

THE FIRST SEAMAN IN EUROPEAN LITERATURE TO EMPLOY night-sky navigation, according to legendary British geographer Eva Taylor, was Homer's Odysseus:

*And now the master mariner steered his craft,
sleep never closing his eyes, forever scanning
the stars, the Pleiades and the Plowman late to set
and the Great Bear that mankind also calls the Wagon:
she wheels on her axis always fixed, watching the Hunter.
She alone is denied a plunge in the Ocean's baths.
Hers were the stars the lustrous goddess told him
to keep hard to port as he cut across the sea.*

Three thousand years post-Homer, instruments far keener than the human eye guide our navigation. Yet an increasingly popular term for guidance of every kind nowadays is North Star. Trendiness aside, this is surely a tribute to the courage and intelligence of our ancestors. And yet it may be something more—an acknowledgement that our journey is no less uncharted, no less unpredictable than that of our forefathers. We navigate uncertainties no less frightening—and no less fictional-sounding—than Sirens or Cyclops, such as AI. And we navigate uncertainties that were all too familiar to Homer, such as war, illness and political unrest.

Our forefathers remain an inspiration to us, in large part by virtue of their navigational skills.

In these pages you'll read about the odysseys of top executives around the world, from AT&T's John Stankey and IBM's Christina Shim to Standard Bank's Sim Tshabalala and Suzano's Beta Abreu. Some amount to victory laps (heavy on how), others, acknowledgements of failure that will be overcome (see ispace on page 95). If common ground seems as mythical these days as Plato's Atlantis, see our interview with Brookfield's Ron Bloom (page 21), a former investment banker and labor leader who served under both President Trump and President Obama. We interview the first woman to lead the Louvre (page 34), the CEO in charge of the Grammys (page 38) and the television star who brought glory to the world's dirtiest jobs (page 64). Elsewhere, the little-known orchestrator of a historic sports turnaround tells how she did it (page 86), and the Saudi Pro League's CEO explains how it became the fastest-growing league in the world's most popular sport (page 79).

At a time when Hollywood has rediscovered *The Odyssey* (casting Ralph Fiennes in one version, Matt Damon in another), and when top executives are recommending it ("I love Odysseus most," Elon Musk recently posted on X), Boston University Master Lecturer Kyna Hamill suggests that navigation can lead us to virtue: "Perhaps the story returns so often to remind us of the values we want to see in our heroes." ♦

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