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 Twelfth Paper Session  
 Section G: Statius' *Thebaid*

## Taking Matters and Eyeballs into Your Own Hands: Greek Tragic Intertext in the Opening of Statius' *Thebaid*

### PASSAGE 1:

#### Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus* 1375-1383; 1389-1392

τοιιάσδ' ἀράς σφῶν πρόσθε τ' ἐξανῆκ' ἐγὼ  
 νῦν τ' ἀνακαλοῦμαι ξυμμάχους ἐλθεῖν ἐμοί,  
 ἴν' ἀξιῶτον τοὺς φυτεύσαντας σέβειν,  
 καὶ μὴ ἕξατιμάζητον, εἰ τυφλοῦ πατρὸς  
 τοιῶδ' ἐφύτην...  
 τοιγὰρ τὸ σὸν θάκημα καὶ τοὺς σοὺς θρόνους  
 κρατοῦσιν, εἴπερ ἐστὶν ἡ παλαίφατος  
 Δίκη ξύνεδρος Ζηνὸς ἀρχαίοις νόμοις...  
 τοιαῦτ' ἀρῶμαι, καὶ καλῶ τὸ Ταρτάρου  
 στυγνὸν πατρῶον ἔρεβος, ὡς σ' ἀποικίση,  
 καλῶ δὲ τάσδε δαίμονας, καλῶ δ' Ἄρη  
 τὸν σφῶν τὸ δεινὸν μῖσος ἐμβεβληκότα.

Such curses that I previously sent forth against you, now **I call** them up to come as allies to me, so that you might think it proper to honor your parents and so that you **not dishonor** them utterly, even if their father is a blind one such as this...Therefore, these curses will overcome your seat and your throne, if indeed the long-spoken **Justice is sitting in council with the ancient laws of Zeus**...Such curses I will invoke and **I call** upon the abhorred, paternal nether darkness of Tartarus, so that it might exile you, and **I call** upon these deities, and **I call** upon Ares, who has thrown terrible hatred upon you both.

### PASSAGE 2:

#### Statius' *Thebaid* 1.56-59; 76-78; 80-86

‘Di, sontes animas angustaque Tartara poenis  
 qui regitis, tuque umbrifero Styx liuida fundo,  
 quam uideo, **multumque mihi consueta uocari**  
 adnue, Tisiphone, **peruersaque** uota secunda...  
 ...quin ecce superbi  
 —pro dolor!—et nostro iamdudum funere reges  
**insultant** tenebris gemitusque **odere** paternos...  
 ...tu saltem debita uindex  
 huc ades et **totos in poenam ordire nepotes**.  
 indue quod madidum tabo diadema cruentis  
 unguibus abripui, **uotisque** instincta **paternis**  
**i media in fratres, generis consortia ferro**  
**dissiliant**. da, Tartarei regina barathri,  
 quod cupiam uidisse nefas.’

‘Gods, you who rule over guilty spirits and Tartarus, a confined place for punishments, and you, Styx, livid in shadow-bearing depths, whom I see, and Tisiphone, **accustomed to be summoned by me many times**, nod assent and favor my perverse prayers... Behold—oh, the anguish— how the haughty [sons], made kings by my ruin, **make insults** at my darkness and **detest** their father’s laments... You, at least, indebted defender, let you come and begin a **punishment against all my offspring**. Put on this diadem dripping with putrid gore, which I snatched with bloody nails. And you, roused **by the prayers of a father, go between the brothers** and **let fellowship of family be burst asunder** by iron. Grant, Queen of the Tartarean abyss, that *nefas* which I desire to have seen’

## PASSAGE 3:

Statius' *Thebaid* 1.71-72

*mox avidus poenae digitis caedentibus ultro  
incubui miseraque oculos in matre reliqui.*

And next, **eager for punishment**, I pressed down with slaughtering fingers and left behind my eyeballs **upon my miserable mother**.

## PASSAGE 4:

Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1263-1270;  
1275-1277

οὐδὲ κρεμαστήν τήν γυναῖκα ἐσείδομεν,  
πλεκταῖσιν αἰώραισιν ἐμπεπλεγμένην.  
ὁ δ' ὡς ὄρᾳ νιν, δεινὰ βρυχηθεὶς τάλας,  
χαλᾶ κρεμαστήν ἀρτάνην. **ἐπεὶ δὲ γῆ  
ἔκειτο τλήμων**, δεινὰ γ' ἦν τάνθένδ' ὄρᾳν.  
ἀποσπᾶσας γὰρ εἰμάτων χρυσηλάτους  
περόνας ἀπ' αὐτῆς, αἷσιν ἐξεστέλλετο,  
**ἄρας ἔπαισεν** ἄρθρα τῶν αὐτοῦ κύκλων...  
τοιαῦτ' ἐφουμῶν πολλάκις τε κούχ ἄπαξ  
**ἦρασσ' ἐπαίρων βλέφαρα. φοίνια δ' ὁμοῦ  
γλῆναι γένει ἔτελλον.**

Then we saw his wife suspended, encircled by a twisted noose. And when he saw her, having bellowed terribly, the wretch loosens the hanging noose. **And when the miserable woman was stretched out on the ground**, from there it was terrible to see. Having ripped off the golden brooches from her robes with which she had adorned herself, **and having raised them up, he struck** the sockets of his eyes...saying such things, not once, but many times, **raising up [his hands], he struck his eyes. And the slaughtered eyes covered his beard.**

## PASSAGE 5:

Seneca' *Oedipus* 965-967

*scrutatur avidus manibus uncis lumina,  
radice ab ima funditus uulsos simul  
euoluit orbes.*

He, **eager**, probes his eyes with **curled hands**, and at once he extricates the orbs having been plucked utterly from their deepest roots.

Statius' *Thebaid* 1.71-72

*mox avidus poenae digitis caedentibus ultro  
incubui miseraque oculos in matre reliqui.*

And next, **eager** for punishment, I pressed down with **slaughtering fingers** and left behind my eyeballs **upon my miserable mother**.

Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* 1266-1267;  
1276-1277

... ἐπεὶ δὲ γῆ  
**ἔκειτο τλήμων**, δεινὰ γ' ἦν τάνθένδ' ὄρᾳν...  
**ἦρασσ' ἐπαίρων βλέφαρα. φοίνια δ' ὁμοῦ  
γλῆναι γένει ἔτελλον.**

And when the **wretched woman was stretched out on the ground**, from there it was terrible to see... raising up [his hands], he struck his eyes. And the **slaughtered eyes** covered his beard.

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