MYTH, LITERATURE, AND THE CREATION OF THE TOPOGRAPHY OF THEBES

How does a city's legendary past affect its present? Thebes remains a city with one of the richest traditions of myth and legend in all of Greece – it was the home of Cadmus, Oedipus, and Hercules, and the traditional birthplace of Dionysus. The city's topography, both natural and built, very often played a significant role in its myths. By focusing on Greek literature ranging from the oral epics to the travel writing of the Roman Empire, this book explores the relationship between the city's spaces as they were represented in the Greek literary tradition and the physical realities of a developing city that had been continuously inhabited since at least the second millennium BC. Spurred on especially by the city's catastrophic sack by Alexander the Great in 335 BC, the urban topography of Thebes came more and more to reflect the literary, even fictional, constructions of its mythic past.

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Acknowledgments

This book grew from my thinking about a portion of my earlier work on the walls of Thebes in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes*, and developed over a number of years of research, primarily in Philadelphia and State College, and travel in Greece and Italy. It is a pleasure to give thanks to the institutions and people whose marks the book bears in ways sometimes obvious and sometimes less so, and to acknowledge the places that influenced my thinking on topography and myth as my work progressed.

This is a book about a particular place, and as such it could not exist apart from a discourse with others working on Thebes and Boeotia. In this sense, I am deeply indebted to the fundamental work of Albert Schachter, whose dedication to Boeotia is the hallmark of his significant, and continuing, scholarship. His acute and helpful responses to much of what is in this book have strengthened it in ways that are impossible to quantify. Others who are working on Boeotian subjects have read or heard portions of the book and given helpful criticism: Stephanie Larson, Mark Munn, Angela Kühr, Fabienne Marchand, and others who have attended the quinquennial meetings of the Society of Boeotian Studies in Thebes and Levadia. And I owe thanks also to Vasilis Aravantinos, the former Ephor of Antiquities for the region of Boeotia, who has been more than generous, sharing many observations with me from his own work in Thebes as my book progressed. The work of Sarantis Symeonoglou has been crucial as well, even if differences of method and some results of those differences will be apparent below.

The book is also about poetry and myth, and on these subjects Claude Calame has offered his consistently perceptive comments and correctives. His scholarship on the poetics and performances of myth in Greece is always in my mind, and he has been an energetic reader of my work for long enough that thanking him is almost a matter of habit. I do so again, with as much genuine gratitude as always. Responsibility for the infelicities

that remain, some of which are, I am sure, the result of my heeding his advice less than I should, is of course all mine.

I began work on Theban city space while at Penn State. The Classics and Ancient Mediterranean Studies (CAMS) Department and the College of Liberal Arts there were generous with support for research and travel related to the book. I thank specifically the CAMS Department and colleagues Phil Baldi, Gary Knoppers, Stephen Wheeler, Garrett Fagan, Amanda Iacobelli (and, again, Mark Munn) for support and fruitful discussion on Theban and topographical matters. Daniel Mack, then reference librarian for Classics, also offered superb support. The project benefited greatly in its early stages from a fellowship at the Institute for the Arts and Humanities (IAH) at Penn State, then directed by Laura Knoppers, which offered me a semester of uninterrupted research to lay foundations, as it were, for the book to come. Also at Penn State I was aided by the research assistance of David Blumberg, who excelled as a research intern for me for a semester. I thank the College of Liberal Arts at Penn State for a sabbatical granted (though not in the end taken) for further work on this project, as well.

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Many audiences have heard portions of this work, at stages ranging from its very tentative beginnings to recitations of nearly complete excerpts. Especially productive discussions came out of presentations at the IAH at Penn State, a roundtable at Wellesley College organized by Nancy

Worman and Kate Gilhuly (thanks to Nancy and Kate, and Christopher Eckerman, Bryan Burns, Betsey Robinson, Alex Purves, Carol Dougherty, and Tim Rood for discussion at that pleasant weekend), a 2006 AIA panel organized by Adam Rabinowitz and myself (here thanks especially to Richard Buxton, who offered an insightful and inspiring response for the panelists and the few attendees of this unfortunately scheduled panel), and another in 2009 on mythography organized by Stephen Trzaskoma and Scott Smith (Ulrike Kenens deserves special thanks for useful comments). Stephen and Scott's promotion of new work on mythography has motivated me to look in that direction more than I might have. I also thank the Classics Department at the University of Pennsylvania for inviting me to give a talk as part of their weekly Classics Colloquium, where lively and thoughtful discussion is the norm. Jeremy McInerney in particular posed questions that day that caused me to think again about some of my conclusions, and subsequent discussion with him has been most productive.

As my work was concluding, I had the great pleasure of spending a year in Rome as the Professor-in-Charge of the Intercollegiate Center for Classical Studies (ICCS). While there, the American Academy in Rome's library offered the perfect place for me to finish the initial manuscript, thanks to the Academy's generous policy of allowing ICCS faculty and students access to its lovely library on the Gianicolo. Intense exposure to the material culture of Italy was an inspiration as I finished the book, and though there is very little explicit discussion of Rome in the pages of what follows, the Urbs is there, present in my thinking about the importance of myth to the development of physical space. Rome offered me a perfect example of the development, the "creation" of the book's title, that I am trying to show in Thebes, and inspired me in ways both specific and intangible. My colleagues (Genevieve Gessert, Joel Ward, and Melanie Subacus) and the staff and students at ICCS (especially Director Francesco Sgariglia and Associate Director Giuseppina Vallefuoco) that year were all an inspiration. Their dedication to Classics, to Rome, and to intellectual curiosity in general sets an ideal I can only hope to approach.

Final touches on arguments and discussions were inspired by a most fulfilling conference in Bristol, "Greek Myths on the Map," organized by Greta Hawes and Jessica Priestley. Papers and discussion again with Richard Buxton and Jeremy McInerney, and also Robert Fowler, Maria Pretzler, Charles Delattre, and others showed me again how many people are thinking about landscape and myth and in what interesting ways they are doing so. I benefited especially from discussion with Greta Hawes on

the fine points of Theban topography as it is represented by Pausanias. She also deserves particular thanks for gently encouraging me to correct a few errors in discussions of Pausanias as the manuscript neared publication.

Some portions of this book may be familiar from earlier versions published elsewhere: the discussion here of the spring/river Dirce is developed from a 2007 article in *Greece & Rome* entitled "Dirce at Thebes," and that of Corinna draws upon my discussion in an article published in *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* in 2010, "The Landscape and Language of Korinna." The maps in Appendix II are mostly so old that the publishing houses are no longer in a position to be thanked, but I do so nonetheless, with special thanks to the two who did grant permission to reprint their more recently published maps, Princeton University Press and Cambridge University Press.

Michael Sharp at Cambridge University Press has seen this book through from its infancy, and his perceptive and careful advice has proved indispensable. I owe him thanks for seeing value in this project from its very beginnings. Elizabeth Hanlon and Elizabeth Davey, also at Cambridge have been responsive and helpful guiding the manuscript to publication.

It might be uncommon to thank places in a book's acknowledgments, but perhaps it can be forgiven in a book *about* a place. The past years I have lived and worked in Rome and Philadelphia, and both have left their imprint on this work. I was born in neither, but have lived long enough in both to appreciate the outsized role myth has played, and continues to play, in their construction and development as urban spaces. Writing this book on Thebes has intensified my appreciation of these two rich urban landscapes, and my experiences of these places have influenced the way I think about Thebes. All three are cities with robust foundation stories, and with deep and inseparable relationships with their myths. My discussions of Theban space are infused with a sense of these two other cities with brotherly love (in some form!) at their very core.

Lastly, it remains to thank my family, whose support has been steadfast. My parents have always encouraged me to do what I love – how else does one become a Classicist? – and I appreciate that even more deeply, and am more impressed by their commitment to that ideal, as I see my children grow and begin to develop interests of their own. My wife Lila's dedication to her own work is the best kind of motivation, but the way she balances it with the rest of a busy life is nothing short of inspiring. Our children Ella and Simon have taught me a great deal about learning, and about stories. I am grateful for their energy, curiosity, and tenacity. It is to them – τέκνα φίλα – that I dedicate this book.