

Travel and Religion in Antiquity Seminar, abstracts for 2007

“To Encounter a Hero: Localization and Travel in Hellenistic Hero Cults”

Ellen Bradshaw Aitken, McGill University

Veneration of heroes in antiquity was predominantly localized, connected with the physical location of the hero's tomb. The ongoing effectiveness of a hero, accessible through cult, began from the tomb with benefits for the immediate locale, including the surrounding city or region. This paper examines the literary evidence for travel to hero sanctuaries, particularly among Second Sophistic authors. It explores the traveler's practices of encounter with the hero at the *hêrôon*, including the acquisition of special knowledge. Attentive to early Christian ritual practices, the paper outlines a set of research questions for the study of travel and localization of cult.

Response: TBA

“Pilgrimage, Place and Meaning-Making by Jews in Greco-Roman Egypt”

Wayne O. McCready, University of Calgary

Edward S. Casey in *Getting Back to Place* (1993) notes that humans are profoundly place-bound and this circumstance provides an important reference for understanding their identity and self-definition. This paper considers pilgrimage as travel ‘with a purpose’ – that is, devotional acts involving travel to sacred sites. It investigates pilgrimage by Jews at the turn of the common era with particular attention paid to pilgrimages made to Egypt including Elephantine. Scholarship on place-making and meaning-making will be used to critique pilgrimage by Jews at the turn of the common era.

Response: John W. Marshall

“‘Danger in the Wilderness, Danger at Sea’ (2 Cor 11:26): Paul and the Perils of Travel”

Ryan Schellenberg, University of St. Michael's College, Toronto School of Theology

In the book of Acts, travel is a narrative trope that allows Luke to emphasize the superior character of his hero: Paul faces hardship with courage and calmly overcomes the dangers of road and sea. Paul's own letters, however, paint a very different picture. Paul's autobiographical comments suggest that his journeys

were fraught with peril and that Paul did not always emerge unscathed. Moreover, unlike the purposeful travel portrayed in Acts, Paul's own discussions of his travel plans are characterized above all by uncertainty and contingency. The nature of Paul's references to travel undermines the credibility of the elaborate missionary agenda often ascribed to him.

Response: TBA

"Christians on the Move: Travel and Social-Networking in Late Antique Oxyrhynchus"

Lincoln H. Blumell, University of Toronto

Few cities from antiquity are as well documented as Oxyrhynchus. To date, this city has yielded over 5,000 papyri, largely from the Roman period, from which a detailed picture of the city and its inhabitants emerges. One area in particular where these papyri have much to offer is in the area of travel and social-networking, and on this front the surviving letters from Oxyrhynchus are perhaps the most illustrative source because of their nature. Letters are implicitly tied with travel and their content almost always reveals something about social-networking. This examination will therefore examine the surviving Christian letters from Oxyrhynchus to determine what they reveal about Christian travel and social-networking in late antique Egypt.

Response: Michele Murray (Bishop's University)