

THE EDGES OF THE EARTH IN ANCIENT THOUGHT

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GEOGRAPHY, EXPLORATION, AND
FICTION

James S. Romm

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

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Published by Princeton University Press, 41 William Street,
Princeton, New Jersey 08540
In the United Kingdom: Princeton University Press,
Chichester, West Sussex
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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Romm, James S.

The edges of the earth in ancient thought : geography,
exploration, and fiction / James S. Romm.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-691-06933-6

ISBN 0-691-03788-4 (pbk.)

1. Classical literature—History and criticism.

2. Geography in literature. I. Title

PA3015.G44R65 1992

809'.93591—dc20 91-25748 CIP

This book has been composed in Linotron Galliard

Princeton University Press books are printed
on acid-free paper and meet the guidelines
for permanence and durability of the Committee
on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity
of the Council on Library Resources

First Princeton paperback printing, 1994

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

For Isabel, Eva, and Esther

If one is disturbed by the evidence that speculation played so large a role in the beginnings of history and geography, which, like most of the sciences, were founded by the Greeks, one may be comforted by the reflection that in all things the factor of greatest importance is the idea; once that is put forward, positive and negative evidence is bound to be discovered, and upon the data thus brought to light a structure can gradually arise that may rightly demand the assent of a schooled intelligence.

—William Arthur Heidel, “A Suggestion Concerning Plato’s Atlantis,” 228

The business of the philosopher, as I believe, includes geography as much as any other science; and it is geography we have now chosen to examine.

—opening sentence of Strabo’s *Geographies*

