

AAR

Landscape as Cartography in Early Christian Pilgrimage Narratives*

Blake Leyerle

COMPARED TO OTHER ancient travel literature, early accounts of Christian pilgrimage are strikingly spare. Our first record comes to us from an anonymous traveler in the early fourth century, but here the land and its inhabitants, both presumably so exotic, remain as faceless as the traveler. Towards the end of the same century, Egeria's account shows a greater expansiveness on these matters but still has intriguing silences; while fulsome in expressing pleasure in what she sees, her enthusiasm stops short of any literary depiction of these sights. Jerome's letters, written at about the same time, describing the land of Palestine as well as the holy travels of his friend Paula, do direct our attention to the landscape but in a highly stylized way. For Jerome, scenery speaks of religious rather than geological formation. By the end of the sixth century, however, when another anonymous pilgrim traveled to the Holy Land, local fauna, flora, and even matters of ethnography are all of exuberant interest. Why is this?

While this question may seem too impressionistic, too insignificant—or perhaps even too obvious—to ask, doing so brings real rewards. Like

Blake Leyerle is Assistant Professor of Early Christian History in the Theology Department at the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN 46556

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the Emperor's new clothes, what escapes perception also carries meaning. Even though the scant and fragmentary nature of our evidence about early Christian pilgrimage cautions against forming generalizations about "shifts in perception," we can, like good travelers ourselves, stay local and examine the texts on their own terms. We will then discover what behavioral geographers and environmental psychologists have been telling us all along, namely, that the perceived world differs significantly from the so-called "real" world that we make our own geography in much the same way that we make our own history. Despite its seemingly objective solidity, landscape is far from being just an inert backdrop for human activity, it should instead be understood as "a human product" (Pred 1984 279, 1990 16). External stimuli like mountains, rough roads, or exotic animals only take on significance when accorded it by the viewer. Spatial knowledge evolves from an "autobiography of experiences that happen to take place in space" (Clayton and Woodyard 116), and is therefore inevitably partial and idiosyncratic (Lloyd 104, Boyle and Robinson 2 59–82). We are, however, saved from the threat of solipsism by the realization that maps are also always shaped by a particular set of social relations (Harley 1988a 278–300, Guy, Curtis, and Crotts 421). These are, in turn, responsible for giving a country its sense of "identity," as Braudel puts it or, in Samuel's words, its "biography." Individual descriptions of terrain form simply "further glosses upon [the] already deeply layered text" of the landscape itself (Panofsky 17, 58). How then might our early pilgrims' descriptions of landscape form part of a general project of biography (Giddens 363, Cosgrove 13–38, Walmsley and Lewis 43–53)?

Kevin Lynch has analyzed precisely how travelers go about coming to terms with their terrain. All of us, he claims, gain a sense of control over "the world," i.e., that portion of the environment we occupy, by building up simplified images. These can be divided into five basic categories: paths (like the road system), edges (obstacles like streams or mountains), nodes (*foci* for travel like cities), districts (large areas with an identifiable character), and landmarks (specific points of reference). Theories of cognitive mapping suggest that we acquire this information gradually, learning first landmarks, then the routes between them, and finally the area surrounding them.¹ Notions of connectedness are primary, what seems to change over time is the nature of that connectedness (Walmsley and Jenkins 280, McNamara 115–116, Lloyd 103). To these categories Philip

¹ The term "cognitive map" refers to the mental representation of spatial knowledge. It does not imply that the representation is "maplike" (McNamara 91) for anchor point theory see Golledge and Spector 125–152.

Pearce adds the concept of “texture,” which is designed to accommodate generalized remarks on landscape such as “saw some great scenery,” “felt happy,” “lots to look at,” and “saw a lot of bird life” (1981 145). The familiarity of these expressions brings us, moreover, face to face with another overlooked aspect of early pilgrimage accounts: their kinship with other records of travel, including our own.

If the work of behavioral geographers engages the wider epistemological question of “how we come to know,” it is the branch of sociology that deals with travel, namely, the sociology of tourism, that addresses the more homey but equally compelling questions of how travelers interact with the sights they have come so far to see and what contributes to a sense of their satisfaction.² Pilgrimage, to be sure, is set apart from the commercialized travel of modern tourists by being a serious spiritual undertaking, and no use of categories drawn from the sociology of tourism should suggest otherwise.³ But as a discipline, this branch of sociology is increasingly precise about the many discrete groups clustered under its definition of a “tourist.” Any voluntary, round-trip traveler who goes on a relatively long journey, during which she or he lives on funds derived from home rather than earned in the places visited, qualifies (Ogilvie 661, Cohen 1974 527–530, 1979 179–201, 1984 374–376, Leiper 390–407, Pearce 1982 29–37, Nash 135, Smith 1–3, Rinschede 51–67, Yiannakis and Gibson 287–303). While belief and worldview do differentiate the tourist from the pilgrim, they nevertheless must share the same infrastructure of travel. How then might insights drawn from the sociology of tourism as well as theories of cognitive mapping illuminate our earliest Christian descriptions of the Holy Land?

THE BORDEAUX PILGRIM

Our earliest pilgrimage account is the anonymous record of a person who traveled from Bordeaux to the Holy Land in 333 C.E. This text is striking precisely for what seems to us its omissions. It begins with a simple itinerary. The most prominent feature, as Lynch’s work suggests, is the road itself, and its markers of progress.

² James J. Gibson, building on the phenomenological question of Koffka, “Why do things look as they do?” suggested that the elementary or fundamental impressions are not bits of color, but surfaces, edges, motion, distance, depth, and so on (8, 133–134, 187, quoted in Lombardo, 193, 196).

³ The term “tourism” was originally used as a deprecatory label (*The Oxford English Dictionary*, 1933, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 11, 190). For an outstanding example of the derogatory use of this word, see Boorstun, 77–117.

| | |
|--|----------|
| Change at the 12th milestone | 12 miles |
| Stay over at the border | 12 miles |
| Change at the 8th milestone | 8 miles |
| City of Taurini [Turin] | 8 miles |
| Change at the 10th milestone | 10 miles |
| Stay over at Quadratae | 12 miles |
| Change at Ceste | 11 miles |
| <i>(It Burd 556–557 [CCSL 175, 3])⁴</i> | |

As this pilgrim nears his goal, however, some informative details creep into this list of stations passed and horses changed. Lynch's "edges" are featured: "Here Italy begins. There rise the Julian Alps. You cross the bridge and go into Lower Pannonia. Crossing the sea, you come to Hydruntum" (*It Burd 555, 560, 561, 609 [CCSL 175, 3, 4, 5, 23]*), as are his landmarks:

| | |
|---|----------|
| City of Viminatium (where Diocletian killed Carinus) | 10 miles |
| Stay over at Libissa There king Hannibal lies who was king of the Africans | 9 miles |
| Stay over at Andaulis There is the villa of Pammatus, whence come the curule horses | 16 miles |
| City of Thyana From there came Apollonius the magician | 18 miles |
| City of Tarsus From there came Paul the apostle | 12 miles |
| Stay over at Antaradus There the city is in the sea, two miles from the shore | 16 miles |
| From there Sarepta Where Elijah went up to the widow and asked for food for himself | 9 miles |
| Stay over at Sycaminos There is mount Carmel, where Elijah offered a sacrifice | 3 miles |
| <i>(It Burd 564–585 [CCSL 175, 6–12])</i> | |

The same singsong patter reasserts itself on the way home, in part perhaps to register a variation in route that took our pilgrim back home by way of Rome.

⁴*Itinerarium Burdigalense* (hereafter abbreviated *It Burd*) 564–585. The basic edition is that edited by P. Geyer and O. Cuntz (Brepols 1965).

| | |
|---|---------------|
| City of Nicopolis | 22 miles |
| City of Lydda | 10 miles |
| Change at Antipatris | 10 miles |
| Change at Betthar | 10 miles |
| City of Caesarea | 16 miles. . . |
| Change at Peripides | 10 miles |
| There the poet Euripides is buried . . . | |
| Change at The Three Taverns | 5 miles |
| City of Laude | 9 miles |
| Change at the ninth milestone | 7 miles |
| City of Milan | 7 miles |
| Sum total from the city of Rome to Milan | |
| 416 miles, 44 changes, 24 stay overs. | |
| (<i>It. Burd.</i> 600–617 [CCSL 175, 20–26]) | |

This list format, however, ends quite abruptly at the frontier, (Lynch's "edge") of the Holy Land. Once the "City of Caesarea Palestina, that is Judaea" is reached and the total miles, changes and halts from Tyre given (*It. Burd.* 585 [CCSL 175, 12–13]), tentative descriptions give way to sustained prose. From now on, apparently, environs are meaningful.

This narrative frame may strike us as an odd kind of map, but it was not one unknown in antiquity. The Peutinger table, a medieval copy of a fourth-century road map, features "paths" highlighted in red and "edges" of greenish blue seas and brown chain mountains rendered in profile (Tsafrir).³ Its format resembles that of a modern strip-map, as the road, no matter what its true direction, seems always to run east-west. Appropriate conventional signs of "landmarks," such as villas, temples, spas, granaries, and lighthouses, punctuate the route. Figural representations signal important cities like Rome, Constantinople, and Antioch. Further literary landmarks are scattered across deserted portions of the map. For example, the Sinai contains two references to the Hebrew Bible; it is marked as "the desert where the children of Israel under Moses wandered for 40 years," as well as "where they received the law on Mount Sinai", from the New Testament, Mount Olivet is marked. In remote regions to the east, vague descriptions fill in uncharted space: "In these areas elephants (or scorpions) are born."

Yet if the Bordeaux pilgrim is more expansive in his descriptions of districts within the Holy Land, he nevertheless exercised a certain reserve. His account lacks any real interest in the native terrain, flora,

³ The fourth-century map may have had a first-century C.E. predecessor, as it lists cities destroyed by Vesuvius. It is clearly a civilian rather than a military map, as it gives no names of military installations (Dilke 1985:113–120).

fauna, or peoples I say “real,” for although some geographical formations are noted, most serve simply as markers of biblical sites (“There is the bath of Cornelius the centurion who gave many alms”, “there the almond tree [where] Jacob saw the vision and the angel wrestled with him” [*It Burd* 585 [CCSL 175, 13]]), or of places where miracles have occurred and might do so again “At the third milestone on mount Syna, there is a fountain, in which a woman becomes pregnant, if she washes” (*It Burd* 588 [CCSL 175, 14]) Other geographical features crop up simply to illustrate especially arduous aspects of the trip as, for example, when we are told that one reaches the top of Mount Gerizim “by thirteen hundred steps” (*It Burd* 587 [CCSL 175, 13]) No description, however, of the mountain itself or the view from its pinnacle follows

A related, curious fact is that our pilgrim did not follow the most direct route from Caesarea Palestina to Jerusalem but went instead by way of Jezreel Scythopolis No reason is given for this choice of route, but it may have been prompted by a desire to complete a tour of sites connected with the prophet Elijah There would be nothing odd in that But when we register that this detour brought him within a day’s journey of Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee, we must pause to wonder why these important sites of Jesus’ ministry were not worth a sidetrip (Wilson viii) It was not that this pilgrim was in a hurry he and his party took nearly seven months to walk to the Holy Land from the Bosphorus, take in its sights, and return (Dilke 1985 129)

The answer, indeed, seems rather simpler the Bordeaux pilgrim didn’t go to Nazareth or to the Sea of Galilee because there was nothing to be seen there No landmarks, just landscape Interest in places like Nazareth and Capernaum would be aroused only later after magnificent churches marked specific places as holy (Wilson ix) This observation, in turn, unlocks for us the structure, or cognitive mapping, of this pilgrimage It is primarily the record of an architectural tour a map of the “must-see” buildings and healing shrines of fourth-century Palestine It comes therefore as no surprise that the most descriptive portions of this itinerary center on Solomon’s palace, Constantine’s basilica, the city of Jencho, and various curative sites (*It Burd* 589–591, 594, 597 [CCSL 175, 15–17, 19]) The importance of geographical locale is implicitly denied In terms of terrain these holy sites could be anywhere

Before leaving the Bordeaux pilgrim, however, we need to underscore how this map evinces interest not only in sites but also in the routes connecting them As an itinerary with interlarded description, it represents an intriguing—perhaps unique—combination of literary genres But if unique in literary circles, the middle portion of the account also has affinities with map-making techniques of the time (Sherek 537–540,

559, Cohen, Nir, and Almagor 214–230) Contemporary land-survey maps, drawn by Roman *agrimensors* (land-surveyors), emphasize routes and edges as well as a few notable districts and landmarks.⁶ For example, Colonia Anxurnas, a miniature from the *Corpus Agrimensorum*, shows the Via Appia, centuriation (regional land allotments),⁷ the Pomptine marshes, the sea, and the mountains. The plan of Minturnae also includes a landmark of local interest, in this case, a bronze statue (*Aena*). As in the Bordeaux itinerary, a few notable features stand out in relief against an empty background marked only by the available route.

Our awareness of “silences” on maps is, as Harley has noted, central to an appreciation of how they encode political or social messages (1988a 290, 1988b 57–76).⁸ The sparseness of this account is, therefore, I suggest, significant. For there was no lack of fanciful travel literature in late antiquity (Romm 82–120). Consider, for example, Lucian of Samosata’s second-century satire of the travelogue, where, after adventures too many to be enumerated, he finds himself at last on the Island of the Blessed. There, he reports,

a marvelous breeze wafted about us and softly stirred the woods so
that from their moving branches whispered a sweet and ceaseless melody
for it is always spring with them and the country blooms with
every flower and plant and the grape vines bear twelve times a year,
every single month [a harvest] and the pomegranate, apple, and other
fruit trees are said to bear thirteen times and instead of ears of wheat,
loaves of bread ready-to-eat grow from the stalks (*Ver Hist.* 2.5–13)

As Lucian himself commented, “It made me think of Aristophanes the poet, a wise and truthful man whose writings are distrusted without reason” (*Ver Hist.* 1.29). Compared to such fanciful descriptions, the dry format of the Bordeaux pilgrim, like that of the professional land-surveyors, seems designed to impress the reader with a sense of the real-life connectedness between the world of “home,” in this case Bordeaux, and the sacred places of Palestine. Like the “plain” maps of the Holy Land included in Protestant Bibles in the sixteenth century (Harley

⁶ *Agrimensores mensores* or *gromatici* were professionals who performed a variety of functions connected with land measurement. None of the original maps has survived, but we do have detailed descriptions of them in the extant works of the *agrimensores* themselves. These professionals were found throughout the empire in both civilian and military status. The final task of the *agrimensor* was to engrave the map on two bronze tablets. Sherek also notes the similarity in concept and composition between the Peutinger Table and the manuscripts of the Roman surveyors (544–561).

⁷ The modern equivalent of a centuria of normal size (200 *iugera* = 20 x 20 *actus*) is between 700 and 714 meters. 708 is the normal measurement in North Africa (Dilke 1974:565).

⁸ For a different reading of this impression of scenic emptiness (Campbell 4–15).

1988a 300–303), the theological point encoded in this “map” is an insistence upon the facticity of the events of salvation history

The virtual absence of any mention of human or animal life in the Holy Land constitutes another silence by fostering the absurd impression of social emptiness (Harley 1988b 66–70)⁹ Perhaps the presence of contemporary life, like geographical formations, would distract from the conveyed perception of a direct interaction with the biblical past instantiated in architectural shrines

EGERIA

Fifty years later, in the early 380s C E, a woman perhaps named Egeria traveled to the Holy Land (Devos 165–194, cf. Wilkinson 237–239) As a writer, she is far more expansive than the traveler from Bordeaux, and her perception of landscape is accordingly richer We are immediately aware of her own voice Whereas the Bordeaux pilgrim preferred to use impersonal verbs, Egeria reports her own actions and reactions Even the measure of her route is taken not in terms of miles traversed, as in the Bordeaux pilgrimage, but rather in terms of how long it took her to get where she wanted to go

Her account, as it has come down to us, opens with a tour of the Sinai region Anticipating Roland Barthes’s comment on the “bourgeois promotion of mountains” (1972 74–77), Egeria favors crags and peaks—and not just in the Sinai, which would be understandable, but also within Palestine, plains merit mention only when they can be described as ‘fertile’ Unlike the Bordeaux pilgrim’s account where mountains represented edges or obstacles, this rugged terrain affords splendid views Through Egeria’s eyes we see the countryside spread out at her feet “From there we saw beneath us Egypt and Palestine, the Red Sea, and the Parthenian Sea which leads to Alexandria, and finally the endless lands of the Saracens” (*It Eg* 3 7 [SC 296, 136])¹⁰ On Mount Nebo she tells us how she walked all around the church built on the pinnacle to achieve a panoramic view

From the door of the church we saw the place where the Jordan flows into the Dead Sea We next saw in the distance not only Livias, which was on this side of the Jordan, but Jericho as well, which was on the other side The greater part of Palestine can be seen from

⁹ The Jews mourning of the perforated stone is the only mention of local inhabitants This of course serves a theological purpose (*It Burd* 591 [CCSL 175 16])

¹⁰ The critical edition is that edited by Pierre Maraval (Paris Editions du Cerf 1982)

there To the left we saw all the lands of the Sodomites as well as
 Segor Next we approached from the right side of the church, but
 outside, and from there two cities were shown to us in the distance
 Hesbon [and] Safdra Then from the same place, Fogor was shown
 to us in the distance All these cities which we saw were situated on
 mountains, but beneath them, a little farther down, the terrain seemed
 more level to us Indeed, from that side of the mountain a very
 steep mountain was pointed out to us which was called Agrispecula (*It*
Eg 12 4–10 [SC 296, 176–180])

But although more detailed, Egeria's commentary remains factual rather than descriptive, she tells us what could be seen rather than what it looked like. Where she uses adjectives, they tend towards the generic: the space is "vast" or "very beautiful." What then does this kind of "mapping" tell us about Egeria?

As her readers, we are as impressed as she with the sheer number of sights. She was offered a view not only of the true descendent of the burning bush but even of the place where Moses had stood when God said, "Loosen the strap of your shoe," and where the golden calf was made and burned, and even where the manna and quails had rained from heaven (*It Eg* 4 8 [SC 296, 142], 3 2–5 8 [SC 296, 144–146]). Egeria's voiced pleasure in these sights runs so high that it threatens to obscure the blunt—indeed, almost too obvious—fact that, apart from the atavistic shrub, there was nothing particular to be seen on the face of this desert landscape. How then are we to understand her satisfaction? Egeria herself gives us the clue. For when the barrage of sights becomes overwhelming and her account declines first into a stenographic list of events before faltering altogether (*It Eg* 5 8 [SC 296, 146]), she refers her correspondent to another source: "When Your Charity reads the holy books of Moses, she will discern quite readily everything that was done there" (*It Eg* 5 8 [SC 296, 146]).¹¹ Sacred writing makes this topography meaningful.

Dean MacCannell's analysis of touristic response distinguishes between what he terms the sight itself and its markers (109–110, cf. Culler 127–140). In themselves markers can be manifold, ranging from off-site markers such as books, pictures, or souvenirs, to on-site markers such as placards, brochures, or even the spectacle of a dense cluster of people, whose mere presence promises a sight worth the wait. The

¹¹ Egeria describes how Christians in Jerusalem were socialized into an awareness of this correlation through a program of explicated biblical readings and recreated events (*It Eg* 46 3 [SC 296 310]). A tourist's satisfaction is significantly correlated with self image/destination image congruity (Chon 363).

traveler's first contact with a site is thus usually not the site itself but rather one of its markers. The act of recognition involves first connecting, and then replacing, the marker with the sight (MacCannell 121–123). This sequence, repeated while traversing a landscape, effectively creates a cognitive map.

Further scrutiny reveals that it is the level of emotional investment in the marker rather than the sight that determines the degree of satisfaction experienced. For in themselves sights may often be disappointingly ordinary—too like any other place (MacCannell 112–115). A high sense of marker involvement, however, not only guarantees satisfaction but may even prevent viewers from realizing that the sight may not be intrinsically worth seeing. The Associated Press thus reported the response of a thirteen-year-old New Yorker to a display of moonrock: “It looks like a piece of something you could pick up in Central Park,” he said. “But it’s cool that it’s from the moon.”¹²

In this light, let us consider Egeria as she walks through the Wadi Feiran. Her monastic guides replicate for her the ancient route of the Hebrews by pointing to on-site markers. The account builds to an emotional peak, signalled in her exclamation, “indeed we were at the very plane above the Red Sea and beside the mountain where the children of Israel cried out when they saw the Egyptians coming after them” (*It Eg* 7.4 [SC 296, 156]). Here Egeria’s high involvement with the Bible, the Christian marker *par excellence*, obscures the fact that no monuments, in the conventional sense of the term, punctuate the desert landscape. Nor does she offer us any geographical description; these are simply the places where sacred history happened (Campbell 4). Her satisfaction, and ours, depends entirely upon the process of connecting sight and marker. It is enough that they exist and can be seen; they do not need to be described. Egeria’s most detailed descriptions are therefore of places not mentioned in scripture, it is upon the palace of King Abgar and the shrine of Thecla that she dilates (*It Eg* 19.6–18 [SC 296, 204–212]), 23.2–5 [SC 296, 226–230]).

Egeria’s travel account illustrates the creation of the holy land as a map of scriptural events. Unlike the depopulated landscape of the Bordeaux pilgrim, she is explicit about who was responsible for staking out the countryside. Wherever she travels, local monastic communities receive her hospitably and perform the essential task of tour-guidance (*It Eg* 3.1 [SC 296, 128], 4.8 [SC 296, 142], 5.12 [SC 296, 148], 11.1 [SC 296, 170], Sivan 54–65, Wilken esp. 100, 119, 166–172, 179–181.)

¹² Reported in the *Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*, November 17, 1969, in MacCannell 113.

Their confidence in offering to “identify . . . each place which is located and can be seen” rested upon a kind of guild knowledge, a “tradition” which “had been handed down to them by their predecessors.”¹³ Sacred memory was housed within the monastic communities (Halbwachs:52–53). From them she also received gifts, usually regional produce.¹⁴ We do not read of money changing hands, but these should nevertheless be considered types of souvenirs. Souvenirs, as the sociology of tourism reminds us, typically function not only as off-site markers—objects to be taken away as reminders of the important place seen—but also as mini-sights in their own right for those non-travelers back home (MacCannell:124).¹⁵ Again, she feels no necessity to describe these “blessings”: even the correspondence between Abgar and Jesus given to her by the bishop of Edessa is valued simply for its greater amplitude (*amplius*) (*It. Eg.* 19.19 [SC 296, 212]). Gifts testify to the tangible holiness of the landscape that in turn depends upon scriptural testimony.

Thus, while Egeria’s account is considerably more detailed than that of the Bordeaux pilgrim, the emphasis still rests on how the land supports the facticity of scripture. Even the repetitious style of her prose seems to imitate the actual experience of someone viewing a landscape; one looks—and looks again—to fill in details (Spitzer:225–258). Although she assures her correspondents that she will tell them “all that she sees,” she never promises to describe what anything looked like. Her repeated injunctions to herself to “return to the subject” suggest that she and her audience agreed upon her subject matter in advance.¹⁶ We can therefore appreciate that despite a chattier tone, Egeria’s interest, like that of the Bordeaux pilgrim, remains centered on the match between scriptural and geographical testimony. Her willingness to connect biblical markers to relatively unmarked geographical spots, moreover, illustrates Pred’s contention that place always represents a human product.

¹³ *It. Eg.* 12.2–4 (SC 296, 174) She terms them *deductores sancti illi* (*It. Eg.*, 1.2, 3.7, 5.12, 10.3, 10.8, 14.1, 21.5 [SC 296, 122, 136, 148, 166, 170, 186, 222]) For how modern tour-guides facilitate tourism, see Schmidt 441–467

¹⁴ For *eulogiae* of fruit, see *It. Eg.* 3.6–7, 11.1, 15.6, 21.3 (SC 296, 134, 172, 190, 222) For an analysis of *eulogiae* in early Christian pilgrimages, see Hahn 85–96

¹⁵ Theodoret informs us that Symeon Stylites was so well known in Rome that one could see small statues of the holy man set up in workshops (*HR* 26.11 [SC 257.181]), these may have been acquired at the site of the pillar itself, where Theodoret implies that *ampullae* for holy oil were available

¹⁶ *Sed ut redeam ad rem* This comment comes after her description of her happy reunion with the deaconess Marthana, the subject to which she returns is the physical description of the monastic settlement around the shrine dedicated to Thecla (*It. Eg.* 23.4 [SC 296, 228]) It also occurs after her description of the decoration of the churches endowed by Constantine, she returns to a description of the services (25.10 [SC 296, 252]) Her authorial task is perhaps summed up in her promise to report “whatever places I shall have come to know” (23.10 [SC 296, 232])

JEROME

In three of his letters Jerome paints a vivid map of the Holy Land, and one quite different from the pilgrim narratives discussed above. To be sure, Jerome, at this point in the late fourth century, inhabits the land rather than passes through it, but nonetheless his stylized description of terrain and landmarks is striking.

On the occasion of Paula's death, Jerome, as her dear friend and companion in ascetic labors, wrote a letter to her daughter Eustochium. It is, I believe, in classic encomiastic style (Neyrey 5–8). In the place where we, as educated readers, would expect to hear of “deeds of the body,” Jerome recounts Paula's pilgrimage through Palestine and Egypt. He insists upon the ascetic rigor of her tour, that she traveled on foot in mid-winter and refused invitations to lodge at official mansions, preferring instead to put up at what he rather tautologically terms “miserable inns” (*Ep.* 108 7, 9, 14 [CSEL 55, 313, 315, 322]).¹⁷ But despite such hardships, the account remains strikingly stylized, even iconic. Landscape speaks here of spiritual truths rather than scriptural events. Jerome thus writes that when Paula looked at “the mulberry tree of Zacchaeus,” what she actually saw was “the good works of repentance, by which he trampled under foot his former hateful sins of bloodshed and pillage.” Similarly, in “the camp of Gilgal [with its] heap of foreskins,” she recognized “the mystery of the second circumcision” (*Ep.* 108 12, [CSEL 55, 321]). Here geographical terrain serves as a springboard to visionary experience. In Bethlehem, she insists that “she could behold with the eyes of faith the infant Lord wrapped in rags and mewling in the manger, the wise men worshipping God, the star shining overhead, the virgin mother, the attentive foster-father, the shepherds coming by night” (*Ep.* 108 10 [CSEL 55, 316]). In the “old road” leading to Gaza, she discerns the previous path of the gentiles. Scripture continues to make place meaningful, but place, in turn, now functions to extend scripture with vistas of deeper spiritual insight (Halbwachs 50–51).

Jerome elaborates this same point in his letter to Marcella, by far the most learned of his women friends, to whom he wrote in the hope of persuading her to leave her palace on the Aventine Hill and her scriptural study group and to relocate to Palestine. In order to increase the letter's emotional pull, he writes in the persona of Paula and Eustochium. Through them, he promises her that if she comes to Palestine, she will see not only the places where scriptural events occurred, but indeed the

¹⁷ The crucial edition is that edited by Isidore Hilberg (Lipsiae: G. Freytag, 1910–12).

events themselves. Together, he says, they will “see Lazarus come forth tied up in winding bands . . . and perceive the prophet Amos sounding the shepherd’s horn upon his mountain . . .” (*Ep* 46 13 [CSEL 54 343]). To Lynch’s intriguing question, “What time is this place?” (1973), Jerome’s answer is clear—to be in the place of revelation is to be in the time of revelation (Wilken 120, Rubin 24–25). Unlike other historical events which unscroll in time, the sights of the biblical land are repeatable. He therefore assures her that “whenever we enter the sepulchre, we see the savior in his shroud, and if we only linger a little longer, we see again the angel sitting at his feet, and the rolled up napkin at his head” (*Ep* 46 5 [CSEL 54, 334]). Given such mystical delights, the strictly geographical “mountainous terrain set on the heights’ has no need of ‘the pleasures of this world’” (*Ep* 46 2 [CSEL 54, 331]). But it is, nevertheless, a place of considerable pastoral delight: “Wherever you turn, the farmer holding his plough recites alleluia, the sweating reaper cheers himself with psalms, and the vine-dresser sings one or another of the songs of David as he prunes the vine with his curved sickle. These are the tunes of this province, these, one might say colloqually, its love songs, such is the whistling of the shepherds, these the tools of cultivation” (*Ep* 46 12 [CSEL 54, 332–333]). Jerome’s point is surely that, from such landscape, monastic life springs up like some product of the soil (*Ep* 46 12 [CSEL 54 342]).

Jerome’s map of the Holy Land, therefore, while evincing considerably more interest in the terrain, sites, and peoples than that of the Bordeaux pilgrim or even Egeria, treats them as symbols—indeed, perhaps as maps themselves—from which spiritual readings are to be derived. Nowhere is this more apparent than in his description of the place where the Samaritan woman met Jesus at the well. This spot as recalled by Paula is related not to a story but to a text, as she remembered how that woman forsook “her five husbands by whom are intended the five books of Moses, and the sixth not a husband, of whom she boasted, to wit the false teacher Dositheus” (*Ep* 108 13 [CSEL 55, 322]). This spiritualization of landscape is prompted, in part, by theological caution. Jerome does not want to imply that God can be more truly present in one place than another. When writing to Paulinus of Nola, to dissuade him from coming to the Holy Land, he argues strongly for a kind of homogenization of space, insisting that “Change of place does not bring us closer to God.”¹⁸ The spiritual insights enjoyed by Paula and promised to Marcella

¹⁸ *Ep* 58 3 (CSEL 54 530–531) cf. *Ep* 46 10 (CSEL 54 33) Gregory of Nyssa *Ep* 2 (PG 46 1012)

are available to every Christian everywhere being in Palestine merely heightens the experience Any person, however, who wants to see the sights of salvation history, need go no farther than the study of scripture The real city to visit is, apparently, the city of the book

Jerome's picture of the Holy Land thus shifts from being warmly attractive, when writing to Marcella or about Paula, to seeming rather crowded and dreary, when writing to Paulinus of Nola No actual change in climate or terrain is responsible for this shift in aspect These letters simply illustrate how the construction of landscape is tied to human relations Jerome's transformation of nature is integrally bound up with his relations to others, in short, to his own biography (Pred 1984 279–282)

THE PIACENZA PILGRIM

The travelogue of another anonymous pilgrim, this time from Piacenza, Italy, who came on tour to Palestine in 570, provides us with a lively description of the Holy Land He is concerned, to be sure, with the routes, landmarks, and districts that preoccupied our earlier travelers, but in this account we also see an interest in what Pearce terms "texture" the feel of a place He is the first to record interest in regional produce, local history and customs, and even a certain amount of ethnography The Piacenza pilgrim, moreover, details the method by which holiness was localized in shrines We are as impressed as he by the synagogue at Nazareth where he saw the bench where the child Jesus sat and the book in which he wrote his ABCs,¹⁹ and by the house in Diocaesarea where he gazed upon Mary's pitcher, clothes, and even the chair "upon which she was sitting when the angel came to her" (*It Plac* 4 [CCSL 175, 130])

Dean MacCannell suggests that the purpose governing such displays is the same as that underlying the recreation of habitats commonly found, in our own day, in museum cases They are designed to invite viewer-identification with the situation depicted for a brief, glad moment we become the Neolithic man crouched in his cave over a smouldering fire (79)²⁰ So religious memory, as Maurice Halbwachs reminds us, does

¹⁹ *Antonini Placentini Itinerarium* 5 (CCSL 175 130–131) Hereafter abbreviated *It Plac*

²⁰ It is this quality of identification that differentiates representations from simple collections where a clever juxtaposition will suffice Baedeker describes one such collection in a Paris museum where one could see Marats snuffbox Voltaire's armchair Napoleons writing desk the door of Balzacs bed room and a copy of the constitution bound in human skin as well as other compelling items (Mac Cannell 79 quoting Baedeker) The church of Holy Zion housed a more episodic collection the horn from which kings were anointed the crown of thorns the lance that pierced Jesus side many of the stones that were used to stone Stephen the cup of the apostles and the cornerstone rejected by the builders among other things (*It Plac* 22 [CCSL 175 140])

not so much “preserve the past” as “reconstruct it with the aid of the material traces, rites, texts, and traditions left behind by that past, and with the aid moreover of recent psychological and social data, that is to say, with the present” (119). It is therefore entirely fitting that Jesus’ bench and copy book be on display in Nazareth, where it can offer the pilgrim an opportunity for identification, for viewer transportation back to the time of Jesus’ childhood. To facilitate this pious work of viewer identification, some of the places visited by the Piacenza pilgrim even suggest Jesus’ physical contours. The column where Jesus had been scourged bore “the marks of both his hands, his fingers, and his palms” (*It Plac* 22 [CCSL 175, 140]), and in the Praetorium his footsteps were clearly visible. Our pilgrim relates that his foot was “well-shaped small and delicate.”²¹ We can gauge the extent of his identification in his musing conclusion that Jesus must have been “of an ordinary height, with a handsome face, [and] curly hair.”²²

Prescribed actions furthered the work of identification discussed above, as some of the displays were, we gather, hands-on. At Golgotha the Piacenza pilgrim drank water from the same sponge that was held out to the crucified Jesus (*It Plac* 20 [CCSL 175, 139], cf. Wilken 115–116). At Cana not only did he heft the water jars and recline upon the couch, but on it, he tells us, “(unworthy though I am) I wrote the names of my parents” (*It Plac* 4 [CCSL 175, 130]). Native monks inculcated an etiquette of sightseeing, prescribing certain prostrations and insisting that all relics be venerated with a kiss (*It Plac* 20 [CCSL 175, 139]). Like Baedeker’s complete tour of Paris, which included the viewing of its slaughter-houses and sewers, a full appreciation of the resources of the Holy Land’s demanded a strong stomach. When confronted with a reliquary of a human head encased in gold, the Piacenza pilgrim calmly relates customary behavior: “Many drink out of it to gain a blessing and so did I” (*It Plac* 22 [CCSL 175, 141]). Through such devotions the pilgrim’s experience of the Holy Land was channeled and focused.

Pilgrim experience was, moreover, susceptible to further concentration through the availability of religious souvenirs. The pursuit of these “blessings” was indeed a prime motivation for the Piacenza pilgrim. All of his mementos share a common nature: every one promises healing. From

¹ *Pedem pulchrum modicum subtilem* (*It Plac* 23 [CCSL 175, 141]). For the tradition of divine footprints see Lucian *Veri Hist.* 1.7 *It Burd.* 590 [CCSL 175, 15–16].

²² *It Plac* 23 [CCSL 175, 141]. Some of this information is derived in part from a picture (*imago*) there which was said to have been painted while he was alive. At Golgotha there was a similarly authenticating picture (*species*) of Mary (*It Plac* 20 [CCSL 175, 139]).

his account the Holy Land emerges as a kind of vast pharmacopia of discrete, portable objects²³ From the small rattling rocks of Mount Carmel that prevent miscarriage (*It Plac* 3 [CCSL 175, 130]), to the wine of the Jordan valley that soothes fevers, to the islands of rock oil off Clysma (modern Suez) that benefit “every sick person” (*It Plac* 12, 14, 42 [CCSL 175, 136, 137, 151]), the Holy Land was essentially curative Especially effective were the “measures” taken from sites bearing the imprint of Jesus’ body These were strips of cloth, stretched around the holy site and cut to length Worn about one’s neck, they were efficacious, we are told, “for any kind of disease” (*It Plac* 22–23 [CCSL 175, 140], cf Ousterhout 109–124) It comes, therefore, as no surprise that the potential of these curative sites had been developed by the monastic communities²⁴ Massive and seemingly well-run, they testify to a degree of professionalism At the hot springs of Elijah lepers took their meals from an inn at public expense, and “more than three thousand beds for the sick” were provided at the basilica of St Mary²⁵ Carefully they collected the curative dew of Mount Hermon in which all the dishes served in the Jerusalem hospices were cooked (*It Plac* 9 [CCSL 175, 133–134]) In the Sinai wilderness monks collected casks of a gummy substance they labelled “manna,” for distribution to pilgrims by the pint (*It Plac* 39 [CCSL 175, 149]) In the Church of the Holy Sepulcher earth was specially imported for its later removal by souvenir-minded pilgrims (*It Plac* 18 [CCSL 175, 138])

Compared to our earlier authors, the Piacenza pilgrim’s knowledge of scripture is strikingly modest Sliding over niceties of chapter and verse, he is content to note simply, “We passed through many cities mentioned in the Bible” (*It Plac* 8 [CCSL 175, 133])²⁶ Religious edification mixes easily with simple curios in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher our pilgrim tells us of his delightful discovery “Next to the altar [of

²³ Thus we read that many diseases were cured at the well of the Samantan woman at the pool of Siloam at the shrine of Saint Menas at the monastery where Paul was converted (*It Plac* 6 27 45 46 [CCSL 175 132 143 152]) Demoniacs were cured at the shrine of Saint George (*It Plac* 25 [CCSL 175 142])

²⁴ Hirschfeld notes that the monastery of Theodosius had a particular care for the sick Monks there worked as physicians orderlies and apothecaries There were even infirmary facilities for the mentally ill (77 94 198–199 citing Theod Petr V *Theod* 17 41–42)

²⁵ Their regime is described the baths are filled in the evening the incubants are sent in with lights and incense and the doors shut They sit in the tank all night and try to sleep the person who is going to be cured sees some kind of vision As soon as he has related it the springs do not flow for a week and within these seven days he is cured (*It Plac* 7 [CCSL 175 132] cf 10 23 24 [CCSL 175 134 141–142])

²⁶ On the Mount of the Transfiguration he does not recall which disciple suggested the building of three booths (*It Plac* 6 [CCSL 175 131] cf 22 [CCSL 175 140])

Abraham] is a crack, and if you throw an apple into it and then go to Siloam, you can pick it up there" (*It Plac* 19 [CCSL 175, 138–139]) He reassures his readers, moreover, that the mortal remains of Lot's wife had not, as rumor had it, been licked away by cattle (*It Plac* 15 [CCSL 175, 137]) In the midst of describing indigenous religious customs, he is swayed into recounting local ghost stories (*It Plac* 31 [CCSL 175, 144]) He is capable of being as fascinated by pagan, as by Christian, shames Indeed, the true subject of his account seems to be the prodigious and exotic As a pilgrim, he practiced no custody of the eyes for if Egeria tells us of the silk banners in the church at Bethlehem (*It Eg* 25 8 [SC 296, 252]), from him we learn of the pure silk hangings in the brothels of Tyre (*It Plac* 2 [CCSL 175, 130], and that the Jewish women of Nazareth were quite exceptionally beautiful a gift, he piously remarks, of the virgin to her fellow villagers (*It Plac* 5 [CCSL 175, 131])

As part of this broader interest in terrain, the Piacenza pilgrim is attentive to the native peoples He is even given to a certain amount of local ethnography, as when he details the trading practices of the Samaritans "Wherever we passed along the streets, they burned away our footprints with straw This is how they answer the Christians, "Don't touch what you intend to buy until you have paid for it" [and] You must put the silver into water, for they will not take it from your hand When you arrive they curse you And don't spit, for if you do, you'll create an uproar" (*It Plac* 8 [CCSL 175, 133], for Ethiopians, see *It Plac* 35 [CCSL 175, 147]) Assessments of the locals' disposition to travelers punctuate his prose We are told that "The people of Tyre are violent, and they live lives of luxury too disgraceful to describe," and that the Alexandrians, even if hospitable, are "worthless" (*It Plac* 2, 45 [CCSL 175, 129–130, 152])² He tells us of his interactions with the Saracen women and children in Egypt who anointed their feet and heads with radish oil, "while chanting an antiphon in the Egyptian language" They also "brought skins of cool water from the remotest parts of the desert and gave us some They accepted bread and gave us garlic and radishes, whose sweet taste was better than the finest spices, and would take nothing for them" (*It Plac* 40, 36 [CCSL 175, 149, 147])

Unlike the other pilgrims who traveled with others but do not mention them, this pilgrim notes memorable actions of his companions, as in this disedifying, but amusing, business proposition

² The noble distinguished and hospitable people of Gaza the kindness of the Jewish women of Nazareth (*It Plac* 33 5 [CCSL 175 145 131])

We discovered a monastery of women who had one small ass to do their heavy work for them, as well as a lion they used to feed, who was tame from the time it was a cub, but huge and terrifying to look at. Indeed when we drew near the cells, at its roar, all the animals we had pissed, and some even fell to the ground. They also told us how this lion guided the little ass to pasture. For these animals, a very Christian man, who accompanied me, offered, with my help, a hundred *solidi*, but they were not willing to accept the offer. Sending to Jerusalem, he brought them thirty tunics, vegetables for storage, and even oil for their lamps. He took out with him coats, dates, and baskets of roast chickpeas—and even lupine—none of which he returned with. All our reasoning was totally unable to console him for his labor and grief. He just kept saying, “How pathetic for whose benefit am I a Christian?” (*It Plac* 34 [CCSL 175, 146])

Further texture is supplied by historical sketches of how cases were heard in the Praetorium, when the walls around Jerusalem were expanded and the bread dole started, and even where the inhabitants of the holy city customarily did their laundry (*It Plac* 23, 25, 27 [CCSL 175, 141, 142, 143]). We learn about the Nile water gauge, the collection of sulphur and pitch, and how to sweeten water made brackish by desert treks (*It Plac* 43, 10, 36 [CCSL 175, 151, 134, 147]). The animal kingdom is also worthy of mention. He tells us of the eery peaceableness of the Sinai animals as well as the vast number of crocodiles around Alexandria (*It Plac* 39, 45 [CCSL 175, 149, 152]).

Nowhere, however, is one more struck by the change in perspective than in his descriptions of sights. Unlike Egeria and the Bordeaux pilgrim, he tells us not only what he saw but also what it looked like. Unlike Jerome, his descriptions remain literal. Here is his description of the Holy Sepulchre:

The tomb is chiseled out of living rock, and where the Lord's body was laid, a bronze lamp, which had been placed there at that time, burns day and night. From it, we took a blessing, and then replaced it. Earth is brought into the tomb from outside, and those coming in take some from there as a blessing. The stone, by which the tomb had been sealed, is in front of the tomb door, and is the same color as that chiseled from the rock of Golgotha. The stone itself is ornamented with gold and jewels, although the rock is like a millstone. From iron rods hang arm-bands, bracelets, purple cloths, signet rings, tiaras, braided belts, women's belts, emperors' crowns of gold and jewels, and the ornaments of an empress. The tomb is roofed with a cone which is silver atop beams of gold. In front of the Tomb there is an altar. (*It Plac* 18 [CCSL 175, 138])

Other passages eulogize locales as “paradises” (*It Plac* 5, 13 [CCSL 175, 131, 136]). Like Lucian before him, he can testify to crops of wondrous

size,²⁸ having laid eyes on one-pound dates, millet that grew taller than a person, and a giant citron weighing forty pounds (*It Plac* 14, 5 [CCSL 175, 136, 131]) Exotic fruit merits special attention in Surandela he saw and picked some pepper, in Clysmā (modern Suez) he tasted some bright green nuts from India, which people “believe come from paradise because even the smallest taste makes one satisfied (*It Plac* 41 [CCSL 175, 150–151])

The account of the Piacenza pilgrim thus allows us to appreciate two related developments in late antique pilgrimages We perceive the extent to which the holiness of the Holy Land had pooled into distinct locales (Brown esp 86–88), as well as how the land itself had become charged with prodigious powers The efficacy of this landscape yields not visions, as in Jerome’s letters, but miraculous cures Because these healing powers can be accessed through natural phenomena such as water, dirt, stones, dew, mineral oil, and regional produce, nature has become commodifiable and valuable Because valuable, it has also become visible Given the close alignment of the perception of landscape to biography, the Piacenza pilgrim may well have traveled in a group, funded by a patron, who went on pilgrimage for healing One of our author’s few biographical asides tells us that “John of Piacenza, Thecla’s husband” died en route, and that he himself was very sick in Alexandria until cured by a vision (*It Plac* 7, 46 [CCSL 175, 132, 152])²⁹

CONCLUSIONS

Insights from cognitive mapping and the sociology of tourism allow us to appreciate not only what our pilgrims mention in their accounts but also what they omit Like the spaces left blank on early maps, these silences express ideology Our earliest account, which is coeval with Constantine and Helena’s extensive building program, concentrates on the road itself and on architectural “markers”, there is no interest in “landscape” Instead, this pilgrim celebrates the achievement of travel and the real-life connectedness of the holy sites to ordinary life “back home” In Egeria’s text we see how monastic tour guides made “unimproved” geographical sites of compelling interest On the basis of personal sanctity as

²⁸ The Piacenza pilgrim is attentive to produce and crop rotation He mentions the Lords field which is reaped twice a year but never sown (*It Plac* 13 [CCSL 175 136]) He notes that Acedama was full of apple trees and vines and that the plain where the five thousand were fed was covered with olive and palm groves (*It Plac* 26 9 [CCSL 175 143 133])

²⁹ A certain idealism about the possibility of cures also marks his prose From time to time by the will of God one is cleansed but for most it brings some relief (*It Plac* 10 [CCSL 175 134])

well as claims to guild tradition, they successfully localized the holy in wilderness areas. The theory of "marker-sight" interaction, borrowed from the sociology of tourism, enables us to understand Egeria's high degree of satisfaction in her tour even in places where there was very little to be seen. Here the realness of the landscape supports scripture's claim to historicity.

In Jerome's letters, as well as in the account of the Piacenza pilgrim, landscape merits description. For Jerome the specialness of the land lies in its promotion of the visual—the way in which geographical features can lead to scriptural insight. Although he is wary of too great a localization of the holy, he remains complacent that the land of Palestine offers special graces. The enduring terrain provides a vehicle for a pilgrim to achieve a sense of the timeless immediacy of the biblical story; it can make the past present. With the Piacenza pilgrim we see how special displays of holy objects facilitated this desire for closeness. Scenic reconstructions satisfied the pilgrim by offering to transport viewers back into biblical time—to place the present in the past. In the eyes of the Piacenza pilgrim, moreover, the terrain, in all its variety, had become holy and potentially powerful; it had therefore also finally become visible. For the first time in this literature, we can see a real interest in local flora, fauna, and peoples.

The diversity of these pilgrims' perspectives on the Holy Land supports Pred's contention that place always represents a human product rather than a simple record of "how it looked." In the partial and idiosyncratic maps sketched by our early Christian pilgrims we glimpse the ongoing transformation of the land, but more intriguingly, the formation and social placement of the viewers. The absence of certain, perhaps expected, features in our texts, just as much as the presence of others, directs our attention to the interests of the viewer—which is an issue of biography—or perhaps to those of the audience—which is an issue of genre. Like all maps, these early pilgrimage accounts do indeed tell us "where we are," but only if we read them rightly, namely, as descriptions of cultural as well as natural terrain.

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