

Reading Allegory into the Landscape of the Holy Land Sermons Integrated into Felix Fabri's 'Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae et Egypti peregrinationem'

Abstract This chapter deals with sermons integrated into the 'Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae et Egypti peregrinationem', a pilgrimage account composed by Dominican pilgrim and preacher Felix Fabri, based on his two pilgrimages to the Holy Land in the 1480s. Via a close analysis of the content and context of the sermons, I discuss Fabri's employment of the landscape of the Holy Land as *itself* a subject for preaching, relating to two distinct layers of interpretation he employs in his writings, the literal and the allegorical, to befit the needs of various audiences: pilgrims and monks. Thus, the chapter offers a window into the mutual and nuanced relationship between the content of a sermon, the site where it was delivered, and the implicit audiences, as they are reflected and re-established in Fabri's text.

Zusammenfassung Dieses Kapitel befasst sich mit den Predigten, die der dominikanische Pilger und Prediger Felix Fabri in sein 'Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae et Egypti peregrinationem' integriert hat, einen Pilgerbericht, der auf seinen beiden Pilgerreisen ins Heilige Land in den 1480er Jahren basiert. Durch eine genaue Analyse von Inhalt und Kontext der Predigten kann gezeigt werden, wie Fabri die Landschaft des Heiligen Landes als Thema für Predigten nutzt. Dabei bezieht er sich auf zwei unterschiedliche Ebenen der Interpretation, die wörtliche und die allegorische, die er auch sonst in seinen Schriften anwendet, um den Bedürfnissen verschiedener Zielgruppen (Pilger und Mönche) gerecht zu werden: So bietet das Kapitel einen Einblick in die wechselseitige und nuancierte Beziehung zwischen dem Inhalt einer Predigt, dem Ort, an dem

Contact

Dr Yamit Rachman-Schrire,
Postdoctoral Fellow, The Hebrew
University of Jerusalem, Mount
Scopus, 91905 Jerusalem, Israel
 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3769-8871>

sie gehalten wurde, und den impliziten Zuhörern, wie sie in Fabris Text reflektiert und konstruiert werden.

1 Introduction

In the 'Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae et Egypti peregrinationem', based on his two pilgrimages to the Holy Land in 1480 and in 1483/84, the Dominican pilgrim and preacher Felix Fabri tells of a sermon he delivered to his fellow pilgrims.¹ Given on the day of the feast of the Visitation, while on board the galley making its way from Venice to Jaffa's shores, Fabri records the following about the sermon:

Eodem die, hora qua Missae celebrari consueverunt, convocavi omnes peregrinos theutonicos et eis sermonem feci de peregrinatione beatissimae Mariae Virginis, quam peregit in visitatione et transitu per montana Iudae, et regulas nostrae peregrinationis ex eius devotissima peregrinatione collegi et proposui, et praeconia ac laudes nostrae peregrinationis exposui et peregrinationem hanc Ierosolymitanam extuli. Sed montis Synai visitationem super omnia laudavi, volens movere aliquos, ne nimis trepidarent. Eram enim ego intentionis peregrinationis Synai, sed nulli hoc manifestavi, nec aliquis mihi de se, et ideo vehementer timui, ne forte in tanto peregrinorum agmine nullus esset ad montem Synai iturus, sicut et in priori peregrinatione contigit. Si ergo finita fuit dies illa et iterum noctem in galea egimus.

On that same day, at the hour at which Mass is accustomed to be celebrated, I called together all the German pilgrims and preached them a sermon about the pilgrimage of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which she performed *during* her visitation, when she went into the hill country of Juda; and from her most devout pilgrimage I derived rules for our own pilgrimage, which I recommended to them; and I set forth the praises and glories of our pilgrimage, and extolled the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. But above all I praised the visiting of Mount Sinai, desiring to move some to do so, lest they might be afraid. For I was determined to go on the pilgrimage to Sinai, but I had told no man thereof, nor had any man told me that he was going, wherefore I greatly feared that it might chance that in all that great band of pilgrims there might not be one who was going to Sinai,

1 This study was supported by the Israel Science Foundation, grant 1821/21. I would like to express my gratitude to Reuven Amitai and Iris Shagrir for their generous help and support. I wish to thank Anna Gutgarts and the anonymous reviewer for their helpful comments and suggestions.

even as it befell me on my former pilgrimage. Thus ended this day, and we again passed the night on board of the galley.²

According to Luke 1:39–56, immediately following the Annunciation, Mary went to visit Elizabeth, then pregnant with her son, John the Baptist. Both Elizabeth and the baby in her womb acknowledged through word and deed the special child in Mary's womb. Though Fabri does not bring the full content of the sermon itself, he testifies to its goals: first, to offer the biblical story of Mary's visitation as a model for pilgrimage, and second, to encourage his fellow pilgrims to set out on a pilgrimage to Sinai. The last point – Fabri further emphasizes – was meant to serve his own interests, for he yearned to reach the desert.

Taking the sermon on Mary's visitation as my point of departure, in what follows I would like to discuss the place of sermons within the 'Evagatorium', as well as Fabri's employment of the landscape of the Holy Land as *itself* a subject for preaching, relating to two distinct layers of interpretation found in his writings, the literal and the allegorical, to befit the needs of various audiences: pilgrims and monks.

2 Preaching in the Holy Places

Already a well-known preacher prior to his visit to the Holy Land,³ and self-conscious of his status within the group of pilgrims, Fabri mentions how he was often asked by his companions to deliver a sermon. At the same time, he compares his own experience as a preacher during his two voyages, demonstrating the different manner in which his words were received by the varying groups of pilgrims. While on his first pilgrimage, he felt that his fellow pilgrims on the ship were often inattentive to his words; on his second pilgrimage, he tells his readers:

In secunda vero peregrinatione fuerunt magis nobiles et maturi viri, qui erant gratissimi, et rogabant me pro verbo Dei, quibus et complacui omnibus diebus

2 Felix Fabri, *Evagatorium in Terrae Sanctae, Arabiae et Egypti peregrinationem*, ed. by Konrad Dietrich HASSLER, Stuttgart 1843–1849, here vol. 1, p. 188. English Translation: Felix Fabri (circa 1480–1483 A.D.), [Wanderings in the Holy Land], ed. and trans. by Aubrey STEWART, 2 vols., 4 parts (Palestine Pilgrims' Text Society vols. 7–10), London 1887–1897, here vol. 1.1, p. 214. References are made to STEWART's numbering; e.g. 'vol. 1.1' refers to volume I, part i of STEWART's edition (= PPTS vol. 7); I have slightly altered the English translation of the PPTS. The English translations of the biblical passages are taken from the King James Version. On Fabri cf. also the edition: Felix Fabri, *Les errances de Frère Félix, pèlerin en Terre sainte, en Arabie et en Égypte (1480–1483)*, ed. and trans. by Jean MEYERS and Michel TARAYRE, vols. 1–9, Paris 2013–2021.

3 Jacob KLINGNER, 'Just Say Happily: 'Felix Said so,' and You'll Be in the Clear: Felix Fabri OP (1440–1502) Preaching Monastic Reform to Nuns, in: *Medieval Sermon Studies* 46 (2002), pp. 42–56; Kathryn BEEBE, *Pilgrim & Preacher: The Audiences and Observant Spirituality of Friar Felix Fabri (1437/8–1502)*, Oxford 2014, p. 95.

festivis. Verum multorum nobilium inimicitias praedicando acquisivi, qui se notatos et proclamatos de certis vitiis aestimabant.

At my second pilgrimage, there were more noble and respectable men on board, who were very pleasant companions, and who were wont to ask me to preach the Word of God to them, which I did on all holy days. Yet I gained by my preaching the dislike of many noblemen, who believed that I marked them and held them up in my sermons as examples of certain vices.⁴

In this segment Fabri reflects on the reception of his sermon by his audiences, and thus offers a view of the close relationship between the content of a sermon (and its success) and the attentiveness of the hearers. To demonstrate this point, he returns to the Bible and cites two sources, the first, Ecclesiasticus 32:6: *Ubi auditus non est, non effundas sermonem, et importune noli extolli in sapientia tua* (“Where there is no hearing, pour not out words, and be not lifted up out season with thy wisdom”);⁵ and the second, Matthew 7:6: *nolite dare sanctum canibus neque mittatis margaritas vestras ante porcos* (“Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs”). Here, Fabri employs both quotations to refer to the link between ‘words’ and ‘hearers’. However, whereas the first quotation is supposed to be understood ‘literally’, the second should instead be understood metaphorically. In this, we see right at the start of his composition Fabri’s ability to juggle between layers of interpretation, a strategy that could easily be deciphered by his readers – the novices and other monks in the Dominican monastery in Ulm.

Fabri’s urge to deliver sermons was perfectly fulfilled after arriving in the Holy Land, at the actual holy places. While in many cases these sermons are mentioned only briefly, there are a few examples of sermons which are included in their entirety.⁶ For example, Fabri tells of a sermon he delivered to the newly made knights – his lords – in praise of holy knighthood. Fabri explains that the sermon was delivered in the “vulgar” German tongue because these knights were not proficient in Latin,⁷

4 Fabri, ‘Evagatorium’, ed. HASSLER (note 2), vol. 1, p. 133; STEWART (note 2), vol. 1, p. 148.

5 Ecclesiasticus (also known as “*Sirach*” and “*Ben Sira*”; not to be confused with Ecclesiastes) is one of the wisdom books that, despite being written in Hebrew by a Jewish author, was never part of the Hebrew canon of scriptures, though it is quoted in the Talmud. The Greek translation of the Bible (the Septuagint) introduced the book to the Christian canon of the scriptures. For the canonical status of the book, its author and historical context, see *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha: New Revised Standard Version*, ed. by Michael COOGAN, New York 2010, pp. 1457 ff.

6 Cf. Max HÄUSSLER, *Felix Fabri aus Ulm und seine Stellung zum geistigen Leben seiner Zeit*, Berlin 1914, pp. 99–102; KLINGNER (note 3), p. 43 n. 11.

7 For multilingualism in the account of Felix Fabri, see Albrecht CLASSEN, *Multilingualism in Medieval Europe. Pilgrimage, Travel, Diplomacy, and Linguistic Challenges. The Case of Felix Fabri and His Contemporaries*, in: Albrecht CLASSEN (ed.), *Multilingualism in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: Communication and Miscommunication in the Premodern World*, Berlin, Boston 2016, pp. 279–312. There is a vast material concerning the transition in the language of the sermon from Latin to the vernaculars. For bibliography see Augustine THOMPSON,

and following a short explanation of the circumstances in which the sermon was delivered, Fabri dedicates the next chapter to a treatise on the sermon, which is cited verbatim, and directed to the knights in the second person plural:

Zelus devotionis et Dei magni amoris, milites optimi, in vobis spiritum excitavit, quo tamquam viri magnanimi sic allecti estis ad obsequia Redemptoris, ut vobis delectabile putaretis, velle rem propriam exponere derelicto solo natalis regionis, quaerentes has peregrinas et sanctas, pio quidem moti proposito, ut scilicet loca haec sanctissima venerantes deoscularemini.

Devout zeal and love towards Almighty God hath stirred you up, my most worthy knights, so that, like the great-hearted gentlemen that you are, you have been attracted towards your Redeemer's grave, and made to think it a pleasant thing that you should hazard the loss of your own possessions by leaving the country of your birth to seek these foreign and holy lands. Herein you have been moved by your pious intentions of worshipping and kissing these most holy places.⁸

Later in the sermon, Fabri addresses the devotional sentiment of his audiences as he reminds them of the significance of the Holy Land's landscape, where the events of the New Testament took place: beginning with Mary's conception and the Nativity, through the sufferings of Christ and His blood that is saturated in the earth, to the Resurrection and the implied salvation. He then elaborates on the Holy Land in the present, which is under the rule of the Mamluks, manifesting a call for active action:

Expergiscimini ergo, milites strenuissimi, et ad ulciscendam Dei nostri iniuriam et populi Christiani opprobrium consurgite ad instar quondam robustissimorum Machabaeorum, et occisis aut profligatis perfidis in Christianae reipublicae haereditatem Domini reducere studete.

Wherefore rouse yourselves, most valiant knights, and avenge the insults offered to our God and the shame of the people of Christendom, even as did those most doughty Maccabees of old, and make it your aim to slay or put to flight the infidels, and bring back the heritage of the Lord into Christendom.⁹

From Texts to Preaching: Retrieving the Medieval Sermon as an Event, in: Carolyn MUESSIG (ed.), *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, Leiden, Boston 2018, pp. 11–37, here pp. 17–18. CONSTABLE summarizes: "Most subsequent scholars have accepted the view that medieval sermons were given to two distinct audiences in two different languages, and that sermons preserved in Latin were presented to a lay audience in the vernacular and sermons delivered in the vernacular were written down in Latin." Giles CONSTABLE, *The Language of Preaching in the Twelfth Century*, in: *Viator* 25 (1994), pp. 131–152, here p. 132.

8 Fabri, 'Evagatorium', ed. HASSLER (note 2), vol. 2, p. 15. STEWART (note 2), vol. 1,2, p. 624–626.

9 Fabri, 'Evagatorium', ed. HASSLER (note 2), vol. 2, p. 16. STEWART (note 2), vol. 1,2, p. 626.

In its tone and content Fabri's sermon bears traces of crusading imagery, enhanced by the employment of the Maccabees as a model to be followed by the Christian knight.¹⁰ Fabri connects different points in space and time, juxtaposing the knights with the Maccabees, and the Holy Land of the present with Jerusalem during the times of the Romans and in the period of Christ. In this he suggests causal relations between the knights' acts in the present and a promised completion of Christian salvation history.

Throughout the 'Evagatorium', Fabri occasionally refers to the *act of preaching* in the holy places, by invoking the figure of Christ as a role model for the preacher. Fabri mentions the biblical sermon of the Beatitudes, informing his readers that this sermon was delivered by Christ at three different places and occasions: on a hill close to Bethlehem, on a mountain in Galilee, and in the plains.¹¹ Fabri then explains that although the Gospels do not mention that Christ repeated the same sermon on three different occasions, "this is an ancient tradition of the saints" (*antiqua sanctorum traditio habet*),¹² adding that: "for a preacher who has a good and profitable subject will often preach upon it many times, both in the same place and in diverse places" (*Sicut praedicator bonam et utilem materiam habens eam quandoque aliquoties praedicat, et in eodem loco, et in diversis*).¹³

As Fabri himself declares, the source for the tradition that Christ had preached the same sermon three times is to be found in the attempt to solve the discrepancies of Matthew 5:1–12 and Luke 6:20–26. It already appears in the writings of the Church Fathers, for example in Augustine of Hippo, who asserts that on the mountain Christ delivered an extensive sermon which is described in Matthew. He then delivered an abridged and more suitable form of the same sermon to the multitudes who congregated at the foot of the mountain, which is the sermon narrated in Luke.¹⁴ In his interpretation Augustine urges us to reflect on the affiliations between the content of the sermon, its audience, and the site where it was delivered. As a preacher and a good narrator, Fabri, too, understood those affiliations, and acknowledged the strength of repetition in driving the preacher's points home.

10 See, for example, Bernard of Clairvaux's 'Liber ad milites Templi de laude novae militiae'. The memory of the Maccabees was appropriated to describe Christian military activities in the 10th and 11th centuries, and especially in the 12th century with the advent of crusading. Among the vast material concerning this subject, see Stephen J. SPENCER, *Emotions in a Crusading Context, 1095–1291*, Oxford 2019, pp. 65–68; Julian YOLLES, *The Maccabees in the Lord's Temple: Biblical Imagery and Latin Poetry in Frankish Jerusalem*, in: Elizabeth LAPINA and Nicholas MORTON (eds.), *The Uses of the Bible in Crusader Sources*, vol. 7: *Commentaria*, Leiden, Boston 2017, pp. 421–439.

11 Fabri, 'Evagatorium', ed. HASSLER (note 2), vol. 1, p. 400. STEWART (note 2), vol. 1,2, p. 502–503.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

14 Augustine, 'De sermone Domini in monte', accessed in: Augustine of Hippo, *Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount*, ed. and trans. by Richard TRENCH, London 1851, pp. 159–160. It is possible that Fabri declares the number three due to the typological significance of the number, or as a reference to the three times that Christ is said to have prayed in agony.

3 Literal and Allegorical Reading of the Landscape of the Holy Land

What is the role of a certain place in the content of a sermon? And what role does the location of its delivery play in a sermon? One chapter of the ‘Evagatorium’, entitled “The cave of St James the apostle, wherein he lay hid while the Lord was being taken (*De specu S. Iacobi Apostoli, in quo latitavit in captione Domini*), offers a glimpse into the manner by which the landscape of the Holy Land became a suitable theme for a preacher.¹⁵ A close reading of the literary strategies employed by Fabri in this chapter invites the reader to decipher the process of composing a sermon which deals with and derives from the geography and topography of a specific site.

Fabri begins with a short description of the topography of the place, which has two stories of deep caverns and holes cut like windows in the upper chambers. He then adopts a more personal tone, as he mentions the visual similarities between the site on the Mount of Olives and the stone forms of a site in Swabia near Gmünd which is called Eberstein: “He who has seen the one has seen the other, save that this one [in the Holy Land] is larger and has the deeper cave” (*Si quis eandem videt, vidit et illam, nisi quod illa est maior et profundiozem habet cavernam*).¹⁶ By drawing this parallel, Fabri invites his readers to imagine the site in the far-away Holy Land in a way that would invoke familiarity,¹⁷ perhaps even intimacy. Fabri then shifts to another interpretational level – that of the sacred history of the site, its traditions, and the narratives associated with it. Fabri elaborates on a specific cave where St James the Lesser sought refuge when Christ was taken prisoner, where he was also buried; in the same place, Fabri tells us, Christ appeared to James after the Resurrection, and gave him food.¹⁸ The last point he ascribes to Josephus Flavius and St Jerome, thus infusing his text with an authoritative tone establishing the sacredness of the place, which is not only connected to St James but is also a place where Christ revealed himself.¹⁹

15 Fabri, ‘Evagatorium’, ed. HASSLER (note 2), vol. 1, p. 411–414. STEWART (note 2), vol. 1,2, p. 518–521.

16 Fabri, ‘Evagatorium’, ed. HASSLER (note 2), vol. 1, p. 411. STEWART (note 2), vol. 1,2, p. 518. I have slightly altered the English translation of the PPTS.

17 According to LEGASSIE, “[m]editants were encouraged to use elements of places familiar to them from experience to construct these virtual places”. Shayne Aaron LEGASSIE, *The Medieval Invention of Travel*, Chicago 2017, p. 120.

18 According to Jerome, James had promised not to eat after the Last Supper before he had seen Jesus risen from the dead; the risen Christ appears to him and offers him food. Hieronymus, ‘*De Viris illustribus*’ 2.2: *post resurrectionem Salvatoris refert: Dominus autem cum dedisset sindonem servo Sacerdotis, ivit ad Iacobum, et apparuit ei. Iuraverat enim Iacobus, se non comesturum panem ab illa hora qua biberat calicem Domini, donec videret eum resurgentem a dormientibus. Rursusque post paululum: Afferte, ait Dominus, mensam et panem. Statimque additur: Tulit panem et benedixit, ac fregit, et dedit Iacobo iusto, et dixit ei: Frater mi, comede panem tuum, quia resurrexit Filius hominis a dormientibus.* For a discussion of this tradition as well as other Apocryphal writings concerning James the Lesser, see Els ROSE, *Ritual Memory: The Apocryphal Acts and Liturgical Commemoration in the Early Medieval West* (c. 500–1215), Leiden, Boston 2009, p. 134.

19 Fabri, ‘Evagatorium’, ed. HASSLER (note 2), vol. 2, p. 412. STEWART (note 2), vol. 1,2, p. 519.

After referring to the history of the site, Fabri returns to his own days, mentioning that a visit there would merit indulgences, and adding, on a more personal note, that he himself used to often visit there and read his prayer book, exploring the caves, and sometimes pretending that he was in the midst of a convent of brethren.²⁰ Here Fabri, in a rather incidental manner, refers to a central line that can be found in the *artes praedicandi*, where preachers are encouraged to seek out some place of privacy where they can practice voice and gesture before they preach to others.²¹ We see how Fabri, in a subtle manner, imbues his text with a didactic agenda especially suited to his readers-audiences who were themselves also preachers or future preachers.

At this stage, Fabri arrives at his main argument: he declares that he read in some ancient pilgrims' guides that members of the Dominican order used to inhabit the site. He then declares that this place was very fit for brethren of the Order of Preaching Friars, offering a curious literary construct in which he reads the topographical conditions of the site as an allegory for the nature of the Dominican order, by elaborating on the specific features of the site: its situation, light, and vegetation. Thus Fabri states that, like the enlightened Mount of Olives, so is the order of preachers lighted by theological and moral science; similar to the brook which takes away all refuse from the city, so the order of preachers washes away all uncleanness from the world;²² the cedars, which are evergreen, lofty and incorruptible, parallel the order's three vows of "the verdure of chastity, the loftiness of poverty, and the incorruptibility of obedience";²³ geographically, the place lies in a valley without the walls of the city, as a symbol for the preaching friars that ought ever to dwell in the valley of humility; the ruggedness of the rocky place parallels the hardship of the life of a preacher; the solitary place meets the needs of contemplation; its narrowness prevents the mind from wandering.²⁴

In this chapter Fabri moves between different layers of interpretation. While the opening of the chapter is highly descriptive and provides what can be dubbed a literal narration of the landscape, in what follows he transits to an allegorical layer of interpretation, in which the actual landscape of the Holy Land provides a geographical

20 Ibid.

21 See for example, the 14th-century treatise by the English Dominican Thomas Waleys, 'De modo componendi sermonis', discussed in Phyllis ROBERTS, *The Ars Praedicandi and the Medieval Sermon*, in: Carolyn A. MUESSIG (ed.), *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, Leiden, Boston 2018, pp. 39–62, here p. 47.

22 As Ora LIMOR has shown, the Valley of Jehoshaphat has a special role in Fabri's description, as it links together past history with eschatological future; filth and dirt become a metaphor for sin and evil, for the fate of humankind and the fearful wrath of God. Ora LIMOR, *Placing an Idea: The Valley of Jehoshaphat in Religious Imagination*, in: Renana BARTAL and Hanna VORHOLT (eds.), *Between Jerusalem and Europe: Essays in Honour of Bianca Kühnel*, Leiden, Boston 2016, pp. 280–300, here p. 295.

23 STEWART (note 2), vol. 8, p. 520; Fabri, 'Evagatorium', ed. HASSLER, vol. 1,2, p. 413: *sic praedicator habet virorem castitatis, altitudinem paupertatis, et imputribilitatem obedientiae in tribus votis.*

24 Fabri, 'Evagatorium', ed. HASSLER (note 2), vol. 1, pp. 412–414. STEWART (note 2), vol. 1,2, p. 519–521.

index in which each feature of the topography – the cave, the rocks, the valley, and the vegetation – is encoded with a cosmic and theological meaning exclusive to the Dominican order.

We should bear in mind that the intended audience of Fabri's 'Evagatorium' were his brothers in the Dominican monastery, and, as Kathryn BEEBE has noted, among other aims, Fabri's intention in the 'Evagatorium' was also to provide a wealth of material for the sermons which his audiences – the Ulmer brothers – would later be expected to preach.²⁵ Fabri thus applies, to the landscape of the Holy Land, a strategy of allegorical interpretation which he and his audiences are familiar with, derived from the study of the scriptures and biblical exegesis. As an interpretive strategy, allegorical reading is very common in medieval commentaries of the Bible, and specifically of the Song of Songs.²⁶ In many cases the subjects of an allegorical reading are geographical figures such as rocks, caves, and gardens. For example, Bernard of Clairvaux's famous interpretation of the "clefts of the rock" (*in foraminibus petrae*, Song of Songs 2:14) as an allegory of the wounds of Christ, or Honorius of Autun's interpretation of the "enclosed garden" (*hortus conclusus*, Song of Songs 4:12) as an allegory of Mary's virginity.²⁷

Allegorical reading of the landscape is to be found not only in biblical exegesis of the scriptures, but also in other late medieval and Renaissance works, both literary and artistic, in which geographical features signify another layer of meaning. Eminent examples are Dante's "dark wood" (*selva oscura*), which is full of shadows and signifies the hero's inner turmoil,²⁸ or Petrarch's well-known letter on the ascent of Mont Ventoux, in which he offers the peaks of the mountains and the routes which he wandered along as an allegory for the quest for a meaning of life, and the ascent of the mountain as an allegory of the ascent of the soul to God.²⁹ Trecento painters too, in paintings of St Francis' stigmatization at La Verna, exploited the rugged background of La Verna to signify the crack of the Golgotha in Jerusalem, which was formed at the time of the Crucifixion, thus portraying Francis as an *alter Christus* and La Verna as the *alter Golgotha*.³⁰ Similarly, the rugged background behind the Virgin in Leonardo da Vinci's 'The Virgin of the Rocks' invites the beholder to meditate on the

25 BEEBE (note 3), p. 100.

26 For allegory as a major factor of medieval commentaries on the Song of Songs, inviting elaboration on the level 'beyond' the apparent surface, see E. Ann MATTER, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity*, Philadelphia 1990.

27 Jill ROSS, *Figuring the Feminine: The Rhetoric of Female Embodiment in Medieval Hispanic Literature*, Toronto 2008, pp. 111–116.

28 Dante, *Inferno*, Canto 1:1–3; Jeremy TAMBLING, *Allegory*, London 2010, pp. 3 and 32. For a summary of the allegorical associations of Dante's *selva oscura* – sinfulness, error, alienation from God, see Robert Pogue HARRISON, *Forests: The Shadow of Civilization*, Chicago 1992, p. 82.

29 See Tomáš NEJESCHLEBA, 'Petrarch's 'Ascent of Mont Ventoux and Philosophy'', in: *Archiwum Historii Filozofii i Myśli Społecznej* 64 (2019), pp. 81–94. See also BAUER in this volume.

30 Yamit RACHMAN SCHRIRE, 'Christ's Side-Wound and Francis' Stigmatization at La-Verna: Reflections on the Rock of Golgotha', in: Isabella AUGART, Maurice SASS and Iris WENDERHOLM (eds.), *Steinformen. Materialität, Qualität, Imitation*, Berlin, Boston 2019, pp. 45–57.

biblical phrase: “My dove in the clefts of the rock” (Song of Songs 2:14), as proposed by Durant Waite ROBERTSON.³¹

Allegorical readings of the landscape of the Holy Land are also to be found in earlier pilgrims’ accounts. For example, pilgrims occasionally refer to natural phenomena of the Holy Land as proof of God’s grace.³² As Ora LIMOR has pointed out, Renaissance travellers, including Felix Fabri

coped with the conflict between the imagined landscape and the real one because the latter did not seem to fit its designation. In a broader sense, we can define this conflict as a clash between the literal and the allegorical and also between reason and faith.³³

Late medieval audiences, readers, and spectators alike, and particularly audiences from monastic or ecclesiastical backgrounds, were well acquainted with allegorical interpretation as a strategy to indicate another layer of meaning. Dorothea FRENCH has shown how late medieval pilgrims, including Felix Fabri, conceived Mount Calvary as both the allegorical and literal centre of the Earth.³⁴ Yet what is innovative in this segment of Fabri’s text is that the allegorical interpretation he employs serves a point that is exclusive to his order. In this chapter, Fabri adopts allegorical interpretation, not to make a point about the Holy Land as an agent in Christian salvation history, but rather to weave the order of preachers into the landscape of the Holy Land. Fabri’s reading of the landscape is an extraordinary example of what Denis COSGROVE and others have argued: namely, that landscape is always a reflection of social systems and cultural practices. At the same time, however, landscape is also itself an agent that shapes them in turn.³⁵

By comparing the geographical features of the place to the Dominican Order, Fabri claims the topography of the Holy Land for the Dominican Order. Fabri emphasizes the potential role of the Holy Land in sermons, given that this is the place where the biblical story occurred. One could speculate that preaching specifically in the holy

31 Durant Waite ROBERTSON, In Foraminibus Petrae: A Note on Leonardo’s ‘Virgin of the Rocks’, in: *Renaissance News* 7 (1954), pp. 92–95.

32 Ora LIMOR, *Wondrous Nature: Landscape and Weather in Early Medieval Pilgrimage Narratives*, in: Orit BASHKIN, Adam BEAVER and Joshua LEVINSON (eds.), *Jews and Journeys: Travel and the Performance of Jewish Identity*, Philadelphia 2021, pp. 46–62.

33 LIMOR (note 22). For an allegorical reading of the landscape of the Holy Land in terms of universal Christian truth in Fabri’s account, see RACHMAN SCHRIRE (note 30).

34 Dorothea R. FRENCH, *Journeys to the Center of the Earth: Medieval and Renaissance Pilgrimages to Mount Calvary*, in: Barbara N. SARGENT-BAUR (ed.), *Journeys toward God: Pilgrimage and Crusade*, Kalamazoo 1992, pp. 45–81.

35 Stephen DANIELS and Denis COSGROVE, Introduction: Iconography and Landscape, in: Denis COSGROVE and Stephen DANIELS (eds.), *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*, Cambridge 1988, pp. 1–10.

places during Fabri's visit had a special importance, due to movement restrictions put in place by Mamluk authorities.

Towards the end of the chapter, Fabri summarizes his short treatise, concluding in the rather wide view that the Holy Land offers many opportunities to the preacher:

In quibus notatur materia praedicanda, ut praedicet vel de monte Oliveti, de virtutibus; de monte offensionis, de vitiis; de Akeldamah, de morte; vel de valle Hennon, de Gehenna aeternae damnationis. Vel debet praedicare montibus et vallibus, hoc est, sapientibus et insipientibus debitor esse debet [...] vel contemplativis et activis; vel religiosis et saecularibus; iustis et peccatoribus; bonis et malis.

Herein may be noted the variety of subjects for a preacher, who may preach either about the Mount of Olives, or virtues, about the Mount of Offence, or vices, about Aceldama, or death, or about the Valley of Hinnon, that is, about hell and eternal damnation. Or he may preach to the mountains and to the valleys, that is, he may be a debtor both to the wise and to the unwise [...] or to the contemplative and the active; or to the religious and to laymen; to just men and sinners; to good and bad.³⁶

Here again Fabri offers a connection between 'content', 'place', and 'audience'. The places of the Holy Land provide subjects for sermons that could be delivered to a variety of audiences. Similar to liturgy, preaching at the actual holy places had the potential to revive the biblical stories *in situ*; sermons in the holy places invited the pilgrims and devotees to draw parallels between the present and the past, and perhaps to yearn for a Christian Renaissance in the Holy Land.

As Shayne Aaron LEGASSIE has shown, "[t]he written account transformed the raw material of the traveller's memory into something systematic and visualizable, for the edification and wholesome delight of readers."³⁷ For Fabri's recipients, the place names, such as 'the Mount of Olives', 'the Mount of Offence', 'Aceldama', or 'the Valley of Hinnon', evoke the imagination of the biblical events associated with them. The names of these sacred sites held symbolic meanings and associations that exceed their geographical substance and boundaries, offering the recipients the opportunity to contemplate the sacred landscape of the Holy Land even if they have never set foot there. At the same time, Fabri's mention of the names of these places added an authoritative layer to his words and voice.

36 Fabri, 'Evagatorium', ed. HASSLER (note 2), vol. 1, p. 413–414. STEWART (note 2), vol. 1,2, p. 521.

37 LEGASSIE (note 17), p. 117.

4 Mary's Visitation as a Pilgrimage

I wish to return now to Fabri's sermon on the Visitation. Though Fabri did not mention the full content of his sermon, he noted its goal: convincing his fellow pilgrims to set out on a pilgrimage through the desert, for he himself yearned to arrive there. In order to do so, Fabri proposes to interpret Mary's visitation as an act of *pilgrimage*, and implicitly suggests seeing the figure of the Virgin as a model for the pilgrim.

Traditionally, preachers employed Mary's visitation as a model for humility and chastity to be followed by young nuns or females.³⁸ The Franciscan theologian Bernardino of Busti (1450–1513), in a sermon on the Visitation, highlighted that Mary remained for about three months in Zechariah's house, not travelling around the countryside, to teach us "to flee the conversations of men, which ought to be avoided especially by virgins and other young women."³⁹ Another 15th-century preacher, the Dominican Gabriele da Barletta, asserted that Mary never even went to the window of her room in order to escape public view. Both preachers foreground Mary's habits of solitude.⁴⁰

Fabri, on the other hand, in his sermon on the Visitation, emphasizes not Mary's enclosure, but rather the actual travel she performed through the terrain of the Holy Land, from her house in Nazareth to her cousin's house in the Judean hills. In this, he departs from the medieval tradition, and offers an innovative line of interpretation of Mary's visitation, which he views as a pilgrimage. The subject of Fabri's sermon might be seen in the context of late medieval sermons, which tended to emphasize Mary's role during the Passion. As Spivey ELLINGTON has shown, it was in these works that Mary shed her traditional role as a model of modesty and humility to become an individual in her own right. These sermons frequently included dialogue and dramatic action, the intent of which was to draw the reader into the events of the Passion so that he or she could better identify with them.⁴¹

The theme of Mary as a model for the pilgrim is integrated into a later chapter of Fabri's 'Evagatorium', which is entirely dedicated to this theme: '*De loco respirationis*

38 Donna Spivey ELLINGTON, *From Sacred Body to Angelic Soul: Understanding Mary in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Washington 2001, p. 145. Mary C. ERLER suggests that Nicholas Love's portrayal of Mary's Visitation to her cousins should also be read in the context of local "supervised" pilgrimages of women, cf. Mary C. ERLER, *Home visits: Mary, Elizabeth, Margery Kempe and the feast of the Visitation*, in: Maryanne KOWALESKI and P. J. P. GOLDBERG (eds.), *Medieval Domesticity. Home, Housing and Household in Medieval England*, Cambridge 2008, pp. 259–276, here pp. 267–268.

39 Bernardino of Busti cited in ELLINGTON (note 38), p. 144.

40 In fact, Ambrose interprets the Vulgate's phrase: "Mary stood up and went with haste through the mountains (*montana festinatione*)" as a recommendation for: "[L]isten, virgins, do not run around to others' houses, do not linger in the streets, or get together in public to gossip. Mary was earnest at home, hurried in public, and stayed at the home of her relatives."

41 Donna Spivey ELLINGTON, *Impassioned Mother or Passive Icon: The Virgin's Role in Late Medieval and Early Modern Passion*, in: *Renaissance Quarterly* 48 (1995), pp. 227–261, here pp. 231–232.

et pausationis beatae Virginis in tali peregrinatione existentis ('On the site where the blessed Virgin Mary recovered and rested when taking her pilgrimage').⁴²

In this chapter Fabri tells us that the Virgin Mary regularly used to set out on three pilgrimages: once a year she visited Nazareth, where the angel Gabriel told her she would conceive and give birth to Christ; once a month, Mary travelled to the grotto in Bethlehem where her son was born; and once a day, every day, she visited the sacred sites of Jerusalem where her child lived and taught, and where he was crucified and resurrected. By the end of this chapter, Fabri addresses the question of the exact nature of Mary's pilgrimages, declaring, in opposition to some of the Church Fathers, who believed Mary's pilgrimages should be understood in a spiritual sense, that for him they were physical as Mary "was in truth a pilgrim" (*vere peregrina fuit*).

A close analysis of this chapter suggests it might have been composed as a sermon. Not only does it form a separate literary unit in the 'Evagatorium', but its catenetical rhetoric also suggests this.⁴³ However, more important for our discussion here is the point that Mary's figure as a model for the pilgrim is a recurring theme in Fabri's text. Yet in the chapter that is dedicated to Mary's pilgrimages in Jerusalem, Fabri portrays a more ambiguous model for the pilgrim, as he offers Mary not only as a model for actual pilgrimage, but also as a model for spiritual pilgrimage. Thus, Fabri tells us that, each day, after she completed the circle of the holy places in Jerusalem, Mary went back to her oratory on Mount Sion, where she prayed in front of two stones which were miraculously brought to her by angels from Mount Sinai. As Fabri suggests, these stones were brought to her so that she would not have to set out on an actual pilgrimage to the desert, but instead could venerate Mount Sinai through the stones.⁴⁴

By integrating a sub-narrative of a spiritual pilgrimage of the Virgin, Fabri offers a model for the pilgrims who cannot arrive in the Holy Land with their bodies, but only through their imagination. We see that Mary's figure as a model for pilgrimage becomes more flexible due to the changing demands of each audience: on the voyage

42 Fabri, 'Evagatorium', ed. HASSLER (note 2), vol. 1, p. 401–408. The chapter spans eight pages in the printed edition of the text and forms a discrete unit that can be read separately. See Yamit RACHMAN-SCHRIRE, *A Voyage to the Land of Mirrors: Felix Fabri's Narration of the Virgin Mary's Pilgrimages as a Model for Late Medieval Mendicant Piety*, in: *Journal of Medieval History* 46 (2020), pp. 596–620.

43 RACHMAN-SCHRIRE (NOTE 42).

44 These two stones appear also in another text of Fabri, 'Die Sionpilger', whose addressees are the Sion pilgrims (*Syon bilgrin*), named after Mount Sion in Jerusalem – pilgrims who travelled to Jerusalem in spirit (to be distinguished from the pilgrim knights – *Ritterbilgrin* – who went to Jerusalem in body as well). In 'Die Sionpilger', Mary's veneration of the Sinai stones suggests a model for a mental pilgrimage. Felix Fabri, *Die Sionpilger*, ed. by Wieland CARLS (*Texte des Späten Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit* 39), Berlin 1999, p. 139. For a discussion of the stones and their historiography: RACHMAN-SCHRIRE (note 42), pp. 617–618. For the manner in which details taken from accounts of real voyages were integrated into guides for pilgrimages of the imagination, see Kathrynne BEEBE, *Reading Mental Pilgrimage in Context: The Imaginary Pilgrims and Real Travels of Felix Fabri's 'Die Sionpilger'*, in: *Essays in Medieval Studies* 25 (2008), pp. 39–70.

to the Holy Land, while preaching to his fellow pilgrims with the intention of convincing them to go on a pilgrimage to Sinai, Mary emerges as a model for corporeal pilgrimage; in the chapter which is dedicated to Mary's pilgrimages and is intended for his brothers in Ulm, he offers a more pluralistic model of the Virgin which befits the needs of audiences who could not have arrived at the holy places themselves. Sinai as the goal for a spiritual pilgrimage of the Virgin Mary should also be read in the context of the prohibition on female pilgrims entering the Monastery of St Catherine, as Fabri testifies.⁴⁵ We see then how the addressees determine the content and rhetoric of each sermon. Indeed, Sinai itself, as an actual geographic place, also changes its role: in the chapter on Mary's pilgrimages Sinai is a site that could be (and perhaps also should be) venerated on Mount Sion. This is based on the unique theological and teleological connection between the two mountains: Sinai the Mount of the Old Covenant, where Moses received the Law, is being replaced (via the relocation of the stones) by Mount Sion, the Mount of the New Covenant, where the tongues of fire fell on the disciples on Pentecost – Mount Sion is the *telos* of Mount Sinai and, therefore, it is only there that the stones could be fully invested with their meaning.⁴⁶ However, in the sermon of the Visitation, addressed to the pilgrims on the boat, Sinai is no longer a goal for spiritual voyage, but becomes a goal for actual physical pilgrimage.

Fabri's 'Evagatorium' is a curious literary construct on which he worked for more than a decade, basing his words on notes he took while in the Holy Land. The composition itself interacts with different literary genres, among them sermons. The intertwining of sermons in the composition of his pilgrimage emphasizes its didactic agenda and indicates the various ways in which different genres are entangled in pilgrimage writings. For Fabri, the pathos of a sermon is inherent in the actual act of pilgrimage.

45 Fabri, 'Evagatorium', ed. HASSLER (note 2), vol. 2, p. 503. My thanks to Susanna FISCHER for bringing this matter to my attention.

46 See Yamit RACHMAN-SCHRIRE, Steintransfer ohne menschliches Zutun: Wie der Berg Sinai auf den Berg Zion gelangte, in: Monika WAGNER and Michael FRIEDRICH (eds.), *Steine aus der Ferne. Kulturelle Praktiken des Steintransfers*, Berlin, Boston 2017, pp. 114–24.