

**The long route up the mountain: aspects of the reception of
classical and biblical mountain writing and medieval
mountain ascents, seen through the ascents of Egeria,
Willibald and Petrarch**

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Abstract

In recent years scholarship has assumed that human interest in climbing mountains for any reason other than necessity began only in the eighteenth century, and that prior to this period humans avoided mountains as vile and dangerous places. This thesis seeks to contest these opinions by exploring the representation of mountains in classical and biblical texts and their influence on the mountain ascents of Egeria in the fourth century, of Saint Willibald in the eighth century and of Petrarch in the fourteenth century. Analysis of these ascents will allow for nuance and qualification of the received narrative regarding pre-Petrarchan perceptions of mountains.

The introduction will examine what a mountain is and means, followed by a focus on the perception of mountains in classical literature. By attending to the representation of mountains in their classical texts, the chapter will show how a mountain could provide a positive framework of order, stability and safety; or portray aspects of disorder, chaos and danger. The chapter will show how imitation and emulation shaped mountain descriptions and perceptions. The next chapter will shift to perceptions of mountains in the Old Testament, mountains of theophany, covenant and homeland; the chapter will show how Egeria relied on the Bible for her travels in the Holy Land; and it will explore stories of Jesus on mountains in the New Testament, and the treatment of these stories by different authors, showing the significance of earlier writings for the shaping of perceptions of mountains. The thesis will then turn to Hugelburc's account of Willibald's climb of Mount Vulcano, and will examine his climb and her account in relation to earlier perceptions of mountains. The concluding chapter will use Petrarch's ascent of Mont Ventoux as a point from which to look back at the discussion of mountains within the thesis.

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Abbreviations

Aesch.	Aeschylus
Ag.	Agamemnon
<i>AJPhil.</i>	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
Arr.	Arrian
Ap. Rhod.	Apollonius Rhodius
August.	Augustine
Ep.	<i>Epistulae</i>
BL	British Library
Callim.	Callimachus
Hymn 3	<i>Hymn to Artemis</i>
CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina</i> (Turnhout)
CPL	<i>Clavis Patrum Latinorum</i> , ed. E. Dekkers and A. Gaar, 2nd ed. (Steenbrugge, 1961)
<i>CQ</i>	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CR	<i>Classical Review</i>
CSEL	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> (Vienna)
Diog. Laert.	Diogenes Laertius
<i>DLS</i>	<i>Adamnani De locis sanctis</i> , ed. and trans. D. Meehan and L. Bieler, <i>Scriptores Latini Hiberniae</i> Vol. III (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1958)
Égérie	Pierre Maraval, <i>Égérie. Journal de voyage (Itinéraire)</i> , Sources chrétiennes 296 (Paris: Cerf, 1982), reissued with additions and corrections, 1997, 2002
Eur.	Euripides
<i>Fam.</i> IV.1	Francesco Petrarca, ed. Vittorio Rossi, <i>Le Familiari</i> , Vol. I (Firenze: G. C. Sansoni, 1933), 153-161
<i>HE</i>	Bede, <i>Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum</i> , ed. and tr. B. Colgrave & R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969)
Hes.	Hesiod
<i>Hes. Th.</i>	<i>Hesiodi Theogonia Opera et Dies Scutum</i> , ed. F. Solmsen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970)
Hom.	Homer
<i>Il.</i>	<i>Iliad</i>
<i>Od.</i>	<i>Odyssey</i>
h. Hom.	<i>Homer Vol. V Hymns etc.</i> Edited by D. B. Monro and T. W. Allen. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963
HB	The Hebrew Bible
Hor.	Horace
Isid.	Isidore
<i>Itin.</i>	Theodore Cachey, <i>Petrarch's Guide to the Holy Land. Itinerary to the Sepulcher of Our Lord Jesus Christ</i> (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002)
Jer.	Jerome
Joseph.	Josephus
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
Loeb	Loeb Classical Library
Macfarlane	Robert Macfarlane, <i>Mountains of the Mind</i> (London: Granta Books, 2003)
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica
Ep.	<i>Epistulae</i>
AA	<i>Auctores Antiquissimi</i>

SS	Scriptores
SS rer. Germ.	Scriptores rerum Germanicarum
SS rer. Merov.	Scriptores rerum Merovingicarum
MLN	<i>Modern Language Notes</i> , The Johns Hopkins University Press
Nicolson	Marjorie Hope Nicolson, <i>Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite</i> (Ithaca: New York, 1959)
NT	The New Testament
OCT	Oxford Classical Texts
Op. West	Hesiod, <i>Works and Days</i> , ed. M. L. West (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978)
Ov.	Ovid
<i>Met.</i>	<i>Metamorphoses</i>
Paus.	Pausanias
Pind.	Pindar
<i>Pyth.</i>	<i>Pythian Odes</i>
Plin.	Pliny the Elder
<i>HN</i>	<i>Naturalis Historia</i>
Plin.	Pliny the Younger
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
PL	Patrologia Latina, ed. J. P. Migne, 221 vols. (Paris, 1844-64)
Plut.	Plutarch
Polyb.	Polybius
SC	Sources chrétiennes
Sen.	Seneca
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
<i>QNat.</i>	<i>Quaestiones naturales</i>
SHA	Scriptores Historiae Augustae
<i>Hadr.</i>	<i>Hadrian</i>
Solin.	Solinus
Strabo	The <i>Geography</i> of Strabo
<i>Texts and Transmission</i>	L. Reynolds (ed.), <i>Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983)
Th. Most	Hesiod, <i>Theogony and Works and Days</i> , tr. Glenn W. Most (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018)
Th. West	Hesiod, <i>Theogony</i> , ed. M. L. West (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966)
V.	Virgil
<i>Aen.</i>	<i>Aeneid</i>
<i>Ecl.</i>	<i>Eclogues</i>
<i>G.</i>	<i>Georgics</i>
Vita	O. Holder-Egger, <i>Vitae SS. Willibaldi et Wynnebaldi</i> , MGH, SS 15.1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1887), 80-117
Walbank, <i>HCP</i>	F. W. Walbank, <i>A Historical Commentary on Polybius</i> , 3 vols. (1957-79)

NOTE ON BIBLICAL REFERENCES, TRANSLATIONS AND NAMES

The Biblical quotations used throughout this dissertation are taken from the Stuttgart Vulgate: *Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, edited by R. Weber *et al.*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart, 1994). All named individual books of the Bible are referred to by abbreviated titles only and these references likewise follow Weber's edition. Scriptural translations are from the Douay-Rheims Bible.

For the citations of classical authors that follow in this thesis, I use the texts as established by the *Scriptorum Classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis* (Oxford Classical Texts) series unless unavailable or otherwise stated. Abbreviations of ancient authors and ancient texts follow the fourth edition of S. Hornblower, A. Spawforth and E. Eidinow, *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford University Press 2012).

All non-biblical translations of Latin and Greek passages are my own unless otherwise stated.

All dates are CE unless specified.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

1 Introducing the mountain

1.1 Introduction

Situated in the Tyrrhenian Sea, a dozen or so miles to the north of Sicily, lies the island of Vulcano, named after the volcanic mountain which dominates the landmass. In 729 the young Englishman Willibald was to be found toiling up the side of this mountain to reach the summit and crater edge. This was not his first visit to the Sicilian archipelago, nor his first time among the mountains; but it was his first visit to this mountain, which he had come to with the deliberate intention of climbing. When he was an old man, Willibald related the events of his life to his biographer Hugeburc, who recorded her description of his attempt to reach the summit:

Et inde navigaverunt ad insulam Vulcana; ibi est infernus Theodrichi. Cumque illic veniebant, ascendebant de nave, ut viderent, qualis esset infernus. Statimque Willibaldus curiosius et volens videre, qualis esset intus ille infernus, et volebat ascendere in montis cacumen ubi infernus subtus erat, et non poterat, qui faville de tetro tartaro usque ad marginem ascendentes glomerati illic iacebant et ad instar nivis, quando de caelo nivans candiditas nivalesque cadentes catervas de aereis etherum arcibus arcis coacervareque solet, ita faville coacervati in apice montis iacebant, ut ascensum Willibaldo prohibebant. Sed tamen tetrum atque terribilem horrendumque eructantem de puteo flammam erumpere videbat, ad instar tonitruum tonantis sic flammam magnum et fumi vaporem valde suplime in alto ascendentem terribiliter intuebat.¹

Then [i.e. from Sicily] they sailed to the island of Vulcano; the hell of Theodoric is on this island. And when they arrived there, they went up from the ship in order to see what this hell was like. And immediately Willibald, driven by curiosity and eager to see what that hell was like inside, wanted to climb to the summit of the mountain, beneath which lay hell: but he was unable to do so because ashes had blown up from the black underworld and lay there in heaps at the edge of the crater: and just as snow, when it falls snow-white from heaven and, falling from the airy palaces of the sky, heaps the flakes into mounds, in the same way the ashes lay piled in heaps on the summit of the mountain and prevented Willibald from reaching the top. Nevertheless, he saw the black, terrible and fearfully belching flames burst forth from the crater with a noise like pealing thunder; and he gazed in terror at the flames, and at the enormous cloud of smoke rising high into the sky.

Hugeburc related that Willibald sailed to Vulcano, and that the hell of Theodoric was reputed to be on the island. Once there, his curiosity inspired him to climb the mountain and attempt the ascent, where he saw the ashes and flames of the volcano. This episode, and Hugeburc's recording of this episode, encapsulates the major themes of the thesis which will be

¹ O. Holder-Egger, *Vitae SS. Willibaldi et Wynnebaldi*, MGH, SS 15.1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1887), 80-117 (101-102). All references to the Latin text of Hugeburc's account will be taken from Holder-Egger's edition, hereafter *Vita*.

laid out in the following pages. Here, briefly for now, are the questions which the passage raises in relation to this thesis. Firstly, a mountain climb by Willibald which was subsequently written down and told by Hugeburc reveals a tension between Willibald's physical engagement with the mountain and Hugeburc's written record of his mountain ascent. The relationship between the real and the virtual opens an area for scholarly exploration of differing perceptions of mountains. Secondly, Hugeburc reported that Willibald wanted to see the hell of Theodoric, and this is what had brought him to the island. The reading of both a climber and a narrator, as much as the mountains themselves, served to fuel interest and enthusiasm for the high places. My thesis will explore how interest in the mountains developed from earlier literature. Thirdly, Hugeburc suggested that curiosity played its part in inspiring Willibald onto the mountain. The concept of curiosity as a factor in exploring mountains opens a door to an intriguing aspect of writing about mountains and about mountain ascents. I will explore curiosity as an inspiration for mountain climbs. Finally, Hugeburc's eighth century account told of an eighth century climb. Current thinking avers that there was no interest in climbing mountains before the eighteenth century, other than out of necessity. The scholarly marginalisation of attitudes to mountains in the ancient world and the medieval period is something I will seek to contest across the thesis as a whole, arguing that the boundaries were more blurred than current thinking might suggest.

1.1.1 The argument

Hugeburc's account of Willibald's climb revealed a young man whose curiosity had inspired him to journey to the island of Vulcano, intent on reaching the summit of the mountain. Yet for decades now the current argument has run that only in the modern era (since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) have humans developed feelings of natural enthusiasm for the high places, and that before this time mountains were viewed with hostility and even fear. Such was the view put forward by Marjorie Hope Nicolson in her influential 1950s work *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite*. Nicolson argued that until recently humans regarded mountains and high places as ugly and dangerous, and that 'for hundreds of years, most men who climbed mountains had climbed them fearfully, grimly, resenting the necessity, only on rare occasions suggesting the slightest aesthetic gratification'.²

The indirect continuum of Nicolson's assertion, that all modern mountaineering takes or has taken place for the sake of 'aesthetic gratification', is, at best, a doubtful proposition. Modern attitudes to mountain climbing are diverse and have included a focus on conquest and domination as much as on aesthetics. A number of mountain ascents of the twentieth century in

² Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1959), 2.

particular could only loosely be described as undertaken for any sort of pleasure in the aesthetic, ascents which were deliberately more about power and control, about being the first individual or nation to climb a mountain or put a flag on its summit: certainly, ‘aesthetic gratification’ was often a secondary purpose of these climbs, if indeed a purpose at all. Thus, the Nazis funded Heinrich Harrer’s record first-ascent of the north-face of the Eiger in 1938 in order to promote and advertise German dominance in the mid-twentieth century, a period when the language of military conquest was as prevalent in mountain ascents as the language of aestheticism.³ Even today, some ascents of the Scottish Munros, for example, are driven by the competitive desire for completion as much as by any ‘aesthetic gratification’. To this might be added the modern obsession with height, which was not a concern to the ancients. In contrast, as Dan Hooley has rightly observed in his chapter on ‘Classical Mountain Landscapes’ (2012), ancient engagement with mountains was not driven by the desire to conquer, master or defeat, but to engage in a much more symbiotic fashion, to co-exist, and to accept mountains as part of the everyday.⁴ Where Hooley’s comments come under pressure is when mountains became a theatre of war, as was the case with Alexander the Great in 327 BCE at the Rock of Sogdiana, in Bactria (north of the Hindu Kush in modern Samarkand), who selected three hundred of his men to climb the ice-bound rock face at night, armed with climbing ropes and pegs to lodge in the snow and ice.⁵

In spite of uncertainties in her argument, Nicolson’s view is one that is still propounded today. Robert Macfarlane’s *Mountains of the Mind* (2003), a book about the psychological effects of mountains on the modern mind, relies on Nicolson’s argument to support his own.⁶ Macfarlane suggests that before the eighteenth century mountains were regarded as ‘aesthetically repellent’, that most people found ‘wilderness dislikeable’ and that ‘risking one’s life to climb a mountain would have been considered tantamount to lunacy. The notion barely existed, indeed, that wild landscape might hold any sort of appeal.’⁷ Such notions still hold sway, and as recently as 2015 Simon Bainbridge cited Nicolson to support his premise that ‘it was only during the eighteenth century that mountains began to be conceived as specific objects of travel rather than as obstacles to be overcome or skirted around’.⁸

For some, such perceptions of mountains in antiquity will come as no surprise: after all, this view existed before Nicolson. The influential Ellen Semple dismissed high places on the

³ See e.g. Heinrich Harrer, *The White Spider* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1960), for Nazi-funded attempts to be the first to climb the Eiger; for the language of military conquest, see Fergus Fleming, *Killing Dragons: The Conquest of the Alps* (New York: Grove Press, 2000). Fleming’s title, with the words ‘killing’ and ‘conquest’, adds to the idea that conquest and domination were driving forces of mountain expeditions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

⁴ Dan Hooley, ‘Prelude: Classical Mountain Landscapes and the Language of Ascent’, in *Heights of Reflection*, ed. Sean Ireton and Caroline Schaumann (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2012), 20-21.

⁵ Arrian. *Anabasis of Alexander*, ed. A. G. Roos, rev. G. Wirth (Leipzig: Teubner, 1967), 4.19.

⁶ Robert Macfarlane, *Mountains of the Mind* (London: Granta Books, 2003).

⁷ Macfarlane, 14.

⁸ Simon Bainbridge, ‘Mountains’, in *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. C. Thompson (London: Routledge, 2015), 445.

grounds that ‘mountain regions discourage the budding of genius because they are areas of isolation, confinement, remote from the great currents of men and ideas’,⁹ while a generation before her, an anonymous piece in *The Edinburgh Review* adopted a similar tone.¹⁰ It would seem that the modern view has been to regard mountains and high places in antiquity as locales of danger and depression, to be avoided at all costs.

However, the views of Nicolson *et al.* are bound by the narrowest of parameters: modern literary Europe—essentially, European literature of the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, with the addition of some few biblical references¹¹—while ongoing archaeological study reminds us that human interaction with the mountains and high places has been prevalent for thousands of years.¹² For example, research has shown that between the late medieval and post-medieval periods of the fourteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, the Alps, including the high-altitude zones, were at their busiest.¹³ Yet this was during a period of climactic deterioration which led to the Little Ice Age. Kevin Walsh (‘Risk and marginality at high altitudes’, 2005) asserts that as the Little Ice Age progressed, human activity on the plateau continued and even intensified, a fact which might appear counter-intuitive if we look only at eighteenth and nineteenth century sources which chart human interest in the mountains.¹⁴ Recent archaeological studies in the Alps show that settlement in the high places has waxed and waned over millennia, not necessarily in step with the climate, and that ‘climate cannot be cited as an explanatory factor for changes in the intensity of occupation’.¹⁵ Walsh examines the difference between the exploitation and the management of high mountainous places, arguing that ‘many supposedly risky environments were at some point in the past successfully managed

⁹ E. C. Semple, *Influences of Geographical Environment* (New York, 1911), 20.

¹⁰ Anonymous, ‘The tour of Mont Blanc and of Monte Rosa: Being a personal narrative, abridged from the author’s ‘travels in the Alps of Savoy’, *The Edinburgh Review*, 104 (212), (October, 1856): 433-453 (esp. 434).

¹¹ See William Barton, ‘The Aesthetics of the Mountain: Latin as a Progressive Force in the Late-Renaissance and Early Modern Period’ (PhD, King’s College, London, 2014), 12.

¹² Maxence Segard, ‘Habiter dans les Alpes: la romanisation des régions de moyenne et de haute montagne au filtre de l’habitat’, *Preistoria Alpina*, 42 (2007). For a range of time periods, see e.g. Kevin Walsh and Florence Mocci, ‘Mobility in the Mountains: Late Third and Second Millennium Alpine Societies’ Engagements with the High-Altitude Zones in the Southern French Alps’, *European Journal of Archaeology*, 14, nos. 1–2 (2011), for evidence of long-distance trade and contact in high-altitude communities (above 2000 m.) in the southern French Alps from 2,500 BCE; Vanessa Py and Bruno Ancel, ‘Exploitation des mines métalliques de la vallée Freissinières (Hautes-Alpes, France): contribution à l’étude de l’économie sud-alpine aux IXe-XIIIe siècles’, *Preistoria Alpina*, 42 (2007), for evidence of mineral and forestry exploitation in the late medieval period of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the southern Alps, again above 2000 m., and the development of mountain economies; and Sean Ireton and Caroline Schaumann, ‘Introduction: the meaning of mountains: geography, history, culture’, in *Heights of Reflection*, ed. Sean Ireton and Caroline Schaumann (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2012), 5, who challenge the ‘oversimplified assumption that human interaction with mountains is a distinctly modern development’.

¹³ K. Walsh, ‘Risk and marginality at high altitudes: new interpretations from fieldwork on the Faravel Plateau, Hautes-Alpes’, *Antiquity* 79 (2005), esp. 297.

¹⁴ Walsh, ‘Risk and marginality’, 298.

¹⁵ Walsh, ‘Risk and marginality’, 298.

and were therefore not marginal',¹⁶ and that 'notions of marginality are contingent on place and time, and societies in different places and at different times define and treat it differently'.¹⁷ Possibly, says Walsh, any perception of risk in the marginal zones was reduced by the presence of other people, whose numbers reduced the isolation and therefore the perceived risk.¹⁸

This thesis posits that the perception of mountains in ancient and medieval periods was more complex than earlier arguments would suggest, and by exploring classical, biblical and medieval texts it widens the boundaries of the discussion. Macfarlane asserts it was only from the nineteenth century onwards that 'mountains began to exert a considerable and often fatal power of attraction on the human mind'.¹⁹ Such marginalisation of preceding centuries is to overlook a wealth of evidence from ancient authors, evidence which hints that human interpretations of mountains were more complex than has generally been thought. Even when human worship of gods on mountain summits is taken out of consideration, there was an engagement of writing about mountains which reveals the lure and the significance that high places occupied in the minds of the ancients. As this thesis will show, Virgil's Mount Ida reminded the refugee Trojans inexorably of a homeland lost forever; Sicily's Mount Etna was a complex mountain in Greco-Roman mythological legend, beloved of tourists as of poets; both Plinys loved their mountains, and wrote about their aesthetic delight in the high places.²⁰ The literary evidence confirms that mountains occupied the thoughts of the ancients and that literary heritage was a part of that occupation.²¹

More recent scholarship has come to regard Nicolson's and Macfarlane's views as under-nourished, and appraisals are appearing to redress the balance.²² Richard Buxton produced a seminal article on mythological mountains (1992, second edition 2013), in which he posited that features of mythological mountains grew out of the practices of daily life, but with

¹⁶ Walsh, 'Risk and marginality', 299. 'The variation in activity can be better explained by changes in the perception of the relative importance of the risks and hazards present in this milieu', 289.

¹⁷ Walsh, 'Risk and marginality', 299.

¹⁸ Walsh, 'Risk and marginality', 299.

¹⁹ Macfarlane, 16.

²⁰ For Ida, see e.g. *P. Vergili Maronis Opera*, ed. R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969) *Aen.* V.252ff. For Etna: the emperor Hadrian climbed the mountain as a tourist, see *Vita Hadriani*, in *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Vol. I, ed. Hermann Peter (Leipzig, 1892), 13.3; the mountain featured in numerous poetical works, e.g. Pindar *Pyth.* I.12; for the geography of Etna, e.g. Strabo, 6.2.3 on the fertile properties of the mountain whose ash made the land excellent for growing vines and feeding sheep. Pliny the Elder described the beauty of the Vale of Tempe, Greece, in *HN* 4.8.31 (cf. Ovid's description of the same valley in *Met.* I.568f.); Pliny the Younger wrote to a friend about the dramatic and beautiful setting of his villa in the Apennine mountains, *Ep.* 5.6.2-13.

²¹ Cf. Hooley, 'Classical Mountain Landscapes', 23, and his comment on Horace's aesthetic view of Mount Soracte, 27.

²² Earlier articles, chapters and books on mountains in antiquity also exist. For example, Francis Gribble, *The Early Mountaineers* (London, 1899), an interesting 'magpie' collection of tales and anecdotes selected from the ancient world, and some early renaissance ascents; W. W. Hyde, *Roman Alpine Routes* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1935), a sound study of the historical and geographical evidence; and, more recently, A. S. Pease, 'Notes on Mountain Climbing in Antiquity', in *Appalachia*, 32 (1961), who provides a useful exploration of mountains and climbing before the sixth century.

different traits. He has recently followed this with his chapter on Mount Etna, in which he explores the volcano in mythology, science and historical geography, as perceived by the cultures of Greece and Rome.²³ Jason König, in his chapter on ‘Strabo’s Mountains’ (2016), discusses the simplistic modern criticism of ancient attitudes to mountains and shows by means of what he terms ‘landscape narratives’ how revealing and complex the works of ancient authors could be with regard to mountains.²⁴ König admires Strabo’s authorial control of his subject matter—the cartographer’s view from the mountain summit and how he established mountains as boundaries and liminal markers—and the complexity of his descriptions help detail how humans have domesticated mountainous territories.²⁵ Dan Hooley’s chapter (‘Classical Mountain Landscapes and the Language of Ascent’, 2012) delivers an excellent exposition on the symbiotic relationship between humans and mountains, and how mountains were topics of reflection in classical antiquity.²⁶

Two recent theses show that new ways of understanding perceptions of mountains of the ancient world continue to emerge. William Barton (‘The Aesthetics of the Mountain’, 2014) explores classical authors and neo-Latin texts between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries to unearth the aesthetic appreciation of the mountains they contain; and Alexis Belis (‘Fire on the Mountain’, 2015) delivers a comprehensive study of mountaintop sanctuaries of ancient Greece.²⁷ Most recently, Gareth Williams (*Pietro Bembo on Etna*, 2017) has written convincingly about the literary history of Etna seen through Pietro Bembo’s ascent of the mountain at the end of the fifteenth century.²⁸ He explores the idea of Etna’s complex and appealing ‘doubleness’ in literary accounts, examining how individual authors offered more than one perception of Etna, e.g. a scientific perception set alongside a folkloric account, thereby showing how they exploited tensions within their descriptions of the mountain.

Yet even in the work of those whose views are broadly opposed to Nicolson’s arguments, questions arise and there is more to be said. Barton declares, without strong evidence, that opinions on mountains in classical literature were ‘negative’ and that for the Greeks and Romans there was a ‘simple lack of interest in the mountain landscape’;²⁹ Williams

²³ R. G. A. Buxton, ‘Imaginary Greek Mountains’, the *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 112 (1992); republished with revisions in R. G. A. Buxton, *Myths and Tragedies in their Ancient Greek Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); for the Greco-Roman mythology of Etna see Richard Buxton, ‘Mount Etna in the Greco-Roman *imaginaire*: Culture and Liquid Fire’, in *Valuing Landscape in Classical Antiquity: Natural Environment and Cultural Imagination*, ed. Jeremy McInerney and Ineke Sluiter (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

²⁴ Jason König, ‘Strabo’s Mountains’, in *Valuing Landscape in Classical Antiquity: Natural Environment and Cultural Imagination*, ed. Jeremy McInerney and Ineke Sluiter (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 52.

²⁵ König, ‘Strabo’s Mountains’, 46-7.

²⁶ Hooley, ‘Classical Mountain Landscapes’, 20-32.

²⁷ Barton, ‘The Aesthetics of the Mountain’; Alexis Belis, ‘Fire on the Mountain: A Comprehensive Study of Greek Mountaintop Sanctuaries’ (PhD, Princeton University, 2015).

²⁸ Gareth Williams, *Pietro Bembo on Etna: The Ascent of a Venetian Humanist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 23-72 (for the ‘doubleness’ see esp. 25-6).

²⁹ Barton, ‘The Aesthetics of the Mountain’, 76. Barton is keener on exploring the neo-Latin evidence of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries than the Latin and Greek evidence from antiquity.

maintains that mountains gained a sinister reputation which endured even into the fifteenth century: ‘very few accounts survive of ascents undertaken from Late Antiquity down to the Middle Ages, but mountains appear broadly to have retained a fearsome reputation throughout that period.’³⁰ Buxton argues that Greek and Roman mountains ‘were situated outside the world of civilisation’.³¹ This thesis seeks to contest these assertions. Buxton adds that different types of mountain discourse overlap and even compete with one another, and to separate these discourses into discrete entities may result in a conflicting or misleading argument:³² any exploration of mountains in the ancient and medieval worlds must take these latter words of Buxton to mind.

Mention must be made of a book published in May 2021, a little too late to be considered for inclusion in this thesis. *Mountain Dialogues from Antiquity to Modernity*, edited by Dawn Hollis and Jason König, delivers a series of essays by distinguished scholars about how ancient engagement with mountain environments is relevant to modern approaches of understanding mountain landscapes.³³ The dialogues work within different timeframes and disciplines to establish a relationship of interconnection between previously disparate areas. Included within the work are connections with particular texts or authors (e.g. Euripides’ *Bacchae*, Pausanias) with later responses to the landscape, discourses on Mount Etna and Petrarch, and ideas of literary expectations as a ‘dominant shaping force’ behind ascent narratives.³⁴ As my own thesis contains discourses on Etna and Petrarch, as well as discussion of literary influences on mountain ascents, the book’s authority presented by these scholars validates the themes I raise and discuss in the following pages. On the other hand, the book makes little or no mention of Willibald or Egeria, Seneca or Arculf, and little reference to the literary expectations inspired by the Bible. All of these will appear in this thesis, along with the interplay between written accounts and physical ascents. The absence of these figures and themes show that there is still a need to integrate them into the larger dialogue.

Finally, I draw attention to the extensive material relating to early medieval sacred spaces, hilltops and high places. While this thesis focuses on human curiosity with regard to seeing, experiencing and ascending mountains, there is a wealth of literature on the importance of hilltops as sacred places in pre-Christian and early medieval communities of England,

³⁰ Williams, *Pietro Bembo on Etna*, 103; cf. 105.

³¹ Buxton, ‘Mount Etna’, 25. But cf. König’s argument that Strabo depicted two distinct strands of mountains, those outside Italy and those inside Italy: ‘the first one links mountains with wild, uncivilised peoples; the second stresses the domestication of mountains.’ König, ‘Strabo’s Mountains’, 48.

³² Buxton, ‘Mount Etna’, 43. The discourses he lists are ‘mythological, religious, historical, geographical, geological, botanical, political, philosophical’.

³³ Dawn Hollis and Jason König (eds.), *Mountain Dialogues from Antiquity to Modernity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021).

³⁴ Hollis and König, *Mountain Dialogues*, 12.

Scotland, Ireland and Scandinavia.³⁵ There is a range of work on British and Scandinavian mounds and hill-top sites, which are often associated with far-seeing power, sacredness and gaining inspiration: human visual and physical engagement developed a sacredness in natural places and features which attracted activity and became revered over millennia.³⁶ As Sarah Semple (*Perceptions of the Prehistoric in Anglo-Saxon England*) says, ‘hilltops ... can be regarded as an indisputable element of the pre-Christian spiritual topography’ and ‘high places also seem to have drawn specific types of activity: prior to the conversion, cemeteries and individual burials were commonly positioned in high and prominent topographic positions’.³⁷

Bede wrote of the hilly, wild landscape surrounding the monastery at Lastingham in North Yorkshire.³⁸ However, Pickles (*Anglo-Saxon Monasteries as Sacred Places*) observes that Bede’s description was more to present the monastery as a community bringing light into the darkness by teaching in the wilderness, than to imply that the location was chosen for climbing or that ascents occurred there.³⁹ Although certain natural places might have liminal qualities associated with fear, darkness and despair, some of these provided the security of an ‘anchor for the narrative’ in the real world.⁴⁰ Thus in Æthelwulf’s *De Abbatibus*, a poem composed in Northumbria sometime between 803 and 821,⁴¹ holy Ecgberht (d. 729) instructed the first church and monastic community to be built on a hilltop, accessed by a winding path. The instructions from Ecgberht were quite specific:

est tamen, ut visus potuit portendere cordis,
collis non magnus declivo tramite flexus,
quo sol consurgens trutinantis tempora Librae
pervolat; hunc spinae spissa cum fronde coronant.
Falcibus has cisas toto cum germine, frater,

³⁵ In addition to the works referred to in these two paragraphs, see also the following: E. FitzPatrick, *Royal Inauguration Sites in Gaelic Ireland* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2004); A. Hall, ‘Constructing Anglo-Saxon Sanctity: Tradition, Innovation and Saint Guthlac’, in *Images of Sanctity: Essays in Honour of Gary Dickson*, 207-35, ed. Debra Higgs Strickland, *Visualising the Middle Ages*, 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2007); Maj-Britt Frenze, ‘Holy Heights in the Anglo-Saxon Imagination: Guthlac’s beorg and Sacred Death’, *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 117, No. 3 (2018), 315-342.

³⁶ Sarah Semple, *Perceptions of the Prehistoric in Anglo-Saxon England: Religion, Ritual, and Rulership in the Landscape* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 63-5.

³⁷ Semple, *Perceptions of the Prehistoric*, 70, 71. For discussion of landscape and memory, see Nordquist’s article on ancient Greece: Gullög Nordquist, ‘The Ancient and Sacred Greek Landscape’, in Sæbjørg Walaker Nordeide and Stefan Brink (eds.), *Sacred sites and holy places: Exploring the sacralization of landscape through time and space*, 141-185, *Studies in the Early Middle Ages*, 11 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2013).

³⁸ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and tr. B. Colgrave & R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 3.23.

³⁹ T. Pickles, ‘Anglo-Saxon Monasteries as Sacred Places’, in J. Sterrett and P. Thomas (eds.), *Sacred Text, Sacred Place*, 49 (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

⁴⁰ Semple, *Perceptions of the Prehistoric*, 138.

⁴¹ J. Terry, ‘Æthelwulf’s *De abbatibus* and the Anglo-Saxon Ecological Imagination’, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 49.3 (September, 2019), 479. doi:

<https://doi.org/10.1215/10829636-7724625>

aequoris et dorso predicti auferre memento,
inque loco pulchrum domino sic conde sacellum.⁴²

[There is, as a vision in my heart can reveal, a hill not large (and) with a sloping, winding path, where the rising sun flies across the face of Libra, the weigher; here thickets of thorn crown (the hill) with leaves. Cut these away with scythes, brother, and take them away with their seed from the top and sides just mentioned, and then establish in that place a beautiful church for the Lord.]⁴³

As Terry (Æthelwulf's *De abbatibus*) says, the poem is a foundation narrative for the monastery and its community, situating the natural world at the heart of the narrative and thereby shaping the community's religiosity, belief and self-identity.⁴⁴ The words of the poem seem to indicate ascent or climbing as part of the spiritual approach to a sacred site. Natural environments, managed by humans, could 'affect the physical and intellectual lives of early medieval people.'⁴⁵ In words that support the premise of this thesis, namely that there was ancient interest and engagement with mountains and high places for their own sake, Semple argues that 'the pre-Christian and Christian populations of England had a strong aesthetic awareness of their environment'.⁴⁶

1.1.2 Outline of the thesis

Following this introductory chapter one, chapter two will explore the representation and perception of mountains in the worlds of Greece and Rome. I will show representations of mountains in literature, with particular analysis of Hesiod's *Theogony* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. I will discuss the function of Mount Helicon in the *Theogony* and the Muses who dwelt upon the mountain, and compare that in turn with Virgil's depiction of the goddess Diana upon Mount Cynthus on the island of Delos. The chapter will then examine the nature of Mount Olympus and Zeus' battle against the Titans and against Typhoeus in the *Theogony*, exploring how this important mountain and these battles had literary ramifications for Mount Atlas and Mount Etna in Virgil's *Aeneid*. Mount Etna developed its own hugely important literary life, appearing often as a mountain of chaos in many representations, and in contrast with other mountains—such as Apennine—which represented order, stability and homeland. I will show the power which Etna played on the mind of the Roman philosopher Seneca. Seneca reflected on his own interest and curiosity about Etna and encouraged his nephew Lucilius to make an ascent of the mountain,

⁴² Æthelwulf, *De abbatibus*, ed. and trans. Alistair Campbell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 131-37.

⁴³ Transl. Terry, 'Æthelwulf', 479.

⁴⁴ Terry, 'Æthelwulf', 480-81.

⁴⁵ Terry, 'Æthelwulf', 482.

⁴⁶ Semple, *Perceptions of the Prehistoric*, 74.

revealing the tension between the reality of a physical ascent and the virtuality of a written account.

Chapter three will examine mountains in the Bible. I will provide analysis and comment on individual Books and writers to show the perception and representation of biblical mountains, and to provide context for the Middle Ages. I will show a complexity of mountain writing in the Bible, especially in the New Testament, and the potential that this writing had to provide inspiration and enthusiasm with regard to mountains. The examination of biblical mountains will lead naturally to Egeria, an early Christian traveller to the Holy Land, who visited a number of mountains specifically because they had featured in the stories of Moses in Exodus and Deuteronomy. Egeria's interest and curiosity and interest in mountains will be a theme for exploration. I will tease out Egeria's interest in mountains from an account that scholars have more traditionally studied as an example of early pilgrimage.⁴⁷

Three hundred years after Egeria, in about 680, a man named Arculf made a journey to the Holy Land, and an account of his travels survives. Chapter four will show that Arculf, a bishop from Gaul, was caught in a storm on his way home from his travels and arrived at the home of Adomnán, abbot of the monastery of Iona. During his stay Arculf recounted his travels to Adomnán, who published his *De Locis Sanctis*, an account of the travels of Arculf in the Holy Land.⁴⁸ Appearing right at the end of Adomnán's book was Arculf's recollection of sailing from Sicily and seeing the island of Vulcano and its mountain. I will discuss the significance of the mountain in Adomnán's work. Over forty years after Arculf, in 729, the young monk Willibald climbed the same mountain, an episode recorded by the nun Hugeburc, when Willibald himself dictated the story of his life to her in 778. Hugeburc's *Vita* of Willibald, her *Hodoeporicon* ('travelogue'),⁴⁹ included a description of his ascent of Mount Vulcano, the passage which opened this thesis. I will show influences between these accounts from Hugeburc and Adomnán. Willibald is a forgotten figure in mountaineering history and chapter four will use Hugeburc's account, and Adomnán's before her, to unpick differences between Willibald's physical ascent and Hugeburc's written account, to see how the interplay between the two adds to our understanding of medieval perceptions of mountains.

⁴⁷ For the modern edition of Egeria's text see Pierre Maraval, *Égérie. Journal de voyage (Itinéraire)*, Sources chrétiennes 296 (Paris: Cerf, 1982), reissued with additions and corrections, 1997, 2002; hereafter *Égérie*. For translations and commentaries see e.g. Anne McGowan and Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Pilgrimage of Egeria* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press Academic, 2018), 1-22; and John Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, (Aris & Phillips: Oxford, 1999), 1-4, 35-45. For a fuller list of works on Egeria see George E. Gingras, *Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage*, Ancient Christian Writers 38 (New York: Newman Press, 1970), 135.

⁴⁸ For the text, see *Adamnani De locis sanctis*, ed. and trans. D. Meehan and L. Bieler, *Scriptores latini hiberniae* 3 (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1958); and Ludwig Bieler, 'Adamnani de locis sanctis libri tres', *Itineraria et Alia Geographica*, ed. P. Geyer, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (CCSL, 175) (Turnhout: Brepols, 1965), 175-234.

⁴⁹ See chapter four for detailed bibliography on Hugeburc and Willibald.

The concluding chapter five will look at a mountain climb which occurred at the end of the medieval period, in 1336. The poet, scholar and humanist Francesco Petrarca climbed Mont Ventoux, a mountain in Provence, near Avignon,⁵⁰ and related an account of the climb in a letter he claimed to have written on the same day. Petrarch's climb is well known, as I will later discuss, though Petrarch's personal written account and the physical ascent have a chequered history, revealing again a tension between the real and the virtual. For some, Petrarch's climb hailed the beginning of modern mountaineering, while for others the account, or the ascent—or both—were mere fabrication. My analysis of Petrarch's climb of Ventoux, will shed new light on perceptions of mountains from antiquity to Petrarch.

There has been a neglect of the role which mountains in antiquity have played in the literary history of mountaineering. This neglect has led to a marginalisation of mountains in earlier accounts, even where the accounts themselves have been objects of vast scholarly study. There is a great storehouse of scholarship on figures such as Seneca, Egeria, Arculf and Willibald, though little of this scholarship relates directly to mountains.⁵¹ Only Petrarch's ascent of Ventoux has received attention—and much attention at that—and my approach will be to examine previous scholarly material and to use material from this thesis to provide a different focus of his ascent. In an exploration of why and how Seneca, Egeria, Willibald and others have been marginalised, we can hope to acquire fresh understanding of ancient perceptions of mountains and gain new insight into the relevant works of these writers and climbers. The exploration of these accounts will also shine light afresh on Petrarch's ascent of Mont Ventoux.

Here, then, are the questions (briefly mentioned above) which I will be exploring in the following pages. Firstly, there was a tension between the real and the virtual, between physical ascents of mountains on the one hand, and ascents of mountains as literary accounts on the other, accounts whose authors had no declared experience of the ascents about which they were writing. The authors of the narratives, not the venturers, were the ones who made the description of the ascents memorable. It was the authors who made use of rich literary examples at their disposal to adorn their respective mountains, delivering an expected or hoped-for representation of a mountain that might have been different from the reality of the ascent. Thus Hugeburc wrote about Willibald's ascent of Vulcano, after he had dictated the tales of his travels to her. I will explore how Hugeburc's employment of her literary predecessors enabled her to add her own interpretation to Willibald's ascent. I will show that analysis of the interplay of her writing and of his experiences help to unearth intriguing aspects of attitudes to mountains. Hugeburc was a sedentary climber, an 'armchair traveller' and discussion of her interpretation of Willibald's climbs will reveal her own attitudes as much as his adventures and his perceptions. There was also interplay between Seneca the philosopher and his written

⁵⁰ For the edition of the letter see Francesco Petrarca, ed. Vittorio Rossi, *Le Familiari*, Vol. I (Firenze: G. C. Sansoni, 1933), 153-161.

⁵¹ Scholarly works will be discussed *ad loc.*

encouragement to his nephew Lucilius to climb Mount Etna, and between Lucilius' ascent and his proposed poem on Etna, showing the importance of literary history for an understanding of a mountain. The unique voice of Egeria, who both climbed in the Holy Land and recorded her climbs in her written account, revealed how she acted as an intercessor between her actual climbs and the sacred climbs written in the Bible. Such interplay revealed an interest in the high places by both climber and narrator, and blurs the origins of human emotional attachment to mountains.

Secondly, I will argue that inspiration from literature created and developed an interest in mountains which has hitherto been overlooked. The literary representation of mountains in classical and biblical literature encouraged motivation for medieval mountain ascents and narratives. Literary antecedents influenced the crafting of mountain accounts represented in literature, delivering perceptions of mountains that influenced later generations. *Imitatio* was the reliance on one's literary predecessors. Virgil drew inspiration from the works of Hesiod, Hugelburc was influenced by Virgil, Petrarch cited Livy. Like layers of lava on a mountainside, literary accretions added to the history of a mountain, suggesting that medieval perceptions of mountains were informed by earlier literary and historical accounts. I will show the significance of the sediment of history in perceptions of mountains in antiquity.

Thirdly, Hugelburc wrote that curiosity encouraged Willibald to ascend the mountain. This thesis will show that different authors attributed the quality of curiosity as a reason for climbing in high places, a positive quality ascribed to those ascending a mountain. Sometimes a biographer used this word, as Hugelburc described Willibald, and sometimes the actual climber described himself or herself as curious, as was the case with Egeria in the Holy Land. From Seneca to Petrarch, it seems that reading often inspired curiosity, and the desire to discover the physicality of their reading was an inspiration for men and women to go into the mountains. The aspect of curiosity in mountain ascents of antiquity has been little explored, and I will show that in all cases in this thesis curiosity was regarded, or at least implied, as a positive quality.

In his article 'Curiosity Killed the Monk', Scott Bruce explains his opinion that curiosity was regarded as a sin in the world of the medieval monk, taking as his starting point a twelfth-century chapter book for nuns.⁵² He refers to a line drawing (fol. 46v) of a young monk near the top of a ladder reaching out to touch an image of Jesus. On the left-hand side of the ladder, written in Latin, were the twelve steps to humility, taken from the seventh chapter of the *Rule of Benedict*. On the right-hand side were twelve dangers for the young Christian, and out of all these dangerous distractions, 'the gateway sin in this litany of monastic vices is curiosity (*curiositas*).'⁵³

⁵² MS Admont, Benediktinerstift, Codex 567. See Scott G. Bruce, 'Curiosity Killed the Monk: The History of an Early Medieval Vice', *Journal of Medieval Monastic Studies*, 8 (Brepols: Turnhout, 2019).

⁵³ Bruce, 'Curiosity', 74.

This thesis will explore the relationship between curiosity and mountain ascents, arguing that curiosity was a positive attribute in climbing accounts. Thus Willibald, whose biographer Hugeburc described him as curious when climbing Vulcano; thus Seneca, whose own words and interest in Etna marked him as a man of curiosity; so, too, the emperor Hadrian, whose curiosity spurred him to climb Etna; and Egeria, climber of biblical mountains, who described herself as very curious; and Petrarch, who wrote that curiosity was an integral quality required of any companion for his mountain climb.⁵⁴ Of those discussed in this thesis, Arculf alone is one whose curiosity was not mentioned, though such a quality might be implicit in one who travelled to explore the Holy Land.

Finally, the whole thesis will serve to contest Nicolson's argument that there was a lack of human interest in mountains before the eighteenth century. I do not suggest that there was widespread recreational mountain climbing or that roped rock climbing was a pastime from antiquity to the fourteenth century. While there is some evidence of interest in this arena, the evidence is too small to justify such a sweeping claim, and the modern extremes of mountain climbing which began in the nineteenth century as a pastime for the European male élite did not take place in the ancient world. However, it is equally valid to deny that the ancient perception of mountains was all 'mountain gloom', to use Nicolson's phrase.⁵⁵ I will argue that during the period of this thesis there *was* human appreciation of the aesthetic, recreational and emotional value of mountains; and that interest existed in both physical and literary ascents of mountains. Virtual descriptions of mountains inspired real ascents of real mountains: as human interest in mountains developed partly from literary accounts of mountains, I will argue that the origins of human emotional investment in mountains, real and virtual, were more blurred than the currently accepted period of the eighteenth century.

This thesis is about the perception and representation of mountains. I will show that there were polyvalent, complex perceptions of mountains in antiquity, which ranged from appreciation and enjoyment to avoidance and fear, including a practical and emotional attachment to mountains. Just as reasons for modern mountaineering are multi-faceted and have focused on conquest and power as well as on aesthetic appreciation and sport, so too it is difficult to categorise ancient attitudes to mountains with a simplistic supposition that all humans regarded all mountains as aesthetically unappealing, or as obstacles to be avoided if possible. The thesis will nuance and qualify the view, held by Nicolson and others, that mountains were ignored or were not appreciated for aesthetic purposes until the advent of modern mountain climbing. In classical and biblical accounts of mountains it was the case that men *did* climb mountains for reasons other than necessity, and in late antiquity and the early medieval period women, too, revealed in their accounts their own fascination with mountains.

⁵⁴ Sen. *Ep.* 79; *Vit. Had.* 13.3; *Égérie*, 16.3; *Fam.* IV.1.

⁵⁵ See section 1.1.1.

For some, there was a need and a joy to be among mountains, requirements which might be enjoyed vicariously if physical ascents were not possible.

By linking Willibald to antiquity and Petrarch to Willibald, this thesis will develop new links between the Greco-Roman world and the world of Petrarch, who stands at the dawn of the renaissance. It will study Egeria in the Holy Land and Willibald on Vulcano to show that ancient perceptions of mountains continued to have flesh on their bones in the medieval period; and it will use these ancient and medieval perceptions of mountains to offer new shades of meaning to Petrarch's ascent of Ventoux which will help to view Petrarch's climb in a new literary and experiential context. The thesis will be part of an innovative evaluation of ancient views of mountaineering and will add nuance and qualification to current views on ancient and medieval perceptions of mountains.

1.1.3 What is a mountain?

The question regarding what a mountain is certainly needs to be addressed at the outset of this thesis, a question which is as true for a modern interpretation of a mountain as it was in classical or biblical literature.⁵⁶ It is easy enough to classify a mountain as, say, six hundred metres above sea level, but mountains, including mountains in antiquity, are not simply vertical zones fixed at a minimum height above the earth: human perception of the character of a mountain is framed by boundaries of societal understanding, and these boundaries constantly shift and blur with the passage of time and cultural change.⁵⁷

Nan Shepherd offers a sharp definition of what a mountain might be:

The Cairngorm mountains are a mass of granite thrust up through the schists and gneiss that form the lower surrounding hills, planed down by the ice cap, and split, shattered and scooped by frost, glaciers and the strength of running water. Their physiognomy is in the geography books – so many square miles of area, so many lochs, so many summits of over 4,000 feet—but this is a pallid simulacrum of their reality, which, like every reality that matters ultimately to human beings, **is a reality of the mind.**⁵⁸

⁵⁶ For a suggested summary of attempts to interpret and define a mountain, see John Gerrard, *Mountain environments: An examination of the physical geography of mountains* (London: Belhaven Press, 1990), 3-7; Bernard Debarbieux and Gilles Rudaz, trans. Jane Marie Todd, *The Mountain: A Political History from the Enlightenment to the Present* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 2-3; Veronica Della Dora, *Mountain: Nature and Culture* (London: Reaktion Books Limited, 2016), 13-28; Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Vol. I (London: Collins, 1972), 30-35. For interpretations of a Greek *oros* and its uses see Buxton, 'Imaginary Greek Mountains', 2-6; and for a Roman *mons* see Barton, 'The Aesthetics of the Mountain', 27-9. For an opinion on the general perception of mountains in Greco-Roman antiquity, see Buxton, 'Mount Etna', 25.

⁵⁷ See Buxton, 'Imaginary Greek Mountains', 2.

⁵⁸ Nan Shepherd, *The Living Mountain* (Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 2011), 1.

As Shepherd, so a textbook might begin its definition of a mountain thus, a steep-sloped landmass of rock pushed up from the earth's crust to achieve prominence over its surroundings, at the mercy of the elements to shape and model as they wish. Yet for Shepherd such a description is not sufficient, such a description does not even begin to explain what a mountain is for a human being, what precisely a mountain *means*. Shepherd, more than most, is aware of this conundrum and is aware of the reality of a mountain and what effect a mountain can have on the human mind. Macfarlane, too, recognises the psychological state which a mountain can arouse: 'what we call a mountain is thus in fact a collaboration of the physical forms of the world with the imagination of humans—a mountain of the mind.'⁵⁹

Mountains, then, have an internal meaning within the human mind, as much as an external, geomorphic reality.⁶⁰ This is as true today as it was for the Greeks and Romans, and the emotional significance of the mountain will be an aspect explored in this thesis. At the end of the first century, the Roman lawyer and politician, Pliny the Younger,⁶¹ revealed just such a perception that certain mountains held for him. Pliny's estate was at *Tifernum Tiberinum* ('Tifernum-on-the-Tiber')—modern Città di Castello, an Umbrian hill town to the north of Perugia, surrounded by the Apennine mountains. In a letter written to his friend Domitius Apollinaris he spoke with great warmth of the mountainous landscape:

Magnam capies **voluptatem**, si hunc regionis situm ex monte prospexeris. Neque enim terras tibi sed formam aliquam ad eximiam **pulchritudinem** pictam videberis cernere: ea varietate, ea descriptione, quocumque inciderint oculi, **reficientur**.⁶²

You will take great **delight** if you look out over this district from the top of the mountain. For you will think yourself to be looking not at land and fields so much as at some imaginary landscape, drawn in a picture of extraordinary **beauty**: wherever your eyes fall they will be **refreshed** by its variety, and by its depiction.

The language of the passage revealed that homeland mountains were 'a reality of the mind' as much for Pliny as for Nan Shepherd and Robert Macfarlane, and in his imagination of the mountains of his home he described them in pictorial terms, as a painting, emphasising their **pleasure, beauty and refreshment**.⁶³ Pliny's powerful sense of place described an idealised scene of mountains within the crafted framework of a letter. The idealisation of mountains in literature influenced later perceptions of mountains, showing how important cultural factors

⁵⁹ Macfarlane, 19.

⁶⁰ For a standard geomorphic description of a mountain see e.g. <https://www.britannica.com/science/mountain-landform>. Accessed 05 November 2020.

⁶¹ His uncle was the natural historian and commander of the Roman fleet, Pliny the Elder, the man of adventure who lost his life exploring the eruption of a volcanic mountain—Vesuvius—in 79.

⁶² *Ep.* 5.6.13. Cf. Strabo's (d. c.21) description of Rome's Campus Martius: he said that the hills which surrounded the Campus provided *σκηνογραφική ὄψις* ('a view in the manner of a scene-painting'), 5.3.8.

⁶³ If mountains are 'a reality of the mind', then the important part of a mountain exists in the imagination. In addition to a mountain's meaning, the ascent of any mountain takes with it as climbing baggage the mountain's literary history: a traverse of the Alps will bring memories of Hannibal, Mont Ventoux is marked with the name of Petrarch and Mount Atlas forever bears the name of the Titan.

were in establishing human perceptions. As Buxton declares, ‘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.’⁶⁴

For the Greeks and Romans, the entity of what was termed a ‘mountain’ was not ‘to be defined simply in terms of physical height’.⁶⁵ Buxton is right to declare that a mountain was ‘in the eye of the beholder’.⁶⁶ Mount Olympus was an *oros* just as Mount Atlas was a *mons*; but so too were the lowly Mount Cynthus (113 m. high) on the island of Delos, and Mount Cronion (the Hill of Cronos, 123 m.) at Olympia.⁶⁷ Terminology, like height, also reveals ancient attitudes to mountains. Barton argues (and dictionaries confirm) that a number of Latin words could extend their meanings to signify a mountain: ‘the breadth of meaning among the words referring to the mountain and its parts even extends to what is commonly thought to be an important distinction in referring to mountains in English: even *collis* (‘a hill’) can also be used to refer to what are usually *montes* (‘mountains’) in Latin.’⁶⁸

Significantly for this study, Isidore of Seville (d. 636) made a clear distinction between a mountain, a hill and a rise, a distinction which, as Barton argues, was very much less clear in Roman descriptions. Contrary to popular perception, therefore, Isidore provided unfamiliar evidence that the Middle Ages *did* think about mountains, and possibly more than is currently acknowledged. As Claude Thomasset in his study of medieval mountains argues, Isidore

[Isidore] ... est l’un des rares à distinguer entre **mons, collis et tumulus**. Les montagnes sont donc des: **tumores terrarum altissimi, dicti quod sint eminentes**. Les colles sont au sommet: **praeminentiora iuga montium, quasi colla**, alors que le tumulus est considéré comme: **mons brevis, tumens tellus**, c’est-à-dire une colline.⁶⁹

[Isidore] ... is one of the few to distinguish between a **mountain, hill and rise**. Mountains are therefore ‘**very high tumours of the earth, named because they stick out**’. Hills are at the top: ‘**pre-eminent ridges of mountains, as if hills**’, while the tumulus is considered as ‘**a low mountain, a swelling in the earth**’, that is to say, a hill.

In spite of claims that ancient perceptions of mountains were not the same as those of today, links and continuity between such terms as Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance are becoming increasingly recognised by scholars. ‘The more we learn about the period following Rome, the less dark and uncultured it appears; the more we inquire into what

⁶⁴ Buxton, *Imaginary Greece: the contexts of mythology* (Cambridge, 1994), 81.

⁶⁵ R. Buxton, ‘Imaginary Greek Mountains’, 2.

⁶⁶ Buxton, *Imaginary Greece*, 81.

⁶⁷ See Belis, ‘Fire on the Mountain’, for Olympus (238-43) and Olympia (136-9); for Cynthus, see Strabo 10.5.2.

⁶⁸ Barton, ‘The Aesthetics of the Mountain’, 28. See also Lewis & Short, *collis*.

⁶⁹ Claude Thomasset, *La montagne dans le texte médiéval: entre mythe et réalité* (Paris: Université de Sorbonne, 2000), 22. See Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, II, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985): *tumores terrarum altissimi, dicti quod sint eminentes* (14.8.1) ... *colles sunt praeminentiora iuga montium, quasi colla* (14.8.19) ... *tumulus est mons brevis, quasi tumens tellus* (14.8.21).

was reborn in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the more we become aware of vital continuities with the past.⁷⁰ I will show that the medieval world did not simply inherit a classical tradition, but used that tradition to develop and modify its own understanding of mountains. Thus Isidore's interpretation of different kinds of high ground went beyond the terminology used in antiquity; thus Egeria's travel journal for her own mountain ascents prepared the way for future accounts and writing about mountains; thus Willibald's ascent of Vulcano in a spirit of curiosity and adventure looked ahead to more modern concepts of mountaineering. This thesis will develop new links between the Greco-Roman world and the world of Petrarch. I will begin now with examples from the classical world to show the portrayal of mountains in the ancient world.

⁷⁰ Nicholas Mann, 'The origins of humanism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Humanism*, ed. Jill Kraye (Cambridge, 1996), 1. Accessed 03.04.20: <https://doi-org.libproxy.york.ac.uk/10.1017/CCOL0521430380>.

2 Establishing the layers: mountains in Greek and Latin authors

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the diverse representation of mountains in Greek and Roman texts, especially in two key texts, the *Theogony* of Hesiod and the *Aeneid* of Virgil. The opening lines of the *Theogony* and isolated passages of the *Aeneid* often appear in discussions on ancient perceptions of mountains.¹ However, taken in isolation there is a danger that these passages provide a limited perception of ancient views of mountains: reading the texts in full rather than as a selection of isolated passages provides a deeper and richer understanding of the mountain perceptions offered by the authors.² This chapter will explore the *Theogony* and the *Aeneid* in their entirety, to shine a light on the lesser-known references, and to bring the whole conspectus together into one arena. Secondly, these authors revealed remarkable descriptions of mountains and perceptions of mountains which were varied and complex, and which would influence later literature and literary ascents. The imprisonment of the monster Typhoeus in the *Theogony* provided a traceable literary line from Hesiod to Virgil's descriptions of Mount Etna, and from Virgil there were connections through to Hugelburc's exposition of Willibald's ascent of Vulcano. I will use perceptions of classical mountains to suggest lines of influence that continued into the medieval period.

The interplay between literary accounts and physical ascents of mountains revealed a familiarity with the high places established by literature. I will show that this textual tension existed during the classical period and will explore the relevance of these sources in fostering perceptions of mountains. I will explore whether curiosity about mountains in ancient texts was also a feature of physical climbs. Finally, I argue that the weight of mountain representations in classical literature revealed an interest in, and curiosity for, mountains.

After this brief Introduction, I will explore Hesiod's Helicon as a place of worship and mystery, its sanctuaries and summits associated with the Muses and their joyful summit dances. I will then offer comparison with a passage from Virgil, where the goddess Diana was similarly depicted as dancing on the mountain. I will show how Hesiod's mountains were elemental and integral to his poem, and how Virgil adapted Hesiodic mountains for his own purposes, weaving the mountains into the narrative of the *Aeneid*. Section three will concentrate on the power of Hesiod's Zeus and the grandeur of Olympus in the battle of the Gods versus the Titans. Atlas

¹ For example, Barton, 'The Aesthetics of the Mountain', 34-36; Betsey A. Robinson, 'On the Rocks: Greek Mountains and Sacred Conversations', in *Heaven on Earth: Temples, Ritual and Cosmic Symbolism in the Ancient World*, ed. Deena Ragavan (University of Chicago, 2013), 175-179.

² Cf. his reference to 'landscape narratives' in König, 'Strabo's Mountains', 52.

was punished by Zeus, his punishment famously being to hold up the heavens on his head and shoulders, and this tale will lead into Virgil's description of Mount Atlas in the *Aeneid*. I will explore the Atlas episode to reveal a perception of mountains in Augustan Rome, and how a fixed mass of earth and rock provided a symbolic sense of durability and permanence. In section four I will explore the phenomenon of Etna in both the *Theogony* and the *Aeneid*, as well as in later literature. Hesiod's Zeus battled Typhoeus, a monster whose presence would affect the portrayal of mountains, especially volcanic mountains, throughout later literature. I will also examine the curiosity inspired by mountains and literature. Section five will consider the symbolism of a mountain and contrast the chaos of Etna with the unity of Mount Ida. It will regard how Virgil portrayed the importance of Mount Apennine as an Italian mountain for an Italian nation. The final section will summarise the chapter and look ahead to the chapter on biblical mountains.

2.2 Holy Summits

In classical literature mountains existed as the abodes or haunts of the gods, and overwhelmingly in literature it was the divinities who occupied these high places, who provided a draw for human ascents and for worship. The Greeks worshipped on mountains, but never regarded mountains as inherently sacred themselves, nor did they dedicate summit sanctuaries to the mountain itself. In other words, mountains were associated *with* gods, rather than identified *as* gods,³ and so for humans in the ancient world 'mountains offered highly affective climbs and climactic revelations'.⁴ Visually, mountain summits were locales where heaven and earth met, places which were rooted to the earth but pointed upwards towards heaven: the dual nature of their dichotomic remoteness and potential accessibility made them places of worship, but also places of mystery.⁵ Many mountain references in classical literary works acknowledged and illuminated human perceptions of this otherness and connection with the divinities—the gods of Homer and Virgil, for example, spent much time flitting between Olympus and earth.⁶ The inherited literary tradition of mountain representations influenced later mountain perceptions.

³ Belis, 'Fire on the Mountain', 52; Buxton, 'Imaginary Greek Mountains', 5-6. Exceptions are seen when the mountains became anthropomorphic in literature, for example an Atlas or Apennine, as discussed in sections 2.3.2 and 2.5.2.

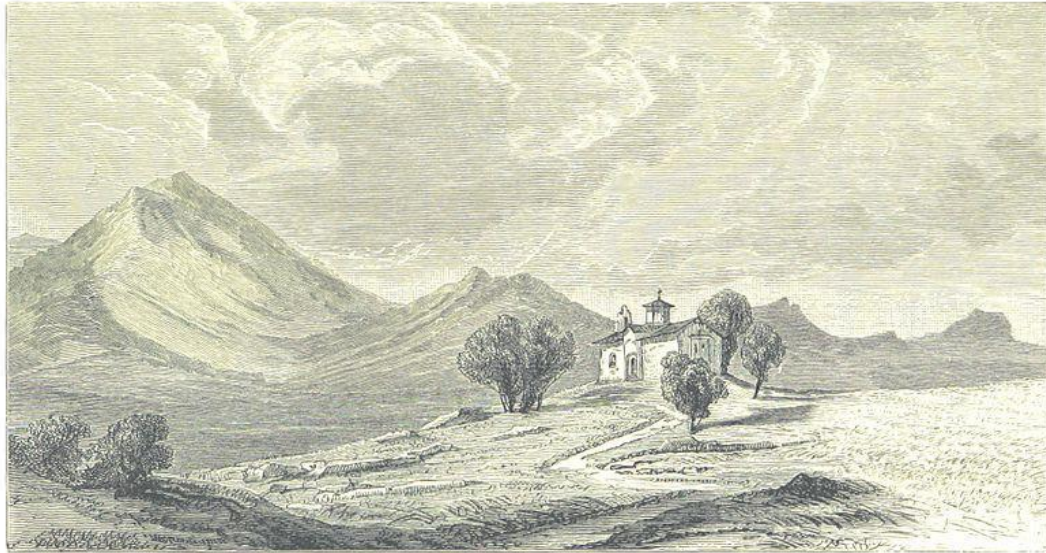
⁴ Robinson, 'On the Rocks', 175.

⁵ For discussion of mountains as locations which bring heaven and earth together, see Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, tr. W. Trask (New York, 1954), 12-17.

⁶ E.g. Hom. *Il.* 1.43ff., Apollo came down from Olympus to Troy, to punish Agamemnon and the Greeks; 4.75ff. Athene flew from Olympus to Troy to break the truce between the Greeks and the Trojans; *Od.* 5.43-91, Hermes flew from Olympus to Calypso. V. *Aen.* 1.219-278, Mercury flew from Olympus to Carthage.

2.2.1 Hesiod's dancing mountain

Hesiod understood the mysterious allure of mountains. He was writing in the last third of the eighth century BCE and his works reveal aspects about his life. He was a shepherd from the small town of Ascra, on the eastern side of Mount Helicon (see Figs. 2-1 and 2-4) in Boeotia, central Greece.



MOUNT HELICON, FROM THESPIÆ.

Figure 2.1: Mount Helicon

Image extracted from page 145 of *A tour in Greece, 1880. With illustrations by Lord Windsor*, by FARRER, Richard Ridley. British Library HMNTS 10125.ee.14. Date: 1882

He wrote two major works—the *Theogony*, the origin and genealogies of the gods, detailing how, after violent struggles against monstrous opposition, Zeus established himself as king of heaven and earth; and the later *Works and Days*, a poetic handbook of moral behaviour and farming practices. He attributed his skill at poetry to the divine aid of the Muses, who, he wrote, taught him the art of poetry when they visited him on the slopes of Mount Helicon and breathed their divine spirit into him.⁷ Hesiod recalled this occasion in the opening lines of his *Theogony*: it was with an understanding of the remote accessibility of the gods on mountain tops that he addressed the Muses:

μουσάων Ἑλικωνιάδων ἀρχώμεθ' αἰεῖδεν,
αἴθ' Ἑλικῶνος ἔχουσιν ὄρος μέγα τε ζάθεόν τε

⁷ For Hesiod's account of himself, see e.g. Hes. *Th.* 22-34; Hes. *Op.* 646-662. See also *Th.* Most, xi-xxv; *Th.* West, 40-48; *Op.* West, 30-33; Betsey A. Robinson, 'Charismatic Landscapes? Scenes from Central Greece Under Roman Rule', in *Valuing Landscape in Classical Antiquity: Natural Environment and Cultural Imagination*, ed. Jeremy McInerney and Ineke Sluiter (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 231ff. Accessed May 8, 2020. Helicon is 1750 m. high and surrounded by other peaks, notably Parnassus.

καί τε περι κρήνην ἰοειδέα πόσσ' ἀπαλοῖσιν
ὄρχεῦνται καὶ βωμὸν ἐρισθενέος Κρονίουνος.
καί τε λοεσσάμεναι τέρενα χροῖα Περμησσοῖο
ἢ Ἴππου κρήνης ἢ Ὀλμειοῦ ζαθέοιο
ἀκροτάτῳ Ἑλικῶνι χοροὺς ἐνεποιήσαντο
καλοῦς, ἱμερόντας: ἐπερρώσαντο δὲ ποσσίν.⁸

Let us begin to sing of the Heliconian Muses, who hold Helicon, the great and holy mountain, and dance on soft feet around the deep-blue spring and altar of Cronus' mighty son. And when they have washed their tender skin in Permessus or Hippocrene or holy Olmeius, they perform choral dances on the very top of Helicon, beautiful dances which arouse desire, and they move nimbly with their feet.

There is some wonderful appreciation of the mountain here, and Hesiod's employment of language provided a clue to the awe and beauty of this mountain scene. The poet chose to portray the Muses through the medium of Mount Helicon, and the hymn opened with an address to the Muses and 'a description of some of their characteristic activities (dancing and singing on Helicon by night).'⁹ They inhabited Helicon, described as both great and holy (μέγα τε ζαθέον τε), for on the mountain stood an altar (βωμὸν) to Zeus. From this mountain flowed life-giving water, a dark-blue spring (κρήνην ἰοειδέα), in whose streams the Muses washed their tender skin (λοεσσάμεναι τέρενα χροῖα). Indeed, such was the beauty of the place that the Muses were dancing on dainty feet (πόσσ' ἀπαλοῖσιν ὄρχεῦνται), forming beautiful dances that aroused desire (χοροὺς ἐνεποιήσαντο καλοῦς ἱμερόντας) on the topmost peak of Helicon itself (ἀκροτάτῳ Ἑλικῶνι).¹⁰

I posit that Hesiod's opening lines counter the declarations of Macfarlane *et al.* that the ancient world had little care for, interest in or emotional association with mountains.¹¹ For this is no description of a *mons horridus*:¹² Hesiod's representation of Helicon is wonderfully engaging, a description of the beauty of the mountain and its scenery. For our understanding of the perception of mountains in antiquity, we see that it was not the divine Muses whose association with the mountain established it as a magnificent location; rather, it was the magnificence of the mountain which drew the holy goddesses to its slopes. There is a notable difference in perception which suggests an idealisation of the mountain.

It would be easy to gainsay this perception and dismiss Hesiod's poetry as lines of verse with no basis in reality, the words of a dreamer imagining gods and seeking poetic inspiration. After all, Hesiod himself wrote that the Muses visited him and taught him to sing beautiful

⁸ Hes. *Th.*, 1-8. For discussion of the *Proem* (lines 1-115) or 'Hymn to the Muses', see *Th.*, West, *ad loc.*

⁹ *Th.*, West, 150.

¹⁰ See Robinson, 'On the Rocks', 177, 179 for further discussion of the opening lines of the *Theogony*.

¹¹ E.g. Macfarlane, 15. For the arguments, see section 1.1.1.

¹² The term comes from Apuleius, 4.6: *Apulei Metamorphoseon, Libri XI*, ed. M. Zimmerman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 74.

poetry.¹³ It would be easy to dismiss Hesiod's words as presenting a picture of a mountain which otherwise played no part in the minds or the thoughts of the Greeks, except that if the Greeks themselves regarded Helicon as a place to be shunned, or simply ignored, then it would be odd for Hesiod to have described it in such delightful terms, in contrast to a putative reality that was recognised as frightening or dull. There is also material evidence to lend support to Hesiod's words, for the local regard for the mountain inspired them to build an altar to Zeus on the summit of Helicon, and sacrifices were made on the summit to the Muses as well.¹⁴ We can see that Hesiod's lines addressed at least a kernel of truth. The altar was a draw for both human and divine—a conscious literary connection between the two—and sources acknowledged that sacrifices occurred on the mountaintops, in particular to Zeus, and these have been confirmed by the archaeological remains of enormous ash altars.¹⁵

Regardless of any possible poetic hyperbole, here we have a scene of mountain glory, not mountain gloom, and the mountain image that appeared at the beginning of the *Theogony* was one that presented readers with a positive representation of a Greek mountain. Hesiod's appreciation of Helicon became part of the mountain's folklore, contributing to its subsequent literary fame and touristic popularity: the influence of Hesiod's Helicon permeated the works of later classical authors and, through them, medieval readers and writers.¹⁶ The influence of literary predecessors was an important factor in developing perceptions of a mountain.

In the second century the Greek traveller and geographer, Pausanias, tramped much of Greece and Asia Minor. Pausanias lived between c.115 and 180, and his *Periegesis*, a travel guide to Greece written in ten books, provided his readers with the author's complete itinerary through central and southern Greece. Pausanias' personal experience of climbing and walking Greek mountains, combined with his knowledge of sanctuaries on the summits, make his work a

¹³ Hes. *Th.* 22-28. 'One time, the Muses taught Hesiod beautiful song while he was pasturing lambs under holy Helicon. And this speech the goddesses spoke first of all to me, the Olympian Muses, the daughters of aegis-holding Zeus: "Field-dwelling shepherds, ignoble disgraces, mere bellies: we know how to say many false things similar to genuine ones, but we know, when we wish, how to proclaim true things."' *Th.* Most.

¹⁴ Paus. 9.29.1. See V. Aravantinos, 'Topographical and Archaeological Investigations on the Summit of Helikon', in *La montagne des muses: Actes du colloque de Geneve*, Recherches et Rencontres 7, ed. A. Hurst and A. Schachter (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1996), 185.

¹⁵ E.g. Paus. 2.25.10 (altars to Zeus and Hera on Mount Arachnaion) and 8.38.7 (sacrifices to Zeus on Mount Lykaeos). See Belis, 'Fire on the Mountain', 216-7.

¹⁶ Hesiod was not the only admirer of the mountain, and classical authors followed his influence. See e.g. Callim., *Hymn.* 5.68-70 to Athene (Athene and Chariclo bathed in the Hippocrene on Helicon); Enn., *Ann.*, 208 (who claimed that he climbed Helicon's summit); V., *Ecl.* 6.64-73 (who told how the poet Gallus visited the waters of Permessus on Helicon, where the Muses gave him Hesiod's crown); Ovid, *Met.*, 5 (the contest of the Muses on Helicon); Paus., *Periegesis*, 9.28. For discussion, see Robinson, 'On the Rocks', 179 ff.

valuable resource for recognising an appreciation of mountains in his time and earlier.¹⁷ In his *Periegesis* Pausanias declared that

ὁ δὲ Ἑλικῶν ὄρων τῶν ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι ἐν τοῖς μάλιστα ἐστὶν εὐγεωσ καὶ δένδρων
ἡμέρων ἀνάπλεωσ.¹⁸

Of the mountains of Greece, Helicon has the most fertile soil and the greatest number of cultivated trees.

Pausanias' words support the image of Helicon we have observed in Hesiod's poem, as a mountain of fertility and cultivation, a mountain that appealed to humans. Pausanias told also of statues on the mountain and at the shrine, evidence of genuine human engagement with the mountain —statues of the Muses, of Apollo fighting Hermes over a lyre, of Dionysus, and even of Hesiod himself.¹⁹ To all those tourists and travellers who climbed the mountain to the *Mouseion*, the summit shrine, the local Boeotians would show an ancient lead tablet inscribed with Hesiod's *Works and Days*.²⁰ The literary descriptions and material evidence point to a positive human appreciation of, and engagement with, Helicon. Robinson confirms this positivity, adding that the mountain had a 'charisma' which drew visitors and writers alike.²¹ The poetry of Hesiod and later poets, and the historical and geographical account of Pausanias, pointed to the importance of Helicon as a mountain, not only for its physical presence and its literary history, but also for its cultural and human appropriation. Its *Mouseion*, the summit shrine, was popular enough for the local Boeotians to erect statues and display an ancient Hesiodic tablet. The mountain gained fame in the ancient world for its reputation as a 'place of human contact with divinity',²² and the evidence from Helicon drives forward my argument that there was human regard for, and interest in, mountains and high places in the ancient world.

2.2.2 The Euthycles stele

Hesiod's link with Helicon remained strong for centuries after his death, showing how important literary connections were in influencing perceptions of a mountain. Pausanias related

¹⁷ See Maria Pretzler, *Pausanias: Travel Writing in Ancient Greece* (London: Duckworth, 2007), especially 4-6, 23-25; and Richard J. A. Talbert, *Ancient Perspectives: Maps and Their Place in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 195. The composition of his work took Pausanias about twenty years, and was written between 160 and 180, a period within the Roman Empire when travel was comparatively easy and relatively safe. Pausanias reminds himself (and therefore the reader) of the enormity of his task at 1.26.4.

¹⁸ Paus. 9.28.1. He added that none of the plants and herbs that grew on and around Helicon were poisonous to humans.

¹⁹ Paus. 9.30.1-3.

²⁰ Paus. 9.31.4. See Robinson, 'On the Rocks', 176. The summit shrine, the *Mouseion*, was a hillside sanctuary on Helicon. It is mentioned in Paus. 9.29; and is discussed further in section 2.2.2 in relation to the Euthycles stele. See Robinson, 'On the Rocks', 177.

²¹ Robinson, 'On the Rocks', 176.

²² Robinson, 'On the Rocks', 179.

that there was a statue of Hesiod on the mountain,²³ and material remains reveal that Hesiod's words featured on a stele, a stone carving which portrayed an image of the mountain itself. The 'Euthycles stele' (see Fig. 2-2) depicts the giant figure of Helicon rising between and towering above the two recognisable mountains of the area—Helicon and Parnassus. The stele, named after its dedicator, was found in 1889 at the hillside sanctuary of the *Mouseion* near the town of Ascra: it is 1.19 m. high, dates from the late third century BCE, and is currently in the National Archaeological Museum of Athens (inv. no. 1455).²⁴



Figure 2.2: The Euthycles Stele, from the Mouseion on Helicon.

Late third century BC. Height 1.19 m. Athens, National Archaeological Museum inv. no. 1455 (© Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Tourism / Archaeological Receipts Fund)

²³ Paus. 9.30.3.

²⁴ Richard Hunter, *Hesiodic Voices: Studies in the Ancient Reception of Hesiod's Works and Days* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 84-86; Robinson, 'On the Rocks', 177, 182-4, 191; André Hurst, 'La stèle de l'Hélicon', in *La montagne des muses*, ed. André Hurst and Albert Schachter, *Recherches et rencontres* 7 (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1996), 57-71; Belis, 'Fire on the Mountain', 43-4.

The sculptor's interpretation of Helicon presented a human personification of his divine nature, an anthropomorphism familiar from Greek and Roman statuary.²⁵ The god was presented as gigantic in form, physically powerful and with the defined muscularity of youth, at the same time maintaining the appearance of a more mature figure with an older face and full beard. The sculptor recognised the god's association with the wild, elemental aspects of the mountain, as depicted in the figure's craggy forehead and shaggy mane, the representation of a powerful and potentially fearsome weather god looking down from his mountain peak.

Though his appearance might be regarded as dangerous by some,²⁶ the words of the inscription are far from aggressive, suggesting the mountain god was kindly and benevolent, as befitted a mountain with life-giving properties.²⁷ There was a relationship between the god and his human worshipper—Euthycles—seen in the generosity of the inscription, a warmth of feeling towards the mountain familiar to readers of Hesiod's poem. The words of the inscription appeared in three separate sections, though the final section, a comment on Hesiod's poetry, is damaged. The first section was a dedication by Euthycles himself:

a) Εὐθύκ[κλ]ῆς παῖς Ἀμφικρίτου Μούσαις ἀνέθηκε
 κοσμήσ[α]ς ἔπεσιν, τῶν ἄ χάρις εἴη αἰνῶς
 καὶ γέν[ε]ος τὸ τέλος [κεί]νου κα[ὶ τοῦ]νομα σώιζοι.²⁸

Euthycles, son of Amphicritus dedicated (this) to the Muses, having adorned it with epic verses. May their grace be eternal and may they ensure the fulfilment of his race and preserve his name.

The second section of writing, below the image, recorded words spoken by the god, and contained a prophecy as well as praise of Hesiod's poetry:

b) οὐτῶς ἀντῶποις ἀριγῆρα[λ]έος βροτῶ[ι ἴ]σα
 οὐκ ἀδ[α]ῆς Ἑλικῶν Μου[σ]άων χρησιμὸν ἰαχέω·
 'πειθομένοι[σ]ι βροτοῖς ὑποθήκαις Ἡσιόδοιο
 εὐνομία χ[ώ]ρα τ' ἔσται καρποῖσι βρύουσα.'

²⁵ See e.g. Nigel Spivey, *Greek Art* (London: Phaidon Press, 1997), 22-24, for a discussion on Greek and Roman religion, which 'depended on visualising its deities in human form' (22). Discussion of the anthropomorphism of mountains will feature later in this chapter.

²⁶ Although it is true that the sculptor recognised the god's association with the wild, elemental aspects of the mountain, nevertheless some commentators incorrectly interpret the stele as a representation of a threatening figure, without taking into account the words inscribed on the stele: see Robinson, 'On the Rocks', 182 (n.53, 54, 57) for references.

²⁷ The year-round, life-giving stream (the deep-blue spring, κρήνην ἰοειδέα) was mentioned in the Hesiod quotation p.19-20; see also Pausanias' words regarding the fertility of the mountain, 9.28.1.

²⁸ For the text, see Werner Peek, 'Hesiod und der Helikon,' *Philologus* 121, 1 (1977): 173-175. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1524/phil.1977.121.1.173>; *Inscriptiones Graecae*, Vol. VII, *Inscriptiones Megaridis et Boeotiae*, ed. W. Dittenberger (Berlin: Reimer, 1892; reissued edition Nachdruck, 1978), 4240. The translation is by S. Burges Watson, *Living Poets*, (Durham, 2014), https://livingpoets.dur.ac.uk/w/Inscriptiones_Graecae_7_4240?oldid=2524 . Accessed 11.08.2019.

Thus facing you very aged, like a mortal, I, Helicon, not ignorant about the Muses, proclaim an oracle: ‘for those mortals who obey the precepts of Hesiod, there will be good order and the land will teem with fruits.’

The final section, though damaged, praised Hesiod:

ε) Ἡσίοδος Δίου Μούσας Ἐλικῶνά τε θεῖον
καλ(λ)ίστοις ὕμνοις ...
γ α[]ιον ἄνδρα.

Hesiod, son of Dius, [verb] the Muses and divine Helicon in the most beautiful hymns.... man.

The Euthycles stele from the third century BCE provides an interpretation of a mountain god imagined into existence. Ring fragments from a much earlier period—Late Minoan II (c.1200 BCE)— suggest that there was a long history of humans imagining mountains and their gods into existence. These fragments (see Fig. 2-3) reveal a seal impression from Knossos (Crete); the impression offered an image of a mountain deity that was similar to the image of the Euthycles stele. Figure 2-3 reveals the image of a goddess, with a pair of lions below her, on a mountain summit, on what was presumably a peak sanctuary, with a male figure below and to the right.²⁹ As was the case with Helicon in the stele, the figure of the deity on the ring fragments represented authority and power, acknowledgement of the human relationship with the mountain and its god.



Figure 2.3: Reconstruction of fragmented seal impressions, Knossos.

Reconstruction of fragmented seal impressions M1-5 Central Shrine, Knossos Palace (1425 –1340 B.C.). Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

²⁹ For more on the ‘Mountain Mother’ seal see Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, transl. John Raffan, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985), 27-8; and for a re-evaluation of the meaning of the seal see Marina Moss, ‘The “Mountain Mother” Seal from Knossos—a Re-evaluation’, *Prudentia* 32.1 (2000), 1-24.

Helicon in the Euthycles stele was an imagined deity, a positive perception of the mountain's god, and is one more piece of evidence to add to other positive representations of the mountain. This was the same mountain Hesiod sang about in his poetry, the mountain which became the traditional home of the Muses and a site for visitors. The perception in the literary, material and cultural sources was of Helicon as a place of nurture rather than danger and, as the home of the Muses, a site of human and divine connectivity. In antiquity Helicon was a mountain of the mind that inspired the thoughts and minds of those who fell under its spell, including poets, tourists and travellers.



Figure 2.4: Map of Helicon, Olympus, Othrys and Cynthus

"File:Greece relief location map.jpg" by Greece_location_map.svg: Lencer derivative work: Uwe Dederling (talk) is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10981243>

2.2.3 Rome imitates Greece

Writing towards the end of the first century BCE, the Roman poet Virgil placed his gods among the mountains, just as his Greek predecessors had done.³⁰ In Book I of the *Aeneid*, amidst pomp

³⁰ Notwithstanding what follows in the pages of this thesis, in recent years there has been much scholarly study on the appearance of landscape in Virgil's works, particularly in his *Eclogues and Georgics*. As E.

and fanfare, Queen Dido of Carthage approached the temple of Juno. As part of his literary construction, Virgil compared the queen to the goddess Diana walking the ridges of Mount Cynthus (see Fig. 2-4):³¹

Qualis in Eurotae ripis aut per iuga Cynthi
 exercet Diana choros, quam mille secutae
 hinc atque hinc glomerantur oreades; illa pharetram 500
 fert umero, gradiensque deas supereminet omnis:
 Latonae tacitum pertemptant gaudia pectus:
 talis erat Dido...³²

Just as Diana leads her dancing troop on the banks of the Eurotas, or across the ridges of Mount Cynthus—a thousand mountain nymphs follow her and gather about her on this side and that; she carries a quiver across her shoulder, and as she walks she surpasses all the divine ones in height: joy assails the silent breast of her mother Latona; just so was Dido...

In this simile we see the influence of his literary predecessors on Virgil. He fashioned his episode by adapting a Homeric simile which had compared the mortal Nausicaa to the goddess Artemis traversing the ridges of Mount Taygetos in the Peloponnese.³³ Virgil's simile also contained echoes of Hesiod's Muses, as Diana's followers, like the Muses, performed dances on the mountain tops. We shall see throughout this chapter the significance of Virgil's literary predecessors for the development of his own representations of mountains.

A primary purpose of Virgil's simile was to flatter his queen Dido by comparing her to the goddess Diana, a beautiful young woman compared to a beautiful goddess. However, an incidental effect of the simile evoked the importance of the classical divine in a mountain location. By placing the goddess on the ridges of Cynthus, Virgil portrayed a human perception that mountain summits were the landscapes of divine action, potentially places of mystery where the gods chose to operate. David West describes the setting and the 'geographical details'

R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (Routledge, 1953), remarks, it is not enough to know only the *Aeneid*, for 'the influence of his eclogues on later times is hardly less important than that of his epic' (190). See for example, G. Kerrigan, *Virgil's Map: Geography, Empire and the Georgics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020); Katharine M. Earnshaw, 'Shelley's Georgic Landscape', *Reflections and New Perspectives on Virgil's Georgics*, ed. Bobby Xinyue and Nicholas Freer, 169–184 (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019); M.Y. Myers, 'From Cumae to Po: Italian itineraries in *Aeneid* 6', *Dictynna* 16 (2019); K. F. B. Fletcher, *Finding Italy: Travel, Nation and Colonization in Vergil's Aeneid* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014); T. Saunders, *Bucolic Ecology: Virgil's Eclogues and the Environmental Literary Tradition* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008); Mathilde Skoie, 'City and Countryside in Virgil's Eclogues', in *City, Countryside, and the Spatial Organization of Value in Classical Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); J. Connolly, 'Picture Arcadia: The Politics of Representation in Virgil's Eclogues', *Vergilius* 47 (2001); Richard Jenkyns, 'Virgil and Arcadia', *JRS* 79 (1989).

³¹ Mount Cynthus is the hill on the island of Delos, Diana's birthplace. Although Cynthus is only 113 m. in height, the presence of Diana on the peak serves as a reminder to a twenty-first century readership that for the ancients it was very much human interpretation, not necessarily height alone, that made a mountain. See section 1.1.3 for discussion of what it was that made a mountain.

³² *Aen.* I.498-503.

³³ Virgil adapted Hom. *Od.* VI.102-9, which begins: 'as Artemis the shooter of arrows goes across the high mountain ridges of Taygetus and Erymanthus ...'

in Homer's simile as being 'purely ornamental', suggesting that Virgil carried the ornaments into his own simile for no purpose beyond decoration of the narrative.³⁴ Yet Virgil regarded the 'geographical details' of mountains as important precisely because they were the haunts of the gods. To overlook the setting is to overlook the mountains, and therefore to overlook how mountains featured in the human landscape. Virgil was a keen proponent of the role of mountains, including the mythology of mountains, and he examined the importance they played in the lives and culture of his characters. Although his characters were fictional, the mountains were real, and Virgil's employment of mountain narratives placed him in a tradition of mountains appearing in mythological tales of gods, humans and heroes.³⁵

Diana, the Greek Artemis, loved the mountains and they were a familiar location for her in classical literature.³⁶ As Callimachus had his Artemis say to her father Zeus:

δὸς δέ μοι οὐρεα πάντα: πόλιν δέ μοι ἤντινα νεῖμον
 ἤντινα λῆς: σπαρνὸν γὰρ ὄτ' Ἄρτεμις ἄστῳ κάτεισιν.
 οὐρεσιν οἰκήσω ...³⁷

Give to me all mountains; and assign me whatever city you wish, for seldom is it that Artemis goes down to the city. On the mountains will I dwell ...

There was a relationship in antiquity between the human world and the natural landscape, including the landscape of mountains.³⁸ The role of Artemis/Diana in human affairs was often at points of political conflict, and these included mountain borders and mountain passes, showing an overlap between the mythical and the historical.³⁹ Likewise, evidence of mountain dancing appeared equally in mythical and historical accounts.⁴⁰ Buxton declares that

³⁴ David West, 'Multiple-Correspondence Similes in the *Aeneid*', *JRS* 59 (1969), 40-2, describes the 'geographical details' in Homer's simile as 'purely ornamental, with no analogue in the narrative' (44); and he adds that 'these ornaments survive' in Virgil's adaptation of the simile (*qualis in eurotae ripis aut per iuga Cynthi*). Austin, in his otherwise excellent commentary on *Aeneid* I, says nothing beyond the fact that Cynthus is 'the hill of Delos, [Diana's] birthplace ... [and] Virgil's geographical setting is appropriate to his context', Virgil, *Aeneid Book I*, ed. R. G. Austin (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1964), 168, n.498.

³⁵ See Buxton, 'Imaginary Greek Mountains', 6-7. For mythological tales set on mountains which reflect human practices see e.g. Soph. *OT* 1133ff. (exposure of the infant Oedipus and transhumance of shepherds), E. *Med.* 3-4 (building the Argo with timber cut from Mount Pelion and use of mountain timber for building) and Hes. *Th.* 632ff. (the Titans fighting from Mount Othrys and mountain summits used for beacon fires).

³⁶ Artemis loved the heights: in E. *Tr.* 551 she was Artemis *ὄρεστέρα* ('of the mountains').

³⁷ Callim. 3.17-20, to Artemis. Artemis continued: 'On the mountains will I dwell and the cities of men I will visit only when women vexed by the sharp pang of childbirth call me to their aid.'

³⁸ See Susan Guettel Cole, 'Landscapes of Artemis', *The Classical World*, Vol. 93, No. 5 (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 471-5; also for evidence for her occupation of coastal strips and boundary roads, as well as the high places.

³⁹ See Buxton, 'Imaginary Greek Mountains', 6-7. For a list of Artemis' mountain sanctuaries as recorded by Pausanias and located often at borders, see Cole, 'Landscapes of Artemis', 475, n.30.

⁴⁰ Evidence of humans dancing on mountains (*oreibasia*): on Cithaeron, in the *Bacchae*: e.g. E. *Ba.* 139-140, '[we are] rushing to the Phrygian, the Lydian mountains, and the leader of the dance is Bromius, euoe!'; Plutarch in the *de primo frigido* (Plut. *Moral.* 18.953D) told of the Thyades who climbed to the top of Mount Parnassus in winter to celebrate Dionysus, were cut off by a snowstorm and had to be

‘human beings create an image of their surroundings throughout their interaction with them’.⁴¹ We can see that human perception of mountain landscapes was partly cultural mediation, and partly a deep-rooted attachment to the landscape and a sense of place. Mountain landscapes were significant for human connection to religious and political life. Geopolitical relations might add tension or security to a mountain pass, whereas dancing infused mountains with religious significance. Such everyday familiarity with mountains pervades the classical sources, and reveals an interplay between human and mythical activity on mountains in antiquity, and connections with mountains that were a result of political necessity, but also a result of religious and cultural engagement.

2.2.4 From Helicon to Olympus: theme-changers

As I have shown in the foregoing section, the opening lines of the *Theogony*, supported by quotations from Virgil and Homer, present a favourable perception of mountains in antiquity. Yet there is a risk that isolated references deliver a picture that is equally isolated, giving an indeterminate, squinted view of the ancient perception of mountains. In order to deliver a deeper and richer understanding, I now examine the *Theogony* and the *Aeneid* in more detail and depth, discussing the sophistication of mountain references and the complexity of ancient perceptions of mountains.

After his initial delightful and delicate treatment of Helicon, Hesiod developed the poem’s theme—which at this point was still the Muses, rather than the birth of the gods⁴²—in telling how the Muses delighted gods as well as men, how

Διὶ πατρὶ ὑμνεῦσαι τέρπουσι μέγαν νόον ἐντὸς Ὀλύμπου;⁴³

by singing for their father Zeus they delight his great mind within Olympus;

and how

ἤχεϊ δὲ κάρη νιφόμεντος Ὀλύμπου.⁴⁴

rescued; Strabo 10.3.23 mentioned the ‘mountain-roaming’ of gods and religious fanatics in myth—closely related to actual mountain-roaming, searching for things (e.g. minerals, or hunting) needed for the purposes of living. For more on *oreibasia* see e.g. *Hymn. Hom. Pan.*, 1-4; cf. *Hymn. Hom. Ap.* For secondary literature on the frequency of *oreibasia* and mountain pilgrimage in Greece, see e.g. Euripides, *Bacchae*, ed. E. R. Dodds (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960), xiii-xvi; Buxton, *Imaginary Greece*, 94-95 (who lists further references); Jas Elsner and Ian Rutherford (eds.), *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 18-19.

⁴¹ Buxton, *Imaginary Greece*, 81.

⁴² Although the title of the poem is the *Theogony* (‘birth of the gods’), these opening lines are still part of the ‘hymn to the Muses’ (1-104) which prefaces the main section of the poem, as ‘it was the regular practice for a reciter of epic to begin with a hymn to a deity before passing to his main theme’, Hesiod, *Theogony and Works and Days*, transl. M. L. West (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), xii.

⁴³ Hes. *Th.*, 37-8, transl. *Th. Most*.

⁴⁴ Hes. *Th.*, 42, transl. *Th. Most*.

snowy Olympus' peak resounds with their singing.

In this section of the poem we see and hear the beautiful Muses whose dancing and singing delighted Zeus and filled his palace with laughter. In his commentary on the poem, West refers to the positivity of the mountain scene, stating that 'the emphasis on beauty, on the delightfulness and restfulness of poetry, is ... sustained and emphatic.'⁴⁵ Within a few lines the poet told of the birth of the Muses, and how they were born from Mnemosyne and Zeus, when Mnemosyne delivered them

τυτθὸν ἀπ' ἀκροτάτης κορυφῆς νιφόμεντος Ὀλύμπου.⁴⁶

not far from snowy Olympus' highest peak.

In these lines Hesiod shifted the scenery of his poem and with it came a subtle shift in tone. While his hymn to the Muses and the beauty of their voices were still the dominant subject of this section of the poem, there was a relocation of the scene from Helicon to Mount Olympus. Mount Olympus (see Figs. 2-4 and 2-5) was the dwelling place of the Olympian gods and received mention as such in the ancient literary sources.⁴⁷ Hesiod used the Muses to bring about the relocation, and to direct the reader to Olympus, the dwelling-place of the gods and home of Zeus. The snowy landscape gave the impression that the scenery on and around Olympus was grander than on Helicon, for, as West declares, 'Olympus is here the gods' settlement at the top of the mountain'.⁴⁸ With the locational shift to Olympus came a burgeoning grandeur and dignity applied to Olympus, home of Zeus, a deference different from the supernatural dignity given in the lighter lines to Helicon and the Muses.⁴⁹ None of the other gods held as much importance for Hesiod as Zeus did, in spite of the *theogony* of the title, as it was primarily Zeus in whom Hesiod was interested. Zeus was the highest god, whose supremacy came from being above (*ὕψοθ' ἐόντι*).⁵⁰ This deference to Zeus quantified Hesiod's attitude to Mount Olympus, and to Zeus—and it is apparent that Hesiod was following an established line of literary influence. The mythological events of a mountain became part of a mountain's history. In turn,

⁴⁵ M. Heath, 'Hesiod's didactic poetry', *Classical Quarterly*, 35.2 (1985), 261-2.

⁴⁶ Hes. *Th.*, 62, transl. *Th. Most*.

⁴⁷ For discussion and notes on excavations and surveys of Olympus, of its sanctuary remains and literary sources, see Belis, 'Fire on the Mountain', 238-243. For Olympus as the home of the gods in ancient literary sources, see e.g. Hom. *Od.* 6.41-7 (height and pleasant climate of the mountain as abode of the gods), *Il.* 13.20-1 (Hera hopped from Olympus to Lemnos), V. *Aen.* 10.3-4 (Olympus as a starry look-out point for Jupiter over the world) and Livy 1.16 (Romulus descended from Olympus).

⁴⁸ *Th.* West, 62.

⁴⁹ Hesiod's deference for Zeus is apparent throughout the *Theogony*. See for example Friedrich Solmsen and G. M. Kirkwood, *Hesiod and Aeschylus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018), 7, 10; M. L. West (transl.), *Hesiod*; Roy Kenneth Hack, *God in Greek Philosophy to the Time of Socrates* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1931), 23-32 (esp. 27).

⁵⁰ Hom. *Il.* 10.16.

the history of a mountain became a human construct, and so the layers of literary history were a significant aspect in establishing the depiction of a literary mountain. Consequently, Hesiod's literary debt to Homer included 'Zeus' eminence among the gods, his lordship over gods and men, his direction of their destinies, his home on Olympus.⁵¹

One explanation for Hesiod's attitude to Zeus and Olympus must surely have been the content. Zeus on his own was more majestic subject-matter than even the Muses together; just so Olympus was more majestic than Helicon. Accordingly, there was a grandeur given to Olympus which Helicon was lacking. The formula 'snow-covered Olympus' (νιφόεντος Ὀλύμπου) occurs four times in the *Theogony* as a suitable description of Olympus,⁵² the term being applied to Olympus to emphasise its height and remoteness. Hesiod was equating the importance of Olympus with the importance of its most famous resident. The grandeur and majesty of the mountain, as of its lord, was a recognised feature of Olympus in ancient writing.⁵³



Figure 2.5: Mount Olympus.

"Mount Olympus, Greece" by LylithLusitana is licensed with CC BY-NC-SA 2.0. To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/>

⁵¹ Quotation from Solmsen and Kirkwood, *Hesiod and Aeschylus*, 7. muse.jhu.edu/book/59046. For the relative antiquity of Hesiod and Homer, see *Th. West*, 46-7.

⁵² *Th. West*, 62. The exact phrase does not occur in Homer, but *Il.* 18.184f. has 'the immortals, who dwell around snow-capped Olympus', Ὀλυμπον ἀγάννιφον; and in 18.616 Thetis springs 'down from snowy Olympus', κατ' Οὐλύμπου νιφόεντος.

⁵³ E.g. as the home of the gods, *Hom. Il.* 1.590-594; *Od.* 6.41-47; as a mountain that gave signs, *Theophr. de sig. temp.* 1.51. Olympus was the abode of the gods and so, ultimately, became transformed as a place of cult activity; processions and sacrifices received mention in ancient literary accounts, and archaeological investigations provide evidence of cult activity on top of the mountain. See Belis, 'Fire on the Mountain', 43; *Solin.* 8.1-6; *Plut. frag.* 191 (processions and sacrifices); B. Kyriazopoulos and G. Livadas, 'Αρχαιολογικά εὑρήματα ἐπὶ τῆς κορυφῆς τοῦ Ὀλύμπου Ἅγιος Ἀντώνιος', *Deltion* 22 (Athens, 1967), 6-14 (for cult activity from the Hellenistic period onwards).

A second reason for Hesiod's shift of tone came as he approached the main theme of the poem—the birth of the gods—and the subsequent development of his subject-matter became grander and more majestic. Hesiod asked the Muses to sing of how the gods were born, and

ὡς τὰ πρῶτα πολύπτυχον ἔσχον Ὀλυμπον.⁵⁴

how in the very beginning [the gods] came to possess Olympus with its many ridges.

By his use of Mount Olympus Hesiod was developing a religious theme, the power of Zeus and the origins and the genealogies of the gods. I argue that the relevance of the mountain in Hesiod underlines the importance of mountain writing in ancient literature. The prominence Hesiod gave to his mountain descriptions influenced later authors.

As Hesiod's theme changed, from the light-footed Muses on Helicon to the physical surroundings of majestic Zeus and the events that led to his gaining power, so too did the scene of his poem change to accompany the thematic shift, and the dancing peak of Helicon gave way to the snow-capped summit of Olympus.⁵⁵ In essence, therefore, by using the mountains as a yardstick Hesiod was priming the reader to expect grainier, tougher material: for Hesiod, the physical setting of the mountain acted as a backdrop for the subsequent action of the poem, and the early history of Zeus and the gods would be played out in the fundamental arena of Olympus.⁵⁶

We can see that this principle of using the mountains as a means to alert the reader to a shift of scene or tone appeared elsewhere in representations of mountains in classical literature.⁵⁷ In Book I of the *Aeneid*, the Trojans, refugees from the sack of their city, were overwhelmed by the force of a storm at sea, sent by the hostile goddess Juno. Part of the Trojan fleet, battered and lost, limped to the unknown African coastline. In such circumstances it would have been easy for the Roman poet to portray the landscape as gloomy and negative, but Virgil avoided this: where Hesiod had used the mountains as a yardstick for grainier, tougher material, Virgil applied the reassuring image of the mountain's physical permanence to introduce calm and tranquillity into a previously hostile setting. The Virgilian commentator Pöschl describes the employment of such mountain scenery as symbolism, or a 'musical motif',⁵⁸ and its symbolic effect here showed the gentle calming brought about by the arrival of the battered ships beneath the shelter of the mountain.

⁵⁴ Hes. *Th.*, 113.

⁵⁵ Hesiod, *Theogony*, transl. West, Intro. x, xii.

⁵⁶ See Solmsen and Kirkwood, *Hesiod and Aeschylus*, 64-65.

⁵⁷ This is pathetic fallacy: examples include *Aen.* III.508, with the mountains used as scene setting, being veiled in shadow as the sun set.

⁵⁸ Viktor Pöschl, *Die Dichtkunst Virgils. Bild und Symbol in der Äneis* (Innsbruck-Wien: Rohrer Verlag, 1950), 176.

Est in secessu longo locus: insula portum
efficit obiectu laterum, quibus omnis ab alto
frangitur inque sinus scindit sese unda reductos.
Hinc atque hinc **vastae rupes geminique** minantur
in caelum **scopuli**, quorum sub vertice late
aequora tuta silent; tum silvis scaena coruscis
desuper horrentique atrum nemus imminet umbra.⁵⁹

There is a place in a deep inlet: here an island creates a harbour, by its sides which create a barrier, onto which every wave coming from the open is broken, and splits and withdraws in ripples. On this side and that **huge cliffs and twin crags** project into the sky, under whose peak far and wide the sheltered sea lies silent; above there is a scene of glittering woods and a dark grove hangs over it, with bristling shade.

The Trojans encountered a natural harbour sheltered from the surf, a harbour enclosed and protected by sheer peaks—**huge cliffs and twin crags**—beneath which the waters far and wide lay still and silent. Virgil added that the mountain slopes were rich in glittering woodland, which was useful for hunting and the reparation of the battered ships, and which offered welcome shade. In his commentary Austin recognises that the passage has ‘detail piled up to emphasise the peace and safety of the landing-place [which] forms a notable and deliberate contrast to the stress and turmoil of what has preceded.’⁶⁰ This was no hostile scene, for Virgil, like Hesiod, used mountain imagery to establish a thematic change: in this case the change was from danger to tranquillity, from the storm to mountains which offered safety and resources for the humans to use. It is useful to observe how effectively mountains were employed in ancient literature, adding to the perceptions of mountains in the ancient world.

Note Virgil’s careful use of the word *scaena* (‘scene’, 164) used to describe the forests on the slopes of the two mountains above the harbour, establishing a ‘scene’ which the poet has prepared for the next part of his tale. Virgil had built up the mountain as a stage on which to perform his drama. Austin suggests the choice of *scaena* shows Virgil’s deliberately theatrical image, the words in the passage describing a painted backdrop, the scene for the next act of the drama when Aeneas would climb the mountain to gain a summit view.⁶¹

The mountain can often be seen in theatrical terms for the unfolding of a drama, as was the case in the letter of Pliny the Younger, already mentioned above.⁶² In his description of the mountain view surrounding his estate in the Apennines, Pliny depicted the mountains around his home in the image of an amphitheatre. He called the whole region a *picta forma* (‘a painted scene’):

⁵⁹ *Aen.* I.159-165.

⁶⁰ Austin, *Aeneid Book I*, 159.

⁶¹ Austin, *Aeneid Book I*, 164.

⁶² See section 1.1.3.

Regionis forma pulcherrima. Imaginare **amphitheatrum** aliquod **immensum**, et quale sola rerum natura possit effingere. Lata et diffusa planities montibus cingitur, montes summa sui parte procera nemora et antiqua habent ...⁶³

The beauty of the surrounding area is wonderful. Imagine some **vast amphitheatre**, the sort which only nature could produce; the wide, spreading plain is ringed by mountains, and the summits of the mountains hold tall and ancient forests ...

Virgil's mountains established a 'scene' for the continuation of the theatrical drama, whereas for Pliny the mountains *were* the theatre (or amphitheatre), surrounding Pliny's land and estate. There was an appreciation of mountain scenery in Pliny's writing, revealing an aesthetic sensitivity towards the mountains on a par with modern mountain literature. We can read a similar expression of aesthetic delight in a letter written as an adaptation of Pliny's letter, showing how the perception of mountains might be influenced by one's reading. At the end of the 470s the poet and Bishop of Clermont, Sidonius Apollinaris, wrote a letter from Clermont (near Lyon) to his friend Domitius.⁶⁴ He described for Domitius an account of his own villa with views to the surrounding mountains and hills similar to the scene presented by Pliny.⁶⁵ In their book, *Landscapes and Seasons of the Medieval World*, Pearsall and Salter offer a different interpretation of ancient attitudes to the aesthetics of the mountain, arguing that the Romans built villas to dominate rather than to appreciate nature.⁶⁶ However, their argument of the manipulation of nature is nowhere substantiated in Pliny's letter, which was simply a joyful description of the aesthetic delight in mountains and the natural world, and the wonderful beauty of the surrounding area.

I have touched on examples of authorial engagement where mountains were not simply a *locus amoenus* or *mons horridus*, but locations that affected the nature and the theme of a tale. Mountains might be idealised, as with Helicon or Pliny's Apennines, or might be the scenes of political or religious engagement, the site of a shrine of Artemis or a location for *oreibasia*. As I have mentioned, ancient authors responded to mountains in different ways and it is difficult to categorise ancient attitudes to mountains with a single approach. I will continue to show that ancient writing revealed a sophistication and complexity about mountains, which included an appreciation of landscape and a pleasure in awe-inspiring mountain beauty. Ancient perceptions of mountains were shaped by real life as well as by the influence of literary precedents.

⁶³ Plin. *Ep.* 5.6.7ff.

⁶⁴ Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 2.2-3.

⁶⁵ See J. Visser, "Sidonius Apollinaris, *Ep.* II.2: The Man and His Villa," *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* 8 (2014) 26-45 (32-3).

⁶⁶ D. Pearsall and S. Salter, *Landscapes and Seasons of the Medieval World* (Elk Books: London, 1973), 11.

2.3 Gods on Mountains

2.3.1 Olympian Zeus

For Hesiod, Olympian Zeus was the most authoritative of the pantheon.⁶⁷ His power and complicated nature were revealed through the prism of the mountain, where in contrast to Hesiod's earlier treatment of the pleasant nature of the gods on Olympus, the violence of Zeus came to the fore in the poet's development of the *Theogony*. This chapter has already shown the Muses on Olympus, where the halls of Zeus echoed with their lord's laughter and the peaks of the mountain resounded with the joyful noise inspired by the Muses, where there was much rejoicing, and where Gaia laughed.⁶⁸ Olympus was (and is) a mountain: where Hesiod's poem required joy, the mountain became a place of joy, where the poem darkened, the poet used mountain imagery to establish a change of tone and mood.

Hesiod sang of the beginning of all things, of Chaos, of Ouranos and Gaia who bore Kronos, the Giants and the Cyclopes, and of Ouranos whose blood bore Aphrodite Kythereia, until finally he reached the birth of the Twelve Olympian gods, the overthrow of Kronos and the rule of Zeus.⁶⁹ The atmosphere of the poem changed as war began and the gods drew themselves up against Kronos and the Titans, forming their very missiles from the mountain beneath their feet,

πέτρας ἠλιβάτους στιβαρῆς ἐν χερσὶν ἔχοντες.⁷⁰

holding boulders of enormous size in their massive hands.

The poet narrated the tale of the ten-year Titanomachy, and such a mighty encounter deserved a mighty stage: as the battle for supremacy continued, both sides secured themselves in their mountain fastnesses, mountains being the suitable location for such opponents—the gods occupied Olympus, and the Titans took Mount Othrys (modern Othri, see Fig. 2-4) as their base.⁷¹ The awe-inspiring scenery was fit for the conflict, and the poet's narration established the battle between the gods and the Titans in the mountain heights. Later authors, following Hesiod, wrote of the monumental struggle, describing how the Titans attempted to storm

⁶⁷ See section 2.2.4. For the lordship of Zeus see also M. L. West, *The East Face of Helicon: West Asiatic Elements in Greek Poetry and Myth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 114; in Aeschylus, Zeus 'does not pay homage to anyone sitting over him' Supp.597; see Aeschylus: *Agamemnon*, ed. Eduard Fraenkel, Vol. II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950), 182f.

⁶⁸ Hes. *Th.* 41-3, 68ff.

⁶⁹ Hes. *Th.*, 116ff.

⁷⁰ Hes. *Th.*, 675.

⁷¹ Hes. *Th.* 630-632.

Olympus by piling Mount Pelion on Mount Ossa—both Virgil and Ovid told the same tale, bringing mountains to the fore of the combat.⁷²

Hesiod's Zeus set free the children of Ouranos from the underworld vault of Erebus to join his forces, and as the opposing sides fought one another,

πεδόθεν δὲ τινάσσετο μακρὸς Ὀλυμπος / ῥίπῃ ὕπ' ἀθανάτων.⁷³

Olympus up on high shook from its very base at the fury of the immortals.

Olympus was no longer a mountain resounding with laughter. In Hesiod's tale its personification⁷⁴ became part of the unfolding drama by which Hesiod sought to reveal the formidable nature of Zeus, who now unleashed his terrible, vengeful power:

ἄμυδις δ' ἄρ' ἀπ' οὐρανοῦ ἠδ' ἀπ' Ὀλύμπου / ἀστράπτων ἔστειχε συνωχαδόν.⁷⁵

from heaven and from Olympus together came Zeus striding and hurling lightning continually.

Zeus, the god of mountains—the god of *the* mountain, Olympus—used as his weapon the thunderbolt, forged for him by the Cyclopes under the mountain.⁷⁶ Zeus' use of the thunderbolt was a repeated motif for Hesiod, a representation of the force of weather surrounding mountain summits, but also, and especially here, a representation of the god's power as he charged forth from his Olympian stronghold.⁷⁷ Important as the battle between gods and Titans was for Hesiod, so, too, were his theme, scenes and subject-matter: as the immortals clashed, their theatres of conflict were the majestic high places—peaks which earlier in the poem Hesiod had described as echoing with laughter had now become scenes of violence and terrifying din, as again the mountains helped inform the subject-matter of the poem. Hesiod did not depict the mountains as places of violence because they were mountains, but because they had become a theatre of war.

⁷² V. *Georg.* 1.281-3; Ov. *Met.* 1.151-5.

⁷³ Hes. *Th.* 680-1.

⁷⁴ Similar personification can be seen in e.g. Pliny *HN* 5.83ff. in his description of the elemental clash between the River Euphrates and Mount Taurus. Pliny described it as *naturae dimicatio* (a battle of nature), 5.85 (5.24): *ita naturae dimicatio illa aequatur, hoc eunte quo vult, illo prohibente ire qua velit*: 'thus that battle of nature is fought on an equal footing—the river flows where it intends to reach, and the mountain prevents it from going where it originally intended.'

⁷⁵ Hes. *Th.* 689-690.

⁷⁶ Hes. *Th.* 501-6.

⁷⁷ For the thunderbolt and lightning as part of Zeus' armoury in the poem see e.g. *Βρόντην τε Στερόπην τε καὶ Ἀργὴν ὀβριμόθυμον, / οἳ Ζηνὶ βροντὴν τ' ἔδοσαν τεύξάν τε κεραυνόν*, Hes. *Th.* 140-141. '[Gaia gave birth to the Cyclopes ...] 'Brontes (Thunder), Steropes (Lightning) and strong-spirited Arges (Bright), those who gave thunder to Zeus and fashioned the thunderbolt.' Transl. *Th. Most*. Later, Zeus struck Menoetius 'with a smoking thunderbolt', and sent him into Erebus, 515: *βαλὼν ψολόεντι κεραυνῷ*. See also 689-63; 839-40; and 853-54, Zeus 'grasped his weapons, thunder, lightning and the flashing thunderbolt, εἶλετο δ' ὄπλα, / βροντὴν τε στεροπὴν τε καὶ αἰθαλόεντα κεραυνόν.

After ten years of war the Titans were defeated, overthrown and punished variously: many were imprisoned in Tartarus, while Atlas was famously compelled to hold up ‘the broad sky’—a grim punishment, highlighted by appearing twice in the poem (lines 517 and 746). Hesiod firstly pictured the Titan enduring his punishment in somewhere that could possibly be aligned near North Africa, close to the Pillars of Hercules, or ‘the limits of the earth’ as Hesiod termed it:

Ἄτλας δ’ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχει κρατερῆς ὑπ’ ἀνάγκης,
 πείρασιν ἐν γαίης πρόπαρ’ Ἑσπερίδων λιγυφώνων
 ἔστηώς, κεφαλῇ τε καὶ ἀκαμάτησι χέρεσσι.⁷⁸

And by mighty necessity **Atlas holds up the broad sky with his head and with his tireless hands**, standing at the limits of the earth in front of the clear-voiced Hesperides; for this is the portion which the counsellor Zeus assigned him;

while the second mention of the same punishment seemingly located Atlas in the underworld, when Hesiod named him at the end of the list of Titans punished by incarceration in Tartarus:

τῶν πρόσθ’ Ἰαπετοῖο πάϊς ἔχει οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν
 ἔστηώς κεφαλῇ τε καὶ ἀκαμάτησι χέρεσσι
 ἀστεμφέως, ὅθι Νύξ τε καὶ Ἡμέρη ἄσσον ἰοῦσαι
 ἀλλήλας προσέειπον ἀμειβόμεναι μέγαν οὐδὸν
 χάλκεον.⁷⁹

In front of them immoveable stands **the son of Iapetus [Atlas] and he holds the broad sky with his head and tireless hands**, where Night and Day go near and greet one another as they cross over the great bronze threshold.

On both occasions Atlas’ punishment was to hold up ‘the broad sky ... with his head and with his tireless hands’.⁸⁰ Later classical writers appropriated the myth and famously related his metamorphosis into Mount Atlas: the Roman poet Ovid told how the mortal hero Perseus used the head of Medusa to transform Atlas the Titan into Mount Atlas, the mountain in North Africa which supported the heavens and all the stars.⁸¹ In Hesiod’s account, however, there was no metamorphosis for Atlas, only the punishment of holding up the heavens with his head and hands. What is fascinating to behold is how powerful an influence Hesiod’s narrative of Atlas exerted over later literary accounts. Responses of later classical literature showed a continuing appreciation of the high places, both as locations of mythology, like the story of Atlas, and as experiences of real life and historical interest, like Atlas the mountain, located in

⁷⁸ Hes. *Th.*, 517-9. Transl. *Th.* Most.

⁷⁹ Hes. *Th.*, 746-50. Transl. *Th.* Most.

⁸⁰ In Homer, Atlas performed a task like that which he did in Hesiod, since he held up the tall pillars which separated heaven from earth. Homer also said that Atlas knew the depths of every sea, *Od.* 1.52-54. See also A. *Pr.* 347; Paus. 5.18.1, 5.11.2.

⁸¹ The most famous account is in Ov. *Met.* 4.630ff. See also e.g. Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.2.3; Diod. Sic. 4.27.

North Africa (see Fig. 2-6). Such responses reveal there was an interest in, and a curiosity for, mountains, as I will show by further exploration of Virgil's *Aeneid*, to examine how Virgil appropriated the Atlas myth and developed it, revealing his own interest in the high places.

2.3.2 Atlas: Titan and mountain

Hesiod's narrative of Atlas' punishment serves to exemplify the power of literary predecessors to influence classical accounts and perceptions of mountains. As his poem dipped from the climax of the Titanomachy and moved towards its close, Hesiod listed the lovers of Zeus and the children born to him. In spite of the punishment given to Atlas it appeared that Zeus held the family no malice, for

Ζηνὶ δ' ἄρ' Ἀτλαντὶς Μαίῃ τέκε κούδιμον Ἑρμῆν, / κήρυκ' ἀθανάτων, ἱερὸν λέχος
εἰσαναβᾶσα.⁸²

Maia, the daughter of Atlas, went up into his holy bed and bore to Zeus renowned
Hermes [Mercury], the messenger of the immortals.

Virgil in the *Aeneid* fleshed out the details of Hesiod's literary lead in relating the grandfather Atlas to the daughter Maia to the grandson Mercury (Hermes). Virgil's Aeneas told Evander of the circumstances of Mercury's birth from the goddess Maia on the peak of Mount Cyllene (in Arcadia):

vobis Mercurius pater est, quem candida Maia
Cyllenae gelido conceptum vertice fudit;
at Maïam, auditis si quicquam credimus, Atlas,
idem Atlas generat caeli qui sidera tollit.⁸³

Your ancestor is Mercury, whom beautiful Maia conceived and bore on the ice-bound
summit of Mount Cyllene. But if we have any trust in the stories of old, Atlas sired
Maia, the same Atlas who holds up the stars of heaven.

Virgil's exposition on the origins of Mercury's birth and his relationship to his grandfather Atlas was partly a learned, Alexandrian allusion to his knowledge of Hesiod's poem,⁸⁴ and partly an allusion to the importance of Atlas in the *Theogony*, an importance which Virgil adopted and developed in the *Aeneid*. Virgil's development of Atlas—the man (Titan) and the mountain—reveals a complexity of writing, an awareness of earlier literature and a sophisticated excursus on human emotional and psychological engagement with the high places.

⁸² Hes. *Th.* 938-9.

⁸³ V. *Aen.* VIII.134-141.

⁸⁴ Ingo Gildenhard, *Virgil, Aeneid, 4.1–299: Latin Text, Study Questions, Commentary and Interpretative Essays* (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2012), 208; accessed May 12, 2020, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt5vjsn7.

In order to explore this mountain engagement further we must provide some background to the appearance of Atlas in the *Aeneid*.

Aeneas and his Trojan followers had been washed up on the shores of Africa near Carthage, the city ruled by Dido. I have already related the episode of Aeneas' fleet limping into a harbour protected by the security of encircling mountains.⁸⁵ At the same time Jupiter, inveigled by his daughter Venus (the mother of Aeneas), sent Mercury from Mount Olympus down to Dido and the Carthaginians, to impress upon them the need to help the Trojans. Mercury carried out Jupiter's orders with remarkable efficiency: in only eight lines the order had been issued, Mercury had flown to Carthage, had delivered his message, and the queen's mind had been primed to welcome the Trojans.⁸⁶

The messenger of the gods can never relax, and there was more work for Mercury to do. By the middle of Book IV Aeneas and Dido had fallen in love; the Trojan mission was in jeopardy because of Aeneas' infatuation, the ships sat empty in an African harbour, Aeneas wore expensive, foreign clothing and even his weaponry was ornate and bejewelled; and the consequential jealous uproar from local chieftains caused consternation in heaven.⁸⁷ Once again Jupiter sent his messenger down to the African city, with instructions that Aeneas must leave Carthage and continue his mission towards Italy.

On this occasion Jupiter's command was urgent⁸⁸—more so than previously, though as his mission to Dido had shown, Mercury was a god accustomed to move swiftly.⁸⁹ The reader might therefore reasonably expect Mercury to travel quickly, carrying his message to Aeneas—and travel quickly he did, until he reached North Africa, spied Mount Atlas, and unexpectedly halted his journey. If Hesiod's Atlas was banished to North Africa as discussed above,⁹⁰ then Virgil here made another connection between his poem and that of his predecessor. Mercury's flight from Mount Olympus and his halt at Mount Atlas is a critical moment for our understanding of the role of mountains in Virgil—and therefore in later literature—because Mercury, who had already shown himself to travel with the greatest speed, decided that he should stop the moment he reached Mount Atlas. This chapter turns to explore why Virgil chose Mount Atlas as the moment to enforce a halt upon Mercury: after all, the god's mission was more urgent than it was in Book I, and yet in Book I he was in and out of Carthage within a mere eight lines.

⁸⁵ See section 2.2.4.

⁸⁶ *Aen.* I.297-304.

⁸⁷ *Aen.* IV.196ff. for Iarbas' complaints; IV.200ff. for Jupiter's concern. For the decoration of Aeneas' clothing and weapons see IV.261ff.

⁸⁸ E.g. IV.223, 226. See also Gildenhard, *Virgil, Aeneid*, 4, 203.

⁸⁹ E.g. IV.241. Cf. Homer's much lighter description of Hermes' journey in *Od.* 5; and Virgil's own more urgent description of Mercury's first visit to Carthage in *Aen.* I.297-304.

⁹⁰ Section 2.3.1.



Figure 2.6: Mount Atlas

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2.3.3 Keeping it in the family: Atlas and Mercury

Virgil made use of his literary antecedents with the appearance of Mercury in Book I and his mention in Book VIII.⁹¹ There were two well-known Homeric precedents where Hermes [Mercury] had flown from Olympus to deliver the message of Zeus, and Virgil manipulated these episodes in order to develop his own themes concerning Mount Atlas. Hermes appeared at *Il.* 24.339-48, to escort Priam to the tent of Achilles, and again at *Od.* 5.43-54, to deliver Zeus' message to Calypso. Virgil was a supreme craftsman, 'and even the slightest of borrowings may shed fresh light on a poem that has yet to give up all of its secrets.'⁹² In neither Homeric scene did the messenger god stop *en route* to his destination, suggesting that Virgil had deliberate reasons for causing his Mercury to stop on the slopes of Mount Atlas.⁹³ We shall explore Virgil's deviation from the Homeric originals to shed some light on his representation of the mountain. For much of what follows I am indebted to J. Morwood's discussion on 'Aeneas and Mount Atlas'.⁹⁴

As Mercury flew down from Olympus, the focus of the passage shifted from the airborne god to Mount Atlas itself. Analysis of what Virgil was trying to achieve, and a

⁹¹ See section 2.3.2.

⁹² David Sider, 'Virgil's *Aeneid* and Hesiod's *Theogony*', in *Vergilius* 34 (1988), 17.

⁹³ See Gildenhard, *Virgil, Aeneid*, 4, 198-200.

⁹⁴ J. Morwood, 'Aeneas and Mount Atlas', *JRS* 75 (1985), 51-59.

comparison with other Virgilian descriptions, shows how well crafted and deliberately developed was his interpretation of Atlas.

iamque volans apicem et latera ardua cernit
Atlantis duri caelum qui vertice fulcit,
Atlantis, cinctum adsidue cui nubibus atris
piniferum caput et vento pulsatur et imbri,
nix umeros infusa tegit, tum flumina mento
praecipitant senis, et glacie riget horrida barba.
hic primum paribus nitens Cyllenius alis
constitit; hinc toto praeceps se corpore ad undas
misit avi similis, quae circum litora, circum
piscoscos scopulos humilis volat aequora iuxta.
haud aliter terras inter caelumque volabat
litus harenosum ad Libyae, ventosque secabat
materno veniens ab avo Cyllenia proles.⁹⁵

And now as he flies he spots the top and steep flanks of tough Atlas, who supports heaven on his peak—Atlas, whose pine-bearing head is continually wreathed with black clouds, and beaten by wind and rain; fallen snow covers his shoulders and rivers plunge down the old man's chin and his rough beard is stiffened with ice. Here first, poised on balanced wings, the Cyllenian god halted; from here he threw himself headlong with his whole body down to the waves like a bird, which flies round the shores, round the cliffs rich in fish, keeping low near to the water. Just so did the Cyllenian offspring come from his maternal grandfather and fly between earth and sky to Libya's sandy shore, and cut through the winds.

Mercury saw the mountain and hovered awhile on his wings, next to his grandfather (*avo*), before coming to a halt. Mention in the passage of the fact that Atlas was Mercury's grandfather appears to have been a Virgilian joke, crafted out of the poet's knowledge of the god's literary mountain background.⁹⁶ Even so, the description of Atlas the mountain at first appearance was grim and foreboding and perhaps to some this represents an example of Nicolson's 'mountain gloom': yet it is possible to see through the gloom, for Virgil presented an example of highly developed and complex mountain writing, mingling and mixing his sources and earlier accounts in order to develop aspects of his own poem and the characters within. The image of Mount Atlas in this passage can be seen to lay foundations for the perception of mountains throughout Virgil's poem. The significance of Virgilian mountains became part of the sediment of literary history, and added to the interplay between real mountain ascents inspired by literature, and virtual mountain ascents, written and shaped out of earlier accounts. For the reader who enjoyed mountains but was unable or unwilling to travel or to climb, Virgil's descriptions provided the opportunity to climb mountains from the safety of one's home.

⁹⁵ V. *Aen.* IV.246-258.

⁹⁶ Gildenhard, *Virgil, Aeneid, 4*, 208 draws attention to the humorous aspect of the 'learned Alexandrian joke' of the grandfather-grandson relationship. Virgil employs *Cyllenius* ('born on Mount Cyllene') as a description of the god in 252; and to make it absolutely certain the reader has understood the reference, in 258 Virgil again mentions Mercury's origins, *materno ueniens ab avo Cyllenia proles* ('the Cyllenian offspring coming from his maternal grandfather').

Mercury made a definite stop at the mountain (*constitit*, 253, confirms that this was no mere pause), the repetition of whose name (*Atlantis duri ... Atlantis*, 247-8) prefaced a heavy physical description of the Titan-mountain, and so brought all movement, Mercury's included, to a halt. Mercury was 'a god who operates at interfaces'⁹⁷ and it was therefore appropriate for him to stop at Atlas, seeing that mountains in antiquity acted as boundaries between nations, between man and god, and between heaven and earth.⁹⁸

There was no Homeric precedent for Mercury's delay, in spite of the fact that the Roman poet borrowed heavily from his Greek predecessor for this episode.⁹⁹ Homer made no mention of mountains, and so Virgil's inclusion of Atlas here was deliberate and crafted, and provides a pointer for understanding the perception of mountains here and throughout the poem. Virgil's significant interest and literary curiosity in Atlas spurred him to develop an entire scene around the mountain. The messenger god was in a hurry, and as explanation for his tardiness in lines 246-251 Pöschl suggested that 'the imposing picture of the tough and suffering giant' Atlas was a 'musical motif' to symbolise 'the cruelty of the gods and the hardness of Fate'.¹⁰⁰ There is perhaps some truth in these words, but there is more to find in the interwoven narrative of Atlas and of mountains throughout the poem than the cruelty of the gods and the hardness of Fate.¹⁰¹

Firstly, mention of Atlas established a comparison between the mountain and Aeneas—what the mountain (the Titan) was, compared to what the Trojan was and was not, had and had not done, and what he had become. There were imputations of eastern luxury and effeminacy in the description of Aeneas: in Carthage the Trojan was wearing a sword decorated with yellow jasper and his cloak, made by Dido, was woven from Tyrian purple and gold thread.¹⁰² On the

⁹⁷ Gildenhard, *Virgil, Aeneid*, 4, 201. Mercury (Hermes), the god of messengers and travellers, had summit shrines on peaks throughout the ancient world, e.g. his birthplace Mount Cyllene (2,380 m.), sitting above the town of Orchomenos in the Peloponnese, had a temple to Mercury on its top: see Belis, 'Fire on the Mountain', II.139-142; Paus. 8.17.1. Such sanctuaries could also offer protection, and in Graubunden (Switzerland) there have been found many small statues or altars to Mercury, and also to Cissonius, the Celtic equivalent of Mercury. See Helena F. Carr, 'Sanctity and Religious Culture Amongst the Alpine Passes. A Study of Aspects of Patrocinia, Liturgy and Scriptoria in Early Medieval Churraetia, 400-850 AD' (PhD, York, 2006), 42. Carr's interpretation is that the deities were invoked as protection against spirits.

⁹⁸ For example, throughout this chapter, and on biblical summits; and certainly on Vulcano with Willibald, the mountain which appeared as a boundary between earth and hell, in chapter four. For Pliny, the Alps acted as a boundary between nations, *HN* 36.2; as a protection for the Roman empire, 3.31; or as a barrier to imprison the Gauls, 12.5. See also Walsh, 'Risk and Marginality', 301-2.

⁹⁹ See above, this section; also Gildenhard, *Virgil, Aeneid*, 4, 198-200, 206-208.

¹⁰⁰ Pöschl, *Die Dichtkunst Virgils*, 176.

¹⁰¹ For other analysis on the passage see e.g. P. Vergili Maronis, *Aeneidos Liber Quartus*, ed. R. G. Austin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), nn. at 248ff. and 250; *The Aeneid of Virgil*, Books I-VI, ed. R. D. Williams (London: Macmillan, 1972), n. at 4.238f; Gildenhard, *Virgil, Aeneid*, 4, nn. at 238-258.

¹⁰² *Aen.* IV.261-4: this was not the typical image of Roman manhood (though, interestingly, it was not so far removed from contemporary descriptions of Virgil's poet, Maecenas: see J. Griffin, 'Augustan Poetry and the Life of Luxury', *JRS* 66 (1976), 95; Gordon Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 385). Mercury's insulting accusatory address to Aeneas was *uxorius*, 266 'under the thumb of your wife'.

other hand, ‘the glimpse of a mountain peak which represents and is a person condemned to a cold and relentless fate’¹⁰³ was a depiction in conflict with the representation of the effeminate Aeneas. As McInerney and Sluiter argue, mountains and the high places offer scope for narrative interpretation, since ‘landscape provides a terrain onto which can be mapped all manner of cultural ideas.’¹⁰⁴ Thus Virgil’s employment of the mountain was to present a clearer image of Aeneas rather than to create a representation of a hostile mountain.

Secondly, the mountain was *durus* (‘hard’ or ‘tough’): *Atlas durus*. Robert Cruttwell (*The Classical Review*, 1945) has a marvellous note on the use of *durus* here.¹⁰⁵ He discusses the Libyan word-base *drr*, meaning ‘mountain’ and concludes that Atlas was called by the Libyans simply *Drr*, or ‘The Mountain’. Roman soldiers fighting in North Africa during the Jugurthine War (111-106 BCE) appropriated this word for their own, in conjunction with the Latin word *durus*, and therefore *Durus* became the soldiers’ slang word for Mount Atlas. ‘Hence Virgil’s *Atlantis duri* probably implies a reference, not only to the meaning of “Atlas”, but also to the Roman slang name of *Durus* for Mount Atlas, derived originally from the Jugurthine War.’¹⁰⁶ Virgil enjoyed the etymological word-association at play here, but also enjoyed the (linguistic) joke that the mountain is *durus* because, in Libyan tongue and Roman slang, the mountain is *dur-* (*drr*).¹⁰⁷

The mountain was tough, both as a man (Titan) and as a mountain. In this passage Virgil presented the mountain in a powerful physical and anthropomorphic description, familiar from the living Titan that he was in the *Theogony*. As Morwood says of Virgil’s depiction, ‘Atlas was a Titan who became a mountain and so the anthropomorphic description, fusing mountain and man,’ may seem entirely appropriate.¹⁰⁸ Virgil’s image of Atlas as a tough figure of enduring permanence could well have represented Atlas as the type of severe figure with ‘uncompromising traditional values, a stark, spiky embodiment of old Rome’ and thus be an attempt by the poet ‘to convey the idea of a man with qualities of endurance that go beyond the merely human’.¹⁰⁹ Aeneas, by contrast, was floundering and directionless, and any stoic toughness he may have possessed had vanished beneath the clothing Dido had given him.

¹⁰³ J. V. Muir, ed., *Selections from Aeneid IV, Handbook*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 35.

¹⁰⁴ Jeremy McInerney and Ineke Sluiter, ‘General Introduction’, in *Valuing Landscape in Classical Antiquity: Natural Environment and Cultural Imagination*, ed. Jeremy McInerney and Ineke Sluiter (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 10. Accessed May 8, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central.

¹⁰⁵ Robert W. Cruttwell, ‘Virgil, *Aeneid*, iv. 247: *Atlantis Duri*’, *The Classical Review* 59 no.1 (1945), 11.

¹⁰⁶ Cruttwell, ‘Virgil, *Aeneid*, iv. 247’, 11.

¹⁰⁷ The joke continued in the very meaning of the Greek name Atlas itself (‘not tough’). Cf. also Strabo 17.1.14, in a description of the Egyptian coastline: ‘Then one comes to the harbour Derrhis, so called because of the black rock nearby, which resembles a “derrhis”...’; and 17.3.2, a description of the Straits of Gibraltar (‘The Pillars of Hercules’): ‘On proceeding outside the strait at the Pillars, with Libya on the left, one comes to a mountain which the Greeks call Atlas and the barbarians Dyris.’

¹⁰⁸ Morwood, ‘Aeneas and Mount Atlas’, 51.

¹⁰⁹ Morwood, ‘Aeneas and Mount Atlas’, 57. Cf. the image of the *senes severiores* in Cat. 5.2.

Virgil's anthropomorphic description evoked the mountain's head, shoulders, chin and beard, and consequently, argues Gildenhard, 'Virgil has created an anthropomorphic landscape that plays on correspondences between Atlas the man, and Atlas the mountain.'¹¹⁰ Poor Aeneas, of course, could not remotely be compared to a mountain. Dressed in the finery of an eastern potentate, he had none of the ruggedness or enduring qualities that a mountain possesses, for Atlas had a summit blasted by wind and rains, a chin off which rivers poured headlong and a beard frozen stiff with ice. The anthropomorphic personification of Atlas portrayed him as a severe old man, a Roman old man, as Morwood is correct to suggest; but I argue that it is possible to see that there was a more deliberate purpose to these very similarities. The shared vocabulary in the description of Aeneas and the personification of Atlas together made the important point that Aeneas and Atlas were *not* the same, and were not even similar.

It is agreed that *durus Atlas* may be viewed as the embodiment of Morwood's 'spiky' Roman elder, but surely Virgil's point was that Aeneas had none of Atlas' manly, dare one say future *Italian*, attributes: Aeneas' summit, or head, was dripping with perfume, not rain; and beneath his chin were bound the ends of a foreign (Phrygian) bonnet.¹¹¹ The African chieftain Iarbas had already complained that Aeneas' qualities were eastern and effeminate, an un-Roman slur, and the Trojan's physical description faded into weakness in comparison to the personification of Atlas.¹¹² Morwood makes interesting observations on the technical terminology Virgil used to describe Atlas' chin (*mentum*). He says that the word *mentum* was used in an architectural context by Vitruvius (4.3.6) of the projecting part of a cornice which casts off the rain, and was eminently suitable to describe Atlas' chin, streaming with mountain torrents.¹¹³ However, the crucial point is not so much the technical terminology, but the fact that Virgil used the same word for 'chin' in describing both Aeneas and Atlas, and his choice of vocabulary and points of similarity highlighted the differences between man and mountain. Atlas' head (*caput*) was blasted and wettened by rain (*imbri*), while Aeneas' hair (*crinem*) was dripping wet (*madentem*) with perfume. Meanwhile, in contrast to Atlas' black clouds, Aeneas gleamed with a bejewelled sword and a purple cloak interwoven with gold thread. The following points of comparison draw out the differences between the strength of the personified mountain and the character failings of Aeneas:

Atlas

caelum qui **vertice** fulcit (he props heaven on his **head**), 247;

¹¹⁰ Gildenhard, *Virgil, Aeneid*, 4, 206. See also Sider, 'Virgil's *Aeneid* and Hesiod's *Theogony*', 15-24; and Heath, 'Hesiod's didactic poetry', 245-263. Also Philip R. Hardie, *Virgil's Aeneid: Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 278.

¹¹¹ The *Maeonia mitra* in 216 refers to the Maeonian mitre, or cap, worn in Maeonia in Lydia, near Phrygia. The term here is used contemptuously by Iarbas. See Gildenhard, *Virgil, Aeneid*, 4, 189.

¹¹² Eastern—*ille Paris* ('that Paris'); effeminate—*cum semiviro comitatu* ('with his band of effeminate'). *Aen.* IV.215.

¹¹³ Morwood, 'Aeneas and Mount Atlas', 57.

cinctum ... nubibus atris / ... **caput** (his **head** is ringed by black clouds), 248-9;

piniferum **caput** (his **head** is wreathed in pine trees), 249;

caput ... vento pulsatur et **imbri** (his **head** is blasted by wind and **rain**), 249;

Aeneas

crinemque madentem (his **head** is dripping wet [with perfume]), 216.

Atlas

flumina **mento** / praecipitant (rivers pour off his **chin**), 250-1;

Aeneas

Maeonia **mentum** mitra / subnexus (a Lydian bonnet is tied under his **chin**), 216-7.

Atlas

nix **umeros** infusa tegit (snow falls and covers his **shoulders**), 250;

Aeneas

laena / demissa ex **umeris** (a cloak hangs from his **shoulders**), 262-3.

Atlas was tough, like a Roman elder; Aeneas was soft and eastern, neither Italian nor Roman. As Hesiod had used Olympus as a yardstick for grainer material in the *Theogony*, so Virgil chose to set Aeneas against the yardstick of Atlas to measure his character, qualities and even his identity. Virgil engaged the reader with Mercury and Mount Atlas, because a reader with knowledge of Homer and Hesiod would be able to recognise Virgil's additions to, and omissions from, his literary antecedents. Virgil's depiction of Atlas had developed from earlier written accounts of the mountain, to provide enduring interest and awareness, developing ancient perceptions of mountains.

As I have argued, the Mount Atlas episode showed the poet's skills with word-play and etymology; his jokes about the family of the gods and about the name of the mountain; his intentional imitation of, and deviation from, his literary predecessors; his conscious representation of Atlas and Aeneas as related by blood but of different character; and the continuing narrative and plot-line of the poem. There were, perhaps, other ways in which the poet could have delivered this, but it is telling that he used the canvas of a mountain to depict these effects and to portray the nature of a man. I contest that through Virgil's mountain imagery it is possible to see an interest that blurred the boundaries of human engagement with mountains, an interest that suggests a long existence of emotional involvement with mountains. For the reader, Virgil's mountain descriptions added intrigue to the reality of mountains, and enlivened and inspired their curiosity.

2.4 Mountains as Landmarks and Vantage Points

Mercury saw Mount Atlas seemingly rise out of the sea as he journeyed from Olympus to Africa, its visibility a navigable landmark for any traveller.¹¹⁴ Their permanence and fixity made mountains suitable landmarks, while their height and vista made them useful vantage points to provide commanding views from the summit. The sensory is part of the experience of mountains, and the visibility of mountains in antiquity was important, mountains to look out from, and mountains to look towards. Strabo gave a description of a viewpoint on the summit of Mount Tmolus in Lydia, Asia Minor (2,200m. high, now called Boz Dag, or the ‘Grey Mountain’, in Anatolia, Turkey);¹¹⁵ and in the *Aeneid* Virgil described mountains as nautical landmarks, such as Mount Leucata when Aeneas sailed past the island of Ithaca, or when Acestes looked out from the summit of Mount Eryx in Sicily and saw the ships of Aeneas draw near.¹¹⁶

The mountain-top setting often offered an unrivalled view in human experience, and mythological literature told of the need for the gods, too, to have a place from where they could look out and down upon the world. Thus, in the *Iliad* Poseidon sat on a mountain top on Samothrace, and gazed upon the battle fought about the city of Troy; and in the *Argonautica*, the third century BCE epic written by the Greek poet Apollonius Rhodius, the god Eros observed the world beneath him as he descended from Olympus.¹¹⁷ Such instances suggest that mountains created a sensory, visual connection between the mythological and the historical worlds. This is an observation supported by Eliade, who regards mountains as the manifestation of sacred space, the points where heaven meets earth.¹¹⁸ Mary Williams, in her commentary on the *Argonautica*, likewise mentions that mountains formed a powerful physical link between human and divine realms.¹¹⁹ Williams recognises the importance attached to views from summit sanctuaries:

¹¹⁴ *Aen.* IV.246-7.

¹¹⁵ ‘Mount Tmolus, a blessed mountain, stands above the city of Sardis, and it has a watch-tower on its summit, made of white marble, built by the Persians, and from here there is a view of the plains all round, especially of the Cayster plain.’ Strabo 13.4.5. For a discussion of Strabo on Tmolus see Clive Foss, ‘Explorations in Mount Tmolus’, *California Studies in Classical Antiquity*, Vol. 11 (1978), 47-49. See also Strabo 3.1.7 for his description of Mount Calpe (the Rock of Gibraltar) as a nautical landmark.

¹¹⁶ Mount Leucata, *Aen.* III.272-5 (see also Virgil *Aeneid* III, ed. R. D. Williams (Bristol Classical Press, 1962), 111); Eryx in Sicily, *Aen.* V.35-36.

¹¹⁷ *Il.* 13.10; *Arg.*, 5.158. Other examples include: the nymphs on Mount Pelion watched the departure of the Argo, *Arg.*, 1.549; and in *Ov. Met.* 1.666, even the hundred-eyed giant Argus, keeping guard over the cow Io, used a high mountain from which to keep watch.

¹¹⁸ Eliade, *The Eternal Return*, 12-17.

¹¹⁹ Mary Williams, *Landscape in the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1991), 79.

Many sanctuaries from the Archaic and Classical periods are notable for having especially spectacular mountain-top or cliff-side settings, and there seems to have been an idea that the gods needed to live where they could gaze down upon the world.¹²⁰

However, Williams is only partially correct. The summit view was as much for the human participant as for the divine inhabitant and the panorama offered a multiplicity of uses. One example was the employment of summits as beacon-chains for the delivery of messages via the night fires, spectacularly seen in the news relay of the fall of Troy at the beginning of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.¹²¹ Mountains naturally draw the eye of the beholder, and the lighting of fires on summits in general was part of the visual process of human involvement with mountains and their gods. A. A. Peatfield's article on Cretan summit sanctuaries offers evidence of lamps found within the peak sanctuaries.¹²² Peatfield argues these finds indicate that fires were lit at night, his conclusion being that the flames were intended to be seen from the local settlements and from other mountain peaks. Peatfield's evidence adds weight to the importance of human sensory involvement with mountains.

Material evidence of landmark mountains in antiquity includes the mountaintop ash altars at Minoan sanctuaries on over fifty peaks on the island of Crete, an island which offers useful material evidence on mountains in antiquity.¹²³ It is tempting to think that it was important for worshippers on the plains to see the fires on the peak sanctuaries, and equally important for worshippers on the peak sanctuaries to see fires burning on other peaks.¹²⁴ The material evidence and the proximity of mountain shrines to the local settlements confirm that the Cretan inhabitants did not regard mountains as hostile locations. These mountains were a part of the local topography and a significant part of cultural participation, as the distance from each peak to its nearest settlement was a constant factor.¹²⁵ The mountain sanctuaries were generally no more than an hour's distance from their local settlements.¹²⁶ The material evidence shows that accessibility and proximity were important factors in peak selection, and that sensory

¹²⁰ Williams, *Landscape*, 82.

¹²¹ A. Ag., 281ff. A multiplicity of purposes is listed in Walter Woodburn Hyde, 'The Ancient Appreciation of Mountain Scenery', in *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Nov., 1915), 75.

¹²² A. A. D. Peatfield, 'The Topography of Minoan Peak Sanctuaries', *The Annual of the British School at Athens*, Vol. 78 (1983), 276. Peatfield says (275) that the structural remains on these summits vary greatly, including temenos areas, enclosures, stone structures, or simply thick layers of ash bonfires. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 27, mentions a relief rhyton from Kato Zakro (Crete) which displays a superb peak sanctuary and connects peak cult practice with the Cretan palaces.

¹²³ According to Kevin Walsh, *The Archaeology of Mediterranean Landscapes: Human-Environment Interaction from the Neolithic to the Roman Period* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 253: 'Archaeological research is rare in the mountains of the major Mediterranean islands, although research on Crete provides a useful exception.'

¹²⁴ The highest point of Crete in the White Mountains (Lefka Ori) is 2,453m, a peak only 16 km from the coast, which thus presents 'an incredible variation in topography over a very small distance', Walsh, *Mediterranean Landscapes*, 253.

¹²⁵ Peatfield, 'Minoan Peak Sanctuaries', 274-5.

¹²⁶ Burkert, *Greek Religion* (1985), 29. The altitudes of the Cretan peaks surveyed vary from between 200m to 1200m, and all the peak sanctuaries lay within vegetation zones which allowed for arable farming.

participation was an important aspect of mountains for human engagement, as was visibility of the summit from the surrounding locations. As Peatfield adds, ‘fires on mountain tops are lit to be seen, so it is pointless to place one where it could not be seen from the homes of the worshippers’.¹²⁷

The permanence and immovability, the ‘fixity and strength’¹²⁸ of a mountain, were aspects which lent themselves readily to landmarks, equally true whether literary gods were looking down on a mountain from above, whether humans (and gods) used summits as viewpoints, or whether the entire mountain mass had a role as a landmark by land and from sea. Homer’s gods used Mount Olympus as a vantage point, revealing the poet’s recognition of the very real strategic benefits brought by height.¹²⁹ In his book *Early Epic Scenery*, Andersson supports the concept of mountain strategy in the martial *Iliad*, declaring that Mount Olympus was a mountain ‘where the gods look down on the field of battle from their lofty perspective’.¹³⁰ Even Homer himself tried to describe the military layout of a wall, gate and trench, though finally admitted defeat:

ἀργαλέον δέ με ταῦτα θεὸν ὧς πάντ’ ἀγορευῆσαι.¹³¹

it is difficult for me to account for everything like a god.

Homer did not have the panorama required for divine oversight. In spite of his failed attempt, mountains did offer strategic benefits to humans as well. I will discuss military strategy later, though offer here an example from the geographer and historian Strabo (c.64 BCE – c.23 CE) as to how a mountain could have been used for strategically exploring enemy territory. Strabo climbed to the top of Acrocorinth (the hill above Corinth) and recorded a description of the panorama which unfolded before his eyes. He described the summit, the lie of the land around Corinth, and was able to name the mountains near him, as well as the snowy peaks lying far-off in the distance:

ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς κορυφῆς πρὸς ἄρκτον μὲν ἀφορᾶται ὃ τε Παρνασσὸς καὶ ὁ Ἑλικῶν, ὄρη ὑψηλὰ καὶ νιφόβoλα, καὶ ὁ Κρισαῖος κόλπος ὑποπεπτωκῶς ἀμφοτέροις, περιεχόμενος ὑπὸ τῆς Φωκίδος καὶ τῆς Βοιωτίας καὶ τῆς Μεγαρίδος καὶ τῆς ἀντιπόρθμου τῆ Φωκίδι Κορινθίας καὶ Σικυωνίας, πρὸς ἐσπέραν δὲ.¹³²

And from looking the summit, to the north can be seen Parnassus and Helicon—high, snow-covered mountains—and lying at the foot of both mountains is the Crisaeian

¹²⁷ Peatfield, ‘Minoan Peak Sanctuaries’, 276.

¹²⁸ R. G. M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace Odes Book I* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 118.

¹²⁹ E.g. *Il.* 13.10.

¹³⁰ T. M. Andersson, *Early Epic Scenery* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 23.

¹³¹ *Il.* 12.176. See Andersson, *Early Epic Scenery*, 26.

¹³² Strabo 8.6.21.

Gulf, surrounded by Phocis, Boeotia, and Megaris, and by the areas of Corinthia and Sicyonia which lie across the gulf from Phocis, towards the west.

Strabo gave a detailed description of a summit view seen only with the naked eye. As König posits, the passage suggests that for geographers such as Strabo, climbing mountains might well have been a practical way of mapping out the surrounding landscape, using mountains as boundary markers and regional landmarks.¹³³ The summit view would also have been of benefit to military strategists.

2.4.1 *Oroskopia*: ‘the view from the summit’

Irene de Jong calls the view from the summit an *oroskopia*,¹³⁴ and discusses the position that both gods and mortals could take from mountains to provide themselves with an overview from above. For De Jong, *oroskopia* was a *topos* in classical literature, comparable to the well-known *topos* of *teichoskopia* (the view from the wall) in Homer, and she subdivides *oroskopia* into divine, mortal and metaphorical rubrics.¹³⁵ In the case of the gods she argues that the mountain-top overview symbolised power and control: thus in *Aeneid* XII, the goddess Juno used Mount Alba just outside Rome as a vantage point, acting as a human general might, from where she could see the Trojan and Italian troops massing for war.¹³⁶

The *topos* of *oroskopia* in the case of mortals is more relevant to this thesis, and certainly more interesting as regards the exploration of the emotional and psychological power mountains played on the human mind. For humans, the summit view might have symbolised an attempt or desire for power. The Roman historian Livy (c.64 BCE – c.12 CE) offered two classic accounts of the human desire for power played out against the backdrop of mountains: Philip V of Macedon on Mount Haemus, and Hannibal in the Alps.¹³⁷

According to Livy, in 181 BCE Philip led a select band to the summit of Mount Haemus in Thrace:

cupido eum ceperat in verticem Haemi montis ascendendi.¹³⁸

¹³³ König, ‘Strabo’s Mountains’, 52-54.

¹³⁴ Irene de Jong, ‘The View from the Mountain (*Oroskopia*) in Greek and Latin Literature’, *Cambridge Classical Journal*, Vol. 64 (2018). She discusses divine *oroskopia*, and how the gods use mountain tops as viewpoints and as positions of power 24ff.

¹³⁵ De Jong, ‘*Oroskopia*’, 24.

¹³⁶ *Aen.* XII.134-7.

¹³⁷ For Philip on Haemus, see Livy, 40.21-22. For a full account of Philip’s ascent of Mount Haemus see Mary Jaeger, ‘Fog on the Mountain: Philip and Mt. Haemus in Livy 40.21-22’, in J. Marincola ed. *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2008): 832-44. For Hannibal in the Alps, see Livy, 21-25. For discussion of Hannibal in the Alps, see e.g. V. Fabrizi, ‘Hannibal’s march and Roman imperial space in Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, Book 21’, *Philologus* 159 (2015): 136-142.

¹³⁸ Livy, 40.21.

A desire seized Philip to climb to the top of Mount Haemus.

From here the king hoped to view simultaneously the Black Sea, the Adriatic, the Danube and the Alps, and suspected that he would see much from the summit that would be useful for a military campaign against Rome.¹³⁹ However, the ascent was steep and difficult and, once he had reached the summit, the king could see nothing because of a thick fog, and so achieved neither the view nor the strategy. Livy was morally censorious of Philip for attempting a task reserved exclusively for the divine, and he mocked this enemy of Rome for an ascent which was a waste of time:

*vanitas itineris ludibrio esset.*¹⁴⁰

the futility of [Philip's] journey was a laughing-stock'.

Philip's objective 'was to discover whether from the summit in the Balkans he could see both the Aegean and the Adriatic, and thus be possessed of a royally farsighted vision: omniscience'.¹⁴¹ Thus Simon Schama recognises the strategy that lay behind Philip's ascent and, equally, the desire for power which had inspired the climb. Livy used the mountain setting to show how Philip's arrogance resulted in a failed journey and humiliation for what he had set out to achieve, with the mountain stage as a sort of moral arbiter over his delusional attempts. Philip's view from the summit, his *oroskopia*, failed because he tried to attain the omniscience granted only to the gods. Petrarch revisited Philip's attempts on Haemus for his own ascent of Mont Ventoux and in chapter five we shall see the power of a literary predecessor to inform and illuminate later mountain writing.

Hannibal was another enemy of Rome who tried to achieve a position from which to attain divine knowledge and power. Livy related that he crossed the Alps in winter in order to embark upon his campaign against the Romans. He stood at the top of the Alpine passes, telling his men they were now crossing the walls of Rome:

*praegressus signa Hannibal in promunturio quodam, unde longe ac late prospectus erat, consistere iussis militibus Italiam ostentat subiectosque Alpinis montibus Circumpadanos campos, moeniaque eos tum transcendere non Italiae modo sed etiam urbis Romanae.*¹⁴²

Hannibal went ahead of his forces to a height from which there was a wide and extensive view. He ordered his troops to stop and showed them the land of Italy and

¹³⁹ Mount Haemus corresponds to the Balkan Mountains, Bulgaria, whose highest point (Botev) stands at 2375 m. Authors later than Livy argued as to whether or not both the Adriatic and the Euxine seas were visible from the summit. Strabo contradicted Livy's notion of the two seas being visible (7.5.1), whereas both Polybius (24.3) and Pomponius Mela, *De Chorographia*, 2.2.17, agreed with Livy. See Jaeger, 'Fog on the Mountain', 840; Hyde, 'Mountain Scenery' 75; König, 'Strabo's Mountains', 52 n.21.

¹⁴⁰ Livy 40.22.

¹⁴¹ Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), 419.

¹⁴² Livy, 21.35.

the rich valley of the Po lying at the foot of the Alps. He told them that they were now crossing the walls not only of Italy, but also of the city of Rome itself.

As was the case with Philip, Hannibal's venture would result in disaster, with the mountain setting again providing moral arbitration.¹⁴³ There was no more suitable stage than the mighty Alps, bulwark of Rome,¹⁴⁴ to witness the failure of one of Rome's mightiest enemies. Hannibal's praeternatural desire for power over Rome would lead to his downfall. Livy's dramatic writing played out mountains as judges of human delusions of omniscience and invincibility in the cases of both Hannibal and Philip, and in his rhetorical accounts the mountains themselves imposed a form of moralistic punishment. Jaeger describes Philip's ascent as 'an act in what has been called the "tragedy" of Philip.' She continues that 'Livy's readers already know that Philip has been cursed and that the angry gods have driven him mad'.¹⁴⁵ The desire for power of Philip and Hannibal failed because of their arrogant attempts to gain a divine omnipotence.

Part of the reason for the failures of Philip and Hannibal was their arrogance in assuming to gain godlike knowledge from the mountain top, and their inability to gain the self-knowledge that such an attempt would be doomed to failure. The force of the mountain to influence psychological understanding features throughout this thesis. The summit view in antiquity could suggest a divine or human, philosophical and emotional objectivity, and the (self-)knowledge that could be gained by gazing from the summit. The awareness coming from a summit view might be emotional, spatial and temporal, as the gods looked back on the day or ahead to the future, or as mortals reflected on their lives. In the *Aeneid*, as day turned to evening, Jupiter looked down from Mount Olympus, from where he was able to see the whole world.¹⁴⁶ In his writing, as we shall see, the Roman philosopher Seneca (c.4 BCE-65 CE) employed the height of Mount Etna as a metaphor for the acquisition of wisdom and self-awareness. Such reflection linked closely with Petrarch's account of his climb of Mont Ventoux in the fourteenth century, an account which reaffirms my argument that literary perceptions of mountains influenced human ascents throughout the period of this thesis. Petrarch's reflective *oroskopia* from the summit of Mont Ventoux displayed emotional, spatial and temporal characteristics similar to those of his classical predecessors.¹⁴⁷ Such reflective views from the mountain summit are part of the pattern of human lives that has allowed development of the human understanding of self and helps reveal the rich variety of the human and literary perceptions of mountains in antiquity.

¹⁴³ Livy, 21.34-35. For commentary, see e.g. Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 460-1.

¹⁴⁴ Plin. *HN* 3.31 for Alps as bulwark and defence of Rome.

¹⁴⁵ Jaeger, 'Fog on the Mountain', 833.

¹⁴⁶ *Aen.* I.223-226.

¹⁴⁷ See section 5.4.2.

2.4.2 The view from the summit: looking back from Mount Etna

The topos of *oroskopia* is relevant to the mountains of the *Aeneid* which occurred as landmarks and vantage points throughout the poem. Virgil relied on his literary predecessors to inform and enlarge his perception of mountains in this context: when Aeneas climbed a peak in order to gain a commanding view in his search for his lost comrades,¹⁴⁸ the episode was reminiscent of Homer's Odysseus, who climbed a craggy hill on Circe's island to gain an overview of his surroundings and look for signs of human habitation.¹⁴⁹

A mountain whose height made it suitable as a vantage point was also useful as a landmark, whether seen from land or from sea. Virgil employed mountain landmarks in different fashions, including them in descriptions of landscape,¹⁵⁰ at moments of excitement,¹⁵¹ and at times of drama and terror, as on the occasion when the Trojans sailed past Sicily, the volcanic island of Mount Etna, Scylla and Charybdis, and home of the Cyclopes:

tum procul e fluctu Trinacria cernitur Aetna,
et gemitum ingentem pelagi pulsataque saxa
audimus longe fractasque ad litora voces,
exsultantque vada atque aestu miscentur harenae.¹⁵²

Then from far out at sea we see Etna on the three-cornered island [Sicily], and from far off we hear a great roar of the ocean, of battered rocks and broken sounds on the shores, and the deep sea surged and the sand mixed in with the swell.

The human, scientific and mythological associations with Etna are well documented in ancient sources,¹⁵³ partly because of the mountain's properties as a volcano, but also because by its size it dominates the island and acts as both a landmark and a vantage point. The location of Mount Etna—accessible for being on an island (Sicily) and therefore surrounded by water—and its height of 3,326 m. made it ideal as a landmark mountain, both for the views from its summit and its visibility from the sea. Its varied documentation not only lends support to the theory that there was an appreciative association with the mountain in antiquity, it also informs the concept of a mountain creating its own literary history or even biography, inspiring future generations to acquaint themselves with the phenomenon that was Etna. Human perceptions of anything are

¹⁴⁸ *Aen.* 1.180-187.

¹⁴⁹ *Od.* 10.144-50.

¹⁵⁰ *Aen.* III.508.

¹⁵¹ *Aen.* III.522-3.

¹⁵² *Aen.* III.554-7.

¹⁵³ For example: Callimachus sang of Etna, *Hymn to Artemis*, 3.56; Lucretius *DRN* 2.593 ff. and 6.686-689 discussed the mountain from a rational and scientific viewpoint; Virgil described the mountain in *Geor.* I.471-473; the anonymous poem *Aetna* was all about the mountain; Strabo mentioned mountain guides for hire on Etna, 6.2.8; Pliny *NH* Vol. I.2.236 regarded Etna as a scientific wonder; Seneca wrote to his nephew about the mountain, *Ep.* 79.1-7; Pausanias 3.23.9 discussed tourists throwing objects into Etna's crater; the emperor Hadrian climbed Etna, in *Vit. Had.* 13.3; Diogenes Laertius 3.18 claimed Plato travelled to Sicily specifically to visit Etna and see its craters; Isidore mentioned the mountain several times, e.g. 14.3.44.

informed by what people have seen, heard and read; perceptions of mountains in antiquity were no different, and literary layers added accretion to human understanding of what a mountain was, and what a mountain meant to a human being. Virgil had a great deal of earlier literature on which to draw to inform his descriptions of Etna, and when he wrote about the mountain in the *Aeneid* and the *Georgics* he was looking back at much that had gone before him.¹⁵⁴ In order to explore how Virgil's descriptions of Etna were informed by his reactions to Hesiod, we turn again to the *Theogony*.

After the violent Titanomachy and Zeus' ultimate defeat of the Titans, Gaia ('Earth') gave birth to her last child, Typhoeus.¹⁵⁵ This was a terrifying monster, from whose shoulders were set the hundred heads of a serpent dragon, with flickering tongues, flashing eyes and a hundred mouths that emitted sounds of bellowing bulls, lions or dogs.¹⁵⁶ Such was his power that

ἄλλοτε δ' αὖ ροίζεσχε', ὑπὸ δ' ἤχεεν οὐρεα μακρά.¹⁵⁷

even when he hissed, the high mountains rumbled from below.

Once again Hesiod chose to enhance Zeus' struggle by using the mountain stage to dramatise the conflict. The king of the gods found himself locked in a contest perhaps even more ferocious than that against the Titans, and he responded with force. The mountains felt his power, for

ποσσί δ' ὑπ' ἀθανάτοισι μέγας πελεμίζετ' Ὀλυμπος
ὀρνυμένοιο ἄνακτος.¹⁵⁸

beneath the god's immortal feet as he moved, great Olympus shook.

The language was violent, extreme, as befitted the battle of immortals, and the sound of the conflict echoed through the lines. Zeus had already defeated the Titans and established order; this latest child of Gaia, Typhoeus, opposed Zeus' order and the established harmony. Again, the mountain peaks represented the stage of the conflict, and Zeus' power was manifest in his wielding of the thunderbolt:

Ζεὺς δ' ἐπεὶ οὖν κόρθυνεν ἐὸν μένος, εἴλετο δ' ὄπλα,
βροντὴν τε στεροπὴν τε καὶ αἰθαλόεντα κεραυνόν,

¹⁵⁴ Etna featured in *Aen.* III.570-577; *Geor.* I.471-473. Vulcano featured in *Aen.* VIII.416-22.

¹⁵⁵ Hes. *Th.*, 821. This thesis will refer throughout to Typhoeus, the name which Hesiod uses in the *Theogony*, though the monster appears in some other versions of the myth as Typhon.

¹⁵⁶ Hes. *Th.*, 824-7. Although Hesiod's is our earliest account, the birth of Typhoeus is widely related in the classical texts. For example: Pind., *Pyth.* Ode 1.15ff, *Ol.* Ode 4.6ff.; A. *Prom.* 363ff.; Lycoph., *Alex.* 688 ff.; Strabo, 5. 4. 9; Ov., *Met.* 5. 346 ff., 14.2; Sen., *Herc. Fur.* 80 ff.; Val. Flacc., *Arg.* 2. 16 ff.; Philostr., *VA* 5. 14, 16.

¹⁵⁷ Hes. *Th.*, 835.

¹⁵⁸ Hes. *Th.*, 842-3.

πλῆξεν ἅπ' Οὐλύμποιο ἐπάλμενος.¹⁵⁹

Therefore, when Zeus lifted up his might and seized his weapons, thunder, flash, and gleaming lightning, he leaped up from Olympus and smote him.

Typhoeus collapsed and was vanquished: the battle had taken place and the monster was defeated. Yet Hesiod's account of the battle against Typhoeus was much more than a repeat of the Titanomachy, for it is the events *after* the monster's defeat that are interesting to a study of mountains in the ancient world, and beyond.

φλὸξ δὲ κεραυνωθέντος ἀπέσσυτο τοῖο ἄνακτος
οὔρεος ἐν βήσσησιν αἰδνῆς παιπαλοέσσης
πληγέντος, πολλὴ δὲ πελώρη καίετο γαῖα
αὐτμῆ θεσπεσίη καὶ ἐτήκετο κασσίτερος ὧς
τέχνη ὑπ' αἰζηῶν ἐν ἐντρήτοις χοάνοισι
θαλφθεῖς, ἢ ἐ σίδηρος, ὃ περ κρατερώτατός ἐστιν,
οὔρεος ἐν βήσσησι δαμαζόμενος πυρὶ κηλέῳ
τήκεται ἐν χθονὶ δίη ὑφ' Ἡφαίστου παλάμησιν.¹⁶⁰

A flame shot forth from that thunderbolted lord [Typhoeus] **in the mountain's dark, rugged glens**, as he was struck, and the huge earth was much burned by the prodigious blast, and **it melted like tin** when it is heated with skill by young men in well-perforated melting pots, or as iron, although it is the strongest thing, melts in the divine earth by the skilled hands of Hephaestus when it is overpowered in a mountain's glens by burning fire.

The description is extreme, and the extent to which earth and Typhoeus '**melted like tin**' and burned '**in the mountain's dark glens**' sounds very like a description of molten lava, pouring forth from a volcano, a volcano like Mount Etna. Buxton¹⁶¹ explores the word αἰδνός (dark, 860), usually accepted as a dative plural agreeing with the word 'glens', ἐν βήσσησιν αἰδνῆς, and commonly translated as '**in the dark glens of the mountain**'.¹⁶² Buxton offers an alternative reading, Αἰδνῆς, which would, he posits, be the name 'of an otherwise unknown location, Aidna', and he uses this reading to suggest that line 860 could in fact translate as 'in the mountain glens of Aitna'.¹⁶³ There are, however, uncertainties with this reading. West categorically refutes the variant and Williams argues that 'the reading Αἴτνης is clearly open to serious objection'.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, Buxton's reading fails to take into account Hesiod's unequivocal declaration that Zeus struck the monster with a thunderbolt first,¹⁶⁵ that the monster

¹⁵⁹ Hes. *Th.* 853-55. See also Buxton, *Mount Etna*, 2016, 26ff.

¹⁶⁰ Hes. *Th.* 859-66. Transl. *Th.* Most.

¹⁶¹ Buxton, *Mount Etna*, 31f.

¹⁶² *Th.* Most *ad loc.*

¹⁶³ Buxton, *Mount Etna*, 31-2.

¹⁶⁴ Williams, *Pietro Bembo on Etna*, 29; West 1966 in *Th.* West, 393 *ad loc.* 860.

¹⁶⁵ Virginia M. Lewis in *Myth, Locality and Identity in Pindar's Sicilian Odes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) agrees with West's interpretation of the variant, 55-6. She adds (56): 'Like Homer, Hesiod locates Typho's prison in a mythical place. What matters more for the narrative of the

then burnt the land on which he was lying and then finally (868) that Zeus flung Typhoeus into Tartarus:

ῥίψε δέ μιν θυμῷ ἀκαχῶν ἐς τάρταρον εὐρύν.¹⁶⁶

and he hurled Typhoeus into broad Tartarus, grieving him in his spirit.

Hesiod made no mention of a locale (other than Tartarus) or any mountain, for the poet was concerned not with a mountain, but with the punishment meted out to the monster and his eventual incarceration in Tartarus. Buxton does not labour his point: ‘be that all as it may’ is his rejoinder to West’s rejection of this reading, ‘Hesiod’s threefold repetition of the idea of melting—eteketo, teketai, teketo—at the very least anticipates and prefigures the imagery of liquid Etnaeian fire, which we find in so many later texts.’¹⁶⁷ Buxton is right to draw attention to Etnaeian fire and its importance in later descriptions of Etna: this fire will feature later in the thesis, in literary representations of Etna, and also of Mount Vulcano.

2.4.3 Mount Etna

The interweaving of the literary sources surrounding Etna are complex and any understanding of aspects of mountains in the ancient world must include an understanding of the perception of Etna. Etna is a mountain and a volcano. In spite of the differences between the two, I argue that the one factor did not negate the other, and that it was possible to climb Etna for reasons other than scientific research into the workings of a volcano. I will discuss this further in the following pages. Buxton affirms that Etna was culturally occupied by three different civilisations—Sicilian, Greek and Roman—and so it became part of three separate societies, each with their own cultural perceptions of the mountain.¹⁶⁸ Later in the thesis—in the chapter on Willibald—I will show how Etna and its literary antecedents influenced Willibald’s ascent of Mount Vulcano: his ascent of Vulcano occurred in the eighth century, adding another dimension, that of time, to Buxton’s cultural interpretation. Medieval perceptions of Etna were informed by the sort of classical writings which I discuss in this chapter, and Hugeburc’s text relating to Willibald’s ascent of Vulcano followed to some extent classical descriptions of Etna.

After Hesiod’s description of the defeat of Typhoeus in Tartarus, the earliest extant account of the monster is that of Pindar’s First *Pythian* Ode.¹⁶⁹ I follow Williams in accepting that it was Pindar who first brought Typhoeus neatly and conveniently into Tartarus, but

Theogony is that Typho—the final in a series of challengers to Zeus’ power—has been defeated and less where he lies in defeat.’

¹⁶⁶ Hes. *Th.*, 868; transl. *Th. Most*.

¹⁶⁷ Buxton, *Mount Etna*, 32.

¹⁶⁸ Buxton, *Mount Etna*, 26.

¹⁶⁹ See Williams, *Pietro Bembo on Etna*, 23-72.

beneath Mount Etna.¹⁷⁰ By using the mountain to link Tartarus to earth, Pindar could have his Typhoeus do more damage beneath Etna, and so Typhoeus—and by extrapolation, the mountain—became more of a dramatic set piece for an author writing about the volcano. As Kathryn Morgan states, ‘an account that started with the monster lying Hesiodically in remote Tartaros now has him much closer to the surface, where he can and does affect everyday life.’¹⁷¹

In the *Aeneid*, Virgil was portraying Etna from several angles and exploited the tension inspired by the mountain in the variety of his subject matter. The mountain held rich material for his writing in its molten lava, the sort of vivid fire described also in the *Theogony*; the violence of Etna repeated the violence of Typhoeus seen elsewhere; and the mountain’s chaotic nature was comparable to the physical and spiritual (dis)order of individual characters, other mountains or even episodes within the *Aeneid*. There is scholarly debate about the chief sources for Virgil’s dramatic set pieces on Etna, though it is apparent that he relied on a number of different predecessors.¹⁷² I posit that the mountain had a literary past rich for *imitatio*,¹⁷³ beginning with the oldest of the poets, Homer, for it is ‘the Homeric frame that unmistakably surrounds the localized Pindaric presence in *Aen.* 3.570–87 as a whole.’¹⁷⁴ Virgil acknowledged Homer’s influence with the very first word of his Etna set-piece, *portus* (‘the harbour’), a conscious and honourable acknowledgement of Homer, reminding the reader of the harbour on the Cyclops’ island into which Odysseus had sailed his ship.¹⁷⁵

As Virgil’s Trojans drew near the island of Sicily, they saw the terrifying mountain close-up, and they even saw the harbour on the shore where Odysseus had beached his ship:¹⁷⁶

Portus ab accessu ventorum immotus et ingens
 ipse: sed **horrificis** iuxta tonat Aetna **ruinis**,
 interdumque atram **prorumpit ad aethera** nubem
 turbine fumantem piceo et candente favilla,
 attollitque globos flammaram et sidera lambit;
 interdum scopulos avulsaque viscera montis
 erigit eructans, liquefactaque saxa sub auras
 cum gemitu glomerat fundoque exaestuat imo.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁰ Williams, *Pietro Bembo on Etna*, 29.

¹⁷¹ K. A. Morgan, *Pindar and the Construction of Syracusan Monarchy in the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 318.

¹⁷² For a summary and discussion of the sources, see N. Horsfall, *Virgil, Aeneid 3: A Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 394–400; for the importance of Lucretius (and his *ratio*) to Virgil’s account, see Williams, *Pietro Bembo on Etna*, 38ff.; for the origins of the cosmic chaos of Virgil’s Etna, see Hardie, *Cosmos and Imperium*, 209–13.

¹⁷³ For discussion on *imitatio et aemulatio*, see D. A. Russell, ‘De Imitatione’, in *Creative Imitation and Latin Literature*, ed. David West and Tony Woodman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 1–16. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511659171.002.

¹⁷⁴ Williams. *Pietro Bembo on Etna*, 35.

¹⁷⁵ *Od.* 9.116.

¹⁷⁶ For further on this passage, see also R. F. Thomas, *Reading Virgil and His Texts: Studies in Intertextuality* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 283–6; for the allusive texture of 570–87, see Horsfall, *Aeneid 3*, 394–5.

¹⁷⁷ *Aen.* III.570–577.

The very harbour is huge and unmoved by the stirring of winds; but hard-by thunders Etna in **horrifying destruction**, and sometimes it **shoots up to the heavens** a black cloud, smoking with a pitchy blast and glowing ash, and it lifts up balls of flame and it licks the stars; at another moment it belches out rocks, rips out the entrails of the mountain and spews them up, and piles molten rocks under the sky with a groan and spews them out from its hidden depths.

I have already shown that Hesiod's Olympus symbolised Zeus' order and harmony over the chaos and disorder threatened by the Titans and their home in Mount Othrys, and by Typhoeus. Zeus defeated both the Titans and Typhoeus. In similar fashion, and by exploitation of his mountains, Virgil drew attention to the order and cosmic harmony symbolised by Atlas, and to the disorder and **horrifying destruction** symbolised by Etna. Atlas symbolised permanence and fixity in marked contrast to the lost state of Aeneas when he was with Dido in Book IV, whereas Etna in the *Aeneid* appeared as a prominent symbol of cosmic chaos.¹⁷⁸ In Virgil's description, Etna **shoots up to the heavens** its balls of flame, pitch and ash as if Typhoeus, beneath the mountain, were still attempting his hostile campaign against the gods on Olympus.¹⁷⁹

At the point of appearance of Etna in *Aeneid* III the Trojans had fled the ruins of Troy and, over several years, had failed to find a new homeland, trying one territory after another, until a prophecy drove them towards an unknown Italy. Sicily and Etna appeared at the mid-point of Aeneas' spatial and temporal journey, from Troy to Italy; and also at the mid-point of his psychological journey, from defeated Trojan refugee to Italian warrior. Etna as a mountain of symbolism had associations with Typhoeus, already discussed, and the mountain's chaotic disorder represented the uncertainty of Aeneas' travels and state of mind.

Such physical and psychological journeying is nothing new: commentators and analysts have long explored these different journeys of Aeneas.¹⁸⁰ Yet what I continue to examine and drive forward in this chapter, and what remains unexplored in other secondary literature, is the role that mountains played as part of Aeneas' constant journeying. Further, the significance of Virgil's mountains influenced later writers. Virgil gave his mountains prominence, making them a feature of his poem, thereby adding to the perception of mountains in classical literature. Virgil required his Aeneas to struggle and fail before he could learn and grow, and portrayed his struggles and growth through his journey, through the gods and through the people he encountered. In much the same way, as I argue, Virgil's mountains represented critical aspects

¹⁷⁸ Williams, *Pietro Bembo on Etna*, 38.

¹⁷⁹ Virgil's reference to Mount Vulcano appeared in *Aen.*VIII.416-22, when he described the island home to Vulcan's forge where the Cyclopes made weapons of war and thunderbolts for Jupiter:

*insula Sicanium iuxta latus Aeoliamque
erigitur Liparen fumantibus ardua saxis ...
Volcani domus et Volcania nomine tellus.*

'Near the coast of Sicily and Aeolian Lipari there rises an island steep with smoking rocks ... This is the home of Vulcan and the land is called Vulcano.'

¹⁸⁰ For example, R. Deryck Williams, *Aeneas and the Roman Hero* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998).

of Aeneas' journey towards personal growth and psychological fulfilment. Virgil's Etna symbolised the sort of danger, chaos and disorder already seen in Hesiod's Typhoeus. However, Virgil was not writing a *Theogony*, but a poem on the struggles of a man, an *Aeneid*: as Atlas highlighted Aeneas' weak and insubstantial nature during his time with Dido, so the violence of Etna symbolised his spiritual disorder in Book III, neither a Trojan nor yet an Italian, searching for a purpose and for a homeland.

2.4.4 Etna and Seneca

Aeneas' voyage past Etna was only part of the mythical, literary and human history of Etna as a mountain and as a volcano which made it an object of such great curiosity.¹⁸¹ The emperor Hadrian climbed Etna in 125:

post, in Siciliam navigavit, in qua Aetnam montem conscendit ut solis ortum videret arcus specie, ut dicitur, varium.¹⁸²

Afterwards he sailed to Sicily, where he climbed Mount Etna, in order to see the sunrise, which, it is said, is variegated, like a rainbow.

According to the author of the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*,¹⁸³ the reward of Hadrian's ascent was not merely the view from the summit (the *oroskopia*), but also the astronomical spectacle of the rising sun; and so the purpose behind his ascent was not purely physical, but one of aesthetic curiosity and pseudo-scientific inquiry. We are told that Hadrian's curiosity was a dominant aspect of his character.¹⁸⁴ Tertullian, a Christian theologian writing at the end of the second century, described Hadrian as

omnium curiositatum explorator¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ For recent research on Etna see especially Richard Buxton, 'Mount Etna', 25-45; D. K. Chester, A. M. Duncan, J. E. Guest, C. R. J. Kilburn, *Mount Etna: The Anatomy of a Volcano* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1985); C. Oppenheimer, *Eruptions that Shook the World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁸² *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, Hadrian 13.3.

¹⁸³ The work is a collection of biographies of the later Roman emperors, possibly written in the early fourth century. Lyman W. Gurney, Penelope J. Gurney, 'The *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*: History and Controversy', *Literary and Linguistic Computing*, Vol. 13, no. 3 (Sept. 1998), 105–109, <https://doi.org/10.1093/lc/13.3.105>. Manuscripts of both Ammianus Marcellinus and *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* appeared at Fulda in the ninth century. Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 84.

¹⁸⁴ Hadrian's *curiositas* was not limited to Etna for its natural phenomena. See Galli (283), 'Pilgrimage as Elite Habitus: Educated Pilgrims in Sacred Landscape During the Second Sophistic', by Marco Galli, in Jas Elsner and Ian Rutherford (eds.), *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian Antiquity: Seeing the Gods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). See also N. Biffi, 'Adriani sul Monte Casio Curiosita epratica devozionale', *Invigilata Lucernis* 17 (1995), 17ff.

¹⁸⁵ Tert. *Apol.* 5,7. Tertullian's positive comment can be ascribed to the fact that he regarded Hadrian as a protector of the Christian religion.

inquisitive and curious about all manner of things.

To a man of curiosity, the inspiration for Hadrian's ascent of Etna was a desire to see and learn about the colours of the sunrise. At the start of this thesis I mentioned curiosity as an important and inspiring factor behind mountain ascents. I have shown how curious classical authors were in their writing about Etna, and Hadrian's curiosity reveals there was a physical curiosity about the mountain, as well. This physical curiosity appears to have been relatively widespread: Strabo related that mountain guides worked from the town of Etna to take tourists to the summit of the mountain.¹⁸⁶ Pertinently for this thesis, as I have mentioned,¹⁸⁷ although Etna is a volcano, Hadrian did not climb it because it was a *volcano*, but because it was a *mountain*. He ascended Etna in order to gain a view of the sunrise, and the height necessary for that view was gained because Etna is a mountain, not because it is a volcano. Similarly, although Strabo did not distinguish, some of those tourists who ascended Etna would have been keen to see the volcano's crater, some would have come for the summit view, and many would have wished to see both. I argue that this is an important distinction, and shows that it was perfectly legitimate to climb a volcano for reasons other than scientific vulcanology. Sunrise ascents can offer the summiteer both scientific understanding and aesthetic appreciation. This distinction will be important when we discuss Willibald's climb of Mount Vulcano in chapter four.

A figure who lived a generation before Hadrian was the stoic philosopher Seneca (c.4 BCE - 65). Lucius Annaeus Seneca, the Emperor Nero's one-time tutor and imperial advisor, led a life of variety, was a writer of tragedies, treatises and letters, and, like Hadrian, was a man of insatiable curiosity. Even in retirement, for example, he wrote about his plans to undertake the task of surveying the world in order to discover its secrets:

qui mundum circumire constitui et causas secretaque eius eruere atque aliis noscenda
producere.¹⁸⁸

since I have decided to survey the world, to unearth its reasons and secrets, and to
reveal them so that others may know.

He wrote his collection of *Dialogues*—written exercises in practical philosophy and the stoic teaching of virtue—between c.50 and the end of his life in 65.¹⁸⁹ In his dialogue *On Leisure*, Seneca explicitly recognised curiosity as part of the human psyche, seeing that nature had provided humans with a sense of curiosity:

¹⁸⁶ Strabo 6.2.8. See also Jason König http://www.bshs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Viewpoint115_Website.pdf, Viewpoint Magazine, 115, 11-13.

¹⁸⁷ Section 2.4.3.

¹⁸⁸ Sen. *QN*, 3 *pref.* 1.

¹⁸⁹ Seneca, *Dialogues and Essays*, ed. and transl. by John Davie and Tobias Reinhardt (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), vii-xxiii.

Curiosum nobis natura ingenium dedit.¹⁹⁰

Nature has given us a curious mind.

In the same dialogue he argued that human curiosity was both a mental and a physical attribute:

Natura nos ad utrumque genuit, et contemplationi rerum et actioni.¹⁹¹

Nature has produced us for both aspects—both the contemplation and the performance of actions.

Seneca's words support my claim that curiosity was a motivating factor for physical ascents of mountains in antiquity. Seneca's observation that curiosity was as much a mental as physical attribute, suggests that ancient interest in mountains also included written accounts—virtual mountain ascents—as well as real, physical ascents. Seneca himself was aware of the tension between the two types of ascent.

In 64 Seneca wrote to his nephew Lucilius, the official procurator of Sicily, whose own interest in the island was significant enough for him recently to have undertaken a sea voyage around it.¹⁹² At the start of his letter Seneca revealed his great curiosity, for he asked Lucilius not for news or gossip, but for any new discoveries his nephew had made during his recent voyage:

exspecto epistulas tuas quibus mihi indices circuitus Siciliae totius **quid tibi novi** ostenderit.¹⁹³

I have been waiting for your letter, so that you might let me know of **anything new** that was revealed to you during your trip round the whole of Sicily.

The letter was crammed with a desire for knowledge, particularly for information regarding natural phenomena, revealing Seneca's enquiring and curious nature.¹⁹⁴ After an opening paragraph asking about these new discoveries, Seneca made another request of Lucilius—actually to climb the mountain. This appeared as a simple and natural request, one that seems to have been as much an act of recreation as a scientific undertaking:

¹⁹⁰ Sen. *de Ot.* 5.3.

¹⁹¹ Sen. *de Ot.* 5.1.

¹⁹² Sen. *Ep.* 79. See Williams, *Pietro Bembo on Etna*, 49; P. Grimal, "Lucilius en Sicile", *Φιλίας χάριν: Miscellanea di studi classici in onore di Eugenio Manni*, ed. M. J. Fontana, M. T. Piraino and F. P. Rizzo (Rome: Giorgio Bretschneider, 1980), 1173–87. See also Sen. *NQ* 4a *pref.* 1 (on Lucilius in Sicily).

¹⁹³ *Ep.* 79.1.

¹⁹⁴ For example, he asked about the physical nature of Charybdis in comparison to its mythological presentation; and he wanted to know how far the crater was from the snow on the summit of the mountain. His letter then extended into metaphysical discussions of wisdom, virtue and the soul.

si haec mihi perscripseris, tunc tibi audebo mandare ut in honorem meum Aetnam quoque ascendas.¹⁹⁵

If you write to me fully about these things, then I shall be bold enough to ask you also to climb Etna for my sake.

It transpired that he wanted Lucilius to climb Mount Etna because he would then be able to provide his uncle with more information about a natural question which concerned him, for Seneca had heard reports that Etna was losing its height:

[Aetnam] ... quam consumi et sensim subsidere ex hoc colligunt quidam, quod aliquanto longius navigantibus solebat ostendi. Potest hoc accidere, non quia montis altitudo descendit, sed quia ignis evanuit et minus vehemens ac largus effertur, ob eandem causam fumo quoque per diem segniori.¹⁹⁶

Some people have opined that Etna is shrinking and gradually settling, for this reason because sailors used to be able to see it from a considerably greater distance. The reason for this is possibly not because the height of the mountain is growing less, but because the flames have reduced and the eruptions are less violent and less powerful, and because for the same reason there appears to be less smoke during the day.

Aspects of mountains which I have already discussed appear in Seneca's letter. He disclosed that one function of Etna was as a nautical landmark by which sailors might orientate themselves, stating that Etna's lofty summit was visible for miles across the wide sea.¹⁹⁷ According to his letter some people believed the mountain was growing smaller, because sailors used to be able to see the summit from a greater distance than was now the case. Etna acted as a foil for Seneca's curiosity, as he put forward the opinion that the height of the mountain might be no less than before, but that the flames had become dimmer. This scientific enquiry was well suited to a philosopher such as Seneca, and shows that ancient perceptions of, and interest in, mountains came from many quarters. After all, as well as the volcano itself, there was much literary history surrounding the mountain to interest a philosopher—for example, the legend of Empedocles the philosopher, who leapt into the crater (to see if he was really a god) and was consumed, save for one of his sandals which the volcano spewed out; and the story that Plato climbed the mountain.¹⁹⁸

Yet it appears that Lucilius had his own curiosity about Etna, and needed no such avuncular bidding to climb the mountain, as Seneca himself declared:

aut ego te non novi aut Aetna **tibi salivam movet**; iam cupis grande aliquid et par prioribus scribere.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁵ *Ep.* 79.2.

¹⁹⁶ *Ep.* 79.2.

¹⁹⁷ *Ep.* 79.10: *hoc excelsum cacumen et conspicuum per vasti maris spatia.*

¹⁹⁸ Empedocles in Strabo 6.2.8, Diog. Laert. 8.69 and Hor. *Ars P.*, 464-466; Plato in Diog. Laert. 3.18. See also Hooley, 'Classical Mountain Landscapes', 29; Barton, *Mountain Aesthetics*, 66-7.

¹⁹⁹ *Ep.* 79.7.

I am mistaken in my knowledge of you if Etna does not **make your mouth water**; for a while now you have wanted to write a grand affair, something on a par with the old days.

Seneca's suggestion that Etna would make Lucilius **salivate** offers a double possibility of meaning: that the prospect of physically climbing Etna and getting to know it for himself was as exciting as the contemplation of a virtual ascent, which could be gained by writing a poem about the mountain. Whether Lucilius was intending to embark on a physical ascent of the mountain, or to undertake a literary exploration of the mountain's influence in earlier poetry and prose, his obvious excitement at such an enterprise lends support to my claim that ancient attitudes to mountains were polyvalent and cut across physical ascents and literary interpretations. My argument gains further support from Seneca himself, in accordance with his observation above, that there was a natural human curiosity in 'both the contemplation and the performance of actions'. Lucilius' own interests—already noted in his circumnavigation of the island—were apparently moving him to climb the mountain, because, as Seneca mentioned, he was engaged in writing a poem about Etna.²⁰⁰

Cognisant of the literary history of the mountain, Seneca advised his nephew how to approach his writing—to explore Etna's literary antecedents and to provide detailed allusions in the writing of his poem. According to Seneca, then, in order to gain a deeper knowledge and perception of the mountain Lucilius needed both to climb Etna and to explore its portrayal in earlier literary accounts. In his letter Seneca mentioned by name three literary predecessors—Virgil, Ovid and Cornelius Severus—all of whom had relied on *imitatio* and the mountain's literary history to influence their own writing about Etna:

Quid tibi do ne Aetnam describas in tuo carmine, ne hunc sollemnem omnibus poetis locum adtingas? Quem quominus Ovidius tractaret, nihil obstitit quod iam Vergilius impleverat; ne Severum quidem Cornelium uterque deterruit.²⁰¹

What am I to give you to prevent you from just tracing Etna in your poem, to prevent you from just touching upon this theme which is a sacred matter for all poets? Nothing prevented Ovid from dealing with the same theme which Vergil had already employed; and neither of those two deterred Cornelius Severus.

Seneca advised Lucilius to avoid skirting around the literary history of the mountain, but to dig deep into his literary predecessors, just as Ovid, Virgil and Severus had done. Seneca's conscious awareness of *imitatio*, of a mountain's continuous literary tradition, goes to the very heart of my thesis. I have shown that the early rumblings of literary Etna began not with the mountain itself, but with Hesiod's Typhoeus; that Pindar was the first to (re)locate

²⁰⁰ Williams, *Pietro Bembo on Etna*, 47-8, says that this poem is widely believed to be the anonymous poem *Aetna*.

²⁰¹ *Ep.* 79.5. Ovid dealt with the Etna 'theme' in *Met.* 15.340ff.; Virgil in *Aen.* III.570ff.; Severus' work is not known. See Williams, *Pietro Bembo on Etna*, 47-8.

Typhoeus beneath Etna; and that thereafter the mountain developed its own literary history, in the works of other Greek and Latin authors. As I argue, *imitatio*, the tradition of borrowing from one's predecessor, was important for a fuller understanding of a text, or of a mountain, particularly when that mountain was a natural phenomenon such as Etna, with its own rich literary history. Perception of a place comes partly from interpretation and imitation of its cultural history. Later in his letter to Lucilius, Seneca affirmed that any literary description of Etna should include all that had gone before, because only by examining all previous accounts could one fully understand the mountain; once collated, the previous accounts could be assembled into a different order so as to offer one's own interpretation, giving a fresh perception or appearance (*faciem*):

Praeterea condicio optima est ultimi: parata verba invenit, quae aliter instructa novam faciem habent. Nec illis manus inicit tamquam alienis; sunt enim publica.²⁰²

Moreover, the best terms remain for the one who writes last; he finds a ready supply of words which, when assembled in a different way, give a new appearance. And he is not laying his hands on them as if they belonged to someone else, for they are common property.

Seneca's words shed light on our understanding of the perception of mountains in ancient times. The layered accumulation of literary descriptions of mountains built up features, appearances and perceptions that became commonplace, perceptions which then became common property out of which could develop new appearances, fresh interpretations or other perceptions.²⁰³

Finally, the philosopher Seneca connected the image of physical mountain climbing with the human pursuit of wisdom.

Inter cetera hoc habet boni sapientia: nemo ab altero potest vinci nisi dum ascenditur. **Cum ad summum perveneris, paria sunt**; non est incremento locus, statur.²⁰⁴

Among other advantages, wisdom has this benefit: no man can be outdone by another, except during the climb. But **when you reach the summit, it is a draw**; there is no room for further ascent, the climbing is over.

By connecting physical climbing with the pursuit of wisdom, Seneca combined the mental and physical curiosity we have already seen associated with mountains. Lucilius would climb Mount Etna, whose physical height would then carry him to literary and poetical heights

²⁰² *Ep.* 79.6:

²⁰³ Etna as 'common property' in literary terms extended to the mountain as part of the panhellenic tradition as well. For the panhellenic tradition of the mountain, see e.g. Lewis, *Myth, Locality, and Identity*, 28, 178.

²⁰⁴ *Ep.* 79.8.

and, ultimately, **when you reach the summit**, to the summit of wisdom.²⁰⁵ As Hooley notes, Seneca has slipped into ‘the perennial language of ascent’.²⁰⁶ Seneca’s implication was that physically—by climbing Etna—and mentally—by his literary endeavours—Lucilius would ascend to a state of wisdom equal to that of others, for at the summit **it is a draw**.

In the end, the landscape of Lucilius' physical and mental ascent provided Seneca with the opportunity to analyse the nature of virtue. The physical ascent towards the summit was a mental ascent towards the acquisition of wisdom and thereby the psychological development of self-knowledge and moral improvement, all suitable material for the human quest towards virtue. Seneca returned to the start of his letter, by observing that Mount Etna might have been growing smaller, but virtue could never disappear.²⁰⁷

An Aetna tua possit sublabi et in se ruere, an hoc excelsum cacumen et conspicuum per vasti maris spatia detrahat adsidua vis ignium, nescio: virtutem non flamma, non ruina inferius adducet.²⁰⁸

I do not know whether your Etna can collapse and fall into ruin, or whether this lofty summit, visible far and wide over the deep sea, is being wasted by the ceaseless power of fire; but I do know that virtue will not be brought down to a lower plane either by flames or by ruins.

Seneca used the metaphor of the mountain to project his ideas of literature, wisdom, and virtue and the development of the self. We shall see a similar process with Petrarch in chapter five, who used the summit of Mont Ventoux to analyse his own spiritual development. This thesis argues that the perception of mountains in the medieval period did not rise out of the sea, like an Atlas, unexpected and unseen: perceptions of mountains were closely allied to their literary history and, as we shall see, to the developing tradition of biblical accounts. Real mountains in the classical world were literal landmarks, but they were literary landmarks as well, appearing not only in the physical sense, but also as part of the philosophical and mental construct of existence, developing attitudes to mountains as part of conditioned learning.

2.5 Mountains of home

Literary representations of mountains could become part of human philosophical and mental furniture and help shape perceptions of mountains. For Virgil, as for other authors, the symbolism of the mountain allowed the poet to nuance the psychological drama of his characters. Virgil’s engagement with mountains contests the views of Barton, mentioned at the

²⁰⁵ Silvia Montiglio, ‘Should the Aspiring Wise Man Travel? A Conflict in Seneca's Thought’, *The American Journal of Philology* 127, no. 4 (2006), 568. Accessed July 22, 2021.

²⁰⁶ Hooley, ‘Classical Mountain Landscapes’, 30.

²⁰⁷ See Montiglio, ‘A Conflict in Seneca's Thought’, 568-9.

²⁰⁸ *Ep.* 79.10.

start of this thesis, that for the Greeks and Romans there was a ‘simple lack of interest in the mountain landscape’.²⁰⁹ In order to show just how humans could develop a strong psychological and mental attachment to the idea of a mountain, I include now a unique interpretation and discussion on Virgil’s Mount Ida as a development of the perception of mountains as part of human philosophical and mental construct.

2.5.1 Mount Ida

A mountain that acted as a literal and figurative beacon for Aeneas and the Trojans was Mount Ida (see Fig. 2-7) in Troy—modern Kaz Daglari in Turkey, 1770 m. high, twenty miles from the ruins of Troy. The mountain held close associations for the city, being for example sacred to the goddess Cybele, the location where Paris judged the three goddesses for the golden apple and a common vantage point for Homer’s gods to view the Trojan War.²¹⁰



Figure 2.7: Map of Troy and Mount Ida

"File:Greece relief location map.jpg" by Greece_location_map.svg: Lencer derivative work: Uwe Dederer (talk) is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10981243>

²⁰⁹ Barton, ‘The Aesthetics of the Mountain’, 76. See section 1.1.1.

²¹⁰ C. J. Mackie, ‘Zeus and Mount Ida in Homer’s Iliad’, *Antichthon* 48 (2014): 1–13.

doi:10.1017/S0066477400004718. Williams, *Landscape in the Argonautica*, 89 (Cybele, who was *Mater Idaea* at Rome); Hom. *Il.* 24.25-30 (Judgement of Paris), *Il.* 8.47-53 (Zeus travelled from Olympus to Gargarus, and watched the Trojans and Greeks do battle).

Virgil's first mention of Ida was at the end of *Aeneid* II, at the fall of the city of Troy and the beginning of Trojan woes. Jupiter sent a shooting star crashing into the side of Mount Ida as a sign that this was where the fleeing Trojans must assemble as refugees, to begin their long search for a new home. It was to Mount Ida that Aeneas and his family went, leaving behind their city and homeland, heading for the embracing but temporary safety of the mountain. Thus Aeneas told Dido,

*cessi, et sublato montes genitore petivi.*²¹¹

I accepted the situation and, lifting my father onto my shoulders, I headed for the mountain).

The Trojans were not heading to the mountain to climb it or use it as a vantage point, nor to write about it or gain self-knowledge: symbolically, with the fall of the city, Ida represented safety, familiarity and religious sanctity, a motif that was to remain attached to Ida throughout the first half of the poem. During their wanderings Ida reminded the Trojans of their homeland, a mountain as an indicator of home, to portray the identity felt by a dispossessed nation. In the protected bay at the foot of Mount Ida at the beginning of Book III the Trojans assembled the refugees and built a fleet; Ida's role was similar to the Carthaginian twin mountains mentioned above, sheltering and protecting the distraught Trojans.²¹² Later in Book III, the thought of living on Mount Ida in Crete—a mountain with the same name but in a different location—beguiled Aeneas' father Anchises into leading the Trojans to attempt to found a new Troy in Crete; while later in the poem, in Sicily, Aeneas presented Cloanthus, winner of the boat race, with a cloak decorated with scenes from Mount Ida.²¹³ For the Trojans in Sicily and far from home, the name of the mountain was mentioned twice in two lines, and 'the repetition of the name of the sacred Trojan mountain serves to underscore the ethnographic significance of the cloak's illustration'.²¹⁴ There was no climbing of Ida in these episodes; rather, the mountain's symbolism was the loss of home, the symbolic overlay of their homeland mountain onto other mountains, places, or objects. One way, perhaps the only way, that the Trojans could make sense of their circumstances was by linking their past with their present, by linking that which they understood with that which they did not know. This deep connection with Mount Ida suggests a powerful attraction and emotional attachment for the Trojans. Nan Shepherd's recognition that 'every reality that matters ultimately to human beings, is a reality of

²¹¹ *Aen.* II.804.

²¹² Section 2.2.4.

²¹³ The Trojans fled, *Aen.* II.801-4; they assembled and built a fleet, III.5-6; Anchises' belief that Crete was the place to build a new Troy, III.103ff.; Cloanthus received a chlamys from Aeneas, V.252ff.

²¹⁴ Lee M. Fratantuono and R. Alden Smith, *Virgil, Aeneid 5* (Leiden: Brill, 2015). doi: <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004301283>, p.316, n.254.

the mind'²¹⁵ reminds us of the complexity of human understanding of what a mountain means. Virgil's engagement with the high places suggests how keenly felt was the ancient attachment to mountains, and counters Macfarlane's claim that mountains began to exert their 'power of attraction on the human mind' only from the nineteenth century onwards.²¹⁶

Symbolic connections with Ida showed a spiritual longing amongst the Trojans for that which was gone and lost forever. As refugees, it was natural that the Trojans should ever look backwards with fondness rather than forwards with uncertainty, and not until Book VI did Aeneas begin his personal, spiritual journey away from his Trojan past and towards his Italian future. Notwithstanding Aeneas' personal development in the Underworld, it might be argued that the entire poem was a Trojan response to the destruction of Troy and their acceptance and welcome into Italy. The important role that mountains played in the understanding of this journey, of the psychological development of the Trojans and of Aeneas in particular, has not been explored; within this exploration Ida plays a full part.²¹⁷

Later in the poem, the Trojans reached Italy and war broke out between the Trojan immigrants and the native Italians, in particular the Rutulian tribe, who besieged the Trojans in their camp. Turnus, chief of the Rutulians, led a sustained attack on the beleaguered Trojans, whom Aeneas had ordered not to leave the camp. Consequently Remulus, one of Turnus' warriors outside the fortifications, impugned Trojan virility in an attempt to provoke them to battle, hurling accusations of effeminacy over the ramparts (most similar to the accusations that Iarbas had made against Aeneas in Book IV).²¹⁸ Remulus detailed the rugged qualities that made Italian men hardy and tough; he then followed this with his verbal onslaught against the soft-living of the Trojans.

vobis picta croco et fulgenti murice vestis,
 desidia cordi, iuvat indulgere choreis,
 et tunicae manicas et habent redimicula mitrae.
 o vere Phrygiae, neque enim Phryges, ite per **alta**
Dindyma, ubi adsuetis biformem dat tibia cantum.
 tympana vos buxusque vocat Berecynthia **Matris**
Idaeae; sinite arma viris et cedite ferro.²¹⁹

But as for you, your clothing is of saffron and gleaming purple, you are shameless in your ease and you love to indulge in dancing. Your tunics have sleeves and your bonnets have bows. Truly, you are Phrygian women, not Phrygian men! Go back to

²¹⁵ Shepherd, *The Living Mountain*, 1.

²¹⁶ Macfarlane, 16.

²¹⁷ The power of mountains to maintain one's emotional and psychological welfare can be seen in the story of W. H. 'Bill' Murray (1913-1996). Murray was a Scottish climber, who, during World War 2, was captured by the Germans on the British retreat to El Alamein in June 1942 and was held as a prisoner for the rest of the war. During his confinement he wrote a history of the Scottish mountains to keep him sane; after the war this book would eventually be published as *Mountaineering in Scotland* (J. M. Dent, 1947). Murray wrote the book in his POW camp on the only paper available to him—toilet paper; when the Gestapo found and destroyed the near-complete manuscript, he started writing again from the beginning.

²¹⁸ For Iarbas see *Aen.* IV.196ff.

²¹⁹ *Aen.* IX.614-20.

high Dindymum, where the double pipe presents you with its familiar sound. The drums beckon you, as does the Berecynthian boxwood flute of **the mother goddess of Mount Ida**. Leave warfare to men and let go of your weapons.

Remulus hurled imputations of effeminacy at the defenders, including their decorated clothing, idleness and a love of dancing, calling them ‘Trojan women’ rather than ‘Trojan men’. In a climactic, flourishing insult, he cast cultural aspersions on the Trojans, through their music, their gods and their mountains, through **high Dindymum** and **the mother goddess of Mount Ida**, thereby highlighting the emotional attachment of the refugees to their homeland and mountains of home.²²⁰ His mention of ‘the double pipe’ on Mount Dindymum and ‘the boxwood flute’ on Mount Ida shows this attachment was very real. These musical phrases suggest the important cultural role attached to mountains, how mountains were not always seen as dangerous places of untouched nature, but rather as the homes of shepherds, of music and of religious observances. Remulus’ insults help us to use mountain attachments to link the world of Virgil’s Ida with Hesiod’s Helicon.

2.5.2 *Mons Appenninus*

Virgil’s depictions of mountains differed one from another. Arguably the culmination of all the mountain symbolism in the *Aeneid* occurred towards the very end of the poem. By now, the inevitable duel between Aeneas and his enemy Turnus had drawn closer, and when Aeneas heard that Turnus was on the field of battle, he rushed to face his foe, mighty and fearsome to behold:

quantus Athos aut quantus Eryx aut ipse coruscis
cum fremit ilicibus quantus gaudetque nivali
vertice se attollens pater Appenninus ad auras.²²¹

[Aeneas was] just like mighty Athos or mighty Eryx or Father Apennine himself, the mighty one, when he roars with glittering oaks and rejoices in his snowy crown, and raises himself to the skies.

For Virgil’s final mountain episode, the imagery he employed to reveal the character of his hero was no picture of mountain gloom, and was absolutely mountain glory. In three lines Virgil expressed the power of Aeneas by comparing him to the might of a towering mountain, to a Greek (*Athos*), Sicilian (*Eryx*) or Italian mountain (*Appenninus*), transferring to Aeneas a

²²⁰ For Mount Dindymum in Phrygia (modern Anatolia), see e.g. Pliny *HN* 5.142; for the *Mater Idaea* see Williams, *Landscape in the Argonautica*, 89: the Trojan goddess Cybele became the *Mater Idaea* at Rome, the ‘Mother of Mount Ida’. Aeneas prayed to the goddesses of the respective mountains in *Aen.* X.251ff.

²²¹ *Aen.* XII.701-3.

noisy power and a joy for battle, alongside the strength of the mountains.²²² In the Atlas episode discussed above,²²³ Virgil could not favourably compare Aeneas to even a single mountain; now, almost at the end of the poem, he compared him to not one, but to three mountains,²²⁴ mountains which had charted Aeneas' geographical journey from Troy across the Mediterranean to Italy. Virgil depicted a virtual appreciation of mountains by employing mountain imagery to delineate the hero's physical journey.²²⁵ Here at the end of the poem, it transpired that Virgil chose to symbolise the fortitude of his hero by comparing him to an Italian mountain. The comparison marked not only Aeneas' physical journey, but also his psychological growth. This is the sort of psychological and emotional development already seen in Seneca's letter to his nephew, when Seneca used the metaphor of the mountain to portray growth of wisdom, virtue and self-knowledge.²²⁶ Virgil's depiction of mountains revealed a sensibility for what a mountain means, and by connecting Aeneas to an *Italian* mountain he showed how Aeneas by now had become an *Italian* hero.

Although this thesis confines itself to the character and identity of Aeneas in relation to mountains in the *Aeneid*, there are wider debates within the poem on Aeneas' identity and on the national identity of the Trojans. Once Troy fell, Aeneas's Trojan identity began to shift and alter, and as he established himself in Italy, the identity he began to develop became increasingly more Italian than Eastern. For Francis Cairns (*Virgil's Augustan Epic*), once the Italian nature of Aeneas and the Trojans became apparent, their former, Asiatic identity at least diminished, if it did not quite disappear.²²⁷ His time in Italy led to Aeneas' acquisition of an Italian identity and nature. Yasmin Syed (*Virgil's Aeneid and the Roman Self*) observes that Aeneas' national identity was 'projected through his interactions with various ethnic others',²²⁸ an observation supported by Reed who argues that the Trojans' development of a Roman identity 'emerge[d] as a synthesis' of other national identities. Virgil's comparison of Aeneas to the three mountains mentioned above was 'an allusive summary of Aeneas' journey from Troy

²²² For his noisy power, Aeneas 'roars' (*fremit*); for his joy 'he rejoices' (*gaudet*); and for his strength, he was 'just like mighty' (*quantus*) Athos.

²²³ Section 2.3.2.

²²⁴ Greek Athos, Sicilian Eryx and Italian Apennine. See Morwood, 'Aeneas and Mount Atlas', 58.

²²⁵ In his *Argonautica* Apollonius Rhodius likewise employed mountains and cliffs to add concepts of movement and the passage of time, as well as the efforts of his protagonists in overcoming obstacles on their journey. For further, see Williams, *Argonautica*, 80-1.

²²⁶ Section 2.4.4.

²²⁷ Francis Cairns, *Virgil's Augustan Epic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 128.

²²⁸ Yasmin Syed, *Virgil's Aeneid and the Roman Self: Subject and Nation in Literary Discourse* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 175. In addition to Cairns and Syed, the following works offer scholarly discussion on the nature of Aeneas' national identity. J.D. Reed, *Virgil's Gaze: Nation and Poetry in the Aeneid* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); W. R. Johnson, 'Imaginary Romans: Vergil and the Illusion of National Identity', in Sarah Spence, ed., *Poets and Critics Read Virgil*, 3-16 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); E. S. Gruen, *Culture and National Identity in Republican Rome* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); K. Toll, 'The *Aeneid* as an Epic of National Identity: *Italiam laeto socii clamore salutant*', *Helios* 18 (1991); F. W. Walbank, 'Nationality as a Factor in Roman History', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, Vol. 76 (1972).

to Italy',²²⁹ and, as I will show, these mountains expressed the character and the Italian qualities of Aeneas in a very specific way. For much of what follows I am grateful to James Morwood for his observations on the triple-mountain simile of Book XII and how the mountains related to Aeneas.²³⁰

However, for a fuller understanding of this episode it is necessary to go back a little earlier in the book than the simile itself. By so doing I will offer a fuller approach and further exploration of the narrative, placing these three lines in their wider context and clarifying Virgil's reasons for choosing Apennine at this point towards the end of his poem. My examination of Virgil's use of vocabulary will help determine the similarities and contrasts within the text.

Shortly before the duel between Turnus and Aeneas, the Rutulian warrior Saces broke through the lines of battle to find Turnus: he asked for help, warning his commander that

fulminat Aeneas armis summasque minatur
deiecturum arces Italum excidioque daturum,
iamque faces ad tecta volant.²³¹

Aeneas hurls lightning with his weapons and threatens that he will tear down the highest citadels of Italy and give them up for destruction; and already torches are flying towards buildings.

Already Virgil placed emphasis on mountain imagery with the position of the first word *fulminat*, as Aeneas metaphorically 'hurls lightning' like Jupiter around a mountain top, or like Zeus himself from Olympus, in Hesiod's *Theogony*. Tarrant, in his commentary on *Aeneid* XII, affirms that *fulminat* in the *Aeneid* is 'used by Virgil of someone other than Jupiter only here' — making comparisons between Aeneas and Jupiter, the god of the mountains, highly likely.²³²

Turnus accepted the news and rushed across the field of battle towards Aeneas and certain death. Virgil symbolised Turnus' charge with the introduction of another mountain simile:

ac veluti montis saxum de vertice praeceps
cum ruit avulsum vento, seu turbidus imber
proluit aut annis solvit sublapsa vetustas;
fertur in abruptum magno mons improbus actu
exultatque solo, silvas armenta virosque
involvens secum ...²³³

²²⁹ Cairns, *Virgil's Augustan Epic*, 109.

²³⁰ Morwood, 'Aeneas and Mount Atlas', 51-59.

²³¹ *Aen.* XII.654-6.

²³² Vergil, *Aeneid Book XII*, ed. R. Tarrant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 256, n.654. The only other use of *fulminat* in connection with a mortal is in *Georg.* 4.560-1, of Octavian.

²³³ *Aen.* XII.684-689. Virgil adapted this simile from Homer, and as with the Atlas episode, Virgil omitted and adapted as he chose. In *Il.* 13.136-46 Hector led the rampant Trojans to attack the Greek ships, compared by Homer to a boulder loosened from a hilltop. The boulder that was Turnus was more chaotic and out of control than the boulder that was Hector.

And just as when a rock, torn out by the winds, hurls headlong from the summit of a mountain, or else either heavy rainfall dislodges it or the length of passing seasons causes it to slip and loosen; the unresisting mountain is carried rushing in a mighty movement and leaps over the ground, dragging forests, animals and men with it ...

This simile was different from the comparison of Aeneas to three huge and fixed mountains, and different again from the description of Atlas in Book IV. In this scene Turnus was compared to a boulder, loosened by heavy rainfall and torn from the summit, which hurled headlong down the mountainside. Freed from the fixity of its mountain, and lacking rootedness, the rock hurtled without purpose or direction, bouncing and even rejoicing in its trajectory, crushing and scattering men and animals in its wake. So Virgil portrayed Turnus, lacking the fixity of a rooted mountain, who raced to challenge Aeneas in single combat.

When Aeneas heard the challenge he came out of the city to meet Turnus:

At pater Aeneas audito nomine Turni ...²³⁴

But when father Aeneas heard the name of Turnus ...

The key word here is *pater* ('father') and I will discuss Virgil's use of this word later. At this point Virgil introduced the triple-mountain simile, comparing Aeneas to Athos, Eryx or Apennine, just as he had compared Turnus to a boulder wrenched from a mountain. At one basic level the symbolism was obvious, as the battlefield encounter between two mighty warriors was symbolised by mountains, the mountain of Turnus to be set in opposition to the mountains of Aeneas. Yet Virgil's complexity and craft of mountain writing added layers to the symbolism, revealing the disparity of the contest: the permanence and immoveability of Aeneas, confirmed in the simile of three mountains, contrasted with the chaotic disorder of Turnus' boulder tumbling out of control. Virgil's simile descriptions of a triple-mountain and of a hurtling boulder foreshadowed the inevitable victory for Aeneas.

As Aeneas rushed into battle he was compared to Athos and to Eryx, but specifically and in detail he was compared to Apennine, the Italian mountain which dominates and defends central Italy with views on all sides (see Fig. 2-8). As we have seen in his other mountain descriptions, Virgil drew attention by his use of vocabulary in order to make comparison between man and mountain explicit.

quantus Athos aut quantus Eryx aut ipse coruscis
cum fremit ilicibus quantus gaudetque nivali
vertice se attollens pater Appenninus ad auras.²³⁵

²³⁴ *Aen.* XII.697-700.

²³⁵ *Aen.* XII.701-3.

[Aeneas was] just like mighty Athos or mighty Eryx or Father Apennine himself, the mighty one, when he roars with glittering oaks and rejoices in his snowy crown, and raises himself to the skies.



Figure 2.8: Map of Italy and Mons Appenninus

"File:Italy relief location map.jpg" by Eric Gaba (Sting - fr:Sting) and NordNordWest is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6718626>

The embracing ideal of Italian fatherliness came in the word *pater* (father): the link between *pater Aeneas* (697) and *pater Appenninus* (703) confirmed the hero's care for his men and his country, much as the divine figure of Apennine protected Italy.²³⁶ *Pater* meant more than 'father' and 'progenitor', embracing those ideals certainly, but also implying concepts of

²³⁶ Aeneas was called *pater* thirty-one times in the *Aeneid*, more than any other character, including Anchises (twenty-five) and Jupiter (twenty-seven): Katharine Toll, 'Making Roman-Ness and the *Aeneid*,' *Classical Antiquity* 16, no. 1 (1997): 42-3. Accessed May 16, 2020. doi:10.2307/25011053. In this heavily Italian context the reader is reminded not only of the link between Augustus and his ancestor *pater Aeneas*, but also of Augustus' title of *Pater Patriae*.

care, of ancestry, and of heritage, and these are qualities that applied to Aeneas as much as to the mountain.²³⁷ By employing the deliberate mountain references Virgil acknowledged the supremacy of Aeneas, but also that Aeneas had now become Italian, like father Apennine, that Italy was his homeland and that he was the guardian of its people.²³⁸ For Apennine was not just any mountain in Italy: Virgil chose his mountains too carefully for random observations. At 2,912 m. in height, the Gran Sasso is the highest peak of the Apennines (see Fig. 2-8), close to the modern city of L'Aquila (approximately one hundred kilometres north-east of Rome), a mountain which is visible from both the Adriatic and the Tyrrhenian seas and, 'seen from the south, its helmet-shaped peak gives the effect of a giant warrior striding along the mountain ridge'.²³⁹ Finally in Italy, after years of wandering and loss, Virgil's Aeneas had found his geographical home and his 'spiritual goal'²⁴⁰ and Virgil used the canvas of the mountains to make this apparent.

Aeneas had come a long way on his physical and psychological journey since Troy, since Carthage and Mount Atlas; and, as Tarrant observes in his commentary on Book XII, 'the foreign origin of Aeneas ... is implicitly undone as he is assimilated to the heart of the Italian landscape.'²⁴¹ Virgil achieved the momentous coupling of Aeneas to Italy by employing Mount Apennine. In Book IV Aeneas had told Dido that, given free choice, he would seek again his *patria*, his 'homeland', Troy.²⁴² Here in Book XII that backwards look had gone, and for Aeneas there was no question but that Italy was his *patria*. Virgil confirmed Aeneas' Italian status by comparing him with *the* Italian mountain, *pater Appenninus*.

2.6 Concluding Remarks

The complexity and sophistication of mountain writing in classical texts show there were diverse practical and virtual functions of mountains, from sacred summits, landmarks and *oroskopia* to examples of literary and psychological engagement resulting from the mountain. The overlap of the literary, practical and psychological functions of mountains in antiquity ensured a diversity of perceptions about mountains. By exploration of the *Theogony* and the

²³⁷ Paralleling Virgil's implications within the words *pater Appenninus*, Strabo 6.4.1 presented the Italian Apennines as a gentle, fertile mountain chain, not unlike the Helicon described by Hesiod or Pausanias, a chain which gave blessings of fine crops to the people of Italy, by producing fruits and crops on both sides of the chain, on hill and on plain. König, 'Strabo's Mountains', 59-60 argues that Strabo regarded the Italian mountains as gentler and more domesticated than the Alps or the Spanish mountains, because to Strabo they were linked with civic identity; compare Strabo's presentation of the Apennines with his comments in 1.418, referencing the mountains overlooking Carthage.

²³⁸ For the deliberately Italian nature of the simile see Morwood, 'Aeneas and Mount Atlas', 58-9.

²³⁹ Mackail (n.40), n. at 704, cited in Morwood, 'Aeneas and Mount Atlas', 58.

²⁴⁰ Morwood, 'Aeneas and Mount Atlas', 59.

²⁴¹ Tarrant, *Aeneid Book XII*, 269, n.701-3. For Virgil's own Italian identity see Toll, 'Making Roman-ness', 34-56.

²⁴² *Aen.* IV.340-344.

Aeneid we have seen the remarkable significance of mountains in classical literature and how these literary mountains spilt out of their original texts to influence later writers. Hesiod cemented the claims of Olympus, already established by Homer, to be the home of the gods; the authority of mythological Zeus shaped Olympus into becoming a panhellenic mountain; Typhoeus was the influential spark which ignited the literary Etna. In the *Aeneid*, Mount Apennine became Virgil's literary construction created to fashion an Italian state, in a time before an Italian state actually existed. By the unifying power of a mountain Virgil strove to unite the Trojans and the disparate tribes of Italy long before any such Italian nation was created. Literary influences helped to develop perceptions about mountains.

Aspects of curiosity showed an interest in mountains that was not exclusively literary. Seneca's writing, especially, suggested that aspects of literary curiosity influenced participation in real ascents and, by extrapolation, that curiosity to undertake real ascents influenced written accounts. The literary history of a mountain like Etna established the building blocks of its reputation, and a mountain with a reputation was likely to stimulate curiosity, and indeed might even be the inspiration behind the desire to climb.

The tension between real and virtual ascents revealed signs of real and virtual emotional attachments to mountains. Even a historian such as Livy, writing about Philip on Haemus or Hannibal in the Alps, offered his own interpretation of actual ascents, and in so doing he raked light on the physical climbs. A physical curiosity for the high places might be revealed or enhanced by literary curiosity, and this interplay between the real and the virtual added shading to perceptions of mountains in antiquity. An inspiration for mountains arose out of literary tradition.

This chapter has presented evidence of human interest in literary mountains and in mountain ascents that contests the current view on the marginalisation of mountains in antiquity. We now turn to examples of mountains in the Bible to continue to show the depiction of mountains in the ancient world.

3 Exploring the narrative of mountains in the Bible

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will explore representations of mountains in the Bible, in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. I will focus on specific mountains, while offering a wider survey of the narrative of biblical mountains: the narrower focus will allow for more detailed analysis to be made, while the exploration of the narrative will show the functions and roles of mountains in the Bible. I will show how perceptions of, and writings about, biblical mountains influenced perceptions of mountains in the early Middle Ages in the writings of Egeria. The chapter will reveal the significance of mountains in the Bible for their sacred status, sites of collective memory and objects of curiosity to inspire physical and virtual ascent.

Following the Introduction, I will begin with an examination of mountains in the Hebrew Bible, with a specific focus on the mountains of Sinai and Zion. These two mountains featured prominently in the Bible, the first as a mountain of God, and the second as a mountain chosen by God.¹ Both Sinai and Zion appeared in the Bible as localities that became sacred by commemoration of the Christian beliefs which occurred there. Recollection of the supernatural events that occurred at the meeting of Moses with God on Sinai ensured that the mountain became sacred. The holy nature of the mountain was not therefore indicative of the mountain *per se*, but of the significant and sacred events that had taken place there, and so the mountain illustrated its supernatural theatre of activities. In the second section I will examine Egeria's travels in the Holy Land. Egeria lived at the end of the fourth century and her Bible reading inspired her to make the physical journey to see what hitherto she had only read about. She wrote an account of her travels and her mountain climbs, and her written record along with her genuine curiosity make her a unique voice from the fourth century. I have shown that in literature there was a capacity for climbing great mountains vicariously or while still staying at home.² Accounts of this nature revealed aspects of mountain perceptions between the virtual and the real. Egeria made her own ascents in the Holy Land and she herself wrote an account of the ascents, and we shall explore later in the chapter her role as narrator of her own climbs. In the final section I will look at mountains in the New Testament, focussing on the synoptic Gospels. The similarities and the repetitious nature of the accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke allow for a granular investigation of the role of the mountain in their writings, and the similarities between their accounts also draw attention to the differences and help explain why

¹ Zion was visited by Willibald, though Hugelburc only briefly touches on this, in section 4.3.2.

² Seneca and Mount Etna: section 2.4.4.

the redactors chose to write what they did. In an examination of narrative I will show that repeated narrative patterns of Moses on Sinai and of Jesus in the New Testament draw attention to deliberate similarities and differences of these accounts.

I will not make St. John's Gospel part of this study, as its author mentioned mountains only once. A paucity of mountain references in John does not necessarily mean that mountains did not feature in the events that he described. Maurice Halbwachs argues that omissions or deviations within collective accounts exist precisely because these accounts were remembered by direct eyewitnesses of the events recorded.³ The likelihood of divergence, Halbwachs suggests, is greater in the collective accounts of direct witnesses, especially so in the case of emotive issues where personal belief or individual agenda might have influenced recollection. This might explain the absence of mountains in John—direct witnesses chose to omit locations which others regarded as significant, but which they regarded as inconsequential to their beliefs or agenda.

There are few modern commentators who specifically discuss biblical mountains, a shortfall which this chapter seeks to address in some small measure. Of those who do discuss them, Robert Barry Leal (*Wilderness in the Bible: Towards a Theology of Wilderness*) attends to ecological concerns through a study of the wilderness theme in the Hebrew Bible and its redaction in the New Testament.⁴ Leal focuses on the environment and societal traditions and uses this lens to explore how wilderness was viewed in the Bible. He explores wilderness ('*midbar*' in Hebrew) in the Bible, including references to mountains, though these are secondary to the overarching wilderness theme, and he discusses attitudes to wilderness of both individual authors and of characters within the text. He usefully explores attitudes towards wilderness within the Bible which he argues to be mixed, both positive and negative, saying that it was a place to test and reveal as well as a place of chaos and destruction. He acknowledges that wilderness in the Bible is a 'peripheral' theme, but nevertheless he is right to regard it as a theme with a 'pervasive presence'.⁵

In *Heights of Reflection*, Sean Ireton and Caroline Schaumann argue that the biblical wilderness was a 'transitional zone', comprising land lying between the infertile desert and the arable lands occupied by humans.⁶ They explore the concept in the Judaeo-Christian tradition—a paradoxical concept, when contrasted with wilderness areas—that a 'privileged status' was accorded to mountains and the high places. They support this concept by offering examples of momentous events which occurred at different mountains, such as Mount Ararat where Noah's

³ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 193-4.

⁴ Robert Barry Leal, *Wilderness in the Bible: Towards a Theology of Wilderness* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004). See also Thomas B. Dozeman, 'Wilderness in the Bible: Toward a Theology of Wilderness', *Shofar* 24, no. 4 (2006), 195-6.

⁵ Leal, *Wilderness in the Bible*, xii.

⁶ Sean Ireton and Caroline Schaumann ed., 'The meaning of mountains', in *Heights of Reflection*, ed. Sean Ireton and Caroline Schaumann (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2012), 2; see Num 21.13-18.

Ark came to rest and Mount Sinai where Moses received the Ten Commandments, and many events in the Gospels, including the Sermon on the Mount and other sites of Jesus' teachings.⁷ For Ireton and Schaumann these mountains and physical heights 'feature as symbolic sites of spirituality, sacrifice and transcendence';⁸ at the same time they argue that this physical appreciation of mountains in the Bible did not transfer to mental approbation, asserting that mountains 'exuded both fear and fascination'.⁹ This is a suggestion which I continue to contest in this thesis.

In 'Place Attachment in the Bible', an example of a growing range of psychological approaches to biblical interpretation, Victor Counted and Fraser Watts look at the importance of how the Bible depicted place attachment and people-place relationships.¹⁰ In particular, they look at the emotion of place attachment to Mount Sinai, their conclusion being that place attachment to Sinai seems to have been ambivalent, a place that was positive and negative, a place of spirituality, testing and of fear: 'the significance and importance of Sinai are never in doubt, but it is not a place that conveys safety and security'.¹¹ I will examine this idea further in my own discussion on Mount Sinai.

In *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, Mircea Eliade describes the Sacred Mountain as a place where heaven and earth meet, calling it an *axis mundi*.¹² Every temple, palace or sacred city is, he argues, by extension a sacred mountain, and therefore the meeting point of heaven, earth and hell. The concept of *axis mundi* is an intriguing one, where Zion, for example, appeared as both the mountain and the city.¹³ Barton in his book *Mountain Aesthetics in Early Modern Latin Literature* specifically explores the importance of mountains in the biblical world. He includes many examples of mountains found in the Bible; and, although his statement that 'the overall image of mountains in the Bible is unenthusiastic' is a conclusion which I will contest in this chapter, I do agree when he adds that the image of the mountains is 'multi-faceted'.¹⁴

Of all modern commentators the most mountain-focused work is by Terence Donaldson. In *Jesus on the Mountain: A Study in Matthean Theology*, Donaldson explores mountains as the sites of Jesus' teaching in the Gospel of Matthew.¹⁵ Donaldson's book contains a great depth of research, and his discussions on mountain episodes in Matthew will be

⁷ Ireton and Schaumann, 'The meaning of mountains', 3.

⁸ Ireton and Schaumann, 'The meaning of mountains', 3.

⁹ Ireton and Schaumann, 'The meaning of mountains', 3.

¹⁰ Victor Counted and Fraser Watts, 'Place Attachment in the Bible: The Role of Attachment to Sacred Places in Religious Life', *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 45, no. 3 (September 2017), 218–32.

¹¹ Counted and Watts, 'Place Attachment in the Bible', 222.

¹² Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, tr. Willard Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1954), 12–17.

¹³ Eliade, *Myth of the Eternal Return*, 12.

¹⁴ Barton, *Mountain Aesthetics*, 78.

¹⁵ Terence M. Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain: A Study in Matthean Theology* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1985).

most useful for this chapter. However, the focus of his analysis is entirely on Zion, and he therefore refutes the linking of Moses and Mount Sinai with scenes in Matthew. His Zion focus means that his argument at times is less reliable, but his analysis of scenes is valuable.¹⁶

In this thesis I will distinguish between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. The Old Testament is a Christian term, coined by the early Christians to contrast with God's new covenant (or testament) with humans, in the New Testament. As the term 'Old Testament' runs the risk of implying that the 'old' Hebrew scripture was of less value, being surpassed or superseded by the Christian 'New' Testament, it is a term potentially offensive to other faiths. This thesis will therefore use the terms 'Hebrew Bible' and 'New Testament', though both of these terms do carry inadequacies and inconsistencies.¹⁷ As Barton says, although the term 'Hebrew Bible' is more restrictive and less informative than the Old Testament, it nevertheless 'avoids the danger of supersessionism ... and finding a term that will not be offensive to other religious groups is an important aim'.¹⁸

Finally, the section on the Hebrew Bible will rely on the Vulgate Latin Bible, as known by Willibald.¹⁹ Examples from the New Testament will also be in Latin, but occasionally Greek will be included where this illuminates the Latin text.²⁰

3.2 The Hebrew Bible

A number of mountains featured in the Hebrew Bible as sites of testing or revealing, where significant acts or events took place. It can be argued, as Ireton and Schaumann mention above,²¹ that these and other mountains had 'privileged status' and that mountains were significant locales in the Hebrew Bible. I suggest that they were regarded as significant locales and that their significance developed from their sacredness, or from the sacred events associated with the mountains. Such mountains included Mount Ararat (Gen. 8.4), the resting-place of Noah's Ark; the mountains where Lot and his daughters hid when they fled from Sodom (Gen. 19.1-30); the unnamed mountain in Moriah on which Abraham, at God's bidding, intended to

¹⁶ E.g. Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 149-56 (a discussion on the Transfiguration, with a focus on Zion).

¹⁷ For further discussion on the Hebrew Bible see John Barton, 'The Hebrew Bible and the Old Testament', in *The Hebrew Bible: A Critical Companion*, ed. John Barton, 3-23 (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016), 5-18; Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 2011), xiii-xiv; Michael Coogan, *The Hebrew Bible: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2008).

¹⁸ J. Barton, 'The Hebrew Bible', 17-18.

¹⁹ The Biblical quotations used throughout this dissertation are taken from the *Stuttgart Vulgate: Biblia Sacra iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, edited by R. Weber *et al.*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart, 1994). All named individual books of the Bible are referred to by abbreviated titles only and these references likewise follow Weber's edition. Scriptural translations are from the Douay-Rheims translation of the Vulgate.

²⁰ On the Greek Bible, see T. M. Law, *When God Spoke Greek: The Septuagint and the Making of the Christian Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

²¹ Ireton and Schaumann, 'The meaning of mountains', 3.

slay his son Isaac (Gen. 22.2); Moses' encounter with God on Mount Horeb, and the occasion of the burning bush (Exod. 3.1-4.17); the prospect given to Moses from Nebo and Mount Pisgah, before his death (Deut. 3.27, 32.48-52, 34.1-7); Elijah and the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel (3 Kings 18.16 ff.) and the vision of Elijah on Mount Horeb in which God appeared to him (3 Kings 19.8-11). Mountains in the Bible could appear as holy places, or else became holy places by association; the mountain could be a dwelling place of God, a place from where God appeared, or else a place which was sacred to God.²²

Yet the depiction of mountains and wilderness in the Bible presented a more mixed picture than one that was simply 'privileged'. A mountain's height was regarded as symbolic of human pride and therefore suitable to be laid low by God, and a high mountain (Bashan, Ps. 68) might appear inferior to the smaller Zion, because the smaller mountain was the dwelling-place of God.²³ Mountains were notorious as places for bandits to hide, but were also places of refuge from enemies, fire and floods.²⁴ In the words of Fernand Braudel (*The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*), mountains have been 'a refuge from soldiers and pirates, as all the documents bear witness, as far back as the Bible.'²⁵ Pastoralism, shepherding and the keeping of flocks was common practice,²⁶ and shepherding was a noble profession and one suitable for a leader, giving prominence to the uplands and also to the wilderness.²⁷ The wilderness had positive associations as a moral or spiritual haven, as being in the wilderness was akin to undertaking preparations for a new start with God, or it was a place where the presence of God might be encountered;²⁸ and Israel's 'national identity' was forged in the wilderness.²⁹ Elsewhere the wilderness was a place of danger and uncertainty, showing the diversity of biblical attitudes towards wilderness: the very ambiguity of the wilderness, as a place of privation and hardship, but a place where God's presence and support might often be found.³⁰ Sacred mountains, wilderness and mountain symbolism appeared as common features

²² Cf. Eliade, *Myth of the Eternal Return*, 12.

²³ Isa. 2.12-19; Ps. 68.15-16.

²⁴ E.g. Josh. 2.16. See Leal, *Wilderness in the Bible*, 180-2.

²⁵ Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, Vol. I (London: Collins, 1972), 31.

²⁶ E.g. Exod. 3.1: 1 'Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.'

²⁷ E.g. Gen. 48.15; Ps. 23.1, 80.2 (God); Jer. 23.1ff.; Ezek. 34.2ff.; Matt. 2.6. See Moshe Greenberg, *Understanding Exodus: A Holistic Commentary on Exodus 1-11*, 2nd edition (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013), 57-8; Scott M. Langston, *Exodus Through the Centuries* (Williston: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2005), 43.

²⁸ For wilderness as a moral or spiritual haven, see Leal, *Wilderness in the Bible*, 184-7. For eschatological events or the presence of God, e.g. Exod. 13.21-22, 1 Kings 8.10-11, Ps. 68.7-10. See R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 188-9.

²⁹ Frank-Lothar Hossfeld, 'Psalm 68', in *Psalms 2: A Commentary on Psalms 51-100*, ed. Klaus Baltzer, Erich Zenger and Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: 1517 Media, 2005), 65.

³⁰ For the wilderness as home to evil spirits, e.g. Luke 4.1-13, see Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2010), 59-60. For diversity of wilderness see Hilary Marlow, 'The Human Condition', in *The Hebrew Bible: A Critical Companion*, ed. John Barton, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 305-6.

in the Hebrew Bible and in Israel's religious life. Of all the sacred mountains, Sinai and Zion were the most important for their religious significance and frequency of mentions in the Bible.³¹ I will therefore be discussing these two mountains in more detail and turn first to discussion of Sinai.

3.2.1 Mount Sinai in Exodus

In Exodus 3.1, Moses the shepherd drove the sheep of his father-in-law into the wilderness to Mount Horeb. There is confusion in the Bible between the names given to Mount Horeb and Mount Sinai (see Fig. 3-1), but the evidence suggests that these mountains were one and the same, and that there was no distinction in biblical tradition between Horeb and Sinai.³² In Exodus 3.1 Horeb was described as 'the Mountain of God'.

Moses autem pascebat oves Iethro cognati sui sacerdotis Madian cumque minasset gregem ad interiora deserti venit ad **montem Dei** Horeb 2 apparuitque ei Dominus in flamma ignis de medio rubi et videbat quod rubus arderet et non conbureretur 3 dixit ergo Moses vadam et videbo visionem hanc magnam quare non conburatur rubus 4 cernens autem Dominus quod pergeret ad videndum vocavit eum de medio rubi et ait Moses Moses qui respondit adsum 5 at ille ne adpropies inquit huc solve calciamentum de pedibus tuis locus enim in quo stas terra sancta est 6 et ait ego sum Deus patris tui Deus Abraham Deus Isaac Deus Iacob abscondit Moses faciem suam non enim audebat aspicere contra Deum.³³

Now Moses fed the sheep of Jethro, his father in law, the priest of Madian: and he drove the flock to the inner parts of the desert, and came to **the mountain of God**, Horeb. 2. And the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he saw that the bush was on fire, and was not burnt. 3. And Moses said: I will go, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. 4. And when the Lord saw that he went forward to see, he called to him out of the midst of the bush. and said: Moses, Moses. And he answered: Here I am. 5. And he said: Come not nigh hither, put off the shoes from thy feet; for the place, whereon thou standest, is holy ground. 6. And he

³¹ Cf. Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 30.

³² The name of Mount Horeb appears three times in Exodus (in 3.1 as the 'Mountain of God'; in 17.6 where Moses struck the rock to provide water; and in 33.6 as the place where the Israelites left their ornaments); and in Deuteronomy Horeb is mentioned more times than Sinai (e.g. 1.2, 1.6, 1.19; references to the Ten Commandments on Horeb include 4.10, 4.15, 5.2); Horeb also appears in 3 Kings 19.8 as the mountain on which Elijah had a vision of God. Mount Sinai is mentioned in Exodus three times (twice when the Ten Commandments were given to Moses, 19.2, 24.16; and 33.16) and also severally in Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy; and at Nehemiah 9.13 (see below). Although Sinai and Horeb are never directly equated, the Exodus accounts of burning of the bush (3.1, on Horeb) and giving of the law (19.2, 24.16 on Sinai) 'are woven together almost seamlessly by means of Exod. 3.12'—which is God's reference to Moses' return to the mountain with the people of Israel. God spoke from Horeb, but Moses' return was to Sinai: '(And God said to Moses:) I will be with thee; and this thou shalt have for a sign that I have sent thee: When thou shalt have brought my people out of Egypt, thou shalt offer sacrifice to God upon this mountain.' See Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 31-2. Moshe Greenberg has the same opinion about Exod. 3.12, in *Understanding Exodus*, 58: 'It is plain from verse 12b that no distinction between Horeb and Sinai was recognised by biblical tradition', an assertion supported by Christopher C. H. Cook, *Hearing Voices, Demonic and Divine: Scientific and Theological Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2019), 65.

³³ Exod. 3.1-6.

said: I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Moses hid his face: for he durst not look at God.



Figure 3.1: Mount Sinai

Map from "Travels in Egypt, Arabia, Petraea and the Holy Land" - 1843 - The British Library, United Kingdom - Public Domain. https://www.europeana.eu/en/item/9200387/BibliographicResource_3000117250141

The passage opened with Moses driving his flock into the ‘desert’. Immediately the text presented an air of mystery and divinity about this mountain in the wilderness, for it ascribed to Horeb the description **mountain of God**. On the mountain Moses saw an angel from God

appear ‘in a flame of fire’ from a bush, though the bush was unharmed by its burning. The image of fire on the mountain occurred several times on Horeb/Sinai as an indication of the divine: here, the burning bush acted as a visual precursor of God’s revelation to Moses, and it was not until Moses had visually seen the bush that God addressed him from within the bush.³⁴ God told Moses he was on holy ground and ‘Moses hid his face’ out of fear: both of these images—the fire imagery and the sense of dread that God inspired—were developed later in the Book, and will be developed later in this chapter. God then ordered Aaron to meet Moses on the mountain, where Moses told him of God’s plan.³⁵

As yet there was nothing to indicate to the reader why the mountain should have been described in this way; nor, seemingly, did Moses know anything about its sacred state, since at this point the mountain held no sanctuary or altar. For the author of Exodus to call it ‘the mountain of God’ anticipated what the mountain would become, and the anticipatory description performed three roles. It revealed the omniscience of the author/narrator, who unfolded the information as he chose; it forewarned the reader that a significant—or, at least, a divine—event was about to occur; and it foreshadowed future events, when the mountain in human eyes did indeed become a holy ‘mountain of God’, the *locus* where Moses received the Ten Commandments and the Covenant from God.³⁶ Early in the pericope, then, the mountain performed the sort of literary role that has already been seen in the classical chapter, by alerting the reader to a sense of significant occasion and forging links with what was to come—as was seen in the *Theogony*, for example, when Hesiod’s descriptions of Olympus prepared the reader for more dramatic events ahead.³⁷

Later, after securing the release of the Israelites from Egypt, Moses again encountered the Lord at Horeb/Sinai, who told him to prepare for His coming. The anticipation originally felt at Moses’ first encounter with God at the mountain now grew more tense and fearful: the tension increased at God’s injunction that Israel must keep off the mountain until bidden to ascend, emphasising the authority of God, but also the sacred nature of the ‘mountain of God’, forbidden to all apart from the mediator, Moses.³⁸ Once again the imagery of fire and fear

³⁴ Exod. 3.1-6. George Savran, ‘Theophany as Type Scene’, in *Prooftexts* 23, no. 2 (2003): 119-49 (128); Mark Zvi Brettler, ‘“Fire, Cloud and Deep Darkness” (Deuteronomy 5.22): Deuteronomy’s Recasting of Revelation’, 15-27 (19), in *The Significance of Sinai: Traditions about Sinai and Divine Revelation in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. George J. Brooke, Hindy Najman, and Loren T. Stuckenbruck (Boston: Brill, 2008).

³⁵ Exod. 4.27-8.

³⁶ For discussion, see Greenberg, *Understanding Exodus*, 57-8. For the importance of Israel’s place attachment to Sinai see Counted and Watts, ‘Place Attachment in the Bible’, 221-2.

³⁷ The pivotal role of Sinai represents again the idea of *axis mundi* and the important representation of mountains in the Bible.

³⁸ Exod. 19.9-13: ‘The Lord said to him: Lo, now will I come to thee in the darkness of a cloud, that the people may hear me speaking to thee, and may believe thee for ever. And Moses told the words of the people to the Lord. 10. And he said to him: Go to the people, and sanctify them today, and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments. 11. And let them be ready against the third day; for on the third day the Lord will come down in the sight of all the people, upon Mount Sinai. 12. And thou shalt appoint certain

appeared in the text, with emphasis on the noise and the vision employed to display the majesty of the scene, in much the same way that the majesty of Hesiod's Zeus and Olympus was created by development of the imagery of the mountain in the *Theogony*.

Exod. 19.16-20: iam advenerat tertius dies et mane inclaruerat et ecce coeperunt **audiri tonitrua** ac **micare fulgura** et *nubes densissima* operire montem **clangorque bucinæ vehementius perstrepebat** timuit populus qui erat in castris 17 cumque eduxisset eos Moses in occursum Dei de loco castrorum steterunt ad radices montis 18 totus autem mons Sinai *fumabat* eo quod *descendisset Dominus* super eum *in igne* et *ascenderet fumus ex eo quasi de fornace* eratque mons omnis terribilis 19 et **sonitus bucinæ paulatim crescebat in maius et prolixius tendebatur** Moses loquebatur et Dominus respondebat ei 20 descenditque Dominus super montem Sinai in ipso montis vertice et vocavit Mosen in cacumen eius quo cum ascendisset ...³⁹

And now the third day was come, and the morning appeared: and behold **thunder** began to be **heard**, and *lightning* to **flash**, and *a very thick cloud* to cover the mount, and the **noise of the trumpet sounded exceeding loud**; and the people that was in the camp, feared. 17. And when Moses had brought them forth to meet God, from the place of the camp, they stood at the bottom of the mount. 18. And all Mount Sinai *was on a smoke*: because *the Lord was come down upon it in fire*, and *the smoke arose from it as out of a furnace*: and all the mount was terrible. 19. And **the sound of the trumpet grew by degrees louder and louder, and was drawn out to a greater length**: Moses spoke, and God answered him. 20. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, in the very top of the mount, and he called Moses unto the top thereof. And when he was gone up thither (21. He said unto him ...)

God came to Sinai to meet Moses in cloud and fire. The scene was violent and storm-filled, a sensory assailing of the human onlookers in the camp at the foot of the mountain, who were all afraid. There was accentuation of the auditory sounds and visual images in the passage with the emphatic positioning of 'heard' and 'flashed' early in the passage. Auditory indicators included 'thunder' and 'the noise of the trumpet' which 'sounded exceeding loud', and 'the sound of the trumpet' which 'grew by degrees louder and louder, and was drawn out to a greater length'; while visual images included 'lightning', 'a very thick cloud' and the mountain 'was on a smoke', while 'the Lord was come down upon it in fire' and 'the smoke arose from it as out of a furnace'. These images were the precursor to the sound of Moses speaking and God responding, and scholars have commented widely on the sensory details within the pericope—the sounds and sights of God choosing the mountain as a place to appear. For Steven Fraade ('Hearing and Seeing at Sinai') the whole scene has 'fantastic visual effects';⁴⁰ Assnat Bartor notices a 'spectacular outpouring' at Sinai, in which 'God revealed himself in an outburst of

limits to the people round about, and thou shalt say to them: Take heed ye go not up into the mount, and that ye touch not the borders thereof: every one that toucheth the mount, dying he shall die. 13. No hands shall touch him, but he shall be stoned to death, or he shall be shot through with arrows: whether it be beast, or man, he shall not live. When the trumpet shall begin to sound, then let them go up into the mount.'

³⁹ Exod. 19.16-20.

⁴⁰ Steven D. Fraade, 'Hearing and Seeing at Sinai: Interpretive Trajectories', 247-68, in Brooke, *et al.*, *The Significance of Sinai*, 247.

natural elements’;⁴¹ and Christopher Cook rightly observes that the theophany ‘is associated with thunder and lightning, thick cloud, a “blast of a trumpet”, smoke and fire ... The people are permitted to hear God from a distance, but not to approach the mountain’.⁴² Finally, George Savran (‘Theophany’) is aware of Moses’ solitude in his encounter with God, and that the ‘solitary aspect of theophany ... increases the sense of mystery and sanctity surrounding the encounter’.⁴³ The supernatural events upon the mountain gave Sinai a sacredness and a sense of awe, which we shall now explore in the next section.

3.2.2 The significance of Sinai

We may observe that the location for the creation of God’s covenant with Israel was a mountain summit, recalling aspects of mountains already seen in chapter two: summit fires, a theophany that made the mountain sacred, and an account of an individual as mediator, seen from the curiosity of the text. It would appear that the development of the narrative that placed God on Sinai was deliberate and that the Sinai covenant was conceived in a complex, historical process, a result of the interweaving of different but parallel narrations.⁴⁴ The increasing consensus among scholars is that the exodus narratives in Exodus and Deuteronomy⁴⁵ were deliberately harmonized in the sixth or fifth century BCE to provide a foundation myth for Israel, in response to the experience of Judah’s exile.⁴⁶ That a mountain should have been chosen as the locale for a national foundation myth reveals the significance of Sinai and the power of its selection as a sacred site.

Exile and enslavement were imposed upon the people of Israel and Judah between the eighth and sixth centuries BCE: Israel was conquered and became part of the Assyrian Empire in 720 while Jerusalem and Judah fell to the Babylonians in 587.⁴⁷ It was during this time that many books in the Hebrew Bible came into being. One Jewish response to the misery of their deportation was a careful crafting and re-shaping of the sacred texts as a series of foundation myths, of which Sinai played a major part. Authorities agree⁴⁸ that the traditions about Moses and his predecessors, written in the Pentateuch (the ‘five books’ of Moses—Genesis, Exodus,

⁴¹ Assnat Bartor, ‘Legal Texts’, in *The Hebrew Bible: A Critical Companion*, ed. John Barton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 167.

⁴² Cook, *Hearing Voices*, 65.

⁴³ Savran, ‘Theophany’, 127.

⁴⁴ Dominik Markl, ‘God’s Covenants with Humanity and Israel’, in *The Hebrew Bible: A Critical Companion*, ed. John Barton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 321.

⁴⁵ For discussion on Deuteronomy, see next section 3.2.3.

⁴⁶ Francesca Stavrakopoulou, ‘The Historical Framework: Biblical and Scholarly Portrayals of the Past’, in *The Hebrew Bible*, 34.

⁴⁷ John Barton, ‘The Hebrew Bible and the Old Testament’, in *The Hebrew Bible*, 3.

⁴⁸ For this and much of what follows see e.g.; J. Barton, ‘The Hebrew Bible’, 3-5; Stavrakopoulou, ‘The Historical Framework’, 34; Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, xiii-xiv; Hossfeld, ‘Psalm 68’, 162-3.

Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), were synthesized and re-written during this period of exile (eighth to sixth centuries), though they were certainly also worked on after the exile.⁴⁹

The significance of Sinai in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament was unambiguous, being the mountain where Yahweh formally made his covenant with Israel. His theophany was ‘part of a larger covenant-making ceremony’⁵⁰ in which Yahweh bound himself to the people in a covenantal relationship. The encounter between God and His people took the form of a theophany; the encounter took place on a mountain; and God came to the mountain of His own accord. This tri-partite episode sanctified the mountain and in particular the presence of Yahweh made it sacred.⁵¹ Modification of the tradition occurred during exile and it is relevant to my thesis to see the significance accorded to Sinai in the story’s re-working. The holiness of the place became important through the recollection of Christian historical beginnings and the mountain became sacred as the site of a significant event.⁵²

Thus mention of Sinai’s ‘mountain locale [was] not just a casual geographical reference, but a central part of the story’,⁵³ and the mountain was one of the most important of the Hebrew Bible mountains for the giving of the law: the mountain setting and flashing fire were not merely dramatic set-pieces for Moses, but were symbolic elements for the entire nation. In other words, the theophany and the covenant were the critical elements for the nation of Israel, but the significance and importance of the mountain was absolute, because the mountain was the means by which the message was delivered; and the mountain was the place where the covenant was established. As *pater Appenninus* was associated with Aeneas and his assumption of an Italian identity, so, too, did Sinai become part of Israel’s national identity.

The imagery was violent, but the mountain was holy; the fire, the noise and the fear prepared the reader for the scene-setting suitable for an occasion on which God gave Moses the Law and the Decalogue (Exod. 20-31). ‘When God has finished speaking, Moses is given two stone tablets, on which the law that God has spoken is written “with the finger of God” (31.18).’⁵⁴ Thus, early in the Bible Sinai was portrayed as a mountain with a sense of mystery and elemental fear similar to the sense of elemental fear found in Hesiod’s description of Typhoeus, or in Virgil’s of Etna, though Sinai was an *axis mundi*, whereas Etna was an *axis*

⁴⁹ Barton, ‘The Hebrew Bible’, 4.

⁵⁰ Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 33.

⁵¹ For God’s theophany: Exod. 19.9, 18; 34.5. See Gert Volschenk, ‘The mountain motif in the plot of Matthew’, *HTS Teologiese Studies*, Vol. 66.1 (Sept. 2010), 1-9. For the modification and the reworking of the biblical tradition in order to lay emphasis on the theophany, see George J. Brooke, Hindy Najman, and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, ‘Introduction’, ix-xiv (x), in Brooke, *et al.*, *The Significance of Sinai*, x. Modification of the tradition meant that the *content* of the revelation, especially with regard to the significance of the covenant, was rethought and reworked in ways that were political, philosophical and theological.

⁵² See Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 202.

⁵³ Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 33.

⁵⁴ Exod. 31.18. Cook, *Hearing Voices*, 65.

infern, the one mountain linking heaven and earth, the other linking earth to hell.⁵⁵ Sinai also had important, theological significance of a mountain associated with the people of Israel and with Israel's constitution represented by the covenant of the Decalogue.⁵⁶ As Volschenk says: 'The Sinai event is the basic presupposition for the rest of the Hebrew Bible, for it was at Sinai that Yahweh bound Israel to himself as his people.'⁵⁷ I will show that Sinai continued to remain an elemental mountain into the New Testament, and influenced later mountain descriptions.

For the Israelites, Sinai came to be a mountain whose symbolism was that of a yearned-for homeland, of all that had been lost or destroyed. Just as the Trojans looked back with yearning to a Mount Ida that belonged in their impossible past, so 'sophisticated priestly scribes projected Mount Sinai as a "utopian" setting for the idea of Israel's formation as a theocracy in the remote past'.⁵⁸ Once again, we can see the significance of the mountain's role in establishing a sense of identity and a sense of a remembered, lost and longed-for homeland to exiles and refugees.

3.2.3 Mount Sinai in Deuteronomy

Mount Sinai, then, was an important feature in the sacred covenant of Israel and in the narrative framework of Exodus. The importance of the mountain continued in Deuteronomy, which revisited the scriptural narratives of Exodus in order to explain and elaborate the episode of God and Moses on Sinai. The texts of Exodus and Deuteronomy employed Mount Sinai as a means of establishing a national identity for Israel. Deuteronomy shone light on Moses' review of the code of law and the second covenant at Sinai, and 'the resources of rhetoric [were] marshalled' throughout the Book 'to create through a written text the memory of a foundational national event.'⁵⁹

I have already discussed the power of literary antecedents to influence later perceptions of mountains.⁶⁰ The Sinai episode reiterates this influence, for Deuteronomy *re-told* the story from Exodus, using the opportunity to develop or explain textual uncertainties or difficulties arising within the Exodus narrative. Thus, in Deuteronomy Moses spoke to Israel about the history of the giving of the Law and the Covenant, drawing attention to certain themes (e.g. fire, cloud, sight and sound) also found in Exodus. Previously the auditory and visual effects had

⁵⁵ Sections 2.4.3-2.4.4. See Eliade, *The Eternal Return*, 12-17.

⁵⁶ See Deut. 5.2: 'The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.'

⁵⁷ Volschenk, 'The mountain motif', 3. He continues: 'Firstly, the encounter between God and his people on the mountain takes place in the form of a theophany, which is described in terms of storm, cloud and fire imagery. Yahweh freely comes to the mountain, with it becoming sacred due to his presence ... Secondly, the theophany is part of a large covenant-making ceremony.'

⁵⁸ Markl, 'God's Covenants', 321.

⁵⁹ Robert Alter (ed.), *The Hebrew Bible*, Vol. I, *Torah* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2019), 610.

⁶⁰ E.g. section 2.4.4.

prepared the way for the verbal encounter between Moses and God (Exod. 19.16-20); on this occasion, however, the Deuteronomist emphasised that the words of God could be *heard* coming from the flames on the mountain, but that God Himself could not be *seen* in the fire:

Deut. 4.11-12: et accessistis ad radices montis qui ardebat usque ad caelum erantque in eo tenebrae nubes et caligo 12 locutusque est Dominus ad vos de medio ignis vocem verborum eius **audistis** et formam penitus **non vidistis**.⁶¹

(Moses speaking to Israel): And you came to the foot of the mount, which burned even unto heaven: and there was darkness, and a cloud and obscurity in it. 12. And the Lord spoke to you from the midst of the fire. **You heard** the voice of his words, but **you saw not** any form at all.

In other words, the Deuteronomist recalled the auditory and visual elements from Exodus, but remodelled them into a different version of the same tale. In the retelling of the Exodus episode, the Deuteronomist gave Sinai fresh significance to remind the reader of the mountain's fundamental importance to the foundation narrative of Israel.

Deut. 5.19: haec verba locutus est Dominus ad omnem multitudinem vestram in monte de medio ignis et nubis et caliginis voce magna nihil addens amplius et scripsit ea in duabus tabulis lapideis quas tradidit mihi.⁶²

These words the Lord spoke to all the multitude of you in the mountain, out of the midst of the fire and the cloud, and the darkness, with a loud voice, adding nothing more: and he wrote them in two tables of stone, which he delivered unto me.

By recalling the events from Exodus, Deuteronomy recalled the significance of Sinai for the Decalogue. All explication of the Sinai theophany began with Deuteronomy, leading later commentators and exegetists to develop their own interpretations accordingly. Writing in the second half of the fourth century from his see in Cappadocia (modern Turkey), Bishop Gregory of Nysa regarded Mount Sinai as symbolic of God's knowledge, a mountain which few could ascend because few were able to withstand the hardship required to attain an understanding of God.

The knowledge of God is a mountain steep indeed and difficult to climb—the majority of people scarcely reach its base. If one were a Moses, he would ascend higher and hear the sound of trumpets which, as the text of the history says [Exod. 19.19], becomes louder as one advances. For the preaching of the divine nature is truly a trumpet blast, which strikes the hearing, being already loud at the beginning but becoming yet louder at the end.⁶³

⁶¹ Deut. 4.11-12.

⁶² Deut. 5.22.

⁶³ Gregory of Nysa, *The Life of Moses*, Vol. 2, tr. Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York, Paulist Press, 1978), 158-61; see also Langston, *Exodus Through the Centuries*, 190.

For Gregory, Moses' ascent of Sinai was concomitant with the acquisition of self-knowledge and spiritual salvation. The metaphor of the mountain as the route to wisdom and virtue was explored with Seneca and Etna above;⁶⁴ I shall revisit the concept with Petrarch's ascent of Mont Ventoux in chapter five. These different episodes continue to be a part of my exploration of the tension underlying the physical ascent of the mountain and the psychological power of a virtual ascent. Gregory read the account of Moses' ascent and made his own interpretation about the power of the mountain.

Sinai's importance in Deuteronomy was physical and psychological, in such a way that, 'in both prospect and retrospect, then, the mountain was decidedly in view'.⁶⁵ Its significance belonged as much to the foundational past, as to the present and the future. The Deuteronomist also reframed the role of Moses, drawing attention to his position as intermediary between Israel and God, since he was the man who had climbed the mountain and spoken to the Lord.

Deut. 5.2-5: Dominus Deus noster pepigit nobiscum foedus in Horeb 3 non cum patribus nostris iniiit pactum sed nobiscum qui inpraesentiarum sumus et vivimus 4 facie ad faciem locutus est nobis in monte de medio ignis 5 ego sequester et medius fui inter Dominum et vos in tempore illo ut adnuntiarem vobis verba eius timuistis enim ignem et non ascendistis in montem et ait.⁶⁶

The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. 3. He made not the covenant with our fathers, but with us, who are now present and living. 4. He spoke to us face to face in the mount out of the midst of fire. 5. I was the mediator and stood between the Lord and you at that time, to shew you his words, for you feared the fire, and went not up into the mountain.

The interplay between the physical and the virtual continued to be significant. Moses climbed Sinai, and his ascent was narrated by others in Exodus and Deuteronomy. The external journey of Moses was critical as part of Israel's foundation mythology, and the written accounts of his climb became part of the reader's internal exploration of the miraculous events. By exploring Sinai through the written accounts of Moses' ascent, the reader was able to discover their own understanding of the mountain and develop their own perceptions about it.

The account of Moses and Sinai in Deuteronomy shows that the Deuteronomist knew the version of Exodus which exists in the Hebrew Bible today, and so Deuteronomy presents 'the earliest extant interpretation of the Sinai material':⁶⁷ in other words, the earliest reception of Moses on Mount Sinai was seen in Deuteronomy, and this early perception of the mountain presented a repetition of the Sinai theophany with Deuteronomy's own interpretation of the

⁶⁴ Section 2.4.4.

⁶⁵ Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 33.

⁶⁶ Deut. 5.2-5. Cf. the account of Exod. 24.15-17 with the same episode in Deut 5.1-5. See Alter, *The Hebrew Bible*, 613.

⁶⁷ Brettler, 'Fire, Cloud and Deep Darkness', 16-17. 'It is unclear what image the Deuteronomist had in mind by conflating fire, cloud and darkness, elements that do not easily fit together, but it is clear that they have been conflated' (19).

events which occurred in Exodus. I continue to show the evolution of perceptions of mountains through interpretations of literature.

Robert Alter, Professor of Hebrew at the University of California, Berkeley, in *The Art of Biblical Narrative* refers to the scenes of repetition which appear in Deuteronomy as ‘type-scenes’, borrowing the name from the use of the term by scholars of Homeric epic.⁶⁸ However, he adds that while the scenes in Homer were typically quotidian, dealing with regular scenes such as eating, offering sacrifice and acts of hospitality, the type-scenes from the Bible occurred not so much in the daily rituals, but rather ‘at the crucial junctures in the lives of the heroes, from conception and birth to betrothal to deathbed’.⁶⁹ As with Homer—and, as I have shown, as with Virgil’s deliberate adaptations of Homer or Hesiod⁷⁰—it was not the type-scene itself which alerted a reader to a specific detail, but a fresh understanding was revealed by the observation of how an author wished to twist the conventional type-scene, ‘to give it a sudden tilt of innovation or even to refashion it radically for the imaginative purposes at hand’.⁷¹ Alter’s words are most apposite to our understanding of Moses on Sinai,⁷² for in Deuteronomy’s re-telling of the tale, the noises and the visions, the fire, the cloud and the fear of the people, elements already familiar from Exodus, were increased and magnified;⁷³ and beyond a re-telling of the account of the theophany, the status of Moses was also magnified, and the people’s admiration of the man who could ascend the mountain and talk to God led to a magnification of his role, and therefore to the development of Moses as their mediator.

The knowledge and authority gained by ascending the mountain were significant. Livy’s Philip and Hannibal both attempted to gain this understanding and power, and failed;⁷⁴ Seneca wrote that Lucilius would gain understanding and self-knowledge if he ascended Etna;⁷⁵ Aeneas’ status was confirmed by his comparison with Apennine.⁷⁶ It seems that heroic status, or heroic understanding, was conferred upon the man who legitimately gained the summit of the mountain.

Moses was the man who braved the mountain (and the fire, darkness and noise) and became the intermediary between God and His people, and in Deuteronomy he was therefore

⁶⁸ Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 55ff.

⁶⁹ Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 60.

⁷⁰ E.g. Virgil’s adaptation of Homer’s Hermes flying down from Olympus: see chapter two, p.40.

⁷¹ Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 63.

⁷² The previous chapter has already analysed typical mountain scenarios to show how interpretation of the mountain is qualified ‘in each individual application of the schema’ (Alter, 63).

⁷³ Brettler, ‘Fire, Cloud and Deep Darkness’, 19-20; Nehemiah 9.13 ‘conflates the contradictory ideas that God speaks from heaven *and* from Mt. Sinai which illustrates the manner in which later texts may combine different, or even contradictory traditions from earlier sources’ (19).

⁷⁴ Section 2.4.1.

⁷⁵ Section 2.4.4.

⁷⁶ Section 2.5.2.

the prophet *par excellence*.⁷⁷ Since Moses had legitimately gained the summit, hereafter, ‘the teaching (Torah) of Moses is also the lens through which the biblical writers [viewed] subsequent episodes in the story of Israel’,⁷⁸ and this teaching appeared through the medium of Mount Sinai.⁷⁹

Deuteronomy’s re-characterisation of Sinai as it was represented in Exodus revealed a pattern of imitation and emulation of mountain scenes, deliberately employed to project an image (e.g. fire), highlight a characteristic (e.g. fear) or state a claim (e.g. the mountain represented God’s covenant with his people Israel); and the narrative developed the perception of the mountain.⁸⁰ Sinai became a mountain of the Law in the same way that Olympus was the panhellenic home of the gods, or Atlas was a mountain of order and stability; and the importance of the mountain drew attention to the developing importance of Moses. It was a dual process, already seen in the virtual and physical ascents: Sinai became important because of the intercession of Moses, and Moses became important because of the historical events which took place at Sinai.

Moses’ biblical associations were varied, but, as I have shown, he *was* associated with Mount Sinai, and for this intermediary the Deuteronomist unfolded a suitable end of life on a mountain top. Obeying God’s command, Moses climbed to Pisgah, the summit of Mount Nebo, from where the Lord showed him the Promised Land, which Moses himself was not permitted to attain:

Deut. 34.1-5: ascendit ergo Moses de campestribus Moab super montem Nebo in verticem Phasga contra Hiericho ostenditque ei Dominus omnem terram Galaad usque Dan et universum Nephthalim terramque Ephraim et Manasse et omnem terram usque ad mare Novissimum et australem partem et latitudinem campi Hiericho civitatis Palmarum usque Segor dixitque Dominus ad eum haec est terra pro qua iuravi Abraham Isaac et Jacob dicens semini tuo dabo eam vidisti eam oculis tuis et non transibis ad illam mortuusque est ibi Moses servus Domini in terra Moab iubente Domino.⁸¹

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab upon mount Nebo, to the top of Phasga over against Jericho: and the Lord shewed him all the land of Galaad as far as Dan. 2. And all Nephtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasses, and all the land of Juda unto the furthestmost sea, 3. And the south part, and the breadth of the plain of Jericho the city of palm trees as far as Segor. 4. And the Lord said to him: This is the land, for

⁷⁷ R. W. L. Moberly, *Prophecy and Discernment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.), 4, cited in Cook, *Hearing Voices*, 61. Bartor, ‘Legal Texts’, 167-8: ‘only Moses, with his human voice, would deliver the divine laws to the Israelites’.

⁷⁸ Stavrakopoulou, ‘The Historical Framework’, 29. For ‘Torah’ meaning the ‘teaching’ and ‘law’ of Moses, and which also refers to the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, see e.g. Coogan, *The Hebrew Bible*, 4-5.

⁷⁹ ‘Miraculous theophany or anthropomorphic description of the divine, the role of Moses as actor or mediator, the response of Israel, were all handled with exegetical skills that released the story of what happened and especially the divine participant in it from the control of the text itself so that everything could be appropriated afresh.’ Brooke *et al.*, ‘Introduction’, x.

⁸⁰ For discussion of *imitatio et aemulatio*, see Russell, ‘De Imitatione’, 1-16.

⁸¹ Deut. 34.1-5: For other mentions of Moses on Nebo/Pisgah see Deut. 3.27, 32.48-50.

which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying: I will give it to thy seed. Thou hast seen it with thy eyes, and shalt not pass over to it. 5. And Moses the servant of the Lord died there, in the land of Moab, by the commandment of the Lord.

Moses climbed his final mountain in the Hebrew Bible, from where he gained his final summit view. Mount Nebo (see Fig. 3-2) was to be his place of burial.⁸² We shall see him again in a mountain setting in the New Testament.

3.2.4 Mount Zion

Israel first appeared as a nation in the eleventh century BCE, under the reigns of David and Solomon, though perhaps even these two kings were legendary. After the death of Solomon, Israel separated into two: Israel, and the smaller southern kingdom of Judah, whose capital city was Jerusalem, situated on Mount Zion (see Fig. 3-2).⁸³ There is uncertainty as to the date of the founding of Jerusalem. Archaeological study has found little evidence of occupation of the city from the eleventh or tenth centuries: ‘archaeologically speaking, the period in which Jerusalem received its social, political, and theological grandeur is still very much an enigma. The nature of the city in the tenth century BC is in fact one of the greatest mysteries in biblical archaeology.’⁸⁴

There is uncertainty, too, as to the exact location of ancient Zion.⁸⁵ In Psalm 48 Zion was ‘the city of our God, in his holy mountain’;⁸⁶ in 1 Kings we read that ‘Sion’ was ‘the city of David’.⁸⁷ A useful description of the location was provided by Josephus, the author of *The Jewish War*, an account of Rome’s sack of Jerusalem in 70. A Jew by birth, Josephus switched allegiance and fought for the Romans, writing an account of the war (in Greek) after the fall of the city. His description is as follows:

αὐτὴ μὲν ὑπὲρ δύο λόφων ἀντιπρόσωπος ἔκτιστο μέση φάραγγι διηρημένων ... τῶν δὲ λόφων ὁ μὲν τὴν ἄνω πόλιν ἔχων ὑψηλότερός τε πολλῶ καὶ τὸ μήκος ἰθύτερος ἦν: διὰ γοῦν τὴν ὀχυρότητα φρούριον μὲν ὑπὸ Δαυίδου τοῦ βασιλέως ἐκαλεῖτο.⁸⁸

⁸² Deut. 34.6.

⁸³ J. Barton, ‘The Hebrew Bible’, 3-4.

⁸⁴ John M. Monson, ‘The Temple of Solomon: Heart of Jerusalem’, in R.S. Hess & G.J. Wenham, eds., *Zion, City of Our God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 5–6.

⁸⁵ See Peter J. Leithart, ‘Where was Ancient Zion?’, *Tyndale Bulletin* 53.2 (2002), 161-2. A summary of the evidence and discussion is to be found in Y. Shiloh *et al.*, ‘Jerusalem: The Early Periods and the First Temple Period’, in E. Stern, ed., *New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, 4 vols. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 2.696–716. Hershel Shanks, *Jerusalem: An Archaeological Biography* (New York: Random House, 1995), 3). C.R. Conder, *The City of Jerusalem* (New York: Dutton, 1909), 47. C.F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, 10 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1880, repr. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 2.315. G.A. Smith, *Jerusalem: The Topography, Economics and History from the Earliest Times to A.D. 70*, 2 vols. (New York: A.C. Armstrong, 1908), 1.136–44.

⁸⁶ Ps. 48.1.

⁸⁷ 1 Kings 8.1.

⁸⁸ Joseph. *BJ*, 5.4.1.

The city [of Jerusalem] was founded upon two ridges, which are opposite to one another, and separated by a valley in the middle ... The ridge which contains the upper city is much higher and straighter than the other. Accordingly, because of its strength it was called the citadel, by King David.



Figure 3.2: Map of the Holy Land.

By Eric Gaba (Sting - fr:Sting) and NordNordWest - Topographic background map: Own workSources of data:SRTM30 PlusNASA SRTM3 (public domain)All additional data taken from File:Israel_location_map.svg created by NordNordWest under GFDL/CC-BY-SA 3.0, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15989985>

According to Annabel Wharton in her discussion on ‘Jerusalem's Zions’, Zion was often used as a synonym for Jerusalem in the Hebrew Bible.⁸⁹ It was, she suggests, the Jebusite name of the fortress that fell to King David and the Israelites, and which became renamed the City of David.⁹⁰ Peter Leithart argues that after the time of Solomon, Zion was a name ‘used exclusively of the temple mount, while the phrase “City of David” replaced “Zion” as the designation of the old city, the fortress’.⁹¹ Taken with Josephus’ account, we can regard Mount Zion as the high point of Jerusalem.

3.2.5 The significance of Zion

God chose Sinai as the mountain of the Covenant, and chose Zion, the mountain of the Temple, for Himself. ‘If Sinai was the mountain of Israel’s constitution, Zion, the holy mountain of God, became the living centre of Israel’s political and religious existence – the site and sign of God’s continuing presence with his people.’⁹² Zion was the city on the holy mountain in Jerusalem, the mountain which God had chosen Zion for Himself. Psalm 131 was one of several psalms to draw attention to the importance of Zion in Jerusalem,⁹³ and declared God’s election of the mountain as His own:

quia **elegit** Dominus Sion **desideravit** eam in habitaculum suum haec est requies mea in sempiternum hic habitabo quia **desideravi** eam.⁹⁴

For the Lord hath **chosen** Sion: he hath **chosen** it for his dwelling. 14. This is my rest for ever and ever: here will I dwell, for I have **chosen** it.

The Lord’s choice of Zion was emphasised by the concept and verbal repetition of **chosen**. It was God’s choosing it for Himself that made Zion so significant a mountain in the Hebrew Bible. As Donaldson says, since Yahweh deliberately chose Zion as the place of His abode, this became ‘the most fundamental feature of Old Testament Zion theology’ and all other themes found their base in this concept.⁹⁵

Literally, as ‘the site of the Temple at the heart of Jerusalem’, and metaphorically, as the chosen mountain, God’s election of Zion placed the mountain (755 m. high) at the heart of

⁸⁹ Annabel Jane Wharton, ‘Jerusalem's Zions’, *Material Religion* 9:2 (2013), 220, DOI: 10.2752/175183413X13703410896050.

⁹⁰ Cf. 2 Sam.5.6-9.

⁹¹ Leithart, ‘Where was Ancient Zion?’, 171-2. Cf. Isa. 8.18; Ps. 74.2.

⁹² Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 41.

⁹³ Other Psalms which mention Zion include: 2.6; 9.11; 43.3; 46; 48; 68.16-17; 74.2; 76.2; 78.67-71; 125.1; 132. Cf. Isa. 2.2-3.

⁹⁴ Ps. 131.13-14. Cf. the repetition of this oath found in 2 Sam. 7, the promise of an eternal throne in Mount Zion for David and his descendants, providing that they keep faithful to the Lord. During and after the Babylonian exile, the promises of God for Zion’s restoration and glorification exercised great influence on the community.’ See *The New Interpreter’s Bible* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), *ad loc.*

⁹⁵ Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 36.

Jewish theology.⁹⁶ The thesis continues to show that the influence a mountain can exert on the human mind is a powerful force. Zion became synonymous with the very city of Jerusalem,⁹⁷ and this became a significant factor for those Jews in exile or living far from home. I have discussed the enslavement and exile of the Jews, the history of Israel's flight from slavery and their journey to the Promised Land.⁹⁸ The period from the eighth to the fourth centuries BCE was a period of devastation wreaked upon the Jews, firstly by the Assyrian conquest of Israel in 720; then later, in 587, by the Babylonian capture of Jerusalem, 'which resulted in the end of the monarchy, the destruction of the Temple, the invasion of the land, and the exile to Babylon'.⁹⁹ It is generally accepted that the majority of the Psalms were written during this period, and a tale of loss and longing, familiar from the narratives of Exodus and Deuteronomy, became part of the national history in the Psalms.¹⁰⁰

Both Sinai, the mountain of Jewish Law and Covenant, and Zion, the mountain of the Temple of God, symbolised national identity. Zion surpassed Sinai in terms of theological importance: its supersession of Sinai was seen in Psalm 68, which 'arguably contains some of the earliest fragments of psalmody in the Psalter',¹⁰¹ and sang of how God rose from the wilderness, left Sinai and established his new home on Zion. The psalm moved through historical recollections of Sinai to deeds in the wilderness, and finished with God's glorious entry into Jerusalem and Zion.¹⁰²

Sinai and Zion featured deeply in Jewish memory.¹⁰³ Psalm 68 reflected the depth of this memory, recalling the mythology of Sinai, echoes of which added interpretation and explication of the emerging Israelite faith. The symbolism of Zion as the dwelling place of God portrayed an image of the mountain and a perception that mountains could be synonymous with home. The power of their God and the memory of their homeland gave the exiled Jews succour. After the fall of Jerusalem in 587 and their deportation to Babylon, the Jews sang of their homeland, of Zion and of Jerusalem, just as the Trojans had once remembered Ida:¹⁰⁴

Super flumina Babylonis ibi sedimus et flevimus cum recordaremur Sion 2 super salices in medio eius suspendimus citharas nostras 3 quoniam ibi interrogaverunt nos qui captivos duxerunt nos verba carminis et qui adfligebant nos laeti canite nobis de

⁹⁶ Volschenk, 'The mountain motif', 3. For studies on Mount Zion see: Wharton, 'Jerusalem's Zions', 218-242.

⁹⁷ Wharton, 'Jerusalem's Zions', 220.

⁹⁸ Section 3.2.2. Israel was conquered and became part of the Assyrian Empire in 720 while Jerusalem and Judah fell to the Babylonians in 587.

⁹⁹ J. Barton, 'The Hebrew Bible', 3-4; Susan Gillingham, 'The Psalms and Poems of the Hebrew Bible', in *The Hebrew Bible*, 206-7, 211; Erich Zenger, 'Psalm 137 (Z)', in *Psalms 3: A Commentary on Psalms 101-150, Hermeneia Series*, ed. Klaus Baltzer, Erich Zenger and Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: 1517 Media, 2011), 511-23.

¹⁰⁰ Hossfeld, 'Psalm 68', 165.

¹⁰¹ Gillingham, 'Psalms and Poems', 207. For dating of Ps. 68 to seventh or sixth century BCE, see Hossfeld, 'Psalm 68', 163.

¹⁰² Ps. 68.1, 7-8, 16-18.

¹⁰³ See Stephen C. Russell, 'Religious Space and Structures', in *The Hebrew Bible*, 370.

¹⁰⁴ Section 2.5.1.

canticis Sion 4 quomodo cantabimus canticum Domini in terra aliena 5 si oblitus fuero tui Hierusalem in oblivione sit dextera mea.¹⁰⁵

Upon the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept: when we remembered Sion: 2. On the willows in the midst thereof we hung up our instruments. 3. For there they that led us into captivity required of us the words of songs. And they that carried us away, said: **Sing ye to us a hymn of the songs of Sion.** 4. How shall we sing the song of the Lord in a strange land? 5. If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten.

This reference to their homeland revealed an understanding of the symbolism mountains played. Far from home, exiled **upon the rivers of Babylon**, the Jews sang of their homeland, songs portraying their loss and misery, emotions refracted through the image of God's mountain, Mount Zion:¹⁰⁶ **we sat and wept when we remembered Sion.** Just as the author of Exodus had recalled the utopian theocracy of early Israel through the tales of Mount Sinai, so in the Psalms through the lens of Jerusalem's holy Mount Zion did the Jews gather their national identity and remember their pre-exilic society, a period before exile to Babylon.¹⁰⁷

Yet their Babylonian captors taunted the exiles' memories, demanding that their captives **sing ye to us a hymn of the songs of Sion.** The fact their enslavers were making taunts of this nature 'suggests that earlier hymns about God's protection of Jerusalem were being sung in exile.'¹⁰⁸ The captors' taunts about the Jews' homeland were flung to remind the exiles of what had been lost, and the aspect of home about which the Jews sang, and about which they were mocked, was Mount Zion, the symbol of their homeland.¹⁰⁹

The symbolic importance that a mountain could exert on its people cannot be overstressed. The symbolism of Zion included the influence of earlier literature and mythology, even to the supersessionism of Sinai, in Psalm 68. In the *Aeneid* we saw the taunts made by Remulus against the Trojans in Book IX, similar to these taunts made by the Babylonians, were a means of causing further pain upon exiles or refugees by mocking a symbol of what they had lost.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ Ps. 137.

¹⁰⁶ For similar songs of exile to Zion, see e.g. Isa. 30.29; Ps. 24.3.

¹⁰⁷ For the understanding of unity established by collective memory, see Barbara Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Berkshire: McGraw-Hill Education, 2003), 51. Accessed July 18, 2020.

¹⁰⁸ Gillingham, 'Psalms and Poems', 211. 'So Psalm 137 provides insight as to how preexilic psalms might have been used by the exiles, when singing was a vital part of their worship, the sacrificial cult having terminated with the Temple's destruction. Despite their experience of the loss of Jerusalem and the king, they sang these earlier psalms to remind themselves of the promises of the past and to give themselves new hope for the future.' See also Psalms 2, 46, 48 for similar laments with a focus on Zion. Wharton, 'Jerusalem's Zions', 220, says that Zion (from Hebrew; Sion from Greek) often appears as a synonym for Jerusalem in the Hebrew Bible.

¹⁰⁹ Ps. 137.1-4 looks at the exiles' suffering in exile in Babylon, and the use of 'we' confirms the singers as being 'the members of a collective entity', who are united by their grief in Babylon and their longing for Zion. Zenger, 'Psalm 137 (Z)', 513.

¹¹⁰ Section 2.5.1.

3.3 Egeria

Sinai and Zion were mountains whose religious, legal and national significance in the Hebrew Bible were revealed by the frequency and substance of their mentions in Exodus, Deuteronomy, the Psalms and other biblical books. This thesis does not claim that mountains in antiquity were a focus of recreational climbing, and the evidence to support such a claim would be limited.¹¹¹ However, the thesis does claim that literary representations of mountains played a role in influencing human perceptions of mountains, and inspired people to engage with the high places they had read about. Scripture could provide the mental mapping *of* a physical ascent, and therefore the actual mapping *for* a physical ascent. One figure who drew mountain inspiration from her biblical reading was Egeria, an early Christian traveller in the Holy Land who has left a record of her travels, including her ascents of the Sinai, Nebo, Taurus and Hermon mountains (see Figs. 3-1, 3-2 and 3-3).¹¹²

Egeria came from Spain and travelled through Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia and Asia Minor towards the end of the fourth century.¹¹³ It is possible that she was a nun, or at least a member of a religious order, as in her journal, written in the form of a diary, she often addresses her 'revered lady sisters' (*dominae venerabiles sorores*) back home, as though the diary were to be sent in the form of an epistle to enhance their understanding of Scripture, or for wider reading within the community.¹¹⁴ Though the beginning and end of her text are missing, it is clear from her writing that she was describing a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, as well as visits to sites and places mentioned in the Bible.

Egeria's physical experiences in the Holy Land developed or verified her understanding of the sacred text. The fragmentary sentence with which the manuscript begins reveals the importance she gave to textual readings,

¹¹¹ See section 1.1.2.

¹¹² For the modern edition of Egeria's text see Pierre Maraval, *Égérie. Journal de voyage (Itinéraire)*, Sources chrétiennes 296 (Paris: Cerf, 1982), reissued with additions and corrections, 1997, 2002: hereafter *Égérie*. For translations and commentaries see e.g. Anne McGowan and Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Pilgrimage of Egeria* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press Academic, 2018), 1-22; and John Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels*, (Aris & Phillips: Oxford, 1999), 1-4, 35-45. There is a vast collection of literature on Egeria. For a list of works on Egeria up to 1970 see George E. Gingras, *Egeria: Diary of a Pilgrimage*, Ancient Christian Writers 38 (New York: Newman Press, 1970), 135. For more recent commentary, see Ora Limor, 'Reading Sacred Space: Egeria, Paula, and the Christian Holy Land', *De Sion exhibit lex et verbum domini de Hierusalem: Essays on Medieval Law, Liturgy, and Literature in Honour of Amnon Linder*, edited by Y. Hen (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 1-15; Andrew Palmer, 'Egeria the Voyager, or The Technology of Remote Sensing in Late Antiquity', 39-53, in *Travel Fact and Travel Fiction*, ed. Z. R. W. M. von Martels (Brill, 1994); H. Sivan, 'Who was Egeria? Piety and pilgrimage in the age of Gratian', *The Harvard theological review*, 81.1 (1988), 59-72; M. Starowieyski, 'Bibliografia Egeriana', *Augustinianum* 19 (1979), 297-318.

¹¹³ For internal evidence within the text that Egeria travelled specifically during 381-4, see McGowan and Bradshaw, *Egeria*, 21-22; Wilkinson, *Egeria*, 169-71.

¹¹⁴ E.g. *Égérie*, 3.8, 12.7. See Wilkinson, *Egeria*, 1; McGowan and Bradshaw, *Egeria*, 6-8.

... ostendebantur iuxta scripturas¹¹⁵

... places were shown according to the Scriptures,

and her account contains repeated statements that she saw places she visited ‘as we are told in the bible’.¹¹⁶ As an intercessor between the words in the Bible and her own physical experiences Egeria’s voice is unique: not just as a woman writing for other women, but as a female author writing of her own mountain climbs.¹¹⁷ Her emphasis on the text to illustrate the landscape showed she was using her reading to inspire her interest, and her account mapped biblical words into a physical geography of her own travels.¹¹⁸

3.3.1 Egeria’s mountains

The account of Egeria’s travels provided an interpretation of the Sinai/Horeb and Nebo/Pisgah mountains in late antiquity and contained ‘the projection of a holy world refracted through her text’.¹¹⁹ Significantly, Egeria employed the Bible almost as a travel guide, and recorded her visits to biblical locations, including mountains, adding interesting and vivid topographical notes and descriptions to her own written account. Her virtual and actual interpretations of the Bible offered others a new perception, a new mental map of scriptural geography.¹²⁰

To illustrate Egeria’s reliance on her biblical reading, I include here part of her description of the approach to Mount Sinai. As she crossed the valley and neared Sinai, she recalled the event in the Bible where Moses had led the Israelites to that very place:

Ipsam ergo vallem nos traversare habebamus, ut possimus montem ingredi. Haec est autem vallis ingens et planissima, in qua filii Israhel commorati sunt his diebus, quod sanctus Moyses ascendit in montem Domini et fuit ibi quadraginta diebus et quadraginta noctibus.¹²¹

So we had to cross this valley in order that we could reach the mountain. **This is the huge** and very flat **valley in which the children of Israel stayed** on those days when holy Moses ascended the mountain of God and was there forty days and forty nights.

¹¹⁵ *Égérie*, 1.1. Limor, ‘Reading Sacred Space’, 11.

¹¹⁶ E.g. *Égérie*, 2.5.

¹¹⁷ Egeria was by no means the first woman to travel to the Holy Land on pilgrimage. For a discussion of Egeria’s predecessors, see Rebecca Stephens Falcasantos, ‘Wandering Wombs, Inspired Intellectuals: Christian Religious Travel in Late Antiquity,’ *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 25 (2017), 89–117; and McGowan and Bradshaw, *Egeria*, 41–42.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Seneca, 2.4.4; Adomnán, 4.3.2; Hugeburc, 4.3.5.

¹¹⁹ McGowan and Bradshaw, *Egeria*, 1.

¹²⁰ For the topography, history and development of Christian sites in the Sinai peninsula, see Daniel F. Caner, *History and Hagiography from the Late Antique Sinai*, Translated Texts for Historians 53 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 17–39.

¹²¹ *Égérie*, 2.1–2. McGowan and Bradshaw, *Egeria*, 104.

With the words ‘**this is the huge valley ... in which the children of Israel stayed ...**’ Egeria was recalling and referring to events related in Exodus 19.2: ‘*and coming to the desert of Sinai, [Israel] camped in the same place, and there they pitched their tents over against the mountain.*’¹²² The biblical text was her guide book. By means of her travels in the Holy Land she could visualise what she had read and her written account corroborated the words of the Bible.¹²³ Her joyful satisfaction in confirming the truth of Scripture was seen in her confirmation of the geography of the place.

Likewise, in her written description of her physical ascent of Sinai, the mountain’s appearance served to illustrate Egeria’s textual reading and understanding:

Mons autem ipse per giro quidem unus esse **videtur**; intus autem **quod ingrederis**, plures sunt, sed totum mons Dei appellatur, specialis autem ille, in cuius summitate est hic locus, ubi descendit maiestas Dei, **sicut scriptum est**, in medio illorum omnium est. Et cum hi omnes, qui per girum sunt, tam excelsi sint quam **nunquam me puto vidisse**, tamen ipse ille medianus, in quo descendit maiestas Dei, tanto altior est omnibus illis, ut, **cum subissemus** in illo, prorsus toti illi montes, quos excelsos **videramus**, ita **infra nos** essent, ac si colliculi permodici essent.¹²⁴

The Mount [of God] itself **appears** from around to be singular, but **when you reach it** there are more, but the whole is called the mountain of God, but that particular one on the summit of which the glory of God descended, **as it is written**, is in the middle of them all. And whereas all these that are around are so very high **as I think I never saw**, yet that middle one on which the glory of God descended, is so much taller than all those that, **when we had gone up it**, absolutely all those mountains that **we had perceived** as very high were **so far below us** as if they were very little hills.

Egeria’s delight that her physical experience was able to corroborate the veracity of the Bible was seen in her words. She employed verbs of **seeing, approaching** and **climbing**, physical evidence that what she saw was just ‘**as it is written**’ in Exodus.

Egeria was literal in her descriptions and in her perception of the mountains. Her scriptural knowledge illustrated the immensity of the mountain on which she was standing, and she referenced the glory of God descending from Sinai:

Pervenimus **in summitatem illam** montis Dei sancti **Syna**, ubi data est lex in eo, id est locum, **ubi descendit maiestas Domini**, in ea die qua mons fumigabat.¹²⁵

¹²² Exod. 19.2.

¹²³ See Exod. 19.2, 24.18, 32.1-6, 3.1-4.18.

¹²⁴ *Égérie*, 2.5-6. The references to the descent of God’s glory are at Exod. 19.18-20; 24.16. McGowan and Bradshaw, *Egeria*, 105.

¹²⁵ *Égérie*, 3.2; McGowan 107. For the glory of God descending from Mount Sinai see Exod. 19.18-20; 24.16: e.g. *totus autem mons Sinai fumabat eo quod descendisset Dominus super eum in igne* (Exod. 19.18), ‘... and the whole of Mount Sinai was in smoke because the Lord had descended upon it in burning fire’.

We reached **the summit of Sinai**, that holy mountain of God, where the law was given, **that place where the glory of God descended**, on the day when the mountain smoked.

Compare this with Exodus 19.20:

Descenditque Dominus super montem Sinai in ipso montis vertice, et vocavit Moysen in cacumen ejus.¹²⁶

And the Lord came down upon mount Sinai, in the very top of the mount, and he called Moses unto the top thereof.

Egeria was astounded by Sinai. Her reading had given the mountain significance enough for her to desire to climb it, and her reading—her knowledge of the Bible was strong—added a physical reality to biblical events. From the summit of Sinai she thrilled at the view of places mentioned in the Bible:

Egyptum autem et Palestinam et mare Rubrum et mare illud Parthenicum, quod mittit Alexandriam, nec non et fines Saracenorum infinitos ita subter nos inde videbamus, ut credi vix possit.¹²⁷

From there [the summit of Sinai] we saw Egypt and Palestine and the Red Sea and the Parthenian Sea, which leads to Alexandria, as well as the immense territory of the Saracens, so far below us that it could hardly be believed.

Egeria's view from the summit revealed a concept of mountains discussed above, the idea of *oroskopia*.¹²⁸ With her scriptural knowledge and summit view she had, as it were, divine knowledge of the world below her. She wrote what she could see from the mountain top as if intended to be inspirational material for her 'revered lady sisters' back at home.

Egeria's travels continued after Sinai, and she travelled to Nebo, the mountain from whose summit—Pisgah—Moses was able to view the Promised Land.¹²⁹ Her description of the summit confirmed she had completed her ascent:

Pervenimus ergo ad summitatem illius montis, ubi est nunc ecclesia non grandis, in ipsa summitate montis Nabau.¹³⁰

So we arrived at the summit of that mountain where there is now a church, not a large one, on the very summit of Mount Nebo.

¹²⁶ Exod. 19.20.

¹²⁷ *Égérie*, 3.8. McGowan and Bradshaw, *Egeria*, 109.

¹²⁸ Section 2.4.1.

¹²⁹ Section 3.2.3.

¹³⁰ *Égérie*, 12.1.

Monks from the church offered to accompany Egeria and show her the view which Moses beheld in Deuteronomy. From the summit of Nebo, she gazed on the same view that Moses himself had seen.

Nam de [h]ostio ipsius ecclesiae **vidimus** locum, ubi intrat Iordanis in mare mortuum, qui locus **subter nos**, quemadmodum stabamus, **parebat**. **Vidimus etiam** de contra non solum Libiadam, quae citra Iordanem erat, sed et Iericho, quae trans Iordanem; tantum eminebat excelsus locus, ubi stabamus, id est ante [h]ostium ecclesiae. Maxima etiam pars Palaestinae, quae est terra repromissionis, inde **videbatur**, nec non et omnis terra Iordanis, in **quantum** tamen **poterat oculis conspici**.¹³¹

For from the door of that church [on the summit of Nebo] **we saw** the place where the Jordan enters the Dead Sea; the place **was visible below us** as we stood. **We also saw** from the other side not only Livias, which was this side of the Jordan, but also Jericho, which was across the Jordan, so high did the place where we stood rise, that is, before the door of the church. The greatest part of Palestine, which is the land of promise, **was seen** from there, as well as the whole land of Jordan, at least **as much as could be seen with the eyes**.

Egeria used the biblical text to interpret the landscape, and the landscape in turn added interpretation to the text. Again, she confirmed the truth of her experience with the language of **seeing**. Corroboration of the text was her reward for the effort of ascent, and her account was a physical record of a real event. For Egeria the events on Sinai and Nebo were historical fact: interpretation and analysis were not necessary.¹³²

Egeria climbed and recorded her ascents of Sinai and Nebo. Later, she crossed Mount Taurus, and possibly climbed Mount Hermon.¹³³ In her account she mentioned a mountain whose location and geographical surroundings mark it as Hermon, but at this point a folio is missing from the manuscript, leaving a tantalising glimpse of a mountain but no information as to whether she climbed it or not. Taurus was mentioned as something she needed to climb, as her route lay across the mountain.¹³⁴

3.3.2 Egeria's nature

It is clear from Egeria's words that she found some ascents difficult, and though she rode on donkey to the foot of Sinai, she needed to walk much of the way to the summit. However, the physical demands of climbing do not seem to have deterred her in any way. Ascending Sinai she wrote of the 'great effort' it took to climb, but that her 'desire' to climb overcame any physical struggle.

¹³¹ *Égérie*, 12.4-5. McGowan and Bradshaw, *Egeria*, 125-6.

¹³² Limor, 'Reading Sacred Space', 12.

¹³³ For Sinai/Horeb, see *Égérie*, 1-4; for Nebo/Pisgah, see *Égérie*, 10-12.

¹³⁴ For Mount Hermon, see *Égérie*, 16 and McGowan and Bradshaw, *Egeria*, 132. For Mount Taurus, see *Égérie*, 23.

Orationibus sanctorum, qui comitabantur, et sic cum grandi labore, quia pedibus me ascendere necesse erat (quia prorsus nec in sella ascendi poterat, tamen ipse labor non sentiebatur, ex ea parte autem non sentiebatur labor, quia desiderium, quod habebam, iubente Deo videbam compleri.¹³⁵

With the prayers of the holy ones who were accompanying us, and with great effort, it was necessary for me to ascend by foot (because it was not possible to ascend in the saddle, however the effort itself was not felt, and the effort was partly not felt because I saw the desire which I had being fulfilled by God's will).

Similarly, her approach to Mount Nebo was made by donkey, but as the steepness increased she walked the rest of the way by foot—she recorded that the climb was not easy, but that she did it.¹³⁶

Egeria's energy and delight for the ascents have an affinity with modern descriptions of natural and mountainous environments. Throughout her account she displayed an enthusiasm for her travels and climbs that belies current thinking about attitudes to mountains in antiquity: there was no mention of the fear, ridicule or terror of high places we have been led to believe were commonplace.¹³⁷ On the summit of Sinai she displayed her enthusiasm, declaring the ascent had been a fulfilment of her desire:

Completo ergo omni desiderio, quo festinaveramus ascendere, coepimus iam et descendere ab ipsa summitate montis Dei, in qua ascenderamus, in alio monte, qui ei periunctus est, qui locus appellatur in Choreb; ibi enim est ecclesia.¹³⁸

So, having fulfilled every desire for which we had hastened to ascend, we began also to descend from the summit of the mountain of God to which we had ascended, to another mountain that adjoined it; the place is called on Horeb, for a church is there.

There was a simplicity and joy in Egeria's writing as she provided information about her surroundings. Often monks accompanied her on her climbs;¹³⁹ the subjects of her account were Scripture and the geography of Scripture which she saw with her own eyes, and she expressed wonder at nature and the beauty of her surroundings;¹⁴⁰ she was observant of the people and the natural world about her and had no place for herself in her descriptions of nature;¹⁴¹ her aesthetic appreciation of the mountains and the wilderness prefigured modern attitudes to nature writing.¹⁴² She had a busy mind, a questioning and enquiring interest in what was around her, and what she could learn from her guides, what Limor calls her 'curiosity and

¹³⁵ *Égérie*, 3.2. See Limor, 'Reading Sacred Space', 10.

¹³⁶ *Égérie*, 11.4: *modice autem erat acrius, quod pedibus necesse erat subiri cum labore, sicut et factum est.*

¹³⁷ See the arguments of Nicolson *et al.*, section 1.1.1.

¹³⁸ *Égérie*, 4.1.

¹³⁹ *Égérie*, 3.1-2, 11.3.

¹⁴⁰ *Égérie*, 1.1.

¹⁴¹ *Égérie*, 3.6, 8.1-2.

¹⁴² Hooley, 'Classical Mountain Landscapes', 27.

almost childish enthusiasm'.¹⁴³ Indeed, 'curious' was the description Egeria gave to herself as her party was following their route along the river Jordan:

tunc ego, **ut sum satis curiosa**, requirere coepi, quae esset haec vallis, ubi sanctus monachus nunc monasterium sibi fecisset; non enim putabam hoc sine causa esse.¹⁴⁴

Then, **as I am very curious**, I began to ask what this valley was where a holy monk had now made a cell; for I did not think this was without a reason.

Egeria's curiosity inspired her to venture to the Holy Land and climb the mountains she had read about. Her perceptions developed from what she had read, she had an interest and an excitement to see these places, and it was her reading which had sparked this interest. She had a 'desire' to climb the mountains and compare her topographical knowledge of the Holy Land with her reading of the Bible;¹⁴⁵ and her 'curious' nature inspired her to go, to ask and to see. I have shown the driving force of curiosity that took individuals into the mountains. Egeria described herself as just such a curious individual.

It is the Egeria as an individual with which I complete this section.¹⁴⁶ It is likely that she was a woman of some wealth, who could afford to travel abroad for three years without expressing financial concern within her written account. Yet equally she was content to travel by foot or by donkey rather than by carriage, and seems to have been as happy to be entertained by monks in their cells as by bishops in their sees. Clues as to Egeria's status perhaps lay in her education: her written Latin was simple; her account lacked knowledge of Greek or Hebrew; and while she revealed a good biblical knowledge there was no evidence in her writing of any classical literature. It is unlikely that she was a member of the Roman aristocracy or city elite, but a woman from the provinces, who had travelled from Spain. Her relatively normal background suggests that relatively common people, including women as well as men, could and did find enjoyment in the high places. Egeria presents a more egalitarian picture which hints that an enjoyment of the high places existed in the fourth century, far earlier than current thinking might suggest; and that this enjoyment was more widely available than might be considered, not merely to the intellectual or literary elite.

I now turn to the representation and perception of mountains in the New Testament.

¹⁴³ Limor, 'Reading Sacred Space', 10.

¹⁴⁴ *Égérie*, 16.3.

¹⁴⁵ Although she had local guides to help throughout her travels, Egeria uses the Bible as a guidebook: *Égérie*, 2.1-2; McGowan and Bradshaw, *Egeria*, 104. See Exod. 19.2, 24.18, 32.1-6, 3.1-4.18.

¹⁴⁶ For discussion of Egeria's status see Limor, 'Reading Sacred Space', 3-4; Palmer, 'Egeria the Voyager', 40-44; and McGowan and Bradshaw, *Egeria*, 11-12 on her social status, and 13-15 on her education.

3.4 The New Testament

My discussion on Sinai and Zion presented examples of the representation given to mountains in the Hebrew Bible, mountains important for their themes of covenant, law and homeland, and, as Donaldson argues, ‘in comparison with Sinai and Zion, all other [mountains] pale into insignificance’.¹⁴⁷ I have shown how important the mountains and the Bible were for Egeria’s travels and mountain ascents within the Holy Land, and their influence continued into the New Testament. I will explore how the New Testament reinterpreted mentions of mountains from the Hebrew Bible, especially Mount Sinai.

I focus on the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke and the occurrences, functions and symbolism of mountains in their writing. I follow William Lane’s work (*The Gospel According to Mark*) with regard to the dating of the Gospels: Lane gives priority to Mark, who wrote between AD 60 and 70, certainly within the lifetime of many who were eyewitnesses to the events he describes.¹⁴⁸ Matthew and then Luke wrote ten or twenty years after Mark, each independent of the other, relying on Mark as a primary source, but also on a common lost source (Q, which was unknown to Mark), as well as oral accounts from the last of the eyewitnesses of the original events; John’s account, written after 100, was quite different from the other three, and with only a single mountain passage, John’s Gospel will not feature in this section.¹⁴⁹ The collective memories of the New Testament Gospels were the result of collective elaborative labour from oral traditions. The oral infusion into the collective memory was shown by the differences and similarities in the accounts.¹⁵⁰

The editorial or redaction activity of the individual authors, especially the independence of Matthew and Luke, is therefore rich material for investigating the particular interests of each author. Included in my discussion in this section of the chapter will be the role of mountains in Matthew, Mark and Luke, and a fuller analysis of Matthew whose account contained more mountain scenes than the other Gospels. Matthew included so many mountain scenes in his gospel partly because mountain scenes were in Q (as evidenced in Luke), but also because—for him—the mountain was an important narrative device and he attached importance to the mountain motif. As this section will show, Moses-typology was also a dominant motif for Matthew: just as the mountain in Exodus and Deuteronomy was an important locale for Moses

¹⁴⁷ Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 30.

¹⁴⁸ For the dating of the Synoptic Gospels, see William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), 17-21.

¹⁴⁹ Other works which deal with the dating of the Gospels include Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament: The Abridged Edition*, ed. Marion L. Soards (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2016), 3-4; R. H. Stein, *The Synoptic Problem* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1987), who argues persuasively (45-88) for Markan priority; B. Orchard and H. Riley, *The Order of the Synoptics* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1987); and Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: the Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 3-11.

¹⁵⁰ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 193.

and the Covenant of Israel, so was it for Jesus in Matthew. Matthew's treatment of mountains looked back retrospectively to the Law and Covenant of Moses, and prospectively to the Great Commission and God's new Covenant through Jesus. Matthew related the new Covenant of God with his people to Jesus' appearance on different mountains. I will show that mountains in the New Testament were as significant as they had been in the Hebrew Bible for the revelation of a covenant with God.

Recent New Testament scholarship on mountains and the Gospels includes study on the mountain motif in Matthew by Terence Donaldson, whose work I have mentioned above.¹⁵¹ Donaldson performs detailed exegesis of the Matthean mountain scenes which are useful for my analysis of these scenes. However, his focus is on Zion and he looks to draw parallels between Matthew's mountains and Mount Zion, and therefore tries to adapt the material to suit his argument. Consequently Donaldson refutes the more likely parallels between Matthew and Moses on Sinai. My analysis will differ from Donaldson in that I will provide a fuller exploration of the three synoptic accounts as opposed to that of just Matthew; and I will focus on how several mountains feature in the Gospels rather than on exploring the Zion theology in Matthew.¹⁵²

Other recent scholarship includes Parsons, Culy and Stigall in their guide to the Greek text of Luke (*Luke: A Handbook on the Greek Text*).¹⁵³ They explore the lexical, grammatical and linguistic aspects of the Greek and also provide brief commentary on Luke's narrative style. The book is designed to support intermediate language students, and so its strength—to assist those with limited Greek reading skills—is also its weakness, as it translates the basic meaning of the text but fails to provide a more detailed exploration of Luke's meaning and text. Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Narrative*, makes a very useful exploration of the interaction of biblical narrative with dialogue.¹⁵⁴ He comments also on the tension between repetition and omission in the alternations between narrative and dialogue, revealing the interstitial meaning.

I have mentioned above William Lane's book on Mark.¹⁵⁵ Although a little older (1974) than the other commentaries, Lane's commentary of Mark's witness documentary expertly reviews the literary and creative aspects of the Gospel, showing also how Mark influenced the Gospel tradition. Charles Talbert's commentary on Matthew approaches analysis of the work as a whole, exploring it in section senses rather than verse by verse.¹⁵⁶ Talbert includes historical, literary and theological commentary, as well as comparative material study from Greco-Roman sources, which adds to the cultural understanding. By contrast, Craig Evans' commentary on

¹⁵¹ See section 3.1. Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*.

¹⁵² See Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 6-7 for further information on current scholarship.

¹⁵³ Mikael C. Parsons, Martin M. Culy and Joshua J. Stigall, eds., *Luke: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2010).

¹⁵⁴ Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 55-60.

¹⁵⁵ Lane, *Mark*.

¹⁵⁶ Talbert, *Matthew*.

Matthew analyses the text verse by verse, and so explores the Gospel with a usefully different approach.¹⁵⁷ R. T. France's excellent commentary on Matthew differs again, and its thoroughness is most helpful.¹⁵⁸ France's focus is less on the history of the text or on comparison with the Synoptic Gospels, but rather the text itself. France includes his own translation of the text which is helpful for the connection with his commentary. All these different commentaries explore the texts in detail. However, none of them relate specifically or in any meaningful fashion to the role of mountains, so in this section I will provide a new synthesis of relevant material in addition to new commentary.

Outside biblical studies, mountain scholarship which refers to New Testament pericopes includes Della Dora's study, *Mountain*.¹⁵⁹ Her sweep of mountains is broad and interesting, but occasional claims are not always supported by the evidence.¹⁶⁰ De Jong's excellent article on *oroskopia* contains very useful discussion about the view seen from the Mountain of Temptation.¹⁶¹ Elsewhere her article is classical in outlook and only the view from the Mountain of Temptation is directly relevant to New Testament studies. In my presentation of the biblical text in what follows, I will consider chiefly the text from the Latin Vulgate, but I will occasionally cite the Greek where this illuminates the Latin text.

3.4.1 The Synoptic Gospels

There are six mountain passages in the Gospel of Matthew, each of which featured a significant episode in the teaching of Jesus. If we agree with Donaldson that the inclusion of these mountain scenes was 'the result of conscious redactional activity', as opposed to chance or random activity, then at the outset we see a perception of mountains being important enough to feature severally in Matthew's account.¹⁶² The mountain passages in Matthew were: 1) The Mountain of Temptation (4.8); 2) The Sermon on the Mount (4.23–8:1); 3) The Feeding of the Four Thousand (15.21–39); 4) The Mountain of Transfiguration (17.1–9); 5) The Mount of Olives and the Olivet Discourse (21.1; 24–25); and 6) The Mountain of Commissioning (28.16–20). No other Gospel had more than these, and the events Matthew recorded were significant in the ministry of Jesus. Donaldson regards the inclusion of the mountains as a 'deliberate and intentional feature of the Matthean redaction', and while I agree with his analysis, my evaluative response differs from his response, as will be shown later.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁷ Craig A. Evans, *Matthew, New Cambridge Bible Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

¹⁵⁸ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*.

¹⁵⁹ Veronica Della Dora, *Mountain: Nature and Culture* (London: Reaktion Books Limited, 2016), 13-28.

¹⁶⁰ Della Dora, *Mountain*, 28, says that the Transfiguration of Jesus occurred on Mount Tabor, but she gives no evidence for her claim nor does she suggest any alternatives.

¹⁶¹ De Jong, *Oroskopia*, 38-39.

¹⁶² Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 4.

¹⁶³ Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 3.

I draw up here a table to show the occurrence of the various mountain-located episodes in all the gospels and to reveal the importance of this motif in Matthew.

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jesus appoints the Twelve (unnamed mountain)	10.1-4 (no mountain motif)	3.13-19	6.12-16	
The Mountain of Temptation	4.8	1.12-13 (no mountain motif)	4.5	
The Sermon on the Mount	4.23-8.1			
The feeding of the four thousand (unnamed mountain)	15.29-39	8.1-9 (no mountain motif)		
The Mountain of Transfiguration	17.1-9	9.2-13	9.28-36	
The Mount of Olives The Olivet Discourse	21.1; 24-25	11.1, 22-25 Olivet discourse: 13.3-37	19.29, 21.37, 22.39-44	
The Mountain of Commissioning	28:16-20	16.14-15 (no mountain motif)	24.45-48 (no mountain motif)	
The Ascension			24.50-3 (no mountain motif)	

Table 3.1: Mountains in the Gospels

The table shows a significant preponderance of the mountain motif in Matthew. Elsewhere in the synoptic Gospels, Mark (8.1-9) shared with Matthew the feeding of the four thousand, though Mark made no mention of a mountain; Mark (3.13-19) and Luke (6.12-16) had the appointment of the Twelve disciples taking place on a mountain, an episode which occurred in Matthew without mention of a mountain; and Luke (24.50-3) alone had the Ascension of Jesus, though again there was no mention of a mountain. The three synoptic Gospels contained three mountain-motifs in common, namely the Mountain of Temptation, the Mount of Olives and the Mountain of Transfiguration. Of these three passages, two (the Mountains of Temptation and Transfiguration) showed the mountain set in sharp relief, delivering essential scenery in order to develop the narrative, while the third (the Mount of Olives) was less occupied with the mountain setting than it was with the content of the Olivet discourse. Consequently, in this section I will explore the passages on Temptation and Transfiguration for the literary motifs and mountain connections and for any deeper theological symbolism between the three Gospels, as well as for any comparison with earlier Hebrew Bible

passages and themes. I will also examine the account of the Great Commission at the end of Matthew (28.16-20), which was a mountain episode of great significance to the ministry of Jesus in all three Gospels and connects the mountain motif to much of Matthew's writing elsewhere.

I will examine the discrete passages mentioned above, will explore them as part of their narrative whole within the context of their own books, and will also analyse the literary nature of the texts as well as their religious and theological setting.¹⁶⁴ The tension of the differing narratives between the three Gospels will help to unpick possible meaning and interpretation of mountains. As Alter affirms, 'in biblical narrative more or less the same story often seems to be told two or three or more times about different characters, or sometimes even about the same character in different sets of circumstances.'¹⁶⁵ He adds that a duplication of stories often arises from a duplication of sources, and that contradictions between the stories provide opportunities for meaning and deliver starting-points for analysis. It will be instructive to compare the same accounts within the different authors and I will explore repeated accounts in anticipation of unearthing biblical interpretations of mountains.

3.4.2 The Mountain of Temptation (Matt. 4.8)

The mountain motif appeared in all three of the synoptic Gospels. The first of these, the Mountain of Temptation, was set in the wilderness in the three accounts, on each occasion placed after Jesus' baptism and before his return to Galilee. I have already discussed the wilderness as a mixed location, a place of danger or a place where God's presence might be found,¹⁶⁶ and both these aspects featured in this pericope. The devil sought to test Jesus in three locations: he ordered Jesus in the wilderness to turn stones into bread to assuage his hunger, in the city to cast himself down from a pinnacle of the temple so that God might save him, and from the summit of a mountain to view the kingdoms of the world, and receive their glory if only he would worship the devil. Matthew and Luke both set their account in the wilderness, though their events took place in a different order from each other; Mark made only a brief mention of the devil and Jesus in the wilderness.

[**Matt. 4.1-11**] tunc Iesus ductus est in desertum ab Spiritu ut temptaretur a diabolo 2 et cum ieiunasset quadraginta diebus et quadraginta noctibus postea esuriit 3 et accedens temptator dixit ei si Filius Dei es dic ut lapides isti panes fiant 4 qui respondens dixit scriptum est non in pane solo vivet homo sed in omni verbo quod procedit de ore Dei 5 tunc adsumit eum diabolus in sanctam civitatem et statuit eum supra pinnaculum templi 6 et dixit ei si Filius Dei es mitte te deorsum scriptum est enim quia angelis suis mandabit de te et in manibus tollent te ne forte offendas ad lapidem pedem tuum 7 ait illi Iesus rursum scriptum est non temptabis Dominum Deum tuum 8 iterum adsumit

¹⁶⁴ See further: Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 1-13.

¹⁶⁵ Alter, *Biblical Narrative*, 58.

¹⁶⁶ Section 3.1.

eum diabolus in montem excelsum valde et ostendit ei omnia regna mundi et gloriam eorum 9 et dixit illi haec tibi omnia dabo si cadens adoraveris me 10 tunc dicit ei Iesus vade Satanas scriptum est Dominum Deum tuum adorabis et illi soli servies 11 tunc reliquit eum diabolus et ecce angeli accesserunt et ministrabant ei.¹⁶⁷

Then Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. 2. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry. 3. And the tempter coming said to him: If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. 4. Who answered and said: It is written, Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. 5. Then the devil took him up into the holy city, and set him upon the pinnacle of the temple, 6. And said to him: If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down, for it is written: That he hath given his angels charge over thee, and in their hands shall they bear thee up, lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone. 7. Jesus said to him: It is written again: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. 8. Again the devil took him up into a very high mountain, and shewed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them 9. And said to him: All these will I give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me. 10. Then Jesus saith to him: Begone, Satan: for it is written: The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve. 11. Then the devil left him; and behold angels came and ministered to him.

[**Mark 1.12-13**] et statim Spiritus expellit eum in desertum 13 et erat in deserto quadraginta diebus et quadraginta noctibus et temptabatur a Satana eratque cum bestiis et angeli ministrabant illi.¹⁶⁸

And immediately the Spirit drove him out into the desert. 13. And he was in the desert forty days and forty nights and was tempted by Satan. And he was with beasts: and the angels ministered to him.

[**Luke 4.1-13**] Iesus autem plenus Spiritu Sancto regressus est ab Iordane et agebatur a Spiritu in desertum 2 diebus quadraginta et temptabatur a diabolo et nihil manducavit in diebus illis et consummatis illis esuriit 3 dixit autem illi diabolus si Filius Dei es dic lapidi huic ut panis fiat 4 et respondit ad illum Iesus scriptum est quia non in pane solo vivet homo sed in omni verbo Dei 5 et duxit illum diabolus et ostendit illi omnia regna orbis terrae in momento temporis 6 et ait ei tibi dabo potestatem hanc universam et gloriam illorum quia mihi tradita sunt et cui volo do illa 7 tu ergo si adoraveris coram me erunt tua omnia 8 et respondens Iesus dixit illi scriptum est Dominum Deum tuum adorabis et illi soli servies 9 et duxit illum in Hierusalem et statuit eum supra pinnam templi et dixit illi si Filius Dei es mitte te hinc deorsum 10 scriptum est enim quod angelis suis mandabit de te ut conservent te 11 et quia in manibus tollent te ne forte offendas ad lapidem pedem tuum 12 et respondens Iesus ait illi dictum est non temptabis Dominum Deum tuum 13 et consummata omni temptatione diabolus recessit ab illo usque ad tempus.¹⁶⁹

And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from the Jordan and was led by the spirit into the desert, 2. For the space of forty days, and was tempted by the devil. And he ate nothing in those days. And when they were ended, he was hungry. 3. And the devil said to him: If thou be the Son of God, say to this stone that it be made bread. 4. And Jesus answered him: is written that Man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word of God. 5. And the devil led him into a high mountain and shewed him all the

¹⁶⁷ Matt. 4.1-11.

¹⁶⁸ Mark 1.12-13.

¹⁶⁹ Luke 4.1-13.

kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6. And he said to him: To thee will I give all this power and the glory of them. For to me they are delivered: and to whom I will, I give them. 7. If thou therefore wilt adore before me, all shall be thine. 8. And Jesus answering said to him. It is written: Thou shalt adore the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. 9. And he brought him to Jerusalem and set him on a pinnacle of the temple and said to him: If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself from hence. 10. For it is written that He hath given his angels charge over thee that they keep thee. 11. And that in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest perhaps thou dash thy foot against a stone. 12. And Jesus answering, said to him: It is said: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. 13. And all the temptation being ended, the devil departed from him for a time.

Mark made no mention of any mountain, simply saying that Jesus was ‘in the desert forty days and forty nights’ where he was tested by Satan; both Matthew and Luke (*ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ*) recorded the events also as happening in ‘the desert’, and also ‘for forty days’ (‘and nights’, in Matthew). However, Matthew and Luke both set Jesus on a mountain.

In Luke’s account, the Vulgate text made no actual mention of a mountain, though height was implied by

et duxit illum diabolus et ostendit illi omnia regna orbis terrae.¹⁷⁰

And the devil led him [into a high mountain] and shewed him all the kingdoms of the world

The idea of height in Luke was more apparent in the Greek text: *ἀναγαγὼν αὐτὸν*, the prefix *ἀνα-* meaning ‘(the devil) leading him up’.¹⁷¹ The mysterious phrases *ἐν στιγμή χρόνου* and *in momento temporis* (both of which mean ‘in a moment of time’) suggest that for Luke, Jesus’ experience was more visionary or hallucinatory than real—a suggestion that is supported by the absence of any physical mountain mentioned in Luke’s pericope. A further note is that of the three temptation scenes—stones into bread, the mountain summit and the temple pinnacle in Jerusalem—Luke placed the mountain second and the pinnacle third, because for Luke the climax of Jesus’ testing was in Jerusalem, not on the mountain, as this was the typology of Luke’s account. There was no presentation of the mountain in Mark, and in Luke the mountain was vague and insubstantial; and while the height of the mountain was implied, Luke appeared to be more concerned with Jerusalem than the mountain episode.

Matthew’s was the only account that expressly presented the reader with a mountain and a high mountain at that, mentioned in both the Latin—‘the devil took him up into a very high mountain’—and the Greek: *παραλαμβάνει αὐτὸν ὁ διάβολος εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλὸν λίαν* (‘the devil took him to an exceedingly high mountain’). Both the Latin and Greek texts not only mentioned the mountain, but also included the descriptor ‘exceedingly high’ to add to the drama of the event and to the emphasis on the mountain itself. R. T. France believes that the setting in

¹⁷⁰ Luke 4.5.

¹⁷¹ Luke 4.5.

Matthew, like the mountain in Luke, was visionary or hallucinatory rather than real.¹⁷² He argues that no mountain could have actually provided a view of ‘all the kingdoms of the world’ at once, and so suggests that ‘this transportation was not physical but visionary. There in the wilderness Jesus “found himself” first on top of the Jerusalem temple and then on an impossibly high mountain with a view of the whole world.’¹⁷³

France is right, of course, because no single mountain could have provided a view as suggested in Matthew, other than for God. The concept of a divine power possessing the right of *oroskopia* is something which I have already discussed with relation to Philip on Haemus and Hannibal in the Alps.¹⁷⁴ However, France fails to take into account Matthew’s deliberate and sole inclusion of the mountain in his account. For Matthew, the mountain was the third and final temptation of three, and the climax of Jesus’ testing: in both the stones-into-bread and the pinnacle-of-a-temple scenes, Jesus rejected the testing of the devil. Finally, the devil led him up a ‘very high mountain’, from whose summit ‘he shewed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them’. Satan showed Jesus the view from the mountain top: Jesus rejected what the devil offered him, for to accept the power offered would have been for Jesus to yield to temptation, to have become arrogant and desirous of power. After his death and resurrection, Jesus from a mountain top would declare his authority over heaven and earth; but for the present he had to refuse it, since it was offered by the devil. Jesus first had to suffer and die before he could be granted divine authority: consequently, Jesus rejected the devil and his bribe. The idea of authority was one aspect of Matthew’s deliberate inclusion of the mountain.¹⁷⁵

A second aspect drew deliberate parallels with the Hebrew Bible. In Matthew’s account of Jesus’ view of the kingdoms of the world, there were parallels with Moses’ view of the promised land from Nebo: both men were shown a vision from a mountain top, a vision which was denied to Moses and refused by Jesus, though the view which the devil revealed to Jesus was far greater than the Canaan shown to Moses.¹⁷⁶ Moses was given a view of the landscape by God but was not permitted to obtain it; Jesus was given a view of the landscape by the devil, rejected the temptation, and (in contrast to the worldly power offered by the devil) would ultimately be rewarded with God’s gift of supreme authority on heaven and earth. This would be God’s new Covenant with Israel.¹⁷⁷ The parallels with Moses are striking. First, the period of forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness in this context referred back to the forty year exile

¹⁷² France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 191.

¹⁷³ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 191, adds the visionary visit of Ezekiel to Jerusalem while he was in fact in Babylon (Ezek 8:1-3; 11:24).

¹⁷⁴ See de Jong, ‘*Oroskopia*’, 38 for discussion of this passage in Matthew.

¹⁷⁵ See W. Davies and D. C. Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, International Critical Commentary (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1998), 369-370; Della Dora, *Mountain*, 56.

¹⁷⁶ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 193.

¹⁷⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 370 (citing Mek on Exod. 17.14-16); Deut. 3.27, 34.1-4.

of Israel led by Moses, in Deuteronomy.¹⁷⁸ Secondly, Jesus' three replies to the devil in Matthew were all quotations taken from Deuteronomy 6-8, where Moses had explained God's Law to Israel. The quotations delivered by Jesus were all 'part of Moses' address to the Israelites before their entry into Canaan in which he reminded them of their forty years of wilderness experiences'.¹⁷⁹ The quotations from Matthew and Deuteronomy were:

It is written, Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. (Matt. 4.4)

Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. (Deut. 8.3)

Jesus said to him: It is written again: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. (Matt.4.7)

Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. (Deut. 6.16)

Then Jesus saith to him: Begone, Satan: for it is written: The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and him only shalt thou serve. (Matt. 4.10)

Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and shalt serve him only. (Deut. 6.13)

Matthew's perception of the mountain, then, was as an important and sacred location with an influential literary and religious history. His three temptations progressed spatially—from low, the stones in the desert, to high, the temple pinnacle in the city and finally to the highest, a high mountain top—and came to a deliberate and dramatic climax on the mountain summit, Matthew's chosen climax, the point where Matthew's Jesus displayed his authority over the devil in the final, revelatory scene. I have already mentioned that Matthew and Luke had access to a different source (Q) from Mark. They both employed the unlocated wilderness for their testing of Jesus, and each author's account perceived the testing of Jesus in a different way, with Matthew focusing particularly on the mountain climax. In these two Gospels we saw the mountain as a suitable location for the examination of the philosophical and moral being of the self, typified by Jesus' rejection of the devil's offer in anticipation of greater rewards to come. The mountain, for Luke and particularly Matthew, was the locus for a deeper and broader philosophical understanding, the acquisition of internal vision acquired by parallels with the vision of the world below. An individual could gain greater self-awareness by possessing the overview that mountains provided. This concept of self-reflection from the mountain top is

¹⁷⁸ Cf. Deut. 8.2 'Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the wilderness these forty years'.

¹⁷⁹ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 188. Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain* (93) tries to link the Temptation pericope with Ps. 2.6, and to link eschatological Zion with the unnamed mountain in the Temptation story. However, the Moses typology present in the Temptation pericope is too strong to be put to one side, which unfortunately is what Donaldson does.

familiar to us from our reading of Seneca, and is an idea we will return to with Petrarch's ascent of Mont Ventoux in chapter five.¹⁸⁰

3.4.3 The Mountain of Transfiguration (Matt. 17.1-9)

As was the case with the Mountain of Temptation, the three synoptic Gospels related the episode of the Mountain of Transfiguration, and each gospel presented the lead up to the episode as follows. They began when Peter declared to Jesus that he was the Messiah, followed by Jesus predicting his death, and finally, on an unnamed mountain, Jesus appeared in shining glory to several of his disciples—his transfiguration.¹⁸¹ The two events that preceded the transfiguration added to its Christological meaning, and to the foreshadowing played by the narrative within the accounts.¹⁸²

[**Matt. 17.1-9**] et post dies sex adsumpsit Iesus Petrum et Iacobum et Iohannem fratrem eius et ducit illos in montem excelsum seorsum 2 et transfiguratus est ante eos et resplenduit facies eius sicut sol vestimenta autem eius facta sunt alba sicut nix 3 et ecce apparuit illis Moses et Helias cum eo loquentes 4 respondens autem Petrus dixit ad Iesum Domine bonum est nos hic esse si vis faciamus hic tria tabernacula tibi unum et Mosi unum et Heliae unum 5 adhuc eo loquente ecce nubes lucida obumbravit eos et ecce vox de nube dicens hic est Filius meus dilectus in quo mihi bene conplacuit ipsum audite 6 et audientes discipuli ceciderunt in faciem suam et timuerunt valde 7 et accessit Iesus et tetigit eos dixitque eis surgite et nolite timere 8 levantes autem oculos suos neminem viderunt nisi solum Iesum 9 et descendentibus illis de monte praecepit Iesus dicens nemini dixeritis visionem donec Filius hominis a mortuis resurgat.¹⁸³

And after six days Jesus taketh unto him Peter and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: 2. And he was transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the sun: and his garments became white as snow. 3. And behold there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with him. 4. And Peter answering, said to Jesus: Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. 5. And as he was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them. And lo a voice out of the cloud, saying: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him. 6. And the disciples hearing fell upon their face, and were very much afraid. 7. And Jesus came and touched them: and said to them: Arise, and fear not. 8. And they lifting up their eyes, saw no one, but only Jesus. 9. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying: Tell the vision to no man, till the Son of man be risen from the dead.

[**Mark 9.1-8**] et post dies sex adsumit Iesus Petrum et Iacobum et Iohannem et ducit illos in montem excelsum seorsum solos et transfiguratus est coram ipsis 2 et vestimenta eius facta sunt splendentia candida nimis velut nix qualia fullo super terram non potest candida facere 3 et apparuit illis Helias cum Mose et erant loquentes cum

¹⁸⁰ Sen. *Ep.* 79.

¹⁸¹ Peter declares Christ the Messiah in Matt. 16.13-20; Mark 8.27-30; Luke 9.18-20.

¹⁸² Cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 370.

¹⁸³ Matt. 17.1-9.

Iesu 4 et respondens Petrus ait Iesu rabbi bonum est hic nos esse et faciamus tria tabernacula tibi unum et Mosi unum et Heliae unum 5 non enim sciebat quid diceret erant enim timore exterriti 6 et facta est nubes obumbrans eos et venit vox de nube dicens hic est Filius meus carissimus audite illum 7 et statim circumspicientes neminem amplius viderunt nisi Iesum tantum secum 8 et descendantibus illis de monte praecepit illis ne cui quae vidissent narrarent nisi cum Filius hominis a mortuis resurrexerit.¹⁸⁴

And after six days, Jesus taketh with him Peter and James and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves, and was transfigured before them. 2. And his garments became shining and exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller upon earth can make white. 3. And there appeared to them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. 4. And Peter answering, said to Jesus: Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. And let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. 5. For he knew not what he said: for they were struck with fear. 6. And there was a cloud overshadowing them. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying: This is my most beloved Son. Hear ye him. 7. And immediately looking about, they saw no man any more, but Jesus only with them. 8. And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them not to tell any man what things they had seen, till the Son of man shall be risen again from the dead.

[**Luke 9.28-36**] factum est autem post haec verba fere dies octo et adsumpsit Petrum et Iohannem et Iacobum et ascendit in montem ut oraret 29 et factum est dum oraret species vultus eius altera et vestitus eius albus refulgens 30 et ecce duo viri loquebantur cum illo erant autem Moses et Helias 31 visi in maiestate et dicebant excessum eius quem completurus erat in Hierusalem 32 Petrus vero et qui cum illo gravati erant somno et evigilantes viderunt maiestatem eius et duos viros qui stabant cum illo 33 et factum est cum discederent ab illo ait Petrus ad Iesum praeceptor bonum est nos hic esse et faciamus tria tabernacula unum tibi et unum Mosi et unum Heliae nesciens quid diceret 34 haec autem illo loquente facta est nubes et obumbravit eos et timuerunt intransibiles illis in nubem 35 et vox facta est de nube dicens hic est Filius meus electus ipsum audite 36 et dum fieret vox inventus est Iesus solus et ipsi tacuerunt et nemini dixerunt in illis diebus quicquam ex his quae viderant.¹⁸⁵

And it came to pass, about eight days after these words, that he took Peter and James and John and went up into a mountain to pray. 29. And whilst he prayed, the shape of his countenance was altered and his raiment became white and glittering. 30. And behold two men were talking with him. And they were Moses and Elias, 31. Appearing in majesty. And they spoke of his decease that he should accomplish in Jerusalem. 32. But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep. And waking, they saw his glory and the two men that stood with him. 33. And it came to pass that, as they were departing from him, Peter saith to Jesus: Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses; and one for Elias: not knowing what he said. 34. And as he spoke these things, there came a cloud and overshadowed them. And they were afraid when they entered into the cloud. 35. And a voice came out of the cloud; saying: This is my beloved son. Hear him. 36. And whilst the voice was uttered Jesus was found alone. And they held their peace and told no man in those days any of these things which they had seen.

¹⁸⁴ Mark 9.1-8.

¹⁸⁵ Luke 9.28-36.

All three synoptic gospels related that the transfiguration took place in the presence of Peter, James and John on an unnamed mountain. Matthew and Mark were vague, in that their accounts made reference to ‘a high mountain’ (*in montem excelsum* and *εἰς ὄρος ὑψηλόν*); whereas Luke more specifically spoke of ‘the mountain’ (*in montem* and *εἰς τὸ ὄρος*), though made no more of it than that. The mountain was not named in any account of the Transfiguration and its location must, to all intents and purposes, remain unknown. Pease, in his ‘Notes on Mountain Climbing’, confirms the doubt surrounding the mountain which he says is ‘variously located’,¹⁸⁶ and suggested possibilities for the mountain include Mount Hermon, Mount Tabor and Mount Meron (see Fig. 3-2).¹⁸⁷

Yet the mystery of the mountain and its location was intriguing enough to spark curiosity in biblical exegetists. In 350 Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, was the first to give a name to the mountain, though without clear evidence, stating that the transfiguration took place on Mount Tabor in front of Moses and Elijah as witnesses.¹⁸⁸ In 404 Jerome cemented the location as Tabor, in a letter he wrote describing the life of the holy woman Paula, who had journeyed to the Holy Land in 385.¹⁸⁹ Paula travelled at the same time as Egeria,¹⁹⁰ providing documented evidence of women in late antiquity engaged in enjoyment of the high places of the Holy Land. In the letter, written to Paula’s daughter as consolation for her mother’s death, Jerome recounted Paula’s travels and her ascents of several mountains, including Mount Tabor:

[Paula] scandeat montem Thabor, in quo transfiguratus est Dominus. Aspiciebat procul montes Hermon et Hermonim et campos latissimos Galilaeae.¹⁹¹

[Paula] made the ascent of Mount Tabor where the Lord was transfigured. Far off in the distance she beheld the range of Hermon and the wide-stretching plains of Galilee.

The theologian and biblical scholar Alfred Plummer argued against Cyril of Jerusalem’s election of Tabor as the location of the transfiguration.¹⁹² Plummer asserted that solitude was

¹⁸⁶ Pease, ‘Notes on Mountain Climbing’, 294.

¹⁸⁷ See Puig i Tàrrach, ‘The Glory on the Mountain: The Episode of the Transfiguration of Jesus’, *New Testament Studies* 58 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 161 (n.34); France, *Matthew*, 647.

¹⁸⁸ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Sancti patris nostri Cyrilli Hierosolymorum Archiepiscopi Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, Vol. 2, ed. W. C. Reischl and J. Rupp (Munich: Lentner, 1860), *Catechetical Lecture* 12.16.

¹⁸⁹ Jerome described Paula’s travels in two of his letters: Hieronymus, ‘Epistula 46, Paula et Eustochium ad Marcellam’, ed. I. Hilberg, *CSEL*, 54 (Vienna and Leipzig, 1910), 329–44; and ‘Epistula 108, Epitaphium sanctae Paulae’, ed. I. Hilberg, *CSEL*, 55 (Vienna and Leipzig, 1912), 306–51. For a translation of the letters see J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1977), 45–52. See also Limor, ‘Reading Sacred Space’, 1–15.

¹⁹⁰ Egeria travelled 381–4. See section 3.1.1.

¹⁹¹ *Ep.* 108.13.6, p.323.

¹⁹² Alfred Plummer, *St. Luke* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1913), 250–251.



Figure 3.3: Map of the Holy Land (New Testament)

By Eric Gaba (Sting - fr:Sting) and NordNordWest - Topographic background map: Own workSources of data:SRTM30 PlusNASA SRTM3 (public domain)All additional data taken from File:Israel_location_map.svg created by NordNordWest under GFDL/CC-BY-SA 3.0, CC BY-SA 3.0
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=15989985>

required for the transfiguration, as both Matthew and Mark mentioned that the mountain was *seorsum* ('apart', 'separate from the rest').¹⁹³ According to Plummer, this would have been impossible on Tabor, where there was a small village which had been fortified by Josephus in 66 in the Jewish wars against Vespasian.¹⁹⁴ Either Mount Meron or Mount Hermon was the

¹⁹³ Matt. 17.1; Mark 9.1.

¹⁹⁴ Plummer, *St. Luke*, 250-251. Joseph., *BJ* 4.1.8.

more likely setting, each about a week's travel from Caesarea Philippi (Luke says 'about eight days'),¹⁹⁵ and Plummer declared that Hermon's 'isolated white summit is visible from many eminences throughout Palestine'.¹⁹⁶

Wherever the mountain was, and it is probable that its true location will never be known, Jesus was the driving force in each of the three accounts as the one who led or took three disciples—Peter, James and John—up the mountain. On the Mountain of Temptation Jesus had been led by the devil, but on this occasion he led the disciples up the mountain himself. In the accounts of mountain ascents thus far explored within the thesis, I have shown that it was not unusual for a human to climb to meet God (e.g. Moses on Sinai, Hesiod on Helicon). In the transfiguration episode, however, 'it is clear that Jesus took the disciples up the mountain in order for them to have this experience, which he intends them to remember for future reference (v. 9).'¹⁹⁷ Jesus had his own reasons for ascending the mountain, choosing the mountain setting for the revelation of his divinity and to give the message that he was the new prophet of God.

Matthew consciously used the mountain motif, and as was the case with the Mountain of Temptation, the Mountain of Transfiguration provided links to other mountain episodes in both the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible. Matthew informed his readers that on one mountain (Temptation) Jesus was tested, alone, by the devil, but that on this mountain (Transfiguration) he revealed his true nature as the Son of God to the disciples, and thus confirmed that the path he had chosen in the presence of the devil was the right one.¹⁹⁸ As Volschenk says, in the Gospel of Matthew the mountain motif 'is a literary device which is used to emphasise theological significance and the Christological fulfilment'.¹⁹⁹ We shall see that Matthew also used the mountain motif to look forward to Jesus on the Mountain of the Great Commission.

On the mountain the disciples were eyewitnesses to the transfiguration of their master:²⁰⁰ in all three accounts Jesus' appearance changed to a dazzling white and the prophets Moses and Elijah, familiar from the Hebrew Bible, appeared.²⁰¹ I argue that their appearance was a conscious authorial reference to Exodus and Deuteronomy, with echoes of Deuteronomy 18.15-19 in v.5, of Jesus as the new prophet. France suggests that the reason for choosing these two characters is that 'Elijah was taken up to heaven without going through death (2 Kings

¹⁹⁵ Luke 9.28. Cf. Matt. 16.13 who has Caesarea Philippi as the last mentioned place.

¹⁹⁶ Plummer, *St. Luke*, 251. See also Elizabeth Porter Gould, *St. Mark* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996), 61. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, (17.1-8) suggests either Tabor or Hermon; but the evidence in Josephus strongly supports Mount Hermon.

¹⁹⁷ France, *Matthew*, 645.

¹⁹⁸ France, *Matthew*, 646; Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 148.

¹⁹⁹ Volschenk, 'The mountain motif', 8.

²⁰⁰ 2 Pet. 1.16-18. See also Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 176

²⁰¹ Their appearance is a conscious authorial reference to Exod. and Deut., with echoes of Deut. 18.15-19 in v.5, of Jesus as the new prophet.

2.11), and mystery surrounds the end of Moses on Mount Nebo'.²⁰² Davies and Allison claim that as Moses and Elijah spoke with God from a cloud on Mount Sinai, 'so their appearance on a mountain in the New Testament should evoke the thought of Mount Sinai'.²⁰³ The mountain parallelism is important. The three Apostles saw the two prophets talking alone with Jesus, but the prophets did nothing and said nothing to the disciples that might add to the glory of Jesus, other than offer him their presence. The three synoptic accounts intentionally included Moses and Elijah, but not for their words or actions. It was their presence that was the decisive factor: both men symbolised connections with Sinai and Nebo, and so their presence at the transfiguration pericope was to highlight the importance of the mountain link for Jesus, the mountain being the *axis mundi*, the place of their encounter with God.

While on the summit a *nubes lucida* ('bright cloud') overshadowed the mountain.²⁰⁴ The literary and theological influence of mountains in the Hebrew Bible allowed Matthew to relate this episode back to the flame-flashing cloud on Sinai (e.g. Exod. 5.22). For Matthew, the mountain as a literary device allowed him to develop his themes, and the bright cloud recalled the importance of Sinai, as did the presence of the prophets Moses and Elijah.²⁰⁵ God's voice came out of the cloud, and the disciples were frightened—again, a reminder of the Sinai episode, of the occasion when God spoke from the cloud and the people of Israel were terrified (Exod. 20.18-21; Deut. 4.33). The whole episode on the Mountain of Transfiguration echoed and recalled the covenantal theophany on Sinai.²⁰⁶

As was the case on Sinai, there was a purpose in ascending the Mountain of Transfiguration, and that was for a revelatory encounter with the divine. However, on Sinai Moses had received a revelation from God, whereas in the transfiguration episode Jesus led the disciples up the mountain and was himself—in his transfigured apparition—the revelation which they received. The transfiguration occurring away from others ('in solitude', the gospels

²⁰² France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 648. Moses ascending Nebo: Deut. 32.48-50.: 'There are also further connections in that both Moses and Elijah went up on Mount Sinai (Horeb) to meet with God and see his glory (Exod. 24:15-18; 33:18-23; 3 Kgs 19:8-13).'

²⁰³ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 687.

²⁰⁴ Matt. 17.5.

²⁰⁵ 'On this high mountain the radiant cloud especially recalls the cloud which overshadowed Mount Sinai when Moses went up to meet God (Exod. 19:16; 24:15-18); not only did the cloud visually proclaim God's presence, but his voice was heard speaking from it (Exod. 19:9; 24:16; 34:5).' France, *Matthew*, 649.

²⁰⁶ This pericope contains the sort of visual and auditory elements seen elsewhere in this chapter: the disciples saw the dazzling whiteness of Jesus and the appearance of the two prophets; they heard the voice of God, whose command was to listen to Jesus; and they heard the precepts of Jesus to tell no one about what happened. The narration of the episode in all three accounts draws attention to the visual and auditory elements of the event, and to its setting, and maintains the link with Sinai. In Matt. v.9, Jesus *post eventum* refers to the episode as a vision (*visionem*, τὸ ὄραμα), which Mark v.9 (*quae vidissent, ἃ εἶδον*) and Luke v.36 (*quae viderant, ἃν ἐώρακαν*) refer to as the events they have seen. Cf. Fraade, 'Hearing and Seeing at Sinai', 247 on events at Sinai: 'Nevertheless, auditory and ocular modes of revelatory reception at Sinai both accompany and remain in tension with one another.'

reported)²⁰⁷ on a high mountain, added a sense of majesty to an event which the gospels regarded to be of monumental significance. However, the mountain motif in the three accounts provided links with Moses and Sinai—the message being that Jesus was the new prophet who had given his disciples an indication of his glory yet to come.²⁰⁸ In his narrative there were strong suggestions that Matthew had established a thematic linking of mountains: the mountain motif in the Transfiguration links with the Temptation and the Great Commission. Matthew was the only author who located all three episodes on a mountain,²⁰⁹ retrospectively in the Temptation pericope and prospectively with the Great Commission, which is where I now turn.²¹⁰

3.4.4 The Mountain of the Great Commission²¹¹ (Matt. 28.16-20)

The third of the three mountain settings in the New Testament was the Great Commission. As I have shown in Table 1, the other Gospels all contained a Commissioning account²¹² but only Matthew's was set on a mountain, thus continuing to reveal his perception of the mountain as a place of sacred importance. Matthew was the only author to include an account of this episode and its inclusion gave a narrative view of how he maintained and developed a mountain motif in order to complete his gospel with this particular pericope.

The eleven disciples went *in montem* / *εἰς τὸ ὄρος* ('to the mountain')²¹³ where Jesus had appointed them; they met with Jesus, who proclaimed his authority in heaven and earth and then gave them the commission to continue teaching his message.

[Matt. 28.16-20] undecim autem discipuli abierunt in Galilaeam in montem ubi constituerat illis Iesus 17 et videntes eum adoraverunt quidam autem dubitaverunt 18 et accedens Iesus locutus est eis dicens data est mihi omnis potestas in caelo et in terra 19 euntes ergo docete omnes gentes baptizantes eos in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti 20 docentes eos servare omnia quaecumque mandavi vobis et ecce ego vobiscum sum omnibus diebus usque ad consummationem saeculi²¹⁴

And the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. 17. And seeing him they adored: but some doubted. 18. And Jesus

²⁰⁷ In Matthew and Mark the three disciples are led up separately, away from the other nine disciples (*seorsum* and *κατ' ἰδίαν*, Matt. 17.1; *seorsum solos* and *κατ' ἰδίαν μόνους*, Mark 9.1).

²⁰⁸ For Moses typology see D. C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 243-48.

²⁰⁹ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 646.

²¹⁰ See Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain*, 185, Volschenk, 'The mountain motif', 6.

²¹¹ For use of the term The Great Commission see e.g. Ian K. Duffield, 'Difficult Texts: Matthew 28.19–20', in *Theology* 120, no. 2 (March 2017), 108–11 (108). doi:10.1177/0040571X16676673; K. Lee and F. P. Viljoen, 'The Ultimate Commission: the Key for the Gospel According to Matthew', in *Acta Theologica*, Vol.30 (1) (2010), 64-83 (64); John H. Strong, "'The Great Commission': Does It Merit the Name?", in *The Biblical World* 29, no. 5 (1907), 352-56. Accessed August 12, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/3141122.

²¹² Mark 16.14-15, Luke 24.45-48; cf. Acts 1.8.

²¹³ Matt. 28.16.

²¹⁴ Matt. 28.16-20.

coming, spoke to them, saying: All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. 19. Going therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. 20. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world.

This was the final chapter in Matthew's Gospel. As the mountain setting added nothing to the telling of the story, for the sake of the story *per se* there was no overt reason why Matthew should have made the setting thus, especially as he was the only Gospel writer to do so. However, understanding can be made of his choice of setting by a closer exploration of the narrative. As a climax and conclusion to his narrative, Matthew chose the location with care and purpose, and 'the location of the ultimate commission at the end of the gospel of Matthew demands our special attention.'²¹⁵ I suggest that, while the commissioning was important enough as a theological episode also to appear in the other Gospels, the unique mountain setting in Matthew hinted at a literary interpretation of linking the mountain episodes together.

We have seen that when the devil showed him the kingdoms of the world from the Mountain of Temptation, Jesus refused to bow down and worship him; he rejected the devil's immediate promise of worldly power in order to wait, to suffer and to receive authority and power from God.²¹⁶ The concept of moral self-discipline on the mountains top was a motif we have previously examined in classical writers—with Philip and with Hannibal, neither of whom were in control of their desires.²¹⁷ There were similarities, too, between the initial weakness of Aeneas in comparison with Atlas, and the man Aeneas became at the end of the *Aeneid* in comparison with Apennine. In contrast, Jesus had been in control of himself throughout: he did not seek undeserved divinity, but told the devil that it was God who was in control of all things. Later, this thesis will explore the mountain as a mirror for Petrarch's moral weakness.

In this final scene Jesus revealed to his followers that he had succeeded and had gained the reward for his earlier self-discipline. The two episodes—Temptation and Commission—marked the beginning and end of Jesus' efforts, with the episode of Transfiguration located mid-point. All three episodes likewise appeared in the other Gospels and Matthew's Christological typology was establishing a link between the devil's temptation, which Christ resisted, and his final reward: as Davies and Allison argue, 'it is hard not to think the correlation intentional'.²¹⁸ Matthew alone chose a mountain setting for all three events, and for him the choice of the mountain hinted at other interpretations. Jesus was bringing the disciples up a mountain to give the Great Commission an aura of a covenant, or an aura of being a special command.

These final verses (16-20) were the last five of the gospel, and were set apart from the rest of Matthew's narrative, just like the setting on the mountain, and the location on the

²¹⁵ Lee and Viljoen, 'The Ultimate Commission', 65.

²¹⁶ Section 3.4.2.

²¹⁷ Section 2.4.1.

²¹⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7*, 404.

mountain top underscored the importance of the mountain's literary role. This episode brought to a satisfying conclusion the narrative of the story of Jesus—a conclusion which was absent from Mark's and Luke's otherwise comparable narrative structure²¹⁹—and a conclusion which was part of the whole. Matthew used the thread of the mountain motif to weave the different scenes together and to develop the themes therein. Matthew's message was that Jesus had triumphed, and the geographical settings helped provide completeness to the story. Thus the gospel closed with a fitting theological ending,²²⁰ but also with a literary and aesthetic flourish.²²¹

3.5 Concluding remarks

This chapter has provided an excursus into the rich diversity of mountains represented in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. The mountain in the wilderness was the home of the shepherd and his flock and a place of positive and negative experiences. The chapter has shown how the mountain became important as a site of sacred memory; how the mountain setting was originally a site of God's presence in the Hebrew Bible and acted as a location for heaven to meet with earth; and how it appeared as a literary device in the Bible. I have shown how significant these themes were for New Testament writers, Matthew in particular, to establish literary and theological links with their biblical predecessors.

Mountains in the Bible were supernatural places endowed with belief. As sites of Jesus' teaching or experiences in the New Testament, they were known first-hand by Jesus' followers and eyewitnesses. As the cult of Christianity grew and developed, the early Christians attached greater importance to those sites which were venerated 'because they thought the divine nature of Jesus had been manifested there.'²²² With the passage of time these spiritual locations became places of memory. Matthew's framework of mountains came from his own interest about the mountain motif and revitalised memories of these sacred sites.²²³ The superstructure of mountain meaning which was prevalent in Matthew was seen less in the other Gospels. This is not to say there was no interest about mountains in other biblical accounts, but rather, as I have stated, that mountain interest in antiquity was polyvalent, complex and varied. This chapter has provided aspects of perceptions of biblical mountains to show how the mountains and high places in biblical literature could enable an understanding of medieval perceptions of mountains.

²¹⁹ The Commission in both Mark 16.14-15 and Luke 24.45-48 was almost incidental, and is therefore difficult to fit into any greater narrative whole.

²²⁰ Power 'has been given' (*data est*, v.18) to Jesus: Lee and Viljoen, 'The Ultimate Commission', 66.

²²¹ France, *Matthew*, 1047-8.

²²² Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 201.

²²³ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 199.

The influence of biblical writing on Egeria was significant and her enthusiasm and curiosity for the mountains reveal that there was engagement with the uplands in antiquity. Egeria's writing provides a unique voice of the tensions between interpretation of the written Bible and perception of the geography of the mountains in the Holy Land, between the actions of reading and doing. As her climbs in the Holy Land were concurrent with Paula's travels, the suggestion is that travels and ascents were perhaps more frequent than we know about today.²²⁴ The thesis can now put into place the learning taken from the classical and biblical mountains and look at the medieval period, and the influence of his earlier reading on Willibald's own perception of mountains.

²²⁴ For Paula, see the letter of Jerome mentioned in section 3.4.3

4 Willibald's ascent through the layers of Vulcano

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will examine Willibald's ascent of Mount Vulcano. I will explore the interplay between Willibald's physical ascent of Vulcano and the written account left to us by his scribe, Hugeburc. The tension between the real and the virtual, between the physical and the literary mountains, is a theme of this thesis and—as far as sources allow—I will show how the interplay between Willibald's ascent and Hugeburc's account unfolded an interpretation of mountains both real and written. Secondly, I have mentioned the importance of curiosity as a theme of the thesis and the appearance of the concept of curiosity as an aspect relevant to ascents discussed above. In her written account of Willibald's climb, Hugeburc described Willibald as curious, a description she offered as a specific reason for his climbing the mountain—he was curious to see Theodoric's hell at the summit. This chapter will explore Willibald's curiosity as a reason for climbing the mountain. Thirdly, I will explore how it was possible that Willibald's reading inspired him for his pilgrimage in foreign lands, his adventures overseas and his ascent of Vulcano by examining earlier literature, including biblical and classical literature. I will show how influence stemming from literary accounts of mountains and volcanoes was likely to have planted seeds of interest in these medieval interpretations of high places. Finally, the whole chapter will continue to offer a counter to modern perceptions to the effect that medieval and ancient mountains were places to be avoided whenever possible.

4.2 Hugeburc¹ and Willibald

We have today a relatively large amount of detail about the life of Willibald, 700-c.786, who left his homeland at about the age of twenty, never to return, and who was ordained as Bishop of Eichstätt (today in Bavaria, Germany, see Fig. 4-1) in 740. A major source of that knowledge comes from the account of Hugeburc, an Anglo-Saxon nun living in Heidenheim (today in

¹ For the spelling of the name Hugeburc, I follow Peter Dronke, *Women Writers Of The Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 31, n.111, who retains the forms of the manuscript Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Codex Latinus Monacensis 1086, fol. 71v, rather than alter her name to the Anglo-Saxon form Hygeburg. Pauline Head, 'Who is the nun from Heidenheim? A study of Hugeburc's *Vita Willibaldi*', *Medium Aevum*, 71:1 (2002), 29, mentions this manuscript as the oldest surviving manuscript of the biographies. For the manuscript online see: <http://www.europeanaregia.eu/en/manuscripts/munich-bayerische-staatsbibliothek-clm-1086/en>.

southern Germany, near the border with Bavaria, see Fig. 4-1), whose *Hodoeporicon* ('Travelogue') gave an account of Willibald's life, travels and adventures.²



Figure 4.1: Map of Germany

"File:Blank Map Germany States.png" by Ahoerstemeier (Later version was uploaded by Postmann Michael) is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=17835603>

The editor of Hugeburc's text, Oswald Holder-Egger, declared in his *Introduction* that the term *Hodoeporicon* was employed not by Hugeburc, but by Henricus Canisius, the first editor of her account—'Canisius the first editor, whom some later editors followed', and he also suggested that Hugeburc originally gave her work the title of *Vita* (life) or *Gesta* (deeds).³ Hugeburc's account is interesting in its own right and a valuable resource, since it is the only

² For the text, see O. Holder-Egger, *Vitae SS. Willibaldi et Wynnebaldi*, MGH, SS 15.1 (Hanover: Hahn, 1887), 80-117. All references to the Latin text of Hugeburc's account will be taken from Holder-Egger's edition, hereafter *Vita*.

³ *Vita*, 81.45 ff., 84.25.

extant narrative of a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the eighth century⁴ and is the only extant life of a Carolingian saint written by a woman.⁵

Nearly a decade before Willibald died, he dictated his life and travels to Hugeburc, who wrote down the account delivered to her from the bishop's own mouth when he was nearing eighty years of age. On Tuesday 23 June in the year 778, at the double monastery of Heidenheim,⁶ Hugeburc composed the *Lives* of Willibald, bishop of Eichstätt, and his brother Wynnebald, abbot of Heidenheim.⁷ Briefly, her account of Willibald's *Life* was as follows. She told of his childhood and education in Wessex, and his departure from England with members of his family on pilgrimage to Rome. His father died at Lucca and Willibald reached Rome with his brother. After two years in Rome his brother returned to England, but Willibald set off with companions on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land. At Tartus (Syria) they were arrested as spies for a short while. Once released, they continued their travels, visiting among other places Damascus, Mount Tabor (named by Hugeburc as the Mountain of Transfiguration), Caesarea Philippi, the river Jordan, Galgala, Jericho, Jerusalem, the Mount of Olives, Bethlehem, Tyre, Sidon and Mount Libanus. During a period of several years they visited some of these places more than once, and on one occasion Willibald smuggled balsam into Tyre. He spent more than two years in Constantinople (Istanbul), and visited Nicaea. From Constantinople he sailed back to the island of Sicily, visiting the towns of Syracuse, Catania and Regia, from where he sailed to the island of Vulcano, where he climbed the mountain of the same name. From here he sailed to Lipari and saw the Didymi mountains, and then went to Naples, Capua, Teano, and finally to the monastery of Saint Benedict at Monte Cassino, about eighty miles to the south of Rome, in 731. He had now been seven years away from Rome, and it was ten years since he had left England. He spent a further ten years at Saint Benedict's monastery, until Pope Gregory III sent him to join the mission of Boniface in Germany. Boniface in turn sent him to Eichstätt. At Thuringia he met his brother Wynnebald for the first time since leaving Rome nearly twenty years previously. Boniface now ordained the forty-one year-old Willibald as the Bishop of Eichstätt, where he spent the remainder of his life. As an old man of about 79 years of age, on 23 June 778, he dictated his life's journey to Hugeburc in the monastery of Heidenheim.

⁴ C. H. Talbot, ed., *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries in Germany* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1954), 152.

⁵ Lisa M. C. Weston, 'A Vicarious Voyage in Queer Time: Hygeburg's *Hodoeporicon*', *Travel, Time, and Space in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Time*, ed. Albrecht Classen, 76-94 (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 76.

⁶ Founded by Willibald: Stephanie Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women and the Church* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1992), 274.

⁷ See e.g. Weston, *A Vicarious Voyage in Queer Time*, 88; Head, 'Who is the nun?', 29; Dronke, *Women Writers*, 33.

4.2.1 Saint Willibald

Willibald was born in Wessex c.700, a kinsman (probably nephew) of the great Anglo-Saxon missionary Saint Boniface, who was martyred in 754. After a life-threatening illness in infancy, at an early age Willibald was entrusted by his parents to the care of Theodred, at the monastery of Waldheim (Bishops Waltham, in Hampshire, see Fig. 4-3), where as an oblate he was to devote his life to monastic service.⁸ His nun biographer related that his childhood reading of Scripture was voracious, and as a boy and young man

... sacras Davitici carminis paginas sollerte mentis intentione peragrans, sed et etiam alios divinae legis agiosgraphiorum armariolas indagando sive legendo procaciter ille sensu sophirus, mente moderatus indagabat, et tamen non adhuc plurimorum etate annororum grandevus, sed, sicut divina semper supernae pietatis clementia agere solet, ut secundum poeticam prophetarum vaticinio ex ore infantium ceu lactantium perficere sibi solet laudem.⁹

... he scanned with diligent purpose of mind the sacred pages of David's Psalms and examined other treasures of the holy writers of the divine law, by inquiring and by reading precociously; he was wise in perception though moderate in opinion, even though not yet old in the age of his years, but he was accustomed to act always with divine mercy of holy piety, so that [as is said] according to the verse of the prophets: 'Out of the mouths of babies or suckling infants God is accustomed to carry out His praise.'

Hugeburc's words described Willibald's early reading, but, pointedly, she might also have been hinting at her own youthful prodigy and wide reading. By quoting from Psalm 8.2—there is no way of knowing whether the quotation was cited by Willibald or by her—she might have been covertly hinting at the quality of her own youthful writing as much as at Willibald's precocious childhood.¹⁰ Such an interpretation raises the view of the tension between the content of her written work and his oral dictation, and the interplay between her writing and his physical activity.

For an understanding of Willibald's ascent of Vulcano the supposition is that Willibald as well as his biographer Hugeburc had access to a wide range of sources and texts, both sacred and secular, which helped shape their understanding and perception of mountains.¹¹ Wessex at

⁸ *Vita*, 85. Michael Lapidge, 'Willibald', in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, second edition, ed. Michael Lapidge, John Blair, Simon Keynes and Donald Scragg (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 498; T. Wright, *Early Travels in Palestine* (London: George Woodfall and Son, 1848).

⁹ *Vita*, 89, quoting Psalm 8.2.

¹⁰ See Weston, 'A Vicarious Voyage in Queer Time', 86, who comments that Hugeburc's passage 'certainly resonates with her ostensible humility and her previous demurs about her skill and worthiness as a hagiographer.'

¹¹ Examples of what was available for Willibald to read can be found in the citations of Aldhelm's reading, listed in Rudolfus Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, MGH AA 15 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1919), 544-6; amplified by V. Law, *Grammar and Grammarians in the Early Middle Ages* (London: Longman, 1997), 93-101; and by Andy Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

the beginning of the eighth century provided churchmen and women with an opportunity for learning under the abbacy of Aldhelm (appointed abbot c.675).¹² The nuances and aspects of earlier literature combined to provide an interest in, perhaps even an expectation of, what might be experienced in the mountains. Willibald and Hugeburc had access to accounts of how mountains featured in literature or were employed in the Bible, a literary heritage which included descriptions of mountains and aspects of climbing mountains (rather than mountain climbing literature *per se*), and this heritage guided and inspired them both.

It was perfectly possible for Willibald to have studied a range of authors, pagan and biblical, and to have read widely before he set off on his pilgrimage; it was equally possible for Hugeburc to have read a similarly significant range of authors in both England and Germany; and it was possible for them both that their reading informed their understanding of mountains and the texts they had read informed their perception of Vulcano. Willibald and Hugeburc were influenced by what they had read, and in order to see what these influences were, it is necessary now to look at their early lives and at Hugeburc's account.

Hugeburc wrote that Willibald was attentive to his studies and sacred reading, and suggested that he also turned to patristic commentaries for interest and guidance in his biblical studies.¹³ He was doubtless aware in his reading of the biblical mountains we have previously discussed and their representation in the Bible might have been an inspiration to his travels, as they had been to Egeria. Before he was twenty years of age Willibald had made up his mind to renounce all worldly possessions and leave his home and family,

[quearet ...] peregrinationisque temptare telluram et ignotas externarum requirere ruras.¹⁴

2006), 126-238. Michael Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, 38, says that before Boniface left for the continent in 718, he had composed several writings in the Monastery at Nursling (on the edge of modern Southampton, and therefore very near to Willibald's birthplace). Boniface's works were an *Ars grammatica*, the *Caesurae versuum* (a metrical treatise), and the *Enigmata* (a metrical collection of riddles on virtues and vices). The sources on which Boniface drew, as mentioned by Lapidge, included: Donatus, *Ars maior*; Priscian, *Institutio de nomine et pronomine et verbo*; Isidore, *Etymologiae*, book i; Asporius, *Ars grammatica*; Aldhelm, Audax, Charisius, Diomedes, Phocas, Sergius, and Virgilius Maro Grammaticus; Isidore, *Etymologiae*, books i, vi, and viii; Servius, *De centum metris*; Vergil (*Aeneis*, *Bucolica*, and *Georgica*), the *Carmen paschale* of Caelius Sedulius, the *Psychomachia* of Prudentius, and the *Metamorphoseis* of Ovid. It is likely that many of these works were available to Willibald.

¹² Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, 34, 267, 347; Richard Gameson, 'From Vindolanda to Domesday: the book in Britain from the Romans to the Normans', *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, Vol. I, c.400-1100, ed. Richard Gameson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 3, who says that centres such as Malmesbury 'accumulated a sufficient quantity and range of books for their holdings to be described as libraries'. Barbara Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages* (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 181. Bede refers to his older contemporary Aldehelm as *vir undecunque doctissimus* ('a man most learned in every possible way'): *HE*, V.18, p.514.

¹³ 'It is accepted that for the Anglo-Saxons the study of the bible was the fundamental literary activity', Patrick Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature in Western England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 177. Aldhelm speaks of *orthodoxorum bibliotechis, ubi sagacissimi Hieronimi commenta recitantur*, '(in the) libraries in which the commentaries of the most wise Jerome are read': *De virginitate* XLIX, in *MGH AA* 15 Ehwald, 303.

¹⁴ *Vita*, 89.

so that he might strive to undertake pilgrimage abroad and explore the unknown regions of foreign lands.

Hugeburc thus presented a picture of a religious, certainly, but also an adventurous young man, for whom the desire to ‘explore the unknown regions’ was as enticing as ‘pilgrimage’, and whose curiosity for the unknown was a motivating factor to visit ‘foreign lands’. Willibald’s curiosity was a defining characteristic in Hugeburc’s description of his ascent of Vulcano. Having travelled on pilgrimage for about eight years, Willibald returned to Italy via Sicily. The island of Vulcano lies about a dozen miles to the north of Sicily: it is one of the Lipari (or Aeolian) islands and is adjacent to Lipari itself (see Fig. 4-2). In 729 the young Willibald climbed Vulcano, the island which Pope Gregory had named as the location of Theodoric’s hell.

Et inde navigaverunt ad insulam Vulcana; ibi est infernus Theodrichi. Cumque illic veniebant, ascendebant de nave, ut viderent, qualis esset infernus. Statimque Willibaldus curiosius¹⁵ et volens videre, qualis esset intus ille infernus, et volebat ascendere in montis cacumen ubi infernus subtus erat, et non poterat, qui faville de tetro tartaro usque ad marginem ascendentes glomerati illic iacebant et ad instar nivis, quando de caelo nivans candiditas nivalesque cadentes catervas de aereis etherum arcibus arcis coacervareque solet, ita faville coacervati in apice montis iacebant, ut ascensum Willibaldo prohibebant. Sed tamen tetrum atque terribilem horrendumque eructantem de puteo flammam erumpere videbat, ad instar tonitru tonantis sic flammam magnum et fumi vaporem valde suplime in alto ascendentem terribiliter intuebat.¹⁶

Then [i.e. from Sicily] they sailed to the island of Vulcano; the hell of Theodoric is on this island. And when they arrived there, they went up from the ship in order to see what this hell was like. And immediately Willibald, driven by curiosity and eager to see what that hell was like inside, wanted to climb to the summit of the mountain, beneath which lay hell: but he was unable to do so because ashes had blown up from the black underworld and lay there in heaps at the edge of the crater: and just as snow, when it falls snow-white from heaven and, falling from the airy palaces of the sky, heaps the flakes into mounds, in the same way the ashes lay piled in heaps on the summit of the mountain and prevented Willibald from reaching the top. Nevertheless, he saw the black, terrible and fearfully belching flames burst forth from the crater with a noise like pealing thunder; and he gazed in terror at the flames, and at the enormous cloud of smoke rising high into the sky.

¹⁵ *Curiosius*: ‘curious’. Willibald’s curiosity is key to his character, even as it was to Seneca’s, and to his perceptions of mountains; his *curiositas* will be explored later.

¹⁶ *Vita*, 101-102.



Figure 4.2: Map of the Aeolian islands

"File:Aeolian Islands map.png" by No machine-readable author provided. NormanEinstein assumed (based on copyright claims). is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0 <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=143459>

I will explore Willibald's actual ascent and Hugeburc's description of the ascent later in this chapter. Firstly, and in anticipation of the interplay between her written word and his literal climb, it will be helpful to look more deeply into Hugeburc's writing.

4.2.2 Hugeburc and the *Hodoeporicon*

Hugeburc wrote her work anonymously: the lives of two renowned men of God, Willibald and Wynnebald, to be remembered forever, written by a nameless woman. Yet placed between the end of the life of Wynnebald and the beginning of that of Willibald¹⁷ the nun wrote four riddling lines—a cryptogram—and in this position the lines survived for more than a millennium, untranslated, a complex riddle whose meaning could not be understood.¹⁸ The words remained,

¹⁷ The four lines of text were in a late eighth-century or early ninth-century manuscript, 'inserted between [Hugeburc's] *Vita Wynnebaldi abbatis Heidenheimensis* and *Vita Willibaldi episcopi Eichstetensis*, in Codex latinus Monacensis 1086, the oldest surviving manuscript of the biographies': Head, 'Who is the nun?', 29.

¹⁸ 'Her name is lost, it is as the anonymous nun of Heidenheim that she has come down to posterity.' Lina Eckenstein, *Women Under Monasticism: Chapters on Saint-Lore and Convent Life Between A.D. 500 and A.D. 1500* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896), 142. Head, 'Who is the nun?', 29, adds that before Bischoff no editor of Hugeburc's work discussed or made comment on the curious 'intertextual gloss'.

copied and recopied, until in 1931 the puzzle was deciphered by Bernhard Bischoff,¹⁹ to reveal the name of the hitherto anonymous scribe:

*ego una Saxonica nomine Hugeburc ordinando hec scribebam.*²⁰

I, a Saxon woman named Hugeburc, arranged and wrote this account.

The cryptogram revealed that the work was not, after all, anonymous, and it divulged the name of Hugeburc as the author of the *Vitae*. Her use of a cryptogram invites close analysis of all that Hugeburc wrote, for it is possible that other secrets lie hidden within her account: after all, her use of the word *ordinando* ('arranging') suggests a gathering and ordering of narrative techniques as much as a gathering and ordering a text of Willibald's life. Before one reads her account of Willibald, therefore, there is an awareness of contradictory forces which earlier scholars have recognised.²¹ There is a tension in her mediated interpretation of his words, and for this thesis it will be necessary to examine what mediated excitement she might have delivered from her depths of literary knowledge, and how she might have chosen to represent Willibald's dictation in an account structured and arranged by herself. Her interpretation of Willibald's climb allows for a wider understanding of medieval views on mountains, as she heard of Willibald's climb through his own words and perceived it through his lens and her own.

Hugeburc referred to herself as unworthy and spoke of herself and her own abilities with great modesty.²² As with her anonymous revelation and her arrangement of the text, her declaration of unworthiness belied her considerable literary skill and was a repeated declaration, that she was a frail woman, and inadequate for the task before her.²³ She emphasised that her role was simply that of a scribe, and to counter any claim that her narrative was worthless she provided apparent buttress to her account by mentioning the male deacons and priests who had also listened to Willibald's tale: Hugeburc's was a *feminine* declaration supported by *male* witnesses.²⁴ The declaration was important enough for her to repeat the idea towards the end of the *Vita*:

¹⁹ Bernhard Bischoff, 'Wer ist die Nonne von Heidenheim?', *Studien und Mitteilungen zur Geschichte des Benediktinerordens*, 49 (1931), 387-8; Dronke, *Women Writers*, 33.

²⁰ Head, 'Who is the nun?', 38. As Weston, 'A Vicarious Voyage in Queer Time', (80) says, 'The cypher is of a common Bonifatian type, very much in the textual tradition of Fulda and other Bonifatian foundations.' For further on Bonifatian cryptography as a means of delivering a covert expression of identity, enveloping a wish to be recognised and remembered, in spite of apparent anonymity, see Head, 'Who is the nun?', 29-30; Wilhelm Levison, 'Saint Boniface and cryptography', in *England and the Continent* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946), 190-94.

²¹ For example, Bischoff, 'Wer ist die Nonne von Heidenheim?', 387-8; and Head, 'Who is the nun?', 31.

²² *Vita* 86.27-8. For the trope of the humble hagiographer, see Head, 'Who is the nun?', 31; Dronke, *Women Writers*, 34; Levison, *England and the Continent*, x.

²³ *Vita*, 86.32-3. See also Dronke, *Women Writers*, 34.

²⁴ *Vita* 87.21-3. See also Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries*, 153.

...non ab alio reperta nisi ab ipso audita et ex illius ore dictata perscripsimus in monasterio Heidanheim, testibus mihi diaconis eius et aliis nonnullis iuniores eius. Ideo dico hoc, ut nullus iterum dicat frivolum fuisse.²⁵

We have not written these words down as if discovered from another, but rather as having been heard from him and dictated from his mouth in the monastery at Heidenheim, and my evidence for this are his deacons and some other minor priests. I mention this, so that no one might later say that this account is worthless.

Hugeburc declared that she had heard Willibald's words dictated from his own mouth, so the story was his; but that she wrote it, so the story was also hers, even though she said she wrote nothing which had not been heard from him. It is difficult to separate their voices. Hugeburc was a second-hand witness to Willibald's travels, his mountain ascents in the Holy Land and his ascent of Vulcano, and she was a first-hand witness to his telling of his life. She was writing not because she had any pretensions to literature, she said, but because Willibald dictated the account of his life to her.

When she supported her claim to write with the information that she was a relative²⁶ of Willibald, Hugeburc disingenuously avowed that it was no skill on her part, but her blood kinship to the bishop which allowed her to relate his story.²⁷ However, her skills at writing were 'demonstrated in both her presentation of herself as author and her narrative of Willibald's life,'²⁸ and the tension between her claims and his climbs is to be taken into account when reading of Willibald's ascents. In spite of her self-deprecation discussed above, Hugeburc's writing reveals a facility more than a scribe's literal rendition of a dictation, unfolding a vicarious enjoyment of his travels and a shared excitement for his adventures, including his ascent of Vulcano.²⁹ She left her mark on her writing as surely as she left her name concealed in a cypher, and the unpicking of her account from Willibald's recitation allows for a twofold medieval perception of mountaineering, viewed from his experience and from her mediation.

²⁵ *Vita*, 105.15-17. See also Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries*, 175.

²⁶ *Vita*, 87.

²⁷ Hugeburc would have had models of other saints' *Vitae* to follow, including the Life of Boniface, written only a few years earlier in 768 or 769. Ian Wood, 'Missionary hagiography in the eighth and ninth centuries', in *Ethnogenese und Überlieferung: Angewandte Methoden der Frühmittelalterforschung* ed. Karl Brunner and Brigitte Merta (Vienna: Oldenbourg, 1994), 189; Head, 'Who is the nun?', 33, n.27.

²⁸ Weston, 'A Vicarious Voyage in Queer Time', 84. See also Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries*, 153, Dronke, *Women Writers*, 34 and Head, 'Who is the nun?', 30.

²⁹ See Weston, 'A Vicarious Voyage in Queer Time,' 76. For further on Hugeburc and her work within the Bonifatian Circle, see also Head, 'Who is the Nun?', 29-46 (esp. 29-30); Patricia Ranft, *Women in Western Intellectual Culture 600-1500* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), esp. 6-10; and Rosalind Love, 'Insular Latin Literature to 900,' in *The Cambridge History of Early Medieval English Literature*, ed. Clare Lees (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 120-57.

4.3 Willibald's travel and pilgrimage

Willibald travelled to Rome accompanied by his father and his brother Wynnebald. Seasonal timing was everything: for the traveller who set out too early in spring or too late in autumn there were dangers from the weather, and the snowy Alpine passes presented a very real threat to life; but for those who set out in the height of summer, disease (especially the danger of malaria in parts of France and Italy) was to be feared.³⁰ According to Albert of Stade (c.1236) August and September were the best times to be in the Alps;³¹ and though the evenings were cool at altitude, it was generally safer to cross the Alps in mid- to late-summer, as there was a greater chance of snow-free Alpine passes.³²

Willibald's party left England in the summer of 721, when he was not much more than twenty years of age. They sailed from Hamblemouth near Bishops Waltham, about ten miles from Southampton, crossed the English Channel and headed up the river Seine to Rotum (Rouen, see Fig. 4-3).³³ Hugeburc moved quickly in the account, lingering on scenes that interested her, but travelling with speed. At Rouen the party rested for a few days; then almost immediately they had reached Lucca (see Fig. 4-3), in northern Italy.

et sic inante Gorthonicum gradatim ex parte peragrantes supervenerunt. Cumque pergentes venerunt ad urbe que vocatur Luca ...³⁴

And so, going on gradually from place to place they came over into Gorthonicum. And when in their journey they had reached the city which is called Lucca ...

³⁰ 'Ideally, therefore, the pilgrim should set out from home early enough to cross the Alps before winter had set in but late enough so that he arrived in Rome after the heat of summer had subsided.' Debra J. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome in the Middle Ages*, Studies in the History of Medieval Religion, Vol. XIII (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1998), 58. See also Peter Spufford, *Power and Profit: the Merchant in Medieval Europe* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002), 160.

³¹ For Albert of Stade see Johann M. Lappenberg, *Annales Stadenses*, MGH SS 16 (Hanover: Hahn, 1859), 271-379, esp. 340: 'Which time of year is most suitable to undertake a journey to Rome? About mid-August, because then the weather is temperate, the roads are dry and there is enough water, but not too much, the days are long enough for walking and the nights for recuperating the body, and you will find your staple diet replenished with seasonal fare.'

³² Snow-free passes could not, of course, be guaranteed: in the twelfth century the Icelandic pilgrim Abbot Nikolas Bergsson spoke of snow on the Great Saint Bernard pass in summer, E.C. Werlauff, *Symbolae ad Geographiam Medii Aevi ex Monumentis Islandicis* (Haunia: Librariae Gyldendalanae, 1821), 18. Conditions in winter were much worse: John de Liro, c.1215, travelling from Liege to Rome, froze to death in the Alps, Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome*, 56.

³³ *Vita*, 91.1-11. Hugeburc related that it took Willibald time and persuasive effort to convince his father (especially) and brother to accompany him. Head, 'Who is the nun?', 35-6, argues that by leaving behind his home and worldly possessions Willibald was following the biblical tradition; and by travelling with his father and brother he was adhering to the Bonifatian practice of travelling with kin. Hugeburc is related to Willibald and his brother Wynnebald, and so related in detail the conflict behind the journey.

³⁴ *Vita*, 91.14-15.

It is frustrating and not easy to be sure of the route that the brothers and their father took across the Alps.³⁵ Hugeburc's use of the word *supervenerunt* meaning 'they went over' would strongly suggest an Alpine pass. Her sole geographical reference between Rouen and Lucca was the (unknown) town of Gorthonicum, which is yet to be identified,³⁶ and she lingers only when the party reached Lucca, and not before, as this is where Willibald's father died. According to Peter Spufford's detailed work on travel in medieval Europe (*Power and Profit: The Merchant in Medieval Europe*, 2002), a very common route used by pilgrims and merchants was the Great Saint Bernard Pass, lying in a roughly straight line from Rouen to Paris over the Alps to Lucca.³⁷ The Simplon Pass was lower at 2100 m., but the descending roads on the Italian side were difficult and dangerous, and so the Great Saint Bernard, though higher at 2473 m., was more popular.³⁸

Hugeburc made no mention of the Alps or any of the terrain travelled between Rouen and Lucca. I suggest Hugeburc's wish to reach Lucca quickly was because of the momentous event which occurred there. Once the party reached Lucca at the beginning of autumn, the father died and was buried, at the Church of Saint Frigidian.³⁹ The father's death was clearly an emotive incident to recall, more memorable to Willibald than the early stages of their journey, and more powerful to Hugeburc, who was perhaps eager to keep her account, and Willibald, moving forward.

³⁵ George B. Parks, *The English Traveller to Italy, Vol. I: The Middle Ages to 1525* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1954), 49, says no more than that Willibald definitely crossed the Alps, possibly by the Great Saint Bernard Pass, but provides no supporting evidence. Several had been this way before Willibald, for example Wilfrid in 678: Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi I episcopi Eboracensis*, ed. Wilhelm Levison, MGH, SS rer. Merov. VI, (Hannoverae et Lipsiae: Hahn, 1913), 163–263 (in Latin). On the greater popularity of the Great Saint Bernard Pass for pilgrims and travellers, see J. E. Tyler, *The Alpine Passes: The Middle Ages 962-1250* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1930), 68-73; Spufford, *Power and Profit*, 155-161. For major routes over the Alps to Rome used between the eighth and the thirteenth centuries, see Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome*, 43ff.; Parks, *The English Traveller*, 24ff.

³⁶ Holder-Egger, *Vita* 91, n.7, offers Mabillon's conjecture that the town was in fact Dertona (Tortona), a town in Liguria, just south-west of Milan; and that others such as Tobler believe it to be Cortona in Tuscany: however, as Cortona is a hundred or so miles south of Lucca this is unlikely, unless Hugeburc's geography errs here as well.

³⁷ Spufford, *Power and Profit*, 140; Tyler, *The Alpine Passes*, 71.

³⁸ Spufford, *Power and Profit*, 159. The higher pass was open to wheeled traffic only between June and October, because of Alpine snows, though Hugeburc tells us that Willibald was travelling on foot, *pedestrim*, *Vita* 91.

³⁹ *Vita*, 91.19. Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome*, 40, reminds us that pilgrims wrote wills before travelling, an indication they were aware that they would encounter hardship and even death on their travels.

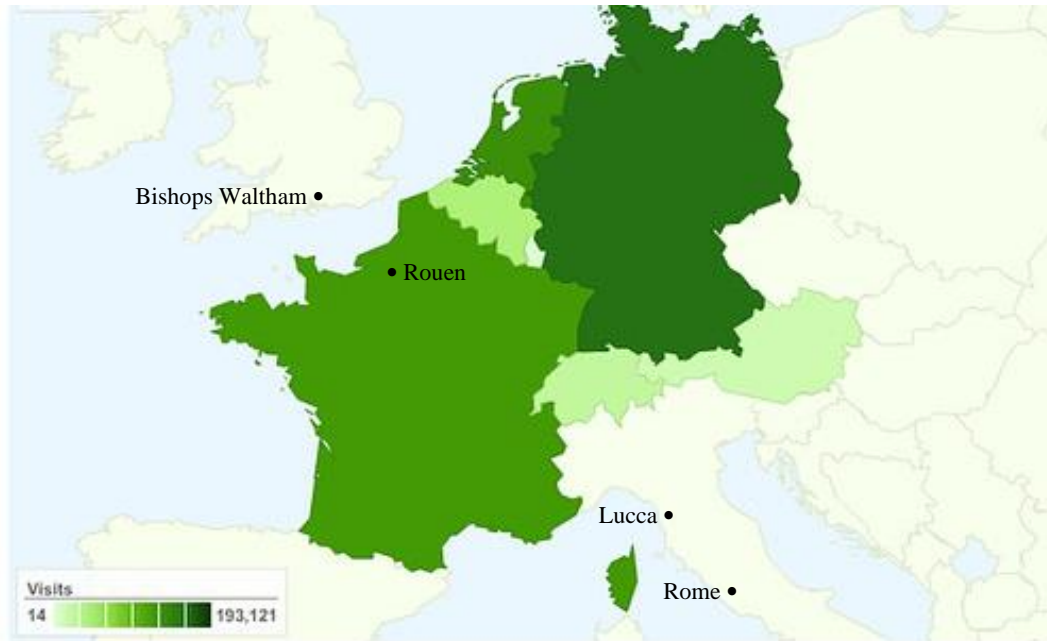


Figure 4.3: Map of Western Europe

"The Brothers Brick Year 5: Western Europe" by Dunechaser is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/12426416@N00/4832666245>

From Lucca the *Vita*, erroneously, showed the brothers travelled over the Alps, thus conflating the Alps and the Apennines, though whether Hugeburc or Willibald was at fault in the geography is not possible to know:

Confestimque illi pergentes usque dum per vastam Italie telluram perneciter, per concava vallium, per abrupta montium, per plana campestrium ad ardua Alpium arces pedestrim scandendo gressum dirigebant in altum. Cumque, lustratis Alpium cacuminis glacialique nivium nebulosa turbidine, almi Dei adminiculo sanctorumque sustentaculo cum cunctis contibulum clientello omnique collegum cetu tuti toti tumida militum evaserunt versutias, inlustraque extimplo adierunt limina egregiasque Petri...⁴⁰

At once they set out on their way, going steadily through the vast land of Italy, through the deep valleys, over steep mountains across the level plains, and climbing upwards they directed their steps towards the high mountains of the Alps. And after they had beheld the Alpine peaks and the icy winds heavy with snow and cloud, with the help of a loving God and the support of the saints, accompanied by all their relatives and companions they all safely avoided the trickery of the fierce soldiery and came to the shrine of Saint Peter...in [Rome].

There was a conflation of the Alps and the Apennines in Hugeburc's account here, showing a lack of knowledge about Alpine and Apennine routes. At such a far remove it is difficult now to discern whether the error was made by the recollections of an eighty year-old man remembering scenes of his youth, or by a woman ordering an old man's recollection of

⁴⁰ *Vita*, 91. See also Talbot, *The Anglo-Saxon Missionaries*, 158.

scenes and places she had never witnessed or visited.⁴¹ However, the *Vita* of Saint Boniface (written by Willibald of Mainz) had recorded the journey of Boniface to Rome in 718, three years before Hugeburc's Willibald left England with his father and brother.⁴² Boniface, like Hugeburc's Willibald, had crossed from England to France, landing at Quentvic in Normandy (just south of modern Boulogne), before walking across France, over the Alps, and onto Rome. Boniface's Willibald recorded the journey:

[oraverunt] ... ut tutius, opitulante altithrono, Alpina nivium iuga transcenderent, Langobardorumque erga illos humanitatem mitius sentirent militumque malitiosam superbiae ferocitatem facilius evaderent. Cumque, sanctorum suffragante patrocínio et Domino deo dispensante, omnis quippe cohors contribunalium comitatu huius sancti viri inherens limina beati Peteri apostoli prospere aggressus est, immensas statim Christo pro sospitate eorum grates persolvunt.⁴³

[They prayed] ... that by the help of Almighty God they might cross in safety the snowy peaks of the Alps, find greater kindness at the hands of the Lombards, and escape with impunity from the savage ferocity of the undisciplined soldiery. And when at last, through the prayers of the saints and the providence of God, the saint and his whole retinue had reached the tomb of Saint Peter the Apostle unharmed, they immediately gave thanks to Christ for their safe journey.'

For Holder-Egger, the editor of Hugeburc's text, the words of Boniface's journey were the source for Hugeburc's geographical error.

Errore sane gravissimo monialis scribit, fratres demum Luca Romam proficiscentes, Alpes transiisse, etiamsi Apenninos intelligere velis. Quem ex eo ortum esse crediderim, quod Willibaldus c. 5.1.1. scribit, Bonifatium Alpes transgressum scribit Romam venisse. Quam Vitam monialem hoc loco imitatam esse, simillima eius verba probare videntur.⁴⁴

The nun writes with a very great error, in saying that the brothers eventually set out from Lucca for Rome and crossed the Alps, even though you would expect to understand the Apennines. I can believe that this mistake arose from the fact that

⁴¹ Hugeburc was not the only one to confuse the Alps and the Apennines. Parks, *The English Traveller*, 208 says that Gerald of Barri's (Giraldus Cambrensis) written account of his third journey to Rome in 1203, confuses the two chains. For the whole journey, with escapes in England, see H. E. Butler, *The Autobiography of Giraldus Cambrensis* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937), 261-66.

⁴² For Willibald of Mainz's biography of Saint Boniface, which served Hugeburc as a model, see Eva Gottschaller, *Hugeburc von Heidenheim. Philologische Untersuchungen zu den Heiligenbiographien einer Nonne des achten Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Arbo-Gesellschaft, 1973), 75-81.

⁴³ Wilhelm Levison, *Vitae Sancti Bonifatii Archiepiscopi Moguntini*, MGH, SS rer. Germ. 57.1 (Hannoverae et Lipsiae: Hahn, 1905), 20-21.

⁴⁴ *Vita* 91, n.10. Holder-Egger then selectively quotes from Hugeburc: *ut ... militum malitiosam superbiae ferocitatem facilius evaderent. Cumque, sanctorum suffragante patrocínio et Domino deo dispensante, omnis quippe cohors contribunalium comitatu huius sancti viri inherens limina beati Peteri apostoli prospere aggressus est, immensas statim Christo pro sospitate eorum grates persolvunt.* 'When they had easily escaped the wicked ferocity of the soldiers, and when, with the support of the saints and the help of God, all of their party reached unscathed the shrine of Saint Peter the Apostle. At once they gave many thanks to Christ for their safety.'

Willibald, in c. 5.1.1. writes that Boniface crossed the Alps and came to Rome; and that the nun imitated that Life at this point, as her very similar words seem to prove.

I agree with Holder-Egger in surmising the source of Hugeburc's mistake, though his reference to the similarities of the text are not convincing—certainly Hugeburc's words are not 'very similar' to those of Boniface's Willibald. However, it is the case that Boniface's account showed that he moved quickly from Quentvic, over the Alps, to the territory of Lombardy and into Rome. If Hugeburc had access to this account, then it is probable that elements of Boniface's journey melded into her own account of Willibald's journey. It is more likely, therefore, that the conflation of the Alps and the Apennines, allied to the momentous event of the passing of Willibald's father in Lucca, arose partly from Hugeburc's knowledge of the Bonifatian account, partly from her limited geographical knowledge and partly from her desire to move her version onwards. Hugeburc's reliance on an earlier source influenced her own interpretation of the mountains.

Be that as it may, her narrative now blurred into the adventure rather than the location, which hints at Hugeburc's own perception of 'the story heard from him'⁴⁵ rather than Willibald's own verbal recollection 'dictated from his own lips',⁴⁶ the consequence of her mediated response to his record of the pilgrimage. She represented, or interpreted, the words of the bishop (she called her account a *coniectura*, 'interpretation');⁴⁷ and she wove them into her account (she used the word *texere*, 'wove' to describe her arrangement of the account).⁴⁸ There was a sense of excitement in her description of the journey through the mountains, and this exhilaration was as much Hugeburc's mediation as Willibald's recollection.

The mood of adventure was palpable, and the challenges of *abrupta montium* (steep mountains), *militum* (soldiers) and *nivium* (snow) were all part of the journey for this soldier of Christ, and the use of vivid vocabulary reminded the reader that danger was present on every precipice: the land of Italy was *vastam* (vast), the mountains were *abrupta* (steep) and the Alps were *ardua* (high). Firstly, a tricolon with repeated use of *per* led the party out of the valleys and up into the mountains:

pergentes usque dum **per** concava vallium, **per** abrupta montium, **per** plana
campestrium ad ardua Alpium arces ...⁴⁹

going through the deep valleys, over steep mountains, across the level plains towards
the high mountains of the Alps ...

⁴⁵ *Vita*, 87.21-3; 105.15-17: *ab ipso audita*.

⁴⁶ *Vita*, 87.21-3; 105.15-17: *de ori sui dictatio*.

⁴⁷ She calls it her *coniectura* ('interpretation'), *Vita*, 88.

⁴⁸ *Vita*, 88: *texere*. See Head 'Who is the nun?', 38, 41.

⁴⁹ *Vita*, 91.22-5.

The alliterative force of the repeated ‘p’ sound and the magnificently alliterative *tuti toti tumida militum* (‘all safely [avoided] the trickery of the soldiers’)⁵⁰ revealed literary play at work in Hugeburc’s writing which was also seen in her description of Willibald’s ascent of Vulcano. These aural effects hinted at a familiarity with, and admiration for, the prose and verse style of Aldhelm, in whose writing alliteration was a strong feature.⁵¹ The literary link with Aldhelm continued to be seen in Hugeburc’s contrasting pairs of words, akin to Aldhelm’s use of ‘thematic parallels and contrasts’.⁵² Compare the following lines, taken from the verse version of Thecla and Eulalia, in Aldhelm’s *Carmen de virginitate*. Thecla spurned the

dulcia mundanae ... consortia vitae (**sweet association** with **worldly life**, 1980)

in favour of the

aurea caelestis ... praemia regni (the **golden rewards** of the **heavenly kingdom**, 2005).

Similarly, Eulalia rejected life’s

pompas opimas (**rich displays**, 2013)

preferring instead God’s

praemia vitae (**rewards of life**, 2019).⁵³

Hugeburc adopted such rhetorical artifice with her own contrasting pairings. Willibald travelled

per concava vallium, per abrupta montium (through the **deep valleys**, over **steep mountains**),

and then he went

per plana campestrium ad ardua Alpium (across the **level plains**, to the **heights of the Alps**).⁵⁴

⁵⁰ *Vita*, 91.26-7.

⁵¹ For a detailed examination of Aldhelm’s style, see M. Winterbottom, ‘Aldhelm’s Prose Style and its Origins’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 6 (1977), 39-76 (esp. 39-46); M. Lapidge, ‘Aldhelm’s Latin Poetry and Old English Verse’, *Comparative Literature* 31 (1979), 249-314; A. Orchard, *The Poetic Art of Aldhelm* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; 2006), 8-18, 112-116.

⁵² Orchard, *Aldhelm*, 15.

⁵³ Ehwald, *Aldhelmi Opera*, MGH AA 15, p.435, 435, 436, 436. For these and further examples see Orchard, *Aldhelm*, 15-16.

⁵⁴ *Vita*, 91.22-5.

For Orchard, Aldhelm’s rhetorical displays submerged the narrative content of his words, and ‘by his frequent use of stylistic devices Aldhelm [made] it clear that his interest [lay] in the telling and not the tale’.⁵⁵ By contrast, I argue that Hugeburc’s interest lay in both ‘the telling *and* the tale’, and that this was an indication of the interplay between the tale of Willibald and the teller Hugeburc, who was the mediator and writer of the account. Whatever Willibald may have dictated to her, Hugeburc added her own rhetorical polish to the account and the evidence is that the polish came from her reading—in this instance, from her reading of Aldhelm. I have shown already the importance of her earlier reading—of Boniface’s journey, for example—and the tension between what she had read and what she had heard (from Willibald) mingled to create her own version of his ascent. I posit that the admixture of Willibald’s dictation, Hugeburc’s perception and her knowledge and imitation of earlier literature combined to give Willibald’s tale more drama than the initial telling contained. Her reading informed her account and both her narrative content and rhetorical display were strong. Hugeburc’s paragraph of Willibald’s party advancing past Lucca through the mountains nicely supported Hugeburc’s declaration that she would be *ordinandoque texere* (‘arranging and weaving’)⁵⁶ the text of Willibald’s life. Her decorative description of the mountains revealed an enthusiastic interest in the high places as well as a breadth of reading.

4.3.1 Mount Etna, again

As Hugeburc recorded, Willibald related that the brothers reached Rome in November 721, where they spent two years. In 723 Wynnebald returned to England, while his brother ventured East, to Jerusalem. Willibald’s journey onwards took him through Sicily,⁵⁷ firstly to the town of Catania (see Fig. 4-4), where lay the body of Saint Agatha the virgin, and then to Mount Etna (see Fig. 4-4).⁵⁸ The account gave no hint as to whether he climbed the mountain, though it was certainly important enough for him to visit and to mention to the nun, for even fifty years *post eventum* it remained fresh in his memory. The lure of the area’s literary and religious history must have been appealing, but so, too, was the idea of seeing a volcanic mountain with his own eyes.

Et ibi est mons Ethna; que et quando evenerit prope aliquis rebus, ut illa ignis dilatare se voluerit super regionem, tunc **cito** illi cives sumunt **corpus sanctae** Agathae et contra **ignem ponunt**, et cessat. Illic fuerunt 3 ebdomadas.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Orchard, *Aldhelm*, 11.

⁵⁶ *Vita*, 88.12.

⁵⁷ The importance of Sicily as an approach to the Holy Land is discussed in Haris Kalligas, ‘Byzantine Monemvasia’, (PhD, King’s College London, 1987), 110.

⁵⁸ The history between Etna and Catania is a long one. The Roman poet Lucretius refers to a devastating Etnaean eruption in 121 BCE which destroyed Catania, 6.641-3.

⁵⁹ *Vita*, 93.7-11.

Mount Etna is there; and whenever it happens for any reason that the fire of the volcano decides to spread over the region, then **swiftly** the citizens there **take the body** of **Saint Agatha** and **place** it against **the fire**, and it stops. They stayed there for three weeks.



Figure 4.4: Map of Sicily, showing Catania, Syracuse and Mount Etna

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I have mentioned already that classical associations showed that Etna was a popular site for visitors.⁶⁰ Willibald's curiosity, like Seneca's,⁶¹ was piqued by the literary history and wonder of Mount Etna, and by the volcanic eruptions. His three-week stay lent credence to his curious nature, what Hugeburc had called his desire to explore foreign lands.⁶² Willibald was visiting a mountain familiar through classical associations, a mountain and a volcano, beneath which, as I have shown, there lay a mythological Typhoeus located in hell.⁶³ Hugeburc's reference to Saint Agatha indicated that Hugeburc, or Willibald, or both, might have been inspired by Aldhelm's *Carmen de Virginitate*, which contained a vivid description of Mount Etna, and referred to the same Catanian custom of setting Saint Agatha's body against the flames when the volcano had erupted.

Tum Siculus cultor flammarum fulmina cernens
Ignibus opposuit sanctam cum corpore tumbam,

⁶⁰ Section 2.4.3.

⁶¹ Section 2.4.4.

⁶² *Vita*, 89.

⁶³ For discussion on a volcano as a mountain, sections 2.4.3, 2.4.4.

Et dicto **citius** sopivit damna focorum.⁶⁴

Then a Sicilian priest, seeing the flashes of the flames, **placed** the **holy** tomb along with her **body** against **the fire**—and **more quickly** than words the threat of the flames diminished.

The similarities in content between the passages from Aldhelm and Hugeburc suggest that Hugeburc’s remembered reading shaped aspects of her account. I have argued that literary influence was an important aspect in impacting perceptions of mountains, whether or not they were volcanoes, and millennia of layers of hardened ash and lava on the mountainside were not the only accretions to have built Etna’s reputation. Williams recognises the significance of literary predecessors when he discusses what he terms the ‘literary geology’ needed to create Pietro Bembo’s ‘development of the Etna Idea’.⁶⁵ By these terms he refers to the layers of Greek and Roman literature that have moulded and fashioned the mountain’s history even as countless eruptions have altered its physical shape.⁶⁶ I have argued in this thesis that the ‘literary geology’ went all the way back to Hesiod. Hugeburc’s account added one more layer to Etna’s literary history, just as she in turn had relied on layers which had been set down before.

From Sicily, Willibald travelled to the Holy Land. I shall briefly discuss his ascent of mountains in the Holy Land before turning in more detail to his ascent of Vulcano. Before that, however, I will show layers of ‘literary geology’ that were influential in Willibald’s ascents, examining first the travels of Arculf as depicted in the writing of Adomnán.

4.3.2 In the Holy Land with Arculf and Willibald

A generation before Willibald, a man named Arculf, a bishop from Gaul travelling back from pilgrimage in the Holy Land, was caught in a storm and washed far from his native land. He reached the home of Adomnán, abbot of the monastery of Iona.⁶⁷ During his stay Arculf recounted his travels to Adomnán, who related that from Arculf’s narrative he wrote the *De Locis Sanctis* (‘On the Holy Places’), an account of the travels of Arculf in the Holy Land.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Aldhelm, *Carmen de Virginitate*, 1768 ff., in Ehwald, *MGH AA* 15.426-7. See also Aldhelm, *The Poetic Works*, by Lapidge and Rosier (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2009), 142.

⁶⁵ Williams, *Pietro Bembo on Etna*, 33; for more on Bembo see 23-72.

⁶⁶ The literary geology goes all the way back to Hesiod.

⁶⁷ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and tr. B. Colgrave & R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 5,15.

⁶⁸ To add authenticity to the traveller’s tale, Adomnán says that he recorded Arculf’s words on tablets first then parchment. *DLS* 3.6. For a fuller account of Arculf’s travels and how Adomnán came to write the account of Arculf’s pilgrimage, see Ora Limor, ‘Pilgrims and Authors: Adomnán’s *De locis sanctis* and Hugeburc’s *Hodoeporicon Willibaldi Sancti*’, in *Revue Bénédictine* 114 (2004), 253-275; Thomas O’Loughlin, *Adomnán and the Holy Places: The Perceptions of an Insular Monk on the Locations of the Biblical Drama* (London: T & T Clark, 2007).

The account is to be found in the text edited by Meehan and Bieler.⁶⁹ Meehan suggests that Arculf was travelling between 679-82 and that Adomnán wrote up the account between 683-686, so this was about forty-five years before Willibald climbed Vulcano (in 729).⁷⁰

Adomnán cited Arculf's own words frequently⁷¹—like Hugeburc, he reported in the third person the words which he had heard from an eyewitness account in the first person, what Weston describes as an 'auditor-turned-author'.⁷² As I have shown, this was an authorial aspect familiar in Hugeburc's account of Willibald, an account where the author became 'a partner in producing the story of a journey in which he or she had not taken part—a kind of intermediary between pilgrim and reader.'⁷³ Hugeburc was able to visualise scenes through the eyes of Willibald, as Adomnán did for Arculf.⁷⁴ The interplay between Adomnán and Arculf, and between Hugeburc and Willibald, gave a virtual freedom to the writers not accorded to the travellers, not to be confined by the physical realities of earth, rock and fire. Adomnán, like Hugeburc, recorded the narrative of the traveller whose words he heard, and he added to Arculf's descriptions by using the wealth of sources and resources which existed at Iona to supplement his description of the holy places.⁷⁵ This, too, is what Hugeburc did in her account of Willibald: she supplemented his testimony by her reliance on a rich collection of classical and biblical texts, which allowed her literary knowledge and her enthusiasm for Willibald's travels to adorn the account of Willibald's narrative. We have already seen Hugeburc's literary involvement in Willibald's tale and, as Weston says, 'far more than Adomnán, [Hugeburc] participates imaginatively and emotionally in the pilgrimage she renders into text.'⁷⁶

⁶⁹ For the text, see *Adamnani De locis sanctis*, ed. and trans. D. Meehan and L. Bieler, *Scriptores Latini Hiberniae* Vol. III (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1958) – hereafter *DLS*. This same text appears in Ludwig Bieler, 'Adamnani de locis sanctis libri tres', in *Itineraria et Alia Geographica*, ed. P. Geyer, *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (CCSL, 175)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1965), 175-234.

⁷⁰ Meehan, *DLS*, 9-11.

⁷¹ He mentions Arculf by name eighty-six times, seeking to add verification to his words: Limor, 'Pilgrims and Authors', 264.

⁷² Weston, 'A Vicarious Voyage in Queer Time', 81. See also Adomnán of Iona, *De Locis Sanctis*, in Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, 193, 276.

⁷³ Limor, 'Pilgrims and Authors', 255.

⁷⁴ Egeria and Petrarch visualised and recorded scenes through their own selves. Andersson, *Early Epic Scenery*, 158.

⁷⁵ For the richness of Iona's literary resources, see T. O'Loughlin, 'The library of Iona in the late seventh century: the evidence from Adomnán's *De locis sanctis*', *Ériu* 45 (1994), 33-52; David Woods, 'Arculf's Luggage: The Sources for Adomnán's *De locis Sanctis*', *Ériu* 52 (2002), 25-52. Adomnán himself had access to Augustine and to at least six works of Jerome. 'The presence of this range of works from one major exegetical figure in the Latin tradition suggests that there may have been sizeable holdings of several other important patristic authorities': T. O'Loughlin, 'The library of Iona', in *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, Vol. I, c.400-1100, ed. Richard Gameson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 572, who adds that Adomnán also had access to Gregory the Great's *Dialogues*.

⁷⁶ Weston, 'A Vicarious Voyage in Queer Time', 82. For more on the relationship between Hugeburc and Willibald, see Limor, 'Pilgrims and Authors', 266.

Opinion today is divided as to whether Arculf actually existed, or whether Adomnán invented him for the purposes of writing his book.⁷⁷ Certainly Bede accepted the veracity of Adomnán's tale of Arculf's account,⁷⁸ and as Bede's acceptance would be sufficient for Willibald and Hugeburc, the question over Arculf's existence is not a matter for debate in this chapter.⁷⁹

Adomnán mentioned two mountains in the Holy Land which Arculf said he had ascended. The first of these was Mount Olivet (the mountain of the Ascension). No record of the climb was given, only a description of the summit church, authorial evidence that Arculf had indeed climbed the mountain and seen what lay on its top, in much the same way that Egeria in the Holy Land verified her ascents by descriptions of the summits or of the views from the summits:⁸⁰

In toto monte Oliveti nullus alius locus altior esse videtur illo de quo Dominus ad caelos ascendisse traditur, ubi grandis ecclesia stat rotunda, ternas per circuitum cameratas habens porticos desuper tectas.⁸¹

On all Mount Olivet no other place appears to be higher than that place from which, it is said, the Lord ascended to heaven. A great round church stands there, which has within its circuit three arched porticos roofed in over.

The other mountain Arculf climbed was Mount Tabor (which Adomnán referred to as the mountain of Transfiguration).⁸² Again, as if offering proof of the authenticity of the account, Adomnán recorded that Arculf spent the night on the summit,⁸³ and that there were three churches on the upper plateau of the mountain.

In eadem quoque superiore planitie non parvi edificii ternae sunt fundatae celebres ecclesiae iuxta illorum tabernaculorum numerum de quibus in eodem sancto monte Petrus caelesti laetificatus visione et valde pavefactus ad Dominum locutus ait: *Bonum est nobis hic esse et faciamus tria tabernacula, unum tibi et unum Moysi et unum Heliae.*⁸⁴

On this same upper plateau, three notable and significantly-sized churches have been built, the same as the number of those tabernacles concerning which Peter, on the same holy mount, rejoicing and greatly terrified by the heavenly vision, said to the Lord: 'It

⁷⁷ For the argument that Arculf should not be completely overlooked, see Limor, 'Pilgrims and Authors', 262-3. For those who disavow that Arculf ever existed, see Thomas O'Loughlin, 'Perceiving Palestine in Early Christian Ireland: Martyrium, Exegetical Key, Relic and Liturgical Space', *Ériu* 54 (2004): 125-37 (esp. 125-7); O'Loughlin, 'The library of Iona', 33-52; Woods, 'Arculf's Luggage', 25-52.

⁷⁸ Bede, *De locis sanctis*, ed. I. Fraipont, CCSL 175 (1965), 245-280.

⁷⁹ Limor, 'Pilgrims and Authors', 263, adopts the line of not pursuing the question of Arculf's existence, but concentrates instead on the importance of the literary encounter between him and Adomnán.

⁸⁰ Section 3.3.1.

⁸¹ *DLS* 1.23.1: Mount Olivet, p.64-5.

⁸² *DLS* 2.27-29 (Tabor, 96-99). Cf. section 3.4.3.

⁸³ *DLS* 2.27.5.

⁸⁴ *DLS* 2.27.3. the biblical quotation is from Matt. 17.4.

is good for us to be here and let us make three tabernacles—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elias.’

Adomnán’s quotation from Matthew (17.4) allows us to see the biblical connections made by medieval visitors to mountains in the Holy Land. Adomnán linked the Mountain of Transfiguration visited by Arculf, with the Mountain of Transfiguration written about by Matthew. It seems that Adomnán and Arculf employed the Bible as a guidebook to the mountains of the Holy Land, just as Egeria had done three centuries earlier.

Willibald, too, travelled to the Holy Land. He spent some years on pilgrimage, visiting Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Damascus and Tyre. In Willibald’s wide-ranging travels, Hugeburc mentioned his climbs, much in the manner that Egeria and Arculf had done. He, too, came to Mount Tabor. Hugeburc also regarded Tabor as the Mountain of Transfiguration, and she therefore made the same connection with Matthew (17.4) as Adomnán had done. Although Hugeburc did not say that Willibald actually climbed the mountain, she hinted that he did so by mentioning that there was a monastery and a church on the summit, consecrated to Jesus, Moses and Elijah—the three churches mentioned by Arculf.

venerunt ad montem Thabor, ubi Dominus transfiguratus est; ibi est nunc monasterium monachorum et aecclesia Domino consecrata et Moyysi et Helie; et illi cives nominant illum locum Age-mons.⁸⁵

They came to Mount Thabor, where the Lord was transfigured. Now a monastery of monks is there and a church dedicated to the Lord and to Moses and to Elias.

Later, Willibald visited Mount Olivet.

ascendit in montem Oliveti ... Et in monte Oliveti est nunc aecclesia, ubi Dominus ante passionem orabat et dixit ad discipulos: *Vigilate et orate, ut non intretis in temptationem*. Et inde venit ad aecclesiam, in ipso monte ubi Dominus ascendit in caelum.⁸⁶

He climbed Mount Olivet ... And on the mountain there is now a church where before his Passion our Lord prayed and spoke to his disciples: ‘Watch and pray, so that you do not enter into temptation.’ And from there he came to the church on the mountain itself where our Lord ascended into heaven.

Again, Hugeburc included a biblical reference (Matt. 26.41) to add a sense of sacred location and symbolic representation to the mountain, enhancing the mountain’s significance by association with the events of the place concerned. The events of the Gospels and the historical reality of these places fitted naturally into Willibald’s travels and therefore into Hugeburc’s account, as well.⁸⁷ Like Egeria and Arculf before him, Willibald had used the Bible as a guide to

⁸⁵ *Vita*, 95.29. Holder-Egger’s comment on the unusual local name given to Thabor is ‘i.e. ἄγιος mons, cf. Adomnán 2.26’, 95.

⁸⁶ *Vita* 98.11-14.

⁸⁷ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 205.

his travels. Willibald was a witness to what he saw and Hugeburc's written account reinforced the traveller's words. I have shown that mountains and the memory of events on the mountains were significant enough for both Arculf and Willibald to climb when on pilgrimage in the Holy Land. We shall now turn to their visits to the island of Vulcano.

4.3.3 Gregory, Arculf and the island of Vulcano

It is likely that the influences behind Willibald's visit to Vulcano lay further back than Willibald, further even than Arculf. I turn to the *Dialogi* of Gregory the Great, written between 593 and 594, ninety years before Arculf saw Vulcano and one hundred and thirty years before Willibald went there.⁸⁸ Gregory's *Dialogi* was essentially an anthology of miracles performed by Italian saints and was one of three great Anglo-Saxon compilations of saints' lives.⁸⁹ The compilations were popular, and Lapidge's assertion that 'there is good evidence that these three works were widely studied in Anglo-Saxon England' lends support to the likelihood that Arculf, Willibald and their auditors had read them.⁹⁰ It is possible, therefore, that the travellers had been inspired to visit Mount Vulcano by Gregory's account of the island.

In his *Dialogi*, Gregory the Great related a supernatural tale told him by a Roman official, Julian, who had heard the story from a hermit who lived on the island of Lipari (see Fig. 4-2).

Hic itaque mihi quadam die narravit, dicens: 'Theodorici regis temporibus, pater soceri mei in Siciliam exactionem canonis egerat, atque iam ad Italiam rediebat. Cuius navis adpulsa est ad insulam quae Liparis appellatur et quia illic vir quidam solitarius magnae virtutis habitabat, dum nautae navis armamenta repararent, visum est praedicto patri soceri mei ad eundem virum Dei pergere, seque eius orationibus commendare. Quos vir Domini cum vidisset, eis inter alia conloquens, dixit: "Scitis quia rex Theodoricus mortuus est?" Cui illi protinus responderunt: "Absit, nos eum viventem dimisimus, et nihil tale ad nos de eo nunc usque perlatum est." Quibus Dei famulus addidit, dicens: "Etiam mortuus est. Nam hesterno die hora nona inter Iohannem papam et Symmachum patricium discinctus atque discalciatus et vinctis manibus deductus in hac vicina Vulcani olla iactatus est." Quod illi audientes, sollicitè conscripserunt diem, atque in Italia reversi eo die Theodoricum regem invenerunt fuisse mortuum, quo de eius exitu atque supplicio Dei famulo fuerat ostensum. Et quia

⁸⁸ For the text of the *Dialogi*: Gregory the Great, *Gregoire le Grand – Dialogues* Tome III (Livre IV), ed. Adalbert De Vogué (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1980), xxxi.2-4. See also *Gregorii Magni Dialogi*, ed. Umberto Moricca, *Istituto Storico Italiano: Fonti per la storia d'Italia*, Vol. 57 (Rome: Tipografia del Senato, 1924). Gregory I held the papacy at Rome between 590-604. J. Richards, *Consul of God: The Life and Times of Gregory the Great* (London: Routledge, 1980), 1-2.

⁸⁹ The other two were Gregory of Tours—his *Libri miraculorum*—and Aldhelm's great prose work, *De Virginitate*. Michael Lapidge, 'The Sainly Life in Anglo-Saxon England', in *The Cambridge Companion to Old English Literature*, ed. Michael Godden and Michael Lapidge (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 255.

⁹⁰ Lapidge, 'The saintly life in Anglo-Saxon England', 255. See also Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, Appendix C: 'Surviving Eighth-Century Manuscripts from the Area of the Anglo-Saxon Mission in Germany', 158, 159, 162, who has references to manuscripts containing the *Dialogi* of Gregory. Lapidge again details citations from Gregory, including his *Dialogi*, in both Aldhelm (181) and Bede (209). Lapidge's 'Catalogue' contains mention of manuscripts of Gregory the Great's *Dialogi*, 304.

Iohannem papam adfligendo in custodia occidit, Symmachum quoque patricium ferro trucidavit, ab illis iuste in igne mitti apparuit, quos in hac vita iniuste iudicavit.⁹¹

And so, on a particular day he said to me [i.e. the Roman official Julian said to Gregory]: ‘In the time of king Theodoricus my wife's grandfather had completed his work in Sicily and was returning to Italy. His ship was driven onto the island of Lipari; and because a certain hermit of great virtue lived there, my relative decided, while the sailors were repairing the ship's tackle, to visit the man of God and to commend himself to his prayers: and so he did in the company of others. When the man of God had met them, amongst other things he said to them: “Do you know that king Theodoricus is dead?” They immediately answered: “That cannot be! We left him alive in Rome; and from that time to this, no news about him has been brought to us.” Then the servant of God said: “He is indeed dead for yesterday at the ninth hour, ungirded, without shoes, and with his hands bound fast, he was brought between Pope John and the patrician Symmachus, and was thrown into nearby Vulcan's crater.” When they heard this news, carefully they wrote down the time and day, and when they returned to Italy, they learned that king Theodoricus had died upon that very day, when his death and punishment had been revealed to the servant of God.” And because he had killed Pope John by beatings and by imprisonment, and had also executed Symmachus, those whom he had unjustly condemned in this life regarded it as just that he was thrown into the fire.”

The essence of Julian's story is that in August 526 King Theodoricus was thrown into hell in the crater of Vulcano (the island neighbouring Lipari) for his murders of Symmachus and Pope John I.⁹² Therefore Theodoricus was led to the crater by the spirits of the very men he had caused to be killed. It is relevant to note the links that bound each of the reporters to the tale. Gregory heard the tale from Julian (a Roman official), who had heard it from his wife's grandfather, who had heard it from a hermit living on the island of Lipari, the island that neighbours Vulcano (see Fig. 4-2). This was a long chain of reporting, but each auditor's role was explained and justified by Gregory. The auditor as witness to a mountain episode was an important element in Gregory's tale of Theodoric, in Adomnán's account of Arculf's travels, and in Hugebure's account of Willibald.

Gregory's tale of Theodoricus' death may have been influential in inspiring later generations to write about, or to visit, the mountain on the island. In the early seventh century Isidore of Seville (d.634), who knew Gregory's *Dialogi* well,⁹³ provided his own picture of this region of Sicily and the Lipari islands not dissimilar to Gregory's description of Theodoric's hell.

⁹¹ *Gregoire le Grand*, De Vogué, xxxi.2-4 (p.104-5). For an emendation of the reading *vulcani* ('of a volcano') to *Vulcani* ('of Vulcan'), see O'Loughlin, *Adomnán and the Holy Places* 250.

⁹² For a discussion and interpretation of Gregory's account of Theodoric's hell see O'Loughlin, *Adomnán and the Holy Places*, 134-6. Theodoric had Symmachus executed in 525; and he imprisoned Pope John I, who died as a result of his incarceration on 27 May 526.

⁹³ See e.g. Richards, *Consul of God*, 259-265; Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, 21 n.88; O'Loughlin, *Adomnán and the Holy Places*, 137.

Aeoliae insulae Siciliae ... et Vulcaniae vocantur, quod et ipsae sicut Aethna ardeant. Sunt autem novem habentes propria nomina ... altera Hiera vocatur, quod sit collibus eminentissimis ... quoniam nocte ardent, Aeoliae sive Vulcaniae dicuntur.⁹⁴

The Aeolian islands of Sicily ... are also called Vulcanian, because they burn like Etna. Nine of these islands have proper names. ... the second is called Hiera, because it has the loftiest hills [and] because they burn at night, they are called the Aeolians or the Vulcanians.

As we have seen, a generation after Isidore, and forty years before Willibald's ascent, Adomnán related Arculf's tale of his journey, an account which ended with Arculf (c.780) sailing past the same island of Vulcano on his return from the Holy Land.

Quaedam insula in mari magno habetur ad orientalem plagam xii milibus a Sicilia distans, in qua Vulcanus mons quasi tonitruum totis diebus et noctibus in tantum intonat ut Siciliae terra longius positae terrifico tremore submoveri putetur, sed maius sexta feria et sabbato intonare videtur. Qui omni tempore noctibus flammare monstratur, diebus vero fumare. Haec mihi Arculfus scribenti de eodem dictavit monte, qui propriis illum oculorum aspexit obtutibus noctu ignitosum diae vero fumosum, eiusque tonitrualem sonitum propriis aurium audivit auditibus in Sicilia per aliquot hospitatus dies.⁹⁵

Towards the east, about twelve miles distance from Sicily, there is an island in the great sea, where day and night Mount Vulcan roars like thunder, so powerfully that one might think that the land of Sicily (situated a long way away) was being shaken by a terrific earthquake. But the mountain seems to thunder more on Friday and Saturday. All night long it can be seen blazing, whereas during the day it smokes. While I was writing, Arculf dictated these things to me about the same mountain. He looked upon it with his own eyes, fiery by night and smoky by day, and with his own ears he heard its thunderous noise when he stayed for a few days in Sicily.

Gregory, Isidore and Adomnán were each writing about Mount Vulcano, the same mountain on the same island. It is tempting to trace in their words a literary link that went back to the first century AD and Pliny's writings about the same mountain on the same island.

[Lipara insula] ... abest XXV ab Italia, ipsa circuitu paulo minor V. inter hanc et Siciliam altera, antea Therasia appellata, nunc Hiera, quia sacra Volcano est, colle in ea nocturnas evomente flammis.⁹⁶

[The island of Liparis] ... is twenty-five miles distant from Italy, and in circumference a little less. Between this island and Sicily we find another, the name of which was formerly Therasia, but now called Hiera, because it is sacred to Vulcan [now called Volcano]: it contains a hill which at night vomits forth flames.

⁹⁴ Isid. *Etym.*, 14.6.36-7. They are called 'Vulcanian', because they burn like Etna, which was the mountain site of Vulcan's forge. For a discussion and interpretation of Isidore's account of hell see O'Loughlin, *Adomnán and the Holy Places*, 137-8.

⁹⁵ Meehan, *Adomnán's De Locis Sanctis*, 120-1 (DLS 3.6.1-3)

⁹⁶ Pliny, *HN* 3.93. For evidence that Pliny was available to Adomnán see O'Loughlin, 'Adomnán and the Holy Places', 249.

There are similarities in the descriptions of the mountain, and there are verbal echoes which connect these passages together, even though Gregory’s account was describing an event rather than the actual volcano. I include a table to highlight the connections (see Table 4-1).

	Pliny	Gregory	Isidore	Adomnán
1	[Lipara insula] ... abest XXV ab Italia;	in Siciliam ... atque iam ad Italiam rediebat;	Aeoliae insulae Siciliae;	[insula] ... xii milibus a Sicilia distans;
2	nunc Hiera , quia sacra Vulcano est;	Vulcani olla. ⁹⁷	... et Vulcaniae vocantur; altera Hiera vocatur;	Vulcanus mons;
3	colle in ea nocturnas evomente flammis. ⁹⁸	-	quoniam nocte ardent. ⁹⁹	omni tempore noctibus flammare monstratur; noctu ignitosum. ¹⁰⁰

Table 4.1: Mount Vulcano

1) Pliny’s Lipari was **twenty-five miles from Italy** while Adomnán’s Vulcano was **twelve miles from Sicily**. The distances are different because each referred to a different measuring point, but each author saw fit to mention the island in its geographical location. Gregory did not give distances, but he did provide the information that the island lay between **Sicily and Italy**; Isidore said the Aeolian islands were located near **Sicily**. 2) Pliny explained that the island was called **Hiera** (we are to think of the Greek *ἱερός*—*hieros*—meaning ‘holy’) because it was holy or **sacred to Vulcan**; Gregory’s mountain maintained this connection, being the mountain of **Vulcan**; Isidore followed both sources in relating that all of the islands were called **Vulcanian**, and he called Mount Vulcano **Hiera**, as Pliny had done; Adomnán called the mountain **Vulcano**.¹⁰¹ 3) Pliny’s hill **vomited forth flames at night**; all of Isidore’s

⁹⁷ *Gregoire le Grand, De Vogué, xxxi.3.*

⁹⁸ Pliny *HN* 3.93.

⁹⁹ Isid. *Etym.* 14.6.36, 36, 37, 37.

¹⁰⁰ *DLS* 3.6.1, 1, 2, 3.

¹⁰¹ For his note explaining the manuscript corruption of *Vulcanus* to *Vulcanus*, see O’Loughlin *Adomnán and the Holy Places*, 139.

Aeolian islands **blazed at night**; and from Adomnán's mountain **flames could be seen at night** and the mountain was **fiery at night**, whereas smoke was seen during the day.

There were lines of influence here reaching back to antiquity, and it is not beyond the realms of possibility in this instance to regard Pliny as a literary model for the mountain writing of these different authors. O'Loughlin regards debate over whether Pliny was available on Adomnán's Iona as 'evenly balanced' but decides that it is 'better to consider [Pliny] as part of the library of Iona'.¹⁰² We know that Gregory's *Dialogues* were available to Adomnán on Iona and were known by Isidore.¹⁰³ If Pliny was available to Adomnán, as O'Loughlin suggests, then it is possible to trace the literary origins of Vulcano in Adomnán's *DLS* as far back as Pliny.

Arculf did not stop at the island, but he did provide Adomnán with a vivid description of Mount Vulcano.¹⁰⁴ Some of the digressions in the *DLS* and the tales of Arculf on his pilgrimage seem to have had 'little to do with Christianity', and were doubtless intended to be rather for interest and to pique the curiosity about the geography of the Mediterranean.¹⁰⁵ Mount Vulcano was perhaps one such example. Adomnán's written account revealed the physical power of the mountain seen and heard by Arculf, and Adomnán corroborated Arculf's tale by reminding his readers that Arculf was an eyewitness to Vulcano's power: Arculf 'looked upon the volcano *with his own eyes*, fiery by night and smoky by day, and *with his own ears* he heard its thunderous noise' (my italics).¹⁰⁶ It was important for the author to confirm the evidence of what the eyewitness had seen. Consequently, asserts O'Loughlin, Adomnán's 'readers had a factual description of the exact place mentioned by Gregory, could locate it with ease down to the mile, and, if they were so inclined, could visit and see it for themselves.'¹⁰⁷

This is exactly what Willibald did.

4.3.4 The island of Vulcano

The evidence is not clear as to whether Willibald had read Adomnán's *DLS*. There are suggestions that Willibald had access to both Gregory's *Dialogi* and Isidore's *Etymologiae*. Lapidge asserts that the *Dialogi* was widely available, and was a work which both Aldhelm and Bede cited.¹⁰⁸ It is likely that Isidore was available to the young Willibald at Nursling.¹⁰⁹ It must

¹⁰² For literary influences and Adomnán's overlap of information with Pliny *HN* 3.93 see T. O'Loughlin, 'The Library of Iona in the late seventh century', 45-6. Adomnán knew Gregory's *Dialogi* and had a copy at Iona: see T. O'Loughlin, 'The Library of Iona in the late seventh century:', 41.

¹⁰³ Richards, *Consul of God*, 259-265; O'Loughlin, *Adomnán and the Holy Places*, 137.

¹⁰⁴ See O'Loughlin, *Adomnán and the Holy Places*, 139 for further discussion of this passage.

¹⁰⁵ M. Smyth, 'The physical world of seventh-century Hiberno-Latin texts', *Peritia* 5 (1986), 211.

¹⁰⁶ *DLS* 3.6.3.

¹⁰⁷ O'Loughlin, *Adomnán and the Holy Places*, 139.

¹⁰⁸ For the *Dialogi* in Britain: Lapidge, 'The saintly life in Anglo-Saxon England', 255; Richards, *Consul of God*, 259-265; O'Loughlin, *Adomnán and the Holy Places*, 137. For Aldhelm and Bede: Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, 181, 209, 304.

¹⁰⁹ For Isidore's availability to a young Willibald at Boniface's Monastery at Nursling, see Lapidge, *Anglo Saxon Library*, 38, who says Isidore's *Etymologiae* was available at Nursling in the eighth century.

remain uncertain about whether he had read the *DLS*, though O’Loughlin suggests that Bede’s edited form of the *DLS* was widely available.¹¹⁰

When his pilgrimage to the Holy Land came to a close, Willibald spent two years in Constantinople¹¹¹ until, in 728-9, about nine years since leaving home, he began his journey back, and came once again to the town of Catania in Sicily, and thence to Reggio, a city in Calabria, in the ‘toe’ of Italy. From here his party sailed to the island of Vulcano (see Fig. 4-5). There would be no reason to stop off at the island—it is on no route home—other than to climb Vulcano and satisfy the curiosity piqued by his reading.

Et inde navigaverunt ad insulam Vulcana; ibi est infernus Theodrichi. Cumque illic veniebant, ascendebant de nave, ut viderent, qualis esset infernus. Statimque Willibaldus **curiosius** et volens videre, qualis esset intus ille infernus, et volebat ascendere in montis cacumen ubi infernus subtus erat, et non poterat, qui faville de tetro tartaro usque ad marginem ascendentes glomerati illic iacebant et ad instar nivis, quando de caelo nivans candiditas nivalesque cadentes catervas de aereis etherum arcibus arcis coacervareque solet, ita faville coacervati in apice montis iacebant, ut ascensum Willibaldo prohibebant. Sed tamen tetrum atque terribilem horrendumque eructantem de puteo flammam erumpere videbat, ad instar tonitruum tonantis sic flammam magnum et fumi vaporem valde suplime in alto ascendentem terribiliter intuebat.¹¹²

From there [i.e. from Sicily] they sailed to the island of Vulcano; the hell of Theodoric is on this island. And when they arrived there, they went up from the ship in order to see what this hell was like. And immediately Willibald, **inspired by curiosity** and eager to see what that hell was like inside, wanted to climb to the summit of the mountain, beneath which lay hell: but he was unable to do so because ashes had blown up from the black underworld and lay there in heaps at the edge of the crater: and just as snow, when it falls snow-white from the sky and, falling from the airy palaces of the sky, heaps the flakes into mounds, in the same way the ashes lay piled in heaps on the summit of the mountain and prevented Willibald from reaching the top. Nevertheless, he saw the black, terrible and fearfully belching flames burst forth from the crater with a noise like pealing thunder; and he gazed in terror at the flames, and at the enormous cloud of smoke rising high into the sky.

We have already seen that curiosity was a quality which spurred Seneca, Hadrian and Egeria into the mountains.¹¹³ In this passage Hugeburc mentioned that Willibald was **inspired by curiosity** (*curiosius*) to climb the mountain. Gregory’s written account of Theodoric had informed Willibald about Vulcano’s hell, and Arculf’s written traveller’s tale had shown him that the island was truly terrifying and exciting; it was Willibald’s *curiosity* which motivated him to make the physical climb to the top of Vulcano mountain and to see for himself the hell which lay beneath. His curiosity was to climb Vulcano and to see hell. I have argued previously that there were different reasons to climb a mountain, whether that mountain was a volcano or

¹¹⁰ O’Loughlin, *Adomnán and the Holy Places*, 181-3.

¹¹¹ *Vita*, 93ff.

¹¹² *Vita*, 101-2.

¹¹³ See sections above for discussion of the curiosity of Seneca 2.4.4, Hadrian 2.4.4 and Egeria 3.3.2.

not.¹¹⁴ We have seen that scientific, religious and natural phenomena were all valid reasons to climb mountains, and Willibald's climb was no exception. He was climbing Vulcano as a mountain and as a volcano, because his curiosity had been inspired by his reading and because he wanted to see hell. As I argued previously, it was perfectly possible to climb a mountain, or a volcano, for more than one reason. Even fear of the unknown was—and is—a draw to climb a mountain.



Figure 4.5: Vulcano island

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As well as Willibald's curiosity we must also consider the curiosity displayed by Hugeburc. It was the monk who made the journey, climbed the mountain and beheld the volcano; it was the nun who heard the tale, wrote it down and elaborated the account. His physical engagement with the mountain inspired her virtual engagement with the mountain, in the same way as their reading had inspired them both. Hugeburc did not make the same journey as Willibald on foot, but she could nevertheless display her curiosity and enthusiasm on the page by enveloping the layers of her reading within her account, and by using earlier literature to adorn her account. She revealed this curiosity—hers as much as his—in the act of collation and in the imagery she displayed at the end of the *Vita*, when she compared Willibald to a bee flitting from flower to flower sipping nectar:

¹¹⁴ Section 2.4.3.

sic apis prudentissima, que per purpura violarium virecta et per fulvas frondosorum flosculos et per olida holerum florida loetalem liquantes toxicam et suavissimum sorbentes sucum nectaris, et sic cruribus et toto corpore referta ad alveariis gestando properat: sic et ille beatus barilion Willibaldus in omnibus, que late lustrando proprii cernebat luminis, optima elegendo arripiebat.¹¹⁵

Like the very wise bee that flits through the meadows filled with purple violets, through the yellow blossom of the trees, and through the sweet-smelling herbs, avoiding the lethal poison and sipping the sweetest liquid nectar, and which hurries back to the hive carrying honey on its legs and body; just so did the blessed Willibald choose and adopt the best things out of all those which he had seen with his own eyes on his travels far and wide.

The simile of the ‘very wise bee’ and the vocabulary Hugeburc employed ‘echo Aldhelm’s metaphor of bees as model monastic subjects in his *Prosa de Virginitate*.’¹¹⁶ Of course, in addition to passing comment on Willibald’s gathering ideas from the experiences gained during his travels, Hugeburc was also, deliberately or not, ‘implicitly commenting on her own gatherings and appropriations’ and revealing her own curiosity about Willibald’s adventures.¹¹⁷ Her curiosity and layering of ideas connected also to an Anglo-Saxon preoccupation with hell and damnation, and with their notions of ‘the infernal punishments that awaited sinners and heathens’.¹¹⁸ I will now show how Hugeburc gathered earlier literature and chose aspects from her reading to illustrate Willibald’s ascent of Vulcano.

4.3.5 Willibald and Hugeburc on Vulcano

The ascent of this mountain—and the vividness of Hugeburc’s account is enough to persuade that an ascent was attempted—was no mere symbolism or literary expediency,¹¹⁹ even though earlier literature had inspired Willibald’s visit. The scenes of hell portrayed in Gregory’s *Dialogi* and Isidore’s *Etymologiae*, and the description of the mountain in Adomnán’s *DLS*,

¹¹⁵ *Vita*, 105.26ff.

¹¹⁶ See Weston, ‘A Vicarious Voyage in Queer Time’, 85, n.38: *Aldhelmi Malmesbiriensis Prosa de Virginitate*, ed. Scott Gwara. *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina*, A, CXXIV (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001), 51. Aldhelm. *The Prose Works*, trans. Michael Lapidge and Michael Herren (1979; Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), 61.

¹¹⁷ Weston, ‘A Vicarious Voyage in Queer Time’, 85. ‘Her composition being a compilation, it requires her to “excerpere compagere edissereque” (pluck, collect and display [*Vita*, 87]) texts and models she shares with her readers’.

¹¹⁸ Sarah Semple, ‘Illustrations of Damnation in Late Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 32 (2003): 231. For more on Anglo-Saxon images of the underworld and the fear of torment by demons in a burning hell beneath the earth, see section 4.4 below. See also: the Harley Psalter London, British Library, Harley 603; W. Noel, *The Harley Psalter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2; M. Carver, ‘Contemporary Artefacts Illustrated in Late Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts’, *Archaeologia* 108 (1986): 132.

¹¹⁹ An accusation which is often levelled at Petrarch’s ascent of Mount Ventoux.

offered a place which the traveller, if 'so inclined, could visit and see' for himself, and so illuminate his reading the better.¹²⁰

The evidence from the passage suggests that Willibald did attempt an ascent of the mountain, though it is apparent he did not reach the summit. Firstly, 'he **started climbing** from the ship' (*ascendebant de nave*) because he wanted to see the entrance to hell. (Arculf, on the other hand, had made his recordings of the island entirely from Sicily, showing that what was an observational exercise for Arculf was a genuine and physical undertaking for Willibald.¹²¹) Secondly, 'he **wanted to climb** to the summit of the mountain' (*volebat ascendere in montis cacumen*), showing that the desire to climb was certainly there. Next, Hugeburc was careful to impress upon the reader that Willibald was an eyewitness of her account, that he saw the volcano, and that he saw it close at hand: he climbed 'in order **to see**' (*ut viderent*) 'what hell was like' (*qualis esset infernus*) and because 'he wanted **to see**' (*volens videre*) 'what this hell was like inside' (*qualis esset intus ille infernus*). The emphasis on **seeing** confirmed Willibald's physical and sensory experience of the mountain, which continued as Hugeburc related that 'he **saw**' the terrible flames and '**gazed upon**' the flames and smoke (*videbat ... intuebat*). Finally, he managed to climb part of the way up the mountain but 'was not able' (*non poterat*) to see the summit, because he was beaten back by the heat of the ashes. Hugeburc's description of the ashes indicated that Willibald saw them for himself close at hand: '**the ashes** had blown up from the black underworld and **lay there in heaps** at the edge of the crater' (*faville de tetro tartaro usque ad marginem ascendentes glomerati illic iacebant*). Hugeburc reported that 'the ashes lay piled in heaps **on the summit of the mountain**' (*faville coacervati in apice montis iacebant*), indicating that it was likely that Willibald was close to the crater, that he saw the top, but that the ashes 'prevented him from reaching the top' (*ascensum Willibaldo prohibebant*).

Willibald made an attempt to climb the mountain and failed to reach the summit. His failure grants him entry to a distinguished literary club of similarly unsuccessful or even fabricated accounts of mountain climbs. It is possible that Petrarch failed to reach the summit of Ventoux, if indeed he attempted the climb at all; and there are suggestions that Bembo failed to reach the summit of Etna, though he claimed that he had.¹²² However, the fulfilment or otherwise of the ascent is less of a concern; what Hugeburc's account showed is that there existed a desire to climb and to see, and that earlier literature had been the inspiration that fired Willibald's desire to go to the mountain. This thesis has argued that earlier literature has been an influential factor in establishing perceptions about mountains and in inspiring mountain ascents.

¹²⁰ O'Loughlin, *Adomnán and the Holy Places*, 139. For the desire to satisfy one's curiosity by visiting the places mentioned in literature, see e.g. Macfarlane, 86.

¹²¹ ... *proprios aurium audivit auditibus in Sicilia per aliquot hospitatus dies*. '... he heard the volcano with his own ears when he was lodged for some days in Sicily', Meehan, *DLS*, 3.6.3 (p.121).

¹²² For commentary on Petrarch's climb, see section 5.3. For the uncertainty of Bembo's summit success, see Williams, *Pietro Bembo on Etna*, 86; Hollis and König, *Mountain Dialogues*, 13.

The literary inspiration for Willibald and for Hugeburc went all the way back to Hesiod, though the line was not always unbroken.

The ashes kept Willibald from the actual summit: in Hugeburc's account they lay in heaps around the crater's mouth, she wrote, like snow falling from the sky. It was not an unusual simile to use—an image of piling snow provided the picture of ashes piled on the mountain summit—but the reference to snow and ashes on the summit draws our attention to earlier accounts.

Here is a description of Mount Etna by Pliny:

verum in montium miraculis ardet aetna noctibus semper tantoque aevo materia ignium sufficit, nivalis hibernis temporibus egestumque cinerem pruinis operiens.¹²³

Among the wonders of mountains there is Etna, which always burns in the night, and for so long a period has always had materials for combustion, being in the winter buried in snow, and having the ashes which it has ejected covered with frost.

Pliny described the ashes from Etna's crater being covered with frost in the winter. Here is a different description of Etna, by Solinus:

[Mirum hoc est] ... quod in [Aetna] ferventis naturae pervicacia mixtas ignibus nives praefert, et licet vastis exundet incendiis, apicis canitie perpetua brumalem detinet faciem.¹²⁴

[This is wondrous] ... the fact that on [Etna] the stubbornness of burning nature brings forth snow mixed with fire, and that although it pours forth in vast fires, it keeps a wintry appearance with perpetual snow on the summit.

Solinus described snow and fire issuing together from the crater and snow lying on the summit next to the volcano's fire. This is Hugeburc's description of Vulcano:

et ad instar nivis, quando de caelo nivans canditas nivalesque cadentes catervas de aereis etherum arcibus arcis coacervareque solet, ita faville coacervati in apice montis iacebant.¹²⁵

And just as snow, when it falls snow-white from the heavens and, falling from the airy palaces of the sky, heaps the flakes into mounds, in the same way the ashes lay piled in heaps on the summit of the mountain.

Hugeburc described the ashes on the summit of Vulcano by comparing them to snow falling from the sky. There are enough similarities of a fire-and-snow theme between these three accounts at least to suggest a line of influence threading from Hugeburc back to Pliny. There are no direct or obvious lexical parallels between the passages, but the underlying perceptions are

¹²³ Plin. *HN*, 2.236.

¹²⁴ Solin., 5.9-10.

¹²⁵ Vita, 101-2.

the same. Pliny's picture of Etna in wintertime portrayed the mountain's snowy summit covering the ashes with frost. Solinus developed this image, by referring to an *appearance* of winter on the summit because there was perpetual lying snow which mingled with the fires that poured forth from the crater. Hugeburc, in turn, appeared to conflate these ideas into imagery of her own making: she created a simile which showed ashes lying piled in heaps on the mountain summit, just like snow which falls from the sky and forms heaps and piles. It is unlikely that Hugeburc borrowed directly from Pliny, even though we have evidence of a manuscript of part of Pliny's *Natural History* written in England before 800, but echoes of Pliny did appear in Hugeburc.¹²⁶ However Solinus, whose third century epitome of classical works—the *Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium*—excerpted heavily from Pliny, was widely available in England in the time of Hugeburc.¹²⁷ Citations of Solinus in medieval authors (e.g. Augustine, Adhelm, Bede and Isidore) which antedate the surviving manuscripts indicated wide circulation in the early Middle Ages.¹²⁸

I have already discussed Virgil's two descriptions of Mount Etna and the vivid language employed there.¹²⁹ Echoes of Virgil's Etna reverberated from Hugeburc's Vulcano:

avulsaque viscera montis / erigit **eructans**¹³⁰ (Virgil)

Etna is **belching** its torn-out entrails;

crateres ... per quos **eructatus erumpit** vapor¹³¹ (Solinus)

Smoke **belches** and **breaks through** the craters;

¹²⁶ Pliny is mentioned in Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, 325, in the 'Catalogue of Classical and Patristic Authors and Works Composed Before AD 700 And Known In Anglo-Saxon England'. Lapidge again details citations from Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia* in both Aldhelm (184) and Bede (222). For Pliny's references to Etna see e.g. *C. Plinii Secundi Naturalis Historia*, ed. K. and C. Mayhoff, Vol. I (Books 1-6) (Leipzig: Teubner, 1906), 2.236; 3.88. Lapidge (130) refers to a manuscript of Pliny the Elder's *Natural History* written in England before 800, a copy of part of books ii-vi, now in Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit, Voss. Lat. F. 4, fols. 4-33, 'written in Anglo-Saxon minuscule somewhere in Northumbria during the first half of the eighth century'. See also Mary Garrison, 'An insular copy of Pliny's *Naturalis historia*: Leiden VLF 4 fols. 4-33', in *Writing in Context: Insular Manuscript Culture 500-1200*, ed. Erik Kwakkel (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2013), 67-125, who argues for York as the provenance of the original volume; and L. D. Reynolds (ed.), *Texts and Transmission: A Survey of the Latin Classics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 309, who states that the manuscript is 'by far the earliest surviving manuscript of Pliny to have been written north of the Alps'.

¹²⁷ *C. Iulii Solini Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium*, ed. Theodor Mommsen (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895). Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission*, 308 (n.2). Solinus is mentioned in Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon Library*, 333 in the 'Catalogue'. Lapidge details citations from Solinus' *Collectanea Rerum Memorabilium* in both Aldhelm (187) and Bede (225).

¹²⁸ Reynolds, *Texts and Transmission*, 391.

¹²⁹ Section 2.4.3.

¹³⁰ *V. Aen.* 3.575.

¹³¹ *Solin.* 5.9.

eructuantem de puteo flammam **erumpere** videbat¹³² (Hugeburc)

He saw **belching** flames **break through** from the pit.

The lexical parallels showed a perception about the volcano and possibly a literary influence. Hugeburc was the most recent in a line of imitators relying on previous content to inform and embellish her work. Willibald recounted his travels and adventures to the nun Hugeburc, and it was she who adorned her writing of his travels with her own inspiration from the very same writers who had previously inspired Willibald.

There are echoes, conscious and otherwise, in the above descriptions. The various authors were using and reshaping previous accounts to inform and highlight their own versions, and these added layers of colour, literature and history to their own writing. There was a history to Vulcano, too, a cultural, literary and sacred history, which allowed both Arculf and Willibald to view the same mountain through similar lenses, though only the latter actually climbed it. Willibald was unsuccessful at the mountain's summit, as the ashes and the heat from the crater prevented him from peering at the crater, into hell. Perhaps he was aware this would be the case, for his reading had forewarned him of the difficulties and dangers. Ironically, his reading which was also Hugeburc's reading, prevented him from reaching the summit but allowed her to colour her account.

4.4 Hugeburc's literary visions

Willibald had a very real motive for visiting the island and for climbing its mountain, namely to see what that hell inside the volcano was like.¹³³ Willibald's curiosity was sparked by a desire to see for himself Theodoric's hell. In Gregory's account, Theodoric had been forcibly led up Vulcano by the souls of Pope John and Symmachus, who threw him into the crater and through the gate of hell. Yet Willibald's decision to climb Vulcano was no act of supernatural coercion, but a deliberate decision. In the hope of seeing hell he did not await some form of mystic revelation, but chose to rely on his own decision-making, his own physical energy and the power of his own senses to ascend the mountain and see for himself the mouth of hell. His mountain climb was a deliberate choice, an experience which suggests that there was a greater medieval interest in mountains than previous scholarship has acknowledged.

This interest was not exclusively physical, and literary representations of mountains were also influential. We have already seen literary representations of mountains and of burning fire in the cases of Typhoeus in the *Theogony*, the bubbling of Etna above the Cyclopes' furnace

¹³² *Vita* 102.

¹³³ *Vita* 101.32: *qualis esset intus ille infernus*.

in the *Georgics* and Theodoric's hell in Gregory's *Dialogi*.¹³⁴ The fire and destruction represented by volcanoes had similarities with some biblical pictures of hell, where the rumbling of a volcano might be identified with the crackle of fire that would destroy the world on the Day of Judgement.¹³⁵ The century before Willibald saw the rise of vision literature throughout Europe, and early medieval monasticism helped to develop otherworld visions into a recognisable literary form.¹³⁶ Gregory's *Dialogi* set a precedent for vision literature.¹³⁷ One consequence of this was that though Hugelburc could turn to classical and biblical sources for literary descriptions of mountains and of hell, more recent fare of vision literature provided otherworld scenes and images for literary excavation.¹³⁸

Vision literature connected with Anglo-Saxon notions of hell and damnation as places of eternal fire and torment, and the wealth of visions available shows that the Anglo-Saxons clearly enjoyed these visions of hell and damnation (and heaven).¹³⁹ An early, popular – and apocryphal – text was the *Visio Pauli*. In 2 Cor. 12.2-4, the apostle Paul speaks of himself (in the third person) as having been taken up into heaven, and 'how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter'.¹⁴⁰ In spite of Paul's refusal to tell of what he heard, it was a popular work, condemned by both Aldhelm and Aelfric, and the popularity of early Christian writers happy to add the missing details is shown

¹³⁴ Hes. *Th.* 859-66; V. *Georg.* 1.471 ff.; Greg. *Dial.* 3.31.2-4.

¹³⁵ E.g. II Peter 3.10: *adveniet autem dies Domini ut fur in qua caeli magno impetu transient elementa vero calore solventur*: 'But the day of the Lord shall come as a thief, when the heavens shall pass away with great violence and the elements shall be melted with heat and the earth and the works which are in it shall be burnt up.' For other biblical versions of hell see e. g. II Peter 3.7; I Cor. III.12-15; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 20:10.

¹³⁶ For recent literature on Anglo-Saxon notions of hell and vision literature, see: Ananya Jahanara Kabir, *Paradise, Death and Doomsday in Anglo-Saxon Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*; P. Piehler, *The Visionary Landscape: a Study in the Medieval Allegory* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971); H. L. C. Tristram, 'Stock Descriptions of Heaven and Hell in Old English Prose and Poetry', in *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 79.2 (1978), 102-13; C. D. Wright, 'Some Evidence for an Irish Origin of Redaction XI of the *Visio Pauli*', *Manuscripta* 34 (1990), 34-44.

¹³⁷ Kabir, *Paradise, Death and Doomsday*, 78-83. Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, 244-5.

¹³⁸ For example, V. *Aen.* VI. Cf. *HE* 5.12, where Bede quotes *Aen.* VI.268; see Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, 261. For discussion of the belief that volcanoes were the mouth of hell see J. S. Mackley, *The Legend of St Brendan* (Boston: Brill, 2008), 187 ff. According to J. A. MacCulloch, *Medieval Faith and Fable* (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1932), 98, there was a widespread medieval belief that volcanoes were entrances to hell: Pope Gregory II (669-731) 'gave the weight of his authority to the belief' that volcanoes were the gateways to hell.

¹³⁹ For more on the Anglo-Saxon visions of hell and damnation see section 4.3.4; also Gernot R. Wieland, 'Anglo-Saxon Visions of Heaven and Hell', in *Imagining the Medieval Afterlife*, 79-98, ed. Richard Matthew Pollard, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020). Wieland mentions the availability of Anglo-Saxon vision literature including (79): the *Visio Pauli*, the visions in Gregory the Great's *Dialogi*, Fursey's vision in the *Vita S. Fursei*, Boniface's letter to the abbess Eadburg containing the vision of the monk of Wenlock, a number of visions in Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica* and Aethelwulf's poem *De abbatibus*. All editions are mentioned elsewhere, but for the *Visio Pauli* see: M. P. Ciccarese (ed. and trans.), *Visioni dell'aldilà in occidente*, Biblioteca Patristica 8 (Florence, 1987), 46-55.

¹⁴⁰ 2 Cor. 12.4: *quoniam raptus est in paradisum: et audivit arcana verba, quae non licet homini loqui*.

by those who spoke out against it.¹⁴¹ The popularity of vision literature included the vision of the Irish monk Furseus in the *Vita Sancti Fursei*, written at Péronne (northern France, near Lille) c.657.¹⁴² In the vision the soul of Furseus was carried up by angels, and from his lofty viewpoint he could see fire and demons surrounding the earth. When his soul returned through the flames, one of the demons attacked him and burnt him on the cheek and shoulder. After the vision, the burn, which had been received by the soul, became a visible mark on the body. The incident showed how spiritual visions could have permanent physical effects.¹⁴³ Fulk and Cain consider visions of heaven and hell ‘well suited to monitory purposes,’¹⁴⁴ since ‘nothing admonishe[d] medieval people more to stay on the path of righteousness than the threat of a fiery hell, inhabited by most unpleasant demons.’¹⁴⁵

The vision of the monk of Wenlock was written by Boniface about sixty years after Furseus’ vision, sometime between 716 and 719, and certainly before Willibald began his pilgrimage. In a letter to the Abbess Eadburg, at Wimborne in Wessex, Boniface described the vision of a brother at Wenlock,¹⁴⁶ and recorded the monk’s description of hell:

Inter ea referebat se quasi in inferioribus in hoc mundo vidisse igneos puteos horrendam eructantes flammam plurimos et erumpente tetra terribilis flamma ignis volitasse et miserorum hominum spiritus in similitudine nigrarum avium per flammam plorantes et ululantes et verbis et voce humana stridentes et lugentes propria merita et praesens supplicium et consedissee paululum herentes in marginibus puteorum et iterum heulantes cecidisse in puteos.¹⁴⁷

He reported further that he saw, as it were in the bowels of the earth, many fiery pits vomiting forth terrible flames and, as the foul flame arose, the souls of wretched men in the likeness of black birds sat upon the edges of the pits clinging there for a while wailing and howling and shrieking with human cries, mourning their past deeds and their present suffering; then they fell screaming back into the pits.

¹⁴¹ Aldhelm, *De virginitate (prosa)*, in *Aldhelmi Opera*, ed. Ehwald, 256; Aelfric of Eynsham, *Aelfric’s Catholic Homilies: The Second Series*. Text, ed. M. Godden, EETS supplementary series 5 (London, New York, and Toronto, 1979), 190.

¹⁴² For the *Visio S. Fursei* see Kabir, *Paradise, Death and Doomsday*, 85-6. Bede speaks of the *libellus* of the *visio Fursei* in the early eighth century as though it were a book readily available, Bede *HE* 3.19 (p.270): de quibus omnibus siqui plenius scire vult ... legat ipsum de quo dixi libellum. ‘If anyone wishes to know further about all these things ... let him read the very book which I have spoken of.’ Boniface’s account of the vision of the monk of Much Wenlock preceded Bede’s *Historia Ecclesiastica* by just 14 years.

¹⁴³ Wieland, ‘Anglo-Saxon Visions’, 80-81.

¹⁴⁴ Robert D. Fulk and Christopher M. Cain, *A History of Old English Literature* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2002), 143.

¹⁴⁵ Wieland, ‘Anglo-Saxon Visions’, 93.

¹⁴⁶ Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, 243; Kabir, *Paradise, Death and Doomsday*, 77.

¹⁴⁷ MGH *Epistolae Selectae* 1, *Die Briefe Des Heiligen Bonifatius Und Lullus*, ed. Michael Tangl (Berlin: Weidmann, 1916), ep. X (p.11). *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, translated by Ephraim Emerton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940; 2000), 27-8.

It is likely that Willibald had read Boniface’s account; it is indisputable that Hugeburc had read it, as the verbal echoes between the following passages make clear:¹⁴⁸

vidisse igneos puteos horrendam eructantes flammam plurimos et erumpente tetra
terribilis flamma ignis ... (**Boniface**);¹⁴⁹

He saw very many fiery craters belching forth fearsome flames and, as the foul flame
of that terrible fire broke out ...;

tetrum atque terribilem horrendumque eructuantem de puteo flammam erumpere
videbat ... (**Hugeburc**).¹⁵⁰

He saw the foul, terrible and fearsome flame belching forth and break out from the
crater.

Specifically, as I show in table 4-2, the passage by Hugeburc used almost every one of
the same nouns, verbs, and adjectives that Boniface deployed, and created a description of her
Vulcano akin to the monk’s vision of hell in Boniface’s account.

Boniface	Hugeburc	English meaning
vidisse	videbat	saw
puteos	puteo	crater
eructantes	eructuantem	belching
horrendam	horrendumque	fearsome
flammam	flammam	flame
tetra terribilis	tetrum atque terribilem	foul, terrible
erumpente	erumpere	break out

Table 4.2: Hugeburc and Boniface

The similarities showed Boniface was a significant literary source for Hugeburc, and
that she wished her readers to view the summit of Mount Vulcano as Willibald had done—as
the entrance to hell. The mountain appeared as an *axis inferni* instead of an *axis mundi*, the
mountain as a visual link to hell rather than the point where heaven meets earth.¹⁵¹ Nevertheless,
the mountain was still at the forefront of human activity, and was still a place where connection
was made between the mundane world and a world beyond. Willibald sought an otherworld
vision for himself by means of a mountain, just as Hadrian’s activity on a mountain was to see

¹⁴⁸ Sims-Williams, *Religion and Literature*, 259 mentions the parallels between the two passages. For
comparison between Boniface’s account and that of Bede’s vision of Drythelm (*HE* 5.12), see Wieland,
‘Anglo-Saxon Visions’, 86-7.

¹⁴⁹ MGH *Ep.* X.11.

¹⁵⁰ *Vita* 102.2-3.

¹⁵¹ See Eliade, *The Eternal Return*, 12-17.

the sunrise, or Seneca's interest about a mountain was for scientific inquiry as to its height, and for philosophical introspection about virtue of the individual.

Hugeburc described Willibald as 'inspired by curiosity' (*curiosius*)¹⁵²—her description of him during the ascent of Vulcano—and his actions and portrayal within her narrative certainly supported that claim, seeing his fascination for foreign sights and sounds, and a predilection for the physical difficulties and dangers of travel and different mountain ascents in the Holy Land. Yet she was as fascinated as the pilgrim by his tales of travel to distant lands, and her sedentary writing found itself intertwined with the very physical undertaking of Willibald's pilgrimage.¹⁵³ She wished to record not only his deeds (*acta*) but also his travels (*itinera*), hinting that she was mesmerised as much by Willibald's tales of adventure and his far-flung travels as by his saintly actions.¹⁵⁴

Hugeburc's curiosity is important for our understanding of the representation of mountains in literature. Her adornment of the ascent of Mount Vulcano added another literary layer to the cultural understanding, knowledge and history of that mountain, and to that end it is difficult to ascertain the point at which Willibald's inspiration for travel finished and Hugeburc's inspiration for embroidering the account began. Thus Hugeburc's writing was all the more valuable for her interest in the adventurous details of Willibald's life, a biography which has hitherto been little studied with regard to the ascent of Vulcano.

4.5 Concluding remarks

Hugeburc's *Life* related that Willibald reported that he had climbed Vulcano to see the view—a perfectly normal approach to a mountain climb, by today's standards of climbing and hill-walking. However, Willibald's view was not to be gazing *from* the summit, as one might expect, but rather gazing *into* the summit, looking down into hell. This is key for an appreciation of the medieval perception of mountains, for his curiosity was sparked not by his encounter with the mountain in the landscape, but by the breadth of his reading beforehand. Willibald's inspiration came from the literary, religious and cultural history of the mountain. Just as Willibald wished to gaze into hell, his biographer—who wrote that she arranged and wove (*ordinandoque texere*)¹⁵⁵ the text of Willibald's life—gazed into a shared literary history. Willibald attempted

¹⁵² *Vita* 101.32.

¹⁵³ Hollis, *Anglo-Saxon Women*, 145, says that Hugeburc was 'unaffected by the world-denying idealism that universally affects later hagiographers' and made no attempt to hide the fact that Willibald was on pilgrimage, certainly, and was thus inspired by God; but he was also eager to travel, to go abroad to new and strange places and find out all about them.

¹⁵⁴ *Vita*, 87. *non solum in actibus, sed et in itineribus variis*: 'not only in his deeds, but also in his various travels'.

¹⁵⁵ *Vita*, 88.12.

to look into hell with his own eyes; Hugeburc looked into a virtual hell through the literary filters of Boniface, Adomnán, Gregory, Solinus, Virgil and others.

I argue that Hugeburc's curiosity for the mountains was equal to Willibald's, albeit hers was confined to the written word, whereas he gave physical address to his curiosity. She, the female, enclosed nun could have created a great separation between herself and the male, travelling pilgrim. 'Yet through her writing—through the interest in place which structures her narrative—she shares in the excitement and spiritual growth of his activity, implicitly conveying their similarities and drawing them together.'¹⁵⁶

According to Michael Lapidge, Willibald's *Vita* followed a standard form of saints' *Vitae*.¹⁵⁷ These invariably showed that the saint was nobly-born, his birth often accompanied by heavenly signs of his future greatness; in learning he was prodigious, and at the end of his childhood he forsook his secular life (including his family) to pursue a sacred activity. Variants were possible within the basic framework, 'but the framework itself [was] invariable.'¹⁵⁸ Mountain ascents and the description of mountain ascents were not a standard feature of saints' *Vitae*. Therefore Hugeburc's inclusion of Vulcano was atypical, showing that she enjoyed the adventurous aspect of Willibald and the curiosity in her description of his ascent came not only from Willibald, but also from Hugeburc his scribe. Hugeburc's deliberate variance from the established framework allowed her to show the reader where her own interests lay in parallel with relating the life of the saint.

I argue that Willibald's mountain ascent would not have taken place without the literary history preceding it, and would certainly not have happened in the same way nor for the same reasons. The curiosity of both Willibald and Hugeburc played a part in the representation of Vulcano in her account, and the interplay between the physical and the written ascents prepares us now for Petrarch's own account of his ascent of Mont Ventoux.

¹⁵⁶ Head, 'Who is the nun?', 38.

¹⁵⁷ Lapidge, 'The Sainly Life', 243-263 (esp. 253). According to Lapidge, there were good reasons for the hagiographer to adopt this basic framework, as (254) it linked their Saint to the community of saints by following earlier authors closely, 'especially Sulpicius Severus, Athanasius and Jerome', and this ensures 'that the local saint is seen clearly to possess the attributes of, and to belong undoubtedly to, the universal community of saints.'

¹⁵⁸ Lapidge, 'The Sainly Life', 254.

5 Concluding with Petrarch and the view from Mont Ventoux

5.1 Introduction

In 1336 Petrarch made a physical ascent of Mont Ventoux and recorded the ascent in a letter he wrote to a friend at the end of the same day. In this concluding chapter I will draw together aspects of the thesis as reflected in Petrarch's climb, and will use these to cast light on unfamiliar facets of the event. By examination of Petrarch's letter and his climb, and the scholarly research surrounding the letter, the chapter will explore the influences of classical and biblical literature on Petrarch's decision to climb. The aspect of curiosity will be a feature of the chapter and we will examine curiosity as a spur to his ascent. Petrarch wrote at length about the view from the summit: by discussion of his *oroskopia*, I will consider both the external view from the summit of the mountain as well as Petrarch's mental introspection and search for spiritual self-knowledge, inspired by the summit view. The chapter will examine the interplay between Petrarch's physical ascent and his written account to reveal aspects of mountain perceptions. The tensions between written accounts of mountain climbs and the actual ascents revealed aspects of mountain interest beyond a simple narrative of hostility and avoidance, as I have argued throughout this thesis and continue to argue within this chapter. The chapter will lead into the conclusion of the thesis where I show that the origins of human interest in the mountains and the origins of aesthetic and recreational human activity in the mountains were more blurred than traditional scholarship has suggested

5.2 Petrarch

Petrarch (Francesco Petrarca, 1304-1374) is regarded by many as the father of Italian humanism, as well as a prolific lyric poet, a letter writer and, as a diplomat for the church, a frequent traveller.¹ He was born in Italy, but his parents moved to Avignon in the Provence region of France (see Fig. 5-1), which is where he spent much of his childhood. Our knowledge of him comes chiefly from his own writings, which he revised and edited throughout his life,

¹ For details on Petrarch's life and works see: Albert Russell Ascoli and Unn Falkeid, 'Introduction', in Albert Russell Ascoli and Unn Falkeid, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 1-11; Theodore Cachey, *Itinerarium: Petrarch's Guide to the Holy Land. Itinerary to the Sepulcher of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 1-50 (esp. 5-7); Nicholas Mann, *Petrarch* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 21-45; Hans Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 2-8; Williams, *Pietro Bembo on Etna*, 95-101; Victoria Kirkham, 'A life's work', in Victoria Kirkham and Armando Maggi, eds., *Petrarch: a critical guide to the complete works* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 1-9.

often with one eye to posterity. He began editing and collating his letters in the 1350s and published four anthologies during his lifetime, the largest being his *Rerum Familiarium Libri*, known collectively as the *Familiars*, which contained three hundred and fifty of his Latin letters written between 1325 and 1366.² In 1336 Petrarch climbed Mont Ventoux (see Fig. 5-1), a mountain near Avignon, 1912 m. high: the climb, which he undertook with his brother, and the subsequent letter he wrote describing the climb, have ensured that Petrarch's is a name associated with the history of mountaineering. Michael Kimmelman regards Petrarch's letter as 'a description of mountain climbing that has become a pre-modern classic',³ since Petrarch climbed Ventoux in an age when, allegedly, few people undertook a mountain climb for pleasure or for recreation. We shall turn to explore that observation in more detail.



Figure 5.1: Map of Avignon and Mont Ventoux

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https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:France_map_Lambert-93_topographic-blank.svg

² Francesco Petrarch, ed. Aldo S. Bernardo, 'Introduction', in *Letters on Familiar Matters (Rerum Familiarium Libri)*, Vol. 1, xvii-xxvii. (New York: Italica Press, 2005). Accessed August 20, 2021. doi:10.2307/j.ctt1tqxw4s.4. Shayne Aaron Legassie, *The Medieval Invention of Travel* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 2017), 169. For the chronology of the letters see Ernest H. Wilkins, *Petrarch's Correspondence* (Padua: Antenore, 1960).

³ M. Kimmelman, 'Not because it's there', *The New York Times*, 06 June 1999.
<http://www.nytimes.com/1999/06/06/magazine/not-because-it-s-there.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>.

5.2.1 A letter from Mont Ventoux

In a description which combined physical ascent, literary influence and spiritual contemplation, Petrarch wrote one of the most famous of all his letters, which he claimed to have written on the same day as his ascent of Mont Ventoux, on 26 April 1336.⁴ Petrarch declared that he wrote the letter in the inn on the evening of the day of the climb, ‘hurriedly and on the spur of the moment’ (*raptim et ex tempore*), while he was waiting for his supper to be brought.⁵ Petrarch wrote the letter to his friend, the Augustinian friar Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro,⁶ Professor of Theology at the University of Paris, who had met Petrarch three years earlier in 1333 and had presented him with a pocket edition of Augustine's *Confessions* as a token of friendship: we shall see that Petrarch made reference to this book in the letter of his climb.⁷

Some scholars and commentators have argued that it is possible to trace the beginning of modern mountaineering from Petrarch's ascent of Mont Ventoux. This was the strongly-held view of Petrarchan studies in the nineteenth century. Jacob Burckhardt, in his monumental study of the renaissance, had no doubt about Petrarch's significance in the field of mountaineering, describing him as ‘one of the first truly modern men’, whose ‘ascent of a mountain for its own sake was unheard of’ in the fourteenth century.⁸ Burckhardt's notions framed and shaped Petrarchan studies for nearly a century. Joel Spingarn, in his history of renaissance literature, argued that Petrarch as a traveller and mountain climber introduced ‘an appreciation of natural beauty ... into modern Europe’.⁹ Ernest Wilkins believed it probable that Petrarch had indeed undertaken the ascent of Ventoux, and that the letter had been written on the same day of the ascent, as Petrarch asserted.¹⁰ Macfarlane follows Burckhardt, stating that ‘the starting point for histories of altitude is [with] the Italian poet Petrarch’.¹¹

⁴ For the text of the letter, see Petrarch, *Le familiari*, IV.1, in Francesco Petrarca, ed. Vittorio Rossi, *Le Familiari*, Vol. I (Firenze: G. C. Sansoni, 1933), 153-61. There is a useful summary of some of the more important commentaries on the letter in Unn Falkeid, ‘Petrarch, Mont Ventoux and the Modern Self’, in *Forum Italicum* 43, no. 1 (March 2009), 5. For the fame of *Fam.* IV.1, see Albert Russell Ascoli, ‘Epistolary Petrarch’, in Albert Russell Ascoli and Unn Falkeid, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 121-3; Legassie, *The Medieval Invention of Travel*, 169-70; and Albert Russell Ascoli, ‘Petrarch's Middle Age: Memory, Imagination, History, and the “Ascent of Mount Ventoux”’, *Stanford Italian Review* 10 (1991), 7.

⁵ *Fam.* IV.1.35.

⁶ Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 419; David Thompson, *Petrarch: A Humanist Among Princes* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 33.

⁷ R. J. Lokaj, ‘Petrarch vs. Gherardo. A case of sibling rivalry inside and outside the cloister’, (PhD: University of Edinburgh, 2001), 141; E. H. Wilkins, *Vita del Petrarca e la formazione del Canzoniere* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1964), 25. Dionigi became professor at the University of Naples in 1338.

⁸ Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy*, transl. S. G. C. Middlemore (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1890), 165; 300.

⁹ J. E. Spingarn, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance* (London: Macmillan, 1899), 226.

¹⁰ E. H. Wilkins, *The making of the ‘Canzoniere’ and other Petrarchan studies* (Rome: Storia e Letteratura, 1951), 312, 317.

¹¹ Macfarlane, 146; Nicolson, 49-50, follows the same argument. Lokaj, ‘Petrarch vs. Gherardo’, 351, also regards Petrarch as the first ‘modern man’.

However, more recent scholarship has debated whether the ascent of the mountain ever took place as Petrarch asserted, and has called into question the composition and the dating of Petrarch's letter, and therefore the veracity of what he wrote.¹² Even Petrarch admitted that he was not the first to make the ascent, declaring at the beginning of his letter that he had met an old shepherd who claimed to have climbed the mountain years before.¹³ As early as 1932 Vittorio Rossi stated that *Fam. IV.1* could not have been composed according to Petrarch's contention that he wrote it on the evening of the same day of the ascent. The time required for the day's climb, the summit contemplation, the descent and the journey back to the inn (a total of 40 km. from start to finish) suggests that the composition of a letter in the evening, particularly such a crafted letter as *Fam. IV.1*, would have been impossible.¹⁴ Rossi argued rather that the letter was a piece of art symbolising Petrarch's life and human life in general. Following Rossi, Lynn Thorndike drew attention to what she regarded as the fictitious nature of Petrarch's climb and claim, declaring that 'all Petrarch's account proves is his capacity for story-telling and sentimental ability to make a mountain out of a molehill.'¹⁵ Giuseppe Billanovich believed that the Ventoux letter was never actually intended to be sent to Dionigi, but that Petrarch had composed the letter specifically for his own collection.¹⁶ Hans Baron, too, questioned the truth of what Petrarch wrote, arguing that 'since 1932, critical research has steadily undermined the belief that the *Epistolae Familiares* are reliable autobiographical documents.'¹⁷

Studies since Rossi have shown that Petrarch reworked his earlier letters throughout his life and the purported date of the letter, 26 April 1336, remains contentious.¹⁸ Rossi noted that Petrarch's brother Gherardo, a key figure in the letter as one who took a straight and virtuous path to the summit, joined the Carthusian Monastery in Montrieux only in 1343, meaning that Petrarch was unlikely to have composed the letter before his brother's conversion and before

¹² For those who deny Petrarch's version of the ascent or the claim that he was the first to regard nature through an aesthetic lens see also Jill Robbins, 'Petrarch Reading Augustine: "the Ascent of Mont Ventoux"', *Philological Quarterly* 64 no.4 (1985), 534, who agrees that the date of the letter is spurious and that 'it is probable that Dionigi, who died in 1342, never received the letter at all'; and Michael O'Connell, 'Authority and the Truth of Experience in Petrarch's "Ascent of Mt. Ventoux"', *Philological Quarterly* 62 (1983), 507-20 (508), who declares that if indeed Petrarch and his brother did actually climb Ventoux, then the experience has actually been masked 'by motives that render it entirely fictional'.

¹³ *Fam. IV.1*.

¹⁴ See V. Rossi, 'Sulla formazione delle raccolte epistolari petrarchesche,' in *Annali della Cattedra Petrarcesca*, III (1932), 68-73.

¹⁵ Lynn Thorndike, "Renaissance or Prenaissance?," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 4.1 (1943), 72.

¹⁶ G. Billanovich, 'Petrarca e Il Ventoso', *Italia Medioevale e Umanistica* 9 (1966), 389-401; esp. 399-400. Bernardo, 'Introduction', xxvii-xxx.

¹⁷ Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*, 9.

¹⁸ E.g. Robert M. Durling, 'Il Petrarca, il Ventoso e la possibilità dell'allegoria', *Revue d'Etudes Augustiniennes et Patristiques*, Vol. 23 (1977), 304; Lokaj, 'Petrarch vs. Gherardo', 123-5. Bernardo, 'Introduction', xxvii-xxx. For a detailed and useful attempt to address the problems of dating, see R. Lokaj, *Petrarch's Ascent of Mount Ventoux: The Familiaris IV.1* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo, 2006), 28-43.

1343.¹⁹ Following Rossi, Billanovich likewise argued that the date of the letter was fictitious and suggested the later date of 1352-3, which is today regarded as the generally accepted date for the composition of the letter.²⁰ As Dionigi had died in 1342, one consequence of the later composition, Billanovich declared, is that Petrarch could not have intended to send the letter to Dionigi at all.²¹ As Michael O'Connell observes in his discussion of Petrarch's ascent of the mountain, the arguments of Giuseppe Billanovich mean that 'we must give up the charming notion of Petrarch *alpinista*, the first European to climb a mountain because it is there, and believe that the letter was written some fifteen years after its purported date of April 26, 1336, and a decade after its addressee, the Augustinian canon Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro had died.'²²

If the friar was indeed dead by the time Petrarch composed the letter, we should note that it was not unusual for Petrarch to write letters to those who were deceased. His classical letters in the *Familiars* were addressed to the dead giants of classical literature—Cicero, Virgil and Homer, among others—though he did not seek to imply that any of these recipients were still living when he wrote those letters.²³ By the same measure it would not have been an unusual act for Petrarch to have fabricated a physical expedition for the sake of producing a written account of that journey. In the spring of 1358, twenty-two years after the purported date of *Fam.* IV.1, his friend Giovanni Mandelli invited Petrarch to accompany him on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Unwilling to go, Petrarch declined in a letter—his *Itinerarium ad sepulcrum nostri domini Iesu Christi*.²⁴ Few have commented upon the relevance of the *Itinerarium* to Petrarch's ascent of Ventoux, and it will be useful briefly to explore Petrarch's letter to Mandelli here.

Rather than physically accompanying his friend, Petrarch traced instead a virtual journey from Genoa to the Holy Land, a letter which he said took him three days to write from the security of his home where he was able to imagine his travels in safety.

Sed iam satis itum, satis est scriptum. Hactenus tu remis ac pedibus maria et terras, ego hanc papirum calamo properante sulcaverim, et an adhuc tu fessus sis eundo, certe ego iam scribendo fatigatus sum eoque magis quo celerius incesi. Quod enim iter tu tribus forte vix mensibus, hoc ego triduo consummavi.²⁵

¹⁹ Cited in Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*, 17-23. See Billanovich, 'Petarca e Il Ventoso', 397; Robbins, 'Petrarch Reading Augustine', 534.

²⁰ See Billanovich, 'Petarca e Il Ventoso', 389-401; esp. 397-9. G. Billanovich, *Petrarca letterato, 1. Lo scrittoio del Petrarca* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1947), 88ff., 192-195.

²¹ Billanovich 'Petarca e Il Ventoso', 389-401. Billanovich also observed that Dionigi, the addressee, was actually in Avignon, not Italy, in April 1336: see Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*, 17-23.

²² O'Connell, 'Authority and the Truth of Experience', 507; Billanovich, 'Petarca e Il Ventoso', 399.

²³ Lokaj, 'Petrarch vs. Gherardo', 141. Ascoli, 'Epistolary Petrarch', 121. Petrarch conceived the idea of collating his letters after 1345 and his discovery of Cicero's letters.

²⁴ Theodore Cachey, *Itinerarium: Petrarch's Guide to the Holy Land. Itinerary to the Sepulcher of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002).

²⁵ *Itin.*, 21. See also *Itin.*, 1-32; poem, 7.

But we have already travelled far enough and enough has been written. You have come this far by oar and by foot, on sea and on land, I, ploughing this paper with a swift pen. I don't know if you are tired of travelling; certainly I am tired of writing, especially since I have advanced at greater speed. Your journey of three months I have completed in three days ... You must return home, while I [return] to my studies.

He set his journey against Mandelli's, boasting to have completed a 'three month' physical journey in only 'three days' of writing, thus collapsing 'the distinction between the travails of travel and the labour of writing'.²⁶ Petrarch's words put the effort of writing on an equal footing with the physical movement of travel.²⁷ Moreover, Petrarch declared his three-day virtual journey of writing had exhausted him, especially because he had 'advanced at greater speed' than Mandelli's (imagined) three-month journey on foot.²⁸ Here in his *Itinerarium* Petrarch illuminated the conflict between his own interior, written movement and his exterior, physical effort. The tension between a physical and virtual journey has been a theme of this thesis. Seneca did not climb Mount Etna, but wrote of his interest in the mountain and asked his nephew Lucilius to climb it for him; neither Hugeburc nor Adomnán travelled to the island of Vulcano, though they both wrote a description of others seeing the mountain there. Egeria, like Petrarch, both climbed and wrote an account of her climbs. In *Fam.* IV.1 I will further explore this tension and the conflict between Petrarch's exterior ascent of Ventoux and his interior, written account. The *Itinerarium*, then, is a useful letter to set alongside *Fam.* IV.1.

If we are to believe his account, Petrarch's speed in the *Itinerarium* was seen also in his ascent of Ventoux, which he professed took him a single day to climb up and down and to write a lengthy, crafted letter on his contemplation of the day's achievements. I do not argue for or against the veracity of Petrarch's written account, or physical ascent of Ventoux. What is of interest here is that Petrarch's choice of delivering the message of his letter through the interpretation of a mountain climb—fictitious or real—is central to the very message of this thesis that there was human interest in mountains earlier than has been suggested; and that perceptions of mountains in the medieval period developed from literary perceptions of mountains in classical and biblical literature.

5.3 The Ascent of Mont Ventoux

A brief summary of the letter, which Petrarch claimed to have written in his inn while waiting for supper on the evening of the day of the ascent, is as follows. Francesco Petrarch and his

²⁶ Legassie, *The Medieval Invention of Travel*, 201.

²⁷ For Petrarch's views on writing as a higher form of travel, see his dedicatory letter to *Familiares: Fam.* 1.1, and *Itin.* 21.

²⁸ Perhaps virtual pilgrimage is just as beneficial as the real experience. Cachey explores the relationship between actual and fictional travel: cf. Giuseppe Gazzola, 'Review', *MLN* 120, no. 1 (2005): 239-47 (241). Accessed November 6, 2020. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3252036>.

brother Gherardo, along with two servants, set off to climb the mountain; they met an old shepherd who tried to send them back, declaring that he had climbed Ventoux fifty years previously, getting nothing for his pains other than regret, effort, and cuts and bruises. Undeterred, the brothers climbed on, with the younger Gherardo always taking the difficult route, straight up, while Petrarch looked for easy options and short-cuts—as a consequence of which he stumbled and wandered, lost in the valleys, while his brother moved onwards and upwards. Petrarch made this mistake several times on the ascent, but eventually recognised the need for application and effort, and finally took a direct ascent. The brothers were rewarded with an impressive view from the summit. After a short while the view was not enough for Petrarch. He took a copy of Augustine’s *Confessions* from his pocket (the book, a gift from the addressee of this letter, was always with him, he said) and opened the book at random. The passage²⁹ he read was more overwhelming than the summit view and made him reflect on the need for God in human existence. As the sun was setting the brothers descended from Ventoux and returned to their inn in darkness, where Petrarch wrote his account of the day in a letter to his friend at the University of Paris, the Augustinian friar Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro.

Although the ascent was unlikely to have occurred as and when Petrarch stated that it had taken place (reasons for which have been detailed above), nevertheless there are several features within the letter that resonate with the study of this thesis. I shall explore these in the order of the narrative related by Petrarch.

5.3.1 Reasons for the ascent

At the beginning of the letter Petrarch asserted that his reason for climbing Ventoux, the highest mountain in the region, was to see the view from the summit:

altissimum regionis huius montem, quem non immerito Ventosum vocant, hodierno die, sola videndi insignem loci altitudinem cupiditate ductus, ascendi. multis iter hoc annis in animo fuerat; ab infantia enim his in locis, ut nosti, fato res hominum versante, versatus sum; mons autem hic late undique conspectus, fere semper in oculis est.³⁰

Today I climbed the highest mountain in this region, which is rightly called Ventosus [Windy], spurred on by the sole desire of seeing what so great an elevation had to offer. I had wanted to make this journey for many years; for I have lived in this area since infancy, as you know, fate playing its part in the affairs of men. And this mountain is widely seen from all sides, and is almost always before my eyes.

At the outset, Petrarch’s declaration was that his sole motivation for climbing Ventoux was to see ‘what so great an elevation had to offer’. The mountain’s very height was alluring for

²⁹ The quotation is from Aug. *Conf.* X.8.15. See section 5.4.2.

³⁰ *Fam.* IV.1.1.

Petrarch, and gave the mountain status as a landmark, such as those discussed above.³¹ The mountain, as is the case with all mountains, drew the eyes upward from every angle and made it a point of visibility. Petrarch's Ventoux could be 'seen from all sides' and was 'almost always before my eyes'. The physical sight of the mountain gave him a sensory attachment to it, a vital definition of its visual importance. His attachment was not only sensory, however, as 'for many years' it had occupied his mind's eye: he had seen it and thought about it since he was a child, 'for I have lived in this area since infancy'. Petrarch's mental and visual engagement with the mountain was a long-standing motivation to climb it. Interestingly, even though his association and familiarity with the mountain were deep and long-standing, the immediate inspiration that drew him to climb it was historical and literary. He declared that the impetus to climb came about as a result of his reading the passage from Livy where King Philip had ascended Mount Haemus.

praecipue postquam relegenti pridie res Romanas apud Livium forte ille mihi locus occurrerat, ubi Philippus Macedonum rex - is qui cum populo Romano bellum gessit - Haemum montem Thessalicum conscendit, e cuius vertice duo maria videri, Adriaticum et Euxinum, famae crediderat.³²

The idea [of climbing] came upon me yesterday in particular, while re-reading Livy's History of Rome, when I happened to come across the place where Philip of Macedon, (the same king who waged war against the Romans), ascended Mount Haemus in Thessaly, from whose summit he believed that two seas, the Adriatic and the Euxine, could be seen.

The aim of the ascent was so that Petrarch could gain a view from the summit, to experience his own understanding of the view from the mountaintop—the concept of *oroskopia*, a concept discussed above.³³ He conceived the idea 'yesterday in particular, while re-reading Livy'.³⁴ We have seen³⁵ that in 181 BCE Philip ascended Haemus in Thrace³⁶ for military purposes, an attempt to seek personal power which failed because the fog on the summit prevented any view and frustrated his strategy. It appears that Petrarch gained the idea of climbing Ventoux in order to gain the view from the summit because this is what Philip had planned from Mount Haemus.

Livy's passage began:

cupido eum ceperat in verticem Haemi montis ascendendi ...³⁷

³¹ For examples of mountains as landmarks, see section 2.4-2.4.1.

³² *Fam.* IV.1.2.

³³ Section 2.4.1.

³⁴ Livy, 40.21-22.

³⁵ Section 2.4.1.

³⁶ Modern Bulgaria, not *Haemum montem Thessalicum* (Haemus [is] a mountain in Thessaly), as Petrarch stated. See Jaeger, 'Fog on the Mountain', 840.

³⁷ Livy, 40.21.

A **desire** seized Philip to climb to the top of Mount Haemus ...

There were Livian echoes in Petrarch's letter, seen in the choice of the same word in a similarly prominent position:

... sola videndi insignem loci altitudinem **cupiditate** ...³⁸

... the sole **desire** of seeing what so great an elevation had to offer...

Petrarch's echo of Livy's *cupido* ('desire') was surely intentional, in a passage which actively recalled Livy's episode of Philip on Haemus. The influence of his classical predecessor acted as a spur for Petrarch to climb Ventoux, where he might experience his own *oroskopia*. However, the parallel with Philip's climb seemingly went far beyond simply a physical mountain climb. If, as Jaeger argues,³⁹ Livy's account prepared his readers for the failure of Philip's view from the summit, then Petrarch's decision at the start of his letter to reference the Livian passage pointed to an anticipated failure in his own letter. By echoing Philip's failed *cupido*, Petrarch was preparing his readers to witness his own failings, using Livy as a literary lens and the mountain as a stage on which to act this out.

Literary history had instilled in Petrarch a desire to climb Ventoux, just as his stated desire that his sole motivation for climbing Ventoux was to see 'what so great an elevation had to offer'. The historical passage from which he declared he had drawn inspiration came from Livy's account about Mount Haemus, not from a passage about Mont Ventoux. Seemingly, then, the influence of one's literary predecessors was a transferable commodity, and a passage written about one mountain could act as the motivation to climb a different mountain. The power of the influence of literary predecessors has been a theme of this thesis and the evidence of this power continues to be shown.

5.3.2 Curiosity

Petrarch's curiosity about the mountain was apparent in his letter and it arose from different motivating factors. His curiosity was sparked by his desire to see 'what so great an elevation had to offer'; he also hinted at an aesthetic curiosity inspired by his sensory attachment to the mountain which was 'widely seen from all sides'; and his reading of Livy had further inspired him, showing curiosity coming from a historical source. In addition to these aspects of curiosity, he also wrote that he wanted a companion for the climb and listed a number of characteristics which he wished to avoid in any companion, such as idleness or gloominess, heartiness or prolixity:

³⁸ *Fam.* IV.1.1.

³⁹ Jaeger, 'Fog on the Mountain', 833-4.

denique hic stultior, prudentior ille quam vellem; huius silentium, illius procacitas; huius pondus ac pinguedo, illius macies atque imbecillitas terrebat; huius **frigida incuriositas**, illius ardens occupatio dehortabatur.⁴⁰

In sum, this fellow was simpler than I wanted, that one was wiser. I rejected this one's silence and that one's forwardness. The lumbering placidity of one frightened me, as did the lean inadequacy of another. This man's **cold lack of curiosity** put me off, as did that fellow's excessive enthusiasm.

While his list appeared to be as much a rhetorical flourish as a genuine requirement, it is telling that curiosity was a characteristic which Petrarch sought in his companion—or, at least, he did not want the company of someone with a **cold lack of curiosity**. The theme of curiosity about the mountain, aesthetic, visual and literary, connects with curiosity about mountains across time and place, seen in other examples of curiosity in this thesis.⁴¹ By drawing attention to his curiosity, Petrarch was at the same time idealising the mountain as worthy of the climb. For him and presumably anyone else who had 'lived in this area since infancy', the mountain was 'seen from all sides', and potentially had a remarkable summit view. He idealised the mountain in different ways, and a suitable companion was one who would have been curious about these different aspects of the mountain.

However, Petrarch provided a clue through the lens of Livy that his narrative would develop to contest his idealised thoughts of the mountain. His external curiosity, about the nature and the history of the mountain was, like the physical ascent, obvious and overt. He mentioned the visual appearance of the mountain as being always before his eyes, and therefore an object of curiosity. As we shall see, Petrarch's internal curiosity, his curiosity about his moral and spiritual self, was less obvious and more deeply hidden. Later in the chapter we shall see that Petrarch's reading of Augustine brought all these aspects together on the summit: the external summit view from the idealised mountain, the literary lens of Livy and of Augustine, and the internal spiritual view. Curiosity was as much a spur to Petrarch's mountain ascent as it had been to Seneca and Willibald, with his external curiosity leading him to an intriguing internal contemplation.

5.3.3 Moving upwards

To accompany him on the climb he eventually chose his brother Gherardo, and the party (Petrarch, Gherardo and two non-speaking servants) set off on their venture.⁴² According to O'Connell, the choice of Gherardo was the beginning of a theme, foreshadowed by the Livian reference, of failing at first to find what was close at hand and searching instead far and wide, to

⁴⁰ *Fam.* IV.1.4.

⁴¹ For example, Egeria's comment about her own curiosity, *Égérie*, 16.3.

⁴² *Fam.* IV.1.5-6.

no avail.⁴³ The theme developed after Petrarch had, with difficulty, climbed the mountain and enjoyed the view, only to be confounded by the words of Augustine in a book which he had carried in his pocket, ‘close at hand all along’.⁴⁴ I argue that it is testimony to the power of mountains on the human psyche that Petrarch chose the mountain as the stage on which to illuminate his drama of self-growth and spiritual understanding.

On the ascent the mountain looked steep and almost inaccessible, but as inspiration for the challenge Petrarch quoted Virgil—‘remorseless toil conquers all’ (*labor omnia vincit improbus*)⁴⁵—thereby portraying the mountain ascent through another literary lens, calling on the need for hard work and effort. Petrarch filled his letter with classical and biblical allusions—so many allusions, in fact, that it has been proved that Petrarch did not know of some of them until after the date he claimed to have written the letter.⁴⁶ For example, he did not discover Cicero’s *Letters* (the model for his own *Epistolae Familiares*) until 1345, in Verona, nine years after the alleged date of this letter.⁴⁷ Regardless of the possibly fictitious nature of his letter, Petrarch relied on *imitatio* of his classical and biblical predecessors to help shape his depiction of the mountain stage.

Almost immediately among the mountain’s winding valleys the party encountered an old shepherd.

pastorem exactae aetatis inter convexa montis invenimus, qui nos ab ascensu retrahere multis verbis enisus est, dicens se ante annos quinquaginta eodem iuvenilis ardoris impetu supremum in verticem ascendisse, nihilque inde retulisse praeter **paenitentiam et laborem**, corpusque et amictum lacerum saxis ac vepribus.⁴⁸

In the mountain dales we found a shepherd of advanced years, who tried at great length to dissuade us from going up, saying that fifty years before, with the same burning impetuosity of youth, he had climbed to the very top. He said that he took back with him nothing except **regret and hard toil**, and a body and cloak torn by the rocks and thorns.

The shepherd’s message was to turn back: he himself had climbed to the summit fifty years ago, he said, and had nothing to show for the effort except **regret and hard toil**, his body and clothing scratched by thorns. The shepherd’s words continued the hinting that Petrarch’s climb would be a failure. Already in the letter Petrarch had quoted Virgil’s maxim that

⁴³ O’Connell, ‘Authority and the Truth of Experience’, 509-10. If we accept that the real date of the composition of Petrarch’s letter was 1352-3 (Billanovich, ‘Petarca e Il Ventoso’, 397-399), then Gherardo was already in his monastery at Montrieux by the time this letter was written and could not have accompanied his brother up Ventoux. See e.g. Lokaj, ‘Petrarch vs. Gherardo’, 142-3.

⁴⁴ O’Connell, ‘Authority and the Truth of Experience’, 510.

⁴⁵ V. *Georg.* I.145-6. *Fam.* IV.1.6.

⁴⁶ For biblical and classical allusions, see e.g. Billanovich, ‘Petarca e Il Ventoso’, 394-5; Robert M. Durling, ‘Il Petarca, il Ventoso’, 305; and R. J. Lokaj, ‘Petrarch vs. Gherardo’, 140.

⁴⁷ For Petrarch and Cicero’s *Letters*, see Williams, *Pietro Bembo on Etna*, 97-8; M. L. McLaughlin, ‘Petrarch and Cicero: Adulation and Critical Distance’, in *Brill’s Companion to the Reception of Cicero*, ed. William H. F. Altman (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2015), 19-38.

⁴⁸ *Fam.* IV.1.7.

‘remorseless toil’ would see them to the top, but when the unexpected figure of the shepherd gave them advice about ‘regret and hard toil’, they chose to ignore him. In this episode Petrarch delivered an example of the absence of his moral or inner curiosity or understanding about the nature of the challenge. The reader would remember the shepherd’s advice on the summit of Ventoux once Petrarch had read from Augustine, a ‘higher model of pastoral wisdom and authority’ whose words would rebuke Petrarch for his insubstantial and superficial desire to climb the mountain and his failure to examine his inner self.⁴⁹

In a letter crammed with allusions, the shepherd might have represented a Moses leading his sheep to the base of Sinai, or indeed any of the biblical shepherds in the wilderness whose role was positive.⁵⁰ Another role the shepherd offered in this letter was to create a sense of history surrounding the mountain, a figure to provide the mountain with its own mythology. An unclimbed mountain could have allure for its uniqueness, whereas a previously-climbed mountain developed its own history, its own mythology of ascent. The shepherd said he had climbed Ventoux fifty years previously, but that the ascent was unrewarding. His words provided a history for the mountain, but not a glorious one, and the mountain’s history warned Petrarch yet again that the ascent would be painful and best avoided. Petrarch also now had a predecessor to measure himself against, a man who had already climbed the mountain and against whose climb Petrarch could test his own physical ability. The shepherd’s historicity of the mountain prepared the reader again for Petrarch’s failure. It was the second historical episode, after Philip on Haemus, which reminded the reader of failures on the mountain stage.

As the party advanced upwards, Petrarch related how several times he took the easy path while his brother chose the direct path,⁵¹ straight up the ridge towards the top; and while his brother climbed higher, Petrarch seemed only to descend, or to find himself lost and wandering among the valleys.

differebam nempe ascendendi molestiam, sed ingenio humanae rerum natura non tollitur, nec fieri potest ut corporeum aliquid ad alta descendendo perveniat.⁵²

Of course, I was trying to put off the difficulty of the ascent, but human ingenuity cannot resolve the nature of things, nor can it be the case that anything corporeal can climb to the heights by going downhill.

His self-disparaging description of his shameful attempts to climb the mountain were an acknowledgement of his lack of physical constancy, moral commitment, and spiritual prowess.⁵³ The pure actions of his brother acted as a measure against Petrarch’s own failings. The yardstick

⁴⁹ Quotation from Williams, *Pietro Bembo on Etna*, 99; cf. Falkeid, ‘Petrarch, Mont Ventoux and the Modern Self’, 11; O’Connell, ‘Authority and the Truth of Experience’, 514.

⁵⁰ See section 3.1.

⁵¹ The date of Gherardo’s conversion and his entry into the Carthusian Monastery in Montrieux in 1343 are believed to relate to the references to his taking the direct path up the mountain.

⁵² *Fam.* IV.1.11.

⁵³ Cf. O’Connell, ‘Authority and the Truth of Experience’, 510.

of the mountain displayed his inconstancy set against Ventoux' constancy, just as Virgil had set Aeneas against the yardstick of Mount Atlas.⁵⁴ For Petrarch, what had seemingly begun as a physical exercise and historical re-enactment, had developed into something much more challenging than the physical ascent—a growing awareness of his own spiritual and moral inadequacies. This awareness would continue once he reached the top of the mountain.

5.4 The summit of Mont Ventoux

Several times Petrarch tried to take a short cut to the top, and several times found himself lost in the valleys. In despair, he admonished himself for his attempts to achieve success without applying the effort.

quod totiens hodie in ascensu montis huius expertus es, id scito et tibi accidere et multis, accedentibus ad beatam vitam; sed idcirco tam facile ab hominibus non perpendi, quod corporis motus in aperto sunt, animorum vero invisibiles et occulti. equidem vita, quam beatam dicimus, celso loco sita est; arcta, ut aiunt, ad illam ducit via. multi quoque colles intereminent et de virtute in virtutem praeclaris gradibus ambulandum est; in summo finis est omnium et viae terminus ad quem peregrinatio nostra disponitur. eo pervenire volunt omnes, sed, ut ait Naso, velle parum est; cupias, ut re potiaris, oportet.⁵⁵

You should be aware that what you have experienced so many times today in the ascent of this mountain happens to you and to many, in their journey towards the blessed life; but that it is not so easily recognised by men, since the movements of the body are obvious while those of the soul are invisible and hidden. Indeed, the life which we call blessed is to be found in a high location; and narrow, it is said, is the way that leads to it. Many hills also lie between, and we must walk from virtue to virtue by a glorious ascent; at the top is the end of our struggles and the completion of the journey which we have undertaken. All wish to reach this goal, but, as the poet Ovid says, 'To wish is little; you must be filled with desire to obtain your goal.'

This short passage contained references to earlier literature, inspiration and imitation for Petrarch through the metaphor of the mountain. He gave a direct quotation from Ovid:

to wish is little; you must be filled with desire to obtain your goal;⁵⁶

and a less obvious reference to Matthew's gospel. Petrarch's 'narrow, it is said, is the way that leads to a blessed life' found its origins in Matthew's

⁵⁴ Section 2.3.3.

⁵⁵ *Fam.* IV.1.

⁵⁶ *Ov. Pont.* 3.1.35: *velle parum est: cupias, ut re potiaris, oportet.*

how small is the gate and narrow the path which leads to life, and there are only a few who find it.⁵⁷

These examples of the rich weaving of references in the letter increase the likelihood that the letter was crafted and shaped with deliberate care, not hastily penned in the inn at night, as Petrarch declared.

The mountain set the stage for Petrarch's increasing self-awareness. His perception of his failings and his perception of the mountain developed from his climb and from his knowledge of his classical and biblical predecessors. Most revealing was the message within the passage which we have already seen in Seneca's letter to his nephew Lucilius.⁵⁸ Seneca wrote that one could reach the top of a mountain by application of effort, and that wisdom could be obtained with similar application. Together, suggested Seneca, effort and wisdom were able to develop virtue, and that virtue was more lasting than mountains.⁵⁹ The physical ascent towards the summit was matched by a mental ascent towards the development of virtue and the self. Petrarch's growing awareness of his moral failings during the climb resonated with Seneca's stoic teaching to his nephew Lucilius. Physically, Petrarch was climbing Ventoux; spiritually, he would use the mountain to learn from the teaching of Augustine.

5.4.1 The view from the summit

On his arrival at the summit, Petrarch's first thought was to gaze at the awe-inspiring view.

stupenti similis steti.⁶⁰

I stood like one who was amazed.

Interestingly, it seems that his recollection of literary mountain influences was as inspiring as the panorama, and he used these influences to describe the wonder of the view. He declared that his reading about Olympus and Athos seemed more credible now that he was confronted with this view from a mountain of lesser fame.⁶¹ Mountain literature provided him with points of reference for his summit view. He looked across at the Alps towards Italy—the same Alps, he said, where Livy wrote that Hannibal had once broken through the mountain passes on his way into Italy.⁶² Petrarch's reading of Livy directed him to the outside, to the sensory view, to what was visible.⁶³ Inspired by Philip on Haemus, his aim had been to climb

⁵⁷ Matt. 7.14: *quam angusta porta et arta via quae ducit ad vitam et pauci sunt qui inveniunt eam.*

⁵⁸ Section 2.4.4.

⁵⁹ Sen. *Ep.* 79.10.

⁶⁰ *Fam.* IV.1.

⁶¹ *Fam.* IV.1. Although he had provided the Livian Philip and Mount Haemus reference at the start of his letter, it did not suit him to provide similar references for these two mountains. De Jong, 'Oroskopia', 24.

⁶² Livy, 21-25.

⁶³ Robbins, 'Petrarch Reading Augustine', 535.

Ventoux for the summit view; once on the summit, his view of the Alps reminded him of Hannibal, the enemy of Rome, whose own *oroskopia* from the Alps had preceded his bloody campaign against the Romans. Petrarch's summit view inspired his visual senses and his literary memory, and presumably satisfied his aesthetic and historical-literary curiosity.

However, Simon Schama has correctly observed that for people on mountain summits, 'the panorama show[s] nothing so clearly as the scenery of their lives'.⁶⁴ With his exterior curiosity satisfied, Petrarch's thoughts turned elsewhere. Gazing from the summit, he exclaimed:

occupavit inde animum nova cogitatio atque a locis traduxit ad tempora.⁶⁵

Then a new thought seized my mind and turned it to time rather than place.

His view from the summit moved from the external to the internal, and the effect of his summit-gaze was that he turned the view onto himself, and began to look back at the previous ten years of his life. We saw with Seneca how mountain summits could provide opportunities for philosophical introspection, and so it was with Petrarch, who moved mentally from the spatial plane to that of memory and of time.⁶⁶ As O'Connell remarks, Petrarch's self-disparaging voice began to adopt a more serious tone: 'the mountain now afford[ed him] a "view" of memory', and as he looked back at his youth and the indiscretions of his youth, he criticised his failings.⁶⁷ Then the setting sun shook him from his reverie: he looked west to the Pyrenees and below him towards Marseilles and the Rhone.

The tensions between Petrarch's external and internal views paralleled the tensions between his physical ascent and his own written description of the ascent. Like Egeria, Petrarch wrote about his own ascent; like Egeria, he determined the means of ascent and the letter's structure. However, his letter was much more finely-crafted than Egeria's account, and contained wide allusions to a breadth of literature, not just to the Bible. He added data from other sources, including his own, enriching it with biblical and classical quotations endowing it with majesty and dignity. As climber of his own ascent Petrarch was able to provide the physical evidence of an eyewitness (like an Arculf or a Willibald); and as narrator of his own adventure he was able to offer the reader his own thoughts and mental processes (like a Seneca). His physical encounter with the mountain was more straightforward than his mental engagement with it. His mental dialogue featured as a key player in his own drama, providing commentary to the twists and turns of the ascent and adding thought processes alongside his

⁶⁴ Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 422.

⁶⁵ *Fam.* IV.1.

⁶⁶ Williams, *Pietro Bembo on Etna*, 96-7.

⁶⁷ O'Connell, 'Authority and the Truth of Experience', 512.

challenges and failings. The complexities of mental adjustment brought about by his reaction to the physical revealed the significance of the mountain in life and in literature.

5.4.2 Looking out and looking in

It was at this point, Petrarch professed, that it occurred to him to open his copy of Augustine's *Confessions*, and to read the first page that came to hand. He read the passage to his brother:

'Et eunt homines admirari alta montium et ingentes fluctus maris et latissimos lapsus fluminum et oceani ambitum et giros siderum, et relinquunt se ipsos.' Obstipui, fateor.⁶⁸

'And men go to wonder at the heights of mountains, and the mighty waves of the sea, and the wide stretches of rivers, and the circle of the ocean, and the revolution of the stars, but they fail to wonder at themselves.' I confess that I was amazed.

The passage quoted was from Book X of Augustine's *Confessions* (the book explaining Augustine's conversion to Christianity) at the point where Augustine discussed how only within the memory and mind was anyone able to develop the self-knowledge necessary to become closer to God. In his spiritual meditation Augustine had wondered why humans chose to explore the external world but failed to explore themselves.⁶⁹ The alleged date of Petrarch's climb was 26 April 1336, when Petrarch was thirty-two years old. As Billanovich and others have noted, this would have made Petrarch the same age as Augustine at the end of his conversion, and therefore a symbolic age for Petrarch to claim to have written the letter—if indeed he did fabricate the letter.⁷⁰ In recent years some scholars have regarded Petrarch's letter as an imitation of the Augustine conversion, and the date chosen as a fabrication to align with the conversion of Augustine.⁷¹ Others have argued against this, regarding the letter as a critique of Augustine conversion ideology.⁷²

My concern is not about the veracity of the ascent, nor about Petrarch's possible imitation of Augustine's conversion. My concern is with Petrarch's climb and his account of the climb, including his internal and external responses to the mountain and to the Augustinian passage, which he claimed to have read from the summit of Ventoux, inspired to do so by the

⁶⁸ Aug. *Conf.* X.8.15. *Fam.* IV.1.27.

⁶⁹ Cf. O'Connell, 'Authority and the Truth of Experience', 512.

⁷⁰ Baron, *From Petrarch to Leonardo Bruni*, 18; Billanovich, *Lo Scrittoio del Petrarca*, 88-90, 192-5; Billanovich 'Petrarca e Il Ventoso', 394-5; O'Connell, 'Authority and the Truth of Experience', 513; Robbins, 'Petrarch Reading Augustine', 534; and Ascoli, 'Petrarch's Middle Age', 11. Williams, *Pietro Bembo on Etna*, 99.

⁷¹ E.g. Durling, 'Il Petrarca, il Ventoso', 304-6; Robbins, 'Petrarch Reading Augustine', 534. See a summary in Falkeid, 'Petrarch, Mont Ventoux and the Modern Self', 5; and O'Connell, 'Authority and the Truth of Experience', 507-20.

⁷² E.g. Falkeid, 'Petrarch, Mont Ventoux and the Modern Self', 7-14.

summit view.⁷³ We cannot say for sure whether he opened his book at random or not (it was unlikely), or even if he had the book with him to open, though we can respond to his narrative. His internal reaction to the words on the page was one of **physical** amazement, and he underlined this by use of the same root verb he had used to describe his physical amazement at the extraordinary external summit view: *obstipui* ('I was **amazed**') reminds us of his reaction to the summit view: *stupenti similis steti* ('I stood like one who was **amazed**'). The power of the mountain caused him amazement at both the internal and the external panorama.

Within Petrarch's reference to Augustine, it is also possible to discover intertext links to the Transfiguration story.⁷⁴ Just as Jesus led Peter, James and John up the mountain where they heard the voice of God on the summit, so Petrarch ascended Ventoux where he read the words which Augustine said had turned him to the worship of God, words which made Petrarch examine his soul.⁷⁵ Although there were no explicit references to the biblical story, it can still be seen as a structural intertext.⁷⁶

At first, however, it appeared that Augustine's words had forced a retraction of the aesthetic curiosity which we noted above. Petrarch recoiled from the external view:

librum clausi, iratus mihi met quod nunc etiam terrestria mirarer, qui iam pridem ab ipsis gentium philosophis discere debuissem nihil praeter animum esse mirabile, cui magno nihil est magnum.⁷⁷

I closed the book, angry with myself that I should still be admiring earthly things when long ago I ought to have learned from even the pagan philosophers that nothing is wonderful but the soul, which, being great, finds nothing outside itself great.

Whereas Petrarch had rejected the old shepherd's words at the foot of the mountain, he chose now to adhere to the words of Augustine. His climb had made him aware of the self-knowledge necessary to heed the advice of Augustine. His anger was at the futility of human desires in comparison with the spiritual self-knowledge required to become closer to God. The mountain allowed him to realise that the external meant little, that only the internal was important:

... quod intus inveniri poterat, querentes extrinsecus.⁷⁸

... [we] look about outside ourselves for what can only be found within.

⁷³ Cf. Limor, 'Pilgrims and Authors', 263.

⁷⁴ For the Transfiguration, see section 3.4.3.

⁷⁵ Falkeid, 'Petrarch, Mont Ventoux and the Modern Self', 17, though as Falkeid says, on Ventoux there is utter silence. See also Ascoli, 'Petrarch's Middle Age', 21.

⁷⁶ Falkeid, 'Petrarch, Mont Ventoux and the Modern Self', 17.

⁷⁷ *Fam.* IV.1.28.

⁷⁸ *Fam.* IV.1.32.

No longer prepared to consider the external view, Petrarch used the summit for self-reflection, turning the gaze from the mountain to himself.

tunc vero montem satis vidisse contentus, in me ipsum interiores oculos reflexi.⁷⁹

Then indeed I was content to have seen enough of the mountain, and I turned my inner eyes upon myself.

The mountain summit as a place for spiritual contemplation or for examination of the self is a motif we have seen throughout this thesis. Most significant was Seneca's recognition that the acquisition of wisdom could be viewed in the metaphorical terms of the ascent of Mount Etna. Seneca chose the physical and mental ascent of the mountain as the location for analysis, for the height and the literary history of Etna allowed for a discussion about knowledge and wisdom, and the search for virtue. Seneca's reflections about Etna show that a mountain could be a site for introspection as well as an opportunity for an internal monologue. Egeria's introspection was simpler, offering admiration for the summit view and corroboration of what she had read in the Bible. Petrarch's monologue on the summit of Ventoux was the result of the knowledge gained from his ascent, and from the summit views, both internal and external, and for him it became a site for catharsis.⁸⁰ His *oroskopia* from Ventoux gave Petrarch an opportunity to consider wisdom and spiritual awareness, and to reflect on his own life.

5.4.3 The descent

Petrarch wrote that he did not utter another word during the descent from the summit on the walk back to the inn, and whenever he looked back at the mountain—as he did, many times—his perception of it had changed dramatically:

quotiens, putas, illo die, rediens et in tergum versus, cacumen montis aspexi, et vix unius cubiti altitudo visa est prae altitudine contemplationis humanae?⁸¹

How often, do you think, on the return did I turn round and look at the summit of the mountain? It now seemed no more than a cubit high in comparison with the height of human contemplation.

According to O'Connell, the mountain taught Petrarch that, compared to the magnitude of human contemplation, a mountain was insignificant, no more than a cubit in height.⁸² The implication was that after his reading of Augustine and his understanding of the words within, for Petrarch the mountain faded into insignificance, appearing no more than a few inches high.

⁷⁹ *Fam.* IV.1.29.

⁸⁰ Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, 420.

⁸¹ *Fam.* IV.1.33.

⁸² O'Connell, 'Authority and the Truth of Experience', 512-14.

He had received a spiritual rebuke from Augustine, as earlier he had been given physical and moral advice from the shepherd. The shepherd had found only ‘regret and hard toil’ from his efforts (*paenitentiam et laborem*), but Petrarch’s analysis of his thoughts suggested that his own *paenitentia* would be in some form of spiritual redemption.⁸³

However, Petrarch’s descent from the mountain was more complex than this. I argue that it was not only the words of Augustine which had motivated Petrarch to analyse his thoughts. The mountain was significant for his self-contemplation, and he had deliberately used the mountain as a stage for his particular drama. Only on the mountain summit, above the cares of everyday life, could Petrarch actually make sense of the passage he read to himself and his brother:⁸⁴ the external view from the mountain summit, followed by his internal introspection, taught him about his spiritual failings just as earlier the mountain slopes had taught him about his moral and physical weakness while undertaking ‘hard toil’. Augustine taught him about the value of his soul as earlier the shepherd had told him about physical and moral suffering. Only the permanence of the mountain could provide Petrarch with the stability needed to understand the flux of human behaviour. Petrarch’s letter analysed the spiritual pursuit of the self, in an attempt to discern constancy or certainty, scrutinising the human soul against the fixity of the mountain.⁸⁵

5.5 Conclusion

This thesis has charted the depiction of mountains in classical and biblical literature and has explored how their depiction played an important role in establishing medieval perceptions of mountains and high places. It has revealed how mountains featured prominently in literature and, contrary to established scholarly opinion, how aspects of their perception in medieval accounts showed an appreciation and awareness that was at least as positive as it was negative. We have seen evidence from Latin, Greek and biblical texts and from accounts of selected medieval mountain ascents.

The thesis set out to explore four main issues. Firstly, by unpacking the tension between the real and the virtual, between physical ascents and literary accounts, it looked to discover intriguing aspects about attitudes to mountains. Secondly, it sought to explore how the inspiration for mountain ascents developed out of earlier literature and how literary accounts helped establish perceptions of mountains. Thirdly, the thesis looked at human curiosity, to understand how the role of curiosity acted as an inspiration to climb in the mountains. Finally,

⁸³ *Fam.* IV.1.7. Williams, *Pietro Bembo on Etna*, 99; O’Connell, ‘Authority and the Truth of Experience’, 514.

⁸⁴ *Confessions*, X.8.15. *Fam.* IV.1.27.

⁸⁵ Falkeid, ‘Petrarch, Mont Ventoux and the Modern Self’, 5.

the thesis contested the current scholarly marginalisation of mountains in the ancient and medieval worlds.

Firstly, the tension between actual ascents and the written accounts of those ascents has been an important feature of the thesis. In antiquity and the Middle Ages, for those who wanted, it was not always possible to undertake a mountain climb, and the way to visit mountains might have been through the lens of a written account. The author-mediator of a virtual account made the mountain available to others by writing for those who otherwise would have been unable or unwilling to go. The mountain account became the mediator's own representation and the reader's own interpretation.

At times the tension between these two aspects of a mountain ascent could reveal differing attitudes and perceptions. While the physical ascents dwelt on the demands and the exertion of a climb (as was the case, for example, with Egeria's account of her climbs in the Holy Land, or Petrarch's account of his toiling on Ventoux), the written accounts were able to examine the description of self-discovery or self-analysis (as occurred with Seneca on Etna, and Petrarch on Ventoux). In addition, the written account of a Hugeburc or a Petrarch might have enhanced the actual climb by crafting a literary written account whose description went beyond the reality of the ascent. The simplicity of Egeria's account suggested that she wrote her account on the day of the ascent as a daily diary, or very shortly afterwards; her writing contrasted with Petrarch's artful claim to have written his letter to Dionigi da Borgo San Sepolcro on the evening of the day of his ascent of Ventoux. Egeria's simplicity further contrasted with Seneca's deliberation about virtue or Petrarch's spiritual angst, showing that the mental growth or spiritual development of an individual could be developed within the written account of a mountain ascent.

However, the climber and the mediator may not have been so far distant from one another as imagined, and the gulf not so wide. They both experienced the same mountains, but saw the mountains through different filtering processes. Thus, Willibald wished to look into Vulcano's hell with his own eyes, whereas Hugeburc did look into Vulcano's hell, but through an association of different literary filters, from Adomnán to Virgil. They experienced the same mountain and filtered it through different lenses. At other times the twofold interplay between the physical ascents and the written accounts could lead to a dilution or elaboration of events. The collective memories experienced in the Gospels and in varying descriptions of New Testament mountains suggest that divergences in descriptions existed as a result of differing personal beliefs and recollection.

Virtual accounts often placed great emphasis on the sensory aspects of a climb, on the visual and auditory aspects, as if to atone for the virtuality or else to reassure the reader of the validity of their words. The interplay between accounts meant that potential climbers could even experience their journey virtually before travelling. This is what Egeria did, by reading the

Bible; this is what Willibald did, by reading Adomnán; this is what Hugeburc did, by reading Boniface. This thesis has shown that the tension between literary and real ascents ensured that there was a facility to climb mountains while still at home.

Secondly, I have shown how earlier literature was a powerful influencing force in establishing perceptions of mountains. The literary history of a mountain often cemented its reputation: after Homer and Hesiod, Olympus was always the home of the gods, after Hesiod and Pindar, Typhoeus and hell lay beneath Mount Etna. The influence of literary history on a mountain gave a mountain its own mythology, and the mythology of a mountain established the mountain's reputation and gave that mountain meaning. The mythology of Etna stretched back at least as far as Hesiod's description of Typhoeus, and was later appropriated by Pindar who placed Typhoeus under the mountain. The mythology of Sinai and Zion in the Bible connected the mountains with the foundation myths of the nation of Israel, establishing the mountains as places of great sacredness in Israel's history. Vulcano's mythology stemmed from Virgil's description of the mountain as the forge of the god Vulcan, a mythology developed and altered over time by Gregory's account of Vulcano being the hell of Theodoric. Even Ventoux developed its own mythology, firstly in the account of the old shepherd who had climbed the mountain in his youth, and then as a result of Petrarch's climb and his account of the climb, which (even if we do not accept it as true) led to a remarkable mythology of the mountain stemming from Petrarch's letter.

Written accounts of ascents were conceived through the literary filters of previous literature. Thus, this thesis has explored and harvested the *Theogony* of Hesiod and the *Aeneid* of Virgil for depictions of mountains in the ancient world. Chapter two traced strong links between the two texts to show that rarely did a mountain description appear in isolation but was likely to have been informed by the perceptions and descriptions which preceded it. Chapter three explored depictions of mountains in the Bible and revealed the significance of earlier biblical mountains to inform later events on mountains in the narrative of the New Testament.

It can be seen, therefore, that the sediment of history added to the human sense of awe when climbing a mountain. Any historical or literary struggle surrounding a mountain became the stuff of legend, adding to the significance of the mountain. The constancy and fixity of Atlas was confirmed by the legend of the Titan whose mythology prefigured the mountain. That struggle could be physical, as was the case with Zeus on Olympus, or psychological, as with Seneca on Etna. Petrarch struggled both physically and mentally in his ascent of Mont Ventoux. His struggles allowed him to describe the drama in his letter; and although his physical struggle was never a life-and-death drama, it was climbing as performance art, a letter as an act of theatre. The mythology of a mountain made the account more appealing, and the fame of the mountain grew alongside its mythology. The combination of history and danger added interest to a mountain.

The literary history of a mountain, and therefore the mountain itself, became a human construct. As we have seen, potential climbers could experience their journey before travelling, by reading previous accounts or descriptions. This added great meaning to a written account by a Hugeburc or an Adomnán, for later perceptions of mountains were taken from the literary accounts.

The third aspect, that of curiosity, has featured throughout the thesis. Curiosity was a contributory factor in Willibald's ascent of Vulcano, his curiosity apparent in his desire to go on pilgrimage and visit foreign lands. However, the curiosity was Hugeburc's as much as Willibald's and she was inspired by the literature surrounding Mount Vulcano—the literature that stemmed from Adomnán, Gregory, Boniface and Willibald of Mainz, as well as earlier classical and biblical literature.

Curiosity for the mountain often stemmed from literature. The literary curiosity in all instances in this thesis prefigured the ascent of the mountain and was usually the reason for visiting the mountain in the first instance. People could read an account of a mountain climb and imagine themselves to be there. They could imagine their ignorance into knowledge when they climbed the mountain and put their reading into practice. However, the curiosity was more than literary, and we have seen different types of curiosity throughout the thesis. There was a desire for the aesthetic of the mountain, recognised by Hadrian on Etna and Pliny in the Apennines; there was a curiosity about the mountain's literary history, as was the case with Seneca on Etna, and Hugeburc on Vulcano; religious curiosity inspired Matthew's superstructure of mountains in his gospel, and inspired Egeria to climb in the Holy Land; scientific curiosity inspired Seneca on Etna and Strabo on Acrocorinth; and internal curiosity encouraged Petrarch's spiritual contemplation on Ventoux.

Curiosity was an inspiring factor in mountain ascents, and the terrible reputation of a mountain attracted climbers, with danger and fear not infrequently acting as a draw. It is possible that the danger of Theodoric's hell in Gregory's account of Vulcano drew both Arculf and Willibald to the mountain. The history of Mount Etna revealed that curiosity about fear rather than a fear of curiosity was an inspiration for mountain ascents: it made for wonderful physical theatre and exciting literature. However, a wonderful reputation also attracted—thus a curious Egeria was inspired to visit the Holy Land. Literary and physical ascents allowed men and women to fulfil their curiosity and display their erudition.⁸⁶

Finally, this thesis has offered a fresh understanding of mountains in antiquity and the Middle Ages. Egeria's joyful account of her climbs in the Holy Land affirmed that there existed a delight in being among the mountains for their own sake. She engaged emotionally with the mountains as the Trojans did with Mount Ida. The emotional involvement with a mountain was part of its history. A mountain exerted emotional influence on the mind, a fact understood by

⁸⁶ *Itin.*, 17.

Hesiod in his description of Helicon, by Virgil and Pliny in their depictions of the Apennines, and by Petrarch in his letter about Ventoux. The combination of classical and biblical sources and examination of accounts from the Middle Ages in this thesis have offered a more nuanced and developed approach to analysing Willibald's ascent of Vulcano and Egeria's travels in the fourth century, and have helped to qualify established opinion on pre-Petrarchan mountain narratives.

The mountain episodes in this thesis have revealed a search for meaning beyond the individual's ascent. Seneca's Etna gave him hopes of attaining wisdom and virtue; Egeria in the Holy Land was seeking corroboration of the Bible's truths; Willibald on Vulcano, seeking the truth of Gregory's account, wished to encounter hell at the mountain summit; Petrarch desired to reach the summit of Ventoux, where he was astounded by the view and by his own act of contemplation. Even in myth there was a quest: Aeneas' search for a purpose and a homeland was set against Virgil's mountains, while Zeus and the other gods sought to establish order and a sense of harmony from Mount Olympus. The act of climbing or even of being in the mountains led to a sense of mission; the climb was as important as the summit view and 'the upward movement [became] a heuristic process'.⁸⁷

The thesis ended with Petrarch's ascent of Ventoux to show that Petrarch was looking back from the summit as much as he was looking forward. In other words, though some commentators have regarded his climb as the start of modern mountaineering, this thesis interprets it rather as the continuation of something that never went away. Our final look at Petrarch placed him comfortably at the end of a long period of mountain narrative, as well as in an innovative position at the dawn of modern mountaineering.

⁸⁷ Hooley, 'Classical Mountain Landscapes', 30.

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