INTRODUCTION

Kate Gilhuly and Nancy Worman

Meaningful Vistas

This volume brings together a collection of essays that seek to recuperate some of the many ways in which the ancient Greeks in the archaic and classical period invested places with meaning, as well as how the representation of place in literature connects to social practices. While archeologists and ancient historians have long been attentive to geography in ancient Greece, in the past thirty years the innovative work of cultural geographers and scholars in related disciplines (e.g., social anthropology, landscape studies) has raised new possibilities for the examination of actual and symbolic topographies in ancient Greek culture. The essays gathered here explore the critical potential that a consideration of space, place, and landscape brings to the study of Greek literature and culture.

A number of ancient historians and archeologists have been profitably influenced by the "spatial turn,"[1] a term used to describe the confluence of interests across many disciplines regarding what it means to be situated in space. Scholars now conceive of the ancient world as comprised of cultural spaces that are not just the backdrop for the built environment but dynamic and multilayered social constructs whose possible

[1] E.g., Horden and Purcell 2000; Van Dyck and Alcock 2003; Robinson 2011. Cf. Osborne 1987; Cole 2004.

meanings are created and negotiated in a variety of ways. Thus historians and archeologists have undertaken cross-cultural considerations of the development of ancient cities,[2] as well as exploration of cities or religious centers in their relationships to other places and regions, as these are made up of local ecologies and networks of communication and connection.[3] This means that scholars are considering defined types of space in terms of the wider cultural systems in which they are situated.[4] Landscape theory has been especially productive for thinking about the development of sacred space and its relationship to its broader context, as well as the intersection of landscape, monument, and memory.[5]

At the same time, theorists of classical literature are coming to grips with the importance of place and space for understanding textual strategies and cultural values. Since the 1980s, the powerful impact of structuralism on classical literary studies has played a central role in raising awareness of space and place in ancient texts. This conforms with the fact that space is central to the concerns of structuralism; as Doreen Massey has remarked, "The aim of structuralism in fact seemed to be to put space, rather than time on the intellectual agenda."[6] Indeed, spatial notions permeate the structuralist readings of

[2] Smith 2003; Gates 2011.

[3] Osborne 1987; Cole 2009. Scott 2013 considers the spatial dimension of the metropolis-colony relationship as it evolves over time, and applies spatial theory to a range of other historical questions, exploring the potential that an understanding of space has for scholars of Greek and Roman history. Horden and Purcell 2000 brings together broad-ranging historical essays on the relationship between people and their environment in the Mediterranean region.

[4] Nevett 2010 collects and evaluates archeological evidence of domestic spaces to examine how they open up onto larger social and cultural issues. Cf. Nevett 1999, which argues for a recalibration of our understanding of gender in the context of domestic space. O'Sullivan 2011 explores the way Romans thought about moving through society in terms of power, the body, and space in an exploration of walking in Rome.

[5] Scott 2010; Cole 2004; Alcock and Osborne 1994; Alcock 2002.

[6] Massey 2005: 36.

Introduction

Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, as well as others these groundbreaking scholars of ancient literature have influenced. Consider Vernant's analysis of the binary of space and movement as reflected in the conjunction of Hestia and Hermes on the base of the pedestal of Zeus' statue at Olympia.[7] In his *Origins of Greek Thought*, when describing the move away from the Mycenaean Palace system toward the *polis*, Vernant presents this transformation as having a central spatial dimension:

> The terms a Greek would use to express this concept are striking: he would say that certain deliberations, certain decisions must be brought *es to koinon* [to the commons], that the ancient privileges of the king and *arche* itself were set down *es to meson*, in the middle, at the center. The recourse to a spatial image to express the self-awareness that a human group has acquired, its sense of existing as a political unit, is of value not only as a comparison; it also reflects the creation of a social space that was altogether new.[8]

In the first section of the *Black Hunter*, entitled "Space and Time," Vidal-Naquet sees a similar transition in spatial coordinates from Homer to the classical period: "As presented by the *Odyssey*, space figures into the opposition between the real and the imaginary, the gods, monsters, and men, sacrifice and barbarism. After Homer it became the city-state's space. . . . "[9]

While many of the authors in this collection have been deeply influenced by structuralist approaches, the theoretical work in cultural geography and landscape studies, much of which also reflects a poststructuralist awareness of place and landscape as contested and constructed, has had a more immediate impact on most of us, as we explore further below. Our volume seeks to converse with and extend the engagement of other scholars of classical literature and

[7] Vernant 1963.
[8] Vernant 1962: 47.
[9] Vidal-Naquet 1986: xxii.

culture who also incorporate a similarly evolving mix of concepts and methodologies.[10]

With this collection of papers we offer a distinctive supplement to this discussion that both encompasses a number of different authors and genres and takes up from different angles contemporary questions about place, space, and landscape. In the modern period, these three key terms have shifted repeatedly and cultural geographers use them to mean different things;[11] Ancient Greek terminology seems just as unstable as modern geographical discourse, since there is considerable overlap and fluidity in the usage of such terms as *topos* ("place, site"), *chôros* ("space, region"), and *chôra* ("land, countryside"). In what follows, we make a brief attempt to separate out the modern terms in ways that are particularly useful for and relevant to the ancient Greek context, as well as specific to the focus of the papers in this volume. It should be noted, however, that the contributors to this volume use these terms in a variety of ways, not only because of their unique emphases but also because of their exposure to changing awareness in the disciplines about the ways in which modern terminology encodes ideological concerns.[12]

Let us consider, as a first instance, the concept of place. Theorists who engage with it as a social construct, as opposed to a strictly real, inhabited place or undifferentiated space, have proved most useful to those of us who focus on the confluence of particular settings and issues of status and identity. This includes an awareness of perspective, since the looker effectively shapes the place.[13] Consideration of place makes visible relationships among topographical features, identity,

[10] E.g., Romm 1992; Collot et al. 1997; Thalmann 2011.

[11] Kenneth Olwig (2002a, 2002b) notes the influence of the capacious German concept of *Raum*, which can mean space, place, and landscape, and has led to considerable fluidity in the separating out of "space" from "place" and both of these from "landscape."

[12] Olwig (2002a, 2002b) has identified such shifts in terminology as the result of ideological pressures.

[13] See, e.g., Calame 2007.

and the body, while exploration of the vantage from which place is considered reveals the way scenes can be shaped by ideological perspectives and manipulated to promote authority and stature.[14]

As David Harvey has argued, a place is a multilayered locus of the imaginary, a site for the negotiation of social relations, a form of discourse and of power, and, at the same time, a material practice.[15] The construction of place is also relational: take, for example, the ways in which the city of Thebes functions in Athenian drama. As Froma Zeitlin has famously argued, it serves as the other to Athenian values and identity.[16] A place can be defined in its difference relative to other places that are constantly evolving, "woven together out of ongoing stories," as Doreen Massey says.[17] For scholars who study the past primarily through texts, a focus on place is tantalizing because it insists that the imaginary is grounded in the real, locating the discursive patterns that we interrogate in the realm of lived experience. It thus provides the potential to understand how and where the imaginary interacts with actual places and practices.

The philosopher J. E. Malpas observes that the social and place are mutually constitutive: "the social does not exist prior to place nor is it given expression except in and through place. . . . It is within the structure of place that the very possibility of the social arises."[18] This perspective prompts us to consider the particularity of place – what are the social, political, and economic relationships that imbue a place

[14] See Chris Eckerman's essay in this volume, "Pindar's Delphi" (Chapter 1) for an exploration of terms and consideration of the way the framing of place operates in the construction of an authoritative identity.

[15] Harvey 1996: 293–94.

[16] Zeitlin 1990.

[17] Massey 2005: 126. Kate Gilhuly's essay in this volume, "Corinth, Courtesans, and the Politics of Place" (Chapter 5), looks at the identity of Corinth in relationship to Athens as an ongoing process.

[18] Malpas 1999: 36. Cf. Cresswell 2004: 33, who suggests that we think of place as a "'necessary social construction' – something we have to construct in order to be human."

with a distinctive character? What are the local attributes of a place that give it an identity? How can this identity be manipulated?

Politically minded theorists urge that places are not static and bounded but are the site of movement, process, and practice. For the Hellenist, chronologically sundered from the subject of study, captive to fragmentary and seemingly unchanging representations of Greek culture, the allure of place lies in its porousness, the suggestion of plenitude, and the relation of place to the practices of everyday life. As Arturo Escobar writes, we must recognize "that place, body, and environment integrate with each other; that places gather things, thoughts and memories in particular configurations; and that place, more an event than a thing, is characterized by openness rather than by a unitary self-identity."[19]

If place and the social are crucially interdependent, and if places are performative accretions of local meanings, it follows that identity and its coordinates (e.g., class, gender, sexuality) are implicated in the construction of place, and these are constantly resurfacing emphases in this collection of papers. Depictions of place encode a range of values – political, ethical, and aesthetic – as they are embedded in actual practices. A focus on place thus has the potential to foster an approach to an embodied kind of meaning, the space of lived experience. Such insights can lead, for instance, to recognizing more fully the fluid, performative character of urban settings such as the Athenian agora. Drama and oratory help to give the marketplace shape both through actual ritual and legal practices and in the often derisive attributes they attach to it in the course of arguments and plotting. An exploration of place in Greek literature should, then, add dimensions to our understanding of identity in the ancient world.

By contrast to place, the notion of space contributes a different vantage to this exploration. Insofar as the theoretical vocabulary suits the ancient phenomena, "space" would

[19] Escobar 2001: 143; cf. de Certeau 1984: 117, who claims this event status for space. See further below.

appear to be the most abstract, encompassing, and fluid designation: "what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it . . . "[20] While some theorists emphasize the opposition between space and place, others note the fluidity of the relationship between the two.[21] Andrew Merrifield understands the interaction between these two terms as a constant negotiation; he argues that space and place "are different aspects of a unity," and the distinction between the two exists "only insofar as it represents different 'moments' of a contradictory and conflictual process."[22]

Space may oppose inside and outside, include symbolic and actual registers, and encompass areas as disparate as those defined by dramatic and topographical coordinates. And yet, as the geographer Kirsten Simonsen has recently emphasized, one great contribution of Henri Lefebvre's influential work *The Production of Space* is his focus on space as embodied, as just the opposite of abstract or formal.[23] Lefebvre regards the abstraction of space, its disengagement from the warm life of the body, as a result of the visualizing, signifying work of drawing generalized meanings from specific, lived engagements. But paradoxically it is the body itself, what Lefebvre calls the "spatial body," that generates the coordinates demarcating space in abstract terms (e.g., left and right, up and down).[24]

The spatial body in literature can orient the reader to the text. One gets a keen sense of the body's spatial orientations on the Homeric battlefield, for instance, where the reader's high

[20] Tuan 1977: 6.

[21] In "The Permeable Spaces of the Athenian Law-Court" (Chapter 7) Alastair Blanshard finds flexibility in the ways in which Athenians understood and designated the spaces of law. He argues that law-courts were performed places, thus showing the fluidity between space and place in the disposition of the Athenian Agora.

[22] Merrifield 1993: 527. See also Harvey 1996: 315, who also describes the relationship between space and place as dialectic.

[23] Simonsen 2005; cf. Lefebvre (1974) 1991: 194–96; also Rodaway 1994.

[24] Cf. Tuan 1975: 215; also Cook 1998, who refers us to Aristotle's *Physics* 4.1.208b.

prospect (essentially a gods-eye view) allows for the placed viewing of spears whipping through the air from left and right, cutting across and through warrior bodies, which take the fall from high up in the chariot to down on the dusty ground.[25] This same spatial body may also give shape to intimate spaces, as its close-range prospects correlate most directly to domestic settings and thus to indoor and outdoor, floor and ceiling, as points of reference.[26] In tension with such abstractions are the phenomenological features of bodies in spaces – that is, what bodies do in detail, when engaged in particular practices in particular spaces, within the social sphere or in private.[27]

There is a point at which notions of space may include specific places, especially in the context of self-consciously mimetic places like the theatre.[28] The notion of representational space in general is important for our volume since we are engaging spatiality through texts. Representational space allows for a distinctive type of multilayering. For performative space can, at times, engage simultaneously with real and fictional places. In this spatial play, there is a convergence of real and imaginary, and these different experiences of space and/or place are imbricated.[29]

Some scholars have argued that Lefebvre effectively inverts more common notions of space and place, so that the former sometimes appears to indicate specific places.[30] Thus, for instance, while discussing the spatial organization of ancient Athens, he includes the Agora and Acropolis under this rubric

[25] See Purves 2006.
[26] Cook 1998.
[27] Taking a close look at such details, Alex Purves works within this small-scope notion of space in her essay "In the Bedroom: Interior Spaces in Herodotus' *Histories*" (Chapter 3), where she traces important parallels between entering and exiting a room and the putting on and taking off of clothing.
[28] See, e.g., Wiles 1999; Worman 2001; Rehm 2002.
[29] Nancy Worman's essay "Mapping Literary Styles in Aristophanes' *Frogs*" (Chapter 6) directly addresses the interplay between mimetic and real landscapes of Attica.
[30] E.g., Cresswell 2004: 10.

and yet refers to the agora as "gathering-place."[31] But some of the ways in which the terms have shifted over the past decades may also obscure where they intersect, and why Lefebvre and other poststructuralist thinkers such as Michel de Certeau, writing in the 1970s and early 1980s, may have seen space where their critics, writing in 1990s and after, saw place.[32] With the rising influence of historicizing narratives and identity politics, the specifics of place emerged as more compelling sites for scrutinizing power and its negotiations than the relatively abstract schemes that notions of space tend to illuminate.[33] And yet, as the essays in this volume demonstrate, spatial coordinates may bring into sharper focus aspects of status and identity, while characteristics associated with a place may have little to do with a specific site.

In any case, for some of us in this volume it is useful that theorists such as Lefebvre sustain a focus on the continuum from small-scale and embodied coordinates to larger and more abstract ones.[34] In considering ancient phenomena, we are constantly reminded that space can also delineate vast expanses, high vantage points with long views across zones that may run from the upper air to below the ground. From early on Greek poets and philosophers strove to conceive of the earth's edges and to organize Greek and foreign identities in relation to them.[35] From this broad prospect space, in coordination with time, may entail movement within (often quite expansive) confines. Unlike the notion of place, however, space does not necessarily concern so much individual identities

[31] Lefebvre (1974) 1991: 249–50.

[32] Cf. de Certeau's 1984: 117 emphasis on space as "actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it" and as a "practiced place."

[33] In fact, Cresswell's 2004 introduction to his essay, which is very grounded in particular histories and locales, appears to claim for place what earlier writers might have taken to fall under rubrics such as space or landscape.

[34] See esp. chapter 4 in Lefebvre (1974) 1991; also Tuan 1977.

[35] Bakhtin (1930s) 1981; Lefebvre (1974) 1991: 237–41; Cook 1998: 558–59; cf. Romm 1992.

as ontological categories in a broad and symbolic sense (e.g., borderlands, which tend to be inhabited by monsters and other hybrid figures).[36]

Again, place seems to be much more specific than this, a distinct site of marked convergence that accrues social and cultural details over time. Thus place is also historical, existing in narrative time.[37] It has a past that can give a sense of rootedness, as well as one of loss and thus nostalgia.[38] These aspects usually situate the individual in relation to both actual and typifying coordinates. Our third term, "landscape" also implies a subject, one who surveys a geographical vista. This term is freighted with historical, cultural, and especially aesthetic meaning. When, for instance, Denis Cosgrove seeks an example of how topographies are shaped into value-laden patterns by the perceiver, he looks to Ruskin, a profoundly influential interpreter of European art and architecture in the nineteenth century. Cosgrove remarks, "[L]andscape became in Ruskin's eyes a suitable subject for examining the deepest moral and artistic truths," describing a sensibility steeped in centuries-old traditions of landscape painting and architecture.[39]

Landscape embraces aspects of layered cultural settings as they are familiarly viewed, such as the Athenian theater and temple precincts, as well as internationally celebrated sanctuaries such as Delphi and Olympia. Scholars have thus come to recognize that notions of landscape may include aspects more akin to the ways in which place and space intersect with embodied perspectives and social orientations. In the introduction to his influential edited volume, *Landscape and Power*, W. J. T. Mitchell remarks, "Landscape as a cultural medium . . .

[36] E.g., Homer, *Od*. Bks. 9–10; Hesiod, *Theog*. 211–332; Euripes, *Her*. 359–424.

[37] Carol Dougherty's essay, "Ships, Walls, Men: Classical Athens and the Poetics of Infrastructure" (Chapter 4), explores the shifting significance of Athenian terms for infrastructure during the last third of the fifth century BCE.

[38] On *lieux de memoire* see Nora 1989; Schama 1999; Tuan 2003.

[39] Cosgrove and Daniels (1988) 2002: 5. Cf. Cosgrove 1985, 1998; also Tuan 1995.