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MYTHOGRAPHY OR HISTORIOGRAPHY? THE INTERPRETATION OF THEBAN MYTHS IN LATE MEDIAEVAL LITERATURE

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For Richard Hamilton Green

The modern term "classical myth" covers a range of legendary subjects which mediaeval writers commonly distinguished as *fabula* or *historia*; or, with the addition of a third term, as 1) things which could have happened and did happen (*historia*); 2) things which could have happened but did not (*argumentum*); and 3) things which could not have happened and did not happen, such as the preposterous high jinks of the pagan gods (*fabula*).[1] Though the mediaeval Latin word *historia* and the derivative loan-words in vernacular languages, such as Middle English "storie," do not correspond exactly to the meaning of Modern English "history," they stood always and clearly in contrast to *fabula*, which denoted a lie, a falsehood.

By the fourteenth century, writers were using this pair of terms with the informality accorded an unquestioned convention. In one well-known example, Chaucer's Physician remarks that the tale of Appius and Virginia "is no fable, / but knowen for historial thyng notable" (154-55); and in another, Boccaccio distinguishes the fabulous from the historical characters and events in Vergil's *Aeneid*, book 4 (*Genealogie* 14.13). Accounts of the "myths" of the ancient cities of Thebes and Troy often focussed on the question of fabulous and historical elements in the received sources: Guido delle Colonne, for one, sets it as his task to "separate the true from the false among the things which were written of [Trojan] history in Latin books,"[2] an assertion which John Lydgate translates and expands in the prologue to his *Troy Book*.

The term *historia* in this common pair, or triplet, of critical terms, raises an issue of some importance to the study of classical myth in mediaeval literature. Scholarly investigations in this field have generally identified their primary sources in commentaries on Roman poetry and their close relatives the mythographical treatises. However, with legendary materials that were considered wholly or partly *historia*, another kind of primary source must be taken into account as well, and that is the large body of historical writings or chronicles[3] which describe the events of antiquity. The mythographers themselves point us toward these sources. Boccaccio, for example, quotes no authority more often in his *Genealogie* than the *Chronicon* of Eusebius. Like other mythographers, Boccaccio turns to Eusebius for the chronology of events in various ancient kingdoms as well as for details of the legendary events themselves. Indeed, mythographers often introduce their subject with reference to its origins in the ancient world. Fulgentius and following him the Third Vatican Mythographer begin their treatises with accounts of the rise of idolatry in Egypt. The major universal chronicles give a similar account of the first idolatry (and with it the first fables about pagan gods), though they tend to follow Isidore of Seville in placing the event in Babylon rather than in Egypt.[4] Idolatry was not something which emerged from the mists of prehistory and eventually developed into monotheism, as some modern views would have it, but a manifestation of the wilfulness and ignorance which characterized mankind after the Fall. It is not within the scope of the present essay to explore the relations between mythographic texts and chronicle literature systematically, but I should like to suggest the importance of historical writings in the transmission of certain classical myths by means of one well-documented example. First of all, we may establish that historical writings placed the legendary kings of ancient Thebes at a specific moment in the past, and then proceed to some observations on the way in which the "mythography" of such figures as Amphion and Oedipus could be shaped by their status as *historia*.

The Theban myths offer an especially suggestive example of the influence which mediaeval historiography sometimes had on legendary materials. The city had its place in contemporary as well as ancient chronicles, in contrast to Troy, which though more prominent in ancient history, was known to exist no longer. Boccaccio and Chaucer might easily have located on a map the Thebes and the Athens where they set their narratives of Arcite and Palamon. Boccaccio would have known many details of the city's current affairs as well, since possession of Thebes and Athens was contested by the

Angevin rulers of Naples, in whose capital he lived in the late 1330's when he began composing the *Teseida*; and Niccolò Acciaiuoli, close friend of Boccaccio's youth, made a brilliant career in Greece in the service of the Angevin dynasty, before 1341.[5] Thebes and its surrounding region, Boeotia, appear in most mediaeval geographies, and the city is more prominent on mediaeval *mappaemundi* than on modern maps. Geographers distinguished between the various cities named "Thebes" and as a rule mediaeval writers did not confuse their various histories. "Thebes" was the name of four cities mentioned by old authorities: a city in Mysia, mentioned in the Trojan material as the home of Andromache; a biblical town in Samaria; and of course the ancient capital of Egypt, as well as a city in Greece.[6] Higden's *Polychronicon*, the most widely-known of the universal chronicles compiled in the fourteenth century, begins with a survey of the lands and peoples of the world: in his description of Boeotia, Higden states that different adjectival forms of the name "Thebes" should be used to distinguish its citizens from those of the other cities:

> Et nota quod a Thebis Aegyptiorum dicuntur Thebaei, a Thebis Graecorum Thebani, a Thebis Judeaorum Thebitae.[7]

He cites Peter Comestor as his source for this distinction, which also appears in the thirteenth-century Ebstorf *mappamundi*. The following legend defines "Boecia" on that map:

> Hec regio Boecia dicitur. Catmus enim Agenoris filius illo veniens bovem repperit, quem diis immolans Thebas construxit Boeciamque regionem nuncupavit. Ab hac Thebani dicuntur, ab alia vero, quam in Egypto construxit, Thebei.[8]

Most mythographers, including Boccaccio in the *Genealogie*, argued that the family of Cadmus, the founder of Boeotian Thebes, had its origins in Egyptian Thebes, and a few, like the Ebstorf cartographer, asserted that Cadmus himself had migrated from one Thebes to the other.[9] Perhaps it was because the origin of the *Thebani* could be traced to the Egyptian Thebaei that Chaucer allows the reputation of Egyptian Thebes as a centre of the opium trade to intrude upon Boeotian Thebes in a curious allusion in the *Knight's Tale* (A 1470 ff.); but such outright confusion of the two cities as Chaucer's is rare in mediaeval writings, and one suspects that in this case it was intentional.[10]

Boeotian Thebes appears in Higden's chronicle just as it does in his geography, and this is also the case throughout the tradition of historical writings on which Higden draws. The late-mediaeval chronicle derived most of its ancient history from a few patristic sources, in some contrast to the wider range of sources generally used for more recent events. The *Chronicon* (or *Liber temporum*) of Eusebius, Orosius' *Historia contra paganos*, and St Augustine's *De civitate Dei* are the most important of these: Eusebius and Orosius provided an outline of events in the ancient world which set the sequence of pagan kingdoms beside the history of the Hebrew nation; St Augustine's *De civitate Dei* stands apart as the great work of historical interpretation, the dominating exposition of the shape and significance of those parallel histories.

Though St Augustine describes in detail only the histories of Babylon and Rome, he treats them as examples of a pattern which can be observed in the long succession of other states which arose after Babylon and before "Rome, as it were a second Babylon." "All the other kingdoms and kings I should describe as something like appendages of those [two] empires" (18.2). Later historians writing in the tradition of the *De civitate Dei* added details of those "other kingdoms," including the kingdom of Thebes. The first and most influential of these historians was Paulus Orosius. In the preface to his *Historia contra paganos*, Orosius explains that his work is intended to supplement the *De civitate Dei* by extending its description of the Fall and the subsequent founding of Babylonian cities, into areas and times which St Augustine himself, for want of leisure, had not discussed. The Thebans appear twice in Orosius' first book, as part of the succession of ancient kingdoms:

> Item anno ante urbem conditam DCCLXXV inter Danai atque Aegypti fratrum filios quinquaginta parricidia una nocte commisa sunt. Ipse deinde tantorum scelerum fabricator Danaus regno, quod tot flagitiis adquisiverat, pulsus Argos concessit.[11]

Further on, Orosius mentions the family of Danaus and Aegyptus once again, now in possession of the city of Boeotian Thebes:

> Illa quoque praetereo, quae de Perseo, Cadmo, Thebanis Spartanisque per inextricabiles alternantium malorum recursus, Palephato scribente, referuntur . . . . Omitto Oedipum interfectorem patris, matris maritum, filiorum fratrum, vitricum suum. Sileri

> malo Eteoclen atque Polynicen mutuis laborasse concursibus, ne quis eorum parricida non esset.[12]

On the authority of Orosius, the legendary history of Thebes, and that is to say the royal house of Cadmus and his descendants Laius, Oedipus, and Oedipus' sons, entered the late-mediaeval universal chronicles and other historical writings concerned with the ancient succession of gentile empires. The twelfth-century *De duabus civitatibus* of Otto of Freising, which, like Orosius' *Historia*, is designed as a continuation of the *De civitate Dei*, cites a classical source to the effect that the succession of ancient powers, after arising in the east, passed through Greece on its way to Rome:

> Imperium Greciae fuit penes Athenienses, Atheniensium potiti sunt Spartiatae, Spartiatas superaverunt Thebani, Thebanos Macedones vicerunt, qui ad imperium Greciae brevi tempore adiunxerunt Asiam bello subactam.[13]

The *Thebani* were part of the succession.

The late-mediaeval chronicles which described the ancient world also drew on the *Chronicon* of Eusebius of Caesarea, which circulated widely in the translation of St Jerome. Unlike the *De civitate Dei* and Orosius' *Historia*, the *Chronicon* does not offer commentary on the historical materials it relates; it is a work of comparative chronology, or more precisely, of the sequence of rulers in several ancient kingdoms, among them the Hebrew patriarchs, judges, kings, and prophets. Biblical chronology is set beside and, as regards the sequence of events, reconciled with the traditions of Greek and Roman history. As modified by Isidore, Bede, and others, the *Chronicon* provided historians in the West with the framework of ancient history until about the sixteenth century, when Greek sources newly accessible forced a revaluation. Some chroniclers follow Eusebius' tabular format; others, such as Vincent of Beauvais and Higden, divide their description into chapters according to the sequence of Jewish rulers, describing under that head all of the contemporaneous events in the gentile kingdoms. Though they were made before the *De civitate Dei* was written, the Eusebian tables were easily harmonized with St Augustine's analyses of ancient cities, and late-mediaeval commentaries on the *De civitate Dei* sometimes reproduce portions of the tables in their exposition of books 15-18, St Augustine's analysis of the growth and progress of the *civitas terrena* after the Fall.[14]

The Latin *Chronicon* of Eusebius / Jerome does not make Thebes one of the principal kingdoms whose rulers are listed in detail. However, the rulers of Athens are so listed, and Theban history is frequently noted in conjunction with Athenian history. The reign of Theseus, for example, is correlated by Eusebius with the reigns of the judges Thola and Jair in Israel. And for the first year of Theseus' reign at Athens, the *Chronicon* notes the beginning of the war of the Seven against Thebes: "Septem qui adversus Thebas pugnaverunt."[15] A number of Theban legends appear in the *Chronicon*, in the form of notations opposite dates in the parallel reigns of the Athenians and the Israelites. The "raptus Europae," or the legendary abduction of Europa from Sidon which led to the founding of Boeotian Thebes by her brother Cadmus, appears opposite the year 13 of the reign of the judge Gothoniel. The next notice of Theban history appears in the following year of Gothoniel's reign:

> Cadmus regnavit Thebas ex cuius filia Semele natus est Dionysus et est Liber pater sub quo et Linus Thebaeus musicus fuit.[16]

"Linus Thebaeus" reappears in the years 23-30 of Gothoniel:

> Linus Thebaeus et Zethus et Amfion in musica arte clarescunt. Amfion et Zethus Thebis regnabant.[17]

And again in the year 30 after the reign of Gothoniel:

> Thebis expulso Cadmo, Amfion et Zethus regnaverunt.

There is implicit here a variety of "mythography," in that these legendary figures are presented as actual rulers. This "historical" interpretation of legendary events sometimes expands to include fabulous elements. For example, the last mention of Amphion offers an allegorical interpretation of the fabulous legend that Amphion built the walls of Thebes by moving rocks with the magical power of his lyre:

> Amphion Thebis regnavit, quem ferunt cantu citharae saxa movisse. Ferunt autem duro corde et, ut ita dicam, saxei quidam auditores.[18]

Many such historical allegories or interpretations of fabulous elements in received accounts are to be found in the first portion of Eusebius' *Chronicon*: The cause of the Trojan war was a contest over the beauty of "three women" for which a shepherd named Paris was the judge (*Chronicon*, at

1 Esbon); the Centaurs who fought with the Lapiths were knights (*equites*) of Thessalonia (1 Thola); the Sirens who called to Ulysses were courtesans who tempted sailors (6 Samson).[19] To an even greater extent than Orosius' *Historia*, this work left to the mediaeval universal chronicles a tradition of identifying and, if necessary, interpreting Theban legends, and incorporating them into a broad vision of the ancient past which encompassed biblical as well as classical history. Fables of the pagan gods were brought into this frame as well. Higden, following a hint in Eusebius, interprets Jupiter's legendary abduction of Europa "while he was in the form of a bull" as an allegory for the kidnapping of a Phoenician princess by a king of Crete, who carried her back to his island in a ship with a bull's-head ornament on its stem. This allegory later found its way from the historians into the writings of the mythographers commenting on the fable in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[20]

Historical or "euhemeristic" allegories of this sort are not remarkable in themselves. They had been expounded by late classical writers, Greek and Latin, on whose writings the early Christian historians drew freely. But the context in which these interpretations appear gives them a remarkable measure of authority, which was further increased by St Augustine's assertion that euhemeristic interpretations simply recover historical information which was lost during an early period of active myth-making in the pagan kingdoms. Toward the end of the chronicle portion of the *De civitate Dei*, St Augustine remarks that fables of various sorts arose in the ancient world along with idolatry. During the time of the Judges in Israel, these frequently involved wonderful beasts like the Minotaur, the Centaurs, Cerberus, and Bellerophon, "made up by the ingenuity of men, who took the opportunities offered by historical records which contain true accounts of actual events" (18.13).[21] After the time of the Trojan war, the fables often included the pagan deities, who were simply men dressed up by the memories of many generations; and some mythologizing of this kind had occurred in even earlier periods: "During this period, that is, from the departure of Israel from Egypt down to the death of Joshua . . . ceremonies in honor of false gods were established by the kings of Greece . . . . It was in this period as the story goes, that Dionysus (also called Father Liber), who was regarded as a god after his death, introduced the vine to his host in the land of Attica" (18.12); and "during these years, so runs the tale, Europa was carried off by Xanthus, king of Crete . . . though the more generally accepted story makes [him] Jupiter" (18.12). The Theban

myths were reflections of historical events, and even the process by which they accumulated fabulous elaborations was a proper subject for the historian.

The interpretive frame which chronicle literature established around these Theban myths did more than identify certain human characters as "historical" and thereby influence the interpretation of fabulous elements in their myths in the direction of historical allegories. Mediaeval historiography also influenced the presentation of the human characters themselves. To recognize this influence, it is necessary to bear in mind the interworkings of typological and tropological analysis in the writings of St Augustine and Orosius, especially as it served to define the concept of the *civitas terrena*.

St Augustine's *De civitate Dei* stands apart from the other sources of chronicle literature as the dominant exposition of an historical method, and the work was widely cultivated in its own right in the later Middle Ages. Beryl Smalley has pointed out that the *De civitate Dei* did not circulate widely before the twelfth century, but there can be no doubt that its influence on late mediaeval views of the ancient world was direct as well as indirect.[22] Works such as Otto of Freising's *De duabus civitatibus*, Henry of Marcy's *De peregrinante civitate Dei*, and Hugh of St Victor's *De vanitate mundi* attest to the vigour of the Augustinian concept of the two cities in twelfth-century historiography,[23] while quotations from the *De civitate Dei* in the universal chronicles, a large number of copies of the original Latin text, and of translations, witness to its continued cultivation in subsequent centuries. Manuscripts surviving today range from plain copies to richly illustrated productions of the French translation by De Praelles, made for the libraries of wealthy townsmen and nobles. The cycles of illustration associated with the De Praelles translation provide useful information about late-mediaeval interest in the *De civitate Dei*, as do the commentaries on the Latin text.[24] At the end of the thirteenth century, Nicholas Trevet commented on the entire work; in the next generation, another English Dominican revised Trevet's commentary on books 1-10, and the combined apparatus of Thomas Walleys on 1-10 and Trevet on 11-22 appears in many manuscript copies and early printed editions. Also in the fourteenth century, John Ridevall wrote what has been described as a critique of Trevet, and Raoul De Praelles drew on Trevet and Walleys in composing a commentary to accompany his translation of St Augustine's work. Taken together, this evidence suggests that the *De civitate Dei*, whatever its

earlier lot had been, enjoyed a considerable amount of serious attention in the literary culture of the twelfth through the fifteenth century.

The aspect of St Augustine's work and of the Augustinian tradition in late-mediaeval historiography which has particular relevance to the study of ancient Thebes is the concept of the *civitas terrena*, the worldly city or city dedicated to worldly possessions. Though St Augustine defines the *civitas terrena* in terms of Babylonian history and Roman history, he clearly implies that the same pattern is reflected in the entire succession of kingdoms which rose after Babylon and before Rome. The concept itself develops from the interworkings of typological and tropological analysis. The familiar typology of biblical exegesis views events of the Old Testament as types or foreshadowings of the New, especially of the life of Christ and the subsequent history of his Church. However, when St Augustine uses typology as an aspect of historical analysis in the *De civitate Dei*, the historical subject broadens to include all of ancient history, and the types, in addition to pointing forward, point as it were upward, to an archetypical pattern which is manifested throughout the ancient empires. In the chronicle section of the *De civitate Dei*, books 15-18, and again in Orosius' *Historia contra paganos*, a typological analysis of ancient cities expands from the familiar territory of biblical *historia* to organize events recorded by non-scriptural sources. Parallels are found in the histories of Babylon and Rome which reflect their common adherence to the archetype of the *civitas terrena*. These are types of the future in the sense that the *civitas terrena* prefigures the enemies of the Church, but their immediate purpose is to serve as tools in an historical analysis, which relates disparate events throughout antiquity to a single, meaningful pattern.[25]

A fifteenth-century miniature in a manuscript of the De Praelles translation illustrates the typological correspondences between Belus, the first king of the Babylonians, and Romulus, first king of the Romans, by depicting them in identical settings similarly arranged, one placed immediately above the other (*De civitate Dei* 18.24). The two figures would be difficult to distinguish were it not for scrolls bearing their names. A similar pair of figures is Cain and Romulus. Having pointed out that Cain, the "first founder of the earthly city," was a fratricide, St Augustine goes on to argue that "it is no wonder that long afterwards this first precedent -- what the Greeks call an archetype -- was answered by a kind of reflection, by an event of the same kind at the founding of [Rome]" (15.5).[26] This typological correspondence was often the subject of illustrations, which

juxtaposed the two legendary fratricides. In the example reproduced here, Cain is distinguished from Romulus by his more primitive clothing, but the act being committed is clearly the same. In defining the *civitas terrena*, St Augustine discusses the tropological significance of these figures and events, and we shall return to that subject shortly.

Orosius' typological analysis of the succession of ancient kingdoms begins with these and other correspondences mentioned by St Augustine, but elaborates them with remarkable zeal. For example, Orosius notes that Semiramis founded Babylon in the sixty-fourth year of the reign of Ninus; he then points to the numerical correspondence between these events at Babylon and the fact that Romulus founded Rome in the sixty-fourth year of the reign of Procas (*Historia* 2.2.5). And other numerical correspondences appear as well. Sixty-four years before the founding of Rome, the Medes destroyed the Assyrian empire, successors to the Babylonian empire, which had existed for 1564 years; Rome in its turn was pillaged by the Goths 1564 years after its founding (*Historia* 2.3.4).[27]

In St Augustine's historiography, the *civitas Dei* and *civitas terrena* are archetypes with tropological as well as typological features. Just before he begins the chronicle of the "growth and progress of the two cities" which will occupy books 15-18 of the *De civitate Dei*, St Augustine defines the tropological or moral element in the pattern of the *civitas terrena* as love of self and the world before all other things, in contrast to the *civitas Dei*, which is founded upon the love of God before all other things:

> Fecerunt itaque civitates duas amores duo terrenam scilicet amor sui usque ad contemptum Dei caelestem vero amor Dei usque ad contemptum sui. (14.28)[28]

Tropology is frequently manifested in the principal types for the *civitas terrena*; Cain and Romulus, for example, were driven to fratricide by envy of their brothers and desire for their possessions. Thus the moral definition of the archetype goes some way in explaining why historical cities like Babylon and Rome rose and fell as they did. They grew large out of a desire for worldly possessions, and they fell when internal divisions, caused by the same selfish desires, weakened the body politic. "It has its good in this world, and . . . since this is not the kind of good that causes no frustrations to those enamoured of it, the earthly city is generally divided against itself by litigation, by wars, [and] by battles" (18.2). St Augustine takes pains, however, to emphasize that this definition of a

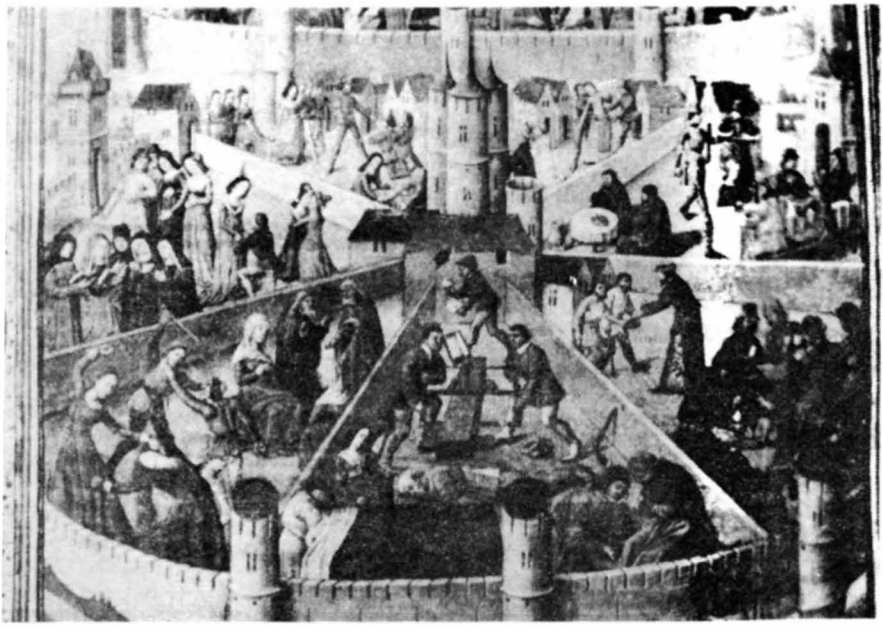
citizen of the city of the world is not a definition of all citizens in a specific city. It refers to the archetype. Thus a "citizen" of the *civitas Dei* might well be found in historical Babylon, just as "citizens" or types of the *civitas terrena* may be found in the history of the Jewish nation. But the history of Babylon in its general outline may be taken as the first manifestation of those attitudes which define the pattern of the worldly city, while the early history of the Jewish nation in its general outline provides the most vivid types for the city of God.[29]

Late-mediaeval illustrations of St Augustine's work often incorporate the tropological significance of "Babylon" into their designs. One representation, which occurs in a number of miniature-sequences, shows the city walls in the form of a wheel, with seven internal walls dividing, like spokes, the city-wheel into neighborhoods (see pl. 1). Within the seven divisions, "Babylonians" vigorously exemplify the seven principal vices and also, less prominently, the corresponding virtues. Thus the illustration offers an emblem for St Augustine's argument that love of self and of worldly things, with the vices such love produces, subject Babylonian cities to the caprices of Fortune. The illustrator is depicting the archetype rather than the historical Babylon: the "citizens" in the seven neighborhoods wear late-mediaeval clothes and move among buildings and objects of the fifteenth century. The archetype is never anachronistic in its tropological aspect, for that defines a moral condition rather than an historical event.

For an eye alert to typological correspondences in the ancient kingdoms of the world, many aspects of Theban history immediately stand out. Orosius, as we have noted, mentions the reigns of Cadmus and Oedipus in passing, as examples of the impious and destructive behaviour of men after the Fall. Some late-mediaeval historical writings such as Paolino Veneto's *Chronologia Magna* (or *Compendium*), a universal chronicle compiled in the second quarter of the fourteenth century, and the vernacular compilations such as the one known as *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à Cesar* (thirteenth century, frequently revised in the fourteenth century), include longer descriptions of Thebes which make that kingdom a primary example of the general pattern of events in the ancient world.[30] Like the founders of Babylon and Rome, the Theban royal house had vivid episodes of fraternal strife, including the rivalry between Oedipus' sons which led to the destruction of the city. Like Semiramis of Babylon, Iocasta had children by her own son; like Semiramis' son Belus, Oedipus killed one of his parents. Because of the archetype of the *civitas terrena*, the chroniclers tend to give these features of Theban history the greatest prominence.

Plate 1

Babylon as the Wheel:



Paris: Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, MS. Fr. 246.
St Augustine, *Cité de Dieu*, translated with commentary by Raoul de Praelles. Book I (folio 3 v°). Ca. 1475.
The two cities (detail).

The influence of such typological analysis may be seen clearly in the figure of Oedipus, which undergoes a striking transformation in historical writings. The Oedipus known so widely today from the writings of Sophocles and Aristotle finds his terrible misfortunes by means of his own considerable virtue: were he not such a capable fighter, he would not have overcome Laius; were he not such a capable intellect, he would not have been able to solve the riddle of the Sphynx and of Laius' death; and most paradoxically, were he not such a good ruler, he would not have prosecuted his inquest of the causes of the plague to the point of condemning himself. The complexity of his situation and the relative blamelessness of his actions render any simple judgement of this Oedipus impossible. Though one occasionally encounters a qualified opinion of Oedipus in mediaeval sources, the tendency is in the direction of simplifying and flattening. Part of the reason is simply a matter of different literary sources. Poets like Boccaccio and Chaucer knew Oedipus from Statius' *Thebaid* and Seneca's tragedies rather than from Sophocles and Aristotle. Statius, writing an epic about the destruction of a city, had depicted Oedipus as an irresponsible king who was so angered by the mistreatment he suffered at the hands of sons that he hoped for their destruction. The chief epithet for Oedipus in the *Thebaid* is "impius," and the character stands as an antithesis to Vergil's "pius Aeneas": whereas Aeneas laboured to found a city which he knew he would not live to see, and did so for the sake of his descendants, Statius' Oedipus calls on the gods for vengeance on his sons. The gods consent with a bitter rivalry between Eteocles and Polyneices, which destroys them and the city of Thebes as well.

Along with the chance that gave fourteenth-century poets Statius rather than Sophocles, traditions of typological analysis also contributed to the shaping of an un-Sophoclean figure. Orosius had simplified the story of Oedipus and Iocasta so that it would better recall the biblical types of the *civitas terrena*. Violent strife among family members as well as incest were both prominent aspects of Babylonian history, and Orosius' Oedipus appears as "the slayer of his father, the husband of his mother, the brother of their children" without any qualification or mitigating circumstances.[31] In another typological alignment, De Praelles' commentary on the *De civitate Dei* matches Oedipus with Romulus, as infants abandoned by their parents, who later become kings.[32]

This flattened Oedipus accorded well enough with the Oedipus of Statius' *Thebaid* to be adopted by some mediaeval commentators on that poem. An

academic prologue which was probably composed in France in the thirteenth century recounts the history of Thebes from its founding by Cadmus to its fall at the time of Oedipus: Cadmus was a wise man, the inventor of the Greek alphabet, but his descendants were not like him. Oedipus was strong in arms but a foolish ruler, and might alone cannot bring prosperity to a kingdom. As Boethius says, that commonwealth will be blessed which is ruled by a wise king or a king who takes the advice of wise men. Oedipus was not one of these. And after mentioning Oedipus' parricide and incest, the summary notes that Iocasta was also "remarkable for her loose morals."[33]

Interest in the paradoxes of Oedipus' crimes did not lack entirely, as the "Compendium" of the *Thebaid*, composed around 1400 by Laurent de Premierfait, attests;[34] but such interest seems to have been rare. It is certainly not evident in Dante's passing reference to Oedipus in the *Convivio*, where the Theban king is simply an example of someone who blinded himself so that his eyes would not show his shame.[35] Dante quotes a line from the beginning of the *Thebaid*, in which there is no hint that Oedipus' blindness should be taken as a figure for the internal light of wisdom, and one doubts that that Sophoclean metaphor is implied by Chaucer when he has Troilus liken himself to Oedipus: "But ende I wol, as Edippe, in derkness" (IV.300), though one modern reader, ignoring mediaeval sources, has argued precisely that.[36]

The full portrait of Oedipus in Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* stands clearly in the tradition of Statius and the chronicle literature. He is proud and contentious in his youth (467 ff.); though he does not realize that Iocasta is his mother, it is a sin to marry her nonetheless, and it recalls for Lydgate the incestuous relations between Herod and Herodias, a brother's wife (794); Oedipus blinds himself and dies in a fit of rage at his sons, with no indication that he has discovered a measure of detached serenity or that he has found in his physical blindness a second, internal light of wisdom (994 ff.). Though the modern reader may find that his familiarity with the more complex character of another literary tradition interferes with appreciation of it, this Oedipus serves Lydgate's artistic purposes well enough, as an example of a prosperous and proud ruler brought low by his misdeeds and the caprices of Fortune (885-94).

The *Siege of Thebes* was written about 1420. Lydgate translated a prose *Roman de Thèbes* into English verse, abridging the narrative, adding comments and episodes according to his own designs, and framing the whole as one of the *Canterbury Tales*. The verse narrative offers an especially good

example of the influence which mediaeval historical writing could have on a literary work, because the "literary" tradition of Statius' *Thebaid* on which the *Siege* is based, had in effect merged with one kind of vernacular chronicle in Lydgate's immediate source. The precise text from which he worked has not been identified, but it was certainly a prose redaction of the poetic *Roman de Thèbes*, which in turn had been loosely based on Statius' *Thebaid*. All of the numerous copies of the prose redactions to survive are found in compilations of historical writings such as the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à Cesar*, which trace ancient history from the Creation to the time of the later Roman empire, incorporating a full translation of Orosius' *Historia contra paganos* along the way (though some copies do not contain the entire series of texts and one of the later redactions was designed to focus on the histories of Troy and Thebes alone).[37] We find the prose *Roman de Thèbes* embedded within the translation of Orosius' *Historia*, standing as it were in the place of the two brief references to the Theban kings in the Latin original.

Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* is designed for a very different compilation of texts, but the author conserves much of the historical frame so obvious in his source by means of passages and allusions which refer to the broader panorama of ancient history. In his prologue, Lydgate establishes the date of his "story" in the manner so characteristic of universal chronicles:[38]

> I wol reherce a story wonderful
> Towchinge the sige and destructioun
> Of worthy Thebes, the myghty royal toun
> Bylt and begonne of olde antiquité
> Upon the tyme of worthy Isoue
> By dyligence of king Amphioun. (184-89)

Placing the events in Theban history with reference to the sequence of Jewish rulers also introduces the possibility that Thebes may be viewed with reference to the familiar patterns of universal history, and Lydgate will elaborate on this possibility throughout his narrative. The most striking example appears about half-way, when the author pauses to reflect on the way the destruction of Thebes by Oedipus' sons repeats a pattern of civic discord and strife brought about by the Fall and the propensity of fallen man to sin:

[Thebes] brent and was sette a-fyre,
As bookes olde wel reherce konne,
Of cruel hate rooted and begunne
And engendred the story maketh mynde
Oonly of blood corrupt and unkynde,
Bynfeccioun called Orygynal,
Causyng strif dredful and mortal,
Of which the meschief thorgh al Grece ran. (2560-67)

This Theban "story" reminds him of the beginning of strife, at the beginning of the *civitas terrena*, when Cain killed his brother Abel. Thebes is, moreover, one of that succession of worldly kingdoms which arose first in the East with Babylon and later passed "thorgh al Grece" on its way to Rome. The chronicle literature had long established that internecine strife characterizes that succession. The *civitas terrena* "has its good in this world . . . and since this is not the kind of good that causes no frustrations to those enamored of it, the earthly city is generally divided against itself." The "strif dredful and mortal" which St Augustine had identified with the figures of Cain and Romulus reappears at Thebes in what Lydgate calls the "fraternal hate" (869) of Eteocles and Polyneices. Lydgate will conclude his poem with further observations on historical antecedents for this type and with remarks on its tropological aspect, "the ground and cause why that men so stryve, / [which] is coveytise and fals ambicioun" (4674-75).

The "divisioun" represented by Oedipus and his sons is the central theme of Lydgate's *Siege*, which the author elaborates in reference to the larger pattern of strife in the succession of ancient kingdoms before and after the time of Oedipus. He throws this theme into relief at the beginning of the narrative by the example of a prosperous and harmonious Thebes in the days of king Amphion. This contrasting example also recalls certain conventional types from the ancient past. The passage is largely Lydgate's own; a reference to Amphion does appear in his sources, but it comes later, is shorter, and lacks many of the striking details of the beginning of the *Siege of Thebes*. The legend itself is familiar from classical poetry: Amphion's lyre, which was given him by Mercury, has magical powers, and by means of its music Amphion moves large stones from the nearby mountains to build the city's walls. Lydgate explains that "Mercury" stands for eloquence, and that Amphion's music is the gift of oratorical skill which made the king's wise words appealing to the rustic people who heard him. Therefore, the "music"

. . . made the contres envyroun
To han such lust in his wordes swete,
That were so plesaunt favourable and mete
In her eerys that shortly ther was noon
Disobeysaunt with the kyng to goon
Wher so evere that hym list assigne. (228-33)

The stones of the fable represent the citizens of Thebes, who were brought together in harmonious accord by Amphion's wisdom and eloquence. (By contrast, wisdom and eloquence will be absent from Oedipus' wedding [830 ff.].)

Lydgate tells us that his interpretation of the fable comes from Boccaccio, and it is indeed to be found in the *Genealogie*,[39] but as we have already seen, it has much longer roots in the chronicle tradition. Eusebius interprets Amphion's "music" in much the same way in the *Chronicon*, whence the allegory passed to later universal chronicles. The association of musical harmony with civic concord is also made in the *De civitate Dei*, where St Augustine remarks that "the rational and well-ordered concord of diverse sounds in harmonious variety suggests the compact unity of a well-ordered city" (17.14). The allegory of the building of Thebes recalls the Jerusalem of scriptural tradition as well. For example, the standard commentary on II Esdras takes Nehemiah, who rebuilt the walls and gates of Jerusalem, as a type of the preachers who built the Church from the living stones of the faithful.[40] Lydgate will present us with Nehemiah, though not with this allegory, later in the *Siege of Thebes*. Nehemiah's "trouthe," we are reminded, "Gat hym licence to reedifie / The wallys newe of Ierusalem" (1740-41), in marked contrast to Eteocles, who has just refused to honour his agreements with his brother and who will thereby provoke the civil war which would destroy his city. The impression that Lydgate chose to open his narrative in a way that would recall this scriptural type or foreshadowing of the *civitas Dei* is further encouraged when he specifies that the stones brought together by Amphion were "square." The detail is not found in Boccaccio, but it does appear in a suggestive context in Isaias 9:10, where the prophet contrasts the brick and mortar of the worldly kingdoms with the square stones which will be used to construct the New Jerusalem.[41]

We have seen that the "mythography" of the early Theban kings was influenced by their status as *historia*. The chronicles of the ancient world which enjoyed the greatest esteem in mediaeval literary culture placed Thebes in the succession of "Babylonian" kingdoms, and in doing so,

they provided a frame of reference for the interpretation of Theban characters and Theban legends. Because of the place of the city in universal history, fabulous narratives such as the abduction of Europa or the building of the city with music, were viewed as overwrought versions of real events, requiring explanation accordingly. Mediaeval historical thought, especially typological analysis, also influenced the presentation of human characters such as Oedipus. Finally, the frame in which the Theban legends appeared could be exploited in a literary work like the *Siege of Thebes* to suggest that the particular Theban "stories" at hand reflect larger patterns in universal history.

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NOTES

[1] The three-part distinction is found in Isidore, *Etymologiarum libri*, ed. W.M. Lindsay (Oxford 1911) I.xliv.5. For an interesting discussion of the passage with reference to Dante, see Giuseppe Mazzotta, *Dante Poet of the Desert: History and Allegory in the Divine Comedy* (Princeton 1979) 66-68. On the use of *fabula* and *historia* as contrasting terms in mediaeval literary theory, see J.W.H. Atkins, *English Literary Criticism: The Medieval Phase* (2nd ed., rpt. Gloucester, Mass. 1961) 33; and Paul Strohm, "Storie, Spelle, Geste, Romaunce, Tragedie: Generic Distinctions in the Middle English Troy Narratives," *Speculum* 46 (1971) 348-52; also Judson Allen, *The Ethical Poetic of the Later Middle Ages* (Toronto 1982) 76-77 and n. 22.

[2] Guido delle Colonne, *Historia destructionis Troiae*, trans. M.E. Meek (Bloomington, Ind. 1974) 2 (Prologue, lines 38-40). Compare Lydgate, "Omer . . . the whiche in his writyng / I-feyned hathe ful many diuers thyng / That neuer was, as Guydo lyst deuise, / And thingys done in a-nother wyse / He hathe transformed than þe truþe was, / And feyned falsly that goddis in þis caas / The worthi Grekis holpen to werreye / Ageyn Troyens, and howe þat þei were seye / Lyche lyfly men amonge hem day by day" (ed. H. Bergen, EETS, E.S. 97 [1906] 8).

[3] Modern writers frequently distinguish a chronicle from a history in terms of presentation: a chronicle is shorter, less analytical, and arranges events into a chronological sequence. But mediaeval writers often used the terms with reference to the distance of the events narrated from the narrator's own experience. As de Lubac remarks in *Exégèse Médiéval*: "[*chronica*] . . . c'est le nom qui s'impose habituellement a eux pour toute histoire du passé, et non pas seulement pour des 'chronographies' au sens actuel du mot, ou pour des 'annales'" (Paris 1959), vol. 2, pt. 2, p. 427. See also Joachim Knape, *"Historie" im Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit, Saecula Spiritalia*, 10 (Baden-Baden 1984).

[4] The source of Fulgentius' account of Syrophanes of Egypt, who made an image of his dead father and ordered his servants to revere it, is not known. See L.G. Whitbread, *Fulgentius the Mythographer* (Columbus, Ohio 1971) 49 n. It is repeated by Vaticanus Tertius in the "Prooemium," ed. Bode (Celle 1834) 152-53. For the standard version of the origins of idolatry as it appears in chronicle literature, see Peter Comestor, *Historia scholastica*, liber Genesis, ch. 40, "De morte Beli et ortu idolorum," (PL 198.1090); and Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum historiale*, I. ch. 102, "De ortu idolatrie sub Nino" (I quote from the Venetian edn. of 1494). Cf. Isidore, *Etymologiarum libri* 8.11.23. Cf. also St Augustine, *De civitate Dei* 14.28 and 18.12.

[5] Emile G. Léonard, *Gli Angioini di Napoli*, tr. R. Liguori (Varese 1967) 374; Nicolas Cheetham, *Mediaeval Greece* (New Haven, Conn. 1981) 166-68.

[6] See, for example, Konrad Miller, *Mappaemundi* (Stuttgart 1895-98) vol. 3, plate 1; or vol. 2, plate 11, where only two cities, Thebes and Athens, are shown in Greece. Thebes in Mysia appears frequently in the works of Ovid also; see for example *Metamorphoses* 12.110; 13.173; *Tristia* 4.3.29; and compare Pomponius Mela, *De situ orbis* 1.18. For the biblical Thebes, see for example II Samuel 11:21.

[7] J.R. Lumby, ed., *The Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland*, No. 41 (London 1865-86) vol. 1, p. 196

[8] Miller, *Mappaemundi* (at n. 6) vol. 5, p. 21.

[9] Giovanni Boccaccio, *Genealogie deorum gentilium libri*, ed. V. Romano (Bari 1951) vol. 1, p. 97. Another is Honorius of Autun, who writes that Egypt is a land named for Aegyptus, brother of Danaus, and that in Egypt

"est provincia Thebaida, a civitate Thebe cognominata, quam Cadmus Agenoris filius in Aegyptum veniens aedificavit, Thebas secundum illam quam in Boetia construxit, nominans" (*De imagine mundi libri tres*, PL 172. 126-27).

[10] The Modern English adjective "thebaic" means "of or pertaining to opium," presumably because Egyptian Thebes was renowned as a centre of the opium trade (*OED*).

[11] Paulus Orosius, *Historiarum adversum paganos libri vii*, ed. C. Zangemeister (Vienna 1882; rpt. Hildesheim 1967) 1.10.1 (p. 59). English translation by I.W. Raymond, *Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*, (New York 1936) 59.

[12] 1.12; ed. Zangemeister, 61-62; Raymond, 61.

[13] *Historia de duabus civitatibus*, ed. Hofmeister, MGH *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum*, 58 (Hannover and Leipzig 1912) 45; English translation from *Otto of Freising, The Two Cities*, tr. C.C. Mierow (New York 1928) 131. Otto is quoting the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 4.25.

[14] Cf. *De civitate Dei* 18.2 and *passim*, where chronological sequence is established by reference to the events in the Old Testament. I have seen the late-mediaeval commentary which reproduces the Eusebian tables in *Diui Aurelij Augustini . . . De ciuitate dei . . . Cum commentariis Thome Valois et Nicolai Triueth nec non additionibus Jacobi Passauantij* (Lugduni 1520).

[15] *Hieronymi Chronicon*, ed. R.W.O. Helm (2nd ed., Berlin 1956) 57b, and repeated in many universal chronicles. See for example Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum historiale* 2.57, "De Gedeone et Abimelech et Thola et Iair."

[16] Ed. Helm, 57b; and repeated in the chronicles. See for example Peter Comestor, *Historia scholastica PL* 198.1271; also *De civitate Dei*, 18.14.

[17] Ed. Helm, 58b. A manuscript of Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica* now in Munich (Staatsbibl. MS. Clm. 17405) contains a miniature (fol. 3^{r}) in which the liberal arts are represented as personifications. Behind the figure representing "musica" is a city, inscribed "Thebes". The miniature is reproduced in Johannes Damrich, *Ein Künstlerdreiblatt des XIII Jahrhunderts aus Kloster Scheyern* (Strassburg 1904) 26.

[18] Ed. Helm, 61b. On Lydgate's use of this allegory, see below.

[19] These interpretations appear in the chronicle tradition as well. See for example *Historia scholastica*, PL 198.1283 for the Centaurs, 1290 for

Ulysses (where the *meretrices* of Eusebius have become simple *mulieres*); also *De civitate Dei*, 18.13 and 18.18.

[20] *Polychronicon*, ed. Lumby, Vol. 2, pp. 340-42; cf. Arnulf of Orleans, "Allegoriae super Ovidii Metamorphosin," in Fausto Ghisalberti, *Arnolfo d'Orleans, un cultore di Ovidio nel secolo XII* (Milan 1932) 207; John of Garland, *Integumenta Ovidii*, ed. Fausto Ghisalberti (Milan and Messina 1933) 47; Giovanni del Virgilio, "Allegorie Librorum Ovidii Metamorphoseos," in Fausto Ghisalberti, "Giovanni del Virgilio espositore delle *Metamorfose*," *Il Giornale Dantesco*, 34, N.S. 4 (1931) 51.

[21] And compare *De civitate Dei* 18.8, where St Augustine remarks that "many other legendary stories were first made up in the Greece of those days; in fact, down to the reign of Cecrops at Athens, which was when the city was given its name, and when God led his people from Egypt through the agency of Moses, the Greeks enrolled a number of departed human beings among the number of the gods. Such was their blind superstition and their characteristic folly."

[22] Beryl Smalley's comment in *Historians in the Middle Ages* (London 1974), that the *De civitate Dei* "was too long and rambling to share the immense popularity of his other works . . . . It influenced medieval historians through the distorting influence of Augustine's disciple Orosius" (p. 44) seems to me to be misleading, at least with regard to the later Middle Ages. Compare the reflections of John Taylor, *The Universal Chronicle of Ranulf Higden* (Oxford 1966), to the effect that "if Eusebius provided universal history with its chronology, Augustine supplied it with its philosophy" (p. 34). And see Beryl Smalley's own remarks on the fourteenth-century commentators on the *De civitate Dei* (n. 24, below).

[23] Otto (1111?-1158) as half-brother to Conrad III and a trusted uncle of Fredrick I Hohenstauffen, lived close to the centre of affairs in the Holy Roman Empire. Cf. *The Two Cities*, trans. C.C. Mierow (at n. 13) introduction. Henry of Marcy was abbot of Clairvaux from 1176 until 1179. His *De peregrinante civitate Dei* is printed in PL 204.251-402. Hugh of St Victor's philosophy of history is discussed at length in Joachim Ehlers, *Hugo von St. Viktor, Studien zum Geschichtsdenken und zur Geschichtsschreibung des 12. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden 1973). See also W.M. Green, "Hugo of St. Victor: *De Tribus Maximis Circumstantiis Gestorum*," *Speculum* 18 (1943) 484-93.

[24] A. de Laborde, *Les manuscrits à peintures de la Cité de Dieu de Saint Augustin*, 3 vols. (Paris 1909); Beryl Smalley, *English Friars and Antiquity in the Early Fourteenth Century* (New York 1960) devotes chapters to Thomas Waleys and John Ridevall. On Raoul de Praelles, see de Laborde, Vol. 1, pp. 44 ff. A commentary by Francais de Mayronis preceded that of de Praelles in France.

[25] Jean Danielou, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, tr. Hibberd (London 1960); Henri Marrou, "S. Augustin et l'augustinisme historique," in *La storiografia altomedievale*, 2 vols. (Spoleto 1970) Vol. 1, pp. 59-87.

[26] The miniatures in manuscripts of De Praelles' translation may be seen in Alexandre de Laborde, *Les manuscrits à peintures de la Cité de Dieu de Saint Augustin*, 3 vols. (Paris 1909). For four extant copies from the library of Jean de Berry, see Millard Meiss, *French Painting in the Time of Jean de Berry* (London 1967) vol. 1, pp. 309, 312, 314. These types of the *civitas terrena* were often noted in the universal chronicles; see for example Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum historiale*, bk. 1, Ch. 57, "De ortu ecclesie ab Abel": "Cayn vero nequissime avaratie inserviens, terram coluit ac de peioribus fructibus deo obtulit; post peccatum in fratrem, de salute eterna desperat; et quasi civis terrenus civitatem in terra primus condidit, rapinis et violentia opes congregans; suos ad latrocinia invitavit," etc. (I quote from the Venetian edition of 1494.)

[27] On the extension of typology to non-biblical events, see Karl Heinrich Kruger, *Die Universalchroniken* (Brepols 1976) 28-29; Erich Auerbach, "Figura," in *Archivium Romanicum* 22 (1938) 436-89; Jean Danielou (at n. 25). The thirteenth-century commentary on Lucan's *Pharsalia*, by Arnulf of Orleans, gives an example of such typological reading of classical history: "Pompey's death has sanctified the land of the Nile as the Crucifixion has made of Calvary a holy place (IX.82) and . . . the willingness of a sacrificial animal, considered a good omen by the ancients, may be compared to Christ's self-sacrifice (I. 609)," Berthe M. Marti, *Arnulfi Aurelianensis glosule super Lucanum* (Rome 1958) xliii.

[28] St Augustine provides a succinct statement of the tropological significance of "Babylon" again in his sermon on Psalm 64, "The Canticle of Jeremias and Ezechiel to the People of the Captivity, when they began to go out," with reference to v. 2, "A vow shall be paid to thee in Jerusalem": "Et uidete

nomina duarum istarum ciuitatum, Babylonis et Ierusalem. Babylon confusio interpretatur, Ierusalem uisio pacis . . . . Duas istas ciuitates faciunt duo amores: Ierusalem facit amor Dei; Babyloniam facit amor saeculi. Interroget ergo se quisque quid amet, et inueniet unde sit ciuis." The commentary goes on to remark that the "Babylonian" who is dwelling in the confusion of a selfish will goes out of Babylon when learning to recognize charity: "Incipit exire qui incipit amare. Exeunt enim multi latenter, et exeuntium pedes sunt cordis affectus; Exeunt autem de Babylonia. Quid est de Babylonia? De confusione. Quomodo exitur de Babylone, id est de confusione? Qui primo confusi erant similibus cupiditatibus, incipiunt caritate distingui; iam distincti, non sunt confusi." (*Ennarrationes in Psalmos*, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina, 39 (Brepols 1956) 823. Cf. *De civitate Dei*, 11.1.

[29] *De civitate Dei*, 16.10.

[30] Paolino Veneto, *Chronologia Magna* in its fullest version, in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana MS. Lat. 1960, f. 56^{r-v}. Paolino's summary of Theban history extends from the birth of Oedipus to the deaths of Polyneices and Eteocles. It is almost certainly indebted to the tradition of the *Roman de Thèbes*, prose copies of which are known to have been made in northern Italy and in Naples during Paolino's lifetime; see Alessandra P. Saggese, *I romanzi cavalereschi miniati a Napoli* (Naples 1979). On Boccaccio's relations with Paolino, see Aldo Maria Costantini, "La polemica con Fra Paolino da Venezia," *Studi sul Boccaccio* 10 (1978) 255-75. On the *Histoire ancienne*, see Paul Meyer, "Les premières compilations françaises d'histoire ancienne," *Romania* 14 (1885) 1-81; Paul Zumthor, *Histoire littéraire de la France médiévale (VIe-XIVe siècles)* (Paris 1954) 230 ff.

[31] See above, n. 12. Robert Hanning, *The Vision of History in Early Britain* (New York 1966), makes the following comment on the typological habit of thought in the Middle Ages and its consequences in the literary depiction of character. His comment suits the case of the mediaeval Oedipus well, although it is not made with reference to Oedipus:

> Furthermore, the concept of typology and the vivid apprehension of Christ's continued life in the Church and her members sharply limited, if it did not entirely suppress, the portrayal of individualized character as we know it in the novel, or even in the 'genetic characters' of Greek literature. (p. 16)

The general method of Orosius' *Historia* clearly derives from St Augustine, and this is nowhere more evident than in his discussion of types for the two cities. There are, however, distinctions to be made when discussing the historiography of these two writers, including the notable absence of tropological analysis in Orosius. For other departures from the model of the *De civitate Dei*, see Hanning's discussion, pp. 37-43.

[32] De Laborde (at n. 26) vol. 1, p. 61.

[33] The *accessus* was published in 1866 from a possibly unique manuscript, now lost: Moritz Schmidt, "Ein scholion zum Statius," *Philologus* 23 (1866) 541-47. Schmidt reports that the manuscript was bought in Urbino, and argues that its origin was in the fourteenth century, but the abbreviations and orthography of the *accessus* as transcribed by Schmidt suggest an earlier date and possibly a northern place of origin.

[34] Four manuscripts of Statius' *Thebaid* contain an introductory "compendium" of the history of the house of Oedipus from the marriage between Iocasta and Laius to the defeat of Creon by Theseus: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana MS. Ottob. lat. 1475 and MS. Reg. 1375; Paris: BN MS. Par. 7936, and London: BL Burney 257. The author is "Laurentius Campanus" (Laurent de Premierfait). The summary proceeds in a conventional manner up to the war of the Seven against Thebes, giving a brief account like those of earlier *accessus* to the *Thebaid* and of mediaeval chronicles of the ancient world. However, Laurent's version of Oedipus' last years is surprisingly original: What Statius says of Oedipus -- that he rejoiced at the news his sons had killed each other -- is impossible to believe. Oedipus did not affirm his curse on Polyneices and Eteocles as Statius says; rather, after their deaths, he cursed the day he had cursed his sons, and he also cursed Creon, who had occupied the throne of Thebes after their deaths and sent Oedipus into exile. Having thus corrected his *auctor* and given us a more sympathetic view of Oedipus' character, Laurent quickly draws his summary to a close.

[35] "Onde alcuno già si trasse li occhi, perché la vergogna d'entro non paresse di fuori sì come dice Stazio poeta del tebano Edipo, quando dice che 'con etterna notte solvette lo suo dannato pudore'" (*Convivio*, 3.8.10, ed. Simonelli, p. 97). The passage alludes to that scene, at the beginning of the *Thebaid*, in which Oedipus calls for vengeance on his cruel sons.

[36] Julia Ebel, "Troilus and Oedipus: The Genealogy of an Image," *English Studies* 55 (1974) 15-21.

[37] On the histories of Thebes in the compilations called *Histoire ancienne jusqu'a Cesar*, see Paul Meyer, "Les premières compilations françaises d'histoire ancienne," *Romania* 14 (1885) 1-81. On Lydgate's sources see Axel Erdmann and Eilert Ekwall, *Lydgate's Siege of Thebes*, EETS, E.S. 125 (1930).

[38] I quote from the edition of Axel Erdmann, John Lydgate, *The Siege of Thebes*, EETS, E.S. 108 (1911), with punctuation and orthography normalized.

[39] *Geneálogie*, 5.30, end.

[40] Bede's commentary on II Esdras is quoted *in extenso* in the *Glossa ordinaria*. He interprets Artaxerxes as a figure for God, and Nehemiah as a figure for the preachers who built the Church:

> Congruit figura Nehemiae et sanctis praedicatoribus, quorum ministero superna nobis consolatio praestatus, dum, post lapsum peccati, spem veniae ac propitiationis divinae poenitentibus pollicentes, quasi diruta ab hostibus Jerosolymorum moenia murosque restaurant. (PL 91. 383, cf. 885)

In a similar fashion, the music of the Psalms is said to accompany the building of the New Jerusalem, see *De civitate Dei*, 17.14; Peter Lombard explains that the title of Psalm 95, "Psalmus ipsi David, quando domus Dei aedificabatur post captivitatem" refers tropologically to the rebuilding of the *civitas Dei* in the soul previously captive of sin. Quoting St Augustine, the commentary says that building this Jerusalem is accompanied, indeed accomplished, by singing the new song of charity:

> Vetus autem canticum cantat cupiditas; novum charitas, quae ipsa est novum canticum. Cantare autem ipsum aedificare est" (PL 191. 879).

[41] Gregory the Great, in his commentary on the seven penitential psalms, discusses the figurative Babylon and Jerusalem in terms of the building materials associated with those two cities. The bricks and mortar of Babylon figure the impermanence of worldly desires: "Per quod intelligitur quod mundi amatores carnalis vitae construunt municipium, quod ad vim ventorum, et impetus fluvii, facili impulsi velociter est subruendum." The New Jerusalem is built of sturdy square stones of discipline and fortitude: "Lateribus quippe cadentibus, lapidibus quadris aedificat, cuicunque

carnis lasciviam disciplinae strictioris rigore castigat, qui membrorum legem mentis lege superat, qui corporis fortitudinem spiritus virtute commutat" (PL 79. 598). Cf. Hugh of St Victor, *De claustro animae* 3.12 (PL 176. 1114), who interprets the squaring of the stones to build the temple at Jerusalem as a figure for the influence of monastic discipline on irascible and intractable churchmen. These diverse sources all present square stones as figures for stable elements in a harmonious community.

Translations

p. 115 And note that [people] from Egyptian Thebes are called Thebaei, [those] from Grecian Thebes, Thebani, [those] from Judean Thebes Thebitae.

p. 115 This region is called Boeotia. For Cadmus, the son of Agenor, when he came there found a cow and sacrificing it to the gods he built Thebes and named the region Boeotia. From this [city] they are called Thebani; from the other, which he constructed in Egypt, Thebaei.

p. 116 Again, during the seven hundred and seventy-fifth year before the founding of [Rome], in the course of the quarrel between Danaus and his brother Aegyptus, the daughters of the former murdered the fifty sons of the latter. Later Danaus himself, the instigator of these many crimes, was driven from the kingdom which he had won by many shameful deeds.

p. 116 I am also omitting those stories about Perseus, Cadmus, the Thebans, and the Spartans, which Palaephatus describes as he describes their winding course through mazes of successive evils . . . . I omit Oedipus, the slayer of his father, the husband of his mother, the brother of their children, his own stepfather. I prefer to be silent about how the brothers Eteocles and Polyneices attacked each other, each one striving to be the murderer of the other.

p. 117 The control of Greece was in the hands of the Athenians. The Spartans prevailed over the Athenians, the Thebans overcame the Spartans, the Macedonians conquered the Thebans and soon subdued Asia in war and added it to the empire of Greece.

p. 118 Cadmus ruled Thebes, whose daughter Semele gave birth to Dionysius, that is Liber pater, and under whose [reign] lived Theban Linus, the musician.

p. 118 Theban Linus and Zethus and Amphion became famous for their musical art. Amphion and Zethus were ruling in Thebes.

p. 118 With Cadmus expelled from Thebes, Amphion and Zethus ruled.

p. 118 Amphion ruled Thebes, who, it is said, had moved rocks by the sound of his lyre. But it is said of listeners with hard, or, as I will say, rock-like, hearts.

p. 122 Two loves made the two cities, the earthly one love of self even to the contempt of God, the heavenly one love of God even to the contempt of self.