

Home and Away: The Epic Journey

A conference at Yale, April 25th–26th, 2014



This conference will explore the idea of journeys across time and space, taking as its starting point the paradigm of travel offered by the epic genre. The foundational role of epic in Greek and Latin literature places the journey at the center of both literary and historical discourses of self-construction. The epic journey is intrinsic to questions of identity formation, on both the communal and the individual level, to narrative development, to historical emplotment and to constructions of heroism. Despite much scholarship on travel and homecoming in ancient literature, there remains room in the current academic discourse for a thorough reexamination of the concept of the journey itself (*iter*, *nostos*, *via*, *cursus*, etc.), especially since it sits at the heart of ancient mythic and literary thought. We will look at this theme in the context of journeys to and from home: by defining the cultural-imaginary space in which a character or story operates, the journey provides the structure that allows that person or plot to take on its distinctive character.



The conference will expand and reflect on the wider, year-long project of the Departmental Colloquium, that in 2013-14 examines the idea of home, displacement and the dialogue between the two that journeys create. As the ideological center of a community, home is both a fixed point of orientation and a transportable set of cultural values. 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 thus be seen as translation, conquest, or self-definition, a process of movement away from or through an ideological home as much as a geographical one. Whether one looks to Greek colonists conceiving of their westward journeys through the lens of the *Odyssey* or Vergil's presentation of the *Aeneid* as a homecoming through civil conquest, the concept of journey is intrinsic to the construction of home. In exploring the interrelationship of the journey and home, this conference will provide a forum for reconceiving how the journey functions across a wide variety of genres and historical contexts.



Organizers:

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Speakers:

Egbert Bakker
Emily Baragwanath
Cynthia Damon & Liz Palazzolo
Martin Devecka
Andrew Johnston
Allison Keith
Silvia Montiglio
Damien Nelis – Keynote
Karen Ni-Mheallaigh

(Yale University)
(University of North Carolina Chapel Hill)
(University of Pennsylvania)
(Yale University)
(Yale University)
University of Toronto)
(Johns Hopkins University)
(University of Geneva)
(University of Exeter)

A programme and registration information will be posted shortly.

