CHAPTER 1

Introduction

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This volume explores journeys across time and space in Greek and Latin literature, taking as its starting point the paradigm of travel offered by the epic genre. In light of a recent wave of research concerning space, time, and landscape, both in epic poetry and farther afield, this collection approaches the journey as an essential but often overlooked feature of Classical literature. Since antiquity, detailed scholarly attention has been paid to the far-reaching influence of epic poetry, but a single volume has yet to be dedicated to the epic journey itself in the field of Classical studies. In the significant scholarship on travel and homecoming (*nostos*) in ancient literature, the centrality of the journey has been taken for granted. Accordingly, the journey remains a concept largely treated in disparate works, one that calls for interaction with a growing body of nuanced critical perspectives.

The factors that make the journeys explored in this volume specifically "epic" are manifold, but circulate around a set of key themes, formal features, and influences. Each act of motion, whether depicted in Archaic Greek hexameter verse or Imperial Latin prose, gestures toward the structure and content of the ur-journey as defined by Homer. Homeric epic, particularly the *Odyssey*, is therefore an anchor for the volume. As the chapters show, however, Odysseus' voyage spawned a variety of parallel and peripheral acts of literary movement, often with little visible trace of their Greek literary origins. In fact, those built upon the voyage of the Argo display different understandings of time and space, of travel as quest, in contrast to or in conjunction with the journey as *nostos*. Homer's journey is thus both route and point of departure for its many descendants.

Beyond their derivation from benchmark "epic journeys," the non-epic voyages in this volume appropriate elements of the epic genre, including elevated tone and register, heroic expectations and characterizations, laborious obstacles, and even the vastness of space itself. It is most frequently an epic lens through which the volume's characters create meaning from the

landscapes they negotiate. Epic space presents a world against which reality can crash, a world that often appears as a series of imaginary cartographies drawn up in contrast to lived and experienced space. But at times, these seemingly distinct planes of existence appear to coalesce, as actors – both mythic and historic – traverse and perceive topographies of the real through those of the impossible. At their core, acts of departing and returning home were always already bound to epic features, since it is in epic that the first attempts were taken to define these central human concepts in literary terms. As this volume shows in detail, therefore, the epic journey offers a powerful framework for talking about "home" and its antitheses. With such an outsized influence attributed to the genre in the cultures of Greece and Rome, the epic journey perhaps unsurprisingly emerges as intrinsic to questions of identity both collective and individual; to the development of narrative; to historical emplotment; and to constructions of heroism. This collection seeks to elucidate these various aspects in isolation and in interaction, offering a wide-ranging discussion of the epic journey from a number of different angles.

In the course of conceptualizing this volume, several questions emerged as shared points of investigation throughout the contributions. By applying the model of the epic journey to a variety of generic contexts and historical periods, our contributors explore how the nature of the journey creates its multiplicity of functions. Specifically, by examining the structure of the journey within different generic frameworks, the chapters reveal the journey's function as a point of departure and of cohesion as each work situates itself against epic templates. Translated into different genres, the journey provides a vehicle for identifying and authorizing the protagonists of the various texts under consideration. Mapped onto community, kingdom, or empire, it enables these protagonists to assert knowledge, and therefore power, over the spaces they trace and traverse. By its very nature, the journey raises questions of agency and leadership, informing the relationship between individual and community, male and female, parent and child, but also destabilizing these most rudimentary binaries: the journey links while it creates distance – it always functions in multiple dimensions.

In order to understand the journey in its many facets, this volume reflects broadly on ideas of home, displacement, and the dialogue between the two created by the act of traveling.[1] While the array of topics under analysis may

[1] The discussion of "home" here is indebted to a colloquium series organized by Andrew C. Johnston and Alexander Loney at Yale University in 2014.

appear to range far from one another, the contributions find shared ground not only in their focus on epic travel and its influence, but also in their consistent return to the most common and powerful point of departure. As the ideological center of a community, "home" is both a fixed point of orientation and a transportable set of cultural values.[2] As Kirsten Jacobson suggests,

> Just as our bodies and our ability to find orientation through our bodies serve to open us up onto the world and varying spatial levels, the home is also responsible for providing a form of habituated orientation for us insofar as it is intimately tied up with these developments of our body. In and through our homes (especially those of our childhood), we develop certain ways of doing and perceiving things, and we carry these tendencies with us into our future homes as well as into the world.[3]

Gaston Bachelard's reflections on the retrospective impact of "home" in *The Poetics of Space* underscore the centrality of home for the shaping of the self:

> The successive houses in which we have lived have no doubt made our gestures commonplace. But we are very surprised, when we return to the old house, after an odyssey of many years, to find that the most delicate gestures, the earliest gestures suddenly come alive, are still faultless. In short, the house we were born in has engraved within us the hierarchy of the various functions of inhabiting. We are the diagram of the functions of inhabiting that particular house, and all the other houses are but variations on a fundamental theme.[4]

We see here the role of home in the making of a "home" in the world, of constructing a zone of familiarity while "abroad."[5] "Home," in fact, is not

[2] Cf. Jacobson 2012. "On "home" and the creation of political subjects, see Kirsten Jacobson's very useful discussion in Jacobson 2010. Through engagement with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's treatment of home and beyond, Jacobson argues that "although leaving home is essential to our experience of home *as* home, it is an activity that we win, so to speak, through effort and ultimately through the established security of the home" (Jacobson 2010: 220). She continues, "[t]o be public is to improvise on the basis of a foundation—a homestead," noting elsewhere that, "[b]eing an individual must be a development that relies on our being first *with* others, on our having departed from a secure base—from a home" (Jacobson 2010: 230; 242). Cf. esp. Deleuze and Guattari 1987. For the foundational idea of "being-at-home," see Jacobson 2009.

[3] Jacobson 2010: 228. She here engages with Steinbock 1995.

[4] Bachelard 1964: 15. See discussion of the quotation at Jacobson 2010: 221.

[5] The political dimensions of the spatial construction of the city (*polis*-space) have exercised numerous thinkers. Arendt's claim in *The Human Condition* is particularly relevant: "men's life together in the form of the *polis* seemed to assure that the most futile of human activities, action and speech…would become imperishable. The organization of the *polis*, physically secured by the wall around the city and physiognomically guaranteed by its laws…is a kind of organized remembrance" (Arendt 1998: 198). See discussion at Willis 2011: 6. For "home" and human movement, see also Virilio 1997.

always left behind: it can be used to negotiate collective and cultural identity upon reaching a foreign destination. The idea of "home" also has its darker side. It excludes, separating inside from outside, distinguishing "us" from "them"; even within the home, boundaries of gender, age, and social status are constructed and negotiated. "Home" can be represented as a place, a perspective, a language, through which the idea of travel can be explored, not just as a physical journey but also as an intellectual process. A journey can be conceptualized in similarly metaphorical terms, as translation, conquest, or self-definition, as a process of movement away from or through an ideological home as much as a geographical one: famously, the journey is itself a "metaphor we live by."[6] In a consideration of the impact that mobility and movement have on ideas, cultures, cities, and peoples, Stephen Greenblatt has observed that "the reality, for most of the past as once again for the present, is more about nomads than natives."[7] Hence, whether one looks to Greek colonists conceptualizing their westward journeys through the lens of the *Odyssey* or Vergil's composition of the *Aeneid* as a homecoming achieved through civil conquest, the journey, mobility in action, emerges as intrinsic to the construction of "home."[8]

Recent research in Classics has devoted significant attention to place, space, liminality, boundaries, and their transgression. It has been some time since Michel Foucault (1986) proclaimed the coming "spatial turn" in cultural analysis (cf. Tally 2013) and Henri Lefebvre theorized the cultural and political dimensions of the "production of space," particularly that of the city. For Lefebvre, the individual's relationship with environmental systems and spatial networks help scholars articulate a vision of the participant as viewer and creator, one who inhabits the interstitial zone between active and passive. Such theories continue to influence contemporary understanding of a variety of ancient contexts, concepts, and figures, from the Ovidian flâneur to Augustan architectural intervention in Rome's urban ebb and flow.[9] Within the fields of Classics and Comparative Literature space and spatiality have been increasingly prominent in scholarly inquiry for nearly twenty years, serving as "objects" of analysis and as lenses for

[6] Lakoff and Johnson 1980.
[7] Greenblatt 2010: 6.
[8] Jacobson discusses the role of home in Biblical and Homeric texts, concluding that stories of homes lost and regained, of hospitality offered and perverted, "emphasise the ways in which our homes establish our participation in human community–both family and nation–and the conflicts and responsibilities that emerge within and between such communities" (Jacobson 2012: 178).
[9] See Lefebvre 1970 and 1991. Also of significance is the treatment of urban motion in de Certeau 1984. In this volume, see O'Sullivan's discussion of movement in Ch. 8.

viewing and interrogating literary and cultural production. The cartographic impulse of many ancient genres and the key role of "place" in texts as disparate as Greek pastoral and Propertian elegy have led Classicists to undertake the study of landscape (real and imaginary) within the subfields of history, archaeology, literary studies, and well beyond (Alcock 1993; Shipley and Salmon 1996; Alcock, Cherry, and Elsner 2001; Spencer 2010; Scott 2013). Roman literary studies offer a well-known example: work on Latin literature and the palimpsestic landscape of monumental Rome has often broken new ground concerning the impact of place on interpretation (and that of interpretation on the construction of place) (Edwards 1996; Jaeger 1997; Welch 2005). The narratological implications of thinking spatially – a methodology that our focus on the journey may bring out more fully – have also received more attention in recent years. Among Classical scholars, De Jong 2012 heralded space as the overlooked companion of time in literary interpretation, a call already heeded by Heirman and Klooster 2013.[10] The afterlife of the Odyssean journey, one of the better-studied paradigms of epic travel (Stanford 1954; Malkin 1998; Hartog 2001), has recently given rise to a significant volume of reception studies (Gardner and Murnaghan 2014). Indeed, the epic genre – and to a lesser degree the epic journey – has lately been treated in terms of space, landscape, and geography (Skempis and Ziogas 2013). The chapters in this volume aim to complement this rapidly growing body of scholarship.

An example that demonstrates the centrality of the epic journey across genres is Emily Gowers' 1994 reading of Horace *Satires* 1.5, in which the epic journey provides a point of reference and departure for the satirist's travels. Reversing, in some sense, Aeneas' foundational journey to Rome, Horace depicts himself bumbling along the route to Brundisium with none other than Vergil himself. As Gowers points out, his progress is "a series of negative choices. The roads not taken on this journey are as much part of the picture as those that are."[11] Horace flips his epic counterpoint's geographical and historical teleology, denying his audience both the site and sight of Augustan Rome and the political inner circle they crave. Another significant example of spatial research, this time focused on reading the epic genre itself, is found in William Thalmann's 2011 study of Apollonius Rhodius' *Argonautica*. Its introduction offers a detailed survey of place, space, and spatiality as conceptualized in current literary theory and Classical studies. For Thalmann, space is essential to the poem, and the *Argonautica* offers "a richly suggestive portrayal of space, the

[10] Cf. Purves 2010a with bibliography. [11] Gowers 1994: 50.

physical world as it is experienced, shaped, and imagined by human beings in their social and cultural interactions."[12] It is such inherent yet often-overlooked elements of epic's textualized relationships between human actors and the physical world, in this case within a poem that is itself about movement through spaces and places, that render Thalmann's readings and methodological propositions a springboard for further interpretation. As he well puts it, "space as a concept ... encompasses geography as emplotment and measurement and in some ways relies on it; but it includes much more: in particular, human experience."[13] This potted formulation points toward the core of what the present collection is about. For our authors, space is always crafted by human experience, never a static given; it is always caught up in the transformative journey to which it is subjected through the construction of "place." And movement through literary space on epic terms allows for its measurement in ways that serve not only to imbue it with meaning, but also to define the self.

The contributions to this volume represent a first step toward filling a scholarly gap by looking at the "epic journey" with a wide lens, but with particular focus on journeys taken to and from home. Individual chapters discuss authors as distinct as Homer (Bakker, Loney) and Rutilius Namatianus (Devecka), Tacitus (Damon and Palazzolo) and Lucian (ní Mheallaigh). The voyage of the Argo is explored in Apollonius of Rhodes, in comparison with the *Aethiopica* of Heliodorus (Montiglio), and in the *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus (Blum). From Rome to the moon (Devecka, ní Mheallaigh), the journeys in this volume span the space between *oikos* and *oikumene*, *urbs* and *orbis* (Baragwanath, Johnston, O'Sullivan). Journeys provide the means to negotiate Greek identity in the shadow of Rome (Johnston) and to conceptualize periods of transition in Hesiodic time (Bakker). Such journeys take numerous forms: whether the foundational story of *nostos* presented in the *Odyssey* (Loney); its redirection as the structure that underlies Aeneas' (or Dido's) journey from east to west (Keith, O'Sullivan, Biggs); or Xenophon's Odyssean *nostos* in the *Anabasis* (Baragwanath). The epic journey not only provides the road map for the heroic quest, but as a framework may also be coopted into historiographical accounts, such as Germanicus' voyage to the periphery of the Roman Empire (Damon and Palazzolo) or Xenophon's account of his own return (Baragwanath). The analysis of what this generically encoded structure does in a range of literary environments enables us to better understand still-underserved topics that are as essential to the heroic

[12] Thalmann 2011: 9. [13] Thalmann 2011: 14.

quest as a hero in motion, such as the impact of gender on the epic narrative: after all, it is not only male heroes who undertake epic voyages, nor is the home from which one travels necessarily a male-dominated sphere (Keith, Baragwanath). With such a wealth of examples, the journey emerges as a vital subject of investigation in its own right.

An understanding of the journey as a process of construction – of self, space, or society – also provides a common theme throughout the volume. What emerges from this thread of investigation is a series of interconnections that maps literary intertextuality onto the historical and geographical *loci* depicted by the ancient authors. These textualized constellations tell the story of the epic journey from Odysseus' wanderings to modern-day voyages to the moon. Through a retrospective lens, Homer becomes "home" – a point of departure to which later authors, implicitly or explicitly, return in a sort of literary *nostos*. Part I, focusing on the *Odyssey* and its reception, locates the journey in a temporal as well as spatial continuum as it traces the origins and parameters of the Iron Age present. Part II develops the idea of characterization and "home" through gendered journeys, examining in particular the relationships between different travelers and the different teleologies they posit for their journey. Part III takes the idea of the journey as a *locus* for the construction of national identity to Rome, where the movements – willing or unwilling – of various travelers define Rome's place in the wider world. Part IV, too, explores the interaction of distance and definition in the Roman Empire, examining how the spaces across which one journeys locate the center in a cosmic scheme. Each part begins with a summary and discussion of the chapters it includes. These brief editorial treatments are designed to highlight points of continuity and contrast between the various themes throughout the volume. We have decided upon these localized engagements in lieu of a frontloaded survey in the general introduction: by distributing our comments throughout the book, we hope to offer readers some waystations for reflection as they travel through its pages.

Many of the chapters in this volume are based on papers given at a conference organized by Thomas Biggs and Jessica Blum at Yale University on 25–26 April 2014. The event, entitled "Home and Away: The Epic Journey," was the first step in the reevaluation of the journey that we now aim to realize in the pages that follow. The conversations that took place between the contributors have given rise to the vast yet cohesive scope of this volume. In addition to the conference, several of the volume's chapters derive from a yearlong colloquium also held at Yale on the concept of "home," organized by Andrew C. Johnston and Alexander Loney, and

from the papers delivered at a symposium on poetic journeys held at Yale in March 2014. Together, they bring into dialogue a wide range of texts, methodologies, and focal points, offering numerous pathways for the interpretive journey.

Lastly, a note on format and the use of critical editions. As editors we have crafted a level of consistency throughout the volume. Nevertheless, to provide our contributors with the scope to express their views as desired, we have allowed individual authors to use distinct forms of transliteration and some freedom in the presentation of the ancient languages for emphasis. For example, although consistency is maintained within each chapter, Hellenists have on the whole elected to maintain a form of transliteration closer to the Greek (e.g. Phaiakians), while the Latinized forms appear more often in the contributions of Romanists. In most cases contributors employ the standard critical texts as defined by the current scholarly consensus, but in some instances an author firmly believed in the need to engage with a different edition. These editorial decisions reflect our belief in the strength of the arguments as they are presented.