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Alison M. Keith

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IMPERIAL BUILDING PROJECTS AND ARCHITECTURAL  
ECPHRASES IN OVID'S *METAMORPHOSES*  
AND STATIUS' *THEBAID*

ALISON M. KEITH

The reception history of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in later Latin and European literature and culture currently constitutes a focus of concentrated scholarly interest,<sup>1</sup> not least because of the contemporary renewal of popular interest in Ovid's poem.<sup>2</sup> Recent research on the reception of the *Metamorphoses* in antiquity has revealed a special debt in Statius' *Thebaid* not only to Ovid's so-called "Theban narrative" of *Met.* 3.1–4.605 but also to the larger literary and imperial programmes of the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>3</sup> Scholars have documented Statius' deployment in the *Thebaid* of Ovidian techniques of characterization and narrative in the *Metamorphoses*, and this research suggests the importance of investigating other aspects of the relationship between the two poems in areas such as politics and myth. In this article, I examine Statius' descriptions of built forms, interior decoration, and spatial usage in the *Thebaid* in relation both to the architectural settings of the *Metamorphoses* (and their reception of Augustus' building projects) and to the contemporary architectural programs of the Flavian emperors. In particular, I analyze the layout, decoration, and use-patterns of the royal households of Thebes (1.46–52, 7.243–52, 8.607–54) and Argos (1.386–536), as well as the palace-temples of the gods Jupiter, Mars, and Dis (*Theb.* 1.197–2, 7.40–63, 8.21–83) in Statius' *Thebaid* in conjunction with their Ovidian (and contemporary imperial) models.

Although this study focuses on Statius' appropriations of architectural descriptions in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, it is essential to consider as well the building projects of the emperors under whose rule they wrote, primarily Augustus and Domitian, in order to emphasize the impact of Augustan and Flavian building projects, both public and do-

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<sup>1</sup> Allen 2002; Burrow 2002; Dewar 2002; Dimmick 2002; Lyne 2002a and 2002b; Newlands 2002a; Tissol and Wheeler 2002; Keith 2002, 2004–2005, and Keith and Rupp 2007; Hardie 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Ransmayr 1988; Hofmann and Lasdun 1992; Hughes 1997; Terry 2001; Zimmerman 2002. On current literary interest in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, see Henderson 1999 and Kennedy 2002.

<sup>3</sup> Feeney 1991: 337–363; Keith 2002 and 2004–2005; Newlands 2002a.

mestic, not only on the urban fabric of Rome but especially on the literary imagination of her poets. I shall argue that Ovid's *Metamorphoses* plays a crucial role in the literary reception of imperial architecture for Statius. Alexandrian court poetry provides examples of literary celebration of Ptolemaic spectacle (e.g., Theocr. 15, Call. *Actia* 4 fr. 110 Pf.), but no instance of epic commemoration of contemporary building projects survives, if indeed any existed.<sup>4</sup> Ennius' *Annales*, no longer fully extant, very likely included descriptions of built-forms<sup>5</sup> but the evidence is lost and is, in any case, not as obviously relevant a model for the celebration of an emperor's architectural projects, undertaken with resources both financial and topographical unavailable to republican aristocrats. Early Augustan poetry also offers few literary models for Ovidian epic practice. The works of Vergil, for example, focus insistently on bucolic, agricultural and pre-urban settings, though partial precedent is provided by the ecphrasis of an imagined temple in the preface to *Georgics* 3 (usually interpreted as a metaphor for a future literary project, but perhaps also reflecting contemporary temple-vowing and building)<sup>6</sup> and the description of Latinus' palace in *Aeneid* 7 (often read as a commentary on Augustus' building programme on the Palatine,<sup>7</sup> which the *princeps* had begun, but not fully realized, before Vergil's death in 19 BCE). Tibullan elegy and Horatian lyric follow the Vergilian pattern of avoiding specific reflection on urban settings. By contrast, both Propertius and Ovid include descriptions of contemporary Augustan buildings in their elegiac poetry, Ovid much more extensively than Propertius.<sup>8</sup> Moreover it is in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

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<sup>4</sup> It is by no means certain, *pace* Thomas 1983: 97–99, that Callimachus' *Victoria Berences*, for example, contained a temple description: see Newlands 1991: 442. For Callimachus' interest in temples (not necessarily contemporary) and the artwork adorning them, see Thomas 1983.

<sup>5</sup> See Skutsch 1985: 144–146 on Enn. *Ann.* 1 and, especially, 1985: 649 on Enn. *Ann.* 487, on Ennius' commemoration of the foundation of a temple or portico of Hercules and the Muses by his patron M. Fulvius Nobilior in 179 BCE.

<sup>6</sup> On Vergil's temple as a literary metaphor, see Thomas 1983: 96–101 and Newlands 1991: 446; on late republican/early imperial temple-vowing and temple-building, see Meban 2002: 23–66.

<sup>7</sup> See especially Wiseman 1987: 397–403, who notes that Ovid's poetry provides the most detailed engagement with the Augustan building programme on the Palatine, and cf. Smolenaars 1998 on the Vergilian background of the palace of Atreus in Seneca, *Thyestes* 641–82.

<sup>8</sup> Ovid encomiastically describes the grandeur of the temple of Mars Ultor (dedicated in 2 BCE) in the *Fasti* (5.551–62), while Propertius celebrates the radiance of the temple to Apollo on the Palatine (2.31) in language that is remarkably close to Ovid's description of the Palace of the Sun at the opening of *Metamorphoses* 2 (discussed below). On Ovid and the monuments, see now Boyle

that we first encounter an epic architectural ecphrasis that explicitly invites literary and political reflection on contemporary imperial building projects (1.170–80), the council of the gods convened on the “Palatine of Heaven” (*magni ... Palatia caeli*, 1.176). Elsewhere in the *Metamorphoses* too, Ovid includes ecphrases of built forms that suggest contemporary architectural projects: 2.1–30 (the Palace of the Sun); 4.437–54 (the House of Dis in the underworld); and 12.43–58 (the House of Fama).<sup>9</sup> It is therefore worth surveying the building programs of Augustus and the Flavian emperors as a preface to this discussion of their literary reception in the epics of Ovid and Statius.

In his memoirs, Augustus records that he undertook a number of architectural projects throughout his principate, both in Rome (*RG* 19–21) and elsewhere in the empire (*RG* 24), including restoring 82 temples in the city, as well as vowing and building temples to Apollo (Palatinus, vowed in 36 BCE, dedicated in 28 BCE), Jupiter (Tonans, vowed in 26 BCE, dedicated in 22 BCE) and Mars (Ultor, vowed in 42 BCE, dedicated in 2 BCE), among other gods, and embarking on an ambitious domestic architectural program that ultimately conjoined the temple of Apollo Palatinus and a shrine of Vesta with his own home.<sup>10</sup> The relationship between Augustus’ extensive architectural program and literary descriptions of building activity in contemporary poetry has been well discussed in connection with Vergil’s *Aeneid*, even though by the time of Vergil’s death in 19 BCE many of the *princeps*’ most ambitious archi-

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2003 with detailed discussion of Ovidian elegy but less full treatment of the *Metamorphoses*; on Propertius and the monuments, see Welch 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Other ecphrases in the poem evoke contemporary interest in suburban gardens (e.g. Pomona’s *horti*, 14.635–62) and landscaped grottoes for outdoor bathing (e.g. Diana’s bath, 3.155–64) and dining (e.g. Achelous’ dinner party, 8.550–75).

<sup>10</sup> On Augustus’ architectural programme in Rome see Zanker 1988, Favro 1996, and Boyle 2003: 36–44. Favro 1996: 80–142 identifies three phases of Augustan building projects: Phase I (44–29 BCE, Favro 1996: 80–103) saw construction of manubial monuments in the city by successful generals associated with the triumvirs; Phase II (29–17 BCE, Favro 1996: 103–120) witnessed a frenetic building program undertaken by Augustus and Agrippa in the city; and Phase III (17 BCE–14 CE, Favro 1996: 120–142) saw the consolidation of Augustan monuments in the city. Ovid comments on Augustus’ consolidation of his household in a temple complex on the Palatine at *F.* 4.949–54 (on which see Boyle 2003: 226–229): *cognati Vesta recepta est | limine; sic iusti constituere patres. | Phoebus habet partem: Vestae pars altera cessit: | quod superest illis, tertius ipse tenet. | state Palatinae laurus, praetextaque quercu | stet domus: aeternos tres habet una deos* (“Vesta was received on her relative’s doorstep; so the just Fathers decreed. Phoebus Apollo has a share; another share is given to Vesta; what remains from theirs, he himself holds as third. Stay Palatine laurels, and let the house stand girt with oak: one house has three eternal gods”).

tectural projects remained unfinished.<sup>11</sup> A generation after Vergil's death, the *princeps* could boast that he had found Rome a city built of brick and left it a city of marble (*ut iure sit gloriatus marmoream se relinquere, quam latericiam accepisset*, Suet. *Aug.* 28.3). This is the city commemorated in Ovid's poetry, which celebrates Rome's rejection of her rustic past and transformation into a golden city, worthy of an imperial capital (*simplicitas rudis ante fuit: nunc aurea Roma est | et domiti magnas possidet orbis opes*, *Ars* 3.113–14).<sup>12</sup>

Augustus' architectural enhancement of Rome was praised by many contemporary and later writers (e.g. Livy 1.56.2, Strabo 5.3.8, Vell. 2.81.3), including the biographer Suetonius, who commemorates his achievements as a builder at length (*Aug.* 28.3–30.2) and evaluates those of his successors by reference to the founding prince's accomplishments.<sup>13</sup> When reporting the extensive building projects of the Flavian emperors (*Div. Vesp.* 8–9, 19, *Div. Tit.* 7.3, 8.3–4, *Dom.* 5, 13), for example, Suetonius particularly approves Vespasian's decision to build an amphitheatre in the centre of Rome because Augustus had planned to do so (*Div. Vesp.* 9.1). Despite the biographer's derision of Domitian's erection of numerous arches in the city—reporting one wag's punning comment, *arci* (“arches,” a pun on Greek *arkei*, “it is enough”)—it is clear that the last Flavian emperor seized the opportunity “to remap Rome, to leave the Flavian mark on the most historically resonant sites by rebuilding hallowed shrines in the name of religious revival or by gracing prestigious Augustan monuments with Flavian additions to ensure that the second dynasty was linked to the first.”<sup>14</sup> Suetonius reports

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<sup>11</sup> Vergil witnessed the construction associated with Favro's Phase I and much of that of Phase II, but did not live to see the conclusion of Phase II or any of the architectural monuments of Phase III. On Vergil's interest in contemporary building projects see, e.g., Eden 1975; Fordyce 1977; and Gransden 1976, all discussing *Aeneid* 8.

<sup>12</sup> Boyle 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Suetonius excoriates Tiberius for his miserly refusal to complete the two construction projects he undertook as *princeps* (both apparently in deference to Augustus's wishes, *Tib.* 46–47) and praises Caligula for completing these after his uncle's death (*Gaius* 21). Claudius he praises for the utility of his building projects rather than their extent or beauty (*Claud.* 20), noting that at least one had been contemplated by Augustus (but rejected as too difficult), but Caligula and Nero earn Suetonius' censure for the decadence and selfishness of their architectural projects (*Gaius* 22, 37; *Nero* 31). Nero's extravagance in building the *domus aurea* is a focus of elite hostility; cf. Tac. *Ann.* 15.42–43.

<sup>14</sup> D'Ambra 1993: 5. According to Dio (66.24.1–3), all the buildings between the Pantheon and the Capitol had been destroyed or damaged. On Flavian building projects, see MacDonald 1982: 47–74; D'Ambra 1993; and Darwall-Smith 1996.

that Domitian (like Augustus) “restored many splendid buildings which had been destroyed by fire ... [and] built a new temple on the Capitoline hill in honour of Jupiter Custos and the forum which now bears the name of Nerva; likewise a temple to the Flavian family, a stadium, an Odeum, and a pool for sea-fights” (Suet. *Dom.* 5).<sup>15</sup> In addition to building this new temple to Jupiter Custos (his “guardian” or saviour), Domitian restored the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, both on the Capitol.<sup>16</sup> He also advertised a close relationship with the goddess Minerva, by worshipping her at a shrine in his bedroom (Suet. *Dom.* 15.3, D.C. 67.16.1) and building at least three temples for her, including the temple of Minerva in his new forum, commonly called the Forum Transitorium.<sup>17</sup> Domitian also extensively remodeled the Palatine where his architect Rabirius built, over the ruins of several Julio-Claudian domestic structures, a new imperial palace (completed in 92 CE), that remained the emperor’s official residence for centuries.<sup>18</sup> The extent of Domitian’s temple-construction, temple-restoration, and palace-building projects—like that of Augustus—requires us to take full account of contemporary imperial architectural activity in our analysis of architectural descriptions in Statius’ poetry, not only in the *Silvae* (where scholars have been used to do so)<sup>19</sup> but also in the *Thebaid* (where they have not).

I offer this sketch of contemporary imperial building programmes in order to contextualize the architectural ecphrases of both Ovid and Statius and in particular Statius’ literary debt to Ovid’s epic innovations in this regard. We may begin our discussion of Statius’ debt to Ovidian architectural ecphrases by considering the literary models that Ovid’s Theban narrative supplies for the palace of Dis and the royal house of

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<sup>15</sup>Cf. the Chronographer of 354, who reports that Domitian built “seven *atria*, two *horrea*, a temple of Castor and Minerva, and the *Porta Capena*; temples of the Flavian *gens*, the *Diribiorum*, Isis and Serapis, and Minerva Chalcidia; the Odeum, the porticus *Minucia Vetus*, the stadium, the baths of Titus and Trajan, an amphitheatre, the temple of Vespasian and Titus, the Capitol, the Senate, four *ludi*, the Palatine, the *Meta Sudans* and the Pantheon.”

<sup>16</sup>Darwall-Smith 1996: 105–115; cf. Suet. *Dom.* 4.4.

<sup>17</sup>Darwall-Smith 1996: 115–129.

<sup>18</sup>MacDonald 1982: 47: “Domitian’s palace became the permanent residence of the emperors, for centuries the very center of the far-flung imperial machine. It was still in use when Narses, the conqueror of the Goths, died there in 571, and repairs were made to it a century later by a Byzantine officer, Plato.” On Domitian’s palace, see MacDonald 1982: 47–74, and on the relationship between the *domus Flavia*, the *domus Augustana*, and the *domus Tiberiana*, see also Darwall-Smith 1996: 183–185, 199–200, 207–215; and Royo 2001: 61–64.

<sup>19</sup>See, e.g., Vessey 1983; Bergmann 1991; Coleman 1988; and Newlands 1991 and 2002b, with further bibliography.

Cadmus in Statius' *Thebaid*, the latter of which he invokes as the subject of his poem: *limes mihi carminis esto | Oedipodae confusa domus* ("let the limit of my lay be the troubled house of Oedipus," *Theb.* 1.16–17).<sup>20</sup> The Flavian poet offers no grand description of the façade of the Theban royal palace or its audience chambers (such as he gives of the contemporary *domus Flavia* on the Palatine in *Silvae* 4.2) but instead focuses on its inmost depths, where the aged and accursed Oedipus lingers on in an embittered half-life (*Theb.* 1.50–51): *illum indulgentem tenebris imaeque recessu | sedis inaspectos caelo radiisque penates | seruantem ...* ("he devotes himself to darkness, and in the lowest recess of his abode he keeps his home on which the rays of heaven never look ...").<sup>21</sup>

In this dark and hellish setting Oedipus prays to the gods of the underworld, summoning Tisiphone to punish his sons and avenge his calamities (*Theb.* 1.56–87).<sup>22</sup> Nor does Tisiphone disdain his prayers, immediately answering his summons (*Theb.* 1.94–96). The close relations between the house of death in the Underworld and the house of Cadmus in Thebes are brought out in the description of Tisiphone's journey, and especially in Statius' knowing comment on the familiarity of the Fury's route to Thebes (*Theb.* 1.100–102): *arripit extemplo Maleae de ualle resurgens | notum iter ad Thebas; neque enim uelocior ulla | itque reditque uias cognataue Tartara mauult* ("rising from Malea's valley, she hastens without delay along the familiar road to Thebes. No route does she travel faster to and fro, nor does she like kindred Tartarus better"). Statius here alludes to the long literary tradition of Oedipus' curse on his sons and particularly to the fourth book of the *Metamorphoses*, where Ovid in his Theban narrative establishes the close topographical and thematic relationship between Thebes and the underworld.<sup>23</sup>

There, at Juno's request, Tisiphone appears as the Fury who infests the house of Athamas (Cadmus' son-in-law, the husband of Ino), in or-

<sup>20</sup> On Statius' debt to Ovid's Theban narrative for the *mise-en-scène* of the *Thebaid*, see Feeney 1991: 337–364, and Keith 2002 and 2004–2005.

<sup>21</sup> I cite Statius' *Thebaid* from Shackleton Bailey 2003 and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* from Tarrant 2004; translations of Statius are adapted from Shackleton Bailey 2003 while translations of Ovid are adapted from Miller 1984.

<sup>22</sup> Oedipus' vengeful seclusion in the depths of the Theban royal house finds striking parallels in Domitian's celebrated reclusiveness and in his architect Rabirius' construction of a suite of rooms of limited access for the emperor's personal use on the lower level of the *domus Augustana*. On Domitian's reclusiveness, see Suet. *Dom.* 3.1, 14.4, 21; Plin. *Pan.* 48–49, 51.5. For his private quarters in the *domus Augustana*, see the discussion of MacDonald 1982: 67–69, complicated by Darwall-Smith 1996: 209–214.

<sup>23</sup> Feeney 1991: 343–344, especially 344 n. 106.

der to avenge their contempt for her godhead (Ov. *Met.* 4.481, 484, 486–87): *Nec mora, Tisiphone ... | egressiturque domo; ... | limine **constiterant**: postes tremuisse feruntur | Aeolii pallorque fores **infecit acernas*** (“without delay, Tisiphone ... leaves the house of Dis ... She (and her companions) had taken their stand on Athamas’ threshold; the doorposts of Aeolus’ son are reported to have trembled, and paleness afflicted the maple doors”). Statius’ debt is especially visible in the verbal texture of his description of the Fury’s arrival in Thebes (*Theb.* 1.123–25): *atque ea Cadmeo praeceps ubi **culmine primum** | **constitit assuetaque**<sup>24</sup> **infecit nube penates**, | **protinus attoniti fratrum sub peccatore motus*** (“and when she first stayed her headlong course at Cadmus’ roof and afflicted the household with her customary cloud, shock stirred the brothers’ hearts”).

Several lines of reception of Ovid’s Theban settings can be traced in Statius’ depiction of the palace in Thebes. One strand of reception, essentially thematic, is represented, as we have seen, by the Flavian poet’s insistence on the proximity of the Theban royal house to hell and the concomitant implication that Oedipus’ location within the palace is itself hellish.<sup>25</sup> In this context, we may consider as well Statius’ close linguistic adaptation of Ovid’s topography of the underworld and description of the House of Dis (*Met.* 4.432–45):

Est uia decliuis, funesta nubile **taxo**;  
 ducit ad infernas per muta silentia sedes.  
**Styx** nebulas exhalat iners, umbraeque recentes  
 descendunt illac simulacraque functa sepulcris;  
**pallor** hiemsque tenent late loca senta, nouique,  
 qua sit iter, **manes, Stygiam** quod **ducat ad urbem**  
 ignorant, ubi sit **nigri fera regia** Ditis.  
 mille capax aditus et apertas undique portas  
 urbs habet, utque fretum de tota flumina terra,  
 sic omnes animas locus accipit ille nec ulli  
 exiguos **populo** est turbamue accedere sentit.  
 errant exsanguis sine corpore et ossibus **umbrae**,  
 parsque forum celebrant, pars **imi tecta tyranni**,  
 pars aliquas artes, antiquae imitamina **uitae**.

There is a sloping path shaded by deadly yew-trees, which leads through dumb silence to the infernal realms. The sluggish Styx there exhales its vaporous breath; and by that way come down the spirits of the newly dead, shades of those who have received due funeral rites.

<sup>24</sup>M. Dewar reminds me that *assueta* here, like *notum iter* above (*Theb.* 1.101), also draws attention to literary history; it may be “her customary cloud” but it is also a cloud the doors have “grown accustomed to.”

<sup>25</sup>Oedipus’ location is also potentially Domitianic in both its seclusion and its position on the lowest level of the house; see n. 22 above.



This is a wide extending waste, wan and cold; and the shades newly arrived know not where the road is which leads to the Stygian city where lies the dread palace of black Dis. This city has a thousand wide approaches and gates open on all sides; and as the ocean receives the rivers that flow down from all the earth, so does this place receive all souls; it is not too small for any people, nor does it feel the accession of a throng. There wander the shades bloodless, without body and bone. Some through the forum, some the palace of the underworld king; others ply some craft in imitation of their former life.

The Ovidian downward sloping path to hell is precisely the road *not* taken by the Argive seer Amphiaraus at the opening of Statius' eighth book. Sustained verbal echoes of the Ovidian ecphrasis, however, undergird the topography and architecture of Statius' underworld, into which Amphiaraus falls as he fights on the battlefield before the city walls of Thebes (*Theb.* 8.1–5, 9–11, 21–23):

Vt subitus uates **pallentibus** incidit **umbris**  
 letiferasque **domos** **regis**que arcana sepulti  
 rupit et armato turbauit funere **manes**,  
 horror habet cunctos, **Stygiis** mirantur **in oris**  
 tela et equos corpusque nouum ...  
 necdum illum aut trunca lustrauerat obuia **taxo**  
 Eumenis, aut furuo Proserpina poste notarat  
 coetibus assumptum functis ...

Forte sedens **media regni infelicis in arce**  
**dux Erebi** **populos** posebat **crimina uitae**,  
 nil hominum miserans iratusque omnibus **umbris**.

When suddenly the prophet fell into the pallid shades, shattering the homes of death and the secrets of the buried king and throwing the ghosts into confusion with his armed corpse, all were seized with horror; they marvelled in the Stygian regions at the weapons, the horses, and the strange body .... The Fury had not yet met and purified him with branch of yew nor had Proserpina marked him on the dark doorstep as recruited to the company of the dead .... By chance the lord of Erebus was seated in the middle of the citadel of his unhappy realm demanding of the people their lies' misdeeds. He had no pity for humankind, angered against all the shades.

The River Styx features prominently in both passages (*Met.* 4.434, 437; *Theb.* 8.4),<sup>26</sup> while the wan inhabitants of Statius' underworld (*pallentibus umbris*, *Theb.* 8.1; cf. *manes*, 8.3, *umbris*, 8.23) derive their pallor from the ghostly paleness of the Ovidian underworld (*pallor*, *Met.* 4.436; cf. *manes*, 4.437, *umbrae*, *Met.* 4.443).<sup>27</sup> Also prominent in

<sup>26</sup> The Styx is conspicuously absent from the entrance to the Virgilian Underworld (*Aen.* 6.264–97), first appearing at 6.323 where it supplements the Cocytus (6.297, 323).

<sup>27</sup> Vergil notes the lack of colour in the underworld (*rebus nox abstulit atra colorem*, *Aen.* 6.271) and some of its inhabitants (*pallentesque habitant Morbi*,

both passages is the House of Dis, which stands as a fixed point of reference in the “realm” or “city” of the dead (*infernas ... sedes*, *Met.* 4.433; *urbs*, *Met.* 4.437, 440; cf. *letiferasque domos regisque arcana sepulti*, *Theb.* 8.2), both in Ovid’s references to the “dread palace of black Dis” (*nigri fera regia Ditis*, *Met.* 4.438) and the “halls of the underworld tyrant” (*imi tecta tyranni*, *Met.* 4.444), as well as in Statius’ climactic portrait of the ruler dispensing fearsome justice to his unhappy subjects (*Theb.* 8.21–22; cf. Suet. *Dom.* 8 on Domitian’s scrupulous performance of his judicial responsibilities).

By locating not only the route to hell but also the palace of Dis in such close proximity to Thebes, Statius both acknowledges the overarching debt of his *Thebaid* to Ovid’s Theban narrative and particularly underlines the thematic connection between Thebes and the underworld, first broached in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, where Juno traverses the road to hell in order to punish Cadmus’ Theban dynasty (*Met.* 4.447–48). Moreover, the city of Rome may also be implicated in this thematic nexus in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, since the underworld is here represented as a city (*urbs*, 4.437, 440) with strikingly Roman features, including a forum (4.444), city-gates (*portas*, 4.439), and ruler’s palace (*regia Ditis*, 4.438; *tecta tyranni*, 444).<sup>28</sup> In the *Metamorphoses*, hell is thus envisaged as a Roman city, perhaps Rome itself, with close relations to Thebes. Lucan elaborates the identification of Thebes with Rome in the *Bellum Civile*, where he portrays Thebes as a dystopic political model for Rome (*BC* 1.550–52, 4.549–51),<sup>29</sup> although without the architectural ecphrases of Ovid and Statius, and the implication may also be felt in Statius’ description of the underworld ruler dispensing justice in his palace, surrounded by his infernal courtiers, the allegorical figures of Furies, Deaths, and Punishment (*stant Furiae circum uariaeque ex ordine Mortes, | saeuaque multisonas exertat Poena catenas*, *Theb.* 8.24–25).

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*Aen.* 6.275), but *pallor* is not a controlling image in his description of the underworld and no form of the root *pallor* appears again until 6.480 (*Adrasti pallentis imago*).

<sup>28</sup> Ovid’s urban underworld stands in striking contrast to Vergil’s, which figures as an uninhabited labyrinthine landscape and is compared to a moon-lit forest: *ibant obscuro sub nocte per umbram | perque domos Ditis uacuas et inania regna | quale per incertam lunam sub luce maligna | est iter in siluis* (“they move forward unclearly in the lonely night through the shade, the empty halls and realm of the underworld prince, just as though through uncertain moonlight under an ill light, there is a path in a forest,” 6.268–71). On Vergil’s Labyrinthine underworld, see Fitzgerald 1984 and Miller 1995, with further bibliography.

<sup>29</sup> Braund 2006.

The ecphrastic phraseology with which Ovid's description of the underworld opens (*est uia decliuis*, 4.432) invites further comparison with the opening of his detailed topography of Olympus in the first book of the *Metamorphoses* (1.168–69): *est uia sublimis, caelo manifesta sereno; | Lactea nomen habet, candore notabilis ipso* (“there is an upward path visible in the clear sky; it has the name ‘Milky’ and is known for its brilliance”), a passage whose importance for Statius' epic I discuss below in connection with the Council of the Gods in *Thebaid* 1. The parallels between the Ovidian passages extend beyond the opening syntax to the inclusion of anachronistic descriptions of the ruler's palace and a detailed urban topography (*Met.* 1.170–76):

hac iter est superis ad magni tecta Tonantis  
regalem domum. dextra laeuaque deorum  
atria nobilium ualuis celebrantur apertis.  
plebs habitat diuersa locis; hac parte potentes  
caelicolae clarique suos posuere Penates.  
hic locus est quem, si uerbis audacia detur,  
haud timeam magni dixisse Palatia caeli.

By this road the gods journey to the halls of the great Thunderer, his royal palace. Right and left the reception halls of the noble gods are thronged, their doors open. The common folk dwell in different places; in this part the powerful and illustrious heaven-dwellers have established their household gods. Here is the place which, if boldness be granted my words, I would not fear to call the Palatine of great heaven.

Of special interest is Ovid's explicit invitation to read both the architecture and the topography of heaven in terms appropriate to contemporary Rome. Thus the royal dwelling of Jupiter *Tonans* (“the Thunderer”) is both an imperial palace (1.171) and a god's temple (1.170), while the celestial aristocracy inhabit atrium-houses featuring double-doors (1.172) and establish their own household gods (*Penates*, 1.174) in the “Palatine” of heaven from which the “Plebeian” gods are excluded (1.173). Ovid confirms the invitation to read the passage in contemporary Roman political terms, and perhaps in the emergent terms of imperial cult, at two later points in the first book, comparing the gods' outrage at Lycaon's impious attack on Jupiter to contemporary Romans' outrage at plots against Augustus' life (*Met.* 1.200–205) and making explicit reference to Augustus' display of triumphal laurel (with its Apolline associations), along with the civic crown of oak, on the doors of his Palatine house (*Met.* 1.560–63).<sup>30</sup> Given the close verbal and situational

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<sup>30</sup> Augustus records a senatorial decree of January 27 BCE authorizing him to decorate his doors with laurel and oak in recognition of his having saved the lives of citizens: *RG* 6.16, D.C. 53.16.4; cf. *Ov. Ars* 3.389 (*laurigero sacrata Palatia Phoebos*) and *F.* 4.953–54 (*state Palatinae laurus, praetextaque quercu | stet*

parallels between Ovid's descriptions of heaven and hell, we would do well to acknowledge the (more muted) contemporary Roman resonances of his underworld, in which the ruler's temple-palace is also described in terminology drawn from both imperial domestic and divine temple architecture (*regia Ditis*, 4.438 ~ *regalem domum*, 1.171; *imi tecta tyranni*, 4.444 ~ *magni tecta Tonantis*, 1.170).

Another significant strand, essentially political, in Statius' reception of Ovid's Theban domestic settings, can be discerned in the anachronistically Roman militaristic cast with which the Flavian poet endows the audience chambers of Cadmus' halls.<sup>31</sup> Statius denies that the primitive Theban palace displays the architectural refinements and luxury products characteristic of contemporary imperial palaces (Stat. *Theb.* 1.144–51):

et nondum crasso laquearia fulua metallo  
montibus aut alte Graias effulta nitebant  
atria, congestos satis explicitura clientes;  
non impacatis regum aduigilantia somnis  
pila, nec alterna † ferri statione gementes †<sup>32</sup>  
excubiae, nec cura mero committere gemmas  
atque aurum uiolare cibis: sed nuda potestas  
armauit fratres, pugna est de paupere regno.

And not yet did panelled ceiling shine golden with thick metal or lofty halls propped upon Greek marble, with space to spread assembled clients. There were no spears watching over the restless slumbers of monarchs nor steel-bearing (?) guards standing in alternate station, nor were they at pains to trust jewels to wine and pollute gold with victuals: naked power armed the brethren, their fight is for a pauper crown.

The Flavian poet's cynical observation that old Thebes lacked a house "with space to spread assembled clients" (1.146) suggests a contrast with Ovid's anachronistic description of the palaces of the gods of higher rank, "thronged with clients through folding doors flung wide" (*Met.* 1.172, quoted above). Yet Statius' description of the Theban royal palace in the following book hints at an anachronistic similarity to Domitian's court in at least two respects (*Theb.* 2.383–85): ... *et arces | intrat Agenoreas. ibi durum Eteoclea cernit | sublimem solio saeptumque*

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*domus*). On Ovid's interest in contemporary Augustan architectural projects, see Bömer 1969: 79–81 *ad Met.* 1.172ff., 236 *ad Met.* 2.1–2; and now Boyle 2003.

<sup>31</sup> For contemporary political resonances in Statius' *Thebaid* see Dominik 1994; McGuire 1989 and 1997; Ripoll 1998; and Braund 2006; in the *Silvae*, see Coleman 1988 and Newlands 2002b.

<sup>32</sup> On the textual problem, see Shackleton Bailey 2003: 1.50, with further bibliography.

*horrentibus armis* (“Tydeus enters Agenor’s citadel. There he sees harsh Eteocles aloft on his throne, fenced with bristling lances”). Eteocles’ authority anticipates that of the ruler of the underworld in *Thebaid* 8, who dispenses justice to his unhappy citizens (8.21–23, quoted above). The display of military force and the lofty position from which Eteocles presides (as Dis will later in the poem) can be paralleled in Roman literary accounts of contemporary imperial despotism. Juvenal, for example, comments sarcastically of Domitian’s advisor Q. Vibius Crispus, thrice-consul and governor of Africa, that his circumspection provided him with the “weapons” that enabled him to survive to a ripe old age in the imperial court (Juv. 4.93): *his armis illa quoque tutus in aula* (“with these weapons, he was safe even in that court”).<sup>33</sup> The undertone of menace in Juvenal’s depiction of Domitian’s summary dismissal and summons of the imperial council is also striking (Juv. 4.144–46): *surgitur et misso proceres exire iubentur | consilio, quos Albanam dux magnus in arcem | traxerat attonitos et festinare coactos* (“Domitian rises, dismissing the Council, and the leading men, whom the great leader had dragged to his Alban citadel shaken and forced to hurry, are bidden depart”).

Eteocles explicitly contrasts the poverty of his household with the luxury of the palace at Argos, where his brother Polynices has settled after marrying Argia, the daughter of the Argive king Adrastus (*Theb.* 2.430–42):

te penes Inachiae dotalis regia dono  
 coniugis, et Danaae (quid enim maioribus actis  
 inuideam?) cumulentur opes. felicibus Argos  
 auspiciis Lernamque regas: nos horrida Dirces  
 pascua et Euboicis artatas fluctibus oras,  
 non indignati miserum dixisse parentem  
 Oedipoden: tibi larga (Pelops et Tantalus auctor)  
 nobilitas, propiorque fluat de sanguine iuncto  
 Iuppiter. anne feret luxu consueta paterno  
 hunc regina larem? nostrae cui iure sorores  
 anxia pensa trahant, longo quam sordida luctu  
 mater et ex imis auditus forte tenebris  
 offendat sacer ille senex ...

To you belongs dotal kingship by gift of your Inachian bride. Let Danaë’s riches pile high—for why should I be jealous of a greater career? Rule Argos and Lerna with happy auspices, while I keep Dirce’s rough pastures and the shores narrowed by Euboea’s waves, not disdain to call poor Oedipus my father. Yours be generous nobility—Pelops and Tantalus your ancestors—with Jupiter flowing closer from

<sup>33</sup> Braund 1996: 255 comments *ad loc.* that *aula* is often used “in contexts of danger and despotism, e.g. Tac. *Hist.* 1.7. *eadem ... nouae aulae mala.*”

allied blood. Will the queen accustomed to her father's luxury endure a home like this?—where our sisters would in duty spin anxious threads for her, where our mother, unkempt in long mourning, and that accursed ancient, heard by chance from the depths of darkness, would offend her?

Eteocles emphasizes the poverty of both his kingdom and his household through references to untamed nature (2.433–34) and the metonymy of a single household god (*Iarem*, 2.439) in conjunction with the dreary domestic activities of his sisters (dutiful spinning) and parents (Jocasta's laments and Oedipus' curses). His characterization of Adrastus' palace as a setting of luxury, by contrast, is borne out by Statius' description of the Argive king's palace in the opening book (*Theb.* 1.514–21, 1.524–26):

... adolere focos epulasque recentes  
 instaurare iubet. dictis parere ministri  
 certatim accelerant; uario strepit icta tumultu  
 regia: pars ostro tenues auroque sonantes  
 emunire toros alteque inferre tapetas,  
 pars teretes leuare manu ac disponere mensas.  
 ast alii tenebras et opacam uincere noctem  
 aggressi tendunt auratis uincola lychnis.  
 .....  
 ... laetatur Adrastus  
 obsequio feruere domum, iamque ipse superbis  
 fulgebat stratis solioque effultus eburno.

Adrastus gives order to rouse the fires and renew the recent feast. The servants hasten in rivalry to obey his word. The royal abode hums with various bustle. Some furnish the couches with fine-spun purples and rustling gold, piling high the cushions, some polish the round tables and set them in place. Yet others essay to overcome dark night's shades, stretching chains with gilded lamps. ... Adrastus delights in the seething activity of his household, and now himself glows propped up on proud draperies and ivory throne.

The splendour of Adrastus' palace in luxury of decoration and opulence of food evokes the splendour of Domitian's new imperial residence on the Palatine and the banquets the *princeps* gave there (commemorated by Statius in *Silvae* 4.2).<sup>34</sup> This description of the hospitality offered by Adrastus to Polynices and Tydeus, as potential sons-in-law, is usually discussed in intertextual relation to Vergil's description of the reception of Aeneas and the Trojan survivors in Dido's palace in Carthage at the

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<sup>34</sup> See Coleman *ad Stat. Silv.* 4.2. Like Adrastus' palace, Domitian's imperial residence is richly decorated (*Silv.* 4.2.26–31; cf. *Theb.* 1.517–21) and like Adrastus, the emperor offers a banquet to his guests on a sacred occasion (*Silv.* 4.2.5–8, 16–18; cf. *Theb.* 1.154–55). Martial also celebrates the rich decoration of the new imperial residence in contemporary occasional poems (*Ep.* 7.56 and 8.36).

end of the first book of the *Aeneid* (Verg. *Aen.* 1.637–42, 697–706, 723–27) and indeed the verbal texture of Statius' passage adheres closely to the Vergilian model.<sup>35</sup>

But the passage also invites comparison with Ovid's description of the conjugal hospitality extended to the Argive hero Perseus by his father-in-law Cepheus after Perseus rescues Andromeda from the sea-monster in *Metamorphoses* 4, in both its luxury and its explicitly marital context (*Met.* 4.758–64):

... taedas Hymenaeus Amorque  
 praecutiunt, largis satiantur odoribus ignes,  
 sartaque dependent tectis et ubique lyraeque  
 tibique et cantus, animi felicia laeti  
 argumenta, sonant, reseratis aurea ualuis  
 atria tota patent, pulchroque instructa paratu  
 Cepheni proceres ineunt conuiuia regis.

Hymen and Love shake the marriage torch; the fires are fed full with incense rich and fragrant, garlands deck the dwellings, and everywhere lyre and flute and songs resound, blessed proofs of inward joy. The huge folding-doors swing back and reveal the great golden palace-hall with a rich banquet spread, where Cepheus' princely courtiers grace the feast.

Adrastus is already planning to marry his two guests, Polynices and Tydeus, off to his daughters (1.529–34), with lawful Venus (*iustae Veneri*, 1.531) and sacred modesty (*sacrum ... pudorem*, 1.531) presiding over the maidens' first meeting with the heroes, just as the wedding god Hymenaeus and Love himself preside over the marriage of Perseus and Andromeda in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (*Hymenaeus Amorque*, 4.758). After the ritual libation, moreover, the Argive household renews the festal worship of Phoebus Apollo with a description of domestic hospitality that recalls the nuptial celebrations of *Metamorphoses* 4 (*Theb.* 1.554–55): *cui festa dies largoque refectione | ture uaporatis lucent altaribus ignes* ("the holiday is Apollo's and it is for him the fires, revived by abundant incense, glow on the smoking altars").

Two other palace settings in Statius' *Thebaid* rework still more closely architectural ephrases in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in their elaboration of the earlier poet's allusions to contemporary Augustan building projects. In the first book of the *Thebaid*, Statius describes a council of the gods, whom Jupiter summons to his throne-room (*Theb.* 1.197–212):

At Iouis imperiis rapidi super atria caeli  
 lectus concilio diuum conuenerat ordo

<sup>35</sup> For the reception of Vergil in Statius, see Gossage 1959; Mozley 1963–64; Kytzler 1969; Vessey 1973; Hardie 1989 and 1993; Frings 1991; and Ganiban 2007.

interiore polo. spatii hinc omnia iuxta,  
 primaecque occiduaeque domus et fusa sub omni 200  
terra atque unda die. mediis sese arduus infert  
 ipse deis, placido quatiens tamen omnia uultu,  
 stellantique locat solio; nec protinus ausi  
**caelicolae**, ueniam donec pater ipse **sedendi**  
tranquilla iubet esse manu. mox turba uagorum 205  
**semideum** et summis cognati Nubibus Amnes  
 et **compressa** metu seruantes **murmura** Venti  
**aurea** tecta replent. **mixta** conuexa **deorum**  
**maiestate** tremunt, **radiant** maiore **sereno**  
culmina et arcano florentes lumine postes. 210  
 postquam iussa quies siluitque exterritus orbis,  
 incipit ex alto ...

Now at Jove's decree the chosen hierarchy of the gods had assembled in council in the hall of the whirling firmament, at the sky's centre. From this point all is at close distance, the halls of rising and setting, land and sea spread out under every heaven. He himself proceeds towering through the midst of the deities, making all things quake though his countenance be serene, and places himself on his starry throne. Nor dare heaven's denizens follow suit straightway, but wait until the father himself with tranquil gesture orders license to be seated. Presently a crowd of wandering demigods and Rivers kin to the lofty Clouds and Winds keeping their roars under fear's restraint fill the golden edifice. The dome trembles with the mingled majesty of the deities, the towers shine in a larger blue, and the portals bloom with a mystic light. Silence was ordered and mute in terror fell the world. From on high he begins.

This passage closely rehearses the Council of the Gods summoned by Jupiter in the first book of the *Metamorphoses* (I.170–76, quoted above), which has been interpreted as a “parody of an imperial council presided over by Augustus.”<sup>36</sup> Ovid prefaces his description of Olympian topography with a line reporting Jupiter's summons of the Gods to Council (*conciliumque uocat*, *Met.* I.167) that Statius reworks at the outset of his description (*Theb.* I.198). Moreover, as we have seen, Ovid indulges in the same self-conscious anachronism of architectural and topographical detail that informs Statius' description of heaven. Thus the Ovidian gods (*caelicolae*, *Met.* I.174; cf. *Theb.* I.204) dwell in atrium-houses (*Met.* I.172; cf. *Theb.* I.197) on the Palatine of heaven (*Met.* I.176), where Jupiter follows Augustus' precedent in summoning a meeting of the senate to his own home (*hac iter est superis ad magni tecta Tonantis | regalemque domum*, *Met.* I.170–71).<sup>37</sup> The Ovidian Jupiter takes his

<sup>36</sup> Dominik 1994: 164. He observes (7–8), though without detailed discussion, Statius' debt to Ovid and notes contemporary Flavian resonances in Statius' redaction in *Theb.* I of Ovid's Divine Council.

<sup>37</sup> Under Augustus the Senate often met in the library associated with the



seat in Council on a lofty throne (*ergo ubi marmoreo superi sedere recessu*, | *celsior ipse loco*, *Met.* 1.177–78; cf. *Theb.* 1.203, 212) and arrives among the assembled company bearing a countenance that shakes the world (*terrificam capitis concussit terque quaterque* | *caesariem, cum qua terram mare sidera mouit*, *Met.* 1.179–80; cf. *Theb.* 1.1.202). The Ovidian gods even throng (*celebrantur*, *Met.* 1.172) the palaces of heaven just as Statius' lesser gods fill (*replent*, *Theb.* 1.208) Jove's golden audience chamber. The rich splendour of the Statian Jove's divine court (*Theb.* 1.208–10) also recalls the brilliant marble halls of the Ovidian Jupiter's palace (quoted above, *Met.* 1.177) and the ivory sceptre that marks his authority (*sceptroque innixus eburno*, *Met.* 1.178). Ovid's Jupiter wields his authority as autocratically as Statius', commanding silence with word and hand (*postquam uoce manuque* | *murmura compressit, tenere silentia cuncti. | substitit ut clamor pressus grauitate regentis*, *Met.* 1.205–6; cf. *Theb.* 1.205, 207, 211). Statius mischievously signals his independence from Ovid (in an otherwise close reworking of the passage) by his inclusion of the *semidei* in attendance at the council (*Theb.* 1.206), since the Ovidian Jupiter is particularly concerned to protect their interests in his address to the gods—even though he does not deem them worthy of heaven (*Met.* 1.192–95).<sup>38</sup>

In addition to these allusions to Augustus' building programme on the Palatine in Ovid's Divine Council and their contemporary panegyric political overtones in the narrative setting of this scene, Statius owes a conceptual debt to two other Ovidian architectural descriptions. The golden radiance of Statius' divine council chambers recalls the richness of the façade and interior decoration of the Ovidian Palace of the Sun (*Met.* 2.1–7):

Regia Solis erat sublimibus alta columnis,  
 clara micante auro flammisque imitante pyropo,  
 cuius ebur nitidum fastigia summa tegebat,  
 argenti bifores radiabant lumine valvae.  
 materiam superabat opus: nam Mulciber illic  
 aequora caelarat medias cingentia terras

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Temple of Apollo Palatinus (D.C. 53.1.3; Suet. *Aug.* 29.3), which adjoined the house of the *princeps*. It has also been suggested that a statue of Augustus “with all the insignia of Apollo” (*cum Apollinis cunctis insignibus*, Serv. *ad Buc.* 4.10; cf. Schol. *ad Hor. Ep.* 1.3.17) was included amongst the portraits of literary men in the Palatine Library.

<sup>38</sup> *sunt mihi semidei, sunt rustica numina nymphae* | *Faunisque Satyrique et monticolae Siluani*; | *quos, quoniam caeli nondum dignamur honore, | quas dedimus certe terras habitare sinamus* (“I have demigods, rustic divinities, nymphs, fauns and satyrs, and sylvan deities upon the mountain-slopes. Since we do not yet esteem them worthy the honour of a place in heaven, let us at least allow them to dwell in safety in the lands allotted them”).

terrarumque orbem caelumque, quod imminet orbi.

The palace of the Sun was raised high on lofty columns, bright with flashing gold and bronze imitating flames, whose high gables were tiled in glowing ivory; the folding double doors gleamed with a silver radiance. The craftsmanship outstripped these materials: for Vulcan had there engraved the sea encircling the lands in their midst, the globe of lands and heaven which hangs over the world.

The ecphrasis of the Palace of the Sun has often been interpreted as a poetic meditation on the temple to Apollo built by Augustus to be contiguous with his own residence on the Palatine and which, according to Propertius, featured a statue of Helios in a chariot on the roof (*in quo Solis erat supra fastigia currus*, 2.31.11).<sup>39</sup> Moreover Ovid's description of Phaethon's awe at the sight of the temple and its owner not only suggests the overwhelming magnificence of the temple of Apollo Palatinus, "universally admired as the most sumptuous and magnificent of all early Augustan buildings,"<sup>40</sup> but may also evoke the splendour of an audience with the *princeps* (*Met.* 2.19–24):

Quo simul acclui Clymeneia limite proles  
uenit et intrauit dubitati tecta parentis,  
protinus ad patrios uertit uestigia uultus  
consistitque procul; neque enim propiora ferebat  
lumina. Purpurea uelatus ueste **sedebat**  
in **solio** Phoebus claris lucente smaragdis.

Now when Clymene's son had climbed the steep path which leads thither, and had come beneath the roof of his sire whose fatherhood had been questioned, straightway he turned to his father's face, but halted some little space away; for he could not bear the radiance at a nearer view. Clad in a purple robe, Phoebus sat on his throne gleaming with brilliant emeralds.

Statius too, Dominik suggests, implies in "the resignation of deities ... to the all-powerful Jupiter on Olympus ... the pusillanimous submission of the Senators to the autocratic Julio-Claudian and Flavian emperors in the Senate house as described in Tacitus and other writers."<sup>41</sup> The sug-

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<sup>39</sup> See Bömer 1969: 236 *ad loc.*; Boyle 2003 does not discuss the passage in connection with the temple of Apollo Palatinus although he notes Augustus' close association with the god. Suetonius records the outrage that greeted the report of a "banquet of the twelve Olympians" during the famine caused by Sextus Pompey's naval blockade of Italy, to which Octavian came as Apollo (*Aug.* 70).

<sup>40</sup> Richardson 1992: 14.

<sup>41</sup> Dominik 1994: 164. In his view, "the scene may well have evoked a typical reminiscence of an assembly chaired by Domitian" and, indeed, there are striking points of resonance with the caustic portrait of a Domitianic Council Juvenal provides in *Satire* 4.

gestion is all the more compelling when we recall the proliferation of contemporary references to Domitian as Jupiter on earth.<sup>42</sup>

A final Ovidian architectural model for Statius' divine council chamber is provided by the House of Fama in *Metamorphoses* 12, which is located, like Statius' "celestial halls," at the centre of the universe (12.39–55):

orbe locus <b>medio</b> est inter <u>terrasque fretumque</u>	
caelestesque plagas, triplicis confinia mundi;	40
unde quod est usquam, quamuis regionibus absit,	
inspicitur, penetratque cauas uox omnis ad aures:	
Fama tenet summaque domum sibi legit in arce,	
innumerosque aditus ac mille foramina tectis	
addidit et nullis inclusit <u>limina portis</u> ;	45
nocte dieque patet: tota est ex aere sonanti,	
tota fremit uocesque refert iteratque quod audit;	
nulla quies intus nullaque silentia parte,	
nec tamen est clamor, sed paruae <b>murmura uocis</b> ,	
qualia de pelagi, siquis procul audiat, undis	50
esse solent, qualemue sonum, cum Iuppiter atras	
inrepuuit nubes, extrema tonitrua reddunt.	
<u>atria turba tenet</u> : ueniunt, leue uulgus, euntque	
<b>mixta</b> que cum ueris passim commenta uagantur	
milia rumorum confusaque uerba uolutant;	55

There is a place in the middle of the world, between land and sea and sky, the meeting-point of the three-fold universe. From this place, whatever is, however far away, is seen, and every word penetrates to these hollow ears. Rumour dwells here, having chosen her house upon a high mountain-top; and she gave the house countless entrances, a thousand apertures, but with no doors to close them. Night and day the house stands open. It is built all of echoing brass. The whole place resounds with confused noise, repeats all words and doubles what it hears. There is no quiet, no silence anywhere within. And yet there is no loud clamour, but only the subdued murmur of voices, like the murmur of the waves of the sea if you listen afar off, or like the last rumblings of thunder when Jove has made the dark clouds crash together. Crowds fill the hall, shifting throngs come and go, and everywhere wander thousands of rumours, falsehoods mingled with the truth, and confused reports flit about.

Like the Ovidian House of Fama, Statius' divine council chambers are set in proximity to all (*Theb.* 1.199; cf. *Met.* 12.42) and give easy access to land, sea, and sky (*Theb.* 1.200–1; cf. *Met.* 12.39–41). Both divine chambers echo with conversation (*murmura*, *Met.* 12.49, *Theb.* 1.207) when

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<sup>42</sup> Mart. 5.1, 6.10, 6.83, 7.99, 9.39.1 (*Palatinus ... Tonans*), 9.91.6 (*me meus in terris Iuppiter ecce tenet*); Stat. *Silv.* 1.1.39–40, 4.2.20–22. For the conflation of Augustus with Jupiter, see already Hor. *C.* 3.5.1–4 and Ov. *Met.* 1.204–5 (discussed above).

thronged with crowds (*Met.* 12.53–4, *Theb.* 1.208), though Statius' Jupiter can command the silence (*quies*, *Theb.* 1.211) that Ovid's House of Fama is designed not to offer (*Met.* 12.48).<sup>43</sup>

The final built-form we may consider in Statius' *Thebaid* is the Temple of Mars, to which Jupiter sends Mercury at the opening of the seventh book of the *Thebaid* in order to rouse the war-god from his torpor and revive the epic narrative. Statius describes the god's house from the aerial perspective of Mercury (*Theb.* 7.40–63):

hic steriles delubra notat Mauortia siluas  
 horrescitque tuens, ubi mille Furoribus illi  
 cingitur auerso domus immansueta sub Haemo.  
 ferrea compago laterum, ferro apta teruntur  
 limina, ferratis incumbunt tecta columnis.  
 laeditur aduersum Phoebi iubar, ipsaque sedem  
 lux timet, et durus contristat sidera fulgor.  
 digna loco statio: primis salit Impetus amens  
 e foribus caecumque Nefas Iraeque rubentes  
 exsanguisque Metus, occultisque ensibus astant  
 Insidiae geminumque tenens Discordia ferrum.  
 innumeris strepit aula Minis, tristissima Virtus  
 stat medio, laetusque Furor uultuque cruento  
 Mors armata sedet; bellorum solus in aris  
 sanguis et incensis qui raptus ab urbibus ignis.  
 terrarum exuuiæ circum et fastigia templi  
 captae insignibant gentes: caelataque ferro  
 fragmina portarum bellatricesque carinae  
 et uacui currus protritaque curribus ora,  
 paene etiam gemitus: adeo uis omnis et omne

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<sup>43</sup> In addition to these several Ovidian models, Statius seems to have drawn inspiration for the *Thebaid's* first divine council from his attendance at the imperial banquet in the new palace recorded in *Silvae* 4.2. In this poem he implicitly likens Domitian to Jupiter and the imperial palace to the god's celestial dwelling (*medius uideor discumbere in astris | cum Ioue*, 4.2.10–11), in a description that recalls Jupiter's council chambers in the opening book of the *Thebaid* (1.197–99, quoted above) and comments on the god's astonished gaze from his neighbouring temple on the Capitoline hill (*stupet hoc uicina Tonantis | regia*, *Silv.* 4.2.20–21). Like Jupiter's celestial council chambers (*Theb.* 1.208–10, quoted above), Domitian's palace is thronged with guests (*Silv.* 4.2.32–33) and, "embracing much of heaven within its shelter" (*multumque amplexus aperti | aetheros*, *Silv.* 4.2.24–25), seems to have as its roof "the gilded ceiling of heaven" (*fessis uix culmina prendas | uisibus auratique putes laquearia caeli*, *Silv.* 4.2.30–31). On Stat. *Silv.* 4.2 see Vessey 1983; Coleman 1988; and Malamud 2001. For the celestial height of the imperial palace, cf. *Mart. Ep.* 8.36.7–8, 10–11: *aethera sic intrat nitidis ut conditus astris | inferiore tonet nube serenus apex | ... | Haec, Auguste, tamen, quae uertice sidera pulsat, | par domus est caelo sed minor est domino*. For the actual roofing materials of the triclinium of the *domus Flavia*, see Gibson, DeLaine, and Claridge 1994 and Darwall-Smith 1996: 193–199.

uulnus. ubique ipsum, sed non usquam ore remisso  
cernere erat:<sup>44</sup> talem diuina Mulciber arte  
ediderat; nondum radiis monstratus adulter  
foeda catenato luerat conubia lecto.

Here he marks barren woods, Mars' shrine, and shudders as he looks. There under distant Haemus is the god's ungentle house, girt with a thousand Rages. The sides are of iron structure, the trodden thresholds are fitted with iron, the roof rests on iron-bound pillars. Phoebus' opposing ray takes hurt, the very light fears the dwelling and a harsh glare glooms the stars. The guard is worthy of the place. Wild Impulse leaps from the outer gates and blind Evil and ruddy Angers and bloodless Fears. Treachery lurks with hidden swords and Strife holding two-edged steel. The court resounds with countless Threats, Valour most somber stands in the centre, and joyful Rage and armed Death with bloodstained countenance there sit. On the altars in blood of wars, that only, and fire snatched from burning towns. Trophies from many lands and captured peoples marked the temple's sides and top and fragments of iron-wrought gates and warship keels and empty chariots and heads by chariots crushed, groans too almost. Every violence truly, every wound. Everywhere himself to be seen, but nowhere with easy look; thus had Mulciber portrayed him with his divine art. Not yet had he been revealed an adulterer by sunbeams and expiated a shameful union in a chained bed.

Statius' description of the Palace of Mars has been much discussed and his literary debts to Homer, Vergil, and Valerius Flaccus in this passage minutely examined.<sup>45</sup> Another important epic model for Statius' ecphrasis, however, is Ovid's description of the Palace of the Sun (*Met.* 2.1–7, quoted above). Ovid there anticipates Statius in his combinatorial allusion<sup>46</sup> to Homer's glittering palace of Alcinous (*Od.* 7.84–97) and the Vergilian temple in which Latinus receives the Trojan embassy (*Aen.* 7.170–92). While the Statian Mars' palace is constructed of iron — appropriately the metal of military weaponry—and so darkens the landscape in which it is set, however, the Ovidian Sun's palace gives off

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<sup>44</sup> Contrast Domitian in *Silv.* 4.2.46–47, where the conqueror of Germany relaxes *non aliter gelida Rhodopes in ualle recumbit | dimissis Gradius equis* (“not otherwise than Mars Gradivus in Rhodope's cool valley having dismissed his horses”). M. Dewar wonders if we can see, in the confrontation of the two passages (*Theb.* 7.40–63 and *Silv.* 4.2.46–47), Statius engaging directly with the Flavian programme of “peace” (instantiated architecturally in Vespasian's *templum Pacis*, inaugurated 75 CE) as a triumphant result of just war: *Pax* resides in the centre of (Flavian) Rome while Mars and the warfare in which he engages have been expelled to the very edges of the world, the remote regions where Domitian wins his victories. On the *templum Pacis*, see Darwall-Smith 1996: 55–68.

<sup>45</sup> See Smolenaars 1994: *ad loc.*, for commentary and further bibliography.

<sup>46</sup> On combinatorial allusion, see Hardie 1989.

a radiant glow that equally reflects the character of its owner. Statius implicitly signals his debt to the bright radiance of the Sun's palace in the Ovidian passage in his reference to the dull iron of the façade of Mars' palace (*Theb.* 7.45–6) that fears the rays of the Sun. He also follows Ovid in attributing to Mulciber the decoration of the war god's palace (*Theb.* 7.61; cf. *Met.* 2.5), an attribution that requires some explanation in Statius' poem (*Theb.* 7.62–3), where Mars is consistently linked with the Thebans through his daughter Harmonia (Cadmus' wife), the result of an adulterous affair with Venus.

The allegorical figures in attendance on Statius' Mars (*Theb.* 7.47–53)—*Impetus*, *Nefas Iraeque*, *Metus*, *Discordia*, *Minae*, and *Mors*, his traditional associates in ancient epic—also find their counterparts in the palace of the Ovidian Sun, a detail not present in the description of the Vergilian Latinus' palace (*Met.* 2.23–30):

... purpurea velatus veste sedebat  
 in solio Phoebus claris lucente smaragdis.  
 a dextra laevaue Dies et Mensis et Annus  
 Saeculaque et positae spatiis aequalibus Horae  
 Verque novum stabat cinctum florente corona,  
 stabat nuda Aestas et spiceaserta gerebat,  
 stabat et Autumnus calcatis sordidus uvis  
 et glacialis Hiems canos hirsuta capillos.

Phoebus, clad in a purple robe, was sitting on a throne shining with bright emeralds. On his right and left stood Day, Month, Year and Generation, while the Hours were stationed at equal distances from one another; in attendance stood new Spring girt with a flowering garland, naked Summer wearing garlands of wheat, Autumn all grimy with trampled grapes, and icy Winter, shaggy with white hair.

Ovid extends the technique of personification in his description of the Palace of the Sun to include both setting and attendants, just as Statius does in his description of the Palace of Mars. The Flavian poet exploits the conventional epic technique of describing the attendants of the war god through personification allegory (7.47–53),<sup>47</sup> but further extends the allegory into the very site of the war god's home by emphasizing the desolation of the palace's setting in Thrace (7.40–42, a description that again may remind us of the war-mongering Domitian's reclusive tendencies). The radiance of the Ovidian Sun's palace symbolizes the Sun's rays, while the iron of which Mars' palace is built (7.43–6) is also adapted to the Flavian poet's allegorical purpose: the Latin epic poets frequently employ the word *ferrum* by metonymy for sword, as Statius does in this passage (7.50). Statius' Mars thus becomes the very personi-

<sup>47</sup> On allegory in Statius see Lewis 1936: 48–56, and especially 50–52 on Mars. He does not note Statius' debt to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

fication of war while traces of his characteristic activity litter the landscape (7.53–60). Even the narrative progression of Staius' passage may be derived from the Ovidian model, for Ovid's ecphrasis follows the arrival of Phaethon at the Sun's palace at the Eastern ends of the earth, while Staius' description of the Palace of Mars follows the arrival of Mercury at Mars' temple in the northern wilds of Thrace.

The convergences between Domitian's contemporary architectural and decorative practice and Staius' description of the royal palace of Cadmus at Thebes and the Temple of Mars also demand closer scrutiny. The temple of Mars—located in the northern wastes of Thrace (Mars' traditional home)—invites comparison with Domitian's military exploits in Germany, where he campaigned successfully against the Chatti in 83 CE, and in Dacia (Romania), where he campaigned less so in 85–87 CE (concluding a peace treaty in 89 CE after two defeats). While we know of no temple of Mars built by Domitian, his extensive temple-building for Jupiter and Minerva may in itself have afforded considerable scope for martial celebration, since their iconography included Jupiter's thunderbolt and spear (appropriated by Domitian on coins from 85 CE on),<sup>48</sup> and Minerva's shield, spear, helmet, and Gorgon-breastplate.

In addition, two anecdotes can be fruitfully brought into contact with Staius' description of the Palace of Mars. Towards the end of his reign, Suetonius says that Domitian hung mirrors of phengite, a hard white translucent stone described as similar to obsidian (Pliny, *Nat.* 36.136, 196), "in order to see in its brilliant surface the reflection of all that went on behind his back" (*tempore uero suspecti periculi appropinquante sollicitior in dies porticum, in quibus spatiari consu-erat, parietes phengite lapide distinxit, e cuius splendore per imagines quidquid a tergo fieret prouideret, Dom.* 14.4). A similarly sombre, not to say morbid, taste on the emperor's part is evidenced in Dio's account of a dinner party he gave, the famous "black banquet" (67.9.1–5):

Domitian prepared a room that was pitch black on every side, ceiling, walls and floor, and had made ready bare couches of the same colour resting on the uncovered floor; then he invited in his guests alone at night without their attendants. And first he set beside each of them a slab shaped like a gravestone, bearing the guest's name and also a small lamp, such as hang in tombs. Next comely naked boys, likewise painted black, entered like phantoms, and after encircling the guests in an awe-inspiring dance took up their stations at their feet. After this all the things that are commonly offered at the sacrifices to departed spirits were likewise set before the guests, all of them black and in dishes of a similar colour. Consequently, every single one of the guests feared and

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<sup>48</sup> Darwall-Smith 1996: 34.

trembled and was kept in constant expectation of having his throat cut the next moment.<sup>49</sup>

After sending his guests home (alive), he presented them with the place-markers that turned out to be made of solid silver. The deathly hues of this banquet resonate eerily not only with the Statian Mars' somber palace, but also with the House of Cadmus at Thebes and indeed the Palace of Dis in Hell, all of which put on terrifying display the symbols of death and the underworld.

This study of architectural ecphrases in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Statius' *Thebaid* has uncovered numerous points of contact in the linguistic registers of the two poems, with important implications for the thematic and political interpretation of both epics. Particularly striking is Ovid's anachronistic representation of the topography and architecture of Olympus and the underworld in contemporary Roman guise and Statius' adaptation of this anachronistically Roman heaven and hell in his *Thebaid*. Like Ovid, Statius locates the underworld in close proximity to Thebes and portrays the king of the underworld as an emperor presiding over a contemporary urban landscape that features both Roman architecture and Roman justice. Both poets also draw on the luxury of contemporary imperial residences in their description of royal palaces such as those of Cepheus in *Metamorphoses* 5 and Adrastus in *Thebaid* 1. Statius' most extensive debt to Ovid in his descriptions of built forms and spatial usage, however, lies in his ecphrases of the gods' temple-palace complexes. Ovid's witty representation of Jupiter as Augustus in *Metamorphoses* 1, modeled in part on Augustus' close identification with Apollo in the Palatine complex, is closely reworked in panegyric mode by Statius in his portrait of a Domitianic Jupiter in the divine council of *Thebaid* 1. Even where Statius departs from Ovidian models, moreover, he signals a larger conceptual debt to the earlier poet as, for example, when his Jupiter pointedly supersedes Ovid's by including the *semidei* as full participants in the divine council, even though the Ovidian Jupiter had deemed them as yet unworthy of heaven, and when his temple of Mars deflects the rays of the Sun even as it reverses the themes and imagery of Ovid's palace of the Sun. Throughout the *Thebaid*, Statius accommodates his architectural ecphrases to the thematic demands of his narrative while simultaneously refracting the richness and careful attention to detail of contemporary imperial building projects. Ovid provides an instructive model

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<sup>49</sup> Cary 1925: 335–337.



for both practices in the *Metamorphoses*.<sup>50</sup>

DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICS  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO  
TORONTO, ON M5S 2C7

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