ff), Agave-like, and possessed of a desperate strength beyond the limits of her sex or years:

at genetrix primam funestae sortis et amens
 expavit famam - nec tarde credidit - ibat
 scissa comam voltusque et pectore nuda cruento,
 nec sexus decorisve memor: Pentheia qualis
 mater ad insani scandebat culmina montis
 promissum saevo caput adlatura Lyaeo.
 nec comites, non ferre piae vestigia natae
 aequae valent: tantum miserae dolor ultimus addit
 robur, et exsanguis crudescunt luctibus anni. 315-23

The effect of the *ingens / mater* (326-7) on the army is correspondingly increased: *ipse metu famulumque expalluit omnis / coetus, et oblatam retro dedit armiger hastam* (327-8). She evinces no dignity now, no semblance of self-reproach, as she demands to know the origin of the brothers' madness: *quis furor? unde iterum regni integrata resurgit / Eumenis?* (329-30).⁷³ She asks the purpose of their senseless duel (330-3), and voices her envy for Oedipus' sightless condition: *o diri coniugis olim / felices tenebrae! datis, improba lumina, poenas. /*

haec spectanda dies? (333-5). She perceives that her words are having no effect upon the obdurate Eteocles (quo, saeve, minantia flectis / ora? quid alternus voltus pallorque ruborque / mutat, et obnixi⁷⁴ frangunt mala murmura dentes? 335-7). Her final recourse now is to threaten him with the prospect of a bad omen for his venture, and to dare him to kill her first:⁷⁵

...prius haec tamen arma necesse est
 experiare domi: stabo ipso in limine portae
 auspiciū infelix scelerumque immanis imago.
 haec tibi canities, haec sunt calcanda, nefande,
 ubera, perque uterum sonipes hic matris agendus. 337-42

He shoves her rudely out of the way (343), and her threatening pose crumbles: she assures him that, unlike Oedipus, she has not cursed him (344-5), and supplicates him (exaudi miseram 346) as his mother (genetrix te, saeve, precatur 346)⁷⁶, appealing to him to curb his guilty madness: adde moram sceleri et metire, quod audes (347). Her final appeal is by all the possible constraints of pietas: patriotism, religion, and filial devotion (tu limina avita deosque / linquis et a nostris in fratrem amplexibus exis? (352-3)).⁷⁷

Antigone, meanwhile, has gone to make appeal to Polynices from the Ogygian wall (354ff). She assures him that their mother is at that very moment making a similar appeal to Eteocles: illum gemitu iam supplici mater/frangit (375-6).⁷⁸ It seems still possible that piety may triumph over fury in the heart of Polynices (382-7) - when suddenly Tisiphone intervenes directly, herself thrusting Jocasta aside, shattering the gate and hurling Eteocles forth (387ff).

At lines 457ff, the poet has inserted a twin episode to that of the Bacchic tigers: again evil intervenes to prevent the triumph of good,

the protagonists represented here in the personified figures of Tisiphone and Pietas. The confrontation between them recalls that between Jocasta and Tisiphone in Book 7. In various aspects of her appearance, speech and behaviour, Pietas plays the sorrowful mother of before: she is *ceu soror infelix pignantum aut anxia mater* (461); utters tearful reproaches (*deflebat, saevumque Iovem Parcasque nocentes / vociferans* 462-3); is determined to try, albeit consciously in vain (*temptemus licet inrita coner* 471), and descends *maesta vestigia* (473) to the plain, with predictable results: *vix steterat campo, subita mansuescere pace / agmina sentirique nefas; tunc ora madescunt / pectoraque, et tacitus subrepsit fratribus horror* (474-6).

She exhorts the Thebans to rally and resist the Thebans, and achieves a small measure of success (*nonnihil impulerat dubios* 482). But *torva* Tisiphone has noticed her *fraudes* (deceitful in that she is well aware that a Theban victory is not fated to be), and speeds down from heaven to reproach her, calling her *numen iners pacique datum* (485) and *improba*. She (quite rightly) asks where Pietas was at all the previous significant incidents of Theban wrong-doing, her reproof culminating in: *dum lampade nostra / in thalamos Iocasta venit?* (491-2). Tisiphone's harsh reproofs have their desired effect and Pietas *pudivunda ora* (493-4) is compelled to flee the scene, like Jocasta in book 7 (7.609): *...deiectam in lumina pallam / diva trahit magnoque*
79
fugit questura Tonanti (496-7). Tisiphone's intervention appears to have had a similar effect on the armies as that of Tydeus in Book 7: *tunc vero accensae stimulis maioribus irae: / arma placent, versaequae volunt spectare cohortes* (497-8).

B) THE DUEL AND JOCASTA'S SUICIDE

The story of the combat in Book 11 has been interrupted by a series of attempts to prevent it: by the noble mother Jocasta, and sister Antigone, by the inherently pious Adrastus and finally by Pietas, personified Good. Now the combat rages more fiercely than before, and there is no longer any need for the intervention of the Furies (537).⁸⁰ In a reversal of the Euripidean sequence of events, Eteocles is the first to go down (542) and stabs his brother as he stoops to despoil him (557ff). The order of events here is not motivated⁸¹ by Statius' wish to reward Polynices for his hardships so much as designed to increase the element of suspense at this climactic moment (will Polynices perhaps prevail?), and also because of the poet's critical view of Polynices, sustained throughout the poem. Statius does not exhibit Euripides' enthusiasm for Polynices: the brothers share equal guilt in the outcome of affairs.⁸² Wholly characteristic, then, are Polynices' hateful dying words (568-71), which bear no resemblance to the conciliatory farewell he utters in Euripides' version.

Oedipus genitor comes out (580ff) to utter a lament over the dead bodies of his accursed sons⁸³, who are in death clasped together (625-6) not in love (like the twin sons of Ide) but in everlasting hatred. Overcome with great grief, he seeks his sons' swords, with which to stab himself, but is prevented by Antigone.⁸⁴

Now it is time for Jocasta's exit from the poem: Statius inserts a short suicide-scene, in which she utters no word, but silently takes her leave of the world.

Hyginus Fab 243.7 lists Jocasta among those unhappy mythological women

quae se ipsae interfecerunt : Iocasta Menoecei filia propter interitum
filiorum et nefas.⁸⁵ Statius has not followed the version of the
legend as adopted by Sophocles in Oedipus Rex, i.e. that Jocasta
committed suicide on discovering the incestuous nature of her marriage
to Oedipus. Although Statius' Oedipus has indeed blinded himself out of
remorse for his unwitting crime, his Jocasta lives on through the poem
in order to play out the important role of mediator: only on learning
of her sons' death does she commit suicide.

Statius' account of her suicide (634-47) is quite different to that of
Euripides: whereas in the Greek tragedy Jocasta stabs herself with
one of her sons' swords when she finds that she has arrived at the
battlefield too late to prevent their duel⁸⁶, in the poem the queen is
terrified by the sound of the duel commencing and uses Laius' sword to
stab herself in her chamber in the presence of her daughter Ismene
(olim autem inceptae clamore exterrita pugnae / regina extulerat notum
penetralibus ensem, / ensem sceptriferi spolium lacrimabile Lai 634-6).

The description of her suicidal act is a pathetic picture of frail old
age: Jocasta, who acquired superhuman strength in her bid to save her
sons, now appears as a weak, defeated old woman (637-41):

multaque cum superis et diro questa cubili
et nata furiis et primi coniugis umbris,
luctata est dextra, et prono vix pectore ferrum
intravit tandem: venas perrumpit aniles
volnus et infelix lustratur sanguine lectus.

Ismene, likened to the sorrowful Erigone, falls weeping on the bleeding
bosom of her dead mother (642-7).⁸⁷

V. SIMILES USED TO DESCRIBE JOCASTA

The similes used to describe Jocasta are at: A) 7.477 (where she is compared to a Fury); B) 7.529-33 (where her calming effect on the men is likened to that of satiated lions); C) 11.318-20 (where she is compared to Agave). In these three similes, the main elements of Jocasta's characterisation in the poem are highlighted: in B) the strength of her appeal to pietas is described, in A) and C) her employment of furor in order to achieve her goal.

A) Jocasta, as she goes to pacify Polynices, is described as Eumenidum velut antiquissima (7.477). Her immense dignity is brought out in this comparison. Also the fact that she must fight Furor with the appearance thereof.⁸⁸ Important details of her outward appearance are borrowed from Virgil's description of the Fury, Allecto (Aen 7.416).⁸⁹ To describe Jocasta's tremulous cries (482), Statius uses the words of Virgil relating the Bacchanalian frenzy of the mothers led by queen Amata (7.395).⁹⁰

The strange, terrifying aspect of Jocasta's characterisation here is foreshadowed in Book 3 by the analogous depiction of the Theban mother, Ide, whose twin sons were killed by Tydeus.⁹¹ To express the awesome rather than pathetic nature of her sorrow, Statius uses an unusual simile: the bereaved mother is like a Thessalian witch⁹² combing the battlefield for a corpse to use in her foul rites (3.140-6):

Thessalis haud aliter bello gavisia recenti,
cui gentile nefas hominem renovare canendo,

multifida attollens antiqua lumina cedro
nocte subit campos versatque in sanguine functum
vulgus et explorat manes, cui plurima busto
imperet ad superos: animarum maesta queruntur
concilia, et nigri pater indignatur Averni.

The only direct point of comparison is between the horrific appearance of each. Statius uses the same technique later, in the simile which compares Jocasta to "the most ancient of the Furies" (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:125-6)..

B) The effect which Jocasta has on the Argive host is that of lions
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calming down to devour their prey (7.529-33):

quales ubi tela virosque
pectoris impulsu rabidi stravere leones,
protinus ira minor, gaudentque in corpore capto
securam differre famem: sic flexa Pelasgum
corda labant, ferrique avidus mansueverat ardor.

This simile describes the lessening of martial fervour (impulsu rabidi 530, ira 531, ferrique avidus...ardor 533), and it is balanced by the simile describing the rebirth of furor, at the instigation of Tydeus (560-3): subito ceu turbine caeli / obvius adversum Boreae Notus abstulit aequor. / arma iterum furiaeque placent; fera tempus Erinys / arripit et primae molitur semina pugnae. Jocasta's motherly love changes beasts into men; Tydeus' ira enrages them like a storm (Vessey 1973:273). The comparison of a turbulent crowd to a rough sea is Homeric (Il 2.144). Virgil reversed the simile (Aen 1.148), comparing the sea to the turbulent crowd mollified by the pietas of a statesman. Statius has skilfully utilised his models here: he reverts to the Homeric order of comparison, but recalls - by contrast - the successful quality of Virgil's statesman: it is not pietas but ira that sways the assembled Argive host.

C) Jocasta, as she goes to supplicate Eteocles, is compared to Agave climbing the mountain to tear to pieces her son Pentheus king of Thebes (11.318-20):⁹⁴

Pentheia qualis
mater ad insani scandebat culmina montis,
promissum saevo caput adlatura Lyaeo.

She is now more frenzied than before. She has lost the dignity which she had in the first mediation attempt (non sexus decorisve memor 318): from the most ancient of the Eumenides (7.477), she has now become an Agave (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:273). Her grief, anger and despair lend her an inhuman strength (11.321-3)⁹⁵, wherewith she would "murder" Eteocles rather than allow him to kill his brother.⁹⁶

This simile is a reworking of Sen Phoen 363-5, in which Jocasta compares her tragedy unfavourably with that of Bacchanal Agave:

Felix Agave: facinus horrendum manu,
qua fecerat, gestavit et spoliū tulit
cruenta nati maenas in partes dati.

Seneca makes no use of this parallel within the structure of his play. Statius, on the other hand, uses the simile as part of his characterisation technique here: the desperate, frenzied Jocasta is compared to a Bacchante, first indirectly at 7.482-3 (tremulisque ululatibus orat/admitti)⁹⁷, and then directly and more potently here.⁹⁸

The polar opposite character to Jocasta in this poem, Polyxo, who is the personification of Furor in this poem and the female counterpart of Oedipus, is not unsurprisingly likened to a Bacchic devotee possessed by a god, when at 5.92-4 she incites the Lemnian women to

murder their husbands: insano veluti Teumesia thyias / rapta deo, cum
sacra vocant Idaeaeque suadet / buxus et a summis auditus montibus
99
Euhan.

Bacchic worship is also used as the subject for two similes at the
close of the poem to indicate rejoicing and relief of women: the Theban
women, welcoming *Theseus*, are like the people of the Ganges celebrating
Bacchus' victory (12.787-8): qualis thyrsos bellante subactus/ mollia
laudabat iam marcidus orgia Ganges. The Argive women, rushing down in
joy from Dirce's height, are compared to Thyiads summoned to Bacchus'
wars (12.791-3): quales Bacchea ad bella vocatae / Thyiades amentes,
100
magnum quas poscere credas / aut fecisse nefas.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

I. INTRODUCTION: MOTHERS IN STATIUS' SILVAE

1. See Chapter 2 (ARGIA) Part I.

2. See further Dixon (1988:44ff) for details of the legal relationship
between mothers and children, and also Gardner (1986:146-54) for
details of the guardianship, custody and control over children.

3. Dixon (1988:4) isolates as an exception to this, the unrestrained
mourning for deceased children, which was considered a peculiarly
feminine activity, see for example Tac Agricola 29.1.

4. In a bid to boost the flagging birth-rate and improve public
morality, marriage and parenthood was encouraged by the emperor
Augustus, with legislation offering rewards for the fertile and
penalties for the unmarried or childless, e.g. the *ius liberorum* for
three legitimate children, which afforded political advantages for the
husband, improvement in status for the wife (freedom from perpetual
tutelage, testamentary rights etc.).

5. The womanly virtue of pudicitia, "modesty", was celebrated on
coinage depicting female members of the imperial house, often in
conjunction with goddesses like Vesta, Venus and Juno (Dixon 1988:83).

6. As Dixon (1988:104ff) demonstrates, in wealthy circles the mother's
role in her child's upbringing was primarily didactic and disciplinary.
Feeding and tending of the baby, and the acts of tenderness now
associated with motherhood, were normally performed by the *nutrix* (wet-

nurse) - though the practice of employing one was universally denounced and breast-feeding by the mother encouraged (Dixon 1988:120).

7. This popular tale is treated by Appian (Roman History 2.5), Cicero's friend Atticus (see Cic Brutus 42), Livy (2.40), Valerius Maximus (5.2.1 and 4.1) and Plutarch (Coriolanus 1.2, 4.3-4, 34-6).

8. The circumstances of the legend bear an obvious resemblance to the story of Jocasta's deputation to Polynices, as told in Stat Theb 7, and there is internal evidence to demonstrate Statius' use of Livy's account of the Coriolanus myth here: see below Part III for details. Volumnia is an example of the recurrent figure of the anxia mater, the mother whose son is in danger of death, exile or failure. As Dixon (1988:194) points out, mothers constantly feature as suppliants in accounts of the civil wars, employing tactics of entreaty and bullying: Suet (Vesp 2.2) describes Vespasian's mother's use of sarcasm to goad him to ambition.

9. For the text and discussion of this inscription, see Vollmer, F 1892. *Laudationum funebrium Romanorum historia et reliquiarum editio*. *Jahrbücher für classische Philologie* (Supplement-band 18), 484ff.

10. We do deduce from inscriptions that foster-mothering was common among working or slave mothers. (Dixon 1988:141ff)

11. Dixon (1988:4) quite rightly points out that many of the accounts of motherhood we find in literature and inscriptions may have been idealising or prescriptive, reflecting a view of the mother as she should be. Great mothers of the past served as symbols of the superior virtue of an earlier age. However, as Dixon points out, the existence of a topos is in itself revealing.

12. Dixon (1988:228) contends that the mother was more protective towards her daughter than her son, e.g. she could exercise her powers of intercession with her husband for her daughter's sake.

13. On the relationship between mothers and adult daughters among the Roman elite, see Phillips, J E 1978. *Roman mothers and the lives of their adult daughters*. *Helios* n.s.6, 69-80.

14. As did Caecilia Metella and Sasia (Plut Pomp 9.1-2).

15. As did Helvia for Seneca (Sen Ad Helviam 14.3; 19.2).

16. Caesar boasted of his maternal descent as well as his father's line in the funeral laudatio he delivered for his aunt Julia (Suet Iul 6.1).

17. Statius mentions his own mother only once, and this only in reference to his praise of the sterling attributes of his father: in *Silv* 5.3 (the lament for his father), he states that his father loved his wife as much as he loved his son (239-40), that he married only once (240-1), and that Statius' mother is now utterly devoted to her husband's grave, visiting it morning and night (241-5), and observing her son's grief with approval (263).

18. Dixon (1988:217) cites this reference in connection with her discussion of the weighty business of arranging a marriage: screening candidates, assessing the dowry payment etc.

19. In *Silv* 5.2, the young Crispinus is praised for his generosity towards his mother who tried to poison him (75-97); in *Silv* 5.5 (lament for his adopted son), Statius invites any bereaved mothers to share in his lamentation with him: his description of the bereaved mother is vivid: faltering step, breasts still filled with milk, beating her teeming chest and quenching the flames with her milk (14-20). For the proverbial grief of a mourning mother, see also, *Silv* 2.6. (*consolatio* to Flavius Ursus on the death of a favourite slave): Statius describes the lamentations of the master as no less fierce than Philetas' mother's who, had she lived, would have blackened with bruises her arms while she mourned, and his father would have done the same (82-4).

20. In *Silv* 3.3 (*consolatio* to Claudius Etruscus for the death of his father, who rose from slave to Knight under Vespasian), Statius describes the mother, Etrusca (111ff), who possessed all the qualities of an ideal wife: noble birth (particularly important in this case), beauty and charm, fertility. (111-123). She unfortunately died in her prime, and Statius whimsically describes her death and funeral (124-34). He asks rhetorically what offerings and tears Etruscus must have paid at his mother's funeral, if he mourns his father's death as untimely (135-7).

21. In 4.8 (31-41), Statius reproaches a friend for not instantly informing him of the birth of a child, and describes how he would have reacted to the news: lighting his own altar, decorating his doorway, celebrating with wine and song.

22. See above n8.

23. See below Parts III and IV for details.

24. In Book 7, Antigone and Ismene accompany Jocasta on her mission to Polynices; in Book 11, Antigone mediates with Polynices while her mother addresses Eteocles (see below Parts III and IV for details).

25. See, for example, Valerius Argon 7.153ff, for a description of Juno's desperation at the strength of Medea's pudor.

26. See Dixon (1988:74) for a discussion of the view of motherhood in the Roman imperial family: Venus, who was initially a rustic goddess with primarily literary associations, became a state deity, Venus Genetrix, the founder of the Julian house, with a temple in the Forum Iulium. The *Aeneid* reinforced this image of Venus, "the forceful mother pushing her son to his divine destiny and inextricably associating the fortunes of Rome and the Julian house." (Dixon 1988:74).

II. PRE-STATIAN JOCASTA

27. For the account of Jocasta's role in literature before Statius, I am chiefly indebted to the work of the scholars Kitto (1966), Soubiran

(1966), Vessey (1973), and Smolenaars (1986).

28. The cyclic Thebais was mainly concerned with the expedition of the Seven from Argos, and seems to have contained no mention of Epicaste or Euryganea.

29. For the differences between the account of Stesichorus and that of Euripides, see below.

30. The action in this scene does not, of course, take place on stage but is reported in a messenger-speech, the delivery of which is sufficiently lively to prompt Kitto (1966:353,362) to term the play a "dramatic pageant" instead of a tragedy, "good cinema" instead of serious theatre.

31. There is some doubt as to whether or not the extant text is complete: some scholars believe that the cantica are missing, while others consider the reconciliation scene itself as unfinished (Slings, van Erp Taalman Kip and Bremer 1986:170). On the other hand, there are those who see no reason to regard the received text as incomplete (Smolenaars 1986:274).

32. Helm (1892:53ff) argues that Statius' divergences from Euripides at other points are due to the influence of now lost portions of the Senecan tragedy. Vessey (Statius and the Thebaid:274) disagrees.

33. Smolenaars (loc cit 275) argues, contra Vessey (ibid 271) that Jocasta goes alone to mediate between the brothers. According to Smolenaar's analysis, Seneca has combined the two mediation attempts found in Euripides, and given Antigone a reversed role in the action, her eye-witness description of events from the tower of the palace probably inspired by the teichoscopy in Eur Phoen 88-201.

34. Petronius Sat 80.4 is very likely a parody of Sen Phoen 443ff: Giton leaps between the quarrelling Encolpius and Ascyltus, begging them not to re-enact the Thebaid, but rather to kill him who is the cause of their argument.

35. This theme (556-9) is clearly adapted from Eur Phoen 560-77.

36. The duel itself may have taken place in the same (or the next) scene: as Helm points out (1892:49), the appearance of mutual slaughter can hardly have been offensive to the playwright who had presented on stage the sight of Hercules Furens killing his children!

37. It is doubtful that Statius was directly familiar with Stesichorus: see the findings of Horsfall (Horsfall, N 1979. Stesichorus at Bovillae? JHS 99, 26-48) on the Tabulae Iliacae which are attributed to the Augustan craftsman Theodorus: Horsfall adduces cogent evidence (both internal and external) to challenge the truth of Theodorus' professed employment of Stesichorus' Iliou Persis.

38. Soubiran (1969:689-99) gives an excellent account of the influence of Livy 2.40 on Statius' account of Jocasta's mediation in Theb 7.

39. For the socio-cultural significance of the Coriolanus-episode, see above Part I.

III. EVENTS OF BOOK 7 AND BEFORE

A) BEFORE JOCASTA'S APPEARANCE

40. See Appendix B (4.1) for discussion of emendation in lines 71-2.

41. See below Part IV.

42. See Chapter 2 (ARGIA) Part II for details of the necklace scene.

43. Her lament echoes that of Euryalus' mother in Virg Aen 9.473ff: compare Theb 3.164 *heu quantus furto cruor et sine laude iacetis!* to Aen 9.485-6 *heu terra ignota canibus data praeda Latinis / alitibusque iaces!*.

44. See below B).

45. See Chapter 3 (ANTIGONE) Part III for details of the funeral scene.

B) BOOK 7: APPEAL TO POLYNICES; THE BACCHIC TIGERS

46. Eur Phoen 81-3, 273, 449-51. Seneca, on the other hand, combines the moment of Jocasta's proposition with the mediation itself (Phoen 440-2).

47. See Part II above.

48. The group of three women might well be a Statian innovation, or otherwise the influence of a lost model. Lesueur (1986:26-7) makes the interesting point that Statius emphasises the bond between mother and daughters, and thereby causes us to forget the bonds of affection which since Sophocles unite Antigone to her father. In the Thebaid on the contrary, Oedipus has a bad role: he is a distrustful character, who works in favour of war, sets up Tisiphone between his sons, and feels a perverse joy at the onset of the conflict (Theb 8.251-3). Men and women, bad and good, oppose each other in this family. This distinction, simplistic as it may seem, puts a certain value on the feminine characters.

49. *iam gelidam Phoeben et caligantia primus
 hauserat astra dies, cum iam tumet igne futuro
 Oceanus lateque novo Titane reclusum
 aequor anhelantum radiis subsidit equorum. 470-4*

Whereas Soubiran (1969:691-2) regards this elaborate description of sunrise as an epic cliché, Smolenaars (1986:279-80) has noted the allusion to Eur Phoen 541-8, where Jocasta illustrates her proposed solution to the brothers' quarrel, by using a simile of alternately ruling day and night. The description of daybreak thus contributes meaningfully to the atmosphere of the coming scene, either as an exposition of Nature's violence as fitting introduction to the impending fraternal strife, or merely as an incorporation of the words

of Euripides as temporal setting.

50. Her shocking appearance is prefigured in the description of Ide: see A) above.

51. ...et Veturia, magno natu mulier, et Volumnia duos parvos ex Marcio ferens secum in castra hostium irent....precibus lacrimisque...insignem ma estitia...Veturiam, inter nurum nepotesque stantem... (Livy 2.40.2-4).

The pathetic addition of two children, the tearful cries, the outstanding majesty of her bearing: all are features borrowed by Statius to effect in this riveting description.

52. Important details of her outward appearance are borrowed from Virgil's description of the Fury, Allecto, in her guise (in vultus...aniles Aen 7.416) as the old priestess, Calybe: the fierce countenance (torvam faciem Aen 7.415), the white hair (albos...crinis 417-8), the olive branch (ramum...olivae 418). Aeneas' sacrifice to the mother of the Furies (Aen 6.249ff) is also recalled here:

ipse atri velleris agnam
Aeneas matri Eumenidum magnaеque sorori
ense ferit.

The wool entwined branch as a symbol of supplication and the identity of the person being supplicated are clearly important associations for the passage of Statius at hand. To describe Jocasta's tremulous cries (482), Statius uses the words of Virgil, relating the Bacchanalian frenzy of the Latin mothers led by queen Amata: ast aliae tremulis ululatibus aethera complent (Aen 7.395).

53. See Eur Phoen 322ff for the theme of the unkempt hair obscuring her eyes, the sable wool a variation of her black clothing here.

54. Sen Phoen 427-34 similarly describes her hurry.

55. As Smolenaars (1986: 282) notes, this is a brilliant reversal of Virgil's portrayal of Allecto, who initially disguises herself as a harmless crone in order to incite Turnus to war, and then later, when her ruse appears to fail, reveals herself in all her terrifying glory.

56. As Soubiran (1969:693) points out, the epithet impia bella mater (483-4) condenses a sententia expressed by Livy's Veturia: ergo ego nisi peperissem, Roma non oppugnaretur (2.40.8).

57. This effect increases visibly by Book 11 - see 11.326-8 (Part IV below).

58. Seneca provides the starting point for Jocasta's fury: vadit furenti similis aut etiam furit (Phoen 427).

59. Her description of him here (hostem, / quem peperit 490-1) echoes the words of Livy's Veturia at 2.40.5-6: sine...sciam...ad hostem an ad filium venerim.

60. His emotional reaction, far from the enthusiastic greeting of Euripides' Polynices (Phoen 301ff), is developed from that of Livy's Coriolanus: Coriolanus prope ut amens consternatus ab sede sua cum ferret matri obviam complexum (2.40.5).

61. This angry response (cum mixta fletus anus asperat ira 496), so different to her unbounded joy in Euripides or her maternal concern in Seneca, is again derived from Livy's Veturia: mulier in iram ex precibus versa (40.5). The words quid...venerandaque nomina (497) recall the words of Eteocles in Eur Phoen 617.

62. See Smolenaars (1986:284-5) for a thorough analysis of her destructive reaction here. As Soubiran (1969:695) observes: "c'est cette figure hautaine, de justicière plus que de victime, que Stace a choisi de reproduire."

63. She uses the same term for Eteocles at 11.335, 346 (see below Part IV).

64. As Smolenaars has observed (1986: 285-6), her words are in the "pathetic style" of rhetoric, designed to reduce the hearers to tearful miseratio. In this, Jocasta is as successful as Livy's Veturia: uxor deinde ac liberi amplexi, fletusque...fregere tandem virum (2.40.9).

65. See Chapter 3 (ANTIGONE), Part IV C) for a discussion of beast-of-prey similes in the Thebaid. This particular simile is discussed below in Part V B).

66. As Schetter has noted (1960:92) the Jocasta-scene and the Tiger-episode connected with it form a counterbalancing median stress to the climactic outbreak of fighting at the end of the book. This episode recalls a similar scene in Vergil (Aen 7.485ff) where a tame stag is the cause of the breach of the agreement between the Trojans and the Rutulians to suspend hostilities.

67. The death of the tigers resembles the fate of the animal-like Polynices and Eteocles: tamed by Jocasta, goaded by Tisiphone to self-destruction.

68. See Appendix B (4.2) for discussion of possible emendation in line 609.

69. In any case, a traditional reconciliation scene would have seemed highly improbable, seeing that Jupiter gave Eteocles orders to keep his brother away from the kingship.

70. Atys, the betrothed of Ismene, is one of the early victims of the war. In Book 8, Jocasta exhibits once more her nobility of spirit: by granting the dying youth the boon of his fiancée's company (641ff). See Chapter 3 (ANTIGONE) Part II for details.

IV. EVENTS OF BOOK 11

A) JOCASTA'S APPEAL TO ETEOCLES; THE ROUT OF PIETAS

71. This is Mozley's reading, adopted and re-punctuated by Ker (1953:9): see Appendix B (4.3) for details.

72. Statius has intensified Seneca's description of her extreme sorrow: *laniata canas mater ostendit comas* (Phoen 440); cf. *scissa comam voltusque et pectore nuda cruento* (Theb 11.317). Lines 318-20 are a reworking of Sen Phoen 363-5, in which Jocasta compares her tragedy unfavourably with that of Bacchanal Agave. See below Part V C) for discussion of this simile.

73. For this mention of the Eumenis (330), compare the simile at 7.478 (see below Part V A)..

74. The words *quo...minantia flectis / ora* (335-6) continue the motif of sight which she employs at 333-5. There are verbal reminiscences of the earlier mediation scene: she also called Polynices *saeve* (7.516); her persuasive words broke the cohorts then (*frangebant* 527), whereas now Eteocles' clenched teeth stifle the angry words he would utter (*obnixi frangunt mala murmura dentes* 11.337).

75. Similarly (but less drastically) her last recourse with Polynices was a bold injunction to him to take her and the rest of their family captive (516ff).

76. As she did with Polynices at 7.506.

77. Glaesener (1899:111) contends that Jocasta is the epitome of the affectionate mother who loves her two sons equally, without being able to see on which side the wrong is, and trying everything possible to reconcile them. This does not seem to be entirely true: her appeal to Eteocles contains no reference to her love for him, as her speech to Polynices did (7.514).

78. Compare the description of Jocasta's effect on Polynices' army in book 7: see above n74. On the scene between Antigone and Polynices, see Chapter 3 (ANTIGONE) Part III.

79. As some have observed, there is an unmistakable element of comedy in her behaviour, which undermines somewhat the gravity of her plight: she flees to the Father for redress, like a petulant child when thwarted.

B) THE DUEL AND JOCASTA'S SUICIDE

80. The bloodthirstiness of the attack is compared, in a simile (530ff) that echoes Eur Phoen 1380ff, to the murderous ferocity of wild boars.

81. As Fiehn (1917:76) imagined.

82. See Vessey (Stattus and the Thebaid:278-9) for details in this regard. As he rightly notes, Statius' portrayal of Eteocles, on the other hand, is not unremittently harsh: after initially fearing to duel with his brother, he is chastened by the reproofs of Creon and finally

chooses the safety of his country over that of his person. Also, the depiction of the ruthless, ambitious Creon at this point in the narrative distracts our critical attention from Eteocles.

83. Thereby Oedipus assumes alone the role which he and Jocasta share in Euripides. The motivating theme of Euripides' play was not the curse of Oedipus, but the slaying of Ares' serpent by Cadmus.

84. See Chapter 3 (Antigone) Part III for details of the scene between Antigone and Oedipus.

85. Jocasta also heads the list of those quae contra fas concubuerunt: Iocaste cum Oedipo filio. (253.1)

86. See above Part II.

87. See Chapter 3 (ANTIGONE) Part IV B) for discussion of this simile. The description of Jocasta's suicide recalls that of queen Amata in the Aeneid: the Latin queen hangs herself in her bedchamber when she thinks that Turnus has already been killed (Aen 12.593-607).

V. SIMILES USED TO DESCRIBE JOCASTA

88. For references to the Furies in this poem, see Theb 1.229; 1.598; 2.52; 2.186; 4.54; 4.526; 5.302; 6.500; 7.218; 8.59; 11.271; 12.433; 12.559; 12.696; 12.773

89. See above Part III for details. Aeneas' sacrifice to the mother of the Furies (Aen 6.249ff) is also recalled here.

90. See above Part III n52 for details. And also cf. n55.

91. See above Part III. Ide also foreshadows Menoceus' mother (10.820ff) in this respect. The description of Ide's grief is inspired by that of Euryalus' mother in Aen 9.473ff.

92. For mention of Thessalian witches in the poem, see 2.22; 3.559; 6.687ff. In Aen 4, Dido assumes the guise of witchcraft in order to hide her suicidal intentions from her sister Anna: perhaps Virgil is indeed Statius' source for this kind of portrayal of a grief-stricken woman.

93. For discussion of beast-of-prey similes, see Chapter 3 (ANTIGONE) Part IV.

94. Since Pentheus had tried to suppress Bacchic worship, Agave had promised his head to the god.

95. Compare 7.479-81 (see above Part III), where she was supported by her daughters and tried to hasten further than her strength allowed. Now her companions cannot keep pace with her: tantum miserae dolor ultimus addit / robur, et exsanguis crudescunt luctibus anni (11.322-3).

96. Compare Ach 1.839-40, where Achilles is compared to Pentheus in his

scorn of his mother's scheme. For details see Chapter 6 (THETIS) Part VI.

97. This is an echo of Virgil's description of the Latin mothers' worship of Bacchus, under the leadership of the Fury-driven queen Amata: *ast aliae tremulis ululatibus aethera complent* (Aen 7.395). Statius' starting-point for the extended Jocasta-Fury association is, however, the words of the messenger in Sen Phoen 427: *vadit furenti similis aut etiam furit*. His description of Jocasta is also heavily influenced by Livy's description of Veturia, the mother of Coriolanus (Livy 2.40): for details, see above Part III.

98. See Chapter 5 (Part IV) for details. The Virgilian model for Polyxo is Amata, stirred up by Allecto to incite the Latin matrons to join in Bacchic revels with her (Aen 7.341ff). Amata is compared to a spinning top, lashed by boys: 7.378-83 (West:1969:49). The Virgilian source for this particular simile is Aen 4.301-3 (Mozley 1933:34).

99. As Smolenaars (1986:283) says,

"De diepere grond voor de via literaire allusies tot stand gebrachte parallellie Iocaste - Furie is wellicht dat zij in dit stadium nog de enige belemmering vormt voor de door Oedipus opgeroepen Tisiphone. Haar uitzinnig gedrag maakt haar tot een waardige tegenstander van de Furie. Dat haar felle pogingen tot mislukken gedoemd zijn, maakt haar tragischer dan de Iocaste van de tragedies."

100. For descriptions of Bacchic worship or Bacchantes in this poem, see 2.71ff (celebration of Bacchus' birthday), 4.377-405 (the leader of the Bacchanals); 7.168ff (Bacchic worship), 7.649-87 (the death of Euneus), 9.476-80 (Hippomedon taunts Ismenos); 9.792-6 (Parthenopaeus taunts Amphion).

CHAPTER FIVE: HYPsipYLE IN STATIUS' THEBAID 4.646-7.226

pulchro in maerore (Theb 4.740)

I. THE PLACE OF THE HYPsipYLE-EPISODE WITHIN THE OVERALL STRUCTURE OF THE POEM

II. THE NARRATIVE OF HYPsipYLE: A) THE LEMNIAN EPISODE
B) JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS

III. EVENTS IN NEMEA: A) THE DEATH OF OPHELTES
B) LYCURGUS' ANGER; HYPsipYLE REUNITED WITH HER SONS

IV. SIMILES USED TO DESCRIBE HYPsipYLE

I. THE PLACE OF THE HYPsipYLE-EPISODE WITHIN THE OVERALL STRUCTURE OF THE POEM

Writing on Hypsipyle a century ago, I would have had no need for a section of this nature: the epithet "silver", and the inferiority which it assumed for all aspects of Statius' poetry, naturally included criticism of form as well as content. My procedure would have been ingeniously simple: a statement of fact concerning the absence of a discernible structure in the poem, a remark about the poet's artistic inferiority, and the Hypsipyle-episode therefore considered a perfectly explicable part of the overall compositional confusion, with no need for further comment.

Early twentieth-century scholars improved matters considerably: at least they considered Statius a worthy object of their scrutiny. But echoes of the former bias were everywhere apparent and the Nemean mora was generally considered a "senseless digression". As Ahl so sharply observed: "what is being said by Mozley, Butler, Williams and Kenney is simply this: whatever it is that Statius is saying does not interest me and is not in accord with what Latin literature should be like" (1986: 2807).¹

Of course, scholars being an essentially orderly (or, rather, ordering) lot, there have been those who have produced convincing structural analyses of the Thebaid: Kytzler, and Ribbeck, for example ², who neatly organised the poem into so-called "triads": 1 - 3 being the books of preparation, 4 - 6 the books of delay, 7 - 9 the books of war, and 10 - 12 the climax and resolution (the victory of pietas). ³ Kytzler (1955:77) calls the mora the theme of the 2nd triad (Books 4-6), while Schetter (1960:70f) corrects this structural analysis by locating the mora-complex from 4.646 to 7.144.

Unfortunately, this plan does not serve to answer all our questions - most importantly for our purposes here, what precise function is served by a triad of "delay"? As Schetter (1960) and Vessey (Statius and the Thebaid), following him, have conclusively shown, the poem defies such a facile architectonic analysis; that in fact, unity is achieved from within and "is to be found primarily in the complex inter-relationships and correspondences which bind individual episodes to each other and to the whole epic" (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:320).

The so-called Nemean episode is introduced at Theb 4.646-9. The Argive army is deflected from its appointed course by a drought arranged by Bacchus, patron god of Thebes, and the men are forced to stop in Nemea for water:

interea gelidam Nemeen et conscia laudis
Herculeae dumeta vaga legione tenebant
Inachidae; iam Sidonias avertere praedas,
sternere, ferre domos ardent instantque. 4.646-9

Structurally, of course, a mora, engineered by a divinity with a

perverse desire to retard ineluctable fate, is virtually obligatory in any self-respecting post-Virgilian epic. Within the framework of this divine plan, Hypsipyle initially features in the role of guide (4.739ff).

Hypsipyle is a familiar character from mythology: the heroic daughter of the king of Lemnos, the first victim of Jason's attractions, and the slave-nurse of the unfortunate baby Opheltes.⁴ In this poem, Hypsipyle is all of these: indeed, she takes the largest female role in the poem, in her role as guide and story-teller dominating the central episodes of the poem which (on a superficial level) relate the aetiology of the Nemean games. To her narrative describing her past experiences, and to her present calamities, is devoted the entire portion from the end of Book 4 to the beginning of Book 6. The reason for the importance given to her character is directly related to the reason that a comparatively large portion of the poem is devoted to the Nemean digression: just as events in the *mora* prefigure what is to come, so it is with the character of Hypsipyle who in her suffering, *pietas*, and courage in Book 5, foreshadows the ordeals and *aristeia* of the Theban and Argive womenfolk later in the poem.⁵ At the beginning of the poem, Antigone and Jocasta have not yet appeared, and Argia is still a demure young wife. Like Hypsipyle, they are to endure the furor of others and the death of loved ones. Hypsipyle is a more complex character than they, since she combines within herself the roles of courageous young daughter to Thoas (as Antigone is to Oedipus), wife to Jason (as Argia is to Polynices), mother to two sons (as Jocasta is to Polynices and Eteocles) and nurse to baby Opheltes (she is as it were his adoptive mother, so that she mourns for him as if he were her own, suffering a double maternal loss). As Goetting (1969:89) points out, only a few of

the characters in the Thebaid succeed in escaping the furor of the others and the resulting slaughter: Hypsipyle on Lemnos, Adrastus, Amphiaraus, Argia and Antigone in Argos and Thebes.

The literary sources for Hypsipyle's character are many, in particular Apollonius Rhodius and Valerius for her Lemnian narrative, and Euripides for her Nemean experiences. But perhaps more than with any of the other female characters the influence of Virgil is constantly discernible: like Aeneas of Books 2-3 (himself in turn influenced by Homer's Odysseus) she is the traveller with a long digressory tale, like Andromache of Book 3 she is the enslaved princess who has lost her children, like Dido of Book 4 she is the lovelorn and deserted queen. Statius "anchors" the narrative of Hypsipyle in the surrounding action in the same way as Homer the narrative of Odysseus to the Phaeacians, and Virgil the story of Aeneas as told to Carthaginian Dido (Goetting 1969:88). The inserted novella was a conventional feature of epic, novel and romance, e.g. the story of Amor and Psyche in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, and the Lemnian tale, with its extended erotic connotations, provides a welcome diversion from the mainstream narrative - and, on a different level, an opportunity for the poet to compete with Valerius Flaccus' recent treatment of the same myth.

Statius provides an introductory section to the Lemnian narrative (4.739-5.47), in which he takes every care to establish the significance of the digression for the poem as a whole for, as Vessey (1986:2993) comments, "in it a past is re(-)presented in a present that is always already both past and future."

From her first appearance, Hypsipyle attracts a not inconsiderable

amount of personal attention and curiosity (on the part of the Argives as well as the reader): she is beautiful even in grief (*pulchro in maerore* 4.740), the child at her breast not her own but the baby Opheltes (*Inachii proles infausta Lycurgi* 742)⁶, her noble birth showing through her dishevelled tatty appearance (*neglecta comam nec dives amictu / regales tamen ore notae* 743-4), and her dignity not destroyed by affliction (*nec mersus acerbis / exstat honos* 744-5).⁷

The awe-struck Adrastus (*stupefactus* 745) makes an appeal to her as if to a goddess, convinced by her countenance and bearing that she is a woodland divinity (*diva potens nemorum nam te vultusque pudorque / mortali de stirpe negant* (746-7)).⁸ In reply (769-78), Hypsipyle agrees to lead them to Langia's stream, but her speech, though presented with conventional maidenly modesty (*demisso...vultu* 768), is noticeably self-centred, with tantalising hints at the superhuman nature of her origins (*diva quidem vobis, etsi caelestis origo est, / unde ego?* 769-70) and her sufferings (*...mortales utinam haud transgressa fuisset / luctibus!* 770-1). She explains briefly that Opheltes is not her own baby but a nursling,⁹ and she herself the bereft nurse, unaware of the fate of her own sons, though once she had been possessed of a kingdom and a powerful father (*altricem mandati cernitis orbam / pignoris; at nostris an quis sinus uberaque ulla, / scit deus, et nobis regnum tamen et pater ingens* - 771-3).

Abruptly she breaks off her allusive reminiscences, when she recalls the urgency of Argives' present situation (*sed quid ego haec, fessosque optatis demoror undis?* 774), and, motivated by the desire to be an efficient guide for the Argives (*ne tarda Pelasgis / dux foret* 778-9), she leaves her infant charge behind, consoling him with flowers and

coaxing whispers, like mother Cybele with the infant Jove (778-85).¹⁰
This action, too, is not treated in an offhand manner by the poet, who
intervenes to make a comment on the fateful implications of Hypsipyle's
act: : a! miserum...alumnum / - sic Parcae volvere - locat (779-80).¹¹
In the following lines (786ff) Statius lingers on the pleasant, yet
somehow tragic picture of the little child playing in the meadow.¹² In
three vaguely disturbing similes, he compares the (vulnerable) Opheltes
to the (immortal) Zeus, Mars and Apollo in their respective childhoods
(794-6).¹³ The infant Opheltes, crying for his dear nurse (caram /
nutricem 788-9) and crawling about the forest in complete ignorance of
danger (malorum / inscius et vitae multum securus... 792-3), is the
epitome of vulnerability, and while he may resemble the fledging
"Superheroes" in their charm or recklessness, we know already that he
does not possess their gift of immortality.

The rest of book 4 (797-843) is given to a dramatic depiction of the
Argives' arrival at the stream.¹⁴ With the apparent structural
condition for the delay fulfilled (the army needs water; Hypsipyle
successfully acts as guide), the extension of the digression for a
further two books obviously requires a different explanation. At the
beginning of book 5, Adrastus asks to know the identity of the saviour
sent to them by fate. Again she is likened to the highest god: Adrastus
says that even Jupiter would not scorn the glory that she has earned as
their protectress (20-2). The curiosity of the Argives has been aroused
by her regal bearing and meaningful allusions (cf.4.743-5) and they are
eager to know more of her land of birth and the father she mentioned at
4.773:¹⁵

"at tamen, o quaecumque es" ait, "cui - gloria tanta -
 +vivimus innumeras fatum debere cohortes+,
 quem non ipse deum sator aspernetur honorem,
 dic age, quando tuis alacres absistimus undis,
 quae domus aut tellus, animam quibus hauseris astris?
 dic, quis ille pater? neque enim tibi numina longe,
 transierit fortuna licet, maiorque per ora
 sanguis, et adflicto spirat reverentia vultu. 5.20-7

Hypsipyle responds with an initial reluctance that displays both womanly modesty (or shame) and the traditional reticence of the traveller who has travelled far and suffered much, a convention of epic poetry: *Ingemit, et paulum fletu cunctata modesto / Lemnias orsa refert: 'immania vulnera, rector, / integrare iubes, ...'* (28-30).¹⁶ She gives another short, allusive summary of her Lemnian history (cf. 4.770-3), elliptical because of its painful nature, and also perhaps because the Argives were already well-acquainted with this famous story. The structural motivation for her tale is indicated clearly in Hypsipyle's introductory description:¹⁷

...Furias et Lemnon et artis
 arma inserta toris, debellatosque pudendo
 ense mares; redit ecce nefas et frigida cordi
 Eumenis. o miserae, quibus hic furor additus! o nox!
 o pater! illa ego nam, pudeat ne forte benignae
 hospitis, illa, duces, raptum quae sola parentem
 occului. quid longa malis exordia necto?
 et vos arma vocant magnique in corde paratus.
 hoc memorasse sat est: claro generata Thoante
 servitium Hypsipyle vestri fero capta Lycurgi. 30-9

The careful listener/reader is able to detect the verbal clues provided here: Hypsipyle is announcing that hers is a tale of furor, of intrinsic interest as a self-contained narrative, as well as of larger significance for the poem as a whole: the weapons in the marriage-bed (*artis / arma inserta toris* 30-1), the war between the sexes in which the men were defeated by the shameful swords of women (*debellatosque*

pudendo / ense mares 31-2) corresponds to the civil war and fratricide that is to come in the poem. When Hypsipyle cries out that the wickedness and freezing horror returns to her as she recalls these events (redit ecce nefas et frigida cordi / Eumenis 32-3), there is also the implication that these evils return to feature in the present. So that the Argives should not feel shame to have been rescued by a stranger (pudeat ne forte benignae / hospitis 34-5), she identifies her role as the heroine in the Lemnian tale, the only one who saved her father's life (illa, duces, raptum quae sola parentem / ocului 35-6): we are reminded of the stark contrast between her filial devotion and the selfish hatred of the Theban brothers. When she dismisses these words as a "lengthy prelude to the crimes" (quid longa malis exordia necto? 36), we readers realise that her narrative itself plays prelude to the crimes we are to witness in the poem. The "holistic" aspect of the Hypsipyle-narrative ¹⁸ is indicated finally by the implied comparison between the impious weapons of the Lemnian women (artis / arma inserta toris) and the weapons of the Argive army, which, together with the commitments formed in their hearts, call them to war (et vos arma vocant magnique in corde paratus 37). The narrative of Hypsipyle thus functions as a cameo exposition of the central themes of the Thebaid: the mutability of fortune, the corruption of power ¹⁹, and the inherent impiety of civil war. Within the structure of the main narrative, the advancing Argive army is provided with a "cautionary tale", the ominous import of which they regrettably fail to grasp. Hypsipyle has finally identified herself by name, again pointing out the dichotomy between her royal rank and present servitude (claro generata Thoante / servitium Hypsipyle vestri fero capta Lycurgi 38-9).

She has caught the attention of the Argives who regard her with more respect now, and are agog for her story (*advertere animos, maiorque et honora videri / parque operi tanto; cunctis tunc noscere casus/amor* 40-2), particularly Adrastus (*pater ante alios hortatur Adrastus* 42). The epithet *pater* explains his eagerness: as father of two daughters himself (and a king too), Adrastus may all too easily "identify" with Thoas, the corresponding character in Hypsipyle's forthcoming tale. He tells her to go on (*immo age* 43)²⁰, while the army is delaying to re-order its columns, to tell of the crime (*pande nefas* 46), of her praiseworthy deeds (*laudes tuas* 46), of the sufferings of her people (*gemitus...tuorum* 46), and of how she came to her present servile state (*unde hos advenias regno deiecta labores* 47). Hypsipyle, taking in typically human fashion a bittersweet comfort in reminiscence (*dulce loqui miseris veteresque reducere questus* 48), launches obligingly into the lengthy narrative, describing the massacre on Lemnos, the sojourn of Jason and the Argonauts there, and her subsequent misfortunes²¹ leading up to the present time (5.49-498).

The Nemean digression does not end with the conclusion of Hypsipyle's narrative: the rest of the *mora* is given to the death of Opheltes, (5.499ff) and the funeral games following his burial (6.249ff).²² These events function structurally and thematically in the same way as the preceding tale. The serpent's killing of Opheltes acts as "allegorical symbolism" of violence and wasted youth (this episode is itself paralleled and foreshadowed by the narrated myth of Linus and Coroebus at Theb 1.557-672 - see Vessey 1970:315-331), and provides a powerful portent of doom for the Argive mission (the implications of which do not this time escape them, due to the prophetic wisdom of Amphiaraus,

5.733ff). Of course, structurally, the death of Opheltes also leads to the reunion of Hypsipyle and her sons (5.710ff), and thereby provides the resolution of her problems: at last mention, her future happiness seems secured (*ecce et Iasonidae iuvenes, nova gloria matris / Hypsipyles, subiere iugo* 6.340-1). The entire episode is then "officially" concluded by the reappearance of Bacchus, his final plea²³ and eventual acceptance of fate (7.145ff).

The integral value of this "digression", and others like it, for the structural continuity and plot development of the poem as a "harmonious and self-consistent whole" (Vessey *Statius and the Thebaid*:320) can no longer be denied. Schetter (1960:91) expresses this view neatly:

Statius gibt keine organisch sich entfaltende, sondern eine architektonisch durchstrukturierte Erzählung, deren Einheit vornehmlich durch formale Bezüge konstituiert wird. Nur wenn man dies beachtet, vermag man ihn zu verstehen und seiner Kunst gerecht zu werden.

- II. THE NARRATIVE OF HYPPIPYLE: A) THE LEMNIAN MASSACRE
B) JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS
A) THE LEMNIAN MASSACRE

24

The story of the Lemnian massacre and the romance of Jason and Hypsipyle was a popular one in antiquity: Homer mentions the myth at *Od* 12.70. Apollonius Rhodius, in *Argon* 1, provided the chief Hellenistic precedent for the digressory treatment of this myth. In Apollonius too, on the level of the main narrative, the episode is inserted as a diversion (though not a divinely engineered one) of a "hell-bent" band of Argives from their fated course: the Argonauts, sailing to Colchis in search of the golden fleece, are deserted by the winds and forced to put in at Lemnos (*Argon*.1.601-8).

At this point, Apollonius describes briefly the recent happenings on

the island: all the men have been mercilessly killed, due to the wrong-doings of the women in the previous year (609-10). Because of Venus' anger at the women's neglect of her cult, the men were motivated to reject their wives with loathing, and had turned their affections to captive Thracian women, brought home from their overseas expeditions (611-15).²⁵

Overcome with jealousy, the Lemnian women have murdered their husbands, the Thracian captives and, also, lest there be any "comebacks" from the next generation, have exterminated the entire male population on Lemnos (616-19). Only Hypsipyle, the king's daughter, spared her father, Thoas, and, by dispatching him across the waters in a hollow chest, helped him to escape to the island of Oenoe (620-6). The women, we are told, attend with ease to the traditionally male chores of tending flocks and reaping corn (627-30).

Later, when Jason is granted his first audience with Hypsipyle (1.788ff), she tells him a version of the tale which is in substance (probably) accurate, but for the denouement: she describes, in greater detail than the poet-"speaker" does earlier, the men's heaven-sent infatuation for Thracian captives, and the outrageous neglect suffered by the women at the hands of all their menfolk (798-819); she then tells how, with desperate courage acquired from some divine source, the women shut their husbands out of their homes and compelled them to choose, and how, thereupon, the men had chosen to leave for Thrace, taking their male offspring with them (820-6).

The so-called "Golden Age" of Latin literature, as far as we know, produced no comparable treatment of the Lemnian myth, as either main or

subordinate plot of a full-scale epic. Hypsipyle makes her only significant appearance, during this time, in Ovid's *Heroides* 6, where her character portrayal is so radically different from that of the earlier and later versions, that points of comparison relating to the story itself are difficult to establish. Ovid's Hypsipyle, with her exaggerated pride and self-awareness, her sustained sarcasm, and her jealous hatred of Medea, is a far cry from the tragic heroine she plays in Apollonius, Valerius or Statius. The most noticeable departure from Apollonius' Lemnian account is that here Hypsipyle's words indicate that she has confessed the women's crime to Jason - indeed, she attempts to excuse their behaviour (*Her* 6.140), and almost regrets having not participated in their man-hatred (6.53-4). Nevertheless, as Jacobson (1974:105-6) points out, Ovid's depiction of Hypsipyle - as consumed primarily with hatred for Medea - serves to illuminate the essentially sexual nature of the Lemnian myth. Hypsipyle is expressing her deep-rooted sense of frustration and inadequacy at having failed where Medea and the Lemnian women have been blatantly successful: defeat of the male and/or assumption of the male role.

Valerius Flaccus, a Roman contemporary of Statius, had been recently composing his own (incomplete) *Argonautica*, when our poet was composing the *Thebaid*.²⁶ Valerius, at *Argon* 2.72-106, introduces the Lemnian digression with an account of the aboriginal causes of divine "investment" there: Lemnos had harboured the crippled Vulcan when he had been cast from heaven by Jove, wherefore the island is dear to his heart; the Lemnians had abandoned worship of Venus since the day she had been caught in flagrant¹ delicto with Mars, for which reason the goddess is furiously plotting the razing of the island.

Valerius provides an account of the Lemnian women's fatal jealousy, which is more gradually developed and psychologically complex than the straightforward treatment of Apollonius: the captive women whom the Lemnian men bring home from their conquest of Thrace are intended as slaves for their wives, who are influenced by Rumour (instigated by Venus) and by the rousing speeches of the goddess herself (in the guises of Neaera and Dryope, Lemnian women) into assuming that they are about to be supplanted by the new arrivals (116-185).²⁷ The women disperse to bid their returning husbands a falsely cheerful welcome home, each, like a Tisiphone, scheming her man's destruction (186-195). Valerius describes the proceedings of the murderous night in gruesome detail (196-241): the women, under the direct guidance of Venus²⁸, slaughter their sleeping husbands and the Thracian slaves with them, and some, to crown their anarchic achievement, set their houses alight as well.

Hypsipyle's rescue mission is likewise described in some detail (242-305): she takes her father to the temple of Bacchus, hiding him there for the night; the next day, she disguises him as a statue of Bacchus, and shifts him to a forest glen, pretending that the "statue" is in need of ritual purification; from there, she arranges his escape from Lemnos in an abandoned old vessel.²⁹

Upon her return to the capital, Hypsipyle is acknowledged as rightful heir to the throne by the Lemnian women who, after having naturally assumed political power, are changing the constitution (306-310).

³⁰
As most scholars have pointed out, Statius diverges in many respects

from the above treatments of the myth. Vessey (Stattius and the Thebaid: 171) rightly summarises the prevailing view when he says that "in fact, the points of agreement are so general as to be virtually inevitable in any narration of the story." Hypsipyle's narrative, therefore, contains the obligatory description of Lemnos (5.49-56) and explanation of the instigating wrath of Venus (57ff); an account of the women's resolve to murder their men, and of the execution of their plan after a celebratory feast (143ff - this part of the tale is present only in the Roman poets); a description of Hypsipyle's rescue of Thoas and her accession to the throne (240ff). Operating within this broad framework, Statius has adapted the received material ingeniously to suit his unique thematic design.

After situating her narrative in the rich and well-populated island of Lemnos (49-56)³¹, Hypsipyle gives to the onset of man-hatred both a human and a divine motivation (*dis visum turbare domos, nec pectora culpa / nostra vacant* 57-8): it was due to the Lemnians' neglect of the worship of Venus that the goddess slowly grew resentful and the Avenging Furies came creeping towards Lemnos (58-60)³². In appearance and behaviour more like a Fury herself, Venus had come to bring twining serpents and savage terror to the people loved by her husband (61-9)³³.

Schetter (1960:54-5) sees a strongly erotic component in Hypsipyle's narrative of the Lemnian massacre. He points out, firstly, the unmistakably sexual nature of the estrangement of the husbands, as described by Hypsipyle:

protinus a Lemno teneri fugistis Amores,
 mutus Hymen versaeque faces et frigida iusti
 cura tori, nullae redeunt in gaudia noctes,
 nullus in amplexu sopor est, Odia aspera ubique

On the divine level, Venus causes her "tender Loves" to flee the island, Hymen god of marriage is silent with his torch downcast, and in the cold, joyless bedchambers, Hatred, Frenzy and Discord divide the marriage partners. Hypsipyle also provides a reason for disenchantment on the human level: the women are opposed to the imminent Thracian expedition (75-80), and when the men have left they all remain behind, weeping and pining - all except the young and unmarried Hypsipyle, that is (81-4).

Then, amidst terrifying natural phenomena (85-9), the old crone Polyxo is seized with madness and in unaccustomed fashion flies out of her chamber (*subito horrendas aevi matura Polyxo / tollitur in furias thalamisque insueta relictis / evolat* 90-2), in appearance and behaviour like a Theban bacchante (92-4).³⁴ Polyxo does indeed feature in the versions of Apollonius (where she plays Hypsipyle's beloved nurse, who persuades the Lemnians to receive the Argonauts) and Valerius (where she appears as a priestess of Apollo, behaving in a similarly persuasive manner). But Statius casts her as the aging wife of Charops, and the chief transactor of Venus' nefarious design, as "the first victim of furor, from whom the disease spreads, corrupting and inflaming the others" (Vessey: Statius and Thebaid:173). As such, Polyxo plays an analogous role to that of Oedipus in Thebaid 1: both are agents of divine retribution, with Polyxo employed in the Lemnian "digression" to strengthen the parallel which the poet is attempting to draw between Hypsipyle's narrative and the Theban war (Vessey Statius and the Thebaid:174-5).³⁵ Like Argos, Lemnos was initially rich and happy (5.54-5), but she was brought down through divine wrath (Venus

behaving like Jupiter) combined with human fault (the curse of Oedipus paralleled in the obedience of the Lemnian women to the orders of Polyxo, *dis visum turbare domos, nec pectora culpa / nostra vacant...* 5.57-8).

At the beginning of her speech inciting the women to murder their menfolk, Polyxo exhorts them (*o viduae... / Lemniades* 105-6) to strengthen their resolve and reject their natural sex (*firmate animos et pellite sexum!* 5.105)³⁶, identifying as their main grievance the deprivation of love which they have suffered as a result of the men's departure (106-8, 112-17).³⁷ Her words explicitly affirm the existence of dual human and divine motivation for the act (*rem summam instinctu superum meritique doloris* 104), and support the equation between Venus and sex which I formulated above (*inveni, promitto, viam... / qua renovanda Venus* 109-110). While she is making allusive references to the myths of Danaus' daughters and Procne (117-122)³⁸ and promising to kill her own children as proof of her commitment to the cause (123-9), the returning Lemnian fleet appears on the horizon, and Polyxo takes the opportunity to redouble her exhortation, emphasizing the divine inspiration for the deed (132-9) and urging the women to act at once (140-1).

There is no place within Statius' (compositional and thematic) design for the depiction of a gradual psychological development on the part of the Lemnian women: the invasion of furor is abrupt and immediate (143ff). While Venus hovers invisible among them³⁹, the women, seized with frenzy and bloodlust, swear an oath to murder over the body of Polyxo's son, their first victim (158-163). Hypsipyle, by virtue of her

unwed status, is immune to the taint (*nam me tunc libera curis / virginitas annique tegunt* 81-2), and is therefore understandably horrified by these grim proceedings (*talia cernenti mihi quantus in ossibus horror, / quisve per ora color!* 164-5), as frightened as a deer trapped by wolves (165-9).⁴⁰

Of the three poets, Statius' account of the massacre (5.195-235) is fullest, with an attention to gruesome detail that is at once thematically desirable (as a foreshadowing of the Theban war), and stylistically inevitable.⁴¹ Each ruled by her private Fury (*cuncto sua regnat Erinys / pectore* 202-3), the women set about their grim tasks, likened in their actions to Hyrcanian lionesses hunting cattle (203-5). The narrator enlivens the description by focussing on certain of the couples in turn, particularly those who belong to her own family (219ff) - her foster-brothers Cydon (220) and Crenaeus (221), her own betrothed Gyas (223). The description of Lycaste's murder of her twin brother, Cydimus (226-235) is particularly poignant: her mother must needs stand over her and physically compel her to the deed, playing the role which Venus plays in Valerius' account.⁴²

When Hypsipyle sees Alcimede carrying aloft the severed head of her father (236), she is seized with *saevus / horror* (238-9), being reminded of her own father Thoas and the deed she herself is expected to perform (*meus ille Thoas, mea dira videri / dextra mihi!* 239-40). She therefore rushes *turbata* (240) to her father's bedchamber, tells a confused tale of the crime, the women's grievance and the source of their strength (*trepido scelus ordine pando, / quis dolor, unde animi* 244-5). Thoas *motus* (247) springs out of his bed, and together they hurry through the city, past scenes of unspeakable carnage (247-64).

Another major divergence between Valerius and Statius is the latter's account of Thoas' salvation that night: here, in accordance with the poet's structural plan, we have the direct intervention of Thoas' father Bacchus (paralleling his interference in Book 4), who helps Hypsipyle to lead her father to the shore (265ff). Bacchus appears before them, exhorting Hypsipyle to guide her father to the sea and to avoid the gate where Venus stands guard for the Lemnian women (*illa... porta / stat funesta Venus ferroque accincta furentes / adiuvat* 280-2).⁴³

The next morning, the nocturnal madness is manifest (*patuere furores / nocturni* 298-9), and the new terrors of the day bring a sudden shame to the Lemnian women (*lucisque novae formidine cunctis, / ...subitus pudor* 299-300), who hurriedly burn or bury the corpses (300-1) while, on the supernatural level, the Furies and a sated Venus flee the devastated city (*iam manus Eumenidum captasque refugerat arces / exsaturata Venus* 302-3). The women are now able to understand what they have done and to mourn their dead (*licuit sentire, quid ausae, / et turbare comas et lumina tingere fletu* 303-4).

Another unique element of Statius' version (and likewise justified) is that the next day, upon her return to the city, Hypsipyle dissembles by building a pyre for her "dead" father and going through the motions of a funeral:⁴⁴

*ipsa quoque arcanis tecti in penetralibus alto
 molior igne pyram, sceptrum super armaque patris,
 inicio et notas regum velamina vestes,
 ac prope maesta rogum confusis ignibus adsto
 ense cruentato, fraudemque et inania busta
 plango metu, si forte premant, cassumque parenti
 omen et hac dubios leti precor ire timores.* 313-9

The motif of the simulated bier serves to rationalise the story (since Hypsipyle must convince the other women of her participation in their guilt), while, compositionally, it foreshadows the funerals of Book 6 (Opheltes) and Book 12 (Eteocles and Polynices).⁴⁵

For the afflicted Lemnians the fever has broken, but the sickness has yet to depart entirely. After they set Hypsipyle upon the throne (320-325), the sense of shame and sorrow gradually increases, and therewith grows apace their resentment of Polyxo (326-334). Now the women, who were compared to Hyrcanian lionesses in their fury (5.203-5), are likened in a simile to frightened heifers who have lost the leader of their herd to a Massylian lion (330-4).⁴⁶ Thus ends the first section of Hypsipyle's narrative, which is linked by this motif (of receding madness and reawakening sexuality) to the subsequent tale of the arrival of the Argonauts.

B) JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS

In Apollonius' poem the arrival of the Argonauts is a cause for great dismay for the Lemnian women, who fear that it is a band of marauding Thracians (Argon.1.633). After they are informed by the messenger, Aethalides, of the true identity of the newcomers, the women hold an assembly, at which Hypsipyle advocates the giving of gifts to the Argonauts so that they may be kept at bay (640-66). Then the beloved old nurse, Polyxo, speaks in favour of admitting the visitors into their homes and lives (667-96), and, since her counsel is pleasing to the women and to Hypsipyle, they send word of their intent, via Iphinoe, to the ship (697-716). The Argonauts, imagining Thoas to be dead and his daughter queen, immediately dispatch to the palace Jason,

who is magnificently attired in the gifts of Athena (717-73). He makes his way through the city accompanied by a throng of admiring women⁴⁷, finally arriving at the palace (774-787).

With a cleverly contrived version of recent events on Lemnos, Hypsipyle tries to persuade him to settle there with his men and himself assume the kingship (788-833). He declines the latter offer (834-41), but relays the former to his companions, who are easily persuaded (all but Heracles, that is) to leave the ship and succumb for a while to the sweet temptations ashore (842-660; we are told, at 850-2, that Venus has reawakened the women's desires). Eventually, it is Heracles who reminds the men of their mission, and, amidst the tearful greetings of the women, they prepare to leave (861-85). Hypsipyle and Jason exchange tender farewells (886-909), in which they both mention the possibility, and improbability, of his return and the (more likely) prospect of her bearing him a child.

In Valerius' account (Argon 2.311ff) the women make ready to attack the approaching ship, but are stayed due to the placatory effect of Vulcan on his angry wife. At the advice of Polyxo (here a priestess of Apollo), the Argonauts are welcomed into the city, and they eagerly accept the invitation (here with full knowledge of the women's crime, but rendered fearless by Venus). A sumptuous banquet is held in honour of the Greeks, at which Jason tells the tale of his travels, and Hypsipyle, in true Virgilian manner, falls in love with the narrator (341-56). Jupiter himself, by providing a few days' inclement weather, permits this delay of the Argonauts' mission (357ff), and they laze, forgetful of their duty until admonished by Heracles (373ff). The departure of the men reminds the Lemnian women of their earlier

bereavement and redoubles their sense of remorse for that wicked deed (393-99). Equally sorrowful, Hypsipyle reproaches Jason briefly (400-8), presents him with a woven tunic (on which is embroidered the story of her rescue of Thoas 408-17) and her father's sword (gift of Vulcan), prays by their unborn child for his return (422-4), and clasps him in the farewell embrace customary for many a tragic heroine (425-7).

As Schetter has rightly observed (1960:55), the erotic motif, which formed an indispensable component of epic since the Hellenistic age, is used by Statius to fuse the previously unconnected episodes of the Lemnian massacre and the Argonauts' sojourn on the island to an inner unity. The poet marks the arrival of the Argonauts with a heaven-sent storm of dramatic (and clearly symbolic) fury (Theb 5.361ff).⁴⁸ The Lemnian women, imagining them to be Thracians, try to organise a defence, but the "spirit" which had possessed them earlier is noticeably weakened: *heu ubi nunc furiae?*... (350); *armaque maesta virum atque infectos caedibus ensis / subvectant trepidae* (353-4). With feeble female strength (mocked by the gods, 356-7), the Lemnians shower missiles on the storm-tossed Greeks (378), until a bright stroke of lightning from Jupiter illuminates the powerful forms of the mariners. Then the weapons drop from the women's hands, and their true sex returns into their breasts: *deriguere animi, manibusque horrore remissis / arma aliena cadunt, rediit in pectora sexus* (396-7).

Polyxo's evil influence (*firmate animos et pellite sexum!* 105) is thus finally banished⁴⁹, and the Lemnians are able to assume once more their true sexual identities, directing their desires at the impressive specimens of heroic manhood (*magnorum decora alta patrum*...424) before

50

them: ergo iterum Venus et tacitis corda aspera flammis / Lemniadum
pertemptat Amor...(445-6). Juno also plays her part: tunc regia Iuno /
arma habitusque virum pulchraeque insignia gentis / mentibus insinuat..
(446-8). Carefree celebration, untroubled sleep, sins confessed and
pardoned (449-52) - the sequence of events here follows very much that
of Valerius' account:

51

certatimque ordine cunctae
hospitibus patuere fores; tunc primus in aris
ignis, et infandis venere obliviae curis;
tunc epulae felixque sopor noctesque quietae,
nec superum sine mente, reor, placuere fatentes. 448-52

52

Hypsipyle, ever the pious and dignified heroine , is at pains to
assert, at this point in her narrative, the innocence and reluctance
with which she had united with Jason - he was skilled in ensnaring
young girls, and she no passionate Medea:

53

forsitan et nostrae fatum excusabile culpae
noscere cura, duces. cineres furiasque meorum
testor: ut externas non sponte aut crimine taedas
attigerim - scit cura deum - etsi blandus Iason
virginibus dare vincla novis: sua iura cruentum
Phasin habent; alios, Colchi, generatis amores. 453-8

She tells of the children born to the Lemnian women in the new year

54

(459ff) , and explains that she herself had two children whom she left
with Lycaste to rear, and has not seen for twenty years:

55

nec non ipsa tamen thalami monimenta coacti
enitor geminos, duroque sub hospite mater
nomen avi renovo; nec quae fortuna relictis
nosse datur, iam plena quater quinquennia surgunt
si modo fata sinunt aluitque rogata Lycaste. 463-7

Eventually the weather improves, the Argonauts wish to leave and cruel
Jason summons his comrades (inde fugam Minyae, sociosque appellat Iason

/ efferus 471-2). It is time for the Lemnian women to grieve again for the loss of their menfolk: heu iterum gemitu⁵, iterumque novissima nox est (478). Like so many wistful Didos, they stand on rocks and mountains to watch as the ship disappears over the horizon (481-5).⁵⁶

The unfortunate Hypsipyle, already cruelly punished by fate for her piety (by her unwilling receipt of the Argonauts' manner of forgiveness 453-4), is dealt another undeserved blow when the Lemnians (impia plebes 488) learn of her righteous deed (mihi crimina nulla, / et vacuos arsisse rogos 487-8) and, by their guilty intolerance, force her to choose exile (493ff). This time, as she tells the Argives, Bacchus does not come to her aid, and she is enslaved by pirates and brought a captive to Nemea (sed non iterum obvius Euhan, / nam me praedonum manus huc adpulsa tacentem / abripit et vestras famulam transmittit in oras⁵⁷ 496-8). As Vessey (Stattius and the Thebaid:187) neatly concludes:

"The Lemnian story is basically one of furor and pietas, of odium and amor, of sin and repentance. Even Hypsipyle, who appears to have suffered for her pietas, is to receive a delayed reward. But the Argives who listen to the tale cannot see any moral for themselves."

III. EVENTS IN NEMEA: A) THE DEATH OF OPHELTES

B) LYCURGUS' ANGER; HYPPIPYLE REUNITED WITH HER SONS

A) THE DEATH OF OPHELTES

The myth of the death of Opheltes was as popular in antiquity as any other aspect of the Hypsipyle-legend.⁵⁸ According to tradition, Opheltes is killed by a snake when Hypsipyle exchanges her duties as nursemaid for that of guide to the Argives, seeking water, and after the Greeks kill the serpent, they institute the Nemean games in honour of the dead boy.⁵⁹ The earliest extant literary treatment of the legend is Euripides' Hypsipyle, a (fragmentary) tragedy which has, as its

central theme, the reunion of Hypsipyle and her sons. Though of a different genre and theme, the influence of this work on Statius' account in *Theb* 5-6 must necessarily be examined.

Here follows a synopsis of the dramatic action (as conjectured by Bond 1963, and Webster 1967): the play opens with Hypsipyle's prologue speech: she sets the scene by providing a genealogy, an account of Jason's visit to Lemnos and her subsequent flight from the island, the circumstances of her enslavement and a description of her present unenviable situation - nurse to infant Opheltes, the son of Lycurgus and Eurydice of Nemea, while the fate of her own two sons, Euneos and Thoas, is unknown to her (though she expresses the hope that they may be hale and hearty as the newly arrived Seven of Thebes). She exits.

Thoas and Euneos enter, and, after a short dialogue, they knock at the palace door. Hypsipyle comes out, holding the baby, and she welcomes them in, overcoming their initial reluctance to visit in the king's absence.⁶¹ The *parados* consists of a lyric exchange between Hypsipyle, bewailing her lot (Webster 1967:212-3), and the chorus of Nemean women who attempt to console her.

In the first episode, Amphiaraus, who comes to ask for water for purification purposes, and Hypsipyle, who eventually (in spite of her reservations concerning the guardian snake) agrees to show him the spring, exchange their tales of woe (he tells of his fatal promise to Eriphyle). While the chorus sings the *stasimon*, the Argives are presumably guided to the spring by Hypsipyle, who lays Opheltes down in a nearby meadow, where he is crushed by the snake in the sight of all. Amphiaraus shoots the snake, the Argives take up the mangled body of

the child, while Hypsipyle returns, alone and distraught, to the palace.

In the second episode, Hypsipyle sings a lyric dialogue with the chorus, tells in a monody of her loss, and then discusses the possibility of flight. A messenger arrives to narrate the death of Opheltes.

In a dialogue scene between Eurydice and Hypsipyle, the queen accuses her of murder, and has her bound for execution, the hapless Hypsipyle all the while protesting her innocence and calling on the Argo, her sons and Amphiaraus for aid. The latter makes a sudden and dramatic entrance, absolving Hypsipyle from blame, explaining the significance of Opheltes' fate for the Argive expedition and for Eurydice (respectively as an omen and an inescapable consequence of nature), and promising to give the child a ceremonious burial. Eurydice appears to be conciliated, and pardons Hypsipyle (or, at least, alters her punishment to imprisonment, pending the return of Lycurgus). Thoas and Euneos go off to compete in the funeral games, which take place off-stage, during the stasimon in praise of Dionysos.

A messenger (probably) reports that the sons have won a victory in the footrace, news which infuriates Eurydice (perhaps to the point of a second execution order), but Amphiaraus (presumably) saves the day, persuading the queen to release Hypsipyle. There is a (lost) recognition scene. In the exodus Amphiaraus departs, and Hypsipyle and Euneos appear to say the prologue.

Thus we see that the sons play a relatively small part in the play, and even Hypsipyle herself is overshadowed by the imposing tragic stature

of Amphiaraus (in preparation for his role in the Phoenissae) who, proceeding calmly towards death foreseen, takes upon himself as representative of the Seven the responsibility for Opheltes' death (Webster 1967:214-5).

Even a cursory glance at Statius' portrayal of these events in Theb 5.499ff reveals "radical divergences" (Vessey 1971:48) rather than "magnae similitudines" (Fiehn 1917:65). The parallels are of a most general (and probably fortuitous) nature, unavoidable in any treatment of the myth.⁶² On the other hand, the differences, as we shall see, are numerous, and justify entirely the opinion that Statius employed in his version of the episode "a good deal of imaginative latitude" (Vessey: 1971, 51) in the interests of achieving that inner unity of theme for which his poem has rightly been praised. The motivating theme of the entire Nemean digression, the intervention of Bacchus (4.646ff), is the common factor in all the points of divergence noted below: the god engineers a drought in order to divert the Argives from Thebes, but, in appointing Hypsipyle as their guide, we see that he has not forgotten his grand daughter.

While Hypsipyle has been recounting her tale to the thirst-quenched Argives, prompted by the gods to be forgetful of her charge (*immemor absentis - sic di suasistis - alumni* 5.501), Opheltes has fallen asleep in the grassy meadow where she laid him down (...a! miserum ...alumnus / -sic Parcae volvere- locat... 4.779-80).⁶³ Meanwhile a huge earthborn serpent sacred to Jupiter (511), appears⁶⁴ and unwittingly strikes the infant a fatal blow with its powerful tail (538-40).⁶⁵ Hypsipyle, her heart filled with foreboding at hearing Opheltes' dying wail, rushes to

the spot and searches in vain for a trace of the child (iam certa
malorum / mentis ab augurio sparsoque per omnia visu / lustrat humum
quaerens et nota vocabula parvo / nequiquam ingeminans: nusquam ille,
et prata recentes / amisere notas 545-9). At the sight of the slimy
perpetrator, she shrieks, filled with horror, (horruit infelix visu
longoque profundum / incendit clamore nemus 552-3).⁶⁶ In turn, her
anguished shrieks summon the Argives, one of whom, Capaneus, kills the
snake (554-78).⁶⁷

Hypsipyle, infelix Lemnia (588)⁶⁸, wanders over the fields, until she
finds what is left of Opheltes. The description is filled with intense
pathos:⁶⁹

Iamque pererratis infelix Lemnia campis,
liber ut angue locus, modico super aggere longe
pallida sanguineis infectas roribus herbas
prospicit. huc magno cursum rapit effera luctu
agnoscitque nefas, terraeque inlisa nocenti
funeris in morem non verba in fulmine primo
non lacrimas habet: ingeminat misera oscula tantum
incumbens animaeque fugam per membra tepentem
quaerit hians. non ora loco, non pectora restant,
raptae cutis, tenuia ossa patent nexusque madentes
sanguinis imbre novi, totumque in vulnere corpus. 588-98

The body is a pathetic bundle of mangled flesh (596-8), and Hypsipyle,
falls dry-eyed to the earth with grief at this sudden shock (592-4),
showering kisses on the corpse and breathlessly searching the still-
warm limbs for a hint of the departed spirit (594-6). She is reacting
like a mother bird who finds that her nest has been ravished by a snake
(599-604).⁷⁰

Then the pitiable woman (miseranda 605) gathers up the mangled remains
in her lap, covering them with tresses of her hair and finally, when
her voice has found a path to her grief (606-7), she begins to keen

over the corpse (608-34). Her speech is the credible expression of human grief under such circumstances. She asks what guilty gods could have killed her only joyous reminder of her own two babies (o mihi desertae natorum dulcis imago, / Archemore, o rerum et patriae solamen ademptae / servitii decus, qui te, mea gaudia, sontes / *exstinxere dei* 608-11). She recalls their time together, when only she could understand his smiles and speech ⁷¹, and would rock him to sleep with the tale of her experiences at Lemnos, and would give him to drink from her own breasts (613-19). She insists that blame lies with the gods, because of the recent ominous dreams she has been having (620-2). But then she realises that the fault is hers, who forgot her charge and abandoned him to his fate while telling her tale to the Argive army (622-8). Her words here show that she is not unaware of the significance of his death, both for the fate of the Argive mission (she is the first to call Opheltes by his new name, 609), as well as for her own: in that she had previously cheated Venus of a victim rightfully hers, Hypsipyle "owed" to heaven this present lapse of pietas, which occurs, ironically, at the very time when she is boasting of her earlier act of piety (dum patrios casus famaеque exorsa retracto / ambitiosa meae - pietas haec magna fidesque - / exsolvi tibi, Lemne, nefas 626-8).

Hypsipyle accordingly asks the Argives to kill her also (629-30), since she does not wish to see her sad masters again, and the bereaved mother Eurydice who has been made her enemy by this deed, though her own grief does not fall short of the maternal (ne tristes dominos orbamque inimica revisam / Eurydicen, quamquam haud illi mea cura dolendo / cesserit 631-3). She declares that she would rather die than have to

carry her sad burden and place it in the mother's lap (633-4).

So saying, Hypsipyle blackens her face with dust and blood, and turns to follow behind the Argive leaders, in her heart blaming their thirst also for the disaster (et tacite maerentibus imputat undas 637).

B) LYCURGUS' ANGER; HYPPIPYLE REUNITED WITH HER SONS

As Vessey observes (Statius and the Thebaid:189):

"the infant's death is a necessary prelude to Hypsipyle's reunion with her sons, for it re-established the equilibrium of fate, for her exile was in part a punishment for saving Thoas in defiance of the will of deus and fatum."

Lycurgus soon hears of his son's death, and fills his house with tears (638-40): he had been warned at the shrine of Jupiter that he would provide the first casualty in the war (prima, Lycurge, dabis Dircaeo funera bello 647). When he beholds Hypsipyle in his son's funeral train, his first impulse is to vent his righteous anger (at non magnanimo pietas ignava Lycurgo 653) on her. ⁷² Statius' version ⁷³ contains no debate between Hypsipyle and Eurydice, no trial scene. Instead, it focusses on the reaction of the child's father, a pious and reverend king (unlike Eteocles, or even Adrastus) who, though he attempts to avoid participation in the Theban war, cannot prevent the realisation of fate's decree.

As Lycurgus advances to kill Hypsipyle with his sword, the Argive leaders move in to protect her (660ff): they draw their swords and ⁷⁴ Amphiaraus bids Lycurgus to disarm, while Tydeus addresses him in bolder vein, demanding to know how the cowardly king dare spill the blood of their illustrious saviour on such a small account (quanti pro

funeris ultor! 674).

Meanwhile, rumour is rife that Hypsipyle is being executed, and as a result a war ⁷⁶ between the Argives and Nemea seems imminent:

atque illic alio certamine belli
 tecta fremunt; volucres equitum praeverterat alas
 Fama recens, vanos alis amplexa tumultus:
 illi ad fata rapi atque illi iam occumbere leto,
 sic meritam Hypsipylen iterant, creduntque, nec irae
 fit mora, iamque faces et tela penatibus instant,
 vertere regna fremunt raptumque auferre Lycurgum
 cum Iove cumque aris; resonant ululatibus aedes
 femineis, versusque dolor dat terga timori. 690-8

Adrastus parades Hypsipyle in front of his army, thereby allaying the angry panic of those who fear for her safety (699ff). Now, at last, comes her long-awaited reward, and proof of the fides superum (650) which has for so long appeared to elude Hypsipyle. Her divine ancestor Bacchus intervenes one last time into the human sphere, since he had spirited Hypsipyle's sons away from Lemnos to Nemea and was planning a marvellous outcome (Quis superum tanto solatus funera voto / pensavit lacrimis inopinaque gaudia maestae / rettulit Hypsipylae? tu gentis conditor, Euan, / qui geminos iuvenes Lemni de litore vectos / intuleras Nemeae mirandaque fata parabas 710-14). Thoas and Euneos, who have come in search of their mother, are guests in Lycurgus' palace at the time he receives the news of his son's death, and ironically (pro fors et caeca futuri / mens hominum! 718-9) they rush out to his aid. When, however, they hear the words Lemnos (719) and Thoas (720), they realize that their journey's end has been reached. At first, Hypsipyle stands immobile, not daring to believe (illa velut rupes immoto saxea visu / haeret et expertis non audet credere divis 723-4), but then she recognizes their (Argonaut) swords and tattoos (725-6). Finally, as at

the climax of many successful serialised dramas, the heroine faints and weeps for joy (*cesserunt luctus, turbataque munere tanto / conruit, atque alio maduerunt lumina fletu* 727-8), the music reaches a crescendo (729-30), and the scene fades out on a note which is to prove significant for a future episode (Amphiaraus renames Opheltes "Beginning of Doom" and institutes the funeral games 731-753).

To make one final query: is the excess of grief shown by Hypsipyle and Lycurgus in Book 5, and by Eurydice in Book 6 (135ff), a credible human reaction by Statius' standards? Cicero (*Tusc. Disp* 1.93) stated that people did not mourn the deaths of small children extravagantly, and Dixon (1988:104) taking her cue from Cicero, points out the evidence (from sepulchral inscriptions) to suggest that the Romans placed a relatively low social value on small children (whose chances of survival were low in antiquity); she also provides proof (from artistic representations and literature) that Roman mothers did not play the nurturing, protective role we today associate with motherhood. Latin literature does however provide conflicting testimony in this regard: Dixon admits (1988:112) that the Romans were clearly touched and entertained by the childish ways and the charm of infants, and often individuals could become attached to particular children. I believe that there is sufficient evidence to prove that many people did indeed prize infants and feel their deaths keenly: Statius, for one, in both the *Silvae* and *Thebaid*, provides an extremely emotional attitude towards fosterhood and the death of a small child.⁷⁷

IV. SIMILES USED TO DESCRIBE HYPSSIPYLE

The Lemnian women in Hypsipyle's narrative exhibit a behaviour cycle of

sanity - madness - sanity that is well-illustrated by the similes which the poet employs during the course of the tale: Polyxo stirring them up to madness is compared to a Bacchante 5.92ff; the Lemniades about to attack their menfolk are likened to Amazons off to war 5.144ff; as they fall on the men, they are like Hyrcanian lionesses 5.203ff; Lycaste as she repents of her fratricide is as a tamed wild beast that refuses to be goaded 5.231ff; the Lemnian women as they regret their crime and give their menfolk proper burial are like heifers whose leader has been killed by a lion 5.330-4. On the other hand, Hypsipyle herself shows no real character development in this poem: she is ever the pitiable, passive victim of fate and circumstance.⁷⁸ The similes used to describe her behaviour and emotions are accordingly homogeneous:

A) As she sets baby Opheltes down in the grass (4.782-5) and tries to hush him, Hypsipyle is likened to Cybele⁷⁹, trying to distract the wailing baby Jove:

qualis Berecyntia mater,
dum parvum circa iubet exsultare Tonantem
Curetas trepidos; illi certantia plaudunt
orgia, sed magnis resonat vagitibus Ide.

Hypsipyle, in her gentle, caring attitude to the child, is compared to the great mother of God: she attempts to coax him with flowers and sweet whispers (locat ponique negantis / floribus adgestis et amico murmure dulces / solatur lacrimas 780-2), just as Cybele tries to entertain Jove with the noisy dance of the Curetes (783-5).⁸⁰

The comparison of Hypsipyle to a goddess is appropriate at this point in the narrative, since the Argives had on first sight taken her for one (4.746ff) and Opheltes for her offspring by a divinity, perhaps

Jove himself (750-2).

There is an indirect comparison, thus, between Opheltes and the infant Jove, both of whom are resolutely inconsolable: ⁸² this is surely ironic, since the god is immortal, while Hypsipyle's charge, as the poet's aside warns us (*a! miserum alumnum-sic Parcae volvere-* 779-80) is pitifully human and fated to die in the near future. The simile is related to the ones later in the same passage where the infant Opheltes playing with reckless confidence in the woods is compared to Mars, Mercury and Apollo: *sic tener Odrysia Mavors nive, sic puer ales / vertice Maenali, talis per litora reptans / improbus Ortygiae latus* ⁸³ *inclinabat Apollo* (794-6).

B) As the Lemnian women swear a blood-oath to murder their menfolk, Hypsipyle in her fear is compared to a terrified doe cornered by wolves (5.165-9):

*qualis cum cerva cruentis
circumventa lupis, nullum cui pectore molli
robur et in volucris tenuis fiducia cursu,
praecipitat suspensa fugam, iamiamque teneri
credit et elusos audit concurrere morsus.*

The pathetic fear which roots Hypsipyle to the spot (*taliam cernenti mihi quantus in ossibus horror* 164) is her chief similarity to the frightened doe (166-8), but there is also an implied comparison between the Lemnian women and the wolves. ⁸⁴ This impression is supported by the choice of similes used to depict them in the moment of their homicidal madness: as they fall upon their menfolk they are likened to Hyrcanian lionesses attacking cattle to feed their cubs (5.203-5). ⁸⁵ When Lycaste repents of her fratricide (5.231-3) and falls to embrace the brother she has stabbed, she is compared to a wild beast who has been so tamed

that goading will not provoke it.

The wounded doe simile derives ultimately from Homer. At Iliad 11.473-84 jackals and a lion pursue a stag who has been wounded by a huntsman; see also Il 22.189-92 Achilles pursuing Hector like a hound pursuing a stag)⁸⁷. But the application of it to lovers stems from Apollonius' Argon 4.11-13, where Medea, filled with the guilty knowledge of her betrayal of Aetes, is compared to a fleet-footed fawn in a thicket terrified by the barking of the hounds. Statius' most likely source for deer similes is Virgil:⁸⁸ in the Aeneid, the two people who represent obstacles to the successful fulfilment of Aeneas' mission are compared to deer: at 12.749-57 Turnus pursued by Aeneas is likened to a stag chased by a hound⁸⁹; at 4.69-73 Dido smitten with love for Aeneas is compared to a doe wounded by a hunting shepherd (*uritur infelix Dido totaque vagatur / urbe furens, qualis coniecta cerva sagitta, / quam procul incautam nemora inter Cresia fixit / pastor agens telis, liquitque volatile ferrum / nescius: illa fuga silvas saltusque*⁹⁰ *peragrat/Dictaeos; haeret lateri letalis harundo*).

There are verbal reminiscences of both these Virgilian similes here: the *elusos...morsus* (169) of the wolves recalls the *morsuque...elusus* (Aen 12.755) of the hound in the Turnus simile; Hypsipyle is surrounded (*circumventa* 166) as Turnus is trapped (*inclusum...nactus* 749); Hypsipyle's *cerva* (165), on the other hand, echoes the *cerva* (Aen 4.69) of the Dido simile, who flees in terror (*praecipitat suspensa fugam* Theb 5.168; *fuga...peragat* Aen 4.72).

In spite of these superficial similarities, Statius' deer simile is not to be compared to those of Virgil, being much simpler of intent: Virgil

employs the deer similes in complex ways: to evoke pathos for a basically unsympathetic character (Turnus) in his moment of vulnerability, and, in the case of Dido, to increase sympathy for a character who, though she is opposed to Aeneas' purpose, is consistently favoured by the poet. Both similes cast Aeneas in an aggressive and ignoble role, thereby serving to diminish his stature, and, ultimately, to detract from full approbation for the successful outcome of his mission. Statius' heroine Hypsipyle, on the other hand, is on "the right side" all along, and an innocent and wholly passive victim of evil forces beyond her control: ⁹¹ she is consistently depicted in similes as such (Cybele, a doe, a mother bird). There are no disturbing (or intriguing) "grey areas" in Statius' female character portrayal.

C) When she discovers the mutilated body of Opheltes, Hypsipyle is compared to a mother bird who finds that her nest has been ravaged by a snake (5.599-604):

ac velut aligerae sedem fetusque parentis
 cum piger umbrosa populatus in ilice serpens,
 illa redit querulaeque domus mirata quietem
 iam stupet impendens advectosque horrida maesto
 excutit ore cibos, cum solus in arbore paret
 sanguis et errantes per capta cubilia plumae.

There are a number of correspondences between Hypsipyle's plight and that of the mother bird: the horror at discovering the murder (agnoscitque nefas, terraeque inlisa nocenti / fulminis in morem non verba in funere primo 592-3 - iam stupet impendens advectosque horrida maesto/ excutit ore cibos 602-3), the mutilated remains of the helpless victims (non ora loco, non pectora restant 596 - cum solus in arbore paret / sanguis et errantes per capta cubilia plumae 603-4) and, of

course, in both cases a serpent has been the cause of the crime.

This simile recalls the other bird similes in the poem, and serves to identify Hypsipyle in some way with the other women who have been characterised in this way: she is grieving like Antigone and Ismene in Book 8 and the Argive matrons in Book 12, who are compared to nightingales returning to their nests with their tale of woe (8.616ff, 12.478ff).⁹² On the other hand, she is not as fortunate as the Theban women who, after the retreat of the Argive army, are compared in their disbelief to doves who have managed to chase a serpent from their nests⁹³ (12.5-21).

This simile identifies her particularly with the host of bereft mothers⁹⁴ in the poem, who are likened to maternal animals in their moment of loss. Ismenis the grieving mother of Crenaeus is compared to a kingfisher whose chicks have been turned out of their nest by wind and water: *fluctivagam sic saepe domum madidosque penates / Alcione deserta gemit, cum pignora saevus / Auster et argentes rapuit Thetis invida nidos* (9.360-2).⁹⁵

It is particularly interesting to observe the poet's depiction of the grief of Opheltes' real mother: Eurydice, lamenting at her baby's funeral, is like a cow mourning for the calf which a shepherd or a wild beast has taken from her (6.186-192):⁹⁶

non secus ac primo fraudatum lacte iuencum,
cui trepidae vires et solus ab ubere sanguis,
seu fera seu duras avexit pastor ad aras;
nunc vallem spoliata parens, nunc flumina questu,
nunc armenta movet vacuosque interrogat agros;
tunc piget ire domum, maestoque novissima campo
exit et oppositas impasta avertitur herbas.

This poignant image of the mother cow may be compared to 9.118: Hippomedon protecting the bodyguard of Tydeus like a mother cow protecting her defenceless calves from the wolves.

Thus Hypsipyle and Eurydice are both characterised by the choice of simile here as helpless victims of the cruel instincts of the beasts of prey: Hypsipyle, the doe frightened of the wolves (5.165ff) and the mother bird robbed by the snake (5.599ff), and Eurydice, the cow mourning her stolen calf (6.186ff). Yet, the wild beasts themselves possess a motherly instinct, which renders them vulnerable to hurt: Atalanta as she goes to prevent her son from going to war (4.315ff) is like a tigress whose cubs have been stolen by a hunter on horseback; Menoeceus' mother grieving for the son she has lost (10.820ff) is as a tigress whose hunting instinct has been deadened by the loss of her cubs.⁹⁷

Hypsipyle and Eurydice are set in fascinating opposition to the Lemnian women of Hypsipyle's narrative, whose strange unfeminine (and unmotherly) behaviour is illustrated by a series of similes comparing them first to beasts of prey and then to the victims thereof: as they set upon their menfolk, they are as fierce lionesses (5.203-5), but when they repent of their crime and give the men proper burial, they are as anxious heifers mourning for the leader, who has been killed by a Massylian lion (5.330-4).⁹⁸ At the first sight of the Argonauts, they flee in fear to their homes, like crowding cattle or scattering birds (5.349).⁹⁹

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER FIVE

I. THE PLACE OF THE HYPSSIPYLE-EPIISODE WITHIN THE OVERALL STRUCTURE OF

THE POEM

1. The earliest critique of the Hypsipyle-episode is that of Lactantius scholion to Book 5 line 1: *hunc librum poeta extra ordinem carminis fecit, excessit enim oeconomiam suam*. No later critics latched on to this idea.

2. Statius-Studien: Beiträge zum Verständnis der Thebais diss Berlin 1955, 56ff; Geschichte der römischen Dichtung III Berlin 1913, 224-5.

3. See Chapter 1 (INTRODUCTION) Part III for these structural analyses.

4. Burkert (1970:16) has said of the myth:

"This is what the myth is about: love, hatred, and their conflict, murderous instincts and piety, solidarity of women and family bonds, hateful separation and lustful reunion - this is the story of Hypsipyle..."

5. Goetting (1969:88): "mit dem Bericht über ihre Vergangenheit liefert Hypsipyle die Voraussetzung zum Verständnis der Gegenwart."

6. Opheltes' name, meaning "Snake man", is in itself a indicator of his impending fate; after his death, 5.739, Amphiaraus will rename him, no less significantly, Archemorus, "Beginner of Doom".

7. On the regal dignity of Hypsipyle's physical appearance, see also 4.800 and 5.25-7. Adrastus' awe recalls that of Aeneas on his first encounter with Dido (Aen 1.494ff): there is, however, a pathetic contrast between the actual splendour of queen Dido's circumstances, and the hint of royal birth which shows only in the face and carriage of the slave, Hypsipyle. We are also reminded, by Adrastus' address to Hypsipyle as if to a divinity (4.762-3), of Aeneas' meeting with his mother disguised as a hunting nymph, at Aen 1.334.

8. Later in his address Adrastus again calls her diva (765).

9. She explains that Opheltes is not her own child (771-2) to correct Adrastus' assumption that he is her offspring, perhaps conceived by Jove himself (*seu lapsus ab astris / non humilis fecundat amor - neque enim ipse deorum / arbiter Argolidum thalamis novus - 750-2*).

10. On this simile, see below Part IV A).

11. On subjective comment by the poet, see further von Moisy (1971:36).

12. See below Part III for Statius' fondness for depictions of little children at play, e.g. *Silv* 5.5.79-87, describing the babyhood of a beloved slave-child. The view that this was Statius' adopted son is clearly incorrect: at 5.5.10f he says *non de stirpe quidem nec qui mea nomina ferret / oraque* (Coleman 1988:xvi).

13. The descriptions of fledgling "Superheroes" are conventional: compare Achilles' description of his own infancy at *Ach* 2. 96-7.

14. Schetter (1960:89) provides an excellent discussion of this lively scene.
15. See Appendix B (5.1) for this emendation of line 21 as per Watt (1987:51).
16. The opening is particularly reminiscent of Aeneas' words at Aen 2.3ff: *infandum, regina, iubes renovare dolorem*. Statius' choice of words is more graphically exaggerated e.g. *immania vulnera* for *infandum...dolorem*. I also identify a hint of Andromache here, who at the beginning of her narrative in Book 3 is thus described: *deiecit vultum et demissa voce locuta est* (3.320).
17. See Vessey (1986:2988-91) for a very detailed analysis of Hypsipyle's speech at lines 27-38.
18. Thoroughly treated by Schetter (1960) and Vessey (Statius and the Thebaid:).
19. See Bonner (1966:269ff) for the popularity, in contemporary epic, of declamatory commonplaces like the *locus de divitiis* and *de varietate fortunae*.
20. The scene here is very Virgilian in appearance: Adrastus implores Hypsipyle to recount her story as Dido pleads with Aeneas (Aen 1.753-4 *immo age, et a prima, dic, hospes, origine nobis / insidias*); the Argives are as agog to hear her tale (5.41-2) as are the Carthaginians who surround Aeneas (Aen 2.10 *sed si tantus amor casus cognoscere nostros...*).
21. This flashback technique has an honourable epic pedigree: Aeneas' narrative in Aeneid 2, itself modelled on Odysseus' tale in the Odyssey. For an excellent commentary on Aen 2, see Austin R G 1964. P. Vergili Maronis: Aeneidos Liber Secundus Oxford: Clarendon Press.
22. See further below Part III.
23. His dialogue with Jupiter obviously recalls the conciliation of Juno in Aen 12.

II. THE NARRATIVE OF HYPISIPYLE: A) THE LEMNIAN EPISODE
B) JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS

24. Some scholars have viewed the existence of the Lemnian traditions as evidence of early matriarchal rule on the island. See, for example, Bachofen (J J 1861. *Das Mutterrecht* Stuttgart. 84f).
25. According to another version of the myth, the women had developed a foul smell - *δυσσομία* - so awful that their husbands took refuge in the arms of Thracian slave-girls. Burkert (1970:7) surmises that Myrsilus of Methymna, under the influence of Pindar's Pythian 4.252-7, gave another explanation of the foul smell: that Medea caused it. When the Argonauts came to Lemnos from Colchis, Medea took her jealous revenge on the lovers Jason and Hypsipyle. Steven Jackson (1990. Myrsilus of

Methymna and the Dreadful Smell of the Lemnian Women. ICS next issue) points out that Pindar is in fact the only authority for the transfer of the Argonauts' visit from the outward journey to the return, and that Myrsilus did not follow Pindar at all: with the exception of Medea's olfactory drug, Myrsilus was in fact following the original version of the tale. Apollodorus 1.9.17 and Hyginus 15 mention the bad smell as part of the Lemnian myth but Jackson explains that it is due to the coalescence of two separate stories. Myrsilus was trying to explain a contemporary annual event on Lemnos, a menstruation ritual, wherein the women, on the pretext of a smell, kept apart from their menfolk for one day - nothing to do with the fire-ritual at all. He therefore composed a version of the myth whereby the Lemnian women consorted willingly with the Argonauts en route to Colchis, and that on the return trip Medea put a vengeful smell-curse on them, which they finally freed themselves from by establishing a festival.

26. See Chapter 1 (INTRODUCTION) Part I for the dating of Valerius' poem. Vessey (Stattius and the Thebaid:178) points out the existence of a certain number of verbal echoes between the Thebaid and the Argonautica.

27. Nonetheless, there is a hint at 343-5 that the women's suspicion was not entirely groundless: we hear of the surviving Thracian women who were believed not to have committed adultery with the Lemnian men (*stat maerens atavos reges regesque maritos / Thressa manus, quaecumque faces timuisse iugales / credita nec dominae sanctum tetigisse cubile*).

28. She summons Fear, Discord, Ire, Treachery, Frenzy and Death to her aid, and strikes the first fateful blow herself, and, even at the final stage of taking up swords, has need to drive them on with a lash (196-215).

29. Burkert (1970:7-8) has pointed out the ritualistic aspects of this account, that these features - the disguise of the semi-divine king, the way to the sea, the casting off of the statue - all reflect a Lemnian ritual of departure, corresponding to one of arrival, rebirth from the sea.

30. See, for example, Krumboltz (1955:125ff), Schetter (1960:5ff) and Vessey (Stattius and the Thebaid:171ff) for detailed examinations of the similarities and differences between the versions of Apollonius, Valerius and Statius.

31. The island will of course no longer be wealthy or populous by the end of her tale.

32. Statius does not give any reason for the Lemnians' disrespect towards Venus, as Valerius had done.

33. Statius makes only passing reference (*nec fidi populum miserata mariti* 69) to the myth, expanded on in some detail in Valerius' account, of how Lemnos had once saved Vulcan's life.

34. Likewise is queen Amata described, when she rages in Latium under the influence of Allecto in Aen 7. In the Thebaid, Statius employs the simile to describe the desperate insane behaviour of a woman thwarted

by the insensitive behaviour of a man, viz. Jocasta who is compared to Agave at Theb 11.318-20.

35. The simile at 5.92-4, in which Polyxo is compared to a raving Thyiad, clearly recalls the parallel description of Dido at Aen 4.300-3: *saevit inops animi, totamque incensa per urbem / bacchatur; qualis commotis excita sacris / Thyias, ubi audito stimulant trieterica Baccho / orgia, nocturnusque vocat clamore Cithaeron*. Like Polyxo, Dido is driven mad by the insentient behaviour of the opposite sex, while, on the divine level, Venus is the instigator of the madness.

36. See Chapter 3, 4 and 5 for the same theme in the characterisation of Argia, Antigone and Jocasta. These women however sacrifice their femininity for a good cause: in order to fight furor, they are forced to take on the appearance thereof.

37. The traditional motive, their usurpation at the hands of captive Thracian women, is relegated to an insignificant position at the end of her speech (*Bistonides veniunt fortasse maritae* 5.142). Thus, as Schetter (1960:55) has observed,

"die von Statius in den Mittelpunkt gerückte Liebesentbehrung der Frauen als Ansatzpunkt für den Furor stellt die konsequente Weiterführung des Erotischen als tragenden Motivs der lemnischen Geschehnisse dar".

38. At the instigation of their father, Danaus' fifty daughters murdered their bridegrooms on their wedding-night (we recall that one daughter, Hypermnestra, spared her husband); Procne served up to her husband Tereus the flesh of their son Itys.

39. "Frauen bedürfen denn auch für die Mordtat keines weiteren Anstosses und keiner erneuten Nötigung; diese tritt mit unheimlicher Folgerichtigkeit aus ihrem ganz in blutdürstigen Furor verwandelten Wesen hervor" (Schetter 1960:17).

40. See below Part IV B) for an examination of this simile.

41. See Bonner (1966:277-8), on the declamatory fondness for descriptions of excessive cruelty and horrible death.

42. Lycaste is likened in a simile (231-3) to a tamed wild beast which is goaded into savagery. For wild beast similes in the Thebaid, see Chapter 3 (ANTIGONE) Part IV.

43. This scene reminds us of a similar one in Aen 2.270ff, where Venus appears to Aeneas on Troy's last night, exhorting him to take to the sea with his comrades and his home-gods. Legras (1905:64) makes a detailed list of correspondences between the scene of Hypsipyle and Thoas here, and Aeneas' solicitude towards Anchises in Aen 2.

44. See Appendix B (5.2) for possible emendation in line 316.

45. The echo of the Aeneid is undeniable here: we recall the pyre which Dido builds for Aeneas' possessions to dissimulate her suicidal

intentions: at regina, pyra penetrati in sede sub auras / erecta, ingenti taedis atque ilice secta, intenditque locum sertis, et fronde coronat / funerea; super exuvias ensemque relictum / effigiemque toro locat, haud ignara futuri (Aen 4.504-8). The influence of Virgil on the narrative as a whole is also discernible: Hypsipyle's narrative at this point echoes Aeneas' tale in Aen 2 of Troy's last night.

46. See below Part IV C) for a discussion of this simile.

47. Evans (1948:198) discusses the portraiture here of Jason, shining star (774-86), and of Hypsipyle, modest (yet crafty) maiden (790-2).

48. See Bonner (1966:280-1) on the declamatory fondness (inherited by Virgil, Ovid, Seneca, Lucan and Statius) for the descriptio tempestatis. See also Mozley (1933:35) for a comparison of storm scenes in Virgil, Ovid and Statius.

49. Polyxo plays no part in convincing the women to accept the Argonauts, as she does in Apollonius' and Valerius' accounts. These women need no such external encouragement: the goddesses Venus and Juno alone symbolize the return of normal femininity.

50. The arrival of the Argonauts seems, therefore, to be the fulfilment of Venus' promise, in her (alleged) dream-appearance to Polyxo: ipsa faces alias melioraque foedera iungam (5.138).

51. See Appendix B (5.3) for a possible emendation and rearrangement in lines 449-52.

52. The chaste maiden, as Schetter points out (1960:55), was one of the stock erotic types of epic poetry.

53. See Appendix B (5.4) for the retention of fatum in line 453.

54. In Valerius' account, the Argonauts only remained a few days at Lemnos.

55. See Appendix B (5.5) for the emendation in line 466.

56. This is a convention of epic farewells between man and woman. Compare these lines, for example, to Her 5.55-6, where Oenone describes her misery at Paris' departure: prosequor infelix oculis abeuntia vela, / qua licet, et lacrimis umet harena meis. Similarly at Ach 2.25-6, Deidamia is described at Achilles' departure: pendebat coniunx oculisque in carbasa fixis / ibat et ipsa freto, et puppem iam sola videbat. See Chapter 7 (DEIDAMIA) Part IV for details.

57. Here, as at 5.47, Hypsipyle recalls Virgil's Andromache: compare Aen 3.317ff (heu! quis te casus delectam coniuge tanto / excipit, aut quae digna satis fortuna revisit? / Hectoris) and 3.329 (me famulo famulamque Heleno transmisit habendam).

III. EVENTS IN NEMEA: A) THE DEATH OF OPHELTES

B) LYCURGUS' ANGER; HYPsipYLE REUNITED WITH HER SONS

58. Representations of Hypsipyle in the pictorial arts of antiquity: Webster (1967:306) lists two pictorial representations of Euripides' Hypsipyle. One is the Apulian amphora (Naples M.N.3255), depicting the stage building and the main human characters, plus Dionysos, Zeus and Nemea. The other is a wall painting from Pompeii (Naples M.N.9039) of Amphiaraus with his jug, and Hypsipyle with the baby. There is also a relief in the Palazzo Spada at Rome: the serpent coiled around Opheltes, being attacked by two of the Argives, while Hypsipyle is seen retreating in the background, hands up in horror, her pitcher at her feet (Roscher i.473). There is a vase-painting of the dead boy on a bier being attended by two women, while Eurydice stands at the palace between the suppliant Hypsipyle and the dignified Amphiaraus.

59. See Apollod.Bibl 3.6.4 for the main elements of the story as we know it: Hypsipyle as guide to the Argive army left behind Opheltes, sold into slavery by the Lemnian women, the abandoned Opheltes killed by a serpent, the Nemean games instituted.

60. A lost play of Aeschylus dealt with the institution of the Nemean games for a dead child, Archemorus.

61. Her complimentary greeting "How blessed your mother, whoever she was!" (Fr.1.i.5) is a neat touch of dramatic irony.

62. See Vessey (1970:50-1) for a list of the more substantial of these similarities.

63. See von Moisy (1971:36) for discussion of these parenthetic, prophetic "reflections".

64. Statius' elaborate description of the serpent is clearly inspired by Ovid Met.3.31ff, and thus indirectly by Virgil's sea-serpents in Aen 2.

65. quis tibi, parve, deus tam magni pondera fati
 sorte dedit? Tune hoc vix prima ad limina vitae
 hoste iaces? an ut inde sacer per saecula Grais
 gentibus et tanto dignus morerere sepulchro?
 occidis extremae dstrictus verberere caudae
 ignaro serpente puer, fugit ilicet artus
 somnia, at in solam patuerunt lumina mortem. 534-40

See von Moisy (1971:28-9) for close examination of these lines. Notice particularly how, by the device of the reflection (here in the form of an apostrophe to Opheltes), the decisive moment of action (the actual death-blow) is passed over. The final atrocity of the dying Tydeus (8.758ff) is similarly (un)depicted.

66. While being raped by Achilles, Deidamia also fills the wood with cries (Ach 1.645 illa quidem clamore nemus...replevit), but unlike Hypsipyle, her calls for help are not answered.

67. The changes here, in the identities of the snake and his slayer, are justified in terms of Statius' overall structure of characterisation: Capaneus, the blasphemer, kills a creature which is sacred to a god, an

act which prefigures his own death (by Jove's thunderbolt) in Book 10.

68. This epithet reminds us of the great suffering she has already endured.

69. See Appendix B (5.6) for the emended transposition in line 593.

70. See below Part IV C) for a discussion of this simile.

71. Compare lines 613-15 (*ubi verba ligatis / imperfecta sonis risusque et murmura soli / intellecta mihi?*) to Statius' description of his own tender charge over a beloved slave-child at *Silv* 5.5.79-87 (...*cui verba sonosque / monstravi questusque et vulnera caeca resolvi... 81-2*).

To what extent does this depiction of Hypsipyle's position and mother-like love for Opheltes reflect the attitude of nurses in contemporary Rome? Ancient sources testify that the Late Republic Roman aristocracy used *nutrices*, wet-nurses, to feed and tend small children (Dixon 1988:120ff). Nurses were usually brought into the home on salary or were part of the child's *familia*. The *assa nutrix* was a nurse who did not provide milk but tended the child in its early years. After the baby was weaned, the nurse became known as *educatrix*, nanny (Gardner 1986:241). Dixon (1988:127) identifies the primary bond between nurses and their grown-up aristocratic charges as one of patronage. In the early years there was room for close ties to develop between them. Inscriptions demonstrate that nurses often had marriage or *contubernium* relationships, and children of their own. Dixon (1988:141ff) does not regard these nurses as "mother-substitutes" since they were the social inferiors of their charges, and also because they supplemented the role of the mother rather than replacing it. On Roman nurses, see further Bradley, K R 1986. *Wet-nursing at Rome: a study in social relations*, in Rawson, B (ed.) *The family in Ancient Rome: new perspectives* London-Sydney:Croom Helm. Gardner (1986:241-5) describes some of the conditions of nursing contracts.

72. Legras (1905:73) points out the similarity of this description to Virgil's portrayal of Evander's grief for his son Pallas at *Aen* 11.148ff.

73. Whereas in Euripides' play it is Eurydice who wishes to institute the vendetta against Hypsipyle supported by Lycurgus, Statius has Lycurgus first launch himself at Hypsipyle with a sword (5.656ff) and then Eurydice continue his vendetta in 6.167ff. Arico (1961:57-8) claims that Statius' purpose here was to fuse two versions of the myth.

74. Amphiaraus does not play the fundamental role in the Thebaid which he has in Euripides' play: whereas it is Amphiaraus who consoles Eurydice in the play, it is Adrastus who speaks words of comfort to Lycurgus at 6.45ff.

75. See below for a discussion of the value placed on small children in antiquity.

76. See Appendix B (5.7) for the emendation in 692.

77. For Statius' ideas on the tenderness of foster-motherhood, see *Silvae* 2.1: at lines 166ff Melior's grief at the funeral is described as more cogent than that of the parents themselves. The dead boy at his funeral is compared to Palaemon when his mother discovered his drowned body (179-80), and Opheltes who had been savaged by a snake, when the flames consumed his body (sic et in anguiferae ludentem gramine Lerna / rescissum squamis avidus bibit ignis Ophelten 181-2). See also *Silv* 5.5, the lament for a beloved child: he mentions the death of Linus, beloved of Apollo (another great bard), at lines 55-6. Lines 81-7 contain a winsome description of Statius' loving tenderness towards the boy as a little baby.

Kenney (E J 1964. *Erotion* again. *G&R* n.s.11, 77-81) has successfully analysed *Martial* 5.37 as a tender lament for a young slave-girl, rather than as a lover's address to his mistress.

Two recent studies devoted specifically to the issue of the ancient attitude to children, reflect the ongoing division of opinion on the subject. Golden (M 1988. *Did the ancients care when their children died?* *G&R* n.s.35, 152-63) discusses the high infant mortality rate in antiquity and the problem of exposure of infants, and concludes firmly that there is enough evidence to support the belief that the ancients did care when their children died. On the other hand, Wiedemann (T 1989. *Adults and Children in the Roman Empire* Routledge-Yale) traces a change in attitude towards children from the classical period, when children were excluded from civic life, to the Christian period, when they were given equal rights with adults to a place in the religious community.

IV. SIMILES USED TO DESCRIBE HYPSSIPYLE

78. To the end, Hypsipyle is scarcely able to believe that she has discovered her sons again, and she retains her impassivity: *illa velut rupes immoto saxea visu* (5.723). For this proverbial description of inflexibility in the mouths of other female characters, see *Venus'* description of *Mars* at 3.280-1 and *Argia's* description of her own tender-heartedness at 3.693-5.

79. At 12.224-7, *Argia* journeying to find her husband's body is compared, in her terrifying determination, to a votary of *Cybele* - see Chapter 2 Part V B).

80. The picture of the loving childminder is one *Statius* is fond of: see, for example *Silv* 5.5. 79-87. See above Part III n77.

81. See above Part I.

82. The different methods which *Hypsipyle* and *Cybele* employ to distract the babies help to characterize them - and the children.

83. See above Part I.

84. This is thus a more complex deer simile than *Theb* 6.598-601, where speed is the only point of comparison between the athletes at *Opheltes'*

funeral games and stags frightened by the far-off roar of a hungry lion.

85. For discussion of beast-of-prey similes in the Thebaid, see Chapter 3 (ANTIGONE) Part IV C).

86. The word *fera* is also used of Tisiphone (1.115; 7.5623) and the Sphinx (2.505).

87. The only other deer simile in the Iliad (16.756-61) compares the body of Kebriones to that of a slain deer over which lions fight.

88. Virgil exhibits a fondness for the subject: see, for example, the descriptions of deer at Geo 3.368-75; Geo 3.411-3.

89. Virgil modelled this simile on Homer Il 22.188ff and Apoll Argon 2.278ff, but enlarged and adapted the image. Ovid in turn imitates Virgil at Met 1.533ff, where Apollo's pursuit of Daphne is likened to a Gallic hound's pursuit of a hare. For a discussion of this simile see Briggs (1980:43-4).

90. This simile has been thoroughly analysed by Otis (1963:71-88), and by Ferguson, J 1970-1. Fire and the Wound: the Imagery of Aeneid 4.1ff. PVS 10, 57-63.

91. That is, the unholy furor of the Lemnian women, incited by Polyxo at the instigation of Venus.

92. See above Chapter 3 (ANTIGONE) Part IV A).

93. The Argive women achieve release from their suffering when they arrive at the altar of Clementia (12.515ff): here, they are compared to cranes migrating thankfully for the winter (see Chapter 3 n57).

94. Though Hypsipyle is not the mother of Opheltes, she behaves at all times as if she were: see above Part III.

95. Alcyon ("kingfisher") was the daughter of Aeolus and the wife of Ceyx ("gannet"), son of the Morning Star. They were changed into kingfishers because they were drowned at sea and her despair was so great that the gods reunited them.

96. The words in bold type are reminiscent of those used in the Hypsipyle simile (*maesto* 602; *solus in arbore paret* 603).

97. See Chapter 3 (ANTIGONE) Part IV C).

98. For a discussion thereof, see Kytzler (1962:147). Similarly, the Argive women, dismayed by Ornytus' news, are like heifers filled with fear at the roar of a Hyrcanian lioness (12.169-72). The simile invokes their abandonment and loss of protection in the face of a gruesome enemy (Kytzler 1962:147). - cf. 2.675; 8.124-6; 11.27-31. See also Silv 2.5.8, the poem for the tame lion.

99. See discussion von Moisy (1971:92).

CHAPTER SIX: THETIS IN STATIUS' ACHILLEID

optima...genetrix (Ach 1.143-4)

- I. INTRODUCTION: PRE-STATIAN THETIS
- II. INITIAL CONCERN: THE PLAN IS FORMED
- III. ARRIVAL AT SCYROS: THE PLAN IS IMPLEMENTED
- IV. THE PLAN IS UNDERMINED
- V. THE PLAN FAILS
- VI. SIMILES USED TO DESCRIBE THETIS

I. INTRODUCTION: PRE-STATIAN THETIS

For Statius' stated project, a poetic composition narrating the complete life of the hero Achilles¹, there was no precise literary precedent.² The principles of imitatio dictated that the poet should then select material from a variety of sources. What primarily concern us here are the sources for the character of Thetis.

Homer portrays all the main female characters in the Iliad (Helen, Andromache, Hecabe, Briseis) as extremely tragic figures, frustrated and desperately helpless in the face of a course of events which they cannot determine, possessing a degree of intensity and depth of emotion largely ignored by the male characters (Farron 1979:15ff). In the Iliad, Thetis is a relatively minor figure with few appearances, and she is characterised by helplessness and impotent grief: in Book 18, she is the epitome of sorrowful vulnerability in the face of her son's mortality. Yet she serves a crucial function: because Achilles is her son, she persuades Zeus to set events in motion. At Il 1.394-412, Achilles asks her to intercede on his behalf with Zeus, reminding her of how she had saved Zeus when the other Olympian gods had wished to

overthrow his rule. Similarly, at 6.123-37, Diomedes tells how she saved Dionysus, and at 18.394-405, Hephaestus tells how she had saved him after Hera had cast him out of Olympus. These are reminders of her supreme power to "ward off destruction": besides Thetis, only Zeus, Apollo and Achilles are capable of this power in mythology: only they can ward off or generate $\alpha\chi\omicron\varsigma$ (grief) for mortals. In the Theogony (succession myth), the motif of binding of a superhuman adversary was one of the chief ways, in a realm where there is no death, to assert divine sovereignty over a challenger. Thetis' act of rescuing Zeus thus restored the cosmic equilibrium: with the greatest $\alpha\chi\omicron\varsigma$, she is therefore potentially the greatest threat to the gods.

Slatkin (1986:1-24) attempts to see Thetis' ambiguous role in the Iliad in the context of her mythology. Thetis has elements of Eos (Dawn), Calypso and Aphrodite: the immortal goddess with the mortal lover (pathetic and erotic elements, associated with impenetrable clouds, veils and concealment), and the mortal child (maternal aspect, guardian and protector of child). In Laconian poetic traditions, Thetis is the creatrix, the generative principle of the universe, with the capacity for metamorphosis (since she "contains" the potential shapes of all things). She has connections with Metis (also a sea power and shape-shifter, also loved by Zeus, and destined to have a son greater than his father). In the cosmogony, she is therefore a force against chaos.

Although Thetis is thus infinitely capable of snatching Achilles away from danger or of rendering him immortal, she does neither in the Iliad: after she has asserted that he must die, she gives him aid for his greatest fight - with a suit of divine armour which does not

ultimately save his life. Slatkin believes that Thetis is characterised as helpless in the Iliad for the sake of the primacy of the theme of mortality. Achilles' ἀχος leads to his μῆνις (wrath), and this is the motivating force for the plot of the Iliad. Thetis' own "wrath" (potent in another framework) is therefore subsumed into that of her son (who shares her reciprocal ἄχος). Thetis' dark shawl, in Book 24, carries the implicit reminder of her μῆνις (wrath) which is never explicitly mentioned in the poem. Her acceptance of his mortality means that her wrath has been defused, leaving only her grief. Her sorrow is twofold: grief at having to marry a mortal (Il 18.429-37); grief at the mortality of her son. We realise that Zeus' hegemony has been purchased with Achilles' death: cosmic equilibrium in the Iliad is bought at the cost of human mortality. Against the unthinkable alternative (continuous evolution, violent succession, and chaos), Thetis again features in the role of protectress of Olympian stability.

Homer's account of Achilles' pre-war career (very different to that of Statius) is as follows: Achilles was brought up by Phoenix at Phthia (Il 18.436), taught medicine by Chiron (Il 11.832), and sent to Troy with Thetis' consent, though she knew his fate (Il 18.439ff). Scyros is named as one of the cities which Achilles captured on his way to Troy (Il 9.667f), and as the place where his son Neoptolemos was brought up (Il 19.326ff; Od 11.506ff).

Pindar is the first extant poet to name Chiron as Achilles' guardian (Pyth 6.21ff; Nem 3.43ff). Pindar Isthmian Ode 8 (celebrating the victory of Cleander of Aegina in the boys' pancratium) tells at lines 23-60 the myth of the Aeacidae: how Zeus and Poseidon were rivals for the hand of Thetis. Neither of them prevailed, however, since Themis

(guardian of the social order) predicted that Thetis would bear a princely son who would be stronger than his father. She therefore advised that Thetis be married off to a mortal, so that her son might die in battle. She suggested Peleus, son of Aeacus, as the bridegroom, and exhorted the gods to have Nereus' daughter safely in love with him, and not to allow her to cause strife between the gods again (and so cause another intergenerational succession struggle). Here too, Thetis is revealed as a figure of cosmic proportions, whose existence has profound implications for the gods (Slatkin 1986:12).

Euripides' (lost) *Scyrians* dealt with Achilles' stay on Scyros and his departure from the court of Lycomedes. In Euripides' version (as reconstructed by Webster 1967:95-7), Thetis disguised Achilles as a girl³ and gave him into the care of the unknowing Lycomedes, who brought him up with his own orphan daughter.⁴ Achilles grew up and raped Deidamia. The papyrus Hypothesis breaks off at that point in the story when the Greeks sent Diomedes to Scyros on the strength of an oracle. Webster (1967:96) agrees with Körte (1934:1) that in Euripides, as in Apollodorus (3.13.8), Neoptolemos was born before Odysseus discovered Achilles with the trumpet-blast ruse.

The play began with an invocation to Helen, spoken either by Deidamia's nurse (as Körte believes) or, which Webster believes to be more likely, by Thetis (Gallivotti 1933:177) - since only she has complete knowledge of the story at the beginning of the play. The prologue was followed by a dialogue between the nurse and Lycomedes, in which she tells the king of his daughter's "illness" and they decide to conceal her condition. This may have led to a confrontation scene between Achilles and

Lycomedes, and also possibly (as Körte has suggested) to a depiction of the birth of Neoptolemos (with Achilles agreeing to marry Deidamia). Thereafter, Diomedes and Odysseus presumably arrived (announced perhaps by the chorus of Scyrians). The remaining fragments are from a dialogue between Achilles and Odysseus, probably a debate in which Achilles was persuaded to leave Deidamia and go to the Trojan war. This scene was thus presumably preceded by a dialogue between Lycomedes and Odysseus, and the discovery of Achilles.

Sophocles also wrote a (completely lost) play entitled Scyrians and, together with Euripides, this portrayal may have influenced Hellenistic writers.⁵

In Book 4 of Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*, after Jason and Medea have been sent on their way by Circe, Hera predicts that Medea will someday be joined to Achilles, her true soulmate, in Elysium (810-15). She does this, of course, to enlist Thetis' aid for the safe passage of the Argo (815-32). Thetis agrees, and speeds off to where the Argo is anchored, to deliver Hera's message to Peleus, who, we hear, was her husband. At 866-79, the story of Thetis' unhappy marriage to Peleus is outlined: she is depicted as a strong woman, who left him out of anger, because of his inability to comprehend her attempts to render their son immortal.⁶ Book 4 contains a single light-hearted passage (930-64) which contrasts strongly with the prevailing air of gloom: as the Argo passes through the Symplegades, Thetis orders the Nereids to help lift the boat out of the water. They are compared here to dolphins frolicking around a ship, and to girls playing with a ball. In Book 4, therefore, Thetis is portrayed as a powerful woman in control of her situation.

No Roman poet had written a complete life of Achilles before Statius.⁷ Catullus 64, the epyllion describing the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, influenced Statius' portrayal of Thetis in some ways (as well as providing a source for verbal echoes). The poem tells how one of the Argonauts, Peleus, fell in love with Thetis, who did not disdain marriage with a mortal, and that Jupiter himself realised that the marriage was fated to take place (64.21).⁸ Reference is explicitly made to the legend of Jove's love for Thetis (64.26-7). Thetis' illustrious ancestry is mentioned: she is daughter of Nereus and granddaughter of Tethys and Oceanus (64.28-30). Chiron leads the procession of wedding guests bearing gifts (64.278ff), but Apollo and Diana are conspicuously absent from that party (64.299-302). The Parcae foretell the future of their unborn child to Peleus and Thetis at their wedding (344);⁹ they also predict Achilles' death at Troy, for they describe his funeral and the sacrifice of Polyxena (362-70).

As we shall see, Virgil's Aeneid, though it contains no treatment of Thetis herself, influenced Statius greatly: Juno, Venus, Dido, Andromache and Aeneas variously provided material for his portrayal of Thetis, and Virgil's diction and narrative form are often recalled.

The influence of Ovid in these areas is equally pervasive, and more significant than that of Virgil for creating the tone and humour which Statius desired in the Achilleid (Fantham 1979:457).¹⁰ The motifs of the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, and the Scyros story, are employed by Ovid in various of his poems. At *Ars Am* 1.682-704, Achilles' disguise and the rape of Deidamia are briefly described (by way of a didactic exemplum on the easy virtue of women). Here Ovid says that

Achilles' acquiescence in his mother's shameful scheme was out of filial pietas (689-90).¹¹ In the *Metamorphoses*, Thetis appears as a potent figure. See, for example, her portrayal at *Met* 11.217-265. Here Ovid (217-220) states explicitly that Peleus is more proud of the divinity of his wife (the daughter of Nereus) than of that of his grandfather (Jove, who has many grandsons). Proteus' prophecy to Thetis is mentioned (221-3): how her son will grow up to excel the deeds of his father, and be called greater than her.¹² Ovid provides a different account of the relationship of Peleus and Thetis from that given in Pindar: here is a typical scene of a god raping a nymph or mortal girl (Peleus is given superhuman aid, Thetis is a Nereid): Peleus attempts to rape her, but she changes her shape and eludes him (238-46). Proteus advises him on how to catch her (247-56): by binding her with thongs as she sleeps and not allowing her to deceive him with a thousand transformations. The ruse works (257-65): she admits defeat, and Peleus gets his wicked way.¹³

Seneca's *Troades* (c AD 47) although belonging to a genre different from that of the *Achilleid*, has clearly influenced Statius' theme and diction. At *Tro* 213-4, there is a reference to the prophecy which caused Thetis to hide Achilles on Scyros, and the fact that Scyros was home to Neoptolemos, his son. As Fantham (1979:457) hastens to point out, we need more than mere mention of the same mythological story to postulate imitation or influence. She therefore adduces more substantial evidence of borrowing: the use of similar diction in the description of the same mythological events¹⁴, the borrowing of traits (both from Seneca's description of Achilles as well as from the portrayal of the doomed Astyanax) for the characterisation of Achilles

and, more significantly, the treatment of a similar mythological episode where situation and rhetorical purpose can be transferred: as Thetis (Ach 1.259-60, 270-2) must first persuade Achilles to accept a female disguise, so Andromache (Tro 503-6) must persuade Astyanax to accept the shame of hiding in his father's tomb.¹⁵

In his Thetis, Statius has created a figure who is unique to the Achilles-tradition.¹⁶ As a conniving goddess and the epitome of the anxia mater, she has elements of Homer's Thetis and Virgil's Venus, but one feature of her characterisation separates her clearly from any of these: by distortion and exaggeration of all the traditional elements, Statius has given Thetis a distinctly comic treatment.

Thetis of Statius' Achilleid has little in common with the female protagonists of the Thebaid, human or divine. She has none of the nobility and tragic dignity of Jocasta, the mother of the warring brothers, or of the captive Hypsipyle, nurse and surrogate mother to the doomed infant Opheltes. In situation, she resembles more the minor maternal characters, particularly the nymph, Atalanta, who in Book 4 tries to prevent her hotheaded young son, Parthenopaeus, from going to the war. Atalanta's concern for her immature boy, her haste to his side, her persuasive attempts to detain him, her ultimate failure, all prefigure the behaviour of Thetis. She also lacks the potency of the goddesses in the Thebaid, Juno (the patroness of the Argives, who implores the aid of her husband, Jupiter), Venus (who wreaks such destruction on Lemnos in Book 5, and who champions the Thebans, by imploring the aid of her lover, Mars), Pallas (who supports Tydeus) and Diana (who strives to ennoble the cause of the doomed Parthenopaeus).

The Thebaid, after all, is a sombre poem with a mythological theme which can hardly be said to invite frivolity¹⁷, whereas the legendary account of a mother's attempts to protect her adolescent son from military service has obvious scope for humour.

I have structured the rest of this chapter according to the "rise and fall" of Thetis' transvestite scheme: we follow an account of the narrative wherein the plan is formed (II), implemented (III), undermined (IV) and destroyed (V). Thereafter follows a section (VI) on the similes used to describe Thetis.

II. INITIAL CONCERN: THE PLAN IS FORMED (ACH 1.1-241)
A) MOTHERLY CONCERN (20-51)

After the introduction (1-13) and the prefatory dedication to the emperor (14-19), the narrative begins. The scene is set for the entrance of the first protagonist - Paris is returning from his guilty mission in Greece, when Thetis starts in terror (*expavit* 26) at the implications of his act, and hastens to come to her son's aid (*nec mora, et undosis turba comitante sororum / prosiluit thalamis* 27-8).¹⁸

The authorial comment *heu numquam vana parentum/auguria!* (25-6) is ambiguous. It may mean that she recognises the implications of Hecuba's dire prediction, mentioned at line 22 (*plenaque materni referens praesagia somni* is said of Paris at 22).¹⁹ Equally, the words may mean that Thetis too has had a sense of foreboding about the consequences of Paris' rape of Helen.

In her monologue (30-51), she expresses directly her feeling of unease about Paris' voyage. His fleet is dangerous to her (*me petit haec, mihi classis...funesta minatur* 31) because she recognises the truth about

Proteus' warnings (agnosco monitus et Protea vera locutum 32)²⁰, and the war she foresees out of the marriage of Paris and Helen (33-4) will demand her own son Achilles, who will be eager to go (iam pelago terrisque meus quaeretur Achilles. / et volet ipse sequi 37-8). She reproaches herself for having allowed him to be tutored by the centaur Chiron in his cave on Mount Pelion (38-9). Sentimentally, she imagines him there, playing at the battle of the Lapiths and already strong enough to wield his father's spear (40-1).²¹

She laments her sorrow and her untimely fears (o dolor, o seri materno in corde timores 42), and wishes that she might have wrecked Paris' fleet with a storm at the outset of his voyage (43-6).²² But, seeing that it is too late for preventative measures (47), Thetis now moves from self-reproach to desperate resolve: she decides to go to Neptune and, humbling herself totally (supplex miseranda 50), to entreat him by her grandparents Tethys and Oceanus for one single storm (48-51).

B) INTERVIEW WITH NEPTUNE (51-94)

Straight after her monologue, she beholds the timeous arrival of Neptune (51-2). After a (delightfully winsome) description of the arrival of Neptune (52-60), Thetis' highly rhetorical suasoria begins (61ff). She starts with a declamatory commonplace on the evils of sailing (61-5)²³, expressed in a way that is pertinent to the situation: she reproaches Neptune for having allowed the passage of ships (61-3), and recalls the first fleet, the Argo (64-5) - which she proceeds to compare to that of Paris (plunder by sea and violation of hospitality 66-7). She stresses first the sorrow this ship will cause to heaven and earth (eheu quos gemitus terris caeloque daturus 68)²⁴,

and then to herself (quos mihi 69); and she complains bitterly that all must pay thus dearly for the victory of Venus on Mount Ida, who shows herself ungrateful to the sea which bore her (69-70). After she has thus "scolded" Neptune, she finally puts her request for a storm (71-6). It is cunningly framed: she appeals to his conscience (it is the least he can do, if he has any regard left for the sea, has saltem...- si quis adhuc undis honor, obrue puppes 71-2), pride (she asks alternatively to be given power over the sea, aut permitte fretum 73 - a thing which she knows he would never allow), justice (she assures him that she desires only a slight storm, which will cause no undue suffering and emphasises that it is lawfully proper that she should look after her own child, nulla inclementia (sc.me movet): fas sit / pro nato timuisse mihi 73-4) and pity (she asks that he grant her the wherewithal to drive away her sorrow, and begs him not to wish her to exile herself at the place of Achilles' tomb (da pellere luctus, / nec tibi de tantis placeat me fluctibus unum / litus et Iliaci scopulos²⁵ habitare sepulcri 74-6).

She accompanies this plea with more of the devices characteristic of the suppliant human female: torn cheeks, bared bosom and passive resistance (orabat laniata genas et pectore nudo / caeruleis obstabat²⁶ equis 77-8). Neptune, in his turn is gentle (78-9) but firm in his refusal: that which she requests is against the ordinances of Fate and of Jupiter (fata vetant, ratus ordo deis miscere cruentas / Europamque Asiamque manus, consultaque belli/ Iuppiter et tristes edixit caedibus²⁷ annos 81-3). By way of recompense for her son's mortality, he²⁸ promises great glory for Achilles at Troy (84-91) , as well as eventual revenge for Thetis herself (91-4). The scene is reminiscent

of Juno's request of a storm of Aeolus in Aen 1.65ff.²⁹ However,
whereas Aeolus immediately grants her request, Thetis is completely
unsuccessful.³⁰ A closer parallel is therefore Thebaid 3.260ff, where
Venus is likewise unable to sway Mars away from his purpose (war with
her beloved Thebes), since he tells her, dictis amicis (294)³¹ that he
is acting at fate's behest (fata vetant 316).

C) INTERVIEW WITH CHIRON (95-158); MEETING WITH ACHILLES (158-97)

Now Thetis behaves singularly like Juno in Aeneid 1: after Neptune's
solemn pronouncement, Thetis appears submissive to his order (Dixerat.
illa gravi vultum demissa repulsa 95)³² while actually, no whit less
determined in her resolve, she conceives a second plan and sets off to
visit Chiron (quae iam excire fretum et ratibus bellare parabat /
Iliacis, alios animo commenta paratus, / tristis ad Haemonias detorquet
bracchia terras 96-8).³³

She does not delight in the joyous welcome which nature (101-3) gives
her (illa nihil gavisata locis... 104), absorbed as she is with scheming
(sed coepta fatigat / pectora consilia... 104-5) and the cunning which
her love for Achilles has engendered (et sollers pietate magistra /
longaevum Chirona petit 105-6). Herein she is reminiscent of Venus in
Aeneid 1.657ff, whose love for her son Aeneas and her fear of Juno's
spite compel her to devise the scheme of substituting Cupid for
Ascanius (and so cause Dido to fall in love with the father and son).

After a description of Chiron's cave³⁴ (106-118 parallel to the
ecphrasis on Neptune at 52-60), Chiron himself is pictured awaiting
Achilles' return from hunting (119-21), when he sees Thetis' arrival

and hastens down to the shore to welcome her and to lead her back to the cave (121-5). She, all the while impatiently scanning her surroundings for sight of Achilles (*iamdudum tacito lustrat Thetis omnia visu / nec perpessa moras* 126-7), bursts into speech (127ff). She demands to know the whereabouts of her son and reproaches Chiron for allowing the boy out of his sight at all (127-9). She mendaciously proceeds to explain the cause of her concern (129ff): how she is afflicted with fears because of the terrible portents which she has received from the gods in her sleep (129-34). The fear and the existence of dire portents are true enough, as we know, and the details which she provides of her dreams (threatening swords and savage beasts 131-3) as well as her dream-solutions (dipping her son in the Styx a second time 133-4) are psychologically possible - she may well have dreamt these things, or at least thought them in her wakening nightmares. The second part of her tale, however (and the important part for Chiron's purpose, since it involves his co-operation), is a complete fabrication (135-9): she says that Proteus (*Carpathius vates* 136) has ordered her to rid herself of *metus* (135) by a magic rite and purification of Achilles in far-off secret waters.³⁵

At 139-140, Thetis betrays her deceit (to us but evidently not to the naïve Chiron) by her impatience to be gone - a sign that her own lies are tedious to her (*donaque - sed longum cuncta enumerare vetorque; / trade magis!*). Chiron shows by acquiescing to her demand (143ff) that he interprets her impatience as mere maternal concern (which, ironically enough, it is), but the concluding comment of the poet after Thetis' speech leaves us in no doubt as to the mendacity of her words (as well as the necessity for deceit): *sic ficta parens: neque enim*

ille dedisset, / si molles habitus et tegmina foeda fateri / ausa seni (141-3). She has to lie, for if Chiron had known her real design (the first mention of it in the poem) he would certainly not have given up his charge.

As it is, he praises her for being an excellent mother (optima... / ... genetrix 143-4) and bids her luck in her endeavour to appease the gods, whose invidia she has aroused due to her over-ambitious hopes for her son 144-6). He confesses that he too has had forebodings that nescio quid magnum... / vis festina parat (147-8) regarding Achilles³⁶, whose newly-acquired attitude of defiance and mischief has led him into trouble with the other Centaurs, who are planning reprisals (149-155).³⁷ He starts to draw an unfavourable comparison between Achilles and the young Hercules and Theseus (156-8), but breaks off (sed taceo 158) at the arrival of Achilles.

When Thetis sees her son for the first time, she is seized by a gelidus... pallor (158)³⁸ at his beauty (as well as perhaps at the thought of the danger he is in). He is noticeably like his mother in looks (plurima vultu / mater inest 164-5).³⁹ When he catches sight of her, he flings away the lion-cubs he is holding and embraces her enthusiastically. As his mother may have noted at this point, so the poet comments on his increased strength and height (iam gravis amplexu iamque aequus vertice matri 173). As she watches Chiron attending to him, her very joy at seeing him pierces her heart (angunt sua gaudia matrem 183), mindful as she is of imminent danger. Chiron invites her to a banquet and tries to distract her anxiety with various entertainments (184-8), and Achilles sings of mighty deeds (188-92), and lastly of Thetis' own wedding and of Pelion (193-4). At this her

anxiety appears to be conquered, for she smiles (*hic victo risit Thetis anxia vultu* 194), but (which is more likely from what follows) she may merely be masking her concern for the present.

D) SCYROS IS CHOSEN (198-216); THEIR DEPARTURE (217-41)

That night, while Achilles enjoys a carefree sleep in his tutor's embrace ⁴⁰, Thetis stays awake, undecided as to where she will hide her son: At Thetis undisonis per noctem in rupibus astans, / quae nato secreta velit, quibus abdere terris ⁴¹ / destinet, huc illuc divisa ⁴² mente volutat (198-200). In an amusing dubitatio she considers and discards various possible hiding-places, either for their warmongery (Thrace 201), hardiness (Macedon 202), noble ambition (Athens 202-3), surfeit of hospitality (Sestos and Abydos 203-4; Delos 206-7) or lack thereof (Lemnos 206). This list may appear long-winded, but perhaps the poet is parodying Thetis' extreme concern for her child, in that she considers all possibilities with such exaggerated care. Then she recalls Scyros, where lately she had heard the sound of girlish mirth ⁴³ (207-9), when she had passed that way in search of Briareus (209-10). She finally chooses this as the hiding-place (*haec placet, haec timidae tellus tutissima matri* ⁴⁴ 211). In a simile (212-6), she is compared to an expectant mother-bird who at last finds a secure tree for her nest (see below Part VI).

She has one further worry (217-8): how to transport her son to Scyros - on her own (218), or with the aid of Triton (219), the winds (219-20), or Iris (220 the rainbow). Finally she summons and bridles her dolphin team (221-6), displaying tender concern for her animals (whom she does not allow too close to the shore, lest the touch of naked earth hurt

them 226-7), as well as for her son, whose sleeping body she carries down to the beach (228-31). Cynthia (the moon) lights her way (231-2) and Chiron escorts her, wading out and hiding his tears as he bids her a speedy return and watches until they are out of sight (232-6). The mountains, the river, Chiron's grotto, the Fauns and the Nymphs all mourn the departure of Achilles (237-41) who, contrary to the expectations of Chiron, is not destined to return again (*illum non alias rediturum* 237).

The episode in which Thetis conveys her sleeping son from Thessaly over the sea to Scyros (Ach 1.228-31 *ipsa dehinc toto resolutum pectore Achillem...ad placidas deportat aquas et iussa tacere / litora*), probably derives from Venus' substitution of Cupid for Ascanius in Virgil's Aeneid 1: she spirits the sleeping Ascanius at Venus *Ascanio placidam per membra quietem / irrigat et fotum gremio dea tollit in altos / Idaliae lucos* (Aen 1.691-3). The Ovidian touches are noticeable: the dolphin-drawn "speedboat", the amusing incongruity of Chiron's affection in combination with his equine nature (232-5) (Fantham 1979:457).⁴⁵

III. ARRIVAL AT SCYROS: THE PLAN IS IMPLEMENTED (242-396) A) INITIAL RESISTANCE; ACHILLES FALLS IN LOVE (242-317)

Next day, they are arrived in Scyros (242-6), when Achilles awakes (247-8). He is bewildered and afraid, and finds everything so strange (248-50) that he scarcely recognises his mother (*dubitatque agnoscere matrem* 250).⁴⁶ She strokes him and hastens to speak soothing (not to mention persuasive) words (*occupat illa manu blandique adfata paventem* 251): she explains that, if she had been granted her promised sors

(252), she would now be in heaven (i.e. married to Jupiter) embracing Achilles, a star, herself a celestial mother without fear of earthly fate (*magnique puerpera caeli / nil humilis Parcas terrenaque fata*⁴⁷ *vererer* 254-5). But Achilles is only half-immortal: *nunc impar tibi,*⁴⁸ *nate, genus, praeclusaque leti / tantum a matre via est* (256-8). The latter statement is ambiguous: it can equally mean that only his mother is able to save his life. She warns him of the great danger which he is in (*quin et metuenda propinquant / tempora et extremis admota pericula metis* 257-8), working gradually towards her suggestion. In military metaphors (which in themselves flatter a beardless boy), she advises a temporary retreat, and that he deign to wear the clothes she offers: *cedamus, paulumque animos submitte viriles / atque habitus dignare meos*⁴⁹ (259-60). She follows up her seemingly shocking suggestion with four significant exempla from mythology: two prominent heroes and two major deities who resorted to this convenient stratagem without in any way⁵⁰ impeding their masculinity:

si Lydia dura
pensa manu mollesque tulit Tirynthius hastas,
si decet aurata Bacchum vestigia palla
verrere, virgineos si Iuppiter induit artus,
nec magnum ambigui fregerunt Caenea sexus... 260-4

The content and language of these exempla will be recalled at various later stages in the narrative: Achilles, carding wool for Deidamia, will recall Hercules here (1.582), his ambiguous appearance will remind us of Caeneus (1.337), and he will be explicitly compared to Bacchus (1.615-8), and to Jupiter (1. 588-91).

If others greater than he have done so before, can he not do it too - as a special favour to his mother; *hac sine, quaeso, minas nubemque*

exire malignam (265)? She promises to take him back to Thessaly soon
(266-7)⁵¹, and implores him again to take on the safe disguise harmless
to his masculinity (cape tuta parumper / tegmina nil nocitura animo
270-1), this time appealing to him by his beauty and youthful pleasures
to come (267-8), and by the favours she has in the past done for him
(enduring earth and a human husband, dipping Achilles in the Styx to
strengthen him 268-70)

Her next words are a reaction to the embarrassed and defiant response
which her request has evoked in Achilles: cur ora reducis / quidve
parant oculi? (271-2). Suggesting a possible reason for his opposition
(pudet hoc mitescere cultu? (272), she answers it (not very
satisfactorily, it appears) by swearing a solemn oath that Chiron will
know nothing of these affairs: per te, care puer, cognata per aequora
iuro, / nesciet hoc Chiron (273-4)⁵². These first vain attempts of
Thetis to persuade her son are likened (274-82) to those of a trainer
initially unsuccessful in trying to tame a wild horse (see below Part
VI).

In two rhetorical questions the narrator introduces the following
section of the story, in which Thetis' plan prevails: quis deus
attonitae fraudes astumque parenti / contulit? indocilem quae mens
detraxit Achillem? (283-4). There is implicit criticism in these words:
the idea that Thetis "seduces" her son away from his firm resolve by
devious means. By chance (forte 286) it is the festal day of Pallas on
Scyros, and the daughters of Lycomedes are out of doors performing the
rites of spring.⁵³ Deidamia's pre-eminent beauty causes Achilles to
fall in love with her.⁵⁴ He would rush forward and upset the rituals,
did not shame (pudor 312) and respect for his mother (reverentia

matris) force him to contain his lust. Inflamed with love for Deidamia, he is likened to a lovestruck bullock (313-7) - with Thetis implicitly likened to the herdsmen who, secretly pleased, restrain him (spectant⁵⁵ hilares obstantque magistri).

B) TRANSFORMATION AND BEAUTIFICATION OF ACHILLES; THETIS' LAST WORDS OF ADVICE (318-48)

Chance has presented to Thetis a golden opportunity (286), which she purposefully seizes (occupat arrepto iam conscia tempore mater 318) in order to add a few compelling addenda to her previous speech: she asks whether it would be so difficult to dance and play amongst these maidens (319-20), and whether Thessaly had comparable delights to offer (320-1). Then she slyly expresses the wish to be a matchmaker and a grandmother: *osi mihi iungere curas*⁵⁶ / *atque alium portare sinu contingat Achillen!* (321-2). Her words have their effect: he weakens, and does not push away the disguise quite as firmly as before (323-4). Perceiving his hesitation, she acts decisively and throws the robe over him: *aspicit ambiguum genetrix cogique volentem / iniecitque sinus*(325-6). Achilles, won over by his mother's persuasion (Ach 1.325 *cogique volentem*), is like the raped Deidamia of Ovid *Ars Am* (1.666, 700). Achilles and Thetis are indeed "birds of a feather".⁵⁷ Statius describes Thetis' gentle yet firm actions in dressing her son as a girl and teaching him to behave as one (326-31 verbs like *mollit* / *submittit* ... *laxat* / ... *domat*.../... *docet*). Her manipulative actions are likened (332-4) to those of an artist who moulds waxen images (see below Part VI). She does not have to work very hard on the disguise (*nec luctata diu* 335), for Achilles has much beauty (*superest nam plurimus illi / invita virtute decor* 335-6) and his equivocal

appearance puzzles onlookers (ambiguuus tenuique latens discrimine
58
sexus 337).

Thetis does not desist from heaping advice on Achilles even at this stage (iterumque monens iterumque fatigans / blanda Thetis 338-9): she warns him that he must behave like a maiden at all times (339-40) if he does not want the king to suspect him and not admit him to the woman's chambers (a sly appeal to his lust) and their deceitful enterprise be lost: ne te suspectum molli non misceat aulae / rector et incepti pereant mendacia furti (341-2). She implicitly admits here that her plan is a fraud. Thetis, adding the finishing touches to Achilles' disguise, is compared (344-8) to Latona, tidying the dishevelled attire of Hecate (Artemis) when she returns from hunting (see below Part VI).

C) INTERVIEW WITH LYCOMEDES; HIS ACCEPTANCE OF ACHILLES (349-378)

Now must she complete her ruse by winning over Lycomedes, king of Scyros: she accosts him immediately where he is sacrificing (349).
Cunningly, she presents Achilles as his own sister⁵⁹, thus explaining "her" likeness to her brother as well as "her" tomboyish preference for masculine activities (hanc tibi...nostri germanam, rector, Achillis / - nonne vides, ut torva genas aequandaque fratri? / - tradimus. arma
60
umeris arcumque animosa petebat / ferre et Amazonio conubia pellere ritu 350-4). She explains that her son is care enough for her (355) and asks Lycomedes to tame her "daughter" into behaving as a girl until her time for marriage and an end to maidenly modesty (tu frange⁶¹ regendo / indocilem sexuque tene, dum nubilis aetas / solvendusque pudor 355-7); that he keep her to maidenly occupations and ladylike seclusion (haec calathos et sacra ferat 355; intus ale et similes inter seclude puellas

359) and away from manly sports (neve exercere protervas / gymnadas aut lustris nemorum concede vagari 357-8), and especially away from the sea (litore praecipue portuque arcere memento / vidisti modo vela Phrygum: iam mutua iura / fallere transmissae pelago didicere carinae 360-2). All of these requests are of course highly ironic: aside from their superficially reasonable value (as regards a maiden) they each have an ulterior purpose (as regards a disguised youth) which is hidden to Lycomedes but perfectly clear to the reader: Thetis has in fact asked Lycomedes to help maintain the feminine disguise (355-7); to keep Achilles away from activities where his true sex may be discovered (357-8), and particularly away from sight of Greek ships (360-2), which would conscript the boy - not, as Thetis has implied, requisition the "girl"!

Lycomedes is deceived and takes in the disguised Achilles (accredit dictis pater ingenioque parentis / occultum Aeciden...accipit 363-5). Indeed, as the poet comments (364), the king, mere mortal as he is in strength and understanding, has little choice: quis divum fraudibus obstet?. Statius leaves us in no doubt as to the reprehensibility of Thetis' plan. It is pathetic to see the eager thankfulness with which the king welcomes his fraudulent charge: ultro etiam veneratur supplice dextra / et grates electus agit (365-6). Neither are his daughters slow to accept their strange new companion (366-8).

63

D) THETIS' DEPARTURE (379-96)

It is time for Thetis to depart, but she does not leave without giving further last-minute advice to her son (digreditur multum cunctata in limine mater, / dum repetit monitus arcanaque murmura figit / auribus

et tacito dat verba novissima vultu 379-81) and sealing her plan with a final prayer of flattery to the Scyrian shore (tunc excepta freto longe cervice reflexa / abnatat et blandis adfatur litora votis 382-3). Her final suasoria is as cogent as any that have gone before: blatant flattery and a reminder of the honour she has bestowed on it (cara mihi tellus, magnae cui pignora curae / depositumque ingens timido⁶⁴ commisimus astu 384-5) ; entreaty for silent co-operation with didactic mythological exemplum (sis felix taceasque, precor, quo more tacebat / Creta Rheae 386-7)⁶⁵ ; promises of great reward - honour, shrines, supremacy, sacrosanctity, renown as a sailors' haven (te longus honos aeternaque cingent / templa nec instabili fama superabere Delo, / et ventis et sacra fretis interque vadosas / Cycladas, Aegaeae frangunt ubi saxa procellae, / Nereidum tranquilla domus iurandaque nautis / insula 387-92). The last promise reminds her of further requests: no admittance to Greek ships (ne solum Danaas admitte carinas, / ne precor 392-3), the spreading of false rumour about the inmates of Scyros ("Hic thiasi tantum et nihil utile bellis:"/ hoc famam narrare doce 393-4), and, while for all she cares, war rages in the rest of the world (dumque arma parantur/ Dorica et alternum Mavors interfurit orbem, / - cedo equidem - 394-6), the maintenance of Achilles' transvestite disguise: sit virgo pii Lycomedis Achilles (396). The words cedo equidem echo Juno at Aen 12.818, where she⁶⁶ finally relinquishes her vendetta against the Trojans.

The first 396 lines of the poem may rightly be termed a Theteis: here it is that the goddess holds sway (albeit by less than dignified⁶⁷ means): she forms a plan (to keep her son away from war) , overcomes a temporary setback (Neptune's refusal of aid), and implements her scheme

(by encouraging Achilles' infatuation with Deidamia and deceiving Chiron, Lycomedes and even the Scyrian shore).

IV. THE PLAN IS UNDERMINED (397-674)

After the preface (1-10), the poem may be divided into four broad sections according to the characters that dominate in each: Thetis presides over the first section just examined (lines 20-396); there follows an intervening "Greek" section in which no character predominates (397-559); Deidamia may be said to preside over the second part (560-674) and Ulysses over the third (675-851), while Achilles takes precedence for the rest (1.852 - 2.167).

Since Thetis does not reappear in person after her departure at 1.396, after examining Thetis' characterisation in the first section, there is no value to be gained out of discussing the rest of the plan according to character, however, but rather according to some schema which has relevance to Thetis herself, i.e. the undermining and eventual failure of her ruse. I shall therefore proceed according to the agenda (as delineated on the CONTENTS page), sketching the main events briefly and alluding specifically to passages where Thetis is mentioned.

68

A) THE GREEKS CLAMOUR FOR ACHILLES (397-559)

In lines 397-466, the Greek preparations for the Trojan war are described. In the section comprising lines 467-559, we hear how the Greeks assembled at Aulis clamour for the absent Achilles. His sterling upbringing (476-9) is discussed, as well as his superior ancestry and immortality: *patrii propior cui linea caeli, / quemve alium Stygios tulerit secreta per amnes / Nereis et pulchros ferro praestruxerit*

artus? (479-81). Protesilaus rebukes the prophet Calchas for not "doing his bit" for the war effort, namely to find out where Achilles is hidden (491-513). Calchas obliges (514ff); he goes into a trance and therein apostrophises Thetis by implication as the culprit responsible for Achilles' absence (526-35): Quo rapis ingentem magni Chironis ⁶⁹ alumnum / femineis, Nerei, dolis? (526-7). As himself representative of a deity (tu diva profundi? et me Phoebus agit 528-9), he condemns her act in the strongest possible terms as criminal and shameful guile: quo rapis ingentem magni Chironis alumnum / femineis, Nerei, dolis? (526-7); latebris quibus abdere temptas / eversorem Asiae? video per Cycladas altas / attonitam et turpi quaerentem litora furto (529-31); o ⁷⁰ scelus! en fluxae veniunt in pectora vestes (533). He regards Scyros as a willing accomplice in crime (placuit Lycomedis conscia tellus 532), and urges Achilles to resist his mother's timidity: scinde, puer, ⁷¹ scinde et timidae ne cede parenti (534).

Thus informed, Ulysses and Diomedes resolve to flush Achilles out, wherever Thetis may have hidden him (licet ille sonantibus antris / ⁷² Tethyos aversae gremioque prematur aquosi / Nereos 540-2), and they set sail for Scyros (536-559).

B) ACHILLES RAPES DEIDAMIA (560-674) ⁷³

Calchas' prophecy (see above) strikes the first significant blow against Thetis' carefully-laid stratagem: the Greeks are now aware of Achilles' location. In the following section of the poem (560-674), Achilles himself undermines her plan further - by seducing Deidamia (592ff) and so revealing his identity and making her and her nurse accomplices (668-71) in the plan which previously only he and his

mother were party to.

The poet introduces the episode of the rape with the words tandem detecti timidae Nereidos astus (592), explicitly naming the rape as the cause of the failure of Thetis' plan.⁷⁴ That night, while Achilles takes part in the Bacchic rites, his beauty inspires the admiration of his female companions et sexus pariter decet et mendacia matris (605). But, though the feminine disguise may outwardly become him, in his heart he has decidedly virile intentions (624ff). Prior to performing the deed, he utters a self-reproachful monologue in which (inter alia) he chafes against his mother's restrictions: quonam timidae commenta parentis / usque feres?⁷⁵ (624-5).

After he has raped Deidamia, he comforts her by copious reference to his ancestry on his mother's side⁷⁶ (ille ego - quid trepidas - genitum quem caerulea mater / paene Iovi⁷⁷ 650-1; quid defles magno nurus addita ponto? 655) as well as on his father's (quid gemis ingentes caelo paritura nepotes? 656). He asserts that he assumed the feminine disguise out of love for her (652-5) - which is partly true, though he was equally motivated by reverence for his mother. He betrays the extent of Thetis' control over him in his last word of consolation when, in promising that he will not allow Lycomedes to punish her for receiving his favours, he adds: non adeo parebimus omnia matri (660).

V. THE PLAN FAILS

A) THE GREEKS ARRIVE AT SCYROS; THE BANQUET (675-818)

Ulysses' ship enjoys safe passage to Scyros, since it is fated that Achilles be discovered, and Thetis' further entreaties fall on deaf ears (quippe alta Tonantis / iussa Thetin certas fatorum vertere leges

/ arcebant aegram lacrimis ac multa gementem, / quod non erueret pontum
ventisque fretisque / omnibus invisum iam tunc sequeretur Ulixem 684-
8). The Greeks accordingly disembark at Scyros (697ff). Ulysses' words
betray him as a fitting counterpart to Thetis in guile: he reveals to
Diomedes the cunning plan which he has devised for the detection of
Achilles (709-25), while dissembling to Lycomedes as to the true
purpose of their visit (726-37).⁷⁸

Lycomedes arranges a banquet for the visitors (741ff), which his
daughters (and the disguised Achilles) attend. Ulysses scrutinises them
all carefully (761ff)⁷⁹ and makes a rousingly patriotic speech (785-
802) in which he hints directly at Achilles when he says *vix timidae
matres aut agmina cessant / virginea* (799-800). Achilles nearly betrays
himself twice but for the quick-witted action of Deidamia (764-72; 794-
5; 802-5). After the maidens have retired, Ulysses praises their beauty
(807-11). Inter alia, he eulogises cryptically: *is decor et formae
species permixta virili* 811. Lycomedes invites him and Diomedes to a
dancing display on the following day (812-14).⁸⁰

B) THE GREEKS GIVE GIFTS AND ACHILLES BETRAYS HIS IDENTITY; LYCOMEDES
AND DEIDAMIA ARE APPEASED (819-960)⁸¹

The next day, during the dancing, Achilles clearly reveals his sex in
his behaviour as he rebels against the feminine disguise (*tunc vero,
tunc praecipue manifestus Achilles / nec servare vices nec bracchia
iungere curat; tunc molles gressus, tunc aspernatur amictus / plus
solito rumpitque choros et plurima turbat* 835-8). In a simile (839-
40), he is likened to Pentheus rejecting the accoutrements of his
mother's Bacchic cult (see below Part VI).

Ulysses lays his bait (841ff), and Achilles "bites" (852ff): at the sight of shield, he forgets about obedience to his mother (nusquam mandata parentis 856) or love for Deidamia, and thinks only of war (nusquam occultus amor, totoque in pectore Troia est 857). In a simile he is likened to a tamed lion (with Thetis as its tamer?) which forgets its training at the first glimpse of steel (858-63).⁸² Ulysses spurs him on by immediately rushing up to flatter and shame him into a full revelation of his identity (866-74). In his speech, he cunningly contrasts the reactions which Achilles' parents will (or should) respectively have towards the news of his going to war: his father ought to be pleased (et iuvet haec audire patrem 873), his guileful mother ashamed of her previous fears (pudeatque dolosam / sic pro te timuisse Thetin 873-4). The former may be true, the latter certainly is not.⁸³

At Agyrtes'⁸⁴ trumpet-blast, Achilles is revealed in all his glory (875ff): Peleus' "daughter" has disappeared (Peleaque virgo / quaeritur 884-5). Deidamia laments (885-8) and Achilles hastens to appease the dazed Lycomedes (889ff). His speech resounds with the illustrious names of his parents, all the better to dazzle the old king and convince him of the honour which such a match will bring his family (me tibi...dedit alma Thetis 892-3; Peleus te nato socerum et Thetis hospita iungunt / adlegantque suos utroque a sanguine divos 898-9).⁸⁵

Lycomedes is at first furious (907), but when he weighs his anger at his daughter's deed (912) and his honour in keeping the promise he made to Thetis (et Thetidis mandata movent prodique videtur / depositum tam grande deae 913-4) against his fear at resisting fate (914-5), the

irreversible fact of Achilles' defiance of his mother (fac velit: ipsam
illic matrem sprevisset Achilles 916)⁸⁶ and the obvious desirability
of so great a son-in-law (917), he is won over (vincitur 918).

In the general jubilation, plans are made for war (921-4), there is feasting, and Achilles and Deidamia spend their first lawful night together (925-6). Now must Achilles appease her too, for she makes a pitiful appeal for him to return to her and Scyros (927-55). She reminds him of Thetis' well-grounded fears (i cautus, nec vana Thetin timuisse memento 941), the language here echoes that of Ulysses at 873-4 and reminds us of the truth which the Greek has attempted to conceal - that Achilles is destined to die at Troy. She jealously fears that he may fall in love with some Trojan captive (943, 954) - as indeed he shall - and reminds him of the dishonour which the offspring of such an inferior match would bring to his semi-divine mother (ne qua det indignos Thetidi captiva nepotes 955). He, of course, promises all that she asks and more (956-9), and the wind sweeps his oaths unfulfilled away (960).⁸⁷

C) ACHILLES' DEPARTURE (2.1-85)

At the beginning of Book 2 (according to the division of the P manuscript, that is), Achilles sets sail with Ulysses and Diomedes (1-22). Just prior to embarkation, he makes dutiful sacrifice (as Ulysses has instructed) to the gods, the waters, the south winds, Neptune, Nereus (12-15), and lastly, his mother whom he appeases with a garlanded heifer (vittata genetrix placata iuvenca 15). As he casts the entrails upon the waters, he addresses her (16-19). His tone is firm and mature: in the past he has obeyed her intolerable commands

(paruimus, genetrix, quamquam haut toleranda iuberes, / paruimus nimium
17-18) but now he must away to his calling (bella ad Troiana ratesque /
Argolicas quaesitus eo 18-19). He is rather like Aeneas who, after
being delayed by Dido, is reminded of his duty: Achilles, however,
makes the excuses to his mother rather than to his lover, for it is
here the mother who is opposed to her son's destiny. ⁸⁸

When he looks back from the deck and observes the distraught Deidamia
on the tower, his resolve weakens (23-30), and Ulysses must needs
distract his thoughts (30ff). This he does by a subtle mixture of
flattery and reproach, and scornful reference to the ruse of Thetis
(tene... / ...callida femineo genetrix violavit ⁸⁹ amictu / commisitque
illis tam grandia furta latebris / speravitque fidem? nimis o suspensa
nimisque/ mater! an haec tacita virtus torperet in umbra, / quae vix
audito litui clangore refugit / et Thetin et comites et quos
suppresserat ignes? 32-40). Achilles, shamed, interrupts his speech,
declaring that his actions in war will excuse his delay at Scyros
(longum resides exponere causas / maternumque nefas; hoc excusabitur
ense / Scyros et indecores, fatorum crimina, cultus ⁹⁰ 43-5). He asks to
hear the origins of the Trojan war (46-9), which Ulysses proceeds to
recount (49-85).

D) ACHILLES' FINAL WORDS (2.167)

Diomede now asks in turn for the tale of Achilles' upbringing in
Thessaly (86-93) and Achilles complies (94ff) with an account of the
rough, "macho" training he received under Chiron. He ends his narrative
(167) with three dismissive words on his stay in Scyros: scit cetera
mater. ⁹¹

VI. SIMILES USED TO DESCRIBE THETIS

The similes used to describe Thetis' behaviour in the first section of the poem (up to line 396) stress the main features of her portrayal: her excessive maternal anxiety (as portrayed in simile A, in which she is likened to a timid mother bird), her blatant manipulation of Achilles (as highlighted by similes B, C and D, in which she is compared to a horse trainer, an artist in wax and the goddess Latona respectively). Later in the poem, Thetis' failure to retain control over her son is well-illustrated (in simile E) when she is indirectly compared to Agave.

A) Thetis, finally deciding on Scyros for Achilles' hiding-place, is compared to an expectant mother bird who at last finds a secure tree for her nest (1.212-6):⁹²

haec placet, haec timidae tellus tutissima matri.
qualis vicino volucris iam sedula partu
iamque timens, qua fronde domum suspendat inanem:
providet hic ventos, hic anxia cogitat angues,
hic homines: tandem dubiae placet umbra, novisque
vix stetit in ramis et protinus arbor amatur. 211-6

The main correspondence is between the eventual fulfilment of the anxious mother bird's mission (iamque timens 213; tandem dubiae placet umbra 215) and that of Thetis (haec placet, haec timidae tellus tutissima matri 211).⁹³ Indirectly, there are other parallels to be drawn. Fearful of potential dangers, each mother initially rejects a number of possible sites: Thetis, in a panic of indecision⁹⁴, passes over lands and islands which have a reputation for warmongery, hardiness, noble ambition, a surfeit or a lack of hospitality⁹⁵; the

mother-bird repudiates the trees which are vulnerable to winds, snakes or men (215-6). Finally, each mother settles on a place which she considers safe: Thetis chooses Scyros because of its unwarlike character (*imbelli nuper Lycomedis ab aula / virgineos coetus ...audierat* 207-9); the mother-bird picks a shady spot (*tandem dubiae placet umbra* 215).

Statius was rather fond of employing bird-similes in his epic poetry: in the *Thebaid*, there are a number of similes comparing women in a state of distress or relief to birds: for example, *Theb* 8.616ff (Antigone and Ismene like woeful nightingales); 12.478ff (the Argive matrons like woeful nightingales); 12.515ff (the Argive women like migrating cranes). There are, in particular, a couple of similes employing the figure of the bereft mother bird: Hypsipyle discovering the body of Opheltes is likened to a mother bird who finds that her nest has been ravaged by a snake (*Theb* 5.559-604); Ismenis, the grieving mother of Crenaeus, is likened to a kingfisher whose chicks have been turned out of the nest (*Theb* 9.360-2).

Two of the bird-similes in the *Thebaid* describe a successful mission undertaken by the parent birds: at *Theb* 12.5-21, the disbelief of the Theban matrons after the retreat of the Argive army is compared to that of doves who have managed to chase a serpent from their nests⁹⁶; at *Theb* 10.458ff, the Greeks' reaction to the return of Thiodamas from the battlefield is likened to that of eager nestlings, protected from falling by their attentive mother.

B) The first vain attempts of Thetis to persuade her son to adopt her plan are likened to those of a trainer initially unsuccessful in trying

to tame a wild young horse (1.277-82):

 sic horrida pectora tractat
nequiquam mulcens; obstat genitorque roganti
nutritorque ingens et cruda exordia magnae
indolis. effrenae tumidum velut igne iuventae
si quis equum primis submittere temptet habenis:
ille diu campis fluviisque et honore superbo
gavisus non colla iugo, non aspera praebet
ora lupis dominique fremit captivus inire
imperia atque alios miratur discere cursus. 274-82

This is a so-called "multiple-correspondence" simile, since the main point of comparison is as much Thetis-trainer as it is Achilles-wild horse: the "vain persuasions" (nequiquam mulcens 275)⁹⁷ of Thetis correspond to the ineffectual attempts of the trainer (si quis equum primis submittere temptet habenis 278); the unpolished youth (horrida pectora 274) of Achilles and his proud opposition to his mother's cajoling (obstat genitorque roganti / nutritorque⁹⁸ ingens et cruda exordia magnae / indolis 275-7) have a parallel in the wild nature (effrenae tumidum velut igne iuventae 277; aspera... / ora 280-1) and⁹⁹ arrogance of the young horse (ille diu campis fluviisque et honore superbo / gavisus non colla iugo... 279-80).

The comparison of the impetuous young hero to a proud stallion has its epic origin in Hom Il 6 ad fin, where Paris' speed as he rushes off to war is likened to that of a stallion who breaks his halter at the feed-manger and gallops off to the river to bathe (where also the mares are to be found). His self-conscious beauty is noted, and the gracefulness of his stride.

The metaphor of bridling a wild horse, used to describe Thetis' attempts here, is used at Silv 1.2.77-8, 3.5.26f, to describe a wife's "taming" of her husband.

The comparison of Achilles to a trained beast, introduced here at the beginning of the Scyros-episode to illustrate the onset of Thetis' control over her son, is resumed and completed near the end of the book: at Ach 1.852ff when, at Ulysses' instigation, Achilles throws off the disguise imposed on him by his mother, he is likened to a young lion who reverts to savagery when first he catches a glimpse of
100
steel.

C) The poet describes how Thetis accustoms her son to female dress and manner, likening her actions to that of an artist who moulds waxen
101
images (1.332-4):

mulcetur laetumque rubet visusque protervos
obliquat vestes^{que} manu leviore repellit.
aspicit ambiguum genetrix cogique volentem
iniecitque sinus; tum colla rigentia mollit
submittit^{que} graves umeros et fortia laxat
bracchia et impexos certo domat ordine crines
ac sua dilecta cervice monilia transfert;
et picturato cohibens vestigia limbo
incessum motumque docet fandique pudorem
qualiter artificii victurae pollice cerae
accipiunt formas ignemque manumque sequuntur,
talis erat divae natum mutantis imago. 323-34

The chief point of correspondence is between the moulding actions of Thetis (mollit 326, submittitque 327, laxat 327) and that of the artist (artificii victurae pollice cerae 332), but the secondary comparison is between Achilles (mulcetur) and the artist's material (ignemque
102
manumque sequuntur 333).

Dilke (1954:108) rejects Vollmer's suggestion that the waxen images described here are Apelleae cerae as at Silv 1.1.100; 2.2.63ff, asserting that these were probably references to paintings made with

wax, whereas the simile here mentions specifically *victurae cerae*, waxen images. Dilke therefore suggests that these are the waxen images of ancestors, as at Juv 8.19.¹⁰³ D-S (1019-20) describes the various uses of *cera* in antiquity, and, amongst the "artistic" uses, lists the statuettes of gods (*lares*), of children (*pupa*), busts of ancestors (*imagines* as at Plin Ep 4.7) and *cerae pictae* of various kinds: effigies of the dead (*funus*), processional masks (*pompa*). Any of these types of waxen images might be denoted here: in referring to the practice of colouring the wax to give more reality to the image, Saglio cites Ach 1.332, along with Plin Nat Hist 8.80. He evidently therefore regards this simile as referring to one of the types of *cerae pictae* listed.

D) Thetis, adding the finishing touches to Achilles' disguise, is likened to Latona tidying the dishevelled attire of Hecate (Diana)¹⁰⁴ when she returns from hunting (1.345-8):¹⁰⁵

dicit et admoto non cessat comere tactu.
 sic ubi virgineis Hecate lassata Therapnis
 ad patrem fratremque redit, comes haeret eunti
 mater et ipsa umeros exsertaque bracchia velat;
 ipsa arcum pharetrasque locat vestemque latentem
 deducit sparsosque tumet componere crines. 343-8

The chief correspondence is between the tidying efforts of Thetis (*admoto non cessat comere tactu* 343) and those of Latona (*ipsa umeros exsertaque bracchia velat; / ipsa arcum pharetrasque locat vestemque latentem/ deducit sparsosque tumet componere crines* 346-8). The simile clearly also invites comparison between Achilles and Hecate, both of whom have their disorderly physical appearance altered by the actions of their mothers. This comparison reminds us, of course, of an earlier one in the poem, 1.165-6, where Achilles returning from the hunt is

likened to Apollo, the brother of Diana, in the same capacity. Again, later in the poem, at 1.823-6, Deidamia and Achilles are likened, in their outstanding beauty, to Diana, Pallas and Proserpina.¹⁰⁶ The comparison between Achilles and Artemis is here at 1.343ff a most superficial one since, apart from the sprucing activities of their respective mothers, the two have very little in common. In fact, there is an elegant and ironical inversion here: in the rearranging of his dress, Achilles is being disguised as a woman in order that he may avoid a masculine pursuit (war), whereas in the tidying of her garb Hecate is being indirectly encouraged by her mother to take part in a manly activity (hunting). The effect of these differences between the comparee (Artemis) and the comparand (Achilles) is hardly flattering to the latter, I think. The other details of the simile, Hecate's exhaustion (*lassata* 344) and her return to her father and brother (*ad patrem fratremque redit* 345) have no correspondence in the narrative, and serve only to flesh out the picture that the simile creates; they also subtly add to the negative view of Achilles' choice which the comparison has hinted at: Achilles can hardly be said to be weary from physical exertion, and, by his obedience to his mother's command, he is consciously acting against the precepts of his father and his teacher (see 1.275-6 above).¹⁰⁷

E) Achilles, disdaining his womanly disguise and breaking up the dance, is likened to Pentheus rejecting the accoutrements of his mother's Bacchic adherence (1.839-40):

tunc vero, tunc praecipue manifestus Achilles
nec servare vices nec bracchia iungere curat;
tunc molles gressus, tunc aspernatur amictus
plus solito rumpitque choros et plurima turbat.

sic indignantem thyrsos acceptaque matris
tympana iam tristes spectabant Penthea Thebae. 835-40

The chief comparison is, of course, between the disdainful behaviour of each son towards the accoutrements of his mother's beliefs: Achilles' scorn of the disguise imposed on him by Thetis (tunc molles gressus, tunc aspernatur amictus 837) is mirrored in the behaviour of Pentheus towards the tools of Agave's religion (sic indignantem thyrsos acceptaque matris / tympana 839-40).¹⁰⁸ We are reminded of the fatal consequence of Pentheus' act, a warning that Achilles' act may have similarly disastrous implications for himself and for the war.

Thetis therefore features only indirectly in this simile, as the instigator of a course of action which her son now has cause to reject, just as Agave's acceptance of Bacchus is repudiated by Pentheus. At Theb 11.318-20, Jocasta going to supplicate Eteocles is compared to Agave climbing the mountain to tear to pieces her son Pentheus, king of Thebes, for this very act of disrespect towards her religion. There, the figure of Agave stands for the avenging mother in the sequel to her son's misdeed, here she appears as the passive victim of the initial act.

Sturt (1982:833-40) has made a thorough analysis of this simile, in conjunction with a number of others in the Achilleid. He shows that the transformation of Achilles in the poem is illustrated by a series of connected passages: Ach 1.259ff (where Thetis tries to convince Achilles with the mythological exempla of the transvestite Hercules, Bacchus, Jupiter and Caeneus)¹⁰⁹; 1.593ff (the episode of the rites of Bacchus, culminating in the comparison of Achilles with the invading Bacchus, 615-8, in the first step which the young hero takes to

reassert his manhood) ¹¹⁰ ; 1.835ff (this simile comparing him to Pentheus, which describes a further stage of his rebellion, again during a Bacchic dance). ¹¹¹ Sturt believes that the starting-point for these three passages is the (somewhat comical) simile at Theb 10.646-9, where the goddess Virtus, disguised as the prophetess Manto, is compared to Hercules dressed as a handmaiden of Omphale. ¹¹²

The Pentheus-simile, as an illustration of Achilles' reawakening manhood, is also linked to the simile of 1.858ff where, at the consummation of his rebellion, he is compared to a young tamed lion who reverts to his natural savagery at the first glimpse of steel. ¹¹³

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER SIX

I. INTRODUCTION: PRE-STATION THETIS

1. Ach 1.4-7: ...nos ire per omnem - / sic amor est - heroa velis Scyroque latentem / Dulichia proferre tuba nec in Hectore tracto / sistere, sed tota iuvenem deducere Troia. See further Chapter 1 (INTRODUCTION) Part II.

2. Weitzmann, K (Greek Mythology in Byzantine Art Princeton 1951) insists upon the existence of an original Greek Achilleis dealing with the birth of the hero - as Statius' version does not - to explain the widespread occurrence of representations of Achilles' childhood in eastern Mediterranean art. Although Weitzmann's thesis remains conjecture, there is indeed a connection to be made between representations of the hero in the ancient visual arts, and in Statius' poem: it appears likely that the poet utilized the pictorial and plastic arts directly as sources for his literary portrayal. See further Appendix A.

3. In Statius Ach 1.350, Thetis passes Achilles off as her daughter.

4. Euripides mentions no other daughters of Lycomedes.

5. There are, for example, fragments of Bion's Idyll 15, which briefly describe Achilles' stay on Scyros among Lycomedes' maiden daughters - see further Chapter 7 (DEIDAMIA) Part I.

6. In Argon 4.865-77, we are told that Peleus sent Achilles to be brought up by Chiron. Statius completely omits mention of Peleus in Achilles' education, and says that Thetis sent him.

7. There is a single fragment of Livius Andronicus' lost *Achilleid*, which concerns Deidamia: see Bickel (1937:1) and Webster (1967:96). See further Chapter 7 (DEIDAMIA) Part I.

8. See Mayer (R 1980. On Catullus 64.21. PACA 15, 16-18) for discussion on the identity of the pater in line 21 (*tum Thetidi pater ipse iugandum Pelea sensit*).

9. This is recalled at Ach 1.86ff, where Jupiter predicts Achilles' future greatness. Seneca's *Troades* 414-5 is also a model here. See also Chapter 7 (DEIDAMIA).

10. See, for example, Ach 1.228ff: below Part II.

11. In the *Achilleid*, it is Thetis' cunning (in manipulating his infatuation with Deidamia) that persuades Achilles. The description of Achilles spinning (*Ars Am* 1.691-6) is recalled at Ach 1.355, when Thetis asks Lycomedes if Achilles may carry the baskets at the sacrifice (see below p13). At *Met* 13.162-170, Odysseus, in competing with Ajax for the arms of Achilles, asserts that he is more deserving of them. He recounts the tale of how he fetched Achilles from Scyros where his mother had hidden him in disguise.

12. Words for "goddess" (221,6) and "girl" are used to describe her, since Ovid seems to regard her as both here.

13. The words at 264-5 are recalled by Ach 1.642-3, describing Achilles' rape of Deidamia: family history repeats itself (or: all men are the same?).

14. Compare *Tro* 414-5 to Ach 1.86ff; *Tro* 879-82 to Ach 1.655-6, 897-8. See below Part II.

15. At *Tro* 569-70 Ulysses says: *vicimus matrum dolos etiam dearum*, explicitly comparing the present situation (he has come to demand Astyanax, on the strength of Calchas' prophecy) to that of Thetis and Achilles. See further below Part IV.

16. Brief references in the *Silvae* provide the starting-point for her depiction in the *Achilleid*: at 2.7.96-7, she is said to be horrified at Achilles' death at the hands of Paris (cf. Ach 1.26 and *Theb* 1.39); at *Silv* 2.6.30-1 it is said that she hid on the virgin shore him who did not fear war (echoed at Ach 1.207).

17. The comic elements in the simile at *Theb* 10.646-9 (in which *Virtus* disguised as the priestess *Manto* is compared to *Hercules* in drag) are consequently difficult to explain. See further below Part VI E).

II. INITIAL CONCERN: THE PLAN IS FORMED

18. This whimsical portrayal of Thetis recalls that of *Venus* in her marriage-chamber in *Silv* 1.2 (see Chapter 4 Part I). The image in lines 28-9 of the shore seething with activity is Virgilian: *fervent coeuntia Phrixi / litora* cf. *Aen* 4.409ff *litora fervere late prospiceres*.

19. According to legend, Hecuba the mother of Paris dreamt that she was bearing a burning torch which had set fire to Troy.
20. For Proteus' predictions, see Ovid Met 11.221-23.
21. The affectionate epithet *improbus* (41) which she applies to her son means in this context "naughty" as at Theb 4.796, or "headstrong" as at Theb 6.839. See Dilke's full note on the use of this word in Statius (1979:84).
22. There are definite shades of Virgil's Dido here: *non potui infelix...* (43) begins Thetis, echoing Dido in a similar situation at Aen 4.596 (*infelix*) and 600 (*non potui*) when she rages against Aeneas' perfidy and wishes that she had killed him on sight.
23. On the declamatory invective against ships and sailing, see Virgil Ecl 4.32ff (at line 36 the epithet *magnus Achilles* is employed - the model for Statius' use of it in the Achilleid e.g. Ach 1.513). See also Silv 3.2.61ff.
24. The meaning here is that of causing sighs among gods and men. This is thus a verbal but not a semantic echo of Aen 4.409 *quosve dabas gemitus* (of Dido emitting groans at the sight of Aeneas' preparations for departure).
25. Thetis imagines herself as confined to the waters below Achilles' tomb, which explains the apparent contradiction between *fluctibus* and *litus* (Dilke 1954:89). At Sen Tro 1121f, the tomb of Achilles is described, *cuius extremum latus / Rhoetea leni verberant fluctu vada*.
26. The words *laniata genas* (77) are an echo of Aen 12.606, describing the grief-stricken behaviour of Lavinia at the imminent defeat of the Latin forces.
27. The phrase *fata vetant* (81) has its origin in Ovid (Met 3.548f *fata vetabant / stare diu Thebas*), but the most memorable instance of its use before Statius is by Lucan (BC 10.485 *fata vetant, murique vicem Fortuna tuetur*), describing the luck which adheres to Caesar' cause even in times of adversity.
28. Lines 86ff recall the prophecy of the Parcae at the wedding of Peleus and Thetis in Cat 64.344 (*cum Phrygii Teucro manabunt sanguine campi*), as well as Seneca's Troades 414-5 (*cum...gravi gerneret sono / pondere Hectoreo tremens*). See further Fantham (1979:458) for discussion of these lines, and of the possible emendation of *funere* (Ach 1.88) to *pondere*.
29. The epithet *supplex* is used of Juno at Aen 1.64.
30. At Aen 1.65-6 Juno tells Aeolus what Jove has allowed him to do, a verbal similarity but semantic contrast to Ach 1.74 *da pellere luctus* (Thetis requesting Neptune).
31. This is itself a Virgilian phrase (see e.g. Aen 2.147; 5.770;

8.126; 10.466).

32. The words *vultum...demissa* (95) recall Aen 1.561 (where Dido's modesty is thus described) and Theb 4.769 (Hypsipyle, sad and likewise modest in the face of the Argive army).

33. We notice with amusement the description of the superhuman speed employed by Thetis as she is pictured swimming towards Thessaly: *ter conata manu, liquidum ter gressibus aequor / reppulit et niveas feriunt vada Thessala plantas* (99-100).

34. The description derives from Ovid Met 11.229ff.

35. We clearly recall here the scene in Virgil's Aeneid (4.480ff) where Dido, who is deceiving her sister Anna about her real intentions, tells her that she has found an Ethiopian sorceress who will cure her of her love, and asks her to put relics of Aeneas on a funeral pyre. There are a number of verbal reminiscences of the Dido-Anna episode: e.g. *hos abolere metus...iubet...Carpathius vates* (Ach 1.135-6) recalls *abolere nefandi cuncta viri monumenta iubet* (Aen 4.497ff).

36. Dilke (1954:95-6) suggests that *nec me patria omina fallunt* (147) refers to the gift of prophecy bestowed on Chiron by his father Saturn.

37. The phrase *nunc illum non Ossa capit* (151) recalls Aen 9.644 *nec te Troia capit* (spoken by Apollo to Ascanius).

38. The phrase *gelidus...pallor* derives from Ovid Tristia 1.4.11 (describing the appearance of a terrified sailor).

39. The topos at lines 164-5 is that of the similarity between parent and child. The simile at lines 165-6 comparing Achilles to Apollo is inspired by Virgil Aen 4.143ff, where Aeneas setting out to hunt is likened to Apollo. See Appendix A for a discussion of the similes which emphasize Achilles' appearance.

40. The poet explains: *quamquam ibi fida parens, adsuetaque pectora mavult* 197 - cf Ovid Met 4.596 *assuetaque colla petebat* (describing Cadmus' love for Harmonia when they are transformed into snakes).

41. See below line 505 *quibus abditus oris* (Protesilaus to Calchas).

42. Thetis is here (198-218) implicitly compared to Aeneas in his uncertainty before the Latin war: Aen 8.20 *atque animum nunc huc celerem nunc dividit illuc*.

43. A reference to the myth of the plotted overthrow of Zeus: Thetis had the task of going in search of Briareus in order to enlist his aid, since Zeus had freed him when he and his brothers had been fettered by his father Uranus. What a contrast between her potency then and her present helplessness and necessary guile!

44. This line recalls Virg Aen 3.78ff (*huc feror; haec fessos tuto placidissima portu/accipit*) describing Aeneas' arrival at Delos.

45. The phrase *erecto prospectat equo* (235) occurs also at *Silv* 1.2.217, to describe Chiron observing Thetis' arrival at her wedding.

III. ARRIVAL AT SCYROS: THE PLAN IS IMPLEMENTED

46. This passage recalls the kidnapping of Bacchus at *Met* 3.630-6.

47. The words *aetheriis...plagis* (253-4) echo those at *Aen* 1.394 (Venus to Aeneas): *aetheria quos lapsa plaga Iovis ales aperto / turbabat caelo*.

48. This recalls *Met* 1.662 *praeclusique ianua leti* (Inachus laments his immortality in the face of his daughter Io's sad fate).

49. Her speech at 259-60 and 270-2 is strongly reminiscent of Andromache's words in *Sen Tro* 503-6, where she tries to persuade her son Astyanax to accept the shame of hiding in his father's tomb.

50. The first reference (260-1) is to the myth of Hercules' labour under Omphale, queen of Lydia, as punishment for his murder of Iphitus. The language recalls *Prop* 3.11.19f (*ut...tam dura traheret mollia pensa manu*). Compare also *Theb* 10.646ff (the disguised Virtus likened to Hercules); *Ach* 1.582, 654 (Achilles spinning with Deidamia).

The arch-seducer Jupiter (263) often resorted to disguise in order to achieve his lascivious ends: see, for example, Jupiter disguising himself as Diana in order to seduce Callisto, described at *Met* 2.425.

The story of Caeneus' change of sex (264) is given at *Met* 12.171ff, where we hear that, as a girl, Caenis might well have been wooed by Peleus were he not already betrothed to Thetis. Caeneus is called *magnus* here, probably because he, like Achilles, was invincible except for his heel. The phrase *ambigui...sexus* (plural here because of Caeneus' double change of sex) is recalled at line 337, where it describes Achilles.

51. The same formula (*per ego...*) is used by the suppliant Dido *Aen* 4.314ff.

52. Compare Achilles last words at 2.167: *scit cetera mater*, "my mother knows the rest." For a discussion of the rhetorical device known as *aposiopesis* (*reticentia*), see Lausberg:887-9.

53. The passage (285ff) recalls *Virg Aen* 8.102ff (describing Evander's festival in honour of Hercules) and *Ovid Met* 2.711ff (the Athenian festival of Pallas).

54. See further Chapter 7 (DEIDAMIA) Part II.

55. See further Appendix A.

56. For the words *iungere curas* (321-2), see *Aen* 4.328f (Dido wishes she had conceived a son from Aeneas before his departure).

57. In lines 1.325ff, verbal reminiscences of female characters described in Ovid and Virgil strengthen the impression of Achilles' femininity: see Aen 4.137 (Dido); 1.405 (Venus); Ovid Ars Am 1.666, 700 (Deidamia).

58. This line is closely modelled on Horace Od 2.5.21ff quem si puellarum insereres choro, / mire sagaces falleret hospites / discrimen obscurum solutis / crinibus ambiguoque vultu (describing the effeminate charms of Gyges).

59. Homer (Il 16.175) tells us that Achilles did have a sister, Polydora, who was betrothed to the river Spercheus.

60. Compare Ovid Her 13.91 ne sis animosis in armis (Laodamia writes to her husband Protesilaus, warning him of the prophecy that the first of the Greeks to set foot on Trojan soil shall die).

61. The word frangebat is used at Silv 5.3.194 of Chiron disciplining Achilles.

62. This recalls Ovid's description of Achilles' stay on Scyros at Ars Am 1.691-6.

63. See Chapter 7 (DEIDAMIA) Part V for a discussion of the simile at 1.372-8, where Lycomedes' daughters are likened to doves welcoming a foreign bird.

64. So had Seneca's Andromache made an appeal to the earth of Hector's tomb to hide her son Astyanax: dehisce tellus tuque, coniunx, ultimo / specu revulsam scinde tellurem et Stygis / sinu profundo conde depositum meum Tro (519-21).

65. This is another simile from Jupiter's youth. Compare later 1.588-91: see Chapter 7 (DEIDAMIA) Part V.

66. See also Theb 7.178 (Bacchus laments Juno's spite towards the Thebans); 8.516 (Hercules relinquishes his defence of Thebes in order to please Pallas).

67. The (Roman) mother afraid for her son away at sea or war was a stock figure: see Horace Od 4.5.9-13, Ovid Rem Am 547-8 (Dixon 1988:201-2).

IV. THE PLAN IS UNDERMINED

68. See Dilke (1954:23) for various book divisions found in the manuscripts. Dilke follows the division of the P manuscript, i.e. that by which Book 1 ends at line 960.

69. Calchas' oblique style of identifying Thetis was typical of oracular ambiguity.

70. The word fluxae is used of clothes also by Lucan (2.362; 8.367); elsewhere in the Achilleid (2.108) of limbs.

71. Compare line 211: *haec placet, haec timidae tellus tutissima matri.*
72. Ovid *Her* 3.53 describes Thetis as *numina matris aquosae.*
73. For a detailed discussion of this section, see Chapter 7 (DEIDAMIA) Part III.
74. This does appear somewhat strange, since the disguise only collapses much later, at the instigation of Ulysses (852f). The authenticity of this line has therefore long been suspected: see discussion at Appendix B (6.1).
75. For *timidae commenta parentis* (624), compare Ovid *Met* 13.38ff *timidi commenta...animi* (Odysseus says of Achilles' stay on Scyros). For a discussion of emendation in lines 624-7, see Appendix B (7.2).
76. Compare Pyrrhus' threefold claim regarding his ancestry at *Sen Tro* 345ff. The words *verbis ...amicis* (*Ach* 1.649) recall the earlier use of *dictis amicis* (1.79) to describe Neptune's pacifying tone in addressing Thetis: both Neptune and Achilles are trying to convince someone in their power of a rather unpalatable truth.
77. Achilles regards himself as the almost-son of Jupiter, because of the fact that the Thunderer nearly married Thetis: for this idea of quasi-kinship see *Lucan* 6.363f, *Theb* 4.289f. Dixon (1988:174) names noble birth as one of the sources from which a Roman mother could derive great authority over her son: a respectable pedigree on the maternal side was useful both in politics as well as in arranging a good marriage. A historical analogy to Achilles' speech at 650ff is Julius Caesar's eulogy at his aunt's funeral, in which he praised both branches of his own ancestry.

V. THE PLAN FAILS

78. He says that they are on a reconnaissance mission for the war (736-7) - which of course, in a way, they are.
79. Compare *Aen* 2.1 *conticuere omnes intentique ora tenebant* (describing the attentive hush at the Carthaginian banquet, as they await the tale of Aeneas' travels). Lines 761-2 (*tum vero intentus vultus ac pectora Ulixes / perlibrat visu*) appear to reflect a reversal of the Virgilian motif (since it is here the narrator who is intent on his audience). On the other hand, if *intentus* (761) is to be emended to *intentos* (as found in the Q and P manuscripts), then Statius' borrowing from Virgil is a more straightforward one (since it would then mean that the audience is intent on the narrator).
80. For a detailed discussion of this scene, see further Chapter 7 (DEIDAMIA) Part IV.
81. For a detailed discussion of this scene, see further Chapter 7 (DEIDAMIA) Part IV.

82. See discussion at Appendix A.

83. There is an interesting inversion implied here by the application of the epithet *dolosa* to Thetis, when it is Ulysses who is traditionally *πολύτροπος*.

84. Statius may have borrowed this name from Ovid *Met* 5.148 (one of Perseus' victims). He uses it also at *Theb* 9.281 (one of those slain in battle).

85. Achilles asks Lycomedes: *an gens humilis tibi degeneresque videmur?* (901). So at *Aen* 4.13 Dido, speaking to Anna, contrasts Aeneas' possession of divine ancestry with those who are *degeneres animos*.

86. This line has long been suspected: see Appendix B (6.2) for an argument for the retention of this line.

87. The model for this line was doubtless *Cat* 64.59 (*irrita ventosae linquens promissa procellae*). This passage describes the flight of Theseus abandoning Ariadne, whose tale is told on the embroidered coverlet which Peleus and Thetis receive as a wedding-gift. The symbolic prediction of unhappiness for their marriage (too true alas) serves here by allusion to foretell ill for Deidamia's future as well - see further Chapter 7 (DEIDAMIA) Part IV.

88. Dixon (1988:180) provides an excellent historical analogy here: there is the story of how the young Octavian (as reported by the later Augustus) finally asserted his independence from his over-anxious mother, when he ignored her entreaties and left to round up an army without her permission.

89. Compare 1.511 *numquam has imbelles galea violabere vittas* (Protesilaus to the peaceable Calchas). See Appendix B (6.3) for retention of the word *violavit*.

90. Line 45 may be an echo of *Met* 6.131 *pictas, caelestia crimina, vestes* (Pallas' jealous attitude towards Arachne's handicraft).

91. A rather abrupt ending. Dilke (1954:151) compares Parthenopaeus' concluding words at *Theb* 9.799f: *et - quid plura loquar? ferrum mea semper et arcus/mater habet...* These are further examples of the rhetorical device known as *aposiopesis*: see n52 above.

VI. SIMILES USED TO DESCRIBE THETIS

92. The use of the poetic construction *vix... et* (216) in a simile is paralleled at *Theb* 5.263ff, where the orgy of death on Lemnos is compared to a drunken brawl of Centaurs: *vix primus ab ira / pallor, et impulsis surgunt ad proelia mensis*.

93. Line 211 recalls *Virg Aen* 3.78ff, where Aeneas describes the island of Delos as just such a haven for his weary comrades: *huc feror; haec fessos tuto placidissima portu/accipit*. Note the alliteration here as well as in Statius' rendition.

94. at Thetis undisonis per noctem in rupibus astans,
quae nato secreta velit, quibus abdere terris
destinet, huc illuc divisa mente volutat. 198-200

Here is an unmistakable echo of Virg Aen 8.20 (atque animum nunc huc celerem, nunc dividit illuc), where the prospect of war with the Latins has Aeneas in just such an anguish of indecision.

95. proxima, sed studiis multum Mavortia, Thrace;
nec Macetum gens dura placet laudumque daturi
Cecropidae stimulos; nimium opportuna carinis
Sestos Abydenique sinus. placet ire per artas
Cycladas; hic spretae Myconosque humilisque Seriphos
et Lemnos non aequa viris atque hospita Delos
gentibus. 201-7

96. For discussion of bird-similes in the Thebaid, see Chapter 3 (ANTIGONE) Part IV and Chapter 5 (HYPISIPYLE) Part V.

97. The word *mulcens* (275), "cajoling" (Mozley), is used by Virgil at Aen 1.153 (et pectora mulcet) to describe the calming effect of a respected man's words on a hysterical, violent mob; and at Aen 1.197 (dictis maerentia pectora mulcet) to introduce Aeneas' comforting words to his dejected companions. Statius himself employs the word at Silv 2.1.56f (quis tua colloquiis hilaris mulcebit amatis / pectora?), 230 (tu pectora mulce) to describe the soothing, beguiling talk which the bereaved Atedius Melior needs, and which only the departed Glaucias is able to provide.

98. The abstract formulation *genitorque...nutritorque* (275f), meaning the thought of his father and his teacher, recalls Theb 1.591f (pulsi ex animo genitorque pudorque / et metus) describing the reaction of king Crotopus' daughter to the death of her child; Theb 5.658ff (faxo omnis fabula Lemni / et pater et tumidae generis mendacia sacri / exciderint), the vengeful words of Lycurgus, reacting to the death of his son, Opheltes. Ovid Met 8.463 (pugnant materque sororque) describes thus the conflict of loyalties in Althaea's heart.

99. Dilke (1954:104) asserts that the word *honore* (279) has the poetic meaning of "grace" here, citing parallel references at Hor Epod 17.17f (tunc mens et sonus relapsus atque notus in voltus honor); Theb 2.160 (quantus honos quantusque pudor, Adrastus says of his daughters); Theb 7.225 (redit omnis honos - of rose gardens). At TLL VI.3.2930.16-2931.2, references are cited for the equation of *honos* with *pulchritudo*: i) *praevalet vis maiestatis, dignitatis* Theb 9.705; 2.241; 4.335; 4.398; 4.752; 5.330; 8.573; 10.642 (*Virtus* disguised as *Manto*); 12.417; ii) *praevalet vis claritatis, splendoris* Theb 2.160; Silv 1.3.11; 2.6.39; Ach 1.225. Under the metonymic uses of the word (VI.3.2931.4-21) *i.q.homo -e insigni*, the reference is Ach 1.798.

100. For discussion of this simile, see Appendix A.

101. Here follows a discussion of the words in bold type:

mulcetur: use of the word mulcetur, "he is softened" here, makes explicit Statius' point that the cajoleries of Thetis are finally meeting with success: compare nequiquam mulcens (275) used above of her initially unsuccessful attempts. The verb "mulcere" is, of course, also appropriate in the context of the simile of the moulding of waxen images to follow.

visus...obliquat: Achilles casts sly sidelong glances, as he relaxes his previously stiff expression. The words visus...obliquat (323-4) are echoed at 2.27 (obliquos...vultus where he turns his departing gaze sadly on Scyros), and recall also Silv 2.6.102 (obliquo...vultu the covert attention paid by Proserpina to the shade of the departed slave, Philetus. At Silv 2.6.31, his beauty is said to outstrip that of Achilles when his mother hid him at Scyros).

cogi...volentem: the words cogi...volentem (325) may have been inspired by Ov Ars Amatoria 1.666, 700, where the story of Deidamia and Achilles is employed to illustrate the point that a struggling woman wishes to be overcome: pugnando vinci se tamen illa volet (666), says Ovid, referring the reader to the mythological exemplum of Deidamia:

viribus illa quidem victa est, ita credere oportet:
sed voluit vinci viribus illa tamen. 699-700

sinus: the word sinus (326) is commonly used to mean "garment", see for example Silv 2.1.133 (describing the garb of Glaucias).

colla rigentia: the phrase colla rigentia, "sinewy neck" (326) echoes Th 6.482 (the straining necks of competing chariot steeds), and suggests physical strength in action. Thetis seeks to disguise as well as to tame that virile neck, by setting her own necklace around it (329).

picturato cohibens vestigia limbo (330): recalls Virg Aen 4.137 (a description of Dido's hunting outfit): Sidoniam picto chlamydem circumdata limbo. At Th 6.367, picto discingit pectora limbo refers to a girdle (of Apollo), not to the fringe of a dress, as here.

incessum: the word incessum (331) means "gait", as at Virg Aen 1.405 (Venus appears to her son): vera incessu patuit dea. Statius' simile of the artist also recalls this passage of Virgil, since at 1.592ff Venus' beautification of Aeneas is compared to an artist's adornment of ivory, or the gilding of silver or marble.

victurae cerae: the phrase victurae..cerae, "living wax images" (332) reminds us of Statius' fondness for expressions which describe the appearance of statues as literally living: see, for example, Silv 1.3.47-8 metalla/ viva; Silv 2.2.66-7 quod ab arte Myronis / aut Polycliteo iussum est quod vivere caelo; Silv 3.1.95 viventes ceras; Silv 4.6.26ff vivant quae marmora...quid..iussum spirare (Polyclitus' statues are so true-to-life that they seem to come alive when he casts them).

talis erat...imago: the phrase talis erat...imago (334) recalls Theb 7.808, where talis erat campo belli fluitantis imago concludes a simile

likening the combat on the battlefield during an earthquake to a sea-battle during a storm.

102. The verbs *domat* (328) and *docet* (331) recall the earlier simile of the wild horse and its trainer (see above B).

103. Barth points out the verbal similarities to *Juv 7.237ff exigite ut mores teneros ceu pollice ducat, / ut si quis cera vultum facit; Pers 5.40 artificemque tuo ducit sub pollice vultum.*

104. For the Hecate-Artemis identification, see further Duncan (1914:95f).

105. Here follows discussion of the words in bold type:

cessat: 343 *cessat w et EBKQR: distat Garrod et Mozley*, following P. Dilke's reading *cessat* is supported by *Silv 1.2.110f nec colla genasque comere...cessavit mea, nate, manus* (Venus describes how she has beautified Violentilla, the bride of Arruntius Stella).

admoto...tactu: For the words *admoto...tactu*, "at a touch" (343), see *Silv 2.1.13* (Melior's grief at the death of Glaucias): *admoto latrant praecordia tactu.*

comes haeret eunti: for the phrase *comes haeret eunti*, "(her mother) keeps her company as she goes" (345), see *Val Fl 8.55* (of Jason following the sorrowful Medea); also *Theb 5.98f* (of Polyxo's sorrowful children) *comitatus eunti...haerebant*; *Theb 11.357* (of Actor following Antigone) *comes haeret eunti.*

exserta: for the use of *exserta* (346) to mean "bare" or "protruding" (here, with *umeros* "shoulders"), see *Theb 2.513* (of the Sphinx): *exsertos ungues; Th 4.235* (describing the warriors of Amphiaraus): *exserti ingentes umeros.*

componere crines: for the phrase *componere crines* (348), see *Virg Georg 4.416f* (the beautifying effect of Cyrene's ambrosia on Aristaeus): *at illi/ dulcis compositis spiravit crinibus aura.*

106. See further Chapter 7 (DEIDAMIA) Part V.

107. Perhaps I am reading too much into what may be purely decorative details. These are, after all, standard in an extended simile.

108. Sturt (1982:237) has suggested that there is also a slight reference to Deidamia here: her anxiety at the disruption of proceedings and the possible implications of Achilles' behaviour may be reflected in the detail of the simile *iam tristes spectabant Penthea Thebae* (1.840).

109. For this device of citing the conduct of a mythological figure as a model when urging a certain mode of behaviour, see e.g. *Prop 1.1.9-16, 2.15-22; Ovid Am 2.9.7-8, Her 4.93-100*. The *Ars Amatoria* contains 52 such exempla: see Watson (1983:117-126) for details.

110. See further Appendix A.

111. As Sturt (1982:837) has noted, the connection between the Pentheus-simile and the Bacchus-simile (1.615ff) is strengthened by the identification of Bacchus with Thebes at 1.615: ubi ad Thebas...

112. Note the verbal similarities between the Pentheus-simile and the last two lines of the Hercules-simile: ...tunc aspernatur amictus / plus solito rumpitque choros et plurima turbat. / sic indignantem thyrsos acceptaque matris / tympana iam tristes spectabant Penthea Thebae (Ach 1.837-40); perdere Sidonios umeris ridebat amictus/ et turbare colus et tympana rumpere dextra Theb 10.648-9.

113. See further Appendix A.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DEIDAMIA IN STATIUS' ACHILLEID

regina (Ach 1.295, 662, 823)

I. INTRODUCTION: PRE-STATIAN DEIDAMIA

II. ACHILLES FALLS IN LOVE

III. ACHILLES SEDUCES DEIDAMIA

IV. ACHILLES IS DISCOVERED AND LEAVES SCYROS

V. SIMILES USED TO DESCRIBE DEIDAMIA

I. INTRODUCTION: PRE-STATIAN DEIDAMIA

Homer foregrounds the captive Briseis as the woman in Achilles' life at the time of the Trojan war: the plot of the Iliad is largely motivated by Achilles' wrath at her theft by Agamemnon. Deidamia is only indirectly alluded to: there is mention that Achilles captured Scyros on his way to the war (Il 9.667f) and there are references to his son's upbringing there (Il 19.326-7; Od 11.506-40).¹ Deidamia, though not mentioned by name, is therefore regarded not as a wife but as an earlier war-prize of Achilles. The version offered in the Cypria, according to Proclus' summary, is that of a storm at sea which blew Achilles' ship to Scyros, where he married Lycomedes' daughter.²

By the fifth century a new account had emerged, attributing Achilles' stay on Scyros to Thetis' maternal fears. Euripides' (now fragmentary) play Scyrians described Odysseus' and Diomedes' mission to extract Achilles from Scyros,³ and the theme was also popular in Greek art: the fifth-century painter Polygnotus depicted Achilles among the Scyrian maidens (Paus 1.22.6) in the acropolis at Athens, and Athenion of Maroneia depicted the recognition scene (Pliny N.H. 35.134), which was also a popular subject with Pompeian fresco painters.⁴ Philostratus

Minor (c AD 300) in his *Imagines* I describes a picture of windswept Scyros, pointing out the tower where Lycomedes' daughters followed their maidenly pursuits with the "daughter" of Thetis. According to his description, the picture captures a moment in the story when Deidamia is soon to be delivered of Pyrrhus, Achilles soon to be discovered.

There exists a fragmentary Idyll 2 of the Hellenistic bucolic poet Bion (c.100 BC), an epithalamium of Achilles and Deidamia. After a brief mention of the origins of the Trojan war (lines 10-14), there is a description of Achilles learning wool-carding among the daughters of Lycomedes (15-16). The poet comically stresses Achilles' feminine appearance (16-20), but alludes also to his masculine desires (21). He begins to relate the seduction of Deidamia (22ff), how Achilles would sit beside her all day, kissing her hand, helping her and praising her weaving (22-4), and how he tries to persuade her that they as two bosom companions should sleep together (25-32). Here, unfortunately, the fragment breaks off, but enough has survived of the poem to classify it as a light-hearted erotic treatment.

The early Latin writers Ennius and Accius each composed an Achilles but these are both completely lost and it is unknown whether either contained the Scyros-story. Two fragments remain of Livius Andronicus' Achilles, of which one consists in part of an address to Achilles by Deidamia (Bickel 1937:1): si malas imitabo, tum tu pretium pro noxa dabis (Warmington II, Livius Andronicus 1).⁵ Nothing more substantial than this may be said of the play, other than that it probably contained the Euripidean version of the Scyros-story.

As I have mentioned before, Virgil greatly influenced Statius in the

areas of narrative form and diction as well as in female characterisation. The episodes concerning Dido and Andromache in the Aeneid provided Statius with ample material for his depiction of the relationship between Achilles and Deidamia. In Book 4 of the Aeneid, Aeneas is tarrying in Carthage with Dido, until a messenger from the gods (*Mercury*) reminds him of his divine mission, whereupon the hero immediately wishes to be gone though Dido tries to convince him to stay: a similar situation develops in the Achilleid, and we are further reminded of the Virgilian treatment by a number of strong verbal echoes.⁶ The bereft Andromache of Aeneid 3 may also have provided material for the portrayal of Deidamia in the Achilleid (1.927fff).

Ovid mentions the Scyros-episode in the *Ars Amatoria* (1.681-704) by way of a mythological exemplum on the easy virtue of women.⁷ The narrator introduces the story by a brief allusive mention of the origins of the Trojan war (the judgement of Paris and the rape of Helen 681-8). He then proceeds to chide Achilles for his shameful feminine disguise and womanly activities (689-96)⁸, with rhetorical amplification of the antithesis between weaving and fighting.⁹ The scene shifts abruptly to the bedroom where Achilles by chance (*forte* 697) was in bed with Deidamia. In a rather flippant tone, Ovid describes the rape and Achilles' consequent return to a masculine role (*haec illum stupro comperit esse virum* 698), followed by a brief account of Deidamia's propempticon (698-704). There is a clear connection made between military and erotic arma which demonstrates that Achilles' assertion of his manhood involves the violent conquest of others.¹⁰ Ovid is trying to prove a point which Statius is not, namely that all women will consent to sex when hard-pressed and therefore the employment of force,

vis, is both useful and, for the women, desirable (Ars Am 1.699-700). For this reason, Statius' tone is rather different and his characterisation of Deidamia stresses her girlish innocence. Nevertheless, there are a number of thematic echoes of this passage in Statius' account¹², and a few of the same ideas are expressed, e.g. 698 Deidamia shamefully learning that Achilles is a man (cf. Ach 1.561-2); the gift of Venus and the rape of Helen 683-6 (cf. Ach 1.33-4, 69-70); the disgrace of wielding the distaff instead of the spear 691-6 (cf. Ach 1.626, 635 during Achilles' soliloquy). Statius amplifies the epic motif (expressed in Ovid as a rhetorical antithesis 691-6) of women spinning while men are at war: Ach 1.355 (Thetis asks Lycomedes if Achilles may carry the baskets at the sacrifice); 1.580-3 (Deidamia teaches Achilles to spin); 1.634-5 (concerning his spinning activities, Achilles asks himself similar rhetorical questions to those of Ovid here); 1.654-5 (Achilles, while consoling Deidamia, says that he submitted to these female occupations for her sake).

Ovid's *Heroides*, letters from mythological heroines to their absent lovers, provided Statius with a fund of material to draw upon for his portrayal of Achilles' wayward behaviour in the *Achilleid*. There are a number of echoes of the various epistles¹³, but one of them particularly concerns us here: Her 3, the letter of Briseis to Achilles. In lines 7-56, Briseis complains that Achilles' love for her is not as strong as it should be, since he gave her up so easily and now delays in demanding her back (and even opposes her restoration). True love, according to Briseis (25-42, 55-6), would return Achilles to his role as warrior.¹⁴ We recognise how much Ovid's Briseis has in common with Deidamia of the *Achilleid*: Briseis reminds him of the

broken promises (53-4, 115-20)¹⁵, she expresses the wish to die rather than to be left behind to watch him leave her¹⁶, she imagines him with a noble bride.¹⁷ These are all the rhetorical devices that a desperate woman on the brink of desertion might plausibly employ.

Palmer (1898:xxvi) mentions that in the Paris manuscript 2782 there is a twelfth-century epistle of Deidamia to Achilles written in unelided leonine elegiacs (a ninth-century vogue) by an skilled Ovid-imitator. Reproduced by Reise (1879:474ff), it contains amplification of many of the ideas expressed in Deidamia's propempticon (Ach 1.927-60). It contains a direct farewell address by Achilles 14-22 (as reported by Deidamia in the letter), in which he expresses the wish (17) that he might take Deidamia with him (a wish that she expresses at Ach 1.949) and makes the standard promise (20-22) to bring her Trojan captives and treasure (cf. Ach 1.958-9). Deidamia mentions her son Pyrrhus as the solace and companion of her grief (26-7, cf. Ach 1.952). She hopes (52) that no foreign heifer has stolen her bull (a neat variation on the bull-simile employed at Ach 1.313-7 to describe the love-struck Achilles), and, mentioning the rumours that she has heard about his love for Briseis (65ff *barbara amica* 126), she chides him for the disgrace (cf. Ach 1.955) and for his levity (89-90), and exhorts him to shake free his neck from that shameful yoke (94). She realises (115-16) that, on the contrary, he has come to feel shame for his youthful misdemeanours (cf. Ach 1.947-8).

As noted before, there is in the *Achilleid* the discernible influence of Seneca's *Troades*. Aside from a brief allusion to the Scyros-story (210-14) Achilles threw off his mother's disguise; Scyros was home to his

son Neoptolemos), there are also distinct echoes in theme and in situation: for example Helen, bringing to Polyxena a false report of her betrothal to Achilles' son, says at Tro 879-82: *te magna Tethys teque tot pelagi deae / placidumque numen aequoris tumidi Thetis / suam vocabunt, te datam Pyrrho socer / Peleus nurum vocabit et Nereus nurum.* This is echoed in two separate speeches of Achilles in the Achilleid: when he comforts Deidamia after he has seduced her (*quid defles magno nurus addita ponto? / quid gemis ingentis caelo paritura nepotes?* 655-6), and when he appeases Lycomedes (*Peleus te nato socerum et Thetis hospita iungunt / adlegantque suos utroque a sanguine divos* 898-9).¹⁸

II. ACHILLES FALLS IN LOVE (Ach 1.283-378)

As we observed in Chapter 6, Thetis dominates the first part of the poem (lines 1-396): it is during this section that, motivated by maternal concern, she conceives and proceeds to implement her deceitful plan (the transvestite disguise of Achilles), after unsuccessfully attempting a stratagem more fitting to a goddess in an epic poem (i.e. the sabotage of Paris' fleet). A crucial stage in the implementation of the disguise is the persuasion of the reluctant Achilles, and it is here that the entrance of Deidamia plays an important role.

Thetis manages to fool Chiron (1.126ff), and removes the sleeping Achilles to the island of Scyros, home of peaceable king Lycomedes. When Achilles awakens and hears of her plan (242ff), he is at first adamant in his refusal to accept the feminine disguise. In a simile (277-82), Thetis is likened to a trainer unsuccessfully trying to tame a wild horse. But then chance provides Thetis with the opportunity she has been looking for: it happens (*forte* 286) to be the festal day of Pallas

on the island¹⁹, and the daughters of Lycomedes are out of doors (for them a rare privilege, 287) paying tribute with flowers to the statue of the goddess:

Palladi litoreae celebrabat Scyros honorum
 forte diem, placidoque satae Lycomedae sorores
 luce sacra patriis, quae rara licentia, muris
 exierant dare veris opes divaeque severas
 fronde ligare comas et spargere floribus hastam. 285-9

All the sisters are of rarest beauty (omnibus eximium formae decus²⁰ 290), all dressed alike (omnibus idem / cultus 290-1) and all eminently nubile (expleto teneri iam fine pudoris / virginitas matura toris annique tumentes 291-2). Nevertheless, as Homer's Nausicaa and Virgil's Dido before her have done²¹, Statius' Deidamia is said to eclipse her sisters and maidens like Venus or Diana (293-4); her beauty is also said to equal or even outstrip that of the goddess Pallas (299-300). This comparison is linked to a later one (1.823-6) where Deidamia and Achilles, as they prepare to dance for the guests, are likened in their "outstanding" appearance to Diana, Pallas or Proserpina.²² There are also connections with the Apollo-simile at 1.165-6, where Achilles returning from the hunt is likened to Apollo²³, and the Latona-simile (1.344-8) where Thetis, adding the finishing touches to Achilles' disguise, is likened to Latona, tidying the dishevelled attire of Hecate (Diana) returning from the hunt.²⁴ Deidamia is therefore portrayed as goddess-like in her beauty, a fitting counterpart to the godlike Achilles.

For the untamed Achilles, it is love at first sight: a fire races through his body (302-6)²⁵; inflamed with love for Deidamia and eager to rush forward and disturb the ceremonies (but restrained by shame and

respect for his mother), he is like a bullock who rages with love for a snow-white heifer but is restrained by the pleased herdsmen (313-17).²⁶ Thetis seizes the opportunity which chance has provided her (*occupat arrepto iam conscia tempore mater* 318): she asks Achilles whether it would be so difficult a thing to stay awhile among these maidens, and expresses the (conventional) wish to be a match-maker and to hold a grandchild in her arms (319-22). He is softened, and willing to be coerced (325), and Thetis throws the feminine robes over him. She beautifies him (though he has little need of it, 335-7) and teaches him how to behave as a girl (326ff), her manipulative actions compared to those of an artist moulding waxen images (332-4), her final adjustments likening her to Latona tidying the dishevelled attire of Hecate (344-²⁷8).

Thetis now has a completely successful interview with Lycomedes (349ff). The old king accepts his new charge and Lycomedes' daughters welcome the strange "girl" into their midst (366ff), wondering at "her" height and size (*quantum cervicis comisque / emineat quantumque umeros ac pectora fundat* 368-9).²⁸ Delighting to touch the seeming maiden, (*contingere gaudent* 371), their fateful actions recall those of the Trojan youth welcoming the fatal wooden horse into the city (*Aen* 2.239). In a simile, they are likened to doves learning to accept a foreign bird (372-8).²⁹ Thetis departs, with last-minute words of advice for Achilles (379ff), and a final prayer of supplication to the very shores of Scyros.³⁰

In this episode (283-396), Deidamia's entrance motivates the plot in an entirely passive manner: her beauty causes Achilles to fall in love with her, which enables his mother to persuade him to adopt the

feminine disguise. This device of female characterisation (the motivating presence) recalls that of Lavinia in the Aeneid, whose wordless, tearful blush inflames the hotheaded Turnus for his duel with Aeneas (Aen 12.64ff).³¹

III. ACHILLES SEDUCES DEIDAMIA (lines 560-674)

Thetis' plan is undermined in the two subsequent sections of the poem: firstly (1.397-559) when the Greeks at Aulis clamour for the absent Achilles, and Calchas is persuaded to discover his whereabouts by prophetic means; secondly (1.560-674) when Achilles seduces Deidamia and thus makes her an accomplice to his mother's scheme. When Calchas "sees" Achilles on Scyros, he is outraged. His anger is primarily directed against Thetis, but at the end of his tirade he asks: *quaenam haec procul improba virgo?* (535).³² Thus it is implied that Calchas views Deidamia as an accomplice in the dastardly feminine scheme to hide Achilles away on Scyros. Also, he probably divines what is about to happen between Achilles and Deidamia.

As the ship of Ulysses and Diomedes sets out for Scyros, the scene changes to the island itself, where Deidamia is guilt-ridden and fearful of discovery (*opertae conscia culpae / cuncta pavet tacitasque putat sentire sorores* 562-3), since she has learnt in secret of the true sexual identity of the transvestite Achilles: *occultum falsi sub imagine sexus / Aeaciden furto iam noverat una latenti / Deidamia virum* (560-2).³³ For rough (*durus* 564) Achilles loses his gruff shyness (*rudem... pudorem* 565) on the departure of his mother, and of all the admiring girls, chooses Deidamia as his companion (566-7). He begins to woo her cunningly, though she does not know it (*blandequae novas nil*

tale timenti / admovet insidias 567-8): following her and staring at her (568-9), playfully pelting her with their Bacchic accoutrements (570-2), and teaching her (with many a kiss, embrace and word of flattery) how to play the lyre and the harp, and to sing the songs which Chiron had taught him (572-6).³⁴ He also teaches her to sing of the wonderful exploits of Achilles, thereby causing her to fall in love with the "brother" and to sing of him in his own presence (577-9).³⁵ In her turn, Deidamia shows him how to move more gracefully and teaches him to spin, though he does not show much aptitude for it, his clumsy hands snapping the thread and even breaking the distaff:³⁶

ipsa quoque et validos proferre modestius artus
 et tenuare rudes attrito pollice lanas
 demonstrat reficitque colos et perdita dura
 pensa manu. 1.580-3

The language in Statius' version recalls that of Her 9, where Deianira writing to Hercules chides him for the disgrace of his female dress.³⁷ This is a reference to the myth of Hercules serving as handmaiden under queen Omphale of Lydia to atone for his murder of Iphitus. Propertius (3.11) was the first to see Hercules' situation as that of a servile lover, and the myth became a topos for *servitium amoris* (see *Ars Am* 2.215ff, for example). The connection between the context here at 581-3 and the myth of Hercules and Omphale is strengthened by Thetis' mention of the story at 260-1, where she adduces it as an exemplum of a hero employing a female disguise without in any way impeding his masculinity.³⁸ The associations evoked at this point in the narrative³⁹ conspire to make Achilles appear subjugated by his love for Deidamia, though he clearly takes the initiative in the relationship with her.

The voice of the new "girl" is also suspiciously gruff and "her" weight in an embrace excessive (*vocisque sonum pondusque tenentis* 583), and, a point which escapes the notice of the others (*quodque fugit comites* 584), "she" appears to pay overmuch attention to Deidamia (*nimio quod lumine sese / figat et in verbis intempestivus anhelet* 584-5).⁴⁰ Yet when Achilles would confess to Deidamia, she avoids him: *iam iamque dolos aperire parantem / virginea levitate fugit prohibetque fateri* (586-7). In this, they are compared to the young Jupiter giving deceptively innocent kisses to his sister, who at last began to suspect his true intentions (588-91).⁴¹

Then comes the evening of the Bacchic festival (592ff). It takes place in a sacred grove and no man is allowed near the place (*lex procul ire mares* 598). Lycomedes makes proclamation of the ban on males and a priestess is posted to watch for intruders (598-602). Leading the virgin band, Achilles laughs silently to himself (*tacitus sibi risit Achilles* 602). His comrades wonder at him as he joins awkwardly in the dance (603-4), his assumed sex suiting him as well as his own (*et sexus pariter decet et mendacia matris* 605). Now he outshines Deidamia in beauty by as much as she had previously outshone her sisters: *nec iam pulcherrima turbae / Deidamia suae tantumque admota superbo / vincitur Aeacide, quantum premit ipsa sorores* (606-8).⁴² Achilles, donning Bacchic costume, is likened to the god himself, preparing to go to war (615-8).⁴³

As midnight approaches (618ff), the sleepless Achilles fights his reverence for his mother in a self-reproachful soliloquy (624-39): he asks himself how long he will waste his youth in the imprisonment imposed on him by his mother (*quonam timidae commenta parentis / usque*

feres? primumque imbelli carcere perdes / florem aevi 624-5)⁴⁴ ; he enumerates his manly pursuits now prohibited (non tela licet Mavortia dextra, / non trepidas agitare feras? 626-7); he recalls his beloved Thessaly, Chiron and Patroclus (627-33), contrasting the latter's sporting activities with his own present feminine occupations (tu nunc tela manu, nostros tu dirigis arcus / nutritosque mihi scandis, Patrocle, iugales: / ast ego pampineis diffundere bracchia thyrsis/ et tenuare colus - pudet haec taedetque fateri - / iam scio (633-6)⁴⁵. Even his love for Deidamia is needs kept hidden (quin etiam dilectae virginis ignem / aequaevamque facem captus noctesque diesque / dissimulas 636-8). Finally he comes to the crux of the matter: when will he do the thing which would both heal the wound caused by love concealed, and also prove his manhood in the only available way: quonam usque preme urentia pectus / vulnera? teque marem - pudet heu! - nec amore probaris? (638-9).

He speaks thus (sic ait 640), and straightaway in the grove of Bacchus that night⁴⁶ fits actions to his words: vi potitur votis et toto pectore veros / admovet amplexus (642-3). The stars see it and the Moon blushes (643-4); Deidamia screams but the other maidens think it is just the signal for the dance to begin (645-7)⁴⁷. The words at 642-3 are an echo of Met 11.264f (confessam amplectitur heros / et potitur votis ingentique implet Achille), and there is parallelism of context (Peleus raping Thetis) as well as the obvious relationship between the two sets of rape (Achilles' father impregnating Thetis with Achilles)⁴⁸.

Achilles resumes the dance, brandishing his thyrsus (647-8)⁴⁹ , but not

before he has consoled the anxious Deidamia with kindly words (ante
⁵⁰
tamen dubiam verbis solatur amicis 649): he reveals his illustrious
identity (ille ego - quid trepidas? - genitum quem caerula mater /
paene Iovi silvis nivibusque inmisit alendum / Thessalicis 650-2),
declares that he submitted to the feminine disguise only for Deidamia's
sake (nec ego hos cultus aut foeda subissem / tegmina, ni primo te visa
in litore: cessi / te propter, tibi pensa manu, tibi mollia gesto /
⁵¹
tympana 652-55) , reminds her of the wonderful match she is making
(quid defles magno nurus addita ponto? / quid gemis ingentes caelo
paritura nepotes? 655-6) and, anticipating her deepest fear (sed pater-
⁵²
657), promises to protect her from her father's wrath (657-60).

Although she has long suspected Achilles' good faith (quamquam olim
suspecta fides 663), Deidamia is horror-struck at the outcome of events
(obstipuit tantis regina exterrita monstris 662). As he confesses to
her, his very countenance changes, and she shrinks from him (cominus
ipsum / horruit et facies multum mutata fatentis 663-4). At 662 she is
called regina, recalling Dido of the Aeneid: Aeneas tarried in Carthage
until a messenger reminded him of his duty; Achilles, though his
mission is not divine, will similarly be recalled to his fate (by a
very human messenger, Ulysses). Deidamia debates her course of action:
should she tell her father and thereby ruin herself and perhaps also
endanger the life of the young man (665-7)? ⁵³ For in her heart there is
the undeniable love she has long since conceived for Achilles (et adhuc
in corde manebat / ille diu deceptus amor 667-8). She therefore decides
to remain silent and becomes an accomplice in Thetis' deceit (silet
aegra premitque / iam commune nefas 668-9), letting only her nurse into
the secret (669-71). She cunningly conceals the rape and the pregnancy

(illa astu tacito raptumque pudorem / surgentemque uterum atque aegros
in pondere menses / occuluit 671-3) ⁵⁴ until she duly gives birth to the
child.

While the Greek ships head for Scyros, an innocent (perhaps too naïve) Deidamia falls in love with an Achilles she has heard tell of (579) but shrinks from the real man revealed (662). Then, inspired by the same emotions (fear and love) as those which motivated Thetis to conceive the scheme, Deidamia conspires in the deception (669). In some ways, her dilemma is that of a Medea: she must choose between reverence for her father (657) and love of her suitor (667-8). Like Medea, she chooses for her lover, though with considerably less conflict (compare the torment of Medea as described in Valerius Flaccus) and, once the choice has been made, far less effort: not for her the labours of Medea; all Deidamia has to do is to keep silent. Her role at this stage of the narrative is thus still a passive one.

IV. ACHILLES IS DISCOVERED AND LEAVES SCYROS (1.750-960; 2.23-30, 80-5)

In the next section of the poem (1.675ff), we witness the eventual collapse of Thetis' plan. The Greeks arrive at Scyros and Ulysses reveals to Diomedes his plan to uncover Achilles with the gift of the shield and the ruse of the trumpet-blast (1.718ff), while he dissembles to Lycomedes as to the true purpose of their visit (726-37). Lycomedes arranges a banquet for the visitors (741ff), while Ulysses looks around the palace for a masculine-looking girl (*si qua vestigia magnae / virginis aut dubia facies suspecta figura* 743-4). He is compared to a hunter scouring the fields with a Molossian hound (Diomedes) in search of the quarry (746-9).

Reports of the Greek embassy have reached the girls' private chamber, and while the other maidens are with just cause afraid (*iure pavent aliae* 753), Achilles can hardly contain his delight or his eagerness to see the heroes and their arms, in spite of his dress (*sed vix nova gaudia celat / Pelides avidusque novos heroas et arma / vel talis vidisse cupit* 753-5). Lycomedes summons his daughters and their companions to the feast (*pater ire iubet natas comitesque pudicas / natarum* 757-8). Entering the banqueting hall, they are compared to Amazons feasting after a campaign (758-60).⁵⁵

Ulysses scrutinizes all the faces and figures (*tum vero intentus vultus ac pectora Ulixes / perlibrat visu* 761-2), but the evening light is deceptive and their stature is concealed as soon as they are seated (*extemplo latuit mensura iacentum* 763). He does notice and point out to Diomedes one with an immodest gaze (*nullaque virginei servantem signa pudoris* 765). Now, were it not for the actions of Deidamia, Achilles would already have been discovered: for she restrains his impulse to leap up from the couch, and re-adjusts his female disguise:⁵⁶

quid nisi praecipitem blando complexa moneret
 Deidamia sinu nudataque pectora semper
 exsertasque manus umerosque in veste teneret
 et prodire toris et poscere vina vetaret
 saepius et fronti crinale reponeret aurum?
 Argolicis ducibus iam tunc patuisset Achilles. 767-72

So we see that Deidamia has taken up the functions of restricting (cf. 1.312) and dressing (cf. 1.326ff) Achilles which Thetis originally performed in the initial stages of the scheme: Achilles is still under female control, though he is beginning to show signs of rebellion in the presence of men.

After dinner, Lycomedes makes a speech (775-83) in which he claims to envy the Greek heroes their enterprise (775-6) since he himself is too old to go to war, and has no sons or grandsons to send (nunc ipsi viresque meas et cara videtis / pignora: quando novos dabit haec mihi turba nepotes? 782-3).⁵⁷ Ulysses grabs the opportunity which Lycomedes' speech has provided him (sollers arrepto tempore Ulixes 784)⁵⁸ to make a rousing patriotic speech (785ff). He notices the attentiveness of the one "girl" contrasted with the alarm of the rest (aspicit intentum vigilique haec aure⁵⁹ trahentem, / cum paveant aliae demissa^{que} lumina flectant 794-5), and presses further, promising glory in battle (798-9) to anyone with a proud ancestry and a martial skill (796-7), scorning the efficacy of female restraints (vix timidae matres aut agmina cessant / virginea 799-800) and dooming any shirkers to oblivion and heavenly damnation (800-2). Again, were it not for Deidamia's quick-witted actions (in signalling the maidens to leave, and personally escorting Achilles out), Achilles would have jumped up to reveal his identity: exisset stratis, ni provida signo / Deidamia dato cunctas hortata sorores / liquisset mensas ipsum complexa (802-4).⁶⁰ Deidamia has once more delayed the inevitable discovery of Achilles. She has begun to take a far more active role in the plot than hitherto, and in some ways can be seen as the chosen representative of the absent Thetis.

Achilles leaves last of all the maidens, with many a backward glance (805). After they have retired, Ulysses compliments Lycomedes on the goddess-like beauty (sidereis divarum vultibus aequas⁶¹ 809) of his beloved daughters (caris...natis 808), eulogising cryptically: ut me olim tacitum reverentia tangit! / is decor et formae species permixta virili 810-11). Lycomedes accordingly invites the Greeks to a dancing

display to be held the next day (812-14). They eagerly accept and all depart to bed and tranquil sleep, except Ulysses who impatiently awaits the coming of the day (816-8).

The following day, Ulysses and Agyrtes come out to watch the dancing, bearing their treacherous gifts (819-20). The Scyrian maidens also emerge from their chamber (821-3).⁶² Deidamia and Achilles, standing out among their companions as they prepare to dance for the guests, are likened to Diana, Pallas and Proserpina, who shine out among the nymphs of Enna (823-6). This simile is linked to that at 1.293f, where at Deidamia's first appearance she is likened in her outstanding beauty to Venus, Diana and Pallas.⁶³

The dancing commences (827-34) and Achilles clearly reveals his sex in his behaviour as he rebels against the feminine disguise: *tunc vero, tunc praecipue manifestus Achilles / nec servare vices nec bracchia iungere curat; tunc molles gressus, tunc aspernatur amictus / plus solito rumpitque choros et plurima turbat* (835-8). Achilles, disdaining his womanly disguise and breaking up the dance, is likened to Pentheus rejecting the accoutrements of his mother's Bacchic belief.⁶⁴ The Pentheus-simile, as an illustration of Achilles' reawakening manhood, is also linked to the simile at 1.858ff where, at the consummation of his rebellion, Achilles is compared to a young tamed lion who reverts to his natural savagery at the first glimpse of steel.⁶⁵

After the female troop have disbanded amid applause (841), they rush back into the palace where Diomedes has set out the gifts and tells them to choose as they fancy with Lycomedes' permission (845).⁶⁶ The girls take the Bacchic gifts and adornments (*quas sexus iners naturaque*

ducit 848), and think the weapons a gift for their father (851). But Achilles (ferus Aeacides 852), abandoning all thought of his mother or Deidamia at the sight of the shield and spear brought by Ulysses, is like a tamed lion which has forgotten its training (858-63).⁶⁷ Ulysses spurs him on to reveal his full identity, by immediately rushing up to him and uttering a shaming speech (866-74).⁶⁸ As Achilles strips the female robes off his body, Agyrtes gives a mighty blast on the trumpet and Achilles is revealed in his full glory (874-85).

But when Achilles hears Deidamia weeping in the next room, his virtus is (temporarily) broken by his hidden love:⁶⁹

ast alia plangebatur parte relictos
Deidamia dolos, cuius cum grandia primum
lamenta et notas accepit pectore voces
haesit et occulto virtus infracta calore est. 885-8

He feels the need to make their marriage public and as comfortable as possible for Deidamia and her family. He therefore drops the shield and addresses the bewildered Lycomedes (889ff). It is a clever, flattering speech: he mentions the glory which will attach to Lycomedes for sending him, Achilles, to the war (894-5), formally requests on behalf of his illustrious parents the hand in marriage of one of Lycomedes' daughters (898-901)⁷⁰ and when he hears no demur from the old king, asks for his blessing on the marriage and his pardon for his kin (iunge ergo manus et concipe foedus / atque ignosce tuis 902-3).⁷¹ Then he confesses the rape (903-5) and offers to make atonement by surrendering his arms and remaining on Scyros (906-7). When he sees Lycomedes' angry countenance (907), he changes his tone from conciliatory to defiant: he declares that Lycomedes is already a father-in-law and a grandfather,

placing the child at his feet (908-10).⁷² This is a powerful argument, since we know (1.780-3) of Lycomedes' already-expressed wish for male offspring. Persuasive Ulysses and the Greeks add their entreaties to Achilles' words (910-11) and Lycomedes is finally won over (918).⁷³ Deidamia comes out of the palace, so fearful that she cannot believe she has been forgiven, and still anxious to conciliate her father: *arcanis effert pudibunda tenebris / Deidamia gradum, veniae nec protinus amens / credit et opposito genitorem placat Achille* (918-20).⁷⁴

A messenger is now sent to Peleus to inform him of these happenings and to ask for contributions to the war effort (921-2); Lycomedes himself gives what little he can (923-4); there is a feast, and with the union at last made public, Achilles and Deidamia enjoy their first legitimate night together (*tunc epulis consumpta dies, tandemque relectum / foedus et intrepidus nox conscia iungit amantes*. 925-6).

Now the scene moves to the bedroom (927-60) where Deidamia lies awake fearing the dawn, thinking of Troy and the very waves which next day will take her lover from her (*illius ante oculos nova bella et Xanthus et Ide/ Argolicaeque rates atque ipsas cogitat undas* 927-8). She throws her arms about his neck and, clutching his limbs, breaks into a tearful propempticon (931ff).⁷⁵ This is her first (and only) speech in the poem, and is thus a substantial part of her characterisation. The locus communis for this sort of propempticon is that uttered by Andromache to Hector at Il 6.400f.⁷⁶ The context and verbal similarities remind us of Dido's farewell speech to Aeneas in Aen 4, Briseis to Achilles in Ovid's Her 3 - and Argia to Polynices at Theb 2.306-74.

First, Deidamia asks when she will see Achilles again, whether he will condescend to look again upon his son (*aspiciamne iterum meque hoc in pectore ponam, / Aeacide? rursusque tuos dignabere partus?* 931-2), or whether he will return from the Trojan war puffed up with pride and wishing to forget his stay on Scyros (*an tumidus Teucrosque lares et capta reportans / Pergama virgineae noles meminisse latebrae?* 933-4). She does not know what to plead, what to fear, what to cry for, since she has scarcely had time to formulate her thoughts (*quid precer, heu! timeamve prius? quidve anxia mandem, / cui vix flere vacat?* 935-6). She bewails the short time they have had together: the secret love was sweet, the marriage brings separation (*modo te nox una deditque / inviditque mihi. thalamis haec tempora nostris? / hicne est liber hymen? o dulcia furta dolique, / o timor! abripitur miserae permissus Achilles* 936-9).

Nevertheless, she does not attempt to keep him from the war (for she, like her father, fears to delay the passage of fate), but bids him go with her blessing, reminding him to be careful since his mother's fears were not in vain, and asking that he come back hers (*i - neque enim tantos ausim revocare paratus - / i cautus, nec vana Thetin timuisse memento, / i felix nosterque redi!* 940-2). The injunction to go recalls that of Dido at *Aen* 4.380 (*sequere Italiam ventis*), but whereas Dido's tone is sarcastic, Deidamia is being sincere.

Immediately she has asked for his return, she realises that her request is too bold (*nimis improba posco* 942).⁷⁷ She jealously imagines the Trojan women sighing over him and offering themselves to him, and perhaps even Helen herself (*iam te sperabunt lacrimis planctuque decorae / Troades optabuntque tuis dare colla catenis / et patriam*

pensare toris⁷⁸, aut ipsa placebit / Tyndaris, incesta nimium laudata rapina 943-6). Deianira in Her 9 (123ff) likewise describes her feelings of outrage when she sees Hercules' slave-mistress Iole. Deidamia says that she herself will be merely a story from his wild youth, with which he will regale his Trojan slaves (ast egomet primae puerilis fabula culpae /⁷⁹ narrabor famulis aut dissimulata latebo 947-8).⁸⁰ Argia, the model wife of the Thebaid, also succumbs to jealousy in her propempticon: quo tendis iter? ni conscius ardor / ducit et ad Thebas melior socer (Theb 2.351-2).

Now she changes her plea, and begs him to take her along with him, so that she may share in his activities as once he shared in hers (quin age, duc comitem; cur non ego Martia tecum / signa feram? tu thyrsa manu Baccheaque mecum / sacra, quod infelix non credet Troia, tulisti 949-51). This recalls the words of Deianira to Hercules at Her 9.101ff, where she describes the exchange of dress between Hercules and queen Omphale, the latter assuming also his armour and weapons. Statius is providing a rendition of Ovid's classic antithesis between male (warlike) and female (pacific) activities.

Abandoning all these entreaties, Deidamia finally pleads with Achilles on behalf of his son not to marry any foreign wife and thereby disown his child and disgrace his own illustrious line:

attamen hunc, quem maesta mihi solacia linqis,
 hunc saltem sub corde tene et concede precanti
 hoc solum, pariat ne quid tibi Barbara coniunx,
 ne qua det indignos Thetidi captiva nepotes. 952-5

Here (952) is the topos of the bereft woman having her husband's image (in his son) to comfort her: whereas Deidamia does indeed have this

solace, Dido in the Aeneid does not (at Aen 4. 327-30 she wishes for an Ascanius of her own for this reason), nor does Virgil's Andromache (at Aen 3.489f, she says that Ascanius is the image of her Astyanax, the only picture of him left to her). Here also is the propempticon topos (954-5) of the (imputed) foreign mistress: compare Deianira's outrage in Her 9.123ff. An interesting variation on this theme is the jealous imaginings of Briseis in Her 3.71ff: she pictures Achilles with a noble wife, worthy of his family (inter Achaeiadas longe pulcherrima matres / in thalamos coniunx ibit eatque tuos, / digna nurus socero, Iovis Aeginaeque nepote, / cuique senex Nereus prosocer esse velit 71-4).

Achilles is not unmoved by Deidamia's speech and comforts her, swearing an oath to return, and promising her gifts and spoils (956-9). The last line belies the sincerity of his words: inrita ventosae rapiebant verba procellae (960).⁸¹ Likewise, Polynices fobs Argia off with empty promises (Theb 2.361-2), and Ovid's Briseis reminds Achilles of the broken oaths (Her 3.53-4, 115-20).

As he sails away with the Greeks, Achilles looks back at Deidamia standing on the tower, clutching his son and straining her eyes for the last glimpse of his ship; he looks at the beloved walls and thinks of Deidamia left alone and her tears:⁸²

Turre procul summa lacrimis comitata sororum
 commissumque tenens et habentem nomina Pyrrhum
 pendebat coniunx oculisque in carbasa fixis
 ibat et ipsa freto, et puppem iam sola videbat.
 ille quoque obliquos dilecta ad moenia vultus
 declinat viduamque domum gemitusque relictæ
 cogitat.

2.23-9

Again (as at 1.885ff above) his virtus gives way to a reborn ardor that

is hidden in his heart (*occultus sub corde renascitur ardor / datque locum virtus* 29-30). And once more (as at 1.866ff above), he is brought back to his warrior identity by Ulysses (30ff) who perceives his moment of weakness and reproaches him slyly by appealing to his pride.⁸³

Later, when Ulysses is telling of the origins of the Trojan war and the cause of Menelaus' wrath, he draws a parallel between Helen and Deidamia: what would Achilles do if Deidamia were stolen as Helen had been (*quid si nunc aliquis patriis rapturus ab oris / Deidamian eat viduaque e sede revellat / attonitam et magni clamantem nomen Achilles?* (2.81-3). Ulysses' words have their desired effect: Achilles puts his hand to his sword, flushed with anger at the thought; Ulysses is content (84-5).

V. SIMILES USED TO DESCRIBE DEIDAMIA

The majority of similes involving Deidamia focus on physical attributes: the awesome appearance of Lycomedes' daughters (1.758-60) and the pre-eminent beauty of Deidamia (1.290-300), coupled with that of Achilles (1.824-6), among them. Moreover, during the course of the relationship between Deidamia and Achilles, similes illustrate the maidens' initial acceptance of him (1.372-8) and Deidamia's innocent trust (1.588-91). None of these similes, as we shall see, involves a straightforward correspondence between image and context: secondary correlations and inferences abound within a narrative with a subtle undercurrent of humour.

A) At Deidamia's first appearance, she, like Venus or Diana, is said to eclipse her maidens (1.290-6); her beauty is also said to equal (or even outstrip) that of the goddess Pallas (299-300):⁸⁴

omnibus eximium formae decus omnibus idem
 cultus et expleto teneri iam fine pudoris
 virginitas matura toris annique tumentes.
 sed quantum virides pelagi Venus addita Nymphas
 obruit, aut umeris quantum Diana reliquit
 Naidas, effulget tantum regina decori
 Deidamia chori pulchrisque sororibus obstat.
 illius et roseo flammatur purpura vultu
 et gemmis lux maior inest et blandius aurum:
 atque ipsi par forma deaest, si pectoris angues
 ponat et exempta pacetur casside vultus.

1.290-300

Deidamia's companions and sisters are all beautiful (omnibus eximium formae decus 290), but she outshines them in loveliness (effulget tantum regina decori / Deidamia chori pulchrisque sororibus obstat 295-6), just like Venus or Diana in some way or other surpass their maidens. The simile of the "outstanding" goddess has a long epic tradition, beginning with Hom Od 6.102ff: Nausicaa with her maidens, at their first appearance to Odysseus on the beach, is likened in her surpassing beauty to Artemis hunting with the woodland nymphs. Virgil adapts this simile at Aen 1.498ff: Dido, at her first appearance to Aeneas, is compared in superior beauty, graceful movement and active leadership to Diana leading a dance of the Oreads. Ovid has his version at Met 3.181ff, a description of Diana bathing with her nymphs, in the Actaeon story: she is a head taller than them all.

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Statius himself employs the simile of the "outstanding" goddess at Silv 1.2.114ff (Venus' description of the beauty of Arruntius Stella's bride): ... Latias metire quid ultra / emineat matres: quantum Latonia nymphas / virgo premit quantumque egomet Nereidas exsto. A related simile is that of Theb 1.534-6 (resumed and extended at Theb 2.226ff), where Argia and Deipyle on their wedding day are likened to Pallas and Diana. There, the poet makes explicit the point that the Argive

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sisters do not arouse the fear that the martial goddesses do (terrore minus 1.536). Here also, he makes that point, but in a reversed fashion: he comments that Pallas, were she to change her awesome appearance, would be as beautiful as Deidamia now appears: *atque ipsi par forma deae est, si pectoris angues / ponat et exempta pacetur casside vultus* (299-300). Thus, Deidamia seems to lack the potential aggression which Argia and Deipyle manifest at an early stage in the Thebaid, and which they have cause to utilize later in that poem.

This simile is linked to a later one at Ach 1.823-6, where Deidamia and Achilles, as they prepare to dance for the guests, are likened in their "outstanding" appearance to Diana, Pallas or Proserpina (see E below).

B) Lycomedes' daughters, welcoming the strange "girl", Achilles, into their midst, are likened to doves learning to accept a foreign bird (1.372-78):

nec turba piarum
Scyriadum cessat nimio defigere visu
virginis ora novae, quantum cervice comisque
emineat quantumque umeros ac pectora fundat.
dehinc sociare choros castisque accedere sacris
hortantur ceduntque loco et contingere gaudent.
qualiter Idaliae volucres, ubi mollia frangunt
nubila, iam longum caeloque domoque gregatae,
si iunxit pinnas diversoque hospita tractu
venit avis, cunctae primum mirantur et horrent;
mox propius propiusque volant, atque aëre in ipso
paulatim fecere suam plausuque secundo
circumeunt hilares et ad alta cubilia ducunt. 1.366-78

The point of correspondence is primarily the caution with which the Scyrian maidens (Deidamia among them) and the doves (Idaliae volucres 372) accept Achilles and the strange bird respectively: first awe (nec turba piarum / Scyriadum cessat nimio defigere visu / virginis ora novae, quantum cervice comisque / emineat quantumque umeros ac pectora

fundat 366-9⁸⁸ - cf. cunctae primum mirantur et horrent 375), and then delighted acceptance into their activities (dehinc sociare choros castisque sacris / hortantur, ceduntque loco et contingere gaudent 370-⁸⁹ 1 - cf. mox propius propiusque volant, atque aere in ipso / paulatim fecere suam plausuque⁹⁰ secundo / circumeunt hilares et ad alta cubilia ducunt 376-8).

The secondary point of comparison is between Achilles (virginis...novae 368) and the hospita...avis (374-5): both are foreign, trustingly accepted and, as the literary allusion of contingere gaudent (371) suggests (see n89), destined to be a viper in the nest (see n87).

C) Achilles pays overmuch attention to Deidamia, and, when he would confess to her, she avoids him. In this, they are compared to the young Jupiter giving deceptively innocent kisses to his sister, who at last began to suspect his true intentions (1.588-91):

sic sub matre Rhea iuvenis regnator Olympi
 oscula securae dabat insidiosa sorori
 frater adhuc, medii donec reverentia cessit
 sanguinis et versos germana expavit amores.

Deidamia and Achilles share this simile equally, I do believe: the main point of comparison is as much the curiously attentive behaviour of Achilles (quodque fugit comites ...miratur 584-6) with that of Jupiter (sic sub matre Rhea iuvenis regnator Olympi / oscula ...dabat insidiosa 588-9), as it is the ingenuous reaction of Deidamia (virginea levitate fugit prohibetque fateri 587) with that of Juno (securae... sorori / frater adhuc 589-90). A minor point of identification, also, is between Rhea and Thetis, both of whom are still at present in control of their sons (sub matre Rhea 588).

The description of the outcome of Juno's innocent trust (*medii donec reverentia cessit / sanguinis et versos germana expavit amores*. 590-

⁹¹
1) predicts a similar result for Deidamia (who regards Achilles as her "sister")⁹², and serves perhaps to imply that Deidamia avoids Achilles not only out of *virginea levitate* (587) but also because she fears to face the reality she has begun to suspect.⁹³

D) Lycomedes' daughters, entering the banqueting hall, are compared to Amazons feasting after a campaign (1.758-60):⁹⁴

*iamque atria fervent
regali strepitu et picto discumbitur auro,
cum pater ire iubet natas comitesque pudicas
natarum. subeunt, quales Maeotide ripa,
cum Scythicas rapuere domos et capta Getarum
moenia, sepositis epulantur Amazones armis.* 1.755-60

This comparison appears an odd one: the well-behaved Scyrian maidens likened to warlike Amazons. What in their bearing, movement or behaviour can be said to be Amazonian? Both groups are virginal⁹⁵ and shy of men, to be sure, and each is sitting down to a meal. Also, the leaders of the train, Deidamia and Achilles, are, as we have seen, imposing enough in height and beauty⁹⁶, and their companions hardly less so.⁹⁷ On the other hand, there is no correspondence in the narrative to the martial activities of the Amazons in the simile. Unlike other epic Amazon similes, this one is not employed in a martial context.⁹⁸ Perhaps, as Lemaire has suggested⁹⁹, the numbers and sequence of entry of the maidens is illustrated by the Amazon image, connected to the dance movements of 1.833. Duncan (1914:99-100) suggests that Statius was so absorbed in some artistic representation of the subject that he overlooked the context of the image.¹⁰⁰ Sturt

(1982:837-9) sees this as an "inverted comparison", an ironic contrast of the trivial pastimes of the Scyrian girls with the warlike activities of the warrior maidens.¹⁰¹

E) Deidamia and Achilles, standing out among their companions as they prepare to dance for the guests, are likened to Diana and Pallas and Proserpina, who shine out among the nymphs of Enna (1.824-6):¹⁰²

nitet ante alias regina comesque
Pelides: qualis Siculae sub rupibus Aetnae
Naidas Hennaes inter Diana feroxque
Pallas et Elysii lucebat sponsa tyranni. 1.823-6

This simile recalls that of Valerius Argon 5.344ff (describing the beauty of Medea among her maidens): aut Sicula sub rupe choros, hinc gressibus haerens/Pallados, hinc carae Proserpina iuncta Dianae. Here, Medea is said to be as surpassingly beautiful as Proserpina is taller even than Pallas and Diana. In Statius' version of the simile, the three goddesses are represented as equally outstanding amongst their companions: as Dilke (1979:136) notes, the point of the simile is not the comparison of Deidamia and Achilles with the individual goddesses, but the fact that both stand out in the crowd.¹⁰³ A further reminiscence of Valerius' simile is the setting of Statius' one: Achilles and Deidamia are about to take part in a dance, as is Proserpina.

This simile is linked to that at 1.293f, where Deidamia, at her first appearance, is likened in her outstanding beauty to Venus, Diana and Pallas (see A above). There, the martial appearance of Pallas was considered a detraction from the goddess' beauty (1.299-300) in comparison to that of Deidamia; here Pallas is called ferox (825)

without comment or qualification: possibly because her fearsome aspect is appropriate to a comparison with Achilles (who is, after all, a boy).¹⁰⁴

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER SEVEN

I. INTRODUCTION: PRE-STATIAN DEIDAMIA

1. Deidamia is only one of the several women connected with Achilles in the Epic Cycle: Penthesilea is mentioned in the Aithiopsis; Helen in the Cypria; Lycophron mentions Iphigenia and Hemithea. The latter three women, however, play no literary role in the developing tradition of Achilles as lover (King 1987:175).

2. Though Statius employs a different (later) account of Achilles' stay on Scyros, he does display his knowledge of Homer's Iliad in his characterisation of the relationship between Achilles and Deidamia, e.g. the propempticon uttered by Andromache to the departing Hector (Il 6.400f) was the starting-point for his own farewell-scene between Achilles and Deidamia (Ach 1.927-60). On this propempticon, see below Part IV.

3. For details see Chapter 6 (THETIS) Part I.

4. Polygnotus' painting may also have depicted the recognition-scene.

5. As Webster points out (1967:96) *malas* has usually been emended to *malos*, and may therefore have been spoken by Achilles rather than by Deidamia.

6. For example, Dido's unfulfilled wish for the solace of a son (Aen 4.27-30) is to be contrasted with Deidamia's words at Ach 1.952 (she already has this solace); Dido's sarcastic dismissal of Aeneas at Aen 4.380 is echoed (though in a different tone) by Deidamia at 940, 942; Aeneas looks back at the Carthaginian shore at Aen 5.3-7 just as Achilles does (with more sensitive emotion) at Ach 2.27-30. See below for more detailed discussion of these correspondences.

7. According to Hollis (1977:138ff) lines 690, 698 of *Ars Am* 1.682-706 show the influence of Bion, lines 691-4 show knowledge of Euripides *Scyrians*. For an analysis of the Sabine episode and the rape of Deidamia, as Ovid's critique of the kind of "chauvinist" philosophy espoused by the narrator, see Hemker, J 1985. *Rape and the Founding of Rome*. *Helios* 12, 41-7.

8. At 689-90 Ovid says that Achilles' acquiescence is caused by *pietas* towards his mother, but in the *Achilleid* it is Thetis' cunning in manipulating his infatuation with Deidamia that persuades her son.

9. This is the epic motif, originating with the story of Penelope in

the Odyssey, of women spinning while men are at war.

10. The speaker urges Achilles to reject the female disguise and take up arms (*clipeo manus apta ferendo est* 693, *quassanda est ista Pelias hasta manu* 696), and Achilles responds by raping Deidamia (698): the link between exhortation and action is made clear at 702 (*fortia nam posito sumpserat arma colo*).

11. In Roman law, rape (*per vim stuprum*) was a capital offence: see Gardner (1986:118-25) for the legal implications of rape and sexual immorality (*stuprum*).

12. For example compare 698 *haec illum stupro comperit esse virum* to Ach 1.639 *teque marem...nec amore probaris?*; 699 *viribus illa quidem victa est* to Ach 1.642 *vi potitur votis*, 904-5 *quid enim his obstare lacertis, / qua potuit nostras possessa repellere vires?*. Also compare 701 to Ach 1.767.

13. Her 9 (Deianira to Hercules) contains a description (55-119) of the dress and activities of Hercules enslaved to Omphale. As we shall see (below Part III), this passage influenced Statius in his description of the transvestite Achilles. It was Propertius (3.11) who first introduced an erotic element into the relationship of Hercules and Omphale, and Ovid expanded on this.

14. Ovid sees the roles of lover and soldier as compatible: at *Ars Am* 2.711-6 he pictures Achilles and Briseis in bed together, Achilles' lethal hands now expertly engaged in pleasuring her.

15. In the *Achilleid* (1.956-60) he is once again cast as the oath-breaking lover abandoning the woman who has been faithful to him (see below Part IV).

16. Line 66 (*et videam puppes ire relictas tuas*) is recalled at Ach 2.26, 28: *ibat et ipsa freto, et puppem iam sola videbat; declinat viduamque domum gemitusque relictas*.

17. The bride will be *digna nurus socero, Iovis Aeginaeque nepote, / cuique senex Nereus prosocer esse velit* (73-4). In contrast, Deidamia urges Achilles not to have low-born children with a foreign captive (Ach 1.954-5): see below Part IV.

18. As Fantham points out (1979:458), the strong verbal reminiscences rule out the possibility that this is merely the employment of recognised topoi of courtship and consolation after seduction by the two writers. For these topoi see Ovid *Ars Am* 1.555-6, Her 16.171-8 (courtship); Hor *Od* 3.27, 73-6 (consolation for seduction).

II. ACHILLES FALLS IN LOVE

19. This is a conventional epic setting for the entrance of a beautiful nubile female: it was also the day of Pallas' festival when Mercury fell in love with Herse in Ovid *Met* 2.711ff. The verbal allusion in these lines is clear: compare lines 285ff to Ovid *Met* 2.711ff (the

Athenian festival of Pallas): *illa forte die castaede more puellae/ vertice supposito festas in Pallados arces/pura coronatis portabant sacra canistris*. This passage is itself reminiscent of Virgil Aen 8.102ff (the arrival of Aeneas' ships, during Evander's festival of Hercules): *forte die sollemnem illo rex Arcas honorem/Amphitryoniadae magno divisque ferebat/ante urbem in luco*.

20. The phrase *eximium formae decus* recalls Silv 3.3.113, describing the fabled beauty of Etrusca, wife of Claudius Etruscus.

21. So also Ovid's Herse, who is said to outshine her comrades as the morning star the other stars, or the golden moon the morning star (Met 2. 722-5).

22. See below Part V A) and E) for discussion of these similes.

23. The Apollo-simile at 1.765-6 (*qualis Lycia venator Apollo / cum redit et saevis permutat plectra pharetris*) is inspired by Aen 4.143ff, where Aeneas setting out for the hunt with Dido is compared to Apollo leaving Lycia to visit Delos. The situation has been reversed: in Virgil, Aeneas is going out to hunt, while Statius has Achilles returning from the hunt.

24. See Chapter 6 (THETIS) Part VI.

25. The flame of love which burns within Achilles, when he first sets eyes upon Deidamia, is likened in its appearance to bowls dyed red, and ivory stained with purple (*lactea Massagetae veluti cum pocula fuscant / sanguine puniceo vel ebur corrumpitur ostro* 307-8). This recalls the simile describing Lavinia's blush at Aen 12.67-9. Compare n31 below.

26. See Appendix A for discussion of this animal-simile. It is linked to that at 1.277ff where Thetis' vain persuasions are compared to the unsuccessful attempts of a trainer to tame a wild young stallion (see Chapter 6 Part VI); also to that at 858ff where, when Achilles finally reveals his identity in defiance of his mother's wishes, he is likened to a young tamed lion reverting to natural savagery at the first sight of steel, ashamed to have served such a timid lord (see Appendix A). Paradoxically, Achilles' animal lust causes him at 301ff to allow himself to be manipulated by his mother, i.e. the very opposite of manly behaviour. At 858ff, another natural impulse (belligerence) causes him to be manipulated by Ulysses, and thereby restored to his warrior identity. King (1987:182) therefore views the Achilleid as the first cogent portrayal of a youthful Achilles (temporarily) "effeminized" by love. See further Appendix A.

27. See further Chapter 6 (THETIS) Part III.

28. This description leads up to that at 1.606-8, where Achilles leading the Bacchic dance of the maidens is said to stand out even above Deidamia: *nec iam pulcherrima turbae / Deidamia suae tantumque admota superbo / vincitur Aeacidae, quantum premit ipsa sorores*. Height was regarded as a sign of beauty in antiquity: for a discussion of this point in connection with the Diana-Actaeon episode at Met 3.181ff, see Bömer, F 1969.P. Ovidius Naso: Metamorphosen Buch I-III Heidelberg:

Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 498.

29. See below Part V B).

30. See Chapter 6 (THETIS) Part III for details

31. This passage in Virgil is otherwise recalled here: see n25 above.

III. ACHILLES SEDUCES DEIDAMIA

32. The identity of the *improba virgo* is deliberately ambiguous: it could equally well be Achilles as Deidamia that Calchas is referring to. Nevertheless, with hindsight we realise that he means Deidamia. See also 1.942 *nimis improba posco* (Deidamia talks of herself). Compare Valerius Argon 6.681f (describing Medea): *imminet e celsis audentius improba muris virgo*.

33. The phrase *falsi sub imagine sexus* (560) is Ovidian, recalling *falsi sub imagine cervi* of Met 3.250 (describing Actaeon transformed into a deer), Met 7.360 (a bullock changed into a stag). The word *furto* (561) is often used of the secret affair of Achilles and Deidamia (see lines 641, 669, 903, 938). Compare lines 560-2 also to Ovid's description of the rape at *Ars Am* 1.698 *haec illum stupro comperit esse virum*.

34. The description of Achilles' seductive wiles was a standard feature of the literary treatment of the Scyros-myth: see Bion's idyll (15.22-4).

35. King (1987:181-4) interprets Statius' message as a moral one: Achilles is here misusing the education which Chiron has provided him with, employing it in love (teaching Deidamia to sing and admire his own wonderful deeds) instead of in war (to sing and admire the honores of other heroes, as at 1.188-194; 2.156-8). I see Statius' intention as purely comic: he is exploiting the ironic disjunction between Chiron's intention and Achilles' action.

36. This aspect of the story is referred to by Ovid at *Ars Am* 1.691-6 (see above Part I).

37. See the similarity of lines 581-3 to *Her* 9.79-80: *a, quotiens digitis dum torques stamina duris, / praevalidae fusos conminuere manus! Deianira goes on (83ff) to imagine how Hercules lies at the feet of his mistress and tells of his famous exploits, while dressed in a Sidonian gown*.

38. Statius employs the image in a simile at *Theb* 10.648, when *Virtus* disguised as *Manto* is compared to Hercules dressed in the clothes of *Omphale*.

39. Compare line 863 (describing Achilles' reaction when he throws off the feminine disguise): *timidoque pudet servisse magistro*.

40. See Appendix B (7.1) for Dilke's interpretation of lines 583-6.

41. See below Part V C).

Achilles is first likened to Jupiter at 1.484-90 where in a simile the Greek chieftains, acknowledging the innate supremacy of Achilles, are likened to the gods, awaiting the reaction of Jupiter in the battle of the gods and the Giants.

42. Compare above lines 293-6 and 368-9.

43. See Appendix A for discussion of this simile.

44. See Appendix B (7.2) for the emendation *aevi* in line 626. Compare line 624 to Ovid *Met* 13.38f *timidi commenta...animi* (so Ajax taunts Ulysses, reminding him of the trick of feigned madness with which Ulysses himself attempted to evade the war, until exposed by Palamedes).

45. This recalls Ovid's mock-moralising jibes at *Ars Am* 1.691-6, where the poet contrasts the activities of war with those of women:

quid facis, Aeacide? non sunt tua munera lanae;
tu titulos alia Palladis arte petas
quid tibi cum calathis? clipeo manus apta ferendo est;
pensa quid in dextra, qua cadet, Hector habes?
reice succinctos operosostamine fusos:
quassanda est ista Pelias hasta manu.

This is a variant of the *topos* of turning swords into ploughshares. Hollis (1977:140), sees lines 691-6 as a four-fold amplification of Bion line 16: εἰρία δ' ἀνθ' ὀπλῶν ἐδιδάσκετο .

46. Contrast the setting with that of *Ars Am* 1.698: *forte erat in thalamo virgo regalis eodem*.

47. Statius' Deidamia is genuinely unwilling and Achilles' success is based only on his strength. Contrast Ovid's description of the rape at *Ars Am* 1.699-700 *viribus illa quidem victa est (ita credere oportet) / sed voluit vinci viribus illa tamen*. Of course Ovid's purpose in relating this story is to prove by *exemplum* from mythology that all women (albeit unconsciously) want sex.

48. See Stirrup (B 1977. *Techniques of Rape: Variety of Wit in Ovid's Metamorphoses*. G&R n.s.24, 170-184, 169ff) for a detailed examination of three rape-scenes in the *Metamorphoses*. There are obvious similarities between Ovid's treatment of such scenes and that of Statius. See for example the Apollo-Daphne story (*Met* 1.490ff): epic similes are used to depict the onset of Apollo's love (490-502; he "burns" 492-6 as does Achilles *Ach* 1.303ff), Daphne's physical attractions have awakened his desire (498-9, cf. *Ach* 1.295f), she flees and does not wait to listen (502, cf. *Ach* 1.586-7). In the speech which Apollo uses to convince Daphne, he lists his credentials (512-15), his possessions (515-6), his genealogy (*Iuppiter est genitor* 517): compare Achilles' post-coital *consolatio* at *Ach* 1.650ff. Many of the same elements are present in Statius' treatment: a semi-divinity (Achilles), a kind of metamorphosis (the female disguise), a journey (from Thessaly

to Scyros) and many of the same techniques of wit.

49. The thyrsus, according to Sturt (1982:836) is a symbol of Achilles' awakening manhood.

50. This recalls line 78-9, where Neptune is said to console Thetis after having to refuse her request (*sed rector aquarum / invitat curru dictisque ita mulcet amicis*). The phrase *dictis...amicis* is Virgilian (see Chapter 6 Part II).

51. Compare lines 580-3 (the description of Achilles' feminine activities).

52. See Appendix B (7.3) for discussion of the possibility of a missing speech after *sed pater-* in line 657.

53. The phrase *hausurum poenas* (667) is perhaps borrowed from *Aen* 4.383. It is a reversal: Deidamia wishes to save Achilles, Dido that Aeneas be destroyed.

54. The phrase *rapuit ...pudorem* (671) recalls *Ovid Met* 1.600 (thus stole Jupiter the virginity of Io).

IV. ACHILLES IS DISCOVERED AND LEAVES SCYROS

55. See discussion below Part V D).

56. Line 772 is doubtful: see discussion at Appendix B (6.1).

57. It is of course highly ironic that Lycomedes should ask when his daughters will give him grandsons. His desire for grandchildren will help sway his judgement later, when Achilles' deceit is revealed (912ff).

58. Like Thetis, Ulysses has an eye for the "main chance" cf. 318 *occupat arrepto iam conscia tempore mater* (Thetis grasping the opportunity for manipulating Achilles when he falls in love with Deidamia).

59. The phrase *vigili ...aure* recall *Silv* 3.5.35 (describing the attentiveness with which Statius' wife Claudia listened to the early drafts of his poetry).

60. The phrase *cunctas ...sorores* (803) is used at line 46 of the fifty Nereids. Deidamia is reminding us increasingly of Thetis.

61. Compare *sidereis ...vultibus* (809) with the description of Venus at *Silv* 1.2.141 *sidereos ...artus*.

62. The phrase *egressae thalamo* (821) recalls *Theb* 1.534 (Argia and Deipyle summoned to meet Polynices and Tydeus).

63. See discussion of these two similes below Part V E) and A) respectively.

64. See discussion in Chapter 6 (THETIS) Part VI.

65. See discussion of this simile in Appendix A. The secondary correspondence, that of the "timid lord" (863), presents something of a problem: is it a reference to Thetis or to Deidamia? On the one hand, Thetis imposed the disguise on her son against his will: he was likened in his initial resistance to a wild young stallion who resists a trainer's efforts: *ora lupis dominique fremit captivus inire / imperia atque alios miratur discere cursus* 281-2; at 313f to a lustful bullock restrained by the herdsmen: *spectant hilares obstantque magistri* 317. On the other hand, Thetis can scarcely be called timid, whereas Deidamia, with her increased "investment" in the disguise stratagem, has taken up the function of restraining Achilles' desire to reveal his identity (1.768-72; 802-5).

66. Lycomedes is as naïve and unsuspecting as he was with the guileful Thetis (363ff): *heu simplex nimiumque rudis, qui callida dona / Graiorumque dolos variumque ignoret Ulixem!* (846-7). Compare Aen 2.49 (Laocoon on the proverbial duplicity of the Greeks): *quidquid id est, timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.*

67. See above n65.

68. Compare this speech to Ulysses' report of his own words at Met 13.167-70.

69. Achilles will experience the same conflict between love and duty at 2.29ff (see below). There, Ulysses will return him to his warrior identity.

70. Lines 897-8 are reminiscent of Seneca's *Troades* 879-82 (Helen boasting of the ancestry of Pyrrhus): see Part I above. The word *agmine* (900) is often used of women in Statius' poetry: see *Theb* 5.652; 6.132; 7.240; 12.125; *Ach* 1.301, 555, 602, 623, 799; *Silv* 3.2.13. For the use of *agmen* for women, see TLL I.1341.77ff (Hey) where examples are cited from Virgil, Ovid, Seneca, Manilius, Valerius Flaccus, Tacitus and Petronius, in addition to Statius.

71. The phrase *concipe foedus* (902) is Virgilian: at Aen 12.13 Turnus asks Latinus thus for Lavinia's hand in marriage. The word *tuis* (903) indicates that Achilles already considers himself to be related to Lycomedes.

72. At 908 Achilles says to Lycomedes: *iam socer es*. See Hallett (1984:102) for the importance attached to the relationship between *socer* (father-in-law) and *gener* (son-in-law). Perhaps the most striking historical example of the potential of such a relationship, is that of Caesar and Pompey: while Pompey was married to Caesar's daughter Julia, the two great leaders were closely allied; after her death, their association deteriorated to the level of civil war between their factions.

73. For an analysis of Lycomedes' soliloquy see Chapter 6 (THETIS) Part V.

74. For the words *effert ... gradum* see Seneca *Medea* 891 (the nurse

urges Medea to flee).

75. Ovid's Deidamia likewise attempts to persuade Achilles to remain with her on Scyros (Ars Am 1.701-6): see above Part I. The typical propempticon contained such standard features as the attempt to delay the traveller and reproaches for his cruelty.

76. The Achilles-Deidamia couple seem to behave less nobly, less "universally" than Andromache-Hector: their motivating emotions are Deidamia's jealousy (as opposed to Andromache's very real fear, particularised in Helen), Achilles' deceit (vs Hector's honesty). Nevertheless, their behaviour is entirely in character and their youth may account for some of their remarks; there are similarities, *topoi* really: both women use their sons as a "weapon" in their *suasoriae*, both men seek to comfort their wives. Thus there are similarities and the contrasts are psychologically credible.

77. Deidamia herself is called *improba* by Calchas at 1.535 (see n32 above).

78. Deidamia is saying that Trojan women will compensate for the loss of Troy by marrying Achilles.

79. The phrase *primae ...culpae* (947) derives from Theb 2.233 where it describes the first impure thoughts entering the minds of the brides Argia and Deipyle.

80. Lines 947-8 and *ipsa ...Tyndaris* (945-6) appear to have been employed by Martial: *dulcis in Elysio narraris fabula campo, et stupet ad raptus Tyndaris ipsa tuos* (12.52.5-6).

81. This line is inspired by Cat 64.59: see Chapter 6 (THETIS) n87. For the epic and elegiac *topos* of the deceitful lover, see the (spurious) twelfth-century Deidamia-Achilles epistle (above Part I).

82. Here follows discussion of the words in bold type:

turre procul summa (23): compare Theb 7.243 Antigone *turre procul sola* (watching the mustering of the troops).

ibat et ipsa freto (26): Deidamia's concentration is so intense that she almost feels the motion of the waves herself and can see the ship long after her companions have lost sight of it cf. *Silv* 5.2.6f (Stattius watching young Crispinus go off to vacation); *Lucan* 8.47f *prospiciens fluctus nutantia longe semper prima vides venientis vela carinae* (Cornelia watching for Pompey's ships).

obliquos ...vultus (27): see *Silv* 2.6.102 (Proserpine notes the dead slave with a sidelong glance).

viduam ...domum (28): see line 82 below (where Ulysses imagines Deidamia snatched from her lonely chamber by some marauder).

83. Here we have a reverse image of the reaction of Virgil's Aeneas looking back to shore at his beloved: Aeneas at *Aen* 4.331 buries his

emotion whereas Achilles (Ach 2.29-30) gives way (temporarily) to his passion; Aen 5.4-7 Aeneas' only emotion is nameless dread. Thus there are verbal and behavioral similarities, and the contrasts are credible due to the characters' different personalities and circumstances, and the scope of the author's theme.

V. SIMILES USED TO DESCRIBE DEIDAMIA

84. Here follows discussion of the words in bold type:

eximium formae decus, "rarest beauty" (290): compare *Silv* 3.3.113 (description of the beauty of Etrusca): **decus eximium famaepar reddit imago**.

virginitas matura toris annique tumentes, "girlhood and years ripe for the wedding-couch" (292): contrast *Theb* 5.81-2 (**nam me tunc libera curis/ virginitas annique tegunt**) where Hypsipyle was spared the torments of the Lemnian women because she was younger than they. Compare also *Claud. Epithal* 125ff: **has matura tumescit virginitas**.

quantum ...obruit, ...tantum ...obstat, "as far as (she) surpasses, ...so does (she) outshine" (293-6): this formula occurs in *Val.Fl.* 1.318ff: **femineis tantum illa furens ululatibus obstat, / obruit Idaeam quantum tuba Martia buxum**. For this meaning of *obstare* as "to eclipse, outshine", see also *Livy* 2.33.9 (**sua laude obstitit fama consulis Marcius**).

roseo flammatur purpura vultu (297): with this description of Deidamia's complexion, compare the portrayal of Achilles' complexion at 1.162 (**purpureus fulvoque nitet coma gratior auro**) and at 1.307ff (the simile comparing his colour to that of bowls dyed red or ivory stained purple).

85. Here, of course, Diana's height works to her disadvantage since it prevents her from hiding behind her companions. Ovid follows this description with a simile, comparing the colour of Diana's blush to sun-tinted clouds or the crimson dawn.

86. See discussion in Chapter 2 (ARGIA) Part V.

87. The phrase **Idaliae volucres** (372), "Idalian birds", reminds us that doves were sacred to Venus, who had a shrine at Idalium (see *Theb* 5.63). Compare the dove simile at *Theb* 12.16ff (the disbelief of the Theban women after the retreat of the Argive army is likened to that of doves who have successfully chased a serpent from their nests).

88. The words **quantum cervice comisque / emineat quantumque uneros ac pectora fundat**, "how she stands out head and shoulders (above the rest), and how broad her shoulders and breast" (368-9) recall the similar quality of excellence which Deidamia exhibits among her maidens (1.290ff) - see A) above). As far as Deidamia surpasses her companions in beauty, so far does Achilles surpass all of them in height and size (the mark of a god or superhero). Later, during the dance 823ff, Deidamia and Achilles are said to "outshine" their comrades equally -

see E) below.

89. The phrase *contingere gaudent* (371) recalls Virg Aen 2.239 (the joyful reception which the youth of Troy give to the wooden horse): *funemque manu contingere gaudent*. This literary reminiscence sounds an ominous note for the innocent joy of the Scyrian maidens here: they will also come to regret their warm-hearted acceptance of Thetis' "daughter".

90. For the word *plausu*, "beating of wings", see Virg Aen 5.215 (simile of a frightened pigeon).

91. The phrase *versos ...amores* (591) recalls Prop 2.8.7 *omnia vertuntur: certe vertuntur amores*. Here, however, love does not change into faithlessness but into a new kind of love.

92. For did Thetis not ask that Lycomedes treat Achilles as his own daughter (*sit virgo pii Lycomedis Achilles* 396)?

93. The same story is told from Juno's point of view at Theb 10.61-4 (embroidered on the robe presented to Juno by the suppliant Argive women): *ipsa illic magni thalamo desponsa Tonantis, / expers conubii et timide positura sororem* (Pw: *furorem* B: *pudorem* D), / *lumine demisso pueri Iovis oscula libat / simplex et nondum furtis offensa mariti*.

94. Here follows discussion of the words in bold type:

fervent (755): is used here of bustle, as at Theb 1.525; Theb 2.52; Theb 3.120; Theb 5.144; Silv 4.3.61.

picto discumbitur auro (756): this probably refers to the gold-embroidered covers on the couches: cf. Suet Jul 84.1 *lectus eburneus auro ac purpura stratus*; Cic Tusc Disp 5.61 *textili stragulo magnificis operibus picto*.

Maeotida ripa (758): this is a reference to one of the traditional dwelling-places of the Amazons, the Sea of Azov. See Theb 12.526 (the Maeotis being frozen over).

95. Deidamia, of course, is no longer a virgin (see 1.640-74), and Achilles is hardly one of the daughters' *comites...pudicas* (757).

96. See Ach 1.161ff; 290ff; 824-6.

97. Sturt (1982:838) warns us not to judge them by modern standards of beauty and sexuality.

98. See, for example, Virg Aen 11.659-63 (describing Camilla in battle); Sil Ital Pun 2.73-6 (describing the hunting pursuits of Asbyte, the Libyan warrior-maiden); 8.428-30 (Curio urging on his men); Theb 5.144f (describing the Lemnian massacre).

99. Amar and Lemaire 1825-30. P.Papinii Statii opera omnia vols I-IV. Paris.

100. Duncan sees the Virtus-Hercules image of Theb 10.646ff in the same light. He compares (1914:100) this pictorial treatment of the Amazon motif with that of Claudian (De Rapt Pros 2.62 describing the Naiads around Proserpina), which is an imitation of the passage in Statius:

qualis Amazonidum peltis exsultat aduncis
pulchra cohors: quotiens Arcton populata virago
Hippolyte, niveas ducit post proelia turmas,
seu flavos stravere Getas, seu forte regentem
Thermodontiacae Tanaim fregere securi.

101. See also the inverted comparison of Achilles-Hecate at 1.343-8 (see Chapter 6 Part VI).

102. Line 825 Hennaenas Dilke aetneas codd: Ennaeas Gronovius, Garrod, Mozley. Henna was the scene of the rape of Proserpine.

103. Dilke therefore rejects Damsté's emendation feroxve or Brinkgreve's theory of "chiasmus" of names.

104. The epithet ferox (825) for Pallas recalls Mart.14.179 Minerva argentea 1 virgo ferox; see also Theb 2.715 diva ferox; Sil 9.457; Sen Octavia 558. For Greek epithets referring to her warlike attributes, see Dict Biog I.399 (C.P.Mason). Mason notes that the Homeric Athena is prudent, not a lover of war for its own sake. He also notes that in early Greek literature (e.g. Orphic Hymn 31.10), Athena was said to be midway between male and female.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

I. STATIUS' CONTRIBUTION TO FEMALE CHARACTERISATION IN EPIC

II. THE DIFFERENT APPROACHES OF THE TWO EPICS

III. CHARACTERISATION AND THE EPIC SIMILE

I. STATIUS' CONTRIBUTION TO FEMALE CHARACTERISATION IN EPIC

Has Statius made a valuable contribution to female characterisation in secondary epic? Turn-of-the-century scholars did not rate his achievement highly¹ and dismissed caustically the fact that the characters of Statius' epics were popular in antiquity.² More recently, the worth of Statius' poetry has been scientifically reappraised and the features of his technique, including his character portrayal, have received critical appreciation.³

The nature of Statius' contribution to female characterisation is that, building on techniques received from his predecessors (Apollonius, Virgil and Ovid particularly) and combining these with his own innovations in theme and device, Statius has created six characters who, though they may resemble in some ways their literary predecessors, are each in their way rivetingly unique. Furthermore, he has shown his versatility in the varied nature with which he has treated the female characters of the Thebaid and Achilleid respectively (see below Part II).

There is a definite observable progression in the characterisation of women from Homer to Statius: Homer's essentially masculine epic portrayed the peripheral and impotent nature of female involvement in the course of events (see Chapter 1 Part I); Apollonius' portrayal of

Medea introduced an unprecedented psychological element into the treatment of female characters; Virgil extended Apollonius' technique and furthermore used the characterisation of his heroine Dido to comment subtly and powerfully on the portrayal of the hero and the main themes of the poem⁴; Ovid's proverbial humour and mock-moralising obscure the complex and insightful nature of his female characterisation. Statius' role in this developing tradition will soon become clear (see below Part II): he has taken up the Hellenistic poet's interest in the psychological element of characterisation, and coupled it with a Virgilian interest in the thematic value of the female character, employing at times Virgilian "humanity" and Ovidian humour.

On a less important note, Statius has in his poetry perhaps reflected his "real" attitudes to women: the heroines and goddesses of his epics may in some way correspond to his personal view of women. This is a difficult issue, and little can be said with any degree of certainty: certainly it appears from the treatment of the principal heroines of the Thebaid that Statius had a sensitive and sympathetic opinion of the woman and her role in society, while his comic portrayal of the protagonists of the extant Achilleid shows that he was not blind to the humorous stereotypes that exist in contemporary attitudes towards women (the interfering anxia mater, the credulous virgin, the dominated adolescent son).

II. THE DIFFERENT APPROACHES OF THE TWO EPICS

There is little value in attempting to find in Statius' female characterisation a method or spirit "common" to both poems. The

contrast between the theme and tone of each poem is reflected in the very disparate portrayal of female personality in each. The dark and tragic Thebaid contains a sombre portrayal of the courageous Argia and Antigone, the desperate Jocasta, and the long-suffering Hypsipyle.⁵ On the other hand, the comic tone of Achilleid is paralleled by the humorous portrayal of the ineffective goddess Thetis, the ineffectual girl Deidamia and the transvestite Achilles.⁶

The style of the Achilleid appears less complex than that of the Thebaid, but it is really that the theme is far different and therefore a different style is entirely appropriate (Vessey 1986:3007-8). As Vessey points out here, Statius explicitly intended the Thebaid to compete with Virgil's epic, the Achilleid with that of Homer (Ach 1.3-7). Certainly, the later books of the Achilleid would have been filled with tragedy and darkness (Achilles at Troy), but the poet never came to write that part of the story: the first book recounts the myth of Achilles' Scyrian adventure, a tale of maternal deceit and first love. The style is therefore "deceptively naïve, ...on the surface humorous charm and an Ovidian levity" (Vessey 1986:3014).

Meanwhile, the female characters of the Thebaid attract our sympathy⁷ as well as our admiration, for they are portrayed as the melior sexus, whose pietas enlightens the sombre tonality of the poem and contrasts starkly with the impietas of the main male characters: Polynices, Eteocles (also Oedipus, Creon, Tydeus, Capaneus), and correspond to the pietas of Adrastus, Theseus, Amphiaraus - though the female are at all times without fault.

As Lesueur (1986:29) points out, the female characters of the Thebaid

do not feature merely in the background or in brief intervals in the main narrative:

"bien au contraire, en s'incorporant à l'action, elles apportent un témoignage d'humanité qui présage le rétablissement de la justice et de l'amour. C'est ainsi que se concrétise une thématique signifiante et contrastante évoluant du premier au dernier livre et se surimposant puissamment aux structures complexes qui régissent la composition des épisodes."

Aside from the main thematic and stylistic aspects of Statius' female characterisation, the poet employs other techniques which have been clearly observable in the close analysis of the preceding chapters, for example, in the *Thebaid*, the device of pairing the sisters in various combinations in order to show up similarities and contrasts between and within the couples (see further below). Another significant technique of characterisation is the use of epic similes (see below Part III).

Let us look briefly again at the six female characters:

Even the most critical assessment of Statius' character portrayal has lent support to his treatment of Argia: Legras (1906:231) asserts that, while the well-known characters, like Antigone and Jocasta, are quite feeble, the "new" character, Argia, plays an important role, and Statius has tried to bring her to life.⁸

During the course of the poem, Argia develops from maiden daughter to loving bride and finally to courageous widow. She is characterised principally by her devotion to her husband, and all her actions are motivated by this conjugal pietas: her selfless propempticon in Book 2, the interview with her father Adrastus in Book 3, her sacrifice of the necklace to Eriphyle in Book 4, and, above all, her final aristeia in

Book 12, when she leaves the other Argive women who return to Athens,⁹ and pursues alone her hard road to find and burn Polynices' corpse.

According to Statius' portrayal of the ideal wife in the *Silvae* (see Chapter 2 Part I), Argia is an exemplary spouse (*optima coniunx* 3.378): beautiful (*egregia* 2.203), high-born (*regina* 12.111, 280), faithful (*fida coniunx* 2.332) and by her actions, extremely pious. Her sister Deipyle is said to be no less beautiful (*nec formae laude secundam* 2.203) or dutiful (*haud cessura sorori* 12.118).

Argia is of the same temperament as her sister-in-law, Antigone (see below): this is most clear in the last book of the poem, when they unite to bury Polynices' body. Argia's sister, Deipyle, plays hardly any role, contrary to Ismene, the sister of Antigone, who features prominently in the Atys-episode of Book 8. Lesueur (1986:23ff) identifies these four women as two antithetical couples: Argia (in the role of woman and wife), Antigone (in the role of woman and sister) are equally attached to Polynices, whom they love differently; Deipyle and Ismene, though they both are the "secondary" sisters, are contrasted in the varied nature of their involvement in the narrative (Ismene is more visible than Deipyle), and thus there are cross-correspondences also to be drawn (Argia and Ismene are more prominent than Antigone and Deipyle).

The portrayal of Argia in the poem is related also to that of Jocasta, for, as we have seen, her brand of courage and piety, like that of the Theban mother (11.318), exceeds the bounds of her sex (12.177-9), and, like Jocasta (11.327-8), Argia appears terrifying in her desperate determination (12.221-3).

Antigone was a common figure in Greek tragedy and Roman literature (see Chapter 3 Part I). Statius portrays her in the conventional fashion of the devoted daughter and sister, and she is certainly not the most memorable of his female characters.

Statius' Antigone is the model virgin sister (*virgo* 7.246, 12.380): high-born (*regina* 7.246), and *prudent* (*cauta* 11.629). Her role in the earlier books of the poem is entirely passive: she appears as *alumna*¹⁰ in the *teichoscopy* in Book 7, and as companion in her mother's mediation attempt later in the same book. Later on in the poem, she begins to assume a more active role, when she pleads with Polynices in Book 11, and supplicates Creon on Oedipus' behalf later in that book. Indeed, until Book 12, it can be said that Antigone is characterised mostly by her skill at pleading¹¹, i.e. she takes a purely "feminine" role up to that point in the narrative.

In Book 12, Antigone grows in stature from innocent young maiden to desperately courageous, mature heroine. As she joins with Argia to bury Polynices' corpse, she finally achieves a level of *pietas* equal to that of her sister-in-law. Unlike Argia, however, she remains unmarried, sacrificing personal happiness in the interests of sororal duty. It is her loyalty to her brother Polynices, rather than to her father Oedipus, that marks her characterisation.

Like Antigone, Jocasta had a rich literary past in the works of Euripides and Seneca (see Chapter 4 Part II). Nevertheless, Statius' portrayal of the Theban mother is quite different to any Greek or Roman dramatic treatment of her character. For example, one of Statius' main

innovations, on the level of the narrative, was the creation of two separate mediation-scenes (see Chapter 4 Parts III and IV).

A real, human mother, according to Statius, is meant to be: absolutely devoted to her children, often demanding or suppliant, but nevertheless capable of commanding their respect (see chapter 4 Part I). Statius' Jocasta is all of these.¹² Furthermore, as with the two pairs of sisters described above, Statius evokes a deal of sympathy for her plight: she is described as luckless (*infelix* 2.294), and struck dumb by her wretched lot (*attonitae* 7.492).

Nevertheless, there is a larger-than-life element to her characterisation: Jocasta is like a Fury in her determination (7.477), her grief is enraged (*lucta furiata* 7.489), even mad (*amens* 11.315). She is the *ingens...mater* (11.326-7), *magna cum maiestate malorum* (7.478), as she tries to mediate between her two sons. Statius portrays Jocasta as "unwomanly" in her desperate courage, in order to impress upon us the enormity of her effort.¹³ Finally, when she is defeated by the Powers of Darkness, Jocasta reverts to a terrified (*exterrita* 11.634) pitiable old woman.

Hypsipyle has been treated primarily in the context of the "digression" which the Nemean episode represents in the *Thebaid* as a whole (e.g. Goetting 1969). Her characterisation *per se* has not, I feel, been adequately considered.

It is noticeable that Hypsipyle, while featuring only in the digressory Nemean episode, nonetheless takes the largest female role in the poem (in that, of all the female characters, she has the most amount of direct speech allotted to her, and also occupies the most

number of lines in toto). This is because Hypsipyle's pietas and courageous suffering prefigure that of the female characters of the main narrative, while her tale of the Lemnian furor predicts the unholy outcome of the fratricidal hatred at Thebes (see Chapter 5 Part I).

Though Statius followed the outline of the Lemnian story as provided by Apollonius (and Valerius) and that of the Opheltes-episode as Euripides treated it, he made a number of significant changes and rearrangements to these stories (see Chapter 5 Parts II and III). Hypsipyle is a complex character, and the most Virgilian, variously recalling Virgil's Aeneas, Dido, Andromache: worldly-wise traveller, forsaken heroine, and princess fallen on hard times. She is at once young maiden (virgo 5.279)¹⁴, daughter (5.239-41), queen (5.320-2), goddess-like (diva potens Adrastus calls her 4.746), mother (6.340-1), leader (dux 4.779), nurse (altricem... orbam 4.771, caram / nutricem 4.788-9), and slave (5.497-8).

Aside from her thematic value, and the complexity of her portrayal, the more conventional aspects of her characterisation make Hypsipyle an exceptionally interesting figure: she is so mysteriously dignified and beautiful in her suffering (pulchro in maerore 4.740) that she captures the attention of the Argive army in Books 4-6; for her double tragedy (her loss of her own children, as well as Opheltes) she commands a great deal of the readers' sympathy (infelix Lemnia 5.588, miseranda 5.605, maestae / ...Hypsipylae 5.711-2).

Significantly, Hypsipyle is the only female character whose suffering is rewarded with happiness: she finds her children again, and "lives happily ever after." Thus the outcome of the Nemean sub-plot contrasts

sharply with that of the main narrative where, for Jocasta, there is death in store, and for Argia and Antigone, a victory that is also a loss (since it consists in the burial of him whom they love best).

"Thetis combines the foreknowledge and cunning of a goddess with the frailty of a human mother" (Dilke 1954:18). Thetis in the *Achilleid* is characterised primarily by overwhelming concern for her son's welfare (optima...genetrix 1.143-4; fida parens 1.197). Her concern motivates her anger against Paris and her wish to destroy him and avenge Helen's rape (1.31-76). A certain amount of sympathy is evoked on her behalf: she is a *supplex miseranda* (1.50), *tristis* (1.98).¹⁵

Nevertheless, Thetis' concern does not quite justify her extreme cunning and deceit.¹⁶ She is *sollers pietate magistra* (1.105), *dolosam...* Thetin (1.873-4). She tries to fool Neptune (51-94); when this fails, she goes against *fatum* and deceives Chiron (95-241)¹⁷, then Achilles (251-348), then Lycomedes (349-78) and finally the very shore of Scyros (382-396).¹⁸ Her web of deceit spreads to Deidamia and her nurse (669-71). Her elaborate intrigues are ultimately in vain (as we knew from the beginning)¹⁹, and Fate sends in its own man, Ulysses, to be her match in cunning, and to outwit her plan with a ruse of his own (709ff).

Indirectly, in her speech or behaviour, Thetis sometimes recalls various illustrious characters from Greek myth and Roman literature: Hecuba (25-6), Dido (43, 129-39), Juno (95-7, 396), Venus (105, 251, 325) and even Aeneas himself (194, 200). But Thetis has none of the tragic stature or potency of these. Statius has reduced her to a pathetic and deliberately humorous parody of these, with scarcely a

hint at the cosmic force she wields in various other myths.²⁰ As a goddess, she is exaggeratedly ineffectual, her elevated status²¹ and her metamorphosing abilities²² reduced to an absurdity: she cannot obtain one storm from Neptune (1.80ff) or Jupiter (1.684-8) and the only transformation she accomplishes is that of disguising her son as a girl!

As a real human mother²³, Thetis appears imperfect and selfish in the manifestation of her love (by trying to keep her son away from his destiny, at the cost of the war) and ultimately ineffectual (for he rebels against her commands and defies her).

Deidamia's portrayal is mainly the elaboration of a "love-interest" motif into a charming, diversionary ecphrasis, characterised by lightness of touch, but with some subtlety and inferences about feminine behaviour. Although Bion's Idyll 15 describes the love-affair of Achilles and Deidamia and Ovid mentions the Scyros-episode at *Ars Am* 1.681-704, there was no literary precedent for an extended portrayal of the character of Deidamia. As we saw in Chapter 7 (DEIDAMIA), Statius' character is shaped primarily by the influence of Ovid (nymphs and maidens in the *Metamorphoses*, deserted heroines in the *Heroides*), while the humour that we observe in her characterisation is a Statian innovation, consonant with the style of the poem.

Deidamia displays the typical positive characteristics of an unmarried maiden, as expounded in the *Silvae* (although her peculiar circumstances²⁴ are unprecedented there); also, she has some goddess-like attributes. She progresses from innocent maiden to loving wife: before the rape she is a *virgo* (1.535), afterwards a *coniunx* (2.25).²⁵

She is portrayed as a queen (regina 1.295, 1.662, 1.823) and a beautiful (823-6), innocent (567, 579) almost gullible (570, 577) girl, to whom no blame attaches. Though she behaves deceitfully (561, 582, 667, 671, 767-772, 938), her deceit is ambiguously described (at 561, 567, 570, 587, 645)²⁶ and is passed on to her by Thetis (580) whose cause she resumes. She is portrayed as unwilling (645, 663) and griefstricken (662f, 667) at the rape. Nevertheless, her love for Achilles is certain (665, 667, 767-772, 802-4, 885-7, 929, 939, 2.23-6), and she displays typical "female" shame (pudibunda 918), fear at her father's wrath (919-20), and jealousy (943-55). In the display of these emotions, she variously recalls Virgil's Dido, Apollonius and Valerius' Medea and Homer's Andromache - though she is a much "slighter", less noble character than any of these.

Initially, Deidamia is, like Virgil's Lavinia, merely a useful device for the narrative (in that the fact of Achilles' falling in love with her advances the plot). As Dilke has observed (1954:18), she stands out more as a personality after the birth of Pyrrhus: her farewell speech at 1.931ff and the pathetic scene on the tower at 2.23-6 show her in tragic circumstances. Nevertheless, Statius has not created a memorable figure in his Deidamia: as a pathetic character she fails, since any element of tragedy in the (extant) poem is considerably diminished by the overall humorous tone; as a comic character she pales beside the figure of the exaggeratedly deceitful and colossally ineffectual goddess-mother Thetis.

III. CHARACTERISATION AND THE EPIC SIMILE

To my mind, an important device of character portrayal in the two poems is that of the epic simile.²⁷ I believe that Statius has made a significant contribution in this area of characterisation.

A study of the nature and subject-matter of epic similes inevitably starts with Homer. With the Homeric simile, the poet claims to see and establish connections between image and context so that, in this sense, the simile has been called "authorial, impartial and objective"²⁸ (Williams 1983:166). The similes of the Iliad and Odyssey can be divided into so-called "primitive" and extended similes, i.e. those similes which make a single, superficial correspondence between comparee and comparand²⁹, and those which elaborate on the similarities³⁰ between them. The Iliad contains many similes from natural phenomena and wild animals, as well as from the human world (including political situations) and everyday objects. There are fewer similes in the Odyssey, with a marked emphasis on the ordinary and prosaic (Briggs³¹ 1980:5).

Homer's epic successor, Apollonius Rhodius, moved from the universal³² and objective simile to the particularised and "subjective". With the focus of his Argonautica on the romantic angle (the Jason-Medea encounter), many of the themes of Homeric martial similes were inappropriate. Moreover, it seems certain that Apollonius considered some of Homer's imagery as unseemly or undignified for the purposes of epic. He therefore limits the range of Homeric similes, employing similes from inanimate nature (particularly heavenly phenomena), human activities and emotionally excited women³³ (Coffey 1967).

Virgil consciously sought to be Homer's Roman successor in the arena of

epic poetry and for that reason, even while the influence of Apollonius is undeniable, Virgil's similes are often recognisably Homeric: certain of the similes may be termed "objective"³⁴, others subjective.³⁵ With a consciousness of the continuity of his work, and employing his extraordinary gift for repetitio, Virgil often remodelled similes (and also narrative passages) from his previous work, the didactic Georgics, for use as similes in the Aeneid (Briggs 1980:21).

Unlike Homeric similes, which have one point of comparison with the narrative and a large ornamental development, most of Virgil's similes have many corresponding details, i.e. they are "multiple-correspondence similes"³⁶.

Virgil follows in the steps of Apollonius, and restricts even further the range of subject-matter for his similes. Virgil's similes draw on natural phenomena³⁷, animals³⁸, the life of the farmer or shepherd³⁹, trade⁴⁰, political life⁴¹, war and weapons⁴², building technique⁴³, the visual arts⁴⁴, religious experience⁴⁵, boat-racing⁴⁶, dreams⁴⁷, children's games⁴⁸, everyday objects⁴⁹ and mythology⁵⁰. He avoids Homer's similes from trades and occupations (except agriculture) and those of unheroic people and unpoetic everyday objects. He also dislikes technical terms, which are more suited to didactic poetry than to epic.⁵¹ Often, the subject-matter of a simile is also important in the narrative, since Virgil uses similes to elucidate theme.⁵²

What can be said of Ovid's epic similes? A look at his modus operandi in *Ars Amatoria* is instructive: in this mock-didactic poem, content and style of imagery is in comic imitation of Virgil's *Georgics* (Leach⁵³ 1964:149ff). The subject-matter of his similes is agriculture,

hunting, capture and training. In particular, he draws a constant parallel between the violence of women and that of animals⁵⁴, and between female compliance and that of cultivated land.⁵⁵

In his use of the epic simile, Statius is imitative of his epic predecessors. Mostly, he expands on an idea found in Virgil or Ovid, elaborating it (as Lucan does and, indeed, all the other Silver Latin poets do) with ornate or unusual expressions or erudite allusions, and often adding a plethora of detail. The subject-matter of Statius' similes is entirely traditional: the gods and mythology, and the natural world. Like the other Silver Latin epic poets, he has inherited the Ovidian fondness for the mythological analogy, legend providing a wealth of material to illustrate almost any emotion, act or set of circumstances (Sturt 1982:839).⁵⁶ Statius is fond of the sentimental touch, derived partly from his habit of personification of feelings, passions and inanimate objects (Mozley 1933:33). Furthermore, many of his similes (like those of Ovid) display the unmistakable influence of the plastic arts (e.g. Theb 10.646ff; Ach 1.758ff - cf. pp248-9 above).

My opinion on Statius' use of similes as a device of characterisation in the Thebaid is, to summarize briefly, as follows: as the main female protagonists develop in strength and determination during the course of the poem (with the exception perhaps of Hypsipyle), the choice of simile corresponds to the change e.g. Jocasta, whose majestic dignity at 7.477f - where she is likened "to the most ancient of the Furies" - is replaced by desperate frenzy at 11.318ff - where she is compared to Agave about to sacrifice Pentheus. The treatment of group female behaviour is no different: the choice of similes employed to characterise the Lemnian, Theban and Argive women shows a definite

progression analogous with the change of heart taking place within the
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group.

At their first entrance Argia and Ismene are likened in their outstanding beauty to Pallas and Diana (2.236-43); Argia in her awesome confidence in Book 12 is compared to the leader of the followers of Cybele (12.224-7); her frenzied grief as she rushes onto the battlefield is likened to that of the goddess Ceres searching for her daughter Persephone (12.270-7). Thus, in book 12, when she comes to achieve full status as a character, two powerful similes are assigned to her alone.

The method of characterising Antigone by the employment of similes is similar to that for Argia: as Antigone and Ismene grieve for their lot, they are likened to nightingales returning to their nests after winter (8.616-20); Ismene is compared in her weeping for the death of Jocasta to Erigone grieving for her father Icarus (11.644-7); Antigone in her terrifying determination in Book 12 is likened to a young lioness hunting for the first time without her mother (12.356-8); Antigone and Argia are compared in their washing of Polynices' corpse to the sisters of Phaëthon (12.413-5). Thus we see that Antigone is regarded as unique in her behaviour in only one place in the poem, when she defies the order of Creon. Ismene, on the other hand, is a more independent character than Deipyle, and has an entire simile devoted to her alone.

Hypsipyle does not "develop" in the same fashion as the other three female characters of the Thebaid: the similes that describe her pitiable lot and passive suffering are accordingly homogeneous. She is compared in her caring for the infant Opheltes to Cybele trying to

placate the crying baby Jupiter (4.782-5); she is compared in her fear of the Lemnian women to a doe cornered by wolves (5.165-9); her horror at the discovery of Opheltes' corpse is likened to that of a mother-bird who finds that her nest has been raided by a snake (5.599-604).

Is there any observable difference in Statius' employment of similes in these two epics? Certainly the subject-matter is common to both (mythology, birds, beasts of prey), but it does appear as if there are more "irrational correspondences" in the similes of the *Achilleid* (e.g. the Amazon-simile at 1.7598-60). This is possibly due to the comic intent of the *Achilleid* similes.

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In direct similes, Thetis' maternal and manipulative aspects are highlighted: she is variously likened to a broody bird (212-6); a sculptor (323-34); Latona (343-8). In similes chiefly concerned with Achilles, the rise and fall of her power over her son is depicted: she is implicitly likened to a horse-trainer (274-82) and a group of herdsmen (310-17) as she struggles to acquire control; to Agave (835-40) as she loses it.

Whereas there appears to be some observable pattern to the choice of similes for Thetis, this is not the case with Deidamia: she is variously likened to Venus, Diana, Pallas and Proserpina (in her outstanding beauty 1.290-300, 824-6), to a dove and to Juno (in her innocence of Achilles' deceit 1.372-8, 588-90), to an Amazon (in the awe-inspiring appearance of her and her sisters 1.758-60), and to a lion-tamer (when she loses control over Achilles 1.858-63).

Statius' stated ambition for the *Thebaid* was that it should earn a

reputation, not by rivalling, but by paying reverend homage to its illustrious Roman model (vive, precor; nec tu divinam Aeneida tempta, / sed longe sequere et vestigia semper adora Theb 12.816-7). In this aim, Statius has fully succeeded, for his poems have survived largely due to the recognisable debt they owe to Virgil, in the area of female characterisation as in any other.

FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER EIGHT

I. STATIUS' CONTRIBUTION TO FEMALE CHARACTERISATION IN EPIC

1. Legras comments on the Thebaid: "Stace, lui aussi, nous présentera-t-il une femme, une héroïne qui nous saisisse et nous émeuve? Hélas! non." (1906:229)

2. "Peut-être cependant ses contemporains ont-ils goûté ses personnages composites et pâles, comme ils ont admiré l'ensemble de son poème, mais c'est que, gâtés par une éducation mauvaise, ils aimaient autant le ressouvenir que la création, le savoir-faire que le génie; et ils ont encouragé cet agréable poète dans la voie imprudente de la grande poésie où il s'était fourvoyé. (Legras *ibid* 232)

3. See, for example, Lesueur's examination of female characterisation in the Thebaid (1986:20-32).

4. Virgil's "humanity", in his depiction of certain of the lesser female characters (like Creusa, Andromache, Camilla, Lavinia, Euryalus' mother), has often been noted.

II. THE DIFFERENT APPROACHES OF THE TWO EPICS

5. We observe here a Virgilian spirit of humanity and pietas, like that of Euryalus' mother in the Aeneid, Andromache, Dido, Amata.

6. Here, the influence of Ovid is much more noticeable: the delight in incongruity, the seduction theme etc.

7. It is clear from the epithets that these women are to be pitied: miseranda (3.136 Ide, 5.605 Hypsipyle, 11.598 Antigone, 11.707 Antigone, 12.120 Deipyle, 12.313 Argia, 12.350 Antigone); miserata: (3.679 Argia); miserae: (11.170 Antigone and Ismene, 12.188 Argia, 12.417 Argia & Antigone, misera Jocasta 1.72). Other epithets: undeserving, immerita (11.622 Antigone, 12.296 Argia); innocent, innoxia (8.608-9 Antigone and Ismene); shocked, attonita (4.90, 12.111 Argia).

8. There was no precise literary model available for the figure of Argia. She does recall Lucan's Cornelia, the stylised model of the

noble wife, whose destiny is not dissociated from that of her husband, ready for all possible sacrifices to save and defend his honour.

9. Vessey (1986:3003-7) sees an element of absurdity in the description of Argia's journey of Book 12, and he feels that her eventual discovery of her husband's body fails in pathos because of the grotesque excesses Statius describes; he sees as equally extreme the meeting of Argia and Antigone and their falling on the body of Polynices.

10. Argia is similarly called alumna at 12.238 (Menoetes is her paedagogus).

11. Antigone is described as flebiliora precantis at 7.535, and Tisiphone calls her blanda precatu at 11.103.

12. "Though stylised, Ismene, Atys and Jocasta bear the lineaments of humankind." (Vessey 1986:3000).

13. Smolenaars (1986) has provided an excellent analysis of Jocasta's characterisation within the context of the theme of pietas vs furor.

14. For the use of the term virgo, see Watson, P 1983. Puella and Virgo. Glotta 61, 119-43. Watson asserts that, whereas in prose, virgo refers to biological virginity, in poetry, it could simply mean "girl" (like the more general term puella), since it was used to describe raped or married women.

15. See Ach 1.25ff, 42ff, 74, 126ff, 158, 183, 194, 198-216, 217-220, 228-231, 251, 325ff, 379-396, 873-4, 941.

16. There are hints of disapproval at 141-3 and 283-4, Thetis herself admits the disguise to be a fraud (342), Statius provides authorial comment at 364, Ulysses' words at 873-4 are condemnatory. Statius takes his cue from Ovid in his attitude towards Thetis' plan (see, for example, Met 13.162-4, spoken by Ulysses: praescia venturi genetrix Nereia leti / dissimulat cultu natum, et deceperat omnes, / in quibus Aiacem, sumptae fallacia vestis).

17. Only at this stage, after she has won over Chiron (207ff), does Thetis begin to conceive the ruse of the transvestite disguise.

18. Her speeches (61-76, 126-40, 252-74, 350-62, 384-96) are highly rhetorical and cunning suasoriae.

19. See Neptune's speech at 1.80ff.

20. There is an allusion to her connection with Briareus and the affair of the binding of Jupiter at 1.209-10 (cf. Hom Il 1.398ff).

21. In certain of her legends, Thetis is rated above Jupiter (see Chapter 6 Part I).

22. See Ovid Met 11.217-265 for a description of her abilities at transformation.

23. See, for example, her similarity to a real Roman matrona at 1.77ff.
24. For example the description of her pre-eminent beauty at 1.293-300, and the simile which likens her to Venus, Diana and Pallas.
25. For the ambiguous meaning of virgo in poetry, see above n14.
26. Calchas calls her improba virgo at 1.535, she calls herself improba at 1.942.

III. CHARACTERISATION AND THE EPIC SIMILE

27. What precisely is a simile? Definition of a simile = an "icon" (Grk. εἰκών) or "image", "likeness" (Grk. ἕσκα = to be like, to seem). The Latin word similis also conveys this notion of identity or "sameness" (rather than mere similarity) between the comparee and comparand. See further Ernout, A and Meillet, A 1951. Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine (3ed) Paris, under similis and unus. It is therefore, argues Anderson (1957-8:82), a fallacy to regard the common definitions of metaphor and simile as mutually exclusive. See what Aristotle (Rhet 1406b20, 25f) has to say on the practical equation of these two terms. Quinn (1968:432) groups similes and metaphors together under the category of "imagery", defining imagery as "the verbal representation of an idea in terms of a visual image often in no way accurately descriptive of the person or thing being illustrated, but aimed at making some feature of the person or thing clearer by means of an imaginative word picture."

28. Homer's similes have long been praised for their qualities of so-called "universality" and "objectivity" - that "objectivity of the unchanging background" which C.S. Lewis called "the glory of Homer's poetry", and which he finds embodied in it to "a degree...no other poetry has ever surpassed" (A preface to Paradise Lost London, 1924, 24f). An example of an "objective" simile is Il 16.823-6, where there is a simple comparison of size and strength, in likening Hector and Patroclus fighting to a lion and a boar fighting over a small spring (Briggs 1980:12).

29. Anderson (1957-8:82) points out the strong element of identity in primitive Homeric similes, e.g. the nymph Thetis rising out of the sea "like a mist" (Il 1.359) reveals her almost certain origin in the sea-mist that steals up on the land.

30. Quinn (1968:432) compares Homer's extended similes to tragic choruses: "the action stops while an idea suggested to the poet by the context is explored at a more poetic level." The translator Robert Graves represents Homer's similes as short lyric poems in his otherwise prose translation.

31. In antiquity, Homer's choice of subject-matter was sometimes criticised for impropriety (see, for example, the Iliad scholia). On Homer's similes, see further Bowra, C M 1930. Tradition and Design in the Iliad. Oxford; Fränkel H, 1921. Die Homerischen Gleichnisse Göttingen (Hampe and Schadewaldt both draw on his work); Schadewaldt,

W 1944. *Von Homers Welt und Werk. Aufsätze und Auslegungen zur Homerischen Frage* Stuttgart; Hampe, R 1952. *Die Gleichnisse Homers und die Bildkunst seiner Zeit* Tübingen; Porter, D H 1972. *Violent Juxtapositions in the Similes of the Iliad*. CJ 68, 11-21; Scott, W C 1974. *The Oral Nature of the Homeric Simile* Leiden: Brill.

32. For an example of a "subjective" simile, see Argon 3.651-64 (Medea in her eagerness to go to her sister's room and reveal what is in her heart, but unable to overcome her scruples, is likened to a bride mourning her dead betrothed). The difference between Apollonius' similes from human nature and those of Homer, is that whereas Apollonius sought to reveal the mind, Homer merely used its workings to portray external motion (Anderson 1957-8:84).

33. See further Wilkins, E J 1921. *A Classification of the Similes in the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius*. *Classical World* 14, 162-66.

34. Virgil attempted to capture the atmosphere of Homer's extended similes, though his tone is somewhat different: "intense, evocative selectivity" (Quinn 1968:432). Many of his similes follow a Homeric original closely (e.g. Aen 2.626-31, the felling of a mountain ash), or fuse two originals, or, if there is no model, follow the syntactical layout of a Homeric simile (e.g. 7.698-702, where Messapus' troops are compared to swans).

35. The "slanting" of the Virgilian simile is unique: e.g. 12.746-62 (Turnus likened to a frightened stag), which is modelled on a simile in Apollonius Rhodius. Whereas in Homer, sympathy for Hector is expressed in the context rather than in simile, and in Apollonius Rhodius the objectivity of the simile conceals the poet's actual hostility towards the pursued, in Virgil Turnus' terror and his view of Aeneas as a savage hunting-dog is used to win sympathy for Aeneas' enemy. Here, therefore, a contextually inappropriate element in the simile is an indication that this aspect of the simile is not to be interpreted as authorially impartial (Williams 1983:170).

36. West (1969:40) classifies Virgilian similes as follows:

a) those which have "unilateral correspondences", i.e. a detail from the simile corresponds to some detail in the narrative (e.g. Aen 2.512-7 the Trojan women, praecipites and condensae, taking refuge at the altar, compared to doves sweeping down in a dark storm);

b) those which have "bilateral correspondences", i.e. many details correspond to details in the surrounding narrative (e.g. in the Dido-Diana simile 1.497ff; the Amata-spinning top simile at 7.377ff);

c) those which include "irrational correspondences", i.e. those details in the simile which resemble details in the narrative but do not fit the main correspondence between simile and narrative. These correspondences are usually entirely verbal (eg. in the dove simile, there is no link between the behaviour of doves and the women, *divum amplexae simulacra sedebant*).

It is clear from an examination of the multiple-correspondence

similes, that Virgil took great pains to develop verbal and thematic correspondences between narrative and simile (West 1969:49).

37. Violent extremes (storms, rough seas etc.) are the traditional means of illustrating the movements and sounds of men in battle; trees illustrate size or immovability, etc.

38. Beasts of prey were frequent in battle narratives: lions, a tiger and an unspecified fera, the wolf and the boar. Birds of prey illustrate a violent attacker, swans and cranes illustrate noise and migrating birds flitting souls in the underworld. As in Homer and Apollonius, bees (and also ants) illustrate vast numbers in vigorous motion.

39. For example Aen 2.304.

40. There is only one simile from trade: the woman who is compelled to earn a living by spinning (8.408).

41. He reverses the Homeric simile (Il 2.144) from political life (1.148): whereas Homer compares a turbulent crowd to a rough sea (a comparison popular in Roman rhetoric also), Virgil compares the sea to the turbulent mob mollified by a statesman.

42. For example 4.669; 12.921.

43. Virgil has one simile from contemporary building technique: the use of hydraulic cement (9.710).

44. There are similes from the gilding of marble statues (1.592) and ivory (12.67): cf. Ach 1.307-8.

45. Virgil employs one simile from religious experience: the personified goddess Roma is compared to Cybele riding through the cities of Phrygia and surrounded by her divine descendants (6.783)

46. At 5.144, he compares a chariot-race to boat-racing in the Games.

47. There are dream similes at 10.641 and 12.908. The latter simile, which compares Turnus' vain endeavours to those of a man in a dream, is derived from Il 22.199, but Virgil has only one figure and his anxiety dream has a much more complex psychological content than that of the Homeric simile. The simile creates a sympathetic attitude towards Turnus, who is paralysed by fear and by a self-defeating sense that death is near (Williams 1983:173).

48. One famous simile draws on the games of children: Amata, incited by Allecto, rushes through the city like a top whipped up by boys (7.378). In Homer, a soldier struck in battle is compared to a spinning top (Il 7.378) but Virgil's simile is immediately modelled on an epigram of Callimachus, in which children chase their tops. Though the subject-matter of this simile may appear somewhat frivolous, the tone and intention of Virgil's rendition is tragic: Amata, like the spinning top, is driven by an inexorable external force (Coffey 1967).

49. There are two similes from everyday objects: Turnus' emotions are likened to a boiling cauldron of water (7.462); at 8.22, Aeneas' mind turning from one problem to another is compared to a flickering light reflected on water. This decorative simile derives from Apollonius (3.756 describing the palpitating heart of Medea).
50. Dido is compared to Diana pre-eminent among her companions (1.498). This derives from Homer's description of Nausicaa (Od 6.102).
51. If Virgil ever does employ an "unheroic" theme, he elevates it by carefully chosen poetic vocabulary and decoration (Coffey 1967:72).
52. Virgil here adapted the didactic device of the Lucretian digression, setting similes at significant points in the poem to enhance the narration, advance the action or clinch a passage with a *Schlussfigur*, an important thematic figure (Briggs 1980:29).
53. Leach (1964) sees Ovid's poem as strongly subversive, parodying the ideals and patriotism of the *Georgics* as well as its poetic techniques: whereas Virgil, the didactic poet-philosopher, founded his conception of an ideal agrarian order on legends of the golden age and on the life of the contemporary Italian farmer, Ovid as *magister amoris* celebrates the morals and sophisticated achievements of contemporary Rome, scorning the unsophisticated past and comically re-interpreting mythology for this purpose.
54. For example, at *Ars Am* 1.303ff, we have the image of the Cretan Pasiphae and her love-sickness for the bull. This illustrating Ovid's thesis that women are "the creatures of untamed nature... the raw materials of love" (Leach 1964:144) upon whom the lover, like the farmer or artisan, must impose his craft, in order to create order out of chaos.
55. See similes at 1.755-58; 2.179, 647-52, 667-8, 513, where again Ovid demonstrates persevering labour will reap its just reward.
56. Examples of ingenious mythological similes in Statius include: *Theb* 6.320ff, 893ff; 7.638ff; 8.255ff; 10.76ff; 12.413ff; *Ach* 1.165ff; 484ff. Legras (1905:296-7) gives a total of 49 mythological similes for the *Thebaid*; Sturt counts 55 for the *Thebaid* and 10 for the *Achilleid* (1977. *Tradition and Innovation in the Silver Latin Epic Simile: A Thematic Study* Ph.D. thesis London, p14f). In fact, twenty-eight percent of the similes in the *Thebaid* are founded on myth, as compared with ten percent in Virgil's *Aeneid* (Sturt *ibid* 280). Ovid, in his *Metamorphoses*, both prefigured this Neo-Alexandrian interest in mythology and himself provided the Silver Latin poets with a storehouse of material.
57. Kytzler (1962:141ff) believes in *Gleichnisgruppen*, i.e. the existence of extensive systems of interconnecting similes in the *Thebaid*. This belief is not wholly endorsed by Sturt (1982:835 n10).
58. For further reading on Statius' epic similes, see Coffey, M 1953-4. *A Study of Imagery in Latin Verse in the Silver Age in the Genres of Epic, Tragedy and Satire* Ph.D. thesis Cambridge.

APPENDIX A: SIMILES FOR ACHILLES

In Chapter 1 (INTRODUCTION), I indicated my intention to append a section on Achilles. My thesis entails an examination of the portrayal of the main female characters in Statius' epic poetry. In a sense, the young Achilles of Ach 1 appears (temporarily) as a "female" character, primarily through the employment of similes (some of which we have already examined in connection with the portrayal of Thetis and Deidamia) placed strategically at certain stages in the narrative to illustrate his development from an adolescent boy of equivocal appearance¹, who is effeminized by his love for his mother and lust for Deidamia², to a self-assertive, independent young warrior whose masculinity is in no doubt.³ In this appendix, I shall discuss three similes which I have not previously examined: A) 1.313-17 (likened to a young bullock in his impulsive desire for Deidamia); B) 1.615-18 (compared in his dress to the effeminate Bacchus); C) 1.858-63 (likened at the point of rebellion to a tamed lion who reverts to savagery).

What is the significance of Statius' transvestite theme? From the point of view of myth, it may be seen as an expression of the dragon-slaying (giant-killing) motif which is interpreted as a figuration of that process from immaturity to maturity, that escape from the domination of the "terrible mother" which characterises the early years of every epic hero.⁴ As regards Statius' literary purpose, the disguise of Achilles may be regarded as a rendition of the classic⁵ opposition between truth and concealment and expedience vs honour: since it is expedient to them both, Achilles allows his mother to disguise him as a girl; thereafter he manages to gain access to the

girl that he loves and reveals his true sexual identity; his full identity is only discovered when Odysseus, the arch-deceiver, tricks him into revealing it.⁶

A) Achilles, inflamed⁷ with love for Deidamia and eager to rush forward and disturb the ceremonies but restrained by shame and respect for his mother, is like a bullock who rages with love for a heifer but is restrained by the pleased herdsmen (1.313-17):⁸

eat atque ultro ferus hospita sacra
disiciat turbae securus et immemor aevi,
ni pudor et iunctae teneat reverentia matris.
ut pater armenti quondam ductorque futurus,
cui nondum toto peraguntur cornua gyro,
cum sociam pastus niveo candore iuvencam
aspicit, ardescunt animi primusque per ora
spumat amor, spectant hilares obstantque magistri. 310-17

This is a skilfully worked out multiple-correspondence simile. The chief point of comparison is the impulsive desire of Achilles (eat atque ultro ferus... 310) and that of the bullock (ardescunt animi 316). There are also a number of secondary comparisons to be drawn between the simile and narrative, which involve not only Achilles, but also Deidamia and Thetis: the young hero will soon too be leader of his "herd" (ut pater armenti quondam ductorque futurus 313); he is falling in love for the first time (trux puer et nullo temeratus pectora motu 302 - cf. primusque per ora / spumat amor) with a beautiful female of the species (effulget tantum regina decori / Deidamia chori...295-6 - cf. niveo candore iuvencam), his would-be companion (sociam pastus 315 - cf. similes inter seclude puellas 359); his reckless desire is restrained (Achilles is checked by pudor and reverentia for his mother at his side 312, who is secretly pleased by his lust 318, just as the bullock is restrained: spectant hilares obstantque magistri 317).

This simile takes its place in a series of similes which illustrate various significant moments in the execution of Thetis' plan: at 1.277ff, Thetis' vain persuasions are compared to the unsuccessful attempts of a trainer to tame a wild young stallion⁹; here (313ff), Achilles is likened in his impetuous lust to a bullock, Deidamia to the heifer, Thetis to the delighted herdsmen; at 332ff, Thetis' moulding of him is compared to the work of an artist in wax¹⁰; at 344ff, Thetis' completion of his disguise is likened to the tidying-up of Hecate by Latona¹¹; at 588ff, Achilles' restrained lust for Deidamia is likened to that of the young Jupiter for Juno (Thetis' rule corresponding to that of Rhea)¹²; at 839-40, Achilles' disruption of the maidens' dance in front of the Greek guests is compared to Pentheus' rejection of his mother Agave's religion¹³; at 858ff, when he finally reveals his identity in defiance of his mother's wishes, Achilles is likened to a young tamed lion reverting to his natural savagery at the first sight of steel, ashamed to have served such a timid lord (Thetis, or Deidamia)¹⁴. Thus the simile of the bullock illustrates the inherent dichotomy of Achilles' position at this point in the narrative: like the animal he is young, strong and virile, a future leader of the "herd", but nevertheless he is subject to the control of a being more powerful than himself, who skilfully manipulates his youthful passion. Thus the bullock-simile contributes to the portrayal of Achilles as paradoxically unmanned by the very masculine impulse (lust) he displays.

Bull similes occur frequently in the Thebaid: Theb 2.323ff (Polynices returning to Thebes, like an exiled bull returning to challenge his

dismayed conquerer); Theb 3.330ff (Tydeus returning from Thebes, like a wounded but victorious bull returning to his pastures); Theb 12.601ff (Theseus renewing the battle cry, like a wounded warrior bull resuming the fight when he hears the lowing of a new challenger). The simile of the lustful bullock, applied to Achilles, contrasts humorously with these comparisons to fighter bulls, applied to the adult protagonists of the Thebaid: Achilles is a warrior in training, and the arena of love is as yet his only battlefield.¹⁵

B) Achilles, donning Bacchic costume, is likened to the god himself preparing to go to war (1.605-18):¹⁶

ut vero e tereti demisit nebrida collo
errantesque ^{sinus} hедера collegit et alte
cinxit purpureis flaventia tempora vittis
vibravitque gravi redimitum missile dextra,
attonito stat turba metu sacrisque relictis
illum ambire libet pronosque attollere vultus.
talis, ubi ad Thebas vultumque animumque remisit
Euhius et patrio satiavit pectora luxu,
serta comis mitramque levat thrysumque virentem
armat et hostiles invisit fortior Indos. 609-18

The scene is the celebration of the Trieterica, an all-female rite celebrated in commemoration of Bacchus' Indian triumph. Achilles, dressed in the costume of a bacchante, is the centre of attraction: in fact, his beauty is said to surpass that of Deidamia herself (603-8). Statius provides a picture of the real Bacchus in both his revelling and warlike gear, no doubt influenced by some artistic representation of the god (Duncan 1914:98-9).¹⁷

Nevertheless, as Mozley notes, it appears to be a somewhat inverted comparison: "the warlike Achilles putting on Bacchic garb is compared to effeminate Bacchus making ready for war." (1928:554). Is there any

straight-forward correspondence to be drawn between image and context here? Dilke (1979:125) comments that the poet is perhaps thinking more of the similarities of dress than of any other contrast.¹⁸ As I have mentioned before, Sturt (1982:835-6) regards the simile at Theb 10.646-9 (the metamorphosis of Virtus) as the starting-point for the series of similes depicting Achilles' transformation in this poem.¹⁹ As to the precise correspondence between image and context here, Sturt agrees with Dilke but sees a special significance in the bacchic dress of Achilles: "in the costume of a bacchante ... Achilles is able to assume a more manly role, in that he is free from the restraints of dress and deportment and can indulge in energetic and extravagant movements more natural to a hot-blooded boy."²⁰ (1982:836). Just as the effeminate Bacchus stirs from his peaceful existence to make war (617-8), so is Achilles' vigorous shaking of the thyrsus (612) a symbolic manifestation of his manhood, preceding his actual assertion of his manhood to Deidamia at 640ff. The Bacchus-simile is therefore linked and leads up to the one at Ach 1.828-40, where Achilles scorning his feminine disguise is compared to Pentheus repudiating his mother's Bacchic worship.²¹

In fact, all of these theories regarding the meaning and significance of the Bacchus simile are neatly combined, on the level of literary purpose, in the study of A-M Taisne (1976:363-79), who sees Bacchus and his cult as a unifying theme of Book 1, joining the otherwise disparate Thessalian and Scyrian episodes (1976:363-79). In the explication of the Bacchic theme, Statius is shown to employ contrasts: e.g. the virile education Achilles receives from Chiron vs the effeminate lifestyle on Scyros, and the savage vs the gentle aspects of the

Bacchic cult.

Thus one may view this simile in the same light: the contrast within the figure of Bacchus mirrors the contrast inherent in Achilles' position on Scyros. He is a future male warrior, temporarily engaged in feminine activities, but soon to reveal his masculinity - by raping Deidamia (lines 640ff) and finally by going off to war.

C) Achilles, abandoning all thought of his mother or Deidamia at the sight of the shield and spear brought by Ulysses, is like a tamed lion²³ which forgets its training at the first glimpse of steel (1.858-63):

at ferus Aeacides, radiantem ut cominus orbem
 caelatum pugnas - saevis et forte rubebat
 bellorum maculis - adclinem conspicit hastae,
 infremuit torsitque genas, et fronte relictā
 surrexere comae; nusquam mandata parentis,
 nusquam occultus amor, totoque in pectore Troia est.
 ut leo, materno cum raptus ab ubere mores
 accepit pectique iubas hominemque vereri
 edidicit nullasque rapi nisi iussus in iras,
 si semel adverso radiavit lumine ferrum,
 eiurata fides domitorque inimicus, in illum
 prima fames, timidoque pudet servisse magistro. 852-63

The chief correspondence is the reversion to savagery which the sight of steel inspires in man and beast. The comparison recalls the similes of the *primus furor* of young beasts-of-prey used in the *Thebaid*: 8.572 (Atys is like the young lion who steals a lamb while the shepherd is away); 9.738 (Parthenopaeus is like a lion cub who has outgrown his mother's feeding of him and breaks out to freedom on the open plain); 12.356-8 (Antigone's courage and determination is like that of a young²⁴ lioness hunting for the first time without her mother). There are similes also of trained animals at *Theb* 8.124ff (where Amphiaraus is²⁵ likened to a Massylian lion angered *cum lux stetit obvia ferri*) and

Lucan 4.237ff (where the effect of Petreius' speech on the men is likened to that which a drop of blood has on tamed wild beasts: a ²⁶ *trepido vix abstinet ira magistro*). There are verbal echoes also of the opening lines of *Silv* 2.5 (the poem on a lion fallen in the amphitheatre): *quid tibi nunc strata* (Mozley: *constrata* Courtney) *mansuescere profuit ira? / quid scelus humanasque animo dediscere* ²⁷ *caedes / imperiumque pati et domino parere minori?*

Thus, with a complex nexus of allusions, Achilles' behaviour at this point is portrayed as an act of adolescent self-assertion against the domination of his mother (like that of Parthenopaeus and Antigone in the *Thebaid*) and as a rediscovery (akin to that of a tamed wild beast) of his dormant savagery. He has taken the final step of independence ²⁸ from the restraints of women and, from this moment forward in the poem, Achilles is to be regarded as a fully-fledged, totally male epic hero.

FOOTNOTES TO APPENDIX A

1. Achilles' equivocal beauty was hinted at in similes at 1.758-60 (where he and Lycomedes' daughters were likened to Amazons) and 1.823-6 (where he and Deidamia were compared to Pallas, Diana and Proserpina): see Chapter 7 (DEIDAMIA) Part V.
2. Thetis' domination over her son was depicted in the similes at 1.277-82 (where Achilles was likened to a wild young stallion and his mother the trainer), 1.332-4 (where Thetis was likened to an artist moulding wax images) and 1.343-8 (where Thetis was compared to Latona, and Achilles indirectly to Hecate): see Chapter 6 (THETIS) Part VI.
3. Achilles' rebellion against his mother is depicted in a simile at 1.839-40 (where he is likened to Pentheus, she to Agave): see Chapter 6 (THETIS) Part VI. Mythological similes reinforce his god-like appearance throughout the narrative, even when his masculinity is being otherwise undermined: at 1.165-66 he is likened to Apollo, at 1.180-81 to Castor, at 1.484-90 and 588-91 to Jupiter (for discussion of this last simile see Chapter 7 Part V). It may appear odd that Statius portrayed a (future) hero in this equivocal fashion, but we must remember that an epic hero was possessed of comic as well as tragic potential (see Pike, D L 1980. *The Comic Aspects of the Strongman-Hero*

in Greek myth. AClass 23-4, 37-44). Dilke finds it difficult to accept that there is a humorous intent in Achilles' "girlish" appearance and insists that Statius consistently portrayed the hero as magnus in size, impressiveness and character, using "every artifice (including comparison with the emperor) in a grandiose manner reminiscent of baroque art." (Dilke, O A W 1963. Magnus Achilles and Statian Baroque. Latomus 22, 498-503 at 503).

4. On this motif, see: Day, M S 1984. The Many Meanings of Myth Lanham: University Press of America, at 382-3.

5. On the age-old dichotomy between appearances and reality, see for example the Odyssey where Odysseus πολύτροπος is masked both by his own verbal deceptions as well as by various physical disguises, and the revelation of truth evolved from concealment is expressed in concrete terms in repeated scenes involving clothing and covering. See further: Block, E 1985. Clothing makes the man: a pattern in the Odyssey. TAPA 115, 1-11.

6. It is clear that later generations of readers of Statius recognised the effeminate nature of Achilles' characterisation in this poem, and the amatory motif was developed in the Middle Ages into a fully-fledged romantic tradition of the Achilles-figure. For further details of the romantic and rationalistic traditions concerning Achilles in medieval literature, see further King (1987:110-217).

7. The flame of love which burns within Achilles, when he first sets eyes on Deidamia, is likened in its manifestation to bowls dyed red and ivory stained with purple (1.307-10 lactea Massagetae veluti cum pocula fuscant / sanguine puniceo vel ebur corrumpitur ostro, / sic variis manifesta notis palletque rubetque / flamma repens).

8. Here follows discussion of the words in bold type:

eat... / disiciat... / ...teneat (310-12): the present subjunctives are used to create a more vivid picture. The lines are reminiscent in content of Aen 6.292ff (Aeneas would have attacked the underworld monsters, had not the Sibyl restrained him): ni docta comes tenues sine corpore vitas / admoneat volitare cava sub imagine formae, / inruat, et frustra ferro diverberet umbras.

toto peraguntur cornua gyro (314): see Theb 11.311; 9.117 (Hippomedon compared to a cow protecting her calf): ancipiti circumfert cornua gyro.

aspicit, ardescunt animi primusque per ora / spumat amor... (316f): note the alliteration.

9. See discussion at Chapter 6 (THETIS) Part VI.

10. See discussion at Chapter 6 (THETIS) Part VI.

11. See discussion at Chapter 6 (THETIS) Part VI.

12. See discussion at Chapter 7 (DEIDAMIA) Part V.

13. See discussion at Chapter 6 (THETIS) Part VI.

14. See discussion at C) below.

15. Fantham (1979:460-1) sees this simile as a comic adaptation of Seneca Troades 537-40, a solemn heroic simile applied by Ulysses to Astyanax where in his potential leadership he is likened to a bullock who suddenly takes charge of his father's herd.

16. Here follows discussion of the words in bold type:

nebrida (609): the fawnskin worn by the Bacchantes appears in Statius also in Theb 2.664 (Tydeus taunts the vanquished Menoetes); Silv 1.2.226 (the wedding gifts which Bacchus brings to Arruntius Stella); and at Ach 1.716 (Diomedes names the gifts which Ulysses has brought for Lycomedes' daughters).

hedera (610): ivy was also twined around the thyrsus.

flaventia tempora (611): "flaxen temples" are mentioned at Am 1.1.29 (describing the elegiac Muse).

attonito... metu, "awestruck" (613): for this phrase see Lucan 8.591 (describing Cornelia's reaction to Pompey's decision to leave her on board ship).

mitra (617): this was headgear, usually with earflaps, worn by women (especially Bacchantes, see Th 9.795) and by Bacchus (see Ach 1.617). Oriental headgear was regarded in antiquity with a certain amount of suspicion: Aen 4.216-7 (Iarbas' contemptuous description of Aeneas): *Maeonia mentum mitra crinemque madentem / subnexus, rapto potitur*.

thyrsumque virentem / armat (617-8): this phrase is used since Bacchus is regarded as converting his thyrsus into a spear by fitting it with an iron tip.

hostiles... Indos (618): these are the various Indian chieftains whom, according to legend, Bacchus is said to have conquered before he founded cities and civilised the country.

17. On the many artistic representations of Bacchus at Rome and in Campania, see further: Bruhl, A 1953. Liber Pater Paris, Chapter III.

18. He compares the Bacchus similes at Theb 8.237ff (describing the happy chatter of the Thebans after a successful battle); 12.787ff (describing the rejoicing of the Theban matrons after Theseus kills Creon).

19. Note that the myth of Hercules and Omphale is amongst the exempla provided by Thetis when she tries to persuade Achilles to don women's clothing (Ach 1.260-1). At 262-3, she refers to Bacchus' effeminate dress (*si decet aurata Bacchum vestigia palla / verrere*).

20. Contrast Achilles' awkwardness in the formal dancing at 835-8 (*tunc*

vero, tunc praecipue manifestus Achilles / nec servare vices nec
bracchia iungere curat; / tunc molles gressus, tunc aspernatur amictus
/ plus solito rumpitque choros et plurima turbat).

21. On this simile, see Chapter 6 (THETIS) Part VI.

22. Taisne provides a thorough analysis of the depiction of Chiron as a Bacchic devotee in the poem (1976:364-9): e.g Chiron trains Achilles to hunt Ach 2.102-5, 121-5 (as maenads hunt wild animals); Achilles hunts the most ferocious animals (as lions and tigers are associated with Bacchus); Chiron's diet for Achilles Ach 2.98-102 (like the maenad's omophagia); Achilles rides on Chiron's back Ach 2.113-6 (as Bacchus rides on Centaurs). On the other hand, the ritual dances of couples on Scyros (Ach 1.570-6), the exclusion of males from the rites (1.598-602) and Achilles' hermaphrodite appearance (1.603-6), all reflect the gentler aspects of the cult.

23. Here follows discussion of the words in bold type:

rubebat bellorum maculis (853-4): these words refer to real blood stains on the shield, as *et forte* shows, and not, as Brinkgreve imagined, a mere appearance of blood stains in the battle-scenes depicted thereon.

nisi iussus (860): the lions would be ordered to show ferocity in the amphitheatre, when confronted with other wild beasts.

24. On the other hand, Achilles' behaviour is the opposite of that of Lycaste in Hypsipyle's tale of the Lemnian women (5.226ff): when she repents of her act of fratricide, she is likened to a wild beast who has been successfully trained and refuses to resume its savage nature, in spite of much goading and beating.

25. Compare line 861 (*si semel adverso radiavit lumine ferrum*) to Theb 8.124. The gleam of the sword in the simile corresponds to that of the shield at line 852.

26. Compare this to *timido ...magistro* (Ach 1.863) and to Silv 2.5.3 *domino parere minori* (see below).

27. See further van Dam (Comm:368-90), who notes that *ira* is the common factor in nearly all the lion similes of Statian epic: Theb 7.529; 8.123; 12.357 and 740 (see also Kytzler 1962, 150, 153). On Silv 2.5.3, van Dam cites Ach 1.858ff (what happens when a tame lion is goaded); Lucan 4.237-42 (see above); and also Lucr 5.1310-22 (about the unsuccessful use of tame lions in war).

28. The first step towards independence was the establishment of his sexual identity, by the act of raping Deidamia (Ach 1.640ff). The problem of the nature of the secondary correspondence in this simile (does the "timid lord" refer to Thetis or Deidamia?) has been discussed in Chapter 7 (DEIDAMIA) n67.

power?", he suggests: "is violence nothing to the mourner?" (since Argia feels that in her grief she ought to have cared nothing for force of arms). And for "thou dost cheer me on my way, Ornytus", he offers: "you encourage me, but I am going anyway" (which better serves to remind us that Ornytus has tried to warn her against going).

3. 12.314-5 quamquam texta latent suffusaque sanguine +maeret
purpura... (Mozley)

314 maeret codd, Garrod: marcet Ker

Argia, searching for her husband's body, recognises it by the cloak which she herself made. The expression "the purple mourns" seems rather odd, though Statius is fond of personifying inanimate objects, and it may be typical of him to ascribe mourning to the outfit that commonly designates it. Ker (1953. Notes on Statius. CQ 3, 1-10 and 175-182 at 181) suggests marcet, to balance in meaning with latent: "although the texture was hidden and (although) the purple was becoming faint with the blood it was soaked in." He compares 8.220-1 ipsaeque ad moenia marcent / excubiae; 4.667 quamquam ore et pectore marcet.

4. 12.328-9 heu quid ego? proiectus caespite nudo
hoc patriae telluris habes? +quae iurgia+?
(Mozley)

329 quae iurgia codd, Garrod: quae iniuria Koestlin: quo iurgia Ker

Argia addresses her husband's corpse. Alton (1923. Notes on the Thebaid of Statius. CQ 17, 175-187) understandably considers it strange that she should ask: "What was your quarrel?" He therefore asserts that the existing reading occurred under the influence of 1.444, and that Statius wrote quo iurgia?: "What is the use of quarrels?" Alton's emendation is plausible, but his reasoning is not very convincing: it is most likely that the scribe assumed that the pronoun agreed with iurgia and so changed quo to quae.

5. 12.344-7 sed nec te flammis inopem tua terra videbit:
+ardebis lacrimasque feres, quas ferre negatum
regibus, aeternumque +tuo famulata sepulchro
durabit deserta fides... (Mozley)

345 ardebit P (lacrimasque...regibus omitted): ardebit Garrod Alton
346 longumque P: aeternumque ωS: in longumque Owen: ardebit, longumque
Ker

Argia promises Polynices' corpse an honourable burial. Mozley follows the ωS manuscripts here. Instead of 345-6, P has only one, seemingly senseless, line: ardebit longumque tuo famulata sepulchro. Alton (ibid 186) plausibly suggests that P has a lacuna stretching over portions of two lines, and that Statius wrote: ardebit, lacrimasque feres quas ferre negatum, / ardebit, longumque tuo famulata sepulchro / durabit deserta fides.. The P copyist then reproduced the omission, while the

Shackleton Bailey (1983:55) approves Mozley's retention of the manuscripts' *ignibus*, rather than Hakanson's proposed *crinibus*. I concur with the majority: although *confusis ignibus* ("with confused flames") sounds rather odd and *confusis crinibus* seems more likely ("sadly I stand by the pyre with dishevelled hair"), we must remember that this is no ordinary funeral, and Hypsipyle hopes that the pretended cremation will be a good rather than a bad omen for her father (*cassumque parenti / omen...precor* 318-9). On the other hand, the reading *crinibus* is supported by *Aen* 4.509 where Dido, standing before the sham pyre she has erected for Aeneas' belongings, is described as *crines effusa*.

3. 5.449-52 *hospitibus patuere fores: tunc primus in aris
ignis, et infandis venere obliviae curis;
tunc epulae felixque sopor noctesque quietae,
+nec superum sine mente, reor, placuere fatentes+.* (Mozley)

Hypsipyle describes the mutual delight when the Lemnian women received the Argonauts into their homes and hearts. The last line (452) appears to mean that the Lemnian women won the hearts of the Argonauts by confessing that they killed their husbands. Alton (1923:180) feels that Statius would have ended this passage on a peaceful note (*felixque sopor noctesque quietae*) and therefore he reconstructs these lines in the following way: *hospitibus patuere fores: placuere patentes / (nec superum sine mente, reor): tunc primus...* According to Alton the copyist's eye must have slipped, omitting half a line, and he may have restored it subsequently as a single line and out of place. I am not convinced that Alton's objection is a valid one, particularly since his suggested transposition destroys the link which follows: *forsitan et nostrae excusabile culpae / noscere cura, duces* (453-4). Hypsipyle goes on to tell the Argives of her own culpa, after she has described that of the other Lemnian women.

4. 5.453-4 *forsitan et nostrae +fatum excusabile culpae
noscere cura, duces.* (Mozley)

453 *fatum* codd, Garrod *factum* Lactantius Alton

Hypsipyle offers to tell the Argives of her own "fated pardonable fault" (Mozley) in falling in love with Jason. Alton (1923:180) approves Lactantius' emendation of *fatum* to *factum*: he argues that *fatum* is too strong a term, and also that one does not excuse one's destiny for which one is not responsible. See however TLL VI.1.355.19ff, where it is explained that *factum* is often given where *fatum* must either be restored or certainly understood. One of the examples given is *Theb* 8.227-8 (*nunc facta revolvunt / maiorum*). At 367.24-5, *Theb* 5.453 is cited as an example of the use of *fatum* to mean a *necessitas*, transferred to things. A cross-reference cited is *Silv* 3.1.11 (*sunt fata deum! sunt fata locorum!* = "Gods and places have their destinies also").

5. 5.465-7 *nec quae fortuna relictis*

nosse datur, iam plena quater quinquennia +pergunt,
si modo fata sinunt aluitque rogata Lycaste. (Mozley)

466 pergunt codd: vergunt Lachmann Garrod: surgunt Watt

Hypsipyle speaks of the twin sons whom she left behind on Lemnos twenty years previously. The manuscripts have pergunt: "now that full twenty years have passed" (Mozley). Since the conditional clause si modo fata sinunt ("if only the fates allow them to live") shows that the subject of the obelized verb cannot be quinquennia, Watt (1987:51-2) suspects that pergunt must be corrupt. He also points out that pergere is not used to mean "attain a certain age", and therefore suggests surgunt which fits the context better and can have the sense of "grow up", cf. Theb 8.565-5 surgentes etiamnum umeros et levia mater / pectora; Silv 2.6.3 pignora, surgentesque - nefas! - accendere natos.

6. 5.591-4 huc magno cursum rapit effera luctu
agnoscitque nefas, terraeque inlisa nocenti
+fulminis in morem non verba in funere primo,+
non lacrimas habet... (Mozley)

593 fulminis (funeris Gossage) in morem non verba in funere (fulmine Gossage: vulnere Bentley) primo codd, Garrod

Hypsipyle's reaction upon discovering the horrible fate of the infant Opheltes is described. Scholars have shown dissatisfaction with line 593, since in funere primo ("in the first moment of death") is a contradiction with what has just occurred in the story: Opheltes has been dead some time. Bentley suggested vulnere for funere while Mozley, though he retains the manuscript reading, translates it subjectively (from Hypsipyle's point of view, that is): "in the first shock of ruin." Gossage (1961. Statius, Thebaid V.593. CR 11-12, 114-5) is also dissatisfied with Mozley's translation of fulminis in morem ("as though lightning-struck"), and therefore suggests a transposition which I find to be thoroughly convincing. He offers: funeris in morem non verba in fulmine primo, which suggests that Hypsipyle collapsed to the ground as though dead, at the first shock. He provides substantiating examples from the Thebaid and the Silvae (e.g. lacero...funere Theb 7.213-4; venturi fulminis ictus Silv 3.3.158) to prove that Statius regularly uses funus to mean "a dead body" and fulmen, a thunder-bolt, in the context of a sudden calamity.

7. 5.691-2 volucres equitum praeverterat alas
Fama recens, +geminos alis+ amplexa tumultus...(Mozley)

692 geminos codd: vanos Poynton alis codd: aulis Garrod: suis Burman

Rumour hastens to spread the news of Hypsipyle's arrest at the hands of Lycurgus. Most scholars find lines 691-2 suspect: the repetition of alas...alis sounds odd (Garrod emends alis to aulis and regards volucres...recens as a parenthesis); Poynton on the other hand (1963:259) points out that geminos...tumultus is an unnatural phrase since there is only one attack on Hypsipyle, even if one report does

2. 1.624-7 quonam timidae commenta parentis
 usque feres? primumque imbelli carcere perdes
 florem +animi? non tela licet Mavortia dextra,
 non trepidas agitare feras? (Dilke)

626 animi codd, Garrod: aevi Watt

In a soliloquy, Achilles chafes at the restrictions imposed on him by his mother. He resents that he is being kept a prisoner in the "prime of his life". For this latter figure of speech, the phrase *flos aetatis* ("flower of his youth") is more usual than *flos animi* ("flower of his courage"), though the latter expression may have been chosen in reference to the manly pursuits of war, hunting and swimming mentioned directly thereafter (626-33). Watt (W S 1984. Notes on Latin Epic Poetry. BICS 31, 163) convincingly proffers the emendation *florem aevi*, referring to its entry at TLL VI.935.11-13 and pointing out that *aevi* is more fitting than *animi* to the direction in which Achilles' soliloquy is leading: not war or sporting activities but the seduction of Deidamia (636-44).

3. 1. 656-60 quid gemis ingentes caelo paritura nepotes?
 "Sed pater- " ante igni ferroque excisa iacebit
 Scyros et in tumidas ibunt haec versa procellas
 moenia, quam saevo mea tu conubia pendas
 funere: non adeo parebimus omnia matri. (Dilke)

657 sed pater- codd: si pater Garrod: lacuna Ker

Achilles has seduced Deidamia and is now attempting to comfort her (inter alia by revealing his divine origins. Dilke punctuates line 657 as above, treating the words *sed pater-* as an aposiopesis spoken by Achilles as an anticipated objection from Deidamia (which he counters at 657-60). Ker (1953:181) points out that, unlike the other instances of the device in Statius' poetry, this particular aposiopesis lacks dramatic force. Ker may therefore be correct in suspecting a lacuna in the text at this point. The internal evidence which he adduces for his idea is cogent: the reference to Deidamia's fatal punishment at her father's hands (657-60) would be meaningless unless some mention had already been made of it. The words *sed pater-* may thus have introduced a speech by Deidamia in which she raised this objection. The missing lines might also have contained the first part of Achilles' reply.