

Walking through History:¹ Unlocking the Mythical Past

Landscape as palimpsest: at the crossroads of space and time

The palimpsest, on which erasure precedes reuse, may seem an unlikely parallel for the development of an imagined landscape, a mental map, or a conceptual geography. Nevertheless, this analogy captures the way in which experiences through time constantly set down new imprints on the faded experiences of the past and effectively encapsulates the layered nature of the ancient landscapes. One tension which emerges from these landscape palimpsests is seen in the way in which landscapes are built up and imbued with ever greater significance over time, resulting in a multi-layered world with both spatial and temporal dimensions, while, nevertheless, there is a privileging of certain key moments in the past, which are dominant in their level of resonance and signification.² Furthermore the importance of continuity across time, however unevenly textured, is mirrored by continuity across space. In spite of the local nature of stories that attach to each place and the consequently fragmentary sense of space that might emerge, it is interaction and connectivity, above all conducted through travel, that predominates. Such movement through a landscape in the present enables us to unlock the mythical past and its narratives. As the traveller continues on his or her way, the past comes to life, and the landscape becomes not only the one being journeyed through, but simultaneously the one experienced by figures from the past, evoked by place names, artefacts, and stories.³

Myth and landscape: a natural partnership

¹ My title refers to the Channel 4 Series, *Walking through History*, and featuring Tony Robinson, who according to the Series description 'embarks on spectacular walks through some of Britain's most historic landscapes in search of the richest stories from our past'. Julia Bradbury's BBC series of *Railway Walks* similarly typifies the sense of uncovering the past by travelling through the present landscape, which this article explores.

² On this see Clarke (1999) 245-93.

³ Here the language of de Jong (2012) 4 may be helpful for its distinction between the 'setting' of the action, and 'frames', that is 'locations that occur in thoughts, dreams, or memories.... Such frames may bring in distant, inaccessible, hypothetical, or counterfactual locations, which all expand the space of a story in various significant ways'.

Let us start by acknowledging that both myth and landscape are problematic terms. In terms of its chronological scope, 'myth' has most naturally been defined as dealing with the age of gods and heroes, although even here there is a long history of scholarly dispute. Brillante, for example, places great significance on the temporal distinction between myth and history, whereas Calame offers a broader definition in which the presence of a narrative, the focus on the time of gods and heroes, and the element of imagination are the three definitive cornerstones.⁴ The term 'landscape' too begs a sharpening of focus on whether we are using it to refer to a discrete physical entity, which is almost objective in its existence, or, more pertinently here, to a human 'construction' of space.⁵

The constructed nature of landscape and its relationship to myth are beautifully illustrated by the work of Pausanias, a traveller through and creator of mythical landscapes.⁶ For Alcock, landscape 'conveys the totalizing and constructed nature of Pausanias' narrated world, implying a geography conceived from the perspective of one individual observer. Moving through space... he creates the entire terrain the reader too travels'.⁷ Pausanias' professed focus on the combination of *logoi* and *theoremata* (1.39.3), stories and sights, eloquently expresses the process by which travel in the text gives rise to tales about the past, as the predominantly spatial organization of the *Periegesis* yields a 'discontinuous and anachronic exploration of the Greek past and present through its monuments and remains'.⁸ The author and reader of this text, then, leap together backwards and forwards in time as the present landscape becomes temporarily and imaginatively the landscape of the mythic past through memories and stories evoked by monuments, rituals, and place-names.⁹ It is

⁴ See Brillante (1990) 101-5, and Calame (2003) 3-25, respectively

⁵ On the difference between real and constructed landscapes see Buxton (1994) 81, reminding us that, while there *are* real landscapes, 'human beings create an image of their surroundings through their interaction with them, so that perception of a landscape is inevitably mediated by cultural factors'. See Clarke (1999) 17, 28-9, for the parallel 'construction' of 'place', which can be seen as generated from space by human interaction; also now Gilhuly and Worman (2014) 6-7.

⁶ For Pausanias' preference for distant periods of the past over more recent and current history, see Cohen (2001) 95-6: Pausanias 'ignored those spaces touched by imperial power and populated the land with imaginary superhuman beings'; also Pretzler (2007) 77-8.

⁷ Alcock (1996) 249.

⁸ Akujärvi (2012) 238.

⁹ See Alcock (1996) 249, for the active construction of memory in the landscape: 'One of the primary means by which memories were preserved and promulgated was

the arrival of the interested traveller which triggers the process of turning the clock back, so that one location shares two time-frames.¹⁰ In the same way, I shall argue that while the physical environment provides a setting for mythical episodes, those myths in turn facilitate the intellectual transformation of physical space into a resonant 'landscape'. The 'mythic landscape' thus spans a period from the distant past to the present, in which location is the constant and myth is a medium through which that space is articulated and experienced.

The relevance of the distant past, the world of myth, to those who would seek to understand, describe, even create a landscape is addressed directly in the most completely preserved geographical text from the ancient world, Strabo's *Geography* (8.3.3):

I am comparing present conditions with those described by Homer; for we must initiate this comparison because of the renown of the poet and because of our familiarity with him from our childhood, since all of us believe that we have not successfully treated any subject which we may have under discussion until there is left in our treatment nothing that conflicts with what the poet says on the same subject, such trust do we place in his words.

The importance of the mythical, epic, distant past in the mental geography of Strabo's imagined readership, was due partly to its inherent appeal,¹¹ and partly to the nature of Classical *paideia* with Homer at its heart.¹² The ongoing centrality of Homer in the ancient mind-set offers a compelling explanation for why putting Greek myths on the map remained a concern throughout Classical antiquity and beyond.¹³

As Strabo (2.5.17) makes clear, even though places may change physically or even drop off the map altogether, significant elements of their past can override their current demise. Mapping the world through the past rests on the premise that places

through the marking of specific places in the landscape, either through the telling of stories, the enactment of rituals, or the building of commemorative monuments'.

¹⁰ See Hawes (2013) 195, for the tension between the continuity of location and the gap in time-frame, which yields a 'paradoxical relationship between the realms of myth and contemporary experience'.

¹¹ See 13.1.1 for the idea that a strong Homeric element was demanded by 'everyone who longed to know about famous and ancient things'.

¹² See Biraschi (2005) 81, on the 'absolute pre-eminence of Homeric tradition in Greek education, culture and history'.

¹³ The inescapability of the Homeric geographical frame is familiar from Herodotus' need to engage with the notion of an all-encircling Ocean (2.21; 2.23), on which see Fowler's chapter in this volume.

are made through time; the past does not vanish but remains embedded in the identity of a place and enhances its current status and appeal.¹⁴ This idea is borne out in the strength of the currency of myth in the creation of local identity and the generation of political power. Claims that a particular hero had passed by carried high value, especially in the competitive, performative and intrinsically related worlds of local historiography and inter-city diplomacy, as we shall see later.

Nevertheless, in spite of his belief in the fundamental importance of Homer, Strabo expresses reservations about the lack of accuracy in a world mapped out by myth.¹⁵ The mythic layer of the landscape palimpsest stretches credibility and sits uncomfortably with the reality on the ground, and the problem is exacerbated by those who believe and endorse fanciful tales just to fill in the gaps in their knowledge of how the world shapes up (Strabo 7.3.1):

It is because of men's ignorance of these regions that any heed has been given to those who created the mythical 'Rhipaeian Mountains' and 'Hyperboreans', and also to all those false statements made by Pytheas the Massalian regarding the country along the ocean... So then, those men should be disregarded... Let us confine our narrative to what we have learned from history, both ancient and modern....

Strabo seems uncertain where to draw the line on the place of myth in the generation of landscape, claiming for example that the story of Dodona and its doves is 'excessively poetic, but appropriate for this current geographical work'.¹⁶ His concerns over the implausibility of some mythic landscapes never entails rejection of the mental map of an educated reader which was inevitably based on a mythical world of the Homeric epics, the wanderings of Odysseus, and the dispersal of heroes from Troy.¹⁷ Such epic lustre, a link to the mythical past, invested a place with special status and added to the competitive claims of cities.

¹⁴ On this, see Clarke (1999) 245-93 and Clarke (2008) *passim*, but especially 140-50 in relation to Strabo. For the idea that mythic motifs 'were fundamental for the *imaginaire* of a community, a *polis*, a league, and indeed the Hellenic world as a whole', see Gehrke (2001) 300.

¹⁵ See Calame (2003) 115-16, discussing Strabo's difficulties in placing Homer on the truth-scale.

¹⁶ Strabo, *Geography* 7.7.10: τὰ μὲν ποιητικετέρας ἐστὶ διατριβῆς τὰ δ' οἰκεῖα τῆς νῦν περιοδείας. On this passage and the implications of Strabo's analysis of the myth for the contested nature of mythical material, see Hawes (2014) 10.

¹⁷ See Kim (2010) 47-84, for discussion of Strabo's attempt to reconcile Homer's poetic and historical roles partly through a defence of Homer's geographical knowledge.

Myth was clearly a significant component in the geographer's world-view. It encapsulates the continuing relevance of the distant past partly for the sake of prestige. But seeing the physical and imagined landscape through the prism of myth highlights its constantly shifting nature: geography is evolving, growing in depth and resonance, 'created' in the sense of humanly-conceived and sometimes even man-made. Therefore it is contestable and contested, redefined and renegotiated.¹⁸ Geographical space and the narrative medium of myth mesh together to create links across time, across different key episodes which have taken place in the same location and have in turn each enriched that space and made it into a place.

Islands of myth and travelling heroes

Many myths are very local, as the contributions in this volume illustrate. They both take place in a particular location, and enrich and define that place as a mythic landscape for the future, evocative of particular resonant narratives.¹⁹ The fragments of space defined and enriched by different myths might be compared to a multitude of islands, broken up by clear water. These 'islands' of mythical significance, in which places are made meaningful and resonant by their pasts, might *potentially*, if put together, enable us to create a composite 'map of myths'. Some areas might be particularly rich in mythical figures and episodes, with different myths overlaid to create a deep and concentrated set of resonances; others would be under-populated with mythical material. Looking down magisterially on such a map of myths would present a picture of incomplete coverage, with some areas picked out in significantly more glorious technicolour than others.

But the static view from the divine vantage point is quickly rendered dynamic, and the space becomes an experienced rather than simply a viewed one, when we consider the myths which *poleis* adopted or which local historians favoured in their accounts. Herakles, a naturally itinerant figure, appears in the fragmentary remains of a geographically diverse range of local histories, both from the Peloponnese,

¹⁸ For space as 'constantly negotiated and reconstructed in the physical, cultural, and political map', see Skempis and Ziogas (2013) 1.

¹⁹ See in this volume Mount Pelion and its Thessalian location, or Boeotian Thebes, myths associated with the edges of the earth, or with iconic locations such as the Hellespont, or with particular islands such as Erythreia. XXX

especially Elis, and beyond.²⁰ Hegesippos of Mekyberna takes him north to Chalcidice (*FGrH* 391), where he was involved in a gigantomachy at Phlegraea, while writers on Italy and Sicily naturally involved him in a gigantomachy at a different Phlegraeian plain. Timaios of Tauromenium related Herakles' journey through Italy, via the battle between giants and gods, and on down to Sicily (F89). A more inventive appropriation of the 'Herakles fought the giants *here*' theme is to be found in the third-century BC work on Cyzicos by Agathocles, which concerns the competitive creation of small islands near Cyzicos (*FGrH* 472 F2). One island was piled up by Giants, another by Kore, on which she destroyed the Giants with that flexible hero, Herakles, at her side. Pelops was another such disputed mythical figure, part of the competition between local historians to appropriate major Panhellenic heroes for inclusion in their local accounts.²¹ Istros the Callimachean claimed that Pelops was a Paphlagonian; while Autesion said that he was an Achaean and from the city of Olenos (*FGrH* 334 F74).

The kudos attached to mythical associations is neatly illustrated by Strabo who criticizes the author of a work on Thessaly for distorting his history and misappropriating more famous tales than the region really deserved in order to please his audience: 'wanting to gratify the Thessalians with mythical stories', says Strabo, 'he says that the temple at Dodona was transferred there from part of Thessaly' (7.7.12). These local histories exemplify the effectiveness of myth in the competitive field of *polis* or regional self-enhancement. They furthermore reinforce the convenient blurring that could be made between *spatium mythicum* and *spatium historicum*, which facilitated the creation of histories that could run, at least intermittently, from the distant past to the present day. Mobile heroes - Herakles, Pelops, the fleeing Trojans and homeward-bound Greeks of the epic cycle - not only brought lustre to multiple locations, but linked different parts of the world together through their travels. Travelling heroes set down points of mythical significance as they covered large tracts of the Mediterranean world, which in turn became an archipelago of

²⁰ See Herakles in the *Argolika* of Hagias-Derkylos (*FGrH* 305), as father of Megara's children in the *Argolika* of Deinias (*FGrH* 306); with the horse, Arion, in the *Arkadika* of Ar(I)aithos of Tegea (*FGrH* 316); in the *Eliaka* of Echephylidas; or outside the Peloponnese in the *Attika* of Philochoros.

²¹ Even minor figures from the mythical period apparently carried some prestige. As Pausanias claims of the people of Troezen (2.30.5): 'They glorify their own country more than anyone else. They claim Oros as first-born in their land, even though Oros is not even a Greek name'.

islands of myth, linked by the lines of their journeys. Kowalzig argues, 'If we traced all the voyages of gods and heroes on a giant map of the Mediterranean, positioning little figures where they left behind a cult, few spots would remain blank'.²² I would press for a less continuous mythic landscape than that posited by Kowalzig, and for the possibility that other factors and figures besides founding heroes might play some part in the spatial articulation of Greece. Kowalzig's picture of a 'map of Greece *entirely* [my italics] shaped by itinerant gods, heroes and humans from a distant past, who establish cults and rituals, and set up and carry around cult images and other spoils from a time long ago',²³ may seem overstated. Nevertheless, the notion of heroic travellers depositing hot-spots of mythic resonance is an appealing one, and illustrates how we may see myth sitting at the intersection of a web of links across the matrix of space and time.

Creating the heroic landscape: a patchwork of myth and history

The predominance of travel in the mythical age ties 'mythical islands' into a network, which has implications for the continuous nature of the mythical landscape, since it generates linear connections between discrete mythic locations. When we try to plot myth and landscape against the matrix of time, the picture is no less complex. Alongside the idea of the mythic landscape spanning vast stretches of time in a process of constant redefinition and renegotiation, we may introduce the image of the patchwork. This has been frequently applied to myth, particularly with respect to the temporal interface between myth and history. Thus Finley notes that, 'Patchwork is the rule in myth, and it gives no trouble. Only the historically minded see the rough stitches and the faulty joins and are bothered by them'.²⁴ Similarly, Brillante describes myth, in contrast to history, as 'a stitching together of heterogeneous elements'.²⁵ Not only does this imagery reinforce the 'bricolage' of mythical narrative, but it also implies that the temporal links between distant past and present are, however roughly assembled, nevertheless continuous. However, as Finley himself notes in his discussion of myth, memory, and history, we do not recall the past by working

²² Kowalzig (2007) 24.

²³ Kowalzig (2007) 24.

²⁴ Finley (1975) 16.

²⁵ Brillante (1990) 101.

steadily backwards along a continuous time-line; rather, the 'memory leaps instantaneously to the desired point and it then dates by association'.²⁶

The prevalence of moments of foundation in myth, expressed through place-name aetiologies as well as foundation stories,²⁷ naturally places the creation of a landscape at the centre of many mythic narratives and also locates the chronological focal point at the earliest extent of the place's existence. That foundations are routinely conducted in the course of heroic travels further serves to tie the mythical landscape associated with each mythical foundation into a more extensive web of contacts. Myth thus underpins the essential aim of local historiography, namely to set out the claims to importance, the identity, the story of a particular place both locally and in the broader context of the world beyond. Mythic discourse offers a medium through which this duality between local and universal can be articulated. Because of the characteristic mobility of the mythical world, it seems that jumping back to the moment of foundation often offers the best opportunity in the life of a city to stress its interconnectedness with the wider world.

Malkin has discussed this issue extensively, in the context of his interest in networks and connectivity, arguing that myth is a, perhaps *the*, key mode through which interaction and relationships between *poleis* could be expressed. Malkin notes that the creation of a symbolic landscape often involved the reconfiguration of the city's past to focus on the period of myth. He gives the example of the fifth-century Italiote city of Achaean Croton, which effectively replaced its historical founder Myskellos of Rhytai, with the new, more prestigious, mythical founder, Herakles, in whose name the city started striking coins.²⁸ The ubiquitous Herakles was, as the fragments of local historiography demonstrate, ideal for the purpose of enabling cities to buy into a Panhellenic identity and give themselves a history which was even older than the Trojan war. However, a different form of one up-man-ship can be seen in the behaviour of the Spartan colony of Taras, which replaced its founder, Phalanthos, in the Classical period with Taras, the eponymous hero of local river. This was clearly not a Panhellenic move, but rather one which projected the city's past further back in

²⁶ Finley (1975) 23.

²⁷ See Malkin (1994) 20, for the importance of mythological land genealogies, as providing the explanation for the names of landmarks.

²⁸ See Malkin (2005) 64.

time.²⁹

The period of mythical foundations encapsulates a moment of supreme mobility, entailing travel on a grand scale, which gave the resulting communities Mediterranean as well as local identities.³⁰ Even tales of heroic foundations, which appear on first sight to involve relatively static models, serve to illustrate the way in which the story becomes more fluid when the full mythic context is taken into account. One such example, preserved in Justin's epitome of Pompeius Trogus, brings together the story of Jason and Medea with that of Herakles. Jason is worshipped by 'almost the whole Orient' as its founder, and the city of Media is said to have been established in honour of Medea.³¹ The region as a whole, Armenia, is given the rather obvious aetiology of having been founded by Armenius, a companion of Jason, a detail which provides the initial impetus for telling the Golden Fleece and Medea stories, and thereby evokes a broad spatial scope (Justin 42.2.7-12). This is further extended by mention of the treaty made between the new settlers and the Albanians who followed Herakles from the Alban Mount when he led the cattle of Geryon. Casting back to the mythical age of heroic foundations almost inevitably entails the critical ingredient of travel, knitting together a web of connections between places, which might seem initially discrete.

The strong element of fluidity in the world of myth is enhanced by one of its other striking features, namely the multiplicity of competing versions of foundations, which conjure up different landscapes through different heroic journeys. The parameters for the competition were no doubt set by existing narratives and consequent expectations, but, as Price rightly notes in his discussion of the power of myth in local identity in the cities of the Greek East, it is not clear who had the right to adjudicate.³² Stories concerning the foundation of Rome were a case in point. According to Dionysius of Halicarnassus (1.45-9), Hellanicus gave the best account of Aeneas' travels to Italy, and almost all Roman writers attested to the arrival of

²⁹ See Malkin (2005) 64.

³⁰ See Malkin (2005) 56, for the displacement of hierarchies such as that embodied by the centre-periphery model, by the notion of a network which 'fosters a new view of geography and human space'.

³¹ See Justin, *Epitome of the Historiae Philippicae of Pompeius Trogus* 42.3.5-6.

³² Price (2005) 119-20. A slightly different angle is offered by Mac Sweeney (2013) 15, who sees the multiplicity of competing foundation stories as reflecting the needs of different audiences and occasions, thus concurrently valid as part of a 'foundation discourse'.

Aeneas and the Trojans, for which there was evidence in the form of rituals. However, the exact route taken was controversial and Dionysius decides to set it out in full detail (1.49.4-53.3) in order to refute the suggestion made by some historians that Aeneas did not come to Italy at all. Sometimes, unsurprisingly, vested interests got in the way of the 'truth', and this was apparent in the appropriation of big heroes to individual *poleis*. According to Strabo (13.1.53), Demetrius of Scepsis thought that Scepsis was a royal residence of Aeneas; but Strabo knew that Aeneas was not part of that story at all.

Writers of the Hellenistic period and beyond devoted a great deal of attention to working out who went where after the fall of Troy, exemplifying the impact that mythical mobility had on the later conceptual mapping of the Mediterranean world and the imaginative creation of its landscape. But these mythic migrations sat alongside more recent tales of travel and resettlement. Strabo's account (3.4.3) of Abdera, founded by the Phoenicians, and of other cities in Spain, founded by an array of heroes, illustrates the rather hazy boundary between mythic and historical foundation stories, all of which could be told in the same breath and in the same spirit. It also includes the testimony of Asclepiades of Myrleia, who tells of a temple to Minerva above the city of Ulyssea, in which were hung up spears and prows of vessels, 'monuments of the wanderings of Ulysses' (3.4.3: ὑπομνήματα τῆς πλάνης τῆς Ὀδυσσέως). The arrival of Odysseus clearly carried great prestige, and was all the more powerful because it could be authenticated by the artefacts themselves. According to Asclepiades, some followers of Herakles and some inhabitants of Messene settled in Iberia, illustrating again the easy transition between mythical and historical founders.³³ Iberia and other parts of the Mediterranean, according to Asclepiades, were full of Greek heroes from the Trojan war, as well as being populated by more recent itinerants. Each hero from the mythical, Homeric age, brings a fresh layer of glossy prestige to a region and to individual cities. At the same time, each evokes a journey, often a tortuous one, such as formed the subject-base of the epic cycle, which not only links the start and end points, but also encompasses much along the way.

³³ A further example of the juxtaposition of mythical and historical foundation tales, is that of the Lakonian settlement of Cantabria, set alongside the foundation of Opsicella by Ocela, who passed into Italy with Antenor and his children (Strabo 3.4.3).

That still later writers in the period of the Second Sophistic, trying to provide aetiologies for the importance of certain parts of the contemporary world, were left with the task of gathering up bundles of sometimes incompatible myths is clear from Plutarch's *Life of Romulus*, which opens with multiple versions of a foundation myth for Rome, all evocative of different itineraries around the Mediterranean world, and hence different mental maps. Whether it was the notoriously nomadic Pelasgians, who settled on the site 'after wandering (πλανηθέντας) over most of the habitable earth and subduing most of mankind' (Plutarch, *Romulus* 1), or fugitives from Troy, or alternatively one of the dispersing Greek heroes,³⁴ all these variants entail and evoke long journeys linking Rome into the wider networks of mythic travel around the Mediterranean. Even more obviously local versions offered by Plutarch, such as a Rome founded by Romis, tyrant of the Latins, nevertheless allude to a world of large-scale mobility, since Romis first had to drive out the Tuscans, who had passed from Thessaly into Lydia, and from Lydia into Italy. The name of Romulus too conjures up multiple mental maps, depending on whether he is believed to be the son of Aeneas and Dexithea the daughter of Phorbas, brought to Italy in his infancy, along with his brother Romus, or alternatively, the Romulus who was grandson of Telemachus, or the Romulus, who was son of Mars and of Aemilia, the daughter of Aeneas and Lavinia.

Plutarch's contribution to the creation of a mythic landscape is in a sense complementary to that of Strabo. While Strabo's primary interest is to understand and provide aetiologies for the Mediterranean map as it is in his day, for Plutarch, the main purpose is to produce an acceptable version of Roman history, in the course of which the tracks evoked by the various options serve incidentally to bind together the mental geography of the Mediterranean. Putting down heroic foundations was an itinerant activity that belonged to the mythical period. It is, however, clear that there was an acute awareness of these travels across time, and that this interest would be manifested by different viewers and authors in ways which reflected their own times, exigencies, and genres. Authors from the archaic period onwards allude to a web of heroic travels which spans the Mediterranean, although the political capital to be

³⁴ Such as Romanus, a son of Odysseus and Circe, or Romus, sent from Troy by Diomedes son of Emathion, both at Plutarch, *Romulus* 2.

gained from tying city-foundations into mythical travels was sometimes realised only at later stages in the history of a *polis*.³⁵

Travel and reenactment: unlocking the mythical past

We have already seen with Pausanias the key role played by travel in not only prompting description of its own real-time geography but also, often through the encounter with sights (*theomata*) which give rise to stories (*logoi*), magically unlocking mythological geographies from the distant past. In the *Periegesis* it is the figure of the author who travels through the present and thereby evokes, perhaps even generates, a set of distant mythic landscapes.³⁶ The author and reader of this text transcend time as the present landscape becomes temporarily the landscape of the mythic past through memories and stories evoked by monuments, rituals, and place-names.³⁷ The presence of the enquiring traveller provokes a turning back of the clock, so that one location shares two time-frames.³⁸ In the world of Hellenistic inter-*polis* relations, it was the travels of ambassadors which tapped into and utilized the diplomatic capital encapsulated in the travels of mythical figures, who then became appropriated by particular *poleis*.³⁹ Being tied into this web of Panhellenic mythology enhanced the status of otherwise small and insignificant places, quite literally putting them on the map. Furthermore, the mythological geography of the heroic age through its web of connections facilitated a similar set of interactions from place to place in the world of the Hellenistic *polis* and, as Hornblower has noted, through its *syngeneia*

³⁵ See Malkin (2005) 65, for the contrast between the spatial network offered by the heroic age, and the later articulation of foundation myths which exploited and consolidated that web of connections. See also Mac Sweeney (2013) 10, stressing foundation myths as politically useful, social constructs and later creations rather than reflections of community tradition from the distant past.

³⁶ Hawes (2013) 190, expresses this double-matrix of the *Periegesis* well as 'both a tour of Greece and a journey back into its past'.

³⁷ See Alcock (1996) 249, for the active construction of memory in the landscape: 'One of the primary means by which memories were preserved and promulgated was through the marking of specific places in the landscape, either through the telling of stories, the enactment of rituals, or the building of commemorative monuments'.

³⁸ See Hawes (2013) 195, for the tension between the continuity of location and the gap in time-frame, which yields a 'paradoxical relationship between the realms of myth and contemporary experience'.

³⁹ See *IC* 1.24.1 for a Cretan inscription honouring two Tean ambassadors for their performances of material concerning the gods and heroes of Crete, with Erskine (2002) 97; Clarke (2008) 347-9.

concepts, 'made it possible for Greeks to bridge the mythical and historical worlds in so apparently effortless a way'.⁴⁰

The capacity of later travels to unlock the resonance of the mythic landscape may alternatively be encapsulated in historical narratives. Here again, the two travelling time-frames of the heroic world and of characters within the narrative might be seen to share a geography, or to have an intertwined one, which leaps via stepping-stones or, more often, directly across vast stretches of intervening history. The progress of Xerxes' expedition against Greece in Herodotus' narrative, marching through a heroic and mythologically charged landscape, illustrates this point. The journey is made through a fifth-century world, through a landscape that belongs to the present; but as the troops pass through mythologically resonant locations, their journey unlocks a past geography. Their progress brings an apparently dormant landscape back to life, evoking key moments of its past.⁴¹ The mention of the Iliadic river Scamander (7.42) and Xerxes' excitement, or rather passion, to visit the site of Troy, linked explicitly to its famous Iliadic phase as Priam's Pergamon, (ἐς τὸ Πριάμου Πέργαμον ἀνέβη ἕμερον ἔχων θεήσασθαι), might seem at first to lend heroic status to the narrative of the Persian campaign. The appeal of myth and of Troy in particular to Xerxes and especially to his adviser, Mardonius, has indeed been noted as a key part of the characterization of those players.⁴² However, in spite of these impassioned attempts by Persians to appropriate the epic grandeur associated with Troy, the Trojan landscape witnesses the first of many setbacks offered by the forces of nature, as the river Scamander is unable to satisfy the needs of the army, and the troops are assailed by lightning and thunderbolts as they halt for the night under Mt Ida (7.42).⁴³

But Troy was not everything, even in the progress of ambitious Persian kings. The landscape of Eastern Europe and down into Greece offers a non-Trojan mythical

⁴⁰ Hornblower (2001) 137.

⁴¹ The obvious parallel to draw is with the prince in the *Sleeping Beauty*, whose progress through the sleeping landscape brings it back to its life of 100 years before.

⁴² Baragwanath (2012) 299. For Mardonius in his mission against Athens embodying Xerxes' passion (ἕμερος) for Troy, see 9.3. The Trojan echo is reinforced by Mardonius' wish to indicate to Xerxes his expected capture of the city by a chain of beacons across the islands, evocative of the *Agamemnon*. See Aara Suksi's chapter.

⁴³ For the idea that association with the mythical age might be *unsatisfactory*, and might fail to enhance the narrative, see Munson (2012). Saïd (2012) 96, argues that in spite of attempts by both Greeks (9.26-7) and Persians (as here) to appropriate the Trojan heritage, Herodotus endorses this in the case of the former and not of the latter.

edge to Xerxes' expedition. In the aftermath of the destruction of four hundred Persian ships off the Magnesian coast near Cape Sepias, the Persians moor their remaining ships in a bay 'where it is said that Herakles, at the start of the voyage of the *Argo* to fetch the Golden Fleece from Aea (Colchis), was put ashore by Jason and his companions to get water, and was left behind. The place acquired the name of Aphetæ ('putting forth') because it was the intention of the Argonauts to make it their point of departure after watering the ship' (7.193). Just as the mythological connotations of the Troad might lend only a compromised epic grandeur to the Persian expedition, here one of the Persians' lowest moments sits in poignant contrast to their mythologically charged location, at the junction of two of the most iconic mythical journeys - those of Herakles and of the Argonauts. The Persian journey yet again unlocks the mythological past through the telling of the story that explains the place-name. It is not only a static moment in space and time that is elicited here, but two further lines of travel, the journeys of the two respective heroes, which are evoked to generate a more complex and extensive spatial network. Thus the chronological depth offered by the mythological resonances generates further geographical breadth. Furthermore, the triple coincidence of Xerxes' fleet with the point at which the travels of Herakles and of the Argonauts had come together transforms an otherwise insignificant bit of space along the shore into a highly resonant 'place'.

The area is clearly rich in mythological resonance. Xerxes' guides at Halos tell him about the local legend of the Laphystian Zeus, which involves an aetiology for the maltreatment of the descendants of Cytissorus and Phrixus, the latter having been saved from death by the former, who swooped in from Colchis for the purpose (7.197). From a geographical point of view, this apparently very local legend effortlessly evokes another more distant mythological venue and one which, as we have just seen, has its own itinerant associations as the starting-point of the Argonautic expedition. Thus Xerxes' progress again unlocks not just the mythological geography of the regions he travels through, but also the broader spatial network of the associated narratives. The river Dryas in Thessaly adds a new dimension, being given an aetiology which relates back to the labours of Herakles, since the river arose in order to save the demi-god from flames (7.198). Xerxes and the Persians thus occupy a landscape that was not only traversed but actually generated by mythical heroes.

Although I have suggested above that the primary focalization for experiencing the mythical landscape of Herodotus' narrative is through the characters themselves, nevertheless, as Bowie has acutely analysed, the mythological content of Xerxes' expedition facilitates also an *authorial* commentary on its religious and moral quality, often to its discredit.⁴⁴ The story of the flaying of Marsyas (7.26.3), situated at the key geographical point of Celaenae in Phrygia, at the confluence of the Maeander and Cataractes, offers, as Bowie notes, a reminder of a hybristic man who was brutally punished,⁴⁵ with clear warning signals for Xerxes himself. Time and again, the mythological episodes elicited by the unfolding narrative tell tales of *hybris* and consequent divine displeasure. The Scamander (7.43.1) evokes Achilles' violent arrogance; the headland of Sarpedon (7.58) is the location of Herakles' destruction of a hybristic tyrant; the marsh of Stentor (7.58) too carries strong warning signals, commemorating, as it does, the Thracian who was killed when he challenged Hermes to a shouting competition.

We have already seen how famously mobile heroes and demi-gods such as Pelops and Herakles create a complex geography made up of discrete points of interest at which particular episodes for the mythical narrative took place, but linked by the linear journeys they took from one eventful stop-off point to another. As the Persian army progresses it unlocks these mini-mythological narratives at keypoints along the way. In doing so it creates a multi-temporal narrative, which flashes backwards and forwards between mythical times and the present day, making the landscape itself into the constant. Thus the journeys and episodes of the distant past, which give resonance to various locations, combine with the power of later journeys, which 'flick on the switches' of historical and mythical narratives, linking past and present time through space, and adding still further moral depth and complexity to the world of Herodotus' narrative.

The geography of the historical present and that of the mythological past may be brought into contact through such imagined, diplomatic, recreational, or military itinerancy. But in some cases, the line of travel and the act of the journey itself not only serve to unlock other spatial frameworks at points of coincidence and overlap -

⁴⁴ This sense of Herodotus *using* mythical associations as an interpretative tool pulls against the proposition of Haubold (2007) that Xerxes and the Persians creatively use, rewrite and exploit Homeric resonances no less than do the Greeks.

⁴⁵ Bowie (2012) 273-6.

the triple coincidence of Xerxes' fleet with the point at which the travels of Herakles and of the Argonauts had come together, making an otherwise insignificant bit of space along the shore into a highly resonant 'place'. The coincidence between past and present geographies can run much closer - to near identity, or at least 'reenactment' of key journeys from the past that have articulated particular bits of space. Here the world of *theoria* comes to the fore - now, not just inter-city diplomats, but sacred ambassadors criss-crossing the Mediterranean world in journeys whose very content and route mirrors the content and routes of the mythological age.

As ever, Herodotus gives us a beautifully evocative example in the amazing journey made not, in fact, by a single set of envoys but by holy offerings wrapped in straw and sent by the Hyperboreans to Scythia (4.33).⁴⁶ The offerings are then passed on by neighbours in succession to the furthest west point in the Adriatic, then taken southwards, where the people of Dodona are the first of the Greeks to receive them, then down to the Melian Gulf, across into Euboea and from city to city to Carystus; Andros is omitted from the journey because the offerings are carried by the Carystians straight to Tenos;⁴⁷ then the Tenians take them to their final resting place of Delos. As Herodotus explains, it was a real journey made by two young girls which underlay the relay described above. The two young girls and the five men who escorted them on the first such pilgrimage simply never returned, although they appear to have made it as far as Delos, since they were given honorific names by the Delians (Hyperoche and Laodice for the girls, and the Perpherees collectively for their guides). The Hyperboreans, unhappy at the idea of losing people every time they send offerings to Delos in the future, therefore devise this postal system for their offerings, by which, like the Orient Express still today, each land is given responsibility for conveyance through its territory. Stage-by-stage the offerings and the reader are carried from the

⁴⁶ See Kowlazig (2007) 56-80, for excellent discussion of a close parallel in the form of the Deliades, re-enacting mythical accounts of the birth of Apollo and Artemis. As Kowlazig notes (67), the Deliades simultaneously perform in two time-spheres as companions of female deities in mythical tale and as a chorus of women in the current festival. They are both narrators of and actors in the story, performing in ritual what they are narrating in myth. 'In this double role, the chorus of *Δαλίων θύγατρεις* bridges the time gap, linking the mythical past to the present ritual.' Kowlazig notes (122) a significant overlap between these Deliades and the Hyperborean girls, 'suggesting an intriguing link between the different sets of mythical worshippers'.

⁴⁷ Rutherford (2004) 60 n. 7, points out the surprising nature of this omission, since Andros, certainly in the early fourth century, was the only state except Athens known to have a part in the administration of Delos and the Amphictyony.

edges of the earth right to the core of the Greek world at the pivotal island of Delos, surely a resonant set of book-ends for a journey. Conceptually, we have here, as so often, a multi-layered sense of space – the linear space of the successive sections of the journey in what we might call the geography of *theoria*, and simultaneously the linking up of the religious and commercial centre of the known world and one of its notorious edges, creating a bridge by which the intervening space is leap-frogged. A journey from the distant past is re-enacted across time, with geography the constant. Myth acts as the medium through which not only is that space articulated and linked, creating a linear geography of the journey being performed, but the journey of the present time, being identical to and mimetic of the version belonging to the mythical age, somehow compresses time itself or perhaps creates a timeless geography, free-floating, neither mythical nor historical or maybe both of these.⁴⁸

Conclusion

In spite of the local nature and uses of so many mythical narratives, and their significance in giving places meaning and status, it is travel, connections, and journeys from which the real power of myth in geography and geography in myth derives. The mobility of the heroic world creates a web of connections which links together the islands of myth generated by often very localized episodes. Making sense of the frequently contradictory narratives of heroic travel and especially foundation stories was to vex many writers of later periods. But, perhaps predictably, the greatest insight and resonance was derived from stepping in the footsteps of the heroes themselves. Travelling through the world, whether oneself as in the case of Pausanias or vicariously as with the characters in Herodotus' historical narrative, flicks on the switches of historical and mythical narratives, linking past and present time through space.

Word count - 7184

⁴⁸ See Kowalzig (2007) 28, for the proposition that aetiology 'transcends real (historical) time by postulating a physical or local continuity of religious place'.

Works cited

- Akujärvi J. 2012. 'Pausanias'. In *Space in Ancient Greek literature. Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative. Vol. 3*, edited by I. J. F. de Jong, 235-55. Leiden: Brill.
- Alcock S. E. 1996. 'Landscapes of Memory and the Authority of Pausanias'. In *Pausanias Historien*, edited by J. Bingen, 241-67. Geneva: Fondation Hardt.
- Baragwanath E. 2012. 'Returning to Troy: Herodotus and the Mythic Discourse of his own Time'. In *Myth, Truth, and Narrative in Herodotus*, edited by E. Baragwanath and M. de Bakker, 287-312. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Biraschi A. M. 2005. 'Strabo and Homer: a chapter in cultural history'. In *Strabo's Cultural Geography. The Making of a Kolossourgia*, edited by D. Dueck, H. Lindsay and S. Potheary, 73-85. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bowie A. M. 2012. 'Mythology and the Expedition of Xerxes'. In *Myth, Truth, and Narrative in Herodotus*, edited by E. Baragwanath and M. de Bakker, 269-86. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Brillante C. 1990. 'Myth and History. History and the Historical Interpretation of Myth'. In *Approaches to Greek Mythology*, edited by L. Edmunds, 91-138. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Buxton R. 1994. *Imaginary Greece*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Calame C. 2003. *Myth and History in Ancient Greece. The Symbolic Creation of a Colony*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Clarke K. 1999. *Between Geography and History. Hellenistic Constructions of the Roman World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Clarke K. 2008. *Making Time for the Past: Local History and the Polis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cohen A. 2001. 'Art, Myth, and Travel in the Hellenistic World'. In *Pausanias. Travel and Memory in Roman Greece*, edited by S. E. Alcock, J. F. Cherry, and J. Elsner, 93-126. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- De Jong, I. J. F. 2012. 'Narratological Theory on Space'. In *Space in Ancient Greek literature. Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative. Vol. 3*, edited by I. J. F. de Jong, 1-18. Leiden: Brill.
- Erskine A. 2002. 'O Brother, Where Art Thou? Tales of Kinship and Diplomacy'. In *The Hellenistic World: New Perspectives*, edited by D. Ogden, 97-115. London: Duckworth.
- Finley M. I. 1975. *The Use and Abuse of History*. London: Penguin.
- Gehrke H.-J. 2001. 'Myth, History, and Collective Identity: Uses of the Past in Ancient Greece and Beyond'. In *The Historian's Craft in the Age of Herodotus*, edited by N. Luraghi, 286-313. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gilhuly K. and Worman N. 2014. 'Introduction'. In *Space, Place, and Landscape in Ancient Greek Literature and Culture*, edited by K. Gilhuly and N. Worman, 1-20. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Haubold J. 2007. 'Xerxes' Homer'. In *Cultural Responses to the Persian Wars: Antiquity to the Third Millennium*, edited by E. Bridges, E. Hall and P. J. Rhodes, 47-63. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hawes G. 2014. *Rationalizing Myth in Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hornblower S. 2001. 'Epic and Epiphanies: Herodotus and the "New Simonides"'. In *The New Simonides. Contexts of Praise and Desire*, edited by D. Boedeker and D. Sider, 135-47. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kim L. 2010. *Homer between History and Fiction in Imperial Greek Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Kowalzig B. 2007. *Singing for the Gods. Performances of Myth and Ritual in Archaic and Classical Greece*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mac Sweeney N. 2013. *Foundation Myths and Politics in Ancient Ionia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Malkin I. 1994. *Myth and Territory in the Spartan Mediterranean*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Malkin I. 2005. 'Networks and the Emergence of Greek Identity'. In *Mediterranean Paradigms and Classical Antiquity*, edited by I. Malkin, 56-74. London, New York: Routledge.
- Munson R. V. 2012. 'Herodotus and the Heroic Age: The Case of Minos'. In *Myth, Truth, and Narrative in Herodotus*, edited by E. Baragwanath and M. de Bakker, 195-212. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Pretzler M. 2007. *Pausanias. Travel Writing in Ancient Greece*. London: Duckworth.
- Price S. 2005. 'Local Mythologies in the Greek East'. In *Coinage and Identity in the Roman Provinces*, edited by C. Howgego, V. Heuchert, and A. Burnett, 115-24. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rutherford I. 2004. 'Andros at Delphi: CID 1.7 and Insular Theoria'. In *The Greek Islands and the Sea. Proceedings of the First International Colloquium held at the Hellenic Institute, Royal Holloway, University of London, 21-22 September 2001*, edited by J. Chrysostomides, C. Dendrinos and J. Harris, 59-75. Camberley: Porphyrogenitus.
- Saïd S. 2012. 'Herodotus and the 'Myth' of the Trojan War'. In *Myth, Truth, and Narrative in Herodotus*, edited by E. Baragwanath and M. de Bakker, 87-105. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Skempis M. & Ziogas I. 2013. *Geography, topography, landscape* (Berlin: de Gruyter).